

THE COURIER

VOLUME 95, NUMBER 1

WHITE PLAINS, NEW YORK 10605

DECEMBER 2022/JANUARY 2023

IN THE TIGERS DEN

SO Student Elections

By Niek Erkkila

Just as a country cannot function without a government, Highlands cannot function without the SO, or Student Organization. The SO is responsible for organizing and executing school activities and ensuring that the school runs smoothly from the students' points of view. A couple weeks ago, you had the opportunity to vote for the officers of the SO, students who would lead the group and be our representatives. Keep reading to meet this year's officers of the Student Organization!

The President is, as the name suggests, the executive officer of the SO. This year's president, Fatoumata Jallow, took charge of scheduling meetings with administration and overseeing the SO's operations.

The Vice President, Halle Archer, adds onto the president's ideas. Two brains are better than one, and the vice president has the power to add to the president's original thoughts, and is a second opinion.

The Treasurer is responsible for handling money. As with any club or group, the SO needs a certain amount of funds to operate successfully.

The acquisition and use of these funds is overseen by the treasurer, Michelle Arias.

Public Relations Manager is a position that directly impacts you and your daily life. The Public Relations Manager, Mario Novello, takes all the wonderful work that the SO does and communicates it to you. Without this position, the SO would operate with no publicity, and would not get support from the student body.

Last, but certainly not least, is the Secretary. The Secretary, Layla Hanbali, is responsible for keeping the SO organized and on-track through the logging of daily activities. Just as a student without any sort of planner will struggle to get their homework done, the SO without a Secretary would struggle to get their work carried out.

There were numerous winners in this year's Highlands Middle School election, and today I'm going to be interviewing all of the winners with my friend, Sean.



Fatoumata Jallow: President

"I am a 14 year old who lives in White Plains. I play basketball and I have an interest in art. I am a talkative person."

What are your goals for this year?

"I want Highlands to be a good place without too many restrictions and I hope people get along."

Halle Archer: Vice President

"I am a 12 year old girl who is very athletic. I am a very kind and caring person."

What are your goals for this year?

"I want to make the school kinder, make sure everyone gets along and that there is no loneliness."



Mario Novello: Public Relations Manager

"I feel I'm a caring person who has interest in... I don't know."

What are your goals for this year?

"I just want to make the school a place that makes people comfortable."



Michelle Arias: Treasurer

"I'm 13 years old, I play lacrosse, and I feel like I'm pretty nice. I'm pretty shy, but when I get to know you I am very talkative."

What are your goals for this year?

"To raise money and to make sure we have more events that are fun for the kids."



