

National

5 KIDS WHO ARE

MAKING THE NEWS

WHEN IT COMES TO BEING A JOURNALIST, AGE DOESN'T MATTER

HILDE
LYSIAKAGE: 13
BREAKS NEWS BEFORE
THE ADULTS DO

OF ALL THE subjects Hilde reports on, she likes crime the best. "With crime, it's like a puzzle or a mystery," the young reporter says. "I love investigating." Hilde, who inherited her love of journalism from her dad, started her own print-and-online news outlet, called Orange Street News, when she was 7. She has come a long way since then: She's now the youngest member of the Society of Professional Journalists.

In 2016, when she was 9 and living in Selinsgrove, Pa., Hilde got international attention for breaking the news of a homicide near her home. Working on a tip from a source, she headed over to the crime scene and got the scoop hours before the competition. Then last year, while following up on a tip about a possible case involving drugs in her new town of Patagonia, Ariz., she had a confrontation with the police chief. He warned her not to post footage she was shooting of him, saying it would be illegal to do so. She put it up on the internet anyway, and the incident made headlines. The town later apologized to her for threatening her freedom of speech.

Some critics have said that it's inappropriate for a young girl to report on crime, but Hilde disagrees. "I try not to pay any attention to it," she says, adding that she's not scared when she goes to crime scenes because she grew up tagging along with her dad when he was a reporter in New York for The Daily News.

Hilde and her father have written a six-book Scholastic series together called "Hilde Cracks the Case," and her life is the basis for an upcoming Apple TV Plus series called "Home Before Dark." In the future, Hilde says, she wants to focus more on investigative journalism, which is like detective work. "I really look forward to the day that I'll be judged on my work, not my age or my gender," she adds. *Mark Yarm*

JADEN
JEFFERSONAGE: 11
TAKES ON POLITICS
ON CAMERA

A FAN OF TV NEWS, Jaden started reporting on local events in Toledo, Ohio, when he was 10. He had a microphone and a video camera setup, and he uploaded his videos to his YouTube channel, Jaden Reports NOW. Then in late July, he broke onto the national stage when he asked Elizabeth Warren, a senator from Massachusetts who is running for president, a question at an event in Toledo.

Afterward, Warren granted him a one-on-one video interview, in which he asked her what President Trump's worst policy was. A CNN reporter tweeted about the interactions, praising the young journalist's skills, and "the next day, I was a viral sensation," Jaden says. "As a journalist, I try not to be the story. But in that case, I was the story." He now has nearly 23,000 followers on Twitter.

Since then, Jaden has appeared on "The Ellen DeGeneres Show" four times. The show has arranged for him to interview big names like Brad Pitt and Oprah Winfrey. Although talking to celebrities is a lot of fun, he says, his heart is really in hard news and political reporting. "I like asking politicians a lot of tough questions," he says. He has interviewed one other Democratic presidential candidate, Representative Tim Ryan (who has since dropped out of the race), and he is still hoping to snag his dream interview: President Trump.

Jaden says he enjoys all aspects of broadcast journalism — meaning on-camera reporting shown on TV or the internet — from interviewing people to writing scripts to editing footage. Currently, he is in the early stages of developing a TV show. "I would love to have my own TV show where I can talk for hours about the political-news headlines," he says. "I just love keeping people informed and helping them make great decisions." *Mark Yarm*

OLIVIA
DOYLEAGE: 17
WON'T BE TOLD
NO

LAST APRIL, Olivia and two other staff members from The PLD Lamplighter, the student newspaper of Paul Laurence Dunbar High School in Lexington, Ky., drove to a nearby community college to cover a discussion on education featuring Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos. The student journalists had been led to believe that the event was open to reporters, but security barred them from entering. "We were kind of stunned that we were turned away," says Olivia, now a senior and one of three editors in chief of the paper.

So Olivia and her fellow editor in chief at the time, Abigail Wheatley, wrote an editorial, which is an opinion piece by a newspaper's editors, about what happened. "The bottom line is that we do not think that it is fair to have a closed round table about education when it affects thousands of Kentucky teachers, students and parents," they wrote. The local paper reported on it, followed by The Washington Post and CNN. "We were taken aback by how powerful our voices can be, even as students," Olivia says.

More recently, Olivia was a writer on another editorial, this one on why staff members decided not to attend a local rally by President Trump because of safety concerns. "He's waging a war on journalism and causing a rift between the public and the media," she says. Some classmates accused her of bias — of taking sides — as an editor in chief, but she stands by her piece. "I have always been one who's not necessarily afraid of a challenge," she says. "I think it's important that people talk about the controversial issues."

Olivia will attend Eastern Kentucky University next year, where she plans to major in broadcast journalism. "I would love to be an anchor," she says. "The dream would be to work at the 'Today' show or CNN." *Mark Yarm*

MEREDITH
MOONEYAGE: 13
ASKS LOTS OF
QUESTIONS

AS MEREDITH, editor in chief of The Sequoyah Scribe at John Sevier Middle School, puts it: "A lot of middle schoolers put themselves in a bubble sometimes. My goal is to catch their eye."

