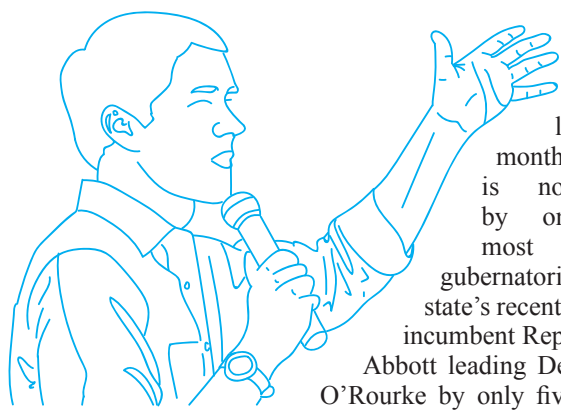




# editorial Guide to the Governor Election Texas Sees Closest Gubernatorial Race in Decades

**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.



With the 2022 midterm elections less than a month away, Texas is now gripped by one of the most competitive gubernatorial races in the state's recent history. With incumbent Republican Greg Abbott leading Democrat Beto O'Rourke by only five percentage points according to a University of

Texas poll conducted in August, many Texans hope to see the state's first Democratic governor since Anne Richards left office more than two decades ago.

The two main contenders in the gubernatorial race are Governor Abbott, a conservative Republican who has served as governor since 2015, and Mr. O'Rourke, a liberal Democrat who has positioned himself as an outsider and a man of the people. Abbott's campaign has described him as a "strong conservative leader who fights to preserve Texas values," focused on addressing issues of education, the economy, and border security. O'Rourke has committed to working against gun violence, poverty, and climate change, as well as opposing restrictions on abortion and immigration. While O'Rourke's platform has been popular with some Texans, including black, Hispanic, and urban voters, it has also drawn criticism for its liberalism in the traditionally conservative state – including from Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick, who called O'Rourke "looney" and "a radical left-winger" in a campaign email.

The most important issue to Texas voters by a 13 percentage point margin, according to the aforementioned University of Texas poll, is immigration and border security. As the state which shares the longest border with Mexico, immigration from Latin America has long been a focal point of Texas politics. The debate over immigration has only intensified since Donald Trump made border security a major component of his 2016 campaign for the United States presidency.

While Donald Trump and other Republicans have continued to call for the construction of a wall along the United States' border with Mexico, some Republican governors, including Abbott,

have begun a program of bussing undocumented immigrants to Democratic strongholds, including New York and the District of Columbia. In September, Florida governor Ron Desantis drew criticism for flying 50 Venezuelan migrants to the traditionally wealthy and white Massachusetts vacation destination Martha's Vineyard, with the White House calling the flights "a political stunt" and inhumane. While the flights were arranged by the Florida governor, their origin was San Antonio, Texas.

With more than 40% of the Texas' population identifying as Hispanic or Latino, according to the United States Census Bureau, and a record number of immigration arrests along the southern border – more than two million for fiscal year 2022, most of which were made in Texas – immigration and the border will likely grow in importance in Texas elections. Though Abbott has praised legal immigration, he has consistently supported heightened security at the border, including a wall, and has called for the deportation of illegal immigrants. O'Rourke, while agreeing with the necessity of certain security measures to reduce human trafficking and smuggling, has called for a simplification of the immigration process and a pathway to citizenship for migrants currently in the United States.

Though it has long been a point of contention in Texas politics, abortion has, in recent months, become another especially relevant issue. In June, the Supreme Court of the United States overruled the landmark Roe v. Wade in its decision in Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health, nullifying the court's earlier assertion of a constitutional right to abortion. Despite consistent criticism from the legal community and an active pro-life movement, many had viewed Roe and the right to abortion as settled law. While Texas had implemented a law allowing civil action to be taken against those who performed or aided an abortion after a fetal heartbeat could be detected in 2021, the state began to enforce a near-total abortion ban in late August following the ruling in Dobbs.

Although the Texas abortion ban does include an exception for the life of the mother, critics such as the American Civil Liberties Union have claimed that the law prevents women from obtaining medical treatment for miscarriages, ectopic pregnancies, and other complicating conditions. While these claims have been disputed, O'Rourke has criticized the law over them as well as the lack of exceptions for cases involving rape and incest. O'Rourke has articulated staunch opposition to abortion restrictions, and promised to "veto any future legislation that seeks to further control women." Abbott, on the other hand, has maintained his support for the near-

total ban on abortions in Texas, promising to "defend the culture of life in Texas."

After the mass shooting at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas that killed 21, many Texans renewed calls for stricter gun laws. The firearm used in the shooting, an AR-15 style rifle, was purchased legally along with multiple other guns and ammunition. The shooting came only weeks after a racially motivated shooting at a supermarket in Buffalo, New York, and was in the mold of other school shootings such as those at Sandy Hook Elementary School and Marjory Stoneman-Douglass High School. Entities such as March for Our Lives have reiterated demands that new restrictions be implemented to prevent future shootings, and have organized protests at the Texas Capitol.

Beto O'Rourke has made gun control a central facet of his campaign, going viral during the 2020 Democratic presidential primary for stating his intent to "take your AR-15s." While O'Rourke has softened his message for the gubernatorial race, stating he is "proud of Texas' long tradition of responsible gun ownership," he maintains his support for a ban on AR-15s, AK-47s, and similar weapons. Abbott has opposed most restrictions on firearms, in 2021 signing into law the removal of a permit requirement to carry a gun in public. Abbott has instead emphasized increased security and better mental health services as ways to prevent future shootings.

There can be no doubt that the upcoming Texas gubernatorial election will be of great consequence. While immigration, abortion, and gun control are some of the most contentious issues, many others, including the state economy and climate change, will be dramatically affected by the outcome of the election. With many LASA students eligible to vote, it is imperative that young people make their voices heard. The decisions made now will impact today's students for the rest of their lives, and the LASA Liberator strongly encourages all who can to be active in Texas politics and vote when eligible.



graphics by Amelia Coleman

## Raptor Chatter

How do you think the upcoming election to decide the governor of Texas will affect LASA students?



photo by Norah Hussani

**Niamh Catterall**  
*Freshman*

I think that if we get a very conservative governor then we will be less likely to actually learn the things we need to learn like critical race theory which is very important to the status of America right now.



photo by Beatriz Marteleto-Lara

**Nico Campanell**  
*Sophomore*

I think the biggest thing that would affect LASA students is abortion. I know that Greg (Abbott) is against them and Beto is probably going to legalize it, so students that are girls or are affected by that, their rights would change.



photo by Beatriz Marteleto-Lara

**Vale Cannon**  
*Junior*

I mean, I think it's like a precedent in politics for Texas. Obviously it'll change how it reflects on our lives, especially for minorities, within LASA, but also setting the precedent for the future.

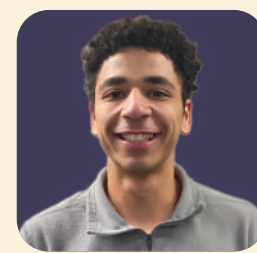


photo by Beatriz Marteleto-Lara

**Josh Crowley**  
*Senior*

I think actually the Lieutenant Governor election between Mike Collier and Dan Patrick is actually more interesting, as they actually have legislative power and decides what the Senate actually hears.

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- If you are interested in writing for the paper and becoming a club contributor then be sure to stop by Room 701 to find out more!**

## the liberator

### Editorial Policy

Responsibilities of a free student press: Serving 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 Liberator 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 Liberator 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.

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The Liberator staff will be governed by an editorial board composed of the following individuals: lead editors and commentary editors.

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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.  
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**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 Liberator will attempt to publish a range of opinions within reason.

Welcome back Raptors, this year is going to be great!



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

## Is Body Positivity Toxic? How a Well-Intentioned Movement Crossed a Line

WINTYR RICE | staff writer



It is said that beauty is in the eye of the beholder, but the media will often only frame specific types of people—typically the young, tall, thin, and able-bodied—as ‘beautiful’. This is despite the fact that the vast majority of people don’t look anything close to that, and never will. That doesn’t mean that they can’t still be beautiful, or that they don’t deserve representation in popular culture. This was the founding principle behind the current iteration of the body positivity movement. What is rarely considered, however, is whether or not the movement could have gone too far.

According to the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), the body positive

movement first started in the late 1960s and exists in retaliation to conventional ideas of beauty, including the idea that everybody should be thin. Initially, people wrote essays in editorials about how larger people were unfairly discriminated against in society. After momentum grew, Bill Fabrey in New York created the National Association to Aid Fat Americans (NAAFA), which has since been renamed to the National Association to Advance Fat Acceptance. The Fat Underground was created around the same time in California, and released their Fat Manifesto in 1973, which called for equal rights for larger people in all settings and labeled the diet industry as one of their primary enemies.

The movement was not perfect though. In the late 1990s, leaders would often try to oppress the voices of people of color, because they felt like it would muddle their message by including multiple issues. Unfortunately, this was quite commonplace at the time, with many groups ignoring voices that didn’t fit with their message, and their message only.

Currently, the movement mainly focuses on making sure people feel comfortable in their own skin, no matter what size or color it may be. It’s a great idea, but many believe that supporters of the movement have taken it a step too far. The current iteration of body positivity also fails to address the stigma that exists around different body types.

Keerthana Kumarasen explains in her article for City Nomads “Why Body Positivity Isn’t All That Positive” that centuries of societal pressure have cemented the idea of what is traditionally considered to be pretty, and many of those ideas are still echoed today. Many people will spend their lives surrounded by media telling them that there is a “correct” way to look in order to be considered beautiful, and that it’s not what they look like.

The body positivity movement tells people that they should love themselves, but it’s impossible to change that kind of mindset over night, and trying to can lead to toxic positivity and the suppression of negative thoughts. This way of thinking is unhealthy, and regularly leads to worsening body dysmorphia, anxiety, depression, and eating disorders—the opposite of what body positivity is trying to achieve.

Many supporters of the movement are angry with the diet and exercise industries, and understandably so. The industries have repeatedly taken advantage of societal pressures to be skinny, and used them to push diet and exercise regimens on people who were already perfectly healthy. But as Nathalie Hosch pointed out in an article written for Mass Media and Culture, the criticism for diet industries has quickly evolved into the idea that anyone who goes on a diet or starts exercising more, must be against body positivity, when that often isn’t even close to the truth. Loving yourself also means taking care of yourself, and it is more important now than ever to remember that the two are far from mutually exclusive.

It should also be kept in mind that when the NAAFA was created, the percentage of adult Americans considered obese was at 13%, according to the CDC—nowhere near the 42% seen today. Even now, most people are not including obesity when saying that bigger bodies can be healthy too.

This is an important distinction because being excessively underweight or overweight can lead to a myriad of health complications. According to the CDC, obesity increases risk for many deadly or life-long afflictions, such as stroke, cancer, heart disease, diabetes, osteoarthritis, and many, many more.

As Rachel Hosie pointed out in her article for Insider, there has lately been a push, especially in online communities, towards the idea that people can be healthy at any size, including sizes that almost no human bodies would ever reach in nature. Communities like this could be convinced that they are in no danger from their weight, even if that weight could be drastically shortening their lifespan. A study by the National Institutes of Health found that severe obesity can decrease life expectancy by nearly 14 years. When people are obese, there is a legitimate reason to be concerned about their health. When these dangers are minimized or outright dismissed, it leads people to believe that they aren’t at any risk, when that couldn’t be further from the truth. Whenever people try to point that out, however, they are attacked with a barrage of hateful comments calling them fat-phobic or anti-body positivity.

It is completely wonderful that people have different sized bodies, and representing that diversity is incredibly important. However, that does not give anyone the right to use body positivity as an excuse to promote toxic positivity, shame people for trying to be healthy, or encourage obesity. People are allowed to love and appreciate their bodies, and the central idea behind body positivity should be encouraged, but when that idea is twisted and used to harm people, that’s where a line should be drawn.

## ask the lib



graphic by Amelia Coleman

### How do I establish boundaries with my schoolwork?

In order to establish boundaries with your schoolwork, it is important not to let it pile up. The only way that you can possibly manage the immense amounts of work that are assigned to you each week is to get them done ASAP. However, it may be difficult to get started everyday, which is why you need to block out time specifically for homework and nothing else. An easy way to segment this time is to use different study techniques. The Pomodoro technique has you study for 25 minutes and break for five, and the pareto analysis technique helps to prioritize what needs to be done first. No matter what strategy you use, time management is imperative in maintaining a healthy work-life balance. Even so, there’s always nights when assignments have built up so much that there is no possibility of completing everything. In this scenario, no matter what, make sure you’re able to get a sufficient amount of sleep. If you’re functioning on fumes, you’re not going to be able to complete things with full effort and thought. It is better to have to ask for extensions on certain things and not do others the day they’re assigned than to get points off on things the next day because you’re so drowsy. The best boundary to set with your schoolwork is not letting school thoughts, assignments, and tests occupy your mind more than 12/24 hours a day. Unless it’s AP exam week of course.

### How do I maintain healthy friendships?

In the whirlwind of assignments, tests, extracurriculars, and LASA stress, friendships and relationships tend to take the back burner for many students. However, friends are one of the only escapes from this fast-paced day-to-day life, and those friends should be a source of comfort and relief. Friendships need care and nurture or they can quickly become another origin of anxiety. In order to ensure your relationships with friends stay positive and thriving, it is crucial to communicate. Because LASA life can get so stressful and relationships get lost in the madness, communication can dwindle between friends. This often leads to miscommunications and misunderstandings, so it is important that you check in with friends at least a couple times a week. Whether it’s a quick text about how their day’s doing, stopping them in the hall to say hello, or an activity on the weekends, these small interactions can not only improve your friendship, but also improve your mental health. Everyone needs a person to check in with and wind down with, especially when things are hectic.

### 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.

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

## Online Alphas Cause Alarm

JOLIE GROGAN | staff writer



Alpha males are an increasingly popular cultural phenomenon. Defined as “bold, self-confident, and demanding” by the Harvard Business Review, these men are known by the term “alpha male” because they believe they are dominant and are better than other groups such as women, those who are less financially prosperous than them, and regular males who don’t exhibit the same characteristics that they do. At the forefront of the popularization of this term are influencers across social media websites who spread their message in loud videos. These videos are made by influencers for the sole purpose of flaunting their wealth to show other men that affluence is what comes out of being an alpha. Whether it’s a TikTok about alpha male influencer Andrew Tate or an Instagram post guiding followers on how to “become an alpha,” there is a clear connotation that goes along with this.

The influencers explain how to become successful economically and romantically by following the rules of the alpha man—what they call the superior man. Some people seem to believe that these influencers are qualified to spread this information. Part of why they’re so supported is because their ideas are very compelling and tempting to a certain demographic. Alpha male culture and sexism seem to go hand and hand though. The dangerous temptation of this culture appeals to men who have struggled to be successful and see the culture and ways of these males as a way to become rich. Alpha male culture negatively impacts society in many ways, as their ideas are offensive and harmful to a large number of people.

In modern day society, the workforce is quickly becoming balanced, with the wage gap rapidly closing in 22 metropolitan areas such as New York City, Los Angeles, and Washington D.C. (NPR). Additionally, according to

Matthew Zane of Zippia, women now make up about 47% of the workforce, which means men have to compete much more with women to get jobs or promotions than they did in the past. For some men who can’t seem to succeed, blaming women for their problems or objectifying women seems easier than admitting that they have achieved their success through merit. Some men have been attracted to the idea that the way to get rich and be successful is by being an alpha male, carrying confidence, and taking what they want. On platforms like TikTok and YouTube, alpha male influencers describe what they think makes a man a real alpha. Their beliefs are highly troubling. Alpha males consider women to be objects meant to be admired and taken care of and believe that women don’t belong in the workforce, according to the Guardian. Alpha males also don’t consider any man that doesn’t take control of what he wants, no matter the cost, to be worth as much as an alpha male. They think that men should take what they want physically, and that showing emotion is weak.

Women are the primary target of the alpha community’s regressive views. Alpha males make the argument that they love women so much that they want to provide for them and take care of them, but don’t want them to have a mind of their own. Those who subscribe to this worldview claim women should not have to work, and men are doing women a favor by allowing them to stay out of the workforce. These dominating men spew out monologues about wanting to protect women—but only the ones they consider to be worthy are what Tate calls, “high value” women—submissive women who will follow them blindly. Alpha influencers have concocted a myth of the ideal woman, and the modern, empowered woman is the opposite of that. A high achieving woman is a threat to an alpha male because she challenges his self-imposed role and perceived importance.

One of the most well-known self-proclaimed alpha males, Andrew Tate, went from a micro celebrity to one of the most talked about topics on social media in a matter of months due to his controversial ideas. Tate first garnered infamy by running Hustlers University, a program where customers paid Tate \$49 per month in exchange for Tate teaching them how to get rich. The program included courses on cryptocurrency and stocks and presented itself as a way to rapidly gain wealth. It eventually

came out in an article by The Guardian that the entire program was a pyramid scheme in which members who referred new people got 48% commission for every person they referred. Additionally, after being banned from TikTok, Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram in August, Tate shut down the site without compensating his customers, according to Forbes.

Despite this controversial scam and the absence of a social media presence, many people continued to follow Tate’s advice and ideas on the ‘anti-cancel culture’ platform Rumble. His audience continues to believe in his views because they want a way to get rich quick. They want a way to feel like they mean something, and if someone comes along giving them a plan and telling them to blame others for the problems they feel they have, chances are they are going to take advantage of that. It’s easy for vulnerable people to fall into someone’s scheme when they are desperate to succeed.

It makes sense for an insecure man to adopt alpha beliefs. It’s instinctual to want to solve problems easily, but what is bad is when there is this idea of toxic masculinity which becomes harmful to others. Women should be treated well and properly loved as well as appreciated for their hard work without having insecure men belittle their accomplishments. Men like Andrew Tate manipulate the feelings of young, impressionable boys, not in the interest of actually helping them, but helping himself and making money.

The mentality of the alpha male is dangerous as a culture. Being aggressive toward others and stopping at nothing is not the way to happiness and success. Anger and violence filled videos are not the kind of content people need to be consuming. Additionally, alpha males should not have large audiences who will shove money at them, fund their fraudulent schemes, and feed their idea that they’re in the right. Many of the people being captured into the whirlpool of these tempting ideas are young boys who see wealth, women, and muscle and begin to yearn for these things themselves. Alpha male influencers use manipulation tactics to grow large followings of these young men to make money to fund their luxurious lifestyles. These are backwards and childish ideas, especially at the expense of knowingly corrupting young minds.



graphic by Alexandra Valencia

## Colleges Perpetuate Elitism Use Exclusive Admissions Processes

SADIE CRAVOTTA | staff writer



Preparing for college has always been an anxiety-inducing endeavor, but the path to admittance is increasingly difficult. We have a broken system that perpetuates classism and undue stress on students and their families. It's time for colleges and universities to overhaul their application process and make it easier for themselves and for high school students preparing for the future.

In May, The Wall Street Journal published a story following Kaitlyn Younger, a girl from Texas who had gone above and beyond in every area of her life in hopes of getting into an Ivy League school. She had been a standout student her whole life. Kaitlyn earned a 1550 on her SATs and graduated high school with a 3.95 unweighted GPA. She performed in and directed multiple plays, sang in the school choir, scored high grades in more than 10 advanced placement classes, helped run a summer camp, and worked part-time. Given her extensive resume and hard work for years, she felt confident when she applied to top schools: Stanford, Harvard, Yale, Brown, Cornell, Penn, the University of Southern California, and others. They all rejected her.

Kaitlyn's story is part of a larger trend. College acceptance rates are at an all-time low. According to a college counseling website Prepory, Boston College's acceptance rate dropped from 32% to 16% in 2022. Northeastern's acceptance rate similarly dropped from 20% to just 7% in 2022. According to Douglas Belkin of the Wall Street Journal, Harvard, always elite but now seemingly impossible, only accepted 3.2% of applicants last year. Brown took in 5%, and Yale 4.5%. But it's not just an Ivy League school trend. It is increasingly harder to get in at state schools, too. Here in our own backyard, the acceptance rate for the University of Texas at Austin has dropped from 40.4% in the 2016-2017 school year to 32% in the 2019-2020 school year.

The plummet in acceptance rates is largely due to a massive increase in applications, according to UT News. Many students feel pressured to apply to more universities to increase their chances of being accepted because acceptance rates are lower, but more applicants simply perpetuates the problem and the vicious cycle continues. During and after the pandemic, the application surge was particularly large because everyone had extra time to give. According to Sarah Wood from US News and World Report, on average, students applied to seven schools in

2021, up from 6.1 in 2020. Wood states that this was because students wanted to find the most cost effective college choice during this time, and needed more options.

Not only is applying to college stressful; it is expensive. This is part of what makes the application process classist and unfair to families who lack the financial means for multiple application fees and to invest in extra help to be optimally prepared for applications. Each application can cost upwards of \$70. With the average student applying to seven schools now, that could cost a family \$630 just to apply. Investments to help support chances of success can include hiring tutors, SAT coaches, or personal college admissions advisors who can cost around \$200/hr or several thousand dollars for package service, according to the U.S. News and World Report.

