

# the liberator

— Celebrating 50 years of publication —

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graphics by Kayla Le

photos courtesy of Central Texas Science

## Travel Abroad Takes Off

### Students Spend their Summers Abroad

**SADIE CRAVOTTA**  
**LASYA SANGANA** | student life editors

This summer, multiple LASA students had the chance to travel internationally to participate in various study abroad programs, such as the volunteer abroad program with Amigos de las Americas in Costa Rica and a student exchange program in Berlin, Germany. These programs served as an opportunity for students to connect with other cultures and improve their language skills.

Sophomore Beatriz Lara participated in the volunteer program with Amigos de las Americas, a nonprofit that offers programs in Latin America that combines cultural immersion with changemaking. Lara took AP Spanish IV at LASA her freshman year and said traveling to Costa Rica was a great educational experience for her to build on her cultural knowledge.

"I really enjoyed it," Lara said. "I feel like the program did a good job of furthering my Spanish skills, helping me connect with people from other cultures, like my host family, and growing close to my fellow students."

Junior Chelsey also participated in Amigos de las Americas this summer, and like Lara, she stayed in Costa

Rica. She lived with her host family for six weeks all while learning more about the culture and language there.

"It was really amazing," Pence said. "It was eye-opening to see another culture and it didn't really feel like a vacation... It felt like living in their life and having the privilege of experiencing everything about how they live there."

A large part of Pence's time in Los Santos, Costa Rica, was centered around volunteer work and food justice. Pence learned a lot about communication and advocacy through this experience.

"I lived in a family with a coffee farm and I just got to learn a lot about food justice through that," Pence said. "I got to work in the community and do a project. We ended up painting the police station and setting up a mini fundraiser for the [community] school."

Pence hopes to continue working with Amigos de las Americas as a training supervisor to make a lasting impact. She said that her experience in Costa Rica taught her the importance of understanding multiple perspectives.

"I learned how to communicate with people, even difficult people, and how to be patient with people in the community," Pence said. "I realized I have to make sure that I'm [considering] the community's needs first instead of what we think would be best for the community."



graphic by Amelia Coleman

see **TRAVEL ABROAD** page 3

graphic by Amelia Coleman



**KATIE BUSBY**  
**MEGAN GEROLD** | entertainment editors

In the hot and humid summer months of Austin, Blues on the Green, the ACL radio concert series, is nestled among the trees of Zilker Park. The concert series—an Austin staple hosted across multiple days in the summer—took place on July 18th and 19th, and featured performances from

Devon Gilfillian, Phillip Phillips, Paul Val, Wild Child, Thebrosfresh, and Zach Carney.

Zach Carney, a performer at Blues on the Green this year, is an Austin-based musician that dabbles in pop, soft rock, jazz, and R&B. He said his love for music came from his experiences as a kid growing up around instruments, writing, and experiencing the impact music has on people.

"I wrote my first song when I was 19, and the person that it was for cried," Carney said. "And I was like, 'Oh, you can touch people with this, and you could do something positive with it.'"

Alexa Khanbabaee, a junior at Austin High, was an audience member at Blues on the Green. She finds live music events to be uplifting.

"I could be tired, it could be a long day, but when I'm surrounded by all these people, it's just so lively," Khanbabaee said. "The music, the scene...you just soak it all up. It gives you energy."

Carney agreed that the energy of the crowd was really inspiring. Carney describes the scene in Austin as a melting pot of genres—a

melting pot that Austinites love.

"They were awesome," Carney said. "Everyone is gathered there to listen to music and hear something they've never heard before, or come because they have heard somebody. So when people are gathered under the same ideal, it tends to be pretty magical. That's why festivals work. They [the audience] were so kind to me, and it was a really lovely experience."

LASA sophomore Tara Shenoy also attended Blues on the Green this year. She appreciated immersing herself in live music with her friends and family scattered on blankets across the park.

"It was a fun experience; it's super nice that Austin has these different events that everyone can go enjoy," Shenoy said. "It was definitely very busy, the crowd was covering most of Zilker. Everyone just seemed to be having a good time and relaxing."

