

# love

As Valentine's Day looms over 11 states that have passed anti-gay-marriage initiatives, as No Child Left Behind legislation prohibits federal funds for programs about HIV that do not emphasize health benefits of abstinence, and as school dances are accused of allowing the equivalent of sex on the dance floor, our centerspread begins to examine "love." What is it? Is it real? Is it a class?

## Love in our halls: IHS staff who married high school sweethearts

By BEN GLOSENGER

Valentine's Day. Every year we continue this age-old tradition by recognizing our loved ones. In Kindergarten, students make cards to give to the valentine of their choice. In middle school, kids find dates for the Valentine's Day dance. Throughout grade school, this day in February is often nothing more than a time to express an ephemeral crush. For a young adult, boyfriends and girlfriends come and go and usually without any lasting impressions. Only a lucky few truly experience the reality of true

love at such a young age. Although rare, some people do find the boy or girl of their dreams during high school. Kim Swartz, a respected ninth grade English teacher at IHS, found the love of her life when she was a sophomore at Candor high school. His name was Michael and he was a senior on the football, baseball, and basketball teams. She had a crush on him, even going so far as to steal his homecoming poster off the school wall and hang it in her room. The first time that Michael called her, Swartz was so excited that she ran out of the room to tell her

mother. On her way, she managed to bump heads with a low doorway and knock herself out cold. Apparently the Everly Brothers were correct, love hurts, and love does scar. When she came around, Swartz went on to marry her high school sweetheart. Ever since that first date to see Rocky V, the two have been inseparable. After high school, she followed him to Ithaca College, and in 2000, they were happily married. Their first daughter, Shelby, was born in 2004 and is now going on ten months of age. Swartz isn't the only staff member of IHS who is still with her high school

sweetheart. Assistant Principal Emily Hess met her boyfriend of 13 years in H Courtyard back when it was truly a courtyard. Christopher would always bring Dunkin' Donuts to school, and one day Emily decided to go with him on a donut run. The rest is history. In the years that followed, the couple has traveled to many exotic destinations such as Cuba, Mexico, and Puerto Rico. Eventually, they plan on getting married and having kids, but Hess stressed that this time is not in the immediate future. The longest lasting high school lover that I talked

to was Kathy Troy, the student services secretary in the main office. She has been with her husband Jim for 29 years. After breaking up with his best friend, she asked him to the winter formal while walking down J hallway, and they have been together ever since. These love stories are inspiring, and history tends to repeat itself. There are couples in the high school today who certainly have the potential to enjoy the romantic success of these three couples. Happy Valentine's Day to IHS and good luck to all with your romantic endeavors in the New Year.

## Point/Counterpoint: Monogamy

### Point

Monogamy, according to Webster, is defined as "being married to one person at a time." Marriage is a powerful bond between two people—a unit of two. Part of the vows one takes to become married is to be faithful for as long as the two are living. This doesn't include polygamy. However, we all know that unfaithfulness does exist in this world. The public generally looks down upon such practices, as seen in Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, in which Hester Prynne was punished by the town for committing adultery. Of course, this book took place in the 1600s and now adultery is a much more private matter. While adultery doesn't usually involve public punishment, it is generally looked down upon. Monogamy is simply a safer alternative to polygamy. When one is in a monogamous relationship, the risk of contracting dangerous sexually transmitted infections like Herpes, Syphilis, or HIV is greatly decreased. Being faithful also builds trust and stability. Jealousy is

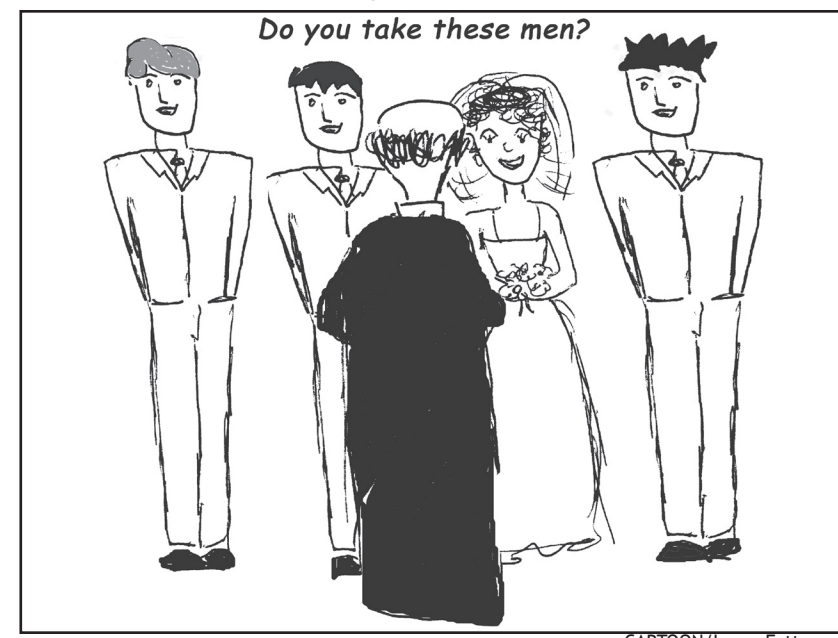
decreased dramatically when there aren't multiple partners involved. A deeper connection between the couple is allowed to be nurtured in a monogamous setting. I will admit that monogamy is not right for everyone. There are those who seem unable to maintain a monogamous relationship for fear of commitment. These people can either try to overcome their fears by facing them head on, or neglect them and choose polygamy. The choice is yours. -Angela Sparrow '06

