

# the liberator

Liberal Arts and Science Academy | 7309 Lazy Creek Drive, Austin, TX, 78729 | April 6, 2021 | Volume 47 | Edition 4 | lasaliberator.com

## what's news



photo courtesy of Aaron Pellowski

### Flex Friday Festivities

Students take advantage of Flex Fridays with unique and engaging Master Classes spanning a wide range of interactive topics.

see **MASTER CLASSES** page 12



photo by Emma McBride

### Lettuce Eat the Plants

The population growth within Austin bolsters an increase in the availability of specifically vegan dining throughout the city catering to vegans' unique diet.

see **VEGAN RESTAURANTS** page 13

## How COVID-19 Highlights Disparities Across AISD

LUCI GARZA | news editor

According to the University of Texas (UT) Institute of Urban Policy Research (IUPRA), more than 55% of Austin Independent School District's (AISD) student population qualifies for free or reduced lunches, with a majority of those students attending schools with a higher Black and brown student population. Throughout

Austin's history, Interstate Highway 35 has separated the city's poorer communities and communities of color, who reside on the eastern side of the

city, from wealthier predominantly white communities, who reside on the western side, according to the Austin American-Statesman.

According to IUPRA research associate Ricardo Lowe, schools with a higher population of students of color also have a higher percentage of disciplinary issues between those students and their school. Lowe also added that within these margins, Black students comprise the largest portion of students who are penalized.

"You have to really look into what it means for school resource officers to be in the spaces where Black families and Black students and brown families or Brown students don't necessarily have great relationships, or great trust in policing, because we saw what happened with George Floyd," Lowe said. "This is something that is being shown to you, and you have to really start listening to people more."

Before the COVID-19 pandemic was an issue, a large problem Black and brown communities living in East Austin were facing had to do with school closures in their area, according to Lowe. In 2019, AISD announced 12 school closures, nine of which were within Austin's east side.

"Even before the school closures were announced, you'll see that Black families had issues with the way that their children were being treated inside of the schools in terms of school discipline, in terms of school resource officers

disproportionately disciplining their children, in terms of academic achievement, in terms of the school-to-teacher ratios, there were so many different things," Lowe said. "Even after the pandemic, you really had those issues and they continued to persist, they're a little bit more pervasive, in fact, because COVID-19 really has exposed some of those things a lot more."

House District 49 Rep. Gina Hinajosa is a policy maker who has spoken out about her concerns with school segregation within Austin. Hinajosa was also a long-time board member of AISD and has two children who are AISD students.

"My office did a study about it over the interim, and what we found was that we looked at segregation two ways — we looked at it racial and socioeconomic segregation," Hinajosa said. "In both of those categories, [Austin] ranked as one of the worst-segregated, by both measures, of large districts in the States."

Lowe said this eventually caused a shift in these communities, overall leading to many parents un-enrolling their children from AISD. A report done by IUPRA showed that the number of Black students enrolled in AISD from ages 5-17 declined by 18% between 2000 and 2010. According to Lowe, Black families were more likely to move out of Austin completely, whereas Hispanic communities were more likely to enroll their children in local charter schools

see **ONLINE SCHOOL** page 5

**PHYSICS SUPPLEMENT REVIEW** Physics teacher Jon Croston goes over notes from the fluids unit with his students in class. Every Friday, Croston reviews class notes with his students to prepare them for the weekly quiz covering the material. photo by Emma McBride

**MOVING FORWARD** AISD's Homeless Liaison Rosie Coleman and Project Supervisor Howard Hooper Jr. smile for a photo. Both Coleman and Hooper Jr. advocate and promote equity across the district. photo courtesy of Rosie Coleman

**Mr. Croston Wins Teacher of the Year**

ANNABEL ANDRE | staff writer

This school year, Jon Croston, one of the Physics and Calculus teachers and both the golf and cross country coach, won LASA's 2020-2021 teacher of the year award. According to principal Stacia Crescenzi, despite the difficulties of virtual school this year, Croston continues to go the extra mile to help his students.

Every year LASA conducts a survey to choose the teacher of the year. The survey is sent to staff members and after two rounds of

qualifications and there's a first round of voting. Ms. Czaplinski runs it and then she sees the top couple of teachers. Then [teachers] put together their resumes and then that's sent out to staffers as a second voting opportunity."

During virtual school the process of choosing a teacher has not changed, but it was difficult for faculty to gauge how well teachers orchestrated their classes since there has been less interaction among them. Connections and bonds between teachers and students were also lacking, leaving faculty members unsure of how to vote.

"The process was exactly the same," Crescenzi said. "I think teachers might not feel as connected to each other. You don't get the buzz about what people are doing in their classrooms the same way you do when you're here and all the students are on campus."

Online learning has also forced teachers to adapt and change how they teach, which is connected with their effectiveness in engaging students. Crescenzi said that despite the recent and sudden changes teachers have had to respond to, they have managed it very well.

"Virtual teaching is a totally different thing and I think that the platform comes more naturally to some people than others. Some content areas lend themselves to virtual models more than others,"

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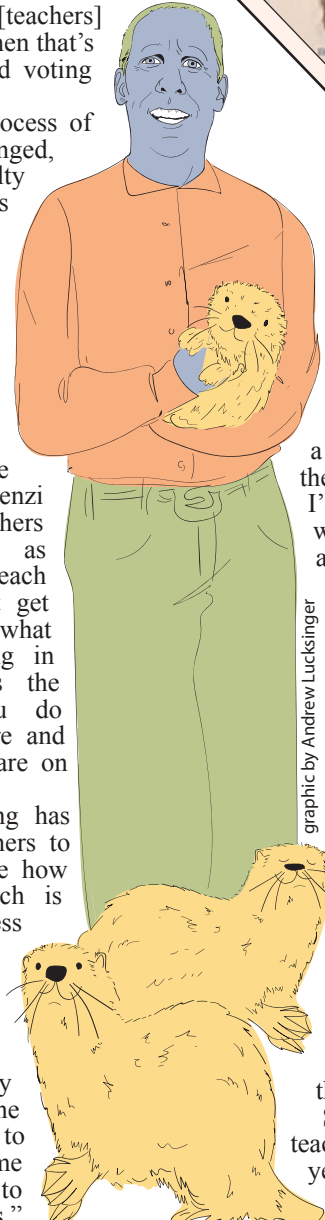
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**"If my students are happy, if my students learn and if my students think I am a good teacher, I'm happy."**

-Teacher of the Year Jon Croston

voting, they choose who they think is the best teacher to receive the award. Croston devotes much of his time to his students and their education, as he teaches two AP classes and coaches two sports teams. The rest of his time is spent hosting office hours and preparing for his classes. Crescenzi explained the process of choosing the teacher of the year.

"It's two rounds of voting by the staff," Crescenzi said. "There is an initial round of voting based on the guidelines the district gives us. We list everyone who meets the



graphic by Andrew Lucisinger



see **TEACHER OF THE YEAR** page 10

## SXSW Hosts a Variety of Films from Students to Seasoned Filmmakers

CHARLES TAYLOR | copy editor

When it was announced that the South By Southwest (SXSW) Film Festival would be going virtual in 2021 due to COVID-19 concerns, thousands of filmmakers and cinema enthusiasts from across the globe were left to dreamily reminisce over the days when attending the much-anticipated mid-March showcase of cinema from diverse genres bathed in the majestic, soft white light of big screens among passionate spellbound crowds was still possible. Instead, they would sit alone on their couches or chairs staring at computer monitors, with the audience's laughter, stunned gasps and rapturous ovations replaced with a pittance of congratulatory messages in a chat box in the bottom right corner of the screen. Despite this change in format, the festival, headlined by "Demi Lovato: Dancing with the Devil," "Alone Together," and "Tom Petty: Somewhere You Feel Free," occurred as planned from March 16-18 and included streamed online screenings of new films by young and seasoned filmmakers alike.

Senior Gaelila McKaughan's short film, "In Time," was featured in the Texas High School Shorts section of the festival. McKaughan said her film, which documents parts of her daily routine during COVID-19-imposed quarantine, portrays the introspection and struggle with self-acceptance she faced while isolated from the distractions of the outside world.

"I just had cameras around while I was doing things in my house, and it's very much just

documenting how I was living in quarantine," McKaughan said. "I think that for me, and for a lot of people, people have kind of felt themselves being unwound in quarantine because they feel like they're stuck inside, or they're also stuck having to deal with themselves. There's no distractions through routine, you have to create your own routine, but past that, you have to face yourself."

In tune with the topic of her film, McKaughan said her biggest challenge in creating "In Time" was motivation and the development of a routine. She said paying less attention to the script and forcing herself to begin the filming and editing process was crucial to her completion of the short.

"I like to take more of an assistant type role, so actually motivating myself to create an original idea, and then put in the work to convey that idea was a lot for me," McKaughan said. "It was like the only way I can motivate myself was not even thinking about the script anymore. And just putting the camera in totally different spots in my house and going through my routine. And just say, 'Okay, I'm just gonna figure it out and edit it.' I guess, you could say, it's part of the message of the film, too. But that was a real challenge for me, like a self-motivated project. But it's also something that I'm really proud to be able to accomplish."

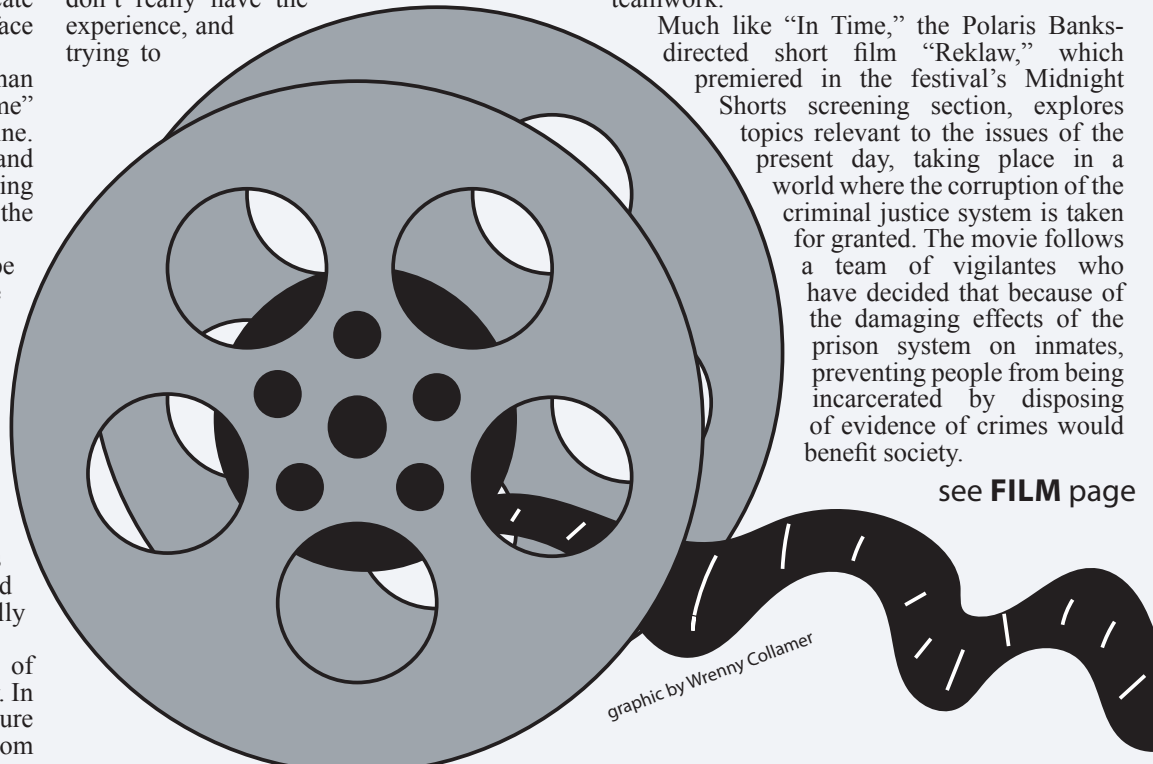
McKaughan stressed the importance of practice when first starting off as a filmmaker. In addition, she said developing a support structure and deriving motivation from working from

others are key to success in filmmaking. "You just gotta do it," McKaughan said. "When you're first starting out, you don't know what your process is, you don't know what you're good at. And it also takes you more time to work on things because you don't really have the experience, and trying to

figure out how to convey what you're feeling... Another thing too, is...I think that, if anything, finding somebody to collaborate with, whether that's a mentor who keeps you on track or a friend to look over your stuff or working in a crew with somebody; I think film is inherently teamwork."

Much like "In Time," the Polaris Banks-directed short film "Reklaw," which premiered in the festival's Midnight Shorts screening section, explores topics relevant to the issues of the present day, taking place in a world where the corruption of the criminal justice system is taken for granted. The movie follows a team of vigilantes who have decided that because of the damaging effects of the prison system on inmates, preventing people from being incarcerated by disposing of evidence of crimes would benefit society.

see **FILM** page



graphic by Wrenny Collamer

editorial Government For the People  
How the Texas Government Fails to Serve Texans

Our legislators have been wandering the hallowed halls of the Texas capitol for 133 years. During those 133 years, hundreds of thousands of pieces of legislation have been introduced. But in a time that feels near-apocalyptic, this legislation holds a whole new weight. Legislators have the power to face Texas' most pertinent issues — issues like COVID-19, energy regulation and the racial prejudice plaguing our state and nation. From bolstering the Texas economy to protecting the rights and freedoms Texans deserve, it is their responsibility to stand up for the common Texan.

In the year since the first case of COVID-19 was identified in Texas, almost 3 million Texans have tested positive for COVID-19. Close to 47,000 of those people died from it. Gov. Greg Abbott's removal of the statewide mask mandate is likely to trigger a surge in case numbers in upcoming weeks, according to the Texas Tribune. This year's legislation has the potential to change the course of this disease and the power to transform the way we address statewide issues for centuries to come.

COVID-19 is mentioned in the Texas Senate bill book 13 times, piling in comparison to abortion's 22 appearances. Our legislators pay more attention to regulating our bodies than they do to protecting them — we must hold our legislators responsible for sticking up for the needs of the common person. To make it past this virus in one piece, change must come — and fast.

These changes could include reinstating a statewide mask mandate as long as necessary, invoking legislation not unlike President Joe Biden's Defense Protection Act, which mobilizes the economy for production of antiviral materials, and funding for statewide vaccinations. In order to bolster our state's economy and keep Texans safe, the virus must be faced with full force.

Among other crises that Texans have faced in recent months was February's winter storm. For the first time in recorded Texas history, it was below 40 degrees for a week straight in February. Texas was four minutes and 37 seconds away from overloading the power grid to a point that would incite a statewide blackout that could have lasted months. Over 4.5 million Texans were without power, many for days at a time. Our state is still reeling from the effects of a lack of infrastructure fit for the cold. Legislators have the power to reform this infrastructure — the potential to transform the way Texans receive energy and aid.

And while energy reform is a priority for many legislators, including Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick, the suggested reform may not be drastic enough. Requiring members of the Energy Reliability Council of Texas (ERCOT) to live in Texas — as many many legislators are advocating for — may not be enough to prevent

this from happening again and repair the damages done.

Dramatic changes are necessary. That could include anything from democratically electing our ERCOT members to federalizing the Texas power grid — something that most other states in the union did decades ago. It could also include funding winter equipment such as snow plows and burying power lines to prevent small-area outages caused by exploding transformers and frozen power lines.

In addition, from the Rio Grande to the Gulf of Mexico, Texans are making their voices heard in racial activism. Local protests have surged and Texans are using social media to express outrage at the deep roots of racism and prejudice that run through the foundation of our state. In the wake of the murder of George Floyd, Texas Black community have rallied around the to advocate for racial justice. After a dramatic increase in crimes in the past year, Texans are calling attention to the injustices committed against Asian Americans after

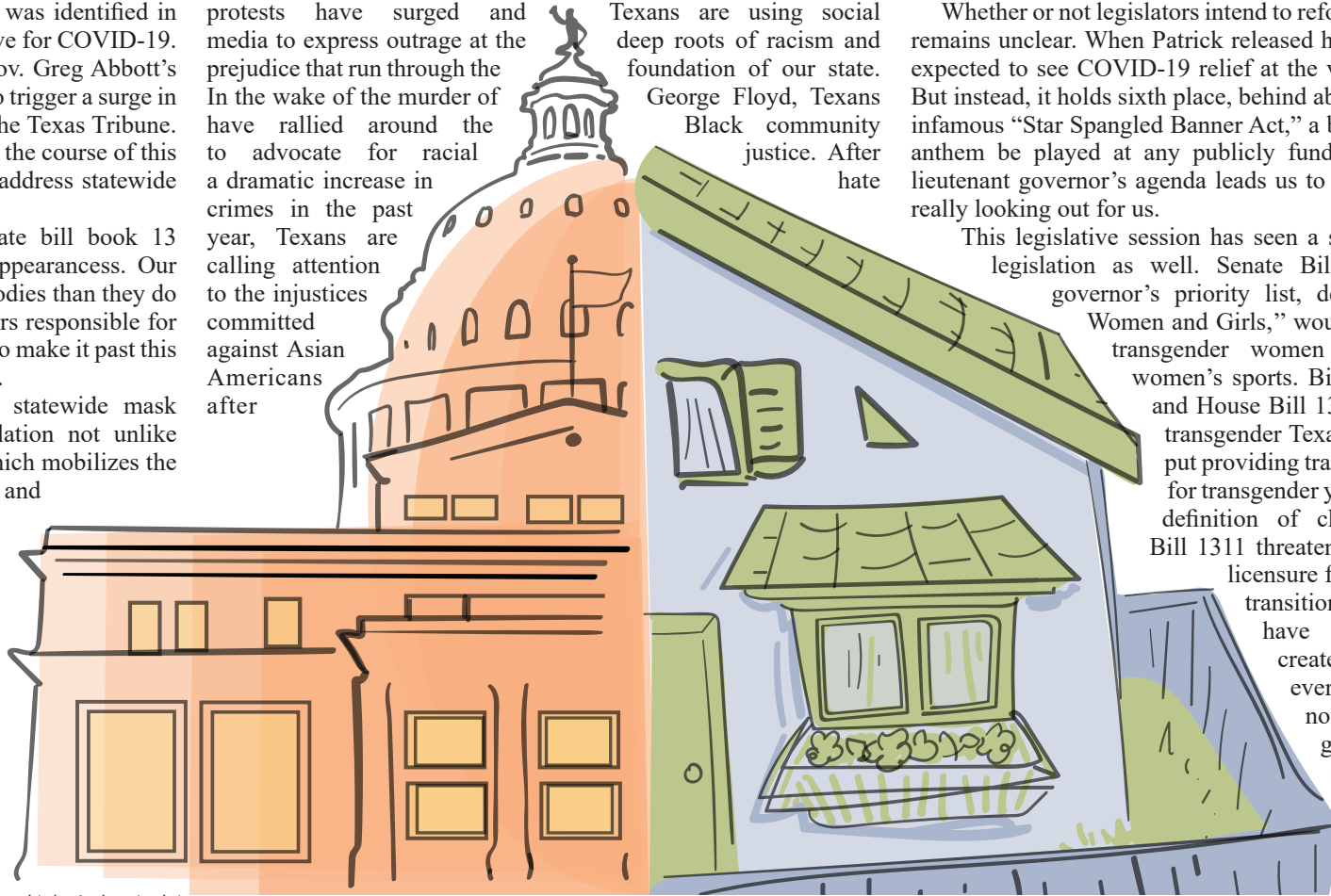
that would remove racist restrictions from real estate deeds. This would mean removing deed provisions mandating that real estate owners be white — a provision that, while present on many deeds, is largely ignored by agents in our modern society. And while this is a symbolic step in the fight against historic racial injustice, it is just that — symbolic.

In order to make true strides against prejudice, legislators must seek clear-cut change — change like defunding programs that enable racism and instating diversity training for police officers.

Whether or not legislators intend to reform these three key issues remains unclear. When Patrick released his policy agenda, Texans expected to see COVID-19 relief at the very top of his priorities. But instead, it holds sixth place, behind abortion regulation and the infamous "Star Spangled Banner Act," a bill requiring the national anthem be played at any publicly funded event in Texas. The lieutenant governor's agenda leads us to ask if our legislators are really looking out for us.

This legislative session has seen a surge in anti-transgender legislation as well. Senate Bill 29 on the lieutenant governor's priority list, deemed "Fair Sports for Women and Girls," would effectively ban young transgender women from participating in women's sports. Bills like House Bill 2693 and House Bill 1399 restrict insurance for transgender Texans, House Bill 68 would put providing transition-related healthcare for transgender youth under the statutory definition of child abuse and Senate Bill 1311 threatens to revoke the medical licensure from all doctors who give transition-related care. Legislators have the responsibility to create a Texas that works for everyone, a Texas that does not treat any particular group unfairly. In fact, it is their responsibility to fight it.

During this session, legislators hold the power to change the course of Texas history. They have the opportunity to dictate how our children and grandchildren's history books cover this time of deep tragedy. And they have the responsibility to save countless Texan lives. The question remains of whether or not they will use these convictions to fortify our state or to leave it out to dry.



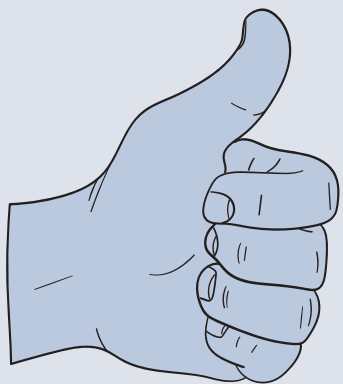
graphic by Andrew Lucksinger

politicians labelled COVID-19 the "Chinese Virus." The injustices facing people of color remain prevalent. Legislators have the opportunity to address these issues through police reform, explicitly anti-racist bills and public activism.

Legislation with respect to racism and prejudice remain lacking on the docket. Among Patrick's priorities is Senate Bill 30, a bill

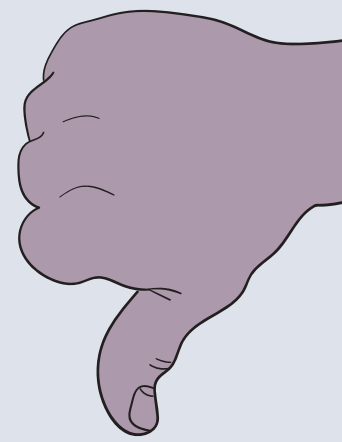
**Staff Stance:** Every six weeks the Liberator staff presents their opinion on an important current issue in the form of an editorial written by the Commentary editors. The opinions in the piece above represent those of the staff as a collective, not of each individual member.

Thumbs Up



- Frosted Flakes
- To-Do Lists
- Ginger Tea
- Multivitamins
- House Plants

Thumbs Down



- Bagpipes
- Muggy Weather
- Flossing
- Soggy Cereal
- Piranhas

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Editorial Policy

Responsibilities of a Free Student Press: Serving the primary communication link within the Liberal Arts and Science Academy and between the school and the local community, this newspaper accepts the responsibilities inherent in being a free press. The Liberator staff strives to produce a professional-quality publication that follows the Code of Ethics of the Society of Professional Journalists. The objective is to print the news in a fair and objective way with the utmost regard for integrity.

- Editorial Content:
1. The students on The Liberator staff will print articles which have been researched to the best of their ability to obtain most complete information.
2. The information will be presented in an objective, truthful and fair manner.
3. When personal commentary is given it will be in good taste on issues that have been researched, analyzed and where expert opinion has been sought, and then presented with the best ability of the writer. In addition, all opinion or commentary will be clearly labeled as so.
4. No material which is obscene, libelous or that will cause an immaterial and substantial disruption of the school day, according to accepted legal definitions, will be printed.

The Editorial Boards and its Functions:
The Liberator staff will be governed by an editorial board comprised of the following individuals: editors-in-chief and section editors.
The Editorial board will:

- 1. Determine the content of the publication (with input from other staff members).
2. Stress the editorial policy.
3. Ensure the accuracy of the publication.
4. Address disciplinary or other inappropriate behavior of staff.
5. Vote on removal of staff members.
6. Change or add policy as necessary with three of four board members voting favorably.

Viewpoints:
Printed material which is a view of a staff member or a contributing writer will be labeled as such. These views are not intended to reflect the view of the administration of Liberal Arts and Science Academy nor the School Board of the Austin Independent School District. Viewpoints will be given in two areas in the newspaper.

Editorials: These will be determined by the staff consensus. The editorial will be unsigned and will represent the viewpoint of the publication.
Letters to the Editor: Letters to the Editor are accepted for topics of general interest to the readership of the newspaper. Letters must be submitted typed or neatly printed in ink and must have the signature of the writer and the writer's grade level. Editors reserve the right to determine which issue the letter goes in, with every effort made to print the letter as soon as possible. The editors also reserve the right to edit the letter for grammar, length and repetition.

