

## LGBTQ Awareness at School

Staff writer,  
Keara Alberts

[Picture of Friends from Zoe Boren](#)

The LGBTQ community at Rochester Area High School needs to be heard. LGBTQ is an acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer or questioning. There are many students at Rochester who are a part of the community. Many students in high school questioned their sexuality/gender in middle school. Middle school can be a scary confusing time in a child's life. They're discovering who they are as a person and going through a lot of changes in their body. Some students go through a lot more in middle school

than others. As a straight female, in middle school I had it easier than others who questioned whether they were actually straight or not. Zoe Boren, a local student at Rochester High School said "when I first came out in middle school, bullies would

call me homophobic slurs." This is unacceptable behavior. People who first come out as who they were born to be, is really hard for them to do. On top of that, to be bullied by others in school is just wrong.

People have the right to have their own opinion, but to bully or use homophobic phrases isn't ok. In our high school we are respectful of the LGBTQ community and students are supportive. But in middle school the LGBTQ youth are nearly twice as likely to be called names verbally harassed at school compared to their non-LGBTQ peers, according to cdc.gov. Their mental health and education can be at risk. There should be awareness starting in middle

school about the LGBTQ community and if students have questions there should be some type of meetings or somebody

to talk to you about these feelings that students may have. Zoe Boren also included "sex education teachers should have more of an understanding of the community because that's the time when you get judged the most."



Zoe isn't the only member of the community. There are so many students who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or either questioning their sexuality. As a school district we should show love towards everyone, no matter if they are straight or not. Let's love and support each other as much as possible and spread awareness of the LGBTQ community.

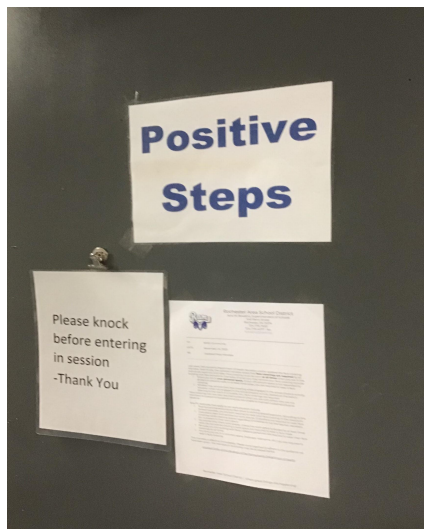
## Teen Depression is on the Rise

Editor,  
Jenna Zawislak

[Picture taken by Jenna Zawislak](#)

Depression and anxiety are serious issues that people of all ages face. Young children do not necessarily understand what depression and anxiety are, so people really start realizing they are anxious or depressed in their teen years. This world is so superficial anymore. People strive to be like shallow celebrities who look amazing but are not good people. Society pressures teens to want to look and be like people that they will never be like instead of encouraging kids to be themselves. High expectations from parents, teachers, and others as well as the pressure to succeed makes teens extremely anxious. A survey taken by Higher Education Research asked incoming college freshmen if they felt overwhelmed with all of the things they were expected to do. Out of all that were surveyed, 41% said yes. Social media is

another cause of anxiety and depression. We compare ourselves to other people's posts, wondering why we don't look like her, or how he looks more athletic than me. I'll admit I've scrolled through Instagram and thought to myself, "wow she's gorgeous, I wish I was as pretty as her." We shouldn't have to feel like we have to be anyone other than ourselves. Cyber bullying can cause depression in children and



teens. Once something is posted it never goes away. These people that are cyberbullied can never escape the embarrassment and harassment. Until they realize that others' words about them do not define them, they are sad, lonely, and depressed. Cyber bullying can sometimes lead to suicide. Children and teens sometimes don't see any other solution. They feel that the world would be better without them in it. Covid-19 has done nothing but make all of these problems worse. Everyone was stuck in their house. This left some children with no one to talk to that they trusted, and put some in dangerous situations due to abusive parents. Some children were left at home with access to alcohol, pills, and other dangerous things. With no one there to watch them, some

could have the inclination to try some, or purposely try to harm themselves. My mom works at Children's Hospital in Pittsburgh, and she was telling me one day that they have seen a huge increase in overdoses in

teens. Low self esteem, irritability, tiredness, insomnia, social isolation, and use of alcohol and drugs can all be signs of depression. If you see these signs and are worried about your friend or child, talk to them. Make

sure your children and friends are okay and if they aren't help them out or refer them to help.