### Counterpoint

Monogamy isn't all bad. Although some people would be happy if society were accepting of unrestrained, orgasmic free-for-alls, that type of behavior is not exactly emotionally healthy. However, the prevailing attitude, that one has to eventually find a permanent partner, isn't much better. Let's face it: as a species, we are indecisive. Our preferences change over time. Just as one's taste for mashed car-

rots eventually evaporates, so does the affection two people can feel for each other. This is perfectly natural, as anyone who's been in a relationship knows. Sooner or later, you just stop enjoying being in that person's presence. Their unique habits, once amusing, become annoying; their perfect imperfections lose their flawlessness. It's not that we're insensitive—we're just unstable. Change is necessary, whether we like it or not. Unfortunately, we are barraged from birth with the concept that a healthy, permanent partnership is the goal (less so now than in past generations, but still prevalently). We see movies, watch television shows, and read novels that all inspire hope for that perfect someone, who we can live with for at least the rest of our lives, and at most for eternity. So it's no surprise when after someone experiences their first breakup, they feel as if

society has cheated them. "What's the big deal?" they ask. "Whatever happened to eternal happiness and all that good stuff?" Well, the answer is that good stuff never existed. It's normal to spend time with one person and then move on. After all, we are genetically programmed to propagate our species, and obviously our genes adopted the strategy of "more is better." We shouldn't be ashamed over our infidelity; we're not meant to be locked up to a ball and chain for our entire lives. We need freedom! The benefits of a caring yet temporary relationship far outweigh the false sense of security offered by a monogamous one, not to mention the emotional devastation and eventual boredom caused by having only one love. Think of it from a culinary perspective: just because you really like Italian food doesn't mean you should never try Mexican. Or Romanian. I hear French cuisine is the bomb, too. And don't forget good ol' fashioned American cooking. Anyway, the point is that you need to expand your palate. Of love, that is. -Ted Stinson '05



## How is sex being taught in our health classes?

By SCOTT ZUCCARINO

Across the country, many high schools' sex education programs grapple with touchy and complex issues. Despite sex ed.'s ubiquity, these programs are by no means uniform. In fact, there is controversy regarding many districts' sex education programs. Such controversy does exist locally and has prompted a debate in the Ithaca City School District (ICSD) and the Lansing Central School District (LCS) over the curricular inclusion of the Ithaca Pregnancy Center's pro-abstinence program. In the ICSD, taking a semester of Health is a requirement for graduation. The logic behind such a requirement is that students will be forced to learn about the dangers associated with behaviors like drug use and unsafe sex. Sex education at Ithaca High School informs students of the consequences associated with unsafe sex, and it touches upon many courses of action such as abstinence and contraceptive usage.

Other schools across the country, though, have a more linear approach to sex, only teaching abstinence—an approach that the current government seems to favor. According to the American Civil Liberties Union, well over half a billion dollars has been allocated for abstinence-only educational programs since 1997. The White House has also proposed \$170 million for abstinence-only sex education programs for next year, according to the *Ithaca Journal*. Schools that have comprehensive sex education programs are ineligible for such funding. Requirements for this funding are so stringent that even schools with sex education programs that highlight abstinence as the preferred behavior but still broach other relatively safe behaviors (i.e. condom usage) are ineligible. But in an area where school funding is always

