

BEHIND THE WALL



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Special points of interest:

- Westport prepares to perform its final show
- Lady Eagles headed to Section VII Championship
- FBLA students win big in Lake George
- Student Council prepares for second half of the year
- New School Board set for productive year
- Boys Basketball ends abruptly

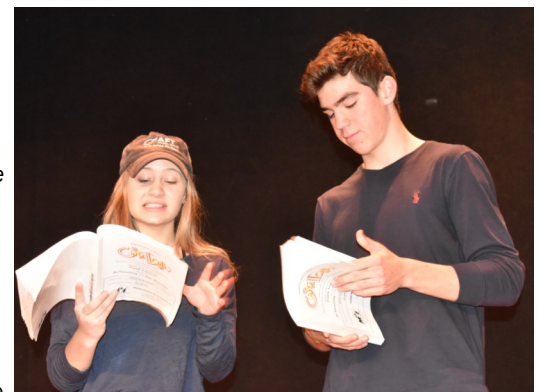
WCS DRAMA CLUB TO PERFORM *GUYS AND DOLLS*

FINAL WESTPORT PRODUCTION SET FOR WEEKEND OF MARCH 29TH

BY: ANNETTE STEPHENS

In its final run, the Westport Drama Department proudly presents *Guys and Dolls* coming to you live in the Bulles Auditorium at the end of March. With a re-established drama program, the popular play is sure to be the event of the month, and quite possibly climb towards the top of Westport's production "Most Favorite List." Fifth year director, Diana McGuigan George, is returning to the scene and has really outdone herself with casting this year. The production is nearly perfectly cast with Maggie Ploufe, appearing as the ditsy, outspoken lead of the Hot Box performers, Miss Adelaide, starring in her third consecu-

tive school production (previously Sandy in *Grease*, and Maisie in *The Boyfriend*). Alongside Ploufe is McKenzie Stephens as Nathan Detroit, Adelaide's fiance and a good-hearted gambler who just can't get out of the game. This is McKenzie's first lead in a school production, but he has plenty of spotlight experience in Boquet River Theater Festival productions starring as Prince Eric in *The*



Little Mermaid, and undoubtedly winning the best supporting actor award as Aldolpho in *The Drowsy Chaperone*. Hudson Stephens will star alongside his brother this year, appearing as the suave, successful gambler Sky Masterson. Like Ploufe, Hudson has plenty of experience,

GIRLS VARSITY WINS SECTION VII, HEADED TO REGIONALS MARCH 9TH



Eighth Grader Abbey Schwoebel sealed the deal for the young Westport Varsity team with a single foul shot in the dying seconds of the fourth quarter. The 38-37 win gave the Westport girls their 20th Section VII title, a fitting end to a legendary program. Senior Kaeli Brack contributed 12 points in the win, while Schwoebel added 13, Rachel Storey 6, Skylar Bisselle, 4 and Ella King, 3. Maggie Ploufe dished out 3 assists

and took a key offensive foul in the fourth to force the turnover. With the victory, Hokey Mckinley adds a Section Championship to his already achieved MVAC title in just his first year returning as head coach of the program. The girls will travel to Hudson Valley Community College on Saturday, March 9th to play Bishop Gibbons of Section II in a regional matchup.

“The auditorium is sure to be full of smiles, laughter, and applause in the final production of Westport’s historically renowned drama club.”

GUYS AND DOLLS (CONTINUED)

BY: ANNETTE STEPHENS

also appearing as a lead for the third consecutive time (previously Danny in *Grease*, and Tony in *The Boyfriend*). Abbey Schwoebel, returning from a few years away from a leading role, after playing Annie in *Annie* in 2016, will play the transformative Sarah Brown. Finally, the infamous song “Sit Down You’re Rocking The Boat, a certain show-stopper, sung by Nicely-nicely Johnson will be breathtakingly performed by veteran actor Lawrence Lobdell, (previously performing a spectacular

rendition of “Grease Lightning” in his charismatic role as Kenickie during the 2017 production of *Grease*).

The actors and production crew currently have 3 short weeks to pull out all the stops including a highly anticipated and inventive set, live music, and emotion-evoking musical numbers. With straight up bangers such as “Luck Be A Lady Tonight”, “A Bushel and A Peck”, “Adelaide’s Lament,” and “Sit Down You’re Rocking The Boat” the auditorium is sure to be full of smiles,

laughter, and applause in the final production of Westport’s historically renowned drama club. The show will premiere Friday, March 29th at 7:00 PM, Saturday the 30th at 7:00 PM and Sunday the 31st at 2PM. Believe me when I tell you that this is not a weekend you want to go out of town, as this play will be an historic moment in school history, and, beyond a shadow of a doubt, a good time.

