

THE PERFORMER

Charter School

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By: Jackie Bastidas

The Lehigh Valley Charter High School for the Performing Arts (LVPA) is considered by many students a “home away from home” and an open, healthy environment. Being a public charter school, LVPA relies on the funds for public schools from Pennsylvania’s state tax, sponsors, and kind benefactors who donate to our place of academic and artistic education. Tensions run high in regards to the transfer of funds from the public “home schools” and charter schools, including LVPA, LVA and other local charter schools. The chain of events is as follows: homeowners pay taxes, a percentage of those taxes go to funding public schools, and public schools send money to charter schools in exchange for the student they no longer are responsible for. However, public schools keep a percentage of the funds for each student, therefore, charter schools are not reimbursed the full amount, making it hard to stay afloat without the help



of donations and sponsors.

The facts are: an average 70% cost per student is passed on to charter schools; charter schools receive no money for construction and repairs, unlike the districts; and charter schools currently educate more than 70,000 children in Pennsylvania with an additional 24,000 on waiting lists.

As all students at LVPA know, funding was cut in the 2011/ 2012 budget. These budget cuts are taking place across the country, not just in Pennsylvania. Because of this, school programs, teachers, and students alike are taking a hit. “Campaign for America’s Future” provided evidence suggesting budget cutbacks from early childhood educational programs increase class sizes and lead to the termination of Art, Music, PE, and other electives from schools. In high schools, Advanced Placement courses, extracurricular activities, Foreign Language, and Technology classes are the first types of courses lost when bud-

gets are cut. Drawing on case studies in five states, the “Campaign for America’s Future” shows that states across the country fail to meet the requirements of reinstating adequate funding to public charter schools. Statewide, funding to charter schools was cut by 13%. However, numerous counties and districts have increased cuts to more than 13%. Mifflin County in Pennsylvania, though not a charter school but rather a body of schools, faced a 12% decrease in state funding as well as declining enrollment. The school district closed an approximate 40% of schools and dismissed an additional 11% of their staff. Class sizes go up while diversity in course selection drops.

Superintendents from public schools in counties including Lehigh and Northampton feel that “using vouchers to fund private school or to funnel public school dollars away from local schools to fund charter schools is fundamentally wrong and inequitable” (bethlehem.patch.com). Why would superintendents need money for a student they aren’t responsible for and don’t have to pay for, whether it be towards supplies or otherwise? Pennsylvania, as a whole, discontinued the practice of partial reimbursement for public schools in the case of a charter school student. Who really needs the proper funds when the education of a child is at risk: the school educating them or the one that child chose not to attend?

In the School District of Philadelphia, Governor Corbett changed state law in order to defund charter schools. The Pennsylvania Coalition of Public Charter Schools protested in a letter to the Governor. In changing the law, the Philadelphia school district would cut charter school funding an additional 13%, an estimated \$57 million. The money would then be transferred to the School District of Philadelphia as “compensation for children the District does not educate” (pacharters.org). Public schools are allowed to subtract the cost of transportation from the 70% given to charter schools. Public schools are still expected to pay for heat, electricity, and water in the building. The loss of students greatly effect how their facility is managed.

The benefits of charter schools are that they meet the needs of children that are not met at their “home school.” Charter schools like LVPA provide a hands-on, unique education that cannot be received anywhere else in the Nation at a high school level.

Love Game

By: Aly Wolf and
Kalina Mellman

Well, my friends, Valentine's Day is just around the corner. Now is the time to really get to know your significant other. In the style of "The Newlywed Game," The Performer used a simple questionnaire to interview your fellow students and their counterparts about their knowledge of each other. Note: Bolded answers signify a correct match!

Cont. on page 3 (Love)

YOUR NAME:

Sean Reinert

YOUR BOYFRIEND OR GIRLFRIENDS NAME:

Kate Smith

List 3 words that would best describe your significant other:

Loving, beautiful, amazing

List 3 words that would best describe you:

Caring, loving, handsome

Where would your significant other rather go on a date?

Stay in

Where would you rather go on a date?

Stay in

What is your significant other's favorite thing about you?

I know how to make her happy, no matter how upset she is.

What is your favorite thing about your significant other?

She loves me like I'm the only one in her life.

What is your significant other's opinion of Valentine's Day?

It's overrated.

What is your opinion of Valentine's Day?

It's unnecessary.

YOUR NAME:

Kate Smith

YOUR BOYFRIEND OR GIRLFRIENDS NAME:

Sean Reinert

List 3 words that would best describe your significant other:

Outgoing, **compassionate**, fun

List 3 words that would best describe you:

Determined, shy, **compassionate**

Where would your significant other rather go on a date?

