

# the liberator

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## New Mural Splatters LASA with School Spirit

**FIONA KLEEMAN** | staff writer

The mural club is a way to add a pop of color to the school as well as earning National Honors Society (NHS) hours along the way. The club's first mural is on the wall outside of the newspaper classroom, room 701, heading to the cafeteria. According to

junior and club leader Vivian Butler, the artwork provides the school with a touch of LASA pride.

The club first started off as a nonprofit organized by Butler outside of school in May 2021. Butler said she painted a small mural for an apartment building over the summer and after that success decided to bring it to school as a way to get new participants. Butler founded the club in September 2021 and started to brainstorm ways to raise awareness for the club by asking if painting murals could be community service.

"Then I learned that it could also be NHS hours, so that would be another motivation for people to join," Butler said.

Some students, like club co-president junior Emma Bailey, were drawn into the club because of her love for art. Bailey said she has enjoyed painting for multiple years, and she was excited to participate in her first art-based club.

"I did art when I was little, and I got into a museum when I was in elementary school, regarding a painting I did," Bailey said. "I've always loved the field of art, and I want to pursue it, so I decided to run this club with my friend."

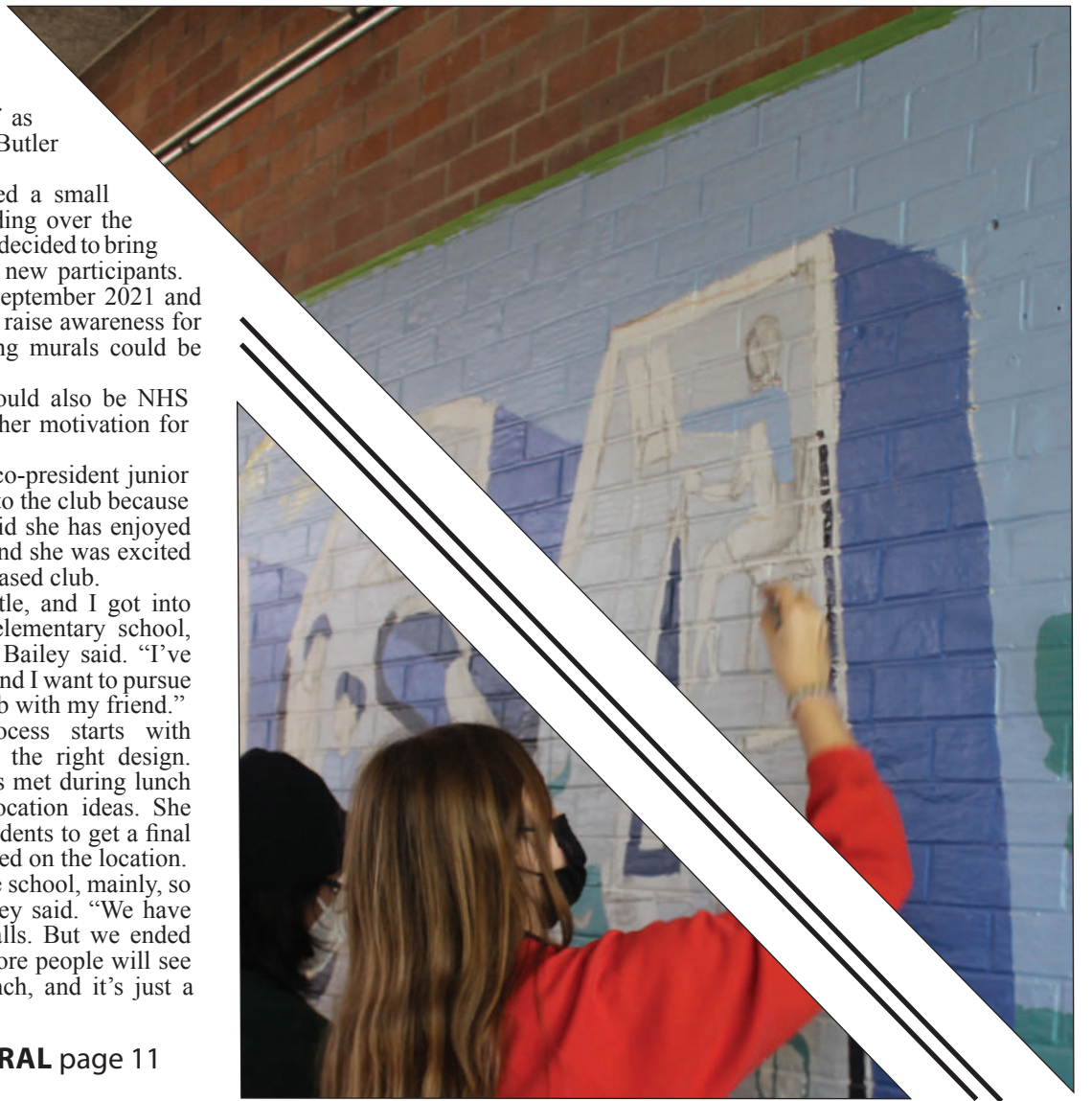
The mural creation process starts with brainstorming and choosing the right design. Butler says about 30 students met during lunch and discussed design and location ideas. She then sent out a poll to the students to get a final consensus, and the club decided on the location.

"We wanted to be inside the school, mainly, so more people can see it," Bailey said. "We have multiple options, multiple walls. But we ended up choosing that one, so more people will see it as they come into lunch, and it's just a focal point."

see **NEW MURAL** page 11



**SHOWING THEIR TRUE COLORS** Junior Tyler Hawkins helps paint the "S" in "LASA" for the mural club's latest project, located adjacent to the cafeteria. Students who participate are given NHS hours for their contributions. photo by Edith Holmsten



**NOT HER FIRST RODEO** Junior Vivian Butler fills in the fine details on the "A" of LASA. Butler is the founder of mural club and has previously helped with a mural near her apartment building. photo by JC Ramirez Delgado

## what's news



photo by Madeleine Van Slyke

**Welcome to the Club Sports**  
Learn about LASA's non-UIL sport teams, such as ultimate frisbee, lacrosse, and water polo.

see **CLUB** page 15



photo by JC Ramirez Delgado

**Donut Forget to Check It Out**  
The Salty, an artisan donut shop, opens up on South Congress.

see **NEW PASTRY** page 13



photo by Kayla Le

**A Beauty to Behold**  
A special look into the production of LASA's spring musical, "Beauty and the Beast."

see **BEAUTY** page 14



photo courtesy of Eva Dollahon

**How to Save a Life**  
Discover what a day in the life of an LBJ EMT student looks like.

see **EMT** page 10

## When Podcasts Rule the World

**AMELIA COLEMAN** | staff writer

From "The Joe Rogan Experience" to "Chuckle Sandwich," the only limit to a podcaster's imagination is Spotify's terms and conditions.

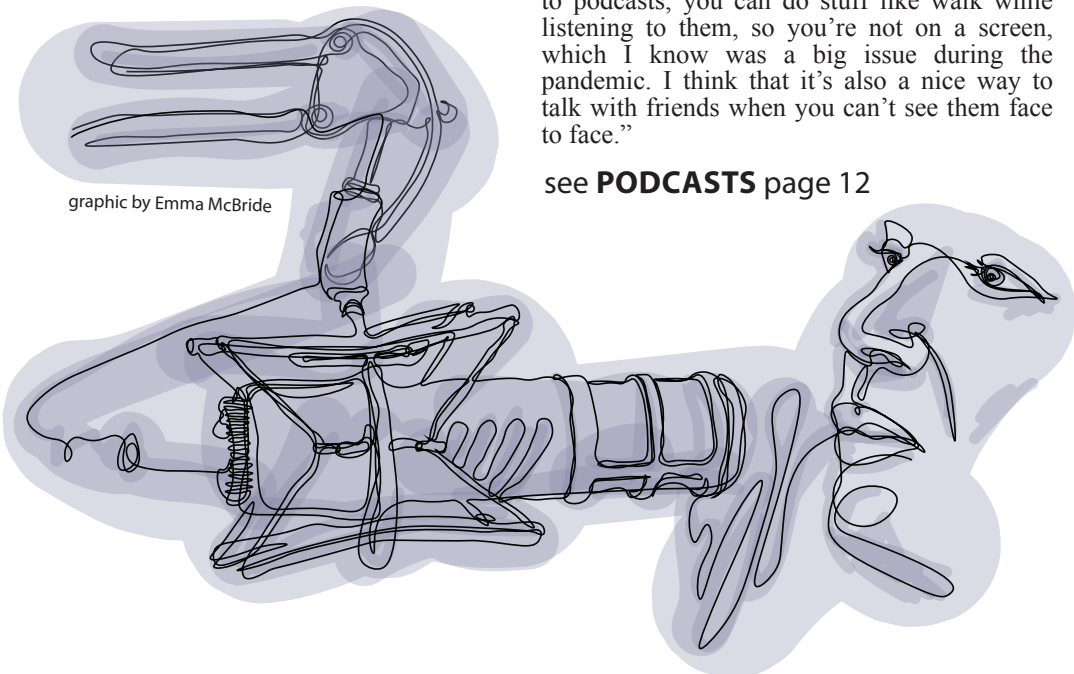
According to Spotify quarter earnings, the number of podcasts available on Spotify has increased from 700,000 in 2019 to 3.6 million in 2021. The typical format of a podcast is an episodic, audio-only series, but some podcasts on video platforms such as YouTube might

have accompanying video. Genres range from politics to comedy.

Freshman Adele Tversky is a regular podcast listener. She listens to "Planet Money," a NPR podcast that explains the economy, and "The Anthropocene Reviewed," where author John Green reviews things about our planet. Both podcasts can be found in most podcast platforms, including Spotify and Apple Podcasts. She found herself listening to podcasts with the increased free time the pandemic brought.

"It's probably because people have had lots of extra free time," Tversky said. "Listening to podcasts, you can do stuff like walk while listening to them, so you're not on a screen, which I know was a big issue during the pandemic. I think that it's also a nice way to talk with friends when you can't see them face to face."

see **PODCASTS** page 12



graphic by Emma McBride

## Pushing the Power Button

**KIRA AUBY** | club writer

Texas is a state almost as well-known for its fierce independence as it is for its hot temperatures, but these titles are starting to become mutually exclusive as the risk of power outages increase in the wake of lowering winter temperatures.

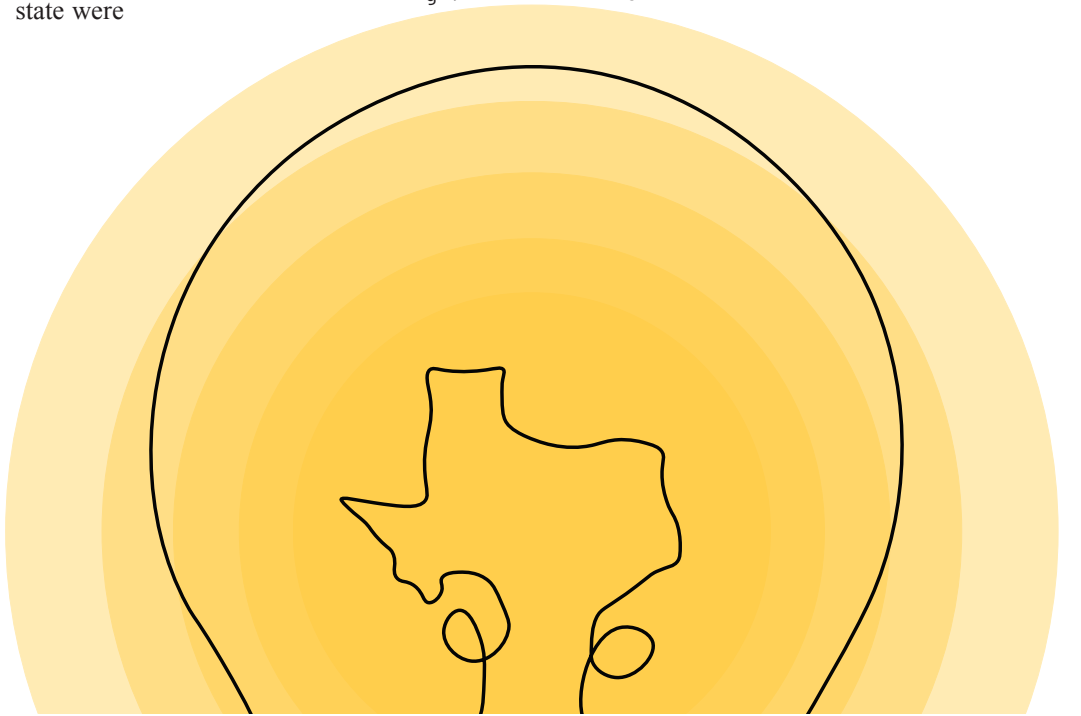
Most Texans recall the Texas power crisis, an event spanning for around a week in February of 2021. 4.5 million homes throughout the state were

left without power, with cost estimates hovering at around \$195 billion of damage, according to Power Technology, a research institution on issues pertaining to business and technology.

As people struggled to pick up the pieces of the power crisis and decide how to move forward, it's evident that considering the factors that went into the power outage are important in deciding next steps for Texas's power grid.

see **POWER GRID** page 3

graphic by Emma McBride



*editorial* **The Dark Side of Social Media**  
*How the Internet Exacerbates Mental Health Issues*

**Staff Stance:** Every grading period 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.

In 2022, one would likely be hard-pressed to find anyone who is not aware, to some extent, of the negative effects of social media and internet usage, rumored or proven. From the warnings of older generations that technology will “melt your brain” to scientific studies linking social media use and mental health issues, fears about the effects of such innovations are widespread.

According to a September 2021 poll of United States internet users, almost twice as many respondents (39%) held a negative view of social media as those who responded positively (22%). Yet, according to Pew Research, 72% of American adults regularly use some form of social media. Though these contradicting statistics are confusing, they are not without precedent. Cigarettes, for example, continue to be a multi-billion dollar industry despite their well-documented status as a carcinogen. While scientific data on the effects of social media are less clear, the two industries are analogous in a variety of ways. Much like the cigarette industry, many social media companies have been aware of the negative effects of their products for some time, and use predatory tactics to keep their users coming back for more. While the waters are considerably murkier when it comes to social media, the basic facts remain the same: the industry has a problem, and they will continue to neglect to fix it without external pressure and responsible behavior from consumers.

While social media does not have a demonstrated effect on physical health, its issues are no less serious. According to the Mayo Clinic, 12- to 15-year-olds who use social media for three or more hours per day are at a heightened risk for a variety of mental health problems, including anxiety and depression. A similar study in the United Kingdom showed a link between social media use and disrupted sleep, mental health issues, and poor academic performance.

Even teen users of social media seem to recognize its problems. According to Pew Research, only 31% of teens report social media as having a positive effect on them and their peers. A University of Pennsylvania study affirms these findings, adding that those who reduced their social media use below their typical amounts for a set

period of time saw reduced loneliness and depression during that time. These studies and a handful of others seem to identify a fairly straightforward problem, that of social media causing mental health problems, and a fairly straightforward solution: reduced social media use. The obvious question, then, is why more people don't ditch social media altogether.

The answer to this question isn't simple. One system that makes social media so appealing, but which also serves to make it harder to quit, is the algorithm. An algorithm, in its most basic sense, is a mathematical formula for manipulating data. In the context of social media, algorithms are used to sift through an ocean of content and deliver to each user that which is most relevant to his individual interests. This system allows social media users to easily access content which is interesting and engaging to them, as well as personalized advertising.

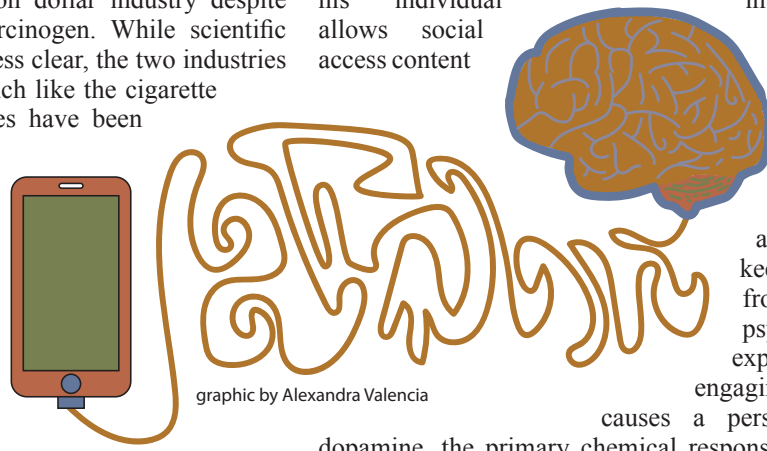
However, it also contributes to an addictive quality that keeps social media users from leaving. Stanford psychiatrist Anna Lembke explains that experiencing engaging social media content causes a person's brain to release dopamine, the primary chemical responsible for pleasure. When someone is exposed to a virtually endless feed of this kind of content, the dopamine rush becomes addictive as it becomes more difficult to replicate the sensation outside of the world of social media. This effect often snowballs, causing social media to take up more and more of one's free time. The algorithms employed by companies such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube are expressly designed to deliver enjoyable content, triggering the aforementioned dopamine rush and contributing to addiction.

Another similarly addictive element of social media is a sense, real or perceived, of social acceptance. According to Addiction Center, an online resource for information on substance abuse, receiving interaction on one's own post can produce just as much if not more of a dopamine rush as interacting with others'. Receiving

likes, comments, and shares on one's post can trigger a similar sense of pleasure, while failing to do so can cause brief or long-term feelings of anxiety and depression. What's more, social media companies often create incentives for posting often and receiving interactions, such as increasing a person or post's presence within the algorithm. Altogether, the dopamine-inducing effects of social media use can result in an addiction comparable to that seen in users of some physical drugs.

While the most oft-cited reasons for the widespread use of social media seen in the United States tend to be negative (e.g. addiction), there is an argument to be made that its popularity stems, at least partially, from the myriad of positive effects of the technology. According to the Mayo Clinic, social media allows teens to build social networks and access valuable support they may not be able to find in the real world. Internet Matters, a nonprofit dedicated to helping parents keep their kids safe on the internet, says using social media responsibly can teach children and teens digital media literacy and safe ways to access the internet. While there are numerous demonstrable harmful effects of social media, it is important to acknowledge that such platforms are not entirely bad, and can provide a valuable service if used in a safe and responsible manner.

While it is easy to point out the issues with social media, it is harder to propose solutions. Unfortunately, it is not even clear who should take responsibility for addressing these issues, much less what they should do about them. While it is easy to pin governments or corporations with this responsibility, in truth, solving the problems caused by social media begins in the home. Parents must be thoughtful about when they give their children access to the internet. While there is no one right age for this, they must ensure that their children are emotionally mature enough to handle it. Parents must also be involved in educating their children on safe and responsible ways to use the internet and social media. Teens and adults must also self-regulate and make smart decisions about how to use their freedom on the internet. Finally, we as a culture must push social media companies to take responsibility and end predatory practices that can lead to harm. Ironically, one of the most effective ways to make this push is on social media itself. This point perhaps best illustrates the lack of black and white when it comes to this subject. Social media can be both a means for great progress and source of profound malice; it is up to us to decide which.



graphic by Alexandra Valencia

**Raptor Chatter**

*How do you think the mental health problems caused by social media should be addressed?*



**Taylar Edgerton**  
*Freshman*

People should share their real selves on social media and users should try to stop comparing themselves to what they see on the internet. #showthetruth.



**Erika Torii-Karch**  
*Sophomore*

I think that people who struggle with mental health due to social media should just delete it, or try to limit the amount they consume because it's generally very toxic and people can easily just cling to it and endlessly scroll through it.



**Xue Rojas Tang**  
*Junior*

Companies purposefully make social media platforms extremely addictive because that's how they make their profits. I think that if companies were to be more conscious about how addictive it is, then these issues could be reduced.



**Jessie Connolly**  
*Senior*

We should use less metrics on social media so it's less of a competition of how many likes someone gets, and more of a place where you can just share things about their life.

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- Copy** Zoe Klein
- Finance** Delia Rune
- Commentary** Beck Williams, LiLi Xiong
- News** Luci Garza, Malvika Pradhan
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- Sports** Annabel Andre, Sanwi Sarode
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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!**

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**Editorial Policy**

Responsibilities of a free student press: Serving as 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 Liberators staff strive 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 manner with the utmost regard for integrity.

- Editorial Content:**
1. The students on The Liberators staff will print articles which have been researched to the best of their ability to obtain the most complete available information.
  2. The information will be presented in a 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.
  4. All commentary will be clearly labeled as such.
  5. 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 Liberators staff will be governed by an editorial board composed of the following individuals: lead editors and commentary 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 inappropriate behavior on the part of the staff
  5. Dispense disciplinary action to staff members
  6. Change or add policy as necessary

**Viewpoints:**  
Printed material which contains the opinion 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 majority viewpoint of the staff.  
**Commentary:** Commentary articles represent the viewpoint of one member of the staff, and are signed as such. These articles do not represent the opinions of the entire staff.

**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 will be published 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. No letters which are obscene or libelous will be published.

**Non-Staff Contributors:** Bylined contributions are welcome.  
**Correction of Errors:** The staff makes every effort to print accurate information. In the case of substantial 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 Liberators will attempt to publish a range of opinions within reason.

**Stay safe during spring break and look out for SXSW traffic!**



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.

## Paying More for Pink • Elite College Cash-In Gendered Price Discrimination • The Role of Money in Admissions

AMELIA COLEMAN | staff writer



The pink tax is a burden that women and people assigned female at birth (AFAB) face when participating in the economy. The pink tax is when goods and services cost more primarily because they are made for women or are commonly associated with femininity. This can also be when women have to buy products that men usually don't have to buy.

The "tax" is a system that exploits women into paying what seems like a minimal extra amount after one purchase, but over time, causes women to pay substantially more than men. The pink tax can follow a woman from the grocery store, to a dry cleaner, and even to services like a car mechanic. Action can be taken to remove the pink tax by regulating it to the point of eradication. For example, New York outlawed the pink tax by making it illegal to charge different prices for products that look the same and serve the same function. While the pink tax is almost impossible to escape from, if equitable policies are put into place, there is hope for outrunning it.

There are a variety of reasons for why things tend to cost more for women, ranging from higher production costs to retailers believing the stereotype that women are more impulsive or uninformed consumers. However, these reasons are baseless, and conscious efforts need to be made towards mitigating gendered price inequity.

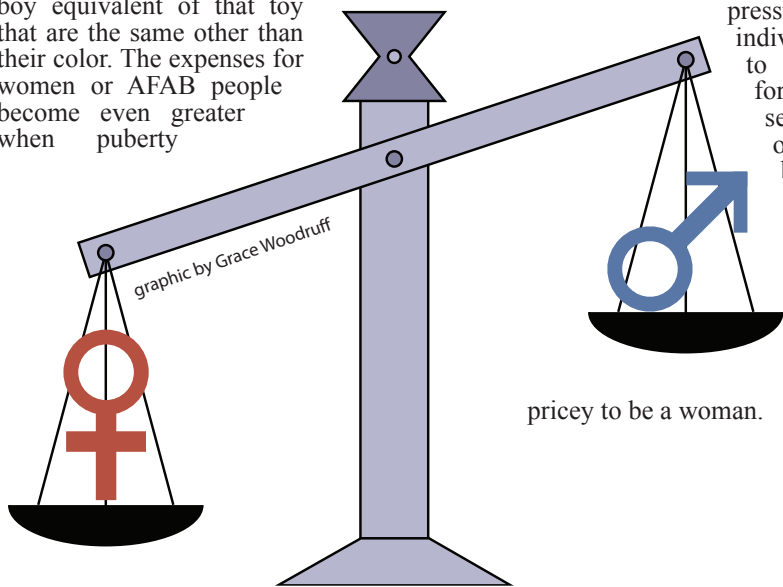
This system of things costing more for women is inherently misogynistic, and the numbers show it. From birth, things marketed to women will cost more. A New York City Department of Consumer Affairs study found that toys "made for girls" cost on average 2% to 13% more than the boy equivalent of that toy that are the same other than their color. The expenses for women or AFAB people become even greater when puberty

approaches, as they have to spend more on products like pads and tampons, which is heightened by the fact that many states still have a tax on tampons, and don't see them as a necessity. Along with menstrual products, women pay around 13% more for personal care products like razors and shampoo.

