

## Veterans Day more than just a day off



CHELSEA AYERS Freeman

When browsing through my school calendar at the beginning of the year, I came across Veterans Day, Nov. 11. "Cool, a day off!" was my immediate response. Only now do I painfully remember my blasé reaction to such an important date in our country's history, and kick myself for being that annoying cliché teenager that I strive everyday not to become.

And yet I am not alone in my Veterans Day naivete. Most teenagers notice the day off of school, free from homework and schedules, and not of the millions of soldiers that have died for our country and are remembered on this day.

There really aren't sufficient words to describe all we owe to our country's veterans. Without their extreme sacrifice, America would be a much graver place. Veterans are not just men and women who have served our country in battle; they are the reason that we are living here today the way we are. They left their families, homes, and lives to fight for us. They gave up everything to protect the ideals and rights that America stands for. Our veterans were willing to lay down their lives for a country and a purpose they believed in. It's a difficult concept for us to wrap our minds around, that kind of sacrifice is a lot to chew on, yet

without it, we would not enjoy the lives that we have.

Regardless of your personal opinion of the war in Iraq, we all should stand together on one issue: the support for our soldiers and veterans. When Kent Smith, an English teacher at Freeman High School, came home from Vietnam after serving for 14 months, it was not all warm welcomes and happy faces. "My friends and family were very happy to see me, alive and safe. But if overheard talking about Vietnam in public, people treated you as if you had made a bad choice; that was how they viewed the war."

Veterans Day was designated by the Congress of the United States in 1938 to tribute what was then known as Armistice Day. This day honored the end of the worst war in our history at that time, World War I, on the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month. Armistice Day was changed to Veterans Day in 1954 when President Woodrow Wilson signed the bill into law. It is observed by different names all over the world. We all remember the struggles of our soldiers, just in different languages.

Flags are raised on Veterans day. Yellow ribbons are hung for those fighting now. Patriotic parades march down city streets, and children sing "The Star-Spangled Banner" at school assemblies. But I think that it is a vacation from school that gets most of us really excited. "I think sometimes it has become a day off, a free day. I believe

that kids should give respect for those that have passed in defense of our freedom. Some time must be spent in remembrance and give thanks for those that have died for us," Smith said.

So should we be somber and remember the deaths of those we knew and cared about? Or should we celebrate our freedom and joyfully thank those responsible for it? Before President Wilson changed the name, Veterans Day was Armistice day, which means a truce, an end to the fighting.

Although sitting through a painful rendition of 1st graders attempting patriotic tunes on their recorders is great, wouldn't peace in America be the greatest show of support we can give? If we all stopped being selfish and tried to put others first, think of how strong America could be. And it starts with us. Not only is Veterans Day a good example of our maturity to show our appreciation for our way of life, but it is a day to consider that we are the future of our country.

Although its doubtful that any of us are veterans ourselves, we will be the ones filling the ranks before long, and an adult understanding is needed for such adult matters. Its time for us to step up and take responsibility for our futures. So when you turn off your alarm clock to sleep in on Nov. 11, think about what the day off of school is celebrating, and be thankful for our freedom.



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## Sprechen Sie... anything other than just English?



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What do you call someone who speaks two languages? Bilingual. What do you call someone who speaks multiple languages? Multilingual. And what do you call someone who speaks one language? American.

Ouch. That's harsh. America is one of the leading world powers, and yet, we trail behind when it

comes to language education. A majority of 56 percent of Europeans speak at least one other language other than their native tongue and some countries are almost 99 percent multilingual. In contrast, only 18 percent of Americans speak a language other than English at home. America's lingual ignorance is rooted in the education system. While forty states require that two-year foreign language courses be offered in schools, none of these states require that students actually take these courses. By remaining uni-lingual, Americans are only hurting themselves. Almost one-third of American colleges and universities list foreign language as an admissions requirement and will turn down applicants that speak only one language. This requirement alone limits many American students.

Additionally, in today's competitive job market, most business positions require international travel and communication. A person who only speaks English would not even be considered for most companies wishing to

reach a global demographic. American businesspeople that are multilingual are able to communicate much more effectively and generate much more respect from foreign clientele.

