

THE HORIZON

WESTWOOD HIGH SCHOOL | 12400 MELLOW MEADOW DRIVE | AUSTIN TEXAS | MARCH 2014

Student Expression

Four Student Artists Share Why they Do What they Do



Vian Nguyen, sophomore
artist, blogger

You have a blog called Jubnuggets (<http://jubnuggets.wordpress.com/>). What do you post?

On the blog my posts are usually centered around art, liberal arts professions, and illustrations I've done throughout the week. Recently I've opened up a feature on my blog to guests, exclusively students from WHS. Since I have an average of 10 views per day on my site it would be a good way for those students to have opportunities that they wouldn't otherwise have drawing in an old sketchbook.

What is the most enjoyable part about drawing?

I used to have really bad anxiety, especially before a test or a presentation. Drawing helped me escape that aspect of life: I could create worlds and characters that were generally carefree, they could be whoever they wanted to be and love themselves and not worry about homework or others' opinions. In a way, art and drawing and doodling helps me just leave the stresses of life and just be.

Anything else you want to say?

Draw your heart out. Even if you think you aren't as good as others, you can still draw and practice and just love the places you create with just a pencil and a scrap sheet of paper.



What is most enjoyable about performing? What do you hope to accomplish through violin in the upcoming years?

The best thing about performing is the bliss of delivering the emotion of the music. I want the audience to feel every note the performer plays, and for them to listen in awe. In the future, I plan to major in violin performance at a good music school.

Have you competed in any competitions recently?

Recently I won Grand Prize at the 7th Young Musicians Competition at the Asian American Cultural Center. This competition is a biannual competition and it is the most competitive competition in Austin. This competition was held for two days on February 8 to 9, and out of 41 contestants I was chosen Grand Prize winner.

Favorite composer?

Even though I love almost every composer, my favorite composer will probably have to be Antonin Dvorak, because his music is so lovely yet harsh at the same time. Dvorak has a really intense motif in his music that leaves me breathless. His chamber musics and violin concerto are so beautiful, yet it has such passion that allows me to express myself through the music.



Grace Song, junior
violinist



Annaliese Oliveira, senior
actress, singer

You recently got a role on NBC's Revolution. How did that come about? What will you be doing? What are your feelings about this?

I found the casting call online for 18-20 year olds to play interns on the show while they were filming in Austin. I sent in my headshot and resume and they called me to come in for a two day shoot in January. It was such a different experience from theater ~ a 10 second shot took about 3 hours to film because of all the different angles ~ but it was a great experience. However, I did accidentally crash into the celebrity guy in front of everyone while we were filming the first take.

What is most enjoyable about performing or being on stage?

I love finding a character and learning to play them. Performing is the best way for me to express myself; singing especially is great for getting rid of any bad emotions.

What do you hope to achieve in theater in the future?

In the future, I hope to continue to do theater and to expand my horizons in the arts as much as I can. I hope to do more operas and to do theater in college as well, even if not as my major. I really just would like to advance my skills as much as I can and to continue doing what I love.

What are some of your inspirations when it comes to dance?

My biggest inspiration is the insatiable goal of getting rid of my demons, which mostly stem from self consciousness from things such as my weight and general body image, to what I say and how I handle situations. Every time I dance, I imagine dancing as a tool I've been given to fight off these demons.

You have started a YouTube channel focused on your dancing. What do you hope to do with your channel?

The channel's called Journey of a Freestyle Dancer. It's a YouTube channel that works along side my Tumblr with the same exact name. Hopefully I'll post more dance videos as well as vlogs.

What do you hope to achieve when it comes to dancing?

I would really love to join a crew that travels everywhere. Seeing the world would be an amazing thing. Most importantly, I want to get better every day so I can be the best dancer that I can be.



Aditya Ali, senior
dancer, vlogger



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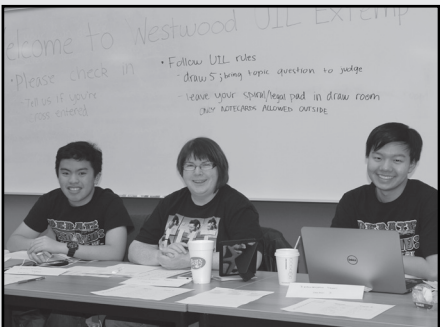
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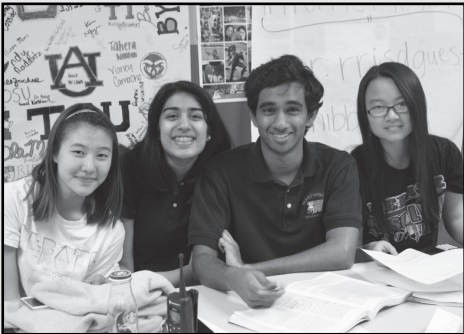


NHS to
Raise
Money
for Thirst
Project



TOP LEFT Senior Rohit Mucherla helps judges and proctors find their ballots and rooms. **ABOVE:** Junior David Dam and junior Darren Pomida run Extemp Draw in the Library great room. **TOP RIGHT:** Sophomore Spoorthi Dasari announces the results for academic subjects. **BOTTOM LEFT:** Junior Angela Park, senior Terisha Kolencherry, junior Akhil Gandra, and sophomore Catherine Cheng assist teachers and coaches in running the tournament.

photos by Linda Yoo



Westwood UIL

The school hosts an academic and debate tournament

Linda Yoo | Editor in Chief

“The UIL tournament presents a unique opportunity for our team to work together and requires a lot of coordination between students, teachers, and parents.”

