

## Presents, mistletoe, excess: ho, ho, ho!



**NANETTE PHILLIPS**  
Lewis and Clark

'Tis the season when housewives across the nation head down into the depths of their suburban basements to pull out their dusty Rubbermaid bins of seasonal supplies, and begin decorating every accessible square inch of their overly-vacuumed homes for the approaching holiday season. While some may view it as a trivial task, adorning your house with angels, snowmen and other darling seasonal gems can be the most fulfilling undertaking you can do for yourself and your families.

Moreover, I don't think it's an overstatement to say that your reputation amongst your neighbors depends solely on the degree to which you spread the holiday spirit throughout your home and yard.

It's hard for me to imagine looking out my front window on Christmas and not seeing the twenty-five foot tall-inflatable Frosty the Snowman, waving his mittened hand at the passing cars. Without the perfectly decorated house, your holiday season will probably be meaningless, your home will not be filled with laughter, and your friends and family will get up, take their marshmallowed yams, and leave your dull house without looking back. Let this not be the case.

After the depressing months of the warm, sunny summer, the first of November marks the day that life resumes: the day stores unload their shipments of plastic wreaths and trees, ornaments, wrapping paper, blow-up snow globes, and icicle lights. It is also the day when American flags, flying outside of front doors, are replaced with Santa banners, Frosty banners, and occasional menorah banners, signaling the start of the holiday season. Around this same time, many feel the undeniable urge to play Josh Groban's album Noel, which you have been waiting patiently to play for the past nine months.

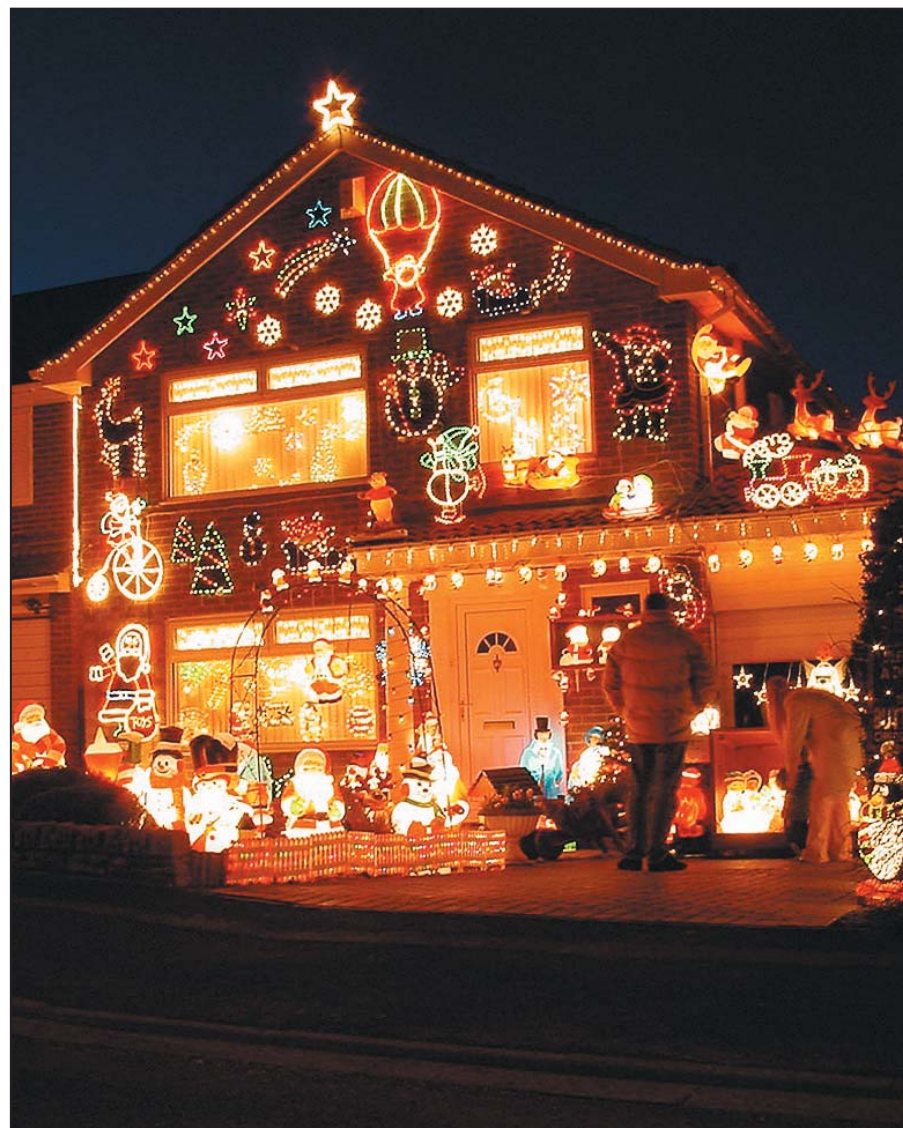
So while the poignant melodies of Little Drummer Boy drift through the halls of your dull, undecorated house, you can begin the transformation of your home into a winter wonderland.