Concert

Where would you rather go on a date?

Stay in

What is your significant other's favorite thing about you?

I'm caring.

What is your favorite thing about your significant other?

He's always trying to make me laugh/ smile, from randomly grabbing my hand and slow dancing with me in a store to sending me a simple letter, even when we talk every day.

What is your significant other's opinion of Valentine's Day?

Just a day.

What is your opinion of Valentine's Day?

It's unnecessary. Everyday should be a day that you tell your loved ones how much you love and care about them. Tomorrows aren't guaranteed.

Local Skiing and Snowboarding

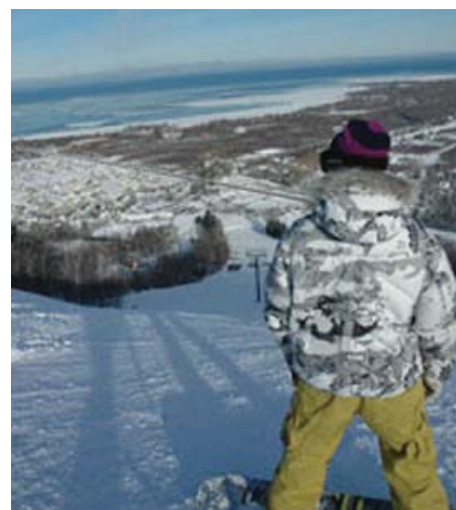
By: Gina Lerman

Cold air whipping past your face, the feeling of fresh powder beneath you, being on top of the world- literally: these experiences are what make skiing and snowboarding more than just expensive hobbies to some people. Especially in this area, with four great places to ride all under an hour away, many adventurous kids cherish Pennsylvania's winter months and consider snowboarding an integral part of their lives.

Some groups of people spend all their waking hours on the mountain, riding the slopes and being part of the lifestyle. These are usually the same people one might see there almost every day, whether they're landing a big jump or even instructing young children on how to ski or board.

Lexi Blazinski, a junior Visual Art major at LVPA, dedicates herself to riding. When asked about some of her favorite parts of snowboarding, she said, "I snowboard because it takes my mind off of things that actually matter, such as school and work. There's nothing better than shredding some Blue Mountain pow!"

Unfortunately, the severely disappointing lack of snow lately means that, while the local mountains are open, groomed, and ready to ride, trails remain scarce. Jack Frost/ Big Boulder and Camelback Mountain Resort in the Poconos currently have the most trails open, due to their locations in the far north. Blue Mountain Palmerton and Bear Creek Resort in Macungie are both currently open and making snow whenever the temperature drops low enough. With about two months left in the ski season, here's to hoping for some real snow soon!



SHRED DA POW!

Review: *xtrvskmk* by XVSK

By: Devon Zilinek

The band XVSK, also known as Exter vs Kimock, hails from our home town of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. The members consist of cellist and vocalist Trevor Exter and percussionist John Kimock. Their music can be characterized as a mix between Indie rock, Americana rock, and Improvisation. XVSK's latest album, *xtrvskmk*, shows off their interesting mix of styles well.

The album starts off with the catchy song "On the Night Train." The chorus has a beat listeners can't help but bob along with, making it a great way to start off the album. The song leads into the track entitled "Mexico." This track has an apparent Folk inspired sound in which Exter shows off his strange way of playing cello. Unlike the usual way of bowing or strumming, Exter plays the song's melody by slapping the strings of the cello. The method of slapping on the stings makes the cello sound like an acoustic guitar being picked. "Good Old Days," the third track on the album, strangely mixes classical cello technique and calm electronic sounds. The two techniques work surprisingly well together and lead into their next catchy hit entitled "Hits." On "Hits," Exter sings of having the potential to do great things but never actually doing them. Next on the track list are "DeAnn" and "Marty," two electronic inspired songs which calm the listener down after the energy of "Hits." "Marty" has the sound of a folk song played backwards. *Xtrvskmk* finishes off with the relaxed melodies of "Drink Deep," a 5 minute song packed with emotion, perfectly ending the album.

Xtrvskmk is an exquisite album. XVSK, as a band, differs greatly from all popular music today. Their album displays a great mix of styles, from catchy hits to electronic-inspired interludes and relaxing, emotional ballads. Best of all, anyone can obtain *xtrvskmk* for free! Just go to XVSK's website (extervskimock.com) and download the album.



(Love) from page 2

Relationships are never easy. During the "season of love," couples find it interesting to wonder how much they know about each other. Sometimes, the results might be surprising. It's nice to see some couples know each other well; but more importantly, in a relationship, one must know him or her self and ultimately grow to accept and cherish personal flaws. If you're single, focus Valentine's Day energy on getting to know and love yourself, because in the end, you're the only person who will never let you down.

