



Rocking Chairs for Krejci Academy

by Kristen Peterson
News writer

This month, students from Woods I, Art, and Interior Design came together to create rocking chairs for children at Krejci Academy.

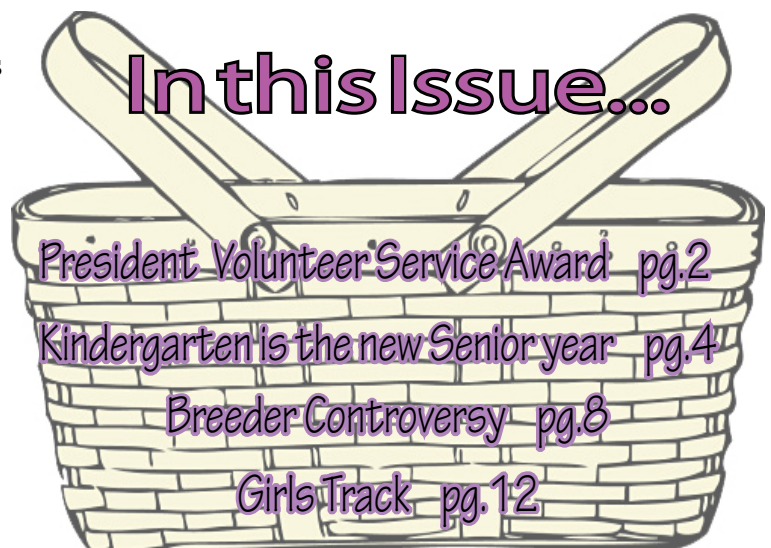
Krejci Academy, located in Naperville, is an alternative school for children and adults, ranging from ages 3 to 21, who have developmental and social/emotional disabilities, such as Autism, PDD and Asperger's Syndrome.

"Originally, my idea was to find a local charity to donate the chairs to for Christmas so that less fortunate children could receive them as Christmas presents," says Scott Duensing, Industrial Technology teacher, "But after speaking with Mr. Hamilton [director of school and community relations], he suggested the Krejci Academy and all of us agreed that this was a great idea."

The chairs started off with Duensing's Woods I students building the bodies. In art teacher Ryan Hennebry's classes, students designed and hand-painted each chair themselves. The last step in creating each chair was with Jenna Stevenson's Interior Design students. They selected fabric and created a seat cushion for each chair individually.

The gratitude received from Krejci Academy was overwhelming. "It was a pleasure making the chairs for the kids," says Migle Medonaite, a junior art student. "Our hard work paid off once we heard how happy it made them."

"This is definitely a project that the students as well as all teachers involved will not soon forget," adds Duensing. "It is my hope that we can continue to create similar rewarding experiences for our students in the future so that we can inspire them to make positive contributions to society throughout their lives."





Presidents Volunteer Service Award

Given to LHS Senior

by Andrea Earnest
News Editor

Senior Abby Rachwalski has been honored with the Presidents Volunteer Service award through the 2010 Prudential Spirit of Community Awards.

Rachwalski is President of Community Service for Everyone (CSFE) and a member of student council. However, she has also given her time to different organizations like the Lemont Youth Ministry, Almost Home Kids, the Caring for Kids Summer Camp and the Catholic Heart Work Camp.

The Volunteer Service Award recognizes Americans of various ages who have given their time to serve their towns and communities.

The award is presented by Prudent Financial and the National Association of Secondary School Principals on behalf of President Obama. President Obama has had a campaign for volunteerism since he was put into office.

In a recent speech, President Obama said, “All that’s required [for volunteering] is a willingness to make a difference. And that is, after all, the beauty of service. Anybody can do it.” Many Americans have been persuaded to volunteer because of the President’s encouragement.

The President’s Volunteer Service Award was established in 2003 to recognize the difference volunteers make and to encourage more people to do the same. There are three different age groups for recipients of the award: kids, young adults and adults.

Winners can receive one of three different medals depending on how many hours they have volunteered. The bronze level requires at least 100 hours of service for young adults, whereas the gold medal requires at least 250 hours.

Volunteers are needed to create change in America. They help in times of trouble, providing a source of hope for victims of disasters.

