For three seniors, four years of hard work pays off with scholarship money for college

Jessica Hammond
Staff Writer

The class of 2007 is coming to the end of their four-year stay at Benson High School. While others may have been keeping busy counting the days until graduation, seniors Tyrell Atkins, Yang Cha, and Goldka Yang have applied themselves to getting scholarships. Atkins, Cha, and Yang are all senior senate officers, members of National Honor Society and Minority Scholars.

Yang has been active in many student organizations during her four years at Benson. She was involved in Stuco, and won second place for yearbook layout at the Western Nebraska State Journalism Contest in 2006. Yang also opted to take a Health Occupations Career Center, where she will receive her CNA license. Yang is actively pursuing her goal of becoming a nurse, volunteering at Children’s Hospital during the summer months. Although Yang has not received a scholarship yet, she is in the final interviewing stages.

“I am doing an interview for the NU Paths Scholarship and I will find out about that in April. I am also interviewing qn for the Goodrich Scholarship and I find out about that at the end of April,” said Yang. Both of these scholarships would give her full tuition to the school of her choice. Yang will be going to UNO, and will major in Nursing.

Cha is also a yearbook member, and was involved in the band. An academic and an athlete, Cha is a varsity cheerleader and soccer player. Cha is also dedicated to volunteering, working at the Pharmacy Center at the Veteran’s Association.

Goldka Yang’s tips for senior year scholarship success

1. Become involved your freshman year

Join sports, clubs, and activities as soon as you enter high school.

2. Get started with scholarships your junior year

Look for scholarships that you can apply for before your senior year and save on stress.

3. Write essays the summer before senior year

Look for books and Web sites that show common essay questions applications ask for.

4. Ask teachers for letters of recommendation early

Give teachers 2-3 weeks to write a letter of recommendation.

5. Get organized and make a college binder

Use a binder with everything you need for scholarship applications to get organized.

Stuco announces ‘07 prom theme

Louis Moreno-Teal
Sports Editor

Prom night has been special to countless juniors and seniors. Whether it is midnight masquerade or a night in a botanical paradise, a good time is almost always guaranteed. Student Council has announced this year’s prom theme: Moulin Rouge. The theme is inspired by the musical featuring Nicole Kidman and Ewan McGregor.

The process of picking the theme included a brainstorming session in which each member would come up with three ideas and put them on the chalkboard. “We picked three themes we wanted, and then we voted on it,” said senior Erin Jones. This year it was narrowed down to “A Midsummer Night’s Dream”, “A Red Carpet Affair”, and “Moulin Rouge.” “Moulin Rouge” was suggested by Stuco President Cameron Ram.

“Along with my friends I thought the idea, but thought it was too sexy,” said senior Cameron Ram.

Students attend IncluCity retreat

Allie Daley
Staff Writer

On March 16, 2007, fifteen Benson students departed school early for a weekend that would change their lives. They came back March 19 wearing IncluCity T-shirts and smiles on their faces. It was what some would come to know as one of the most eye opening experiences they would ever share.

“IncluCity is a Human Relations and Leadership Program is a free four-day retreat where 60 high school students and selected staff members are brought together to discuss the issues of difference, race, culture, faith, class, sexual orientation, age, appearance and ability,” said sophomore Morgan Olivera.

Students were kept busy by various activities, and open discussions. “My favorite part was getting into the group discussions, it was fun,” said junior Chong Lor. “I talk to people now I wouldn’t usually talk to before I went to IncluCity.”

Learning how not to judge made a major impact on students while they participated in group discussions. “I used to judge everybody I didn’t know before I went to IncluCity,”
Bunny brief: Students endure “A Fate Worse Than Death”

Auditions for Benson’s spring musical, “A Fate Worse Than Death,” are set for May 4 and 5 in the Mary McNamara auditorium.

Inclusivity: retreat brings students together

Conference for Inclusive Communities is the organization that hosts the IncluCity program. Amy sophomore, junior, or senior who has, “leadership abilities, knowledge of human relations/social justice issues and is committed to empowering others to create a better future for tomorrow,” is a perfect candidate for the IncluCity Program Director, Spencer Terry. Students who want to attend IncluCity should talk to Hagen. Terry said a potential candidate for IncluCity should show that they have a passion for their community, not just say it. It’s more than just volunteering for community organizations or getting involved in similar types of work.

Prom theme: can you “Can Can”?

Even before the official announcement to the student body, students were buzzing with excitement over what the theme would be. Information was leaked about the theme a few days later, and many people loved the idea. “I think it’s gonna be a hit,” said sophomore, Nick Daehling.

Senior success: Students cash in on scholarships

Atkins got online to look for his scholarships, but Benson did still help him. “I received quality education from Benson,” said Atkins. Students should start applying for scholarships their junior year. There are a variety of ways to get started. The first thing that potential applicants can do is to start a FastWeb account to complete scholarship searches. Students can also see Rehffling for a District Scholarship booklet. Students can and should also keep an eye on the Benson High School Web site. Although an active schedule is one thing scholarship committees look for, grades are equally important. “I had to have a 2.5 or above GPA for the Horatio Alger Scholarship,” said Cha.
**EDITORIAL POLICY**

The Benson High Gazette is a publication of Benson High School, 5120 Maple St., Omaha, NE 68104. It is published monthly throughout the school year. Subscriptions are free for those with an activity card, and individual papers may be purchased through room 104. Generally all content, including pictures, layout, and art are created by students under disabilities.

The role of the Benson High Gazette is to promote the accomplishments of the school, and inform the community of events and issues that affect students, faculty, staff, administration, and community. The focus is to serve the students of Benson High school by covering issues that affect them. The Benson High Gazette will not run any group or stories directed toward students, departments, or schools.

Advertising of products and services illegal for minors, or otherwise unsuitable for publication as determined by the editor, advisor, or principal will not be published. Material that may cause a disruption of school as judged by the editor, advisor, or principal will not be published. All letters submitted must be signed.

**ADVERTISING RATES:**

- Inserts are $75.
- Prices per page: 8 column, $72; 4 column, $36.
- We run a six column paper.

---

**It's a pirate's life for me**

Nicholas Jones  
*News Editor*

“I won't get caught, how will they find me out?” said junior Maurice Bowie. “I download music using limewire at least once a month. I think I have over one hundred songs. I do it because it’s cheaper than buying CDs.” To many of the music artists, this is viewed as stealing, the legal term being music piracy.

