

2014 Winter Games Take Off in Sochi, Russia

By *The Lance Staff*

On February 7, over 40,000 traveled to Fisht Olympic Stadium to witness the start of the 2014 Sochi Olympics in Russia, the most expensive Games in history. An additional 31.7 million people in America alone have followed the spectacles of this year's Winter Olympics at home.

Athletes have competed in skiing, curling, figure skating, ice hockey, and more, as per the tradition of the Games.

The United States sent 230 athletes to Sochi, the largest team it has ever sent to a Winter Games. This year, the U.S. accumulated 28 medals for a standing of fourth place overall; Russia won first with 33 medals. One American gold medal went to figure skaters Meryl Davis and Charlie White, the first that the U.S. has ever won in ice dance. Skier Ted Ligety won another two, becoming the first American man to do so in Alpine skiing.

Livingston resident Anya Davidovich competed in pair skating for Team Israel, finishing fif-

teenth in the pairs short program. "It's been my sister's dream since she first started skating as a child," said freshman Nathan Davidovich, Anya's younger brother. "I'm so

media attention behind the Games has been on the controversy over Russia's 2013 law banning LGBT symbols from being displayed in public. In an international protest



Fireworks are launched over Olympic Park in Sochi on February 7 as part of the Opening Ceremony. Image source: Canada.com.

proud that she is able to fulfill that dream and make Olympic history at the same time."

Despite the general praise over the performances at the opening performances, much of the

effort, nations in support of LGBT rights publicly denounced Russia's actions; athletes raised rainbow flags and sported rainbow uniforms at the Opening Ceremony, and LGBT activists have boycotted the Games.

Actor Philip Seymour Hoffman Dead at 46

By *Brett Weiser-Schlesinger '14*

With more than twenty years and 50 films worth of experience, Philip Seymour Hoffman's career came to a tragic end on February 2, 2014, when the actor was found dead at the age of 46.

Hoffman's body was found in the bathroom of his Manhattan apartment, allegedly lying on the floor with a syringe in his left arm. Hoffman, known to have a history of drug addiction, had close to 50 envelopes of a substance preliminarily identified as heroin in his apartment at the time of his death, as discovered by investigators.

The actor's funeral was held on February 7 at St. Ignatius Loyola church in Manhattan, with over 400 mourners in attendance. At the ceremonies, fellow actor and priest James Martin S.J. said of Hoffman, "He was a lovely person, very down-to-earth . . . I learned about humility from him."

Hoffman is survived by his partner, Mimi O'Donnell, and their three children.

Minivan Crashes Into Kumon Learning Center

By *Joan Shira '14*

"Mrs. Lee saved my life," says Joshua Kim, an LHS senior and Kumon Learning Center worker. On Monday, January 13, 2014, Mrs. Lee, the Kumon manager, let Josh off of work fifteen minutes early at 7:15, and at 7:30 P.M., the normal time workers are released, a van crashed into the Livingston Kumon.

Kumon is an after-school self-learning program where the curriculum ranges from basic arithmetic to advance calculus. The Livingston branch had just been renovated in the fall of 2013 to include a waiting room for parents. This was the place where a Sienna Toyota van crashed into the building.

A handicapped elderly woman was driving the van, but neither she nor anyone in the building was injured. There is no information as to whether the driver was under any influence. The details of the crash are under private police files, and the investigation still continues.

After losing control off of West Mount Pleasant Avenue, the grey minivan leaped over the curb,

pushed through a barrier of shrubs, and landed thirty feet into the building.

"I just heard a crash and went flying through the air," Ron Hascasak, a parent of a Kumon says. He was waiting for his daughter to finish her math work when the van pushed him from his chair, hitting his head on the floor.

Along with Mr. Hascasak, about fifteen people were inside Kumon. Four students and three parents were in the waiting room at the time of the crash, and three students and six workers were further back in the classroom.

Mrs. Bowman, a worker at Kumon, explained how Mrs. Lee had bought an expensive window shade for the waiting room. At that time, it seemed unnecessary. But if Mrs. Lee hadn't invested in a thick window shade, when the glass shattered on impact, the remains would have flown across the room in all directions.

"The blinds kept the glass in, thank goodness. If not, who would've *continued on page 2*

Redefining Ukrainian Democracy: The Euromaidan

By *Sofia Soroka '14*

Violence in Ukraine has escalated as protestors seek to recover the symbolic Independence Square in the capital city of Kiev despite a truce called the day before after Russia resumed financial support. Eleven people were killed on February 20 as riot police and protestors clashed with firearms; another 28, including police officers, have died earlier this week.

The bodies have been moved to a temporary morgue at the entrance to the square.

"There will be many dead today," 38 year old demonstrator Anatoly Volk told the *New York Times*.

Over the past few months, people in western Ukraine have overthrown government agencies, and in Kiev, barricades 15 feet high have been put up to protect the protestors.

Ukrainian president Viktor F. Yanukovich is no longer in control of the situation; instead, privately contracted criminals have been sent in from eastern Ukraine and Russia to beat protestors in Kiev and sur-

rounding cities.

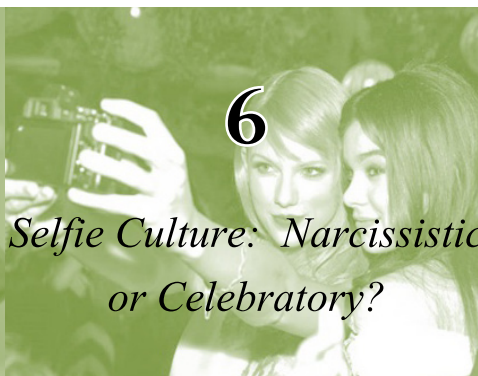
Over the last few weeks several hundred journalists, political activists, and protestors have been battered. Some have disappeared and later been found dead or severely injured. These instances of undisclosed brutality are never investigated by the police, who turn a blind eye to the criminal actions. Such violence continues to occur even during Yanukovich's conciliatory meetings with leading representatives from Euromaidan, named to reflect activists' aspiration to Europe and its political values.

Since the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, Ukraine has been struggling with its own corrupt "democracy," upheld by fraudulent elections and a party system dominated by the wealthiest oligarchs, who are under perpetual pressure from neighboring Russia.

In the late summer of 2013, plans for a trade agreement with the European Union were meant to be finalized by Yanukovich—an economically and politically favorable decision for *continued on page 2*



Spotlight on Senioritis



Selfie Culture: Narcissistic or Celebratory?



