

BEHIND THE GLAMOUR: YOUTH INITIATIVE HIGH SCHOOL REVEALED

VOLUME 17
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KALEIDOSCOPE

Due to the recent popularity of television programs like *Glee* and *Saved By the Bell*, many of you may be under the impression that high school is a place of laugh tracks, spontaneous song, and perfectly orchestrated hair. But behind the scenes there is a lot of blood, sweat, and tears.

Many of you are familiar with our school in varying capacities but how many can truly say they know what goes on behind the scenes at the Youth Initiative High School?

This issue of the Kaleidoscope is dedicated to sharing more of ourselves than we are usually comfortable with, to leaving the curtain open after the sun goes down, showing all the beautiful little idiosyncrasies that make this such a wonderful and unique place to work and to learn.

Whether it is a student mopping up a spill, a teacher staying behind after class to help someone who didn't quite get it, or a parent donating their time and talent to help ensure the school stays on firm financial ground, there are a thousand little things that happen here everyday "behind the scenes" which make us stronger as an institution and as individuals. We hope you enjoy your peek behind the "glamour".

HEARING EVERY VOICE: THE PROCESS OF YIHS JACOB HUNDT	Pg. 2-3
PASSION ANIMATES: THE STORY OF A YIHS INDEPENDENT STUDY MISA GRENIER	Pg. 4-5
MEDITATIVE PEDAGOGY: HOW ONE TEACHER APPROACHES HER JOB SHAWN LAVOIE AND JULEE AGAR	Pgs. 6-7
THE SECRET LIVES OF STUDENTS: STUDENT LIFE OUTSIDE SCHOOL YIHS STUDENTS	Pg. 8-9
THE PIT: THE PERSONALITY OF A STORAGE UNIT MATTHEW VOZ	Pg. 10-11
UPCOMING EVENTS AND SPONSORS	Pg. 12



*Thank you to all
who played a part
in another
glamorous
Valentines Dinner*

HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW YIHS?

On the border of each page in this issue is a photo of a place or object in or around the Youth Initiative High School. See if you can guess what these images are and where they came from. Write your answers down and send them in with a \$25 donation. The contestant with the most correct answers will win a YIHS student-crafted t-shirt!

HEARING EVERY VOICE:

BY JACOB HUNDT

THE PROCESS OF YIHS

Democracy is the worst form of government except for all those others that have been tried.

--Winston Churchill



Each year when I study ancient Greece with sophomores at the Youth Initiative High School, I take the opportunity to share with them one of great landmarks of political rhetoric: The Funeral Oration of Pericles. The occasion for Pericles' speech is a formal eulogy for citizens slain in the course of a bitter struggle for the existence of their country, in this case the desperate first year of Athens' mortal conflict with Sparta, around 430 BC. Pericles takes the opportunity to articulate and re-emphasize not only the aims of the war, but also the core values and identity, the *raison d'être*, of Athens itself.

