

the liberator

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THE BEAT OF A NEW

drum



ROBBY COLE | staff writer

Students in the LASA Raptor marching band spend hours after school preparing their show for competitions. This year, students and observers got to enjoy the marching band's show "The Manhattan Project." However, senior Gus Serff-Roberts, the band's brass captain, explained that there been a lot of unique this year.

"This season we've had a lot of setbacks," Serff-Roberts said. "Obviously we had the challenge of a head band director leaving unprompted pretty close to the start of band camp."

Brian Mayor, the previous LASA band director, left LASA to direct the Dripping Springs marching band. The previous associate band director, Ponder East, stepped up to fill his role as Head Band Director, and Jesus Torres joined the LASA staff as the new associate band director to lend his expertise. Despite the change in staff, the passion and dedication of band members carried them through to produce yet another award-winning year.

According to Serff-Roberts, students found that they had to be more independent after the loss of a director. Serff-Roberts said that he had to take on more responsibilities regarding managing the band this year.

"Not only my role, but a lot of the leadership roles, have gone up and gotten a little more involved," Serff-Roberts said. "Especially considering that the band director is new here, so he has to settle in the same way all of the other new members do."

see **BAND** page 11



graphic by Kayla Le

SENIOR SOLO Seniors Claire Waggoner, Tony Lin, Aaryan Sharma, and William Yang perform a solo for the 2022 LASA Raptor Band marching show. The four were donned in letterman jackets to celebrate Senior Night. photo by Kayla Le.



A MEMORABLE ENDING Freshman, Kevin Li strikes a final pose at the finale of the Raptor Band marching show. This was the band's first full run of the show with props and special effects. photo by Kayla Le.



STAY ON BEAT Junior, Mateo Rives plays percussion in the marching show. The 2022 marching show was called "The Manhattan Project." photo by Kayla Le.

what's news



photo by Kayla Le

Martial arts demonstrations show students self-defense techniques

see **MARTIAL ARTS** page 17



photo by Annabel Andre

Local artists in East Austin open their workspaces to the public

see **AUSTIN STUDIO TOUR** page 12



photo courtesy of Zachary Suri

LASA students show their creativity through visual art, music, poetry, and more!

see **ARTISTS AT LASA** page 10

LASYA SANGANA | staff writer

As the third semester at LASA's new campus comes to an end, the Raptors have accomplished many milestones and produced various events including club activities, musical concerts, and pep rallies. Among the many is the Alley Cat Players production of LASA's very own fall play, "Twelfth Night".

Over the weekends of Nov. 4 and Nov 12, LASA theater's "Twelfth Night" play took place in the LASA theater. "Twelfth Night" is a romantic comedy written by Shakespeare, describing the aftermath of a shipwreck where the lead, Viola, thinks her twin brother is dead. As a result, Viola goes to infiltrate the court of Duke Orsino and is forced to woo Lady Olivia under the Duke's command. However, Lady Olivia falls in love with the disguised Viola. Senior Samantha Mason played Lady Olivia and was surprised by the love triangle that ensues as a result.

"It's really funny," Mason said. "It's shockingly funny for a Shakespearean comedy."

Mason said she was very excited for everyone to see the play, especially due to the fact that LASA theater has not done a lot of Shakespeare before, and Mason predicted that the show would be entertaining. However, Mason said there were some challenges to trying out a new form of theater.

"The biggest difficulty with the play we had is the fact that it is Shakespeare," Mason said. "Most of the people don't have a lot of experience performing Shakespeare."

Shakespeare originally wrote "Twelfth Night" in the early 1600s, and the language is different from modern day. Mason said that because of the play's difficult language, more experienced theater members helped the inexperienced.

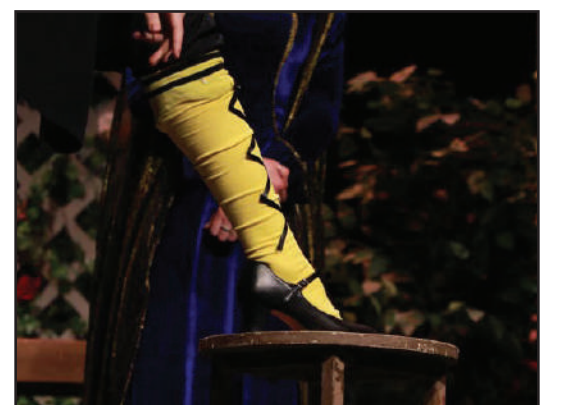
"Mr. Escandell, and a couple other people who have more experience with performing Shakespearean plays have done a really great job of trying to help the younger people," Mason said. "[It's been helpful for those] who may not have as much experience."

Mason said another difficulty this year was that they had a new director, Jason Escandell, one of LASA's sophomore English teachers. Mason said Escandell amazingly got everyone together, which is a notable feat especially for such a large company with a play of this scale, something especially hard to do as a brand new director.

"I'm excited for people just to see the work that especially Mr. Escandell has done as an incoming brand new director brand new to the program," Mason said. "He worked really hard."

Mason said that Escandell had very valuable Shakespearean knowledge and was great about helping the young performers perfect their scenes. Sophomore Piper Chen, who played Viola, the lead, said another challenge that arose this year which was working with new people.

see **TWELFTH NIGHT** page 14



A LOVE FOR YELLOW In Twelfth Night, Malvolio is asked to wear gartered yellow stockings to prove his love for Olivia. photo courtesy of Eloise Embry.



MUSIC TO MY EARS Feste the Fool, played by senior Kendra Vaz, and his jesters serenade Count Orsino. photo courtesy of Eloise Embry.

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Twelfth Night

SIGNED, SEALED, DELIVERED Sir Toby, played by sophomore Nadia Lott, casts a hopeful glance. Twelfth Night is the ACP's first production under the supervision of new theater director Jason Escandell. photo courtesy of Eloise Embry.

TAKEN ABACK Sir Toby, played by sophomore Riley Wayt, hears a shocking proclamation from Olivia (left). photo courtesy of Eloise Embry.

LOOKING UP Sir Andrew, played by sophomore Nadia Lott, casts a hopeful glance. Twelfth Night is the ACP's first production under the supervision of new theater director Jason Escandell. photo courtesy of Eloise Embry.

PLAYBILL

LASA ALLEY CAT PLAYERS

editorial Protest Productivity Plateaus Effectiveness of Large Demonstrations Dwindles

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.

On May 25, 2020, the entirety of the nation was seized with terror and petrification over a nine minute, twenty-nine second video. It popped up on every Instagram story; the news headlines flashed red and blue with details of the egregious case, and TikTok videos almost immediately began circulating about the injustice that had led to a man's passing. The death of George Perry Floyd Jr. set into motion a domino-like sequence of events, which would result in reform in police departments across the country, further intensifying the partisan divide, and most importantly, igniting wide-scale protests which took the nation by storm.

The protests started the day after Floyd's death, and, according to the New York Times, peaked on June 6, 2020 with 550 cities across the U.S. being host to protests — some peaceful, some violent. According to the Carr Center for human rights, over the duration of the protests, somewhere from 15 million to 26 million Americans were engaged in the cause. Changes began to occur nationwide. According to Urban Institute, many communities reduced police funding and reallocated that money towards supports for mental health and social services. However, these advances eventually plateaued, as did the protests. The issue of police brutality continued, and in the grand scheme of things, the developments made due to protests were infinitesimal when backdropped against the severity of the issue. The cycle is recurrent. First, a devastating occurrence causes mass protest which causes companies and politicians to placate the public with small shifts in policy and eventually the uprisings die down. With every cycle, the issue changes, the year changes, but the outcome never does. It is because of the eventual downfall of the movement, that governments and corporations have learned that they do not truly have to change, and it is mostly because of this cycle that protests have lost a substantial amount of their impact.

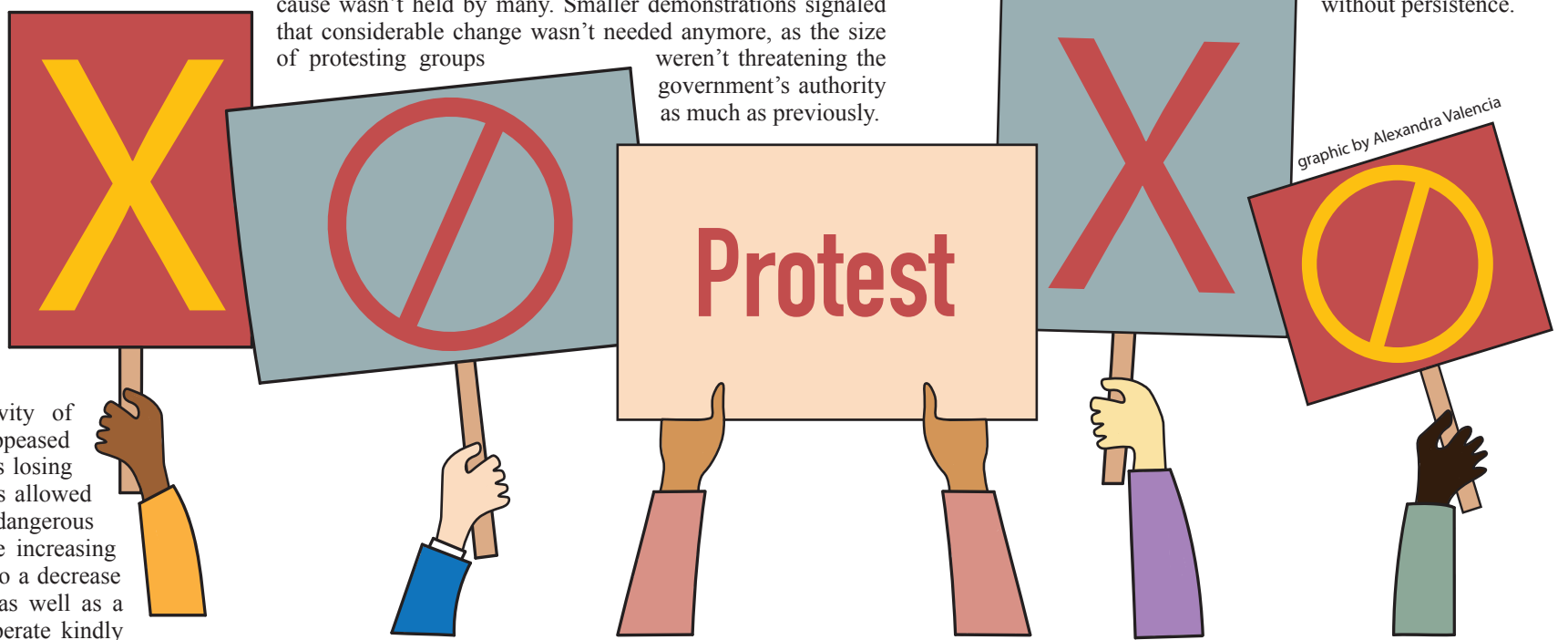
However, the decline in the productivity of protests is not only due to people being appeased so easily, but also because of demonstrations losing their credibility. The use of social media has allowed for uprisings to form rapidly and expand at a dangerous rate. According to the Marshall Project, the increasing danger and violence of revolts has also led to a decrease in willingness by the public to participate as well as a decrease in the police's willingness to cooperate kindly

with protesters. Additionally, more than a few protests have lost credibility due to acts of violence committed during the protests by people not even interested in the cause. For example, the few 2020 Black Lives Matter protests that turned violent due to participants who did not truly understand the purpose, were used by politicians such as Donald Trump to invalidate the cause amongst their followings. Unfortunately, the invalidation was effective in convincing people that protests are inherently violent. The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project reported that 93% of these protests were peaceful, but 42% of respondents in a Morning Consult poll believed that "most protesters (associated with the BLM movement) are trying to incite violence or destroy property."

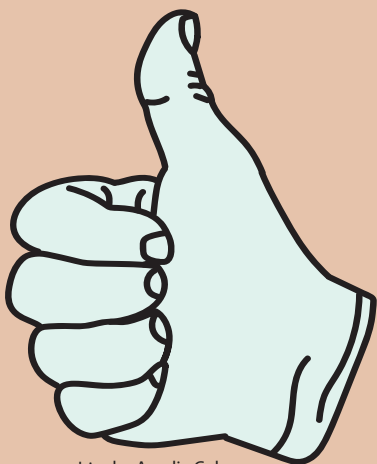
Another sect of those not actually interested in the cause of the protests are performative activists, who have also caused a downturn in protest legitimacy. These people feign interest in issues for long enough to snap a picture, upload it to social media platforms, and then receive praise for their politically and socially aware actions. Then, they turn their backs and the number of demonstrators shrinks rapidly. The dwindling number of activists that remained a couple months after Floyd's death served as proof to police departments and politicians that a substantial passion about this cause wasn't held by many. Smaller demonstrations signaled that considerable change wasn't needed anymore, as the size of protesting groups weren't threatening the government's authority as much as previously.

However, there has been a positive side to the amount of social media posts that are uploaded — awareness. Posts have been successful in boosting morale and inspiring new fights, as well as bringing notice to charities and places to donate to support movements. Large numbers are one of the most important components to a protest's success. In fact, according to BBC Future, nonviolent protests that engage 3.5% of the world's population have never failed to achieve their cause. The protests that meet this quota are twice as likely to succeed as violent or armed protests. The pressure that large amounts of truly interested and willing-to-fight people can put on governments is far greater than any violent rebellion could ever cause, and social media can draw people to care about and consider causes like nothing else can.

As governments adapt and become more comfortable with protests, new ways of bringing attention to a cause need to be developed. Writing to public officials, engaging with candidates for office and local governmental figures, or boycotts could be effective ways to make the same impact, but avoid the issues of violence and performativity. No matter what the new method be, it needs to draw large swaths of people and capture the eye of higher-ups. No change can happen without persistence.

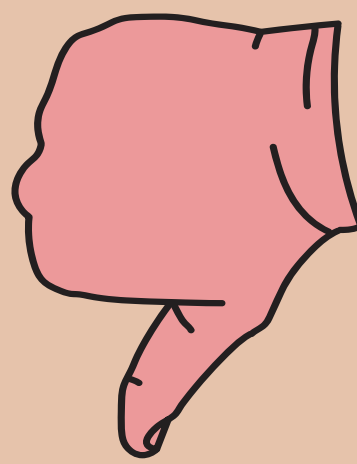


Thumbs Up Thumbs Down



graphics by Amelia Coleman

- Pomegranates
- Warm apple cider
- Agressiveness
- Apple pie
- Sweatpants



- Eggs
- Power grid failure
- Phone jails
- Passive aggressiveness
- College emails

Thumbs Up Thumbs Down: Every grading period, the commentary editors of the Liberator select a few objects, things, places, or current events that they are either liking or disliking at the moment. Likes are placed under Thumbs Up and the dislikes under Thumbs Down. These items are chosen randomly, meant to be taken in a lighthearted manner, and are not meant to offend anyone.

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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.

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

- The Editorial board will:**
1. Determine the content of the publication (with input from other staff members)
 2. Stress the editorial policy
 3. Ensure the accuracy of the publication
 4. Address inappropriate behavior on the part of the staff
 5. Dispense disciplinary action to staff members
 6. Change or add policy as necessary

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

Editorials: These will be determined by the staff consensus. The editorial will be unsigned and will represent the majority viewpoint of the staff.
Commentary: Commentary articles represent the viewpoint of one member of the staff, and are signed as such. These articles do not represent the opinions of the entire staff.

Letters to the Editor: Letters 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.

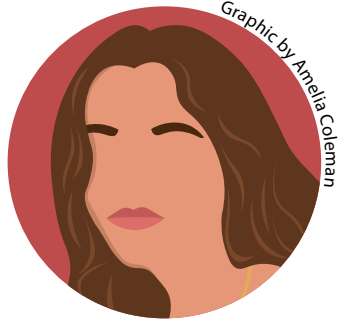
Happy Holidays, Raptors! Enjoy the break.



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.

What a Way to Make a Living Influencers Face Questions About the Legitimacy of Their Jobs

BEATRIZ MARTELETO-LARA | staff writer



Influencers, or social media creators who have established an influential presence, are taking over social media and the world. According to Forbes, over 50 million people consider themselves influencers; this usually means they have been able to monetize their social media presences on various platforms. The monetization of social media can make it a seriously lucrative business, with the highest paid influencers making up to nine figures a year. Forbes noted that Tik Toker Charli D'Amelio made \$17.5 million dollars in 2021 alone. With mega-rich influencers who seem to be popping out of nowhere, public audiences have begun questioning the credibility of influencing as a profession. Although social media content creation does not look like a typical 9-5 job, questioning the legitimacy of influencing discredits the hard work influencers put into their careers.

Influencers' careers are hard to balance — they need to seem relatable and human to their audiences, but their content needs to always be alluring. This entails sharing details of their personal lives on the internet, but most of this relatable content is painstakingly curated and does not reflect these people's lives. Fashion micro-influencer, an influencer with less than 1 million followers, Jordan Bunker told The Guardian his life is nothing like it seems on his Instagram. He's seen modeling for luxurious fashion brands and is always smartly dressed, but many people do not see that he lives with his parents and works on his social media and modeling career at his desk. By only following him on his social media accounts, his fans are not seeing what his life actually looks like.

Because of their curated and filtered faux-relatable content, influencers seem to have it all. However, the upkeep for the job is more than many could handle. Part of influencing is making a life, and by extension a personal brand, desirable. A video blog (vlog) of an influencer attending events, going out, and enjoying their life is, in general, more desirable than showing the hours of editing and planning it took to make that specific vlog. Audiences live off the glitz and glamor of being a social media creator, so influencers do not tend to show the more difficult parts of the job.

Social media is often positioned as a subsection of two industries: marketing and entertainment. Marketing and sponsored posts are the main ways influencers make money. Although many creators can make a profit from monetized posts, brand sponsorships are the most lucrative option. Creators will reach out to brands and market their products through their posts, while the brands pay the creator for their advertising. Behind the scenes work, like advertising and marketing, are an important part of being an influencer, and the job is not just pure posting.

Many large-scale influencers have managers or a whole management team to help them choose sponsored posts and brand partnerships, which leads many to believe that social media figures sit back and relax while others do their job. According to Forbes, managers plan campaigns and posts, upload content for the creator, and analyze data to interpret post interactions. While it may seem like managers do all the work and the creator themselves does nothing, this is not true. Large-scale social media creators are the face of their own personal brand. They have to interact with fans through public appearances and retain a more relatable public persona than the average celebrity. Influencers often have to do their own managing because signing on to a talent agency is an expensive and complicated process not many people can afford. According to Indeed, most micro-influencers do their own management and behind the scenes work, along with filming, photographing, or writing up content for their socials.

Part of social media management is marketing and business collaborations. This marketing is usually harmless, unless the

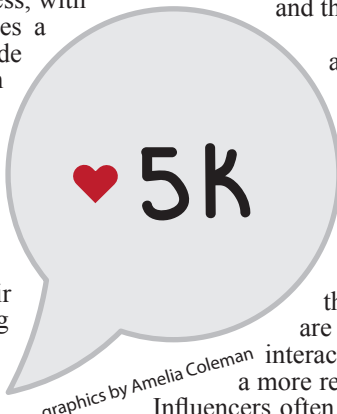
product is illegitimate or could be harmful to the mental health of those it's targeted at. Social media marketing is wildly successful, which makes legitimate advertising very important. Companies have started to rely on influencers more and more for advertising, which could be dangerous in itself because social media figures may not know the best way to frame or describe a product. However,

Forbes stated that 56% of their survey respondents have made a purchase that was advertised to them through social media, and 63% of respondents said they trust social media advertisements more than traditional advertising strategies such as billboards, television ads and pay per click ads (pop-ups on social media or websites, ads in search engines, etc.). Influencers and social media are revolutionizing the marketing industry.

The greatest benefit of social media marketing is increased brand awareness and exposure. Inc. Magazine stated that 78% of small businesses attract new customers by way of social media. Also, Wired projected that in 2020 more than 6 million Instagram posts were sponsored content, and companies were spending up to 10 billion dollars on social media marketing alone. So, not only are influencers making huge amounts of money, marketing and advertising experts are investing their money in influencer marketing. Social media marketing does not just help large corporations, but through influencers many small businesses can open up their audiences and gain new customers that weren't even aware of their company's existence.

Influencer audiences are huge, with Pew Research Center stating that 72% of American adults are on social media, which puts a ton of stress on influencers to keep producing popular content. The influencer workload may not seem heavy, but many influencers do not have managers to do all the behind-the-scenes work for them and have to constantly be doing analytics of their own content, planning their own brand collaborations and campaigns, and planning regular non-sponsored content. Influencing doesn't have a typical 9-5 schedule, so a work-life balance is difficult to achieve when influencers are constantly aware of their job through their phones.

Being an influencer is not that different from other professions in the entertainment industry and criticizing the entire profession of social media influencing because it's eccentric and does not fit in a traditional desk job template is ignorant and diminishes all the hard work creators and their teams put into the content they post.



graphics by Amelia Coleman

Raptor Chatter

What do you think the overall impact of influencers has been on Gen Z and high school students?



photo by Norah Hussaini

Laila Ross
Freshman

Influencers have definitely been negative in recent years for Gen Z. There's been a lot of scandals and misinformation around COVID and political views and things like that. I think influencers, especially ones who don't use their influence properly, can be pretty destructive.



photo by Norah Hussaini

Lucas Castillo-West
Sophomore

I think that a lot of influencers set really unrealistic standards for high school students. However, some are empowering and can give support to high school students that have insecurities.



photo by Norah Hussaini

Gabriel Syed
Junior

I believe it's been relatively detrimental because kids get a snapshot of an ideal life where everything is going perfectly but in reality these people aren't really experiencing these impossible lives.

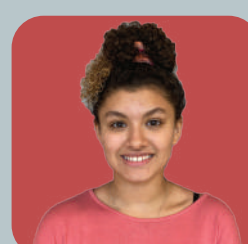


photo by Norah Hussaini

Lola Galindo DeLeon
Senior

I wouldn't say they've been positive or negative in any substantial way, but I do think it's a terrible climate of comparison. There's not that much joy that comes out of [influencing].

Concerns of Nicotine Abuse in Teens

GRIFFIN BEAM | staff writer



According to the Texas Medical Association, the average smoker in Texas will spend 1.5 million dollars on cigarettes in their lifetime. Nicotine is extremely addictive, leading users to believe they can never quit, although according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 68% of smokers want to stop smoking. This addiction to nicotine can lead to numerous health problems from cancer to heart disease and has resulted in many premature deaths across the nation.

This addiction does not just cost the person who uses nicotine products, but it also costs the U.S. a lot of money. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), in 2018 cigarettes cost the U.S. more than 600 billion dollars overall — 240 billion of which was spent on healthcare for people getting injured because of the use of nicotine. There are many different ways to use nicotine, from cigarettes to vaping to even nicotine patches. These patches are essentially transdermal band-aids that let nicotine seep through the skin. Nicotine patches are less harmful than smoking and vaping according to the CDC but should only be used when someone wants to quit the habit. Quitting can be extremely difficult without nicotine patches, but the patches alone can still cause issues similar to those of smoking.

