

EDITORIALS

Guitar Hero symptomatic of generation's ennui



Rexly Penaflores II
Managing Editor

“No pain, no gain.” How often have we heard that aphorism applied to sports and other fields of endeavor? It has become a national mantra used to describe the determination to succeed in everything that we do, regardless of the effort and hardship involved.

Lately, however, it seems that more and more people dismiss the notion of hard work as a ticket to success. It is as if we want to reap the benefits of hard labor but not to go through hard labor itself. Everyone seems to want to be Paris Hilton, famous for being famous, without ever putting forth any effort.

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An illustrative example would be the popular video game known as *Guitar Hero*TM. The game allows participants to “play” prerecorded songs with the use of a strum bar and five different colored buttons to play different notes. Ever since its release, it has become a hit, spawning sequels, a rival game (*Rock Band*TM) and various tournaments, which groups in this school have started to use as a form of fundraising.

The problem lies in the ease of playing the game. The songs used in the game are timeless classics. The fact that gamers can play these songs with a few buttons underscores the game’s moronic simplicity. As multiplatinum selling artist Prince noted when he refused to allow his songs to be used for *Guitar Hero*TM, whatever happened to sitting down with a guitar or drum set and actually trying to learn to play these instruments?

The roots of the *Guitar Hero*TM phenomenon might be found in rap and hip-hop, which electronically sample other artists’ work, essentially producing a patchwork quilt of borrowed sounds that

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are combined into a melody over which lyrics are spoken. While hip hop producers are creative technicians and rappers are talented writers and performers, musically speaking, they are using recycled material. It is almost like stealing property.

It seems that people no longer want the satisfaction of working hard. Instead, they take shortcuts and satisfy themselves with mediocre effort. While *Guitar Hero*TM is a metaphor for our collective laziness, it is not the only example.

The recent economic downturn resulted partly because many financiers and investors took shortcuts in easy, get-rich-quick schemes that proved to be ill-advised.

This country was conceived on the notion of working industriously. Many men and women fought with their lives to be independent from a monarch. There were no shortcuts when we fought for our independence, why do we look for them now?

In the past, Americans were inspired by success stories of people who started at rock bottom and worked their way to the top. They

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gave it their all to reach their dreams, and they cut no corners. In their place, this generation has such role models as Nicole Richie and Kim Kardashian, heiresses who have never worked a day in their lives (unless appearing on reality shows *about* their lives counts) and have become famous nonetheless.

Since most of us will not be inheriting vast sums, perhaps it is time to get off the couch, put down the fake guitar and put our collective nose to the grindstone.

Creative fundraising options urged



Zoe Ljubic
Editor in Chief

Not a day goes by at West when the hallway in front of the student cafeteria and student commons isn’t filled with clubs trying to make some money. DECA sells ice cream each Monday, Wednesday and Friday, while other clubs scramble around on the other side of the hall with baked goods or Jamba JuiceTM.

In class, it would be hard to miss those Dance Marathon club members with large containers of baked goods for sale or the variety of boxes filled with chocolate and hard candy. Niles West clubs primarily fundraise through food sales. For the big fundraising events throughout the year, food is always sold. Sports teams scramble to find a spot to work at the concession stand for proceeds for their team.

The point is that West’s primarily fundraising tool is food and not very healthy food at that. Why? Put simply, many clubs and teams sell food because it is the easiest thing to sell, and it makes the most money — fast.

The problem with food-related fundraising is twofold: it promotes unhealthy, high calorie consumption, and it is terribly unoriginal and lacking in creativity.

In regard to the former: on any given day, a student is tempted by baked goods, juice, ice cream and candy. If a student were to consume a cupcake, a 12-ounce juice, a bowl of ice cream, a half dozen AirheadsTM and/or TwizzlersTM and a candy bar—all readily available throughout the school—his/her caloric intake would exceed 1500 calories per day. Add to that total whatever the student consumes in regular meals, and it is no secret why teenage obesity is a problem.

As for the latter, food has become a crutch for extracurricular fundraising, but such is not the case at all schools. A survey of area schools revealed some provide fun and original ways for schools to

raise money. One such activity involves an event in which students pay \$1 to see a teacher duct taped to a tree. Some schools even “pie the teacher.” This is similar to the duct tape fundraiser where students pay \$1 for a raffle ticket, and the holder of the winning ticket gets to throw a pie at the teacher of their choice.

Other schools gather irrelevant or unimportant items from home and host a yard sale in the school’s parking lot. This not only serves as a means to bring in profit for sports teams and clubs, but also is the leading figure in fundraising for religious and community activities. Another way to make quick, easy money on hot spring day is by hosting a car wash. Using a high school’s big parking lot, many schools host car washes.

As for junior high schools, many schools in the suburban area host walk-a-thons where students spend one hour walking around

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a track for donations. Prior to the event, students go around asking parents, neighbors and community members for pledges. Some schools even used this walk-a-thon idea and spiced it up to a jump-a-thon where students engage in a variety of jumping events for an hour.

While some clubs and teams have found creative ways to raise money, far too many of West’s fundraising efforts center on quick, easy, one-dimensional and unhealthy methods, primarily sugar-laden junk food. The alternative fundraising options listed above will not only bring in a larger profit, but they will provide an environment that is fun and enjoyable for all school and community members involved.

By employing creative fundraising, student organizations will be able to interact with one another and to raise funds in a productive manner to which only local dentists and cardiologists would object.

