Blair fails to meet NCLB standards

By Kristina Hamilton

Because Blair’s recent Maryland School Assessment (MSA) scores failed to meet standards under the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, Blair is now a school “in need of improvement” and could face school-wide restructuring if scores do not meet rising standards in coming years, according to Maryland State Department of Education law.

The Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) report on last year’s MSA scores released on Oct. 20 showed that Blair Hispanic males in Geometry, one of 37 AYP target categories, did not meet the target MSA scores. Not meeting any one of the target categories renders the entire school failing. Blair, now on the NCLB watch list, will only be removed if it meets AYP guidelines in all of the categories this school year.

Freshmen repeats rise

By Elizabeth Packer

The current freshman class includes over 100 students who did not have enough credits to pass ninth grade last school year, according to student information management system coordinator Joseph Bellino.

Blair’s retention rate reflects a nationwide crisis, according to a recent study from Consortium for Equity in Standards and Testing at Boston College, which found that the freshmen retention rate has tripled over the past 30 years.

As of Sept. 7, 13.1 percent of the 937 freshmen at Blair did not receive the minimum five credits needed to pass the ninth grade last year, according to Bellino.

This percentage is more than a twofold increase from that of the 2002-2003 school year, when freshmen retention reached an all-time low of 6.4 percent. It has now risen to one of the highest rates in recent years; Over the past five years, the average freshmen retention rate was 11.1 percent. The last time that more than 13 percent of freshmen did not receive five credits was during the 2001-2002 school year.

The 15-minute morning drop off

Parents who disobey rules clog student lot

By Yeong Li

Dela Segovia lives on Lockwood Drive. Every weekday morning she wakes up at around 6:30 a.m. to drop off her daughter at Blair. The shortest and quickest route leads her to University Boulevard and then to the student parking lot, where she stops briefly to let her daughter off. A few good-byes and familiar gestures are exchanged before Segovia leaves for work.

Segovia’s morning routine is typical—on Oct. 19, over 60 cars violated school rules by dropping students off at the University Boulevard entrance of Blair rather than at the designated student drop-off site along Colesville Road. These drop-offs were PARKING page 9.

Drag racers cheating death

By Kishan Bharti

Where only first names appear, names have been changed to protect the identities of the sources.

The smell of gasoline wafts through the midnight air one Friday in August as Dave, a junior, revs the engine of his Honda in a parking lot directly off Route 355. Onlookers mingle as organizers collect entrance fees, cordon off surrounding roads and listen intently to a scanner radio monitoring police chatter. In just moments, the vehicles at the starting line will belch fire, as they approach speeds of up to 125 miles per hour.

Once the start signal is given, Dave keeps his hand on the wheel and his foot on the gas. His surroundings begin to blur as the Honda rips through the air like a bullet. His heart races, adrenaline pumping through his veins. Then, as fast as he can, he...
Lead: still an issue

Time after time, every single school tested for lead in MCPs shows signs of lead contamination. In some elementary schools, tests show peak lead levels of 35,000 parts per billion (ppb), far surpassing the 15-pbb maximum, and for nearly eight months now, MCPs students have been exposed to the possibility of drinking lead every time they take a sip from a water fountain.

The solution to such a crisis is relatively simple—test only water sources from which people actually drink for lead contamination, and replace lead-leaching parts before checking other sources of water. Such a solution seemed to work for Prince George's County, who, according to The Washington Post, began remediation procedures as early as this summer and whose students started the school year reassured that their water was safe to drink.

Instead of following this protocol, some schools are using the convoluted, senseless method of testing all water sources. MCPs tested 27,000 water samples when 1,500 to 2,000 samples would have sufficed to assure drinking-water safety. Many of these samples were also taken from sources students barely use or use only rarely, rather than solely the water fountains that could pose a health risk.

The only prevention mechanism MCPs has to protect students from lead is a stopgap directive that orders janitors to flush fountains for 15 minutes every four hours while buildings are occupied. Previous flushing directives mandated by MCPs proved useless: a similar directive was mandated in 1986 and not followed in 1987; sure enough, lead was discovered in the 1988-1989 school year.

Last year, the previous administration got a nasty wake-up call in 2000: lead in Seneca Valley High School.

Evidence that this latest directive is not being followed abounds. For one thing, the directive has not been followed at Blair, where one can see any flushing this school has done, and the four-hour schedule is the only directive for mandatory lead testing.

For another, MCPs does not provide any means for and has little idea of how to flush fountains for extended periods of time. "It's a matter of just having them flushed," said a school official. "We don't have a program and we're not following any program." A similar argument began with the last directive, as well. "It's just something we want to get done," said a school official. "It's not something we want to do, but we want to get done.

The frightening indifference with which MCPs has treated the lead situation exposes students and staff to the possibility of lead poisoning. Lead can cause irreversible damage in the brain and nervous system. As the buck and holding janitors responsible for MCPs own planning flaws, MCPs should take this issue squarely, treating only water fountains and developing a solution to the plumbing system's lead problems once and for all.

IBC overtaxes Blair's resources

Interagency Coordinating Board doesn't support school

Blair, already a seriously overcrowded high school, is seeing its scheduling problems compounded thanks to the Interagency Coordinating Board (ICB), a 12-member committee that schedules all events taking place in any County-owned building. Despite their authoritative positions, this group of County officials is out of touch with school communities and affairs and thereby creates, not solves, problems in school scheduling.

According to MCPs regulations, the ICB pledges to "maximize the community use of public schools." This accomplishes this mission very well with complete disregard for Blair's overuse of the school. The school already must support the newly-imported Night School program and Adult Ed! In Education classes, both of which draw hundreds of students and adults from across the County to Blair. Through these programs provide necessary community educational support, the Board forces Blair to house multiple additional activities each week, including church services every Sunday, according to Blair secretary Carrie Addision. These activities, some of which run as late as midnight, leave little time for custodians to clean the school; groups with as many as 2,000 members stay late into the night, sometimes causing messes that force custodians to clean as late as 2:30 a.m.

However, according to Business Manager Laurie Checo, Blair building services received less than $30 weekly during the 2003-2004 school year to cover all ICB activities, a woefully insufficient amount considering the work required to keep up after Blair's visitors. According to former Blair manager Anne Albon, Blair spends an additional $10,000 annually to provide for supplies, equipment and repairs that the ICB does not cover—money that shouldn't be leaving Blair's pockets because of the oversight of a distant committee.

In a June 8 Board of Education Meeting, MCPs Superintendent Jerry Weast admitted that buildings wear out more quickly than they can be repaired with the amount of use they receive. The school must set a limit on school usage to relieve Blair's pressure building and compensate for its overworked building services staff.

Furthermore, the ICB upholds a ridiculous policy that requires Blair students, teachers, and the PTSA to rent building space as much as six months in advance in order to be granted priority. The ICB must realize the Blair community's stance in using its own building and give students prior priority throughout the school year accordingly.

When Blair organizers are able to reserve building space, they must then pay exorbitant fees to the ICB. According to ICB parent Susan Crawford, SAC rental for Blair's annual three-hour jazz band Spring Fling planned for May 2005 would have cost about $450. The ensemble was forced to abandon plans a Blair performance and book their concert at a nearby community center at a more reasonable price. Though student events, PTSA activities and non-profit organization meetings receive lower rental rates from the ICB than outside groups, they still have to dish out hundreds of dollars for merely a couple hours school use—an impossibility for many cash-strapped student organizations.

The ICB cannot meet this student need because it does not exist. Despite the fact that the ICB mainly impacts County schools, only two of the 12 board members are principals, and they are left powerless in their minority. Ironically, the Board's voting members are mostly citizen representatives appointed by the County Executive or County Council who are not at all affected by the ICB's decisions.

The Board must modify their composition, providing the most voice for those most affected by usage County schools.

In addition to the lack of voices on the ICB, the Board lacks proper priorities. Over $7.7 million of the $9.7 million collected from ICB facility usage fees this year will be expended for the 2004 salaries and benefit packages of the Board's 27 support staff, according to the Board budget summary. When combined with the $250,000 annual overhead paid to the County government for personnel costs, nearly one-third of the ICB's expenditures support its office staff instead of County schools. Instead of giving back extra funding to schools worn out by the ICB's overscheduling, the Board chooses to fund an inflated support staff that provides little aid to the community.

The ICB must not cut back on its support staff to ensure that more of its revenues are channeled to building services workers, but it must also raise the rates for outside organizations so that more money is available for maintenance.

In order to achieve its purpose of truly aiding the community, the ICB must start supporting students instead of other County services. Until the Board starts holding itself up to the bargain, it will remain as it is—an enemy to students countywide.
Dangerous driving isn’t just an accident

Adults must create a safer driving atmosphere to prevent accidents in Montgomery County

By ARMIN ROSEN
An opinion

On Sept. 24, the lives of five area teenagers ended early on the roads of Montgomery County. The following week, County law enforcement officials and local policy makers took up numerous calls for action, ranging from helicopter traffic surveillance to reforms in the driver’s license testing process. These recommendations suffer from the pervasive assumption that teen traffic accidents are caused simply by the volatile combination of youth and cars. Yet nationwide, adult drivers outnumber teens nine to one—it is their behavior behind the wheel that serves as a determinant of overall traffic safety.

Legislative efforts

Unfortunately for area teens, adults in Montgomery County are not safe drivers. According to the Montgomery County Police Department, in 2003, Montgomery County drivers got into over 13,500 traffic accidents, up from 11,680 the year before. Drivers were issued 110,615 citations in 2003, up from a little over 106,000 in 2002. These increases are partly the result of police department initiatives aimed at curbing drunk driving and pedestrian deaths. Yet it is nevertheless worrisome that one out of every six Montgomery County drivers will be caught breaking the law sometime in the next year.

According to University of Hawaii professors Leon James and Diane Nahal, the authors of several essays on the psychology of driving, “aggressiveness, rage and anger reactions are commonplace on the road because they are learned habits, acquired by children in the bloodstream, where kids are not merely passive passengers.” Apparently, dangerous driving begets dangerous driving.

Even Mothers Against Drunk Driving and the American Automobile Association are missing the real problem: They have called on lawmakers to impose tougher restrictions on teen drivers but fail to realize that dangerous driving does not begin and end with teens alone.

This problem is compounded by an egregious misplacement of priorities. A bill that would restrict young drivers from transporting passengers under the age of 18 for six months after receiving a driver’s license was proposed twice, but it was defeated both times—partly because parents expressed concern over yet another extra instruction or supervision this law would entail. “It bothers me greatly that a parent will spend time with their child at a sports event but will not help drivers get six months of extra experience,” says Delegate Adrienne Mandel, who proposed the law. Evidently, Marylanders believe that the safety of our state’s teenagers is not worth the extra parental responsibility needed to prepare teen drivers for the dangers of the road. And if parents are led to believe that their teen’s driving is not their responsibility, this is likely to never change.

The parent’s responsibility

But if teen driving is not a parental responsibility, then why is a parent’s signature needed in order for a teenager to drive? The state requirement that adults co-sign for their child’s driver’s license is not merely procedural; it gives parents partial accountability for that teenager’s behavior on the road. It also allows a parent to revoke a license so long as their teen is still a minor, a power that should be used to place limitations on driving privileges or prohibit their child from carrying teen passengers. Parents should also refuse to sign for a driver’s license unless they feel their child possesses the responsibility, and not merely the capability, of controlling a two-ton vehicle.

Although parents play a crucial role in keeping the roads safe, traffic safety is still the responsibility of all drivers. Teens represent only seven percent of drivers nationwide; it is up to the other 93 percent of drivers to create a safe atmosphere where the rules of the road are respected and followed. Such an atmosphere does not exist in Montgomery County. And as we found out on Sept. 24, the consequences can be beyond tragic.

Military recruiting makes army of the disadvantaged

By PRIYA AMAND
An opinion

A Navy poster sits beside a stack of PSAT practice booklets on the roads of Montgomery County. Against an adjacent wall lie piles of business cards left by the many military recruiters who frequent Blair’s hallways. At the front desk is a rack of glossy Army brochures bearing slogans like “the experience of a lifetime” while the recruitment offices promise “opportunities.” In between, the faces of confident, clean-cut soldiers far removed from the bloody battlefields many recruits will soon face.

Now more than ever, high school students are under pressure; with the military seeking an increased 30,000 troops over the next four years. Like colleges and other school advertisers, military recruiters are pushing younger and younger—targeting the high-risk “product” on Bldg. 19. So, unlike other advertisers, they cannot count success merely in return—military recruiters must also consider the ethics of their selling tactics.

Core demographics

Military recruiters’ strategies have the hallmarks of more traditional advertising, and recruiters are quick to identify their core demographic of students to whom the service is an easy sell. Enlistees in the military usually come from the lowest economic brackets and have consigned themselves to military service for the simple reason that they have few other options. A fact recruiters capitalize on to meet recruiting quotas.

According to MCV’s statistics from 2002, the percent of Bldg. 19ers who enlist after high school is 1.5 times the County average. MCV statistics also show that students in Downcounty schools, which continue to be a hotbed of recruiting activity for the enlisted ranks, are twice as likely to receive free and reduced meals (FARMS) and almost twice as likely to attend after high school as the rest of the county. These skewed demographics suggest that the enlistees who fight and die for their country are not representative of the population they are defending. According to a 2003 Department of Defense survey, most recruits come from homes where the average income is several thousand dollars lower than the national average. Evidently, the choice of risking one’s life for a living has become a burden borne exclusively by the socioeconomically disadvantaged.

Risky business

An even more frightening disparity is evident in the ranks of the military: According to the Department of Defense, enlistees, who account for 86 percent of the active military service, come from consistently lower-income backgrounds than their officers. The recruits who take the most risk are inherently those with the least voice. Marines Sergeant Edwin Scott, a recruit at Blair as well as the wealthiest Bethesda-Chevy Chase (B-CC) and Whitman, says that he has come to expect that the recruits from B-CC and Whitman will consist almost entirely of commissioned officers. Still, recruiters continue to push commissioned officer programs at already privileged schools; across the county at Richard Montgomery, where students are slightly over half as likely to receive FARMS as Bldg. 19ers, recruiters provide the Career Center with brochures almost exclusively, despite lobbying the Reserwe Officers’ Training Corps and military offices.

