Editorial Cartoon - Mikah Schultz

I began this project with a blank sheet of paper and a clear message: energy drink companies use bright colors, bold lettering, and flashy designs to distract consumers from the unhealthy ingredients and harmful side effects hidden inside their products. To communicate this, I first drew an energy drink can using a thin black Sharpie, labeling it with the word “ENERGY” in oversized, bold letters. I filled the can with exaggerated, fictional ingredients to highlight how real ingredients are often concealed or minimized by the industry.

After completing the drawing, I cut the can out and taped it onto a new sheet of paper to represent how companies literally and figuratively cover up the truth behind their products. Still wanting the message to be stronger, I added well-known slogans from Red Bull, Ghost, Monster, and 5-Hour Energy using Crayola markers, highlighters, and Sharpies. These bright colors and lightning-bolt illustrations act as visual “noise,” mirroring the distracting tactics corporations use in their marketing.

Finally, in contrast to the loud design, I wrote the actual side effects and conditions in very small text across the background. This choice emphasizes how these important details are often hidden or overlooked. Through these combined elements, my artwork exposes the way energy drink companies mask the risks of their products behind attention-grabbing advertising.

News from the Nest

THE EFFECT OF ENERGY DRINKS ON TEENS

By Anzlee Horwart

If it looks like a juice and tastes like candy, how dangerous can it really be? Despite their bright colors and sweet flavors, energy drinks can be a serious health risk. Energy drink consumption is constantly on the rise. Among middle schoolers, 1 in 3 regularly drink energy drinks (CDC). Overconsumption of energy drinks can cause several health issues, including heart palpitations, headaches, and insomnia. These issues are just the tip of the iceberg. In teens, these effects are only amplified because their bodies are continually developing. So why do teens and kids continue to drink these dangerous beverages?

One reason teens drink energized beverages is a lack of sleep and a heavy workload. Teens have homework, jobs, extracurriculars, and sports. This leads to a lot of extra work outside of school hours. This leads to staying up late and needing an energy drink to stay awake that night or the next day. Another reason is social influence. Peer pressure is a huge factor in teens' decision-making. If a teenager's friend is drinking an energy drink, they are more likely to start drinking energy drinks, too. Teens do this to look cool, seem fun, or fit in.

High school junior, Addelyn Warner, says, "I started drinking energy drinks in 7th grade because I saw my friends drinking them. Now I drink them because I have so many activities and need an extra energy boost."

Editorial Cartoon by Mikah Schultz

Caffeine toxicity is caused by overconsumption of caffeine. This can cause heart arrhythmias, cardiac arrest, or even death. The caffeine toxicity rate in high school students has almost doubled between 2017 and 2023. According to Caffeine-Related ED Visits, Although Uncommon, Doubled for Middle School and High School Aged Children Since 2017, by Barlet, Higgs, Kazaglis, and Deckert in 2023, Between 2017 and 2023, the rate of emergency department (ED) visits related to caffeine overdose or adverse effects more than doubled for children aged 11 to 14, increasing from 3.1 to 6.6 per 100,000 visits. For those aged 15 to 18, the rate rose from 7.4 to 13.6 per 100,000 visits.

> "The recommended dose of caffeine would be zero for kids. Their brains are still developing. Unfortunately, their impulse control is still developing, too."
> — Dr. Margaret West

Dr. Margaret West, a pediatrician at Le Bonheur Pediatrics Ridgeway Loop location stated that she was seeing an increased rate of young patients dealing with health complications tied to energy drink consumption (Hrach, Fox 13, 2025).

Energy drinks may seem harmless, but their growing popularity among teens comes with serious health risks that can't be ignored. Choosing healthier ways to boost energy, such as sleep, hydration, and balanced nutrition, can protect developing bodies and minds in the long run.