## How to be Yourself and Live a Complete Life

Co-editor,  
Ryan Zawislak

Picture from  
Pexels Picture

Everyone always hears people say they should be themselves and live life to the fullest. They believe that this is the way to live a

complete life. However, many people struggle and find it difficult to be themselves and live their life to the fullest. They ultimately feel as if they failed to live a fulfilling life. In order to avoid becoming a part of this group of people, I am going to explain how I feel you can achieve being yourself and begin to work on living a complete life.

The first step in this process is finding out who you are. Sometimes, people want to be themselves but find it impossible to do so. In many situations this is because they are not even sure who they are yet. In order to find out who you are, you must look at two major things. These things are your morals and your values. Morals are what you believe in and how you decide right from wrong. Values are what you find most important in your life. Once you figure these two things out you will be on the right track to being yourself and living a complete life.

The second step in the process is acting on your morals and values. Living in line with your moral code will help you develop as a person and placing emphasis on your values will

help you surround yourself with people that have the same values as yourself. It is important to be around these types of people because otherwise you



will be led down a path you shouldn't be going down with the wrong people. This will inhibit you from feeling fulfilled and will instead leave you feeling empty. Once you surround yourself with the right people, it will help you to continue to grow and live the way you want to be living.

Finally, once you have completed the first two steps, it is important you stand firm in the life you have created for yourself. People will always judge you and tell you what they believe you should be doing with your life. However, you must do what you feel is best for yourself and ignore the outside influences trying to pull you from this. It doesn't matter what anyone else thinks, as long as you are happy and thriving - that is all that matters.

If you are able to live your life following this process, I believe that you will be successful in your journey to be yourself and live a complete life. Keep continuing down your intended path and you will be satisfied with whatever you come across during your passage through life.

## Bullying and Drug Abuse

Staff writer,  
Bronc Tomochak

Picture by Bronc Tomochak

Do you know anyone who is being bullied? If the answer is "no", then you're either not very observant or you just wanna believe that you don't. In an anonymous

survey, 25 people were asked about bullying and substance abuse. When asked if they were ever bullied 16 out of 25 said yes, and when asked if they knew anyone who was a victim of bullying the number was even greater with 21 out of 25 saying yes. Would you say that this seems to be a problem? I guess the question is,

who should deal with it? Teachers will say parents because they should teach their kids to defend/stick up for themselves, whereas parents say it should be the school's responsibility - if it takes place on school property to step in and deal with it. It's complete chaos, and call me crazy, but I don't see how both teachers and parents can stand here and blame someone else when it's the child who is suffering. This causes many students to think they just aren't worth the effort. "Students who experienced bullying or cyberbullying are nearly two times more likely to attempt suicide" Sameer Hinduja and Justin W. Patchin. "Just stay away from them" or "they wouldn't just randomly try to start something if you didn't provoke them" are two great examples of things you shouldn't say if a kid tells you they're being bullied. However those words are



some of the most used responses to a kid thinking they can trust an adult by telling them about their bullies. This is a problem! However if you interview any of them I'd be willing to bet

money that they'll say something along the lines of "If I saw a student being bullied I'd step in and do

whatever I can to help." But if it actually came down to it only 10% or less would truly have the students back. Even if teachers and parents can't see it, many students have each other's backs when the people who are supposed to be there just don't help. Many don't notice and many just don't care but there are more students than teachers and more students that will help you than teachers. Remember to keep friends you trust with you because they will help you. Never try to deal with it on your own because although there's many people who won't help you there's more people who will help you. Many bullies don't notice until after they have already hurt someone, and in many cases they are being hurt by someone close to them so they think it's normal. Being a bully is never acceptable and can cause serious mental damage to the victim, but if both sides can work through it, it will get easier and don't forget to lean on people when you need to.



