

The Devil's Advocate

OF ALL VICTIMS UNDER 18,
2 OUT OF 3 ARE AGES 12-17



■ 34% under age 12 ■ 66% age 12-17

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UNMASKING SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Speaking out about what happens in schools

by Mia Steeves

In 2006, the phrase “Me Too” was brought to life by a woman named Tarana Burke, and females everywhere were encouraged to speak out about their stories and experiences of sexual harassment, which have become far too common in recent years. Whether it was someone on the news, a friend or a cousin, or even you, sexual harassment of any kind and any degree can affect someone for the rest of their life. It can change their perspective, their attitude, the way they dress, their social life, and everything in between.

Since the “Me Too” movement was ignited, stories of sexual harassment have been rampant in the media. The accusations against Harvey Weinstein

blew up the film and music industry, and the stories of emotional and sexual abuse of women who were used and taken advantage of spread rapidly. Social media played a huge role in its escalation, and many eyes were opened to the exploitation that had been occurring for so long. Even more recently, rap-star R. Kelly has been accused by a number of women for sexual misconduct, most of whom were underage at the time. Despite the justice attained for so many of these women, the focus of the issue remains largely among women in the workplace. Even the google definition for sexual harassment states as such: “behavior characterized by the making of unwelcome and inappropriate

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sexual remarks or physical advances in a workplace or other professional or social situation.” While it is statistically true that most cases of sexual harassment take place at work, society seems to fail to acknowledge what kind of problems young women face at school.

In our Peotone 207U Student Handbooks, it clearly states that sexual harassment of any kind is prohibited. Interestingly enough, the handbook also provides behaviors that fall under these categories: “Examples of sexual harassment include touching, crude jokes or pictures, discussions of sexual experiences, teasing related to sexual characteristics, and spreading rumors related to a person’s alleged sexual activities.” If something as simple as spreading a rumor is considered sexual harassment, then countless girls, and even boys, have been victims as well as culprits. After showing these examples, a small poll was taken of female Peotone High School students, and it asked the question: Have you ever felt that you have been a victim of sexual harassment at school? Thirteen girls out of fifty, ranging from sophomore to senior answered “yes.” Some students did not respond, or said no. For those that answered yes, it was then asked if these girls had taken the issue further to a teacher or an administrator. Each and every one of those girls answered no.

Several of them provided reasons as to why they chose not to bring the issue to someone at school. One student said, “I didn’t want to seem like I was dramatic, and it didn’t seem important to me.” Another student said that she didn’t know she was actually being harassed. Many young women don’t realize the effects, nor the significance, that certain incidents can have on them.

In today’s society, so much in our culture has become sexualized that sometimes men do not realize what they are doing to make women uncomfortable, and those women do not recognize or address their own uneasiness. One senior

girl described how “...the kids (from school) and a friend drove by, and he stuck half of his body out of the car to whistle and catcall us...” Unfortunately, she felt like she could not go to a teacher because it happened just outside of school grounds. Other kinds of harassment have been even more blatant and physical. Another Senior girl said, “I used to get grabbed by a guy every day after class.” This type of provocation is a prosecutable offense, and it could mean serious consequences for those that are 18 years of age or older. Sexual harassment has been so downplayed that men and women who commit certain offenses do not even realize what it could mean for them.

So, why is it that these girls who shared their experiences felt like they should keep it to themselves? Despite all of the attention and support that has been generated around the issue, there is still a negative stigma that remains, keeping women, and men alike, from feeling safe to talk about their encounters. In a perfect world, every victim of sexual harassment would not have to hesitate for a second before finding help for themselves or confronting their offenders. However, this is not the case, and there is certainly no guarantee that it ever will be.

There is only so much that our school’s rules or a student handbook can do to make sure nobody suffers from incidents of sexual harassment. This does not mean that we should continue turning a blind eye to the situation, or pretend that these things do not go on in the places that we are supposed to learn and, ideally, feel safe. Our administrators and teachers can only protect students so much, while the rest of it lies in the hands of our peers. It is an issue of respecting each other and being aware of our actions, even if they seem unimportant or “not a big deal.” By drawing attention to sexual harassment and supporting those who need it, we can bring strength to the movement and hope that those numbers of victims become lower and lower.

