

# Turning back time may be dangerous

by Melinda Lewis

## *Junior Editor*

Daylight saving time will end this Sunday, Nov. 6. The time change will set time back by one hour. Although the extra hour of sleep this time of year is something most look forward to, the loss of an hour in the spring has been linked to negative effects on health.

Daylight saving time (DST) was first proposed by Benjamin Franklin in 1784. He noticed people burned candles at night and slept past dawn in the morning, wasting natural sunlight. Thus, he coined the phrase, “Early to bed and early to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise.”

It was first used during World War I, to conserve fuel for the United States and other warring nations. The effect of DST has changed over time, and some experts now argue that it no longer saves energy.

According to the U.S. News and World Report, the change in time has been linked to a spike in heart attacks. Experts say the loss of an hour of sleep can make people more susceptible to a heart attack, and when DST ends in the fall, these rates drop.

Some argue that DST has health benefits, as it decreases traffic accidents. Studies in the U.S. and Great Britain have found that the DST daylight shift reduces net traffic accidents and fatalities by close to one percent. The increase in accidents in the dark mornings is more than offset by the decrease in accidents in the evening.

However, recent research indicates that pedestrian fatalities soar during the weeks after the time change in the fall. Pedestrians are three times more likely to be hit and killed by cars right after the change than in the month before DST ends. A study at Carnegie Mellon University found a 186% jump in the risk of being killed by a car for every mile walked. Although the risk drops in the morning, because there are fewer pedestrians, the lives saved in the morning don’t offset those lost in the evening. A study by researchers at the University of Michigan in 2001 corroborates this research. Their studies showed that 65 pedestrians were killed in the week before DST ended, but 227 were killed the following week.

With the negative health effects and questionable efficiency, some question whether the change should still be observed. Science teacher John Vaden said, “We shouldn’t try to change it. Time should just be what it is.”

Senior Brennan Davaloz sees it differently. “I believe that it helps humans adapt to the change in seasons. It shows [our] superior ability to adapt to the environment.”

Two states in the U.S. choose not to participate in DST, Arizona and Hawaii. Four U.S. territories —American Samoa, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands— choose not to observe the time change as well.

Regardless of the pros and cons, the state of Tennessee observed this change, so be prepared to “fall back.”