Blues on the Green is free to attend and is an Austin summer tradition that attracts thousands of people every year. The concert exposes smaller, and often local artists, to possible new fans. Carney said that shows like these can offer many people a shot at recognition they might not get otherwise.

"At big concert series, everyone who comes all get to meet up and go, 'Oh, I came here for this person, okay, I'll be sure to listen to that person,'" Carney said. "So it's a pretty great thing. I'm glad they do that a lot and I hope to get to be part of more."

see **BLUES** page 3

graphic by Asha Rountree



## Austin ISD Approves Raise For All Staff

**MALVIKA PRADHAN**  
**SARAH GARRETT** | news editors

On May 18 the AISD board of trustees unanimously approved raises for all AISD staff, according to the district's website. The compensation package included increasing the minimum wage for all staff to \$20 per hour and a 7% increase in salary for teachers, Special Education employees, librarians, instructional coaches, and counselors. The package also included a 5% raise for Administrative Professionals and a 3% raise for executive directors.

According to the AISD website, these adjustments are projected to cause a \$53 million deficit. Clay Robison, a spokesperson for the Texas State Teachers Association (TSTA), said this deficit is due to the lack of public education funding from the Texas legislature.

"The Texas legislature and the governor do not spend enough money on public education, so it's up to school districts like Austin ISD to scramble for additional funding," Robison said. "[AISD] recognizes they need to pay their teachers and their bus drivers and their cafeteria workers more because many of these school employees are finding they can no longer afford to work for the public education system. They have bills to pay like everybody else."

Arati Singh is an AISD Trustee At-Large, which means she represents the whole school district. She says the \$53 million deficit coupled with the lack of legislative funding means the district will need to rely on its savings.

"We knew that we were going to be having to dig into our savings to attract and retain our staff if the legislature did not put any new money into teacher salaries and public education," Singh said. "We thought we would get at least \$6 million, which is not a whole heck of a lot. We didn't get a dime. And so it really has put us in a hard situation where we know we have to pay our staff more."

Texas pays teachers from \$7,000 to \$7,700 less than the national average. A survey conducted by TSTA in the spring of 2022 revealed that 40% of respondents worked additional jobs during the school year. Even though teachers recognize that their quality of teaching may suffer from working more than one job, they don't have a choice because they need to support their families, according to Robison. Without the package, Robison fears that more and more teachers will leave the profession.

"These teachers otherwise may have given up and taken on early retirement, or tried to quit, or said, 'I just need to do something else,'" Robison said.

Because the average Texas teacher salary lags behind the national average, and the cost of living in Austin is above the national average, Singh wanted the raise given to AISD teachers to be much higher. However, Texas ranks in the bottom 10 of per pupil funding in the country, so without money from the state, there isn't a realistic

way to increase teacher salaries, according to Singh.

"We've seen unprecedented inflation like we haven't seen in several years," Singh said. "So the cost of running a district has gone up, like maybe six or seven percent. But we haven't gotten any increase in funding to be able to fill that need. It's really a shame. We really do need to increase the salaries way more, but there's just not a way to physically do that right now without the state allowing us to keep more of our tax money."

In December 2022, Texas representative Donna Howard filed House Bill 882 with hopes of increasing per pupil allotment in Texas school districts to account for inflation, but the bill did not pass. According to her, the bill's opposition was partly due to Governor Greg Abbott's desire to pass vouchers, which are aimed at supplementing private school tuition for some Texas families.

"He's [Abbott] holding our public school districts hostage," Singh said. "Basically, it's a lot of fighting that's happening at the Capitol at the expense of students."

According to the 2022 Charles Butt Foundation Texas Teachers Poll, 80% of teachers experience insufficient planning time and take on non-instructional responsibilities. LASA freshman John Lozier has had many teachers leave the profession midway through his past years of school. He hopes the pay raise will increase teacher retention.

