TEENS IN PRINT BOSTON
BOSTON TEENS IN PRINT JAN/FEB 2011 ™

▲ AFH art by Mary Nguyen

"Why can't you just be *normal*?"

Bullied for being a lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning teen

By Milanes Morejon // Staff Editor

Eighteen-year-old Stephen Toy recalled the day last year after school when a buddy of his belted him out of the blue.

"He legit hit me because I'm gay," said Toy, who lives in Roslindale.

Toy is one of the many lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning (LGBTQ) youth who have had to endure physical and emotional bullying.

The National Crime Prevention Council reported that six out of 10 American teens witness bullying at least once every day. However, LGBTQ teens said that, for them, the harassment can feel even more relentless. A 2006 survey found that 90 percent of LGBT students had been taunted or assaulted during the past year, according to the Trevor Project, a group working to prevent youth suicides. Last September alone, six young people nationwide ended their lives due to constant torment from others who thought or knew the six were gay.

While the interaction between students is the

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In partnership with The Boston Globe

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AFH photo by Dalena Thai

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Photo courtesy of IGnorant

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Art/Photography
Artists for Humanity

Staff Editors
Ashley Barker
Milanes Morejon
Makiz Nasirahmad
Melissa Rodriguez

Staff Writers
Sherley Belizaire
Eloisa Cabello
Tyler Cohen
Pablo Garcia
Tucker S. Gaye
Zikre Haimanot
Jose Ibarra
Tom Leu
Shanique Lewis
Alejandro Martinez
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Javie McLean
Marmarin Nasirahmad
Parnian Nasirahmad
Audrey Ngankam
Sandy Nguyen
Jorgji Nikopulli
Ieisha Sampson
Linda Vancol
Gabriel Ward

Contributing Writers
Felicia Andre
Alaxzandria Bianchi
Daijsia Bubb
Francisco Castillo
Marinela Golemi
Dennis Tan
Iman Wright

THE BOSTON GLOBE
Robert Powers, VP Marketing and Communications
Irene Mauch, T.i.P. Production Director
Julie Regan, T.i.P. Designer

WRITEBOSTON
Betty Southwick, Director

T.i.P. Coordinator
Ric Kahn

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backdrop for most of the media stories about bullying – and the focus of a new state anti-bullying law – the persecution extends well beyond the school walls, from cyberspace to the street.

Toy remembered times when he and friends had to deal with anti-gay epithets outside of school.

"They call you things like 'freak' and say dumb stuff like, 'Why can't you just be *normal*?' " said Toy.

That kind of sinister stereotyping can give teens the go-ahead to start bashing.

"When students see they're different, they think they should be treated differently," said Yuniesh Robinson, 18, of Roslindale.

The reasons behind the bullying of LGBTQ youth are numerous, experts said. Parents who grew up in a society where people only looked through a heterosexual lens may pass that ignorance on to their children without even realizing it. The beliefs of many religions that being gay is a sin can affect the way individuals grow up and can turn them into bullies.

Melody Brazo, LGBT family liaison for the Cambridge Public Schools, who has also worked in Boston, agreed that teens do not simply take on the role of bullies on their own.

"Though [bullying] is pretty common, many adults never knew how to prevent it, and, when I grew up, they would simply say to just ignore it," she said.

Many with homophobic mentalities believe that if you don't fit into gender norms then you should be bullied and taught the hard way. It can be difficult to fix old-school hate. Brazo said that a teacher once told her: "If I stopped whenever people say 'faggot,' we'd never get any work done."

Patrick Elvin, 17, of West Roxbury, holds strong beliefs about whom to hold responsible for the bullying backlash against LGBTQ youth.

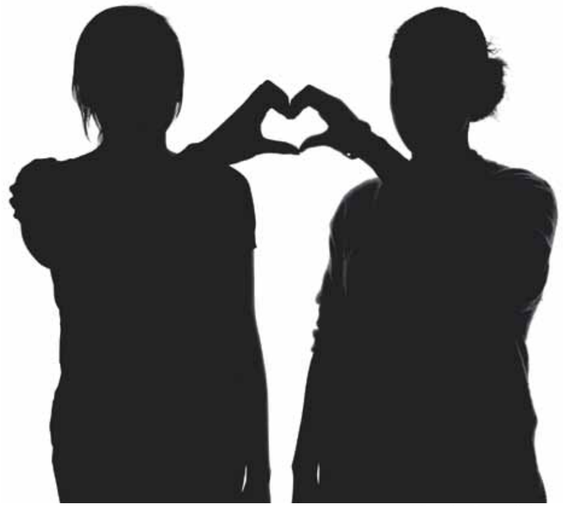
"Anyone who tells gays they are worthless should be blamed," he said. "Every day I read in newspapers, magazines, TV, that most religions don't support me being gay."

Elvin said that he often feels undercut by the world around him.

"The amount of LGBT politicians is numbered, activists in the various entertainment industries are minimal, and it takes away all hope I have of a future," he said. "It encourages suicide."

Still, Elvin said, he tries to ignore the anti-gay expletives tossed left and right and not let homophobic media messages get in his way.

"[Bullying] is like the hill you must overcome in order to get to the other side," he said, "but one must keep climbing and not give up." ■


AFH photo by Emmanuel Santana

A helping hand

Here's some advice on how to deal with any harassment:

- Tell your parents, teachers, or other trusted adults.
- Stay in a group. Try not to show fear.
- Say nothing and then walk away. Or, use humor to defuse the situation.
- Try to avoid places where bullying is likely to happen.
- If the bullying occurs on the Internet, print out the messages and show them to a person who can help you report it.
- Join programs where you feel comfortable.

-- Milanes Morejon

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

You are not alone

Boston Alliance of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, & Transgender Youth
617-227-4313

Samariteens 24-hour helpline
617-247-0220

More than one billion Muslims can't be wrong

Build the NYC Islamic community center!

By Iman Wright // Contributing Writer

I believe that the Cordoba House Community Center should be built, absolutely! The First Amendment of the Bill of Rights states, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the exercise thereof…."

It is Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf's constitutional right to erect this Muslim community center – even if it is about two blocks from the site of the New York City World Trade Center terror tragedy that was perpetrated by Islamic extremists. The purpose of this center is to create relationships among people of all faiths. We can't do that if we are still constantly fighting about which religion is right to follow. Just like the Puritans came to the New World in the 1600's to escape religious persecution, so, too, are Muslims seeking religious freedom in America, our cultural mosaic.

"Our name, Cordoba, was inspired by the city in Spain where Muslims, Christians and Jews coexisted in the Middle Ages during a period of great cultural enrichment created by Muslims," Rauf writes in an opinion piece published by The New York Times. "Our initiative is intended to cultivate understanding among all religions and cultures."

If we, as Americans, deny Muslims these rights, what are we saying about ourselves, and, more so, what image are we projecting to the global community? This position is reiterated when Rauf writes: "These efforts by radicals at distortion endanger our national security and the personal security of Americans worldwide. This is why Americans must not back away from completion of this project. If we do, we cede the discourse and, essentially, our future to radicals on both sides."

If Americans are true to our values, then constructing the community center should foster feelings of tolerance and acceptance of those who are different from us. It will show that the wounds inflicted upon us by the 9/11 attacks are beginning to heal; instead, it has furthered feelings of hatred and misunderstanding.

Some 9/11 families support this project, a true testament to American values. The ongoing controversy over the community center has allowed Islam to be interpreted incorrectly; Islam is a religion of peace and love, not terrorism. If Islam truly is a "terrorist" religion, why are there more than one billion faithful Muslims around the world? ■

A post-Thanksgiving Native American tale

This land is still their land

By Audrey Ngankam // Staff Writer

Why do people often think the United States was founded by white people? The U.S. territory was the land of the Indians, who today are called Native Americans. We should remember – and not just during the holiday of Thanksgiving that just passed – that this country is their country. And it will always be, no matter what happens.

In 1831, The U.S. government relocated the Indians from their homeland to Indian Territory, which is present day Oklahoma. Many of them suffered diseases during the move.

They still suffer today. Several months ago, I saw a Native American on the train. Every one could tell he was a homeless man. Five minutes later, he pulled a bottle out of his bag and he peed inside it. This made me feel so bad. I asked myself, "Why would this man be in his own country and not be comfortable?"

That is not fair and right for the Native Americans. If there is a group here in the United States that should live well, it should be the Native Americans. This land on which we live belongs to them.