“Our government can help to rebuild our economy, but we need Americans willing to mentor our eager young children, or care for the sick, or ease the strains of deployment on our military families,” President Obama said.



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by Emily Hartl
Head Editor

Nearly everybody is familiar with Dora the Explorer, an adorably youthful Latina cartoon character on Nickelodeon. She's bilingual, teaching little viewers common Spanish phrases and terms, while teaching kids a moral lesson or value in every episode.



When the show was created in 1999, Dora had the look of a pudgy but cute kindergardener, with a round tummy, ruffled socks and an awkward bob haircut with bangs. She even carried a talking backpack. But on Feb. 13, 2009, Mattel Inc. and Nickelodeon released a new grown-up Dora: she ditched the backpack, got a new hairdo, updated her wardrobe with fashionable ballet flats and a dress with leggings, and she slimmed down... a lot.

With her new makeover, Dora's character will grow up a little: she'll attend middle school and live in a big city. She'll still be solving mysteries, but Dora will adopt shopping and fashion as her new forté instead of the great outdoors.

The issue here is that Dora's fans over the past decade have remained in the same age group: the show is written for preschoolers and kindergardeners. Year after year, Dora has stayed the same age, and so have her viewers. Now that Dora is a tween, five-year-olds will have a new role model: one of the "big girls" with beauty and poise and a fantastic outfit.

Photo Courtesy of Google

Mattel, the maker of the new Dora The Explorer doll, designed the Dora toy for girls ages five thru eight. The doll will have USB capabilities so girls can plug her in and play with her online (how's that for kiddie technology?).

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Dora is just one example of how girls are growing up too quickly. Her fans will now deem it acceptable to wear makeup in first grade and find it necessary to have long, slender legs just like their Latina hero.

This concept of children growing up sooner and sooner is known as age compression, and it’s becoming a more prevalent issue with our current generation. It affects childrens’ mentalities pertaining to violence, sexuality and responses to marketing; in addition, studies show that kids are hitting puberty earlier, thanks to positive influences like Dora.

How early, and why?

In 2000, six *Time Magazine* writers put together a piece on kids becoming teens before they’re ready. They examined girls as young as five-years-old hitting puberty and being almost fully developed by the age of eight.

These youngsters received medical tests to no avail: their blood tests and hormone levels came back normal. And clinicians claim that these cases are becoming the norm: physical development for girls between five- and ten-years-old will be expected and average in the near future.

Scientists attribute these early changes partly to obesity, and partly to added hormones in animal products (now am I crazy for being a vegan?). Although they have not nailed these down as solidified causes, the climb in obesity rate is undeniable: according to the National Center for Health Statistics, the percentage of overweight six- to eleven-year old kids jumped nearly five percent between the ‘70s and the ‘90s.

According to the *Time* article, one in seven Caucasian girls is fully developed by age eight; for African American girls, the odds are one in two.

Naturally, young girls who look like adults will assume adult behavior.

Not just physical

In a *USA Today* article from 2007, Jayne O’Donnell investigated age compression from a marketing and consumer perspective. In this regard, age compression occurs when children reach for the items in stores that are targeted towards older teens or adults.

In 2006, 7- to 14-year-old girls spent \$11.5 billion apparel, a \$1 billion increase from 2005. Clothing companies and makeup brands are aiming to seize young tweens while they can, and make them lifelong purchasers.

According to the article, tween girls are driven by imitation, making them the ultimate faction to target when it



Photo Courtesy of Google

“Kindergarten” Cont. from pg. 5

comes to fashion. Young girls all want to look identical, but consequently be unique. Once a trend starts, tweens must have it in order to connect with the “in-crowd.” Also, with their imitative nature, young girls deem it necessary to act and dress like the “older girls”: in other words, high schoolers.

Another reason for the rise in tween consumerism is, essentially, the greed. Kids need *more* of everything, and they don’t see a reason not to own multiples of everything, from jewelry to blue jeans. The average Bonne Bell customer owns 10 Lip-Smacker lip balms and lip glosses...ten! It takes me *months* to use up a single tube of lipgloss. It would take me years to use up ten.