YOUR NAME:
Samuel Radogna

YOUR BOYFRIEND OR GIRLFRIEND'S NAME:
Demi DeJesse

List 3 words that would best describe your significant other:
Caring, stubborn, gorgeous

List 3 words that would best describe you:
Lazy, understanding, tall

Where would your significant other rather go on a date?
Concert

Where would you rather go on a date?
Dinner

What is your significant other's favorite thing about you?
My personality

What is your favorite thing about your significant other?
Her smile

What is your significant other's opinion of Valentine's Day?
A holiday to show love.

What is your opinion of Valentine's Day?
A holiday to show love.

YOUR NAME:
Demi DeJesse

YOUR BOYFRIEND OR GIRLFRIEND'S NAME:
Samuel Radogna

List 3 words that would best describe your significant other:
Intelligent, beautiful & inspirational

List 3 words that would best describe you:
Down to earth, **caring & driven**

Where would your significant other rather go on a date?
Concert

Where would you rather go on a date?
Concert

What is your significant other's favorite thing about you?
Smile

What is your favorite thing about your significant other?
Personality

What is your significant other's opinion of Valentine's Day?
It's just any other day for Samuel. He shows me how much he loves me every single day.

What is your opinion of Valentine's Day?
It's just like any other day to me. You should show the ones you love how much you love them every day. I'm not a romantic kind of girl, so I honestly don't care much for it.

Humorous Article

By: Tabitha Arnold

There comes a time in every adorable little boy and girl's life when they must make the transition into adulthood. Unfortunately, the road there isn't always a pleasant one. While some manage to scrape by with little to no embarrassment, the rest of the world's children are left to struggle through the most awkward phase of their lives: middle school. Some of the following experiences encountered in middle school are more grueling than others, but they are all relatable to anyone who has gone through those years. The middle school years are when most children stop letting their mothers dress them. However, since they are still very unsure of themselves, as far as individuality is concerned, they usually tend to imitate what their friends are wearing. In the modern American school system, the clothing article of choice would be... the polo shirt. No one knows of its appeal, but nevertheless, male and female alike follow the crowd and stop by their local preppy, tween outlet store to pick up 10 or 20 polos.

One perk of jumping on the polo shirt bandwagon is that it could potentially lead to a high enough degree of popularity to attract a mate. Most people wish never again to mention their middle school relationships once they reach high school. A spike in hormone levels and added peer pressure amounts to the simple phrase being repeated over and over throughout the hallways: "Hey, my friend wants you go out with him." Affection also comes in the form of Instant Messaging, handwritten notes, or whatever other method children can utilize that helps them avoid talking face-to-face. The highlights of the relationship include sitting next to each other at lunch, going to the movies, and maybe holding hands. While the average "Hot Item" lasts between a week and a month, the gossip about it seems never to end.

Of course, it must be acknowledged that middle school affects boys and girls in very different ways. A girl will not change size much; she's lucky if a few inches are added to her height. Her voice will stay relatively the same. However, there is the issue of breasts. Becoming a woman strikes at a very uncomfortable time; some girls will have developed feminine bodies very early on, while others will not feel their hormones kick in until years later. One way or another, they're bound to feel alienated. To boot, many parents let their daughters wear makeup at this age. Girls in polo shirts, who have just enough breasts to flatten against their clavicle to insinuate cleavage, with eyes surrounded by crusty, black obelisks, populate the halls. If a girl doesn't have the same body type and parental limitations, she might as well give up on popularity once these girls start to show up.

For a boy, the gap between maturity and childhood cannot be imitated using a caked layer of L'Oreal products. For a while, everything is fine and dandy; a male child can slip under the radar of physical awkwardness. Then, the poor, average boy notices that all of his friends have grown six inches overnight. The pitch of their voices have plunged about five octaves, and they are sprouting hair from every pore. Both sides of this spectrum become very unpleasant. The poor, undeveloped kid starts to feel horribly uncomfortable about his baby-smooth hairless skin, his height, with which he still can't access ALL of the roller coasters at the amusement park, and his childhood voice. The boy who just hit puberty enters into a bad habit of waking up screaming because every morning he is taller and more acne covers his face. Sweat, stink, and pimples are overwhelming things to add to his list of insecurities. No matter how the issue is approached, puberty is something that is going to take some time to get under control.