Just like the way it was in my native Cameroon. The Europeans took control of our country, saying that they came to help and to make us strong. But that is not really what they did. They came and divided our country and took control of everything. Related to the Native Americans, this is how they were relocated and made to believe it was for a good purpose, but it wasn't. ■

Give and let live

Don't make charity a selfish act

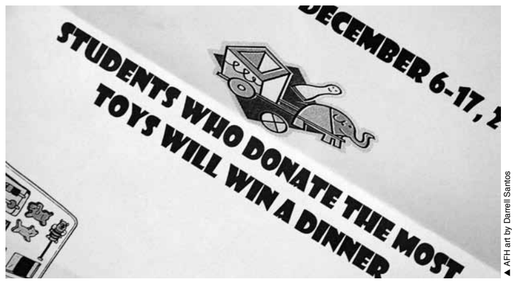
By Daijsia Bubb // Contributing Writer

Powerful, useful, helpful – the feeling of giving. Charitable projects are done by those who have a need to give back. Whether it's for the community, or to a friend, this shows kindness and can leave people feeling as if they made a difference. But does that sentiment apply to those who do it for publicity or praise? Do they feel the same sense of usefulness as those who do it without the expectation of getting something back? And is it even charitable if one expects to gain something in return? Although offering a reward could lead to more good deeds getting done, I believe that true charity work must come from the heart rather than from any expectation of repayment.

Charity work is a form of volunteerism. The true lessons of charitable actions are a sense of accomplishment and pride – not a tax deduction or even a better grade. Rewarding people for their good deeds leads them to not do it for others, but for themselves. This is the act of selfishness.

Looking back on my middle school days, my school raised money for the victims of Hurricane Katrina. I thought it was a good way to show we cared about those who lost everything. Yet all I remember is a brief explanation of what the money was for, and a more detailed description of beating others in raising money.

The class with the biggest contribution got a pizza party. I don't once recall any of us really caring for the people we helped. All we wanted was the pizza. Our charity for others became a kind of charity for ourselves.



▲ AFH art by Darrell Santos

Although it is true that the benefit of charity-work incentives increases donations, it is still a horrible way to prove we care. We are just showing generations to come that giving is a selfish act. ■

Textual abstinence

By Alaxzandria Bianchi // Contributing Writer

In the fall, a new anti-texting law went into effect in Massachusetts. The measure states that no one is allowed to send text messages while driving and also that drivers under 18 cannot make cellphone calls.

The law was made to decrease the number of deaths due to distracted drivers. Although I agree that something should be done to decrease the amount of people dying due to distracted drivers, I don't think that there should be age limits in the law. Also, police officers shouldn't have to spend the day searching for people texting.

Texting while driving is a very dangerous thing – but so is making a phone call. It seems unreasonable to say that someone can't text but can punch in a phone number. James Machado, executive director of the Massachusetts Police Association, was quoted in The Boston Globe: "I can dial your number but I can't text 'hello'?"

Also, how can police know the difference? Medfield Police Chief Robert E. Meany Jr. told The Globe: "They are going to have some difficulties with enforcement, because how do we tell if you're under 18 or over 18? Also, we are going to have to figure out, is the person over 18 dialing a phone or texting on the phone?"

So, yes, this law is for a good cause. During 2009 in the United States, 5,474 people were killed in motor vehicle crashes that involved distracted drivers, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. No one deserves to die because a person chose to use a phone at the wrong time. Still, the law is unrealistic due to the difficulties the police will face trying to enforce it.

Some may use the example of the seat belt law. No one likes to wear a seat belt. Early on, the police had trouble enforcing it. But now, those in our generation know they have to wear their seat belts. Still, the texting law is different from the seat belt law: it has age limits while everyone has to wear a seat belt.

Meanwhile, there is the deeper issue of putting police officers on patrol to look for people who are texting. There is so much violence going on that to have police officers looking for texters, while they can be looking for killers instead, seems like a waste. ■

Saggy-pants opponents: How low can they go?

By Marinela Golemi // Contributing Writer

"Pull up your pants!" This seems to be the word on the street. Young men have been targeted for their particular fashion choice because it appears that part of society disagrees with this trend. The segment I am referring to is the older generation who find saggy pants disgusting, while teenagers find them hip and cool.

Sagging pants remain a controversial issue between generations. Although I understand that saggy pants may seem disrespectful to the conservative public because they are revealing, individuals should have the absolute liberty to dress as they please. Of course, others also have the freedom to express their opinions about these styles.

I am not a fan of saggy pants, and I do not encourage them. I do, however, support people's rights to dress as they like. In April 2009, New York City police issued a ticket to a man wearing pants below his buttocks. The charge: disorderly conduct.

The fact that police want to make saggy pants illegal blows the whole situation out of proportion. The right to freedom of expression falls under the First Amendment of the Bill of Rights. In New York, Judge Ruben Franco threw out the saggy-pants charge this summer, according to law.com, ruling that "people can dress as they please, wear anything, so long as they do not offend public order and decency."

New York State Senator Eric Adams recently used $2,000 of his campaign funds to pay for billboards denouncing the saggy-pants style. His message was "Raise your pants, raise your image!" The senator knows this is a hot topic and he used it to gain votes from the elderly people who oppose the saggy-pants movement. Instead of wasting his money on billboards, he should be investing it in the education of those young adults.

I acknowledge that saggy pants project a negative image, but that does not justify the cause of making this a legal matter. This is a free country. For instance, some people like fast food while others think it is gross. But just because it does not meet one person's standards does not mean fast food should be banned for everyone. People have freedom of choice.

The way a person chooses to represent himself is his personal business. The extent to which people are taking this is clearly ridiculous.

▲ AFH photo by Dalena Thai

News reports say that, in October, a 45-year-old man in Memphis, Tennessee, shot and injured a teenager in his behind after he refused to pull up his saggy pants.

This is taking it too far. ■

Cultural incompetency

By Felicia Andre // Contributing Writer

Many students have recently complained that they are forced to check their cultures at the door; they say that Boston Public Schools teachers need cultural competency training.

My question to that is: How much does lack of cultural understanding actually contribute to the educational problems that Boston faces? Although I agree with students' complaints up to a point, I cannot accept the overall conclusion that it is the teachers' lack of sensitivity towards cultures that causes us to keep our heritages in check.

Oftentimes, people forget that it is the teasing of students by other students that is the most harmful. You don't go to school expecting to make friends with your teachers. They have a job to do: to teach students, which usually overshadows whether they like you or not.

Kids go to school hoping to be befriended and accepted by their peers. Therefore, when the teasing comes from them, it hurts.

I had to deal with many taunting remarks growing up here. For the most part, I was known and liked. However, there were always the smart comments that would catch me off guard. I made it known that I was 100 percent Haitian, and I was teased for it. For example, students would tell me that I don't look like most Haitians – because I dress well and smell good. They may not have meant to insult me, but they did. I felt bad.

Insensitivity did occur, but not from teachers. So, I wonder how effective mandatory cultural competency training for teachers would be and whether it would be worth the cost. After all, you can't make people care if they don't. We are talking about adults here; if they had wanted to, they would have gotten this training prior to even confirming their positions at particular schools.

They know what they signed up for. ■

Triumphant teens

Marie Levey-Pabst asked students in her ninth-grade writing classes at Boston Community Leadership Academy to define what success means to them. Here's what two of them came up with.

▲ AFH photo by Lena Yee

A rocky road to success

By Shanique Lewis // Staff Writer

Success might be an easy word to say, but it works up a lot of sweat to get there. Success is an accomplishment that brings you one step closer to your dream. Success is like walking on flaming hot rocks or swimming in the Pacific Ocean. It is a challenge that takes a lot of courage because people may give up or might not believe in themselves.

When my teacher introduced me to the topic of success, I was very shocked because I had some deep secrets that no one really knew about. When I was younger, I always wanted to be a doctor so that I could help sick people, and, up to this day, that is still my goal in life. But to be successful, there are some challenges.

In elementary school, I didn't really care about success. I argued with teachers, cut classes, and got kicked out of them. When I got a failing notice, it didn't worry me. But the way my mother was yelling and screaming about how I disappointed her made my heart cry. I promised her that I would head in a new direction. Did I keep that promise? Yes I did. I am now a freshman at BCLA. I have straight A's and never get into trouble. I hope to keep this for the next three years so that I can overcome my final obstacle and go to college.

In my life, I've been influenced by both negative and positive energy. When I was 12 and 13, I hung out with the wrong group. It shattered my heart to see that being with these students was not getting me anywhere. In this group were students who cut school, who had already dropped out, or who were smokers/drinkers. Then, one day, I was chilling with the same groupies and the cops saw us and asked if we were supposed to be in school. I got scared. At that point, I noticed that I'd made a huge mistake and chilling with these students was driving me off a cliff. I made a decision that I knew I might regret because they were there for me when I was struggling, but it was for my own good.

