A STORM IS BREWING

With the increased availability and dependence on coffee and energy drinks, the effects upon students are more profound

By Ben Seelig

With an increased market for energy drinks and mass-distributed coffee, more teens than ever before are drinking over the recommended caffeine levels.

According to UCLA Health, the average teen should consume less than 100 mg of caffeine a day. In just one serving, a Grande Starbucks latte and a Celsius contained roughly 150 mg and 200 mg of caffeine respectively.

“Usually I wake up in the morning and go, ‘how am I going to get through today?’ The problem is, I’m not a morning person, and it usually takes until 1 (p.m.) for me to recoup from waking up. I can’t deal with that, not during school,” theatre junior **Brayden Wartman** said. “Then, there’s the realization of ‘Oh, I have rehearsal after school today,’ and I know I’m going to need two energy drinks to wake me up again.”

The shift from soda to coffee was a predominant trend, with the National Library of Medicine reporting that of all commercial caffeine sales, soda dropped from 62% to 38% since 2000, while coffee grew from 10% to 24%. For many families, though, coffee was always held in high cultural importance, and even treated as a medicine for students like strings freshman **Cecilia Rincon**.

“(My father’s) mom influenced him from a really young age to drink coffee, and he got obsessed with it... Later, before I was even born, he was found to have high blood pressure because of it,” Rincon said. “(Without coffee), he gets very stressed out, and a lot of times, he

gets really tired so he can't function… It makes me sad, because I don't want him to be stressed out."

There was debate between the American Psychiatric Association and The World Health Organization over whether caffeine is a true addictive drug, according to the Addiction Center. While it does stimulate the central nervous system and release some dopamine, it does not release enough of the chemical to unbalance the brain's natural reward system (unless consumed in high doses). Caffeine creates its desired effect with its molecular structure, traveling through the blood and into the brain. It resembles the shape of adenosine, the molecule that creates a tired feeling and lessens the excretion of adrenaline. Caffeine blocks the adenosine receptors in the brain, causing the body to not feel tired until the caffeine is metabolized.

Whether or not it is an addiction, some Dreyfoos students have tried lessening their reliance on caffeine. Communications junior **Ruhaan Sood**, for example, has moved on from drinking two cans of Celsius a day to only a few a month.

"A few days into the week, my stomach would start to hurt, and that still happens (to this day). Then, I would crash completely. So, if I popped an energy drink in the morning, usually by fifth period I was about to fall asleep," Sood said. "It's all short term energy. None of it will be sustained 'til the end of the day."

Despite the health consequences of caffeinated beverages, there were positive effects of coffee. According to Harvard T.H. Chan, School of Public Health, about 2-5 cups of coffee a day could lower the chances of getting type 2 diabetes, Parkinson's disease, and depression. In moderation, the consumption of caffeinated beverages had the potential to fuel greatness; given the current state of overconsumption, though, the storm could sweep drinkers off their feet and down a dangerous road.