

# The Student Alliance creating change at school

SA advocates for social media, among other changes

by Helen Fagen

From clubs to tech issues to the cafeteria muffins, the Student Alliance is working to fix it all.

NT's student government is working hard to make positive changes for the student body, while making some internal changes themselves.

One of the significant projects the Student Alliance has been working on that will be finished this year is the Club Finder.

This resource is an online service that will allow students to easily find clubs that match their interests.

President Jacob Shaw explains that it will "generate a custom-tailored list of New Trier extracurriculars that you not only have time for, but would find generally appealing."

Because New Trier is home to over 200 clubs, Shaw hopes this resource will help students become

more involved in extracurricular activities.

The Student Alliance is also working to smooth out the problems with technology in the classroom. Some social media sites such as Instagram and Facebook have been blocked on the student wifi network, and many students are disappointed that they can't use these applications during their free periods.

But the blocking of the apps ensures that students don't use them during class time. The balance between maintaining maximum technological freedom while also ensuring order in the classroom is a harmony that the Student Alliance is working hard to achieve.

In his presidential campaign, Shaw promised to unblock Facebook and work with the teachers and administration to compromise in unblocking other apps such as Instagram and Snapchat.

Shaw remarked, "I can now say with conviction that this [balanced unblocking of social media applications] will happen."

The Student Alliance has also been working on a new long-term project. Shaw said the Alliance is "exploring desegregating advisories"



The Student Alliance's logo outside of their door in room 009 | Zervas

and currently discussing this with the administration.

Though Shaw noted this is a long-term project and could be unsuccessful, he stressed that the Student Alliance is always working to support all students regardless of their gender identity.

With the construction of the new cafeteria, students have seen many changes in the food system this year. The Student Alliance working to improve the cafeteria experience. Shaw said he meets with the head chefs every couple of weeks to voice student suggestions.

These student suggestions have made a real impact in the cafeteria, according to Shaw. Students spoke to the Student Alliance about their wishes to have the coffee bar open after school to provide study snacks. Starting last Monday, the coffee bar is now open until 3:45pm.

This productivity has been noticed by the student body, who are impressed by the positive changes. Senior Grace Nielson said, "The new cafeteria is really awesome, and I feel like as the year goes on, the food just keeps getting better."

The Student Alliance has

also faced internal changes that have allowed them to work more efficiently than ever.

In addition to the appointing of new sponsors Ms. Kolack, Ms. Gamauf and Mr. Noskin, the number of students on the Student Alliance board has nearly doubled. Shaw said that due to this change, "without a doubt, we have been twice as productive."

Shaw commented that the entire atmosphere of the room has been revitalized, and every day the board works hard to make change.

"Come into our boardroom office any day and find someone announcing the daily suggestions we've received, a couple researching projects online, someone on the phone with the township press and someone painting a poster to advertise our service work."

The Student Alliance is working to ensure that this productivity only increases. Shaw recently created an online suggestion box for students.

According to Shaw, the site has become "our biggest source of student suggestions" and is really improving the efficiency of the Student Alliance at fixing the issues of students.

## Literary Festival goes off without a hitch, despite low attendance



Jeffery Brown, pictured here in 2014, returns to Lit Fest | NT News

Low attendance does not hinder learning experience

by Beth Wall

Despite its low attendance, the annual Literary Festival proved to be a success for aspiring writers.

Friday, Nov. 4 marked the 13th year of Lit Fest, an event in which journalism and senior writing students attend four (of seventeen possible) seminars hosted by professional authors, poets, musicians, and critics.

Sponsor Chris Oetter said, "the best speakers give students inspiration for their own writing, and to keep writing."

"I got to meet a lot of local writers. That was cool because when you think of professional writers, you never think that they might be that close," senior Creative Writing student Michelle Cheng said.

Lineups from past years have included Wussy the band, the late Harold Ramis, and musician Andrew Bird.

This year featured a wide range of high-profile writers, including prolific journalist Chris Steiner, architecture critic Blair Kamin, and writer for the hit TV shows "Parenthood" and "Gilmore Girls", Gina Fattore.

Senior Tim Zajdela said he most enjoyed songwriter Josh Siegel, who encouraged students with writers blocked to journal daily and write freely about everything they're feeling.

