At least ten of Blair’s school buses are overcrowded again this year, with many students being forced to stand or sit three to a seat, according to students and several bus drivers. Experts say overcrowded buses are “extremely dangerous.”

“I think just about all of us are overloaded,” said Blair bus driver Alma Carpenter of her school bus, route 6110, and the other Blair school buses. “I’ve got kids standing and sitting three to a seat and some of us have some pretty big kids that don’t fit well.” Students who stand on moving buses are

Welcome to Sardine City

Crammed corridors require shuffled half-steps that cannot exceed the speed of the crowd’s current. Long, winding food lines frustrate their patrons, who know their precious lunch minutes are ticking away. Even long waits exist to use the toilet, with the next-closest restroom a mob-laden trek away.

When a public high school resembles a packed pro-football stadium at halftime, something is wrong.

Despite the launch of the Downcounty Consortium (DCC) and the opening of Northwood, arrangements designed to ease Blair’s overcrowding, Blair will not see a significant decrease in student population anytime soon. With evidence from the National Education Association that
Exploiting 9/11

Just after 9/11, America was saturated with sentiment. The sheer volume of prayers and donations was a testament to the sincerity of the American people. For a while, the media joined in on the hype, honoring the sacrifices made and reminding us of the victims’ families. We mourned with our newspapers, our television's, our President. But in the three-year wake of 9/11, the media has begun to manipulate that mindset into a well-oiled machine for producing Nielsen ratings, poll points and box-office bucks. Sept. 11 should still be a sensitive subject, but that sensitivity has been compromised to suit the needs of an impatient entertainment industry.

In the first few months after 9/11, Hollywood was quick to halt all things terrorist, Twin Tower- or airplane-related from hitting theaters. Collateral Damage, a Schwarzenegger action flick about a fireman whose family was killed in a terrorist bombing, originally had an opening day a few months after 9/11 but was postponed until 2002. A trailer for the Spider-Man, in which a giant web between the Tower Twins to net bank robbers in a helicopter, was retracted almost immediately.

But today, new shows like LAX and Threat Matrix are using airport security and national security as their respective rating takers. The new F/X Network series Rescue Me chronicles the rough-edged lives of FDNY firemen post-9/11. The list gets longer and the audacity even stronger. Television, our former medium of compassion and unity, has now soothed us onto our sofas for the commercial break.

Take, for example, TNT’s summer miniseries The Grid, which focused on a special taskforce dedicated to averting the efforts of an international terrorist cell. One of the protagonists, Jane McCann, lost her husband in the attack on the World Trade Center. Or take F/X's Melded, an original movie that plays on fear—maybe for nostalgia’s sake—by asking what would happen if terrorists took control of a U.S. nuclear facility. The title is especially appropriate considering what is happening to the ethics of entertainment.

Such blatant sensationalisms of 9/11 silting out of the Hollywoodwork ignore the fact that, for many families, emotional repercussions still exist.

For this reason, we still and always will owe remembrance to those who died; the question is simply whether we should mind who’s profiting from our remembrance. While we wait on that answer, however, all signs of respectful restraint in the media seem to be taking a nose dive...straight into the World Trade Center.

When a failing grade can cut it

New policy discourages efforts of struggling students

Every failing high-school student’s dream will come true next fall: Simply hand in a blank piece of paper (or no paper at all) for any assignment, and automatically get 50 percent credit. While it may seem appealing, this guideline of the new grading policy contradicts everything MCPS is trying to achieve: It will discourage student effort, inflate grades and allow false promotion from one grade level to the next.

MCPS Director of Curriculum and Instruction Karen Harvey says the policy ensures that all grades have the same weight so it will no longer be impossible to recover from a bad grade. An A and an E should theoretically average to a C, she says, but currently, if a student receives a zero on one test and then a 100 on the next, his or her average would be 50 percent, which is still a failing grade. A zero through 59 percent will merit the same E. To fix this inconsistency, the new policy asks teachers to record letter grades as opposed to numeric one.

The bottom line is that grades should be representative of knowledge mastered. If students fail one test and ace the other, they still only know half of the total material covered, and thus a 50 percent would be representative of mastery. Why is that too much to expect?

A more viable solution to help students improve their grades is to give more assignments and thus progressively decrease the effect one bad test day can have on a quarter grade. This solution (which is also suggested in the current grading policy), combined with the use of percentages, accurately reflects mastery and gives students more opportunities to fix their own grades.

The letter-grade aspect of the new policy is inflating the grades of students who might have failed otherwise. This becomes dangerous when students are unrightfully promoted to the next grade—probably for the second, third or fourth time—because their skewed grades indicate that they mastered material that they may have never even glanced at. Too bad for the teacher who has to help that struggling student next year.

In addition, the class of 2009 now must pass the High School Assessments to graduate. Unfortunately, those who fly through school with no value placed on their grades (as long as they’re passing) are the ones who will fail their standardized tests simply because no one declared that they weren’t ready.

Nobody wants to tell a student they cannot graduate because they only have a ninth-grade understanding of math or English. And nobody wants to explain to that student’s parents where the system went wrong.

If the County wants grades to be accurate, they should use a number system instead of the traditional letter system. No longer would an 89.5 merit an A while an 89.4 earns a B. A number system wouldn’t equate both a 69.5 and a 79.4 as C’s, as the traditional system does. In addition, instead of students deciding how little work they have to do to get a C, they will work harder knowing that colleges or employers will see how high their A was.

MCPS has mandated most of the guidelines to be implemented in secondary schools starting this year but has allowed high school leadership teams to decide which portions of the new system will be required in high school. Thankfully, there is time to voice your complaints about this confusing and counterproductive policy.
Empty promises stretch Blair to the limit

Immediate action is necessary before Blair explodes

—from STUFFED page 1

desire to have fewer students is unreasonable. But what is our cap, if not already established at 2,831? And Bedfords, by occupation, is Blair’s chief advocate—why isn’t he pushing for our numbers to go down, instead of asking how far we can still go up before caving in?”

Each year, MCPS promises our population climb is going to stop. “Next year, Blair will definitely be over its cap,” asserted its Senior Planner Bruce Crispell two weeks ago, adding halt-jokily, “I’ll put my well, I swear!” Yet isn’t that what MCPS vowed last year and the year before as well? “This should be the worst year for Blair,” Crispell offered when interviewed on Sept. 8, 2003. Wrong. Blair’s enrollment “will drop each year ’til [2007-2008] as grades phase out out.”

segregation not only creating concentrated areas of lower-class, heavily minority and immigrant populations like the Down County, but also one to which Montgomery County officials are turning a blind eye.

We need to end these divisions. Only by acknowledging past mistakes and redrawing boundary lines can MCPS integrate race and class, alleviate the suffocating pressure on Blair and finally deliver on promises of relief to a powerless and frustrated Blair community.

“I think it’s time,” says Scotts, and the Blair community agrees. MCPS, we need more students, and now. Blair’s situation is dangerous and outrageous, and MCPS’ responses have thus far been shamefully lacking.

Hitting the streets on Halloween, dressed for action

By Dan Greene

Humor

Look! There’s little Randall in his Batman outfit! And Katy is just adorable as Sleeping Beauty, who’s that Jiminy Cricket outfit? That’s a nifty cane; he sure looks... well? That’s a nifty cane; he sure looks... oh no.

Yes. Thanks to those marketing geniuses at the online store Brandsonsale.com, we now have the privilege of seeing the younger trick-or-treaters of 2004 decked out in 1980s movie costumes like “Pee Wee’s Big Adventure” or “The Breakfast Club.” Students are loyal to their brands and MCPS’ responses lack the kind of example they’re setting. On the one hand, that $40 costume is just another step in the holiday marketing explosion. What these angry parents don’t realize is that they’ve been encouraging bad Halloween role models for years. I’m sure most mothers don’t see “innocent” or “ninja” as viable career choices for their babies.

But it’s degrading!” you cry. “Schools should not be debasing the childhood innocence of Halloween.” Oh, but it wasn’t degrading for me to be a pumpkin for three years straight, after which I graduated to bumble-bee. That was traumatizing, but at least eating up the food chain—I got some self-respect around kindergarten and have been a Cyborg Space Ninja ever since.

And don’t talk to me about the spoiled innocence of Halloween—or have you missed the ever-popular “butcher knife in the chest complete with realistic squishy intestines” look or the charming “faux screwdriver in the side of the head”? If you ask me, we need to get our priorities straight. I’d rather hang out with the guys from Superfly than the one from Jason XXI: The Disemboweling.

Calm down, have some Milk Duds or something

Everyone involved in this debate needs some perspective. On the one hand, that $40 costume is designed to make a fourth-grader look like a call girl, and parents who buy it for their kids should put at least a little thought into the kind of example they’re setting. On the other hand, I can confidently say that this will not trigger the Apocalypse. Now, Chicken-Dance Elmo—there’s something you should worry about.
Blazers sound off on current issues

Do you still trick-or-treat? Why or why not? ◄ see story, page 3

I still love to trick-or-treat. No matter what age you are, you can always dress up in a goofy costume and collect candy around the block. The best part is going back to one house every year and knowing that you’ll get a king-size Hershey chocolate bar.

-sophomore Lucia Sirota

No, I haven’t trick-or-treated in years. There’s no point in it anymore, seeing as how dressing up as ghosts and celebrities isn’t fun. Besides, Halloween parties are so much better.

-sophomore Terence McPherson

I don’t trick-or-treat on Halloween. I am from Barbados, so I was brought up by a mother who never celebrated Halloween. Since my cousins do not celebrate Halloween, I am completely fine with not celebrating it. I actually would not be surprised if fewer and fewer children trick-or-treat on Halloween.

-freshman Dawn Brimmer

For as long as I can remember, I’ve gone trick-or-treating in my neighborhood. Although trick-or-treating is for younger children, I still trick-or-treat because it’s a time to relax and pretend you’re someone else. It people think that teenagers shouldn’t go trick-or-treating, they should try to remember their experiences as a child.

This year, I’m going as a pirate.

-freshman Bridget Egan

Do you play fantasy football? Why or why not? ◄ see story, page 28

I am a fantasy football fanatic. I’m in two leagues, and I check my teams every day to try and make a trade or pick up a player to improve my team. I play fantasy football to keep up-to-date with my sports knowledge and to compete and beat my friends. Fantasy football is a fun way for me to care even more about the world of the NFL.

-sophomore Josh Zipin

I do not play fantasy football. I can never find a little group of people that wants to participate in that activity. I’m not sure of all of the rules that apply when you play. I’d love to learn to play and eventually make a mini-league amongst friends and family.

-senior Javier Gonzalez

I play fantasy football because it makes every game more exciting, instead of just watching it and not caring who wins. I like competing against my friends, and we have fun teasing each other about bad draft picks. It is also an incredible feeling when your quarterback throws a game-winning touchdown pass that gives you more points than your opponent.

-freshman Aaron Sacks

Yes, I do play fantasy football. It makes me more knowledgeable about the game and the different players in the NFL. Also, playing fantasy football gives me an opportunity to compare different players and their statistics. Another reason why I play fantasy football is because I have the opportunity to win prizes if I choose the right players.

-freshman Areeb Quasem

Do you think Blair is overcrowded? ◄ see stories, page 1

Blair is indeed overcrowded. When it’s time to go to your next class, the hallways are ridiculously packed to the maximum with students. If you can barely walk through your school hallway because of traffic, the school needs to reconsider its student size.

-sophomore Keianna Dixon

I believe that Blair is overcrowded. Every day, I find it a chore to get to the SAC, going against a current of people. Picture yourself in the middle of an ocean, standing by yourself on an island, and now imagine the water as people. That is what Blair is like—a never-ending sea of faces.

