

# Rethinking Mental Health

Trigger Warning: the contents of this section mention suicide and other potentially distressing mental health issues

Pages 4 and 5

## Day of Silence struggles to provoke discussion

Some LGBTQ+ students think silent protest misses point

by Eva Roytburg

The Day of Silence has been a part of New Trier since the '90s. However, supporters have begun to question the effectiveness of the protest.

The Day of Silence on April 12 is a student-led national event where supporters take a vow of silence to highlight the silencing and erasure of LGBTQ+ people that takes place at school. Here, the event is orchestrated by the Gender-Sexuality Alliance club (GSA).

Over the years, there has been a decline in participation in the Day of Silence. Matt Stuczynski, one of the sponsors for GSA, outlined a central conflict many supporters feel about the protest.

"Students in the club seem to be uncomfortable with the fact that it's silent. They think it's sort of self-defeating. They want it to be more voiceful than silent," said Stuczynski.

Senior Angela O'Connor, who has been a member of the GSA for 4 years, further described the issue.

"When teachers and advisors

start talking about the issues LGBTQ people face, the kids who are participating can't say anything, and that defeats the whole purpose."

The silence has caused some students to stop participating. Alanna Goldstein, a senior, participated in the protest her freshman year and found the silence to be debilitating to starting conversations about issues the LGBTQ+ community faces.

"I found that teachers were having discussions about LGBTQ+ identities, and I wasn't able to participate because I was silent, so in future years I just wore a rainbow," she said.

Other students found the silence to be a compelling aspect of the protest. Maggie Lin, a junior and part of the LGBTQ+ community, described how the silence forces people into the shoes of one who has to hide a crucial aspect of their identity.

"It's interesting to try to navigate through a day where you can't speak, people sort of realize that it becomes difficult which parallels the difficulty of reconciling an identity which is hidden."

Junior Nico Tobon agreed: "I think it's a great thing to do and a great way to spread a message."

But for Isabelle Aladda, a junior and member of the GSA club, the lack of participation was a central issue to



Supporters, like those in the Funo advisery, sported gray and black clothing and donned rainbow pins Apr. 12 | Towers

the effectiveness of silence. "Conceptually, the silence just doesn't make much sense, because most people aren't silent. If people participated, it could be a really good thing."

While many who support the cause choose not to participate due to the silent nature of the protest, there could be cultural aspects specific to New Trier that is decking participation.

One such factor could be a pressure to conform for students. Stuczynski said, "It [being silent] is tough to do. When students aren't speaking, they're sticking out, it's hard for kids to do that."

For O'Connor, another reason

why student's don't participate in the Day of Silence is because of the misconception that our community is shielded from homophobia.

She explained that "a lot of people think, oh, we're from New Trier, we're some liberal bubble. It's a lot more subtle now than just not letting people get married, like when they changed the name of Turnabout and everyone got so mad. It didn't hurt anyone."

Some students have found the lack of conversation on days following or leading up to the protest problematic and difficult to navigate.

Sophomore Maya Crystal said, "Nobody talks about it after the day, there's no debriefing session, so it's

really bad to silence the people who need their voices heard on the one day where people are paying attention."

O'Connor also found issues with how conversations were being conducted about the protest.

"Teachers don't really know how to talk about it, it's just kind of really awkward with participation and things like that. The issue needs to be better integrated into classrooms," she said.

"I think it just needs to be talked about more because there are a lot of misconceptions about it, people think its just some fun quiet game when it's a protest. And it is a protest. A march isn't about going on a walk," said O'Connor.

