

BEHIND THE WALL



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- The passing of the proposed merger and the reactions of students and teachers
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- What Student Council wants to see in this final year
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- Will Napper and the Quizbowl team's success in Burlington
- Why we shouldn't be called ELWCS



WCS-ELCS MERGE PASSES; STUDENTS EMOTIONAL

BY: LAWRENCE LOBDELL



The decision to merge the Elizabethtown-Lewis and Westport school districts passed by a significant margin on the evening of December 4, 2018. This news comes to most as bittersweet, seeing the end of our beloved Westport Central School as it merges with Elizabethtown-Lewis Central School. Just hours after the merge went through, Westport students grouped together to organize an unofficial Westport Pride

Day where students showed off their blue and white in celebration of the history of Westport, as well as to "pay respects" to the school we have lost.

Most teachers I talked to expressed a general excitement for a new beginning. Mrs. Brankman said that she will be sad not seeing the same kids in the building after 8th grade but is excited for what could be. Mr. Kapper said that a merger would have eventu-

ally been required but feels the way news and information, or lack thereof, was delivered was inappropriate. Mrs. Loher and Mrs. Olson both spoke about their excitement for new opportunities. Mr. Campagna is excited for something new and something different and says that we as a community can do two things: Be excited or sit around and pout about it. Most students I talked to had a more negative than optimis-

"A lot of students have many concerns, but rather than sitting around and fearing what you fear, go out and be vocal about it and make sure it doesn't happen."

MERGE PASSES

(CONTINUED)

BY: LAWRENCE LOBDELL

tic outlook. George Staats expressed how his school experience was just getting fun but now it's all going to change. Solomon Fair said that though there may be a silver lining, the cloud of uncertainty is still there.

Some students did look at this merge in better light. Magnus Kohler said that he thinks the merge will be good if everyone goes in with an open mind. Lauren Gough says that she is happy the merge went through and that she is excited for better classes and education. Hudson Stephens says that it's sad that we're losing our school

that we have worked so hard to maintain, but it's time for us to look forward instead of backward, and it's important to celebrate what we have accomplished as well as prepare ourselves for a successful future.

My personal opinion is that students need to be vocal about what they want to see in the merge. Part of the Journey is the end, and with the end of Westport means the beginning of the merged district. There will be new rules that need to be made and changed and new things will have the opportunity to be added, so get out there and

get what you want to see. A lot of students have many concerns, but rather than sitting around and fearing what you fear, go out and be vocal about it and make sure it doesn't happen. When a new board is elected, go in and get your answers and bring up your concerns. The only person who can do that is you; so get on it.

WHAT SCHOOL CAN GIVE YOU

BY: EDWARD NESBITT

"Learning to be kind can go a long way."

Being kind and having people to look up to can really lighten the mood and allow for a better social experience in school. School can teach us skills to be used in the real world. For example, learning how to prevent conflict in social interactions can help students figure out who they are and where they belong in groups. After all, students spend more time with their classmates and teachers than they spend with family.

There is so much more to school than book work and tests; school gives the first taste of working with new people. In this process, you help others by being kind and being a friend. It pays to have a heart and be there for others. There are many challenges in school and many of us do not share our problems which can hurt even more.

Family members don't always have to be the ones to listen to your problems. In school you have trusted friends and even teachers. Everyone has a favorite teacher, or two, that they can easily talk to about anything. Socially, school can give us a feeling of sadness, but it also gives us the feeling of hope that someone is always there for us. Personally, I have at least three teachers I could talk to if I ever felt the need. I have that connection, but it could be different in a bigger school. I'm glad that I am a part of a small school. I know everyone and have been around long enough to have a bond or connection with students and teachers alike.

Honestly, the moral is, if there is anything stressful or hurting you, there is someone in your school that cares and will

listen, so keep your head up and focus on what makes you better. But, don't forget to be kind to others as well because everyone deserves a friend. School can give us the chance to make friends and begin to form special, and sometimes, long-term bonds. You never know when something grand can come along. Learning to be kind and to socially fit in, can go a long way.

THE FINAL YEAR; A MESSAGE FROM STUDENT COUNCIL

BY: JEREMY ROSSI

Our time left...