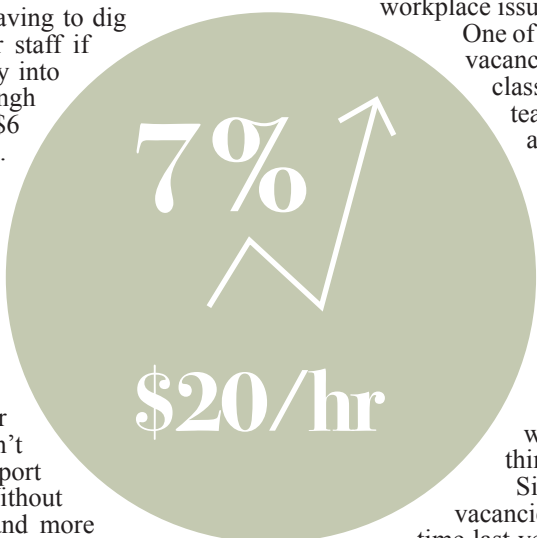
"I believe that the most common reason for leaving was because of dislike for the administration and AISD, including pay and other workplace issues," Lozier said.

One of the most memorable experiences with teacher vacancies to Lozier was in one of his middle school classes. During the last school year one of his teachers was unable to work, and without another certified teacher to fill their place, the burden was placed on an existing educator.

"My 8th grade geometry teacher ended up leaving in the middle of the school year due to health issues, and the Algebra teacher had to come in and help teach the class," Lozier said. "After a few months of doing this, the Algebra teacher stopped teaching our class, because of parents annoying her and the fact that she wasn't even getting paid for all the extra work. Hopefully, this package will make it a little easier for teachers to do things like this from the extra pay."

Singh says the raise is already helping to fill vacancies within the district. She says around this time last year, the district had 1,200 vacancies, but now that number is down to 80. Singh hopes to decrease the number of classes in the district being taught by non-certified teachers.

"We have many schools where we did not have certified teachers in the classroom for much of the year, last year, and even into this year," Singh said. "I know one middle school where the principal was teaching a math class in the cafeteria, and that's not the vision of public education. We know we have to prepare our students for success, and you need a certified teacher to do that."



## Disorder in the Court

United States Supreme Court Reaches New Verdicts

**WINTYR RICE** | commentary editor

### INSIDE THE SUPREME COURT

Currently the U.S. supreme court has a conservative supermajority, meaning that two-thirds of the justices are conservative. Among them is Clarence Thomas, who has been serving on the court since 1991, and has recently come under fire for receiving donations and luxury vacations from Republican billionaire Harlan Crow, potentially compromising his objectivity. Similar accusations have been levied at Samuel Alito, who took a luxury trip with a Republican donor and didn't report it to the court. Alito has been serving since 2006. The court's other conservative justices include Neil Gorsuch (appointed 2017), Brett Kavanaugh (appointed 2018), and Amy Coney Barrett (appointed 2020), as well as the current Chief Justice, John Roberts (appointed 2005). There are only three liberal justices on the Supreme Court—Justices Sonia Sotomayer (appointed 2009), Elena Kagan (appointed 2010), and Ketanji Brown Jackson (appointed 2022). This split is the reason that many recent Supreme Court decisions have been decided by a 6-3 vote, such as Biden v. Nebraska—the case against President Biden's student loan debt forgiveness program; 303 Creative LLC v. Elenis, which undermined queer rights; and Students for Fair Admissions v. Harvard, which did away with affirmative action. These votes are almost always split against party lines, with the six conservative justices forming the majority. There are no limits on how long justices can serve, so the current court won't change unless a justice dies or retires, neither of which seem particularly likely. The U.S. will have to see more than its fair share of oppressive and politicized decisions before anything close to a balance will be achieved.

