

the liberator

Liberal Arts and Science Academy | 7309 Lazy Creek Drive, Austin, TX, 78729 | February 16, 2021 | Volume 47 | Edition 3 | lasaliberator.com

what's news



photo by Emma McBride

Outside Explorations

Students find enjoyment, a source of exercise, safer outdoor activities along with new heights through hiking in Austin.

see **HIKING** page 13



photo by Emma McBride

Socially Dog-stant Clinics

Many Austin Veterinary Clinics have reworked their health practices and styles of appointments to maximize animal and human safety during COVID-19.

see **VETERINARY CLINICS** page 5



graphic by Andrew Luckinger

SXSW Returns to Austin Virtually with Full Schedule

CHARLES TAYLOR | copy editor

On March 3, 2020, Austin Mayor Steve Adler released an order effectively canceling South By Southwest (SXSW), citing public health concerns related to the emerging COVID-19 pandemic. In its March 6 statement, the corporation announced the official cancellation of the

event and mentioned plans to attempt to reschedule it for a later date. Given the continued climb of local and national COVID-19 cases for the rest of the year, this reschedule proved impossible.



graphic by Andrew Luckinger

attending SXSW will look different this year, Roberts said the perseverance of the arts despite the COVID-19 pandemic will keep the event alive.

“Even though we can’t meet for a physical event, it doesn’t mean that creativity stopped, and there’s new music to be heard and films to come out, and speakers that will impart certain presentations,” Roberts said. “You still wouldn’t want to miss out since we’re all kind of on pause in a remote world.”

going to be the opening night headliner for the film festival, that’s been getting a lot of good pickups.”

Joost van Dreunen, a New York University Stern School of Business teacher and the founder of interactive entertainment investment management company New Breukelen, will speak about video games as the future of entertainment at this year’s SXSW in the form of a pre-recorded video. According to van Dreunen, not appearing physically in front of his audience will pose some challenges, but hosting a virtual talk will allow him the leeway to attempt a more creative approach.

“Spontaneity will be an issue,” van Dreunen said. “My session, I believe, is pre-recorded. One of things I enjoy most about public speaking is interacting with a crowd. It is more difficult to keep people’s attention in an online pre-recorded video. However, I don’t have a lot of experience with this format so I’m hoping it will work out and be interesting...I will be able to integrate more visuals, change scenery, and take the audience on a field trip as part of the talk, which you usually cannot do. We’ll see.”

Cindy Royal, a professor and the founding director of the Media Innovation Lab in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication at Texas State University, has attended SXSW since the late 1990s.

see **SXSW** page 13

Indigo Sparke, A Place to Bury Strangers, and Francisca Valenzuela will join the music festival’s featured artists, and featured speakers this year will include Willie Nelson, Queen Latifah and Matthew McConaughey. In addition, Roberts said an initial film slate has been announced.

“We have about seven or so feature films,” Roberts said. “A few of them are documentaries. There’s one that’s about NASA, so it’s ‘The Hunt for Planet B.’ But the big opening night headliner is Demi Lovato’s documentary...‘Dancing With the Devil.’ So that’s

Hoopin’ All Day

SANWI SARODE | staff writer

This is the first year that LASA has had its own sports teams due to LASA and LBJ’s UIL split. One such team was the girls basketball team, which started practicing last semester in preparation for the spring season.

Holly Adams, a freshman on the team, said that at the start of the season, she was most looking forward to meeting new people. She was also looking forward to playing basketball again as it had been a while since she had last played.

“Coming into basketball, I was just looking forward to being able to play again because it had been a year since I played,” Adams said. “Also, sports are a way to meet new people, and I was really looking forward to that.”

In addition to meeting new people and getting the chance to play again, basketball has also given players the opportunity to stay fit. Jessie Connolly, a junior and member of the girls basketball team, said that playing basketball this season has been a way for her to keep active.

“Having that outlet to just go and be able to be active every day instead of having to stay at home staring at a computer is really nice, and it’s really fun playing with these people,” Connolly said.

Although the basketball season was able to proceed, Adams said that the pandemic made scheduling difficult when trying to maintain social distance from other teams that are using the gym. Although LASA and LBJ have separate athletics, they still have to share facilities like the gyms.

“It’s kinda difficult with other people using the gym,” Adams said, “because we can’t really cross over that much with different teams, so we’re on a stricter schedule.”

Adryanna Sanchez, a junior on the basketball team, said that playing basketball during the pandemic can make practices more difficult.

see **BASKETBALL** page 15

The Future Home of the LASA Raptors

KATIE BUSBY | staff writer

The Raptors are moving to a new home. LASA will soon be part of a campus modernization and swap plan, which involves LBJ, LASA and the Johnston campus, located in East Austin and currently being used by Eastside Memorial. As LASA moves to the now Eastside Memorial campus, the Eastside Memorial community will move into a new building.

Principal Stacia Crescenzi said that the process of moving and modernization of campuses started

as soon as the Austin ISD 2017 Bond was passed. According to the Austin Independent School District (AISD) website, \$1,050,984,000 will be given to AISD through this bond after two years of work to plan the specifics. Aside from the LASA and Eastside Memorial moves, the AISD website said the bond is also designed to help the district by improving technology and transport, lessening overcrowding and initiating the modernization or construction of new buildings.

see **NEW CAMPUS** page 7



FUTURE CAMPUS This is the entrance for Eastside Memorial High School, which is going to be LASA’s new campus for the 2021-2022 school year. LASA expects to begin all future instruction from this building for the graduating classes of 2022 and on. photo by Emma McBride

NON PROFIT ORG
PRST STD
PERMIT NO. 16
ZIP CODE: 78660

the liberator
Liberal Arts and Science Academy
7309 Lazy Creek Dr.
Austin, TX 78724



graphic by Andrew Luckinger

editorial An Open Letter From Generation Z Growing Up In the Era of Breaking News

The Staff Stance is an editorial written by the Liberator's Commentary Editors. The opinions presented in it are based on those of the Liberator staff as a collective. This story represents the majority of the staff, but the Liberator recognizes and respects opposing viewpoints.

When we were growing up, we often heard our parents recall the most important events of their lifetime. Specifically, they would remember where they were when a major traumatic event occurred. Where they were when Kennedy was killed or the 9/11 terrorist attacks happened was forever seared into their minds, the horror of those events not allowing them to forget. In an age where we are constantly bombarded by news of some horrific catastrophe or other, Generation Z does not have the luxury of remembering where we were; we simply do not have the mental capacity anymore.

Growing up in the 21st century, we can barely remember a time when we have not had access to an almost infinite world of information brought to our fingertips by smartphones, computers and other devices. Since we were in diapers, we have had the capability to receive the answer to any question in a matter of seconds; any resource we could dream of was presented to us with the push of a button. This luxury is an astounding success of the market and human ingenuity, but it has opened the door to the most pressing issues of our day. Political volatility and the spread of misinformation have forced intellectual maturity on children too young to understand the implications of their decisions. They have caused epidemics of mental health issues and have amplified generational trauma associated with major national and international events. From the Sandy Hook school shooting to the COVID-19 pandemic, the election of President Barack Obama to the election of President Donald Trump — Generation Z has had unprecedented access to information about national and global events.

Generation Z has seen a lot — and most of us have not even turned 18 yet. When many of us were still learning to read and some had not even been born yet, we saw one of America's most devastating recessions in history, which caused millions to lose their jobs. In 2012, a man shot and killed 26 innocent people at Sandy Hook Elementary School, 20 of whom were elementary school-aged children. Earlier in the same year, Trayvon Martin, a black man, was fatally shot by George Zimmerman, acting as a catalyst for the rapid growth of the Black Lives Matter movement. In 2020, our lives were suspended due to the outbreak of a pandemic the likes of which have not been seen in America since the Spanish Flu. It is almost difficult to recount all of these generational traumas.

What makes these events so impactful on Generation Z's psyche is not simply the nature of the events themselves, but their media coverage. The use of the internet has allowed outrage and fear to spread like wildfire, often before the integrity of the facts have been verified. According to Nielsen, 72% of Generation Z in America has access to all mobile wireless services, including voice, messaging, and data, with the vast majority of them using some form of social media. The algorithms used by social media companies such as Facebook, Twitter and TikTok to determine the content that its users

see is often designed to create an echo chamber of confirmation bias, which often includes false or misleading information. This system only serves to bolster one's own opinions and drives division between opposing factions on issues as trivial as sports and as serious as the foundations of democracy itself. The ability to reach millions of social media users with the push of a button has amplified the effects of national and generational traumas such as school shootings and political

study by the National Institute of Mental Health found that 31.9% of adolescents suffer from an anxiety disorder, compared to only 19.1% of adults. Even with increased connection through the internet, a Cigna study found that nearly half of Americans report feeling a sense of loneliness, with Generation Z being the loneliest generation included in the study. Though there are many factors that contribute to these statistics, the trends suggest that the generations who have been exposed to traumatic events through the use of social media and the internet for their entire lives are dealing with more mental health issues.

All of this is not to say that we are the first or only generation to deal with adversity. Generations before us have grown up in difficult times, and generations after us surely will do the same. Our parents grew up bracing for nuclear war with the Soviet Union. Our grandparents lived through the Civil Rights era, one of the most tumultuous times in the nation's history, and fought in the Vietnam War when they were barely out of high school. It is also important to note that, as Americans, we have grown up in one of the safest and most prosperous countries on the planet. The same cannot be said for children coming of age under authoritarian regimes such as China and Iran or in nations ravaged by poverty such as South Sudan and Haiti. When discussing such serious topics as mental health and generational trauma, it is important that we put things into perspective.

We should also remember the great things that have happened during our lifetime. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, unemployment had reached record lows, especially within minority communities. The United States has, for over a decade, consistently lowered its carbon emissions. We elected our first black president, a historic occasion regardless of one's opinions on his performance as President. The nation came together, across partisan lines, to unequivocally condemn the vicious attack on our Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021. When all seems bleak, it is imperative that we unite as a nation behind what makes our country great and remember that we, as a generation, are in this together.

The rise of social media coupled with the unprecedented political polarization and volatility in America today are serious concerns for the future of Generation Z. The events that shaped our childhood have impacted our mental health and our outlook on the country's situation. If we cannot overcome this challenge, our generation and our country will be forever fractured, but there is hope. We have seen the generations that came before us overcome some of the most troubling issues of their time. We, as a generation, have more in common than not. We have the ability to look past the noise and distraction generated online to come together and take on the challenges of our time. We must unite to overcome them, or else let them destroy us.

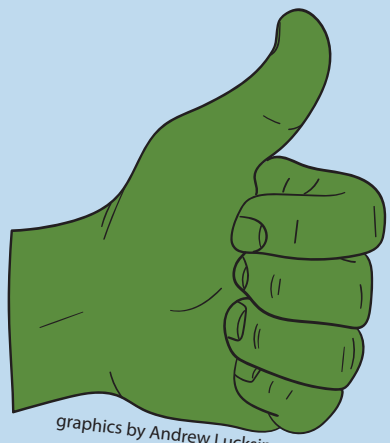


graphic by Susan Ballesteros

unrest. It is in the interest of both social media companies and traditional news media outlets to stoke fear and anger over these events in order to increase interaction with posts, rather than encouraging unity and cooperation. This practice has seared some of America's most horrific events into the minds of young people for the rest of their lives and will be a defining part of growing up in an era of unprecedented access to information.

The effects of these events are not simply conceptual, but quantifiable. According to Western Governors University, only 45% of Generation Z reports being in good mental health, and a

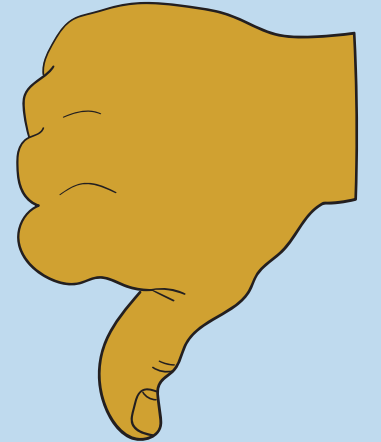
Thumbs Up



graphics by Andrew Lucksinger

- College Acceptances
- The COVID-19 Vaccine
- Showering at Night
- Webkinz
- Planned Parenthood
- Times New Roman Font

Thumbs Down



- College Rejections
- Cheeto Fingers
- Themed Bathrooms
- The Laughing Emoji
- Over-Salted Chips
- Downstyle

- Advisor** Kevin Garcia
- Editors-in-Chief** Malena Heineman, Nia Orakwue
- Managing** Alec Lippman
- Copy and Finance** Charles Taylor
- Commentary** Zoe Klein, Beck Williams
- News** Luci Garza, Somaya Jimenez-Haham
- Student Life** Sophia Chau, Ava De Leon
- Entertainment** Wrenny Collamer, Max Domel
- Sports** Abigail Jackson, Helena Lara
- Photo** Emma McBride
- Graphics** Andrew Lucksinger
- Web** Ainsley Freeman, Grace Woodruff
- Staff Writers** Annabel Andre, Susan Ballesteros, Katie Busby, Nevin Hall, Edith Holmsten, Norah Hussaini, Eliana Legatt, Ewan McNerney, Malvika Pradhan, Juan Carlos Ramirez Delgado, Sanwi Sarode, Madeleine Van Slyke, LiLi Xiong
- Club Contributors** Amani Ahmad, Ahnsa Campbell, Eva Schwarm, Kayla Le, Rebecca Scaramuzzi
- If you are interested in writing for the paper and becoming a club contributor then be sure to email us at lasaliberator@gmail.com to find out more!**

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:

- The students on The Liberator staff will print articles which have been researched to the best of their ability to obtain most complete information.
- The information will be presented in an objective, truthful and fair manner.
- 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.
- 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:

- Determine the content of the publication (with input from other staff members).
- Stress the editorial policy.
- Ensure the accuracy of the publication.
- Address disciplinary or other inappropriate behavior of staff.
- Vote on removal of staff members.
- 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.

CORRECTIONS (ISSUE 3):

Page 1: "Vendors and Spenders" photo by Eliana Legatt "With Liberty" graphic by Susan Ballesteros

Page 3: "505" graphic by Susan Ballesteros "Straight Up" graphic by Juan Carlos Ramirez

Page 5: Car graphic by Ahnsa Campbell

Page 6: "Charitable" photo courtesy of Pallavi Gokul (name misspelled)

Page 13: "AVP" photo courtesy of Gaelila McKaughan



graphic by Andrew 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.

PRESIDENT JOE BIDEN'S CABINET NOMINEES

NORAH HUSSAINI | staff writer



UNITED STATES TRADE REPRESENTATIVE

Katherine Tai will fill the role of U.S. trade representative. Tai was one of the main managers of the passing of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). This agreement was signed by Canada, Mexico and the U.S. and lifted tariffs from most goods that were produced. However, this wasn't the only huge task that Tai has worked through successfully. She also included labor unions, corporate lobbyists, environmental groups and the Trump administration's demands in the United-States-Mexico-Canada-Agreement (U.S.M.C.A), a successor to NAFTA. Tai's leadership skills, as well as her involvement in past large trade agreements, will undoubtedly come in handy as she fills her role.



SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION

Pete Buttigieg will be another "first" nomination for the Presidential Cabinet as the first LGBTQ+ American to fill a Senate-confirmed Cabinet post. During Buttigieg's presidential campaign, he introduced a 1 trillion-dollar infrastructure plan with a focus on public transportation as well as reconnecting impoverished and minority communities. Buttigieg's plan also includes elements of climate protection, which Biden has committed to addressing. In addition to his infrastructure plan, one of Buttigieg's main focuses in his campaign was the Green New Deal. With many other members of the cabinet also focusing on environmental benefits, Buttigieg could be a key player in making America green.



SECRETARY OF EDUCATION

Biden's pick for secretary of education, Miguel Cardona, was the only candidate that was a surprise to many. Although Biden fulfilled his promise of appointing a public school educator as secretary of education, Cardona doesn't have the same level of experience that other nominees have. His previous position was as an assistant superintendent of 8,000 kids in Connecticut. He will be going from 8,000 kids to overseeing the entire Department of Education. This role will be especially difficult for Cardona because he will have to fix mistakes made by Betsy DeVos, the former secretary of education under Former President Trump, who wanted to find a completely different alternative to public schooling. Cardona may take some time to adjust, which could have an impact on the amount of work he gets done in the first year.



SECRETARY OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Xavier Becerra is an interesting pick for Biden's secretary of health and human services. Biden and Becerra's views on healthcare are complete opposites. While Becerra openly supports Medicare for all, Biden has repeatedly said that he opposes the idea. As an advocate for abortion rights and women's rights, Becerra earns my star of approval. He has challenged laws that prohibit women from receiving abortions and has stood up to policies in Mississippi that restricted what doctors could do to help women with unwanted pregnancies. Biden and Becerra could either even each other out or cause a conflict between progressive and moderate ideas.



SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY

Janet Yellen is, by far, one of the most qualified people to serve her position as Treasury secretary. Yellen will be responsible for helping the struggling economy and massive unemployment rate due to COVID-19, and she may be one of the best people for the job. She will be the first person to have served as chair of the Council of Economic Advisors, Treasury secretary and chair of the Federal Reserve. This also means that she is now part of the minuscule group of people who have gotten to control economic power from the White House, the Federal Reserve and the President's cabinet.



ATTORNEY GENERAL

Merrick Garland is most known for his failed Supreme Court nomination during the Obama administration. He was denied a hearing by Mitch McConnell, who wanted to reserve the seat for a justice nominated by the incoming president. This has made his nomination even more well-deserved. Even so, Garland is usually regarded as a moderate, which puts him in a good place with both Democrats and Republicans. Garland also has decades of past experience with the United States attorney general, including serving as principal associate deputy U.S. attorney general, which is directly below his new position.

graphics by Emma McBride

Back in Session

Texas Legislature Has a New Set of Challenges to Tackle in 2021

LILI XIONG | staff writer



It's that time again — time for the biennial Texas legislative session, a meeting that could perhaps provide a chance to pass the legislation needed for Texas to recover from all that has happened in 2020. For the unemployed, the uninsured and struggling families, this legislative session could act as a lifeboat in the vast ocean of uncertainty that symbolizes 2021. For lawmakers, this legislative session could act as just another chance to reject the extension of Medicaid and to hold on to their chances of re-election.

Regardless of political stance, it's clear to every Texan that the state's economy is in a dire situation. According to the Economist, Texas' dwindling oil and gas industry, coupled with decreasing sales tax revenue, has contributed to our state's relatively high unemployment rate. The biggest ally to the Texas economy this year has been federal aid, as \$13 billion have been allocated to our local governments. With a Democrat-controlled United States Senate and the incoming Biden-Harris administration, these funds are likely to increase. Texan leaders such as Governor Greg Abbott were known for criticizing the Obama administration, and Texas sued his administration 44 times, more than any other state. It's important, now more than ever, for Texas leaders to not show the same hostility to the new administration — our state funding could depend on it.

Perhaps the most pressing matter that needs to be addressed in the upcoming legislation is health care. Texas has been notorious for not extending Medicare due to claims that it

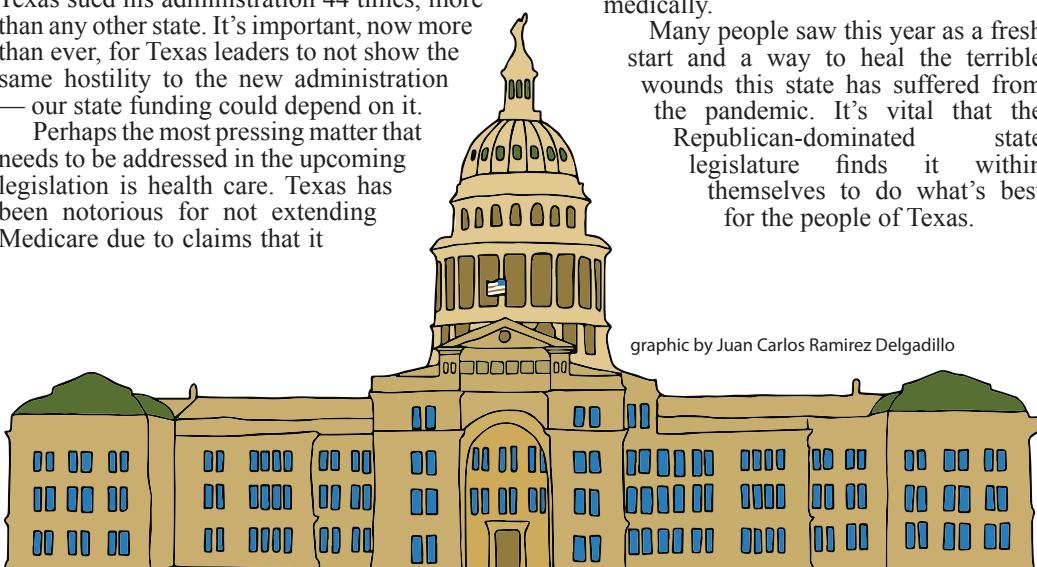
is too costly. Of course, that isn't entirely true — the federal government would take care of 90% of the cost. People's health coverage is determined by their employment, and during a pandemic that has put so many out of their jobs, many more people are now living uninsured. Access to healthcare is a human right and deserves to be a major topic in the legislative session, especially during a pandemic.

Another major issue that needs to be discussed is Texas' increasing population. Many are incentivized to move here because we don't have to pay income tax, but that might not be sustainable for long. Without guaranteed healthcare for everyone and skyrocketing local property tax rates, it's wise to invest in improving living conditions for future population growth. However, Republicans are generally unwilling to make these kinds of investments. We're in the middle of a pandemic, and neglecting the overwhelming health-related needs of the Texas population undergoing a health crisis could be laughable if there weren't more than 30,000 Texans dead at the hands of COVID-19 and overfilled hospitals across the state.

Regardless of how the healthcare debate is going to go, COVID-19 has already struck the capitol building as a result of the session. State representative Joe Deshotel announced his positive COVID-19 test after the first week in the session. Lawmakers are trying to be careful without seeming like they care more about their health than that of the citizens. For example, if they ended up closing the building, it would be hard to make the case that schools and businesses should be kept open. If they keep constituents out, it would be hard to make the case that the unheard are being heard. This is the dilemma of the Texas legislative session. The responsible thing to do would be to host a virtual session and pass legislation that would aid everyday families financially and medically.

Many people saw this year as a fresh start and a way to heal the terrible wounds this state has suffered from the pandemic. It's vital that the Republican-dominated state legislature finds it within themselves to do what's best for the people of Texas.

graphic by Juan Carlos Ramirez Delgado



The Problem With Grades

MADELEINE VAN SLYKE | staff writer



Throughout their education, students are taught that school is the most important thing in their lives. High school students, especially, are constantly reminded that the grades they receive determine their future and that if they fail, there can be lasting consequences.