Meredith has been an editor at The Scribe, located in Kingsport, Tenn., since sixth grade. Now she attends meetings on Wednesday afternoons, writes stories from home and works on layouts and projects two mornings a week. She's particularly proud of an article she wrote about why it's problematic that schools in Kingsport use Native American stereotypes as mascots — the Redskins, the Warriors and the Indians. It was a tough one to report, she says, because when she asked teachers and students about it, a lot of them didn't want to be quoted criticizing the district. (Reporters can ask any question they want, but no one has to answer. And if a source says something is "off the record" in an interview, you can't print it.) "I like doing stories that make the reader a little uncomfortable," she says.

As editor in chief, Meredith tries to be someone the other staff members — six editors, five media editors and 28 staff writers — can rely on for help. Their efforts have paid off. Last year, The Scribe was the only middle-school paper in the country to win a coveted Pacemaker Award, the biggest award given for student journalism. When she gets to high school next year, she hopes to help start a newspaper, because there isn't one there now. Until then she'll be leading The Scribe, putting real issues in front of her classmates. "We always try to bring it back down to a middle-school level, so they don't think it's above their heads to change problems," she says. "We're telling them the problems, and they can create their own solutions." *Elise Craig*

JAMES
O'LEARYAGE: 18
STICKS TO THE
ISSUES

A BIG CHALLENGE faced by a school newspaper is to report on student activities even when the students might not want their parents or the school administration to know about them. But when the staff of The Cub News, the newspaper for the all-male University of Detroit Jesuit High School, took note of the prevalence of vaping among its fellow students, reporters and editors got to work. "It was our responsibility as journalists to cover this and make the dangers of vaping known to our students and faculty," says James, a senior and The Cub News's editor in chief. "This has been especially hard for us because a lot of our friends and classmates vape or have vaped, and it was unpopular that we were drawing attention to it."

The outcome has been a series of articles focusing on the hazards and culture of vaping, including one with details about students who had been suspended for vaping in classrooms and another about the futility of antivaping posters in school restrooms. "It was a little hard getting people to talk," James says, "because it's more of a thing that students want to keep hidden." He encouraged reporters to reach out to peers known to vape and see if anyone was willing to talk, even anonymously. "It was most important that they tell us the real truth," he says.

The school administration has been supportive of the paper's coverage, says James, who first got involved when he was a junior after years of reading two local papers, The Detroit News and The Detroit Free Press, in addition to The New York Times and The Wall Street Journal. "The guiding principle of our school is to 'be a person for others,' and you can see how that applies to our journalism." *Katherine Rosman*

FREEDOM
OF THE PRESS IS YOURS TOOWHEN STUDENTS' NEWSPAPERS ARE CENSORED,
WHAT ARE THEIR RIGHTS?

BY ELISE CRAIG

Student journalists have the right to report and publish the news in their school communities, even if, say, it's not flattering to the principal. Says who? The Supreme Court. In 1969, a ruling established that students have the right to freedom of speech at school, meaning they can express themselves through student publications, armbands that protest war and more so long as their actions don't cause a "material and substantial" disruption in school activities. "That means there needs to be a riot breaking out — not that people are upset by a story," says Hadar Harris, executive director of the Student Press Law Center. (Freedom of speech and of the press is enshrined in the Constitution: It's No. 1 on the Bill of Rights.)

A ruling from 1988, however, made it easier for schools to limit those rights, allowing for administrators to change, stop or take down student articles for reasonable educational purposes.

That's known as censorship, and student journalists across the country have been fighting it. Take the case of The Eagle Nation Online, a high-school newspaper in Prosper, Tex. During the 2017-18 school year, according to the former staff member Haley Stack, 18, the principal requested that the newspaper staff remove one article and two opinion pieces from its website. Why? Because they were not "uplifting" or didn't represent all students. The principal also added something called a prior-review policy, which meant the newspaper had to run every article by him before publishing it. "It sounds like a fact-check, but that's not how it's used," Haley says. "They can censor you or let it go."

Examples like this one are pretty common. In Utah, the administration of Herriman High School removed an article about a teacher who was fired for apparent misconduct from the website of The Herriman Telegraph. A similar thing happened at Burlington High School in Vermont when students broke a story about the guidance

director's being under investigation for unprofessional conduct. And in Springdale, Ark., The Har-Ber Herald was censored after it ran a story about football players who violated school-district policies.

The students behind all of these papers fought back to protect their rights. In Vermont and Arkansas, the censored stories were allowed to go back up. In Utah, students created their own site where they reposted their story. And in Texas, Haley and her fellow staff members contacted the S.P.L.C. for help. When the students returned to school after summer break, the prior-review policy was gone.

Haley and other students around the country are working to create laws that make it harder to censor student reporters. Already, 14 states have passed New Voices laws that provide protection for student journalism, and advocates are pushing for new legislation in all remaining states. Haley is part of the effort in Texas, where a New Voices law was proposed in state government. "We're working as hard as we can," she says. ♦