

# the liberator

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## what's news



photo by JC Ramirez Delgadillo

### Liberator in the Wild

The first edition of the Raptor Rant features a Liberator Editor cheerleading for a week, despite never having tried the sport previously.

see **THE RAPTOR RUN DOWN** page 15



photo by Luci Garza

### Austin Covid Limits

ACL concludes its first two weekends since 2019, despite growing COVID-19 concerns.

see **ACL** page 13

## LIGHTS OUT AUSTIN

### Travis County Joins Initiative to Help Save Migrating Birds

**KAYLA LE** | graphics editor

From August through November, migrating birds fly over Austin through the central flyway, a migration route that passes through North Dakota, South Dakota, Oklahoma, Kansas, Nebraska, and Texas.

In an effort to counteract the effects of light pollution, Travis Audubon, an Austin-based non-profit dedicated to bird conservation efforts, adopted an initiative called Lights Out Austin. Audubon's program manager Caley Zuzula has been working with them since graduating Texas State University with a degree in conservation biology.

"Lights Out is an awesome campaign that is a coalition of organizations and businesses across Texas," Zuzula said. "We are promoting this Lights Out initiative to not only businesses and cities, but also to residents. So just everybody."

The initiative is meant to encourage Austinites to turn off all non-essential lights between the hours of 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. to aid birds in their most active times of migration. Zuzula believes that dimming the city is essential to preventing light pollution from interfering with their journey north from Oklahoma to North Dakota.

"The reason that it's important to turn your lights out at night, or at least dim lighting, to turn off non-essential lighting, is because most birds migrate at night," Zuzula said. "Having so much light pollution can mess up their orientation and their navigating skills."

Executive Director of Austin Wildlife Rescue (AWF) Haley Hudnall highlights the effects of excess light in relation to migration. She details her encounters with birds with injuries related to light pollution.

"The most common are: hit by a car, caught by a cat or dog, ran into a car or window, or orphaned," Hudnall said. "Light pollution contributes to some of those run-ins with windows."

AWF rehabilitates and releases orphaned, injured, and sick wild animals, as well as educates the public on how to coexist with wildlife. Hudnall was also able to provide some other ways that one might be able to aid in a safe migration trip for birds.

"They can only trim trees in the winter months, or check before trimming otherwise to avoid cutting down nests or dead trees with hollows where baby birds may have made a nest," Hudnall said. "They can start bird watching to

appreciate all the different species even in their own backyards. Most importantly for us, if they find a fledgling bird, they need to leave where it is and allow mom to raise it from the ground while it learns to fly."

Students at LASA have begun to participate in incentives promoted by Lights Out. Junior River Ahlquist works to reduce light pollution in their own home, and encourages their friends as well.

"I would and already take steps towards participating in this initiative," Ahlquist said. "At my house, my curtains are drawn at night and there are no lights outside. I assume this is similar at my friends' houses."

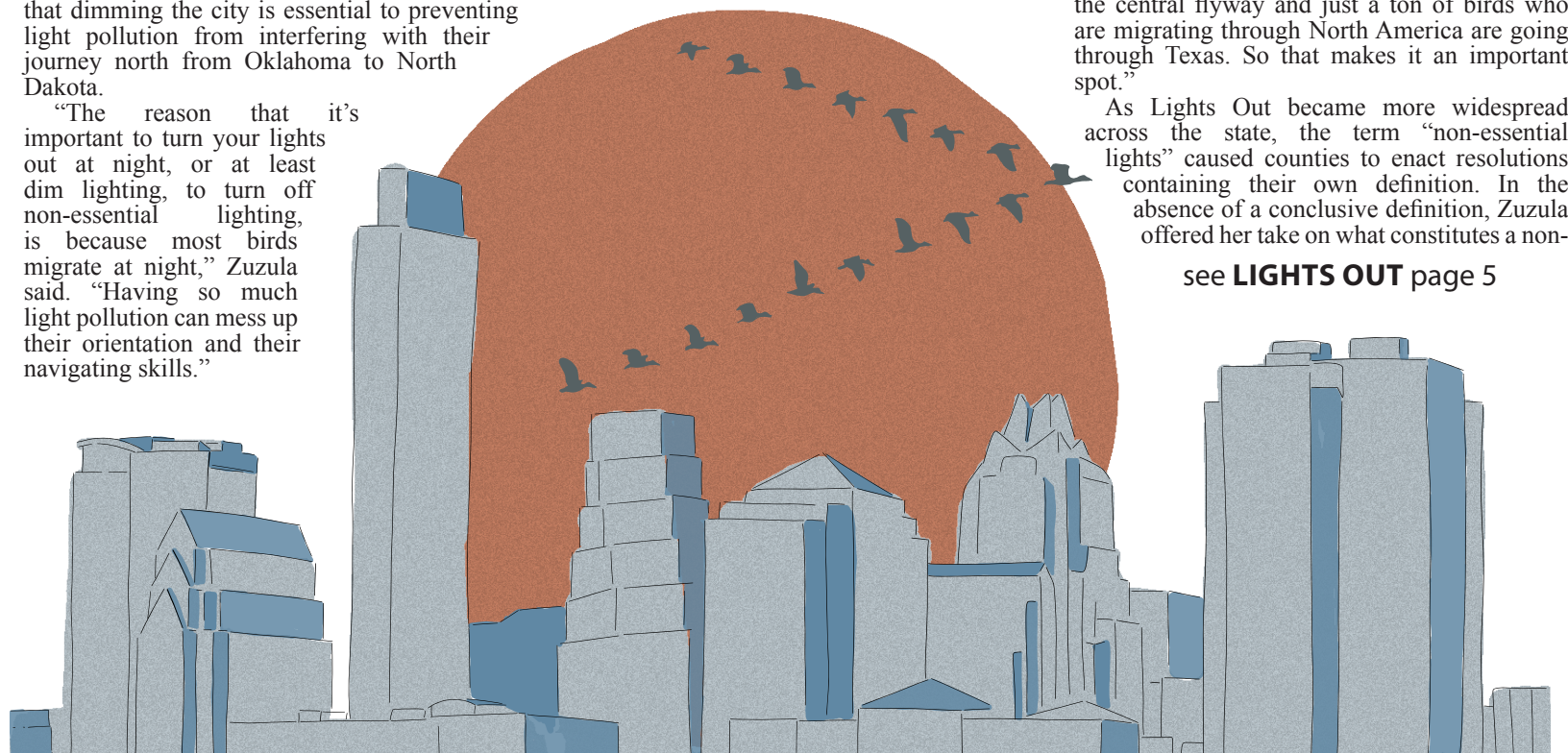
With the Central Flyway bisecting the United States, Austin was a key location to implement Lights Out. Zuzula noted the heavy traffic of birds through the city and its role as a migratory hotspot.

"First of all, for birds migrating North America, a very large percentage of them migrate through Texas," Zuzula said. "We are in the central flyway and just a ton of birds who are migrating through North America are going through Texas. So that makes it an important spot."

As Lights Out became more widespread across the state, the term "non-essential lights" caused counties to enact resolutions containing their own definition. In the absence of a conclusive definition, Zuzula offered her take on what constitutes a non-

see **LIGHTS OUT** page 5

graphic by Kayla Le



## Trans Representation in Sports

**AMELIA COLEMAN** | staff writer

On April 15, 2021, the Texas Legislature proposed Senate Bill 29, which requires transgender students to compete in sports that correspond to the sex recorded on their birth certificate. The complications of this bill have led some LASA students to speak out about the difficulties of being a transgender or nonbinary student athlete in sports.

According to Sophomore and LASA Pride Alliance (LPA) officer Emily Polio, there is often a struggle between what students identify with and what they were assigned at birth when it comes to athletics. Polio said that the current system makes students feel as if they are not allowed to participate in sports.

"If you are a trans student it's very hard," Polio said. "You want to play a sport and then you feel like you can't play or the school won't let you play because [your gender] doesn't correspond with what they have on record."

According to junior and LPA officer Eva Schwarm, denying a student the right to play with the gender they identify with can contribute to a student's gender dysphoria. Schwarm believes this makes students who are transgender or nonbinary feel uncomfortable in spaces that are supposed to be safe and enjoyable.

"It could probably make some students feel uncomfortable if they were constantly referred to as a gender they didn't identify as," Schwarm said.

Polio believes that an important part of ensuring that students feel safe in their environment is making sure that they feel just as accepted and welcome as anybody else on the team. Polio believes that athletes' assigned gender at birth doesn't matter in these situations.

"I think making sure that there is awareness in sports [will] make people feel like they're part of that community, as well as letting students play for

the teams that they identify with, as opposed to whatever they were assigned at birth," Polio said. "It can feel a lot like you're being shoved into a box that you very much don't fit in."

Polio believes that gender-based discrimination is a big issue in the school system. According to Polio, schools don't have enough policies in place to normalise being transgender or nonbinary.

"There's a lot of discrimination we don't think of in very small ways," Polio said. "Access to their bathrooms is always a big deal, the locker rooms are also very stressful because it feels like you're being forced to out yourself in a way. Then there's the city regulations about allowing them to play sports based on the gender they identify with."

see **TRANS AND NONBINARY ATHELETES** page 14



file graphic by Andrew Lucksinger

## AISD Offers Free Lunch

**SYDNEY JONES** | staff writer

In previous years, students in the Austin Independent School District (AISD) had to bring their own meals, buy food from school, or register for free or reduced priced meals. But as a continuation of a federally funded program last year, the district is offering free breakfast and lunch to every student.

In March 2021, AISD began giving free meals for the first time, and over the rest of the school year, the district distributed more than 3 million free lunches. In April 2021, the United States Department of Agriculture decided to extend the free meal benefits until June 2022, allowing AISD to provide free school meals at all of their schools for the whole 2021-2022 school year. This new benefit allows students to consistently have healthy food and stress less about getting food that can help students focus better in school.

Whether students bring their lunch from home or get it at school, free lunches can lower students' stress levels, according to executive chef Diane Grodek. She said free lunches can help students take one thing off their metaphorical plate—and add one more thing to their physical plate.

"LASA students are notoriously stressed and have a lot on their plate and do a lot of activities," Grodek said. "This is one less thing for their parents to have to think about, for the kids have to think about. They don't have to make their lunch. They don't have to make their breakfast. They don't have to worry about bringing money or putting money on their account. It's just super simple, their food is taken care of for the whole time they're at school."

By having free meals, students also have the opportunity to concentrate in their classes more effectively. Healthy meals allow for students to focus better and have a better brain performance. Cafeteria manager Amanda Gilroy has two young kids, and she said that when they do not get food, it's harder for them to focus. Her family's experience with food is one of the main reasons why she believes nutrition is so crucial for everyone.

"If you're giving your body the right nutrition, and keeping yourself satisfied, it helps you to stay more focused," Gilroy said. "In the classroom, that's very important."

see **FREE SCHOOL MEALS** page 10



graphics by Emma McBride

# editorial COVID Comes to Texas – Again

## How Texas Fails to Protect Students and Teachers

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

On March 13, 2020, the Austin Independent School District (AISD) closed its schools temporarily to contain the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Less than a hundred cases had been identified in the United States, a mere scruple of the millions identified since then. On Aug. 17, 2021, most students set foot in physical classrooms for the first time in over a year. However, it was not business as usual.

Although the vaccine has been widely available since the beginning of the year, students are still required to wear masks and socially distance when possible. The district defied a state executive order prohibiting the requirement of face masks in public schools, with Superintendent Stephanie Elizalde stating, “I am responsible for the safety, the health and the welfare of each and every one of our students and our staff.” Despite lowering case numbers, hospitalizations, and deaths, now is no time to let down our guard against threats to student and staff health.

One of the most effective protectors against COVID-19 is the use of facemasks. Masks catch large respiratory droplets exhaled by wearers, preventing them from spreading through the air around them. This limits the likelihood of wearers spreading respiratory viruses including COVID-19.

Masks have been used to prevent disease since the early 20th century Manchurian Plague, and evidence suggests the use of rudimentary face coverings as far back as the Black Death. In addition to a history of mask usage, modern scientific data also supports their effectiveness.

According to the Mayo Clinic, the proper use of a cloth face mask can, along with regular hand-washing and social distancing, help slow or prevent the spread of COVID-19. A study conducted in Bangladesh by Innovations for Poverty Action and led by top American scientists found that the use of face masks could reduce symptomatic COVID-19 cases by 9%, with reason to believe they may be even more effective. Additional studies by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) confirm the effectiveness of masks, including in reducing outbreaks in schools. Considering the minor inconvenience that wearing a mask poses, this evidence suggests that the proper course of action is to continue to require their use in Austin schools for the time being.

The best long-term solution to the pandemic, though, is vaccination. At present, there are three approved COVID-19 vaccines in the United States, with all three being readily available

to anyone who wants one. The most effective are the two-dose Pfizer and Moderna mRNA vaccines, with the one-dose Johnson and Johnson viral vector vaccine affording slightly less protection. However, all vaccines are monumentally helpful. A study from the New England Journal of Medicine found that both mRNA vaccines were effective in preventing health care workers from catching and spreading the virus, with Pfizer being 88.8% effective and Moderna 96.3% with full vaccination. These vaccines can not only prevent the spread of the disease, but can greatly reduce the severity of breakthrough cases. According to CDC research, full mRNA

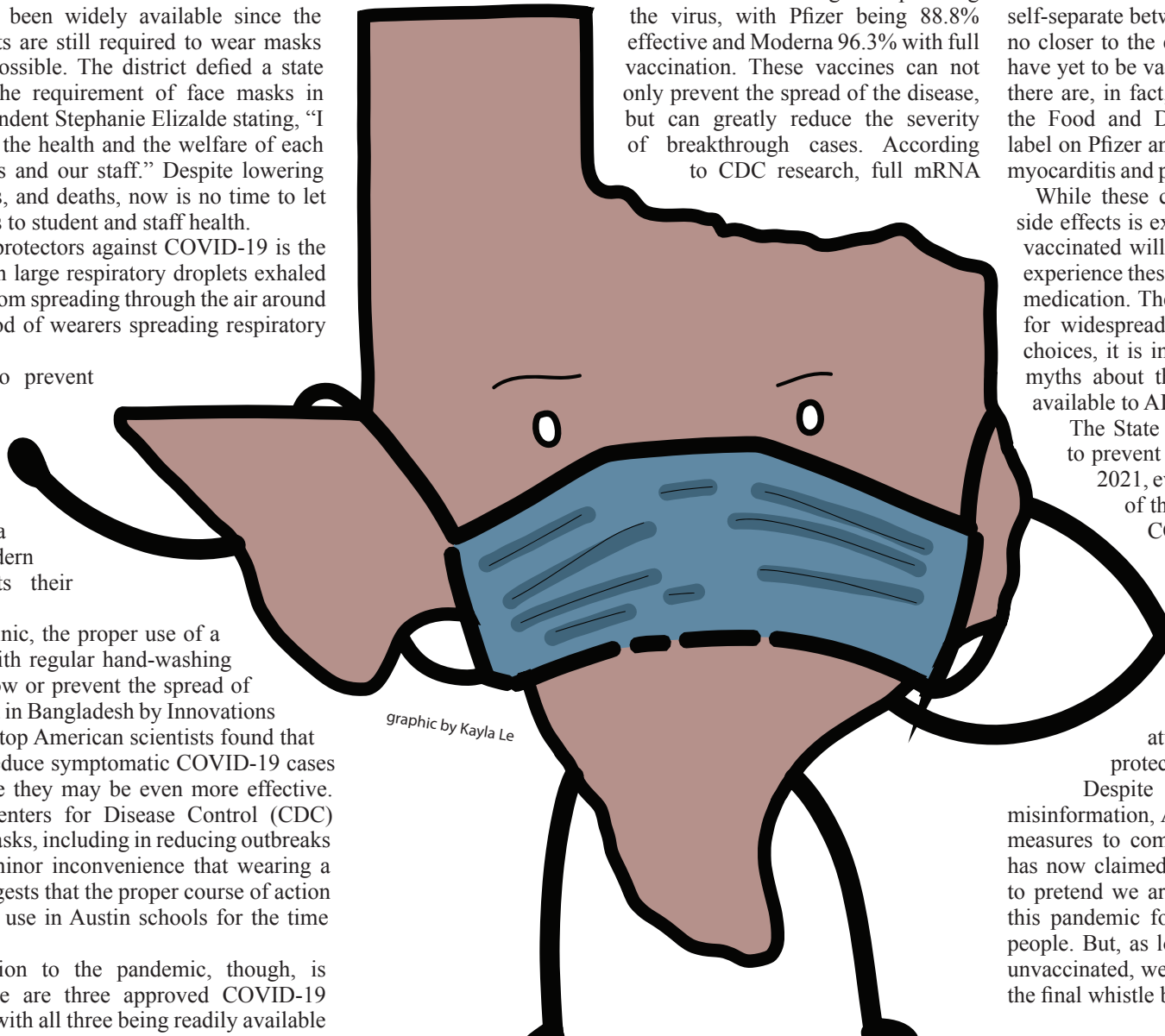
vaccination is 89% effective in preventing hospitalization among vaccinated COVID-19 patients, and 90% effective in preventing ICU admission. It is for this reason that AISD initiatives to help students and staff get vaccinated are so important in protecting their health.

Despite their great success, there are many who object to the vaccine. While it is easy to become divided into “us and them” and self-separate between vaccinated and unvaccinated, this will get us no closer to the end of the pandemic or to convincing those who have yet to be vaccinated to do so. It is important to recognize that there are, in fact, risks associated with the vaccine. For example, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) requires a warning label on Pfizer and Moderna vaccines due to their connection with myocarditis and pericarditis, two types of inflammation of the heart.

While these concerns are valid, the risk of developing these side effects is extremely small; only 12.6 of every million people vaccinated will develop them. What’s more, almost all who did experience these symptoms made a full recovery aided by rest and medication. The FDA has also fully approved the Pfizer vaccine for widespread use. While all are entitled to make their own choices, it is important to distribute information that can dispel myths about the vaccine, as well as make vaccination easily available to AISD students and staff.

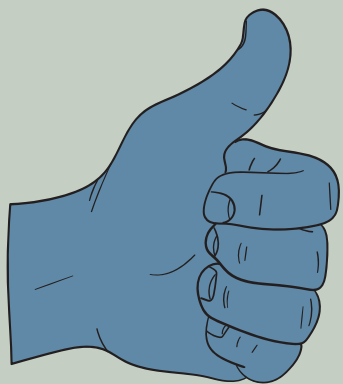
The State of Texas made no effort to implement measures to prevent the spread of the virus during the surge in fall of 2021, even as case numbers neared those seen at the height of the pandemic. While the seven-day average of new COVID-19 cases soared past 20,000 in September, Gov. Greg Abbott refused to implement mask mandates anywhere in the state. He even went so far as to issue an executive order barring cities and school districts from implementing such mandates, though the Texas Supreme Court has allowed some districts to do so. This kind of reckless behavior endangers Texans, and attempts to prevent school districts like Austin from protecting the health and safety of students and staff.

Despite obstacles from the state and the prevalence of misinformation, AISD must continue to implement sensible safety measures to combat the spread of COVID-19. As the pandemic has now claimed over 700,000 American lives, we cannot afford to pretend we are in the clear. The only way to fight and defeat this pandemic for good is to vaccinate the vast majority of the people. But, as long as almost half of the State of Texas remains unvaccinated, we must remain vigilant. The game is not over until the final whistle blows, and we cannot afford to give up now.



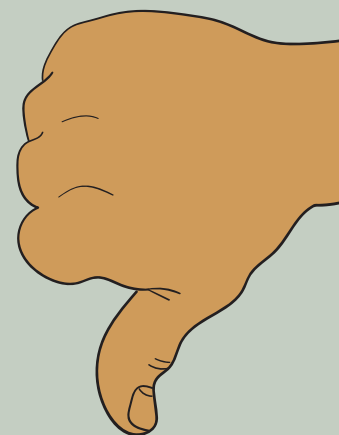
Graphic by Kayla Le

### Thumbs Up



Fridays  
Domino's  
Water  
Long Weekends  
Subtitles

### Thumbs Down



Broken A/C  
Mornings  
Quarter Exams  
Calculus  
Traffic

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**If you are interested in writing for the paper and becoming a club contributor, then be sure to stop by Room 701 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:

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

#### The Editorial Boards and its Functions:

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

#### The Editorial board will:

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

#### Viewpoints:

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

Editorials: These will be determined by the staff consensus. The editorial will be unsigned and will represent the viewpoint of the publication.

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

Non-Staff Contributors: Bylined contributions are welcome.

Correction of Errors: The staff makes every effort to print accurate information. In the case of errors, a written correction will be made in the following issue of the newspaper.

#### Sources:

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

Note: The Liberator is an open forum.

Congratulations  
on finishing the  
first quarter of  
the year – keep  
it up!



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](mailto:lasaliberator@gmail.com) or DM us @lasaliberator.

## Tech Monopolies How Massive Corporations Dominate New Markets

FIONA KLEEMAN | staff writer

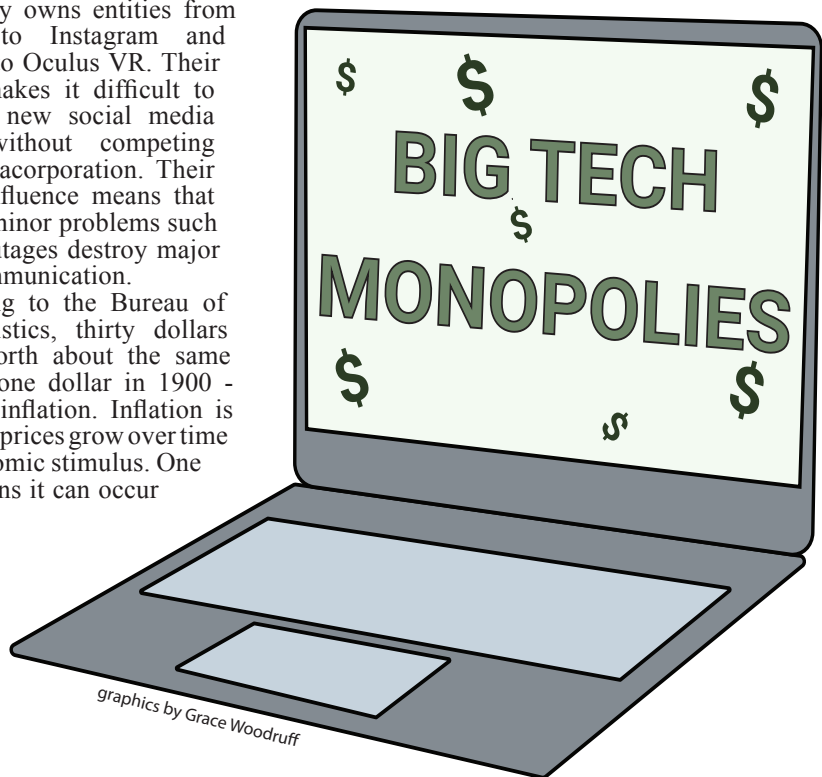


In the board game Monopoly, players compete in a cutthroat competition to acquire property and put competition out of business. While the game is intended to be light-hearted fun, it bears disturbing parallels to the real world. With a simple roll of the dice, megacorporations like Facebook and Microsoft have linked together to form monopolies that give them control over vast swaths of the gameboard.

One of the most prominent digital monopolies is Apple's App Store. If users want their apps to be downloaded on iPhones, they have to download them from the App Store. This siphons off some of the app designer's profit. Apple's profit margin differs greatly between apps - Tinder pays a 30% fee, while Uber skips fees altogether.

