

12.11.09

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Published biweekly by and for the Upper School students of Riverfield Country Day School in Tulsa, OK

VOLUME IV NO. 7

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

Courage is every virtue at its testing point. — C. S. Lewis



Need any last minute gift ideas? ..... 3



Mr. Pond, tear down this wall! ..... 4

The COMMONS is published biweekly during the school year by the Upper School Newspaper class at Riverfield Country Day School, 2433 W. 61st Street, Tulsa, Oklahoma 74132. No issues are published the weeks of Fall Campout, Winter Break and Spring Break.

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EDITOR-IN-CHIEF  
Matt Faeth

SPORTS EDITOR  
Tristan Hightower

A&E EDITOR  
Marisa Morgan

OPINION EDITOR  
Malachi Keeter

FEATURES EDITOR  
Ramsey Talladivedula

PHOTOGRAPHY EDITOR  
Kaitlyn Richardson

DESIGN EDITORS  
Ryan Peake, captain  
Chris Dickey  
Kenzie Zwayner  
Claire White

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS  
Madeline Berry  
Hayden Mears  
Nick Pond  
Omar Rana  
Bryce Rossler

NEWSPAPER ADVISERS  
Mr. Daniel Hodges  
Mrs. Patricia Dickey

weekend weather

SAT 46

SUN 59

INFORMATION FROM WEATHER.COM, 12/11, 9:30 A.M.

Don't forget to order your yearbook before the end of the year to get the best price (\$42). See Mrs. Long for order forms...

# Capturing memories



By Madeline Berry  
11TH GRADE

We all love the end of the school year. Class trips, the lock-in, graduation, the start of summer, and finals(!) are just some of the joys of in the final chapter of each academic year. This all comes to a climax when you receive your yearbook.

Looking at a yearbook is like going on a trip back in time. The pictures taken throughout the year bring back a flood of good memories that you will want to remember for the rest of your life. Thankfully, your yearbook stores those memories so that each time you forget, all you have to do is flip through the pages to relive the past.

For most of you, the only time you think about the yearbook is when you receive it and when you look at it. Some students, however, think about the yearbook throughout the entire school year. The yearbook does not simply appear in nice packed boxes at the front office every

May. It takes many hours of dedicated work to compile such a complete history of the academic year.

At Riverfield, the yearbook is created by approximately 15 Upper School students under the expert guidance of Mrs. Knight and Mr. Rowell. Every student knows that there is an elective choice for Yearbook, but most don't really think of the immense task that these few staffers have before them.

Not only is every grade represented in the yearbook, but also the preschoolers, faculty, and as many events as the book can possibly hold. But the staff doesn't want to merely document the events of the year. They want to capture the spirit of the events, the individual memories and thoughts of students and faculty. The yearbook is meant to tell a story.

Each year the story is different, and each year the yearbook staff is challenged to tell the whole story in a unique and memorable way. If you want to be a part of preserving the story of this year at Riverfield, then join our yearbook staff next semester. Every creative mind is welcome!

## Future plans for Upper School expansion

By Bryce Rossler  
10TH GRADE

Freshman Logan Brown is in his first year at Riverfield. At the start of the year, he was assigned locker number 2. Number 2 is a bottom locker in a tightly-crammed spot, situated inconveniently between a wall and a desk.

This leaves me wondering what administrators plan to do about our Upper School facilities. With the 2010-2011 freshman class (projected to be the largest ever at RCDS, with 30 students currently enrolled in 8th grade) looming right around the corner, Riverfield officials

have to do something about our facilities quickly.

Sure, we have the LAC and the TAC, but those are both "temporary" buildings. Only the LAC has lockers, and those are just for middle school students. I thought the LAC was supposed to be temporary, but it's looking like it's not going anywhere any time soon, and the TAC is used primarily for electives and secondary classes.

