

Westhill News



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Better Than Broadway

The Northstar Playmakers kicked off a spectacular season with a performance of *The Laramie Project*, written by Moises Kaufman and the Members of the Tectonic Theatre Project. The play chronicles the merciless 1998 murder of Matthew Shepard, a gay Wyoming University student, by two young men native to Laramie. Based on actual interviews, the play exposes the reactions of Laramie residents to a hate crime in their city that drew condemnation from people in cities all around the country.

At every performance, cast members captured audiences with their portrayals of men and women forced to make sense of their lives in a city forever marred by

hate, a city where crimes such as the one committed against Matthew Shepard was never supposed to happen. Two separate casts prepared for three performances, allowing almost double the number of students an opportunity perform, many for the first time.

An innovative, multimedia set provided the backdrop for the play's poignant marriage of real life and theater. Photos of Matthew Shepard, depicting both the joy and horror he experienced in life, were projected on an idyllic Wyoming background, above the actors who changed their costumes on stage while they slipped from role to role.

An original score, written and performed on piano

by senior, Jason Bernstein, added an additional, emotional dimension through its interpretation of the script.

Highly technical in nature, the production allowed the talents of students, behind the scenes, to be showcased as well. With unprecedented support from professionals in the community, the community at large and the Westhill family, experienced crew members as well as those new to drama, had opportunities to tap into their numerous, individual talents

In a word: Bravo! Memorable performances by all gave meaning and life to the play's message, to accept and respect differences and to "live and let live."

A Hearty Welcome

On opening day, two new assistant principals, three new world language teachers, two new business teachers, two new math teachers, one science department head, one new security guard, two new para educators, a new guidance counselor,

four interns, and two student teachers, began their Westhill journeys along with 550 freshmen who arrived bright-eyed and full of anticipation from middle school. In the months since, newcomers have been so fully welcomed into the

Westhill family that it is impossible to imagine school life before they arrived. However, they have not gone unnoticed. In the short time they've been here, their presence and their contributions, have enriched the school community.

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The Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act, also known as the Matthew Shepard Act, was signed into law by President Obama on October 28, 2009, expanding the 1969 United States Federal hate-crime law to include crimes motivated by a victim's actual or perceived gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or disability.

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Help is Here!



With school in full swing and the first quarter over, many students can use an extra dose of academic support. At Westhill, help is never in short supply.

First and foremost, the school's dedicated teachers are available after school and in some cases, before the day begins to provide extra help. Sometimes it takes just a few extra minutes with a teacher to make learning a breeze.

For writing help, students can visit the writing center during lunch; with a teacher referral, students can hone skills in math lab during the school day.

After school, Period 8, offered on Mon-

days, Tuesdays, and Thursdays enlists National Honor Society students to tutor their peers. One to one peer tutoring is also available.

Other after school programs such as LEAD, Success, and ALTA provide ongoing, focused academic support, including help with organization and study skills, subject tutoring, and homework help.

For more information on any of Westhill's extra help opportunities, contact

Fall Season Sports Highlights By Mike King

The girls cross country team had a great year finishing 4th in the FCIAC Championships with three runners, Nicole Ambrosechio, Claire Howlett, Alison Ambrosechio, finishing in the top 13. Sam Lagasse on the boys team finished 9th.

The Vikings field hockey team had a solid season this fall, finishing the regular season 7-8-1 and qualifying for both the FCIAC and State Tournament.

Following a 9-5-1 regular season finish the boys soccer team qualified for both the FCIAC and State Tournament.

Going into the last game of the season at 0-9, the Vikings football team will take on Stamford High on Thanksgiving Day at Westhill.

The volleyball team had a real nice year, finishing the regular season 11-7 and qualifying for the State Tournament.

The girls soccer team finished the regular season 11-1-4 qualifying for both the FCIAC and State Tournament. They made it to the quarter-finals in the States before losing to Staples 2-1.

Finally, the girls swim team finished 8th in the FCIAC and State LL Tournament with several team members setting personal and school records. They finish their season at Yale in the State Open Meet.

Business as Usual

On December 14th, 75 entrepreneurship students will host Westhill's 11th annual Holiday Bazaar. On the day of the event, student vendors will set up shop in the cafeteria, hoping to turn a profit on the items they have for sale. Individuals and groups of sellers will compete with one another to attract buyers, mostly teenagers with a fixed amount to spend, to convince them to

buy whatever they have on sale, from specialty foods to costume jewelry.

To prepare for the event, students did the extensive market and advertising research necessary for making reasonable predictions about what might sell best in a teenage market. With a fixed amount to spend, students headed to NYC to shop for super wholesale deals on items they've decided to sell,



hoping not only to recoup their costs, but to reign in profits, as well. As all successful entrepreneurs know, it is the profit and loss analysis done after the money is counted that matters most. After all, profit or loss, there is always next time...

Around the World in Art

By: Kelly Barney

Each year, to honor a commitment she made to the Fulbright Memorial Grant committee, who selected her to visit Japan for three weeks, Ms. Barney's teaches her student how to make ceramic tea bowls and flower holders in the traditional Japanese style.