Layla Hanbali: Secretary

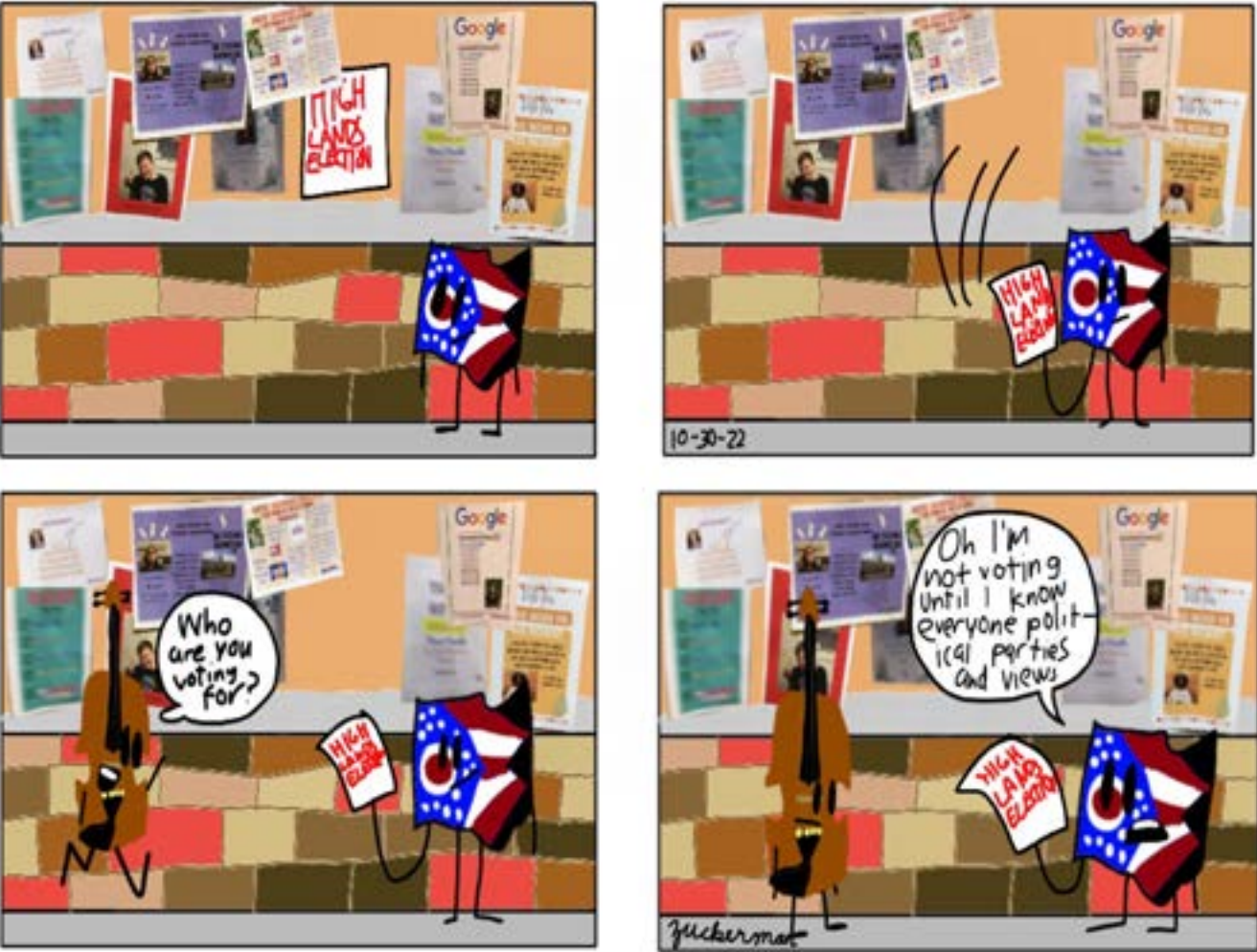
"I like taking on new activities. I like to run, especially cross country and track. The most important thing to me are my friendships."

What are your goals for this year?

"I want to hear everybody's ideas and make sure it is a fun year for our Highlanders. I also want to make it a memorable year for the eighth graders."

SO Political Cartoon: Make Sure You Vote!

By: David Zuckerman



The Great Debate: Should Teachers Give Out Candy?

By Niek Erkkila

It's the end of fourth period and the teacher hands out Jolly Ranchers to all the students due to their "good behavior." The question that has to be answered here: is giving candy to kids just to be manageable once in a while the way to go?

I can certainly say that three of the classes in my schedule do this type of rewarding. There's nothing better than hearing the bell and either getting a sweet treat for raising my hand and participating in class (which I do naturally), or getting a sweet treat for not calling out (something that takes great restraint to do).

The thing is, I find it a little bit unnecessary to get candy for doing so little.

Eventually the candy handouts just become a part of the routine: do work, then get candy at the end of class.

This is only my opinion, so I think it would be justified to hear a little bit of every part of the story. I spoke to the people who hand out candy, the ones who don't, kids that don't get candy in any classes, and kids with classes that always give out candy.

Some Interesting Person: Yes. You should give them candy if they are being good, and you don't give them candy if they are being bad.

Anonymous: You should give kids candy, since then they get hyper. They should only give it to kids in ninth period, so then they can go home and take out their energy on their parents.

Anonymous: I think that it is okay. If the class is doing good at the time or if it's a Friday , then candy should be given. If you got a bad grade on a test, students need something to feel better, so they give the students candy. This can make students want to learn more about the subject and create better relationships.and then the kid wants to learn more.

Molly Powers: The most important opinion of them all is the opinion of the teachers that are generous enough to give us the sweet treats. One of them that needs to be interviewed is the algebra and geometry teacher, Ms. Kelly.

We decided to go directly to the source, Ms. Kelly, and chat with her about her choices to hand out candy.