But appearance-enhancement products are not the only affected industry. The toy industry, because of age compression, is suffering immensely. Baby dolls and action figures are out of commission these days; kids would rather have electronics, particularly those necessary for adults. Children would rather have iPhones and laptops to play with than “toys.”

In 2002, Toys R Us had recently closed 27 stores and cut 1900 job. Imagine, with our recent economic struggles as well as the exponential spread of age compression, how many stores have been shut down by now.

Some companies are trying to go with the flow, like Fischer Price. They have created the “Growing Smart Laptop Computer” for two-year-olds, which teaches colors, numbers and letters. Better yet, the company produced a line of toys titled “Pre-Cool” for kids aspiring to do big-kid activities at an early age. I call that “egging it on.”

Find the scapegoat

Often parents with good intentions are to blame, argues Dorothy G. Singer, a research scientist at Yale University. Singer found that infants and toddlers are deeply affected by talking robots, computer games and electronic educational toys; parents mean well but later in life their children will expect the same level of electronic indulgence, if not more.

Tech toys and PC games cause “convergent thinking,” Singer says. These items limit children’s imaginations; kids have to hit certain buttons and provide certain answers to questions in order to proceed with their games or programs. With Legos and dolls, their imaginations can expand and the possibilities are limitless.

But let’s not hate on blind-sighted mommies and daddies. What about those parents who just let it all happen?

I have a little friend at my dance studio who’s in fourth grade. She’s stunning: beautiful brown eyes, long healthy hair and fantastic bone structure...you know, for a fourth grader. And still, she wears mascara every single day to school and to dance class.

If I was wearing any makeup to school, or anywhere at all, at the age of nine, my mother would throw an absolute fit.

There are parents out there who relentlessly pander to their children’s “needs,” or even encourage it because it’s “cute” to see kindergardeners wearing baby push-up bras and lipstick. When kids are too little to make their own ridiculous purchases, who does it for them? Mom and dad, time after time.

Look in the next issue of the Tom-Tom for more on unreasonable things that parents allow...like Childhood Obesity.

Prom:

No date? No problem

by Kelly Lyons
Editorials writer

So many young girls look forward to attending prom from the moment they learn what it is. From poufy dresses and fancy hair to ballrooms and limos, it all seems perfect. And who doesn't want the chance to look like a princess for a day?

But wait. How could a girl possibly live out this fantasy without a guy by her side? Many girls believe that going to prom without a date is not acceptable and just downright embarrassing. Forget the decades of work toward women's independence; obviously some girls can't even enjoy a night of dinner and dancing without the security of being part of a couple.

Maybe you always imagined making your grand entrance at prom with your very own prince charming in a horse-drawn carriage (or more realistically, a stretch Hummer limo.) But honestly, prom may not exactly live up to those kinds of expectations. Not that there isn't a chance that your prom experience will turn out amazing...you just don't need all the extras in order to make it happen.

For starters, I really don't see what's wrong with going to prom with a group of friends. Your friends are the people you know you're going to have fun with, so why not go in a group? Plus, this will save you tons of potential awkward moments you might have experienced if you went with a guy you don't know as well as your friends.

Going to prom with a date can be equally as fun of course, but it isn't the end of the world if you don't have one. Think back to all of the dances you went to in middle school when no one typically went with dates. Looking back, these dances may seem old school and cheesy, but admit it: you always had the time of your life.

Junior Delia Ercoli agrees that girls shouldn't worry too much about having a date. "If someone asks you [to prom] and you want to go with them, then obviously go and have a good time. But don't say you're not going [to prom] unless you have a date."

And whatever the case, you're going to see Ercoli at prom. "I'm going no matter what. It's my junior prom. Why would I miss that?"

True, you may feel a bit lonely during the slow dances if you go solo, but there are no rules against dancing with friends or any single boy who happens to be there. Just think of the positive: you can dance with as many people as you want!

So ladies, if you don't have a date to prom, you have a couple of choices. You could skip the dance altogether and sulk at home, but I think you should spare yourself the misery. Another option is going to the dance and being a wallflower the entire time (boring!). Or you could follow the advice of the very wise Beyoncé and take pride in being a single lady. "All the single ladies, put your hands up!"