This problem is heightened by the wage gap which results in women, especially women of color, getting paid far less than their male counterparts for the same job. According to the Pew Research Center, women earned on average 84% of what men earned in 2020. The combination of a disparaging wage gap and the pink tax makes it incredibly more expensive to be a woman. There is no reason for women to pay more than men, but they do throughout the entirety of their life. The state of California found that women pay roughly \$1,351 more in extra costs and fees due to the pink tax.

The pink tax doesn't just affect goods, but also services. A study done by the National Bureau of Economic Research had male and female participants call mechanics to get quotes for repairs for their cars. People who seemed to be well-informed about the price to fix their cars were treated the same regardless of gender. Female callers who didn't know about the pricing were quoted almost \$23 more on average than male callers with similar education on the matter. Another instance of the pink tax occurring is when laundrers charge more for female clothes to be cleaned than males. This occurs because clothes marketed to women and men are often made out of different materials and require different cleaning techniques. However, this does not mean there shouldn't be efforts made towards price equity. For instance, businesses could estimate the ratio of men's to women's clothing that is dry cleaned and average out the cost to make the pricing more fair. This way, businesses still get the same profit and consumers would not have to pay more for the gender of their clothes.

The pink tax can be avoided by buying products that are non-gendered, researching brands before you buy, or simply purchasing the considerably less expensive "male" versions of the same product. However, the pink tax isn't something that women should have to bear and it shouldn't be their responsibility to avoid it. If not through legal regulation, then pressure could be put on individual businesses to charge equally for their goods and services regardless of the gender of the buyer. It is possible for this problem to be managed and eventually be erased entirely, to become a memory of bygone times. Ultimately, it shouldn't be this



graphic by Grace Woodruff

pricey to be a woman.

NAYAN KONDAPALLI | staff writer



Regardless of what school they go to or what classes they are taking, one thing consistently clouds the minds of high school seniors: college applications. For many, what college they go to and what major they take can determine their success in their desired field. As a result, many will try to fill up their resumes, achieve a good GPA, and get high scores on their college entrance exams. However, wealth and access to resources can significantly improve a student's ability to use these factors to his advantage.

When looking at SAT or ACT scores, it's evident how having more money gives students a leg up. According to a study conducted by The Washington Post, when the SAT still had a 2400 point grading scale, students whose families earned more than \$200,000 a year averaged a combined score of 1,714, while students whose families earned under \$20,000 a year averaged a combined score of 1,326. This nearly 30% increase in the SAT scores is because students in higher income brackets were able to afford SAT tutoring and services to improve their scores. On top of that, students with more money can afford to pay the fees to take the test more than once to maximize their potential. Even with cost waivers, low-income students can only take two free SATs, with each subsequent SAT costing them the normal price.

The effects of wealth disparity do not just extend to college entrance exams. Financial status can even affect GPA. This can most easily be seen in the difference of GPAs in private schools and public schools. Private schools can cost \$10,000 to attend per year on average, versus the free cost to attend public schools. A study conducted by the Hechinger Report, a non-profit dedicated to improving the US education system, showed that on average, since 1998, private schools' average GPA rose from 3.25 to 3.51, whereas the average public school GPA stayed roughly the same, at around 3.3. For something as important as GPA, the difference between

a 3.3 and 3.51 can be a major determining factor for colleges. This indicates that being able to have enough money to attend a private school can result in average better grades than if one were to go to a public school, not to mention that the similar factors that contribute to a better SAT score can be in play at a public school, with resources such as private tutoring, textbooks, and supplies allowing for a student to perform better.

Saying that someone is rich does not mean they will automatically have better grades and a better ACT or SAT score, it just means they have access to resources that put them in a position to obtain improved statistics. However, tests such as the SAT are growing increasingly irrelevant, considering how many colleges didn't require an SAT score to submit an application due to COVID-19. In fact, 75% of colleges will continue to not require SAT scores past the pandemic, as the SAT has been known to be a poor indication of knowledge. According to Penn State's Center for the Study of Higher Education, the SAT is unlikely to be a reliable predictor of anything

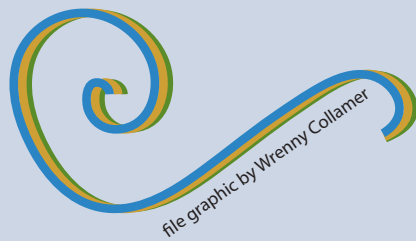


graphic by Amelia Coleman

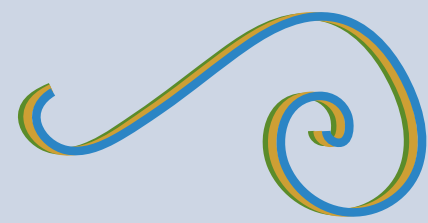
beyond first-year college grades. This

has been recognized by the College Board, who have decided to shorten the SAT and make it online only in order to retain prominence.

Fixing the problem of wealth inequality and its effects on higher education will not be an easy task. It will not be something that can be fixed overnight, nor will we likely ever achieve a perfect solution. However, we can start by investing more in underprivileged schools and taking a greater interest in the education and opportunities available to those who have been overlooked for years. Until we fix this problem, potentially thousands of would-be leaders will continue to be held back by an education that only sees them as a source of revenue.



## Power Grid from Page 1



Claims for the cause of the power outage came from both sides of the political spectrum, but one party was undeniably in the middle of the uproar: The Electric Reliability Council of Texas (ERCOT).

Founded in 1970, this council was in charge of the Texas power grid, making Texas the only state in the U.S. to have its own grid, the others sharing two larger grids. The reason ERCOT was separated comes largely down to political reasons. In 1935, when congress passed the Federal Power Act, utility companies that sold extra power to the Texas area formed an alliance to maintain control over the Texas region's power supply, which worked, leading to the separation of Texas from national grids.

ERCOT is responsible for keeping the power frequency at 60 hz because if it dips below a certain threshold, 59.4 hz, for more than around ten minutes, the entire grid will be too overtaxed and will have to be manually reset.

"That is the thing that we cannot allow to happen," Bill Magness, ERCOT's president and CEO, said last winter. "Because if we have a blackout of the system, the system is out for an indeterminate amount of time. We may still be here today

talking about when the power is going to come back on if we had let the system get into that condition."

The Texas power grid dipped below that threshold last winter for around four minutes before ERCOT managed to cut off power to some Texas residents in order to allow the overall frequency to rise back up to the acceptable 60 hz levels.

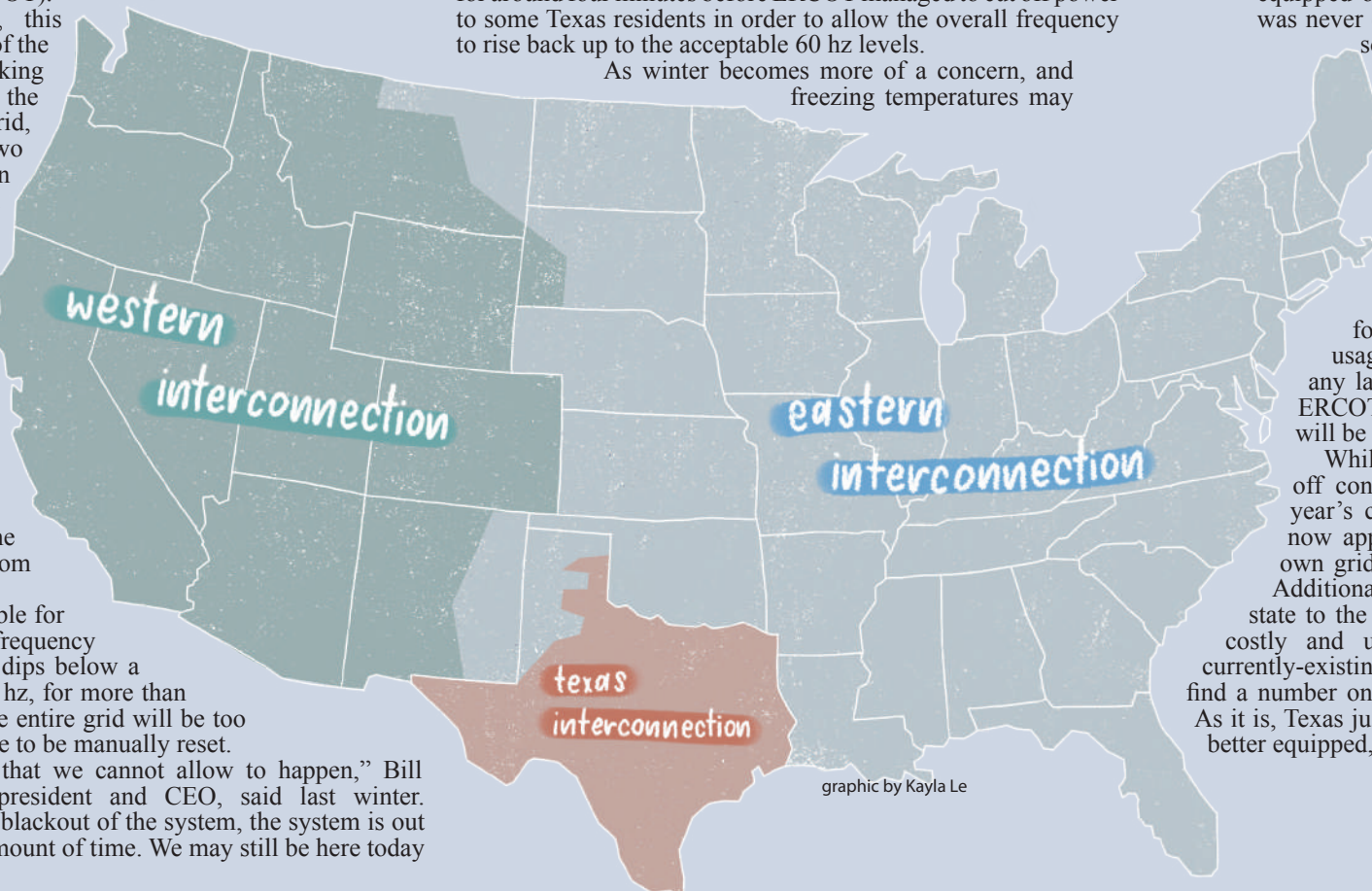
As winter becomes more of a concern, and freezing temperatures may

become more and more commonplace in Texas, it's important to consider whether it is worth it to move Texas to the national grids or not. It's immediately clear that Texas would have been better equipped on the national grids last winter. The state was never expected to experience cold temperatures,

so the expense of adding cold weather provisions that are present on national grids wasn't considered necessary until now, while the other American grids are most definitely prepared for the colder temperatures seen throughout those regions.

However, since the outage in February 2021, ERCOT has been working to build winter provisions and they now maintain that they are prepared for the estimated temperatures and power usage of this year, and as there have not been any large scale outages in the state this winter. ERCOT projects no outages for this winter, which will be incredibly good news if it is maintained.

While the grids really would have been better off connected in the first place to prevent last year's catastrophe or one of a similar nature, it now appears that Texas may remain safe on its own grid if equipped with appropriate provisions. Additionally, moving the largest energy-consuming state to the National power grid would be extremely costly and uneconomical. The price of expanding currently-existing power grids to include Texas is hard to find a number on, but it certainly is not a cheap proposal. As it is, Texas just might be better off with an updated and better equipped, but not replaced, state power grid.



graphic by Kayla Le

## Ineffective Restrictions Against COVID

### The Effectiveness of Travel Regulations



DELIA RUNE | finance director

On Nov. 26, 2021, as Omicron cases began to spread across the United States, President Joe Biden instituted travel restrictions that barred non-U.S. citizens from Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, and Zimbabwe from entering the country.

The use of travel restrictions was somewhat effective at the start of the pandemic in March 2020. According to BMJ Health, local travel restrictions within China may have reduced the number of cases exported by 70-80%. However, almost two years into the pandemic, this technique is no longer relevant and major international travel bans are ineffective in limiting the spread of COVID-19. Although countries continue to use them as a way to provide their citizens with a false sense of security, these restrictions are ultimately pointless—and even harmful.

When the Omicron variant emerged, the World Health Organization (WHO) warned countries not to impose travel restrictions until governments could determine whether vaccines would protect against the strain. But exactly one week after the WHO had issued this warning, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released its new travel guidelines banning travelers from certain countries from entering the United States. According to President Biden, this was a strategy to “give us time.” However, many scientists are arguing that this did not have the intended effect.

Alessandro Vespignani, a professor at Northeastern University who models global disease spread, said that, according to his models, there were “tens to hundreds of Omicron carriers in the United States” by the time the first case had been officially reported in November. Given the high Omicron rates on planes going from South Africa to Amsterdam—about 5%—Vespignani believed that Omicron was already well established around the world when countries began issuing travel restrictions.

In fact, the travel restrictions America instituted likely did not even limit cases. Vespignani explained the effect of the travel restrictions as “trying to prevent sparks from entering the forest, but the wildfires are already starting.”

Vespignani is not alone in this belief—most experts know that travel restrictions only offer the appearance of safety when implemented late.

“I think this is really an illusion of protection,” CNN medical analyst Dr. Jonathan Reiner said, explaining that, at best, such bans will only slow the spread by a week or two. Saad Omer, director of the Yale Institute of Global Health, agrees, telling NPR that “there is very little utility of these kinds of bans.”

These travel bans are not only ineffective—they can potentially even be damaging. Cutting South Africans off from traveling after they came forward with the information they had about a new strain of COVID-19, Omicron, discourages countries from sharing information they have about new strains in the future. In order to effectively combat COVID-19, it’s vital for countries to be transparent about pandemic-related data.

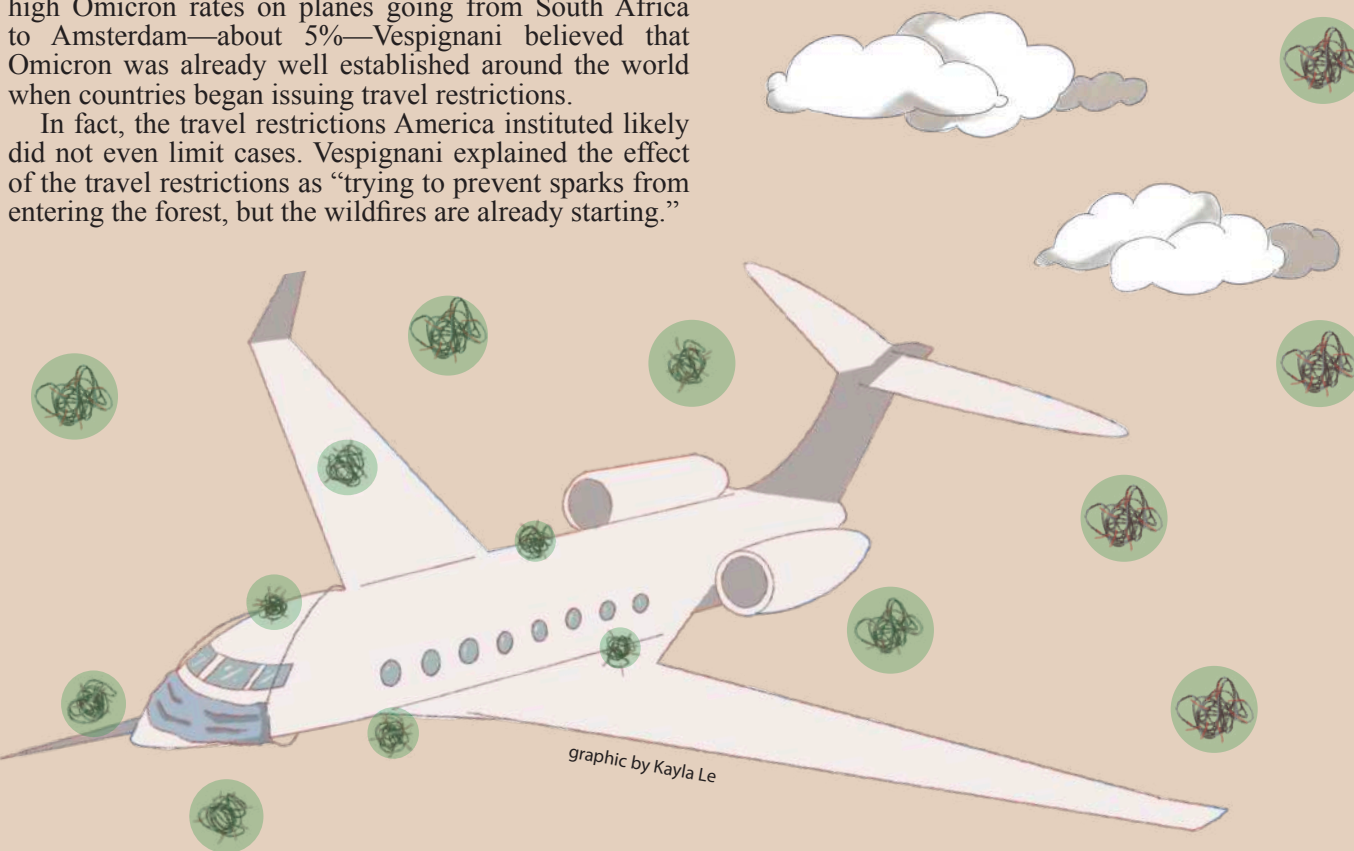
“What you worry about is whether a country will be as forthcoming next time if the result is they get a travel ban imposed on them,” Nicole Errett, a researcher at the University of Washington, told The New Yorker.

And, of course, travel restrictions aren’t just politically dangerous—they have the ability to negatively impact ordinary citizens’ lives as well. Migrants trying to flee to America from dangerous situations, as well as American travelers stranded in South Africa with no way to get home, are inadvertently targeted by these travel bans.

Although these travel restrictions are, at this point in the pandemic, wholly unnecessary, there are other options for countries that refuse to stop limiting travel that won’t punish South Africa for publicizing information about the Omicron variant.

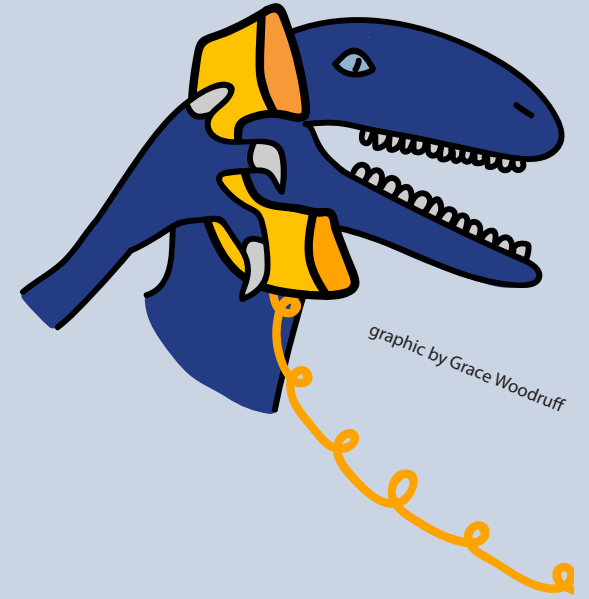
These alternatives are sometimes known as “keyhole” restrictions. One example of a keyhole restriction is a mandatory 14-day quarantine for travelers before entering the country. This would provide citizens with a similar sense of security as travel bans, without barring tourists and citizens from entering the country.

Two years after the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, it seems that countries should have figured out what methods are most effective at limiting the spread of the virus and protecting their citizens. However, the United States and other countries continue to implement measures, such as travel restrictions, that only provide the illusion of safety. It is time for governments to look at the data and make decisions that will actually benefit global politics, immigrants, and their own citizens.



graphic by Kayla Le

## ask the lib



graphic by Grace Woodruff

### How Do I Overcome My Fear Of Driving?

Driving may seem daunting, especially when most driver’s ed courses seem to utilize endless alarming crash statistics to encourage cautious driving. While being terrified of getting behind the wheel certainly isn’t good, just remember that your perceived “fear” of driving is much better than being an overly-confident and reckless driver. Remember that no one expects you to drive flawlessly, and getting the hang of driving around neighborhoods or parking lots can make you a stronger, more capable driver on bigger roads. Additionally, consider who you’re driving with, and if their behavior negatively affects your driving confidence. Are they the parent that freaks out about you driving a little too close to the garbage cans, causing you to swerve dangerously? Or are they the parent that decides driving is the perfect time to chatter on about deep and concerning family secrets? While it’s important to receive guidance from experienced drivers, make sure to talk to your parents about maintaining a calm and constructive atmosphere in the car, especially if driving is something that makes you nervous.

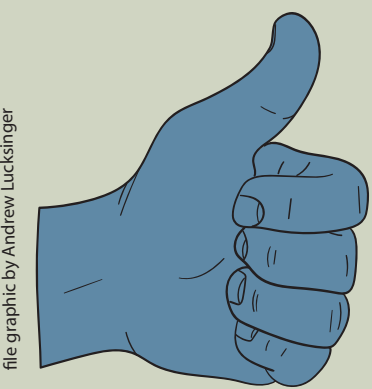
### How Do I Avoid Burnout?

It’s true: school can be an absolute pain, and days can flow into unending cycles of lectures, assignments, tests, and then more lectures, assignments, and tests. To-do lists pile up, the news keeps getting worse, personal matters incessantly occupy your brain, extracurriculars are all-consuming, and there are only 24 hours in a day to deal with it all. Burnout often seems imminent, inevitable. Try consciously choosing what you give importance to throughout your day. Take advantage of the little moments you have to yourself and focus on them. For example, have a staring contest with the chickens in the courtyard. Look out the window on your way to school and notice the color of the sky. Sit in silence with a friend and bask in the glory of doing absolutely nothing. Seeking out these moments can make you feel more in control, and can help ground you when everything else is bogging you down.

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

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

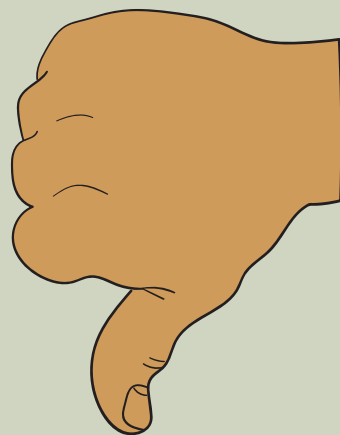
### Thumbs Up



file graphic by Andrew Luckinger

Ice Days  
Fruit Snacks  
Free WiFi  
Pizza Bagels  
Bubbly Water

### Thumbs Down



Hot Classrooms  
Timed Writing  
The Thermos  
Playposits  
Cold Classrooms

2022 GOV. CANDIDATES

graphics by Kayla Le  
blurbs by Malvika Pradhan

GREG



ABBOTT

Governor Greg Abbott has held his office since 2015. During his two terms as governor, Abbott has helped lift restrictions on guns, added more security to the Texas-Mexico border, and tightened abortion laws.

BETO



O'ROURKE

Beto O'Rourke is from El Paso, where he served as a member of their city council, and has also been a congressman for the United States House of Representatives. O'Rourke hopes to tighten gun control laws, repeal anti-abortion laws, and legalize marijuana during his time in office.