Terisha Kolencherry,
Senior



photo by Tristan Seifert

On March 22, the Westwood Speech and Debate team held the Westwood Winter Classic UIL tournament. From Lincoln Douglas Debate to Computer Science, the competition held a vast array of debate events and academic subjects for guest schools.

Two debate events and four speech events compromised the forensics sections of the tournament, and 16 different UIL academic events were offered. Ms. Greene led the tab room for the academics portion and Mr. Stroudt led the debate tab room.

“The diversity of events that are offered at Westwood UIL is

one of a kind.” said junior Akhil Gandra, “UIL provides learning opportunities that all students should take advantage of.”

The UIL tournament was possible through the collaboration between the debate team, school officials, and parent volunteers. Also, many teacher gave permission to allow their rooms to be used for debate rounds, academic tests, and presentations. Students from the debate team helped run the event by working in concessions, hospitality, the tab room, and giving directions to other students.

“Organizing our own Westwood UIL tournament is an eye-opening because we get to experience how

much work goes into making a tournament run without issues,” said senior Victoria Fung.

This annual and main fundraiser for the Westwood Speech and Debate team. The Westwood Speech and Debate team participates in tournaments weekly in the local circuit as well as travel to tournaments out of state.

On March 5 to 7, the debate team travel to Houston to attend the TFA State competition. On April 4 to 5, students will compete for the limited spots to attend the National Forensics League Tournament held in Kansas.

SkillsUSA

Vikas Reddy | Staffwriter

Westwood SkillsUSA had its district competition from February 24 to 25 in Waco, Texas. More than 60 students competed at the event and more than 50 students qualified for the state conference in Corpus Christi from March 28 to 29 the district competition to compete in 98 events. Winners of each event are listed below.

3D Animation
Isabelle Le and Chris Wen

AutoCad Civil
Mary Eversmann

Advertising Design
Kyle Guerrero

Basic Healthcare Skills
Rasik Jankay

Computer Maintenance
Chris Ayoub

Computer Programming
Josh Loehr

Desktop Publishing
Vikas Reddy

Photography
Akash Thakkar

Technical Computer Applications
Namita Tendolkar

Urban Search and Rescue
Daniel Yang and Archit Kumar

Human-Robot Interaction
Jae Cho and Sai Pathuri

Due to limited space, the rest of the results are available online.



Celebrate Senior Neha Yedatore and junior Kavya Yedatore clap their hands during the SkillsUSA award ceremony. SkillsUSA hopes to promote career and technical skills to students. *photos by Tara Froehler*

NSHS Induction

Graciela Sills | Features Editor

National Spanish Honor Society (NSHS) held its annual induction ceremony on Thursday, February 20. This year, 62 new members joined the organization.

In order to qualify for NSHS, students must be enrolled in Spanish III, IV, or V and have a certain cumulative Spanish grade depending on the difficulty level of the course: 95 or above for Spanish III, 92 or above for Spanish III Pre-AP and Spanish IV, and 88 or above for Spanish AP and Spanish AP Literature. Students may apply for NSHS during the fall semester of their sophomore, junior, or senior years.

When students join this

organization, they commit to attending monthly meetings and participating in events that further their experience with Spanish-speaking cultures and community service. This past Valentine’s Day, for example, members delivered handmade cards to Purple Sage Elementary, where they had conversations with kindergarteners enrolled in the school’s bilingual program.

“At our club events, we strive to create an atmosphere that is conducive to learning and understanding of the language and culture in order to help our members find joy and fun through their Spanish studies,” said senior

Madan Gopal, NSHS reporting secretary.

The first meeting for new members will be on Thursday, March 6 at 8:30 a.m. or 4:20 p.m. Upcoming events include the Pan-American Student Forum in San Antonio and the Battle of the Languages, Westwood’s annual soccer game between the foreign language clubs.

“We hope to get the trophy back from the Germans this year,” Gopal said.

In the next months, The National Spanish Honor Society will hold elections to choose officers for the upcoming school year.



NSHS Students read the NSHS pledge before entering the society. The National Spanish Honor Society’s members will take the national spanish exam to qualify for scholarships. *photo by Karthik Nataraj*

The Evolution of Snapchat: Changing Photography

Lexi Jovanovic | Forum Editor

Since its debut in September 2011, the photo-sharing app Snapchat has grown dramatically in popularity. The app has over 30 million users, who send an average of 400 million snaps per day, and its rise shows no signs of stopping. Snapchat’s initial attraction was its anonymity – snaps sent automatically disappear from the recipient’s phone after a set amount of time (between one and ten seconds, to be decided by the sender). It even informs the sender if someone screenshots an image they sent. This allows users to take pictures and send messages without worrying that they’ll come back to haunt them, at least technically. (In practice, there are ways of getting around the app’s security features, like taking a picture of the phone with a separate camera).

But users of the app have taken it far beyond its original function. The ease of modifying photos and combining pictures and text makes Snapchat a widespread means of digital communication, especially among teenagers, 32% of whom report using Snapchat on a mobile device. The app’s popularity even led its creators to turn down a \$4 billion offer from Facebook to buy

Snapchat last November. This growing ubiquity made it all the more shocking when hackers released 4.6 million Snapchat usernames and phone numbers onto the internet on December 31, 2013. In an anonymous statement, the perpetrators of the hack claimed their intention was to raise public awareness about the security exploit that allowed them to access user data. Several groups had pointed out weaknesses in the app’s security earlier, but Snapchat had taken only token measures to fix the problem.

