

The battle against graffiti

by Anna Ferguson

We all know it when we see it. Whether it be a floor to ceiling drawing of Jesus, a racial slur, or a game of tic-tac-toe, graffiti is present in almost every bathroom in the school, much to the annoyance of the custodians in charge of erasing it.

John Ackermann, the Physical Plant Services (PPS) Manager, described the fight against bathroom graffiti as a daily struggle, “There are two cleaning shifts after school that spend most of their time cleaning the bathrooms, classrooms, cafeterias and hallways, and so on”.

The custodial staff spends their after school shifts removing as much graffiti as possible, though sometimes it is not possible to remove all of the graffiti in the school in a single night.

The graffiti usually comes in waves, according to Ackermann. After those responsible for a lot of graffiti graduate, the amount of graffiti usually goes down until a new group of kids with a passion for graffiti comes in and starts defacing the bathrooms.

For example, if there is a wave of offensive drawings or remarks, it is typically due to one person or one group of friends. So once they graduate, that specific type of

offensive vandalism usually fades away until a new person or group of people comes along.

Specific bathrooms in the school are typically targeted by graffiti artists more often. The bathrooms by the scrounge in the basement, the first floor bathrooms by the lobby, and the third floor bathrooms by the library receive the most graffiti.

When the custodians clean the bathrooms they focus on erasing as much of the writing and drawings regardless of what they say or depict. All the graffiti, except for the particularly offensive graffiti, is erased indiscriminately, according to Ackermann.

Most students graffiti the bathroom walls as a joke, either to play a prank on their friends or just to write or draw something they think is funny.

“One time I wrote my friend’s phone number and ‘call for a good time’ underneath on the wall in the second floor bathroom” said junior Jonah Noel.

Individual student opinions on the graffiti seem to land somewhere on a spectrum. Some students love the graffiti and enjoy seeing it, some enjoy the more innocent vandalism but do not appreciate the more vulgar or attacking graffiti, while others are offended by it or feel that

it places an unnecessary burden on the PPS staff.

“I think some of it’s funny, but some of it is definitely too personal.” said junior, Taylor Kwok.

“I feel like it’s really disrespectful to the PPS staff, because they work hard to keep the school clean and shouldn’t have to deal with unnecessary vandalism.” said junior William Kirby

Grffiti does place a time burden on the PPS staff, says Ackermann. Erasing it takes up valuable time that the custodians would rather spend cleaning the more typical and unavoidable messes in the school, cleaning door and window glass, for example.

Offensive graffiti, that is, graffiti that includes racist or sexist or otherwise offensive remarks or drawings, are photographed and then reported to the advisor chairs in an effort to find the offender.

The graffiti in the bathrooms has always been a problem here at New Trier and, according to Ackermann, does not appear to be disappearing or winding down any time soon.

Despite the incessant graffiti, Ackermann approaches it with a relentlessly positive attitude, “We’re here to help and to clean and we love it”.

Nicole and the new reality of TV

by Carly Travis

It seems that the tides are turning for reality television series and the stars that are famous because of them.

In recent years, celebrities like Kim Kardashian have graced the covers of provocative fashion magazines, replacing actors and actresses. They’re not just “famous for being famous” anymore. Lauren Conrad, another example of this, has created a lifestyle brand for herself and has a significant following to prove it.

After exclusively being known for her role on “The Hills,” Conrad is now more known for her intricate hair tutorials and Pinterest-like website, laurenconrad.com (clever title).

Nicole Richie is among the likes of these reality stars. For those who are unfamiliar with the pint size fashion maven, Richie was known for running around L.A. as Paris Hilton’s sidekick in their show titled “The Simple Life.”

The girls essentially danced around L.A. falling into trouble and occasionally experimenting in goofy odd jobs.

In recent years, Richie has taken her image and done a 360. Appearing briefly on “Fashion Star,” Richie is now known for her fashion sense.

But within the last year, Nicole Richie has taken the internet by storm. After launching her web series with AOL.com, cleverly titled “#CandidlyNicole,” the world now knows her for witty one liners, sarcastic delivery, and the funny friends she surrounds herself with.

Each show ranges from three to five minutes long and is based on her Twitter feed. Each episode usually opens with a tweet, like, “Woke up feeling good about myself, until I remembered I have a tramp stamp”.

This specific episode is then



Reality star Nicole Richie has found fame from her web series |AP Images

followed by Richie visiting Dr. Tattoff and proceeds to ask questions about the removal of her tramp stamp. Sounds like nothing special, right? Yet, Richie’s funny questions and the doctors blasé and blunt answers keep the viewer glued.

