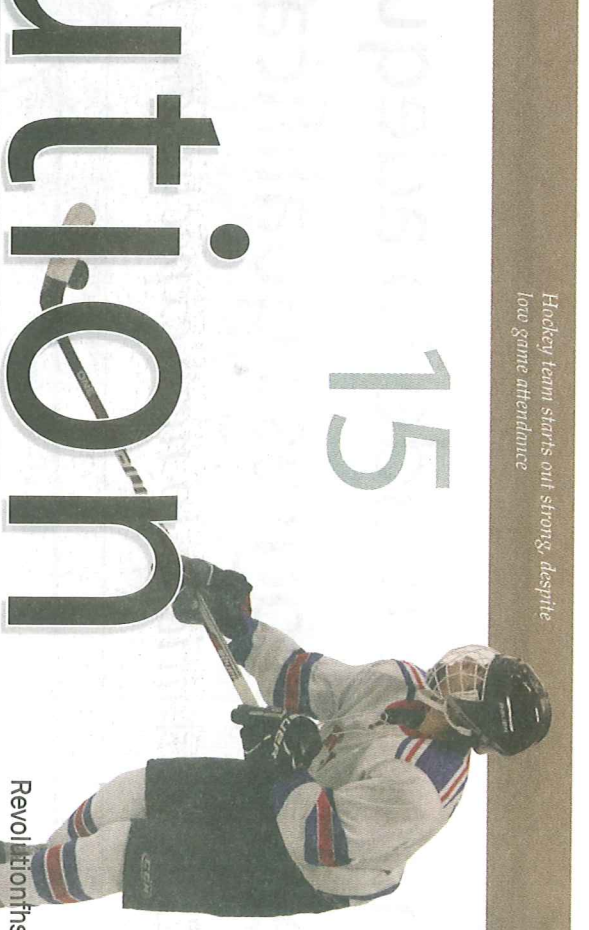


Freedom High School



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# Blessings from Battles

## Student gains perspective from fight with cancer

Leah Wasserman  
*editor-in-chief*

"Why are you wearing a hat? Are you a cancer patient or something?" Sophomore Jordan Harris was greeted with these words on the first day of the school year.

"I was like yeah and she was like 'shut up, no you're not,'" Harris said.

Last year, Harris knew something was wrong. "I started getting migraines everyday but I never used to get headaches at all," Harris said. Following the headaches, Harris began experiencing a loss of mobility in the left side of his body.

"When I would walk my left arm would just sway like it was just hanging dead," Harris said. "At soccer practice I just started to do worse and worse and at a point I couldn't even use my left foot anymore."

On April 30 last year, Harris was diagnosed with Primitive Neuroectodermal Tumors. Doctors found a tumor the size of a fist on the right side of Harris's brain through an MRI.

"I thought 'this is going to screw up my everything; my life.' I wasn't scared or anything. I was just surprised it was happening to me," Harris said. The first step on Harris's road to recovery went extremely well.

"Surgery to get the tumor removed went perfectly. Sometimes the tumors are in your brain but mine was right on it and they just sucked it up and got all of it," Harris said. "I was supposed to be in the hospital for seven weeks but since I was athletic and healthy I recovered quickly. Eight days after surgery I was at the beach."

From there, things got harder for Harris. The next milestone in his recovery was radiation therapy. "I didn't have any (tumor) in me but if it did come back they wouldn't have been able to do anything about it and eventually I would just die."

The radiation process lasted six weeks. Harris says that was the worst part.

"It killed my taste buds," Harris said. "I did not eat anything through my mouth for a month in summer. I couldn't even watch any commercial for food."

A feeding tube was inserted through Harris's stomach and for months, he was unable to consume food normally. "The machine ran through the night and I woke up full," Harris said.

After radiation therapy came chemotherapy. Starting in August, Harris began his six sessions of chemo, one every 28 days. Each time he goes in for chemo, he is in the hospital for four to five days.

"When I'm in there I get annoyed with everything," Harris said. "I give my mom my phone and I don't take it out until I'm leaving."

Harris has gone from weighing 160 to 100 pounds. "I have 0% body fat and 1% muscle left in my body. If I lose any more weight I would be kept in the hospital and fed constantly."

