

the liberator

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what's news

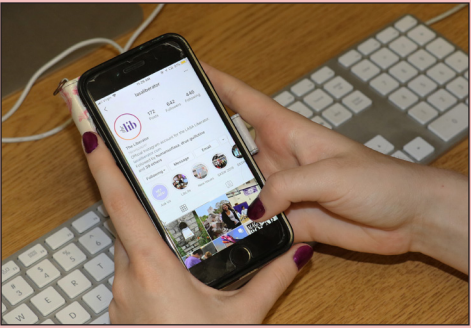


photo by Sarah Mines

New Forms of Activism

In our Staff Stance, the Liberator assesses both the benefits and downsides of using social media as a platform to incite social change.

see **ACTIVISM** page 2



photo courtesy of Chloe Pence

United for a Cause

Several students from LASA volunteered over the summer with local and international organizations such as the Thinkery and Amigos.

see **VOLUNTEER** page 3

MEET THREE OF LASA'S NEW TEACHERS

Lauren Williams

ENGLISH

Fun Facts:

- Austin native, graduated from McCallum High School in 2003
- performed in Carnegie Hall at 15 years old
- has a goal to visit all 30 MLB stadiums before turning 50, has been to 9 so far



- graduated from the University of Missouri with a double major in Photojournalism and Creative Writing, has a masters in Secondary English Education from Rockhurst University

Hobbies:

"I'm into anything that allows me to be creative. I love creating quilts and scrapbooking. I like to solve jigsaw puzzles. I'm getting back into running. Finally, I like to give myself brain breaks by indulging in reality TV and in baseball games."

Looking Forward to:

"Not only am I excited about coming home to AISD, the school district that gave me my lifelong love of learning, I am most looking forward working with students and teachers who approach learning with a challenging, yet innovative mindset."



graphic by Sarah Mines



graphic by Sarah Mines

Aaron Pelowski

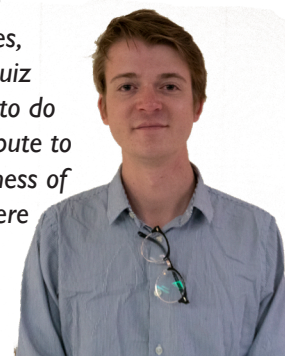
LATIN

Fun Facts:

- Austin native, graduated from LASA in 2011
- graduated from Dartmouth College with a degree in Classical Studies
- formerly worked in the software industry and taught Latin in Arizona
- enjoys listening to podcasts about language, history, politics and etymology, reading droll novels by British authors, and travelling around the country and the world.

Looking Forward to:

"I look forward to meeting a wide swath of bright students through my classes, Latin Club, and Quiz Bowl. I also hope to do my best to contribute to the well-roundedness of their education here at LASA."



photos by Kevin Garcia

Jack Cunningham

GREAT IDEAS

Fun Facts:

- Still new to Austin! moved from Seattle last summer, where he went to graduate school
- has lived in seven states altogether, and traveled to all 50.
- his dog, Juno, is the 'absolute best'

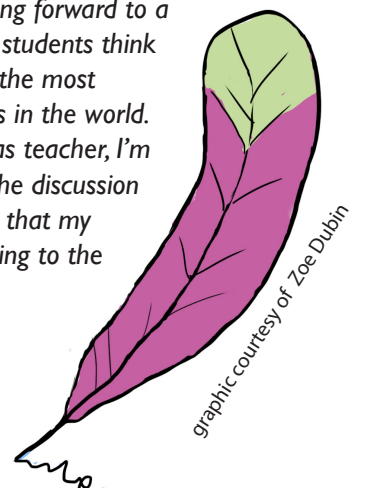


Hobbies:

"Running: I have run three half marathons this year, and I'm training for the Austin Marathon in February! Reading: I love reading anything and everything, from magazines and academic journals to novels and poetry. Climbing: I try to make it to the climbing gym once a week and take at least two climbing trips a year."

Looking Forward to:

"I'm most looking forward to a chance to help students think critically about the most important ideas in the world. As a Great Ideas teacher, I'm excited about the discussion and the writing that my students will bring to the table."



graphic courtesy of Zoe Dublin

Female Athletes Reflect on the Importance of World Cup Wins

CHARLES TAYLOR | sports editor

Three sharp whistle blasts signaled the end of the US Women's National Soccer Team's 2-0 defeat of the Netherlands in the FIFA Women's World Cup. The game signified the culmination of the pride, motivation, and passion shown by the team during the tournament. The US earned a 7-0 record and outscored opponents 26-3 along the way to earning its fourth title ever.

