

Students choose whether to say pledge | Historic election brings change

By OLIVIA PARSONS

When the bell rings at precisely 7:10 a.m., something happens. Students rush into class, desks shuffle, binders open, and then something else happens.

That something is the Pledge of Allegiance, and students at Baton Rouge High choose whether or not to say the pledge.

Not all schools experience the pledge on the level we experience it.

Sarah Abdel of Harmony Middle School in Overland Park, Kansas, reports that at her school they do not say the Pledge of Allegiance.

"Saying the pledge shows that you are patriotic and that you respect your country. We should say it everyday like after the morning announcements," she said.

At Baton Rouge High, we have the privilege of having the pledge recited over the intercom for all to hear. Some students however, opt out of performing the morning ritual.

Junior Hannah Armstrong said, "We say it so much it kind of lost its meaning." Many students agree with Armstrong in that the pledge does not mean anything to them anymore, and they are, in effect, just going through the motions.

It is a different story in Geri Wheatley's homeroom. "I kind of make it a dramatic production, and the kids, they try to outshine me," she said.

Voices rise in her civics classroom as students have fun and try to outshout the intercom. Wheatley makes it clear, though, that it is not all fun and games.

"I think you should say it like you mean it,



Gerri Wheatley's first hour Civics class enthusiastically recites the Pledge of Allegiance. (Photo by Brock Palombo)

and if you don't mean it, don't say it," she said.

Some students merely stand for the pledge, but do not speak the words. Wheatley says that she doesn't make a big deal about that.

After all, students do have the constitutional right not to say the Pledge of Allegiance, according to a case the Supreme Court decided in 1943. Wheatley and teacher Mark Barry agree that students only need to be respectful.

Barry says, "I do not believe that saying the pledge or wearing a flag pin on your lapel should be a litmus test for being a good citizen.

I think actions should speak louder than words or symbols."

Senior Kenisha Campbell exercises her rights to the fullest extent. Campbell is a Jehovah's Witness and speaks for the group

when she says, "We stand to show respect, but we do not put our hands over our hearts, and we do not say it." The pledge is a powerful statement and Campbell finds that the words may be too strong.

She said, "It is only appropriate to give devotion to Jehovah. Though we might respect our country, respect and honor belongs fully to our God."

There are others though, who have no inclination to say the pledge, because they are not citizens of the United States.

Junior Jackie St. Croix said, "I don't say the pledge. Maybe if I

was a citizen I would feel differently, but I don't know. I don't have any intention of becoming a US citizen."

Emigrating from another country has also affected teacher Peter Oelschaeger's view of not only the pledge but America in general.

"I am an immigrant, an American by choice who had to take a test, pass security screening, and more to become a citizen of this nation," Oelschaeger said. "I jealously keep my citizenship. I am proud to be an American and have served in its military."

Oelschaeger believes that everyone should say the pledge.

"It is just good manners," he said.

Whether it is good manners or not, no one can force the students to mean the pledge when they say it.

Freshman Dustin Nguyen said, "I just do it to do it," and Nguyen's words seem to ring true throughout the halls of Baton Rouge High.

Everyday, students have a chance to be reminded of those who fought and died for freedom. Whatever a student's opinion may be though, his or her freedom is protected and respected in America, the land of choices.

Everyday choices, such as those made by Armstrong, Campbell, St. Croix, Nguyen, and teachers Wheatley, Barry, and Oelschaeger help make up what America is today.

By BROCK PALOMBO

History was made on Tuesday November 4, when at 10 p.m. central time, Barack Obama was announced as the president-elect of the United States.

The Democratic Party candidate Obama became the first African-American to be elected president of the U.S. He beat out opponent Republican presidential candidate John McCain by 201 electoral votes. The final tally gave Obama 364 votes, while McCain received 163.

Results for the election were set to break new ground in Washington with the election of either candidate. Republican vice presidential candidate Sarah Palin would have become the first female vice president of the U.S. had John McCain won the election.

Civics teacher Geri Wheatley said she definitely felt the election was one to be remembered.

"On the 40th anniversary of Dr. King's 'I Have a Dream' speech, it's great to see his dream being realized. Both Obama's and Palin's accomplishments are huge steps in showing that America isn't concerned with race or gender of a candidate," said Wheatley.

For a number of BRHS seniors, this was the first election in which they could vote. Senior Michael Breaux felt that this was a very important time.


"It felt good to be voting in such an important election," Breaux said.

He was not surprised by the results of the election either.


"Obama clearly had the popular vote," said Breaux, "he's young, and he represents a change that America is ready for."

Although he thought Obama would win, Breaux's vote went to another candidate. "I voted for Ron Paul, because his policies let me do me," he said.


Top Dogs of the month



Angela Chun- Senior, Honors student
Schedule: Six AP classes and one talented music class. **Favorite Class:** English. **Office:** Interact Club district governor. **Passion:** Service. **Plans:** College, medical school, become a pediatric surgeon. **Quote:** "I've always liked to write and analyzing literature and poetry comes naturally to me."



Emily Cancienne- Junior, Soccer player
Sport: Soccer since the age of five. **School records:** Goals in one season- 36. (tie) **Career goals scored:** 63. **Honors:** All-district offensive MVP, All-state, Regional pool. **Plans:** College. **Quote:** "The team works well together, and I know we will do well in the playoffs."



Brittany McMahon- Junior, Talented drama. **Dad:** Teacher Glenn McMahon. **Last jobs:** Stage manager ("Frankenstein"). Wendy ("Women and Wallace"). **Plans:** College at Akron U. or LSU. Major in theater. **Quote:** "I actually had an anxiety attack the week of "Women and Wallace"."

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BETA (continued from page 1)

The BRHS Beta club was fortunate to have one recognized member who placed. Senior Rachel Williams will represent District VII at the state convention in the special

talent division.

Liu is hoping that the unrecognized members will be able to show their talent at the state convention as well.

"Our district certainly has

shown talent, and we're looking forward to seeing all of them compete at the state rally in January," said Mocan.