Users have realized there are limits to the privacy and anonymity that Snapchat claims to provide. Despite the early assertions on the company’s website, it is possible to retrieve images electronically after they’ve been officially deleted. In response, the company has scaled down its emphasis on privacy and offered features that allow users to view their friends’ lists of recipients. The move from traceless photo-sharing to mass social media communications is gradual, but Snapchat’s attempts to fix its security issues and adapt to the uses the public has found for it are ongoing.



Animal House: Film

Graciela Sills | Features Editor

In honor of comedy writer Harold Ramis, who passed away on February 24 of this year, this column is dedicated to one of his most famous films. Recently I had the privilege of watching *Animal House* - the story of one college fraternity’s excessive partying and triumph over an elitist rival house- with a few friends. I had previously seen this 1978 comedy in bits and pieces on basic cable, but never in its entirety. After finally witnessing the full arc of Delta Tau Chi’s crazy antics (and laughing until my

sides hurt), it occurred to me just how influential this film has been on the genre as a whole. Modern “teen” comedies frequently borrow the raunchy, less refined tropes that characterize *Animal House*, but it is the movie’s ability to create one iconic moment after another that has allowed it to stand the test of time. Like any other classic, *Animal House* may or may not be familiar to a majority of current youth, depending on whom you ask. Chances are, though, that the image of college students in togas dancing to the Isley Brothers’ “Shout” would ring a bell. Many would also recognize the motivational-but-historically-inaccurate speech delivered by the late, great John Belushi. (“Nothing is over until we decide it is! Was it over when the Germans bombed Pearl Harbor?”) The element of absurdity in these moments is precisely what makes them so memorable.

Another strength of *Animal House* lies with its over-the-top execution of a rather standard plot device (losers versus preps) and subtle subversions of the audience’s expectations. Although the protagonists are almost too immature to function, they carry an oddly cerebral self-awareness that makes them likeable. Of course, the behavior of the antagonists is comically exaggerated, but overall, the characters are more well-rounded than those in much of the rest of the genre. Finally, this film’s universal themes give it appeal to a wide audience. While some individual jokes may be outdated or politically incorrect, almost everybody can relate, in one way or another, to the challenge of finding acceptance and friendship in an overwhelmingly chaotic world. Thus, *Animal House* will likely remain a classic with high rewatch value for decades to come.

Dysfunctional Systems Episode 1

Visual Novel

Jarod Janner | Journalism 1

Dischan Media’s newest visual novel, *Dysfunctional Systems Episode 1: Learning to Manage Chaos*, released in March of 2013. It is set on a utopian Earth-like planet in the distant future, and focuses on the experiences of Winter Harrison, a young trainee for a group of people, known as mediators, who attempt to solve issues on other planets. Winter has to shadow several graduated Mediators as part of her training, and is paired up with one of the most notorious Mediators in the academy, Cyrus Addington. He is known for his unorthodox ways of solving situations, and is rumored to be a tad on the murderous side. Inexperienced and naïve Winter finds out more about the troubles of the world they are attempting to mediate, as her disagreement with Cyrus grows and the possibility of serious injury rapidly rises.

As with all visual novels, there are choices the player must make that change the possible outcomes of the story. In this episode of the game, there is really only one outcome of the story, but you can take two paths to get there: either a reader follows Cyrus in his major plan, or a reader rebels and try to convince him to follow their plan instead.

The major event of the story still happens, but the experiences leading up to the climax and the downfall vary slightly. This is my only real issue with the gameplay in general: the illusion of choice. It feels like like choices during the playthrough of the game matter, yet in the end, the major event still occurs. There is no way to change it. In the visual novel genre, this is not something that you see very often, because of the attempt many visual novels make to simulate real life. Personally, this lack of control made it seem like the choices weren’t allowing me to learn, as the title would suggest, to manage chaos.

However, if this illusion of choice had actually been a real choice, the story would have needed to change drastically. The focus of the novel was much more based on character development than story development because the basis of the plot was

made while a deeper connection with characters was established. Any actual choice would have changed the plot too early on in the series. Dischan could have chosen a less drastic event to make you feel like you could change, so as to not toy with the reader’s emotions, but a little sadism never hurt anyone.

The diction and syntax in the writing helps me understand the characters. I could tell that Winter was a very intellectual individual, but, due to her peaceful upbringing, her intellect was not equipped to her job. However, the piece of character development I appreciated most was the backstory of Winter. By hinting at parts of her history, Dischan delved into her morals in a way I found to be stunning and hilarious at the same time.

The way Dischan constructs its characters is something a character development junkie like myself could simply not ignore, and I am proud to say, the company does a masterful job at it. In visual novels, character development is either overdone to the point where no real plot is found, or underdone to the point where you’re judging the characters by stereotypes. The episodic take Dischan takes to *Dysfunctional Systems* was, in my opinion, the correct way to go, as it allows for the writers to expand into characters without ruining the plot, and I give kudos to them for making this decision.

In general, I would rank *Dysfunctional Systems: Learning to Manage Chaos* as second in my top five list of games. In terms of its format as a visual novel, it is definitely the best I have had the pleasure of playing. I would recommend this game to anyone looking to buy something new.



