



THE BLUE DEVIL NEWS

The Student-Produced Newsletter of West Haven High School

December Topics

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Principal and Police Department Clarify School Lockdown Procedures

By Nevaeh Lugo, Class 2023



Photo credit: Todd Dandelske

Officer Vic DeSimone of the West Haven Police Department and Principal Dana Paredes recently visited the school newsroom to discuss the actions being taken for the physical and mental health of students regarding school shootings, a topic which began to trend once again after the Oxford shooting in Michigan.

Mrs. Paredes described the school's mitigation strategies as having levels, which she labeled as physical, human, and mental health resources.

Physical mitigation includes the amount of entrances and exits in the building. The newer building includes fewer opportunities for an intruder to enter and each exit is equipped with an alarm that will trigger if a door is propped open. Starting in the New Year, those physical mitigation strategies will include metal detectors at each entrance.

Human mitigation includes security on campus. Security guards are always located in each area of school grounds to keep staff and students safe from a variety of dangerous scenarios.

“We have [resource officers] from the West Haven Police Department who are here with us and really, actively investigate any rumors, any suspicion, any social media post,” Mrs. Paredes said.

The school’s mental health resources include social workers who are willing to talk to students about any concerns that arise regarding lockdowns or help them through struggles with mental health in general.

“After the pandemic, we realized that there may be many students who maybe really didn’t struggle with mental health [before], and we were able to bring in some full-time clinicians through Bridges to work on behavioral health,” Mrs. Paredes said.

Bridges is a behavioral health clinic stationed in areas across Connecticut, including West Haven.

In the event that a lockdown takes place, the WHPD and the school administration have made their roles clear.

“Our goal and our role is to find out what the problem is and resolve it,” Officer DeSimone said. “In the case of an active shooter, if one should happen, that’s important.”

He continued to stress the importance of the police department finding the cause of a threat to school safety and rectifying it.

Mrs. Paredes described the administration’s role in a lockdown as providing assistance to the police department.

She said that the department relies on the staff in administration to relay demographic and relationship information if the police find it relevant, but leave the authorities to resolve the issue beyond that.

“[During a lockdown] we hand over control of the building to the police department.” Mrs. Paredes said, “As far as making decisions, the command center of the police department would take over all decision-making and we would kind of work at their will.”

Following the rise in popularity of threats and jokes on social media, the administration and police department wanted to remind students to not make light of a potentially life-threatening situation.

“There are some things that students need to realize that they can joke about and they can’t make a joke about,” Officer DeSimone said. “Anything about a school shooting, it’s not a joke, and we need everyone to take it seriously.”

Band and Chorus Creating Video Versions of their Holiday Concerts

By Yamilette Romero, Class of 2022



Members of Bel Canto and Blue Notes performed their holiday show on camera this year.

The Band and Choral Departments have prepared video versions of their holiday concerts as a safe way of sharing their music during the pandemic. Both concerts are available in the arts section of our student-produced news site, whsnews.com.

The band’s selections are *Jing, Jing, Jingle* by Chris Sharp, and Mariah Carey’s popular *All I Want for Christmas is You*. Donata Lupacchino, director of the band, held a poll for band students in November to vote on which winter pieces they’d play.

Band members are required to wear musicians’ masks while remaining three feet apart. Musicians' masks are designed to adopt the use of a regular mask without restricting the ability to play. Flutists, for example, have a mask with two holes that they slide the head joint through. They also wear bell covers to reduce the spread of germs.

Alyssa Dowse, WHHS Drum Major and flute and piccolo player, said they aren’t a big fan of the masks.

“It’s very inconvenient for flutes because it always gets in our way,” they said. “Playing piccolo is hard because you only have a small space to play through.”

Meanwhile in the Choral Department, members are required to wear normal masks while maintaining a safe distance apart.

The Choral Department, which includes Bel Canto, Blue Notes and Chorus, prepared a full concert for the holidays. Their selections included the holiday classic “The Christmas Song,” “Believe” from the movie “Polar Express,” and Pat-A-Pan, a traditional French carol.

Kellyan Ruiz, member of the Chorus, said she was most excited to perform “Pat-A-Pan.”