Additionally, students' options in applications are also impacted by their financial situation. If students apply through the early decision path, they show more interest in the college which can help students get accepted. Certain elite schools, for example, focus on early applicants and some choose them to make up up to 50% of their student body. Alyse Levine from Premium Prep states that admission rates for those that are able to apply early skyrocket. An example of this could be Northeastern university's acceptance rate, which shoots up from 7% to 33% if students decide to apply early decision instead of applying regular decision.

Early decision dramatically increases chances of acceptance, but early decision forces students to go to a certain college if they get accepted no matter if they can afford it. High-achieving high school students from lower income families are less able to pursue because of the financial implications. Students also lose financial aid matching and negotiating opportunities with early decision applications because they already committed to the school instead of being able to weigh their options based on price. Ultimately, we've gotten to a point where the arbitrary, unpredictable application process that the affluent and well-connected can use to their advantage leaves the majority of other people feeling like they must give up their aspirations.

In order to solve this issue, the college application process needs a redesign. Less wealthy students need access to the same resources that more affluent applicants get, and eliminating early admittance would level the playing field while also reducing stress. Another way to deal with part of the problem could simply be expanding space, faculty, or resources to support the admission of more students. Expanding the size of elite schools by 10-15% to make room for more applicants could be a viable solution. This would also make sense because the number of college applicants has nearly doubled since 1970, while acceptance rates have plummeted, according to the National Bureau of Economic Research.

Lastly, there needs to be more support to student's mental health throughout the process, as applying is a taxing process that is so heavy that many students forget to think about themselves. Students have to balance their senior year classes, extracurriculars, college applications, and familial relationships during the process of applying, the stage of anxiety while waiting for acceptance letters, and the process of coping afterwards if they are rejected from some of their dream schools. Students need to know that they have resources and people to look to during these times when they push themselves to their limits, and that not being accepted to a specific college won't close a substantial amount of doors for their future. This is why we also need to destigmatize the idea of Ivy Leagues and elite schools being the only ones that provide opportunities for students, and push the idea of prioritizing mental stability and health over all.

## Austin's Food Desert Issue Citizens Denied Access to Necessities

AMELIA COLEMAN | graphics editor



Maslow's hierarchy of needs is a 5 tier model of human necessities, which is ranked most important on the bottom to least important at the top. On this hierarchy, food is right there at the bottom, showing it is one of the most important things needed for our survival and the foundation to all other aspects of life. So why should we deny people that necessity and let food deserts continue to be prevalent in many cities?

The United States Department of Agriculture defines a food desert as a low-income area where a substantial number of residents do not have easy access to a supermarket or large grocery store. Food deserts exist because of inequalities in income level. Some people who live in low-income neighborhoods have limited funds to purchase fresh produce, so vendors worry their produce would go bad or not make enough profit for them. Food retailers therefore see an investment risk in opening stores in low-income areas, resulting in limited access to food at corner stores and fast food joints.

Around 39.5 million people in the United States live in food deserts, according to the Anne E. Casey foundation, a charitable organization that is one of the leading organizations centered around child welfare issues in the U.S. The lack of grocery stores can have a major impact on the health of residents because limited food sources can force people to buy foods that are more caloric and higher in fat. Medical News Today found that people in food deserts have heightened risks of diet-related conditions, like diabetes, high blood pressure, and cardiovascular disease. Governments need to combat food deserts because everyone should have access to fresh, nutritious food that nourishes and makes lives better.

One example of the government in Austin helping to fight food deserts took place on March 3, 2016. Austin's City Council passed Resolution 20160303-020, which prompted the city manager to develop a plan to combat the city's food deserts. They ended up with a six-step program to try to counter this problem. It included doing a comprehensive Food Environment Analysis, expanding healthy food initiatives, increasing local food production, widely introducing a Nutritious Food Incentives Program, improving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) outreach, and creating Safe Routes to Markets. Much progress has been made, such as the forming of Fresh For Less Market, a program that brings locally grown produce and healthy groceries to people at reduced prices (austintexas.gov). Another way the city of Austin has been combating food deserts is with the Healthy Corner Store program. This program has worked closely with corner stores to help them offer more healthy food options. This works through the City of Austin offering subsidies on nutritious foods if the stores meet a minimum order requirement for these foods. They will continue to subsidize these goods for a year.

One way to reduce food deserts is to incentivize large grocery stores to put down roots in these areas. The incentives would likely be in the form of subsidies on essential foods to offset the losses that these businesses believe they could face when selling in low-income neighborhoods. Bringing in large food retailers would also provide an economic boost to the community through better paying jobs. However, the amount of time these subsidies would need to be continued is a big question that arises out of this solution. There are

some organizations that don't need incentives, though. The Go Austin/Vamos Austin (GAVA) organization has been attempting to help with one of the largest food deserts in Austin: Dove Springs. This initiative has been working closely with business owners and residents of the Dove Springs area to help minimize the negative effects food injustice has on members of these neighborhoods. For example, just this year on Sep. 1, GAVA partnered with the City of Austin to launch a healthy, non-profit grocery store that would be setup in East Austin and that would combat food insecurity in that area.

Another way to address food deserts is to incentivize smaller food retailers, like gas stations or convenience stores, to sell fresh and healthy food options. Many corner stores do not stock fresh produce, and since these retailers are often the main source of groceries in food deserts, families are left with few healthy options. Many cities and local governments can try to combat the issue by providing monetary incentives like subsidies to small food retailers for meeting requirements in the fresh produce they sell. The subsidies would be on the fresh produce in this example. Although gentrification could be a concern if large supermarket chains move into low-income areas, helping local small businesses provide healthier options could avoid this problem.

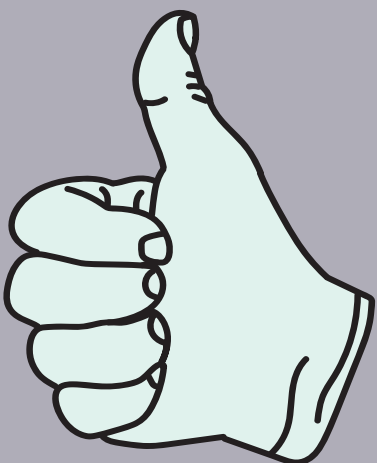
A final way to combat food deserts could be by bringing the food sources directly to neighborhoods, either by farmers markets or community gardens. Locally funded community gardens help these neighborhoods access fresh produce, although the yield would be too small to support a large population. Farmers markets bring produce to neighborhoods and give residents a variety of different choices through different farm vendors. Shopping at farmers markets can be expensive, which is a drawback to this suggestion. However, since many people in these neighborhoods are low-income, they might have access to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. This program can help these families pay for their food and can often be used at farmers markets.

Outside of Austin, many things are being done to combat food deserts. In Louisville, the government has partnered with the non-profit New Roots to create the Fresh Stop Market Program. This program has community members combine money and SNAP credit in order to purchase shares of local food from farmers. The Fresh Stop Market Program launches markets, gathers families who want to become shareholders, and those shareholders receive fresh and healthy food in return. In 2008, Minneapolis required corner stores to carry staple foods, including eggs, grains, milk, and other fresh produce. Since then, Minneapolis has continued to address this problem with each new initiative they create, and have also ensured store owners know how to properly care for and market healthy produce. Because these initiatives have been so successful, they would be great models for Austin to look to and take inspiration from. Whatever solutions communities are able to come up with, they need to come fast. Food deserts are debilitating and can cause chronic health problems, so it's a race against the clock to find a fix so these issues will affect the least amount of people possible.



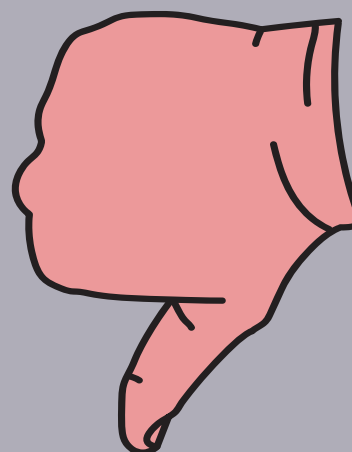
**Vegetable Vacancy** These store shelves are lined with leafy greens, but not every resident of Austin is able to access the added health benefits they offer. People who don't consume enough vegetables are susceptible to ailments such as diverticulosis and dehydration. photo by Ella Lily

## Thumbs Up



Animal Jam  
Ice Water  
Rom-Coms  
DBQs  
Austin City Limits  
Chips and Guac

## Thumbs Down



T-Annex Temps  
Little Caesar's  
Hydroflask Dents  
LEQs  
Speed Bumps  
Sand

graphic by Amelia Coleman

graphic by Amelia Coleman

# Austinites Bid Adieu to Adler with New Candidates

LILY WILKERSON | staff writer

Local elections in Austin have seen low voter turnout for decades, according to the Austin Community College Center for Public Study and Political Studies. One local election this year is the mayoral race, which will determine incumbent mayor Steve Adler's successor. Adler, who has served for two terms, is ineligible to run again. Six candidates will appear on the ballot this November, ranging from local business owners to state representatives to college students.

One of the candidates in the race is Kirk Watson, a democrat and former Texas state senator and mayor of Austin from 1997 to 2001. His campaign manager, Max Lars, said that this previous political experience is a major reason why people should support Watson's campaign.

"There are a lot of things that we enjoy in the City of Austin that are attributed to the work that Kirk Watson was able to do," Lars said. "One of the things that made me want to be his campaign manager, and one of the ways that we're wanting people to know about this campaign, is showing Kirk's record in getting things done."

Lars said that Watson's prior experience in Austin politics gives him an advantage when it comes to tackling the city's biggest issues. Lars listed transportation, homelessness, and particularly housing costs as some of Austin's largest problems in recent years.

"One reason we talk about housing as being a housing emergency is it means that we have to take quick action in order to solve it," Lars said. "There are so many ways in which we can provide more housing into this city, and I think that we have an opportunity to really address them. We have to definitely find ways to reform our current land development code."

Mayoral candidate and UT student Phil Brual also agrees on the need to reform Austin's land development code, or LDC. Brual said that the housing crisis is one of Austin's most pressing issues, and that, if elected, he would make immediate efforts to end it.

"The first thing I would do is basically force our city

council to rezone and redraw the development codes that we have in the city," Brual said. "These codes have been in our system since 1984, and they supported the growth spurt of suburban life. And we just can't keep growing that way because we're pushing a lot of our people out, out, out, and since we can't do new development, prices continue to rise."

Brual criticized other mayoral candidates' housing plans as not going far enough. He said that simply increasing the supply of market-rate housing in Austin would not do enough to keep up with demand.

"The problem that people like Celia and Kirk Watson would face is that rezoning is just very much a temporary solution," Brual said. "The next step that the city would have to do is to use the property that we own as a city... Using this land we could make housing affordable and keep them at prices that serve to keep everything in competition, forcing everything to go low without having to worry about big companies screwing over the common people."

Both Brual and Lars said that homelessness was one of the top issues in the mayoral election. Brual said that his first action as mayor would be to use \$11 million of funds from the American Rescue Plan to help fund homeless shelters in Travis County, while Lars detailed a plan to provide housing for the homeless population.

"The biggest thing is what we already talked about earlier, and that is access to housing," Lars said. "In regards to homelessness, there has been a very large support for permanent supportive housing, which has been... one of the biggest benefactors in supporting our homeless, unhoused population."

Lars said that Watson also supported many steps between supportive housing and doing nothing. He said that some of Austin's current ways of helping the homeless come from Watson's first term as mayor.

"When Kirk was mayor before, he was actually the first one to establish a homeless center for women and children in the City of Austin," Lars said. "When he was mayor before, a lot of these issues that we're facing today, he also had some play in it... he has that ability to look at what's happening now and say 'well maybe we could do it this way.'"

Lars and Brual also agreed on the importance of public transportation for Austin's future. Lars mentioned Watson's history of supporting transit initiatives in the Austin area.

"Kirk has worked both as senator and even when he was mayor, he worked hard for pushing public transportation, and typically rail," Lars said. "There was a bond proposal to create a rail line back when he was mayor that he supported and promoted, unfortunately it was denied, but he was thinking about this nearly 30 years ago."

Both candidates support CapMetro's Project Connect, a multimodal public transit construction project in the Austin area. Brual said that while the project is necessary, he would like to re-evaluate its scope before construction begins.

"The problem is that Project Connect sacrifices way too many small businesses, and way too many areas of our city that make Austin Austin," Brual said. "And that's not even the only issue, the problem costs way more than the original estimate, something around seven billion, but now it's up to ten billion... as a city, we need to take that project, re-evaluate, re-develop, and then get it going, because we've been sitting on our butts for way too long."

While this is Brual's first time running for office, he said that that shouldn't count against him. He said that as a political science student, he has plenty of experience with the political process.

"I've attended way too many city hall meetings," Brual said. "I've studied this kind of local politics in my classes, outside of my classes. There's nothing that holds me back. I've noted sometimes that I'm able to answer questions that Celia, Kirk, or even Gary



SAY CHEESE Mayoral Candidate Phil Brual stands outside of Austin City Hall downtown. Brual is the first college student to run for mayor in Austin. Photo courtesy of Phil Brual via Instagram.



STRIKE A POSE Mayoral Candidate Kirk Watson poses outside of Austin City Hall downtown. Watson runs as a Democrat against Phil Brual. Photo courtesy Kirk Watson via Instagram.

Spellman or Jennifer Virden can't answer because they don't understand, or they don't know the answer. Just because this is my first time on a ballot, it doesn't mean I don't know what I'm doing."

While the candidates may be the ones on the ballot, it's the voters of Austin who will ultimately decide the city's next mayor. Senior Oscar Thompson, who has worked as a poll clerk in Travis County, stressed the importance of voting in every election on the ballot this November.

"One thing I can say for certain is that it's very important for people to cast every vote that they can," Thompson said. "A lot of the smaller elections tend to get ignored... the big ones are flashy, sure, but they don't affect you the same on a daily basis."

Thompson emphasized that many LASA students can still register to vote for this year's election by Oct. 11, as long as they will be 18 by election day. He said that everyone should vote if they are able to, and that this year's mayoral election is highly important.

"I would say that voting is one of the most important things you can do in a democracy, because that's how democracy functions," Thompson said. "Without voters, without people who are willing to use their vote, the whole system breaks down... the mayoral election is pretty important for Austin. That one is probably going to be for the heart and soul of Austin."

The other four mayoral candidates are members of the Texas House of Representatives Celia Israel, real estate broker Jennifer Virden, local businessman Gary S. Spellman, and Anthony Bradshaw, Southeast Austin resident. Election day is Nov. 8.

# LASA's bathrooms are fully stocked. Period.

ALONDRA AGUIRRE | staff writer

Austin Independent School District (AISD) has implemented new changes in schools, according to a district-wide announcement at the beginning of the year. One of said changes is free menstrual products provided for students who experience periods. Although last year LASA's Women's Rights club took it upon themselves to buy and provide menstrual products to the students at LASA, AISD will now be the one providing these products for students at no cost.

AISD has proceeded to create a policy where free menstruation products are now provided to all the schools in the district. Although AISD provides the products, LASA's building manager Adela Sifuentes, who has worked at LASA for 11 years, says it's her job to monitor the supply of products.

"I just need to make sure I order the products when we run out," Sifuentes said. "Make sure that students and nurses are stocking up."

Period Pals is a club that focuses on fighting period poverty, which is defined as a lack of safe and hygienic access to menstrual products, in the Austin area. Co-president Irena Li believes that AISD providing free menstrual products is a big step forward as one of the main causes of period poverty is not being able to afford menstrual products.

"I think it's awesome and definitely a step in fighting period poverty," Li said. "I think it's doing a lot to help students realize the privilege we have to be a part of a school district with adequate funding to provide period products."

Since the development is new this year, not many people have been properly informed, according to LASA wellness counselor Alicia Salinas. She says she believes that these new products will help people feel more comfortable at school, but she said she nor the student body was well informed in the process.

"I honestly didn't know about it until I Googled it," Salinas said.

"I think more advertisements need to be made on AISD's part."

Although not many people are well informed, Salinas said it is still very significant for menstruating students who need these products. According to Salinas, menstrual products are both crucial in a person's life, and expensive, which makes this new policy very helpful to menstruating students.

"I think it's a big step to just acknowledge that one, they're expensive, and for a family that has multiple menstruating people in their household, that money adds up," Salinas said.

Sifuentes agrees that menstrual products can be costly. She said she thinks it's beneficial to students to have free menstrual products.

"For us to be able to provide that, I think that's a really good thing," Sifuentes said. "I am happy that we can provide the product for students at no cost."

According to Li, some students still struggle to get products at home. She says AISD making menstrual products available at school for free is not the end of the road for helping menstruating students.

"I think menstruating students should also keep in mind that our access to period products doesn't end inaccessibility to period products for students at home or in neighboring school districts and Austinites in general," Li said.

Li participated in a program that helped her learn what schools across different states are doing to support people who menstruate. What she learned at the program led her to the conclusion that although AISD starting to provide these products at school for free has been a huge step forwards in the right direction, there are still more things that need to be done.

"Over the summer I participated in a program where I was with high school students across the US.," Li said. "A particular friend I made attends a public high school in Seattle, Washington where they have access to free condoms, free STD tests, and resources to help obtain other forms of birth control. It's hard to see a future where LASA, AISD, or the state of Texas as a whole can provide resources like this due to politics and funding."

With these changes being made, more ideas in which AISD and students combined can help menstruating students have been brought up. For example, Li has started to take action with her club Period Pals.

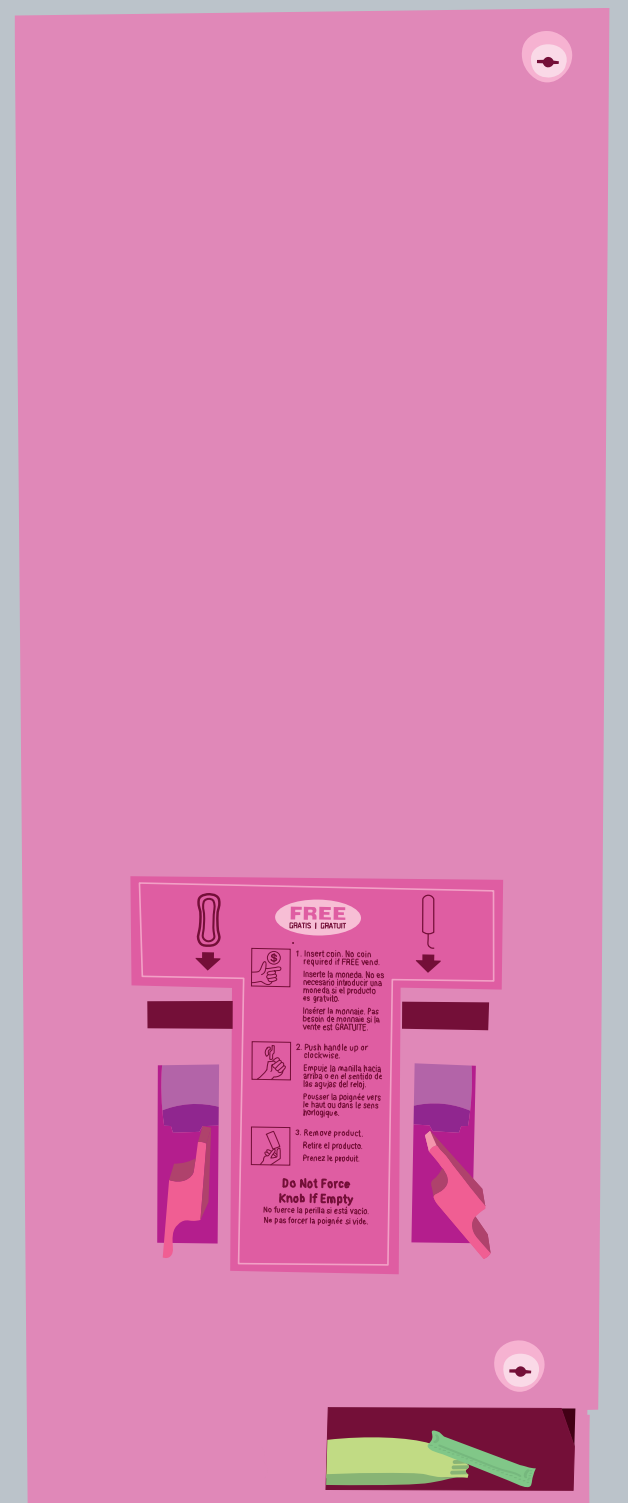
"If our upcoming fundraiser(s) generate enough money, I could see the club possibly providing heating pads or period packages that would include things other than just period products," Li said. "I already spoke with Austin Public Health about possibly providing free condoms for Period Pals. There's some pen-pushing and details that need to be worked out before that becomes a reality, though."