When asked about the future of the temporary buildings, Mr. Clark said, "The LAC is permanent with an expected life span of 30 years, and the TAC will be moved across from Mr. Knight's building." But that still

leaves questions about future expansion.

According to Mr. Clark, there are plans to build a two-story building next year near the pond, across from the current Upper School building. The building will have a cafeteria and ten classrooms. Construction is expected to take six months, and the cost of the building is approximately \$3 million, or the equivalent of 322 high school students' tuition with a little change left over.

All hypothesizing and planning aside, whatever Riverfield officials do will no doubt be financially bothersome, a tad bit hectic, but in the end it will be

all right. We'll never have the Great Hall that Union has, but we'll always have the Commons. And hopefully, more lockers.



Logan Brown's locker space...  
PHOTO BY KAITLYN RICHARDSON

## Touring colleges

By Marisa Morgan  
STAFF WRITER

As you advance through various grades in high school, you eventually have to make a decision about where you are going to go to college. One of the first steps in making this decision is taking a tour of your college choices.

Most of these tours follow the same format, but some are better than others. The first item on the checklist of a good tour is what kind of swag you score. Most schools give you a t-shirt (except TCU—they're stingy!) and you usually get a water bottle that you have to carry around during the entire tour.

The next important thing is the dorm rooms. Despite all the myths and stories, dorm rooms do not have to be bad. Some of them are actually quite nice. I prefer when a tour takes you inside a dorm room that is being used, as opposed to a model room. This gives you a feel of what it will really look like with a college student's stuff in it.

The final thing you should do on a tour is eat in one of the dining halls. Most colleges will give you a voucher so you can pick whichever one you like. This part is the most important, because if you can't find something you like to eat there, you definitely will not survive your college years.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS FROM THE STAFF OF TheCOMMONS

# 2 Sports

COMING UP IN JANUARY: Upper School building plans, Target vs. Wal-Mart, a failed thrash metal concert, Diet Coke addiction, and much more! . . .

## Fantasy sports are popular at Riverfield

By Tristan Hightower  
SPORTS EDITOR

Fantasy sports have recently caught on big here at Riverfield.

Last year there were only a few leagues and they were lacking people to play in them, but this year there are several big ones. The popular sports for Upper School students are basketball and football.

But how exactly do these leagues work?

Well, one person creates the league from a site like Yahoo or ESPN then invites people to join. Once you have people in the league, it's time for the draft, where you draft

players just like they do in real life.

When everyone has their teams, that's when the fantasy play starts. The league takes the stats from your players' games in real life and plugs them into your matchup against the team you are playing. So if your guy gets 30 points, it adds that to your point total versus the other person's point total.

Although it may seem boring, I think it's a really fun thing to do, because you can do everything from adding and dropping players on your team to trading with other teams in the league. That is definitely one of the highlights of fantasy sports.

Ryan Peake, fantasy owner of both football and basketball teams, says, "Fantasy sports are great to do in your spare time, and the trades and matchups with teams are fun and can get intense!"

Fantasy sports have a pretty core following of the sports lovers out there, but if it sounds interesting to manage your own team of superstars, ask someone you know to let you into their league. If you have any interest in pro sports, you will not be disappointed!



Some of Riverfield's finest fantasy players.  
PHOTO BY KAITLYN RICHARDSON

## 2009-2010 Heisman hopefuls

By Matt Faeth  
STAFF WRITER

Every year at the end of the college football season, an award is given out to the best player in FBS college football. That award is called the Heisman Trophy.

This will be the 75th year this trophy has been awarded to celebrate greatness.

In my mind, there are four candidates that stand out who deserve this coveted trophy. In fourth place, I would put dark horse junior strong safety Eric Berry from the Tennessee Volunteers. He was an All-

American as both a freshman and a junior. As a freshman, he broke the tackle record for freshmen in the SEC conference. He is projected by ESPN to go as a Top 5 pick in the 2010 NFL draft.