Facebook's spider web stretches to all corners of the social media world: the company owns entities from Facebook to Instagram and WhatsApp to Oculus VR. Their influence makes it difficult to populate a new social media platform without competing with a megacorporation. Their swath of influence means that seemingly minor problems such as server outages destroy major lines of communication.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, thirty dollars today is worth about the same amount as one dollar in 1900 - a result of inflation. Inflation is when items' prices grow over time due to economic stimulus. One of the reasons it can occur



graphics by Grace Woodruff

is a rise in cost of production. This process can be exacerbated when one company controls the majority of a market, preventing others from producing the same product for less.

In spite of their shortcomings, large tech companies provide jobs for thousands of people. The bigger the company, the more employees needed for production. However, these benefits do not justify the extreme control exerted by these companies over the market, especially when many employees are underpaid and poorly treated. Amazon, for example, is notorious for making employees work long hours with heavily restricted breaks, according to Forbes.

With a future of tech-driven life and big companies only getting bigger, small businesses may never catch up. It seems the future is up to us. There are not many ways to prevent these trends from getting out of hand, but there are small solutions like protesting and shopping small. Shopping with small businesses not only redirects business away from large corporations, but it draws benefits toward local communities.

As massive corporations continue to advance, inflation will continue to rise and monopoly holders will just keep getting richer. But there is a course of action to fight this trend. If the people take it into their own hands to support local businesses, stop patronizing the major corporations, and protest against market domination, small businesses still have a chance at winning the game.

## AP Exam Scam? Examining the College Board

NAYAN KONDAPALLI | staff writer

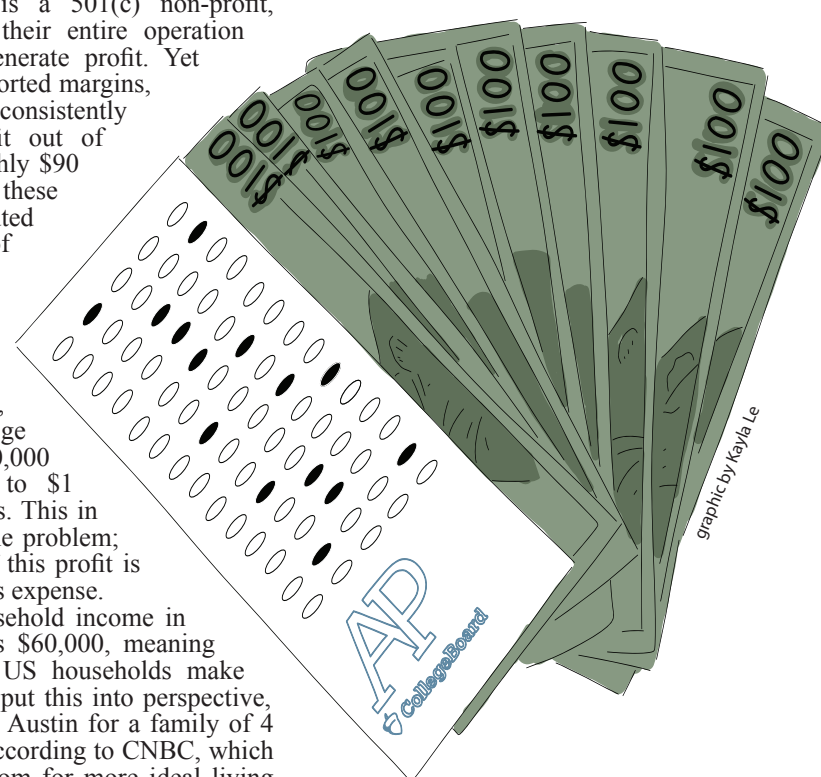


After eight months of quizzes, tests, and cold preparations, approximately 2.5 million high school students eagerly wait to receive their AP test scores every summer. In an attempt to cushion their resumes or knock out a college credit, students will pay \$90 to take just one of these tests, yet many wonder if it was worth it.

The College Board was founded in 1899 with the mission of pushing higher education throughout the United States. Since then, they have been best known for creating the SAT exam and the Advanced Placement (AP) test, which are meant to help high school students save money by awarding them with college credits. By these descriptions, it can be hard to come to the conclusion that College Board is a rip-off, as considered by many students, but the expenses of College Board's exams and their profits suggest that there is merit behind such accusations.

College Board is a 501(c) non-profit, which means that their entire operation is not meant to generate profit. Yet when looking at reported margins, College Board consistently generates 8% profit out of total revenue, roughly \$90 million. As a result, these profits are distributed to the executives of College Board, similar to a normal for-profit company, along with compensation for the CEO. In fact, the CEO of College Board makes \$870,000 per year and up to \$1 million with benefits. This in and of itself isn't the problem; the issue is most of this profit is made at the student's expense.

The median household income in the United States is \$60,000, meaning that about half of US households make \$60,000 or less. To put this into perspective, the cost of living in Austin for a family of 4 is around \$80,000 according to CNBC, which leaves very little room for more ideal living



graphic by Kayla Le

## Making the Case for Texas' Abortion Bill

The opinions expressed in this editorial do not conform with the views of the majority of the Liberator newsroom, but we strive to follow the journalistic duty of publishing diverse views, even those which could be found divisive. Readers concerned about any article are always encouraged to write the Liberator at [lasaliberator@gmail.com](mailto:lasaliberator@gmail.com) with their opinions.

BECK WILLIAMS | commentary editor



Human beings have an innate calling to defend those who cannot defend themselves, which undergirds civilization itself. But those with power in the modern world have abandoned this concept, instead adopting a radically self-serving outlook that leaves the weak to fend for themselves. Cultural acceptance of abortion, the intentional killing of a child inside the womb, is indicative of our collective self-

worship and emphasis on success over morality, convenience over compassion, and self over all else.

There is hope, however, in the surge of laws like the most recent in Texas, effectively banning abortions after a fetal heartbeat can be detected. While these laws are only a stepping stone to building a culture of life, they are vitally important in turning the tide.

To defend life, a coherent definition of what life is is needed. Though groups like Planned Parenthood, the largest abortion provider in the United States, deny that human life begins at conception, they do not provide a consistent answer for when it does. While signs like a heartbeat, brain waves, and independent movement, all of which can be detected in the first trimester of a pregnancy, are vital indicators of life, they do not define it.

A University of Chicago survey of 5,502 biologists found that over 90% of them agreed that a zygote is an independent organism. It has its own individual DNA sequence, is separate entirely from the mother, and is "programmed" with all of those features which make individuals unique. Seeing as the zygote is of the human species, it follows that an independent human being inside the womb would be just as alive as any other. Though there are many finer details to explore, in the process of going from zygote to adult human, one does not become a different organism. Without such a difference, one cannot justify the killing of one but not the other.

Approaching this topic from a purely scientific perspective ignores major philosophical and moral questions. For a proper

examination of the permissibility of abortion, the reasons that a mother might try to terminate her pregnancy must be accounted for. While instances of rape or health of the mother are often cited as justification for abortion, these are statistically extremely rare. According to a survey of more than 2.4 million women seeking abortions carried out by the states of Florida, Louisiana, Minnesota, Nebraska, South Dakota and Utah between 1996 and 2020, these cases make up less than 3.5% of all abortions. Even the Guttmacher Institute, the research arm of Planned Parenthood, puts these cases under 7%. While these rare cases are extremely tragic, they do not excuse the killing of an innocent child. In these instances, alternatives must be offered to abortion.

What is far more disturbing is the 96.5% of abortions which do not fall under "hard cases". In these cases, it seems as though pro-abortion organizations have deemed it acceptable to kill a child for economic or social reasons, or even because the mother simply does not want a child. Advocates for abortion, such as United Nations Human Rights Official Dr. Tlaleng Mofokeng, call it an "act of self-love." This euphemistic language belies reality: that abortion is an act of self-worship. This is evident in the way proponents of abortion like Planned Parenthood place materialistic pursuits like success in the workplace and "freedom" from child-rearing above the lives of unborn infants. What's more, widespread abortion allows men to avoid responsibility for their actions, and encourages them to pressure women into abortion for their sake. While it is foolish to dismiss the reasons that women seek abortion as invalid, it is important to recognize that none of these reasons justify the taking of an innocent life.

The pro-life mission does not end with condemning abortion and the women who seek it. It is vital that alternatives be widely discussed and provided to end the deeply rooted issues that cause abortion. Options like adoption are viable for women who cannot take care of their children. With as many as 36 families waiting to adopt for every child available, good homes can be found for children who would have otherwise been killed. For those women who do want to keep their children, pro-life pregnancy resource centers, of which there are over 2,300 in North America, provide the help needed to do so.

The new Texas law regarding abortions after a fetal heartbeat can be detected is not perfect, but it is enormously helpful. With almost 1,000,000 abortions occurring in America every year,

any law that stops even a few is a good law. Admittedly, the deputization of the citizenry to do the state's dirty work is not ideal, and the deadline set at the detection of a fetal heartbeat is arbitrary. Even so, it is a victory for life, and state and national lawmakers must continue to work to ensure every unborn life is protected by law.

The Texas Heartbeat Law is a step in the right direction, but it is just that: a step. In order to build a culture of life, the state and the country must start by ensuring that every human life, from the moment of conception, is protected. They must value the life of the mother and child equally, and make alternatives to abortion readily available. Accurate information about abortion must be made available to the public. While Texas has made great strides in protecting the unborn, it still has a long road ahead.

# ALL EYES ON TEXAS

## Why The Two-Party System is Failing

What The Texas Democrats Fleeing Says About Bipartisanship

AMELIA COLEMAN | staff writer



After weeks of built-up tension surrounding the Texas Republican's voter suppression bills, constituents waited with bated breaths to see if their voting rights would remain intact. In a last-ditch effort to preserve those rights, on July 12th, 2021, 51 out of 67

of the Texas House's Democratic representatives left Austin, Texas, and flew to D.C.

They did this with the intention of interrupting the quorum, which is the minimum number of legislators that have to currently be on the floor for the session to begin. They left because Republican legislators were introducing bills that supposedly intended to secure "voter integrity," but that the Democrats believed would suppress voters of color. They hoped that their action would call national attention to the issue. Democrats were using every tool in their arsenal to block these bills and ensure that everyone has an equal opportunity to vote. Regardless of its necessity, the situation sheds light on a fundamental part of modern American politics: the parties can hardly even talk to each other anymore.

According to the Pew Research Center, in 1994, 16% of Democrats and 17% of Republicans viewed the other party as very unfavorable.

In 2014, that number has more than doubled, Democrats and of Republicans seen as very unfavorable by the other party.

Moreover, 27% of Democrats

and 36% of Republicans think that the other party is a threat to the nation's well-being. Bipartisanship has likely not improved since the statistic was collected.

The parties harbor so much animosity for one another that they struggle to meet consensus in legislation. According to the Pew Research Center, bipartisan voting was not uncommon in congress until the mid 1970s. Experts theorize that the cause of this newfound polarization is that both parties have become more and more liberal in their views and it only became noticeable in the 1990s, or that party polarization was common beforehand and World War II was just able to bring the country together and create this artificial sense of bipartisanship that weakened in the 1990s.

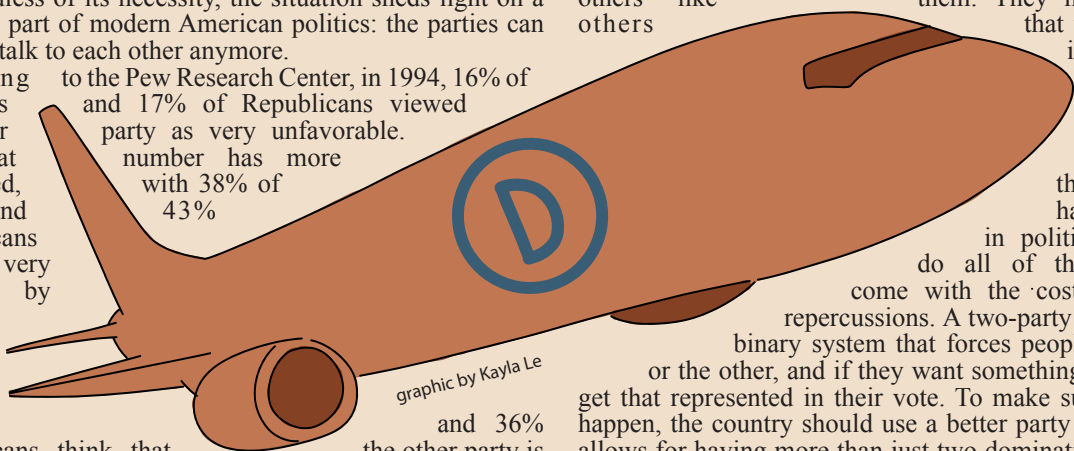
Having two dominant parties that are so radically different from each other and only seem to be growing further apart suggests that this system does not work in today's evolving political landscape. Even the first president of this country

did not think the two-party system would work, stating in his farewell address that "the alternate domination of one faction over another, sharpened by the spirit of revenge...is itself a frightful despotism." If the man whose contributions were so critical to the formation of this nation believed that the two-party system was so inherently flawed, one must question whether that system has any place in American democracy. It is long past time that we reevaluate the way political business is conducted in the United States.

It seems as though Republicans and Democrats are trying to live in worlds that cannot coincide. Increasingly unwilling to compromise for the good of the country, they have adopted a "my way or the highway" mentality that leaves the American people underserved. This country has become so obsessed with this idea of "I get all of what I want and nobody else gets anything," when instead everyone should try their hardest to get a little of what they want, and nobody should go home feeling like they have completely won. This ideology may make sense when laws are being made to directly impact the lives of citizens in a very drastic way, but in most circumstances, everyone just needs to recognize that "all or nothing" is just impacting both major parties negatively.

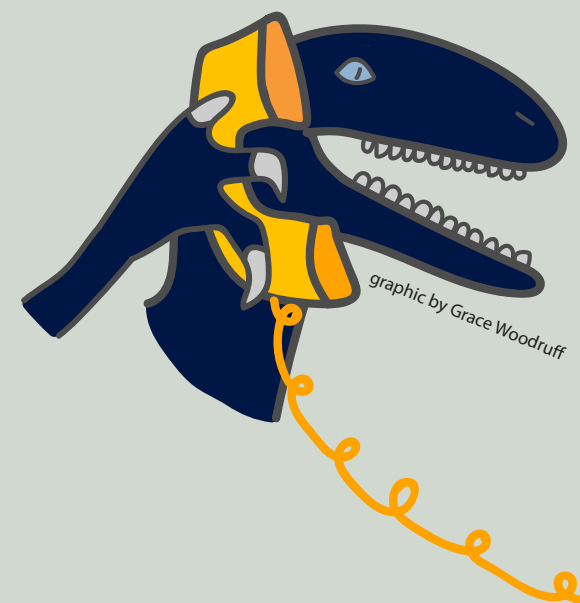
All of this raises the question of why we have parties in the first place. They help categorize people into their political ideologies to see what they want in the world and to find others like them. They help people find others that they want to see in positions of leadership. A party can make people want to dedicate themselves to having a voice in politics. Two parties do all of these things, but come with the cost of undesirable repercussions. A two-party system creates a binary system that forces people to choose one or the other, and if they want something else they rarely get that represented in their vote. To make sure this does not happen, the country should use a better party system, one that allows for having more than just two dominating parties, or no parties.

With multiple main parties, the country could function while not being split almost entirely in two. A multi-party system could create a wide variety of ways to align and find others like us. There would be far less partisanship and more cooperation with this system since the ideologies of the groups would intersect far more than if there were only two parties with almost polar opposite ways of seeing the world. To shift an entire country into an era with two or three more main parties would take years, decades even, and would most definitely require government intervention. For now the country could use a good lesson in compromise, bipartisanship, and how to function properly while being constantly divided.



graphic by Kayla Le

ask the libs



graphic by Grace Woodruff

## How Do I Reconnect With Friends After Online School?

You've probably already seen some old friends in the hallways and awkwardly avoided eye-contact with them, wondering if they remember you, but fear not! They're probably feeling the same exact way, and if you're hopelessly awkward in-person, you could try texting them and asking if they want to join a club or stay after school in the library to do homework together. You don't have to do anything crazy, but actually warming up to the people you once were close with would make your school life more enjoyable. Take it step by step— isolation has been hard, and no one expects for you to suddenly go back to how things were before— but remember that everyone is in the same boat of having a somewhat rusty social life. You got this!

## How Do I Balance School Life and Social Life?

This is obviously the million dollar question for LASA students—how to find the golden mean between all of the equally pressing priorities that all seem to demand your time. As cliché as it may sound, I recommend writing everything you have to do for the week, prioritizing what you have to get done, and intentionally making space in your schedule for something not school-related, whether that be going out with friends, focusing on your hobbies, or literally just staring out the window. Rest is necessary, important, and productive- don't let LASA's academic-focused culture diminish that. Overall, set up a rough schedule for what you need to get done, and if assignments are taking up a considerable amount of your scheduled rest time even with proper time management, communicate this with your teachers, and oftentimes they'll be willing to work with you if they understand your situation.

## How Do I Submit to the Advice Column?

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

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

## Drawing the Line: Art vs the Artist

The Ethics of Consuming Art by Corrupt Creators

ELLA LILLY | staff writer



On June 6, 2020, Harry Potter's once beloved author, J.K. Rowling, made a comment on gender identity that caused her audience and the media to question her character. Fans of her

work wondered if they could read and love Rowling's work without supporting her transphobic views.

The debate regarding separating the artist from their art has become increasingly prevalent as our society is becoming more invested in cancel culture and the morality of holding public figures, such as artists, accountable for their behavior. This has raised the question of if one should, or even can, appreciate works of art without supporting an artist's potentially iniquitous behavior.

J.K. Rowling is a relevant example of this dilemma, having made transphobic comments on gender identity in 2020. In response to a Devex article with the words "people who menstruate" in the title, Rowling tweeted, "'People who menstruate.' I'm sure there used to be a word for those people. Someone help me out. Wumben? Wimpund? Woomud?" Rowling received harsh backlash and criticism in response.

There is a difference between making a mistake with the right intentions and making an offensive statement with serious consequences. Cancel culture is different from accountability culture. Cancel culture implies mistakes that destroy careers and can come with a mob mentality, whereas accountability culture holds public figures accountable for their actions in an appropriate way, as in the case of J.K. Rowling. While there are times to separate the work itself from its creator, there still needs to be an extent to which accountability culture is applied to artists. We have to consider if J.K. Rowling, as an example of a dishonorable artist, can be considered separate from her writing, and while J.K. Rowling might be unethical, whether or not we should completely avoid and discredit the "Harry Potter" series, as her work is a staple in children's literature.

On the other hand, the influence of the artist's beliefs on their own work is also important to consider. Consumers of art can't look at a work without seeing, to an extent, the artist's experiences and ideas reflected in their art. So by the logic that the art is connected to the artist, supporting the artist can also be considered wrong. Everytime someone

purchases a book to read, buys a ticket to watch a movie, or attends a concert, they're supporting the artist whether they're making the conscious decision or not. Therefore, in cases where the artist has been bigot, consumers shouldn't give them the power of monetary wealth that feeds back into the cycle of corruption.

A different approach for how one can separate the art from the artist considers that readers have the ultimate power and responsibility to make the decision of what ideas and meanings they take from the art itself. Art is about the interpretation from the audience; the artist doesn't control their audience's thoughts. The issue is that if one truly can separate the art from the artist, they are still saying that they accept their unacceptable morals and it's okay to consume information without context. Saying that it's ethical to see past ignorance because consuming art is different from supporting the artist just doesn't account for the monetary gain that artists have when we consume their work.

Instead of supporting corruption, there are ethical ways of consuming media. Instead of buying a book written by an author who shouldn't be supported, borrow it from the library. This way, art can be consumed without giving power to an unconscionable artist. Ultimately, we have the opportunity to choose where we place power. We could "cancel" every artist who offends our moral sensibilities, or we could make an effort to consume great art ethically.



# Austin's Affordability Problem

## What happens when residents can no longer pay rent?

DELIA RUNE | staff writer

For the last year, Austin has protected residents from being evicted from their homes with an eviction moratorium. But on Oct. 15, that moratorium ended, and an estimated 60,000 Austinites were evicted, according to Molly Jensen, executive director of the Austin Tenants Council (ATC).

According to Jensen, there is no longer a prohibition or restriction on issuing notices to vacate for nonpayment of rent in Austin and Travis County. She explained that ATC is responding to roughly 450 calls a month.

However, leaving the eviction moratorium in place would have led to large financial losses for Austin landlords. The Austin City Council's choice to end the eviction moratorium was complex, and, according to executive director of the Austin Housing Coalition Nora Linares-Moeller, it's still unclear how it will affect Austin residents.

"The jury's still out on how the eviction moratorium will affect Austinites," Jensen said. "Ultimately, there is going to be some problems with the end of the eviction moratorium, but that's across the board how it's been with everything."

Chris Davis, the communications manager at the Ending Community Homelessness Coalition (ECHO), agrees. ECHO advocates for affordable housing in Austin and policies that prevent homelessness.

"Eviction rates are a community-level indicator for risk of homelessness," Davis said. "The local eviction moratoriums have almost certainly prevented people from becoming unhoused."

According to Linares-Moeller, the solution to this problem isn't extending the eviction moratorium further. Instead, Linares-Moeller explained that it all has to do with policies like Austin's

land development code.

"That code hasn't been fixed in 10 to 15 years," Linares-Moeller said. "There are also a lot of density bonus programs that need to get tweaked."

According to Linares-Moeller, density bonus programs allow for developers to build more houses in a certain area than permitted if it is listed as affordable housing. Ultimately, all of the policies that the Austin Housing Coalition is working on have one goal: to make affordable housing an attractive option for land developers.

"This is because, when you're a developer, you're looking for the land that you can buy for the cheapest and that can help you make a profit," Linares-Moeller said.

According to Davis, Austin's affordable housing needs are high. The City of Austin has received a lot of funding this year, and Davis believes that there's a chance it could make a real difference in homeless communities.

"We need to build out almost 6,000 units just of permanent housing to meet the current needs of people experiencing homelessness," Davis said. "That's an insane number, and that only includes those who have already lost their homes. When you factor in the affordable housing Austinites need to prevent homelessness in the first place, the number of homes needed rises into the tens of thousands."

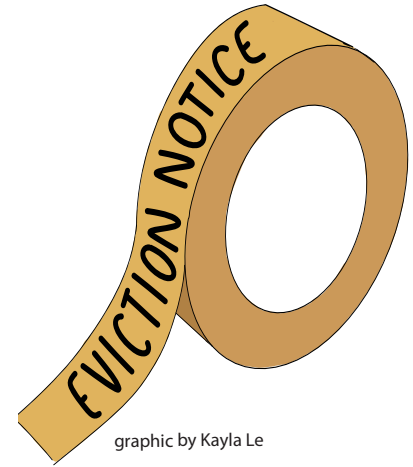
Leah Hargrave, founder of the Charlie Center and director of Mosaic Street Ministries, which are two organizations working to end homelessness in Austin by helping homeless individuals access healthcare services and housing navigation, said that there's a lot of misconceptions about what causes people to become homeless. But unfortunately, according to Hargrave, this problem is not as simple as telling people to "just get a job."

"The City of Austin has really committed itself to funding

homelessness response at levels that are really meaningful and make a big impact," Davis said. "Both the city and Travis County have committed 100 million dollars each towards homelessness response and affordable housing. That is historic — there is no other way to put it."