Although all the possibilities in which AISD could help menstruating students are endless, AISD has just started creating these changes in the district. According to Salinas, because providing menstrual products is so new, not a lot of people have much insight into it. She believes that for AISD to continue to grow, and continue to take steps forwards to help menstruating students more information has to be given.

"That's the next step if we're going to offer it," Salinas said. "How do we roll it out? How do we let people know about it?"

I think it's a big step to just acknowledge that one, they're expensive, and for a family that has multiple menstruating people in their household, that money adds up.

- ALICIA SALINAS, LASA Counselor



graphic by Amelia Coleman

# AISSD Educators Exit in a Mass Exodus

## Teacher positions left unfilled as school year begins

WINTYR RICE | staff writer

According to the Texas Tribune, 8,600 Texas teachers quit their jobs in 2021, which is over the state average of 7,500. Because of this, many students came back from the COVID-19 pandemic to classrooms without a permanent teacher.

Austin Independent School District (AISD) is currently experiencing a teacher shortage, but difficulty hiring and retaining teachers is not uncommon. According to the University of Pennsylvania, nearly half of all teachers leave the profession after just five years, and the National Center for Education Statistics estimates that eight percent of teachers quit every year.

This is especially common for special education (special-ed) teachers, who deal with students with disabilities and are often put under more pressure and have higher workloads. One such teacher is LeAnn Pigulski, an occupational therapist for AISD and special-ed teacher.

"There's a lot less teachers in special-ed," Pigulski said. "A lot of teachers are trying to get either out of special-ed or out of teaching entirely, even young teachers. A lot of teachers are taking early retirement."

Pigulski has been working for the district for seven years. She said things have changed since she started, especially with the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We're on our third software system since I started special-ed," Pigulski said. "We have had many different administrators. COVID-19 threw everyone for a loop."

LASA English teacher Caroline Pinkston said the overall community attitude towards virtual school and teachers during the pandemic switched back and forth between positive and negative commentary. She said teachers felt like they were doing a lot to adjust which wasn't always recognized.

"At the beginning of the pandemic, there was a lot of talk of teachers being heroes," Pinkston said. "Because we were doing all this great stuff, but that turned really quickly into frustration with teachers for not being willing to come right back into buildings, or for complaining about workload."

Pinkston believes that the COVID-19 pandemic was one of the main causes of the teacher shortage. She said the switch to virtual school overworked teachers, and many teachers felt there wasn't enough concern for their wellbeing.

"For everybody that was a really bad feeling, to feel like nobody really cared if we were put in a safe position or not," Pinkston said. "And I also think that was the turning point, in terms of teachers feeling really attacked."

Former LASA teacher Nathan Wong said that he left teaching because of the way decisions are made in the district. In AISD, teachers don't get a say in the majority of policy decisions that affect teachers, according to Wong.

"The things that need to be fixed can't get fixed on our level," Wong said. "Students, and teachers, and principals, we're the ones

who all these decisions affect, but none of us actually make those decisions. It's people who are not even involved in school, and haven't been in school in ages."

Wong also mentioned how teachers' workloads keep increasing. He said that teachers used to have 25 students per class, and now that's closer to 35.

"We can't keep growing classrooms more and more," Wong said. "That's just more and more hours of prep, more and more hours of grading."

Lindsey Ramirez is a physical therapist in the district. She also touched on the amount of work teachers are having to do.

"Administration places a lot on [the teachers'] plate and never takes anything off," Ramirez said. "It just becomes overwhelming, and you don't feel like a good teacher anymore."

Pinkston said that the workload in teaching is likely the main cause of the shortage. She said that teachers have an average of 170 students this year, which is more than previous years.

"The workload... is increasing all the time and becoming unsustainable," Pinkston said. "We have more grading and more planning, but the pay is not keeping up with that."

Pigulski also said that pay is probably a driving factor in decisions to leave teaching. She believes that a better salary and more benefits would make a lot of teachers reconsider their decisions to leave.

"It's one of the lowest paying jobs, still," Pigulski said. "And oftentimes teachers are working so much extra time out of school hours, or because they don't get paid enough, they're working second jobs."

Ramirez said that it's difficult to fill certain positions due to low pay. She talked about how many assistant positions have been left empty which takes away individualized help from special-ed students, and further divides the teacher's attention.

"Some students require a one-on-one, which means they have a dedicated person just attending to their needs," Ramirez said. "We are not filling all of those positions, and the teaching assistants do not get paid very well."

Pigulski talked about how the lack of teacher's assistants is affecting students in special-ed. According to Pigulski, a lot of special-ed teachers have changed careers.

"What that means is that the general ed teacher has a lot more responsibility," Pigulski said. "She has to help the special-ed kids more than ever before, because there used to be more TAs that could be in her classroom helping her out."

The shortage is affecting general education students as well. Ramirez has noticed effects of the teacher shortage in her own children's education in kindergarten (kinder) and pre-kindergarten (pre-K) as well.

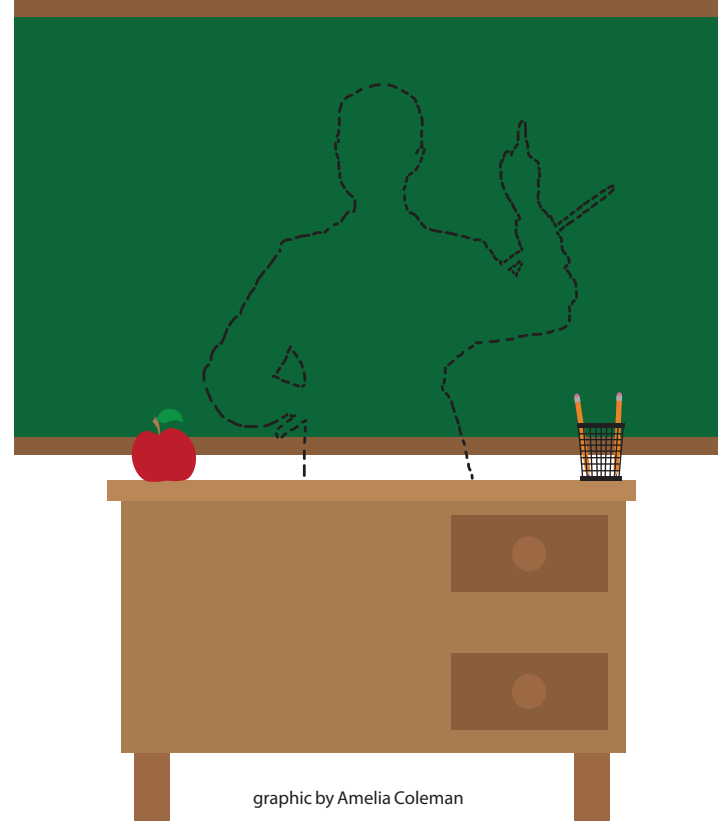
"I have two children in the school district," Ramirez said. "One is in kinder and one is in pre-K, and they are both in combined classes because of the shortage. So my kindergarten is in a class with 25 kinder and first-graders... Some students have never been in school before... That's very challenging for the teacher."

Pinkston said some solutions to help stop the shortage such as revisiting the ideas of pay and workload. She said teachers should be well-compensated for the time they spend grading and planning outside of class, which only increases as class sizes get larger.

"A meaningful pay increase would make a difference," Pinkston said. "Working to cap class sizes would make a difference."

Wong said that a lot of the decisions made by the district make life harder for teachers. He stressed the importance of listening to staff in the future.

"I think being open to hearing from teachers, from students, from principals, having a forum where that's possible, is really, really important," Wong said. "I think that would be 10 miles better than just pretending like they know how to make decisions."



graphic by Amelia Coleman

# Looking for Extracurriculars? Join the Club

SADIE CRAVOTTA | staff writer

## Political Discourse

Political Discourse club runs meetings in which students are able to argue in a civil manner, according to club president junior James Ervin. The club was created in order to have an opportunity to discuss subjects with other interested students.

"This club began with the intention of creating a civil format where controversial subjects can be discussed, with abortion being the only exception as it tends to never end well in almost every format," Ervin said. "Now, after Gavin [former president] left, we've decided to reformat the club so that we'd be able to bring in speakers, politicians, lawmakers, activists, experts, etc. via Zoom to present a topic and discuss it, rather than each club member preparing a presentation on a topic."

With the club now bringing in outside speakers, the club's meetings will be altered as well. Meetings will now have more of an emphasis on planning for these speakers, rather than being mostly discussion based.

"The club will now function on a monthly schedule where the first Friday of the month is dedicated to choosing a topic and creating a list of speakers who we'd want to have join us" Ervin said.

"The second Friday is about polling the school to see what sorts of questions are out there, and then we'll choose the best 10-20 to go ask our speaker."

Ervin says the club has a very purposeful structure that repeats. A structured schedule allows for thorough and well-

informed discussion on each topic.

"The third Friday is the actual presentation with the questions we've chosen," Ervin said, "and finally, the fourth Friday is a discussion based on the topic and where we'll draft, as a club, our consensus on what should be done about an issue or what we had to say on a matter."

Senior Abhinav Vasudevan is the vice president of Political Discourse Club. He enjoys the club's focus on politics.

"We talk about politics and various issues," Vasudevan said. "Last year they had a slideshow presentation and cookies for someone who wanted to discuss a topic."

Junior Max Rodriguez is the secretary of civility for the Political Discourse club and according to Rodriguez, he is focused on making sure the club stays organized and calm. He said that his role mostly involves calling order and he enjoys acting as the club's judge.

"I make sure that people don't get out of hand. If people are yelling at each other then I bang a giant hammer and order like all the cool judges do in the movies," Rodriguez said.

Political discourse club meets on Fridays in Mr. Risinger's room during lunch. Meetings usually run about 30 minutes to an hour.

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



GETTING POLITICAL Political Discourse club president James Ervin runs a club meeting. The club facilitates friendly discussion on important political issues. photo courtesy of Political Discourse Club.

## Beautification Club

School Beautification Club was founded back when LASA was a part of Lyndon Baines Johnson (LBJ) Early College High School and moved with the school to the new campus. This club aims to improve the school campus through various projects.

Junior Nicole Manning Lorino is the president of the School Beautification club. According to Lorino, her biggest goal is to enact changes that will make the LASA campus better by adding artwork or fixing up areas of the campus.

"The purpose of School Beautification Club is to personalize and improve our school campus," Lorino said. "We want to add a touch of LASA to the building. Our goal is to brighten both the campus and everyone's day."

The members of the club spend their meetings working on projects around the school, according to junior Emily Lucas. Lucas said she joined the club to have an opportunity to paint and spend time with friends.

"I love hanging out with my friends and beautifying the school and doing arts and crafts because those are my hobbies and my passions," Lucas said.

Neil Loewenstern is the sponsor of LASA's School Beautification club and he said the club aims to make the LASA campus more unique and welcoming. The club has previously done multiple painting projects around the school.

"They look for ways to make the campus look nicer, so they look for projects," Loewenstern said. "Last year they painted a mural on the walls down by the gym. The year before, they painted

a bunch of picnic tables at LBJ high school when we were over there, and this year we're trying to figure out what our new project is going to be."

In addition to murals, the School Beautification club also adds decorations around the school. They have big plans for this year, according to Lorino.

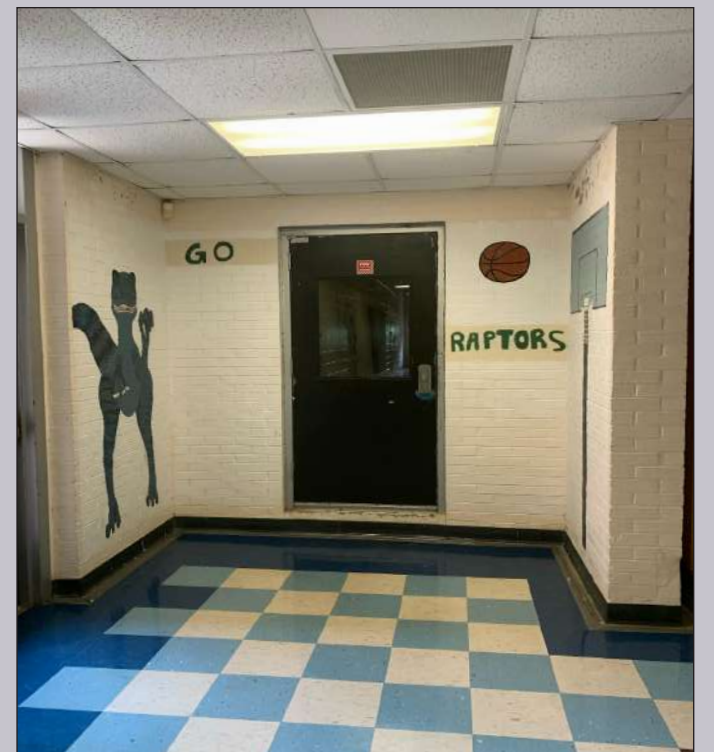
"This year, we are going to make a mosaic of the letters 'LASA' to hang on the wall," Lorino said. "Hopefully, we will have time to make a second mosaic of a raptor or some other LASA-esque thing."

According to Lorino, the club plans to take on smaller, more seasonal projects. Projects around school will be regularly updated by club members.

"We are planning to paint small seasonal designs on the bottom windows that face the courtyard, mainly the windows by the Cafeteria," Lorino said. "Our plan is to update the window designs on the first Tuesday of every month to new designs. For example, in December, we might paint snowflakes or trees."

School beautification club meets on Tuesdays at lunch in room 309A. Meetings typically run for the whole lunch period to discuss assignments and plans moving forward.

When: Tuesdays during Lunch, Lowenstern's Room (309A)  
Contact: @lasabeautification on Instagram



MURAL, MURAL ON THE WALL One of the murals painted by Beautification club. This one is outside the small gym. photo courtesy of Beautification club.

# Lady Bird Lake Lacks Legitimate Liquid Levels

AIDAN GANNON | staff writer

MALVIKA PRADHAN | news editor

Since 2019, the water in Lady Bird Lake in Austin has been considered unsafe to swim in, especially for pets, according to the City of Austin. In recent years, dogs have passed away after swimming in the lake due to toxic algae, which can also be harmful to humans.

Brett Bellinger, a botanist working for the City of Austin, heard about the dog deaths and started investigating the infested waters. He points to cyanobacteria, also known as blue-green algae, as the main cause responsible for the deaths. According to Bellinger, cyanobacteria are in all bodies of water, but normally, not abundant enough to pose a danger to life. Starting in 2019, Bellinger said there was enough cyanobacteria in Lady Bird Lake to produce dangerous levels of toxins.

"2019 is when some dogs died, and we started monitoring and observing the neurotoxin and the likely drivers are changes in the nutrient availability," Bellinger said. "Again it is a lot of things that come together. It is not specifically known, but it's summer time, hot water, and low flow, which means you're not flushing out the cyanobacteria and nutrients to grow."

Junior Anna Williams rows for Texas Rowing Club, which holds practices on Lady Bird Lake. Williams practices about 5 times a week at the lake but said the toxic waters haven't affected her practices much.



**AT THE WATER'S EDGE** Lady Bird lake has suffered from algae blooms. Cyanobacteria has made the lake water unsafe for humans to swim in, photo by Zia Harvey

"When we're rowing we shouldn't really be in the water anyways, but I do get splashed a lot," Williams said. "I heard about the algae from people on my team, and my mom's mentioned it to me, our coach mostly tells us to just not get in the water."

Cyanobacteria is a photosynthetic bacteria, which means it's able to photosynthesize and create dangerous toxins. Bellinger says that the toxins from cyanobacteria can affect every organ, and can even cause cancer, but the species of cyanobacteria in Lady Bird Lake specifically produces neurotoxins that are only harmful to humans if large amounts are ingested.

"Essentially if you are exposed to too much of [the neurotoxin] you will have seizures," Bellinger said. "Physiological activities, something as simple as breathing, all comes down to electrical impulses, and the neurotoxin affects those processes. It could be depending on how much neurotoxin you are exposed to. You could have tremors, seizures, or you could just stop breathing entirely."

Bellinger adds that the algae is more dangerous for animals because it only causes illness when ingested, such as when a dog grooms themselves. Accidentally drinking the water from the lake won't cause as much harm as directly ingesting the algae itself.

"The neurotoxin we have here in Austin has not been found in the water, so that's good," Bellinger said. "It has only been found in the algae, so you have to consume the algae to get the toxin. So that's why it affects dogs more, they get the algae on them, and when they clean themselves or groom themselves, they ingest the algae. Then they release the toxin into their systems."

The city has issued several warnings about the contaminated water, in order to try and keep people and pets away from the dangerous areas. District 4 City Council member Chito Vela said the city is raising awareness about the algae and is trying to prevent it. Vela said the city has put out websites, social media posts, newspaper articles, and television announcements about the hazard.

"Right now the city is warning folks who are in the places that it has been found, the creeks and the river itself, be careful with swimming and keep your dogs out of it," Vela said. "The city is also putting clay that kills the algae in the areas that it has been found."

Bellinger says it's hard to specifically work to reduce the cyanobacteria itself. Instead, they need to reduce the ideal factors that help with bacteria growth.

"We are investigating some options that target nutrients, but the mitigation strategy would not work in all systems," Bellinger said. "As such, we really need citizens throughout the watershed to do their part to reduce inputs of sediments and nutrients to contributing creeks and rivers."

According to their website, the city is currently testing a measure to reduce the amount of phosphorus in the lake, which the toxic cyanobacteria thrive on. By adding phos-lock—a type of clay that binds to phosphorus—phosphorus levels can be reduced.

"I think adding clay will probably be the best way to prevent it from forming," Vela said. "Or moving the water, because stagnant water makes it [the cyanobacteria] more abundant."

While the water is mainly unsafe for animals, it can still cause illness in humans. Vela said the lake water undergoes regular testing every two weeks, but is not 100% safe for humans yet.



**WALKING AROUND THE LAKE** Austinites have enjoyed walking around Lady Bird lake for years, but recently there has been more algae in its water. Dogs are the most prone to illness and death from the cyanobacteria, and people are still not advised to swim, photo by Zia Harvey

# THE SKINNY

## Global News

Sept. 8

In a statement released on September 8, Buckingham palace announced the death of Queen Elizabeth II. She assumed the throne in 1952 at the age of 25, and worked with 15 prime ministers during her reign, according to the BBC. Her son, King Charles the III, has taken over as monarch of the kingdom. Her death came right after former Foreign Secretary Liz Truss replaced Prime Minister Boris Johnson on Sept. 6.

September

According to the Associated Press, Ukraine has begun to take back territory Russia captured during the Russian-Ukraine war, which started in February 2022. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky says Ukrainian soldiers have gained more than 2,300 square miles of land back during September 2022. This has been Russia's biggest loss since its attempted capture of Kyiv in April 2022.

Sept. 26

On Sept. 26, Giorgia Meloni won Italy's race for Prime Minister, and will become the first woman prime minister of the country. She replaced former Prime Minister Mario Draghi, who resigned in July 2022. According to the BBC, Meloni, a member of the Brothers of Italy party, is the country's most right-wing prime minister since World War II. Meloni says she's passionate about securing Italy's border, and preserving "natural" family values.

## National News

Early August

In early August, the Federal Bureau of Investigation raided former president Donald Trump's Mar-a-Lago home in Florida, and found more than 300 classified government documents, according to the New York Times. Now, the Washington Post reports that the 11th circuit appeals court has found it constitutional for the FBI to use the documents found at Mar-a-Lago in a current criminal investigation into Trump. The investigation is questioning whether Trump and his aides "mishandled national security secrets" or destroyed government records.

Aug. 25

On August 25, California regulators voted to ban the sale of recently produced gasoline-powered cars. This policy was issued by the California Air Resources Board, and will go into effect by 2035, according to the New York Times. About a dozen other states, including New York and Washington, have similar legislation and are predicted to follow California's lead and begin transitioning to using primarily electric cars.

Sept. 18.

Hurricane Fiona made landfall in Puerto Rico on September 18, causing major flooding and power outages in the US territory. Fiona is the first major Atlantic hurricane of the season, according to CNN. Fiona then moved into the Dominican Republic and surrounding areas in the Caribbean. Recent estimates from Reuters say that at least eight Puerto Ricans were killed in the storm and from subsequent landslides. Fiona then strengthened to a Category 4 storm a few days later, on the 21.

## State News

Sept. 15

In a press release from his office, governor Greg Abbott announced that two buses of migrants from the Texas border had reached Washington D.C., on September 15th. Over 100 migrants from various South and Central American countries were dropped off in front of Vice President Kamala Harris' house in the city. As a purposeful jab at Harris, Abbott sent the migrants to sanctuary cities to negate her claim that the Texas border is 'secure'.

Sept. 22

As of Sept. 22nd, two polls recently published show Greg Abbott leading in the gubernatorial race this election season, according to the Houston Chronicle. The poll says Texans are prioritizing immigration issues over abortion rights, especially after Abbott made headlines by bussing immigrants from the border to Washington. One of the polls, done by Spectrum News/Siena College, reports Abbott having a 50-43 lead over democratic candidate Beto O'Rourke. The poll shows republican candidates leading overall, in several other statewide elections.