Today, we are still somewhat friends and two of them attend my school. But it was the best decision I've made. This helped me to open my eyes, because I have a goal to become a doctor in front of me.

Success is the trembling feeling that you get at the end of every year. Was I successful? Did I meet my expectations? Those are questions that float around in thin air without any answers or explanations. But at the end of every year, I would be able to find out. And I can shout, "Yes, I did it!"

I don't want to fail because it hurts my mother. Failure is like getting a rope to climb across a broken bridge, but I choose to fall instead. Failure is a consequence that can break you or make you depending on your situation. But there is always a solution. On the other hand, success makes me the person I am today.

Success is me! ■

Wealth. Power. Fame. Or, none of the above?

By Francisco Castillo // Contributing Writer

Success is something that everyone wants. Many people think of success as wealth, power, and fame; that is success, but there are other things, as well. Success, plays a very important role in people's lives. Without success you can't be happy.

Success is a really strong word, just like love and hate.

Success could be a goal that you want to achieve. For example, many teenagers want to be doctors when they grow up and if they reach that goal they can be successful in their lives.

You can also be successful when you are happy with who you are. I think that people can create their own successes if they put their minds into it. Success is also whatever accomplishments you won't regret when your final moments come. I remember seeing a lot of parents telling their children to go to school and get good grades, so they could be successful. Even my mom tells me that at least once a month. She is always saying that if I want to live the life I want that I should work hard. Still, I think that for people to be successful they don't really have to finish school. People could just invent useful stuff and make a lot of money and, maybe, if they are smart, they would know how to use that money to get more money. For example, Bill Gates invented a really important thing, Microsoft. Gates did not finish college, but he is a very smart man and became successful without it.

When I say achieving success without school, I don't mean by selling drugs and doing things that could get you in trouble. One example is people who give up on everything and never put 100 percent effort in what they do. ■

My Venezuela

I will never forget

By Eloisa Cabello // Staff Writer

Flashbacks. Go back to a place where you had your first kiss, where all you can remember was the place you were sitting, when your cheeks glowed the most innocent red. Return to the time when you lost your first tooth. Where you smiled a toothless smile, and how you anxiously waited for the tooth fairy to vigilantly replace the tooth with a dollar.

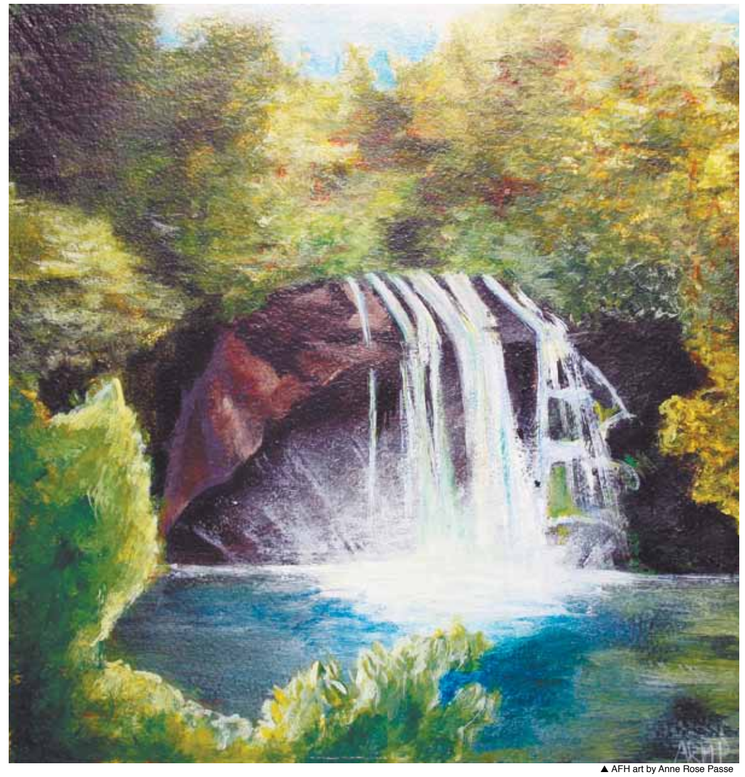
My flashback goes to a place where I was exposed to the sensation of my taste buds recognizing the Venezuelan heritage I got from my father. A place where *arepas* make up my mornings, and a togetherness feeling can help us get to sleep at night. The kitchen where my sister and I would devour the leftover dinner to please our midnight hunger and to try and satisfy the craving of my Venezuela that we can't get in Boston.

In the summers, the plane would bring me to the airport where my aunt would then drive us through the unforgettable Andes mountains to a beautiful street with a blanket of trees dropping delectable *limoncillo* fruit one by one, and we would pull up to the house called Araguaney that lies in my Caracas.

In Araguaney, the kitchen is the most memorable place for me. The *cachapa*s would make my mouth water. The collection of tea my cousin had in the bottom shelf decreases day by day because of my "sticky fingers." My aunt would dance away in her kitchen, with headphones jammed in her ears, drowning out our laughter. She would be cooking what I call "South American hamburgers" that are, by the way, much better without the bun. A Spanish melody would flood the big house, as well as my head, because this is one of many memories in my aunt's kitchen that is in the house of Araguaney, that is found in the city of Caracas, which is bordered by the unforgettable mountains that will always have a place in my heart.

My mother always described her country, the Dominican Republic, so proudly: her red-white-and-blue flag, her coconuts, her beaches, her people; everything is hers. I have the same feeling when our little-old beat-up green van with broken doors would drive in between immense mountains that could make me feel lightheaded. These mountains resemble giants, gentle green giants that in their own way welcome us to Venezuela.

There are wonders my aunt's hands can bring to the human soul and mouth. When I was little, I would fervently and impatiently watch her grind corn into a batter. She would shower it with salt and grease it with oil. My aunt would grill the batter into a circle that looked like an American pancake, but then she sliced white cheese into a melted delight. When it was in front of me, I took my fork and set it aside. With my hands, I ripped in half the soft *cachapa*, and let the stringy and gooey cheese stretch, and it released an aroma that smelled like home. Every food that had the honor of being devoured in my aunt Cecilia's kitchen is usually something that will never taste the same in Boston. The astounding cooking I so often miss back there is something that makes my Venezuela special, but there is also a particular reason that I find my aunt's kitchen so extraordinary, and it isn't the food.



▲ AFH art by Anne Rose Passe

The door in my aunt's kitchen is a metal frame with bars. This is where I often come in and out on a sunny day, to skateboard with my cousin until my butt gets bruised from falling repeatedly. That same door was where I was introduced to my best friend. A friend that I know will never leave me, or do me wrong. Humans tend to rely on hate and expect the giving, but my friend only relies on food to eat, a place to sleep, and a person to love.

That day this summer was unforgettable. I remember the vibration of my music blasting though my ears when I hear little footsteps approach me, with my uncle along her side. The drop of my mouth as I see one-month-and-three-week-old Bella lick my feet and wag her black-and-white tail side to side. My little puppy, the little dog that I had met in Venezuela, that little beagle that entered through my aunt's kitchen. This wet-nosed piece of Venezuela that I brought home with me to Boston, her tiny face bringing back the memories of my Venezuela. ■

First rule: stay in school

Halting the deluge of dropouts

By Sherley Belizaire // Staff Writer

Jose Barros, 19, from Boston International High School, knows that a student can drop out of school for many reasons, as he experienced himself.

"I had a few problems with one teacher and needed to work to pay my rent and bills because I lived alone," he said. "During that time, I felt bored by going to work from one to eight every day and that is why I had decided to come back to school."

For a time, anyway.

The Boston Public Schools high school dropout rate fell from 7.2 percent to 6.4 percent, school officials said last year, noting that it continued a three-year downward trend.

According to school officials, the decrease can be linked to a number of factors, including an online class-credit recovery program, helping newcomers to this country adapt socially while they develop English skills, and trying to draw dropouts back to school.

Still, a November article in The Boston Globe warned of a potential statewide wave of eighth-graders at risk of dropping out. A report from the Boston Youth Transitions Task Force said students who leave school early often face serious non-academic problems, from winding up in jail to being unemployed.

"Usually what I do is find out what barriers may be preventing the student from staying in school," said Jenny Dunne, a counselor at Boston International. "Oftentimes, the problem is more complex than simply not wanting to be in school. Maybe there are things that can be done to resolve some of the problems, for example, by helping someone find work or shelter. It's important to keep encouraging students no matter where they are and remind them of the ability to be successful. It's important for them to know there is always someone in the school that they can remain connected to. Having this person available makes returning to school easier."

More support from other students can also help them stay in school.