According to Linares-Moeller, the amount of money and people going into Austin's fight for affordable housing should be reassuring to those facing evictions on Oct. 15. However, it is important to remember that housing takes time to build, according to Davis.

"There's a big opportunity right now," Davis said, "and I'm hopeful that we as a community can really capitalize on that."



graphic by Kayla Le

## LIGHTS OUT

from page 1

essential light.

"I say that non-essential lighting is anything that you don't need for safety," Zuzula said. "That for the most part eliminates a lot of outside lighting and then it also eliminates inside lighting as well. Any things that you would keep on during the night for various reasons. If you think it's going to make your house feel significantly less safe than I consider that essential lighting, but if not, then it can be turned out."

Lowering lights could provide benefits for birds and also award an advantage to participants by lowering the cost of the electric bill, according to Zuzula. In addition, it could help motivate individuals not already engaged with birds to participate.

"Well, it's great for energy consumption," Zuzula said. "If you're using fewer lights at night, that's going to lower your energy bill. So I think that's a big profit, especially for people who aren't necessarily conservation oriented."

Ahlquist was also able to note some of the other benefits of Lights Out that they knew of. According to Ahlquist, lights can confuse a travelling bird, and cause them to waste energy.

"I like the Lights Out Initiative because window collisions are one of the leading causes of death for birds and I think it could help solve this problem," Ahlquist said. "Specifically it affects birds migrating at night as bright lights can confuse the birds, causing them to waste energy, leading

to death."

Hundall weighed in with her view on the initiative as an animal rehabilitation expert. Not only has turning lights out benefitted birds, but it has also publicized bird conservation.

"This is a great initiative," Hundall said. "I'm glad it is a nationwide program and Texas has joined in. I think Travis Audubon is doing a great job promoting it and spreading the word about the cause and how people can participate. I think the more people know, the more they care, so education is a huge step."

The Lights Out Initiative will continue from now until Nov. 30, the end of the migration window. Within this timeframe, the peak migration dates are from Sept. 5 to Oct. 29.



graphic by Kayla Le

# Making Money Moves in New Budget

SYDNEY JONES | staff writer

The Austin budget for the 2021-2022 fiscal year was recently adopted and approved. This budget contained changes to different departments, which meant including more money for the Austin Public Library (APL) and the Austin Parks and Recreation Department (PAR), as well as more funding for the Safe Routes to School program.

APL financial manager Wendy Harrison said that they were given an extra 2.75% from last year's budget to work with, which is an extra \$1,618,884. The APL is going to make multiple changes in their operations, such as computer training, community engagement, and literary advancement.

"One of the biggest changes for the new fiscal year is that the library will provide a free library card for any student enrolled within Travis County, rather than only to those within the City of Austin," Harrison said. "This important update supports the library's literacy advancement strategic priority and will provide access to library materials for more students in the coming year."

Harrison talked about getting more communities access to digital devices. APL is hoping to teach people more about technology, according to Harrison.

"APL will also soon have laptops available for customers to check out and take home at all branches," Harrison said. "Additional funding of \$63,000 was provided by Council for laptops in response to various Board & Commission recommendations to address the needs within our community for digital access."

The library is also trying to connect more with the community around them. They are seeking new ways of library service throughout Austin, such as express services and a pop-up library.

"A repurpose of the Terrazas Branch is underway for this location to be a hybrid of community services navigation and express library service," Harrison said. "A new vehicle to provide pop-up library services will be introduced to the community in FY22."

PAR, on the other hand, was given almost four million extra dollars for the 2021-2022 fiscal year. Angela Richter is the advocacy manager for the Austin Parks Foundation, which is an organization that is run through PAR works to maintain the city's parks, as well as create programs to introduce Austinites to nature and recreational public spaces.

"This year, we were able to expand the park rangers program, there are six new park rangers," Richter said. "That's really important. I feel like the park ranger program is something that is very useful and not currently well funded."

Richter also said that the organization was given more money for maintenance for both the facilities and the grounds, which is very important to the wellbeing of parks around Austin. This money will be used to repair some of the eastern facilities within the Austin Parks Foundation.

"A bigger budget for maintenance and rehabilitation is part of PAR's facilities," Richter said. "So things like new restrooms or tennis courts that need resurfacing. All kinds of facilities that are just in need of condition and that need to be updated."

Lastly, some of the money is going to be used for PAR's afterschool program. More than 15 locations are located all across the city, according to the department.

"This is something that not everyone knows that the department does," Richter said, "but we have recreational facilities across the city that actually have after school programs for kids."

The Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program promotes

bicycling and walking to school, and was given an additional sum of money this year. SRTS infrastructure manager Coleen Gentles and SRTS financial manager Ben Ellinor both said they are going to continue previous projects with the additional money and add more safety features around schools.

"We're still going to spend money on building curb ramps and sidewalks," Gentles said. "We'll see other traffic calming devices, such as speed bumps. The projects won't really change from year to year. We'll just be doing more of them."

Since previous budget additions, the program has already started to see their effects around them, according to Gentles. Multiple different projects have been implemented since the last change in their budget.

"I believe we have 149 projects completed," Gentles said. "We're seeing safety improvements across schools across the city. We have children using our infrastructure in a very short period of time. We're getting projects on the ground really quickly."

The decisions for the budget are voted on by city council members after departments and programs come in to advocate for more money. The District 10 council member is Alison Alter.

"I have advocated for investments that improve our community and strengthen our city's long-term financial health," Alter said. "I was pleased to vote for a budget that

is fiscally sustainable and makes strategic investments to keep our community healthy, resilient, and safe."

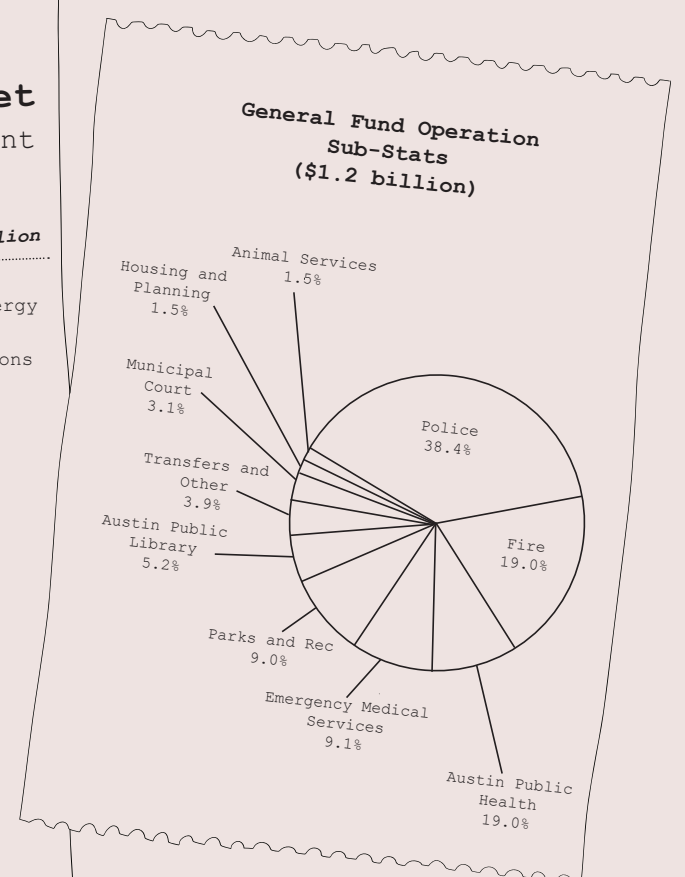
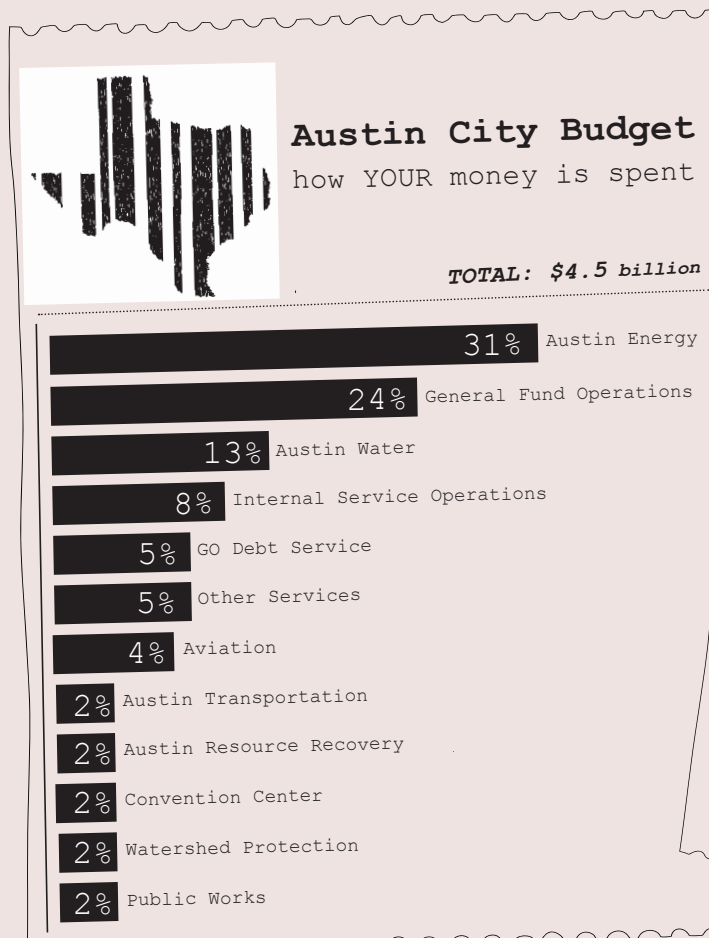
Council Members can vote on the budget based on what they think will be best for the city. This vote impacts what the budget will hold for the next fiscal year, according to Alter.

"Every Council Member in Austin plays a role in deliberating and passing the annual budget," Alter said. "I am proud to have advanced significant initiatives related to public safety, the environment, and improving access to medical care for residents."

This new budget will have many lasting impacts to the City of Austin and will help many communities in the future, according to Alter. The changes in the new budget go into effect soon and the next budget will be adopted in September of 2022, and many have already begun to take their projects off the ground, according to Gentles.

According to Alter, many pieces of the annual budget are the continuation of programs and projects from previous years. The fiscal budget for 2021-2022 will begin on Oct. 1, and will introduce new programs as well as continue the advancement of previous ones.

graphic by Kayla Le



# Austin Organizations Bring Aid to New Refugees

## From Afghanistan to Austin, Refugees Begin Resettling

FIONA KLEEMAN | staff writer

Due to recent violence in Afghanistan caused by the Taliban, many refugees are migrating to other countries like the U.S. in search of asylum and job opportunities, according to the New York Times. The Taliban is a political group and military organization that has taken over Afghanistan, and branches in Pakistan known as the Tehrik-e Taliban are classified as terrorist organizations by the U.S.

Neil Loewenstern has been teaching contemporary issues and world geography since 2002. He believes the U.S. could have handled the situation better by spreading out the exit process over a couple of years, as well believing that the government should be doing more to help fund resettlement.

"I've been teaching quite a bit about it all year long," Loewenstern said. "Contemporary issues, which is a foreign policy class, has focused very heavily on the crisis in Afghanistan, as well as world geography class to talk about current events every day."

Thousands of Afghans were trying to flee the country and catch a flight at the Kabul Airport, according to the BBC. In a viral photo taken by U.S. Airforce Captain Chris Herbert, approximately 640 Afghan refugees were aboard a C-17 military plane flying to the U.S. Refugee services, such as Refugee Services of Texas (RST), have been working with new refugees to get them through the tough transition, according to RST spokesperson Chris Kelley. When working with refugees, Kelley says that many do not realize the experience that many go through when relocating.

"I don't mean to be snarky, but I do encourage others to think about having to leave everything you've ever known — your home, your school, your job, family members, the food, the climate, etc., because you were forced to move because your life was no longer safe," Kelley said.

Kelley says support is needed for refugees coming to the United States. RST helps families by offering a variety of services, like enrolling children in schools.

"After arrival, RST helps refugees to start their lives in the U.S.," Kelley said. "Assisting them with applying for a social security card, registering children in school, learning how to access shopping facilities, arranging medical appointments, and connecting them with needed social or language services."

Former RST employee Lilo Pomerleau has a different view on how they handle things. She says RST tries to assist refugees in too short of a timespan, which is determined based on the status a refugee is given.

"RST generally provides assistance to the family for six months," Pomerleau said. "This is a ridiculously short period of time. Canada helps for a year."

Loewenstern also mentioned that he himself has begun to get involved with helping welcome refugees through his synagogue. RST works with other faith organizations to help refugees through welcoming committees, according to Loewenstern.

"There are organizations out there that are actively helping, especially here in Austin and Refugee Services of Texas, and I'm involved through my Jewish synagogue in Israel, and they're the ones who have been their welcoming committees," Loewenstern said. "The refugee services of Texas works with some of that through faith based organizations. So, if anybody's looking to get involved, there are ways to do that here in Austin."

According to RST, they rely on volunteers during those first three to six months. They help set up and find homes for the refugees to live in, and according to Pomerleau, some even keep in contact with the families they work with.

"I am still in contact and help my family from time to time," Pomerleau said. "They have been here for more than three years. I have helped them move to different apartments; it is very difficult to find cheap apartments. They are located in not so nice areas. There is usually a requirement that they don't earn too much money to qualify for a low rent apartment."

According to Kelley, one of the main struggles that Afghanistan refugees have when coming to the U.S. is learning English. He says refugees can be taught the language over time, but RST is in need of translators when they first come to sort out their legal status and employment.

"Although volunteers for RST and other refugee support organizations can teach individual refugees basic English conversation skills over time, refugees still need immediate assistance with interpretation and translation services as they work out their legal status and employment," Kelley said. "RST, along with other community organizations, helps

refugees with translation and interpretation, relying on volunteers to use their dual language skills to help those who are still learning English."

In the first phase of resettlement, Texas is expected to take in the second most amount of Afghan refugees with 4.5 thousand out of 37 thousand, which is around 12%. Some states are doing less by only taking in ten individual refugees, while some states aren't taking any, according to KUT.

"Well, there definitely needs to be quite a bit of government funding," Loewenstern said. "There's different classifications as refugees and parolees, and that gives them a certain amount of funding for a certain amount of time. And so that's kind of an issue."

According to Kelley, organizations like RST have recently become busier as Austin takes in more refugees. But Kelley also noted that he has hopes for many of the families as RST works to provide permanent housing and citizenship for families using their services.

"More than 75% of refugees to the U.S. become independent Americans," Kelley said. "After which, they are subject to about the same rates of success as every native-born citizen, becoming homeowners at about the same rate and remaining employed at about the same rate. They own businesses, pay taxes, and succeed as contributing members of society, just like everyone else."



file graphic by Andrew Lucksinger

## Looking for Extracurriculars? Join the Club

AVA SPURGEON | staff writer

### Horror Movie Club

When: Fridays During Lunch, Madame Pate's Room (204)  
Contact: Founder Avery Evans, Sponsor Madame Pate

Every Friday in Madame Pate's classroom, Horror Movie Club meets to enjoy horror movies together.

At the meetings, students spread out on chairs and across the floor to enjoy that week's film. Since lunch period is only an hour, most movies are watched over the course of a couple of weeks. So far, the club has finished the movie "Poltergeist," but is deciding together what to watch next. Any student who wants to get into horror, or movie buffs are welcome to join, according to sophomore Isabela Kramer.

"I'm not a scary movie person, but I want to get into it," Kramer said. "So if you want to watch horror movies, this is where you should go."

Junior and club president Avery Evans started this club two years ago. Evans says she loves watching any horror movies, and wanted a club to meet

others who did as well.

"I figured people who like horror movies are pretty intense about it, so I thought there would be a good market here and there is," Evans said. "There's a lot of people in this club right now."

The club aims to maintain a chill atmosphere for students to watch movies they enjoy and relax on their Fridays. Some weeks, they enjoy special treats while watching.

"We had a popcorn machine [one] day. I don't think other clubs have popcorn machines," Kramer said.

Along with popcorn, the club members also discuss movies once they finish them. Evans enjoys these discussions with the entire club and the conversations they get to have about horror and scary films they watch.

"We watch horror movies and discuss them," Evans said. "Once we actually finish one, and I think it's really fun to discuss horror movies, that's one of my favorite things to do, and I think they're interesting and other people think they're interesting, too. It's really fun to get to discuss at school."



MOVIE TIME Horror movie club meets during one of their weekly meetings to continue watching their current pick. Movies are shown during lunch until they are watched all the way through. photo by Ava Spurgeon

### Youth & Government

When: Mondays During Lunch, Risinger's Room (307)  
Contact: @lasayag on Instagram

Youth and Government Club provides students with an opportunity to become a part of a nationally ranked mock government team. Senior Harsha Venkatraman is the co-president of Youth and Government club.

"Youth and Government is a club where we perform mock government, like different elements of it," Venkatraman said. "There's mock legislature, mock trial, mock appellate, mock journalism, and all of those things that work in the actual governmental process and we perform those different activities at the state conferences. It's a really fun experience to debate at the conferences."

With a wide range of opportunities, students can find their niche based on their passions and interests, according to senior Sally Edwards. Edwards is a returning club member who is a part of the mock trial team for the club.

"There's a lot of different branches. If you have different interests, you

can still get involved," Edwards said.

As for the different sections, students have a variety of different options to pick from, according to Venkatraman. Venkatraman is returning to Youth and Government this year after being a member of the team that won Nationals in the 2020-2021 school year.

"Mock trial is the most well known," Venkatraman said. "You have a case, and two teams debate against each other for a judge. The legislative section, which is what I've been doing for three years now, is where we write bills about whatever's important to you or changes you would like to see made in your community."

Students are also able to participate in the political journalism section or the mock appellate court. Besides involvement in law, Youth and Government Club also provides a community that members can enjoy being a part of, according to member senior Shivani Regan.

"I honestly think anyone can join," Regan said. "When I joined the club, I had absolutely no interest in law or anything relating to law or government whatsoever. But I ended up having a lot of fun. It's a really great opportunity to be in a club for anyone who really wants to get involved in a fun club and make some new friends."



CAPITOL CAPTURE LASA Youth & Government members Cristel Chalain, Louisa Mcdaniel, Sofia Buntz, Violet KoppenHaverm, and Zoe Klein stand outside of the Texas State Capitol building. The group was competing at the State Competition in 2019. photo by Zoe Klein

### Outdoors Club

When: Thursdays During Lunch, Cunningham's Room (103)  
Contact: @lasaenvironmentalclub on Instagram

Outdoors Club, which was designed for LASA's nature lovers, was created as an opportunity for students to connect with nature and each other. Junior and club secretary Nina Balachandran attends and helps to coordinate some of the Outdoors Club's activities.

"It's really just a chance to get outside during school and relax a bit while enjoying the nature," Balachandran said. "Right now, we're planning a field trip to the Greenbelt, and we're thinking about paddleboarding or biking or even camping at one point."

Junior and club member Emma Chu also designs their posters and advertisements. According to Chu, Outdoors Club aims to provide a variety of fun outdoors-centric activities for members without intense commitments. Most weeks, the club hikes on nearby trails as a way to get outdoors during school hours.

"The gist of it is that we want to spend our time outdoors," Chu said. "So that's why we go on hikes during lunch, like we recently went to the trail nearby."

Most often, the hikes are around Boggy Creek, because of the trail's close

proximity to the LASA campus. Other times, they may go on hikes throughout the city.

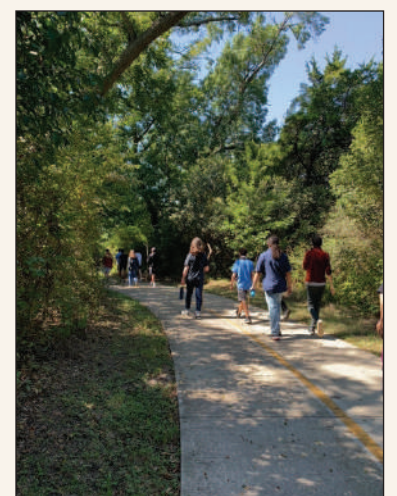
"Right now we're planning a field trip to the Greenbelt, and we're thinking about paddleboarding or biking or even camping," Balachandran said.

Other than just physical activities, Outdoors Club plans to have fun educational activities as well.

"We recently went to the trail nearby, and one of our club leaders came up with this bingo sheet and on the hike we filled out the bingo sheet and it was things like spiders or bikers, stuff you see on the trail," Chu said. "We're also planning on doing things where we stay indoors sometimes, where someone will research a topic like beetles, ants, natural Texas plants, it varies. But, they'll do a presentation for the club, basically."

With a large variety in activities from mountain biking to swimming to studying plants, any student interested in nature can find something that piques their interest in Outdoors Club, according to club treasurer and junior Helen Bigge. Since it's the club's first year, this is Bigge's first time working as club treasurer.

"This club is basically for anyone who likes things related to the outdoors," Bigge said. "That could be hiking, climbing, doing lots of different physical activities. If you like collecting rocks, for example, or a specific type of plant or animal then you might like this club."



GREAT OUTDOORS LASA Outdoors Club takes a mid-day hike nearby at Boggy Creek. The club goes on semi-regular hikes in addition to meeting during lunch. photo courtesy of Emma Chu

# New September Heartbeat Bill Goes into Effect

SARAH GARRETT | staff writer

In the 1973 Roe v. Wade case, abortion became a constitutional right. Now, after 48 years, Texas passed what CNN deems its most restrictive abortion law yet.

On Sept. 1, 2021, the state of Texas passed a law banning abortions after six weeks, the time in a pregnancy when fetal cardiac activity can be detected, according to law makers. The law, known as the Texas Heartbeat Act, does not make any exceptions for pregnancies due to rape, sexual abuse, or incest. The only exception to getting an abortion is if a physician believes that the pregnant person's life is in danger without the procedure.

Sarah Wheat, the chief external affairs officer at Planned Parenthood of Greater Texas, is very upset with this new law. According to Wheat, the Texas Heartbeat Act will do more harm than good.

"I think there are enormous negative consequences now that most people in Texas seeking an abortion can no longer access an abortion safely in a healthcare setting in Texas," Wheat said. "They are forced to leave the state, if they are able, or forced to carry a pregnancy against their wishes. The law bans abortions after approximately six weeks into a pregnancy, about one to two weeks after a late period for someone with regular periods, which is before many people even realize they're pregnant."

For those who menstruate, a period occurs around every four weeks, but this fluctuates from person to person. For someone with a four-week time period between periods, they would have two weeks to realize they are pregnant and receive a legal abortion if they choose. According to the Texas Tribune, for someone with an irregular period, figuring out they are pregnant can be much trickier in the time frame specified in the Texas Heartbeat Act. Sophomore Aurna Mukherjee feels that it is unfair for the Texas Abortion Act to ban abortions so early in a pregnancy.

"Six weeks is often not enough for a woman to know about pregnancy, which means that it's unfair to make it illegal to have an abortion after that point," Mukherjee said.

According to the Texas Tribune, what makes this law unique, aside from being more restrictive than past laws, is that if someone successfully sues someone assisting a person in receiving an abortion, they can get a settlement of up to \$10,000. This process has been referred to as "bounty hunting."

"This can affect even Uber drivers that can be young adults that drive someone to an abortion clinic," Mukherjee said.

Pro-choice organizations like Planned Parenthood are finding ways to combat this law. Other organizations, such as Women's March, have organized protests. Women's Marches protesting the abortion law were planned in cities all over the country, including Austin, on Oct. 2.