Precautions are being made to prevent it, if not stop it. On March 21, 2002, State Senator Fritz Hollings presented the Consumer Broadband and Digital Television Promotion Act (CBDTPA). The date the bill is set to pass is still pending. It requires that most new hardware and software include a device approved by the government to prevent the piracy of not only music, but any other internet downloads, such as online documents or games. The device may include actual physical devices or might only be software preventing one from playing it in cars or personal CD players.

“Here at Benson we do not have much of a problem with illegal downloading of copyrighted material. The primary reason for this is that all student user accounts are restricted from loading any kind of software onto school machines therefore file-sharing programs cannot be installed,” said Kevin Halladay, field support technician. You can’t use a school computer without a valid user account and detailed logs of user activities are recorded automatically.

“Everything is tracked, from visited Web sites to files loaded onto computers. "We do find that students bring in music on CDs or flash-drives and copy them into their share folders but we scan the servers regularly to detect and remove items that do not meet our acceptable use policy such as copyrighted music and images. If it all else fails the District maintains a firewall that prevents anyone using an OPS computer from accessing restricted sites and material," Halladay said.

According to OPS, The District’s Internet system (“OPS Online”) has a limited educational purpose. Activities that are acceptable on OPS Online include classroom activities, career development, and high-quality educational research. OPS Online may not be used for entertainment purposes. OPS Online is not a public access service or a public forum.

“In my past experience working for Internet Service Providers I have seen people get caught and sued for thousands of dollars by the RIAA for online piracy. Whether you know it or not, file-sharing programs upload the materials you downloaded to other users making you liable for distribution," said Halladay. “It’s just not worth the risk, there is no such thing as anonymity online anymore because all ISPs track and log their customers activities in order to protect themselves.”

---

**Benson's "Waiting room"**

After a month of renovations, Benson’s new venue, The Waiting Room, opened March 9 with a show featuring Art in Black, The Squirrels and the 4th of July. For more information visit 1/8percent.com or the waitingroomlounge.com

“It’s alright, I would go to something like that and hang out with my friends. -freshman David Hardy Jr.

“I think it’s cool to finally have a place to hang out around here. It gives smaller bands a chance to get known.” -senior Brad Jones

“It’s somewhere to chill and go with your friends. It’s a place where local artists can come and perform.” -freshman Kenneth Hutcheson

---

**Benson's idol - Jamarr Jones**

Ashley Bjergard  
*Entertainment Editor*

Sweaty palms and shaking hands, no one there, but him and three judges then all of the sudden out of all the commotion a beautiful voice resonates through a crowded mall. There were 500 to about 600 plus people all lined up to show their stuff.

Senior Jamarr Jones got the chance to audition for season 6 of American Idol, an internationally known reality talent show. “I couldn’t decide on which song I was going to sing, but I finally decided to sing on the Sparrow.” It’s an old traditional gospel tune but five other people sung my song and I was really mad!”

Though Jones experienced a little fear, he was able push on through the competition. “I was scared. There was this girl, she did really well, but I still made it in to the top 40,” said Jones.

For the second audition, Jones began to notice that the judges seemed to have a certain sound they were looking for. “It was really scary this time there was like a thousand people there, so many good singers, but they was looking for a certain something like more of a pop song so I decided to sing a different song this time ‘All Or Nothing’ by O-Town,” said Jones.

Now that the basic try outs were over there was a burden that was taken off of him. “I did really well and I made it in to the top 40 again, I didn’t win the Minnesota Idol, but making it in to the top 40, I was eligible to audition with Simon, Paula, and Randy,” said Jones.

Now that the sixth season has now began the reactions of the fans have been vary on many different levels. I’ve been disappointed watching other people sing, but making it in to the top 40, I was eligible to audition with Simon, Paula, and Randy,” said Jones.

Along with Jones’ ambition of being on American Idol, Jones has also been involved in a music group CGS (Capricorn, Gemini, and Scorpio). CGS is made up of Jones, his brother 2006 Benson alum CJ Jones, and James White from North High School. Jones said the group has a “Neo-soul, R&B, and Indie kind of sound.”

They are also in the process of making a CD with BOLD Productions, but it’s not all their music. The CD is a combination of 7 or 8 other groups, but it hasn’t been mixed down yet. In the process, all the members do music together in a little group. They’re produced by DJ Smooth who is also a DJ for 106.9 fm.

---

**Why music?”**

“Music is a part of my passion for music, singing has been a life-time dream of his. “I started singing in church when I was a little boy. Then I sang in the choir in all grades of school,” said Jones. Many young aspiring singers have had someone who has really inspired and influenced them. Jones’ biggest inspiration is his Aunt Margaret, who he said is “just so amazing.” Other inspirations include Misiq Soulchild, Robin Thicke, Marvin Gaye, Luther Vandross, Usher, and Fantasia and Jermaine Hudson who were both discovered through American Idol. To maintain his gift, Jones has to eat, breathe, and live singing. It is not just a talent that develops over night. For Jones, practicing is a daily routine.

“I practice constantly everyday, I wake up singing, I go to bed singing,” said Jones. “I work on my personal stuff, I try and imitate some other genres. My secret love is country music and my favorite group is Rascal Flatts.”

Along with Jones’ ambition of being on American Idol, Jones has also been involved in a music group CGS (Capricorn, Gemini, and Scorpio). CGS is made up of Jones, his brother 2006 Benson alum CJ Jones, and James White from North High School. Jones said the group has a “Neo-soul, R&B, and Indie kind of sound.”

They are also in the process of making a CD with BOLD Productions, but it’s not all their music. The CD is a combination of 7 or 8 other groups, but it hasn’t been mixed down yet. In the process, all the members do music together in a little group. They’re produced by DJ Smooth who is also a DJ for 106.9 fm.

---

**It’s a pirate’s life for me**

Nicholas Jones  
*News Editor*

“I won't get caught, how will they find me out?” said junior Maurice Bowie. “I download music using limewire at least once a month. I think I have over one hundred songs. I do it because it’s cheaper than buying CDs.” To many of the music artists, this is viewed as stealing, the legal term being music piracy.

Precautions are being made to prevent it, if not stop it. On March 21, 2002, State Senator Fritz Hollings presented the Consumer Broadband and Digital Television Promotion Act (CBDTPA). The date the bill is set to pass is still pending. It requires that most new hardware and software include a device approved by the government to prevent the piracy of not only music, but any other internet downloads, such as online documents or games. The device may include actual physical devices or might only be software preventing one from playing it in cars or personal CD players.