Third on my list of Heisman hopefuls is Mark Ingram. He has met and exceeded the expectations that the very successful Alabama football program has bestowed upon him. He has rushed for 1429 yards, 12 touchdowns, and 6.5 yards per carry so far this season.

Second on my list is senior leader for the Florida Gators, Tim Tebow. This year I was

especially impressed with Tebow because of his ability to keep his team winning despite the loss of playmaker receiver Percy Harvin, who is now in the NFL.

Finally, my top pick for the Heisman is Stanford running back Toby Gerhart. Gerhart is a giant power back who seems to bounce off defenders in the end zone time and time again. He has been the reason for domination against big time teams like Oregon, USC, and Notre Dame. He has rushed for 26 touchdowns and 1,736 yards.

Good luck to all these worthy candidates.

## Varsity Basketball Scorecard



PHOTOS COURTESY OF BOOSTER CLUB

11/24	Summit Christian	HOME	Varsity Boys 57-47 (W) Varsity Girls 58-9 (W) Junior Varsity Boys 43-29 (W)
11/30	Prue	Away	Varsity Boys 71-42 (W) Varsity Girls 46-31 (W)
11/30	Town & Country	HOME	Junior Varsity Boys 42-12 (W)
12/1	Dove Academy	HOME	Varsity Boys 79-36 (W) Varsity Girls 58-7 (W)
12/8	Regent Preparatory	Away	Varsity Boys 78-10 (W) Varsity Girls 46-17 (W)

## Kobe's crazy shot

By Tristan Hightower  
SPORTS EDITOR

So there's this NBA basketball player. You may have heard of him. He's one of the top three in the league, and arguably the best.

His name is Kobe Bryant and he's been a baller in the

NBA since he skipped college and went straight to the best draft class of all time. The 1996 NBA draft was where superstars like Allen Iverson and Steve Nash started their careers.

Bryant was just a high school kid from Philadelphia before he was drafted by the Charlotte Hornets, then immediately traded to the Los Angeles Lakers where he still suits up in royal colors to continue his reign as one of the best.

He's averaging one of his best scoring seasons this year at 28.8. In my mind, he is the best leader in the game, keeping his Lakers one of the most dominant teams in the league for years.

Just the other night he made a shot from completely behind the backboard that he somehow managed to get around the suspension wire, making it a legal shot. Unbelievable!

His vertical is amazing on jumpers, making it nearly impossible to block, and giving him the shot just about anywhere on the floor.

He can shoot, he can slash, and he can pass. And, oh yeah, he can SCORE. He plays some of the best defense in the league, and is the one you want with the ball at all times. He is a closer, the Black Mamba, one of the best of all time.

He is Kobe Bryant.



Jordan Buggs tries in vain to duplicate Kobe's amazing shot.  
PHOTO BY KAITLYN RICHARDSON

## Bedlam slaughter: OU 27, OSU 0

By Ryan Peake  
STAFF WRITER

On Saturday November 28, OU was favored by ten points even though they were 6-5 and OSU was 9-2. At home, OU had a 29-game winning streak, and now it is 30. OU defensive lineman

Gerald McCoy says the crowd has so much energy, and the OU players just feed off it.

The last time OU lost at home was in 2005 against TCU. OSU was the only team this year to play in Norman with a

winning record. After the 27-0 slaughter of OSU, OU leads the series 81-16-7.

During the second half, OU's defense held OSU's offense to a stunning 4 yards. For the game, OSU had a total of 109 yards of offense, while OU had a total of 367 yards.

The main factor, though, was Ryan Broyles, who had nine receptions for 109 yards receiving and returned eight punts for 209 yards, including a 87-yard touchdown return. Broyles finished with 316 all-purpose yards.

A questionable touchdown came in the second half when DeMarco Murray dove for the end zone. From the replays, it looked like Murray was a yard short and out of bounds. After reviewing the play, it stood as a touchdown, but it was still a very questionable call.