Many students, including myself, struggle with mental health disorders that make school seem like an impossible task some days. In a study done by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, one in six students had enough symptoms and impairment to meet the criteria for one or more mental disorders. Additionally, an estimated 2.2 million American adolescents aged 12 to 17 had at least one major depressive episode with severe impairment. These impediments can hugely damage students' performance in school. Low motivation and even suicidal thoughts are a common symptom of depression, and only 19% of all teens will receive help from a professional during their school years.

According to a study conducted by the University of Phoenix College of Education, the average high school student spends 17.5 hours on homework each week during the current COVID-19 pandemic. Compared to a previous study done by the National Center for Education Statistics that showed high school students spent an average of 6.8 hours on homework each week, the increase has been huge.

Now, with school being online for many, it seems a more daunting task than ever. A survey by the University of Colorado at Boulder found that students have felt a lack of motivation since the beginning of the pandemic. I have found myself not attending online Zoom meetings simply because it feels like more of an option than something that can impact my future. The social aspect of attending school was an incentive that allowed me to feel attending was important, and now that that has been taken away, it is sometimes hard to find a reason to study for my math test or do my English homework. A lack of motivation can not only be linked to depression and other disorders, but also to losing what made school bearable — friends.

School pressure, relationships, a lack of coping skills and bullying are also major

contributors that can harm teens' mental health. Feeling as if you have to get an A or else be considered a failure is a lot of pressure to put on young minds. Many high school students, especially at LASA, give in to the idea that if they don't have a 4.0 GPA and go to an Ivy League college, their life will have been inconsequential.

I've found that being outside is something that really helps me relax and stay grounded, so I try to go out as much as I can. But as school has become more time-consuming, I haven't been able to do so as much. This has had a negative affect on my own mental circumstances. Many of those I know, including myself, have put school before other things, including ourselves and our mental health. Almost every day I hear many teens echoing my own thoughts: "I didn't get any sleep last night," "I feel so stressed" and "I can't handle this." It's not stubbornness or not wanting to do work — it's the effect of feeling as though one's life revolves around academics.

And I'm not alone. As students get more and more work to do after school, they are spending less and less time outside. This increased time spent indoors is causing lasting mental issues. According to Newport Academy, the excessive amount of time adolescents spend either doing homework or on screens has caused an uptick in mental health issues. This is referred to as "nature deficit disorder," which refers to a lack of outdoor time that results in a wide range of behavioral and mental health problems, including depression.

So I try to take a deep breath. Maybe once a week, I go out on a bike ride. Maybe singing is something that helps you, so you plan a virtual karaoke party with your friends. I make time for self-care, not grades. We think that if we get bad grades, we are a failure, but really, failing ourselves is so much worse. We're growing up in a world where we have so many stressors, so many things that consume our time and push us away from ourselves. It is vital that we consciously remember to be ourselves and take time to do the things we love.

graphic by Zoe Klein



The Fall of the SAT

How a Century-Old Test Has Passed its Prime

SANWI SARODE | staff writer



When COVID-19 began to spread across the United States, many students found it difficult to take the SAT and other standardized tests due to limited testing space and a decrease in testing opportunities. Thus, many colleges made the decision to go test-optional, meaning that students are not required to submit their SAT scores with the rest of their application. But even before COVID-19, many were questioning whether taking the SAT was worth all the attention it was given — and they were right to question its importance. Not only are SATs a source of stress, they can also prevent colleges from diversifying their schools. SATs should no longer be a staple of admissions.

There's a saying that if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid. The same concept applies to the SAT — expecting every student to be good at standardized tests is unreasonable. According to a 2016 Los Angeles Times article, students who excel in areas such as music, public speaking or time management cannot exhibit these skills through a standardized test. Everyone

has their own strengths and weaknesses, and putting such a large emphasis on the SAT causes unnecessary stress and anxiety for students. That stress only builds as a student's high school career progresses.

The SAT puts immense pressure on students to get good scores. This pressure can make students almost obsessed with their scores, which causes unnecessary stress and mental health issues. According to ReclaimSchools, an organization set up to support campaigns for progressive and socially responsible education, eight out of ten teachers report an increase in stress and anxiety among students in the time leading up to the SAT. Removing the SAT from college applications could ease this already heavy burden on students.

According to a college prep organization called Ivywise, an obsession with test scores could also shift a student's focus away from parts of the increasingly popular holistic review of college applications: grades, student interests and success in college-prep classes. In preparation for the SAT, students often lose focus on these factors.

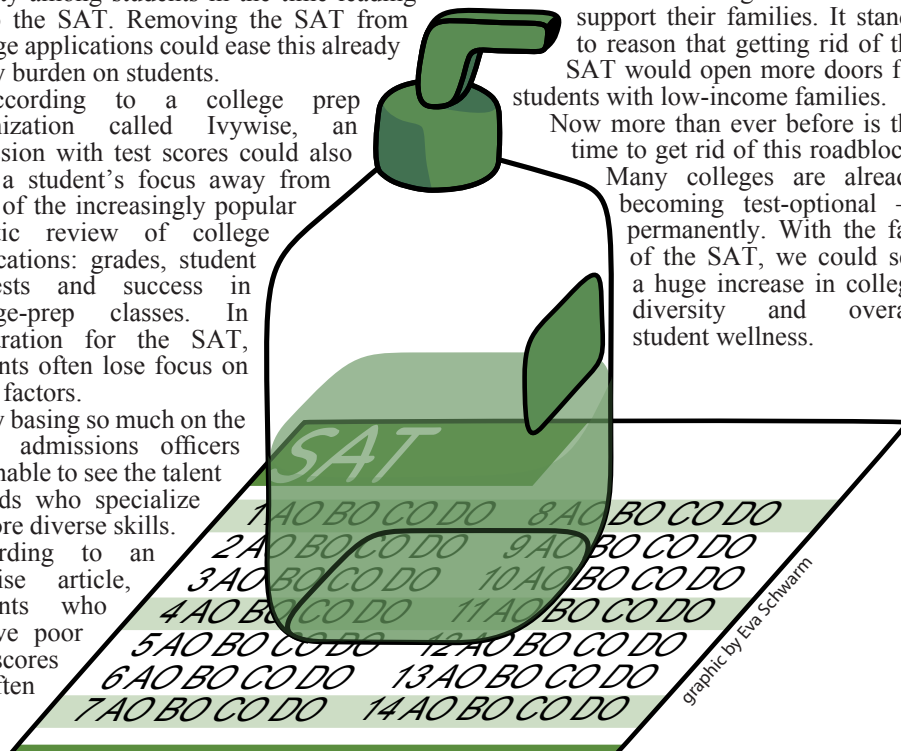
By basing so much on the SAT, admissions officers are unable to see the talent of kids who specialize in more diverse skills.

According to an Ivywise article, students who receive poor test scores are often

discouraged from applying to prestigious schools. When the SAT is removed from the equation, the application pool at these colleges becomes more diverse in a variety of areas.

A U.S. News article showed that there is a notable correlation between family income and SAT performance: the higher a family's income, the higher the score on the SAT. More affluent families have the advantage of being able to afford different levels of tutoring and practice. In addition, students from low-income families have more important things to take care of than the SAT, such as working to financially support their families. It stands to reason that getting rid of the SAT would open more doors for students with low-income families.

Now more than ever before is the time to get rid of this roadblock. Many colleges are already becoming test-optional — permanently. With the fall of the SAT, we could see a huge increase in college diversity and overall student wellness.



ask the lib

How can I learn to approach new people?

Approaching new people is always hard, but there are some things that can make it easier. Start by identifying what is preventing you from meeting new people. Are you anxious? Afraid they won't like you? Just an introvert? Address those concerns first to work towards building confidence in yourself. However, you can't just avoid new people under the guise of working on yourself — you will need to face your fears eventually. That being said, there's no need to rush into it. Begin by talking to someone you have good reason to believe is kind and courteous, like a sibling's friend or a classmate you've met before, and keep the conversation short if need be. There's no right or wrong way to make a new friend, just be yourself! Now that you've eased yourself into the water, it's time to start wading deeper. Try asking a peer for homework help via text or at office hours, or try attending a club you've never been to before. Common interests are a great way to bond! Be the kind of person you would want to be friends with, so offer the kind of help you'd want to receive or send them a photo that reminds you of them if that's the kind of text you'd like to get.

How can I keep track of my assignments?

When it comes to keeping track of homework and new assignments, LASA offers many programs to note what assignments you have and when they are due. BLEND's calendar and Studyo are two such programs. The BLEND calendar shows all your assignments and organizes them by their due date. Studyo incorporates this format but also allows users to add their own assignments, which is especially useful for students with extracurricular activities that wouldn't be recorded on BLEND. However, many prefer to keep their to-do lists analog. While this does take a bit more work, as you have to record everything by hand and keep track of the list itself, the satisfaction of crossing things off said list is unmatched. Additionally, it is easy to add new items and highlight what is most important or urgent. Bullet journaling is another form of an analog list but is usually more artistic and visually appealing. Again, more effort is required, but many say that the journal helps them keep all of their assignments and other engagements in one place. Lastly, Todoist is an immensely popular online tool used for keeping track of work. It is intensive, with lots of boxes to check and blanks to fill, but once you get the hang of it, you can keep your whole life organized.

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 Commentary Editors give advice regarding questions that students may have.

Beauty and the Beast: A COVID-19 Story

REBECCA SCARAMUCCI | club contributor



I've been reading a lot of fairy tales lately, mostly from the Grimm brothers. One of the stories I've read is "Beauty and the Beast." A few years ago, I was listening to an audiobook of fairy tales and came across many versions of this story. Though they varied a little, they all included the similar plot of a girl going to live with a beast who is cursed to live alone for many years. She breaks that curse through love and hope. It's a story I grew up with, but recently, it has taken on another meaning for me.

The world's expectations for Generation Z are high. Generation

Z has expressed strong support for social causes as well as a salient desire to learn and grow. COVID-19 threw a wrench in these expectations - isolation serving as a damper on our big dreams. Similarly to the Beast in "Beauty and the Beast," our society went from social activities to social distancing seemingly overnight. It is lonely, and, frankly, incredibly scary. It's difficult to live in constant fear that someone you know or love might catch this deadly virus.

COVID-19 affects Generation Z in a unique way. The kids in this generation are just that: kids, the oldest of which would have graduated from college in 2020. And while kids are unlikely to experience severe symptoms of COVID-19, we're often surrounded by adults who can.

As someone whose medical track record isn't spotless, I worry about catching COVID-19 myself. But the idea of someone I'm close to dying is far scarier. People joke about catching COVID-19 whenever someone sneezes or coughs, but the risk is very real. It's terrifying not knowing.

During traumatic times, I often seek solace in spending time with those I love, but I can't see my friends and many of my family members in person right now. I rely heavily on texting and social media, as well as the occasional FaceTime or Zoom call,

to communicate with them, but it's just not the same.

Generation Z grew up with the internet and social media. And while social media can be a positive place and a great way to connect with friends and family, there are also many negative aspects. Social media also has become a common place for cyber bullying and constant comparison, which can deteriorate one's self esteem. COVID-19 makes it difficult to communicate in person, and social media is one of the few ways we are still able to connect with each other. While it's good that people are still able to communicate, it seems almost inevitable that our mental health might deteriorate further.

Like "Beauty and the Beast," though, there is still hope. The COVID-19 Vaccine is beginning distribution, and while the shadow of COVID-19 is unlikely to disappear entirely, I believe that we as a society will be able to push through it together. One of mankind's greatest attributes is the ability to get strength from optimism. And, like reading a fairy tale, there is always the possibility that better things will come with each turn of the page.

GEMINI

You've had some big accomplishments lately, Gemini. Reading the horoscopes is unfortunately not one of them. Get back to work.

CANCER

People have been asking you a lot of questions lately, Cancer. Is it bothering you? Have you asked them to stop? Do you even want them to stop?

LEO

The attention hasn't been on you recently, Leo. That sucks. What's the next horoscope?

VIRGO

It's been busy lately, Virgo! Remember to take time to breathe, sleep, eat, and all of the other things that are supposedly important to, like, stay alive and stuff.

LIBRA

Take time to socialize, Libra. I know that you're busy, but socializing can help recharge. Hold on — If you're so busy, why are you reading the horoscopes?

TAURUS

Stop doing mildly suspicious things, Taurus. I know what you did. I was watching you. You really think you could get away with that?

HOROSCOPES

ZOE KLEIN | commentary editor

SCORPIO

Sometimes things don't go exactly as you expect, Scorpio. For example, I'm sure you expected this horoscope to end with advice.

ARIES

You have an important decision to make, Aries. Just decide. Look at your horoscope for advice or something. I'm not the boss of you. Oh wait!

PISCES

There have been a lot of highs and lows for you lately, Pisces. Are you in the hills or something? I've heard the landscape of Kansas is a bit flatter — maybe move there?

AQUARIUS

This horoscope is specifically for you, Harry Styles. Happy birthday. Remember to take care of yourself. Have you been drinking enough water? I hope so.

CAPRICORN

You've been feeling lonely lately, Capricorn. Remember that you're not alone. I mean, technically you are, but we're in a pandemic. It's how you're supposed to feel.

SAGITTARIUS

There isn't actually any proof to the idea that your sign exists. Only celebrities are sagittariuses. Find me a sagittarius, and I'll write you a horoscope. Until then, you're out of luck.

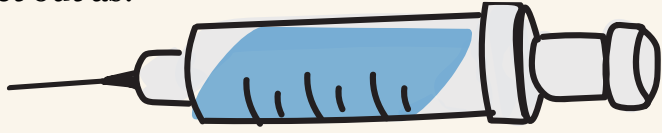
graphics by Grace Woodruff

Travis County's COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution

Who is Eligible?

The state has outlined the first stages of COVID-19 vaccine distribution.

Stage **1A** and **1B** criteria have already been set out as:



- 1A** • Frontline healthcare workers
- Long term health facilities' residents

- 1B** • Individuals of 65+ years or 16+ years and with chronic conditions such as (but not limited to):

- Cancer
- Pregnancy
- Down Syndrome
- Heart conditions
- Solid organ transplantation
- Obesity and severe obesity (BMI of 30 kg/m2 or higher)
- Pregnancy
- Sickle cell disease
- Type 2 diabetes mellitus



- 1C, 2, 3** Still under consideration

To find a hub and register for a vaccine, visit tinyurl.com/TXvaccine

Source: <https://www.dshs.state.tx.us/covidvaccine/>

graphics by Somaya Jimenez-Haham

LUCI GARZA | news editor

A vaccine for COVID-19 amid the ongoing pandemic began early stages of distribution on Dec. 14, 2020 in Austin at Dell Medical Center. Since then, more than 2 million Texans have been vaccinated, either with only the first or both doses, according to the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS). As of this writing, the vaccine is available to people in 1A, which is mainly made up of frontline workers, and 1B criteria groups, consisting mainly of senior citizens and others with underlying health issues. Individuals will receive their vaccine through vaccination hubs or their own private clinic. There are 82 large hubs in all of Texas, two of which are in Austin: Austin Public Health (APH) and the Dell Medical Center.

House District 46 Rep. Sheryl Cole has recently spoken out on concerns regarding the geographic disparity of distribution centers located in East versus West Austin.

"Geographically and locally, we haven't seen much of a change," Cole said. "Austin Public Health has been working on distributing [vaccines] to more areas east of I-35, but I don't think that has been carried out across the state, and I don't think it's been carried out enough locally."

According to Cole, continuous efforts from APH are being put in place to help communities of color and of lower income receive information about the vaccination process as well as the vaccine itself. The Delco Center in Northeast Austin is one space that will greatly help bring vaccine accessibility to communities of color in the area, according to Cole.

"Initially, you had to call and register, and then once you're on a list, usually they'll call you back and get your first dose, and after that time, you get scheduled for your second dose and they give you a card as well to keep track," Cole said. "The helping has rather been talked about in regards to assistance in actually learning about the vaccine and also getting to and from the vaccine distribution centers, really making sure that they have information on how to handle your vaccine."

Cole and other African-American leaders in the community have also been recruited to start doing radio announcements, which Cole says is an effort to help minimize hesitancy towards receiving the vaccine in Black and brown communities. Douglas Loveday, the senior media specialist for the Texas

Department of State Health Services, said there is information on multiple websites presented in a more accessible manner.

"Information about vaccine allocation and availability, in both English and Spanish, is dispersed across multiple platforms, including online and via social media posts and advertising," Loveday said. "Interest among the news media remains at peak levels too, and mainstream English and Spanish-speaking broadcast, print and digital outlets push out this information daily."

Although some providers are currently collecting insurance information, there has not yet been any intention on charging recipients for the vaccine, according to Cole. The vaccine has so far been delivered and advertised as free to all who receive it, which also allows better availability to others who may be uninsured, Loveday said.

"A vaccine provider may charge a person's insurance an administration fee but cannot charge for the vaccine itself," Loveday said. "There are no out-of-pocket expenses when you go to get your vaccine. And if you don't have insurance... There is no charge for anything."

Cole said that since December, the distribution process for both hubs and local recipients has changed, whether that be through presidential policies or state guidelines, in an effort to maximize doses. Dr. Manish Naik, Chair of the Austin Regional Clinic (ARC) pandemic committee and Chief of the Medical Information Office, has worked with the state and city from the beginning of distributions in early December. Since then, ARC has been in constant communication with the State of Texas in order to stay updated on regulations, dose deliveries and other developments, according to Naik.

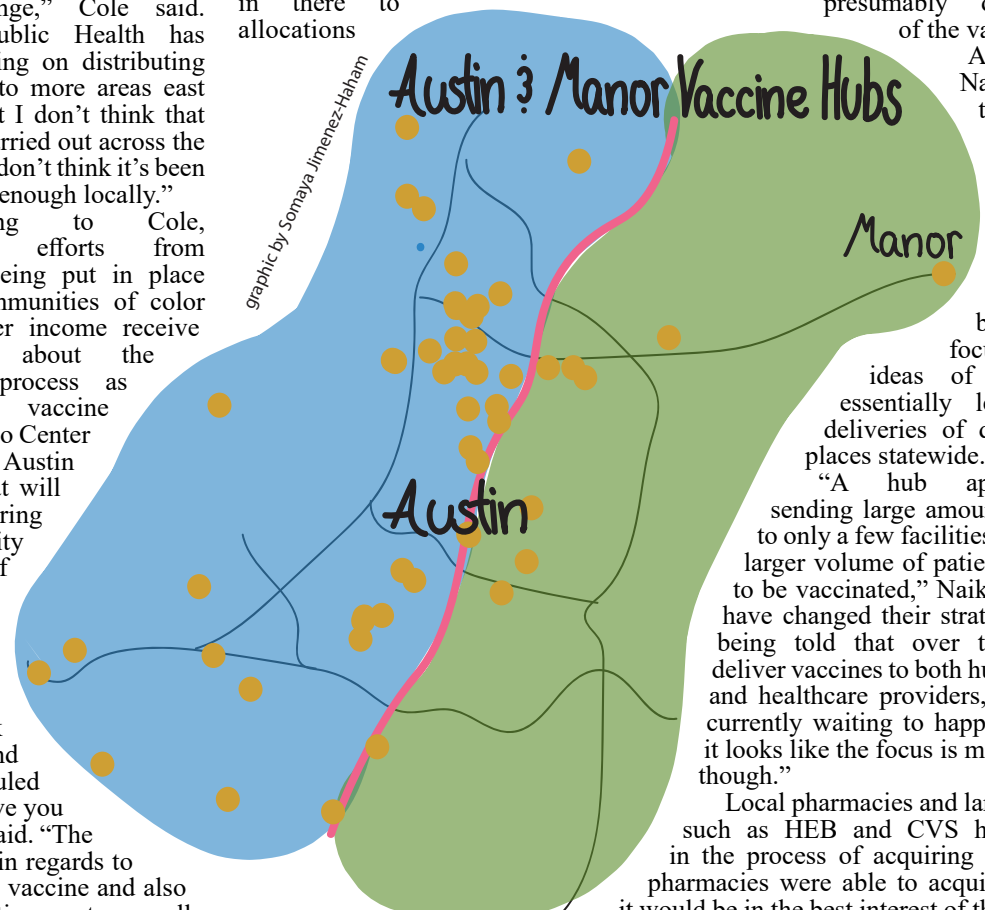
"When it first started, the state used a website that we had to log onto, and we registered each of our clinic locations, and they put us through a questionnaire on that site that asked us about our clinics and how many doctors do you have, how many patients do you see, et cetera," Naik said. "Once we registered all of our locations, it then went to the state level to make decisions based on all of that information entered in there to allocations presumably decide where of the vaccine go."

According to Naik, APH and the DSHS have clearly changed their procedure over time. Currently, Naik said, they have become more focused on the ideas of hubs, which essentially lead to larger deliveries of doses to fewer places statewide.

"A hub approach... meant sending large amounts of vaccines to only a few facilities to vaccinate a larger volume of patients that needed to be vaccinated," Naik said. "So they have changed their strategy, and we're being told that over time they will deliver vaccines to both hubs and vaccine and healthcare providers, which we are currently waiting to happen. Right now, it looks like the focus is more on the hubs though."

Local pharmacies and large chain stores such as HEB and CVS have also been in the process of acquiring the vaccine. If pharmacies were able to acquire the vaccine, it would be in the best interest of the communities of color in Austin, according to Cole. Loveday said after emergency use authorization is granted.

"Please be patient," Loveday said. "While supply is still limited, a third vaccine may be approved soon. It's made by Johnson & Johnson, and it could receive FDA authorization in February. Quantities of that vaccine are already at the distribution centers across the country and waiting for the emergency use authorization."



Pets, Paws, Pandemic, Oh My! Shelters and Vets Adapting Amid COVID-19

EDITH HOLMSTEN | staff writer

Austin Pets Alive (APA) is taking care of over 200 dogs, with 85% of them currently in foster homes in order to adapt to the constraints of COVID-19, according to APA PR and Events Manager Katera Berent. Berent said the increase in the number of animals in foster care represents one of the many changes that Austin animal clinics have been forced to make in the past year.

Austin Vet Hospital, Windsor Park Veterinary Clinic and APA have all experienced changes in their pickup of pets for appointments and communication with pet owners due to COVID-19. However, many technical aspects of animal care have not changed.

Currently, all staff members at the clinics are asked to wear masks during in-person work and conduct curbside visits where pet owners drive up with their pets, and staff members take them inside, allowing veterinarians to do their work while owners are not inside. The new system has ensured safety for staff and clients during COVID-19.