-sophomore Alex Ogley

I don’t think that Blair is overcrowded because I can still get to classes well within the eight-minute time period, and I always get a seat at lunch. Even though this school has many students, there are plenty of classrooms, and it is big enough to support all the people.

-freshman Jack Berry

Do you have any relatives serving in Iraq? How does that make you feel? ◄ see Centerspread

My older brother joined the Marines two years ago. Last February, he announced that he was going to Iraq for six months. We didn’t hear from him for two weeks. We were worried that something might happen to him. We would watch the news to see if anything happened where he was. The day he came back we thanked God he was safe. We just hope that he will not be sent back.

-senior Maria Ayala

My cousin was serving in Iraq for a few months. It was really scary and sad, because he didn’t get to see his wife for nine months that she was pregnant.

-freshman Brittany Smith

212  Blazers will be eligible to vote in the upcoming election

Cokes is the highest number of caffeinated-drinks consumed by a Blazer in one day

1,231  people attended Blair’s first home varsity football game on Sept. 10

36 percent of Blazers say that they plan to go trick-or-treating this Halloween

84 percent of Blazers say that they ride on an overcrowded school bus

367 freshmen enrolled in Northwood High School as of the month of September

937 freshmen enrolled in Blair as of the month of Sept. 24

Information compiled by Nora Boedecker. Additional reporting by Lois Bangiolo, Joseph Bellino, Martin Brown, Olivia Buzek, David Hu, Alex Hzaer and Baijia Jiang. Informal surveys of 100 students taken during the week of Sept. 21.

Quote of the issue

“I’ve listened to the sound of legs breaking. I’ve watched goal keepers knocked unconscious.” ◄ see “Going too far on the playing field,” page 29
No custodial funds for Night School

COUNTY does not increase support for Building Services despite additional school usage

No one has volunteered to work later, said Gainous, and without any additional funds or employees from the County, it is difficult to address the repercussions of Blair's overuse.

MCPS currently gives Blair $4 per Night School student each semester, an amount that PTSA President Fran Rothstein called "woefully insufficient."

Gainous spoke about the situation with Dianne Jones, MCPS Director of School Plant Operations, who wrote in an e-mail to Gainous that Blair is the "best-staffed" school in the county in terms of Building Services work per square foot. Custodians say that such a claim is misleading: The number of people who use a building should be a major consideration when allocating resources, they say, since people— not space—leave the messes they must clean.

Jones said that she would "study the situation," according to Gainous, who hopes the study will be fast. "I don't have a problem with them studying the situation, as long as they don't study it forever, because Night School is going on now. We need help," he said.

After five calls to DSPO, Jones was unavailable for comment.

Additionally, the PTSA has pressured MCPS to further support the Night School initiative. Rothstein presented testimony at a July 29 Board of Education (BOE) meeting stressing the need for more traffic control, funding for building maintenance and Night School support.

Rothstein and the PTSA spoke to Jones on Sept. 9 to request two additional Building Services employees to work for four hours each night after Night School but received no response.

The Night School program has historically been understaffed, critics say. Due to an MCPS spending freeze last year, all Night School counselors were eliminated; this year, there will be counselors for only three weeks of each 20-week semester. Though the problems have become less severe, Night School Principal James Short said the program is "probably still under-resourced."

"We have to stand up for our system"

The County moved Night School from Northwood High School this year in an attempt to relieve stress on Northwood's building, which is still under construction, Gainous said.

No representatives from the administration or the Blair community were involved in last July's decision to move Night School to Blair, according to Rothstein. Gainous said that because of a miscommunication between MCPS and Blair, representatives from the Office of School Performance believed that Gainous had been consulted about the move. "I was pretty upset over the way it was notified—I was in a meeting, and they called me on the phone to tell me that Night School was coming to Blair," Gainous said.

The administration views Night School as a permanent fixture at Blair in the future and will not try to change its location. Rather, Short said that Blair will take the new responsibilities in stride. "When our number is called, we have to stand up for our system," he said. "It's here, and we need to teach the kids. We need to provide them [with] the opportunity to earn the credits they missed during the day."

The PTSA has requested more resources to mitigate the problems that accompany Night School's move, including additional Building Services staff, funds to care for Blair, more Night School security and traffic control. "Neglecting Blair's physical plant is tantamount to neglecting Blair's students," Rothstein told the BOE.

"A deteriorating facility tells Blair students that MCPS doesn't care about them," Rothstein went on to ask why so many students must attend Night School, citing Blair's overcrowding as a cause. "We don't want people catching them when they first start to fall, and that's not Blair's fault," she said. "That's just what happens when your school has too many people."

Currently, classes take place from 6:00 p.m. to 7:40 p.m. and from 7:55 p.m. to 9:35 p.m. at Col. Zadok Magruder High School and Blair on Mondays and Wednesdays and at Wheaton High School on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Students may also attend four-hour class sessions from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. on Saturdays at Blair.

Trash left for Building Services to clean up after 5B lunch on Sept. 30. Photos by Hannah Rosen

By RAVI UMARI

Blair has experienced difficulties in implementing MCPS's Technology Modernization Program (TechMod), an initiative to keep technology current in County schools, partially due to a lack of user support specialists to oversee the installation of a new computer network. Blair, said faculty members. This was Blair's first installment of new equipment as part of the program. TechMod, which started in 2001, is projected to cost MCPS $1.5 billion for fiscal year 2005. Each school receives new hardware and software every four years, as part of the program.

TechMod's implementation, however, has been plagued by a series of problems that Blair has experienced, according to User Support Specialist Anne Fleischaker. "They come in [before school] running, and they go home running," Night School Secretary Carrie Addison said. "From Sunday to Sunday, someone is here all the time.""We definitely need the manpower," he said.

Currently, the custodial staff's last shift ends only one-and-a-half hours after Night School students leave the building. This late start needs more resources to effectively manage the Night School custodial situation, according to Building Service Manager Quentin Middleton. "We definitely need the manpower," he said.

Many applications which were supposed to be sent to each computer did not run on all computers. Some applications ran perfectly one week, but malfunctioned the next, said Winiwski.

"I think we're facing some real problems—much more than we should've."

Math teacher David Fantegrossi: "Stuff just doesn't work, but once it's working, it's going to be awesome."

English teacher Phyllis Fleischaker: "[Technology Modernization] was not and is not ready."

English teacher Lucas Henry: "They had a lot of work to do this summer, but teachers came in cold, just not knowing how to operate."

History teacher Randall Ravilious: "I think we're facing some real problems—much more than we should've."
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New reports show Blair SAT scores on the rise

Record SAT averages for class of 2004 rank Blair seventh among 23 MCPS high schools

By YICONG LIU

Blair’s SAT average for the class of 2004 increased 20 points from 1128 in 2003 to 1148 in 2004, placing Blair seventh among MCPS high schools, according to data released recently by the College Board.

Last school year’s results reflect Blair’s highest score in the last five years. Blair is among 11 schools in the county with an average score above 1100 and among only three schools where both African American participation and scores have gone up. At Blair, African American scores rose from 902 to 922. On the County level, white and Asian American scores improved, while those of African Americans and Hispanics showed no increase.

The countywide average this year reflects both a record-breaking score of 1102 points and a record-breaking total of 7,263 students who took the test. Both Blair and MCPS averages are above the 2004 national average of 1026.

Principal Chip Gainous commended Blair’s increasing scores but stressed the importance of breaking down score reports between the Magnet and Communications Arts Programs and those of the general population. According to Gainous, the 2004 Magnet SAT average was 1498. “I’d love to be number one,” he said. “I’d love it even more if our regular program were number one.”

Averages scores at Blair are African Americans 922, Hispanics 872, whites 1301 and Asians 1316. African American, white and Asian American group scores improved from last year, while those of Hispanics did not.

MCPS Superintendent of Schools Jerry Weast applauded this year’s outcome in his recent report on SATs as a reflection of initiatives implemented by the school system over the last five years. Such initiatives include increasing rigor in the curriculum, organizing greater intra-county coordination and increasing student enrollment in Advanced Placement and honors level courses.

Following Weast’s initiative, the Blair administration has piloted programs targeting students who have scored around the 800 range to personally encourage them to retake the SAT with additional support from the school. These students, explains Assistant Principal and head of the SAT committee Patricia Hurley, are just shy of the “threshold 1000,” a score that could be a deciding factor in determining scholarship money and admittance into college.

Both Gainous and Hurley agree that it is too early to determine whether such efforts have played a role in Blair’s overall SAT average increase this year. “We can’t draw that conclusion until we’re three to four years down the road,” said Hurley.

At the news conference held at Blair on Sept. 1, MCPS officials praised the rise in SAT scores as proof of the efficacy of continuing efforts and as an indication of poverty playing a less prominent role in standardized tests in MCPS. This year’s increase, according to Weast, included gains in African American students who received free and reduced meals (FARMS). He cited the 17-point increase in African American FARMS score from last year. The FARMS average score has also gone up 16 points.

“I’d love to be number one. I’d love it even more if our regular program were number one.”

According to Statistics teacher David Stein, however, the observed 16-point rise from last year in FARMS average scores shows no evidence of increase when compared to the five-year trend. Similarly, the gap in scores between FARMS and non-FARMS groups shows no significant decrease within the last five years.

MCPS Director of Communications Kate Harrison acknowledges the consistent fluctuation in scores from year to year and the continuing achievement disparity in the county. “There’s still a significant gap, and we need to close that gap,” she said.
Dear Maura and Emma, we miss your spitting of crackers and your whining about dying. Love, B-Lunch crew. Holla

Sydney is so friggin’ hot. I love you, baby girl. You are beautiful on the inside and out.

I don’t know what to say. =)

JOEL POPKIN IS HOT! I LOVE SARAH, JULIE, ELENA, NOLAN, RAYA, JENNY, KATHERINE, PIERS, DIANA and ALL THEM 06 HEADS YO! 06 WILL FOREVER BE REALLY COOL! IF YOU WERE BORN IN THE 90’S YOU’RE WEIRD

I went to the park
I made my mark
Holler at Blair lacrosse!

Ooo a cookie.

What a waste of 50 cents

Hey BJP! May our friendship and comradery last forever! Yellow stays cool. Pink. Keep doing UR thing! Ankle CLAP!

Ellie! We’ll miss you next semester when you go to Italy. Have a blast! Love you! Maddie and Erica. We love you Clair!

I want to give this shout-out to my main mans Ben & Chris. Love you both.

see SHOUTOUTS page 10
Blazers mourn two deaths

Two separate automobile-related deaths in Montgomery County over the past two weeks have hit close to home for many Blazers.

Blair graduate Carlos Brenes, class of 2002, was killed early Saturday, Oct. 2, according to police. "I don’t know if MCPS is doing anything about it," said in a interview.

The goal of the MCPS Department of Transportation is to assure that no students have to stand on any school buses, according to Thompson, but due to the DCC, transportation has spent over a month working on buses this year.

Packed buses leave students seatless

"I don’t know if MCPS is doing anything about it." Based on the assumption that three students can fit in the large bus-seat guidelines are based on a 4-foot-11-inch tall, 102-pound female student, according to the MCPS. The Department of Transportation Planner Randolph Thompson admits seating capacity guidelines are "outdated" because they are not based on high-school-sized students. "Depending on the size of the student, you can’t always fit three to a seat," said Ed Beck, Maryland Department of Education Pupil Transportation Director, to Silver Chips in February.

"There have been no serious grievances. There are some parents with concerns, and my job is to follow through on any complaints," said Thompson.

Currently, Blair has 32 morning school buses and 27 afternoon buses, with the highest student capacity being 72 and the lowest being 45. In addition, there are 23 high-school-sized buses that transport Blair students.

