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CAMPUS

Career Center sees rise in job options for students

By Rochelle Beckel
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The rates of student employment through SJSU's Career Center and SpartaJobs have been consistently on the rise for the past 18 months, according to Daniel Newell, the Career Center's job developer and marketing specialist.

"When the recession hit, it hit students very hard," Newell said. "What we've been seeing over the past three years is that it's starting to get better, but over the past 18 months it started to get significantly better for college students."

Caitlin Stueve, a junior communicative disorders and science major and employee of the University Housing Services mailroom since her sophomore year, said she had used the SpartaJobs website

before, but that when she suggested it to other people, most of them had never heard of it.

"I love working for SJSU," Stueve said. "It makes my life easy because I don't have to drive anywhere after class to get to school. Best of all, since I'm employed by the school I'm attending, they know exactly when my classes and finals are, and are able to schedule me accordingly."

Newell said Quarter One (July, August and September) of the 2012-13 fiscal year experienced a 19 percent increase in job openings over the previous quarter, and Quarter Two (October, November and December) experienced a 105 percent increase.

According to Newell, SpartaJobs offered a combined total of 8,108 more job openings during the first six months of this fiscal year than the first six months of the last fiscal year.

"Over the past three semesters, our job fairs have completely sold out," Newell said. "We've actually had no more physical space to host employers on campus."

There were more than 600 recruiters at the Career Center's last job fair on Sept. 27, 2012, which was the largest amount of recruiters it had hosted at one time since the dot-com boom, according to Newell.

Newell said this year the Career Center is still seeing employers register for its job fairs at record numbers and 1,089 new employers registered with the center on top of the 14,000 that are already signed on with Sparta Jobs.

"We're getting up there, and businesses are com-

SEE **WORK** ON PAGE 3

TRANSPORTATION

Eco Pass may drive student fees higher in future

By Bryan Delohery
@Bdelohery

The Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority plans to increase the price of the SJSU student Eco Pass by 7 percent in 2014, bringing the cost to \$38.52 per student each year.

That is a \$20.52 increase from the original 1994 price of \$18.

Transportation Solutions Manager Eyedin Zonobi said the Eco Pass price structure is based on frequency of service and population of people within a certain area.

"Every few years VTA increases the fee for Eco Pass," Zonobi said. "We started with \$18 per student per year, now we are at \$36."

According to the Associated Students Transportation Solutions Fall 2012 "Student Commute Survey Report," 50 percent of the student population uses alternative modes of transportation including VTA, while 34 percent rely solely on bus and light rail.

That leaves the other 50 percent, or 16,953 students paying for an Eco Pass which adds up to \$610,308 that VTA collects on unused passes.

The Eco Pass is subsidized by ASTS and the price is included in student fees.

Senior kinesiology major Nick Martinez said that because he does not use the Eco Pass, paying for it should be something optional for someone who wants to use it.



A VTA light rail takes off toward Alum Rock as a couple walks beside it in Downtown San Jose near Paseo de San Antonio Friday. Photo Illustration by Codi Mills / Spartan Daily

"I think that those who really need it should probably be paying for it and those who aren't using it probably shouldn't have to," Martinez said. "That's a lot of money that's being taken from the students."

According to Zonobi, every time there is an Eco Pass price increase, neither Transportation Solutions or students enjoy it.

"We have to make sure VTA doesn't look at us as some source of cash because these are students and students don't have money," Zonobi said.

Senior business major Shiho Ito said she uses her Eco Pass twice a week but if it was not offered she would just walk to school.

"The \$2.52 price increase is a really small amount so I am OK with this," Ito said. "But if

the price is going to go up more to like \$50 or \$60 I would not be OK with that because I am an international student, and I already pay a lot for school."

Ito said that in her experience, many international students do not have a car for their first or second year so the Eco Pass is good for them, but wishes she had the choice to opt out of paying for it if she does not need it.

According to Zonobi, Parking Services subsidizes the employee Eco Pass with revenue generated from parking tickets, meaning students do not pay for the employee pass.

"They (faculty) are piggybacking on our contract with VTA," Zonobi said. "If they went in to contract with VTA on their own, they would be paying at least twice as much, maybe even three times as

much as what they are paying now."

Ito said she does not like the fact that everyone has to pay for a pass even if they are not using it.

