

Editorial:

Bring back the non-diet sodas!

Zero-calorie products such as Coke Zero and Sprite Zero are very familiar to the students of Riverdale High School. The drink vending machines are filled to the brim with products that are supposedly better for students' health than regular drinks containing sugar. However, one must wonder at the grand purpose of replacing these normal drinks with the zero calorie or diet substitutes.

If the idea is to lower the students' intake of sugar and encourage health, then why do the choices offered in our cafeteria not reflect this goal?

Almost every RHS student can attest to having seen another student walking with a zero calorie soda and a plate of greasy French fries. Furthermore, clubs, sports teams, and other school groups are allowed to sell regular soda. RHS students, at least those who love the fully-sugared drinks more, buy

from individual organizations as opposed to the school, which cuts back profit for the school. Because of these clubs, it is still possible for a student to get a fully sugared soda, so the school has not accomplished anything toward the student's health.

If the goal is to improve the health of the students, giving a half-hearted attempt accomplishes nothing but criticism from those who do not like the substituted drinks. Instead of forcing health on students, the school should consider offering both original soft drinks and substitutes and consider replacing some the cafeteria food with healthy alternatives. Students who wish to eat healthy now have options available, and school is encouraging healthy eating while not forcing it.

The change could begin by adding a better variety of healthy foods at school. "The Lite Side" of the cafeteria, which consists of salads served with high calorie dressings and too much cheese, does not do the job adequately. Offering grilled chicken sandwiches, baked potatoes, or fresh vegetables with dip may encourage students to make a change. A juice bar and smoothie station would be a healthy option for the school or a club to open; this kind of alternative would allow the students a sweet treat without a massive amount of calories and fat, encouraging health.

Depriving someone often creates a stronger craving. As an alternative, students should be given the option of healthy and enjoyable food. Whether, a student organization takes on the task of offering these options or the administration offers it in the cafeteria—truly healthy choices are needed at RHS. Substituting high sugar drinks is not enough to inspire a change in eating/drinking habits, especially when these drinks are coupled with fat-filled, grease-soaked French fries and chicken fingers. RHS can possibly spark a change in the health of high school students, but only if more effort is put into the cause.