Because of the geographic spread of Blair students under the Downcounty Consortium (DCC), every Blair bus route had to be re-mapped, said Thompson. After receiving final student counts for each stop from each bus driver, Thompson coordenates buses for certain buses during the week of Sept. 28 in order to alleviate bus overcrowding.

Overcrowding persists

Northwood does not alleviate problems

Despite the reopening of Northwood and the launch of the Downcounty Consortium (DCC) this year, Blair is overcrowded for the sixth consecutive year and will continue to be overcrowded for several years, according to DCC Senior Planner Bruce Crispell.

As of Sept. 30, 3,323 students were enrolled at Blair, which is 492 over the planned capacity of 2,831.

This year, Blair has a total of 937 freshmen, as of Sept. 24. MCPS predicted that 822 freshmen would attend Blair last May. However, nine more students are expected to enroll at Blair each day, according to Resource Counselor Karen Hunt.

Additional problems were not requested because there is no more space to add beyond the seven portable classroom of the school, according to Principal Philip Gainous. More portable classes would use student parking or athletic fields, Gainous said. Also, juniors and seniors were asked again to share lockers in order to tackle the 359-locker shortage, according to Security Guard John Toombs.

Overcrowding persists

Northwood does not alleviate problems

By STEPHANIE NGUYEN

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Blair Cluster Representative Ray Scannell identified additional safety concerns related to overcrowding, such as a greater potential for violent outburst. "There is always a possibility of a fight flaring up with so many kids in here," he said.

Scannell also emphasized the increased difficulty for Blair to control pedestrian safety, citing last year’s school-wide evacuation during a power outage in which a Blair student was struck by an SUV while crossing University Boulevard. "We’re a disaster waiting to happen," Scannell said.

Although Northwood was supposed to relieve 200 freshmen from Blair’s population, according to PTSA Co-President Fran Rothstein, it did not, in part because incoming freshmen were granted their first choices in the DCC. According to Crispell, students opted to go to Blair instead of Northwood, due to its strong academic reputation. Gainous agreed with Crispell, adding, "The good news is everybody wants to come to Blair. The bad news is everybody’s coming to Blair.”
Jessica sweats Naco cuz she’s a beast!

This is that game where we each write a word. Shoutout to my magnet homies on all roofs all above the party (not!) and run on featherless chickens. It’s my life to do so don’t tell him, ok? Swingin’ in the trees with you is a dream undone I splattered.

GNC… that’s what I’m talking about! You’re such a hater.

“05” Finally we made it, well almost! I want to tell all my buddies that I love you guys so much! Especially to my ladies Thaissa, Karina, Elly, Julie, & my lovely sister Deana! “Muah”

Aden, Will you go out with me?

Naco sweats Clair cuz she’s a crazy beast! But not as much as Janice!

Janice is a BEAST! Morgan & Doug are slumming for not picking me as a host on Rapid Fire.

Just wanted to give a shout out to the seniors 05, especially FBI, Raz, Rice, and Chauna. Happy Birthday, Raz!

06!!! Holla @ all my people: Chris Stavish I love you… and everybody else!!! Peace out, Thaissa

This is for Kiran Belani! YOU ROCK!

Kiran Belani is the awesomest ever!

Hey Nuhu and Nandini, you know who you are. Thank you so much for sticking by me and being true friends. Love ya always

I wanna give a shout-out to the JV football team and all my magnet friends (you know who you are)

Pawel, Jess, Collin, George, Shagee & Sam! You guys rock my lunch!! I love you, guys, Class of ’07 W00T!

Christine Kim

Jessie and Devon are the tightest people I know

Dear everyone, we can’t think of 20 words. We love you all. Well, at least most of you. LOLMAOROFL!!

Shoutout to Girls’ Tennis—we are an amazing team full of amazing people. Way to go Blazers blue chips!
Lack of funds delays Center
Takoma Park Community Center to open in spring 2005

By SALLY LAMAR

The prospective opening for the new Takoma Park Community Center (TPCC) has been postponed from October 2004 to late spring 2005 because of a lack of funds and construction problems, according to Takoma Park City officials.

The city still does not have the necessary $430,000 for the building to open in late spring 2005, said Ward 3 Council Member Bruce Williams. Additional funds are essential to furnishing the community center, but there are no definite sources for the necessary revenue to complete construction, nor to furnish the building, according to City Manager Barbara Matthews.

Because of the revenue shortfall, construction cannot begin as planned on a large modern gymnasium, a feature Takoma Park citizens widely advocated, said city officials. Due to the lack of funds, the community center will not have the highly-anticipated section of the Victorian-style façade that would have wrapped around the Takoma Park Library.

The loss of the gymnasium disappointed junior Sam Morris because the city’s church and school gymnasiums are usually in use, he said, and he and his friends often have trouble finding a place to play sports.

The lack of funds arose in part from the discovery of a 100-year floodplain, an area where there is a chance of serious flooding once every 100 years, on the site of construction at the corner of Philadelphia and Maple Avenues where the current Municipal Building is located, said city officials. The city, forced to comply with Montgomery County regulations, spent an unexpected $1 million to meet floodPLAIN engineering requirements.

The previous City Council’s decision to build the TPCC without all the necessary funds also contributed to the revenue shortfall. The Council made the decision in 2000, at a time of relative economic prosperity, explained Larry Rubin, a former City Council member. There was absolutely no idea whatsoever that we’d have to make a cutback,” he said in reference to the gym.

Despite the loss of funds, the TPCC will still include offices for city officials; an art room with a kiln; separate rooms for seniors and senior citizens with access to table-top and board games; general meeting spaces; and a spacious, four-room computer lab, according to Recreation Department Director Debra Haiduv.

Although Blazars who live in the Takoma Park area said they would use the TPCC’s new features, some of them were discontent with the city’s efforts. Senior Heather Baker expressed frustration with the slow pace of construction and its unattractive appearance. “I’m glad that it’s being fixed up, but I think it needs to be done quicker,” she said.

Some Takoma Park Blazars, however, remained unaware of both the new features the TPCC would include and of the postponed opening. Senior Saundra Cruz-Abruzo, who did not know the TPCC was being built, wondered if the lack of information could be a source of the fund shortfall.

“When [the city government] needs community support, the community isn’t advised and can’t say whether or not it wants certain features,” she said.

Newsbriefs compiled by Ravi Umarji with additional reporting by Seema Kacker and Renee Park

GUIDANCE CORNER

Seniors interested in participating in the 2005 Student Page Program for the Maryland General Assembly, a program in which students distribute materials, run errands, answer the phone and deliver messages to members of the Maryland General Assembly should contact MCPS Student Affairs Coordinator Karen Crawford at (301) 279-4957.

Resource Counselor Karen Hunt reminds students of the following upcoming deadlines:

- Oct. 9—SAT I and II administered
- Oct. 13—PSAT administered
- Oct. 15—No school: Maryland State Teachers Convention
- Oct. 18—ACT administered
- Oct. 29—End of first marking period
- Registration deadline for Dec. 4 SAT I and II
- Nov. 1—No school: Professional Day
- Principal Pre-Election
- Nov. 5—Registration deadline for Dec. 11 ACT
- Nov. 6—SAT I and II administered

HONORS

- Senior David Crawford won third place in the Ayn Rand Institute 2004 Essay Competition. Crawford is one of five third-place winners to receive $1,000 for his essay based on Rand’s book, The Fountainhead.
- Senior Shervin Geng won second place in the 2004 National Student Press Association Story of the Year Award for features. See story online.

The Takoma Park Community Center (TPCC), at the corner of Philadelphia and Maple Avenues, is currently under construction and will open in the spring of 2005. Photo by Nathaniel Lichten
Hey to everyone who wished me a happy B-day. I love you guys. Oh, and thanks for my gift Oscar—I got you next time, lol. Yasmin

GIRLS’ VOLLEYBALL rocks our (schoolgirl-knee) socks! #8 & 9 & 77

Dana, you rock my world! HAPPY BIRTHDAY and I hope you got everything you want and more! Jane is stupid!!!

Congrats to Stephanie Lobos for being single for about 7 months. Dats a miracle girl FINALLY

If your man is bad for you, break up with him. You know who you are

WOOT Blair Frisbee is the awesome! Koalas and lizard rabbits and apocalypse cows!!! OH SNAP! Come join us! Whee flying discs...

Tommy Dugan—I love you. I stare at you during AP Econ. <3

Silver Chips Online: The juice is worth the squeeze

We love you, Wasserman! Not really… we’re just happy, bye

SUE, TRUC MAI, AMANDA, and ANNIE SAY HI TO MICHAEL UNG — I LOVE YOU MICHAEL, from SUE

Hello Srikanth! U have a secret admirer. It’s my last year at Blair, marry me! I LOVE YOU!!

Happy sweet seventeenth, Yuminizzle! Live this year up… come next October. MC will be ILLEGAL — wink — TYVESTRONG forever!

Young Smith, Michelle A, Bob, Lil shells Bim, Dayo Sheldon, Jason M, A.B., ADB, Baby Jeff, Sandman Heem, Mikey, The football team.

**NOW HIRING...**

The YMCA of silver spring Aquatic Department is currently hiring. Looking for responsible individuals to fill positions of swim instructors, lifeguards, swim coaches, and water aerobics instructors. All certifications must be current.

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Saturday 8:00 am to 5:00 pm
Blazers in Politics

By Emily Kate Hamraiel

SGA president calls for action

Junior Sebastian Johnson swaggered down Blair Boulevard. He casually waves hello to a passing friend, gives a high five to another. He walks on. From a bench, he hears, “Yo Sebastian, what’s up?” He goes over to talk, and introduces himself to a boy sitting at the same bench. He sticks out his hand, ready to shake. “Hi, I’m Sebastian Johnson, SGA president. It’s nice to meet you.” This is Johnson’s domain. Johnson is a model, and Blair Boulevard is his runway.

Although some consider the SGA to be insignificant, Johnson is a way of allowing students to express their opinions. He says the purpose of the SGA is to represent all students at Blair. “We have 4,000 people with different opinions. They all want something different, and I represent them all,” he says as he continues walking.

Johnson encourages all teenagers to get involved in politics. “It’s a responsibility every citizen has,” he says, “and it’s important that any person can do. You can do this by learning about candidates and taking an active role in politics. It’s a responsibility every citizen has,” he says, “and even teens.”

SGR members follow campaign trail

She pounds on the door. No answer. With a yawn, she knocks again. The door opens slowly. “Hi, my name is Emma. Will you be voting in the upcoming election?” The door slams shut. She is used to this sort of rejection, and she quickly moves on to the next house. This morning, junior Emma Hutchinson is in Pennsylvania canvassing for Lois Murphy, a Democrat running for Congress.

Hutchinson, along with several members of Blair’s Students for Global Responsibility (SGR) and the non-partisan group America Coming Together based in Washington, D.C., traveled to Pennsylvania to canvass, going door-to-door to persuade people to vote for Murphy. While canvassing, Hutchinson says she was surprised by the number of people who didn’t know who Murphy was or, worse yet, didn’t care. “Some people had no idea,” she says. “So, by the end of the day, Hutchinson’s collection of students had canvassed over 1,000 residences, and she came to the conclusion that even if teens can’t vote, they can make a difference in other ways. “It’s important, even if you can’t vote, to do other things to ensure that those who [vote] make informed decisions,” she says. After she had finished canvassing, Hutchinson left with a sense of pride and the hope that more people would be voting because of her efforts.

Young Democrats involve students

It’s Thursday at 3:00 p.m., and sophomore Adam Yalowitz stands in front of the 60 students who have come to the first meeting of Blair’s Young Democrats Club. The club was formed after several Democratic students were upset that they had no place to express their opinions. Yalowitz and Co-President sophomore Eve Gleichman founded the club in hopes of getting more students involved in politics.