“Here at Benson we do not have much of a problem with illegal downloading of copyrighted material. The primary reason for this is that all student user accounts are restricted from loading any kind of software onto school machines therefore file-sharing programs cannot be installed,” said Kevin Halladay, field support technician. You can’t use a school computer without a valid user account and detailed logs of user activities are recorded automatically.

“Everything is tracked, from visited Web sites to files loaded onto computers. "We do find that students bring in music on CDs or flash-drives and copy them into their share folders but we scan the servers regularly to detect and remove items that do not meet our acceptable use policy such as copyrighted music and images. If it all else fails the District maintains a firewall that prevents anyone using an OPS computer from accessing restricted sites and material," Halladay said.

According to OPS, The District’s Internet system (“OPS Online”) has a limited educational purpose. Activities that are acceptable on OPS Online include classroom activities, career development, and high-quality educational research. OPS Online may not be used for entertainment purposes. OPS Online is not a
Great athletes are seen in the hallways everyday. Many of them go unnoticed, and others shine their starlight on others. The question still remains, what makes a good athlete?

Freshman Byron Villalta is a normal student here at Benson, trying to make a name for himself in his first year in high school. In trying to do so, he participates in three sports during the school year—tennis, swimming, and soccer; one sport for every season of the school year. “I play sports to be active, it’s fun, I enjoy being with my friends, and making new ones too,” Villalta said.

During the tennis season, Villalta competed well against his competitors in the metro. He ended tennis season leaving room for improvement.

In his freshman year, Villalta competed on the varsity level for swimming; competing in the distance race (500 meters). During the season, Villalta practiced swimming 500 meters daily to prepare for his races. At the end of his first season, Villalta did what Coach Jason Rhine said was amazing. “Byron Villalta did amazing this year, he increased his time by one minute,” Rhine said. “In swimming, you tell time by seconds not minutes— he increased his time by one whole minute.”

The season opener for his soccer experience was on March 30. In playing in the game, Villalta is prepared for the duration of his high school soccer career with the experience of having a game to his name—by knowing what to expect in games to come. Villalta knows what to expect with years of experience in soccer, “I’ve played soccer my whole life,” Villata said.

The Villalta family has a special history with sports—especially soccer. A few members of the family made the semi-professional level. Knowing this, young Villalta has big shoes to fill. Villalta started competitive soccer at the age of five, having had previous experience on the soccer-field has given Villalta the drive to work hard to become the best he can be. The hard work not only shines from soccer, but in everything he does including school and music.

“When Byron was five years old, in his first season of soccer, his team went to the championship game. Byron scored the game winning goal,” said his dad, Wilfyedo Villalta. “We are very proud of Byron; he respects everyone and enjoys everything he does.”

Villalta’s work ethic is unquestionable—he gives time up for three separate sports, homework, and even learning to play a new instrument in the school’s band. “Byron is a hard worker, he likes to learn and do the best he can,” his father said.

“Byron is a hard worker, he likes to learn and do the best he can”

- Wilfyedo Villalta, father
The cheers and the tears: it’s all a part of the game

Louis Moreno-Teal
Sports Editor

Benson cheerleaders are seen everywhere from pep rallies to basketball games; chanting, cheering, or tumbling. This select group works hard almost everyday to cheer for their fellow students, even when the situation is hopeless. Emotion is needed in every single game in sports. Varsity cheerleaders lead into every one of those games, both football and basketball, with confidence. Benson will win.

“I love the excitement of the games,” said senior Jade Gordon. “The long and arduous task starts with tryouts in spring. The aspiring cheerleaders head to the gym to meet up with current cheerleaders as well as coaches to learn their “tryout dance.” From that point on, they work hard to receive and maintain merits and to avoid demerits. “Some girls have trouble with the demerits, but it’s usually easy to avoid,” said Gordon. “Cheerleading is not as harsh as it seems.”

As soon as their tryouts are completed and the cheerleaders are chosen, both varsity and junior varsity meet to learn new cheers and dances for games. “It’s fun learning the dances. Some are easier than others,” Gordon said.

Training and learning does not disappear at the end of the school year, the cheerleaders have to attend cheer camp during the summer, which is a week long event to learn cheers, dances, and everything essential to becoming a cheerleader; working just as hard as football players do.

The stereotype of cheerleaders and drama is one of the reasons that drives away potential cheerleaders. “There has been a lot of drama over the years,” Thomas admitted. “Though there was drama, it was cancelled out by special times. “One time when we were cheering, Taylor jumped up too high she fell on the headboard,” Thomas said.

The cheerleaders here at Benson have been recognized for their efforts and emotion brought to the games; both varsity and junior varsity were given letters at the winter sports banquet, however, some views on the cheerleaders are negative, some saying they are pointless and stupid. The reaction to that is a simple question, as Gordon said: “If we are so stupid, why are there so many people involved with cheerleading taking honors and AP classes?”

Even through there is hard work needed to become a great cheerleader, many of them create times to remember. “Whenever the band plays the Darth Vadar song, a couple of us would do a darkey dance... we always ended up laughing,” said Spears. “It’s quite fun to act the way we do,” said Cha. “I’ll always miss our over nighters, they were so fun,” said Thomas.

Although cheerleaders at Benson do not get all the respect they deserve, most of them will never forget the experience of cheering. “I will miss cheerleading the most, it was what made school fun,” said Gordon. “I’ll always miss the girls I’ve cheered with,” said Thomas.

Varisty cheerleaders at the district I-A championship game.

Record setting relay squad prepares for a successful season

Louis Moreno-Teal
Sports Editor

On March 26, 2007, an unusually warm spring day, the Benson track team headed to the Dan Lennon Invite. Little did any of them know this day would be a defining time in their track season as well as their high school careers. Moments before their meet, junior Willie White took the role of leader and “hyped up” his fellow teammates.

“We get each other hyped up, I just happened to be the one to do it that time,” said White. Their standards for the season at that point were immensely greater than previous years.

“We want to, at the minimum, qualify for state, but we want to win it all,” said White. Knowing this, practicing for their meets would be easier. Moments before their race, a sense of excitement struck them.

The 4x4 relay team includes all juniors- Kyle Enrick, Jaron Hall, Jared Hall, and Willie White. The talented foursome has worked hard since day one.

The 4x4 relay team was about to take the track. The starting gun fires and they are off to the races. Adrenaline pumped through their bodies as they raced for their lives. Benson won the relay, but to their surprise, they also made history.

