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Raising the Bar

HT Editorial Staff

It's no secret that Ridgewood High School has seen a recent increase in Xanax use. On January 31, Dr. Fishbein sent an email to parents addressing the latest incidents of Xanax use, "In Ridgewood, we have seen a significant increase in prescription drug use, especially Xanax. This rise has been brought to our attention through reported incidents of 'under the influence' behavior."

High school students have always done drugs,

but Xanax is an especially strange phenomenon because it is a localized issue.

The stories of students "barring out" in class, the hushed police involvement, the confused look of adults when they hear about it....these are isolated to Ridgewood. The High Times asked students from nearby high schools and recent RHS alumni about Xanax use in their schools. Most were completely unaware of the trend, and a few did not even know what Xanax was. It is not that prescription drug abuse among high school students, especially in an affluent area, is surprising, instead the mystery lies in how confined the problem is.

There has been very little research on Xanax, as its abuse is not a national epidemic among students in the same way Adderall, Vicodin, and Oxycontin are. So why Ridgewood? In a survey conducted by the High Times in January, 1 out of 10 students reported abusing Xanax, a drug that is considered "low risk" for abuse by the American Addiction Center. In the past few months multiple students have been caught abusing Xanax in school, and in some extreme situations students

have required emergency

medical attention as a result of overdosing on the anxiety drug. The administration did not respond to the High Times request for comment and the investigation into Xanax abuse at RHS is still ongoing... continued on page 7.

Yes, RHS Vapes

HT Editorial Staff

It is difficult to ignore the prevalence of vaping at Ridgewood High School, and more generally, at high schools around the country. According to a survey conducted by the Center for Disease Control, 16% of all high students in the US vape. As one anonymous source from RHS notes, vapor products, or e-cigarettes, are "extremely common, because they are very easy to get. So many stores sell them so vapes are always around." But why do Ridgewood students vape? Another anonymous student sees vaping as a social activity, "People start vaping at parties and when they are out on the weekends because it's cool and everyone is. But once someone starts doing it often they usually buy their own vape and use it more often on their own because it becomes easily accessible."

The student reasons that it alleviates the stressful environment of high school life. "I need the buzz. It calms me down in school and helps me to focus in class. If I don't vape...

continued on page 7.

It's 11am. You're off to a quick stop in the bathroom after three long morning classes. Open the door and a sweet, pungent smell wafts over you.

The interior of the bathroom is hazy; a thin, translucent cloud covers the ceiling. On the edges of the sink lie spent pods

and in one of the stalls an opened Juul wrapper is stuffed behind the toilet. Although you're alone in the bathroom, it's clear what happened just minutes before.

Vaping at RHS is more obvious than expected. One can only be mesmerized by this seemingly widespread new trend. As most probably know, vaping devices, otherwise known as E-cigarettes, are battery-operated devices that can look like a pen, and often are sold with refillable tanks. The containers inside are filled with a liquid that is usually composed of nicotine, flavorings, and other chemicals, all of which heat up and turn into vapor that one inhales when he or she takes a drag.

RHS High Times Special Feature *Drugs and Alcohol*

A Brute Force in the Philippines

Suhanya Pathman
staff writer

From marijuana to methamphetamine, drug production is a major issue in the Philippines. Along with Mexico, Panama, and Colombia, the Philippines is one of the largest drug producing countries in the world. According to the CIA, domestic methamphetamine production, or “shabu,” as it is called in the Philippines, has been a problem for years. The Philippines Dangerous Drug Board states that 1.8 million out of 100 million Filipinos used illegal drugs in 2015. The government is attempting to crack down on the issue through a campaign called “Project Tokhang.” According to National Public Radio, the recently elected Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte said there

would be a “bloody war” to kill thousands of drug addicts, exemplified by problematic mass incarcerations. About 5,000 people have been reportedly killed because of the war on drugs: 2,000 in encounters with law enforcement and 3,000 in extrajudicial killings. However, international reactions have been critical of Duterte’s plans. The European Parliament, for example, conveyed concern for those who were targeted by the government despite being aware of the war on drugs. Daniel Berehulak, a writer for the New York Times, went to the Philippines to document the campaign against drugs. He photographed dead bodies sprawled in the streets in front of convenience stores, restaurants, and alleys, and policemen nonchalantly standing by the bloody bodies. Berehulak wrote that President Duterte promised, “You can expect 20,000 or 30,000

more [deaths].” He wrote about the numerous deaths he witnessed, and interviewed those who had relationships with the deceased. He marked the location of the deaths, a majority of which occurred in Manila in the Western Philippines. He documented not only the deaths, but also the treatment of the dead bodies: how they were discarded on the sides of roads under pieces of trash or “stacked like firewood” as well as heads wrapped in packing tape with cardboard signs labeling them forever as drug dealers or addicts. As for international relations, President Duterte has strengthened his alliance with U.S. President Trump. After conversing, Duterte reflected, “He [Trump] said that, well, we are doing it as a sovereign nation, the right way.” However, Duterte has threatened to withdraw from the UN based on negative reactions to his campaign.



Teen Substance Trends Around the World

Emily Kopec
editor in-chief

The High Times interviewed teenagers across the United States and around the world about their drugs and alcohol culture and use.

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What’s the drinking age in your country?
“The drinking age is 18.” -Slovakia

How do you and your friends typically spend a Friday or Saturday night?
“We go to a bar to have dinner and drink a few beers. Sometimes, we go to clubs.” -Spain

Comments on alcohol at yourschool?
“There is definitely a strong presence of binge drinking at my school. While people are not often hospitalized, there are many times when they should be. “Blacking out,” alcohol poisoning and drunk driving are all weekly occurrences for some students and none of these things are seen as terribly unfavorable. In my opinion, there is a problem with alcohol consumption at my school, but more broadly, in the US as a whole. The drinking age of 21 encourages underage drinking, forces teens to sneak around and binge drink, and hinders responsible consumption of alcohol. Additionally, a shocking number of people shoplift alcohol which in my opinion is a gateway for shoplifting of more serious items.”-Washington State

Hasyourschooltakenactioninregard to substance use among teenagers?
“Students are usually informed about alcohol and other substances in primary school. In high school no attention is dedicated towards that. In the case that a student is suspected of drug use, his/her parents are contacted and actions are taken from the schools side.” -Slovenia

How would you describe the attitude towards marijuana in Washington?
“The attitude towards weed in Washington is very mixed. Much like to-

bacco products, there are a good amount of people that openly condemn the consumption of marijuana. On the other hand, there are also many people that see weed in the same light as alcohol or even see marijuana as a safer, less serious alternative to alcohol.” - Washington State

Any other comments on weed in your country?
“Despite marijuana being illegal, it is very accessible. In primary school it is semi-accessible, but in high school and university/college it is accessible to anyone. It is sold by various students attending the schools. As an example, the high school I am attending is considered as the best in the country, has around 1000 students, but still has around 10 dealers I personally know. The biggest problem of marijuana being illegal is that the black market it is sold on is not controlled. Therefore, you never know what kind of marijuana you get (as there are several different types). As a consequence consumers experience different wanted and unwanted effects which are often very dangerous.” -Slovenia

Is smoking cigarettes common and what is the attitude towards smoking cigarettes?
“Yes, it is really unhealthy.” -Slovakia

Are hard drugs popular?
“They are definitely much less popular compared to marijuana, as people are aware that hard drugs have bad consequences. The most popular hard drug is ecstasy, which is followed by cocaine and at last heroin.”-Slovenia

Law & Disorder

Lena Yannella
arts editor

An interview with Donald Yannella, a criminal defense attorney. What type of offenses are high school children most often charged with? Possession of marijuana and possession of paraphernalia are the most common charges that I see. Underage drinking is the second most common offense. A teenager being under the influence of drugs or alcohol is an offense, even if the person is not caught possessing drugs or alcohol.