Yalowitz tells the club the that he hopes to bring Democratic speakers to Blair, get students to volunteer for the Kerry campaign and go canvassing. A sign-up sheet is passed around the classroom, and the same sheet is then sent around at Blair’s Club Fair. By the end of both, the list has over 130 names on it.

Yalowitz believes that there are countless opportunities for teens to get involved in the presidential election. “Volunteer on Election Day, go to the polls, go to events; canvass in swing states,” he raffles off.

He reiterates what a significant difference volunteers can make. “When it comes down to it, all the small things make a big difference,” he says.

Blazer ACTs on his beliefs

It’s a Thursday night, and senior William Dreher is interning at America Coming Together (ACT), just as he has for the past four months. Tonight, the building—just a block from the White House and in the heart of D.C.’s political circle—is nearly empty. Dreher sits in a small room, surrounded by what he refers to as “gear”—shirts, bags and windbreakers that ACT sends out to its state offices. Some days are more interesting than others, like when he compiles lists of voters for people canvassing to visit, but tonight he is counting windbreakers, dividing them into stacks of 12 to be mailed out in the morning.

Dreher explains that he is one of the few high-school students who intern at ACT, and he is one of his only peers who is involved in a campaign.

Dreher argues that teens must start getting involved now. “All the issues affect us now or will affect us in the future. For example, college: The prices are going up. This is definitely a factor for all students,” he says, placing another windbreaker in the stack and finishing a box.

For Dreher, his volunteering experience is one that will continue to affect him, and he encourages all teens to get politically involved. “Every time you knock on a door, you can make a difference,” Dreher says. “If you register ten people to vote, you’ve created ten votes. Go volunteer, make a change, and it will have a positive impact. You don’t have to cast a ballot to do that.”

“The ballot is stronger than bullets.”

-Joseph Schumpeter
Future Olympians
Blazers spend long hours training for the gold

By PRIA ANAND

Junior Michael Reives was eight years old when he first realized that he had the potential to make a name for himself running track. He began running when a friend noticed his speed, and soon after, Reives qualified to compete in the Junior Olympics. Both male and female Blazers participate in more than 200-meter events. He started commuting nightly to Washington, D.C., for three-hour training sessions. His goals and motivations soared as his running times dropped. Reives set his sights on the 2012 Olympic Games.

During his middle-school years, however, Reives began to question the sacrifices he had made for his sport. He quit once before rejoining the team and soon stopped training in the off-season. Finally, at the end of his freshman year, after seven years of training, Reives put away his running spikes to focus on academics. For him, Olympic gold had lost its luster.

Especially after the hype and coverage of the 2004 Athens Olympics, turning down such a chance at international acclaim seems unimportant. Yet, for Reives and others, however, the prospect of Olympic success isn’t quite enough. According to the Institute for the Study of Youth Sports, 50 percent of competitive student athletes quit their sports by early adolescence in favor of school, social life or after-school jobs. Regardless, these students’ aspirations have left an indelible mark on their lives.

Olympic aspirations
Junior Yao Xu’s earliest taste of Olympic dreams came while competing in his first table-tennis tournament. Nervous and flustered, a ninth-year-old Xu arrived at the Junior Olympic competition in Virginia with few expectations and no paddle. He played his best with a borrowed paddle and, surprisingly, won his first two events. It was then that Xu knew that he had the makings of an Olympian.

Xu’s serious ambitions led him to a committed training program. “If you have time, you practice: Friday afternoons, Saturday mornings, Sunday nights,” he says. “I played against my teammates, my coaches, even a robot.”

After successfully competing in the Junior Olympics, Reives saw the Olympics as the next logical step, but the realization of his promise came later in his athletic career. “My first year, all I wanted was to quit, I did so badly,” he says.

Stephanie Verdugoza complains. Cookies are better than no lunch at all.

There are days when, at the end of a lunch period, students are still waiting in line to receive food, according to Vice Principal Linda Wanner. “I hate lunch duty, quite frankly,” she says. “[Students] come up to me and say, ‘Ms. Wanner, I don’t want to stand in line for 40 minutes.’ So I say, ‘Well, go sit down for a minute.’ But there’s nowhere for them to sit.”

“I played against my teammates, my coaches, even a robot.”

Future Olympians spend long hours training for the gold. Do you welcome the sacrifices of your athletes as well? Do you have any tips on helping student-athletes manage their time and training demands? Please share your insights in the comments section.
Paying the price for college advice

By ANI WOLFMAN-ARENT

Walking into the office of Dr. Lori Potts-Dupré is not like walking in for a checkup with your family physician. Operating from an office hidden in the heart of downtown Takoma Park, Potts-Dupré offers visitors a piece of candy and a contagious smile instead of a scale and a stethoscope. That is because Potts-Dupré, a private educational consultant, does not check her clients’ heart rates—she checks their high-school transcripts.

Potts-Dupré has been a private educational consultant since 1996, guiding clients through the often nerve-wracking college admissions process. An increasing number of people agree that a private consultant is worthwhile. USA Today reported in April 2003 that six percent of high-school graduates received professional help in the college selection process, up from one percent in 1990. That number is expected to double in the next ten years. Some experts, however, say that parents and students are over-investing in college counselors.

From obscurity to necessity

The services of a private college counselor are not cheap. According to the 2005 edition of Newsweek’s Kaplan College Guide, consultants can cost between $300 and $7,500. Still, Potts-Dupré says she has a waiting list of clients willing to pay the $500 for the first session and $200 for every 90-minute session thereafter. These fees pay for a wide variety of services. College Bound, a company in Rockville, provides a typical menu of private counseling services: evaluating students’ academic credentials, recommending high-school course selections and the best times to take standardized tests, developing a list of college choices and helping families with college visits.

A fork in the college road

Some Blaziers believe private college counselors provide a vital service. Senior Will Sprecher has been visiting a private college counselor for the last year. “[My counselor] is solely devoted to finding schools and is focused on finding the right college for me,” says Sprecher.

Other students resist their parents’ suggestions to see a college counselor. “I just don’t want to take the time to talk to a counselor. . . . [College] is too far away, and I don’t think I need to do that right now.”

Big bucks do not guarantee thick envelopes

Joyce Slatyon Mitchell, author of Winning the Heart of the College Admissions Dean and Director of College Advising at Nightingale-Bamford School in New York City, believes that parents spend too much money on consultants who do not improve their child’s chances of getting into the college of his or her choice. Mitchell says parents are often scared into thinking that their child cannot compete against other applicants, when in reality there are plenty of good schools with relatively low rejection rates. “If the 350 top colleges, 250 are not that competitive but are fabulous schools,” Mitchell says.

Although Mitchell generally discourages the use of private college counselors, she thinks they are helpful to kids at large schools like Blair, where school counselors cannot meet individual needs. However, since school counselors have direct input in the college selection process, Mitchell believes private counselors can jeopardize students’ relationships with their school counselor. “The [high-school] counselors write the letters, and they talk to the schools,” Mitchell says. “They are the ones who recommend or don’t recommend you.”

Mitchell believes an advantage private-school students have is that they often have multiple meetings with representatives from elite schools before applying. “Now one kid in New York is in all the way to Harvard, Penn and Yale. Connections are everything,” she says.

The decision of a lifetime

Potts-Dupré argues that private college counselors are a smart investment because picking the right college can be a life-changing decision. “You’re going to spend a lot of money to send your kid to college; it’s going to be four or five years of their life,” says Potts-Dupré. “To spend $50,000 to $80,000 a year and the time and money to make the process as thorough as possible is a good thing.”

Potts-Dupré contends that her services are invaluable because of the interaction she has with her students. “More than anything, [my job] is sitting down one-on-one and talking about everything.”

According to Mitchell’s book, the college admissions business, which includes SAT prep courses, private college counselors, has become a $500 million-a-year industry. And although it is debatable whether the services Potts-Dupré and other private college counselors offer are worth the bill, one thing is certain: The doctor is in.

The LiveStrong band: fundraiser or fad?

By KARIMA TAWFIK

AP World History teacher James Mogge wears the bright yellow band around his wrist both to support his brother and as inspiration to stay off cigarettes; senior Kate Johnston wears it because she saw it in People Magazine and decided to purchase one a few days later; and junior Anna Chiplis decided not to buy the bracelet, even though her father recently passed away due to cancer.

Engraved with the words “LiveStrong,” these yellow rubber bracelets can be spotted on students and teachers alike on Blair Boulevard as part of the Lance Armstrong Foundation’s campaign to raise money for cancer research and education. They have passed the $12 million mark in sales all over the world. But with celebrities like Matt Damon, Lincoln Chibiso, Ashley Olsen and even both President George W. Bush and Presidential candidate John Kerry sporting the LiveStrong bracelet, these yellow bands have become more than just a fundraiser—they are embedded into this fall’s fashion.

With their popularity growing, some Blaziers fear the original message of the LiveStrong band is being lost. “The whole idea of the band is integration, not just México, but also the world,” senior Stefanie Samarripa, a Media and Public Relations intern at the Lance Armstrong Foundation, says.

A lost meaning

The publicity that has come with the LiveStrong bands has irritated Chiplis, whose dad was diagnosed with Chronic Lymphocytic Leukemia, a cancer of the blood, five years ago. After dealing with her father’s failed bone marrow transplant in March, she turned to other sources of hope, among them the Buddhist religion, where “nobody ever really dies.” Instead of commemorating her father through a LiveStrong band, Chiplis wears a heart-shaped locket that features her father’s photo.

“Wear yellow, LiveStrong”

For Mogge, the original message of the LiveStrong bracelet is integrated into aspects of his everyday life. When Mogge’s brother was diagnosed with a malignant tumor in his kidney this summer, Mogge’s sister-in-law bought some bracelets from the hospital, and Mogge and his brother wears the bands in hopes that “whatever obstacles we may face, we may overcome them,” Mogge says.

A few years ago, Mogge faced cancer himself; after removing a melanoma on his face contracted from overexposure to the sun, he now wears a LiveStrong band as a reminder of health’s fragility. Now, when given the chance to pick up a cigarette, instead

Cross-country team members model LiveStrong bands on Sept. 23. The LiveStrong bracelets were created by the Lance Armstrong Foundation to raise money for cancer research. Because of supporters like these Blaziers, more than 12 million bands have been purchased worldwide. Photo by Adam Schuyler

Page 20
It was like hell, a big nightmare, you don’t know whether or not he’s dead.”

"Iraq is steeped in history. It is the site of the Garden of Eden, of the Great Flood and the Garden of Gath. It is the site of the first real battle in history. It is the site of the first real war in history. It is the site of the first real siege in history. It is the site of the first real invasion in history. It is the site of the first real occupation in history. It is the site of the first real revolution in history. It is the site of the first real civil war in history.

On March 20, 2003, Lieutenant Tim Collins gave the order to his battle group, the 1st Battalion of the Royal Irish at Fort Blair Mayne desert camp, to move to the front line. The Iraqis had been occupying the United States, whom they view not as a “liberator” but as a foreign invader.

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BLAZE ON BLAZERS: R + P + V + N. Word to your mother!!

Happy Birthday Yuning!
Yo

Happy Anniversary to Stephanie and Nascar and to Yasmin and Carlos! Also Happy B-day Yasmin

Hey Yasminie! Happy Birthday! We are graduating, GO Class of 2004! -Love Kelly and Elysia

50 cents for this shoutout? Giving it up to the golf team holding it down. Bill is a slacker-golfer

Magnet Pride '06 Come and Get it!! Austin Fang is hot! Ravi Joseph is sexy!!!