Twenty-five years ago a relay squad similar to this year’s, set out to do well, they did. Twenty-five years later, the Benson relay team broke the record by getting a time of 3:31.

Coached by Mark Meier, not only these four, but the whole team works hard everyday to strive for their ultimate goal.

Morse is high for the teammates, “I think we are going to do pretty good this year,” said White. Though there is no telling what the track team this year can accomplish, it is obvious that the potential and work ethic present can take this team beyond their wildest expectation.

The 4x4 relay team includes all juniors- Kyle Enrick, Jaron Hall, Jared Hall, and Willie White. The talented foursome has worked hard since day one.

The 4x4 relay team was about to take the track. The starting gun fires and they are off to the races. Adrenaline pumped through their bodies as they raced for their lives. Benson won the relay, but to their surprise, they also made history.

Twenty-five years ago a relay squad similar to this year’s, set out to do well, they did. Twenty-five years later, the Benson relay team broke the record by getting a time of 3:31.

Coached by Mark Meier, not only these four, but the whole team works hard everyday to strive for their ultimate goal.

Morse is high for the teammates, “I think we are going to do pretty good this year,” said White. Though there is no telling what the track team this year can accomplish, it is obvious that the potential and work ethic present can take this team beyond their wildest expectation.

The 4x4 relay team includes all juniors- Kyle Enrick, Jaron Hall, Jared Hall, and Willie White. The talented foursome has worked hard since day one.

The 4x4 relay team was about to take the track. The starting gun fires and they are off to the races. Adrenaline pumped through their bodies as they raced for their lives. Benson won the relay, but to their surprise, they also made history.

Twenty-five years ago a relay squad similar to this year’s, set out to do well, they did. Twenty-five years later, the Benson relay team broke the record by getting a time of 3:31.

Coached by Mark Meier, not only these four, but the whole team works hard everyday to strive for their ultimate goal.

Morse is high for the teammates, “I think we are going to do pretty good this year,” said White. Though there is no telling what the track team this year can accomplish, it is obvious that the potential and work ethic present can take this team beyond their wildest expectation.
Environment under attack

Mary Davis
World Editor

Everyday freshman Dallas McMurphy goes home just in time to turn on the television. He looks for some entertainment just to be halted by a string of commercials. As he flips between channels, between the Captain Morgan and My Circle from Alltel commercials, he comes upon MTV. To his surprise there is a commercial called "Stop the Addiction". This MTV commercial tells teens that they can help stop global warming and they should. Not impressed, he turns the channel again to see a commercial for a gas company. P.P. They advertise cleaner fuel for the house, car, and everyday lives of customers.

[Global Warning] an issue that should be addressed by our government and should not be put on the back burner," said McMurphy. "Not enough steps are being made to stop it."

Commercialists are not the only advertisements for a cleaner society. When reading the newspaper, many will come upon stories with titles such as, "Scientists Warn of Lake Superior Warming." An Academy Award winning film, "An Inconvenient Truth" which documents former Vice President Al Gore and his crusade against what is happening to the environment, helps inform the public.

"An Inconvenient Truth", if nothing is done now to stop global warming, all ice glaciers will be gone by 2060. That is within this lifetime. By that time, if nothing is done, all of New York could be flooded due to the access water. Can students stop it?

"My son is only 8 years old so I have hope that we will start working on change, that we will continue to make progress on reducing pollution, and that we will make conservation of plants and animals a priority," said McCarthy.

"I see signs that give me hope that we will find the will to move forward."

A UNO professor thinks this way of thinking adds to the problem.

"I think the common threat running through environmental problems and preventing us from finding solutions is the attitude that we have that we are separate from our environment," said John McCarthy, a professor of biology and director of the Environmental Studies Program at UNO.

"Concern about the environment is viewed as something optional -- a hobby like being interested in sports or music."

One thing that teens and celebrities can do to help is recycle. Paper, water, aluminum, electricity and plastic can be recycled. Water has a recycling period of every three years. In other words, the same water that is put into noodles to make pasta was the same water that someone in Europe could have drunk three years ago.

Everyday 1400 gallons of water are being used for everyone.

Paper can be recycled up to five times. Benson JROTC has made a real effort to help since Benson alone uses about 3,666 pieces of paper a day. Karen Comfort, media center paraprofessional, JROTC recycles 17 tons of it. That comes to about 1,136,000 pieces of paper. According to "An Inconvenient Truth", if nothing is done now to stop global warming, all ice glaciers will be gone by 2060. That is within this lifetime.

By that time, if nothing is done, all of New York could be flooded due to the access water. Can students stop it?

"My son is only 8 years old so I have hope that we will start working on change, that we will continue to make progress on reducing pollution, and that we will make conservation of plants and animals a priority," said McCarthy.

"I see signs that give me hope that we will find the will to move forward."

As he is flipping channels, between the commercials from a gas company, he turns the channel again to see a commercial for a gas company. P.P.

They advertise cleaner fuel for the house, car, and everyday lives of customers.

[Global Warning] an issue that should be addressed by our government and should not be put on the back burner," said McMurphy. "Not enough steps are being made to stop it."

Commercialists are not the only advertisements for a cleaner society. When reading the newspaper, many will come upon stories with titles such as, "Scientists Warn of Lake Superior Warming." An Academy Award winning film, "An Inconvenient Truth" which documents former Vice President Al Gore and his crusade against what is happening to the environment, helps inform the public.

"An Inconvenient Truth", if nothing is done now to stop global warming, all ice glaciers will be gone by 2060. That is within this lifetime. By that time, if nothing is done, all of New York could be flooded due to the access water. Can students stop it?

"My son is only 8 years old so I have hope that we will start working on change, that we will continue to make progress on reducing pollution, and that we will make conservation of plants and animals a priority," said McCarthy.

"I see signs that give me hope that we will find the will to move forward."

Benson Math teacher- Kevin Johnson takes a 10 minutes or less shower. That is about 50 gallons of water (5 gal/min).

Junior Samantha Jackson takes about 15 minutes in the shower. That is about 75 gallons of water.

Sophomore Chris Moore takes about a 20 minutes shower. That is about 100 gallons of water.

Senior Jennifer Kallstrom takes about 25 minutes in the shower. That is about 125 gallons of water.

Freshman LaRhonda Parker takes 30 or more minutes in the shower. That is about 150 gallons of water.