### 303 CREATIVE LLC V. ELENIS

In a major loss for queer rights, the U.S. Supreme Court sided with conservative web designer Lorie Smith in her case 303 Creative LLC v. Elenis. Smith refused to design wedding websites for same-sex couples, citing her Christian beliefs. However, the suit itself should never have been brought to the court in the first place. It contained contact details for the gay man who had supposedly requested Smith's services, but upon reaching out to him, The New Republic found that he was actually a straight man, who was already married, and had never submitted a request. In essence, the Supreme Court made the decision to roll back LGBTQ rights based off of a case that should never have existed in the first place. Justice Neil Gorsuch defended the 6-3 decision, stating that it does not endorse "anything like the 'straight couples only' notices the dissent conjures out of thin air." However, giving businesses a right to discriminate against queer couples will inevitably allow homophobic business owners to refuse services to anyone who isn't straight. In the words of Justice Sonia Sotomayer, "the opinion of the Court is, quite literally, a notice that reads: 'Some services may be denied to same-sex couples.'" While the ruling only applies to businesses that provide an "expressive" and "customized" product, these terms don't have any official legal definition, meaning that the effects of this ruling could be much more far-reaching than intended. The court also did not limit the decision to just same-sex couples, which opens the door to numerous other potential discrimination cases. Will business owners be able to deny services to Jewish or Muslim customers because they disagree with their beliefs? Will the first amendment now allow shops to keep out immigrants? A line must be drawn somewhere; now the only question is how many minorities will have their rights eroded before we get to it.

### AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

Near the end of June, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in a 6-3 decision to overturn affirmative action programs designed to increase racial diversity in universities and help students of color access the same higher education opportunities as white students. Justice John Roberts wrote in the court's decision that "many universities have for too long...concluded, wrongly, that the touchstone of an individual's identity is not challenges bested, skills built, or lessons learned but the color of their skin." Many core arguments against affirmative action echo this point, saying that race-conscious admissions place unqualified students into selective colleges. However, affirmative action is designed not to give admission to students who would otherwise not meet the requirements, but to help qualified students get the places they deserve. However, this idea of unearned admission is not unfounded, because there is a group of students who have lower admission requirements than everyone else—legacy applicants. These are students who apply to the same schools that their immediate family members have graduated from, and they have much lower admission requirements than other students, especially in highly selective schools such as Harvard or Yale. Legacy policies also overwhelmingly benefit white students. A study from the National Bureau of Economic Research found that 43% of white students at Harvard were recruited athletes, legacy students, from the dean's list (meaning they had relatives who donated to the school), or children of Harvard staff, while less than 16% of Asian, Black, or Latino students were part of this group (named ALDCs by the study). The study also found that 75% of white ALDCs would not have been admitted if they weren't part of the group. These statistics make it clear that if any group is being given unearned places in universities, it isn't the ones benefiting from affirmative action. However, the court seems only concerned with limiting the higher education access of poor and marginalized students, as opposed to the rich and privileged who are being handed admission on a platter.



### INDIAN CHILD WELFARE ACT

In a 7-2 ruling, with Justices Clarence Thomas and Samuel Alito dissenting, the U.S. Supreme Court voted to uphold the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA), a 1978 law designed to increase the odds that Native American children in the adoption system would be placed into Native American families. It gives preference first to the child's extended family, then to members of the same tribe, and finally to members of other tribes. The act is crucial to maintaining Native American cultures by helping to ensure that Native American children get placed in families that will respect their tribe's culture and integrate it into the child's life. Otherwise, these children often have no way of learning the history and legends of their tribe. The ICWA's mission is especially important considering the cultural genocide experienced by nearly every Native American tribe within the past few centuries. Throughout the 1900s, Native American children were often forcibly taken from their parents and placed in white families or enrolled in residential schools where the sole purpose was to erase the cultures, traditions, and languages of Native American tribes. Students had to use English Christian names and were only allowed to speak English. The ICWA ensures that something like it won't happen again by allowing tribes to be involved in the child welfare of their citizens. Justice Thomas wrote in his dissent that Congress "does not have the power to sacrifice the best interests of vulnerable children to promote the interests of the tribes"—a view that misunderstands the fundamental purpose of the ICWA, a law put in place specifically for the protection of these children. Ultimately, the decision to uphold the ICWA is a victory for Native American children in the adoption system and for maintaining America's cultural diversity.