Let's go BLAIR FIELD HOCKEY!! We rock!!

Hi SHOUT OUT to Elena, F. Carney, Danjaninj, DJ, Foobah, Rose, Christine, Morgano, Russell, Harris, Natalie, Molly, LUCY SAMUEL we miss you, Sydney, Bess, Em-k, Dietrich, Sam Sil, Douglass, Tyty, Peter, Hayley, Monkey Boy, you are all awesome!

GO AWAY STRESS!!!!!!

see SHOUTOUTS page 26
Salvador

The top three causes of illness-related deaths in El Salvador are diarrhea, respiratory infections and parasitic diseases, according to the Public Broadcasting Service. In Mazatepeque, we saw some of these conditions on a daily basis.

Mazatepeque was created out of the 1992 Peace Accords that marked the end of a bitter civil war in El Salvador. During the war, peasants, students and blue-collar workers banded together as guerillas revolting against an oppressive government that had been violating human rights for decades. Perceiving the guerillas as Communists, the U.S. aided the Salvadoran government by equipping and training an army that kidnapped over 30,000 people and carried out large-scale massacres of women and children, according to an article by Tom Gibb, a correspondent during the war.

Thousands of Salvadorans have left home to pursue a better life. Twenty percent of the Salvadoran population currently lives abroad, mainly in America.

By Olivia Bevacqua

He was so skinny you could actually see his heart beating hard against his skin. A tiny boy with jutting ribs and toothpick arms, he looked more like an eight-year-old than his actual age of 13. His name was Moises.

Moises is a victim of malnutrition and heart disease. He was one of dozens of Salvadoran children I met this summer when I traveled with a group of doctors, dentists and Blair teens to build a medical clinic and school in two rural villages of El Salvador. The trip was a project of International Partners, an organization that supports local leaders who are committed to developing self-sustaining communities in areas of extreme poverty. For 17 days, we lived in mud-brick houses without running water or plumbing, building a medical clinic and peering into a world that was both foreign and familiar.

Chickens and roaches

In the village of Mazatepeque I stayed in a two-room, mud-brick house with two other delegates and a family of six. Bits of dirt from the walls and ceiling would sometimes fall onto my face at night. In the house where my friends were staying, you could see stars through the holes in the roof.

Horses, cows, chickens and pigs wandered freely through the village, defecating all over the roads and in people’s yards. We almost died laughing the morning our friend, yelling in horror, found a chicken roosting in his hat.

Located outside the houses were cement cylinder-toilets resting atop a pit in the earth, surrounded by a ramshackle structure made out of anything available—blankets, tree branches, strips of metal. At night, three-inch-long cockroaches would crawl inside the rims.

All day, the children who were too young to be in school would play. I come from a middle-class world of protective parents who make their kids look both ways before crossing the street, so it was strange to see children having swordfights with rusty wires, playing at construction sites or walking around with machetes.

The walls of poverty

Poverty surrounded us. I saw it in the bony bodies of malnourished children, rotting teeth and torn clothes that people wore for days at a time. It was evident in teens wearing flip-flops on their hands as gloves during softball games and women using cardboard as potholders while they cooked.

Some differences were less visible. It took me several days to realize that Irene, the skinny, pale ten-year-old who helped serve our meals, wasn’t going to school. Her mother wanted her to help in the kitchen, she explained. Oscar, the handsome 15-year-old in whose house I was living, was skipping school so that he could help his father in the fields. In Mazatepeque, there are no formal consequences for missing class.

For Blaziers who have recently emigrated from El Salvador, the promise of getting a quality education justifies the sacrifice of leaving their homeland. Sophomore Jose Guevara-Garcia, who immigrated five months ago, says that back in his city of Anomoros, the schools offer fewer programs, teachers and computers, and school days are only four hours long.

Freshman Tomas Guevara claims that she misses “everything” about El Salvador, and plans to return. “But live there?” she says. “No. I need to stay where my future will be better.”

A broken heart

Despite the poverty, the people have a richness of spirit evident in the joy they experience with the resources at hand. The children spend hours making games with marbles, sticks—or in my case, caterpillars.

I was swimming in the river when the children attacked. The boys had noticed my revulsion toward Salvadoran caterpillars—thick, squashy creatures that were easily five inches long and stuck to my shirt like Super Glue. A group of kids, led by Moises, were tossing the dreaded things in my direction. They delighted in my fear and chased me all the way home.

Later that week, our delegation doctor was describing how day after day, he saw children suffering from serious complications of easily preventable diseases. He then explained that Moises had contracted strep throat, which developed into rheumatic fever and caused a disease of the heart valves because he never received treatment. Now, if he doesn’t receive open-heart surgery, he will die.

In that moment, the poverty became personal. I knew Moises and his family—I was living in their house. I felt like I’d been slapped. I learned that Moises’ mother had raised the necessary $4,000 for his surgery through non-governmental organizations, but I also learned that in most cases, poverty trumps any hope rural people have in combating such diseases.

Building a dream

The story of Moises gave us a new sense of purpose in constructing the clinic. Every day, we would mix and pour cement, lay down cinder blocks and level the ground. The walls of the clinic grew taller and taller, and one day we woke to find that the villagers had begun building the roof. Prior to our project, the nearest access to medical supplies was several miles away, accessible by horseback over dirt roads dotted with craters and sometimes submerged by six inches of water.

We stocked the medical clinic with supplies, including the antibiotics Moises would have needed to prevent his condition. After two weeks of lifting, stacking and sweating, the finished building looked surprisingly small.

It stood on a slight hill, its gray cinderblocks standing out against the morning sky. Behind it, in the distance, stood the remains of another clinic, bombed during the war and covered in ivy that had grown for 12 years.
Breaking it down

Training for the ultimate test: the Olympics

Senior Sanford Hesler practices a few of his moves, including an “airchair,” during the Sept. 15 meeting of the Breakdance Club. The club has been reinstated after controversy over sponsorship last year. Photos by Hannah Rosen

The Rumor around Blair
Preparations underway for the upcoming fall play

By KRISTI CHAKRABARTI

English and Communication Arts teacher Kristi Chakrabarti

English and Communication Arts teacher Kristi Chakrabarti. Anne Cullen will make her directorial debut in the upcoming fall play, Rumors, by Neil Simon. Cullen has taken the job of directing the play to challenge herself but knows that it will be a lot of fun. She chose Rumors because she is very familiar with Simon’s work and thinks that the play is suspenseful and humorous. The play is a fast-paced farce about a high-society New York couple (Charlie and Myra) that invites eight of their best friends to celebrate their tenth wedding anniversary. However, things become complicated when guests arrive at the party and find Charlie’s dead body, a suicide note and no Myra. The ten-member cast of Rumors is relatively small compared to that of previous Blair productions. According to sophomore Josh Griner (Officer Welch), the cast and crew of last year’s production of The Merry Widow totaled close to 100, and the cast itself was well over 30. However, because of Rumors’ smaller size, the members have quickly become acquainted with each other’s dynamics. “There is really good chemistry between all of us,” says senior Alex Gersh, who plays Ken Gorman. Assistant director and senior Elise Harvey says that having a smaller cast with mostly veteran actors fits Cullen well because she can learn from them as much as they can learn from her. Harvey says that Cullen plans to have a larger ensemble cast for the spring musical, which can’t be revealed—of around 60 people. According to Harvey, a major difference between Rumors and other plays is that one set will encompass the entire stage. The large set, with stairs, opening doors and a balcony, requires the students to be aware of their surroundings. “The cast has to learn to use that space, they must work with the props and not only with each other,” says Harvey.

Written in 1988, Rumors is one of Neil Simon’s later works, and though the play is relatively modern, Gersh says that the play is still compelling. “The cast has to learn to use that space, they must work with the props and not only with each other,” says Harvey.

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Breaking through the color barrier

For multiracial Blazers, past prejudices fade as students learn to embrace their cultures

By Chelsea Zhang

When senior Saskia Alemar visits her mother’s relatives in Singapore, her brown hair and white skin single her out in a wave of black-haired heads. She has difficulty pronouncing Chinese inflections and overcoming an American accent. Even her walking style is American; her Singaporean aunts tell her to put her shoulders back, chest out and stomach in. But despite appearing white, Alemar is multiracial—Chinese, white and Hispanic.

Though Alemar’s background may stand out in Singapore, she has plenty of multiracial peers in the U.S. Since the Supreme Court overturned all laws against interracial marriage in 1967, the number of such couples has more than quadrupled, as revealed by the 2000 Census. Among seven million multiracial individuals are four million teens—a fast-growing, increasingly-accepted population, according to Silver Spring psychologist William Shore. Despite facing scattered prejudice in the outside world, mixed Blazers are readily fitting into Blair’s diverse community.

An easy fit

In talks with Blair students, Shore has detected no intolerance of multiracial backgrounds, unlike at other area schools. His students describe Blair as a “melting pot kind of place,” where they feel comfortable with different races and cultures.

Junior Zainub Aslam feels that coming from Egyptian and Indian families should not, and does not, affect her social life. “I don’t feel like I have to be in a specific race to fit in,” she remarks. “I don’t feel weird being unique.”

For junior Joanne Rogers, a black and white background means freckles, springy curls, a skin tone sometimes mistaken for Hispanic and a ticket past Blair’s race-based color cliques. “Just from looking around the school, there are definitely different places where different races are, and that’s really sad. But I can go around places without feeling awkward,” says Rogers.

Today’s multiracial teens strike freelance journalist John DiConsiglio, who has interviewed them for a Scholastic Choices article, as comfortable and confident. He credits their acceptance to multi-racial celebrities like actor Keans Reeves, singer Mariah Carey and golf legend Tiger Woods. Climbing interracial marriage rates also come into play, pushing multiracial families to define themselves, grow and become models for society, says Shore.

In fact, junior Josh Gist lives in a disparate family able to resolve its differences. The black Christian on his dad’s side and white Jews on his mom’s get along, and Gist celebrates both Christmas and Chanukah.

The old stigma of mixed race has faded enough that Gist says his friends don’t even notice his different background. “Being biracial doesn’t make you stand out. It just makes you know you’re different,” he says.

However, English teacher Sandra Ivey believes Blair might be a “pseudo-world” that tolerates diversity and shields multiracial teens from harsher realities outside, where the need to categorize still exists. Growing up in the past, Ivey felt denied of her multiple heritages—Hispanic, European and indigenous Caribbean—when she attended a predominantly-white school in New York. “You lived in an either-or society. You never fit in anywhere, and that’s where some people wanted you to be,” she says.

Reflection of the past

California State University psychology professor Jean Phinney notes that while multiracial young adults are more accepted today, their appearances still present an issue. “Many people still react negatively to anyone who looks different from them or can’t easily be placed in a category,” Phinney says.

Away from the Blair community, Rogers has witnessed this unease firsthand. Her light skin color sometimes catches stares when she goes out with her black dad, as it did when she attended her grandfather’s funeral in Farmville, Virginia, a city where some black and white churches are still separate.

Aslam faced similar discrimination as a member of a dance team before attending Blair. Her self-dubbed “coffee-colored” skin tone set her apart from the mostly black girls. They accepted black newcomers over her, sometimes making fun of her if she could not learn a step or move, she says.

According to DiConsiglio, remnants of intolerance from decades ago still linger, pressuring multiracial individuals to identify themselves as of one race. “There’s still prejudice,” he observes, “still people who kind of look at them funny and say, ‘pick one.’”

Best of both worlds

Alemar’s unique family, however, mixes the perks of all of her heritages. Her father tries to cook all her favorite dishes, and she is multiracial—Chinese, white and Hispanic. Her mother’s international work at the Singaporean Embassy and the World Bank in Washington, D.C., has inspired her to pursue East Asian Studies.