In the last four bedlams, OSU has been outscored 164-79. With these numbers, it's hard to win a game, and OSU proved it. If you can't score, you most definitely cannot win. OU overall just outplayed the OSU football team as a whole.

# 3 Features

OPENING IN THEATERS FRIDAY, 12/18: "Avatar" (PG-13 action/adventure), "Did You Hear About the Morgans?" (PG-13 comedy)

## Get ready—they're almost here!

By Ramsey Talladivedula  
FEATURES EDITOR

Finals time is here. You have two choices: procrastinate or study. Studying sounds like a good thing to do, but somehow the majority of us always end up procrastinating.

"I will start out with a study guide and fill in the blanks," says Steve Pittman, but he admits, "I spend hours straining my brain because there's so much to do." That's what really happens. Sam DesPrez and Pittman both agree they usually end up watching TV.

It's hard to get ready for finals when we feel so jammed with work. It's very easy to get frustrated when you think about everything we need to do. The

fact that one final can take two hours can really freak someone out. I find it easier to think about one class at a time. On the weekends, just spend the early part of your day on one class, and then later in the day spend time on the other class. This way you can still find time



Is Ryan studying for finals?  
PHOTO BY KAITLYN RICHARDSON

to hang out with your friends and relax.

Ryan Tracy admits, "about a week before is when I will start studying for finals." And this is why teachers don't feel sorry for us. We say we are going to study, most of our teachers give us the information we need to know or a study guide, and still we blow it off until the last minute. This seems to be how it always works out for us.

"You have five finals, right? All you need to do is this. Just devote 30 minutes to each class two times a weekend about a month before finals," says Matt Faeth.

We just have to be responsible and do the right thing...even though finals can scare the studying right out of us.

## DVD Review:

# Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen

By Hayden Mears  
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

The second Transformers flick may have been one of the most hated movies of the year, but that didn't stop it from becoming a box office giant.

This movie tells the story of Sam Witwicky and his girlfriend, Mikaela, and their quest to help the Autobots (the good guys) defeat the Decepticons (the bad guys.)

Instead of searching for the AllSpark, which is what they were after in the first film, the Decepticons are after an object that will help them destroy the world. This time around, a new villain joins the ensemble along with a few amusing new Autobots and Sam's college roommate, Leo.

I recently bought the DVD, and I was surprised at how few special features it had. It may be an enjoyable movie, but I was very disappointed in the lack of extra material the DVD contained.

Now, on to the film itself.

*Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen* is a fun, action-packed, and exciting movie, and I thoroughly enjoyed seeing it when it was in theaters. But, like all movies, it wasn't perfect. The action sequences were great, but so much was going on at once that it was hard to tell what was happen-

ing. Everything moved so fast that I felt dazed as I left the theater.

The story could have made more sense, and the director, Michael Bay, didn't do much character development, which was another of the movie's weaknesses.

But all in all, this Transformers was still an entertaining movie despite a few problems here and there. The DVD is sure to be on a lot of holiday wish lists this year. And since this is primarily a DVD review, I will rate both the movie and the DVD.

Movie: 4 stars  
DVD: 2 stars



How disappointing. Not a single one of these transforms into Megan Fox.  
PHOTO BY KAITLYN RICHARDSON

WEDNESDAY, 12/16  
9-11am — History  
1-3pm — English

THURSDAY, 12/17  
9-11am — Spanish/German  
1-3pm — Math

FRIDAY, 12/18  
9-11am — Science  
Winter Break begins

## Game Review: Pandemic 2

By Omar Rana  
10TH GRADE

Have many of you been watching the news and hearing about the terrible swine flu pandemic? With all the talk of flus and other diseases, one can wonder if we will ever degrade ourselves from the inevitability that is the modern pandemic.

However I found the perfect remedy for all the pandemics around us. Want to know what it is? OK, I don't really have a remedy for all

these diseases. However, I did find a game called Pandemic 2. The game is a virtual reality show where you make your own disease, then you infect the world with your mutant disease.