NBA Predictions

News 1 & 2

Features 3 & 4

Opinion 5 & 6

Entertainment 7

Sports 8

Staff

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From the Desk of the Editors-in-Chief

For generations, Americans have viewed the government as a separate entity from all other aspects of society. However, in recent years the lines between the government and the entertainment industry have become blurred in more ways than one. For better or for worse, Hollywood is slowly playing a bigger and bigger role in widespread opinions of the American government.

Now, culture and politics are more intertwined than ever through celebrity endorsements of political parties and campaigns, as well as popular television shows that sensationalize politics. Dramatic shows such as “Scandal,” “House of Cards,” and “Blacklist” are a few of the most regularly watched shows that captivate American audiences.

“House of Cards,” for instance, depicts one congressman’s relentless quest for power and his ascension of the American political hierarchy, lending a dark tone of intrigue to the otherwise mundane tone of politics. The political set-

ting and characters of each show’s storylines exaggerate the suspense, controversy, and even romance in the lives and jobs of the most secretive and prestigious politicians.

The infusion of political drama into American culture has both integrated and isolated Americans from their government. On the one hand, Americans have become more interested in learning about current political controversies. By doing so, viewers form solidified political opinions that have the potential to affect voter statistics.

On the other hand, Hollywood’s dramatization of government activity has glamorized an otherwise not so glamorous business. The backdoor deals and secret alliances depicted on TV are often more immoral and less suspenseful than they seem, and are made to look all the more glamorous with Olivia Pope’s sleek suits and scandalous love affair.

Not only do television shows sensationalize political life, but increasing celebrity involvement in politics has made prominent

politicians and political platforms take on their own celebrity status. A-listers such as Steven Spielberg, Jay-Z, and Bruce Springsteen are among many who use their fame and fortune to promote politicians, specifically those from the Democratic Party. Even political candidates themselves can take advantage of popular culture to reach out to their constituencies. Both President Obama and 2012 Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney appeared on *Late Night with Jimmy Fallon*, using the media to make themselves approachable—something politicians in another era could never have done.

While there is no proven way to define and measure the effects of Hollywood on public political opinion, it is clear that the American view of politics has shifted to one that is more culturally oriented. Now, the question for the future is whether or not this change will affect voter turnout or even foster new goals in policy making.

Rachel and Crystal

Kumon Crash, page 1

... known what damage could’ve been done.”

Kumon was closed from January 13 to 17, but as of Tuesday, January 21, Kumon was up and running. With big yellow tape surrounding the front of Kumon and a big sign that said, “Do Not Touch,” children and parents avoid coming in from Eppes Essen Deli, and instead have to come in from the direction of Livingston Pharmacy.

The windows and wall of the waiting room are still under construction, so parents have to wait inside the classroom, filling in the small stools designed for children. It’s crowded, but necessary.

Ukrainian Democracy, page 1

... the nation and an opportunity to move toward the western world, severing ties with Russia.

However, in November, two weeks before the final agreement would be signed, Yanukovich met with Russian president Putin and the plans for European integration were dissolved.

Appalled, Ukrainians began peacefully protesting, accumulating up to 500,000 people in Kiev calling for a reinstatement of the intended trade agreement, and later, for reelections, due to the ruling party’s violent attempts to dissolve the peaceful protest.

Since November, the situ-

ation has only gotten worse. The government has refused to acknowledge the protest; instead, Yanukovich’s party has brought internal security police forces into Kiev, and in mid-January, passed anti-protest laws banning public assembly and freedom of the press. These dictatorial laws allowed police to imprison anyone protesting in Kiev.

In reaction to the current situation in Ukraine, the European Union and the United States are ready to implement economic sanctions against the Ukrainian authorities responsible for the violence against the people—closing theirs and their families’ foreign accounts.

Christie Sworn In For Second Term Amid Mounting Scandals

By Andrew Peng ‘17

New Jersey Governor and Livingston High School graduate Chris Christie sought to turn back the clock as he was sworn into a second term, saying he would “stay the course” and put aside partisan differences despite explosive allegations of corruption and abuse of power directly linked to his administration.

Christie, who is considered a likely Republican presidential candidate for the 2016 race, and who currently chairs the Republican Governors Association, did not mention the multiple investigations that have continued to plague his office. The scandals have resulted in the firings or resignations of multiple top aides and political appointees.

Democratic lawmakers in the Senate and state Assembly announced that they were joining forces to create a joint committee to investigate allegations that Christie’s aides engineered crushing four-day traffic jams last September in Fort Lee as political retribution, apparently against Democratic Mayor Mark Sokolich for failing to endorse Christie for re-election. Eighteen

people from Christie’s reelection campaign and administration have been subpoenaed by the committee.

Now, David Wildstein, the former Port Authority director of interstate capital projects who personally oversaw the lane closings, says that “evidence exists” show that the governor knew about the closings when they happened. Alan Zegas, Wildstein’s lawyer, wrote a letter describing the move to shut down the lanes as “the Christie administration’s order . . . evidence exists as well tying Mr. Christie to having knowledge of the lane closures, during the period when the lanes were closed, contrary to what the governor stated publically in a two-hour press conference.”

Governor Christie had stated during the conference that he had no knowledge that traffic lanes leading to the bridge had been closed until after they were reopened. “I had no knowledge of this—of the planning, the execution, or anything about it—and that I first found out about it after it was over,” he said. “And even then, what I was told was that it was a traffic study.”

The letter, sent as part of a dispute between the Port Authority and Wildstein’s legal fees, does not specify what the evidence is, but shows a striking separation between previous allies. Wildstein was a classmate of the governor at Livingston High School, and was hired with Christie’s blessing at the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, the joint-state agency that controls the bridge. Christie has since tried to distance himself from Wildstein by portraying him as a loose cannon. In a memo to close friends and allies, Christie said that “as a 16-year-old kid” at Livingston High School, Wildstein had sued over a school board election, been “accused by his high school social studies teacher of deceptive behavior,” and had “a strange habit of registering web addresses of other people’s names without telling them.”

Lawmakers are also considering extending their investigation to allegations raised by Hoboken Mayor Dawn Zimmer, who said that Christie, through Lt. Governor Kim Guadagno, tried to force her to approve a prime real estate project

under threat of withholding Hurricane Sandy relief funds. Zimmer allegedly applied for \$130 million in aid but only received \$300,000.

Multiple Christie appointees and persons who have been subpoenaed have refused to testify or hand over evidence, citing their Fifth Amendment rights.

According to national polls from Reuters and Gallup, Christie’s popularity has plummeted as much as twenty points since his landslide election victory. His popularity among locals who use the George Washington Bridge has slid even further, decreasing by 37 percent. Christie has apologized profusely and has denied any involvement in any of the wrongdoings. He fired deputy chief of staff Bridget Anne Kelly, who infamously sent an email to Wildstein that said, “Time for some traffic problems in Fort Lee.” Wildstein responded, “Got it.”

