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Chase Wofford
The Sidekick adviser
Coppell High School
185 West Parkway Boulevard
Coppell, Texas 75019
(214) 496-6239
cwofford@coppellisd.com

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to strongly recommend Coppell High School 2018 graduate Amelia Vanyo for the 2018 National Scholastic Press Association Writer of the Year award.

It was August 2016 when Amelia first entered the D115 newsroom. Each year, a new group of students join The Sidekick newspaper, where I serve as the publication's adviser. They enter as students, but my goal is they exit the year as journalists.

Two weeks later, Amelia was already a journalist. I know this not because I read her stories or because she did something great in our newsroom. I knew Amelia was a journalist because I saw it with my own eyes. Her first story assignment was somewhat challenging for rookie student reporter. This may not seem too difficult for seasoned journalists, but Amelia was assigned a story about safety on Denton Tap Road near Coppell High School as it undergoes construction.

Years ago, a CHS student was killed crossing Denton Tap Road when struck by a vehicle. During last year's construction, many students were dangerously crossing the street as fences had been temporarily removed, making it easy for students to not use crosswalks.

I told Amelia she needed to go to the intersection and talk to students as they crossed the street and ask them about their safety concerns. Honestly, I did not expect her to take my advice as most new staff members do not have this confidence as reporters. They are still learning the "go to the news, go to the story" mentality of reporting. Later that afternoon when I was leaving campus, I saw Amelia standing in front of the Sonic Drive-In on Denton Tap Road with her pen and reporter's notebook interviewing student pedestrians.

Right then, I knew Amelia was going places in journalism.

This was just the start to an outstanding junior year on staff for Amelia. She quickly emerged as one of our very best news writers and reporters. In May 2017, it was time to make selections for 2017-2018 Sidekick editors. I had a name in mind but always want to get confirmation from my students as this is a student newspaper. I asked then-editor-in-chief Meara Isenberg (2017 Dallas Morning News summer intern) and then-executive news editor Sakshi Venkatraman (2016 Dallas Morning News summer intern) who they would recommend for 2017-2018 Sidekick-editor-in-chief.

All of three of us immediately said the same name. Amelia Vanyo.

Amelia did not disappoint as our program's leader. Student vaping is a growing problem on our campus and her in-depth look at this issue is well sourced and connects to our audience. I believe it is easier as a journalist to tell the stories of others than it is to tell your own. Amelia's column on her battle with anxiety since she was a baby displays her courage and willingness to open up to make a positive impact on readers.

You get it all with Amelia, as she is on her way to pursue a journalism degree from the University of Maryland. Responsibility, maturity, journalistic integrity, reporting skills, excellent writing – the list goes on and on. Amelia would make for an outstanding recipient of the NSPA Writer of the Year award.

Thank you for your time and consideration of Amelia.

Chase Wofford

The Sidekick newspaper adviser
214.496.6239
cwofford@coppellisd.com

Blurred circumstances: From campus to company, consequences for vaping cross loose lines

 coppellstudentmedia.com/75508/news/blurred-circumstances/

The thick, sweet fruity smell fills my head as I step into the bathroom. A girl swipes at the air and slyly pockets a silver device as the space in front of her becomes smudged and blurry.

The problem staring Coppel in the face: A look into roadblocks associated with reinforcement of rules

It is not altogether unusual for students to witness their peers using vape pens or e-cigarettes on the Coppel High School campus. Walking through the hallways, smelling the sickly sweet juices is a very real possibility. However this year, students who have witnessed others illegally using the pens or e-cigs have started to turn in students at fault.

The school is doing what it can to address the problem, but there is only so much they can do to actively combat the issue.

“We have to have reasonable suspicion that somebody is in possession of something like a vape pen or vape product then we have the authority to search,” Coppel High School principal Dr. Nicole Jund said. “We have to actively try to eliminate those things on campus, if we don’t actively try to eliminate that then we are allowing for it to happen.”

The problem extends beyond Coppel High School, with students getting busted for vaping on campus at the middle schools as well.

According to Coppel Middle School North student resource officer Rachel Freeman, there have been a few students caught with vapes on their persons while in the school.

“Vaping is a problem among middle school students in general,” Freeman said. “We did have some isolated incidents [where students were caught with vapes on campus last year.] But what is reported and what is actually going on is very different. We don’t get a lot of reports about it because it’s not something that kids are going to tell on each other [for].”