Divergent: Dystopian Novel

Mackenzie Farkus | Staffwriter

To be honest, I’m not the biggest fan of dystopian novels. I know, I know; it’s ridiculous, right? Nearly all of my friends and relatives – as well as my colleagues in newspaper, of course – have been chastising me for nearly two years about this, and yet, I still wasn’t able to find a good young adult (YA) dystopian novel. That was my situation, until I read *Divergent* by Veronica Roth. *Divergent* is about a girl named Tris, who believes she doesn’t quite fit in with her family and faction. She lives in post-apocalyptic Chicago, which is now divided by factions based on five desirable qualities: selflessness, courage, knowledge, honesty, and friendliness, which all have strict lifestyle regulations. Now that she’s 16, Tris has to choose between staying with her family in her faction, which will guarantee her safety, or choosing a new lifestyle, which will provide her with adventure and freedom. Throughout the novel, Tris faces unique challenges, such as facing her fears, and a variety of intriguing characters, like the mysterious Four and Tori. Through these characters, Tris finds her views constantly changing.

Although I didn’t necessarily enjoy Tris’ character in the first few chapters due to her slightly robotic tone – which eventually changes – I found that by the end of the novel, she really grew on me, which was something Katniss Everdeen of *The Hunger Games* fame could never do. Despite the overbearingly bleak tones in most dystopian novels, what with all the death, chaos, and inequality, I really felt that *Divergent* defied that specific trope with an equal amount of hope, romance, and even some amusing comedic parts. Because of this, I was able to connect more to the characters and the plotline itself. I actually had fun reading it, instead of feeling depressed about the dystopian society that they were living in. *Divergent* by Veronica Roth is a serious game-changer in the world of dystopian YA literature, especially if it can convert someone like me who swore off the dystopian genre. I recommend *Divergent* wholeheartedly, and easily can give it a solid 4 out of 5 stars.



Express Yourself, Don't Repress Yourself

“The arts program is nice because you don’t need to be rigid and focused--it’s a relaxed environment.”

-Krithika Vasudevan, senior

“I can create a world for myself.”

-Vian Nguyen, sophomore

“Choir is a way to express my feelings and meet new people who share my interest and passion for music.”

-Manasa Kanukurthy, junior

Frontage Roads: sharing stories

Tristan Seifert | Staffwriter

Frontage Roads, Westwood’s student-run literary magazine containing prose, poetry, and artwork will be published later this school year. Any interested students may submit up to three pieces of their own art, poetry, audio and prose by March 21 to get a chance to be featured in the magazine. In the past, the magazine has interviewed several authors, including

Amy Tan, writer of *Joy Luck Club*, Elie Wiesel, author of *Night*, and Ray Bradbury, author of *Fahrenheit 451*. Additionally, Frontage Roads has won several awards every year it has been published, including the first prize from the American Scholastic Press Association, as well as a superior rating from the National Council of Teachers of English. “I think it’s great that we have

Frontage Roads,” said sophomore Yusuf Ulla. “It lets students express themselves and gives them an audience for their work.” In order to fund the magazine, the staff of Frontage Roads holds the Bohemia West talent show. It also serves to showcase students’ talents. Magazines will be available for purchase in Ms. Drown’s room, D1315 for \$10 each.



Stories: Posters have been put up around the school with more information concerning Frontage Roads. *photo by Tristan Seifert*

Dance

Students engage in artistic exercise

Shreya Dasari | Staffwriter



MIRROR Dance 1 practices their choreography in the dance studio. Westwood dance classes are currently preparing for Escapade, the biggest show of the year consisting of only Westwood High School dancers. The shows will take place on March 21 and 22 and tickets will be sold during all lunches. Prices are \$5 for students with a current student I.D. and \$8 for adults and non-students. *photo by Shreya Dasari*

SASSY The Westwood SunDancers performed at fishbowl to welcome the incoming freshman. The dance department consists of Sundancers, Warrior Pride, drill-prep, and all of the Academy classes (Jazz, Tap, Ballet, etc.) *photo courtesy of Yearbook*



5,6,7,8! Dance teacher, Mrs. Valk, instructs her 2nd block Dance 1 class about their rehearsal for Escapade. Recently, a flash mob was directed by the dance teachers involving every dance student at Westwood. This flash mon occurred on Thursday February 13th. Video footage is available on youtube. [be/989WFG5VzaA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=be/989WFG5VzaA) *photo by Shreya Dasari*

“I have a passion for dance because it allows you to become someone else.”

-Olivia Parks, freshman



130 Students	78 Students
DANCE	THEATRE
44 Students	
MUSIC	
130 Students	33 Students
ART	UNDECIDED

Theatre Offers Variety

Mackenzie Farkus | Staffwriter

A great number of students here call the new Black Box theatre and the old Black Box theatre home at Westwood due to the amazing teachers and fun environment. “The greatest thing about theater is that you can be whoever and whatever you want. You don’t have to worry about others,” sophomore Julio Martinez said. On March 21, students involved with the 40 minute Westwood One Act play will compete at Henrickson High School at 7 p.m. The play this year, titled *And a*

Nightingale Sang, is set in a town in England during World War II, and portrays a character named Helen Scott and her family as they cope with life during wartime. Other schools that will be competing are Stony Point, Round Rock, and Henrickson. Later this year, the musical theatre class will be putting on *Guys and Dolls*, which will be performed May 8, 9, and 10. Tickets go on sale during the last week of April, and the show will be at the Raymond Hartfield PAC.