"I think it's unfair for students that don't use (the) Eco Pass because they are already paying a lot for tuition and parking permits," she said.

Bryan Delohery is a Spartan Daily staff writer.

MOSS LANDING

Graduate program research vessel points to Antarctic

By Bryan Delohery
@Bdelohery

The oceanic research vessel Point Sur, which is part of the SJSU marine science graduate program, set sail from its base at Moss Landing Marine Laboratories Nov. 29 for a voyage to the Antarctic.

Brynn Hooton-Kaufman, an alumna of the program and communications associate for Moss Landing said that although there are no SJSU faculty or students on this expedition, the Sur is a crucial part of the graduate program.

"The boat, when it's here, is used in support of San Jose State faculty and student research," Hooton-Kaufman said. "One week during the semester the boat is set aside for student research and class projects."

The ship is owned by the National Science Foundation according to Stewart Lamerdin, Moss Landing Marine Laboratories Superintendent.

"The Point Sur is on a Charter Party Agreement with San Jose State University Research Foundation" Lamerdin said.

According to Dr. Kenneth Coale, Director of Moss Landing Marine Laboratories, the ship, crew and a team of scientists will be embarking on an 8,200 mile journey to Palmer Station, a small research station in the Antarctic.

"Moss Landing is the entire graduate program which serves seven California State University campuses includ-

ing San Jose State, San Francisco State and Fresno State" Coale said.

... Everyone here is like-minded and we have a great sense of community

...

Kristin Walovich
SJSU marine science graduate

have access to," Lamerdin said.

Kristin Walovich, an SJSU marine science graduate student and member of the Pacific Shark Research Center, said Moss Landing is home to about 60 graduate students.

Coale noted that because the entire graduate program is housed at Moss Landing, many of the graduate students never have to set foot on their home campuses.

During the five month trip, scientists will be studying the geology and ecology of the Antarctic around Palmer Station and tagging local wildlife, according to Lamerdin.

Lamerdin said the scientists are currently tagging whales to study depth and feeding behaviors as well as collecting blubber samples.

"The ship is able to take divers out to various locations that they otherwise would not

"Forty percent of the students here are enrolled at San Jose State," Walovich said. "Everyone here is like-minded and we have a great sense of community."

Walovich said she wants to stay within the research field and hopes to obtain a Ph.D. or work for a government agency like the California Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Although, the program currently supports a number of students from different universities, Coale said the budget cuts have affected them on both the state and foundation side.

"There are fewer resources available for supporting class activities," Coale said. "The ability to hire support personnel is limited and the ability to maintain our seawater system is at risk right now."

Walovich said the budget cuts have made it harder for her to track down funding for a graduate degree.

"It used to be that you could go and get a master's or a Ph.D. and it was paid for," Walovich said. "Now I have to find the funding all by myself, it does limit your research sometimes but you just have to work a little harder."

Despite budget cuts, Lamerdin said he thinks the advantage to the program is the access students have to the ocean and almost every type of marine environment at their fingertips.

"Having a ship that has the size and capability of the Point Sur and the tangible access it can give to students without cost to them is invaluable."

Bryan Delohery is a Spartan Daily staff writer.

MOVIE REVIEW

'Identity Thief' robs audiences of original comedy

★☆☆☆☆

By Dennis Biles
@Denny149

Let me start off this review by saying this: I really wanted to like this movie. I really, really wanted to like it.

I've been eagerly awaiting the next works of Melissa McCarthy ever since her hilarious breakout performance in "Bridesmaids."

With that being said, this movie does have its entertaining moments but falls short of its potential and squanders the performances of McCarthy and co-star Jason Bateman.

Perhaps I was expecting too much because McCarthy has me dying with laughter every time I watch her, but the problem isn't with her or with Bateman, who does a reliable job of playing the jilted straight-man seeking justice.

The problem is that this film attempts to make a comedy out of a subject that is decidedly unfunny with a plot that becomes more ridiculous with each passing minute.

Still, it could work if the script weren't so uneven and unbelievable, but in this case it just doesn't.

McCarthy plays Diana, a con artist who employs a variety of scams, most notably identity theft, to finance a lavish lifestyle of excess.

She targets Bateman because his character's name, Sandy Bigelow Patterson, could be taken to be either male or female.