Springin’ into Sports

Warming up for good weather

by Lynn Merigold

Spring sports are kicking off their seasons with preseason conditioning and practices. Although the winter weather has not yet broke, the teams are far from stopping their progress and preparation for this year. Baseball, softball, girls soccer, and track and field are ready to start their games and competitions.

Track and field has been conditioning since January, working hard to be ready for the season, and finally the time is here to start competing. The girls team ran against Lincoln-Way West on March 12th in their first meet of the season. Some of the students placed as individuals. The numbers for track are on the lower side this season; many seniors left last year. The athletes plan to do their best and work very hard with the amount of students they have.

Junior Nick Scropo is excited to be part of the Varsity squad for baseball. “The team we have has great chemistry. Our JV season together was very successful and so this season should be,” Scropo says with optimism. The boys typically start practice by stretching and then running base-to-base sprints, getting them in better shape physically. Along with the conditioning, the infielders work on fielding ground balls and double plays. The space is limited in the gyms but the boys make it work for the time being. The pitchers throw in the cages, which helps the batters work on their timing. Most importantly the guys end with a team break. “I play catcher and I like it because you can control the game, being involved in every play. As a player, you always want the season to come to play games,” Scropo adds.

Rheanne Kendra, a Senior, has been on the Varsity soccer team for four years now. This season, however, is off to a new start with first time girls soccer coach,



Hoping for the sun! Freshman Esmey Diaz and Sophomore Ashley Moore are ready to begin playing some games as soon as possible.

Justin Meyers. The girls are excited to work with Coach Meyers throughout the season, as he had a lot of success coaching the boys soccer team. The team has played one game, securing a 4-2 victory against Crete-Monee. Kendra says, “Last year we had some drama, so this year I’m looking forward to playing with a new group of people on this team.” Like many sports, there is drama, especially at the high school level. At the end of the day everyone is part of the team and hopefully this shared characteristic can lead them to a fun and memorable season. For the younger students, Kendra has some advice, “Really enjoy the season while it lasts. Looking back it seems like everything went by so quick.”

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Softball is kicking off their season with two new coaches this year: Mr. Hopman and Peotone Alum Jenna Balthazor. "We are always moving and running at practices run by Coach J," says Sophomore Grace Vowell. Coach J played college softball in Fort Wayne, Indiana. She pushes the girls past their limits, which may not always be fun, but in the end will benefit the team. Someone with college experience is great for the program at Peotone and especially for those looking to further their softball careers. Unfortunately, the girls' first game against Momence is rescheduled due to rainy weather. Sophomore Grace Vowell is looking forward to, "playing with all of my friends, having fun, and doing my best to get better throughout the season."

If you are thinking about trying out for a sport next year, go for it! All of these athletes agree and suggest giving a new sport a chance. "The best way to stand out is to have confidence. Remember to only do what you can do and keep it as simple as possible," says Vowell. "You might end up falling in love with it, and of course having the support of the team is great," Kendra adds. These sports are fundraising as well, so be sure to help support the Blue Devils throughout their perspective seasons. Good luck to all this year!



JV Baseball



JV Baseball



Brock Kraska

Racism

Time to end it

by Seth Lonard

Racism is by far the most vile thing on this planet. There is absolutely no need for it and it benefits no one. Racism has lived in the history books and should have gone away a long time ago, yet it still plagues this nation. No one is born with hate in their heart, and no one is born a racist: it's taught. That is the sad truth. Often racist people don't even know people of different ethnicity on a personal level. If you sit down and get know someone, it gets very, very hard to hate them.

Some people still have the mindset where all it takes to dislike/hate someone is the color of their skin. These people have sadly been corrupted and are mistaken. I truly think understanding and respect is the best way to resolve differences in almost all circumstances. An interesting thought rapper Tyler the Creator had has lingered in my mind and it relates to this topic. I do not think anyone can have so much hate, and he



There needs to be peace and love in every culture, race, and place. Peace and kindness should always be your number one option.

shares that point. "You go on TV and there's a dog attacking someone. Every time you turn on the TV it's a dog. 'A dog bit a five-year-old today!' When you go outside and you see a dog, the only thing you know about dogs is that they bite people. And it made me think . . . Are some people genuinely racist or is it all that they've seen? Just a random thought."

