



## Feline Friday's Reuben the cat joins the Challenge program every Friday

By Parker Jones

Most students walk by the Challenge Program's room every day, but never actually see the inside during their time at Conifer. Likely to many students' surprise, the room houses a cat named Reuben every Friday.

Every Friday, teacher Diana Baker-Low brings Reuben the cat to the Challenge Program room for the day. Although he's only nine months old - not old enough to be a certified therapy cat - he has become a characteristic part of the program.

"I just started bringing him in at the beginning of the year, and the kids told Mr. Paxton what a wonderful thing it was," Baker-Low said. "I was like, 'I'll just bring him in for one day,' but then the kids just loved him, and parents started calling me and saying it's a really cool idea."

The students in the program quickly got used to having Reuben at the school once a week, and many of them now look forward to the days when he's visiting.

"A couple parents have said the only reason their kids come to school is to see Reuben," Baker-Low said. "They won't want to get out of bed, but then they're like, 'Oh, it's a Reuben day.'"

When students are having a hard day, Reuben is often there to cheer them up and even sometimes motivate them to work.

"A student was crying and didn't want to work, and I said, 'Well, I think Reuben wants you to read,'" Baker-Low said. "He said, 'Okay, I'll read for Reuben.' A little while later I looked over and I asked what he was doing, and he goes, 'I'm teaching Reuben to read.' It was so cute, he was holding the book up so Reuben could see the words. Then he stopped crying."

Some students around the school have learned about Reuben's weekly presence, and they'll often go in to visit, especially when they need something to cheer them up.

"Even some of the kids in General Ed that don't have special needs will come in saying, 'I just need a fix, I'm really upset, my boyfriend just dumped me, can I hold Reuben?' He's an awesome kitty," Baker-Low said.

Reuben always brings a touch of joy to the Challenge Program, along with other students throughout the school.

"Reuben is the awesomest cat and he likes to snuggle with you," senior Maddie Koskinen, a member of the Challenge Program, said. "It gives me something to look forward to every Friday.

It makes me happier and motivates me to do my work."



# Pressure on stud

## Students are under more pressure than ever

By Zoe Watts and Zoey Melton

It's no mystery that teenagers have little to no time to relax. From homework to social media, students face various sources of stress in their day to day lives that pile on the pressure. That pressure is hurting the students in more ways than most think.

The modern teenager has a million things to think about each second of the day: what homework they need to do, what people are posting on Instagram, or even what trends they feel they need to follow. Teenagers are having a hard time making room for what they love, and they aren't sure what to do about it. It's become a constant struggle in this day and age.

Some argue that technology has made life way too easy for students, but there is data for both sides of the argument. Before the internet, school looked very different. Teachers gave out all of the physical work or instructions. Everything that needed to be done could be found in the classroom, or local library.

Things are very different now. The curriculum has evolved, adding more difficult concepts and work for younger classes.

Teachers have multiple websites, each one with a new assignment and different structures, and many seem to update at different times. Some students have to check upwards of 12 websites each night.

Students don't have as many breaks like the previous generations because teachers can still give them work outside of the classroom. Even when students are out of the classroom, they get notifications

for assignments that are due, or are going to be due sometime soon.

"Technology is supposed to make studying easier, but since teachers have so many websites to check, it makes it harder than just getting a worksheet," freshman Ashley O'Neal, a student taking honors and AP courses, stated.

Teenagers are reporting much higher levels of stress than is considered healthy according to the American Psychological Association (APA). The APA did a study on teenagers over the course of a month. The study took place in Washington, DC. 1,018 teens that contributed to the study.

The data recovered from the study showed that 74% of teens reported more than one symptom of stress. The average stress level reported by teenage girls was equal to the levels reported by full grown adults; the boys reported slightly lower stress levels, but not by much. About 35% reported that stress caused them to lie awake at night. School was the biggest source of stress of 83% of the kids.

In the last 20 years or so, statistics have shown that anxiety and depression in students is steadily increasing. In 2015, studies showed that at least 80% of students were diagnosed with anxiety, and 60% of students could be diagnosed with depression, but don't receive help. Students who suffer with anxiety are more likely to suffer with depression as well.

Another few obstacles teens may face, due to pressures to succeed in school, are

Anorexia, Bulimia, or Binge Eating disorder. Roughly 5.4% (2.2 million adolescents) of children between 13 and 18 will suffer from these eating disorders.

"Stress affects my determination to go to school. I just end up hating it," freshman Kira Alley said.

In a small poll among CHS freshmen, it was found that it takes an average of 2 hours to complete after school homework. Students also reported that they have almost no time for things they actually like to do.

