



THE WESTMOUNT GAZETTE

Winter Edition

December 2023

Grade 9 Fun Night: Uniting Students Through Fun and Camaraderie

By Zainab Shoaib

Westmount's first Grade 9 Fun Night was a resounding success, sparking enthusiasm and camaraderie among the incoming freshmen. The evening began in the cafeteria, where students eagerly received instructions before venturing outdoors for a variety of engaging group activities. Upon returning indoors, students were given pizza and an assortment of snacks. Then, students gathered on the bleachers for a group photo, capturing the collective spirit of their first high school milestone. But the night was far from over. Post-photo, students were offered various options to continue the celebration. Some chose the dance floor in the cafeteria, while others chose the gym. For those seeking a quieter ambiance, a



quiet room provided board games and puzzles. Beyond being just a series of entertaining events, the Grade 9 Fun Night brought students closer together, fostering a vibrant spirit and inclusivity to thrive within the school walls.

HWDSB Days of Climate Action

By Lilyanna Colling-Cen

On November 16, high schools across the HWDSB rallied to show solidarity in support for climate action. Taking initiative and promoting accountability to sustain the natural state of the planet is a pertinent issue in today's society; especially since climate change and other environmental topics are important to discuss for *everyone* that lives on Earth.

The seeds of this call for climate justice were nurtured when members of HWDSB high school environmental teams gathered at the board office for the Youth EcoSummit on October 26th. From there, Westmount's EcoNinjas planned an event to participate in the Day of Climate Action in November.

The action took place periods three and four in the cafeteria, and then permeated throughout the school. Many members of the Westmount community were involved; with performances from the dance team, Iceberg—a band comprised of Westmount students, a video of Amanda Gorman's Earthrise, and much more in this attempt to engage the community in such a significant matter. There were activities such as sign-making, and poster-signing, as well as an address from one of the leaders of youth-led environmental initiative in the city, Jordyn Boyer. In period four, the focus shifted to the outside of the campus, where students and teachers walked around the



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front yard, and later travelled around the school's hallways. This Day of Climate Action garnered media attention from the local news channel, CHCH, along with other schools being highlighted, such as Saltfleet Secondary.

Connecting with our Earth is something that we do not make time to do in our lives. Often, we think that these changes that our environment is experiencing is a task that others should solve. However, as the next generation of young minds in Canada, we need to familiarize ourselves with standing up for climate justice. As was discussed in the chant throughout Westmount halls, there is no Planet B. There will be another Day of Climate Action on Earth Day, which is April 22nd, so stay tuned for more environmental events at Westmount.

The Junior Girls Basketball Winning Season, 2023 By Koralynn Smith

It was a great season; how did they get there?

To start off, I would like to congratulate the junior girls on their championship win.



That took a lot of hard work and determination and if any of you are reading this, you should be extremely proud of yourselves.

To dive right in, the girls recently won the championship game against Sherwood, the score ended with 28-34 in their favour. At first, Westmount was up by quite a bit but then relaxed just enough for Sherwood to make a decent comeback. For this article I was lucky enough to get an interview with the coach herself, Ms. Pankerican who made it possible to have this much of a personal insight into the season.

One of the problems in the very beginning was the approach, lots of the students came from different sports backgrounds, especially because of covid and so it was decided that the season would just be for fun, a way to help the girls form skills and make bonds as a team.

It didn't turn out that way, they won every game but their first. Well, hey, I mean feel free to gloat about that! So, quickly into the season they realized that they had real talent, and with that a real chance to win. This first game was viewed as a "wake up call" to start taking the season and practices more seriously. They quickly became strong competitors. Pankerican said it felt like there had been a target put on their backs after that, and they needed to stay on top.

When taking practices more seriously, of course not everyone would be as up to it as others. The coach said that the people who tried their best in practice and accepted helpful criticism improved a lot more over the season because they were more dedicated and wanted to improve.

When some people would not practice or try as hard as they needed to, the team felt a hit in the next game. "It felt like maybe we couldn't win, but we knew we could still do if we worked hard enough because we deserved it."

The team was compared to two groups of people, one determined to put in all the work they could and the other who just did not have the time nor energy to.



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When you are playing a team sport like basketball every person matters, and there was a certain consistency throughout the season. That everyone was equally important no matter what their experience. She described it as a “calibrated blend of people, all sharing the court working together in a blend of competitiveness and cooperation. They had a goal to win and kept it fair amongst each other.” There was a rhythm between each other, a rhythm of lineups. It was essential to understand who they were playing with and use that to create moments with each other on the court. Everyone plays differently and it is important to embrace that. In things like group huddles, they cheered loudly for each other and supported one another on and off the court. “I wasn’t involved, I was happy to be a guide and allow their talent to unfold naturally.”

Since it was not a long season, it was important that yes, of course the players needed to form skills, but it was just as important that they needed to know what to do in a situation without a set play, * they needed to know how to make quick decisions on their own and think for themselves.