Author and DePaul writing professor, Michelle Morano, gave advice on how to piece together realistic characters, according to senior Claire Hooper.

One of the most popular speakers was graphic artist and "Jedi Academy" author Jeffrey Brown, who explained his creative process and history, and taught students how to draw a cartoon Darth Vader.

Cheng said that one of the most important pieces of advice she gained from the day came from Brown.

"He said to always keep trying and be open to anything. Even if you're not satisfied with where you're at, keep trying so can get better."

Although it looked promising, the event unfourtantly intersected with the Cubs' World Series parade. So while 284 students had registered to take part, about half actually showed up.

Zajdela said he hardly noticed the low attendance. The only exception a poetry writing session in which he was one of two students. "The low numbers in that particular seminar made it feel more special and intimate," Zajdela said.

Other students had experiences similar to that of Zajdela. "I went to one session where there were only a few students, but I think it only added to the experience," agreed Hooper.

According to Oetter, the attendance gap was somewhat compensated by allowing junior IGSS students, American Studies students, and various other English classes to attend afternoon sessions.

IGSS junior Emily Barnes participated in a slam poetry session. Though she said that particular session was not especially compelling, she said that she would have readily taken part in the full day's activities, if given the option.

## Environmental club to give free Nalgene

In an effort to reduce waste, the club is giving water bottles to all

by Bella Geroulis

New Trier has become increasingly more eco-friendly within the past few decades, and it's no surprise that the school's very own Environmental Club has influenced these efforts.

The club has aided in raising the school's overall awareness of the issues our environment faces and has made as many efforts as possible to engage students in and outside of school.

They've held Earth Day seminars to raise awareness on environmental sustainability, and members volunteer in their free time for environmental organizations.

According to club representative senior Max Kanter, the club's main goal is to "promote environmental sustainability within our community while indulging students and staff with education and awareness."

Environmental Club's most recent project at New Trier is arguably their biggest.

Their goal is to provide a renewable water bottle to every New Trier student and staff member, and it's been the leading force in their goal to reduce the amount of plastic waste that students create.

On any given day, the hallways and cafeteria are filled with plastic water bottles, and an average of 5/10 students say that they don't notice if they throw their waste in the garbage or the recycling bins.

According to the "Ban The Bottle" organization, of the 50 billion plastic water bottles used by Americans each year, over 80% end up in a landfill. Though recycling programs have been implemented throughout the New Trier Township, they've unfortunately gone unnoticed by students and staff members for too long.

Though it may seem impossible, the club's attempt to provide every student and faculty member with a



Enviornmental Club co-president Jacob Weinstein with a Nalgene | Coladarci

free 32 ounce Nalgene water bottle is becoming more of a reality.

*of the 50 billion plastic water bottles used by Americans each year, over 80% end up in a landfill*

The club has been working relentlessly over the past few months with the administration to reach their shared goal. According to Kanter "the Environmental Club and the administration see it as a dire need to provide a free alternative in order to cut down on the immense amount of waste produced by New Trier every day."

Kanter went on to say that he sees this project not only as a way to build a more sustainable lifestyle, but also to act as a wake up call for students and staff to see how much plastic and other non-renewable materials they end up wasting over time.

Many students have already made the switch to reusable water bottles, mostly due to the increase in options when picking out bottles.

"Swell" water bottles have taken over New Trier, acting as a cute accessory for students as well as

significantly reducing the amount of plastic waste Trevians produce.

Most students see the benefits that providing water bottles to students would offer. Senior Leah Graham is an avid supporter of reusable water bottles, and she herself carries one every day. She thinks the club's efforts would help ease the concerns that some people have of giving up plastic bottles completely.

"Hopefully carrying a reusable water bottle will eventually catch on instead of buying plastic things everyday," Graham said.

While a lot of students agree with Graham, some think it's a waste of money. Sophomore Michael Endre thinks Environmental Club should make the program an option, because "not everyone uses plastic waste everyday. If they want one, they should get one. That way the school wouldn't waste money on the people who don't want it."

The Club is confident that they will be able to overcome the challenges they might face, and they hope to continue the work they've spent implementing eco-friendly alternatives throughout the school.

They hope that these efforts will create a ripple effect, and ultimately lead to a greener society beyond the walls of New Trier.