What’s going on

- Heat waves and periods of unusually warm weather
- Ocean warming, sea-level rise and coastal flooding
- Glaciers melting
- Arctic and Antarctic warming

How to fix it

- Recycle everything you can: newspapers, cans, glass bottles and jars, aluminum foil, motor oil, scrap metal, etc.
- Pull weeds instead of using herbicides.
- Don’t leave water running needlessly.
- Turn off the lights, TV, or other electrical appliances when you are out of a room.
- Make step changes, that we will continue to make progress on reducing pollution, and that we will make conservation of plants and animals a priority," said McCarthy.

"I see signs that give me hope that we will find the will to move forward."

Benson Math teacher- Kevin Johnson takes a 10 minutes or less shower. That is about 50 gallons of water (5 gal/min).

Junior Samantha Jackson takes about 15 minutes in the shower. That is about 75 gallons of water.

Sophomore Chris Moore takes about a 20 minutes shower. That is about 100 gallons of water.

Senior Jennifer Kallstrom takes about 25 minutes in the shower. That is about 125 gallons of water.

Freshman LaRhonda Parker takes 30 or more minutes in the shower. That is about 150 gallons of water.
STDs: infecting a county near you

Mary Davis
World Editor

As many students roam the halls in between passing periods they see the adorable couples up against the walls. Of course they are all over each other like they have not seen each other in years instead of the 90 minutes during class. Little do they know that the Douglas County Health Department says that teenagers have an 82 percent chance that both of them have had sex with another person, which also means there’s a 78 percent chance, compared to any other age group, that it was unprotected. They don’t know that being a teenager increases the chance for them to catch a disease from the person they love. It will not take long for rumors of the “clap”, “the clap”, or “pox” to get around. It takes about 30 seconds for word to get out about anything in this school,” said school nurse Mary Kay Henningsen. Even though it may take only seconds for new rumors to spread, it takes several days and numerous tests to know if someone has a sexually transmitted disease (STD).

Basic screenings are a blood test to check for syphilis, chlamydia, and gonorrhea. We offer it for HIV also, but you can opt out of it,” said B.J. Thiele, a nurse and Clinic Coordinator of the Douglas County STD Clinic.

According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), Douglas County remains in the top five in the nation for STDs. More than 1,200 reported cases of an STD in Douglas County were among high school age students between the years 2002-2005. “We predominantly work with the ages ranging from 15-29 but we accept people as young as 13,” Thiele said.

A common teenage disease is Gonorrhea, also known as “the clap” or “drip.” Each year, 700,000 people in the US receive new gonorrhea infections. Men may have severe symptoms or experience none for up to 30 days. For women, they usually have little to no symptoms and they are cured.

The worst is the incurable human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), also known as “Has the Package,” “HIV,” which can be treated but not cured. Though, HIV and AIDS are different, they are connected. AIDS is a more developed form of HIV, and is only treatable for the symptoms and not the disease. If someone contracts HIV or AIDS, doctors can put them on a triple cocktail of medications, or Highly Active Antiretroviral Therapy (HAART). HAART combines three or more antiviral HIV medications into a daily routine.

Anyone can contract an STD. If someone does have an STD and does not want to tell their parents, they could go to the Douglas County STD Clinic, the Charles Drew Clinic, or One World Community Health Center. The Douglas County STD Clinic changes a $15 fee but is open for people as young as 13.

Each month an average of 272 people are treated at the Douglas County STD Clinic. Some students have already decreased their chance of a clinic visit, by deciding sex is not for them.

They said, “Sex is dumb. Sex just leads to pregnant people and diseases. I do not want,” Sophomore Emilia Galven said. “Sex is dumb. Sex just leads to pregnant people and diseases. I do not want,” Sophomore Emilia Galven said. “Sex is dumb. Sex just leads to pregnant people and diseases. I do not want,” Sophomore Emilia Galven said. “Sex is dumb. Sex just leads to pregnant people and diseases. I do not want,” Sophomore Emilia Galven said.

Some are unsure why Omaha decided to annex Elkhorn, but feel money was an issue. “I don’t know why Omaha wants to take over Elkhorn in the first place. I think they should stay their own town and not be a part of Omaha,” said English teacher Miss Tawnia Cunningham. “It’s probably just about money.”

A representative of Mayor Mike Fahey assured that opinions like Cunningham’s and others are not true. “In order to protect Omaha’s ability to grow, it was necessary to annex Elkhorn before they grew to be over 10,000 people,” the representative said. Elkhorn’s residents will see few, if any, changes to their city. He assured they will maintain the quality of life they already have and it will not affect local school districts.

Since Omaha’s acquisition, some students have considered what it would be like if Elkhorn took over Omaha and feel it wouldn’t make a difference. “I never really put much thought into it. In Omaha taking over Elkhorn, but if they had the chance to take over us, I guess it would be ok,” said freshman Nequa McBride. Other students feel things will not change because to them Elkhorn was already a part of Omaha before this annexation occurred. “To me this doesn’t make a difference, it’s still just going to be Omaha,” said junior Shaun Glenn.

Now officially Elkhorn’s mail will be addressed to Omaha, Neb., but unofficially they will maintain the name of Elkhorn.
Editorial came, but life went on as usual. awe which passed as fast as it covered the story, there was suspended for bringing a (and even staff), a student cooler” talk between students ammunition for “water time. of onlookers and preventing Benson, stirring the curiosity erupted in the east wing of that a large gang related fight was at approximately 9:27 a.m after a four day weekend. It's on us, folks it, especially when we know what is going on around us. But what is it,” per se? It is animal testing. It is exploiting animals for entertainment in movies, circuses, etc. It is killing animals for the sake of looking and smelling pretty. It is even killing animals so that our own family pets may eat well. What can we do about it? There are many things, such as pushing all meat out of our diet, protesting companies like KFC, and boycotting companies that test on animals. I am certainly not asking you to become a vegetarian cold turkey, however, I would like to request that you take these few and simple steps: Try, just for a week, cutting any particular meat out of your diet. I suggest chicken because it is more likely to make you sick and they are also the worst treated animal for food. If you like that lifestyle then stick with it, but if not then feel free to go back to your previous ways. Drop one product, at least, from your life that is tested on animals or harms the environment. Makeup is a good starting place for girls; don’t use Maybelline or CoverGirl, but instead try Redken. For boys, try switching cologne; use Nivea instead of TAG or AXE. Try not to use products made by Johnson & Johnson, Proctor and Gamble, and Colgate-Palmolive as much as possible, I know, I know. They each have a vast selection of products, but it only takes a few seconds in the grocery store to check the labels and shop around for a less harmful, more ethical product. If you see or know of anyone exploiting animals for fights around your area, with all due respect, please try to convince them to stop. If that doesn’t work, don’t feel guilty about sending an anonymous tip to the police. Have you thought about these steps? Have you acted a few of them out? Congratulations, you’re on your way to being an animal advocate. Keep up the great work, and remember. Would you want your own pet to go through what millions of animals are going through right this minute? Sincerely, Casey Mourer

Letter to the Editor

Senior Casey Mourer addresses the issues on animal testing and vegetarianism

My fellow Bunnies,

As a senior, I’ve seen my fair share of phases. But to call this a phase would be a downright lie. As Americans, and as humans, we have many rights: freedoms of almost anything, the right to volunteer for medical testing, the right to use ethical products, etc., etc.

