

Hunched backs, empty lockers

BY CASSIE SMITH

Several Bigfoots have been sighted walking down our very own halls. The slumped shoulders, the swinging arms, the curved back, even the monstrous stride have all been witnessed here at RCHS.

Wait a minute, that's not Bigfoot, that's all the students trying to lug their backpacks from class to class.

Recently, I surveyed one hundred students of varying classes to find out just how much stuff we have to carry around.

What I found was alarming. Students carry an average of fourteen pounds on their backs every day of school. Before I go further, I want to make something clear. The average was low compared to the numerous backpacks that weighed from seventeen to twenty-five pounds. The average was lowered because there were a few backpacks that weighed only five to ten pounds.

"Fourteen or fifteen pounds is not a problem," says Dr. Tony Arvin, a family practice physician here in Mt. Vernon.

According to Dr. Arvin, the

problem comes from the way a back pack is being carried. He offered these tips on how to properly avoid discomfort or injury:

- ◆ Distribute weight evenly
- ◆ Use both shoulder straps
- ◆ Change positions often
- ◆ Leave unnecessary items at home or in the locker

Why would a student be carrying twenty-five pounds on their back when they have the option of using a locker? Only 32% of those surveyed actually use a locker. Fifty percent said that they don't have time to go to a locker between classes, and ten percent said they don't have money to purchase a locker.

"Lockers are there so students don't have to carry a heavy burden throughout the day," says RCHS Principal John Hale.

He also informed me that if a student can't afford a locker, they can contact the office and it will be taken care of.

Whatever the reason may be for not using a locker, the consequence is the same for almost every student. Discomfort caused by the

weight of backpacks is a problem amongst students. Sixty-three percent of those surveyed said they experience pain caused by the weight of their back packs.

"It makes me feel like the Hunchback of Notre Dame," says James Wheat, junior. "It's a pain."

Most pain reported by students can be classified as mild back or shoulder pain, but I found extreme cases of students who experience head aches, arm pain, and neck pain.

Though the situation poses a big problem there are solutions. Using a locker despite the risk of tardies is one thing students need to consider. Also, talking to the office if you can't afford a locker is another option.

Other solutions that don't involve lockers include carrying your backpack properly, or using a roller back pack. These are back packs that are set up on wheels like luggage. They can also be carried on your back.



Many RCHS students carry backpacks that weigh as much as 20 pounds. Several say they opt to carry the load rather than pay for a locker. Under a heavy load, freshman Mary Brenson trudges her way to band class. (photo by Cassie Smith)



Hectic schedules have students pulling a balancing act

BY ASHLEY MCCLURE

It's not just the adults with busy, chaotic schedules anymore. It's also the teens.

They not only go to school for seven hours a day. Some of them also work four to six hours after that and most have chores at home they have to perform. They do this routine for five days a week, sometimes only getting between 5-8 hours of sleep a night.

"It makes you feel as if you are already pushing thirty," says junior Angie Laswell.

Laswell works at the 1-75 race-track located in Brushcreek, Mt. Vernon.

"Weekends are a time for fun, to relax and recover from the past week, but for me it is a time for work."

Laswell pulls a twelve hour shift on the weekends when she doesn't have to work over-time.

"I have no time to do my homework on the weekends. I barely have enough time to breath."

Now that's just the weekends.

Let's take a look at her usual week-day.

Laswell starts her day by waking up at 5:30 to get ready to go to school. After she gets her self ready she must then get her little brother and sister ready. They leave for school at 7:15.

"When school is over, I usually spend two hours a day on homework. Then I clean the kitchen, cook dinner, and clean the kitchen again."

After all of that cleaning she

must then clean the living room and her bedroom. The last thing that she has to do is help her little brother and sister with their homework.

Laswell says that someday her schedule will become even worse because she plans on getting a job through the week.

"Then I could get a car and get a better job."

Sophomore Chassity Deborde is employed by Dairy Queen and "loves it." She works Wednesday

through Sunday, until her schedule changes.

"I work 40 hours, every two weeks," says Deborde.

Deborde also stated that she believes that she could handle an after school job and a school activity. "It would be extremely hard though."

She usually spends about 30 minutes a day on homework. She

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