needed, the Bush administration's pro-abstinence position has not affected IHS. If anything, IHS and the surrounding areas are moving towards more liberal sex education programs as conservative and misleading (according to some) programs are not invited back to schools. For many years, the expressly Christian Ithaca Pregnancy Center's "Waiting the Smart Choice" program and "I'm Worth Waiting For" program has made numerous presentations to IHS and Lansing students. According to the Ithaca Pregnancy Center's website, the two programs are "designed to shape sensible attitudes towards sexuality among teens by: -Encouraging self-respect and the postponement of sexual activities until marriage; -Teaching reliable information about sexually transmitted diseases; -Providing trained, local college students as peer group leaders and using role plays and discussion to explore sound reasons to wait." Many feel that the Ithaca Pregnancy Center's presentations to IHS Health classes deliberately framed certain issues of sexuality in a misleading manner. Benjamin Zax '06, a current Health student said, "I think they certainly tried to be misleading in order to convince us...it seemed totally unrealistic. A repeated phrase was 'On your honeymoon, do you want to be thinking about the person you're marrying, or all the other people you've had sex with? Do you really want to be comparing your spouse to other lovers? And would you want your spouse comparing you to former lovers?'" The sometimes-comical skits employed exaggeration, according to Zax. One example was the usage of a gumball as an analogy for virginity. After one student chewed the gumball, a presenter asked for its return and then offered it to other

students. In regards to such exaggeration, Zax said "I think it was a persuasive tactic." According to the Center, such tactics are employed for both persuasive and comedic purposes. Rhonda Mapes, the Ithaca Pregnancy Center's executive director said, "It's [exaggeration] definitely in there for comedy and I think it's also in there so that kids will listen and also remember. I don't know that that necessarily persuades people. But it's more that you give them something that'll come back to their minds when they're making choices." Not all of the Center's presentations are as biased, though. Greg Colucci '06, who took Health one year ago and saw one presentation on STDs from the Ithaca Pregnancy Center, said "It [the presentation] didn't seem biased when I saw it." Colucci also said that the Center only performed that one STD skit for his class. He was quick to note, however that, "They [the presenters] were informative from a beginner's point of view...It was kind of pointless though and it didn't help me personally at all since we had been doing so much of this topic already in class." Health teacher Jeannette Palmer stated that IHS does not plan to have the Center return until issues are worked out. According to an *Ithaca*

*Journal* article, Lansing has not invited the Ithaca Pregnancy Center back to its middle school for the second semester on grounds that the Center's focus on marriage might upset children who do not come from a traditional family and that the group's with certain behaviors. The student must make a decision based on those risks. We encourage the students to make decisions that are in the best interest of their health so they can live long and productive lives." According to Shawn

Image censored. A cartoon providing commentary on sex education was deleted by The Tattler advisor. Editors are currently appealing the decision.

Center's executive director said, "It's [exaggeration] definitely in there for comedy and I think it's also in there so that kids will listen and also remember. I don't know that that necessarily persuades people. But it's more that you give them something that'll come back to their minds when they're making choices." Not all of the Center's presentations are as biased, though. Greg Colucci '06, who took Health one year ago and saw one presentation on STDs from the Ithaca Pregnancy Center, said "It [the presentation] didn't seem biased when I saw it." Colucci also said that the Center only performed that one STD skit for his class. He was quick to note, however that, "They [the presenters] were informative from a beginner's point of view...It was kind of pointless though and it didn't help me personally at all since we had been doing so much of this topic already in class." Health teacher Jeannette Palmer stated that IHS does not plan to have the Center return until issues are worked out. According to an *Ithaca*

Christian focus was inappropriate for a public school setting. In the LCS, a health committee will deal with this issue among others once formed. The Ithaca Pregnancy Center's website, though, simultaneously proclaims the Center's non-denominational outlook but Christian beliefs. Mapes said in regards to the Center's religious motivation, "Our abstinence programs are just principle-based. The way I would frame it is that our faith is the reason that we want to serve people...but the what we do is based on the best medical evidence." Several schools, including BOCES and Homer plan to have the Center return to Health Classes. But is sex education really worth fighting over? Certainly, sex education at IHS does not stop all students from having sex. But then again, is that its job? IHS's answer to that question apparently deviates greatly from abstinence-only programs. According to Thomas Hall, a health teacher at IHS, "I believe education is designed to inform the students of the risks associated

Ward '07, who has already completed IHS's sex education program, sex education teaches students, but the knowledge does not seem to translate into practice. "Some people got a little nervous when they heard about what was going on, but I don't think it's going to stop anything [sex and drug use]," Ward explained. Ward also cited the fact that many students who take health have already participated in unsafe activities. Nonetheless, sex education is directed at all students, not exclusively those who have already performed unsafe activities. Although some students ignore what they learn in Health, others do not. The overall societal effort to reduce teen sexual activity seems to be paying off. According to teenpregnancy.org, the rate of teenage birth has been on the decline. On average, 1000 women ages 15-19 birthed approximately 66 babies in 1970 while in 2003, on average, 1000 women ages 15-19 birthed 42 babies. Also, between 1991 and 2003, the US teen birth rate has declined by 32.5 percent.