Seeing as middle school years have already been labeled as the terrifying shark tank in the aquarium of life, parents think it is appropriate to throw an extra bundle of meat into the social bloodbath. This is the phase of growing up when a child must wear braces, glasses, and retainers. This "Work in Progress" phase, coupled with the awkward hair that was perfectly fine before the apparatus went on, can turn one's social life into a disaster. Between maneuvering out of the line of camera vision, avoiding projectile saliva when having a conversation with someone, and trying hard not to smile lest you flash your new 1-inch strip of pink gums over the wires and brackets that are your teeth, nothing stresses the children out more than appearance. Having braces, glasses, and a retainer is anything short of disastrous to a tween, whose trademark outlook on life is that everything is surely "the end of the world." This is where the bombardment of awkwardness seemingly culminates into the death of their social life, forever. Thankfully, there is a light at the end of the tunnel. Yes, middle school is the most awkward time of a person's life, but it is a learning process, a necessary phase on the journey to becoming a mature adult. And most importantly: for us as high schoolers, it is over.

How to Style Velvet

By: Devon Zilinek

When most people hear the word "velvet," they think of those heavy, itchy, holiday dresses they wore as a kid. However, velvet has been reinvented, becoming one of the hottest trends for the winter 2012 fashion season. Many of the top designers utilize velvet in their collections. A great option for the winter, velvet retains warmth and coziness, while still appearing stylish.

Many people may feel they would look silly wearing velvet. This is not the case; velvet can be subtly integrated into anyone's everyday wardrobe. Try mixing classic pieces, such as jeans or a basic cotton tee shirt, with velvet items. Some trendy velvet items include ballet flats and blazers. The ballet flats add interest to an outfit without standing out too much, and a velvet blazer not only looks chic but also keeps one very warm during the brisk winter season. Dark colors create a less flashy velvet statement. Colors like maroon, navy, and, of course, black, show off velvet's texture up close, but from farther away, can appear like any other fabric.

For parties or nights out, one can be more daring with velvet. A velvet skirt always stands as a good option. A navy velvet skirt can look like a classic denim skirt from afar, but, when one views it up close, its luxe velvet texture radiates. Pair the skirt with a simplistic top, adorned with some unique shoulder accents. Another option, a velvet dress, looks great in a jewel tone, paired with edgy boots and a fun animal print bag. When wearing velvet, remember the key rule: do not wear more than one velvet item at a time. Too much velvet in an outfit can look tacky.

Velvet greatly jazzes up any winter wardrobe. Simply wear dark colored velvet pieces with wardrobe staples or fun colored velvet items for a bold statement. Regardless of how one decides to wear velvet, the fabric leaves an array of opportunities for fun and play!



Teacher Feature: Mr. Walsh English Teacher

By: Tabitha Arnold

What is your favorite part about working at LVPA? Why?

I truly enjoy the diversity that makes up the LVPA community. It is an honor to work everyday with students who come from a variety of backgrounds and have an array of artistic interests. LVPA is a great place to work, because I am constantly learning from my students, as they teach me various elements that deal with their majors.

If you were a student at the school, which major(s) would you most likely be in?

I would most likely be a theatre major because I did some acting in high school, and I do feel like life is my stage. Coupled with this are the facts that I have never ice-skated in my life, and I cannot sing, dance, draw, paint, or play an instrument. Therefore, my options would be limited.

Favorite:

Book:

To Kill a Mockingbird or Wuthering Heights

Type of Music:

I like all kinds of music.

TV show:

Modern Family

Musical Artist:

Fleetwood Mac and The Goo Goo Dolls

Quote:

“Do I dare disturb the universe?” – T.S. Eliot

Food:

Mashed potatoes. Hands down.

Subject in school:

English. Duh.

What is a hobby of yours, unrelated to your job at LVPA?

My biggest hobby is coaching baseball. I am the assistant head coach for Bethlehem Catholic’s JV baseball team. I have also coached a Senior Legion baseball team, The North End Wanderers, for the past three summers, as an assistant coach. This summer will be my fourth summer coaching that team. I love baseball and played the sport in high school. Coaching is a great way for me to be around the game, even when I’m not playing.

What brought you to work at this school? What led you into your profession?

I was called to interview for a long-term substitute position in the beginning of December. What led me to become a teacher is not really a what but a who. My 7th grade English teacher, Mrs. Reese, helped me to fall in love with English. Under her guidance, I began to love reading and writing. By the end of my 7th grade year, I wanted to be an English teacher. That plan never changed, and the rest is history!

When you were a young child, what did you want to be when you “grew up”?

Before 7th grade and wanting to be an English teacher, I wanted to be a movie star. Everyone always told me that I could be an actor and take Hollywood by storm. There are parts of me that still wish that I could be in a Blockbuster hit. Maybe one day!