FBLA STUDENTS PROVE SUCCESSFUL IN LAKE GEORGE

BY: MAGGIE PLOUFE

February 6th marked an important day for FBLA clubs around the region, as students from all over the North Country gathered to participate in competitive testing and interview processes at a hotel in Lake George. Despite likely being the smallest school in FBLA’s District 5, and probably the least acclimated, Westport students were able to place top 5 in several categories, and even earned a few podium finishes.

Here is a list of accolades:

Annette Stephens: 4th in Entrepreneurship

Maggie Ploufe: 5th in Career and Financial Management

Rachel Storey: 3rd in Intro to Financial Math

Will Napper: 4th in Computer Applications and 2nd in

Sports Management

Hudson Stephens: 5th in Economics and 1st in Sports Management

Peter Vaiciulis: 4th in Personal Finance and 2nd in Business Communications

Congratulations to all of our FBLA participants!



MID-YEAR MEETING WITH STUDENT COUNCIL PRESIDENT

BY: JEREMY ROSSI

In Westport Central's final year, the Student Council has been trying to go BIG! This has been an incredible year so far for our Student Council. Buzz around the school is that this has been the most productive and fun year they've ever had!

Mr. Meyer and staff have been super this year and have allowed us do some really cool activities already in the first two quarters. We've been able to have a Spirit Week for both soccer and basketball. To celebrate the Thanksgiving holiday, members of the Student Council purchased and served pie to everyone. Over the month of December, Student Council added a festive touch to the school, and by the end of the month, the halls were looking very jolly with decorations. In January, we even threw one of the first semi-formals the high school has had in a while!

However, we still have several weeks of school left, and we aren't going to let them go to waste! We want to make this year "out of this world." Hearing students say they loved an activity we've put on, just pumps us up to do more. I can't spill all the top secret beans, but we already have some cool ideas in mind. Also, a student suggestion box has been added by the piano in the main upstairs hall for student ideas, and you can always find us on Thursdays, during lunch, meeting in Mrs. Brankman's room.

I've asked students what they think of the activities going on throughout the year and everyone has had something positive to say. Owen Pierce especially had some positive words about pie day; however, they were barely audible through mouthfuls of pumpkin. Despite my want to admit it, the juniors were all ecstatic

when they beat the seniors in dodgeball. (However, this is the first time they've ever beat us in anything). Members of the Council also feel that this year has been amazing. Ella King and Lawrence Lobdell both expressed that this has been a productive, fun year. I myself have had a blast, and appreciate everything everyone has done so far. I only have positive things to say. It has been a real group effort. A special thank you to our kick-butt advisor Mrs. Brankman, for steering the ship, filling out forms, sending emails, helping get things, and just plain old making things happen!

Student Council aims to keep up the student-centered work in the second half of the year. We want your help with a grand finale being planned for the end of the year, so fill out suggestion slips!

"Student council aims to keep up the good work in the second half of the year."

THE POWER OF SECOND CHANCES

BY: EDWARD NESBITT

As a senior, the time from kindergarten to now has been a great adventure. Personally, I started school shy and not having friends and doing poorly in my academics. All through elementary was an interesting time and full of surprises. Then High School hit and it wasn't that horrible because I had my sister in the halls, and knowing I had someone really helped and so did sports. I never played sports until 7th grade and I reconnected with some friends and thus began a second chance. Now that's enough about me, I only wanted to say, in our time as stu-

dents, we should take advantage of second chances and not dwell in fear. We all have our ups and downs, but we always seem to find the willpower to move on and keep fighting the daily sadness. So, all the fear from one year to another, or the loss of a friendship or anything you have had in life, should be dealt with, and as a person who always shuts down and avoids talking openly about why I'm upset, you shouldn't do it. Your friends or family can help. You should always have one person that means the world to you and vice versa, so that way there's always

open talk and ways to grow and develop the best possible way you can.

"We all have our ups and downs, but we always seem to find the willpower to move on"

NEW SCHOOL BOARD TO EXPLORE ALTERNATIVE FORMS OF BUILDING USE AND PROGRAM DESIGN

PHIL MERO ELECTED PRESIDENT, EXCLUSIVE STATEMENTS FROM NEW BOARD MEMBERS

BY: HUDSON STEPHENS

"I look forward to working with the new Board and the district in the months ahead." - District Superintendent Dr. Mark Davey

"We have a fantastic opportunity to mold the future of education for students and everyone's input will be important as we move forward." - School Board President Phil Mero

Phil Mero, former student, teacher, and father of two alumni at Westport Central School, led all school board candidates on Tuesday, the 29th of January, with an unprecedented 457 votes. He was followed by fellow Westport residents Heather Reynolds (447) and Suzanne Russell (308), who will join him in serving a three-year term, set to end June of 2022. Alan Jones (295) and Karin Demuro (284) of Elizabethtown will serve two year terms, while Sarah Kullman (263) and Dina Garvey (243) of Lewis will each serve one. Of the 12 additional candidates, notable runner ups included Douglas Spilling of Elizabethtown with 242 votes, Nicole Sudduth of Westport with 220, and Micah Stewart of Westport with 210.