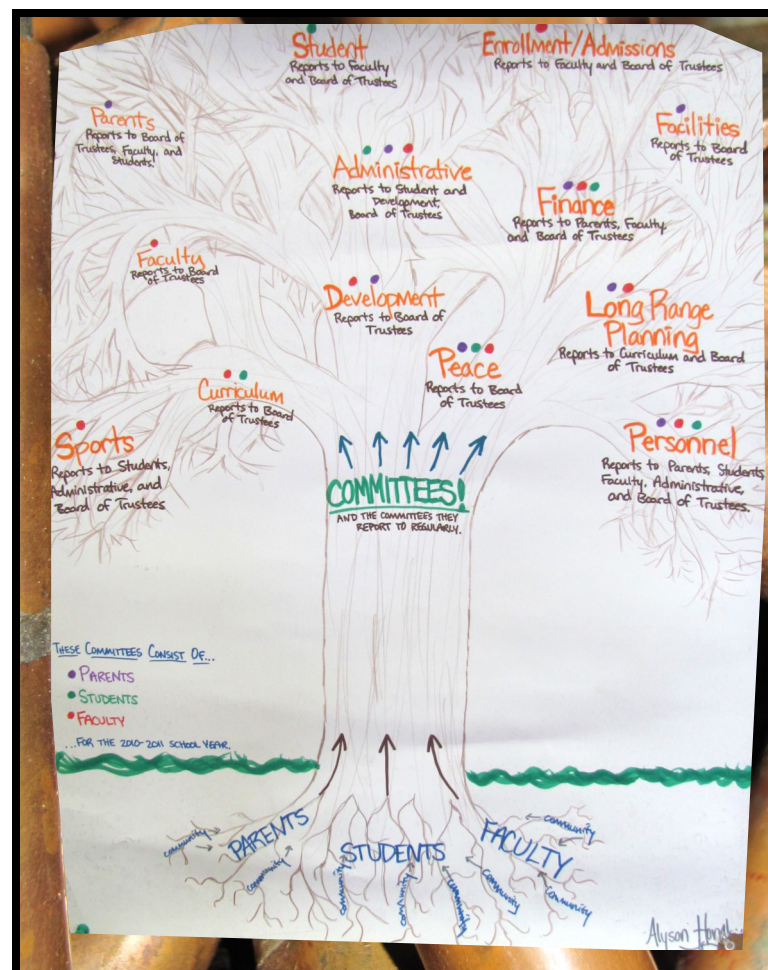
And the contrast between Athens and its rival city-state could not have been greater. Whereas the Spartan was raised from his earliest years in an environment of strict military discipline and proverbial austerity, the Athenian citizen was surrounded by an atmosphere of unheard of freedom, expressed in its arts, literature, and philosophy, as well as by a political culture which gave the world the word, and the idea, of *demokratia*, or rule by "the many." As a model of governance, democracy had many vehement opponents, both within Athens and without, and Pericles is at pains to show how it might be a source of strength rather than of weakness. Because, indeed, is it not a rather a ridiculous idea? To turn the unmediated governance of a mighty city and maritime empire over to a bunch of propertyless oarsmen and tenant farmers? At its best, isn't democracy always doomed to inefficiency, endless petty bickering, and serial incompetence? At its worst, can it not also devolve into violent civil strife, mob justice, and, ultimately, naked tyranny?

Perhaps this is so. After all, Athens was not ultimately victorious against Sparta and the record of its leaders and deliberative bodies during the war was frequently shameful and stupid, to say nothing of modern democracies. But perhaps the Athenian political model represents a higher goal for the aspirations of a human being, regardless of its efficiency. Whereas Sparta represents a model of the human being as a Soldier, a specialized, well-honed weapon in the arsenal of a state, the Athenian ideal is that of the Citizen, one who takes up the business of the community as a whole as their own. For freedom in Athens meant that all citizens, rich and poor, were not only allowed, but positively expected to take their part in the governance of the state.

For the Athenians, the word for such a person who "takes no interest in politics" – in debate, discussion, and affairs of the community – was **idiot**, which literally means "a private person." According to Pericles, "minding your own business" is a terrible disgrace, and the highest activity of a true man and wise citizen is in discussion, in seemingly endless debate on matters of public importance:

We Athenians, in our own persons, take our decisions on policy or submit them to proper discussions: for we do not think that there is an incompatibility between words and deeds; the worst thing is to rush into action before the consequences have been properly debated.

This assertion gets to the heart of what many critics of participatory governance, whether of states or of organizations and schools, find objectionable and frustrating about



One particularly pleasing depiction of the YIHS governance structure.

this model. Namely, that democratic self-governance seems to be nothing more than an endless, tiring, disheartening cycle of argument and compromise. As a result, many of the most difficult and urgent issues can never be properly addressed until there is a mortal crisis and the decisions which are enacted tend to be watered down and weakened from within by loopholes and compromises.

Again, this is certainly also often true. Any observer of the workings of Congress or of any modern participatory government or organization can sympathize with the sense of frustration, with the bickering, the petty haggling, and the glacial pace. But, then again, perhaps this is the price we pay for something greater, for the chance to not be **idiots** in the Athenian sense. It is not an accident that, whatever its failures as a military hegemon, Athens succeeded in creating a flourishing culture that resounded throughout

Greece and throughout the world down to the present day. This was made possible not only by the cultural liberties of Athens, but also by a political system that demanded that its people be *Citizens* and not *Idiots*, that they take up the active task of creative problem solving and self-determination, as opposed to passively "minding their own business" and allowing the affairs of state to be handled by authoritative experts and technocrats. It is only in such an environment that a large number of people might be able to realize a calling to be masters of their own souls and bring their individual capacities of reasoning and intuition to bear in the public space of common affairs.