According to the American Heart Association, vaping is considered by some consumers to be the "healthier" version of smoking. However, in reality vaping is just as bad as smoking. We just do not know the long term effects of vaping, and there have not been as many in-depth studies centered around it. Therefore, vaping can have effects that haven't been discovered yet because

people haven't been using it for as long. While cigarettes and nicotine patch use isn't rising amongst adolescents, vape use is. The CDC reported that more than 2.5 youths are using or addicted to vapes. Increasing vaping use is mostly because they have lots of flavors that appeal to adolescents like cotton candy and gummy bear. Another reason vape use is rising in adolescents is because they are more discreet than cigarettes and cigars. Increased vape use started more recently around 2007, so long term effects are still a mystery.

Increased vape use is harming a lot of adolescents. According to the New York Times, in 2019 a 15-year-old in Dallas, Texas became the youngest person to die from lung disease because they were vaping too much. A way this spike in adolescent vaping use could be controlled is by enforcing rules in smoke shops that ensure only adults can enter. Making vapes, cigarettes, and other nicotine items less accessible would help a lot not just now but also over time too because there will be less and less youth smokers growing into adult smokers passing that habit on to their kids.

Along with vapes, cigarettes are also harmful products. According to the American Cancer Association, regular cigarettes are made of tobacco, chemicals, a filter, and an added paper covering. Although seemingly simple, this three inch contraption contains over 7,000 chemicals, most of which are extremely dangerous to the human body. The chemicals can lead to cancers all over the body. One main reason cigarettes are unhealthy is because inhaled smoke cannot be entirely exhaled, leaving dangerous toxins in the lungs and causing buildup over time. Cancer can lead to all types of difficulties like having to talk through a voice box, or having to be put on a respirator for the rest of one's life.

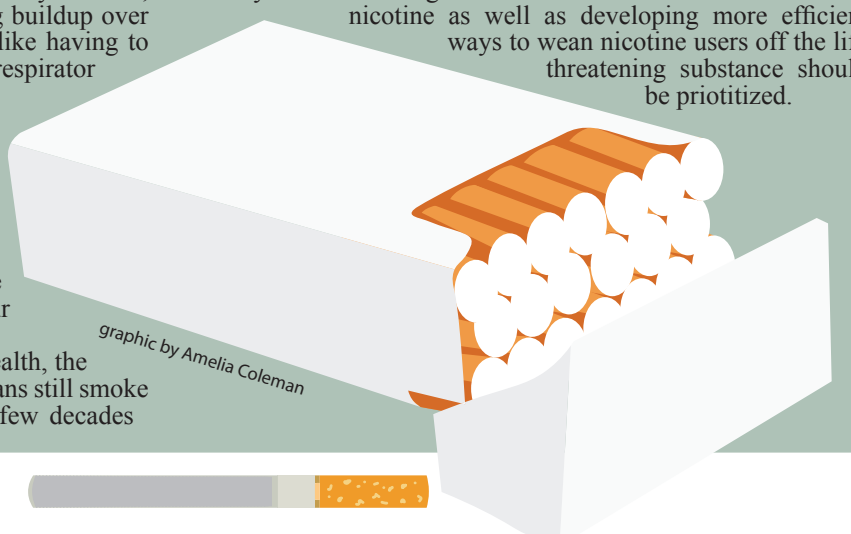
Another form of nicotine is cigars. These are similar to cigarettes, as they are made with the same type of tobacco. One main difference between the two though is how they are made. Cigars are made with about 25 times more nicotine than cigarettes, according to Presbyterian Intercommunity Hospital, meaning cigars have the potential to end up doing more damage to your lungs than cigarettes will.

Despite all this damage occurring to peoples health, the CDC reported that an estimated 31 million Americans still smoke today. Although this is an improvement from a few decades

ago, the fact that so many Americans continue to smoke shows that nicotine is almost ingrained into American culture. Nicotine being so buried into American's day to day lives makes it probable that if the U.S. were to completely take nicotine products off the market, it could cause significant cultural upheaval.

Although the government getting rid of nicotine would be beneficial, insofar as it would curb the detrimental health effects of said products, such a decision could produce negative consequences for the economy. One reason is because a lot of other countries rely on our country's consumption of nicotine products so that could potentially ruin their economy too. It would also take a lot of money, time, and resources to pull nicotine products from the market, and there is no guarantee that this would work, as people could simply smuggle nicotine products into the country as has been done with other drugs and stimulants previously. While just banning nicotine products in general overnight seems like a good idea, it really isn't. The people addicted to cigarettes and vapes will have a hard time dealing with this sudden disappearance of nicotine products. This immediate shift could cause smokers to go through heavy withdrawal. Smokers could experience a range of reactions, ranging from mild flu-like symptoms to severe seizure-like activity, according to American Addiction Centers.

Nicotine is harmful to both the users and other people, and the U.S. should begin to implement some of these long term solutions to help reduce use of nicotine in the U.S. — especially in the youth. Protecting adolescents and children from abusing nicotine as well as developing more efficient ways to wean nicotine users off the life threatening substance should be prioritized.



graphic by Amelia Coleman

Exorbitant Pharmaceutical Prices The Rise of Corporate Greed in Medicine

DAVIS BURNS | club contributor



In 2006, an EpiPen was \$54. In 2016, an EpiPen cost around \$300, according to a report published by the Connecticut General Assembly. In just a decade, the price of this life-saving product that millions throughout the whole country use has multiplied about six times. Americans across the nation have become increasingly upset about rising healthcare and medicine pricing.

The cost of medications has increased so far that members of Mylan, the company that makes the EpiPen, have testified before Congress about the price of their product and its effect on consumers. According to a 2016 article from USA Today, Democrat Rep. Elijah Cummings from Maryland said, “[Mylan’s goal is] to get filthy rich at the expense of our constituents,” and Democratic Rep. Stephen Lynch from Massachusetts described the testimony as “disgraceful” and “disgusting.” EpiPen is just one example of many examples of pharmaceutical greed in recent years. This issue grows and becomes more widespread by the day, continuously limiting Americans’ access to potentially life-saving treatment and medicine that is needed to treat certain conditions.

Alongside EpiPens, the price of asthma inhalers has skyrocketed as well. An analysis done by GoodRx shows that between 2013 and 2018, prices soared almost 35%, from \$280 to more than \$380 in just a couple of years. Considering the fact that around 25 million Americans – about 1 in every 13 people – have asthma. Higher costs for inhalers could be extremely profitable for companies. Advair and Flovent are two of the leading manufacturers of asthma inhalers in the United States, and reports from GoodRx show that in the same time frame, the prices jumped 56% and 41% respectively, leading to a large price hike across the industry.

Predictably, this particularly affected those who have no insurance or who are underinsured. A report issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) found that in some states as many as 20% of people with asthma have to pay out of pocket for their inhalers because they do not have insurance. An article from GoodRX Health shows that oftentimes lower-income areas have higher rates of asthma and have lower numbers of people with insurance. These

two factors only exacerbate the damage caused by extortionate prices.

According to the American Diabetes Association (ADA), around 8.4 million people in the U.S. use insulin as a major medication. An article from AP News shows that the price of the drug has nearly tripled in the past 20 years. If the drug is so needed for such a large amount of people, the question of why it is so expensive still remains. The answer to that is simply in how many manufacturers make it. There’s only three companies that produce insulin, allowing for a near monopoly on the life-saving medication. Eli Lilly, Novo Nordisk, and Sanofi are the puppet master pharmaceutical companies controlling the prices. Dr. Jing Lou of the University of Pittsburgh explains, “They’ve been historically raising their list prices for their respective products in lockstep with one another... There hasn’t been a lot of pricing pressure (AP News).” This has been problematic, as all three companies have raised their prices in tandem with no other smaller manufacturers available to sell EpiPens for less. Higher prices lead to those in need being cornered into spending insane amounts of money. Insulin is a life-saving drug, and having to choose between food, rent, and care that could keep you from death is not a decision any American should have to make.

Although not much can be done to alter the ways of individual companies, there have been attempts by the government to soothe the effects of the economy on prices for medicine. The Inflation Reduction Act was passed into law on Aug. 16, 2022. This act was set to lower prescription costs for all Americans including price caps, reductions, and allows the federal government to negotiate prices on the priciest drugs gradually over the course of ten years. According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, this act will let people with Medicare only have to pay a \$35 monthly cost sharing for insulin beginning in 2023. According to NBC, the current cost for insulin can be \$1,000 or more, so this would be a substantial development in making insulin more accessible. However, many fear that legal loopholes will soon be discovered by big pharmaceutical companies that will be utilized to undo progress being made. The wellbeing of millions of Americans is under attack, and if more legislation like the Inflation Reduction Act isn’t passed, the lives of these people could be entirely in the hands of a few select companies.



Medical Inflation A Victoza liraglutide injection used to treat type 2 diabetes. The price of insulin, a related product, has nearly tripled in the past two decades. photo by JC Ramirez Delgado

Racial Gerrymandering Districts Dillute Minority Vote

HELEN BIGGE | staff writer



For many people, gerrymandering, or grouping a larger-than necessary amount of one race or community, is the main term synonymous with controlling the outcome of an election. Recently, another form of voter suppression has been increasingly recognized: vote dilution.

Merrill v. Milligan (2022) is one in a series of cases brought before the Supreme Court regarding voting rights in state districts. After the 2020 census, three separate plaintiffs filed lawsuits against the state of Alabama for its failure to give Black voters a fair chance to elect officials compared to White voters. Such discrimination in voting has been illegal since 1965 under Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act (VRA). The three plaintiffs eventually consolidated into the one Merrill v. Milligan (2022) case in which the three district court judges found a VRA violation and favored the plaintiffs’ plans to create a second majority-minority district – a district that has a majority voting population of racial minorities – that still complied with traditional districting standards (despite two of the three judges being Trump-appointed to their roles). The state appealed, and after being argued in front of the Supreme Court on Oct. 4, 2022, the case now awaits decision from the Supreme Court.

Most of the contention over whether or not to let Alabama keep their singular majority-Black district – or to make them add a second one once and for all – lies in whether race should be used at all in deciding the district lines. Race is a valid factor to consider when drawing state boundaries if attempting to provide more equal representation, especially when there is a history of unequal representation in regards to race. The Alabama petitioner believes that since race was not used in the calculations of the original redistricting maps and the only way the plaintiffs were able to create the second district was by factoring race into the simulations, it should not have to change its map. The important thing to the plaintiffs is that there is no part of the VRA that says race can not be factored into redistricting boundaries, just that it can not be the “predominant” factor

in forming these boundaries. Since the goal of the government’s own proposed redistricting plans is to make everyone’s vote equal, or at least make Black and white voters ballots count more equally in Congressional elections, considering race to determine the congressional map is valid – especially when taken as one of many factors in the redistricting process.

The state of Alabama aims to keep its originally rendered 2022 district map with one majority-Black district, while the plaintiff hopes to have them draw a second majority-Black district into existence. Despite Black voters comprising 27% of Alabama’s population, according to SCOTUSBlog, the state’s current seven-district system only has one majority-Black district which has a 55% Black voting population. The state has a history of cracking the “Black Belt” – an East-West span of counties in which much of the state’s Black population resides – into four or five separate sections among the other majority-White districts. Breaking the majority up ensures that the people who were a part of that group now reside in different districts, making them the minority. This dilutes the vote and is done to make certain that Black citizens are unable to elect the candidate they desire.

Breaking up this group of communities would not pose such a large problem for other states where voting is much less racially polarized, but this is Alabama. Since 2010, the state’s District 7 (the one majority-Black district) has voted differently than every other district for their House Representative – it has been the only district electing Democratic representatives. According to Ballotpedia, in 2020, over 90% of Black voters in the first three districts cast their ballot for the same House of Representatives candidates (James Averhart, Phyllis Harvey-Hall, and Adia Winfrey) while a mere 12.6% of White voters supported Averhart in District 1, 5.2% for Harvey-Hall in District 2, and 6.6% for Winfrey in District 3. None of the candidates that the Black voters rallied behind won their districts, except in District 7.

There is an increasing discontentment with Alabama’s Congressional representation, and with good reason. If everyone in a community was rallying behind the same person, but year after year an overwhelming majority tipped the balance in favor of their opponent, most wouldn’t feel like their vote mattered at all. The consequence of diluting the Black population’s vote, of lessening the impact that said vote has on the outcome of Congressional elections, is an extreme shortcoming of the state government that draws these maps.

The Question of Religious Faith and the War in Ukraine

BECK WILLIAMS | commentary editor



On a warm and humid night this September, as we do every year, my family and I filed into an airy, brightly lit auditorium, clad in kippot (Jewish skullcaps) and clutching siddurim (Hebrew prayer books). We had come, stomachs full of apples and honey, to celebrate Rosh Hashanah, the Hebrew new year, with the vibrant Reform Jewish community of Congregation Beth Israel. As we sank into our seats and opened our ears to the cantor’s melody, it almost felt like a “normal” Rosh Hashanah.

Normality, alas, is a luxury the Jewish world rarely enjoys. Rising above the congregation, though covered with a white sheet, was the unmistakable figure of a Christian cross; behind it, a stained glass window depicted the descent of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. Instead of celebrating the Jewish new year at our home synagogue, we packed into St. Matthew’s Episcopal Church – the synagogue was still recovering from an anti-semitic arson attack in 2021. That night, as we remembered a painful history of violence against Jews, we also contemplated a harrowing reality half a world away: the ongoing war in Ukraine. Neither the conflict nor its senseless brutality need an introduction, but one angle has, in my opinion, been too oft-overlooked. In addition to ethnic and historical hostilities, Russia’s February invasion was precipitated by a tense religious divide – one with parallels to our own struggles over faith.

Since the 16th century, Orthodox Christians in much of Eastern Europe, including Russia and the Ukraine, have fallen under the jurisdiction

of the Patriarch of Moscow, a bishop with positional authority over other hierarchs in the region. Though Ukrainian Christians have enjoyed varying levels of independence from Moscow over the following centuries, they have consistently been considered a part of the greater Russian Orthodox Church (ROC). That status changed in 2018 when Bartholomew I, Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople (and traditional arbiter of ecclesiastical autonomy), declared the autocephaly (independence, of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine under Metropolitan Epiphanius I.

Bartholomew’s decision precipitated a deepening of pre-existing divides between Moscow and Constantinople, born out of fear of perceived Westernization. Sections of the Eastern Orthodox world were now split over the canonical status of entities previously considered to be schismatic (separated from the accepted Orthodox churches) and who could receive communion with whom. In October 2018, the final nail was hammered into the coffin of Orthodox unity when the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church officially severed ties with the Ecumenical Patriarch and barred the sharing of communion with those under his jurisdiction. The decision constituted one of the greatest schisms in Eastern Christianity since the Great Schism of 1054, which saw the Eastern Orthodox Churches split from the Catholic Church.

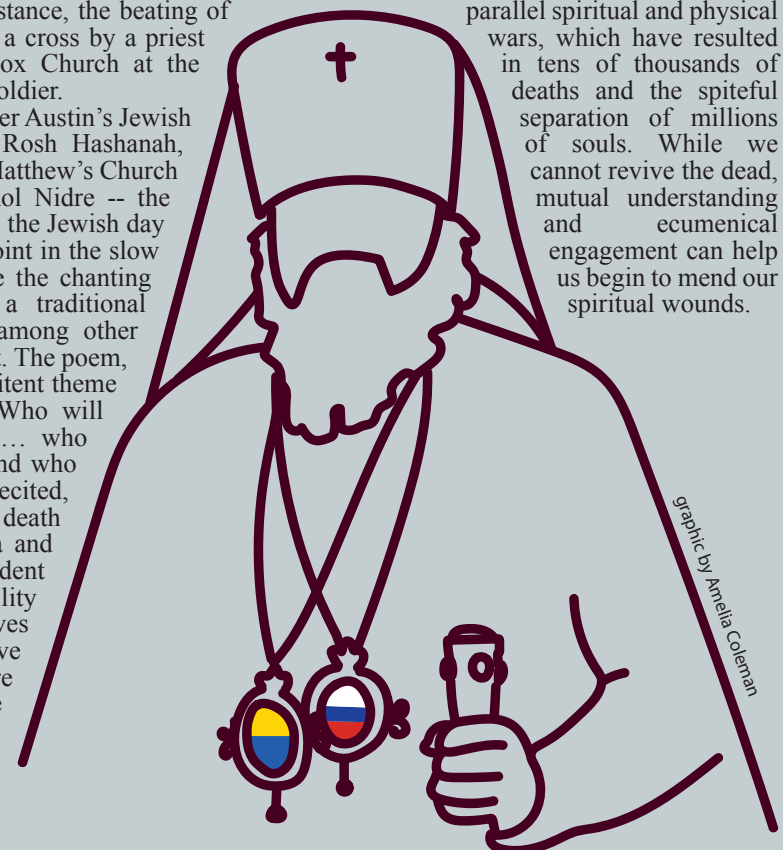
The 2018 schism split the Eastern Orthodox world nearly down the middle, with 110 million of Eastern Orthodoxy’s 220 million adherents belonging to the Russian Orthodox Church, according to Encyclopædia Britannica. While the severance of communion only affects members of the ROC and those churches directly subordinate to the Patriarchate of Constantinople, many smaller churches, such as the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Greek Orthodox Church under the Patriarch of Alexandria, have positioned themselves to choose sides should the schism widen. The situation is especially tense in Ukraine, where over one third of citizens before the war declared allegiance to the autocephalous Orthodox Church of Ukraine to the ROC’s 14%, according to the Razumkov Center.

After the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the already brewing religious tensions boiled over, and added more gas to an out-of-control fire. The divide between the dominant churches of the two countries has been used to justify senseless violence and sow discord among communities that used to worship in harmony. Russian President Vladimir Putin described Ukraine as sharing a “spiritual space” with Russia in his justification for invasion, and Patriarch Kirill of Moscow proclaimed that Russian intervention in Ukraine was of “metaphysical significance.” In return, the Ecumenical Patriarch openly condemned the invasion, along with various other religious leaders including Pope Francis. On the ground, the schism has led to heightened animosity, including, in one especially disturbing instance, the beating of a Ukrainian priest with a cross by a priest of the Russian Orthodox Church at the funeral of a Ukrainian soldier.

A week and a half after Austin’s Jewish community celebrated Rosh Hashanah, we again filed into St. Matthew’s Church to solemnly observe Kol Nidre – the opening to Yom Kippur, the Jewish day of atonement. At one point in the slow and sober service came the chanting of Unetanneh Tokef, a traditional Hebrew Poem about, among other things, Divine judgment. The poem, in keeping with the penitent theme of the holiday, asks “Who will live and who will die... who will enjoy tranquility and who will suffer?” As we recited, we remembered the death and suffering in Russia and Ukraine and gave diffident thanks for the tranquility we enjoy and the lives we are permitted to live without fear of massacre at the hands of a hostile nation. We remembered that we, as Jews, cannot be indifferent to the religious angle of the war; in March, as if as a reminder of too

familiar patterns, a Russian missile struck the site of a 1941 massacre of Jewish Ukrainians at the hands of Nazi forces.

One does not need to be an Orthodox Christian, a Jew, or otherwise religiously affiliated to recognize the horror of the war in Ukraine and to sympathize with those who, desiring only to practice their faith, have been caught up in a messy geopolitical conflict. It is a frank reality that we, as ordinary Texans, have very little power to stop the violence thousands of miles away. What we can do is open our hearts to those who look, speak, and pray differently than we do. It is easy to dismiss imperatives like these as corny and overplayed platitudes, but in Ukraine, a failure to embrace them has led to parallel spiritual and physical wars, which have resulted in tens of thousands of deaths and the spiteful separation of millions of souls. While we cannot revive the dead, mutual understanding and ecumenical engagement can help us begin to mend our spiritual wounds.



'Mo Money, 'Mo Problems in Housing Market

LASYA SANGANA | staff writer

Over the past year median rent prices in Austin have doubled, according to KVUE. Additionally, a report from Dwellsy ranked Austin fifth in a list of cities with the fastest-growing rent. Although Austin has been a rapidly growing city for a while, the change has accelerated by percentages as big as 30%-40% over the past few years, according to the Austin Chamber of Commerce. As house prices continue to increase, many native Austinites have seen issues with gentrification, and increased property taxes in their neighborhoods.

John Doggett is a professor at the McCombs School Business at the University of Texas at Austin. He says that Austin's growing population directly impacts residents by causing increased house prices.

"I've been in Austin since 1989, and the definition of Austin has changed," Doggett said. "It used to be within the city limits of Austin, and now it's Greater Austin, to even have towns like Round Rock or Cedar Park viewed as being part of Austin."

One example of this, Doggett said, is the shifting of African American and Hispanic communities, who originally lived in East Austin. Now, the dominant African American community is in Pflugerville, with the subdominant being Round Rock. Doggett says those that have left Austin say newer houses and better education systems drew them to suburbs. The general trend experts, like Doggett, are seeing Austin's city limits decreasing in population while the greater Austin area gets larger.

When Doggett first moved to Austin, he said Pflugerville had about 400 residents, but now it has a population of 40,000. Cedar Park was its own separate town, but now has over 77,000

people. w Austin's suburbs have now become substantial towns of their own because it's considerably less expensive to live in those areas than in Austin itself. Doggett said the key cause of this phenomenon is supply issues in the housing market.

"We have two things going on," Doggett said. "We have Austin becoming more popular, so more people are moving in. So from a supply and demand standpoint, they're more people wanting apartments and houses, and we can build them fast enough. So there's a supply problem. We don't have enough supply."

Growing issues of inflation, which is mainly a consequence of the war in Ukraine, and local issues with supply and demand mismatch mean house prices in Austin are much higher. Julie Gualandri, owner of Julie G Homes, said global politics has a large influence on the economy, even at a local level.

"Others are at war in the world, which has costs associated with it," Gualandri said. "It interrupts manufacturing and delivery of goods, and with simple supply and demand... it turned it into a bidding war. So you'd price a house, let's just use simple numbers, \$10,000 for a house, which then gets more expensive than that because you have five buyers come in, and the highest bidder would bid \$20,000."

Situations like these quickly turn into cycles of bidding prices that are much higher than what the property was listed for. Gualandri said buyers will race to outbid each other and end up paying exorbitant prices. She said these bidding wars cause people to leave Austin, especially Austin natives who have lower paying jobs than newcomers and simply can not afford to live in the city anymore.

However, Doggett says inflation, issues with increased demand, and bidding wars are not the only parts of the puzzle. In addition, the city government has added yet another challenging aspect to increasing supply.

"We have just more people moving to Austin faster than we can build new products, new housing, [and] new apartments," Doggett said. "And part of that is because the building regulations that the City of Austin has are pretty draconian in terms of they make it really difficult for people to build new property."

These strict regulations, Doggett says, go hand in hand with supply chain issues. These supply chain issues, along with inflation, tend to slow down the whole process.

"Basically it's a combination of everything so far, but inflation has just made things worse," Doggett said.

Regardless of whether people are actually purchasing houses, Gualandri says they are still affected by the change in the housing market. She says increased property prices are responsible for pricing out many locals.

"Maybe they're not buying a house right now, but the taxes on their house are up significantly because the taxes are associated with property values," Gualandri said. "I would still say that Austin is not the most expensive place to live in America. It's still less expensive here than other big cities and other states in the US."