ALLEN



WEST

Lieutenant Colonel Allen West is a veteran and former a representative from Florida's 22nd congressional district. West wants to stop "foreign influence on Texas," and includes on his website that he won't allow people tied to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) or military to purchase land in Texas, or companies with ties to the CCP to operate from Texas.

DELILAH



BARRIOS

Delilah Barrios is running for governor of Texas as a part of the Green Party. Barrios plans to prioritize healthcare and environmental issues. Barrios also wants to expand the Medicaid program in Texas and as well as to ban fracking in Texas, and regulate the power grid.

MICHEAL



COOPER

Michael Cooper is from Beaumont is currently a pastor and president of his local National Association for the Advancement of Colored People chapter. Cooper aims to focus on criminal justice reform, tightening gun laws, addressing climate change issues in Texas, and keeping the Texas-Mexico border secure. Additionally, Cooper wants to expand healthcare to all Texans, raise teacher pay, and make housing more affordable.

DEIRDRE



DICKSON-GILBERT

Deirdre Dickson-Gilbert is a Houston native, author, activist, and educator. She wants to expand the Texas education system by adding more pre-K schools and changing teacher's salaries to be in accordance with the cost of living in Texas. Dickson-Gilbert also wants to enforce the regulations put on companies that have a large environmental impacts and regulate of microplastics.

PAUL



BELEW

Paul Belew, a resident of Wise County, Texas, and criminal defense attorney. According to his campaign website, Belew supports increasing teacher pay, to second and fourth amendment rights, to pro-life positions, and the legalization of THC and gambling in Texas.

DON



HUFFINES

Don Huffines lives in Dallas and served on the state Senate representing district 16 there. Huffines wants to eliminate property taxes, tighten border security, eliminate voter fraud, stop critical race theory from being taught in schools, and fix the Texas power grid.

Austin Marathon Sprints to the 30-Year Finish Line

SYDNEY JONES | staff writer

The Austin Marathon has been around since 1992, making this year's run in February the event's 30th anniversary. As the 25th-largest marathon in the United States, the Austin marathon brings people from all over to participate in the iconic event, according to Anita Ardeneaux, an ambassador for the Austin Marathon.

Ardeneaux has run the Austin Marathon since 2017. She helps promote the marathon to other people by spreading the word about it through flyers and social media.

"The biggest goal is just to promote the race and help other people sign up for it," Ardeneaux said. "So we each get a special, unique code that is a discount for people who want to sign up. It's promoting through friends and family and running groups, social media, just encouraging people to sign up for the race, and then just be an advocate for talking about why it's such a great race and just kind of helping with whatever Austin Marathon needs in promoting."

The Austin Marathon is also a popular event because of its scenic views, and runners are able to see lots of Austin, according to junior Sophie Russell, who ran the marathon in 2019 and plans to run it again this year. The marathon runs through multiple Austin neighborhoods, such as Hyde Park and South Congress.

"It was really nice, because it went all over all the sides of Austin," Russell said. "So I got to experience a lot of different areas of Austin in the three hours."

According to Russell, the marathon is

also very supportive. People come out and help cheer on the runners through the marathon.

"The Austin Marathon is just one of the best runs in Austin," Ardeneaux said. "It's a really fun run that takes you through the city. And the energy is great, like the community really comes out and supports the runners, which makes the run a lot more fun. And it's just a really fun run, and definitely one that's known in the city."

Community is a big part of the event, according to Russell. Russell also added that the marathon and its supporters help to make it more special for the runners.

"The Austin Marathon is very different, because there's so much more massive support," Russell said. "Since I had not really experienced that before, it was really kind of surprising. They had live bands for the first few miles. And after that it was just consistent, just people sitting on their porches. And people with bells at every aid station. I mean, all the way until the end."

The marathon has also evolved a lot over time, according to Ardeneaux. These changes range from the course route to functioning with COVID-19 protocol.

"I think the biggest change is the route changed," Ardeneaux said. "It went to a different neighborhood and now it goes to the east side of 35. The last couple years have been a little interesting with the pandemic and all the security issues that have been put in place. But it's always been a very solid run."

Community outreach manager Fiona Hayden said the marathon has also expanded over its thirty years. This means that they have been gaining a bigger number of runners and expanding the variety of races.

"The marathon has evolved over time in so many ways," Hayden said. "It used to

"It's a really fun run that takes you through the city. And the energy is great, the community really comes out and supports the runners, which makes the run a lot more fun."

-Austin Marathon Ambassador Anita Ardeneaux

only be just a marathon. Now we've added different distances, and partnerships with the community have evolved as well as the marathon continues to grow. We're able to connect with different businesses and organizations to run aid stations on our course. As well as just get more participants from the country as well as internationally."

When the pandemic happened, marathon organizers also had to change some of the protocol for operating the event, according to Hayden. She later added that they have been working closely with Austin Public Health to make the marathon a safer place for runners.

"We work with Austin Public Health to create a plan for our event based on what stage of COVID we're in in Austin," Hayden said. "Right now we just don't know what stage we'll get in February, but we work closely with Austin Public Health to make sure that we're all state and local guidance to hold a large-scale event here in Austin."

The marathon is a big part of the Austin community. It helps to bring out some of the Austin spirit, according to Ardeneaux.

"I think it's a great thing for the community because it encourages people, the people who participate and encourages them to have this goal of running a half marathon or a marathon," Ardeneaux said. "So it's good for their well being, their health. And it's really fun as a spectator of the sport to be out on the course and watch all these incredible athletes run by and you're cheering them on, and there's just a very positive environment on the day of the race, which is really fun."



RUNNING BUDDIES Junior Sophie Russell and her dad pose with their finishing medals after running the Austin Marathon in 2019. The two also plan on running the marathon this year, the marathons first in-person event since 2019. photo courtesy of Sophie Russell

Texas Faces Grind Time for Grid Time  
An Update on ERCOT One Year Post-Freeze

LANA GILES | staff writer

On Feb. 13, 2021, winter storm Uri hit Texas, inducing power outages, limited resource access, and damage to homes. According to the Texas Department of State and Health Services, 246 Texans died from winter-storm related deaths. 21 of those deaths were in Austin.

The Electrical Reliability Council of Texas (ERCOT) operates Texas's electrical grid. Carey King, a research scientist and Assistant Director of the Energy Institute at University of Texas at Austin, says ERCOT functions as a traffic cop, monitoring the grid and noting the flow of energy and transactions.

"They take account of energy power flowing from one place to another and they take account of who's buying and who's selling it at what price," King said. "The companies that own power plants, for every power plant they own, they bid a price at which they're willing to sell electricity a day before it happens. And they do this every 15 minute interval for every power plant they have."

According to King, the power outage caused by the storm was the largest in the grid's history. Power outages can be localized, as in the incident of a fallen tree on a power line, or take place on a larger-scale.

"What happened in February last year was a problem for the entire electric grid within the ERCOT area," King said. "Something like that happens because all the electricity people are trying to consume is more than what power plants can generate. And so essentially, if that situation occurs, they have to actually prevent people from consuming electricity. And the way that ERCOT prevents people from consuming electricity is by issuing orders to a set of companies that own the transmission and distribution lines."

King also said that due to the extent of energy usage and demand on the grid, the operators of the grid lost the ability to alternate turning power on and off. The grid was unable to rotate outages at that point because of other emergency constraints.

"These rules are associated with making sure that the grid stays on and operates," King said. "We had a very bad scenario, but the

absolute worst case scenario is that nobody has power completely. And if that happens, that's a complete blackout. And if it's a complete blackout, it's hard to get the grid going back again."

The risk of a complete blackout made leaving the grid static the best option. King shared that there are circuits, or relays, on the grid that automatically shut off if they sense that the frequency is too low, which occurred during the storm.

"They were left with the circuits that still have power are the ones that have these emergency relays on them," King said. "And if they shut down one of these circuits that had an emergency relay, that means they were going to turn on a circuit that did not have an emergency relay. And if you left on too many circuits without emergency relays, if the grid got even worse, then you wouldn't have enough automatic triggering of the load going off to maintain the grid, you would have risked the whole grid going down."

In the aftermath of the storm, Texas lawmakers passed bills to reform the electrical industry. In a statement given by ERCOT's media team, it was said that they feel the grid has become more resilient and reliable than ever before.

"On Tuesday, Jan. 18, 2022, ERCOT filed a final winter weatherization inspection report with the PUC, indicating nearly all of the generators and transmission service providers inspected had met the winterization requirements required by the regulators. ERCOT is confident it will be able to meet electric demand as a result of the rigorous new preparation and resiliency requirements," the media team said in a statement.

Bryce Bencivengo, communications manager for the City of Austin's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Management, shared that the City of Austin has taken many steps to improve Austin in response to a weather emergency. In a findings report done by the city after the storm, it was found that nearly every part of Austin was affected by the storm in one way or another.

"We have increased training for all staff and more staff have received emergency response training, conducted a practice exercise on winter weather with government, private businesses, and other organizations, and made improvements to the communication process, including making direct texting of updates available," Bencivengo said.

In early February 2022, there was a freeze-warning due to winter weather conditions. Bencivengo says that this gave the city an opportunity to see how their preparedness improved.

"The goal is for Austin to be more resilient and more prepared," Bencivengo said. "We found a lot of what we learned from Winter Storm Uri helped us to be more effective in our preparations, communications, and response to this event. While nowhere near as severe, we are happy with the improvements made."



graphic by Grace Woodruff

# Momentum Mutations: COVID-19 Variants During the Pandemic

MALVIKA PRADHAN | news editor



The Alpha COVID-19 variant was first identified in Great Britain in November 2020. The variant's lineage was believed to make it 30 to 50% more contagious than the original strain of COVID-19. Studies have shown that the Alpha variant is more fatal and more severe to those who contract it, as compared to the original strain of COVID-19, but Moderna, Pfizer, and Johnson & Johnson vaccines have all said their vaccines are effective in preventing severe cases of the variant. According to a study from the Center for Disease Control (CDC) released in June, by mid-April of 2020, 66% of cases in the United States were from the Alpha variant.



The Gamma variant was first detected in Brazil. According to the Global Virus Network, the P1 version of the Gamma variant is up to 2.5 times more transmissible than the original COVID-19 virus. However, the variant is most likely not as lethal as other variants, although additional studies are needed to verify this. The variant is not listed as a variant of concern on the CDC website.



The Omicron variant was also first discovered in South Africa, and may spread more easily than other variants, according to the CDC. Omicron might be less severe than previous variants, and infections might be more mild. However, since this variant is relatively new, not much can be definitively said about its severity and mortality rate. Breakthrough infections are still possible with this variant, and fully vaccinated individuals are still able to spread the virus to others.

The Beta variant of COVID-19 was first discovered in South Africa. According to the CDC, the Beta variant is said to be almost 50% more contagious than the original COVID-19 strain. There is also some evidence that the Beta variant is more likely to lead to hospitalization and death than other variants. Vaccines against this variant have been less effective, as companies like Pfizer, Moderna, and Johnson & Johnson have reported that their vaccines have been shown to offer less protection against this variant. The AstraZeneca-Oxford vaccine, which is not available in the United States, was shown to not be protective against cases of the Beta variant in a 2021 clinical trial.



graphics by Grace Woodruff

The Delta variant, which was first identified in India, might spread more easily than previous variants, according to the CDC. The variant also may cause more serious and severe cases than other variants, resulting in a higher chance of hospitalization. With the Delta variant, people who are fully vaccinated could still become infected. These kinds of infections are known as "breakthrough infections." However, vaccines are still effective at preventing severe illness and death, even though some early studies show that fully vaccinated people can still spread the variant to others.



Sources  
cdc.org  
gvn.org

# Looking for Extracurriculars? Join the Club

MAYA LINVILLE | club contributor

## Stitch Service Club

When: Thursdays during lunch, Ms. Lee's room (206)  
Contact: [thestitchservice@gmail.com](mailto:thestitchservice@gmail.com)

The Stitch Service is a student-run knitting and crocheting club that was created as a space for students to crochet and knit in a relaxing, de-stressing, and friendly environment. The club offers knitting and crocheting lessons, and will hold drives to donate many of the projects they knit and crochet to various charities around America.

"Currently, we're working with two big [organizations], which are Soldiers' Angels and then Mitzvah," Murphy said. "But we've also done, last year, a really big drive with Warm Up America where we made big squares, or rectangles, basically nine by seven. And then we donated them, and they made them into really big Afghans and then distributed them across America."

According to club leader and senior Megan Marostica, the club made and collected over 500 squares for the Warm Up America drive last year, and they're excited to continue donating projects this year. The club provides knitting and crocheting supplies to its members and also has video tutorials and books available for beginners.

"If there's someone who needs supplies or some assistance, they can come to us during the meetings and we'll help them," Murphy said. "Occasionally we have a PowerPoint presentation, but overall, I feel like it's not extremely structured because we're there if you need us, but also if you just want to come and crochet with us

we're totally open to that."

Students are eligible to receive NHS hours for the projects and donations they make during the Stitch Service drives. The club also makes sure to recognize the members' skill levels, as well as the dedication that goes behind their projects, according to Murphy.

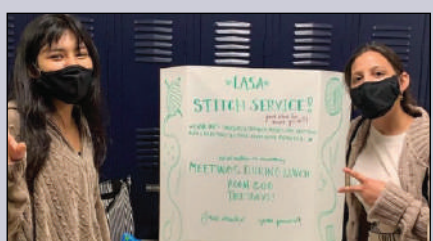
"We try to accommodate, so it's not one hat is six hours all the time," Murphy said. "If you're newer, a hat might take you 14 hours, and we understand that, so we'll give you those hours because it's about the time that you put in. It's still time, even if you have to restart or redo something."

French teacher Lily Lee is the sponsor of the club and an avid knitter herself. Lee said she believes that knitting and crocheting can be great activities for relaxation.

"They're both excellent activities for helping to destress," Lee said. "I like to knit while watching TV, so it's something for my hands to do. It's a great skill for anyone to learn, and it's fun."

Marostica said she appreciates the club because it allows her to hang out and do one of her favorite activities while also helping others. She hopes the club will continue in the future so that students have a way to volunteer from home while COVID is still around.

"I really enjoy knitting and crocheting," Marostica said. "So working on my own projects and working on projects that I'll donate is just fun for me and I like helping other people do the same."



**RECRUITING** Stitch Service members Natalie Murphy and Marina Kinzy stand in front of their booth at the LASA Club Fair. Members of the club can crochet or knit, and often donate their work to those in need. photo courtesy of LASA Stitch Service

## Period Pals

When: Wednesdays during lunch, Ms. McGuire's room (134D)  
Contact: [periodmmaustin@gmail.com](mailto:periodmmaustin@gmail.com)

**PACKING IT UP** Period Pals members make care packages as a part of their packing party. The group donated 96 care packages to women all around the Austin area. photo courtesy of Period Pals



During the summer of 2020, with the pandemic in full swing, two LASA seniors helped create the Period Pals organization to address period poverty in Austin. The club aims to provide period products to any person who needs them and to use advocacy to help make period supplies cheaper for everyone.

These seniors, Jane Fulton and Naiya Vasquez-Castañeda, who helped create Period Pals, recognized the serious issue of period poverty in Texas and wanted to make a difference in the community through service work.

"Naiya and I sat down together, and we were like, 'What is an issue that we want to tackle?'" Fulton said. "And we felt that period poverty was an important one, especially during the pandemic, because a lot of people were losing their jobs, or they couldn't afford period products. So we thought we would start Period Pals to help provide products to menstruating individuals who couldn't afford them."

One of the most important ways the organization helps with period poverty is by organizing packing parties. The club finds volunteers from schools all over Austin and will gather to put together their donations.

"Basically, we just get a whole bunch of people together, and we get these little goodie bags filled with pads, tampons, panty liners, and then we usually do some toiletries," Vasquez-Castañeda said.

Sometimes the volunteers and members will hand out the packed bags filled with the

period supplies and donations. Most often though, Fulton or Vasquez-Castañeda will drive and donate the period's supplies and products to different organizations around Austin.

"If we have a big packing party and we make 250 goodie bags, we'll say, 'If you have a car and you're willing, take this here,' or, 'If you see someone on the street that you think would benefit from having this, give it to them,'" Vasquez-Castañeda said. "It's [usually] just either me and Jane dropping them off somewhere, especially if we're doing bulk donations, like these huge boxes with thousands of products."

According to Fulton and Vasquez-Castañeda, the organizations that Period Pals primarily donates to are Out Youth, Foundation for the Homeless, Safe Austin, and Casa Marianella. They said Period Pals distributes its donations to a variety of organizations in the hopes of reaching a wide range of people.

"We just want to make sure everybody has access to period products," Vasquez-Castañeda said.

"And I guess, in years previous, a lot of the focus has been on giving women period products, but we really want to kind of change that message and make sure that everyone with a uterus, not just women, have access to those products. And I think inclusivity is something that we're really striving towards."

## A Cappella Club

When: Mondays and Thursdays during lunch, Mr. Lewis's room (Choir Room)  
Contact: (737) 203-7537

A Capella Club is a student-led singing group that emphasizes the importance of creativity, community, and leadership. Unlike choir, a cappella music is singing without the use of instrumental accompaniment, and every Monday and Thursday, the club meets at lunch to work on new musical arrangements together.

According to senior and club officer Ella Williams, A Capella Club is a friendly and creative environment for all members to contribute. Although the club sings music that is already written, the members work together to add their own original spin to each piece they work on.

"The officers and the students together decide what song to arrange, and the officers sort of write the sheet music ourselves," Williams said. "So everything that we produce is our original work, and sometimes we'll even build arrangements as a club as we're learning it, which is something that's really unique to us."

Right now, the club is working on a new song called "Babe" by Taylor Swift. Officer and senior Chloe Lein explained that to help everyone learn the song, she transcribed the chords into a capella vowels and put them onto sheet music paper using an online program called Noteflight. Both Lein and Williams hope to teach the younger members of the club how to use noteflight and other a cappella resources so that they can continue the club in the future.



**CAROLING** Members of the A Capella club perform at their winter concert. A Capella singers sing without accompanying instruments, and instead use their voices to make sounds. photo courtesy of Ruby Venkatesh

"We give them all of our music that we already have that they can take on and teach again if they want to redo those pieces, or we also teach them how to make their own music so that they can drive whatever way," Lein said.

Freshman Ruby Venkatesh is one of these new members. Venkatesh said that a cappella club gave her the perfect opportunity to jump back into singing with a group of people after the pandemic.

"I joined A Capella Club because I was enjoying choir class and singing with people, and I honestly had missed getting to harmonize with people because I didn't get to do that a lot over the pandemic," Venkatesh said. "I thought joining a capella group would be a perfect way to get back into the music world with singing and making beautiful harmonies."

Venkatesh really appreciates the club because it introduces her to new genres of music and helps improve her knowledge and skills in singing. She said the club is also a great opportunity to find a community and make friends in a welcoming atmosphere.

"It's fun that before we sing, we eat lunch together," Venkatesh said. "So we get to talk and learn about what's going on in each other's classes, and we're in a lot of different grades, so I get to learn from seniors and juniors about what's going on in their lives. So it's fun to get to know the people who you're singing with."

# Texas Tussles with Netflix Over Taxes

SARAH GARRETT | staff writer

According to KXAN, on Dec. 7, 2022, the city of Austin decided to join with other Texas cities and sue Netflix, Hulu, and Disney+. A Texas law from 2005 says that video service and cable providers are required to pay a fee to the municipality for using the transmission lines. According to the firm, Netflix, Hulu, and Disney+ have not been paying this fee.

Stephen D. Wolens, a lawyer at McKool Smith, said that before 2005, cable services were required to pay a negotiable fee. The law changed in 2005, though, and that is the current law the case is based on.

“Before 2005, Texas had a policy that says that public entities that use the public right away pay the city a franchise fee, and it’s a franchise fee for use of the public right of way,” Wolens said. “The law was changed to center the application process at the state level. Instead of negotiating a rate with each city, they would pay a flat 5% gross receipts tax.”

Senior policy tax analyst Ulrik Boesen said that lawsuits like this are happening nationwide. The U.S. required the cable companies to pay money for using the land to run cables through, but now that cable is not used as often, the localities are changing how they charge the services.

“People are not apt to stop consuming entertainment,” Boesen said. “They just changed how they consume. So let’s [localities] either expand the tax base, or change the tax so that these companies will also have to be now, that’s where the issue starts. Because there was a legitimate reason why localities tax cable companies they were utilizing right away. The streaming services are using the internet.”

Boesen also says the reason the

streaming services are refusing to pay the fees is because they argue that they don’t have any reason to pay the fee. Streaming services use the internet, not cables.

“Streaming services are claiming you [localities] cannot tax us because you have no legitimate reason to,” Boesen said. “And you cannot say that we provide the same services to cable companies, because we don’t have any cables. That’s really where the short discussion is. More localities think it’s a similar service that should be taxed in a similar way. And the streaming services say, ‘No, it isn’t.’ This is just another option for consumption on the internet to protect other things that we do with Wi-Fi on the internet.”

Mina Shekarchi, the constituent liaison and executive assistant of Mayor Pro Tempore Alison Alter, said that it is time for the streaming services to pay the money. She feels that it is illogical that the different streaming services have

avoided paying the fee up to this point.

“Streaming services are a new and unique way of consuming television, and until now, these companies have avoided paying the fees that many traditional cable companies have paid,” Shekarchi said. “Austin, along with other Texas cities, wants these streaming services to pay their fair share.”

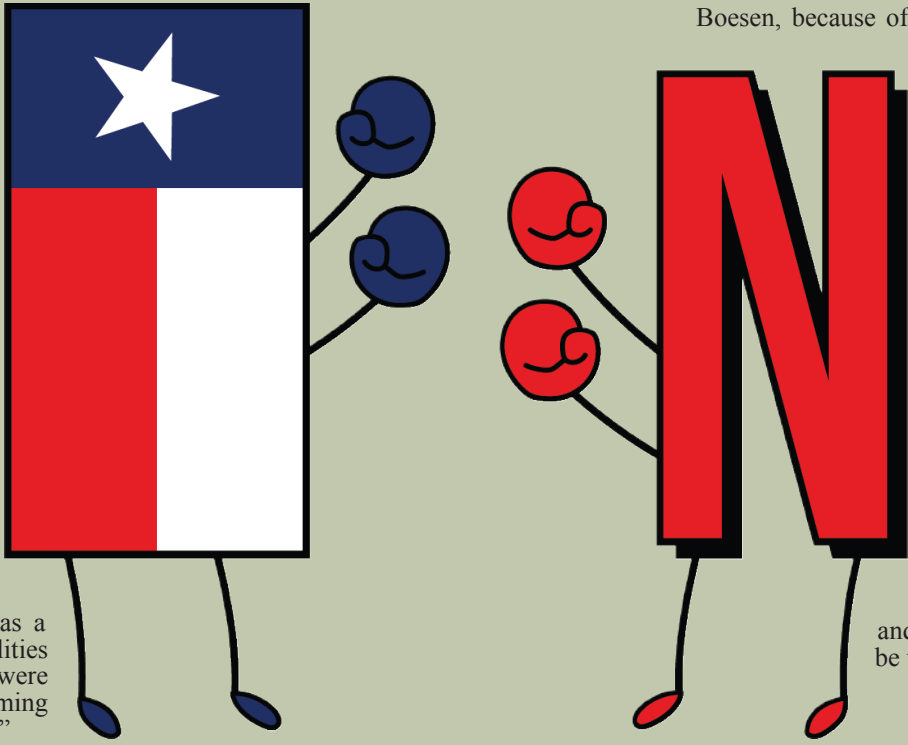
Shekarchi predicts that the streaming services will try to avoid paying the fees. Shekarchi says that the services may try to claim that the customers should pay the fees.