Arts Programs Inspire Students

Tristan Seifert | Staffwriter

Westwood has fine arts classes for every student, ranging from drawing, music and the visual performing arts, to dance, choir and orchestra. The various programs all serve as media for students to express themselves, their personalities, and their creativity. “Through art I can create a world for myself where I can just be,” said sophomore Vian Nguyen, “In a learning environment such as Westwood, sometimes it is necessary to just create and release all the leftover energy you have from studying for hours straight.” The Visual Performing Arts academy, or VPA, which includes the theatre classes at Westwood, regularly put on shows based upon skills learned throughout the school year. These events

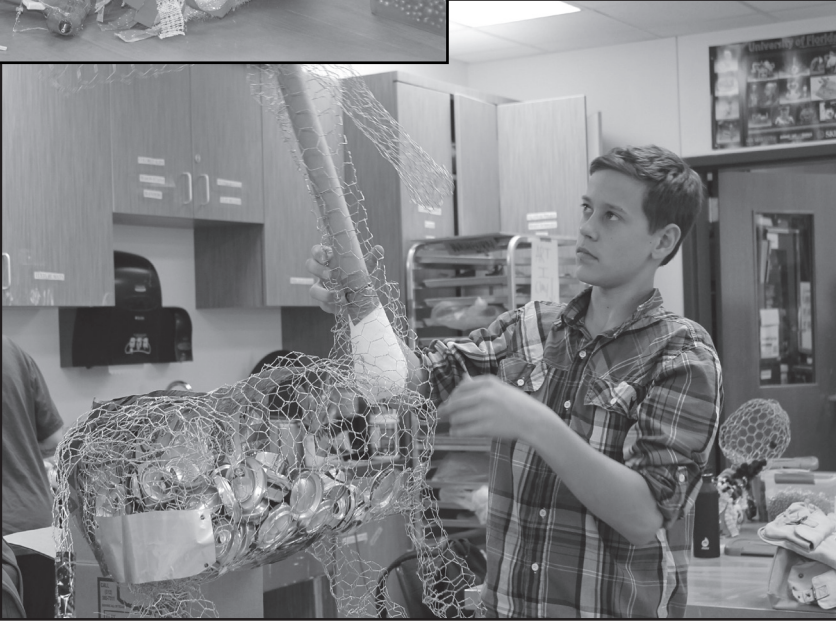
include the Comedy Showcase, multiple Black Box shows, as well as a musical. This year’s selection is “Guys and Dolls,” which will be performed on May 8 to May 10. One of the most well-known of Westwood’s arts is their award-winning band and orchestra. Members of Westwood’s orchestra perform several concerts a year, including the upcoming Spring Concert on May 9. In the December, band and orchestra members traveled to Illinois. “The opportunity to play live performances in front of large audiences is unmatched by anything else,” said junior Geoff Sloan, a member of the marching band and drummer in The Good Thieves.

Choir has recently performed Cabaret, their annual event featuring both dancing and singing. This year’s theme was love, and included performances of popular love songs. They will also be performing their Spring Concert on March 20. Dance classes will put on their biggest show of the year, Escapade, on March 21 and 22, showcasing their talents and skills they have learned throughout the year.

Arts not only serve as ways for students to express themselves, but also teaches students lifelong lessons by motivating individuals to pursue their interests and likings without feeling pressured to choose certain subjects. “The arts program at Westwood also helps them develop social skills and work ethics,” said sophomore Zahin Nambiar, a member of the Orchestra, “Arts teach skills that people use later in life, even if they don’t go into art.” Plenty of Westwood students enjoy the arts outside of the classroom. With the popularity of the Internet and ease of accessibility of free blogging websites, many students have created blogs where they can post their works. “Art is my way of telling my reality—that I’m different and I’m okay with it,” Nguyen said.



CREATE TOP: senior Skye Hilton concentrates as covers her bust made of wire during art class. RIGHT: Freshman Steve Szostak fixes his project of a giraffe with an elephants head for his art project. Inside the bust, Szostak used many colorful aluminum cans. *photo by Hannah Canter*



LOVE SONGS Choir students perform in the annual Cabaret show. This year’s theme was “Love Me, Love Me Not,” with each choir singing popular romance songs. *photo by Jessica Zeng*

Choir Performs in Cabaret

Mackenzie Farkus | Staffwriter

Westwood’s choir is one of the most popular groups in the world of Westwood fine arts. Although those outside of the arts academy know little about choir, the choir is an extremely talented group with a diverse range of events and competitions. The choir, led by head choir director Daniel Arredondo and choir director Monica Muscato, is much loved by its members. “I think that the best thing about choir is that I get to sing with other people. Also, the teachers are really nice, too!” sophomore soprano Prachi Mujumdar said. In choir class, students do a variety of activities. “Typically, we practice songs for upcoming events like concerts and UIL,” freshman alto Grace Shih said. Not only do choir students participate in UIL, but they are also given the option to compete to join the Texas All-State Choir, Texas State Solo and Ensemble Contest, or participate in concerts and sight-reading contests. “Our main goal for this year is to have a good number of students win at UIL this year,”

choir director Monica Muscato said. In fact, last October, Westwood choir had the most students to qualify for Region and advance for State than any other school in the RRISD district. Choir performs at each of the football games by singing the National Anthem. They also have an annual Fall, Winter, and Spring Concert, as well as a popular event known as Cabaret. On February 28 and March 1, the choir performed in their annual free event known as Cabaret, which featured dancing and singing. Each year, the choir chooses a different theme for Cabaret; this year’s title was “Love Me, Love Me Not”, which was focused on love. Each choir sang one routine to popular romance songs, including “Summer Lovin’,” from the well-known musical Grease and “Raining Men,” by The Weather Girls. Additionally, solos, duets, and even bands within choir performed after undergoing a rigorous auditioning process. Be sure to support your peers in choir participating in UIL and other competitions in the upcoming months.