Known for his straight-talking governing, Christie has built a national following, and is seen as a politician who can find common ground with Democrats on key issues.

features

LANCER CLUB UPDATES

TV Production Club

By Gabby Watson '15

Calling all Lancers: are you currently enrolled in a television class? Do you have a fascination with what occurs behind the scenes of an interview, movie, or TV segment? Good with a camera? If you've answered yes to any of these questions, you should join Livingston High School's TV Production club.

TV Production offers something for everyone. Members can film a variety of events including musical productions, symphonies, and Lancer sports. The club also allows students to assist in the filming of L-TV shows such as Clergy Corner. Members of this activity aim to provide the residents of Livingston with entertainment and information about the community. Year round, students record Memorial Day celebrations, banquets, Youth Appreciation week programs, political debates, and many other broadcasts. Currently, the club is busy filming the two Lancer sports highlights of the season: basketball and hockey.

No applications are required to take part in filming. However, anyone interested must capture at least thirteen hours of footage in a TV Production class before joining. Close to production dates, Mr. Milano holds meetings for interested students. For more information, contact Mr. Milano or stop by room B134 or B138 after school. Why settle for just streaming Netflix movies and TV shows to your computer, when you can actually produce your own TV show?

Chinese Honors Society

By Michelle Bao '14

For about 3.8 million Chinese Americans in the United States, New Year's does not end on January 1—we have fifteen upcoming days of Chinese New Year.

Every year, all the Chinese-affiliated organizations in Livingston, including our own Chinese Honors Society and Chinese Culture

Club, come together to celebrate the New Year by organizing a day of food, games, and performances at Livingston High School. The planning of Livingston Chinese Cultural Day (LCCD), which began in mid-January, involves Livingston Chinese School, Livingston HuaXia Chinese School, Living Stone Christian Church, and the Livingston Chinese Association.

This year, the celebration of the beginning of the Year of the Horse took place on Saturday, February 15. Games and crafts began in the afternoon around 3 o'clock, located in the auxiliary gym and B hall classrooms, and dinner was served in the cafeteria prior to the performances that are scheduled to begin at around 6 o'clock. Livingston High School students Grace An, Dylan Camche, Jeremy Knopf, and Julia Wang showed off their Mandarin skills, hosting the evening's performances as Masters of Ceremonies. Performances typically include a vibrant mix of music, martial arts, skits, and dance.

While this year also marks the 15th anniversary of the Chinatown Lunar New Year Festival, Chinese New Year is a time of excitement and celebration for people everywhere—even in our tiny suburb of Livingston, New Jersey.

French Club

By Samantha Caruso '16

Very exciting things are happening in the French Club! They're currently raising money for the Doctors without Borders organization. This French non-government organization works to provide medical care to people in need all around the world. Be on the lookout for their upcoming crepe sale!

The French Club members would like to extend their gratitude to their club advisor, Madame Stefner, for her hard work and support. The French Club is always welcoming new members, so stop by room A123 if you're interested in joining this awesome club.

Breaking the Chain

By Samantha Caruso '16

Working hard this month, Breaking the Chain is selling candy in the hallways of LHS during school hours. All candy is \$1 and will benefit Breaking the Chain Through Education, an organization that builds schools and rescues underprivileged children in Ghana, Africa. This great club is always happy to have new members! Go to room S27 for more information about Breaking the Chain.

Sign Language Club

By Samantha Caruso '16

The Sign Language Club is working hard to improve their ASL skills, moving towards learning to sign the lyrics of popular songs and poems, which the club will be performing in front of preschools and schools for special needs children on their upcoming field trip!

Vice President Sydney Becker says that she is "excited for the future of the Sign Language Club. We are making leaps and bounds in our signing abilities and cannot wait to perform our songs and poems for young children on our field trip!" If you're interested in joining this fantastic club, visit room D264 for more information.

Do Something Club

By Samantha Spencer '15

The Do Something Club has been busy making Valentine's Day cards for the national "Love Letters" campaign. The club made 30 beautifully decorated cards that will be sent to local Senior Citizens courtesy of Meals on Wheels. The club has also written letters to soldiers thanking them for their service and protecting our country. The letters have been sent to "A Million Thanks" in Villa Park, California.

The club is very excited for February 27th, when it will be participating in the national campaign "End It," which brings awareness to human trafficking. On

February 27th, you will see Do Something members wearing the red club shirts with fact necklaces. Be sure to ask them about the facts. You are sure to be shocked at the devastating statistics you will hear.

Do Something meets on a bi-weekly schedule on Thursdays in room D163, and new members are always welcomed and encouraged to come to meetings. Any questions can be directed to co-presidents Sami Spencer and Vihan Khanna.

Science Olympiad

By Oriana Tang '15

The Livingston High School Science Olympiad team placed first out of 19 teams in their regional competition at NJIT on January 16. The team is coached by teachers Ms. Keller and Ms. Pelullo and has been working since September to prepare for the competition.

Eighteen team members competed in twelve science-related events that range anywhere from building rubber band-launched gliders to studying epidemiology, garnering individual medals in ten of them. The overall team placement is determined by the combined individual scores.

Livingston, along with other teams who placed in the top ten at NJIT, will be attending the state competition at Middlesex County College in March against the top teams of two other regional qualifiers.

Lancers Against Cancer

By Randy Posner '14

After an extremely successful year of fundraising last school year, Lancers Against Cancer is doing better than ever. This spring, the club will be holding its second annual "Shoot for a Cure," where students will be able to form teams of five and compete in the FWC for prizes, and the ultimate goal of raising money for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society. More information on the event and other fundraising opportunities will be announced on AM Wired.

ROVING REPORTER: How Do You Study for Midterms? By Jackson Rynar '17

"Color code everything."

Miranda Dambrot

"Retake my tests."

Natalie Kahn

"Flashcards."

Morgan Levy

"You don't."

Isha Battu

"Review your stuff and packets."

Tal Shaine

"What do you mean my answer has to be 'LHS-appropriate?'"

Ilana Saltzman

"You freak out."

Emily Goldson

"You make packets."

Brian Misco

"Read over my notes."

Sam Sheng

"I scream into a pillow and pretend there are no midterms."

Ali Ruchman

"What's a midterm?"

Abi Simko

features

Bust Out The Coloring Books: Spotlight on Senioritis

By Annie Rishty '14

Get out your brand-new Crayola markers and coloring books because senioritis has arrived! What many underclassmen don't understand is that senioritis begins as early as their acceptance into their top choice college via early decision or early action; for others, once midterms are over. Once second semester starts, seniors claim, colleges do not consider your senior year grades because they have all of the information they need to view your application.