To begin the unit, Ms. Barney shares her photographs of Japan to introduce her students to what Japan is really like from an American's point of view. The photos prompt lively discussions about Japan's architecture, climate and geography, clothing, schools, its people, dance and music, culture, and religion. At the same time, students learn tea ceremonies and the use of tea bowls, originated when, after a war, Shinto priests would invite badly wounded and exhausted soldiers to the shrine drink hot tea, and eat sweet cakes in an effort to nourish their bodies and their souls.

Students also learn about the Japanese method of symbol writing, or "Kanji," derived from the Chinese, centuries ago. They learn the meaning symbol and pick two favorites they use to form "impressing tools" out of clay, which they use to decorate their tea bowls and "Chabana", or flower holders.

With an understanding of the tea bowl custom to guide their work, students create their own bowls with their hands, using the pinch method. They use their impressing tools to stamp a Kanji design into their bows, making each one unique. Metal scrapers are used to carve out the bowls until they are smooth and thin before they are dried, fired, and glazed with color, and fired again. At each step, students learn the proper names for what is happening to their bowls. Vitrification, for example, or the process of becoming glass-like, turns soft clay objects into

ceramic substances that can last thousands of years.

Finally, each student makes a flower holder using the "slab method." They begin by designing paper patterns of that they use to cut out two pieces of slab clay. Kanji symbols are imprinted into the flower holders, after which they colored with glaze and fired to create hard shiny ceramic ware.

The culminating event is a Japanese tea ceremony, complete with table cloths, napkins, a flower for the Chabana, a teapot, Japanese music, green tea, and sweet cakes. Students drink three sips of tea out of their bowls and experience first-hand the sharing and "turning of the bowls" as they lift them to receive the hot green tea. Students are always eager finally take their bowls home to show their parents!!

Successful Measures

Westhill guidance counselors have been busier than usual this fall. Added to their normal routine that includes adjusting student schedules, celebrating student successes, and preparing seniors for college, they hosted a ribbon cutting for a spectacular new college career center.

Representatives from GE, who funded the high tech career center, joined parents, teachers, administrators, acting superintendent, Dr. Winifred Hamilton, and community volunteers to officially open the center on October 7th. Now, using state-of-the-art computers and software, students can access Naviance, complete interest inventories, research

post-graduate educational and career opportunities, complete college applications and resumes, and more, with the help of school counselors, and parent and community volunteers, who staff the center throughout the day.

Celebrations have kept counselors busy as well. On October 13th, they hosted a ceremony, at which representatives from Project Opening Doors awarded juniors and seniors more than \$39,000 for qualifying scores on Advanced Placement Exams the took last spring. Students making high marks on SATs and ACTs were honored at an October 28th 700 Club/ACT Stars ceremonial breakfast, also hosted by counselors.

Helping students make college plans is always a highlight of the fall. On October 20th, Westhill hosted the annual city-wide college fair, attended by more than 160 colleges and universities. Drawing thousands of guests from the high schools in our area, the event provided students and their families with overview and contact information to assist them in the college selection process.

Finally, so that Westhill's seniors are "prepared to launch" into post graduate futures, every senior took part in a college process review session and parents were invited to attend a financial aid information session in November.

Westhill High School

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Westhill High School values learning because it promotes academic excellence, civic responsibility, and personal growth. Our community provides all students with opportunities to acquire, analyze and apply knowledge.



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Important Reminders

- December 14th is an early release day for students. Dismissal will be at 11:45.
- School will be closed from Friday, December 23rd at 11:45 until Tuesday, January 2nd.
- Midterm exams are from Tuesday, January 17th through Friday, January 20th. Students are required to be in school for their exam periods only.

SIP—Our Commitment to Achievement for All

SIP is not just a 3-letter word at Westhill High School. Here, SIP which stands for School Improvement Plan spells out the work every teacher in all disciplines has committed to do so that student achievement across the board will increase.

This year, the SIP represents the expertise of teachers in every department who drew upon their collective wisdom and experience to determine strategies all teachers might implement to increase literacy and math achievement. Their ideas, rooted in the most current reliable research, and combined with conventional wisdom, are communicated in the SIP in the areas of math and literacy.

One of the challenges for teachers is to collaborate about the many and varied real-world applications of math and to design lessons that deliberately address

math concepts. From now on, teachers who routinely refer to measurement, percentages, statistics, and mathematic predictions, no matter what their discipline, will point out math vocabulary and concepts to students in order to reinforce math language and ideas.

Likewise, teachers who do not normally teach literacy will focus on ways in which to make textual information accessible. From defining the purpose of a text to linking new information to contexts that make sense to students, all teachers will make certain that students are able to understand the relevance and value of what they read, giving them access to the concepts and ideas that advance their learning.

All in all, this year's SIP speaks to the goals of Westhill educators and to the ways in which the goals will be realized. Written in language that speaks

to the commitment of Westhill faculty to educate all of its students so that they can meet the highest of standards, this year's SIP, a five-year roadmap to educational excellence, is a plan that illuminates the professional commitment of each and every teacher to each and every student at Westhill.