The governance structure of the Youth Initiative High School bears more than a passing resemblance of that of classic Athens. Like the Athenian state, it is sometimes slow, cumbersome, and inefficient. Sometimes the decisions that are reached and policies that are ratified can be inelegant and needlessly wordy, the typical symptoms of legislation by committee rather than executive fiat. Debates and discussion can become rancorous or heated, and almost always longwinded. And yet, in the midst of all this hubbub lies something unutterably precious: the living, beating heart of the school and the community it makes manifest. By their engagement in this messy process, YIHS students take their first steps out of idiocy and into citizenship.

In the process, students learn how to negotiate and frame an argument, to consider a multiplicity of interests and to weigh the pros and cons of compromise. Above all, student participants in YIHS governance get a chance to feel what it means to have a real stake in the life of a community that both cares for and depends on them. Together, we are directly responsible for the wellbeing of our peers and colleagues and for the life of the school itself. Vast horizons open up for the student who is able to awaken to the depth and uniqueness of this relationship.



PASSION ANIMATES: A YHS INDEPENDENT STUDY

BY MISA GRENIER
(GRADE 12)

Writing a song can be as simple as writing your own name for some people and as hard as hiking the Himalayas for others. I was in the latter of the two categories, or so I felt, until I decided to take up the challenge of learning to write music in my senior year, before I took off into the outside world.

I wanted to design a class where I could strengthen my skills in the many areas of writing music, playing guitar and learning how to hear a melody, and then be able to put it together with chords and create a whole original song. The process consists of writing the lyrics, finding a melody and tune of the song, putting together the technical structure, including the chord progression, tempo of the song and much more. I had never done this complete process before and although I had the desire to create my own music, I had a mental block. I felt I needed to be more skilled with the guitar so I could have something to support my thoughts and tunes that I came up with. I wanted to fully understand music keys, intervals, harmonies, and how it all fits together to make a song.

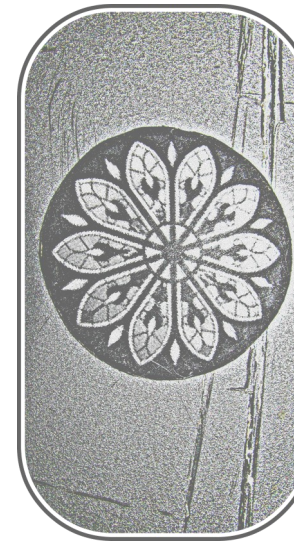
So I decided to design a class that could help steer me in the right direction, through advice and suggestions and even lessons (guitar in this instance). I had been

playing guitar, but I was very limited to a few chords and I felt trapped and ready to expand. So I created a schedule with various adults and also had time to practice and write on my own as well. This process in the planning of the independent study took more work than I expected. I had to get in contact with all the different people and find out the times that worked for them each week.

After all that planning this is what my three-week class consisted of: On Mondays I would meet with Catherine and Ted Parrish (I worked with them each for an hour). Catherine and I worked on taking all the lyrics I had and trying to find a melody to go with them. She worked with me on finding the keys etc. Mostly I played what I had for her and she would listen and throw in tidbits of advice here and there. She also helped me write a bridge, which was a great breakthrough. Ted and I worked on guitar, mainly different chords and the 1,4 and 5 chords in a



Misa Grenier,
Grade 12



certain key, which was very helpful. He worked with me on basic strums and how to write out my song in a way that another person could play with me if they wanted to. It took him a bit to reign in my odd rhythm. I did my own thing and he wanted to show me how to stick with what I had written. He also taught me basic chord progressions that tend to work well for songs, the patterns of chords, and how to know where to start your bridge.

On Tuesdays and Fridays I just worked by myself, practicing and executing the advice I was given.

