

Extracurriculars offer welcoming communities for minority students

by Bella Geroulis

When one thinks of New Trier, the first thing that comes to most people's minds is not its vastly diverse student body. The minorities at New Trier can often be overlooked, but that doesn't mean that they're not there.

Korean club meets every Monday after school, and to Sophomore Zack Lim, the club is more than just an after school activity.

"You don't see many Koreans walking around the school," Kim states, "So it's nice to come to the club and socialize with people of my culture."

Kim went on to say that he's not treated any differently by teachers or students for his ethnicity or race, and that New Trier is "a very open place."

Senior Michelle Vasiliadis, who meets with Hellenic Club once a week, agrees with Kim.

She says that because it's a club of people who share the same background, it's "a very comfortable environment to be in."

Kim and Vasiliadis are among many of the students at New Trier who identify as a minority who believe that New Trier is a welcoming and inclusive place. However, minorities aren't just limited to race

or ethnicity. Kay Pothast teaches students with mental and physical disabilities, and makes a point of treating her students the same as everyone else. In regard to the way other teachers work with students with disabilities, Pothast says "sometimes teachers just simply don't know what to do, but once they learn, they don't treat them any differently."

Pothast and the administration make a point of making New Trier as inclusive as possible.

Just like students with disabilities, the LGBTQ community is a group of students who may feel somewhat isolated from the majority of students. Though treated well among most teachers, some students who identify as LGBTQ face difficulties among their peers.

A student from the Junior class who identifies as queer says that "although there are some teachers who treat LGBTQ students differently, most are really kind and compassionate."

The student says she only ever faced a conflict with another student once, but for the most part everyone is tolerant of her sexual orientation.

With a school as big as New Trier, it's expected that nearly every culture, race, and sexual orientation is represented.

But it's not enough to just address that there are minorities

present. While the school makes every effort to make everyone feel comfortable.

The unfortunate truth is that the outside world isn't always as inclusive and welcoming as New Trier is. Still in 2016, the problems that systemic racism and homophobia have set up still impact the lives of millions across the country.

While the privileges that come with attending New Trier High School aid everyone, it's hard to tell if those privileges will be enough to break down all of the systemic issues that our country faces.

An African American student who talked on the condition of anonymity from the Sophomore class worries about his future outside of New Trier. While he's never faced major problems at school in the past, he says "It's scary to think of what the outside world is like. The North Shore is sort of cut off from the rest of Chicago and even the world, so I know it's not always going to be like this."

While we as Trevians make every effort to make these four years as welcoming as possible for every student and staff member, it is also our duty to leave this school with the lessons we've learned here.

The ideas of equality and tolerance for everyone are not just ideas that are nice to remember every now and then, but they are traits that should be ingrained in our society

Some grads stay in comfort zone, others branch out

by Sam Blanc

It's easy for students to say they're ready to leave the North Shore, but how do we really cope outside our comfort zone? Is college even a step outside, or are students just jumping into a new bubble.

Students at New Trier certainly understand that they are privileged. We're told to seek justice for that, told we should strive to make it on our own.

However, it might be more difficult than it sounds to leave behind the comfort of the bubble. Claire Zimmerman, a freshman at Lawrence University, encountered this issue.

"I did want to leave the North Shore area and go somewhere completely different. I felt like the view I had was so limited. But I managed to wind up in a place that's (respectively) similar," Zimmerman said.

According to Zimmerman, it was difficult to chose a diverse college. The kind of schools she was looking at, small liberal arts colleges, were often very white.

In fact, a lot of New Trier students end up applying to very white schools. The good education, tutoring help, and college counseling expertise provided by schools like New Trier put those privileged students, many of them white, ahead of others. They make up the majority of those applying to high end schools.

Henry Ewing, a freshman at Tulane University agreed, saying "The people here are wealthy and white, so I think my experience is still inherently different than other kids."

At some colleges, it's not just the North-Shore atmosphere that lingers, either. New Trier itself is a well known entity, especially in the midwest college scene.

"The bubble doesn't ever really go away," Camille Baer, a freshman at University of Illinois, said, "Especially at University of Illinois where there are so many New Trier kids."

Sam Petrakis, a freshman at Indiana University agreed that it's hard to leave the New Trier stereotypes behind. "Everyone hates us," he said.

According to Petrakis, the bubble is still very much alive. Many New Trier students stick together because it's just easier than branching out, especially when people have a preconceived perception of New Trier and its students.