Katherine Guerrero, 20, from Boston International, was thinking of dropping out when she was pregnant in her freshman year. She encourages others to be strong in any circumstances. She said: "Continue school. I did it. You can do it. Don't quit."■

▲ AFH photo by Richie Philippe

BSAC BUZZ

By Dennis Tan // Contributing Writer

Have you ever felt like you don't learn anything in class and find it boring? Or have you ever felt that your teachers aren't teaching well and you want them to change their styles? Or that your teacher doesn't understand you as a student? If your answer is yes, come to the Boston Student Advisory Council (BSAC) to fight for the right education from teachers – and not just some busy work.

Recently, BSAC has been working on some projects: homework policy, anti-bullying, and student-to-teacher constructive comments. The last issue is about students giving teachers friendly feedback, both on their own learning and on classroom instruction. The goal is to help increase students' voices about their teachers' teachings, improve the level of accountability, and build ownership in students' own educations.

William Mai, 18, from the Josiah Quincy Upper School, agrees that students should have input into the way teachers operate. "Students' feedbacks are vital because the advice helps teachers identify strengths and weaknesses," he says.

Amy Duong, 17, from JQUS, also believes that it's appropriate for students to have a voice in this. "I feel that feedbacks are important because people don't have the whole 360 view of themselves, so other people help evaluate them," she says. "As students, we are aware of how effective are our teachers' lessons…and this…will help expand the learning environment."

So, remember to let your teachers know what they need to improve on. If you are interested in BSAC or our work, please contact Maria I. Ortiz at mortiz@boston.k12.ma.us or at 617-635-8079 ext 104. ■

Want to be a student reporter?
Join T.i.P. Please call us at
617-541-2651

Recycle paper, save the planet

By Linda Vancol // Staff Writer

Nelfrey Velez, 16, from Boston International High School, understands the importance of recycling.

"I think that recycling paper at school is a good idea because we waste a lot of papers each month and every day," said Velez. "If we put all those papers in a recycle bin, we will save a lot of trees per year. I recycle paper at home and I encourage all my friends to do it, too."

In September, the Boston Public Schools declared a "mandatory systemwide recycling program."

Nicole Bahnam, headmaster at Boston International, said at press time that the school did not have a program to recycle its paper, but that it is working toward it.

"Recycling is very important," she said. "It's no longer about recycling or not. It's now about how to do it."

Bahnam said BPS used to provide a big recycling bin, but no one was there to manage it.

"There is group of students very active in recycling but I want them to know how to do it first," she said. "I think the students must lead the way."

There are some teachers who are willing to recycle paper and think it can raise consciousness. For example, history teacher Ojala Mwalimu, from Boston International, said: "I can put a recycle bin in my room and encourage my students to recycle. Once a week, I can take the bin to the recycle center."

Some students didn't always know about recycling, but now feel it's a worthy activity.

Wesline Cange, 18, from Boston International, said, "When I finished using papers, I just threw them to the trash. Now I think recycling paper is an amazing idea…in order to save our planet." ■

▲ AFH photo by Boysie Williams

Paper, wait!

- Paper waste makes up nearly 40 percent of U.S. landfills.
- About one billion trees worth of paper is discarded every year in the U.S.
- Each ton of recycled paper can save 17 trees, 380 gallons of oil, 4,000 kilowatts of energy, and 7,000 gallons of water.

-- Linda Vancol

Sources: recycling-revolution.com, environment-green.com

As easy as one, two, tree…

Here are some tips on how to stop wasting:

- Buy a refillable cup for your coffee.
- Use scrap paper for making notes.
- Use a smaller font to fit more onto your computer printouts -- and use both sides.

-- Linda Vancol

Source: environment-green.com

ASHLEY BARKER
Favorite Christmas movie? "Grandma Got Run Over by a Reindeer."
Is trust earned or given? Earned. Some people break it.
Favorite thing to do in the snow? Get out of it.
Do you read the gossip on the bathroom walls? Nah. Pointless.

SHERLEY BELIZAIRE
Is trust earned or given? Earned.
What's your best attribute? I make people smile.
Favorite thing to do in the snow? Play with it and throw it at people.
Do you read the gossip on the bathroom walls? No.

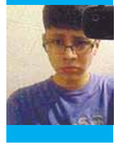
ELOISA CABELLO
Favorite Christmas movie? "How the Grinch Stole Christmas."
Is trust earned or given? Earned. Trust is the most important thing in any relationship.
Favorite thing to do in the snow? Throw people in it.
Do you read the gossip on the bathroom walls? I have a life. Gossip is immature.

TYLER COHEN
Favorite Christmas movie? "The Nightmare Before Christmas."
Is trust earned or given? Given.
Favorite thing to do in the snow? Snowball fight.
Do you read the gossip on the bathroom walls? No.

PABLO GARCIA
Favorite Christmas movie? "Elf."
What's your best attribute? I'm funny.
Favorite thing to do in the snow? Snowball fights.
Do you read the gossip on the bathroom walls? No.

TUCKER S. GAYE
Favorite Christmas movie? "A Christmas Carol."
Is trust earned or given? Starts off given, then it's earned.
What's your best attribute? Patience and imagination.
Favorite thing to do in the snow? Get out the snow!

ZIKRE HAIMANOT
Is trust earned or given? You have to earn trust.
What's your best attribute? I'm a really good friend.
Favorite thing to do in the snow? I like throwing snowballs at people in the street - sorry.
Do you read the gossip on the bathroom walls? Probably the one who wrote it. Lol.



JOSE IBARRA
Favorite Christmas movie? "How the Grinch Stole Christmas."
Is trust earned or given? It's earned.
Favorite thing to do in the snow? Shoot snow balls at people.
Do you read the gossip on the bathroom walls? No.

TEENS IN PRINT

MEET THE STAFF

Boston **Teens in Print** unites the city's teens to create an outlet to inform, communicate, and provide positive change through written expression.

Write for Teens in Print!

- **SEND your essays, letters, articles, commentaries, poems, pen-and-ink drawings or cartoons, and photos.**
- EMAIL submissions to ric.kahn.jcs@cityofboston.gov
- Send them as either MS Word attachments or email messages.
- Provide your name, age, grade, and school. You must attend one of the Boston Public high schools.

- **FORMAT your writing**
- Double spaced
- Times New Roman, 12 point font
- In the upper left corner—your name, Contributing Writer, and a title or headline

- Whatever you submit has to be **YOUR OWN CREATION**. We only print original work. Please write "this is my own creation" next to your name.
- You will not get your work back. **KEEP A COPY** for yourself.

- Teens in Print reserves the **right to EDIT your work for length, content, or appropriateness.**

FEEDBACK!

- **Was it something we said? Or didn't say? Something with which you agree – or disagree?**
- Let Teens in Print know what's on your mind by sending us an email to ric.kahn.jcs@cityofboston.gov Please include your full name, neighborhood, and your date of birth (this won't be printed but is just to verify your age at the time of publication) and we may run your letter in an upcoming edition. *Thank you.*

Next issue: March 2011

Send submissions by mail to:
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c/o WriteBoston
7 Palmer Street,
Roxbury, MA 02119

Contact us:
WriteBoston
617-541-2651

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Teachers! Use T.i.P in your classroom.
Please go to our website for curriculum ideas.

bostontip.com

TOM LEU
Favorite Christmas movie? "A Christmas Story."
What's your best attribute? I am nice.
Favorite thing to do in the snow? Make snowballs.
Do you read the gossip on the bathroom walls? Who goes to bathrooms with pens?

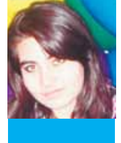
SHANIQUE LEWIS
Is trust earned or given? Both.
What's your best attribute? Being goofy.
Favorite thing to do in the snow? Snowball fights.
Do you read the gossip on the bathroom walls? No, but I'm willing to.

ALEJANDRO MARTINEZ
Favorite Christmas movie? "How the Grinch Stole Christmas."
Is trust earned or given? EARNED.
What's your best attribute? Easy to talk to.
Do you read the gossip on the bathroom walls? Of course. That's the only reason I go to the bathroom.

ARIANA MARTINEZ
Favorite Christmas movie? "How the Grinch Stole Christmas."
Is trust earned or given? Earned.
Favorite thing to do in the snow? Snow fights.
Do you read the gossip on the bathroom walls? Sometimes.

JAVIE MCLEAN
Favorite Christmas movie? "This Christmas."
Is trust earned or given? DEFINITELY EARNED!
What's your best attribute? My smile!!
Favorite thing to do in the snow? Play in it!