The military carries a responsibility beyond that of their average advertiser because of its high-risk nature. Whereas other advertisers do not have to make their pitch to the most receptive audience, recruiters must make an effort not to perpetuate a destractive cycle of disadvantages enlistment through selective recruiting. Responsible recruiting may not completely equalize the demographics of the military, but it is a much-needed first step.
Mobilizing forces to beat lunch line blues

Two Chips staffers endeavor to stop line-busters and encourage love, respect and justice

By ALEXA GABRIEL and JULIA PENN

Humor

A
er three beautiful years here at Blair, almost everyone has learned that our records are pretty clean. We wear our IDs. We don’t cut class. We do our homework on occasion. But on one issue we’re fed up. No, scratch that—we’re hungry. Like many of our fellow Blairs, we like to eat—but we’re having a little trouble with that aspect of our lives. According to mathematics, any two points can make a line. But in the case of the lunch line, 6.022x10^10 hungry people make an angry mob.

In our second year as members of said mob, we’ve encountered two types of people: those who butt and those who starve. Sadly, we are members of the latter category. For years, we have watched students slip into the cafeteria that is the front of the la carte line, leaving us to lacking food. In the words of our good friend Aretha, all we’re asking for is a little respect.

Armored with polite words and enthusiastic idealism, we set out to 6.022x10^10 to kill our rude enemies with kindness. Our first test came when freshman Michael Kinse stepped in front of us, the last two people in a starling line.

Alexa: “Excuse me, do you mind getting to the back of the line? You just cut right in front of me.”

Kinse: “It’s okay. I’m not buying anything.”

Alexa: “But that’s not true; you have money in your hand.”

Kinse: “Wanna go out?”

Both: “Wanna go to the Better Understanding of The Type of Acceptable SAC Etiquette League (hereinafter referred to as the BUTFFACE League)"

But in order to successfully fight the insurgency that was destroying the integrity of our lives and the fullness of our bellies, the League needed an insider: security guard Jones-Y-Jones’ head of the la carte line. “I got a system going on right now,” Jones explained, leaking valuable intelligence information.

Out of the corners of her ever-watchful eyes, Jones had caught one. All it took was one cold stare.

“I was already here,” the culprit pleaded, fear oozing from his every pore.

The girl behind him confirmed our suspicions with a subtle shake of the head.

“GET!” said Jones. He got.

After observing Jones in action, it was clear that we needed to globalize her tactics in order to bring an end to the daily injustices in the SAC. Let’s just say we shook her hand.

With the BUTFFACE League now four strong and ready for battle, it was time to take to the streets. On Oct. 21, we set out to picket lunch-line rudeness. We took our posts between the two main lunch lines and faced the masses.

“NO E-S-P-E-C-T! Find out what it means to me,” shouted Alexa, her voice booming throughout the lines, causing vindictive buffers to stop and think about what it meant.

“IT means nothing to me!” quipped Julia, adding this clever one-liner to really drive our point home.

The masses stared, awestruck, taken aback and maybe even moved. We had finally gotten through to them. Feeling pride akin to that of a mother who had just witnessed her child’s first words (“Justice, JUSTICE!”), we started our retreat when a young man motioned confidently to us. He rushed to his side, eager to hear words of encouragement and praise from one of our new followers.

“So, you guys wanna cut in line?”

Curses. Foiled again.

A world away from historical truth

By ROCKY MADADI

An opinion

“In 1492, Columbus sailed the ocean blue—Columbus was brave and he was brilliant, he won—he won—he won—he won—he won—he won—he won—he won!”

Unfortunately for kindergarten classes everywhere, the truth about Columbus Day is much different. Almost everyone knows why we honor Columbus on the second Monday of October: He “discovered” America, helping to introduce North and South America into the international community. Unfortunately, millions of Americans don’t realize that we have been honoring the wrong person for years and ignoring those who deserve our real gratitude. By the time Columbus “discovered” America, the land had already been inhabited with natives who had lived there for decades. In fact, Columbus was not even the first newcomer to set foot upon these lands—evidence suggests that explorer Leif Erikson’s journey in the 11th century was successful, to say nothing of the Chinese expedition to America 72 years before Columbus.

It is important to remember about Columbus Day is the type of man that Columbus was and the behavior that he exhibited during his life. According to his journals, he described the way the natives greeted him upon his arrival: “They are the best people in the world, and above all, the gentlest—without knowledge of what is evil; nor do they murder and steal. They love their neighbors as themselves, and they have the sweetest talk in the world, always laughing.”

However, Columbus’s true nature was revealed in a letter he would send to a friend back in Spain: “With 50 men, we could subjugate them all and make them do whatever we want,” he writes. And the point Columbus Day conveniently overlooks? He did.

Social studies teacher David Whitacre agrees with this notion. “[Columbus Day] is a celebration of destruction, not discovery,” he says. “Ten to 50 million people and their cultures were subjected to conquest, not contact.”

To help prove his point of “balancing out the cultural propaganda led to in our schools,” Whitacre took his Cultural Anthropology class to the recently-opened National Museum of the American Indian on Columbus Day.

With reminders like the Museum of the American Indian and with the true nature of Columbus’s legacy available to anyone willing to look outside of a standard history textbook, it is a mystery as to why such a man would continue to be honored by our nation. Are we the type of country that finds it fitting to honor a man who, between the 15th and 17th centuries, indirectly killed more than eight million Arawak Indians through torture, murder, forced labor, starvation, disease and despair? By the year 1650, no traces of the original Arawak Indians—or any of their descendants—remained; Columbus had begun a legacy of racism, bloodshed and violence that would continue to persist through the Americas. The character of a nation can be seen by those it chooses to honor and respect; it is an unanswerable question, then, as to why the United States of America chooses to celebrate a man who held none of the standard American ideals like equality, honesty and compassion.

In addition to discarding the notion of Columbus Day, it is important that we teach our nation about the true history of his voyage and be honest about the actual events of 1492 and the decades that followed. Instead of educating generations to come about Columbus’s legacy of devastation, we could also celebrate the true discoverers of the Americas: the Arawak Indians and the other Native American groups that still inhabit the Americas today. Only through an understanding of the great harm caused by Columbus and his “discovery” on Oct. 12, 1492 can we begin to appreciate the original founders of America.
Blazers sound off on current issues

What are your family’s Thanksgiving traditions? ▶ see story, page 22

My family’s Thanksgiving traditions are to first watch the Macy’s Day Parade in the morning. I always look for the musical numbers. Then we invite a bunch of people over, cook Thanksgiving dinner together and then eat! The Sunday of Thanksgiving weekend, we buy a Christmas tree.
-senior Elise Harvey

For Thanksgiving, my family celebrates with an enormous dinner, usually with my grandparents and my cousins. The stuffing is the most important part. The duck is absolutely delicious with it.
-senior Kevin Kahn

My mom and everyone on her side of the family are Jamaican. On Thanksgiving we eat the normal foods, but we also eat Jamaican dishes like oxtail curry, goat, rice and peas. Some people think this food is strange, but I like it.
-freshman Keith Jacks

Do you watch children’s television shows? Why or why not? ▶ see story, page 13

I’ve always watched television shows for children mainly because everything else on TV is trash.
-junior Erica Rowe

When I’m tired of dealing with grown-up problems and serious world issues, I turn on the TV and watch Arthur, where the biggest problems he has to deal with are his bratty sister and strict teacher. The show lets me remember the days when life was simple and carefree.
-senior Suzie Adjogah

I watch children’s shows. Most shows on TV these days are all about real life and how horrible it is. Kids’ shows take you away from that for 30 minutes.
-junior Kat Comisiak

Yes, sometimes I do watch children’s television shows because they remind me of how much fun I had growing up.
-senior Laura Granados

Do you think the driving age should be raised? ▶ see story, page 3

No, I do not think that the driving age in Maryland should be raised. People should be responsible while driving. Just because some are not responsible doesn’t mean others should be penalized.
-sophomore Ashley Carroll

I don’t think the Maryland driving age should be raised. Instead, they should impose stricter road tests and maybe extend the provisional license period.
-sophomore Cyril Lan

I think the Maryland driving age should be lowered, not raised. That way, drivers get more practice and driving experience.
-freshman Ben Kastner

I say no, because I’ve waited too long for my license, and if they do raise the age I will be very, very mad.
-sophomore Michael Morris

Should Blair’s vending machines sell soda and candy? Why or why not? ▶ see story online

I do not think that Blair’s vending machines should be stocked with soda, simply because it has been proven that one soda a day can increase your risk of diabetes.
However, I do think the vending machines should be stocked with candy, since it makes Blair a great deal of money.
-junior Flynan Collins

Blair’s vending machines should sell candy and soda because some of us consider these necessities in order to stay awake at seven in the morning.
-junior Katie Frank

Yes, because we should get the food we want.
-junior Shwetadwip Chowdhury

chipsINDEX

61 percent of Blazers have already had a cold this year
81 percent of Blazers say they are upset with the changes in vending machine options
150 dollars is the most a Blazer spent on a Halloween costume
19 Blair clocks did not work or showed the wrong time during the week of Oct. 25
94 percent of Blazers have jaywalked on University Boulevard or Colesville Road
20,270 sheets of Xerox paper are used at Blair on a daily basis
31 total penalty points are on the driver’s licenses of 100 random Blazers who drive
9,000 dollars were made by the SGA from the sale of Homecoming dance tickets

Quote of the issue

“I could sing ‘Hail to the Redskins’ when I was four.”
▶ see “Loyal to the burgundy and gold,” page 29
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curriculum that decreases school-level supervision and extending the school day or year.

Sophomores across the state take annual standardized assessments like the MSA, and under NCLB, the percentage of students that must meet proficiency standards will increase each year. For this year’s Maryland AYP requirement, 53.3 percent of students must read at a proficient level, up from last year’s goal of 45.5 percent, and 40.7 percent must be proficient in math, up from last year’s goal of 27.5 percent.

In the 2013-2014 school year, 100 percent of students must meet the proficiency standards. Beginning this year, the scores of ESL students who have been in the U.S. for at least nine months will be counted among the scores in the rest of the evaluated groups.

Principal Phillip Gainous expressed much concern regarding Blair’s future performance under the strict guidelines of NCLB and hopes to see the act itself revised. “I’m worried in the sense that it makes Blair look bad. It’ll cause community concern; staff will feel frustrated because the school’s in trouble, so we’ll lose good staff,” he said.

Percent of Proficient Students

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Blair: 33.6%

Freshmen retention rate higher than last year

Research shows that getting back high school, particularly during the critical ninth grade year, greatly increases a student’s chances of dropping out. Based on an analysis of research in 2002, the Center for Development and Learning concluded that “retention is one of the most powerful predictors of high school dropout; holding a child back twice makes dropping out of school 90 percent certain.”

Suzanne Harvey, the tenth-grade administrator responsible for second-time freshmen, is confident that these students will be able to graduate on time. Retained students will have to concentrate on the 21 basic credits, eliminate electives from their schedules and enroll in night school or summer school programs, explained Harvey. “They will just have to pedal faster and harder,” she said. “Of course we’re concerned about students falling behind—that’s why we’re trying several different approaches to the problem.”

The administration include the newly implemented freshman wing and the Connections course, according to Harvey. The administration hopes that all freshman classes in the same area will create a sense of community among students. All freshmen have to take Communications Arts Program or the Magnet program are also required to take Connections, a course designed to “help students adjust to high school, improve test-taking skills and learn discipline,” said Connections teacher Todd Anderson.

While Stephens says that “it remains unseen how Connections will affect the freshman failure rate,” he has already received positive feedback from both teachers and students. “I know I’ve seen lots of students embracing the strategies they’re learning in class,” he said.

In addition to strengthening academic academics, the PTSA has found that students who participate in extracurricular activities tend to feel more connected to the school community and therefore are motivated to work harder, according to Kati Yu, PTSA President in charge of academic achievement.

The problem is that those who are academically ineligible are those who most need to feel connected,” she said.

A proposed initiative under review at the Board of Education would allow academically ineligible Diversity Consortium students in the freshman class to remain eligible for participation in sports and other extracurricular activities if they choose to participate in a tutoring program. By agreeing to use a tutor or visit academic support when doing poorly in a class, a student would get one waiver per semester from maintaining a minimum 2.0 GPA, explained Yu.

The PTSA is currently working with faculty and the State Government Association in order to help these students get back on track, according to Yu. “We want to integrate our efforts to assist these 122 students who don’t have credits,” she said.

Greg Ruffin, a sophomore who finished his ninth grade year with “three or four credits,” said once his grades began to slip, it was hard to stay motivated. “I realized I wasn’t going to pass, so I just gave up,” he said. “I went to academic support a few times, and they gave me work, but they never actually explained it.”

Ruffin’s retention has not been the least inspired to work hard this year. “I’m starting this year with a fresh start. I’m going to night school, and I’m going to pass,” he said.

Freshmen Failure Rates

<table>
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<th>Year</th>
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Maryland colleges fail price check

Rising tuitions in Maryland state colleges and universities create worries for Blazerson.

We're doing our best to reach out to students in need.

from AFFORDABILITY page 1

Blair class of 2004 generated 125 applications for the University of Maryland in College Park (UMCP). 46 applications for Montgomery College in Rockville and 24 applications for Montgomery College in Takoma Park, according to information from the TTCI Family Connection program. However, in-state tuition and room and board for UMCP have increased to $4,925 and $7,241 per year respectively. For Montgomery College in Rockville, tuition is $4,416, and there is no room and board fee.

"Blair people that live down in Silver Spring and the Takoma Park area are not generally the wealthiest people," Kaiser said, "and these people might be caught in the lack of funding coming from the state.

Poor affordability may alter or delay college plans for some seniors at Blair. "I know a lot of kids who are opting to go to schools that are less to pay for," said senior Saida Cruz-Abreu. "Many kids I know are not even going to college for a semester so that they can work in order to build up money for their tuition," she said.

The University System of Maryland accounts for 7.5 percent of the state's budget, yet it shoulders 20 percent of the cuts needed to balance the state budget. The total of raised tuition costs and room and board at four-year colleges consume about 40 percent of median family income, according to the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education. "We're in a very tight state budget crunch," said Rod Grad, Director of Federal Relations for the University of Maryland. "We're doing our best to reach out to students in need.