After Diana gets his information and runs up an enormous bill, Sandy, a hard working father of two with another on the way, is accused of credit card fraud and is informed by the police he missed a court date in Orlando, thousands of miles away from his home in Denver.

In order to clear his name and save his job at a financial firm, Sandy decides to travel to Florida to find Diana and bring her back to Denver.

Besides being a completely outrageous idea that no reasonably logical person would ever conceive, the movie instantly loses credibility with me when he actually gets the endorsement from police to go ahead with the plan.

Yes, I know it's a movie, so we need to stretch the imagination a bit.

... this film attempts to make a comedy out of a subject that is decidedly unfunny...

But there is nothing about Bateman's character that would suggest he would be pushed to travel thousands



The comedy movie "Identity Thief," starring Jason Bateman as Sandy Patterson and Melissa McCarthy as Diana, was released in theaters nationwide on Feb. 8. Photo courtesy of pastemagazine.com.

of miles to catch a dangerous criminal while leaving his pregnant wife at home.

Furthermore, the police would never sign off on such a reckless, slapdash scheme.

Nevertheless, Sandy flies to Florida to track Diana down, but it's an obvious understatement to say that she won't go quietly.

Things get even more absurd when complications arise that force the duo to drive back to Denver, turning the film into a road comedy.

Along the way, they are pursued by hit men who are looking to even the score for some kingpin criminals

Diana once scammed, because the two characters need some kind of contrived reason to become friends and work together.

By this point, the film has long since veered off into the realm of extreme ridiculousness and the few comedic moments that were present in the beginning start to dry up considerably.

McCarthy and Bateman actually possess a fair amount of chemistry and do a fine job of playing off each other, but the script only allows them so few opportunities to really let their abilities shine.

McCarthy is a master

of physical comedy, and Bateman has the role of the straight-man down cold, but neither of them are allowed to explore their characters much beyond those basic attributes.

The only real deviation we see from either is at the end of the movie, when Diana opens up and talks about why she was driven to a life of crime.

It's pointless drivel that attempts to cultivate a sense of remorse for her character, but it seems labored and only undermines the fact that this was supposed to be a comedy.

Not that a comedy can't have its moments of senti-

mentality, but it feels out of place, almost like it was tacked on because the audience needs a reason to have sympathy for Diana even when we weren't really looking for it in the first place.

"Identity Thief" has some big stretches of logic and reason.

That is to be expected from comedies of this type and is not the single biggest downfall of this movie.

This movie is doomed because it simply doesn't know what to do with two proven comedic actors who actually work well together.

Dennis Biles is the Spartan Daily Sports Editor.

MUSIC

SJSU student group rocks launch party performance



Soulful Obsession performed at the Milano nightclub in San Jose Feb. 9. Photo by Lauren Hailey / Spartan Daily

By Lauren Hailey
@LaurenOLovely

SJSU student music group Soulful Obsession performed at the "Open Invitation" release party for its EP Saturday night.

Group members Lily Tran, Bennett Roth-Newell, Veno Bender, and Kosuke Okamura, are all former or current students in the music department.

The performance was at Milano nightclub in San Jose, and featured performances from other notable acts including WISHONE, original founding member of the Jabawockeez — winners of the first season of MTV's America's Best Dance Crew.

Also performing that night was a member of The Bangerz, DJ Goldenchylid and Kero One, who has toured with artists such as Bruno Mars and Stevie Wonder.

"It was a really great show," said Christina Davis, an audience member at the show. "That band is awesome."

Other members of the audience said they liked the live band that performed with them, which consisted

of trombones, trumpets, conga drums, and background singers.

Soulful Obsession's sound is a funky Hip hop, blues, and R&B genre. "It's a very eclectic mix," said lead singer Lily Tran. "(We sound) like Adele, John Legend, The Roots, artists like that."

The group first met each other in the music department, and after a trip to the karaoke bar, they decided to put a band together, said Roth-Newell, the band's keyboardist.

Kosuke Okamura, the band's drummer and a classically-trained percussionist, was the member who actually put the group together.

Soulful Obsession's group members all come from different nationalities and backgrounds, but were able to find common ground while studying in the music department, said Bender, the band's bassist.

The band has received a lot of recognition for its music in the Bay Area, which has given it the opportunity to perform many other live shows.

