

the POLLS

On Nov. 6, President Barack Obama defeated Republican candidate Mitt Romney to win re-election

"I like the good things about Obama, like the Dream Act, which affect me and my friends."



mitzi ramos, 12

"I was disappointed with the results, but hey, America has spoken!"



aparna chandrashekar, 11

"I don't get how four more years with the same guy will help. Romney should have won."



molly stotts, 9

"I was disappointed when Romney lost, but I think we need to embrace every challenge."



nat franke, 12

"I think Obama will have a lot of work to do to repair this country, but as Americans, it is our job to support his decisions."



allyson smith, 12

"I'm upset because I think Romney has a better view plan. It's going to affect me getting a job."



abbey hamilton, 11

My Sandy Hook

Junior remembers experience at elementary school

by Vanessa Feldman

Newtown, Connecticut.

That's all I needed to say, right? It's the small town that the entire world knows, and it's the place that faced an unspeakable tragedy. On a morning in December, 28 people died — 20 first graders and six faculty members were among them.

Sandy Hook Elementary School.

This is the place where I learned how to read and write. It's where my friends and I would run around on the blacktop at recess. It's when bus rides became a favorite part of my day, and we would hope that our bus driver wouldn't catch us stealthily hopping seats while the bus was moving. Sandy Hook is where I met some of the most inspiring and caring teachers I have ever had in my 11 years of schooling. This is where I made great friends, some of whom still remain my friends today.

This is where I grew up, and it's where I attended school for five

years. How could such a horrific occurrence ever happen in a place that evokes pure innocence? Elementary schools should be safe havens, so how could something like this possibly happen? How could someone so violently have destroyed my entire image of childhood?

The catastrophe that occurred at Sandy Hook is personal. I associate purity and kindness and innocence with this school. This is why I couldn't hold in my tears and why I couldn't fight back my urge to run when I found out. When my classmate told me there was a shooting in my hometown, my thoughts started to run circles in my head, jumbling and mixing together into one huge ball of shock and confusion. My heart is broken. It's broken for the victims and their families and the town and everyone who was affected by the shooting in Newtown.

Everything has changed. Usually when people ask me where I'm from, I reply with, "You've probably never heard of it ... just a small town in Connecticut." On Dec. 14 that all changed. Things will be different now when people ask me where I'm from. Newtown is no longer the town that nobody's heard of. Honestly, I don't know how I will respond to the question. But I know I'll be thinking about the victims and their stories, the beautiful and courageous people of Newtown and the hope that this will never happen again.



stars and stripes

Just days before the presidential election, senior Rusty Hutson portrays Barack Obama in a skit at the Nov. 2 pep rally. "The pep rally was very creative," sophomore Daniel Kern said, "and I enjoyed the patriotic skits."



casey simmons

make history

1 During an after-school meeting of the Westlake Democrats Club on Jan. 17, senior Eric Robinson leads a discussion with sophomore Quiana Jeffs and other members. "The conversations can lead to heated arguments," Robinson said, "yet we are passionate in what we believe."

2 In Washington, D.C., on Jan. 21, senior Stephanie Hoyer witnesses the 57th inauguration of President Barack Obama. "The best part of the inauguration was getting to share a historic moment with thousands of people who take pride in their country," Hoyer said.

3 On Sept. 18 in the Commons, senior Derek Cohen registers to vote. Government classes sponsored voter registration as well as a presidential mock election open to all students.



1. chloe mills 2. stephanie hoyer 3. david oliver



1. courtesy of anna-christine parrish 2. cindy todd 3. maggie werkenthin

newsmakers

1 On Jan. 26, seniors Anna-Christine Parrish and Sarah Wampler attend a rally with the Culture of Life Club. "Seeing so many people of all different ages and races coming together in support of the same cause was inspiring," Parrish said. 2 On the morning of Sept. 20, the Endeavor Space Shuttle flies toward the stadium on its way to Los Angeles. "Mr. Taylor yelled for us to stop rehearsing and look up," freshman band member Megan McKenzie said. "It was really loud, and some people started clapping." The cross-country team was on the track at the time. "It was flying really low with the sun right behind it," junior Rebecca Little said. 3 At Bastrop State Park on Jan. 15, seniors Hayden Yancer and Mack Murray plant loblolly pines to replace trees that were lost in the September 2011 fires that burned 96 percent of the park's Lost Pines ecosystem. "I was proud to be a part of planting 1,400 trees for the park," Yancer said.



sarah guthrie



casey simmons

mock the vote

Senior Duncan Brown casts his vote in the mock election on Nov. 1. "I turned 18 the day after the election," Brown said, "so it was great to feel like I was part of the democratic process."

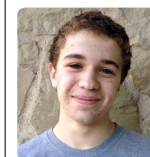
double check

The morning of the mock election, seniors Annie Ortman and Ashlyn Henry check off the student list. "It is a good experience for people to be involved in the political system," Ortman said.

"Guns are an integral part of society, but we need tougher and more thorough background checks." michael shumaker, 12



"I don't think the rights of our citizens should be infringed, but guns should be regulated more efficiently." gillian wright, 12



"Gun control is a safety measure, — assault weapons are not needed in everyday life." ben tuck, 11



"There needs to be a balance between both parties on gun control. For that to happen, both sides need to come to a compromise." emily fisher, 12