## Local News

September

This September, U.S. News and World Report's most recent ranking of universities and colleges across the country came out. The University of Texas at Austin was ranked 38th best in the nation, and the 10th best public university in the United States, a one spot drop from last year. In disciplines, the university ranked best in accounting and petroleum engineering. "These rankings illustrate the strong academic reputation we have among our peers," said University President Jay Hartzell in an article published by UT News.

# Banned Books in Texas District

JOLIE GROGAN | staff writer

All around the country book banning has become a topic of controversy, especially in Texas, according to American Progress. 713 books have been banned across the state and that the upsurge in book banning has caused increased advocating for legislation regarding school curriculum and what should and should not be allowed to be read in school, according to American progress.

Recently, there has been a big push from parents and government officials to ban books like The Bible and The Diary of Anne Frank graphic novel in Keller ISD, according to the Texas Tribune. LASA Librarian Elizabeth Switek is an advocate against the banning of books. Switek said that the push has been from the Texas governments' support for this censorship, but that the process to ban a book is very intricate and often complicated.

"We usually see maybe a few 100 book challenges over the course of a year nationwide," Switek said. "Last year, there were hundreds and hundreds, several thousand books were challenged. Some were banned."

Switek said a book being challenged is common, but doesn't mean that the book will actually be banned from schools. Anyone can challenge a book for any reason, but that doesn't mean that AISD can or will ban the book.

"We are not allowed to pull books based on somebody's opinion of the content of the book," Switek said. "That content, even if it's offensive to you, may not be offensive to somebody else."

Switek also said a book being banned from a library is a much bigger deal than a book being banned from a teacher's classroom. She said banning books from libraries interferes with people's first amendment rights.

"Since the library serves everyone, it's a little harder to have a book challenge or actually banned," Switek said. "Whereas, if it's something that's in a class that a classroom library has, or they're going to put it on a reading list that everybody has to use, it seems to be a little easier."

Switek said she feels responsible for students' reading career as the main part of her job is to encourage students to be lifelong readers. She said she also does her best to gather and learn information about reading to empower students in their education.

"The idea is that if, if you as a kid, your parents does not want you to read it, that's conversation you have at the dinner table, conversation you have in the car, and your parent can decide what is right for you, but they can't decide what's right for that kid over there," Switek said.

In Williamson County, COVID-19 relief money, also known as cares money, was used as a bargaining tool to ban books from schools. As a way to cut budgets, the government came up with rules to disqualify schools from receiving relief money if they did not ban certain books.

"They refused to give any of the of that cares money to those school districts because they said they had inappropriate and pornographic material in their libraries," Switek said.

Sophomore student council president Cecilia Gay is actively involved with events concerning the school district and students

rights to have a say in educational decisions. Gay said she believes only books that actively spread misinformation should be banned.

"They're a part of our history," Gay said, "and I think it's important for people to know about all types of backgrounds, religions, different sexualities, etc."

Anne Frank's Diary had been a controversial book for years, according to Switek. The book was challenged many times, and finally got banned by Keller ISD.

"The Anne Frank diary has been challenged and was banned from one year's display in the 80s," Switek said.

Anne Frank's Diary was edited by her father to leave out certain, more private information, but the author of the graphic novel based it off of the unedited diary. An argument for the recent banning of the book was that it was "depressing".

"It's going to be depressing, yes," Switek said, "and again, if they didn't want their child to read it, fine, but they made the decision for the entire school district"

The Bible was also banned in Keller ISD. Switek said the banning of the Bible seemed like revenge because of the removal of the graphic novel of Anne Frank's diary, which covers the Holocaust. The challengers to the Bible said it contained topics that fell under the category of being inappropriate for young children.

"The Bible, that's kind of a tit for tat, so you're gonna say that I can't have this either," Switek said.

In Texas if someone donates something to a school under God, the school is required to display that. However, Switek says this isn't well received with non-Christian religions.

"There's a man who was Muslim, who tried to donate one that was written in Arabic, and then one that had like a rainbow flag heart underneath it," Switek said. "And they've said, no, no, we don't want it."

In Florida there has been a big movement about restricting books about LGBTQ, dubbed the "Don't Say Gay movement". Books with any mention of LGBTQ+ people are being pulled off the shelves.

"And so you can't have books that have a trans character, you can't have books where Heather has two mommies," Switek said. "So people have been pushing back on that, if we can't talk about families, and if we can't talk about gender, then we can't talk about husbands and wives."

Senior Samantha Mason said banning books is almost always unacceptable. Mason said the books that should be banned are ones that are universally acknowledged as not helpful to educating children.

"It's a really bad thing," Mason said. "It's not productive to the educational system. A children's book that teaches kids to go shoot up schools, teaches violence, and unwarranted behaviors like that [should be banned], where it's not productive and efficient."

If students disagree with the banning of books, Switek said there are opportunities for students to take action to get books on the challenged list, or write to government officials concerning books on the banned list. LASA also held events in the library for Banned Books during the week of Oct. 1-7.



graphic by Amelia Coleman

# The Neighbors of LASA

Taking a look at Austin's Eastside community and its history

DELIA RUNE  
LILI XIONG | student life editors

The current LASA campus has been home to many schools over the last few decades: Johnston, The Liberal Arts Academy (LAA), Eastside Memorial Early College High School (EMECHS), International high school, and now, LASA. The campus is filled with imprints of the schools that came before: the pictures and trophies of Johnston alumni, the G and T annexes that housed the Green and New Tech high schools, and even the chickens that belonged to Eastside Memorial ECHS. As students settle in for their second year at the new campus, the administration is beginning to look for ways to incorporate traditions and history from the previous high schools at this campus.

LASA Social Studies teacher Maricruz Aguayo also taught at LAA— the magnet school within Johnston that would later combine with the Science Academy to become LASA. She remembers that Johnston and LAA had many rich and beloved traditions.

"We had a Cinco de Mayo celebration, and they would invite the lowrider club in Austin," Aguayo said. "They would drive up their cars and drive them up close to the cafeteria courtyard, and they would be lined up out there. We also had the fall festival... that was all community-oriented because we used to reach out to the community and be like 'hey, come on in and enjoy all of this stuff.' The fall festival was cute because it was put on by the high school students, but you invited the middle school and elementary school students, and there were little kids running around."

Benjamin Decherd, an LAA alumni and current counselor at Eastside Memorial ECHS, also remembers traditions at the high school fondly. The fall festival stuck out to him as well.

"When I was a student at Johnston, we had partnerships like big brothers, big sisters," Decherd said. "The Fall Festival was very cool with the lowriders club."

After Johnson transitioned to Eastside Memorial ECHS, Jessica Cherry, current LASA assistant principal and former Eastside Memorial ECHS teacher, recalls that there was a big focus on being a part of the neighborhood community. People who lived in the surrounding areas were always welcome to come to Eastside Memorial ECHS events and programs.

"At Back-to-School night there was always a part of it where our principal and assistant principals would serve the community and the teachers food," Cherry said. "With the whole community, we would do community walks, so at the beginning of the year we would have students scheduled to come to us, and we would knock on their doors and give them a goody bag and introduce ourselves."

Now that LASA has taken over the Eastside Memorial ECHS campus, some community members feel as if this tradition of including neighbors has been lost. Vincent Tovar, a Johnston Terrace community member and activist, wishes that LASA had done more to reach out to the community.

"I think that as a neighbor, I've never had anybody knock on my door or had any kind of flier left that says, 'Hey, we're here, so we acknowledge this land. We're grateful to be here, and we want to respect the community as much as possible,'" Tovar said. "All of this acknowledgment just hasn't happened, in my opinion."

However, according to LASA's current principal, Stacia Crescenzi, LASA did try to reach out to the neighborhood when they moved in. LASA's administration and PTSA made efforts to connect with nearby communities by passing out magnets.

"Before we moved in, the PTSA went around and gave out these little magnets that had the office phone, the AISD PD phone, and a district number," Crescenzi said. "We wanted to make sure they didn't feel like they had to just sit there and be frustrated and let them know that they could contact us. We try to take action to the best of our ability, and I do think that's gone really well."

According to Tovar, the demographics of the current LASA campus have changed significantly as the school has transitioned from Johnston to Eastside Memorial ECHS to LASA. Johnston was a primarily Hispanic and African-American school, while LASA is not. He believes LASA's arrival in the Johnston Terrace neighborhood is part of a larger issue of gentrification in the city.

"It just felt like LASA is saying, 'We're here, we're the LASA raptors, and we're cool,'" Tovar said. "...and I think black and brown people are used to that. We're used to this gentrification, of people saying 'We're here. You can't do anything about it.' So I think there's work that can be done around all that."

But not all community members feel that LASA plays a part in Austin's gentrification. According to Decherd, gentrification is somewhat inevitable.

"The area's going to be gentrified regardless of if LASA's there or not, and that's a bigger force than a magnet school moving to the Eastside [EMECHS]," Decherd said. "But gentrification is a big monster. There's a lot of factors contributing to that. Having white students in a neighborhood is not a bad thing in and of itself."

Despite not believing LASA is really contributing to the gentrification of East Austin, Decherd acknowledges that neighborhoods in East Austin have been hit hard by the effects of gentrification. As someone who has worked in Austin most of his life, he has seen this change happen firsthand.

"Now, ten years ago, [members of East Austin] were a part of a community that looked

like them. You walk out to your doorstep or you go to the grocery store or you go to school, and you see people that share your culture. And now, they walk out on their doorstep and they look around and it's a white world." Decherd said. "... I just can't imagine what it's like for them. They must feel like their whole world is changing, their whole neighborhood, but they can't leave. Gentrification sucks. It's the big steamroller that comes in and sweeps out people who can't afford something anymore, and sometimes that's white people, but most of the time it's people of color."

Although there is division about whether or not LASA's move to Johnston Terrace has been negative, most community members agree that it was positive that Eastside Memorial ECHS got a new campus. According to Decherd, they were last in line with AISD for repairs and funding for many years, so a new campus was overdue.

"I think this was years in the making to say 'alright, Eastside [EMECHS] has been neglected, this student population has been neglected, let's give them one of the shiny new buildings with all the bells and whistles,'" Decherd said. "So I think they did the right thing by making that move."

As LASA becomes more familiar with the new building, Crescenzi is beginning to look for ways to honor Johnston on and off campus. According to Crescenzi, Johnston alumni look back on their high school years with much fondness, and LASA wants to make sure they do not feel forgotten.

"We want to do at least a couple of displays in the campus," Crescenzi said. "The idea is to take some of the memorabilia that's in the library and make a really nice Johnston display."

Crescenzi also anticipates incorporating Johnston alumni into LASA events such as homecoming. According to her, it's important for LASA to recognize and remember Johnston alumni.

"Johnston alumni are always going to be welcome at our homecoming, but we did think maybe it would be neat to have one of the games be Johnston recognition night," Crescenzi said. "We would raise some money, buy one set of uniforms— Johnston colors— have the band learn the Johnston school song and fight song. And for that one game, every year, we bring back that nostalgia for the alumni."

Cherry agrees that it is important for LASA to continue to look for ways to include the community and Johnston alumni. According to Cherry, it is important for students and faculty to be inclusive and friendly to the surrounding neighborhood.

"I think the more that we're open and friendly to the neighborhood, the more that we can bring people together," Cherry said. "I think that'll be really beneficial to making people feel that they're a part of the community, and not like we're just here."

[[ I just can't imagine what it's like for them. They must feel like their whole world is changing, their whole neighborhood, but they can't leave.

- Benjamin Decherd, LAA Alumni and Eastside Memorial ECHS counselor

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## A.S. JOHNSTON HIGH SCHOOL

Johnston High School was the first high school to occupy the Eastside Memorial Campus. It served as a school for primarily East Austin students from 1960 to 2008, and offered a variety of technical programs such as cosmetology and auto mechanics. From 1998 to 2002, the campus also housed the Liberal Arts Academy (LAA), a magnet school that brought students across the district to the school. Johnston High School also housed International High School beginning in 2004, which provided an English program for immigrant or refugee students across the district. When LAA joined the Science Academy at the LBJ campus, Johnston test scores started slipping to the point where the Texas Education Agency (TEA) closed the school. It marked the first time the TEA had ever closed a school under the state's new accountability system.

## We asked Johnston Terrace residents for their thoughts on LASA:

"I like the band practice. My roommate probably doesn't like it super early though."  
-- Ryan Green

"I can hear the drums in the school parking lot all the way to my house. It makes my nerves bad; I'm disabled."  
-- Lisa Black

"I saw the sidewalk chalk for reproductive rights last spring, and I appreciated that."  
-- Vincent Tovar

"I like it when the marimbas do arpeggios."  
-- Jesse Ebaugh

"Everything is overcrowded, but other than that, I'd say everything is pretty good."  
-- Ida Townshend

"Just recently, a lot of apartment complex prices across the street from 7/11 have gone up. It's like a boom."  
-- Robert Luna



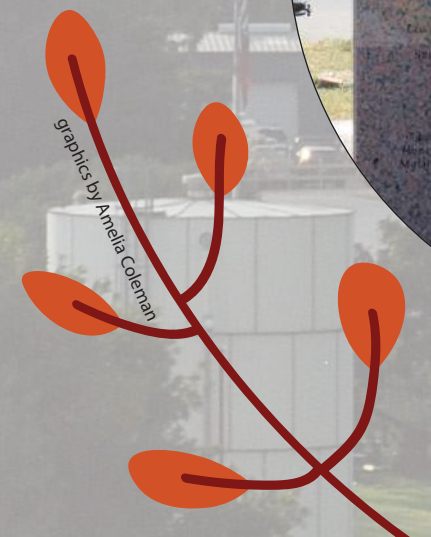
## EASTSIDE MEMORIAL HIGH SCHOOL

In 2008, Eastside Memorial High School was opened at the same campus. In 2009, the school was split into the Global Tech and Green Tech programs. In 2011, the two programs merged back into one school. The same year, AISD Superintendent Meria Cerstarphen proposed having a charter school from Del Valle manage East Austin schools starting with Allen Elementary, and eventually Eastside Memorial High School as well. However, due to backlash from the community, the contract with the charter school was cancelled. In 2017, TEA announced the Early College High School program for the school, which gives students the opportunity to earn a high school diploma as well as an associate degree. Later, as a part of AISD's 2017 Bond, it was decided that Eastside Memorial would be relocated to the original L.C. Anderson High School campus.



## LIBERAL ARTS AND SCIENCE ACADEMY

In the summer of 2021, LASA moved into the Eastside Memorial campus. It's the first time LASA has had its own campus and had an independent athletics and fine arts department since it shared a campus with LBJ Early College High School from 2007 to 2021. Along with a new campus, LASA established its own mascot and school colors. The 2022-2023 school year marks the second year LASA has had its own identity in terms of these aspects.



# Raptors Come Home to a Sweet Surprise

CHARLOTTE WHALEN | staff writer

The homecoming dance and the week leading up to it has always been filled with various traditions and the participation of most of the student body. This year's dance, organized by the student council, was characterized by colorful decorations, a crowded dance floor, and an outdoor courtyard filled with students cooling off or playing board games.

According to senior student council president Sam Church, the council has been brainstorming ideas and establishing a budget for the event since the summer. This year's homecoming theme was Candyland.

"We went around and asked members of our class for ideas for the theme," Church said. "Once we had a long list, we discussed ideas as a council and voted on our top three."

Junior student representative Travis Edwards was especially excited for this year's decorations. He anticipated many aspects of the dance to remain the same as previous years, even though the themes are different, such as a photo backdrop, crafted out of a pipe and hanging drape.

"We might set up the cafeteria with the pipe and drape, like last year," Edwards said, referencing the curtains set up in the cafeteria. "We might replicate how that was used as the dance floor and then there were centerpieces on the tables. We thought that had kind of a nice aesthetic, and this year instead of having those centerpieces from last year, we're going to have something more candyland related."

The homecoming dance always has a different theme and atmosphere every year. This year, Travis was excited to apply the candyland theme to plans for the event.

"It'll just have a different feel, with the theme being candyland, which I'm excited about," Edwards said, "but we also want to make sure since it seemed like homecoming was very positive, and generally people had a very good time. We wanted to make sure to try to emulate the things we did last year, but apply them in a new way."

The cafeteria and courtyard were decorated with colorful fairy lights and other candyland-themed decorations, such as construction paper cutouts. According to Edwards, the theme was largely chosen because the decorations would be practical and easy to execute.

"We thought it was a nice fun theme that we thought also had many neat ideas for decorations that we could do," Edwards said. "We thought that we could try and design them ourselves, which is always a benefit to try and be economical with doing these things because money always is one thing that we have to keep in mind. And so we wanted to find a way to make sure that

we're giving something that's very enjoyable but also happens to be economic."

This year, homecoming tickets were either \$15 if purchased in advance or \$20 if purchased within. The student council uses all of the proceeds from the event to create bigger and better events, according to Edwards.

"It goes to all sorts of things, like renting equipment like the pipe and drape used to help decorate and transform the cafeteria into the dance floor area," Edwards said. "And the money provides the food and the drinks; it also pays for the lighting. Without the money we raised it wouldn't be nearly the same experience."

In addition to continuing the homecoming dance tradition, various other LASA traditions happened throughout the week. These traditions included spirit week, the gallon challenge, and the homecoming football game.

"We will of course continue having our HoCo court announced at both the game and the dance," Church said. "Additionally, things like photo booths, free food, and more will all be returning. Any surprises will be revealed at the dance."

The homecoming celebration is often a week-long event to boost school spirit and camaraderie among the classes with the big dance at the end of the week. LASA has also incorporated the Texas tradition of mums, an arrangement of ribbons, bells or charms worn around the neck during homecoming, this year. According to sophomore cheer captain Sofia Neal, mums are a tradition that many Texas high schools take part in.

"Students create a beautiful, ribbon-filled mum or garter and wear it the day of the homecoming football game," Neal said. "Typically the girl gives her date one of them, but anyone can have one. The reason we started selling mums this year was to try and influence the school to create more traditions and do something that could be enjoyable for students."

In addition to making mums, the cheer team and student council collaborated to come up with ideas for spirit week. Every day of the week, students dressed up for various themes which included business casual Monday day, Tropical Tuesday, Western Wednesday, Adam Sandler Thursday, and ended the week with dressing up in school spirit. According to junior student council president Wendy Geng, the student body really engaged with outlandish hairstyles, accessories, and clothing for spirit week.

"Spirit week was pretty sick," Geng said. "The Adam Sandler outfits were some of my favorites, and I think the student body did a great job following the themed days."

Last year's homecoming was some students' first homecoming dance since COVID-19. According to Geng, the student council tried to make this year's dance as successful as last year's.

Generally people had a very good time. We wanted to make sure to try to emulate the things we did last year, but apply them in a new way.

- TRAVIS EDWARDS, JUNIOR STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE

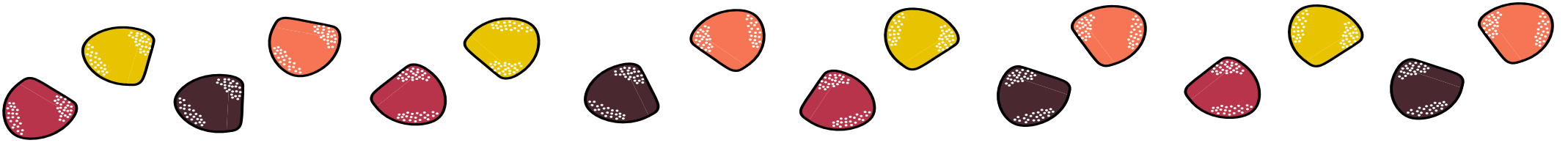


CHA CHA CHAI LASA students gather in the cafeteria to dance. Candyland-themed decorations hang from the ceiling. photo by JC Ramirez Delgadillo



HOMECOMING COURT. Students watch as student council prepares to announce the homecoming kings and queens. This year's senior homecoming court was Andy Wang and Claire Prairie. photo by JC Ramirez Delgadillo

"I think the dance was pretty successful in terms of what the student council could control," Geng said. "We had a lot to live up to from last year... but overall I think all in all it went much smoother than what we thought it would be like."



graphic by Alexandra Valencia

# Biotech Students Splice up Internships

HELEN BIGGE | staff writer

LASA's Biotechnology Internship course provides students the opportunity to work on projects with college professors and other professionals in the field. Biotechnology can either be taken as a LASA course with dual credit from the Austin Community College (ACC) during senior year, or solely at ACC after graduation. During the course, students have the opportunity to intern for about two hours for three days a week at a company. They're required to work at least 60 hours per semester, which gives students real-world experience.

Before the internship, students are required to take a year-long introductory biotechnology course along with a summer course on the creation of biotechnology products. Biotechnology teacher Joseph Oleniczak said the introductory biotechnology class is a lab-based class that helps students gain knowledge about biotechnology techniques and skills needed in internships.

"In the fall semester, we focus mostly on DNA technologies and lab skills to students who are learning about the structure of DNA and how to manipulate DNA using molecular techniques," Oleniczak said, "and the spring semester, we focus mostly on protein technologies and bioinformatics, as well as other molecular techniques associated with those."

