

Stop and smell the turkey

by Lydia Wuorinen

Don't get me wrong, I adore the holiday season. Peppermint hot chocolate, ice-skating at the McCormick Tribune Ice Rink, dinner at Macy's Walnut Room, it's all great.

People's spirits are high, and a jovial air of love and peace seeps into every nook and cranny of even modern-day-Scrooges' hearts. It's a winter wonderland.

However, it's not winter. It's the middle of November. The presence of a light powdering of snow does not warrant singing "Frosty the Snowman" all the way to school. Get it together, people.

We have a month and a half of work to do before curling up in our Snuggie for days on end. It's tempting to do so now, but be warned, the only thing that could drop faster than the thermometer will be your 2nd quarter grades.

No one wants to come to terms with poor academic performance when they could be taking part in winter festivities.

Putting up wreaths in

November, I wouldn't recommend it. The same can be said for leaving out the blow-up Menorah in the front yard until February.

Granted, I will admit to wanting the holidays to linger well-past their welcome. Every year, my parents tell me that we have enough holiday lights. And yet, I always make sure that we end up with more than before. I've even started putting them in my room. Yes, it's gone too far.

With that said, if anticipating the holiday season is what keeps you going, by all means keep moving forward. High school is certainly a tough time for all adolescents, so it can be healthy to take a step back and focus on the upcoming holiday season, a joyous, fond few weeks for most.

I know I did just that my junior year. Just remember that you can create good feelings without bringing out the Christmas tree.

With Thanksgiving only 6 days away, we only have 3 days of school left until a 5-day weekend (including today). And for those early morning shoppers, Black Friday is also drawing near. Some

of you may decide to fuel your love for the holiday season by purchasing presents for your family, friends, pets, extended family, friends-of-friends—you get the idea.

Back to Thanksgiving though, it's a national holiday, too. Let's give it some respect.

Whether Thanksgiving means spending time with family, cooking tasty dishes, or dedicating your time to helping others, it's a wonderful day that has the trappings of a first-rate holiday.

I know that we're all busy managing our high school careers, so what's one more thing to juggle? If possible, carve out a portion of your time and energy to do something meaningful for others. We spend enough time browsing the internet to be able to spend time volunteering at a soup-kitchen.

The "holiday season" is a ways away, but Thanksgiving is just around the corner.

Prepare yourself for the winter to come by enjoying the impending turkey: not the gingerbread cookies and dreidels.

Staff editorial: New Trier's the mayor of college crazy town

It's that time of year again. Snow on the ground, seasonal music seeps through the radio, ugly sweaters make their annual appearance. Yes, it most definitely is that time of year; college application time, that is.

During the most stressful period of the year for seniors, many find themselves overworked, especially when it comes to college applications. However, is that not our own doing?

Today, students are applying to more schools than ever before. This past Sunday, The New York Times published an article describing the increase in applications students are completing, trying to gain any and every advantage they can.

According to Naviance, a program that helps students research and organize the college application process, 16.5 percent of seniors nationwide said they were applying to between 11 and 20 schools. Similarly, according to a study done by the National Association for College Admission Counseling, in 1990 only 9 percent of students applied to seven or more schools, whereas in 2011, that group had risen to 29 percent.

Naviance also recorded that one student's account has already reached the 60 application threshold, as last year's record of 83 applications looks to be in jeopardy.

One reason students continue to apply to so many schools is the Common Application. The Common App provides a standardized form for students to submit to the more than 500 member colleges without having to re-input their data -- one of the most time consuming tasks of the college application process.

However, due to the ease of

systems like the Common App, students will apply to schools for which they are either well-qualified or over-qualified. Despite the ease of applying through the Common App, it still creates more essays, more money, and more stress for students.

In addition, applying to college comes at a cost. While some schools offer free applications, many schools charge upwards of \$65. The expenses associated with applying and the sheer stress of applications should dissuade students from applying to so many schools, but we continue to do so.

While the increase in applications may be a downside for students, colleges welcome it. In what has become a trend, schools now entice students, who may not be qualified, to apply long before their senior year.

This is partially to increase their standing in the annual rankings of "best colleges" by decreasing their acceptance rate.

In a time of extreme stress and pressure, are students actually doing themselves a service by applying to more than seven or eight schools?

At some point, students are really creating more and more stress and cost for themselves and their families.

While applying to college can be an exciting time, students are making it harder and more stressful by applying to so many schools.

It's time we recognize the ridiculousness of applying to so many schools, and take this time to focus on the ones we really do want to attend; not a school that is a shot in the dark just because we can.

You missed out on Lit Fest



Students gather around Jeffrey Brown to learn about graphic novels at Literary Festival on Nov. 14 | Wong

by Abby Burton

Literary Festival (Lit Fest) is an annual gathering that introduces students of senior writing classes to some of the best journalists, authors, and even songwriters around our area.

Some of the speakers New Trier hosted this year were Jay Bonansinga, Jeffrey Brown, David Kaplan and even William Deresiewicz.

To my disappointment, some students did not take this day as seriously as I would have expected.

While walking through the halls, I heard many comparing this day to Expanding the Circle day of 2013.

Granted, ETC day was fun while it lasted, but in the end, it had little educational benefit.

For a few, ETC was a success because kids got to see a motivational speaker, Johnny Cupcakes. For the majority, the day seemed pointless because all students learned about was the latest movie trivia or the location of Narnia in our school.

From what I remember, a little over half of the school actually attended that day. Meaning, the other half was enjoying their day off to lunch or at the movie theater with their friends.

Lit Fest was so closely compared

to ETC day that I think some believed they could just skip this day, too.

This year for Lit Fest, English teachers were drowned with complaints about students missing AP classes and having to do extra work. For many, this presentation of speakers is a once in a lifetime opportunity and the fact that some students didn't take advantage of this is discouraging.

I personally thought that the stories from each of the speakers I saw were moving and motivational.

Each seminar offered me insight into writing techniques such as the triangulation of senses or even the incorporation of realism into novels. Although I may not be writing fiction in my future, their advice motivated me to improve my own writing.

Investigative journalist Chris Steiner shared his story of being fresh out of graduate school and not knowing where he was going in life. He slid some samples of his work under the door of an editor at the Chicago Tribune not knowing what would happen.

He waited months and heard no response, until one day he received a life-changing phone call. It was the Tribune calling to offer him a job.

I was shown that success is ultimately gained by taking risks.

Without trying something new or putting yourself out there, nothing is going to change in your life.

Author Julie Halpern also shared her story of becoming a writer. She opened her session by stating that it was okay if we don't know what we want to be when we are older because she never expected to become an author until later in her life.

Throughout her life, Halpern struggled with severe depression, and she expressed how important writing was to her recovery.

Writing allows people to express their emotions. Halpern showed how transforming her emotions into stories can be an important outlet.

Although some argued that these are life lessons that they already knew or could learn on their own, hearing this advice from role models has a greater impact.

I consider writing a passion of mine, so this experience may have been more important to me than for others.

Either way, for any one who is remotely interested in writing, the only way to expand your knowledge is to expose yourself to samples of successful writers in the real world.

For those who skipped, just know that you missed a great day, one you will never get back.



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