Non-Staff Contributors: Bylined contributions are welcome.
Correction of Errors: The staff makes every effort to print accurate information. In the case of errors, a written correction will be made in the following issue of the newspaper.

Sources:
In general, no anonymous sources will be used in reporting. Sources from within the school, as well as those not connected with the school, will be used. Under no circumstances will gifts, including coupons, etc., be accepted by the staff members from sources or advertisers.
Note: The Liberator is an open forum.

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Have an opinion about a new school policy? Got an issue with this issue? Anything else on your mind? Email us at lasaliberator@gmail.com or DM us @lasaliberator.

## Blocks to Barbies Advertising to Teens Revolutionizes Marketing

MADELEINE VAN SLYKE | staff writer



Our generation is the first where smart technology is a day to day part of our lives. Kindergarteners know how to use Zoom and BLEND, and children are getting phones in elementary school. Surveys have shown that the average age for a child to get a phone is 10 years old. Millions of young teenagers spend time online without parental supervision. As a result, marketers are gearing increasingly more ads towards kids. Broadcasting media have codes restricting advertising towards kids to an extent, but the internet is largely unregulated in this sense. As teenagers become the target audience of many advertisements, companies must consider the implications of advertising to this impressionable group.

Most products used to be advertised through ads both on billboards and the radio — places where adults would see them. But now, it has become common for brands to advertise through content creators and on social media platforms which are more popular among teenagers.

A new form of advertising called influencer

marketing has become increasingly popular. Influencer marketing is an outreach tactic in which a company partners with an influential person in their industry to shape consumer behavior. The individual is trusted by the company's target market and, therefore, can influence shoppers to consider, engage with and use a business's product or service.

According to the Guardian, teenage minds are more impressionable. And while this is of great benefit to companies, it can be greatly detrimental to teens. It fosters the idea that in order to be happy, a teen needs the skin serum their favorite influencer is advertising, for example. For adults, this has a lesser impact, but in teens, it can promote unrealistic beauty standards.

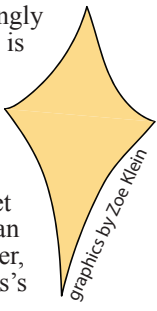
According to a report by the University of Nebraska, 44% of teenage girls feel "ugly and unattractive." This same study showed that young women who browse advertisements in beauty magazines eat less to attain the displayed body type.

Many advertisers rely on this very concept to sell their product. They aim to make those watching their advertisement believe that there is something wrong with them and buy the product to fix it.

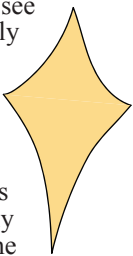
But to combat these ideals, many companies are taking to a different form of advertising — one that inspires confidence in those watching. In 2004, Dove launched its revolutionary "Dove Self-Esteem Project," with the stated goal of helping the young girls watching to understand their worth. In the years since the project launched, the company's sales have increased by a whopping \$1.5 billion. In 2020, Olay followed in Dove's footsteps, pledging to stop retouching images in their advertisements.

While there has been an increase in popularity in realistic advertising, the marketing sector still has a long way to go. To reform the way that teenagers see themselves and create a mentally healthier society, companies must consider the implications of advertising to teenagers in our growing digital world. And with companies like Dove and Olay leading the way, others must begin to realize that not only will realistic advertising bolster the mental health of their audience, it will bolster their sales as well.

Zoe Klein also contributed to this story.



Graphics by Zoe Klein



graphic by Andrew Lucksinger

## The Art Thief Fighting Digital Art Theft

LILI XIONG | staff writer



Creating art takes real work: mustering creative energy, putting an excessive amount of time into projects until they feel right and usually working other jobs since, in reality, being an artist usually is not a reliable source of income. Yet it brings artists joy to be able to pursue their creative passion and share their art with the world. It only makes sense for artists to be able to own what they create and to control who gets to profit off of their art.

As reported by BBC, there have been serious issues with digital art thieves as more artists have begun to publicize their work on social media. While social media has proven to be a great platform for artists to have a large and diverse audience, the aspects of ownership and copyright can get muddled. To support artists, it is crucial for the public to know how to consume art ethically.

Art thieves have been especially prevalent on Twitter. For instance, an artist posts a picture of their work, and perhaps someone comments that they would love to see this design on a T-shirt. This is when the situation gets messy.

Certain bots are programmed to pick up on comments like these. Once a post has been detected, the bot generates a website selling merchandise with the design printed on it and comments that link under the post, tricking people into thinking that it's an official product. This whole process isn't just a few criminals in their basements earning a bit of extra cash out of art theft; it is a mass network of bots creating website after website, manipulating consumers and tearing apart the art community.

Nonetheless, there are a few ways to protect artist rights in a world where it is so easy to take advantage of their hard work. If a consumer is unsure of whether a product was created by a certain artist and not an impostor, they should contact them. Quickly direct-messaging the artist to make sure that it really is their website can be really helpful to them. They might even have been previously unaware of what was happening to their art.

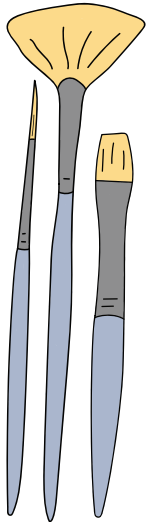
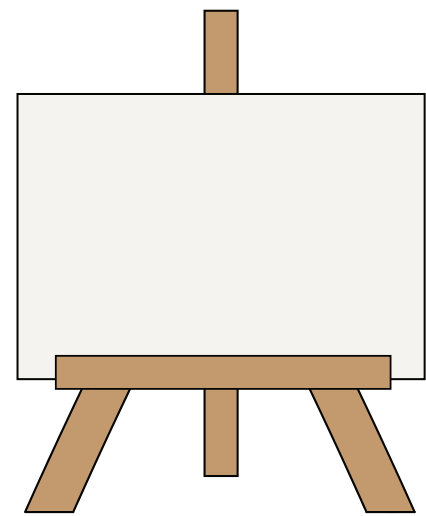
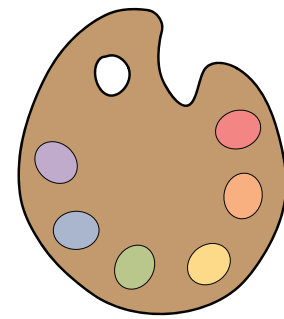
Another important aspect of protecting artists' work is becoming educated about how copyright works. When anyone creates something, it is automatically copyrighted, meaning it would be illegal for others to use, copy, modify or publish their work without permission. However, fair use allows people to use portions of copyrighted material without permission



graphics by Grace Woodruff

for certain cases, including criticism, education or news reporting, which clearly rules out art theft as being under the umbrella of fair use. Therefore, there is absolutely no loophole for art theft to be considered legal and hence the situation deserves much more legal enforcement.

Art theft is blatantly illegal, and there should be more of a push toward criminal investigations into these bots. In the meantime, individuals should be informed about these struggles and learn to appreciate art ethically, helping to conserve the already fragile industry. Art consumption must support the artist, not obscure bots. It is our responsibility as consumers to defend one of the most beautiful methods of expression against large-scale malicious commercial endeavors.



## Texas Moderation Looming Large

### Nonpartisan Politics Paves the Way for Texas House Productivity

NEVIN HALL | staff writer



When it comes to the United States legislative branch, there is no figure who looms larger than the Speaker of the House of Representatives. They are empowered to decide which legislation reaches the floor and which legislators get which committee appointments, alongside many other crucial powers. This also holds true in Texas. However, simply because both the Texas speaker and the

U.S. speaker hold the same job and hold similar powers does not mean that their actions yield the same results. The sheer tonnage of differences in efficiency, content or centrism between the Texas House and U.S. House, at present, could stun a bull elephant.

Beginning with the election of the speakers themselves, the Honorable Nancy Pelosi, D-CA, and the Honorable Dade Phelan, R-21, were chosen to head the U.S. House and the Texas House, respectively. They were both elected by a first past the post system, in which whoever gets the most votes wins, which was open to all members of their respective Houses. But while Pelosi garnered not a single U.S. House Republican vote in her favor, Phelan garnered the votes of the all-female, all-Democratic "Equity Caucus" in the Texas House.

The Texas House is, by far, the more legislative body between the two in that it actually passes a reasonable number of laws — in the last legislative session, the Texas House passed 969 bills. Its national counterpart managed to pass 214 in all of 2020. The Texas House filed over 4700 bills last session. Its national counterpart managed to file a little over 7500 bills in roughly five times the amount of time. The Texas House has about one month to pass laws every year — the U.S. House has all year. Some of this, of course, is due to the fact that 55% of seats in the Texas House are held by Republicans. However, when the U.S. House has a similar proportion of party domination, as was the case with the 116th Congress in 2019-21, it only managed to pass 214 bills.

It is the constituents and their respective leaders within these bodies that make the difference. The centrism of those elected to the Texas House contrasts majorly with those elected to the U.S. House. TribTalk, a publication of the Texas Tribune, rates

the party delegations to the Texas and U.S. House on a mean scale between 2 and -2, 2 meaning the most conservative and -2 meaning the most liberal. The Republican delegation in the Texas House garnered about a .1 on this scale, and the local Democratic delegation garnered about a -1. Overall, neither delegation at the Texas House was particularly partisan. However, this differs from the Texas delegation at the national level. On the same scale, the national Republican delegation garnered a 1, and the national Democratic delegation garnered a -1. The exact same populace votes for these representatives. Yet, somehow, one group is far less partisan than the other. And one group manages to pass hundreds more laws over the same period of time than the other.

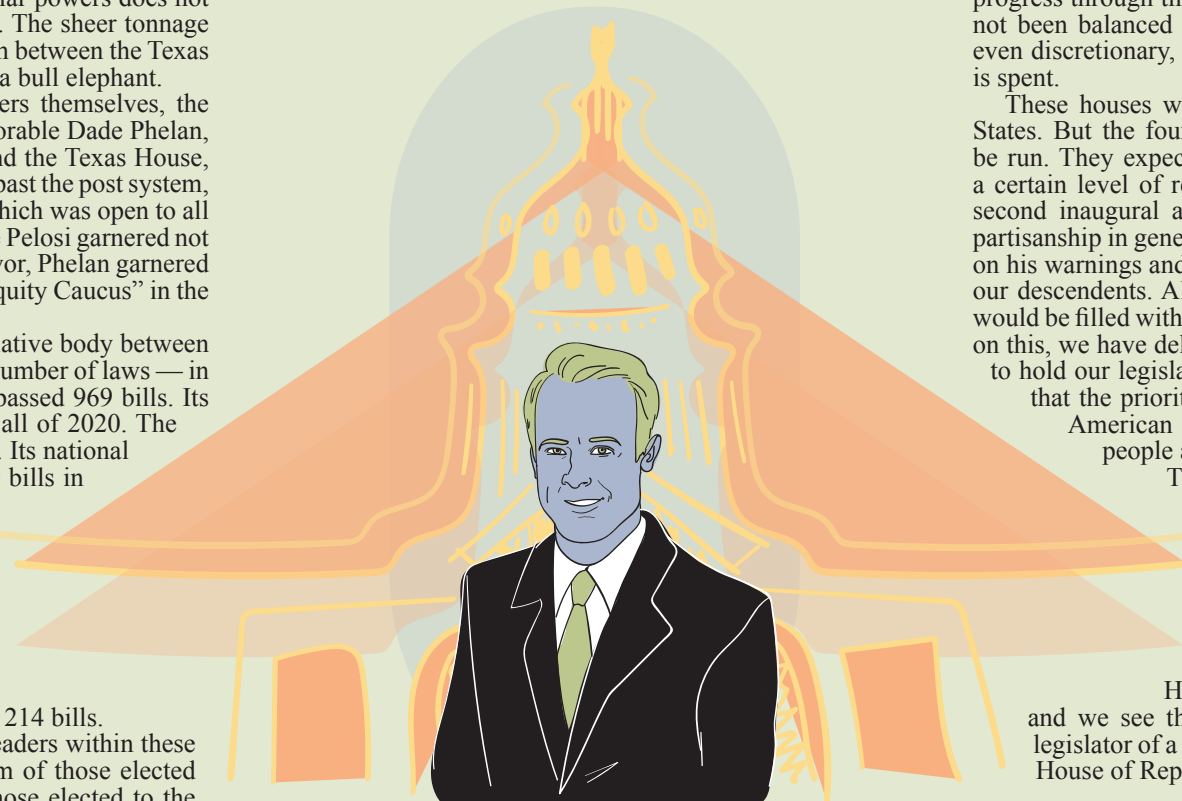
We can clearly see the effects of the centrism of the Texas House as a whole. This is clearest in the spending priorities of the state. As per constitutional requirement, the budget is always balanced.

Last session, the budget was focused on priorities like school finance reform, increased school funding, property tax reform and state infrastructure, especially after Hurricane Harvey. The House also passed other pragmatic reforms like raising the smoking age from 18 to 21, and extending the period to prosecute in sexual abuse lawsuits. Many proposed bills did not pass. Regressive tax increases, like that of the sales tax, were struck down. Culture war priorities, like efforts to keep Confederate monuments and laws directing the state attorney general to take legal action on suspicion of social media censorship, did not pass.

Turning attention to the national stage, plenty of drastically partisan motions have taken place on Capitol Hill. From House Bill 1, the "For the People Act," a massive expansion of voting rights for federal prisoners, to House Bill 1222, an act that allows states to use federal funds to acquire land for expanding or constructing a public target range, plenty of culture war priorities have made progress through the House. Most strikingly, the U.S. budget has not been balanced for over 20 years. Most U.S. spending isn't even discretionary, making it almost impossible to divine how it is spent.

These houses were created by the founders of these United States. But the founders didn't dictate how these houses might be run. They expected a certain level of decorum and expected a certain level of respect. George Washington, famously, in his second inaugural address, warned against political parties and partisanship in general. It is up to us, his successors, to make good on his warnings and keep our legislative bodies free and clear for our descendants. All of the founders expected that these houses would be filled with educated, moral and high-thinking citizens — on this, we have delivered. It is now up to us, past the ballot box, to hold our legislators to account, to use our vote to make sure that the priorities of the American people, the needs of the American people and the urgent cries of the American people are heard.

The speakers preside over the circus that these houses consist of. They are at least partially responsible for the results that these statistics cover. Between the two, the Texas House is the more moderate, more pragmatic, more efficient of the two, which can be largely credited to the speaker. The people delivered a partisan group to the U.S. House and a moderate one to the Texas House, and we see the results of their labors. One is a dynamic legislator of a growing, bullish area, and the other is the U.S. House of Representatives.



graphic by Andrew Lucksinger

# Trump's Historic Second Impeachment

NORAH HUSSAINI | staff writer



140 injuries and several arrests. The second impeachment trial of Trump started on Jan. 13, 2021, a week before he left presidential office. When the trial ended, Trump was acquitted as less than the required two-thirds of the Senate voted to have him removed from office.

The question of whether Trump was exercising his right to free speech or if his role in the events at the Capitol amounted to an incitement of insurrection was a significant topic of debate in the time leading up to the trial. At the end of his speech on Jan. 6, Trump said, "We fight. We fight like hell, and if you don't fight like hell, you're not going to have a country anymore." In addition to this, Trump also told his supporters in the very same speech that they were going to "walk down Pennsylvania Avenue" and make their way to the Capitol. Trump's lawyers claim that people took these words in the wrong way and that his words were not intended to be taken literally.

The First Amendment does not protect speech which incites violence, riots or insurrection. And while Trump's words on that day are credited with spurring these people into action, it was not only this speech that did it. Trump fed his supporters lies about the election for weeks and then acted as if he didn't know that they would act on his claims that Democrats were trying to take over the country. After telling his supporters to "fight like hell," Trump told them to walk down to the Capitol and "peacefully and patriotically" make their voices heard, letting it be known that the election was stolen. The mixed messages Trump sent through his speech, as well as the lies throughout the past weeks of the election being stolen, created a storm of angry supporters who believed the election was conducted unfairly and were ready and willing to do anything necessary to overturn it. When Trump's dangerous rhetoric does not qualify as an incitement of insurrection, it sends the message that saying similar things does not have many consequences.

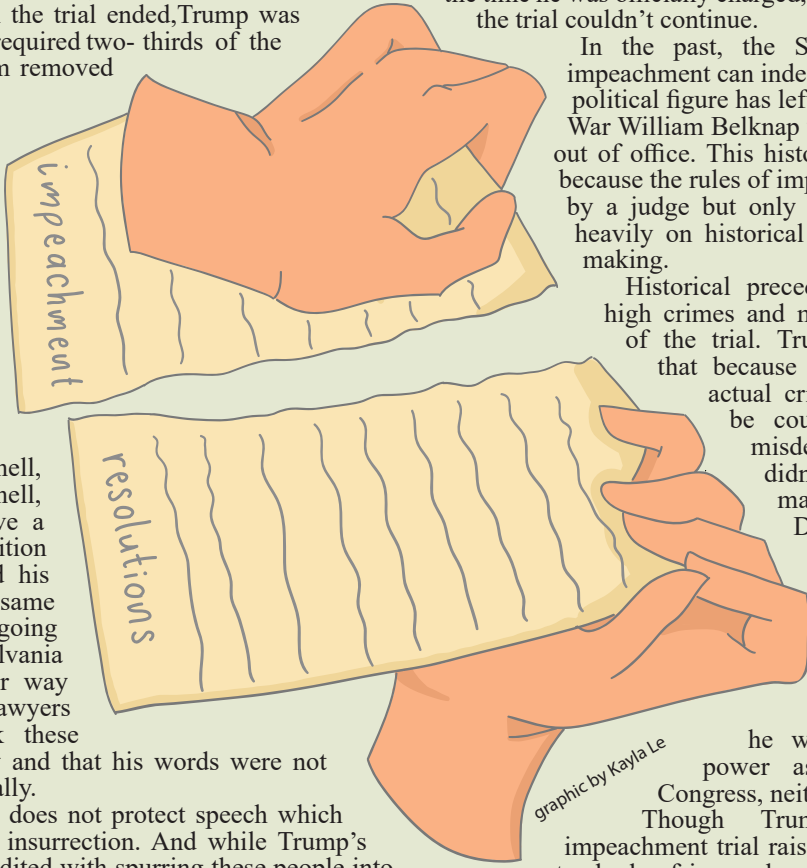
The timing of the second impeachment was also a major topic of debate. Trump's lawyers claimed that the impeachment trial was not constitutional because a non-sitting president could not be impeached. Trump's actions were taken while he was in office, so it doesn't matter if he was in office at the time of the

trial or not. If Trump made these decisions while he was in the position of president, his actions could be representative of future behavior as well. Because the Constitution does not directly address Trump's situation, the parts of the Constitution that could apply to his case have been interpreted many different ways. For example, Trump's legal team has said that Article 2 of the Constitution states that an impeached and convicted president shall be removed from office, but since Trump was no longer in office after Jan. 20, the trial would happen after he left office. This would mean that he could no longer technically be removed from his position, and, therefore, the trial could not carry on after he left office. However, this argument implies that if a president was close enough to the end of his term, he could do whatever he wanted without weathering impeachment — by the time he was officially charged, he would have left office and the trial couldn't continue.

In the past, the Senate has determined that impeachment can indeed be undertaken even after a political figure has left office. In 1876, Secretary of War William Belknap was impeached while he was out of office. This historical precedent is important because the rules of impeachment cannot be decided by a judge but only by the Senate, which relies heavily on historical precedence for its decision making.

Historical precedent also helped to clarify high crimes and misdemeanors in the context of the trial. Trump's defense team argued that because Trump did not commit an actual crime, what he did could not be counted as a high crime or misdemeanor. Even if Trump didn't commit a criminal offense, many legal experts, including Democratic House Judiciary Committee Chair Jerrold Nadler, think it may not matter because of the belief that an impeachable crime does not have to violate a law. This is because during Trump's first impeachment, he was charged with abuse of power as well as obstruction of Congress, neither of which are crimes.

Though Trump was acquitted, his impeachment trial raised many questions about the standards of impeachments, as well as how we will determine if an impeachment is constitutional in the coming years. With society continuously changing and evolving, it is getting harder to bend the Constitution to the circumstances of today. This also brings up questions of whether the Constitution will be resilient enough to withstand future political challenges. Trump's impeachment may have sent shockwaves throughout America, but it has also led us to consider the changes we need to make as a nation.

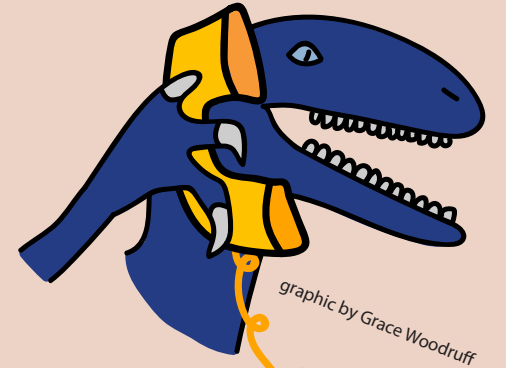


graphic by Kayla Le



graphic by Andrew Luckinger

## ask the libs



graphic by Grace Woodruff

### How Can I Obtain a COVID-19 Vaccine?

With Texas' new vaccine rollout on March 29, all adults, regardless of age or preexisting conditions, are eligible to receive their COVID-19 shot. Those 16 and up are also eligible, but only for the Pfizer vaccine, as Moderna and Johnson & Johnson are not approved for those under 18. This means that more than half of the LASA student body, not to mention faculty and staff, can now be vaccinated. Some of the best places to get your shot include UT Health and Austin Public Health. @whenwherewhataustin on Instagram also has a comprehensive list of websites that can help you get onto different vaccine waiting lists. One less official option is to go to a vaccine distribution center with someone who has an appointment and see if there are any extras available. This option is more hit or miss, but if you go at the end of the day you might have a shot (no pun intended) at getting your vaccine, as all unused vaccines must be thrown away at the end of the day due to the way the vaccines are made.

### How Do I Submit to the Advice Column?

Just DM us @lasaliberator to hear more about the things you care about in future issues of the Liberator.

ADVICE COLUMN: Every six weeks the Liberator staff present their opinion on a series of questions written by the Commentary editors.

### GEMINI

If Geminis are two-faced, your two faces are "Jake Paul" and "bored." One of those is a good thing. The other is "Jake Paul."

### CANCER

You're intuitive, Cancer. And I bet you wouldn't have been able to tell if I hadn't told you. Who's the intuitive one now, huh?

### LEO

I know you like to be generous, Leo, but stop letting other people do your homework for you! That's not generous, it's academic dishonesty.

### VIRGO

Okay, wow, Virgo. You need to breathe. I can feel your tension from all the way over here. Look up at the stars, take a breath and chill out.

### LIBRA

Sometimes being fair-minded can turn into being too neutral, Libra. I know your closet is monochrome, but surprise, your opinions don't need to be.

TAURUS

SCORPIO

## HOROSCOPES

ZOE KLEIN | commentary editor

Your reliable nature is incriminating, Taurus. For example, I know both what you had for breakfast and about the

I sense law school in your future. Maybe it's your assertive nature, or maybe you just need somewhere else to put the energy you use in dinner table arguments.

You have some things to figure out, Aries. I'm sure you knew that. So stop reading the horoscopes and go figure them out. Why are you still here?

You should try becoming a penpal, Pisces. Because right now the only letters you're sending are in "u up?" texts. At least spell out

I know you're bored, Aquarius. We all are. But I hate to break it to you, your knitting obsession is going to wear off soon. Maybe try horses?

I hate to break it to you, Capricorn, but doing all your homework in one night isn't responsible. Especially when it's the night before it's due.

Listen, man. I know you like to be idealistic, but your parents really aren't going to let you get a giraffe. Or a hippo. No matter how hard you beg.

### ARIES

### PISCES

### AQUARIUS

### CAPRICORN

### SAGITTARIUS

# One Year of COVID-19 in Texas

SOMAYA JIMENEZ-HAHAM | news editor



March 13, 2020

Gov. Greg Abbott declares a statewide emergency due to the pandemic and COVID-19 testing is in the works to become more widely available to the public to more easily identify positive cases in the population.

March 19, 2020

Gov. Greg Abbott issues an executive order, closing schools, bars, and restaurants while allowing takeout. Gatherings are restricted to 10 people or less.



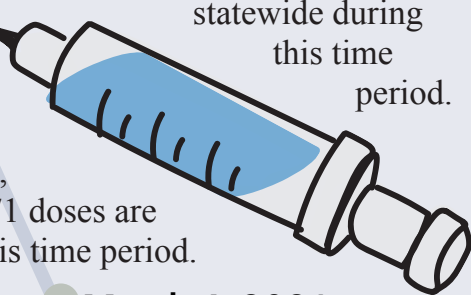
1 MILLION

Nov. 13, 2020

Texas hits one million confirmed cases, with 19,320 deaths in the state. About 7,700 cases are confirmed each day statewide during this time period.

