

# THE RHETORICAL QUESTION

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## ASL Team Still at its Peak

BY JONATHAN TALARRICO

Consistency is not a problem with the Collegiate Academy Sports League team. Despite its annual rotation of competitors, the team has continually achieved one of the highest positions at the national level.

Last year four ASL team members graduated, so there were uncertainties about how the team would fair this year. At the November 15th competition at Mercyhurst College, however, Academy once again defeated the other schools. They gained another win at the Penn State Behrend competition on December 6th. Competition results can be found on page 2 of this issue.

Junior Vid Yogeswaran.

a new addition to the ASL family, has already inherited the confidence of returning members. She asserts that "Collegiate owns."

That common characteristic of confidence is not to be confused with arrogance, however. The team endures many hours of study, test-taking, and

speech and interview preparation. Each individual also devotes an hour after school to studying at least once a week.

Senior Amal Abukar, who is competing for a third year, believes that the team's weakest category is math, yet Abukar says, "[We] understand

appeal to her. However, a lack of interest in the yearly theme has yet to hinder the securing team goals.

Junior Joshua Habursky, who is competing for a second year, says that relationships between teams are "filled with hostile rivalries, however each team respects one another; chivalry is ever present." Abukar refers to these "chivalrous hostilities" as boos from the crowd.



PHOTO COURTESY OF DANNY HAAS

The ASL team celebrates their victory at the Penn State Behrend Competition on December 6th.

that we have an agenda - to win."

The subject that ASL studies also changes every year, but the team does not let a particularly dull or difficult theme disrupt its winning streak.

This year they must study history of Latin America. Abukar says that the subject does not really

maintain positive inter-team relationships. The team has awarded some fellow members nicknames reminiscent of comic book heroes. For example,

Senior Joshua Ohmer has become "Josh the Man Machine," and Sophomore Benjamin Engel has become "Bengel." Something else that stays the



PHOTO COURTESY OF DANNY HAAS

same from year to year is the goal, the driving force behind all this studying and test-taking. From year to year it has not changed. It is, at least for Abukar and Junior Reeve Hunsaker,

the desire for a shiny gold medal, round and cold, around the neck.

## Holiday Concerts Set New Standards

BY JAMIE BADAMS

On Dec. 9 Collegiate Academy's choral groups charmed audiences with their "best winter concert [in] years" according to Carly Dodick, a sophomore at Collegiate Academy.

Four groups including ninth

Grade Girls Chorus, Women's Chorus, Collegiate Voices, and Chamber Singers

"It was so powerful, right when we started I got a chill," said Dodick, who participated in the event.

Dec. 11 heralded a much anticipated Vocal Jazz and Instrumental concert. As always they thrilled the audience with their spin on

popular holiday songs as well as some more obscure ones.

Collegiate words cannot give them justice," said Collegiate Dean Dr. Gornall.

In addition to the two school performances, Collegiate Academy Chamber Singers performed with the Erie Philharmonic on Dec. 13.

"The performances went exceptionally well, the highlight being our performance with the



PHOTO COURTESY OF DANNY HAAS

Collegiate Academy's Women's Chorus performs at the holiday concert.

performed songs such as "White Christmas" and "Ding-a-Ding-a-Ding" as well as other holiday favorites. The show ended with the "Hallelujah Chorus," and some of the Collegiate faculty and alumni joined the performers as the combined chorus.

## Rudi Awards Showcase Diverse Talent

BY SARAH DAVIS

December 23, 2008, Collegiate Academy hosted a favorite tradition, the Rudi Awards. Senior Brittany Barko won for the fourth consecutive year. Accompanying herself on piano, she sang "O Holy Night."

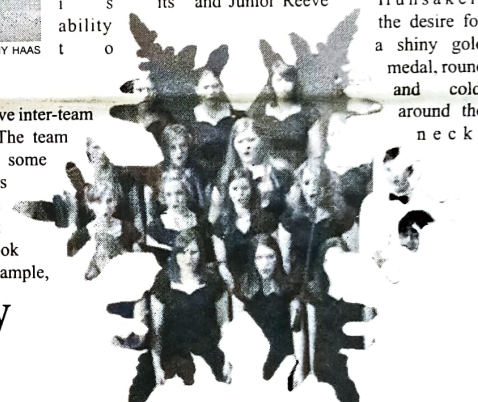
"I just perform to have fun and praise God. It was nice to share the stage with many of my friends this year," says Barko.

Junior Katie Ahrens played her rendition of "Christmas Eve" by the Trans-Siberian Orchestra, capturing second place.

Senior Heather Sitek snagged third place by singing "The Christmas Song".

The Rudis hosted some of the most diverse talents, including instrumental groups, dancers, and vocal performances.

See page 2 for Rudis pictures.



# In a Red Economy, "Blue" Remains the Dominant Color

BY SCOTT TARASOVITCH

When Obama stamped America with "change" until the country was deaf in the ears, he really did mean it. Indeed, president-elect Obama plans to use his executive powers to make an immediate impact when he takes office.

John Podesta, Obama's transition chief, said that Obama is reviewing President Bush's executive orders on those issues and others as he works to undo policies enacted during eight years of Republican rule. He said the president can use such orders to move quickly on his own. "There's a lot that the president can do using his executive authority without waiting for congressional action, and I think we'll see the president do that," Podesta said.

In spite of the 10.5 trillion national debt, Obama has argued for a public spending increase as the best way to get the dead-in-the-water economy moving again. "This painful crisis," he said, "is an opportunity to improve the lives of ordinary people by rebuilding roads and modernizing schools for our children, and by investing in clean energy projects."

Also, Obama plans to lift full abortion restrictions on U.S. overseas aid, spend more money in stem cell research and close 360,000 acres of

public land in Utah that was used in the Bush administration for oil and

is changing. "Obama's advantage of course is he'll have the House and the

Senate working with him, and that makes it easier," said Carl Tobias, a law professor at the University of Richmond. "But even then, having an immediate impact is very difficult to do because the machinery of government doesn't move that quickly."

Two top House Republicans said there is a willingness to try to work with Obama to reach decisions. However, both claim that Republicans will most likely check the power held by Obama and Democratic leaders in Congress. "It's going to be a cheerful opposition," said Rep. Mike Pence, R-Ind. "We're going to carry those timeless principles of limited government, a strong defense, traditional values, to the American people."

Obama, it appears, has backed up his talk of doing away with President Bush's policies, whether Republicans like it or not. For the next four years, America will see if Obama's measures will wake the United States up from its economic slumber, and "change" the country back into an unquestioned superpower.



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE BOSTON HERALD

Obama plans to undo President Bush's policies in the near future.

gas drilling. "They want to have oil and gas drilling in some of the most sensitive, fragile lands in Utah," Podesta said. "I think that's a mistake."

Obama could use his executive powers to at least signal that Washington

## Rudi Awards 2008



## Behrend ASL Competition Medals 2008

### SPEECH

Varsity – Gold, Vid Yogeswaran  
Scholastic – Gold, Amal Abukar  
Honors – Silver, Ben Engel; Silver, Rachel Vandevent

### INTERVIEW

Varsity – Silver, Stan Tuznik; Silver, Vid Yogeswaran  
Honors – Bronze, Sujay Jayakar

### MATH

Varsity – Bronze, Stan Tuznik; Gold, Reeve Hunsaker  
Scholastic – Gold, Cullen Skinner  
Honors – Gold, Sujay Jayakar

### ESSAY

Honors – Silver, Sujay Jayakar

### SUPER QUIZ

Varsity – Gold, Reeve Hunsaker;  
Bronze, Vid Yogeswaran;  
Scholastic – Gold, Cullen Skinner  
Honors – Gold, Rachel Vandevent

### SUPER QUIZ RELAY

Bronze – Moniteau and Commodore Perry  
Silver – McDowell  
Gold – Collegiate Academy

### TOP INDIVIDUAL OVERALL SCORERS

Varsity – Gold – Reeve Hunsaker;  
Silver, Vid Yogeswaran  
Scholastic – Silver, Cullen Skinner  
Honors – Gold, Sujay Jayakar; Silver, Rachel Vandevent

### TEAM PLACES

5th – Commodore Perry  
4th – Fairview  
3rd – McDowell  
2nd – Moniteau

1st - Collegiate Academy

# It is Time to Start Appreciating Our Diversity

BY ABIGAIL TAYLOR

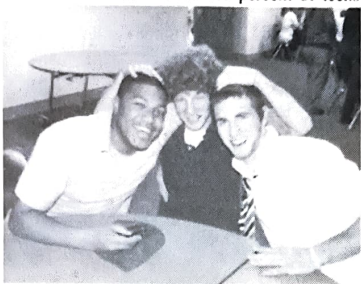
It is the 21st century, and according to a Washington Post Poll done on June 12, 2008, 69 percent of people believe that being racially prejudice is wrong. However, stereotypes continue to exist even in our own hallways at Collegiate.