Windsor Park Veterinary Clinic Technician and Practice Manager Sarah McCobb said curbside appointments, their new COVID-19 strategy, have not affected their communication with pet owners. Before curbside visits, a staff member talks to each owner either outside or on the phone to learn about each pet's health.

"I wouldn't say that that's changed too much because when we go outside, we just socially distance, but we still go over everything with the owner," McCobb said. "We ask some questions about how they're doing, what are the symptoms that they're seeing."

McCobb said that she was glad the clinic has been able to keep communication with pet owners. According to McCobb, surgery procedures have also not had to change at their clinic due to COVID-19.

"We, already, for surgeries, have to glove up and be careful and make sure that we're sanitizing, so we already take those steps, and we did that before COVID happened," McCobb said. "Now, really the only addition is just trying to distance as much as we can and wear the masks."

Austin Vet Hospital Practice Manager Doug Warden also agreed that major surgeries have not changed due to COVID-19. However, the clinic has enforced social distancing in break areas for their staff.

"Because most procedures require staff to be within six feet of each other, i.e. blood draws, taking x-rays, the only place where we have taken direct measures to ensure social distancing is in the employee break areas," Warden said.

Warden also said that the clinic has seen its largest adaptation around curbside pickups for pets. Warden said that, at first, communication was harder over the phone, but Austin Vet Hospital has since used email reminders to make sure their clients understand the procedures.

"Alerting clients to the changing protocols has been a challenge, but we typically send emails when they make their appointments with

what they should expect at their upcoming visit," Warden said. "It also allows them to refer to that document as opposed to describing the procedure each time over the phone."

Similar to how Austin Vet Hospital used online communication regarding appointments, Berent said that APA has found methods which don't require going into physical buildings for pet adoptions.

"We're doing car appointments when possible," Berent said. "Then we have our adoption building, so instead of doing in-person adoptions in an indoor building, we'll either do them outdoors, or we'll do a Zoom call or FaceTime."

For animals that are not adopted yet, Berent said that APA worked to get their pets into foster care to compensate for reduced staff. The weekend of March 13, 2020, APA got the most animals into foster homes that they had ever had in the history of their shelter.

"We knew that with COVID-19, we would have reduced staff on site and reduced volunteers on site, so we had to make sure that we are getting pets into homes so that we weren't losing any quality of care with those dogs and cats," Berent said. "We did that first and foremost."

Foster volunteer Camille Kilday said that part of the reason that so many people, like herself, were able to foster for APA this year was that more people were home. Extra time and increased availability at home helped her foster three kittens during COVID-19.

"People who hadn't ever had the time to foster kittens before, especially people who had to go to work outside home every day and couldn't take care of kittens but really wanted to," Kilday said, "suddenly everybody has the availability and opportunity to get them, and it was just really the perfect time."

In addition to the benefits for new foster families, Kilday said that she hopes increased fostering during COVID-19 will be positive for APA and that it continues.

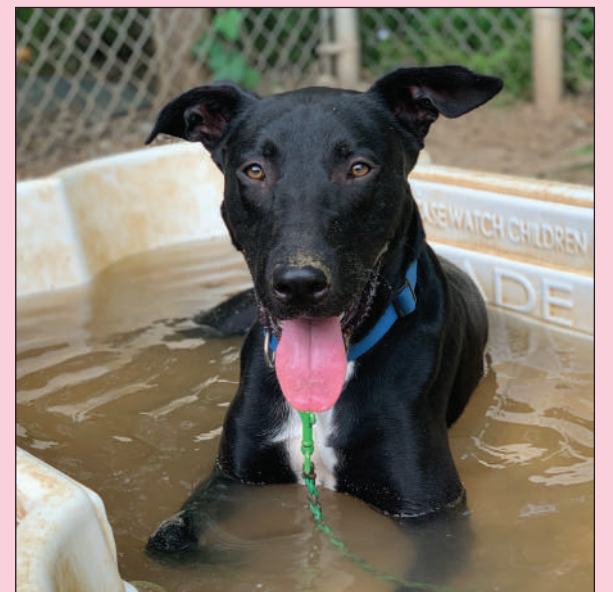
"I think it's going to have a positive effect long-term on Austin Pets Alive because so many people have been introduced to fostering and to volunteering with APA this year," Kilday said.

Austin Vet Hospital, Windsor Park Veterinary Clinic and APA adapted their animal care with curbside appointments and fostering programs, yet many technical procedures maintained high quality, according to Warden and McCobb. Berent said that in March, after the majority of their pets were transferred to fosters, the staff were touched by the number of pets in loving homes.

"There were a few of us who were just walking through the kennels and catteries, and we all started crying because we have never seen the shelter so empty and knowing that also, rather than being in these kennels, they were in warm foster homes that give them love," Berent said. "That was a really, really beautiful moment, despite a scary time in the world."



graphic by Amani Ahmad



WET AND WILD Mochi is a recently adopted dog from Austin Pets Alive. During COVID-19, Austin Pets Alive are getting more pets, like Mochi, adopted than ever before. photo courtesy of Austin Pets Alive



CURBSIDE Austinite drives through Austin Pets Alive's curbside event with her dog. Austin Pets Alive hands out dog food for pet owners during COVID-19. photo courtesy of Austin Pets Alive



FOOD MANIA Austin Pets Alive Volunteers direct traffic at their September drive through event at Austin High School. Volunteers give out pet food to Austin citizens in need during the pandemic. photo courtesy of Austin Pets Alive

Small Businesses and the COVID-19 Pandemic

NEVIN HALL | staff writer

Small, local and independent businesses are often affected by large global-scale events such as the current pandemic caused by the COVID-19 disease, according to Small Business Trends. From the cancellation of SXSW and ACL to the restrictions placed on indoor dining and mask mandates, Austin small business has seen changes from 2019. The City of Austin and Travis County have received a total of \$224.8 million through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, with more seemingly on the way. Some of this federal aid has gone to small businesses through programs like the Paycheck Protection Program and other locally administered grants.

Dixie Patrick, the executive director of the Austin Independent Business Alliance, a local business advocacy group, said she is more than aware of the financial situation confronting the City of Austin as regards small business. Even with the CARES Act, Patrick said she is concerned about the future of government aid to small businesses.

"The city just doesn't have enough money to save all the small businesses indefinitely," Patrick said. "That's a really hard truth."

The City of Austin has been distributing more than money to small businesses, according to Phil Thoden, president of the Austin Branch of the Associated General Contractors of America, a vertical construction association. Thoden said that his industry has received plenty of non-monetary assistance from the city.

"They were helpful, and we worked with City Council to procure, for example, the masks," Thoden said. "We had over 1,000-2,000 masks that we distributed."

Many small businesses have been pivoting on their own according to Brian Stubbs, owner of Genuine Article, a restaurant services company. Stubbs said he has many clients who have shifted their business a bit.

"I have a client, they were able to become a small grocery store, and early on, HEB was overwhelmed with their curbside," Stubbs said. "So in some respects, it was interesting to see how just selling butter and milk and cheese and bread became a pivot, a way for them to move product and help their guests get what they needed, the staples, when we couldn't go inside grocery stores."

Patrick said that protecting Austin's eccentricity is a priority that local business is often promoting, which becomes an even larger priority during a worldwide economic slowdown. Protecting local economic boosters becomes even more important during a pandemic, according to The Economist.

"I know how easy it is to use the Starbucks app, but every time I choose to buy coffee at Texas Coffee Traders instead of going through the Starbucks line, it's a small choice to me," Patrick said. "That's a huge choice to the business."

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, about 6% of Austin's workforce works in construction. Thoden said that even though quite a lot of contractors around the country are nervous about the prospects for future work, he is cautiously optimistic.

"What we typically see here in Austin is that we are a bubble, if you will, for construction," Thoden said. "What I mean by that is other parts of the country are suffering more from pauses in construction activity due to the overall uncertainty of COVID and the way things are changing as far as people gathering in offices, et cetera."

Thoden said that it is a common theme amongst those representing a small business in Austin that this metro area, even through this pain, is still fundamentally strong. The Texas economy is doing better than many others in the country, according to the Federal Reserve, and the construction industry is no different, according to the 2021 Construction Outlook for Builders.

"I have no doubt that the economy of Austin will recover and will do just fine," Patrick said. "My fear is, when this is all over and the dust has settled, that because our local and independent businesses don't have that structural framework to prop them up that some of the chain stores and franchises have, that Austin will turn into a city that doesn't look like itself."

Even though the future prospects for Austin businesses are strong, according to Patrick, many businesses are still currently feeling the pinch. The industries that are feeling this pressure may

not just be the local restaurant around the corner, Stubbs said.

"It's not just restaurants, it's any occupancy-based business, any business that relies on people coming inside of its doors or its gates, music venues, restaurants, bars," Stubbs said. "I just feel like they deserve targeted relief to that industry because they obviously were the most negatively affected by an airborne virus, and it was totally out of their control. They woke up on March 15th and were told that they couldn't be open in a lot of respects. I think the targeted relief to those types of businesses is important."

There are still some bright spots, even in the current business climate in the city, Thoden said. Hospitality businesses only employ 12.1% of Austin workers, according to the Austin Chamber of Commerce.

"Warehouses are doing pretty well," Thoden said. "And then you have the real big black swan kind of events that are very rare, like Tesla

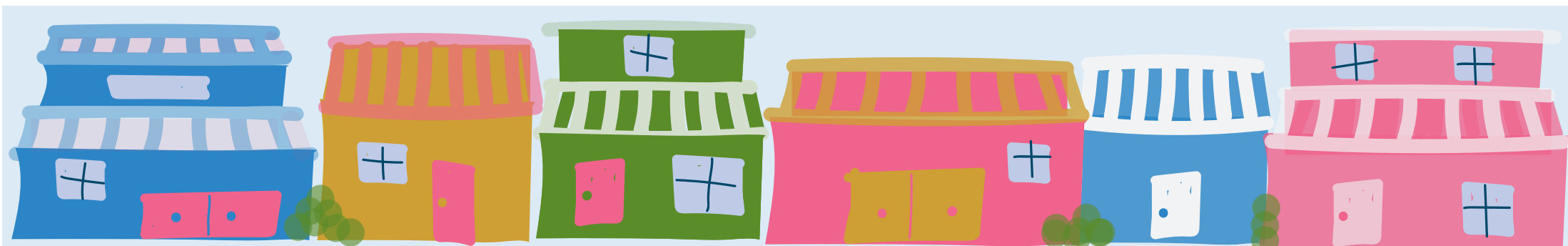
setting up a gigafactory here. That's going to spin off a lot of different construction activities related to the motor car industry and e-vehicles."

According to Stubbs, Austin business comprises a plurality of different businesses, both those thriving right now and those just barely surviving. At the end of the day, Stubbs said, even for the hardest-hit businesses, when the re-opening finally happens, Austin is poised to explode.

"Because of Austin's growth, because of Austin's professional class, because of Austin's economics and then ultimately, because of our weather, I'm pretty confident that if the vaccine rollout timelines are met, by fall, there will be a lot of pent-up demand," Stubbs said. "And I think that a lot of people will be anxious to go have dinner and go see music with their friends when they know that they've been vaccinated."

"I'm pretty confident that if the vaccine rollout timelines are met by fall, there will be a lot of pent up demand"

- Genuine Article Owner Brian Stubbs



graphic by Somaya Jimenez-Haham

Looking for Extracurriculars? Join the Club

EWAN MCINERNEY | staff writer

Reptile Club

When: Wednesdays at lunch (Zoom)
Contact: lasareptiles@gmail.com

Reptile Club is a club where students can support and participate in the caring and conservation of reptiles.

Before the events of COVID-19, each club session was devoted to tending to in-class reptiles, according to senior Mazzy Zimmerman. Zimmerman said members could also volunteer to care for them individually.

"Before the quarantine, we used to actually have reptiles at the school building," Zimmerman said. "Every Wednesday during lunch, we'd take care of them, clean their cages, feed them and generally just make sure they were doing well. We'd also find them summer homes, and we gave people at LASA the opportunity to sign up to take them home and care for them over breaks."

Senior Sage Phuepwint, the club's president, said that Reptile Club

still works from home to care for reptiles and other animals through its connections to animal shelters. Over Zoom, the club still discusses facts about reptiles.

"We gave all the reptiles away since we can't care for them in person right now, but now we do a lot of work making toys to send to animal shelters," Phuepwint said. "A lot of what the club does now on Zoom is talk about some of the science and history of reptiles. Otherwise, club sessions are a good way to keep in touch with each other and just talk, which is nice because we don't get to see each other as much now."

Because of COVID-19, many people travel less, spend more time at home and generally have more time on their hands, Zimmerman said. According to Zimmerman, being quarantined at home has left people with time to devote to their pets.

"Something that we've talked about before in Reptile Club is the effect that the quarantine has had on people's pets, not just with reptiles, but with all animals as well," Zimmerman said. "I think that people are able to put more energy into caring for the pets they have, and people who are home alone a lot are getting new pets to keep them company as well. The situation has definitely given people opportunities to connect to their pets more."



CRAWLING CRITTERS Senior Sage Phuepwint feeds fat-tailed gecko Jack-Jack pre-COVID-19. The reptiles from previous years have been given away because due to the pandemic. photo by Wrenny Collamer

Newspaper Club

When: Wednesdays after school (Zoom)
Contact: lasaliberator@gmail.com

Newspaper Club allows students to contribute to the Liberator, LASA's student-run publication, through writing or design and without having to take Newspaper class. According to freshman Rebecca Scaramuzzi, participating in the club allows her more time to focus on her other schoolwork.

"The nice part about Newspaper Club is that me and other members are still able to contribute to the paper if we can and want to, without making a full commitment," Scaramuzzi said. "I'm a freshman and only have one elective, so freeing up a slot on my schedule means that I am able to be in the club and take another elective, which is really nice."

The club's schedule is relatively relaxed, according to sophomore Eva Schwarm. Schwarm said that, while members are expected to sign up to work on parts of the Liberator, the requirements are not as demanding as

the elective.

"For most Newspaper Club sessions, we don't even do that much," Schwarm said. "You show up to the meeting, and the editors ask how your work on stories or graphics is coming along. For each issue, every six weeks, you can sign up to write a story or create a graphic on a Google Form. If I have a weekend where I'm not that busy, I'll usually just sign up for a graphic. It's very nice because you can choose exactly what you want to contribute, and how much, without experiencing the stress of trying to get a certain assignment done by the deadline."

The district provides club members with access to Adobe Illustrator and InDesign to create graphics and page layouts. According to freshman Kayla Le, the club also provides opportunities to learn valuable skills needed for editing, artwork and journalism.

"Since I've joined the Liberator, I've created one graphic using Adobe Illustrator," Le said. "Currently, I'm taking Ezine, which also requires me to use several editing programs made by Adobe, so it's really nice to be getting extra experience with them from Newspaper Club. Also, I'm planning on taking a lot more classes involving journalism, so getting interviews and writing stories for the club now will be good practice for me."



GRAPHIC FRENZY Senior and Liberator graphics editor Andrew Lucksinger works on a graphic for the newspaper. Graphics are among some of the contributions made by Newspaper Club. photo by members. photo by Andrew Lucksinger

Youth & Government

When: Wednesdays at lunch (Zoom)
Contact: youthandgov.lasa@gmail.com

Youth and Government Club is part of a YMCA-affiliated program that involves thousands of students nationwide in organized model-government conferences.

Each year, District and State conferences are held, in which members of the club compete against other schools in varying sections. These sections represent different parts of government, including judicial, legislative, executive, appellate and political journalism. The conference is being held virtually this year.

Senior Violet Koppenhaver said that the Youth and Government program helps to teach students about state and federal government procedures and policies. The aim of the club hosted at LASA, according to Koppenhaver, is to prepare the members for their participation in the statewide Youth and Government conference.

"By putting students in this model government, holding mock trials and mock court sessions, it helps them gain understanding of governmental

procedures and policies while simulating government themselves," Koppenhaver said. "It's important for students to get to know what's going on in their government and how it operates and forms new policies."

LASA's Youth and Government team meets once a week to prepare for the competition. However, according to junior Harsha Venkataramen, most of the activity occurs outside of the club sessions.

"Usually, in a normal club session, we'll just check up on how everybody's doing in preparing for their different sections," Venkataramen said. "For example, the mock trial teams will meet, and the legislative section will ask how everybody else is doing with bills. Most people actually prepare for the competition by studying in between sessions."

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the conferences could not take place in person this year. However, according to senior Pearl Morosky, the club president, participants still get to have some of the opportunities that they would have had in previous years.

"All the mock trials and legislative committees, as well as the opening and closing ceremonies, are conducted over Zoom this year," Morosky said. "It's a lot different, but I think we've been very fortunate. Since we are part of a larger organization that's doing the legwork in setting the conferences up, people who compete are able to have some of the experience still."



CONFERENCE READY Seniors Violet Koppenhaver, Pearl Morosky, Louisa McDaniel and Sofia Buntz attend a conference pre-COVID-19. In between trials at these conferences, attendees have some time to reconvene and come up with a plan. photo courtesy of Ronny Risinger

Compost Craze

ATX Compost Bin Distribution

ELIANA LEGATT | staff writer

According to the Green Action Centre, compost has multiple benefits, such as returning valuable nutrients to the soil and acting as a natural fertilizer that will not burn plants. The Austin Composting plan began as a pilot program in 2012, serving 13,000 houses in Austin and allowing for curbside collection of their compost. After five years, it began its first expansion, adding an additional 36,000 homes. Austin Resource Recovery (ARR) collects trash, recycling and compost throughout Austin. Their goal is to reduce the amount of trash produced in Austin by 90% and turn Austin into a zero-waste city, according to the ARR website.

Due to the fourth and final delay caused by COVID-19, the last expansion of the composting plan will be starting this February, which will serve an additional 54,000 homes. Austinites are set to receive their green composting cart between Jan. 26 and Feb. 16. According to ARR Public Information Specialist Ashley Pace, the organization only has a few commercial customers, but they will not be on the composting program. In general, Pace said ARR only serves residential homes up to fourplexes.

"Now, all of Austin Resource Recovery customers, [which includes] anyone who receives trash and recycling and compost service from the city of Austin will have that additional service," Pace said.

According to Pace, a lower number of Austinites than expected have been putting their compost out to be collected by services. Pace also said that ARR will be running additional large-scale educational campaigns with the end goal of engaging more people in the composting program.

"It hasn't been the most well-received program, we have about a 30% set out rate," Pace said. "That means of everyone who's already on the program, we did a study and found that they were setting out their carts maybe 30% of the time."

The cost of composting is included in the baseline utility bill. All people living in Austin are already paying for the service, and whether they use the compost bins or not, they will still have to pay for it. Emanuele Olivieri is a sophomore who recently received his compost bin.

"Compost is amazing. It's an amazing resource. It's a chemical-free fertilizer that people can use."

-Public Information Specialist at Austin Resource Recovery Ashley Pace

"I think [the required cost is] fine because people without kids pay taxes to support schools, and no one's like, 'Oh I don't have kids, so why should I be paying the school?'" Olivieri said. "It's your civic duty."

The trash cart is the only cart that has an additional cost associated with the size of the cart. The size of the recycling and composting carts will not affect the cost of the service, Pace said. According to

Pace, people in Austin can also reduce the cost of their utility bill by getting a smaller trash cart, which allows them to take further advantage of composting and recycling services.

"For those who are not part of our citywide program, maybe they live in an apartment, maybe they live in a private neighborhood that doesn't have our services, they can take advantage of the home composting rebate," Pace said.

Compost is distributed after materials are broken down by Organics by Gosh, a landscaping outpost with composting services, either commercially or locally. Some flower stores in Austin even buy the compost for their businesses. ARR has criteria for compost, according to Pace. Both pet waste and plastic bags are frequently found in compost even though neither can be composted, either due to acidity or other factors.

"BPI-certified compostable bags are the only bags that have been certified to break down completely in the composting process, but people think that they can use any old plastic bags that they might use to put their food scraps in or their yard trimmings, [but] that's a really high contaminant," Pace said. "Pet waste is a problem because it does make sense to people. They think, 'It's organic, natural things, things found in nature, and that has to include pet waste,' but it does not."

According to Pace, compost is also a natural resource to help combat droughts, which can be frequent due to Texas' hot and dry climate. According to weather.gov, 94% of south central Texas has abnormally dry to extreme drought conditions.

"Compost is amazing, it's an amazing resource, it's a chemical-free fertilizer that people can use," Pace said. "It's great for soil retention, which is so important for especially drier areas, like Texas, it can really help the water too or the ground to retain that water and help with farming conditions."

ARR will give citizens \$75 toward purchasing a composting system for a backyard. This system cannot handle meat bones or dairy as the city composting can, but it can still take many items that would otherwise be in the trash, according to Pace. Shivani Regan is a junior who recently received her compost bin from the city.

"My dad is big into composting and helping the environment," Regan said. "He's been wanting Austin to start composting forever, and when my parents talk about eventually moving once me and my brothers are all graduated, my dad always wanted to move somewhere that composts."

Regan said she was surprised and disappointed to hear that only 30% of people in Austin with access to the program were using it. Pace said she and ARR encourage people to try it for a time, and if they don't enjoy it, they can arrange for someone to take it back. Olivieri said he sees this as a good push factor.

"Just try it," Olivieri said. "Don't stop yourself from doing it just because you're not really sure about what you can put in there. Just look up, 'What can you compost,' read the first thing that pops up, it's pretty easy."

ARR has guides and more information for compost users on the City of Austin website, www.austintexas.gov.



graphic by Anna Campbell

NEWS BRIEFS

Global News

Feb. 2

The United Nations has delayed the salvage of an underwater Yemeni oil tanker indefinitely amid oil spill fears, according to the New York Times. The oil tanker is holding about 48 million gallons of oil, and the U.N. has cited the lack of Yemen's Houthi insurgents' guarantee of the salvage team's safety as the reason for the expedition's delay. The Houthis granted the U.N. formal permission to salvage another tanker in November 2020, months after the U.N. began asking.

Feb. 3

UNICEF is set to receive up to 1.1 billion vaccine doses. Executive Director Henrietta Fore has said that these doses will be distributed throughout 100 countries for about \$3 each. The doses will mostly go to healthcare workers, Fore said, in urban regions. UNICEF is also providing some countries with specialized refrigerators needed to store the vaccines.

National News

Jan. 20

Joe Biden was inaugurated on Jan. 20, being sworn in as the 46th president of the United States. This was the first inauguration with COVID-19 precautions implemented, as well as the first inauguration in more than a century and a half in which the outgoing president has not attended.