However, many of us fail to use some of those rights, be it by ignorance, arrogance and sometimes both. But the worst that we are, as the dominant species on Earth, can do is sit idly by and do nothing about it, especially when we know what is going on around us.

But the only difference in this instance is that he was caught. It’s not as if we are living in some dream society where whenever you enter school doors everything suddenly becomes safe. Metal detectors may be able to stop a few students from bringing in firearms or knives, but in all of the craziness of the morning it is easy to let one weapon slip between the cracks.

In order to prevent this, there would be guards stationed at all of the entrances, extra security at the north entrance, and thousands of dollars to make them effective. Eventually, it all comes down to us. We’re at that age where we want more responsibility, we want more freedom, we want more respect. How do we expect to get that if we can’t keep ourselves in check.

We need attendants in the bathroom to make sure we don’t show shoes in the toilet. We need five people watching ourselves in check.

We need attendants in the corner to make sure we don’t make too much of a mess. We need metal detectors to keep people from illegal arms dealing. We need to make a critical change if we want to live our lives without CCT (Closed Circuit Television) watching over every move.

What can we do about this? We can:

1. Watch what we eat and try to cut down on our meat consumption. Try for a week, cutting any one meat out of your diet. It can be chicken, beef, you name it. If it’s killing a living creature to make you feel full, try making an effort to eat meat less.
2. Don’t use any products that are tested on animals.
3. If you have money to spend, try to find companies that do not test on animals and shop with them. It’s a great way to win with money. If you believe in something, try to make a change.
4. Make sure that your friends and family are doing the same thing. If everyone makes a change, they will have a better chance of surviving.

There are many ways to make a change, but the most important thing is that we try. It’s not as if we are living in some dream society where we can just do what we want and not worry about the consequences. We need to take responsibility for our actions and make sure that we are doing what is right.

My fellow Bunnies,

As a senior, I’ve seen my fair share of phases. But to call this a phase would be a downright lie. As Americans, and as humans, we have many rights: freedoms of almost anything, the right to volunteer for medical testing, the right to use ethical products, etc., etc.

However, many of us fail to use some of those rights, be it by ignorance, arrogance and sometimes both. But the worst that we are, as the dominant species on Earth, can do is sit idly by and do nothing about it, especially when we know what is going on around us.

But the only difference in this instance is that he was caught. It’s not as if we are living in some dream society where whenever you enter school doors everything suddenly becomes safe. Metal detectors may be able to stop a few students from bringing in firearms or knives, but in all of the craziness of the morning it is easy to let one weapon slip between the cracks.

In order to prevent this, there would be guards stationed at all of the entrances, extra security at the north entrance, and thousands of dollars to make them effective. Eventually, it all comes down to us. We’re at that age where we want more responsibility, we want more freedom, we want more respect. How do we expect to get that if we can’t keep ourselves in check.

We need attendants in the bathroom to make sure we don’t show shoes in the toilet. We need five people watching ourselves in check.

We need attendants in the corner to make sure we don’t make too much of a mess. We need metal detectors to keep people from illegal arms dealing. We need to make a critical change if we want to live our lives without CCT (Closed Circuit Television) watching over every move.

What can we do about this? We can:

1. Watch what we eat and try to cut down on our meat consumption. Try for a week, cutting any one meat out of your diet. It can be chicken, beef, you name it. If it’s killing a living creature to make you feel full, try making an effort to eat meat less.
2. Don’t use any products that are tested on animals.
3. If you have money to spend, try to find companies that do not test on animals and shop with them. It’s a great way to win with money. If you believe in something, try to make a change.
4. Make sure that your friends and family are doing the same thing. If everyone makes a change, they will have a better chance of surviving.

There are many ways to make a change, but the most important thing is that we try. It’s not as if we are living in some dream society where we can just do what we want and not worry about the consequences. We need to take responsibility for our actions and make sure that we are doing what is right.

My fellow Bunnies,

As a senior, I’ve seen my fair share of phases. But to call this a phase would be a downright lie. As Americans, and as humans, we have many rights: freedoms of almost anything, the right to volunteer for medical testing, the right to use ethical products, etc., etc.

However, many of us fail to use some of those rights, be it by ignorance, arrogance and sometimes both. But the worst that we are, as the dominant species on Earth, can do is sit idly by and do nothing about it, especially when we know what is going on around us.

But the only difference in this instance is that he was caught. It’s not as if we are living in some dream society where whenever you enter school doors everything suddenly becomes safe. Metal detectors may be able to stop a few students from bringing in firearms or knives, but in all of the craziness of the morning it is easy to let one weapon slip between the cracks.

In order to prevent this, there would be guards stationed at all of the entrances, extra security at the north entrance, and thousands of dollars to make them effective. Eventually, it all comes down to us. We’re at that age where we want more responsibility, we want more freedom, we want more respect. How do we expect to get that if we can’t keep ourselves in check.

We need attendants in the bathroom to make sure we don’t show shoes in the toilet. We need five people watching ourselves in check.

We need attendants in the corner to make sure we don’t make too much of a mess. We need metal detectors to keep people from illegal arms dealing. We need to make a critical change if we want to live our lives without CCT (Closed Circuit Television) watching over every move.

What can we do about this? We can:

1. Watch what we eat and try to cut down on our meat consumption. Try for a week, cutting any one meat out of your diet. It can be chicken, beef, you name it. If it’s killing a living creature to make you feel full, try making an effort to eat meat less.
2. Don’t use any products that are tested on animals.
3. If you have money to spend, try to find companies that do not test on animals and shop with them. It’s a great way to win with money. If you believe in something, try to make a change.
4. Make sure that your friends and family are doing the same thing. If everyone makes a change, they will have a better chance of surviving.