This success sharply contrasts with the US Men's National Soccer Team's relative failure, including its 2-1 loss to Trinidad and Tobago on Oct. 10, 2017., which This loss signaled the death of the side's hopes for a berth in the men's equivalent to the tournament in which the women were victorious. The men's team has not won a World Cup to date. In addition to the women's higher number of World Cup wins, the team generated more net revenue between fiscal years 2016-2018. According to the United States Soccer Federation (USSF), the women's team generated

about \$50.8 million while the men's team generated \$49.9 million.

Junior Ellen Larson attended the Women's World Cup and said this statistic highlights the comparable value of women's and men's soccer in America. Larson believes the pay should be equal as well.

"If the US women are generating the same profit as the men, I think they should absolutely be paid the same," Larson said. "According to this statistic, men's and women's soccer have a similar value, and I think that such information demands more similar pay in return."

Freshman Miranda Nguyen also attended the Women's World Cup. According to Nguyen, the high amount of support the US Women's National Team receives and its greater success on the field compared to the men's team means the players deserve to be paid more than they currently are.

see **WORLD** page 4



WORLD CUP CHAMPS The US Women's National Team celebrates after defeating the Netherlands 2-0 in the final game. The FIFA Women's World Cup, hosted once every four years, was held in France. photo courtesy of Valeria Ortiz

learn about the lib

The Liberator, a student-run newspaper at the Liberal Arts and Science Academy, has gained national recognition and won numerous awards including the Pacemaker, the Gold Crown Press Association and 2005 First Place Best in Show given by the National Scholastic Press Association. The Liberator publishes seven issues a year, one on the first day of school, one every six weeks. Past issues and more stories can be found on lasaliberator.com. The student-run paper is an elective and club at LASA High School.

By the Numbers: Incoming Students

333 incoming freshmen

27 new upperclassmen

85 new freshmen have a sibling who attended LASA

A Freshman Guide to High School

NIA ORAKWUE | entertainment editor

High school is a difficult time for all of us. There will be sleepless nights, and for many of us, stress induced tears. We all know that high school will prove to be a significant time period in our futures. Not just for our future careers and long-term goals, but also for us as people and the habits we bring into adulthood. Below is a list I've compiled of the very best high school advice I could muster. Keep in mind I am not a professional, just another kid like you. I hope it proves useful and helps someone take control of their high school experience in a way that I haven't yet been able to.

Learn to study now. Many LASA students fly through their middle school years without having to put in any effort, which is great. Some students even find that they barely have to put in effort their freshman year. While it's cool that some of us are lucky enough to not have to study most of the time, that doesn't mean it's a good habit to start. Not learning how to study when the material is easy for you can often lead to issues later when classes begin to get more difficult.

see **GUIDE** page 4

editorial The Rise of Social Media Apptivism

The emergence of social media has encouraged rising patterns of engagement and activism. Prior to the advent of social media, platforms which shared ideas existed on obscure blogs that could be difficult for readers to find. Through the creation of sites such as Facebook and Instagram, ideas are granted a wider reach and audience.

Over time, social media, which was once viewed as simply a platform for sharing information about your summer vacation or your dining choices, became a digital battleground for politicians to court young voters. While much of social media does consist of these casual posts, the applications of social media expanded. Political organizations, activist groups, and countless other interest groups began utilizing these platforms to raise awareness about a host of issues relevant to them. Social media activism has allowed an individual's reach to dramatically increase, opening political discussion. As a result, this made exposure to injustice rampant, as likes and shares allowed passionate individuals to spread the word about their cause. This stimulated a considerable reach to social activism.

The most important effect to social media activism is the opportunity it provides to aspiring young activists to participate in a system dominated by money and influence. Social media activism has allowed for those who the system has locked out the chance to make their voices heard on a range of issues typically relating to social inequity. Due to judicial precedent which favored the rise of political action committees (PACs), the current political system became primarily influenced through heavily funded and loosely regulated PACs and other prominent lobbying groups which dominate the political realm through vast finances and connections.