The media portrays our school as having the best kids in the city of Erie; however, there are students here who feel alone and verbally abused daily just because they are different.

"Depression is the most common mental health disorder in the United States

among teens and adults, and can have a serious impact on the lives of the many

teens who suffer from depression," according to the Teen Depression website. "About 20 percent of teens



will experience teen depression before they reach adulthood."

Here at collegiate students sit alone at lunch everyday and the only time they are even acknowledged is if they are going to be the center of a joke for others to laugh at. Anyone would be slighted by a rude remark made about their character regardless if it is concerning race, religion, or intelligence.

Unfortunately, some students do not know how to react to these remarks because of disabilities or even social awkwardness. There are many reasons why students in high school are criticized by their peers. After all, each one of us plays into "Survival of the Fittest," and high school seems to be a race as to who can come out on top of every trend and style the world has to offer.

Weird, geek, dork, and freak are all adjectives I hear daily at Collegiate that people are called, whether they spend their free time studying, playing video games, or shopping for the perfect outfit.

There are plenty of minorities in our school, and I know that I do not recognize this a lot of the time because I am not the one getting picked on.

When I came to Collegiate I did not feel like I was part of the "family" but with the help of a few people I found my niche. I know that it can be hard to do that, and I

am sure it would be more difficult to do so if you had no one to turn to.

I know that I have become more compassionate toward the people who look lost, confused, or hurt. I try to sit with the people who have no one else and say hello to everyone in the hallways.



We all know that it is wrong to hate people because of race. The truth is, though, we should be accepting of everyone no matter what their differences are. I know it is cliché but when I hear and see people do these terrible things day in and day out, I realize that the people who need to hear it, did not get the message.

In math class the person sitting next to you may be a refugee, gay, wicken, a member of the chess club, or a player on the basketball team. There are so many things that make us different. We should appreciate that.

## Snow Complicates Parking Habits at Academy

BY RYAN REED-CAMPBELL

Parking in the winter at Collegiate Academy adds to the already troublesome issue of normal parking among the student population as well as among the residents surrounding the school.

In an attempt to save the

be parked on one side of the street only. On odd days, cars will be along one side of the street, and on even days, the other side to allow plows to come through and push the snow to the side where the cars are not parked.

However, for those who park on 28th and 29th Streets, this law is enforced very strictly. Violators will usually find a ticket waiting for them under their windshield wiper shortly after dismissal.

"I had just started driving when I got my first one, but after I got my third [parking ticket], I was just like, 'Are you serious?'" Senior Dan Majewski said, recalling his experience with the parking regulations on 29th Street.

State Street is the only true safe zone, where odd-even parking does not apply, due in part to its boulevard. However, parking on State Street is the most difficult because it is the most popular street to park on.

Because of this, some turn



PHOTO COURTESY OF DANNY HARRIS

Academy population from being buried by the city plows this winter, here are some tips on where to park, and where not to park:

Parking on the East side of French Street may result in being plowed in while school is in session. The snow plows will push all the street's snow to this side, regardless of whether a car is there or not.

"I literally spent fifteen minutes digging my car out [after the snowstorm in March last year]," Collegiate graduate

Andy Wienzcowski said. Andy was a regular parker on the East side of French Street.

The city recognizes the lack of a parking area for Academy, and is lenient about French Street parking. Instead of enforcing an odd-even parking law, the backache of digging yourself out of the snow bank will become the penalty.

"Odd-even" parking means that each day, between the hours of 8 AM and 4 PM on weekdays, all cars must



PHOTO COURTESY OF DANNY HARRIS

to the stadium parking lot. It is well plowed; however, parking is only available for teachers there.

-The final tip is to pay attention to the parking regulation signs and to the other cars parked nearby. If everyone seems to be favoring one side of the street, a wise decision would be to park on the side they are parked on.

**NHS Meeting  
Wednesday,  
January 28th  
at 7:30 A.M. or 3:00  
P.M. in the library  
Next Clean-Up on  
Wednesday,  
February 11th  
Seniors, Don't forget  
to submit your service  
hours by April 17,  
2009**

# Tearing Down the Wall of Separation

BY ZACHARY BURSH

Today's debates over explosive cultural issues, mainly abortion and gay marriage, can be boiled down to a simple question: What role, if any, should religion play in the government's decisions on such issues?

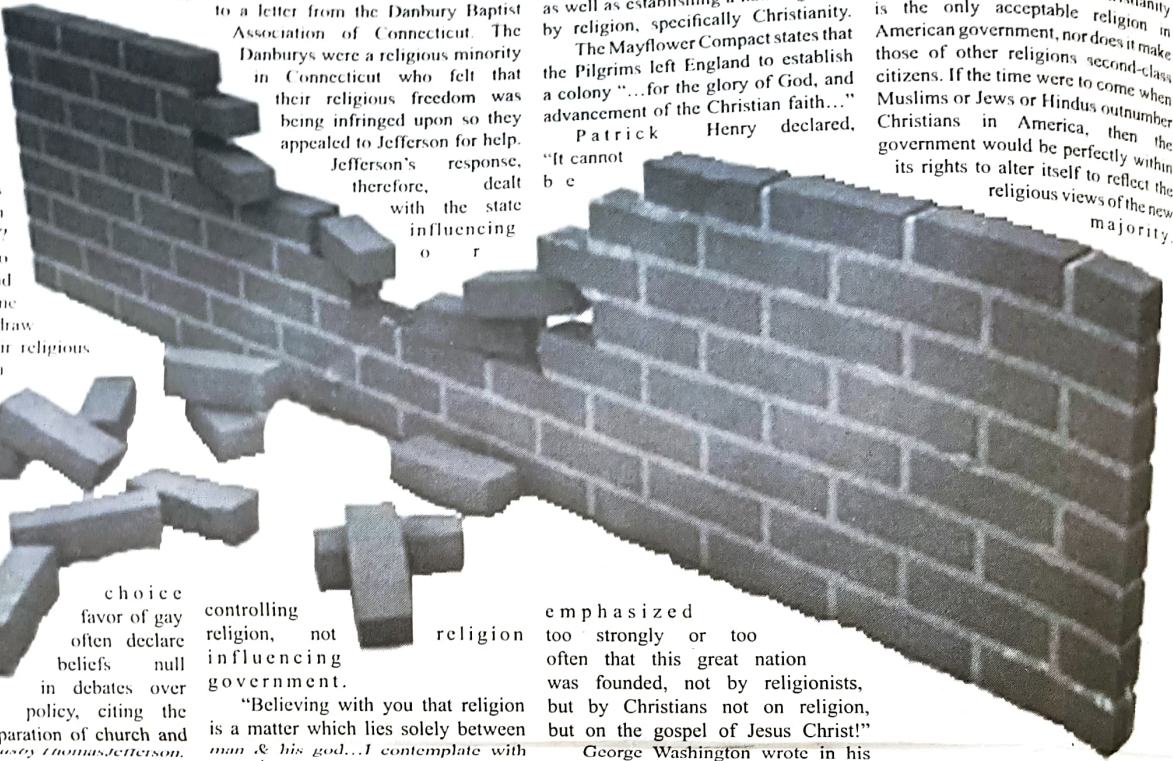
Those who are pro-life and opposed to same sex marriage draw heavily on their religious beliefs when arguing the merits of their positions. People who are pro-choice or in favor of gay marriage often declare religious beliefs null and void in debates over public policy, citing the principal of separation of church and state.

In its current form, separation of church and state means that religion should not have control or a hand in government. Unfortunately for those who espouse this view, Thomas Jefferson was not talking about anything of the sort when he first used the words "separation of church and state."

When Jefferson wrote of a "wall of separation," he was responding to a letter from the Danbury Baptist Association of Connecticut. The Danburys were a religious minority in Connecticut who felt that their religious freedom was being infringed upon so they appealed to Jefferson for help. Jefferson's response, therefore, dealt with the state influencing

The Founding Fathers were committed to making sure that no one was persecuted in any way for his religion as well as establishing a nation guided by religion, specifically Christianity. The Mayflower Compact states that the Pilgrims left England to establish a colony "...for the glory of God, and advancement of the Christian faith..." Patrick Henry declared, "It cannot be

to be told how to practice their faith, but they all viewed faith as essential to good governance. This is not to say that Christianity is the only acceptable religion in American government, nor does it make those of other religions second-class citizens. If the time were to come when Muslims or Jews or Hindus outnumber Christians in America, then the government would be perfectly within its rights to alter itself to reflect the religious views of the new majority.



controlling religion, not influencing government. "Believing with you that religion is a matter which lies solely between man & his god...I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof, thus building a wall of separation between church and state."

emphasized too strongly or too often that this great nation was founded, not by religionists, but by Christians not on religion, but on the gospel of Jesus Christ!" George Washington wrote in his Farewell Address that "Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports." Clearly the Founders intended for the Christian religion to influence the government. They did not want

No matter what the religious preference of the majority of Americans is, let us stop deluding ourselves with the notion that religion has no place in government. If government is supposed to be by the people, for the people, it must include religion.