“I can say that it seems like the fees, if collected, would be used to benefit Austinites through other City services,” Shekarchi said. “Streaming services have their content moved through the same transmission lines as traditional cable companies, so it seems illogical that the streaming services have not received similar treatment.”

Boesen says that many times, the streaming services win the court cases. According to Boesen, because of the rise of the internet, and the speed at which

it progresses, tax policy is often trying to catch up to the developments.

“From what I’ve seen, in a lot of the places the streaming services win the court cases, but it really depends on the specific language and local tax code,” Boesen said. “I doubt that we’ll have cable taxes on streaming services commonly. Most places just charge sales tax on these kinds of things, and I suspect that that will be the norm.”



graphic by Grace Woodruff

# THE SKINNY

## Global News

Feb. 13

15-year-old Russian figure skater Kamila Valieva has recently tested positive for a heart medication that is tied to performance enhancement. Before the test was flagged, Valieva won a gold medal for the Russian Olympic Committee. Although the drug is banned, the International Olympic Committee, World Anti-Doping Agency, and the International Skating Union have contested her ban. On Tuesday, Feb. 15, it was ruled that Valieva could still compete, but is not allowed to win medals.

Feb. 14

Under pressure from protests in Canada revolving around public health measures, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has declared a state of emergency. Protests led by the Truckers Occupation of Ottawa began on Jan. 28 in response to COVID-19 regulations and country-wide vaccine mandates, according to The New York Times. Drivers started their protest in Ottawa by parking their trucks and blocking traffic and have since catalyzed similar movements across Canada. Trudeau has enacted the country’s Emergency Act, which allows for the federal government to do what is necessary, and at times override civil rights, in order to restore public order.

Feb. 14

According to The New York Times, the politically active student population in Nicaragua has become one of the last communities in the country that openly opposes President Daniel Ortega. In the coming months, the government will begin to strip colleges across the country of their ability to operate independently. Claims by the Nicaraguan government say that this comes from the colleges and their inability to comply with financial regulations, although critics suspect that this may have more to do directly with President Ortega’s attempts to gain power across the country instead, says The New York Times.

## National News

Feb. 9

Although both states chose to end their mask mandates, they will still have different regulations in place. Governor Charlie Baker announced the official end of the Massachusetts state-wide mask mandate on Feb. 28. New York, on the other hand, will allow its indoor mask mandate to expire. According to The New York Times, the decision came from the most recent data, as well as consultations with experts and officials.

Feb. 11

Fordham University, located in the Bronx borough of New York City, announced Tania Tetlow as their new choice for university president. According to The New York Times, this was the first time the school has broken its Jesuit tradition of heading the school with a Catholic priest. Tetlow was previously a law professor and president of another Jesuit school, Loyola University in New Orleans, Louisiana. She will take the position in July of 2022, when current president, Rev. Joseph McShane, steps down after his 19-year tenure.

Feb. 13

On Sunday, Feb. 13, the Los Angeles Rams and the Cincinnati Bengals competed in the 56th Superbowl, ultimately ending in a 23-20 win for the Los Angeles Rams. According to USA Today, there were 70,048 fans in SoFi Stadium rooting for the Rams for their second Super Bowl title in history, the first happening over 20 years ago in 2000. They were also only the second team in Super Bowl history to win in their own home stadium.

## State News

Feb. 11

As notified through an email, A&M President Katherine Banks has ordered that at the end of the spring semester, the Battalion, A&M’s student newspaper, must cease printing its weekly editions after 129 years in print. According to a statement from the university president, Banks wishes to modify the paper in order to push for digital publication, as part of a larger plan to revitalize digital journalism at the university. Since the announcement, students have begun to protest against the decision, pushing for the continuation to have their editions in print weekly.

Feb. 11

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

Feb. 9

As many as 21 APD officers involved in the protests for George Floyd and Black Lives Matter held in Austin during June of 2020 could now face possible criminal charges. The officers, who have claimed to partake in the use of “less lethal” ammunition, are now being reviewed for force incidents, according to KVUE. Attorneys and organizations that are both for and against the use of the ammunition have brought forth their opinions on the subject, although in Travis County, all incidents are still under review.

# Playing COVID by Ear, Austin Musicians Perform Again

DELIA RUNE | finance director

When the world went into lockdown in March of 2020, artists were some of those struck the hardest, according to a study by the Queensland Conservatorium Research Centre. Musicians in particular usually require shows with large gatherings of people in order to perform their work, and this was one of the first things to disappear with the emergence of COVID-19.

Lindsey Verrill is a local musician in the band Little Mazam. Recently, the band has had to cope with new hurdles as they transition into playing live shows again, according to Verrill.

“I think the effects of COVID have been absolutely devastating for everyone in the music industry,” Verrill said. “It’s just made performing really unpredictable.”

Verrill has continued to play some live shows, but there are also artists who still haven’t returned to playing. Pedro Moreno, founder of Epistrophy Arts—an organization in Austin since 1998 that presents jazz and experimental music—said that he hasn’t played a show in-person since March 2020.

“We’ve pretty much been on pause since COVID started,” Moreno said. “We’re very much still here waiting for things to kind of get back to something that’s like normal so we can start doing it again.”

According to Moreno, the lack of live performers has been tough on venues, too. Although bigger venues remain, many small performance spaces have closed.

“The commercial venues in town seem to have returned, but one of the venues that we used for a long time, the North Door, went out of business,” Moreno said. “So it’s been tricky to find spaces.”

Despite these challenges, the music community in Austin remains. According to Verrill, artists continue to write and perform music in Austin to keep the industry alive.

“I think the community here is really strong,” Verrill said. “I think there are a lot of young bands that are working really hard to do interesting stuff. . . Austin is still really great for ambitious people that are willing to work hard.”

Moreno agreed that Austin continues to be a good place for aspiring musicians. However, he acknowledged that music genres with smaller audiences might have a harder time returning.

“I think [music] is still very much part of the identity here,” Moreno said. “The commercial, large-scale music business will still remain pretty strong after this, but the fringes are going to be a little harder to recover.”

According to Verrill, one of the main barriers preventing music in Austin from returning to its pre-COVID-19 state is lingering



TAKING A BOW The band Briscoe takes a bow after performing at Spider-House Ballroom. Currently, the group is on a nation-wide tour until May of 2022. photo courtesy of Zoe Dell

anxiety for concert-goers about being in large groups of people. Verrill explained that this anxiety affects both musicians and audience members and complicates the process of performing while respecting health guidelines and community concerns.

“It’s really hard to make plans to play live because you never know if you’re going to sell any tickets, if people are going to want to come out, or if it’s going to be too risky,” Verrill said. “So you’re really taking a chance putting in the work to play live.”

According to senior Zoe Dell, venues don’t even seem to be clear on what the correct health procedures are for live shows anymore. According to Dell, her recent experiences at concerts might call for mask requirements, but attendees might not always follow through with them.

“To be honest, there weren’t a lot of people wearing masks,” Dell said. “Me and my friend were the only two people wearing them.”

But mask-wearing and other COVID-19 safety measures differ at different concerts, according to Dell. She said that she’s also been to concerts with much tighter restrictions.

“Other concerts I’ve attended earlier this year required a vaccine card or proof of a negative test,” Dell said. “I went to Harry Styles concerts in the fall that required masks.”

Verrill isn’t certain if live music will ever return to how it was pre-COVID-19, but she is sure that how she approaches shows and playing live has changed forever. Verrill says that she now values the work that goes into playing a live music show more.

“I don’t think I could go back to like, ‘Oh, yeah, I’ll drive to Tulsa and just play a show—that’s cool, no big deal,’” Verrill said. “Those days are over for me.”

According to Verrill, since many Austinites haven’t been to concerts in a long time, there is a stronger appreciation for the shows they are able to attend. Performers, such as Verrill, can tell that audience members are excited to be back.

“I feel like the audience really, really appreciates the shows they attend, and they show musicians a lot of love,” Verrill said. “So that’s really cool.”

Musicians are wary of COVID-19 but still seem to have hope for the coming year. Even Moreno, who has not played a concert in two years, is optimistic for Austin’s music scene to return.

“The nerves around being outside and being in a venue are going to linger for a while, and it’s going to make it hard,” Moreno said. “But you have to keep the community intact, and I hope that, if we do that, then when conditions get safer things will come back.”



SING-ALONG Two members of the band Briscoe, sing together at a concert that took place at Spider-House Ballroom. The band was created by Truett Heinzelman and Phillip Lupton in 2019. photo courtesy of Zoe Dell

# LASA Sustainability

EDITH HOLMSTEN  
AVA DE LEON | student life editors

Because the Austin Independent School District (AISD) has about 75,000 students across 132 facilities, AISD sustainability manager Darien Clary said the district has a large impact on the environmental sustainability of its community by using a lot of resources. According to the AISD Energy Management, the district as a whole used over 28 million gallons of water and about 13 million kilowatt hours of energy in October 2021 alone. In comparison, the average household in Texas uses only 1,176 kilowatt hours of energy in one month, according to the Energy Information Administration.

In addition to using a lot of energy and water, the district also has the capacity to improve sustainability. For example, the district has recycled and composted over 28 million pounds of waste since 2015, according to Clary.

Due to the impact that schools can have on the environment, students are trying to reduce their environmental impacts. Clary said students can help the district be more sustainable through conserving energy, planting trees, limiting excess water usage, and recycling or composting.

Environmental Club co-president and senior Anna Fulton said the club is working with AISD Zero Waste manager Amanda Mortl to add composting bins to the new campus. According to Fulton, the club received bins for LASA's old campus, but the bins were left when LASA moved, so the club has to reapply for bins.

"We're trying to get compost bins for the bathrooms for the paper towels, which is something we had at the old campus because that's just a really easy way to prevent that from going to landfill," Fulton said. "For the most part, there's not a lot of sorting that has to happen when people are using the bathroom."

According to Fulton, the club is also starting to collect old dry erase markers, since the markers can be recycled but need to go to a special sorting center first. The idea was originally brought up by the math department, but Fulton hopes to expand the initiative to the whole school.

"We're going to start having bins in each wing where the teachers can throw their old dry erase markers and then depending how many we get, every other Friday or once a month depending, we're going to have people at lunch collect all the bins from the school," Fulton said. "Then one of us from the club will drive them down to the recycling center."

Even though the Environmental Club does not have all their recycling and composting bins yet, Fulton said she is optimistic that they can make large progress once the bins are in place. Fulton hopes that once students have more recycling and composting bins available, they will naturally use the bins instead of having to put things in the trash.

"There are a lot of things we could do that are really easy if we had the materials," Fulton said. "Once we get materials, it doesn't take that much effort to throw a bottle into a blue bin instead of a gray bin. If we can get composting bins in the bathrooms, that does not require a bunch of sorting."

Along with re-starting composting and recycling initiatives at the new campus, the club is continuing trash cleanups at school where students pick up trash, like water bottle caps or plastic wrappers, in courtyards and outdoor areas. Fulton said the club provides trash bags, gloves, and snacks for students while they walk around in groups and collect trash.

"Last time we did a cleanup we had so many bags of trash, and it only took us an hour because we had lots of different people which was great," Fulton said. "It really does make a difference. You don't realize how much trash is just lying on the ground until you see it condensed into those bags."

Another way students are increasing sustainability is by planting trees in the courtyards. Senior Rebecca George is designing the courtyard next to the orchestra room and the 400 wing with benches and plants for students to hang out there.

"In the long term, I hope any plants I put in prove themselves sustainable and that the structures I put in the courtyard like benches and tables are not something that seem stuck there," George said, "but that the courtyard remains something which grows and is revised for and by the students occupying this school."

George is committed to keeping the courtyard as sustainable as possible through planting native plants that require less water. George is also limiting the impermeable cover, or surfaces that water can not flow through, to help facilitate natural water runoff and maintain natural areas for vegetation.

"Planting trees is important to offsetting our carbon footprint by growing plants which process carbon dioxide while we constantly emit air and other pollution," George said. "On a similar note, one similarity through all my plans is that I refuse to put impermeable cover over the ground, especially I am against concrete."

AISD sustainability manager Darien Clary works with sustainability projects across the district, and she said other students have helped their campus be more environmentally friendly by conserving energy. In particular, students and teachers can turn off electronics, make sure windows are closed, and keep A/C vents clear before leaving the building.

"We also have over 5,000 classrooms across the district, so when you think about small changes that an individual can do at a district this size, it adds up fast," Clary said. "Even little things like turning off the lights, unplugging your appliances, especially before winter break, or Thanksgiving break, or spring break across the district, that means a lot of energy conservation, and a lot of money saved."

AISD energy conservation specialist Ana Echeverria said it is also important for students to be mindful of how long extracurricular activities, like band, theater, or clubs, are in the building after the school day ends because that requires the district to keep the A/C and lighting on longer. Echeverria said it is particularly helpful if students schedule activities with other clubs on the same day, so the whole building does not have to run the A/C for one event.

"In any sustainable project the most important factor is reduction," Echeverria said. "AISD is committed to providing opportunities for all students, but we want to be mindful of the consumption after hours."

AISD's energy department also tracks hourly water usage at 100 of about 132 district buildings. Echeverria said the department occasionally finds spikes in the data but sometimes struggles to find the cause for a few days. It is helpful when students and teachers watch out for leaks from school sinks or in classrooms, so the district knows where potential problems might be.

A fully grown tree can absorb 48 pounds of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere each year

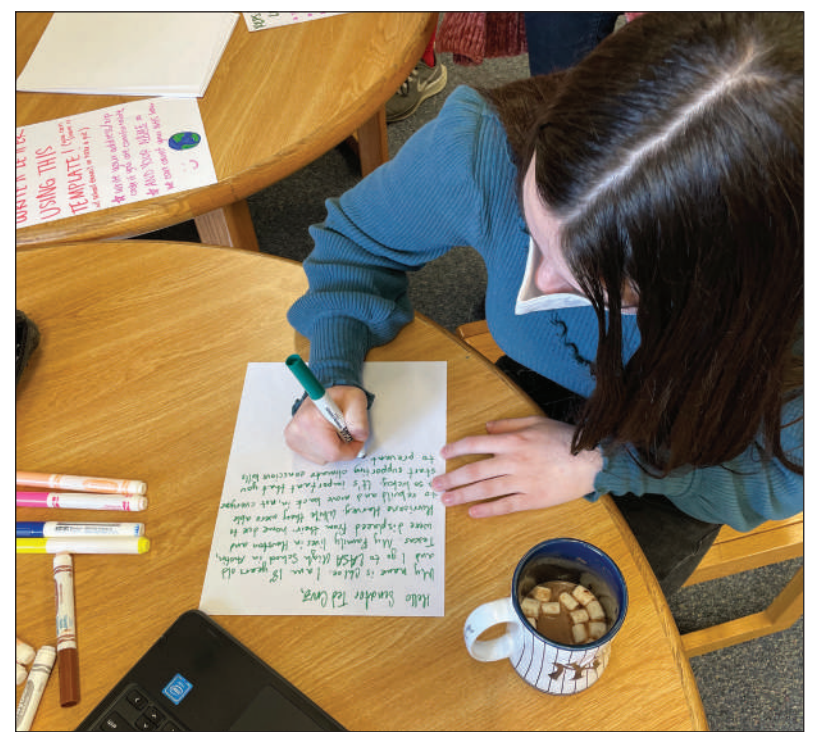
There are approximately 100 fully grown trees at LASA

LASA trees remove over 480 pounds of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere each year

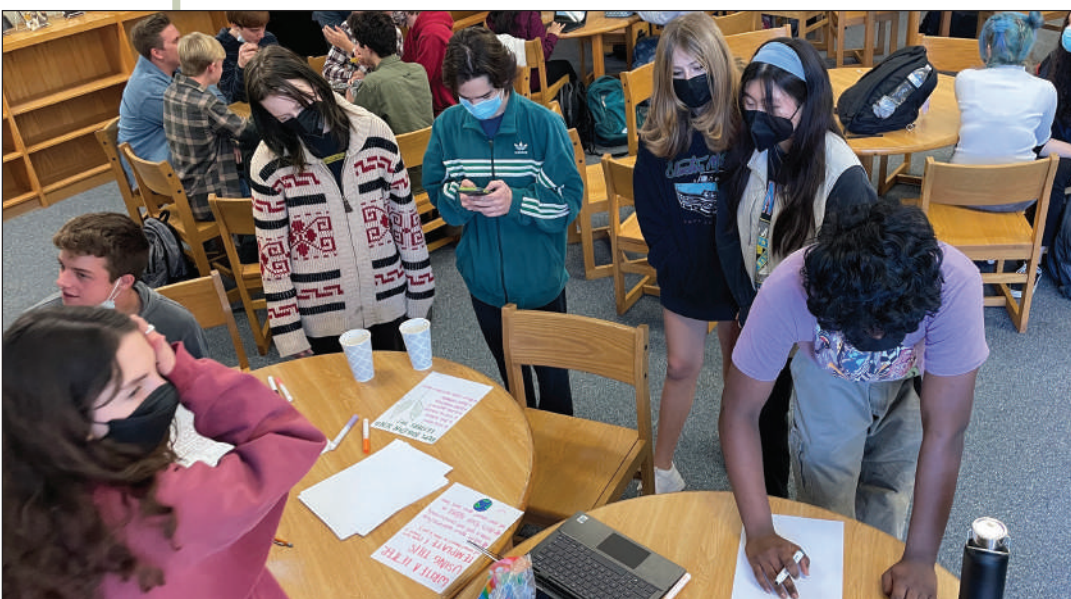
graphics by Kayla Le



**LETTERS FOR LAWMAKERS** The Environmental club hosted a letter writing event in the school library on January 14, 2021. Over 100 letters were completed during the event. photo courtesy of Anna Fulton



**COCOA AND CURSIVE** Students write letter to state representatives regarding environmental issues. Students were encouraged to bring their own mugs to drink hot chocolate during the event. photo courtesy of Anna Fulton



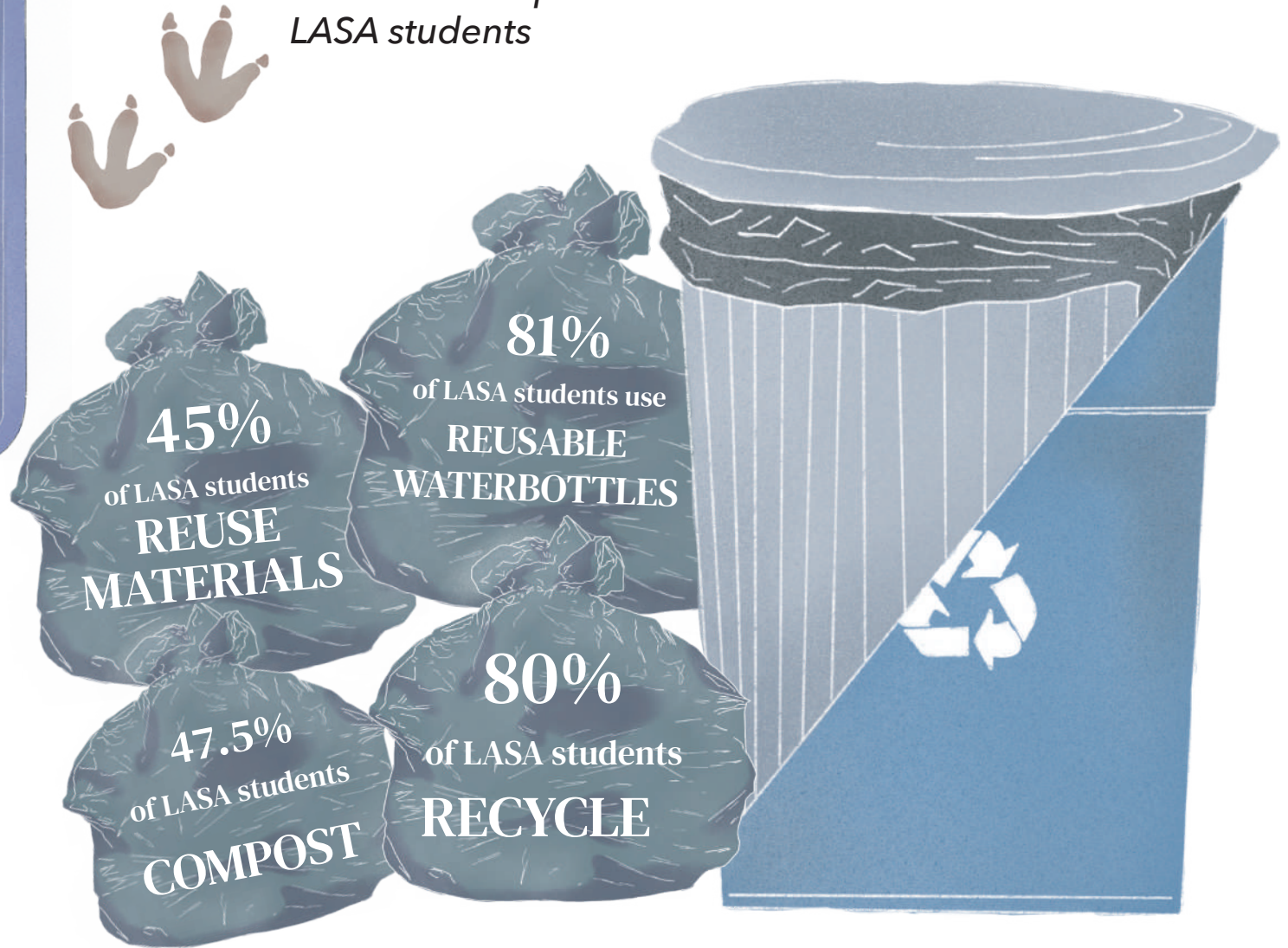
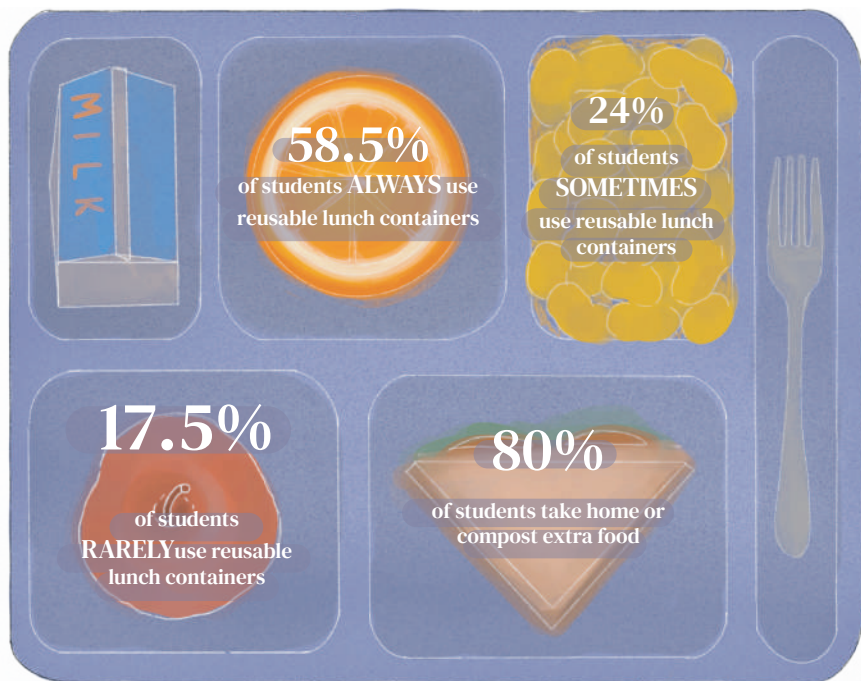
**STUDENT ACTION** LASA student stand in line to write a letter to policy makers about how to vote on green bills. The event provided students with the opportunity to make an impact on the laws being passed on environmental issues. photo courtesy of Anna Fulton



**TRASH DAY** Environmental Club leads a school wide trash pick up. The event took place on Nov. 2, 2021 at the LASA campus. photo courtesy of Anna Fulton

# Digging Up The Facts

Results from a poll of 238 LASA students



"It would benefit it a lot if you report leaks," Echeverria said. "Even if you see a small leak, that translates to gallons and gallons of water by the time you see it."