Urban Dictionary defines senioritis as "a crippling disease that strikes high school seniors. Symptoms include: laziness, an over-excessive wearing of track pants, old athletic shirts, sweatpants, ath-

letic shorts, and sweatshirts. Also features a lack of studying, repeated absences, and generally dismissive attitude. The only known cure is a phenomenon known as Graduation." Unfortunately, this is extremely true, and it's the most frustrating season for teachers who teach senior classes, when their students are ready to begin their lives at college, where they can run free from parental supervision and experience a greater degree of academic freedom.

Collegeboard explains how colleges have the ability to veto offers of admission, change financial aid packages, and even put students on academic probation because of senioritis. Their website states that colleges "may reserve the right to deny admission

to an accepted applicant should the student's senior-year grades drop." So seniors might have the impression that failing their classes are acceptable, but although it's very rare that a college would revoke a student's acceptance, students shouldn't give up and totally forget about school.

Not to scare any seniors, but according to an article in the *New York Times* last year, the University of Colorado Boulder rescinded admission for 45 of its accepted students, ten of which had already attended freshman orientation and selected classes and roommates. The University of Michigan in Ann Arbor sent out three types of letters to its incoming freshman: sixty-two issuing gentle warnings, one hundred eighty requesting an explanation of poor

grades, and nine revoking admission. Twenty-three admitted freshman found themselves without a college to attend after the University of Washington revoked their acceptances during the summer because of very low final grades.

So, although it might be time for markers and coloring books, make sure to have a pencil and notebook too, just to assure yourself that you know something for the upcoming exam. Senior year is supposed to be fun, but I wouldn't completely forget about school and grades. Each of us deserves to go to the colleges we are admitted to because of our hard work and dedication. Don't disappoint the colleges, and most importantly, don't disappoint yourself.

ROVING REPORTER: When Did You Develop Senioritis? By Sami Spencer '15

"When I got into UMass and when Cate (Leu) got into Rutgers, we just pretty much **agreed to just sit in bed and eat** and not do any homework at all or study even though we knew we had so much to do."

Jess Yang '14

"I'm too senior to answer this."

Randy Posner '14

"My senioritis was at its worst **freshman year**. It's a Benjamin Button type thing."

Ethan Sternstein '14

"Freshman year."

Bryan Sorrentino '14

"Probably **seventh grade**. Sleep just seems way more appealing."

Alex Ehrlich '14

"Basically the first day of senior year."

Joan Shira '14

"When I purchased a **princess coloring book** and a box of crayons."

Alexa Altchek

"The womb."

Shoshana Gorelick '14

"After I got my **first college acceptance**. Now it's so hard to even print my homework."

Sam Hong '14

Exam Tips: How to Stay Healthy Under Stress

By Kerry Zak '15

Even when midterms aren't looming on the horizon, we often become increasingly stressed out from studying (or lack thereof). We've all been there: that pint of Ben & Jerry's Phish Food tucked away in the freezer starts calling your name and seems like the perfect fix to get you through an all-nighter. Before you know it, you've devoured more than you had planned, and you still don't know how to solve a quadratic equation. How did this happen?

Stress can trigger an emotional response in the brain, which responds by releasing cortisol, otherwise known as "the stress hormone." Unfortunately, the release of cortisol also prompts a craving for sweet or salty foods.

In addition to having zero nutritional value, eating these foods affects the dopamine levels in the brain, which makes the body crave more sugar. After this, we begin the roller coaster ride of "sugar highs," taking our insulin levels sky-



Eating healthy foods while logging long hours studying will aid your productivity more than eating junk foods. Image source: healthyfoodhouse.com

high, and then feeling tired and weak when they come crashing back down. Inversely, stress can also induce a response that blocks hunger, and cause some people to skip meals when cramming. This also sends a person's blood sugar plummeting, causing the same tired and weak response.

In order to combat the stress that exams can have on our eating habits, here's a list of do's

and don'ts for midterm meals.

DON'T load up on energy drinks. They are chock full of chemicals and sugar that are nutritionally detrimental.

DO opt for coffee or tea if you must have your caffeine fix with a natural sweetener such as Stevia or honey. (Fun fact: black tea has 50-60% of the caffeine content in coffee, all for zero calories!)

DON'T forget to exercise!

Exercise can release endorphins and serotonin, which regulates cortisol levels and decreases stress.

DO remember FFP: fiber, fat, and protein. Foods high in these prevent overeating and will keep you feeling full longer (as well as prevent an awkward gurgling stomach during the exam). Think of almonds, avocados, oatmeal, and others.

DON'T become dehydrated, which can also cause overeating. A good rule to estimate your daily water intake is divide your body weight by two. This number represents the amount in ounces of recommended consumption.

DO snack healthy! Some great snack options include carrots with hummus, peanut butter with celery, apples with honey, and any other fruit or vegetable you like.

Everyone stresses out during the school year. But with these tips, you can ace those pesky exams, all while maintaining a healthy, balanced lifestyle.

opinion

Has Sweden Taken Gender Neutrality Too Far?

By Melinda Hu '16

In 2010, the World Economic Forum designated Sweden as the most gender-equal country in the world. Amazing, right? The country has the highest proportion of women working in the world, two-thirds of all college degrees are given to women, and in 1974, Sweden was the first nation in the world to change maternity leave into parental leave. As an outsider, Sweden seems like the utopia for equality. Yet, many citizens of the country are pushing for more than just gender equality—they want gender neutrality.

In other words, they want to eliminate gender entirely, expressing the idea that government and society should tolerate no distinctions at all between the sexes. Gender-neutral activists seek a society that entirely erases traditional gender roles and stereotypes at even the most ordinary levels. In a world that has developed and grown over thousands of years depending on the distinct roles of both men and women, it is illogical and unrealistic to eliminate gender in society.

The movement for gender neutrality reached a milestone a few days after International Women's Day: a new pronoun, "hen," was added to the online version of the Sweden's National Encyclopedia. "Hen" was a "proposed gender-neutral personal pronoun instead of he [han in Swedish] and she [hon]."

A heated debate about gender neutrality has been raging in Swedish newspaper columns and on parenting blogs and feminist websites when the new word was announced.

It was sparked by the publication of Sweden's first ever gender-neutral children's book, *Kivi och Monsterhund* (*Kivi and Monsterdog*), which uses several gender neutral words.

Today though, publishing companies that use "hen" have a political agenda: to challenge traditional perspectives about females

the individualities between men and women should not exist, so that we really are one type of being. Nonetheless, being so "the same" is impossible, and diminishes a society's mosaic of unique characters of man and woman. Differences are what foster growth and propel change, and we cannot subdue that.