Can a person be charged with possession of drugs that another person had? Yes. For example, two people can be charged with the same bag of marijuana under a legal theory called constructive possession. For example, if the drugs were found on the floor of a car, neither the driver or passenger personally possess the drugs. But they can both be arrested for “constructively possessing” the marijuana. Physical possession, meaning having it in your hand or pocket, is not required for legal action to be taken.

Is it possible to get the drug possession charges reduced or dismissed? There is a law in New Jersey that prohibits plea bargains in drug possession cases. However, depending on the type and quantity of drugs, it is possible to get put on a form of probation for six months to two years during which the person will be drug tested, but there are a lot of fees and financial penalties. Even if the charges are dismissed at the end of the supervision, it still reflects poorly to have this in your history because many professions and schools now ask if you had a charge expunged or dismissed under a diversion program.

What are the penalties for selling drugs? It is against the law in New Jersey to “distribute” drugs, not simply to sell drugs. Distribution of drugs is a felony, even if you don’t consider yourself a drug dealer. Buying drugs for a friend or friends is considered “distribution” even if you didn’t make a profit.

Do the police focus on drugs in high school? Under New Jersey law, distributing drugs within 1,000 feet of school grounds or within 1,000 feet of a park is a felony in the third degree. A prison sentence is mandatory. It is important to note that 1,000 feet is a long distance, and these enhanced penalties apply even if the school or park is blocks away and can’t be seen.

What are the penalties for having drugs or alcohol in cars? If you plead guilty to possessing drugs in a motor vehicle, there is a mandatory license suspension of two years. There is zero tolerance for teenagers with probationary licenses drinking and driving. While adults are often judged based upon how much alcohol was in their blood system, individuals with a probationary license will face severe penalties even if they have one sip of alcohol.

What other drugs do you often see teenagers charged with? K2, which is a synthetic marijuana, is seen with increasing frequency. It is a dangerous drug because it can cause severe hallucinations. Because it is synthetic, the user does not know how manufactured it is or what toxic ingredients may be in it. Sometimes drug dealers are drug addicts who are desperate for money, and they manufacture fake drugs with dangerous ingredients.



Amelia Chen

To ‘Follow’ or ‘Unfollow’ Drug Use?

Amelia Chen and Ellie Tsapatsaris
staff writers

We have access to news anywhere, anytime, and all within the reach of our fingertips. With a scroll of any social media platform, we know all the latest trends. It’s great, but at the same time, terrifying. One cannot control what is put on the internet, nor what message it conveys.

Unfortunately, there are often misconceptions on social media, which make it all the more alarming, specifically in relation to drug use. The phrase ‘don’t do drugs’ has been hammered into our minds since elementary school, so one would think that it would be something easy to abide by. But what happens when social media tells us otherwise?

Drugs in general are glamorized by numerous social media platforms, especially in popular music and media. As high schoolers, it is hard to scroll through Instagram or Snapchat stories without seeing some sort of reference to drugs and alcohol.

In 2011, a study done by Columbia University revealed that 70% of teens surveyed were on social media. Those teens in particular were two times more likely to have been exposed to, or even to have used, marijuana.

The main problem with the ubiquity of drugs and alcohol in social media today is that it makes drug use seem normal, and even cool. When teens decide to post about drugs and alcohol carelessly, they show an attitude that deems them harmless. The popularity of drugs and alcohol on the internet gives the impression to teens that they are not a big deal when they actually are. Joseph Califano, the Former U.S. Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, stated, “The relationship of social networking site images of kids drunk, passed out, or using drugs and of suggestive teen

programming... increases teen risk of substance abuse [and] offers grotesque confirmation of the adage that a picture is worth a thousand words.”

In addition, some of the most famous celebrities have been caught in the possession of drugs or have had a drug abuse problem. These celebrities set a negative example to their millions of social media followers. The majority of followers are impressionable young people, often copying the actions of their role models.

Yet, despite all of these cons, social media might be helping the war on teen drug use. With most teens having access to social media, the world is essentially at their fingertips.

If there’s news, they’ll hear it; and the numerous celebrity deaths that can be linked to drugs and alcohol are definitely a part of that news cycle. Cory Monteith, star of the popular show *Glee*, is one of those celebrities. After passing away due to a drug overdose, the hashtag #ripcoreymonteith has more than 100,000 posts on Instagram alone. This isn’t an isolated case.

Every time a celebrity passes away due to drugs or alcohol, it is a wake up call for teens. In the same study by Columbia University, it was shown that the majority of surveyed participants (82%) felt that social media could warn about the dangers of drug use. With so many kids exposed to the harsh reality of drug use, social media has the potential to be used as a helpful tool.

So, while certain teens on social media might seem to be promoting drug use by posting a picture with that red solo cup or smoking on their story, in reality, it is up to teens to recognize the warnings that we are given by all of these social media platforms. It is our duty to take the unfortunate outcomes and potential consequences of drug use and change them into life lessons that we can use to prevent ourselves from suffering the same fate.

Romanticization of Alcohol

Brianna Patek
arts editor

Absolut Vodka will help you escape life for a while. Guinness is good for you. Jack Daniels will help you flirt. If James Bond takes his martinis shaken (not stirred) and the most interesting man in the world enjoys Dos Equis, so why shouldn’t you? Sexy, successful, suave, and sleek. Drink our product and cast off the chains of insecurity to achieve the best version of yourself.

We have all been there: enticed by the advertising campaigns that some brilliant marketing executives spent hours concocting in beige board rooms, searching for what makes the American consumer tick. Over the years, alcohol has been labeled everything from an aphrodisiac to a cure for the common cold. But what many of these advertisements and media portrayals of alcohol fail to mention is the often ugly truths behind those wonderful, inspiring drinks and concoctions.

Throughout the halls of RHS, posters adorn the walls, stairwells, and doors, emphasizing scary statistics and facts about underage alcohol consumption. Despite efforts to prevent this nationwide phenomenon, the Center for Disease Control reports that persons aged 12 to 20 account for 11% of all alcohol consumed in the United States, more than 90% of which is consumed in the form of binge drinking. From an early age, we are all taught to obey and respect the law; so if drinking is illegal for people younger than 21, why is it so prevalent among this demographic?

The taboos of underage drinking are probably one of its most appealing aspects. Psychology might argue that it is human nature to be

attracted to the forbidden or taboo. Various cultures and religions have tried to underscore the danger of giving into temptation (Pandora opened the box and Eve ate the apple, both unleashing malice into the world), but humans love to engage in sinful indulgence, despite the consequences.

In the vein of stereotypical teenage behavior, many high schoolers seek to defy authority and drink to forget a stressful day, bombarded by quizzes or college rejections.

Classic high school films like *Fast Times at Ridgemont High* and *Sixteen Candles* portray epic house parties where even those at the bottom of the high school social hierarchy attain popularity by supplying the booze. The media exploits the charming awkwardness of teenagedom by pointing to a solution for our angst and sexual frustration.

“Yearning for popularity? Provide a few handles, prove you can hang, and you’re in.”

“Nervous to talk to your crush? Down a few shots and you’re golden.”

“Suffering from major FOMO (fear of missing out) due to your friend’s crazy war stories and your lack thereof? Drink more and you’re bound to do something hilariously regrettable.”

The media’s glorification of alcohol, peer pressure, and rebellion is what attracts us to alcohol.