Jan. 30

As of Jan. 30, the new, highly contagious variant of COVID-19 was confirmed in Maryland. The strain is thought to have originated in South Africa, and although the variant isn't more likely to cause extreme symptoms or death, it is more contagious than before. Maryland Governor Larry Hogan spoke out about the confirmation, saying, "We strongly encourage Marylanders to practice extra caution to limit the additional risk of transmission associated with this variant".

Feb. 2

On Feb. 2, the Biden administration announced that it will soon direct vaccine shipments to retail pharmacies such as CVS and Walgreens. A total of one million doses will begin to arrive as of Feb. 11 to about 6,500 stores, according to White House correspondent Jeff Zients. They also announced that allocation of vaccines will be expanding by at least 5%, increasing vaccines given per week to about 10.5 million.

State News

Late 2020-Early 2021

In Texas, teachers have been staying home at higher rates than past years due to COVID-19-related isolation, according to Texas Tribune. In addition to this, Texas Tribune said there have been fewer substitute teachers compared to past years, leading to a shortage throughout the state. As a result, schools have resorted to various solutions. Some have decided to combine classrooms. Others are enlisting administrators or paraprofessionals to teach class, while some are conducting virtual classes.

Feb. 3

Planned Parenthood has sued Texas to keep the state from removing Planned Parenthood from Medicaid. A judge has granted a temporary restraining order through a hearing on Feb. 3, moving the new date for the hearing to Feb. 17. Texas had previously given patients on Planned Parenthood from Medicaid until Feb. 3 to find new doctors. Texas has the highest rate of uninsured people in the country and, according to Texas Tribune, it is hard to qualify for Medicaid in the state.

Feb. 3

According to Texas District 26 Senator Jose Menendez, students across Texas have lost valuable parts of their education due to the COVID-19 pandemic and virtual schooling. The Texas Education Administration has also announced on Feb. 3 that STAAR testing will resume this school year after being canceled last year and will take place in person. According to KXAN, many educators and administrators have been split about the standardized testing, which will be used as a baseline for both students and schools.

Local News

Jan. 27

Austin City Council has approved one proposal to buy a hotel meant to provide housing to the city's unhoused population, but has delayed the vote on the second hotel. The vote on Jan. 27 approved the purchase of the Texas Bungalows Hotel & Suites in North Austin. According to KVUE, the vote on the second hotel proposal is expected to pass. City Council Member Greg Casar said that providing housing will increase stability and provide services such as health care, mental health resources and job aid.

NEW CAMPUS

from page 1

According to Crescenzi, LASA moving into its own campus will allow room to grow as a school in a couple ways. For one, Crescenzi said it will help the school be able to provide more opportunities to the student body.

"I think that the best part will be our ability to really grow, both in terms of total student population and [accepting] more students," Crescenzi said. "But in the same idea, sort of grow in terms of curriculum as well so that we might be able to offer classes or Career and Technical Education programming that we can't currently, just because we're so limited in physical space."

Junior Pete Bates said he is looking forward to new hallways to walk through after three years at the LBJ campus. Aside from a new beginning, Bates said he is excited for other advantages this different campus could offer.

"I think the benefits are that we get to have our own space and we get to have an upstairs and a downstairs," Bates said. "I don't know if the building actually has an upstairs, but I guess we can call it a metaphor. And I think that the whole school will just enjoy being able to have a campus that, at least for me, didn't feel like I was infringing, like I was putting myself in a place where I didn't belong. So I'm totally happy that LBJ gets their building back because I felt like LASA was always kind of like the one that was added onto the building."

Along with growth, LASA will also have its own facilities, including athletic practice spaces. Geometry teacher and football head

coach Glen McNeil said that this was exciting for him.

"We won't have to do all of our athletic practices all over town, we can all just have practice at school," McNeil said. "And so not sharing an athletic department is going to be my number one."

LASA will also have more classrooms as part of the facilities in the new building.



OLD CAMPUS The entrance sign writing welcome to Eastside Memorial. This is a part of the old campus which will change before LASA moves to this location, photo by Emma McBride

Crescenzi said this means fewer teachers will have to move around or share classroom space.

"I would say the second biggest positive...is right now, we probably have 25 or larger percent of the staff that have to shift classrooms all the time," Crescenzi said. "And that's really tough on a teacher, and it limits sometimes, when we're in physical school, what they're willing to bring from this part of the building to that part of the building or what chemicals can be schlepped around."

There are a few challenges in moving, according to Crescenzi. The first one would be physically moving both LASA's and Eastside

Memorial's materials into new classrooms. Crescenzi said that logistical challenges of moving would be the first issue, especially given the current timeline.

"The Eastside Memorial community, their new building has to be finished, ready to go so that they can move on from their current building to the new one," Crescenzi said. But yet we need to get out fast enough so that LBJ can start their construction for their modernization. That's a challenge, it's a very, very tight timeline that is very stressful."

According to Crescenzi, the other challenge is transitioning over from the old building and sharing facilities with LBJ. She said this is because some people feel connected to the current campus, though others may have less connection because of the time away during online school. Bates, however, said he does not feel as connected to the LBJ campus.

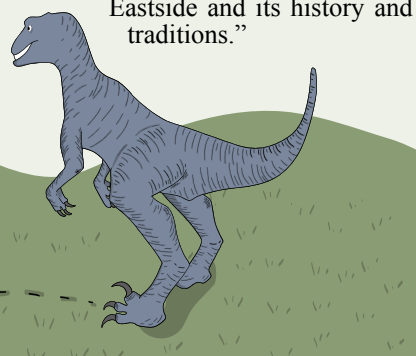
"I think it's been easier because of the pandemic," Bates said. "Because I'm not there going to parties or whatever that would happen if there was an in-person school. And so it's kind of just like a lost land long forgotten in a way. I kind of just left LASA [on] March 12. And I'm going to go to a new building next year like it's a ritual or something."

LASA has history and traditions at the LBJ campus, as does the Eastside Memorial community at theirs. For example, LASA has had a habit of taking yearbook club pictures in front of the Texas statue, which sits at the entrance of the campus. Crescenzi said that leaving memories and traditions like this behind will be somewhat of a challenge.

"I think that one's a little bit of 'we're gonna gain here in the same way we're gonna lose,'" Crescenzi said. "So I think we're just going to have to figure out how LASA and its history and its traditions fits with Johnston and Eastside and its history and traditions."



graphics by Kayla Le



Advocating For Change

Generation Z and the World of Activism

SOPHIA CHAU
AVA DE LEON | student life editors

From the Civil Rights movement to the Vietnam War, youth activists have often been an important part of reform. But suffice to say, today's young people aren't living in the '50s, '60s or '70s. Generation Z is living in a different decade comprised of its own challenges and ways of doing things.

Generation Z is defined by the Pew Research Center as any person born after 1997. This means that Generation Z, often referred to as "Gen Z," has lived their entire lives in a world run by the internet; according to a 2018 Pew Research Center poll, 97% of teens use at least one social media platform. According to Dr. Erica Ciszek, assistant professor at the University of Texas Stan Richards School of Advertising and Public Relations, Generation Z's activism can span the entirety of the political spectrum.

"I think of multiple forms of activism on a spectrum," Ciszek said, "so it could be politically and socially progressive activism, or it could be also what we're seeing in terms of white supremacy activism and anti-semitic activism and insurgency. You can see that, right now, really, really loudly as it relates to digital media like Parler and Twitter. And if you look at the footage from the past couple days in DC, there are quite a few Gen Z-ers in that space."

Ciszek was not alone in bringing up how digital media affects activism. According to AP Government and Constitutional Law teacher Ronny Risinger, technology has completely transformed activism.

"The social media landscape has fundamentally changed everything we know about politics," Risinger said. "For example, you can use an app called Act Blue — the Democrats used that app to raise millions and millions of dollars. So contributing to a candidate that you support anywhere in the nation can be done with a literal click of a button."

Former student and youth activist Conor Heffernan helped plan Austin's March For Our Lives in 2018 to protest gun violence in schools. According to him, social media played a key role in planning that event.

"We had a Facebook event and that's where we got a lot of the attention for the event," Heffernan said. "We also did a whole lot of local press."

Social media has become an important forum for disseminating information. According to senior Abby Greendyk, the Austin Climate Coalition (ACCo), of which she is a co-leader, is active in the digital media landscape for that particular reason.

"Having, for example, Instagram or our website or our Facebook page is really important right now," Greendyk said. "Especially as the social media activism world grows and people are looking for things to get involved in and information and resources...we'd like to be able to be a source of information for people."

Activism Club leader Jaelin Su described actions they've taken that utilize social media. For example, Su and the club made an email template that students could send to Austin Independent School District's (AISD) superintendent to speak out against AISD's policies towards teachers. According to Su, the Activism Club sends out informative posts over Instagram that they hope will increase exposure to certain issues.

"We take an issue that we care about, and then we like to research and find information and stats or whatever, and then decide how we want to share it," Su said.

According to Ciszek, social media can also change how

Generation Z's level of political engagement is perceived. While there is not much data to show whether Generation Z is more or less politically active than other generations, their actions are more visible.

"I'm not sure numerically if this particular generation is more active, I think the tools that each generation utilizes...their activist efforts vary depending on whatever platforms and technologies are available at the time," Ciszek said. "I think with Gen Z, what we're seeing is a lot of the activism is very visible because it is digital and in digital media and social media, so I think that we're more attuned to it within our current technological landscape."

"If you really want to get the job done, you got to be persistent and you have to be ready to be patient, you have to put the work in for a long time."

-Youth Activist Conor Heffernan

But social media isn't the only way youth activists are campaigning for different issues. Senior and Youth and Government club leader Pearl Morosky lobbied for gun control legislation. Morosky lived in Newtown, CT, at the time of the Sandy Hook school shooting.

"We were trying to get them to pass universal background checks, for example, but our role there was kind of more just telling our story and about how gun violence affected our lives," Morosky said.

Young activist groups, like the Austin Liberation Youth Movement (ALYM), also help plan protests, demonstrations and charity projects. Krupali Kumar, one of the leaders of ALYM, described their various programs.

"We planned a mutual aid project for folks living under the I-35 bridge," Kumar said. "We just provided them with a couple necessary resources. We've also hosted some online things. I participated in a webinar/activism workshop, where we worked with other teenagers and taught them how to effectively engage in digital activism and not make it performative and how to transform that digital activism into direct action."

Youth activists also utilize connections to other activist groups. According to Kumar, connections with other like-minded

organizations was how ALYM started out, and continuing those connections has helped them to grow.

"After sort of building connections with them, we were able to establish our credibility in Austin, and that kind of opened up more opportunities for us to collaborate with other organizations," Kumar said.

Connections also encourage others to form their own activist groups. Su decided to form the activism club after being mentored by Brave Communities, an organization that helps young women build leadership skills.

"Personally, I needed somebody who was already involved in it or had already gone through that to help me figure out the process of realizing where I am at in my understanding of the world and figuring out things that I could do," Su said.

Mentorship programs aren't the only way to find help. According to Risinger, getting involved in political parties or campaigns is a very good way to start building connections.

"Through the political parties, you meet the operatives that are involved, and you can use them as a network to build out broader contacts," Risinger said.

However, according to Cisek, that's not all prospective youth activists should be thinking about. She said young people should also be strategic about their goals.

"Think strategically about what you're trying to accomplish and who you can align yourself with," Ciszek said. "What coalitions can you build across movements? And thinking of the tools that you have at your disposal, also looking back historically as to what others have done and has worked and what hasn't worked."

Not only that, but constantly working towards your goal is important, according to Heffernan. Just doing one action won't lead to long-term results, he said.

"A big event is great, but it won't get the job done," Heffernan said. "If you really want to get the job done, you got to be persistent and you have to be ready to be patient, you have to put the work in for a long period of time."

Motivation can be difficult to maintain, according to Morosky. She said it can feel frustrating when a seemingly reasonable piece of legislation is faced with large opposition from powerful advocacy groups like the National Rifle Association.

"There's just tons and tons of work to be done," Morosky said. "It can feel very difficult to keep moving forward when it feels like you're kind of always just fighting for the tiniest little piece of legislation, and there's just so much opposition to it."

It can also be hard for youth activists to make headway because of their age. Former Liberator editor Aaron Booe, who is also one of the leaders of the ALYM, said that young people face the challenge of being dismissed.

"I feel like a lot of us are in that mindset to where it's really easy to dismiss young people, especially young people of color, whenever they try to engage in some form of direct action against the system," Booe said.

Regardless of its challenges, Su believes that activism is a very important subject for young people to get into. After all, it's their future.

"It's up to us at this point to create the world that we want to live in and make progress toward the world that we want for us and generations after us," Su said.

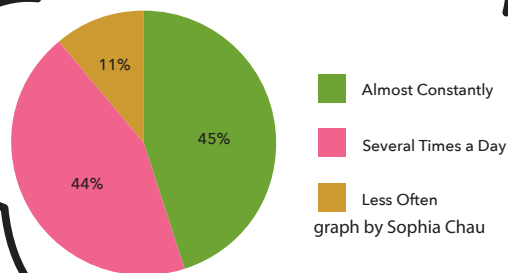
Young Activists



Sarah Parker Remond, born a free woman in 1826, was an abolitionist activist famous for giving her first speech at the age of 16. Even though she was born to a prominent family, Remond struggled for an education in her hometown of Salem, Mass., after being expelled from an unsegregated high school because of backlash from white parents. She was later able to gain an education after she and her family moved to Rhode Island. Later in life, Remond would give speeches across both Britain and the United States, advocating for the abolition of slavery, and, after the Civil War, funds to help freedmen across America. She eventually moved to Italy, gaining a degree in medicine from the Santa Maria Nuova Hospital, and went on to practice medicine for 20 years. Remond died in 1894, leaving behind a legacy of tenacious activism — one that started at just the age of 16.



% Of Gen Z That Use the Internet



SustainUS

SustainUS is a student-led, non-partisan and non-profit organization empowering young people to take control of their future all over the world. They are challenging injustice and handing the reins over to the next generation by providing resources for young kids to get involved with their community. Since 2004, over 600 young people have attended conferences on climate change, social development and biological diversity through SustainUS.

Contact: sustainus.org

Taking it Global

Taking It Global is an online-based community of teen activists looking to make social change. The organization supports youth in their endeavors to engage and connect with local and global challenges. With programs in over 150 countries, students are exposed to opportunities and are surrounded by allies looking to help the next generation grow and inspire change.

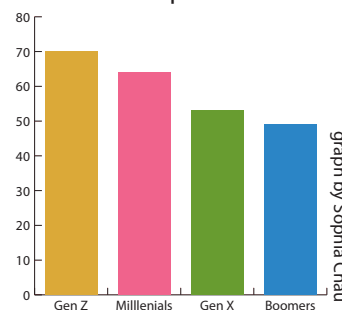
Contact: tigweb.org

Global Youth Connect

Global Youth Connect is an organization for young adults looking to be more involved with humanitarian issues around the world. By engaging in a multitude of programs that prompt critical thinking and test boundaries of physical and emotional growth, youths are able to have an outlet for promoting and protecting human rights.

Contact: globalyouthconnect.org

% That Say the Government "Should do more to solve problems"



graphics by Andrew Lucksinger

Homeless Project 512

LASA sophomores Josh Crowley and Diego Prozzi founded Homeless Project 512 in 2021. Their organization is dedicated to helping citizens experiencing homelessness all over Austin. Through social media, they have been able to share their mission of bringing awareness, recognition and resources to the local unhoused community, such as a project to hand out 100 bagels and 200 water bottles.

Contact: homelessproject512@gmail.com

National Teenage Republicans

National Teenage Republicans aims to recruit young people to serve their community and educate youth on political processes. As members of the organization, teenagers are taught about national and international issues and how current events impact their lives. The organization allows young Republicans to talk with other teenagers and nation leaders who share their values and views.

Contact: teenagerepublicans.org

Young Democrats of America

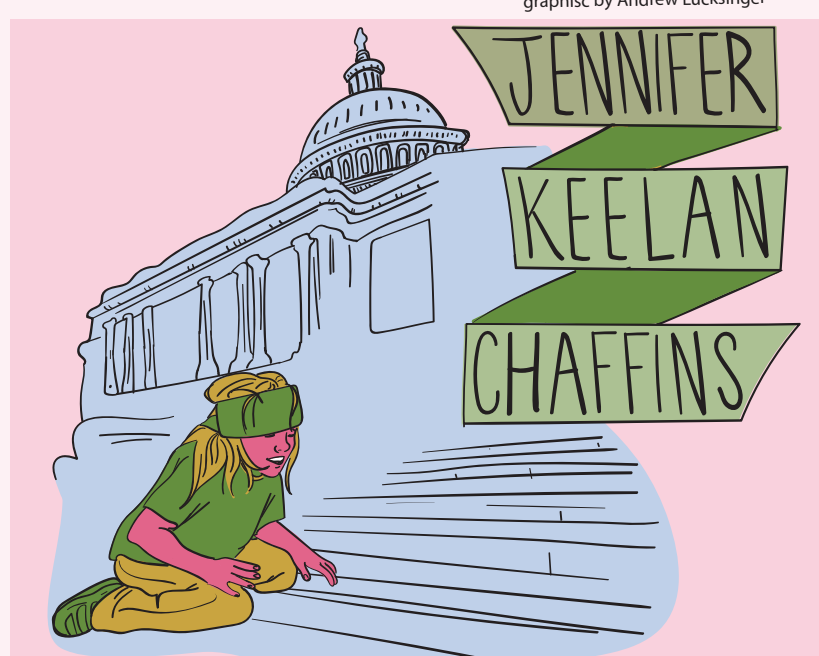
As the largest partisan, youth-led political organization in the country, the Young Democrats of America is committed to advocating for progressive issues and training the future leaders of America. Members participate in hands-on activities within the Democratic party, including campaigns, elections and fundraising. The organization also provides opportunities to network with other Democrats across the country and sharpen political skills.

Contact: yda.org



Through History

Diane Nash, born in 1938, is a nonviolent Civil Rights activist who was most active during the '60s and '70s. She first got her start after experiencing racial discrimination at Fisk University, which propelled her to take a class in nonviolent activism taught by Rev. James Lawson. At the age of 22, she became the Nashville chairperson of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, which would lead to her participating in and organizing lunch counter sit-ins. After the Freedom Riders, who rode across the American South to protest segregation in the bus system, were met with violence in Alabama and had to retreat, Nash continued to lead the movement all the way to Mississippi. That same year, Nash was arrested for teaching nonviolent workshops to young Black activists. She was charged for contempt of court after refusing to sit at the back of the courtroom and served 10 days in jail. She also faced a two-year sentence for teaching the workshops, but a judge refused to see the case. Today, Diane Nash still advocates for nonviolence and racial equality.



Jennifer Keelan-Chaffins, who was born with cerebral palsy, is a disability rights activist. Keelan-Chaffins attended her first protest when she was six years old to advocate for accessible buses. At the age of seven, Keelan-Chaffins and her mother were arrested in Montreal after they accidentally crossed a protest boundary trying to reach the bathroom. A crowd of protestors gathered outside the police station, chanting, "Free the mother! Free the child!" and Keelan-Chaffins and her mother were eventually released. When she was eight, she became the centerpiece of the Capitol Crawl, a protest where activists crawled up the stairs of the U.S. Capitol building to show how inaccessible much of America was to people with disabilities. Just a few months later, on July 26, 1990, the Americans with Disabilities Act would be signed into law. Today, Keelan-Chaffins still participates in activism and has recently published a children's book about the Capitol Crawl called "All the Way to the Top."

Online Freshmen's First Impressions

LILI XIONG | staff writer

Picture a class of freshmen that have been going to school for an entire semester, yet most of them still don't know where their classrooms are located in the building, haven't physically seen their teachers or classmates and couldn't tell you what their locker code is. That is the experience of freshmen at LASA, and worldwide, this year.



While some freshmen have been coming to school in person, most students are learning from home. As ninth graders come from different middle schools, they enter high school unfamiliar with the majority of students. According to freshman Sabine Petusky, virtual school has limited the ways in which students usually become more comfortable with their peers.

"It's definitely been pretty strange," Petusky said. "I'm at a new school and everything's online, so I haven't really been able to meet many people."

Freshman Lyssa Lashus feels that isolation has majorly impacted the ways she interacts with people. For her, making new friends was something she was looking forward to in high school.

"Anytime I'm around someone, I talk a lot and get really energetic about everything because it's just like 'Oh my god, another

human being,'" Lashus said. "Not having that social interaction in class or being able to see everyone has made connecting and communicating with people harder. That just made the first year of high school more frustrating and also made me a little nostalgic for the middle school days when everything was normal and you could just walk into a classroom and talk to your friends."

Freshmen are finding ways around the looming feeling of isolation. Freshman Aurna Mukherjee makes a point of texting people regularly and going on socially distanced walks with classmates.

"I cannot have a day where I don't talk to someone, so even if it's on text, I do try to talk to people every day," Mukherjee said. "Also, in a way, it's been helpful to spend more time with my family because before [COVID-19] started, I didn't get to spend as much time with them. Just talking and not staying locked up in my room for the whole day is a coping mechanism in its own way."

Social life aside, LASA has an almost notorious reputation of being academically challenging, according to Petusky. After having experienced a full semester at LASA, she feels that the workload has been manageable to a degree.

"It's honestly not as bad as I thought it would be," Petusky said, "which isn't to say that it's necessarily easy, it's just I'm used to having all of my classes every day — so with a blocked schedule, we only have to do work

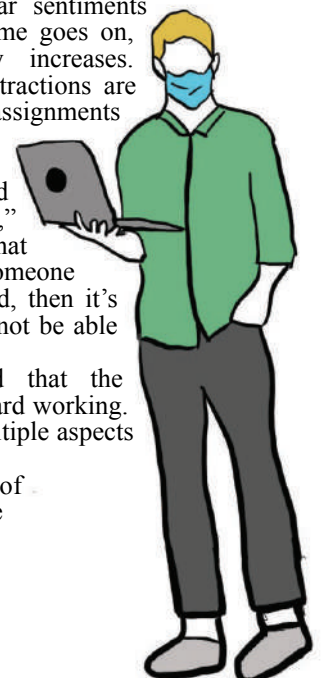
for four classes every day. It's just that when you throw things like long-term assignments in, it can make it really difficult. I don't have something always keeping me on track. It's all just me getting my work done on my own, and there's just so many distractions in my house which makes focusing kind of difficult."

Mukherjee expressed similar sentiments to Petusky, adding that as time goes on, the workload progressively increases. According to Mukherjee, distractions are the main issue to keeping assignments under control.