Jan. 14, 2021

Texas' millionth vaccine dose is administered, with the first ones starting to be given on Dec. 14, 2020, to Texans. On average, 68,571 doses are being administered during this time period.



March 4, 2021

On March 4, the one year anniversary since Texas' first presumptive case was hit. Since the past year, more than 2.3 million Texans have contracted COVID-19 and more than 2.1 million Texans have been fully vaccinated.



graphics by Somaya Jimenez-Haham information from texastribune.org and kxan.com

# ONLINE SCHOOL

from page 1

Lowe said that in suburban communities like Hutto, the Black population has increased by 256% since 2000.

"A lot of the Black families that you'll see that are moving out of AISD are going to the suburban areas, they're going to Round Rock or Pflugerville or Hutto, they're going to these different types of spaces, and suburban areas are definitely seeing a large increase in Black population," Lowe said. "I wrote a report last year, or maybe a year or two before, about charter schools. And you'll see that the charter school population in Austin has increased substantially while the AISD population is declining. So that tells you that even though affordability is having a detrimental effect on Hispanic communities, a lot of these parents are taking their kids out."

Hinojosa said she first became interested in researching and fighting for a more equal learning environment between schools within Austin after hearing former AISD board member Ted Gordon speak out about the wide disparities across AISD. According to Hinojosa, this is an issue that many policymakers within Texas do not notice the severity of.

"It'll be interesting to have the State of Texas, or even the Texas Education Agency, do a review of school districts and have some kind of data that is supported by the state to say this exists," Hinojosa said. "It's happening, segregation, socioeconomic and racial segregation. And then a review of our funding policies, a review of our accountability policies to understand whether there's anything that's in them now that is incentivizing that segregation and whether there's anything that we can do."

AISD's Helping the Homeless campaign is still working to help students and their families, even during a virtual school year. Rosie Coleman, a coordinator and homeless liaison for the district, said she has also seen changes in the students she works with. This year, Coleman said that there are around 870 students within the program and qualified as unhoused by the McKinney-Vento Homeless Act, with around 70% of those students being "doubled up".

Which is when students and their families cannot maintain their own household, so they are living with others in another home, according to Coleman. "But when we talk about the students and families, we should really be saying families that are in transitional living situations," Coleman said. "It is so common for many people, throughout their lifetime, to be put in a situation where they have to live with family or friends for a while because they can't afford something so people really don't identify the label of homeless."

Since the beginning of the COVID-19

pandemic in March 2020, many students and underfunded schools in segregated areas have fallen behind and are in threat, according to Hinojosa. Almost a full year later, in a mainly virtual learning environment, students are now expected to take a State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) test for the 2020-2021 school year, which is used to fund schools as well as determine a student's eligibility to move on to the next grade.

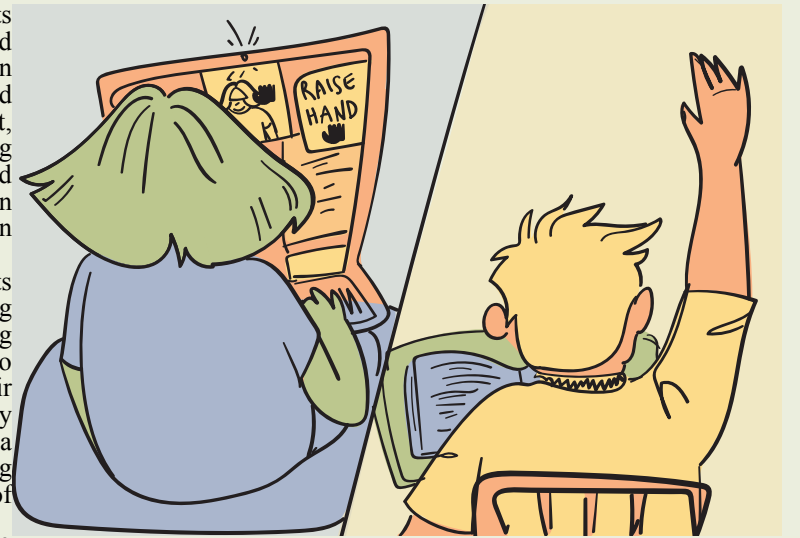
"But it shouldn't determine school funding," Hinojosa said. "But definitely, it's the lower-income schools that struggle most with meeting standards on the STAAR test. Just taking the test is a stressor for schools, and also schools are having to figure out how to do this in person. I mean, they're just figuring out how to get kids back in the classroom, much less how to administer a very regimented test."

Lowe said that AISD and districts across the nation need to be listening to the families who are speaking out. According to Lowe, this means that the district needs to also reach out to the families, not just wait for them.

"AISD has got to be more inclusive of voices who don't always get a chance to show up to the table, if you're holding community conversations, Black people are not always at those meetings," Lowe said. "It's not because they don't always want to be at the meeting, it's because some of them are too busy trying to get things done in other areas of life, and they don't have time to be in these spaces. So you have to go to them. Sometimes you've got to go to the churches, the Black churches, sometimes you've got to go to the barber shops, you have to do that. But if you don't make any effort in doing that, and understanding what this means, what does that say about equity in your district?"

**"It's happening. Segregation, socioeconomic and racial segregation."**

-House District 49 Rep. Gina Hinojosa



graphic by Andrew Lucksinger

# NONPROFIT SPOTLIGHT

graphic by Zoe Klein

# FLATWATER FOUNDATION

graphics by Somaya Jimenez-Haham

SUSAN BALLESTEROS | staff writer



JUST KEEP PADDLING TYLER'S Dam that Cancer event is hosted yearly. It is one of the fundraising events for the Flatwater Foundation. photo courtesy of Greg Fulks

Flatwater Foundation provides access to therapy for people who have recently been diagnosed with cancer and their friends and family members.

According to founder and executive director Mark Garza, Flatwater Foundation's name comes from the feelings large bodies of calm water bring and wanting to help families find that sense of calmness. He said he founded Flatwater after his own struggle with finding therapy after his father's diagnosis.

"After taking my own journey to try to find a counselor and seeing how difficult it was, I set out on my mission to make sure other people did not have to go through the same struggle I did," Garza said. "We decided to set up a process by which those touched by a cancer diagnosis that don't have the financial means to access therapy can get the care they deserve."

One of the ways Flatwater Foundation raises money to help

those looking for therapy access is through a paddleboarding event called Dam That Cancer, Garza said. According to chairman of the board David Saenz, he first became involved with Flatwater Foundation when Dam That Cancer was the only event they held.

"The first challenge six years ago, stand up paddleboarding (SUP) 11 City Tour in the Netherlands, was a game-changer," Saenz said. "We paddled approximately 26 miles for five straight days. Training and participating and completing the New York and Berlin Marathons was also invigorating."

In the summer of 2019, Flatwater took their challenge series to Iceland, and raised \$202,000 over the course of the five day trip. In the future, Flatwater Foundation hopes to incorporate more technology into their mission, Garza said.

"One example would be creating automated on-boarding processes that enable our database of approved therapists in our network to be vetted, approved and added in a quicker manner," Garza said. "Additionally, we can use tech to get more data on the efficacy of our services and to take surveys anonymously to see how those in care feel about their therapy. By automating program activities, we can be sure that more and more dollars are going directly to the mission, covering therapy costs and freeing up resources to grow our impact."

# AUSTIN PARKS FOUNDATION

Austin Park Foundation (APF) was founded in 1992 to increase access to parks for Austin citizens and improve current parkland through raising money and organizing volunteer projects.

Apart from improving parks and raising money, APF also sets out to preserve Austin parks, according to chief strategy officer Allison Watkins. Safe and accessible parks are a right for every citizen, Watkins said.

"We believe access to free recreation will make our city healthy and vibrant for years to come," Watkins said. "We believe that citizens should be able to actively come together to create parks that reflect their unique neighborhood culture and serve the diverse needs of Austinites."

APF doesn't work toward its mission alone, according to CEO Colin Wallis. Through partnerships with other nonprofits and organizations, Wallis said APF is able to help others in their united goal of improving parks.

"We partner with a lot of other non-profits in a

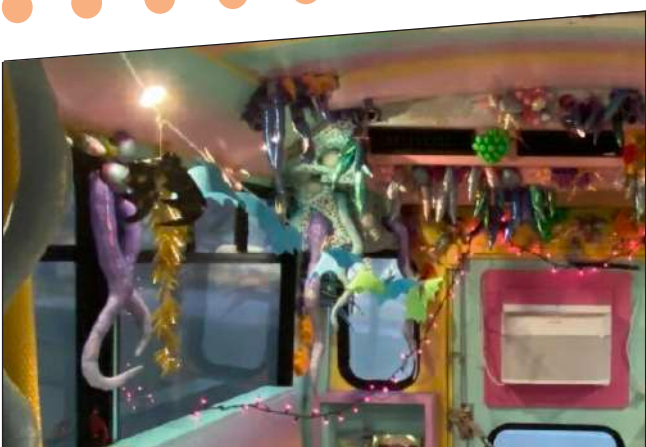
variety of ways," Wallis said. "We loan our tools to other organizations to help with volunteer projects, and we lead advocacy efforts with other organizations to better our parks."

Wallis said his favorite part of working with APF are the fun projects they do. APF has events that they set up during which volunteers can help out with the maintenance and improvement of Austin parks. One such day is It's My Park Day (IMPD), which had to be changed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"While there were some events that we weren't able to do in 2020, like our Movies in the Park series, we were able to host It's My Park Day Spring the weekend before lockdown, and for our event in the fall, we were able to reimagine IMPD as a complete virtual experience," Watkins said. "This year, we have pushed IMPD Spring to be in June to coincide with APF's 29th anniversary, and we hope to host people both in person and virtually."



PARK PRESERVATION Parque Zaragoza is one of the parks that the Austin Park Foundation has on their registry. Other Austin parks, such as Wooten Neighborhood Park are also on the Austin Parks Foundation registry. photo courtesy of Austin Parks Foundation



COLOR MANIA Austin Bat Cave's Batmobile is a bus decorated to look like an underwater cave. Though used to carry groups before COVID-19, it is now used to feature authors, musicians, and creatives. photo courtesy of Austin Bat Cave

# AUSTIN BAT CAVE

Austin Bat Cave is a nonprofit that focuses on hosting writing workshops for kids and teenagers. According to program director Heather Jones, the workshops cover fiction, poetry, screenwriting and comic book writing.

"We also do a lot of subgenres like post-apocalyptic fiction or horror writing," Jones said. "We also teach different types of academic and professional writing, so we do college essays, like scholarship essays, and then we also provide workshops on resumes and cover letters."

Every year, Austin Bat Cave also publishes an anthology, which is a collection of pieces students have written throughout the year during workshops. Program associate Xotchitl Gonzalez said that throughout the year, students are also able to bond with volunteers during workshops as they learn how to express their creativity.

"I really like that we focus on relationship-building with our students to make sure that they feel safe to be creative with us, and I really like the relationship that volunteers are able to build with our students too," Gonzalez said. "I think a lot of them feel really touched by that experience even with our one day workshops, and even more so when

they're longer."

Gonzalez also likes that Austin Bat Cave lets the community they are working in dictate how help might best be used. Although based in the Austin area, Austin Bat Cave has been able to reach out to more places since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, according to Jones.

"Ever since the pandemic started, all of our workshops have been on Zoom," Jones said. "Which, of course, is very different, but it's also created more accessibility in some ways because students who don't live in central Austin or who either wanted to join from other parts of the country or even other countries, have been able to join."

Other changes have had to be made too, including an introduction of new online resources, according to Jones. According to Gonzalez, the Batmobile is a bus that looks like an underwater cave that the Austin Bat Cave used before the pandemic prevented close gatherings.

"Our regional program manager, Leticia, has been using the Batmobile to feature student writing read by local authors and musicians and creatives in Austin," Gonzalez said. "So [the pandemic has] been a really cool opportunity for us to rethink how our programs work."

# To Mask or Not to Mask, That Is the Question

## Looking at the Mask Mandate Lift and its Effects

SANWI SARODE | staff writer

Over 70,000 U.S. stores and businesses closed when the COVID-19 pandemic first began, according to Forbes. COVID-19 vaccines were recently developed, and according to the Texas Tribune, as of March 13, approximately 10% of Texas's population has been vaccinated. In response to more Texans being vaccinated, Gov. Greg Abbott decided to lift the mask mandate for all Texans starting March 10.

Senior Sebastian Lopez, an HEB employee, said that the removal of the mask mandate is already affecting his workplace. According to Lopez, within the first few mandate-free days, he could already see a difference in the amount of customers coming into the store to shop.

"The amount of people going in and out of HEB actually declined a little bit, obviously, because less people were willing to go out of their houses," Lopez said. "But ever since Greg Abbott decided to lift the mask mandate, we've already been seeing a lot more people starting to come in, and the crowd density has gone a lot higher."

When the mandate was first removed, HEB had a policy requiring all its staff to wear masks and to strongly encourage its customers to do so too. A few days later, HEB made it mandatory for its customers to wear masks as well. During the few days that masks were not required to be worn, Lopez said he had also noticed more people taking advantage of the lift.

"I took a week off from HEB, and my last shift was a week before Abbott lifted the mask mandate, and then when I came back I could already notice there were so many more people just maskless in a store taking advantage of the lift," Lopez said.

Matt Shook owns a chain of juice bars in Texas called Juiceland, which is local to the Austin area. Although the mask mandate was lifted, businesses and stores like Juiceland can still decide whether they want their customers and staff to wear masks. Shook said he decided that customers and staff should still be required to wear masks.

Having the mask mandate repealed could have been a preemptive decision, Lopez said. According to him, the maskless mandate is a decision that won't help Texans in the long run.

"I hope and pray that we don't get bit in the butt again by COVID, but with such loose rules on masks, the effort to use the vaccine to its highest potential is just not going to be there," Lopez said. "There's a large number of people in the U.S. now, especially in Texas, who don't trust the vaccine. Now that they're going to be allowed to also walk around maskless in public, the signs are going to show for themselves. We're probably going to see a spike in COVID again."

Shook has a similar opinion and said that it's still necessary to wear masks. According to Shook, if something is meant for one's safety, it's best to do it.

"We all agree that a four-way stop sign is intended to be used to protect people," Shook said. "It's for safety, so everyone does it. I don't see how masks would be any different. Why not do something that encourages safety? If it saves lives, what's the big deal? We all wear seat belts or we get a ticket. What's the difference between a seatbelt and a mask? Sure, you could argue that it infringes on your liberty, but we do it because it's safer."

According to a press release from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) director Dr.

Rochelle Walensky, now is not the time to pull back on restrictions. She stated that the next few months are critical for vaccination rollouts, and it would help if people still abided by the CDC guidelines.

"I think we at the CDC have been very clear that now is not the time to release all restrictions," Walensky said. "The next month or two is really pivotal with how this pandemic goes as we scale up vaccinations, we really do need to decrease the amount of the virus that is circulating as we are trying to vaccinate all of the public."

Walensky also said that she's afraid that rolling back health measures will undermine the progress Texas made. Austin

is currently in Stage 3, and Texas is still receiving over 100 hospitalizations due to COVID-19 every day, according to Texas Medical Center.

"Please hear me clearly: At this level of cases with variants spreading, we stand to completely lose the hard-earned ground we have gained," Walensky said. "I am really worried about reports that more states are rolling back the exact public health measures

**"We all wear seat belts or we get a ticket. What's the difference between a seatbelt and a mask?"**

-Juiceland Owner Matt Shook

we have recommended to protect people from COVID-19."

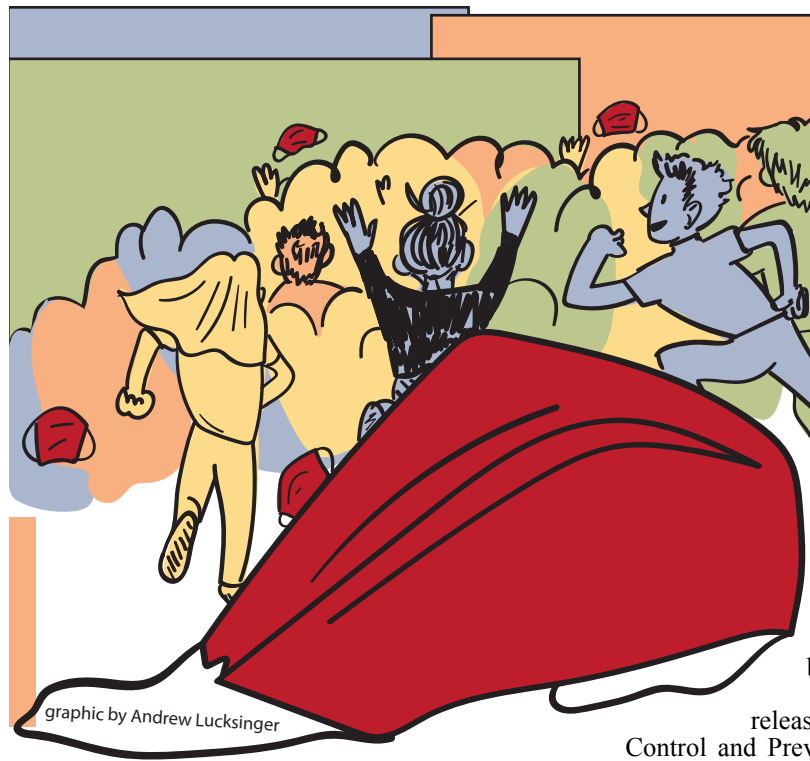
Shook said that for people to be able to go back to normality, it's important to receive and follow guidelines from actual health officials instead of politicians. He also said that not enough people have been vaccinated yet for others to stop wearing masks.

Lopez also said that people need to learn to accept the truth and stop spreading conspiracy theories. According to Lopez, theories like these are what make people skeptical of the vaccine.

"I think there would need to be more emphasis on the truth and valuing what is true and not accepting what isn't," Lopez said. "Nowadays, the truth means so little. There's this revolutionary vaccine that has exceeded expectations in the medical part of this, and it's too bad that there's a false narrative being spread around. It ranges from conspiracy theories like Alex Jones saying like the vaccine is being used to help the government track you. There's a lot of silly things being said about the vaccine, so I think that for there to be an Austin without masks, we need to all appreciate and value what is true."

According to Lopez, unless the truth is valued in terms of masks and vaccines, there will be a lot of conflict and disagreements with a lack of resolutions. Americans should still do what they can to protect themselves and their community against COVID-19, Walensky said.

"I will also note that every individual is empowered to do the right thing here regardless of what the states decide, for personal health, for public health, for the health of their loved ones, and communities," Walensky said. "I would still encourage individuals to wear a mask, to socially distance, to do the right thing to protect their own health."



graphic by Andrew Lucksinger

# Looking for Extracurriculars? Join the Club

ELIANA LEGATT | staff writer

## Poetry Club

When: Fridays after school (Zoom)  
Contact: lasapoetryclub@gmail.com

Established in February 2020, the Poetry Club is a relatively recent addition to LASA. The club discusses, presents and reads poetry.

Junior Eli Clark is one of the founders of the club. Clark said people are able to share their own poetry for part of the time open mic style, though the rest of the time they read and discuss other poetry.

"Our usual schedule is that one of us will choose a poem from some other outside author, and it may relate to current events," Clark said. "We'll share a poem and have a little discussion about it."

The group discusses various kinds of poetry and may relate them to current events, such as International Women's Month. The club, however, does not pressure members to share their own poetry if they do not wish to, Clark said. According to them, any level of participation or knowledge of poetry is acceptable.

"Last year, before the pandemic, one of our members didn't write poetry," Clark said. "She didn't feel pressed to share poetry, so really, anyone can join if they're interested in learning about poetry, hearing poetry or sharing poetry."

The presentation of outside works is usually introduced by someone with knowledge of the specific subject or poet. According to sophomore club member Zachary Suri, when members share their own poetry, the group will give feedback.

"I would just say that it's not just about sharing poetry — it's also a safe and open space to talk about our experiences and express ourselves in ways that make us feel comfortable and feel like who we are," Suri said. "You don't have to be someone who's super interested in poetry as a craft; we talk in many ways about how poetry fits into our lives."

The club allows its members to talk about their personal experiences and thoughts. According to junior Shanja Ferdous, who has been a member since her sophomore year, the club can also simply serve as a place to meet with friends.

"It's a really safe place, and last year, when we did the club in person before COVID-19, I had a lot of my friends come over and meet," Ferdous said. "It wasn't necessarily about if they wrote poetry or if they even read poetry; it was more like it was a place to hang out and feel comfortable."



**POETRY PASSION** Sophomore T-Wolf Nguyen, junior Eli Clark, junior Silas Logan, sophomore Ian Shih, junior Shanja Ferdous, and sophomore Zachary Suri attend a poetry club meeting. Club meetings are held weekly Fridays after school on Zoom. photo courtesy of Eli Clark

## Latin Club

When: Tuesdays during lunch (Zoom)  
Contact: lasalatinclub@gmail.com

Former Latin teacher Byron Brown founded the Latin club, though it is now sponsored by Aaron Pellowski, the current Latin teacher at LASA.

The club provides a space for students to talk about the language or participate in competitions, according to senior club president Jasmine Gokingo, who has been a member since her junior year. Gokingo said the club requires no prior experience or expertise in Latin to join — just an interest in the subject.

"Last year, we would have social meetings every month because you can make Latin Club as serious as you want it or as not serious as you want," Gokingo said. "We have traditions. But usually, day to day, we just have social events during lunch, or if a lot of competitions are coming up soon, then we all just prepare for that."

This year, all meetings are virtual due to the pandemic. The Latin Club allows participants to engage as much or as little as they wish, according to Gokingo. Sophomore club member Kushaal Singh participates in the Latin competitions.

"One of the things that all of us are part of is called Certamen, which is a Latin buzzer game where you have to buzz in as they're asking the question, opening you up to bonuses, which is an answer as a team," Singh said. "Each of us have our own specialty."

Gokingo said that competitions are more focused on Certamen compared to previous years. The club is part of the Texas State National Junior Classical League (TSJCL), which is a part of the National Junior Classical League (NJCL). TSJCL is broken further into various groups based on five Texas areas. The LASA Latin club is part of Area F, which consists of schools in Austin. Sophomore Nisha Vishag is another member of the Latin club.

"Next year we are going to be hosting Area F at LASA next year, and we're looking forward to that," Vishag said.

This year, the club participated in additional competitions where they were tested on grammar, history, mythology and reading Latin passages. There are also different levels for teams: advanced, intermediate and novice. Advanced is for Latin III and higher, intermediate is for Latin II and novice is for Latin I.



**ICY FUN** Latin club members play broomball before COVID-19. Broomball is a competitive game hosted by the Latin Club played between other language departments. photo courtesy of Jasmine Gokingo

## LASA Smiles

When: Thursdays at lunch (Zoom) with in-person activities  
Contact: lasasmiles@gmail.com

LASA Smiles, founded in January 2021, raises money for Operation Smile, an international organization that provides free cleft palate surgeries for those in need. Operation Smile also provides dental care, nutritional support and speech therapy for their patients.

According to sophomore co-president Lizbeth Arellano, she and the other club founders had been intending to start a club since hearing it was an option. Arellano said they found inspiration once they heard about Operation Smile and what they aspire to do and decided to start hosting weekly meetings to work with them.

"We mostly discuss what we have coming up, like events," Arellano said. "We also talk about our ideas so we can create more projects that people can participate in."

LASA Smiles fundraises through sponsored running, projects for Operation Smile's "Spread the Love" campaign and blanket drives and will in the future begin writing to elders at a local elderly home. According to Arellano, the LASA Smiles team hopes to raise about \$1,000 by the end of the year, which Arellano said is enough to fund four surgeries. Arellano said they are still learning how to run the club but are hoping to do more in the future.

The LASA Smiles club runs five miles every Friday and raises money through a charity app called Charity Miles. The club also participates in other physical activities that raise money through the app as well, such as biking, according to sophomore club founder and co-president Gabriela Aguirre.

"You can also participate individually by tracking your progress on Charity Miles," Aguirre said. "Your own sponsor can be a parent or a friend."

According to Aguirre, you can also earn volunteer hours by participating through the app. Charity Miles donates to the charity of the user's choice for every mile that they run, using money made primarily through corporate sponsorships. Charity Miles takes no percentage of the money earned by its users and instead hands it directly to the charities involved, Arellano said. Sophomore club secretary Jonathan Lopez said that founding the club created a lot of great memories, and the club members are very supportive of each other.

"We're always open and welcoming to new members," Lopez said. "We can't wait to see some new faces and hopefully make some new friends. We are super excited to hopefully meet some new people in this new club."