Freeman thinks students at the middle schools are reluctant to turn in other students for vaping because middle schoolers are still deciding what they do and do not stand for. The lack of maturity makes this age group more susceptible to peer pressure and less likely to stand up against someone. However, high schoolers are more grounded in what they stand for, or in this case, do not stand for, meaning high school students are more comfortable ousting someone for activities they see as wrong.

“At the middle school level kids are just trying to figure out who they are and what they are about, and I think by high school you’ve got it kind of figured out a little bit better,” Freeman said. “I think by high school you’re just a lot more comfortable and a lot more confident about who you are as a person and what you stand for. I think in middle school there’s still a lot of uncertainty, you know the ‘I know this is wrong but I don’t know what I should do about it.’”

While Coppell Middle School East has yet to catch students vaping on the East campus, Principal Laura Springer is not naive enough to doubt the probability of the existence of the problem.

“So far we’ve had a couple of our kids go to another middle school event and got caught vaping at another school,” Springer said. “We have not caught anyone, that doesn’t mean they’re not doing it – they’re real crafty – but so far we have not caught one person vaping. We have drug dogs come in regularly and we’ve not caught them with any paraphernalia. I’m not going to be naive and say our kids don’t, but they have not been caught at school doing it yet.”

Springer attributes the East environment of love and support to the impact she makes on the decisions her students come across.

“We really stress respect here,” Springer said. “I try to talk to them about that fact that I’m their school momma, and I would be really disappointed if I caught them doing something they shouldn’t do. We are going to try to keep you safe here and love you. I really believe you’ve gotta love kids hard to keep them from doing horrible things to themselves. I want to make sure that y’all all know that y’all are like my kids, I love you like your mom, I do not want any of my kids vaping.”

“You start that by teaching you all very early on to respect yourself, to respect your bodies, to respect each other. It’s one of the reasons I moved to the middle school. When I was at the high school it broke my heart how many kids were broken up there. I was trying to put them back together, but once they’re broken it’s hard to put them back together, so I thought I gotta catch them before they break and see if we can keep some of them from breaking at all.”

According to the 2017-2018 CHS Student Code of Conduct, it is against the rules to possess, use, give, sell or buy “electronic cigarettes and any component, part or accessory for an e-cigarette device.”

The problem does not subside outside school walls. According to [SB No. 97](#), a document outlining the regulation of possession, selling and use of e-cigarettes, possession, purchase, consumption or receipt of cigarettes, e-cigarettes, or tobacco products by minors, is prohibited. In addition, there are consequences for minors who are caught possessing, purchasing, consuming or accepting these products, which include attending an e-cigarette and tobacco awareness program, or eight to 12 hours of community service.

According to the CHS Student Code of Conduct, “school administration will report crimes as required by law and will contact local law enforcement regarding suspected criminal activity committed while under the school’s jurisdiction.”

However, a minor vaping is only considered a class C misdemeanor, on par with theft under \$100, public intoxication and minor in possession of alcohol or tobacco. Under SB 393, a bill defining the legal prosecution of minors accused of class c misdemeanors, officers cannot write class C tickets on campus to persons under the age of 18, so class C misdemeanors can only be treated as school administrative or disciplinary issues.

This leaves the school to manage vaping on campus internally, causing the severity of punishment of a minor vaping on campus to have potentially more lenient punishments that getting caught off-campus. Even if a tip is given through Coppell Crime Stoppers about a student vaping on campus the campus, student resource officers must hand the problem over to administration. If the tip is given to the school and not Coppell Crime Stoppers, the school cannot report the offense to the authorities.

The only case where a minor is prosecuted for illegally using a vape is when a tip is called in that is about a minor vaping outside of school jurisdiction, in which case the police will determine if a citation is necessary.

“End game for us is it needs to not come to school. We did up the consequences for [vaping on campus],” CHS Principal Dr. Nicole Jund said. “We know that it is a community expectation that I do everything I can to keep it out of school.”

This year, when a student is caught on campus with a vape once, the device is confiscated and only returned to the parents of the student. The student will also be given a minimum of two days of in-school suspension. Jund said that while she could not release exactly what would take place in the circumstance that a student brings a vape to school more than once, consequences do increase for multiple time offenders.