Soulful Obsession has performed at many events in the Bay Area, including South Bay

First Thursdays and the Bring Back the Arts Festival.

"We've been doing music for a year and a half now," said Tran.

The group is celebrating the release of its new self-titled, five-song EP, which debuted Feb. 9 on iTunes.

They also gave out copies of the EP at the show, and many of them went quickly.

"I was so excited to get a copy of this," said Jonathan Winger, an audience member. "They were really awesome."

All of the songs on the new EP are written and produced by the band members, and carry themes that many young adults can relate to, according to Tran.

Their songs often use many instruments to mix in with their own.

"I was dancing and grooving all night, and I really loved it when they started throwing their clothes," said audience member Virginia Powell.

The band was wearing items from its local sponsors, The Usuals clothing brand, and gave them away for free during the performance.

Two of the songs played at the show were the singles "Open Invitation" and "Sexual Crescendo", both available on the EP.

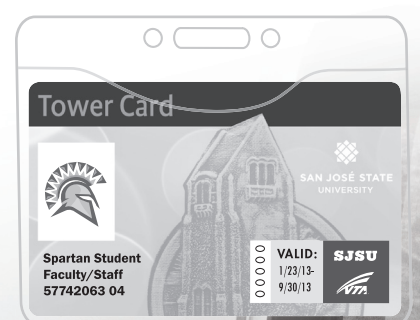
"Shout out to the fans for supporting us so far," Roth-Newell said. "Hopefully we can do more for you in the future."

People who want to pick up the EP "Soulful Obsession" can go to iTunes, Bandcamp.com, Cdbaby.com, and SoulfulObsession.com.

Lauren Hailey is a Spartan Daily staff writer.

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Seismic readings point to new North Korean nuclear test

By Tom Lasseter
McClatchy Tribune

BEIJING — The South Korean Yonhap News agency reported on Tuesday that North Korea is believed to have conducted its third nuclear test after an artificial earthquake was detected across the heavily armed border.

Yonhap said that South Korea had called for an emergency meeting of the U.N. Security Council, reportedly scheduled for Tuesday morning, New York time.

The test would be North Korea's third since 2006 and would be a sharp challenge to the Security Council, which warned last month of "significant action" should the rogue nation carry out further provocations.

The U.S. Geological Survey said that it had detected a 4.9-magnitude earthquake in a region where North Korea maintains a nuclear test site. By 1:30 p.m. local time, though, there had been no confirmation from the North Korean government.

Pyongyang in December defied United Nations' sanctions by launching a satellite that was seen as a thinly disguised test of ballistic missile technology. A nuclear test on Tuesday would fall in line with threats made last month by North Korea's National Defense Commis-

sion to do just that. The commission is headed by the nation's young leader, Kim Jong Un, who's thought to be about 30 years old.

A test would almost certainly strain relations with North Korea's largest backer, China, which has signaled repeatedly that it has tired of diplomatic headaches brought on by the secretive nation. The Global Times newspaper in Beijing, which while not an official mouthpiece of the Chinese Communist Party is state-controlled, ran a strongly worded editorial earlier this month saying that, "if North Korea insists on a third nuclear test despite attempts to dissuade it, it must pay a heavy price. The assistance it will be able to receive from China should be reduced."

Because of the strategic importance Chinese officials see in maintaining relations with North Korea — maintaining a buffer between China and U.S. troops stationed in South Korea, and avoiding the chaos of a fallen North Korea spilling over its borders — Beijing is not likely to be anywhere close to pulling the plug on aid and support.

But frustrations with Pyongyang in China, which is currently in the middle of Chinese New Year celebrations, might well lend support to stronger sanctions by the U.N. Security Council.

Work: Bay Area offers career variety through SpartaJobs



SJSU Students take advantage of the Career Center resources with center employees on Monday. Photo by Kevin Johnson / Spartan Daily

FROM PAGE 1

ing to Silicon Valley to hire our talent because Silicon Valley is one of the No. 1 job creators," Newell said. "We are a hub of innovation for the entire world and so a lot of jobs in the tech industry come here first to hire all this entry level talent and then they funnel them out elsewhere."

Newell said because of the technology boom occurring throughout the Bay Area, employers of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics companies often seek out qualified workers who can fill the demand.