Gender neutral toy advertisement. Image source: *The Wall Street Journal*.

and males. This political meddling with the Swedish language is a measure that should not be supported. There will always be distinctions between men and women, and that should not be seen as a negative thing. Distinctions, are what make a group of people, a nation, and the whole planet, an interesting, innovative place to live in and amongst.

Having a gender-neutral pronoun implies that these differences shouldn't be recognized, and that we are essentially all the "same." Yes, we should all be the same in respect to enjoying our natural rights and freedoms. However, this "hen" pronoun, and gender neutrality in general, infers that

Gender neutrality can also be psychologically and socially damaging, especially for children. What is the difference between a boy and a girl? Well, according to stereotypes, boys like racecars and action-figures, while girls like princesses and ponies. Although attempts to reduce gender stereotypes are to allow children to develop interests without this bias, the actions of Swedish gender-neutral proponents have gone a little overboard. Children are now exposed to new rules and new norms as certain games are removed, language becomes regulated, and children's interactions are scrutinized by teachers. One Swedish school

got rid of toy cars because of "gender-coding." Furthermore, several preschools have banished references to genders, instead referring to kids as "buddies." Children are now kept on a tight rein by adults, who end up interfering with all aspects of their lives.

Children should be able to grow up freely and form their own opinions about gender stereotypes; adults should not interrupt children's discovery of their gender and sexuality. Elise Claeson, a columnist and a former equality expert at the Swedish Confederation of Professions, has said that young children can become confused by the suggestion that there is a third, "in-between" gender (called "hen") at a time when their brains and bodies are developing.

If Sweden is already the most gender-equal country on the planet, what more do they need in terms of equal opportunity? If it has been established that both men and women can accomplish the same things and become just as successful as one another, why does gender need to be eliminated? Even though gender roles have had negative effects, men and women both embrace the qualities that make them a man and a woman.

Gender neutrality is not needed to enforce the ideas that both sexes should be treated equally, without prejudice. As the debate of gender neutrality in Sweden continues, Swedish people should remember that as citizens of a nation that can proudly be called the most gender-equal, gender neutrality is a step that need not be taken.

Changing the Channel: Why TV Needs to Start Tuning In to Today's America

By Morgan Levy '15

Welcome to 2014, where our progressive American society embraces previously taboo issues like abortion, diversity, and homosexuality. However, the television programming remains stuck in the past; shows of today shy away from the realities of society. While television should provoke debate, today's shows do not candidly reflect America's increasingly liberal ideology.

Even with the 41st anniversary of the *Roe v. Wade* Supreme Court case and the fact that 22% of pregnancies end in abortion, producers still replace plot lines involving abortion with euphemism. The list of rich portrayals of abortion on television is very short. Many characters conveniently miscarry on shows including "90210," "Gossip Girl," "Revenge," and "Girls." On Season 1 of "Grey's Anatomy," Dr. Cristina Yang—a brilliant, career minded cardiothoracic surgeon—was supposed to have an abortion. Eventually, however, the producers decided to write Cristina's pregnancy storyline because they "didn't want [abor-



The cast of "Looking," a new HBO show that provides a slice-of-life perspective on LGBT Americans. Image source: *Slate*.

tion] to become what the show was about."

Shonda Rhimes, producer of many shows including "Grey's Anatomy" and "Scandal," laments that abortion is "a polarizing issue, obviously. Because it is such a hot button issue, because people are debating it, it should be discussed. And I'm not sure why it's not being discussed." Abortion remains one of the the most controversial debates in our society, yet producers refuse to show characters dealing with the same struggles. Eric Fer-

roro, Vice President of Communications for Planned Parenthood, complains that "even if a character is weighing her options, abortion won't be spoken about, which only [increases] the shame."

Moreover, in a country coined the "melting pot," racial diversity continues to be an issue in television. According to NPR, "Saturday Night Live" recently hired Sasheer Zamata, the fifth black female cast member in the show's 38 year run. The show only hired Sasheer following public out-

rage due to lack of racial representation. Cast member Kenan Thompson criticized the lack of diversity as "just a tough part of the business." Show producers should prioritize and promote diversity, even without citizens nagging them to make a change.

Seventeen states and counting have legalized same-sex marriage, yet most homosexual characters on TV today still fall into old stereotypes. Many shows, including "Sex and the City" and "Girls," feature extremely feminine gay male characters. These shows present caricatures rather than showing a full spectrum of personality traits. "Looking," a new show from HBO, shines because it shows the day-to-day life of a gay person without exaggeration.

Today's television shows are like funhouse mirrors: they distort true American societal values. As we become more liberal and progressive, we should promote shows that foster discussion and documentation of 21st century American life. In a country that prides itself on liberty, justice, and equality for all, it's time to get honest.

opinion

Head to Head: Do We Really Need Midterms?

YES

By Gabby Watson '15

Towards the middle of the school year, students might find a change occurring within the halls of high school. During first period, they might hear a friend joke about how they had spent hours rifling through mounds of clothing and junk, desperately trying to recover the copy of *The Americans* that was handed to them at the beginning of the school year. After school, they find libraries overflowing with a great percentage of the student body. No, this isn't the apocalypse. Rather, it is a sign that midterms are steadfastly approaching.

Midterms are assessments administered at most U.S. high schools at the end of the second semester. Students are evaluated on their knowledge of content they've learned from the beginning of the year. Though midterms week is full of stress, aggravation, and hard work, the assessments are worth it. Midterms provide students the opportunity to reflect and possibly improve upon their work ethic.

Midterms are progress indicators. Learning is a process. Any process can be enhanced and made better. One way of doing this is to establish milestones in order to compare actual performance to expected results, and midterm exams are one such milestone.

Julie Day, a writer for *The Daily American*, supports high school

students completing evaluations at the end of their second semester. She says, "Studying for midterms and finals can allow students the opportunity to learn valuable skills that are a necessity even outside the classroom such as time management, studying discipline and preparation skills like staying on task and learning to equip oneself with adequate knowledge of various fields." In one instance, medical professionals and medical students must be able to properly diagnose sick patients, on the spot, based on a description of the symptoms they are experiencing. From there, doctors need to prescribe medication to relieve the problems. Day goes on to add that "these can be valuable for when students apply for jobs and must be working to meet certain deadlines or take certification tests."

Testing also has the possibility to improve overall course grades and GPAs. Suppose that a student does exceptionally well in a course, but is borderline between two grades at the end of the marking period. The ten percent factored in from midyear scores can raise a student's grade.

In all, contrary to popular belief, high school midterms are beneficial. Not only do they prepare kids for college, but they also help in supplying teens with important skills that are needed everywhere.