Hey! You’ve Got to Hide Your Love Away!

Enough with the public display of affection already.

Shreya Dasari | Staffwriter

Close your eyes, and imagine walking down the hallways and being forced to watch other couples make out. Now open your eyes: you are about to run into one of these couples in real life, and that is just awkward. For the average Westwood student, PDA (Public Displays of Affection) is part of our regular school day. Whether we partake in it or cringe inwardly and writhe in disgust while witnessing it, PDA affects us all.

“I do not mind a bit of hand holding, but I don’t want to be uncomfortable while walking in the hallway. Sometimes it’s just gross,” said World Geography teacher Heather Curry.

Most teachers believe that PDA can negatively affect the learning environment. PDA is a distraction and can hamper a student’s ability to focus on their education, the main purpose of school.

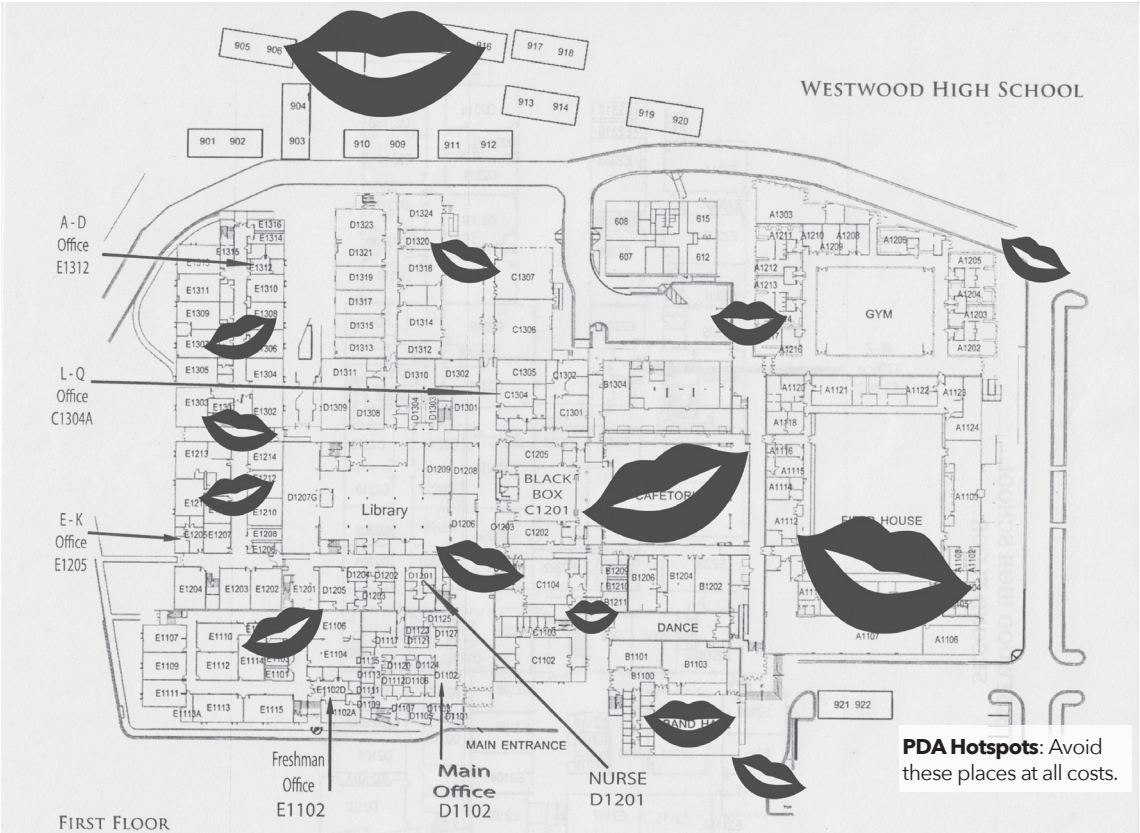
Even if PDA doesn’t impact the learning environment, but

“it definitely affects people’s ability to get to the learning environment in the first place,” said history teacher Joshua Williams.

Students, however, have slightly different reasons for disliking PDA. Many students just do not like having to navigate the hallways while dodging random couples, and they shouldn’t have to. School should be a place that is enjoyable for everyone. I don’t know about everyone else, but I would like to be able to go to school without wanting to claw my eyeballs out.

The Round Rock ISD student handbook states, “Public display of affection is prohibited on RRISD campuses. Students are subject to disciplinary action for public displays of affection.” Rules like these were created to ensure the safety of students and the effectiveness of school.

Many couples do not engage in excessive PDA because they find it uncomfortable for themselves



and the people around them. Certain things are meant to be kept private. By partaking in PDA, these couples are bringing

every other person in the hallway into their relationship. On behalf of everyone that doesn’t like PDA, I would like

to ask that student couples keep their displays to a minimum. For all of our sakes, please follow the rules.