Year of the Dragon

By: Aly Wolf

While America settles down after a busy holiday season, preparations begin on the other side of the world for the Chinese New Year, one of the most cherished holidays of the eastern hemisphere. Because of the lunar and solar movements from which the Chinese calendar system derives, the Chinese New Year falls on a different day each year. Ultimately, the celebration always takes place in January or February, based on the day of the first new moon of the year. This year, the Year of the Dragon, January 23rd marks the beginning of



the New Year. The Chinese consider those born in the Year of the Dragon to have “good fortune”; they have often become powerful and successful. The superstition of the Year of the Dragon raises the expectation of an upcoming brilliant new year.

The New Year celebration retains the most importance of any event in Chinese culture. The week long celebration, distinguished as a “family affair,” instigates countrywide travel. China’s rail network, the most convenient mode of getting home for the celebration, amasses the most travelers around the time of the New Year. To secure a ticket, the journeyers previously waited in

lines overnight and possibly multiple days. New for 2012, travelers can use the phone or internet to buy tickets. Also, one must provide his or her full name for entry, a requirement to reduce the number of scalpers who sell tickets at inflated prices.

To mark the Year of the Dragon, various electronic companies have scheduled exclusive sales and commencements. China plans to launch the first three dimensional television service on New Years Day. Apple will unleash a one day sale, similar to that of an American Black Friday sale, in Hong Kong, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Taiwan, and Thailand.

For those who cannot return to their homelands for the celebrations, parties happen in cultural Chinatowns around the United States. Bethlehem lies a mere hour and a half from one of the largest Chinatowns in the world, located in New York City. Chinese New Year celebrations encourage attendance from anyone in the public. The festivities this year kicks off on January 23rd with the Firecracker Ceremony and Cultural Festival in Roosevelt Park. Traditional and contemporary Asian-American singers and dancers will perform for the guests, among which include local politicians and community leaders, from 11 AM to 3:30 PM. The firework display follows as part of a tradition to ward off evil spirits, according to ancient belief. During this time, the 13th Annual Lunar New Year Parade winds through the main streets of Chinatown, featuring lion, dragon, and unicorn dance troupes. Festive events continue throughout the week. On Sunday, February 5th, from 11 AM until noon, a notable folk tradition, the China Institute Lion Dance, provides the public with a free spectacle of acrobats and martial artists. The very popular event requires an early arrival to the institute, located on 65th street, to ensure an adequate view of the performance. The authenticity of the events raises awareness of the Chinese New Year and provides a sense of belonging to anyone who chooses to participate. Whether celebrating in Chinatowns in New York, San Francisco, or China itself, the spirit of anticipation of a new, fruitful beginning of the Year of the Dragon lives in the souls of all who cherish Asian culture.

Fact or Fake?

By: KalinaMellman

Can you tell which story is fact....or fake? In the November issue *The Pain of Making Art* was indeed true.

How old is too old?

On October 17th 2011, a man completed a 15K race in Toronto’s Waterfront Marathon. He finished in only eight hours, twenty-five minutes, and sixteen seconds. The only thing missing from this story is a name and an age. Well, my fellow readers, Fauja Singh was 100 years old. He placed 3,850th place, very impressive for a man of his age. Singh took up running 11 years ago after losing his wife and son, training everyday by running a 10-mile stretch. It looks like this man won’t be slowing down for a while!

Blood at First Sight

Many people have their own cute couple ritual, whether it be matching necklaces or bracelets. Las Vegas police arrested a couple in Las Vegas, because of their interesting obsession, blood letting. This couple would collect each other’s blood and put it into veils for necklaces and other oddities. Separate mental institutions hold John B., 22, and Clementine S., 20. Both individuals, doctors agree, “need to spend time apart.” The toxicology reports for both individuals came back clean.

Valentines Traditions

By: Lana Brucker

When many think of Valentine's Day, they envision an array of pink and red, as well as hearts, flowers, candy, chocolate, and romantic getaways. Some believe Cupid strings his bow and arrow to make matches on this special day. However, the holiday does not only celebrate romance. Both singles and couples practice a wide range of activities to radiate the spirit of Valentine's Day. From dates to an Anti-Valentine's Day party, each person can make the day memorable and conducive to personal style.