What leads you to giving candy out to students?
To reward for celebrations and birthdays, and to build community. When students are being kind and engaged in the classroom activity and not fooling around, I like rewarding the active and positive atmosphere in the classroom.

Do you think that giving candy is healthy?
I think, in moderation, it's pretty healthy. I think a single piece of candy can lead to great enjoyment without being that bad to the system.

Do you think candy should be given out?
I think when given out appropriately, candy can have a beneficial contribution to the classroom. I can say it's a good motivator.

How often do you give candy out to kids?
Usually once a week.

Do you think that giving candy makes kids want to learn more?
No. I think giving out candy makes kids want to be in the classroom more and builds a stronger feeling of community.

What's your favorite kind of candy?
Swedish fish. They are delicious and sweet and yummy. I love the chewiness of Swedish Fish and that it has to be the original flavor in order to be good.



What's your least favorite candy?
Oh! I hate butterscotch, it's gross. Just don't like the taste of butterscotch it's just that flavor isn't for me.

What could make you stop handing out candy?
I would say disrespect and students going willy nilly. That would cause me to stop giving out candy. If I thought it was creating a bad environment, or the students were reacting poorly in class.

Do you think that you eat more candy then the kids combined?
Probably, yes. If the candy is there, it's going in my mouth.

From the information I have gathered, it seems people like candy and would crash and burn without the constant supply of sugar to keep them awake and functioning as living human beings.



Should “Away for the Day” Exist?

By Riley

Everybody knows the school rule “Away for the Day,” which states that you are not allowed to have your phone or earbuds on you during the school day. Before we can talk about why this rule should be banned, we first have to understand why this rule exists in the first place.

“It exists because we need students to concentrate on their education instead of their phones,” says Mr. Eaton. “Their phones become a major distraction to the educational process. It’s important to enforce this rule because it allows students to succeed to the best of their ability.” When asked why phones and AirPods specifically, he says “iPads are meant to enhance your educational experience, whereas phones and AirPods do not enhance your educational experience.”

“Ever since the rule has been enforced, I have seen much more positive interactions between students and students, and students and adults.”

Mr. Eaton says, “The benefits of having your phone ‘Away for the Day’ is that it creates more meaningful conversations than text messaging each other does.”

We asked Mr. Eaton the difference between having their phone in their lockers and not being allowed to use them. He responded with, “if kids were able to have enough self control – which is difficult for middle school students – then they would be allowed to have their phones on them, but because of the difficulty, they would probably be more prone to taking it out in the middle of the day.”

While there is a lot of importance in having your phone away, there are even more reasons for you to have it with you. Some of those being the reason behind all of our drills. In a fire drill, if you have your phone in your locker, it will burn, and it’s not like you can call your parents for obvious reasons.

“Oh, just go to the front desk.” THE FRONT DESK IS IN FLAMES!

Lockdown drills, too. If there’s someone with the intention to hurt another person in the school, we’re not going to be able to get up and walk down to the front desk, especially in emergency evacuations. We’d probably be a mile from the

school, and we’d have left our phones in the school, and most students (especially with phones) don’t know their parents’/ guardians’ phone numbers.

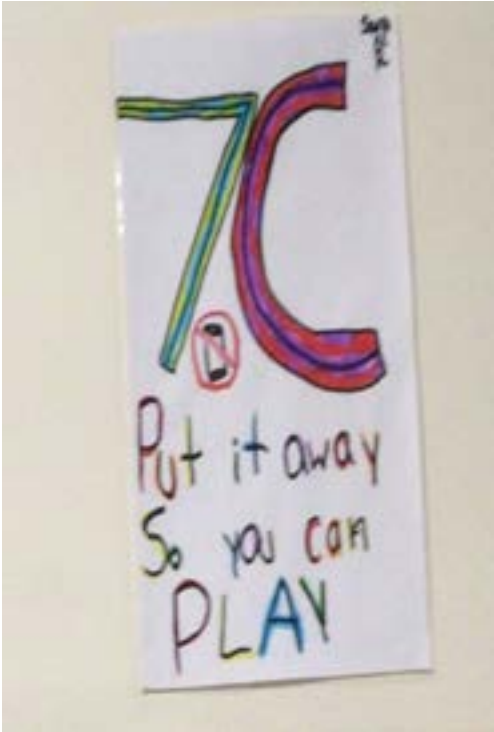
Also, iPads are also a huge distraction. People have already made unblocking websites, so blocking websites doesn’t make any difference. Students have and will continue to figure out new ways to get games. Putting the phones away just limits most social media apps. YouTube is still accessible to the students, and somehow Twitter is still accessible on the iPads as well. Many students take time out of their day just to make unblocker websites. There is no stopping the students, and not getting our phones just makes it worse.

