

## Peshtigo psychology students spent a day in someone else's shoes

### Psychology lesson opens eyes to situations of others

Special to the EagleHerald  
*Editor's note: This article was submitted by the Peshtigo School District.*

PESHTIGO—Peshtigo psychology students recently finished a unit learning about abnormal behaviors with a lab called “copy-cat.”

For this lab, students were “challenged to think outside of their comfort zone and experience life through someone else's struggles.” Teacher Donna Kalafut finished her unit on mind and behavior with students “acting as if they have a condition of their choosing, ranging from teen pregnancy to hearing loss or obsessive behaviors to schizophrenia.”

“Psychology is a realistic and statistical discussion on how nature and nurture affect us all,” Kalafut said. “Students learn about human behavior, emotion and thought processes. Students learn how genetic, medication and environmental factors influence thinking and behavior.”

Peshtigo High School juniors and seniors can take “Introduction to Psychology” through a dual enrollment program with NWTTC. Students earn high school credits, as well as college credits through NWTTC, free of charge.

Some students didn't like having to play the role all day, not liking the discomfort caused by how others reacted to their behaviors.

“No, I did not have fun,” stated senior Adam Reiszewitz. He chose to portray manic behavior such as tapping feet and chomping on gum all day. He said he found it tough to act out the behavior all day and didn't like other students staring at him all day long.

More than one student commented how other students in school reacted to junior Ashley May, who chose to act as if she was a pregnant teen for the day, starting at her and discussing her “pregnancy.”

“Walking through the halls was scary,” said May, who put a large bowl under her



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Peshtigo High School student Landon Lemke, front, stands with his imaginary friend, while Adam Reiszewitz can't still during a lab session on abnormal behavior in Donna Kalafut's psychology class.

sweatshirt to portray being pregnant. She said, “I felt like all eyes were on me!”

Other students didn't like their roles, because they didn't like how it made them feel, personally, while acting out the roles.

Junior Radwa Farghali acted like the television character, Monk, and found it “hard to focus when I wanted everything to be perfect and clean. It was also distracting and time consuming.”

Senior Evan Schoenebeck chose to act like a pessimist all day and found it tough

saying, “it's not easy and it really affects how you act.”

Junior Cassidy Michalski chose to act like someone who was hard of hearing. “I found it extremely tough and it made me

feel how difficult things can be for people who face hearing loss.”

Senior Colin McMahon chose antisocial personality disorder and tried to act “unnecessarily rude and short-tempered ... it hurt me to intentionally belittle others.”

For most students the activity was positive, due to the nature of the condition, or that they really learned a valuable lesson.

Senior Paris Grabian liked acting out her role as an optimist as it “helped me feel more happy, less stressed, and more successful.”

Senior Landon Lemke acted like he had schizophrenia and acted as if he was talking to an imaginary friend throughout the day. Lemke was “surprised when other people started accepting my imaginary friends and having conversations with them. I learned that people suffer many different things and we all need to find ways to help them overcome their difficulties.”

McMahon said, “You don't really know what's going on with someone below the surface. It's easy to jump to conclusions, but it's much more important to try to understand the whole situation.”

Michalski adds, “The biggest thing I learned was to not judge others.”

After the copy-cat lab students wrote a report on their personal emotional and physical experiences of the day. Students discussed the experience, comparing similarities and looking at differences they experienced while acting with one of these challenging conditions.

“Taking the time to understand ourselves and others allows for a deeper understanding when encountering others who display different conditions and behaviors,” Kalafut said. She quotes Margaret Mead, saying “always remember that you are absolutely unique, just like everyone else.”

Senior McKenna Priyardashane said we should treat someone with a condition “the same as any other person.”

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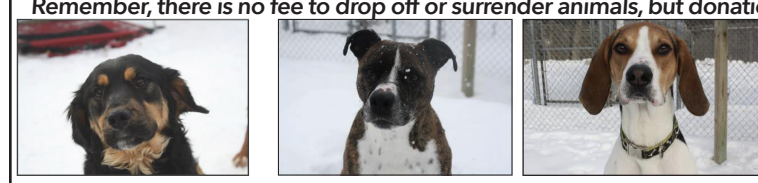
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