Aol released the first season of #CandidlyNicole in the spring of 2014 and is currently airing episodes from the shows second season. Aol isn’t the only community to fall in love with Richie; VH1 just picked up her show for a second season.

The same theme of the web series is followed on the big screen, as well.

The show begins with a tweet and then expands on it. What’s different is the cast-like feeling after each new episode. Richie’s friends, including writer Erin Foster or her dad, musician Lionel Richie, appear more than once so you not only become better acquainted with Richie, but her friends and family as well.

Is it a reality show? Not exactly. Each episode is staged and somewhat scripted, yet is entirely based off of

Nicole’s life and acquaintances.

“#CandidlyNicole” isn’t the first show to do this either. “Broad City,” a 30 minute show on Comedy Central, was originally a small YouTube channel that featured funny, scripted videos. The stars, Ilana Glazer and Abbi Jacobson took small clips, jokes, or moments of their relatable lives in New York and posted it on YouTube.

The videos fell into the hands of fellow New Yorker and comedian Amy Poehler who in return took the role of executive producer, getting them on Comedy Central.

The sudden shift in the way we watch television these days is profound. The people we are watching are also changing. Ex-reality stars are restarting their careers by portraying themselves as funny, relatable faces and YouTube stars are promoting these stars talk shows like “the tonight show with Jimmy Fallon.”

Be sure to tune in to season two of “#CandidlyNicole” premiering on VH1 later this spring/summer of 2015.

Twenty-one years later, Safe Rides continues to serve



Safe Rides ensure students a reliable way home on weekends |Stockvault

by Rachel Melancon

Safe Rides has existed at New Trier for 21 years, but it takes a lot of behind the scenes work to ensure that the program runs smoothly.

Safe Rides is an organization that provides free rides to students who do not have a ride home. Their goal is to reduce the risk of teens drunk driving, along with the dangers associated with driving under the influence.

Safe Rides member and Junior Emma Alter, shared that she joined Safe Rides to start getting more involved in school.

“Safe Rides was appealing because not only was I helping out my peers, but I was able to have fun while doing it,” said Alter. “Safe Rides is a pretty loose time commitment.”

Another Safe Rides member explained that they must work 1-2 weekends per month. Typically, their nights begin at 10 p.m. “We sit on couches and wait for a call. We then pick up the student and drive them to their home.”

But there is more behind the scenes work in order to have Safe Rides function properly. Prior to participating, prospective members must take a 1 hour training course led by the adult leaders. Students are shown how the program is run, and are taught important safety measures.

“After this, student leaders split the kids into groups [and] each group has two student leaders. The leaders then divvy up and organize who gets [which] night,” explained Alter.

Each group is made up of around 50 people. “This is so that not everyone has to show up every night,” said Alter.

On the night of a group’s shift, members are split up into 3 different sections. Each are assigned different jobs.

“When you’re not driving, you’re lounging around on couches [and] chatting with your friends. Often times, people bring food and food is always a good time,” said Alter. Not all members will have the opportunity to drive each night.

There are a select number of students who are in charge of answering the phones. “These confirm that the student on the phone is indeed a New Trier student and is heading to their house,” shared Alter.

The second job is the driver, who must operate their own vehicle. They assure that the student is both picked up and dropped off safely.

By their side is the navigator. Not only must this Safe Rides member locate the various addresses, but they must remember to bring the forms. “[But] most importantly, [they] must remember the barf bag,” said Alter.

Safe Rides members are required to fill out forms when they provide a ride to a student. When a call is answered, members are required to write the name of the student, the addresses traveled too, and if alcohol was involved. “Those sheets are completely confidential,” explained a Safe Rides driver.

When a person is picked up, it is kept completely private outside of Safe Rides. Drivers are only allowed to drive one person at a time.

Safe Rides stops accepting calls at around 1-2 a.m. Therefore, members are working 4 hours shifts. “For me, the hardest part of Safe Rides is definitely staying up,” shared Alter, “[It all] depends on how busy the phones are.”

Nevertheless, Safe Rides keep giving rides to many of their peers

‘Safe Rides was appealing because not only was I helping out my peers, but I was able to have fun while doing it.’

-Emma Alter

“It was extremely helpful,” shared a student who recently received a Safe Ride. “It was a great way to get home. I’m sure it has helped many people stay safe.”

But another user shares that despite being helpful, it can be difficult to call Safe Rides and identify which nights the organization is running.

“What makes Safe Rides cool is that you’re able to help out your friends and classmates while also having a great time,” shared Alter. “The people who do Safe Rides are all fun people, so spending the majority of your night with them is enjoyable.”