# Russian Mini Cakes

Staff Writer,

By: Abi's Grandmother Cookbook



(Pexels Picture)

## Ingredients

- About 350 gr. neutral cookies or biscuits (Like Maria, digestive cookies, or similar tea biscuits) – always have a few extra cookies
- 1,5 sticks of butter (about 170 gr.), soften
- About 2/3 cup sweetened condensed milk – always have a few extra spoons.
- 1-2 tbsp. of strong alcohol like cognac, brandy, or rum
- 1-3 tbsp. dark cacao, for the dark version
- ½ cup walnuts toasted and finely chopped

## Coating

- 3-4 tbsp. dark cacao powder, sifted
- 1 tbsp. powdered sugar, sifted

## Instructions

- Beat the butter with a mixer, until lighter, about 2 minutes. Stir in the sweetened condensed milk and beat for another 1-2 minutes, until well combined. Reserve 1 tbsp.

of the cream, for the “eyes” if desired.

- Place biscuits into a blender and pulse until they turn into fine crumbs.
- Take about 2/3 of the crumbs and mix with the cream. If using, add the cacao powder (for the dark version), walnuts, and alcohol. mix well, adding more of the reserved crumbs, until you get dough-like consistency. If you’re using nuts or cacao, you will need less of the crumbs. The mixture will be slightly sticky and soft but pliable. You can always chill it out for 20-30 minutes to make it firmer.
- Take a little piece of dough (around 3 tablespoons or less depending on desired size) at a time and roll it into a ball or oval shaped “potato”
- Sift the combination of cacao and powdered sugar in a small bowl and roll each ball in it. You might desire to repeat it once or twice, for a thicker coating.
- Using a pastry bag or small wooden stick, decorate with chocolate chips.
- Arrange on a plate, cover, and let them cool in the fridge for 30-60 minutes.



(Pexels Picture)

# German Cookie Cakes

Staff Writer,

By: Abi's Grandmother

Cookbook

## Ingredients

- 1 cup light brown sugar
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 2 large eggs, beaten
- 2 1/4 cups all-purpose flour
- 1/2 cup unsweetened cocoa, such as Hershey's
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- Pinch salt
- 1 cup semisweet chocolate chips
- 1 cup shredded sweetened coconut, such as Baker's Angel Flake Coconut
- 1 cup chopped pecans

## Instructions

- Preheat the oven to 375 degrees F. Line baking sheets with parchment paper.
- In a stand mixer or large bowl using a hand mixer, blend the butter, both sugars, vanilla and eggs. In a medium bowl, stir together the flour, cocoa, baking soda and salt. Gradually add the flour mixture into the butter mixture and blend until combined. Stir in the chocolate chips, coconut and pecans.
  - Drop the dough by tablespoons onto the prepared baking sheets, 12 cookies per sheet, and bake 8 to 10 minutes. Cool on a baking rack.



# Student Poems

## Roses Like Us

(Picture from Pexels by Gabby K.)

Why should I  
listen why  
should I give  
enough thing  
for people who  
don't matter  
and respect me.  
they say "life's  
too short" then  
why play this  
game of rosey  
poses when  
we're all gonna  
fall down a rose  
lives and can create beauty but  
can die short and make a  
blooming flower short and fake



We are a single rose but living  
longer

We grow from the seed then  
sprout soon we blossom and we  
die

We can never truly break the  
cage we will  
anyways have  
guilt but we  
ourselves can  
only set our guilts  
and pains that can  
hold us down free

And our  
freedoms may be  
a cruel and hard  
but we all will  
spread our wings  
to take flight to  
see our beauty of

our

Are we sweet or sour

Are we corrupted or cryptic

We are free but trapped in a cage  
were a bird caged sitting their  
for years. We fly to get free but  
fail we're trapped in a cage by  
our guilts and hostility we are  
trapped by the thoughts yet we  
can only set ourselves free.