STAY FOR THE DAY!

Writing: Riley Conley, Marie Magneson, and Samantha Hudson

Interviewing Help: Joshua Mui and Samantha Hudson

Inspiration: Sabrina Blum and Samantha Hudson



Keep The Away For The Day Rule

By Claire Kostek

Here at Highlands, the school follows an “Away for the Day” policy regarding cell phone use during the school day. This policy has been the subject of many debates over the years among students and administrators. I sat down with Mr. Eaton, Mrs. Daly, and Mrs. Maracallo to get some insight into this policy, and they gave me a few pointers on it, which are listed throughout my article.

Highlands’ “Away for the Day” policy was instated in 2018 after phones were becoming a distraction for students and teachers inside and outside the classroom, according to Mrs. Daly. She added that it was hard for students to focus while texting on their phones.

Prior to 2018, cell phones were allowed in the classrooms and were used to scan QR codes related to schoolwork and to check up on assignments. Mr. Eaton added, “We had a few problems, but not as much as today.” Mr. Eaton and Mrs. Daly attribute many of the problems with cell phones to the widespread use of social media.

One teacher in Colorado conducted an experiment to determine the number of notifications her students received in 30 minutes. Her class was interrupted a whopping 268 times by cell phone notifications, including texts and social media alerts, amongst many others. Can you imagine learning anything during that class?

Since implementing the “Away for the Day” policy, Mr. Eaton, Mrs. Daly, and Mrs. Maracallo all strongly agree that the school has seen outstanding improvements among students since the policy was created. Before, students were on their phones texting and looking at their social media alerts, and no work was getting done. Now, with the policy, students are able to focus and learn productively in our classrooms.

A common argument against this policy is that if students have to put their phones away for the day, they will never learn to use them responsibly. However, many experts are concerned that teens spend way too much time on their phones already.

Nicknamed “iGen” by author Jean M. Twenge in her article for The Atlantic, “Have Smartphones Destroyed a Generation?”, our generation has grown up with phones and the internet is ever-present in our lives. Many teens spend more time on their phones than they do with actual people. Experts are

concerned with the rise of isolation, loneliness, and sleep disorders that are attributable to the overuse of smartphones. When I asked about this, Mrs. Maracallo said, “It’s psychologically not a good idea to let kids have phones.”

The lessons we learn in middle school, both academic and social, are too important to miss because we are distracted by our phones. We all have bright futures ahead of us. Mrs. Daly might have said it best when she said, “The phones are used socially, and you have all the social time you need in school. With REAL human beings.”

Sources:

Mr Eaton, Mrs Daly, and Mrs Maracallo
“Math Teacher’s experiment with students shows how distracting phones are in the classroom” Kelly Bazzle, ABC Action News February 2019
“Have Smartphones Destroyed A Generation?” The Atlantic, September, 2017, By Jean M. Twenge

Pentatonix

By Olivia

Pentatonix, or PTX, is a group of 5 a cappella (singing without any instruments) singers. Scott Hoying, Mitch Grassi, Kirstin Maldonado, Kevin Olusola, and Matt Sallee are all the current members. Avi Kaplan is a past member who left to spend more time with his family. The name Pentatonix came from the word pentatonic, or a pentatonic scale. Pentatonix added a X at the end of the word for their group name.

Many of the songs that Pentatonix sings are Christmas songs, but they also sing pop songs. They are currently on an international tour. (Evergreen Christmas Tour. Get your tickets now!)

Pentatonix originated from Arlington, Texas in 2011. Before becoming signed to Sony Music, they had won \$200,000 from Sing-Off. The competition contributed to the reason Pentatonix got signed to Sony Music. Pentatonix has won 3 Grammys and has a YouTube channel, PTXofficial. They have 19+ million subscribers, 5.6+ billion views and have 3 creator awards. Some of their songs are: I Saw Three Ships, Dance Of the Sugar Plum Fairy, and Hallelujah.