**RUNNING FRENZY** Sophomores Xade Biscoe, Paw Eh, Catherine de la Cruz, Lizbeth Arellano, and Gabriela Aguirre attend a Friday run meeting. This run is hosted weekly by the LASA Smiles team. photo courtesy of Gabriela Aguirre

# POST-FREEZE IN TEXAS

graphic by Somaya Jimenez-Haham

EWAN MCLNERNEY | staff writer

During the winter storm that occurred in mid-February, Texans were faced with different challenges depending on their location, their financial situation and their experience with the unfamiliar weather. Austinites were left without power, water and energy and, in some cases, are still recovering from the effects of the storm.

The majority of Texas's electrical grid, which is separate from the U.S. national grid, is operated by the Electric Reliability Council of Texas (ERCOT). Due to a statewide fall in power generation on Feb. 15, ERCOT began implementing blackouts. Because of the shortage of power, electricity bills spiked, and providers faced significant losses or bankruptcy. Lawsuits have also been filed against ERCOT for mismanagement, as well as the failure to weatherize generators after the outage that occurred in Texas.

Kelly Blackmer is a former ERCOT employee and control room operator. He said that multiple power companies around the state own parts of the grid, but ERCOT manages it.

"Within ERCOT, each power company has their own transmission services, like Austin Energy," Blackmer said. "But the whole of the grid is overseen by the ERCOT operators, who check that the power is flowing the way it needs to, that the lines aren't overloaded, and the market is functioning correctly, and above all, that the frequency is maintained throughout the interconnection."

Blackmer said there were multiple causes of the issues in the grid that led to blackouts. According to him, the most important responsibility of power regulators is to maintain the balance between the power generated and the power used.

"In the U.S., we have a standard operating frequency of 60 hertz, which basically means that our power generators are cycling around 60 times every second," Blackmer said. "ERCOT's job is to keep the generation consistent with the load that's connected to it. The load is the amount of power used by buildings around Texas. If those things aren't in balance, the frequency drops. When you have a cold weather event, not only is there loss of generation, but also a rise in load, because everybody's turning on their heaters to stay warm. So the frequency dropped low enough for the generators to start tripping."

Blackmer said that ERCOT implemented blackouts to maintain the balance between energy and load. According to Blackmer, effects of cold weather on transmission equipment also worsened the issue.

"When reliability coordinators at ERCOT saw generation decreasing, they needed to get rid of some of the load to maintain that balance," Blackmer said. "That's why they had to implement temporary blackouts so they could repair the system and avoid it going offline completely. Another thing that makes restoring the system more difficult is the fact that transmitters all over the city like power lines and transformers were frozen by the cold."

People all over Texas suffered from the storm in different ways, according to Peter Tung, a citizen whose parents own a motel in southeast Austin. Tung said that the storm not only caused physical damage, but led to issues with their employees and customers.

"Obviously, the plumbing issues were the main issue that happened because of the storm, but another big problem was the worker commute," Tung said. "We had people that couldn't come to work because Austin wasn't prepared and none of the roads were operational. So in addition to physical repairs, it was extra bad from a business point of view because the guests were stuck with no service or housekeeping or anything like that, which meant that we had to

compensate them."

According to Tung, managing a business during a weather disaster required him to face a set of challenges different from people who experienced damage to their homes rather than their places of work. Reasons for these challenges include the effects of the damage and the scale of the repair.

"In terms of physical damage, the biggest issue was that one of the pipes burst, so we had to shut water down for the whole building," Tung said. "We had to do some manual patching up and fixing the water system, which will last until we get a licensed plumber on the premises to assess the damage. When you're running a business that gets damaged in some way, repairs of this scale present extra challenges than just repairing your house — it doesn't only affect you or your family, but your employees and your customers as well. That's why you have to get through all these regulations, and all the while, you're losing business."

Because of excessive demand, repairs are even more expensive than usual in the places affected by the storm, according to Tung. He added that the local government should work on a way to control the prices offered by the maintenance industry.

"One of our biggest challenges right now is trying to find a plumber that's not overcharging," Tung said. "I don't really blame them for overcharging because they're working overtime for everybody right now. At least for Austin, I feel like there's not a good general plan on how to financially deal with weather disasters like this in terms of regulating prices for repairs."

English II teacher Lauren Williams resides in an apartment complex that was severely affected by the winter storm. Although she wasn't faced with paying for the restoration of her home, she said the effects of the storm have disrupted other aspects of her life.

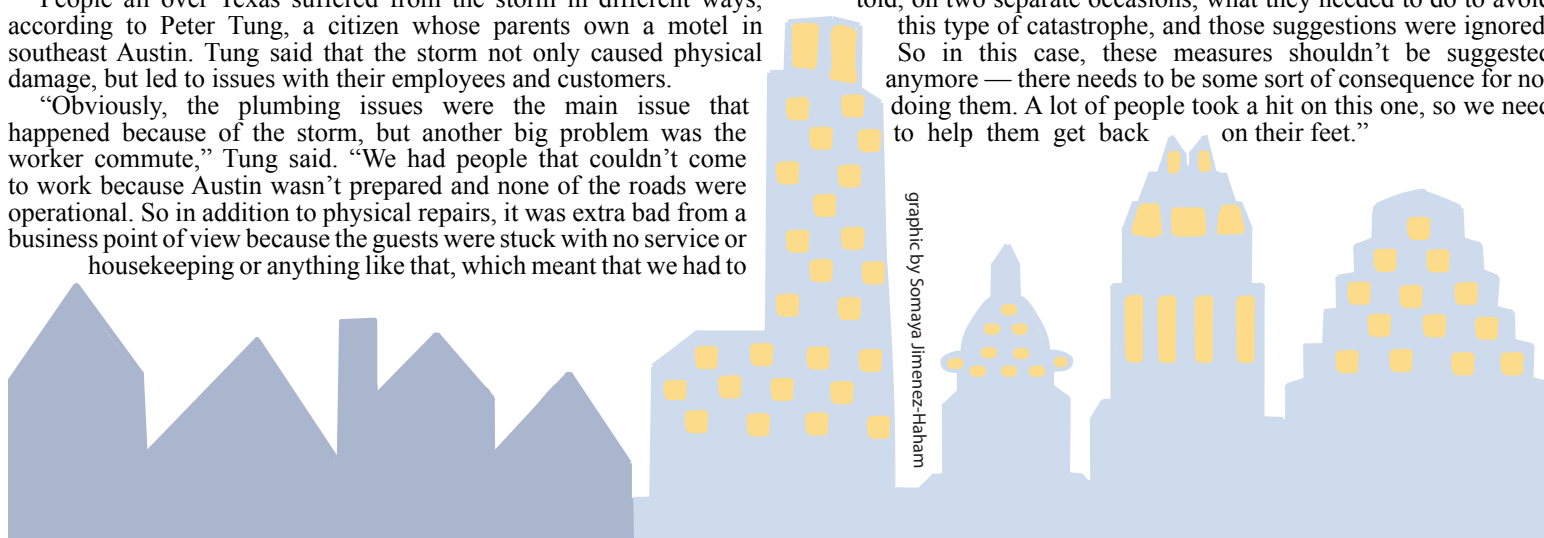
"For starters, my apartment lost power for several days, so I was forced to throw out the contents of my refrigerator and freezer," Williams said. "It was definitely sad to see all that food and money go to waste, but it's also nice living in an apartment in some ways because things like plumbing repairs are the responsibility of the complex owners. However, the biggest issue that's come up is that, because of really horrible communication between my apartment and their residents, I ended up breaking my lease, and I'm currently in the process of getting ready to move to a new place. Being clued in on what's going on, when I can get my power and water back, when everything will be normal again, is something that's very important to me."

According to Williams, it is necessary that legal action be taken against ERCOT for neglecting to prepare for the winter storm. She also said that priorities should be placed on helping people recover and the mitigation of future weather events in Texas.

"Legislation wise, I think the ERCOT organization needs to be held responsible for the effects of this storm," Williams said. "They were told, on two separate occasions, what they needed to do to avoid this type of catastrophe, and those suggestions were ignored. So in this case, these measures shouldn't be suggested anymore — there needs to be some sort of consequence for not doing them. A lot of people took a hit on this one, so we need to help them get back on their feet."

## "The ERCOT organization needs to be held responsible for the effects of this storm."

- English II Teacher Lauren Williams



graphic by Somaya Jimenez-Haham

# NEWS BRIEFS

## National News

March 23

On the afternoon of March 23, Libby Schaaf, the mayor of Oakland, Calif., announced that a privately funded program will begin to give low-income families \$500 per month with no spending limitations. The program is part of an experiment with set income to try to help families feel ease from poverty, as well as to help recipients feel less stressed when looking for jobs, according to the Associated Press. This idea is not new and has been launched by other mayors with smaller, more temporary plans in hopes of helping Congress adopt a nationwide program that would ensure guaranteed income for families.

## State News

March 10

According to KVUE, the Texas Health and Human Services Commission has announced it is curtailing visitation limits for nursing homes and long-term care facilities starting Mar. 23. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services are now allowing fully vaccinated residents close-up and in-person visits with their family and friends. The expanded visitation will also give patients in assisted living facilities, intermediate care facilities and home and community-based services new rules and regulations.

March 29

Starting March 29, the State of Texas opened up vaccine distribution to anyone over the age of 16. This will allow for around 22 million more Texans to become eligible for the vaccine, according to the Texas Tribune. State officials are still asking for people to prioritize anyone 80-plus who has not yet received a vaccine and for all other age groups to primarily serve as walk-in appointments. In the state of Texas, citizenship is not necessary to receive a vaccine dose, nor is residence in Texas.

## Local News

March 23

The Texas legislature's House Bill 1683, filed by Republican Rep. Brooke Landgraf to reduce federal oversight of the Texas fossil fuel industry, might also force the closure of Barton Springs Pool. Austin must hold an operating permit from the U.S. Department of Fish and Wildlife because the pool is home to the Barton Springs salamander, which is endangered. Occasionally, federal regulations that are necessary to protect the pool and federal laws for fossil fuels counteract each other, and a passing of the Bill would lead to the city making a choice over which to keep.

# Referee Biases and Racism in Sports

MALVIKA PRADHAN | staff writer

In December 2020, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the LBJ High School football team filed a complaint with the University Interscholastic League (UIL). At their state semifinal game in Humble, Texas, against Lindale High School, some parents and players felt the referee was being racist in his calls.

After the game, LBJ parents called and wrote to the Austin branch of the NAACP. After looking through the complaints, Nelson Linder, the branch president, filed a complaint with UIL.

"The parents called me up," Linder said. "I got a lot of complaints, about 20 to 30 letters, based on the number of complaints I received, and what they were saying was very similar. We went ahead and filed a complaint. That's what the parents wanted and some of the students too. We had a lot of anonymous phone calls, so it was very clear to me that something was going on."

The team was winning at halftime, but afterwards the referees started to make controversial calls. Brendan Jones, a senior on the LBJ football team, was at the game.

"We were up, I believe, 28-7 at halftime, or 27-7, something crazy like that," Jones said. "And then, coming out of halftime, we scored twice, and the referees called back both of our touchdowns. And there were just a lot of calls that were called for us, but not for the other team."

Jones also said that Lindale players were using racial slurs during the game. Afterwards, there were social media posts with slurs as well.

"There was a post on Twitter and on other social media platforms, it was a bunch of racial slurs being thrown around and a whole bunch of racist phrases from a whole bunch of other people," Jones said. "And then during the game, the players on the other team called us racial slurs, and just stuff like that. And I wouldn't say it's uncommon in football, but it was done a lot more than what usually happens."

Linder thinks the official could have been influenced by the LBJ team kneeling during the pledge. All season, the team had knelt during the pledge in a silent protest.

"The LBJ team, all year, basically took a knee like Colin Kaepernick before the game, and that was very unpopular in many places," Linder said. "You can imagine in East Texas, that environment there, basically, a Black team takes a knee, and it brought up a lot of conflict that was happening all over the country. And I think that action and their reputation created a very explosive environment in terms of race and misunderstanding. And I think that affected the game. It was much bigger than football for me."

However, filing a complaint didn't change the outcome of the game, and the game won't be replayed according to LBJ athletic

director and head football coach Jahmal Fenner. Fenner said they wanted to file a complaint to raise awareness about the issue.

"We just felt that we wanted to bring awareness, it's not the first time we felt like we've been in a competitive game or competing, the odds were against us for whatever reason, and it was outside of just playing the game of football," Fenner said. "We've experienced that before."

The UIL took the complaint to the Texas Association of Sports Officials, who sent a letter back to LBJ. UIL responded saying that the calls were poor judgement on the part of the official.

"The UIL turned it over to the Texas Association of Sports Officials," Fenner said. "So I followed the process with that and they did respond. They pretty much stated that it was judgment calls by the officials, and it could have gone either way. So they really didn't do anything as far as with the complaint we filed."

According to Jones, most of the players on the LBJ team were upset about the game. There were many seniors on the team who felt like the opportunity to go to the state final was taken away from them, Jones said.

"A lot of the players that were more involved in the game, they're highly upset about it and they wish the outcome was different," Jones said. "It was a lot of our senior years, we were senior-heavy on our team, so we don't get another go at it, and we worked really hard this summer to prepare for it just to be cheated out of it."

The Lindale team has not commented on the complaint. According to Linder, the coach ignored it.

"Which is fine for him," Lindale said. "He chose not to engage, he just kind of brushed it off and they lost tonight, they didn't win the title, but he kind of brushed it off, which I knew he would."

This isn't the first time LBJ games have been poorly officiated. Jones said officials have been unprofessional in the past, but never to this extent.

"We get a lot of dirt from officials just because we're LBJ, and during previous seasons, they built up our reputation as being undisciplined and stuff like that," Jones said. "But this year specifically, with the team that we had, no, it didn't really happen — we were a very disciplined team."

Fenner said this does happen at least once or twice a season to the team, but they don't file complaints. Instead, Fenner can recommend that the team not get the same referee at another game.

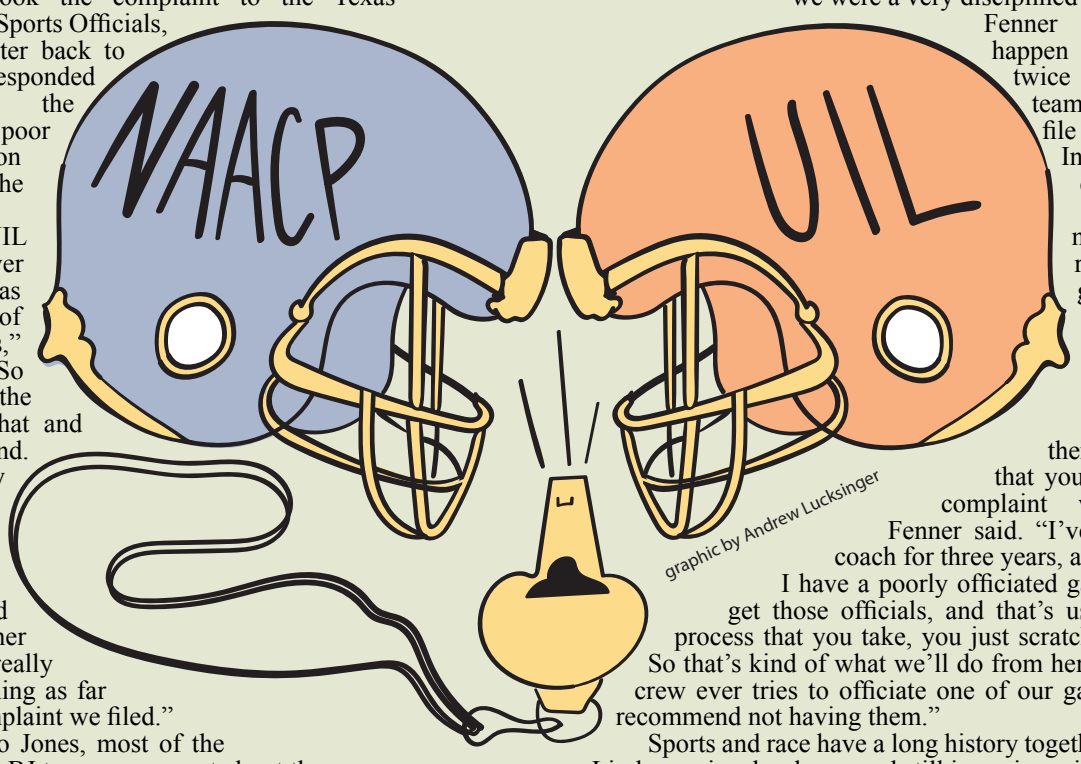
"In the coaching

profession, there is a process that you follow to file a complaint with officials," Fenner said. "I've been the head coach for three years, and usually, when I have a poorly officiated game, I just don't get those officials, and that's usually kind of a process that you take, you just scratch those officials. So that's kind of what we'll do from here forward if that crew ever tries to officiate one of our games — we will recommend not having them."

Sports and race have a long history together. According to Linder, racism has been, and still is, an issue in sports. "Sports is very powerful because everybody notices," Fenner said. "So absolutely, it's been a big factor, and oftentimes, it's a very positive thing because you're breaking down barriers."

Linder said that he's glad the NAACP filed a complaint. He thinks it's important for people to recognize when there is cheating and when to take action.

"I think by doing this, we made a very loud statement and it got coverage all over all over the state, in fact around the country," Linder said. "So we did the right thing here, so we hope those kids know we respect them and we're going to encourage them, this happens in life. There are lessons learned here. Because when you get out of school, you're going to see racism all over this country. You never give up, you stand up, and you keep going forward."



graphic by Andrew Luckinger

# THE VA

## Teachers and Students on COVID-19

SOPHIA CHAU | student life editors  
 AVA DE LEON

“Thank you. Thank you for what you’ve done for the atmosphere to be together with people and appreciation.”

Although the shot is not yet available for all of the community, many students, like Ripp, she would be willing to overcome any obstacles to get the shot in order to return to normal.

“I have a fear of shots, but I want to get the world back to normalcy. I think that it won’t change much, but the rest of the year will be virtually a developed vaccine for children under 16.”

As for what the vaccine might mean for the public, she is anxious about the possibility that the rest of the year will be virtually a developed vaccine for children under 16.

“I feel like it doesn’t super affect my life, but I’m excited to get back to school,” Albarnaz said. “Since I have 2 months left in the year, I don’t think I’ll miss school - for the students coming to school - for the year.”

Sophomore Pallavi Gokul expressed her excitement when the vaccines were available, she would still have a lot of things to do for the public. She is anxious about the possibility of not being completely trusting the efficacy of the vaccine.

“I would feel safer, but since I haven’t been vaccinated yet, I probably wouldn’t feel like it would definitely make me feel better about the situation.”

Albarnaz also acknowledged the possibility of restrictions that would still apply even if everyone was vaccinated. However, Albarnaz chose to focus on the positive aspects of the vaccine.

As of March 12, 2021, it has been an entire year since schools were shut down in the Austin Independent School District (AISD) and the world was thrown into a pandemic. One year later, a vaccine is finally being distributed to adults and teachers, who now have the opportunity to take one step closer towards immunity from COVID-19.

After nearly nine months without a viable cure or vaccine for COVID-19, the public got the first news of vaccine distributions in early December 2020. At first, the shot was only available to a select portion of the population, but recently, a wider demographic of Texans have gotten access to the vaccine. According to KXAN, a total of more than 6 million people in Texas have gotten their first doses, and more than 3 million are fully vaccinated. The vaccine is still not available for people under 16 and the majority of the general public, which has prevented many LASA students from being vaccinated. Child vaccine trials have been ongoing since late December, and many experts hope to complete a 16-and-under vaccine by the 2021-2022 school year. The vaccine was made available to everyone aged 16 and up on March 29. On March 3, the Texas Department of State Health Services announced that Texas teachers and educators were eligible to receive the vaccine. Since then, many teachers at LASA have been scheduling appointments to get their shots, including Medical Microbiology teacher Kyle Albarnaz, who described his experience of getting his appointment as stressful.

“When I did get an appointment, I discovered that it was like three hours outside of Austin, and so I was like, ‘Ok, I guess I am going to drive three hours outside of Austin,’” Albarnaz said. “But I honestly would have done anything.”

AVP teacher Vanessa Mokry had a similar, chaotic experience with trying to find a time to go and get her vaccine. She mentioned how quickly appointments would fill up and the struggle she had to deal with in order to just get signed up for the shot.

“I tried to contact people, and everybody — the person who was the AISD contact — their voicemail was full, of course,” Mokry said. “It’s just a little like Mad Max when they release the vaccines and everyone was running for them and stuff like that.”

Many teachers, like Albarnaz and Mokry, were ready to get their vaccine, as they sought to find relief of the panic of the pandemic. Albarnaz recalled standing in line to get his shot and recognizing the surrealness of the past year culminated into a few moments.

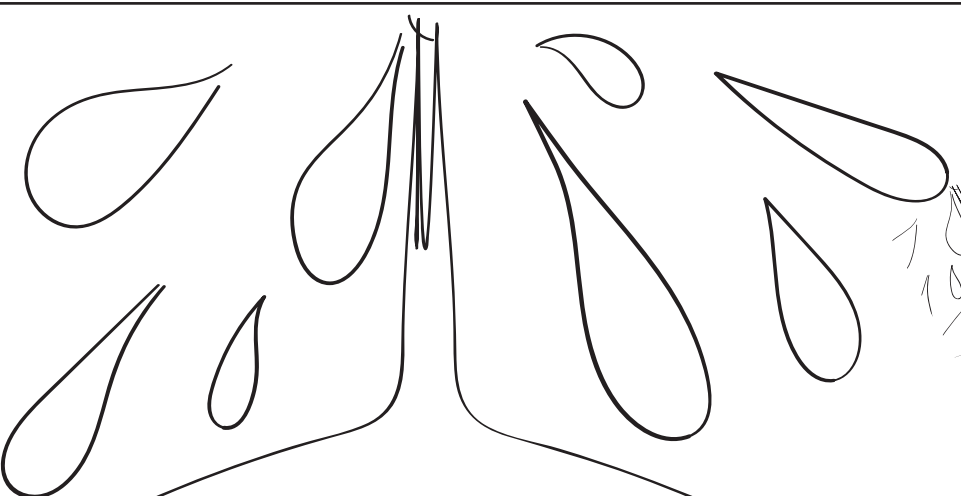
“I actually was shaking, thinking, ‘This is crazy because not even a year ago, this whole thing started, and it’s so scary,’” Albarnaz said. “We didn’t know when this was going to end, and now, less than a year later, I’m getting this vaccine.’ I was shaking from anticipation or something, but it was fine. It felt like a surreal experience, like this was really happening.”

Some have had reservations about getting the vaccine because it has been known to cause side effects for a few days after in some recipients, according to KXAN. Mokry, having contracted the virus in November, was eager to become fully vaccinated.

“I was not even a little bit anxious or scared about getting the vaccine,” Mokry said. “They’ve said the efficacy is so high, and I trust everyone who is endorsing it, and I was just so ready for this vaccine.”

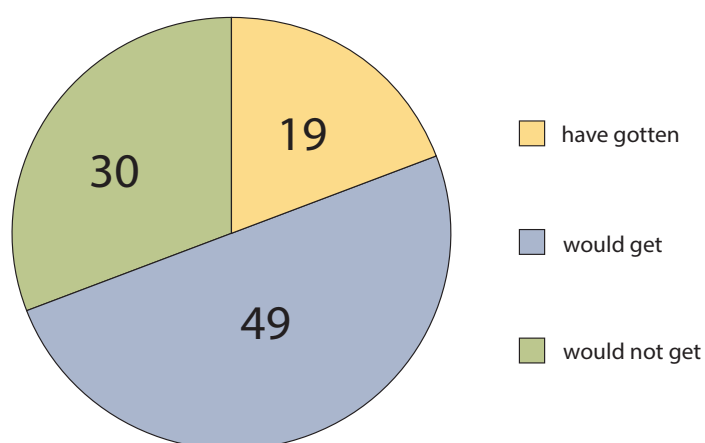
Mokry did suffer some of the common side effects when she received her first dosage, but she did have a positive experience getting the shot. She praised the health workers and the patience of everyone who was waiting in line with her to get their vaccine.