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### Editorial Policy

Responsibilities of a Free Student Press: Serving the primary communication link within the Liberal Arts and Science Academy and between the school and the local community, this newspaper accepts the responsibilities inherent in being a free press. The Liberator staff strives to produce a professional-quality publication that follows the Code of Ethics of the Society of Professional Journalists. The objective is to print the news in a fair and objective way with the utmost regard for integrity.

#### Editorial Content:

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

#### The Editorial Boards and its Functions:

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

#### The Editorial board will:

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

#### Viewpoints:

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

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

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

#### Non-Staff Contributors: Bylined contributions are welcome.

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

#### Sources:

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

Note: The Liberator is an open forum.

## Travel Abroad Takes Off

from page 1

Sophomore Sonya Kraizman had a similar experience during her time studying abroad in Germany as part of a student exchange program for college credit. She got to tour the capital city of Berlin and experience German culture first-hand.

"It was exciting because I've always wanted to live in Europe, and I got to experience what that would be like," Kraizman said. "I made a lot of friends and learned a lot more of the language and culture."

Kraizman hopes the German she learned this summer will carry into the school year for her German class. Kraizman added

that it was a unique experience to spend several weeks in a different country and that she would definitely recommend it to others.

"It was a good experience," Kraizman said. "There was a lot to do because of the train system, and I met German kids my age. My host family was also super nice, and my roommate was from Dallas, so that gave me the chance to visit her, which was pretty cool."

Pence, Kraizman, and Lara all said that their time abroad helped them strengthen their understanding of different communities.

Pence believes in the importance of cultural immersion and is inspired to continue traveling and experiencing different cultures in the future.

"I feel that if I'm living in the same country, more or less everybody has the same routine, and when you learn another culture in another country you learn so much about how other people live and how it's so different around the world," Pence said. "I think I'll carry that understanding into next summer and into the rest of my life: that the world is so beautiful, and culture is so beautiful, and I want to learn more about it."

## Blues on the Green

from page 1

Not only does the audience get to enjoy accessible music in an open air environment, but Carney added that because music connects people, listening to it collectively makes the experience even better. It creates a unified feeling sharing emotions and experiences with so many others.

"Concert series like this are super important for uniting people and having people forget about their differences and come together," Carney said. "That's what I love about music so much is that everybody's united. We all experience the same feelings ... and that's very isolating alone, but it makes you feel good to be

around people that feel the same way."

Local artists have been performing at Blues on the Green since the early 1990s, when it was a small music gathering at the Arboretum instead of the multi-day series it now is at Zilker. But the event quickly grew too big for the limited space of the Arboretum, and was moved to its current location, which can accommodate around 50,000 attendees.

"At Blues on the Green, I had the experience of meeting and talking to new people, and also getting exposed to different new artists in a music style I don't listen to very often," Shenoy said.

Food and drinks from local businesses were provided on-site. The Austin community came out to support both businesses and artists to create a unique opportunity for everyone to connect through music.

"I mostly stayed backstage," Carney said. "But at one point, I went out and was watching Thebrofresh and I almost couldn't believe that I was just out there. It's so different looking at it from both sides. But yeah, we're going out in the crowd and seeing people enjoy themselves. It was just a lot of connection and community and it was beautiful."

## EDITORS' PICKS

### Barbie

graphic by Asha Rountree



KATIE BUSBY | entertainment editor

Barbie, released July of this year, was categorized pre-release as the 'fun part' of the internet phenomenon that was 'Barbenheimer'— the theatrical portmanteau of the titles of Barbie and Oppenheimer. However, now the viewpoint is shifting as this thought-provoking movie hits close to home for many while also being so quintessentially Barbie. Aside from the hype around a fun, pink, feminist movie, the soundtrack — featuring the likes of Dua Lipa, Ice Spice, and Nicki Minaj — increased anticipation even more. However, director Greta Gerwig managed to surprise audiences with the true values of this movie. It quickly garnered a large fan base not just from the camp and nostalgia of it all but also its relatability. Themes of self discovery and identity are prevalent throughout different character arcs and experiences. The movie is made for women in a way that is so emotionally raw and powerful that it is impossible not to realize the contrast with the media usually popularized and the constant presence of the male gaze. This movie is made for those who know the struggles displayed in this movie, who can see themselves in the relationships portrayed on screen, and who wish life could be as simple as Barbie Land but still feel united and find joy in the beauty of the relationships they have with women around them.