At the end of the day, alcohol is nothing more than an organic chemical compound that we should ingest in safe amounts. It is not going to help you find love, make friends for you, or cure your low self-esteem, and behind every exaggerated story of a wild night out is usually a negative externality. Stay aware of personal limits and know the truth behind the romanticized portrayals of alcohol in the world.

A Sober Decision

Erin Grant
opinion editor

Project Graduation is the culmination of our high school experience. After the actual graduation ceremony in our white dresses and rose-accented dinner jackets, we get shipped off in buses to a dinner and taken back to Benjamin Franklin Middle School to spend the entire night roaming through the extravagantly decorated rooms.

Over the course of our high school career, we collectively raise money to fund this night of revelry and nostalgia. Parents spend hours organizing, crafting, and assembling props to decorate BF, working hard to provide a popular, safe night to avoid unregulated, dangerous parties. The night ends in the morning with a trip to Graydon pool, which has become a cherished tradition despite protests by local authorities. This is a seminal moment in our lives, our last night of high school and the last night we will all be together, which begs the question: Why jeopardize your opportunity to participate by drinking alcohol?

Technically, Project Graduation is still considered a school function, and there is no reason to deviate from Ridgewood High School’s code of conduct. Sure, one could argue, “I already graduated; they can’t punish me now!” But don’t be that misguided person. Celebrate in your own way (which may or may not include illicit drinking) on your own time.

As a senior, I obviously have not yet experienced the marathon evening that is graduation night. But having spoken with RHS alumni, I’ve gotten a sense of the kind of security the administration imposes to prevent substance use. In the past two years, more precautions have

been put in place to dissuade students from smuggling in drugs or alcohol.

For example, students must pack their change of clothes in a transparent plastic bag that will be scrutinized by the teachers and police. This makes it impossible to sneak in water bottles containing vodka, hidden among the folds of their t-shirts; but there are two inherent problems with this system, at least from my perspective.

First, in principle, this is a violation of privacy. I understand that the administration has to go to great lengths to ensure the safety of all students, but it’s sad that they have resorted to a system that allows them to view which pair of underwear a student packs.

Second, this system does not entirely solve the problem because students opt for even more dangerous substances--namely, pills, which are more easily concealed. Rumors of students in prior years taping pills to their body illustrate how ineffective these screening efforts are.

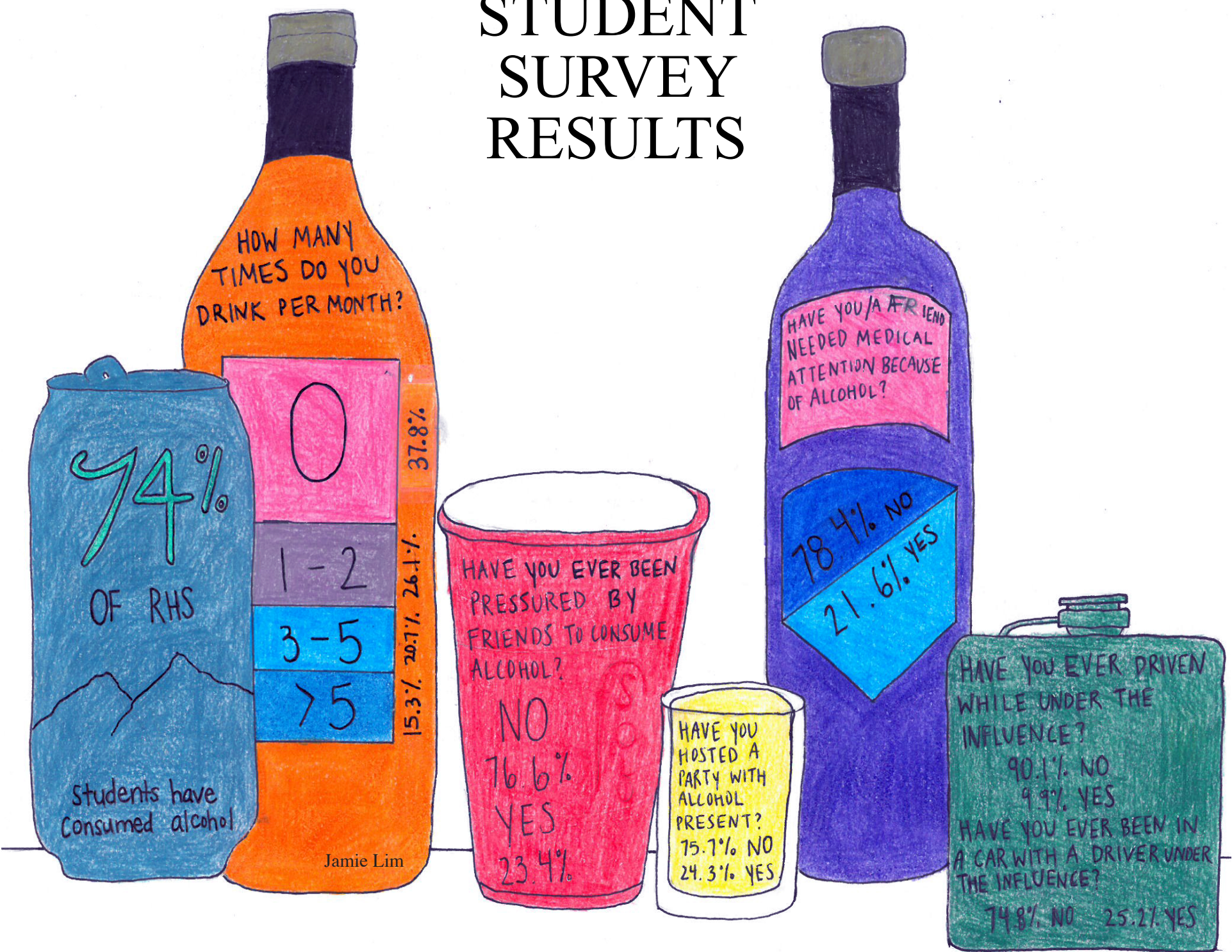
Yet, in order for the administration to show more trust, students must be responsible. As we’ve seen with Backwoods, MetLife games, and Project Graduation of the past, the administration often makes many threats in terms of security and/or potential consequences. This makes sense, considering the outcomes of some of those events.

If the class of 2017 can set a precedent for a successful (substance free) Project Graduation, perhaps we can help the grades after us gain some trust back.

