

Amplifier

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High school joins forces with community to combat underage drinking and drug use

JENNIFER SITTON

For years WLHS and other surrounding schools have attempted to combat the underground world of underage drinking and drug use. Recently, a group of dedicated community members have joined forces with school officials to bring this topic above ground, through a newly created Community Task Force.

"This is a community problem and not just in the schools," Julie Edwards, CTF

creator, co-chair and parent, said. "There is a lack of awareness and discussion, so it is my hope that through the CTF our community can gain a better understanding of the serious issues around us."

Community members have watched this problem grow for years, unacknowledged. According to Edwards, nearly 60% of high school students either drink illegally or do drugs such as prescription drugs, marijuana, cocaine and

heroin.

Some teens attend parties at which they toss random prescription drugs into a bowl, reach in and take whatever pills they grab. Because various prescription drugs can often be accessed from home medicine cabinets and the underground market, this issue is becoming more prevalent. However, this is not a problem only at WLHS, it seems to be a generational epidemic according to Edwards.

"We're not unique as a high school to have this drug problem," Lou Bailey, principal, said. "However, this is not solely a school issue. We can't solve this problem unless we have support from parents."

This support is beginning to take shape in the form of the CTF, as well as the addition of a parent advocate group that will help parents obtain current information and communicate with each other. The main goals of

the CTF are education and awareness.

The team includes Dr. Andrew Mendenhall, who specializes in addictions, school resource officer Mike Francis, representatives from the legal community including the DA's office, the City of West Linn, Young Life, Willamette Christian Church as well as Youth Advocates and the WLHS staff.

Community Task Force

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School security modeled after past experience

MARY EARP

The disappearance of Kyron Horman has prompted Portland schools to change its

"When a student misses one or more periods in a day there is an automated system that calls home to notify the parent or guardian, as well as e-mail

provide the best educational experience we can."

"I personally feel safe in the school," Alec Nakano, sophomore, said. "I feel like I can put my belongings anywhere, and enter the school without worry that I won't be safe."

All visitors at WLHS are required to sign in and show a visitor's pass while on school property. If a teacher has a guest in the classroom, he or she is supposed to inform the administration beforehand. Although the school has many policies such as these according to Holstrom, there is much freedom around the school because of the age of the students and the respect that the administration has for them.

"This is different from an elementary school," Holstrom said. "It's not quite the same. The security isn't as high."

This year, the school has published new crisis books, which inform teachers about emergency procedures including fire drills and health emergencies. The school evaluates its security plans yearly. According to Holstrom, if something major happens, another evaluation of security might be necessary.

"So much of life can never be written into a script to prepare for," Holstrom said. "There is always something that rewrites the book."