NO

By Carly Taylor '15

Frantic packet-completing, piles of notes across your bedroom floor, hours of staring at textbooks, and PowerPoint slideshows until you no longer can bear the headache. These are just a few of the common pre-exam experiences that the students of LHS have to look forward to in the near future before the infamous midterm exams. While this frenzy is quickly approaching, I cannot help but question: is this testing necessary at all?

With a limited amount of time to study for a test covering such widespread material, the chances for success are minimal. Even closer than midterm exams is the end of the marking period; most teachers are throwing tests and other assessments our way to finalize our second marking period grades. The end of the marking period is a time for students to put in as much effort as possible to heighten or at least maintain the grades that will eventually affect their transcripts.

According to psychological studies from ASAP Science, the further away a reward is, the more we discount its value. So students are not focusing on the bigger task at hand, in this scenario—midterms—because it has a further due date. After the end of the marking period, assignments are

cleared out of the way, midterms will be a week away at most, and there is nothing left to do other than brew some coffee and cram for the exam! The stress and panic spreads like a contagion over the student body. According to the Franklin Institute Online, the cumulative effect of a lack of sleep and overload of stress can have a profound effect on the brain including its ability to remember and learn as well as cell damage.

Some people may say that midterms are a good way to assess the knowledge that students have acquired up to this point in time and are good preparation for college as well. However, if students are being forced to cram, lose sleep and are generally stressed for days leading up to the test, the exams then lose their purpose because students are being evaluated in a weakened condition. If high schools are interested in preparing students for college, they should spend more time promoting effective study habits rather than holding large-scale exams that resort students to cramming.

Even teachers have said it themselves: a student's grade on a midterm is likely to be lower than their average test grades. So is this excessive "studying" and stress craze really worth the ineffective evaluation of knowledge? I urge boards of education everywhere to reconsider this controversy, and ultimately terminate the midterm exams we all know and dread.

Selfie Absorbance: Latest Photography Fad a Study in Narcissism

By Natalie Kahn '16

When I scroll through my Instagram feed, I notice that many of the pictures share a common theme: they are selfies. The number of selfies seems to increase daily. In other words, my Instagram feed has become a means of seeing pictures of others in which they held their front-facing camera slightly away from their faces and smiled. Or their tongue stuck out. Or did that girly pose in which their mouth is partially open and half-smiling with their tongue peeking out.

This causes me to question the motives for posting these selfies, and what people who post them hope to gain. Selfies do not have a purpose, and posting them results in more harm than benefit.

First of all, one of the main reasons for people to post selfies on social media sites is for the onslaught of support and compliments that those who post them feel that they are entitled to. It is not uncommon to see a selfie posted on Instagram with over twenty comments detailing how "GORGGG," "hawttt," and "OMG SO PERF" the person is.

Though this, at first, seems like a kind and heartwarming gesture, this is creating a generation of people who firmly believe in their



Pop sensation Miley Cyrus is well-known online for her selfies.
Image source: collegetimes.com.

beauty due to some comments on a picture that they posted. This starts a vicious chain of events. Once people see such comments on a selfie that they posted, they post more, as they begin to crave this positive feedback. In turn, these people become self-absorbent and egotistical about their looks, facilitating their transformation into unpleasant and boastful people.

Furthermore, selfies can have the opposite effect: they can

make people feel insecure. For example, if someone posts a selfie that they thought was particularly attractive, they might expect some supportive comments. However, if these compliments never came, this person may start to feel apprehensive about his or her own looks. To salt their wound further, if they see a massive list of comments on another person's selfie, they might decide that this person is more attractive than they are, and they may

even start disliking this person for it. Though this started by posting a selfie on a social media website, the consequences may be more severe than people think.

Lastly, selfies are just a great deal of added stress on messaging services like Snapchat, in which messages sent require a picture to accompany a brief line of text. Many people choose, naturally, to send selfies. These pictures can be difficult to take and cause added pressure for the sender: they become nervous as to whether or not their recipient thought the photograph was attractive. This leads to people taking multiple selfies before sending one, which is a complete waste of time, in addition to unnecessary extra anxiety.

It is not uncommon to see vast amounts of selfies plastered all over social media websites. People who post selfies wanted comments. Compliments. Support. However, the presence or absence of these comments only leads to self-absorbance or insecurity, and sending selfies creates increased stress about one's looks. Next time you pick up your phone to take a selfie, think twice. Ask yourself if you truly must take this picture. Odds are, it is not necessary.

entertainment

Get Ready for the Red Carpet: 2014 Oscars Previews

By Jackson Rynar '18

The 86th Academy Awards are upon us—the U.S. awards for achievements in the film industry whose winners are determined by a group of more than 6,000 accomplished men and women working in cinema. Winners are awarded golden statuettes, also known as the Academy Awards of Merit. The Oscars give America's best actors, writers, directors, producers, and technicians the opportunity to be rewarded for their great work.

The 86th Annual Academy Awards will air live on ABC on Sunday, March 2, 2014, at the Dolby Theatre at Hollywood and Highland Center and will be broadcasted in over 225 countries. This year the Oscars will be hosted by Actress, comedian, and TV show host, Ellen DeGeneres who previously hosted the 79th Academy Awards in 2007. DeGeneres joked, "I am so excited to be hosting the Oscars for the second time. You know what they say—third time's the charm."

Who knows what will happen at the Oscars this year, with better nominees than ever. Movies such as *American Hustle*, *Captain Phillips*, *Dallas Buyers Club*, *Gravity*, *Her*, *Nebraska*, *Philomena*, *12 Years a Slave*, and *The Wolf of Wall Street* are all in the running for Best Picture. Up for the award for Best Actor are nominees Christian Bale, Bruce Dern, Leonardo DiCaprio, Chiwetel Ejiofor, and Matthew McConaughey. Another major category is Actress in a Leading Role. This year the category includes Amy Adams, Cate Blanchett, Sandra Bullock, Judi Dench, and Meryl Streep. Other prestigious categories include

