

Brennan creates path with passion for code

Computer whiz kid speaks the language of coding

by Sarah Zhang

After the academics, extracurriculars come in a close second in the New Trier community. Sports, theater, yearbook, service—students usually go above and beyond in order to put the ‘extra’ in ‘extracurricular’.

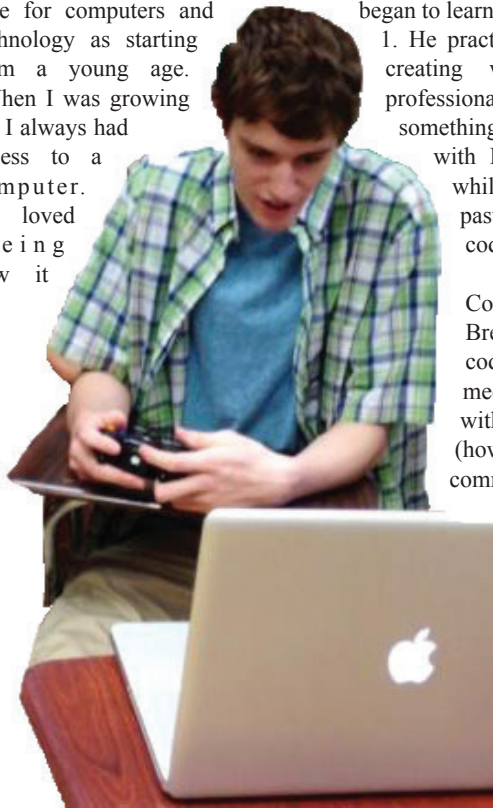
But if sports aren’t exactly up your alley, and you’d rather leave theater up to the professionals on Broadway, how exactly do you stand out in a sea of 4,000 students?

Senior Kevin Brennan strays from the traditional, expected after-school route, and instead turns to the computer. In some respects, this is nothing special. Like most students, his after school routine follows as such, “After school, if I don’t have work, I’ll usually go online,” Brennan said.

At first glance it seems quite ordinary, but more than just scrolling

on Facebook, Brennan channels his energy and passion into computers.

Brennan describes his love for computers and technology as starting from a young age. “When I was growing up, I always had access to a computer. I loved seeing how it



worked and what all the parts did,” Brennan said.

Starting freshman year, Brennan began to learn to code in Web Design 1. He practiced using Photoshop, creating web pages, making professional quality graphics and, something that’s really stuck with Brennan, coding. And while freshman year is long past, Brennan still enjoys coding in senior year.

As part of the Computer Science Club, Brennan and fellow coders of varied skill level meet once a week to work with a variety of languages (how instructions are communicated to a computer) and environments, including C++, Python and Game Maker, according to the club description.

Even with joining Computer Science Club and taking Web Design, Brennan will

typically code after school. When describing his favorite extracurricular, Brennan said, “If [on that day] I want to learn any programming, I will go to Codecademy, which is a great site to learn many different languages.”

Using his knowledge, Brennan uses his computer to create: “I love using some of the Adobe apps like Photoshop, Dreamweaver, and Premiere,” Brennan said.

Such apps have become increasingly popular, as more and more people are discovering a passion for graphic design, just as Brennan does.

From freelance bloggers to professional coders, in an age where computers, smartphones, tablets, or anything with a screen dominates much of our time, ‘playing’ on computers becomes a lot less of an activity for schubs, the un-athletic and the anti-social.

As playing computer games turns into making a simple website turns into coding, a passion for how computers work has evolved into a viable extracurricular, much like theater or sports, although largely unlisted on most applications.

Although New Trier has had Computer Science courses in its curriculum for some time now, the rest of the country is catching up. Last December, over 60 school districts committed to offering computer science courses to their students, reaching over 4 million students nationwide as part of a movement to connect students with technology skills at younger ages.

Though coding is not Brennan’s only passion—“I love playing guitar. Whenever I’m doing homework or relaxing, I’m always listening to music,” Brennan said—coding is something that takes a lot of time and skill to master, much like playing tennis or singing a solo on stage.

Even though Brennan comes across as what we may imagine as a ‘computer nerd’, it’s hard to place him in exactly one category.

Coding has become an integral, very serious part of how we communicate and live our daily lives. It’s due in part to many people just like Brennan, those who code and spend a lot of time doing it because they love it.

Playing, teaching keep De Jaegher composed

The halls are alive with the sound of music

by Melanie Mandell

With a world class music program and hundreds of students who play instruments, it’s no wonder the music wing is filled with incredible talent. Senior Emiel De Jaegher stands out amidst this crowd of budding musicians.

De Jaegher plays the trumpet in the Symphony Orchestra, Jazz Ensemble I, and the Symphonic Wind Ensemble. “These classes are very hard, highly selective, and require a lot of work to be put in outside of class,” said De Jaegher. He also mentioned that they are capstone ensembles, which means they are the top classes available for the genre.