But before you begin, it is crucial to have the right supplies. If seasonal supplies look insufficient, head to my personal favorite store, Walmart, to stock up on the all-so-critical elements to any festive home. Start with your porcelain angel figurines, a seven hundred foot string of lights, giant inflatable Santa for the front yard, and don't forget the fifteen miniature plastic Christmas trees that will be strategically placed in every room. And when your neighbor one-ups you with a bigger inflatable Santa than yours, it is absolutely necessary to rebound by putting in an even larger Santa and his seven reindeer. It would be down right humiliating to be caught with a less extravagant Christmas display than your next-door neighbor, now wouldn't it?

Don't forget the lights, and the more the better. A good rule of thumb is to use the same amount of electricity it takes to light a village of about five-hundred, or bright enough to be seen from the International Space Station--with the naked eye. You can never have too many. For starters you should have lights on the trees, lights on the eaves, lights around your windows, lights on the garage, lights on the railings, lights on your driveway, mailbox, you get the point. Giant candy cane lights are a classic.

The final and most important part of the process is the tree, and don't even think about messing around with one of those real trees. They shed, drip sap, and you have to water them like every day, and you have to buy one every year. Stick with a gorgeous, artificial pre-lit Christmas tree for your living room, and miniature ones for the other rooms. Anyway, who doesn't prefer the perfect symmetry of their branches and the succulent smell of polyurethane over a Charlie Brown Christmas tree that smells like it came straight out of the woods. I know I don't.

When the decorating is done, sit back with a cup of Swiss Miss and admire this Christmas miracle. Think of Jesus looking down and smiling upon this seasonal display of Santa and his helpers, the Frosty banner flapping in the brisk winter breeze, and all of the other sweet little things from Walmart and Fred Meyers that make this a true Christmas miracle.



## Homework load necessary prep for real life



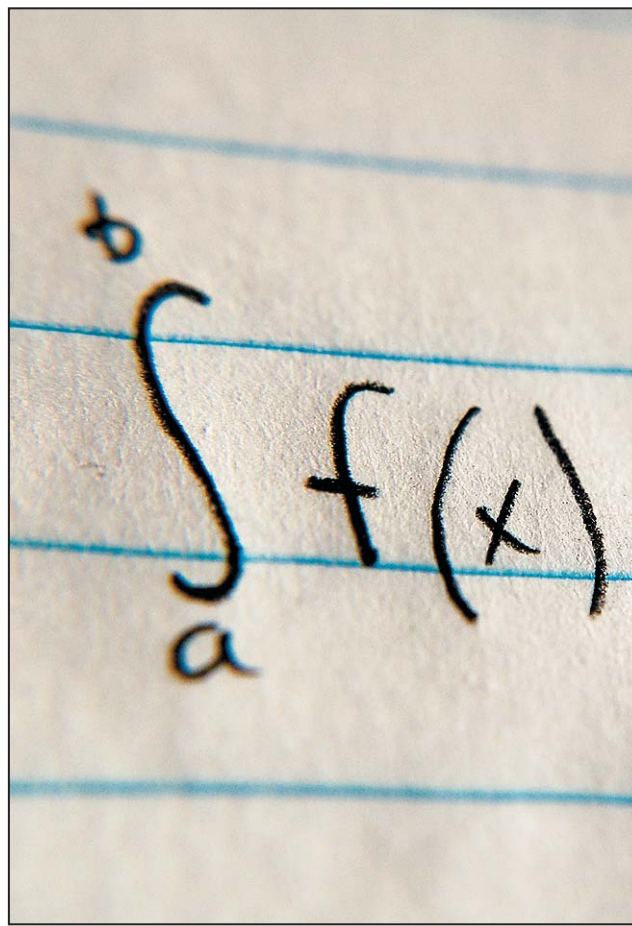
**JENNIFER HELTON**  
Mead

As soon as a student enters high school (or maybe even before), they become familiar with the stressful yet effective homework method known to many as the "do it in any class while the teacher's not looking" technique. As the year slowly progresses, I find more and more of my senior friends and classmates taking English notes in a numerical code that looks astonishingly similar to the previous night's calculus assignment. I myself am learning a surprising amount

about United States government in organic chemistry, so I probably should not be talking.

I was amazed that I did not have several hours of homework every night when I first started high school, and that amazement followed me through the junior year. It turns out that I wasn't taking the right classes. Throw in a little AP here and there and WHAM! I have homework now. But it is not the homework that has me and many other seniors wanting to step in front of a bus. It is the homework on top of applications, sports, after school activities, jobs and household tasks. Forget any social activities.

Colleges make it clear they like to see well rounded students--students who take challenging courses, participate in after school and leadership activities, and who volunteer on a regular basis. Even students not taking AP courses can expect several hours of homework a week at the very least. AP and Running Start students can expect a few hours more. After school activities such as clubs will take up at least an hour of time, sports at least two. The combination of homework and after-school ac-



tivities do not make for a lot of extra time, but the rising cost of college tuition means more students are forced to start working. Assuming the shortest shift is three hours long, the average student is up to about six hours of work and after school activities. These activities spill into the weekend, along with any household chores expected by parents.