There are many ways to make a change, but the most important thing is that we try. It’s not as if we are living in some dream society where we can just do what we want and not worry about the consequences. We need to take responsibility for our actions and make sure that we are doing what is right.
“I’ve done heard it so much it doesn’t bother me at all,” Sophomore Michael Lee. “There’s a difference; when it ends an ‘a’, you’re cool with them, but when it’s with an ‘er’ it’s disrespectful,” Freshman Bryan Grant. “If you use it jokingly, you’re not really offending anybody,” Sophomore Michael Hudson. “It’s not as bad as most people think it is, it just means ignorant.” Sophomore Jared Pike. “Nigger – a black man with a slavery chain around his neck; Nigga – a black man with a gold chain on his neck.” Tupac Shakur
The “N” word: in our own words

Two students discuss how they feel about the “N” word and why they feel that way

Jeda Robinson, 12

I use the “N” word because it's a habit. It has become part of my vocabulary. It's not only black culture, but with what is considered "black," it should never be a term of endearment to call another ignorant. It's also never okay for a white person to use the “N” word because of the negative history behind it. It's extremely hurtful and really in bad taste. It's not okay for my friends to use the word because it shows a lack of appreciation for your people and culture. To me the “N” word means ignorance. It's an insult to what several people fought hard for. People like Martin Luther King would be disgusted at what today's black people define as good. To other people the “N” word is just a word no more, no less. It has become skewed to mean no more than “dude” or “man.” It's like one large misinforming. The word is important around school because the school has a large black population, that combined with the fact that the word is carelessly spewed from the mouths of many students, makes it well used. I do not support the word because of the negative history behind it. I respect my peers. The word is important around school because of its users to diminish its use.

Jake Barrickman, 10

I said it once, and I ended up getting jumped for it. I had no idea what was so wrong with me saying it. It is a word with its own set of rules. "Nigger" was always used, and they have nothing to worry about, it's ok. While if another person says it there will be consequences. According to the Martin Luther King assembly, Reverend Eure explained the fact that we need to wipe that word from our vocabulary, I find it ironic that the ones who get so mad at people, who say it to them, were the ones screaming it while walking out of the assembly.

The word is like illegal drugs, even if it gets outlawed, it will still be used without any fear. Here in school, we use much worse language, the "F" word for instance; there is not a day when someone doesn't hear it used. If a person says it in the halls, a teacher might say “watch your language." If it is used in the classroom “That's a referral, go to your administrator." It's always frowned upon. The "N" word is different though, when it's said that same person who told you to go to your administrator pretend not to hear it, and for those teachers who are brave enough to say something will at the most only give you a warning. I do not support the word, I do not think anything will ever be done about it, but I do my part and try not to use it.

Rules of a word

Jeremy Bagby

"Nigger" is a word frequently heard in school music, and on the streets. The word, which stems from "nigga," has gained popularity in the black community, but it has also developed an equal amount of controversy.

The word "Nigga" is a term used to greet, compliment, or put down a person of the African American ethnicity, but this word comes with rules. The first of the unspoken rules is no person of any other race can use the word and the word can only be used with an "a" ending, not an "e" ending.

These rules, however, have not taken away from this word’s history and weight; to many, it is still offensive.

"Personally I find it offensive and I believe that my feelings on that comes from my age," said Dean of Students Rich Hood. "When it was used when I was young, it was used to be derogatory. It was used to put down somebody, so when I hear younger people use it, it's offensive." Many teachers already believe the word should not be used by anybody and trust it like any other curse word.

"My personal feeling is even if you're black or white or Hispanic or Asian, we treat it the same way as any other profanity or vulgarity," said Hood. "It's not allowed."

Students still continue to use the word because most of them do not see the harm and don't think its offensive. Some students have heard this word used throughout their lives and it has become a part of their regular vocabulary.

"For being saying it all my life, I grew up hearing it," senior Jason Jackson said. "White people can't use it, nobody can say it but black people; it's disrespectful for them to say it to us," said Jackson.

In Bryson there are many students who use the word simply because they hear their parents or grandparents using it.

"I use it rather often, it's like I was known for sayin' it, it was used in my family," said freshman Larry Erye.

The word's vast and disturbing history should cause the number of its users to diminish its use. Ironically the people who started it can no longer use it while the people who were endlessly victimized by it can freely use it to address each other.

"They shouldn't be able to use it because that's not what they are, plus a lot of people got offended when they used it," said junior Leatha Nunn.

Athletic Director Francis Szynskie doesn't agree with the unspoken rule No. 2 states no one can use the old pronunciation "rieger" in the place of the word niggers. Apparently using nigger is offensive but if the "e" and the "i" are dropped, it is just fine.

"To use it doesn't make it any different, it means like hearing the word "frickin'." It's just like using the "F" word, you're just trying to dress up or camouflage the word," said Hood.

Ironically, changing the ending to an already offensive word can make it less offensive, almost friendly. The reason may be that when students look back in any history book or film about the days of racism, "nigger" was always used, therefore that word probably sounds much worse than calling your homeboy "your nigga". I would say nigger is more offensive than if you use an "a," said Erye.

"Back then white folks used to say it to mean and they still say it now," said Nunn.

Currently, the school system is at a loss. Banning the word from use will probably not prevent its use from being used because of the wide range of users.

New York City Councilman Leroy Comrie is heading a movement to try and get the word nigger banned from use all around the country. He has already gotten it symbolically banned in NYC but students are already not following this ban because they don’t find the word offensive.
Ethnic studies teacher Curtis Weber allowed the Gazette to interview his first hour class to discuss what they thought about the “N” word.

SS: Is this an issue just for black people, should white people leave it alone?

JJ: If the word offends you, it doesn’t matter what your race is.

JC: I believe that as a generation as a whole, we have become desensitized to the word. Because we just hear it so much that it has become part of our everyday lives.

Mr. Weber: Just to add to that… Ludacris has his own take on that word. He said the purpose of the use of the word today is to take away from the meaning and by what Jeff says, you know, “Why is it okay for someone who’s black to say it but for someone who’s white to say it?” I think that Ludacris’ point is kind of shown there by saying it’s desensitizing that word because of the fact that there is a culture today that CAN say that word, and nobody else can. NOBODY else can.

RB: I think everybody is involved because it’s not just a black society and it’s not just a white society, it’s a white and black society so everybody knows what’s going on.

SS: What comes to mind when you hear the “N” word?

RB: It’s like the same thing as going up to someone and saying, “What up, dude?” or something like that, you know?