MILANES MOREJON
Favorite Christmas movie? "Annie."
What's your best attribute? Self-motivated.
Favorite thing to do in the snow? Run fast to get out of it.
Do you read the gossip on the bathroom walls? Eh, I try not to.



MAKIZ NASIRAHMAD
Is trust earned or given? Trust is always earned.
What's your best attribute? Honesty.
Favorite thing to do in the snow? Stay home and read a book.
Do you read the gossip on the bathroom walls? If you're in the bathroom, you're bored, so you read whatever you see. Lol.

MARMARIN NASIRAHMAD
Is trust earned or given? Earned.
What's your best attribute? I'm funny.
Favorite thing to do in the snow? Playing around with my friends.
Do you read the gossip on the bathroom walls? No.

PARNIAN NASIRAHMAD
Is trust earned or given? Earned.
What's your best attribute? I am honest.
Favorite thing to do in the snow? Sit at home.
Do you read the gossip on the bathroom walls? Sometimes.

AUDREY NGANKAM
Favorite Christmas movie? "This Christmas," "Home Alone."
Is trust earned or given? Somebody has to earn my trust before I trust them.
What's your best attribute? My honesty and my courage.
Do you read the gossip on the bathroom walls? I don't have time to gossip.

SANDY NGUYEN
Favorite Christmas movie? I don't like Christmas movies.
Is trust earned or given? Earned.
What's your best attribute? I'm trustworthy.
Do you read the gossip on the bathroom walls? No.

JORGJI NIKOPULLI
Favorite Christmas movie? "The Twilight Saga: Eclipse."
Is trust earned or given? EARNED!
What's your best attribute? Hmmm. Well, I am good at playing "Call of Duty: Black Ops," and I am good at Mario games. Oh, and I am a good artist and writer.
Favorite thing to do in the snow? I love the snow, but I don't really go outside. I am more into playing video games.

MELISSA RODRIGUEZ
What's your favorite Christmas movie? "The Nightmare Before Christmas."
What's your best attribute? Umm, not my singing. LOL.
Favorite thing to do in the snow? Make snow angels and throw snowballs at little people.
Do you read the gossip on the bathroom walls? Yea, it's just there.

IEISHA SAMPSON
Favorite Christmas movie? "Home Alone," it's a classic.
Is trust earned or given? Earned!
Favorite thing to do in the snow? I love to sled.
Do you read the gossip on the bathroom walls? Definitely, who doesn't?

LINDA VANCOL
Favorite Christmas movie? "Home Alone."
What's your best attribute? Making friends.
Favorite thing to do in the snow? This is my first winter here.
Do you read the gossip on the bathroom walls? Yes I do. I'm so curious.

GABRIEL WARD
Favorite Christmas movie? You mean holiday movie? We're a politically-correct newspaper.
Is trust earned or given? Earned by defeating a level-57 gorobeast in the dungeon of Caraka.
What's your best attribute? Earth. Oh, and Fire. Oh, and Water. Oh, and Wind.
Do you read the gossip on the bathroom walls? Nah, I'm more of a writer.

Digital dangers

By Tom Leu // Staff Writer

Nate Perkins logs into Facebook for approximately five hours a day. “I am addicted to the Internet,” says the 17-year-old from Boston Latin Academy, who cannot seem to quit.

Facebook for him is a simple way to stay in touch and meet up with friends. Perkins was shocked when he found out that teens who actively text or linger on Facebook can develop issues that range from skipping school to underage drinking. Although Perkins clocks in for massive amounts of hours, he feels no urge to get into trouble.

A study recently conducted by Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine showed that teens who excessively text or spend multiple hours on social networking sites are prone to dangerous behavior. According to the study, hyper-texters are more likely than others to have smoked, drank, done drugs, and gotten into physical fights.

Drama that teens deal with digitally transitions to their real life, only to have profound effects. Texting and social networking do not necessarily make a teen vulnerable to these potential repercussions, but trying to fit in online can lead to experimenting with drugs or alcohol to be part of the crowd, too.

Arthur Etienne, 17, of the John D. O’Bryant School of Math & Science, seems to be a teen that confirms the study’s findings, but only to a certain extent. He spends six to eight hours a day on Facebook and admits to partaking in some of the aforementioned activities. Facebooking allows him to conveniently communicate with friends and set up times to hang out. Etienne, however, only makes plans once in a while and is not fully consumed by the lifestyle. After being introduced to the study, Etienne found himself disagreeing because he merely uses technology as an easy way to connect with friends. He sees no real correlation with Facebook and vulgar behavior.

▲ AFH photo by Kin Huynh

Joseph Wall, 18, from the O’Bryant, admitted to having some symptoms of over-texting. Wall expressed his texting obsession as amounting to up to “5,200 times a day” according to him. Of course, that’s an over-exaggeration, but Wall cannot seem to detach himself from his phone, not even during class. Wall agrees that texting plays a major role in influencing teens to get into the troublesome lifestyle; he admits that it is texting that allows him to make plans with ease to go hang out with his friends. Wall, though, does not entirely use the power of texting for his nefarious activities. “Texting is both good and bad,” he says.

The verdict from some teens on the study by Case Western Reserve is that it seems to ring more false than true. Even without texting, they say, teens will always be experimental and find a way to get together and indulge in their chaotic festivities. ■

This is your brain on video games...

By Parnian Nasirahmad // Staff Writer

Milkias Asfha, a freshman at Boston Community Leadership Academy, loves to play video games: shooting guns, racing cars, jumping around with Super Mario Bros. “When I play video games, I feel competitive, I want to win,” says Asfha.

Scientists warn that teens imitate what they see on screen, and that witnessing violence being rewarded in video games can to lead to aggressive behavior in real life.

Okey Chima, a senior at BCLA, plays violent video games like Grand Theft Auto. He does not think they are hurting him.

“Normal state of mind, it is just a game to waste my time,” says Chima.

Eighteen-year-old Aws Aws, of BCLA, says the relationship between violent videos and true crime is apparent: Humans who create the games base them on actual mayhem from the mean streets.

Meanwhile, other researchers say that video games also teach positive skills, from perseverance to problem-solving.

David Bickham, research scientist at Children’s Hospital Boston’s Center on Media and Child Health, says that teens need to beware not to overload on any of their interests.

“It’s important for everyone to balance their activities in life,” he says.

Asfha says he’s been told to limit his video-game pursuit to an hour at a time or he will get a headache or worse – a bad addiction on his brain. ■

BOSTON VICE

▲ AFH photo by Tatiana Ware

Teens tackle...

Underage drinking

By Melissa Rodriguez // Staff Editor

A group of teens stands outside the Chinatown liquor store, waiting. As pedestrians walk in, the teens ask the adults to buy them some booze. If people say yes, these youth stop and let them know why buying alcohol for minors is unacceptable. If the people say no, they explain their cause and thank them for supporting it.

The goal of this group of young people – known as Asian Teens Keeping It Dry – is to raise awareness about the dangers of drinking and lower the following statistics: In 2007, underage drinkers guzzled 15.4 percent of all alcohol sold in Massachusetts, according to a study by the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation. That same year, 73 percent of high-schoolers in the study said they’d already had their first real drinks of liquor.

“Underage drinking is dangerous,” said group member Alex Chan, 16.

The city earlier this month launched a campaign against underage drinking.

Asian Teens Keeping It Dry was formed several years ago after reports surfaced that some Chinatown establishments were selling tea mixed with beer to teens.

According to the 2007 study, teens who begin drinking before the age of 15 are two-and-a-half times more likely to become abusers of alcohol than those who start at 21.

“When you start [drinking], you get addicted, when you get addicted, you can’t stop,” said Albert Wong, 19, another group member.

These teens participate in many different projects to share their cause with the public. For example, they go to restaurants and liquor stores in the Chinatown area to distribute stickers and posters so adults will think twice before buying alcohol for kids.

“I know friends that do drink,” said Janice Tang, a 16-year-old member of the group. “I don’t want to see my friends get into accidents because I don’t want to lose them.” ■

Underage smoking

By Alejandro Martinez // Staff Writer

Arsenio Negron, a 13-year-old boy living in the South End, was inspired by his uncle.

“[My] uncle worked in a drug-prevention program during his lifetime and it really made me want to do the same and make a change,” he says.

Negron is part of a group of young people from the South End agency Inquilinos Boricuas en Accion who are surveying the streets, learning about the consequences of underage smoking, and trying to stamp it out.

“[We] are kids who want to make a difference,” says Michael Cordero, 14.

The teens from IBA have two goals for the neighborhood over the next several months: to limit the sale of sweetened cigar products to adult-only establishments, and to require a minimum number of cigars per package to prevent the sale of cheaper-priced singles.

