

# The MLWGS Jabberwock

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Friday, March 16, 2007

## ASL Attends Expo in Orlando

**Danny Yates**

Jabberwock Staff Reporter

While their fellow classmates toil away with schoolwork on Friday, March 16, 2007, eighteen MLWGS American Sign Language (ASL) students will be riding roller coasters and basking in the Florida sunshine.

"I'm looking forward to relaxing down there, and having a different sort of cultural experience," said Lauren Williams ('08).

The ASL students, led by teacher Brenda Thornton, are attending a three day conference and exposition by the DeafNation Organization. Since the Expo is held in Orlando, Florida, the trip brings with it some extra perks.

"We got a fun pass for four of the main parks in the area, and since there are a lot of them around Disney World it'll be nice," said Steven Funes ('09).

Traditionally, MLWGS ASL classes try to participate in several field trips each year. This allows students to practice their communication skills in the real world. Earlier this year they attended a deaf production of *Medea*.

Last year's trip to Boston, Massachusetts was a big success, and the ASL club is also in the process of planning a spring camping trip. Additionally, the club holds regular "silent lunches" in the cafeteria to put their skills into practice.

ASL students have been preparing for this trip since early in the school year. Each student was required to pay \$485 to cover airplane fare, hotel costs, and amusement park admissions. Some sold candy and participated in other fundraisers.

"I did some fundraising, but I made my parents pay for the rest of the cost," said Williams.

Events scheduled for this weekend's exhibition and conference include featured guest sign language speakers, deaf



**ASL students leave for Florida to attend DeafNation Expo, an exhibition and conference. Photo by Alan Chang.**

entertainment, and a convention hall full of vendors advertising their products using ASL.

Mr. Joel Barish, one of the coordinators for the Expo, provided some statistics for the event.

"DeafNation usually draw over 3,500 people, and some events have over 5,000 attendees. Ninety-five percent of our attendees are deaf, and others are students learning sign language or hearing parents with deaf children."

"It is so wonderful to see many groups at our DeafNation Expo, especially schools, and I'm glad [MLWGS] could attend," said Barish.

The group traveling to Orlando will depart MLWGS on Thursday afternoon in order to catch a flight to Florida and arrive in time for Friday's activities. They will return to Richmond on Sunday afternoon.

"It's going to be amazing, really great and I personally can't wait," said ASL Club Co-President Tom Tibbett ('07).

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# Post-Grad Pressure

College is a daunting concept for many of us. While in the past, anxieties about college and applications were reserved for high school seniors, nowadays preparations can begin as early as freshman year. From ensuring a rigorous course schedule full of Advanced Placement courses to enrolling in as many extracurricular activities as humanly possible, it seems that college is constantly on minds.

Collegeboard.com, the authority on all things college-related, provides a calendar for prospective college students that details the steps they should follow, starting from sophomore year. For sophomores, the website suggests meeting with college guidance counselors and attending college fairs, among other things.

But how much is too much? How much of the high school experience are we missing by constantly worrying about the four years after we graduate? While a certain level of preparedness is necessary in order to enroll in a university, sometimes students can be a little excessive. Many people have no idea what college or major suits them best. So what is it that drives so many of us to stress about college?

What many students do not realize is that there are other options that serve as precursors to college. It is not imperative that everyone enter a university immediately after graduation. From getting a job to taking a year off to travel, there are many options for high school students after graduation that do not include the dreaded c-word.

This is not to say that everyone is in this same situation. I have known many people who have had explicit plans for years. This is admirable, but for those of you who are stressing about the infinite abyss of college, *stop*. Enjoy high school while you can. Get involved in activities and courses because you like them, not because some distant admissions officer may find them impressive. Stop worrying about the past or future and focus on the present.

—AM

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The MLWGS Jabberwock covers news events related to the school community and provides a forum for students to share their ideas. However, the statements expressed by columnists do not necessarily reflect the views of the Jabberwock staff.

All members of the MLWGS community are invited to submit letters to the editor on any topic, although the publication of all letters is not guaranteed. The newspaper reserves the right to edit letters for grammar, language and length. Please e-mail letters to: [newspaper@gsgis.k12.va.us](mailto:newspaper@gsgis.k12.va.us).

# Give My Regards to Broadway

**Among the talented MLWGS student body, there lies Broadway potential**

**Elaine Hillgrove**  
Jabberwock Staff Reporter

“It’s probably my biggest passion,” says freshman Libby Schneider about her three-year involvement in Christian Youth Theater (CYT).

