

NT hosts country's largest annual Gap Year Fair

Event featured 55 vendors and panel of past student participants

by *Amelia Jacobson*

Senior Nicki Montenegro attended the twelfth annual New Trier Gap Year Fair on Jan. 26 to search for programs to participate in during the second semester of her gap year.

She is already planning on traveling to Patagonia with The National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS) for her first semester.

Montenegro has been considering taking a gap year since junior year. She saw the fair as an opportunity not only to find an additional gap year semester program, but also to talk to the representatives of NOLS.

The fair was organized by the U.S. Gap Year Fairs, and although there are 42 Gap Year Fairs hosted around the country, New Trier's fair is the largest.

Post High School Counselor Gretchen Stauder coordinated the event.

"It gives students time to reflect, do something different, explore something they have always wanted to explore. I would say, it's important for students to realize, and families, that not all gap year programs cost

a lot of money, you can create your own," said Stauder.

The fair attracted approximately 500 students from across Illinois and 55 global vendors. The vendors offer a variety of programs such as service trips, sailing around the world, language immersion, and much more.

With the various programs available for gap year, there is something interesting, beneficial, and affordable for every student.

"There were countless organizations giving presentations on their summer and gap year options. Each presentation was really informative and gave me a better understanding of what I'm looking for in a program," said Montenegro.

After attending the fair, junior Katherine Connolly is interested in French immersion programs offered by two vendors, Education First and The Council on International Educational Exchange.

"It was definitely helpful, because it shows you a bunch of possibilities that you didn't really know existed," said Connolly.

Sophomore Beth Morton attended the fair after hearing about it in her advisory.

Although Morton said she may not take a gap year, she was happy to learn about available summer programs, like the health initiatives in Dominican Republic and Costa Rica through Global Leadership Adventures.



Over 500 students attended to learn about the variety, affordability, and benefits of taking a gap year

| **Stauder**

"I think [the fair] was helpful because you got to speak to people who actually ran the business, instead of hearing it from other people, or having to research it on the internet," Morton said.

The fair also had a panel of past participants and counselors to share their experiences. 2017 alumnus and University of Chicago freshman Vicky Berman was one of the panelists.

Berman spent one semester backpacking in Southeast Asia, and the next semester she spent time in Chili, Patagonia, and Cuba, both programs offered by ARCC Adventures Cross-Country.

"[The gap year] made me more independent, more creative, and more confident. It made me much more comfortable and adaptable to

situations than I was before," said Berman.

One of the draws for those considering gap year are the benefits not just from a personal standpoint but an educational one as well.

"Studies have shown that the retention rate is higher, [previous gap year participants] are happier, and their grades are stronger—not just their freshman year but by the time they graduate," said Stauder.

Colleges also see the benefits of students taking a gap year, with some colleges offering programs and scholarships.

"It helps students, it helps colleges, it helps everyone, it helps the world," said Stauder

The students who attended the gap fair felt that more of their classmates should consider taking a

gap year.

"It's so easy to get stuck in the typical routine of a New Trier student; go to high school, get good grades, get into a good college, get a good job, and the option of a gap year is highly underrated," said Montenegro.

New Trier students often attend college directly after graduation, with approximately 98% of the class enrolled in college after senior year. Only an average 1.5% students at New Trier take a gap year.

"I think where we come from, there is [a stigma]. The normal path is just to go to college, and I don't think that is a bad path, but it's not the only path. I was very hesitant to take one, but looking back it was the best year of my life," said Berman.

Usefulness of notecards during finals contested

Notecard policy depends on course level and teacher

by *Ghousia Anwar*

First semester finals started on Jan. 23, leaving many students and teachers discussing if some courses had less intense finals.

Junior AP Physics student Rosemary Shelton was allowed a notecard for her final, but she heard that this was uncommon for an AP class.

"I don't know about anyone else having a notecard on an AP final. We couldn't have any words on the notecard, it was only formulas."

Classes that aren't AP usually allow students to use a notecard, but ultimately it depends on the teacher.

Level-four chemistry and level three pre-calculus student sophomore Lidia Orta said that having a notecard on the final would have helped with her final grade and would've reduced stress associated with finals.

"I spent a lot of time studying so it paid off. For sure my final grade wasn't ideal; however, some classes like chemistry require a greater amount of studying," said Orta.

She was allowed a notecard last year, but not this year, making finals more difficult.

Orta believes that each teacher teaches differently, so it is up to them whether they choose to allow a notecard or not.