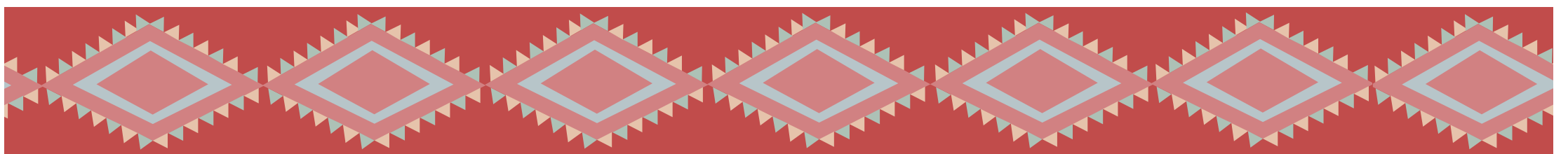


graphic by Benjamin Josephs



I would still say that Austin is not the most expensive place to live in America. It's still less expensive here than other big cities and other states in the US.

- REALTOR JULIE GUALANDRI



November is Native American Heritage Month *What You Need to Know About Heritage Recognition*

LUCI GARZA | editor-in-chief

BACKGROUND

As the Texan leaves make their attempts to turn various shades of brown and orange in the month of November, the chilly air also brings the remembrance and celebration of Native American history in the form of Native American Heritage month. Its enactment as a national, 30-day celebration period under President George H.W. Bush in 1990, followed years after the enactment of Black History Month in 1986 and Hispanic Heritage Month in 1988. The official dates of Native American Heritage Month are Oct. 30-Nov. 30.

Congress ultimately decided to choose the month of November as it signifies the end of many indigenous tribes traditional harvest seasons. Previously, the second Saturday of May was declared to be American Indian Day, as proclaimed by the Congress of the American Indian Association in 1915 after various other efforts had been made to give Indigenous and Native Americans a day to celebrate their individuality and culture. American Indian Day was celebrated by select states, the first of which was the state of New York in 1916.

More recently, the federal holiday known as Columbus Day, on Oct. 11, was changed to become Indigenous People's Day, under the oversight of President Joe Biden in 2021. As stated in a press release announcing this change, Biden was quoted saying, "On Indigenous Peoples' Day, we honor America's first inhabitants and the Tribal Nations that continue to thrive today."

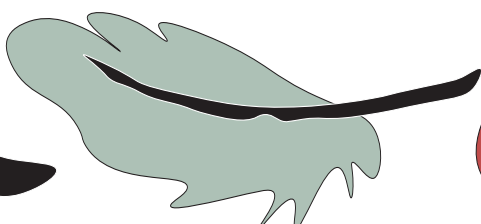
With this announcement, some might come to question the difference between the terms "Indigenous" and "Native Americans", which are commonly used interchangeably, according to the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). However, the ACLU has different definitions for both terms: "Indigenous Peoples" referring to a group with pre-existing sovereignty with a shared national identity, such as "Navajo" or "Sami," and "Native American" referring to peoples living within what is now the United States prior to European contact.

SUPPORT & EVENTS

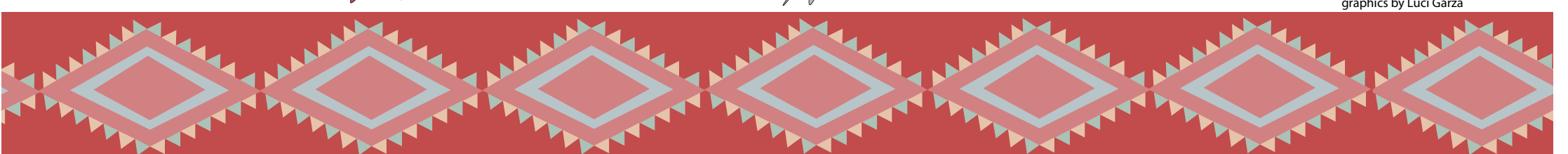
Since becoming a recognized month nationally, various federal organizations, such as The Library of Congress and National Archives and Records, among many others, work to pay tribute to the rich ancestry and traditions of Native Americans. Most often, work is done by these organizations to educate the general public on the importance of the holiday, as well as to place an importance on much of the forgotten history that comes with Native American Heritage, according to the National Library of Medicine (NLM). Currently, the NLM has a dedicated website for Native Peoples' Concept of Health and Illness, which is home to various educational timelines, online exhibits, as well as oral interviews and transcripts.

The federal government has also partnered with national non-profit organizations, such as the Greater Promise for American Indians (GPAI). The GPAI is an organization which works to help develop more accurate understandings of past and present Indigenous culture and history for federal agencies and corporations. Austin's local GPAI chapter puts on an annual Powwow, which is known as the Austin Powwow, in order to pass down generational legacy and tradition, according to the GPAI. The most recent powwow was on Nov. 12, 2022, and the event is the largest one-day powwow in the country, according to the Austin Powwow Committee.

Another organization dedicated to serving the broad interest of tribal governments and communities is the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI). They claim to be the oldest, largest, and most representative American Indian and Alaska Native organization. According to the NCAI, while the federal government has made strides in supporting those with an Indigenous background, there is still much ground to cover, or rather give back.



graphics by Luci Garza



Rise in Mental Health Issues Among Teens

MEGAN GEROLD | staff writer

Since the beginning of the pandemic, life has changed dramatically for many and issues like social isolation and financial pressure became prevalent, according to Mayo Clinic. With COVID-19 came the onset of depression, anxiety, and isolation, among other mental health issues, in teens according to the World Health Organization. Cut off from their friends, from school, and their life, many teens lived the past few years in isolation. For someone who has not lived for very much of their life, a reference of what is “normal” and what is not, does not seem very apparent, according to counselor and Associate Professor at the University of Mary Hardin Baylor Jason Martin.

“If you’re 15 years old, a year and a half is 10%, that’s a long time,” Martin said. “So 10% of your life is of a particular way, and it’s the most recent 10% of your life, then it’s going to be hard to really put yourself back into the mindset of what life was like before that time.”

According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), mental health from before the pandemic is vastly different from how it is now. There’s been an exacerbation of isolation and lack of ability for development according to LASA wellness counselor Olga Alvarado.

“There was a lot of isolation,” Alvarado said. “Some things that you go through navigating relationships, peer issues, all of that and navigating the ability to talk to other people, that just got cut off.”

Counselor Kathryn Fisher said the age in which teens had to take a step back, was a time full of vital developmental and critical moments. She believes that teens were taken away from society at a period where their brains were beginning to take shape.

“As a teen, the part of your brain (prefrontal cortex) that controls executive function, emotion regulation, impulse control, decision making, etc is still forming,” Fisher said. “The pandemic happened at a time when teens were/are growing this brain muscle and they were flooded by unregulated emotions from internal and external factors. The prefrontal cortex wasn’t yet equipped to regulate this flood.”

The chance to connect and develop has been taken away from teens, according to Alvarado. Despite this, the conversation about mental health has seized the chance to evolve with an emergence of awareness.

“It’s becoming less of a stigma, so if you have mental health issues, or difficulties, if you see a counselor, you see a therapist, that’s much less stigmatizing than it was a few years ago,” Martin said. “It’s much more normal, and it’s more acceptable and even healthy, to see a counselor and to talk to people about your mental health.”

The progress of mental health has grown alongside the newest generation. Alvarado partially credits the evolution to social media.

“The impact has been shown a lot on different platforms because I know the one thing that has been really coming up, especially working with the teen population, is that you will post a lot of this stuff [mental health related content] on Tik Tok,” Alvarado said.

Seeing people be more open about mental illness on social media, and influencers’ attempting to destigmatize getting help for mental

illness is one of the positives that has come from the pandemic. With social media, there are also negative effects that will continue to play out, according to Martin.

“Looking to see how the continued evolution of social media continues to affect how people think of themselves,” Martin said. “I think we’ve seen a lot of evidence that it can have a positive effect if social media allows people to connect with people who are encouraging and supportive, but it can also have a negative effect, if it amplifies insecurities and amplifies hostile behavior.”

The de-stigmatization of mental health has opened up the floor for people to be open with their struggles and seek help. Fisher says that this sparked through both organic means like social media and strategic means from campaigns.

“In either instance, there have been more opportunities to connect with others that are also struggling who might otherwise have felt alone or abnormal,” Fisher said. “People finally feel seen and now they want to be heard and help.”

Going from interacting with hardly anyone to being back to a seemingly normal life, prompted an odd adjustment. Alvarado said she observed an increase in a struggle to adapt back to life.

“There was an increase just in mental health for students, just not knowing how to reengage or socialize again, and just feeling more anxious and more nervous,” Alvarado said.

While there has been an adjustment in getting back to normal and experiencing an event such as the pandemic, a different kind of attitude has formed. Fisher says that on the other side of negative feelings there has been an emergence of curiosity, resilience and perseverance.

Martin said one of the ways to take care of yourself is by taking care of your mental health and seeking counseling.

“There’s no downside to it [counseling],” Martin said. “If someone is thinking about

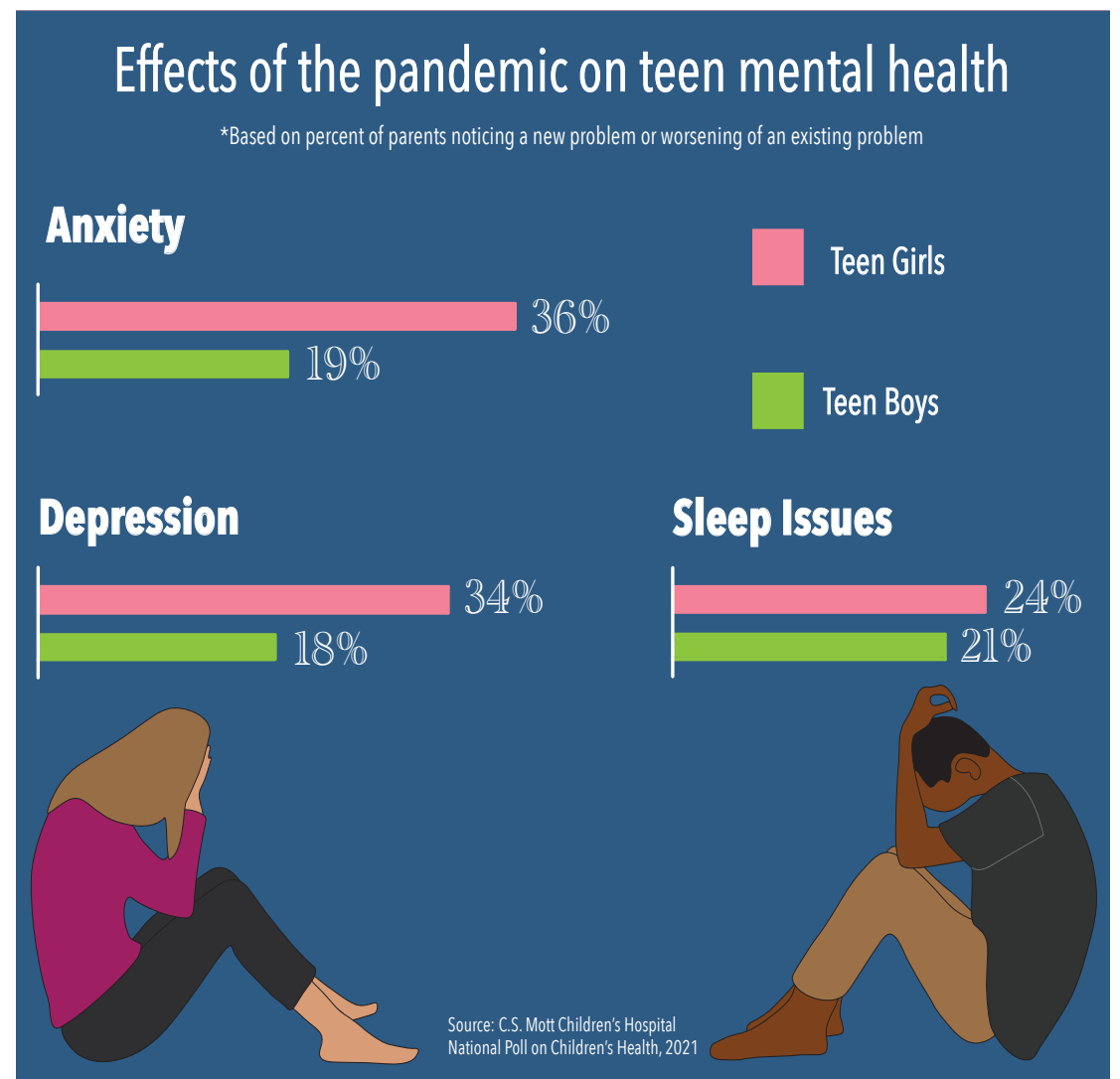
it, looking into it, the first thing I would recommend is just do it. Have one session. You’re not committing to going every week, for a year, or anything like that.”

The effects of the pandemic could be long lasting, but they’re not something that is easily identifiable at this point in time. Short term effects are already being revealed as Dr. Martin points out that some people may have new fears of large crowds and spaces after having been confined for so long.

Mental health is something serious and necessary to consider, according to the CDC. Therapists are there to listen, and counseling gives a space to talk in times of distress.

“You might not connect with

graphic by Alexandra Valencia



Looking for Extracurriculars? Join the Club

AMELIA COLEMAN | graphics editor

Music in the Community

When: Every other Thursdays in Orchestra room
Contact: lasacomunitymusic@gmail.com

According to junior Anika Patel, music can be a great way to bring people together and create a shared community. Like the name suggests, Patel said the Music in the Community club is all about bringing people together.

“Our club is made up of musicians who want to share our love of music with people in community settings, such as nursing homes, hospice centers, and hospitals,” Patel said. “Our goal is to spread joy and healing through music. Our club includes several types of musicians, including orchestra, band, guitar, and choir.”

Patel started the club earlier this year, in an effort to create a safe space for musicians. She said that community is important for high schoolers and can be especially powerful for music.

“I wanted to find a way to bring other people together that feel the same way and share this feeling, especially with people who might be experiencing difficult times in their lives,” Patel said. “I also felt it would be a good opportunity for musicians across grades and different ensembles to meet and collaborate.”

Anokhi Sheth, a senior, is one of the officers of the club and says she joined to be more involved in her community and help others. Additionally, she says she became an officer because she was passionate about the club’s cause and thought it was a good investment of her time.

“I joined music in the communities because it’s a great opportunity to use the abilities I already have to help other,” Sheth said. “It was also something that I had already been interested in doing so being able to join was really cool.”

Patel said she likes music and playing her instrument. She said there is a calming aspect of music that can be beneficial for her mental health.

“I’ve been playing the violin since I was five and it has always been something I have found to be comforting and even meditative,” Patel said.

After much planning and rehearsing, one must perform their talents. Patel said there has been a lot of planning and organizing that went into their performance in December.

“On any given meeting, we may be brainstorming on community venues, selecting music to perform, and rehearsing our pieces,” Patel said. “Our first project is a holiday music performance at a local nursing home in December. We have selected some fun holiday-themed pieces which we hope the residents will enjoy.”



SOUNDING IT OUT Club president and junior Anika Patel talks to Music in the Community members about their music ahead of their upcoming recital. The club plays at venues in the Austin community, including nursing homes. photo by Malvika Pradhan

Young Socialists

When: Wednesday’s during lunch in Ms. Digoia’s room (202)
Contact: katheryn.digoia@austinisd.org

Many of the students at LASA will be able to vote in the next presidential election, so several clubs have been created to help students solidify their ideals and make informed decisions on candidates and policies they might be voting on. The LASA Democratic Socialist Club is one of the clubs dedicated to encouraging students to become the best activists they can be.

Senior Duncan Findlay founded this club as a way for students to become more politically involved.

“I started here at LASA just because I wanted to do more politically, and I wanted to try and get involved in activism,” Findlay said. “The Democratic Socialists were the biggest socialist organization in America right now, so I basically linked up with them and started a chapter here at LASA.”

When first recruiting, the club plastered dozens of posters across LASA in the hopes of drawing in interested members, according to Findlay. Senior Eva Schwarm was intrigued by the club’s quality advertising.

“I decided to attend after seeing the club’s first wave of posters,” Schwarm said. “They were well designed both in form and content. They always

included the sources of their statements.”

Club meetings are mostly informal discussions, according to Findlay. Meetings often consist of conversations and sharing of knowledge among members.

“In an average day for the club, it’ll mostly be us, like discussing theory, talking about books, and there’s all sorts of different levels of leftist education and the club,” Findlay said. “So a lot of it is us sharing the knowledge that we have with each other so that we can help each other be better activists.”

According to Findlay, the club is currently focused on recruiting new members and gaining credibility so people come to the club. However, Schwarm said the club hopes to collaborate with other clubs for a bigger student activist group in the future.

“Our biggest plan right now is to start a Student Advocacy Coalition with help from other clubs,” Schwarm said. “This group would be like a workers’ union, helping LASA students and maybe teachers to band together and get our voices heard on issues that affect us all, such as school funding and class sizes.”

The Student Advocacy Coalition could act as a resource for students, according to Findlay. This coalition could be useful in helping students advocate for what they want and need out of their education.



ATTENTION-GRABBING Young Socialists Club has become infamous around campus for their club flyers. The club’s goal is to share leftist knowledge and help members learn about activism. graphic by Amelia Coleman

Rockestra

When: Orchestra room on Thursdays
Contact: lasarockestra@gmail.com

Rockestra is a club with a title that says it all. The music is a mash of rock and orchestra. The LASA club itself is relatively new, but senior club member Emma Chu said Rockestra has been at middle schools for years.

“It was actually a club in my middle school, and then we just brought it over to LASA because we’re like, why not,” Chu said. “It started last year and it kept going on this year.”

Sophomore Tavi Tragus plays Viola for Rockestra. It is here that Tragus is able to experiment with a variety of musical genres.

“In Rockestra we play contemporary rock, pop, and other music on orchestral instruments,” Tragus said. “But, we are expanding to other instrument groups as well.”

Rockestra, while more focused on playing contemporary music, still

occasionally plays older hits. According to Chu, the club caters their music selection according to their audiences.

“We play a lot of pop music and old songs, like The Beatles and Queen,” Chu said. “The main reason we do it is just for fun ensemble work, but we also perform at senior homes, so we tend to choose music that seniors like.”

The club performs for seniors about once every grading period. According to Chu, right now the club is working on holiday music for their next performance, and that the club has at least 20 people in it right now. One of the aspects Chu likes about the club is the rehearsals.

“I think it’s just so relaxed,” Chu said. “We have a very varied ensemble, and there’s a ton of random instruments in it and that makes rehearsal really cool.”

Tragus encourages anyone interested in the club to join and try it for themselves. While Rockestra does have other benefits, such as performances being NHS sponsored, Tragus said the best thing about the club is the people.

“What I like about Rockestra is the community we are building,” Tragus said. “It is great to hang out with other people who also enjoy making music.”



ROCKING OUT Senior Aileen Chow practices violin during a Rockestra club meeting. The group plays contemporary pieces on orchestra instruments. photo by Amelia Coleman

AISD Voters Elect New Board Trustees

MALVIKA PRADHAN | news editor

This midterm election season, three new trustees were elected to Austin Independent School District's (AISD) school board. The new school board-elected members include Candance Hunter for District 1, Kathryn Whitley Chu for District 4, and Andrew Gonzales for District 6. Additionally, incumbent Arati Singh was re-elected to her District 9 at-large position, where she will represent all AISD families. Austin voters also passed a 2.44 billion dollar bond package which, according to the AISD website, will fund improvements for almost every AISD campus.

Chu, the new trustee for District 4, won her race against Clint Small by 71% of the vote, according to Community Impact Magazine. Chu said she is excited for the term ahead and to be able to serve AISD families and staff.

"I look forward to bringing my teaching experience to advocate for best educational practices for students and better working conditions for teachers," Whitley Chu said. "I began my career as an accountant, and that expertise is extremely important in a Trustee's role as a steward of taxpayer dollars."

Incumbent Singh won her race for the at-large position against her opponent, Heather Toolin, by 67% of the vote according to Community Impact Magazine. Singh said the results of the bond and trustee elections show that AISD voters are ready to invest in students and public education.

"The election also shows me that AISD can become a world class school district with audacious goals and the ability to meet them, and I couldn't be happier about that," Singh said. "Voters elected candidates that understand all students can achieve at high levels and that teacher voice is critical to achieving that goal."

Gonzales, the new trustee for District 6, won his seat with 67% of the votes, according to Community Impact. Gonzales said he is thrilled to have won, and though AISD has many challenges to overcome, he is optimistic that the new board can tackle these issues.

"We have a large district that makes decisions that impact our quality of life in many ways," Gonzales said. "As the child of a retired AISD teacher, a former AISD student, and a former AISD employee, I know from firsthand experience the many ways AISD plays a significant role in our lives. I want our district to be the best possible for everyone we come into contact with and it was that desire that compelled me to run for this office."

Chu said her first priorities in office will be to improve teacher and staff recruitment and retention, hire an interim superintendent, and eventually hire a permanent superintendent that is invested and committed to the district. Additionally, Chu said some of the biggest challenges facing the district are Texas' underfunding of public education, and standardized testing.

"The biggest challenges facing AISD are that Texas underfunds public schools and has punitive, high-stakes testing," Whitley Chu said. "Both of these problems are huge factors in the critical teacher and staff shortage. Teachers and classified staff—such as teacher's assistants, custodians, bus drivers, food service workers and front office staff—are grossly underpaid because Texas is 49 out of 50 states in per pupil spending."

According to KUT, AISD has seen three different superintendents since the pandemic started. Interim superintendent, Anthony Mays, who took over on July 8, 2022 – after Stephanie Elizalde left the position this past June – announced his resignation on Nov. 16, 2022. Gonzales said in an interview with KUT that Austin residents should have some input on the candidate, which the district hopes to choose by Thursday, Dec 15.

"Our biggest and most immediate priority will be to oversee both the development of the process and ultimately the selection of our next superintendent," Gonzales said. "Our district has not been immune from the national trend of high turnover in superintendents, and I think that we owe our community a significant degree of engagement and input in the selection process so that we can identify the best superintendent possible for our city."

Singh's priorities for this term are very similar. She said the new school board will utilize teacher and family voices to make AISD a stronger district.

"I expect our first few priorities will include finding an excellent interim superintendent, having a successful permanent superintendent search, filling our vacancies with highly qualified teachers, strengthening our special education program, and advocating at the legislature for more school funding and local control," Singh said.

In addition to making improvements on the superintendent, Chu said she is glad voters passed the bond this election season. According to the district, the proposed improvements to LASA will cost about \$29,648,000 and include security improvements, heating and air conditioning repairs, athletic field upgrades, and a school mental health center.

"I am extremely excited about the passage of the 2022 AISD Bond package," Chu said. "Modernized facilities will offer an amazing environment and learning opportunities for students. Additionally, the cost savings on deferred maintenance (not having to repeatedly fix old stuff in our buildings that need to be replaced) will free up more dollars that I would like to use to give school-based staff a much-deserved and needed pay raise."

Gonzales said he is also excited for the changes the bond could bring. According to Gonzales, the bond should be spent as outlined



The election also shows me that AISD can become a world class school district with audacious goals and the ability to meet them, and I couldn't be happier about that.



- ARATI SINGH, AT-LARGE TRUSTEE

in the proposed plan put out by the district in August 2022.