With the knowledge of the techniques, students who take the internship course usually work at UT or industry labs to gain experience in the field. According to Oleniczak, there are a variety of different biotech companies that they can use to decide where to apply to.

"I can think of three off the top of my head that are working at labs at UT," Oleniczak said, "and then the other 14 people who are off campus are working at different companies."



LOOKING UP CLOSE. Jon Tor and Ben Garner measure a leaf as part of their data collection. Students use this data to help them during in-class work and labs. photo by JC Ramirez Delgadillo

While eighth-period students intern off-campus, the fourth-period classes have the option to intern on-campus. Senior Jimena Martinez is a current biotechnology student at LASA and is taking advantage of a new opportunity available to students taking this course.

"This year, Mr. Oleniczak added an option; rather than you asking another organization or company for an internship, you could do it in class," Martinez said. "So it's something unique to the course where instead of going out to another company and interning for them, you get to create your own project with the resources that he provides."

The on-campus internship class focuses on a biodiversity barcoding project of their choice. According to Oleniczak, the students get to design everything about their project: from who they work with to what they're researching.

"Students for that project are dividing into teams, and they're coming up with their own research question," Oleniczak said. "Then they're reaching out to local experts: either professors at the University of Texas, local people in industry, or people who work for Austin Parks and Rec."

Even the students who will take the on-campus course will end up sampling their specimens off-campus, for the most part. But one group is electing to do their entire project at LASA.

"Some people in my class want to sample all of the plants from our school," Martinez said, "so they are going to do a census of all the different species here, which I think is pretty cool."

All students complete the same process of extracting DNA, regardless of where they collect their samples. Oleniczak helps his students learn how to use equipment most of them have never seen before, like sequencing machines. Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR), for example, is a technique where DNA segments are copied hundreds of times, so that the fragments can then be put through a DNA sequencer to determine the nucleotide bases.

"They can extract DNA from them, amplify them at a barcode region using PCR," Oleniczak said. "And then we have an in-house DNA sequencing machine, so it will sequence your own samples and come up with the DNA barcode to identify those species."

According to Martinez, even with the equipment provided by Oleniczak and funded by AISD Career and Technology Education (CTE) and ACC Biotechnology, it can be difficult for students to get started. Reaching out to find mentors, a crucial part of the project, sometimes yields few results.

"I know that some people did have support from ACC; individuals were able to revise their emails or resumes," Martinez said. "We just had to send our credentials to a bunch of companies, and I heard a lot of them, they did not get, not even a response or anything. Obviously since we're high schoolers, maybe some of them want people with more experience or knowledge, but it is really cool that a lot of students have been able to intern in companies."

Some off-campus students have also experienced lack of responses from companies, including LASA alumni and current first-year grad student at Baylor College of Medicine, Faith



OUT IN THE FIELD. Jon Tor collects samples of leaves. He will use these for his biotech project. photo by JC Ramirez Delgadillo

Jackobs. Jackobs has worked for several biotech companies in central Texas.

"I applied to the Houston Forensics Lab, their DNA lab," Jackobs said. "I put a lot of time into it, I wrote a cover letter, and I never heard back. It would've been a cool job, but there's plenty of opportunities out there, especially for people who are in my field."

According to Jackobs, all of her jobs anJackobs has developed lasting connections with former mentors such as Dr. Greg Clark at the University of Texas, and Dr. Richard Finnell at the Dell Pediatric Research Institute, who now works at Baylor College of Medicine. She offered to help LASA students reach out to those mentors if they need help finding internships.

"I'm sure that Dr. Clark still takes on high school students, so I could try to make a connection if anyone's interested in doing plant biology," Jackobs said. "Dr. Phinells' lab, but that's in Houston. I feel like there's lots of Principal Investigators, the heads of labs, who do take on high school students or undergrad students, but it's not always super obvious."

Both Jackobs and Martinez said they are grateful to have taken biotechnology and say that they have gained a lot from the course. Oleniczak is still as enthusiastic about the subject as he was when he started teaching it 20 years ago and as he has gotten new technology to help students learn skills they will need in the lab.

"It's a great program, especially if you're interested in a career in life sciences or molecular biology, biology, or biotechnology in general," Oleniczak said, "so if you have any other questions, please stop by, and I'd be happy to talk to anybody about joining biotech."

## Addressing Dress Code • Fresh Faculty Faces at LASA

ALONDRA AGUIRRE | staff writer

The Austin Independent School District (AISD) has a dress code for all the schools in the district including LASA. AISD explains on their website that clothing must be worn in such a way that “abdomen, genitals, buttocks, breasts and nipples are fully covered with opaque fabric.” Students are also not allowed to wear clothing with violent language or images.

According to AISD, the dress code is put in place to ensure the safety and well-being of students, but students such as seniors Geetika Polavarapu and Simona Kao disagree with this narrative. Although students have felt as if the enforcement of the dress code has changed in the past year, Assistant Principal San Czaplinski confirms that AISD has not changed its dress code since 2019.

“We don’t have a separate dress code from Austin ISD,” Czaplinski said. “We actually follow the same dress code that the district has published and put out for the entire district. It’s been the same dress code for the last several years.”

Although Czaplinski reveals that the dress code has not changed in the past year, Polavarapu feels as though this new school year, there has been a change in the enforcement of the dress code. The increased enforcement is what students such as Polavarapu have been reacting to. “I heard this year, it’s getting back to the strictness thing,” Polavarapu said. “There was no issue with the relaxed dress code last year.”

Czaplinski sees dress code restrictions from a different point of view. According to her, the dress code is not always a bad thing.

“I think the whole idea of saying dress



graphic by Amelia Coleman

code has a very negative connotation to it,” Czaplinski said. “It’s not dress



That’s such a degrading thing to say to a student. I feel like if you’re going to dress code someone, have some respect for their body, and don’t act as if they’re asking for it

- GEETIKA POLAVARAPU, LASA AMBASSADOR OFFICER

coding.’ That has definitely changed in the last few years. It’s making students aware of what the expectation is.”

The dress code has also caused many issues because students have noticed that the dress code is targeted more toward female-presenting students. Senior NHS President Simona Kao, believes that there are gendered aspects to dress coding.

“I’ve never heard a single guy get dress-coded,” Kao said. “The only people here getting dress-coded are girls.”

Czaplinski is someone who has the power to dress code students as an assistant principal. Because of her experience with dress coding students, she knows what types of clothes AISD considers inappropriate for high school.

“I’ve had to dress code boys also,” Czaplinski said. “For young men, oftentimes it’ll be things like advertising alcohol or advertising products that are not legal at this age, like vaping or cigarettes. . . I’ve had to also address young men, as well as young women.”

According to Polavarapu, the enforcement of the dress code can feel demeaning. Polavarapu shared the story of one of her friend’s experiences with dress code.

“One of my friends was wearing shorts, and an administrator stopped her and said, “your backpack is riding up your shorts. What if boys take pictures of that?” Polavarapu said. “That’s such a degrading thing to say to a student. I feel like if you’re going to dress code someone, have some respect for their body, and don’t act as if they’re asking for it.”

According to Kao, many students at LASA are not well informed, and therefore don’t know if what they are wearing will get them dress-coded. Kao says that there is no set time for teachers to explain the dress code, so students need to take initiative if they are curious about what clothes are school-appropriate.

“Nobody really goes over the dress code,” Kao said. “If you want to know the dress code then you have to go look for it yourself on the website, nobody else is going to give you that information.”

Students interested in learning more about the dress code can visit the following link: <https://www.austinisd.org/family-support/dress-code>

LASYA SANGANA | staff writer

As students pour into classes again, many are being taught by unfamiliar faces. Since COVID-19, there have been more than a couple of teachers who have left LASA that have been swapped with new ones. Similar to the freshman class, new teachers have also been finding the ropes around a new school.

First-year Electronic Magazine teacher Nancy Zamora talked about her experiences with the difference between teaching at her former school, Richmond Elementary, and LASA. So far, she loves the change.

“They [LASA students] are incredibly capable as well,” Zamora said. “I’m just here to support and teach what I know.”

According to Zamora, the dedication of LASA students to their learning pleasantly surprised her. Zamora didn’t know much about LASA prior to teaching here, and was initially unaware that she worked at one of the best schools in the nation, according to US News.

“Everyone is having really intelligent conversations too,” Zamora said. “I’m getting emails at two or three in the morning when kids are turning in their work. That’s crazy.”

New Chemistry teacher Joel Barton agreed with Zamora’s sentiment. Prior to coming to LASA, he taught at Kealing middle school, and believes that LASA offers a relatively flexible learning environment.

“I think both students and teachers seem they’re given a lot of choices about how to accomplish what they’re supposed to accomplish,” Barton said. “So students are told what they’re going to need to know or what they’re going to need to produce by a given date, and they’re given the tools to do it.”

Barton is also excited about LASA’s performing arts, especially after hearing good things about Coffeehouse and the Twelfth Night, this year’s theater production. He looks forward to being a part of the LASA community by supporting the marching band, as well as other LASA sports.

“I went to a volleyball game last week...my parents actually came out, and we watched the volleyball game together,” Barton said. “So that was fun.”

New French and Spanish teacher Nancy Alanis is also eager to engage with the clubs and sports at LASA. Alanis hopes to use these LASA traditions and groups to bring excitement into her classroom as well.

“I believe high academic standards and fun make the perfect union,” Alanis said. “I hope to bring the excitement of the arts and performance into the language setting to make the language practical, fun, and applicable to real life.”

Alanis agrees that LASA is fast-paced and comes with a heavy workload, but she has a desire for her students to experience the language outside the classroom as well. She, along with Barton and Zamora, believe that LASA students are driven by initiative and desire to excel.

With a little insight into their experiences so far, new teachers such as Zamora, Barton, and Alanis are overall eager to see what the rest of the school year has in store for them.

“I love the huge windows. I love all the courtyards,” Zamora said. “I love the personality of the kids and their devotion to their work. I love the opportunities provided in just the classes alone that you guys have. . . I just want to see how that goes this year.”



Ms. Zamora

Mr. Barton

Ms. Analisis

graphic by Amelia Coleman

## Freshman Raptors Return in Record Numbers

LILY WILKERSON | staff writer

As LASA’s freshman classes have grown over the years, the school has experienced growing pains to match. As LASA has moved to its own campus, the school will be able to further expand subsequent freshman classes. This year’s freshman class is the largest in school history, with over 425 students trouncing the senior class by over 100 students.

However, according to social studies teacher Kathryn DiGioia, the increasing strain on teachers isn’t solely responsible for class size growth. DiGioia attributes most of this strain to the rising student-to-teacher ratio due to the loss of teachers.

“When I first started teaching... a larger class size was maybe 28, whereas now that’s the smallest class size I have, and the average is like 32,” DiGioia said. “Where I had 125 students, now I have almost 170, so that’s a lot more grading for teachers, and it’s a lot more strain.”

DiGioia said that the increasing burden on teachers is common across multiple departments at LASA. She mentioned pressure from Austin Independent School District (Austin ISD) as a factor contributing to teacher workload.

“It’s not necessarily a LASA issue... it’s also an Austin ISD issue,” DiGioia said. “I think Austin ISD has an issue with the student-teacher ratio, and that’s a funding problem that they just need to address.”

The student-to-teacher ratio has also been impacted not only by the loss of teacher positions. DiGioia said the COVID-19 pandemic had a major effect on the district’s ability to support teachers.

“Teachers actually had to be cut because of this difference... for the district,” DiGioia said. “We actually had to let go of a social studies teacher. That adds to the ratio. That’s the biggest problem I’m seeing, actually. If we had more teachers, I’d welcome more students.”

Academic counselor Sandi Woodrow has seen the student body increase from around 1000 students to over 1400 students within her seven years with the school. She said LASA will continue to grow as the school has moved out of the Lyndon Baines Johnson (LBJ) high school campus, but that the growth

has been planned for years.

“When I was first hired, the class sizes had been about 250, And the incoming freshman class was 350,” Woodrow said. “That was an intentional jump, and they were going to potentially make each one larger. But it wasn’t supportable on the... LBJ

Extracurriculars are not the only parts of school that are improved by having more students, according to Woodrow. She believes the classroom environment benefits from a larger student body as well.

“Bringing more kids to LASA... creates a diversity of thought, ideas in a classroom,” Woodrow said. “If you’re going to have a full class, you’re going to have five kids that might make a comment instead of three. All those types of things take a little bit more time, but you have a richer learning environment.”

Freshman Noah Jaworski-Timm hasn’t noticed any size disparities between the classes at all. He said that he and his classmates haven’t been affected by the school’s new, larger size.

“No one has mentioned it, and this is the first time I’m hearing about it,” Jaworski-Timm said. “If [the difference between classes] is less than a hundred, or around that number, honestly what’s the point in worrying about it?”

Jaworski-Timm said that none of his classes have felt overcrowded. He also said that since many classes at LASA are mixed between grade levels, the impact of larger freshman classes is less pronounced.

“If you take a language, a lot of them are mixed,” Jaworski-Timm said. “Even types of math, if you’re in a high-level math, you might be with more juniors and sophomores, so honestly there is no issue.”

It makes sense for the school to expand as more people want to attend, according to Jaworski-Timm. Accepting more students gives more people from around Austin ISD the opportunity to attend LASA.

“I think the interest in LASA overall is also increasing,” Jaworski-Timm said. “Now that they’ve been willing to accept more people, surprise surprise, more people are willing to come to LASA, and then there’s a bigger class. That’s just going to happen.”

The growth of LASA’s freshman classes has had a major effect on the school. According to Woodrow, it’s better to look at the upsides.

“I’m choosing to call it good,” Woodrow said. “Because it’s going to be here and it’s a fact of life. And I think that about a lot of things in life. If it’s out of my control, whether it’s going to be larger or smaller... I think it’s healthy minded, I’m going to look at the positives of it.”

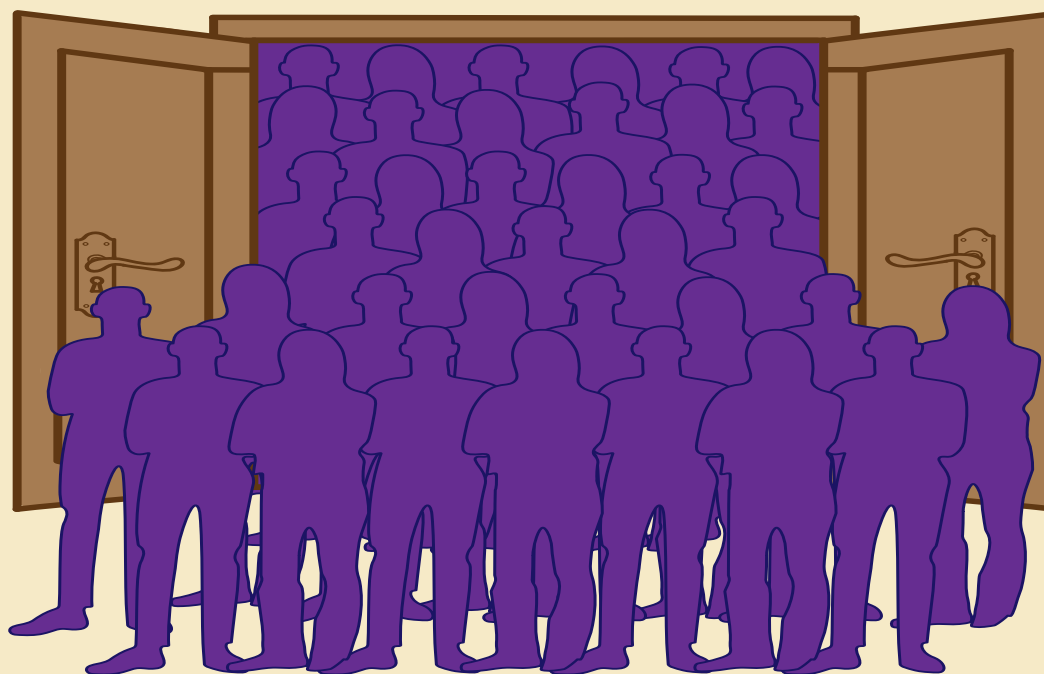
campus for us to stay there with those numbers.”

Woodrow said that there are benefits to having a larger student body. According to her, the growth of the freshman classes since LASA moved to its new campus has been good for the school.

“I think with larger numbers of kids, you get more variety,” Woodrow said. “With clubs, there’s more interest. We have to field our own teams now, we’re not combined with LBJ, so the more kids we bring in the more choices of athletes you have. . . I think it makes for more competitive teams.”

Welcome Class of 2027

graphic by Alexandra Valencia



## Liberator's Picks

## Songs of the Summer

August

Flipturn

SARAH GARRETT | entertainment editor

"August," by Flipturn, emphasizes the sadness of wishing for summer to never end, a feeling I resonated with before and even during this school year. One of the main lines from the chorus is "But now you're a stranger, and I'm still July." I not only love this line for the entertaining word play, but also because I was able to relate to it in a quite literal sense. As someone who was plagued with COVID-19 for two weeks in July, when August came around I was not ready for the upcoming school year, at least not yet. I felt that the song reflected my feelings on how my summer break, full of friends and fun, had passed faster than ever. While this sounds very melancholy, the lyrics aren't all gloomy. The lyric "August, honey, you were mine" reminds the audience about the memories from the past. In the end, while the song is metaphorically using the months as a way to reflect on a past relationship, I was happy to find music that I could literally relate to, perfectly summing up the bittersweet beginning of my school year.

Surf

Mac Miller

KATIE BUSBY | entertainment editor

"Surf", by Mac Miller and released posthumously in early 2020, is my song of the summer. I may have listened to a huge variety of music this summer, but this song made it onto almost every one of my playlists, and I never got tired of it. The acoustic guitar, drums, and raspy vocals became the soundtrack to my drowsy summer mornings and long sunny days. I had a lot of hard moments over the summer, but the airy, calming feel of this song always reminded me to get out of my head and look around. Lyrics like "And I know that somebody knows me, I know somewhere there's home" brought me comfort and made me believe that everything will eventually work out. This song feels like the summer breeze and green leaves, like you're sitting under a tree just watching the world go by. Figuring out that healing isn't linear and life is ever changing. "Until we get old, there's water in the flowers, let's grow."

First Day of My Life

Bright Eyes

LILI XIONG | student life editor

"First Day of My Life" by Bright Eyes was my song of the summer. Yes, it was released in 2002, and yes, I only discovered it in 2022. There's something about the gentle acoustic guitar in the background and the song's delicate, simple lyrics that bring me a sense of nostalgia for the roadtrips, cicadas serenading me on summer evening walks, and the sometimes questionable summertime shenanigans you get into as a kid that defined my childhood summers. I'd describe this song as sleepy—but in the absolute best way possible. The lyrics roll off the lead singer's tongue like he's mumbling peacefully in his sleep and when I listen to it, I can almost hear the lazy smile emanating straight into my ear phones. The lyrics 'I think I was blind before I met you / And I don't know where I am, I don't know where I've been / But I know where I want to go' embody the experience of summer days blending into a slew of indistinctive days of spending time with the people you love instead of grueling over LASA's extensive workload.

Miles Ahead

The Strike

SANWI SARODE | sports editor

Released in 2020 by The Strike, "Miles Ahead" is a song about young love and the feeling of outrunning forever. The song follows the narrative of a shy boy finding a new beginning in his admiration of his brave, beautiful crush. However, he knows that this phase in his life can never last, and he wishes there was a way to catch up to forever, which is "miles ahead." With summer vibes being the epitome of fresh starts that come to an end, this song fits with the season perfectly, and the pure relationship portrayed between the two lovers throughout the song is simply refreshing. The song's nostalgic lyrics, catchy beat, and yearning tone makes "Miles Ahead" nothing less than the perfect song for summer.

## New PBS Center Opens Its Doors

MARS LESLIE | staff writer

The Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) has been a household name to Americans for decades, according to PBSWarn. PBS is centered around providing entertaining programs and documentaries all over the states, focusing on creating tight-knit communities in large cities like Austin. PBS owns the radio station KLRU in Austin and operated out of the University of Texas. Recently, the decision was made to relocate into a new building to expand their services by Sept. 2020.

The new headquarters for the organization are on Austin Community College (ACC)'s Highland campus, a development of recently completed buildings around the long abandoned Highland Mall. The on-campus location was exactly what PBS Austin Chief Executive Officer Luis Patiño and his staff were looking for.

"Our agreement with the University of Texas and the School of Communications had expired," Patiño said. "As we explored finding a new home for Austin PBS, this opportunity to be a part of the new ACC development at the old Highland Mall became a reality."

PBS Austin is known for its participation in local colleges and involvement with students in television program production, according to PBS. When this opportunity arose, Patiño said it seemed like the perfect way to bring production expertise to people who may not be able to afford attending a university like the University of Texas.

"The vision is that we integrate our media services and expertise into the role that ACC provides in educating and teaching the newest cohort of media professionals both in front and behind the camera," Patiño said. "Our staff together with their teachers will work together to help ACC TV elevate their professionalism and leverage our team's years of expertise in production and content creation."