"Those are the four fields that there are often shortages in," he said. "So because all these new technologies are coming out, and social media usage is trending, all those companies tend to start here in Silicon Valley, because that's where all the connections are, where the talent is."

Newell said as industries begin to expand, a larger variety of jobs are created as supportive roles, allowing professionals from fields unrelated to science and technology to pursue jobs in those industries.

"Eventually, all these other jobs are created," he said. "You see marketing, then we need sales, then we need a PR person, then there's going to be paper work so we need admin people. I want to say it's the trickle across effect, you have one job but then you need all these supportive roles for it."

Newell said in order for students to apply for any of these thousands of jobs accessible through the Career Center, they need to register for SpartaJobs.

"There are still about 14,000 students who are not receiving any services, and it's simply because they may not know about us," he said.

Lucki Qin, a junior mechanical engineering major, said she was unsure of what SpartaJobs had to offer and she had never been to the Career Center before.

"I think SpartaJobs is for people who need jobs, like in the dining commons or the bookstore," Qin said. "I'm not too sure what it is exactly, (but) I know my roommate used it to look for a job on campus recently."

Jephrey Rodriguez, a graduate student majoring in biomedical engineering, said although he hadn't visited the Career Center before, one of his colleagues had told him that it was a great place to get resumes edited and interview questions answered.

"I have used SpartaJobs before," Rodriguez stated. "In my opinion, it's limited in the diversity of career and internship availabilities but a great start for graduating students transitioning into the work force."

Rochelle Beckel is a Spartan Daily staff writer.

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CHURCH

Pope Benedict XVI resigns

By Frank Kummer and Emily Babay
McClatchy Tribune

PHILADELPHIA — Pope Benedict XVI, 85, said that he will resign on Feb. 28, and would become the first pontiff of the Roman Catholic Church to do so in nearly 600 years.

Benedict announced his decision in Latin during a meeting of Vatican cardinals Monday morning and said it was because of his age.

A conclave to elect a new pope will form before the end of March.

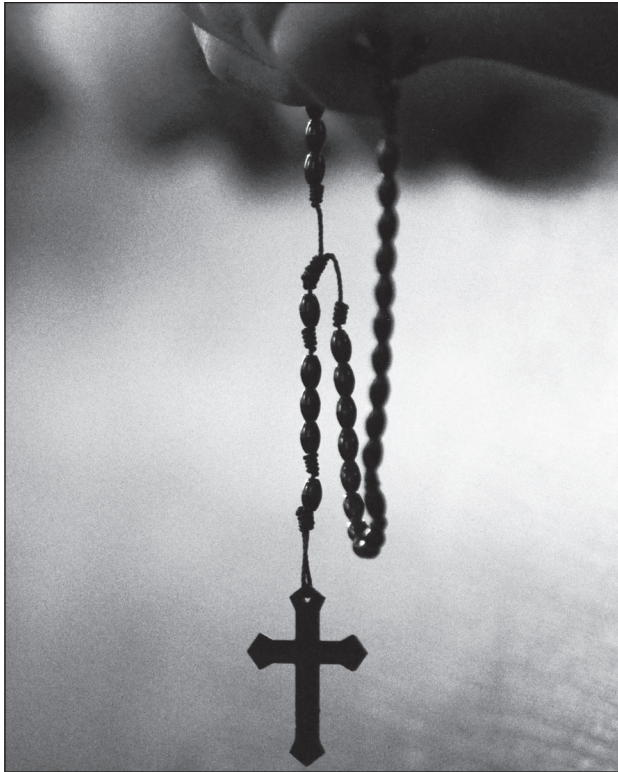
"After having repeatedly examined my conscience before God, I have come to the certainty that my strengths due to an advanced age are no longer suited to an adequate exercise of the Petrine ministry," he told the cardinals. "I am well aware that this ministry, due to its essential spiritual nature, must be carried out not only by words and deeds but no less with prayer and suffering."

"However, in today's world, subject to so many rapid changes and shaken by questions of deep relevance for the life of faith, in order to govern the bark of St. Peter and proclaim the Gospel, both strength of mind and body are necessary, strengths which in the last few months, has deteriorated in me to the extent that I have had to recognize my incapacity to adequately fulfill the ministry entrusted to me."