Another impact of SB 393 is that Coppell Crime Stoppers is not paying for tips about vaping as any tips will not result in an arrest.

Fortunately, despite not receiving a reward, students continue to turn in other students for vaping on campus.

“Other students are starting to report it more because they’ll go into the bathrooms or their classrooms and it’s distracting them,” CHS Student Resource Officer Chris Cobb said.

Even with the tips, it can be difficult to catch a student and correct the behavior.

“Some of the tips aren’t specific enough,” Cobb said. “It’s kind of hard for us or the [assistant principals] to actually go pull a student out to handle a tip, it’s gotta be a little more specific.”



Slideshow • 2 Photos

Ale Cenicerros

The use of vapes has increased among students attending Coppell secondary schools. This leads to an addiction for nicotine which can cause adverse effects on the brain.

The harsh reality: Ignored truths of using of vapes, with or without nicotine

Facts vs Myths

Myth: The vapes expel vapor

Fact: The vapes expel aerosol

Myth: E-Cigarettes and vapes are safe

Fact: A lot is still unknown about the health impacts of vapes and e-cigarettes

Fact: Some flavor chemicals, when inhaled, have been known to cause scarring in the lungs, a condition known as “popcorn lungs”

Myth: Vapes and e-cigs are well built for safety

Fact: The heat generated in an e-cig can create formaldehyde from the liquid, and rip metals from the side of the device. This is delivered to the lungs.

Myth: Nicotine is addictive, but otherwise is not particularly harmful

Fact: Nicotine is known to cause users to experience problems developing natural feelings of pleasure, and can cause developmental problems in the prefrontal cortex of younger users.

Myth: The amount of nicotine in a pen is labeled correctly

Fact: There is no regulation or checking of the nicotine content in a vape-pen. The amount of nicotine the product claims to contain may be more or less than what is actually there.

Myth: The FDA regulates ingredients in e-juice

Fact: The FDA does not regulate the chemicals used in e-juice or monitor the cleanliness of the locations where e-juices are made.

Vapes consist of a battery, a heating coil, and an absorbent material (like cotton) that absorbs liquid called e-juice that contains flavors and sometimes nicotine. As the e-juice is heated up, the device creates an aerosol that is inhaled into the lungs and then exhaled out into the air.

It is important to understand that vapes create an aerosol and not vapor because aerosol, unlike vapor which is solely gas, contains solid particles within a gas. According to [Stanford Medicine](#), rather than mixing with the air as gas does, aerosols leave particles, often containing chemicals, behind. Some of the chemicals that can be found in vapes are known to cause cancer, and while it is currently unknown if second hand smoke is a danger with vaping, third hand smoke is.

The aerosol leaves behind those particles, on surfaces and dust. These particles react with other chemicals near by and can create dangerous chemicals that can be introduced to others through ingestion, respiration or even skin exposure.

In some cases, vaping is considered a healthier alternative, able to help people more easily recover from a cigarette smoking addiction.

“A lot of younger kids who are over 18 they do it for the flavor,” managing partner of Jetstream Vape in Coppell Nathan McWhorter said. “A lot of times you get someone who’s 18 or 19 and they’ve never smoked but they want to get zero nicotine. But our primary draw is quitting smoking. We put them at the nicotine level they’re used to and we drop them down very slowly.”

However, teenagers who begin using the devices with nicotine risk becoming addicted to the drug and racking up a bill paying for juices because of it. Not only will they have to pay for their addiction, they will have to deal with it when they can not have nicotine, such as during the school day.

Addiction to nicotine is caused by changes in brain chemistry which causes users to crave more nicotine.

Along with addiction, nicotine can cause adverse effects on the brain. Nicotine causes a flood of chemicals to the brain that cause intense feelings of pleasure, but when it's gone it leaves the user unable to feel normal emotions naturally.

The reality is, many students who continue to bring vapes or e-cigarettes to school despite the increased risk do so because they are addicted to nicotine.


Even using a vape with no nicotine can be harmful. Many of the flavors used in vapes are known to contain toxic chemicals. Diacetyl is found in many of the sweet flavors and is known to cause constrictive bronchiolitis obliterans (popcorn lung) which is scarring within the lungs. Teens vaping with nicotine can cause problems with brain development in the prefrontal cortex that can be long lasting and cause psychiatric disorders later in life.