10 Minute Rule

By Molly Powers, Sara Ragusa and Miles Washington

Incoming 7th graders arrived from Eastview and discovered there was a big change. Now, whenever you have to go to the bathroom in the beginning of the period, YOU. WILL. BE. STOPPED.

No matter how badly you have to go, THE TEN MINUTE RULE WILL STOP YOU.

The Ten Minute Rule States: Students may not leave the class room the first ten minutes of class and the last ten minutes of class.

Molly Powers, Sara Ragusa, and Miles Washington all came together to ask our fellow teachers their perspectives on the ten minute rule.

Anonymous Teacher 1:

“I love the ten minute rule - why would anyone change it? I think in an emergency situation, we need something else, but I think it is a good start to make sure everyone’s accounted for. It gives people time to pack up, finish work, and clean up neatly!”

What would you say to Anonymous Teacher 1? Do you think the 10 minute rule should be changed? Let’s hear from Anonymous Teacher 2, and see what she has to say.

Anonymous Teacher 2:

“Pros are that some kids are in the halls less, making my job easier. During class, it allows less kids to be out at once.

Cons are as a teacher, I would rather send that student right then when they ask so I don’t have to worry about it in the middle of class when we are doing activities. It’s disturbing to constantly send them out.

I personally think it should be a three minute rule so we could make things easier. I also feel like there should be consistency, so if they do it at Highlands, they should do it at Eastview, as well.”

Kids going into Highlands might not be used to only having 3 minutes in between each period to use the restroom.

Now that you have heard two different teacher’s perspectives, what do you think about the 10 minute rule? If you could change it, would you?

Are the foods they give out in the Cafeteria the right choice?

By Sabrina Blum & Elizabeth Salera

Pop Tarts®. Muffins. Cinnamon rolls. Apple and orange juice. Pizza. Chicken nuggets. These are just a few items that the cafeteria here at Highlands gives out to students. They don’t seem like breakfast, or even a lunch item. They seem unhealthy. So why give them out?

There’s one well-known reason why: these food items are C-H-E-A-P.

During lunchtime, the school has more control over what they serve. There’s not a ton of money going towards healthy breakfast in the cafeteria, and the strange thing is, the breakfast is paid for by the government! So why isn’t it healthy?

The earlier the buses come, which is EARLY, the later these kids will want (and will!) wake up. They will probably miss the healthy breakfasts at home and will end up eating a cinnamon roll from Pillsbury® during first period, which has the calorie equivalent of two pieces of whole wheat bread.

The cafeteria doesn’t just give out cinnamon buns for breakfast. They also give out Pop Tarts, cereal, juices, and chocolate cereal bars. Pop Tarts contain 28% of your advised daily sugars. Your advised daily sugars are 50 grams which means, a strawberry sprinkled Pop Tart® plus a frozen container of juice could easily be HALF of your advised sugar intake.

Many people disagree with our school foods and the health quality of them.

One person, a seventh grader named Addison Javier, says, “This school should be giving us more healthy options in order to eat and be the nutritious people [the schools encourage] us to be.”

We also used to have more choices for breakfast. They were a lot healthier, but the infamous COVID-19 struck and most of our healthy options went down the drain.

You probably have had some of our old food in your elementary school cafeteria. In an interview with Ms. Daly, she says, “We used to have more choices, but Covid hit, so our choices became more limited. We used to have oatmeal, yogurt, fruit, waffles, and more and as well as the

choices we have today.”

On the other hand, some people agree with the schools food choices and systems. One student, a seventh grader named Stephanie Charro Gil states, “[The school cafeteria is] a safe place for me to eat my breakfast because I know I’m busy and I am very late to wake up.”

This is true for many students here at Highlands. Another student, Sebastian Casanova, has a positive review about the school lunch. When asked how he feels about the cafeteria food, he says, “I think the school cafeteria lunch is very underrated and is not as bad as other kids say it is.” Many kids buy lunch from the cafeteria, and they like it!

On the other hand, some people agree with the schools food choices and systems. One student, a seventh grader named Stephanie Charro Gil states, “[The school cafeteria is] a safe place for me to eat my breakfast because I know I’m busy and I am very late to wake up.” This is true for many students, as they don’t have a ton of time to get ready for school.