# Creating the Schism: Church Versus State

BY ALEXANDER DAVIS

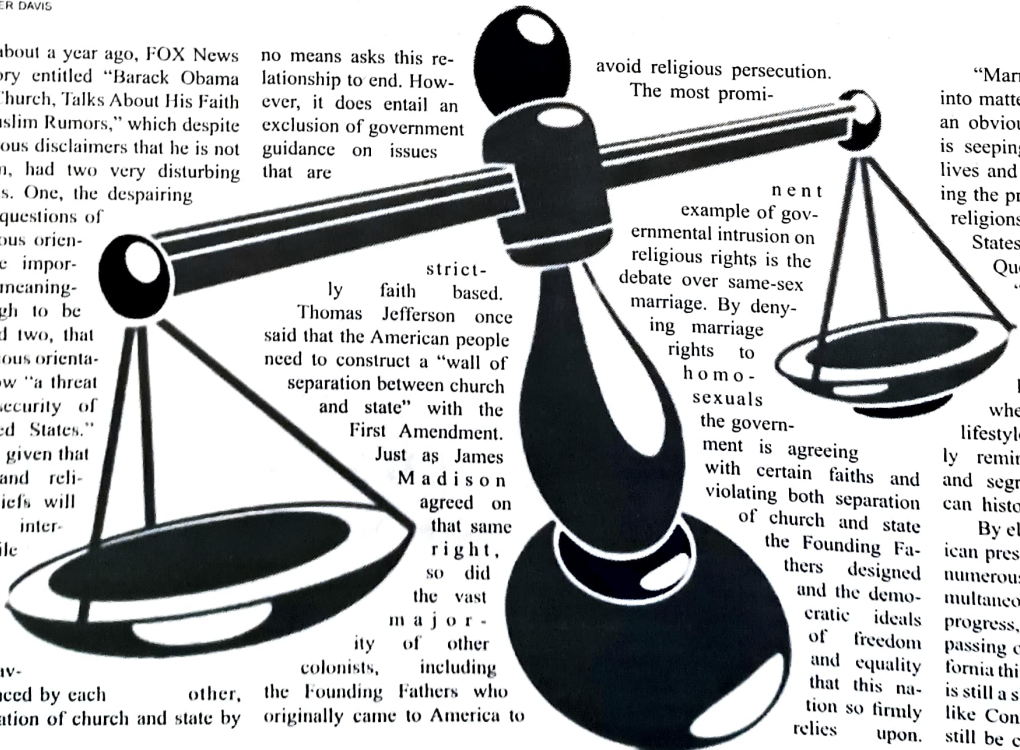
Just about a year ago, FOX News ran a story entitled "Barack Obama Goes to Church, Talks About His Faith Amid Muslim Rumors," which despite its numerous disclaimers that he is not a Muslim, had two very disturbing statements. One, the despairing fact that questions of his religious orientation are important and meaningful enough to be news, and two, that said religious orientation is now "a threat to the security of the United States."

It is a given that politics and religious beliefs will always intertwine while discussing beliefs, for the two are heavily influenced by each other, and separation of church and state by

no means asks this relationship to end. However, it does entail an exclusion of government guidance on issues that are strictly faith based. Thomas Jefferson once said that the American people need to construct a "wall of separation between church and state" with the First Amendment. Just as James Madison agreed on that same right, so did the vast majority of other colonists, including the Founding Fathers who originally came to America to

avoid religious persecution. The most prominent example of governmental intrusion on religious rights is the debate over same-sex marriage. By denying rights to homosexuals the government is agreeing with certain faiths and violating both separation of church and state the Founding Fathers designed and the democratic ideals of freedom and equality that this nation so firmly relies upon.

"Marriage goes far beyond religion into matter of the state... That alone is an obvious indication of how church is seeping into state, prohibiting the lives and rights of people and imposing the practices and beliefs of certain religions on all citizens of the United States," stated previous Rhetorical Question writer Daniel Wheeler. "it's a giant contradiction as to what America stands for." The denial of any person's rights to be who he or she is, especially when it comes to marriage and lifestyle, seem more than faintly reminiscent of slave treatment and segregation, an age in American history no one wishes to relive. By electing our first African American president, America has overcome numerous faults in equality, while simultaneously undoing just as much progress, especially reinforced by the passing of a gay marriage ban in California this past election. However, there is still a slight glimmer of hope in states like Connecticut, where America can still be considered a land of equality.



# Healthcare on the Brink of Socialism

BY ALI KAMRAN BEHATI

Social security, welfare, and health care reform top the list for the Obama administration. Unfortunately that will mean flirting with socialist ideologies to solve these national problems.

undeniable, inevitable failures of a nationalized, universal healthcare plan. Since its initiation it has constituted the equivalent of more than half of Canada's entire national debt. All this

accept less service or more taxes."

California governor Arnold Schwarzenegger proposed a plan for universal statewide healthcare plan in California earlier this year. The plan failed for one of two reasons: it either failed, as liberals argued, to provide enough aid to those who could not afford coverage, or as conservatives asserted, requires too much aid.

"Lowering cost and increasing access, in other words, are separate and irreconcilable issues," the author writes in "Terminated" from the Wall Street Journal.

The only way for the government to implement a universal healthcare system would be to do it on a national scale. If this occurred the American taxpayer could expect to see exponential increases in his or her taxes to cover the program.

While it is an idyllic system of reciprocal obligations between the people and the government with the government acting as a primary caregiver to its people, the government has no right to infringe on personal choices such as healthcare.

The continual manifestation of government power goes against the principles of democracy that ensure individual liberties. If Congress and the White House aim at American's pocketbooks, they are depriving Americans of the opportunities to make choices such as which doctors to see, what benefits they are willing to pay for or want, and if they are willing to be tied down to a monopolized industry's plan.

Until Congress pushes legislation through that dictates to the government such a monumental violation of personal liberty, it is up to the American people to realize that it is not the government's responsibility to mandate that healthcare coverage should be provided to everyone, especially if that means following in Canada's footsteps.

If the longer waits, fewer services, aging technology, limited doctor availability, closing clinics and increased taxes were not deterrent enough, the World Health Organization ranks Canada's system 30th, with the U.S. close behind, ranked 37th.

At this critical social, economic, and political juncture in American history, in a time of changing government philosophies, the American people cannot allow the federal government to grow unrestrained into a colossus of bureaucracy that would trample the American working middle class, stripping them of their paycheck for the expansion of federal power over the individual.



A social welfare state is characterized by the distribution of aid from the federal government to the people. In 2009, the United States government plans to give out nearly \$470 billion in welfare and spend another trillion dollars on healthcare.

Canada is a prime example of the

for a service that is barely adequate. According to Brian Lee Crowley of the Heritage Foundation, in his lecture on "The Top Ten Things People Believe About Canadian Health Care, But Shouldn't", "Medicare as we know it can only be 'sustainable' if Canadians are willing to

## What Ever Happened to the Iditarod?

BY JEFFREY D. CAMPBELL

Each February at Collegiate Academy the winter wind whipped through the air, watering the eyes of many teams of athletes as they trudged through the snow. The sidelines were packed with students yelling and cheering, and the teams dragged their sled by ropes around Veterans stadium, adrenaline rushed and hearts pounded as the finish line came closer. "Just a little bit further," they told themselves, "almost there."

This was the scene every year. Well, every year until last year, that is, when Academy brought the memorable tradition of the Iditarod to a sliding stop, and left students wondering why someone put the brakes on the sledding.

"There won't be one [this year]," Student Senate Advisor Mr. Taylor says. "After... [the 2006 Iditarod] it was decided to just keep it part of the Winter Olympics [instead of every year]. I think that it is a good place for it."

The Iditarod should be brought back as a yearly tradition. Seemingly endless schoolwork that marks the halfway point of the school year fills the dull winter months. The lack of a school spirit activity between December's Rudi Awards and May's Prom and Senior Days, needs to be filled with a school-wide day of fun.

Last year's seniors never tasted

the February air due to the race's discontinuation. After three years of perseverance, they just needed to wait a little bit longer. They kept telling themselves in order to get to their senior Iditarod they needed to push just a little bit further. But that day never came.

Mr. Taylor went on to comment on the problem of physical exertion during the race. Several people lost their break-

fast in the snow in 2007, and were sick and exhausted from sprinting the laps.

"It's a good time, although [a student] almost puked on my shoes last [time]," Senior Pat Holmes says.