## College acceptance rates drop as stress rises

Elite colleges boast record low admission rates as competition gets tougher

by Katy Pickens

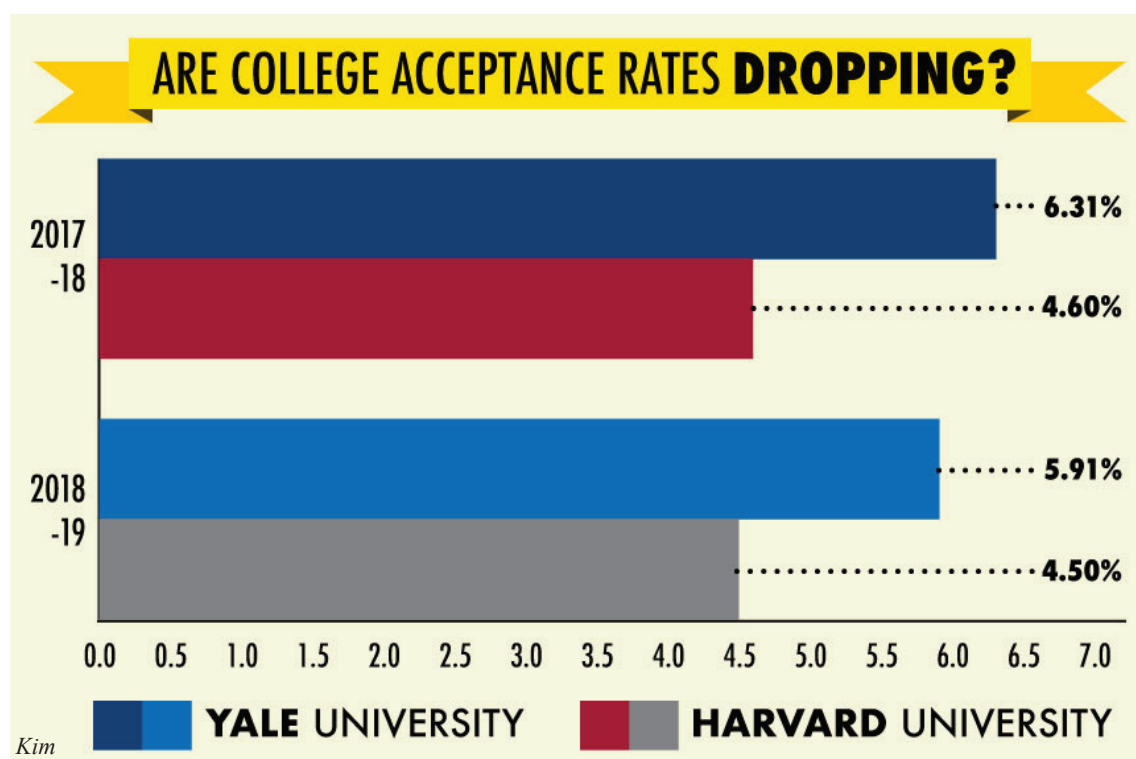
The Varsity Blues scandal has shed light on how corrupt, dramatic, and cutthroat the college admissions process can be -- and it is only getting more competitive. Many highly selective schools have announced that their acceptance rates decreased from 2018.

Yale and University of Southern California, both of which were involved in the Varsity Blues scandal, released their admission rates: Yale's rate dropped from 6.31 percent to 5.91, while USC had an admission rate of just 11 percent, its lowest ever. Harvard's rate of admission also dropped slightly to 4.5 percent from 4.6 percent last year.

College counselor Dan Rogan explained that this decrease is likely due to the influx of applications and will not have a large impact on students' chances of getting into selective universities.

"A lot of it stems from the Common App and how easy it is to submit applications to multiple schools they wouldn't think about otherwise," said Rogan.

"It is also about the commercialization and commodification of the admissions process. It can become more about the 'brand name' of a college than the best fit," he added.



When considering colleges with very low admission rates, students can feel the need to submit more applications in order to ensure they are accepted somewhere.

However, as admissions at top-tier institution goes down, the desire to attend these colleges only increases. As a result, students feel pressure to get perfect grades, delve into many extracurriculars, and eventually attend an elite college despite the odds.

"Teachers emphasize that the name of the school shouldn't matter, but there is a lot of pressure among the student body. Sometimes everything can feel like it's about college even when it shouldn't be,"

said senior Abby Wilson.

Senior Edward Seol agreed that applying to college can be intense and that this community can sometimes obsess over admissions.

"College admissions [pressure] really hit me in the face at the beginning of this year," said Seol. "I am not the type to get nervous or impatient about results, but I experienced that too, especially during late February and into March."

Seol also acknowledged that even though people might be disappointed by college admissions, there is no one perfect school for a person to attend.

"In a [high] school where so much value is placed on

accomplishment, college admissions is assuredly going to be disappointing for many people. Students just have to become comfortable knowing that results will not be pretty for most and that many paths exist outside of the one they fixate on," said Seol.

For junior Kate Fawcett, thinking about submitting her college applications in the next school year is nerve-racking because the end result is so unpredictable.

"I think that it is really stressful, because you can be a great student and be genuinely passionate about the things on your resumé and still not get to where you want to go," said Fawcett. "I think sometimes there can be a feeling that you need to go to a

top school to be successful, but that's just not true."

Senior Molly Van Gorp agreed that the college process can be stressful and emphasized it is different for everyone. Van Gorp applied early decision and committed to college before the end of first semester.

"It was great to know where I would be going earlier in the application process, but it also limited my options. Ultimately I am happy that I applied ED because it gave me clarity early on, allowing me to get excited and start planning for next year sooner," said Van Gorp.

Van Gorp also stressed the importance of finding the school that best fits your personality, not the name of the college or its admission rate.

"Don't come into the process with preconceived notions and don't let others overly influence your decision making," said Van Gorp.

There is a college that is a good fit for everyone out there, she emphasized.

This rang especially true for Wilson, who is excited to go to college in the fall even though her admission process did not look exactly like she thought it would.

"I'm actually grateful that I didn't get into some of the places I applied to because it wouldn't have been a good fit," Wilson explained.

While students do feel pressure to attend elite universities, the college you attend does not determine your future, she added.

"It's not all about the name or the prestige," Wilson said. "It's about where you could be happy."