Human understanding and communication can solve multiple problems in the United States, and I believe racism is one of them.

The Peotone Park District will hold our annual Easter Egg Grab on Saturday April 13 at the PJHS Gym (If weather is nice we will be on the Park grounds). The event runs from 10-11am, setting up about 8/8:30 am, leaving the building by noon. If anyone would be interested in being our bunny that would be great (we already have a costume). 3-5 students would be good for this event. Students can contact Jennifer Swanson at the Peotone Park Dist. Office 708-258-3343 to sign up for the Easter Egg Grab.

The Pollution Panic

Taking time to talk about waste

by Averi Fier

On February 27, 2019, Global Citizen released an article explaining their latest testing of animals in the ocean. The title alone is startling: “Every Animal Pulled from the Deepest Part of the Ocean had Plastic in Its Gut”. The piece explained how the team of scientists ventured east of the Philippines to the Mariana Trench, the deepest part in any ocean. They observed many deep sea organisms. These animals are tiny and alien-like. Along with these creatures, however, the team also found that there was pollution all the way in this part of our ocean. Concerned, the scientists decided to test various inhabitants of this trench for foreign objects inside their bodies, and the results were shocking; all of the animals tested had plastic in their guts. Because these simple animals live in difficult conditions, they scavenge for whatever food they can eat. Unfortunately, in this day and age, that means plastic. To put it in perspective, the researchers found that the plastic found in comparison to the animal’s size is equivalent to a human swallowing a meter of rope. That is about three feet! So what comes next? First we must ask, is pollution a problem, or are there other, more important, things we need to be worried about? Maybe it’s time we talked about waste.

There are many different opinions surrounding pollution. Some people may argue that taking action against pollution is absolutely necessary, however others may not think of it as a grave situation. In September, America officially became the largest producer of oil in the world. How does this affect our planet? With so many questions, it becomes necessary to open up conversations. Valid yet differing opinions on these issues became clear after interviewing Seniors Malia Griffin

and Andrew Grzeskowiak. “Humans have left the most visible footprint on the Earth, and much of the damage is to the point where the future generations have no hope for reversing what has already been done- carbon emissions have obliterated the ozone,” Griffin says. This is true, and it is so worrisome because the ozone layer protects us from fatal UV rays. The layer has been damaged for years, and as of now, we don’t quite know if there is a way to fix it... So is the government responsible for creating a plan?

Grzeskowiak says, “Action is needed, but the current action now, I believe, has set us on the right track towards greener energy at the right pace.” However, it is difficult because stores, factories, and oil drilling are all necessities that are hurting the Earth by increasing waste and emitting gases that increasingly harm the ozone layer.



Malia Griffin believes recycling is essential in cleaning up our planet. “It is one of the simple things anyone can do to help the earth,” Griffin says.

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Malia appreciates the fact that oil, petroleum and coal are necessary in this day and age, however she also knows there are other forms of energy we can apply to our industries such as solar, wind, and hydro power. “Places like Germany have already developed goals to completely cut out nuclear power as well as coal and oil by 2030,” Griffin points out, “because the resources are not renewable, and once they are gone, millions of people could be without work or running cars.” However, Grzeskowiak pointed out that, “Oil production isn’t really what makes pollution- its the way it’s used.”

So what can we do about the state of our planet? Griffin says, “There are hundreds of things every person in the world can do: using reusable bottles, bags and utensils; recycle, repurpose, and reuse!” Malia also encourages everyone to educate themselves on the matter by reading books and researching companies that are sustainable and going green. That sounds like a lot of work, so why should we do this? There is no other planet. The planet we live on is so forgiving and plentiful; we are supplied with everything we need to live and thrive- all from nature. Maybe we owe it to Earth to at least pick up our trash after we have already paved it, built on it, bombed it, and chopped it down. Grzeskowiak is hopeful for a greener future, saying that in 50 years, he predicts the planet will look “pretty much the same as it is now, with some changes to how we obtain energy.” However, Malia worries about the future of our planet. She says, “I am sure many of you have seen the movie WALL-E, and if you haven’t, I encourage you to, because fifty years from now, that could be our reality. This is my opinion, but I urge you to do research for yourself. If you ever have any information you would like to share with me, I am all ears- whether you are with me or against me. We have to live together in this world.”