According to Dr. Gornall, a big fan of the Iditarod tradition, there may be some discussion in the near future of developing a shorter lap that would require less physical exertion on the students. With this, students would be able to complete the race with their lunch still in tact.

She says that the possibility of an Iditarod taking place this year is not entirely ruled out, but significant changes would have to be made.

Another major concern is the students who do not participate in the event being forced to watch the race in the frigid weather. As a solution, the race could be broadcast with a live feed to the big screen in the auditorium, which was done a few years ago.

"We should do it [this year], for real," Senior Ryan Zimmerman says. "It is school spirit..."

There is no confirmation on whether or not Iditarod 2009 will take place for sure or not, but if we voice our opinions there is hope. We need to push just a little bit further, and this tradition may return to Academy for good.



Collegiate students demonstrate teamwork and overcome exhaustion in the near marathon-like time-honored tradition of the Iditarod.

# Baptists Worship to a Fascinating Rhythm

BY JONATHAN TALAHICO

Worship is an aspect of religion that is completely unique to the denomination and to the individual. My experience in the Catholic Church (by which I was raised) has always been formal and focused on the community of churchgoers rather than separate persons.

Churchgoers synchronize responses and motions and take no creative liberties. In fact, I have always strove to become as much a part of the pew as possible. This is all I have ever known of religion, so in order to glimpse a different view, the newspaper staff decided that a "day in the life" of a different denomination would assist in a more informed opinion.

Upon entering the Community Missionary Baptist Church one Sunday morning the parishioners immediately accepted me as their brother. Despite peevish attempts to avoid eye contact with strangers, every person there greeted me with a smile. They instilled in me a sense of comfort while I was among them.

The parish members invited me to enjoy coffee and doughnuts before the service, a welcoming activity during which I experienced an excess of handshakes and back pats. In the corner sat a retro vending machine most likely visiting from the 1950s.

The parishioners wore colorful formal wear and bejeweled ties or chorus robes.

Local newspapers print that the reverend will hold an 11:00 Sunday service there, but numbers and newsprint do not rule the church. One of the participants will begin a hymn in the upstairs sanctuary and gradually the friendly coffee sharers will congregate, each bringing with him or her an added voice and hands to clap.

Associate Reverend Gary Brown did not exaggerate in his assertion that "it's gonna be on." The men and women sing throughout the ceremony. Even when someone is speaking, there is usually music supplementing it (and often competing with it).

The men and woman do not strive to sing or pray in unison. One can hear every voice, each with its own unique harmony, phrasing, emphasis and inflection. They do not allow notes and lyrics and Biblical responses to confine them. Instead, personal meaning seems to steer their worship.

No one in the congregation is shy to respond aloud during the service. There are frequent exclamations of praise and "Amen!" Individual participation is clearly valued in this setting. Although they hold weekly programs, church members seem to have no trouble

following the direction of the service, and they already know the songs without having to follow the hymnal.

During the sermon, most of the men and women present form a swaying, singing chain below the altar. The reverend Herles Murphy's words are passionate, the music underneath them unceasing, and the devotion of the people obvious and true.

When I attended a service there with my father, the reverend introduced us and gave us an opportunity to speak. The parish is entirely African American, so although the most visible difference between them and ourselves is race, they are an entirely welcoming people and do not entertain any preconceptions about their guests.

One certainty about Christ's followers at the Community Missionary Baptist Church is that they are enthusiastic about their religion and entirely accepting without a second thought.

This is not to say that Catholicism is any less than this. I do not have the credibility to suggest what religion should or should not do, however I would not allow the rules and status quo of a particular denomination or religion to close my mind to another religious perspective.

BY AMAL ABUKARI

People have always identified me as the African or Somalian girl; it set me apart from all other students. However, at an early age, I understood that my fellow classmates held many misconceptions about Africa and my culture.

Many assumed that Africa was one place - where everyone spoke the same language, roamed around barely clothed, lived in huts and lived amongst the wild animals. I had been so accustomed to being asked if I ever rode a lion or lived in the jungle that it all became funny.

But that all changed after September 11, 2001. I was no longer identified by my nationality - suddenly it became my religion.

Just in the fifth grade at the time, I did not completely comprehend the situation at hand. While we waited in line at the supermarket, I did not understand why everyone stared at my mother because she wore a hijab.

It was not a big deal before, but suddenly it garnered so much attention. I did not fully fathom the snickers around us. I could hear the "why do not they just leave us alone" or "haven't they done enough".

The one that hurt the most was "why don't they go back to their country." Was America not my country anymore? I understand that it is a nation with a

# It Takes Faith, Understanding, and Humility to be an Atheist

BY KATIE DIPRINZIO

The American society is one that is highly conservative and intolerant in terms of religion, which is why atheists are often condemned and almost always misunderstood.

Upon revealing the fact that I am an atheist to very religiously conservative individuals, I have gotten mixed reactions, from looks of pity to being told that I am "damned to hell."

Unfortunately for them, those words have no effect on me because, well, I do not believe that there is a hell. However, those reactions do compel me to offer some clarification on the true nature of atheism and maybe a little lesson on tolerance.

Atheism is not a religion. There is no worship; does not demand absolute, unquestioning

obedience or make threats about eternal damnation. But if individuals took the time to dig deeper, think deeper and learn more about atheism, they would realize that it does share some important characteristics with their religions.

The fundamental characteristic that all religions have in common is the search for ultimate truth-the explanation for human existence. However,

for some, like me, the generally accepted beliefs are not satisfying.

At some point during my ten years of Catholic education, I questioned the teachers' instruction. It was not enough for me to simply accept that the Earth was created in seven days, and that one woman was responsible for the sorry state of humanity.

And because of that skepticism, I began searching for different explanations, new beliefs that would facilitate my need for logic. To my surprise, there were other people who did not believe in God (heaven forbid).

Instead of viewing atheists as sinful individuals, people should see us for who we really

are: some of the ultimate learners and deep-thinkers of the world. We do not simply accept what is spoon-fed to us during childhood, but steer from the norm and search for our own truth.

are: some of the ultimate learners and deep-thinkers of the world. We do not simply accept what is spoon-fed to us during childhood, but steer from the norm and search for our own truth. Atheism is often identified as a "belief in nothing." This could not be more wrong. Like religion, atheism involves belief and faith.

For example, I, and other atheists, believe in science. I firmly believe that as humans, we are merely an element of the earth's endless, one-way cycle of matter and energy. We live, we die and after that, there is nothing left but to decompose.

I know, this is not quite as glamorous an outcome as ascension into heaven, or as favorable as living forever, but it is reality, and a belief that takes an incredible amount of humility and inner strength to accept.

Atheists also have faith. But instead of instilling faith in some ultimate, supreme being, we instill faith in scientific theory and data.

You see, atheism is not just a convenient way to sin without consequence; it is possible to have morality

and a conscious without religion as a guide. Atheism is truly a search for explanation and truth using logic.

So the next time someone tells you that he or she is an atheist, take a page out of the good book and love your atheist neighbor as you love yourself, and practice that tolerance those teachers taught you in Catholic school, instead of passing judgment.

# Holiday Spirit

BY LEAH TAYLOR

Department stores have replaced pumpkins with poinsettias, ghosts with Santas, and orange and black carpets with red and green bows. The phrases, "The perfect Christmas present for that special someone," and "Find the lowest prices on toys for a memorable Christmas day," are plastered along the walls of local malls.

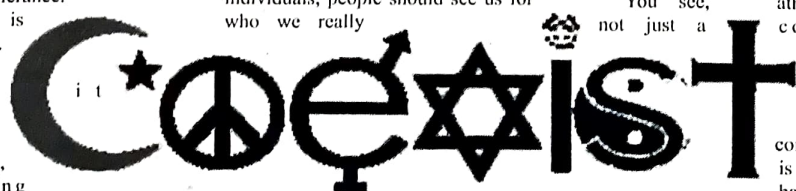
These sights are commonplace for shoppers to witness during the Christmas season, yet not all shoppers in America celebrate that holiday that has become the norm in advertisements. America contains many diverse individuals who are allowed to practice their own faiths, but the media during holiday seasons could lead people to believe the United States is made up solely of Christian citizens.

Junior Brittani Wood says, "I'm Jewish and I understand that we are a minority in America. However, I do sometimes wish that commercials and other advertising campaigns had more focus on Jewish and other religious holidays."

Macy's hangs banners reading "Happy Holidays" at every entrance and requires employees to repeat the phrase



JcPenney admits the holiday season is called "The Christmas" and that it is a nation with a



# No, I Don't Know Osama Bin Laden

Christian majority, but the whole reason the family immigrated here was because it was a nation of acceptance and diversity.

that I could soon laugh about as well. A few years later, at a middle school in Erie, just as the bell rang to report to homeroom, someone I thought I knew very well came to up to me and told me to kindly ask Osama Bin Laden to stop bombing us. I told him I did not know Osama Bin Laden because I thought he was joking but he replied, "Well, he's part of your people."

