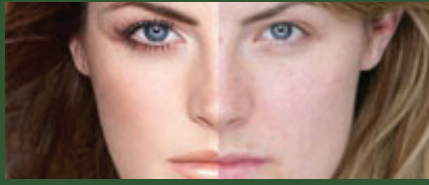
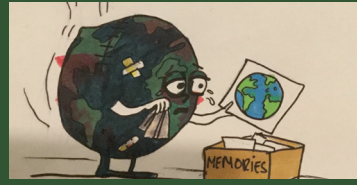


# the NEW TRIER NEWS



Resisting digital retouching  
2



We can't deny climate change  
3



Girls volleyball beats ETHS  
4

## Mom of WJHS student discusses weapons found in son's room

After finding loaded guns and explosives in son's room, mom called police

by Nadia Jaikaran and Sofia Papakos

A WJHS student was taken into police custody on Sept. 16 after he was found in possession of potential explosive materials and firearms. The student may be receiving charges, according to the Wilmette police.

A police report stated that the mother of the student found two handguns, a shotgun, and explosive matter in the boy's room, prompting her to call local authorities.

Before students arrived to school on Sept. 17, the Cook County Bomb Unit rigorously checked the school, concluding that there were no potential dangers to students or staff.

The firearm was confirmed to belong to the student's maternal grandfather. The student obtained the weapon by opening a locked safe.

More information regarding the student and incident is stated below in an exclusive interview with the child's mother.

### How was his school life?

His school life was okay. He's got some really good friends and he got along with people most of the time.

### Did he have a lot of friends? What activities or sports was he part of?

He had a fair amount of friends. A couple of besties. They're still checking on him. He did Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts, he skateboarded for a while. Typical kid stuff, nothing out of the ordinary.

### What is his personality like?

He is very much a leader. He looks a lot older than he is, even though he's thirteen. He looks like he could be in high school, since his father and I are very tall. Kids looked up to him.

### Did you detect any behavior that was suspicious?

No. He's definitely mechanically-inclined. He likes to take things apart and put them back together. He could be an engineer in the future. His father and I are divorced, so when he'd spend time with his father, his parents had a place in southern Illinois. He'd go down there and shoot BB guns and do archery. I think, with kids in the North Shore, a lot of them can't relate to [his interests]. I think he's been misunderstood. He's an incredibly intelligent young guy, very

intuitive, and a great sense of humor. He loves his brother very much, who is in college in Colorado. He loves his father, his step-father, and he loves me. I miss him a lot.

### What was your initial reaction?

Shocked, as any mother would be. He's always had interest in the military and we'd go to army stores. He really likes science, and he has some memorabilia of army items, nothing weapon-wise, or anything like that. I knew he was interested and I told him that when he gets older, if that's what he wants to do, he could be a police officer or go into the military. I told him he's too young for that now.

### Do you know how your son obtained the weapons?

The weapons he acquired were in a locked gun safe that belonged to his grandfather. We were going to sell them, and in hindsight, we should have done it a while ago.

### Do you know what his intentions were?

I think he thinks he's older than he is and the internet is a very powerful place and you can look up and inquire anything you want with a couple of clicks. We talked to some people and were able to find some of the things

he was looking up. It was very easy for him to find out how to cut into a safe, it was right out there on the internet. So, I guess where there is a will there is a way. But I will say that he did not have any malicious intentions. He was never ever going to do anything to hurt himself or anybody else. By his account, all he wanted to do was clean them. I think he looked at them as toys and didn't understand the gravity of what he was doing.

### Is he actively receiving treatment?

Yes. He will not be back for any part of eighth grade. He'll go to high school. But I don't know if that will be here.

### Is there anything else you'd like the public to know about your child that is not already known?

I told him I was going to [interview] with you guys and asked him if there was anything he wanted me to say. He said to just let [everyone] know that things aren't as they seem. He said there's more to it. People think the worst. There is still an ongoing investigation, they still have his phone and things they took out of the house. If you look at it from an outsider's view, it doesn't look good. But, he's just a curious child. He needs to find other hobbies.

He didn't realize what he was doing was dangerous, that's why he's receiving treatment. He's a good kid. I understand it though, if it was a different family, I'd be freaked out and would want to know what was going on and why, and if it was a threat to the community or the school.

I knew when I found when I found that I had to call the police, there was no other choice. I would hope that any other parent would do the same thing. It sucked. There are some people in our family that aren't happy with me, that I should have made a different choice. But, it was obvious to me, that if it was taken this far, he needed help.