"It is definitely manageable as long as you start soon and finish your work on time," Mukherjee said. "I think that the main problem is that if someone doesn't start when it's assigned, then it's very easy to procrastinate and not be able to finish."

Overall, Lashus expressed that the people she has met are super hard working. Lashus was impressed with multiple aspects of the school.

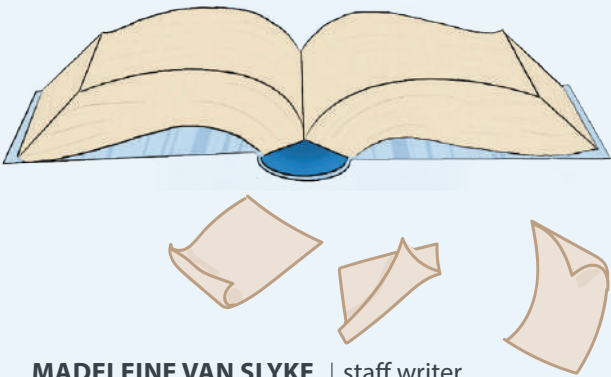
"Although school kind of sucks right now, I just feel like I'm surrounded by all of these really, really intelligent people who want to work and dedicate themselves to their projects," Lashus said.



graphics by Ava De Leon

Extensive Knowledge Students Take Extension Classes

graphic by Ahnsa Campbell and Somaya Jimenez-Haham

MADELINE VAN SLYKE
AVA DE LEON | staff writer
student life editor

A new opportunity to learn has come to LASA in the form of extension classes. From Harry Potter Trivia to discussions about Bigfoot, extension classes at LASA cover a variety of topics that would appeal to students.

Before the beginning of the school year, LASA offered students the chance to participate in extension classes taught by teachers at LASA. The classes consisted of a multitude of topics for students to choose from and provided information on new and unusual subjects, instructions on how to do or create something and helpful life tips. This was the first year that LASA has introduced extension classes as a way to compensate for pandemic precautions. With a majority of students remaining at home, these classes have provided different opportunities that would not have been possible otherwise. Freshman Ramona González has attended several extension classes this year.

"[Extension classes] are basically a way to find something new that you want to learn about or learn to do," González said. "There have been many different ones offered so far, and I believe there are new ones regularly. They are a really good way to connect with people who are interested in what you are and meet new people."

Students, especially freshmen, have missed out on some of the typical LASA introductory events. However, these classes gave students the opportunity to try and get up to speed with high school life and get to know some of the teachers at LASA. Freshman Lucy Pigford reflected on her experience in the sessions she attended.

"I took the 'Philosophy of the Good Place,' 'Chess for Beginners,' 'Harry Potter Trivia' and 'Procrastinators Unite,'" Pigford said. "I liked how there was such a wide variety. It was cool how teachers shared their passions and interests with the students. Since I'm a freshman, it was nice to meet potential classmates with the same interests as me."

González also mentioned how she enjoyed the opportunity to sample multiple hobbies in such a short amount of time. The flexibility of the schedules and the brevity of the sessions allowed students to attend multiple classes in one day and experience many different interesting subjects and topics.

"I like the idea that you can learn and try something new for just one day and one period of time and that you are not signed up for an entire semester class of something that you do not enjoy," González said. "It is like a little bite of a hobby or topic that you can now choose to go deeper into or not."

With the classes being before the school year, students were able to attend sessions without having to worry about missing out on other classes or getting caught up in school work. The availability and convenience of the classes allowed Pigford to take part in most of the ones she was interested in.

"I liked how they were before school started because then I actually had time to participate," Pigford said. "I appreciated how they were free to students and you could take up to four."

Students have found these classes helpful for different reasons. According to freshman Ella Lilly, they were a fun way to change up the day-to-day schedule and learn about new activities while meeting new people.

"I originally was just like, 'What the heck, why not?'" Lilly said. "I believe my first class was 'The Basics of Sourdough,' which was fun when we were all stuck at home. I really liked that class, so I went to another and another. It was fun that I got to meet people when I hadn't seen anyone new in ages, even though it was through Zoom. I had found myself getting into the same routine with what I was doing, which, if I'm being honest, was really nothing, and these classes got me started on activities I really enjoy."

Extension classes allowed freshmen to be introduced to the LASA experience. Many students, like Pigford, hadn't had an educational outlet for most of quarantine, and Pigford found the classes to be a good segue into a normal school year.

"I suppose it was good to learn and do something educational before school started since I hadn't done much learning over spring and summer," Pigford said. "My classes really didn't relate to COVID, which was a nice change, but it was a fun way to learn during quarantine and meet people I otherwise wouldn't."

Managing Disabilities and Online School

EDITH HOLMSTEN | staff writer

While there have been multiple changes to the way education looks this school year due to COVID-19, adaptations to an online environment created opportunities for students with learning accommodations. Many accommodations that were provided to students in the classroom are still easily accessible online.

Students noticed that certain reading tools are more accessible online than with physical documents, and accommodations for extra time on assessments are easier due to asynchronous class time. Another reason students are finding online environments beneficial is that online interactions take away social pressures about accepting accommodations.

Academic counselor Sandra Woodrow said that she is proud of LASA's accommodations for many students during COVID-19. According to her, many accommodations, like preferential seating for students with vision difficulties who need to sit towards the front of the classroom, are even available at home.

"We can't provide preferential seating, but you're at your house, so you can sit wherever you want to at your house, wherever your laptop or Chromebook will go," Woodrow said. "Most of the things that would look like we can't provide control over, students just would naturally be able to get them at their house."

Similar to the accommodations for seating, Woodrow said that LASA has also adapted its accommodations for students with anxiety about having Zoom meetings recorded or having their cameras on. Students can now turn their videos off if needed.

"For some of those students, we can have an accommodation of they can turn their screen off for a certain number of minutes," Woodrow said. "What, in the past, might have been breaks-as-needed where they just step in the hall, now the breaks-as-needed might include turning off your screen."

Senior Kyle Read, who has dysgraphia and ADHD, found that learning online has allowed him to use his accommodations, like taking extra time on tests, more freely. Read said that during a normal school year, he felt awkward asking for extra time in front of his classmates, but online learning allows him to take extra time without having to ask in front of other students.

"With the adaptation of a computer, most of the teachers, when they give us a test, the rest of class is asynchronous. So when I

finish a test, I can finish it under my own time," Read said. "I don't need to ask a teacher for extra time."

Read also said the social stigma has been erased for using his typing accommodation. Read used to be one of the only students typing during class, but online learning has made his accommodation more common since all students are online.

"The fact that I don't handwrite my stuff doesn't matter," Read said. "So actually, I'm not really using my typing accommodation right now anymore because everyone's using it."

Junior Eli Clark, who is receiving reading and breaks accommodations for dyslexia and anxiety, agreed with Read that being online has helped him better use reading and writing accommodations. Clark said that because most documents are digital now, it is easier to use special browsers for reading assignments instead of struggling with physical copies of documents.

"I also have this thing called Open Font, which is an extension you can download on your computer or on your Chromebook, which specifically changes the font on every page you're on, unless it's something like a PDF; I can't change that unless you went in and edited it," Clark said, "which makes it a lot easier for people with dyslexia to read."

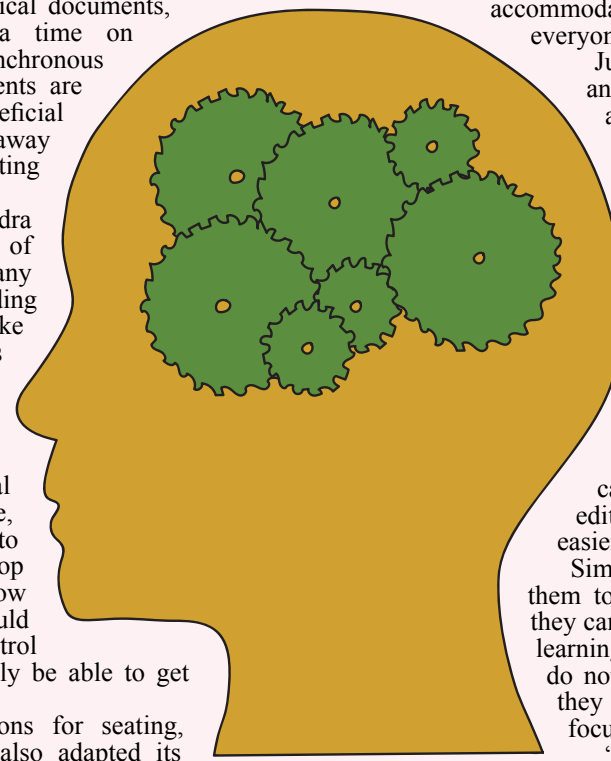
Similar to how online learning has allowed them to read documents easier, Clark said that they can still take breaks during class with online learning. However, they said that they sometimes do not feel comfortable taking breaks because they worry their teachers think they are not focusing.

"It's a lot harder for me to ask for that now on Zoom because before, they knew that

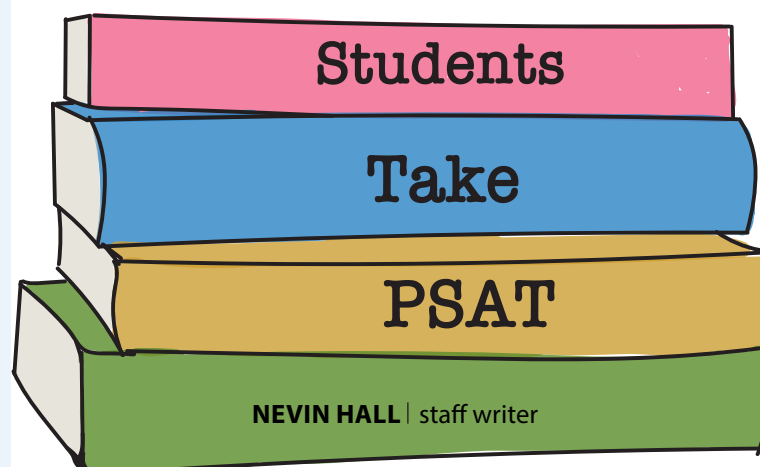
regardless of either I might be going to the nurse or just taking a quick walk, but they know I'm still on campus, and I'll be back soon," Clark said, "versus when you're on Zoom, I feel like I have more anxiety about asking them that because I don't want it to seem like, 'Oh, well, this kid just turned off the camera, and they're just messing around.'"

Read, Clark and Woodrow have all agreed that online learning has been beneficial due to asynchronous time, extra online tools and the release of social pressures. Woodrow said that she feels there are not many accommodations that have been completely unavailable due to online learning.

"I don't think there has been anything that we can't provide that isn't basically already included, really, in virtual learning," Woodrow said.



graphic by Susan Ballesteros



NEVIN HALL | staff writer

graphic by Somaya Jimenez-Haham

Every year, juniors across the country prepare for the PSAT, a test run by the College Board that prepares students for the SAT and qualifies juniors for the National Merit Scholarship. The test is standardized, but in a pandemic, the school year is shaping up to be far from standard.

This year, for a variety of reasons, the PSAT looked different from normal. Many students did not take the PSAT this year due to COVID-19 concerns, others were forced to take the exam over the internet and juniors took a socially distanced in-person test. Concerns over COVID-19 have also permeated the planning process for administering the exam.

Magnet Director Andy Paulson was a part of the planning process for the PSAT this year. According to Paulson, there have been multiple versions of the plan for PSAT testing.

"I think we're on plan E, E or F," Paulson said. "It's been colossal different for the EOC test, for the STAAR test. It's just been plan after plan after plan."

It has not only been the planning process for the execution of this exam that has changed, but also how the exam is valued by different groups of test-takers. Suzanna Ammenheuser, owner of Be You College Coaching, is aware of the different College Board

criteria to qualify for the National Merit Scholarship.

"The PSAT that the 11th graders are going to take is the same PSAT that they would have taken in the real world for National Merit qualification," Ammenheuser said. "Anybody who chooses to take the PSAT at home, 10th or 11th graders, then they will be taking a practice, which is an important distinction."

In a normal year LASA students take a junior-level PSAT as both freshmen and sophomores. Junior Sally Edwards feels that practice tests are important for preparation.

"I think it made me feel a lot more comfortable taking the actual test," Edwards said. "I get pretty nervous for finals, or big tests and stuff like that, and being able to have that sense of repetition — just having that sense of a pattern, I think, helped me not feel as worried for this time."

Some students took PSAT/SAT prep courses along with their freshman and sophomore year PSATs. Ammenheuser agrees that the preparatory PSATs freshmen and sophomores take at LASA can be useful for the junior year PSAT.

"I think the sophomore one is important," Ammenheuser said. "The sophomore one is important because it gives you a benchmark for what you need to practice before your junior year PSAT, which matters."

For freshmen and sophomores at LASA this year, their PSAT was over the virtual medium. Paulson understands the possible consequences of this new testing experience, especially when it comes to cheating.

"If the kid takes it seriously and takes it in their home, and they don't use any other materials, and they do the same thing they would have done if they were taking it in person, I think it's going to be valid," Paulson said. "Now, if a kid cheats, they're only going to get the score, they would have cheated."

According to Ammenheuser, the question is whether or not the test scores will be affected by the circumstances the world is under at this moment.

"I think the scores will probably look the same," Ammenheuser said. "I don't think there's been enough gap in learning to make a difference, so I don't think there's going to be any penalization for students that are taking it now."

"Not Alone" Exhibit Addresses Human Trafficking

Bullock Museum Aims to Educate the Public

MALVIKA PRADHAN | staff writer

The Bob Bullock Museum is using its new exhibit, "Not Alone," to educate the public about human trafficking and provide informative resources. The temporary exhibit features artifacts and stories to help bring viewers closer to the issue and combat misinformation.

Human trafficking is using force, coercion or fraud to sell someone for sex or labor. President Barack Obama once called the practice "modern day slavery," and Texas ranks tenth in the nation for the highest rate of human trafficking.

Exhibit curator Angie Glasker said the museum was inspired by locally-developed campaigns centered on education and prevention of human trafficking. Her idea first came to mind a few years ago.

"We're really inspired by the Office of the Governor and their child trafficking group within that office, as well as a recent campaign called 'Be the One' that came out of the attorney general's office," Glasker said. "It was in 2018 that we started thinking about doing human trafficking as a topic for an exhibit."

The exhibit focuses on educating and spreading awareness about human trafficking while also giving people knowledge on prevention strategies. Glasker said she hopes that people will leave with more knowledge and a deeper understanding of the subject.

"We're really trying to get people to have a baseline knowledge of what human trafficking is because it is something that I think is misunderstood, or a lot of people, I think, confuse trafficking with human smuggling, and that's not the case," Glasker said. "It's really giving people that baseline knowledge. An exhibit like this also allows us to humanize the problem."

In the exhibit, there are artifacts that help communicate survivors' experiences, as well as donated artifacts from other anti-human trafficking organizations. While some of them are everyday items, the significance behind them is much deeper.

"The exhibit is actually a little different than a lot of our exhibits in that it's not as artifact-heavy as other temporary exhibits," Glasker said. "We do have some artifacts. The majority of those artifacts come from either survivors that we talked to and helped us with this exhibit or from other organizational partners. For example, we have this backpack kit that Love 146 in Houston distributes to people who are at risk, and the kit includes things that someone who's vulnerable to trafficking or somebody who is being trafficked would find useful or would help them to better cope with their situation; so things like hygiene



GIVING A VOICE The exhibit places a focus on giving survivors a space to be heard. Much of the visual content is provided by previous victims. photo courtesy of the Bullock Texas State History Museum



DISPLAYS The exhibit uses displays to bring visitors closer to the issue. They seek to communicate stories of resilience. photo courtesy of the Bullock Texas State History Museum

products, there's a journal, a rain poncho, that sort of thing."

The museum partnered with survivors of human trafficking to share their stories. Tori McKinley is one of those survivors, and she said the exhibit is a very effective way to raise awareness.

"I never in my life thought that I would be in a museum," McKinley said. "A lot of kids do go to museums, and it's not an explicit, derogatory or shameful way to talk about trafficking. A lot of people get scared by it because it has the word 'sex' in it, [but] it's not about sex. It's about violence against women and men and how to protect yourself, so I think it's a good way to reach children in a non-threatening way... I think it's a good start, I think it's one of many ways and a very creative way [to] teach about sex trafficking."

Katherine McGibbon became an advocate against human trafficking after overcoming it herself and realizing the lack of awareness of the issue. She explained that the misinformation and absence of education surrounding human trafficking contribute to the problem.

"I'm an overcomer myself, and I saw that there was a huge need just for awareness and education," McGibbon said. "And I realized that a lot of people did not know what trafficking was or they do not know what trafficking is, and a lot of survivors and victims possibly don't even know either, so they don't know if they can self-identify... By getting the word out there, they can feel like they're not alone."

The Polaris Project, the organization that operates the National Human Trafficking Hotline, worked on 11,500 cases that were reported to the

hotline in 2019. However, the organization said human trafficking cases are usually underreported despite the large extent to which it occurs, according to McGibbon.

"It's not just a foreign problem — it's a domestic problem as well," McGibbon said. "It's very, very prevalent in the United States. And it's in our backyards, it's in our schools, our churches, our neighborhoods, and our communities. It's hidden in plain sight. That's what makes it so dangerous."

McKinley agrees that there is a lack of awareness. She said that people might not be aware because it can be hard to hear and talk about, and that governments can often shy away from talking about the topic.

"When you are searching for a place to live, you're searching for a good area that you're going to feel safe and protected in, and so it's hard to believe that an area that you spent time researching may have some negative things going on in it, or some bad things being done or just bad people," McKinley said. "The cities that we live in, they don't want people to know that something like that is going on in their neighborhood because then they won't move there and be involved in the economy... It's really difficult for a lot of people to hear, they just don't want to hear about it because they can't. For some people, it's just such a tough issue that they can't handle hearing about it and they don't want to know."

The exhibit is open until May 30, 2021. The Bob Bullock Museum webpage has pictures and information about the exhibit for anyone who isn't comfortable going in-person. The National Human Trafficking Hotline is 888-373-7888, or text "HELP" or "INFO" to 233733.



ARTIFACTS The exhibit contains artifacts that are a part of survivors' stories. These artifacts serve to better communicate the raw experience of being trafficked. photo courtesy of the Bullock Texas State History Museum



VIDEO Various mediums are used to educate and communicate with visitors. One of those mediums is a video explaining social media's role in modern day human trafficking. photo courtesy of the Bullock Texas State History Museum

Teachers Turn to Online Platforms

The Liberator asked teachers to share their favorite tools to keep students engaged in virtual classes. These are their top picks.

NORAH HUSSAINI | staff writer

Flipgrid - Caroline Pinkston

Flipgrid is a video platform that lets students share their ideas out loud instead of writing them down and turning them in. Students can have discussions and respond to each other, voicing their thought processes and opinions. Caroline Pinkston, freshman English teacher, just discovered Flipgrid this year.

"Flipgrid was the first time that I've played around with an external tool that involved recording yourself talking out loud," Pinkston said. "I found that some students who don't like to write or maybe are not very strong writers were able to give really great responses on Flipgrid."

Most students are now online and may not be able to ask or answer questions in class due to shaky internet, loud noises or distractions. Pinkston feels Flipgrid is a great way to change that.

"The biggest thing I find is that far fewer people participate over Zoom," Pinkston said. "Flipgrid is a way for me to hear the voices of students that I might otherwise never hear over the course of the year."

Pear Deck - Lily Lee

Pear Deck is an online platform that lets students interact with and view their teachers' slideshow presentations as well as type out answers on their own virtual whiteboard. Students can only see their answers, while teachers can see all answers and provide feedback. According to Lily Lee, French I and AP French teacher, this isn't the only way to use Pear Deck.

"I like using the drawing feature with mapping, and there's also multiple-choice quizzes," Lee said. "Pear Deck gives me a lot of ways to engage and help students out in class, and there's so many activities you can use."

Usually, Lee shares the questions on her slides with Pear Deck and lets students have a few moments to answer the questions on their virtual whiteboards. Once done, she reviews the answers on Pear Deck, shares her screen and shows the common mistakes that were made.

"We can't do a lot of in-class games, discussions or activities," Lee said. "Pear Deck lets me do those things and helps make things fun and a little more engaging online."

Padlet - Allie Hill

During COVID-19, online school is a weekly repetition of eight classes, bringing less of the social interaction and variation that in-person school does. However, freshman Biology teacher Allie Hill has brought a new form of fun into her classes this year. Hill uses Padlet, an online discussion board, to let students post memes.

"This year where we are virtual without all of our external platforms, would be so much harder to teach," Hill said. "I like adding variety and using various tools so we can get exposure to some different forms of learning. I enjoy Padlet because it's a way for students to anonymously post and not have that added pressure if they don't like to ask questions."

In addition to her meme Padlet, Hill also has another Padlet specifically for students to ask questions. For her, Padlet is a light and fun alternative to other platforms.

"I used a Padlet because it's easy to learn, there are good security settings and it's fun!" Hill said.

Quizlet - Valerie Zhong

Quizlet is one of the more well-known external platforms. Its features include games, practice tests and flashcards. Chinese teacher Valerie Zhong favors Quizlet over other platforms, noting that it is particularly useful for language learning.

"I like Quizlet because lots of teachers put in their language sets and vocabulary sets, so I can copy and paste and modify it to save time and change it to what our students need," Zhong said. "I think it's handy, saves time and is versatile."

Zhong isn't the only person who finds Quizlet to be the best online education platform. She has conducted surveys among her students to see which platform was polling the highest.

"I gave them a list of all different tools and said, 'Which ones do you think are helpful in your learning and which are less helpful?' Quizlet came out on top all across the board," Zhong said.

Spring Musical in Limbo

Theater Program Evaluates Options

SUSAN BALLESTEROS | staff writer

Theater productions around the country have had to shut down due to the COVID-19 pandemic. For the Alley Cat Players (ACP), LASA's theater troupe, it is still unknown whether they will be able to put on their yearly spring musical. It is also unclear whether UIL theater competitions will happen, and the ACP spring show hinges on that decision. In the meantime, the ACP has been exploring new ways to safely hold auditions and rehearsals.

Junior Olivia Eric-Griffinson, an ACP representative, said that COVID-19 has had a large impact on the ACP theater community. She explained that the ACP, in her opinion, have been hurt more than many other extracurriculars at LASA.

"COVID has had a really negative impact on theater, which you can see by the fact that we didn't do any shows in the fall," Eric-Griffinson said. "It has been difficult to recruit new people — especially freshmen. It's so difficult to reach out to people virtually that you've never met, and even more to find new people who are interested. UIL is happening soon, which is fantastic, but it's frustrating that sports have been able to continue somewhat normally since the beginning of the year while theater has been hurt so much by COVID."

