

# “The Hunting Ground” raises awareness at NT

The controversial documentary shines light on sexual assault

by Jessi Zook

New Trier students are preparing for college with ACTs, college counselors and shopping lists, but most aren't ready for the real risk of sexual assault on college campuses.

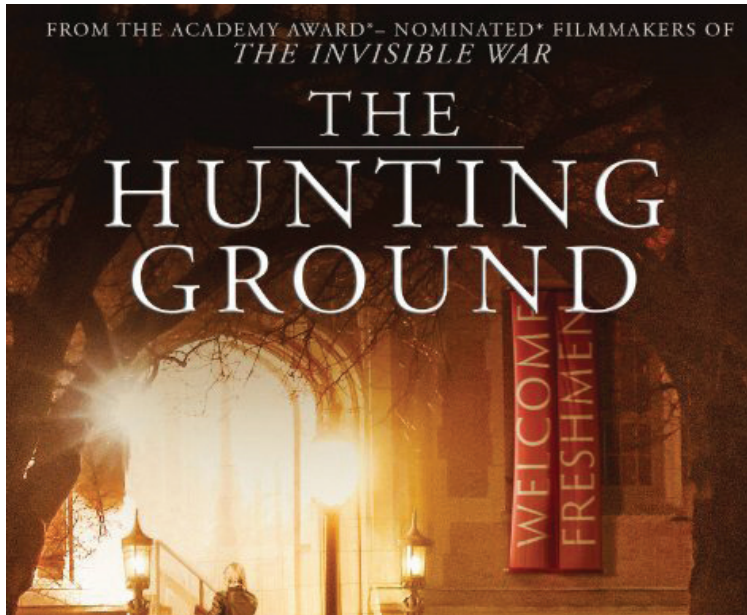
“The Hunting Ground,” a movie directed by Kirby Dick, attempts to raise awareness about rape and sexual assault on college campuses. The documentary exposes shocking information about the truth behind many college scandals.

Ariell Bachman, an English teacher and senior girl's advisor, chose to show her advisory “The Hunting Ground” after seeing a free screening of it at the University of Chicago last spring. She thought her advisory would benefit from seeing it.

Bachman's advisory had been having ongoing discussions on gender identity and the expectations of women in society, so the movie was just part of the broader topic.

Bachman prefaced the movie through discussions with the administration and parents.

“I told parents that if they wanted their daughter to opt out of the film—because it can be a trigger



The acclaimed film centers around rape on college campuses | Amazon

for some students—then that was totally fine. I was pretty transparent,” Bachman said.

While she encouraged her advisees to take advantage of the opportunity, she was still open to individual cases, in which the movie might not be as beneficial.

Overall, Bachman found that her advisees had a very good response to the movie.

“Everyone was emotionally impacted,” Bachman said, “it may have stirred some things up, but those things needed to be talked about and examined.”

While it's not frequently talked about, sexual assault is a huge

problem. According to a 2014 MIT survey, 17 percent of undergraduate women on college campuses have experienced unwanted sexual encounters.

The film has the power to make a change, according to Bachman. “My advisees feel like they can handle themselves better and help their peers, too.” The girls feel empowered, having gained the knowledge they need to be prepared and protected in the real world.

At this point, Bachman is the only adviser to have shown the movie to her advisory, but she said, “I know a couple of other female advisers want to show the film.”

Liette Brisebois, a junior girls advisor, has not shown “The Hunting Ground” to her advisory, but said, “I think it would be a very appropriate topic to talk about in advisory. It would really raise awareness and show what is known about what goes on at college campuses.”

Brisebois's only concern is the fear tactic that many people discussing the topic often resort to.

“I think culturally there's a lot of scare tactics that are going on,” she said, and that's something she'd like to avoid exposing her advisory to.

Brisebois doesn't want anything to cause her girls to live in fear while in the real world.

Junior Hannah Shushunov had some concerns about the movie, too.

“It's a really heavy topic for advisory,” Shushunov said. “It might make people feel uncomfortable.”

While the movie may have some potential problems, Bachman thought the viewing audience should be expanded. “I think it is an unfortunate reality that these kinds of things only end up being talked about in girls advisories or with women, because, of course, it's a male issue, too,” Bachman said.

We need to change “what it means to be a male so that it doesn't include objectifying women's bodies and taking them for your own,” Bachman said.

Bachman's ideas are well justified. According to the Sexual

Assault Prevention and Awareness Center, 99 percent of perpetrators of sexual assault are males.

However, boys and men can also be victimized. According to the Rape Crisis Center, 10 percent of all victims are men. So, the film could begin a conversation in boys advisories and prepare them.

Brisebois agreed wholeheartedly. “I think it would be a great thing that could be shared with boys and girls advisories,” she said.

However, logistically, making the movie a school wide phenomenon has its challenges. In order for it to be really beneficial, Brisebois said, it would require preparation.

“For example, I would have to be paired with a male colleague. I'd need a man's perspective on the issue.” But, if it was successful, Brisebois said it would be a really powerful experience.

Junior Kameron Valdivia agreed. While he acknowledged that there's always a risk in showing something so controversial, he said, “I think it would be beneficial for anyone to watch a movie like that.”

The unfortunate reality is that sexual violence does exist in our society, so integrating “The Hunting Ground” into advisories can add awareness and a sense of community for both boys and girls.

“You should watch it with somebody, because it is serious, and it's deeply devastating,” Bachman said.

