

This year two of our Greenport students have become published authors. Senior Lexie Heidtmann won a writing contest to be published. She wrote about Social Media and students. Faith Welch, a sophomore was recognized for her commitment to historical research. Below please find both articles that were featured in *The Suffolk Times*

WHY EVERYONE SHOULD CELEBRATE JUNETEENTH ON THE NORTH FORK

FAITH WELCH '26

As the gentle breeze of June flows through the towns of the North Fork, it brings with it a reminder of a significant moment in American history, Juneteenth.

Juneteenth, observed on June 19th, marks the emancipation of enslaved African Americans in the United States. It commemorates the day in 1865 when Union General Gordon Granger arrived in Galveston, Texas, to announce the end of slavery, two and a half years after the Emancipation Proclamation; which was a presidential proclamation signed by Abraham Lincoln. It stated that all of those enslaved in the confederate states fighting the Union, including Texas, must be freed. Due to the contributions from slaves and African Americans here on the North Fork there's ample reason for residents of this area to join in the festivities and commemorate this pivotal day.

Juneteenth signifies not only the liberation of individuals who had been enslaved but also the enduring struggle for equality and justice in America. For many years, Juneteenth was primarily celebrated by African Americans; in fact, it was only made a federal holiday in 2021 when President Joe Biden signed the Juneteenth National Independence Day Act.

One might wonder, "Why should the North Fork embrace Juneteenth?"

The answer lies in the spirit of unity and inclusivity that Juneteenth embodies. Although the events of that day took place in Texas, where more than 250,000 enslaved people received news of their freedom, and celebrated with a parade and picnics. The outcome affected people across the nation, shaping the course of American history not just African American history.

The North Fork, known for its rich tapestry of communities, can use Juneteenth as an opportunity to acknowledge the contributions of African Americans to the region's heritage and to reflect on the ongoing journey toward racial equality. It is also an opportunity to acknowledge the history of slavery on the North Fork, which I researched along with four of my classmates at Greenport High School. We were all astonished to learn about this hidden and forgotten history. We learned of the first slave to own a home on the North Fork, who's name was Kedar Derby. I was displeased to learn that they are now selling his house instead of preserving it like they do the majority of the other historical house on the North Fork. This aided me to come to a bigger realization that by celebrating days like Juneteenth, residents of the North Fork can engage in meaningful dialogue about the past, present, and future of race relations in America. This provides a chance to lift discussions about houses like Kedar Derby's and what should be done with them. It's a chance to promote racial healing and to educate ourselves, and our children about the struggles and triumphs of the African American community, fostering empathy, understanding, and solidarity.

Through cultural events, and community gatherings like the Juneteenth celebration and parade on June 15th in Greenport, these events can serve as a catalyst for positive change, inspiring us to confront systemic injustices and work towards a more inclusive society. It also provides an opportunity for locals and visitors to come together, share experiences, and celebrate diversity. By recognizing Juneteenth as a federal holiday, one that should be celebrated by all Americans, we not only honor the resilience of those who fought for freedom but also reaffirm our commitment to building a community where everyone is valued and respected equally.

In conclusion, the history of slavery and African Americans on the North Fork is the history we forget to remember and the history we remember to forget. Celebrating Juneteenth on the North Fork is not just an acknowledgment of that history; it's a declaration of our shared humanity and our collective aspirations for a better future. It's a chance to come together as a community, to listen, learn, and grow. So let's raise our voices, raise our flags, and raise our glasses in celebration of Juneteenth, a day of freedom, unity, and hope.*

LOOK UP FROM YOUR SCREEN

LEXIE HEIDTMANN '24

In today's digital age, social media has become a universal presence in the lives of high schoolers. With just one scroll, one second of checking comments, and one click on a link a person's mood and mental state can be altered for the entirety of the day or week.

“Scrolling through social media is something I do in my downtime, but the more I scroll, the more I get stressed,” Says a student at Greenport High School. They are not alone in this sentiment.

Teenagers commonly start their day by checking their phones and scrolling through apps like TikTok and Instagram before getting out of bed. While this might seem harmless at first glance, it can have detrimental effects on teens’ mental health.

Here’s the science; When sleeping, the brain is full of various electrical impulses: alpha, theta, beta, and delta. Each of these impulses interchanges throughout the four stages of sleep. These high-amplitude fluctuations are calculated using an electroencephalogram test (EEG). In short, each stage is vital to healthy sleep and prosperous mental health. However, when teens wake up and immediately pick up their phones to check social media, a crucial stage of waves is rushed- the slow transition from delta to beta.

Numerous studies, such as one conducted by National Library of Medicine, state that “Internet addiction is significantly associated with sleep latency, sleep duration, and subjective sleep quality.” Typically, the body takes time to transition into the awake stage (beta) to start the day with full alertness and cognitive abilities. A healthy morning consists of zero phone usage.

Social media use in the mornings is particularly concerning for high schoolers. Checking throughout the day removes focus from class participation, allowing a dependency on 15-second TikTok videos. The app has been shown to reduce the concentration time of high schoolers. According to a survey from the Pew Research Center, “Constantly being exposed to short videos may train one’s attention span to be shorter.” Because of this effect many schools have tried to curb cell phone use to varying success.

It’s worth reiterating the importance of starting the day with a healthy morning routine that doesn’t involve technology.

So, do you have a morning routine? What’s the first thing you do when you wake up? A recent survey among Greenport student reveal that 75% of Greenport High School students state that social media is the first thing they check in the morning, but most also know this habit isn’t necessarily the healthiest.

Social media has many positive aspects, such as connectedness, idea sharing, and more. However, 53.1% of high schoolers responded that social media has negatively affected them more than positively. Mr. Dlhopsky, a long-time teacher and coach at Greenport High School, has noticed the impact of social media on students and his teaching routine.

Social media affects teachers like Dlhopsky, who can also be found as the head coach of the Greenport varsity soccer team, where social media during soccer games or at practice is not an option. “I’m not surprised that 75% of people check social media in the morning. This generation is so tied to social media...they are on social media all the time.”

This cell phone use is even prevalent on the soccer field, “Recently, students on the bench would be on their phones during a game, which drove me nuts. I never anticipated that because soccer is voluntary.”

Greenport High schoolers have become increasingly reliant on technology, with vast information at their fingertips. Dlhopsky agrees: “Social media and phones, in general, have created a sense of immediate gratification because you can find whatever you’re looking for immediately, and entertainment is readily available.”

Although phones can distract players on the field, Dlhopsky says he wouldn’t ever want them to disappear entirely from the sports world. “I like that other people are on their phones, so our big goals are filmed, and awesome free kicks are posted to our school’s social media account; some people wouldn’t have seen them, and I see that as a positive aspect of this issue.”

Technology will never go away, and it will constantly change. The key is how we, as a society, use it. Rather than treating social media as a necessity, consider it a privilege and moderate when to use platforms like Instagram and TikTok.

Although social media has allowed for the sharing of ideas and news, it’s paramount to recognize its negative impact on mental health, as it affects everyone in a community, not just students. It’s easy to wonder what we would be without social media, but it is vital to remember that the world existed before it. So take a minute to look up from your screen and give yourself a break from scrolling.*