The last pope to resign was Pope Gregory XII, who stepped down in 1415 in a deal to end the Great Western Schism among competing papal claimants.

Benedict called his choice "a decision of great importance for the life of the church."

The Roman Catholic Church can move swiftly to find a new



Luke Martin, 14, of Clayton, holds a cross necklace as he prays at Sacred Heart Cathedral in Raleigh, North Carolina, Monday. Photo by Takaaki Iwabu / MCT

pontiff since there will be no traditional mourning time that would follow the death of a pope. There are several papal contenders in the wings, but no obvious front-runner as was the case when Benedict was elected pontiff in 2005 after the death of Pope John Paul II.

Benedict, 85, is the 265th pope, and is the sixth German to serve as pope and the first since the 11th century. The former Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger became pope in April 2005 after the death of John Paul II. He was ordained as a priest in June 1951.

His nearly seven years as pontiff was marked not only by a decline in religious participation throughout the world, but also by sex abuse scandals that have left their damage in the church.

In fact, Philadelphia was center-stage last year in its own priest abuse trial. Monsignor William Lynn became the highest-ranking U.S. Catholic church official

jailed for crimes related to sexual abuse of children.

Jurors found that Lynn, former secretary for clergy for the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, endangered children by letting a priest who molested children in the 1990s remain in public ministry.

The pope's announcement comes days before Ash Wednesday, which signifies the beginning of Lent for Christians throughout the world.

Even though the pope privately considered quitting for months, his announcement caught many Roman Catholics off-guard.

Carole Breslin was attending 7:30 a.m. Monday at Cathedral Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul in Center City Philadelphia when she heard the news.

"He was getting up there," Breslin said. "I guess he feels like he can't carry in the way he should."

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The menace of drugging kids

In the wake of the tragic shootings in Newtown, Conn. and Aurora, Colo., gun control has been in the hearts and minds of the country as we look for a solution to the problem.

We scratch our heads in disbelief and bewilderment trying to find an answer to the question; what would possess someone to do this and how do we prevent these kinds of things from happening in the future?

That question is not easily answered because there are many factors involved.

I feel that in times of tragedy our society reacts out of anger and fear.

Albeit much deserved anger, especially when so many young lives are taken in a senseless rage.

When tensions are running high and children are involved, it is easy to blame the weapons, but maybe there is more to this issue than just banning assault rifles and high capacity magazines.

I think a large part of the problem is that potentially mind altering drugs are being administered to young people whose brains are still developing and going through changes that may cause undesired effects.

Recent statistics show there is an increasing number of mass shooters that are under the influence of anti-depressants or psychostimulant drugs.

According to the Citizens Commission on Human Rights International, 31 school shootings and/or school related acts of violence have been committed by those taking or withdrawing from psychiatric drugs.

CCHRI also states that from 2004-2011, there were more than 11,000 violent acts related to psychiatric drugs that were reported to the Food and Drug Administration MedWatch system.

Recent violent school acts have left 72 dead and 162 wounded, but mass school shootings and mass school murders are not as new as we might think.

While it may seem that there has been a string of deadly school shootings in recent years, Criminologist James Allen Fox of Northeastern University said there is no increase or pattern in mass shootings.

The earliest recorded history we have of a mass school shooting dates back to April 10, 1891 when James Foster



Follow Bryan Delohery on Twitter @Bdelohery

walked into a parochial school in Newburg, New York with a shotgun and opened fire on children playing in the playground.

In the infamous Bath School Disaster of 1927, Andrew Kehoe blew up the Bath Consolidated School, leaving 38 elementary school children and six adults dead before committing suicide.

Whether or not the frequency of these attacks has changed, there may be a more sinister underlying issue.

Michael Moore, director of "Bowling for Columbine," said in the documentary film "The Drugging of Our Children" he believes there should be an investigation into what pharmaceutical drugs these kids were taking.

While there is convincing evidence that many school shooters were on some sort of psychotropic drug, I see an underlying issue here that is much more concerning.

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, children as young as four years old can be evaluated for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and prescribed Ritalin.

Since when did we become a society that is comfortable giving children psychotropic drugs?

At best, psychotropic drugs only cover up the symptoms and have little to no effect on the root cause of the problem.

As horrible as I think giving drugs to kids is, it is all of our responsibility to make sure that those around us who may be mentally challenged have access to proper mental health care.