### OPPENHEIMER

graphic by Asha Rountree



VICTOR MARTINEZ | sports editor

Given the massive scale of the atomic bomb's moral and societal implications, making a great movie out of delving into the psyche of its brilliant yet tortured creator is no easy task. However, Christopher Nolan was able to make what may be the best of his filmography out of this seemingly impossible task in this summer's Oppenheimer.

The film is a nonlinear epic that follows the life of J. Robert Oppenheimer as he advances from one of the first American professors of quantum physics, to head of the Manhattan Project, to the morally-conflicted destroyer of worlds— all while his personal fears that the atomic bomb would set off a world-destroying chain reaction escalate as the movie progresses.

For most of its three-hour runtime, the film is surprisingly well-paced. Nolan's signature orchestral, goosebump-inducing soundtrack, and awe-inspiring cinematic effects only add to the film's already captivating experience of complex metaphysical concepts and moral dilemmas playing out on the big screen.

Elevating Nolan's script and storytelling is the film's ensemble cast, particularly the perfectly cast Cillian Murphy and Robert Downey Jr. as Oppenheimer and his bitter rival Lewis Strauss, with Murphy shining in his first lead role on the big screen and at times carrying scenes with his eyes and visage alone.

While not as fun as its box office competitor Barbie, Nolan has outdone himself with Oppenheimer and made a film comparable to his previous works, which many consider to be cinematic masterpieces.

## Pilot PE Program Pospers

VICTOR MARTINEZ | sports editor  
CHARLOTTE WHALEN

Principal Stacia Crescenzi and athletic coordinator Derrick Lewis introduced a summer athletic program for students to provide them the opportunity to get their Physical Education (PE) credit, which is required for graduation, out of the way before the school year starts. The course spanned ten days: the novice class took place from June 12 to June 16, and the advanced class took place from June 26 to June 30. Students could take one or two weeks over the summer, one week earning them half of the credit that they would complete the following summer and two weeks earning them the full PE credit.

Unlike traditional schools, LASA doesn't offer a PE class, meaning students must join a school sport or get an off-campus PE credit approved. Lewis hopes that this new program will be more appealing for students in need of a PE credit and also teach them valuable lessons about health.

"A lot of kids that go to LASA don't necessarily want to play a sport, but they have to get a PE credit, so we thought this would be a fun way to introduce different types of sports," Lewis said. "We also teach them lifelong health skills like CPR, nutrition, tobacco use, all these different elements."

Lewis said that the new program could also be a way to get students interested in school sports as a long term commitment. He is able to give suggestions to students about which sports would best suit them based on the athletic ability he observes from them during the program.

"At the end I'm able to give them a recommendation on a team sport they should join based on their skill set," Lewis said. "Some of them move better than others in a certain capacity. Like the kids who sprinted faster, I recommend track for them."

Despite it being the inaugural year of the program, over ten kids participated in it each week. Junior Cory Grodek participated in the advanced program and was able to engage in various different activities throughout its course.

"I tried roller skating, climbing, biking, and swimming," Grodek said. "I had done some of these before, but this time I got more time to try them than I have had in the past. Most days we ate lunch and then took the bus to the activity. We spent a few hours at the activity for that day and then took the bus back."

The program consisted of two different levels, a novice and advanced level. The two different levels were provided to accommodate a broader range of athleticism and give both students who enjoy less rigorous activity and students who enjoy more rigorous activity an opportunity to satisfactorily complete their PE credit over the summer.

"The novice [program did] less rigorous exercises," Lewis said. "It was stuff like fencing, where you're not moving too far, you're in a short space, but it's just great cardio work for you. Basic things that everybody should know how to do, but the more you do it, the better you'll feel about yourself. The advanced class was for those kids who could play those sports. They had to go rock climbing and stuff like that. It was a way to differentiate ability levels that they've decided on themselves."

