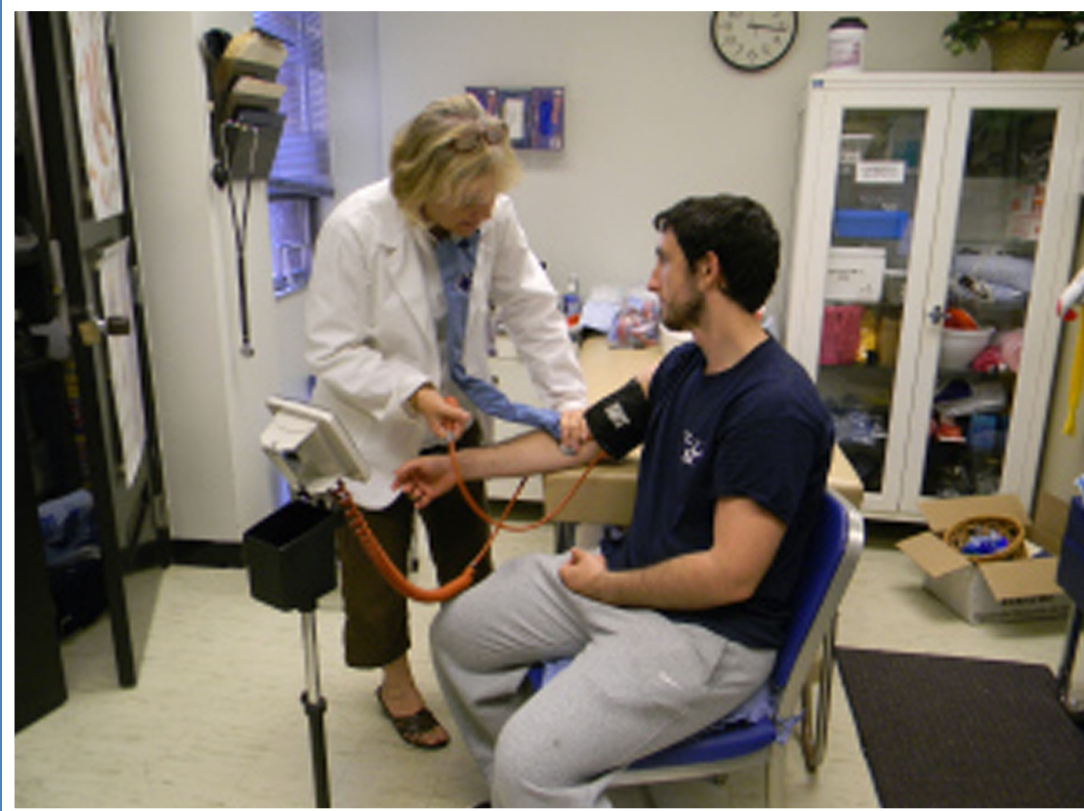


# THE NITTANY PRIDE

Vol. VIII No. 1

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## PSNK Offers Variety of Health Services



Penn State Student Government Association Welcomes New President

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The Top 10 Most Anticipated Fall and Winter Films

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Is Lowering the Drinking Age Really the Answer to College Binge Drinking?

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

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<b>Penn State Student Government Association Welcomes New President .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>PSNK Offers Variety of Health Services .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Is Lowering the Drinking Age Really the Answer to College Binge Drinking? .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>‘We Can’t Stop’ Giving Miley Cyrus Attention .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Movie Review: The Spectacular Now .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Music Review: Arctic Monkeys New Release .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>The Top 10 Most Anticipated Fall and Winter Films .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Plum Residents Still Upset Over Budget Cuts .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Prescription Drugs: Worth Awful Side Effects? .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Fido’s Back to School Blues .....</b>	<b>16</b>

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**The Nittany Pride is a Student Newspaper of the Penn State New Kensington Campus**

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# CAMPUS LIFE

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## Penn State Student Government Association Welcomes New President

*By Casey Domski*

NEW KENSINGTON, Pa. – Penn State New Kensington’s Student Government has found a new face for the 2013-2014 school year. Nineteen-year-old Chelsea Leake has begun her fall semester as the new president of SGA. Leake, a sophomore originally from the Saxonburg area, is a graduate of Knoch High School and is hoping to major in risk management, with a minor in math.

Leake will head the face of this year’s Student Government Association along with a variety of other new officers. Leake has a love of involvement on campus and is also a member of both the Student Activities Club and THON.

“I love getting involved and just helping out,” expressed Leake.

Leake first became involved with SGA when a faculty member mentioned SGA and the clubs need for new officers. Leake quickly became interested in the club and its activities, and soon after filled out an application for the president position.

“I must give Lauren Blum all of the credit for getting me involved with SGA. Lauren was talking to me one day about SGA and how they would be needing executive officers for the new year. I was surprisingly interested in what she was telling me, and soon after I filled out an application right then and there,” said Leake.