Along with daily actions like recycling or conserving energy, Fulton said the Environmental Club also organized a letter writing social on Jan. 14 to urge political leaders to make long term change. During the social, students wrote letters to their county representatives, state officials, and even President Joe Biden to ask for climate conscious legislation.

"We got around 100 letters, which was really good," Fulton said. "We provided a template just urging lawmakers to support green bills and to take more action that's addressing the root of the problem."

Clary is glad so many students are working on environmental sustainability in their schools. She said hands-on student-run projects are beneficial for protecting the environment and also for problem-solving opportunities in education.

"You can sit in a classroom and listen to a lesson, or you can get out and do," Clary said. "Sustainability is so geared towards action that I find that that's where so much learning happens and can really help students and staff find a lot of purpose in that."

Clary and Echeverria are optimistic for the future of sustainability across the district because of students like Fulton and George helping to make LASA more environmentally friendly. The Environmental Club hopes to get more recycling and composting bins by the end of the school year, and George hopes to start planting trees after spring break. AISD is also currently conducting a greenhouse gas inventory to examine other ways that the district can lower their carbon footprint. Clary hopes that a variety of students will choose to help their campus be more environmentally conscious.

"Sustainability is broad," Clary said. "So with that, I think it's important to remember and for students to know that there's a place in sustainability for everybody."

## Why is Sustainability Important?

"Schools in general have a large effect on how us students grow up and see the world. By implementing these practices we can help more of these sustainable practices become part of everyday life."

- Freshman Jake McKinney

"Becoming more sustainable is important to preserve our environment for the future. Issues regarding climate change are very real and are impacting our lives every day."

- Junior Nina Prasad

"In a world where using unneeded resources is becoming more and more costly, any school that is able to make the effort for sustainability, should."

- Sophomore Mayer Stanley

"We only have one planet, we should be less focused on finding the next one and on more focused on saving this one."

- Senior Larissa Borg

**39%**

of LASA students ride the **BUS**

LASA buses produce an annual average of about **26.88 metric tons** of **CO2**



**25%**

of LASA students **CARPPOOL**

LASA cars produce an annual average of about **835.7 metric tons** of **CO2**

**35%**

of LASA students drive themselves or are driven by their parents



## Diversity Council Coordinates and Curates Culture Day

SARAH GARRETT | staff writer

The LASA-exclusive Culture Fest is a half day dedicated to learning about other cultures. On Feb. 2, students had the opportunity to listen to different speakers, engage in various activities, and learn about diverse cultures and experiences.

This year, there were 16 different events ranging from “Discovering the Language and Culture of the Andes of Latin America,” to “ATX Korean Dance Crew,” to “Perhaps it is Music That Will Save the World.”

Culture Fest is organized by LASA Diversity Council members, including sophomore Morgan Walker. She and the rest of the council helped put together Culture Fest, from solving issues that came up to promoting the event.

“We invited speakers from all over,” Walker said. “Some people are activists, I actually invited a lobbyist to work for a statewide organization that works with animal rights. People who really know what they’re doing, come to give talks and lectures on really important issues.”

Senior Jana Lassiter, a Culture Fest coordinator, also worked to plan the event alongside senior Jillian Evans-Strong. Lassiter said she was particularly excited for the event this year because after a year of online school, it’s nice to host the event back in-person instead of over Zoom.

“This year, I think we have some really interesting sessions,” Lassiter said. “I always love the teacher sessions, because we obviously all know the teachers. I’ve had Ms. DiGioia, I’ve talked to Mr. Ganesan, but then attending their sessions is just so interesting because they do an amazing job because they obviously know how to really engage students.”

Walker feels that Culture Fest is an amazing opportunity to learn about real-world issues. She said that it is important to the school because it exposes students to different ideas.

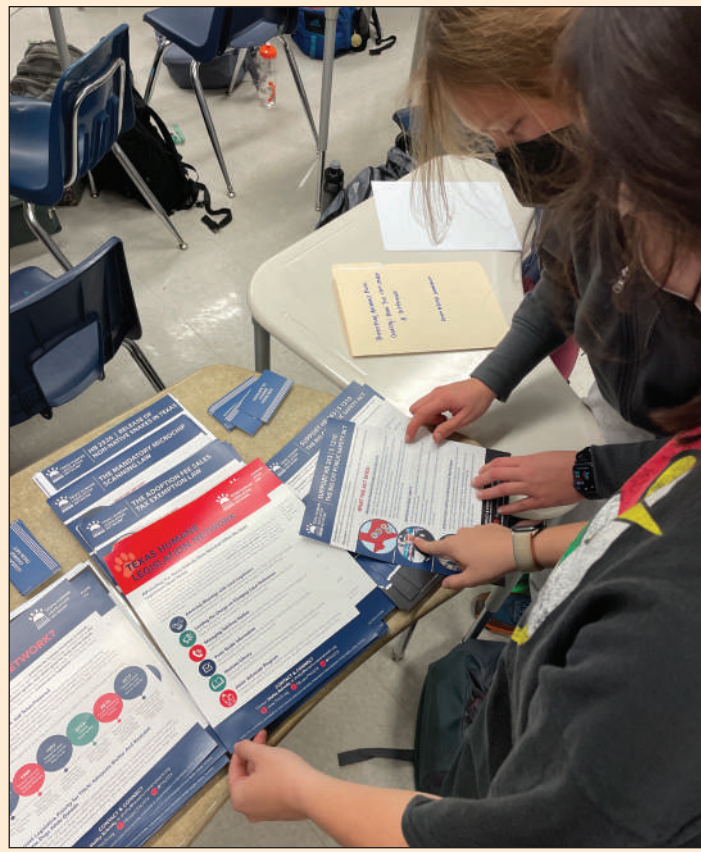
“Culture fest is the quintessential platform from which we can as a campus encourage diversity, acceptance, respecting one another, and just being the best human beings we possibly can, doing the most we can, as people, to make the world a better place both within our campus,” Walker said.

Diversity Council sponsor and SciTech teacher Ellen Owens agrees that Culture Fest is a good way to learn about real-world issues. She said Culture Day is important because it helps expose students to the outside world.

“Since I have ninth graders, I often have to kind of explain to them what it is and what’s going on,” Owens said. “So they often go in not knowing anything of what to expect. I think the impression that I’ve gotten from ninth graders in the past is that a lot of the topics are more mature than they’ve experienced previously because it’s people coming in from the world at large, rather than from within the campus, although we do have some teachers present.”

Lassiter also said that Culture Fest is a very unique opportunity since no other schools in AISD designates a half-day event during school hours for cultural presentations. Lassiter hopes that people appreciate the event as much as she does.

“I just think because of the diversity of all our sessions, people really should use that opportunity, and attend them,” Lassiter said. “I think it’s just really important because other schools don’t have an event like this, and we’re really lucky to be able to host it. We’re really lucky that the faculty lets us have like a whole half day for the event.”



**STAYING INFORMED** Freshman Ella Lilly looks at Texas Humane Legislation Network flyers in the animal rights session. The session, led by Stacy Sutton Kerby, analyzes how you can make a difference in protecting animal rights. photo by Sarah Garrett

There were some students who chose to leave school early and not to go to the event. According to Lassiter, it can be disappointing to see students pass up this opportunity.

“I think people afterwards really do enjoy the sessions that they go to,” Lassiter said. “A lot of times people choose not to go or to the event, which they’re really missing out on because [from] the people that do attend, we hear amazing feedback.”

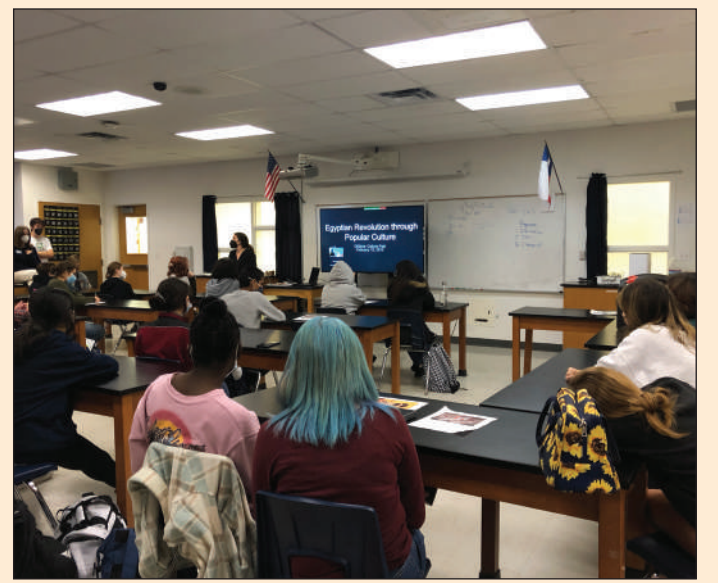
According to Lassiter, planning Culture Fest takes a lot of time and effort. Because it is a completely student-run event, Lassiter had to work outside of school to organize the event.

“It is stressful, the work definitely builds up, so every day me and Jillian are texting and responding to emails, and it’s just a constant back and forth,” Lassiter said. “But I honestly have handled that stress pretty well because I just know that we’re really prepared.”

Lassiter also said that she was happy with how much work the Diversity Council was actually able to complete. This year the Diversity Council split up the jobs among themselves, something different from years past.

“I’m just so proud of how well that’s going because everyone’s just really working well together,” Lassiter said. “It’s just really nice to see the whole council coming together for this.”

Culture Fest will continue to be hosted by LASA in the future. Even though the event takes time to plan and time to execute, the six-year-long and counting tradition will continue to teach students about different cultures.



**INTERPRETING ART** Students listen to a presentation about the Arab Spring by World Geography teacher Kathryn DiGioia. The students then analyzed how photos of graffiti art and social media messages influenced the event. photo by Edith Holmsten



**LEARNING THE DANCE STEPS** Students dance to K-Pop music during a culture session hosted by UT's Korean Dance Crew. Watching themselves in the mirror, the students practice choreography from the Dance Crew. photo by Ella Lilly



**BREAKING DOWN THEIR MOVES** UT's Korean Dance Crew teaches choreography in the dance room. Students also learn about the culture of K-Pop. photo by Ella Lilly



**READY, SET, DISCUSS** Stacy Sutton Kerby directs students in a seminar addressing animal abuse. Students split into groups to debate what type of animal protection laws should be created based on their effectiveness. photo by Sarah Garrett

## EMT Students Train to Be First Responders

AVA SPURGEON | staff writer

Every “A” Day, a small group of students commute to the LBJ Early College High School (LBJ ECHS) campus for a double-blocked period of Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) training. This class promises a certificate to become a practicing EMT.

Students must take one year long disaster response class and two years of an EMT class at LASA before receiving their certification. Students who want to receive a certificate must start disaster response their sophomore year, so it’s a three-year-long commitment. Over the course of their training, students learn how to perform paramedic tasks such as diagnosing and treating patients, conducting emergency response procedures, and lifting and transporting people.

Participating students all have different reasons for joining. Junior Ahnsa Campbell signed up for the class to get practice in a realistic medical career, even though she doesn’t plan on being an EMT after college.



**EMERGENCY READY** EMT students practice techniques for infant CPR on a doll. They also learn how to diagnose patients through the program. photo courtesy of Ella Dollahon

“I have a lot of interest in going into the medical field, so I thought this would look really good on my transcripts for college,” Campbell said. “Even if I don’t decide to do that, it looks good to be dedicated to something that takes that much effort and work on a college transcript.”

Similar to her classmate, junior Eva Dollahon said she wanted to learn more about medicine and thought the EMT class would be the best resource for exploring her interest in the field. She also liked the job opportunity that the EMT certification would provide in the future.

“I wanted to have a good job in college, so I thought the certificate would be useful,” Dollahon said. “I also am trying to pursue a job in the medical field, so I thought it was a really good start.”

The EMT curriculum is similar to that of a science class in that it is made up of lessons and memorization of medical techniques, but there are also opportunities for students to participate in simulated medical responses. Dollahon explained how students learn how to address a wide scope of problems and address situations as an EMT.

“We learn how to take vitals,” Dollahon said. “We learn how to take assessments of patients, learn how to properly transport and dress wounds, and do a bunch of scenarios and practice, too.”

Although they receive lots of practice, students in training are still very limited to what they can do as they are training to be emergency medical responders (EMR), a job that requires less skills than an EMT. Campbell explained how the class has given her new insight into the role of a paramedic in ways she did not know before.

“The biggest thing I think I’ve learned is the scope of practice. I feel like as an outsider when you see paramedics working you don’t really think about what they are and aren’t allowed to do,” Campbell said. “Now that I’m actually doing it, it’s really weird because you aren’t actually diagnosing a person, you’re just doing what you can to best treat what you think could be the problem. EMT’s actually have a wider scope of practice, but right now as an EMR there’s not a lot I can do in very specific situations.”

As previously mentioned, students are in the class for two periods, rather than just one, but the downside of this structure is that students in the program lose another elective, according to Dollahon. LASA has another program similar to the EMT program for students who want to train to be firefighters, but junior Ansh Sarda says the programs are very different in terms of the training and exercise involved.

“EMT is a lot less manual labor than firefighting,” Sarda said. “It’s more like we learn stuff and have activities.”

The class is taught in a portable on the LBJ ECHS campus, and contains students from both LBJ ECHS and LASA because a lot of the equipment stayed at LBJ ECHS after the move. The commute every other day sparks a variety of opinions from students in the program, Dollahon finding the situation irritating.



graphic by Amelia Coleman

“Having the equipment at LBJ is a little bit annoying,” Dollahon said. “I don’t understand why we have to do that considering there’s only one kid in our class who goes to LBJ, honestly I wish they would move it to LASA because that would make a lot more sense and it probably wouldn’t have to be double blocked if we did that.”

Although Dollahon does not like the long commute and class being on another campus, some of her EMT classmates have a different opinion. Sarda said he enjoys the fact that EMT classes start later than LASA’s regular schedule since the class follows LBJ ECHS’s schedule.

“The days we have it are actually really nice, because the class starts at 9:05 when LASA normally starts at 8:15,” Sarda said. “I don’t mind going to LBJ, the only bad part is it takes up half of our lunch. Other than that, I don’t mind it. I actually really like the portables.”

The juniors in the program will have an opportunity to continue the training during their senior year and receive the certification, and theoretically be a certified EMT by the time they graduate. Campbell hopes participating in the EMT program will allow her to receive an internship while in medical school, while Dollahon hopes to have an opportunity to work as an EMT while in college.

Ava De Leon contributed to this article.

# NEW MURAL

from page 1

Once the club decided on the mural location, Butler sketched out the mural design on Illustrator. Unfortunately, Bailey said the club hit a roadblock regarding the similar mural outside of the small gym. The design issues made the process last over two weeks, which Bailey said was longer than she had wanted.

"The first [design] was of the Austin skyline," Butler said. "Then we realized it was too similar to the other mural. So then I completely scratched the idea and created a new idea that wasn't in the poll, and that's the current one."

Butler got inspiration for the final design from the welcome to Austin postcards found around the city. According to Butler, the design will say, "Welcome to LASA Liberal Arts and Science Academy", and each letter will have representations of LASA activities, like band, art, science, and math.

"Those old postcards I thought would reflect LASA's personality with all of the extracurriculars and things that truly represent the school inside the letters," Butler said.

After finalizing the design, Butler said the club started on the physical mural. They primed the wall, painting on a layer of white paint that makes the wall a clean canvas for new artwork. Butler said the club then used a grid to scale up the design and make sure any artist, even if they were not the original designers, knew what the mural should look like.

"We started making a grid on the wall, and we primed it," Butler said. "Then we started to sketch to get proportionate over the grid. It took longer than expected, probably three meetings to prime and chalk, so a month."

One of the most difficult tasks to handle was the costs of all the materials, according to Butler. She said she originally paid for all the primer, brushes, and paint for the project.

"It wasn't until the color paints, which cost twice or three times as much as the original materials, that I went and asked Ms. Crescenzi, and sent in a receipt to the school," Butler said.

Despite the challenges that the club faced when making the murals, Dance director Paige Edwards likes the result. Edwards said the mural helps to add a touch of school spirit as well as a pop of color to the school.

"Art can uplift people," Edwards said. "I think it's a great way for artists to express themselves and give the school more character too."

Club members like Bailey are also excited to see the final result. After working as a team on the mural, everyone has their favorite bits and pieces.

"I really love the raptors, how they turned out," Bailey said. "There's two of them. There's one on each side of the mural, and I just think it adds a really cute aspect considering we just recently made the new mascot."



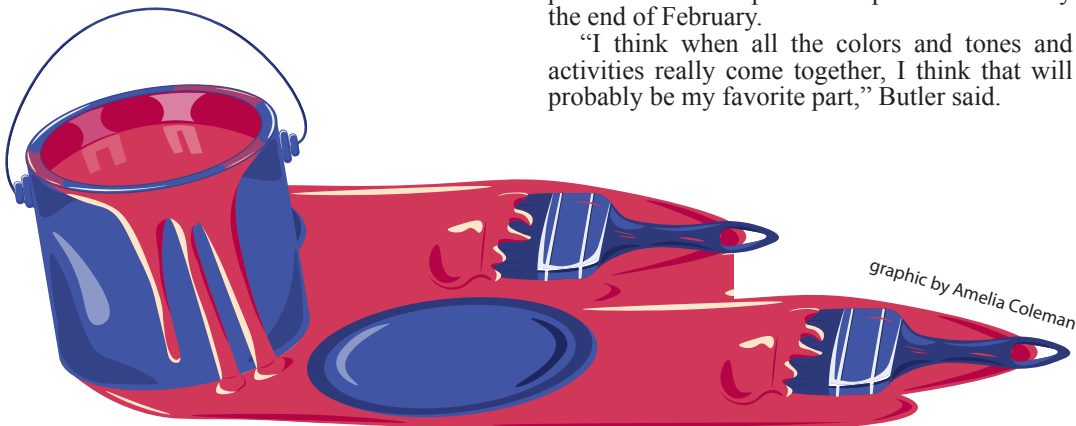
**MAKING THE PLAN** Juniors Tyler Hawkins and Vivian Butler sketch out designs for each letter. They use a grid as a reference to ensure all the elements were proportional. photo by Edith Holmsten



**ADDING TOUCH UPS** Juniors Tyler Hawkins and Vivian Butler paint details on the artwork. Many students volunteered to decorate the mural during lunch. photo by JC Ramirez Delgadillo

Butler does not have a favorite image but rather a favorite aspect. She is excited to view the piece when it comes together. It has taken the mural club longer than they thought it would to complete it, but they are eager to see the final piece. The club hopes to complete the mural by the end of February.

"I think when all the colors and tones and activities really come together, I think that will probably be my favorite part," Butler said.



graphic by Amelia Coleman

# AISD Plans for Next Year

ELLA LILLY | staff writer

Due to press time, some of these discussions may have been updated before print.

As the Austin Independent School District (AISD) works to construct a new calendar for the 2022-2023 school year, principal Stacia Crescenzi addressed that rumors of seven-period days and early-release Wednesdays have been circulating. Students and teachers at LASA do not yet know what future schedules could look like and how it will change.

In December, AISD proposed a seven-period schedule in which students would attend seven classes every day, and teachers would teach during six out of seven periods each day.

**"The decision was implemented with two things in mind, and that's a balanced budget and student success."**

- Edward Villa, AISD Media

AISD media relations specialist Edward Villa explained that AISD decided to abandon the proposal after hearing feedback from families and staff that they wanted all eight classes.

"We've had a mixed reaction across our stakeholders," Villa said, "but really, the decision was implemented with two things in mind, and that's a balanced budget and student success."

After the seven-period schedule was discarded, principal Crescenzi said the updated proposal is to keep the eight period total with a four classes per day schedule. However, AISD proposed increasing the number of periods that teachers teach, amounting to more students per teacher.

"You would have all your teachers teach seven out of eight, so they'd be sort of averaging about 200 kids a teacher total," Crescenzi said. "And if you keep a block schedule, then one day they'd have no breaks except for lunch, and the other day they'd get a period off."

Government teacher Ronny Risinger does not like the switch proposed by AISD Superintendent Stephanie Elizalde. Risinger feels this switch is putting more work on the teachers to grade additional students' work, but with less planning periods and time.

"What Elizalde is proposing is to take away one of those conference planning and prep periods, so that one day of the blocked schedule, you would teach all four classes and be teaching all day long with no breaks except a state mandated duty free lunch," Risinger said. "If you think about it, how would you even

answer emails? How can you grade if you're just teaching all day long?"

With an increase in the number of classes they teach, teachers would be responsible for educating more students. Crescenzi said LASA is currently staffed at about 28 students per teacher, so the new proposal would also see over a one-student increase per class for the additional period taught. This means that teachers would have more than 30 total additional students than they currently have. Crescenzi said this move, among other things, will put more stress on teachers and could cause them to consider leaving the district because of this, according to Crescenzi.

"For some teachers, they may decide to just leave education, like the proverbial straw that broke the camel's back," Crescenzi said. "I think others might look to find districts that are not in the same financial constraints as AISD."

On Dec. 21, AISD confirmed their plans for a pay increase for teachers, independent from the schedule proposal. Teachers do not know specifically if there will be an increase in pay or the amount since the pay increase proposal will not be voted on by the Board of Trustees until June 2022. Therefore, it is not guaranteed that teachers will be paid more to compensate for teaching more periods a day.

Amidst all the concerns that students and teachers have reported, Crescenzi concluded that her goal is to talk to her staff once the final decision is made. She hopes to find a fair solution in which everyone feels comfortable with.

"My plan, once I get my staffing, is to have a conversation with the staff to say, 'I'm uncomfortable with some people having two conference periods, and some people having one,'" Crescenzi said. "So as a staff, I want us to make a decision either everybody's teaching seven out of eight, at a little smaller class size, or everybody's gonna stay with six out of eight and slightly larger classes. In my mind, I would be very uncomfortable with some teachers having more planning time than others. It would just be a campus decision."

As of the publication date of this article, AISD is having meetings with teachers and parents about the proposal. Amid concerns from staff, Elizalde said the district is considering cutting about 250 positions to earn enough money to keep teachers' planning periods. While the futures for periods, planning time, and personnel is not concrete now, district officials and teachers will continue to power through. The final budget is expected to be approved in June 2022.



graphic by Kayla Le

# How LASA's Student Council Serves Fellow Teens

MAIRIN BACHSCHMID | club contributor

Silver streamers sparkle and balloons float towards the ceiling as LASA's Student Council (StuCo) decorates the cafeteria for the school dance. In addition to planning school dances, the council is responsible for organizing grade-level socials throughout the school year to help students get to know one another and planning teacher breakfasts to show appreciation for their work.

Every Wednesday, student council members meet during lunch to discuss plans for future events. Not only this, but they also meet with the school administration and Parent Teacher Administration (PTA) once a month during a Campus Advisory Council (CAC) meeting. Freshman StuCo president Cecelia Gay said she enjoys the meetings as a way to provide a voice for students' interests.

"Every month, one person from each grade level in StuCo goes to what is called a CAC meeting," Gay said. "PTA members and Ms. Crescenzi talk about future plans and concerns about the school. This way we have a say in what is happening."

**"Events really promote school spirit and community. I've been able to connect a lot more with the LASA community through planning and participating in StuCo sponsored events."**

- Sophomore President Jaynie Lee

Sophomore StuCo president Jaynie Lee is glad she is able to meet with Crescenzi each month because the meetings allow the council to make large steps to support LASA. Lee said StuCo is beneficial to the school because they build a community and plan events that support the school.