The financial elite dominate the political system, pouring millions into Congress and influencing national laws. The influence of money can be seen in expensive congressional elections, and considering that elections need resources to win, the monetary means to participate in politics grant a clear advantage in determining the political landscape. It can be argued that the conversation around where the country is headed is ruled by the elites of society with monetary means, and their actions show little interest in the thoughts and words of marginalized communities that are directly impacted by societal inequity, such as women, African Americans and the LGBT+ community. Many marginalized communities have utilized social media to inform and create support for their struggle.

Despite the fact that a great deal of young American citizens tend not to vote at elections, the expansion of political engagement should be seen favorably, especially given the glaring lack of political participation. Social media activism grants anyone with a capable device the opportunity to speak out and be heard.

Through this engagement, various issues in society are finally brought front and center in many people's minds. Without the awareness brought about by social media activism, a majority of Americans would have little clue who Eric Garner was or why members of the African American community feel as if they still can't breathe. Thanks to social media activism, many are exposed to countless forms of discrimination and harassment felt on behalf of marginalized communities everyday, most notably with the powerful #METOO movement and its sweeping examination of the rampant sexual harassment and assault faced by women daily. It was also social media activism, and the hashtag #EnoughIsEnough, that helped give young people a larger voice in the gun control debate. In addition, social media activism has helped the public to hear about pressing matters that demand public attention such as school shootings, international crises, internal systemic injustices, or political turmoil and corruption of the American government exposed by whistleblowers. Social media activism's advent has expanded the average person's ability to garner change through direct engagement with the American public.

Change is something which is hard to quantify. For some individuals, progress is thought to takes the

form of national legislation which directly combats the rampant injustices of modern society. To members of the activist community, helping people think about social issues in a new light is viewed as a minuscule victory in the fight for social justice. However, the spectrum of change is one that highlights the versatility of activism on social media and is a testament to its success. The #BlackLivesMatters movement generated its massive support in the creation of a new argument around police brutality which existed prior to the movement. It was through video recording of police officers violently assaulting African Americans that our country decided it would reconsider incidents and cast suspicion on law enforcement and the legal system.

Few believe that merely reposting is enough to go about creating legislation that change in society often demands. While social media activism offers a greater reach to matters one may care about, it also lacks the effects traditional activism carries. Aspiring activist should always pair the two to generate the greatest depth to their cause. When confronted with the limiting realities of the current political landscape in which money reigns supreme, the act of reposting or sharing your thoughts can be the catalyst that generates awareness about a societal injustice. It is through sharing and distributing information that activists garner the audience to create the support needed to combat institutional and societal problems. It is from there that individuals can set about organizing rallies and marches, lobbying congressional officials and performing other works generally regarded as traditional activism.



graphic by Emmi Lucksinger

Critiquing the Unrealistic Portrayal of High School

NIA ORAKWUE | student life editor

High school is a complex experience for us all. Students go through a lot of changes, ranging from physical to mental and even emotional. It's a time of transition from immaturity and innocence into one of independence and eventual adulthood. I'd describe it as a long and twisty road that a lot of us have trouble navigating, and it doesn't help that many of our expectations of what high school should comprise are shaped by the way it is portrayed in the media.

In the case of adolescence and high school, the media oversexualizes and overdramatizes high school life to make movies and TV more interesting to younger audiences. Popular shows focused on teenage life frequently feature characters whose entire personalities are based on their sexuality and love life. They are grotesque archetypes whose characteristics have been distorted to help push narratives of unrealistic character arcs. With those features as the defining qualities in shows, their storylines are built on sex and scandal instead of multi-dimensional content that mimics what real life is actually about. In reality, we all have many things going on at once, and no one has just one single defining characteristic. High schoolers are constantly juggling school, social life, sports, home life, friends, and countless other things. This is not to say that a person's sexuality isn't a big part of what makes them who they are or even that

sexuality isn't a big part of being a teenager, but it definitely isn't the sole factor that makes a person interesting or all a person has to offer.

The focus on sexuality is only heightened by the fact that roles of high school students are frequently played by actors who are much older. Older actors playing students can also help foster body image issues in teens since the characters meant to represent high school students are not accurately showing what a teen body looks like.