"There's this perception that it's just a cloud of dust," Jund said "It does have addictive properties. It's something that is still relatively new, and we don't know 100 percent what the longterm outcomes and implications vaping will have on our health."

In addition to these risks, there are probably countless more. It took years to prove that cigarettes are dangerous, who is to say the same thing won't happen with vapes?

Editor's note: This story is a part of The Sidekick's continuous coverage on vaping. Visit [this article](#) for further information.

I was bullied because of my anxiety (with video)

 coppelstudentmedia.com/76577/opinions/i-was-bullied-because-of-my-anxiety/

My journey with mental illness

Amelia Vanyo, Editor-in-Chief • February 2, 2018 •



Varsha Kanneganti

Sidekick editor-in-chief Amelia Vanyo began wearing bracelets to cover up self-harm scars in seventh grade. Now she wears them as a symbol of what she has overcome.

The honest truth

I used to self harm. It started in the seventh grade, shortly after I began taking medication for anxiety.

There was a girl in my seventh grade class who would check my wrists every day, making a show of how she was trying to help me.

She did not help me.

So I started wearing bracelets.

I have always had anxiety. Since the day I was born I was a jumpy, nervous kid.

Even when I was a baby it was obvious that something was different. Parents are encouraged to put babies to sleep on their backs to protect them against crib death. But if I slept on my back, when I woke up from nightmares I would start crying and screaming, but the support I got when I laid on my stomach would help keep me calm, and put me back to sleep.

I cannot remember the first time I had an anxiety attack, but I remember being very young when the sudden jolts of fear would run through my body without a moment's notice. The tears would surface and my hands would clamp over my ears in terror.

I was diagnosed with general anxiety disorder in the second grade, shortly after developing such a fear over going to school that it would make me physically sick to my stomach.

Being the girl with anxiety is not being the cute, nervous, shy girl. It is being the girl who cries when she has to take a test. It is being the girl who has to cancel plans because she is too scared to go out. It is being the girl who panics at nothing. It is being the girl who throws up when something freaks her out. There is nothing cute about anxiety.

There is nothing wrong with it either. I have a condition, but I am not flawed.

But for some reason, my anxiety provided the perfect opportunity for my peers to bully me.

I was bullied in sixth and seventh grade by both my peers and my teachers.

In the sixth grade, I was told by a teacher that the reason I was anxious was because I was not religious enough.



In the sixth grade, two girls I went to school with made fun of me for my phobias.

In the seventh grade, girls would make fun of my anxiety, they would provoke me and try to get me to freak out.

In the seventh grade, I was left out, ignored, laughed at.

The teachers would not help – if anything they made it worse.

I often received texts from the girls in which they asked “why don’t you just stop worrying?” The messages on my phone would glare up at me, and my eyes would fill with tears.

Anxiety is not a choice. I do not wake up in the morning and think to myself “you know what? I want to have anxiety today.” I do not interrupt my day to have a panic attack on purpose, I do not choose to shut down in the middle of doing something. It is all out of my control.

I do not get bullied in the same way I used to be bullied. Now it is a lot more misunderstanding than outright hate. Sometimes people will say they are having a panic attack when they are not. That is always upsetting. I made a point of not misusing the vocabulary of mental illness [here](#).

I never got an apology from anyone who bullied me. But in some ways I do not mind. An apology only helps so much – what would really make a difference would be if those people changed and, instead of attacking people who are different, did what they could to be empathetic and helpful.

How anxiety has helped me

I still have anxiety, I still have panic attacks and I still have days where I cannot seem to function. I still have to take medication. I still struggle a lot with the nerves and the stomach problems that I get when my anxiety spikes up. I still sometimes get bullied by people.

The thing is, I am not ashamed of my condition anymore. In fact, there are instances in which I am almost thankful for it.

My anxiety has taught me a lot about about being a better person and how to get through hard times.

Because of what I have been through, I know how to be empathetic to other people. I do not get offended when someone is not in the mood to chat because they are having a bad day. I am never quick to judge – I know that everyone goes through things.

And because I appreciate the people who were there for me when I needed it, I am good at being there for others when they ask for help – but I am also good at standing back when they want some space.