"Student council events really promote school spirit and community," Lee said. "I've been able to connect a lot more with the LASA community through planning and participating in StuCo sponsored events."

Student council not only plans dances but also does smaller projects that benefit the teachers as well as the students. Sophomore student representative Sofia Francis said the small events, like selling candy around holidays, are important to raise money for larger class dances. According to Francis, StuCo is involved in every step of the planning process.

"Stuff we do includes the holiday cheer events, which would be candygrams, hallway decorating, class gift exchanges, and class T-shirt sales," Francis said. "We host at least two teacher breakfast events to show our appreciation for our teachers and to relieve a little bit of stress at the end of the year."

Other than school-wide activities, Francis said each grade level is required to plan at least two socials each year. According to Lee, each grade council works individually to plan the social and then gets the events approved by the administration, StuCo sponsor Melissa Alexander Driscoll (Ms. A), and Parents and Friends of LASA (PFLASA).

"We normally split into different teams for different aspects and categories per big event," Lee said. "For grade-wide socials, we usually plan details within each grade council and get them approved by Mr. Paulson and Ms. A first. Then we find two parent volunteers through PFLASA."

Once these socials are approved by the administration, it is important to schedule it for a day that works for everyone in StuCo. Gay said it needs to be an event that all students can attend and does not conflict with any other major events.

"We are given a set budget," Gay said. "We pick a day and time that works best for all of the freshman StuCo and get our plan in motion."

Throughout the year, students have to participate in school-wide events, but StuCo takes advantage of this time to plan grade-level events. According to Francis, with all the stress of reaching various important milestones during high school, the socials are a way for students to relax and take their mind off of other things.

"We have to make it cost-effective but still fun," Francis said. "We'll schedule them near big events, like college application submissions or Finals week, to take that extra bit of stress off of students."

Francis said it is also important for StuCo members to be in contact with each other and the other students in their grade. This can help notify everyone about upcoming activities, or things to be prepared for.

"Each grade level has an Instagram and a Remind to reach out to the extended classes about events, when requested," Francis said. "Student council's main responsibility is to handle student events and student communications."

Communication between StuCo and the students is very beneficial when planning events, according to Francis. Gay agrees that constant communication builds a community for the student body and improves student-representative relationships.

"StuCo events help people connect with others and make new bonds," Gay said. "It also builds our relationship with others, so they feel like they could talk to us if they had a pressing issue that maybe we could do something about."

Planning the events are not only beneficial for the LASA community but also for the members of StuCo as Lee said it provides an opportunity for members to meet new people.

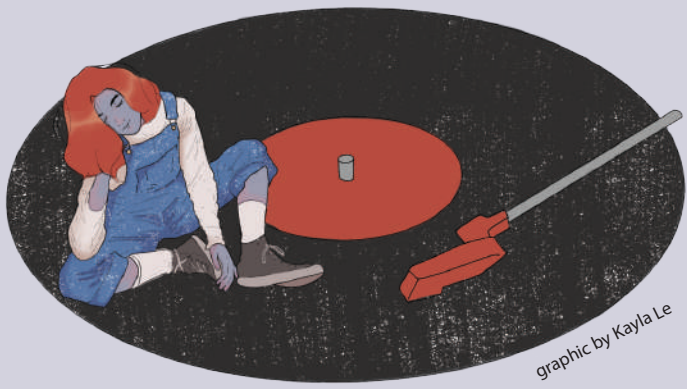
"My favorite part of being in student council is getting to meet so many new people and be involved in planning big events," Lee said.

Lee, Gay, and Francis are looking forward to upcoming events with the council. Currently, StuCo is planning prom on April 9.



**OPEN FOR DISCUSSION** Student Council meets Wednesday during lunch to discuss upcoming events, like prom and class socials. The council also meets with school administration each month to address student desires. photo by JC Ramirez Delgadillo

**Liberator's Picks**  
2021 Album Throwback



graphic by Kayla Le

"If I Can't Have Love, I Want Power" - Halsey

LILI XIONG | commentary editor

The title alone makes the album a force to be reckoned with. "If I Can't Have Love, I Want Power," Halsey's fourth studio album, is as wrathful as it is intimate, tough-skinned as it is soft and vulnerable. Tracks such as "The Tradition" and "Girl is a Gun" are dramatic songs, escalated by the sort of piano backing tracks that are dark, voluminous, and fill the song with character beyond lyrics. In contrast, Halsey sings "Darling" with care, delicately rolling out each decidedly relatable lyric: "foolish men have tried, but only you have shown me how to love being alive." This album confronts both the excitement and terror of getting what you want, touching on themes of revenge after others have taken advantage of you. She explores the messy, complicated, and chaotic parts of falling in love—and what makes it a beautiful phenomenon in spite of all that.

"The Living End" - Sarah and the Sundays

KATIE BUSBY | entertainment editor

"The Living End" is the second album from Austin based indie-rock band Sarah and the Sundays. It consists of fourteen tracks, starting with the short, guitar-only "For Harry," which transitions smoothly into "Coward," the next song, and ending with the titular song "The Living End." The whole album has a candid emotion to it, weaving in stories with thoughts about life in the form of catchy refrains. Songs range from upbeat tunes and relatable lyrics found in "I'm So Bored" to mellow songs like "Vices" that tell stories of change and growth. Overall, the album emulates going through changes—and the emotions that come along with it—in different ways.

"Call Me If You Get Lost" - Tyler the Creator

NORAH HUSSAINI | web editor

Tyler the Creator's seventh album, "Call Me If You Get Lost" (CMIYGL), showcases his cleanest and most mature work yet, boasting perfect production, an intricate storyline, and lyrics that take shape to form Tyler's alter ego of the album: Tyler Baudelaire. The album displays a wide range of genres, emotions, and guest stars, bouncing from the belligerent rap song "LEMONHEAD" featuring 42 Dugg, to the crooning R&B ten minute marathon that is "SWEET/ I THOUGHT YOU WANTED TO DANCE" featuring Brent Faiyaz and Fana Hues. CMIYGL contains so many stark contrasts from song to song that slight mental whiplash is almost inevitable. Despite this, Tyler is sure to weave recurring beats, melodies, motifs, and references throughout the entire 52-minute album. He also skillfully implements the mixtape-like element of DJ Drama, not only to toy around and ad-lib on songs, but also to help construct the arrogance and braggadociousness that make up the personality of Tyler Baudelaire. Baudelaire spends a sizable amount of time on the album flaunting his wealth, but tracks such as "WILSHIRE" let us peer into relationship troubles that, as affluent as he is, Baudelaire just can't seem to fix. This album's professional and crisp production goes to show just how much Tyler has been able to expand and get comfortable in his own—and Tyler Baudelaire's—skin.



graphic by Kayla Le

PODCASTS

from page 1

According to freshman and podcast listener Tavi Tragus, podcasts can be enjoyable when finishing chores. Tragus listens to "Blessed Entertaining" in her free time.

"I enjoy that there's no visual element," Tragus said. "I can listen to them while doing other things, such as dishes or homework. A lot of them are great because they can occupy a lot of time, and listening to podcasts can be a great way to spend it."

According to freshman Lilah Bounds, there are a wide range of podcasts and genres to choose from. Some podcasts that she likes to listen to fall under the true crime and lifestyle genres.

"I like that some podcasts are more informational while others are more people just talking," Bounds said. "The whole podcast thing leaves a lot of room for variety."

According to Tragus, podcasts have become more popular because people have more spare time and less to do with it. Tragus also believes the extra pandemic time can be used to make podcasts.

"More podcasts have been listened to again because people need something to do, and I think it's easier to make a podcast in the pandemic because you're all at home," Tragus said. "It's easier to record individually than together because one person might talk a lot quieter than the other people, but that can be artificially made louder. It's something that's easy to do over a video call, and you don't need to do it in-person to make a podcast or listen to a podcast."

Tragus has previously researched and planned how to make a podcast. She thinks making one would be an interesting endeavor.

"I think it would be a fun project to teach me new skills, like using Adobe Audition," Tragus said. "I have just a little bit of people skills but not really because I would just be doing it with my friends. I also thought that it'd be a fun

use of the time." According to Bounds, podcasts can be used as a platform to explore and share subjects a person likes. She enjoys listening to people talk about things that they



graphic by Grace Noduff

are interested in. "During the beginning part of COVID-19," Bounds said, "I started listening to this one podcast called 'Office Ladies,' which has some of the ladies from the show 'The Office' talking about their experiences from the show. They go through every episode and talk about behind the scenes from the show."

Senior Hudson Day created "Musicology Podcast" with his cousin,

Anna Van Hoom, during the pandemic as an escape from work. It can be found on Spotify. Each episode they evaluate different songs by looking into their history, genre, and style.

"I started my podcast because my cousin Anna and I wanted a reason to get to talk together and enjoy sharing music with each other, which we used to just do over text, but it was much more meaningful over a podcast vocal setting," Day said. "It's enriching to learn about new music for our episodes, and it acts as a creative outlet for me to share my views and ideas on music and also art in some cases. It's been a cool venue to experiment with quality writing and art historical contexts, too."

COMICS

JC RAMIREZ DELGADILLO | photo editor (right)

SUSAN BALLESTEROS | entertainment editor (below)

Test Sheet

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# The Phantom of the Choir

Students Learn the Art of Singing as an Ensemble

LANA GILES | staff writer

For LASA choir members, home is where the song is.

Choir at LASA is led by director Deric Lewis. Originally part of a combined choir with Lyndon Baines Johnson Early College High School (LBJ ECHS), the choirs split along with the rest of the academic clubs and sports during the 2020-2021 school year. Now, there are 28 student members in choir.

Over the course of the year, students build friendships, strengthen their vocal skills, and win recognition by participating in competitions. According to senior and choir president Ella Williams, choir can be different than what people expect.

“People assume that being in choir is just singing like you would in your car, and that it doesn’t take technical skills and practice,” Williams said. “I think a lot of people underestimate the value of continuing to practice and working with different directors to increase your technical skills. Singing is not something that I was born with, but it is something that I’ve worked hard on.”

Choir students are given solo or ensemble pieces to learn in order to showcase their vocal abilities in competitions. According to Lewis, the pieces that students learn are typically in a foreign language, like German or French.

“They perform that piece for a judge, and the judge gives them notes, and then also gives them a score,” Lewis said. “If they score high enough, and they’re able to go on to state, then they do the same thing at the state level. The ensemble portion of that is almost the same, except instead of singing as a solo, they do it as an ensemble. It can be a trio, duet, or a smaller ensemble with five or six people.”

LASA choir participates in University Interscholastic League (UIL) competitions as well as Texas Music Educators Association competitions. Senior Devon Hobbs, choir vice president, has competed at these events and says out-of-class practice is needed for a skilled performance.

“It has to be extracurricular,” Hobbs said. “I have to work with Mr. Lewis or other people to get my solo where it needs to be. Last year, I got all the way to state, and I got a perfect score, so I’m doing it again this year.”

Choir also involves performances without the competitive nature. One such performance, Art as Activism, has previously only been in-house but will be public next year.

“Students are able to choose a topic that they want to spotlight using music,” Lewis said. “And they do a little bit of research in their particular subject area and then they do an infographic and a slideshow. Part of their performance is a

song that they choose that sort of helps to bring attention to whatever topic they choose.”

Williams has been involved in choir since she joined her freshman year after having participated in her middle school’s choir. She believes the traditions that the choir community has developed—like the daily game known as Quarter of the Day, which involves members trying to guess everything they can about what’s on a quarter—bring everyone together in a more personal way. Other traditions range from get-togethers to more games.

“We have socials every three-ish months,” Williams said. “We also always compete at the same competitions, and we have traditions tied to that.”

According to Hobbs, the experience of being in choir, along with the traditions it comes with, enables students to come together to form a community. Williams agrees with this and says that her relationship with choir has shaped who she is.

“Being in choir both requires learning and technical skills, which I think is really important, and also fun,” Williams said. “It’s also about building a community of people who make beautiful music together and encourage that sort of sense of community.”

Recently, the choir program lost a few students to the school campus move. According to Lewis, LASA choir is a welcoming and friendly community, and he wants students, especially those that have previously taken choir in middle school, to know it’s an option.

“We’re open to new students, and we would

love to have them,” Lewis said. “We are just a family down here. We really want as many people as possible to not feel afraid to take it because yes, we do hard music, but the way we teach it, it’s very accessible.”

Hobbs shares that being involved in choir can open opportunities to meet like-minded people and enjoy yourself. Hobbs says that choir is social and emphasizes the people and experience, which she missed during online schooling.

“During the pandemic, we couldn’t meet in person,” Hobbs said. “Things like band and choir and orchestra, you can’t really do that over zoom. You just can’t make music with other people together like that, and I didn’t realize how much I missed it until we finally came back this year. We were all in a room together singing, and it was just incredible. It’s such a nice feeling. Even though we have to wear masks, which isn’t great when singing, it’s still empowering. It’s just fun. Just adjusting yourself or other people and working together to make something.”

According to Williams, choir is a way for students to create relationships and connect to people with similar interests. She says choir has been influential in her relationships, and she’s gained friends as a result.

“My closest friendships have come from choir, which has been really important in shaping who I am,” Williams said. “I think that music is something that brings people together in a really unique way that is irreplaceable.”



# New Pastry on the Block

The Salty Donut Opens New Austin Location

ELLA LILLY | staff writer

Donuts ranging from Horchata to Texas Chocolate Sheet Cake are featured at a new donut shop in Austin, along with a mix of drinks that include signature coffees like the Cinnamon Cereal Latte and Maple Brown Sugar Coldbrew.

The Salty, an artisan donut shop, has recently opened in South Congress. It is open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Sunday through Thursday and from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. on Friday and Saturday. According to

The Salty marketing director Kae Roffman, the difference between their donuts and others’ starts at the base.

“Our dough base is very different from a lot of donut shops,”

Roffman said. “When you go into a traditional donut shop, you’re probably going to get cake or yeast bases. Our brioche base is light and fluffy, but it’s almost like biting into a cake more than anything.”

The Salty also works with local businesses to collaborate and introduce new specials to the menu. Collaborations include those with a brewery, a barbecue restaurant, and Topo Chico, along with donut specials inspired by Austin and Texas.

“You know you’re going in more for an experience, especially if you’re a foodie,” Roffman said. “We’ve got a ton of different offerings specific to the areas that we’re in, as well. So for example, in our Austin shop, we have the Prickly Pear Margarita donut, which is inspired by being in Austin. And then in both of our Texas shops, we have an alternate base, which is just your traditional cake donut but Texas Chocolate Sheet Cake donut.

We also love to partner with local businesses as much as we can to support our communities and give back to them. So with our Maple Bacon, we partnered up with a local meat vendor, [Terry Black’s], in the area.”

Over 4,000 donuts were sold in just a couple hours during their grand opening in August 2021. Walking into the store reveals a display of donuts in a coffee shop-like space. Customer Lauren from Miami loved the spacious, thought-out interior and patio decor.

“The vibes are amazing, it’s very up and coming,” Lauren said. “I’m here just for the weekend, but my friend lives here and comes here all the time. I like the fact that it’s open air, and I love being on the green.”

According to Roffman, careful consideration was put into the interior. It is also different from The Salty’s other locations.

“Our co-founder, Amanda Pizarro, puts in a lot of time and attention into reflecting the environment of the shop to the surroundings in the community,” Roffman said. “So the idea behind the Austin shop was actually more of a living room. When you walk in, it feels very open, it’s natural, it’s bright, it’s cozy. There’s a nice lounge area to lay in and do your work. There’s murals done by local artists around the shop...you could hang out with your friends, or it’s a nice place to work and listen to a playlist at the same time get your coffee, get your donuts, and just have a nice environment that’s open and inclusive.”

Cristian, an Austinite visitor, went to The Salty with his partner Cass. They enjoyed their experience along with the offered treats.

“The flavor is different than you typically see with donuts, and same thing with the coffee,” Cristian said. “It’s got a unique flavor that you don’t see in other places.”

Looking forward, The Salty has just announced a partnership with Terry Black’s Barbecue to serve a barbecue brisket kolache. As The Salty expands and reaches a greater audience, customers continue to have access to their signature donut treats.



# Throwback Thursday

Vintage Sale in Austin

SYDNEY JONES | staff writer

As a longstanding Austin tradition, the Citywide Vintage Sale is a vintage shopper’s paradise.

The Citywide Vintage Sale is a community event held in the Palmer Event Center that brings vintage vendors from all over Texas to sell their goods. Originating as a garage sale in 1977, the collectible market has evolved into a popular event in Austin held almost every month.

Citywide Vintage Sale founder Sammie Dwyer and her daughter, Jennifer Dwyer, are a part of the organizing team. According to Jennifer Dwyer, the sale, which has been going on for 45 years, is intended to help small businesses based in Austin and Texas, and part of that is keeping booth rent fees lower than the average.

“We want to make it easy for people to start a small business, and our fees will enable them to do that,” Dwyer said. “We’ve got people that have come and started doing little small booths at our show, and then eventually they’ll open up a store or go on to bigger and better things for their business. It really does contribute to the community.”

The event was originally held during a gas crisis in 1977 that limited the amount of gas each car could get. It gave the founders the idea to centralize garage sales into one location so the driving distance needed to attend could be limited, and it has continued to evolve over time. Maggie Stephens is an avid attendee of the Citywide Vintage Sale.

“They used to call it the Citywide Garage Sale,” Stephens said. “It’s just kind of a mismatch of different vendors to bring tables and sell all different kinds of items in all different kinds of conditions.”

The event relies on vendors, who bring in goods to sell, to continue thriving. Over the years, the amount of vendors at the sale has increased from the small community garage sale it started as, but COVID-19 brought the numbers back down.

“Prior to COVID, we had between 80 and 100 vendors on average per show,” Dwyer said. “Since COVID, we have a lot of vendors, but probably more like 70 since the pandemic started.”

Dwyer is attempting to build the event back to pre-pandemic levels. While most vendors come from or near Austin, according to Dwyer, some travel much farther to attend.

“I have a gentleman that comes from New York, and he lives in the Bronx,” Dwyer said. “He’s actually from Africa, but he travels all over the country, back and forth, selling his goods. He always makes sure that he times his trips so that he’s coming through when we have one of our events.”

The Citywide Vintage Sale has items that range from used clothes and jewelry to old dishes and tchotchkes, or miscellaneous trinkets. People can find all sorts of goods that might appeal to them, according to Stephens. The event has also proven to be enjoyable for all different ages, according to Dwyer, allowing all to find something they can appreciate in the Citywide Vintage Sale.

“It’s a really neat event,” Dwyer said. “There are a lot of people of all ages [that] love it. I see people come in with their little five year old and they’ll give them a little bit of money and they’ll have so much fun, or people in their 80s come and shop, so it’s good for all ages, and really nice vendors, really nice community of people that we have there.”



AS FAR AS THE GLAZE CAN SEE Rows of donuts sit in glass displays inside The Salty. The South Congress location had its grand opening on Aug. 27, 2021, and holds a variety of donuts, including Austin and Texas themed ones. photo by JC Ramirez Delgadillo



AUSTIN EXPERIENCE The Salty’s exit leads to an outdoor seating area. The interior of the shop was themed to feel like a living room. photo by JC Ramirez Delgadillo

## The Writings on the Wall

Reflecting on the Old and Looking to the New HOPE Gallery

**KATIE BUSBY** | entertainment editor  
**LILI XIONG** | commentary editor

A collage of Austinites' artistic works. That is essentially what the HOPE Outdoor Gallery is. The plot that is home to HOPE Outdoor Gallery was originally a failed condo development abandoned in the 1980s, leaving behind a canvas for the art that was to come.

Eventually, it became a space for ever-changing public art as Austin graffiti artists added to its walls. In 2011, the HOPE organization took charge of the space and transformed it into a place for the creation and observation of art after opening it to the public. It was housed at its original location for around eight years until it was bought by a new developer. Now they are set to open a new and bigger space soon.

The HOPE Outdoor Gallery has housed various artworks, both small pieces made by newcomers, and large scale pieces like murals contributed by more experienced artists. Sophomore Ramona Gonzalez enjoyed the gallery and found it to be very inspirational.

"I was interested in going to the HOPE Gallery because I thought it was a very positive way to celebrate the art of graffiti," Gonzalez said. "Graffiti in Austin can be seen as kinda tacky, but the HOPE Gallery lets folks come together and do creative graffiti legally, and I thought it was a really cool way of doing that."

Freshman Bailey Hall didn't know there were local graffiti artists working at the park along with the normal people visiting and creating art until she went to visit it. The gallery was intended to be a space for anyone to try out murals and spray painting, but it also had graffiti artists working in it, which Hall observed.

"I was interested in going to the HOPE Gallery because I met someone who was an actual graffiti artist," Hall said. "It's near my house, and we've been near it, and we met one of the graffiti artists who works on the wall. We thought it would be cool to go see what artists were making on the wall."

Freshman Ella Brotman noted that the gallery gave exposure to different graffiti artists with a variety of art. She said some of her favorites were the large scale murals and realistic works.

"I really liked the graffiti paintings with the highlights that looked really realistic," Brotman said. "I thought those were really cool."

The HOPE gallery's original location was spread out over a hillside in downtown Austin. Its concrete structures were the foundations of the condos that were abandoned, but they lent themselves to the paintings spread across the gallery. Gonzalez said she how this was a gallery to appreciate street art and all the cool pieces spread around the structures.

"I don't remember if it had a name next to it or if someone titled it, but there was a really cool one in a sort of tunnel-like cave part of the exhibit," Gonzalez said. "They had incorporated the shape into their design, and it was a well with stuff around the well, and they made it like an optical illusion."

The HOPE gallery was covered with many layers of paint before it was demolished and they moved to the new location. It was used as a place for people to both display and contribute to street art.

"I feel like it just adds a cool element to Austin," Hall said. "Anyone can contribute, rather than like an indoor gallery or something where you have to be accepted into it."

Gonzalez said that to her, the park emulates all the positive parts of graffiti. She thinks it's a really unique part of the Austin art scene.

"I also liked some of the positive messages that are spread through graffiti around the park and some of the hope," Gonzalez said. "I think the gallery has a good name because you can see the hope in the art in the gallery."

The HOPE gallery's original location closed in 2019 when a new developer bought the land and the condos that were originally going to be there became the plan for the land again. The gallery is opening their new location near the Austin-Bergstrom International Airport in east Austin, which, after delays, is set to open soon.

According to the website, the new location is supposed to be a cultural center which celebrates the old gallery while adding new elements. It is set to be around 18 acres of open air space, and will have many walls for visitors to paint along with exhibits and sculptures and commodities like food and drinks.

"My hopes for the new location are that it is very accessible for everyone just like it was," Gonzalez said. "I hope it keeps the same culture that it has about being positive and staying open to everyone."

## Yearning for Yarn

Knitting and Crocheting Pandemic Popularity

**SARAH GARRETT** | staff writer

In a journey to find ways to spend quarantine hours, people turned to new hobbies that included baking, watching tv, reading books, and for some, knitting and crocheting.

Knitting and crocheting both use the same general principle of creating fabric by looping holes through holes, but they differ in how they do this. While knitting uses two needles, crocheting uses one hook. According to Melissa Sternberg, one of the owners of Gauge Yarn, a yarn store in Austin that was directly impacted by the pandemic, both activities became a popular craft and hobby for teenagers during quarantine.

"The most interesting thing we saw was a change in what people made," Sternberg said. "2020 was the year of the blanket, which, in Austin, Texas, wasn't previously a huge knitting thing. The biggest difference is we had a real change in our customer base. We had much younger customers, which was very exciting for us."