To have the opportunity to do these activities, students paid a fee of \$300 that covered their entrance into facilities, transportation, and other expenses that came up along the way. The class was as long as a traditional school day, lasting from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

"They all said they had a good time every day," Lewis said. "It was hard to get some of them out of there. Students seemed to really enjoy the class, and Principal Crescenzi is planning on continuing it in years to come."



**PEDAL TO THE METAL** In the Texas heat, PE students cycled around Austin. This experience offered students an opportunity to engage with sports they otherwise wouldn't have. photo courtesy of Derrick Lewis



**THEY SEE ME ROLLING** Participants in the PE pilot course rollerskate at Play Land Skate Center. Rollerskating was one of many cardio workouts offered during the summer. photo courtesy of Derrick Lewis

## Students Shift Focus Towards Summer Shifts LASA Students Spend the Summer Working and Volunteering



graphics by Amelia Coleman

### Swimming for a Living

AVANI GANNE | photo editor

Grabbing a bottle of sunscreen and throwing on a swimsuit, junior Gracie Philips heads to the pool — but not for a refreshing break from the Texas heat. Philips decided to spend her summer working as a City of Austin lifeguard at several Austin pools. For Philips, getting a summer job was essential on her path to adjust from life as a high schooler to life as an adult.

“I wanted to get a summer job because I really wanted to be able to not depend on my mom for money anymore,” Philips said. “I thought it would be a good accomplishment, life experience, and practice for when I have to be an adult.”

Even though summer jobs for teens often all offer the same new work experiences for them to acclimate to college and adult life, Philips feels that lifeguarding has its own specific advantages. For her, lifeguarding facilitates an environment in which she is able to network with others from across the city, help others, and have fun.

“I was excited to meet a lot of new people from different high schools and learn how to do CPR and other life saving techniques,” Philips said. “It was also really nice to be able to make sure that people coming to the pool were having fun and being safe.”

In addition to ensuring the safety of the

patrons in the pools Philips worked at, she also learned a lot of skills that she didn't expect to. She learned quickly that customer service and social skills were also essential parts of lifeguarding.

“Lifeguarding has taught me a lot about how to deal with difficult patrons,” Philips said. “It has also taught me how to interact with a boss and other employees.”

New lifeguards go through lengthy training to ensure that they can correctly oversee the safety of patrons. According to Philips, it was all worth it to be able to have the work experience and be able to meet so many great people.

“I initially signed up on the Austin Parks and Recreation website after hearing about it from a lot of my friends,” Philips said. “Then, I did 40 to 50 hours of training over four days, and took a written test at the end of the training process. Even though it was a lot, I'm really glad that I applied and got to meet so many great people while having such a fun yet very sweaty experience.”



**FUN IN THE SUN** Junior Gracie Philips spent part of the summer by the pool, monitoring patrons, making sure everyone was staying safe. According to Philips, lifeguarding helped her learn valuable lessons about customers and how to interact with a boss and other employees photo courtesy of Gracie Philips



**DIVING INTO SUMMER** According to Philips, despite the 40 hard hours of training, lifeguarding is worth it for the people she met and the experience she gained. photo by Avani Ganne



graphics by Amelia Coleman

### Suiting Up to Show LASA's School Spirit

ANNABEL ANDRE | editor-in-chief

As the summer came to an end, students began to come back to school to train and prepare for upcoming sports seasons, including the cheer team and Blue the Raptor, the LASA mascot. Blue was among a plethora of theatrical creatures including cartoonish bears, lions, and tigers gathered at a mascot camp hosted by the Universal Cheerleaders Association (UCA). While the LASA cheerleaders participated in the UCA cheerleading camp practicing stunts and learning about school spirit, Blue was busy finetuning their persona at the mascot camp.

“Mascot camp was a part of the UCA cheer camp that the LASA cheer team attended from the 27th to the 30th of

July at the University of Texas,” Blue said. “There were many other cheer teams there, with some of them having mascots and some not.”