The "Hot Guy Panel" or "HGP" from Seventeen Magazine offers advice for Valentine's dates. Cody recommends keeping the date simple with a "casual night out on the town." John thinks a "cute and thoughtful" date (but nothing over-the-top) works well, and Justus thinks "something cool and fun...like...a sporting event" fits his idea of Valentine's Day perfectly. "My advice for girls is not to over-think it," Alex tells female readers who stress over planning the day for their special someone. Meanwhile, Hector describes his perfect date as dinner, ice cream, and the other person's favorite movie to watch at home. The final hot guy on "HGP" advises a tour of a chocolate factory for Valentine's Day. However, as one guy on the panel points out, "It doesn't matter so much if it's casual or really extravagant, as long as, by the end of the night, they know that what you did was for them, because you love them."

The Hamden Journal, in an article by SPM WIRE, offers some festive activities for singles on Valentine's Day. It states the highly popular tradition of an evening outing with other single friends. It also suggests the adventures outdoors for those who wish to escape "all those pink hearts and lace." "You can also treat Valentine's Day as a day to honor yourself," the article suggests. Many women pamper themselves with spa treatment. "You should also remember to honor the people who have loved you the longest. A simple phone call to a favorite relative or best friend can leave two people with happy Valentine's Day memories," SPM WIRE exclaims. After all, Valentine's Day exists as a celebration of love above the glitz, glamour, and the distraction of romance.

While many singles and couples relish in the beauty and warm atmosphere of Valentine's Day, countless individuals loathe the idea of a day to show off love, couples, and chick-flick fantasies. Thus spawned the Anti-Valentine's Day party! The idea of a party against Valentine's Day has existed for years and has even appeared in the movie Valentine's Day. Traditions for the bash include setting up a heart shaped piñata for each party member to hit while playing anti-love songs. A column on Hubpages.com suggests to "make funny 'bad relationship name tags' and hand them out of the door when people come in...such as... 'Break-Up Queen,' 'The Other Woman,' ... 'Bad Boyfriend,' 'The Jerk,' etc." The column also poses the option of making fortune cookies with funny anti-love fortunes. Party resource ideas include giving out T-shirts with slogans such as "Back off, Hallmark," "This heart is not for sale," "Cupid works for the bad guys," "Happy shallow, fake love day," "No chocolate? No thank you," and "Get a room." Anti-Valentine's day parties come in a vast variety of forms, from silly get-togethers to slandering of love ceremonies complete with voodoo dolls, darts, and fire.

Valentine's Day, the day to celebrate love, provides an abundance of opportunities for couples, family members, friends, grateful singles, vengeful singles, and those who simply do not believe in a holiday dedicated to an emotion. Many high school students favor anonymous or surprise Valentine deliveries on Valentine's Day, such as "Secret Admirer" letters. Furthermore, others have annual Valentine's traditions, such as drinking tea by the fire with a partner and attending Valentine's Day dances. Whether single, attached, happy, depressed, dating, or completely fed up with relationships in general, opportunities for activities on the holiday abound everywhere, so have fun! Happy Valentine's Day!

Local Artist: Mark Cohen

By: Jackie Bastidas

Street Photography is a specialty of this month's local artist, Mark Cohen. Born and raised in Wilkes-Barre, Cohen opened a local commercial photography studio in 1966, after attending Penn State University and Wilkes College. Upon opening the studio, Cohen's work first appeared at "Vision and Expression," and continued on to other exhibitions such as "True Color," "Five Minutes in Mexico," and "Grim Street."

According to his book, Cohen's work "confronts the viewer with a startling beauty, rapidly shifting from rough and confrontational to quiet, respectful, and serene." His Street Photography features residents of his small hometown in everyday life. However, the everyday life images incorporate intense black and white contrast, which pulls the viewer into the image. Cohen's work "will open your eyes as wide as they can go and keep you flipping the pages for years to come."



mine." Cohen self entitles his work "grab shots" because of the way the viewer is pulled in and experiences the scene. Last month, "Grim Street" was actually featured in the Fowler Gallery at the Banana Factory!

Mark Cohen published six books: *Mark Cohen, Photographer: A Monograph*; *Mark Cohen: October 10- December 13, 1981*; *Images: A Photographic Essay of Northeastern Pennsylvania*; *Five Minutes in Mexico: Photographs*; *Grim Street*; and *True Color*. His work has been exhibited at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, as well as various exhibits in New York City. To learn more about Mark Cohen's intriguing photography, consider buying one of his books or seeing one of his ArtsQuest exhibits.