Looking at the recent HBO series Euphoria, a show focusing on juniors and seniors that would be 17 or 18. All of the star actors are played by actors well into their 20s. When juniors or seniors see these actors, they are looking at fully grown adults, which holds them to an unrealistic standard of what they should look like. It pushes the viewers to have impractical and unhealthy ideas as to what their still developing

bodies should to appear as.

One of the biggest problems about the way high school is portrayed through TV or film is that it sets an unrealistic ideal or facade of what high school should be like. From making a character's sexuality their defining characteristic or setting ideas about what high schoolers should look like, there are few accurate portrayals that attempt to foster positive themes that could be beneficial for a student to watch. Even trying to think about a show which features high school characters that aren't being shown in these possibly detrimental ways is difficult, which is why this is such an issue. There are virtually no mediums that portray high schoolers in ways that aren't focused on generally unrealistic ideals that create a harmful standard of what to be like towards actual high schoolers.

While many shows don't show much of an attempt to showcase more positive elements that are not likely to negatively impact any high schooler watching, there are some shows which do. American Vandal is a good example, being one of the few high school shows which portrays teenagers in a way that accurately depicts what most teenagers look like — not as adult-looking 20 to 24 year olds. It is also a show which mostly stays away from focusing on some of the idealized elements of high school in other TV shows.

As we continue to plunge into a world where the media takes up more and more of our lives, it is important for these mediums to at least begin making more of an effort to stay true to the reality of most high schoolers. High school is not a story of rampant drama, but a chance at experimentation and self discovery.



graphic by Emmi Lucksinger

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the liberator 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.

Hey Jags! The Liberator staff wishes you a great start to your school year!



graphic by Emmi Lucksinger

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.

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WORLD

from page 1

“The support of the crowd and the community that the US women’s team brings in is amazing, and I can’t believe that such smart, high-level players aren’t paid what they deserve,” Nguyen said. “It only makes sense that the more money you bring in, the more you should be paid. There are plenty of statistics to back up women. Not only have they played in more World Cups, but they also bring in lots of loyal fans.”

Larson said seeing the teams in action altered the way she saw the issue of equal pay in soccer. According to Larson, the players’ talent and training should be rewarded with higher pay.

“I think watching the women’s World Cup really emphasized how the gender pay gap impacts the sport and how ridiculous it is,” Larson said. “There are so many incredible female players that participated, and it’s terrible that even when they’re in the top of their field, they’re still at a disadvantage simply because of their gender.”

Regardless of their talent level, Nguyen mentioned the hard work female players put in. Nguyen believes that the female players’ tenacity justifies equal pay to men.

“I find it unbelievable that today women are still paid less than men,” Nguyen said. “Women work just as hard and play just as tough, but they are paid significantly less. To me that makes zero sense.”

Junior Morgan Strong, who attended the Women’s World Cup as well, said the high level of play influenced how she views the gender pay gap. Strong noticed the women played at a high enough level to compete with men’s teams.

“This is the first year I was like, ‘Oh, my God, they’re such a solid team. They could compete against any men’s team and give them a run for their money,’” Strong said. “It’s a different game, right? Things are changing, things are developing. It’s not like, ‘Women aren’t capable.’”

And that’s the idea that people have in their head still.”

Strong said the confidence among the US contingent at the Women’s World Cup was perceptible. Strong believed that this mentality from the players spread to the fans.

“It was just this confidence that was like, we know that we can do this,” Strong said. “You could see that in the way that they played, like Julie Ertz, who’s the holding mid, she just destroyed, and it’s not like she had to do really flamboyant plays and stuff ... that’s sort of confidence in, like, ‘I know what I need to do.’ That kind of spread throughout the team and the fans.”

Strong said Americans should watch more women’s soccer. She believes some people might begin to form new opinions about it if the sport had more exposure.

“I think that people should go out and see women’s soccer more or just, like, from TV, because we don’t really acknowledge it,” Strong said. “It’s still generating a lot of press. But I think that the everyday man doesn’t really like it as much. And so just having a TV and watching a little bit [to see] what you feel helps.”

Larson said the US team’s performance in the World Cup was a good display of the team’s strength. According to Larson, the team deserves more praise for what they accomplished.

“After seeing the US compete so well throughout the whole tournament and come out with a win overall, it just showed how strong the US women’s soccer program is, and it gave me a lot of appreciation for the USWNT,” Larson said. “We have such an amazing team and players, and I really think they deserve a lot more recognition and appreciation, especially in light of all their recent success.”