Lauren Blum, assistant director of student affairs, felt Leake would be a perfect fit for the SGA president position based on her up beat and friendly personality.

“Chelsea is friendly and approachable, which makes her a great president that students can feel comfortable talking to,” said Blum.

Blum also noted Leake’s drive and dedication to hard work.

“She is motivated to do a great job at everything she does,” expressed Blum.

Others also notice Chelsea’s work ethic, with her fellow SGA officers admiring her dedication.

“I think the fact that Chelsea doesn’t mind taking the long way to get things done right really shows her dedication to SGA and her position,” said SGA Vice President Marissa Russo.

This year Leake hopes to make students the main focus of Student Government focusing on their wants and needs in an effort to make the New Kensington campus the best it can be for students.

“I want to better the campus and listen to the student’s wants and needs to help make Penn State New Ken a campus that students wouldn’t want to leave,” said Leake.

(contd. Page 2)

# CAMPUS LIFE

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Leake encourages any student interested in SGA to join. She accredits SGA to building many valuable relationships with both staff and students around campus. She also expressed the importance of students taking an active voice and role within their campus.

“We can’t be the voice of the student body if we don’t know what the students want, or if we don’t have their opinion on certain issues. Get involved now so that possibly next year, you could be an SGA executive and make a difference,” said Leake.

Although Leake loves SGA and her other Penn State activities, she also has a variety of interests outside of Penn State. Leake expressed a love for both dance and old cars.

“One thing I loved to do and did do for a long time was dance, however my schedule now prevents me from doing it,” said Leake.

Old cars are also an interest of Leake’s.

“None the less I also love old cars, in the summer I love going to car shows and looking at the vehicles as well as learning about where they were made,” shared Leake.

Even though dance and old cars don’t have a place in Student Government, they are all part of what makes Leake a unique new president for this year’s Student Government Association.

For more information on SGA please contact or visit the SGA office located in Café 780.

***Want to Find Out More About Student  
Government?***

**Visit their Office in Café 780**

# CAMPUS LIFE

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## PSNK Offers Variety of Health Services

*By Alexandra Smith*

UPPER BURRELL, Pa.—Penn State New Kensington students may be unaware that the university offers health services to students including personal counseling, disability services, athletic physicals, health and wellness programs, and other medical treatments.

Students, faculty, and staff are eligible to receive free treatment from the campus nurse, counselors, and medical doctor.

Many students may feel overwhelmed by academic, social, family, financial, and work stresses throughout the semester. Two licensed counselors are available on campus to help students manage the demands of university life.

Heidi Shirley, campus counselor, said that the counseling services at Penn State New Kensington are free of charge, and very flexible. “Counseling is absolutely free,” she said. “You don’t have to worry about a thing. The length of a session depends on how long a student has. We’ll take as long as anybody needs.”

“You can call to schedule an appointment or just stop in. Either way is fine,” Shirley added.

Shirley, whose counseling specialty is family and marital therapy, said that everything discussed during an appointment is confidential, and that she treats a wide variety of illnesses, “We treat everything,” she said. “Primarily here it’s just stressful situations.”

Julie McCune, also a campus counselor, said that most of what she treats on campus is “school stress, family stress, and financial stress.”

“We see people who are already in treatment outside of here, but need a little support for depression or anxiety if it’s getting in the way of classes,” she added.

Shirley said that students who are feeling overwhelmed and stressed out need to practice balance in their lives. “There has to be balance in your life,” she said. “You have to pay attention to your social life, your health, your school, and your family. You have to get all of that into your week.”

“I think the most thriving person out there is the person who is well balanced and making sure they’re paying attention to every aspect of their life,” Shirley added.

McCune’s said her tip for students dealing with stress is to “just stop.”

(contd. Page 4)

# CAMPUS LIFE

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“If you feel like it’s all too much, then for a moment it probably is. Just stop and think okay, what do I need to do right now? Because you can’t do everything all at once,” she said. “The minute you start talking about that big thing to a therapist or someone else, you start to hear it outside of your head and it makes it more manageable. If you keep it all in your head, it will stay too big.”

The campus nurse and medical doctor also treat a wide variety of medical needs on campus.

Nurse Elaine Zarichnak said she performs physicals for varsity sports, treats minor injuries, illnesses, and conducts health and wellness programs for student, faculty, and staff. “On a daily basis I treat any medical needs that students have,” she said. “Or I refer them to other resources in the community that they need.”

“I have an open door policy,” Zarichnak said. “I think that students feel very comfortable coming in here. It’s all confidential.”

