

Staff Editorial

Stop shaming people for getting sleep

“Sleep shaming” is an issue endemic to New Trier. It seems a peculiar ritual as students lament how little sleep they got as the teacher hands out the test, each aspiring to out-do their friends in a vicious cycle that harms students. Each cry of “oh, well I went to bed at 3 am,” further legitimizes a culture that subconsciously encourages students to procrastinate and neglect their mental health.

These conversations rapidly become competitions of who is going to “totally fail this test” the most. Students in these scenarios thrive on their peers (often exaggerated) claims of busy, sleepless nights. When students come to school believing their peers’ claims that everybody else in their class is sleep deprived, they leave more likely to mimic these behaviors to the detriment of their mental and physical health.

“This attention seeking behavior is destructive, but is something that we are all admittedly prone to. Students should not feel the need to rationalize our shortcomings by soliciting pity for our long nights of procrastination.

There is a perception that the more rigorous classes you take, the less sleep you will get; so students will boast how little sleep they get as a way to covertly share how many AP or honors classes they take. The fallacy in this logic is that these restless nights are rarely an indication of course rigor, but of time management skills (or the lack thereof).

Even worse than legitimizing their lack of sleep, this phenomena can go so far as to shame students who do get adequate sleep. When students reveal how much sleep they get they can be judged by peers as simpletons without passion for their studies or friends, quite often, the opposite is true.

Sleep is fundamental to student wellbeing. As we’re reminded often, the teenage brain requires 8-10 hours of sleep for optimal functioning. Though it’s often possible to power through a day or two, prolonged sleep deprivation affects not only academic performance, but social relationships. Sleep deprived persons can become more prone to illness, resulting in missed days of school and further heightened stress and a backlog of work.

We want students to be happy and healthy so next time you witness your peers competing to have the worst evening, try interjecting with something positive. If you find yourself or a friend slipping into this habit, don’t be afraid to call them out. We should all work to find ways to get through our problems without routinely soliciting pity.

As students head into the hectic winter season—with finals just around the corner—it’s important that we all access our behaviors to support ourselves and others in healthier and less destructive ways.

Why I watch Fox News

by Arjun Thakkar



Drop your pitchforks, guys. I’m still a human being.

I’ve been pretty apolitical this year, preferring to lighten tense situations by cracking a cringey joke or two, and I still strive for that goal.

But with how chaotic events have been recently, it was only a matter of time before I’d bring up politics.

Since we can’t feasibly spend our entire day in Washington listening to the jargon of Congress, understanding the rulings of the Supreme Court, and, most notably, observing the statements of our President, we have to rely on the various forms of media to funnel information our way.

For some odd reason, we approach the media, a vital institution to an informed citizenry, like non-fat milk, completely lacking in any substance. Many readers, including our own, just carelessly breeze through print or digital headlines.

There’s nothing wrong with that, other than missing out on the 600+ words that a writer spent hours creating, only to be disrespected within seconds. Totally fine with that.

There’s a select few that somehow actually spend time engaging in quality coverage.

Reading The Atlantic or Wall Street Journal articles might make you feel like a pseudo-intellectual, but that kind of effort is what we need to have real, informed conversations.

But I’m not here to praise those credible, reliable sources that teachers and librarians love referring you to. No, I’m focusing on one of those taboos that are often the subject of an angry teacher rant regarding sources to avoid.

Because I read Breitbart. I listen to conservative podcasts. And yes, I watch Fox News.

I’m not an avid follower of the news these groups put out, but when I have time to flip through TV channels, I spend at least twenty minutes to see what the “most-viewed cable news network” has to say about the day’s events.

To clarify, I don’t at all condone the poor business practices you hear in these organizations, like allegations of sexual harassment against Bill O’Reilly. That’s an entirely different conversation.

What I’m focusing on is how we surround ourselves with sources that we personally agree with, or organizations that validate our personal beliefs. Watching John Oliver rant about journalism or reading The Atlantic’s skepticism is a satisfying experience, but I don’t feel that I get much out of it except new information to consider.

But hearing Alex Jones talk about chemicals in the water making frog people? Now that’s entertaining to watch, if not frustrating at the same time.

It’s so easy to label those we disagree with, whether it’s Anderson Cooper or Sean Hannity, as a “snowflake” or a Trump supporter.

But less simple, less fun, and more noble is choosing to treat your apparent opponents with respect.

In doing so, we can genuinely listen to what the other side says, understand their perspective, and see them as a friend.

And you might hear some valid points. When Hannity mentioned how debate moderators showed some bias in their treatment of candidates, he raised a fair point.

