Jillian Rusher-Editorial Cartoon

My drawing accompanied an article that discussed the importance of using natural remedies rather than just taking a pill anytime something is slightly wrong. I started with a blank piece of paper and wanted to convey the message that natural products will keep us happier and healthier. I took different food and supplements that were talked about in the article and drew them in a way that arranged the items into people. I put the pills, chemicals, and man-made products on one person, who portrayed an unhappy, disgusted look. On the contrary, the person who was made up of natural ingredients had the products listed in the article arranged in a way that portrayed a happy and healthy person. I drew the entire cartoon by hand with pencil then outlined it with black pen. After it dried, I took markers and filled in the entire artwork.

Taking the formal out of Winter Formal

By Rock Bottom Staff

Despite its music video having over 2.7 billion views and its lasting presence as a dance floor staple since its 2011 release, Jennifer Lopez's hit single "On the Floor" tends to fall flat for Scotus Winter Formal attendees. Instead of heeding Lopez's urges to 'get on the floor' and 'dance the night away', most students take a few selfies with friends, join the crowd jumping up and down for a few songs, and then grab their dates and leave the gym practically empty by 9. With its record for low attendance and critical reviews, we believe it is high time Scotus took the formal out of Winter Formal.

In 2023, Columbus High School hosted the town's first informal school dance in years after facing similar problems with attendance and engagement levels. With the use of three of their gyms, students could participate in a traditional dance experience with a DJ and dance floor, a movie watch party, or a game room with dodgeball, spikeball, lasertag, and ring toss. Attendees were given the choice of arriving in style or taking the comfier route, with many beginning the night in formal wear and changing later on. The changes worked. As principal David Heibner wrote in an article on CHS's website, a record 400 students attended the dance. However, would Scotus students have the same reaction?

One of the most obvious advantages to an informal dance is the pressure it takes off of getting ready. For some, dressing to the nines while laughing and snacking with friends is the highlight of their night. However, other students can find it hectic and stressful or simply would much rather wear sweatpants and a baggy T-shirt than a fancy dress or suit. Making Winter Formal an informal dance would allow students to choose the level of dress they prefer most, resulting in higher comfort levels and lower overall stress.

> "From movies, to games, to the dance floor, everyone is bound to find something they will enjoy."
>
> **Audrey Stoner** ROCK BOTTOM

Another big selling point of a Winter Informal is the wider variety of kids it attracts. While formal dances tend to only draw students who either enjoy getting dressed up and dancing or have a date to go with, an informal dance caters to all students. From movies, to games, to the dance floor, everyone is bound to find something they will enjoy. This also can deter students from leaving early as anyone tired of one activity could easily try out another instead of going home.

On the other hand, there are a few major concerns raised when switching from a formal to informal dance. Most often, both the cost and the need for extra volunteers either delay or deter such a change entirely. These hiccups in the planning process are far from unsolvable, though. Concessions could be sold to cover extra costs, a small entrance fee could be implemented, school service hours could be offered for helping set up, or sophomore parents could be asked to volunteer similar to freshman parents assisting with Homecoming and junior parents facilitating Prom.

Another snag in the works of a Winter Informal is the idea of abolishing the Winter Formal court and coronation. However, in our experience, the nomination and voting process can cause more frustration for court members than excitement. Nominees can be seen by themselves and others as the 'second string'candidates when compared to Homecoming, or feel devalued by the lack of attendance at the typical Winter Formal coronation. Furthermore, it is not a rare occurrence for candidates to be nominated who did not plan to attend the dance at all. These candidates then feel trapped into going for the sake of their place on the court, setting up a negative experience on their part and a mood killer for other court members. Eliminating a Winter Formal coronation would prevent this coercion from happening and allow everyone who attends to have the best experience possible.

The annual Winter Formal dance is not perfect, and a Winter Informal will never be either. However, we believe the benefits of the latter would far outweigh the costs, and student attendance and engagement would soar accordingly. While the thought of 'getting on the floor' and 'dancing the night away' may send bad dancers sprinting, introverts burrowing under the covers to hide, and single students on a collective wave of wistful thinking, a Winter Informal would hit the billboards as a long-awaited remix.

Proactive preventatives top pharmaceuticals

By Sydney Stuart

As I stroll down the grungy grocery store floors with my creaky shopping cart, I look at the hundreds of bottles of vitamins and pills for every cause you can imagine. Take a look in your medicine cabinet at home; there you will find your own grocery list of prescriptions. The medicine in the orange bottle is for headaches, the green bottle is for indigestion, the red bottle is for aches, the yellow bottle is for colds, and the purple bottle is for nausea. When will the cycle stop?

As a whole, big pharma has taken advantage of people's need to quickly solve their problems. Instead of relying on quick fixes, people should get to the root of their problems and use preventive measures. The biggest preventative measure is natural medicine, which includes daily nutrition and herbal supplements.