The television content that PBS Austin produces often feature cultures that are local to Austin and central Texas. Having the ability to provide this outreach and represent all of Austin, but also the small and rural communities outside of the city is something that the organization values, according to Austin PBS.

"Our role is unique in that we operate at the intersection of

community service and media distribution," Patiño said. "We have the privilege of producing and creating local community focused content that showcases our diverse community."

All was going to plan with the move and production until Feb. 2021. PBS Austin staff were getting ready to move over to the new building, and then the Uri winter storm hit. After winter storm Uri, damage issues and other factors caused a large inconvenience and pushed back the expected opening date to almost years later. Chief Operating Officer Lori Bolding, was managing the opening throughout all the issues.

"We began construction in 2019 with an expected completion date of Sept. 2020," Bolding said. "We experienced a few delays due to the pandemic pushing the expected move-in date to February 2021. There was significant damage to the building during the Feb. 2021 winter storm thus delaying the project another 18+ months."

Delays weren't the only problem Austin PBS ran into while moving, according to Bolding. Finding adequate funding to support the new building became a challenge as well.

"In January of 2019 Austin PBS set a 12 million dollar fundraising goal to raise the funds needed to acquire the furniture, fixtures and equipment required to complete a project of this magnitude," Bolding said. "Austin PBS will pay back the construction cost to ACC for their space over the term of the lease."

Senior Vice President Sara Robertson experienced the move firsthand. Robertson has been with PBS Austin for nearly 17 years and understands how important the old location is and was to PBS employees.

"The move has been emotional," Robertsons said. "Some of our staff had been working at our former studio for 40+ years. That is a lot of memories. Now that things are about done, we are all excited to get back into offices and for new opportunities."

After the issues were resolved and final details were complete, the new PBS Austin headquarters was opened to the public. The organization hosted several grand opening events from Aug. 25-27 in the new building at the corner of Wilhelmina Delco Drive and Clayton Lane.

## Tunnel Vision

from page 1

Tunnel Vision had multiple events. There was a summer series event and a surprise show in July, which was followed by the final event in late August. Some people like Francis enjoyed the events so much they went to multiple.

"The first show was definitely my favorite because of the sheer amount of people and the venue," Francis said. "I also attended the end of summer bash because I wanted to see if anything had been changed or refined, but it was about the same idea with a much larger indoor/outdoor space."

With Ponder's event series she was able to provide exposure for the teens who participated and connect possible fans to the artists by creating interest around the event. The event was promoted on Instagram and around various Austin high schools which also allowed possible vendors or bands to hear about the event.

"For the first event, I asked around and scouted different teen bands to see who would be interested in playing," Ponder said. "After the first event, Instagram played a big

talent. In the first show alone there were 7 different musical acts composed of Austin teens. Along with that there were also many art vendors and Shaevel said she really liked this.

"My experience at Tunnel Vision was really great because I got to be surrounded by other high school artists like myself who are passionate about creating art," Shaevel said. "It was nice to be a part of something like this where I could actually display and sell my art in a public setting because I've never had that opportunity before."

Ponder put a lot of work into organizing the events throughout the series. She worked with the venues and the acts in order to provide the best experience she could.

"The only thing you can count on is something going wrong, and so I had to juggle a lot of moving parts before and during the show, as well as figure out logistical problems in the moment," Ponder said. "My family and friends were always super helpful though, and I couldn't have pulled these off without their help. But for each show, once the music started, all the hard work put into the shows were instantly worth it."

Tunnel Vision provided a space for young creators that existed just for the purpose of being a space where people could come together and share their ideas. It also gave artists a chance to sell their work to people and gain new customers, which Francis thought that this was a great idea.

"I think that Tunnel Vision was so incredible because it allowed teenagers to showcase their art in a public, informal setting, not only an opportunity to make a little bit of money but also to network with people your age and older," Francis said.

Along with gaining publicity in the Austin area, Shaevel said presenting art at Tunnel Vision helps artists gain more respect for their own art skills. When students see how other people appreciate their work, they can feel more proud of their contribution to the art community, according to Shaevel.

"It's really important for young artists to have the



**ENTERING THE EVENT** Teens walk into Tunnel Vision at Feels So Good on Saturday, August 27th. Tunnel Vision hosted a number of bands and art vendors, all of whom were teens. photo by Katie Busby

part in letting artists and bands reach out to the Tunnel Vision account, @tunnelvisionatx, and send some music samples to see if they would be a good fit for the show. I tried to mix up different bands who played each show so that we could get as many people as much stage time as possible. For art vendors, I did pretty much the same thing. Vendors didn't have to pay a fee for a table, and got to sell any product they wanted, as long as it was original."

Tunnel Vision's events brought together a community of many different people with similar interests by hosting events that allowed artistic teens to show off their



**TEEN SINGS** The band Midnight Butterfly performs at Tunnel Vision. Midnight Butterfly, The Formality, and Lila + Sophia were only a few of the performing groups at the event. photo by Katie Busby



**OUTDOOR ARTISTS** Attendees of Tunnel Vision stand outside, browsing through a number of art and food vendors selling crocheted pieces, original art, and snow cones. Along with the vendors, teens watch bands perform in the outdoor area, separate from the indoor performances. photo by Katie Busby

opportunity to share their work with the public because it gives them more confidence to create knowing that there are other people who care about their work, and that they're not solely creating art for themselves," Shaevel said.

The series Tunnel Vision has come for a close for now, but Ponder wants people to take something from it. The event aimed to give people a way to share creativity with each other, and that doesn't have to stop with the current version of the series ending, according to Ponder.

"I want people to be inspired by it," Ponder said. "Whether that means creating their own events, or starting their own bands or small businesses, I think it could be a really unique movement in Austin to have more creative events 'for teens, by teens.' I have already been helping a few different people, both in Austin and in surrounding towns, put on their own mini events and festivals. I think it's a great way to foster real community and creativity in our increasingly digital and isolated world."

# Wildflower Center Lights Up

Bruce Munro's calming immersive experience comes to Austin

BEATRIZ MARTELETO-LARA | staff writer

Deep in South Austin, as the sun sets across MoPac, 16 acres of grassland light up at the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center. Bruce Munro's "Field of Light Austin" installation opened at the center on Sept. 9, but Munro has exhibited Fields of Light all over the world, including a permanent installation in Uluru, Australia. Munro was inspired by a 1992 trip to Australia when he visited Uluru, where he felt compelled to create an art piece resembling dormant seeds blooming in the night.



**SETTING SUN** As the sun sets, the fiber-optic light pods in the Field of Light art installation show their true colors. According to the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, Munro's installation combines art, technology, and nature. photo by Beatriz Marteleto-Lara

"We were traveling in a car in the Outback, and we passed through a place called Uluru, which is right in the middle of the Outback," Munro said. "I'd been told about it by many friends over the years, that it was an amazing place to visit. People always talk about these life-changing experiences. I've never quite believed it, but when I got there it completely got into my heart and my spirit, so that might have changed my life."

According to Munro, he felt connected to the energy of Uluru, where he imagined The Field of Light. The installation features 28,000 fiber-optic, solar powered light bulbs covering 16 acres of grass. The lights shine at a low frequency, so they slowly become more visible as the sun sets, until they, along with the moon, are the sole illuminators of the Wildflower Center.

"I wasn't trying to create a piece of art you go look at," Munro said. "I wanted it to be more immersive as an experience."

Munro works with light often, but according to him, he doesn't think of himself as a light artist, just an artist who likes to use light.

Freshman Lillian Poland visited the exhibit on its opening day and found Munro's work very relaxing.

"It was nice," Poland said. "It was really calming and soothing."

Others who have visited or work with the exhibit, such as Field of Light Event Director Sam Elkin, agree that the installation is very calming. The event focuses on the beauty of the light and the simplicity guides the viewer to really experience the exhibit according to Elkin.

"It's a very meditative, calming, and cerebral experience," Elkin said. "It's a really simple, beautiful installation. There's no music, it's about enjoying being in the outdoors and experiencing the beautiful, beautiful light installation in a beautiful place."

Field of Light Austin will be the 14th Field of Light Munro has done, starting with one in his home garden in the UK in 2003. The Field of Light is Munro's longest lasting exhibition.

"[The exhibit has] never changed. They've evolved visually, but they don't change at all conceptually," Munro said. "I never thought it would get past our field, to be honest. And it was the response from people that was very, very moving for me."

The response from the audience was overwhelmingly positive, according to Munro. Opening day was completely sold out. At the event, many people could be seen connecting with their family or friends.

"I've had multiple people say how nice and serene [the installation] is and how it really helps calm them," Elkin said. "Also it brings people together in a beautiful outdoor space. That's something the artists really strive for, bringing people together."

While many artists create artwork to express their personal feelings and innerworkings to the outside world as a way to cope, Munro wants to share his positive feelings and experiences with his viewers. He said art is never truly created for the artist only. There will always be a viewer, and what you choose to pass onto the viewer is the meaning of your work, according to Munro.

"You don't have an exhibition until people look at it," Munro said. "The visitors in the audience are really supposed to be part of it. A lot of people and artists think, 'Well, this is all for me.' But it's not because from that experience of the audience that the art is made."

Many people had concerns about how the installation may affect the Wildflower Center's wildlife since the lights take up nearly one fifth of the center's area. Light pollution can harm plants, native animals, and migratory bird species. However, Munro was mindful of the wildlife, making sure the lights are on from 5pm-11pm so as to not harm native species.

"It was very in tune with nature," Poland said. "You can tell they cared about that because there were boundaries, and the lights weren't too bright, so they didn't disrupt the animals."

The concept of creating an exhibition in nature is not a new one, but it is still not as commonplace as indoor art. According to Munro, Field of Light is about bringing attention to the natural landscapes a place already has and just enhancing its natural beauty.

"I have this interest in how the landscape can change the art, and the art can change the landscape," Munro said. "It's a special sort of symbiotic relationship, and I'm always interested to see it... There's these natural landscapes that are changing the way people

see their emotions."

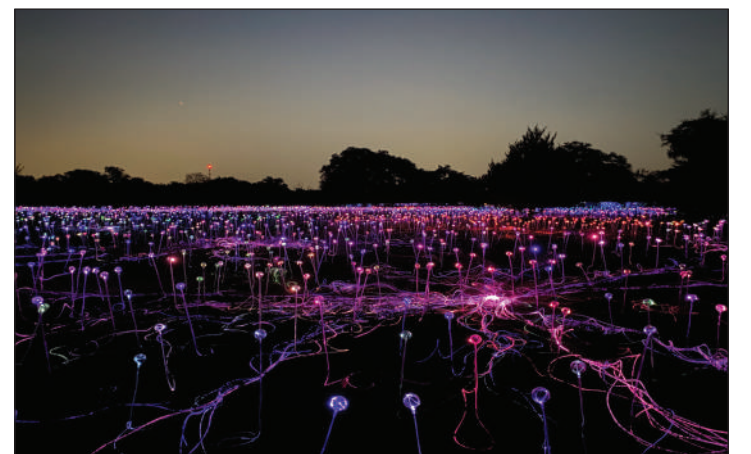
Field of Light is an immersive artwork. It's not meant to evoke any strong, aggressive emotions, according to Munro. He shared that his intentions were to make the viewer think about themselves and their experiences in a new and hopefully more positive light.

"I have not got any time to make negative experiences because I don't want to do that," Munro said. "I want to try and make things that make people joyful."

The Field of Light Austin is open for viewing until Dec. 20. Tickets are available at [fieldoflightaustin.com](http://fieldoflightaustin.com).



**RAINBOW HUES** Light pods shine in the night at Bruce Munro's Field of Light installation in the Texas Arboretum Wildflower Center. Field of Light is open until December 2022. photo by Beatriz Marteleto-Lara



**ILLUMINATED ACRES** In the night at the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, 28,000 light spheres illuminate 16 acres. Bruce Munro's Field of Light light spheres are powered by LED 'low lumen' lights, minimizing the environmental impact. photo by Beatriz Marteleto-Lara

## Espionage Back to Basics Blanton Brings New Art

Spy Kids Returns to Austin Austin's Art Museum Installs New Exhibits

JAMES GRAHAM | staff writer

"Spy Kids" is a movie series directed by Robert Rodriguez, and has released four movies between the years of 2001 and 2011. A new movie, titled "Spy Kids: Armageddon", is set to come out next year and will be the fifth film in the series. Similar to the previous "Spy Kids" movies, "Spy Kids: Armageddon" will also be filmed in Austin.

English teacher Daniela Recalde watched the first two "Spy Kids" movies when she was a kid. She enjoyed the original movies, and especially liked being able to escape from reality through film.

"I felt weird about [Spy Kids]," Recalde said. "It was the first movie that I had ever seen in theaters. It's not even because I was that young, necessarily, but I grew up in a family that didn't really watch movies very much and was very conservative ... and all of a sudden, we're watching this movie about these kids with microscopic cameras and men made of thumbs."

The "Spy Kids" movies had a big effect on Recalde because they introduced her to fantasy movies and showed her that children can be powerful too. Although Recalde has become less impressed by the movies' effects as she has gotten older, she still enjoys them. She is looking forward to seeing how special effects have evolved with the new movie.

"I'm sure that if I went back to rewatch them, I would probably laugh at the effects in there," Recalde said. "Part of what was really cool about the original 'Spy Kids' is the fact that they had all of this super cool, really advanced technology for that time... So I'm curious to see what kind of futuristic technology they're gonna have in this new 'Spy Kids' movie and how they're going to present that."

E-Zine teacher Nancy Zamora watched the movie when she was younger due to the Latinx representation. Spy Kids director Robert Rodriguez, as a Latino himself, did this intentionally so that Latinx children could relate to the film.

"I hadn't seen something like that, representing Latino kids, so it really piqued my interest," Zamora said. "I was interested in watching the movie, even though I thought the movie wasn't good. I personally didn't like it. I still watched it. I watched all of them because of that, so that's what got me excited to see it."

Although Zamora doesn't enjoy the movies very much, she still watches them because she appreciates the positive portrayal of Latinx people. For the new movie, Zamora expects more of the same.

"I remember there being water-related stuff, so maybe this time I'd like something to do with outer space, something outlandish and dangerous," Zamora said. "I also expect some fight scenes and stuff like that."

Freshman Tomas Bellavia watched the first two "Spy Kids" movies when he was younger and he enjoyed the movies at the time, but he started to dislike them as he got older because the quality wasn't good compared to current films. Still, he is looking forward to seeing how the franchise evolves as its audience gets older.

"I hope it becomes a little more mature because all the kids that watched it when it came out will be older now," Bellavia said. "I still want [the creators of 'Spy Kids'] to relate back to the original fans."

The LASA community has mixed feelings about the previous "Spy Kids" movies, but they are looking forward to seeing how the series continues to develop. "Spy Kids: Armageddon" finished filming on Aug. 31, but the release date hasn't been announced yet. The movie will once again be produced, directed, and written by Rodriguez.

LASYA SANGANA | staff writer

Within the midst of bustling pedestrians and the car-cramped streets of downtown sits one of Austin's art museums, the Blanton Art Museum (Blanton). The new contemporary art exhibit by Njideka Akunyili Crosby of large scale paintings, and other exhibits such as Ellsworth Kelly: Postcards and Painted Cloth: Fashion and Ritual in Colonial Latin America are the newest additions to the museum.

Blanton Public Relations & Media Manager Kate Bruton says that in order to create an exhibit, the first step of the creation process is with the curator. According to Bruton, there is a curatorial team where each curator specializes in a different global area.

"We have a lot of art from Latin America," Bruton said, "and this was the first museum [in the US] to have a curator dedicated to Latin American art."

The Blanton also has a curator who specializes in Spanish American art, another for modern and contemporary art, and a final director for European art, as well as prints and drawings. The exhibits are planned several years ahead of time, because the curators need a couple of months to sign contracts and coordinate with other museums to loan pieces of art for the exhibit.

Bruton feels the diversity of art at the Blanton is especially important due to the mixed culture of Austin and the centrality of the museum in the heart of the city. Located downtown, the Blanton is right next to the State Capitol.

"It's on the university campus, but it's right across from the Capitol, which is interesting and symbolic," Bruton said. "It's an art museum for the University of Texas, but it's also an art museum for the entire city."

According to Bruton, the museum is not just for students, but it is for all people to come and enjoy it like a laboratory of learning in a fun environment. Blanton Museum Educator Carlen Floyd similarly spoke about the welcoming environment of the Blanton. When she was a kid going to museums, she wasn't allowed to speak, look too closely,

or even sit down. Floyd said she wants the Blanton to be different.

"We really embrace an experience of art," Floyd said. "When there are particular installations, we invite people to lie down on the floor, to look up. It's to look at things from different perspectives."

Floyd feels like the uniqueness of the Blanton exhibits makes the experience more special and valuable. Floyd said that it never gets old to just look at the same piece of art multiple times at the Blanton.

"When you slow down and devote uninterrupted time, energy, and consciousness to looking, there's nothing like that," Floyd said. "When you come with other people and have the opportunity [to look at art], we learn so much from each other. That has been one of the things that I just love about looking at art with other people is, the more you look, the more you see."

According to Floyd, seeing students is always a treat as they teach her something new about a piece of art she's already seen whenever they come to the museum. Intermediate Art teacher Jessica Fisher strongly agrees that going to art museums is beneficial saying it's important for students to experience art.

"It's creative expression," Fisher said. "It gives [high schoolers] a way to express themselves and learn different mediums, like technical things."

Fisher also said the Blanton does a great job curating and displaying art. She loves how there's always something new and they are always rotating art exhibits, such as Akunyili Crosby's contemporary project: a showcase of paintings of plants from Lagos, Nigeria, and Los Angeles, and a self-portrait of her holding her son.

According to Floyd, the Blanton's 20,000 artworks currently not on display ensure that it can continue connecting, challenging, and inspiring people.

The contemporary project by Akunyili Crosby will be up until Dec. 4, Ellsworth Kelly: Postcards will be up until Nov. 27, and Painted Cloth: Fashion and Ritual in Colonial Latin America is also up at the Blanton until Jan. 8.



**ART ENTHUSIAST** Viewers walk through Njideka Akunyili Crosby's contemporary art exhibition in the Blanton Museum of Art. Akunyili Crosby's painting "Still You Bloom in the Land of No Gardens" is the largest painting in the exhibit, featuring her holding her child, which will be open to the public until Dec. 4. photo by Sarah Garrett

# Race to See The Grand Picks

Learn more about COTA with Austin's Turn Around the Track on page 16

**World Racing League 2022 Championship Finale**  
Dec. 1-4

20 hours of included track time at the only Formula 1 track in the US. Experience the thrill of 90 cars in a multi-class endurance format. This event has always sold out, be sure to be ready when registration opens to secure your spot at the 2021 US Endurance Championship at COTA.

**Electrify Expo**  
Nov. 11-13

Nov. 11 is Industry Day, Nov. 12 and 13 are public days. Electrify Expo is a weekend-long festival taking in multiple cities across the country. At Electrify Expo, you can ride, drive, and demo electronic vehicles. This includes E-motorcycles, E-bikes, E-scooters, E-skateboards and more.

**Peppermint Parkway**  
Nov. 25-Dec. 30

Their version of trail of lights. According to the website Peppermint Parkway is a magical drive-thru holiday experience at Circuit of The Americas featuring one-mile of immersive holiday displays, millions of lights, dancing elves and more. In addition to the main adventure, guests can take a parade lap on COTA's signature track with a Candy Cane Cruise ticket and visit Peppermint Plaza to meet Pepper and Mint, enjoy holiday treats and experience new rides and attractions.

graphics by Katie Busby and Amelia Coleman  
research by Sarah Garrett and Luci Garza

# See the Space Seas of CGI

How Avatar's Tech Has and Will Revolutionize Movies

GRIFFIN BEAM | staff writer

In the lush landscape of Pandora, the storyline of the "Avatar" franchise played out, and the viewers were right there with it. Computer-generated imagery (CGI) was utilized very heavily and brought the world to life in a way that hadn't been done before, according to Screen Rant. "Avatar," directed by James Cameron, was released in 2009. Now, after 13 years, a second "Avatar" movie will be coming out on Dec. 19. Cameron has directed multiple award-winning films including "Titanic," "True Lies," and "The Terminator."

University of Texas professor Ben Bays teaches in the Radio, Television, and Film (RTF) department. He has been working in RTF for 24 years, some of which has been spent working with CGI.

"The movie was filmed in 2009 which is a long time ago if you think about it," Bays said. "I guess people just ended up forgetting about how good the CGI was in it."

According to the Guardian, "Avatar" was created with 70% CGI. This was made possible by motion-capture technology, which, according to the Motion Capture Society, was pioneered by Cameron.

"They used higher tech suits [motion-capture suits] which let them record specific facial

expressions which made the movie way more realistic," Bays said. "That is why the movie is so well done, and so well animated."