They practiced a lot of scrimmages so that they understood what to do in any situation, and so they would know what to do to be able to help themselves and each other the most. To have a more fluid adapting mindset instead of a structured machine. “It is more of psychology” says Ms. Pankeric, “being able to stop and go instead of planning every moment, instead of hoping for a specific environment. Basketball is about being a teammate, and that was something of a transferable goal; when people come together, if you stay in shape that’s great, but basketball is not about just playing the game, it is about honing your skills and building a bond as a team.”

I believe that to be one of the most important takeaways from this, everyone is an individual person but when they come together as a team and understand each other, they can accomplish anything.

The Housing Crisis: A Problem with No Near End in Sight **By David Cosma**

Over the past 3 years, Canada’s housing prices have increased substantially. Despite all of this, the origins of the



housing crisis are far less recent than most people think. A housing crisis can be described as a period in which the cost of housing exceeds the average person’s purchasing power. The housing crisis is often attributed to the decrease of mortgage interest rates after the late 1990s. Prior to that, it was very common to have mortgage interest rates in the double digits. The decrease to single digit interest rates resulted in far more Canadians being able to afford homes. It is also important to note that Canada’s housing crisis was not caused by a single issue, but rather many. The number of houses being built has also steadily decreased over time. Mass investment purchases, and money laundering have also contributed to the crisis. As a result of the extreme cost of buying a home, the demand for rental properties has significantly increased as fewer people qualify for bank mortgages and or lack the ability to save the rate needed for a house down-payment.



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This has resulted in increases in rental prices further impacting people's economic lives. Due to the high cost of living, in the foreseeable future Canada's young generations will be burdened with greater financial strain. The higher cost of living often results in a lower ability to save, less discretionary spending (spending on things that are not essential) and lower quality of life.

Unfortunately, the housing crisis has no near end in sight. In fact, our own Finance Minister stated that the housing crisis will take years to resolve. The CMHC (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation) estimates that Canada will need an additional 3.5 million housing units to restore housing affordability by 2030. Unfortunately, many economists say that building many homes within this time frame is statistically impossible. It seems to be that unfortunately the financial futures of the next generations are in peril for the foreseeable future.

A Life of Varsity

By Ereza Dedinca

Many young men in secondary school dedicate much of their lives to sports throughout their years in school, Football is a good representation of this.

Westmount's Football team is known for their invincible team, getting in win after win, although they may not have made it all the way, their team is incredibly strong. So, what does it take to create an incredible team and incredible players such as the Wildcats?

Mohamad Kassemhallab is a senior in high school focusing on his studies, however he also devotes much of his time to being a defense halfback on the Westmount Football team. His days during the Football season are incredibly busy, practices 4-5 times a week after school, including games and film sessions once a week. That's really the bare minimum, there is a lot more that goes into it.

Mohamad was asked what managing his life is like during the Football season, he responded by saying "being on a football team that has been the city champions for the past 5 years takes extreme dedication. If you want to be a champion, you have to work like a champion, this means countless hours of practice every single day. Lots of sacrifices had to be made and tons of effort was required for us to reach the level we're at. Managing my time and life throughout the season was challenging, but with discipline and passion for the sport I managed to find a way."

"Football is one of those sports where you have to give it everything you have in order to learn and improve. Being a better player requires more than just being on the field and getting through practice. Things like getting enough sleep, eating the right food, studying the game on and off the field, being disciplined and patient and most importantly being a team player. As coach pain always says, "nothing is ever guaranteed in this sport and that's the beauty of it". This shows the amount of discipline and effort it takes for someone to put in countless hours of practice with the guaranteed results. It takes a lot to be on the level of a Westmount football player, was it all worth it? Absolutely, every second of it" is how Mohamad responded.

With the season that has come to an end (a very good one at that) it is clear, that this life is not easy. This is the life of varsity.



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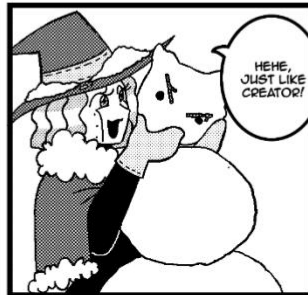
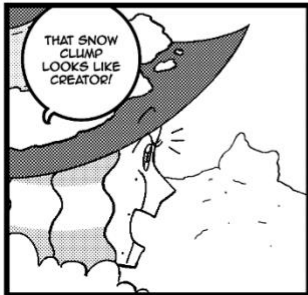
Comic – Glitch The Robot Witch

By Andrea Castillo

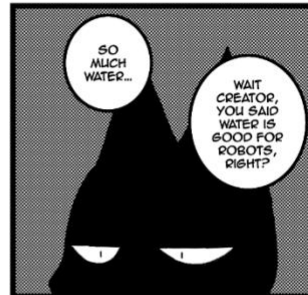
WINTER WISHING



SNOW LONELY



HOT AND COLD



GLITCH THE ROBOT WITCH





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Life at Westmount



The amazing artwork for the Winter Concert



The Disco ball at the Winter Concert



The Wind Orchestra



The Wind Orchestra with the Choir



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