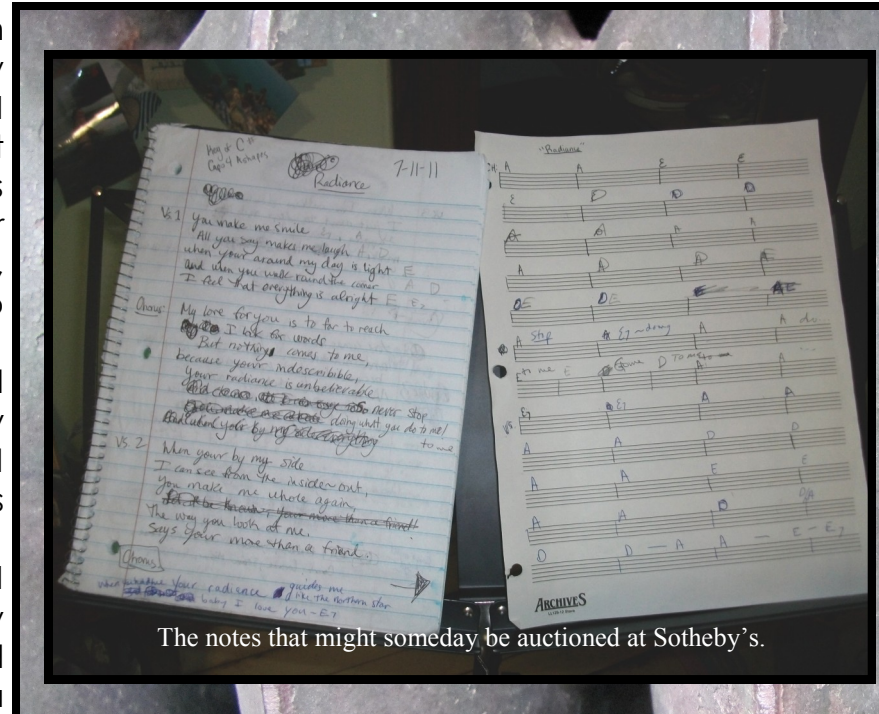
On Wednesday I worked with my mentor Betsy Farrell, who helped and continues to help me hold a vision for what I want to do

with my music and my future plans. She is also very talented musically and worked with me on my songs and intervals and harmonies. She helped me to feel the lyrics and find where the melody was supposed to go (incredible advice).

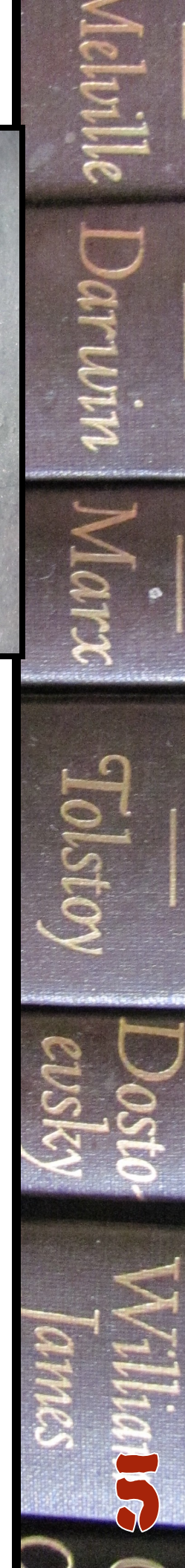
Lastly, on Thursdays I did something a little different. I worked with Dodie Whitaker, who gave me a voice lesson, since I do not have time outside of school to work on my musical side as much as I'd like. She helped me prepare my musical piece for my college audition that was coming up. She worked a lot with me on vowels, giving space in my mouth to get the right sound, and changing the volume of my voice and the feeling to portray a certain energy or type of song. She also helped me learn the proper technique of breathing during singing, a difficult thing to master.