“It was one of the more difficult songs,” she said. “It’s very fast pacing, so it’s very challenging, but very rewarding.”

Though concerts are being operated differently this year, both departments have worked hard, and are thrilled to share their performances.

Toys for Joys Fundraiser Provides Holiday Gifts

By Danielle Ricketts, Class of 2022



Members of the Peer Advocates sort out toy donations.

West Haven High School Peer Advocates were hard at work this month as they prepared for the annual Toys for Joy event, which provides children in need something to look forward to on Christmas Day.

Due to the effects of the pandemic, the need this year is greater than ever before. After only two weeks of registration, 375 families signed up.

Peer Advocates, led by teachers Taylor Paredes and Jolie Morrell, fundraised for months so this event could be possible.

It began with Peer Advocates heading to stores all over West Haven, requesting the donation of gift cards to support the Toys For Joy cause. These donated gift cards were then used in a calendar-style raffle.

Each day of December, people who participated had the chance of being randomly selected and winning the gift cards for that day. Peer Advocates sold these calendars for \$20 each, which raised the money for toys to be bought.

These toys were then organized and packaged to be given to the hundreds of West Haven families that signed up to receive a special holiday gift.

Peer Advocates put aside their busy schedules and work really hard during the holiday season to make sure West Haven families in need will have something to look forward to for Christmas, and said that the hard work is worth it.

“Nothing makes me happier than giving toys to kids that need them,” Peer Advocate Robert Vets Jr. said.

In order for this program to be possible, Toys for Joy has partnered with the West Haven Fire Department, West Haven Police Department, Fred Hugendubel (Dubel’s Cafe) and Westies Win.

“It’s extremely difficult coordinating with all the different parties, but it’s well worth it,” Mr. Paredes said.

Winter Sports Preview

By Haven Fowlkes, Class of 2024 and Dakota Willette, Class of 2023

With the winter sports seasons starting, we wanted to give everyone an overview of what you have to look forward to this season.

Special thanks to Todd Dandelske for the use of many of his photographs.

Boys Hockey

Coaches: Steve Harris, Travis Bokina, Jim Lafo, Eric Diller, Mike Violano

Captains: Joe D’Aurio, Mike Alfano, DJ Carfora



The boys hockey team has strong potential this winter. Last season, the team went 5-8-1. Due to Covid and all of the unknowns, it was difficult for any team to stand out. Despite this, West Haven had several All-SCC players on its roster. With the graduation of former goalie Charlie Miller, sophomore Javed Ullah will take over as the starting goalie this season. The team is expected to have a very strong record this season, as they would have qualified for the playoffs in previous seasons but for the pandemic canceling the postseason. As always we have our cross-town rival game against Notre Dame-West Haven on March 2, which will be at the Bennett Rink. The team also plays our long-time rival, Hamden, on Feb. 12.

Girls Hockey

Coach: Erin Blake and Jocey Morrell

Captains: Meghan Dupre (WHHS), Grace Nowak (WHHS), and Maya Boyhen (Sacred Heart Academy)



The 2021/22 girls hockey season is shaping up to be one of the most important in recent memory. Last year the team went undefeated. Despite the challenges of having a season during the pandemic, the girls made it all the way to the SCC finals and won against long-time rival Guilford. This was their first SCC victory since 2018. This season the team is expected to have a very strong record. The team is very young, with the majority of the players being sophomores. At the start of the season, they lost 3-2 to their long-time rivals, Guilford. They'll play them again at the Milford Ice Pavilion on Feb. 19.

Boys Basketball

Coach: Ty Sullivan

Captains: Kyle Kearson, Manny Belcher, Javuan Calhoun



Although the boys season has started off a little rocky, Coach Ty Sullivan said he believes his team will have a good season. “We wanted to schedule really good teams this season,” he said. “Our players that we expect to have a positive impact are very young and we are hoping that this season gives them some experience to carry over to next season.” Standout players are senior Manny Belcher (6’0), senior Kyle Kearson (6’3), sophomore Adam Elkharraz (6’3) and sophomore Isaiah Jackson (6’4). Unfortunately senior Javaun Calhoun (6’7) is out with a knee injury. Coach Sullivan said he expects to have a much better team by March. “More games equals more experience,” he said. “We always look forward to any game we play. We treat every opponent the same.”