To do this, their plans have included circulating a petition and developing public service announcements to educate the community about the risks of smoking – and then taking their cause to the city’s Board of Health.

These teens have found out that many youth are exposed to the paraphernalia of smoking on a regular basis: of 52 young people asked how often they go to stores that sell tobacco products, 29 said every day.

“The tobacco industry is targeting youth, and we are offended by it,” says Rosandys Colon, 14. “If [youth] learned about how many chemicals were in tobacco, they wouldn’t do it anymore,”

According to anti-tobacco advocates, about 3,900 young people in the U.S. under the age of 18 start smoking every day and, of those, 1,500 will become regular smokers.

Smoking is influenced through friends, family, media, and many other ways.

“My dad has been smoking since he was 14, and he has tried to stop, but almost every time I come home, I see him smoking,” says Thashauna Burrell, 17.

Jasmine Burgos, 15, says she knows young people who regularly light up.

“It hurts me to see them smoke,” she says. ■

Dating dilemma

When your best friend wants to be your boyfriend

By Jorgji Nikopulli // Staff Writer

It's another day. The sun's shining and the birds are chirping. You get on the bus. You arrive at school and open the doors. Now your good day has gone down the drain. Now you know your day will be sheer horror. Why? Because today you have to choose between a guy who has been your best friend forever and the one you give all your love to, your boyfriend. So which will it be?

A lot of teenagers these days are dealing with the fact that your best friend is in love with you – and so is your boyfriend. You don't want to leave your boyfriend, because you love him, but you also don't want to hurt your best friend. This brings to mind a very popular sci-fi romance that has girls fainting, and that's "Twilight." In "Twilight," a girl named Bella is torn between her friendship with Jacob, a werewolf, and her relationship with Edward, a vampire. But, of course, this is reality.

"If I had to choose between my best friend and my boyfriend, I would have to say that I would choose to stay with my boyfriend and tell my best friend that we can only be friends, but at the same time I would want my friendship," says Yvelande Merisier, 16, who attends Boston Community Leadership Academy. "It might be hard for my best friend to handle the news, but he has to understand that if he's my best friend, then he would let me be happy and make my own decisions."

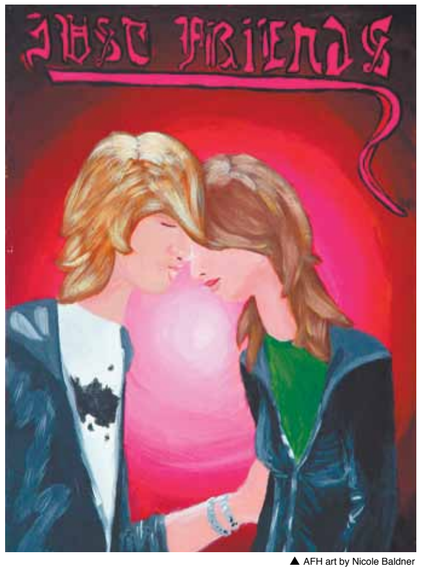
This can be a very hard topic to choose sides on because, on the one hand, you don't want to hurt your best friend, and, on the other hand, you don't want to leave your boyfriend because you are happy and in love with him.

Fitaw Beyene, 15, from Roxbury, says: "It depends on how long you and your best friend have known each other, and how long you have been with your boyfriend."

Friendship grows over time and can develop even after fights. But isn't a relationship the same, only intimate? Can't your best friend understand that you only think of him as a friend and nothing more?

"Even if my best friend likes me…I wouldn't be with him," says Tiffany Rosario, 17, from BCLA. "He knows everything about me and I think that would be too much. But, if I liked him more than my boyfriend, then I would give the relationship a try."

In the end, it's the person in the love triangle who's stuck in the middle and has to make the choice. And that's not okay. ■



▲ AFH art by Nicole Baldner

Oh, brother

The joys and heartaches of siblings

By Jose Ibarra // Staff Writer

Siblings are people sent from God to us for several reasons. Siblings are very different from ordinary citizens that we meet walking in the street. Siblings are either friends, best friends, enemies, worse enemies, or just wannabes. Siblings – you can't choose them, no matter how much you want them to be born according to your own expectations.

Lucy Elizabeth Cabel, 16, from Boston Community Leadership Academy, was an only child until recently, when she found out that she was going to have a little brother. At the beginning, she said, she was shocked and confused. She thought of the pros and cons of this new little person living in her family.

"I would love him however he is," she decided.

People should have siblings, she thought, so they can have company and have someone to make them happy whenever they are sad.

But, teens know, jealousy can turn everything around. Siblings know what bothers you, what you hate, what disgusts you; they know more than anyone.

Rose Fils-aime, 16, from BCLA, said she has four brothers.

"My brothers and I are very close," she said.

She said that she learns many things from them – such as how not to fall for young, blind love too soon, and also how to respect everyone. Even though she loves her brothers to death, she wishes she would have a sister so she can share her deepest thoughts with her.

Zainab Hussein, 17, said she has eight sisters and two brothers. For her, there are positive and negative sides about having so many siblings. She knows that they might have some arguments and fights along the way, but every time they have a problem with each other, they come up front with it, and they talk it through.

From her older siblings, she expects them to set a good example for her. "They can create a good path for me to follow and learn from," said Hussein, who attends BCLA.

In turn, she will pass along to her younger siblings the wisdom she has gathered along the way.

"I want to…make sure they don't do the mistakes that I made once," she said. "I also want them to be able to see from right and wrong by themselves over time." ■

Seeking the true meaning of… …Love

By Shanique Lewis // Staff Writer

Ney-Ney Jones, 18, and Damion Lewis, 20, have been dating for over one year now. Jones started going out with guys when she was 16 because, before that, she thought that boys were just players and that they were always up to no good. After getting her heart broken by her former boyfriend, she decided to give up for a while. She had convinced herself that love is just a devouring animal that is slowly eating away her heart, bit by bit.

"There are so many different kinds of relationships in the world," says Jones, who goes to Dorchester High School. "You have the good ones and the bad ones. A good relationship would work longer if the couples can…fix their mistakes. On the other hand, a bad relationship ends when there is a bump in the road or one of the partners makes a mistake. In order for a relationship to work, both partners have to be healthy and willing to work/talk-out their problems. They also have to be able to benefit from each other."

A lot of girls agree with Jones because they had encountered similar situations. Female teens say that a lot of males have an intention of lying about their feelings toward their partners so that they can get a chance to have relationships. A male teen would manipulate a female to think that he's in love, but then it would turn out to be complete irony. Female teens say your whole life would seem like it's falling apart in a split second. Nothing would feel real, you would reach out for a helping hand to smack you back to reality, but the nightmare would never end. A lot of teens agree that love can make you or break you.

"Love is a lot of things," says Kayla Morris, 16, from Hyde Park. "Love is trust; love is honesty, respect and learning from each other. Without these things, love is nothing because in past relationships I expressed personal information to that person because I feel as if I can trust them, but after we break up he would use that revenge against me so that I won't be able to date another. Then, most likely, I'll have to crawl back to that person. Over the years, I had learned from my mistakes."

Janisel Hernandez, 15, says she is very cautious when it comes to giving up her heart.

"I would never get caught up in a relationship because I never hold to one for that long because he can get over-conceited and become a jerk," says Hernandez, who attends Boston Community Leadership Academy. "When you fall too deep with a person, your emotions get the best of you, because you once were in love with that person. It's best to learn more about your relationship before you end up with a heart attack in zero-degree weather." ■

▲ AFH art by Christopher Boliver

…And friendship

By Makiz Nasirahmad // Staff Editor

Gumercindo Buenrostro, 16, who attends Boston Community Leadership Academy, thinks he knows exactly what friendship is: "A true friend is someone who is there when you need them and someone you just like to be around."

Friendship is one of the most complicated things in the world for teens. Every person has a definition for it. Therefore, friends can have arguments about them actually being friends.

In high school, friends mostly break-up and make-up. For instance, you can find friends who find out that their friends don't trust them, so they think that must mean they are not really friends. But maybe for that person, friendship doesn't include trust.

Jose Belliard, 18, from BCLA, thinks friendship is when you're with someone who cares about you. To be his friend, you would need to share interests and would have to care about what he has to say. Belliard's friends would say that he's very trustworthy, most likely because that's what he wants his friends to be.

Michael Escobar, 17, who also goes to BCLA, talks about Belliard being an awesome friend.

"Even though I only know Jose for about a year, in that year I got to know a great person, who I say is a great friend. We have become close…friends who trust each other with our personal lives outside of school."