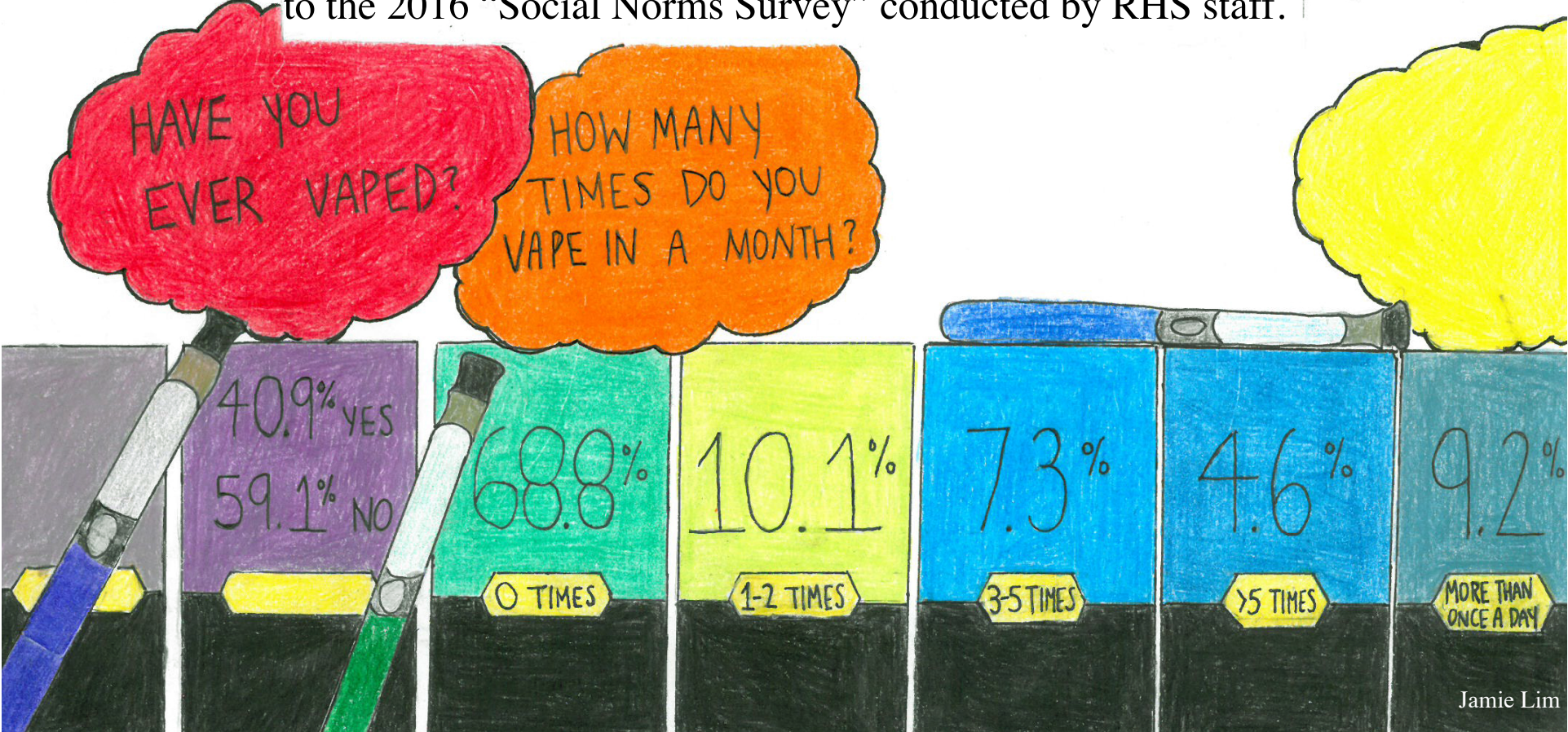
However, despite whatever warnings or threats are received from teachers or wary parents, some people will not be deterred from drinking. Those individuals should consider their peers, both seniors and younger classes, before making the mistake of sneaking in illegal substances.

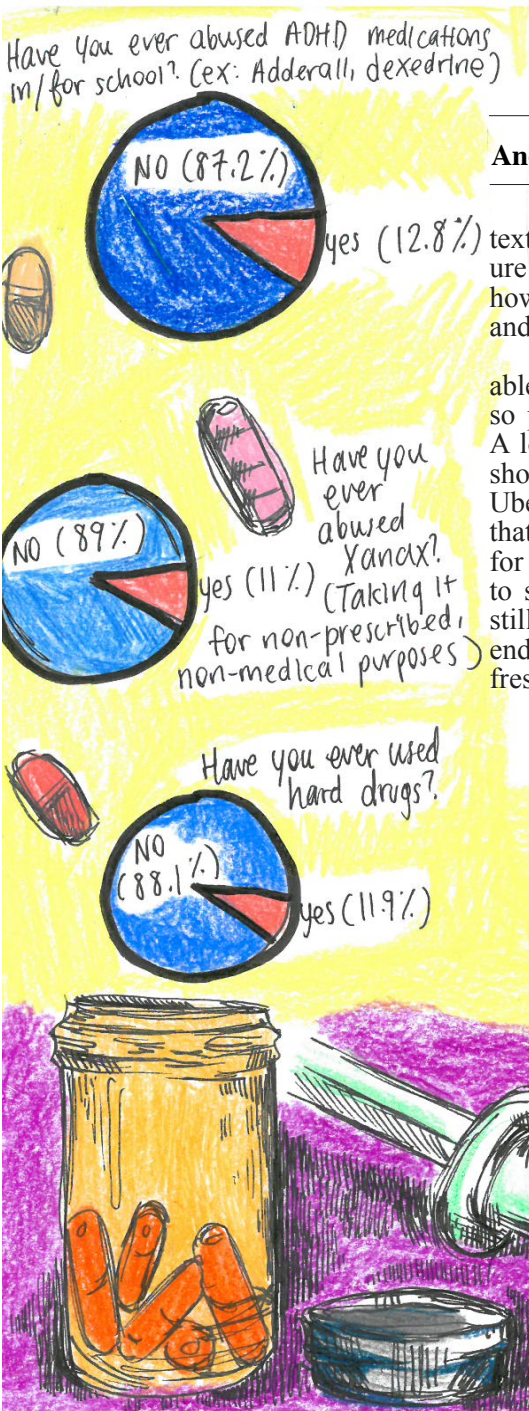
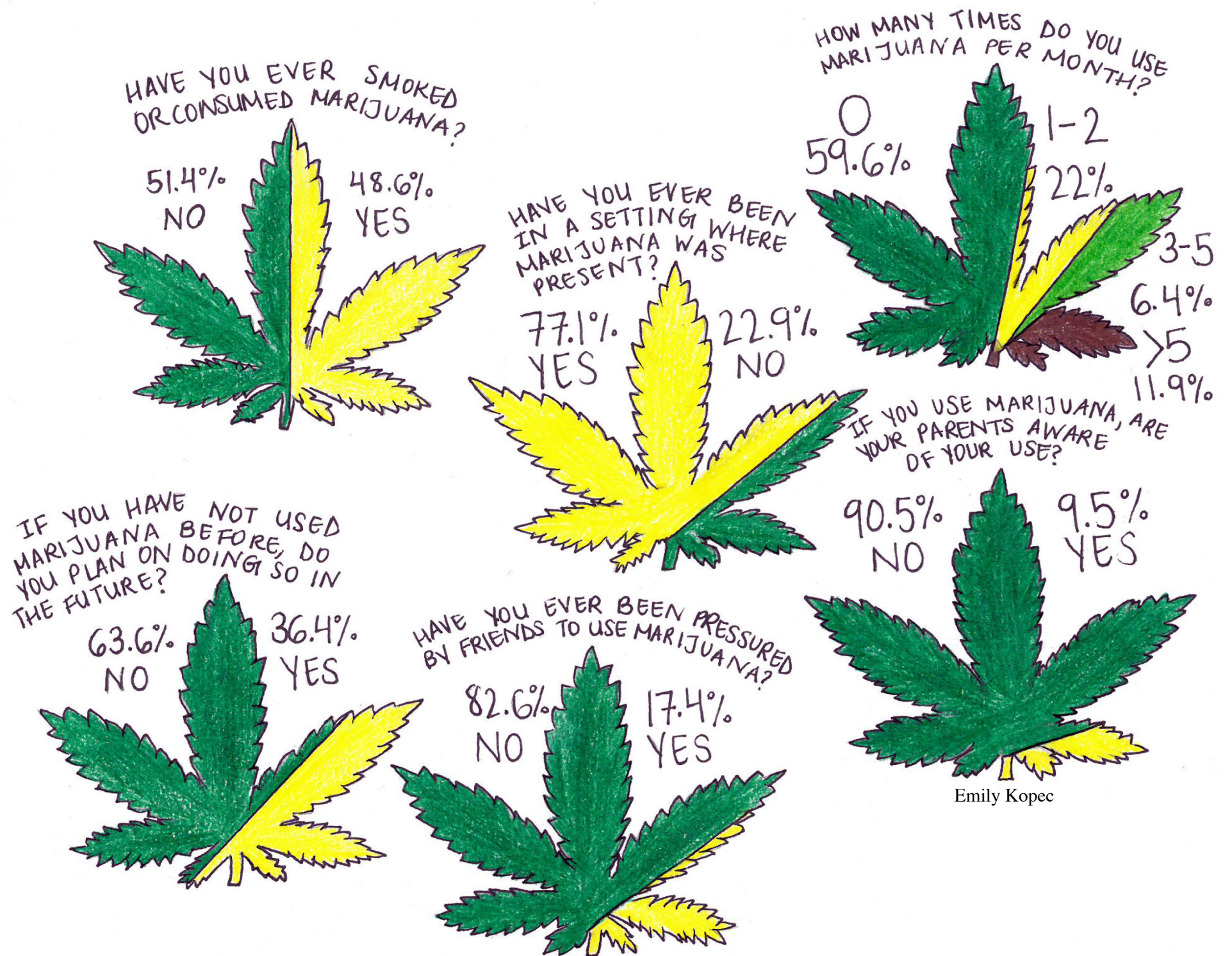