She explained that most things about the spring musical, and even the topic of the musical itself, are still undecided. Junior ACP President Jennifer Ramirez was able to provide more information on their plans for the future.

"We're running it based on if UIL happens," Ramirez said. "As of right now, we've held video auditions for UIL and are hoping to practice online until we absolutely have to rehearse in person, which would probably be the mandatory rehearsal right before competition."

According to her, if Austin is still under Stage 5 regulations by that time, UIL will not hold any competitions. If UIL competitions are permitted to take place, however, the ACP is considering drive-in performances. Junior ACP Officer Lucy Sugawa said that the department will place a strong focus on safety, but many details are still being worked out.

"It looks like if a musical is going to happen, emphasis on the if, we're hoping it can be outdoors, sort of a drive-thru musical sort of thing," Sugawa said. "We're working on rehearsal plans, and some of our techs are drawing up plans for building an outdoor stage."

Tentative plans indicate that actors would wear masks throughout the show, and a sound system would be rigged so that both audience members and actors would be able to socially distance, regardless of the number of people. In the meantime, the ACP have held auditions for the musical online.

"This year all auditions for shows have been virtual," Ramirez said. "Anyone can submit a video with a monologue or anything depending on what the requirements are, but we are keeping all auditions virtual."

According to Ramirez, in-person rehearsals were held a few times a week in the theater parking lot when the pandemic first started, but that has changed because of the need for stricter regulations under the city's Stage 5 precautions. Now, all auditions and rehearsals are online.

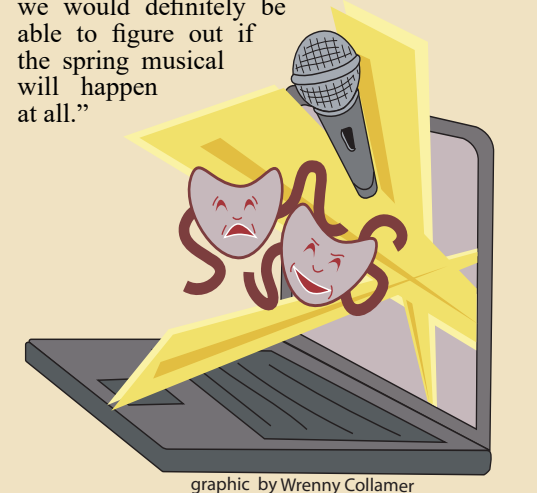
"We're actually doing a play right now, and virtual rehearsals over Zoom have been working okay," Sugawa said. "I would guess that with the musical, rehearsals would have to be more of a combination between virtual and in-person, but the department is really focused on safety, so it would be masked at all times, outdoors, and socially distanced."

The switch to online rehearsals has called for changes to how the actors practice their roles. Due to how difficult it is to move around on a Zoom call, Ramirez said they now place a focus on practicing lines and developing characters instead of stage directions and the blocking of the actors on the stage.

"Because we're confined to our houses during rehearsal, we focus a lot more on character building and mostly just going through lines," Ramirez said. "Specifically for UIL, we were told that we wouldn't be going back to in-person. Even then, the blocking would be made so that we're not too close to each other, and we would basically learn it there and maybe add some blocking into the Zoom calls if permitted, but it's a bit hard whenever you're not next to the person you're talking to."

According to Sugawa, if everything works out, auditions for the spring musical will be in late February and performances in April or May. For now, however, Ramirez said they'll still have to wait and see if plans will go through.

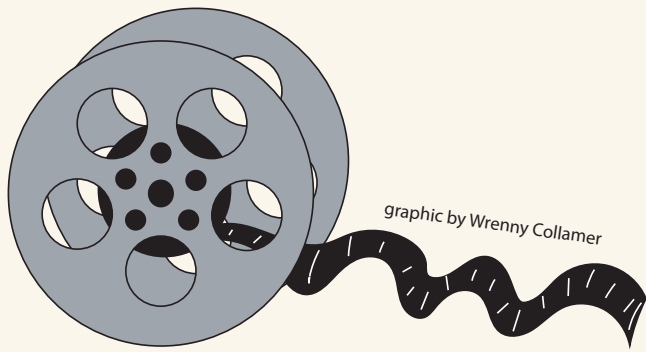
"We're really just going with the situation," Ramirez said. "Everything is up in the air, and we don't really know. We haven't gotten a cast list for UIL as of right now, meaning we haven't really started the actual rehearsal process, and competition is set for the Friday in March before spring break, so once we get closer, we'll be able to figure out whether or not we will be performing and competing at UIL, and then after that, we would definitely be able to figure out if the spring musical will happen at all."



graphic by Wrenny Collamer

Entertainment Picks

Worthwhile Documentaries



"Free Solo"

2018

WRENNY COLLAMER | entertainment editor

Alex Honnald's journey to conquer El Capitan free of ropes, as portrayed in "Free Solo," is inspiring and gripping — as he dangles from rocks hundreds of feet high, it's hard not to hold your breath. To a viewer, Honnald's persistence and athleticism are sometimes inconceivable, but his journey is relatable in its struggles, exploring the timeless internal conflict between passion and relationships. The film investigates Honnald's physical and emotional process of working towards the goal of El Capitan, and his desire to eliminate his emotional and material ties to his own existence comes to the forefront as he grapples with what it means to attempt El Capitan. As the film lets viewers into Alex's life and mind, it becomes increasingly clear that his approach to everything he does is unconventional. It's not the stunning visuals or physical achievement that make the film special — it's Alex. His dialogue surrounding free soloing, a sport that regularly puts him next to death, provides a unique perspective on the way life can be lived and raises questions on how death should be viewed.

"Too Funny to Fail"

2017

MAX DOMEL | entertainment editor

If you heard that the creative team behind a sketch comedy show included names like Dana Carvey, Robert Smigel, Steve Carrell, Stephen Colbert, Louis C.K., Heather Morgan, Charlie Kaufman and more, you wouldn't expect it to only last on the air for less than two months and be regarded as a total failure. However, after buddies Carvey and Smigel left Saturday Night Live in 1993 and struck a deal for their own primetime slot on ABC three years later, not even that incredible crew of talented "nobodies" could prevent the quick demise of "The Dana Carvey Show." The entertaining story of this comedic phenomenon was chronicled in the 2017 documentary "Too Funny to Fail: The Life & Death of the Dana Carvey Show," which compiles interviews with some of the show's members sharing funny (and embarrassing) memories of how it all came together and fell apart with old clips from the actual show. With hilarious bits like "Waiters Nauseated by Food," "Germans Who Say Nice Things," "Stupid Pranksters" and plenty of spot-on Beatles impressions, the amount of chemistry and creative energy presented in the film makes it unbelievable that the show wasn't a hit. Maybe its more over-the-top and presentational content was just ahead of its time.

"My Octopus Teacher"

2020

WRENNY COLLAMER | entertainment editor

The popular 2020 Netflix documentary "My Octopus Teacher" chronicles the unlikely relationship that filmmaker Craig Foster forms with an octopus. It takes viewers below the surface of the powerful waters of South Africa's southern coast, uncovering the alien underwater world and flaunting the environment's mesmerizing visuals. The exotic hues and strange animals captivate the eye as Foster's subdued voice recounts how his relationship with an octopus changed his life. The story doesn't feel like a science lesson; rather, Foster's emotions feel relatable and universal, humanizing nature and forcing the viewer to question: "Who is my octopus?" Present throughout the film is Craig's desire to blur the line that exists between man and nature — through his story, he explores the fragility of human intervention in nature and makes clear the undeniable connection that links the two realms. "My Octopus Teacher" serves as a testament to what humans can learn from the natural world and a tribute to the marvel of the secrets that lie below the surface, but more than anything, it proves the importance of relationships in the human experience.

"J. Cole: 4 Your Eyez Only"

2017

MAX DOMEL | entertainment editor

A few months after the release of his fourth studio album, "4 Your Eyez Only," in late 2016, native North Carolina rapper J. Cole released a 50-minute documentary to go along with it. There's two contrasting sides to the piece: the music video scenes and the documentation scenes. In the former, colors in the background are fantastically manipulated to show pink grass, blue trees and a sky that is an accentuated vibrant orange, all enhanced by the use of a more static-esque lens. In the latter, Cole and director Scott Lazer develop a very down to earth aesthetic that reflects Cole's more humble and conscientious personality. The scenes are made up of many powerful and personal portrayals and informal interviews with Black people on their everyday struggles and resilience in modern society in places including Baton Rouge, La, Ferguson, Miss, and Jonesboro, Ark. Each of these scenes acts as a preface to the next song, exploring similar themes. The impressive storytelling both on the mic and behind the camera throughout is always compelling and makes for an all-around important cultural experience.

Local Cooks Transition to Virtual Culinary Classes

KATIE BUSBY | staff writer

Over time, Austin has garnered a reputation for being a city with a high-profile food scene, whether from famous restaurants, grocery stores or even smaller cooking companies. Now during the COVID-19 pandemic, though, local chefs, organizations and individuals that offer culinary classes have been turning to online formats to share their cooking knowledge and show people how to make food from the comfort of their homes.

When Thomas Morris created one such organization called Cuisine Counselor, he would usually go to people's houses to cook for them, but interactions had to be adjusted when the pandemic came. Following positive reception of some of his newer, online content, he shifted his focus to teaching virtual cooking classes.

"When we first stopped being able to do things, I started making some cooking videos...like I did one on how to make banana bread," Morris said. "And then I did a couple like that. Some people saw them, and they thought, 'Oh, this would be kind of fun. Would you be willing to do this as a class? That sounds like fun.' Then, as they say, the rest is history."

LASA French teacher Rachel Pate teaches said she was exploring cooking more during the pandemic and decided to put together a cooking class along with Latin teacher Aaron Pellowski. This class was included in the masterclass program done by PFLASA.

"He thought that it would be a really fun opportunity," Pate said. "And we had been cooking a lot in lockdown and doing Blue Apron recipes and kind of trying different things. He thought, 'Wouldn't this be fun?'"

Layla Sojoodi, a 7th grader at Lamar Middle School, has been taking virtual cooking classes because of her love of cooking and baking, and also to learn something new during quarantine. She said that despite the con of getting less direct help, her experiences have been positive.

"I wasn't thinking that it would be as great as an in-person class because you don't really get the same experiences," Sojoodi said. "But so far, all of the classes I've taken have been really fun...it's nice to have the materials at your house...and if you need to stop for a second, you could just record it, and then listen to it later."

Pate said that she likes the reach she can have with her masterclass program and the way people can connect through something as simple as making a meal at home. Like Sojoodi, she also pointed out the benefits of having one's own supplies at home.

"I mean, I love that that expands our reach, and I think I could see something like this moving forward, even when we're no longer sheltering at home due to COVID," Pate said. "And I think it's really hands-on. People can use their own materials, which...is hard [in person] because you're provided with all of these really great kitchen tools that you may not have at home. But if you're cooking along with people from your house, you can use what you have, and you can be comfortable. And it's still kind of a fun way to connect and get the family together."

Morris said that he enjoys bringing people together and having them enjoy some time cooking. According to him, helping others learn something new and gaining new skills they didn't know they could do is fulfilling. "It's about making people happy,"

Morris said. "I get to spend an hour and a half, give or take, in some people's lives and give them some enjoyment. Part of that enjoyment is, we make things that they might not otherwise make because they think it's too difficult. And so, at the end, people are saying, 'Oh my god, I made this.'"

graphics by Wrenny Collamer

"Loki," "Black Widow," "Eternals" and More

New Marvel Content to Look Out for in 2021

EWAN MCINERNEY | staff writer

This year will be a very eventful one for Marvel fans, as it marks the beginning of Phase Four in the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU), which will feature movies and TV shows released from 2021 to 2023 on Disney Plus. This newest chapter of storylines within the MCU is particularly notable compared to previous phases for both its inclusion of TV shows and in creating a more planned-out connection between all of the content to an overarching narrative.

The first release, the original series, "WandaVision," premiered on Jan. 15, and takes place after the events of 2019's "Avengers: Endgame," centering around the relationship between Avengers Wanda Maximoff and Vision. "The Falcon and the Winter Soldier," a series that will start in March, will also serve as a follow-up to "Endgame." "Black Widow," set for May 7, will focus on Natasha Romanoff and her life after "Captain America: Civil War" and will be the first new movie in almost two years.

"Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings" will be released on July 9, marking the cinematic debut for Shang-Chi, a superhero that gains the power to duplicate himself and eventually joins the Avengers. Spider-Man will also be brought back in December for a second sequel, and "Eternals," set for release on Nov. 7, will introduce new characters to the MCU based on an alien race of humanoid that appear in comic books of the same name.

Another series that will premiere this year is "Loki," based on Loki's experiences after he steals the Tesseract in "Avengers: Endgame" and uses it to alter history and create new timelines. Junior Hudson Day said he is looking forward to the series because of its acting, timeline and character development.

"Out of all the Marvel content coming out this year, I'm probably most looking forward to 'Loki' because I love Tom Hiddleston's unique acting and funny vibe that he brings to the viewing experience," Day said. "Loki's character is also extremely interesting, and I think that there's a lot of opportunity for Marvel to bring in more nuanced aspects of his past, personality and future in the Marvel Universe. This show also has a potential to add a lot of previously unseen content to the MCU, which could help to diversify the community that is interested in Loki and Thor specifically."

Junior Rohan Malhotra is looking forward to future episodes of "WandaVision" as well as the new Doctor Strange movie that will be released later in Phase Four. He said he enjoys how the characters evolve and how their connections to other parts of the MCU are revealed.

"I've been watching 'WandaVision' and looking forward to future episodes, and I'm also excited about the new Doctor Strange movie: 'Doctor Strange and the Multiverse of Madness,'" Malhotra said. "Doctor Strange has always been one of my favorite heroes because of how complex his character is, and I've been wondering what they'll do with him in upcoming movies. I'll also enjoy seeing how the story arc of the new Doctor Strange movie fits into the Marvel Universe and connects to other movies and shows released in this year and in past years, like 'WandaVision,' 'Loki' and the new Spider-Man movie."

Although longtime fans may be more concerned to see how new Marvel content will affect the progression of the overall story universe, some movies will also likely serve as

opportunities to draw new fans into the Marvel franchise. Day thinks that the third Spider-Man film will be the most well-received by the general public for this reason.

"The previous Spider-Man movies were wildly popular and didn't require much previous knowledge about the Marvel Cinematic Universe," Day said. "They were good for families because they were much more mild and less violent than some of the other Marvel movies. They also do a better job incorporating common themes that are more relatable to the audience, things like high school, teenage years and coming of age."

On the other hand, Malhotra thinks that the more popular Marvel films set to be released this year will bring back old storylines. He said that reprising characters will appeal more to those longtime Marvel fans.

"If Marvel is making a movie centered around a

"I'm also looking forward to the older characters facing new and unique situations with newer characters incorporated"

-Senior Xan Smith

completely new character, it's probably not going to do quite as well because of that," Malhotra said. "Also, with the amount of characters and timelines that they have currently, they can continue that narrative for years to come, without having to add anything else into the mix."

According to senior Xan Smith, the best way to tell the Marvel story is with a balance of old and new characters and plots. He thinks this mixture would help create more refreshing storylines for future Marvel movies and shows.

"There are a lot of storylines that I'm already invested in, but I also want to see Marvel take them in directions that I'm not expecting," Smith said. "I'm into lots of the already existing characters, storywise, but I'm also looking forward to the older characters facing new and unique situations with newer characters incorporated."

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the majority of Marvel movies that were set for release in 2020 were postponed. However, according to freshman Eammon Keane, even though he didn't get to see any new Marvel content released last year, he wasn't greatly affected by it.

"I did find the lapse of movies in 2020 kind of disappointing," Keane said. "However, a big part of Marvel movies is the experience of getting to watch them in a movie theater, and I liked the idea of postponing them until we could go to theaters again. Also, the whole quarantine thing isn't really unique to Marvel, and there were so many other things related to the coronavirus that I had to focus on. So not getting to see any new movies last year didn't have that much of an impact on me, and I get to look forward to all the other movies coming up."



LASA Students Rediscover Love for Hiking with Limited Outdoors Time

JUAN CARLOS RAMIREZ DELGADILLO | staff writer

With a number of scenic outdoor spaces to visit around Austin — whether it be the Barton Creek Greenbelt, the Lady Bird Lake Trail or the Southern Walnut Creek trail — visitors and residents have options for where to explore nature in the capital. Especially now, in a time where people have had to spend larger portions of their time inside, the escape provided by hiking has found a greater appreciation from LASA students.

When sophomore Paw Eh was in middle school, she had athletic commitments to various clubs. Nowadays, her preferred form of exercise has pivoted to hiking around Austin.

“I used to be really outgoing in middle school,” Eh said. “Then I started joining sport clubs and doing a few sports. After that, I didn’t join any sports club in high school, so hiking keeps me moving.”

Senior Nicole Vu first got into hiking when she visited a national park with her parents and brother. Now, it’s one of her hobbies, and she most enjoys challenging trails that go along cliffs and up the mountains.

“I got into hiking when my parents took my brother and I to our first National park, Zion,” Vu said. “The scenery was very beautiful, and the hikes to get to certain viewpoints were peaceful. Ever since, we’ve been traveling to national parks and finding local places to hike whenever we can.”

Senior Tess Frazer’s love of hiking was sparked by her annual outdoors experiences at summer camp. According to Frazer, hiking has led her on some memorable adventures, and she hopes to further explore in the future.

“I have always loved the outdoors, and spend two months every summer living in the woods of Tennessee at an all-female summer camp,” Frazer said. “The only way to get anywhere at camp is to walk. This sparked my love of hiking, and living in the city, I find hiking to be a grounding way to escape. Hiking has also led me on some cool backpacking adventures. I hope to go to college in a location that has good hiking trails so that I can continue this hobby.”

For some like Vu, the beauty of nature can leave a lasting impression. That was the case for her when she recently visited the Cascade Canyon at Grand Teton National Park in Wyoming.

“It was very steep and involved a lot of tight walkways along the side of a cliff,” Vu said. “In the eight miles that we hiked, we passed a waterfall, a lake overlook, crossed a river and even had to walk through a bit of snow. At the end of the hike, the trees cleared, and we were standing in the middle of a vast canyon with snow-capped mountains surrounding us on all sides. It was really breathtaking.”

Similar to Vu, Frazer also has memories of a specific hiking setting that has stood out to her. Regarding a trip in the mountains this past summer, she said that enjoying the visual rewards of the hike comes with a physical price.

“My favorite place I have hiked was on a backpacking trip this summer in Colorado,” Frazer said. “I spent three days hiking and camping through the West and East Maroon Bells in the Elk Mountains. My feet were blistered, and my back was sore from my 50-pound pack and 14-mile days, but it was unlike any other place I had been. There is something so simple about watching the moon rise over the mountains away from society that reminds me of my humanity.”

As an experienced hiker, Vu recommends that finding the right footwear or investing in a pair of hiking shoes to use on a regular basis should be main priorities for those just stepping out onto the trails. In addition, newer hikers should pace themselves at the beginning, according to Vu.

“I would tell new hikers to invest in a nice, comfortable pair of shoes so that they don’t injure themselves,” Vu said. “I would also encourage them to start slow and only go as far as they’re comfortable with in the beginning. Lastly, I would just say to try and enjoy nature as much as possible; it’s a really good way to clear your mind.”

Eh, on the other hand, emphasizes bringing along hiking partners and the importance of hydration.

“Hiking is more fun when you go with friends and family,” Eh said. “Make sure to bring a water bottle so that you’re ready to explore the world!”

While the COVID-19 pandemic has prevented people from keeping up with hobbies indoors or involving crowds, Vu is glad that hiking has been largely unaffected as exposure has been easier to control in outdoor settings. Vu has also appreciated the continued mental health benefits from hiking, especially during the pandemic.

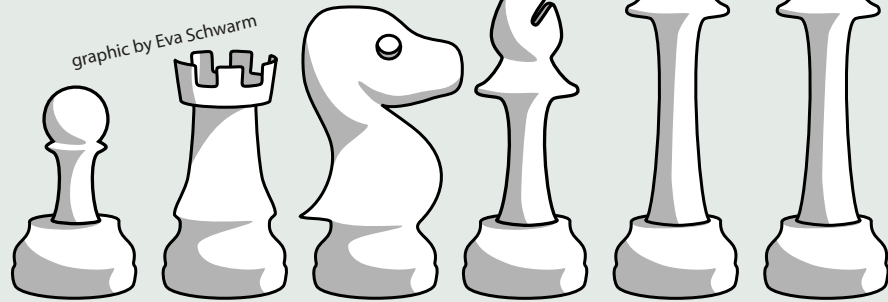
“Since COVID-19 started, I’ve tried to avoid notoriously crowded trails, and I always have a mask with me to put on when passing other people,” Vu said. “We did go to Wyoming, but we stayed away from people and drove 30 hours to get there instead of flying. We had our own cabin instead of a hotel, and we packed all of our food so we didn’t have to go out to eat. I feel lucky to have a hobby that hasn’t been affected too much by COVID-19. It’s been a great way to unwind and relieve stress during these strange times.”



THE PATH LESS TRAVELED A bridge along the South Walnut Creek Trail basks in the January sun. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this and other parks have seen less visitation, though some Austinites still go to escape into nature. photo by Emma McBride



GETTING FRESH AIR Local residents find the time to replace Zoom calls and isolation with time at parks. Senior Nicole Vu has been able to keep up with her hobby of hiking due to the greater freedom that trails have for social distancing. photo by Emma McBride



graphic by Eva Schwarm

Review “Queen’s Gambit” Miniseries

MALENA HEINEMAN | editor-in-chief

Power, fame and... chess? “The Queen’s Gambit” took Netflix by storm in October 2020, with the story of Beth Harmon, a child prodigy who erupts into the predominantly male realm of competitive chess in the 1960s. Told through a series of flashbacks, we watch the origins of her love of the game and watch as she struggles to balance her rising success with an addiction to prescription pills.

The show begins in a disheveled, darkened Paris hotel room, as a young woman wakes and rushes to pull on her designer dress and heels, running out of the door to play in what seems to be the ultimate match of her career. But director Scott Frank leaves the reader with little more, jumping years back to Beth’s childhood when she is placed in the Methuen home, an orphanage for young girls, after being the sole survivor in a car crash that killed her mother. With a suffocating, repressive atmosphere, the orphanage feeds the girls green tranquilizer pills that sedate the orphans rather than providing emotional support. Already an awkward loner, Beth finds one friend, Jolene, who shows her how to hide her pills and take them in the evening to help her sleep, setting the scene for Beth’s substance abuse in the episodes to come.