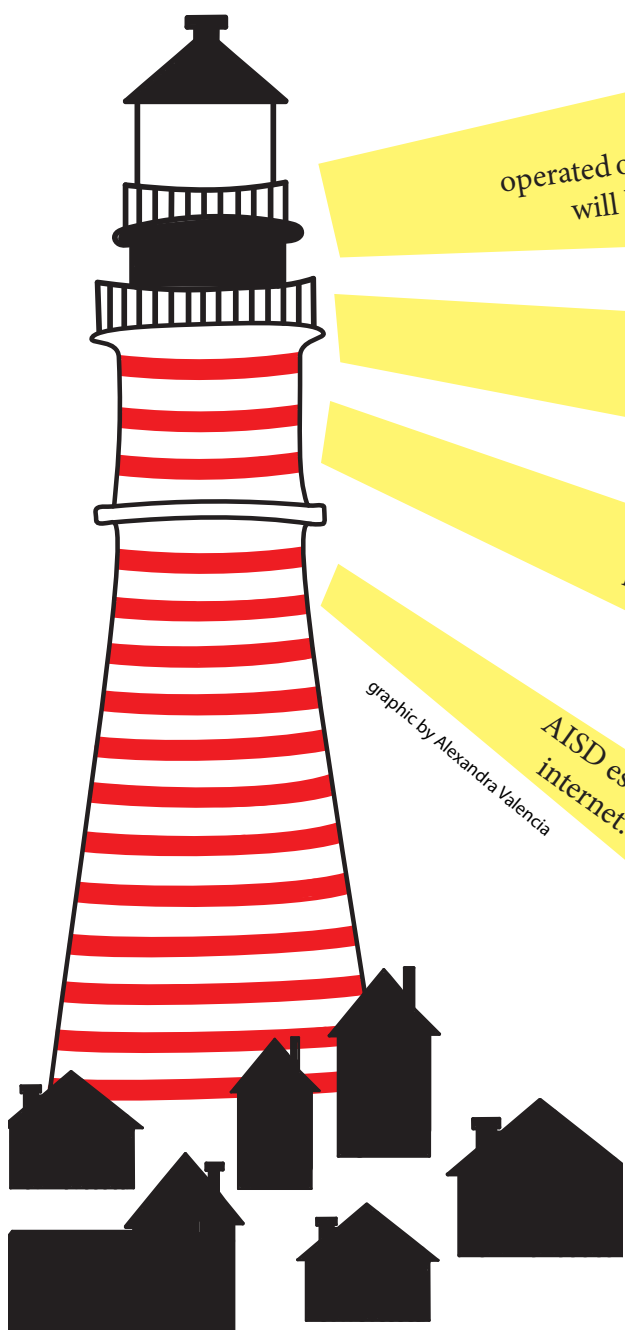
"I would encourage anyone interested in learning more about the expenditure of bond dollars to join the Community Bond Oversight Committee," Gonzales said. "In addition, I will say that as a former teacher at two different campuses in AISD, I know how desperately in need of repair and outright replacement many of our facilities and systems are."

Another thing that Gonzales said impacts the district is the outcome of the governor's race in Texas. Governors have an input in education policy and funding for Texas public schools. Apart from the outcome of the recent election, Gonzales says those that want to make a difference in the district should get involved with the local and state government.

"I would strongly suggest that all those with opinions about public education in the state of Texas make plans to visit with legislators, testify at the capitol, and get organized with others to make your feelings known at our upcoming state legislative session," Gonzales said.

AISD Shines a Light

District Rolls Out Internet Access Project



graphic by Alexandra Valencia

"Lighthouses" will be cell tower monopoles that will be installed and operated on Austin Independent School District (AISD) campuses. Each Lighthouse will have equipment that offers students within one mile access to high-speed internet at no cost.

The first nine campuses to receive "lighthouses" will be: Andrews, Barbara Jordan, Blanton, Blazier, Houston, Oak Springs, and Perez Elementary Schools, Martin Middle School, and LASA.

The monopoles will be up to 120 feet tall and are expected to be installed in late 2022, if the district gets city permitting approval. AISD estimates that about 30% of its students have no access to high-speed internet.

Information collected by Lily Wilkerson.

THE SKINNY

Global News

November

Iranian protests calling for political and social change have been occurring since mid-September, following the death of Mahsa Amini, a 22 year old woman who was killed while in the custody of Iranian morality police. Young people have been at the center of these protests, facing massive pushback from the government, according to the New York Times. Thousands of minors participating in protests have been targeted, and Amnesty International estimates nearly 50 minors have been killed in the clashes between protesters and authorities, as of Nov. 13.

Nov. 17

On Nov. 17, Myanmar's military announced a mass amnesty, where over 5,000 political prisoners, as well as four foreign prisoners, will be released. These foreign prisoners include Victoria Bowman, a former British ambassador to Myanmar, and Sean Turnell, an Australian economic adviser. There's been concern among Burmese citizens that this mass pardon will lead to an increase in crime.

Nov. 17

On Nov. 17 a court in the Netherlands, three men were convicted for the shooting of Malaysian jet MH17 in 2014. The jet was shot down while flying over eastern Ukraine, killing all 283 passengers and 15 crew members aboard. Two of the men convicted are Russian, and the other is a pro-separatist Ukrainian, according to AP. It is also unlikely that these men will serve their full sentences.

National News

Nov. 15

On Nov. 15, Donald Trump announced he'll be running for the presidency again in 2024. Currently, Trump is under investigation for both the Jan. 6, 2021 insurrection at the Capital, as well as documents found at his Mar-a-Lago home in Florida. There's concern about Trump's selection as the Republican candidate, as he's facing opposition from other candidates such as DeSantis and Pence.

Nov. 17

Nancy Pelosi announced on Nov. 17 that she will not run for Democratic leadership in the House of Representatives. Pelosi became the first woman to hold the position of Speaker of the House in 2007, and began her career in Congress in 1987. Her resignation comes shortly after Republicans took control of the House of Representatives during the midterm elections in early November.

Nov. 21

On Nov. 21, a shooting inside an LGBTQ+ nightclub in Colorado Springs, Colorado left 25 people injured, and five killed. The suspect, identified by police as Anderson Aldrich, is 22 years old and now in police custody. Additionally, the Colorado Springs Police Department says they are looking into whether the attack was a hate crime. According to CNN, two patrons in the club confronted Aldrich during the shooting and stopped him from killing more people.

State News

Oct. 20

On Oct. 20, Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton filed a lawsuit against Google. The lawsuit claimed Google had recorded voice and facial recognition of Texans without consent. Paxton claims that Google Photos, Google Nest, and Google Assistant all violate a biometric privacy act passed in 2009, which requires explicit consent before recording any individual's biometric data collection, including fingerprints, voice recognition, and facial recognition.

Nov. 10

On Nov. 10, state officials released a new proposal that would require power providers to buy "credits" from power generators. This proposal would help to ensure that power demand can be met, even when demand is extremely high, according to the Texas Tribune. The goal is to make Texas' power grid more reliable without raising electric bill costs. The Public Utility Commission voted on this proposal on Thursday, Dec. 15.

Local News

November

Austin City Council has been in multiple lawsuits with citizens who were injured by Austin Police Department officers during protests, according to the Austin-American Statesman. These injuries were mostly obtained in May 2020, during social justice protests following the murder of George Floyd. On Nov. 15, 11 individuals were receiving settlements from City Council, and the payout was totaled at \$17.3 million. The number of settlements is expected to increase, as many cases are still pending.

Learning Languages

Creates Caring Cultures

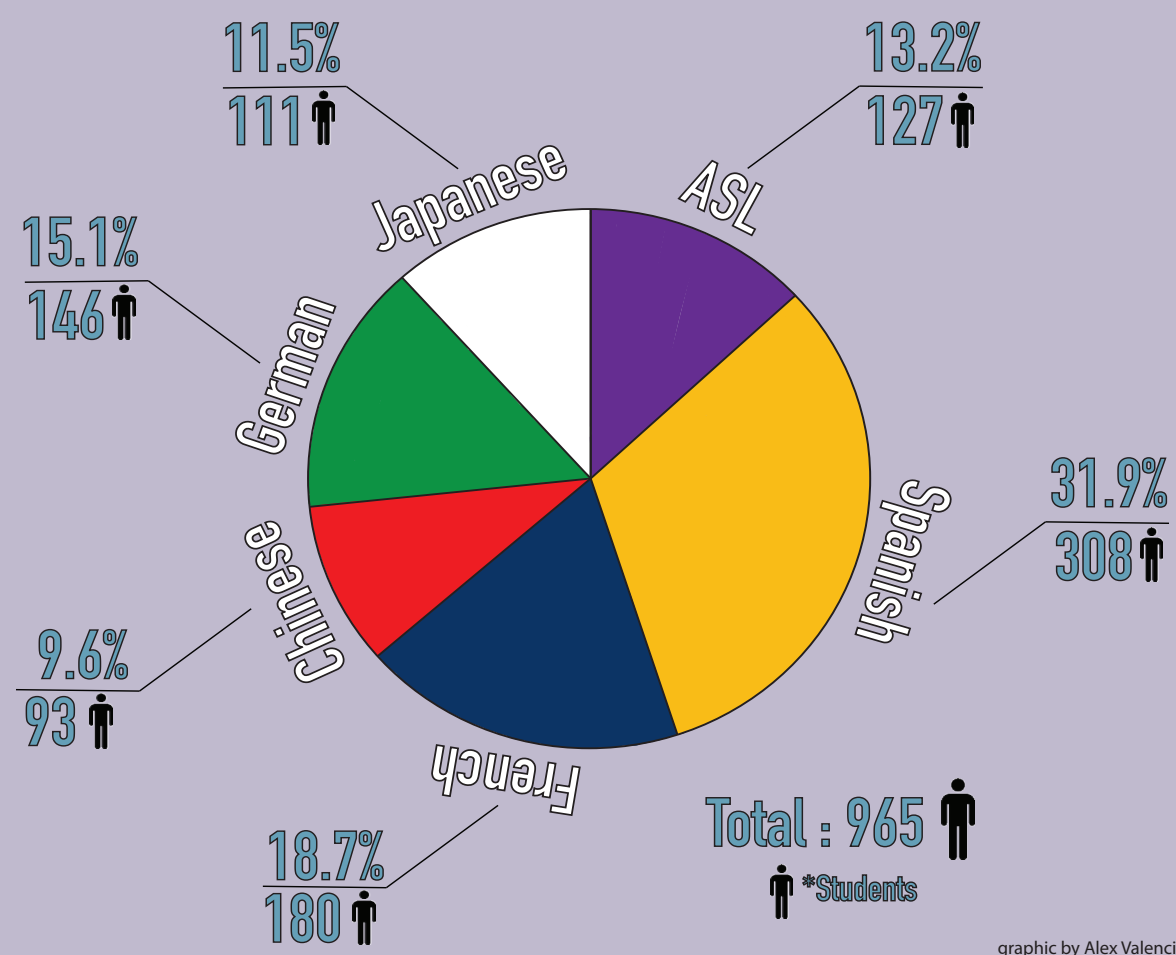


LOTE at LASA:

DELIA RUNE
LILI XIONG | student life editors

Throughout the school year, LASA students in language classes learn about a variety of holidays and cultural celebrations as ways to connect with the people and culture they are learning to communicate with through language. The following in-depth focuses on Spanish, American Sign Language, Chinese, and German as four examples of languages at LASA. Each of these classes celebrate culture in different ways, whether through research projects, food, or art displays. However, those four classes are by no means the only language classes with cultural celebrations at LASA, and this is not meant to be an exhaustive list.

LASA students have six options for languages other than English (LOTE) classes. This infographic represents the number of students in each language class at LASA. The data for this infographic was provided by Shannon Cardona, one of LASA's academic counselors.



American Sign Language

Just like the other languages offered at LASA, the American Sign Language (ASL) department incorporates its culture and traditions into the classroom. Deaf culture is the behaviors, norms, and language utilized by the majority of deaf people in the United States. According to ASL teacher Eric Breland, not all people who have hearing loss are part of Deaf culture.

"Deaf culture has a lot of different cultural norms," Breland said. "Like to get a whole room's attention, you don't clear your throat or do anything like that, you flash lights on and off... Visual things are very important to Deaf culture because that's the main mode of communication."

Breland tries to replicate some things common in Deaf culture within his classroom. According to Breland, this helps students get a better understanding of Deaf culture and practices.

"I incorporate using the lights to get the entire class's attention," Breland said. "I incorporate lots of interactive games and the room is normally set up in a gigantic U, so everyone can see each other, so we can see each other sign. That's how most

classrooms at a deaf school at the deaf universities are set up and established."

Breland incorporates holidays such as Halloween, Thanksgiving, and Hanukkah in his lessons through themed word searches, teaching specific vocabulary, and other interactive projects. He also discusses the unique ways Deaf people experience the holidays in class.

"We talk about one main problem in the deaf community, which is called dinner table syndrome," Breland said. "90% of deaf people have hearing parents, so when they go home for Thanksgiving or for the holidays, they're often left out of conversations...Hearing people typically will talk, and then they'll eat. For Deaf people it's normally the opposite, where they'll eat, and then they'll talk because their hands are now free...You also can't really lip read if someone's mouth is full of food, and if your family doesn't sign it all, you're left out of the conversation. So a lot of Deaf people would rather gather together in a deaf space instead of going home to a space where

there's a lack of communication."

Breland believes language and culture are intertwined, so it's especially important for ASL learners to be cognizant of Deaf norms. When they are using their ASL in the real world, these cultural lessons will also come into play.

"To learn a language, you've got to learn about culture," Breland said. "A lot of language things relate to the culture, like why you do something, or why something is explained a certain way, or why a particular habit is offensive or not offensive, or why they [Deaf culture] shares more information than hearing culture does. It's really difficult to teach a language without teaching the culture and the cultural norms."

German

Gingerbread houses, colorful posters, photos, and trophies upon trophies don the walls and shelves of the German classroom at LASA. These decorations are the culminating result of years of attending Sprachfest, the Texas German competition students prepare for during December and attend in February. The contest has opportunities for students to engage with German culture

Culture just adds that layer of tangibility and emotional connection that you can have with the language because it's related to people and their habits.

- Christopher Parks, German teacher

"A big part of the holiday season for LASA that isn't really a German tradition is getting ready for Sprachfest starting in mid-November, so that's leading into St. Nicholas Day, and those Germanic holidays that are celebrated in the winter," Parks said. "There's a lot more of a recreational approach to classes because everybody's working on a project or a piece of art or a dramatic event."

Parks incorporates teaching German history as a part of celebrating German traditions, as he says that the two are deeply intertwined. On days of particular significance to German history, Parks carves out time during classes to discuss them.

"Other than the more traditional holiday season holidays, early on in fall we celebrate the German Unity Day, which is on October 3, and then the day of the Berlin Wall falling on November 9," Parks said. "And really that's the diving board into more holidays that are culturally relevant, holidays that have persisted over long periods of time as opposed to the day of the wall falling which was just two decades ago."

Some of these traditional German holidays include Krampus Night, which is the night before St. Nicholas Day on Dec. 6. In German lore, St. Nicholas rewards good children by leaving them presents, while Krampus comes to punish bad children.

"St. Nicholas Day is where in America we get a lot of our traditions for having your stocking stuffed with little treats or coal, and getting bad presents if you misbehave, and the whole legend of Krampus," Parks said. "Then, three weeks later is when you have the actual Christmas Eve, so they're two different things in Germany as opposed to combining them into Christmas night."

Parks grew up around some of these German traditions because his grandmother was German. He enjoys sharing these

traditions with his students, as he believes culture is an important part of learning a language.

"Culture just adds that layer of tangibility and emotional connection that you can have with the language because it's related to people and their habits and what they do, and you can take part in that," Parks said. "I also like discussing holidays from all cultures, like we did a lesson on Diwali in German. I just think it's a shame if you're able to start speaking a language with people, but you can't really speak to their heart because you don't know much about who they are and where they're from."



OCTOBERFEST CELEBRATION LASA students participate in cultural celebrations related to their languages outside of class as well. Pictured above is an Oktoberfest celebration attended by LASA senior, Zachary Suri. photo by Zachary Suri

through participating in events ranging from poetry declamation to crafts to musical ensembles. According to the German teacher Christopher Parks, preparing for the Sprachfest competition is part of how the department celebrates the holidays.

Chinese

The Chinese department hosts several events throughout the year to celebrate Chinese holidays and culture – everything ranging from the school-wide Mid-Autumn Festival to a ramen social hosted by the Chinese Club. The Mid-Autumn Festival is traditionally a celebration of harvest, which LASA celebrates



MID-AUTUMN FESTIVAL Students line up to collect traditional Chinese foods. This celebration was organized by students to celebrate part of the Mid-Autumn festival. photo by JC Ramirez

through hosting a fair during lunch open to the whole school. Another major Chinese holiday is Chinese New Year, which is also referred to as Spring Festival by the department, and celebrates the beginning of the new year on the lunar Chinese calendar (usually in late January). These celebrations are largely student-driven, according to Chinese teacher Valerie Zhong.

"Especially before the pandemic, we did a lot [for the Chinese New Year's celebration]," Zhong said. "All of the Chinese students would participate and perform on stage. We use it as a part of culture-based learning...the whole class would brainstorm ideas for what they want to do, for example skits, or singing, or musical instruments, or games. It's a student-centered activity where almost everything comes from their own ideas, and they decide how to do it, and I'm more of a facilitator, helping them and guiding them."

The Chinese New Year's celebration at LASA usually takes place on the day of the Lantern Festival, which is on the fifteenth day of the first month in the lunar Chinese calendar, as it's the last day of New Year's celebration in China. The celebration is generally open to students outside of the department, parents, and staff, according to Zhong.

"It's really fun," Zhong said. "At the celebration event, we also invite guest speakers, which are sometimes parents coming to talk about learning Chinese and Chinese culture. Besides the

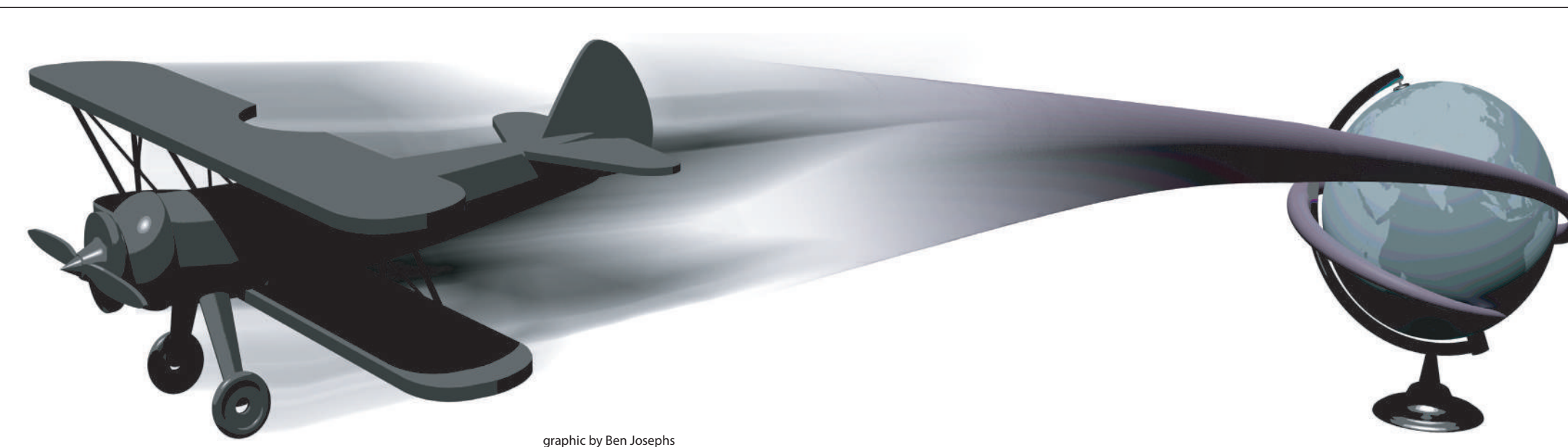
performances, we display student work, and students bring food for a potluck."

Similarly, the department hosted a celebration for the Mid-Autumn Festival on Sept. 8. Throughout the halls and classrooms, students put on plays, held demonstrations of Chinese Yo-Yo, and a variety of other activities the student body could participate in.

"For the Mid-Autumn Festival, we also have a celebration fair open to the whole school during lunch time," Zhong said. "We teach students how to make moon cakes and display calligraphy, and lots of different kinds of activities."

Zhong feels that it's important to not only expose her own students to Chinese culture, but also to promote cultural appreciation across the student body. She believes that fostering this understanding is important for students later on in life as well.

"We hope for students to become global citizens," Zhong said, "so once they learn the culture, they have a better understanding of people coming from different cultures all over the world, and so they can also better understand themselves through the comparison and contrast of different cultures."



graphic by Ben Josephs

Spanish

The Spanish department is LASA's biggest language department with six levels of Spanish, three teachers, and over 300 students. The department celebrates holidays and learns about traditions from a variety of Spanish-speaking countries, though one of the main holidays celebrated is Día de los Muertos which is a celebratory holiday to remember the dead on Nov. 1 and 2. La Catrina, an elegantly dressed skeleton, is a prominent symbol of the holiday, which was a subject of classroom discussion in Spanish teacher Luis Ramirez's classes.

"We compared how Catrina is a fictional character that was created to really enhance the narrative, and we compare that to how Santa Claus was also a character that was invented to create this narrative about Christmas," Ramirez said. "And so we've looked at different ways people celebrate Día de los Muertos, but we've also looked into the deeper details, so that's definitely

Teaching the culture in addition to the language helps people view the humanity within a language and how impactful the culture has been.

- Luis Ramirez, Spanish teacher

one of the things that we really focus on in November."

Outside of classroom discussions, students in different levels of Spanish engaged with Día de los Muertos in a variety of different ways. For example, Spanish One did a project on alebrijes, which are colorful imaginary creatures from Mexican Folk Art as a part of a unit on body parts.

"In Spanish Three, students did individual research papers on Hispanics who have passed away, and they created their own mini altars," Ramirez said. "In Spanish Six, they created the huge altar that we saw in the library, so designing that and creating something that was traditional to the size and scope of an actual ofrenda was pretty wonderful. So with each level,

it's a more intense look at the holiday, and really getting more involved in the whole process."

Higher levels of the language are more project-based, and there's more of a focus on the cultural elements of the language. Students who have a better understanding of the language they are learning are able to dive deeper into Spanish literature and media.

"In my Spanish Six class, we've done a segment where the kids actually had to prepare their own dishes, present them in class, talk about the history of those dishes, and really take us on a step by step [process] and then we're actually able to eat the food in class," Ramirez said. "In previous classes we've also had students actually open up their own restaurants and design a menu."

According to Ramirez, it's difficult to teach about all of the different Spanish-speaking countries, but he tries to ensure that class content covers different countries, and not just Mexico or just Spain. Spanish VI student Kyra Kleiman has participated in activities that cover multiple countries.