"Do you have any ibuprofen? I have a headache," I hear my classmate ask after explaining to me how they skipped breakfast, forgot their water bottle, and got 4 hours of sleep. No wonder they have a headache. There is no reason to rely on tiny man-made pills when a balanced diet and lifestyle takes care of 80% of various complaints I hear daily.

According to Harvard Health Publishing, nearly 30 billion doses of nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (ibuprofen) are taken by people a year. To put this enormous number into perspective, that means on average, 82.2 million doses are taken a day worldwide.

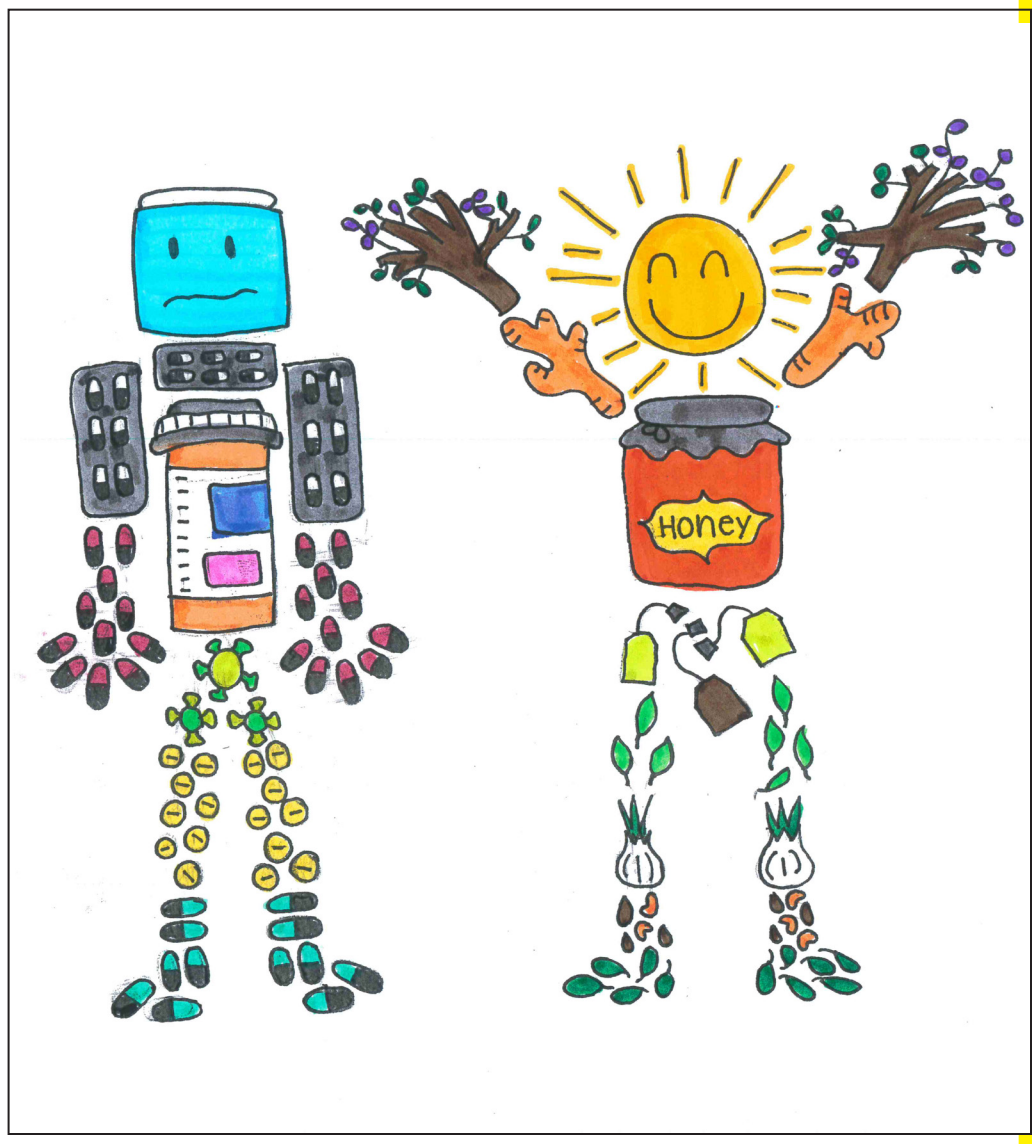
Along with encouraging people to neglect their body' s actual needs, big pharma encourages the rapidly growing need for speed rather than quality. The problem lies in people trying to solve a problem in 3 days that they developed over the past 3 years. The reason herbs and daily nutrition don't work overnight is because they aren't an override button that sends the body into fight or flight. Pills are an abrupt override button that sends the body into fight or flight. Herbs and nutrition work with the body to naturally resolve issues. There is no rushing mother nature without complications. While using herbs and nutrition takes more time to "work", their benefits outweigh any pill you can make.