Mark Cohen shot "Grim Street," a collection of Americana, between the 1960s and 1980s in Wilkes-Barre. The black and white photos look almost vulgar and slightly disconcerting, because they contain drastic crops and warped perspectives. Thus, one may find his work harsh, but Cohen meant for his art to embody an "in your face" view of America. He shoots his photography up close, often with wide-angle lens and some flash. The effect of his technique produces a cropped subject and concentration on small details and moments, rather than the general subject. Because Mark Cohen's method of shooting is considered "intrusive," many viewers pull away from it. However, as he points out, "They're not easy pictures, but I guess that's why they're



Snow Days

By: Katelyn Gulotta

Children typically looked forward to having snow days when they were younger. However, when they become older, many dread making them up. Undoubtedly, sleeping in a few extra hours is fantastic; but a few months down the road, when spring break narrows from an already unreasonably short span and days are added on at the end of the year, students begin to wish they never had that day off.

Many people have different opinions on the matter of snow days. Most people would rather have a two-hour delay or even early dismissal. At LVPA, individuals missing school on snowy days is not uncommon because of all the different school districts which send their students to the school.

Anneliese Deussing, an 11th grade figure skater, says, "Personally, I do not like snow days because it means I have to make up days. Traveling in the snowy, icy weather is no fun, due to my long drive to school."

Mrs. Bardales says, "I love snow days because when I drive, I think about my childhood, and I become very excited. I like the concept of God sending the snow. I have different questions, and in that moment, it is special. I enjoy shopping (on snow days). No one is there because they are scared to drive. I miss the snow."

Fortunately, this year, we have not had to worry about inclement weather as much as in the past two years. Personally, I am more than happy with having 50 degree weather in January and would rather spend my winter days out running, instead of shoveling snow and being freezing cold. Who knows what is in store for us for the remainder of this year? We may have a few more days off from snow or excessive rain, yet.

Origins of Valentine's Day: From Way Back Until Today

By: Sarah Grapek

Many people interpret Valentine's Day as a commercial holiday; a day made specifically for promoting greeting cards, candy, and jewelry. However, the origins of Valentine's Day run deep, only to be found with a little historical research. Many experts believe this holiday dates all the way back to Roman times, when a priest, Valentine, married young couples, despite the fact that Emperor Claudius II outlawed marriage, intending to keep his army unaffected by emotion. Because of his actions, Claudius II had Valentine imprisoned and killed, and thus, Valentine died a martyr. Legend states that he died on the 14th of February, around 270 A.D. Another legend claims Valentine befriended his jailer's daughter during his imprisonment and cured her of her blindness. When he was sentenced to death, he left a farewell note signed, "From Your Valentine," thereby creating the first Valentine card.



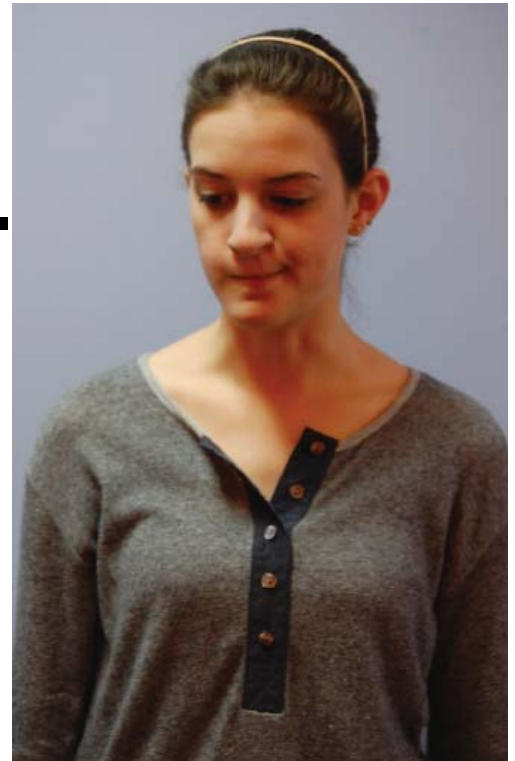
In another legend, Christians deliberately placed the holiday at the same time as a Pagan feast, Lupercalia. The festival celebrated fertility and love, but Christians thought of it as "uncivil." The Christians then replaced it with Valentine's Day, in an effort to "Christianize" Pagans. Around the eighteenth century, Valentine's Day started to popularize in England. Shakespeare and Chaucer romanticized the holiday in their writings, making it increasingly popular throughout England and all of Europe. Handmade cards and Valentine's became part of the celebrations around this time. Towards the end of the 18th century and early 19th century, businesses created "mechanical valentines," printed with verses and sketches. Mechanical valentines became so popular; they were assembled in factories. At the time, the postal service lowered rates, leading to increased popularity in the sending of Valentines.

Esther A. Howland sold the first mass produced Valentine's in America in the 1840s. Nowadays, American sales of Valentine's cards total an estimated 1 billion, coming in second to the 2.6 billion cards sent at Christmas time. Valentine's Day holds popularity in America as well as Mexico, France, the United Kingdom, Australia, and Canada. This holiday greatly boosts the economy and also benefits the people receiving the cards and gifts. Valentine's Day inventions received inspiration from the card industries, but ultimately, the cards accommodate the holiday's true origins and encompass the celebration of love, friendship, and romance.