Even when I hear something I disagree with, like opinions on our president, I don’t dismiss it or completely change my opinion. I try to take the path of nuance, comprehend why he and many others have that belief, and consider that perspective in any and all future political discussions.

Ignoring a vast majority of the human race on the sole basis of disagreement isn’t going to resolve our conflict, but empathy might be the first step.

My point is that in our current environment, we’re surrounded by predominantly liberal sources of media, and diversifying your viewing with some Fox News now and then wouldn’t hurt you.

The labelling process validates our sense of self, and it also creates a group to blame. An opponent. An enemy.

But if we take a moment to listen to what they have to say, suspending our disagreement in favor of understanding, then perhaps we’ll find that there is more that unites us in our humanity than what divides us.

So when looking at other content, please don’t be like non-fat milk: skim.

We should be helping people to help people, not to feel good about ourselves

by Rebecca Lee

Every year for the past seventeen years, the senior class has partnered with Habitat for Humanity to build a home for a deserving family. The year-long fundraising efforts, from Lunch on the Lawn to the Winter Carnival, succeed in bringing together a class that averages one thousand students.

In addition, all students are asked to physically contribute to the construction of the house. Habitat for Humanity gives seniors the opportunity to take part in a cause from start to finish.

Most notably, New Trier’s partnership with Habitat challenges young people of the North Shore to step outside of the bubble, within which we rarely have conversations about historical housing discrimination, or the financial significance of home ownership.

As a senior, I’m excited to play a role, no matter how small that role may be, in such an endeavor.

Two weeks ago, during advisory, all seniors attended an assembly hosted by Habitat for Humanity. The speakers blasting

Kelly Clarkson and the slideshow of smiling students planting flowers all succeeded in exciting the senior class.

But then the PowerPoint ended and the upbeat music faded, and the executive director of Habitat for Humanity Lake County came onstage with the recipient family.

As the senior class, one thousand largely white and largely wealthy eighteen year-olds, looked on at the members of the family, both of whom are black, a feeling of discomfort grew in the pit of my stomach.

I recall that they stood to the side as the director praised us for “changing their lives,” as though they were not standing right there, as though they could not speak for themselves.

Then, when the couple was handed the microphone, there were what felt like several minutes of awkward pauses, punctuated by sympathetic noises and random applause from the crowd. It became clear that no one had prepared them to speak.

At this point, I felt not only uncomfortable, I felt deeply unsettled. I felt as though two people who had proved themselves through

a rigorous application process were being pressured to now justify their situation to unfamiliar teenagers, the vast majority of whom have never paid a bill.

As I walked out of the auditorium and later sat in my classes, I overheard students making comments like, “That was so cute” and “New Trier is amazing.”

It seemed to me that the assembly and the spectacle we made out of poverty and the pats on the back had more to do with the image of social service than the social service itself.

All of us as young adults have a civic duty to care about other people and to actively seek out ways to help other people

Let me clarify that I, like most seniors, found the assembly to be overall exciting and educational and fun. The student leaders, all of whom deserve recognition for their dedication to community service,

spoke eloquently and prepared an engaging presentation.

This is by no means an attack on any student or staff member working on Habitat for Humanity, nor is it a criticism of the project itself.

I also acknowledge that the family may have had a totally different experience than I did on Wednesday morning. I do not attempt to speak for them.

I can only imagine how emotional and nervous they must have felt to share such a personal story with an audience of nearly one thousand strangers.

I also genuinely hope that they left the assembly with a positive impression of New Trier seniors, all of whom I do believe have only good intentions.

That said, many of my peers and I feel uncomfortable with and even frustrated by the presentation of Habitat for Humanity as well as that of other social services at New Trier.

It frustrates me that others call those served by organizations like Habitat for Humanity “cute”. They’re not puppies; they are working adults and students and taxpayers and parents.

It frustrates me that beyond

the fundraising events, there seems to be no time set aside for students to personally reflect about the importance of service to others, or to have critical discussions about economic inequality in the United States. It frustrates me that we feel the need to purchase tee shirts and order bagels and create Kahoot games to encourage students to care about a world other than their own.

All of us as young adults have a civic duty to care about other people and to actively seek out ways to help other people, especially when we get nothing out of it. That’s the point.

Helping other people should be about other people, not about me or the Instagram I can post or the box I can check on my college application.

Our work for Habitat for Humanity should be about understanding and serving a community outside of our own, not about us or the prizes or the praise. Our support of the recipient family should be totally and unequivocally about the members of the family.

The vast majority of the time, New Trier gets it right. But this time, I think we’re getting it really wrong.

The New Trier News

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