Breeder controversy

by Hannah Johnson
Features Editor

The Westminster Kennel Club celebrated its 134th Annual Dog Show on Feb. 15-16. It persists as the second longest continually held sporting event in this country, just one year behind the Kentucky Derby.

Established in 1877, The Westminster Kennel Club is America's oldest organization dedicated to the sport of purebred dogs. Simply put, Westminster has become the symbol of the purebred dog.

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), an international nonprofit organization with more than two million members and supporters, is the largest animal rights organization in the world. PETA focuses its attention on the four areas in which the largest numbers of animals suffer the most intensely for the longest periods of time: on factory farms, in laboratories, in the clothing trade, and in the entertainment industry.

PETA also works on a variety of other issues, including the cruel killing of beavers, birds and other "pests," and the abuse of backyard dogs.

PETA Plan

At the 2009 Westminster Dog Show, PETA supporters held giant posters showing images of a sad-eyed shelter dog and reading "Breeders Kill Shelter Dogs' Chances". Before the big event aired this year, PETA blogs, "The PETA Files", stated that they were up to something different and thought-provoking.

While breeders, dogs and fans from around the world gathered at Madison Square Garden PETA was outside protesting during the show. Later during the event Sadie the Scottish terrier won the award for America's top dog, but what happened next made the crowd of 15,000 gasp in disgust.



Photo Courtesy of PETA

“Breeder” Cont. from pg. 8

The different thought-provoking plan that PETA came up with involved two members of the PETA group walking into the center ring at Madison Square Garden and holding up signs that said “Mutts Rule” and “Breeders Kill Shelter Dogs’ Chances,” the slogan popularized by PETA.

The crowd booed the women and cheered as security ushered them away and the women, who acted on their own but were supported by PETA, were charged with criminal trespassing, police said.

“I thought [the situation] was well-controlled by our people,” Westminster spokesman David Frei said, without elaborating. Frei, the host of USA Network’s coverage, is a veteran of the show world and a longtime advocate of therapy and rescue dogs. While PETA is more than happy to comment on the event Westminster is keeping quiet.



Photo Courtesy of PETA

Homer Glen TLC
Animal Shelter Manager

Dennis Carter:

TOM TOM: Do you agree with PETA and their message?

Dennis Carter: No, in my opinion PETA are radicals. They’re like the Animal Liberation Front (ALF) who burned down a meat company for having exotic meat from animals the company didn’t know was endangered. I think they do more harm than good.

TT: Do you agree with the statement “Breeders kill shelter dog’s chances”?

DC: No, no matter where you get a dog from a breeder, pet store, or shelter you’re giving a dog a home.

TT: PETA raises the problem that breeders give dogs a higher health risk, do you know of this or agree?

DC: Yes, my uncle breeds beagles and some people do breed just for profits and they’ll take any two dogs, whether their brother and sister and breed them and that can cause health problems. But when it’s done right it won’t cause these heightened health problems.

“Breeder” Cont. from pg. 9

An Ongoing Conflict

Back in Jan. 2009 PETA sent a letter to Geoff Browne, Sponsorship Manager for Pedigree, asking him to pull their sponsorship for the Westminster Dog Show.



Photo Courtesy of www.westminsterkennelclub.org

shelter or roaming the streets.”

Also back in Jan. 2009 PETA Files blogged:

“Intentionally breeding dogs for their looks while millions are dying for lack of good homes in extremely crowded shelters? The American Kennel Club just doesn’t get it... That’s why we sent USA [Network] a letter asking for a little face time to discuss really important things like, oh, not airing the controversial purebred pup parade.”

All of this went on with no comment from Westminster.

Breeding Health Problems

Selective breeding for certain special traits in dogs raises their chances of health problems.

“In first place, we have Uno, the first beagle ever to take home the “Best in Show” honors at Westminster... Uno has a significantly higher risk of hypothyroidism, demodectic mange, umbilical hernia, epilepsy, eye and eyelid problems, cryptorchidism, hip dysplasia, intervertebral disk disease, and luxating patella. But I’m sure his Westminster crown will console him when one or more of these ailments set in,” stated PETA.