Senior Perspective

By Rebecca Popper '14



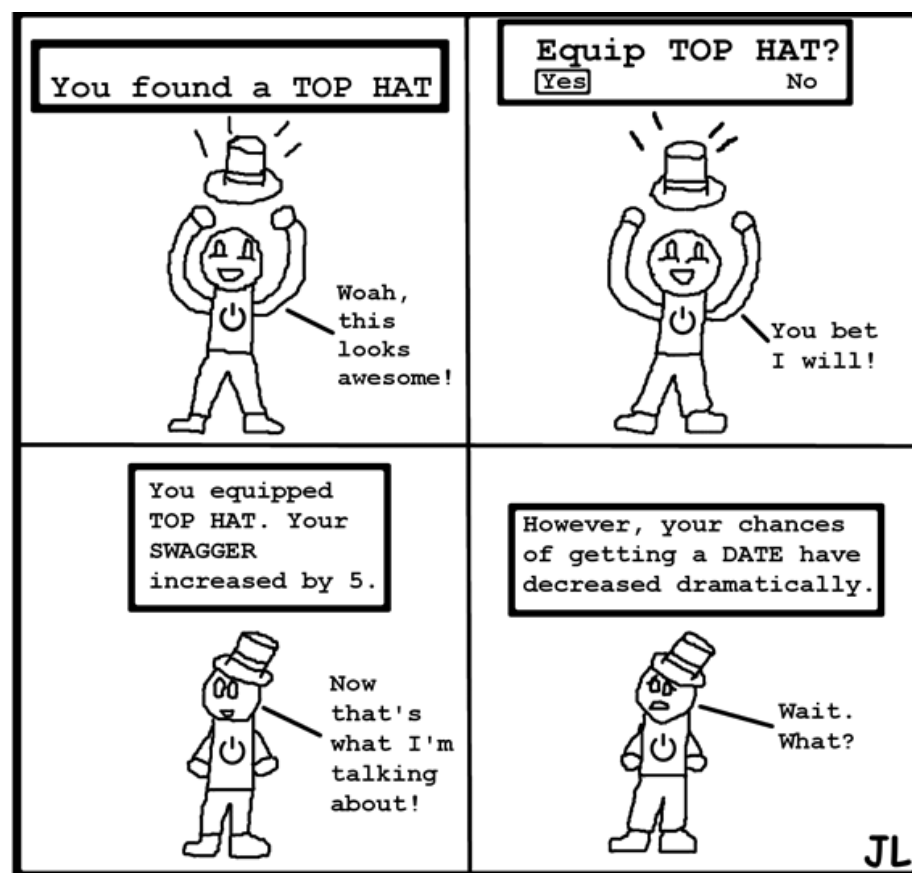
Actor in a Supporting Role, Actress in a Supporting Role, Animated Feature Film, and many more.

Oftentimes, even more anticipated than the award show is the red carpet. The tacit competition among Hollywood's finest to make the Best Dressed list provides much entertainment for viewers at home watching elegant gowns and sleek suits glide down the iconic red carpet.

This year, says DeGeneres, the awards show will be better than ever. Who will go home a winner? Who will steal the spotlight? Tune in to find out.

Life's a Game

By John Lanigan '16



listeners, who is the real audience?

As a society, we applaud Macklemore for producing a hit song that allows straight people to pat themselves on the back and say, look how far we've come. Macklemore needs the LGBT community far more than it needs him. "Same Love" is perfect for those who nominally support LGBT rights; they can comfortably proclaim equality while listening to a song and changing their profile picture to a red equals sign, as though those things actually help at all.

This is not to say that Macklemore has no merit as a music artist, nor that heterosexual allies aren't an important part of the movement for LGBT rights—simply that they shouldn't dominate that movement, because they were born with the societal advantage of being straight. Yes, we should all be equal, with equal voices. But the fact remains that we are not all equal, and with majority voices drowning out the minority even in their own movement, it's going to be a while. So for now, I'll be keeping that gay shit turned down.

The Real Reason "Same Love" is So Popular

By Crystal Song '14

"When I was in the third grade, I thought that I was gay because I had crushes on other girls and felt relieved when marriage equality passed in Massachusetts," my friend tells me as we watch the Grammys. "Can I have a Grammy now?" Another puts it more succinctly. When the "Same Love" performance starts, she says, "Turn that gay shit down."

Shocking, perhaps, that the majority of queer Americans seem to shun Macklemore. Why aren't they ecstatic that a straight, influential singer can sympathize with their struggles, and "Same Love" is heralded as our generation's gay anthem?

The truth is, there's more to being queer than Macklemore's elementary level of self-acceptance. For a lot of people, the self-doubt doesn't stop in elementary school. It grows into a constant, exhausting fear: of getting kicked out of their

homes, losing their jobs, alienating their friends; of having to live in a world that tells them they don't matter, or wanting to live at all. Macklemore can never understand any of that, no matter how neat his room was.

And the truth is, LGBT Americans doesn't need Macklemore. They don't need the spectacle of straight and gay couples alike receiving their nuptials from Queen Latifah while Macklemore performs "Same Love" on the Grammys to show that their love is, in fact, the same. They know that they don't need to be "cured" with religion or therapy, that they are as human as anyone else. They have artists like Angel Haze and Mary Lambert covering Macklemore and making his song their own, infusing it with the authenticity of real queer experiences. But if "Same Love" ultimately does nothing for LGBT

sports

LANCER SPORTS UPDATES

Boys' Varsity Fencing

By Ty Josloff '16

The boys' varsity fencing team is currently 3-7-0. Despite starting the season a solid 3-4-0, the team has recently succumbed to a 3 game losing streak, since its 24-3 win against Bayonne, in which the team lost 15-12 on the road against Columbia before returning home to lose 21-6 to Ridge and then 19-8 against Millburn. Livingston has four more home games remaining on its six-game home stand before returning to the road against Watchung Hills for its final game of the season. The Lancers still hope to finish off with a winning record.

Girls' Varsity Fencing

By Ty Josloff '16

The girls' varsity fencing team started off their season with an impressive 7 game win streak. During the run, the team defeated Montclair 16-11, Morris Hills 17-10, Bergen County 15-12, West Essex 18-9, Montclair Kimberly Academy 21-6, Newark Academy 21-6, and Bayonne 23-4 before having the streak ended against Columbia in a 17-10 loss. The team lost its following game against Ridge 16-11 before returning to their winning ways as

they defeated Millburn 19-8. It has been a phenomenal season so far for the Lancers as they look to finish out their season strong.

Boys' Varsity Basketball

By Ty Josloff '16

The boys' varsity basketball team started off their season with two straight impressive wins over West Orange, 47-41, and Pequannock, 49-39. Since starting 2-0, Livingston has since lost its last seven games, five of which have come against top 10 teams in the county, now with a 2-7 record. Nearly all of the team's losses have come in tightly contested games, including a 54-48 loss to Randolph in their most recent game. Senior Kahlil Garnes has been leading the team in scoring at 15 points per game. The Lancers still have 8 games remaining and, according to Head Coach David Cohen, the team has been "competing hard and hopes to finish the year strong."

Girls' Varsity Basketball

By Bob Towey '16

The girls' varsity basketball team is closing its season with a current 9-7-0 record. The team lost its opener to West Essex, but came

back with a 41-30 victory against Oak Knoll in the Hilltopper Holiday Tournament Semifinal. After a Tournament Finals loss to Summit, the team went on a three game win streak, defeating Orange and Millburn at the Joe Valentine Classic.