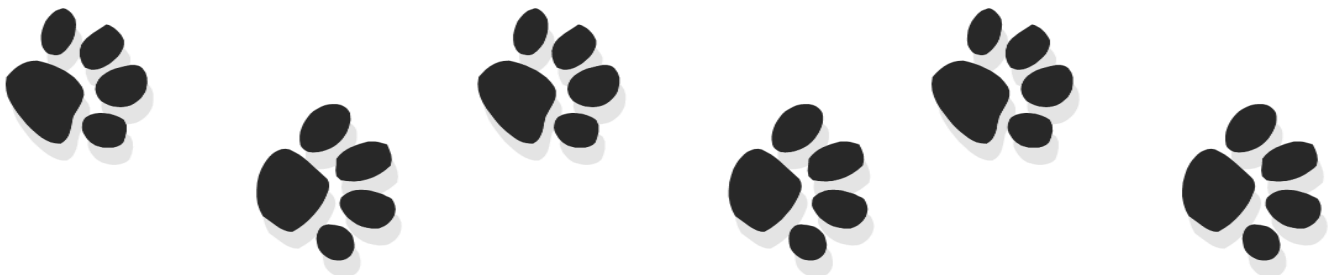
Zarichnak also noted that a medical doctor is available on campus. “He’s here the first and third Wednesday of almost every month from around 12:15 p.m. to 1:15 p.m., and he will see students for all medical reasons.”

Zarichnak said that her tips for staying healthy throughout the semester are all about healthy food, limiting alcohol consumption, and staying involved with campus activities. “Eating healthy food is important,” she said. “Minimize the intake of alcoholic beverages because it does make you sluggish and affects your judgment.”

“Joining clubs is very important. Maybe joining a team. Get involved with something happening on campus because it makes you feel like you’re a part of something,” she added.

Students can visit campus counselors on Mondays from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., Tuesdays from noon to 3:00 p.m., and Thursdays from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. from August to May. The counseling office is located within the theatre and IST building at ITC034.

The nurse is available Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. from August to June. The nurse’s office is located within the athletics center.



# CAMPUS LIFE

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## Is Lowering the Drinking Age Really the Answer to College Binge Drinking?

By Casey Domski

Every year thousands of kids head off to college, some attending Ivy League establishments, others seeking a fresh start at a local state school. One theme, however, seems to be common on every college campus across the country—drinking. At some schools, consuming alcohol is seen as more of a rite of passage rather than a Friday night extracurricular, and it is no secret that many of the kids partaking in college drinking are not 21.

According to the 2012 Monitoring the Future Study, 81% of college students have tried alcohol at least once and 70% report they have been drunk. These statistics demonstrate just how common drinking is among college students, and while there is really no true way to completely stop students from drinking on campus, there have been debates about how to eliminate the dangers of it. For many that answer is to lower the drinking age from 21 to 18. This would make it legal for all college students to consume alcohol, which many argue takes away its appeal.

How will taking away the appeal of alcohol solve the issue of college drinking, though? The issue of college drinking is not so much alcohol itself, but rather the rate and quantity in which it is consumed. Alcohol consumed in large quantities in a short amount of time is referred to by most as binge drinking. Binge drinking is not only one of the most common forms of college drinking, it is also one of the most deadly. According to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism 1,825 college students be

tween the ages of 18 and 24 die each year from alcohol-related unintentional injuries.

Why is the drinking age seen as the main cause for deadly binge drinking? According to a May 2011 article on latimes.com, “right now we basically have alcohol prohibition for adults ages 18 to 20, and we are getting some of the same results we got through national prohibition in the early 20th century.”

As with early 20<sup>th</sup> century prohibition, while we are seeing fewer young people drink regularly; when they do they drink a lot, and usually in excess. Many feel that the “risk” of underage drinking is actually fueling its appeal. The risk of getting caught or doing what you’re not allowed to makes it more exciting for kids, especially on college campuses where parties are a nightly event.

If the legal age of alcohol consumption was reduced, it would not come without caution, according to a Sept. 2009 article on CNN.com, “We should prepare young adults to make responsible decisions about alcohol in the same way we prepare them to operate a motor vehicle: by first educating and then licensing, and permitting them to exercise the full privileges of adulthood so long as they demonstrate their ability to observe the law.”

Even with these cautions and alarming statistics, not everyone shares the same views on reducing the drinking age. Many argue that the change would cause more issues than it would solve.

(contd. Page 6)

# CAMPUS LIFE

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In a recent Feb. 2013 article posted on [sciencedaily.com](http://sciencedaily.com), a study that tracked the long-term drinking behavior of more than 39,000 people who began consuming alcohol in the 1970s, when some states had legal drinking ages as low as 18, it was found that “people who lived in states with lower minimum drinking ages weren’t more likely to consume more alcohol overall or to drink more frequently than those from states where the drinking age was 21, but when they did drink, they were more likely to drink heavily.”