I am a lot stronger now than I was in the sixth grade. I have been through a lot, I have had tons of really bad days, so I really appreciate the good days. But I also know I am capable of getting through difficult times.

I know how to handle fear. While I may be one of the most nervous kids I know, and while I create a lot of my fears out of thin air, if something really truly real and terrifying comes my way, I will know how to act with a bit of courage and logic. Someone who has never experienced true terror may not be able to act with as much confidence as I could.

Most importantly, I know how to forgive. I know how to forgive my bullies, for an ignorance about mental illness that in all honesty was the fault of their parents and educators. I know how to forgive my parents, for their confusion and the mistakes they made while trying to figure out how to help me. I know how to forgive myself, for every time I did not try hard enough to get through a day, for every time I hurt myself, for every time I got angry at the world for not understanding.

Now that I have forgiven myself for being angry at those who do not understand, I am determined to make a difference, determined to teach, determined to inform people. I did not choose my anxiety, it is a condition I cannot control, and it is something everyone should have compassion for.

Follow Amelia [@ameliavanyo](#)

Ale Cenicerros

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Placing purpose over profit

 coppellstudentmedia.com/79973/showcase/placing-purpose-over-profit/

Filed under Showcase

How becoming a journalist changed my life, altered my definition of success.

Amelia Vanyo, Editor-in-Chief • May 25, 2018 •



Karis Thomas

The Sidekick editor-in-chief Amelia Vanyo did not realize how much she would love journalism until she joined The Sidekick her junior year. After two years on staff, Vanyo has learned several lessons that have made her more successful than she ever could have hoped.

You might think that getting awards, being placed in competitive positions or singing solos were the highlights of my high school career. But personally I do not see my success as relating to any honors or status.

For me, my greatest accomplishment in high school was a story I wrote my junior year called Construction on Denton Tap impacting student safety.

The story was my very first as a staff writer for *The Sidekick*. It covered an important issue

concerning the fence that runs down Denton Tap Road, preventing students from running across the street, and it was the beginning of two years of lessons that would change my life.

My second greatest accomplishment in high school was every single story I wrote after that.

The Sidekick taught me several of the most important lessons of my life.

One of those lessons was how incredibly exciting and rewarding it is to write about something controversial.

From fences that save student's lives, human labor's ties to T-shirt manufacturing, how to talk about mental health, fake news, international opinions on American politics, the Women's March, March for Science, the word "retard", sexual assault, vaping, gun violence, March for Our Lives, and traffic safety, I found a burning passion for uncovering hidden truths, making change and pursuing a better world through publishing factual information.

I love the thrill of hitting publish on a hard hitting story. Even if the story gets next to no views, the act of writing it gives me a sense of pride that I receive nowhere else. This is in part because the research that goes into publishing the stories I write often results in me becoming an expert in something I did not understand to begin with. To me, the acquisition of knowledge is liberating in a society that uses misinformation to suppress people.

Another lesson I learned was how important it is to celebrate other people's success rather than focusing on your own.

I learned this lesson two ways: in writing and in reading.

Through writing other people's stories, from the hiring of new teachers, the impossible life lived by senior Ashna Pathan, following Coppell Marching Band to State finals, telling the stories of Coppell Band students going to All State, local musicals, several sporting events, and a sophomore drum major, I learned to get excited about the feats of the people around me.

Through reading the stories of my fellow staff members, and watching them grow as photographers and designers, I learned to celebrate their growth in journalism as much as my own. I learned very quickly that high school is much more enjoyable when you are not trying to outdo people, but instead become your peers personal cheerleader and enjoy others success rather than being self obsessed.

The third lesson I learned was about finding a story in everyone and everything around you. This makes the world a much more interesting place, and helped me to realize that the world (believe it or not) does not revolve around me. Everyone is just as unique as the next person.

From writing a story about a community coming together to run, finding an inherent truth through talking to Mihir Chadaga, and getting to know the incredible Charlie Villalobos, feature stories made me a more understanding person.

This next lesson is a little funny, but it is one that has made a huge impact on my life. With every story I have written, I have gotten better at picking up the phone and calling someone.

For whatever reason, I have always been really good at communicating with people in person, but, for the longest time, talking on the phone was really difficult for me. Now, I do not even think twice when I dial a source for an interview – or call to order pizza – which is a relief, because I think my friends were getting tired of making phone calls for me.