These misconceptions did not make me laugh; instead they stung. I could tolerate strangers believing this but not someone I knew, someone I had talked to, laughed with, and wrongfully thought knew me.

The very same day a couple boys thought it would be funny to mention bombings and Bin Laden whenever I would pass them in the hallway. I thought it was rather

ridiculous that I suddenly was linked to all these things just because of my faith.

Over the years, whenever I would go to the local Masjid with my family, I would meet girls who had come over all parts of the globe. They would tell me unfortunate stories about how they would conceal their faith so as to be left alone at school.

One story, in particular, was difficult to fathom. A ten year old's hijab was ripped off her head by a couple of immature students who thought it was a funny and clever stunt to pull.

As their confidante, I wanted to desperately help them. It hurt me to believe that such young and impressionable girls were afraid to be themselves because of the opinions of others.

Some resorted to homeschooling because they were unable to put up with so much bullying. When I would tell them of my experiences, they would gather around me wondering how I reacted. I told them, though sometimes I let the comments go, most of the time I found myself speaking up and standing firm in what I believed in.

I was not going to change who I was to please others. I had hoped they would do the same because these bright, beautiful and fascinating young girls did not and should not

have to hide or run from anything.

I could handle the rude remarks because I had come to be confident and unwavering in my beliefs. But what about the young girls? Who would stand up for them?

Did the snickers bother me? They were not delightful. Did the stares hurt? Yes, but I could deal with it. What I could not deal with was this awful misconception about my faith. The religion I had grown up loving and admiring, people now saw as a violent and angry one.

There is a large misconception about Islam. My religion, a religion of peace, is associated with terrorism. This small minority of "Muslims" are ruining and tarnishing the image of a true Muslim. But it is not entirely their fault that people view Islam this way. It is also the fault of the thousands of people out there who decide to believe that is Islam. They are the ones stomping on and misunderstanding Islam.

I will never be ashamed of being a Muslim. But I am ashamed to acknowledge that there are still people out there who believe being a Muslim makes you un-American, unpatriotic or a terrorist. The nation exists on the value of religious freedom. In reality, what makes one un-American is not understanding the core values that make this nation beautiful.



Muslims in America are going through a rough patch.

Gradually we became "those" people. I could feel the stares and see the fingers. But I was hoping it was just another misconception, one

## Advertising Appeals to Specific Religions

to customers. The store claims this phrase is inclusive of all holidays that take place during the last few months of the year.

However, when they place the same banner with a waving Rudolph in front

of a twinkling Christmas tree with a speech bubble reading "Happy Holidays," they are obviously appealing to the Christian holiday.

Macy's is not the only store that has a tendency to appeal to the standard Christmas holiday. JCPenney admits that their holiday catalogue is always called the "Christmas Catalogue." Another major department store, Dillard's, designed a new holiday phrase to display in their advertisements, "Discover Christmas, Discover Dillard's."

While holiday advertising may only appeal to the holidays practiced by the majority, some individuals do not mind the constant Christmas atmosphere. Brittany Friedman, a senior at Collegiate Academy and a member of the Jewish faith, says, "I don't mind the Christmas music, decorations, and

themes that fill stores and commercials during the holiday season because living in a large city like Erie means having a large population of people who celebrate Christmas; it's expected."

Even though biased holiday advertising may seem to exclude people who practice other religions, companies do have the right to decide the most profitable marketing strategy. That means if stores want to display Santa Claus placing a pair of Macy's diamond studded earrings under a Christmas tree, it is their choice and not a decision to be made by the government.

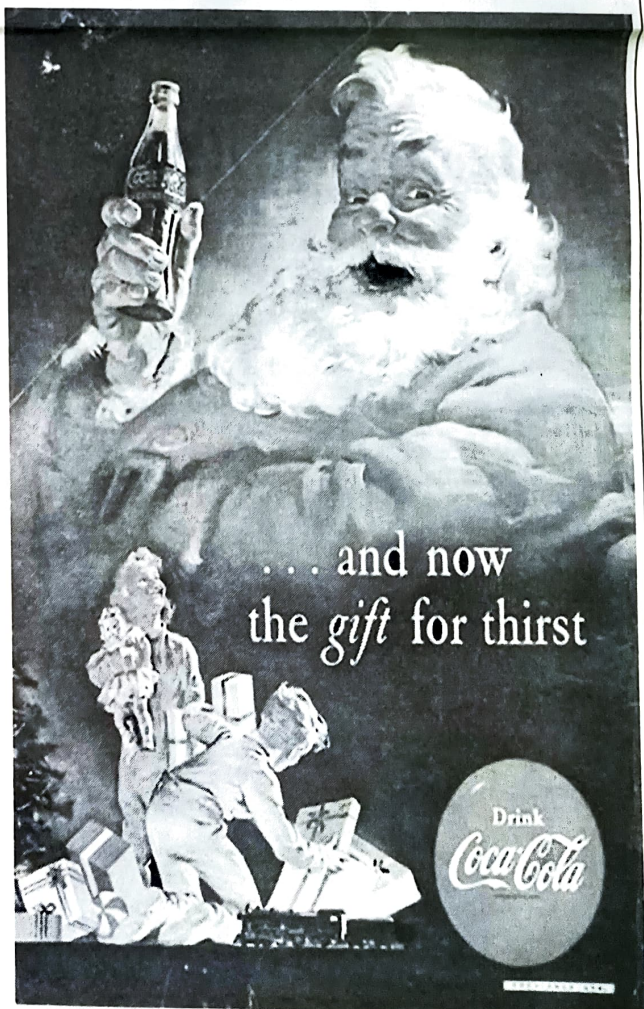
Wood explains, "People who are part of the marketing aspect of companies could be Christian, which means they have a right to voice their religious views in the form of advertising just like any other religion would have the right; just as long as they don't push their beliefs on other people."

Holiday marketing is a big part of America's capitalistic society. While a variety of religions and races comprise modern America, it is undeniable that Christianity has the largest following in the country, meaning it has become the standard holiday in television shows, music, and advertising.

Advertisers could take steps to shed more light on other religions, but American shoppers will continue to see a commercial of a jolly man in a red suit placing a Toys R' Us gift card below a sparkling, red and green Christmas tree.



holiday catalogue is Christmas Catalogue."



Coca Cola has used Santa Claus in their holiday advertisements ever year.

## Merry Christmas, Iconoclasts.

BY ALEXANDRA PFADT

The inevitable clash between political correctness and religious freedom manifests during the holiday season. Extremists from both parties lash out over contemporary celebrations of Christmas.

According to the Washington Post, 85 percent of Americans are Christian, with still more who celebrate the secular, borderline pagan, commercialized holiday of American Christmas. Even with such a large following, 59 percent of people polled in a FOX News Opinion Dynamics Poll feel that Christianity is under attack.

Fanatical crusaders for either political correctness or preservation of traditional beliefs draw lines between marginalizing religions, defending religious freedom and promoting secular tradition. These radicals cause almost half of Americans to feel that Christmas itself is being assaulted, according to the same FOX News poll.

While the First Amendment guarantees the right of free and open religious practice to all citizens, the Constitution does not ensure that they will "never be offended by any religious symbolism," as Albert Mohler notes in his article "Anti-Christmas Bias and the Political Correctness Police."

*Christmas is sheltered under the First Amendment. Yet public displays such as nativity scenes and mistletoe provoke irate liberals to denounce*

these icons as openly neglecting diverging beliefs, and ultraconservatives to upbraid such displays as evil.

The Church condemned images such as Santa Claus and Christmas trees as blasphemous until the fourth century, but ironically, these pagan symbols are now the heart of the modern idea of Christmas.

In today's society, this holiday is not as much of a celebration of Jesus Christ's birth as it is of presents, charity and family gatherings. Secular displays are in no way religious except in their changing cultural connotations.

But still, as John O'Sullivan in National Review says, "The Spirit of Scrooge is abroad in the land seeking a hostile takeover of the Christmas message." Christmas needs to arm itself with whatever it can, be it small action hero figurines or Evangelists wielding their First Amendment rights.

In the Land of the Free, freedom is restricted to only hypersensitive

minority groups. Such high-strung adherents threaten to paint the masses as demeaning and oppressive if they do not surrender their own religious rights to accommodate all.

It is discriminative to claim that Christianity marginalizes while condoning a stronger public presence of minority religions. Controversy surrounds an issueless holiday, caused by the soreness of iconoclasts.

Businesses maintain the right to advertise using Christmas songs, with iconic figures that now connote Christmas, just as the individual retains the right to give out Christmas cards.

It is ludicrous for the few who are nothing more than agitators to trample upon holiday festivities.

Merry Christmas, everyone!