RHS HIGH TIMES STUDENT SURVEY RESULTS



This survey is an independent investigative report conducted by members of the High Times Editorial Staff to collect unbiased information on drug and alcohol usage at Ridgewood High School. We reached out to RHS students to answer a survey via Google Forms on their personal substance use, and distributed the survey through their personal email accounts. This survey is not affiliated with the RHS administration, and is not connected to the 2016 “Social Norms Survey” conducted by RHS staff.





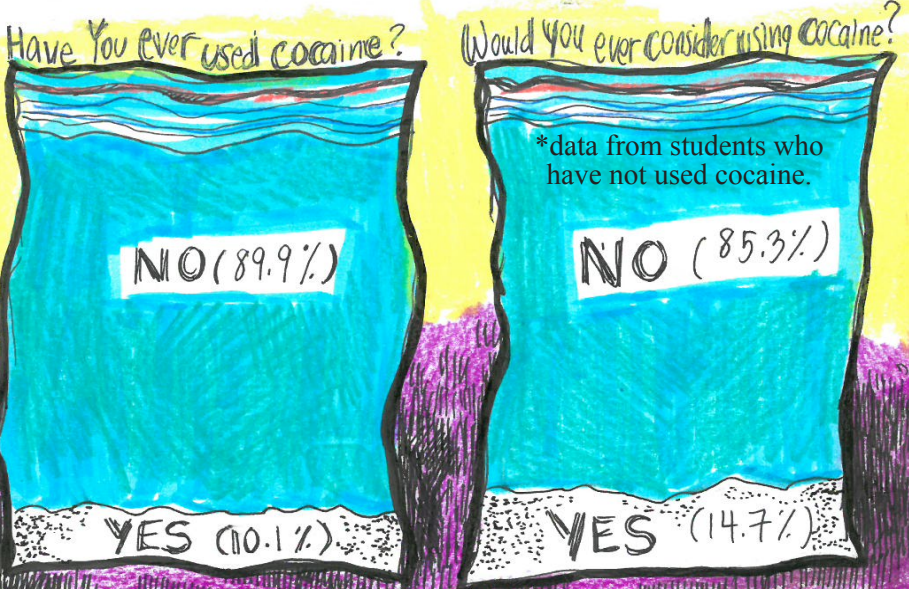
RHS Speaks: A Student's Story

Anonymous

The night started with dozens of texts back and forth attempting to figure out where the party was going to be, how much alcohol we needed to buy, and where we would pregame. It's been awhile since beer has been able to get most of my friends drunk, so pregames usually consist of shots. A lot of shots. One friend was fifteen shots deep before we even got into the Uber for the party, but believe it or not, that's actually a pretty small amount for him. Somehow, he has the ability to spend most nights passed out, and still always finds his way home by the end of them. It's been going on since freshman year, so my friends don't

usually intervene unless he's puking. If you're an adult or parent reading this, you may be shocked about everything I'm about to tell you, but it's all true. Ubers make the weekends much easier, so we all chip in and pile the beer into a car and take it to the party. There's a mix of a couple grades there. If you've never been, beer pong is a must. I don't know one party I've been to in high school where we didn't play pong. Usually I'll play a couple games, then move on to flip cup, and then wrap it up with a couple shotguns. On this particular night, I did all of that and more, and like everyone else there, I was belligerently drunk. At that point, you're just looking to have a good time, so when someone suggested going to a strip club at around

1 AM, how could I turn that down? We grabbed a couple beers each and took the Uber about 30 minutes to the strip club. My fake ID didn't work at the first club, but the bouncer was nice and told us about a place down the street where they would let us in. I won't go into detail, but the strip club was fun, even though we spent a ton of money. I got home at 3, passed out on my couch, and woke up ready to go the next day. We all take pride in the party culture in Ridgewood because we work hard through the week. My friends and I are all pretty successful in school, but we use our weekends to relax and have a good time. I don't think this culture is harmful; I see it rather as a way for us to destress.



The Influenced Artist: Why Some Artists Use Drugs

Evie Cullen and Sophia Swanson
staff writers

Bryan Saunders, hailing from Johnson City, Tennessee, does not fit your average description of a visual artist. He doesn't spend hours carving marble statues; he would probably be disgusted by the idea of drawing a still life, and he would never be caught painting a figure in boring oil paints. Refusing these traditional versions of visual art, Saunders experiments with a wide variety of mediums and techniques, mixing crayons, pencil, paper clips, and even bullet holes into his erratic, and at times disturbing, pieces.

Perhaps the most eccentric thing about this artist is his creative process. Saunders does not follow the traditional methods of starting a work of art. Instead, he takes drugs to enhance his creativity. In fact, he takes so many drugs that he has an entire series of drug-induced self-portraits named "Under the Influence." They range from colorful, cartoon-like portraits to surreal, warped images that may even include violent, angry scribbles.

We're not saying it's common for artists to "profoundly affect [their] perception of self" and translate these new sensations into aesthetically pleasing works of art, as Saunders writes on his website. But over the course of history, a long string of artists, be it visual, performing, or literary, have used drugs as a tool to inspire them. Marijuana and LSD are two of the most prominent drugs in the artistic community due to their psychoactive and hallucinogenic effects, though much controversy surrounds these illegal substances and how they affect their users.

While many people choose to use marijuana merely to "take the edge off," several artists choose to use marijuana as a source of inspiration in their various art forms. Jay-Z, John Lennon, and Lady Gaga wrote several of their biggest hits while high. Dispensary

owners advocate using a specific "writing" strain for those who are more literary-minded. And of course, in the case of our friend Bryan Saunders, his under-the-influence-self-portraits are some of his boldest, brightest, and most whimsical works.

So, how does all of this work? The ability to think in a different, original way forms the basis of creativity, an effect explained by a 2010 study lead by Morgan and Rothwell. According to their experiments, marijuana heightens "hyper-priming," or a person's capacity to connect several seemingly unrelated topics to one another. Additionally, marijuana acts like a stimulant in that it increases the flow of dopamine, the "feel good" hormone, in a person's brain. Because of these effects, many artists and writers are able to free many of their creative roadblocks, and paint, draw, or write with less of a challenge. And, similarly to LSD, marijuana greatly affects users' five senses, allowing them to view things with heightened awareness and internalize information differently.