Maryland State Scholarship programs such as the Guaranteed Access Grant, the Educational Assistance Grant and the Part-Time Grant are among the need-based financial aid programs available to graduating students.

Many members of the Blair PTSA blame Maryland Governor Robert Ehrlich and the state government for poor prioritizing and neglecting duties to Maryland's youth. "I think Governor Ehrlich has abrogated his responsibility to the economic security and future of the state," said PTSA Co-President Fran Rothstein.

Others attributed state financial support cuts to the national economic climate.

Blair College Counseling Information Coordinator Sharon Williams related Maryland public colleges' rising costs to the current war in Iraq. "Our economy is going through a change because of what's going on outside our country, and we're paying for that with higher bills," she said.

Williams disapproved of the methods the Center used to grade affordability, claiming that they were biased. "An optimum only measures whether students and families can afford to pay for higher education given income levels, financial aid and the types of colleges and universities in the state of Maryland.

"I'm already trying to get to school on time, and then I have to deal with something extra," said O'Brien.

"I think parents need to put students' safety on the very top of their list, and if in the middle of the day, not ten minutes later, so be it," she said.

Nonetheless, for many parents, advantages to using the University Boulevard entrance outweigh these risks.

"This says a lot about the University Boulevard entrance is considerably more convenient for some because of where they live. For Segovia this is a big deal," she said.

Security Assistant Everett Campbell attributes many of these problems to Blair's location. "It's part of the unfortunate dynamic of this campus," he explained.

"I'm already trying to get to school on time, and then I have to deal with something extra," said O'Brien.

"If I can get scholarships, that would be a big help," she said.

Persistent problems in student parking lot

from PARKING page 1

Day buses and student cars that are supposed to enter through the University Boulevard side. The sheer volume of cars in the student parking lot in the early mornings increases the risk of accidents and endangers student drivers, according to PTSA Co-President Fran Rothstein. "Parents are not cooperating with us," said Segura. "I spent two weeks turning parents around (at the University Boulevard side), and they still don't get it.

Principal Phillip Catnou was also acknowledged many parents' disregard for school regulations. "I think the only thing that's going to make a difference is if someone gets hurt," he said. "Most parents feel they are not a problem."

Student drop offs in the prohibited lot have been a problem ever since Blair's move to its new building, according to Catnou.

Current measures to reduce the number of parents who drop students off on the University Boulevard side have been ineffective, said Gainous. Rothstein has encouraged Blair administration to ask the police to ticket parents who drop students off in unsafe areas.

"I spent two weeks turning parents around (at the University Boulevard side), and they still don't get it," said Segura. "I spent two weeks turning parents around (at the University Boulevard side), and they still don't get it.

"I'm already trying to get to school on time, and then I have to deal with something extra," said O'Brien.
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Graduation to occur one day early
The senior graduation ceremony will take place on June 2, one day earlier than previously planned. The event date was moved up because of a scheduling conflict with the Jericho City of Praise, the church where graduation is held, according to senior class sponsor and graduation coordinator Charles Wang.

Blair tops state in National Merit semifinalists
Blair had the highest number of National Merit semifinalists in Maryland with 56 of the state’s 339 qualifiers. Fifty students are in the Magnet, three are in the Communication Arts Program and three are on-level.
Two more students have qualified this year than did last year, and 25 more qualified than did in 2003, according to Resource Counselor Karen Hunt. In Montgomery County, 143 students from 15 schools qualified for the scholarship program. Richard Montgomery had 26 qualifiers, Walt Whitman followed with 17 and Bethesda-Chevy Chase had ten.

The National Merit Scholarship Program was established in 1955 as an academic competition for students in grades nine through 11 who took the PSAT/NMSQT.
The top-scoring third of students become semifinalists and are eligible to compete an application packet to become finalists.

Outdoor water fountain to be installed near track
The Physical Education (P.E.) Department, the Athletics Department and the PTSA will split the expenses for installing an outdoor water fountain near the track, according to P.E. Teacher Cynthia Changaris. Changaris said that the new fountain, which will be the first outdoor fountain in Blair’s history, will cost between $1,300 and $2,200.

Old Blair auditorium likely to be renovated
Silver Spring International Middle School’s auditorium will likely be renovated due to recent support from U.S. Senator Barbara Mikulski, Coun. Margaret Douglaston, Sen. Maryland State Senator Ilia Ruben and Blair alumnus Ben Stein. Because of numerous safety concerns, the 1,200-seat auditorium has remained unused since Blair relocated from its Wayne Avenue campus to University Boulevard six years ago. The facility will be needed to bring up to code during renovation, and a sprinkler system will need to be installed.
The old Blair auditorium renovation committee, which consists of parents, students and members of the community, is trying to raise money to fund the estimated $1.5 to 2 million project.

Van Hollen speaks at Blair
Congressman Chris Van Hollen spoke to Blair students on Oct. 29 at 2:30 p.m. in Blair’s Colesville side parking lot at a press conference for Safe Neighborhood Day. Van Hollen discussed with students the diversity of Montgomery County, the restoration of America’s credibility overseas, the No Child Left Behind Act and American unity.

Blazer interviews U.S. Ambassador to Australia
Senior William Dreher interviewed Tom Schieffer, U.S. Ambassador to Australia, via video conference on Oct. 19 as part of Talkback Classroom, an Australian program expanded through the Smithsonian Institution and the National Museum of Australia in Canberra.
Dreher, along with two other area students and three students from Australia, questioned Schieffer on the war in Iraq, his relationship with President Bush, the alliance between Australia and the U.S. and a possible free trade agreement between the two countries.

GUIDANCE CORNER
As college application deadlines draw nearer, Resource Counselor Karen Hunt encourages all students to seek advice in the counseling center and to visit the new counselor website at http://www.mhhs.edu/resource/counseling. Seniors requesting transcripts should refer to the table of dates on page 38 of their student handbooks. Please remember that transcripts take 20 work-days to process. Some important approaching dates include:
- Nov. 11—Report cards distributed
- Nov. 12—Rumors, Blair’s fall play, run
- Nov. 13—Teen Health, Science and Technology Conference
- Nov. 18—Registration deadline for Dec. 11 ACT
- Nov. 25-26—Thanksgiving break
- Dec. 4—SAT I and II administered
- Dec. 11—ACT administered

HONORS
- Senior Katherine Zhang was one of six Maryland Siemens Westinghouse Math, Science and Technology Semifinalists. Finalists will be announced in Washington, D.C., between Dec. 5-6.
- Seniors Greg Jukes (vibes), David Crawford (trumpet) and Gabriel Osborne (trombone) were accepted into the Montgomery County Senior Jazz Band.
- Juniors Greg Donaldson, Josh Gist and Damian Morden-Snipee made the semifinals at the Liquid Arts Expo, a breakdancing competition, on Oct. 22.
- Seniors Jeffrey Dunn, Michael Forbes and Eric Ma won $240 for placing second in the high school division of the Loyola College Programming Contest in Baltimore on Oct. 16.
- Silver Chips swept the Children’s National Medical Center’s 17th Annual Student Journalists Health Writing Contest. Former Print Editor Chief Esha Anand and former Entertainment Editor Abigail Graber of the class of 2004 won first and second places, respectively. Senior Ariane Herman came in third place.

HANDBALL
On Nov. 2, millions of Americans went to the polls to vote in what was one of the closest and most emotionally-charged presidential races in history. The next day at 2:00 p.m., senator John Kerry conceded to President George W. Bush, who won the popular vote by three percent. Many Blazer’s have spent the past several months campaigning and endorsing both candidates—after their overwhelming commitment, some were ecstatic about the outcome, while others were distressed.

"Well, the American people have made their decision. They have done so in a democratic fashion...I would like to see what George W. Bush can do in his second term. I don’t think he’s done as much as I would have liked him to." —Sophomore Alexander Hyde

"I was really disappointed... I watched the speech during yearbook [class], and it was obvious how upset he was. Everyone in the class was watching and yelling about Bush and cheering for Kerry." —Junior Ameliey Major

"I am very relieved that the President was reelected... I feel that if Bush wasn’t elected, it would send a bad message to other countries— to the countries that have lost faith in the U.S. and to terrorism in general. We would be sending the message that we are not supporting the President during wartime. If the people were to turn on the President, it would validate doubts about the U.S. and, in some ways, even validate terrorism." —Teacher John MacDonald

"[Bush] knows more about [the war in Iraq] than Kerry does at this point in time... Kerry would have gone into the White House without much knowledge of everything that’s going on and could have made many mistakes that Bush has already worked out." —Senior Bill McManigle

"We made our decision, and we will live with it." —Teacher Kevin Shindel

"It sucks." —Senior Will Sprecher

Quotes compiled by Varun Gulati and Erik Li
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Next to Chevy Chase Bank
SpongeBob Obsession Pants

Kids’ show helps Blazers hold on to childhood

By Ravi Umarji

Adding along the sandy sea floor, SpongeBob’s eyes roll uncontrollably, his face plastered with a toothy grin. Giggle, he asks his friend Patrick, a starfish, “What do you want to do today?” Patrick responds by lazily repeating the question. And then SpongeBob repeats it. And then Patrick asks it again, and then SpongeBob repeats it again... Believe it or not, this is exactly the type of dialogue that draws students at Blair to the Nickelodeon cartoon SpongeBob SquarePants: According to an informal Silver Chips poll of 100 students on Oct. 48 percent say that they routinely watch SpongeBob, which premiered in 1999. SpongeBob provides a unique balance between childishly jokes and adult humor that allows Blazers to watch a cartoon that amuses them on an adult level.

Reaching back in time

SpongeBob—yes, SpongeBob, the show about a sponge who lives in a pineapple under the sea—actually helps teenagers retain their youth. “I think I’m definitely holding on to my childhood,” says junior Lisa Dupree, who watches SpongeBob. “When you’re a kid, you’re so naïve, and everything’s fun. When you’re older, everything’s sort of sad.” Professor Sandra Calvert, a psychologist at Georgetown University who specializes in the effects of television on children, says that this infatuation results when kids try to hold on to their past. “There’s this hurry-up clause that hurries people through life,” she says. “Everybody’s trying to grow up really fast. If SpongeBob lets them linger, let them linger.” SpongeBob accomplishes this difficult task by fusing fart jokes with fond childhood memories. “It’s just so pointless, because you feel like a little kid again,” says junior Emily Hutchison. Example: the episode in which SpongeBob and Patrick make Valentines out of rocks. “It’s like in elementary school, where you made cards for each other,” Hutchison remarks.

SpongeBob is also simpler to comprehend than a more “adult” show like The Simpsons because The Simpsons has more complex characters. “I mean, take Homer,” says English Resource Teacher Vickie Adamson, whose office is littered with everything from SpongeBob tissues and pencils to a talking SpongeBob alarm clock and a SpongeBob pinata. “[Homer’s] a total loser, but he still loves his kids. Is he a good father? It’s hard to tell. SpongeBob is much more straightforward—SpongeBob is ever the optimist, Patrick is just stupid and Plankton is perpetually evil. It’s nice for you guys to be able to get back to that simplicity.”

The next level

While SpongeBob’s G-rated jokes and fantasy-like portrayal of the world appeal to many loyal fans, the show also speaks to viewers by using more mature material and even some risqué references. Sophomore Phillip Brown sheepishly recalls an episode in which SpongeBob, Patrick and Squidward (the evil castaway at the Krusty Krab, the restaurant where SpongeBob works) are traveling on a ghost ship when Squidward pulls out a jock strap. “I mean, kids won’t know where that goes,” Brown says.

The show also parodies more serious issues that affect teenagers. In one episode, SpongeBob buys fake blow-up arms so he can win a body-building competition. But, says junior Jessica Harris, these fake biceps do not help him be the strongest sea-creature in the entire ocean; instead, they fall off. Harris maintains that this mirrors body-image problems that are frequent among adolescents—even if it is a sponge who’s concerned about his puny arms.

Other, more trivial teenage problems also surface in SpongeBob. In one scene, SpongeBob has to make that ever-so-important choice of whether or not to get something from the vending machine and risk missing his bus. “I mean, we’ve all been in that situation before,” Dupree says almost bitterly. Of course, SpongeBob gets something from a vending machine and misses the bus. “A kid will see that and just say, ‘Aw, SpongeBob missed the bus,’ but we see that situation and say, ‘Oh man, that happened to me!’” says Dupree.

If nautical nonsense be something you wish...

The show creators take advantage of and exploit this broad appeal. “They’re making T-shirts for you guys, so obviously they’re marketing to an audience other than little kids,” Calvert says matter-of-factly. Nowhere is this marketing more apparent than in Harris’s car, which she has dubbed “The Spongemobile.” In what amounts to a Jump My Ride transformation—only SpongeBob-style and cheaper—Harris outfitted a $1,000 1994 Oldsmobile Prince with $50 of SpongeBob-themed merchandise, including SpongeBob seat covers, a SpongeBob steering-wheel cover, SpongeBob floor mats and, of all things, SpongeBob air fresheners. Even Harris, however, tempers her enthusiasm sometimes. “I took out all the SpongeBob stuff when I went to prom last year. I mean, who wants to go to prom in a Spongebob?” she asks.

The one aspect of the SpongeBob craze that even Harris’s car can’t compete with is the specific episode or moment that seemingly every fan can recite at will. Adamson offers her own: “He was at driving school, and his teacher caught him cheating, and he just said ‘No! Cheating is bad’ over and over again, she says. “It’s just so funny!” Brown just likes SpongeBob for SpongeBob. “He just acts like this little boy on Christmas,” he says. “It’s funny to see how old he really is and how childish he acts.” And, to top it off, SpongeBob stays fresh. “Like his laugh—it’s kind of weird how it happens—you don’t get tired of it. His jokes never get old.” And, thanks to him, neither do we.

Catch SpongeBob...

On Nickelodeon:
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On the big screen: The SpongeBob SquarePants Movie on Nov. 19
Rewriting race for college applications

By John Viscolsky

Where only first names appear, names have been changed to protect the identities of the sources.

Cathy Stein, a counselor in the Blair Career Center, thinks it would be easy. All it would take is filling in one tiny box on one very long college application—an almost unnoticeable lie that’s essentially impossible to disprove, and one that can significantly increase a student’s chances of being accepted into college.