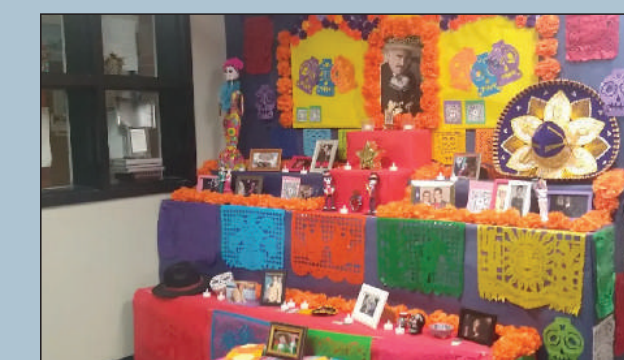
"We've painted tiles, which was one of our first projects, and they were about ourselves," Kleiman said. "But then he [Ramirez] also was talking about la talavera de Puebla and la talavera de la Reina, which are like two different types of tile. One of them's from Spain, and one of them's from Mexico." Kleiman has spent time in Nicaragua, and it's helped shape her understanding of the cultures of Spanish-speaking countries. According to her, learning Spanish has been a gateway into her learning about those cultures.

"I think that there's a lot more to Spanish than just the language," Kleiman said, "and I think that once you're able to speak it, I think it's really important to start learning the culture and the more important themes...the more you learn the language, the better you can understand the culture."

Ramirez also believes teaching culture and traditions goes hand-in-hand with teaching a language. According to Ramirez, looking at these traditions through a modern cross-cultural lens is also important for students.

"Teaching the culture in addition to the language helps people view the humanity within a language and how impactful the culture has been not just within their culture but here in American culture, like how we see Día de los Muertos is really crossing over into the American mainstream in terms of what

we celebrate here in the US," Ramirez said. "...So that way, they have this global competence of the language and not just conjugating verbs."



DÍA DE LOS MUERTOS Spanish VI students worked together to create an altar as part of their Día de los Muertos celebration. Altars are a traditional part of the way the dead are honored during Día de los Muertos. photo by JC Ramirez



ALTARS OF ALL SIZES Lower Spanish levels also created altars. The altars pictured above are smaller and were featured in the library during the fall.

Bringing the Holiday Fear to the LASA Fright House

SADIE CROVATTA | staff writer

The inaugural LASA Raptor Fright House was an event put together by the athletics department to bring LASA together for a fun, spooky night to remember. It took place on the evening of Saturday, Oct. 29, and included escape rooms in various locker rooms designed by athletes. The haunted house itself also involved a guided tour throughout the athletic wing, with rooms ranging from a spooky clown show put on by members of the choir to a grotesque medical scene put on by sports medicine students. Athletic Coordinator and head football coach Derrick Lewis was the one that originally pitched the idea for a haunted house. Given his prior experience running such events at other schools, he took the lead in order to make this happen.

"When I first came for my interview, Ms. Sifuentes took me on a tour of the athletics wing," Lewis said. "I said this could be a great haunted house because it already looked spooky back here, and the building itself had that appeal. I just thought the first fundraiser I would do to try to get the school to all come together would be a haunted house, so I picked the haunted house on my first day here."

The setting up and running of this event was a team effort. Once one club signed up, more quickly followed suit.

"The first group to sign up was the choir with Mr. Lewis, and then our training staff, our velocity dance group, and our cheerleaders," Lewis said.

Brooklyn Bloom is a freshman on the cheer team, one of the groups that participated in

setting up and running the haunted house. According to Bloom, there were a few challenges that came up while planning the haunted house.

"We had to do a lot of planning because we had a price restriction, and we were in the orchestra rooms, so we had to accommodate what would fit in that room," Bloom said. "We had to make sure that the people entering the haunted house did not see the people leaving the haunted house, which was a challenge because the opening to the room is quite small."

The dance team was in charge of another room in the haunted house. Beatriz Pereira, a sophomore on the dance team, helped to make the room spooky and scary.

"The whole dance team volunteered to decorate the dance room," Pereira said. "We had fake blood and fake spiderwebs, and we also had those big blowup ghosts and skeleton hands. "Some of the parents also helped."

Students and faculty members were at school working on setting up for the event all-day on Saturday. According to Bloom, much of the set up and preparation time went into creating the fright house.

"I got there at 10 a.m. on Oct. 29," Bloom said. "We worked pretty much all day to put this together. It was difficult. We had to hang up a bunch of different tarps. We had to set up tunnels and lights. A lot of hard work was put into it, but the end result was definitely worth it, and I think that it was just a really fun experience."

Setting up was one of Pereira's favorite parts of the haunted house. According to her, it brought the student and faculty community closer together.

"Setting it up and test running it was really fun because I got to do it with all of my friends," Pereira said. "We climbed through the tunnel that we made with all the lights out, and we had music playing and flickering lights. It was really cool."

The hope was that all this work would bring everyone at LASA together to experience the campus like they never had before, according to Lewis. The planning and setting up in advance played a big part in making sure everyone was scared as they walked through the school.

"I wanted the first half of the haunted house to look the way the building typically looked, and then as they progressed through

it they felt that they were being taken into a different place with some of the tunnels, the lights, the different elements of it and the idea is that people want to be afraid anyway," Lewis said. "It's like going to a comedy show. You're already anticipating laughing, so you know you're ready to laugh. I know that on Halloween most people already come with the idea that they're going to be scared, and it's just trying to find a way to keep the element of surprise. They never know what's going to happen next, and so it was just trying to hide the next element was the trick behind making it scary."

According to Lewis, the first Raptor Fright House was a success. Lewis said students seemed to really enjoy it, and the turn out was much more than expected given this was the first year.

"We anticipated it being our first year that there was going to be a little skepticism behind it, and what I learned in the past is that the first year is typically like that," Lewis said. "But once the students see what it looks like, their imagination kinda takes over and the second is always the better year. Now they're already like 'Coach we can do it like this next year'...so now I can pull back and let the kids take the lead now that everyone saw what it looked like. [Next year] I think we'll have more escape rooms, and a little more elements of horror, but it's going to be something that's probably going to be here as long as LASA is at this school!"

During each meeting, students pair up with one of over forty industry leaders from the architecture, construction and engineering industries. Each company has a mentor representing them, who will give a presentation to ACE Austin. After the presentation, the mentors will help ACE Austin members with a final group project.

"They work with their mentors on understanding the cost of materials so that they can create a budget," Baqdounes said. "And then on the final presentation night, they essentially present the project that they've been working on all year to all their friends and family."

Jace Castleberry, a LASA sophomore involved in the program, said that he joined the program because of his sister. Castleberry likes that ACE Austin provides internships and said he was going to apply for the scholarship opportunities to help him pay for college.

"I think this program benefits me," Castleberry said. "It gives me an overview of engineering and I'll be able to talk to professionals and mentors in the industry."

According to Baqdounes, the program has grown a lot since it first began. Even she herself finds the work students do with their mentors to be inspiring and interesting.

"Since I joined ACE, I've been able to see our students grow and our organization grow," Baqdounes said, "And, with that, these kids kind of allowed me to grow in my role and position as well."



Graphic by Amelia Coleman

FULL MOON Junior Addison McKenna dressed as a broken doll for the haunted house. Although this was the first Fright House, organizers like Coach Derrick Lewis have high hopes for the future. photo by Sarah Garrett



RAINBOWS AND GOALS LASA students and family don unicorn costumes to get in the halloween spirit. The inaugural Fright House was held in the athletic wing on Oct. 29. photo by Sarah Garrett

Austin Architecture Program Takes Flight

AIDAN GANNON | staff writer

The Architecture, Construction, and Engineering (ACE) Mentor Program is an afterschool program that mentors students for a future career in the construction industry. Students from a variety of Austin schools take part in ACE, including LASA, which has 26 students currently attending. Karima Baqdounes, this year's chair of ACE Austin, feels that this program provides a unique way to introduce high school students to the industry. ACE accomplishes this task by facilitating weekly sessions with students, pairing them with industry mentors, and helping students learn about the current building environment and the opportunities there are in the industry.

"The organization's goal and mission is to engage and enlighten the next generation of professionals in the building industry," Baqdounes said. "I feel that this program really provides a fun and collaborative way to introduce high school students to the industry. And it's not just that you're sitting in a classroom learning about what an architect does— you actually get paired with mentors."

Baqdounes believes ACE gives students an opportunity to see if they want to get involved with construction, engineering, or architecture in the future. According to her, that exposure to the field early on can be helpful for students figuring out their career paths.

"I think it helps students a lot because, personally, when I was in high school, I wasn't quite sure what I wanted to do when I grew up," Baqdounes said. "I knew I liked buildings. I knew I

liked architecture. But, I didn't really have a good understanding of what an architect versus an engineer versus a contractor really does."

Since the program is open to all high schoolers in the Austin area, they meet at an offsite location at the City of Austin Permitting and Development Center. In their latest meeting, Ram Dushyanthram, a project manager for Ryan Companies, a

ACE is probably one of the few organizations which I can connect in a way where I can say I wish I had this program guidance when I was in high school.

- Ram Dushyanthram, ACE Mentor

national construction company and a sponsor of ACE, gave a presentation about the architectural and stability issues of trying to get more light into the room. Dushyanthram is excited to be a mentor with ACE, and wished that he had this kind of program when he was younger.

"ACE is probably one of the few organizations which I can connect with in a way where I say 'I wish I had this program guidance when I was in high school,'" Dushyanthram said. "This program gives students the opportunity to be curious, innovate, and learn from the mentors that are working in the

real world. The level of impact you can create with the future generation is what drives me to be an active proponent of ACE".

During each meeting, students pair up with one of over forty industry leaders from the architecture, construction and engineering industries. Each company has a mentor representing them, who will give a presentation to ACE Austin. After the presentation, the mentors will help ACE Austin members with a final group project.

"They work with their mentors on understanding the cost of materials so that they can create a budget," Baqdounes said. "And then on the final presentation night, they essentially present the project that they've been working on all year to all their friends and family."

Jace Castleberry, a LASA sophomore involved in the program, said that he joined the program because of his sister. Castleberry likes that ACE Austin provides internships and said he was going to apply for the scholarship opportunities to help him pay for college.

"I think this program benefits me," Castleberry said. "It gives me an overview of engineering and I'll be able to talk to professionals and mentors in the industry."

According to Baqdounes, the program has grown a lot since it first began. Even she herself finds the work students do with their mentors to be inspiring and interesting.

"Since I joined ACE, I've been able to see our students grow and our organization grow," Baqdounes said, "And, with that, these kids kind of allowed me to grow in my role and position as well."

A Stroke of Brilliance: Student Artists Find Their Voices

BEATRIZ LARA | staff writer

LASA is known for outstanding academic performance, but according to sophomore dancer Mackenzie Waldinger, the school community promotes artistic talent as well. With a wide range of artists across many different forms of media and expression, LASA is home to many young artists.

Art has a unique way of eliciting strong emotions and self expression according to junior Aurna Mukherjee. She uses her art form, singing, as a creative outlet to express herself.

"I've been singing for my entire life," Mukherjee said. "It's what allows me to express my thoughts and process different emotions."

Art is not confined to one form or traditional quality standard, so artists are able to convey their emotions in new and innovative ways, according to senior Emma Chu. Chu believes that art is a way of crafting a message through various mediums. Art is always evolving and according to Waldinger her art form, dance, is too.

"Dance is a great example of a constantly growing art form," Waldinger said. "There are new and upcoming genres frequently, and the different types of dance that already exist are always evolving."

Many LASA artists are recognized for their talent and hard work. This year, senior Zachary Suri was awarded the Austin Youth Poet Laureate, the highest city-level poetry award a high schooler can get.

"If you have strong emotions, or particular feelings...that often seem to grasp, or hard to do anything with," Suri said, "Poetry is a way to do something with those feelings and to turn them...into something that another person could read and understand the way that it encapsulates those emotions."

According to Chu, while personal emotions can inspire someone to create a work of art, many artists are inspired by their surroundings. Chu says their digital surroundings inspire them most in their paintings.

"I'm inspired a lot by artists I find online honestly," Chu

said. "I think there's genuine value in being inspired by shows you watch or artists that you follow online right now because they're always making stuff that's innovative."

Along with inspirations, a productive environment that encourages creativity and artistic freedom helps artists, such as Waldinger, be able to express themselves. While LASA tends to be more focused on STEM-based studies, Waldinger believes it is also a productive and healthy environment for her as a dancer.



Graphic by Amelia Coleman and Lili Xiong

"I think [LASA] is a great environment for pursuing the arts," Waldinger said. "LASA gives people many opportunities, not only to do extracurricular activities but even in the STEM classes, to focus on art and be creative."

In her singing, Mukherjee tries to emulate the styles of singers she looks up to. She loves to try new techniques— like blending singing styles and genres of music.

"Carrie Underwood [is one of my role models]," Muckerjee said. "I think it's impressive how she merges different styles;

country, pop, rock, which is something I look to do when I sing."

Music can also inspire other forms of art, and inspiration can be found in a variety of places, according to Suri. He believes that many forms of art bleed into each other, especially when it comes to what inspires people to create works of art.

"I would say it's also music for me as well, particularly lyrics often make their way into my poetry," Suri said. "The beauty of poetry is that you can draw from all sorts of source material. It doesn't have to be traditionally considered poetry."

According to Chu, classical arts can be seen as outdated or irrelevant to the modern artistic scene. She believes that the most interesting art is what is happening in present day.

"If you say classical art as in technical arts, I don't think anyone now will get or relate to oil paintings from a few 100 years ago," Chu said. "That [art] has been dead for a while."

Visual arts is not the only art form that has evolved since its classical days. Poetry has also changed since its birth 5,000 years ago, according to Deutsche Welle.

"[Poetry] is often taught in a very restrictive way," Suri said. "Only from the perspective of dead white guys from hundreds of years ago, and we don't really see poetry as something that's meaningful to us as 21st century Americans."

While the evolution of art is exciting and looking forward is important, Suri said it is essential to remember the roots of art and where it all came from. Past art can be obsolete, but many of the issues discussed in old-fashioned art are still present today, according to Suri.

"But at the same time," Suri said, "I do think there's still value in going back and looking at those dead white guys and their poetry and looking at the poetry of the past."

Artists at LASA are constantly expressing themselves in new and innovative ways. While LASA is a nurturing place for many young artists, artists, such as Mukherjee, would appreciate more support and recognition from the community.

"I'd like to see the general community at LASA put more focus on choir and some of the less recognized fine arts at LASA," Mukherjee said "because there's talent in areas where people generally do not know about."

graphic by Alexandra Valencia

BAND DIRECTOR

from page 1

graphics by Amelia Coleman

As brass captain, Serff-Roberts helps the entire brass section of the band learn and play songs such as the school fight song at football games to get students and players excited. He also takes on the job of organizing and teaching each brass player on a more personal level than the directors are able to.

"I'm proud of the band as a whole, just able to persevere through a lot of the setbacks that we've had," Serff-Roberts said. "We just gotta roll with the punches sometimes, and they've done a great job of that."

Head Band Director Ponder East has been working at LASA for over a decade, and is no stranger to the marching band process. He stressed how important it is to have a good relationship between both directors and with students but was very pleased with the addition of Torres.

"With Mr. Torres's experience level, kids took to him right away," East said. "He and I got along great and have been getting along really well. I think that we did quite well and that there's a lot of things that weren't problems that could have been much bigger problems."

Some of these problems ranged from technical difficulties to typos on props with periodic elements, but students' involvement over the season brought success anyway, according to East. He said



NUCLEAR NOTES Freshman Lauren Bai plays percussion in the LASA band's marching show. The show was based on the opera "Dr Atomic" with music from John Adams, Prokofiev, Chesnokov, and Sting. photo by Kayla Le

students largely directed the visual portion of the show with the help of Torres. Student involvement is a huge part of how the band was able to make it past rough patches this season.

"The feeling at rehearsals was really good," East said. "We had several fantastic rehearsals. Just the vibe on the field was really focused. It was upbeat. The kids were working hard. They were responding to the instruction and the feedback, and we became a really good band."

Involvement from students in this year's show was even more important than in the past, but they were able to step up and accept more than the work required, according to Serff-Roberts. Students took control of designing visuals in addition to their usual jobs on the field.

"As we got further into the season, and it was time to start adding in visual stuff on the field, the students were the ones that came up with it," East said. "I had one contribution on the very first movement of the show that I came up with, but pretty much everything else that was in the show was either Mr. Torres's idea or the student leadership."

Torres has taught previously at three other high schools and currently serves as artistic director and conductor of Austin's Cinematic Symphony. He's no stranger to the learning process in band, but Torres said the strong will of LASA students has continued to impress him.

"I think a lot of people get dragged to the finish line in other schools," Torres said. "Here, it was just a matter of giving them the challenge and saying, 'This is what it's going to take,' and then watching the kids answer the call."

photo by Lili Xiong



GAME DAY SPIRIT The LASA band performed at a football game on Oct. 28. Directed by Ponder East, the band accompanied the home game against Navarro High School. photo by Lili Xiong



FEELING THE BEAT Senior drum major Aaryan Sharma conducts the LASA band at a football game on Oct. 28. This year, the LASA marching band's show was titled "The Manhattan Project." photo by Kayla Le

Lively Library Lunches

WINTYR RICE | staff writer

Students can walk into the library and be greeted by a plethora of comfy chairs, bright puzzles, stacks of board games, and a fully-stocked craft station, in addition to the library's many books. In the library, students of every grade level are seen working on assignments, adding to puzzles, and talking with friends.

The LASA library hosts numerous lunchtime events from weekly arts and crafts projects—called artful lunches—and lectures to puzzles and board games. There are also special one-off events, like the cookie decorating contest and the Halloween fashion show. The events are organized by librarian Elizabeth Switek. Most recently, the library hosted a tea lounge, held a potato stamp craft session and started a reading marathon which ends on Jan. 23. According to Switek, the lunches in the library started during the pandemic year due to the low on-campus student population.

"In a normal year, you would be going to your clubs, you would be having activities, you'd be in sports, and you'd all hang out in this locker area having lunch, or you'd go to the costume club," Switek said. "We don't have that now because it's a pandemic. It was really sad and pathetic."

Even before the pandemic, Switek was thinking about how to improve students' experiences in the library. She started including more programming—or activities—to do in the library.

"They had had several librarians before me who basically sat and did nothing," Switek said. "Which is sad, because a library can be so much more."

Switek models her activities after those of bigger libraries. She often gets ideas from Austin Public Library, San Antonio Public Library's teen section, and Pinterest.

"If you've been to a public library in the last five or ten years," Switek said, "you know that they're very active, really engaging the community, trying to get the community to come in for any reason—a seed exchange, or a band concert, or whatever."

At LASA, the library is the only place in the school that is visited by every student, other than the cafeteria. This is a fact Switek is well aware of.

"The library serves everybody," Switek said. "and so it needs to be warm and needs to be engaging."

Naina Jacobs is a LASA junior who often eats lunch in the library. She likes attending the artful lunches and enjoys the atmosphere that surrounds them.

"They're a really great break from school time and just a great relaxing activity to do," Jacobs said. "I really feel like it's fun."

Another student who frequents the artful lunches is junior Rosie Ramirez. Ramirez has been participating in artful lunches since last school year.

"A lot of people started joining together, and it's just something fun to do with all of your friends," Ramirez said. "I think it's just a really nice space to be in."

Switek hopes to continue the library events into the future. She also wants to expand and have more club involvement in the library.

"What I would like to do is build more engagement with the clubs," Switek said. "It's a place that they can use for lectures or activities that they're doing."

Junior Zianya Martinez is a long-time attendee of artful lunches. She says there are a few past activities that she'd like to see again in the future.

"Probably the bracelet making again," Martinez said. "We only did it in the beginning of the year and then after that, it was just gone."

Jacobs enjoys the crafts at the artful lunches and does not have many worries about their future. Jacobs appreciates the hard work Switek puts into making a space for people to be creative together.

"Honestly, the ideas that Ms. Switek has been coming up with have been really good," Jacobs said.

Switek also designs holiday-themed crafts for students. Martinez remembers some of the lunches the library hosted before winter break last year.

"They always have fun activities, like for holidays and stuff," Martinez said. "Before Christmas break, they gave us little arts and crafts with instructions and multiple activities we could do, and that was really fun to do over the break."

Jacobs said that she likes artful lunches that involve crafts that you can bring home. Although, she does also like the crafts that you can eat.

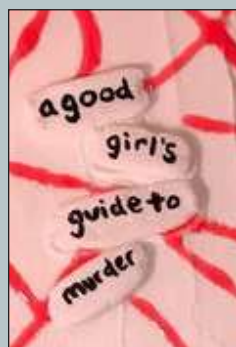
"I liked the cookie decorating one, but I wish I could eat that cookie," Jacobs said. "There was just a lot of frosting that was being touched by everyone."

The library also hosts presentations and lectures outside of the artful lunches to connect students to opportunities they may not be aware of otherwise. Ramirez attended one that was by the Architecture Construction and Engineering (ACE) program—a membership program for students interested in engineering.

"We went to one recently that was ACE," Ramirez said. "It was talking about architecture and construction."

Switek hopes to continue expanding library lunches as a bonding experience for years to come. She said that they're a good way to give students some much-needed downtime between classes.

"They've got an hour [for lunch]," Switek said, "and if they can get out of their head, and can relax, and if they can do something fun and engaging, then I'm going to offer it."



THE COOKIE WAS BETTER Students recreated book cover designs. They then voted for their favorite sweet creations. photos by Lili Xiong

LASA Custodian Appreciation

Spotlighting those who keep our school spotless

JAMES GRAHAM | staff writer

Austin Independent School District (AISD) employs 3,866 custodians, bus drivers, cafeteria workers, and educational aides, and make up a significant portion of LASA's staff, according to the AISD website. Even though students see custodians almost every day, many students do not know much about the personal lives of custodians and what they think about working at LASA.

This year is custodian Lorena Gomez's ninth year working as a custodian at LASA and has become a crew leader, meaning that she has four other custodians whose responsibilities she manages and oversees. Although her job is stressful, she enjoys it and would not change anything about it if she could.

"I don't think I would change anything," Gomez said. "I like working at LASA. I enjoy doing that for you. Having a clean school for you all, a clean desk for you all to sit, a clean classroom, when you're walking through, the floor is clean, I enjoy doing that. And I enjoy seeing your faces every day and the activities that you do. I like what I do. I like the people I work with. It's stressful, I'm not going to say it's not, because sometimes being a supervisor is not easy."

Gomez regards LASA students as relatively respectful compared to other schools she has worked at. However, she would appreciate it if students would pick up after themselves more often.

"[Students] could probably pick up after themselves," Gomez said. "Not all of them [litter]. Some of them are really respectful and pick up after themselves, and that really helps us a lot. For example, sometimes we go into classrooms and clean and students pick up their chairs and other things that are very helpful for me and my coworkers."

Gomez has a variety of interests outside of her work. At home, Gomez enjoys spending time with her family.

"We have a family of five," Gomez said. "It's mainly me, my husband, and my three kids. I have two boys and a girl... In the free time that I have, I spend it mostly with my family. I like playing basketball and soccer with my kids."

Ismael Simentales is another member of Lorena's custodian crew, and he has been working as an AISD custodian for 21 years. Simentales enjoys working at LASA because of the students and the way the school treats them.

"I like that LASA takes care of their students, and I enjoy keeping the school clean for them," Simentales said. "When I am not working, I like to go on vacation with my family and play soccer."