De Jaegher discovered his love for music at a very young age. He began to play the violin at age four and has been hooked on making music ever since. Besides the thirteen years De Jaegher has spent with the violin, he has also been playing the trumpet for seven years, and the piano for two.

Not only does he play for New Trier’s music program, he also teaches other students. “I actually have three students. I have taught ages varying from a current sixth grader to a current freshman in high school,” De Jaegher said.

Not many New Trier musicians have the opportunity to teach music to other students. De Jaegher feels that being a music teacher gives

him an edge over other musicians. “Teaching has kept me on track with my technique and has kept me passionate about the music,” said De Jaegher.

One might assume that all of these music classes would take away a lot of free time, but that’s not necessarily the case. “There are only after school commitments when there is a concert that night, a dress rehearsal the night before, or an all day music clinic,” said De Jaegher. Chamber Orchestra meets before school at 7:25 AM, but De Jaegher was only involved with that during his junior year.

Looking past high school, De Jaegher wishes to continue with his passion for music, both in college and for a career. “I will most likely be playing in the school ensembles and studying with as many teachers as I can,” De Jaegher

said. “I hope to go to a school somewhere in New York City so that I can also play outside school and be immersed in the music.”

For his career, De Jaegher wants music to play a large role. “I plan on studying neuroscience. The goal with studying neuroscience is to understand the science behind music. The topic can be interpreted in many different ways, and I’m very interested in exploring it,” De Jaegher said.

When asked what he does in his free time, De Jaegher immediately went right to music. “I compose or I try and make music with other composers, such as Louis the Child,” said De Jaegher. “We aren’t a band or anything, we just like to make music and record some tracks, nothing too serious.”

With all of his dedication to music, De Jaegher has certainly made an impact on the New Trier music department. You definitely haven’t heard the last of Emiel.



Rickard redesigns the fabric of gender neutral apparel

Simplex redefines the standard of ‘one-size-fits-all’

by Camille Baer

Right now, college students are trying to figure out what they’re going to do with their life, what to major in and how to get a job. But here’s a high school senior who has already branded herself and gained a following in not just one, but two ways.

The name of her unisex clothing line is called Simplex Apparel. Her Soundcloud handle is Laynaproductions. And her name? Alayna Rickard.

In junior year, Rickard interviewed groups of people in order to get their views on gender stereotypes. Using their responses, she created a line of clothing that she named Simplex Apparel. Her line stemmed from a project she began in IGSS: “Last year, in IGSS, I created an online web store that sold gender neutral clothing.”

She cites artist Keith Haring, who used visual art as a tool to spread his voice and message, as her greatest artistic inspiration. “I also love his graphic style, which has inspired me to create textiles and graphics of my own,” Rickard said.

Graphics show up in both her textiles and in her own wardrobe. Rickard describes her personal style as being unique. “I don’t like wearing the same thing everyone else wears, so I try to find or create my own versions of something I like,” Rickard explained.

Because Rickard strives to accommodate her own personal style nuances, she works hard to make others feel more comfortable in their own self-expression, which played a huge role in the creation of her line.

“Growing up as an actor, I was often surrounded by people who were gender non-conforming. For my guy friends, it was normal for them to shop in the opposite gender sections of clothing stores,” she said.

To Rickard, clothing is a huge

part of self-expression, and thus her mission revolves around creating pieces that don’t stay within the constraints of female versus male clothing. “As a society we try to organize [gender] into these two groups, but in reality gender is a spectrum. I wanted to create a brand that fosters a community of people that’s based on acceptance instead of competition,” Rickard said.

‘I don’t like wearing the same thing everyone else wears, so I try to find or create my own versions of something I like.’

Since Simplex Apparel’s debut, Rickard has added several pieces, including a gender-neutral skort, to the collection. As she continues on this artistic path, Rickard wants to begin incorporating ideas from another passion of hers into her designs and music.

“My goal is to fuse

Beyond music and the visual arts, high school has been an important influence on Simplex Apparel’s creation. Rickard is part of IGSS, a program which she has fostered her creativity.

“I chose to take IGSS which has allowed me to generate more creative projects for myself. It gives me the freedom to learn about what I’m actually interested in,” Rickard said.

The freedom she has experienced through the IGSS program is reflected in the lessons she’s learned firsthand through this project. Rickard offers her own advice, saying, “The best advice I can give is to take risks. It is really easy to doubt yourself when making creative work, since you never know how people are going to react. To succeed you have to be brave enough to take the risk and put yourself out there.”

To think that Rickard has accomplished so much in such a short amount of time is admirable in itself, but knowing that it all began with a single sewing machine is a true



fashion, music and the visual arts into an artistic career. My experience with both definitely influenced my work,” Rickard said.

testament to her tenacity: “My mom was worried because I didn’t really have a hobby, so she bought me a sewing machine.”