Political correctness has taken over the Christmas spirit and turned it into a commercialized, consumer-based fraud.

## Christmas is Not a Religious Holiday to Most Americans

BY KATY WITKOWSKI

Children around America wait patiently for that time of the year when everyone is out of school for a week, and they can ask for whatever they want.

Christmas is a holiday that has changed American culture. In the past, Christians viewed Christmas as a celebration of Jesus' birth. As the years progressed, however, it became less of a religious holiday, and more and more of a cultural one.

In the 21st century, children hardly remember the "Christ" part of the holiday and the gifts the Three Kings gave to little baby Jesus in Bethlehem.

According to a Newsweek poll conducted in 2004, 17 percent of all Christians believe that the Nativity scene, including the Virgin Birth, the Wise Men, the angel Gabriel, etc., was written to establish faith in Jesus.

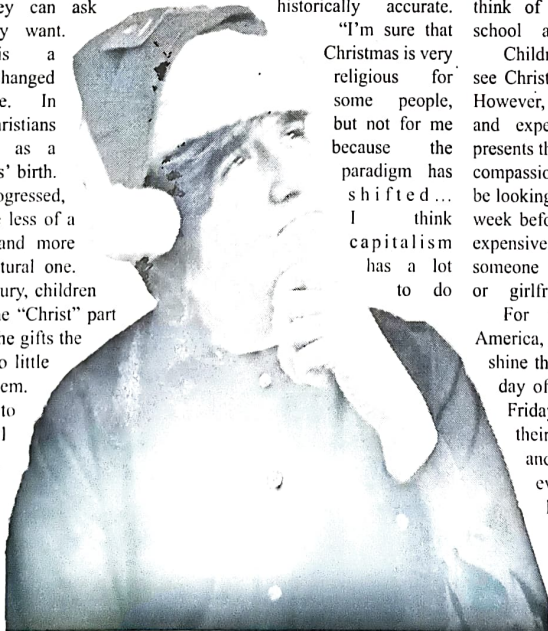


PHOTO COURTESY OF DAN HAAS

Nate Repasz is one of the many Americans who believe that Christmas in the United States is a cultural celebration.

Christ. In the same poll, 59 percent of all non-Christians polled believed that the nativity scene was not historically accurate.

"I'm sure that Christmas is very religious for some people, but not for me because the paradigm has shifted... I think capitalism has a lot to do

with it," says junior Nate Repasz.

When someone says "Christmas," children across the country now think of food, snowball fights, no school and of course, presents.

Children, teenagers and adults see Christmas as the time for giving. However, things like money, clothing and expensive toys are the only presents they think about. The love and compassion in giving are considered to be looking through a store window the week before Christmas and seeing an expensive shirt (on sale) that reminds someone of his or her boyfriend or girlfriend, husband or wife.

For shopping outlets around America, Christmas time is when they shine the brightest. The first official day of Christmas shopping, Black Friday, brings mothers out of their beds at four in the morning and out to the shops to get everything that their children's hearts desire. This tradition gives malls the opportunity to make a profit without straining parents' budgets.

"If there is no preestablished element of devotion, I'm only in it for the business because

[companies] only see Christmas as the perfect time to make a profit," says mall employee and senior Clay Grego.

Although the Christmas rush sends ripples through parents' budgets, nobody seems to complain much. It would be a lot cheaper to get the holiday back to basics and just give the love and compassion that strangers and homeless deserve, but America's quick, easy fixes and obsession with materialistic possessions have gotten Americans this far.

To some families, the tradition of going to mass has gone nowhere in the past half century. One 1954 article in The Christian Century said that "it is un-American to be un-religious!" And many have proven that during the holidays.

There are still a surprising amount of people going to Christmas masses. According to a 2005 Gallup Poll, 43 percent of all American adults are "unchurched" during the regular year. This study did not include holiday seasons such as Christmas.

When more people attend mass regularly throughout the year and see the light of love, maybe then America can see less expensive toys leaving the shelves and more cookies leaving the oven-cookies that have love in every bite.



# Students Immerse Themselves in the Holiday Spirit

*BY LEAH TAYLOR*  
Snowflakes fall heavily outside a frost covered window while oversized velvet mugs filled with hot, creamy cocoa sit atop a fireplace mantle. The flames of a simmering fire flicker below stockings hung carefully in a line. This scenario could be the pinnacle of a warm holiday moment, but giving a special gift to a little boy of girl who never receives presents on Christmas morning can fill a person with more warmth than any fire or cup of cocoa ever can.

There are many charity programs that run during the months of October through December, such as Secret Santa, an association that raises funds and makes contributions to toy drive organizations that benefit needy children during the Christmas holidays.

Along with this well-known donation program is the Northwest Pennsylvania Second Harvest Food Bank, a group that takes in food products, packages them and redistributes the food to the needy families in the area. While they run all year, they especially encourage donations around the holidays when people's spirits need lifting.

In Pennsylvania alone, programs such as Holiday Gift Wrapping for Charity, Toys for Tots and annual food drives offer students the chance to get involved, give back and ultimately make a difference

in the lives of those less fortunate. "Charity work makes me put in perspective how good I have it compared to other people," says Hannah Gleichsner, a junior at Collegiate Academy. While the organizations themselves are well-known, very few people know



*PHOTO COURTESY OF GANNY HALL*  
Volunteering spreads holiday cheer among those who are less fortunate.

the generous volunteers who make those events possible. They spend their free time passing out food to the homeless, gathering cans for food drives and putting together Christmas care packages filled with toys and clothes.

Gleichsner says, "Last year I participated in The Festival of the Trees, helped my church with Operation Christmas Child and worked with my church to put on a food drive to give holiday dinners to needy families. This year I plan to help my church again with Operation Christmas Child."

Operation Christmas Child is an organization that has students raise money and spend an entire Saturday buying toys, clothes and other necessities. They then spend the evening creating gift packages filled with presents that they send to needy children in Africa who rarely get to experience Christmas.

Junior Katie Jobczynski says, "Last year I helped fill bags with food for needy families to have Thanksgiving dinners, and this year I will be serving a Thanksgiving dinner to exchange students." It is truly inspiring to see teenagers, who are usually stereotyped as being self centered or shallow, giving back to the community.

Even though Academy students are not required to volunteer, they are well-known for their work in programs like NHS, the Care Team and many others; these students are more concerned with making a difference in the world, than jotting down service hours on a resume.

This involvement in charity and volunteer organizations does not waver a bit when the busy holiday season comes along. Students become involved in holiday charity programs for many different reasons: some to gain service hours, some to benefit loved ones and some just do it because they feel it is their responsibility.

"I've just always found myself willing to help others because I have

the ability to give my time, and it would be a waste not to do what I can," Jobczynski says. Attitudes like these help put smiles on the faces of families who do not have the means to celebrate the holidays.

Senior Megan Blackford says, "I volunteer because it's something that I can do to actually make a difference. I can impact someone's life with the simple act of volunteering. It is a great way to help others who are less fortunate or just need a little aid."

Whatever the reason students get involved, the most important factor is they are giving back and helping to bring holiday spirit, with the assistance of good food and thoughtful gifts, to the sick, the poor, the old and the hungry families of the country.

While some children anxiously mark up their Toys'R'US magazines with red circles around potential Christmas gifts, others wait patiently for a single plate of food in a homeless shelter.

Though this situation may bring pity to some, it brings inspiration to others to become part of the solution. This feeling is the driving power behind many students who decide that the holidays are about more than eating mounds of food and opening dozens of gifts; they are about bringing peace and happiness to all those around.

A truly warm sentiment if ever there was one.



## Think of Others This Holiday Season

*BY CASEY FOLGA*  
During the holidays people are inclined to be a little nicer, give a little more, and be more charitable. People can do this in numerous ways: volunteering at soup kitchens, donating money or perhaps giving to the Treasures for Children ministry.

Although not as popular as some of the charities people seek to help during the Christmas season, Treasures for Children is important. The Salvation Army heads up this helpful charity, and with all the work they do, it is necessary to bring attention to this program.

Clara Holden, the leader of local Treasures for Children effort in Erie explains, "The main goal of our ministry is to provide happiness in the form of a gift and love expressed through giving for people experiencing hard times during the holiday season."

Treasures for Children seeks to provide new toys and clothing for the kids of

needy families. Churches, businesses, schools and other organizations can place a Christmas tree in their facility and then purchase gifts to place underneath.

In the past this organization was known as the Angel Tree ministry. The Christmas trees were decorated with tags with the child's name, age and gender on it. Toys used to be purchased for specific children, but this sometimes resulted in toys that did not fit the child's personality. Although the children and families who received the gifts were always thankful for the gesture, the gift was sometimes quite out of character for the child.

In order to resolve the issue of mismatched gifts the Salvation Army places all of the presents in a mock store. The parents can then "shop" (the gifts are free) for their child. This way each kid will receive a gift they love and cherish. This also allows parents the joy of picking out presents for their kids.