With many of the school shootings we find out in the aftermath from a family member or friend of the shooter that thinking back on it, there was some sort of red flag.

The shooter is usually described as a loner, isolated, weird or that they expressed strange behaviors.

We have become the "Prozac Nation," a society that expects the solutions to all of its problems to come in the shape of a pill.

Maybe if we paid more attention to these red flags instead of stuffing pills down their throats to cover up some abnormal behavior that we find annoying, we could actually learn more about these disorders and work toward real solutions.

Bryan Delohery is a Spartan Daily staff writer

Don't scapegoat video games

If there is a big shooting or a huge violent act happens, of course the media and politicians will try to blame it on video games, on a local, state and maybe even national level.

They are easy to blame and almost half the nation plays violent video games.

Video games aren't the only violent form of media out there, though. Look at the books, TV shows and many movies that show us violent images in our daily lives.

I am a gamer, and I enjoy playing games that feature fantasy-like violence, but that doesn't make me go hunt for a bad guy, does it?

After the Newtown, Conn. shooting, I heard that Fox News made a point of releasing to the public that the perpetrator of shooting "liked" Mass Effect on Facebook.

Here is what I understand – that the media is blaming "ultraviolent" video games and yet they don't have solid evidence to back up these claims. Where can you find any proof for their claims?

I might be "captain obvious" here: Don't they have a rating on the box that was approved by the Entertainment Software Rating Board? And it's not just a one-word rating either; on both the front and back of the box there should be a description of what the content in these games is.

I bet the parents of the kids who get their hands on games rated teen and mature don't even read the ratings at all. The kids just pick their games out and have their parents buy it for them without the parents even looking at the box, or at least ignore the rating; if they look at anything on the box, it should be that.

It seems like a weird double standard because parents are quick to point out



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movie ratings and parental advisory labels on music CDs. That is plain ludicrous to me and it looks bad for game companies as well.

A few days ago, Rep. DebraLee Hovey (R-Monroe, Newtown) made the suggestion to add a tax on violent video games, in the wake of the Newtown, Conn. shooting that resulted in the death of 20 children and six adults.

People have gone a bit too far in the hype and tension surrounding current violence in video games. The ESRB was started in the early '90s, when Mortal Kombat was out and many consumers were freaking out about content. Back then, we did not have ratings on front of video games. Now, we do have the ratings on the front of the packages and people just need to pay attention to them.

I understand parents are worried about this issue and protecting their kids from violent video games, but putting some kind of "sin taxes" on violent games doesn't solve the problem of parents buying violent video games for their kids.

Kids playing games together can be helpful; if it's a social event for them, they'll associate it more with their friendships instead of obsessing over the game. If they have a sibling, they will probably ask you if they can play with each other, or they can go to their friend's house and play together.

Parents should take responsibility and educate the children on the difference between real violence and fantasy-like violence. Parents need to teach children the difference between right and wrong in today's media, and how to use media responsibly.

For example, people should not believe that video games will cause this problem just because Fox News tells

them so; instead, people need to watch for suspicious behavior and know the warning signs that someone is becoming unstable. People should stop blaming violence solely on video games; as previously stated, video games are not the only medium that exposes people to violence and ultraviolence.

People need to stop making the assumption that playing video games will make people more violent in real life. I do not act viciously violent after I play a video game. Look at our world; we have different media to blame not just video games.

I am truly disgusted by the statement that video games induce violence. I am pretty sure that gamers in general are disgusted by that statement, too.

It is not our fault. It will be an endless battle between gamers and the media. I remembered that I was taught what the difference between "fantasy-like" violence and real life violence is.

Will this stop the media? No, because the media will always be on the violent games' back. The media will never stand up to Hollywood directors about violent movies, though. That would be a great mutiny.

Video games are actually helping people by building up reflexes, and strengthening vocabulary.

Many people nowadays say they met their friends online due to playing video games in different gaming communities. So they don't seem to like to hurt people outside of virtual worlds, and actually come to value people because of the game.

Video games are part of our lives, and can take us to another place, allowing us to escape from the world for a little while. This doesn't mean that we lose touch with reality, though – done right, it forms and strengthens friendships, maintaining and perhaps even deepening our respect for humanity.

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Submit letters to the editor to: spartandaily@gmail.com

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