The Art of the Selfie: the world’s new self portrait

Rohini Kumar | Journalism 1

You’ve seen them. I’m almost sure of it. At the mall, a restaurant, a football game, and in the cafeteria at lunch time. That group of girls, giggling and making faces with a smartphone held out at arm’s length, snapping photos of every moment. They’re taking what is now known as the Oxford Dictionary Word of the Year: a selfie, defined as a photo that one has taken of oneself.

I have to admit, I have been a part of that group, taking selfies with each other in public places. To some, it may seem incredibly arrogant to post, send, and show others pictures of yourself, but that is not always the case. Many times, a picture is taken just to create laughter among a few close friends and is then deleted or kept as a

memento. The selfie is growing more common as people have access to smartphones and front-facing cameras. Pictures can be snapped dozens in a row, without having to worry about rolls of film and developing photos. Everything is within the reach of a finger tap or click of a button. This is easier to comprehend for the younger generation, who have known it this way for most of their lives. Some adults are skeptical or confused by new technology, but others are quickly learning to adapt. Take my mother for example. She learned about selfies last year when a friend of mine pulled out her phone at my house to take a couple pictures. My mom looked over, intrigued, and we explained

the selfie to her. She burst out in laughter and took her first selfies with my friends. A few months later on our winter vacation to Puerto Rico, my mom defined selfie for her cousin, Preetha. Much giggling ensued, and excited over this new discovery, they decided to take a selfie with me, against a lush tropical background. Though taking selfies may seem like common knowledge to most teenagers, it proved a difficult task for my mom. “How do I even do this?” she asked. “I’m going to drop my phone!” Thankfully, she didn’t and we showed the selfie to the rest of the family. Preetha’s son responded with “Mom, how can you not know what a selfie is?” when she

explained what we had done. These experiences with my mother have shown me how technology can affect our parents’ generation. I thoroughly enjoyed seeing her face light up and hearing her laugh, just like teens, over what is now a common part of everyday life. I love knowing that something as simple as a selfie can make people happy and bring them closer through laughter and good times spent together. Although most popular among teens and young adults, selfies are definitely not just for them. President Obama, Pope Francis and many celebrities take selfies, along with ordinary adults like my mom. It is becoming a universal idea, suited for word of the year. Oxford Dictionary chose well.

Russia fails to clinch its Olympics goals

Lexi Jovanovic | Forum Editor

Some Olympics aren’t political, but the 2014 Winter Games in Sochi, Russia definitely were. Even before the torch was lit at the Opening Ceremony, the event was surrounded by controversy, ranging from widespread criticism of anti-Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Trans* (LGBT) policies enacted in Russia last year to concerns about safety following January terrorist attacks in the nearby city of Volgograd. And once athletes and journalists started arriving in Sochi, the poor condition of the newly-built accommodations was shocking enough to spawn a highly popular Twitter hashtag, #sochiproblems. It was not an ideal start to a high-profile sporting event. But for the Russian government, particularly its worryingly authoritarian, Tumblr-famous president, Vladimir Putin, there’s more at stake than the

integrity of the luge competition. Ever since the breakup of the Soviet Union twenty-five years ago, the Russian Federation has been struggling to prove its status as a nation. Putin especially has been trying to assert his power and prominence in the international community. This can be done by cracking down on internal dissent and blocking UN sanctions against Syria-or by hosting a spectacular Olympic games. Russia wouldn’t be the first to use the Olympics in service of national prestige. The 2008 Beijing Olympics were widely seen as China’s attempt to emphasize its newfound wealth and power. But while the Beijing games were a spectacular feat of logistics, technology, and willpower, Sochi’s legacy can already be described as “questionable.” This is not to say that the

games have been a complete failure for Russia. Though not without missteps, the all-important opening ceremony still managed to impress with state-of-the-art floor projections and performances from the Bolshoi Ballet. And Russia now has the highest number of medals at the games (by comparison, they were eleventh four years ago in Vancouver). But Russia’s pyrotechnics and its home-court advantage can both only go so far. Its hockey team, which carried its greatest hopes, was eliminated before the medal round. Controversy has also continued away from the ice rinks and ski slopes. Visitors to Sochi have complained of everything from the food to the shoddy construction to the prevalence of stray dogs. And, during the first week of the games, protests against the pro-Russian

government of neighboring Ukraine erupted into violence, forcing medal ceremonies in Sochi to share news space with death tolls in Kiev. Russia’s first Winter Olympics have seen successes and failures. Nothing truly terrible has happened-certainly nothing that would reflect the widespread fears of a terrorist attack leading up to the games. But between the protests and the poor infrastructure and the continuing state-sanctioned persecution of LGBT individuals, the Sochi games have not presented the image of national reinvention and political power they were intended to give. The thousands who were present for the games, and the millions who watched them on television, are likely to leave with more questions about the nature and extent of Russia’s power than they came in with.

YOU SAID IT

How would you change the school?



Dustin Renfro, Senior
“I would add more fast food places in the cafeteria.”



Kate Marquis, Sophomore
“I would make the library bigger because it is really small.”



Andrew Schoen, Junior
“I would give money to the fine arts academy, mainly marching band.”