## Are mental health days necessary?



Champion of the mental health day, Ferris Bueller, on his day off | Netflix

Students and admin debate mental health day validity

by Nora Crumley

New Trier is in the midst of a very long third quarter, absent of any breaks due to the ongoing construction.

This lengthy quarter has brought about the discussion of mental health days or an absence from school without physical illness.

“A mental health day is when [students] are feeling like the demands of the expectations of work or school are overwhelming to an extent to where somebody needs times off to decompress and relax,” Alexander Zilka, social studies teacher and adviser, said.

While many see the benefit of the occasional mental health day, others note the trends that can be produced by these days.

“I think mental health days are a slippery slope because on one end mental health days fall under healthy living and balance; on the other end of it, we are trying to teach young adults to have a good work ethic and to be resilient when not all things are going great,” NT social worker and adviser Andrew Gomberg said.

The prevalence of students taking mental health days also brings up issues of students' schedules.

“I would hope that school wouldn't be an environment that is so demanding that students need time off to decompress. Given how much students take on it's not surprising to me some students would want to take mental health days,” Zilka said.

Junior girl's adviser Chair, Patricia Sheridan shared Zilka's concerns about over-scheduling.

“Students are so over-scheduled that they are forced to sacrifice things such as school time in order to maintain their mental health. This should not be the norm.”

Many teachers indicated that there are other ways to combat stress other than taking time off of school.

“When a student has difficulty managing their lives and their academic expectations, the first step should be communication with teachers,” John Burnside, science teacher and adviser, said.

Not only is missed class time a concern on teachers' minds, but so is resilience. “We have a lot of students who are not building resilience, avoiding or being overly dependent on someone else taking care of them,” Gomberg said.

Though many teachers have concerns surrounding the prevalence of students' taking mental health days, they do acknowledge the lack of breaks students are facing this year due to the construction.

“I think students right now are definitely stretched to their limit regarding schedules,” said Burnside.

Along with the lack of breaks, the competitive nature of New Trier also takes a toll on students, according to junior Hannah Litchman.

“Mental health days are important because we are under a lot of pressure and New Trier is a very fast paced environment. It is easy to get drained and mentally exhausted.”

“Consider not taking a mental health day when you're really anxious and wishing you were somewhere else. It's not really conducive to your learning experience,” senior Amanda Wong said. “It's like working out, you don't run ten miles without taking a break at some point.”

Though many students recognize the benefits of mental health days, many have not taken one themselves.

“I believe in mental health days; however, I would never take a mental health day because of the amount of school work I would miss,” junior Alex Vlahandreas said.

Though students are the ones taking these mental health days, it is their parents who allow them to miss school. A ‘mental health day’ is not a viable absence, so it is by the discretion of parents that allow these students to take days off.

Kimberly Boscow, mother of junior Liza Boscow, said, “I would allow my child to take a mental health day if I felt it was warranted.” Boscow continued, “It's hard because when we were growing up the term ‘mental health day’ didn't exist. I never considered a mental health day until I saw how stressful and exhausting [my children's] lives are.”

No matter the parent opinion, school personnel find the prevalence in mental health days concerning.

“The reason I am a little hesitant is because I don't want our school to become a place where mental health days are an expectation,” said Zilka.

“We want our students to be happy and healthy,” said Sheridan, “I do realize students are under pressure and need a break, but these breaks must be within a boundary.”

## Vaping continued from page 1

it has been common to sarcastically call them “vape gods” or “vape lords” in passing or on social media. Some people even say “vape is life” to provoke them.

“It doesn't really bother me, in fact, I sort of embrace it,” Halliwell said.

“I honestly hope this is just a fad and it dies out quickly,” Schmezzick said. “I can see why it would be helpful to people trying to quit [smoking] but it's just more of a nuisance than anything else.”

Another concern is that teens are using vaping as a way to smoke marijuana. There are two forms that marijuana can be used in a vape, in

its normal plant form and as an oil. The oil is a more pure form, leading to a higher concentration in THC, the main stimulant in marijuana.

It's too early to tell if vaping is dangerous or not, however New Trier's student body seems to dislike vaping, all except a few vape enthusiasts.

“I don't know why people care so much about it,” an anonymous vape user said. “It's not like I'm blowing cigarette smoke in your face. I'm just trying to enjoy my Skittles flavoring, sorry if that bothers you.”

## Littering continued from page 1

“He's the one who really has driven this project,” Horne said. “My role in it was just to help him out where I could, which was to write a song and show up to shoot the video. He put it all together.”

He added that Shaw had to jump through several hoops to get the video approved by the administration, and that it was his idea to advertise it with banners throughout the school.

Horne said that he's experienced initial excitement from students and teachers who have mentioned the video to him, and he's curious to see if it will make a difference in the long run.

A member of the PPS staff who wished to remain anonymous said that these kinds of campaigns usually help. Other past campaigns, he explained, include Adopt-A-Hallway and a month designated to raise litter awareness through putting up posters have tried to make a difference, but the quantity of litter has remained about the same throughout his eight years at New Trier.

“First of all, this video skyrocketed up way faster than we expected to,” Shaw said. “Secondly, we saw

changes all over the school way faster than we expected to.”

Shaw recounts a time a few days after the video was released, where he and some friends were sitting at a lunch table in the cafeteria and he saw a student, who was originally going to leave his garbage on the floor for the custodians to take care of, pick it up, and throw it out after his friends told him to “Throw it out for real.”

Shaw expressed his excitement and hope for the campaign's future: “It's still in its early phases, we are trying to expand it to reach more people, but it's doing really well for where it is right now.”



Scan this QR code to watch the Student Alliance anti-littering campaign video!