News Briefs

Global News

July 24

After Theresa May resigned as Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, legislators were amid political turmoil. With the wheel to Brexit still rolling, electing a new prime minister was vital. After a brief selection process, Boris Johnson became the new prime minister of the United Kingdom.

National News

Aug. 3

After a mass shooting in an El Paso mall, legislators are beginning to take action on gun control, introducing red-flag laws. These red-flag laws would involve a protection order issued by a judge confiscating a gun from an owner. These orders would be requested by anyone close to a gun owner who believes the owner is unfit to carry, whether it be due to violent behaviors, suicidal ideation, or discussion of shooting people.

State News

May 27

The Texas legislative session ended in May of 2019, and with it came all kinds of changes to the inner workings of school districts within Texas. Many school districts, including AISD, have put raises for teachers in their budgets.

Getting Involved With the LASA Community

How LASA Students Balance Sports and Extracurriculars With the Challenging Curriculum

SOPHIA BLAHA | news editor

With over 70 different clubs and 15 sports teams, LASA students have a wide array of extracurricular activities available to them to explore current interests or develop new passions. If a club doesn’t exist, LASA students can simply register for a new extracurricular by filling out the form in the main office and can gain members by advertising their new club over morning announcements. Given these opportunities, every student has the opportunity to get involved in something they’re interested in and to find others who share their interests.

While some sports teams are more competition-based and require going through tryouts to be placed on the team, many teams and clubs are open to any student to join. Every LASA student must take two semesters of a P.E. credit, so LASA has developed diverse sports teams that can cater to everyone’s interests and abilities. Senior Zeeshan Yazdani is a member of the LASA track team, one of the sports that does not require tryouts.

“Track season starts in the spring semester, and anyone can walk on the team,” Yazdani said. “When we go to meets and

events it gets a little more competitive, but even with that extra pressure, track is really still a sport for everyone.”

Yazdani believes that participating in track and in sports in general took the emphasis off of academics in a unique way and allowed him to get away from the stress of school. He also believes being a part of the track team helped him to find a community and meet other people with similar interests and skills, especially with long, hot hours of practice that bring the team closer together.

“I started track mostly for the P.E. credit, because running track was something I was good at and was something that would help me stay in shape, but I kept going to practice because of the team,” Yazdani said.

Depending on the team’s success, most sports only practice for three or four months. While some athletes do choose to continue their passion for their sport outside of school, many turn to clubs and extracurriculars during the off season to supplement their interests. Senior Shirish Padam joined LASA’s Science Olympiad (SciO) team, a school club that focuses on science and engineering and uses their inventions and designs to compete around Texas.

“I joined SciO because I was really interested in engineering,” Padam said. “I thought the club would be a great way for me to pursue that in a competitive setting. I can learn from the other club members and from the sponsor, Mr. Walker.”

While competitive clubs like SciO can bring about stress and extra time commitments to LASA student’s already busy schedules, Padam reflected that being a part of the SciO team is worth the extra work.

“Being a part of SciO is a big time commitment,” Padam said. “It can get really stressful especially when we go to competitions, but I think being a part of the club is worth it because SciO gives me a chance to do the things I’m really interested in.”

Senior Tiffany Nyguen, member of Asian Student Society, Chinese Club, Diversity Council and Ladies of Distinction, urges LASA freshmen to get involved in clubs they might be interested in as soon as possible.

“Freshmen should try whatever club they think might interest them,” Nyguen said. “That way they can find the ones they’re really passionate about and eventually take up leadership positions in them.”

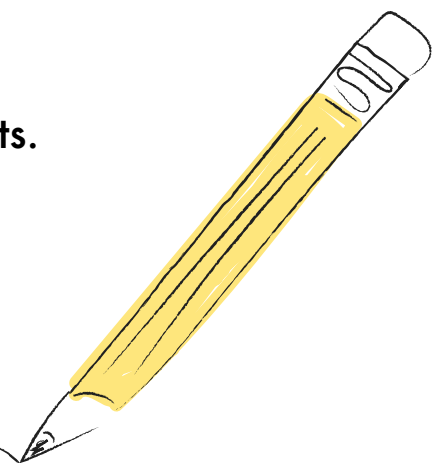
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No Blues on This Green

Free Annual Concert Returns to Zilker

MAX DOMEL | entertainment editor

Austinites do not have to travel far to find activities to do during the summer months. There are plenty of events to participate in in Austin over the break. One of the highlights is Blues on the Green (BOTG), a music festival that runs on select days throughout summer and invites locals to enjoy a unique outdoor and cultural experience.