With no way for colleges to verify its existence, the stress matches the ethnicity recorded on applications and standardized tests, it is relatively easy for students to lie and claim to be of another race, according to Michael Faillace, an employment lawyer in New York City and former assistant director for Action Employment Counseling for International Business Machines Corporation.

There is a lack of affirmative action system that tries to remedy discrimination by giving preferential admission to students from ethnic groups that have traditionally been oppressed.

Although colleges that accept federal financial assistance must adopt affirmative action programs in their admissions policies, many of these same schools do not always adequately verify the race of applicants, according to Faillace.

For Blazer’s Pete—a white student who has lied about his race on standardized tests multiple times since the ninth grade—writing down a false race not only is easy but also will not entail any negative consequences.

A picture tells a thousand race

In an informal Silver Chips survey of 100 white students on Oct. 28, 73 percent said that they would lie about their ethnicity on college applications in order to have no way for colleges to refuse their claims.

While Brown University requires a photographic proof of a student’s race, most colleges neglect to so carefully verify an applicant’s ethnicity, according to http://collegeconfidential.com.

Although there is very little to stop students from lying about their race on college applications, applicants who do so are taking a very large risk in Faillace’s eyes. “If you take the chance of lying and get caught, you will be in trouble,” says Faillace.”

“Every school always check your race? I don’t know. But, if you do something and do not find out, you are done for.”

While many colleges and universities typically withdraw student’s admissions and pocket their application fees as punishment for lying on applications, there is no official college process for reviewing and verifying a student’s race, according to http://collegeconfidential.com.

With college admissions growing increasingly competitive, many students may lie about their ethnicity because they think it will boost their chances of being accepted, according to Blair guidance counselor Melba Battle.

While some students won’t go so far as to falsify their ethnicity, they will emphasize a part of their actual heritage specifically. “I’ve had kids ask me, ‘What should I write down under race, A or B?’” says Stein. “They want to know which answer will give them a better chance of getting into college.”

Most schools require students to be at least one-half of a certain race before they can officially claim to be of that ethnicity, according to http://www.usned.com.

Therefore, half-white students who highlight the non-white half of their ethnicity on college applications are not taking advantage of affirmative action programs in their universities.

The colleges’ desire to avoid the explicit acknowledgment of affirmative action programs is likely due to the polarizing nature of the topic.

Although junior Clare Marshall—who is half-white and half-Algerian—believes in the purpose behind affirmative action, she doesn’t agree with the way it is implemented by college admissions programs. “I agree with affirmative action to a certain extent because it helps people who normally wouldn’t get into college,” says Marshall. “But the way it’s handled is horrible. College want that they need X number of blacks and X number of Hispanics, but just because they want to appear culturally diverse. It’s not about equality.”

Junior Alec Gair, who has a black mother and a white father, is not comfortable with affirmative action in college applications on standardized tests, but still doesn’t have a mind using it to her advantage. “I don’t agree with affirmative action, but if I can benefit from it, I will,” admits Gair.

Struggling on the long road to recovery

After being struck by a car, Blair athlete tries to get back on track

By Renee Park

“My brain can’t figure out what to do,” says junior James Gillette as he slowly smoothes a blue blanket over his injured leg.

“My head feels funny, and I can’t really concentrate.”

He sort of shrugs down, his mother adds. He stands there and can’t function right.” Gillette nods in agreement and looks around the living room where the lights have been dimmed for his eyes, and even his little brother and dog seem to sense his need for quiet.

“His noise really gets me,” he says. Gillette suffers from a “sensor-integrative problem,” which bright lights and loud noises confuse him.

Gillette was one of three Blair students injured in an accident on Nov. 10. Five students were injured in the accident, including a student who was taken to the hospital.

Now, two weeks later, Gillette grin sheepishly when reminded of the accident because head injuries and shock trauma have caused him to forget the incident.

“I only know what other people have told me,” Gillette says.

Gillette, who is co-captain of the varsity wrestling team, suffered a broken right femur and a severe concussion that have prevented him from returning to school. His doctors hope he will be able to return by Thanksgiving, but Gillette might not have full reading and concentration skills for nearly six months.

“Gillette might not play contact sports ever again,” says senior Demma.

Demma was on his way home from Blair when he witnessed the accident. He shared in horror as Gillette “popped up seven feet in the air” and landed screaming as his head hit the asphalt, dealing a severe concussion.

“Demma was watching from about 30 yards away as the accident occurred. When I first saw it, I thought he’d be dead,” Demma recalls. “But when I saw him screaming, I took that as good news. [It] meant he was breathing and alive.”

Individuals involved in the accident have determined that neither Gillette nor the car’s driver was at fault. The car was taken a blind turn and was unable to see the coming wrestlers, indicating that the driver was “traveling in the wrong lane–due to a lack of visibility.”

 Facing the consequences

Gillette’s injuries have meant extreme changes and personal challenges. As of now, Gillette has a subdural hematoma—bleeding in the brain—and must be tutored at home several hours a week for four subjects until all traces of memory are cleared.

> see GILLETTE page 20
Wasted Blazers, wasted education

Many students come to classes under the influence of drugs and alcohol; most go unseen

By CLAIR BRIGGS

Lansing Freeman had a student in class whom he suspected was high. According to Freeman, she was "wildly, inappropriately giggly." When security showed up at his classroom because of a suspected theft by that student, he mentioned his suspicions, and the girl was taken away.

But students are not always caught. At the beginning of the year, Joe was drunk in class and talked for an hour or more; the teacher never said a word. Another junior was high last year when he read the wrong passage to the class. When the teacher corrected him, he repeated the same mistake. One senior, high on marijuana, had difficulty filling in the blanks on the multiple-choice section of a test last spring. During lunch last year, a boy was high on mushrooms and began to talk to a soda machine. However, all of these students managed to get through the school day without being caught.

Steve Moreno, a substance abuse counselor who works with adolescents at Suburban Hospitals, says that many teachers will not immediately suspect that a student is intoxicated unless the student shows typical symptoms like bloodshot eyes or smells of smoke or alcohol. Moreno says that symptoms are especially hard to see in students who have become increasingly tolerant to the substances they are using. "Some kids drink and smoke but still appear very normal," says Moreno. Joe believes that people don't notice when he is high and jokes with his friends about a boy who

Flaws in catching the culprits

Last year, social studies teacher Jim Reardon had a student who was suspected of being drunk. The student was very disruptive in class, talking loudly and laughing. When Reardon asked the student if he was drunk, the student denied it. Reardon then asked the student if he had anything to drink, and the student admitted that he had.

The challenge for teachers and school officials is to find a way to better identify students who are under the influence of drugs and alcohol. One solution might be to implement stricter drug-testing policies, but this can be difficult to implement in a way that does not infringe on students' privacy. Another solution might be to provide more resources for substance abuse counseling and prevention programs, but this requires a significant investment of time and money.

"Some kids think it's just one big joke.

"They'll race until they hit something. They'll race until they can't race."

According to an Oct. 8 Gazette article, 31 percent of fatal car accidents in Maryland were speed-related, and the National Hot Rod Association estimates that one in 20 illegal street racers experience severe injury or even death. Guenthard, whose organization supports teen drivers wishing to race their cars legally at government-sanctioned tracks, admits to drag racing as a youth. However, he decided to become involved in the movement against illegal street racing after witnessing a horrific accident. "When I was younger, I used to indulge," he says, "but then I saw a guy get hit between two cars," he says, his voice quivering. Despite the obvious risks involved with drag racing, Guenthard acknowledges that it takes a concrete physical experience to deter teens from doing it. "They'll [race] until they hit something. They'll race until they can't race," he says.

Willing to take the risk

While admitting that most drag racers take a cavalier attitude towards the risks of their hobby, Deng is fully aware that he could be severely injured or even die. "Something can go wrong with the car, and you never know what's going to happen," he says. "I'm not scared of dying. I know I'm going to die sooner or later; might as well live it up."

"I'm not scared of dying. I know I'm going to die sooner or later; might as well live it up."

Despite the potential legal repercussions, drag racing remains attractive to some Blazers.

"They'll race until they hit something. They'll race until they can't race."

Racing's harsh realities

Dangers aside, drag racers also face several legal repercussions. Maryland penalizes points on a driver’s license and fines drivers $257 for speeding 30 miles or more over the posted speed limit, which is the charge often levied upon racers because cases of racing are not always separately documented. However, fear of police should be the smallest of a teen drag racer’s worries, according to Montgomery County Police Department Information Officer Julia Gilroy. "I don't know that the thrill is, it's not worth it," she says. "Obviously if you die, you won't be there to mourn the loss, but if you're paralyzed, that's something you have to live with for the rest of your life."
WHAT TO DO ON A FRIDAY NIGHT

BREAK IT DOWN ON THE UNDERAGE DANCE FLOOR

By Cassandra Zhang

As speakers blare out lyrics to Radiohead’s “High And Dry” and a few hundred high schoolers dance to the beat, one student, Bethany Tanenbaum, 17,苏州 and her friends, at the annual teen dance at Pomperaug Regional High School in Southbury.

The dance is this Saturday night, and the theme is “Underage Dance Floor.” The dance is for high school students and their guests, and tickets will be sold at the door for $50. The dance will feature a DJ, a photo booth, and a raffle for a variety of prizes.

The event is organized by the student council, and all proceeds will go to the school’s student government.

Divide into Dumpsters

By Kait Beary

Senior Whitney Blair visits the main campus of her high school, Staples High School, where she is a senior. She is wearing a black dress with short sleeves, and her hair is tied back in a ponytail.

She walks into the school and goes to the Title IX office to pick up her schedule. She then heads to her first class, which is English.

After class, she goes to the library to study for her next class, which is history. She spends the rest of her day attending classes and participating in extracurricular activities.

At night, she goes to her dorm at a nearby college and studies for her exams. She goes to bed around midnight and wakes up at 7 a.m. to get ready for her next day at school.

The next day, she has another full day of classes, extracurricular activities, and studying. She spends her evenings socializing with friends and attending parties.

Over the weekend, she takes a break from school and spends time with family and friends. She also takes care of her dog, a golden retriever, who is her best friend.

Throughout the school year, she maintains a high GPA and is involved in many extracurricular activities. She is a member of the track team and a volunteer for a local animal shelter.

In addition, she is an active member of the student government and helps organize community events.

She plans to attend a top university and major in psychology, with the goal of becoming a counselor or therapist. She is passionate about helping others and making a positive impact in the world.
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To the beat of their own drums

By Camille Mackler

Distant drum beats and trumpet blares can be heard on the football field amidst the yells of practicing sports teams. It is 3:30 p.m. on Oct. 14 and the marching band is slowly congregating on the freshly painted football field—drums, instruments in hand, smiles on their faces and ready to play. The marching band has been a large part of Old Blair’s history, but when the school moved to its current location in 1999, the marching band became a lost tradition. It wasn’t until 2001 that former band director Kurt Lucas decided to resurrect the marching band.

Now, after its comeback, the marching band is bringing more entertainment, pep and enthusiasm to football games with coordinated drills and lively songs. Despite the marching band’s unique role in school spirit, it often goes unnoticed by students and spectators, their “dorky” reputation precede them. But behind the ancient uniforms and shiny instruments, there is more than just a collection of stereotypical band geeks—rather, it’s a tight-knit group of musicians who only want to be heard and have fun.

To the ready

“Can you hear me now?” senior and drum major Gaston Jeany yells into a megaphone. The group of restless students before him answer with a resounding “yes” as they put their instruments down and prepare for a round of stretching before the game.

“I want to run laps so badly,” says Jeany with a slight pause as the group groans in disapproval. “But I don’t want to be a dictator, so sit down if you don’t want to run laps.” Only eight of the 43 members are left standing. A skeptical Jeany proceeds to ask the remaining people why.

“Because I’m bored,” yells one Blazer.

“Ain’t afraid!” says another.

Jeany thinks it over, then bounces his shoulders, laughs and moves on—there will be no running laps today.

As drum major, Jeany serves as director of the group, setting up an example for members and guiding them through drills. According to senior and lead percussionist Greg Jukes, Jeany’s role is to provide the team with energy and leadership. “[Jeany] is more of a spiritual leader. He commands our respect,” says Jukes.

“A marching band kind of guy”

As the familiar notes of the anthem float over the empty football stadium, band director Dustin Doyle sits in the back of the bleachers watching and listening intently. Unlike aצמח in hand, Doyle maintains constant communication with Jeany throughout the practice, giving him advice, feedback and direction.

Although in only his second year as assistant director of marching band, Doyle has managed to transform marching band from a laid-back extracurricular activity into a demanding commitment. Having been a member of both his high school and college marching bands, Doyle brings enthusiasm to the group and provides structure and purpose. “He’s just a marching band kind of guy,” says Jukes.

The team now practices twice a week from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. and must attend all home varsity football games—an immense commitment for an activity that used to only meet once a week for a couple of hours. “It’s been an uphill battle trying to convince them that they need to be at practice,” says Doyle. The extra practice, Doyle insists, will pay off in the future. “We’re only touching the tip of what this band can do.”

Drum roll, please

By a quarter to six, the band is clad in their tattered red and white uniforms that were, no doubt, purchased several years ago.

“You’ll have to make fun of us!” Jeany asks as the team makes their final preparations before the game begins. The band answers with a quiet “yeah,” pushing Jeany to ask his question once again. This time they give a booming answer, and Jeany is satisfied.

Traditionally before each game, the band marches onto the field—these days, a percussion cadence, a recurring rhythm, around the entire school, down University Boulevard and into the stadium. But before the walk begins, Doyle offers some important advice to the band.

“The drum line is going to get us through the day, even if they’re wrong,” he says. “Drum line, it’s your job to get it right!”

The drum line nods in agreement, feeling the pressure on their shoulders as they wait for the signal to begin. Jukes describes the drum line’s tight-knit relationship:

“This was just like, I’m going to hang with my kids. I take care of them, and I teach them,” he explains.