This study shows that lowering the drinking age would in fact not solve the issue of college binge drinking at all, but would rather escalate it. While there is no clear answer in the ongoing debate, I think it is important to note that since the age was raised to 21 in the 1980s, there have been significantly less alcohol related deaths, accidents and injuries in the United States. While lowering the age may reduce the amount of binge drinking on college campuses, it does not mean that young adults in the age range of 18 to 20 are ready to handle the other responsibilities of legal drinking, such as not driving under the influence or providing alcohol to minors.



(Photo courtesy flickr.com)



# ENTERTAINMENT

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## 'We Can't Stop' Giving Miley Cyrus Attention

By Alexandra Smith

On Aug. 25, Miley Cyrus performed at the 2013 MTV Video Music Awards in Brooklyn New York, which garnered 10.1 million viewers according to an Aug. 26 article on [variety.com](#). Cyrus generated considerable media attention and public scrutiny following her performance and duet with fellow artist Robin Thicke.

According to an Aug. 27 article on [post-gazette.com](#), Cyrus performed her hit song "We Can't Stop," and then "stripped off her outfit to reveal a nude bikini. She sang the first verse of Mr. Thicke's 'Blurred Lines,' then grinded on the R&B singer and made suggestive moves with a foam hand." An Aug. 25 article on [hollywoodreporter.com](#) noted that "MTV also bleeped the word "molly" in her song, which is believed to be a reference to ecstasy."

In the days following Cyrus' performance, it seemed as if everyone had something to say about the 20-year-old recording artist. Steve Chmelar, the inventor of the foam finger, was quoted in an Aug. 28 news report on [foxnews.com](#) saying that Cyrus "took an honorable icon that is seen in sporting venues everywhere and degraded it."

The Parents Television Council, an advocacy group that opposes explicit programming, was unimpressed by the awards show in general. Dan Isett, PTC director of public policy, was quoted in an Aug. 26 article on [usatoday.com](#) stating that MTV "once again succeeded in marketing sexually charged messages to young children using former child stars." The article also noted the irony in the fact that Cyrus' father sits on PTC's advisory board.

Actress Brooke Shields, who played Cyrus' mother in some episodes of the Disney television show

"Hannah Montana," was quoted in an Aug. 27 article on [post-gazette.com](#) saying "I was Hannah Montana's mom! Where did I go wrong?"

Not all reactions to Cyrus' performance were negative. Singer-songwriter Justin Timberlake said that everyone should "let her do her thing" in an Aug. 27 article on [hollywoodreporter.com](#). Former American Idol winner Adam Lambert had an attitude similar to Timberlake's when he Tweeted "And listen if it wasn't ur cup of tea— all good but why is everyone spazzing? Hey – she's doin something right. We all talkin."

Positive and negative reactions aside, some news outlets consider Cyrus to be the biggest winner of the VMAs even though she didn't win any awards. An Aug. 27 article on [forbes.com](#) noted that Cyrus added 100,000 Instagram followers and received 50,000 Facebook likes within hours of the program. An Aug. 26 article on [hollywoodreporter.com](#) also pointed out that the performer's "We Can't Stop" and "Blurred Lines" medley garnered 306,100 Twitter mentions per minute, only slightly less than the rate of 327,452 during the 2012 presidential election.

Love her or hate her, there's no doubt that Cyrus is being talked about in the media. If people are so upset by the attention and popularity she's receiving from her VMA performance, they should stop giving it to her. The old saying "any publicity is good publicity" seems to be true. If people want to stop giving Cyrus "good publicity," they shouldn't be giving her any at all. Perhaps we ought to be more focused on the crisis in Syria than on Cyrus' "twerking" skills.

# ENTERTAINMENT

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## Movie Review: The Spectacular Now

*By Krista Murray*



Photo courtesy of [spectacularnowmovie.com](http://spectacularnowmovie.com)

This ambitious comedy-drama immediately begins with the main character Sutter Keely, a charming high school partygoer, played by Miles Teller, coping with a recent break up from his idea of the “perfect girl.” After an entire night of partying, Sutter wakes up the next morning on an unknown lawn where he meets Aimee Fineky, an on the surface typical “nice girl,” played by the believable Shailene Woodley. Thus, setting up a relationship that is just as harmful as it is heart-warming.

The Spectacular Now, directed by Indie filmmaker James Ponsoldt and written by the duo Scott Neustadter and Michael H. Weber (500 Days of Summer), is a realistically acted drama with an incredible cast including names like Kyle Chandler (Friday Night Lights) and Brie Larson (21 Jump Street). However, the film struggles with character arches that make once relatable individuals into characters who make head scratching decisions that leave the audience more confused than touched.

In the end, The Spectacular Now is a coming of age story that tries desperately to avoid the clichés of other young adult starring films and it mostly succeeds with occasional drawbacks in the conclusion, which should have been spectacular, but was rather lack-luster.