While Belliard likes to have things in common with his friends, Kimberly Vega is more interested in having friends who are not the same as her. She likes to make friends with people from other countries.

"Knowing different people from all over the world gives me a sense of happiness beccause I get to know things I never knew before and they are the best people I ever met," she says.

Vega, 16, from BCLA, defines friendship this way: "When you have someone that you can constantly lean on and they can lean on you."

Zoraida Ibarra, 16, from BCLA, has high standards for her friends. "Friendship is being there for that person that you called friend, in both bad and good times, without expecting anything in return," she says. "But love and care, as well as trust, should be reciprocal." ■

You collect what?

The obscure things gathered by teens

By Gabriel Ward // Staff Writer

It can be anything from stamps to video games, from model planes to articles of clothing. But how can things that are so different be gathered in the same way? What makes a collection a collection?

"It's all stuff from your childhood," said Eddie Lui, 16, from Boston Latin School.

Perhaps he's right.

Teresa Cheng, 16, has been collecting stuffed animals, or "plushies," since she was eight years old. She still spends almost $50 dollars a year on them. "I just like to admire them," said Cheng, who attends BLS.

But what is it about this compilation of plushy animals that makes it so great? "It has to be worth something," said Lui.

But, in fact, some collections are worth nothing.

William Droser, 16, of BLS, used to amass Boston's Weekly Dig newspapers.

"It was free, you could find them around Boston in boxes," he said

Although after two or three years of accumulating these papers he had to throw them away because they were taking up space, he still picks them up every once in a while.

Keeping a weekly newspaper may be somewhat understandable, but what about stockpiling pants?

"In ninth grade I got obsessed with college skinny jeans, and I wanted every color – so I got every color," said Tammie David, a 16-year-old from BLS. "I spent hundreds of dollars, but they died down."

Still, David has over 20 pairs of skinny jeans, and doesn't plan to stop buying.

Like the skinny jeans, a collectible can be something you use all the time. Daniel Curran, 16, of Hyde Park, has an affinity for Nerf guns. While he doesn't use them as much as he used to, he still loves to bust them out with his brothers.

Though some may think of this as childish, Curran isn't at all embarrassed.

"I could stop if I really wanted," he said. "Scratch that – I'll always want a Nerf gun around."

▲ AFH photo by Alice Tran

Initially, 16-year-old Ian Haines, of BLS, said he didn't collect anything. But after talking about his hobbies, he realized that he had his own set of instruments. "I have a banjo, a cello, a mandolin, a guitar, and a bass," said Haines.

He can even look at them as accomplishments or trophies, each carrying an experience different from the next.

What makes any of these a collection? What makes all these very different material things special?

Teens say it's the amount of association they have with their objects. The more they collect, the more they become attached and share emotional ties with them. The actual object can have very little to do with the collection; with every pair of skinny jeans, for example, can come a memory of the days you wear them.

But no matter the sentimental value of the collections, they can all have the same effect of bringing anybody – whether angry or feeling down – back to a happy place.

"It's important to me," Cheng said about her assortment of stuffed animals. "It gives me a good recollection of my childhood." ■

The latest in New Year's resolutions:

No more New Year's resolutions!

By Ariana Martinez // Staff Writer

New Year's resolutions: Keep room clean, eat more vegetables and go to the gym, always have a positive attitude and, of course, get straight A's in school. Sounds like great ideas – if only you would actually do them.

Many teens think following pledges like these takes too much effort and probably won't work. So they don't even bother with New Year's resolutions anymore.

Aaron Whitehead, 16, said he doesn't make such promises because he knows he won't really change.

"I don't know why you would make them if you're not going to do them," said Whitehead, of Mattapan. "To me, they're just pointless."

Manuela Bermudez doesn't make any resolutions, either.

"I don't know, I just didn't make any, I don't see why I would make them, anyways," said the freshman at Fenway High School. "What's the point of making them if you're not going to do it?"

These teens might be right. A story in The Miami Herald last January said that 97 percent of all New Year's promises are never fulfilled. Still, experts said that people who make New Year's resolutions are actually more likely to change for the better than those who don't.

Bianca Glover, also a freshman at Fenway, said she's never made such resolutions.

"I think they're dumb," she said. ■

Body language says it all

By Tucker S. Gaye // Staff Writer

Body language speaks without having to be audibly heard. How could something so silent shriek so loudly that it manipulatively forces our nerves to react and bring about conflict?

Aidid Brayboy, 17, of Fenway High School, tells us: "See, people don't understand [body language] directly, so they make up their own interpretation."

This universal language could be mistakenly translated and implanted in the core of our deepest thoughts, sometimes sprouting to a very sharp extreme, piercing, scratching, poking, and itching our sensitivity points.

Dary Suero, 15, of Madison Park High School, says: "Silent language is the many influences we face each day, influences that are silent in that they are not verbal, but that are quite loud in terms of the effects they have on our development."

◀ T.I.P. art by Tucker S. Gaye

Body language, a/k/a silent language, carries both negative and positive connotations, depending upon your translation. A simple smile, a flirt of affection, or a turning rejection says a lot. Body language is also often used to offend. Staring in disgust at an individual who expresses himself as an individual, because in your world that's not quite how you would want to sketch it, is an example of bullying through the use of silent language.

"You have the right to remain silent. Anything you say can and will be used against you in a court of law."

Silence can have many versions.

"When one interprets or assumes, they don't care for the reason or intentions behind, whatever, because they already have their minds made up," says Ayshika Wiggins, 16, of Boston Latin Academy.

In fact, all language does not have complete clarification – that's why there are so many ways to exchange meaning.

So, for artists, victims, defendants, and others, silent language is just one form of communication. Teens declare: Know what you're saying, and how to say it, is all we're saying. ■

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Don't be dumb: listen to IGnorant's rap

By Ashley Barker // Staff Editor

If you walked into chorus class at Boston Community Leadership Academy and saw Iggy holding his binder and mumbling, or just standing silent in the back, you would never know he is one of Boston's young and rising rap stars and is already signed to a label: YungMass Records and CEO Joker.

Things are starting to flow.

"I've been working on a couple tracks and should be working with a couple big names soon," IGnorant says, "once I finish a few verses and link up with a specific artist I've been talking to for a while."

He doesn't go on to reveal the mystery artist, except to note that it might or might not be a member of the record label.

IGnorant recollects how he was signed last year by the YungMass CEO. "I was in the studio recording a song when Joker came in and interrupted the session," he says. "I was mad at first, and he said the system that I was using wasn't as good as his. After hearing me rap, a week later Joker came in with a contract and he signed me."

IGnorant says he got into rap to show his middle school math teacher that he was a better lyricist than him. Even though he doesn't remember those early lines, he understood that they were bad: "When I first started, I was terrible and I knew it."

Since then, IGnorant has been working on his writing skills, improving his lyrics as he grows. "Before it was simply verses, now I'm making songs," he says.

Things have changed for the young rapper. This fall, IGnorant and the group that he's part of was played on Fishbowl Radio – an online station in Texas. Even though it wasn't local, supporters of IGnorant stayed up to hear YungMass's "Finale Remix," which used the beat to Young Money's own "Finale."

Those who listened were surprised at how good the song was, even though one of the members – IGnorant himself – only found the sound the hard way. "One friend called me and said 'You hearing this?' " he remembered. "No. But [then] I heard it over the phone."

Though the song got good feedback, IGnorant says he was still upset. "It felt good," he says. "I wasn't too happy, though, because I was hoping some mainstream artist [would] hear it."

Before YungMass came into the picture, IGnorant did not see much happening with rap as a whole for him.

"I used to do it for fun," he says. "It got to me when I met YungMass. Before, I didn't think much could happen."

While his determination continues to shine through to show how far he has come, he knows he still has a long way to go.

"I want to be knee high into it, make something of it," IGnorant says. "Keep doing what I'm doing, talk to a lot of people…and I'll be happy." ■

The elite three

An unbiased review of the most popular video-game consoles

By Gabriel Ward // Staff Writer

If you love video games as much as I do, then you probably received some this past holiday season. But are you dissatisfied with the video-game console you got? Well, then, maybe you've received the wrong one. Hopefully, by reading on, you can figure out which of the top three consoles – the Wii, the Xbox 360, or the PS3 – is right for you.

I believe that these systems aren't really better than one another, but different in their own ways. Now you're going to find out how.

Operation is the most important aspect. You probably figured the graphics on the PS3 are better than the Xbox, but not nearly to the point where you'll notice it. They're softer, you can really see the texture, and the lighting is a little better. But both systems play the games just fine. The Wii, of course, has far less graphic capability, but there are few-to-no games for the Wii that require these graphics. The Wii almost doesn't heat up or make noise, same with the PS3. The Xbox is infamous for its noisy operation and overheating, and most people think twice about getting an Xbox because of this. But the Xbox Slim now has better venting, and is quiet, as well.