Following the conclusion of the vote tally on the evening of January 29th, the District Superintendent of Champlain Valley Educational Services, Dr. Mark Davey, congratulated the newly elected board members with the following statement: "The new ELW district was fortunate to have an excellent field of 19 candidates to choose from in forming their new Board of Education. I look forward to working with the new Board and the district in the months ahead. Now begins an exciting new chapter for both communities going forward."

It's an exciting time for the new board, who have every opportunity to create a district

which stands above the rest, both in educational integrity and cultural rigor. They are the architects who will construct the future for all of our students, as well as aspects of our community, and therefore, find themselves with a high degree of responsibility. This past month I reached out to each member, hoping to get a feel for exactly what each of them wants to accomplish in the coming months and years, and I received a variety of valuable information. Phil Mero began by explaining how excited he is to begin working with the administration, faculty, staff, and students of our new district, and then went on to release the following: "We have a fantastic opportunity to mold the future of education for students and everyone's input will be important as we move forward. I believe that a short term goal for the district would be to develop mission and vision statements that outline the district's educational philosophy and goals for the district. The long term goals would be driven by our mission and vision. I believe that we need to be focused on providing students with the knowledge and skills to be successful in whatever path they decide to follow in life. This can be a challenge because everyone learns differently and has different educational needs and wants. We need to provide a wide variety of educational and social opportunities

and supports. This all needs to be done within the financial constraints placed on us by New York State while keeping in mind the needs of the district residents as well. I believe that by combining the assets of the two previously existing districts and formulating a plan to utilize these assets in the most efficient manner, the whole should exceed the sum of the parts. And the two were pretty great to begin with! This is an exciting time and I am honored to have been chosen to be a part of the process!" Heather Reynolds, mother of two current WCS students, told us: "I am excited to be part of this historical time in our new district. The possibilities are wide open. I'm eager to collaborate with educators, fellow board members, community, and students to ensure that we maximize the opportunities presented and create an extraordinary educational experience for our children. I feel it is very important to honor and continue the traditions of each school, sharing our experiences. I'm an advocate for including the student voice in decisions whenever possible. My short and long term objectives as a member of the board are to see this to success. I am determined to make this merger succeed. There is a lot of work to do before the doors of the new district open, and I hope students and community members are willing to be partners with the board in this

process.”

Sarah Kullman, NYS Forest Ranger and mother of two current ELCS students, and one future student, replied with the following: “This new school board has a lot to accomplish in a short period of time! Forming a budget and choosing a Superintendent are just two of the major tasks we have ahead. In addition to that, my hope is that we will be able to offer new courses to the students in September and that we also be able to help guide these communities to a new united school district. As always, I welcome any thoughts, concerns or suggestions from students as to what they would like to see in the new ELW District.”

Dina Garvey released the following: “As you are all aware there is much work to be done, but there are a few items that need immediate attention. At the top of the list is the establishment of a budget, as this needs to be completed by April. The selection of a new school Superintendent, as well. Contract negotiations are certainly needed in a timely fashion. The placement of a long-term financial plan is imperative to ensure that building and incentive aid is viable for years to come. I feel that there needs to be much input from students, faculty, staff, community members and taxpayers, and I look forward to hearing from all with their input.”

At the first board meeting on Wednesday, the 27th of February, members were sworn in by Dr. Mark Davey, with the exception of Karin Demuro, who was unable to attend. Following the ceremony, Mrs. Atwell was appointed the district clerk, and it was decided that the office of the ELW district will be in Westport. Phil Mero was then nominated for President by current Westport Board member Sue



Phil Mero, President of the new school board

Russell, and was voted in unanimously. Alan Jones was voted in as Vice President moments later. A variety of subjects were then discussed including meeting times, school emails, a new school website, and the future of our out-of-district students, before an executive session took place. Upon returning from the lengthy hour-and a half break, the board went through a plethora of routine motions including the selection of the official newspapers, (The Sun and The Press Republican) the appointment of Dr. Davey as their district representative, and the continued usage of Champlain National Bank.