Beth finds the game of chess through an unconventional friendship with the standoffish janitor Mr. Shaibel, and he begins to teach her the rules of the game under the dim lights of the orphanage basement. Sneaking to play the game and bury herself in books on strategy, we witness the onset of her infatuation with the game and her shrewd natural instinct beginning to take her beyond the skill level of Shaibel and other players in the community. Under the safety of her covers, and with the aid of the green pills, she envisions shadowy chess boards on the ceiling of the orphanage’s bedroom and reenacts previous plays over and over again.

After being adopted, Beth begins to make her name in the world of chess and is followed by a glamorous yet turbulent legacy. Shot through varying staging and perspective, Frank is able to show Beth repeatedly and relentlessly defeat one man after another, while portraying her cool, frank nature that infuriates and engrosses her male counterparts. The hazy tint of the 1960s

aesthetic, coupled with curated color schemes and elegant ‘60s attire to match, sets the scene for Beth’s plunge into the high-stakes and lucrative world of professional chess.

It is incredibly satisfying to watch Beth’s exponential trajectory of success in this male-dominated competition. From the beginning, we see doubts of her talent and the misconception that Beth is defined not by her ability but by her identity as a woman — but her simple love of the game and desire to excel captivates the audience and proves all else false. Chess is a realm where she is completely in control, and there are set rules and regulations to follow. The game’s comforting predictability completely contrasts with the world around her, and, though she finds refuge in the game, she must find a way to balance her talent with her more obsessive, aggressive tendencies that the game brings out.

One especially poignant element of the show is Beth’s struggle with her addiction. From the beginning, we see that her substance abuse is dangerously entangled with her skill in the game, a misconstrued conception that she struggles to let go of. We witness her journey to understand that she doesn’t need drug enhancement to own her skills and herself. This trope that substance abuse “unlocks” a particular genius or skill is one that Hollywood frequently botches and romanticizes, and it thus needs to be addressed consciously and carefully. I enjoyed the film’s unflinching honesty when dealing with her addiction. It allows the audience, through emotive flashbacks of her past and present, to be increasingly invested in her ups and downs as she battles to overpower her substance abuse. Anya Taylor-Joy’s performance as Beth was sharp and believable — she was able to take on Beth’s eccentricities and struggles with a lens that matures as the show continues.

“The Queen’s Gambit” is a coming of age story with an adult twist. In this year of lonely quarantines and copious amounts of free time, the show’s popularity and ability to excite viewers has led to an uptick in popularity of both online chess and real chess boards as captivated fans discover the thrill of the game. The Queen’s Gambit will keep you on the edge of your seat as it brings the unseen glamour and suspense of chess to screens everywhere.



SXSW
from page 1

graphics by Wrenny Collamer

According to her, the impact of COVID-19 on this year’s SXSW will extend beyond the cancellation of physical events, in addition affecting the content presented. One of the reasons Royal plans to attend this year is to get a sense of the pandemic’s impact on workplaces and the entertainment industry.

“There are just some very relevant content points that are happening right now, things that affect what I do with my students in terms of how their careers are changing into the future, like virtual workplaces,” Royal said. “And a lot of them that have graduated, I know, have had to do all their interviewing through Zoom and things like that...But then also, I’ll be interested in the content, the things that really kind of connect all these areas, how technology and the pandemic have affected musicians, how they’ve affected film distribution, and how we’re going to deal with this going forward.”

While organizing a fully virtual SXSW is new territory for the organizers, Roberts said the meetup had already built a significant online presence in past years with a global audience tuning in to get a sense of the trends of the future. She said this year’s SXSW will be a continuation of this digital experience but on a larger scale.

“Each year, we typically are focused on the physical, but we do have a digital component in the past still,” Roberts said. “We would have SXSW live events, we would still livestream keynotes and showcases, and be posting photos. And also, the rest of the world is doing press updates. And that community of the people that aren’t at the event are so heavily engaged, and they’re looking to South By to kind of be those tastemakers and guide and forecast the what’s next. So I think that base, that audience, has always also been there. This year, we’re speaking to them even more directly and having even more programming.”

For Royal in particular, a major part of the SXSW experience in past years has been witnessing her students’ exploration of

events that interest them and interaction with those around them. She hopes that this year’s virtual setting will allow for this same level of engagement between participants.

“The thing that I enjoy most is seeing students acclimate to the community of SXSW when they start meeting people and they start hearing about the topics that we’ve been teaching them in school, and they really feel like they’ve become part of a special community,” Royal said. “So I’ll definitely miss seeing that in person. I’m hoping that that same spirit, for anybody who participates will still be able to be retained.”

The ability to happen upon new topics or artists is one of Royal’s favorite aspects of the convergence, and she hopes this can continue in a virtual setting. According to Royal, a digital SXSW could give people who otherwise wouldn’t be involved with it a chance to join in the action.

“I always encourage students to go to sessions that they know nothing about just to open their mind up to something completely different,” Royal said. “So I’m hoping that there will also be this element of serendipity that will allow people to sort of stumble into something new that they hadn’t really known about before. I also hope that doing SXSW in a virtual manner may open it up to more people than the usual people who come to Austin every year in March.”

While a virtual SXSW will be easier to access, it will render human-to-human interaction at the event impossible. Despite the impact COVID-19 will have on this year’s meetup, van Dreunen said he plans to focus elsewhere during his talk.

“COVID-19 may show up in one or two slides,” van Dreunen said. “But most of us have been spending so much time talking about it that I’d prefer to talk about fun, inspiring, funny, ridiculous things instead.”

SXSW will run from March 16-20, 2021, and lineup updates and other information can be found at sxsw.com.

graphic by Susan Ballesteros

DEPARTURES:

Marvel Madness _____

Museum Maze _____

Musical Magic _____

NOW BOARDING:

• SXSW 2021: **ONLINE**



BLOCKED AND MASKED Freshmen Lyssa Lashus and Isel Jimenez wear masks while playing against the Anderson Freshmen team on Sept. 18. Since then, the mask mandate has become stricter and fans are no longer allowed at games. photo by Emma McBride

Stage 5 and Sports

ANNABEL ANDRE | staff writer

Over the holiday break, Austin returned to Stage 5 of the COVID-19 risk-based guideline in an effort to control the rising number of coronavirus cases. The guidelines for Stage 5 include many lifestyle changes for the greater Austin community. Some of these include avoiding all gatherings outside of the household, avoiding dining and shopping unless necessary, avoiding nonessential traveling and recommending businesses to operate only through curbside pickup and delivery. For LASA athletics, Stage 5 has meant adjustments to the overall number of matches played and how the players practice and compete.

LASA athletics is following the increased guidelines put in place by the city with the goal of keeping players and coaches safe during practices and games. Masks continue to be required, and coaches and players have to keep them on at all times unless they need a quick breather or to quickly drink water. One of the bigger changes is that a limited number of spectators are allowed at games. Some teams, like basketball, allow no spectators — only players, coaches and team managers on the sidelines. Other sports, like soccer and softball, allow two family members to attend per player. Additionally, fewer schools are participating in competitions this year.

Tennis coach Vincent Vizcaino has been required, like all LASA coaches, to enforce the mask mandate at all times. Players wear masks during all games and practices, practice social distancing and remain extremely aware of COVID-19 risks and potential exposure. To reduce the chances of exposure, AISD athletics considered canceling all practices and competition for JV and freshman teams.

“Some sports are, from what I know, affected differently,” Vizcaino said. “But as far as tennis, we just have to make sure that we wear a mask. The main thing is to keep your distance when you’re not playing. That’s the advice, be careful. There was talk of not having or postponing the JV and freshman season as well, but that’s gone away.”

The tennis season has been affected all year due to COVID-19 because the sport practices in both fall and spring. There are structural changes that follow them into the spring season, such as fewer available schools competing.

“In the fall, we would have actually played some tournaments, and we were prohibited from playing them,” Vizcaino said. “Although [the season] hasn’t been cut short for the spring as of yet, the tournaments that we’re going to play will not have as much competition as I am used to; for instance, instead of going to a tournament that might host anywhere from 20 to 30 schools, we might just be going to a tournament that only holds 12 to 16 schools. So the chance to see other schools and compete against other schools has been infringed upon.”

According to freshman track runner Clare Kalapti, participation on the team is lower than past years because many students and their families are worried about contracting COVID-19. Because of these small numbers, the team only has enough runners for a varsity team instead of both varsity and JV.

“There aren’t many people showing up for practice, so my coach asked me to reach out to others and try to get more people to join the team,” Kalapti said. “A lot of people have responded back saying that they would but they can’t because their parents wouldn’t let them go because of Austin being in Stage 5. Yesterday I went to practice, and I was one out of two girls there. I’d say there are about 15 people on the team right now, which isn’t enough to make two teams. I think we’re probably just going to be one varsity team.”

Athletic coordinator Bryan Crews has been in charge of incorporating all of the changes being made to LASA’s sports this year. According to him, he has been focusing on adjusting to all of these changes to make sure that students still have the opportunity to participate in sports safely. Additionally, he says that it’s important for kids at this age to have the experience of competing, winning and losing because it’s something they might only be able to do at this time in their lives.

“Right now, the attitude is to just adjust and be flexible,” Crews said. “That’s what we’ve really been doing since last summer. We just roll with the changes and adjust as we go. I’m really happy that the kids who want to compete are able to, that they have the opportunity to do that. So any kind of restrictions or obstacles that we have to go through, I think, are worth it so we can give those kids the opportunity.”

Grand Slam Into Softball Season

SUSAN BALLESTEROS | staff writer

For the Raptors softball team, 2021 has brought in new players, a new district and new COVID-19 regulations for both practices and games. As with all other sports, the softball team has recently had to adapt to the ongoing pandemic. On top of that, the team is still new because of last year’s LBJ-LASA UIL split.



SCRIMMAGE Junior Jasmine Gaynier gets ready as a hitter in a scrimmage against LBJ. Both teams wear masks and social distance. photo by Emma McBride

However, according to senior and captain Maddie Dixon, the team was able to maintain some sense of normalcy during tryouts, which took place on Jan. 19 and 20.

“We keep masks on every time that we practice, but other than that, it was just the same,” Dixon said. Less girls and more wearing masks. I know a lot of kids can’t play because of COVID-19, but other than that, it is pretty much the same.”

Softball tryouts focus on running various drills to see what physical level each player is starting at. According to senior Alisha Morejon, because there weren’t as many players this year, tryouts were less about who can make the cut and more about demonstrating commitment to the team and understanding each player’s strengths and weaknesses.

“We just don’t have very many girls,” Morejon said. “We’ve been doing captain’s practices for about a month or two now, so we kind of said everybody who’s been to captain’s practices and putting in the work off season is on the team, and some new girls came and they got on the team too. We’ve never really been tryout-heavy.”

In terms of COVID-19 restrictions, masks are mandatory during all games and practices. According to Morejon, the risk of contracting COVID-19 is not as high in softball because it is a non-contact sport, but the precautions are still taken extremely seriously on the Raptors’ softball field.

“We’re not a contact sport and every position plays pretty far away from all the other ones, so it’s not that different,” Morejon said.

According to head coach Vincent Cruz, only a limited number of people will be allowed to attend games. Fans, players, coaches and umpires will have to wear masks, practice social distancing and avoid sharing equipment.

“At games, it’s two parents per kid if they’re being

dropped off but no one else in terms of students and anything like that,” Cruz said. “The brothers and sisters can’t even come anymore. Social distancing and masks at all times with the parents. Just like the athletes, the parents have to deal with it as well. There are also sanitizing stations everywhere.”

Because not a lot of spectators are allowed at games, the team has found other ways to make sure extended family members, friends and other fans can watch each game, according to Cruz.

“We’re going to livestream every game on the AISD athletics app and YouTube,” Cruz said. “That way, the students and the fans can log in and watch the games.”

Another change facing the softball team this season is that they’ve been placed in a new district due to the recent LASA-LBJ split. According to Cruz, the new district brings new, challenging competition to the team.

“We have one Cedar Park tournament, four scrimmages, and then the rest are district teams,” Cruz said. “We’re now in 5A, so we have a pretty tough district in terms that we have Anderson and we have Lockhart, but we dropped Dripping Springs which I’m pretty excited about.”

According to Cruz, team bonding has had to become more practice-based due to a lack of in-person socialization throughout the remainder of the school year. According to Dixon, while bonding might look different in a normal year, they’re still finding new ways to create friendships.

“I think because we’re still playing together, and that’s the only social interaction that any of us have, we are all very excited to get to know one another, and for us that already know one another to reconnect,” Dixon said. “We still bond.”

According to captain Frankie Gigliotti, bonding used to be about hanging out in locker rooms and before practice. Now, it mainly shows up at practice and at games only.

“Since most everyone on our team is doing online instead of in-person, we don’t really get that bonding in the locker room and all that hanging out before practice,” Gigliotti said. “We all just drive up and we’re there.”

Apart from team bonding, COVID-19 almost canceled some of the games themselves. As part of the Stage 5 regulations, only varsity UIL sports were allowed to be played, but those orders have since been pulled back.

“During the spike, the district closed down the JV games and said we can only play district teams,” Cruz said, “but we just got an email, ‘JV is back up and running, and our full schedule is able to be played.’”



TRYOUTS The LASA Raptors Softball team held unofficial tryouts on Jan. 19 and 20. Captain practices have been taking place for weeks before that giving players a chance to display commitment to the team and practice important skills before the season. photo by Emma McBride

editorial Gender Inequality In Sports Coverage

HELENA LARA | sports editor

On Feb. 1, 2021, there were 30 headline articles on ESPN’s website. Four of these headlines were for women’s sports, and 26 were for men’s sports. On that same day, Fox Sports had 56 stories headlined on its website; three were women’s sports and 53 were men’s. The list of news sources that lack female athlete representation goes on and on, and on: The New York Times, Sports Illustrated, the BBC.

I remember watching the Olympic marathon trials last year spanning from male runner to male runner. The amount of women on the start line was almost double that of men, yet the coverage of the female athletes was disproportionately lower than that of the male runners. The major media stories that followed the race reflected the lack of coverage on screen. ESPN briefly mentioned Aliphine Tuliamuk as the winner but detailed the career of the male winner, Galen Rupp. The New York Post did not even mention that women were competing in this race. And The Washington Post mentioned the women’s winner in the 6th paragraph after detailing the men’s race.

The undervaluing of women’s sports in the media is not a secret. Newspapers, radio broadcasts and magazines all focus more reporting and resources on male sports. A study of sports television in southern California found that while women and girls account for more than 40% of athletes, they receive less than 4% of coverage on news shows. Not only do women in sports receive less coverage, the analysis of their competition is often dull and uninspiring, according to the same study. This is ironic considering sports reporters are known for their humor, enthusiasm and colorful commentary.

The authors of the sports television study, Cheryl Cooky, Michael A. Messner and Michaela Musto, found a “stark contrast between the exciting, amplified delivery of stories about men’s sports and the often dull, matter-of-fact delivery of women’s sports stories.” Another study conducted at Wilmington College measured

like the agenda-setting theory and the framing theory can dramatically impact the way society views female sports.

The agenda-setting theory states that the media has the power to influence what an audience deems important. This means that if the media gives higher coverage to men’s sports, then men’s sports are deemed more valuable to society. Therefore, in the eyes of sports fans, women’s sports may be perceived as less important. The framing theory goes deeper and argues that the light or frame in which the media presents women’s sports will shape the opinions of sports fans on the topic. As a result, the often dull and uninspiring way the media portrays women’s sports is reflected in the audience’s viewpoint.

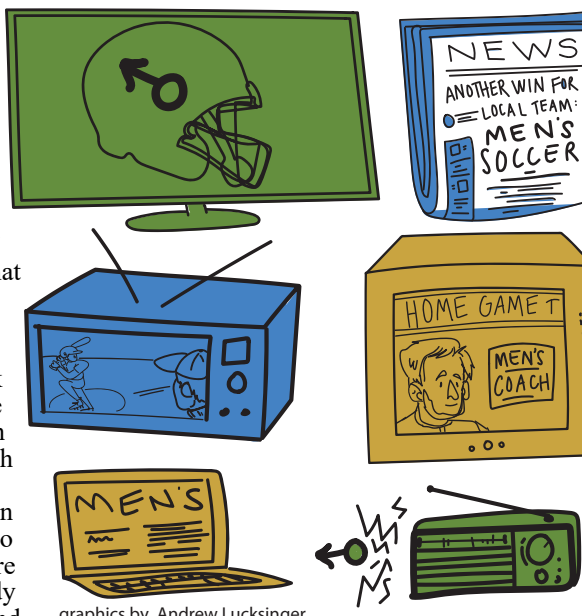
When women’s sports are reported on, the diction, tone of voice and highlight choice shift from those of male sports reporting. Women’s sports are often differentiated by gender, while male sports are simply sports. Even in the *Liberator*, I find myself sometimes writing and reporting from a male-centered perspective of athletics. A couple issues ago, I made the headline for the boys basketball story on page 14 “Basketball Begins Again.” Comparatively, a similar story reporting on the beginning of the soccer season was distinguished as “girls soccer.” Obviously, when designing pages, much more is considered in the creation of headlines than making them descriptive and captivating: space, design and size are all additionally considered. But the point I’m making here is that we are all subject to preconceived biases related to gender and that everyone,

especially those in the journalism and media industry, should be aware of them.

Not only do women in sports get less media coverage, they are also faced with a significant pay gap. Female athletes are consistently paid less than their male counterparts, even when they bring in more revenue. According to a pay equity lawsuit filed in 2019, the U.S. women’s soccer team brought in more revenue in 2017 than the men — yet they were still paid just over one third of what the men received. For context, the U.S. women’s soccer team has won four Olympic gold medals and three World Cups while the U.S. men’s team has none.

The pay gap in basketball is far worse. WNBA players make \$71,635 per year on average, while the average salary for NBA players is \$6.4 million. The NBA justifies the differences in pay between the female and male leagues by pointing to revenue. While it’s true that the men have larger audiences and more lucrative broadcasting deals, the revenue the players receive within the league differs proportionally as well. NBA players receive 50% of league revenue, while the WNBA players receive 25% of their league’s revenue.

It’s so important for young, female athletes to have role models who are celebrated in the media for their strength, speed and athletic ability. And to create more equal opportunities for these young, female athletes, we have to start with the ones that are already playing. Whether in the media, surrounding the pay gap or on the field, representation is crucial in removing the media disparity between male and female sports.



graphics by Andrew Luckingier

people’s exposure to women’s sports and found a correlation between the way that women in sports are portrayed in the media and the way that society views women’s sports. The researchers asked the question, “Could the media be making sports fans believe that women’s sports are less desirable by giving them less coverage?” The researchers found that theoretical considerations



Austin FC Prepares to Kick Off Inaugural Season

ABIGAIL JACKSON | sports editor

In 2017, it was announced that the Major League Soccer (MLS) team the Columbus Crew would be moving their franchise to Austin to become Austin Football Club (FC). After years of preparation, Austin FC is about to begin its inaugural season this April.

Austin used to have a Division 2 soccer team called the Austin Aztex. The Aztex were founded in 2008, and they played in the House Park stadium. In 2010, the Aztex were moved to Orlando, Florida, and in 2011, the team returned to Austin and began to play again. The Aztex had a large fan base and consistently had massive turnouts to their games.

However, after House Park was inundated by the Memorial Day floods of 2015, the Aztex were unable to play because there were no other stadiums in Austin that met the league standards. They went on hiatus and planned to return in time for the 2018 season, but they never fully financially recovered and were forced to disband, once again leaving Austin without any professional sports teams. Since 2019, Austin has been home to a Division 2 team, the Austin Bold, but they don't have nearly the fan base and following that the Aztex had — the average attendance for a Bold game is 2,395 fans, while the Aztex averaged at about 3,000 fans per game before they fell apart.

After the announcement of the new team, soccer fans in the Austin area formed four fan groups — Austin Anthem, Los Verdes, Burnt Orange Brigade and Oak Army New Braunfels. These fan groups go to all of the games and have chants and banners that they use to support their team.

The logo and team colors for Austin FC were announced in 2018. The green in the logo represents the vibrancy of Austin, the tree represents the bond of a team and its city and the four roots at the bottom represent the four major regions of the city. The logo was designed by local Austin design group The Butler Bros.

One of the biggest tasks prior to the start of the season was recruiting new players for the team. Head coach Josh Wolff said in an interview that he wants to blend the young players that are filled with potential with more experienced players that have played in the league for a while.

In addition to the players that moved from Columbus to Austin, the team recently picked up five new players at the Expansion Draft in December. The MLS holds an Expansion Draft for teams prior to their inaugural season where they are allowed to draft players from other teams in the league.

One of the team's top picks from the Expansion Draft was forward Danny Hoesen, who, prior to playing in the MLS, played for Ajax, a well-established soccer team based in Amsterdam.

Hoesen was drafted from the San Jose Earthquakes and is coming off of an injury, but the coaching staff expects him to be recovered in time for the start of the season.

Another new player coming to Austin from the Expansion Draft is midfielder Jared Stroud. While on his old team, the New York Red Bulls, he became the first player in Red Bulls' franchise history to have 20 career goals and 20 career assists. Austin FC sporting director Claudio Reyna is excited to have such a versatile player. "He plays both right and left wing, he's got a really good soccer IQ, movement, and energy," Reyna said in a press conference after the Expansion Draft.

When the team was announced, one of the major questions that arose was over where the team would play. Precourt Sports Ventures, the group that operated the Columbus Crew, scouted potential locations for a stadium prior to moving the team to Austin and found a location in North Austin that fit all of the requirements Precourt had.

The stadium is budgeted at \$240 million, and the majority of the funding came from Precourt and from other private investors. It is expected to hold about 20,500 fans, and, in January 2021, the stadium was officially named Q2 Stadium after online baking provider Q2 Holdings.