Although the team's streak ended in a loss to Newark Academy, the Lancers followed up this loss with a win against Newark's Central High School. At the Essex County Tournament, Livingston blew out Irvington 59-19, and James Caldwell 38-33, but lost to Montclair 45-69. The team lost to West Essex and Orange before winning against MK Academy and Cedar Grove. This streak ended with a loss to Hanover Park on Autism Awareness Night. The team was supported by great games from seniors Catherine Callaghan, Katie Horiuchi, Sam Leshinsky, Sam Rothenberger, and Gianna Vaccaro, along with junior Nicole LaRusso, sophomore Sarosha Parsons, and the team as a whole.

Varsity Hockey

By Bob Towey '16

The Lancers varsity hockey team ended its season with a 13-5-4 record. The team started their sea-

son out with a 3-3 tie against Freehold, followed by a win against Millburn and a loss against MK Academy. Following that loss, the Lancers strung together a three game win-streak, defeating West Orange 8-1, Montclair 5-1, and West Essex 4-2. This streak was snapped when the team was defeated twice in a row by Nutley 3-5, and by Verona-Glen Ridge 2-6.

However, the Lancers came back strong, with wins over Steiner and River Dell, before losing in the Holiday Tournament finals to St. Rose. In their final three games of the season, the team went tied West Essex 1-1, beat Millburn 7-1, and lost to Nutley 0-5. In the McInnis Cup Playoffs, the Lancers defeated Montclair 5-2 (the playoffs have not ended yet).

The team's record is supported by great games from captain Cole Friedfertig, assistant captains Tal Finberg and David Reiter, Josh Delseni, Joe Lilien, and in goal by Brian Lilien and Brendan Flaherty. Coach David Conklin said that, although the team was "faced with the stigma of a rebuilding year after it lost nine seniors, the Lancers continue to be one of the top teams in the state. With a continued effort and a push through the playoffs, the sky is the limit for us... our goal is a state championship."

NBA MIDSEASON PLAYOFF PREDICTIONS

By Brendan Myers '16

Eastern Conference

#1: Indiana Pacers

Considering the only real competition in the Eastern Conference is between the Pacers and Heat, the Pacers have a clear edge to get this spot. Through January, the Pacers have the best record in the NBA, at 41-13, and this record is no fluke. With the number-one scoring defense in the league allowing 90.5 points per game, along with 7-foot-2 center Roy Hibbert protecting the rim, it's near impossible to score on them. On the offensive side, Indiana has Paul George, one of the top emerging young stars in the league, averaging over 22.5 points per game and the ability to spread the floor, with Lance Stephenson, David West, and Luis Scola, and the recovering Danny Granger.

#2: Miami Heat

The only other team consistently above a .500 record in the Eastern Conference this season is the Miami Heat. Any team with LeBron James, Chris Bosh, and Dwyane Wade will be a threat to the first seed; however, with the youth and stout defense of the Pacers, the top seed doesn't look very likely for the Heat this year. With that being said, the Heat still are 24 games over .500, with a record of 38-14, likely a result of their stellar offense. Miami has one of the most efficient offenses, ranking 5th in the league in assists and 7th in total points per game. With LeBron James in command, third in

the league in points per game, the Heat could be a threat to anyone in the East. Being the defending NBA champs, and with nearly the same team as last year, the Heat have experience with players like James, Bosh, Wade, and Allen. However, Wade's injury woes will hurt the team in the long run.

#3: Toronto Raptors

Coming out of nowhere, the Raptors have prided themselves on defensive stops, and that has paid off. Toronto has the 4th best defense in the NBA, allowing only 96.7 points per game, just eight more than the Pacers. The Raptors did themselves much justice by trading away Rudy Gay, who was taking a lot of their shots, and many of them were either highly contested or just plain old bad shots.

Toronto also has themselves a rising star in DeMar DeRozan, who is averaging 22.4 PPG, good enough for 11th in the league. The Raptors also having an unselfish point guard in Kyle Lowry, who has achieving 7.6 assists per game, sitting at sixth in the league. The Raptors are another young team, with a lot of upside; however, the inexperience bug might catch them.

#4: Washington Wizards

The Wizards currently sit at 26-28, but have looked better than their record may indicate. With a January thumping of the Miami Heat with a score of 114-97, Washington looked like more of a 3-seed.

Still, with losses by 20 points to the Pacers, they look more like a 7th or 8th seed. Washington has great young players in John Wall and Bradley Beal, and more experienced role players like Nene and Trevor Ariza. Wall is averaging 20 points and 8.6 assists per game, and could be a key player for the Wizards in pivotal games.

The Wizards are another deep team, with 6 players averaging double figures. However, the Achilles heel of the Wizards might be the inexperience of the players as they have made the playoffs only five times in the past 25 years.

Western Conference

#1: San Antonio Spurs

The Spurs always seem to surprise the NBA by finishing in one of the top three year after year. In addition to future Hall of Famer, Tim Duncan, the Spurs made a key acquisition in signing nine-year veteran, Marco Belinelli. Belinelli brings another spot up shooter to this veteran team, contributing to the fourth-highest three-point field goal percentage in the league, after 55 games. With star point guard Tony Parker, the Spurs are also second in the NBA in assists per game. Any team that sits near the top of the assist column is bound for success come playoff time.

#2: Oklahoma City Thunder

Kevin Durant carried the Thunder through Russell Westbrook's injury, with four 40-point outings just

in January, and eight straight 30 point games as well. Durant is currently averaging 31.5 points per game, and his performances have been so impressive that LeBron James claims to have "a KD watch on my phone." There is no doubt the Thunder can be the top seed in the West, especially with Westbrook back.

#3: Los Angeles Clippers

The Clippers occupy the four seed as of now, and they have played quite well during the absence of Chris Paul. Blake Griffin is having one of his best seasons averaging 24.4 points and 10 rebounds per game. To go along with Blake Griffin's great season, DeAndre Jordan is having his best season, with career highs in points and rebounds. With these two big men and new coach Doc Rivers, the Clippers are heading in the right direction for this playoffs.

#4: Portland Trail Blazers

After missing the playoffs last season, the Trail Blazers are off to a hot start, posting a record of 36-18 after 54 games. The Blazers improved their once non-existent bench with the additions of Mo Williams, Dorrell Wright, C.J. McCollum, and more role players. Another off season acquisition, Robin Lopez, has been what many believe is the key to the Blazers success, surprisingly averaging 10.7 points per game and 8.5 rebounds as well. The Trail Blazers lead the league in points per game are second in three pointers made per game, but playoff inexperience could prove to be a weakness on this young roster.