-JC

“IT’S THE SAME THING AS GOING UP TO SOMEONE AND SAYING, ‘WHAT UP, DUDE?’ OR SOMETHING LIKE THAT, YOU KNOW?”

AT: For me, I don’t try to use it. But, if I see a person of another race that does use it, I really don’t care because it really doesn’t offend me. I try not to use the word, but I try to let them know, “Hey, it’s not cool to use it. Because other African Americans do not like other races saying that word. So just be careful where you say it. But to me, if you say it, you say it.

Mr. Weber: My question would just be why would someone who’s white want to say it?

AT: Just to fit in.

JC: Well, if you’re a hate filled person, you’re going to want to say it.

Mr. Weber: Right, so if it could be a hate filled word, but why would you want to say that word to try to fit in?

JC: That’s just the culture that it is today, with the music and everything.

AP: Some people refer to white people as “white boy” and “cracker,” and I mean, I don’t take offense to it personally.

Anonymous: “Or bouncy”?

AP: But yeah, why should that be okay?

Anonymous: Yeah, like if a white person said, “oh yeah, look at the BLACK boy right there,” that would be a big issue and everything.

Mr. Weber: So it’s like some reverse discrimination, sure.

GV: I would want to know why an individual would want to use the “N” word to begin with. Because, can’t you just greet a person by their name? I think it’s stupid.

JC: Well, it’s like the same thing as going up to someone and saying, “What up, dude?” or something like that, you know?

LO: But “dude” doesn’t have a historical background to it.

SB: Say you were back then and someone would have called you a “nigger” people all around you would have beat the crap out of that one guy.

Anonymous: Yeah, that’s why it changed.

JC: But that’s your ancestors who died to get you where you are today.

AP: If someone’s offended by it, then they shouldn’t say it.

SS: So you mentioned your ancestors and the legacy of the word. How do your parents and grandparents feel about that word?

AT: My grandma’s like, “Don’t say that word.”

JJ: My great-grandparents are still really racist. Every time I walk in to go see one of them, they’re just always saying the word and everything. They’re always calling people “niggers” and everything. Oh well, they’re going to die in a couple years anyway.

Mr. Weber: Unfortunately, we just saw a video where people were trying to sanction segregation in 2002, a small segregated prom, you know? Unfortunately Jeff, your great grands is not the only one out there with those feelings.

SS: After the Michael Richards tirade, where he openly called audience members the “N” word and used racial slurs referring to lynching.

AT: He talked about hanging people upside down, sticking a fork in their asses.

SS: People started taking a stance on the word. For instance, a mayor in Texas actually banned the word, and if the person saying the word is reported by another person, they could have to pay up to a $500 fine.

JC: It’s breaking your first amendment right. Even though it’s a bad word, it’s still freedom of speech, and that’s taking away your freedom of speech right, there.

JJ: It’s unconstitutional.

SS: So Michael Richards apologized on the Late Show with David Letterman.

Mr. Weber: Did you see that? It looked pretty scripted to me.

SS: Should someone just apologize for something like that and expect everything to be okay or should there be punishment in a court of law?

AT: I see why he apologized, but a lot of people just see it as a publicity stunt.

SS: Unfortunately, we just saw a video where people were trying to sanction segregation in 2002, a small segregated prom, you know? Unfortunately Jeff, your great grands is not the only one out there with those feelings.

RB: I think it’s another meaning from what it used to be, another race that does use it, I really don’t care because it really doesn’t offend me. I try not to use the word, but I try to let them know, “Hey, it’s not cool to use it. Because other African Americans do not like other races saying that word. So just be careful where you say it. But to me, if you say it, you say it.

JC: Why should a black person? It’s really kind of not fair why should a white person say it.

AP: If a white person says it, everyone makes a big deal out of it.

AT: Mr. Weber: If a white person can’t say it, why should a black person?

JJ: It’s really kind of not fair.

JC: Right, so it could be a hate filled word, but why would you want to say that word to try to fit in?

Mr. Weber: That’s just the culture that it is today, with the music and everything.

AP: Just to add to that… Ludacris has his own take on that word. He said the purpose of the use of the word today is to take away from the meaning and by what Jeff says, you know, “Why is it okay for someone who’s black to say it but for someone who’s white to say it?” I think that Ludacris’ point is kind of shown there by saying it’s desensitizing that word because of the fact that there is a culture today that CAN say that word, and nobody else can. NOBODY else can.

RB: I think everybody is involved because it’s not just a black society and it’s not just a white society, it’s a white and black society so everybody knows what’s going on.

SS: What comes to mind when you hear the “N” word?

RB: It’s like the same thing as going up to someone and saying, “What up, dude?” or something like that, you know?

-JC

“This is an issue just for black people, should white people leave it alone?”

“I think everybody is involved...it’s a white and black society...everybody knows what’s going on.”

-JB

“My great grandparents are still really racist, they’re just always saying the word.”

-JL

What the students have to say

Can white people say the “N” word even if it is to friends?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>130</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

out of 200 polled

Should cities be allowed to ban the “N” word?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>113</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Should there be a rule against the “N” word in schools?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>122</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Out of 200 polled
A word to my honkies and homies

Nick Daehling
Opinions Editor

If I want to call one of my black friends a nigga I have every right to, just as long as I mean it in a friendly manner. The same terms apply if I want to call a Latino friend a “beaner” or what if I want to call my Asian friend a “chink” or a “yap” – it’s OK as long as it’s not mean or hateful.

In fact, it could be the best way to solve all of our hate crime problems. A lot of teens are using derogatory words in a friendly way to establish relationships. If adults and younger learn to add these words to their vocabulary, imagine the possibilities.

Forget that these kinds of words have been used for ages to demean, belittle, disparage and denigrate the various races, religions, sexes, statuses, ages, etc. Those times have passed when a word of said unforgivable nature could render a class silent or send shivers down the spine and it’s time for change.

I’ve started to refer to all of my white friends as “honkies,” “whities,” and “crackers.” They sure enjoy it and gladly reply with a humorous “Shut up!” accompanied by a smile.

This of course means that they approve of what I’m doing and respect it unhesitantly.

As a matter of fact, I encourage people to use the word “nigga” because it is, by far, the most popular hate-word in the universal dictionary of hate-words.

There are no downsides, only endless possibilities. Animosity and hate crimes will be things of the past.

By using this word in an endearing form as many African American people are already doing, we may soon alter the true, hateful meaning of the word altogether.