PlayStation nuts swear that the PlayStation controller is fantastic, but, to be honest, it feels kind of strange. It's too thin; it isn't really molded to the shape of your hand. Not to mention that the analog sticks are placed too low so that it doesn't seem natural. Don't worry, though; you do get used to this really fast. The good thing about the PS3 controller is that it's extremely light. The Xbox controller, meanwhile, seems like you're holding a five-pound barbell, though it is very comfortable and feels natural. The Wii's controller, with its silicone grip, feels good.

Online play is very important in video games these days, and the Wii can't deliver. It's slow, it lags, and it's ridiculous to connect with people. The PS3 and Xbox online quality and connection, meanwhile, are almost the same. People argue that it's stupid to pay $60 a year for Xbox Live, Xbox's online service, for something the PS3 offers for free. But the PS3 really doesn't offer the same service. Xbox Live provides constant updates, articles, sneak peeks of the newest games, and a vast, easy-to-use online marketplace where you can buy full games and special tidbits. It's like you're subscribing to an online video–gaming magazine. Plus, your whole account, including point balance, download queue, and profile, can be accessed from the computer. If online is extremely important to you, get the Xbox 360 Slim, subscribe to Xbox Live, and enjoy. It truly is the best online gaming.

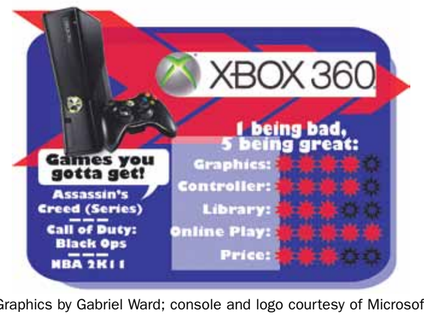
Overall, the Wii is the least popular among teens. Sure, it's fun, and a great party system, but it's more for the family demographic and people who love Nintendo games. It's small and convenient to store, and it offers some of the greatest games, and you can't forget its cheap regular price of $200. But if you're looking for real gaming, then aim toward the other two consoles.

The PS3 is somewhat popular among teens; its standard price starts at $300 with 160 gigabytes. It's got great graphics, fantastic games, and fast online play. Something great about the PS3 is not only the fantastic games that are made for it, but also the previous PS2 games – some of the greatest of all time. This backwards compatibility definitely sells it.

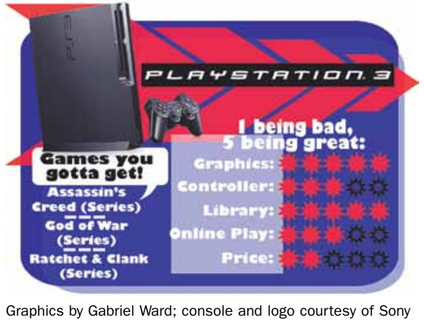
The Xbox 360 is probably the most popular among teens, and its standard price starts at $200 with four gigabytes, but it's much more sensible to pay the extra $100 for 250 gigs. It's got a huge library of games, both at retailers and in their online marketplace. Now that they've shrunk the size with the new Slim, it's not too much of a pain to store, plus they've added wi-fi capability.

Don't let your decision be tainted by video-game bias. Usually, those you ask will have strong opinions about the systems they own – and opinions that aren't based on all three consoles are no good. Use this guide, and, hopefully, you can find the one that is just right to keep you happy for years to come. ■

Graphics by Gabriel Ward; console and logo courtesy of Nintendo.



Graphics by Gabriel Ward; console and logo courtesy of Microsoft.



Graphics by Gabriel Ward; console and logo courtesy of Sony Computer Entertainment America.

HS hoops

Charlestown aims to recapture glory days

By Zikre Haimanot // Staff Writer

Talent doesn't always guarantee victory, but if any city team in high school basketball is being crowned because of its roster, it has to be the Charlestown Townies. With a young and dynamic duo of guard/forward Akosa Maduegbunam and point guard Rony Fernandes leading the way, Charlestown seemed to be a favorite heading into the season.

Indeed, the Charlestown hoopsters got off to a sizzling start. At press time, the team had won its first four games.

Last year, as a sophomore, the 6-3 Maduegbunam led the Townies to a 10-11 record. Though the won-loss ledger wasn't exactly stellar, it foreshadowed the amount of potential they had. Now, adding a floor general like the 5-11ish junior Fernandes can only improve Charlestown High.

What may separate the twin talents on the Townies from other teams is the way they complement each other. Fernandes isn't the type of guard who looks for his own shot before passing, and Maduegbunam is exactly the shooter he needs to rack up his assists. Both understand that they will need to give up shots and play together for the team to win – like King James and D-Wade.

"Me and Rony have known each other a long time," said Maduegbunam. "He's my best friend, so me learning to play with him is something I'm willing to do."

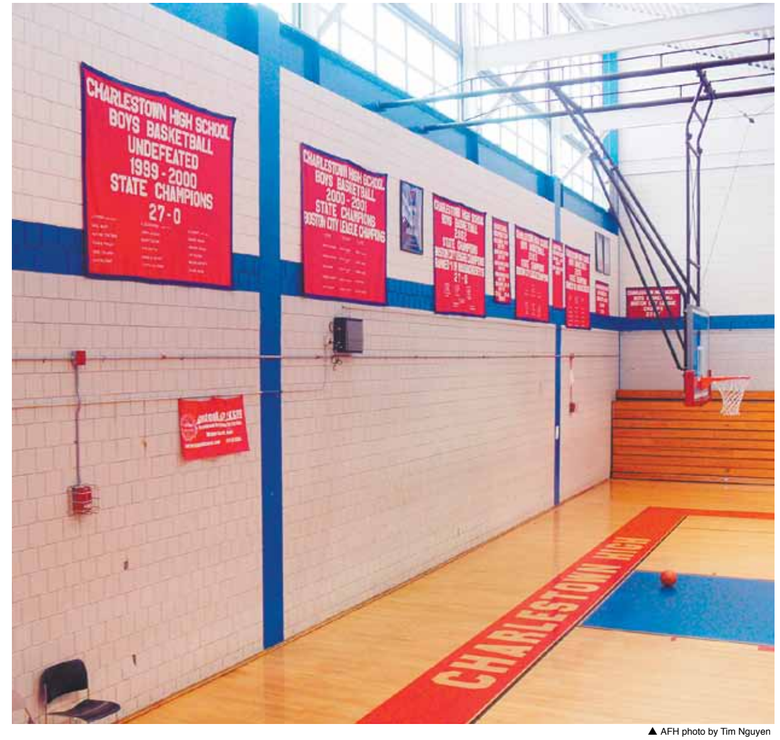
Coach Edson Cardoso is optimistic about his squad. "We feel that we can compete with every team that we play," he said.

Bob Holmes, High School Sports Editor at The Boston Globe, senses that positive vibe, too.

"Charlestown's potential is always high when it comes to basketball and they could always be competing for a city championship," he said. "What seems to make this team special is that if they can work together and live up to their talent level, they could make a run at, not only a city, but state championship, as well."

One of the story lines of this Charlestown team has been the development of Maduegbunam. After improving his game every year, some say this could be the season where he becomes the star that many have predicted.

During a competitive AAU tournament this summer, Maduegbunam delivered some of his best games and caught people's attention with his deadly jump shot, according to gymratchallenge.com. He was named one of the tournament All-Stars.



▲ AFH photo by Tim Nguyen

Before this season, Maduegbunam said he was focusing on the other side of the ball. "I've been working on my ball-handling and defense," he said. "Defense is what is going to carry this team when our offense is in a slump."

With all the talk about Maduegbunam, some people might sleep on Fernandes. That's their first mistake, because when called upon he can be one of the most explosive players on the court. Fernandes had a great summer himself competing for Metro Boston, one of the top AAU teams in Massachusetts. Over the summer, Maduegbunam and Fernandes played against each other, though Maduegbunam's team came out on top. In that game, Fernandes lit up his defenders for 21 points. People should expect to see him post some ridiculous assist numbers and exploit defenses using his high basketball IQ.

Though there has been a lot of hype given to this Charlestown team, they are still in the shadow of their predecessors in recent history, teams that won five state championships in six years. Those lineups included some of the most dominant figures in Boston basketball history, led by coach Jack O'Brien.

This season's leaders don't have the same mystique about them, but they are a group of hard workers. The standards for a good season are going to be very high, but they can ponder the banners of previous teams and try to get one of their own. ■

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