Schneider dates her interest in singing and dancing to early childhood, more specifically, to seeing her first Disney movie, “The Little Mermaid.”

“I was always that little girl who sang and danced in front of all the relatives,” says Schneider. “I love performing so theater just seemed like the perfect opportunity.”

Although Schneider has performed for as long as she can remember, her first real show was as understudy for the lead in Manchester Middle School’s production of “Annie.”

“I think my red hair had a lot to do with that,” she says with a laugh.

After “Annie,” she performed in Manchester’s production of “School House Rock, Jr.” A subsequent audition landed her the role as Frenchie in “Grease.”



**Center, Schneider performs in the Music Man. Photo courtesy of CYT photographers.**

That year, Schneider met Tracia Austin, a vocal coach for CYT, who also happened to be her mother’s former college friend.

“She convinced me to see ‘Beauty and the Beast,’ and after that I was hooked,” she said. “You don’t understand how incredible these productions are until you actually see one. Once I saw it, I knew I had to be a part of it.”

Schneider auditioned for “The Little Mermaid.” However she was not quite over her stage fright because she felt nauseous during the auditions.

“I was so used to getting lead roles at Manchester, that when I didn’t get the part of Ariel or one of her sisters, I was really disappointed,” she said.

**“You don’t understand how incredible these productions are until you actually see one.”**

Schneider did get a role in the ensemble. She subsequently played a “pick-a-little lady” in “The Music Man.”

“I still really wanted a lead role, so I took the initiative and worked my way up,” said Schneider. This led her to a significant part in “Pocahontas.” Schneider played Chitsa, a narrator in the CYT’s historically accurate production.

“It was amazing. I got to work with some of the coolest people ever, who all became my close friends,” she said.

Though thrilled by her achievement, Schneider faced new challenges after “Pocahontas.”

“I actually had to get this horrendous spray-tan that turned me this weird orange color,” said Schneider. “And I had to go to school for about three weeks with everyone calling me ‘Oompa Loompa’ and singing that song in the hallways. It was pretty bad.”

Currently, she plays one of the Bird Girls, a major role, in Dr. Seuss’ “Seussical the Musical.”

“I get this really cool costume and wig. And at least this time, my skin’s not



**Libby Schneider poses before her performance in Pocahontas. Photo courtesy of Shari Schneider.**

orange,” she said.

Eventually Schneider hopes to embark upon a career in musical theater. She recently auditioned for and received a place in a camp called “Destination Broadway,” a program run by Michael Rafter, a noted director of Broadway shows.

“So basically two hundred kids from across the country are accepted into this camp based on their singing, acting and dancing skills.”

After they decide whether or not to go, the actors fly to New York for a week.

“[Participants] take a bunch of classes that helps them improve their theatrical skills,” said Schneider, “At the end of the week they get to audition for real Broadway shows.”

“I would of course love to accept [a role on Broadway], but it would affect my whole family. I would really have to get my priorities in order if I wanted to do that. I just don’t know that at my age if that is best.”

For now at least, Schneider has found her passion.

“I just love it so much. The lights, the songs, the adrenaline. I don’t know how to describe it except for perfect.”

# How Safe Are the Roads?

**Cell phones have become a prominent accessory, but are they endangering the roads?**

**Isshin Teshmia**  
Jabberwock Staff Reporter

Sophomore Jessica Chen starts her school day with a 50-minute school bus ride. At the end of the day, she rides the same bus back to Hanover. Like most public school students, Chen counts on her bus driver to safely transport her to and from school.

“Obviously, bus drivers are trusted enough as good drivers to be responsible for all the children on the bus,” said Chen.

In the last session, the Virginia General Assembly passed House Bill 2510, which prohibits provisional license holders from “using any cellular telephone or other wireless device while driving a motor vehicle on the highways of the Commonwealth.”

Most students in the Virginia public school system use the bus as a form of transportation to and from school. For those who cannot yet drive a car, it is their *only* form of transportation.

Thus, issues of safety concern students, parents, and school system administrators. For this reason, drivers must undergo varying degrees of training.

The lack of seat-belts for students on

buses adds to the danger of using cell phones while operating a school bus.