I also learned the power of honesty. I wrote a lot my junior year about Fake News, and how important it is to spread the truth, but that is not really what I am talking about here. By honesty, I mean opening up and clicking publish on the most personal, painful stories.

After writing three stories about mental health, I learned that the best way to make a difference for people struggling with what I struggle with was simply to tell my own story. This was incredibly hard to do, but getting my own story off of my chest was far more rewarding than writing about how people talk about mental health or the ways mental health could be treated – although those are important stories too.

The last thing I learned is that I love journalism unconditionally. There is no activity that has been as emotionally rewarding. There is no one who has made a bigger impact on my life than *The Sidekick* staff and adviser Chase Wofford. There is no place I have felt more at home than anywhere that I have a pencil and paper in my hand.

Each one of the lessons I learned in *The Sidekick* made me stronger and more certain of who I am, and personally, that is the greatest achievable success.

Though the door to D115 is quickly closing, the door to journalism is just beginning to open, and I cannot wait to see what lies on the other side.

Follow Amelia @ameliavanyo

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This is what democracy looks like

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Filed under [News](#), [Showcase](#)

From Twitter to town halls, students born post-Columbine in America rise up for their mortality

[Amelia Vanyo](#), Editor-in-Chief • April 11, 2018 •

March for Our Lives gives teens a chance to speak up

DALLAS – With a painted bullet in her head and a painted sign in her hand, Mansfield Timberview High School junior Jac Nguyen took to the streets of Dallas.

Nguyen’s statement stood out among the signs at March for Our Lives on March 24, but it was by no means alone in its intent.

“We are kids that were born in a post-Columbine era; they are the adults who didn’t have to fear what we fear today,” Nguyen said.

March for Our Lives is driven by youth in America. With many of the marches chapters and the parent march itself being organized by teens, March for Our Lives is filled with youthful energy.

“Our youth is our future, and even people as young as I am care about this and know that it’s important and want to show that it’s something that we should be focusing on,” Coppell Middle School North sixth grader Anita Goodwin said.

The youth in America have taken on this cause not just because it affects them but because it has been ever present in their lives.



[Kelly Wei](#)

Mansfield Timberview High School junior Jac Nguyen raises her poster at March for Our Lives in downtown Dallas on March 24. The march was attended by approximately 7,000 demonstrators in support of gun control and school safety.

“Everyone older than us has grown up with this, they understand this culture and the whole mass shooting thing has only happened to them for part of their lifetime,” Booker T.

Washington senior Chet Monday said. “But for us, it has been our whole lives. Most of us were born right before or right after Columbine. So our whole life has been filled with mass shootings so we understand this more than they do.”

Monday joined a student committee team a week before March for Our Lives, and is also helping plan rallies and walkouts going forward.

“We’re going to be holding rallies and protests in front of the NRA convention,” Monday said. “They have 7,000 people coming, and our goal is to match that number, because we want to show that as much as they have in numbers we do too. We want to show them that we’re not scared to stand up for something and that we’re not scared that they have a lot of money because we have a lot of people.”

Last year, Monday’s class lost a student to suicide when she took her life using her father’s gun. Monday decided to help with the March for Our Lives movement in part because he thinks suicide and gun violence need to be treated as joint issues, and has felt the emotional effect of what a bullet can do to a school.

“We know the feeling of coming to a classroom with an empty seat that’s not going to be filled,” Monday said. “I get what that feels like. I don’t think anybody else should have to feel like that.”

Despite being harassed because of their age and lack of life experience, youth activists have made it a point to prove they know what they’re talking about.

“[This movement] is important because it shows that we can form opinions and we can argue those effectively,” Monday said. “We need to show people that our arguments are solid, that we have reasoning to backup these opinions.”

The political participation exhibited by the youth in America is strengthened by adversity, as teens see laws and legislation not aligning with their values, they work to make a difference for the nation but also for themselves.

“I was not content with standing back and hoping that someone else would make the changes to gun laws that I saw fit,” Coppell Middle School East eighth grader Jillian Moore said.

“Because I cannot vote [March for Our Lives] was the best way for me to voice my opinion to ensure that gun tragedies would not continue.”