When we free ourselves we may  
not be the prettiest bird. We may  
not be a Phoenix with it's  
dazzling fire feathers that turns  
ugly once near death and can re  
make itself from the ashes good  
as new

## Student Winter Break Memoirs

Picture from Pexels by Andrea Piacquadio

My winter break was like an  
old wooden roller coaster,  
starting out  
slow and  
rattling.

After  
reaching up  
to the top of  
the wooden  
boards  
holding the  
wooden  
cart, with  
clipped, faded red and green  
paint decorating the wood in a  
festive manor. The cart stops  
after a long and slow incline of a  
massive hill. I am allowed to



take a breath before the old cart  
starts to roll down, the slow  
movement is beginning of the  
cookie backing war, then in  
second, at the speed of light the  
cookie war takes off like cannon  
fire. Batting in the trenches of  
school, cookie tray making, gift  
wrapping, gift gathering,  
decorating the tree, delivering  
breakfast boxes and cookie  
trays, the old cart races down the  
massive coaster tracts and rattles  
with stress and sleep  
deprivation. The night of  
Christmas Eve, the cart slows  
down to a tunnel, this tunnel is  
dark, but it is decorated with  
garland, ornaments, and creates  
a sense of wonder and  
excitement after the intense  
coaster ride. Going through  
when it seems like a dark tunnel,  
once the old cart slowly enters  
the tunnel the darkness turns  
into light. The old roller coaster  
cart turns into a sleek, new, and  
exciting cart and track. The day  
continues on the new track at a  
slow, but quick speed with soft  
hills and turns that can fill  
anyone's stomach with  
thousands of tiny, fluttering

butterflies.  
By the end  
of break,  
the new  
coaster  
slows to a  
stop, the  
new and  
old tracts  
combined  
as life,

new and old, continues on for a  
new year to be filled with new  
memories, and revisit the past.

This isolation was enough to make anyone completely insane. Everyday on our dreary break from online school leading up to Christmas was like a ticking time bomb. When will I break? When will I just lose it? Finally on the eve I stayed up until about 3 o'clock in the morning. I slept in the closet. For some reason the peeling wallpaper and unfinished hardwood floor made me feel safe. I stuffed my turquoise blanket-which was barely long enough for my body-into the closet with my stuffed black bear. As I laid against it I could feel the red ribbon tied as a bow around his neck softly caressing my cheek. I eventually fell asleep. The next morning I was surprised as I gazed outside to see ivory. The palest most freshly untouched sheet of snow. This was our first white Christmas in a while. I made my way downstairs unamused. For some reason, maybe because I am getting older, I felt no holiday spirit. It could be just due to the fact that I am aging and becoming more and more mature. However I paid no mind to my immature thoughts of nonsense. I wished not to ruin Christmas for my siblings. After about thirty minutes or so the 3 of them came rushing down the stairs, stomping and jumping over most of the steps. They hurried over and looked joyful. That childhood joy I remember feeling was worlds away. I remember being happy. Oh what a feeling. I envied them for a bit then after a little over an hour and a half I was able to make my way upstairs. I spent most of

my time in my room after that, for the next week or so I rarely came out. It's awfully strange to sometimes become my room is nothing special. It's actually quite a wreck. My bed is never made, my clean laundry is always thrown onto my bed. I always tell myself that I would do it later, but I never do, dishes and laundry piled up over the floor. I'm not sure as why I can stay in my room for so long with it being like this

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