“Everybody is standing in line very happy and very accommodating. Nobody is yelling or complaining,” Mokry said. “When you walk into the bigger area where the nurses are giving the shots, everybody is so appreciative and everybody is saying,



### Vaccine Statistics

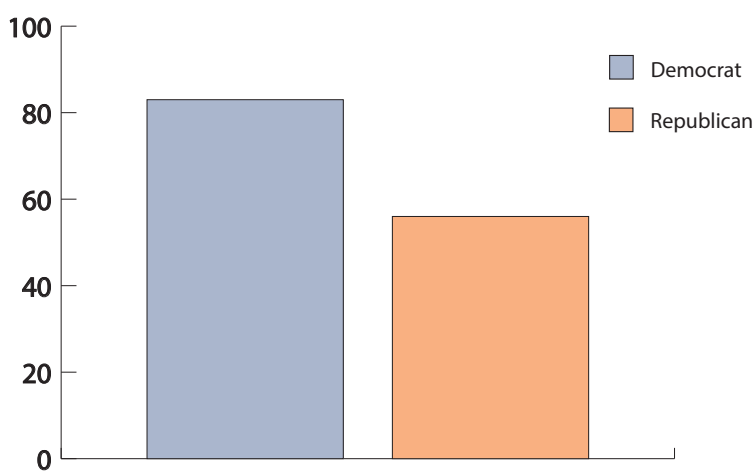
% of Americans Who \_\_\_\_\_ the Vaccine as of February 2021



source: Pew Research Center (February 2021)

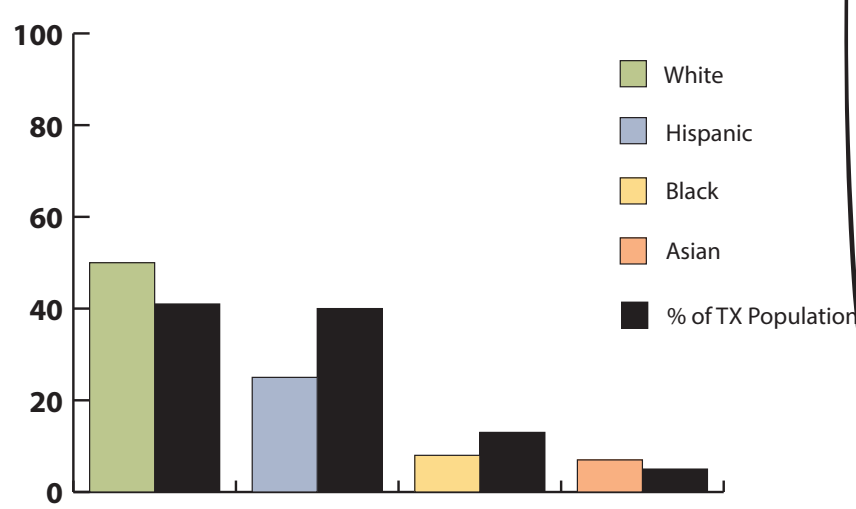
graphics by Sophia Chau

% of Democrats/Republicans Likely to or Already Have Gotten the Vaccine



source: Pew Research Center (February 2021)

% of Texans Vaccinated by Race



sources: Kaiser Family Foundation (March 2021), Census Bureau (2019)

graphics by Andrew Lucksinger

### A Timeline of

August 2005

Hungarian scientist Katalin Karikó began working on the foundations of mRNA vaccines in the 1970s. Even after repeated rejections of her requests for funding, being fired from her position at Temple University, a demotion from the University of Pennsylvania and a cancer diagnosis, Karikó persisted in her research. In 1997, she teamed up with a colleague named Drew Weissman, and the two continued working on a solution to the fatal inflammatory response exhibited by animals injected with synthetic mRNA. Just eight years later, in 2005, they had a breakthrough and published a paper outlining the solution to mitigating the response, making it so that mRNA technology could be safely used in animals.

December 2019

COVID-19 was first discovered in Wuhan, China, sometime in December of 2019. However, the exact origins of the virus are still murky. A report released by the World Health Organization (WHO) stated that the virus originated in bats, but exactly how it transferred to humans is unknown. According to the Centers for Disease Control, the virus is more infectious than the flu and spreads through contact with respiratory droplets in the air or on surfaces. On March 11, 2020, just a few months after its discovery in December, COVID-19 was declared a pandemic by the WHO.

# VACCINE

## Immunization and Hopes for Future

you are doing.' It's just a very nice people and for people to show such

available for most of the LASA sophomore Hailey Ripp, are still getting a vaccine soon. According to overcome any fears or concerns she if it meant that life would go back

think I would overcome that and aid. "I think it's a big push forward I would feel safer."

mean for going to school, Albernaz for the present year. He believes equal but hopes for a near future with under 16.

fect the chances of students going especially with there only being think there will be a huge influx of their protection."

plained that even if the vaccine ive concerns about the well-being out going out without a mask and the vaccination.

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the limits of the vaccine and the y even after he would be fully ose to look at the bigger picture

NOT  
COVID-19  
VACCINE!



graphic by Zoe Klein

and what the distribution of the shot would mean for the future of the pandemic.

"For me, I know that the vaccine isn't like a, 'You can now do everything you want, and you are never going to get COVID' kind of thing," Albernaz said. "But for me, it symbolizes that this is starting to come to an end, so I was really excited to get it."

While teachers do have a choice as to whether or not they want to get the vaccine, many students and faculty are promoting the vaccine as much as possible. Students like Ripp encourage anyone who is eligible to receive the vaccine to do so as it will help contribute to

**"We didn't know when this was going to end, and now less than a year later, I'm getting this vaccine."**

-Science Teacher Kyle Albernaz

herd immunity, which is when a large portion of the population is immune to a specific disease.

"I think really just the sooner everyone gets the vaccine, the sooner everyone can go about their normal lives," Ripp said. "Even if it doesn't seem to benefit you, it could definitely help eliminate the virus, which would help other people feel safer and less at risk."

Albernaz explained the importance of herd immunity and how taking the vaccine will help bring an end to the spread of COVID-19. He hopes that as more people are getting vaccinated, anyone who might be opposed to getting the vaccine will soon follow.

"I do hope that there is some amount of awareness raised so that people who are more hesitant will take the vaccine," Albernaz said. "The only way the pandemic is truly going to come to an end is if the CDC declares herd immunity, which is only possible if 60-70% of the population either gets vaccinated or contracts the disease."

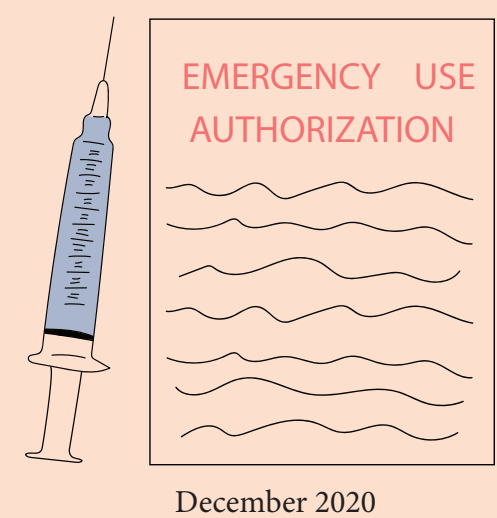
On March 1, there was a seven day state average of 8,140 new cases, but as of March 24 new cases have decreased to 3,100, according to The New York Times. However, there are still many people being hospitalized due to COVID-19, which has come as a disappointment to Mokry. She believes the state could be doing more to distribute vaccines and keep people safe.

"There are just a lot of things that it feels like we should have been doing better," Mokry said. "Because you see other countries that are equal to our standards that have been better at various elements in this pandemic including vaccine distribution."

With vaccine distribution in full swing, there is a possibility that soon, more people will be immune to COVID-19, and the world can start its ascent into normality. Gokul expressed her wish for the world to be more precautionous with regards to the virus.

"I hope this pandemic ends quickly and I hope that people take it more seriously," Gokul said. "The more seriously people take it, the faster it will end."

## Timeline of the Vaccine



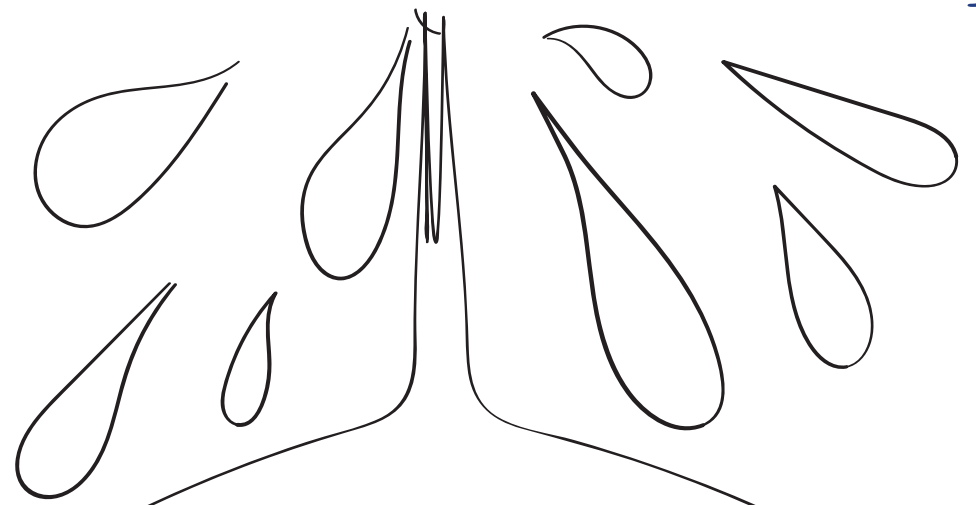
graphic by Grace Woodruff



graphic by Helena Lara

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) issued an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) for the COVID-19 vaccine produced by Pfizer-BioNTech on Dec. 11, 2020. The EUA allowed for the vaccine to be used in people who were 16 years of age or older. Prior to the EUA, the vaccine went through rigorous clinical trials with tens of thousands of patients that tested for efficacy and safety. EUAs are only used during emergencies, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, and only if the FDA has determined that the benefits outweigh the risks.

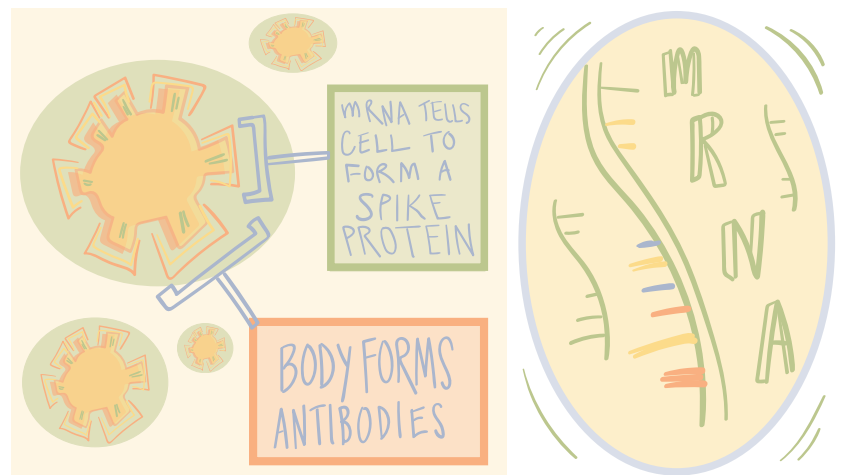
President Joe Biden has promised that all adults will be eligible for the vaccine by May 1, and the White House also promised that Americans will start getting back to some form of normality around July 4. The Biden administration plans to accomplish this by increasing the number of vaccination sites, increasing the number of people who can administer the vaccine, making it easier to find a vaccine and providing guidance for those who have been vaccinated on what activities are safe. Biden also gave information about his plan for reopening schools, which included making sure educators were vaccinated and giving adequate resources to schools.



## How Each Vaccine Works

### mRNA Vaccines (Pfizer, Moderna)

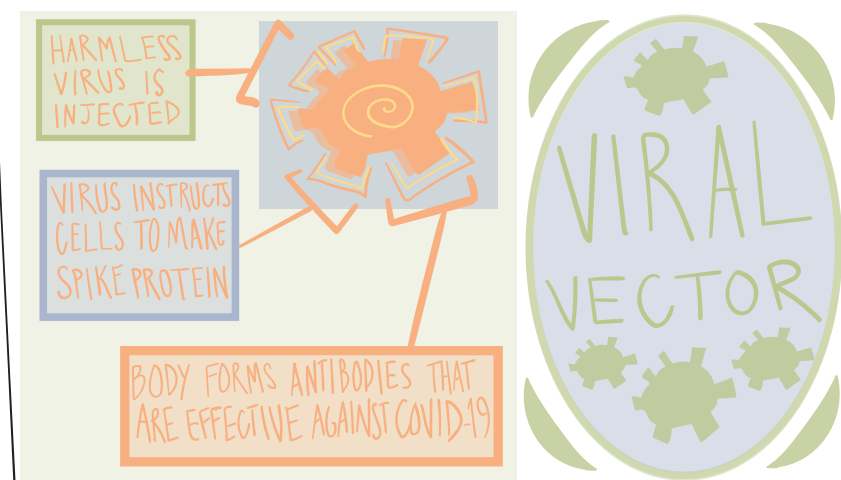
mRNA COVID-19 vaccines, like the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines, give instructional sequences called mRNA to your cells that then make parts of the virus named spike proteins, which help the virus gain entry to host cells. These harmless proteins are then recognized by the body's immune system, which makes antibodies that enable it to learn to neutralize the spike proteins so future COVID-19 viruses can't infect cells.



graphics by Andrew Lucksinger

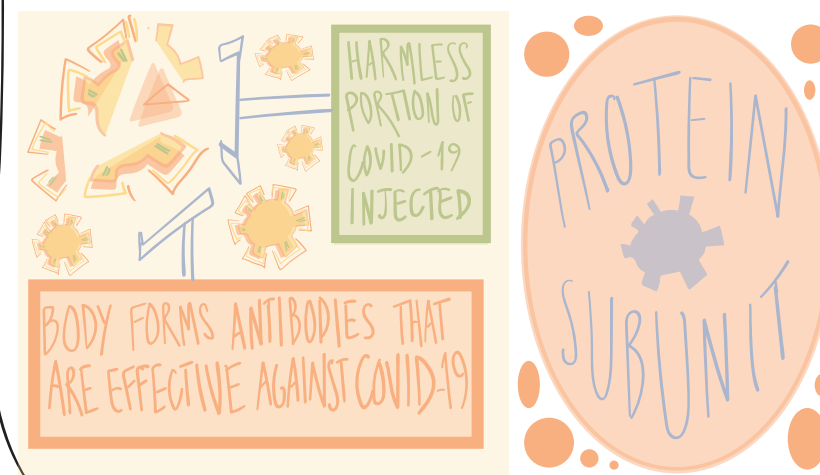
### Vector Vaccines (Johnson & Johnson)

Viral vector vaccines, like the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, also operate by making the body's cells create spike proteins. However, they use a different type of mechanism to accomplish this. Viral vector vaccines use a harmless virus that is not the COVID-19 virus to infect cells and make them create spike proteins. The body then creates antibodies to fight off the "infected" cells so it can learn how to target future infections.



### Protein Subunit Vaccines

As of the time of this writing, there are no protein subunit vaccines being widely distributed to the American public, but there are ongoing, large-scale clinical trials. This type of vaccine works by injecting harmless pieces of the COVID-19 virus into the body so that the immune system can recognize it, create antibodies and learn how to defend against COVID-19 in the future.



# University of Texas CAPlications

EDITH HOLMSTEN | staff writer

Out of all the LASA seniors who apply to the University of Texas at Austin (UT Austin), only about 30% of them gain admission, according to college counselor Jamie Kocian. Some unaccepted students are given the opportunity to participate in UT's Coordinated Admission Program (CAP).

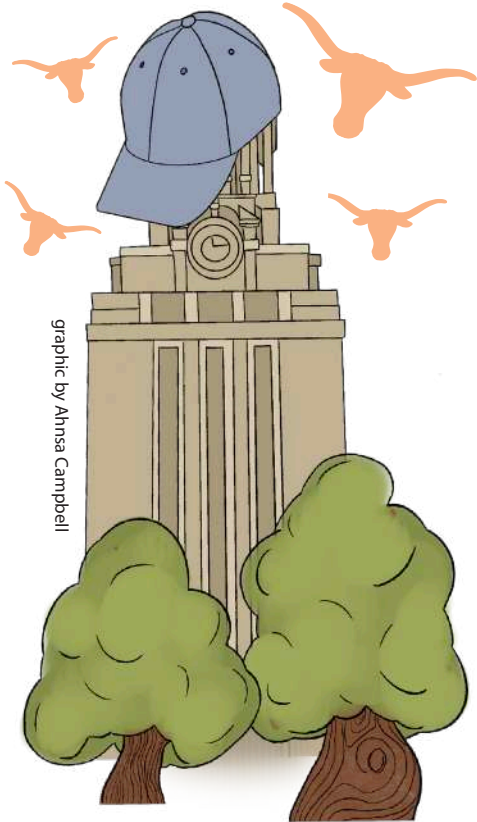
Kocian said students can choose to attend one of the UT system's six participating schools, such as UT El Paso, UT San Antonio and UT Rio Grande Valley, for one year and automatically gain admission to UT Austin for their sophomore year. However, students must earn a GPA of 3.2 and complete 30 semester credit hours at the CAP school they choose. Maintaining these requirements can make the decision to participate in CAP difficult, according to Kocian.

Kocian understands the desire for many students to participate in CAP to get into UT Austin. Kocian said cheaper in-state tuition along with knowledge of the campus encourages students to apply to UT Austin.

"It's a world-class institution, and it's right in their backyard so I think our students have always known or felt like they've known what the UT experience is," Kocian said. "They grew up in Austin, so there's already that affinity and an association."

LASA's policy to not rank students' GPAs outside of the top 10% helps students who are interested in the CAP program. Instead of being constrained to only a few schools, students can choose between all six participating schools, according to Kocian.

"Prior to this year, the test scores were the cutoff for the different CAP programs that a student could be eligible for like UTSA, UT Arlington, but this year because UT went test-optional now it's based on quarter of class," Kocian said. "Since we don't rank outside the top 10%, they allow an option if you're a non-ranking school like LASA is or non-rank-reporting school, then our students have all the CAP options."



graphic by Ahnsa Campbell

Senior Leena Jere said she was glad for the ability to apply to all six schools in order to have a greater chance in finding a university with a radio-television-film program. Jere is considering UT San Antonio for her freshman year.

"It's the only school that has a radio-television-film credit that even transfers to UT [Austin], so at the very least I'll have that," Jere said. "Even then, I'll be able to be close to home, so I can still talk to friends who go to UT [Austin] and maybe even help build up a portfolio for myself to try to get into radio-television-film for my sophomore year."

While Jere is considering going to UT San Antonio, she also said that the CAP requirements only guarantee her admission to the College of Liberal Arts at UT Austin. Jere would then have to participate in radio-television-film as an extracurricular instead of her major, which affects her decision.

"The big negative is that the CAP only guarantees admission to the College of Liberal Arts, which is not where my first choice major is, so if I do CAP, there's definitely a chance that I'm going to end up studying something that I kind of wanted to study, but it's not my first choice," Jere said.

Senior Sofia Syed also has concerns about certain aspects of CAP. Syed said she is worried that transferring after her first year might make her freshman year less enjoyable.

"It just doesn't get me super excited or anything because you'll go into your first year thinking, 'Oh, I'm going to transfer,'" Syed said. "So it may be a little harder to make friends or just make connections in general because you know you're going to transfer, or at least you're hoping to."

While Syed does not like the transfer system, she understands why students would consider the program. Syed said UT's participating schools have high-quality faculty and majors, even though the schools are less well-known.

"Even if you're at that school for a year, it still has a really strong program, and the professors there are very highly ranked," Syed said. "It's still a good option for some people. It's just not my first choice."

# An Untraditional Year The Absence of Senior Traditions

graphic by Ahnsa Campbell



MADLINE VAN SLYKE | staff writer

Once again, seniors are facing a year of uncertainty in the world of the COVID-19 pandemic. They don't know if they will be able to go to their prom or attend graduation, and college next year holds many unanswered questions.

After an entire year of online learning, the class of 2021 was stripped of the possibility of a traditional senior year. COVID-19 came unexpectedly last year, and while people now know what they can and can't do, many things are still uncertain for the future. According to senior Abby Goff, seniors from last year got the worst deal. Last year's spring shutdowns led to many colleges scrambling to accommodate remote learning, and the incoming college freshmen were given what was, in many cases, a completely new way of learning.

"I feel awful for the seniors who graduated last year and started their freshman year of college when everything was completely crazy," Goff said. "Honestly, I much prefer this to that. I think we'll be able to be in person for college next year, even if it's just living on campus while attending online classes."

As is the new usual for everyone, seniors are also rarely able to see their friends. The isolation is making school sports a more important activity, according to senior Elyse Hall.

"I really don't see my friends ever because of COVID," Hall said. "Now, I'm just seeing the people I run with. My friend group has shifted in a way because I only run now, and I only see my track team. I'm lucky in the sense that I do still get to see people on a daily basis, and they have become my really close friends."

Last year, the LASA administration organized a virtual prom in lieu of the in-person event. Students had mixed reactions and reviews of the virtual prom as it did not meet standards for some attendees, such as Goff.

"I went to the virtual prom last year with a friend of mine," Goff said. "It was kind of awkward, so I really hope a virtual prom doesn't happen again. It'd be fun to have an in-person one, but I don't know if that's realistic at this time."

Hall described prom as one of the defining activities of a student's high school career. In a regular school year, seniors would have a night of dressing up with friends, but with many safety precautions being in place that was not the case last year.

"It is something that involves a big and tight community and I think it's really difficult to replicate that," Hall said. "I appreciate the fact that the administration did try to do something to make it a little bit of a normal year. I think it's just not possible to make up for."

Another LASA senior tradition that has changed in light of the pandemic is Senior Assassins. In the game, each participating senior is given a target within the class that they must then try to eliminate in some way. There have been a few more precautions put in place this year to abide by social distancing regulations.

"This year we're doing it with Nerf guns," Hall said. "You have to kill people from a minimum of six feet. You can't get closer than six feet and you have to have a mask on when you're killing someone, and they banned all play indoors. So very COVID safe."

Seniors in previous years also attended football games with friends and family. Despite the changes in the spectating experience that this year has brought, such as crowd limitations and a diminished student section, some things have stayed the same, according to LASA senior Ella Neff.

"I went to one football game to take photos for yearbook, and I was surprised by how many students still showed up to support the team despite COVID," Neff said. "I wasn't expecting many students to be there, but there were a good amount, and the student section leaders were still leading the chants and cheers like always."

Safety concerns did deter some families and students from attending games and sitting in the student section. Hall and her family agreed that the football games were very different from previous years.

"Usually, you're all cheering with your friends, and that's kind of a great experience, just being with your friends," Hall said. "It's a really fun environment, and we all are close together and cheering together. I didn't even go into the student section because of COVID — I just sat with my parents in the stands."

According to Goff, many seniors are hopeful for a semi-normal freshman year of college and a meaningful graduation.

# LASA Language Lowdown

EWAN MCLNERNEY | staff writer

With students learning virtually, languages other than English (LOTE) teachers have been forced to make changes to the structure and curriculum of their classes. Students also have had to find new ways to manage their language courses and communicate with their LOTE teachers during Zoom classes.

Sophomore Nic Gallego is currently taking Spanish II. He said that compared with his Spanish I class the year before, there is less collaboration between classmates in a virtual setting, and asking questions is more difficult.

"Learning in person was definitely easier," Gallego said. "In in-person class, the lectures would usually be a little longer, and the teacher would write what they were talking about on the board to explain it to you better. There were also in-person group activities, which was nice because we could just review the concept that we learned by actually using it in conversation."

Gallego said that being able to interact with the teacher during the class period is important for better understanding and clarifying concepts. However, according to junior Edward Hao, who is enrolled in Chinese V, learning is more flexible in his higher-level LOTE class.

"Traditionally, the lower levels of Chinese class, I to IV, put more of a focus on learning vocabulary or grammar," Hao said. "In levels V and VI, there's a lot more freedom in how the class is structured. There's a greater focus on the culture and the parts of China that you won't really get just from learning vocabulary, and it's more project-based."

Hao said that for this reason, remote and in-person classes are similar for him on a day-to-day basis. However, he agreed that students still get less from classes on Zoom than at school.

"I know that in Chinese V last year, they were doing a lot of the same day-to-day things and assignments that I'm doing now," Hao said. "The class is built pretty similarly, and the teachers post the same PowerPoints and lectures, and it's still easy to communicate with teachers if we need to. But I still think learning in-person is better overall because in the classroom, you're more immersed in the experience and the cultural aspect that you can't really get from sitting in your room."

Because of COVID-19, teachers had to shift their entire curriculum online to BLEND, Austin Independent School District's digital learning platform. French instructor Rachel Pate said one advantage of remote learning is that it has allowed her to consolidate and organize her courses in a more streamlined way.

"In some ways, it's really challenged my creativity in the sense that the quarantine has forced me to create a whole new curriculum based online and made me figure out how to explain the specifics of language concepts nonverbally," Pate said. "Last year, I was new to LASA, so I didn't get the opportunity to learn everything about BLEND because there were so many other things to figure out technology-wise. But now, I can put all of my assignments and grading in one place. Along with the fact that we don't have physical papers to grade anymore, that's definitely been a factor in helping me stay organized."