According to The Guardian, these motion-capture suits improved how facial expressions and small movements were recorded. Audio and Visual Production teacher Vanessa Mokry said that motion-capture suits allow actors to pretend they were the animated character.

"Actors wear a suit that's got a bunch of little sensors on it," Mokry said. "They look like ping pong balls, usually. It lets the actor move around while the computer captures their movement ... and create a performance that's going to then be a CGI character, but it has their movements and their physicality."

According to Bays, the utilization of advanced CGI is one of the contributing factors in making about 2.8 billion dollars in profit from the global box office. This makes "Avatar" the highest grossing film across the world, according to the Insider.

"It was one of the first [movies] that was done to that extent into that level of realism, I think at the time," Mokry said. "[Avatar] raised the bar on the quality and the expectations of the audience."

While viewers, such as Bays and Mokry, appreciated the use of CGI, others appreciated the plot as well. Film critic Bart Weiss, a member of the North Texas Film Critic Association, feels that "Avatar" successfully communicated the story it had in mind.

"I don't know if it contributed to it being successful, but it was the right way to tell the story that he wanted to tell," Weiss said. "I think that if he tried it without that it wouldn't have been so successful. It was really a matter of having a good way to tell the story."

Weiss feels that the film was particularly unique due to its storytelling and its special effects. He, along with Mokry and Bays, recognizes that the CGI impacted the future of computer generation.

"I think it was a film that really pushed the envelope a bit, and that it was very sophisticated and worked really well," Weiss said. "I also think that it changed how animation works now."

This new innovation is present in the new "Avatar: The Way of Water" with Cameron's underwater motion-capture technology. Mokry feels that Cameron's advancements in CGI will continue improving and changing the industry.

"It wasn't just the CGI," Mokry said. "It was also James Cameron, who is just a force itself at making movies. He's also continually advancing that tech. I think that 'The Terminator' movies and 'Avatar' are in his timeline of tech changing movies, and industry evolving."



graphic by Alexandria Valencia

# Tik Tok Tries To Takeover

How the Popular App is Changing the Entertainment Industry

MEGAN GEROLD | staff writer

Since its creation in 2018, TikTok has become one of the leading social media sites in the world with over 1 billion monthly users, according to Adobe. With the growing popularity of the app, BBC News said many industries have jumped on the opportunity to use the platform as a marketing tool to reach communities across the globe and that is just the beginning.

According to a 2022 Pew Research Center study, TikTok has also become a news resource for an increasing number of people. The content on the app has changed to fit the modern day culture, and the popularity of social media influencers and content creators has changed because of TikTok. Artists, brands, and actors have all used this to their advantage, and it's not gone unnoticed by those like freshman Riley McKinley. McKinley is a lover of music, and he has observed a change in how music is made to appeal to TikTok.

"If TikTok wasn't a thing, music would be created differently," McKinley said. "It would have more meaning to the artist and to the consumer than it is now, where it's like 'oh I like this song from tiktok I'm gonna listen to a little part of it,' or the artist [thinks], 'oh I need some money so I can just make some music for TikTok to make some quick money'. I feel like it's not very authentic anymore."

The change in music is not the only industry that's gone through perceived transformations. Films have also taken on a different approach to editing and directing scenes in the hopes that those scenes will resonate with TikTokers. Popular TikTok editor @valentinc believes that the people making shows and movies change what they're producing in order to follow trends.

"Edits largely influence upcoming trends," @valentinc said. "I feel that producers of these films/videos that get edited have the 'editability' of what they're creating in mind."

Not only have industries been changed because of this usage of social media as a marketing tool, but the content on TikTok itself has been reinvented. Brands and people follow trends so that they can make the best out of their postings and social media presence. The creator of Strawberry Milk Media, a social media creative agency, Hannah Eddins has been on social media for a while, and believes that the tone of content has transformed even from just ten years ago.

"If you take a look back at Instagram of 2010, it was very blogger style," Eddins said. "It was very aesthetically pleasing. Everybody used these very filteresque photos, and now if you go to TikTok, it's very much people just pulling out their iPhone, filming as they walk down the street and filming as they unbox a package."

According to Eddins, less formal, photoshopped content is one that is preferable for promotion due to how genuine and relatable it comes across as. The ability of social media, and especially TikTok, to be able to influence what's being consumed by the public even extends to the smaller aspects of the videos such as the sound being played in the background, according to McKinley. For McKinley, TikTok has provided useful guidance in growing his music taste and catalog.

"If you stumble across a video using a certain type of sound on your for you page and it peaks your interest you're gonna want to explore that interest more, so it can expand your music taste buds," McKinley said.

TikTok pushes curated content across people's feed based on an algorithm, but content can differ greatly from person to person, in Eddins' observation. Using an algorithm is not uncommon for social media sites and according to @valentinc, what you do and don't like can affect what you watch across multiple platforms.

"I'll see edits of shows and movies that I've not seen, and they reel me in because I've seen the edit, and I don't know what's happening in the film and I want to know more," @valentinc said.

This modern form of advertisement has provided many advantages for companies and businesses, according to Eddins. TikTok has become a new resource for people to find products to buy and places to visit as they've seen on social media. Eddins said she preferred TikTok over other social media apps because of its advanced promotional and marketing aspects.

"It is the number one search engine in the world right now," Eddins said. "It has surpassed Google and is the number one way to market a product to new customers."

However, despite the mostly positive reviews, @valentinc said there is also dispute about whether this new industry and the emergence of this industry has favorable or unpleasant ramifications. For @valentinc, TikTok is something that has brought her a positive form of solidarity.

"Honestly, a sense of community is immediately created when you start gaining mutuals and getting recognition," @valentinc said. "These edits allow people to meet others with similar interests and create a community through that."

She also agrees that there are negative aspects about social media, but she believes the positives outweigh the negatives. Eddins is another believer that social media is positive, but she also thinks it depends on its usage.

"I think it has negative traits, but overall, I think it's positive if it's used the correct way," Eddins said. "I mean, it's how I make my entire living. It's my whole career, so I couldn't say that it's entirely negative, because it's how it's given me financial stability, for example. It's also given me the ability to be creative, but at the same time, if you do too much of anything, it will have negative effects."

TikTok's success is an opportunity that has been utilized by artists and brands alike, and it is one that many are cognizant of. For Mckenly, @valentinc, and Eddins, TikTok has allowed them to discover new musical artists and enabled the creation of fun projects for years to come.



graphic by Amelia Coleman

## Welcome to the Club Students Bulk Up in New Fitness Group

VICTOR MARTINEZ | staff writer

With the creation of a new lifting club this year, students now have the opportunity to incorporate exercise into their after-school routines. Whether people join for muscular gains, fun, or to connect with friends, the lifting club is open to athletes of all experience levels and offers a wide range of weights, machines, and training equipment for use.

Sponsored by teachers Ryan Bailey and Neno December, the club meets in the weight room after school on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. As someone who has experienced first-hand the negative effects of not incorporating exercise into one's life, Bailey hopes he can help students learn from his mistakes through the lifting club.

"I think all students should participate in some form of athletics frequently for their own health purposes," Bailey said. "When I was a teenager, I didn't, and I saw the effects of it when I threw out my back at the age of 24."

Since then, Bailey has been consistently working out both on his own time and after school in the LASA weight room. Seeing how many students used the room to exercise during his time there, Bailey was inspired to create the lifting club.

"I have been going to the weight room here pretty frequently as of March of 2022," Bailey said. "I took some kids along with me, and then more kids wanted to come, thus leading to me sponsoring the weightlifting club, along with Mr. December."

While the weightlifting club was initially started to teach a powerlifting based program, students are free to do other exercises focusing on different muscles as well. To ensure members can safely operate equipment and be trusted with lifting alone, they are taught fundamental gym safety by club sponsors and officers.

"We give demonstrations of the three main types of lifts and help people with their form as they practice," Bailey said. "I go around watching people's form, making sure they're performing the exercises correctly and safely. We teach how to spot, which means how to make sure that the people

won't drop the weight on themselves and hurt themselves."

Senior club member Jeffrey Li had been lifting for three years before he joined the club. Originally, he was not expecting many people to come to the first meeting, so he was pleasantly surprised with the large turnout the first meeting had.

"A lot more people came than we thought," Li said. "It was 20 to 30 people the first time, and the second time it was a lot more, maybe 35 to 40 people. We thought it would be pretty hectic, but it turns out everybody got into their own group and just started working together, supporting each other, even if they didn't know what they were doing, and just creating friends overall."

In addition to using the club to better themselves, experienced club members, like Senior Ruby Sulter, joined to connect with others and teach new members proper lifting technique. For Sulter, weightlifting gives her the opportunity to take time out of her busy schedule to socialize.

"[Weightlifting] is just really fun, and also I'm a bit experienced, so I know I can always help people out, but this is also a great way to connect with my friends," Sulter said. "I love working out with my friends because I don't get to see them all the time because of jobs and classes."

Sulter has been involved in athletics since she was six. Having participated in multiple team sports in the past, she developed burnout and painful injuries like knee and hip flexor pains. Sulter began to lift consistently a year ago and remains passionate about it. For her, lifting caters much better to each individual's fitness goals than traditional team sports, and she hopes the lifting club can expose others to the sport of lifting as well.

"When it comes to weightlifting, the goal is to build your best self," Sulter said. "I think that's really the big thing that makes it so enjoyable for me: it's just time for me to work on myself without pressure from other people. I just love it."



**MAKING GAINS** Members of the lifting club work on squats, bench press, and other workouts. According to member Ruby Sulter lifting is a great way to gain muscle without damaging your body like cardio can do. photo by JC Ramirez Delgadillo

**BENCH PRESS** Lifting club members and sponsor Ryan Bailey do sets of bench presses in the weightroom. Bench pressing is done by lying on a bench with your feet on the ground and lifting different weights. photo by JC Ramirez Delgadillo

## COACH LEWIS

page 1

According to sophomore football player Juyeop Lee, Lewis has been living up to his reputation, and everyone is improving with his guidance. Lee hopes that LASA can make a name for themselves in football, and that Lewis can help them do just that.

"He's really charismatic, and he's got a lot of good leadership qualities," Lee said. "The mindset around our team and our practices have changed a lot to really want to get better everyday and improve."

The coaching strategy that Lewis uses helps each player learn and develop skills catered to them, according to Freshman football player Elijah Moon. Moon believes that Lewis will turn their team into the strongest it's been.

"I really like Coach Lewis; he's probably one of my favorite coaches I've had," Moon said. "He's really good at teaching and you can tell that he really knows a lot about what he's doing and is able to help our team."

Lewis says he approaches coaching in a way that helps each player hone in on their individual strengths. Lewis attempts to learn each player's preferences in order to teach them in a way they understand.

"I make it relevant to whatever it is they're good at," Lewis said. "If they are basketball players, I apply the drills or teach the drill in such a way that they can receive it in their own understanding. I meet them where they are. I don't expect them to know it like I know, so once I understand what their likes and dislikes are, I can meet them where they are academically or just intellectually and bring them up to where we need them to be

to have success." Even though Lewis has only been with LASA a short while, he has enjoyed it, despite it being very different from what he expected. According to Lewis, the way the school operates and the students and staff's receptiveness to help has been a bit of a culture shock.

"I'm still having culture shock," Lewis said. "Like the fact that there are no bells and the kids are so respectful, and nice, and willing to work and help. The kids are awesome. All the athletes have really embraced what we're trying to do for the team, they want to be a good team, so they're really working hard at it. This is the kind of place I like to be in."

This is currently LASA's third year of having sports independent from Lyndon Baines Johnson Early College High School after the move to the current campus. Despite the fact that the football team was formed relatively recently and does not have much experience with competitive high school football, Lewis has high hopes for the team and believes they can become one of the best teams in the district.

"I hope to be a top two contender in the district and to be the baby Westlake for football," Lewis said. "I want to produce a powerhouse, and it can happen here because there's a lot of nuances with working here that other schools don't have. I know we can't recruit for football, but if we're doing well kids are gonna want to come here not only with academics but for athletics as well."

**EYE OF THE RAPTOR** Derrick Lewis observes his players working hard during their warmup before the football game against St. Andrews. Lewis is the new head football coach and athletic coordinator and hopes to make LASA the second best team in the district. photo by Kayla Le



graphics by Annabel Andre and Amelia Coleman photos by Kayla Le



## WOLO Is No Longer Solo Austin Water Polo Joins UIL

ANNABEL ANDRE | sports editors  
SANWI SARODE

Water polo, also known as "wolo" by players, has long been a club sport, but this year it is making the transition to being an Austin Independent School District (AISD) funded varsity sport. As water polo players in Austin are making the change from being a club to being a University Interscholastic League (UIL) sport, new opportunities may present itself to the team.

Water polo is a fall sport, with the season lasting from August to October, and is a melting pot of components from many different sports. Senior Helen Randle, goalie and one of the captains of the girls water polo team, said that water polo follows a similar format to two sports specifically: basketball and soccer.

"I like to describe it as a mix of soccer and basketball but in the water," Randle said. "It is like soccer because you have a goal, and you're trying to move back and forth across the field trying to shoot. But a lot of the defense looks like basketball in that you have to pair up with one person in order to guard them to try to prevent them from shooting."

Players have gained several benefits as a result of water polo becoming an official UIL sport, such as being able to get a physical education (PE) credit from the sport as well as compete in official

tournaments all the way up to the state level. According to junior Max Vale, a captain of the boys water polo team, these added benefits will hopefully attract more players.

"When the club heard that water polo was becoming a UIL sport, we were all very excited," Vale said. "We knew it meant not only would official tournaments take place, but that it would also attract many new players. It also helps with convenience. Many of our players had to go through the process of getting credit for off-campus PE, which provided a great deal of stress. It's always nice to get credit for something you love."

Another benefit is that water polo will be funded by the district, according to senior captain Manu Singhal. Funding can be allocated towards renting a pool for practice, transportation to tournaments, and meals on game related trips. Before becoming a UIL sport, the club had to find ways to pay for amenities and team requirements themselves, without support from AISD.

"The way LASA water polo worked was everyone had to have the Longhorn membership and that was expensive especially if you weren't playing year round," Singhal said. "We had Longhorn dues and club dues, so we could get t-shirts and sign up for tournaments and everything, but now this year UIL has made it a lot more cheaper."

Despite all the many benefits of officially becoming a UIL sport, the water polo team is still facing challenges. Currently, very few schools in Texas have developed water polo teams because the sport is relatively new to high schools, and there are even less teams in AISD. UIL standards have further narrowed the pool of competitors as schools are required to play against other schools with similar student populations. According to Randle, with so few teams in the area, the LASA teams will have very little exposure to a competitive water polo environment before regionals later this year.

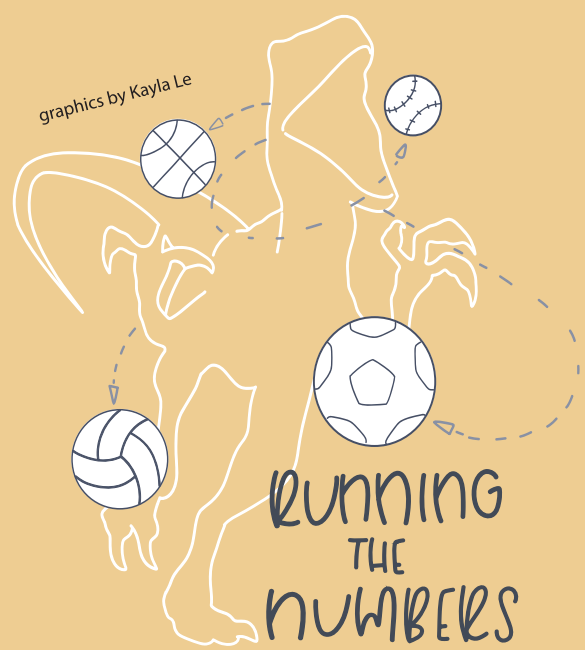
"I play for the girls team, and this year only Anderson and LASA have a girls water polo team which means we only have two games this season, and they're both against Anderson until we get to regionals," Randle said. "That's frustrating because last year we

were able to play a lot of different schools or club teams within the Austin area that we can't play this year because they're not within our same UIL district."

Due to water polo's recent transition to a UIL sport, players are encouraging students to join regardless of experience to create a sustainable team for years to come.

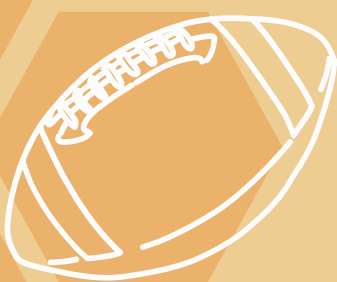
**Robby Cole contributed to this article.**

graphics by Kayla Le



RUNNING THE NUMBERS

LASA'S WINS AND LOSSES  
as of Oct. 1



home	visitor
1	5
football	



home	visitor
7	2
varsity volleyball	



home	visitor
4	2
boys water polo	

home	visitor
0	2
girls water polo	

THE RAPTOR RUN DOWN

ROBBY COLE | staff writer

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

I showed up to the Raptors volleyball practice with no experience in the sport outside of my fifth grade gym class. Although I had extremely limited knowledge of the rules in volleyball, I remembered how to hold my arms for a pass. At least I thought I did.

After convincing her to train and teach me, Junior Holly Adams warmed up with me and I learned to “pepper”. Peppering is a simple warm up in which players hit the ball back and forth in three different ways: bumping, setting, and hitting. Bumping is the traditional pass in which a player uses their forearms to hit the ball up and setting pushes the ball over your head into the air. Finally, a downward and forceful swing can be used to hit the ball over the net to score points. Although bumping should be the first and simplest type of pass, I found much more success in overhead serves and sets.

Somehow, the players seemed like everything came naturally for them. Even though I was doing everything the same, the players were somehow able to direct the ball exactly how they wanted. I don’t understand how they were doing the same thing as I was, but at a much more graceful and eloquent level. I could only accredit their talent to their years of practice and work towards playing volleyball.

We moved onto another drill in which one player had to return another’s hit but freeze immediately after to isolate their form. With the way the ball hurtled hard and fast towards the ground, I

soon realized it can be very difficult to receive. Seeing so many of the players confidently committing to diving and sprawling out to receive the passes shocked me. My partner, Junior Lyssa Lashus, was incredibly patient with me despite the countless missed hits and passes I sent her.

In the last drill, I was placed with a few of the other girls to serve the ball to a few players on the other side, with a consequence of squat jumps if you missed. I knew the idea behind the overhead serving motion was similar to hitting, but I’d never successfully done it before. Although I did my fair share of squat jumps, I was impressed with how many shots I was able to place on their half of the court.

By doing this serving drill I noticed the level of focus the players maintained while also making sure to communicate with each other and strengthen their bond as a team. There were almost no moments in which they were messing around or playing slowly, and I was struggling to keep up with their pace during the drills. It was evident in their playstyle, speed, and communication that the players had created a smooth system driven by their sense of teamwork and intensity.

Thanks to the acceptance from Coach Gritte and Kossa as well as all the players, I was able to follow along and get a firsthand experience of the sport for the first time. As out of place as I looked and felt, multiple players like Holly and Lyssa were very patient and accommodating in allowing me to practice with them. Regardless of my complete ignorance to the sport and the utterly lost look on my face, the girls were very quick to explain and let me practice with them while still maintaining a focused and hardworking attitude towards practice.

**SERVE IT UP** Robby Cole learns how to serve with the rest of the volleyball team. The Raptor Run Down allows a member of the Liberator to learn a new sport. photo by JC Ramirez Delgadillo



**ON THE RUN** Cole does a running drill with the volleyball team. This is one of the many warmup drills they do during practice to raise their heartbeat. photo by JC Ramirez Delgadillo



Austin's Turn Around the Track  
Formula One Comes to Circuit of the Americas

JAMES GRAHAM | staff writer

Just southeast of Austin, the roar of engines and the squeal of brakes can be heard from the Circuit of the Americas (COTA) as Formula One makes their annual visit for the United States Grand Prix. Every year people and businesses all over Austin gear up for the influx of Formula One fans, and each year the crowd continues to grow.

The event will take place over the weekend of Oct. 21-23 with practice on Friday, the qualifying session on Saturday, and the race on Sunday. The starting order for Sunday’s race is decided by the fastest one-lap times from the previous day’s 45-minute qualifying session, while also taking into account any penalties for extra car parts the drivers may have accrued over the course of the weekend. In Formula One, it is common for drivers to take an extra part in the middle of the weekend if a car part is worn or broken, which results in a grid penalty, usually five or ten places. The winner of the race earns 25 points, which count towards the Formula One drivers’ championship. The top 10 finishers in the race earn points, and the driver with the most points at the end of the season wins the championship.

The current championship leader is Max Verstappen of the Red Bull team, who won last year’s United States Grand Prix with 25 points and crossed the finish line 2.4 seconds before the driver who placed second. Verstappen and Red Bull have been comfortably leading their respective standings for the majority of the season, so most of the action in the race will be in the midfield. Weekend attendance has increased by 60% in the past three years from 250,000 in 2019 to 400,000, according to the Formula One website, meaning that Austin will have to manage an influx of an unusually high number of fans going to COTA in October.