"Get involved, volunteer for organizations that you support, find out who represents you at the Texas Legislature, and let them know your views on the new abortion restriction law," Wheat said.

Wheat also feels that Texans have the right to choose abortion care. According to Wheat, she does not feel that the government should

enforce the abortion law.

"An important question for people in Texas is who is the best person to make personal private medical decisions for everyone in the state," Wheat said. "Planned Parenthood advocates for individuals to have the right to make their own personal decisions including whether to seek an abortion. I trust our patients to make personal healthcare decisions that are right for them and their families and am firmly opposed to politicians making private decisions for everyone else."

Unlike Planned Parenthood of Greater Texas, pro-life organizations, like the Texas Alliance for Life (TAL), are happy with this new development. TAL is an organization that does not support the choice to get an abortion unless it is necessary to save a pregnant person's life. TAL has a yearly walk-a-thon to raise money for pro-life education and defending pro-life policies, among other things. TAL's public policy analyst Dierdre Cooper is happy that the law is making abortions harder to get.

"TAL is glad that the Heartbeat bill is saving lives from abortion in Texas and saving women from the trauma of abortion," Cooper said. "We are proud of the nearly 200 pregnancy resource centers in Texas that have been serving a record number of women over the past two weeks. They stand ready to help women and children in need."

TAL is known for promoting ideas of wanting to protect what they consider forms of human life at all stages, according to the organization. Cooper feels that her job is rewarding because it lets her help others.

"I love my job because I love having the chance to save women and children from abortion," Cooper said. "Women deserve so much more than abortion, and we owe it to them to give them other options, to give them support, and informed consent. My job allows me to combine my love of politics with my love for women and children in need."

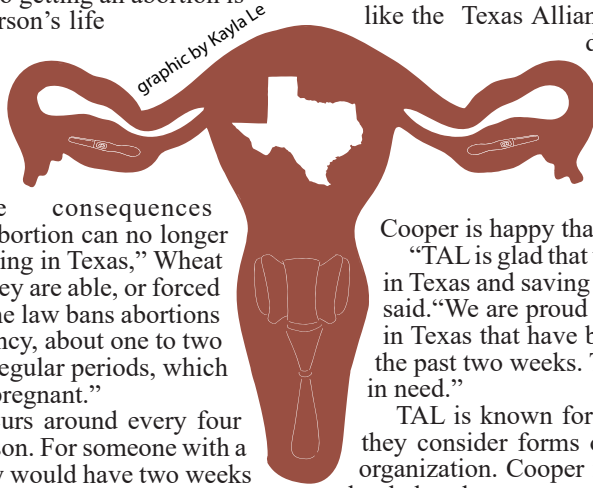
According to The Washington Post, anti-abortion organizations are associated with believing in right-wing politics. In a 5-4 conservative majority vote in the United States Supreme Court on Sept. 1, the abortion law was allowed to take effect in Texas.

"Planned Parenthood of Greater Texas has joined other abortion providers and organizations that provide support for Texans seeking abortion in lawsuits filed to overturn Texas' extreme new law," Wheat said. "Unfortunately, those lawsuits are still pending in the courts."

However, Planned Parenthood disagrees. Unlike TAL, according to Wheat, Planned Parenthood feels that the best way to help others is to educate them about healthcare options.

"Communities are healthier when women are respected and have access to support and healthcare resources," Wheat said. "I would love to see a world where everyone has equal access to health information and healthcare that is affordable and compassionate."

On Oct. 6, a federal judge ordered a temporary preliminary injunction that effectively blocked the bill. As of the time of this writing, it is expected that Texas will appeal this move to the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.



## THE SKINNY

### Global News

Oct. 6

Ellume, an Australian company, has recalled several of their COVID-19 at-home tests due to a manufacturing issue. The company says the mistake is leading to lots of false positives and are currently working on fixing the issue so they can restart normal operations. About 200,000 tests were recalled, which is about 5.6% of the tests that were sent out to the United States, according to the New York Times.

Oct. 3

A new policy in Israel requires people to have three COVID-19 vaccines before being considered fully vaccinated and able to get a "green pass." A "green pass" allows citizens to go to restaurants, bars, and other public places. The requirements to get a green pass have now changed, and most people will need three vaccinations to be able to get one. Exceptions include people who have received their two doses within six months, people who have gotten sick with COVID-19 in the last six months and recovered, and younger children (who are not yet eligible for a vaccine) who have gotten a negative PCR test.

Oct. 4

According to the BBC, the United Kingdom's travel guidelines have been simplified. The country now just has one list of "red" countries, where people coming into the United Kingdom from countries on the list will need to quarantine for 10 days in a hotel. Testing rules were also simplified for those who were vaccinated in a select 21 countries. Now, fully vaccinated travelers only need a polymerase chain reaction test (PCR) two days after arriving in the U.K.

### National News

Oct. 4

According to Reuters, Democrats are wanting to raise the U.S. debt ceiling, which is currently at \$28.4 trillion. President Biden has warned that if action is not taken to raise the limit in the next two weeks, the U.S. could pass the limit. Republicans, on the other hand, agree that action should be taken but do not want to raise the debt ceiling. Biden is urging Republicans, like Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, to work with Democrats and vote to raise the ceiling so the U.S. doesn't pass the limit.

Oct. 2

On Oct. 2, 2021, Amplify Energy Corporation filed a report saying one of their crude oil pipelines in California had been leaking. The timeline of the event is controversial, and according to NPR, some say the company took hours to report the spill and notify the U.S. Coast Guard, while the CEO of Amplify Energy, Martyn Willsler, said the company notified the Coast Guard as soon as they knew about the spill. The exact amount of oil spilled is unknown, but Amplify Energy said the maximum amount of oil spilled could be around 126,000 gallons. Animal rescuers at the scene have reported finding birds and other animals covered in oil.

Late September

The United States Fish and Wildlife Service has declared the ivory-billed woodpecker, alongside 22 other species, extinct. The woodpeckers have received legend status among birding communities since the last reported spotting in 2005. The birds have been dying due to logging and deforestation, which ruins their habitats. The last confirmed sighting of the bird was in 1944.

### State News

October

George Floyd, whose murder by a cop in May 2020 sparked nationwide Black Lives Matter protests, is being considered to receive a posthumous pardon for drug charges made against him in 2004 in Houston, according to the Texas Parole Board. Floyd was convicted on drug charges for allegedly giving another suspect in the case .03 grams of cocaine to sell. The officer who made the arrest was recently convicted of murder in another drug case. Floyd ended up pleading guilty to the charges and serving ten months in jail. Gov. Greg Abbott has not commented on whether the charges will be pardoned or not.

Oct. 4

Texas was given \$16 billion as part of the federal COVID-19 relief package and Texas lawmakers are debating on how to spend the money. During the Senate Finance Committee's hearing on Oct. 4, 2021, lawmakers discussed the first draft of Texas Senate Bill 8. The bill includes \$7.2 billion for the unemployment compensation fund, and \$3.7 billion for the salaries of frontline workers directly working to mitigate the effects of COVID-19, according to KXAN, although it has not been finalized yet.

### Local News

October

According to the Austin-American Statesman, the number of COVID-19 cases in the Austin area have dropped below the threshold for Stage 3, but Austin has not officially moved into Stage 3. As of the time of this writing, the city is in Stage 4, meaning vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals should continue to follow Stage 4 city guidelines. Austin Public Health says it would consider moving the Austin area to Stage 3 guidelines if the seven day rolling average of new patients admitted to the hospital for COVID-19 stays between 15 and 29.

# COVID-19 Cashes Out Rewards Organizations Across Texas Promoting Vaccine Incentives

LANA GILES | staff writer

According to the New York Times, 60% of residents in Travis County are fully vaccinated. In December 2020, the first doses of a COVID-19 vaccine in the U.S. were distributed, which marked the beginning of a transition from strict stay-at-home orders and mask mandates into reopening public spaces and enabling less strict safety precautions, according to the Center for Disease Control (CDC). In order to promote vaccination, many states and local governments have developed incentives to get vaccinated.

With the new awareness that has been given to vaccines, it brings up questions of what is in a vaccine, according to Dr. Theodore Sievers, a pharmacist with the University of California, Los Angeles Medical Center's kidney transplant program.

"There's basically two different varieties of the vaccine," Siever said. "One uses the old standard technology that's pretty much utilized for almost all vaccines. It uses the old technology of putting the antigens you're interested in context with an adenovirus and presenting that to the immune system, and it provides a pretty robust response. The newer ones rely on messenger RNA, which is a brand new methodology."

Many people have doubts about getting the vaccine, especially the transplant patients he has been seeing, according to Sievers. He understands their doubt regarding the vaccine, although he continues to support getting vaccinated.

"There's all kinds of reasons why someone would conceivably not want to get vaccinated," Sievers said. "Unless, there's some compelling reason. Yes, I would say get vaccinated."

On a local scale, an organization called VaxTogetherAustin works to provide vaccines for those in need. Raji Parameswaran, a member on the board, says the group has been working to provide vaccines for those who are not able to themselves.

"Nobody knew how to get the vaccines," Parameswaran said, "and so these vaccine angels sprouted out all over the country with people who would just help others essentially log on and get appointments."

At Texas A&M

"Incentives seem to be working at the moment, but there are a lot of people who are on the edge, they kind of want to get it, but if you tempt them with an ACL wristband that might just tip them over."

-Raji Parameswaran

University (TAMU), the Voluntary Vaccine Incentive Program has been set into motion. Dr. Martha Dannenbaum, the director of student health services at TAMU, explained that the program will give five students an award worth \$14,500 to go towards education-related expenses, and staff will be eligible to win football packs, parking credit, event tickets, or a \$500 gift card.

"The incentive program is drawings for tuition, students, and other TAMU related items, faculty and staff, such as a football weekend experience, parking permit for a year, and tickets for OPAS or Brazos Valley Symphony shows or concerts," Dannenbaum said.

With incentives, the main idea is increasing the amount of vaccinated people. Organizations throughout the country have begun programs in order to promote vaccination against COVID-19, according to the Texas Tribune.

"Everyone's circumstance is a little bit different," Sievers said. "But in general, if you start paying people to do something, they typically start doing it."

With large scale incentives like at TAMU, the goal is to continue to push out factual information and encourage them to consider getting vaccinated, according to Dannenbaum.

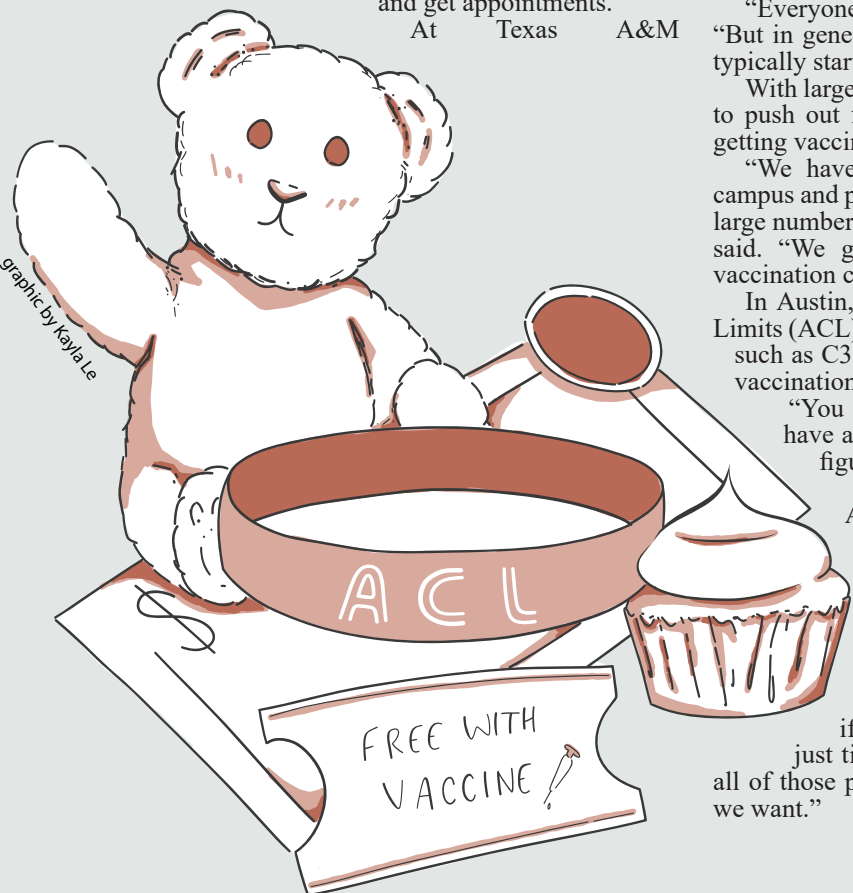
"We have sponsored vaccine clinics at several sites across campus and provided 'mass vaccination' so that we could vaccinate large numbers of people over a short period of time," Dannenbaum said. "We gave over 20,000 vaccines during the eight week vaccination clinic SHS sponsored."

In Austin, one of the major events of the year is Austin City Limits (ACL). VaxTogetherAustin is working with ACL promoters, such as C3 Presents, an event production company, to distribute vaccinations.

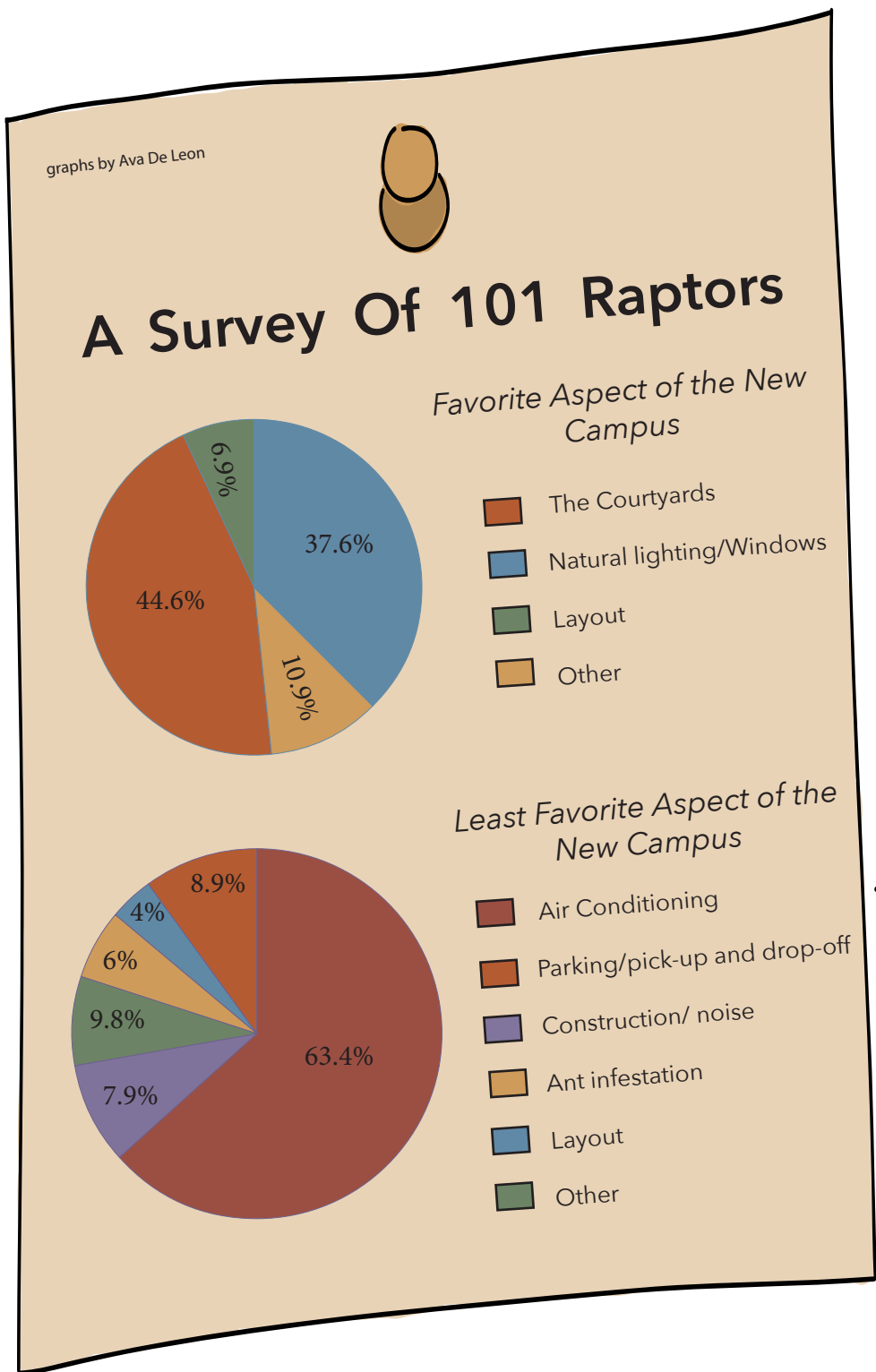
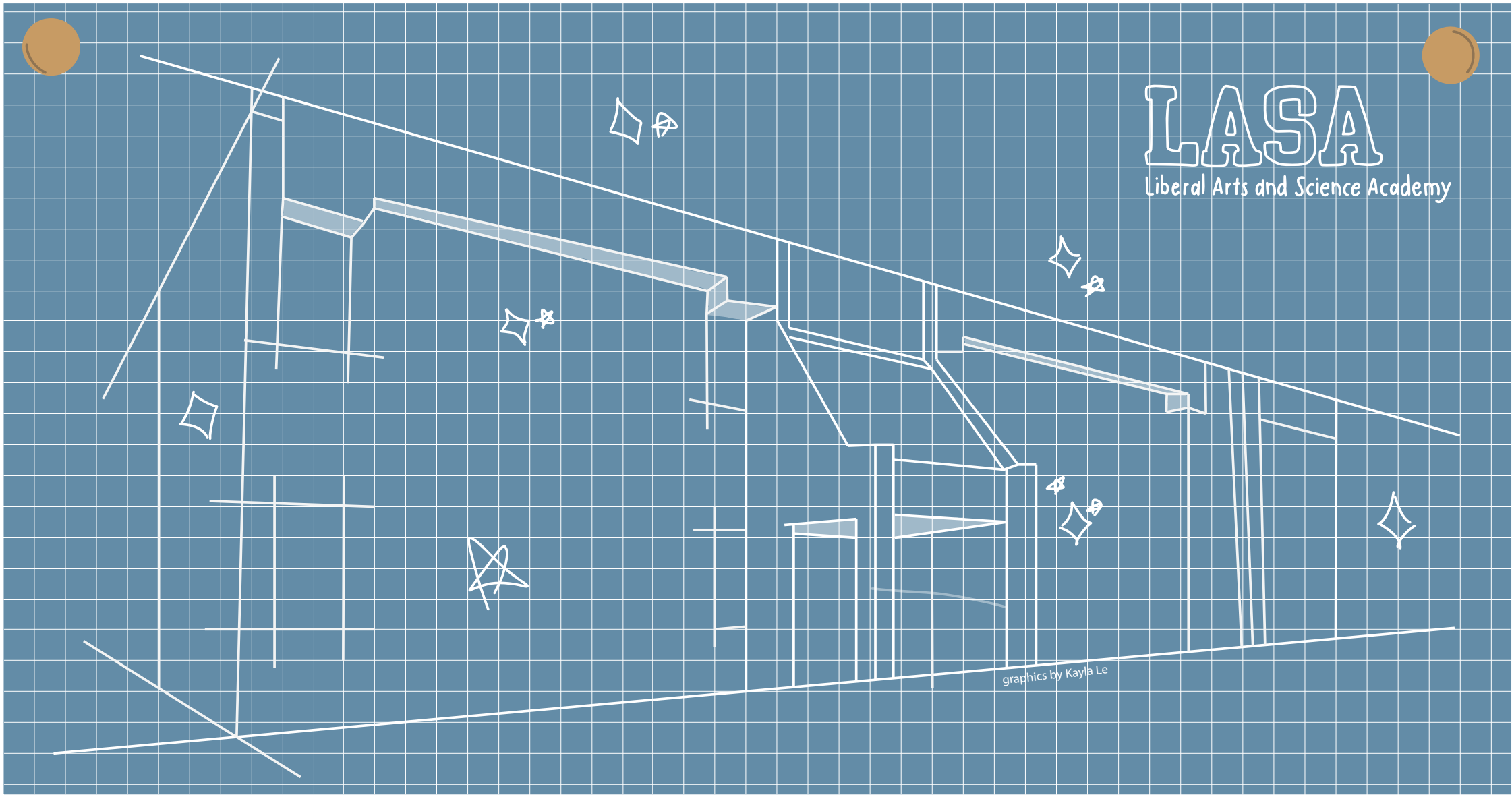
"You either have to be fully vaccinated, or you have to have a negative COVID test," Parameswaran said, "so they figured, 'Hey, why don't we just incentivize people?'"

VaxTogetherAustin, ACL, Q2 Stadium (home of Austin FC), and Walgreens provided free ACL Music Festival Weekend two single-day general admission tickets to the first 1,000 people who pre-registered and got vaccinated on Sept. 10 at Q2 Stadium, according to VaxTogetherAustin.

"Incentives seem to be working at the moment," Parameswaran said. "But there are a lot of people who are on the edge, they kind of want to get it, but if you tempt them with an ACL wristband that might just tip them over. And, you know, if we can just tip over all of those people who are on the fence, one by one, that's what we want."



# Building LASA's Future



## Raptor Chatter

Quotes from Students About the New Campus

graphics by Kayla Le

"I love the open space of the library and the variety of outdoor lunch options. The picnic tables are in great condition and make for a great spot to eat or study during my off period."

- Senior Avery Edwards

"The main issue with the new campus right now is that the air conditioning is extremely inconsistent in some classrooms. Some of my classes are freezing cold, while a few have no air conditioning at all."

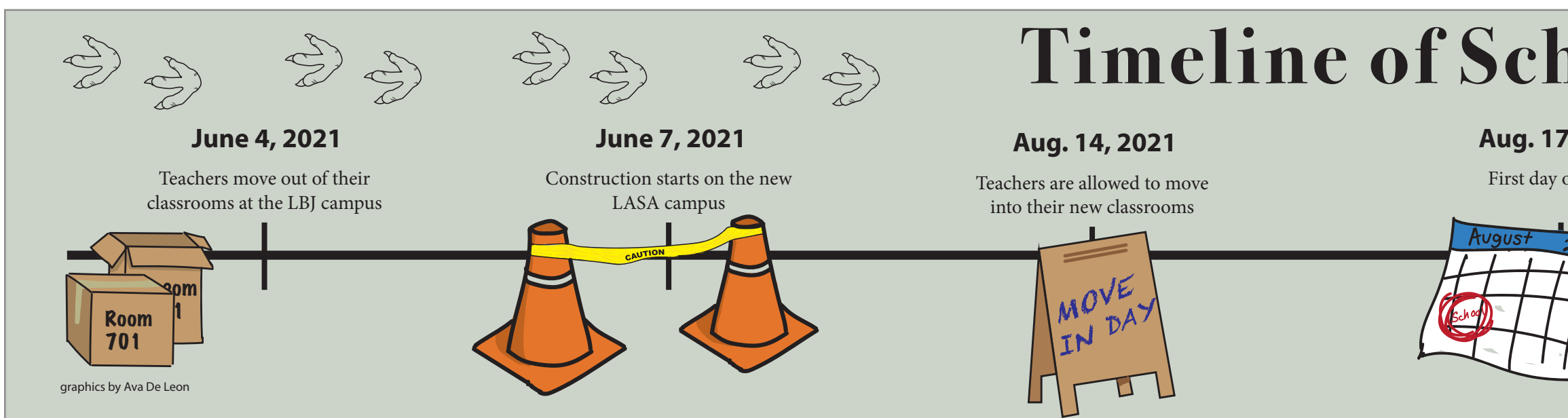
- Junior Ned Yu

"Although many people do not like it, I personally love getting a campus with a lot of history. I enjoy looking at all the old awards and such in the cafetorium."