So is this workload helping or hurting? Some may say it is hurting the students, but in the long run, I am going to have to agree with those who say it is helping. If high school is bad, then college is worse when it comes to homework. Better to be prepared than to be surprised. School itself is only a precursor to real life--juggling a job, a family and a household.

## Counting down 'till 2009

**JILL GUTHRIE**  
Lewis and Clark  
&  
**KATIE BARSOTTI**  
Gonzaga Prep

We have reached that time of year again, the point after Halloween but before snow hits the ground, right around the time that Starbucks introduces their holiday cups and peppermint mochas, the leaves are considering falling off the trees, and you have to wake up five minutes earlier to scrape the frost of your car. The holiday season was dropped in our laps like Santa through a chimney.

What do we do now? Should we get up before the sun on Black Friday to buy the whole family gifts, or maybe scope out all the best sledding hills in town? Do we bake oddball Christmas cookies with our grandparents, or is it time to start lighting the candles on the menorah? Those are all great options to kick off the holidays, but unfortunately not the correct options. My friends, it is time indeed to start counting down the days, afternoons, and nights until 2009.

Forget your major wintertime holidays, the presents, the food, the family and friends--none of that is important because 2009 is going to be the best year yet, so program it in your cell phone because as quick as the holidays go, the new year will come; here are just some of the many things that are going to have you kicking out the old, and welcoming in the new.

Some really kick butt movies are coming out following the New Year. "Harry Potter and the Half Blood Prince" is

scheduled to be released on July 17, and word has it Ron and Harry both have a new love interest, Draco Malfoy is up to some suspicious business, and some dark secrets surface from Dumbledore's past. It may be 2010 before "The Imaginarium of Doctor Parnassus" is released but it's scheduled for 2009 and is sure to be incredible whether it comes out this year or seventy years from now. I have eleven words for you--Heath Ledger is dead but is still playing the main character. Fourteen more? Johnny Depp, Colin Farrell, and Jude Law are also playing the same main character! Super Bowl XLII, will be played in Tampa, Florida.

Analog television will be obsolete in the United States. Feb. 12 will be Charles Darwin's 200-year-old birthday, and on July 22, the longest total solar eclipse of the 21st century will happen, and Veterans Day will be on a Wednesday. December 2008 does mark the end of state quarters, but the depression need not get worse. Starting in January the U.S will mint coins for Washington D.C., Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, the US Virgin Islands, and the Northern Mariana Islands.

Between celebrities popping out babies all year, video game releases, album releases, and the economy bouncing like a five year old on speed, 2009 should be an extremely interesting year.

The countdown starts now...

## Politically-correct sad sacks need to leave Christmas alone



**JORDAN LEE**  
The Oaks

The Christmas season is coming, and with it the tiresome gust of political correctness. In recent years, there has developed this odd notion that it is somehow ignoble to draw too much attention to Christmas.

This is why most businesses are careful to demonstrate seasonal ambiguity so as not to offend any customers. It's why Walmart gave us the infamous "Holiday Tree." Why SeaTac airport tore down its Christmas decorations and replaced them with a more universal winter theme. And why countless other Christmas displays have been protested, attacked in lawsuits, or removed at the sounding of a few complaints. Of course, not everyone celebrates Christmas, but how does this jus-

tify stuffing it in the back closet? So Christmas originated as a Christian holiday, hate to ruffle any feathers, but what's the problem? Schools teach about Hanukkah and Kwanzaa, why is it so outrageous to teach about Christmas? Why has it become such a crime to display Christmas symbols? It is a fine goal to acknowledge those lesser known holidays such as Hanukkah, or Kwanzaa. But, good grief, this is not accomplished by devaluing Christmas.

Perhaps the concept of political correctness once seemed rosy and patriotic, but it has morphed into an insatiable monster. It grants equality, but equality of a most paltry and undesirable nature. It is the same sort of ludicrous equality that would be established if all birthdays were celebrated on the same day, for the sake of those few people who felt upset when it was their friend's birthday and not their own. Rather than promote the general welfare through cultural sensitivity, political correctness has donned

the mask of legalistic censorship. It is a tool that the indignant minority utilizes to dictate on behalf of a whole country.

As we've witnessed, it gives a small group of people the power to systematically smother a holiday of Christmas's prominence, simply because they do not like it. Sometimes, in the quest to defend the minority, the majority are dealt a low blow. There are always going to be those unhappy few who go out of their way to feel wronged. In fact, too many people have an extraordinary talent for conjuring up offense when none was intended. Wouldn't it be marvelous if, instead of filing lawsuits and organizing protests, people would be content to exert themselves serving meals to the homeless, or visiting a nursing home.

Perhaps what this country needs, especially during this time of year, is less of a fixation on political correctness, and refocus on those things that actually matter.



Caroline O'Grady/Lewis and Clark