Jeff Stensland, a senior specialist of public information at the Austin Transportation Department, said Austi works hard every year to prepare for the United States Grand Prix. The department works to ease travel for not only those attending the event but also for residents of Austin that might be affected by changing traffic conditions or crowds.

“Austin Transportation coordinates with promoters of major events, especially when traffic control plans are required to manage crowds and traffic queuing around an event, as well as minimize disruptions for people not attending the event,” Stensland said. “Our department ensures to coordinate with other City departments and the Texas Department of Transportation through the Austin Center for Events, which was created to provide comprehensive major event resource management.”

The Austin

Department also faces logistical challenges within its own operations, such as understaffing. Due to this, the department often changes employee hours to accommodate for the requirements needed to successfully organize a Formula One race, according to Stensland.

“Austin Transportation staffs accordingly to ensure event needs are met,” Stensland said. “That can include our staff shifting work hours to cover our needs in the Office of Special Events, Right of Way Management, or staffing the Mobility Management Center outside normal staffing hours.”

According to Sophomore Astrid Gothard, a Formula One fan, the introduction of two new Grands Prix in the United States—the Miami Grand Prix in 2022 and the Las Vegas Grand Prix in 2023—might draw Formula One fans away from Austin, making Austin and COTA work harder to market the race. Gothard said that the next few years are going to be critical for COTA to prove that it can rise above the competition.

“It’s definitely going to feel a little more high stakes because COTA still needs to be producing good races and a great atmosphere,” Gothard said. “[The circuit will need] a lot of turnout to assert that it’s a good track to have, and so they don’t get rid of it if these other two tracks in the US prove to be better. So there’s a little higher stake in that COTA needs to keep proving that it is a really good circuit.”

The number of American Formula One fans has increased dramatically in recent years according to Formula One, so much so that car racing is now the fastest-growing sport in the United States in terms of fans. This is partly because of the Netflix series “Drive to Survive”, which details the rivalries between drivers and teams throughout the Formula One season and garnered 28 million views within just five days of its release. Gothard said that “Drive to Survive” played a large part in the increase in American Formula One fans, and the rise in popularity will bring more people to Austin for the race.

“It will make Austin need to prove itself by being on its best and flashiest behavior to cater to all these people who are coming in from all different parts of the country and possibly even other countries, especially the drivers and teams who are from all over the world, that this is an amazing city,” Gothard said. “And that we’re proud to be Austin. We’re proud to have this Formula One track that is an important part of the race calendar.”

Formula One tickets can be purchased online now on the Circuit of the Americas website.

graphic by Amelia Coleman

# editorial Female Athletes Try to Ditch Sexist Uniforms Menstruating Women are Forced to Wear White Despite Complaints

MEGAN GEROLD | staff writer

Short shorts, stark white bottoms, tight tops. The articles of clothing that are forced upon women are not only present at school, or at an office job, but also broadcasted to the entire world through sports.

The fight for women's equality has been one tracing back generations, according to The New York Times. Sports have become the new battleground for equality with the U.S. women's soccer team tackling equal pay to gymnasts paving the way for safe and comfortable environments for young female athletes. Some of us are worried about one thing in particular: the clothes we're wearing. Something seemingly superficial to those on one side of the argument is the cause of strife on the other. Just by looking at teams in Austin, it is clear the disparity between gender outfits is not only on the national level, but at the local level as well.

For many athletes, pure, bright white uniforms is where the issue arises, according to The Telegraph. White outfits are a common source of anxiety among many athletes because white is a color that is in stark contrast to blood from periods— which athletes who experience periods must always be cautious of. Even with the plentiful amount of concerns, this color is forced upon them to 'preserve uniformity.'

This sentiment of cleanliness echoed in a different way among my own soccer team. Over Labor Day weekend I played in a soccer tournament—the first tournament in which we tested out our new kits, or uniforms. The severity of the rain had caused mud to form on the fields, and after a few knocks of the ball, 90% of my team's uniforms were no longer the white color that our club had so forcefully made us use, so one must beg the question. Why do clubs continue to give sports teams these

colors of uniforms? One could argue there is substance in the tradition of it all, but tradition has long been used as an excuse for inequality. Some athletes with periods don't even want to get rid of the traditional white because of how common it is throughout sports history, according to The Telegraph. The extent of this tradition even reaches into how the clothes fit.

Sexualization, unfortunately, starts very early on for girls in adolescence because it has been normalized for them to wear less in order to gain more publicity, according to The New York Times. The easiest and most common example of sexualization of women's uniforms is in volleyball where the outfits consist of tight shorts that hug their backsides along with a tight shirt. According to the National Federation of State High School Associations, these shorts aren't even a necessity to play volleyball; you just need to be wearing shorts. One would think all of these different types of athletes would realize that they have a choice in the type of athletic wear they decide to use, but perhaps this choice isn't as straightforward as it seems. Knowing how unstable women's leagues tend to be, with female sports receiving minimal attention in terms of sponsorship and viewing, according to Marketing Week, an athlete might think twice about opting for the more comfortable option. They might even be pressured into wearing the more revealing clothing because "it'll bring more views."

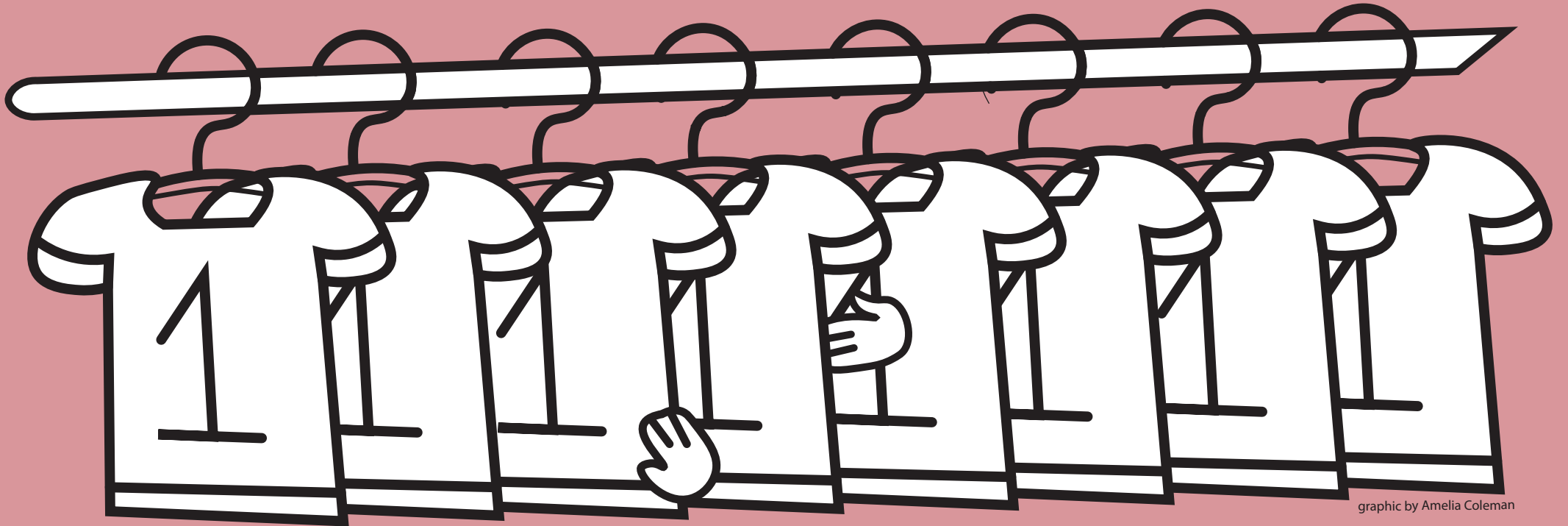
A more severe example would be sand volleyball. While the women's uniforms are essentially a bikini set, the men's uniforms are a full outfit. The problem isn't with women wearing the revealing clothes, but rather the obvious disparity between the two. The entire point of having a choice is that the athlete can choose whether to wear one uniform or another, and when that is taken away, it becomes just another way of objectifying women

athletes—something that men aren't subjected to. Women should be able to choose what outfit they want to wear regardless of what will bring in more views, and leagues should put more effort into making this choice more obvious and open for women who have worked as hard as their men counterparts.

It is important for athletes, especially young ones, to feel comfortable and reassured with being able to choose what they want to wear. However, I have observed that it has been the case that many athletes say they feel insecure in their own uniforms, as the status quo for many women's uniforms continues to value societal pressure for appearance rather than the comfort of players. A Sports Net article reported that a female Norway handball team was fined 150 € after donning shorts instead of the traditional uniform's bikini bottoms which breaks the serves to prove that there is only an illusion of choice.

Being cognisant of women's needs is not something that has been very popular throughout sports. There might even be some resistance to color changes because of the fact that it shouldn't be so pandered to women. The existence of white clothing in sports is never going to change, but making sure that leagues are aware of the sexualization and inconsiderateness it can promote is something that can change.

Understanding the struggles of female athletes who feel pressured to wear white clothing is something that should not be overlooked and pushed aside. The fact of the matter is that women's sports are constantly degraded, neglected, and overshadowed. Unthoughtful uniforms that objectify women just continue to perpetuate the system of disregarding women athletes who have worked to be at the level they are. Those in charge of women's sports should continue to better the environment and learn to acknowledge the qualms expressed.



graphic by Amelia Coleman

## A Guide to the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar

BEATRIZ MARTELETO-LARA | staff writer

The 2022 Soccer World Cup has yet to start, but it's already one of the most controversial Cups to date, according to BBC News. The World Cup will kick off on Nov. 20, 2022 with a match between Ecuador and Qatar, the latter being the host country.

Many teams are in the running for champion, with Brazil leading the qualifying standings. In second is Belgium, who has never won a world cup before, and third is Argentina, who has not won a title since 1982. Behind Argentina is Germany with France — the winners of the 2018 World Cup — in fifth. This is also the first time in eight years that the U.S. men's soccer team is going to participate in a World Cup.

While some teams qualified, only 32 teams could enter, according to Sporting News. Italy did not qualify this year, even after beating England in the European Championship in 2020. According to Junior soccer player Giovanni Villa, it's disappointing that an important player like Italy will not be playing in the World Cup.

"Italy, being one of the best teams in the entire world, got eliminated by a small country, and that team [North Macedonia] didn't even end up going to the World Cup," Villa said. "They didn't make it. It sucks to see that. That's just how soccer is though."

FIFA, the organization which oversees all international soccer competitions, has also recently adjusted their system for reviewing

match calls, previously done with Video Assisted Referee (VAR) technology, to now use Semi-Automated Offside Technology (SAOT), which tracks players' limbs and bodies instead of only

girl's Varsity Soccer team at LASA. McIntosh doesn't believe the VAR technology is being used properly.

"I have strong feelings about VAR," McIntosh said. "I think it can be used well, but it hasn't been used in a productive manner. I think they should regulate the use more, and it should stay an assistant referee and never be used as the main one."

With the introduction of VAR, referees are catching many more errors that they hadn't been able to previously. In 2019, TIME Magazine reported VAR having a 99.3% success rate, but VAR has also received criticism for often catching negligible mistakes in offside situations where it chooses the most minute details of the defensive line and offensive players. VAR and the referee's replay in both slow motion and high-resolution quality show the foul and decide if it should be called or not. With SAOT, the video operations room will get an alert if a player is offside or if a goalie isn't on their mark. SAOT will also send an alert the second a player comes in contact with the ball, so issues with the referee's rulings can be fixed much quicker, in a maximum of five minutes.

In addition to new technology, the schedule for the World Cup this year is also different, with the competition starting in November instead of June due to Qatar's intense summer heat, according to Villa. Although this decision was made for the safety of the players and fans, it messes up soccer internationally, making leagues change their schedules to incorporate the time players will be away for the World Cup— as well as the players'

need for rest— into their regular seasons.

"Obviously, it's really hard in some ways, but I don't like it being in November," Villa said. "I'd prefer it to be June or July. It'd be extremely hot having it during the summer, so I do think this was the best option, but for fans, not really."

Recently, FIFA's also been in controversy for allegations surrounding worker abuse in Qatar, especially with construction involving the World Cup stadium. Qatar's blue-collar labor force—consisting of mostly migrant workers from Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Nepal—are already very scarcely protected by labor laws, and the number of mysterious deaths with odd circumstances has been rising since Qatar began planning for the World Cup, according to The Guardian.

"There are a lot of problems with FIFA, and there should be more people watching out for the working conditions," McIntosh said. "I think there just needs to be improvements, but that requires for there to be greater awareness because a lot of people, especially in the United States, don't know that this is going on, so that needs to happen."

Despite the challenges and controversies surrounding the World Cup, fans like McIntosh and Villa are still looking forward to watching the event. The 2022 Qatar World Cup will start on November 20, 2022 and end on December 18, 2022.

The United States will debut their first World Cup team in eight years on November 21 with a match against Wales. The game will be streamed live on Fox Sports as well as Peacock, Fubo, and SlingTV for all soccer fans to watch.



5 MILLION EXPECTED VISITORS

220B USD MOST EXPENSIVE WORLD CUP EVER

FIRST EVER WINTER WORLD CUP

NOVEMBER 21ST - DECEMBER 18TH

32 TEAMS

playing back the video to make more accurate referee rulings. VAR itself is already a very disputed topic among fans like Junior Megan McIntosh, a player on the

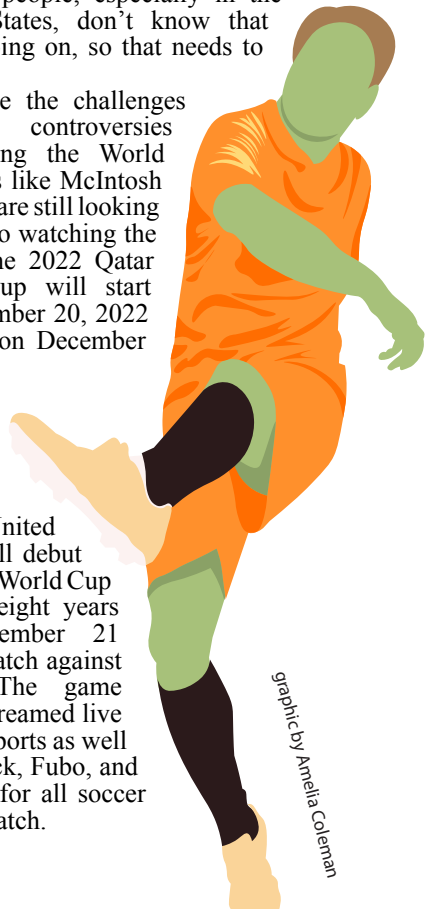
AIR CONDITIONED STADIUMS

QATAR FIRST WORLD CUP IN THE ARAB WORLD

8 STADIUMS

WORLD CUP 22ND

BRAZIL IS FAVORED TO WIN



graphic by Amelia Coleman

## STUDENTS STEP UP

LASA Students get involved in the community to take action in prominent issues

ELLA LILLY  
ZIA RAY | photo editors

After meeting with Senator John Cornyn last year, Austin Climate Coalition started this year strong with an introductory meeting and climate action days planned. The organization, started outside of LASA, invites high schoolers from all over Austin to protest, write letters to policy makers, and mitigate the impact of climate change in their communities. LASA senior Hana Hussaini, an active member of Austin Climate Coalition since 2020 strongly believes the club can make a difference in the climate change issue.

“Austin Climate Coalition’s goal is to really engage you with climate action,” Hussaini said. “A lot of times it might feel like you can’t make a difference, but our goal is to just make sure that you have an opportunity to get out there and change the world and also give them a space to do projects that matter and connect with policymakers and legislatures.”

Austin Climate Coalition invites schools from all over Austin to take action through their numerous events. Hussaini appreciates that unique ability for anyone to make a difference immediately.

“What I like about Austin Climate Coalition is that you can do whatever you want,” Hussaini said. “We don’t have official titles or leadership positions, which means that any student can join and immediately start creating projects and leading meetings.”

Going forward, Hussaini says the organization looks to continue to get high schoolers involved. She wants to provide the opportunity for students to feel empowered enough to take part in local protests along with climate action days dedicated to picking up trash.

“This year, I really want to see the protests and kind of getting students out and talking to people and specifically, like legislatures and people who can make change,” Hussaini said. “And one of the main goals that I have for Austin Coalition is convincing and showing people that we can make change even though we’re young.”



**SPEAK UP** ACC members meet with a representative of Senator John Cornyn last March. They discussed taking climate change action and bipartisan solutions. photo courtesy of Hana Hussaini



**SIGNS UP.** Group of ACC members protest at the Texas Capitol. They join another climate change student group to emphasize the importance of the crisis. photo courtesy of Hana Hussaini

## COMBATING CLIMATE CHANGE



**SHOW UP** Senior Hana Hussaini and the rest of ACC has their first meeting of the year. They discuss their goals and plan future projects. photo courtesy of Hana Hussaini



**A TEMPORARY HOME** Junior Lucia O'Driscoll volunteers with her friend, junior Robin Little at Austin Animal Shelter. They love on the pets until they can find a new home. photo courtesy of Lucia O'Driscoll



**FILLING UP** Junior Javi Glanghai fills up water bowls up for dogs being taken out for play time. He also spends his time fill up Kongs, peanut butter filled toys, and taking dogs on walks. photo by Ella Lilly



**GENTLE LOVE** Junior Lucia O'Driscoll holds and plays with a stray taken in as part of socializing. Cat socialization is meant to help kittens become used to humans so they can be adopted eventually. photo courtesy of Lucia O'Driscoll

## HELPING HANDS

As the school year starts up again for students, and clubs and extracurriculars start to take up more of a high school student's day, it can be hard for students to find time to volunteer. However, some students like junior Lucia O'Driscoll who says she spent her summer volunteering at various organizations and events such as animal shelters that help neglected animals find a comfortable, temporary home.

“It’s the Austin Animal Center off of Levander Loop, and I’ve been trained in everything so I do anything from walking dogs to cleaning their living spaces,” O'Driscoll said. “I also get to work with the kittens and socialize them, so they’re familiar with humans and all

being around the cats in general and playing with them to prepare them for adoptions. And I [also] got trained in small animals so working with bunnies, guinea pigs and other small animals and cleaning their cages.”

O'Driscoll appreciates having the opportunity to give back to her community and the community surrounding LASA. Seeing the impact of donating her time is rewarding for her.

“Volunteering, spending time, and getting to know those animals also makes an impact on their lives and the likelihood of being adopted,” O'Driscoll said. “I also really enjoy being able to see the result of my volunteering when dogs I walk get adopted or start coming out of their shells.”

Similarly, Junior Javi Glanghai began volunteering at Austin Pets Alive multiple years ago and has recently picked it back up this year. At Austin Pets Alive, Glanghai walks dogs and fills Kongs— toys filled with peanut butter for dogs to chew on.

“The overall mission of Austin Pets Alive is to give animals, dogs and cats specifically, just the opportunity to have love because these are our pets that were left on the streets or mistreated so now they’re here,” Glanghai said. “Eventually, they’ll have try and see if anybody wants these pets. But in the meantime, while they’re at Austin Pets Alive, it’s just making sure that they get the love that they did not have before.”

## NHS, MORE THAN A CORD



**FRESH START** Seniors Samatha Mason and Maddie Meyer help host the first NHS meeting for juniors. They cover how to track, log, and find volunteer opportunities. Members of NHS must complete 10 unsponsored and 5 sponsored hours or 30 unsponsored hours a semester. photo by Ella Lilly

National Honor Society (NHS) had its first introductory meetings in September for juniors and seniors to talk about expectations and volunteer opportunities for members this year. Senior service chairs Samantha Mason and Maddie Meyer look forward to their aspirations and plans for NHS this school year.

“We had our first officer meeting a couple of weeks ago,” Mason said. “We’re just trying to plan introductory meetings and let everybody know the guidelines, expectations for this year, and just how various NHS functions work.”

One of the two officers’ goals is to provide members with plentiful opportunities to fulfill volunteer hour requirements. Hour opportunities range from setting up for the homecoming dance to Stitch Service, a club that knits or crochets various items to be donated.

“A lot of people in our class last year didn’t get their hours for NHS last year, so one of our goals is to help at least these juniors and seniors, who

need hours to this year,” Meyer said. “So we want to provide ample opportunities and resources to make volunteering an interesting thing.”

Aside from logging hours and planning events, Mason said she is passionate about NHS and its goal. She believes for LASA students, it can be more than a check on a resume to do list.

“I think it’s a well rounded part of any kind of high school education,” Mason said. “With LASA specifically, it works to allow people to kind of take time and focus on something other than school and focus on something larger than themselves. While they may be kind of trapped, feeling like the world is kind of caving in around them in high school.”

NHS has multiple upcoming volunteer opportunities for members to count hours promoted on their Instagram page. LASA students can volunteer for Mobile Loaves and Fishes tending gardens at a homeless shelter on October 15th, 2022, and cheer on participants in the Austin More than Pink Walk on October 30th, 2022 to raise money and awareness for breast cancer.