



was it WORTH IT?

You can see at least four sets of shoes under the door of the big stall. You know exactly what it means when the bathroom smells like lychees and pineapple. If your keys jingle too loud when you walk in you can almost smell the panic too. A study done by the CDC in 2018 shows that approximately 25% of high school students vape. But with the release of Hyde Vapes, Elf Bars, Breeze Vapes, and tons of other new products, the number is only climbing.

Vapes are not the only things SRO Officer Trejo come across on a daily basis. The staff at Cherokee Trail have disposed of vape pens, carts and batteries, weed, shooters, even stuff like acid and cocaine have been found on school property. For most drug-using students, the confiscation and disposal of their products is an annoyance. A waste of their money. Even something to joke about. But for Officer Trejo that's far from the truth. He has an eight-year-old daughter at home, and the thought of her coming across the type of substances he sees here every day is terrifying. "WHEN I THINK ABOUT MY LITTLE GIRL GROWING UP IN THIS WORLD TODAY, I'M VERY SCARED THAT MAYBE SHE MIGHT COME ACROSS SOMETHING LIKE THAT. AND MAYBE SHE GETS ON IT AND SHE CAN'T GET OFF OF IT," he said. According to a study done by Drug Abuse Statistics, 11.45% of high schoolers in Colorado use illegal drugs. If that applied to CT's student body, that would mean there are almost 344 students that use substances. Many of these 344 people will laugh that off without realizing the weight of the situation they are putting themselves in. "WE CAN'T STOP THEM.

BUT I HOPE IT'S NOT THE LAST TIME THEY COME ACROSS THOSE DRUGS, AND WE END UP READING ABOUT THEM IN THE NEWSPAPER," Trejo said. Much of the stuff that is sold especially amongst high schoolers is not like clean drugs they sell at dispensaries. Especially tabs, shrooms, the juice put in pods, or the oil in

carts that you get off some random guy driving a beat up civic in the parking lot.

You've heard it time and time again in the videos they make you watch in advisory, your parents, your teachers, anti vaping ads on TikTok: it's everywhere. People telling you not to do drugs. It's annoying. It's corny. But above all else, it's true. Your adult brain does not fully develop until the age of 25. Doing drugs at a young age can stunt this development, hindering your memory, problem solving, emotional regulation abilities, and much more. "KIDS SHOULD BE FOCUSING ON MAKING DIFFERENT TYPES OF MEMORIES, NOT MEMORIES OF JUST GETTING HIGH OR GETTING DRUNK. MAYBE THEY SHOULD BE FOCUSING MORE ON GETTING THEIR GRADES UP, MAKING SOME CONNECTIONS WITH DIFFERENT PEOPLE THAT YOU'RE NOT USED TO TALKING TO, LOOKING FORWARD TO PROM, PLAYING SOME SPORTS, STUFF LIKE THAT," Trejo said. There is much more to life than trying to ghost in the bathroom so the vape detectors don't go off, smoking behind 7-Eleven with some guy you barely know, tripping acid in third period because geometry is boring, or doing coke at a party because some random guy said it would be funny.

Ask the people around you that have been friends with people who do drugs. Ask them how being around that impacted their life. Then ask the people who don't do drugs anymore how it impacted theirs. Ask them if it's still hard to remember what the homework was, if they're cough lasts longer than everyone else's after they've had a cold, if the school carpet still spins if they look hard enough. Ask them how much money they spent in the span of six months, a month, a week. Ask them if their parents can still trust them after finding vapes in their pillowcase over and over again. Ask them about the people they've lost because they'd rather get high than have a meaningful conversation with their best friend. Ask them. Then ask yourself if the drugs are still worth it.

- story by E. Roberts

YOU CHOOSE

High school is a time for people to try new things, make new memories, and have new experiences. For some this meant learning to skateboard or late night drives with friends. Others took their youth as an opportunity to find a unique way to relieve stress. Though it may be hard to admit, recreational drinking and drug use is a prevalent part of high school culture. From the shrooms and cocktails of the sixties to the Mike's Harder and snapchat plugs of the 2020s, teens throughout the ages have turned to drugs as a way to cope with the harsher sides of life. Despite trying out the drugs and liking the effects, many students felt conflicted by their own choices. "I THINK NIC AND WEED ARE VERY DIFFERENT BUT ARE THE SAME. BOTH TEMPORARY, GOOD SHORT-TERM EFFECTS, AND BAD LONG-TERM EFFECTS.

WEED CAN BE USED WELL. NIC IS JUST A USELESS ADDICTION," an anonymous junior said. Though he had personal experiences and opinions on the substances, the junior was a month clean at the time of his interview, alluding to his indifference toward substances he once enjoyed. Another anonymous sophomore has a different viewpoint, one that she shares with a sizable community of people. "I THINK DRUGS HELP ME CONNECT WITH PEOPLE. I HAVE SOCIAL ANXIETY, BUT WHEN I'M HIGH, TALKING TO PEOPLE IS EASY. IT MAKES IT EASY TO MAKE FRIENDS TOO. I'LL ASK A GIRL IF SHE WANTS A HIT OF MY PEN AND I JUST MADE A FRIEND FOR LIFE," she said. While drugs came with hardships and obstacles for some, for others they were an outlet for fun and relaxation. The choice is yours, but the outcome of using is not something you could ever predict.