He knows he made a mistake and wishes he could take it back. He's more freaked out that he scared people. He didn't intend to do that. Even when I called the police, he asked 'why are you calling the police?' I told him it wasn't right and he said 'Mom, I wasn't going to do anything to hurt anybody.' I said, 'I know, I know. But still this is extreme.' I know people that own guns don't put their guns in the bed with them. They're meant to be left in a safe.

Regardless, [my son] is a good boy.

## Administration confirms no surveillance of student social media

Schools across US adopt surveillance policies to monitor safety threats, NT hasn't

by Layla Saqibuddin

After a number of highly publicized school shootings, dozens of schools have invested resources into hiring social media monitoring companies to ensure student safety.

According to The New York Times, more than 100 public schools and universities have invested in policies aimed at preventing shootings, including Michigan State and Florida State Universities.

However, the school has not considered hiring social media monitoring companies and there have been no formal social media companies to monitor students because the school has no major concerns regarding student safety.

"NT does receive reports and tips that help guide the school's director of security," said Assistant Principal of Student Programs and Operations, Athena Arvanitis.

Arvanitis believes by having a healthy relationship with kids and teachers, school violence will be prevented.

"The vast majority of research on this topic stresses the importance of student connections to school as a prevention measurement," she said.

"At New Trier, we are fortunate our staff works hard to create opportunities for students to engage in and be connected to school while also focusing on developing positive relationships with students," said



Juniors McKenna Fox, Shelby Jacob, and Summer Wheeler pose for a Snapchat selfie during a free period | Pearlman

Arvanitis.

"When deciding how to allocate school funds it is important for schools to consider what it is they are getting from the dollars spent, and if the expense is worth it. The more information schools have regarding students' wellbeing, the better they are able to support and serve their students," she said.

Despite the fact that dozens of schools have adopted contracts with monitoring companies, there has been little to no proof that social monitoring systems are useful.

Junior Jeremy Lau said, "I highly doubt the school's attempts will pull anything useful. Other schools have done this and it's more for the hype than actual results. Other schools have had little to no results at all."

However, Hardware Software Engineer Anthony Catalano believes it would be good for the school to implement a social media monitoring system.

"Especially with the violence that's going on around the world,

adding an extra level of security is not a bad idea. It all depends on the type of social media. One reason why NT blocked social media during the school day is to make sure social media doesn't provoke bullying or things of that nature," said Catalano.

While many students think monitoring social media could prevent school violence, they don't think the school should hire a monitoring system.

Senior Stephanie Kacius said, "I don't think New Trier should hire a social media monitoring system just because I feel like it would be a huge invasion of privacy even if some students' profiles are public. Security becomes too much when it starts to interfere with students' lives outside of school and when it takes away from the experience of whatever it is that is being monitored."

Lau believes if the school tried adopting this extra level of security, students and parents would be against it.

"Students, especially in this area, will go into an uproar over this

breach of privacy. One of the only ways the school can actually pull this off is if New Trier does it overnight without telling anyone," said Lau.

Arvanitis said, "being in a high school and working with teenagers who are likely to make mistakes or do something on accident, we focus on turning those instances into moment of individual growth."

However, if a student were to get to that place, of safety concern, our response will likely still focus on learning and personal growth but in a different way that may require more support from others," said Arvanitis.

Assistant Principal Scott Williams has encountered and addressed concerns from social media.

"NT has received multiple reports and concerns through social media. We have addressed those issues and cases. NT also works in conjunction with the Winnetka Police department, people throughout the school and parents as well," said Williams.

While addressing those

concerns, Williams biggest concern is whether a comment or a threat is real or not.

"That's the biggest challenge. When we view comments on social media we never know the context and you can't tell the meaning behind words online. However, if we had a concern from someone, we would be sure to follow up in a way which ensured the safety of all students," said Williams.

Senior Maggie Graves has not encountered any threats or cruel comments on social media. However, Graves believes students are desperate to do anything to get their name out in school.

"Students these days are insecure with themselves. Students say things that they think will help them 'fit in' or 'become popular', but in reality, these comments are scary and only end up hurting them even more than they expected," said Graves.

Catalano believes the biggest challenge is to find the fine line between privacy and safety.

"We don't want students to feel like they are being watched, but we also want to make sure students are browsing safely"

Arvanitis believes that the school draws the line when there is something you see or hear, whether it is through social media or at school, that may have a negative impact on a student and their ability to be successful at school.

"Everyone has a right to privacy and can choose to keep things to themselves. When someone's behavior becomes concerning, that's when it's important to say something."

"We want and hope students speak out and tell us when they see or hear something that is concerning," said Arvanitis.