This year marks the 29th year of BOTG, which is hosted by Austin City Limits (ACL) Radio in Zilker Park and is held once a month during the summer. Before housing eight to 10 thousand guests downtown, the festival was located in the Arboretum in Northwest Austin and was smaller and lesser-known. The monthly concerts are pet-friendly and encourage people to have picnics in the park before the music plays from 8 p.m. to 10 p.m.

However, unlike other Austin festivals such as ACL and South by Southwest, all artists who perform at BOTG are homegrown talents.

Emily Parker, the program director at ACL Radio, said that she and the rest of the team try to book artists of many styles and genres within the “local” category. Parker tries to find artists with a variety of sounds to entertain the listeners at the park.

“We look specifically for Austin artists, and we look for an artist that we feel is not just making an impact in Austin, but has a variety of different sounds,” Parker said. “Each band at the four shows brings something different to the table.”

While BOTG artists were mainly blues musicians back in the Arboretum days, the festival now includes funk, soul, latin, pop, rock and country. BOTG is distinguished by its no ticket policy, as other favorite musical events in Zilker Park such as Austin City Limits charge entrance fees. Parker said that besides giving smaller Austin musicians a chance to shine on the big stage, BOTG is also about giving the city an opportunity to do something fun for free.

“I think what’s important is that it’s free to attend,” Parker said. “People of any sort of background or wherever they’re living in Austin can come enjoy some Austin music.”

Senior Sofia Odom, who went to BOTG’s June concert and attends every year, said that she enjoys the outdoor time with friends. She also appreciates having the good music in the background.

“BOTG is an annual tradition for my friends and I, and like past years, it was a good opportunity to get out and enjoy the weather while listening

to good music,” Odom said. “My friends and I got these massive snow cones, and while this year we just hung out in the park, we’ve brought board games and cards to keep us entertained.”

“My favorite thing about BOTG is probably the energy of the whole event and also that you never know who you’re going to run into or meet there because there are people from all over Austin”

-Junior Lilliane Lavier

Junior Lilliane Lavier’s favorite aspects of the festival are the opportunities to engage with different people and the spirit of BOTG that makes the event entertaining and relaxing. Lavier also appreciates the opportunity to spend time with friends outdoors.

“My favorite thing about BOTG is probably the energy of the whole event and also that you never know

who you’re going to run into or meet there because there are people from all over Austin,” Lavier said. “It just makes a really fun environment to hang out in and it’s very chill.”

According to Parker, one of the main goals of BOTG is to form a diverse community of music fans passionate about both Austin culture. Parker said that those in attendance go for more than just the musical experience.

“I think BOTG is more about the vibe,” Parker said. “It’s less about specific artists and more about just a bunch of great people coming together to celebrate what Austin is about.”



graphic by Zoe Klein

graphic by Hanif Amanullah

GUIDE

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Whether you like it or not, studying is an important skill that you won’t succeed without. Don’t be the kid who fails an important test before they learn that lesson. LASA kids don’t have super powers. We do need to study eventually, and I’d suggest figuring out how to do that earlier rather than later.

Use your resources. Going to office hours isn’t always glamorous, but it’s nothing to be ashamed of. I know sometimes they can be inconvenient because no one likes sacrificing their free time, but they are there when you need it. It’s a great opportunity to talk to your teachers, ask questions about topics you went over in class and get extra help. Don’t wait to start going until the end of the six weeks either. By then it’ll probably be too late for you to salvage your grade. I’d recommend making a habit of going so that you can always stay on top of things. LASA isn’t easy, and taking advantage of office hours is the key to success.

Take advantage of your peers. Your friends are not a substitute for office hours, but they can often be helpful if your teacher is unavailable, which happens somewhat often. Having a friend explain something to you can sometimes feel more comfortable than going to the office hours of that one teacher who scares you. Friends can be especially helpful when you just need someone to quickly explain one topic right before a test. Don’t be afraid to be the friend giving out help either. You’ll be grateful one day when your friend returns

the favor. No matter how you choose to do it, it’s important to help and support each other here.