# ENTERTAINMENT

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## Music Review: Arctic Monkeys New Release

By Sarah Steighner

September marked the release of the Arctic Monkeys new album "AM." The album includes previously released hits such as "R U Mine?" and "Do I Wanna Know?" It contains the catchiness of their past four albums, but with arguably less compelling lyrical and driven musical arrangements.

The twelve track album features "Why'd You Only Call Me When Your High", a song that embodies the flow of Alex Turner's seductive vocals, but lacks the energy that previous songs have demonstrated. The distant, muddled slow paced sound in many songs seems to match the ever-present lyrical themes of confusion and drunkenness. "Mad Sounds" is a calming orchestrated piece but lacks a certain level of spunk.

Meanwhile, "No 1 Party Anthem" is ironically one of the slowest songs on the album with such a dragging tempo and lagging vocals that it makes a mockery of its own title. Thankfully, "Arabella" seems to be a redeeming track that recovers the groove that the drumbeat seems to be longing for the whole album. It includes a guitar solo that lets loose with such a chaotic melodious sound to it that demonstrates the well-known Arctic Monkeys vibe.

The upbeat manner continues into "I Want It All." It starts out with a strong lively beat, but the surplus of repetitiveness combined with muddy sounding vocals has it taper off into the near forgettable. Thankfully, the album is snapped out of



Arctic Monkeys release new "AM" album.

(Photo courtesy of arcticmonkeys.com)

its sluggishness a bit with "Snap Out of It." The vocals give off a sound of artistic mystery while the music stirs up certain liveliness.

Of course the catchiest track of the album is without a doubt "R U Mine". The vocals are crystal clear with intent and emotion while the accelerated melody is filled with a fresh liveliness and memorable hooks.

Overall, this might not be the upbeat dance album that Arctic Monkeys fans are used to. However, the jagged guitar riffs, pulsing bass, and mellow sounding vocals have the album grow into a hypnotizing arrangement worth a listen.

# ENTERTAINMENT

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## The Top 10 Most Anticipated Fall and Winter Films

By Krista Murray



Courtesy of Paramount Pictures

1. **Anchorman 2: The Legend Continues-** (Dec. 20) Stay classy San Diego, but Ron Burgundy (Will Ferrell) is headed off to New York City along with his anchormen (played by returning actors Paul Rudd, Steve Carell, and David Koechner) to take the news world by storm. This anticipated sequel to the 2004 hit *Anchorman: The Legend of Ron Burgundy* is sure to leave fans and newcomers in a humorous glass case of emotion.
2. **The Hunger Games: Catching Fire-** (Nov. 22) After being crowned victors, Katniss and Peeta (Josh Hutcherson) return to find a rebellion forming within the 12 Districts as the 75th Annual Hunger Games approaches. Academy Award winner Jennifer Lawrence returns as Katniss Everdeen in this second film installment of the highly successful trilogy *The Hunger Games*.
3. **Gravity-** (Oct. 4) Not much is known about this thriller directed by Alfonso Cuarón, starring Sandra Bullock and George Clooney, but the theatrical trailers showing Bullock stranded in space after becoming detached from her space shuttle are enough to get the heart pounding and crowds to the movie theaters.
4. **Thor: The Dark World-** (Nov. 8) Without his fellow Avenger's, hammer wielding Thor (Chris Hemsworth) must enlist the help of his maniacal brother Loki (Tom Hiddleston) to defeat an enemy that threatens not just New York City, but the world and if action, demi-gods, and Loki's one-liners can't get you to the theatre then maybe knowing the success of *The Avengers* (2012) will.
5. **The Wolf of Wall Street-** (Nov. 15) Leonardo DiCaprio stars in this true story of Jordan Belfort, an exceedingly rich stock broker who quickly becomes enthralled with the corruption on Wall Street. The film, which is sure to get Academy attention in February, also stars Matthew McConaughey and Jonah Hill.

# ENTERTAINMENT

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6. **The Hobbit: The Desolation of Smaug**- (Dec. 13) Though The Hobbit has not garnered the success of The Lord of the Rings trilogy, it is still a movie to watch in November. With returning cast members such as Ian McKellen and Martin Freeman and newcomers like Evangeline Lily, The Desolation of Smaug picks up right where the first installment left off and submerges the audience yet again in Middle Earth.

7. **12 Years A Slave**- (Oct. 17) Starring Chiwetel Ejiofor, Michael Fassbender, and Brad Pitt to name a few, 12 Years A Slave is the true story of a free African American male named Solomon Northup, who is unknowingly forced into slavery. The film has already been given the title of Best Picture Winner by many critics and it will no doubt be a movie that everyone should see.