Whichever organization sponsors the tree is responsible for the storage of the gifts. After all of the presents are bought the Salvation Army comes to collect the donations. Meals are passed out along with the presents to help provide a happy holiday for the families.

Collegiate Academy teacher Ms. Wagner says, "After my experiences at Sarah Reed, I can see the benefits of programs like this. Most of the



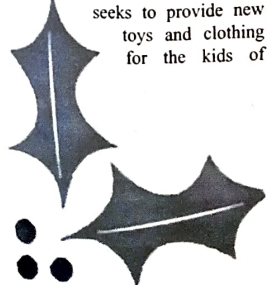
*PHOTO COURTESY OF NELTONS*  
The Treasures for Children Ministry donates gifts to children of underprivileged families.

children's gifts came from similar organizations." Ms. Wagner recognizes the importance that projects like Treasures for Children have. She also stresses the importance of volunteering during and after the holidays.

Senior Patrick Holmes has participated with Treasures for Children with his church: "Last year my family bought clothes for a

little boy; it felt really nice to know I helped bring joy to a family in need."

Treasures for Children is a great way to get involved with helping the less fortunate in the community. It can bring joy to a needy family and spread a little extra holiday cheer. Contact the Salvation Army online at [www.salvationarmyusa.org](http://www.salvationarmyusa.org) or call (814) 454-6497 to help out.



# The Way to Achieving Energy Independence

BY ALEXANDER DAVIS

United States taxpayers contest foreign oil more than any other subject. For almost 40 years the United States has been rapidly increasing its dependence on imported oil for energy, to the point where even a decrease of 10 per cent could cripple American energy by a minimum of seven percent.

Economist, geologist, environmentalist, and even corporate business man for big oil, T. Boone Pickens has been working fervently on a way to release foreign oil's grip on United States energy.

"We could easily cut down our foreign oil consumption by at least 38 percent simply by incorporating domestic natural gas into our energy plan," Pickens states in his own personal energy plans for the country.

Pickens Plan, which "calls for building new wind generation facilities that will produce 20 percent of our nation's electricity and allow us to use natural gas as a transportation fuel. The combination of these domestic energies can replace more than one-third of our foreign oil imports," which according to the website [www.pickensplan.com](http://www.pickensplan.com), is all completely achievable within 10 years and puts America on the track for renewable and ecologically friendly energy resources for the future.

US sources of electrical generation

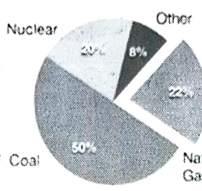


PHOTO COURTESY OF PICKENSPLAN.COM

Utilizing available wind power could cut natural gas consumption almost completely.

The Plan also provides numerous financial benefits for the country. The current foreign oil dependency will cost the United States about \$700 billion in 2008, and could climb as high as \$10 trillion by 2018. Pickens believes that by following his plan America could easily reduce the current bill for foreign oil by over \$300 billion. Large savings such as this could then be used to invest more heavily in renewable resources, which in due time would completely rid the United States of foreign oil dependence, and create a

completely energy independent nation. Pickens Plan already shows success in small towns such as Sweetwater, Texas which moved to completely renewable energy by building wind farms, exhibited an increase of available jobs by 25%, all of which are high paying. The property on which these wind farms are leased also create extra income for the farmers who lease them, along with a cut in their energy bill. If the communities, towns, cities, and eventually states of the United States mirrored the energy policy of Sweetwater, Texas or the one depicted in Pickens Plan, the country would be ensured an ecologically, and more importantly and economically sound future.

## College Costs Take a Toll on Youth

BY KATY WITKOWSKI

For many high school students who look forward to college, the costs are one of the many things that scare them about leaving home. Because of the current financial crisis staring prospective college students in their faces, college is looking like a future filled with debt up to their eye balls.

"I have come to accept the fact that I do not have the money to pay for college, but I'm looking for as many scholarships as possible to help me reduce the debt I will be in," says senior Mike Adams.

This is also the first time for most students to take out loans or search for scholarships to be able to even think about furthering education. The thousands of dollars look scary at first, but after taking a closer look, high school students have nothing to fear. Seniors can find financial aid when they look for it.

According to the National Center of Education Statistics, 63 percent of all undergraduates enrolled in 2003-2004 received some type of financial

than student loans that helped pay less tuition.

"Over half of our student body receives some type of merit scholarship, which is based on their academic achievements," says guidance counselor Mrs. Nichols.

Mr. Marnella, another Collegiate Academy guidance counselor, says that nearly 85 percent of the students he helps receive some type of financial aid: merit, need-based, or both.

Also, according to a College Board study, undergraduate students of the 2006-2007 school year received \$97.1 billion in many different kinds of financial aid, such as work study, federal loans and tax credits and deductions.

"I know that during the ten years after college, I will be working very hard to try to pay off my student loans. I don't have the money now, but I'm going to college to get a job to earn it," says senior Mariah Sager.

But student loans come less often as they did a decade ago. According to the same 2007 College Board study, federal loans to undergraduate students decreased nine percent between the 1996-1997 school year and the 2006-2007 year.

Will student loans become less common in the coming years, leaving college students to struggle and resort to other means for paying for higher education, like credit cards?



PHOTO COURTESY OF COLLEGEBOARD.COM

Forty percent of college undergraduates receive some sort of federal loan.



College costs can be easily paid through scholarships, student and other government aid programs.

aid. It also states that the majority of the 63 percent received more grants

## Student Art Flourishes at Collegiate Academy

Artwork courtesy of Rose Heid



PHOTOS COURTESY OF DANNY HANS

# Winter is Here. Do Not Waste It!

BY ABIGAIL TAYLOR

This year, Collegiate Academy has a winter break made up of twelve days, which is eleven more days than it takes to get sick of your family, and eight more days than it takes to watch every episode of your favorite TV show. Unfortunately most of the students will be missing school with four days still left to have fun.

Because of the "no homework over break" policy, the diligent



PHOTO COURTESY OF WWW.JOYOFBAKING.COM  
Baking goodies during winter break is a longtime tradition and biting into a warm cookie is worth all the hard work.

students, who are eager to learn, cannot even get ahead in their work for the upcoming semester. Bummer!

Since everyone will have a lot of time on their hands, there is no excuse to do nothing.

Because there is a 99 percent chance of snow in Erie and the surrounding areas, take advantage of the snow. For the students who are involved in Ski Club this year and have already purchased their passes, remember that they include unlimited free skiing until Dec. 25.

For the many students not involved, in Ski club, this is the time to try! That may be a little too dangerous

or strenuous for some people, but the Peak also has a tubing hill that involves no walking, not even to the top of the hill. Also remember sledding, snow angels, ice skating, and of course making a snowman.

"It is too cold to go outside," one might say, but that is not a good enough excuse to sleep vacation away! Try planning a fun New Years Eve party. If that is a little too much work, catch

up on those presents that are "on the counter," but really were never bought. If they really are on the counter, but they are not wrapped yet, take the time to do so to show the receiver that there was time put in to make it special.

Sometimes the hardest gifts to pick out are for your family and best friends. Make homemade cookies. This does not mean putting the pre-made dough in the oven and setting the timer for fifteen minutes. No one will be impressed.

Before turning on the oven, make sure to have parental approval to use it. Also it is vital to know where the fire extinguisher is located. Find a good recipe for chocolate chip,

snicker-doodle butter cookies a cookbook. After of the oven, put them plate and add a bow. A nice personal touch be added to any gift.

Volunteering is one of the most satisfying ways to get involved and have a fun time. From making cards and singing carols at the nursing homes to working in the soup kitchen, there are an infinite number of ways to make someone else's holiday season a little bit

or peanut butter cookies online or in they are out on a nice card is also that can

will make someone else smile, and that will be worth the time.

After all of the exhausting work of being an amazing friend and citizen, make a fire, in the fire place preferably, watch a few holiday movies, and drink a big mug of hot cocoa.

Regardless of religion, watching holiday movies is a fun way to spend any stormy winter night.

"My favorite movie around the holidays is Elf with Will Farrell. I would love to live in New York City, and I wish I could eat M&Ms and chocolate syrup (not on my spaghetti) for breakfast," says Julia Chernicky who plans to have a very eventful winter break.

Lastly, to the few lucky individuals who are going to someplace sunny for break, all of the ignored texts from people in Erie are not a result of the bad cell service.

Everyone here will be too

brighter. Rally up a group of friends to go and volunteer for a few hours. It will not take long, but

busy playing in the snow and baking cookies to talk about how fat you have become.