Find a great group of friends, but also know that your friends will change. Freshman year is the year to stick together, however, people change and grow. It’s extremely unlikely that all your best friends in freshman year will still be your best friends in senior year. I’m not saying a couple people

won’t stick around, but it’s inevitable that your relationships will evolve. Stay open to the idea of new friends and possibly saying goodbye to your old ones. More importantly, remember to always be kind to people. We’re in this together for 4 years. Freshman year is not the time to burn bridges.

Have fun! No matter what the culture of LASA leads you to believe, high school isn’t meant to foster anxiety and depression in young people. Take care of yourself and pay attention to your mental health. This doesn’t mean you have to go take a bubble bath, although feel free if that helps. Sometimes it means that one night you decide you can’t do your algebra homework, and you decide to take the late grade. It doesn’t hurt every once in a while. Believe me, I’ve done it quite a few times and my GPA is just fine. Going to an academically focused school is a marathon not a sprint. So, give yourself a night off if you need to. You’re in this for the long haul, and if you burn out halfway through the year you may cause damage that’s extremely difficult to repair. Take a breather, be a kid, have fun (within reason). We won’t be young forever.



graphic by Malena Heineman

Volunteers Use Summer to Serve Others Locally, Abroad

MALENA HEINEMAN | student life editor

Summer can be a time to destress and enjoy long, hot days free of homework. This time allows students to volunteer, which has now become an advantage in college applications and raises awareness of social issues in the local community and abroad. For many LASA students, volunteering presents a way to become more involved in the community and use free time in a productive way.

Junior Jasmine Gokingco spent her time over the summer volunteering with the Thinkery Children’s Center, a STEM based museum in the Mueller area of Austin. The Thinkery employs teenagers from ages 13-18 to work at the museum as either Counselors in Training (CITs) or VolunTeens. Gokingco has volunteered since she was a freshman and advanced to the VolunTeen position this summer.

“I’m a VolunTeen at the moment, so that includes doing gallery shifts and special events at the museum,” Gokingco said. “During these shifts, I’m responsible for keeping gallery spaces as clean as

possible, helping visitors and engaging with kids. At the Thinkery, I’m able to see kids genuinely having fun with STEM topics at the museum and the joy they get when they finally figure something out.”

According to senior Ben Appel, volunteering is a key part of being a well rounded student and can help students gain social skills and be a part of the community. As the president of LASA’s chapter of the National Honor Society (NHS), Appel said that the organization requires its members to log a certain amount of volunteering hours per semester.

“Service is one of the values at the very core of NHS,” Appel said. “It’s one of the four pillars of the program along with scholarship, leadership and character. Members definitely benefit from completing service hours. They make connections in their community, and they start to see themselves as part of the solution.”

Some students volunteer internationally as a part of language immersion programs. These are a popular way for students to experience another culture, learn skills about the language they are taking and having an opportunity to volunteer.

Junior Chloe Pence took part in a trip in Latin America this summer through the non-profit organization Amigos de Las Americas. She worked on community development projects and was able to practice her Spanish speaking.

“As a volunteer, you live with a host family and work on a project specific to their community while promoting important topics, such as gender equality, with the youth and children,” Pence said. “I decided to go because I wanted to improve my Spanish and enhance my leadership skills while also learning about their culture and customs. The main thing was that Amigos was providing a truly authentic experience.”

Although volunteer hours prove useful for college applications and resumes, the lessons that they teach students are much more important, according to Appel. He said that community service can bring people together through a common goal.

“Volunteering is important for everyone and helps students look beyond immediate demands and ... get some perspective about other kinds of challenges and how we can go about helping,” Appel said. “It creates shared experiences and common purpose.”



STANDING FOR A CAUSE LASA students Ella Glasscock, Preston Thiele, and Chloe Pence pose with other members of their Amigos chapter before heading out on their trip. photo courtesy of Chloe Pence



EDUCATOR INTRODUCTION LASA students volunteer to host a “meet and greet” with new LASA teachers, and get their volunteering hours as well. photo by Malena Heineman



COMMUNITY OF AMIGOS Juniors Chloe Pence and Ella Glasscock stand with a group of Latin American girls in the area of Santa Elena. photo courtesy of Chloe Pence