Furthermore, bus drivers have many distractions to cope with. Drivers must be able to effectively handle loud radio music, unruly behavior, and bus dispatch radio orders and simultaneously drive a 10-ton vehicle during morning and afternoon rush hour.

The distractions result in a high number of school bus related accidents. In 2005, according to Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles records, 24 of the 894 school-bus related accidents involved “driver distraction.” 429 school bus occupants were injured and three were killed that year.

Many students think lawmakers should hold experienced drivers who transport minors to the same standards as novice drivers.

## “They’re not being paid to talk to on the phone.”

Because a bus driver is responsible for many lives, most students feel that the increased risk and responsibility of the driver are important for why cell phone use should be prohibited.

“The bus driver is in charge of a bunch of people’s lives,” said Bailey Rose (’09). “I’ve seen bus drivers on the phone. It’s definitely a risk.”

Senior James Presley agreed. “There’s definitely more weight on the driver,” he said.

“They’re not being paid to talk on the phone,” Caroline Kellis (’09) said. “You would think they could wait a couple hours to talk on their own.”

Some students want cell phones prohibited only for commercial license holders.

“Anybody driving under a Commercial License shouldn’t talk on cell phones,” Flora Vassar (’07) said. “Buses are so much bigger and could be a bigger danger to its surroundings.”

Suzie Oh (’08) disagreed.

“If they have experience, then I think



**A bus waits to Park in front of a school in Lansing, Michigan. Photo courtesy of parks.cityoflansingmi.com.**

it’s fine,” Oh said.

According to Mr. Tharp, MLWGS cannot regulate school bus policy since the buses are run under each separate county’s school board.

“In my personal opinion, it is fine if there are no kids,” Tharp said.

“However, drivers shouldn’t be talking [on cell phones] when transporting people.”

When Chesterfield, Henrico, Richmond, and Hanover were contacted, most responded that they had a section separated in a Pupil Transportation Manual that each driver was required to read.

Only Hanover, however, responded that cell phone restrictions while transporting students were not formally written in a manual, though it was a generally understood concept among drivers.

Chesterfield County only restricted cell phone usage when the bus was in motion *with students*.

Richmond and Henrico forbid the use of cell phones while driving or operating a vehicle.

“There should be a law that restricts cell phone usage by bus drivers,” said Megan O’Donnell (’09). “We should protect public safety on the road.”

Regardless of students’ opinions, the execution is left up to the Virginia General Assembly.

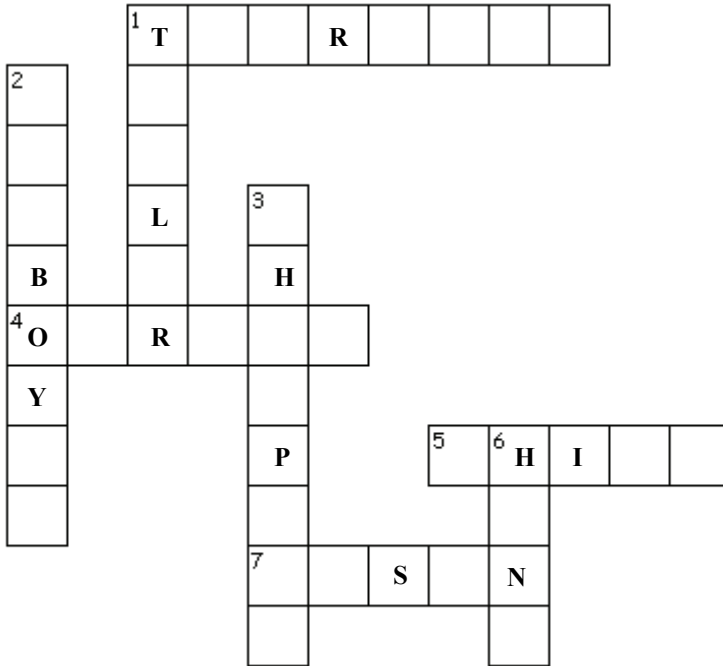
*See “Cell Phone Policies” on page 5.*



**A bus picks up students on the roadside. Photo courtesy of www.tc.gc.ca.**

# Class Times

**Natalia Virani**  
Jabberwock Staff Reporter



**Complete the crossword puzzle with the teacher or administrator's last name only. The Cross Word puzzle clues were submitted by the faculty members.**

**Difficulty level: Easy**

**Clues**

**Across**

- 1. She has a black belt in Tae Kwon Do.
- 4. He was a coordinator for the Peach Center in Patrick Country, VA
- 5. He can wiggle his ears and scalp, together or separately, without using his hands.
- 7. She has been employed as an Irish storyteller

**Down**

- 1. She enjoys hiking and riding horses through the Northern Colorado Rockies.
- 2. She attended a birthday party for Sean Lennon, hosted by his mother, Yoko Ono, in Lennon's Dakota Apartments in New York
- 3. She still has her Barbie doll, Troll, and many box games from when she was in elementary school, and in decent condition!
- 6. He has lived his entire life within a 15 mile radius of MLWGS. That is true school dedication!