Sophomore Hadley Wright is among the teenagers who took up crocheting as a hobby over the pandemic. She already knew how to knit pre-pandemic, but the pandemic gave her extra time to learn something new.

"My grandmother got me crochet hooks for my birthday, and I didn't know how to do it," Wright said. "I decided to buy an instruction book off of Amazon and teach myself, and it was fun."

Senior Harsha Venkataraman has been working on a variety of clothing-related projects since quarantine. Her last crocheted item was a cardigan.

"I think my goal this senior year, second semester, is to crochet sweaters," Venkataraman said. "Something that's practical and fun to spend time on."

According to Venkataraman, for complete beginners, learning how to knit or crochet can seem daunting. She recommends finding video tutorials to follow.

"I would say find something you want to make and then watch a good video on how to make it," Venkataraman said. "Watching someone do it is a lot easier...and then you just use it to learn basic stitches."

Sternberg has come across many beginners that only had access to video tutorials while learning. She recommends that beginners be patient while trying to learn.

"We have seen tons of customers who taught themselves over the pandemic, from YouTube and online, who now have a chance to come in the store and ask us questions," Sternberg said. "Be easy on yourself. You are not going to be a perfect knitter or crocheter when you first start. It is okay to make mistakes, and it's how you learn."

Sternberg, an avid knitter and crocheter herself, speculates that one of the reasons teens decided to knit and crochet over the pandemic is because it is calming. She enjoys the act of creating and so do others.

"There's definitely a lot of hand-brain connection that a lot of studies have shown is calming," Sternberg said. "That repetitive motion triggers a whole different part of your brain that allows you to focus. During the pandemic, being able to focus on something besides the pandemic has been really nice for people."

Wright uses it as a passive activity. When she is relaxing, Wright likes working on projects in her free time.

"When I'm sitting down watching Netflix or talking to my family, I'll pick up projects that I leave all over the house," Wright said. "I'll just pick one up and start working."

## Beauty and the Beats

The Alley Cat Players Perform Spring Musical After Late Production Start

**FIONA KLEEMAN** | staff writer

Every year, when the first semester comes to an end, the LASA musical starts taking auditions. This year's chosen story was "Beauty and The Beast."

The Alley Cat Players' "Beauty and The Beast" ran on Valentine's Day weekend from Feb. 10 to Feb. 13. Play production started in December and involved a 14-person cast along with techs, members of tech theater that handle props and build scenes, a pit orchestra, and costume designers. Theater teacher and director Melissa Driscoll was



**ELECTRIC PERFORMANCE** Freshman Rylie Wayt was Lumière in the alley cat's edition of Beauty and the Beast. The musical was filled with dance scenes that accompanied the acting and singing. photo by Kayla Le

also involved within the musical and not the only faculty member to be a part of the production.

"The choir director is Mr. Lewis, and the orchestra, who is actually going to be playing live, their conductor is Mr. Mayer, the band teacher," Driscoll said. "The choreography [was created by] a combination of me, a couple of students, Ms. Edwards, the dance teacher, and a couple of her students doing sort of bits and pieces of different things. One of my varsity theater students, Samantha Mason, has choreographed two songs, and Jenn Ramirez-Mendoza, who's in the play, is also helping choreograph some. Ms. Edwards is choreographing some of her dancers to be the wolves to do the dance fight with the wolves, and then one of the big numbers, 'Be Our Guest.' We all kind of just put it together."

Sophomore Maka Perry has been doing musicals since the second grade and really enjoys them. He plays Gaston in "Beauty and The Beast."

"Gaston is just a very big fun character," Perry said. "He's very loud and out there, and that's very fun to play."

This is actually Perry's second time doing this musical. He last performed it in 8th grade when he was Cogsworth, the clock.

"It's very new, because they're not in very many scenes together, but it's nice to do it again," Perry said. "It's nice to get a new perspective, as well."

Set pieces and props are done by tech theater, and they are also in charge of stage management while a show is going on. This year, for "Beauty and The Beast," most of the costume design and creation was done outside of LASA.

"We did, for this one, bring in a professional costumer who's helping us pull things and borrow things from other schools as well as make a couple of things," Driscoll said. "We're mostly renting for 'Beauty and the Beast,' but some of it we are making."

For freshman Riley Wayt, "Beauty and The Beast" is his very first musical, and he says the atmosphere is really nice. Everyone is very supportive and compassionate.

"First off, if your voice cracks, everyone is

really understanding and no one laughs," Wayt said. "The same goes for missing a line. Other than that, it starts out a little awkward with learning lines and songs, but when you get those down and you start working on the miscellaneous stuff like tone, costumes, props, and what to do on stage, it's terrifyingly fun."

According to Driscoll, operating behind the scenes can be a very busy time for members of the play and teachers helping to direct. Some, like Perry, practice almost every day.

"I usually just practice when I have time," Perry said. "I practice it quite a bit. I'd say about eight to ten hours a week [spent] going to practice rehearsal."

In a normal year, the musical takes about two-and-a-half months of production before it can be shown. This year, the Alley Cat Players only had two months.

"We started a little bit later because of an issue with getting the rights approved," Driscoll said. "Typically, we start in November, and we open at the end of January. For this one, we didn't start till December, and we're opening at the very start of February. So it's usually about two and a half months. And we've got that time off at winter break. This one, we're trying to do it in two months, and it's a little tight."

According to Driscoll, when directing a musical, there are usually many people working with different branches, but there is only one director for this musical. This can be a little stressful, making it one of the hardest things about being the director.

"I think the hardest part is doing the acting direction and the tech direction as one person, because a lot of other high schools have a tech director and have an acting director," Driscoll said. "I'm always splitting time. I'm always trying to help the tech build and watch over their design and stuff, as well as trying to do all the acting direction. So I think for me, that's probably the hardest part,

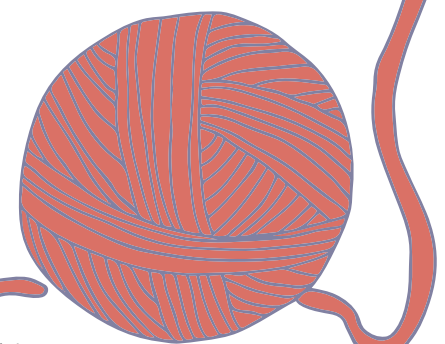


**LAST HURRAH** The cast of Beauty and the Beast closes out the show with a final bow. The Alley Cat Players performed four shows at the AISD Performing Arts Center. photo by Kayla Le

juggling those two big worlds."

After the practice, making the props, and directing, the musical is ready for an audience. This is many participants' favorite part of the process, including Driscoll, who loves connecting the musical to the audience.

"[I love] making exciting things for the audience to see, especially surprises," Driscoll said. "Anytime you can make something, even if the audience is expecting it, you can make it really cool. [It's just special] having moments where you can make the audience surprised and have fun, those moments where you can make them want to cry or feel really sympathetic to the characters."



graphic by Katie Busby

## Welcome to the Club Alternative Athletic Options at LASA

SYDNEY JONES | staff writer

LASA is host to many different University Interscholastic League (UIL) sports, as well as various club sports. Club sports are different from typical UIL-level sports in terms of practices, schedules, and coaching changes.

Club sports like ultimate frisbee, water polo, and lacrosse are not a part of UIL and therefore function differently. The coaches, for example, aren't required to be in the school district, but are instead sponsored by teachers. Students also don't receive a physical education credit for playing, and often captains are in control of the training schedule.



**LINNING UP THE SHOT** LASA's lacrosse team plays a game against another Austin high school team. Lacrosse is a great opportunity to compete and work out with friends. photo by Madeleine Van Slyke

have been able to meet and make friends they wouldn't normally be able to do without an extracurricular like club sports. This is no exception for Flowers, who has gotten the opportunity to meet older LASA students who can serve as friends and mentors as well as how to work well with them in a competitive setting.

"I've met a lot of new people, especially upperclassmen," Flowers said, "which is fun because then they can tell you stuff about LASA or ultimate. Ultimate is also big on sportsmanship. You definitely learn a lot about sportsmanship and being a good player."

Club sports also seem to attract less players than UIL sports. Pigford said that other sports, such as water polo, have fewer players because of graduating seniors. Although participating in sports with fewer members can be hard, players often enjoy it, according to Pigford.



**SWIMMING TO SUCCESS** Freshman Lucy Pigford plays on LASA's water polo team. She enjoys being a part of the team and getting in a good work out. photo by of Ava De Leon

"Water polo is a pretty challenging sport because it is full contact and involves a lot of swimming, but it is a great workout and I would definitely recommend people to join the team," Pigford said. "Plus, with a good chunk of our players graduating last year, we need new players."

Club sports are often unknown to students until recommended by others, according to Pigford. Pigford said she's happy with her decision to join a club sport, and hopes others will do the same.

"I joined last year when I was a freshman and I was the only freshman to join the girls team," Pigford said. "I was told by a swim team captain that swimmers would be good at water polo so I filled out an interest form and decided to join the team. It was definitely a leap of fate because I had never played water polo before, but I am so glad I made that decision."



**WALKING OUT ON THE FIELD** The Vertikills, LASA's ultimate frisbee team gets ready to play a game. Ultimate is a primarily student led sport and has opportunities for leadership positions. photo courtesy of Caroline Stone

Sophomore and water polo player Lucy Pigford has noticed a difference between the club sports and UIL. While most sports are run through UIL, club sports happen through different organizations.

"Water polo is club because it is organized by another organization, TISCA [Texas Interscholastic Swim Coaches Association]," Pigford said.

Freshman and ultimate frisbee player Storey Flowers observed a difference in how club and UIL sports are run. With the former, captains have more control of how the schedules and practices go versus a coach being in complete control.

"[Club sports are] different because you have the captain run practices instead of a coach," Flowers said. "But that's also kind of fun because if everyone's really tired, they can kind of go easy on you and definitely make adjustments. They're much more approachable for questions than a coach would be. They do have to set up the tournaments themselves, but that's also kind of nice, because then you can meet new people from other schools and make connections and network."

Senior and lacrosse team captain Reiko Andrews has been playing on the team since she was a freshman and it has not only let her meet friends but gave her an opportunity to compete and work out. According to Andrew, many of the students in club sports like her have been able to meet other students and make good friends.

"I met a lot of my close friends when I joined LASA lacrosse my freshman year, and I continue to keep contact with alumni who have graduated," Andrews said. "Everyone on the team is fun, energetic, and supportive, and I consider them all to be my close friends."

According to Flowers, many athletes

## Reaching for the Frisbee Senior Goes to Ultimate National Tryouts

ANNABEL ANDRE | sports editor

LASA has many athletic talents, one of whom includes senior Caroline Stone, who has the chance that high school athletes often strive for: to be recognized for their talent. She has been playing ultimate frisbee almost her whole life, and now she is ready to bring it to the next level and possibly even towards playing professional ultimate.

Stone was scouted by a coach for the National Youth Ultimate Frisbee team after she won the quarterfinals of a national tournament and her coach encouraged her to submit an application for the national team. 100 other players got the opportunity to try out, and Stone is one of two from Texas. The tryouts are on March 19 and 20 in Seattle, Washington, and if she is accepted for the



**SNEAK ATTACK** Caroline Stone intercepts the frisbee from an opponent during a game. She plays ultimate all the time, and it is something she wants to pursue professionally. photo courtesy of Caroline Stone

team, she and 49 other players would train over the summer and compete in the World Championships in Poland this August.

Stone has been playing ultimate frisbee since she was in fifth grade and currently plays for LASA's team, the Vertikills, and multiple club frisbee teams outside of LASA. Pursuing ultimate frisbee professionally is a dream of hers, and making the national team would open countless opportunities for her.

"[Ultimate frisbee] is my favorite thing to do of all time," Stone said. "So if I do make the national team, it'll make applying to professional teams, like the professional team in Austin [easier]. I want to take this as far as I can. I'm applying to colleges that have especially good frisbee teams."

Junior Andy Wang has played ultimate with Stone since eighth grade and is currently co-captain with her for LASA's team. After seeing her effort and dedication to the sport over the years, he believes that she deserves this chance that could bring her further into the ultimate world.



**PASSING THE FRISBEE** Stone plays a game on LASA's ultimate team, the Vertikills. Stone believes they are one of the best high school teams in Texas. photo courtesy of Caroline Stone

"I think the biggest thing would be that her name would be more widespread and that more people would know just how good of a fighter she is, not just of players in Texas, but more on a national level," Wang said. "I think that trying out and putting her name out there, and even making the team, would solidify her as a national talent in the sport."

Similarly, senior and another co-captain of Vertikills AJ Leigh has been playing ultimate with Stone for years and has come to admire many aspects of her game. According to him, she is able to lead a team and is incredibly decisive and hardworking, characteristics that Leigh believes have gotten her to the level that can bring her to the national team.

"Whatever she wants to do, she works as hard as she can to do it," Leigh said. "She knows that she can make it, and I think she wants to put in a lot of work to do that. So I guess that's why she has been working so hard because she can put in the work she needs to do for the national team."

Stone has been playing ultimate for years, something that was originally driven by her father's love of the sport. Her brother developed a love for the sport as well, and like her, he tried out for the national team when he was her age, but unfortunately tore his ACL and was unable to play. According to her, she feels she has to pursue her dreams where her brother wasn't able to, especially when he has been helping her train so much.

"My brother and my dad are really just on me for working out," Stone said. "Constantly throwing constantly. My biggest concern is just making my dad and my brother proud. Because they've been really, really successful in the sport and proven themselves around the city and around the state for just being



**HARD AT WORK** Stone leaps to catch the frisbee during a game. She hopes her hard work gets her a position in the national youth ultimate team. photo courtesy of Caroline Stone

top notch players. That would just feel really good, to continue what they've been doing."

Stone is also incredibly thankful of LASA's ultimate team and the experiences she has had as a member and captain of it. She doesn't think she could have had the opportunity to make it to the national tryouts without all of the practice she has had with the Vertikills.

"I think a lot of people that go to LASA, forget that they go to the school that has the best, arguably the best frisbee team in Texas," Stone said. "For some people that just kind of goes over their heads, or people around the school don't really talk about it. It's a super cool sport and I'm super honored to captain this team. I'm super honored to have this opportunity."

# editorial Realizing It's Okay to Not Be Okay Professional Athletes Reflect on Mental Health and its Acceptance in Sports

SANWI SARODE | sports editor

It's not unusual for people to struggle with their mental health, and yet, many don't take it as seriously as they should. Athletes in particular have received criticism about their decisions to withdraw from competitions due to mental health struggles. It's often easy to see athletes as figures of strength and invincibility, but it's important to remember that at the end of the day, they too deserve time to take care of themselves.

In 2021, Simone Biles withdrew from the Tokyo Olympics after deciding that she needed to focus on her mental health. According to the Associated Press, after withdrawing, Biles said, "At the end of the day, we're human, too. So, we have to protect our mind and our body, rather than just go out there and do what the world wants us to do." It's necessary that athletes decide how to navigate their careers according to their own desires instead of the world's.

Although she received a heartwarming amount of support from her fans, she also faced a lot of backlash. Big name far-right celebrities like talk show host Candace Owens and Christian news satire website Babylon Bee owner Seth Dillon discredited her decision, Dillon tweeting, "Simone Biles just said sitting out the big competitions shows how strong you really are. That's like saying soldiers who run away from battle are courageous. Cowardice is not courage; weakness is not strength. Great athletes understand this."

It is disheartening to see great athletes go under fire for prioritizing their personal health, even though this is a fundamental part of a healthy lifestyle. Without knowing what's happening

behind the scenes in an athlete's shoes, it's disrespectful to call out an athlete for taking time off. Simone Biles' withdrawal wasn't cowardice; it was bravery. It takes a lot of strength to admit that you're not feeling well and step down from something you love for the overall performance of a team. After Biles withdrew, Team USA was able to win the silver medal for gymnastics, something that Biles believed was at risk if she had participated.

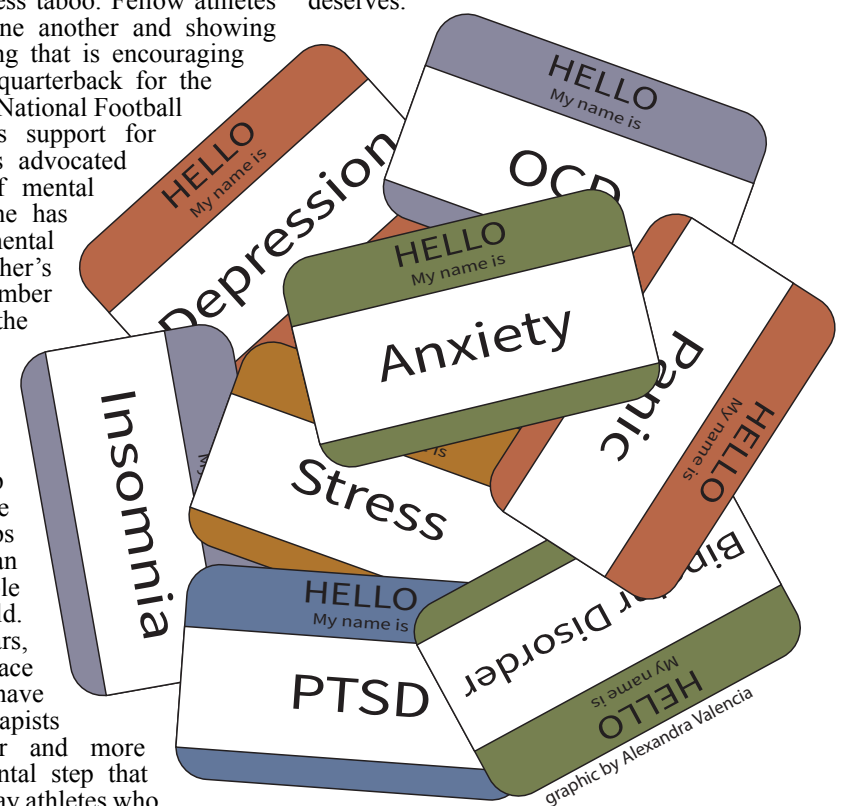
Biles isn't the only athlete who has had to make a tough decision recently. Naomi Osaka, the former #2 women's tennis player in the world, withdrew from Wimbledon in 2021 after facing bouts of anxiety and depression off the court since the US Open in 2018. During this event, she was loudly booed by the crowd after her opponent Serena Williams was given a controversial game penalty. Earlier in the year, she had also received fire for not participating in a mandatory press conference at the French Open. Osaka had announced that she would not do any news conferences at the French Open because they can often be damaging to her mental health. According to The New York Times, Osaka said she had seen too many players break down during interviews and leave in tears, and that the process felt like it was "kicking a person while they are down."

The lack of understanding she received from this decision was frustrating. There is a lot of pressure on athletes to perform, especially after they have reached a certain milestone like Osaka has. Having millions of eyes on them from all over the world during an interview doesn't ease anyone's nerves.

Despite the self-righteous opinions of people who don't support the personal decisions of athletes, there is hope for athletes in the future. According to NBC, awareness about mental health has been on the rise since 2010, and the subject is becoming less and less taboo. Fellow athletes are standing up for one another and showing their support, something that is encouraging to see. Dak Prescott, quarterback for the Dallas Cowboys in the National Football League, expressed his support for Simone Biles and has advocated for the importance of mental health. He too says he has struggled with his mental health since his brother's death in 2020. In September of 2021, he launched the Ask4Help campaign to raise awareness about mental health and promote suicide prevention programs.

Prescott's Ask4Help campaign is just one of the many groups reaching out to tackle an issue that affects people all around the world. Within the past few years, startups such as Talkspace and BetterHelp have made access to therapists and counselors easier and more affordable, a monumental step that gives support to everyday athletes who

felt limited by previous options. With more time and continued acknowledgement, perhaps one day our society can get to a place where athletes get respect for their personal decisions and mental health is treated with the amount of care it deserves.



graphic by Alexandra Valencia

# Staying on the Sidelines

## Sports Managers Role in School Athletics

AVA SPURGEON | staff writer

While athletic managers are behind the scenes, they still remain an integral part of a team. The majority of athletic teams at LASA have multiple managers who help the team run smoothly, work that is often overshadowed by the accomplishments of the players on the team.

Sophomore Liesl Geiger is one of four managers on the girls' soccer team. Geiger regularly attends practices with the girls' soccer team to help assist and manage.

"I go to one or two practices a week, and I usually start with getting all the supplies like balls, nets, and goals and cones out to the field," Geiger said. "If there's anything that needs to be set up or moved during the middle of practice, I do that as well. I also catch balls and run around if there's any extra help that needs to be done."

The work of the student managers doesn't go unnoticed by the players, according to junior Harriette Fraser, a player on the LASA girls' soccer team. She believes having the managers makes a huge difference in the team's productivity and how well their practices run.

"It's really helpful and nice to have the managers there because they'll be setting up the drills while we're doing other things," Fraser said. "We have more time to actually practice and everything just moves much smoother."

Not all teams run the same way as the soccer team, though. The role of the team managers varies from team to team. While the soccer managers mostly attend practices, work with setting up, and make practices run

smoother, the boy's basketball managers do different work. Senior Journee Coleman is one of the basketball team's two managers this year.

"During home games, we run the clock and do the book and keep score," Coleman said. "We also do the music and the announcements and coordinate with the cheer team. We also go to every away game and do the book for every away game. We have their stats, we set up and tear down the gym too. We also help with transportation if we can't get a bus in time."

Students who manage teams found that there are many benefits to becoming a manager. Geiger manages the soccer team as a chance to spend time with friends on the team and earn the PE credit required to graduate.

"I have Ms. Cardinale for great ideas, and she talked me into it," Geiger said. "I know a lot of people on the team, so I thought it would be fun to talk to them and connect to them. Also, it's a good way to get PE credit."

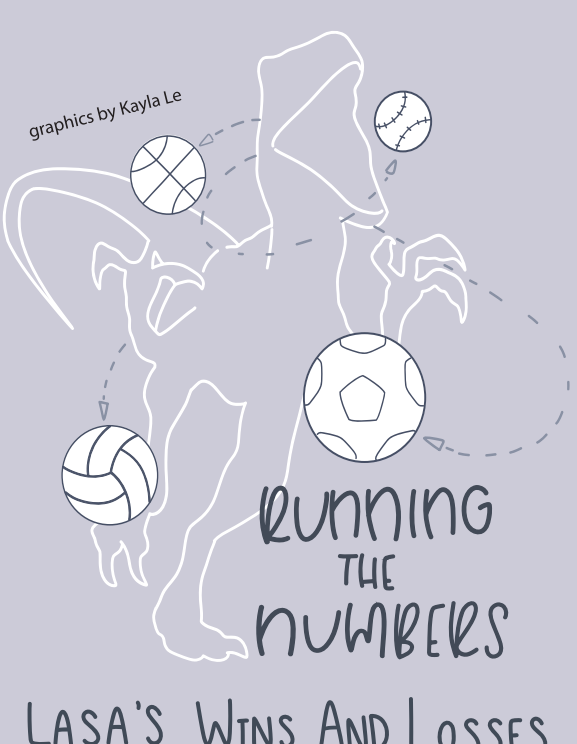
However, Coleman decided to become a manager for very different reasons than Geiger. Her decision to become a manager was more spontaneous and was made after she decided she wanted to spend more time with her friends.

"I didn't think that I would have anything to do this spring semester so I thought it would be fun and I wanted to do something with Lana, the other manager, so we just decided to do it," Coleman said.

Although they may not compete at games or train at practices, managers are still an integral part of the team. According to Coleman, it took some time for the players to warm up to the idea of managers and include them as a part of the team, but the managers now feel like an important part of the team.

"I do feel like I'm part of the team," Coleman said. "It's funny, because at first none of the boys on our team liked us at all and would ignore us. They thought it was weird that we were going to everything."