Many kids have ideas for how the school can be healthier. Valentina Romero-Garcia says, “I don’t eat the breakfast at school, but if I did, the school could make it better by serving fruit instead of cereal.” “I think they could add more fruit options like a fruit cup,” says Stephanie Charro Gil when asked what could be healthier about the food options. While the cafeteria does give out fruit, something of the sort of a fruit medley would be a nice, healthy touch to the list of breakfast and lunch options.

Everyone has a different opinion on our school foods. Most kids do rely on the food our school provides so we shouldn’t hate on them because of the way they look (looks can be deceiving), be kind about this.

In a way, we are very lucky. Other school districts can’t provide name brands. Some probably can’t even provide good food, or breakfast at all. At least our food tastes good and kids want to eat them. We just need to look a little harder for healthy but delicious food options.

White Plains is Going Green!

By Cristina Damato

It is a staple of suburban and urban life to see people blowing leaves into neat piles on the side of the street come autumn. The gas-powered leaf blowers are



noisy, but residents have learned to tune out the noise in favor of neater streets and greener lawns. However, all this normalcy is about to be disrupted: White Plains is banning gas-powered leaf blowers starting in the spring of 2023. All blowers, may they be in backpack, hand-held, ride on, or push-behind form will be permanently ‘retired’ (though lawnmowers, chain saws and trimmers will still be permitted). The idea behind the ban is to reduce noise and pollution and to protect our environment. Wary of manual labor? Electric leaf blowers are quieter, lighter, cheaper, and better for environment than gas leaf blowers! There’s no negative.

To take it a step further, White Plains has also initiated an Electric Vehicle Campaign. If you purchase a new electric vehicle (hybrid or fully electric) you have been asked to send an email to melgueta@whiteplainsny.gov. Your email could help White Plains win NYS grant money!

Lastly, White Plains and DSD Renewables, a solar energy corporation, recently collaborated to create a massive solar energy deployment, the largest in Westchester County. Solar panels are spread out on rooftops and the ground at Gillie Park, Ebersole, and several sanitation complexes.

Mayor Roach said upon its completion, “We are in a climate crisis and are obligated to recognize the urgency and take deliberate action to build a sustainable, resilient planet. The City of White Plains will continue to serve as a sustainability leader by investing in and implementing renewable energy initiatives that will meaningfully reduce greenhouse gas emissions.” The new solar panels are tripling the amount of energy going to Westchester homes, reducing greenhouse gases. This is certainly a large step forward to creating a greener and healthier city!



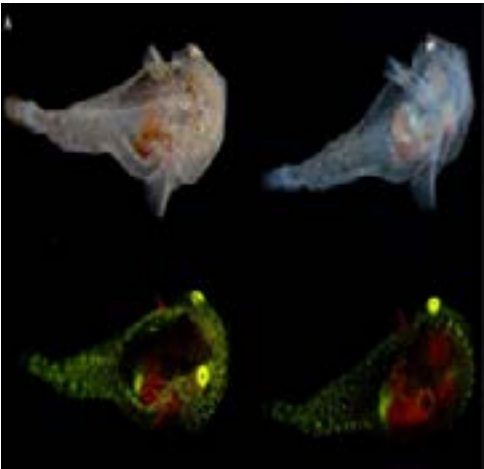
Strange Creatures of the Sea

By Ava Sanchez

The ocean is full of many secrets and discoveries. In fact, there are tiny little snailfish in the waters of Greenland full of antifreeze. The average temperature for Greenlands waters is 43 degrees F. The chemical antifreeze helps snailfish survive the icy waters. A name for these creates is Liparis gibbus. This is a distinctive creature thanks to biofluorescence, which makes it glow green and red. Biofluorescence occurs when animals have the ability to change blue light into green, red, or yellow light.



The proteins that go into antifreeze are created mostly in the liver. This prevents ice grains from forming in their cells and body fluids. 50 years ago, scientist discovered antifreeze proteins in fish. Turns out researchers found five different genetic families with antifreeze. So far, scientist don't



know if the relation between antifreeze proteins and biofluorescence exist. Unfortunately, warming temperatures can make these fish waste their energy. To create the protection these fish need, they use lots of energy. Now with the warming temperatures, the fish waste their energy because there is no need to be warm. The temperature has increased so much over the years that scientists say in about three decades there will be no ice in the Arctic Ocean. Learning about antifreeze is important so we can understand more about these types of creatures.