- Freshman Lexa Lorenz

"Positively, the courtyards offer a lot of open area in the middle of the school, and there's more space to continue expanding in the future, but there's a lot of sometimes annoying construction."

- Sophomore Will Basham



**EDITH HOLMSTEN**  
**AVA DE LEON** | student life editors

In 2019, 12 years after LASA became its own school, talks of moving locations to accommodate the growing student population were heating up. Then COVID-19 hit. But the construction of the school continued, and after many months of planning, moving, and email blasts filled with information about the new campus, students, teachers, and staff were finally able to settle into LASA's new home on the first day of school this year.

Construction of the school started on June 7, 2021, a mere two and a half months before the 2021 school year began. Teachers were only allowed to begin setting up their classrooms on Aug. 14, three days before school started. Over the course of the next few weeks, students and faculty experienced a garden variety of issues with the newly renovated school. From water problems to faulty electricity, the LASA community has had to manage all these issues along with the stress and anxiety that comes with starting school again during a pandemic. However, while there has been some controversy over the new building, there are also many new amenities that were previously unseen by LASA students and staff, including an abundance of courtyards, a cafeteria, and a new school layout. Vice Principal San Czaplinski knew immediately what it could have in store.

"My first impression was that it has so much potential," Czaplinski said. "The spaces here have so much potential, and I love the character of the old building. Just going into teachers' classrooms, especially the teachers that have the windows that are facing Aruthur Stiles [Road]."

But according to junior and LASA ambassador Christina Hwang, many of the school's problems affected classroom learning. In the first few weeks of school, the electricity wasn't working, water leaked from the ceilings, and the temperature of each classroom changed dramatically day-to-day.

"We had a huge water pressure issue a couple of days back," Hwang said. "Because the building is so old and it's been abandoned for a long time, just maintaining it is still a huge issue. I definitely think for a better learning environment, [it could be] better in terms of just AC electricity and water."

Along with troubleshooting the temperature problems in their rooms, teachers have also had to deal with organizing their classrooms after a short move-in period to teaching a full class of students. English teacher Brad Sharp said some teachers are not quite settled in yet and reflected on how difficult the moving process was from Lyndon Baines Johnson Early College High School (LBJ).

"Many teachers are missing items still," Sharp said. "I don't think we will be truly settled until the end of the year just based on getting everything set up in a new space, whereas LASA had been at LBJ for almost 20 years. Trying to recreate that in a short time frame is going to be difficult, but getting things from one location to another all of five miles away is not as smooth as people will have you believe."

During the first few days of school, parents and students had to navigate through the traffic of pick-up and drop-off lines that formed along the school's perimeter as student drivers tried to get home. Many juniors and seniors opted to drive themselves to school, but with the limited availability of parking, administrators had to find a way to organize a parking situation. Permits were administered to all seniors who wanted one, but some juniors were unable to acquire a permit this semester. Czaplinski said she was able to determine an accurate number of available spaces and how difficult it was to accommodate the construction and parking spots.

"Salinas and I worked on parking over the summer," Czaplinski said. "There were multiple days when we drove over here and literally drove around each lot and were trying to count all the spaces, but construction was even more intense at that time, so there were dirt piles and a lot of the parking lot dumpsters that were brought on to the site for the construction workers. So, it's been a challenge."



**THE HOME OF THE RAPTOR** Multiple Raptor statues have been placed along the main courtyard between the cafeteria and the rest of the school. The statues are the first symbols of the new school. photo by Ava De Leon



**CAFETERIA CROWD** LASA students eat lunch in the new cafeteria. At the previous campus, LASA students opted to eat in the hallways as the cafeteria was less accessible. photo by Ava De Leon



**COURTYARD SEATING** Students eat in one of LASA's many courtyards. The courtyards have been one of the most popular features of the new campus among students and teachers alike. photo by Ava De Leon



**FOOTBALL BREAK** Junior Nathan Vorhees and his friends take advantage of the open fields at the new campus to play football. Many students partake in games all around LASA during the lunch hour. photo by Ava De Leon

Junior student council president Sam Church has been driving himself to school and thought that the administrators did a good job of counting parking spots. He said that he was worried about the parking situation previously, but he was pleased with how it turned out.

"I drive myself and carpool with one of my friends, and I think they've actually done a great job with parking," Church said. "I was a little bit worried before the year started that we would not be able to get a spot, or we would have to parallel park everyday, but they've measured the numbers perfectly so that there's always enough room for everyone, and you can always find a spot."

According to Hwang, one of the more positive characteristics of the new campus has been the numerous courtyards scattered throughout the grounds. Students have been taking advantage of the courtyards to eat lunch or to just sit outside in nature.

"I really like the amount of courtyards especially because we have more greenery, [and] we have more windows," Hwang

said. "At our old campus, we were pretty window-less and sunlight-less. It's really nice to see there's more greenery, especially because we're always in classrooms, so being able to look at a window and see a tree is really nice."

Sharp also said the courtyards are a nice change of pace from the old campus. He said he hopes that the areas will be beneficial towards both student and staff mental health.

"Having taught at LBJ long enough to have both a classroom that had natural light and a classroom that did not have natural light, I think it's healthier to not be surrounded by fluorescent lights all the time," Sharp said. "And if the day allows it, it is good to go and conduct class in the courtyard if you can. However, being mindful that there are other classes being conducted is going to be key."

Another thing that students like Church have been enjoying is the cafeteria. At the previous campus, LASA students did not utilize the cafeteria as much, and instead chose to eat in the hallways and outside, according to Church.

"My favorite thing is just the cafeteria," Church said. "I know that's weird, but at the old LBJ, we just had one on the first floor that we didn't really have access to as much, but here we have our own space we can eat in."

While there are both positives and negatives about the new campus, both Church and Hwang agreed that there is more to be done in terms of making the campus a new home for students and staff. Hwang said the campus did not have many LASA memorandums, which she hopes will change in the future.

"Going forward, I think in general, I hope that we can make the school campus, our own," Hwang said. "For the most part for LASA pride and spirit, we still have a lot of the old relics of Johnston High. It still doesn't really feel like our campus. It just feels like we don't really have anything on the walls or in the campus grounds. It really feels like we're taking class in a random building."

Church said he would like to see new LASA traditions form at the new school. He said he hopes that the new campus will allow for students and teachers to come up with creative ideas to make the school feel more spirited.

"I really like that we have the chance to create our new traditions for what the new LASA is going to be like," Church said. "We've pretty much become a new school, so we get to restart what we think would be a good idea to create a tradition around."

The new campus has been called a fixer upper by many students and staff such as Czaplinski, but the general consensus is that it has provided new opportunities for LASA to grow and prosper. Sharp shared his final thoughts on the school.

"I'm happy we finally have our own campus," Sharp said. "It's been a long time coming."



**FRISBEE FUN** Out by the North Annex, students play frisbee at new heights. Easily accessible outdoor spaces have encouraged students to spend time with their friends outside during lunch. photo by Ava De Leon



**LOW NET VOLLEYBALL** Among some of the sports and games that LASA students participate in, is low net volleyball. The new tennis courts are perfect for low net volleyball and small soccer games. photo by Ava De Leon



**LUNCH IN THE LIBRARY** The library has become a popular place for students to eat lunch and construct puzzles. Some classes have decorated the library with exhibits to show off their hard work. photo by Ava De Leon

## School Construction

, 2021

of school

2021

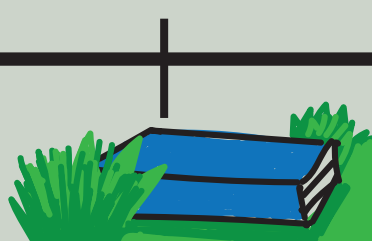
**Late August 2021**

New gym is finished at the LASA campus



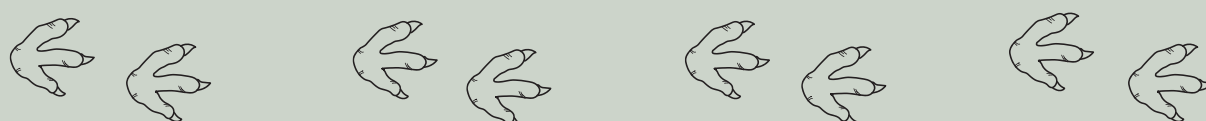
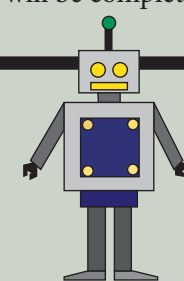
**Sept. 20, 2021**

Construction of the outdoor classroom is started



**Late October 2021**

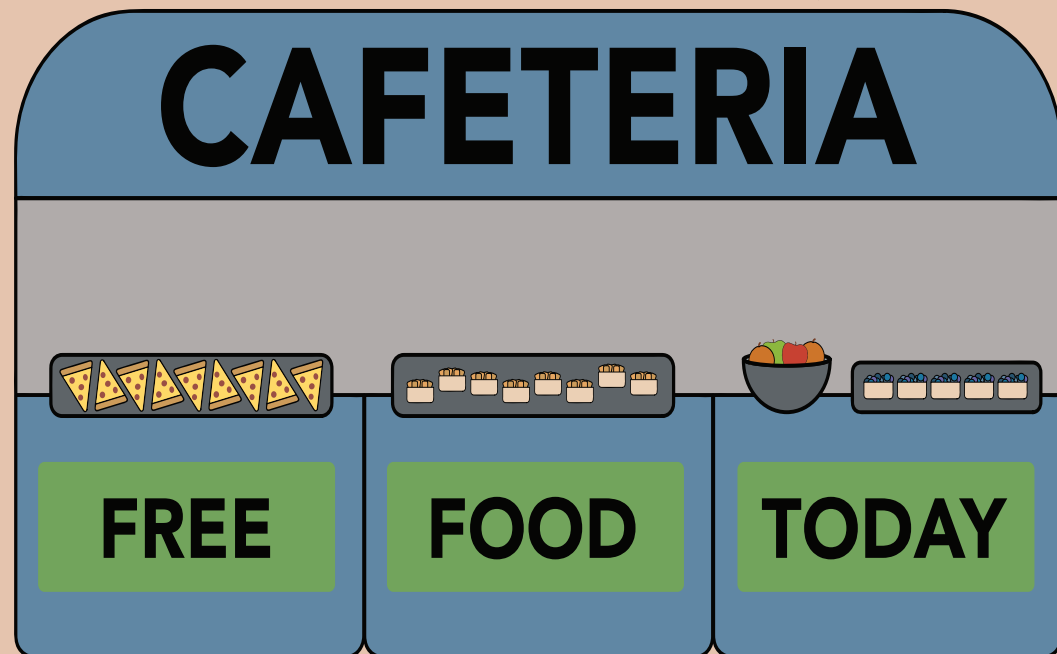
Shops for robotics and woodworking will be completed



## FREE SCHOOL MEALS

from page 1

graphic by Grace Woodruff



According to Grodek, students often think they will be fine if they do not have breakfast or lunch, but in reality this causes them to crash and leads to them operating at a much less efficient pace. The breakfasts and lunches at LASA are a complete meal, so instead of students bringing unhealthy snacks and foods to school, they can now go and get a healthy and fulfilling meal from the school cafeteria.

"I think we have really full, complete meals," Grodek said. "I know at a lot of schools, kids will leave campus, or when they do eat lunch, they're just bringing processed stuff from their house, like snack foods. Whereas here you can have a real full meal. You can have your milk, and protein, and some veggies, or a full sandwich, and you're getting everything you need."

The free meals program also has an effect on cafeteria staff who now have more students to distribute meals to during the day. Even though the new program makes the cafeteria staff, like Grodek, work harder to feed more students, she said it is worth it if it means that more students are getting proper nutrition from the free breakfast and lunch program.

"It's okay because we're feeding more kids," Grodek said. "That's our goal."

The pandemic has caused many issues, such as job instability and increased poverty, for students and their families. Academic director Andy Paulson said providing meals for all students is one way LASA can provide for students during a difficult time.

"This global pandemic has taught us some things," Paulson said. "We need to take care of each other, and this is one way that we're going to help take care of each other."

Another benefit of the free meals is that it could lower stigma around getting meals from school. According to Grodek, students might feel more open to the idea of getting breakfast or lunch from school since it is free for everyone instead of students assuming the cafeteria food is mostly for students who need free or reduced cost meals due to their financial situation.

"Lunch for students in certain schools was stigmatized for a long time, that maybe it was

only for kids that couldn't afford it or only for kids that were free or reduced," Grodek said. "Now that it's free for everyone, it really opens it up, that everybody can come join us for lunch. It's not just because you maybe can't afford it. I think it will help us to get rid of some of the stereotypes that have been forever with cafeteria food."

From short term effects of better student concentration and nutrition to long term benefits of weakening stereotypes, the free lunch program can help students, according to Grodek. Gilroy, Grodek, and Paulson all hope students will use the free meals program.

**"This global pandemic has taught us some things," Paulson said. "We need to take care of each other, and this is one way that we're going to help take care of each other."**

- Academy Director  
Andy Paulson

## In-Person School Mentality

Students Transition Back to On-Campus Learning

ELLA LILLY | staff writer

As students transition out of a year and a half of mostly online school, they are faced with a hefty adjustment. According to LASA wellness counselor Alicia Salinas, mental health and academics are affected by this change: switching learning formats alters social interactions, time online, transportation time, relationships with teachers.

Since the beginning of school this year, Salinas said she's seen students both thriving and struggling during the transition from online to in-person learning. For some students, they have enjoyed the social interaction, while other students have developed social anxiety. Salinas hopes students will be able to adjust to the new environment soon.

"I think it's a hit or miss; same way with virtual," Salinas said. "We've had kids who are like, 'Absolutely, I'm so glad to be back. This is amazing for my mental health or social isolation.' And the way that others just love online so much, that it's been a struggle to be back with 1,300 kids."

Junior Kate Starkloff had a difficult time with online school: she said that being online made it difficult for her to do work on time and muster up the discipline when she did not have that accountability from her teachers and peers that comes with being in-person. One of the factors that Starkloff likes about in-person school is higher motivation.

"I didn't have any motivation when I was just in my room by myself," Starkloff said. "I wasn't really checking TEAMS for my grades, so I didn't really have any consequences if I didn't turn anything in."

Sophomore George Clark, believes that procrastination is also a common theme amongst students who struggled with online school. He said the lack of visible consequences and accountability weighed down on many students last year, and that building the willpower and discipline to work without being in a physical classroom was a completely new and different skill that required a different approach to learning, time management, and managing mental health.

"I think that there's a lot more motivation at school than there is at home," Clark said. "[During online school] it was a lot easier just to put off my assignments for a little bit longer at home. But at school when you're here for eight hours... I work a lot more."

Sophomore Sofia Francis has noticed an increase in workload since transitioning back to in person school. Francis said during online school, students had additional time to do homework because they had less extracurriculars, transportation time, and time spent socializing during lunch.

"Transitioning back to a world where I don't get home until five, I don't have lunch to do homework, and I don't really do homework during class because I'm trying to focus on lectures and classwork, I only have three hours to do everything," Francis said. "I really have to rush myself or focus a lot more than I used to. And that's just been kind of rough. It's definitely a hard transition."

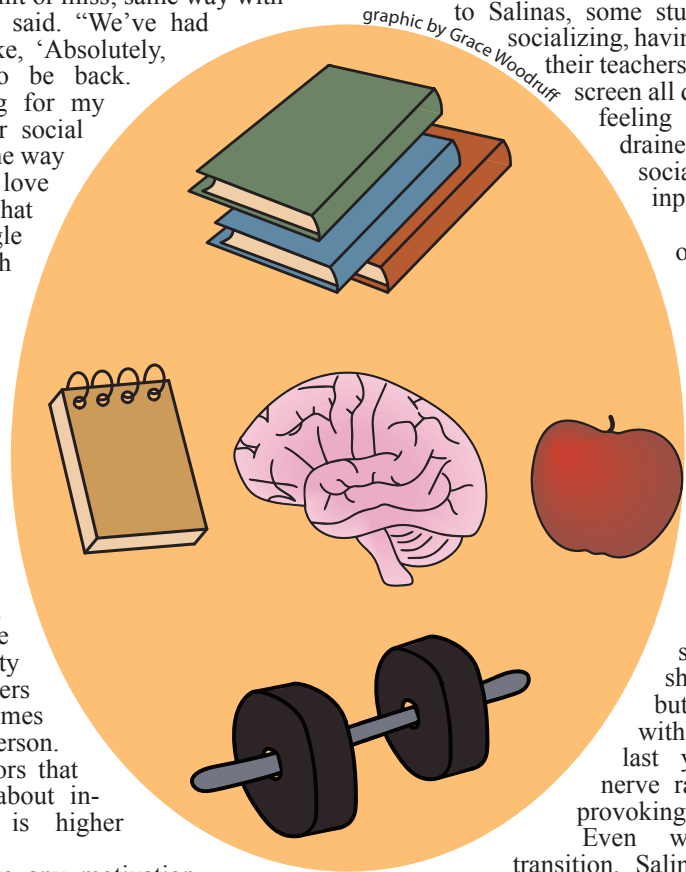
Salinas said she has noticed some students are also noticing differences in their social interactions throughout the transition. According to Salinas, some students thrive off of socializing, having relationships with their teachers, and not staring at a screen all day, while others are feeling overwhelmed and drained by the constant socializing and constant input or distractions.

"It'll just depend on the person," Salinas said. "Some of us crave being around others, and some get their energy drained, like non-pandemic times. And then now you throw in we're still in a pandemic. That can be overwhelming, too. Even if you like to socialize and you show up at a school, but you've only been with 10 people for the last year, that can be nerve racking and anxiety provoking for some."

Even with the difficult transition, Salinas said she hopes students can appreciate being in-person after being online for a year and a half for the meaningful relationships and experiences that Zoom ultimately can only give so much of. Moving forward, Salinas said how she hoped students would be able to have a more connected and stronger environment for academics and mental health.

Salinas noticed that it was easy for struggling students to shut out the world during the pandemic and refuse help, as anxiety and depression heightened. Salinas said she advises students to take advantage of the resources at LASA that are available for students.

"The big thing is reach out, reach out, reach out," Salinas said. "Sometimes we wait until we're at a breaking point. So when you're noticing struggles, talk to somebody whether it's your teacher or a counselor or your parents. Don't sit and suffer in silence."



## Students in STEM Provide Fuel for the Future

NAYAN KONDAPALLI | staff writer

Students interested in science can take a range of electives, like computer science, and organic chemistry, throughout high school to learn about possible career opportunities in STEM fields. However, many students still desire real-life experience. In order to become better prepared for situations after high school, some students choose to apply for internships.

LASA's second year biotechnology class provides such opportunities for students. Biotechnology teacher Joseph Oleniczak said one unique characteristic of the course is the ability to be certified in lab work during a student's junior year, allowing many students to participate in biotechnology internships senior year. According to Oleniczak, there are 23 students currently participating in these internships.

One such student is senior Soh Nishiyama, who works at BioBQ. Nishiyama said the Austin-based company aims to create a lab grown version of brisket to bypass all the carbon dioxide emissions and animal cruelty processes that are associated with raising livestock.



READY TO FLY Tyler Hill sits inside of Lift Aircraft's Hexa drone prototype. Hill works to program codes for the drone during his internship, courtesy of Lift Aircraft.

"What the company is trying to do is to make meat from cultured cells," Nishiyama said. "So for now, I'm just doing research on how standard muscle stem cells and cows, how they differentiate into the muscles."

Two things that Nishiyama said he enjoys about his internship are the ability to do hands-on lab work and that the basis of the internship and the company is genuinely related to his interests. He said that the work he is doing will help him develop his understanding of the field of biotechnology and microbiology.

"I think I enjoy biochemistry a lot, so that's the major I'm going for," Nishiyama said. "I want to understand molecular biology and molecular biology in organisms. I feel like the muscle is one type of that, and I think this internship will help me understand a bit more about how muscles and stem cells differentiate."

Nishiyama said his experience illustrates the importance of internships, especially in the case when when it aligns with one's interests. Nishiyama was previously not too sure about pursuing a major in molecular biology, but with this internship, his interests have been organized and his knowledge is more tailored for that field.

Another student in a biotechnology internship is senior Siddh Bamb. He works at Macromoltek, a company that develops antibody solutions to different illnesses.

"My current tasks are to develop a protein sequence clustering tool that helps them report their data to clients in a more efficient manner," Bamb said. "They actually had some different things that they did with antibodies for COVID-19. Their projects this past year were pretty relevant to the pandemic and other big health crises that the nation is facing. So, it seems like it's meaningful work."

Though Bamb is working for a biotechnology company, his internship does not require him to perform hands-on lab work. Rather, Bamb works on programming tasks for the company.

"As someone who's interested in computer science, I definitely learned about how quality assurance is present in the tech field, or how different parts of your code have to be reviewed," Bamb said. "It's more of a philosophy thing than having to deal with the lab work itself."

Bamb may have been trained to intern in the field of biotechnology, but he said he still enjoys combining his biotechnology experience with computer science. Bamb said that regardless of one's interests, an internship is still an internship, and is an opportunity to be taken.

"Internships are pretty useful opportunities to get experience with something you're interested in," Bamb said. "Even if you're not sure which fields you like, just working in that field can reveal a lot about what you can expect later on after high school or college."

Senior Tyler Hill agrees that working with companies is helpful in high school. Hill is working under contract with Lift Aircraft, a company whose goal is to create a one-seater manned drone for

commercial use.

"They have a drone that has 18 blades, and it carries one person, and it can land on water," Hill said. "It's about 400 pounds, and you don't need a license to fly it. There's a device that will go on the flying machine that they're making, and I'm coding it for some translation function of different codes."

According to Hill, the work may seem similar to a computer

**"Even if you're not sure which fields you like, just working in that field can reveal a lot about what you can expect later on after high school or college."**

-Senior Siddh Bamb

science internship, but contract work is not as easy to obtain as an internship. Usually, they require more steps and digging than an internship, and will oftentimes be more professional and secretive.

"I knew a guy and met another guy," Hill said. "He said, 'Hey, this person has similar interests to you.' And then I went on a phone call with that person, and he said, 'You should go out and to the hangar and meet these people.'"

Despite this, Hill found such an effort to be favorable. Bamb, Nishiyama, and Hill all agreed that their internships helped them explore their interests and gain proper workplace experience that high school students sometimes struggle to find. Hill said he recommends students do internships if they can.

"I'd say yeah, if you can, you totally should. I met a lot of cool people," Hill said. "I think real-world experience is an excellent part. It's an essential part of your education. There's stuff you just can't learn in the classroom. Everyone says that, but it's true."

## Sweet New Exhibit Makes Austin Cool

*The Museum of Ice Cream Opens Location in The Domain*

**KATIE BUSBY** | entertainment editor

There is a new experience in Austin. The Museum of Ice Cream has a new temporary location that was installed in The Domain and opened its doors on Aug. 24. It has had a few different locations, from New York to Singapore to the original in San Francisco, which opened in 2016.

The museum's Austin location in The Domain has 12 different exhibits housed in a very distinct pink building. Rachel Collins, who was visiting the museum on a weekend morning, said it was hard to miss.