Now, everyone is very good friends; we all go and eat together after games or before games, and when they lose we get disappointed too, and when they win we get happy for them."



# Training During the Offseason

## The Importance of Conditioning for Sports

NAYAN KONDAPALLI | staff writer

When it comes to high-school sports, most students think about the somewhat short season of games that last for a few months, only to see them again the next year. But there is a lot more that goes on than games, and to ensure student-athletes are prepared to play better than ever during the season, there's a period of time athletes, specifically football players, take advantage of called the "offseason."

The offseason is an important time for the football team to improve their skills without the competitive edge. The football coach uses this time to keep their athletes in shape, run scrimmages, test out new plays, and assign positions to each player. In doing so, the football team can improve upon the mistakes and shortcomings from the previous season, while allowing new players to get accustomed to the game.

Freshman football player Khush Lalchandani played multiple positions on the defensive line and offensive line. According to him, the offseason serves as a period of time where athletes can relax after a long season.

"After our last game of the season, we take a break and celebrate the end of the football year," Lalchandani said. "But come second semester, everything's back to normal."

Athletes have to be in shape, especially for football, which requires athletes to be strong and have lots of stamina. According to Lalchandani, Conditioning requires time and consistent workouts, and offseason practices are the perfect time to do that.

"One of the things we consistently do in our football class is lift weights to maintain our strength, and make us less injury-prone for the next season," Lalchandani said. "This is something we consistently do, it doesn't matter what time in the season it is."

Senior Ryan Aparicio plays multiple defensive and offensive positions on the football team and noted the varying skills and jobs each position is responsible for. According to him, while keeping up personal fitness is important for athletes to play well in a game, it is also important to know how to play the game as efficiently and effectively as possible.

"A lot of people might think that players just go out on the field, running however they want or trying their best to sack the quarterback, but there is a lot more to it," Aparicio said. "Every time we're out on the field, there's some set play that we're trying to execute. We'll have

memorized a bunch of these plays and decide which one works best based on what the other team is doing. The better we follow the play, the higher chance we have of doing what we got to do."

Even though all the plays in a book could be perfectly practiced, there is always a chance that competition can throw in something new. According to Aparicio, the offseason provides the perfect opportunity to touch up on skills and prepare for the unexpected.

"We can't just memorize all the plays and say, 'Alright we're done' we need to find a way to improve upon what we have and come up with new strategies," Aparicio said. "This is why, aside from the practice we

have during the season, we'll play scrimmages and perfect what we have in spring so we turn out better next year."

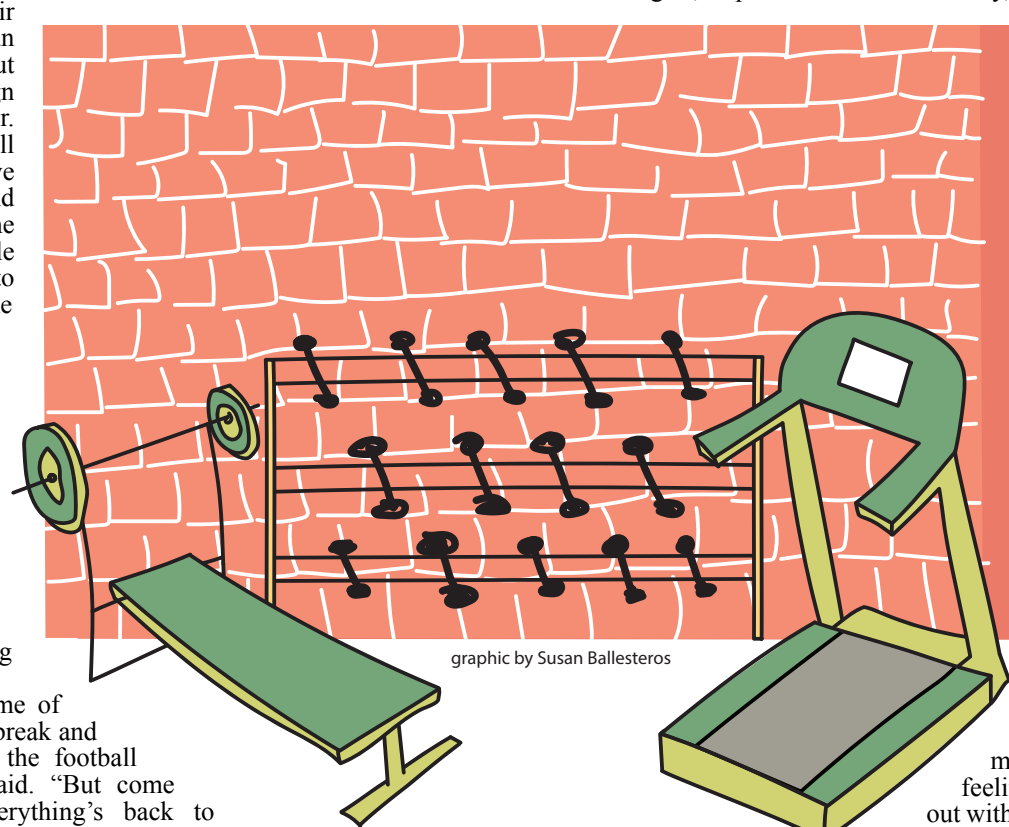
Sophomore Adith Chagarlamudi plays defense on the football team and also has football as an athletic period that provides extra time to practice. According to him, this period gives him the opportunity to condition as well as bond with his teammates.

"During our football athletic period we would go into the weight rooms and squat or bench," Chagarlamudi said. "A lot of the time we're challenging others to see the most they can lift or bench. For the most part it's fun rather than feeling tedious, we get to hang out with our teammates and there's not much that makes us feel like we're doing this out of our own will."

Alongside preparing athletes for the next season, athletes are able to form friendships while working out. According to Chagarlamudi, conditioning also helps athletes not only improve at football, but also get workouts without having to carve out time in their schedules.

"It's nice that we get to do this since I don't have to take a separate time of day out of my schedule to work out, I could just do it while preparing for football," Chagarlamudi said. "With football, it's a constant grind, and I'm just glad I can come out benefiting from it aside from the sport."

The offseason practices for football are set to continue until early October next season. The players will practice every football athletic class or every Tuesday and Thursday morning for weight training. Scrimmages are supposed to begin sometime in March or April, while general workouts and practices will continue throughout summer leading up to next year's season.



# THE RAPTOR RUN DOWN

DELIA RUNE | finance director

Every issue, The Liberator sends a reporter into the field to try a new sport and write about their experiences.

When I arrived at the Morris Williams golf course on a chilly Tuesday afternoon, I wasn't sure what to expect from golf. I didn't know much about the sport apart from the fact that it was somewhat similar to putt-putt, and the players get to wear cute outfits. It took me about one failed attempt to hit the ball to realize that golf was more difficult than I had given it credit for.

We started off golf practice by collecting the golf balls and heading to "the range." As I waited for my turn to try to hit the ball, I watched rows of middle-aged men with AirPods swing their clubs and knock ball after ball into the air with clean precision. I imagined that when it was my turn, that my own golf skills would look something like that.

Obviously, I was wrong. Before I had even taken my first swing, Mr. Croston, the golf coach, was gently correcting me and demonstrating how I should hold my club. I did my best to interlock my fingers the way he had shown me and take aim. Nerves washed over me as I lined myself up to hit the ball. I took two practice swings before I tried to hit the ball. I missed it completely and swung my club hard into the air instead.

Immediately, Mr. Croston jumped in again, reminding me to keep one arm straight and bend my knees a little. I tried again, and, this time, I hit the ball. At first, holding the golf club was a little awkward, but, as I practiced, it became more and more comfortable.

Over the course of the next forty minutes, me and two other members of LASA's golf team—Zaye Beadle and The Liberator news co-editor Luci Garza—rotated who was putting and the stroke used to get the golf ball into the hole, and took turns watching one another play. Mr. Croston was always nearby and

jumped in whenever someone got a few swings in a row that didn't go very far.

One thing that stood out to me about the golf team was the low-pressure, inclusive atmosphere. Even though I was terrible at the sport, I never felt like I stood out or was being made fun of by the other members of the team or even the serious golfers at the course. A handful of the team was also completely new to the sport, and it was comforting to feel like everyone was learning how to play alongside me.

The next and final portion of the golf lesson was to go to the course and try to get a few golf balls into the holes. This was by far the most embarrassing part of the entire day for me.

Although the process of hitting a ball into the small holes marked by flags in the ground is not difficult—in fact, it is very much like putt-putt—I still managed to make a grave error.

See if you can catch my mistake: I took hold of my club the way I had practiced on the range, lined it up with the ball, took one practice swing, and then knocked it with all of my might into the air. I did everything the way I had just been practicing, but the moment the ball entered the air I realized where I had gone wrong.

Had we still been on the range, that would have been a decent shot. But we were not on the range, where the goal seemed to be to get the ball to go as high and as far as possible. Instead, we were on the course, where the goal was to get the ball to glide into one of the holes on the ground.

I watched in horror as my ball soared above all the others and landed yards away from where I was aiming—and directly on top of someone else's ball.

The rest of the golf team laughed at me for a solid minute, but I didn't feel like I was being made fun of. We collected my ball and resumed playing.

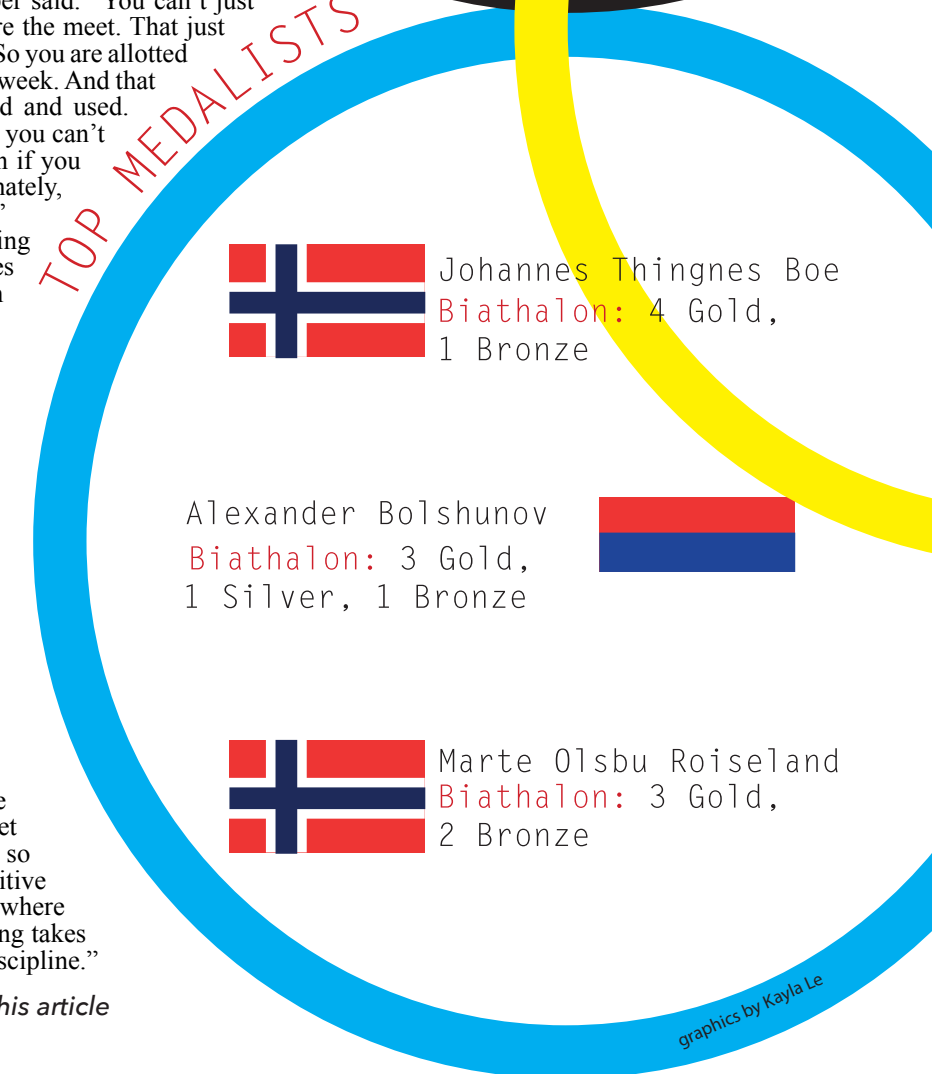
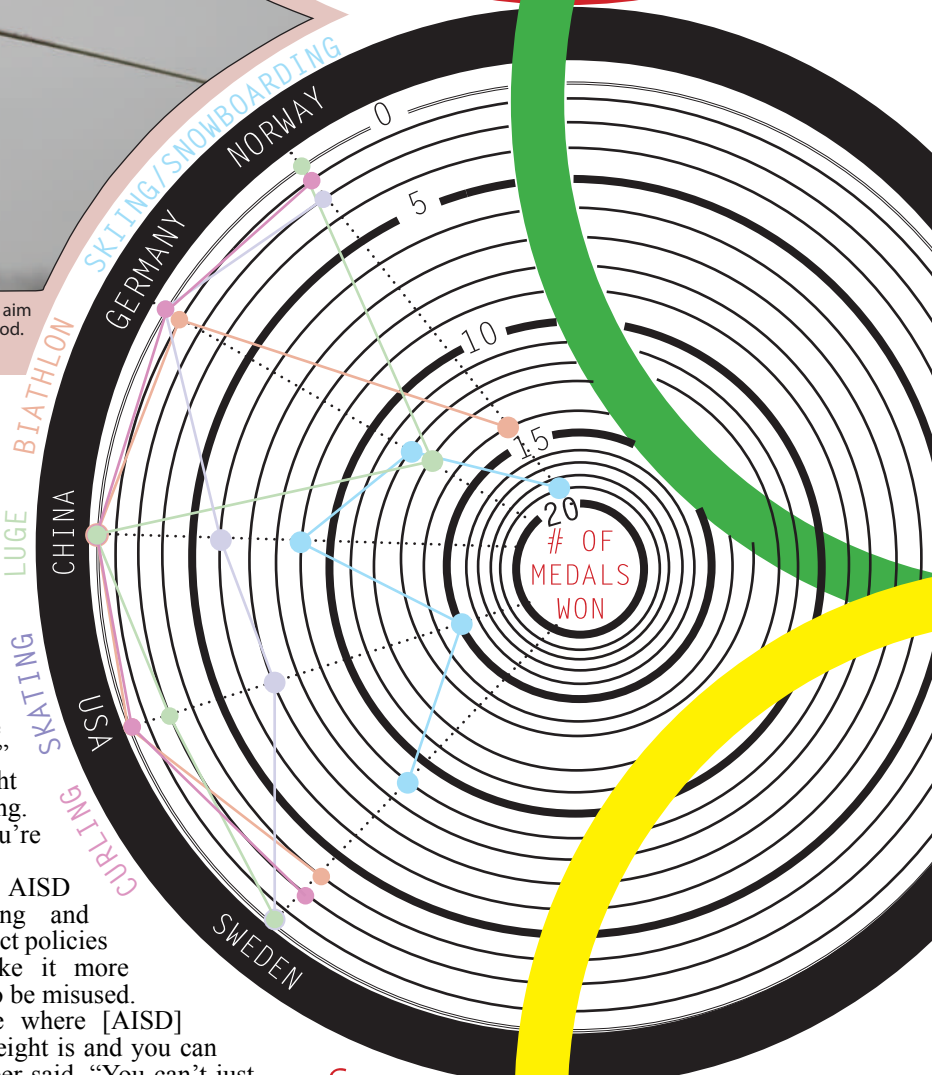
This experience was indicative of what it felt like to be a (temporary) member of LASA's golf team. The atmosphere was warm and very comfortable for complete beginners like myself, and Mr. Croston and the rest of the team were incredibly supportive and helpful. I am definitely more interested in golf now than when I started out and I had the best time stumbling along to figure it out, commitment free.



**TAKING A SWING** Finance Director Delia Rune takes her chances at golfing. She prepares to use the skills she learned to put the ball into the hole. photo by Kayla Le



**JUST WATCH AND OBSERVE** Croston, the golf coach, instructs Rune on how to aim the ball. He is the head coach of the golf team and teaches the golf athletic period. photo by Kayla Le



## Waging War on Weight Watching The Mental and Physical Effects of Wrestling

SANWI SARODE | sports editors  
ANNABEL ANDRE

Article contains references to eating disorders.

Wrestling can be a hard subject to discuss due to the constant monitoring of weight, something that can lead to unhealthy eating habits and sometimes even eating disorders. Bulking and cutting is a concept often involved with wrestling that incorporates gaining muscle mass and then later losing fat mass while still retaining that previously gained muscle mass. This tactic can give a competitive advantage on the mat, but sometimes, the advantage can be outweighed by malnutrition.

According to LASA athletic trainer and director Sue Torres, bulking and cutting can potentially result in athletes having eating disorders. Torres believes that this should be used with caution, especially when it comes to younger athletes.

"They're restricting water. They're trying to eat very little, not eating enough calories," Torres said. "You know, they're doing that on purpose, and it's usually short bouts of it. That's disordered eating. Then, eating disorders [are] the next level."

Wrestling coach Neno December strongly believes that bulking and cutting is an unnecessary measure taken in wrestling. Students have to keep a consistent weight in order to compete due to the Austin Independent School District's (AISD) rules around wrestling which prevents athletes from gaining or losing too much weight. But according to December, the constant monitoring of weight throughout the day is unhealthy.

"I'm against cutting weight," December said. "Because whatever weight class you are in, you are expected to either stay in that weight class throughout the entire season. How much you gain and how much you lose is recorded on a weekly basis, and so I feel like that kind of acts as a countermeasure towards feeding into your eating disorder. Especially if you try to dehydrate yourself to go down a certain weight class."

Torres says that dehydrating is a common method used to lose weight, but often comes with consequences. As a result, Torres

believes that athletes should avoid using dehydration as a method of cutting.

"We don't want them to dehydrate themselves for the purpose of [losing] weight," Torres said. "It just comes right back when you drink something. While you're dehydrated, you're putting yourself at risk."

According to December, AISD regulations emphasize bulking and cutting. He said that AISD's strict policies regarding weight groups make it more likely for bulking and cutting to be misused.

"There is a plan in place where [AISD] checks what your minimum weight is and you can only go down so far," December said. "You can't just lose ten pounds two days before the meet. That just automatically disqualifies you. So you are allotted to lose about two pounds every week. And that is something that gets recorded and used. And if there are any anomalies, you can't participate in the meet. Or even if you do participate in a meet, ultimately, the coach would get in trouble."

Although bulking and cutting comes with drawbacks, Torres said that if done correctly, it can provide an advantage when wrestling. Torres said that younger athletes, as they are less disciplined, often struggle with maintaining their weight according to this principle.

"The problem with high school wrestlers is they're not the most disciplined," Torres said. "When Thanksgiving hits, [they] gain 15 pounds. Now [they] need to get back down to [their] weight class. And also over Christmas break. Those are right smack in the middle of wrestling, which is hard. So what you might have is kids trying to cut weight to get back to their weight class. Not so much to give them a competitive advantage, but to get down to where they're supposed to be. Wrestling takes a tremendous amount of self-discipline."

Jake Smuts contributed to this article



graphic by Kayla Le

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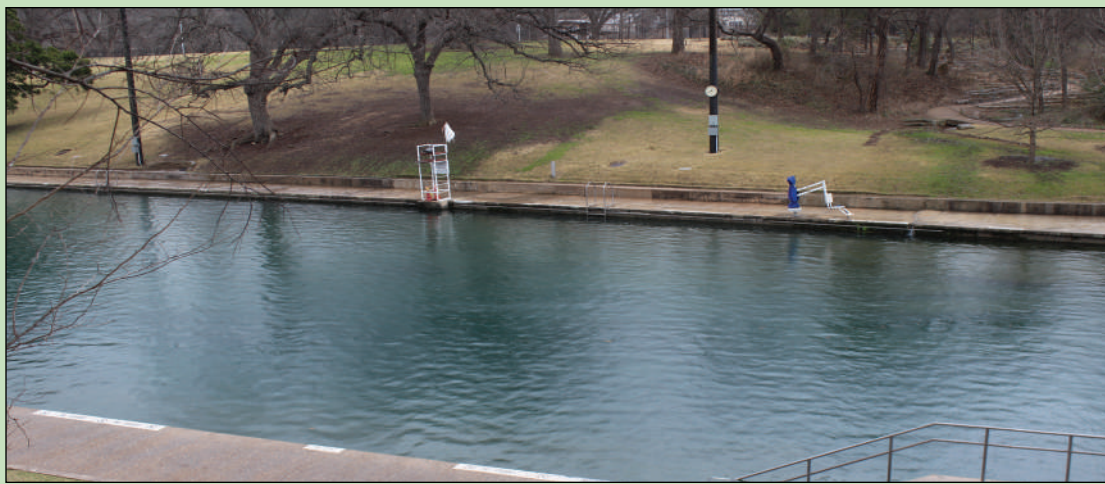


**ALL ABOARD** The Zilker Eagle mini train has made its rounds since 1961, pausing in 2019, but its expected to start again in 2022. The train is one of many features of Zilker Park, a major center for events and activities in the Austin area. photos by JC Ramirez Delgadillo

# SHOWING ZEAL FOR ZILKER

Exploring the Wonders Austin's Most Loved Park Has to Offer

JC RAMIREZ DELGADILLO | photo editors  
MADELEINE VAN SLYKE



**DIVE IN** Barton Springs is a place for people to take a swim during the summer with its warm water but is empty in the winter. photo by JC Ramirez Delgadillo



**TAKE A STROLL** Barton Spring's creek is by the Greenbelt Trail, serving as another alternative to the pool. photo by JC Ramirez Delgadillo

Zilker Park is referred to as the "Jewel in the heart of Austin," by Visit Austin. The park was founded in 1917, and has been claimed to be Austin's most-loved park, according to Austin Parks and Wildlife. Zilker has many recreational opportunities, including a botanical garden and the Barton Spring pool, drawing people to the park and making it one of the best places to spend time, also according to Visit Austin. It has held major annual events such as Austin City Limits and the Trail of Lights.

In 1917, Philanthropist Andrew Jackson Zilker donated the park's land to the city of Austin, and since then, a variety of different traditions have come to life. One of these traditions being a yearly kite festival that has been held every spring since 1936. There are many other attractions, including the Zilker Eagle, a miniature train that passes through a part of the park. The train has been closed down due to erosion in the tracks caused by rain, but is expected to return to the tracks early this year.

Students like junior Aileen Chow enjoy walking the trails that Zilker has to offer and swimming at Barton Springs Pool, but her favorite memory comes from summer camps she has attended at Zilker.

"My favorite memory of Zilker was when I attended several fun summer camps that were organized by the Austin Nature and Science Center," Chow said. "I would enjoy eating and playing games in the park, as well as hanging out with my friends."

Zilker has gone through many changes over the years and has expanded to contain a botanical and sculpture garden, a science center, a theater, and many other of Austin's gems, according to Visit Austin. The park began as 350 mostly undeveloped acres and has grown to house many of the city's favorite events. Many events have been held at Zilker for the past hundred years, and to this day traditions are flying high.



**READING ROCK** The Philosophers' Rock statue depicts the conversations three Austin authors would have by the springs. photos by JC Ramirez Delgadillo



**FIELD DAY** Near the Greenbelt field, empty grasslands can be used for activities such as picnics. photo by JC Ramirez Delgadillo



**PARK'S HOME** Zilker Caretaker's Cottage remains one of the oldest standing structures from the beautification that occurred in the '30s. The cottage now serves as Park Rangers headquarters. photo by JC Ramirez Delgadillo