Alina Wysocki, Freshman
“I don’t like how long the classes are. I would make them shorter.”

compiled by Hannah Canter

Fencers Live By the Sword

Michael Cravey | Staffwriter

Junior Andrew Shaw competed in the 34th Annual Pougardieu Memorial from January 25 to 26 and placed third only behind World Team USA Veteran Fencer Ray Sexton and South Western Intercollegiate Fencing Association (SWIFA) Champion Davis Jno-Finn. Shaw’s footwork and precise attacks on the wrist defended

him from his competitor Jake New’s attacks and helped him win out against Jake New’s athleticism, experience, and strong attacks. He ended the pools four wins to four losses. Shaw’s win-loss and score indicators were good enough for him to advance immediately to the second round, allowing him to rest and study many of

his opponents. In the second round he once again fenced Jake New and won by a single point difference. Shaw then fenced Jno-Finn for the silver. The two were very even for a while, with both taking over the attack at various points and scoring with precision on the wrist, the closest target. Soon, however,

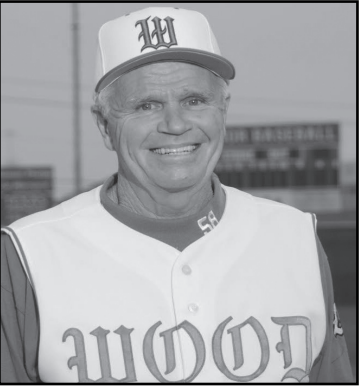
Jno-Finn took over the bout, landing swift, aggressive attacks that undermined Shaw’s bread and butter wrist attack. The bout ended 15 to 6 points and Shaw was awarded the bronze medal. “Drew fenced very well. I am extremely proud of how far he has come and how well he fenced against some more experienced fencers,” said WWFC assistant coach David Bumgarner.

“Drew never gave up, played to his strengths, and made his opponents have to work hard for each and every point.” Shaw is also an officer of the Westwood Warriors Fencing Club (WWFC), which is growing in numbers and student fencers are beginning to see results. Students interested in trying out fencing should talk to Michael Cravey. WWFC hosts meetings every other Wednesday.

Bratcher Makes it 800

Graciela Sills | Features Editor

On February 20, a 6 to 5 Warrior victory over Pflugerville marked Coach Bart Bratcher’s 800th win as a baseball coach. Bratcher’s



RECOGNITION Coach Bart Bratcher earned his 800th career win on February 20. *photo by Jenny Rhea*

remarkable career began in the 1970s at Brazosport and Irving High Schools, where he led his teams to the first 144 of these winning games, including a district championship. He arrived at Westwood High School in 1981, the year the school opened. “[It’s] ancient history, I know, but it represents the work, talent, commitment and sacrifice of a lot of players and assistants to whom I am very grateful,” said Bratcher. Despite his veteran status, however, he humbly acknowledges that his experiences have made him increasingly conscious of how much he still does not comprehend. “I am amazed how much less

I know about this game now than when I started. The gap between my understanding and true understanding is so much greater than I thought possible and it closes more slowly than I anticipated,” said Bratcher. Apart from coaching, Bratcher has dedicated time to dozens of clinics for youth league players and their coaches over the years. In 1995, he was inducted into the Texas High School Baseball Coaches Association’s Hall of Fame in honor of his service. The recent win over Pflugerville now represents yet another major milestone in Bratcher’s long and esteemed career.



TOUCHÉ Junior Drew Shaw (left) scores a point on nationally ranked fencer Austin Lim at the 34th Annual Pougardieu Memorial tournament. The tournament was held from January 25-26 at Texas State University. Shaw, a member of the Westwood Warriors Fencing Club, ended up receiving third place. *photo by Michael Cravey*



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Escaping March Madness

Upcoming concerts and events in Austin

Mackenzie Farkus | Staffwriter

Spring always seems to signal all kinds of phenomena; a flock of new food trucks, upcoming events, and the increasingly warmer weather in Austin. Perhaps the most exciting of all is the slew of upcoming concerts featuring well-known artists.

Bands and singers such as Arcade Fire, The National, Miranda Sings, and Ellie Goulding will be performing this spring in Austin. Although most of these concerts are held indoors at venues like the ACL Moody Theatre and the Paramount Theatre, there are a number of outdoor venues—perfect for spring—with great performances. For instance, Stubb's Barbecue will be hosting Vampire Weekend, Flogging Molly, and Grouplove with opening act, MS MR.

South by Southwest's music portion, one of Austin's more famous festivals, begins on March 11 and ends on March 16. Coming to Austin are bands such as Young the Giant, The Kooks, Of Mice and Men, and Neon Hitch. While you have to buy a ticket for SXSW, most Austinites choose to catch some of the free shows, which often feature surprise headliners. In recent years, performers such as Jack White, A\$AP Rocky, and Beach House have headlined unofficial SXSW parties and performances.



Austin Music: Bands such as Social Studies, an indie rock band from San Francisco, California perform at South by Southwest. This is the 28th year for SXSW music; last year, 2,278 bands performed at the music festival. *Creative Commons photo*

WHEN?	WHAT?	WHERE?
Mar. 1-16	Star of Texas Fair and Rodeo	Travis County Exposition Center
Mar. 2	Zilker Park Kite Festival	Zilker Park
Mar. 11-16	SXSW Music	Austin Convention Center
Mar. 17	St. Patrick's Day Event	Shoals Crossing Event Center
Mar. 28-29	Clyde Littlefield Texas Relays	Mike A. Myers Stadium
Mar. 28-29	Austin Urban Music Festival	Town Lake Auditorium Shores
Mar. 29-30	Zilker Garden Festival	Zilker Park
Mar. 30	Capitol 10K	Congress Avenue to Auditorium Shores

compiled by Vikas Reddy

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