A presentation from Mr. Osborne suggested that the following transition advisory teams be created, headed by the following individuals: School Identity (Mr. Scott Osborne), Curriculum Programming (Mr. Joshua Meyer), Athletics (Mr. Paul Buehler and Mr. Tom Smith), Extra-Curricular Programs (Rob Witkiewicz), Special Education (Robin Douglass), Facilities and Transportation (Eric Bell), Technology (Mr. Joshua Meyer), Code of Conduct (Rob Witkiewicz). Mr. Osborne also mentioned that should the Board decide to come up with a new name, it would need to be decided on by June 14th. Mr. Meyer followed with a presentation on building us-

age and distribution, where he suggested that instead of following the Final Merger Study Report’s recommended plan, we explore the option of a Pre K-6th grade in E-town and a 7th-12th grade in Westport. He also made it clear, that while Westport was his primary suggestion, the elementary school and secondary school could reside in either district, as long as they remained together. This received a lot of positive responses from both Board members and the general public, which makes it seem that a high school in Westport is not all that far-fetched.

Overall, the 5 hour long meeting proved extremely productive, and though the board has a lot of work to do in the coming months, they certainly seem motivated. Of all the topics discussed, it seemed the most urgent was that of grade distribution amongst buildings. Hopefuls from the meeting exclaimed that a decision could be made by the next meeting (Monday, March 4th), but were quickly dismissed by naysayers who are far too used to waiting long periods of time for decisions to be made. It’s an exciting time for students, faculty, and community members alike, as we wait patiently to learn about the future of our district.

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BOYS BASKETBALL SEASON ENDS ABRUPTLY

BY: LAWRENCE LOBDELL

The Westport Boys' Varsity Basketball team, led by Coach Ike Tyler, ended its final season early. The coaches, the seniors on the team, and administration made the decision because of two members being kicked off the team after being caught, for a second time, with vape products on them in the school building. (These students have requested to remain anonymous.) This left the varsity team with only five players. The junior varsity team had nine players that they could pull from to bring up, but not wanting to ruin the rest of the junior varsity boys season, they decided to just pull the plug.

Captain Hudson Stephens spent half an hour with Mr. Meyer and Mr. Smith, Athletic Coordinator, discussing possible alternative punishments for the two students besides suspension from athletics.

The meeting concluded with Mr. Meyer and Mr. Smith unable to change the punishment. Coach Ike Tyler told the team that he felt there was no point in going further in the season with only five

players, and after meeting with the seniors, the season was over.

The decision to end the season was very controversial, causing quite the drama within the MVAC. Crown Point, Seton, and Schroon Lake were supposed to face our Eagles, but because of our forfeiture, those teams didn't get to play those games. A player from Schroon Lake was predicted to receive his highly coveted 1,000 points in the Westport game. People have also pointed out that Westport did have enough players to finish out the rest of the season. With no subs, the numbers are not ideal, but it was still enough to at least end the season. After these events, the MVAC has made a rule that a team must continue playing if they have started the season and have the minimum amount of eligible players.

Kaleb Pettit, a sophomore and player on the Varsity Team, understood why the Varsity team ended their season and was under the impression that he would be

able to play the rest of the season on the Junior Varsity team. He practiced with them and even competed in their game against Crown Point before the Varsity team had officially decided to pull the plug on the remainder of the season. All was well until the day the Junior Varsity team was scheduled to play Schroon Lake. Pettit was informed that he would not be able to play in that game because he was originally a Varsity player and the team chose to end their season early. The Junior Varsity team members and Pettit were upset because within the rules of the League, he should have been able to compete. Varsity and Junior Varsity players are allowed to go between Varsity and Junior Varsity as long as they play only twenty games by the end of the season. It was not against the rules, the Junior Varsity team wanted him to play and finish out the season. Pettit didn't even have a voice on whether or not the Varsity team ended their season, but Mr. Smith

and Mr. Meyer made the decision to not allow him to play. This, along with the Varsity season being cancelled, made students feel that those students who did nothing wrong were punished more than the students who vaped.

This whole debacle opens a bigger conversation about teens and vaping. This month a representative talked to middle and high school students about the dangers of vaping. To sum up the presentation: vaping is very bad. It's addictive, causes severe lung damage, costs a ton of money, and vaping makes you four times more likely to smoke cigarettes in the future. The big companies selling it want you to get addicted. You're young and your brain isn't fully developed, so it's even easier to get addicted.

Vaping isn't a joke. If your friends are doing it, encourage them to stop. If you're doing it, just stop. It's not worth it. It will only do you and all the people around you harm. It really isn't worth getting suspended, getting addicted, and ruining your lungs all for a little buzz.



The Final Five members of Westport Eagles Boys Varsity Basketball