Regardless of what they are fighting for, teens are realizing that when something does not fit their standards, they have the power to make a difference. The only barrier is themselves.

“It is a really brave thing to stand up for what you believe in,” Monday said. “Not everyone can do it, we know that courage doesn’t come easily to people. If you have a feeling and you’re supported by people around you in the feeling then you can stand up for it. I definitely don’t want to push anyone who is limited by their environment.”

Moore realizes that even though she is young, she has a voice that can make a difference just as much as anyone else. And while she cannot vote yet, she can do her best to fight for what she believes in.

“This activism from students is showing that our opinions and our values and beliefs on these types of issues are valid and that we know what’s going on in our country and we want to make a change,” Moore said.



Slideshow • 4 Photos

Kelly Wei

A woman holds up a sign as people gather for March for Our Lives in Dallas. March for Our Lives was a national response to the school shooting in Parkland Fla.

A social media movement

Throughout the movement against gun violence, teens have taken to social media to spread awareness of events and information regarding the legislation being fought.

“In the age of the Internet, students are gaining so much more information that older generations could even know how to access,” Monday said.

National leaders of March for Our Lives have turned their personal social media platforms into functional parts of movement.

“Love and voting are the only two things that will solve this,” Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School senior David Hogg tweeted on March 27. “Regardless of your opinions I think we can all agree that america needs to become more politically active.”

One of the movements well known leaders, Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School senior Emma Gonzalez has not only been an active speaker since Feb. 14, but has also been extremely active on Twitter, encouraging her friends who are standing by her side and helping coax others from the sidelines.

“I think social media tends to be the avenue through which the younger generation connects with one another,” CHS AP U.S. History teacher Kevin Casey said. “ There’s a great deal of kinetic energy in young people. If you’re convinced that you’re friends are going to be more active, then you’re going to be more active, and I think that’s where social media plays a role.”

To the polls

Teens are often criticized for being ready to march or rally but not as readily eager to vote. Programs such as Moms Demand Action send volunteers to marches and rallies where they offer participants who are eligible but do not already have their voter ID the ability to register to vote.

“I have been to so many rallies since the 2016 election and I’ve never seen this many voter registration people,” volunteer Katie Barnes said at March for Our Lives in Dallas.

Even those who cannot yet register made it clear in their movements that they were not going to be bystanders in politics. Many signs at March for Our Lives read “I will vote in 2020” or “I can’t wait to vote.”

“We’re the voters of the future, so we’re going to make sure something happens,” CHS sophomore Nico Reyes said.

Teens came together to march during March for Our Lives in thousands, but it was far from the first time that the youth of this nation decided they had enough with the policies that affect their lives.

Teens have been active in attempts to change policy for decades, some of the most notable youth activist movements date back to the Civil Rights Movement and the Vietnam War protests.

“Youth activism has always been a key point,” Casey said. “In the 1960s, youth were the leading advocates in the protest against [Vietnam War] youth were the leading advocates in asking for more open form of government in the [1970s]. I think it’s one of those processes that ebbs and flows, and obviously with recent events we’re at a period of peak.”

Political participation of any kind can have an impact on policy.

But without making it to the ballot boxes, there is still only so much youth activism can do.

“A great number of young people are very passionate about [gun control] right now, Casey said. “The question really becomes how do you translate the passion of March, April and May into the passion of Nov.”

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The driving force behind campus security

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Committee ponders increasing manpower in parking lots to maximize safety



A student does a jump on his scooter in the student parking lot as students are released after fourth period for eighth period release. In the student parking lot students can be seen walking to or from their cars listening to music, talking to their friends and looking at their phones all while dodging traffic.

In 2013, a student was hit and killed by a parent turning around in the parking lot at Bryan Adams High School in Dallas where he was catching a connecting bus to Townview High School.

“He was caught between the car and the curb as kids were going into school,” said Coppel High School Marketing/Business Practicum Instructor Richard Chamberlain, who worked at Bryan Adams at the time. “They brought the jaws of life to get him out, they got him out and he was dead. And that all happened at the front of the school. It was a really sad thing, it was sad that people had to see it, it was sad for the parent where it happened.”

After having a tragedy of this sort hit so close to home, it is no surprise that Chamberlain puts a

lot of emphasis on traffic safety at Coppell High School.