"I was surprised by how bright it was," Collins said. "It's definitely kind of exciting and it really does stand out from everything else around it. I think it does add to sort of the whimsy of an ice cream museum. It just sounds so magical. It is kind of hard to imagine what they'll do with a bright pink building once the museum leaves, though."

According to their website, The Museum of Ice Cream's rooms are built to be shareable: their environments encourage visitors to connect with each other through interactive representations of ice cream. A visitor of the museum, Anabelle Murphy, said that the museum overall was a great experience and she enjoyed the different parts.

"I did enjoy it, but I'm not really sure what I would call it," Murphy said. "Its design was great, I really loved the colors especially and the feel that the whole museum has. It was more interactive than a lot of art museums, and there were bits of history in a lot of the rooms, so I don't really know. It was kind of a mix of everything, but it was fun."

The museum currently has COVID-19 protections in place, like timed entrance tickets, so that only a certain number of people may enter the museum at a set time. Masks are also required when not eating or taking pictures.

"I think that what they had in place was sort of the best that they could do," Collins said. "A lot of people come with the intention of getting aesthetic photos, and some people want those without a mask, so if they regulate that it could possibly affect their business."

In addition to the activities in the rooms, many rooms also have a sweet treat to go along with them. Bennet Campbell, who visited the museum said that the museum seemed really well put together.

"I really enjoyed all the different desserts that were provided throughout the exhibit, although I'm so full I may never eat again," Campbell said. "It was nice how they mostly matched what it was to the room that you were in. There were just so many of them, but they all tasted great."

Before going to the museum, Murphy had seen photos of the sprinkle pool exhibit on social media. She was at first apprehensive about the museum because it seemed like it was targeted towards kids.

"From some of the things I had seen I kinda thought that the target demographic of the museum might have been kids, and while I guess I'll never really know if it was or not, I enjoyed the experience," Murphy said. "I think while the museum still has some parts that kids would really enjoy the most, everyone is sort of a child at heart, and I think that this museum really caters to that."



**EARLY RISERS** People start to arrive for the first ticket time. The Museum of Ice Cream's large pink building has drawn attention from people. photo by Katie Busby



**IT'S BANANAS** A family takes pictures in the "banana forest." This room contains a large amount of plastic bananas hanging from the ceiling. photo by Katie Busby



**SWEET RIDE** One of the interactive elements of the museum is rideable animal cracker replicas. Visitors can hop on and go for a (stationary) ride on the animals. photo by Katie Busby



**DIVE IN** Visitors at the museum take in the sprinkle pool, one of its popular attractions. Some rooms like this may appear more tailored to little kids. photo by Katie Busby

## Wonderspaces Expands Art Culture

**DELIA RUNE** | finance director

A VR experience with glowing codfish floating through an abandoned city. 8,604 multi-colored points of light changing in correspondence to ambient music. A chalkboard with scrawls from visitors stating their aspirations.

Wonderspaces is an organization that works with artists to introduce art to new audiences. It has locations in four different American cities: Scottsdale, Austin, Philadelphia, and San Diego. The group aims to make art accessible for people who might not usually go to museums by displaying what they describe as fun, interactive, or Instagram-worthy exhibits.

According to their mission statement, Wonderspaces is working to close the divide between artists and their potential audiences. One of the ways they are doing this is by building their exhibits in places not usually used to display art. So far, Wonderspaces has built locations in malls, warehouses, and cruise ship terminals but they're looking to expand even further.

Wonderspaces pays and credits artists to relieve their artists of the responsibility of connecting their art to an audience. Instead, Wonderspaces hopes to act like a bridge between those who make art and those who view it. Visitor Natalia Lopez said this was her first time ever at an art museum.

"Taking pictures and the art motivated me to come," Lopez said. "I got stuck at the lights downstairs for a couple minutes just taking pictures and looking at it."

Lopez said she would be happy to come back to Wonderspaces again, as would another visitor, Andrew McCray, who described himself as a more seasoned museum-goer. He was drawn to Wonderspaces by how interactive the exhibits were.

"I definitely enjoyed the walkthrough and felt like I was really there in the art and it was really cool," McCray said.

Wonderspaces employs a variety of mediums in order to make their pieces interactive or different from traditional museums. One exhibit, known as the Sewing Machine Orchestra, was simply a row of self-operating sewing machines. Another exhibit involved stepping into a large golden tent, and yet another could solely be viewed through a virtual reality headset. One visitor, Bonnie Reese, said the VR experience was her favorite, and others like Lopez were in agreement.

Many people use Wonderspaces as a place to take pictures, but that doesn't mean that the art has less meaning or importance to visitors.

"You can definitely read a deeper meaning into the words and thoughts [in these exhibits]," McCray said. "It gives you a different perspective."

Wonderspaces is full of artwork that visitors can analyze for layers and meaning, but the colors and lights make it fun for those who aren't interested in deeply investigating the art on display.

This year, Wonderspaces has had to put a COVID protocol in place in order to minimize the COVID-19 risks. Wonderspaces has gone cash-free and limited the number of visitors to stop the spread of germs or infections at the museum. Previously, they cut down on exhibitions that involved touching surfaces, like the VR exhibit, but they have now transitioned to sanitizing what they consider high-touch surfaces instead so that visitors have access to all the art available.

Wonderspaces, with its unique location, artwork, and interactive features, takes exhibits to a whole new dimension, and the group is already looking towards the horizon and planning to expand.



**ON AND ON** Families enjoy "Sewing Machine Orchestra" by Martin Meisser at Wonderspaces, an interactive art museum in North Austin. The audio-visual exhibit consists of twelve synched sewing machines that increase in power and time as time goes on. photo by Delia Rune

## LASA to Start Courtyard Concerts to Promote Interaction, Positive Culture

**FIONA KLEEMAN** | staff writer

The musical pep rally may be coming back, and in even bigger ways. LASA is now performing live music a few times per semester in the different courtyards. Music will be spread out by having a different genre correspond to each courtyard, like a music festival or ACL.

According to principal Crescenzi, the courtyards are not quite at the condition needed to have performances, but over time, there are plans to get them there. Because the school is still being built in some areas, it may take a while. Freshman Maya Cannedy-Azim said she thinks that the courtyards have potential.

"I think that outside is a great spot, as long as it's in the shade and has a chair in the shade, people will want to perform there if there is a chair and it's in the shade," Cannedy-Azim said. "It's sometimes hard to play in the sun so if it's in a safe, comfortable place you're good."

Everyone gets to experience different types of music during these events, whether it is students' favorite songs or cultural music, all is welcomed. Another benefit of the music is everyone being able to go to the different courtyards. Principal Crescenzi thinks that this benefit is really important.

"You don't want other kids to feel like, 'Oh, I can't go in there, because that's so-and-so's courtyard,'" Crescenzi said. "So the more we sort of allow other things to happen in those courtyards so that everybody feels like it's a space they can go."

The inspiration behind this is from the school who was in the building before LASA. Eastside Memorial High used to have multicultural potlucks in the courtyards where there would be different food from different places all over the world. Crescenzi wanted to do something similar, so she came up with the idea of different cultures or genres of music in the courtyards instead of the potlucks.

"So, we'd like to use this sort of model of different things happening at the same time in

different courtyards throughout the year for things beyond music," Crescenzi said.

Crescenzi also wants to do other things and may even bring back the potlucks once COVID-19 has slowed down. Another possible option is different cultural clothing which could go along with the different potlucks.

There are many things that have to be perfect for the plan to be executed well. The people who organize the performances will have to check sound pollution between the different courtyards to

make sure there isn't overlap, not to mention getting the courtyards cleared for entry.

"We don't even have corporate allowing anybody in over half of them, but we're working on that," Crescenzi said.

Junior Will Bolduc enjoyed the music. He believes a better sound system would add to the experience, though.

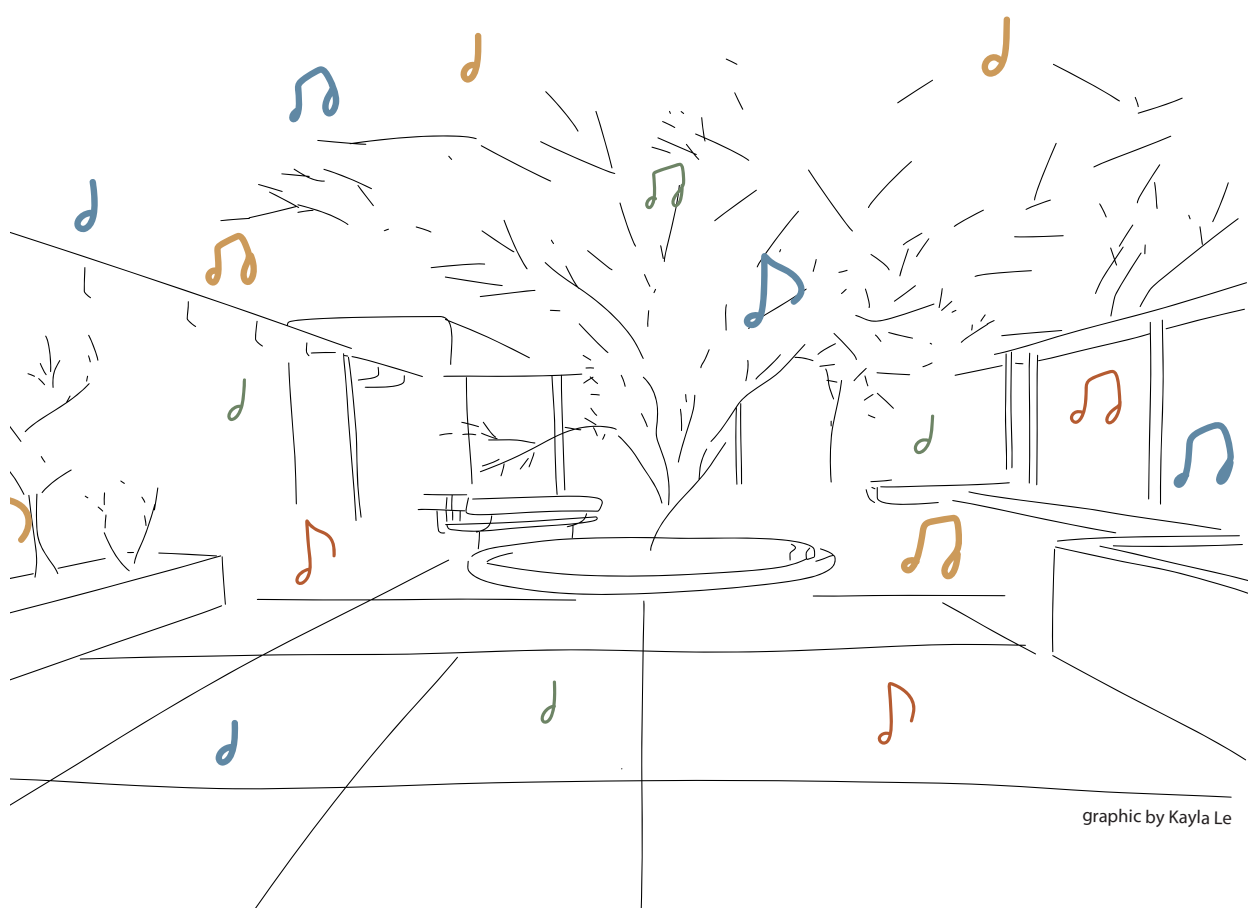
"I thought the music was very good, although the speaker quality left a little to be desired," Bolduc said.

Getting speakers for the different instruments and making the courtyards a safe place to play is another thing that needs to be done before the music can start. Currently, there is not a great speaker system set up.

"I think the other thing that would be helpful is we would need five or six sound systems," Crescenzi said.

Her staff is working hard to get things worked out, but with everything going on, the first performance might be later this semester or early of next. Anyone who can perform is welcomed, students and staff, and everything from singing to playing an instrument is welcome, too. Sign-up methods and dates have not yet been decided, but they are hoping to be able to do this at least once or twice a semester.

"I think this would be wonderful," Crescenzi said. "I think that part of the culture that we want to have is one that is welcoming and supportive of all students. And it might seem like something small, but the music that we love, whether it's what we listened to on the radio, or we play on our phones, or that we write or perform is something really personal and special. I think that students can share that with each other, and maybe step out of their own comfort zone and listen to what their friends or their classmates are interested in. I think it's only going to solidify more of an open minded welcoming culture."



graphic by Kayla Le

**Liberator's Picks**

High School & Teen Movies

Get in Losers, We're Going to School



graphic by Zoe Klein

*Booksmart*

MAX DOMEL | editor-in-chief

High school is a very precious time in life, and one way I've constantly been reminded of this is through movies. "Booksmart" is no exception. The 2019 teen comedy stars Kaitlyn Dever and Beanie Feldstein as best friends Amy and Molly, who on their last day of senior year realize they never did anything fun or social due to solely focusing on grades and college. They make it their mission to have the most wild, adventurous night of their lives to show everyone how cool they can actually be. Suffice to say, the movie provides for an extremely enjoyable ride, full of genuine laugh-out-loud moments, charming, loveable characters with great chemistry, and impactful drama. Portrayals and developments are modern, nuanced, and authentic. Olivia Wilde's directorial debut — a beautifully well-rounded story of self-acceptance, redemption, and teenage complexity — feels far from a first. As we return to normal high school from a year-and-a-half away, taking the time to watch "Booksmart" will be an incredibly relevant and fulfilling experience, and also a reminder to not take things so seriously all the time.

*The Breakfast Club*

NORAH HUSSAINI | web editor

A nerd, a delinquent, a princess, an athlete, and a basket case all cooped up together in Saturday detention. "The Breakfast Club" is a classic '80s movie that is one of the most iconic films of the decade, and the story is so simple that one doesn't notice the life lessons that are being learned. Directed by John Hughes and starring actors such as Molly Ringwald and Judd Nelson, the movie is chock-full of heartfelt moments and clever one-liners. The five students come into the library bleary-eyed and bored with preconceived notions of each other, and leave as a troublemaking group of oversharing friends. With the help of a little criminal activity, a heart to heart, and some mutual attraction, the teens find they're more alike than they think, and that their initial stereotypes about each other weren't really correct in the first place. Five different reasons for detention, five different sets of parents, and five different personalities lead the teens to realize that they're all a little bit of a nerd, a delinquent, a princess, an athlete, and a basket case.

*Ferris Bueller's Day Off*

SUSAN BALLESTEROS | entertainment editor

Ferris Bueller knows the bore of high school, and he's an expert at finding ways to ditch. In "Ferris Bueller's Day Off," he takes those skills to the extreme for one last senior year skip day that traverses Chicago, from the loudest parade float to the tallest building in the city. Ferris, played by Matthew Broderick fakes an illness so severe that the entire neighborhood is talking up a storm, and he recruits his girlfriend Sloane (Mia Sara) and best friend Cameron Frye (Alan Ruck) to make sure the day is worth the performance, and that their principal Ed Rooney (Jeffrey Jones) doesn't have the chance to ruin their plans. While at times coming across as self-centered in his overdramatic antics, Ferris truly does care for his friend and girlfriend, and his determination to have the best day ever wouldn't be possible if it didn't involve them. A highly quotable and quintessential high school movie, "Ferris Bueller's Day Off," gives every teenager the day off they were looking for.

*Clueless*

KATIE BUSBY | entertainment editor

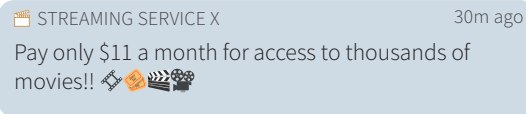
"Clueless" is easy to love. It is an iconic '90s movie, has decent morals about realizing what is important in life, and it has incredible fashion. "Clueless" centers around Cher Horowitz, the queen bee of her high school, and her adventures when she takes the new girl under her wing. Throughout her adventures, accompanied with her snarky and good doing ex stepbrother, they change her perspective on what really matters. She realizes the changes she made to the new girl may have not made her happier, and that she doesn't really do things for other people if they don't benefit her. "Clueless" is truly a timeless heartwarming coming-of-age tale—and everyone gets their fairytale ending.

**Planet of Streaming**

Movie Industry Shifts Power to Popular Online Mediums

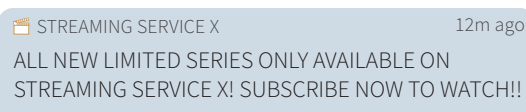
AMELIA COLEMAN | staff writer

For the first time, many of the biggest movie releases aren't being shown in theaters. In part because of movie theater closures due to the pandemic, expected blockbusters like Black Widow were released through streaming services such as Disney+. Audio visual production teacher Vanessa Mokry believes the shift has been a long time coming.



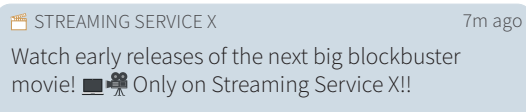
"They only make really big movies these days and very, very, small prestige movies that are going to try to get an Oscar," Mokry said. "Everything else that used to go out in theaters, because that was the only outlet we had, that's all now taken up with Netflix and streaming and other services like that."

Prestige movies are movies made by studios to specifically cater to critics over audiences in order to increase the studio's reputation. According to Mokry, for more traditional blockbuster movies, opening weekend is where a majority of money that a studio makes from a film comes from.



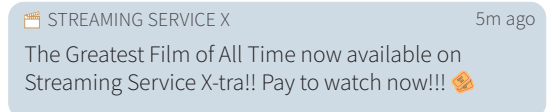
"We've got to shift," Mokry said. "Now that we have so many screens, there's so much content. That's why they only make the really big movies, the sure thing movies, the movies that have IP [intellectual property] built in, and they have a built in audience. The really big movies and movies that were based on books and things that people already love, where they know people will come to the theater and pay the money."

Mokry believes that movies are meant to get theatrical releases. Mueller Alamo Drafthouse manager Howard Burk agrees.



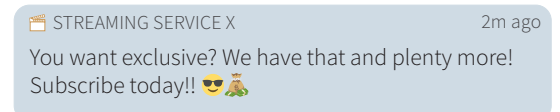
"People still want to come to movies," Burk said. "The experience that you get at a movie theater is nothing like

watching a movie sitting in your living room. And you can still have a bowl of popcorn on your couch, and you can still have the same people around, but it definitely goes beyond just that the screen is bigger and the audio is bigger. There's something special about being at the movie theater."



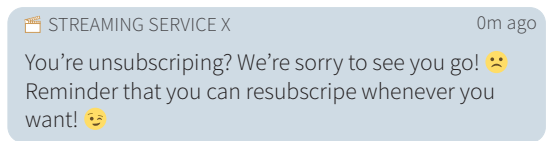
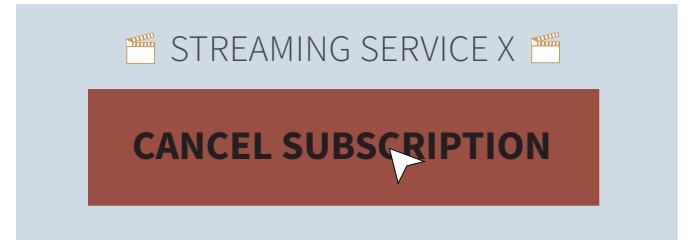
Streaming has its own benefits, however. Freshman Amari Pandian likes that streaming brings movies into the comfort of a person's home, even if there are downsides.

"I think that [streaming] closes off movies to people who could previously go to the movies because they don't have a certain streaming service," Pandian said.



When the COVID-19 pandemic started, studios first chose to push back movie releases. Then, the number of theater premieres shrank as studios chose streaming services over theatres for releases. According to Burk, the Alamo Drafthouse switched to curbside catering and private viewing parties of older movies to make up for the lack.

"Is it creating a challenge for movie theaters in the movie industry? Yes," Burk said. "But is it going to be something that movie theaters can adapt to? Without a doubt."



graphics by Susan Ballesteros

**Fashion Your Seatbelts 'Cause It's Moving Fast**

Influencers, Corporations Feed into Clothing Trends

LANA GILES | staff writer

Fashion impacts almost everyone across the globe in one way or another. However, one aspect of the fashion industry that has controversial opinions around it is fast fashion. Student Anokhi Sheth is one of those people who has a negative view of fast fashion.

"[Fast fashion is] when big companies, for example Shein, mass-produce clothing in a third world country where it is a lot more inexpensive, and then sell them for really cheap in countries like America," Sheth said. "The clothes aren't even that high quality because they're made really fast just to make a quick profit, and since they're so cheap, they have to be made in large amounts and as quickly as possible, which is why it's called fast fashion. It's basically one time use clothing."

Fashion design teacher Jessica Fisher believes that fast fashion is so big due to influencers on social media. Their opinions influence the latest trends and things go in and out of fashion according to what they promote.

"They make things feel almost like you can wear only one time, and that makes me really sad," Fisher said. "There are some influencers that will wear things just once, and they're so trendy that they'll go out really fast, like microbags, which are these teeny tiny handbags that were in for a very brief season, or certain color palettes."

According to Sheth, fast fashion can push underprivileged countries into a cycle of poverty due to constant demand for underpaid labor. Fast fashion also uses up many resources, some of which, according to Fisher, cannot be easily thrown away.

"Once it's been thrown away, you can break it down and try to reuse it," Fisher said. "But there's so many different

materials that don't break down. Like, if there was a wool piece and a synthetic piece, they have to separate those and then turn them into something else. So it's just a lot of energy used."

Fast fashion can be found from stores that specialize in it, like H&M, to stores that sell it as a continuation of their catalogue, like Target. Senior Lili Castillo believes some allowances may be given if buying fast fashion.

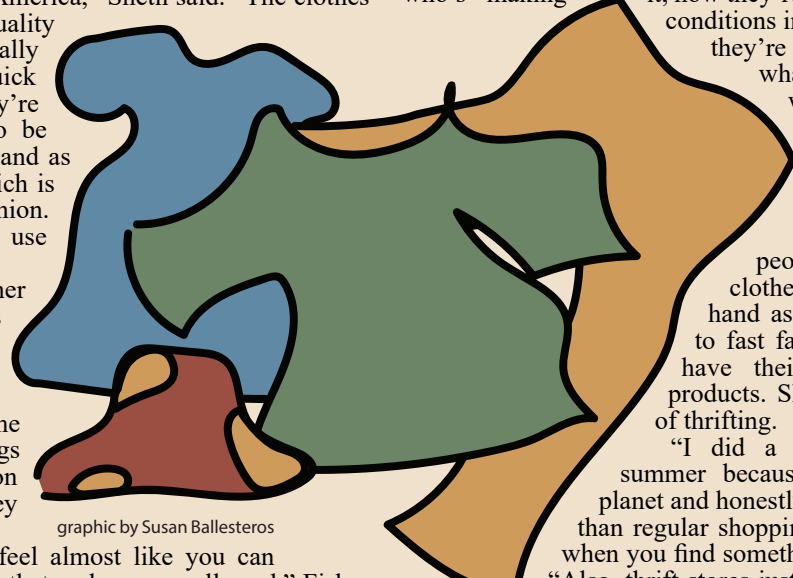
"You just have to be really aware of your source," Castillo said. "Where are all the resources coming from, and who's making it, how they're making, what are the conditions in the environment that they're working in? That's what's really important when you're looking at fast fashion. You can still have fast fashion, but it's just not sustainable."

Castillo suggests people creating their own clothes and shopping second hand as an alternative option to fast fashion and places that have their own fast fashion products. Sheth seconds the idea of thrifting.

