# The Hatchet

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# Mom finds treatment for junior's uncommon disease

*Photo by* Veronica Bonfiglio
**Mom and son. Aren't they cute? This is a very lucky junior, his mother is very dedicated**

Staff Member
*Staff Position*

Veronica Bonfiglio, junior Brent Bonfiglio's mother, has possibly found a treatment for her son's disease, neurodegeneration with brain iron accumulation (NBIA). There supposedly is no known cure for this disease, and most drugs cannot improve the condition because they cannot cross the blood brain barrier and remove the excess iron from the brain. Any other drugs would deprive the body of necessary iron and cause patients to become anemic. The drug Veronica found, Deferiprone, can cross the blood brain barrier.

According to the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, NBIA is a "rare, inherited, neurological movement disorder characterized by progressive degeneration of the nervous system." Some of the symptoms include involuntary muscle contractions and an inability to coordinate movements. These symptoms are caused by an unusually high level of iron in the brain.

Veronica is part of an online support group for people with NBIA. A man in Iceland posted a press release about a drug in France that, although used to treat a different disorder, can cross over the barrier into the brain and help reduce iron levels. After doing research, the Bonfiglios decided to pursue this option.

In order to be able to use the drug in the United States, a doctor needed to make a compassionate use case for Brent to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) that this drug, Deferiprone, was the only treatment that could help him.

Veronica found a doctor at the Children's Hospital in Oakland who uses Deferiprone to treat a different disorder. They weighed the risks and benefits and decided it would be best to go through with it. It took a lot of paperwork for the doctor to make a compassionate use case to the FDA as well as at the hospital level.

Brent was the first child in the United States to receive Deferiprone for his condition. He started treatment in November 2007. To date there have been no side-effects. The drug has helped stop the disease from advancing in his body as well as alleviating the current symptoms.

Since taking Deferiprone, Brent has regained more coordination, balance and trunk control.

"These gains can be noticeable in the little things that we take for granted like being able to sit without back support [or] hold a cup without dropping it," Veronica said.

He is also able to walk better, still with assistance, but with more ease. His speech has become clearer and he is able to use his video game controllers again.

# Gardening the way to green pastures and sunny fields

Staff Member
*Staff Position*

ASBmembers redistributed large planters filled with an assortment of wildflowers around campus over the past few weeks.

The students put in a brick pathway outside of the Eggers building, and they also trimmed plants around school, with student activities director Helen Paris wielding an electric edger. Oh happy days.

These efforts are appreciated, but some students feel the money should go to school improvements, such as new books and bathroom locks. However, ASB isn't authorized to use student funds on such items.

Senior John Rasure said although the improvements are helpful "they should have done this a long time ago, at this point the money could be better spent elsewhere."

Paris thought of the idea to move the planters from their original position near the Eggers building because she thought that students were not noticing them. So ASB moved the planters to more noticeable areas, and work during fourth period to water the new flowers and make sure the additions maintain their beauty.

Junior Julien Malard, president of the New Leaf Club, said their club submitted a plan to ASB to place plants around school throughout the year, but then ASB moved ahead with this project separately.

"I first was a bit disappointed because I wanted our club to do the planting," Malard said.

However, ASB agreed with the New Leaf Club to continue adding flowers, trees and other plants around the school with the help of the club. They will plant to celebrate Earth Day, April 22.

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*Photo by* Kaylee Miu
**Ben and some other guy laying bricks for the walkway that was made.**

# Speech and Debate places

Christine Harms
*Staff Reporter*

The Speech and Debate team was invited to the Richard D. King Annual Youth Speech Contest put on by the Niles Rotary at Washington Hospital, Feb. 4.

Seniors Seth Neumann, Emily Khuc and John Rasure took second, third and fourth places, respectively. Senior Kokei Otosi of Fremont Christian School took first place. She was the only other competitor present. Although Washington could have sent more speakers, they did not want to overload Fremont Christian, who was planning on bringing two students, one of which was unable to attend the event.

Both Neumann and Khuc have participated in the speech contest in the past.

"I really wanted to win this year. I haven't been able to place first in this contest in previous years and it was my last chance before I graduated," Neumann said.

Traditionally, only WHS and Fremont Christian School are invited to this event. Both schools are in the Niles Rotary Club. The competitors were to present a speech corresponding to the idea of "the future of Rotary in your hands." The event was judged by three Rotary members. Otosi, the event winner, will move on to the area level of the competition.

The speech contest is named after Fremont resident Richard D. King. He was the president of Rotary International from 2001 to 2002. He has been involved in the Niles Rotary Club since 1968.

The Rotary is an international community service organization.

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*Photo by* Harris Afridi
**Senior Ben Rich eats a burrito**

# Eat Chipotle

Harris Afridi
*Staff Reporter*

Senior class treasurer Ben Rich organized a Chipotle burrito fundraiser from 5 to 9 pm, March 11. This was the second fundraiser Washington had with Chipotle.

"Students come in with their flyers; we count them off, take our share, and give the rest to Washington," Chipotle manager Jose Corgorno said.

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# WASC swoops in and reports on the school

Staff Member
*Staff Position*

The Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) had their ceremonious evaluation of the school from March 7 to March 10. The committee members were given an itinerary from WASC coordinator Brynn Osicka.

"I helped organize the teacher input in the report. I wrote sections of the report. I organized the actual visit with the committee. I did none of these things alone," Osicka said.

The committee was given a tour of the school from ASB members, and in the following three days, they met with teachers and administrations and visited almost every classroom. A student focus group was also included in the evaluation.

The focus group included members from some of our clubs on campus such as MeCHA, Gay-Straight Alliance, Black Student Union and Interact. There were also students from the African American Male Focus Group, the Multimedia Art Academy and a group of juniors who have been in the families program since their freshmen year. They discussed things such as school atmosphere, preparation for college and the standardized tests.

"The chairman of WASC said we should bottle [clubs and support groups that allow a non-discriminatory environment] and sell it to other schools," junior David Agorastos said. The report gave out the traditional points of strength. The report gave out the traditional points of strength.

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