After continual drug usage, the liver takes a toll. Although ibuprofen is a quick fix, people seem to forget its side effects, including digestion issues, heartburn, ulcers, and allergic reactions. Sticking to natural solutions ensures the safety of the liver and function of the body.

I will admit, it is not always the easiest to plan ahead and become knowledgeable about herbal medicine, but with time and consistency, it is possible.

There are many herbal solutions to the many ailments in our daily lives. They can be found online or through local farmers markets or grocery stores. There are readily available herbs you may not know about. Ginger is excellent at soothing an upset stomach. Fermented honey and garlic helps to clear up respiratory illness, and if you need an extra boost, try elderberries. Chamomile is popular in teas and helps to reduce inflammation and promote sleep. With a little research, the possibilities are endless.

I am not saying I have never or will never take medication. Medication has a time and a place, and modern medicine has expanded further than humans could ever imagine. Many people are dependent on certain medicine to keep their body functioning properly. This is a fantastic use of modern medicine to improve the lives of people with life-threatening diseases and disorders.



Jillian Rusher / Rock Bottom Staff

However, what might not be realized is it is hard to rely on pills, and it is hard to be 100% only natural medicine. Everyone will have a different balance of man-made to natural medicine. Unfortunately, the 30 bottles of medicine sitting in people's cabinets is ruining their ability to pay attention to their bodies' cues. Medicine suppresses the body's ability to communicate properly. People feel drowsy and have headaches when they need more water because the body is communicating through those symptoms.

Next time you feel a cold or headache coming on, do some research into herbs and foods to rejuvenate your body. Lay off o nthe pills and experience what it means to be in tune with your body's needs. You might be surprised to find out you feel better than before.

Nature harvests healthier and happier lives

By Lola Doerneman

The months of winter seem as though they will last forever. The impatient darkness draws the day to a close before 6 pm. Sunlight showers over Nebraska less and less each day, and yet, we spend those precious hours of day inside. These dull, cold months keep people inside when what truly makes us happy is being outside. Seasonal depression is a very real concern; people are made to be out in the sunlight.

Unfortunately, being a basketball player means I truly never see the sun. Wrestlers and swimmers can relate. We wake up and drive to school, it's dark. After school and practice driving home, it's dark. It's as if we live underground. The darkness and length of the winter sports season allow for higher levels of sadness and stress to creep in. As soon as the glee of Christmas break comes to a close, the sighs over returning to school become too loud to bear. The 28 days of February feel like a century.

This winter has been different from years before, though. Rather than the usual blizzards and sleet, we have been blessed with amazingly warm weather. The sun has quickly melted the snow and warmed our earth. Being able to go on a walk outside in a T-shirt and shorts on Christmas Day was glorious.

> "Simply stepping away from the busyness of school and life and into the fresh air makes us happier."
>
> **Lola Doerneman** ROCK BOTTOM

Being outside in nature truly makes us healthier and happier. Breathing fresh air improves sleep, builds immunity, and reduces stress. Fortunately for us winter athletes, sunlight is supremely helpful but not necessary in order to reap the benefits of nature.

Constant scrolling on social media, which has become a common habit of high school kids, is widely known to increase anxiety and disrupt sleep. Nature combats both of these bad effects. I believe students could dramatically better their mental health by putting their phones down and stepping outside once a day. Ten minutes in the sun boosts serotonin (happiness hormone) levels and helps regulate your body clock to improve sleep.

The winter months hold the record for most sickness plaguing our school and world. Nature is once again the answer. According to Florence Williams in her book *The Nature Fix*, sunlight boosts Vitamin D, and airborne chemicals released from plants increase the production of white blood cells, which fight infection in our bodies. Nature reduces the risk of getting sick.

The most dramatic benefit, I believe, is how nature is proven to improve mood. Packed schedules bring stress and anxiety, but being outside in nature helps us decompress. It scientifically lowers the cortisol (stress hormone) levels in our brain and raises serotonin. Being cooped up inside for almost every minute of the day is bound to make us more stressed, anxious, and depressed. Even ten minutes of relaxing in the breeze reaps benefits. Simply stepping away from the busyness of school and life and into the fresh air makes us happier.

Being involved in winter sports truly makes it hard to get the recommended time of sunlight and fresh air, but I believe if people knew the enormous benefits of nature, they'd spend every free moment outside. Even if I get home after practice at 7 pm and it's dark, looking up at the stars for 5 minutes and breathing in the fresh air helps me relax and realize life is alright.

I challenge all the students and teachers at Scotus to take advantage of the slightly-warmer-than-freezing weather we have been given during these difficult times of winter. Go on a walk or simply sit on your porch and breathe in the fresh air. Nature's benefits reach higher than the tallest of trees.