“If you’re in my class, you’ll hear me say wear your seatbelt, drive safe, be careful who you get in the car with because that’s just how people die all over the place, in car wrecks,” Chamberlain said.

Chamberlain is a part of a committee focusing on school safety. In a portion of the initial meeting, members discussed traffic safety and the possibility of putting more signage around the school reminding student and parent drivers about the rules of the road.

“[The speed] of students at the end and beginning of the day was a major concern for all of us. We talked about adding more speed bumps or something that we could use as a deterrent to stop students from driving with high speeds,” associate principal Sean Bagley said.

The speed limit in the student parking lot is 15 mph but students can be seen both before and after school speeding through the lanes toward their destination.

Coppell High School security attendants Dave Trail and Kevin English have given out a total of almost 1,000 parking tickets this year.

“We have probably quadrupled the number of tickets and boots from last year,” Trail said.

While there are rules in place for students and parents alike, the difficulty is making sure drivers and pedestrians adhere to the rules.

Parents dropping off and picking up their students are required to use the parent loop behind the school. Parents can drop off students starting as they turn to the back of the school, but are asked not to let students in while alongside the school or on Town Center Drive. Parents must follow the loop counterclockwise, and can drop off and pick up students in the left or right lane; once their student has exited their vehicle, they can merge into the middle lane and continue along the loop back toward Cowboy Drive.

Campus administrators spend the first few weeks of school directing traffic in the parent loop to teach drivers the way of the road, but without their presence parents often fail to follow the plan in place to drop their children off – either by cutting through the middle lane, dropping off their student before they reach the back of the school, or driving through the loop clockwise.

In the student parking lot, drivers are expected to remain within the speed limit and follow the arrows along the road when driving to ensure they are traveling the correct direction. Students are also requested to use crosswalks when walking to or from their car, but while there are two crosswalks at the exit and entrance of the Student Parking lot, there is only one cross walk in the student parking lot – directly in front of the arena.



A student listens to music on his headphones while walking to his car after school on April 6. In the student parking lot students can be seen walking to or from their cars listening to music, talking to their friends and looking at their phones all while dodging traffic.

After school, Coppell PD School Resource Officer Chris Cobb directs traffic out of the student parking lot, but no one directs traffic after seventh period when many students are leaving for a release period. In the mornings, neither Cobb or SRO Diane Patterson are in the parking lots, as they have found that students often need to talk to them before school.

Trail and English are alone as they work together to ensure students are adhering to the rules in place for most of the day, but often teens can work around their efforts.

“I think most of the students know the rules, but I think they’re trying to test to see how much they can get away with before someone says something to them,” English said.

It is not always just students walking to or from the school that are putting themselves in danger. The cross country team is instructed by coaches not to cut through the parking lot during their morning run, but as students pull into their parking spaces before school, it is not uncommon to see a group of runners making the trek through the parking lot and not alongside it.

Athletes walking from the fieldhouse to the commons in the morning also are asked by coaches and administrators to stay on the sidewalks, but often cut through the parent loop, putting themselves in danger in the process.

“It’s on the coaches to monitor [their players],” associate principal Melissa Arnold said. “They put rules and expectations in place and they should be out there assuring that that happens.”

Trail and English both made it clear they think the problems with traffic safety at the school are not due to a lack of rules or poor design of the parking lots, but a lack of support staff.

Because there are only two of them, they cannot watch all the entrances and exits to the school.

“What happens is when we’re in the parking lot, it leaves the [back] exit wide open. So we don’t have enough help basically,” Trail said.

The committee discussed additional staffing in its meeting as well, in the form of a parking attendant that would be in charge of letting students in and out of a closed off parking lot during the school day.

“One of the things we talked about was putting up a gate, and during the time when kids are supposed to be at school only allowing one way access to the parking lot,” Bagley said.

The arena and Buddy Echols Field hide a lot of the parking lot from view, giving students the ability to use their own discretion when driving. While many students still do abide by the rules, some use the blind spot to their rebellious advantage.

“I had students tell me about ‘oh yeah after school or eighth period I’m peeling out my tires by the tennis court, and I’m going out there, doing all this,’” Chamberlain said. “Apparently there was just a whole parking lot culture over there that they could just do whatever, nobody’s out there. That’s kind of scary, too.”