Overall, the class was a time for me to learn new and improve old skills in a subject that I am very passionate about and since I am very busy with extracurricular activities it was a time for me to work each day. It is proven that repetition is the key to mastery and having the opportunity to do that in my busy life was worth the whole class, not to mention the fact that I wrote a whole song of my own and performed on the radio and at the annual Valentine's Dinner event as a culmination to my studies. When you have music that you have written it is so much easier and more fun to sing, because it is all yours and you can truly sing from a place in your heart that nothing else can come from. You can feel every word and every phrase as a true part of you. It is so special it is hard to understand unless you're the one experiencing it. I feel that this was a very successful class and I am glad I got an opportunity to such an independent study at Youth Initiative High School. I got what I wanted out of it and more. I will continue to work on writing more songs outside of school and in my future as a musician.

Note: Misa has been accepted to the American Music and Drama Academy in Los Angeles and New York City.



The notes that might someday be auctioned at Sotheby's.



TEACHER PREP:

ONE TEACHER'S APPROACH TO HER CRA

Julee Caspers Agar, YIHS Spanish teacher, has a deep love for the language. In addition to teaching Spanish, she is an interpreter for Vernon Memorial Hospital and for Vernon County Human and Social Services. I asked Julee how she organizes her classes, what techniques she uses, and what philosophy inspires her.

Breath, Rhythm and Concentration. Before discussing Spanish, we talked about dance. For 18 years she taught dance and led festivals at Pleasant Ridge Waldorf School and for the last 3 years has been a guest teacher at PRWS. "Each class I focus on breath, rhythm and concentration. At the beginning of class, the breath, intake and outtake, comes through the expansion and contraction of the circle or of your own self—even one digit expanding and contracting. Then a rhythm exercise that goes from simple to complex. But then I always like to go backwards. Build complexity then go back to the simple. Exercises that fortify our ability to concentrate are the third component of opening exercises. Now it is time to focus on the heart of the lesson that ties to the whole curriculum. I'm teaching "The Shuhplattler", a Bavarian dance, and I start with just the percussive rhythmic part. Then I build on that. It's a folk dance done to Waltz, which is great because the group has already learned the Waltz. So you build on what's already there."

When it comes to teaching high school Spanish, "it's a whole new ballgame." Julee has been teaching Spanish at YIHS for the last 9 years to all levels and has organized the bi-annual trip to Guatemala for many years. For inspiration on how to structure her high school Spanish classes, she looks to a well-worn, two-page printout of Waldorf indications for foreign language teaching in the Upper school.

"In the 9th grade, the question is "what" so we focus on the mechanics of the language. In 10th you have the question "how", how does it work? So we look at poetry and how it sticks together. I have an exercise where students write all the words they know (sometimes it's only 10 words) and write a poem from them, freestyle. In the upper levels, the 11th grade question is "why": why is Spanish structured in the way it is? We look at word roots in Arabic and in Romance languages. For the 12th grade, the question of "who"—who are the people writing and speaking Spanish? We look at Spanish authors and how they express their folksoul. In the upper levels we read excerpts from literature; we start with creation stories, Spanish folk and fairy tales, ancient authors such as Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz and Cervantes, all the way to 19th and 20th century writers and their biographies. We ask, who were these writers in their own time? The grammar and vocab are all tied in with the literature and the biographies. So many Spanish authors were also activists; their writing was about social justice. This ties in with the 11th and 12th grade focus on "the quest."

That said, Julee explained how for many reasons the perfect progression of levels doesn't always work out. This year, for instance, many of the upper level students are traveling to Mexico to do a service work project with a Waldorf grade school in Guanajuato, Mexico. "On trip years, the focus is more on conversation and culture than on literature: learning useful phrases and cultural nuances they'll need to know."

The class: A structured experiment. "I like to open [a normal Spanish class] with a song, a poem, a quick game or rapid conversation exercise. I may put the timer on and tell them to





explain who they are to another person: one time invent a persona, next time explain who you really are. I always write on the board in Spanish the order of what's going to happen in class so we can refer to that. At the end of class I refer to it again. It's a process of review; we go backwards. I always try to speak completely in Spanish, but I assess comprehension constantly. That means, mostly, my students with more advanced skills are interpreting. I catch what they are not catching. For the class, I ask on a scale of 0-10 how much are you comprehending? My goal is to present the lesson in Spanish with 100% comprehension.