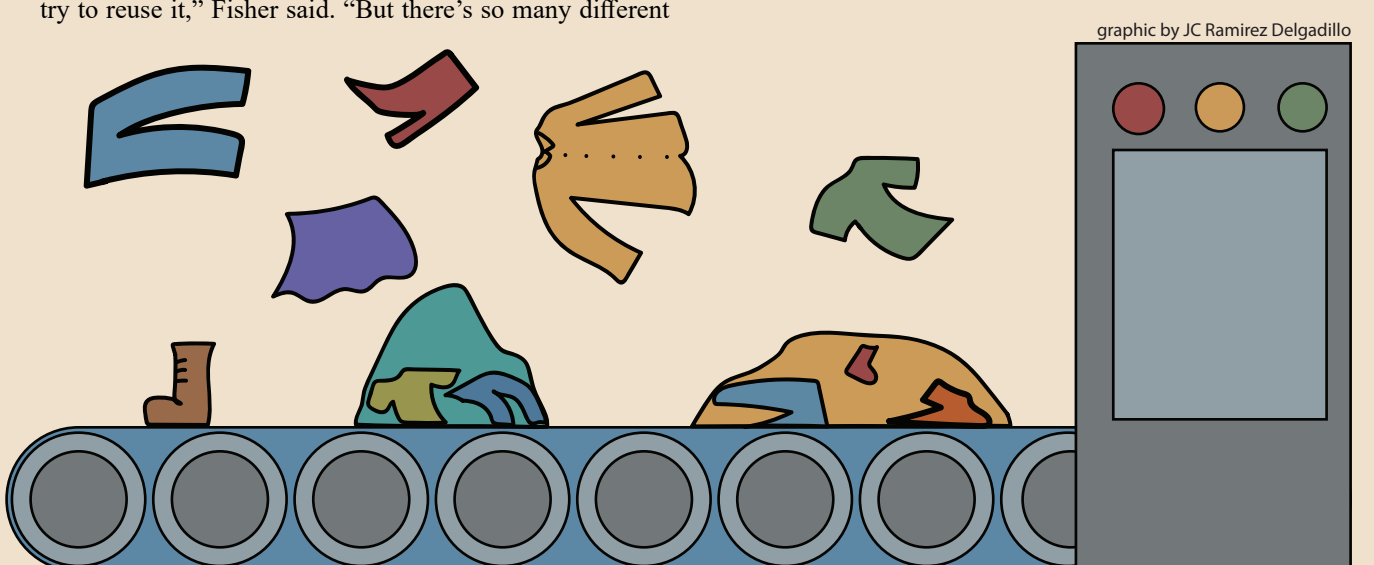
"I did a lot of thrifting this summer because it's better for the planet and honestly, I think it's more fun than regular shopping because it's so fun when you find something cool," Sheth said. "Also, thrift stores just have bigger varieties than regular clothes stores."

Fisher also recommends buying investment pieces, or clothes that might cost more but last longer. That way, the potential to mix and match with other clothes or modify existing ones is there while still keeping up with fashion trends.

"The cycle continues, the styles will come back around," Fisher said. "If I want something that's in now, I'll go look for it other places like Etsy or eBay or Goodwill. That'll stop the fast fashion cycle."



graphic by Susan Ballesteros



graphic by JC Ramirez Delgado

## Local Produce Paradise

Farmers Markets Show Off the Austin Food Scene

DELIA RUNE | finance director

If one heads downtown on a Saturday morning and turns onto Guadalupe, they are guaranteed to stumble upon a special Austin tradition: the farmers market. Every weekend, dozens of stalls and tents are pitched up and down Guadalupe selling fresh, local goods. And it's not just downtown that you can find these farmers markets. From Barton Creek to Mueller, you can find one in almost every corner of town.

The Sustainable Food Center (SFC) runs two of Austin's biggest farmers markets — the oldest of these being their downtown location on Guadalupe. Every weekend, visitors come and admire the perfectly ripe vegetables, homemade hummus, vintage gifts, and locally sourced milk and eggs. After picking up any gifts or groceries they need, there are dozens of food and beverage vendors that provide Austinites with refreshing treats.

For residents and tourists, Austin's farmers markets can be a way to support local businesses and get a taste of Austin's food scene. According to visitor Brandy, the farmers market's outdoor location is more pleasant to visit than a cold, fluorescent-lit grocery store.

"You get a lot of unique stuff [at the farmers market] that you can't get other places," Brandy said. "Also, walking around the whole event itself is much more fun!"

Some of these unique goods include handmade soaps and cosmetics, beeswax, and interesting candies and fudges. Ivan, another farmers market-goer, echoed Brandy's love of the farmers market's goods and local offerings.

"It's cool to support local," Ivan said. "You get to buy a lot of stuff that you don't always get to see at regular grocery stores."

The farmers market carries different items than a traditional store. Instead of selling many different things, vendors specialize in a few products that they can produce at high quality. For example, Jeremy of Pirate Pickles solely sells specialty pickles, and Marty, who works at Beba's P'fresh Salsa, only sells homemade salsa.

"I mean, it's great, all the things you get [at] the grocery store, but this is what people are growing locally, and it supports the people who do that," Marty said. "And then, you know, we have a business of salsas. So we're using a lot of local ingredients to make those. So that's sort of in the circle of life that supports the local vendors and farmers as well."

Farmers markets in Austin have been around for decades, and as the city has grown, so have they. Kay Richardson has had a stall at the farmers market for almost 15 years, and confirmed that farmers markets have gotten a lot more popular since she first started.

"The big thing is the growing number of markets," Richardson said. "When I started, there were only two in Austin."

Now, there are more than 10 farmers markets where both vendors and visitors enjoy themselves. And, according to Marty, despite all the work that goes into the farmers market, vendors are able to focus on enjoying the positive aspects of their job.

"It's a lot of fun to meet people and regular customers," Marty said. "I love seeing all the people, all the dogs, all the kids."

But, according to Richardson, it's not always an easy job. Marty agreed that working at the farmers market requires a lot of perseverance and a strong work ethic.

"There's always a new fire to put out — a million things can go wrong," Marty said. "Most of them don't, but it seems like there's usually something each week that you didn't have to deal with the week before. And I like that."

Marty said the food at the farmers market is always popular. Visitor favorites seem to be peaches, ginger beer, and hummus. However, according to Marty, the people, not the food, are really what make the market.

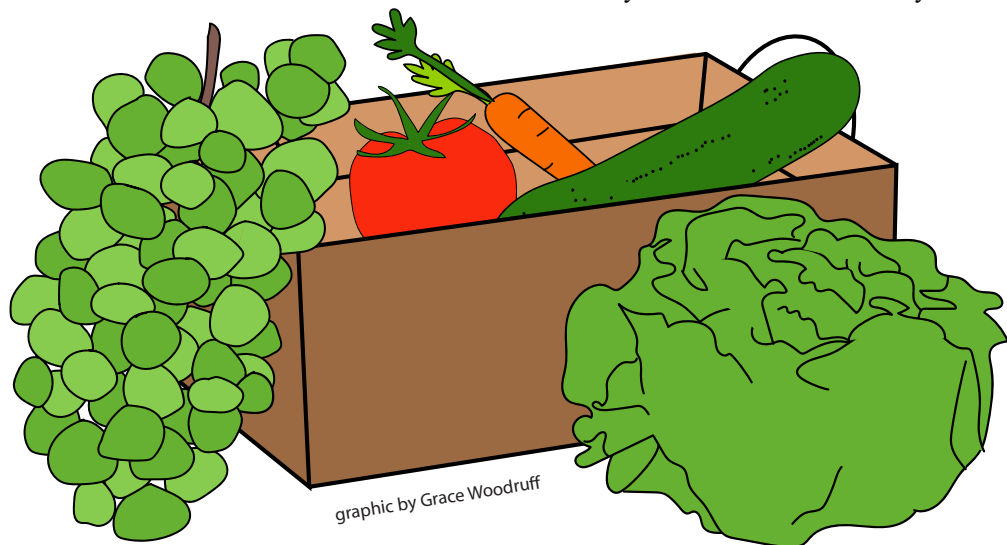
"One of the things I love about being here is that I get to compliment people and their dogs," Marty said. "I like the dogs, and I've met the most incredible people here. I've made friends here, too."

Many farmers markets are pet friendly and some vendors even include free dog treats or biscuits with purchase. Richardson agreed with Marty, and said that the farmer's market is made special by the people who visit.

"[I like the farmers market] because the customer gets to meet the farmer who raises the meat, eggs, or produce," Richardson said. "My favorite part of the farmers market is meeting people."

Many people come to the farmers market for ethically sourced, local products. According to Marty, people, vendors, and businesses all vary, but the market is a constant.

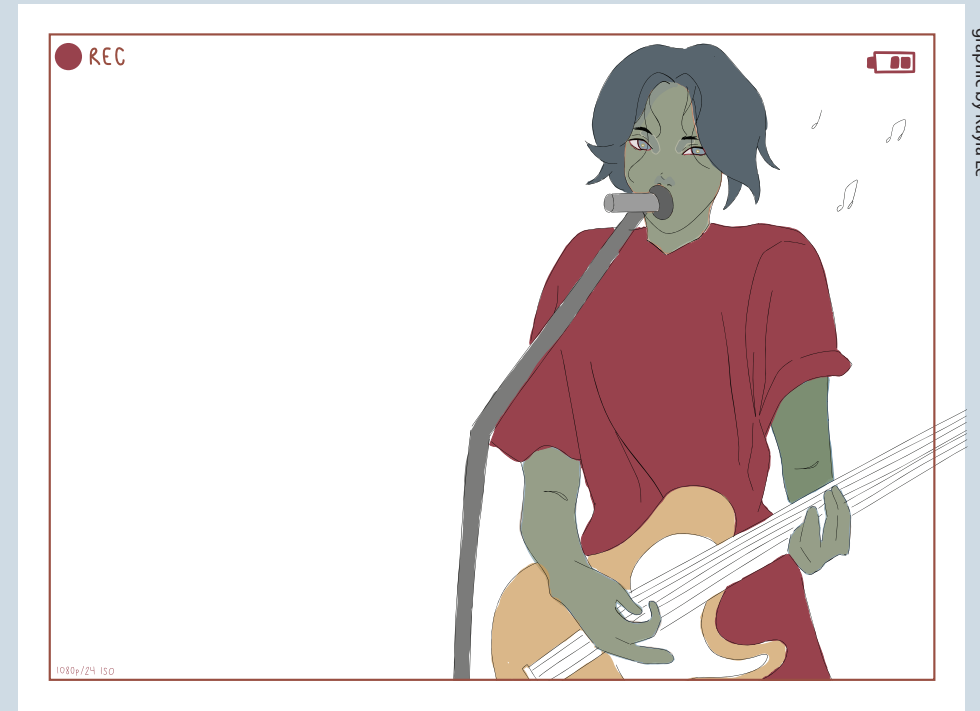
"Vendors come and go, and I always love to see what new people bring to the table," Marty said. "The faces have changed, but the market will always be what the market always is."



graphic by Grace Woodruff

## Musicians Deserve Nerve

New Platform Caters to Artistry, Fans



graphic by Kayla Lee

ELLA LILLY | staff writer

There's a new streaming service on the market aimed at helping musicians achieve the fair pay and conditions they deserve. The app allows fans to subscribe to their favorite artist's channel and have access to unique content.

Nerve FM set out with this goal in mind as they launched their app designed for musicians. Based in Austin, Texas, John Wapush, the co-founder of Nerve FM, saw an issue with the current treatment of musicians and opted for a new way of streaming.

"Think of it like a fan subscribed to an artist channel," Wapush said. "The artist streams audio and video content that can be live streamed as well as recorded in their channel. Typically, the content we encourage artists to put up there is non-catalogued content, so content that's outside of their typical releases...like live performances, demos, that type of stuff."

With a monthly subscription model, The Nerve FM app allows fans to either subscribe to just their favorite artist or subscribe to all of the available artists channels with unlimited content. Compared to popular streaming services, their goal is to improve the way musicians earn commission on their music by using a subscription model instead of the traditional per-play commission and algorithms, which Wapush believes favor larger musicians over smaller ones. Additionally, musicians creating channels don't have to sign binding contracts.

"[Artists] maintain ownership over what they create," Wapush said. "They can put stuff up or take it down whenever they want. There's no contracts or anything else. There's some rules that they agree to, but there's no long-term contracts or anything. It helps them because it's free for them to

create a channel, and they earn significant recurring revenue, that means revenue that repeats over time, like subscription revenue each month."

DJ Ambush, a DJ from Louisiana and musician on Nerve FM, is a large supporter of the app. He likes that he can upload music and extras, such as unreleased music, merch, and other projects he's working on just to Nerve FM.

"It feels like an extension of my creative space, of my existing creative space," DJ Ambush said. "It's like another room where I can put some projects for certain people to come check out."

Some musicians, like Dege Lege, are skeptical over Nerve's age and small user base. Lege supports the app but believes it's difficult for the app to pay bills since it's so new. When traffic is low, listens are low, so right now musicians can make more money on services with larger user bases like Spotify. However, Lege is optimistic that as Nerve FM grows, the mission, purpose, and software is there.

"If the platform grows, it'll definitely improve my liking of it more," Lege said. "I don't dislike it. I just think it's in its infancy like a lot of these platforms are and they're scrambling to distinguish themselves in the forest of apps that are trying to capture a segment of the market."

As musicians look forward to the growth of the app for their own gain, the app is being built and directed for the fans. Fans are able to take a deeper dive into their favorite artists' work and foster a closer relationship with musicians, as Ambush described.

"From a fan's perspective, I would say, Nerve really allows you to zero in on artists that you respect and engage with their content," Ambush said. "It creates an opportunity for you to get into their world and see who inspires them."

## ACL and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Year(s)

AVA SPURGEON | staff writer

After the festival's pandemic-induced cancellation in 2020, Austin City Limits (ACL) returned earlier this month. ACL is hosted at Zilker Park over two weekends at the beginning of every October. Headliners this year included Billie Eilish, Miley Cyrus, and Tyler, the Creator. Popular local restaurants were there as well, so visitors could purchase from Juiceland, Torchy's Tacos, Amy's Ice Creams, and dozens more.

ACL is a local tradition that students like junior Kate Starkloff have been attending for years. She is returning to the festival again with her family this year.

"I've been to ACL every year because I love music and I love big crowds," Starkloff said. "I don't think the music will be that good, but I'm just excited to get back to normal a little bit."

While Starkloff is looking forward to returning to live music and crowds, some students who have gone in previous years are opting not to attend in 2021. Student Annabella Smith has made the decision to not return this year.

"I'm not going back this year because of COVID," Smith said. "I think the protocol is probably the best way to make sure everyone stays safe and doesn't get sick. I agree with it, but I understand why some people might not."

Across social media platforms, there was discussion about whether or not ACL was going to put a mask mandate in place due to announcements that more

information would be released closer to the festival's date so the COVID-19 situation in Austin could be accurately assessed.

According to the festival's website and social media accounts, attendees must provide either proof of being fully vaccinated for COVID-19 or a printed copy of a negative COVID-19 test result they obtained 72 hours before attending in order to be admitted. Once the festival arrived, ACL organizers announced masks would be required in areas of the park where social distancing would not be possible, such as lines and shuttles.

"You do have to be close to other people, which is kind of worrisome, but I'm glad there's protocol in place," Starkloff said. "I'm still excited."

Dollahon believes the festival will have some negative effects on the city. She feels especially nervous about the medical aftermath and damage it could cause.

"I do think there will be outbreaks afterwards, or it will be like Blues on the Green or something like that," Dollahon said, "but as long as you get vaccinated and hang out with vaccinated people you should be okay."

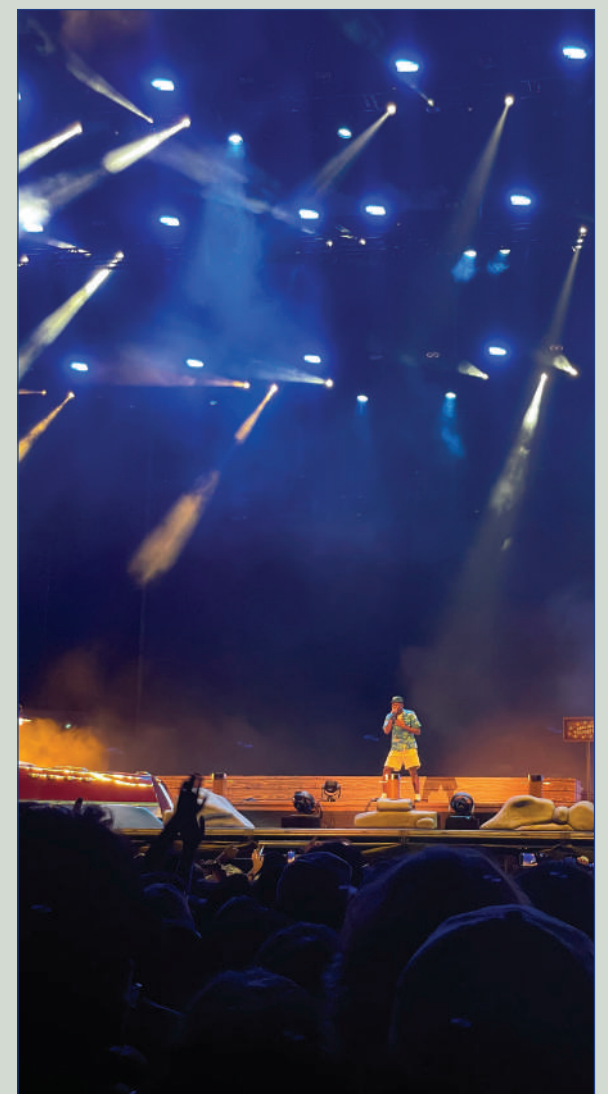
Blues on the Green is a music festival that takes place in Zilker every summer. The festival was postponed this year when Austin entered stage five and experienced a surge in COVID-19 cases. Entering October, Austin moved from stage five COVID-19 restrictions down to stage four. ACL proceeded as previously planned.

Some Austinites believe no protocol should be in place at all, as has been shared through social media platforms, while other people have commented that they personally believe negative tests should be required for all attendees, despite vaccination status. Dollahon has a similar perspective to Smith on the protocol ACL is enforcing.

"I think the vaccine or test are very necessary," Dollahon said. "I'm vaccinated so I'm okay, but honestly I think they should say you can only go if you're vaccinated. But it's not my decision, and I don't think it'll affect how fun it'll be because as long as everyone's being safe, it should be fine."

Although social media users had expressed trepidation over the festival's COVID-19 protocol in ACL's social media comment sections, weekend passes sold out within three hours of being available for purchase. Junior Eva Dollahon had never attended ACL before, but was excited about having her first experience at the festival this fall and felt it was safe enough to attend this year.

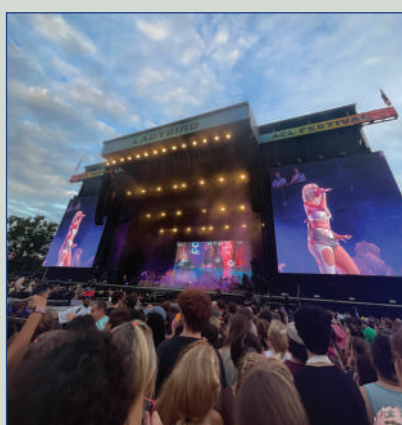
"I feel like it will be really fun this year because I haven't been before," Dollahon said. "I've heard a lot of good things about it."

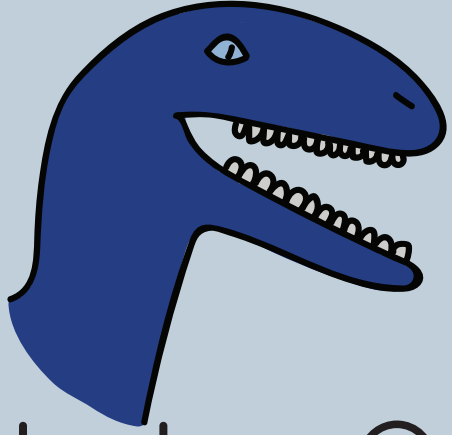


LUMBERJACK Tyler, the Creator, one of this year's ACL headliners, performs on stage with a themed design, influenced by his latest album. The album, *Call Me If You Get Lost*, released this past June. photo by Luci Garza



CROWDS AND CLOUDS Austinites and visitors alike gather for a packed evening of live music at ACL weekend one. Masks were only required where social distancing would not be possible. photos by Luci Garza





FALL 2021

- 10/19 Volleyball vs Crockett HS @Crockett Fr-5:30 p.m. JV-6:30 p.m. Varsity-7:30 p.m.
- 10/21 Boys and Girls Golf @ColoVista Golf Club 9:00 a.m.
- 10/22 Volleyball vs Northeast ECHS @LASA Fr-5:30 p.m. JV-6:30 p.m. Varsity-7:30 p.m.
- 10/23 Swim and Dive Angleton Surfside Meet @Springs Family YMCA 4:00 p.m.
- 10/26 Volleyball vs McCallum HS @McCallum Fr-5:30 p.m. JV-6:30 p.m. Varsity-7:30 p.m.
- 10/28 Football vs Eastside ECHS @Burger Stadium 7:30 p.m.
- 10/29 Swim and Dive AISD Invitational @UT Swim Center 8:15 a.m.
- 11/2 Tennis Freshman Tournament vs Georgetown @Georgetown 8:00 a.m.
- 11/4 Football vs Juan Navaro @Nelson Field 7:30 p.m.
- 11/12 Swim and Dive Burnet TISCA Invitational @YMCA of the Highland Lakes 8:00 a.m.
- 11/16 Boys Basketball vs St. Dominic Savio HS @St. Dominic Savio JV-5:30 p.m. Varsity-7:00 p.m.
- 11/22 Boys Basketball vs Lampasas HS @Lampasas Fr-12:00 p.m. JV-1:30 p.m. Varsity-3:00 p.m.
- 11/30 Boys Basketball vs Austin Achieve @LASA JV-5:30 p.m. Varsity-7:00 p.m.
- 12/7 Girls Soccer vs Pflugerville HS @Pflugerville JV-5:30 p.m. Varsity-7:00 p.m.
- 12/10 Dive Burnet Dive Invitational @YMCA of the Highland Lakes 4:00 p.m.
- 12/18 Boys Basketball vs Eastside ECHS @LASA JV-12:00 p.m. Varsity-1:30 p.m.

## Trans and Nonbinary Athletes

from page 1

Freshman tennis player Caty Mueller says a lot of restrictions on transgender and nonbinary students in sports come from the state and are the result of ignorance. Several states have passed laws that make it difficult for members of the LGBT+ community, especially transgender women and nonbinary students, to compete in their sport.

"The biggest struggle they have to face is the roadblocks, political powers, that prevent them from playing with the gender they identify as," Mueller said. "There's a lot of roadblocks for medical transitions and a player's physical status. But these roadblocks should not be there and players should be allowed to play." Another factor that is critical to this issue is the extent to which sports rely on gender. According to Mueller, some sports rely on gender less than others due to the difference in the physicality required. Mueller argues that in some sports, the biological differences between genders would

Polio also said that gendered sports tend to pander to boy's athletics teams, often excluding female-dominated sports. According to Polio, this difference can especially prevent transgender or nonbinary students from participating in boys' athletics.

"I think there's this misogynistic idea that certain sports are only for certain people," Polio said. "It's hard, especially when you want to do something and you feel like you don't have a place in that community."

According to Schwarm, your biological gender becomes increasingly irrelevant in athletics as time goes on. Schwarm believes that with enough practice and dedication or the use of hormones, there is less of a disadvantage.