Harris has grown accustomed to his new appearance. He is now bald with a scar going across his head.

"I've gotten used to it," Harris said. "I think I look weird now with hair."

He wears a hat most of the time, including the week of school that he attended, but does not feel insecure about his newly bald head.

"If they had a problem with (my hat) at school I would just take it off. I didn't care," Harris said.

Harris said that when he goes out in public most people just kind of assume it's cancer.

"Waiters at restaurants always tell me 'God bless you' and how strong I am," Harris said.

Through it all, Harris has maintained a good attitude. "I'm kind of glad it happened because it put my whole view of life in check," Harris said. "I feel like it's made me a better person. It completely changed my attitude."

Harris focuses on all of the positive aspects of his situation.

"It was the perfect age for it to happen, not too young or too old," Harris said. "It would have sucked if it was senior year because I couldn't have applied to college and if it was freshman year I would have been really confused."

"Coming back to school will be easy," Harris said on his expected return to school after winter break. He will have one more session of chemo following this.

"The first month will be hard but after that it will be smooth sailing from there."

## Preventative measures taken to eliminate bats Pest control called in to deal with bats after teacher complaints

Kelly Bonville-Sexton  
*staff writer*

When you think of October, Halloween immediately comes to mind. It conjures up images of pumpkins, costumes, candy, and even such creepy creatures as bats. So having a bat infestation at our school for October is pretty ironic.

However, these aren't the bats that you think of around Halloween time. These are normal bats that are common around North America and the only thing that should be quivering in fear because of them is the insect population of New Tampa. Some people believe that since they aren't hurting anybody they should be left alone.

"As long as they're not doing anything wrong I don't see why

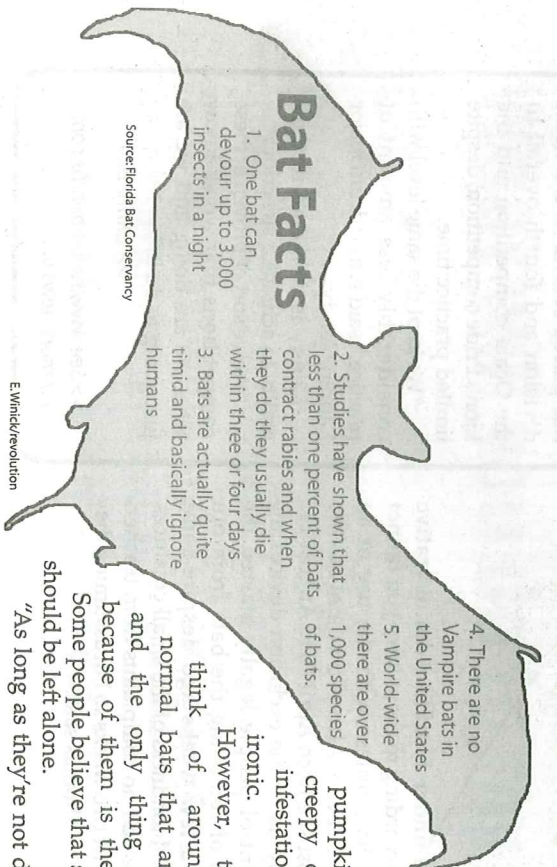
we should get rid of them," senior Cody Baker said. Others even like having these bats in the school and want to keep them here.

"I think we should all be advocates for the bats," freshman Katheryn Clark said. "Please don't take them away."

The administration, however, is less concerned with advocating for the bats and more concerned with the safety of the school. Although most bats do not have it, some bats are carriers of the rabies virus. According to Bat Conservation International, an average of two people per year have died of rabies in association with bats since 1995.

"I personally don't see the use of having the bats," assistant principle Elijah Thomas said. "I've gotten numerous complaints from teachers who come in early in the morning and see them flying around."

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### Bat Facts

1. One bat can devour up to 3,000 insects in a night
2. Studies have shown that less than one percent of bats contract rabies and when they do they usually die within three or four days
3. Bats are actually quite timid and basically ignore humans

Source: Florida Bat Conservancy

4. There are no Vampire bats in the United States
5. World-wide there are over 1,000 species of bats.

E. Winick/revolution



Courtesy of Jordan Harris