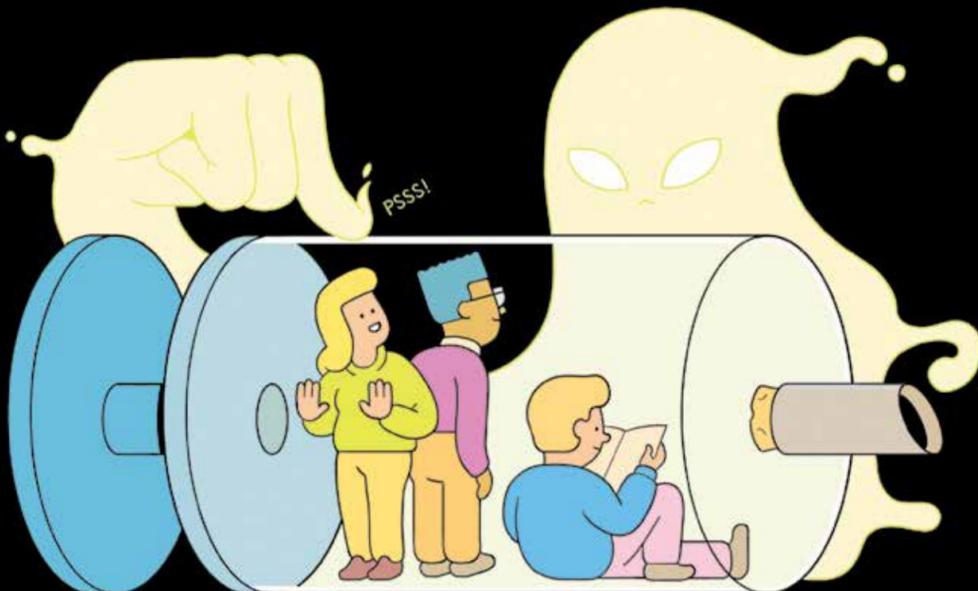


## National

## TAKING CHARGE

THE KIDS GOING AGAINST THEIR PARENTS TO BE VACCINATED

BY ELISE CRAIG ILLUSTRATION BY GIACOMO GAMBINERI



## GETTING SHOTS IS NO FUN.

But it's even less fun not to get them. Just ask Ethan Lindenberger, a high school senior from Norwalk, Ohio. By age 18, kids are supposed to have received shots for 16 different diseases. He'd only had shots for one or two. Why? His mother believes that vaccines are linked to the developmental disorder autism — even though that's not true. When Ethan dug into the issue by talking to his friends and doctor, reading online and even asking for advice in the chat forum Reddit, he discovered that he could get sick if he wasn't vaccinated and that he could make other unvaccinated people sick too. Without a parent to sign off on the shots, though, he was stuck. "I knew that my mom was wrong when I started to do some research," he says. But what could I do? In Ohio, there wasn't an option.

Across the country, more and more parents aren't

vaccinating their children because they have fears like Ethan's mom's. But that means there are now unnecessary outbreaks of contagious diseases. For example, in 2019, there have been more than 550 cases of the measles, a disease that causes a full-body rash and can lead to death in children, even though doctors declared it eliminated in the United States thanks to vaccines! — in the year 2000. (Learn how vaccines help keep people safe over on the Science page.)

So what can you do if you're a kid like Ethan who wants to go against your parents' decisions about vaccinations? It depends on where you live, says Solangel Maldonado, a law professor at Seton Hall University in New Jersey. In Oregon, kids 15 or older can consent to medical care, including immunizations. In Washington, anyone 13 or older can get treatment as long as doctors think that they're mature enough to make medical decisions. And in California, kids 12 and over can consent to sexual health services, which

includes vaccinations for hepatitis B and H.P.V.

In a majority of states, though, only parents can make health care decisions for their kids. "But that authority is not absolute," Maldonado says. "The government has the ability to intervene when children's health is at risk, and when public health is at risk. That means that in theory, a minor could get a lawyer and petition the state to transfer authority over vaccination decisions to a guardian."

As for Ethan, he waited until he was 18, and in December, he got his first round of six shots. His story has received a lot of attention (and he has heard from other kids who also didn't agree with their parents). Just last month, he was invited to testify before Congress about his experience. Still, despite his conversations with his family, he thinks he's the only one of his six siblings to be vaccinated. "I'm just hoping that they see the evidence for themselves, and if I reaffirm that it's important, they'll do it," he says. ♦

## HOW I BECAME A

## CONGRESSWOMAN



BY LAUREN UNDERWOOD

**AFTER THIRD GRADE,** I found out I had a heart condition, and I decided I wanted to be a pediatric cardiologist — until 10th grade, when I took chemistry. Around the same time, our mayor established a program for students to join local boards. My junior year, I joined the Fair Housing Advisory Commission. I was fascinated to learn about housing discrimination. I made recommendations for more inclusive policies, and I was hooked.

For college, I went to the University of Michigan to get my nursing degree. I also interned for Senator Barack Obama — he wasn't yet president. While I was in Washington, I started to see that the House of Representatives was this incredible place filled with normal people. Before that, I didn't think that our elected officials could have backgrounds like mine.