As you may all know by now, this is the last year of Westport Central School. On December 4, 2018 both districts, Elizabethtown-Lewis and Westport, voted to merge schools. Whether you're excited, upset, nervous, we still have 6 months left as Westport Eagles this year and we should make the most of it! Westport's Student Council has tried to be as productive as possible this year and has tried to bring much joy and spirit to the student body. December has been the most ambitious month for us, with the Advent Calendar and daily seasonal fun, but what else can we do!?

The job of Student Council is simply to serve the students, advocate for them, and elevate the Westport experience. The easiest way to do that for us, is for students to come to us with new ideas. Especially

with the merger, it's the best time to embrace our Westport Heritage and go out with an Eagle's cry!

How can you share your ideas with Student Council? There are a few easy ways to share your thoughts with us. We are posting a suggestion box on the piano in the upstairs hallway if you want to write a note for us. We are very welcoming to students joining our meetings on Thursdays during lunch, which are held in Mrs. Brankman's room. If you're in high school, you also have your class representatives who can bring up your ideas to the council as well.

If you don't know who the representatives are, here is a list per class:

9th- **Liz Poe, Alexis Bauman**

10th- **Magnus Kohler, Ella King**

11th- **Lawrence Lobdell, Matthew Pribble**

12th- **Melissa Place, Jeremy Rossi**

Student Council would also like to hear your ideas about the merger. In what might be a confusing, emotional, happy, or hurtful time, we would like to be an outlet for students and hear ideas of what might make it a more positive experience. Both student councils, Elizabethtown and Westport, will likely be collaborating in the future to help students project their ideas. Please remember that in order for us to best serve, we need to understand that the merger has already passed, and that negative comments, especially those that are degrading, won't be given further consideration.

Hopefully your Student Council can make this the best year ever for Westport; we just need your help!

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WESTPORT CELEBRATES AN EARLY CHRISTMAS

BY: ANNETTE STEPHENS

"The town came alive with bundles of Westportians and Christmas cheer."

December first marked the 2018 "Christmas in Westport" celebration. The town came alive with bundles of Westportians and Christmas cheer. If you were unable to make it, here's what you missed: Jamb's was popping, the Bessboro Gift Shop was like stepping into a Christmas movie, the Ship Store made an off-season appearance, and the Ledge Hill Studio was in full swing. On top of these classic Westport businesses, the Boy Scouts were selling their Christmas trees like they were going out of style, as was the senior class of WCS with their annual wreath fund-

raiser. In the Federated church, a small indoor market showcased great gift ideas, and in the library, stories were read to children. Also a main attraction was our boys' varsity basketball coaching duo, Ike Tyler and Barry Morrison, grilling their famous hot dogs in Ballard Park, where the Chamber of Commerce Reindeer Run 5K started and finished. Coming in at the front of the pack in the race through town were Westport students Abbey Schwoebel, Rachel Storey and Annette Stephens. Along with the senior's wreath sale in the Heritage House, were the Masons

holding their annual Christmas party for kids where they could meet Santa, eat cookies and do holiday arts and crafts. Cookie decorating was also a fun and delicious event held in the Bradamant office. The final attraction of the day was the firemen's parade from Wadhams to Westport with lit up trucks, and Santa waving hello. While Westport can sometimes feel dry and desolate during the winter months, "Christmas in Westport" is a beautiful and exciting way to get everyone out and about and in proper holiday spirits.



WCS student, Elizabeth Olson, sits on Santa's lap at "Christmas in Westport"

NAPPER LEADS QUIZBOWL TEAM IN BURLINGTON

BY: MAGGIE PLOUFE



The PHAT, (Pre-Holiday Academic Tournament) in Burlington Vermont, otherwise known as the THICC, (The High-school Interscholastic Curriculum Competition) serves as the epitome of the

quizbowl season for many quiz-bowlers and reaches the height of all competition. Over 30 schools come together to play each other in eight matches to determine both school and individual champions of Quizbowl. Last year, Will Napper led our school to distinction with an individual rank of third place out of 250 students. This year was no different for Will Napper and the Varsity team of quiz-bowlers: Peter Vaiciulis, Hudson Stephens, McKenzie Stephens, and Patrick Fair, who together finished in 13th place out of 32 Varsity teams. Will Napper took the lead again placing 6th individually out of 201 total competitors. As for the WCS Novice team, Annette Stephens, Rafe Sim-

mer, Maggie Ploufe, and quiz-bowl rookie-of-the-year Lawrence Lobdell, the PHAT competitiveness may have been a little too THICC but they still came out with two wins which landed them a spot in the ranks at number 12 out of 16. Lawrence Lobdell racked up 105 points for the team in his first ever match and tournament. Overall, the tournament was successful, and the WCS quiz bowl team will now focus their attention on their primary league in Queensbury, (where they are currently ranked 7th out of 24) come January.