However, using marijuana to expand creativity is not a technique limited to famous artists, singers, and writers. According to an RHS student, marijuana makes artmaking "more enjoyable" and helps them to "focus on the task at hand." Not only does this user feel increased pleasure from using marijuana while creating, but they also feel much more inspired. They "go from having no ideas to having thousands spilling out of my head," and experience a change in artistic style, "using brighter colors and making strange shapes."

LSD could be called a distant cousin of marijuana as it possesses similar psychoactive qualities. Also known as lysergic acid diethylamide, LSD has influenced American culture since the 1960s. LSD was labeled as a drug that could help one "turn on, tune in, and tune out" and became extremely popular within the artistic community, with users such as Jerry Garcia of the Grateful Dead and Ken Kesey, author of the critically-acclaimed novel, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. Short

term effects of taking LSD include rapid mood swings, distortion of reality, intensified feelings, and mixing senses, like being able to hear colors and see music. LSD can be taken as either a pill, liquid, or absorbed through blotting paper.

The use of LSD became highly controversial after it was made illegal in the United States due to tests showing that it didn't have much medicinal use. However, the criminalization of LSD didn't stop artists from consuming the drug to help create their art.

LSD affects the prefrontal cortex of the brain, which controls mood, cognition, and perception. Thus, art created by people on LSD is often a portrait of their hallucinations. Dr. Oscar Janiger, the neurologist who studied the relationship between LSD and creativity, said that trained artists could "maintain a certain balance, riding the edge" of LSD-induced psychosis. In literature, Aldous Huxley, author of *Brave New World*, took LSD regularly to heighten the quality of his writing. Huxley wrote both *The Doors of Perception* and *Heaven and Hell* about how LSD had helped him see things in a different light, exposed to a real, timeless existence that he had never seen before.

Though trends in legislation have yielded an increasingly pro-marijuana legal agenda over the past months, it is important to remember the potential dangers that marijuana can pose for users. Prolonged use of weed can lead to changes in stem cells and even psychosis. In addition, marijuana causes vocal cord scarring, lung cancer, laryngitis, polyps, and nodules.

Using psychoactive drugs like marijuana and LSD may increase a person's creative threshold, allowing one to push the envelope of human expression, but the risks outweigh the rewards. No matter how innovative the art one makes while under the influence may be, a stride forward in artistic expression is not worth risking one's safety and sanity.



You Know My Face, But Not My Addiction

Eugene Park
staff writer

The word "stereotype" is often used to refer to popular beliefs about specific people in their lives. These beliefs can be extremely negative and impact how people interact with each other. Stereotypes can be particularly dangerous for drug users: most often, they are wrong or only provide half truths. These kinds of misconceptions can isolate drug users and deprive them of the information and help that they need.

Drug addicts come from different races, genders, and socioeconomic situations. Recently, it has become clear that drug addiction can become a part of anyone's life, especially in light of the increase in prescription drug abuse. However, most people would be quick to say that drug abuse is more common with certain types of people, or that users exhibit certain types of behaviors. For instance, searching "crack addict" on Google may display images of an African-American living in the inner city, surrounded by criminal activity. A binge drinker may lead people to think of an unmotivated student, wasting away their years by excessively drinking beer or vodka. Gang members may be pictured as Hispanic males, running illegal drug rings in impoverished areas.

When imagining drug users, one of

the first thoughts that comes to mind is a homeless man or woman lying on the street. In reality, there are many users that are 'functional addicts' – addicts that have good jobs, nice cars, homes, and even loving families. Some of these people may not even know that they are addicts, living as normal people without realizing the repercussions of their habit. There may very well be addicts among us at RHS, but it is hard to distinguish them from other peers on the way they look or how they act in

school. Some people might associate drug users here at RHS with greasy hair, dark, grungy clothing, and glassy eyes. More harmful than these physical stereotypes, however, are the character stereotypes; people often assume that drug users are unmotivated, selfish, and lazy. This becomes a bigger problem when decisions and judgements are made based on these unproven, potentially false stereotypes.

These stereotypes about users are grossly detrimental to raising

awareness about addiction, and they tend to keep many people under a heavy veil of denial. Most users refuse to acknowledge their own problems in fear of confirming so many unwarranted stereotypes. Rather than helping them, people may turn a blind eye to addicts in order to maintain their own reputation, or they simply misunderstand the issue and jump to conclusions. Society often associates drug use with immorality, like drug users are inherently bad people. In many cases, addicts cannot help themselves and rely on drugs unconsciously; this is not a character flaw--it is the definition of addiction.

Furthermore, stereotypes can influence negative views and thus trigger consequences. Once users are identified, it is not difficult to view them as inferior. As a result, this negative view could prevent users and addicts from acquiring jobs or cause people with existing jobs to lose them. The image of drug users wearing dirty clothes, having poor hygiene, and participating in criminal activities can harm chances of them getting or settling into a career in society. Addiction is a disease, and people are more than their addictions. Stereotypes need to be managed so that drug users and addicts have more of an incentive to break their habits; if they believe that everyone in society is against them, or that they truly are inferior, they have no real reason to stop abusing substances.



The War on Drugs in Ridgewood

CJ Lee
staff writer

The War on Drugs: a battle between the United States and drugs that has been brewing since the Prohibition era. The US has spent over 1.6 trillion dollars fighting the spread of drugs, yet on both a local and national level, illegal substances have maintained their hold on society. I'm willing to bet there is a large percentage of you who are thinking, "The War on Drugs? Isn't that something that is happening in Central America?" which is completely understandable. The War on Drugs is well-known for butting its head in countries like Panama and Colombia, and there have not been any drug busts in Ridgewood in recent years. But that does not mean The War has no relevance here. It is undeniable that the majority of the Ridgewood population is white, with blacks and Hispanics constituting a minority. According to the Drug Policy Alliance, it is also undeniable that The War on Drugs has disproportionately targeted black and Hispanics more so than whites: about 80% of the inmates in federal prisons for drug-related offenses are black or Hispanic (split about 40/40), while only about 20% are white. There are many reasons for this: disparities in cocaine versus crack sentencing, increased law

enforcement focus on communities of color, and otherwise simple discrimination ranging from the police to the justice system. But ultimately, statistics show that all three ethnicities actually have similar amounts of drug use. So, how is this relevant to us? Ridgewood will have inherently lower drug arrest rates than that of a more culturally diverse town simply because we are more white and, therefore, less targeted. Yes, an argument can be made that maybe we have a lower drug arrest rate simply because we use less drugs. And yes, it can also be said that our wide majority/minority gap simply forces more attention on whites, which evens out possible discrimination.

But let's be honest: I am sure everyone here has heard of those parties. I am sure everyone knows about those bathrooms. And I am pretty sure there is a lot more shady business going on than we can ever truly know about. This fact is a given for nearly every town in the United States, and believing it is miraculously untrue for Ridgewood because of our lower crime rates or higher incomes is simply being narrow-minded. Likewise, while I personally believe Ridgewood has very little problems with racial discrimination, especially considering just how large the ethnic gaps are, there is something to be weary of when you have such a large white majority in such an afflu-

ent town. I am not here to make any outrageous accusations, but when you just consider how 2016 went in terms of racial tension, it becomes clear that the discussion of race is still burning brightly in the United States. Our village is not necessarily a place that should be regarded with suspicion and mistrust. Ridgewood is filled with great people and values, and I personally cannot think of another small town that is better. But it is important to keep in mind that as great as we may strive to be with excellent education and high standards of living, we are not an exception to the modern day drug epidemic. As much as The War on Drugs may seem distant and irrelevant to our humble Northern New Jersey lives, it will always hold a level of relevance to us. There are hundreds of thousands of Americans incarcerated because of drugs, and the sad truth is that many more people of color are locked up than whites simply because of the system. Do we, as The Village of Ridgewood, have a right to take advantage of that same system to bolster our 'drug rates'? To disregard 'lighting up' at parties because we do not have to worry about the same things people in a poorer community does? This all boils down to one's moral compass. I hope we can all at least agree that there is a discussion to be had with the relevance of The War on Drugs in Ridgewood. Covering up never solves anything.