You can give your disease certain traits, such as realistic or relaxed. You can choose to make it a virus, bacteria or parasite. You can make it airborne, waterborne, rodent-borne, insect-borne or a combination of all four. You can give your disease specific symptoms, and you can make it resistant to just about anything.

As a avid player and master of the game, here is what 10<sup>th</sup> grader Caitlin Pond has to say about it. "I love the game and it's awesome and addicting...except for the dreaded Madagascar."

For those of you who aren't familiar with Madagascar, it's a large island nation off the coast of Africa. It is always the hardest obstacle of the game, because it is difficult to attack an island nation with a mutant disease. Because of the dreaded Madagascar, I give this game 4 stars.

## Holiday gift giving at my house

By Marisa Morgan  
STAFF WRITER

It is that time of year again, when everyone must figure out what gifts to get for friends and family. This can be especially challenging for a teenager. I give all my friends the same gift

every year, and they all love it and have come to expect it. Instead of giving them plain lotion, I give them a travel-sized Love Spell body spray with a \$10 gift card to their favorite fast food establishment.

The next person I shop for is my mother, the most difficult

one on the list. She never actually tells me what she wants. She thinks this is nice, but I find it really infuriating. If anyone has any good "Mom gift" ideas that aren't from Bath & Body Works, I would like to hear them.

The next person I shop for is my sibling. Siblings are usually a little greedier and have long lists of things they want. I simply get my brother the cheapest thing on his list.

Finally, the easiest person to shop for in my family is my father. We have had a system down since I was in the 8th grade.

On December 16, he always sticks a piece of paper behind the picture on my door listing the name of the CD he would like to receive that year. It must be done stealthily so my mother won't find out. (She strongly believes in the secrets of Christmas.) In my opinion, this is how all Christmas gifts should be done.



Gift bags are definitely the way to go when wrapping gifts.  
PHOTO BY KAITLYN RICHARDSON

## A killer kangaroo

By Malachi Keeter  
OPINION EDITOR

On November 23, a man in Victoria, Australia was walking his dog, Rocky, on his farm property when they found a five foot tall kangaroo sleeping in the grass.

The animal woke when the pair walked by. Rocky began barking and chased the kangaroo to a nearby pond on the property. The kangaroo and Rocky then engaged in the pond, where the kangaroo held the dog underwater.

When the man dove into the pond to rescue Rocky, the kangaroo attacked him as well,

kicking him and gashing open his forehead and abdomen. Then the kangaroo held him underwater along with the dog.

After a vicious underwater battle, the man elbowed the kangaroo in the throat and it retreated, giving the man and dog time to get away.

Rocky is fine, though a little waterlogged. The man was hospitalized, and though badly beaten, is expected to be fully healed and functioning soon.

Experts at the hospital agreed that this man will have the one of the greatest stories ever to tell at social gatherings. The kangaroo could not be reached for comment.



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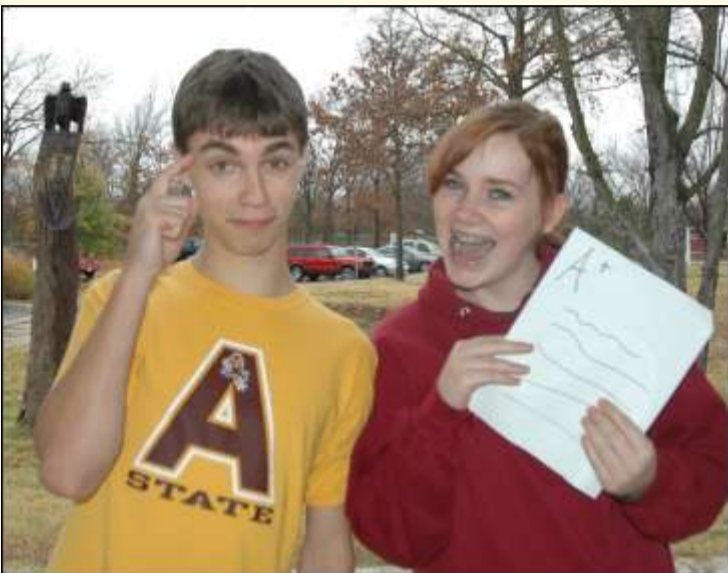
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# 4 Opinion

A BIGTHANKS to these Contributing Writers for their help on this issue:  
Madeline Berry, Hayden Mears, Nick Pond, Omar Rana, and Bryce Rossler.