With grammar I like to give examples and ask students to solve the puzzle, the riddle, the *adivinanza*. I want them to solve it: not just me giving them clues and the answer. Just as you observe in the sciences and then theorize, if I want them to understand that in Spanish the adjective comes after the noun, I write, *El perro rojo come. El gato gris corre.* Etc. We read the examples, translate them, and then the students are to come to conclusions about the pattern, about the grammar rule. Can we figure this out? What's going on here? I keep the sentences and vocab simple and they can focus on the grammar concepts."

Julee also uses a technique called Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling (TPRS). In TPRS, the teacher uses a limited vocabulary to create a story with the class. Posing questions to students helps to fill in the details and the plot of the story, which is often absurd. Once complete, Julee has students draw a cartoon strip of the story, act it out, or tell it to a partner.

Keep it lively! "The only recommendation that Rudolf Steiner gave for the high school foreign language teachers was to regularly change their methods in order to keep from deadening the lessons. Whatever you do, just don't do it the same the whole year round. That's the only recommendation! I like the storytelling and re-telling because it gets students thinking. You create weird, silly little stories, but they remember them; it gives them an image to remember. These are my practical techniques, to create stories with imagery and to solve puzzles.

Other than that, I tell students to talk to themselves in Spanish. You are the interviewer and the interviewee. This is a really good thing to do. No one is judging you. Start simple with questions. (Julee then proceeds to demonstrate talking to herself in Spanish and French [Interviewer note: this was hilarious]).

My philosophy for teaching a foreign language is to get students speaking as much as possible. Students have to be willing to use their voice out loud. Also, I believe strongly that if you are not a native speaker, you need to find a way to live in the language. You need to connect with the folksoul of the language. Everyday a teacher must do something to live in the folksoul of the language. Everyday read something, talk to yourself, dance. Find and calculate ways to live in it."

THE SECRET LIVES OF STUDENTS:

STUDENT LIFE OUTSIDE SCHOOL

My life outside of school is really pretty boring and uneventful when I think about it. After school I usually come home and diligently do my homework, hangout with friends as much as possible, and when ever I can find a single spare moment, I sleep. Thus is my life. Just kidding, honestly during the week I am surprised I sleep at all. I split my time between playing the cello, giving cello lessons, practicing my Japanese, which I do almost constantly, cooking, drawing and painting whenever the mood strikes, and desperately trying to get everything in order for my summer trip to Japan. Where do friends come in, you might wonder? I reserve the occasional Friday night and Sunday for them. And Saturday, the best day of the week of course, is my day to recover. I spend almost the entire day sleeping. However, ask me when it's not so cold outside and it's a whole different story.

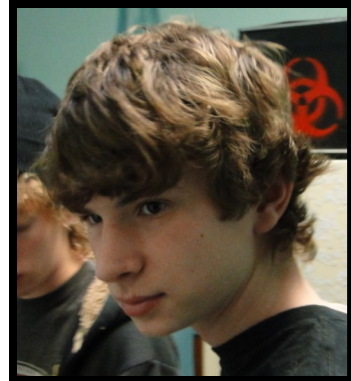
-Ayana Perry (Grade 11)

My life outside of school is a fairly awesome thing. That is because, of course, I am an adolescent and have virtually no big responsibilities outside of school. Being jobless I spend most of my free time with my friends, even though I just saw them at school all day. Most of the time, for lack of anywhere better to go in the winter, we hang out at my house. My room feels more like a conference room than a bedroom due to the high concentration of people that are always there. Luckily for me though, I love it. The biggest aspect of my life is the social aspect. My friends are very important to me, and rarely do I do something outside of school without one of them by my side.

-Sam Varney (Grade 11)

I usually have two different kinds of days after school. I live in the country so a lot of the time I have to ride the bus home. When I do this I talk to some of my friends from Westby school and maybe I'll get off at Westby to hang out with them. Most days I'll just ride the bus all the way home. Then I have to do chores at some point, I listen to music, and usually I will go on the computer and do homework and stuff. On days that I can stay in town I will hang out with friends and just chill. When there is not snow on the ground I like to longboard and skateboard.