After college, I got a master's in nursing and a master's in public health. While I was in school, I had the opportunity to work on the Affordable Care Act, a bill that made it possible for many Americans to have health insurance. I loved being able to combine what I knew from my clinical experience and what was going on politically. When I graduated, I worked to support the Affordable Care Act, and then I joined the Obama administration, working on public-health emergencies.

When President Trump was elected, I went home and got a job in Chicago. I found myself at an event with my congressman, where he made a promise about health coverage that, two weeks later, I felt he broke. I decided, "It's on, I'm running!" I figured out how to start a campaign to become a United States representative for my district in Illinois, and then in November, I beat him by five points in our election. Look around your community, and when you see an opportunity for improvement, don't look the other way. As told to Elise Craig Lauren's sister, Lindsey Underwood, is an editor for The Times's Styles section.

## CHALLENGE ACCEPTED:

## TIKTOK MADNESS

BY KATIE NOTOPOULOS • ILLUSTRATION BY SUPER FREAK



**HOW DID** "Old Town Road," a rap-country song about riding horses by the unsigned rapper Lil Nas X, become the song of the spring? By becoming a meme

on TikTok, the insanely popular video app. Before TikTok became the home of short comedy skits, viral dances, cute animals and just plain weird and funny stuff, there was Musical.ly, a lip-syncing app. Last summer, the Chinese company that owned both apps combined and rebranded them. Now TikTok is hugely popular around the world: It has been downloaded one billion times, according to the analytics company Sensor Tower.

What makes TikTok fun and different from Instagram or YouTube are the challenges and hashtags that encourage

people to participate. "I think the short videos help people be more creative, because you can come up with your own stuff," says Bradee Gilmore, 13, from Terrebonne, Ore. "Even if you're doing a trend (like using someone else's dance or music), it's fun to give it a try and put your own take on it." Presley Basso, 17, from Rancho Cucamonga, Calif., agrees. She browses new videos in the "For You" section and will do a challenge "if I find it funny, or it's really popular."

**WANT TO GET INTO THE TIKTOK GAME? HERE ARE SOME CHALLENGES RECOMMENDED BY KIDS:**

**#RaindropChallenge:** Select the raindrop filter from the Effects button, and it will look as if it's raining on your phone's screen. While filming yourself, put up your hand and spread your

fingers, and the raindrops magically freeze. It's as if you are stopping time.

**#MicrowaveChallenge:** Sit on the floor with your legs up and slowly spin yourself around. Try to not let the camera see your hands! The idea is to rotate like the plate inside a microwave — like a human bag of popcorn.

**#MatildaChallenge:** Make objects move with your mind: Have a friend stand off-camera and shake a curtain or slightly tip a table so it looks as if a glass of water is moving because of your magical skills.

**#BeatTheClock:** Can you do something kind of normal — but superfast? Like play "Chopsticks" on the piano in six seconds? Or fold three T-shirts perfectly in less than 10 seconds? Show the world! ♦

## 4 CRAZY SCHOOL CLUBS

BY HEATHER SCHWEDEL

**SURE, YOU COULD** join the debate team or the drama club. But sometimes it's nice to spend the afternoon indulging your inner oddball. Here are four real school clubs that put the "extra" in extracurricular.



## ZOMBIE COMBAT

If hordes of the undead ever attack Bethlehem, Pa., the 64 members of Northeast Middle School's Survive the Zombie Apocalypse Club will be prepared. Every few weeks, their school transforms into the grounds for a zombie run, a game like a scavenger hunt in which students search for envelopes containing riddles and solve them to collect supplies, while teachers act as zombies. "They can just be anywhere and come at you," says Ryder Paulus, 13. "It's real scary sometimes." On off weeks, club members study viruses and disease outbreaks.



## SOGGY SPORTS

Hockey is better when it's wetter. At least that's what the members of the underwater-hockey team at Roger Bacon High School in Cincinnati think. Once a week, they suit up in snorkels, masks and fins and practice slapping a puck around the floor of a nearby pool. "I love being under the water," says Brooklynn Flowers, 14. "I feel like a fish — except for the fact that I can't breathe." Underwater hockey is actually popular in other countries, but Roger Bacon's is the only continuously operating high school team in the United States, so when it comes time to compete they usually have to play against adult teams (yes, those exist, too).



## ONE-WHEEL WONDERS

Sometimes when Loriselle Acevedo, 12, hangs around her neighborhood in Burlington, N.C., she gets funny looks. That's probably because she's pedaling around on a unicycle, those one-wheeled bikes you may have only seen at the circus. But she's in good company when she's practicing with the 10 other members of the unicycle club at Broadview Middle School, perfecting tricks like the starburst, in which one person holds a Hula-Hoop and the others grab on and ride in circles around it. Onlookers can stare all they want, Loriselle says. "It makes me feel unique."



## VEGGING OUT

When Sean Prell, 18, applied to college this year, there was one achievement he left off his applications: competitive-lettuce-eating champion. Weirdly, there are lots of lettuce-eating clubs all over the country, inspired by a viral Tumblr post from a few years ago. Sean's club, at Ames High School in Ames, Iowa, holds an annual contest to see who can eat a pound of the leafy vegetable the fastest. A pro tip from Sean, who triumphed in the 2017 competition with a time of 3 minutes 41 seconds: "Dressing helps keep you going." ♦