# Cell Phone Policies

**SCHOOL BOARD  
POLICIES FOR USAGE  
WHILE BUS DRIVING**

**Hanover:** "There is no written policy enacted by the school board regarding cell phone usage. However, our practice is that school bus drivers cannot use their cell phones while performing their job function. If they have an emergency, they may use their cell phones if they find a safe place to pull the bus completely off the road."

~Mitzi Crosier  
Director of Transportation

**Richmond City:** Richmond Public Schools has recognized for some time that talking on a cell phone while driving can be hazardous and our policy prohibits bus drivers and any RPS employee driving a city-owned vehicle from using a cell phone while driving.

~Lisa Dawson  
Richmond City School Board

**Henrico:** Refer to the Henrico County Public Schools, Department of Pupil Transportation Manual , Page 4

~Pat Martin  
Assistant Director, Dept. of Pupil Transportation

**Chesterfield:** The Chesterfield County Public Schools' School Bus Driver's Handbook states:

"Except during emergencies, the use of a cellular telephone (with or without an earpiece) is prohibited during loading and unloading of students and any time students are on board."

Barbara V. Goodman  
Associate Director, Transportation

# Not So Amazing Grace

By **Suzanne Vaughan**  
Jabberwock Staff Contributor

Be warned: this is the kind of movie where the timeline is changed so that the main character can speak out, in British Parliament, during the American Revolution, that the Americans are probably right...and said member of British Parliament *does not get arrested in 1776 Britain* (Wilberforce was actually a party-hearty rich kid at Cambridge during that war).

This is the kind of movie where, when asked if he “found God,” the main character very earnestly replies in the hackneyed, “I think He found me.”

“Amazing Grace” is about William Wilberforce, the actual figure in history who was, in fact, an evangelical Christian, a member in the British House of Commons, and the driving political force behind the abolition of the slave trade in Great Britain.

The plot focuses roughly on the fifteen to twenty years in which Wilberforce spent literally all of his political and physical energy pushing for the outlawing of the slave trade in Great Britain. Ioan Gruffudd stars as Wilberforce, who is apparently the Most Perfect Human Being Ever to Walk the Planet, Except for Maybe Jesus.

Gruffudd does his best with the truly horrifying script that he is given, but he is not brilliant enough to mine appreciable depth from Wilberforce’s character. We



**Barbara (Romola Garai) encourages Wilberforce (Ioan Gruffudd) to continue with his crusade against the slave trade. Photo courtesy of [www.Moving-Picture.com](http://www.Moving-Picture.com).**

sympathize with his troubles, but we don’t ever really, viscerally care about him.

The blame for this lies not only in script (which was, I promise you, an atrocity of “Titanic” proportions...pun intended), but also in the direction, or more precisely lack thereof, of Michael Apted. The film meanders in and out of unnecessary subplots and unclear changes in chronology, and the actors are given no help with even the clumsiest of lines.

The saving grace of “Grace,” other than well-done costuming, is truly the actors themselves; the supporting cast entirely carries the movie. Michael Gambon is deliciously mischievous and brilliant as Lord Charles Fox, Wilberforce’s greatest political ally and fellow MP (he also single-handedly bumps this review up half a

star). Rufus Sewell is typically ambiguous as radical abolitionist minister Thomas Clarkson. Romola Garai is sharp and likeable as Barbara, the woman who becomes Wilberforce’s wife. Also well worth mentioning is Youssou N’Dour as Olaudah Equiano, an ex-slave who became a key figure in the abolitionist movement.

Albert Finney plays John Newton, the ex-slave ship captain turned minister who wrote the popular hymn “Amazing Grace.” While that story, as well as Newton and Wilberforce’s relationship, is true, the subplot was not actually relevant to the movie as a whole, except to have a really pretty bagpipe version of “Amazing Grace” at the end; Finney, however, turns an entirely extraneous role into some of the most moving parts of the movie.