Above: Senior Cary Retterer, junior Nicholas Billhimer and senior Greg Jukes drum with the marching band on Oct. 29. Left: Senior Gaston Jeany directs the band. Photos by Hannah Rosen

Stabbing victim attempts to make a turnaround

By Julissa Lopez

He sees the scar when he undresses at night and glances at it while he gets ready for school in the morning. Sliding lasciviously from his heart and carving thickly across his upper chest, the scar is a constant reminder of the knife that sliced into him on May 31, 2001. He remembers the deep redness of the blood from the penetrating wound. He remembers sliding into a dark daze, ambulance sirens wailing in what seemed like a shadowy distance. The wound almost cost him his life during his freshman year, when he was stabbed by a former Blazer near Four Corners.

Now, after overcoming the near-death experience, senior Eiber Gonzalez returns to Blair determined to graduate and resolve the mistakes that he made as a freshman. No longer the same careless 15-year-old he was before, Gonzalez has elicited the admiration of teachers and faculty members for his determination to make an academic turnaround.

“Young and dumb”

Two years ago, Gonzalez snuck out of school through the back hallways, walked into class long after the late bell and sat indifferently in his administrator’s office when called there. His apathetic attitude towards his education resulted in constant calls home and in-school suspensions. “I’d walk out, I’d skip class and my behavior towards teachers was bad. When they’d get written up all the time,” Gonzalez says. “School just wasn’t important to me.”

“I was just young and dumb. And it kept going like that, with me not caring. I just kept causing problems.”

In May of 2002, Gonzalez’s “causing problems” took a turn for the worse. Leaving school grounds during 5B lunch, he and some friends headed to Four Corners to meet another group of boys with whom Gonzalez had been having problems. Soon after, Gonzalez and a former Blazer began to fight. Gonzalez claims his behavior grew worse as his freshman year progressed. “He just didn’t behave in school,” she says. “It’s not that he was a bad kid; he just kept acting up.”

Gonzalez can’t understand the cause of his own misconduct. “It was just like, I’m not real, didn’t care,” he says shaking his head.

“It’s not that he was a bad kid; he just kept acting up.”

By 7:00 p.m., the bleachers are cold, Blair’s football team is down by 18 points and the crowd is rapidly losing their pep. But the end of the movie as the marching band marches onto the playing field. The cheerleaders rally the crowd with Blair’s fight song. By the end of the number, they have the crowd cheering, “Go, Blazers, Fight!” in unison.

Despite their relatively small size and laid-back demeanor, the marching band has proven to be a hit with students and faculty alike. “It’s been an uphill battle trying to convince them that they need to be at practice,” says Doyle. The extra practice, Doyle insists, will pay off in the future. “We’re only touching the tip of what this band can do.”

>> see BAND page 28

Senior Gabriel Osborne, a trombone-playing member for the past four years, offers hisbiased take on the marching band family. “The trombones are the oldest brothers; they’re better than everyone else. The trumpets are the annoying brother that always tries to compete with you. The drum line is the crazy cousin you try to ignore but like to hang out with. And the others are just there,” he says jokingly.

“We are the Blazers”

“Go, Blazers, Fight!”

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“We are the Blazers”

“Go, Blazers, Fight!”

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Echoes of a preseason car accident

Athlete struggles after serious injuries

By REENIE PARK

Junior James Gillette’s accident during a preseason wrestling run in early October (see “Struggling,” page 14) has brought the vagueness of MCPS athletic policies to light.

Gillette was injured while crossing Colesville Road when a car took a blind turn and hit him, fracturing his femur and inducing a severe concussion.

Due to the seriousness of the incident, school administration has emphasized that while athletic teams are permitted to train off school grounds, it is recommended that they remain on the campus.

The accident occurred during a “captain’s practice,” which Blair officials and a state official considered to be within state rules. However, MCPS Coordinator of Athletics William Beattie said that it was “blatantly illegal” to have a preseason captain’s practice. According to the Maryland Public Secondary Schools Athletic Association (MPSAA) Handbook, practices are confined to the “seasonal limitations” dependent on each sport.

However, nowhere does the MPSAA strictly outline what constitutes a practice and which exceptions are allowed. Beattie said a practice is defined by several factors, including whether it is an organized session, how many students attend, how often they attend and who calls the session. In a practice, the members must “come with a predetermined agenda with the expectation to meet.” Many of these factors can be evaluated subjectively.

Due to the circumstances that vary from team to team and the ambiguities defining out-of-season practices, most teams fall into a blurry zone left open to interpretation.

Gillette and senior Andrew Wallis, the co-captains of the wrestling team, both acknowledged that they didn’t know the policy concerning preseason practices. Calling their preseason sessions “captain’s practices,” they ran miles and did crunches and sit-ups.

Contrary to Beattie, Blair Athletic Director Dale Miller categorized Gillette’s practice as a conditioning session that adhered to state guidelines. “Most teams do [condition] to get in shape by themselves,” Miller explained. “It was a volunteer type of situation where you were not obligated to come.”

Maryland State Department of Education’s Director of Athletics Ned Sparks agreed, saying the practice seemed permissible but adding that Beattie may have been correct, as the practice fell in a “gray area” that would require further investigation for a definitive answer. “They were conditioning,” Sparks explained. “That’s a laudable thing that coaches encourage.”

Beattie, Miller and Sparks all kept up-to-date state athletic policies and are considered equally good sources for information on state mandates. But the disparity between the two sides highlights how “gray” this issue can be.

By state standards, many Blair teams, not only wrestling, are in this gray area. Senior Julia Simon-Mishel, a member of the girls’ softball team, called the state rules “ineffective” because coaches around the county have found ways to “push boundaries and walk a fine line.”

In fact, most Blair athletes said they were unaware that many types of preseason practices are not permitted; they believed preseason practices were only forbidden if a coach was present—a fairly clear-cut rule for coaches and athletes.

According to Blair girls’ varsity softball coach Lewis Hoelman, many MCPS teams sign up in recreational community teams during the off-season to improve their skills and stay in shape. This gives school athletes the opportunity to play almost year-round, which is permitted by the state. However, school coaches are not allowed to coach teams that have more than 80 percent of their school team members, said Sparks.

More irregularities occur in this rule because it states that “a coach may not coach a team representing the coach’s school beyond a sports season.” The 80-percent limit is not clearly written in the statute, although it is a set rule passed down to all state officials. This and other unknown details cause coaches like Hoelman to believe it is 70 percent, or even 60, or no other number.

Hoelman cited the Gaithersburg High School girls’ varsity softball team, which consists of over 20 players from seven schools, as an example of a team that remains within limits but still has a large number of school players. Blair girls’ softball actually has players from five schools on its summer league team, which did not allow Hoelman to coach, although he remained in touch with the parents in charge.

However, Hoelman noted other coaches discreetly break the rules. He named some MCPS coaches who are not allowed to coach their players in club teams because they do not meet the 80-percent rule but tend games, sit behind the bench and give the club coach directions or yell them out themselves.

While the state rules concerning off-season practices were instated to protect players from obsessive coaches and give each team a fair start, coaches say they disagree with the rule because it is ineffective in accomplishing its goal but effective enough to hurt some players.

“I don’t think coaches who are willing to put in the time should be penalized,” explained Hoelman. He pointed out that some good athletes opt to attend private schools in high school because the schools do not restrict how long or how many whose athletes play, and

Hoelman wants the rule dissolved to protect players from being unprepared physically for competitive seasons. “Everyone who has been conditioning will be stronger. Is it safe for a kid who’s playing not to condition preseason?” asked Hoelman. “It’s not even safe for [my team] to be out there if they haven’t picked up a ball until March 1.”

Senior Andrew Wallis, Gillette’s wrestling co-captain says the wrestling team has already taken measures to prevent future accidents like Gillette’s and will no longer run off school grounds.

For Gillette, the worst news came when doctors advised him never to play contact sports again. If he sustains another head injury, it could permanent brain damage.

Not only has Gillette enjoyed wrestling, his favorite sport, since middle school, but he is also a brown belt in karate with seven years of experience. Now, although he can carefully continue cheerleading and karate, Gillette’s future in wrestling is questionable.

His neurosurgeon said Gillette may be able to wrestle again his senior year in high school “if everything has come back 100 percent,” says Gillette’s mother. Gillette will wait to have his progress re-evaluated next year.

Although, Gillette says the situation still “stinks,” he is philosophically about the impact the accident will have on his activities. “I am frustrated—I didn’t ask for a car to hit me,” she says Gillette. “But you’ve got to roll with the punches as they say. It’s unfortunate, but it’s not going to hold me back.”

However, Gillette, who is 16, is now holding back on getting his driver’s license. “I’m a little nervous crossing the street now. I’m a little nervous driving,” says Gillette. Even after his leg heals and he can sit behind the driver’s wheel again, Gillette will have three-to-one-two-inch scars on his thigh to forever remind him that lives are at stake on the road.

Contacted Sports After Serious Injury: Gillette.
The Blair melting pot: more than a blend of colors

By Monica Huong

The constant beat of a drum pounds amidst the rich melodies of multiple instruments. The vibrant blue and purple Indian tunics shimmer, and beams of light reflect off small mirrors embroidered on the fabric. For as long as the Cambodian Club, dance class, and drums continue, they will connect with their Indian heritage. But for others like junior Rachel Martin, who is white and Hispanic, and senior Amanda Williams, who is white and African American, there is an opportunity to learn about different cultures from their own.

Some Cambodian students join ethnic clubs primarily for social reasons, only to find that they are inspired by different cultures. Martin was introduced to the Indian Club through two friends. "We're planning dance performances, and we're trying to raise awareness of Indian culture," she says, adding that diversity has allowed her to learn about different ethnicities and meet new people.

Although senior Camila Silva initially intended to attend Cambodian Club meetings to be with her friends, her curiosity grew so quickly that she now leads the club. Silva, Spanish in heritage, explained that her background hasn't interfered with her participation. "I like learning about Cambodian culture," she says. Silva is now learning how to speak their language and play different Cambodian instruments. Just as Silva is learning the Cambodian language, Blair's English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) students must learn English when they come to the U.S. from foreign countries. The school's diverse student population mirrors the world's situation as more immigrants come to Blair during times of international crisis, says ESOL Resource Teacher Joseph Bellino. "When Bellino came to Blair in 1974, there were only 35 ESOL students, and Blair was mostly white and African American."


Senior Thomas Allen poses during SA lunch on Oct. 29 with the Che Guevara pin on his backpack. Photo by Nathaniel Lichterman.
The multiple faces of Blair's diversity

The Washingtonian's most diverse high school offers students more than racial variety.

Blair’s cultural amalgamation exposes students to different walks of life. In addition to its explosion of cultures, Blair has students from all different financial situations. Blair is extremely diverse socially, economically, giving students a more accurate perception of the human race: “We reflect the world internationally much better than a school that is predominantly white, Christian and middle class,” says Diversity Workshop sponsor Joanne Malone. “If we’re ever going to get a real picture of it, it is necessary to understand poverty, religion, et cetera, other than our own.”

About 22 percent of Blair students are from low-income families, according to Blair’s Cooperative Work Experience (CWE) and the CWE with On-the-Job Training classes in which students can be released early for work. This program has allowed senior Alycia Stover to save Blair, gain a part-time job and work and save money for college. She works for both Target and the City of Takoma Park as a program aide. “I’m using the money to help save up for college,” says Stover. Diversity Workshop leader senior Lisa Howe describes the benefits of attending a school that is so varied in every aspect. “We have so many different perspectives, different ways of life,” she says. “We can learn so much and educate each other. For some people, Blair’s diversity can change their life around.”

Indian Club president junior Ramona Singh performs a nativity dance at a club meeting on Nov. 4. Like all Blair clubs, the Indian Club welcomes students of all ethnicities. Photo by Charlie Woo

More than the turkey

By Lucy Forney

Thanksgiving is as much about food as it is about giving thanks. A typical family dinner unfolds with a steaming, stuffed turkey; smooth, fluffy mashed potatoes; thick, creamy gravy; juicy cranberry sauce; and an orange pumpkin pie topped with whipped cream. But at some Blairers’ tables, there may also be a platter of Ethiopian flatbread called injera, a Chinese honey turkey or a bowl of crispy enchiladas.

At my house, the cranberry sauce, pumpkin pie and the rest of the traditional Thanksgiving foods have a place on the Thanksgiving dinner table dating back to the pilgrims and Indians on the first Thanksgiving. But while many of the foods have established a traditional Thanksgiving meal, the ritual has broadened to include the many cultures present in America.

Instead of having turkey, senior Yendi Bollon says he has fried chicken with spices, fried plantains and African fulu, a ground corn starch that is eaten with different vegetables.

For junior Rosa Cruz, the Thanksgiving turkey is accompanied by tortillas, the usual side dish in her Mexican culture. The other American dishes that Cruz’s family eats on Thanksgiving are doused with a spicy sauce that consists of tomatoes, hot peppers and other spices. “We basically put our own twist on things in the meal,“ she says.

Besides the turkey, sophomore Margaret Khan also has cultural foods from her native country of Bangladesh. “We have curry and biryani, which is rice with meat that my mom makes with special spices,” Khan says.

For junior Tinny Lee, there is no bird on her Thanksgiving dinner table, only Chinese vegetables, beef, pork and rice—foods that her family usually eats. Nevertheless, her family recognizes the holiday as a time for coming together, giving thanks and “respecting American history,” Lee says.

Junior Vicky Sandoval’s family musical festivities are also specific to the annual holiday. Throughout the day of preparation and celebration, her family plays traditional Mexican music called Mariachi. “It is really hyped-up, fast music to get us in the mood for the holiday,” she says of Mariachi, which incorporates trumpets, maracas and some salsa.

Music and dance play a big role in Fon’s Cameroonian culture. On Thanksgiving Day, Fon listens to African music called mappuko and lumber, which are sung in French and accompanied by drums and keyboards. “You shake your body to the rhythm. It’s complicated,” Fon says. The dance party accompanies his hearty meal of holiday foods.

Regardless of the type of turkey (or lack thereof) or the annual rituals for celebration, different cultures all converge to pay tribute and reflect “on the blessings of our lives,” senior Andrew Beach says.

For junior Avilla Flores, these blessings deserve more than a once-a-year tribute. “[My family] is very grateful because they have gotten a lot out of the country,” she says. “It really is a reminder to be thankful every day.”

