

This Is Garbage

The issue with waste and disrespect at Golden

By Nya Ulrich



Throughout the years of Golden High School, there has always been an extreme sense of pride to be a demon; through football games with mascots, or events funded by the community, many people can agree that being a demon is something we can all take gratification from. Golden High School has had its fair share of ups and downs, but the community always joins together to create an end goal.

However, that sense of community has become less apparent this year, evident in the school's physical appearance. Sure, (most of) the outside looks pristine. But the trash has become a very obvious problem that many students, staff, and parents have noticed. As Golden is very limited with custodians and janitors this year due to COVID, vast physical changes have popped up around the school. This is a huge issue because it does not represent what it means to be a demon- instead, it demonstrates laziness, an unwillingness to contribute to the community, and a lack of respect for not just the school, but the environment, staff, and other students as well.

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, many staff have been relieved or quit due to unsatisfactory pay or other related problems. Thus, we have been left with very few custodial staff who already do more than imagined. But that is not the only issue. Across the student community, there have been multiple cases of extreme disrespect shown- kids stealing various appliances to fit with a 'Devious Licks' Tik Tok trend, trash shoved in the toilets, broken soap dispensers and paper towel machines; the list is neverending. This adds on to the trash that litters the courtyard, even when there are trash bins surrounding the affected area. Graffiti has

also been a major problem, as people have been writing offensive terms and having conversations.

After doing research and speaking with fellow students and staff, it was discovered that a clean-up service had been initiated by the Debate Club. When asked what sparked the desire to create this service, Ms. O'Connor stated that, after sending out an email to teachers asking what they needed done, they replied with various answers such as, "I need someone to vacuum my room," "I need someone to come take out trash and recycling," etc. They reached out personally to the teachers to ask what was necessary for them to continue teaching in a clean space. When the students were asked what their inspiration was for this, one student said, "I think it is very important to have a clean environment to learn in because many kids have a hard time focusing in dirty areas." Another student said, "As we [Debate Club] have always been considered leaders in the community, we wanted to give back to the school."

Changing the ways we go about cleanliness can drastically affect the school's physical reputation. It is a beautiful campus, yet kids still actively choose to ignore the responsibility of cleaning up after themselves. After reviewing security footage from the school courtyard, it showed multiple times that during our 40 minute lunch period students were discarding their uneaten food and trash on the grass and concrete, 5 feet away from an empty trash can. Why? Well, that's the mystery question. It has recently been shown that kids are actively choosing to ignore the efforts made by other students and staff to encourage self clean-up, and one of those reasons being social norms. Through interviews with many students after being asked the question "Why don't you pick up trash?" countless students have said that they only do it if their friends do it, thus wanting to 'fit in'.

In an interview with Hannah Kramer, a student who has decided to take matters into her own hands, she stated that she received backlash from her close friends when proposing the idea of an after school clean up crew.

"I proposed the idea for after school on Fridays... but a lot of my friends said that it was weird and cheesy because it wasn't normal." Reputation is definitely a huge factor when it comes to social trends such as this because the teenage years are insanely influential: from social media to television shows, our brains are constantly absorbing media that can affect us, be it positive or negative.

Although it may seem 'weird' or 'cheesy' to many people, using that reputation to your advantage can be beneficial. If more people start picking up after themselves, then it will start a chain reaction and hopefully encourage more people to get active and notice the changes. There are many ways you can help out: after lunch, throw away your trash in the designated trash cans around the courtyard; encourage your friends to do the same. You can also monitor your classrooms; after class, pick up one piece of trash or paper you find on the floor. You can ask your teacher what you can do to help, too.

The major kicker is, nobody will pick up after you when you grow up. Unless you live in an assisted housing community or with a maid, you will be the sole person responsible for your own mess. Why not start the habit early? Your brain will thank you.