The Peer Assistance, Leadership, and Service (PALS) program made appreciation posters for each custodian for custodian appreciation day on Oct. 2. PALS teacher Joseph Pendell said he was glad the students were able to show support for the custodians.

"It was requested that we do it from a parent who was doing custodian appreciation," Pendell said. "And before we go off campus when we're in training, we

have time to work with the animal shelter or with Meals

on Wheels, and we have different community activities that we get involved with, so I thought this one is a good one for the custodians."

Pendell thinks that LASA students treat custodians well in general. However, he acknowledges that there is room for improvement when it comes to students picking up after themselves.

"By and large, I think [the students] are great, but there's an issue with some entitlement of feeling that the custodian should pick up their trash when it is so much easier to do it yourself," Pendell said. "Don't think that someone's supposed to pick up your trash, and I understand as high school students, people aren't always aware of that. But it just makes it a nicer place to be thankful for what you have."



"Thank you LASA Custodians!"

photo by Anwaro Valencia

AUSTIN STUDIO TOUR

graphic by Sarah Garrett

HELEN BIGGE | staff writer

The Austin Studio Tour is an annual event spanning three weekends from Nov. 5 through Nov. 20. Traditionally split between the East and West Austin Studio Tours, the first post-quarantine event spans across Austin and features over 500 local artists.

Cat Quintanilla, professionally referred to as Stone Carver Cat, is an artist specializing in a variety of mediums, from sculptures, to paintings, to mixed media. Quintanilla has featured her studio in the tour for the past several decades.

"It really grounds new people to the community in that they have patronized and helped make a living for artists that live here," Quintanilla said. "And they also have a story to tell with each piece of art that they acquire, saying, 'Oh, well I got this from a local artist,' or 'The materials were locally sourced and produced here, and I'm part of the community.'"

Jessica Fisher said that she and fellow art teacher, Elizabeth Hewitt, used to have everyone from their art classes write their midterm paper about an artist they talked to on the tour but have made it optional since COVID-19. Fisher has friends who regularly host during the tour, and one of her students is also participating

this year.

"Some of those spaces [that people host in] are galleries," Fisher said. "Some of those are people's homes which is cool because they invite you into their home and their workspace, and some of them are set up in public areas."

Quintanilla opened up her West Austin studio to showcase her work during the first two weeks of the tour, Nov. 5 through Nov. 13. Her workspace in Sunset Valley was Studio 199 in the tour this year. However, the East Austin tour is featured the last two weeks, with the second week featuring spaces from East and West of IH-35.

"I create large-scale, five, six, seven hundred pound sculptures that end up in sculpture parks," Quintanilla said. "I just brought one back that was in the Govalle Sculpture Park. I enjoy the fact that people will see something of mine in a public setting, and then they contact me and become a client and say, 'I really would like a large bear or a large whatever for my own home.'"

Because of this relationship between Quintanilla and her clients, she is able to have a stable relationship with her fans. The Studio Tour allows for artists to connect with their viewers on a personal level through art.

"It becomes like creating a relationship in many cases with my clients that I've had for years who get excited to see what the next thing that I will produce will look like," Quintanilla said. "If I had to just put it very simply, the tour is about creating relationships with the artists in your life, and enjoying it while you're doing it. It's just not an acquisition, it is a relationship with both the piece of artwork and the artist themselves."

BigMedium is the organization that puts together the Austin Studio Tour every year, along with other events to showcase artists and their work. The organization creates a catalog with all the artists and their work to help people find different artists on the tour.

"I would recommend going -and I always do- going to BigMedium, which is on Springdale Road," Fisher said. "It's close to here, and it's also got the most artists housed in one location, so you don't have to drive all over the city, and it has a wide variety. It's all studio spaces that people work in year-round, they pay for those spaces and that's where they create their art, and they open them up to you to walk in and see their work and the area that they do their process in."

Moyo Oyelola is a local artist who recently joined the BigMedium board. Prior to his board membership, he had a residency with BigMedium at the LINE hotel in downtown Austin, and he now has a show at the George Washington Carver Museum that runs from November 2022 through February 2023.

"I think the challenge and what people don't see is -it's not like it's a ton of people working on [the Studio Tour], it's a small number of people on the BigMedium staff working on it," Oyelola



STRIKING HUES On Nov. 20, viewers look at artist Adrian Armstrong's series "There Are Black People In Nebraska?!" in the East Austin section of the Austin Studio Tour. The Austin Studio Tour took place on weekends between Nov. 5 and Nov. 20. photo by Ella Lilly

said. "Since joining the board, I've always understood that, but you definitely get to see it in real time, what it takes to do that-- from people coming up to pick up their booklets or signage or anything like that. It's just a lot of work, but it currently reaches thousands of people here every year."

Oyelola says that several artist friends have been priced out of the Austin art market, making it difficult to participate in community events like the Austin Studio Tours. According to Oyelola, Austin has experienced a great deal of growth providing a difficult working environment for struggling artists.

"Every artist has different needs, but in general, if BigMedium can provide an ecosystem where people come to them, and they can help direct artists or direct people to artists, whether it's collectors or other institutions," Oyelola said. "And on top of maybe taking artists' work outside of Austin into different markets, that becomes the way in which BigMedium, the way I know, is actively propelling and helping the local environment."

Oyelola feels that there is more that we need to do as a city to help the artistic community, but BigMedium's studio tours take a big step towards helping artists. The tour provides exposure to all sorts of artists across the city and gives Austinites the chance to explore the local artistic movement.



CREATIVE CLUTTER A crowded corner of an East Austin Studio Tour exhibit is one of many creative spaces on the tour. The Austin Studio Tour, split into East and West Austin Tours, is an annual event hosted by Big Medium. photo by Ella Lilly

ConnectHER Film Festival Features female empowerment

MEGAN GEROLD | staff writer

Spanning 62 countries with topics ranging from street harassment to saving the bees, the ConnectHER film festival takes the chance to lay groundwork for female filmmakers. The woman-founded organization supports female filmmakers by highlighting critical issues in the media, and giving high school and college students the chance to share their opinions with the help of a film lens.

The ConnectHER film festival takes place once a year on Nov. 5 at St. Andrew's Dell Fine Arts Theater in Austin, Texas. The ConnectHER film festival is an organization that was created by Lila Igram to give filmmakers a chance to come together and share self-made films that showcase issues not commonly talked about. Filmmakers present their creations in front of a panel of judges, and winners receive a range of scholarships ranging from 1,000 to 5,000 dollars. The festival is an opportunity for women to have a voice and raise awareness about topics in the form of short films, according to the ConnectHER website. Filmmaker Britney Bautista is a 2021 finalist and is a fan of the way ConnectHER makes a space for women in the film industry.

"It's challenging to succeed as a woman in the film industry, a lot of the time," Bautista said. "It's a good collective where people are just constantly supporting you and believe in you."

ConnectHER gives filmmakers a chance to hone their skills and present their films in front of judges. These opportunities extend to being able to give disadvantaged people an opportunity to voice their struggles and hardships. 2022 finalist Autumn Rhodes believes that ConnectHER gives women the chance to speak up when they otherwise would not.

"They're getting viewpoints from girls who would never be able to get their points across otherwise," Rhodes said. "As the film industry is dominated by men, if you look at any film, for the most part, men are a large portion of the film industry, and they do a great job of trying to even the playing field."

Along with making a space for women in an industry dominated by men, ConnectHER gives filmmakers the opportunity to voice common struggles. Beyond ConnectHER and into the industry, marginalized

communities have often not been given proper opportunity in film, according to the Society of Audiovisual Authors. This sentiment is echoed by Austin Film Critic Elizabeth Stoddard, and because of this she makes a point to see and review films made by diminished communities.

"Marginalized filmmakers and performers have been involved since the early days of film," Stoddard said. "But due to institutional racism, they had a hard time finding funding for their work and/or were limited to stereotypical/racist roles in major studios, and they're paid much less than their counterparts."

ConnectHER seizes these chances to promote these topics. Bautista's film "Give me a Smile" is about street harassment that may not have changed laws, according to Bautista, but it and other flicks like it still bring buzz to the issues.

"It's so important to bring awareness to these things," Bautista said. "[It's important to] show that, 'hey, this is still going on, we need to do something about this.'"

All films presented at the festival highlight serious conversations and are divided up into different types of awards. According to Rhodes, ConnectHER films are a way to communicate important conversations.

"ConnectHER is a great way of getting young filmmakers' voices across about topics that are beyond important," Rhodes said. "... they're getting viewpoints from girls who would never be able to get their points across otherwise."

ConnectHER is an organization that supplies filmmakers with the chance to give each other feedback and raise each other up. The true impact of ConnectHER is one that also arrives at a personal level.

"It's just comforting to know that this collective cares so much about women," Bautista said. "Some women don't have support from their families, their support from their friends."

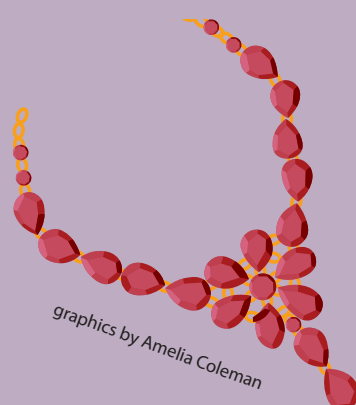
ConnectHER films are available to watch at connectherfilmfest.org. The flicks range across all different genres.

"All the films are amazing," Rhodes said. "I hope everybody gets a chance to view some of them as the topics are heartbreaking, inspiring, and all sorts of emotions."

Austin Fashion Week

Event welcomes diverse designers

ALONDRA AGUIRRE | staff writer



Cheering crowds and diverse fashion graced the Domain on Nov. 11-13 for the Austin fashion week. People from all over Austin went to see the fashion created by numerous local designers in order to experience the latest trends of the fashion world. The Austin Fashion show consists

of many runways exhibiting fashion from different designers.

According to Fashionnovation, fashion allows people to express themselves through apparel, accessories, and shoes. Students interested in fashion have the opportunity to take LASA's career and technical education class, fashion design. Fashion design teacher Jessica Fisher helps kids who are interested in fashion, learn about topics such as fashion merchandising, sewing, and style forecasting.

"The fashion design class covers a wide range of sewing/designing skills and techniques," Fisher said. "We learn fashion illustration on the croquis, flat pattern and sloper designs, cutting panels to construct a bodice, sleeve, pant, and collar, sewing on the machine and by hand, serger, fittings, and alterations. Students also learn about fashion merchandising, retail display, creating a collection, and production of a fashion show at the end of the year."

Senior Jaxie Niles Argüello takes the fashion design class and believes that the class can unlock new passions that will help students express themselves. Niles Argüello uses the skills learned in fashion design as an outlet of creative expression.

"I decided to take the class because I love sewing anyway, but I didn't have that big of a passion for fashion design," Niles Argüello said. "But now I love expressing myself through my design and clothing."

Fisher said that not only does fashion help one learn new things, but it's also important for self image. According to Fisher, fashion can help one express themselves as a person.

"Fashion is an outward expression of self, allows you to be creative, and is a form of wearable art," Fisher said. "Fashion impacts people in so many ways, it allows you to create something that is functional and expressive, gives you a sense of identity, allows you to try different looks, always changing."

Similar to Fisher, Gabriela Garcia, a fashion designer who owns Congrains designs believes that fashion is a very important thing. The Colombian native fashion designer and fashion illustrator who traveled from San Antonio to participate in the Austin fashion show said that not only is fashion important for

many individuals, but it's also a passion.

"Fashion is life," Garcia said. "It's all around us, and quite simply, we need it. It represents us as individuals. Fashion can be simple, fashion can be glamorous but no matter what, fashion always tells a story... The interaction between colors and design and the cuts and the textures of the different fabrics. I love how those elements come together to create style."

Along with her pure love of fashion, Garcia's ethnicity has impacted her designs. Having a Colombian background has impacted her fashion because of the inspiration she takes from her own life.

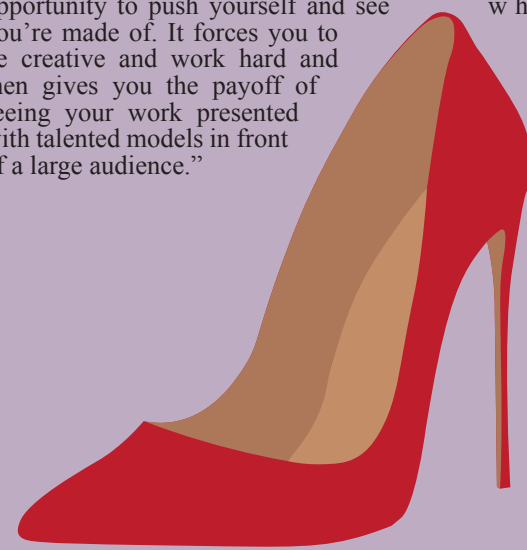
"Being Colombian is who I am," Garcia said. "My culture is in my blood, and so it's always at the core of what and how I create. The journey becomes mixing that culture with my life experiences and the different things that inspire me."

This year, Austin Fashion Week had a diverse group of fashion designers, with designs taking inspiration from Mexico, Afro-Caribbean culture, among other places. Fisher said that the show not only helps designers expose their art but also helps the people in the community understand more about fashion.

"The Austin fashion week fashion show is important because it allows our community to come together and show new seasonal styles, trends, and designers," Fisher said. "People enjoy the Austin fashion week fashion show because it is something that they can easily be a part of and enjoy seeing new trends on the runway. Designers are able to showcase new collections for the season and have them viewed by a wide variety of consumers."

The fashion show both spotlights the work that designers do, but also serves to help motivate them. Garcia enjoys sharing her designs and seeing her passion represented on the runway.

"There is no greater feeling than seeing all your hard work come together and be featured in a setting like this," Garcia said. "Nothing like seeing the whole collection on that runway. More than anything, an experience like this gives you the opportunity to push yourself and see what you're made of. It forces you to be creative and work hard and then gives you the payoff of seeing your work presented with talented models in front of a large audience."



Shopping Nifty and Thrifty

Behind the scenes at a thrift store

WINTYR RICE | staff writer

According to austintexas.gov, there are nearly four dozen thrift stores located in the Austin area. These stores include Goodwill, Pavement, Room Service Vintage, Austin Pets Alive! (APA!) Thrift, and many more.

APA! is a no-kill pet shelter in Austin, and the proceeds from their thrift shop go to fund the shelter. APA! Thrift Retail Operations Derrick Ernst said that there are many reasons that make running a thrift shop different from running a regular store. Thrift stores provide an opportunity to support charities like APA! in an alternate way while purchasing well priced clothes. Instead of using planograms, or diagrams that show how products are placed on shelves, to maximize sales, each thrift store has a different organization method. Along with dividing clothes based on size, APA! Thrift additionally divides clothes based on 'boutique' and regular clothing which dictates how items are priced.

“It's giving clothes that someone might throw away a new home.”



- SOPHOMORE IVY SERNOVITZ

“Everything that's in the thrift store is 100% donated,” Ernst said. “There's no blank, no planograms because we never know what we're gonna get,” Ernst said. “We have two prices of clothing. We have what we call boutique clothing, which are items that are a little bit higher price because the brands are a lot nicer, and then we have regular clothing, which is basically like five to seven dollar pieces of clothing.”

According to Ernst, women's clothing is the biggest seller at thrift stores. More unique items, like vintage pieces no longer in production, are also big sellers.

“[The biggest sellers are] mostly boutique and vintage clothing because they think it's a great deal,” Ernst said. “Some of these items in a department store may run 50 to 100 dollars, but you can get it here for 15 or 20 dollars.”

Fashion Design teacher Jessica Fisher is an avid thrifter and fan of vintage clothing. She is particularly fond of 50s inspired fashion or vibrant clothes.

“Almost all of my wardrobe is thrifted,” Fisher said. “I have a load of 1950's fashion, so I gravitate towards pieces that give me some kind of a vibe like that. But really just any pieces that have great color and patterns. Something that looks like it's still in good condition and would also last a while.”

Sophomore Ivy Sernovitz also enjoys thrifting and hunting through the variety of clothing. She said that there are some trends that are seen across different stores.

“There's usually a lot of T-shirts,” Sernovitz said. “But a lot of times there's like really random stuff, like there'll be a T-shirt for an elementary school's Christmas party or something. There's usually a lot of jeans. It's a little bit of everything.”

Much of the appeal for thrifting comes from the variety of clothing, according to Sernovitz. Because everything at thrift stores is donated, they will often end up with a large array of items.

“It's just fun because you actually have to do a little bit more searching,” Sernovitz said. “And you find some really interesting things that you might not find elsewhere.”

According to Fisher, thrifting also has environmental benefits. She says with the current push for sustainability, thrifting may be a better solution to traditional methods of buying clothes.

“It's good for the environment to not be picking clothes, like fast fashion, buying it, wearing it once, and then throwing it away, and it building up in the landfills,” Fisher said.

Sernovitz agreed about the benefits of thrifting and upcycling old clothes. Clothing production and the fashion industry as a whole are currently responsible for 10% of carbon emissions, according to Business Insider. Buying second hand clothes keeps new ones from having to be produced, lowering carbon emissions.

“It's better for the environment than buying new clothes,” Sernovitz said, “and it's giving clothes that someone might throw away a new home.”

Thrifting is becoming increasingly popular as shown by the market growth of 15% in 2021 and 82% of Americans either buying or selling clothes at second hand stores, according to OfferUp, an online marketplace. Fisher said that this is a trend that she hopes will continue.

“I think that a lot of people should go thrifting,” Fisher said, “and I hope that more people will start to.”

Blue Genie Art Bazaar

Interesting and unique handmade art

JOLIE GROGAN | staff writer

Every year as the holiday season approaches, the Blue Genie Art Bazaar opens up to Austinites, offering the chance to support local artists and community. This year, the Blue Genie will open for the 22nd year in a row, from Nov. 18 to Dec. 24. The festive scene has local art for sale along with various types of entertainment, such as drinks and movies, known among locals as a place to shop for gifts, check out artwork, or just hangout.

Local ceramics artist, Kristen Saksa Juen, displayed her work at the Blue Genie Art Bazaar this year. According to her website, she likes her pieces to grow into their own characters and qualities.

“I create handmade ceramics,” Saska Juen said. “They spark a connection with nature for modern spaces.”

Saska Juen sells her ceramics online through an Etsy store. Alongside this, Saska Juen is a big fan of the art bazaar and has been a part of it for many years.

“I have been selling at the Blue Genie Art Bazaar since 2015,” Juen said. “I did not participate in 2021 and



I really missed it, so I am glad to be back in 2022.”

Saska Juen's favorite part of the Blue Genie Art Bazaar is the local aspect. Saska Juen especially enjoys the atmosphere of the event.

“I love how Blue Genie Art Bazaar showcases the community of local artists and makers here in Austin,” Saska Juen said. “[I get to] Discover local artists and makers, meet up with friends, shop unique gifts for the holidays.”

Sophomore Karter Henkelman agrees that the art bazaar showcases fantastic local art. According to Henkelman, the Blue Genie is a great place to browse through unique and interesting pieces of art.

“I went to the Blue Genie Art Bazaar last year in late November,” Henkelman said. “I really liked how people didn't try and make

conversation as you shopped which decreased the stress around not buying things. Everything was also very curated, and I felt like every booth or area was interesting and fun to browse.”

According to Henkelman, one of her favorite parts of the art bazaar was exploring all of the jewelry available. This year, jewelry vendors include Ashdel, Milk Moon, and Year 901.

“All of the parts of the bazaar are so fun to see, so I recommend seeing as much as possible,” Henkelman said. “If I had to choose, I loved the earrings and rings because there were so many different styles, so everyone can find something they love”.

Artist and sophomore, Annabelle Davis, went to the Blue Genie Art Bazaar a couple years ago while shopping for Christmas gifts. According to Davis, the bazaar is a space for creativity and thinking outside of the box, which is something that Davis particularly enjoys.

“I loved how unique every artist a n d piece of art was,”

Davis said. “A lot of t h e art was very Austin/Texas themed and special to each artist.”

The art bazaar features woodworking, ceramics, clothing, folk art, class art, jewelry, and other art. Davis said she particularly enjoyed seeing the woodworking.

“I would encourage people to go and see the creative woodworking some of the artists are so skilled at,” Davis said.

Both Henkelman and Davis agreed that they are looking forward to going again this year. The Blue Genie Art Bazaar is open 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. daily until Dec. 24 when the store closes for the year at 6 p.m..

“I hope to go again this year because it was so fun the last time I went,” Henkelman said.

The Fun In Farmers Markets

Funky, fun, fresh, and fascinating foods and goods

MARS LESLIE | staff writer

Farmers markets across Austin have been producing fresh produce, new flavors, and hosting community gatherings since 1987, with the Barton Creek Farmers Market. Now known as one of the longest running farmers markets in the country, according to their website – more farmers markets have appeared around Austin, in locations such as Mueller's Town Center and Lakeline Mall, open every Saturday from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., and the Mueller Farmers Market is open every Sunday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Jason Ellis is a local business owner and participates in the Mueller Farmers Market every week, at his yaupon holly tea stand. Ellis has been with the market for years and is familiar with what it takes to both be a vendor and an active member of the community.

“Access to local foods keeps a lot of the money in the local community,” Ellis said. “When you're buying stuff from the farmers, it's going back to the farmers, and then they usually end up spending in the community instead of buying something at Walmart... Who knows where that money goes. That's one of the big things economically.”

Vendors can grow and source products from multiple farmers, as is the case with the Boggy Creek Farms stand. For the last seven and a half years, Safar Arafat-Ray has been a market coordinator and volunteer at Boggy Creek Farms, a farm founded nearly two centuries ago in 1841.

“Farmers markets and stands are key to not only highlighting local growers and artisans, but they introduce the local community to new, seasonal, and in most cases, better, fresher produce and products than they would find at the local grocery store,” Arafat-Ray said. “The markets also create a sense of community and connection with the growers that face-to-face interaction provides.”

Farmers markets bring in a variety of products that are uncommon and unfamiliar to the population, and introduce ideas such as incorporating seasonal fruits and vegetables into meals, which isn't a concern in stores that stock the same produce year-round. Arafat-Ray says exposure to new produce is something that Boggy Creek Farms achieves by bringing in different products during different times of the year.

“The best moments come when you see customers excited by what we have to offer,” Arafat-Ray said. “Some are excited for beans in spring, some for tomatoes in summer, others with greens in autumn, others still beets and carrots in winter.”

Farmers markets offer a wide array of food according to Arafat-Ray. This gives people a chance to both support local farmers but also try local produce that may not be available in traditional grocery stores and find new things they might really like.

“When a customer has been educated about and is interested to try something they've never eaten or seen before

- be it a foraged native green like Purslane or Lamb's Quarter, a squash like Kobocha, Daesene Green Eggplant, Rainbow Radishes, Harukai Turnips, or even Asian Long Beans, the next time they come into the farm stand and tell us how much they enjoyed their new find helps us feel like we've done our jobs,” Arafat-Ray said.

According to Ellis, owning a stand at a farmers market is no easy task, farmers and business owners face unique experiences and challenges on a daily basis. Whether it's troublesome customers or tight schedules, overcoming these obstacles can take a toll on business at the market.

“It's a lot of work,” Ellis said. “It's the best market in Austin too, so they're pretty selective on who gets in here. I woke up at 5:30 this morning and the market didn't start until 10. By the time I'm home and unloaded, it's five o'clock already.”