Proud that his half-white, half-Filipino background lets him connect to multiracial students, magnet computer science teacher Dennis Heidler sees an optimistic future in which widespread interracial marriages will blend all racial lines. He predicts, quoting comedian Paul Rodriguez, that “everybody worldwide will eventually look like a Filipino, with slightly olive skin and dark hair.”

And breaking racial rules of old is what multiracial Blazers do. “For people who are multiracial, you shouldn’t think of it as a burden,” Alemar says. “You’re in-between, but at the same time, you’re extraordinary.”

Jazzing it up

For multiracial students, past prejudices fade as students learn to embrace their cultures.
Drowning in the language of learning

When friends become benefit buddies

Endless buzzwords and catchphrases of edubabble get lost in the translation for students

By AMANDA LEE

B

lazers, be warned—before your teacher administers his next performance assessment to evaluate your understanding of the previous unit's content objectives, make sure you can answer the curriculum's essential questions. And don't plan on writing an essay to demonstrate indicators of core learning goals; ECRs are what the HSA mandates.

First, however, you'll have to figure out what all of this language actually means. "edubabble," actually means.

According to http://www.word-spy.com, "edubabble" is a term used to describe the many cryptic buzzwords used in teaching. Although some educators have been rolling their eyes at edubabble for years, these catchphrases have trickled into the classroom, creating a vast vocabulary of confusing jargon that both students and teachers must master.

SUSPICIOUS SYNONYMS

Students usually encounter edubabble when familiar classroom terms mysteriously morph into mystifying vocabulary. Suddenly, next week's test is now a performance assessment or a culminating exercise, as in senior Austin Grant's Latin class. Those questions he answered on his scantron are not multiple choice but rather selected response, and his essays and paragraphs have become Extended Constructed Responses (ECRs) and Brief Constructed Responses (BCRs).

To such arbitrary changes come from the way school systems adopt reforms. After educational experts at universities and private consulting firms publish new research, they market their ideas to school systems. As According to http://www.sciencegeek.net/lingo.html. According to the MSA (Maryland State Assessment) and an extended BCR. According to the MSA (Maryland State Assessment) and an extended BCR.

"Okay Napoleon, time for another idea," said Dr. Charles Miron, a certified sex therapist and clinical psychologist. "We should hook up sometime," he said. "If there's less emotional responsibility, there's no worry," he says.

Friends-with-benefits relationships don't always work according to plan, however. "There's always the possibility that one person ends up wanting more, maybe expecting it to turn into a romantic relationship. People think they're in it just for physical attraction, but, subconsciously, they grow attached," explains Susan Yudt, editor of the Planned Parenthood Federation of America's web site for young people seeking information about sexual health.

Senior Phuson Hulamm's experience with friends-with-benefits confirm Yudt's theory. "I've been in a friends-with-benefits relationship where I ended up wanting more," he says. "I was holding my soul in the palm of my hands, and what does she do? She slaps my hand, and my heart and soul fall to the ground. I felt like I was used the whole time."

Hulamm's situation, in which one-sided emotions develop, is common, according to Amy Silver Chips. "People go into these relationships thinking they're on the same page, while really they both want different things, which often causes someone to feel used," she says.

Another emotional risk: friends-with-benefits often causes remorse once the relationship ends. "You're more likely to do something you might regret later on that you were in an actual relationship," explains junior Clare Marshall. "It's a lot easier to get caught up in the moment in friends-with-benefits; it can be way too much, too fast."

Friends-with-benefits also complicates relationships once the break-up. "It ruins friendships. Things get awkward and people are confused. It pushes the line too much in between friends-with-benefits; it can be way too much, too fast."

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Speaking of good stories, my ceiling caved in on my face yesterday."

-Sept. 17, 11:41 a.m., senior courtyard

"Because I'm a cowboy, and that's how I like to run my range."

-Sept. 8, 12:58 a.m., room 100

"I ran over a suicidal sheep in the barnyard."

-Sept. 14, 12:06 p.m., 1505 hallway

"Okay Napoleon, time for a bath!"

-Sept. 18, third period, room 317

Terms compiled by http://www.sciencegeek.net/lingo.html

An Education in Edubabble

Features

Learning-intensive curriculum

enhance open-ended networks

performance-based

orchestrate discipline-based learning

assess benchmark empower implement

Subjective critical thinking

Objectives:

Students will be able to identify forms of edubabble?

Agenda:

-go over hw-

-study terms

Graphic by Sheila Rajagopal

ByELIZABETH PACKER

Samantha Baker sits across from her long-time crush Jake Ryan, their faces lit by the candles glowing on the birthday cake in between them. This scene from the classic 1980s movie Sixteen Candles ends with Jake asking Samantha out after the two share a kiss.

Oh, the simple days, when romance ruled, and friends were just friends. At Blair, where "going out," "hooking up" and "friends with benefits" are common, the dating lines have been blurred and romance is no longer required for relationships, friendships that in the past, were lit only for physical attraction, now become a "publish or perish" mentality also found among educational consultants; their livelihoods are even more dependent on how many schools buy into their latest, greatest theory.

CATCHPHRASES IN CLASS

Although these terminology changes are frequent for educators, students are only exposed to a fraction of the edubabble produced by undiscerning researchers. For example, a 2004 teacher resource booklet on the learning cycle lists "Assessing, Grading, and Reporting Guidelines" as a glossary of over 75 different educational buzzwords like tool making, effort-based intelligence, Fundamental Life Skills, norm-referenced test and scaffolding.

Discussing the catchphrases are more prevalent, however, than in the endless parade of standardized tests that march through classrooms before fading into obscurity within a few years. When the class of 2005 was in fourth grade, they took a state-administered multiple choice test called the CRT (Criterion Reference Test). At the same time, the Maryland Board of Education was phasing out a new state test called the MSIPAP (Maryland State Performance Assessment Program). By the time current seniors reached eighth grade in 2001, the HSA (High School Assessment) was piloted throughout Maryland public schools. In 2003, the class of 2005 also took the MSA (Maryland State Assessment), replacing the MSIPAP.

Buzzwords that find their way into the classroom, are not necessarily what the students or teachers intend to teach. The students have the possibility that one person is common, according to Amy Silver Chips. "We should hook up sometime," he says. "If there's less emotional responsibility, there's no worry," he says.

friends-with-benefits relationships are not as straightforward as they seem. Junior Carletta Byrd, who has been in a friends-with-benefits relationship, describes a typical situation, in which "My range." said Dr. Charles Miron, a certified sex therapist. "We should hook up sometime," he says. "If there's less emotional responsibility, there's no worry," he says.

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Show destroys wardrobe, self-esteem

What Not to Watch: Two hosts let superficiality trample self-expression, individuality

By JULIA PENN

An opinion

When it comes to TV shows, I’m no PBZ-watching elitist. I’ll be honest: I love the reality shows. Survivor is my religion. The Simple Life is like a car accident that I can’t help but watch. The slob in My Big Fat, Obnox-ious Family is so charasmatic, he’s endearning. And I’m always on the lookout for a new, addictively trashy, voyeuristic experience.

But there’s one show that makes me question my love of all things “real”—TLC’s What Not to Wear. Spewing forth backhanded and contrived jokes and insults, this show’s two fashionable hosts, Stacy London and Clinton Kelly, tear apart their victim’s wardrobe. Not only does the show provide no entertainment value, but its message is all wrong, especially for teenagers struggling to develop their own senses of self.

Of course, I could just turn a blind eye and instead watch an episode of Neighbours that promises to be sublimely ditzy. But What Not to Wear hit too close to home this past year when the hosts “went back to school”—and to one high school in particular: good old Montgomery Blair. Three lucky Blaziers from the class of 2006 were selected to have their senses of style dumped into a trash can, figuratively and literally.

What Not to Wear is based on the false assumption that wearing the hottest fashions will improve your life. “The point of the show is to tell people what not to wear and make them look better,” says senior Susan Blythe-Goodman, one of the Blaziers chosen for a style make-over.

“But that’s a stupid point, because everyone has a different idea about what looks good, so why should the entire world change for [London and Kelly]?”

In reality, London and Kelly are just the messengers, so we guess we shouldn’t necessarily kill them. Rather, we had better aim our darts at the show’s producers and designers, who shamelessly perpetuate a disturbing and damaging trend in popular culture. The way you dress is an extension of who you are, your individual likes and dislikes. But What Not to Wear focuses instead on a standard of beauty that its producers try to impose on everyone. If Principal Phillip Gainous came on Inhofe’s show today announcing a newly-mandated school uniform policy, we would go crazy, legitimately protesting that a form of self-expression has been narrowed away. So when the show’s producers try to impose on everyone, who has a different idea about what looks good, every Blazer built a wardrobe with classic pieces, like a jacket and “learned how to layer for different looks.” After all, as London says so eloquently, “we know that all teens want to fit in.”

Watching the show, I was sickened to see London and Kelly trowze on any unique form of self-expression. They criticize the mismatched socks of senior Erinn Johnson-Long, another Blazer selected for the show. But Johnson-Long always wears mismatched socks—it’s her “thing”—a miniscule act of rebellion that makes her a little different from the masses. (Don’t worry; even after her fashion makeover experience, Johnson-Long still mismatches her socks.)

Like Johnson-Long, the rest of Blair isn’t exactly on the fast-track to conformity either. What Not to Wear may claim to have the best fashion sense around, but Blythe-Goodman admits that she rarely wears the clothes she bought on the show. “Wearing their clothes tells people what I was on the show? But the clothes they picked out don’t look like me,” she says.

From the brutal and inconsiderate way the hosts attack their victims, I don’t understand why anyone want to be on the show in the first place. London called Blythe-Goodman a peace-loving, tree-hugging vegetarian (Blythe-Goodman took it as a compliment). Kelly questioned Johnson-Long’s overallims, saying, “Do you plan to study agriculture? Because that’s great for a field trip through a cow patty.”

When Kelly voices his concerns about one of Johnson-Long’s outfits, London quips that if Johnson-Long wore those clothes to school, she would get stuffed in a locker. London and Kelly can’t get it through their thick, gel-stiffened heads that you don’t have to look in vogue to feel good. They assume everyone needs all-the-rage clothing to be socially accepted.

Sure, everyone likes to dress up sometimes, but other times, you just want to roll out of bed, throw on the old grandma sweater you found at your favorite thrift store and money on over to school. And, contrary to London and Kelly’s mantra, that’s completely acceptable.
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October Crossword
by Katherine Zhang

Across
1. acting/guessing game
9. healthy, potassium-rich fruit
15. to pause before doing
16. destroyed
17. dry and unattainable for farming
18. extremely large
19. General Telephone & Electronics (abbr.)
20. alias
21. a measure of land
25. a series of noises, usually relating to the respiratory system
26. to pester verbally
27. opposite of tardy (two words)
30. Beanie Babies’ company
31. high-resolution infrared radiometer (abbr.)
32. passes with flying colors
33. something that’s sure to win
34. Oct. 8-9 events
37. volcano output
40. theater
41. of or relating to an epode
42. lack of presence
43. Hindu meditation sound
44. largest port in Yemen
45. volcano output
46. empty
49. resembling a cloud
51. what the mail comes through
52. Thespians’ annual short play
53. an indication of laughter, while online
54. a conductor’s tool
55. a conductor’s tool
56. of or relating to an epode
57. negatives
58. a conductor’s tool
59. in French, smooth
60. Baby-sitters’ Club author __________ M. Martin
61. “Oh give me a home, where the buffalo_________”
62. “_____ and behold!”
63. in French, to you (two words)
64. to get rid of
65. noisy cleaning device
66. employees of the FBI, CIA, etc.
67. employees of the FBI, CIA, etc.
68. employees of the FBI, CIA, etc.
69. employees of the FBI, CIA, etc.
70. employees of the FBI, CIA, etc.
71. Halloween treat: trick-or-

Down
1. dance popular in the 1920s
2. lead singer of the Rolling Stones
3. Advanced Studies Institute (abbr.)
4. Voldemort’s real last name
5. preposition
6. prosecutor (abbr.)
7. a flammable substance
8. Theodore Roosevelt’s pet name
9. Kansas: heart of the ______ of America
10. university located on Massachusetts Avenue in D.C. (abbr.)
11. national income (abbr.)
12. innocent, beautiful
13. on a ship, the equivalent of a policeman
14. largest port in Yemen
15. an eagle’s home
16. destroyed
17. dry and unfavorable for farming
18. extremely large
19. General Telephone & Electronics (abbr.)
20. an indication of laughter, while online
21. in French, you
22. in French, you
23. a measure of land
24. a conductor’s tool
25. a conductor’s tool
26. a conductor’s tool
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70. to get rid of
71. to get rid of
72. to get rid of
73. to get rid of

Submit completed crosswords to room 158 by Oct. 18. The winner will receive two free movie tickets to an AFI movie of his/her choice.