Even when students have the time, their minds are still occupied by the work they have to do, free time is hard to come by.

"In my 20 years of teaching, I have noticed an increase of stress in students through the years. AP classes have more demands, which I think contribute. It's not necessarily honors classes that have more stress than the normal classes, it's just different stress or different reasons for stress, I would say. I think tech has an effect on the students, but not for school per se. Everyone is so connected, it's constantly pulling on them. Students can't concentrate in class because they've got all their things beeping at them, [and] adults can be, and are just as bad," English teacher Eric Kragel, said.

With increasing levels of stress, pressure, and anxiety, kids have come to resent school more and more. If any change were to happen, the effects would be unpredictable.



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# HELP WANTED

## FINDING YOUR PERFECT FIRST JOB

By Ava Dalton

Finding a first job can be a very stressful experience. It can be difficult to find the right fit, especially with zero experience. There are so many different jobs from entertainment to the food industry, so here are seven tips that should help you find the job of your dreams - even if it's entry-level.

# 1

### Studying Up on the Legal Requirements

In the state of Colorado, no minor under the age of 16 is permitted to work between 9:30 pm and 5:00 am on a school night. Minors are also not allowed to work more than eight hours in a 24 hour period or more than 40 hours a week unless there is a business emergency. This is important, due to it being a Colorado state law. Make sure your ideal job meets these requirements.

# 2

### Checking Local Job Boards

There are typically job ideas in the hallway outside of the counselor's office on a bulletin board. You can also go online and search where help is wanted around the Conifer area. There is usually a bulletin board with help wanted signs at King Soopers. If you want to start out with something simpler, it never hurts to ask your neighbors for any odd jobs or babysitting opportunities.

# 3

### Knowing Your Interests

It will make working ten times easier if you are passionate about what you do. This way it won't feel like a job, but rather more like a hobby that you get paid to do. For example, if you are interested in horses, it would make sense to try and find work at a ranch. Or, if you love interior design, you could apply at a retail store that's always changing their displays.

# 4

### Knowing Your Schedule

It's handy to go into a job knowing what the hours look like. If you are a busy person, you will more than likely need to find work somewhere that has flexible hours that work for you. It is a good idea to tell your employer what dates you need off before they hire you, so they understand your

# 5

### Know What You're Getting Into

It is important to understand before you get the job you are wanting that you know what you're signing up for. You are going to have a lot less free time, so your time management skills will need to be strong. This will give you less time for homework, extracurricular activities, and/or a social life.

# 6

### Know What Employers Are Looking For

Have an idea of what type of person your employer is looking for based on what job you are chasing. If the job is one where you interact with people constantly, you should be as positive and friendly as possible. Try your hardest to fit the part, showing your employer you are a promising worker.

# 7

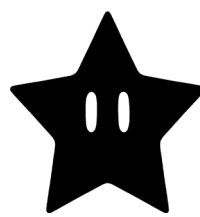
### Work For the Experience

It's key to go into the job after you've been hired with the right mindset. You have to remember that no one has a great salary in their first job. Go in wanting to learn what it's like to be in a working environment, and try to improve yourself and your resume for the next job you want.

# Making school a smash

How Justin Stephens' love for Smash Bros. shaped who he is

By Riley Patton and Tag Speck



A projector light illuminates a whiteboard with the light reflecting off onto a small group of people huddled around the cart. The whirring of the game console's fan can't be heard over the sound of the group's chattering. The match has ended, but another is about to begin.

Junior Justin Stephens has been playing one of Nintendo's flagship series, Super Smash Brothers, for as long as he can remember. As soon as he entered high school, his love for the game hit a new level.

As he got more and more serious about how he played and when he played, he built connections with people at Conifer, such as English teacher Gabe Watson, who plays Smash nearly every day in his classroom.

"The community at Conifer is amazing, and I've met a couple of new people through it, Stephens said. "Just having their input and knowing how they play and how it interacts with my playing is enough to make everybody see how to improve. Mr. Watson has a crazy good understanding of the game, so being able to play against him is amazing," Stephens said.

Stephens doesn't exclusively play Smash at school, though; he practices nearly every day at home with friends and family. He's able to avoid burnout by doing other things such as theater and band.

"Smash is a very easy game to get burnt out on, so just like everything else, you have to be very very dedicated to be good at it or to want to do it so much to be competitive. You have to love the game to be really competitive with it," Stephens said.

Watson has been a big help in boosting Stephens' confidence with a controller, no matter what edition of Smash they're playing.

"What's nice about Justin as a player, is the attention that he pays when other people are playing. You don't grow in a vacuum; you grow by seeing where your skills are in relation to others," Watson said.