Offering a diverse range of produce at multiple different farmers markets is another challenge that requires coordination and the ability to plan ahead, according to Arafat-Ray. Arafat-Ray also said that themselves, as well as other Boggy Creek Farms employees have learned how to be able to problem solve and overcome conditions out of their hands.

“In a larger market, there are always the tasks of coordinating vendors, assigning volunteers and staff to certain tasks, setting up and breaking down the market, accounting systems, dealing with the weather, crowd control, security, and arranging payment,” Arafat-Ray said. “In a farm stand, like at Boggy Creek, we deal with many of these issues as well, just on a smaller scale. The biggest challenge comes from the weather since it's the one thing we can't control. An early or prolonged freeze or extreme prolonged heat & drought can wipe out a field full of crops in a matter of just a few hours to a few days. With climate change, we, and other farmers, will continue to face uncertain weather patterns far more frequently than in the past.”

According to Arafat-Ray, with increased concerns regarding climate, extreme weather, and land usage, vendors have to persevere in order to continue providing for their customers. Arafat-Ray said that farmers across the country face the challenge of preserving the local food and craft culture in their communities. Junior Ana Garfield works at local farm program Urban Roots, which employs high schoolers in an agricultural setting, and has experience with farmers markets.

“Seasonal and local produce is important because it provides variety to people's diets,” Garfield said. “Local produce is especially important as it is more fresh than what you would find at a supermarket, even if it is organic. The average vegetable travels thousands of miles before reaching your table, which is quite odd if you think about it. Seasonal and local produce allow people to feel more connected with their local culture.”



HUSTLE AND BUSTLE The Texas Farmers' Market at Mueller entertained a range of people and vendors on Nov. 13. Vendors range from Austin Honey, to Growtopia, to Lost Pines Yaupon Tea, all of whom sell specialized goods. photo by Zia Harvey



FRESHLY FARMED Simple Promise Farms hosted a tent at the Texas Farmers' Market at Mueller on Nov. 13. Simple Promise Farms sells vegetables and pickled goods, with the goal of assisting people recovering from addiction. photo by Zia Harvey

Austin's Own Awesome Alamo

VICTOR MARTINEZ | staff writer

Founded and headquartered in Austin, the Alamo Drafthouse is a nationwide theater chain with a history in Austin spanning 25 years, priding itself as being the premier destination for cinephiles. As stated on their official website, what distinguishes the chain from other competitors, most notably, is its expansive locally-produced meal and beverage options and strict movie-going etiquette.

While the Drafthouse now has over 50 operating locations across the United States, with plans to add onto the list, the theater chain's very first location was not even a fully functioning theater room. Doug Peña, manager of the Drafthouse's South Lamar location, has worked for the theater chain for many years, eventually leading him to become familiar with the Drafthouse's beginnings: a business venture of a married couple, who had built a one room second-run theater that had a single operating projector, by hand.

"The original Alamo Drafthouse was located on Colorado Street," Peña said. "It was basically a converted parking garage that would turn into a movie theater. [Tim and Karrie League] took the simple idea of watching a movie, being able to enjoy some beer and some food while you watch it, and quickly found also no talking – 'if you talk we will kick you out' – blended together really well, so much so that they could expand and add locations."

For many customers, the strict no talking and film etiquette policies help in creating an uniquely immersive experience out of the Alamo Drafthouse's screenings. Audio Visual Production teacher Vanessa Mokry said the Drafthouse ensures that customers, such as herself, can enjoy a film to the fullest because of these policies.

"[The Alamo Drafthouse is] a place that respects movies," Mokry said. "...It's a place, sometimes it's spoken, sometimes it's unspoken, where people are just there to enjoy the movie and respect each other. You don't tend to have people talking or doing other obnoxious things that interrupts your enjoyment of the film."

In addition to employing its no talking and no phone use policy, the Drafthouse also hosts pre-film events and shows made specially for the movie screened directly after to add to its customers' experiences. Ty Denton is the manager of Austin Books and Comics, a position he has held for nearly twelve years. Due to his extensive knowledge of comics, he was asked by the Drafthouse to record trailers, voice overs, and host live events to be screened at locations around Austin before certain superhero and action films.

"Sometimes they ask me to do a little pre-show, where I'll stand up, and then I do a little quiz, or I'll do little games," Denton said. "For 'Captain America: Civil War,' I had people do a push up contest or see how long they could

keep their hands in ice, and I gave them little prizes."

However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Alamo Drafthouse could not continue these shows or even film screenings for quite some time. As a manager, Peña responded to this dilemma by placing more emphasis on providing for the Drafthouse's customers' love for classic films.

"We're still feeling the effects of the film industry shutting down because it takes so long to make movies," Peña said. "Sometimes it takes five to 10 years, especially if you're looking at something like 'Avatar,' that takes that long to make, so we're still filling in a lot of holes with repertory films... because there's still not a lot of content."

Considering how affected even the largest production companies and theater chains were by the COVID-19 pandemic, one can imagine how less commercial filmmakers and chains could have been greatly troubled by the pandemic. In spite of past hardship, however, Peña nonetheless believes that the future is full of opportunity and chances to uplift artists most in need of support.



LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION The Alamo drafthouse has multiple locations located around Austin. It was founded in Austin and now has locations across the country. photo by Zia Harvey

"I think Alamo is going to continue to promote some of the best films that we can find that need help," Peña said. "You've got films like 'Everything Everywhere All at Once' that, in all of Texas, played only at this location for its first week or two, and it did really well. We're really happy to lend a hand to smaller studios and smaller films like that, and I think we'll continue doing that and hopefully make headway into promoting international films, independent films, and more artistic and creative projects as well."



graphics by Katie Busby

TWELFTH NIGHT

from page 1



CELEBRATING SUCCESS After performing in the closing night of the Alley Cat Players "Twelfth Night," students congratulate and thank their new director, Jason Escandell, on finishing the fall performance. LASA's theater group, the Alley Cat Players, performed over the course of two weekends, Nov. 4, 5, 11, and 12. photo by Katie Busby

"It's been really new with all of the freshmen that are coming in because last year we didn't have a lot of [people] because the program was a lot smaller," Chen said. "It's weird, having all of these new people come in, and then having a new director on top of that, and having the upperclassmen manage a lot of it."

Freshman Zoe Tice, who plays a jester, said she also felt that way. Tice says that she had trouble acclimating to the new environment.

"Getting comfortable with everybody was a little weird at first," Tice said. "I don't know, upperclassmen can be scary."

Chen adds onto this saying although the newness has been difficult, she's very excited about everyone seeing the play because LASA isn't usually known for its theater. Chen said with the possibility of English extra credit, more people were interested in going though.

"LASA isn't really known for great theater," Chen said. "With the draw of the English extra credit, that might be a majority of the people going there."

In order to receive extra credit, students had to watch the play, write a few paragraphs about it, and then they would receive five extra points on their lowest quiz grade. However, Chen says even if the main draw was extra credit, students would hopefully leave with a better experience and mindset about the play.

"I think that they're gonna be pleasantly surprised," Chen said. "Although Shakespeare's talk is hard to understand, and they're not going to know what it is, I think just general body language and voice is enough."

Tice agreed with Chen. She felt that even if students were not used to Shakespeare, they could still understand what the actors were saying.

"It's good for most people," Tice said. "Don't go into it thinking that you're going to understand every single thing that's happening because the words are a little weird, but I feel like most people will get the gist of it."

Mason and Chen both said that it took a lot of practice and work and that they have been doing rehearsals since Sept. to nail down the play. They originally had two rehearsals a week, but as it got closer to opening night, students practiced five times a week. Tice said that rehearsals were actually one of her favorite parts of being in the play.

"I really liked the games, so we played after we practiced," Tice said. "We did dodgeball, which was actually kind of scary because the stage manager is really scary when you play dodgeball, but we also did trivia, which was fun."

Tice, however, said that the theater department did have a problem for a bit related to the location of the rehearsals. According to Tice, rehearsals weren't consistently on the stage.

"We had a week and a half period where there were guitar things going on in the theater, so [rehearsal] was the jazz room instead, and that was really weird to practice not on the stage," Tice said. "That was a hurdle because then some of our practices got canceled because of that, so we had a little less time in practice, but I think it worked out fine."

Tice also said that another particular hurdle was that on opening night for the second half of the play they had a leak at the side of the theater. Despite the challenges, Tice said she hoped people enjoyed the show. In particular, Tice said



DREAMY DRAMA (from left to right) the characters Andrew and Toby discuss with Fabian the plans they have to trick Malvolio. The trio of students performed the Shakespearean play, "Twelfth Night," written in the early 1600s, returned to the modern stage in November with new costumes, sets, and lighting and gave a modern comedic twist on this classical comedy. photo by Katie Busby

that being in the play this semester was a fun experience.

"I think it's been a good way for me to make friends [and] see what LASA of theater is about," Tice said. "I think it was a good introduction to the theater."

With the end of the fall play, the theater program is getting ready for the next few plays as well. Auditions for "Into the Woods" were on Dec. 6, and auditions for the one act play "Wit" were on Dec. 7.

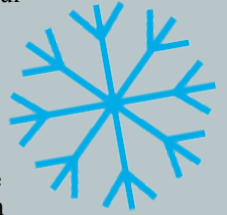
Editor's Picks

Holiday Movies

High School Musical

SARAH GARRETT | entertainment editor

"High School Musical," is a movie not traditionally associated with the holidays, but I disagree. The opening scene of "High School Musical" takes place on New Year's Eve, therefore, in my opinion, making it a holiday movie. The rest of "High School Musical" highlights many winter holiday themes as well: love, music, family, and friends. Disney Channel's "High School Musical" was released on Jan. 20, 2006. For anyone who has not had the pleasure of watching the wonderfully ridiculous film, "High School Musical" focuses on the intricate relationship between teens Troy Bolton and Gabriella Montez. Troy is a music-loving jock, and Gabriella is a music-loving nerd. Meeting at a New Year's Eve party on vacation, they were bound to fall in love but were in the unfortunate situation of having to go home. After that fateful New Year's Eve party, Gabriella and Troy found themselves at the same high school, navigating new hobbies, relationship drama, and of course, the high school's musical. Embodying friendship, forgiveness, and family tradition, what more is there to love from a musical, idealized version of high school-centered New Year's movie.



Polar Express

JC RAMIREZ DELGADILLO | web editor

"The Polar Express" is a Christmas movie that came out on Nov. 10, 2004. The film, directed by Robert Zemeckis is about a nameless boy who rides a magical train that's headed to the north pole on Christmas Eve to visit Santa Claus. During the movie, the boy is trying to discover whether or not he believes in Santa Claus, and the message of the movie is about self-discovery. The movie is the first feature length film that used performance capture

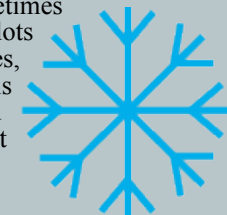
software for all of the characters, a revolutionary moment for the film industry. My elementary Christmas parties wouldn't have been complete without this movie. As a little kid, the movie would play in the background while my family and I indulged in hot chocolate and decorated cookies, awaiting the beginning of winter break.



Elf

NORAH HUSSAINI | commentary editor

Not many films are able to encapsulate and utilize the humor in absolute stupidity, but the 2003 film Elf, does it so skillfully and with a little extra Christmas flair. Played by Will Ferrell, the protagonist of the movie is the extravagant and energetic Buddy the Elf. After being raised in the North Pole with Santa and the rest of the elves, Buddy has a hard time adapting to the hustle and bustle of the gleaming metropolis that is New York City, where he goes to find his true father. As a grown man dressed in an elf costume with extremely fitted red tights and a hat to match, Buddy immediately draws eyes and stares. Pair this with his bubbly, eccentric, and sometimes a little too loud personality, and you get lots of odd meals, a couple corporate mistakes, and one big rager in the mailroom. This film will inspire a childlike wonder and nostalgia, similar to the feelings that Buddy radiates.



Dash and Lily

KATIE BUSBY | entertainment editor

While not technically a movie, my holiday pick is "Dash and Lily," a limited series released on Netflix in 2020 consisting of eight episodes that follow the two main characters, Dash and Lily. Based on the book written by Rachel Cohn and David Levithan, the premise of the show starts when Lily's parents announce that they will not be home for Christmas. Heartbroken and yearning for someone to share the holidays with, Lily ends up placing a notebook in the Strand in New York City with a series of clues in it, in the hopes someone who loves Christmas as much as her will notice it. The notebook is picked up by her polar opposite, Dash, a cynic who hates Christmas but decides to play along. They trade the notebook back and forth, hiding it in places around New York, falling in love while never having met each other, and learning to appreciate the world through the other's perspective. This show is a cute feel good rom com set in the beautiful scene of New York at Christmas time.



graphics by Sarah Garrett

editorial Tennis, Welcome to the New Age

SANWI SARODE | sports editor

Tears have been shed in the tennis industry as top-notch players step down from their careers, leaving the mantle for the younger generation to carry. From Roger Federer to Serena Williams, both retiring at age 41, this year has seen some of the best tennis players of the generation step down from their post.

Roger Federer, often referred to as the most beloved tennis player to be seen, according to Tennis World USA, retired in September 2022 after the Laver Cup tournament, giving a tearful farewell to his fans. Federer had 20 Grand Slam victories at the end of his career, with his specialty being at the grass courts at Wimbledon. Known for not only his effortless strokes, his class, and his humility on the court, but also his constantly cool composure and genuine shows of gratitude towards his fans. Federer was an inspiration for many rising tennis players, including myself. Following his departure, his tennis rival and friend Rafael Nadal said that Federer's career

has "set the tone for what it means to achieve excellence and lead with integrity and poise" and that it was "an honor to know [him] on and off court, and for many more years to come", according to Association of Tennis Professionals (ATP) Tour.

Also in September 2022, tennis star Serena Williams announced her retirement after the U.S. Open, one of the four major tennis tournaments of the year, leaving an everlasting mark on women's tennis after her remarkable 27-year career, according to The Justice. At her peak, Williams broke the record for the most Grand Slam victories among male and female players in history, with 23 wins tucked under her belt. Needless to say, Williams' powerful strokes, mental strength, and respect for her opponents on the court captured the hearts of fans worldwide.

Aside from these pillars in tennis, other prominent players, such as former number one women's player Ashleigh Barty, and former men's number three player Juan Martin del Potro, also retired from tennis due to a desire for perusement of other dreams and injuries respectively, according to ATP rankings. These are just a few of the vast number of players who have retired in 2022. With many influential players leaving their professional careers, it begs the question: what does the future of

tennis have to offer?

The absence of these top players will now give rising stars more opportunity to shine. Women's tennis especially has seen an influx in young players claiming the crown for Grand

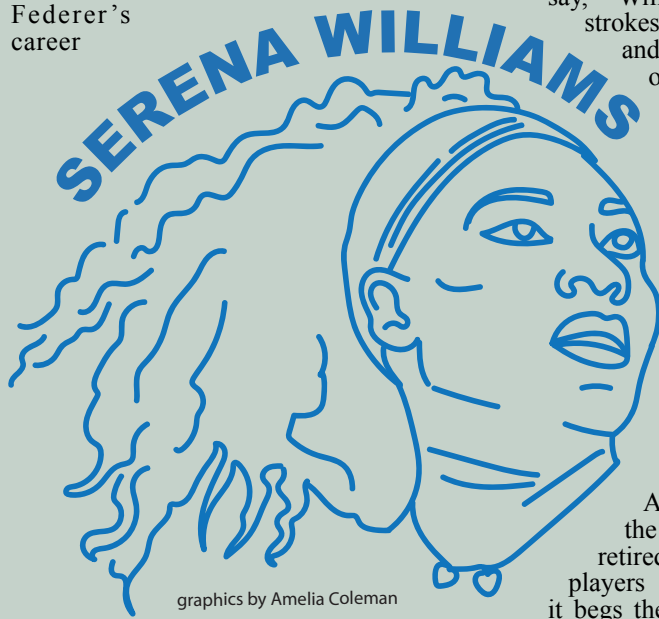
Slam tournaments, with 21-year-old Iga Świątek claiming an additional two Grand Slam victories since her first at the French Open Slam in 2020, according to Womens Tennis Association [WTA] Tennis. 19-year-old Emma Raducanu also made her Grand Slam win debut at the 2021 U.S. Open, taking the title without dropping a single set to an opponent. Finally, 18-year-old Cori Gauff, known to her fans as Coco Gauff, has been consistently reaching high rounds at tournaments, recently losing to Świątek at the WTA Finals.

On the other hand, from men's tennis, 21-year-old Jannik Sinner has been a sight to behold, getting close to winning several Grand Slam titles, only recently losing to 19-year-old Carlos Alcaraz. Alcaraz has claimed the number one men's ranking on the 2022 ATP list following his victory at the 2020 U.S. Open, a major change from the usual results of men's tournaments in which the players known as the "Big Three" – Federer, Rafael Nadal, and Novak Djokovic – have often faced each other for the title, according to The Science Survey. Of course, now that Federer

has left, it means that the race for the most male Grand Slam titles is now only between Nadal and Djokovic, creating an even stronger rivalry between the two players that is sure to spark fans' interest in the future.

Among the young rising stars of this generation, many have cited Williams and Federer as their inspirations, showing these players' lasting impact into the younger generation. Gauff even said that Williams was the one who taught her to never settle for less than what she worked for, according to the Los Angeles Times, and Alcaraz stated that Federer was all "talent, class, and elegance" and that his presence is a "gift" to all tennis fans and players.

Although these legends can never be replaced, the young prodigies excelling upon their leave certainly aspire to take after them and their success. It's a marvel that fans got to witness such high class players competing together in the same generation, and it was certainly a blessing for them. Needless to say, the legacy left behind by Federer, Williams, and the many other strongholds of tennis will no doubt continue to last through tennis for generations to come.



graphics by Amelia Coleman



Opening Eyes to Elitism

GRIFFIN BEAM | staff writer

Elitism in athletics is something that has been around for as long as sports have been competitive, potentially impacting the atmosphere of tournaments at LASA. Elitism is the sense of superiority in a person, athletic club, or school that considers themselves better in aspects regarding their sport for various reasons.

Freshman Claire Zhou is currently a member of the LASA tennis team and a player at Polo tennis club. According to Zhou, elitism can show itself in the way people treat you during a game.

"In tennis, if you're significantly better in school, or you have a higher skill than others, you try less or you don't respect other players as much on court," Zhou said. "That can reflect what you think of them. I feel like certain clubs show elitism because of the people that attend them or the coaches and the staff. They can make it feel like you have to be a certain type of person for other people to perceive you well."

While elitism does play a part in many sports, not all athletic activities experience it to the same level, according to senior Liam McDonald. McDonald is a current member of the Great Hill's Aquatics Rush swim team and has noticed that in his experience, swimming seems to not have that much elitism in it, except on rare occasions when athletes change their style of play.

"I would say the biggest attribute in swimming would be intentionally going slow knowing that you could beat people because that hurts [and disrespects the work they put into the competition]," McDonald said. "Even if they are going slow because they are tired."

According to Zhou, elitism becomes more prevalent in areas where there is a bigger difference in socioeconomic. Zhou said something as typical as high membership fees for many athletic clubs shows elitism in the sense that it creates an environment based on class.

"Being able to become a member or play at the practices [for clubs] are pretty pricey,

and like at Polo, worth the investment because the coaching is good, but it's less accessible," Zhou said. "If you come from a lower income family, your opportunities with the sport could be less than someone who comes from a higher income family."

Junior Elizabeth Ree is a member of LASA's cross country, track and field, and cheerleading team. Ree, through her various experience in multiple sports, has also said that elitism can stem from school funding and stereotypes.

"Other teams definitely get more money than we do which gives them an advantage," Ree said. "Cheer costs more than cross country does because for cross [country] you really just need shoes while for cheer you need shoes, pompoms, and a uniform. I'm not sure how we could help with the problem of funding because it changes between schools and is pretty hard to influence. You can feel discouraged and not want to try because of how people feel better than you and that reduces the amount of people participating. But LASA is a really nice and welcoming place, so it's really easy to get into a sport because of this."

McDonald believes that the best way to repair damages done from elitism is to share resources and avoid having too many aspects in competitions that are dependent on finance. According to him, elitism will be a tough case to crack in the future.

"It's caused by people having those advantages, and not sharing it for competition advantages," McDonald said. "I think that the biggest problem of elitism is that it takes away the point of sports which is to have fun and if you're barred by that and socially gatekeeping it then you're violating the entire thing. I would say that elitism is a really big problem and is going to be really hard to solve."



graphic by Alexandra Valencia



ALONDRA AGUIRRE | staff writer

The sports medicine (sports med) class at LASA consists of teaching skills focusing on the basic application of medicine in sports, like how to treat a wound or wrap an injury. LASA offers three different levels of sports med classes, which provides the opportunity for students to prepare for any future careers in medicine.

Sports med students practice their skills in real time by going to school football games and evaluating injured players. Sports med teacher Sue Torres has been a high school sports med teacher for 15 years and helps students get an in-depth understanding of sports medicine when they take the class.

"Sports med one is a good intro, and then they do an evaluation," Torres said. "Sports med two, we continue on improving their evaluation skills, but then we do modalities which are treatment modalities, [which can be] as simple as an ice bag but as complicated as ultrasound, and then we do rehab also. Sports med three doesn't happen that often, but it's project based, so they do little projects."



A HELPING HAND Sports med students sophomore Abby Aardema and senior Adam Reisman practice their medical skills at a football game. They assist an injured player onto a stretcher and tend to their leg. photo courtesy of Isha Sheth

Many students who take this class find it really helpful, such as senior Nicolás Gallego, who said that the knowledge students acquire in this class can help them in the future. Gallego is taking sports med three, the highest level of the class, and believes that the class is particularly beneficial for students who want to go into the medical field.

"This class is very important," Gallego said. "It's good for learning basic anatomy and human function, and it's also good if you want to pursue a career in athletic training. I think it is very important to know if you hurt yourself. Sports med has taught me how to treat my own injuries and help myself get better."

Like Gallego, senior sports med two student Jaelin Su, also believes that taking this class helps students later in their careers and personal life. Although not all students who take this class are definite in the career that they want to pursue, Su said this class is helpful in realizing your passion.

"Sports med is an important class to take because it's helpful to know how the body



LEAN ON ME Sports med senior Helen Singletary and football Coach Tony Osorio assist an injured player off the field. Sports med 2 students often stay on the sidelines during sports like football and basketball to help injured athletes. photo courtesy of Isha Sheth

works, and you'll be prepared if anyone ever gets hurt on the field," Su said. "This class helps me with my future because I have realized that I was to go into the healthcare field. Going into college, I have all this knowledge about anatomy, specific injuries, and healing."

Not only does this class help students learn more about human anatomy, but Torres said the class also helps students have hands-on experience with injuries. Although Torres is the athletic trainer in school, sports med students also get to experience the job by helping her during a range of athletic events such as football and basketball games.

"Being the only athletic trainer in school, the more educated my student athletic trainers are, the more they can help me," Torres said. "I get kids that can help me and are really interested in doing minor medical stuff, and then I get more hands."