Georgetown freshman Sam Roggenkamp recounted an experience of meeting a girl from the Southside of Chicago: "When I first met her, she immediately connected New Trier to Mean Girls."

Of course, there are also those who strive to leave the bubble behind, journeying into uncharted territory for the average affluent New Trier student.

Musa Abbasi, a freshman at Columbia College, was looking for

drastic change. "I didn't dislike the New Trier area, Abbasi said, "but I was looking forward to leaving the suburbs and going to a city."

Abbasi chose his school not only based on academics, but by the atmosphere in which he wanted to be surrounded. If he hasn't popped the bubble, he's certainly at least stretched it. "I wanted to learn more than academics. I wanted to learn about people too, and what different experiences looked like. It was more than just a numbers game." Abbasi said.

The unknown can be scary, though. Daniel Cooney, a sophomore at University of Nebraska Lincoln, admitted that adapting to a new environment was fairly difficult. "New Trier really prepared me academically," he said, "but socially, I felt kind of out of place the first few weeks. I really had to work to open myself to new types of people."

According to Cooney, however, it is well worth the effort once you adapt: "Being surrounded by so much change really helped me grow. I learned to branch out and interact with everyone, and that transformed into some pretty cool, unexpected friendships."

Zimmerman agreed that college opened new doors, even when hindered by the bubble. "Everyone seems more open here. I think there's something about starting fresh in a new place that makes everyone a little more willing to give others a shot, she said. "We're all here to learn."

New teachers' first days exceed their expectations



New teacher, Laura Bean, is excited to start first year. | Zervas

by Hannah Young

New teachers get first impressions of students and the New Trier environment, yet they don't view it as having a more confined bubble than any other school.

Social studies teacher and former Chicago Public School teacher Laura Bean's perceptions of the school before starting came down to its reputation and funding.

After starting only 3 weeks ago, she said, "It was everything I thought before but a lot deeper than that. There's a lot more to it than just great funding and great opportunities. There's a whole wonderful culture here to support everybody."

Ryan Loris, a science teacher in his second year, however, heard more about the behavior and attitudes of the students than the school itself: "What other people told me was how great the students were. How hard they work. And it was amazing coming into the school in the first week and seeing that right away. Just on a different level about how much they care about learning."

In terms of transition, most of the teachers describe New Trier's faculty and students as extremely supportive, making it easier for them to become accustomed to a different system.

Brenda Crosby, a French teacher in her first year, said, "When you come to a new institution, there's always things to learn." But the support system that Crosby went on to describe is what has made it possible for her to become accustomed to a whole new system.

Additionally, Iwona Awlasiewicz remarks on the difference that she's noticed in how students are treated within the school. "The level of freedom students have in this school and what comes with that freedom is also the degree of self-responsibility and kind of self-monitoring that you guys have here," said Awlasiewicz. "There's a sense of this being a sort of high school for the students

by the students and the teachers are in supportive roles. But this is definitely very much your high school. And you kind of tend to dictate the mood."

Loris previously worked at a high school in Milwaukee, which he pointed out was a much more diverse community of 50% African American and 50% Latino students with 95% of students on reduced or free lunch. However, as Loris indicates, the North Shore's reputation of being largely wealthy doesn't mean it's the only community to have a bubble-like or confined society.

"I think for every student it's different," said Loris. "I think that the experiences that you have in your life can either shape a bubble that you keep yourself in, having the same experiences. At any school you can fall into the trap." In his opinion, this 'North Shore bubble' that many allude to exists in all sorts of communities.

Similarly, Awlasiewicz, a teacher from the Media, Speech, and Theatre faculty, said, "The same statement could be made about teachers in their high schools everywhere. I don't think it's so much about the amount of money that one school has over another, although that certainly makes a lot of things easier. But, the bubble that you speak of is very real here as it is real in any other high school. Because it is simply a self-enclosed universe."

While the teachers do notice a bubble around the North Shore community, they believe students are attempting to get out of it. "I think [students] are still trying to understand what that means and I still think that high school is such a cool time because you are experiencing new parts of the world," said Loris. "You're trying to figure out what it means to get out of the north shore bubble and what it means to be inside it. I think that's something that students are tackling and trying to figure out."

From Awlasiewicz's experience teaching at Libertyville High School and New Trier, she said, "I think that the bubble is true for any institution. It's the nature of being institutionalized."