Scouting’s a hard hike

By Sally Lanier

A silence settles over the 30-some people gathered in the Takoma Park City Council chamber as seven high-school boys in traditional tan scout uniforms march rhythmically down the center aisle, proudly carrying the American flag and their troop’s bright ribbons. The boys line up, straight and tall, along the front of the room, their uniforms decorated with hard-won patches and red scout kerchiefs. They and those around them solemnly stand and begin to recite the Boy Scout Oath and Law: “On my honor, I will do my best.

Takoma Park’s Boy Scout Troop 33, numerous city citizens, the city’s Mayor and its Mayoral House of Delegates representative Peter Franchot came together on Oct. 16 to recognize junior Dan Munson of the highest rank in boy scouting. He proudly wears the pin and kerchief of an Eagle Scout on his uniform.

Munson is part of a rare breed: Among high-school students only about 244,700 boys and 190,000 girls participate in Boy or Girl Scouts nationwide, according to research conducted by the Boy and Girl Scout leadership. Out of those 244,700 high-school Boy Scouts, only one to two percent ever achieve Munson’s rank of Eagle.

Although there are serious aspects to scouting in high school, the program isn’t just about the pomp and circumstance shown in Munson’s ceremony. Adventure, discovery and leadership are also central parts of the high-school scouting experience. Even with these benefits, many Blazers never join scouts or dropout when they reach high school and miss out on all the fun.

More than just the cookies

Silver Spring’s Boy Scout Troop 239 gathers at Marvin Memorial Church across from Blair every other Tuesday night to work on merit badges, plan future trips and, at the end of every meeting, engage in a ritual dodgeball game. On Aug. 19, a swarm of young energetic boys fills the room, fidgeting as they try to keep silent and listen to their Scout Master. It’s hard to pick out the three high-school boys hanging out near the back wall, hidden as they are behind the throng of smaller scouts.

Although the “boys’ presence sometimes frustrates the troop’s high-school members, senior Andrew Curtis Senior Dan Munson earns his Eagle Scout photo courtesy of Daniel Munson

Junior Dan Munson earns his Eagle Scout photo courtesy of Daniel Munson finds helping younger scouts to be a rewarding experience. “It makes me feel really good that I can have an influence on their lives,” he explains.
PMS and the attack of the killer date

Menstrual cycle transforms sweet senior into boyfrind-attacking, modern-day Godzilla

By Olivia Bevacqua

Humor

I can feel the changes come over me as the night begins. My nails are transforming into pointed claws, and my teeth are growing into vicious fangs. The beast within has begun to rear its ugly head. That time of the month has come once again.

Every month, billions of women around the world turn into flesh-eating monsters because of Frey’s Hormonal Syndrome (PMS), a ghastly disease that gives ladies an appetite for chocolate, soda and fast food. In an earlier age—many centuries ago—when children and women crouched in terror each change of the month, none could escape our manly wrath.

During this time of trial, there is only one person I simply try to avoid: my boyfriend. The slightest misstep on his part could send me charging for his head like a rabid rhinoceros. When you add my PMS superabilities to main and destroy, try to be nice to him. He has a fragile emotional state, and a single wrong move could mean the end of our relationship.

The F-word

As the evening wears on, my boyfriend’s future looks grim. I’m helpless against the sheer power of PMS; it’s like watching a tsunami rolling in from sea and devouring his village. My boyfriend is an especially vulnerable village—after all, the dummy stuff he keeps saying only gets worse.

“Closet” scouts

According to Blazer scouts, the absence of scouting in American pop culture and the negative stereotype of scouts as goofy-two-shoes overshadow the opportunities the program offers, leading to a decline in high-school troop membership.

Vann Pearall, District Director for the Boy Scouts’ National Capital Area Council, noted that high-school students are more likely to choose sports over scouting because of the popularity of professional sports. “Let’s face it—successful basketball and baseball players are always on TV earning money, but you never see an Eagle Scout selling magazines,” he says.

The lack of support for scouting in Arizona contributes to the stigma attached to being a high-school scout.

There are lots of ‘closet’ girl scouts because they’re afraid of what their friends will say,” explains Amy Howard, Girl Scout Area Manager for Washington, D.C., and Maryland.

Freshman Russell King, a member of Troop 33, is not stranger to this peer pressure. “My friends are always making fun of me and saying, ‘You run around in booties and help old ladies cross the street,’” complains King. People in general, King argues, have a stereotypical, false image of a Boy Scout. They see him as “a goofy-looking kid with a backpack and a walking stick on top of the mountain watching birds.”

Junior Vanessa Penney of Troop 231 is far from the cliché Girl Scout image. Every time Penney, decked out in dyed hair, a lip ring and a rock shirt, tells people she’s a Girl Scout, they give her “weird looks.” Penney’s reaction is simple: She holds out her Girl Scout membership card and laughs at the shock on their faces.

For Penney and others, combating the ignorance that surrounds high-school scouting remains a daily struggle. As Curtis puts it, “People aren’t willing to accept the fact that they don’t know anything about [scouting], and they aren’t willing to learn about it either.”

The author attempts to attack her boyfriend, senior Ely Portillo, with a sledgehammer in a wild fit of PMS-induced rage in the senior courtyard on Oct. 29. Photo by Adam Schuyler

from SCOUTS page 22

Junior Brian Yu, another member of the troop, agrees with Curtis but says he enjoys camping more than the bi-weekly meetings. Once a year, Troop 249 attends the Klondike Derby, a three-day-long campout during which numerous scouting troops compete in winter sports and cold-weather survival skills. Each night, the troop lights huge fires. “I’ll never forget the expression, ‘Got any eyeglasses left?’” laughs Yu, remembering how the fire exploded last year after the scouts poured kerosene on it—multiple times.

Practical jokes are never far off when Boy Scouts are around. Every time junior Ben Thomas and his friends from Troop 2 go on ski trips, they play a rough game of jumping off the cabin roof and sliding down the snow-covered hill on their bed sheets.

Going abroad in search of adventure is another integral part of high-school scouting. Senior Sasak Aliemar traveled last summer to troika Park’s Girl Scout Troop 231 to London for eight days, where she saw Les Miserables, visited Stonehenge and dined at a 300-year-old pub.

Yet for Munson, scouting has been more than fun and games. To earn his Eagle, Munson completed 21 merit badges and designed a Eagle Project to collect 2,000 books for the charity So Others Might Eat. From his Eagle experience, Munson learned leadership skills he wouldn’t have acquired at school. “There’s a difference between being a leader in the classroom and a leader in the real world, and scouting has really taught me that,” he says.
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Fatherless students try to fill the void

Separated from their fathers, Blazers must overcome the emotional consequences

By SARA PIERCE

ice to meet you, Angela. I am your father,” the man said to his eight-year-old daughter. Angela looked at him unenlightened—she had no memory of the unfamiliar man in her living room. And now, the father she never knew was standing right in front of her.

Five years after that encounter, 13-year-old Angela Hayes began visiting her father more regularly—every holiday and maybe a few weeks each summer.

Now a senior, Hayes says that despite their attempts to reconcile, she still has a distant and unstable relationship with her father. Although Hayes sometimes feels that no one understands her emotional pain, many other children are also coping with the absence of their fathers and can empathize with her frustration. Of the 19.6 million children in America living with only one parent, 83 percent live with their mother, according to a March 2002 report by the U.S. Bureau of the Census.

This national figure is reflected at Blair. An informal poll of 100 Blazers with divorced or unmarried parents on Sept. 20 reveals that 86 percent live with their mother. For many of these students who are living without a father, dealing with emotional hardships has only made them stronger and more independent.

When junior Nolan Burke’s “dream family” began to crumble as the fighting and yelling between his mother and father escalated, his parents’ separation seemed inevitable. Four months later, when the divorce became official, Burke began a new chapter in his life, one of which his father would not be a part.

Burke explains how his father’s absence permanently damaged their “normal father-daughter relationship.” She says that because his father lives two hours away and now has a conflicting schedule, he is no longer as close with him as he was before the divorce. “I hardly even know him anymore,” she says.

“Hardly even know him anymore,” he says.

“I hardly even know him anymore,” he says.

“Hardly even know him anymore,” he says.

The date flows out of her mouth as easily as her name. July 14, 2003: The day that junior Arceley Blanso’s father was deported for illegal immigration from El Salvador; the day that upturned Blanso’s entire life.

Fifteen months ago, Blanso watched helplessly as her father was driven away in a blur of blue and red flashing lights...

Find the rest online at http://silverchips.mbhs.edu

Intoxicated students come to school unnoticed

From WASTED page 15

Recently started smoking marijuana. They call him a “rookie” because he is “still in that giggle stage,” when the effects of marijuana are the strongest.

The social studies teacher Jake Lee believes he would be able to recognize if one of his students was drunk or high. “Sometimes kids can get away with it, but when you are with kids as much as we are as teachers, you can pick up in changes in how they act,” he says.

If teachers believe a student is intoxicated or uses illegal substances, they may refer students to the Montgomery County Student Assistance Program (MSAP), a program designed to identify and help adolescents who may have problems related to alcohol, drug use or violence.

However, some teachers feel that this is not part of their job requirements, according to ninth-grade administrator Linda Wolf. “Some teachers have the attitude that they aren’t there to be social workers or policemen; they are at school to teach,” says Wolf.

But according to Mary, a senior who comes to school high on an average of once a week, students are not usually caught by teachers or referred to MSAP for acting drunk or high. They are caught, says Mary, when leaving school property to drink or smoke. Mary speaks from first-hand experience: she was suspended last year for possession of marijuana.

A risky business

Although intoxicated Blazers are getting through the school day unnoticed, if a student is found to be intoxicated or possess an illegal substance, it is a serious offense. Blair’s discipline policy states that these students will be suspended, referred to the Montgomery County police and required to enroll in a treatment program. If a student is thought to be distributing illegal substances, he or she will be recommended for expulsion. Outside of Blair, a person convicted of possession or the intent to distribute these substances can get a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison.

A track record for this offense will not be left behind after high school; either most colleges ask their applicants to admit to any disciplinary action they have received in school. Colleges will not look favorably on students with that kind of history, according to guidance counselor Lynn Wood.

But some kids, Lee believes, extreme risks involved in attending school drunk or high are part of the reasons it is so appealing. “I think some kids think it’s just too big joke,” he says.

Joe comes to school intoxicated because it is “just another opportunity” to be drunk or high and it helps his school day go by more quickly. They say they can’t control what they are doing because of the school can’t control what they are doing.

Another student says he comes to school drunk because he likes the feeling of being high; something the school can’t control.

But when kids are doing illegal substances in school, Moreno believes it’s indicative of an even bigger problem: They are in early stages of addiction. Some adolescents may use substances recreationally in a social situation where they aren’t trying to get completely drunk or stoned and someone just hands them a beer, but that isn’t the case in school,” he says.

Some kids are using the drugs to help them function with psychological issues like depression, low self-esteem, Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder or even boredom, according to Moreno.

In any case, when students come to school intoxicated or high, “Education is taking a backseat,” says English teacher Lucas Henry.

A look at the facts:

Forty-two percent of 12th-graders in Montgomery County public schools have used marijuana.

Last year, 250 Montgomery County students were suspended for drug offenses; 13 of them were expelled.

The average age when youths first drink alcohol is 11 for boys and 13 for girls.

Adolescents who begin drinking before age 15 are four times more likely to develop alcohol dependence than those who begin drinking at age 21.

The average age when youths first drink alcohol is 11 for boys and 13 for girls. Adolescents who begin drinking before age 15 are four times more likely to develop alcohol dependence than those who begin drinking at age 21.

http://www.ted.com/Alcohol.html

The average age when youths first drink alcohol is 11 for boys and 13 for girls. Adolescents who begin drinking before age 15 are four times more likely to develop alcohol dependence than those who begin drinking at age 21.
November Crossword
by Katherine Zhang

Across
1. on TV, Bert’s dad 11. Spanish word for “man” 12. a lady (Abb.) 13. a heart or characteristic 16. a fiddle, decorative, usually white material 17. time zone of the East Coast (Abb.) 19. “Devote my Cherry to the _______ but the _______ was dry.” 20. a riddle or poem, as in _______ to thy 21. Middle Eastern country: _______ Arabia 22. absolutely nothing 24. announcement system, as the Keystone State (Abb.) 25. sea north of Russia and Scandinavia 27. a man-made structure for holding water and generating electricity 28. sound bouncing back and forth 31. Milks Ways: Stickies and Skillets contain a lot of this (Abb.) 33. a brother or sister 35. a black bird 36. an ID tag for animals 37. to take away, especially by aliens 40. International Life and Food Association (Abb.) 41. title of a man between a boyfriend and a husband 42. rubber, usually pink or white, a school supply 45. a feast 47. a type of combat aircraft 48. a feeling that usually leads to tam 52. technical expert (Abb.) 53. Academy of Natural Health Sciences (Abb.) 55. what you would call the skin of a fish or dragon 56. Admiral Hawkeye (Abb.) 57. _______ Newton 59. a healthcare provider, possibly from Medicine (Abb.) 60. Image _______ of evil 61. what you learn from teachers 62. a way on the way _______ more 64. by yourself 65. November holiday

Down
1. what Agustin and Tyler’s case 2. _______ in a shrine 3. Curly, Larry and _______ 4. JFK’s dress bow 5. smartly 6. the 1 to 3 7. same to 24 across 8. student: need 60 of these hours to graduate (Abb.) 9. tennis match the U.S. _______ 10. state of the Hawaiian, Lake Mead and Las Vegas 11. an oilve 12. a type of tree 15. the Detroit Red Sox, the Washington Redskins and the Minnesota Timberwolves, to name a few 18. tactical data networks (Abb.) 21. tree with aromatic leaves and bark, source of a type of oil 22. “The _______ wider went up the water spat...” 25. Paul, Ringo, John and George: The _______ 26. summer treat 28. high activity aircraft (Abb.) 30. a German’s ___ 32. thin and shifty 34. hair group headed by Jesus Sebastian Johnson 35. maintenance and administrative facility (Abb.) 38. chief of chaplains (Abb.) 39. period of growth that makes a seven-month-old baby cry incessantly 42. letters over the Internet 43. to wash gently 44. simply shocked 45. technology systems (Abb.) 46. actress _______ with a voice 49. district chaplain (Abb.) 50. read basic form of identification 51. to stretch (but without the aid) 54. a wide ribbon or a window part 55. what connects the nerves 56. coat of arms (Abb.) 60. Inner Muhammad 62. one type of Internet browser (Abb.) 64. sum of all components divided by total number of components (Abb.)