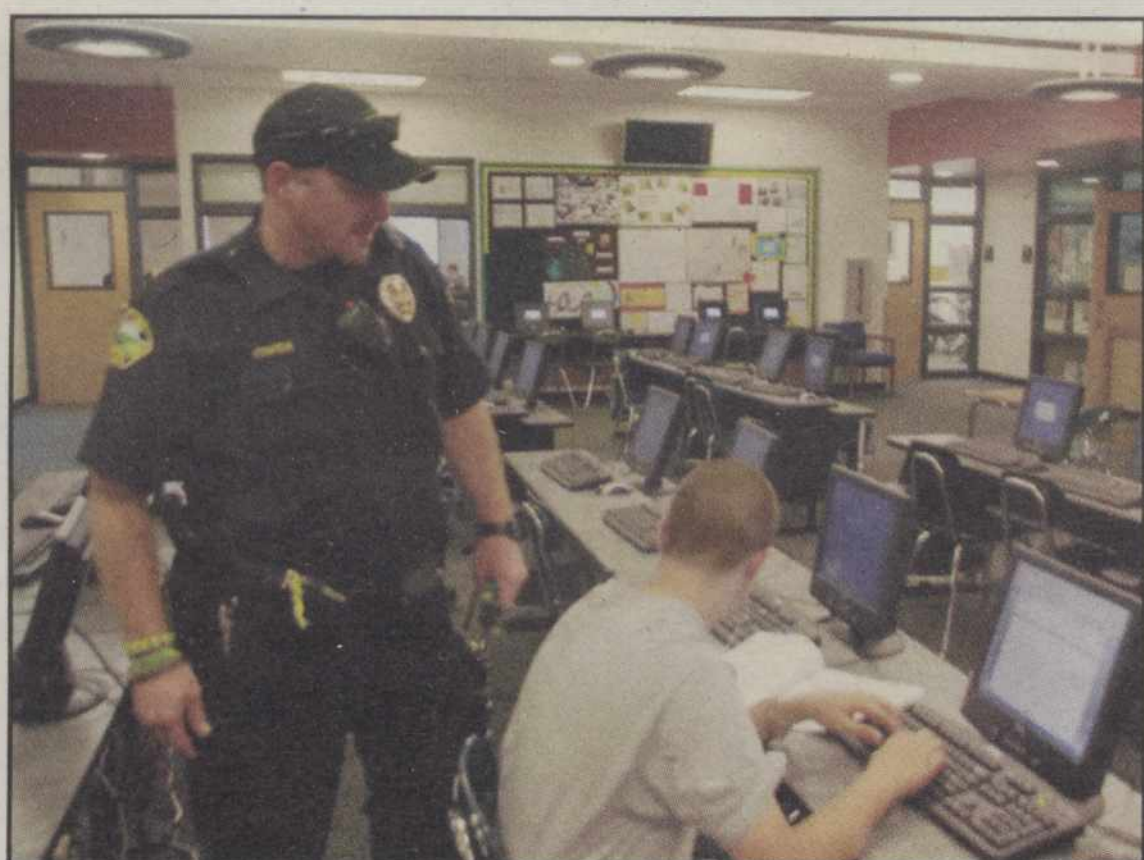


Photo by Patrick Douglas

Officer Mike Francis, school resource officer, works with the administration to defer drugs on campus and works with traffic safety. Francis, along with many other members of the staff, try their best to create a safe school environment.

security systems. With new automatic dialer systems, personal calls to parents when children are absent and new crisis response teams, students at West Linn may ask how secure are we?

"Anything major happening always prompts discussion for security," Rob Holstrom, assistant principal, said. "We always try to be safe."

The school already had in place many of the same security measures that Portland schools have recently implemented such as an automatic caller.

the guardians directly," Ashley Nelson, attendance secretary, said.

An Emergency Response Team (ERT) comprised of 11 members who deal with student health issues and various other problems is also in place. The school tries its best to make students feel safe, and according to students, they succeed.

"Everyone at the school is responsible for security," Mike Francis, school resource officer, said. "The ultimate goal is to have an environment that is safe and supports our mission to

Three National Merit Scholar finalists named

Three seniors, Samantha Ing, Sabrina Levy and Joshua Grelewicz, were recently named National Merit Scholar finalists. The prestigious award is based on students' achievement on the PSAT they took as juniors. Winners were originally notified that they were quarterfinalists before the group was narrowed down to 15,000 finalists nationwide.

"We are extremely proud of these incredible students and their dedication to academic success and so much more. We appreciate their commitment to the school and their hard work is officially recognized," Aaron Downs, Assistant Principal, said. "These are not just great students, but they are great members of our community."

All three of this year's finalists are academically driven as well as involved in numerous extracurricular activities. While they all share a common work ethic in school, this award meant something different to each winner.

"I FEEL
VERY FORTUNATE
TO HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY
TO WIN MONEY
PARA ESCUELA"
SAMANTHA ING
SAMANTHA ING

"I AM
HONORED
TO HAVE RECEIVED
THIS RECOGNITION,
BUT IT REALLY ONLY
REFLECTS ONE
DAY AND ONE
TEST."
SABRINA LEVY
SABRINA LEVY

"IT MAKES ME
FEEL PRETTY
GOOD.
PLUS, IT MIGHT HELP
ME GET A SCHOLARSHIP."
JOSHUA GRELEWICZ
JOSHUA GRELEWICZ



Photo by Alex Houston