On another level, people who are multilingual have much richer cultural experiences. By learning another language, a person opens up new doors for communication with people around the globe. A culture is expressed more vividly in its native language, therefore those who understand the native language can more fully appreciate the cultural nuances.

Some people may not see the practical applications of a second language in their own life, but even people who will not ever use another language can benefit. By learning another language, a person exercises a part of the brain that deals with organization, memory and expression. When a

*By learning another language, a person opens up new doors for communication with people around the globe.*

person challenges their brain by learning another language, they also improve their ability to express themselves in their native tongue.

A person that has the mindset that others should learn their own language, instead of the other way around, risks becoming ignorant to the unique characteristics of people from a different background. And, in this arena, ignorance is not bliss. We Americans must find a way to expose ourselves to other languages so that we are able to better compete with the rapidly changing world around us.

## Breastmilk ice cream? PETA, don't be a boob



JENNIFER HELTON Mead

PETA is known to many as the group that dumps red paint on celebrities wearing fur, or the weirdos who mummify themselves in Saran-Wrap outside meat packaging plants. Even their name, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, suggests that the group and its followers are all for the humane treatment of our furry, feathered or scaly friends.

As it turns out, however, fur-clad celebrities are not the only ones with blood on their hands: PETA members just don't wear their shame.

PETA wants America to become completely vegan, meaning eating no dairy, meat or other animal products. They are against animal testing, hunting, and even the keeping of animals as pets.

I am assuming that by now most people have heard about PETA's recent request of Ben & Jerry's. For those of you who have not heard, PETA asked the popular ice cream company to stop using cow's milk in their product. Instead, they suggested that Ben & Jerry's use breastmilk. Human breastmilk. Ben & Jerry's response was much like the rest of America's, either "eww" or "whatever you're taking, you took too much of it." Besides being just plain creepy, PETA's plan was not well thought out.

First of all, where are we going to get enough willing women? There are not enough PETA groupies to sustain all of our dairy needs, and the women would probably need to be on hormones to keep them lactating for so long. PETA undoubtedly wanted humans to

switch to breastmilk so that the cows could stop being used and "mistreated." If this is their thinking, then obviously no one from PETA has been on a dairy farm lately. Cows need to be milked. If they aren't, their teats become swollen and extremely painful.

In June of 2005, two PETA employees were arrested and charged with 31 felony counts of animal cruelty. Their crime? Dumping 18 puppies and other dead animals in the dumpster of a grocery store. In the PETA van the employees were driving, investigators found 13 additional dead animals.

*Besides being just plain creepy, PETA's plan was not well thought out.*

In response to a website criticizing them, PETA released a statement saying that the animals euthanized were "broken" and that they referred "every healthy, cute, young animal [they] can to shelters." Unfortunately for PETA, this statement doesn't correspond to the evidence. Three of the dead animals were a mother cat and her two kittens, which were said to be adoptable.

According to Newsweek, the animals found in the dumpster were not the only ones. In 2005 alone, PETA put to sleep almost 85 percent of the animals that were surrendered to it. Most of the families that surrendered their pets were told that their animals would be re-homed. A shelter down the street from PETA headquarters, Virginia Beach SPCA, managed to adopt out 70 percent of the animals in its care. This alone is disturbing news, as the SPCA has a much lower income than