Submit completed crosswords to room 158 by Nov. 19. The winner will receive a prize.

Fish `n Chips
by Lena Moreno

You know, life is interesting. We’re just put here on Earth and then we’re left to figure everything out! We just go around aimlessly thinking about anything and everything. And we all just end up asking ourselves... What does it all mean?

by Alex May and Max Wasserman

Okay, let’s make sure we’ve got everything... Helmets? Check! Riot shields? Check! Body armor? Check! Okay, let’s go to 5th period!
Gonzalez determined to graduate

After near-death experience, student returns to Blair for a second chance at an education.

> from GONZALEZ page 19

found out.

Gonzalez was immediately rushed to the hospital and was reportedly pronounced dead when his heart stopped two hours after arriving there. However, he made a miraculous recovery with the help of doctors.

After several months, Gonzalez was released from the hospital and returned to Blair where he, his parents and Assistant Principal Patricia Hurley sat down to discuss his future.

Hurley expressed her deep concern for Gonzalez and listed possible solutions to his worried parents. In addition to a long record of bad behavior and absences, Gonzalez had already been in danger of losing both his LIC and failing his classes. Because of the stabbing incident, Gonzalez was seen as a “danger” to Blair, according to Hurley, and needed to be sent to an alternative school. “She told me she thought his program, Randolph Academy, would be good for me,” says Gonzalez.

Remembering Randolph

Randolph Academy is an alternative school designed to serve 50 of the most highly disruptive students in Montgomery County for a semester to a year, according to Montgomery County Pupil Personnel Director Stan Truman. In addition, the program provides counseling for students.

Upon arriving, Gonzalez swore Hurley was completely wrong. His classmates’ behavior immediately astonished him. “Man, you go to these places, and you’re like, ‘I don’t belong here’,” he says. “It was wild—there’d be fights all the time, and the kids had real bad attitudes toward teachers. It makes you not want to be bad! You’re like [forgets this] I’m gonna change.”

After spending time with the students, Gonzalez claims he began to feel more at ease with the school community. “At first, you feel isolated, and you don’t want to talk to anyone. But then, you start talking to the kids and the teachers and realize you got stuff in common.” He chuckles as he remembers the conversations with some of his friends at Randolph. “The first thing you ask is, ‘What’d you do? Why’d they put you in here? It’s like jail.’

Still, the fact that Gonzalez was associating with kids who had already experienced problems, worried him. “I was scared I’d have a rack of the same friends and start messing up again,” he says. However, on her similarity in struc-
tured environment, Gonzalez began to change for the better. “They make you talk about your family and why you’re angry and just all these things you don’t really talk about,” he remembers. “Then you get teachers talking to you like people, asking you why you’re acting up and why you’re trying to be hard.” He adds quietly, “You start seeing that behaving bad doesn’t make you bigger and that for real, the more education you have, the better you’re gonna do. It forces you to stop being a dummy!”

Gonzalez was released from Randolph Academy and began attending Blair again this year. No longer caught leaving school through the back hallways or starting fights with other students, Gonzalez has astonished teachers with his new behavior. “They’ll come up to me and tell me I’ve changed, and it feels good,” he says.

“I am gonna be something”

One of those impressed includes Administrator Linda Wolf, who marvels at Gonzalez’s new attitude towards his education. His maturation, Wolf believes, resulted from Gonzalez’s reflection of past mistakes. “If he hadn’t gotten hurt, he might have continued on a wrong path,” she says. “Eber got a second chance, and he’s taking advantage of it.”

Another equally impressed staff member is math teacher Earl Lindsay, who knew Gonzalez as a freshman. “I’m so proud of Eber compared to how he used to be,” Lindsay beams. “He’s made so much progress.”

Still, Lindsay acknowledges that his behavior is not always perfect. “He still has a few bad habits, like hanging out with his friends so much, and he still has [has to] work with his probation officer to improve behavior,” he admits.

However, Lindsay believes the fact that Gonzalez is trying to graduate is commendable. “He goes to Night School every day; his attendance has gotten so good that he’s currently at a level B.”

Lindsay also adds that Gonzalez is currently boasting an A in both of his classes.

Gonzalez, who is now finishing his credits to graduate this year, claims his new perspective on education fuels him to work even harder in order to secure a brighter future. “I’m gonna stay here, learn as much as I can and just do good. I used to be this hyper kid—school wasn’t important to me—but now I’m really trying to be something. I am gonna be something. I’m going to start a business and watch—I’m gonna hit a million before 21,” he declares.

“I’m gonna do it.”

* * *

Band brings spirit to Blair

The band's saxophones play together. Photo by Hannah Rosen

> from BAND page 19

their role in football games and other school events is essential. “We are the Blazers. Win or lose, we come here to support the team,” says freshman saxophonist Christoff Vischer.

Jokes strongly agrees; he feels that the marching band more than makes up for the lack of school spirit at Blair. “We show the other teams we have support and pride for our school,” he says. “Most Blazers don’t give a rolling donut if anything happens at [Blair].”

The whistle blows in the background, and the players begin to file off the field for the halftime show. Across the stadium, the band arranges itself in perfect formation, and the musicians all take a deep breath.

“Show time,” whispers Doyle from the stands.

The drum line sets the pace, and the band begins marching in rhythm. An enthusiastic crowd cheers as they play Estancia while performing the intricately choreographed drill. All the hours spent practicing have paid off, as the band executes a near-flawless show.

“We’re all band geeks”

After the performance, the band casually relaxes on the stands, only stopping their chatter to play short bits of their fight song. Meanwhile, freshman Tin-Tin Nguyen breaks out his camera phone, and another Blazer property to shoot people with his silver flute.

Junior Krista Lee, a flutist, looks up at the rest of the band as she takes a break from her experience over the past three years. “I love the way we can all be band geeks, and nobody cares because we’re all band geeks,” she explains.

But Vischer doesn’t believe in “marching band nerds.” “We are very proud of our success.”

“We don’t care what people think of us,” Osborne says differently. “We do it for fun; we do it for ourselves.” But, he adds, a little more school support couldn’t hurt.

“Don’t get me wrong,” Doyle emphasizes that no one is forced to be part of the marching band. “People are here because they want to be here. They want to be better, and they’re improving,” he says.

As the band exits the stadium after the game, they march back around Blair, 43 pairs of feet tapping the pavement in unison to the constant beat of the drums. “Let the drum line take us back,” says Doyle. “Let them take us home.”

Revolving fad

Guevara popular with Blazers

> from CHE page 21

America’s own historical figures. “Some call him a murderer because he was involved in violent struggle, but do we call George Washington a murderer? They did the same thing. They’re ‘murderers’ in the same exact way,” says Weinstein.

What would Ché say?

No matter how much controversy the current Ché fad may cause, one can’t help but wonder what he would think of this craze if he were still around to see it.

Trigant argues that although the commercialization of Ché’s image is benefiting the system of capitalism that he fought so hard against, the revolutionary leader would be pleased to see his ideas reaching students today. “Ché wouldn’t like some parts of it, but he would definitely like that it is drawing more attention to his ideals,” he says. “I believe in and fought for,” he adds.

Indeed, says Weinstein, if Ché were around for all the publicity Guevara is getting, many people would not know anything about him. And although much better known, every detail in Guevara’s life story, the shirts are worn for the ideals Ché has come to represent. “Ché’s life is romantic,” Weinstein says, “and for people unhappy with the way the world is going today, he has become an all-purpose symbol of rebellion and revolution.”

Senior Will Timpson shows off the Ché t-shirt he bought in El Salvador. Photo by Nathaniel Lichten
Tennis ends season at .500

By AVI WOLFFMAN-ARENT

Blair’s girls’ tennis team came into this season focused on one goal: staying in Division I. Still stinging from last season’s wireless campaign in Division I, the Blazers came into a Sept. 21 showdown with division rival Magruder hungry for success and came away with a victory that would eventually keep them in Division I for another year.

However, the 6-1 trouncing of the Colonels was the team’s only divisional triumph and the Blazers consistently found difficulty with higher quality opposition. Their 1-6 divisional record and 6-6 record overall was proof of a mediocre season that, despite one major breakthrough, was only a small step in the right direction.

Blair’s strongest position overall was the first duo of teammates Jahnavi Bhaskar and David Franson. The tandem worked like a well-oiled machine, gobbling up volleys and splitting them back at helpless opponents. Bhaskar and Franson entered the county tournament seeded third and were looking to make a run at the county championship. However, following an opening round victory over Rockville, Bhaskar and Franson lost a closely contested decision to Whitman 6-4, 6-3.

In the Regional tournament first singles player junior Stephanie Paul lost to an opponent from Churchill in the second round.

Paul said that staying in Division I was paramount, and she considers this season a successful one because the Blazers achieved this goal. "I’m very proud of the team for staying in Division I because I must admit I had my doubts initially," Paul remarked. Still, she added that the team felt frustrated with the close losses near the season’s end. "When it came to some of the really close matches, in all honesty, we choked," said Paul.

Despite minor disappointments this year, Ngbea sees potential for his team next year if stresses that gains need to be made in the off-season in order to make significant strides against tougher opponents. "If we want to be successful in Division I, [the players] need to go out and hit the ball during the off-season. I strongly suggest we don’t hang up our rackets," said Ngbea.

And with a solid core of eight starters returning in 2005, Ngbea’s message is clear. A little hard work could reap great rewards.

Junior Pearl Hong hits a backhand on Nov. 1. Photo by Adam Schneider

JV soccer is near-perfect

By KRISTI CHAKRABARTI

Nearly everybody at FedEx Field stands as Clinton Portis catches a pass from quarterback Mark Brunell. With each step Portis takes towards the goal line, the fans’ cheers become louder. His final leap into the end zone after a 43-yard run is met with thunderous applause. With less than three minutes left in the game, Portis has scored the game-winning touchdown, until the referees take the lead away on a penalty.

Disappointment stemming from missed opportunities, bad plays, lost games and poor seasons has become an all-too-familiar feeling for Washington Redskins fans since 1992, when head coach Joe Gibbs left the team. All Redskins home games have been sold out since 1986, a record unmatched by any other NFL team. This type of lasting loyalty draws in many Blazer and keeps them coming for their beloved Redskins.

The burgundy and gold

Since the beginning of the Redskins franchise in 1932, the team has won three Super Bowls in 1982, 1991 and 1992 and made 19 playoff appearances.

English Department Instructional Assistant Janico Taylor became a fan in 1970, when she first moved to Washington, D.C., from Boston, and her support for the team has never died down. “Down here, all I heard about were the Redskins,” she says.

According to WUSA TV 9 sports anchor Levan Reid, the Redskins used to be a pinnacle of sports in the Washington area, representing Maryland, Virginia, Delaware and the Carolinas before those regions gained their own franchises. These large groups of supporters remained with the Redskins over the years and have a real connection with the team. “[The Skins] have the biggest fan base. There are people who have been fans for 50 years or 60 years, who grew up with Joe Gibbs and really believed in the burgundy and gold,” says Reid.

Passing on the loyalty

Long-time fans, along with newer ones, share a commitment to the team. Senior Hersch Bhatia remembers watching Redskins games with his grandfather, a committed Redskins fan. “I could sing ‘Hail to the Redskins’ when I was four,” says Bhatia. “I continue to watch them even though they continue to let me down. I’ve never seen a good season.”

Junior David Joseph can’t wait for the day when the Redskins are successful so he can proudly proclaim his lifetime of loyalty to the team. “When they finally win, I can say that I was there the whole time,” he says.

According to The Washington Post writer Nuno Demasio, these die-hard supporters who stick with the Redskins through thick and thin provide a unique connection between residents of the metropolitan area. “Washington has a small-town mentality when it comes to the Redskins,” says Demasio. “It’s the one thing everyone can agree on.”

Shawn Springs (24) intercepts a pass on Oct. 31. Photo courtesy of http://www.redskins.com

Nick Mozer admits that there are a few cliques within the team when players are off the field, he and Graul both agree that once the starting whistle sounds, the players’ differences disappear. “We have good team chemistry,” Graul explains. “We get along, and that translates to a good game on the field.”

“If not for team chemistry, we wouldn’t be scoring so much,” adds sophomore co-captain Alex Asare-Wassow. Though goals are scored by individuals—such as forwards sophomore Yendorukoa Lamboni and freshman Prince Momo, who finished the season with 13 and nine goals, respectively—Asare-Wassow explains that it takes the effort of an entire team to wrestle the ball from opponents, dribble it down the field and pass it cleanly to the player who finally scores.

Asare-Wassow also credits the Blazers’ success this season to its strong defense, noting that the team could not have shut out so many opponents without the work of sophomore goalies Sam Prager and Matthew McClain. Asare-Wassow and several of his teammates also praise freshman sweeper Noel Aguirre for his intense performance thus far. “Noel is our strongest defender,” Momo says. “He’s fast, he’s aggressive in defense and he motivates the team.”

Study halls and “suicide”

In addition to training his players on the field, Haigh has also implemented a variety of rules to help build discipline, including a mandatory eighth-period study hall as well as an attendance policy in which missed practices mean decreased game time and punishments such as push-ups and "suicides," exhausting sprinting drills that build player endurance. “All of the players show up to practice and study hall,” he says. “[They’re] committed, and it translates into wins.”

Though many of the players groan at the idea of spending an additional 45 minutes in school each day and working at the thought of huffing and puffing through extra conditioning drills, most agree that the rules have been beneficial to building team unity. “We’re good because we’ve got discipline,” sophomore midfielder Jesse Ruf explains. “Mr. Haigh doesn’t let us mess around.”

Haigh agrees with Ruf, but he also adds that most of his players come onto the team already possessing a good sense of discipline in addition to strong playing skills. “The talent is there,” Haigh explains. “I just need to steer it.”