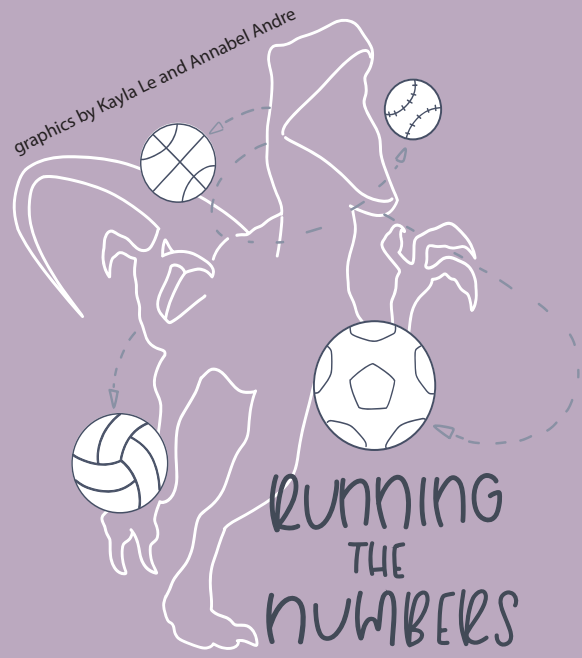
By providing a more hands-on experience, not only do students get a better understanding of this field, but they also get a very enjoyable experience, according to Torres. Even if students taking this class do not plan on proceeding with a career in the medical field, Torres said this class will help them throughout their life.

"I've also loved being a student athletic trainer because we get to practice our skills in game-time situations at the LASA sports events," Su said. "Being an athletic trainer is by far the best part of sports med. The experience is so fun and helpful for the rest of your life."



HARD AT WORK Senior Jaelin Su, a sports med 2 student, applies a wrap to an injured football player's leg. Along with bandaging, sports med 2 students learn more advanced medical techniques for how to treat and detect injuries, such as the use of ultrasound. photo courtesy of Isha Sheth

graphics by Kayla Le and Annabel Andre



RUNNING THE NUMBERS

LASA'S WINS AND LOSSES
as of Dec. 2

STATE SEMI-FINALIST



WINS	LOSSES
10	5
team tennis	



DISTRICT 24 5A CHAMPIONSHIP
BOYS GIRLS

1st Colby Huntress	2nd Sopia Dale
2nd Kepler Huntress	4th Tessa Cook
3rd Charlie Gardner	6th Sydney Jones
4th Asa Shepard	11th Tate Philpott
9th Vance Mader	12th Elizabeth Ree

varsity cross country



GOLD	9
SILVER	4
BRONZE	10
swim and dive	

Golf Program Swings Hard Despite Struggles

LILY WILKERSON | staff writer

LASA's golf program has experienced many changes this year, with a new coach, a lack of transportation to courses, and a class size over twice the average for LASA golf. Both the coach and students have accredited this year's struggles to the program to the aforementioned shifts as well as limited meetings. However, many members still appear to be looking for greener grass on the golf course.

While this is guitar teacher David Lester's first year coaching golf, he's had experience playing it in his free time, so he is not new to it. According to Lester, taking on the role has been a good experience, and he is enjoying teaching golf along with playing it himself.

"I've always enjoyed golf, and I thought it would be fun to pass that down to the LASA students," Lester said. "Golf is a two part thing. It's a class and a team, and I think both have been fun but challenging in different ways."

The two halves of LASA's golf program have vastly different experiences, according to Lester. While the relatively small golf team meets weekly and competes outside the campus, the large golf class has been meeting twice a week for practice and physical education (PE) credit.

"The class, on paper, is just getting a credit that's part of their high school degree," Lester said. "The team is interested in taking part in tournaments and things like that. They're not getting credit for that. The class has 70-something students in it. The team has roughly 10."

The golf program has had to adjust to limited transportation to practices, according to Jett Will, a senior in the class. Because the golf program has not been able to get a bus driver from the district for after-school transportation, all practices have been held on campus, which has been a disadvantage for students because they are unable to hit real golf balls or learn on an actual golf course. Will said having to practice at LASA is one of the main factors behind students not enrolling or being involved with the golf program.

"We can get a bus, but we can't get a driver, just because of the time of day," Will said. "When we go out on Wednesdays, out to the track, it's just standing around swinging a club at a wiffle ball and grabbing it and doing it over and over while Mr. Lester just walks up and down the line."

In previous years, golf classes have been able

to practice on real courses outside of LASA starting early in the year. Junior Adi Pangal, who took golf class last year, said the days on the course were the best days of the program.

"[We started] in October, maybe even September," Pangal said. "You actually get to practice on good ground. We'd actually practice at one hole, so it was like you could play an actual round of golf... You're more involved and actually playing golf instead of just learning about how to play golf."

Will said the large number of students in the class has been a challenge this year. With classes meeting every Monday and Wednesday, Will said that the Monday classes in particular can barely fit everyone in the room.

"There aren't even enough chairs for everybody on Mondays, and those Monday lessons are really short," Will said. "We just go into the guitar room, and we sit down and watch some golf tutorial video. Maybe Mr. Lester will have us stand up and do some exercises."

According to Lester, the Monday classes are too large to do much more than group lectures. For him, 30 students is manageable for an outside lesson, but teaching 70 students simultaneously is not practical, so the number of students has been the program's biggest struggle.

"I think there's a lot of students, and nine out of ten are just grabbing a golf club for the first time," Lester said. "Being hands-on and showing them the details of the swing with that many students is difficult. I think a lot of teachers, not just with golf, have this issue where you want to spend another four or five minutes with a student, but you just have to move on, so you can reach everyone."

Though there have been struggles, according to Lester, the program has been successful so far. He said that it's been a good experience for the people involved, and that many students have been invested in the team and class.

"I'm seeing some students that really care about what we're doing, and they're getting the things that I'm saying," Lester said. "That's whenever I feel like I had a really successful day. When I see someone that's struggling with something, and at the end of the day I come back and they've worked on those points, and they're doing great, I enjoy that a lot."



graphics by Annabel Andre

THE RAPTOR RUN DOWN

VICTOR MARTINEZ | staff writer

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

In my experience, or lack thereof, with playing with frisbee, I have never actually taken the time to improve my throwing or catching technique in any meaningful way. From the time I was a toddler, barely grasping the edges of a frisbee, up until fifth grade physical education class, I only knew one method of handling a disc: grab it around its edges, twist the hips back and forth, release, and hope for the best.

With my lack of experience, I was anxious and unprepared to pick up a frisbee once again and train with Vertikills, LASA's ultimate frisbee team. Not only did I not know what to expect from a sport I knew little to nothing about, but the only aspect I felt sure about was that whatever awaited me on the practice field was sure to end with me making a fool of myself.



ON THE RUN Martinez runs with the rest of the team to warm up for a busy practice. After warming up and practicing his throws he became much more optimistic. photo by JC Ramirez Delgadillo

Upon joining Vertikills' practice on Oct. 28, however, I was relieved to see that the atmosphere on the field was a welcoming one and that every member seemed like they were a part of a cohesive and enthusiastic team. Within the first few minutes, I was able to join in with the team's pre-practice activities, where students had already begun passing a frisbee to one another. It was an even more pleasant surprise to discover that, with the exception of a handful of lopsided passes, my throwing and catching skills were remarkably not as bad as I expected but still paled in comparison to the rest of the team.

With a more confident, optimistic attitude, I felt ready to join the rest of the team in their activities. As the raptor band and football team held practices concurrently in the near distance, we started a series of dynamic warm ups and stretches, ranging from a straight leg march to sprints.

We then moved into practicing the four cuts, which are the different attacking runs made in a game. The first is the strike, which is where the cutter—someone who primarily runs and opens



TOSS THE DISK Staff writer Victor Martinez tosses the disk back in forth with LASA Vertikills members. Martinez joined the Vertikills team for a week to learn how to play ultimate frisbee. photo by JC Ramirez Delgadillo

up options for throwers to pass the disc – runs upline to catch the frisbee. The second is the around, where the cutter moves to one side of the disc handler then switches sides to catch. The third the cut-back, where the cutter fakes an advance up but moves back to catch, and finally the deep-cut, primarily used for end zone plays, which covers the most yardage of the cuts. Since each cut entailed a different throwing grip, I struggled to keep my throws consistently on target. Luckily, I was able to receive pointers from juniors Will Basham and Vance Mader on how to fix my grip and catching, which considerably improved my performance for the rest of practice.

After a water break, co-captains senior Luke Jackson, Mader, and sophomore Rachel Joy-Rocha gave a demonstration of iso – short for isolation plays – using cones, which would be the last activity of the practice. An iso is an end zone play where the offense aligns vertically in the end zone, and a cutter then proceeds to cut back to catch and score in the end zone. Although I could barely wrap my head around the terminology used and overall strategy, I could only see clear senses of understanding from the rest of the team. I was impressed not only by the team's skills, but also their deep understanding of strategy as well.



SCRIMAGE Martinez joins the The Vertikills for a day and plays a practice match while they run their plays for upcoming matches. There are four cuts that the team practices which are strike, the around, the cut-back, and the deep-cut. photo by JC Ramirez Delgadillo

Bringing Charm to Cheer

SADIE CRAVOTTA | staff writer

Every week from Aug. 19 to Nov. 4, students head to the stands to watch the football team play. So many students gathered to watch the games that attendance even broke Burger Stadium records, where LASA plays for home games. As the sun sets and the football team prepares to start their match, the cheer team comes out to greet the crowd and keep the student section entertained.

Cheer coach Olga Alvarado has been coaching the team for three years, ever since LASA athletics became independent from Lyndon Baines Johnson Early College High School. Although she is the cheer coach, most of the responsibilities are carried out by the team which makes cheer a great place to learn leadership skills, according to Alvarado.

"It's a lot of coordinating," Alvarado said. "The team does their own thing. They're pretty good about knowing what to do, but I just make sure that I do the adult stuff, like organizing the meals, organizing the practices, setting them up to do volunteer hours, things like that. I don't do a lot of the day to day practices because that's up to the captains to do all the other stuff."

Senior Lola DeLeon is one of the captains of the LASA cheer team. Throughout her time on the team and as a captain, DeLeon said she has learned that being a captain is much harder and more involved than just having a title.

"Something I didn't realize was that being cheer captain actually gives you a lot of authority in terms of event organizing," DeLeon said. "I mean that's how I was able to do announcements, but we plan pep rallies and participate in school outreach events as well as just interacting with other teams and making things with them."

There is not a class period set aside for cheer, but they practice twice a week on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Sophomore cheerleader Delphia Vo has been going to practices since she joined the team her freshman year and says they are structured in order to prepare for the upcoming games.

"We first stretch and then go over dances and cheers for the upcoming game, then sometimes we will practice jumps and or do tumbling," Vo said. "Lastly we work on stunts, conditioning, give the announcements for the week, and roll up mats."

Game days require a little extra preparation to make sure everything goes smoothly, according to Alvarado. The cheerleaders wear their full uniform to school and then meet in one of the gyms to go over dances and cheers. Parents deliver a team meal, and around 6:30 p.m. the cheerleaders load the buses to head to the game.

"Once we're at the game we normally just set up, and we start to warm up again," Alvarado said. "We warm up the stunts because those are the most time consuming and difficult. We also have our Booster Club, and they do a tailgate, and sometimes we'll make an appearance at the tailgate. We get announced at the beginning of the games and then we go and set up at the end zone to run out with the boys."

The cheer team's responsibilities are not only limited to supporting athletic teams at games though. Cheerleaders also play a huge role in events around and outside the school. These extra duties allow the team to be involved and give back to their community according to Alvarado.

"They do a lot of spirit stuff," Alvarado said. "[They make posters] for homecoming and games. They do a lot of announcing the things that are going on, especially homecoming. A lot of spirit to raise the spirit up for the school. We've also done a charity, we did our first charity event this year. It was running for the Susan B. Komen Cancer Awareness run."

Oftentimes, cheering is only associated with the football season, however, the LASA cheer team does not end their season there. They continue into the spring season and support other sports on game days.

"During the springtime, we normally go down to one practice a week, on Tuesdays," Alvarado said. "Then we cheer either on a Friday night or Tuesday night depending on the basketball schedule. We've tried in the past to do the senior nights or specialty games for the other sports, but there's so many sports out there. I'm hoping that we can at least get out there to do something for those other sports because we normally just cheer for football and basketball."

According to DeLeon, the community is one of the best things about being on the cheer team. She has learned a lot about teamwork and the importance of communication from taking part in cheer.

"My hope is that I've helped to create a community that loves each other and is good at what they do, not because they feel like they have to do well but because they're dedicated enough to want to do well," said DeLeon.

Coach Alvarado encourages more students to join the cheer team. Alvarado said the cheerleaders create a community that helps develop leadership skills and build character.

"A lot of times I feel that some students don't think that it's worth joining extracurricular because they're so overwhelmed with academics, but I always encourage students to join something," Alvarado said. "I'm always telling students this is going to help you in the long term to know how to manage your time. It builds discipline, character, and leadership. Your leadership develops that way and maturity develops that way too."



photo courtesy of Olga Alvarado
graphic by Annabel Andre

New Martial Arts Demonstration is a Knockout

AVANI GANNE | club contributor

The Chinese Club hosted martial arts demonstrations in the Large Gym every Monday and Thursday from Oct. 17- 27. Representatives from the Kuk Sool Won of Oak Hill Martial Arts, many of which were LASA students, helped organize the event and taught students the basics of martial arts during the demonstrations.

Senior Alan Bao organized the majority of the event. Bao has been learning Kuk Sool Won martial arts alongside his sister, sophomore Chloe Bao, at the Oak Hill Martial Arts school since he was very young. During the summer, he thought about what he could do to connect both LASA and the Kuk Sool Won of Oak Hill Martial Arts school in a novel way.

"I chose to organize it just because it's something new that I wanted to bring to the Chinese club," Alan Bao said. "It wasn't something that they've done in the past, and it's just something that I have a passion for. It was really fun and brought everyone together to try something that maybe they haven't done before."

During the presentations, Chloe Bao demonstrated different martial art moves during the events, helped instruct students, and also cheered them on. According to her, learning martial arts in this way can introduce someone to a new form of exercise that isn't too rigorous.

"Each day had different [demonstrations], so I thought it was cool," Chloe Bao said. "It was also nice to get to meet some of my brother's friends' and classmates in the process. In the future, if they do ever do it again, we should

probably have a more confirmed area to do it in. We kept switching from the small gym to the large gym because it was closed, and no one had told them about it so it was confusing."

Involved in the event as well, senior Josiah Phou, said he hoped students were able to have fun and try out a new sport. Phou had also attended the Kuk Sool Won of Oak Hill Martial Arts and decided to help out in the presentations.

"If you like the art and choreography [or] if you want to look cool and have fun, then this is your thing," Phou said. "[However], if you're looking for self defense and trying to be practical, it probably isn't for you given that America has watered down a lot of martial arts, so just research a little bit about what you're trying to do."

Although Alan Bao thought the demonstrations from the instructors, other students, and himself were successful, he thinks there is room for improvement for future collaborations. According to Alan Bao, he hopes to expand the curriculum of the presentations and dive deeper into the parts of martial arts that they had not taught the students about very much.

"For the future, I think I would like to branch out a little bit more, maybe with different martial arts styles, or having new activities for people to work on," Alan Bao said. "For this first time we stuck to the basics, which is more welcoming to newcomers, but if people want to stay interested, I think we can introduce some more advanced or intermediate techniques."



WATCH AND LEARN A representative from the Kuk Sool Won of Oak Hill Martial Arts demonstrates basic martial arts to students. The demonstrations were held in the large gym every Monday and Thursday from Oct. 17-27 and were organized by members of the Chinese Club. photos by Kayla Le



The Extr-oar-dinary Talent of LASA Rowers

CHARLOTTE WHALEN | staff writer

Two LASA juniors, Marin Macycotte and Isabel Ueber, headed to the prestigious rowing competition Head of the Charles Regatta in October, where they raced a 5000 meter course with over 400,000 spectators. With two racing seasons in fall and spring, the rowers put in hours into practicing during the summer and winter to hone their technique and stroke. Rigorous preparation gets them prepared for regattas, or rowing competitions, like the Head of the Charles Regatta.

Juniors Marin Macycotte and Isabel Ueber traveled to Boston, Massachusetts, in October to take part in the competition. According to Macycotte, the Head of Charles Regatta has competitors from all over the world competing at the site.

"The Head of the Charles is the biggest regatta that exists," Macycotte said. "They have thousands of people from college and high school and masters too. The actual race was two days, but we only raced once since it was a longer course. We went on a Thursday, so we were there for four days. We practiced twice, and then the masters raced, and then we raced."

The Head of Charles Regatta, can be quite selective about who they accept because it is such a huge event with participants traveling from all over the world. Over 700 different teams come and compete for a chance to go home with a medal, according to Ueber.

"It's a pretty selective regatta just because you have to get bids for the next year which means that if you don't get in the top half of the results, you don't get bids for the next year," Ueber said. "You just have to be near the top half of your team, and you'll get invited."

Like many other sports, rowing requires a great deal of time and traveling to partake in events. Schoolwork and other extracurricular activities may be affected by

this, according to Ueber. She said that although the massive time requirement can be a downside to rowing, the results that are reaped from it can also be really beneficial.

"I'm planning on trying to get recruited for college," Ueber said. "I think it'll be helpful when they look at my races, and they'll see that I went to Charles because it's a pretty big regatta."

Macycotte and Ueber row for the two different rowing centers in Austin. Macycotte is on a team at the Texas Rowing Center, and Ueber rows at the Austin Rowing Club. One of the coaches at the Texas Rowing Center, Anna Ohrstrom, said that rowing for a Division 1 (D1) team is what brought her newfound excitement after her try in other sports.

"When I was getting burnt out in competitive softball and basketball in high school, I discovered college rowing," Ohrstrom said. "Colleges have novice teams on their rosters, which are to learn to row/first year rowers. I was recruited to be a novice rower. I rowed all four years as a D1 athlete at San Diego State University. I am letter winner, and two-year team captain."

Ohrstrom now spends her full time coaching. She hopes that her efforts will help the next generation of rowers love the sport as much as does.

"I am providing opportunity and experience to the future generation of female athletes," Ohrstrom said. "It allows me to provide to them what I received, but better."

The end results of the regatta were exciting, according to both Macycotte and Ueber. Macycotte's boat placed 16 out of 50 and they improved their time by 30 seconds compared to the past year. Ueber's boat won second place and was just 13 seconds behind the boat that placed first. They both hope to continue their rowing careers as they get older.



ROWING TO SUCCESS Students Isabel Ueber and Marin Macycotte row in the Head of the Charles Regatta, a prestigious rowing event in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The regatta lasts from Oct. 20-22 and hosts over 400,000 spectators and 11,000 competitors. photos courtesy of Isabel Ueber and Marin Macycotte

LBJ FIRE ACADEMY IS FIRED UP

ELLA LILLY | photo editors
ZIA RAY

During the winter season, Lyndon Banes Johnson (LBJ) Fire Academy continues their training and skills days to learn how to be firefighters. The academy is made up of students from all over Austin Independent School District (AISD), including 19 LASA students, and the classes are hosted at LBJ High School. The LBJ Fire Academy is a two year program during students' junior and senior year in which students learn hands-on technical skills, procedures, and Emergency Medical Services (EMS).

While the seniors are working on their EMS certification, the junior LBJ Fire Class just finished up their unit on ladders, where they learned how to set up ladders for multiple story building fires, and forcible entry, where they practiced opening locked metal doors by force. To put their skills into practice, the academy has all-day skills days on Saturdays where students practice techniques they learned in class. Junior Marin Maycotte said the juniors only had one skill day this year due to weather conflicts.

"We learned how to put on all the fire gear and how to use the regulators and the air packs, and then we did the air consumption test which was really interesting," Maycotte said. "We had our full gear on, and we went in circles doing a circuit seeing how long you can last on a bottle of air."

The air consumption test mimics doing light tasks with an air tank until you run out of air, and, according to Maycotte, it is largely a mental test of how far you can push yourself. Additionally, junior firefighters also practiced

climbing through confined spaces in their gear to practice crawling through tight spaces with low visibility and breathing ability.

"We did confined spaces where you go under wires and crawl through a box with your pole," Maycotte said. "You're disoriented because you're wearing everything. You're wearing a mask. You're wearing a regulator, and you have to take your air clock off and crawl through wires and boxes."

The senior class, however, is almost complete with their full firefighter certification which they can then use directly out of high school to become a full time or volunteer firefighter. Senior Emma Bailey said that after practicing with tools and physical skills during junior year, students move onto fighting fires, getting their EMS certification, and practicing with Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs).

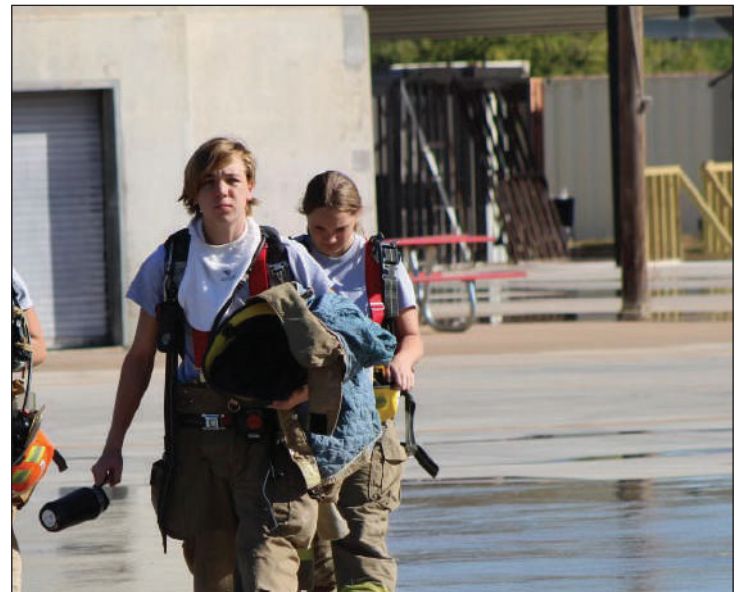
"The second year, you fight your first five to six fires [at the] beginning of the year, and then you move on to your EMS course," Bailey said. "Then when you go into the ER and the ambulance rides, you get to see this in person. Firefighting is always wonderful, but then as an EMT, you get to go through [the ER] with them and see the patient."

Bailey said she always wanted to put her career towards helping people, and her experience with the fire academy has been very rewarding along with the semester of getting EMS certified. The teamwork lessons have been the most impactful for her as she works through the program with her peers.

"You really learn about teamwork," Bailey said. "You think you know about it before, but then when your life is in somebody else's hands, it really comes into effect. They're gonna be the ones that are behind you, that are supporting you and making sure that we all get out of the situation unharmed."



LADDERS UP The junior fire class practices setting up ladders during class outside of LBJ High School. They were scheduled to also practice climbing up them as well but weather did not permit that day. photos by Zia Harvey



OUT OF CONFINEMENT Juniors Marin Maycotte and Will Basham walk back from their confined spaces test during a Saturday skills day. They had to crawl through a small space through wires and obstacles, in full gear, to simulate a low breathing and visibility situation. photos courtesy of LBJ Fire Academy



FIRE AWAY The senior class practices putting out a propane fire during their skills day. In the first semester of senior year, seniors deal with many live fires in action. photos courtesy of LBJ Fire Academy