According to Gallego, his in-person Spanish class had a stricter rule about speaking Spanish whenever possible. Although students sometimes need to speak English to ask questions, he said that less Spanish is spoken in Zoom classes.

"In general, the teachers are probably more lenient about only letting the students speak a foreign language now, but I don't think that's really a good thing," Gallego said. "Learning a language is hard on its own, but I think it's even harder over Zoom. Part of learning a language is also interacting and learning with other people in that language. It's definitely not the best environment when it's hard to even speak English to people, especially when they have their cameras off."

Pate said that the current remote learning system is a good temporary replacement for classroom learning. However, she thinks communication in LOTE classes is something that can't be replicated online.

"It's also hard for me to tell if people are actually speaking French or not, since with in-person group work, you can actually hear what everybody's saying, but with breakout rooms in Zoom, you can only listen to one group at a time," Pate said. "With any remote class, it's harder to ask questions and talk with students, but it's even more limiting with LOTE classes where communication and talking with people is so important to learning."

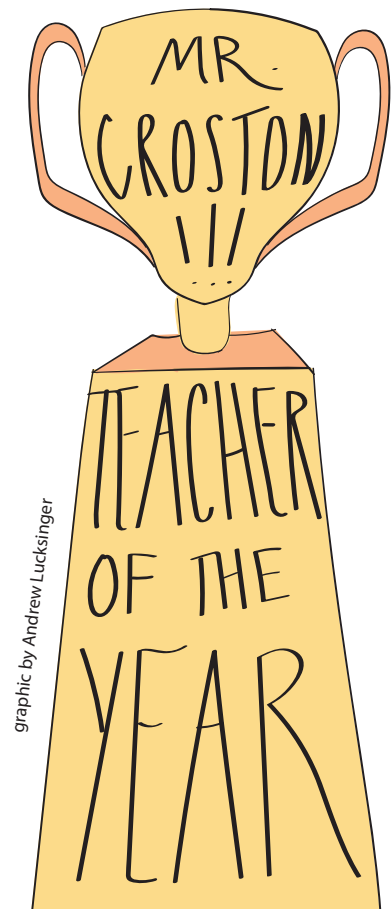
graphics by Eva Schwarm



graphics by Eva Schwarm

# TEACHER OF THE YEAR

from page 1



graphic by Andrew Luckstinger

She said it is obvious he puts in a lot of work to his various positions, and he is always available to help.

"He was a very approachable teacher. When I was struggling in the class or I needed help on a homework problem it was easy to just reach out to him and ask him for help," Thompson said. "He probably won because of all the effort he puts into his classes; he teaches physics and calc, and those are both really big classes that a lot of people struggle with or find difficult. I think he does a really good job of not only teaching them, but also providing help and access when students are struggling in his classes."

An example of how Croston tries to connect with his students is through his love of otters and what they symbolize for him. Since school went virtual in March last year, he has been teaching his classes with help from his many stuffed otters.

"I admire otters," Croston said. "They are like cute little people with a wonderful attitude on life — life is about others and finding joy in the simplest things. I often wish I was an otter, everyone loves otters."

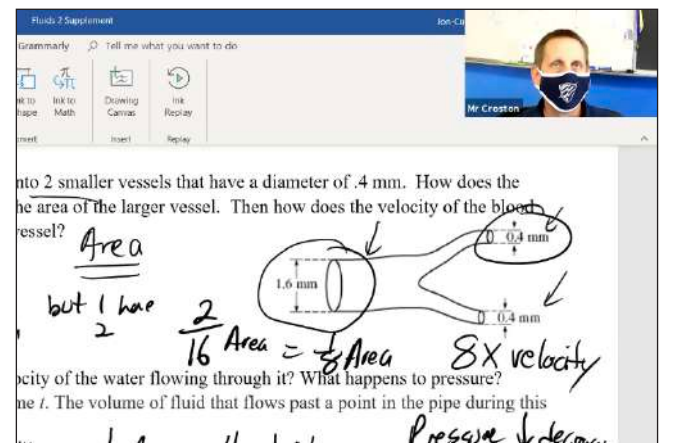
Croston has been teaching for 25 years and to him, the most important part of being a teacher is helping students learn

and making them happy. Croston feels honored to be teacher of the year, but ultimately, he is content if his students think he is a good teacher.

"It is a huge honor," Croston said. "LASA is such an incredible school with incredible students but I also think it has pretty incredible faculty. I mean, there's a lot of teachers in there that are really just incredible. To be selected and honored as one of them is huge, I feel it. But honestly, if my students are happy, if my students learn and if my students think I am a good teacher, I'm happy. The district is all about being professional and joining professional organizations, but for me a lot of being a good teacher is being an effective teacher. Being able to relate to students, being able to make connections with students and really to just help them learn."

Teaching students and helping them succeed is what motivates Croston every day. He explained that he believes being a good and effective teacher means that you not only love your subject, but you also love teaching students.

"I think the biggest part of being a good teacher is not being so in love with your content, but really caring about the students," Croston said. "The students are what motivate me every day. I really enjoy teaching them,



TEACHING TACTICS Jon Croston teaches his classes via Zoom and devotes much of his time to making his lesson plans entertaining and enjoyable for his students. Mr. Croston utilizes the tools that Zoom has to offer. Photo by Emma McBride

not my subject. I enjoy students coming into my class and realizing how hard it's going to be, how difficult it is, and then succeeding. I love that. I love being a part of helping them."

Despite not receiving a physical award due to COVID-19, Croston is appreciative to be chosen as teacher of the year. He is grateful to have worked with all the teachers and students at LASA for as long as has.

"It is such an honor with the faculty we have," Croston said. "I'm just glad that I can teach at LASA. Thank you to all the students and all the teachers for providing a place."

# Inside Look at Online Concerts with Some of SXSW 2021's Musicians

LILI XIONG | staff writer

On a normal year, South by Southwest (SXSW) is an iconic time for musicians and music lovers. This year, however, the festival's organizers were tasked with recreating the hype of live music in a virtual setting. Through an online platform, attendees could tune in to showcases and events throughout the week of March 12-20. There were networking opportunities and a live chat feature to message other members of the audience, allowing attendees from around the world to share the experience.

Sydney Wright is a local Austin artist and sound engineer who works on a wide range of pop. Wright's latest album, "Seiche", has been out since 2018, and she plans on releasing a new project soon.

"It's a coming of age, coming into the world collection of songs," Wright said. "I'm glad that a lot of supporters helped me put that out, and I'm looking forward to the next one because I have this whole new collection of songs."

Wright was supposed to perform at SXSW last year, but it got cancelled due to COVID-19. During previous years, she worked as a sound engineer and had

a few shows as an unofficial artist. 2021 was her first year as an official artist.

"Since almost all of the performances were pre-taped, it gave you a chance to make sure that your sound is good and that you look really nice," Wright said. "You don't get that at South By ever. It would usually be rushing band after band on stage and not having anything extra. It's really hard to do your best when you're in front of people that might matter. These were different circumstances, and it allowed a lot of freedom for performances."

Mimi Bay is an 18-year-old pop singer-songwriter from Gothenburg, Sweden. She started recording music in her bedroom studio and posting YouTube videos, and has since released a ukulele-based EP titled "I Will Be Okay" and several other hit singles, including "No Doubt." This was her first year performing at SXSW.

"I wrote 'No Doubt' in the fall of 2020, a few months after graduation," Bay said. "Fresh out of school spending my days making music in my studio apartment made me feel a little disconnected from the outside world. My friends starting university and new jobs — and this pandemic on top of that — made me doubt where I was going and wondering how I was going to get there. SXSW was fun and interesting. I've never attended the festival before, so it's nice to be able to do it from home, but hopefully, this will be the only year it's online."

Ley Line is an Austin-based multilingual folk and soul band made up of Lydia Froncek, Emily Basez, Madeleine Froncek and Kate Robberson. The band

has toured through Brazil and finds inspiration through their travels around the world. The result is their 2020 album "We Saw Blue," which brims with dreamy melodies and harmonies. Madeleine Froncek said that the band will be releasing a visual accompaniment to the album in the future.

"When we did our tour in 2017 through Brazil, we had the intention of filming the whole time and hopefully collaborating with other people in making an album with a visual component," Froncek said. "We wanted a storytelling piece that brings you along behind the scenes of the adventure to see and feel the influences of the music."

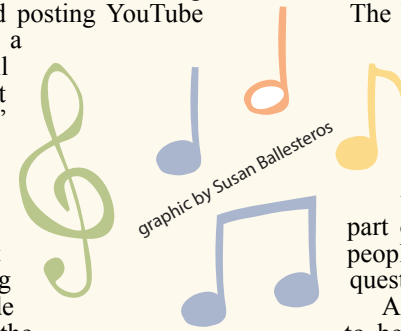
The band has played at SXSW as official artists twice previously. According to Robberson, this was probably the band's most attended SXSW show as hundreds of people tuned in to watch their performance.

"It was really cool to be able to watch our performance and be a part of the live chat and see in real time people responding to our music and asking questions," Robberson said.

According to Basez, it was exciting to be able to see who was in the virtual room, including people from big media companies. However, her favorite part of the festival was connecting with other artists.

"South By has been a big experience," Basez said. "It's a great festival, there's lots of potential, but you can obviously experience the opposite end of it, wondering, 'Where are all these opportunities and guarantees everyone talks about?' They are rare, but it's still amazing, and it's been such a cool festival to connect us with other artists."

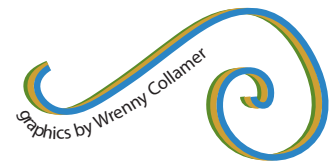
**ZOOM STUDIOS** Indonesian indie pop band Grrrl Gang perform a private studio session for the SXSW musical festival's online attendees. Online features like live chat and the added practice time given to musical acts due to this year's format helped artists to be able to better recreate interactions at traditional concerts. photo courtesy of SXSW



SEE SXSW EDU CONTENT ON PAGE 13 FOR MORE ON THE FESTIVAL

## FILM

from page 1



Banks said he hoped to spark thought among his audience about the importance of compassion in criminal rehabilitation.

"The motivation for this is that the leader of the team believes forgiving people is really the way to rehabilitate them, and punishment without love behind it doesn't work, and it just makes people angry and feel rejected by society," Banks said. "And so I want them to think about the justice system, human nature, how forgiveness and unconditional love actually has more of a potential to rehabilitate people or help society than punishment. So I just want them to think about that. And, usually, that does come across where a lot of people are like, 'It has so many philosophical ideas that are wrapped up in this little action movie.'"

Banks said that his primary focus with "Reklaw" was achieving all of his lifetime goals as a filmmaker. The result of this was a short film containing components normally found in feature films, including a set he built himself.

"For me, I wanted to make a movie that accomplished all my dreams as a filmmaker in 12 minutes, somehow, if I knew I was going to get hit by a bus at this time of the year, that I could die happy," Banks said. "I want it to have multiple locations and multiple characters, and bigger themes and complicated relationships, a lot of stuff you do not put in a short, that's for features. And so I kind of made a little mini-feature. And the set-building was an incredible undertaking, where I built this big, like, basically a house, and I couldn't afford to hire a crew to help me. So instead, I just supplemented it with time, and I spent six months, mostly by myself, framing out this big set."

To Banks, despite the inability to interact with others in person at this year's SXSW, the virtual format enhanced the social aspect of the film festival. According to Banks, conferencing over Zoom gave him the opportunity to speak with others in the industry without having to physically approach or find them.

"It seems like it's not going to be any fun because you're at a festival in person, usually, and there's always mingling, and everything's legit," Banks said. "But the social aspect has surprisingly been nice. Instead of having to approach people at a screening or an event and have to just kind of coldly walk up and

start a conversation, they put us all in Zoom groups, and that takes away the icebreaker where I need to interject into somebody else's little circle of conversation to mingle. Instead, we're all just put in these breakout rooms, and there's eight of us, 10 of us in there, and we didn't decide; it's just kind of like, 'There you are.'"

In addition to allowing more seamless peer-to-peer interaction, this year's virtual film festival was unique in that it allowed attendees to view content at their convenience, according to Stephen Saito, a writer for the film criticism website Moveable Fest. Saito said the discovery of new films that this lack of structure allowed mirrored the experience of previous, in-person years.

**"They put us all in Zoom groups, and that takes away the icebreaker where I need to interject into [somebody's circle]"**

- "Reklaw" Director Polaris Banks

"Most years at SXSW, you often will find yourself wandering into a movie that you have no idea what you're seeing, and you're going through it because you have some free time between other movies that you may not have expected," Saito said. "So it does sort of imitate that in that way that it sort of pushes you to get out of what you thought you were going to see and maybe watch something that you hadn't necessarily put on your schedule, but it's available, and you can check it out at a certain time. So

it sort of imitated the experience in that regard."

Out of all the films he saw during the festival, Saito said the narrative "Our Father" stood out to him the most. However, he also gave a nod to the pandemic comedy film "The End of Us."

"There's a movie called 'Our Father' that's in the Narrative [Feature] Competition that I really, really enjoyed," Saito said. "It's about a pair of sisters that find out that they have an uncle they didn't know about. And it's a really, really wonderful comedy. There's another one that actually is a pandemic movie, it's called 'The End of Us,' that I was concerned about, because I thought, 'The last thing I want to see right now is a movie about last year,' but it's a lot of fun. It's about two people that break up right before the pandemic starts and have to live together throughout it."

Saito served as a juror for SXSW's Louis Black "Lone Star" Award and said the competing films spanned diverse genres and topics. Saito also appreciated the overall similarity between this year's festival and past festivals despite the change in format.

"We had a coming-of-age comedy, 'Inbetween Girl,' that's made by a UT alum," Saito said. "That was wonderful. That actually was the only narrative film in the films that we were judging, the movie 'Kid Candidate' was part of that selection, 'United States vs. Reality Winner' about the whistle-blower, these were movies that were all over the place. But SXSW, generally, I have to say, this seems like a traditional year not pertaining to that category. Actually, what I should say about 'Kid Candidate,' what got me excited about that movie is that it felt like a movie that could have played SXSW 20 years ago. And I think that the festival, in general, has stayed true to the spirit of what it's doing even in this online incarnation."

# Gaming Gains Golden Opportunities

## SXSW's Online Expo Success in Virtual World

SOPHIA CHAU | student life editor

According to the Entertainment Software Association, around 214 million Americans play video games for at least an hour a week. As video games become more and more popular, the landscape of the industry continues to change, a topic that was the subject of multiple talks at South by Southwest (SXSW) Online 2021.

SXSW's Gaming Expo, where attendees could try games and participate in various tournaments, was not a part of this year's event. However, SXSW Online 2021 had components that pertained to gaming, including the Gaming Awards, which spotlighted exemplary games of the past year, and multiple conferences that highlighted new technology, change in the gaming community, and how gaming can be used for good.

From the idea of a "gamer" to celebrities entering the world of streaming, SXSW emphasized the pop culture impact of video games and gaming in general. Cherie Hu, a journalist in the industry, noted how the growth of the video game industry is having a large effect on gaming's perception in pop culture.

"Zooming out and looking at the gaming industry

generally, we're at a really big inflection point," Hu said. "Games have always been popular, but in terms of celebrities really leading gaming across different genres and really embracing it as part of their marketing strategy and personalities, it really is truly part of pop culture."

Jack Dunlop, a prominent content creator on YouTube commonly known by his channel name, CouRage, also noted the gaming industry's growth. He started his channel in 2013 and said that it has been interesting to watch gaming grow.

"I've seen it go from what feels like the grassroots — kind of everyone throwing pieces together to make the puzzle work — to really a sustainable and growing business that has eyes on it from across the world," Dunlop said.

Like all industries at present, the video gaming industry has been affected by COVID-19. Unlike other industries, Dunlop said video gaming seems to have benefited from the millions of people stuck at home.

"I think the pandemic has affected so many different industries in many different ways," Dunlop said. "Gaming has thrived from the pandemic. When the pandemic happened, and everyone was stuck at home, the best thing to do when you're at home is to play video games."

The video gaming industry, however, isn't a monolith. According to Hu, it is interconnected with

the music industry in many ways.

"The scope of music and gaming partnerships is not just about original soundtracks, it's not just about sync licenses in FIFA or Madden, NBA 2k, Grand Theft Auto, etc.," Hu said. "It really now touches literally every part of the music business. It encompasses in-game concerts in games like Fortnite. It encompasses artists investing in esports teams, it encompasses artists using games as lifestyle branding outlets. There really is so much to explore."

The idea of video games being used as lifestyle platforms is evolving apace with the rest of the industry. More recently, video games and streaming have attracted bigger names and new attention, including congresswoman

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, whose stream of the popular game "Among Us" ranks in the 20 most viewed streams on Twitch. Joost van Dreunen, a professor at NYU and gaming industry strategic analyst, keeps watch on these trends.

"In 2020, we see an almost doubling of viewership, so we have an incredible number of eyeballs," van Dreunen said. "It's no longer only gamers; it's all these other categories as well. In particular, political candidates. I thought it was very interesting to see AOC fumble around with a microphone recently and trying to come to terms with a larger conversation."

Regardless of what happens in the future, the video gaming industry will continue to be one to watch.



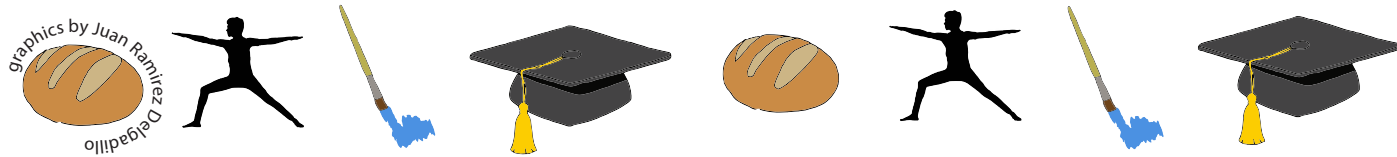
**MICS, CAMERAS, ACTION** The cast and crew of SHOWTIME's dark comedy series "Black Monday" host a virtual Q&A at the 2021 rendition of SXSW's film festival. Online screenings and interactive recordings like this were the main forms of virtual content on attendees' schedules this year. photo courtesy of SXSW



graphic by Andrew Luckinsiget

# LASA Master Classes

Online Programs Entertain and Educate



MALVIKA PRADHAN | staff writer

LASA Master Classes, which allow people to pay to take classes on a variety of topics, were started by PFLASA as a way to raise money for the school and bring the LASA community together during the pandemic. PFLASA head of fundraising Geeta Suggs had the idea for the classes and now manages them.

"I chaired that fundraising team," Suggs said. "But also, I was trying to brainstorm how we could not necessarily just get money, but how we could do anything in this kind of virtual world. So you know on Facebook how they have those ads, or on Instagram there are ads for different classes you can take out there. They're called Master Classes or Skillshare, and I was like, 'Oh, it'd be really cool if we could do something like that.'"

The classes were only supposed to last until the end of September, matching the length of the normal PFLASA fundraising drive. But Suggs said people kept wanting to teach classes.

"It just kind of took off because people would start emailing me, 'Hey, how do I teach a class? I'd like to teach a class,' and I was like, 'Well, OK, we'll do a couple more, and then it'll be done.' And it just kept on going," Suggs said. "And then as we got really into it, then I was like, 'Well, I might as well advertise for teachers and see if anybody else wants to teach one.'"

Senior Sofia Syed taught a class about Irish dancing and Irish soda bread with her mother and brother. She first heard about the classes from the LASA Instagram account and her teacher.

"The LASA Instagram has been posting a lot about them, and then sometimes, I'll get emails from the principal or other administrators advertising them," Syed said. "My French teacher has also been doing a few Master Classes, so every once in a while, she'll ask us, 'Oh, have you guys signed up for this one? It looks interesting.'"

The classes teach a wide variety of skills, from scotch tasting to meditation, which was taught by junior Anya Kureshi. In the class, students were introduced to meditation and did mindfulness exercises.

"I was definitely a little nervous," Kureshi said. "But for this one, the goal is, at least in meditation classes, you're supposed to be calm, so it kind of rounds it out."

Master Classes are open to everyone, even those who aren't associated with LASA. According

to Suggs, they have had teachers from all over the U.S.. One class was taught by a professor from Southwestern University, called 10 Tips from a College Professor on What Students Need to Know.

The price of attending Master Classes was originally \$25, regardless of age. However, due to the

student-oriented nature of many of them, the price was reduced to \$10 for LASA students, according to Suggs.

"It was probably the end of November and all our classes were \$25, and it was just a one-price fee," Suggs said. "And then, as this kept growing, especially the college type classes, we added a student pricing for \$10. And there was Financial Planning for Students. Some of the classes are just geared to the students. And so we did \$10 now for all classes for students and \$25 for adults."

Kureshi has a meditation club at LASA which she started as part of her Girl Scout project. She wanted to teach a class to give more exposure to her club.

"It was really easy because PFLASA kind of advertises the class so you don't have to do much of your own advertisement," Kureshi said. "So it was just a good platform to get the word out about my club."

Kureshi thinks that the classes should continue, even when students go back to in-person school. She said it's a unique way to learn new skills while donating to the school.

"They're really cool," Kureshi said. "It's nice to actually be able to pay to learn something instead of just donating to PFLASA."

For now, the classes are scheduled to run until the end of April. Suggs isn't sure about next year yet, but she said people might be too busy to come.

"The only issue is we're going to be a lot busier if we're actually in person because all the sports are back, [and] everybody's going to be busier with their calendar outside of Master Classes," Suggs said. "I just can't imagine [that it will] be this busy with Master Classes because people have other stuff to do. I don't know."

While the Master Classes have been successful according to Suggs, they haven't raised as much money as PFLASA's normal donation drive, which they still held this year.

"So a general donation drive that we usually do is just, 'Hey, write us a check or donate here.' And that has always been really successful," Suggs said. "This has just been a cherry on top of that. And it has been incredibly successful, and we've never done anything like this before."

Anyone can sign up to take a class on the PFLASA website. To teach a class, email [webmaster@lasahighschool.org](mailto:webmaster@lasahighschool.org) or direct message the LASA Instagram account.

"It was really easy because PFLASA kind of advertises the class so you don't have to do much of your own advertisement, so it was just a good platform to get the word out about my club."

-Junior Anya Kureshi



**COOKING TIME** Latin teacher Aaron Pellowski and French teacher Rachel Pate teach a Master Class. They show viewers how to season and cook potatoes and steaks. photo courtesy of Aaron Pellowski



**SWEET REWARD** Among a broad variety of topics, some Master Classes focus on cooking. Money spent on classes goes towards PFLASA. photo courtesy of Aaron Pellowski

## Liberator's Picks Foreign Musical Artists



graphic by Susan Ballesteros

### Burna Boy

NIA ORAKWUE | editor in chief

Grammy Award-winning, Nigerian-born singer and rapper Burna Boy first made his debut in the music scene in the early 2010s. His combination of reggae, afro-pop and pop in songs like "Gbona" and "Anybody" immerse his listeners into his carefree, feel-good vibes that are complemented by his raspy yet pure-sounding voice. In his success, Burna Boy, along with other Nigerian artists like Wizkid and Davido, has brought international attention and recognition to African artists and music in general. Burna Boy was most recently recognized for his success at the 2021 Grammys in which he won the award for Best Global Music Album. In addition to his music, Burna Boy uses his platform to encourage pride and community among Africans of all nationalities.

### Mon Laferte

GRACE WOODRUFF | web editor

Mon Laferte is the most streamed Chilean artist on Spotify, with 11 Latin Grammy nominations over the past five years, and for good reason. Her music spans genres, space and time as Chilean modern alternative combines with American '50s pop in a beautifully soul-crushing manner. "Tu Falta de Querer" is one of the best examples of her style, with jazzy saxophone, trombone and trumpet in the background, while the singer croons about the pain of returning to a bed you once shared with another. "Amárrame" on the other hand, has rocky guitar and bass and also a great deal of sex appeal, as the singer's lover "transformame en un loco, poco a poco." All in all, Mon Laferte is a versatile and genuine artist everyone should listen to.

### Kimberley Tell

WRENNY COLLAMER | entertainment editor

The rolling melodies and dream-like voice of Kimberley Tell, a Spanish artist with roots in Madrid and the Canary Islands, are hypnotizing, and when her bass hits at a perfectly unexpected beat it's hard not to be overtaken by her music's sentiments of lethargy and love. "Trihte," a standout track on her most recent EP, embodies her seductive sound. "Puede que piense demasiado," or "maybe I'm thinking too much," she repeats as she contemplates the relationship between her mind and her body, feeling stuck after lying in bed all day. It's captivatingly relatable as Tell overthinks her laziness. Her lyrics stand out, but the rarity of her sound makes her a must-listen whether you're familiar with Spanish or not.