-Kahlil Anacker (Grade 10)



I would say that most of my time is spent on music in some aspect, and by most of it, I mean pretty much all of it. I really enjoy writing, recording, editing and producing music, as well as mixing sets for live shows. I love making music in whatever form, from two acoustic guitars, to live rock shows, all the way to electronic music. I've been producing electronic music (or "Techno" as my teacher Matt would call all of it) for just over a year now.

I like to spend time with friends whenever possible to save me from myself... working for hours on end, alone, can create interesting thoughts, as well as moderate insanity. So I try to balance between the two, that's the point where I am the best off. In the short time of a year or so of working with recording and producing I have learned so much, but the funny thing about it is that one can never really know everything about it. That's why I love it, because I learn new things about it everyday.

-Shane "Kobra" Kouba (Grade 12)

When I am not in school I enjoy my freedom to do absolutely anything that I want to do whether it is reading an intriguing book with a cup of tea, practicing yoga, visiting with friends, walking in nature, etc. I love nature; it reminds me of how pure, real and holistic life truly is and how mine should be more similar to that of nature's life forms. It hushes my mind and brings it into a corresponding rhythm with my body and soul. These days I only spend time doing things I really enjoy doing considering my high school years are coming to an end so soon. This year I have gained a new appreciation for my school, good people, and strong motives. I am so fortunate to have received the blissful opportunity of attending YIHS for the past two years. I feel very prepared for life and its beautiful adventures to lead me out of this tiny town and onto my bigger life mission, my bigger purpose.

-Alyson Hornby (Grade 12)



I get off the bus, have a snack and then I will either do some chores or take a nap. However, what I do after school greatly depends on the season. On any given day I may spend my time stacking and splitting wood, biking, harvesting produce, feeding goats, or an assortment of many other things.

On weekends I wake up later than the usual 6:30am, often between 9 and 10 in the morning, and often after a late night of spending time doing various activities with my friends and sometimes family. I can stay up as late as I want as long as I am able to get up in the morning and do some sort of work involving plants, animals, or cleaning. Meals are always bigger and better on the weekends and I am more involved with them. I also spend an ungodly amount of time doing homework and preparing for school.

-Summer Willis (Grade 12)



THE PIT: THE PERSONALITY OF A STORAGE UNIT

BY MATTHEW VOZ

Every culture has its Mecca, a place that serves as the embodiment, the physical locus of an abstract idea, a philosophical mystery wrapped up in a solid palpable mass of corporeality. The French Revolutionaries had their Temple of Reason, the Catholics have their Vatican, The Jews have their Temple Mount, the Muslims their Kaaba, the patriots their Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, the Extraterrestrialists their Roswell. At Youth Initiative High School we have the Pit.

Like all of the other sites listed above, the Pit has a long and sometimes controversial history. It means different things to different people but yet is universally recognized as something which not only should, but *must* exist. It is a place of a thousand treasures, known and unknown. It is the first and last destination of the seeker. Its mysteries confound yet inspire us, and the role which it plays in the everyday life of our school swings like a pendulum between providence and punishment.

Before everything, the Pit is a real physical location. As one climbs the old stone composite stairs to the third floor of the Landmark Center, and enters through the double doors into the Youth Initiative High School proper, the door to the pit stands before you, flanked on the right by a long hall and on the left by a knight's chess move to the main office. Each morning students and staff pass by this door as it stands like a sentry before them. They hurry to their offices, to their classes, to their busy day's thousand distractions. But the Pit is silent, watchful, still, confident in its own potential.

When one achieves the courage to enter the Pit one finds the artifacts of a collective life most fully lived, the traces and the processes of a school which is vibrant, energetic, and resourceful. On the inside of the door great foam pads are affixed to deafen the sound of the music program's rock band. In the opposite corner a trap set sits, waiting to be beaten by sticks. Off to the side of a narrow passageway are guitar and bass amps with their shiny chrome knobs and their

black felt faces. In this way the Pit is not unlike the many hallowed garages that launched the careers of some of the great rock bands of America. The Pit then, can be seen as quintessentially patriotic, an homage to the youthful exuberance and creativity that has defined America since at least the late 1950's.