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WestWord

west opinions

Military proselytizing threatens U.S. status



Uzma Ahmad
Editorials Editor

Recently, Al-Jazeera, an international news network, released video footage showing American troops stationed at a U.S. military base in Baghram, Afghanistan, distributing *Bibles* translated in the local Afghani languages of Pashto and Dari. Although these soldiers claim that they are merely “offering gifts” to locals, this distribution clearly crosses a line and can be seen as proselytizing. These actions have elicited controversy in the political realm, and this issue desperately needs to be addressed by the United States government.

For American soldiers, proselytizing is clearly a direct violation of their regulations and professional codes. According to the U.S. Central Command’s General Order Number 1, soldiers are prohibited from promoting any religion, faith or practice.

The actions of these troops should not be tolerated. Not only is distribution of Christian scripture a violation of military code, but it is morally controversial. These soldiers represent the secular government of America. Their job description does not include serving as missionaries or preachers.

U.S. citizens pay taxes to subsidize the military. The public’s hard-earned money was not collected to help impose a religious ideology on another country. Because of these preaching troops, taxpayers are unwitting accomplices in the spreading of a doctrine

that they might not necessarily condone, follow or support.

When soldiers take on the role of converting local Afghans alongside their military duties, it closely resembles a certain irksome and objectionable era of our global history, the Crusades. During the Crusades, the Roman Catholic Church waged religion-driven military campaigns against minorities and countries that opposed Christian doctrines. Although the missionary troops’ proselytizing in Afghanistan does not approach the severity of that foisted upon non-Christians in the days of the Crusades, there are definitely similarities in their motives. Both unethically use military influence as a method to impose religious beliefs on a people. Furthermore, among the targets of the Crusades were 11th-13th Muslims.

What is even more disappointing than the actions of these militaristic missionaries is that the Pentagon has taken no action to denounce or stop their proselytizing. Furthermore, the U.S. government as a whole has ignored this conflict and has not issued any comments regarding the illegal actions of its own soldiers. The time has come for the Obama administration to step up and take responsibility to eliminate such behavior in Afghanistan.

The government’s reticence may stem from a misguided notion that a call for the government’s intervention is an attack against the doctrines espoused by the missionary troops. In an era of anti-Muslim (and let us be clear, the targeted Afghans are almost all Muslims) sentiment and given the unfounded charges leveled against his own beliefs in the recent campaign, the President might be reluctant to intervene, lest he be seen as anti-Christian and/or pro-Muslim.

Nevertheless, intervene he must. Putting an end to *de facto* missionary work by soldiers would go a long way toward stabilizing relationships with potential allies in a politically unstable and religiously sensitive nation.

Dance Marathon excels above and beyond

Editorial

Kudos to those who participated in Dance Marathon (DM)! Their persistence and devotion helped raise a record high of more than \$73,361.80 for this year’s beneficiary, the Camp One Step at a Time. DM and all of its volunteers deserve a big round of applause for their hard work and all their efforts.

This year, many of DM’s volunteers took on a more dedicated and personal role in order to raise money. Normally, students sell candy to raise donations and go around “canning” in front of specific locations such as Jewel or Panera to pick up spare change wherever they may find people willing to spare it.

However this year, students went above and beyond the usual money-raising strategies. All on their own, these volunteers thought of creative ways to increase their donations. As a result, West’s hallways have overflowed with ingenious individual students who sold thousands of tasty delights over the course of the year to support DM. Executive Board member senior Janine Wilkin has been infamous for her mouthwatering cupcakes that have alone raised hundreds of dollars. Others have sold baked goods and chocolate covered pretzels throughout the school year. Each volunteer was committed to his/her aim to raise as much in donations as possible.

It was these actions that demonstrated that West’s students could selflessly devote themselves to a benevolent cause that benefits their community. These volunteers sacrificed their time and energy and committed themselves to make a difference in the

world around them.

DM also found another resourceful way to boost contributions by working with corporate entities. Dairy Queen, Noodles and Co. and other restaurants worked hand in hand with DM and granted it a portion of their earnings.

What reinforces all of DM’s efforts is that its proceeds will be distributed to a glorious cause. The donations will be passed on to Camp One Step at a Time, an organization that provides a safe and supportive environment for children who are diagnosed with cancer. DM’s money will go directly to sponsor kids who can not afford the camp fees. This camp offers free health care, chemotherapy and radiation to children with cancer. In other words, all the efforts and sacrifices made by each of DM’s volunteers will go directly to assist, financially and emotionally, young children who are afflicted with such devastating illnesses.

West Word hopes that in the following years, DM continues to support the community. We can already see this taking shape, as next year, DM plans to continue to leave a positive impact on society. Next year, volunteers’ efforts will be felt on not only a local level, but a global one, as they prepare to offer their donations to Expanding Lives, an organization that supports and aids women from Niger.

West Word is proud to recognize DM as a great vehicle for serving and strengthening the community through such enjoyable and interactive approaches.



Dance Marathon board members help coordinate the evening’s events. Photo courtesy Florence Lee

Should American soldiers be allowed to preach in foreign countries?

Staff



Nicole Reynolds

No, because it may threaten the locals if the majority of the country follows a different religion.

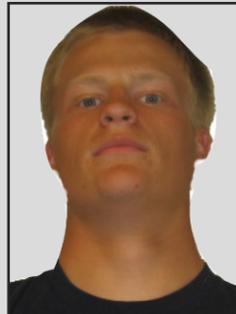
Senior



Owais Ahmed

No, because it may be unfair to locals who follow other religions.

Junior



Tyler Rosell

No, because although we have freedom of speech, we are positioned in different countries.

Sophomore



Nadia Ali

No, because soldiers are only meant to do their military service, and it might be intimidating for locals.

Freshman



Armon Saavedvafa

Yes, because American soldiers have new and different ideas and beliefs to offer.