Please enjoy a fictional story written by a member of the Highlands Community

Cherrytree Academy for Troubled Children
By Anonymous...

Chapter One:
It was cold. Freezing, even, as Anna stepped out of her dorm and into the hallway. Anna made sure to shut her door quietly, but as firm as she could. If the hallway sleepers found it open, they would catch her and send her down to the basement. It was an extremely cruel punishment, really. Once you were in the basement and the heavy metal door was shut tight with that firm click sound doors often make, there was a small percentage you would make it out alive. And even if you did, you would have the pleasure of being forced to stare at the bodies of others who had died before you.
The basement was a confinement room in which you had to stay locked up for exactly 48 consecutive hours, waiting to either go mad or die trying. Anna herself shivered at the thought of going back down there; the bodies didn't help the fact that she had been sent down there multiple times and survived, which most of the students hadn't been able to do before.
Actually, Anna realized as she tiptoed down the hall, nearing the curvy, winding wooden stairs, that she very well may be the only one in Hubert Hall that had even been down there...and came back

up. Anna's heart pumped just a bit faster as the stairs creaked under her footsteps, for she was not a very anxious person and didn't faze easily, as though she wasn't about to do anything. Anything bad. Anything wrong.
The black bag she had slung over her shoulders was crinkling down the stairs as well, and her baby-blue Jansport bag thumped against her back heavily.
Anna wondered where she would go next as she slowly creeped down the steps. Probably hail a cab to her uncle's house, which wasn't too far from Cherrytree Academy. Considering what her father had told her, she owned something banned on school property, something she'd gone into the basement for owning just two weeks before.
A map.
But this wasn't an ordinary map. Well, it was, but not like the other maps students owned. This map not only was a map of the school campus, it was a map of the trapdoors, secret entrances, and surrounding area of the school where her uncle lived. Anna had made it herself - what's a boarding school if you cannot find your way around. Or at least. that was the excuse she had told people before her precious map was taken.
Too bad students had access to the copying room. Anna had smirked at the thought.
After her uncle had graduated form Cherrytree Academy many years before, he never strayed far from the campus. Anna's parents had observed Anna and her brother's behavior; they had feared that they both had the same condition as their uncle Jason, and sent them both straight to Cherrytree. Too bad they don't know Justin's dead, Anna thought as she neared the end of the staircase. And with my help, they will never know.
Anna slipped past the security desk and the snoozing doorman. She could practically see the cartoonish "Z"s coming off his head in little white clouds as she walked by.
Taking the elevator down to the basement was a risky move, even for Anna's taste, and Anna loved taking risky moves. The only elevator close enough to the basement was freight, and would probably wake everyone up with its screech, so Anna played it safe and used a trapdoor in the pillar to get to the basement. The trapdoor led to stairs, which led directly to the door.
The tension was thick, thicker than Anna had wished it was as she entered the basement, staring at

the big pileup of corpses on the floor. She looked around for her brother. She knew he was down here. She just knew.
And there he was. Lying pale, thin, his dust brown hair rustled and his eyes closed. Anna unlatched his chains and in a swift moment, her brother was inside the bag she had brought.
A slight clicking, tapping sound startled Anna; she had been staring at the bodies on the floor. She had recognized some almost immediately; Julia Connor from her mathematics class, Marko Shipman from science. But the sharp sound of clicking on the tiled floor and the metal door slamming shut snapped her back to reality.
Anna didn't try to run, or find as place to go. She wasn't that person; she knew when she had been caught. She bit her lip, knowing in the back of her mind that it had been too easy, the door unlocked and her brother in plain sight.
Anna turned around slowly. A tall, thin woman, pale as dust with a long brown ponytail reaching her thigh stood there. Anna knew her all too well. She wore a velvet green jumper with a red lip to match. Anna looked at the woman's heels; the clear as glass high heels that clinked on tile as she walked.
"Hello, Nicole."
"Hello again, Anna. We were expecting you."

To be continued in the next issue...