"It's more about trying your best and practicing than who you physically are as a person," Schwarm said. "Once you get into higher levels, people have probably transitioned to the point where they have gained or lost an advantage equal to the gender

**"I think students should play for the teams that they identify with, as opposed to whatever they were assigned at birth. It can feel a lot like you're being shoved into a box that you very much don't fit in."**

-Sophomore Emily Polio

make the competition unfair, while in others, it doesn't matter as much.

"With some sports, it's a big difference, because a lot of it is physicality," Mueller said. "Testosterone biologically makes you stronger than estrogen, but with some sports like tennis [it doesn't matter as much]. Sports like tennis and ultimate frisbee shouldn't be gendered as they don't require physicality as much as other sports."

While some students, like Mueller, believe that biological gender is more relevant to some sports than others, students like Polio believe the opposite. According to her, everyone should have an equal opportunity to play any sport. "I think gendered sports are something we can learn and move away from," Polio said. "We know enough about people to know that it doesn't really matter whether you're a guy or girl, or nonbinary. If you want to play football, you should be able to play football in a way that makes you feel comfortable."

they identify as. I've heard [hormone therapy] studies that give people capabilities equal to those of their cis counterparts. But at the school level, it's probably not as big a deal."

According to Polio, trans students should have every opportunity a cis student would in every aspect of their lives, not just athletics. Polio said that normalising people being transgender and making it more socially acceptable for younger people depends on the environment in which they are raised.

"The school district needs to start acknowledging that there is a much broader base of students who want to be participating in sports," Polio said. "Things like more gender neutral locker rooms or areas for them to change can really help make the student feel like they're a part of the community and not just being treated as other because of whatever they identify with. Also obviously allowing them to play sports based on the gender they identify with."

## editorial The Paralympian Accommodation Deficit

AVA SPURGEON | staff writer

The Olympics and Paralympics returned in 2021 after their 2020 cancellation, providing a source of hope and a goal to work towards for athletes. From Aug. 24 through Sept. 5, 2021, Tokyo hosted the Paralympic Games.

The Paralympics are international athletic competitions similar to the Olympics, but for athletes with both physical and mental disabilities. The mission statement from the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) is to "enable Paralympic athletes to achieve sporting excellence and inspire and excite the world." For this year's games, the IPC had to limit the amount of people in attendance due to COVID-19 precautions.

Paralympians usually attend the games with a Personal Care Assistant (PCA) to assist them with their daily tasks. These PCAs are usually a trusted family member or a hired assistant. In previous years, the United States Olympic and Paralympic Committee (USOPC) would pay for and accommodate these PCAs, but this year it was announced athletes could not attend with guests, and there would be a designated PCA at the Olympic Village. There were some exceptions, but the vast majority of athletes were denied a PCA.

Swimmer Becca Meyers is an accomplished athlete who won three gold medals in the 2016 Rio Paralympics and a silver and bronze medal in the 2012 games. Meyers was born with Usher Syndrome, a rare genetic disease that left her deaf and partially blind. When selected for Team USA, she was initially excited until her mother, who normally acts as her PCA, was denied from attending. After being informed that there would only be one PCA for 34 blind paralympic swimmers, Meyers withdrew.

Meyers spoke from her personal experience

about previous Paralympic Games where her mother was not in attendance. She talked about how scared she was when she was expected to navigate an unknown Olympic Village in a foreign country at the 2012 games while being deaf as well as visually impaired.

In an interview with "Swimmer's World", Meyers said, "I haven't been sleeping. I'm so stressed. My training started to suffer because of this situation, and I just haven't been able to be the best I can be. I know I can be the best I can be with the resources I need. It's worked for the last four years."

Many athletes who were left without PCAs and other resources shared their experiences similar to Meyers' stories of suffering and anxiety-inducing experiences. Having needs be ignored by the IPC is not an uncommon experience.

Similar to Meyers, Team USA track athlete Kym Crosby was born with albinism, leaving her legally blind. Crosby was denied her guide dog as a guest at the 2021 Paralympics. She didn't withdraw, but had to face airports and travel

without her dog that she had previously relied on.

Meyers' situation is not uncommon: many Paralympians have gone through similar experiences. Athletes that were permitted a PCA at the 2021 games had to pay for their travel and accommodations, which had been paid for by the USOPC in the past. If the athlete was under the age of 18 or had an intellectual disability, they were exempt from the USOPC restrictions and allowed to bring a chaperone. But unlike previous years where guests were covered by the USOPC, chaperones also had to be paid for entirely by the athlete. A large number of athletes and their families started GoFundMe's to be able to pay for their PCA or chaperone's travel to Tokyo with them, and others had to drop out completely.

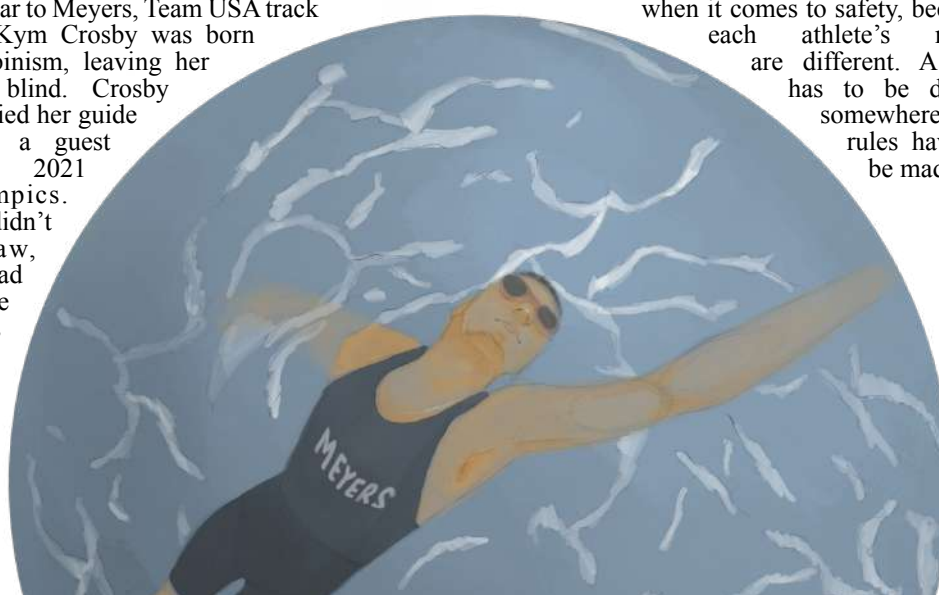
It's difficult to be equitable in these situations and give everyone what they need, especially when it comes to safety, because each athlete's needs are different. A line has to be drawn somewhere, and rules have to be made for

COVID-19 precautions. But in this instance, when it comes down to being able to navigate and manage travel and the Olympic Village, it is inexcusable to deny athletes with physical and mental disabilities the help that they ask for and deserve.

In the Olympic Village, having one PCA for 34 visually impaired athletes is not going to enable the athletes to thrive and perform at their best in the games. If we want athletes to perform their best and succeed, and if the USOPC can't provide athletes impaired athletes with the tools they need, maybe it would have been better to postpone the games rather than subject athletes to this treatment, or rather, lack of treatment.

COVID-19 makes navigating travel and the Olympic Village more difficult than ever before, so athletes need more support, not less. It's not fair to switch the assistance Paralympians receive right now. It's not just about performing well at the games, it's also about the safety and mental health of the athletes. Nobody deserves to experience what Meyers went through at the 2012 games, feeling alone and anxious without the resources she needed. COVID-19 has complicated the USOPC's decisions about allowing PCAs into the games.

While measures should be taken to ensure the safety and health of all athletes, there were other ways this could have been done that would have also allowed athletes to receive the support they needed. Spectators could have been limited in the stands or teams could have been cut down, but taking away PCAs and resources Paralympians depend on is doing an injustice to the athletes who have worked so hard to get to the games. Team USA's athletes deserve support and assistance, and it's time we start working towards making that happen.



graphic by Kayla Le



**PRACTICE** The cheer squad practices their moves with Klein (back right). They need to practice a lot of make sure that their moves are precise. photo by JC Ramirez Delgadillo



**HEAD, SHOULDERS, KNEES, AND TOES** Klein (middle) stretches with the rest of the cheer squad before practice. In order to make sure stunting is safe, the team has to keep their bodies limber. photo by JC Ramirez Delgadillo

## LASA Move Yields Gallons of Traditions

**NAYAN KONDAPALLI** | staff writer

With LASA finally receiving their own campus after their separation from LBJ, students are met with their own sports teams, and by proxy, their own traditions. This means that the LASA students of 2021-2022 set the grounds for what will define LASA in the years to come.

A hopeful new LASA tradition is the Raptor Rage, which is, as LASA senior and football safety Nick Robertson put it: “basically an impromptu pep rally.” Pep rallies are large events that usually took place before the first football game to celebrate the school’s

sports teams, with demonstrations from football, basketball, and volleyball players, along with LBJ’s marching band. But with the absence of pep rallies this year, senior Jack Waters decided to do something about it.

“[Jack] was like, it’s our first game of the year, and we need a pep rally because we don’t have a pep rally so, we built a stage, got a sound system, found a playlist, and we got ourselves a pep rally,” Robertson said.

Another notorious tradition students might be familiar with is the milk jug challenge. Although this tradition was kicked off with LBJ, it’s easily the largest unofficial tradition every year.

“There is the milk jug challenge where we find an empty space, we take all the cars and make a giant circle with them,” Robertson said. “We buy a bunch of milk and then try to drink the whole gallon. It’s probably the biggest [tradition].”

These traditions keep excitement about athletics high all year round, and according to Robertson, the student section is one of the most important traditions, building off the spirit of these. The student section keeps excitement bursting from the bleachers at every football game, making sure spectators are engaged and are having fun, which is one of the most important parts of playing football to Robertson.

“Behind the player benches is where the student section leaders are and they bring megaphones and dance around,” Robertson said. “The students section’s job is to make people have fun at football games and that’s really all that I want in my years playing football.”

But football isn’t the only sport that exists, and large-scale traditions such as pep rallies and milk jugs aren’t the only type of traditions. Senior and center for the basketball team Kenechi Ezekoye described a unique tradition brought in from basketball coach Joseph Pendell.

“After every district win, there’ll be an MVP, and we’ll give them a championship belt to keep until the next MVP,” Ezekoye said. “We call them the Alpha Raptor.”

Ultimate frisbee has a similar tradition at the end-of-the-year celebration. Players are given awards for special things they do for the team. Ultimate also has other fun traditions, such as Spirit Shorts.

“At the end of the year, every year, there’s a banquet where they’d give out little awards for people of the year, like defensive MVP or biggest clown,”

Robertson said. “There’s another thing called Spirit Shorts, these pink shorts that everyone has signed for years now, and we can’t really wash them because then you get all the marker off. So it’s really disgusting. [At the end of each game], whoever you think had the best spirit, you’d give it to them.”

Although these traditions may just seem like fun, Ezekoye believes it’s the simple traditions like these that hype up athletes for the next match and give the incentive to play better each week. When he was at Anderson, there were some traditions, such as pep talks from coaches and drinking chocolate milk, that encouraged him and his teammates to work harder, and he now hopes they could be implemented at LASA.

“We would also drink chocolate milk after every workout session, and man it’s dumb, but we loved it,” Ezekoye said. “It made us work harder. Because we’re still kids, and sometimes we need that push. I think [LASA students] would get a lot out of it.”

LASA is still getting used to athletic teams independent from LBJ and are somewhat unorganized right now, but in the future Ezekoye hopes we can implement more traditions to bring teams and students together. Ezekoye suggested that one way to develop more traditions is to start fundraising to raise money to spend on future traditions.

“Have fundraisers at the beginning of the season,” Ezekoye said. “I don’t remember doing this for LASA, and I kept thinking ‘Why haven’t we done this?’ If we did a fundraiser, we’d be able to get our chocolate milk.”

LASA being in its own building puts a strain on the overall budget, and areas like athletics are being left out more now. Whatever money is given is directed towards building up the team with new equipment and facilities. Starting fundraisers allows students to manage money to improve their own chemistry and increase the quality of their sports.

As of right now, LASA sports are in a crucial developmental period. In the future, the traditions that students will form this year and in the near future will guide the school as a whole to establish what it means to be a part of LASA athletics.

## THE RAPTOR RUN DOWN

**ZOE KLEIN** | copy editor

I lagged about a half a beat behind the cheer team for the entire week — as someone who can’t tell my left from my right, contorting my body into the right shape at the right time was a bit of a challenge. But I did learn that I could do the splits.

As I pulled my sneakers on in the newspaper room ten minutes before practice started, I questioned my offer to join cheer for the week. I did ballet when I was four, but that was about the extent of my dance knowledge. When I walked into the cheer room, the cheer captains were taping a large poster of a frog to the wall. “Don’t tell coach,” one muttered. “Let’s see how long it takes her to notice.”

The schedule for practice remained similar to that of the first one I attended. We all crowded together at the beginning of practice for an unofficial team therapy session that lasted approximately until Coach Alvarado arrived. When she arrived, senior and team captain Zoe Dell led everyone in stretching.

The floor began to pulse to the beat of Taylor Swift, and the team slid into two lines. With each change of song, it seemed like another corner of tape attached to the frog poster had unstuck itself from the wall. The coach absentmindedly re-stuck it each time, yielding giggles from the freshmen in the back row.

At the end of stretching, the girl next to me slipped into the splits. Without any goal or expectation, I did the same. It took me a moment to realize what my body had done. I was in the splits. I didn’t know I could do that.

After stretching, the coach pointed at junior and team captain Lola Galindo-Deleon and said the word “Supercharged.” I was a little bit scared at first, and quickly became more scared when I learned that “Supercharged” was a dance that I was going to need to learn by the end of the week. We repeated small sections of the dance until the captains and coach deemed it flawless.

After “Supercharged,” the captains sent the freshmen to retrieve the stunting mat, which they dutifully unrolled down the center of the room.

Because I am a newspaper kid and not a cheerleader (i.e., I have not been training to be thrown in the air for months), I wasn’t cleared to stunt. I spent most of the week upside down instead. On the first day, the coach and

captains had decided that while the team was doing things that I either wasn’t cleared to do or didn’t know how to do, I would be cartwheeling. I did a lot of cartwheeling.

I learned this week that the fear that comes with stunting (throwing people in the air) is not limited solely to the flyer (the one in the air). It may have been the worry about people near me breaking their bones, but it also could have been dread of the 20 pushups the entire team was required to do if someone touched the ground. I am extremely buff now.

After the experienced cheerleaders finished throwing each other in the air, the captains tortured us. They sent us into wall sits and hip flexor exercises, which turned out to be a recipe for hip cramps (which, I learned this week, are possible).

Game day was a whole new experience. The coach ordered us meals that wouldn’t make our bodies cramp, and we “supercharged” and threw one another in the air again. An hour before the game, the team crowded onto a bus to go to the field.

When we arrived, the football team was throwing their legs in the air with the intent of loosening their muscles before running into each other at increasing forces and speeds throughout the game. Naturally, the cheer team joined them. We threw our legs higher in the air and with more speed than they did. They were not amused.

For the first time this season, the Raptors football team won. While we were on the field, the cheer team behaved. We held our hands behind our backs, and stuck and smeared every cheer with calculation. But when halftime hit and we looked at the scoreboard, we ran into the student section and joined in on the laughter and celebration of the student body. My childhood dream of becoming a cheerleader and my somewhat uncharacteristic love of football were not mutually exclusive anymore. And I could do the splits.

GO RAPTORS!



Graphic by Grace Woodruff

## Students are Game, Set, Matched with Athletic Periods

**LANA GILES** | staff writer

LASA is now implementing athletic periods, a class period during the day dedicated to developing the skills and teambonds of student athletes. Athletic periods open the door for a variety of opportunities for LASA, especially with new teams.

Starting in 2020-2021, LASA added athletic periods during the school day for athletes to participate in. Sports such as football, basketball, golf, volleyball, and soccer now have an athletic period at the end of the day. This enables teams to build their relationships, traditions, and develop connections in and out of practice.

Swim, dive, and track and field coach Christopher Parks helped organize the boys’ soccer athletic period. Parks said that the athletic periods were originally created to give serious athletes the opportunity to pursue their sport during the school day.

“The number one reason is that we want those athletes who really want to take their sport seriously to have as much of an edge as the other schools in the district and within our conference,” Parks said.

According to junior and volleyball player Lily Prath, athletic periods allow athletes to spend more time getting familiar with their sport and their teammates. Prath also said that athletic periods provide students with a gap at the end of the day that serves as a much needed break from classes.

“I wanted more conditioning and more time for practice, and I wanted more time to get to know

my teammates and bond with them,” Prath said. “I was worried that it would take away from taking other classes, but I realized that it was a good decision and it was nice to have that break at the end of the day.”

Sophomore and football player Owen Osborn said the athletic period has allowed benefits for the team as they now have time together to work on strength and bonding. This helps the team hone their abilities and connection.

“It really benefits the team since it gives us a chance to work out and become stronger,” Osborn said. “We can get training in, get faster, run the plays, get down to it, and just get better in general.”

Athletic periods are year-round, so athletes have the chance to get extra training in during the off-season as well as their active season. Parks



**SCRIMMAGE** Football team practicing hard during their athletic period. Scrimmages, like the one above are guaranteed because of the extra time athletic periods provide. photo by JC Ramirez Delgadillo

believes that it helps teammates become relaxed with one another as the season progresses.

“The fact that two to three times a week these guys are getting to train and get comfortable with each other as members of the same team, especially with the new freshmen, is helpful,” Parks said. “I can see the benefit for any sport.”

Some sports such as swim, dive,



**READY, SET, SPIKE** Volleyball team playing a scrimmage during their athletic period. photo by JC Ramirez Delgadillo

and water polo don’t yet have athletic periods. Parks shares his hopes for a potential period for such sports in the future, which will enable athletes in these sports to get that additional edge over competitors.

“For example, the swim team, the amount of different things we could accomplish if we had an athletic period would be much more expanded if we didn’t have to only practice early in the morning at 7



**WARM-UP** Out on the field, the team warms up for a full ninety minutes of practice during their athletic period. photo by JC Ramirez Delgadillo

a.m.,” Parks said. “I think we’ll see a lot of sports probably growing if nothing else and students sustaining a sport longer beyond just their PE credit.”

With all this time spent together, Parks expects to observe more team unity and togetherness throughout all sports. During their active season, athletes will be spending a significant portion of their week with their team.

“I think the biggest thing that everyone is expecting to see is probably higher levels of team unity across the whole athletic department,” Parks said. “If you have people who are getting to spend part of their school day together, it’s just gonna enhance that team bonding that much more. I can say we are going to expect some more success, as far as victories on the field.”

Academics are important to many athletes, and coaches are aware of this and incorporate it into the class

period. Parks says coaches split time between academics and athletics by giving athletes a portion of the time for studying and then the rest for drills and playing.

“I think it’s very signature [of] LASA that we try to also balance what they need as athletes,” Parks said. “So they get a study hall for a portion of the period, and then they have a warmup and stretching period, and slight conditioning, and then actually doing their drills. I think it’s a good balance.”

At LASA, there is an emphasis on student-athletes. Parks acknowledges this and says that coaches recognize that academics are valued to students. If athletes do choose to take the athletic period, they choose to focus on their athletic ability.

“The communication amongst us as coaches has always been the same thing that LASA obviously, the academics is the priority for the educators and the students,” Parks said. “They’re here to focus on their athletics.”

Many players come to a team with little experience or without any friends. Prath says that taking the athletic period adds to the experience of both incoming and returning athletes by giving an opportunity to build their skill and relationships.

“I think incoming and returning players should sign up for it,” Prath said. “Incoming, if you don’t know a lot of people on the team or you haven’t played a lot with them, you’ll get a benefit from that. And returning, it’s just nice to be around your friends and play more sports.”



photo by Maddie Van Slyke



photo by JC Ramirez

# NEW SCHOOL NEWSPOTS

by JC Ramirez Delgado



photo by Maddie Van Slyke



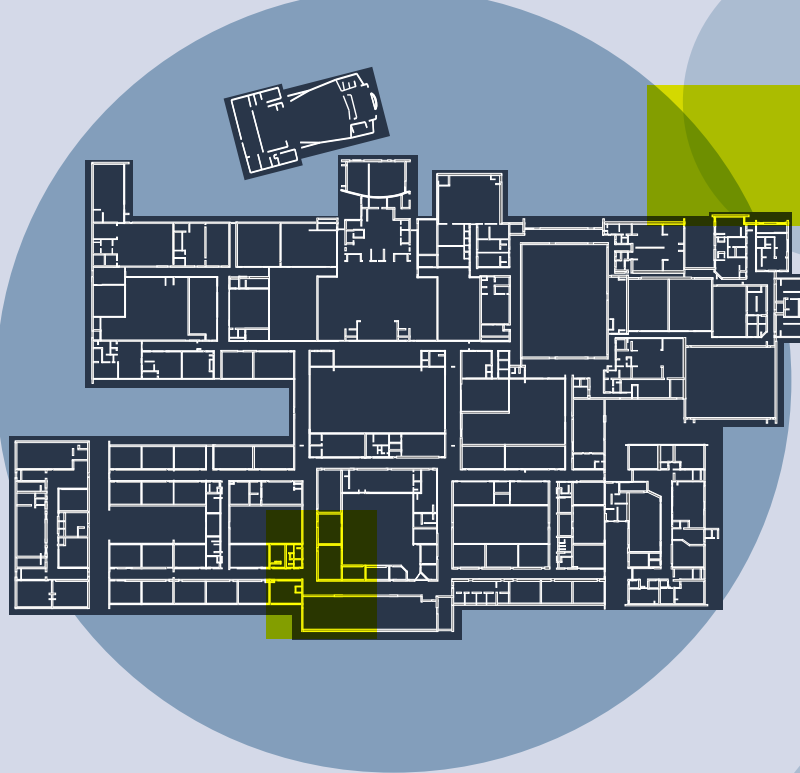
photo by Maddie Van Slyke

LASA High School has moved from the LBJ campus to their own campus for the first time ever. In 2017, the AISD bond program gave a large amount of money to improve many schools. LASA benefited by receiving a campus of their own. Previously, the new campus belonged to Eastside Memorial, and since LASA students find themselves in a new environment, there are many areas of interest to explore.

One of the areas that by now almost all students have seen is the piano in front of the cafeteria, and many students have taken the opportunity to play it. Senior Noah Tsang often walks through the cafeteria hallway and enjoys hearing the tunes other students play.

"It's great," Tsang said. "Sometimes I just come over here and listen to the people who play, and it's fun because many people who come to the piano play really well."

There are only a handful of teachers that have been teaching at LASA since it was only the Liberal Arts Academy. Social studies teacher Maricruz Aguayo



has been teaching here for 20 years. She has seen many of the changes done to the school over the years and was happy with the new campus.

"I was excited that LASA was getting a standalone campus and very happy to return to this particular campus," Aguayo said. "I began my teaching career in AISD at the Liberal Arts Academy, which was then located on the Johnston campus, so I have great memories of this building. The nostalgia alone is great. Beyond that, while no building is perfect, I missed the older-style architecture of the main building and how reasonably laid out the wings are."

The new campus has given LASA students and teachers a fresh start, allowing ways to get creative with wall decorations and public areas like the courtyards and the piano near the cafeteria hallway. With a new setting comes new traditions, and only time will tell how the home of the raptors will transform through the years—hopefully this time, though, the traditions won't go extinct.



photo by JC Ramirez



photo by JC Ramirez



photo by Maddie Van Slyke



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