8. **Ender's Game**- (Nov. 1) Based on the successful Ender's Game series by Orson Scott Card the film is set seven decades after a disastrous war where gifted children are sent to a militaristic school in space to train for the next impending war. Much like The Hunger Games, this film with children as the focus will be a box office success amongst individuals of every age.

9. **Rush**- (Sep. 27) Directed by Ron Howard, Rush is based on the infamous rivalry of James Hunt (Chris Hemsworth) and Niki Lauda (Daniel Brühl) who will risk anything, including their lives, to become world champion Formula One racers.

10. **Carrie**- (Oct. 18) In this remake of the 1976 horror film, Carrie White (Chloë Grace Moretz) returns as a high school outcast with special telekinetic abilities. Based on the novel by Stephen King, Carrie is bound to inflict terror and not just at her senior prom.



Photo courtesy of [entertainment.ie.com](http://entertainment.ie.com)

# COMMUNITY

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## Plum Residents Still Upset Over Budget Cuts

*By Alexandra Smith*

PLUM, Pa.—The Plum Borough school board passed a final 2013-14 budget in June, and many community members are upset with how the budget was balanced.

The \$56.8 million spending plan eliminated the district's driver's education and family and consumer science programs. The board set the property tax at 18.75 mills, the maximum allowed under state Act 1 limit. Act 1 establishes an annual index that determines the percentage each school district in the state can raise taxes.

Three family and consumer science teachers were laid off as a result of the budget cuts, and some students and Plum residents are disappointed about which programs were chosen to be eliminated.

Tammy Tarosky, a Plum resident and mother of two students attending Plum high school, said she doesn't agree with how the Plum school board balanced the budget. "I don't understand why there is a need for budget cuts when Plum is building the second new school in two years," she said.

Tarosky said her youngest son, Jake, wanted to take classes that are no longer available. "Jake wanted to take cooking and driver's education, which were both eliminated," she said. "Now we will have to pay for Jake to take a driver's education class to decrease our insurance payments."

Lynne Braun, a former Plum high school family and consumer science teacher whose job was eliminated due to the budget cuts, said that she attended many school board meetings and people were upset by the proposed budget. "Parents spoke out about the preschool program. Students spoke at meetings if they were interested in going into child development, teaching, or child psychology," she said.

"They totally ignored a whole group of students. Students that were interested in getting into dietetics. Teenagers don't know how to handle money. There are latch key kids, and they don't know how to cook," Braun added.

Braun also said that the elimination of family and consumer science classes made an impact on students with individualized education plans. "These students may have learning disabilities of some kind, so our classes were pretty heavy with those students," she said. "What's going to happen to those kids? They're not going to know how to manage money and learn other life skills that these classes teach."

Braun said the loss of her job has affected her in many different ways. "It's affected me professionally and personally," she said. "I really loved my job. The school code clearly denotes that family and consumer sciences shall be taught in the middle level curriculum. Not maybe. But shall be taught. It's in the Pennsylvania school code."

# COMMUNITY

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Nikki Ruffner, a senior at Plum high school, said she misses a few of the classes that were eliminated due to the budget cuts. “I took a sewing class in seventh grade, a cooking class in eighth, and in tenth I took teen living. They taught me things I need for life like making meals and writing checks and handling credit cards,” she said.

Ruffner also said that she wanted to take more family and consumer sciences classes this school year.

“I wanted to take growing with children, which is a daycare class, so I could work with my mom over the summer,” Ruffner said. “I ended up taking forensics instead and the class is full, which harms the learning because there’s more disruptions and less one-on-one.”

Braun said she’s not sure if there is any chance the family and consumer science and driver’s education programs will be included in Plum’s curriculum again in the future. “Maybe in a few years,” she said. “I think a lot depends on who is on the school board. There are people up for election. There are people who are running for election on the school board that spoke on our behalf, so you never know.”



# HEALTH AND FITNESS

## Prescription Drugs: Worth Awful Side Effects?

By Alexandra Smith

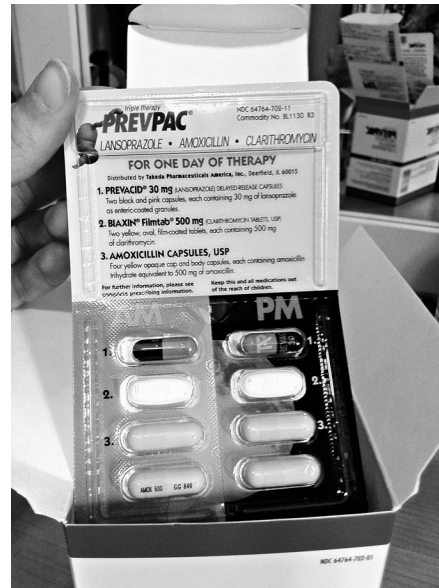
Sometimes the side effects of medicine can be worse than the condition the medicine is treating. I know this personally because in July 2012, I was diagnosed with a helicobacter pylori infection. According to webmd.com, H. pylori is a bacteria that causes abdominal pain, bloating, vomiting, and can lead to stomach ulcers. H. pylori infections are common in developing countries, and I have no idea how I contracted the infection.

