



# The High School View

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## Volunteers travel to Navajo nation

By EmmaJean Holley

During April vacation, 12 regional high students flew into the arid heat of Black Mesa, Arizona to help renovate and rebuild homes for the Navajo Indian tribe. The volunteering students traveled as part of the Martha's Vineyard Ecumenical Youth Group to the Church of Joy on the Black Mesa Navajo reservation.

"It was pretty amazing," said youth group leader Melissa Pitt, one of the chaperones for the trip. "When you closed your eyes, it felt like you were in another country. I think the kids learned a lot from it."

Indeed, junior Kathryn Antonsson took away lessons on the most basic of similarities between cultures by drawing parallels with her Vineyard community. "I learned a lot about

the Navajo tribe. It's like the Island in a lot of ways," she said. "People are close. It's a very tight knit family that's spread out over a large area. They all know and care about each other even though they're miles apart."

While the relationships between people may be comparable to Island life, the most prominent cultural differences are manifested in social behaviors, according to Ms. Pitt.

"In general, the people we met were more shy, more quiet, maybe won't look you in the



PHOTO COURTESY OF CAL FIORE

Volunteers take a break from roofing, painting, and tiling to admire Black Mesa's striking desert backdrop.

eye. But one thing we all noticed was their optimism in the face of ad-

verse conditions, she said." Utilities in the tribe were limited. "A lot of these people have next to nothing," said Ms. Pitt. "One family was living in a camping tent. Others had no running water in their homes, or water but no heat. They didn't have telephones. And they still feel blessed to have what they have."

"The physical labor was intense sometimes," said senior Chris Pitt. "And we didn't have much in terms of materials. For example, I was re-roofing a house, and when we took off the shingles, it exposed all the rotting wood underneath. So we needed to travel 20 miles to the nearest hardware store to get recycled wood to replace it."

Kathryn was surprised by the conditions in which the Navajo people she met lived. "There are no showers – just a tiny stream of water that's barely heated by the sun. Very few houses have actual plumbing, and electricity is minimal everywhere," she said. "It was a little rough. But I definitely learned just how first world we are and how much we take it for granted."

On the last night of the trip, the Church of Joy offered a Navajo taco dinner to the volunteers to reward them for their efforts and give them a lasting taste of culture.

"People were so supportive and they gave so much thanks," said Kathryn. "That really came through in the taco dinner, and that feeling of appreciation is awesome. It makes the cold showers worth it."

Chris said, "At the end of it, it felt great to give them something that they didn't have the resources to do on their own. We helped in a way that wasn't abstract, but real and physical."

## Happiness is a warm hive

By Eva Faber

When temperatures reached the 70's in March, it is usually a cause for celebration, but for the regional high school's bee hive, an early spring meant death. Horticulture teacher John Wojtkielo, who cared for the hive located in the horticulture garden, found the bees dead one morning in the middle of March. Plans to obtain a new hive next spring are already in the works.

Science department chair Elliott Bennett had acquired the hive last spring and learned the careful art of beekeeping with help from the Island Grown Initiative. "We are al-

ready working hard on getting a new hive," said Mrs. Bennett.

There are many potential causes of what beekeepers call "winterkill," a problem that is common for new hives. Among these are starvation, disease, and pests, but Mrs. Bennett believes that this case can be attributed to the unusually warm weather and the subsequent frost in March.

"I think that because of the hot flash we had in weather, the bees started to venture out and about," she said. "When the temperature plummeted at night, they were too spread out, and they froze."

It is critical that bees maintain a temperature of 98.6°F using their wing vibrations to produce heat

and forming a tight cluster in the center of the hive. Horticulture students were able to observe this throughout the winter by monitoring the hive's temperate and comparing it to that of an empty frame. "The temperature difference between the two frames could be as much as 10 degrees," said Mr. Wojtkielo.

Said Mr. Wojtkielo, "Bees are essential to maintaining life. We loved having them in the horticulture garden because they are nature's best pollinator."

But the function of a school beehive goes beyond producing honey and pollinating the garden. "I loved the way they could teach democracy and how to operate as a community. They provided a lesson on living in harmony, and I'll miss go-



PHOTO BY ELLIOTT BENNETT

Noah Stuber tends to the school beehive formerly located in the horticulture garden.

ing out and showing that to the kids," said Mrs. Bennett.

Senior Noah Stuber was so fascinated with beekeeping that he took an independent study in the fall with Mrs. Bennett to learn about how hives are maintained. "I fed them a jar of half water and half sugar every other day. It was a valuable experience because I not only learned from the work habits of bees, but also about the important role they play in ecosystems," said Noah.

"Now we have the opportunity to learn from our mistakes," said Mr. Wojtkielo. "We obtained the hive a little bit too late in the spring. Next year we'll get it much earlier so the bees have more time to produce honey and a better chance of surviving the winter."

## Commentary

### What the electronics policy should be

By Julia Cooper

Technology is the rock and roll of Generation Y. We cannot go back in time to prevent this technological shift in society and culture, just as we could not prevent the music of The Beatles from infiltrating American airwaves, influencing American hairstyles, and re-forming American youth culture.

To issue a complete ban on the use of personal electronic devices in Martha's Vineyard classrooms would be a knee-jerk reaction to change, and blind to complex social developments that American society, inclusive of young adult culture, is currently undergoing.

Welcome to a not-so-unusual classroom scenario in the Martha's

Vineyard Regional High School, where the use of personal electronic devices is visibly abundant and diverse. A teacher uses the Siri function on an iPhone to figure out how to properly operate a Smartboard. A student is working on an iPad, conscientiously taking notes. Another student is sitting in the back of the classroom, using a smartphone to play a round of "Scramble With Friends."

Yet another student has a phone's calculator function open, checking the teacher's math on a test grade. Several other students are texting, checking the time, checking scores, and taking a momentary mental break from their class.

If one were to follow the school's

policy on personal electronic devices to the letter in the above scenario, every student with an active electronic device in his or her possession would require disciplinary action. Does this seem like a reasonable response when the students are causing no notable disruption in the classroom?

Some say that the answer to that question is yes, because when a student is engaging in an activity on a personal electronic device, he or she is ignoring the task at hand and is therefore being distracted from learning. If students were prevented access to such technology, they would learn much more efficiently. In my experience, this is not necessarily the case.

Are unfocused students in the classroom a new sensation? I think not, especially when classes are at such length. Prior to the invention

of cellphones and MP3 players, American students were still capable of not paying attention.

I see both the use and abuse of personal electronic devices in the classroom every day and I find that the solution to our policy problem is simple: if a student being distracted with personal technology is not bothering others, then it is the student's loss. But if the student is compromising the focus of others then disciplinary action should be taken. Teachers can use discretion when personal electronic devices are present in the classroom. But the students gaming and texting on their phones should not impede the potential positivity of appropriate technology use in the classroom.

While many hold that social media and technology are shaping Generation Y into a generation with

no mental capacity for reasoning, we can look at the results of the rock and roll movement to gauge where the technological revolution is taking us. Rock and roll did produce some rebellious teenagers, but the effect was not universal and the impact did not last as the teens of the 1950s progressed in their lives. The same will go for technology. Some teens will become dependent on their personal electronic devices, while others will use them as a tool to reach their full intellectual potential. Sure, teenagers are changing, but so is the rest of the world. We cannot expect education to retain outdated policies successfully when young people are progressing with the world. Technology is not an enemy of education; let's not make education an enemy of technology.