Sophomore Mattias Salina in action on Oct. 27. Photo by Nathaniel Lichten
**Warriors conquer Blazers in first round**

By LAUREN FINKE

**OCT. 28, SHERWOOD—**

At the end of the boys’ varsity soccer game against Sherwood, senior co-captain Greg Breads covered his head with his jersey, co-captain Jack Eisen- Markowitz knelt to the ground and senior Justin Hoy stood still. After playing their hearts out in an amazing 80 minutes of soccer, the whistle blew with the Blazers one goal behind Sherwood, knocking Blair out of the playoffs the first round with a devastating 3-4 final score.

The Warriors and the Blazers were evenly matched for much of the game. Sherwood scored first, but the Blazers answered back with a goal of their own just minutes later, as was the case throughout the game. Each team had a speed attack, a solid midfield, good ball placement, hand shots and stalwart goalies in the net. Ultimately, though, Sherwood generated more of the game than Blair and thus one more win over Blair (their first was a 4-1 win in a regular season). To Breads, the loss embodied the boys’ performance this year, as they repeatedly struggled to beat evenly-matched opponents. That game defines our season, said Breads. “We were always almost there.”

For the loyal Blair fans who trekked out to Olney, it really did seem like the team was there. So equal were the two teams that after a goal scored by Sherwood with 2:05 remaining in the game, Eisen-Markowitz powered a shot into the Sherwood goal from the 30-yard line ten seconds later. In fact, Sherwood fans were still cheering their goal when Eisen-Markowitz’s shot hit the back of the net. The Blazers played an intense first half. Breads and senior co-captain Yanikah Fon anchored the defense and the midfield fought aggressively for balls in the air and on the ground. The offense took solid and frequent shots on goal, something lacking in the first half.

The second half, however, had a much more bitter feel. Three red cards were handed out, two to Sherwood players and one to a Blair player. The red cards were called for repeated fouls, and the Sherwood fans turned sour, booing a number of calls made by the officials. By the time the game ended, heated words had been exchanged between players on the field and fans in the stands. To coach Adrian Baez, this game proved the strength of the Blair squad that he has coached since August. “The boys showed their mettle today,” said Baez. “I had never seen them play like this until today. It was the best performance.”

The Blazers ended the regular season with a final record of 3-8-1.

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**NBA is all shaken up**

By ELIE BLAOCK

**OCT. 25, WATKINS MILL—**

Coming off two consecutive wins, the girls’ varsity soccer team (4-6-3) entered its first playoff game in an optimistic mood, seeming to peak physically and mentally just in time for the post-season. However, teamwork and momentum were not enough for the Blazers to overcome the favored Watkins Mill Wolves, a talented team of seasoned players who beat Blair 3-0, just as they had during the regular season.

Blair’s relative inexperience at playing together put them at an immediate disadvantage against the Wolves, who were ranked second in the 4A West Division. The Watkins Mill players were physically more powerful than Blair girls, producing a subdued offense from Blair and an aggressive, fast-paced shot-making from the Wolves. “We just don’t match up well,” said Coach Robert Gibb.

The Wolves had their moments of glory, though, including a well-played second 20 minutes in which the girls took advantage of the Wolves’ fatigue. But after two goals on crosses and close shots. An energy boost at this point, however, was not enough to spur the Blazers to gain the lead that had our chances a few minutes left. “We just didn’t get the goals we needed,” Gibb said.

A slow beginning for both teams yielded a flurry of shots from Watkins Mill on Blair’s goal. Only 11 minutes into the match, a Wolverine corner kick was headed into the goal out of reach of senior goalie Julia Simon-Michel. The Wolverines wasted little time widening their lead, scoring again in the 20th minute and finally during the fourth minute of the second half. The Blazers were finally able to mount an offensive attack after the second goal, but this rally was unsuccessful against the Wolverine’s strong defensive squad. The offensive burst culminated in a missed indirect kick in the box, which had seemed like a sure bet for seniors Korya Dean and Carly Cox, who had been close to scoring.

Gibb feels this season has been memorable because of the team’s resilience in the face of obstacles. After losing last year’s strong group of seniors, the team faced a rough few games to start the season, only to lose key starters in juniors Sophy Esparrza and Cate Rasmussen several weeks later. “It would have been easy to make excuses, but [the team] didn’t,” said Gibb.

Gibb has high hopes and is excited for the 2005 season, though he will lose many starters to graduation. The team will suffer from the loss of, among others, Simon-Michel at keeper and senior Lindsey Fowler-Marques at midfield; however, Gibb is already contemplating talented successors. Two JV goalies, sophomores Allie Kator and Maggie Sullivan, have been given a varsity playing time this season and will be prepared for stalwart varsity positions next year.

This year’s team was impressive for its sheer ability to bounce back from defeat, crisis and various other obstacles while never losing the play-to-win attitude, fun-loving spirit and passion for the game. “I’m going to remember them because they overcame a lot,” Gibb said, adding, “I’m proud.”

The JV girls’ team finished with a record of 5-2-3.

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**Spurs and Rockets, all who smell a championship.**

Dallas added Erick Dampier, which gives them more of a presence on the boards, but the rest of the squad still can’t guard a broom closer: plus, they lost one of the best shooters in the league in Steve Nash. Apparently Yao and T-Mac are the new Shaq and Kobe, which fits because the Pistons took them apart. Now the Spurs—there’s a team; add in Brent Barry, and you’ve got arguably the most complete squad in basketball.

I’m still going to pick Minnesota over San Antonio. Kevin Garnett has finally come into his own as an incredibly domi- nant all-round star, and—baring the dis- tinct possibility of Latrell Sprewell-related drama—he has a great supporting cast that can light up the scoreboard and tough it out on D. San Antonio will survive the Southwest, but not without suffering a few injuries in intense divisional play; plus, lately, KG has looked more determined and passionate than the qui- etly successful Tim Duncan. You can always make a case for the Kings, but they never kick them off.

My dream for the finals: Dallas over Detroit in seven. David Stern’s dream: Heat over Lakers in seven. What will happen: Pistons over Wolves in six.
RM Rockets blast past the Blazers

Despite strong offensive effort, defensive slips doom field hockey in first-round playoffs

By ERICK KOOLAG

OCT. 28, RICHARD MONTGOMERY—The Blair girls’ varsity field hockey team finished the season with a 2-1-1 record after suffering a disappointing 0-4 loss to the Richard Montgomery Rockets in the first round of county playoffs.

The Rockets have struggled for much of the season, but they did show some signs of improvement in their playoff loss. The ball went back and forth, with Blair’s offense threatening the Rockets’ defense on several occasions. However, the Blazers were unable to follow through and score, and they ended the game shut out for the eighth time this season.

Richard Montgomery scored off a penalty shot shortly into the first half when freshman Claire Onley, who was just moved up from JV, illegally kicked a shot that would’ve scored. The Blazers would battle for the rest of the half but could not score; they also gave up another goal by the time the half time whistle blew.

Throughout the game, the Blazers hustled after every ball and put in a valiant effort to keep their season alive. Still, missed marks and mispasses made things too much for the team to overcome.

The Blazer defense gave up a two-goals in the second half as sophomore Maura Druhan replaced junior Jordy Goldstein in the cage. Junior Sydney Valdez blocked the defense and was superb on her free hits, which traveled well into Rocket territory and helped generate the offensive attack.

Playing in what turned out to be their last high-school field hockey game, Blair’s seniors put in a strong performance. Senior co-captains Rachel Feely-Kob and Alexandra Gabriel led the team with their skills and intensity. Senior Christine Do, the leader scorer for the season, played with tenacity but was unable to add to her season goal total.

Next season, the team looks to build and improve upon its 2-11-1 record. Six seniors will be graduating and sorely missed. However, the Blazers have some young talent that can fill the holes in the coming season.

“V-ball fades in finale

By NICK FALGOUT and DAN GREENE

NOV. 3, NELSON H. KOBREN MEMORIAL GYMNASIUM—

Spirits were high this afternoon as the Blair girls’ volleyball team kicked off its last game of the season against the Paint Branch Panthers. Blair opened strong in its first game but fiddled as the match went on. The girls’ team tied for seventh out of 13 teams, while the boys’ team finished 11th in a pool of 14. The results of this meet did not affect the 7-2 and 2-7 season records the girls’ and boys’ teams achieved, respectively.

The girls were tied with Walter Johnson for seventh place at the end of the race, but meet regulations dictate that the time of the sixth runner decides the winner in the event of a tie. Walter Johnson had the faster runner, allowing the Wildcats to move on to the State Championship Meet, while Blair just missed advancing.

“It was very demoralizing to lose by such a slim margin, but this team ran very well,” Coach Carl Lewin said after the meet. “There were terrible conditions, but our team ran through it.”

According to Lewin, the Blazers’ disappointing performance was partially due to poor course conditions caused by inclement weather. Continuous rain caused the course to become extremely muddy, making it very difficult for runners to keep their footing. Sophomore Ashlyn Sinclair fell during the race, causing her time to be nearly a minute slower than usual.

Despite these poor conditions, the girls ran extremely well, with sophomore Halsey Sinclair finishing first overall with a time of 19:15. Despite being slowed by her fall, Ashlyn Sinclair managed to finish fourth overall in the girls’ pool with a time of 20:56. The team was also supported by good times from junior Katy Laffen and freshman Johanna Gretsch, who finished 5thth with a time of 24:24 and 51st with a time of 25:50, respectively.

The boys’ team continued to perform less successfully than the girls’ team, finishing 11th out of 14 schools with its predominantly underclassmen squad. The team is comprised of almost all freshmen and sophomores and, according to Lewin, should be very competitive for the next two years. Sophomore Josh Uzzi led the team with a time of 19:15, which allowed him to place 43rd overall in the boys’ heat. Senior captain Alan Bateson finished 61st overall with a time of 19:51, and freshman Adrian Davernich also continued to run well with a time of 20:35, completing the race in 71st place.

Although neither the boys’ nor girls’ teams advanced to the State Championships, Lewin saw this meet as an accomplishment and hopes that the Blaz-

ers can go even further next season. “Our girls’ team was maybe 11th last year, and yet this year they were [fielded for] seventh,” Lewin explained after the meet. “I think that next year, we can move to fourth and really run well. Our boys’ team should also continue to improve.”
The NBA tips off

By DAN GRIEWE

Baseball wrapped up in grand form (SOX RULE!), theousing-NFL season promises more surprises for uncharmed QBs and the NBA just rolled back into the spotlight in a big way. Sorry, NFL fans, enjoy the knockout!

You could sense a shake-up in the NBA at the end of last season: The gritty Eastern Conference Patriots had shut down the glittery Western Conference Lakers, who were then dismantled when the most dominant force in basketball was traded for a draft pick, a couple of—at best—above-average veterans and one promising prospect. Throw in a few more teams upgraded by key trades and a new division system that will crank up the competition (have fun in the Southwest, New Orleans), and you’ve definitely mixed the league up.

Sure, we’re dealing with some of the same old drama—Shaq vs. Kobe—but the whole NBA looks reenergized. With a week of games under our collective belts, we have a little more basis for

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JV boys’ soccer heats up the field

By KRISTINA YANG

When JV boys’ soccer coach John Haigh walked into his team’s eighth-period study hall on Oct. 19, he was clearly elated by JV’s 2-0 victory over Walter Johnson the night before. “You have a winning formula,” he told his players, expressing his pride in the team’s then-9-0 season record. “You guys are on the verge of something big.”

True to Haigh’s prediction, JV boys’ soccer ended its season as one of the most successful teams in recent Blair history. The team has suffered only seven losses in the five years since Haigh became its coach, racking up an impressive 22-game winning streak over the last two seasons before finally falling 0-1 to Churchill on Oct. 27. Though the loss to Churchill marked the end of the team’s two-season winning streak, JV boys’ soccer still completed the season with a more-than-respectable 10-1-1 record, scoring 42 goals of its own and shutting out ten opponents along the way.

From strangers to teammates

The JV boys’ soccer team’s continued success is all the more impressive because of its high-player-turnover rate. After losing several juniors and sophomore standout Alec McLean to the varsity squad, the team began the season with only eight veterans on its roster of 24 players. As Haigh notes, however, the team was fortunate enough to recruit a group of talented new players to round out its roster; many who already had experience playing on club teams.

Even players who had no club team experience were able to hone their skills prior to the official start of soccer season by attending the pickup games organized by the varsity team over the summer. “There were summer pickup games three times a week,” Haigh said, “and we’d have as few as 12 or 14—or as many as 35, close to 40—show up.”

As a result of these games, the Blazers were already comfortable playing as a team by the time the official start of soccer season rolled around. “We play so well because we started practicing together over the summer,” sophomore co-captain Jack Grau explains.

Quick feet and chemistry

According to most players, this ability to cooperate well with each other is the most crucial element to the JV boys’ soccer’s success story. Though sophomore midfielders

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Rockets burn Blazer defense

Blair chalks up offensive errors and yields post-season berth to RM

By MICHAEL BUSNELL

NOV. 5, RICHARD MONTGOMERY—

While they could have overcame a few careless mistakes in their 14-7 loss to the RM Rockets (7-3), the Blazers found that allowing their opponent to turn the tide too deep a hole for their own offense to triumph over. Varsity football ended its season with this disappointing loss, allowing the Rockets to continue into the post-season in the 4A West Division.

Blair’s 3-7 was in the game until the very end despite offensive errors like the two interceptions by starting quarterback junior Tyrel Jackson. These problems highlighted a struggling defense that led to the defeat and the ire of Blair head coach Jeffrey Seals.

“We made too many mistakes tonight,” commented Seals, echoing a sentiment he has felt often during this season. Blair’s only points came off a touchdown that was emblematic of the problems the Blazer running backs have had this year. Early in the fourth quarter, senior D’Andre Thomas ran for a first down but fumbled the ball at the RM ten yard line. The ball wound up in the end zone where senior Femi Elemoso dove on it for a touchdown that cut the Blair deficit to 14-7 following the extra point.

Jackson, who was called up from JV halfway through the season, started his second game as quarterback. Both he and sophomore Ross Williams split time under center this game. Williams was two-for-five, but for just ten yards. Jackson went two-for-six for 29 yards, including a very nice 20-yard pass to senior Michael Stewart, the team’s top receiver, who ended his successful high-school career with three receptions for a total of 37 yards.

Even though his first year as head coach produced a losing season, Seals stressed the positive after the game. “We had ups and downs, but all in all, they tried their best, and those guys who really worked came a long way this year,” he enjoyed coaching these guys.”