## A Debate: Grades vs. Learning



Matt and Ramsey demonstrate their personal views on the most important thing about education. PHOTO BY KAITLYN RICHARDSON

By Ramsey Talladivedula  
STAFF WRITER

When you get a paper or test back, what's the first thing you look for? Your grade. And that's the same thing a college will look at when you're applying.

Grades aren't everything in the world, but they do reflect on you. Your boss won't give you an A or F on a task. They will simply tell you they are pleased with your work or leave the office because you are fired.

Criticism is necessary to understand what you've done wrong. You have to listen to it, because if you don't and you mess up on your next chance, it's your fault. You have no one else to blame.

Besides, when you're spending the majority of your time researching, writing, and studying, it's nice to have a good

grade to back it up. Colleges don't know if you're a good student in class or if you work hard. They don't know that your test score was "almost an A" or your essay was great except for a few errors. That's why we have grades—so they know what to expect from us.

Like most of you, I would love to get a scholarship. To get scholarships, good grades are very important. I'm not saying grades are everything you need to worry about in high school, but it sure makes it easier when they are good.

By Matt Faeth  
STAFF WRITER

In high school, most boys have a hard time seeing anything past Friday night. Most girls function on a slightly higher level, but they still fo-

cus on the little things in high school.

Neither care if they are learning anything as long as they get good grades that keep their parents happy and help them advance to the college of their dreams.

Everything is fine as long as the As continue to roll in, but how do we know that students are actually learning anything? Sure tests attempt to measure the pupil's knowledge of a certain subject, but with enough repetition anyone will eventually learn the facts. Then they will forget them because they have no importance beyond getting an "A."

Understanding the ideas behind the facts is more important than rote memorization. Education is defined as the imparting and acquiring of knowledge through teaching and learning. Grades are simply a way to attempt to monitor a child's progression or retrogression. The term "grade" has no mention in the definition of education; the point of an education is to gain knowledge.

I'm afraid that we have lost sight of this simple point. Today a student might comprehend a concept, but they may not understand the fact behind that idea. Then he or she would have to do one of two things—either not question the facts and just memorize them like a drone, or drop out and never have a chance to succeed in life. That would be a shame. Perhaps they might have been the one who proved that the facts were wrong.



ILLUSTRATION BY  
KENZIE ZWAYER

## Fish on Europa?

By Kenzie Zwayer  
STAFF WRITER

By now, you've probably heard the news about the planet Europa, a water-bearing moon of Jupiter. Europa's surface is covered by solid, 6 to 19 mile thick, icy crust, but beneath that there may be an ocean up to 100 miles deep.

A discovery was recently made while re-calculating the oxygen level in Europa's ocean. It turns out to be far higher than was expected. European water contains one hundred times more oxygen than previously thought.

The water on Europa would be kept from freezing by Jupiter's gravitational pull, which would cause waves and therefore frictional heat. The huge shelves of ice that cover the moon's surface shift and crack every so often, letting fresh water seep to the surface and push old ice further under the crust until it melts away.

This exchange opens up a way for oxygen to become trapped under the ice. Over millions of years, this oxygen could

have built up into a life supporting ocean.

Before Europa's oxygen/water ratio was updated, it was thought that any life on the moon would be single-celled, microscopic organisms. Now, however, scientists figure that it is possible that organisms the size of small fish could survive in the waters of Europa. These "lunar" fish would probably move sluggishly due to the cold temperatures of the water.