“Will Napper took the lead again, placing 6th individually out of 201 total competitors.”

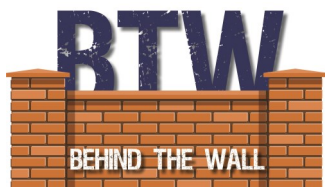
Happy Holidays from Behind the Wall



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"It's important that we make the remainder of this year the best it can be, as we cherish the time we have together in the small community many of us have spent 10 plus years developing."

DON'T CALL US ELWCS; AN IMMEDIATE REACTION TO THE MERGE

BY: HUDSON STEPHENS

So, the merge passed. Perhaps it was inevitable, perhaps not. Maybe there were other options to explore, had we been given the time, maybe there weren't. Regardless, it's important that we recognize where we are now, as well as where we have been and where we will be. Westport has been a center of educational integrity and achievement for years. Our students have consistently scored above average standardized test grades, working hard to better both themselves and the environment they are a part of, and our teachers have continually kept us among the top ranked schools in the county, state and even the country. Great students, athletes, artists, musicians and just plain good people have walked these halls, adding to the many pillars which make WCS so spectacular. For years, students and teachers alike have worked to maintain the things which make Westport so special: the drama club, the senior play, the Quiz Bowl team, a Math League team, a school newspaper, six basketball teams, a Green Team, an active Student Council, class governments, AP courses, a Future Business Leaders of America club, a Parent Teacher Student Organization, a slideshow committee, a yearbook club, an active news show, a model UN club, and so much more. Students and teachers have stretched themselves and sacrificed an immense amount of time and energy to keep these things going, so let's be proud. Let's be proud of what we've created at Westport, and proud of what those who came before

us created.

Having said this, it's important to believe that the dedication to the programs which have been a part of Westport for so long will continue in the years to come and will be contagious in the new school community. It's also important to recognize that ELCS has focused their attention on maintaining a number of programs as well, such as their fitness programs, their jazz band, and Model UN, for example. This means, that despite a lack of enthusiasm amongst our student body to unite with this school, good things can, and will, come out of it.

I think the hardest part right now for Westport students is a lack of pride in what we've been told we will be. We are proud of being from Westport. We are not proud to be from E-town or Lewis and we will likely not be proud to be from Elizabethtown-Lewis-Westport. In fact, I and many others, often times still struggle to find pride even in being a Griffin. The name often feels distant and unrecognizable, as well as quite frankly, a reminder of the failure of two formerly successful school districts. As harsh as that sounds, it's valid and it's true. If we are being told to give up our culture, our school pride, and our identity to help create something new, the least anyone could do is come up with a new name to call ourselves, and a new mascot to rally behind. We will no longer be Westport, and we will no longer be ELCS, we will be something brand new, so let's call ourselves something brand new. I know that it's just a name, but in a lot of

ways it's more than that. It's who we are. It's integral that we take the best of both our districts to create a unique identity, and with that a new title. Don't make us tell our friends and family that we go to Elizabethtown-Lewis-Westport Central School, or E-town, as most people already refer to ELCS. Lewis was dropped from the conversational reference to ELCS a long time ago, how long will it take for Westport to be? The most important thing for students is a sense of place, and that's difficult to maintain if you're spitting out three names every time you talk about your school.

On another note, it's important that we make the remainder of this year the best it can be, as we cherish the time we have together in the small community many of us have spent 10 plus years developing. It's also important that we mourn the loss of our school, the school which most of us expected to graduate from, and recognize the emotion and disappointment which many underclassmen are facing. Let's celebrate the wonderful things which have happened in this building, and acknowledge the sacrifice and commitment which so many people have provided. But above all, let's look to make our future good, and let's challenge Elizabethtown-Lewis to make us excited to merge with them, prove us wrong, show us what motivates and inspires them, and how they can help make our future better, not how we can better theirs.