



# The High School View

The High School View is staffed and prepared entirely by students from the Martha's Vineyard Regional High School, and published on their behalf by The Martha's Vineyard Times, with the generous assistance of the sponsors whose names appear below.

## Sadness and schtick spark standing ovation



PHOTOS BY MADDIE SCOTT

At a recent assembly, motivational speaker Jeff Yalden enthralled regional high school students, staff, and faculty with his poignancy and humor.

BY OLIVIA JACOBS

The students of the regional high school got a taste of inspiration last Friday when Jeff Yalden, a motivational speaker for teens, awed students at a school-wide assembly with his storytelling and words of wisdom. Mr. Yalden told his personal story of hardships, victories, and family, all while engaging the audience of 800 students, teachers, and staff. He has spoken at schools in 48 different countries around the world, all 50 states, and every province in Canada. As well as visiting

schools, Mr. Yalden has his own radio show and is the author of *Your Life Matters*. Mr. Yalden kicked off his speech with an attention-grabbing line. "High school students think I'm here to tell you what to do or what not to do, but that is not the message at all. I don't come here to speak at you. I come here to speak with you," he said. He said, "Lose your ego and open your heart." Sophomore Kyra Whalen was particularly inspired by this quote. She said, "If I see someone sitting alone at a table, I'm going to go sit with them because of what Mr.

Yalden said today." Sophomore Courtney Howell said, "Now I realize that everyone has a story, and I shouldn't judge people because I don't know what's going on in their lives," she said. "[Jeff has] made me wonder how I can help someone feel better or how I can help improve their day just by a simple action." At one point during his speech, Yalden jumped off the stage and asked people in the audience about inner beauty and love. He even ran through a row of seats to talk to junior Mac Sashin. The Youth Task Force of

Martha's Vineyard helped to bring Mr. Yalden to the regional high school. Theresa Manning, program coordinator of the Youth Task Force, said, "I met with Mr. Malowski [MVRHS assistant principal] over the summer to talk about possible speakers for the high school. Mr. Malowski thought it would be great to have a speaker who did not have a heavy message about a specific topic, but rather a motivational speaker to help kids feel inspired and respect one another." After contacting Mr. Yalden about coming to Martha's Vineyard, Ms.

Manning said, "Jeff was excited right away about coming here. Jeff took the time to reach out to us and the school to discuss strengths and challenges at [MVRHS] far before the assembly." "There is no canned message—it's about life and choices that change how we think about life. Some kids find that I changed their outlook on life and made four years of high school seem small compared to the one hour I speak," Mr. Yalden said. "There is prestige with being on Martha's Vineyard, and coming here is different, but the kids and speaking here

are the same." Mr. Yalden said of his speech, "There will be lots of laughing—but I don't think I'm very funny." Students of all grades attended the assembly and seemed to enjoy it. Freshman Monica Carroll said, "I learned a lot from the speech and found it inspirational. I liked when [Jeff] asked, 'If you had one month to live, what would you say to a person, and why?'" Junior Kelsey Moreis said, "I liked his point of view, and it changed my way of thinking about some things. He made me laugh a lot." Many students went back to their homerooms after the assembly and talked about Mr. Yalden's speech. Kelsey said, "We talked about him after and no one wanted him to stop talking." As the students filed out of the PAC, free purple t-shirts awaited them. On the front, Mr. Yalden's message was boldly printed: "Take time to think." On the back was the Youth Task Force of Martha's Vineyard's logo. Throughout the rest of the day, many students replaced their shirts with these inspirational ones, showing the support for motivation and inspiration in students of all ages. **MSV**

## Drug endangers students

BY SARAH ORTLIP-SOMMERS

[Several students agreed to speak only on condition of anonymity. All such persons are identified with pseudonyms that include just a letter for a last name.]

A dangerous drug may be threatening Island teens. Molly, short for molecule, is the street name for MDMA, the chemical used in the popular drug Ecstasy. While Ecstasy is laced with other ingredients, such as methamphetamine, molly is considered to be pure MDMA. The drug is newly popular among local students.

Recently, MDMA use has been glamorized in popular culture by musical artists

such as Trinidad James and Miley Cyrus. Lyrics such as Cyrus', "We like to party / Dancing with molly / Doing whatever we want," make MDMA appealing to teenagers looking for a high. According to one regional high school senior, the high from MDMA is truly euphoric. "It's amazing," Freddie M said, "[Other drugs] pale in comparison, sensory-wise." Others disagree. Senior Elenor X said, "I decided to try it because a lot of my friends had. I felt left out. It was honestly stupid, and I expected it to be crazy-fun but it really wasn't." Elenor X said that although she felt good initially while on the drug, she soon felt what

she called a "mega-low." Freddie M agreed. "After the effects wear off, the world is gray and drab. Everything is a lot less exciting," he said. "I definitely won't do it again because it just wasn't worth it to me," Elenor X said. The public's attention is beginning to focus more intensely on the use of Molly this year due to the multiple deaths caused by MDMA overdose in New England. Island parents are growing more and more worried for their children after reading reports online and seeing them on television. One mother, the parent of a regional high school senior, said, "Of course, there is a concern that kids will indulge in something they don't fully understand. Many people

in my generation, growing up in the 1960s and 1970s, have had experiences either experimenting with drugs or knowing a lot of people who did. Back then, drugs were less socially divisive and more easily accessible. They also usually weren't as potentially lethal as they are today." "I don't hear much about Molly," said Freddie M. "If I wanted some there are a couple people I would know to ask, but barely anyone does it and certainly not unless it's a special occasion." On the other hand, senior Edy R is concerned that MDMA use may be a serious problem among Island youth. "[Molly is] really dangerous and really underestimated," he said. According to medical

health specialist Amy Li-lavois, Molly can be devastating to the body. Long-term effects of MDMA include anxiety, depression, paranoia, insomnia, brain damage, and addiction. Short-term effects include muscle tension, tremors, involuntary teeth clenching, muscle cramps, nausea, faintness, chills, sweating, and blurred vision. High doses of the drug can affect ability to regulate body temperature, which can cause kidney, liver, or cardiovascular failure as well as severe dehydration. "Molly can also result in heightened risks of psychosis and schizophrenia," said nurse Linda Leonard. According to Edy R, young people on the Island aren't getting real Molly, but

they think they are. He said that instead of MDMA, they are taking paracetamol, or acetaminophen, an over-the-counter drug commonly used to treat minor aches and pains. "Kids have no idea what they're doing." Senior Karry B recognizes how harmful drug abuse can be. "I've witnessed how negatively drugs can affect people's lives," she said. "Risking my future and/or my life for a short high just isn't worth it." While many Island teens would agree with Karry B, there are still many making potentially life-threatening decisions. The scope of MDMA use by local teens is still unclear, but students and parents need to be aware of its dangers. **MSV**

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