It is estimated that the moon's underground oceans could support 3 billion tons of sea life, and probably more. Although no one knows whether Europa actually has life on it, we know it can support life and could have in the past.

An interesting issue that hasn't been brought up is what these organisms would look like. Really, it's silly of us to assume that these creatures would resemble fish or any earth creatures. The moon could harbor three billion tons of new and bizarre marine creatures. If the universe is that repetitive, I'd be surprised and a little disappointed.

## 20 years ago, the Berlin Wall fell

By Nick Pond  
10TH GRADE

The 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall was a few weeks ago. Only a few of you probably know of its significance.

The construction of the Wall began in 1961 to stop the flow of East German citizens to West



Nick leans against a quite different sort of wall. PHOTO BY KAITLYN RICHARDSON

Berlin and freedom from communism. East Germany was a satellite state of the Soviet Union, which means that although it wasn't officially part of the U.S.S.R., it adopted Communist ideals, and its leaders obeyed Soviet orders.

Nikita Khrushchev, the leader of the Soviet Union in 1961, ordered the dictator of East Germany to build the Wall. It was a solid concrete fortification that included guard towers placed along large concrete walls, which circumscribed a wide area later known as the "death strip" that contained anti-vehicle trenches and other defenses.

The Wall was not only a physical barrier between East and West, but it also served as a buffer from western ideas. Among the East German people, the Berlin Wall became known as the *Antifaschistischer Schutzmauer*, which, roughly translated, means "Anti-Fascist Protection Wall."

In 1987, U. S. President Ronald Reagan visited West Germany. There, in front of the

Brandenburg Gate and two panes of bulletproof glass to protect him from snipers, he delivered his famous speech to the people of West Berlin. In closing, he said:

*"There is one sign the Soviets can make that would be unmistakable, that would advance dramatically the cause of freedom and peace. General Secretary Gorbachev, if you seek peace, if you seek prosperity for the Soviet Union and eastern Europe, if you seek liberalization, come here to this gate. Mr. Gorbachev, open this gate. Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!"*

Two years later, in 1989, the Wall fell. Thousands of East Germans flooded through the open checkpoints. West Germans helped East Germans climb over the wall, champagne corks were popped, families were reunited, and people tore down the wall with sledgehammers and pickaxes. The Berlin Wall, a monument to oppression, communism, and injustice, had finally fallen.

## Healthcare reform

By Malachi Keeter  
OPINION EDITOR

Ahhh, Barack Obama. Mentioning the name of our President will either draw the applause of his supporters or the equally violent dislike of his detractors.

One issue that is polarizing people like this is healthcare reform. Obama's proposed reforms have drawn a lot of attention. Everybody has an opinion on it—even if many of those opinions are uninformed.

Healthcare is a difficult issue to address because everyone complains about it, but nobody has had a better idea. Now it seems there is finally someone who has an idea and is in the position to implement it, but there are a few rumors standing in his way.

One rumor is that the United States already has the best healthcare in the world. This is not true—the U.S. ranks 50th in the world in life expectancy, one of the lowest of industrialized nations. The U. S. also has the most expensive healthcare, spending on average 52% more per person

than the second most expensive nation (Norway), according to the Kaiser Family Foundation.

There is also a myth that the bill will force employers and citizens to adopt new healthcare services and push private healthcare providers out of business. This is not even close to correct.

The bill specifically states that if you receive high quality healthcare from your employer through a private provider, you may keep that provider without penalty. It also states that insurance companies cannot deny anyone coverage because of preexisting conditions (a common occurrence under the current system.) According to the NY Times, "the public plan would negotiate rates just as private insurers do, rather than imposing rates at a certain percentage."

In short, healthcare reform has been needed for a long, long time. We don't yet know how it will work, and the only way to find out is to let it run. As citizens, making sure that we actually understand the issues would help as well.