Important Dates:

April

5th, 6th, and 7th- PHS presents “High School Musical”
9th- All School Testing Day
13th-22nd- Spring Break

May

1st- Senior Awards Night
4th- Prom at the Odyssey, Post Prom to follow
6th- AP Government Exam
8th- AP English IV Exam
9th- AP Chemistry Exam
10th- AP US History Exam
14th- AP Human Geography and AP Calculus Exams
15th- AP English III Exam
15th-17th- Senior Finals
16th- PHS Spring Concert
17th- Seniors Last Day
20th- Fine Arts Awards
23rd- Senior Graduation Practice, Junior High Graduation
24th- High School Graduation
31st- Finals, Periods 1,3,5

June

3rd- Finals, Periods 2,4,6
4th- Finals, Period 7

Jussie Smollett

Empire actor creates controversy

by Ashleigh Viola

In late January, the Empire actor, Jussie Smollett, claimed he was attacked by two men in Chicago while walking to get something from Subway at around two in the morning. He claimed that the two men were yelling racial and homophobic slurs during the alleged attack. It was also reported that the two individuals were yelling “This is MAGA country” and other pro-Trump, conservative slogans and sayings. Chicago police immediately started an investigation on the reported attack in hopes to see what truly happened and find the two individuals that were the alleged attackers.

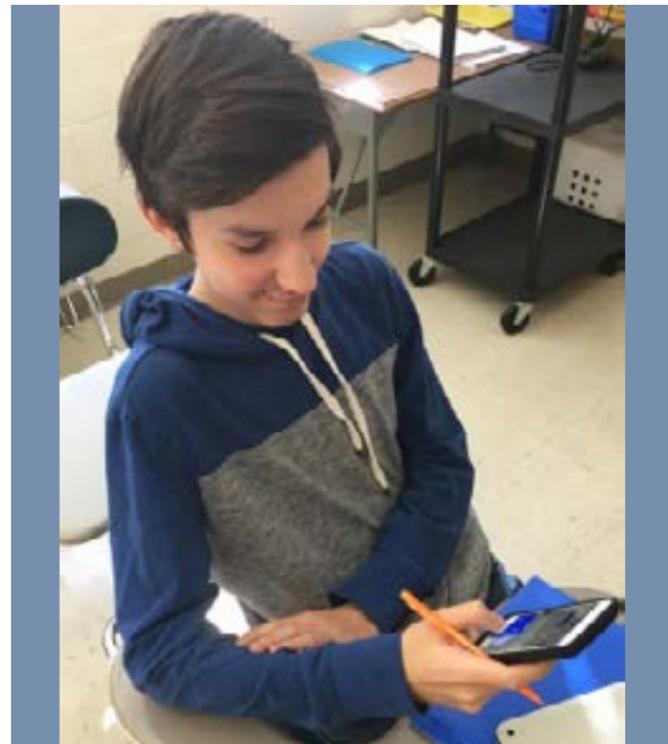
After countless hours of reviewed surveillance footage, it turned out that there were two people of interest, but no physical harm was actually filmed. “I thought it was kind of weird that there were people but no actual attack or attackers caught on camera.” said Sophomore Kyle Pryor, who has been watching the incident unfold. The police originally started the investigation under the premise that it was a hate crime. Smollett’s family later released his official police statement and later a statement of their own saying that they believed this is a “racial and homophobic hate crime” and that they hope that the police will do what needs to be done to prevent another event like this from happening.

Days later, Chicago police identified the two men who were the alleged attackers as two Nigerian brothers who were believed to be on a visit in Chicago at the time. After questioning the two brothers, they were released with no charges against them. The police then started to look further into Smollett himself and requested a follow-up interview with him after they received new information about the case.

Initially most of us thought that this was going to be labeled as a hate crime and the two possible attackers were going to be taken into custody, but that is not what happened. Smollett was placed

under investigation for possibly staging the attack and hiring the two men to come after him to generate publicity and promote the show.