### Bob Marley

ZOE KLEIN | commentary editor

As one of the most influential social activists of his time, singer-songwriter Bob Marley is credited with popularizing reggae all over the world. During a time of national turmoil for his home country of Jamaica, Marley used his music to call attention to hellish conditions caused by racism and colonialism. Through songs like "Get Up, Stand Up" and "One Love," Marley mobilizes his listeners to "get together and feel alright," to unrelentingly advocate for justice. His ruthless optimism is a shining reminder that, in his words, "Every little thing / Is gonna be alright." A household name for many, Marley's music puts smiles on faces and grooves in hips no matter what your background is.

## Photography Enthusiasts Take to Instagram

KATIE BUSBY | staff writer

There are many creative people at LASA, and some of them choose to express it through photography. While some may keep their work private, others have chosen to share it through platforms like Instagram for people to see.

Senior Aubrie Edmond has a photography account under the handle @aubriegraphy. She said that while Instagram is an ideal way to share photography, utilizing the platform adds to the anxiety of putting one's work out to the public.

"It's easy to say that Instagram is the perfect platform for sharing photography, but for me, there's a lot of stress involved with putting myself out there and sharing my

work," Edmond said. "I always wonder whether or not it's good enough and compare it to other stuff that I see."

Junior Lilli Long runs a photography account on Instagram called @lillilongphotography. She said that Instagram can have pros and cons when it comes to sharing any kind of art but thinks Instagram is still a great platform for it.

"I definitely think it's good for reaching people who you think are potential target audience members or people you want to reach in an artistic community, so it's really fantastic for the making connections aspect," Long said. "I think what you could consider a downside is just audience outreach. If you would want to share your art with a large number of people, it can take a long time to develop a following of people [to] actually show off that art [to], but I feel like that involves a lot about meeting new people in the first place, so I think there are definitely pros and cons."

Junior Sam Fischer also has a photography account, @samcphotos. He said that he thinks that Instagram doesn't present any cons for him because he uses his account as a more casual way to share his photography.

"One pro is that it can help motivate me to take more photos," Fischer said. "I don't really think there are any cons for me. I could see how it would be hard if I was more serious about photography or trying to make money off of it, but since I do photography very casually, Instagram is

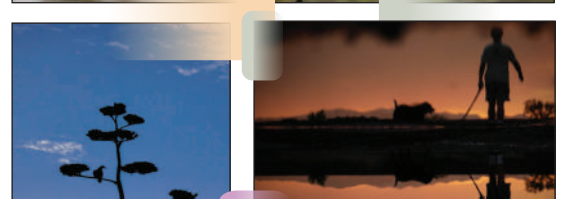
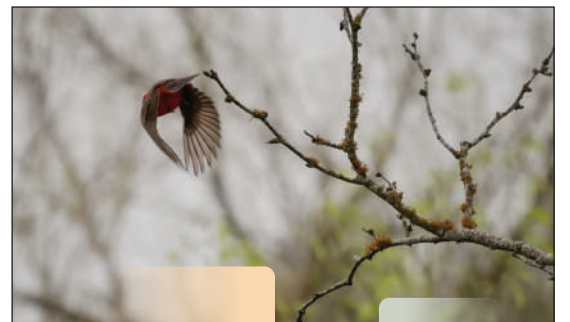
just a good way to share some of my photos with other people."

Senior Ella Neff said that she enjoys using her Instagram, which can be found @eknphoto, to share a style of photo people might not otherwise see from her. Neff takes photos for LASA's yearbook, but she uses her account as a space for more artistic photos, rather than photos just for documentation.

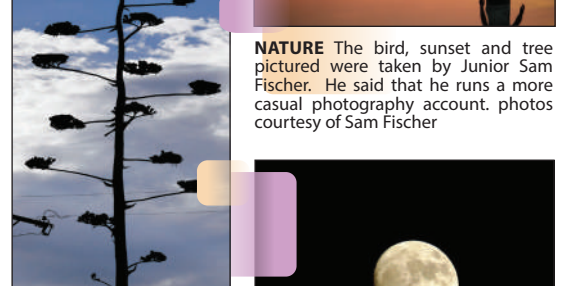
"In the yearbook, you see the sports photos, the academic photos — very cut and dry," Neff said. "There's not much room for artistic expression — really, the goal of the yearbook is to document the year and show the students rather than express your creativity. I like being able to show a different side of my photography and a more creative side of myself, rather than just the rational, 'Here's a photo of someone playing soccer,' the photos you see in all the yearbooks and in the news and stuff. I wanted to do something more creative, and I use Instagram as a way to do that and to show people that I'm a photographer for yearbook but also that this is a passion of mine. This is a hobby I don't just do because I'm in the class."

Long said she thinks that Instagram can also help people overcome anxiety about sharing their art. Despite the downsides, Long expressed that Instagram provides a unique opportunity to put one's work out to the world.

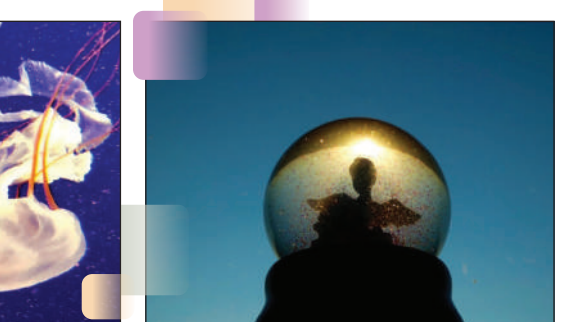
"I feel even though it has pros and cons, it does force you to become comfortable with sharing your art no matter how you feel," Long said.



**NATURE** The bird, sunset and tree pictured were taken by Junior Sam Fischer. He said that he runs a more casual photography account. photos courtesy of Sam Fischer



**SKY AND SEA** The pictured moon, snow globe, and jellyfish were taken by senior Aubrie Edmond. Edmond focuses on nature photography, but also does photo shoots with friends and clients. photos courtesy of Aubrie Edmond



**POSE** Junior Lilli Long specializes in portrait photography. Models from left to right clockwise are Kayla Klepac, Jasmine Gaynier, and James Thompson. photos courtesy of Lilli Long



## Students Still **GARDENING**

Pandemic's Springtime Hobby Has Staying Power



**HANGING OUT** Junior Katie Eastman uses plants to enhance the space of her room. Hanging plants are one of her favorite varieties. photo courtesy of Katie Eastman

**WRENNY COLLAMER** | entertainment editor

Gardening, amongst other hobbies, has had a pandemic moment. However, unlike the jumble of leisurely pursuits that have long been forgotten since 2020, gardening has maintained its relevance with LASA students. Acquiring a passion for plants is a pandemic pastime that comes with added benefits: the activity provides a form of exercise and, according to a 2020 study at Cornell University, spending time outdoors can reduce stress levels. Now that COVID-19's second spring is upon us, students who have stuck with their plants have had more time to develop their passions for gardening and take in the calmness it can bring.

Senior Estelle Powell started gardening when she was younger by participating in a community garden with her family. Now, she has a personal garden where she grows rosemary, sage, mint and lavender. Powell uses the lavender in lemonade, as well as placing it around the house for its pleasant aroma, and uses the mint and sage while cooking. Powell also grows milkweed and passionvine to attract butterflies in the spring. March and April is when she begins to plant most of her garden.

"It has been a really good recreational activity that also helps me to learn more about biology and plants in general, so it's definitely been a good respite — especially during COVID — to keep me calmer," Powell said. "Right now is when I'll be starting to plant stuff in there, like rosemary. Lavender grows best in early spring, so I'll probably start that pretty soon."

Powell has worked on a nonprofit farm for Urban Roots, which is an Austin-based youth program involved with agriculture and leadership. 40% of the produce grown on the farm went to organizations in Austin, while the rest was sold at farmers markets. Powell said that Urban Roots gave her a more commercial, large-scale experience with farming compared to her personal garden.

"I think it was different because of the scale," Powell said. "It was definitely much bigger than the tiny plot that I have at my own house. The one at my house is a lot smaller than the actual farm, and the farm would be more organized."

Junior Izzy Held cuts pieces off large starter plants and puts the cuttings in water to grow her own plants from scratch. She acquired two more starter plants over quarantine and said that her collection of plants has increased dramatically in the past year.

"I got this one big plant a couple years ago, and then I learned that you could cut off the ends of it and put them in water," Held said. "I've just been doing that since, and I've accumulated a bunch of bottles of water with plants in them...it's kind of taking over my room."

Held keeps her plants in clear jars in her room and said that the maintenance and upkeep that her plants require is minimal. More than anything, she said her collection adds to the atmosphere of the space.

"It makes it look less depressing, because I am stuck in here all day — It opens it up a little bit," Held said.

Junior Katie Eastman estimates that she has

over 30 different types of plants. Outside, she grows cucumbers, watermelon and lettuce, and she takes care of a collection of indoor plants that fill the shelves of her room. She started gardening before the pandemic, but she credits quarantine as the reason she started growing her avocados and a large portion of her current plants.

"My mom has always gardened, so I've always liked plants, but I didn't really build my own collection until actually January of 2020...you have a lot more time during quarantine, so I was like, 'Oh, why not just try to start some avocado plants from pits?'" Eastman said. "I started them in June."

Eastman described how each of her plants goes on its own journey and said that bringing plants back to life is one of her favorite challenges. The majority of the plants she grows come from seeds or start out sick, requiring her to support them back to health.

"You definitely kill plants along the way," Eastman said. "It's part of the learning curve. You learn what plants work with you and what plants don't. I am not a succulent person, I don't do ferns and I love hanging plants...I love getting plants in the Lowe's clearance section — they are always on the verge of dying, but I am always able to bring them back."

Eastman said that her plants are beginning to cover her room and that keeping them out of reach from her pet bunny can be hard sometimes. However, she said the large number of plants to take care of provides an ideal time to relax and step away from her schoolwork.

"I'm not surprised that I'm still gardening — I am a little more surprised by how many plants I have," Eastman said. "I think my plants are a good way for me to take a break because after a long day of school with all the plants I have, I have to make sure to water them all and fertilize them, and that takes a good 10-15 minutes."

Powell said that she is also often surprised at the growth of her garden. However, the growth that she is able to see year over year is one of the most fulfilling parts of gardening for her. Powell's largest garden was this past summer, during quarantine.

"I think it's really cool each year to see it grow more and become bigger when I discover new plants to put in there," Powell said. "With the plants that I like to grow, they'll end up succeeding more with every year that I learn more about gardening."



**READY FOR SPRING** Senior Estelle Powell's garden was harmed by the recent freeze, but she is preparing to plant lavender and rosemary for the spring. photo courtesy of Estelle Powell



**WILD SHELVES** Junior Katie Eastman has over 30 different types of plants. One of her favorite ways to get plants is through trading cuttings on Facebook plant groups. photo courtesy of Katie Eastman

## SXSW EDU Holds Separate Festival

The Lib Spotlights Two Notable Presentations

**JUAN RAMIREZ DELGADILLO** | staff writer

At this year's online South By Southwest, the presentation "20 Years from Idea to Impact" by the Teachers' College at Western Governors University (WGU) discussed the history and benefits of its program, which allows people to obtain a teaching degree. One of the many industries that has had to accommodate major changes due to COVID-19 is the education industry. Educators and district administrators have been trying to find the best ways for students to learn virtually, and today's teachers are the pioneers of the new landscape of online learning. Some of the factors in the success of WGU's program are how they help students engage and provide them with a sense of community. The presentation highlighted how students can benefit more from the greater flexibility and affordability of online learning.

Whizz Education works with governments and schools to understand and address the current issues facing the education industry. Dr. Junaid Mubeen stated that over the summer, students often forget parts of the knowledge learned in the previous school year, deeming the phenomenon the "summer slide." Due to COVID-19, this effect has been amplified. U.S. country manager Paul Miller said that the effect is so bad, 13 U.S. states have seen indicators of reduced learning levels at state and national levels. Miller discussed the various methods currently being used to measure learning loss across the nation and commented that teaching methods and differences in testing must be taken into consideration as a part of the conversation. According to his presentation, recovery from this loss will not happen if there is no catch-up intervention.



**VEGAN PIZZA** Big Nonna's uses house made vegan cheeses and meats in their pizzas. Their mozzarella cheese is made with soy, pumpkin seeds, and organic coconut oil. photo courtesy of Big Nonna's



**PLANT BURGER** Citizen Eatery aims to challenge what it means to eat vegan, offering traditionally animal-based food in vegan versions. They also offer all-day breakfast. photo courtesy of Michael Moyer

## Vegan Restaurants Take Off

**ELIANA LEGATT** | staff writer

Austin is well known for its food scene and in recent years has become more vegan friendly with more all-vegan restaurants popping up around the city. A vegan diet excludes animal products such as meat, fish, milk and eggs, and some vegans choose not to eat honey either. One contributor to the local veganism boom is Michael Moyer, co-founder of Citizen Eatery with his wife Aimee. Their vegan café and bar opened on Burnet Road in November of 2016.

"We just felt that our community could benefit from, and really enjoy and embrace, a restaurant that was clean and casual, that has sort of a contemporary vibe that focused on a plant-based cuisine," Moyer said.

The restaurant was originally vegetarian, but after requests for the change, Moyer said they began considering becoming all-vegan. A new vegan egg product reached the market around the same time called JUST Egg, which is primarily made of mung bean.

"We sampled the product, and it was really good, very close to real eggs in the flavor and the texture," Moyer said. "So we researched the availability of that product, and then we did a trial two-week period where we were just vegan."

According to Moyer, the trial went well. From there, they switched to an all plant-based menu, serving JUST Eggs in place of real eggs. "We were the first business in the entire state of Texas to serve that product, and we stayed that way for a little bit," Moyer said. "Now, it's all over the place."

According to Moyer, the restaurant is not only for vegans. Moyer and his family are pescatarians themselves — meaning they eat fish, milk and eggs but not other meat — and they still cater their menu to all diets.

"We try to focus on taste and flavors and feels of foods that people are most familiar with," Moyer said. "It's not necessarily about being vegan or plant-based. We just serve good food, and it just so happens we don't cook with certain proteins. It's tasty food. Don't be scared; come try it."

The restaurant has stayed open through the pandemic and has followed the Centers for Disease Control's protocols and suggestions. The restaurant is currently open at 50% capacity but still does delivery and takeout.

"I just want to say, 'Thank you, thank you, thank you,' because we're still open," Moyer said. "We've been open through the pandemic, through the winter storm. We've made it through that, and it's all because of our community, and we owe it all to our community, and we're just extremely grateful."

Amelia Raley is a co-owner of Sweet Ritual Ice Cream and Big Nonna's Pizza. Tech Ridge's Big Nonna's Pizza opened in November 2020 while Sweet Ritual, on Airport Boulevard, was founded in 2011. Little Nonna's was the original business, and it was founded a few years prior to the opening of Big Nonna's.

"The reason that I started the vegan business with Little Nonna's is a couple of years ago, I started an ATX vegan food business owners meetup," Raley said. "We have a private Facebook group where we talk and we share different resources."

Every six weeks or so, the group would meet at a vegan restaurant called Counter Culture and share ideas about how to run their businesses. In the pandemic, Raley said the group was helpful because they could discuss the implementation of COVID-19 regulations.

"Little Nonna's is a food trailer, and Robbie Lordy is the other owner," Raley said. "He's always been really into pizza, and he started working at Via 313, a Detroit-style pizza place here. He always wanted to start his own vegan business, and so Via 313 invested in him."

Raley and Lordy decided to start Big



**PICK UP** Project Pollo has a window where customers can order. The restaurant specializes in putting vegan twists on traditional chicken dishes. photo by Eliana Legatt

Nonna's, a combination of Sweet Ritual's desserts and Little Nonna's pizza. They looked for a location for about a year, and then the pandemic gave them a unique opportunity with the closure of a business leading to a cut-price deal for the location.

Now Big Nonna's does pickup and carry-out, and they also use third-party delivery services like DoorDash and Grubhub.

Raley said that Big Nonna's will be expanding soon to serve items like vegan milkshakes, chicken nuggets and deep-fried dough since experimenting is made easier by the fact that Big Nonna's isn't confined to a food trailer. Raley said the winter storm set them back, but they continued the expansion once they could.

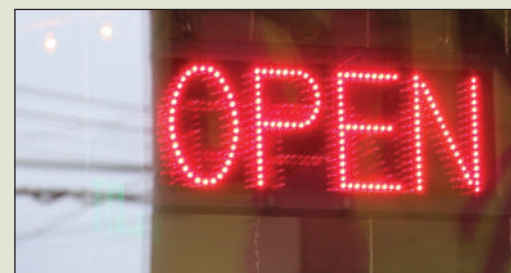
Lucas Bradbury is the founder and CEO of San Antonio-based chicken alternative restaurant Project Pollo. Project Pollo's first location opened in September 2020, and the chain has since expanded into Austin with a location on Rosewood Avenue.

"It was founded to provide more affordable access, or approachable access, to plant-based alternatives," Bradbury said. "I'd wanted to come up with a concept that provided amazing high quality food at an extremely affordable price."

Project Pollo has affordable vegan food but pays all of its employees above living wage with full paid benefits after reaching an eligibility period. Some of the money the restaurant makes also goes toward a local nonprofit.



**DESSERT** Big Nonna's serves both vegan ice cream and pizza. They are open for take-out and delivery. photo courtesy of Big Nonna's



**STILL OPEN** Citizen Eatery is open for takeout and dine-in. They are located on Burnet Road and describe their environment as casual and contemporary. photo by Eliana Legatt

"Why that's important for us to choose some of our smaller nonprofit partners is because every dollar truly matters to them," Bradbury said. "We have a lot of partnerships that we've done events with larger nonprofits, and that's phenomenal; however, our dollar goes a lot further with somebody who legitimately needs it to keep their non-profit or their operation running."

The nonprofit that Project Pollo supports changes every quarter, allowing them to help many charities. It also has an item on the menu called the People Project, which is a pay-what-you-can item. They ask that customers pay the \$5.50 that the item costs, but if a customer does not have the money, they can have it for free. A customer paying the full amount pays for their meal and a meal for two other people.

"I would much rather give away every single item that we have in a restaurant rather than see somebody go hungry," Bradbury said.

Bradbury said the business was on track to save the equivalent of 1 million chickens this year. The business is growing, with a new location opening almost every month. Project Pollo also has delivery, pickup and a few drive-throughs opening soon. They are also putting in larger patios to accommodate for social distancing.

"I knew one way or the other, I was going into this 100 miles per hour [to figure] out if this was going to work or not, and the best way to do that is to put them on every corner and saturate the market," Bradbury said.

Project Pollo is on track to open 10 or 12 locations this first year, 25 by the end of their second year and 100 locations by 2025.

# LASA Ultimate Frisbee Season Canceled

NORAH HUSSAINI | staff writer

Ultimate frisbee has been a popular sport at LASA for years now, bringing together new and experienced players in the up-and-coming sport. For the second year in a row, their season, which runs from March to May, has been cancelled due to COVID-19. Even though games have ceased, practices have continued. At practice, players follow CDC mask and social distancing guidelines.

In order to safely continue practices, the team established a pod system among teammates. The pods are arranged based on neighborhood for each player's convenience. According to junior captain Catie Graves, the pods were arranged in September and have been in use since then.

"We sent out a survey back in September to all the Ultimate kids and we said, 'Hey, roughly where do you live?'" Graves said. "We set up pods, which are little individual practices that you can go to."

Junior Caroline Stone has been participating in the northeast Austin pod so she can continue practicing with her teammates. Although Stone is grateful that she's able to practice, she said there have been some downsides.

"A typical game of frisbee is played with seven people on each team, and the pod numbers aren't big enough to play seven v. seven," Stone said. "I've definitely gotten out of the hang of playing seven v. seven, which is pretty detrimental."

Graves leads one such pod practice, which consists of 7-8 people. The pods were set up so that players could feel safe while still keeping their ultimate frisbee skills sharp.

"With pods, we've been able to keep numbers under 10 because guidelines say gatherings under 10 are okay, and we've also been

following mask rules," Graves said. "Even though it's not the same, it's still somebody to throw with, and you're still running drills. We're still trying to do things."

According to junior Marta Knoll, who has been playing ultimate for four years on and off, there have been advantages with pods that normal practices didn't have. She said the pods have been great for getting closer with parts of the team in a more intimate setting.

"Having smaller practices has helped us get to know the people in those practices a lot better than if we were to just be in regular practices," Knoll said. "Some of the people in my practice are freshmen, so I was able to get to know them a lot better."

The team was able to try a new way to practice this year, but they weren't able to do so when their previous season was cancelled in 2020. Because of the season being cancelled two years in a row, Graves worries they may be put at a disadvantage once games are played again.

another significant problem: they haven't been able to gather many new freshman members.

"We have basically no freshmen on our team this year because we weren't able to advertise," Graves said. "We weren't able to really do Club Fair, we weren't really able to do morning announcements, we couldn't really get the word out that Ultimate was a thing."

Knoll still believes the team will be able to function fluidly once competitions begin again, but says that it might take a little time. Recently, the whole team has been meeting up all together more often to scrimmage.

"I think it's going to take us a second to get used to playing with the whole team again just because we haven't seen each other in a while, and a lot of freshmen don't know the upperclassmen," Knoll said.

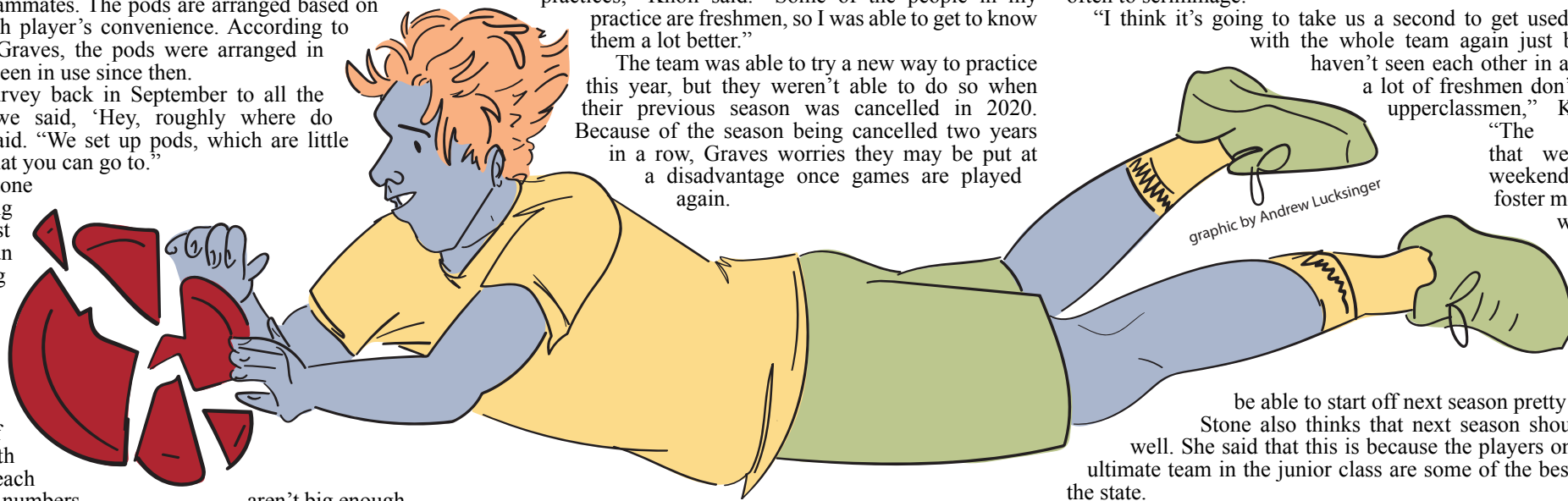
"The scrimmage that we had last weekend helped to foster more spirit as well as

having weekly games, so I think we're going to

be able to start off next season pretty nicely."

Stone also thinks that next season should start off well. She said that this is because the players on the LASA ultimate team in the junior class are some of the best players in the state.

"We just found out that our state tournament got cancelled after our spring season was cancelled, but I think as a grade, we're very strong," Stone said. "Next year is definitely going to be hard because we lost two good years of practice, and so that'll hurt, but also we're very strong as a team, so I think we'll still be very successful next year."



## Roles of Masculinity and Femininity in Athletics

SANWI SARODE | staff writer

Throughout the history of sports, discussions about how the common stereotypes and roles associated with masculinity and femininity impact athletes and their dynamics have been at the forefront of athletics.

Jack Cunningham teaches Great Ideas, a class that studies humanities and the connections between gender, sex and society, at LASA and is an assistant coach for the track and cross country teams. According to Cunningham, one impact that these roles have on athletics is the amount of attention given to traditionally male sports versus traditionally female sports.

"Here in Texas, a lot of attention goes to boy sports," Cunningham said. "Football is an obvious example. We pour a lot of money and attention and resources into football, which is very close to being played exclusively by boys."

According to girls soccer coach and Great Ideas teacher Chloe Cardinale, there is a definite difference in attention between male and female sports. Cardinale said this difference in attention also affects the amount of revenue generated for each league or athletic administration.