Silicon High
by Conor Casey

Psst! Amy! D’you think Alan is sleeping in class again? I think so, yeah.

He’s in for it now. Ms. Geer said if she caught him one more time he’d be suspended.

False alarm. His “please recharge soon” light is flashing.

Good excuse.

The SAC
by Alex May and Max Wasserman

Hey Alex, done with our first The SAC strip yet?

Nothing much, just my brand new laptop with huge amounts of RAM, the newest in Wondoo graphics, superior sound quality, wireless internet and tons and tons of free software. I bought it with my summer job money.

So this laptop is for school?

Nah, I’ll be downloading a bunch of movies.
This shoutout is dedicated to someone whose birthday comes just 3 days after today. Happy Birthday to you, to youuuu!

Hey Nolie, Well I had to waste 50¢ on this shout out to make change for $5, but you know I still would’ve done it 4 U, XOXO MCAT

Dear Helgeson,
You are the bomb! I wish I was as big and cool as you are.
Your Secret Admirer

Ooh, ooh, Free Cookie!

Holy Moses!! This is a shoutout to Mr. Ngbea the coolest all organic coach ever! There is a net in front of you my friend!

To all the pretty boys out dere.
HOLLA!

I LOVE YOU SKITTESTS! You’re amazing!

Hey baby, happy anniversary! I love you very much, Thank you for everything in the past year, it has been great. Mmmush! –tu amor por siempre

DAVID FLORES... I'M PREGNANT WITH YOUR CHILD, SORRY I DIDN'T TELL YOU PERSONALLY. SH@! HAPPENS! Sike, just kidding –SILVIA

Holler at our sexy '06 girls Julie, Ellie, Raya, Gillian, Clair, Nolan, Elena, Cate, Sara P, Jeny, Sophie, Diana and Maddie! We love you!

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Meses importantes para los hispanos

Por RIA RICHARDSON

Verónica Rosales, del undécimo grado está sentada con sus amigos durante el almuerzo 5B. Todos están riendo y hablando pero Verónica se ve sorprendida por lo que acaba de oír. Ella no sabía que era el Mes de la Herencia Hispana.

Rosales no es la única que no sabía de la importancia de este mes para los hispanos en este país. Muchos dentro de Blair también están sorprendidos al saber que la herencia hispana se celebra desde septiembre y octubre.

La costumbre de conmemorar la herencia hispana nacionalmente fue empezada en 1974 cuando el Congreso declaró el 12 de septiembre como el Día de la Herencia Hispana. Desde entonces ha causado problemas a la escuela. Ha sido opción para los programas académicos hasta que en el año pasado Northwood se unió. Juanita Silver, la directora de la escuela, comentó que “Parecía una meta imposible.”

“Yo celebro todos los días de mi herencia.”

Esa semana creció a un mes cuando la decisión fue modificada, el 15 de septiembre se convirtió en el Mes de la Herencia Hispana que celebra el Mes de la Herencia Hispana empezando el 15 de septiembre y se termina el 15 de octubre. De este mes a la escuela es además la independencia de cinco países latinoamericanos: Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras y Nicaragua.

El Mes de la Herencia Hispana es una manera para unir a hispanohablantes de diferentes países y grupos étnicos y para celebrar a todas las diferentes culturas. Muchas celebraciones y eventos se llevan a cabo por todo el país para celebrar este mes tan importante para muchos.

Las noticias más recientes hacen que Verónica no necesite cambiar sus actitudes. No está causa de numerosos profesores nuevos se han unido a la escuela. Un nuevo profesor de Inglés y Matemáticas, como Norman Stant, quien llevaba más de 20 años en la escuela, ha pasado a ser profesor en el departamento.

Los dos departamentos dicen que están satisfechos con los profesores nuevos. Los dos departamentos dicen que están satisfechos con los profesores nuevos. La asistente del director Patricia Hurley, comentó que “Parecía una meta imposible.”

“El Mes de la Herencia Hispana es un mes que tiene la capacidad de crecer el país como los afro-americanos. El mes tiene la capacidad de crecer el país como los afro-americanos.”

Junto a Rosales, el mes tiene la capacidad de crecer como el Mes de la Herencia Afroamerica pero se falta una cosa. Muchos de los hispanos no están unidos con otros grupos en el país como los afro-americanos son y eso no pueden celebrar algo con su misma manera.

Para el día de la unidad, que ha sido creado, una conexión que se ha hecho más importante. “Quisiera tener más contacto con otras familias hispanas y con la de acá para ser más reconocidos”, dice Rosales.

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“Para el día de la unidad, que ha sido creado, una conexión que se ha hecho más importante. “Quisiera tener más contacto con otras familias hispanas y con la de acá para ser más reconocidos”, dice Rosales. La capacidad de la escuela es de 3,369 estudiantes. Hay 49 estudiantes más para el año pasado. Muchos es dormitorios que fueron construidos en el año pasado. Muchos es dormitorios que fueron construidos en el año pasado. Muchos es dormitorios que fueron construidos en el año pasado. Muchos es dormitorios que fueron construidos en el año pasado. Muchos es dormitorios que fueron construidos en el año pasado.

“El día de los Muertos es un día para tener respeto a los antepasados.”

Algunos estudiantes todavía participan de estos eventos. La estudiante boliviana del grado once Paula Encinas y sus familiares van a la tumba de su ser querido y llevan comida, fotos, diplomas o ropa de esa persona. Salvador dice que aunque vea la tradición a sus hijos.

“Yo celebro todos los días de mi herencia.”

El mes de octubre es además el Mes de la Herencia Hispana. “Estamos dando gracias a la gente que ha sido nuestra raza y que han luchado por que nosotros estemos donde estamos”, dice Jhony Bustos, del grado doce.

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“Yo celebro todos los días de mi herencia.”

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Once upon a time, fans cheered and jeered as 22 burly musclemen bumped helmets in graying black and white. Gridiron devotees donated their Sundays to football and then slept, hoping next week would come soon.

But the dawn of the information age has ushered in a new breed of football fans. Nowadays, many aficionados play fantasy football, an Internet-based game in which fans pit their knowledge of football statistics against each other for money. According to ESPN The Magazine, 15 million Americans now play fantasy football, and this growing national trend is reflected here at Blair. According to an informal Silver Chips survey of 100 students on Sept. 22, 32 percent of Blazers said that they participate in a type of fantasy football league. Fantasy football is helping to strengthen friendships, says Fantasy Football Index Magazine Editor Bruce Taylor. Many Blair teachers and students who participate in fantasy football value the social aspect of the game and compete in leagues involving friends and acquaintances, finding that fantasy football is an entertaining way to keep in touch.

"Mental part of sports"

When physical education teacher Louis Hoelman explains why he enjoys fantasy football, his eyes sparkle. "Instead of going out and playing sports, [fantasy football] is a substitute," he says. "This is the mental part of sports." Creating and maintaining a fantasy football league is a three-step process. First, a group of football fans who usually know each other form a fantasy football league, each gaining status as an "owner" in their league. Then, a draft takes place in which each fantasy player selects 16 to 20 football stars to be on his or her team. Each week of the NFL season, the statistics of these drafted players are assessed to determine each owner’s total fantasy points for that week. Finally, owners face each other one-on-one every week, and the team with the most fantasy points wins.

The allure of a fantasy

On fantasy football draft day, junior Mac Kpadeh and four other Blazers gather at the home of a Blazer friend to select players and share a day of NFL obsession. The tense atmosphere is heightened by the amount of money on the line, but the competitive gambling seems to draw Kpadeh closer to his friends. "It’s like a rivalry with your friends because of the money," he says. Taylor believes that cutthroat leagues spawn stronger friendships. "The more competitive you are, the better friends you become," he says. Taylor also notes that 98 percent of owners are men. The most obvious aspect of fantasy football, he believes, is the masculine gratification it provides.

Junior Peter Lopez derives much of his fantasy football enjoyment from verbally sparining with other owners over whose team will be better come Sunday. "I was number one for three weeks running, so I would talk trash until I lost miserably, and then it was just over," Lopez says with a laugh.

For junior Sarah Rumbaugh, the world of fantasy football is new. Rumbaugh proved her novice status by mispronouncing the name of star Indianapolis Colts quarterback Peyton Manning at her very first draft meeting.

"It was number one for three weeks running, so I would talk trash until I lost miserably, and then it was just over," Lopez says with a laugh.

Senior Neil Hofman. This performance seemed to be an appropriate finish to an already difficult year. "In many ways, this was a fitting end to a sub-par season," said a disappointed Schafer.

The Blazers will play in several competitions in the coming weeks, including the County Championship, which the Blazers have consistently succeeded at in the past. The team came in second last year and is looking for another solid performance, according to senior Bill McManigle.

The Divisional Match Play Championship will take place today at Indian Springs Golf Course and will pit Blair against Paint Branch. On Tuesday Oct. 12 the Blair golf team will compete against the lower half of the county in the County Championship Scramble Competition at Poolesville Golf Course. Teams scoring in the bottom 12 of the district competition quality as part of the bottom half, and will compete in the same bracket at Counties.

Senior Thaisa Souza serves in Blair’s three set loss to Whitman on Sept. 28. Photo by Hannah Rosen

By KIRAN BHAT

The NFL gridiron at your fingertips

By ADITH SEKARAN and ELLIE BLAOCK

Blair falls in Districts

By ADITH SEKARAN and ELLIE BLAOCK

Vikings conquer Blazers

By NICK FALGOUT

T he Whitman Vikings stormed into Blair this afternoon and handed the Blazer’s volleyball team its second consecutive loss, winning in three straight sets, 25-14, 25-17, and 25-17. From the opening whistle the Blazers struggled against a talented Whitman squad, and the Vikings were quickly up 16-6 after a flurry of hard-hit serves.

Freshman Julie Zhu had several good service runs, but Whitman’s lead never dwindled below seven after going up to 11 early in the set.

The Blazers’ play improved dramatically in the second set. Blair won the first point on an excellent kill by senior AJ Wil- liams for their first lead of the match. Whitman scored several points in succession, but the Blazers kept with them, evening the set at 11. However, the Vikings once again pulled away and won the set, 25-17.

Blair led off the third set quite competitively. They narrowed the gap to 13-11, but that was as close as the Blazers would get. Whitman capitalized on Blair’s lapses in communication to win the third set decisively.