After a few weeks of looking into this situation, the police released an announcement on February 20th that they have placed Smollett under arrest and he faces up to three years of jail time. His bail was posted as \$100,000, and he was bailed out shortly after his arrest with permission to travel to New York and California. Initially he was only charged with felony disorderly conduct, but on March 9th, Smollett was charged with sixteen counts of disorderly conduct for staging the attack. “It surprised me that he got charged with sixteen counts, but for doing what he did, I think he is getting an appropriate punishment.” explained Pryor. We are still waiting to see the outcome of what will be his final punishment and charges and how the rest of his case will play out.



Sophomore, Kyle Pryor, reads an article about the Smollett case.

Dancing Through the Season

Powerhouse takes on competitions

by Julia Beechy

This year Peotone’s Powerhouse competed at Danville Classic, Manteno Main Event, Chicagoland Showcase, Watseka Invitational, and Herscher Swing and Sing. The 2019 season has been the longest Powerhouse has experienced, lasting ten months and performing a fall set, along with a competition set. The theme of the show was “Move Mountains” in which the songs *Believer* by Imagine Dragons, *Human* by Rags and Bones, *Rise Up* by Andra Day, *Dream On* by Aerosmith, and *Feel it Still* by Portugal. the Man were chosen to reflect the theme.

During the year Miss McKay, the director, made many changes to the typical Powerhouse season. She added a fifth song to the set, held her auditions for the group in May of 2018 in order to perform a Fall Show, and took the team to five competitions. In addition to these changes, McKay hired a choreographer, Richelle Janes, to teach and create dances for the members to perform. Despite the many changes made this year, students recall the team-bonding appreciation circles, the glow stick practices, and the inclusiveness



Powerhouse performs at their third competition: Chicagoland Showcase.

of the extracurricular. “Everyone is so welcoming and nice. They really are a second family,” says Freshman Emsy Diaz.

As the season came to an end, Powerhouse concluded their final practice with a “Senior Circle” where the Seniors were given an opportunity to speak about their favorite memories and what they will miss the most. Senior Chloe Ehrich says, “I will miss all my friends and the Powerhouse chant we do after every practice and before every competition.” Freshman Emsy Diaz recalls, “My favorite memory was at one of our competitions. We were in the bleachers watching other Show Choirs. We were all singing and dancing together like crazy. It was so much fun,” she said after Powerhouse wrapped up at Herscher Swing and Sing on March 16th. To conclude their competition season, the group will attend the annual Show Choir Banquet on March 30th to hand out senior awards.



Peotone Show Choir members jam on stage at the Watseka Invitational March 9th.

Students interested in voting: Any student who is 18 or will be 18 by April 2nd can register to vote online through the Will County Clerk's Office website. Click on the link that says "Register to Vote" and follow the prompts. It is an easy process to complete and only takes a few minutes.

A New Face at School

Meet PHS's Resource Officer

by Staff Writer

While he may be a new addition to the faculty at the high school, Officer Dan Stankus is no stranger to the district as he is a graduate of PHS, which comes in handy when you are the School Resource Officer.



Officer Stankus stands alert, ready for action.

Prior to becoming a police officer, he was on a much different path as during his younger years he was a professional

touring rock musician that traveled throughout the United States. After returning to the Peotone area, he began to focus on the public service sector and became an E.M.T. with the Peotone Fire Department. Through those years of serving the community in that position, he became interested in law enforcement and started his career as a police officer in Beecher prior to joining the Peotone Police Department in 2007. During his time as a Peotone Officer, Stankus has been involved with several organizations relating to the school district, so becoming the district's School Resource Officer was a natural progression.

Ofc. Stankus is based at PHS, but he is the entire district's Resource Officer, and his time is split between the schools. This role gives him the opportunity to talk with many students, parents, and staff, a part of the job that he enjoys. "I am a people person, and I do enjoy interacting with everyone," Stankus explains. "Since the position is fairly new, I am learning the ropes and how things work around here."

There is never a typical day for Officer Stankus. He has many roles in the district, including classroom education, school security, and general advice/discussions with students. He also attends sporting events and other school functions. He is quickly turning into a familiar face at the high school, and can be reached either by email at dstankus@peotoneschools.org, or by calling 708-258-3236.

Seniors: Please complete your profile questionnaire that has been sent to your school email addresses. The profiles will be put on display in the hallway. Include two pictures: a recent senior photo and a toddler or baby photo.

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