But this is not what the Pit *is*. The Pit is not only one thing, in the words of the great poet Walt Whitman, it "contains multitudes." Inside the door sits a tub of things lost and not yet found; Main Lesson Books that never made it home, an Old Navy sweatshirt that was swept away in a mad frenzy of cleaning, a notebook stuffed with





someone's overdue Algebra II homework. Fluorescent vinyl highway safety vests and blank envelopes waiting to be addressed and stuffed sit quietly next to one another on deep ply-wood storage shelves that reach from floor to ceiling, competing

for space with copper wires for the electricity class and cans of paint half full.

The Pit is a cross section of our collective life together. Is it messy? Sure, sometimes, maybe most of the time it is. But how many of our lives are complete at any one moment? Life, like the Pit, is a process both poetic and fluid, not merely the sum of its discrete moments. In a box near the filing cabinet there are a pile of irons for the sewing class, above them are huge vinyl maps in rolls from before the dawn of the Age of Computers. Fluorescent light bulbs, tablecloths, electrical cords of every length, color, gauge, and purpose wound neatly like skeins of yarn, candelabras, boxes of nails—in the Pit one may or may not find what one originally sought but one may also find something one never dreamt of finding. To me, that is the definition of hope.

On the east wall are two doors. The one on the left is thick steel, painted purple. Beyond it lie the costumes which adorn the actors in our school plays. To the right is another door with the words "TOP SPY" painted in blue letters on a cloth banner above it, this door leads out to the balcony of the auditorium. Between these three doors is this loyal room, always there, always trying to help.

There is a tendency to be ashamed of the Pit, it can be disorganized and chaotic, and it is certainly not the first place you might take a visitor. But do we not act in much the same way regarding our very persons? Do we offer our deepest secrets to mere acquaintances? No, and so the pit then also acts as a symbol of our shared intimacy. The people at this school are really people to one another, they know each others failures and successes just as the Pit knows our trash and our treasures.

The Pit is also a monument to community and generosity. It is a room filled with the donations of countless people. Whether it be a sewing machine or a power drill or sequin dress or a five gallon bucket there are few things in the Pit that have not been given in the spirit of sharing and good cheer.

So I am proud of our school, and I am proud of the Pit. In the end, it is a symbol of nearly all the characteristics we hope to instill in our students: resourcefulness, generosity, loyalty, creativity, ingenuity, and the belief that if you look hard enough for something you can find it.



Front to Back:
Leo Shonka, Charlie
Townesley, and Elijah
Kolenko

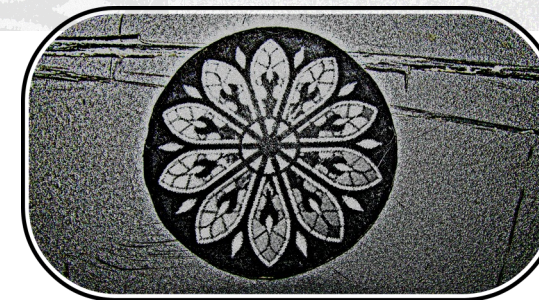


UPCOMING EVENTS AT YIHS:

- ★ **March 16**—Art Night and Donor Appreciation Gala
- ★ **March 29**— YIHS and PRWS Student Orchestra Performance
- ★ **March 30 & 31 and April 1**—YIHS' first ever musical, *Little Shop of Horrors*
- ★ **May 13**— Mothers Day Brunch Student Fundraiser
- ★ **May 17**—Senior Project Presentation Night
- ★ **June 3**—Graduation!

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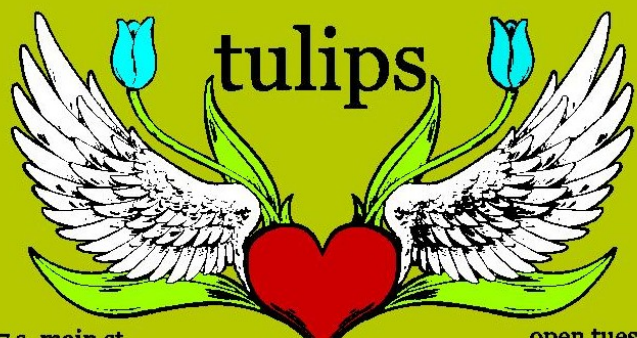


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