My doctor prescribed some serious medicine to heal my stomach. I took 126 pills within two weeks. The medicine prescribed to me was called Prevpac, and had some unpleasant side effects including diarrhea, headache, nausea, vomiting, and abnormal taste. I can honestly say that the side effects of the medicine I took were a lot worse than the H. pylori infection itself.

Why do medical professionals prescribe medicines that make patients feel worse than the original condition for which they seek treatment?

According to a March 2011 article on nytimes.com, psychiatrist Dr. Levin no longer provides talk therapy, a form of psychiatry that dominated the profession for decades. Instead, “he prescribes medication, usually after a brief consultation with each patient.” The author of the article claims that Dr. Levin sent the man away with “a personal crisis unexplored and unresolved.” Are prescription drugs really the only answer to all medical problems?

Dr. Claire McCarthy argued in an April 2013 huffingtonpost.com article that medicine isn’t always the best answer. Dr. McCarthy mentioned



Prescription drug Prevpac, used to treat helicobacter pylori stomach infections. (Photo by Alexandra Smith)

that the number of kids ages 4 to 17 who have been diagnosed with ADHD has gone up 41 percent, and that it is “scary – especially when two-thirds of the people with this diagnosis get a medication for it.” Dr. McCarthy also mentioned that there are techniques that parents, teachers, and children can learn that would “not only be safe and effective – but would work for the rest of their lives.”

Many prescription drugs are also alarmingly expensive. According to an April 2008 article on nytimes.com, patients are no longer paying a fixed amount of money, like \$10, \$20, or \$30 for prescription drugs. Instead, insurers are “charging patients a percentage of the cost of certain high-priced drugs, usually 20 to 33 percent, which can amount to thousands of dollars a month.”



# HEALTH AND FITNESS

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A June 2013 article on [dailyfinance.com](http://dailyfinance.com) stated that “the prescription-drug market currently generates a whopping \$950 billion in annual sales, and that figure is likely to grow to \$1.2 trillion by 2016.”

Prescription drugs are also proving to be dangerous. A June 2008 article on [businessweek.com](http://businessweek.com) reported that painkillers such as Vicodin and Oxycotin “are more likely to cause a fatal overdose than heroin or cocaine.” In Feb. 2008, [nytimes.com](http://nytimes.com) reported that legal prescription drugs like oxycodone and other opioids were “responsible for 15,000 deaths in 2008, compared with 4,000 deaths in 1999.”

It’s understandable that in some cases drugs are absolutely necessary. I know that my H. pylori infection was only treatable through strong prescription drugs. An Aug. 2013 article on [bangordailynews.com](http://bangordailynews.com) reported that Meredith Diaz, a 35-year-old mother of three, suffers from lupus, an inflammatory disease that causes joint problems and bone loss. Diaz must take prescription drugs every day to stay alive.

Many people are now turning to food as their medicine. According to a Feb. 2013 article on [nytimes.com](http://nytimes.com), “about 30 percent of heart attacks, strokes and deaths from heart disease can be prevented in people at high risk if they switch to a Mediterranean diet rich in olive oil, nuts, beans, fish, fruits and vegetables.” A July 2013 article on [wcvb.com](http://wcvb.com), a Boston news website, claimed that Connie Arnold, a cancer survivor, used a macrobiotic diet to cure her cancer.

With the dangers and cost of prescription drugs skyrocketing, I believe that patients should be asking their doctor questions before blindly accepting medicine that can be very harmful to their health. I understand that some prescription drugs are necessary and even life saving, but it doesn’t hurt to ask if a safer alternative to prescription drugs exists.

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# PET CORNER

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## Fido's Back to School Blues

*By Jennifer Phillips*

It is back to school time, which means that schedules become busier and we spend less time at home. Sometimes these changes can cause us a great deal of stress. What we may not realize though is that our pets may also be affected by these changes. Sometimes they are just happy to see us when we return home. Other times, they may misbehave and wreak havoc while we are away. While this may be an issue with improper training, it is possible that your pet is dealing with separation anxiety from your absence.

Although there isn't a clear answer on why some animals develop a problem with separation anxiety, there are a number of situations that have been associated with the development of this problem. The high rate of separation anxiety that is seen in shelter dogs points to changes in the normal structure and routine of the family as a likely cause, according to WebMD. Even an animal that is used to being with their family who is then left alone for the first time, whether it is at home or at a kennel, may become traumatized over the separation.