"A lot of my friends were like 'oh you didn't get to use a notecard?' so I think it just depends on your teacher," stated Orta.

Chemistry and biology teacher Brian Woodruff said that because each class is different, finals for each class are different.

"It's not the same test," said Woodruff adding that, "It varies a little bit based on level."

This year he allowed his Biology students to have several pages of notes.

"They had multiple pieces of paper, but that's a rarity," said Woodruff.

Like many teachers, he believes that finals shouldn't be overly difficult, but he also thinks that notecards don't impact much of the final grade.

To use "[a notecard] doesn't make that much of a difference," stated Woodruff. "My intent on the final is not to make it so they're not going to do well."

Environmental geoscience student sophomore Sofia Russick acknowledges that despite having a notecard in geoscience, last year's biology final was much easier.

"We had a notecard, and I think I did pretty well," said Russick. "Last year in biology it was multiple choice so it was easier."

Sophomore Georgia Jones said she assumes most math teachers allow students to use a notecard on their final, but in science it depends.

"I think for math [a notecard] is a given," said Jones.

"Because of the different disciplines, there is necessarily some variation," remarked forensic science and chemistry teacher Jackie Gnant.

She agrees that whether or not she give a notecard depends on the subject and level of the class.

Students and teachers both agree that if students don't understand the material, then despite the subject and level, whether or not a notecard is allowed won't help.

"If you don't know the material, it doesn't matter if you have a notecard or not," said Woodruff.

Jazz Fest hosts 1,600 music students

The Count Basie Orchestra and Joey Defrancesco headlined the event

by *Connor Caserio*

On Feb. 2, NT hosted its 36th annual Jazz Festival, featuring the world-renowned Count Basie Orchestra. Around 1,600 student musicians gathered in the Gaffney from 45 bands and 38 schools across Illinois, Iowa, Wisconsin and Canada.

The annual event included non-competitive performances and instructional clinics, including master classes with members of the Count Basie Orchestra, who performed later that evening.

Director of Jazz Ensembles Nicholas Meyer, said the goal of the festival is to hire the best clinicians to work with students, "giving them the opportunity to perform great music and be lifted up in a setting where no one wins or loses," according to the Chicago Tribune.

The evening concert began with a performance from Jazz Ensemble 1, the school's top Jazz band, which opened up for the headlining performances from Joey Defrancesco and The Count Basie Orchestra.

This continues a legacy of notable guest artists performing at the festival including The Chris Potter Big Band in 2016, The Count Basie Orchestra in 2013, Chicago Jazz Ensemble in 2008, and last year's headlining performance, Delfeayo Marsalis.

The Count Basie Orchestra became popular as a dance band in the '30s and '40s and continues to hold musical prestige today, having won 18 Grammys.

"They have been at the center of jazz history since then and have been playing almost without interruption since the late '30s,



Nicholas Meyer directs Jazz 1 ensemble before the headlining acts

| **Towers**

said Meyer.

Joey Defrancesco, a celebrated Jazz organist, played alongside them, meaning Jazz students were able to share the stage with a world renowned band.

Junior saxophonist and member of Jazz 1 Nick Thabit who played on stage with Defrancesco said, "They're some of the most premier jazz performers in the world. It's an amazing opportunity for us to be opening the set for them."

Senior saxophonist Joe Huang felt the same. "I absolutely loved the experience. Everyone in the band worked very hard for this moment and we pulled off a hip performance," he said.

"I still remember sitting in the audience two years ago watching the concert, and if anyone were to tell me then that I would be at the solo mic in exactly two years I would not have believed them.

The Jazz Festival also provided multiple opportunities for members of the Jazz Ensemble 1 to take on leadership roles, allowing students to share their love for jazz with the

community. If a student wants to pursue jazz after high school, this is also a useful way to develop musical connections.

Senior Bassist Lily Fox helped orchestrate the Women in Jazz dinner. "It's a special event for women in jazz to come together and share their experiences," said Fox.

This year was the second annual women in jazz dinner and had a total attendance of about 200-- all girls in the NT Jazz program, female jazz musicians from about 20 other high school and middle schools, and even some New Trier alumni attended.

The panelists this year included Sharel Cassity, Jenny Kellogg, Sherrie Maricle, Marlene Rosenberg, and Ellen Rowe.

"Listening to these distinguished female musicians' experience in the male-dominated jazz industry was fascinating, and hearing an all-female quintet was very empowering," said NT Jazz Ensemble 1 member Alexandra Riedinger.

"I look forward to coming back to New Trier next year to participate in this annual inspiration again."