Despite the loss, Garrison remained optimistic with regard to future matches. She believes that the Blazers’ troubles lie not in the physical aspect of the game, but in the mental. “Mentally, they convince themselves that they aren’t supposed to get more than 15 points,” said Garrison.

The Blazers next game is Oct. 12 at Wal- ter Johnson.
Girls’ tennis serves an ace against Paint Branch

By Avi Wolfman-Agent

SEPT. 30, BLAZER COURTS—

The Blair girls’ tennis team continued its hot start to the season as it defeated Paint Branch 6-1 and improved their record to 5-2. The Blazers breezed by their Division II foes on route to their fourth victory in the last five games.

The Blazer’s most consistent squad all year has been the doubles team of senior Erica Nowak and junior Stephanie Paul (see story, p. 24). Bhaskar and Franson used a solid ground game to make quick work of their opponents in a 6-1, 6-0 rout. Bhaskar and Franson cruised to victory with little resistance.

Nowak and Paul have yet to lose a set and are playing with intense aggression and a lot of confidence. "They have been a shining light," coach David Ngbea said. "They are a tough team to beat."

In the first doubles set, junior Pearl Horng was pushed to the limit by senior Margot Pass. Pass added to the tally with a dominant 6-2, 6-2 victory over senior Maggie Pass. Horng fought singles matches. Fourth singles player junior Pearl Horng won her third singles match of the season.

Tiffany Chang won their third doubles match with ease 6-2, 6-2 and freshman substitute Priyanka Gokhale and junior Margot Pass prevailed without difficulty 6-3, 6-2. Second singles player junior Pearl Horng sealed a team victory with a 6-2, 6-0 victory over senior Stephanie Paul (see “Serving up success,” page 30) bounced back from the brink of elimination in the second set to win a dramatic 3-6, 7-6(7-4), 4-6 victory in first doubles.

Coach David Ngbea said he was impressed with the team’s consistency. "If we don’t beat ourselves we’re fine. We’re in every single match," said Ngbea.

Blair’s next home match will be held Monday, Oct. 11 at 3:30 p.m. against Wheaton.

GIRLS’ TENNIS

Coach: David Ngbea
Key returning players: Pearl Horng, Seema Kacker, Stephanie Paul
Key players lost: Aditi Bhaskar, Katherine Epstein, Emily Tour
This year’s record: 5-2
Serving up success

Junior tennis star takes her game face to the court

By KRISTINA YANG

Until age 12, junior Stephanie Paul had never taken tennis particularly seriously. Though she enjoyed the casual games she played with her father and two older siblings, she was just as interested in playing recreational league basketball and softball, and had little desire to focus her energies on tennis.

It was not until Paul entered her first Maryland State and Mid-Atlantic Regional Tennis Tournaments in sixth grade and experienced the high-impact games of the local tennis scene for the first time that she realized how much she wanted to play competitive tennis. Though devoting herself to tennis meant dropping all of her other athletic activities and subscribing to a strenuous schedule of tournaments and training sessions, Paul was willing to make those sacrifices in order to play at the competitive level.

Two years later, her hard work paid off: By the time she entered high school, Paul was the United States Tennis Association 78th-ranked player in the Mid-Atlantic region and easily became the top singles player for the Blair girls’ tennis team. Now ranked 66th in the Mid-Atlantic region, Paul represented the Blazers in both the County and State Girls’ Tennis Championships last year, and has also placed in the top ten at several regional tournaments this year alone, including the Baltimore Junior Open in July and the Sept. 11 McDonough Junior Open.

“Paul is the best player I know,” says teammate junior Jahnavi Bhaskar. “She always helps out other team members, and she cares a lot about the team.”

Blair tennis coach David Ngbea agrees with Bhaskar, adding that Paul’s real strength lies not only in her strong backhand approach shots but also in her positive attitude toward other players. “She could be a college player, but she’s not one to say, ‘I’m better than you,’” Ngbea says. “I can put her with my lowest-playing player and she’ll be a good teacher—very patient.”

While Paul sometimes helps Bhaskar work with younger players during Blair’s tennis practices, she is also constantly training to improve her own game. Paul has trained on-and-off with a private instructor at the Bullis School for four years and is a regular participant in what she jokingly calls “tennis boot camp” at the University of Virginia and the College of William and Mary. “(Camp) is tennis all day for two weeks,” Paul explains. “It’s hard, but I really had so much improve-ment in everything.”

Ultimately, Paul hopes to improve enough to continue playing competitive tennis well beyond her high school years. Though she’s unsure of the possibility of going pro, Paul explains that she is “hoping to find a college with good academ-ics and a decent tennis team. After that, I can play until I’m really old,” she says, laughing. “I want to play for fun with my grandkids.”

Until then, however, Paul’s most pressing goal is to play her best and help keep the Blazers in the highest division of Montgomery County girls’ tennis. “I hope we can stay in Division I,” she says with determination. “I’m pretty competitive, and I want to have fun and win!”
Ftough battle against a very physical team, only to leave Blair’s record at 0-5.

The Blazers started sophomore Ross Williams at quarterback, and he looked solid out of the gate. Williams hooked up with senior Michael Wright for a 28-yard touchdown pass that gave Blair the lead, and a two-point conversion made the score 8-0 Blair.

But that was as bad as it would get for the Blake Bengals, who have serious playoff aspirations after moving up to 4-1 with tonight’s win. A muffled punt was recovered by Blake junior John Kimble at the Blair 27 yard line. Even though the Blair defense held, Blake booted a 35-yard field goal that cut the Blair lead to five.

The Blazers continued to shoot themselves in the foot with special-teams errors throughout the game. Late in the first quarter, junior Blazer punter Joel Popkin had his punt blocked and recovered by Blake at the Blair 23 yard line, leading to a ten-yard touchdown run that put the Bengals in the lead for good.

Blake scored again prior to the half with a six-yard touchdown pass. The next Bengal touchdown came 90 seconds after another blocked Popkin punt.

Williams was replaced by junior Aaron Simon in the third quarter, who went one for three in limited play. Seals expressed disappointment with Williams’ performance, saying that “if Williams uses his head he can be the starter, and he was the last two games.”

Blair’s offense, with the exception of the first touchdown, was dominated by the run. Senior D’Andre Thomas carried the ball 21 times for 95 yards, including strings of three or four plays in a row. Senior Michael Wright got a couple of early carries, getting 42 total yards for ten carries.

Seals took solace in the fact that the team kept fighting until the end of the game. “They never gave up,” he said, but added, “We need to be smart. We made too many mistakes.”

Blair’s next game is the homecoming game on Friday, Oct. 8, against Wheaton. The Blazers won their homecoming game last year, 43-0, against Watkins Mill.

Michael Stewart on a beautifully-thrown 40-yard touchdown pass that gave Blair the lead, and a two-point conversion made the score 8-0 Blair.


XC splits its meets

The cross country teams moved in opposite directions today, as the girls won two of three, while the boys’ team lost at all three competitors. The competition consisted of Quince Orchard, Bethesda-Chevy Chase (B-CC) and Gaithersburg.

The race was run near Quince Orchard at Smokey Glenn, one of the hardest courses in Montgomery County. Despite the difficult course and tough competitors, one Blazer broke the course record and claimed first place.

Sophomore Halsey Sinclair set the girls’ course record with a time of 20:10. Ashlyn Sinclair was close behind at 20:16. These times were almost two minutes better than the sisters’ times last year. Sophomore Josh Uzzell, the leading runner for the Blair boys, ran a time of 19:00, 2:49 better than his course time last year.

The girls continued to shine, beating B-CC and Gaithersburg 28-29 and 23-32 respectively, but losing to Quince Orchard 25-35. The girls’ team is now on top of their division at 5-1. The girls were missing their third fastest runner, junior Katherine Lafen, who was visiting a physical therapist. “These girls have been doing really well,” Coach Carl Lewin said after the race. “When Katy returns we should definitely decrease if we get more time before the next meet.”
Blazers pounce on Bengals

Victory over Blake sets offense-oriented tone for the rest of season

Beckford, were sidelined with leg injuries. The win bolstered the team’s record to 2-2-1 and set them up for what Baez believes will be a pivotal couple of games next week. “I’m very pleased,” he said. “It’s like a turnaround. We just equalized at 2-2-1, and we are going into our games next week with a high.”

Blair next takes on Sherwood at 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday, Oct. 12 at home.

BOYS’ SOCCER

Coach: Adrian Baez
Key returning players: Greg Breads, Jack Eisen-Markowitz, Yenikah Fon
Key players lost: Papes Ndiaye, Will Whitney
This year’s record: 2-2-1

Girls’ Tennis
10/7 at Walter Johnson, 3:30 p.m.
10/11 vs. Wheaton, 3:30 p.m.
10/13 at Bethesda-Chevy Chase, 3:30 p.m.

Girls’ Volleyball
10/12 at Walter Johnson, 7:00 p.m.
10/15 at Blake, 7:00 p.m.
10/19 vs. Gaithersburg, 7:00 p.m.

Field Hockey
10/9 at Paint Branch, 2:00 p.m.
10/12 vs. Kennedy, 3:30 p.m.
10/15 at Blake, 7:00 p.m.

Upcoming Games

Home games are in bold.

Football
10/8 vs. Wheaton, 6:30 p.m.
10/14 vs. Quince Orchard, 6:30 p.m.
10/22 at Watkins Mill, 6:30 p.m.

Boys’ Soccer
10/12 at Gaithersburg, 3:30 p.m.
10/15 vs. Sherwood, 3:30 p.m.
10/18 vs. Walter Johnson, 7:00 p.m.

Girls’ Soccer
10/12 at Gaithersburg, 3:30 p.m.
10/15 vs. Sherwood, 3:30 p.m.
10/18 at Walter Johnson, 7:00 p.m.

Girls’ Tennis
10/7 at Walter Johnson, 3:30 p.m.
10/11 vs. Wheaton, 3:30 p.m.
10/13 at Bethesda-Chevy Chase, 3:30 p.m.

Girls’ Volleyball
10/12 at Walter Johnson, 7:00 p.m.
10/15 at Blake, 7:00 p.m.
10/19 vs. Gaithersburg, 7:00 p.m.

Field Hockey
10/9 at Paint Branch, 2:00 p.m.
10/12 vs. Kennedy, 3:30 p.m.
10/15 at Blake, 7:00 p.m.

Field hockey too hot for Knights

The varsity girls’ field hockey team beat Wheaton 2-1, giving the Blazers their first win of the season and improving their record to 1-5.

The Blazers finally generated a consistent offensive attack while still maintaining an organized defense, a coordination in play that the team has lacked thus far this season.

The first half began with the Blazers going out to an early one-goal lead, but the Knights responded shortly after with one of their own. Blair continued to generate offensive chances, but play in the first half was largely back and forth as both teams were unable to capitalize on their offensive opportunities.

In the second half, the Blazers shut down the Wheaton attack and scored their second goal of the game. Senior Christina Do put a shot through the Wheaton defense off of a pass from junior Sydney Valdez. The Blazers were never able to extend their one-goal lead but were able to hang on for the win.

Senior co-captain Rachel Feely-Kohl felt the team did better with their organization. “We did a good job spreading out, keeping our spacing and communicating,” said Feely-Kohl.

Coach Julie Nation thinks the Blazers could have beaten Wheaton more easily and that the team will be more tested in their upcoming games. “How they play on Tuesday will determine how they play the rest of the season. They need to come out intense,” said Nation.

The Blazers’ next game will be at Paint Branch on Saturday, Oct. 9 at 2:00 p.m.

OCT. 2, WHEATON—

By Erik Koolja

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Key returning players: Rachel Feely-Kohl, Alexa Gabriel, Julia Penn
Key players lost: Anna Benfield, Kamala Smith
This year’s record: 1-5