Drug Abuse Behind Closed Doors

Anonymous

It was around the summer of 2009 when the truth of what was happening around me was first revealed. I remember asking my godmother, "Where are Mom and Dad?" She was clearly torn about how to answer. "They are away," she responded cryptically. Pressed further, she finally admitted, "They are in jail." Confused and shocked, I didn't ask more questions at the time. As I got older, I pieced together that my parents had addiction problems that sent them to prison for stretches of time, leaving me to be raised by my grandparents for most of my childhood. My grandmother would tell me disapproving stories about them. I recall one day in particular when I was 6 years old and both my parents were out of prison. I ran home from the bus stop, excited to tell my parents what I learned in school. But when I pulled my homework out on the table to ask my mother for help, she didn't react because she was knocked out on the couch. I sat there staring at her, trying in vain to wake her up by shaking her, and I was dismayed and hurt when she could only mumble incomprehensibly. At that point, my grandparents wanted me to leave Paterson and move in with my godparents in Ridgewood, where I'd get a better education, and could avoid the dangers of my environment, which had been a bad influence on my step-siblings. I didn't expect to live in Ridgewood for long. But in Ridgewood, I found great friends, activities, and schools. My godparents became my legal guardians and, therefore, made most of the decisions about my welfare. Because my parents continued to struggle, whenever I visited them my grandmother would reassure me that she was just a phone call away. I brushed this off because I felt safe with my family, until I realized that from a young age I was hearing or seeing violence. I witnessed people deal drugs on the street. I saw knife fights,

I would hear gunshots. It didn't faze me because I saw it so often, but my grandmother explained what was happening so that I was not left in the dark. One of the most unforgettable days was when I walked into my brother's apartment and saw things I shouldn't have. I still haven't asked him about this because I'm afraid what I saw was actually true. I had walked upstairs and let myself in, sitting on the couch without anyone noticing. My brother was sitting at the table with a stack of money and drugs. He had friends with him, who were playing music and yelling nonsense. As I ran out, I could hear my brother curse in frustration as he noticed me. I cried when I saw my mom, who was unconscious. It is especially upsetting to know that my niece and nephew have to deal with such things constantly. It made me more appreciative of the education and privilege I have. I think back and try to imagine myself living there and what it would be like without help from my godparents.

My brother was sitting at the table with a stack of money and drugs.

At around the age of 13 my parents tried getting closer to me. They claimed to have changed, which is true because they were trying their best. I'm proud that I can show them how far I have come and how I have learned from their mistakes. I would always feel like I was living a double life. I love my parents, but I don't want to struggle like them or repeat their mistakes. A quote from Gabrielle Williams sums up my thoughts about my experiences: "Hard times are good in their own way, too. Because the only way you can achieve true happiness is if you experience true sadness as well. It's all about light and shade. Balance."

Xanax at RHS

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When used for medical purposes, Xanax, also known as Alprazolam, is a drug that treats panic and anxiety disorders. It is a benzodiazepine, a category of drugs that have a calming effect on the brain, and is labeled a Schedule IV controlled substance, categorizing it as low risk for abuse. However, Xanax is also considered highly addictive and people can become dependent on it relatively quickly. Xanax is especially dangerous when crushed or chewed, because in pill form it is designed to have a controlled-release into one's body when swallowed whole in order to prevent overdose. Xanax provides rapid anxiety relief and is difficult to build up a tolerance to, which is why it is so popular. Xanax reduces anxiety in some patients, but when taken in large doses or combined with al-

cohol or other drugs it can produce a euphoria that lasts for 10 to 15 hours. An anonymous RHS student who often uses Xanax recreationally said, "I don't think Xanax is really a huge deal. When used in moderation, there's no issue with taking one to have fun. We're in high school, now's a good time to do stupid things. Sure, there is a problem when someone goes overboard, but that can be said for anything. It's cheap and easy to get, and usually provides for a fun night." Let's be frank, Ridgewood's fascination with Xanax is utterly bizarre. Other schools don't have students barring out in class or taking it at 7 in the morning before school to the same extent as Ridgewood. Of all the drugs that high school students have incorporated into our culture, Xanax seems like an odd choice, but then again, teenagers of every generation seem to find new ways to get high.

Vaping at RHS

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"If I don't vape, I can't focus." 40% of Ridgewood High School students have vaped at least once, according to a Drugs and Alcohol Survey conducted by this publication in January, while 20% state that they vape consistently, around 1-5 times per month. Each "vaper" should ask oneself whether e-cigs are equally as harmful as traditional tobacco cigarettes. Public health and tobacco experts have discovered mixed results concerning the impact of vaping on cognitive development, cancers, and lung diseases. Although the science on e-cigs is mixed, traditional cigarettes undoubtedly contain a list of chemicals that are proven to be harmful, and e-cigarettes have some of these same chemicals. Since 2009, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has pointed out that e-cigarettes contain "detectable levels of known carcinogens and toxic chemicals to which users could be exposed." For example, in e-cigarette cartridges marketed as "tobacco-free," the

FDA detected toxic compounds also found in antifreeze: tobacco-specific compounds that have been shown to cause cancer in humans. Another study looked at 42 of these liquid cartridges and determined that they contained formaldehyde, a chemical known to cause cancer in humans. Formaldehyde was found in several of the cartridges at levels much higher than the maximum the EPA recommends for humans. The accessibility of vaping devices is alarming, as stores selling the devices, called "vape shops," are ubiquitous across the country, and sales dramatically continue to increase due to online purchases. Due to the addictive nature of the nicotine in e-cigs and the high probability of vape users maintaining and developing their habits in the future, consumption among teenagers is disconcerting. High school drug culture continues to adapt with new technology, and vaping is a prime example of this. Vapes, the modern day cigarettes, are accessible, popular, and common at Ridgewood High School.

Trading Hits for Hits: Marijuana Use in the NFL

Brendan Keane
sports editor

Tyler Sash was a standout rookie and key player for the Giants during their fourth Super Bowl victory. Sash spent his college years playing for the Iowa Hawkeyes, earning “first team all Big-Ten honors” during his final junior season. Tragically, Tyler was found dead in his home in Oskaloosa, Iowa, on September 8th, 2015.

Throughout his football career, Tyler suffered from chronic shoulder pain, concussions, and multiple long-term muscle and bone injuries. To treat this, Tyler began to use and abuse prescription painkillers, and ultimately died when he mixed the pain-relieving drugs methadone and hydrocodone, highly addictive painkillers used to treat extreme pain.

The abuse of painkillers in the NFL is a striking epidemic. Statistics show that 52% of retired NFL players used painkillers at one point in their careers, and of that group, 71% state that they abused these drugs. Common pain-relieving medication used in the NFL, such as Oxycontin, Percocet, Vicodin, and Dilaudid, are classified by the Food and Drug Administration as being “Schedule II” narcotics. This puts these drugs in the same category as cocaine and methamphetamines, drugs which are outlawed in the United States.