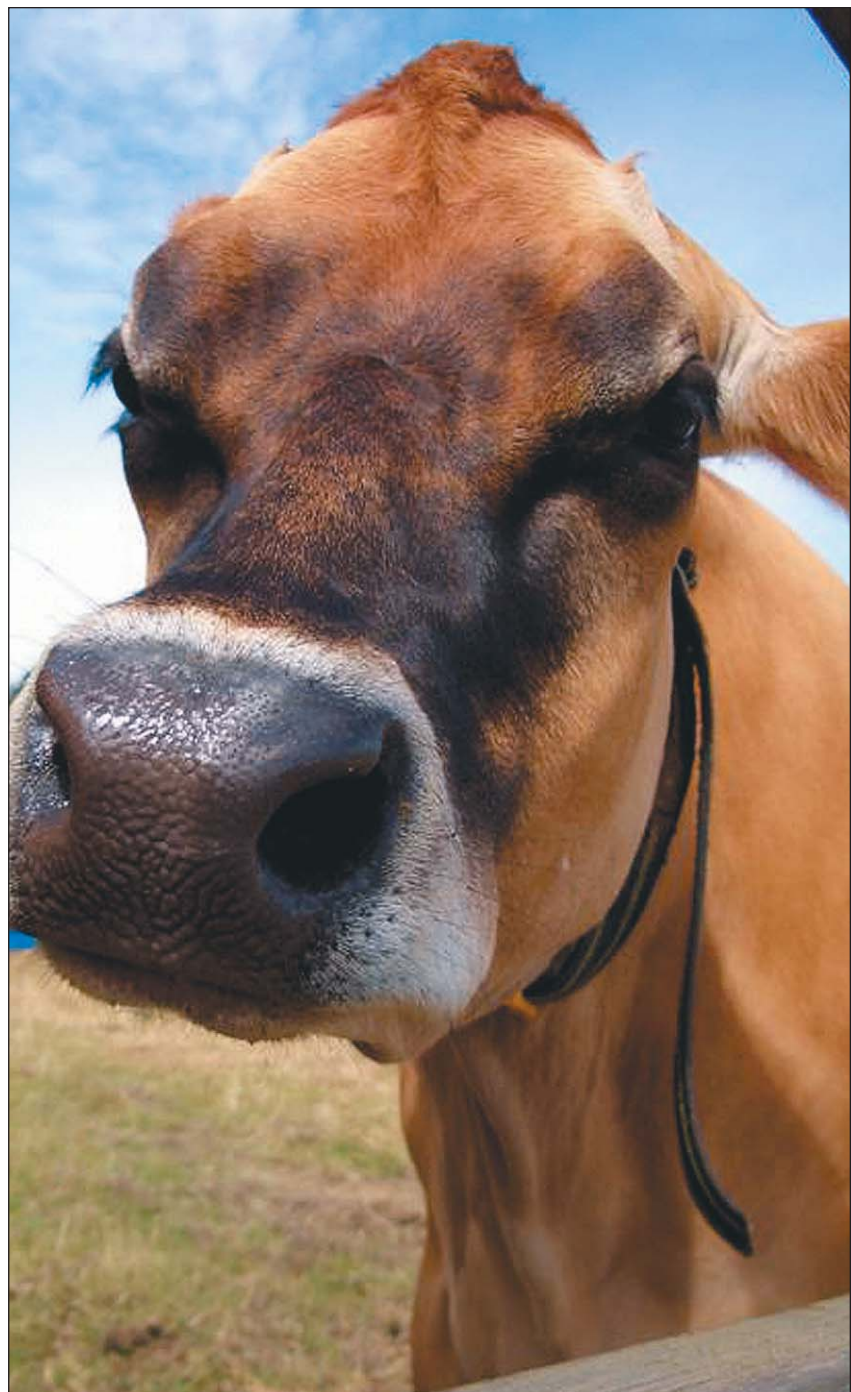
PETA's \$30 million a year. But if PETA is making \$30 million a year, then what is it doing with that money? If PETA does not have the housing or money to care for the animals left in their care, why don't they transfer them or refuse to take them in? The answer is simple--they care more about their image than the animals that they are supposed to be supporting.

It is becoming clear what PETA is using their income for, however. Besides the heavy advertising that the group does, they also financially support groups such as the North American Earth Liberation Front, which the FBI has labeled a "domestic terrorist" due to its involvement in firebombs and death threats, and an Animal Liberation Front that was convicted of burning down a Michigan State University research lab.

Don't get me wrong--I am all for animal rights. I just think that PETA is looking in all the wrong places. Instead of trying to persuade Ben & Jerry's to use breast milk in their ice cream, try to get laws passed that provide better treatment for calves being made into veal. They could work with elementary school kids, teaching them how to properly treat and care for their animals.

In Alaska it is still legal to chase a wolf down in a helicopter until it is too exhausted to move, and then shoot it. Why not try to change this law? There is so much that PETA could be doing for animals, but instead they find it necessary to spend their time and money releasing show-dogs from crates, dumping dead puppies into trash bins, and complaining to Ben & Jerry's.

So answer me this--Where exactly is the ethical treatment of animals?



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