Ali's Advice Column:

I'm really nervous about going away to college. Do you have any tips for me?

Going away to college is a huge deal! This is the first time you'll be away from your parents and have the freedom to be on your own! Try to remember that college is not about partying but studying. However, don't over-do the work. Make sure you get in some relaxation time, or you'll go nuts. College is about balance: be responsible and act like an adult but still have a good time. If you're really nervous about leaving home or being homesick, look and see if your college has a satellite campus closer to your house. You can always switch campuses if you don't want to go too far away from home. If you're nervous about not knowing anyone, don't worry. Everyone is new, and they don't know what to expect, so you'll have something in common with everyone. Be nice, polite, and be yourself. This is the beginning of your adult life, so get excited! Take all those nervous feelings and turn them into something positive!



RANT: Love Conspiracy

By: Ali Cimorelli

Dear everyone who thinks Valentine's Day is a conspiracy made up by the government to make people spend money: It's not a conspiracy. This day is not made to make you feel bad about yourself because no one will be your Valentine. If you don't have a Valentine, suck it up. You have friends, so be happy for that. Don't make others feel bad because they have someone to think about them. Maybe you should ask someone to be your Valentine, and then you won't have to wallow in your self pity. Valentine's Day is a day for people to show kindness and love to others, and in this world, we need more of those days. So what if it's corny? Would it kill you to be happy for a day and not walk around like everything is at its worst? Draw a little heart on someone's paper or give them some candy, and know that out of all the days in the year, this one is dedicated to love. Let me tell you, everyone needs a little love sometimes.

Hide and Seek

Short Story By: Erynn Molettieri

I was seven years old the year my sister went missing. Snow had just fallen the night before, and we had off of school, so we spent the day in the school playground. We had just begun our game of hide and go seek when a boy about my age went over to my sister to ask to play with us. The man he was with sat down at a bench and watched us all with careful eyes. My sister was nine and often spoke for the both of us because I was painfully shy. She told him, "Of course you can!"; the game was hardly fun with only the two of us. The boy and I ran off to hide. I never did learn his name. My sister yelled to me to stay close; the sun was beginning to hide, and it would be time to leave soon. I hid inside of the slide and looked out of the holes, which were shaped like triangles. The boy stayed close to his father, hiding by the swings. My sister was close to him and would find him quickly; she was always good at hide and seek. I sat back and waited for her to find me, but she never came. I do not know how long I sat inside of the slide and waited, but it was night before anyone came to find me. I was crying in my hiding spot, shouting my sister's name, when my father found me. He started yelling things I fail to remember, and police officers ran over to me. I was found, but my sister never was.

That was nine years ago, and still, there have been no traces of my sister and no suspects who could have taken her. The case was closed after only her jacket was found. It was pink, and I was always jealous of it. After uncovering no other evidence, the investigators returned it to my family. I almost asked my mom if I could have it, but she shoved it into a box before I could. Every day, I passed by my sister's room. Her belongings still lay in it; everything was the way she had left it. The door was shut tight. She was supposed to come home. Every now and then, I dared to touch the door knob, but could never muster up the courage to open the door. It felt wrong, like I was invading some sort of privacy, although she was gone and presumed dead.

The first few weeks of my sister's disappearance were the hardest. I was questioned relentlessly but had no answers. I couldn't describe the man. He had a scarf covering most of his face and a hat covering his hair. He was tall, but everyone was tall to me. I didn't recognize the boy from school, either. He was also wearing a scarf and a hat, and I never knew his name. Somehow, it never seemed suspicious. I never thought they would take my sister. I often ended up crying by the end of the questioning. They finally stopped asking me to come in. They brought my parents in instead, but my mother began to react the same way I did.

The search parties held were as useless as I was; we often ran through the back streets and woods shouting my sister's name. We turned up nothing. Memorials were still held on every anniversary, and my sister's tale was still told at school assemblies. They made me angry, and I often did not attend. I lived out my sister's memory every day. I look just like her; my family told me all the time. I don't think we will ever get over her never returning home, and I will always jump when the phone rings. I will always run to the door to answer it, and every time my parents open the door when I am home alone, I will always believe it to be Lissie. Time does not heal all. We just learned to live with it.

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SECRET QUESTION! E-mail the correct answer to ThePerformer@lvpa.org and win a *tasty treat*!

What is the key rule to remember when styling velvet?