Current painkillers used in the NFL have been proven to be highly addictive, and pose severe health risks to athletes. Common side effects of the popular sports drug Oxycontin are nausea, vomiting, dizziness, and weak-

ness, while more severe effects can include apnea, respiratory arrest, circulatory depression, and even death. More shockingly, in cases of addiction to Oxycontin, the majority of those addicted did not additionally abuse the drug, but rather took the recommended amount by their doctor, a testament to Oxycontin’s lethally addictive nature.

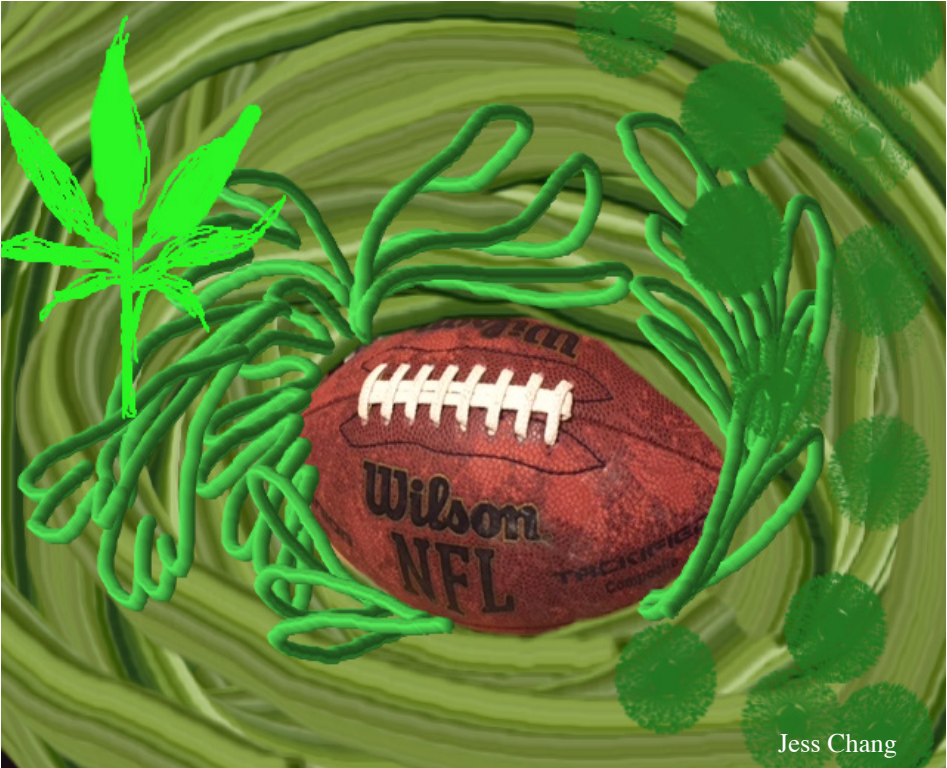
Because of the harmful, lasting effects of painkillers on athletes in the NFL, many league activists pursue other means of pain treatment, including acupuncture, massage-therapy, and electro-stimulus. However, as successful as these therapies may be, they fail to fully treat the chronic pain that most NFL players experience as a result of many years of the full-contact sport. Today, the solution that many players and league advocates are pursuing as a means for pain relief is a highly politicized and partisan one: marijuana.

Currently legal for medicinal use in 26 states and legal for recreational use in eight states, cannabis is a psychoactive drug that is used both recreationally and medicinally across the United States. Current and former NFL athletes have recently begun a push to lift the league’s longtime prohibition on marijuana as an approved

pain relieving substance. Though the drug is still illegal in 24 states, these advocates want football players who play in states that allow marijuana to be able to treat the chronic pain that many of them experience.

Retired NFL player Eugene Monroe is one of these advocates, and has spent a large portion of his professional and retired life speaking out against the NFL for imposing harsh restrictions on marijuana usage. As a former NFL player, Monroe has used harmful pain-relieving opioids, and knows first hand the addictive and destructive effects that painkillers can have. In an interview with the New York Times, Monroe spoke about the debate between marijuana and painkillers, stating, “We now know that these drugs are not as safe as doctors thought, causing higher rates of addiction, causing death all around our country, and we have cannabis, which is far healthier, far less addictive and, quite frankly, can be better in managing pain.” Monroe retired from professional football following the 2015-2016 season, after numerous injuries and intense chronic pain from a long career in the contact sport. Monroe explains that he could have stayed in the NFL, but would have had to increase his consumption of opioids and painkillers considerably.

Though marijuana is legal for medicinal purposes in over half of the United States, Roger Goodell and the National Football League maintain that the drug poses enough of a health risk to be banned for medicinal use, though they continue to allow players to use addictive painkillers.



Avoiding The Roid: The Evolution of Performance Enhancing Drugs

Joe O’Keefe
sports editor

Sports are as old as history itself. They allowed superiority to be quantified: the stronger man won the wrestling match and the better hunter hit the further target. Naturally, a search for performance enhancement came hand-in-hand with athletic competition. Even though the first athletic competitors utilized natural skill and practice, artificial performance enhancement materialized quickly. Players in the MLB and NFL who use performance enhancing drugs (PEDs) are not taking advantage of a modern phenomena, but of modern forms of an age old practice. The history of PEDs sheds light on the ideology behind the drugs many athletes take today and surprisingly explains how the modern steroid has more in common with ancient sheep testicles than one would think.

Doping is suspected to extend as far back in history as sport itself, but the first recorded account of PED use relates to the Berserkers of Scandinavia. This fierce class of Norse warriors enhanced their skill in competition with a drink called “butotens.” Composed of a fungus called Amanita Muscaria, it was said to increase performance by a factor of 12, but at the cost of sanity.

Even the Greeks and Romans doped. The first Olympics of 776 BC in Greece saw the use of multiple methods to enhance athletic performance. Some Greek athletes consumed sheep genitalia to increase their testosterone levels, while many others ate specific enhancement mushrooms. The Romans followed suit in their own competitions. Chariot racers often drank herbal mixtures to gain strength and fed their horses hydromel, an alcoholic mixture with honey, to

gain speed. Roman Gladiators were some of the most persistent ancient PED users. In order to lessen fear, they often consumed hallucinogens and increased strength was garnered with stimulants such as strychnine.

The use of drugs to enhance sports performance, like most aspects of history, is not well documented through the middle ages. However, it is suspected that PEDs were used to fuel conflicting military forces and malnourished peasants who worked in the fields of medieval towns.

One of the next documented uses of drugs to enhance sports performance occurred in 1807 when Abraham Wood competed in a British walking race. He admitted to using Laudanum, which is composed of Opium, to help stay awake for his extended race. Long distance walking races helped gain popularity for similarly exhaustive bicycle races. Like their walking counterparts, early bikers doped, using Nitroglycerin, an extremely potent stimulant.

The use of various stimulants continued through the 19th and 20th centuries in competitive sport, soon accompanied by the modern steroid which is seen today. John Ziegler, a physician who traveled to Vienna in 1954 with the American weightlifting team, discovered that the more competitive Soviets were giving their athletes testosterone. He returned to the US and developed the first modern steroid, Methandrostenolone, as a synthetic substitute for the testosterone which Soviet athletes were receiving.

Today, steroids and stimulants continue to be used to enhance athletic performance, but modern day doping involves a larger array of PEDs. Many endurance athletes use Erythropoietin to increase red blood cell production. Lance Armstrong was recently stripped of his seven Tour de France titles for doping by receiving blood transfusions. Unlike in the past, the modern day doper faces strict regulation and increasingly effective methods of testing for PEDs. Performance enhancing drugs are not old, but neither is the good spirit of athletic competition. If we seek the fair competition that brings excitement to athletics we should stray away from accepting doping as common and normal, regardless of its historical prevalence.