"The hype surrounding it is just different," Cardinale said, "and obviously, the more fans you have, the more revenue is generated, and that hurts when you don't get that. It hurts the program, and trying to up that visibility, I think, is really important."

Cardinale also mentioned that Title IX wouldn't exist if gender inequality wasn't pertinent. Title IX is a federal civil rights law that prohibits discrimination against any sex within an education system or in any activity that receives federal financial assistance.

"The fact that Title IX exists is the best example, the way we have to ensure that female sports get the same funding and the same resources and access to facilities and time," Cardinale said. "And obviously, if we look at the women's soccer league, the way that they don't receive the same salaries is also an example of that."

Male and female athletes who are playing the same sport professionally are paid disproportionately different salaries. Lyssa Lashus, a freshman on the basketball, volleyball, and track teams, explained why the salary difference between genders is unfair.

"If you look at salary differences, there are huge and very unfair differences in the gender pay gap within people who play the same sport," Lashus said. "That's really horrible to see because they should be getting the same pay. It doesn't matter if they're a boy or a girl, they're playing the same sport, they have the same job, eventually, there's no reason why they should be paid less."

There are many examples of women's professional sports teams that are paid less than their male counterparts. According to Cunningham, there's also a difference in perception around bigger sport leagues that are male-dominated.

"You have the NBA, Major League Baseball, the NFL, all these big-time sport leagues that are all exclusively male," Cunningham said. "WNBA players make much, much less than NBA players. They get less attention, and they're made fun of for being in women's basketball. Certainly,

there's a difference in perception, especially around those bigger sports."

The roles associated with masculinity and femininity also affect LGBTQ athletes around the world. New issues surrounding the rights of LGBTQ athletes show up frequently in professional, high school and collegiate athletics. Cunningham explained that one of the newest of these issues has been whether to allow transgender athletes to participate in sports in the gender they transitioned to.

"There's a conversation right now around allowing trans students to participate in sports in their own gender, and a lot of transphobic, ignorant messages are spreading around," Cunningham said. "That's kind of a newer issue that has popped up concerning how LGBTQ students are treated within athletics."

Cunningham explained that there is one central argument being made to undermine transgender girls' participation in sports. There's a perception that letting transgender girls play in women's sports is unfair because they were born with more testosterone than cisgender girls.

"If you have a trans girl competing in women's sports, there's a perception that that is unfair because there are some things biologically male about that person, and having them compete in women's sports is an unfair advantage," Cunningham said. "I don't agree with that view, of course, but that's the argument that people who want to limit trans people's right to play sports use."

When it comes to LGBTQ and women in sports, Megan Rapinoe comes to mind for Cardinale. She is a two-time World Cup Champion for the United States women's soccer team.

"There has been a lot of support for LGBTQ rights and advocacy, and obviously, Megan Rapinoe has been big on that," Cardinale said. "So I think bringing prominent athletes into the spotlight to advocate on behalf of that is really important."

Many have tried to find the root cause of gender inequality surrounding athletics. Cardinale explained that it's a product of history and culture.

"People defer to tradition on how things have always been done, and so to go outside of that is difficult for people," Cardinale said. "It can be done, it's just not the norm, so it's a lot harder to be the first person or to try and break those boundaries down. We're progressing, decade by decade, but it's slow."

Lashus explained that gender inequality also comes from the stereotypes surrounding gender norms in athletics. According to Lashus, these stereotypes come from our history and shape the way we view athletics today.

"If you go back 50 years even, girls, women, they were not really seen as supposed to be exercising or playing, kind of like the stereotype with how girls are supposed to play with dolls while boys get a soccer ball," Lashus said. "Football, basketball, soccer, all of those sports are very male-dominated, and there's been a lot of struggle with their influence for women in history who have tried to open up those sports more to girls."

According to Cunningham, gender inequality is a bigger problem than just individual prejudices. Societal prejudices that affect women's athletics also affect LGBTQ athletes in sports.

"The gender inequality that remains today is a product of our history, a product of patriarchal culture and traditions and ways of doing things," Cunningham said. "A lot of gender inequality comes more from our history and from what elements of our history have remained in our culture. I don't necessarily think that whatever biological differences there are between males and females explains the inequality between genders. I also don't think that it's a matter of individual prejudices. I think it's a bigger problem than that; it's a societal problem."



## Spotlight On JV Athletics

ANNABEL ANDRE | staff writer

Historically, junior varsity (JV) athletics have been seen as less significant than varsity programs. However, this outlook fails to recognize the highly valuable role of junior varsity athletics: to provide a place for athletes to adjust to competitive high school sports and build foundational skills at a level that meets their needs and skill sets.

Junior Corvina Williams plays varsity volleyball and JV tennis. According to Williams, JV not only has less pressure but also gives players the freedom to get more comfortable playing and to figure out the goals they want to accomplish throughout their years in high school athletics.

"There's less pressure put on you, and you also have more freedom to figure out how to play, how you want to play, what fits you," Williams said. "When you're in varsity, they pick you for certain skill sets, but on JV, you have more freedom."

According to Williams, the experience of being on JV versus varsity varies depending on the sport and the team dynamic. In her case, volleyball is a team sport where you develop as a group with your teammates, but tennis is more of an individual sport where you are able to grow at your own pace. This sense of individuality is something that Williams values about JV and aligns well with the structure of tennis.

"For volleyball, I definitely enjoy varsity much more because that's where the people I've played with for the past three years are," said Williams. "Those are my teammates, they are who I communicate best with, we have that understanding. Tennis is more of an individual sport. For tennis, it just is what you're comfortable with, what you're okay with. It's your own starting point, for which my starting point is JV, and my ending point is varsity."

Freshman Lana Giles started out this year's volleyball season on JV but moved up to varsity halfway through. She said that JV was a great place for her to adjust to the world of high school sports before making the transition into playing on varsity.

"I definitely was so nervous playing for varsity and being able to play on JV first, having that as a stepping-off point, was such a good experience because I was able to get a sense of how everything worked," Giles said. "At first, you don't really know what's going on, you're still getting used to everything. It's definitely easier to transition to varsity after playing on JV."

JV also provides a setting without the pressure of performing well on varsity, where there is an expectation of playing more experienced teams and of performing at a higher standard. According to Giles, while JV doesn't have the same pressure, you still have to try your best and contribute as a part of the team.

"You put more stress on yourself [because] you have to play to a higher level," Giles said. "On JV, it's more relaxed in terms of who you have to play for — but you still have to play,

you have to be dedicated to the team, and you still have to play the best you can every day."

According to Giles, JV and varsity volleyball have a strong connection because the two teams practice and grow together. She also believes that the age gap between JV and varsity players, as well as the gap in experience and skill in the particular sport, positions varsity players as role models.

"I know freshman players and JV players look up to senior varsity players for sure, and the girls on varsity have to be role models — they have to be the best during practice and do the best they can and be good role models to the other girls," Giles said.

Similarly, freshman and JV soccer player Sofia Castano said that the girls on varsity and the girls on JV have a good connection, which inspires the JV players. Despite the age gap, according to Castano, this connection can help JV players transition into varsity positions in the future.

"Most of the varsity players are older, and I'm pretty sure the JV team is composed of like 85% freshmen," Castano said. "But honestly, the older girls are really kind, and they make an effort to talk to you and get to know you. I definitely have more friends that are freshmen, but I'm not scared to talk to the older girls just because of their age."

Castano said JV is a good step to take before varsity. She said there is less pressure while you get used to playing, and the experience gives you the time to grow and make mistakes.

"It is definitely more relaxed I think, there's not as much pressure to perform," Castano said. "If you have a bad day, it's okay, everybody makes mistakes. The same goes for varsity as well — however, there's not quite as much pressure."

Playing on the JV soccer team has given Castano the motivation to play for the varsity team in the future. According to her, varsity comes with pressure that she wasn't quite ready to handle, but playing on JV has let her adjust and get ready for playing on varsity in the future.

"There is more pressure because they're playing against higher-level teams, and I definitely get pressured very easily, so it's kind of nice being on JV because I can just really have fun with my friends. And then next year, I'm hoping to make varsity," Castano said.

While Castano believes that JV is a necessary step, she hopes to make varsity next year in order to further develop her game and skills. She looks up to the varsity players because they embody a skill set and a playing frame that she aims for.

"I like how varsity is competitive," Castano said. "I really enjoy passing and doing a lot of pattern play, and I really admire how varsity does that a lot. Varsity has lots of skill work, and I think that's going to be really exciting whenever I do get to be a part of that team. I think that will be a really good opportunity to improve my skills."

## LASA Forms New Velocity Dance Team

EDITH HOLMSTEN | staff writer

Since its foundation in 2007, LASA has had a combined dance team with LBJ called the First Ladies. With LASA moving campuses for the 2021-22 school year, LASA is forming a new dance team called the Velocity Dance Team.

The team held informational sessions on Feb. 25 and March 10 to recruit new members to the team and to provide information about the tryout process. The application deadline for the team was March 8, and dancers tried out for the team on March 25.

LASA dance teacher and Velocity coach Paige Edwards is confident that the team will be able to recruit dancers for the 2021-22 school year. Edwards said she has 17 applications for the team so far, which she was glad to see.

"I was pleasantly surprised to see that number," Edwards said. "That's the amount we actually have on the team this year."

Along with recruiting potential team members, Edwards is also picking out new uniform designs for the team. Edwards worked with advanced graphic design teacher Jill Giulietti to create the logo and a uniform company to choose the uniform's colors.

"I've been working with a uniform company to come up with the new designs for the field uniform, and the chosen one that was really, really wonderful has a very clean, polished look with a lot of colors in it and sparkles to it as well," Edwards said.

Sophomore First Ladies member Carter Matheny said that she was excited to start new choreography traditions for the Velocity Dance Team. Matheny is inspired by how Bowie High School has a line dance that they have been doing for years and hopes to be able to create a similar long-lasting tradition for the Velocity Dance Team.

"They have a dance that they've been doing since the start of [the team] that they do every single year," Matheny said, "and one of my friends was looking at it, and I was like, 'Oh my God, imagine being the people who made up that dance and realizing that girls are still practicing it and doing it,' and it's something that just brings the community together."



DO THE SPLITS LASA senior Chelsey Rocha does the splits on the field at a LBJ football game. LASA used to have a combined dance team with LBJ called the First Ladies. photo courtesy of Paige Edwards

Matheny said that she is also excited about how the new name of the team might facilitate more inclusion. The Velocity Dance Team is not connected to a specific gender like the First Ladies team name, so Matheny said she hopes the name will help more students feel welcome.

"Since it's a gender-neutral name, we can have some guys come in, just anybody welcomed to join, and dance with us because the whole reason why we have a dance team is to dance and to enjoy dancing and to have a fun experience," Matheny said.

Sydney Yium, a junior and a current Junior Lieutenant on the First Ladies, said that she was also looking forward to being one of the trailblazers for the new team. However, Yium also said that she would miss her time with LBJ students through the merged team of First Ladies.

"I'll miss having the opportunity to learn more about the LBJ community and have experiences outside

"The whole reason we have a dance team is to dance and to enjoy dancing and to have a fun experience."

-Sophomore Carter Matheny

of LASA with other schools," Yium said. "I think that's a really important learning experience, and I think it'll be hard to go without that. I love my friends from LBJ on the team with my whole heart, and I'll definitely miss them."

In addition to missing her teammates from LBJ, Yium will miss the traditions that come with being a part of the First Ladies. When LASA moves campuses for the 2021-22 school year, the

Velocity Dance Team will be unable to keep specific traditions that are rooted in the LBJ building.

"We do small things, like in the locker room, in our dance room, there's handprints on the wall from all the seniors who have graduated, and obviously, we can't take that with us because we're moving campuses," Yium said. "Big things like events are definitely going to change, and smaller things like handprints and friendships are going to change too."

Both Yium and Matheny said the split of the First Ladies and formation of LASA's Velocity Dance Team provide both opportunities and challenges. However, overall, Edwards is looking forward to the ability to start a new team.

"That's kind of a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity," Edwards said, "so I am so thankful to be able to lay the foundation for the school and see it progress for many, many years."



TEAM PHOTO The First Ladies pose for a photo on the sideline of a LBJ football game. The First Ladies are made up of LASA and LBJ students. Front row: Sydney Yium, Chelsey Rocha, Micah Reese, Emily Chen, Abril Unda Middle row: Carrie Agboga, Lucia Lubio, DeAria Barker, Vyanka Rodriguez, Dakota Hancock Back row: Kat Duende, Carter Matheny, Nell Kaminski, Emily Malpika. photo courtesy of Paige Edwards

## opinion The Debate Over Tom Brady Greatest of All Time or Overrated?

JUAN CARLOS RAMIREZ DELGADILLO | staff writer  
ABIGAIL JACKSON | sports editor

If you know anything about football, you know who Tom Brady is. He is one of the most accomplished football players of all time, with seven Super Bowl wins, 14 Pro Bowl appearances and the most completed passes by any quarterback in the NFL. He has an exceptional record of 230-69 in the NFL, and he definitely lives up to the title he has garnered in the media in recent years: the greatest quarterback of all time.

Personally, I'm not a Patriots fan — however, there's no doubting Brady's talent. I've watched him make some huge comebacks in the fourth quarter of games and throw some amazing passes, and, according to my dad, he's been that skilled since he first got drafted into the NFL.

Brady was drafted in 2000 to the New England Patriots in the sixth round of the draft. He began his career as the fourth-string quarterback, but by the end of his first season, he had already moved into the number two spot due to his skill and determination in practices.

The Patriots had had a rough few seasons leading up to Brady's arrival on the team and had missed the playoffs the past two years. In 2001, Drew Bledsoe, the Patriots' starting quarterback, suffered internal bleeding after taking a hit in a game, and Brady stepped up to take his place. His hard work in practices paid off, and Brady led the Patriots to win their division and even received an invitation to play in the 2002 Pro Bowl.

A lot of fans are drawn to Brady because of his team commitment. He played for the Patriots for almost 20 years and quickly became a fan favorite. He formed strong friendships with his teammates, such as Rob Gronkowski, who actually came out of retirement to support Brady when he signed a contract with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers in 2020. As someone who plays a team sport, I know how important it is to foster a strong connection with your teammates. Seeing Brady spend time with his teammates outside of practices and games and really grow that bond is something very admirable.

Over his time in the NFL, Brady has won over many fans, including myself, with his impressive statistics and his undeniable skill. Brady has 79,204 career passing yards with 581 touchdowns and has won seven Super Bowls, the most of any player in NFL history. In addition, he has been named Super Bowl MVP five times.

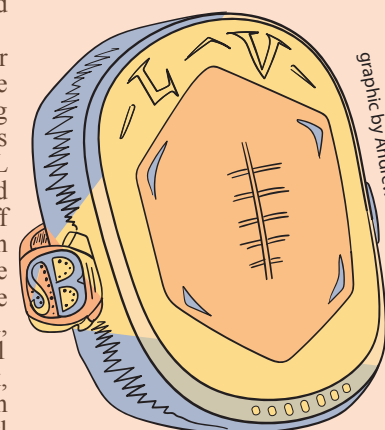
Because Brady played for the Patriots for 20 years, many football fans believed that he was only so good because he had been playing with the same teammates for so long. This may be true, but he has played in the NFL much longer than some of his teammates and was just as good without them. Coming off of a disappointing first-round playoff loss in the 2019-20 season, Brady announced that he would be signing a two-year contract with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers. In the 2019-20 season, the Buccaneers were 7-9, and in the 2020-21 season, with Tom Brady as their quarterback, the Buccaneers finished their season with an 11-5 regular season record and a Super Bowl win. Brady proved to fans that he could shine on his own and that he didn't rely on his teammates to make him look good.

Although many people support Brady, some believe that he is a cheater and that he often complains to get what he wants. Brady was involved in a scandal known as "Deflategate" and has drawn criticism from his reactions to penalties called on the field.

The "Deflategate" scandal refers to an incident that took place when the Patriots played against the Indianapolis Colts in the 2014 AFC championship game. Brady was accused of ordering the footballs to be slightly deflated so that they were easier to throw and catch. Brady initially denied the claims, but when the referees checked the balls at halftime, 11 of the 12 balls used were underinflated. He was suspended for four games due to the scandal, and his reputation was severely damaged among fans and the league as a whole. I was definitely disappointed in Brady because with his level of talent, he could have won the game without deflating the balls.

Additionally, Brady has been known to complain about calls that are made against his team. Former Denver Broncos tight end Antonio Smith said in an interview with the Colorado Springs Gazette that he's "never seen any quarterback look to the referee right after he gets sacked more than Brady." Brady has also publicly criticized the number of calls made by referees in games that he didn't even play in. Although I agree that, occasionally, referees make bad calls, I feel like Brady sometimes takes his complaining too far and that he should be able to win a game whether or not the referees are interfering.

While there is no doubt that Brady is a talented quarterback, there will always be debates over whether he should really be called the greatest of all time. Although I'm not a fan of the team he plays on, I definitely support him as an athlete and as one of the best players that the NFL has ever seen.



graphic by Andrew Luckinger

## New Technologies That Are Changing The Way We Play Sports

ABIGAIL JACKSON | sports editor

### Instant Replay

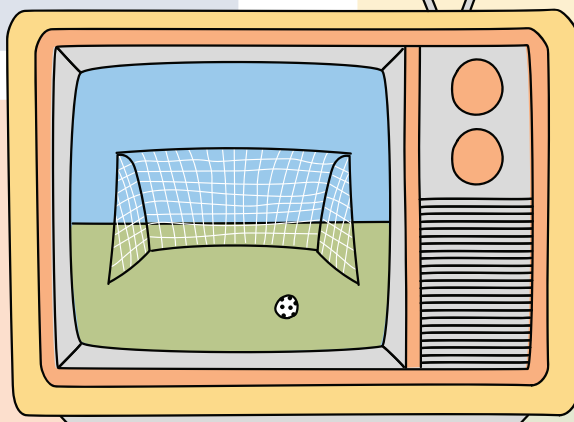
While sporting events used to be broadcast by a single, stationary camera in black and white, they are now shown with a variety of camera angles, informative graphics and instant replay. Instant replay allows for plays to be viewed again instantly after they happen and gives referees and fans the ability to see them slowed down or closer-up. Where referees previously had to rely on what they saw in the moment, they can now rewatch plays if they were unable to make a fair call. In the National Football League (NFL), coaches can throw a challenge flag on a play in order to have it reviewed and possibly overturned. Instant replay allows for the referees to view plays again instantly on the sidelines and reverse their call if necessary when a challenge flag is thrown. This new ability has enhanced the accuracy of sports refereeing, not only in football but in other sports as well. In baseball, umpires can slow down a play to see if a player was safe on a base or not, and in racing sports, such as equestrian and track, film can be rewatched to determine the winner in a photo finish. Fans also benefit from instant replay, as they can view plays again without having to rewind the game. They can also view the plays from different angles if the one broadcast doesn't show the whole play. Instant replay allows for a completely new viewing experience and allows for more accurate gameplay.

### Radio Frequency Identification Chips

Radio frequency identification (RFID) chips can determine the exact location of the person wearing them, and recently, they have begun to be used in sports. The chips are placed in wristbands or in shoes so that athletes can wear them while they compete. RFID chips are most often used in track events as they can be helpful in measuring time or alerting broadcasters and camera operators on the racers' exact locations. There are two kinds of RFID chips that are used in sports — active and passive. Active chips are battery-run and are more accurate in calculating at what time athletes cross a certain point. Passive chips don't have built-in power, and they require sensors in order to record time. Oftentimes, the RFID chips are linked to the starting pistol for track events, so that the timer starts as soon as the race does, and they are designed to stop as soon as the athlete crosses the finish line. Additionally, NFL athletes use RFID chips in order to track their speed when running different plays, and soccer players use them to calculate their average speed throughout a game. RFID chips are allowing players to learn more about their in-game performance so they can better track improvement throughout a season. Professional teams such as the Tampa Bay Lightning, part of the National Hockey League, have also begun to give season ticket holders RFID wristbands for easy access to their seats.

### Goal Line Technology

Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) is the international governing body of soccer, and it oversees the World Cup every four years. In 2011, FIFA introduced goal line technology, which helps determine whether the whole soccer ball crossed the goal line. There are two kinds of goal line technology that FIFA uses in the World Cup. The first is camera-based, in which a myriad of cameras are used to produce a better picture of the goal line. A software system then evaluates the camera footage and makes a decision on whether or not a goal was scored based on the video. The other kind is magnetic goal line technology, in which wires are run through the goal. The ball itself is implanted with multiple chips, so if the ball completely crosses the goal line, it is sensed by the wires, and the referees are notified of a goal. Goal line technology has begun to be used in other professional leagues, such as the Premier League, where it has been used to determine game outcomes. Additionally, the NFL uses a similar technology by putting cameras in the pylons that are parallel to the end-zone, so that they can evaluate the footage and determine if the football crossed the line or not. Goal line technology allows for the most accurate score possible, and will continue to be used for years to come.



graphic by Susan Ballesteros

### Safety Measures

Technology can now be used to help increase the safety of players on the field. The National Football League (NFL) has seen rising numbers of concussions among their players over the past few years. Football is a contact sport, and it is common for players to get multiple concussions throughout their time in the league. According to a study done by students at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, the NFL reports about 140 concussions every season, which is more than any other sport. In 2018, the NFL and the NFL Players Association (NFLPA) conducted a study on different models of helmets and prohibited 10 different models that were not up to their safety standards. They have also developed new ways of padding and designing helmets so that they absorb some of the shock during collisions in order to protect player's heads and necks. The NFL has done similar research to design cleats that are designed to help prevent foot and ankle injuries for athletes. They released a chart that ranks different styles of cleats for players to use, and companies like Adidas and Nike have also been developing new ways to optimize performance. New technology has also helped dietitians determine healthier eating plans for players that can increase their strength and endurance. By using technology to track the performance of players, dietitians can evaluate what nutrients each individual player needs.

THE SHOW MUST GO ON

photos by Emma McBride



EMMA MCBRIDE | photo editor

Pre-COVID-19, one of the ways students could express themselves artistically and make new friends was by participating in one of the many productions the LASA theater department puts on. In this era of social distancing, students have been largely deprived of this opportunity — until now. Sort of.

Despite a few changes made to the normal format, LASA's theater department is competing in the UIL One-Act Play competition with their play "Ducks and Lovers," which started at the zone level the Friday before spring break. One-Act is a competition in which theater departments from schools of similar sizes all over Texas perform 18-40 minute plays in front of a panel of judges. The judges allow the top three plays to move on from zone to district, while also presenting individual acting awards. After district, there's bi-district, area, region and state, where

the competition would end once a winner has been selected. Although this is ordinarily how the One-Act Play schedule pans out, junior Jennifer Ramirez-Mendoza, who plays one of the female leads, thinks that there may be a few hitches during the zone competition process.

"Normally, we'd have a lot of schools competing in UIL, but because of COVID, a lot of schools backed out," Ramirez-Mendoza said. "There were only three schools that performed on Friday, and because there weren't enough schools to pose a contest...it was more of a professional rehearsal rather than an actual UIL performance."

Despite the recent complications with the UIL competition, the cast and crew have been using this play as a learning experience for what to expect with the upcoming spring musical. Sophomore Samantha Mason, who plays another one of the female leads, has a few ideas about what has worked well and what they will need to improve on next time around.

"I imagine we'll probably try to incorporate

more in-person rehearsals from the beginning just so we...have experiences working with Zoom and in person at the same time," Mason said. "We'll also know our strengths...and we'll know what realistically can be done over Zoom."

The first month of rehearsals was entirely over Zoom until they switched to a mix of in-person and Zoom rehearsals. According to Mason, this schedule worked well eventually, even though it was a bit limiting at first.

"It was weird getting used to, but I think once we were able to settle into having to work over Zoom, it got a lot easier," Mason said. "It was just that whenever we ended up being in-person, it made it really hard to get anything done over Zoom once we had already had the experience of working in person."

In addition to having to create work arounds for rehearsal schedules, the lack of behind the scenes help made set building, lighting, and sound a lot more difficult. According to Ramirez-Mendoza, the crew was grateful for the help they

did receive, but it was noticeably harder getting everything done in time.

"Normally, we have a lot more help and there's a lot more people who would stop by and help with construction for the set, but this time around we just had our amazing technical director Jake," Ramirez-Mendoza said. "Not having enough techs...to make the show run was probably one of the hardest parts."

While there have been a few limitations, the play made it to its final stages with the help of the cast and crew. Mason theorized about what has been the hardest part about preparing for this competition.

"The biggest difference is that we're not constantly with each other," Mason said. "Being in these circumstances, we don't have the opportunity to do that. The biggest difference is that whenever we're at rehearsals, you don't have time to hang out with people and build the connections that you normally would."

photos by Emma McBride