Girls basketball

Coach: Jessica Moriarty and Steve Carden

Captains: Amani Abuhatab, Tenique Gates and Kassidy Carrano



The 2021/22 girls basketball season is off to a strong start with wins against Stamford and Lauralton Hall. Having a record of 9-5 last year, the team made it all the way to the SCC Division 2 championship, where they lost to Sacred Heart Academy. They had two players, Amani Abuhatab from ESUMs and Kassidy Carrano, go All Conference. Abuhatab also went All State. This year the team is excited for all their games and hope to make long runs in both the conference tournament as well as the state tournament. The team is looking very promising, being led by captains Tenique Gates, Amani Abuhatab, and Kassidy Carrano. There is an impressive new player playing varsity this year, Freshman Ella Morgan. So far this season, Abuhatab and Carrano have been leading the team in scoring, rebounding and assists.

Indoor Boys and Girls Track

Coaches: Modestine Vaughn (head), Ryan Knight (assistant) and volunteer coaches Cynthia Latham, Robert Hayes and Aaron Vaughn

Captains: Tanasia Fidalago, Amanda Gullo, Dante Rodney and Justin Rodriguez



The 2021/22 indoor track season is somewhat back to normal after a peculiar season last year, when distancing between teammates caused a lack of social interaction. Additionally, the team could only compete against one other school at a time in meets. This year they have to run with masks on, which causes difficulties breathing. But overall the team is enjoying being reunited and hoping to achieve personal records. “Everyone is working hard to develop their skills for competition,” Head Coach Modestine Vaughn said. “Championship competition is right around the corner so we are working hard for that.” There are several strong new runners, including freshman Aylin Soto and freshman Vasillios Parsley. Other up-and-coming athletes are Quadir Blue (freshman), Amber Militrano (sophomore), Mia Rubirosa (sophomore), Dulce Castillo-Guerra (junior) and Ayannah Obas (junior). The team can compete against multiple teams during meets this year, which is more fun and competitive, Girls Captain Tanasia Fidalgo said. “I’m looking forward to the new people pushing themselves to become better athletes in track,” she said. Boys Captain Justin Rodriguez also said it’s great to be back to a more normal season. “I’m looking forward to developing the team further and setting them up for success in the coming years before I leave for college,” Rodriguez said. Coach Vaughn said she is looking for some championship achievements from returning athletes like Fildalago and Dante Rodney in the hurdles as well as distance runners Amanda Gullo and Alex Potter. “All in all, this is definitely a building year for my team,” Coach Vaughn said.

Boy's Swim

Coach: Robin Viani, Kevin Dickson

Captain: Brian Carew, Mustansir Jamalee



This year the 2021/22 Boys swim/dive team is looking forward to returning to a normal season. Due to Covid last year, teams in the league each swam at their own pools and sent in their times. This hurt the team because swimmers tend to be more motivated when they're swimming right next to their competition, Assistant Coach Kevin Dickson said. This was the most likely reason for their 0-9 record last season. "All of the swimmers/divers are really looking forward to having that competition back," Coach Dickson said. Mustansir Jamalee, Collin Charron, Andrew McLarty, Lucas Yavagnilio, Anthony Castillo-Montenegro, and Brandon Paucar are some of the top swimmers to watch. As for divers, Senior Vincent Militrano is an athlete colleges will be looking at this year, Coach. Dickson said. If you're wondering which meets to watch this season, we recommend the Notre Dame meet at home on Feb. 18. That meet is also the team's senior night.

Congratulations to the Talent Show Winners!



Congratulations to Connor Tuttle, Daniel Velez and Mars Cruz Miranda who were all winners at the talent show on Dec. 10. It was a wonderful program showcasing many talented WHHS students.

Student Government Runs Food Drive



The Student Government food drive was a big success. In December the group delivered dozens of boxes of canned food to the West Haven Emergency Assistance Taskforce (WHEAT) charity.