## Fireside Chats

### With Emily and Carolynne

Dear Carolynne and Emily,  
I am absolutely dreading the holidays. My whole family is coming over, and I'm getting kicked out of my room. I love my family and everything, but not enough to give up my room. I have delicate spinal issues, so I need my own bed. My bossy sister doesn't seem to understand this, so I'm getting kicked out. Any advice?  
~ Forgotten Gimp

Emily: Don't let her boss you around: two can play this game. Trash the room as much as possible before she comes, and hide all her clothes while she's in the shower. Make her wish she had never come.

Carolynne: I recommend that you just become the dreaded roommate. You know, the one who is afraid of the dark and has frequent Mariah Carey impersonation dreams. You may be omitted from a few

wills, but when you're all alone and abandoned someday, you will have no need for the extra money. Happy Holidays!

Dear Carolynne and Emily,

First of all, don't label me, okay? We're all people. Second of all, my feet are always freezing cold. Actually, I think one of them just fell off. See, every day I walk to and from school in the snow, but I cannot stand those calve-high boots everyone is wearing this winter. You know, those tan ones with the fuzzy lining. Obviously though, I can't wear anything that everyone else is wearing. That is absolutely degrading to my age, race, and gender. But that doesn't stop my feet from going numb. Help!  
~ Cold Feet



PHOTO COURTESY OF DANNY HARRIS

Emily: First of all, you cannot start off a question that begins with "Don't label me" because we automatically will. Second of all, I have no idea what you're talking about. I don't follow the trends - I start them.

Carolynne: Yes, Emily, which explains why everyone is wearing a giant, black, open-toed boot on their right foot. You're a trendsetter, all right.

Emily: Actually, it's the left foot.

Dear Carolynne and Emily,  
This is humiliating. I can't believe I'm even writing to you losers. But I've got a problem, and I need help - fast. Ever since I was young, I was mortified of Santa Claus in any form.

Yes, I am terrified of a fat, jolly man in a suit, but seriously, he is a creep. As a result, I am forced to stay away from Christmas parties. I am very popular, so this makes it even more difficult. Help - or whatever it is you do.

~ Ruined By Santa

Carolynne: I know exactly how to solve your problem. Just get the most realistic chocolate Santa you can find and make your own Yuletide voodoo doll. I know a quick decapitation of my edible enemies generally gets me through the day.

Emily, \*Calls therapist\*

Please Note: The views and opinions expressed by the advisors are not necessarily those of The Rhetorical Question or Collegiate Academy.

# County School Athletes Receive Less Sport Recognition

BY CASEY FOLGA

The problem that presents itself with Collegiate Academy, a public school without an official sports program, is not that sports are absent, but rather that the athletes do not receive the same amount of acknowledgement for their hard work.

Collegiate tends to place more emphasis on the city school athletes. Due to the availability of schedules, the McDowell season is the only county school schedule posted in the cafeteria. The sport schedules exclude the season games of schools like Iroquois, Harbor Creek, Girard, Fort LeBoeuf, North East, General McLane- the county schools.

The majority of student athletes, 201 students, play sports for one of the three city schools, but the 41 county sport athletes who also attend Collegiate are doing exceptionally well

and deserve due recognition.

While volleyball players from East, Vincent and Central were trick-or-treating, North East and Harbor Creek girls volleyball players spent their time on the court at District playoffs without any recognition from Collegiate.



Patrick Holmes, a Collegiate athlete playing for Iroquois, also feels that city athletes tend to receive more credit.

After speaking with Mr. Luthringer, history teacher and athletic director at Collegiate, some of the reasons for the differences in athlete recognition became apparent. The fact that Collegiate does not have an official director coordinating all of the different schools sports programs is problematic.

Mr. Luthringer receives all of the sports information from either the newspaper or student athletes, and points out that since most Collegiate athletes play for the city he receives more news about them. He has very little contact from the county schools about sport schedules or records.

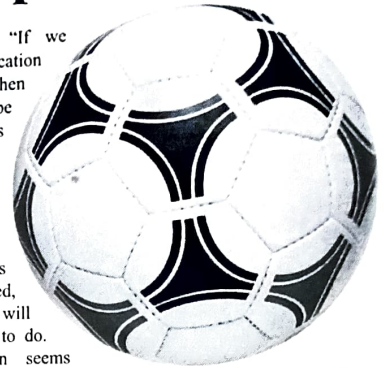
Mr. Luthringer says, "If we could have better communication with the District schools then the whole process would be different." He recognizes Collegiate does not presently have the ideal situation, but that it ultimately falls on students to make the change.

If students make the effort to get their teams scores posted, announced, etc. then Mr. Luthringer will not be left with so much to do.

Perhaps this situation seems unfair. North East Volleyball player Katherine Palmer, along with many others, thinks so. She says, "I have noticed that during the sports assemblies the city schools get a lot of credit, but the county schools are kind of meshed together."

The differences in recognition are apparent, yet change really cannot take place without considerable time spent in research of each school, or the effort of county athletes to get their sport achievements heard.

Mr. Luthringer is eager to give credit to all athletes. Turn in sport



PHOTOS COURTESY OF ECLM



schedules and important events to him to get them posted in the cafeteria. KING TV can also broadcast information on the sports segment.

And finally do not forget to submit photos, video clips, etc. to the media arts students for the sports assembly.

With the cooperation of student athletes, the media outlets of Collegiate Academy, and the help of Mr. Luthringer, it is possible for county and city school athletes to receive due credit.



## Ski Club is Tiny Price for Great Fun

BY SCOTT TARASOVITCH

It is rare to mention skiing or snowboarding and not hear grumblings like "too expensive," "too hard" or the popular "too cold." There will always be students who use these superficial excuses, but for those who are willing to listen, there is indeed another side to the story.

Ski Club meets at Peak N' Peak Resort for eight consecutive Fridays starting the first week of January. A bus picks up all club members at 3:30 p.m., and returns them to Academy around 10:00 p.m. The cost changes each year, but it levitates around \$120-\$150 for the lift ticket, and \$70-\$80 for the bus ride.

Ski Club advisor Mr. Feiock says, "This program has a really good price. People get a chance to ski or snowboard with their friends, and people who have never tried before have a chance to get lessons, too."

Fellow senior Eric Adamus adds, "The halfpipe they have for snowboarding is definitely cool. There are numerous trails as well, ranging from the beginning hills to challenging inclines."

While the price of going may be a great value, Peak N' Peak's concessions can be costly. Senior Adam Stolarski, a snowboarder, says, "Even though the food at the peak is really expensive, ski club is still a lot of fun, and I love to do it."

Junior Rich Wendel agrees, "The food is extremely expensive,



PHOTO COURTESY OF AMY MCKINNEY

Seth Taylor maneuvers his way down the slopes.

but other than that I have heard that the overall package is pretty cheap compared with other programs. Plus you do spend practically your whole day at the Peak, too."

The threat of injury is another roadblock in getting people to join. Wendel says, "I have only seen a few accidents in my life, but beginning snowboarders tend to be the common victims. Injuries are rare, nevertheless they are expected. I mean, everybody falls, especially when the snow is really packed and icy because it makes it hard to turn or stop."

Stolarski says, "I do not know anybody who has been seriously hurt lately. For sure, though, it does happen."

Regardless of these negatives, Stolarski and Wendel agree that ski club is well worth their time and money, and that being with friends is a huge bonus.

Thus, even if skiing or snowboarding never really crossed students' minds before, they should weigh the pros and cons accordingly. Some students may just prefer keeping warm with a hot cup of chocolate, and obviously everybody has their preferences. However, it is rare for a program like this to offer so much bang for the buck.

## District 10 Fall Sports

**Girls Cross Country:**  
First Team All-Star:  
Anna Dunsworth- SV  
Second Team All-Star:  
Nicole Fiorenzo- Central Tech

**Boys Cross Country:**  
First Team All-Star:  
Liam Phillips- McDowell

**Girls Soccer:**  
Region 6 Player of the Year:  
Morgyn Patterson- SV  
First Team All-Star:  
Morgyn and Meghyn Patterson- SV  
Second Team All-Star:  
Brianna Opperman and Colleen Kresse- SV

**Boys Soccer:**  
First Team All-Star:  
Jordan M. Hart- Central Tech  
Second Team All-Star:  
Mike Murphy- Central Tech

**Girls Volleyball:**  
First Team All-Star:  
Sara Narusewicz- Central Tech  
Second Team All-Star:  
Cortnie Prenat- Central Tech

**Girls Tennis D-10 Class AAA Champions:**  
Singles Champ:  
Abby Taylor- McDowell  
Doubles Champ:  
Brittany Friedman- McDowell

**Football D-10 Class AAA Champions and Quarterfinalist for States:**  
**Strong Vincent**  
Arthur Adams  
Tom Churchill  
Alex Davis  
Sean Herron  
James Hormanski  
Shane Hurlburt  
Dylan Nantes  
Ramsey Ortiz-Estrada  
Zachary Silvis  
Mark Woodel