The ending of the movie, through no fault of the script, is also pretty cool, as it portrays the real facts on how the ban on the slave trade was accomplished, which are some pretty cool facts.

On the whole, what could have been a truly powerful film fell far short of the mark—the script, directing, and editing simply failed.

There are, however, some golden moments— Sewell, N’Dour, Finney, and Gambon especially manage to turn the movie from an at-times factually questionable biopic into an actual movie during their screen time, which is more than one can say for “The Covenant.”

## Rating:



# Looking Back: Reflections of a Ballah

**Nick Eilerson**

Jabberwock Staff Reporter

We had four starting seniors. We had the Green Machine. We had the pep band. We had the dance team. We had Mrs. McKay. We had Robert Lawrence. We had, according to our coaches, the best team chemistry they'd ever seen. And we had Tommy Nicholas. The end result?

Two wins. Twenty losses.

So what was the problem? Was it some kind of lack of motivation? Was it a matter of size? Of heart? Or was it simply the absence of the floor leadership of the ever-redoubtable Kel Wilburn?

Tough questions, tougher answers.

"We had some key injuries," said senior Tommy Nicholas, perhaps the district's most recognizable player (due to goofy appearance). "We just didn't finish down the stretch. I also probably passed too much."

It is painful for me to think about the fact that this team did not even qualify for the district tournament this year. Looking back to a few months ago, I remember Tommy and me discussing the "very real" possibility of winning ten games this season. We had a nice mix of talent, we figured, including the district's most potent scoring threat, and the team seemed to gel better than past teams.

Yes, we envisioned being part of a team that rivaled the legendary success of the 2003-2004 Dragon squad (eight wins), which included greats like Pete Georgen and Luke Hostetter. We were just flat out wrong.

You know your team is having a rough year when a few things happen. When your coach's halftime speech begins like this: "Okay guys, we're only down 20! We're still in this!" Or when, upon seeing Maggie Walker on the schedule, an opposing player keels over, laughing uncontrollably. Or when, in the middle of the season, your team captain

tells you, "Dude, I'm just looking forward to tennis season." Or when your loyal fans bring paper bags to the final game of the season.

"I don't think they utilized powerhouse players like Robert Lawrence and Zach Rubin enough," said senior Vince Pierce, a staunch supporter of the team. "But they had good team unity. They always finished the game holding their heads high, like the Ottomans after being conquered by the British."

Now that I think about it, this winter was not a very happy one for any of the school's basketball players. In fact, according to my calculations, Maggie Walker "ballahs" closed out the year with a solid combined district record of 1-67. Sounds more like some highway than a basketball record.

Such a dearth of victory seems to render the record home crowds nothing short of inexplicable. Why did the fans keep coming? What kept refueling the high octane Green Machine?

"The reason I kept coming out to the games was simple," said senior Alex

Hanson, a prominent member of the Green Machine. "I had to have good material to make fun of Wesley with. I am a strong believer in the great American tradition of heckling."

I like to think they were drawn in by the heart of our team, by our competitive drive that made us give it our all no matter who we were up against. I like to think they appreciated our grit, our determination, our desire to impress them. And maybe, just maybe, they truly cared about us.

"I didn't really care about the basketball team," remarked cynical senior Mike Hagemann. "I just went to all the games so I could check out the dance team."

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**"We envisioned being part of a team that rivaled the legendary success of the 2003-2004 Dragon squad (eight wins)."**

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Others were instigated by more sentimental impulses.

"They were awesome because their glass was always half full," said junior Irene Gardner, an enthusiastic regular at home games. "They had a lot of heart."

Though my senior season was marked by disappointment, failure, underachievement, and embarrassment, I will remember it for its more positive characteristics. It was a season of camaraderie, undying fan support, and fond memories. Tommy led the district in scoring. David, unlike his teammates, gave it his all night in and night out. Amit drained nearly as many 3-pointers as Coach Spelsburg Sr. uttered semi-retarded statements. Trent continued to sport blond hair. Max was quite tall. And I unleashed a granny shot on senior night. Ah, yes. What a season indeed.

Heck, what am I saying? I'm just looking forward to soccer season.



**Tommy Nicholas takes the ball down the court. Photo by Michael White.**