Breeding for beauty and profits is no way to treat these animals right from the start. Westminster is not just possibly ruining shelter dogs’ chances but is also shortening the lives of their so-called “perfect” dogs.

In the end they all have their rights. PETA has the right to speak out about their beliefs, but Westminster still has the right to breed dogs and have them compete. By asking USA Network to drop the dog show all together PETA may have been overstepping their boundaries, taking the rights away from viewers, but they bring up some significant arguments.

“Dogs in our nation are facing a crisis, and you are in a unique position to help. The American Kennel Club (AKC) actively promotes dangerous and unhealthy breeding standards in dogs shown at the annual Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show, of which Pedigree is a sponsor... On behalf of the Ethical Treatment of Animals and our more than two million members and supporters, we ask that you pull your company’s sponsorship of this event until the AKC revises its breeding standards.”

PETA even went as far as getting Twilight star Kellan Lutz to spread the message that “every time someone purchases a dog or cat from a pet store or breeder, a door is shut in the face of an animal waiting in an animal

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Sports 12

by Bryan Clark
Sports writer

Photo by Danny McKeivitt

GIRL'S TRACK



Junior Brenna Koerner, conditioning for the 2010 girl's track season.

With two meets already completed in the girls track season, they are off to a rocky start. Finishing near the basement of both meets, some people are already ruling out Lemont. However, there are still plenty of meters to run, yards to throw and hurdles to jump.

Junior Anna Las has the upmost confidence in her teammates. Las, in her third track season, is a returning track veteran. Although it's still the beginning of their season, the girls are working hard. Las states, "We practice every day. The schedule is a little different from last years, we practice nights now and Friday mornings but we all put up with it."

The girls on Lemont track have a lot of rebuilding to do this year. Not only are they lacking returning seniors but this is the first year in 22 years that Tom Kokenes isn't coaching.

"We are a much younger team this year. [And with the loss of Kokenes] we are definitely going to have to rebuild," Las later stated, "We need to train harder in order to be better for conference. Although with a little more effort and a few harder practices, the girls can be ready for a great season."

Heading into their next home meet on Saturday, the girls will try to make their presence felt among the competition.

Baseballin' it up

The title 'Baseballin' it up' is rendered in a stylized font. 'Baseballin'' is in red, 'it' is in a smaller red font, and 'up' is in a large, bold black font. The text is surrounded by illustrations of baseballs and bats. There are two baseballs, one on the left and one on the right, and two bats in the background.

*by Nick Celis
Sports writer*

It's America's favorite time of the year again. When peanuts and beer become part of the nationwide diet, when \$150 replica jerseys suddenly seem like a good idea, and the north and south sides of Chicago can finally go back to absolutely despising each other again.

Although it may not be on such a grand scale, Lemont loves its baseball all the same: even more so this year in fact. With a stellar performance last spring, the boys have their sights even higher this season.

Boasting a 17-10 record, a conference championship, and the schools' first regional title the boys have a lot to live up to this year. Returning senior, and infield captain Mike Dvorak says "This postseason will hopefully be one to remember, with our veteran team I think we can make a run at state."

Along with Dvorak, there are four other seniors returning this year, making it a junior heavy team, with a lot of potential to say the least. Dvorak continues "Even though they are juniors, for many of them, they have been on varsity for a year already, I feel like we are a veteran team still and our experience should help us succeed this year"

As rumors and predictions sprout, the team is making no secret of the fact that they want it all this year. New-comer to the team, junior Jason Stapleton, has the utmost confidence in this squad: "We talk about [state] a lot. It seems like a dramatic concept, but we're getting more and more excited about it every game we play. If we play it one game at a time, I have no doubts we can make it far this summer."

Although a long ways off, the team is ecstatic to be hosting this year's Regional competition, and Dvorak is calling for the support of his peers: "We need some Lemont high school love so we can start off our postseason run with a bang."

Junior Mike Medwed will be starting their next game at Glenbard South high school this Saturday.

For directions to the school or a copy of the rest of their season, click here:

<http://www.highschoolsports.net/defaultcal.cfm?ct=s&schoolid=IL6043911418&spt=1&lvl=1&division=1>