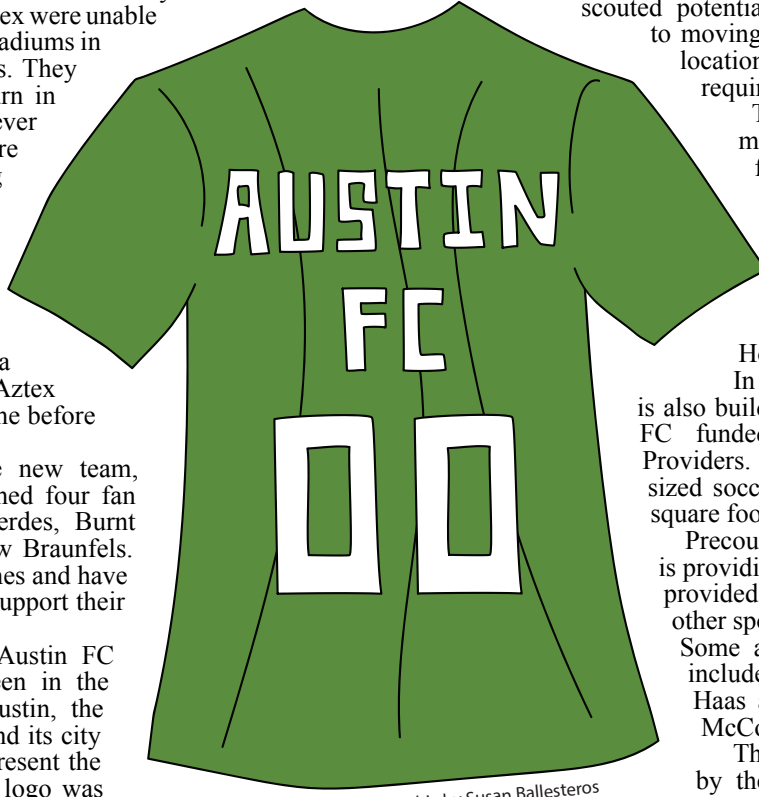
In addition to Q2 Stadium, Precourt is also building a training facility for Austin FC funded by St. David's Healthcare Providers. The facility will include four full sized soccer fields and will have a 30,000 square foot indoor training facility.

Precourt isn't the only organization that is providing funding for Austin FC. Adidas provided the uniforms for the team, and other sponsors include Yeti and Netspend. Some additional investors of the team include Dell President and CCO Marius Haas and Austin-based actor Matthew McConaughey.

The stadium is set to be completed by the start of the 2021 season, but Austin FC will most likely not play a home game until June. Traffic lights, roads and signage around the stadium need to be completed before it is ready for fans, and there will be additional construction in the area for years to come.

Although there are rising COVID-19 cases in Austin, Austin FC officials want to push forward with opening the stadium at 100% capacity. However, they are prepared to reduce the number of fans if COVID-19 spikes in the MLS or in Austin. In a report released by the MLS, it was announced that players and staff will be tested every other day and will be tested the night before every game in order to keep everyone safe and proceed with the season.

The 2021 season will begin for players on Feb. 22, when teams are allowed to begin practicing. This time will be beneficial for Austin FC because the players will be playing together for the first time. They will have six weeks of practices before the season begins on April 3 and 4.



graphic by Susan Ballesteros

Austin FC Timeline

Oct. 2017- Precourt Sports Ventures announces Columbus Crew is moving to Austin	
Aug. 22 2018- Austin FC team colors and logo announced	
Dec. 19, 2018- Lease signed for Q2 Stadium	
Jan. 15, 2019- Austin FC officially announced as a MLS team	
July 23, 2019- Josh Wolff is officially named head coach	
Nov. 21, 2019- Claudio Reyna announced as sporting director	
Dec. 13 2020- Austin FC gets five new players during trading window	
Dec. 15 2020- Austin FC picks up five more players at Expansion Draft	
Feb. 22, 2021- MLS preseason starts, teams are allowed to begin practices	
April 3, 2021- MLS season begins, Austin FC will play their first game	
June 2021- Q2 Stadium is set to open, Austin FC will play their first home game	

graphics by Abigail Jackson

BASKETBALL

from page 1

Sanchez said that the masks make it hard to tell each other apart on the court, and the players are unable to see each other outside of practice to build up their bond.

"Everything's a little difficult because sometimes it's easy to get confused with the masks and with not being able to see each other throughout the day to just check up with everyone," Sanchez said. "So there's some things that could be fixed, but we're still good so far."

Sanchez says that the players have gotten to know each other well thanks to their months of daily practices. She says that the team is now very comfortable with each other and have become great friends.

"It's kinda like a second family," Sanchez said. "It's a whole group of other people that you're close to and you just joke around with, but you're also serious when you're in a game and learning throughout practice."

According to Adams, the basketball team is also much smaller this year, which makes it possible to socialize while still staying safe. Adams likes having a smaller team because it is easier to get to know everyone.

"The team is a lot smaller because a lot less people are playing girls basketball," Adams said. "Because it's so much smaller, we kind of have to be friends to be able to work with each other and figure everything out. It's kinda nice, to be honest. You get to know people better."

Basketball is a team sport, and Connolly believes that one of the most important things about being on a team is to trust each other. She likes that she can count on her teammates for support in and out of practice.

"To me, being in the team means trusting each other on the court and knowing that everyone on the court has your back," Connolly said. "You can worry about yourself and what you're doing because you know everyone else on the court is with you."

According to Sanchez, there are many key aspects to focus on when playing basketball. She said along with trust and communication, basketball also requires a lot of focus.

"Being focused would be the most important because then you're able to be the best in whatever skill you have," Sanchez said. "Whether it's dribbling, keeping your head up or being on defense and trying to keep your arms up and making sure not to foul anybody, you're focusing and not letting anyone get into your head."

Connolly said that dedication to the team is also very important to maintaining the team's winning record. She can tell that everyone on the team is willing to work hard and put in 100% at practices and at games.

"We've come a long way, and I can see us progressing a lot more in the future," Connolly said. "I can see that everyone on this team is really dedicated and willing to work, and everyone is putting in time in practice and off practice, and it's really paying off. I think that's what's going to help us out at the end, and that's what's going to help us progress as a team."

As the season nears its end and the playoffs grow closer, Connolly is excited to see how the rest of the season goes. Connolly believes that the team has had an impressive season and hopes that the team's final record reflects that.

"I'm just excited to see how everyone else progresses because everyone on the team has a lot of potential," Connolly said. "We've progressed a ton so far, and I do think we can end this season with a winning record."

The NFL Tackles COVID-19 Pandemic

MALVIKA PRADHAN | staff writer

While the 2020-2021 NFL season went on this year just like any other, the league implemented many changes in order to ensure the safety of both players and fans.

Every NFL season concludes with the Super Bowl, which usually takes place in early February. The 2020 Super Bowl took place just before major concerns over COVID-19 began in the United States, which gave the NFL until September to make plans for how to kick off the season while keeping players and staff safe.

The first major challenge that the NFL faced was the Draft, which took place in April. This year, the Draft was supposed to take place in Paradise, NV, but due to COVID-19 restrictions, the Draft went virtual. Players and coaches all set up webcams in their homes, and NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell announced the picks from his living room.

Usually, fans from all 32 teams attend the Draft in order to show their support for their teams while millions of others watch from home. According to ESPN, 55 million people watched the three-day event this year, which streamed on ABC, ESPN and NFL Network. The average viewership was up 36% from the 2019 Draft.

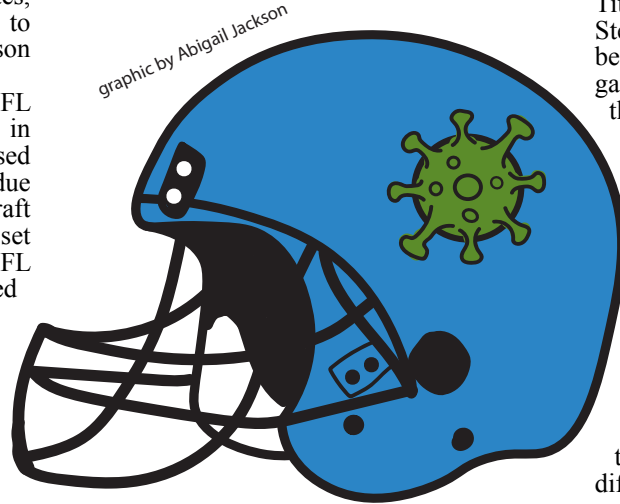
As the start of the season approached, the NFL put together a COVID-19 task force to help the league make informed and safe decisions about their upcoming season. The task force included NFL Chief Medical Officer Dr. Allen Sills, club physicians and public health experts.

All 32 teams were required to submit plans about how they would incorporate the new protocols into their team facilities.

These plans covered everything from

ventilation systems inside each facility to how to get and wear personal protective equipment at practices and games.

All NFL players and staff members were required to get a nasal COVID-19 test every day, and occasionally additional tests were required to confirm those results. Across the entire league, approximately 6,000 tests were administered every day. From the beginning of August to Dec. 19, there were about 840,460 tests given to players, coaches and other personnel.



graphic by Abigail Jackson

The NFL is also reducing the spread of COVID-19 by giving players and staff devices that help them contact trace. These devices make for quick contact tracing by tracking when and how long individuals are less than six feet apart. They also blink a red light when individuals are not social distancing.

In the event of a positive case, the player or staff member who tested positive is isolated immediately, along with anyone who was in contact with that person for more than 15 minutes less than six feet apart. In order to

return to the field, players have to quarantine for 10 days and show no symptoms for an additional day. Players also need two negative COVID-19 tests at least 24 hours apart in order to play.

The first team in the league to experience an outbreak was the Tennessee Titans. On Sept. 24, defensive back Greg Mabin tested positive for COVID-19. Before the end of the month, 11 more players on the Titans and the head coach all tested positive as well.

In response, the NFL postponed the Titans' upcoming game against the Pittsburgh Steelers, which was originally scheduled to be Oct. 4, and they also postponed the Titans' game against the Buffalo Bills. Additionally, the Titans were fined \$350,000 by the NFL for violating the league's COVID-19 guidelines.

Two other teams, the New Orleans Saints and the Las Vegas Raiders, have both been forced to forfeit picks in the 2021 NFL Draft due to COVID-19 guideline violations.

Another problem that NFL teams are having is whether or not to allow fans to games. The NFL never set regulations on whether or not fans could attend, so stadium capacity is dependent on each team's city and state guidelines, meaning different teams have different amounts of spectators.

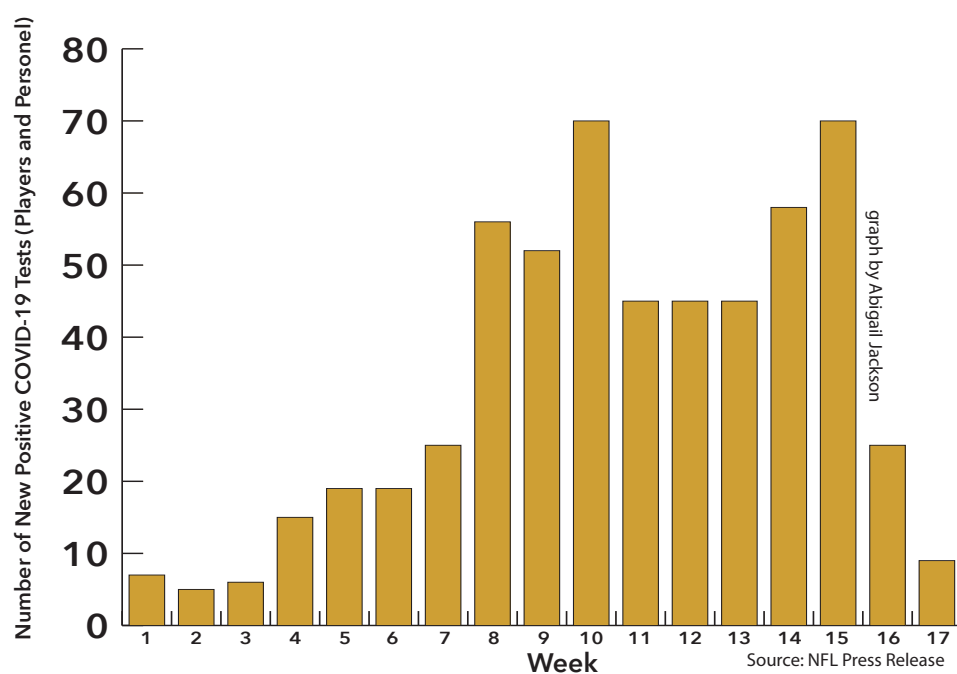
The amount of fans allowed to attend each game varies from team to team. The New York Giants are not allowed to have fans due to statewide restrictions, the Tampa Bay Buccaneers are only allowing long-time season ticket holders to attend games, and most teams, such as the Jacksonville Jaguars, are only allowing around 20% of their stadium's maximum capacity to attend games.

Although the NFL makes more than half of its revenue from TV deals, the league will still lose a large chunk of its earnings due to the limited number of ticket sales. According to the Wall Street Journal, the NFL's 2020 season revenue could fall as much as \$4 billion due to fans not being able to attend games.

Despite all of the chaos and uncertainty this season, the NFL is proceeding with the Super Bowl. It will take place on Feb. 7, 2021, in the Raymond James Stadium in Tampa Bay, Florida. The two teams playing in the game are the Tampa Bay Buccaneers and the Kansas City Chiefs, making this the first time in history that a team will play in its home stadium during the Super Bowl.

The NFL is allowing 22,000 fans to attend the Super Bowl this year. 7,500 seats are reserved for health care workers, and the rest are open to fans. All fans attending the game will be required to socially distance throughout the event and will have to wear masks the whole time.

Although it is unclear how the NFL will proceed with the 2021-2022 season, the organization is also currently planning to hold the 2021 Draft in person this April.



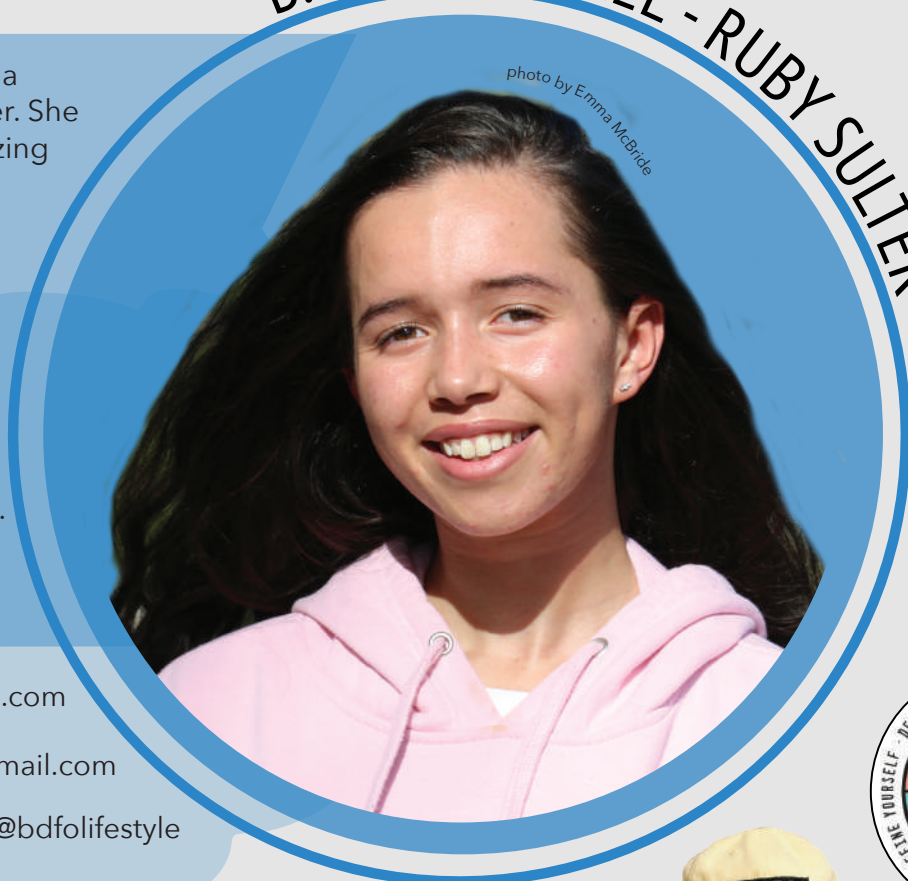
Doing Something Small in a Big Way

Taking a Look Into the Small Business World of LASA

EMMA MCBRIDE | photo editor

B.D.F.O. (Bold, Determined, Fierce, Outstanding) is a clothing brand created by sophomore Ruby Sulter. She was inspired to make her own brand after realizing there were few brands that she felt ethically comfortable supporting or that made her feel confident in her own body. She is determined to support other women through her business in order to ensure no one ever has to feel uneasy about what they wear. In addition to maintaining these high standards, she donates 10% of her profit to organizations that empower women such as Club InsideOut and Project Soar. Support her cause and her business with the information below.

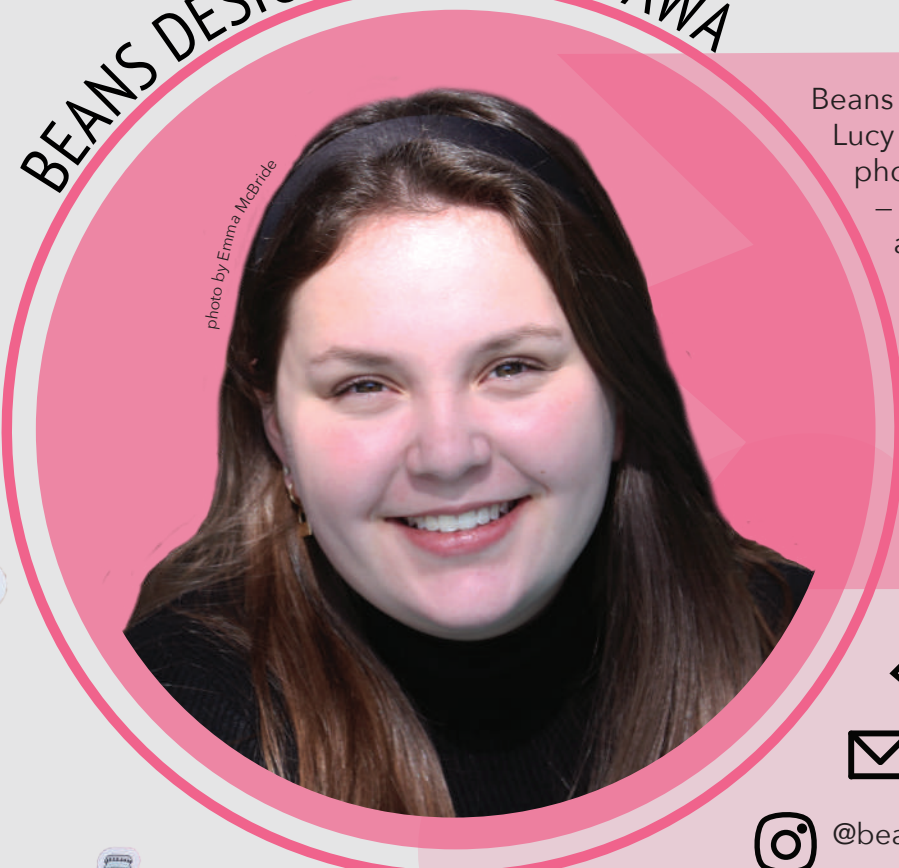
B.D.F.O. APPAREL - RUBY SULTER



photos courtesy of Ruby Sulter

➔ www.bdfolifestyle.com
✉ bdfofashion@gmail.com
📷 @bdfolifestyle

BEANS DESIGN - LUCY SUGAWA



Beans Design is a business that has been run by junior Lucy Sugawa for almost a year. She sells stickers, phone wallpapers and computer wallpapers – all designed by her. What started out as a LASA-majority target audience grew to the point where she is two states away from having delivered products to all 50 states. Her favorite aspect of her business so far has been interacting with her customers. She loves the idea that somebody across the country could be supporting something with her design on it. If you want to support her, check out the links below.



photos courtesy of Lucy Sugawa

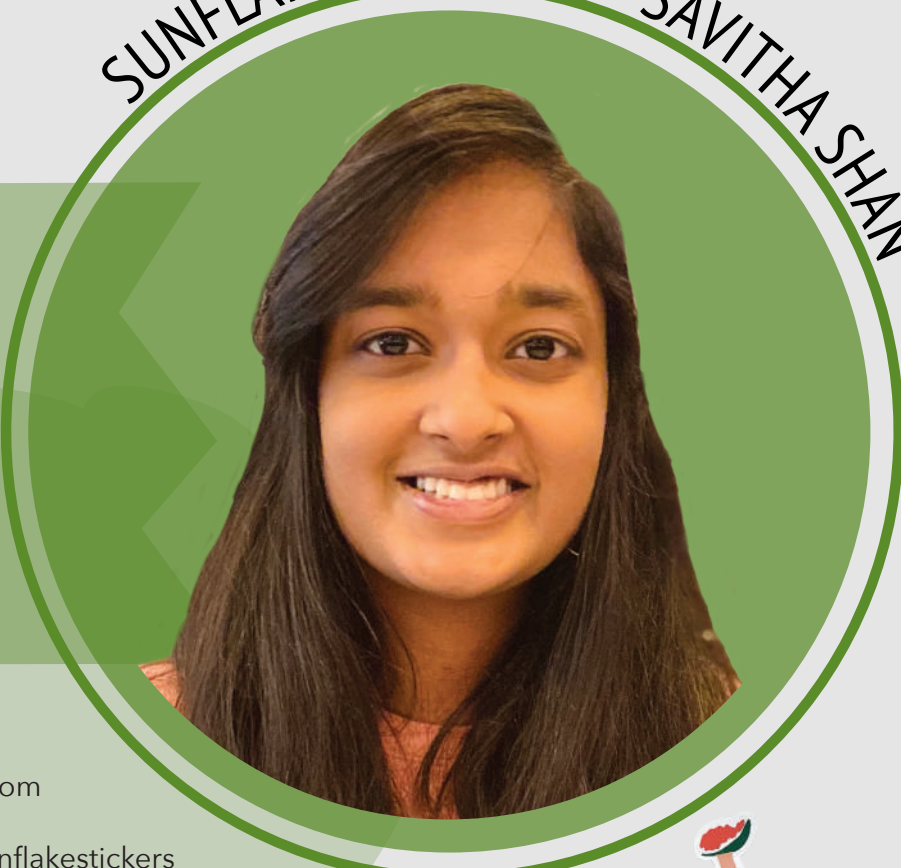
➔ www.beansdesignco.com

✉ lucy@beansdesignco.com

📷 @beans.design

f @beansdesignUS

SUNFLAKE STICKERS - SAVITHA SHAN



Sunflake Stickers is a business based on Etsy and run by junior Savitha Shan. Like Sugawa, Shan sells stickers and a variety of keychain designs. Her target audience is fans of One Direction, especially the lead singer of the band, Harry Styles. Her business started small and grew exponentially, receiving orders from all over the country. She has done a few giveaways for her Instagram audiences every time she hits a milestone in the number of orders she's received, so make sure to follow her on Instagram if you're interested.



photos courtesy of Savitha Shan

➔ www.etsy.com/shop/sunflakestickers.com

✉ sunflakestickers@gmail.com

📷 @sunflakestickers

🎵 @sunflakestickers