Dogs who experience separation anxiety may exhibit a variety of behaviors due to the stress of being separated from their owners. They may begin destructive chewing and digging, pacing, whining, barking, and howling, urination and defecation. It is also possible that the dog may try to escape from a confined area. These behaviors are not only frustrating to owners, but may also result in injury to the scared animal.

If your dog is acting out in these ways only when you are not present, then it is likely that separation

anxiety is the root of the problem. You may also notice a few other signs that could indicate that your dog is experiencing separation anxiety. He might constantly follow you around you're at home and may exhibit overly enthusiastic greeting behaviors. You might also notice that he becomes anxious or excited when you begin to prepare to leave the house. The first thing that you should do is determine whether you are actually dealing with separation anxiety, rather than some underlying medical condition that produces the same behaviors. Once you have ruled this out, you can begin working with your pet to help him to overcome his fears.

For mild cases of separation anxiety, simple actions such as offering a treat or a food dispensing toy each time you leave home, and providing adequate physical and mental stimulation when you are home can help alleviate the problem. It is also important to keep greetings and departures as calm and stress free as possible.

Since dogs often learn cues that you are about to leave, you can change his expectations by sometimes preparing to leave and then sticking around instead. If your pet has a more serious problem with separation anxiety, you will need to take things slowly when trying to accustom him to increasing lengths of time away from you. If at all possible, try to avoid leaving your pet alone unless it is part of the retraining process. This can help prevent any additional and unnecessary stress.

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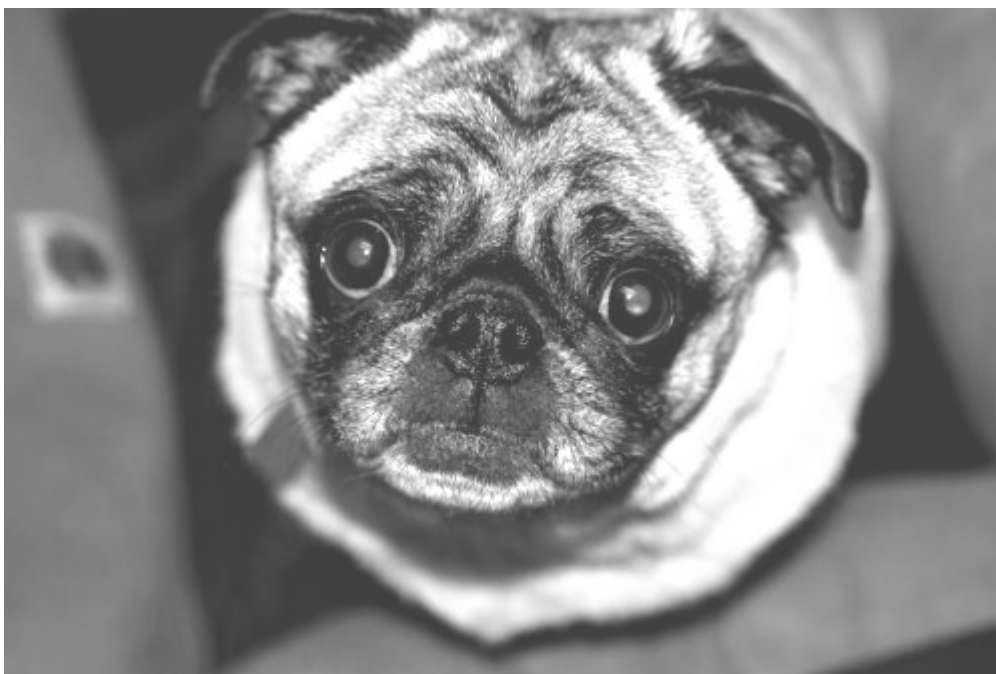
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When dealing with separation anxiety, there are also some actions that some owners may be tempted to take that will not help, and may even make the situation worse. Probably the most important thing for you to keep in mind is that your dog isn't trying to get back at you for going away. He is simply responding to the highly stressful situation of being away from you.

Punishing a dog that is experiencing separation anxiety is not going to improve the situation, and may even make things worse. Likewise, obedience training, while helpful for general behavior training, is not the answer because it is not an issue of misbehaving; it is a panic response. Crating the animal may protect your home from damage, but will do nothing for correcting the problem, and could make things worse if they injure themselves trying to escape.

Some owners may also be tempted to get another dog as a companion, but even this doesn't typically improve the situation because he is responding to being away from you, not to being alone. Trying to understand and be aware of the reasons for any pets' behaviors can often help owners overcome many challenges.

Separation anxiety can be a challenging and sometimes frustrating problem for dogs and their owners. Dogs are not the only animal to suffer from separation anxiety, as it can affect other pets as well. In any case, the most important things to remember are to be patient and understanding when dealing any pet related hurdle. Their unconditional acceptance and companionship continue to make it worthwhile.



All he really wants is for you to stay home. (Photo courtesy flickr.com)

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