The UCA mascot camp serves as an opportunity for mascots to become more comfortable in their mascot personas and help them become the best representation of school pride, according to the UCA website. Not

only do the mascots learn routines and how to use props, but they participate in activities that develop the mascots' personalities.

“At mascot camp we learned how to use props, how to develop the character of our mascot, did some improv, and just generally learned more about mascot,” Blue said. “We got to interview one of the UT mascots,

participated in some of the cheerleaders performances, and also performed some skits.”

The UCA mascot camp gives high school mascots the opportunity to try out for All-American. All-American is an individual award given to cheerleaders and mascots that display superior skills, leadership, and values according to the UCA website. Blue was able to try out for All-American and was awarded the prestigious title at the end of the camp.

“My favorite part of mascot camp was trying out for All American,” Blue said. “In order to get All-American, mascots had to perform a skit. It was super fun to put together and to perform, and many of the LASA cheerleaders were a part of it as well. Several of the cheerleaders were a massive help in choreographing, and it was super cool when it all came together.”

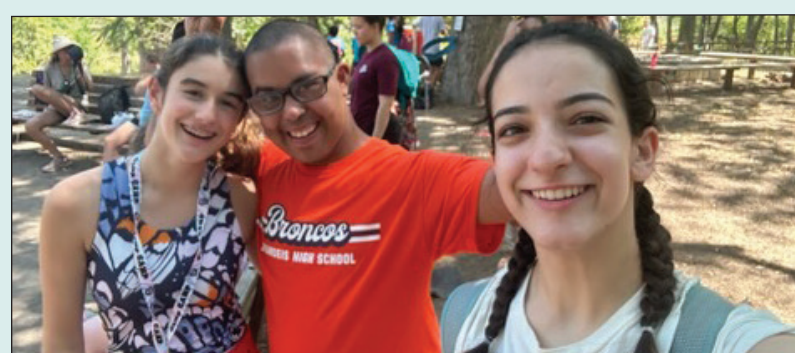
Photo Editor Jolie Grogan contributed to this story.



**MASCOT CONDITIONING** Over the summer, Blue the Raptor, the LASA mascot, and the cheer team participated in the Universal Cheerleaders Association's (UCA) camp at the University of Texas Austin campus. While there, Blue learned how to use different props, how to develop their mascot persona through improv and skits, and even was awarded the All-American title. photo courtesy of Blue the Raptor



graphic by Annabel Andre



**CAMP CAMP** Senior Maylis Schuppe spent the summer as a volunteer at the Children's Association for Maximum Potential (CAMP). CAMP provides recreational opportunities for individuals with medical conditions and disabilities. photo courtesy of Maylis Schuppe

### Camping out at Camp CAMP

ANNABEL ANDRE | editor-in-chief

Swimming, nature, and canoeing are generally universal activities when it comes to summer camps, and it's no different at the camp run by the Children's Association for Maximum Potential (CAMP), which provides recreational opportunities for individuals with medical conditions and disabilities. According to CAMP's website, campers often aren't able to engage in activities like archery and horseback riding elsewhere because of the limitations their disabilities or illnesses might provide.

For senior Maylis Schuppe, volunteering at CAMP is an essential part of her summer. As a volunteer, Schuppe is paired up with a camper and assists them with their daily activities throughout the week.

“CAMP is a place where you go for a week and are paired up with someone,” Schuppe said. “You become friends with that person and you also help them with any special needs. You might feed them, bathe them, whatever they need. You also get to do activities with them. You might go canoeing, you may go horseback riding, you might go to the pool.”

According to Schuppe, CAMP is a great place to make connections with volunteers and campers. The 1:1 ratio of camper to staff makes it possible for campers and staff to create a special

bond, which for Schuppe, makes the hard work worth it.

“The best thing I did was with this person I had for a week who loves Miraculous Ladybug,” Schuppe said. “So me and some of the other staff got masks from the show and everyone was asking to take pictures. Whatever is fun for her is fun for me. It makes me happy to see the smile on her face.”

Volunteer work is often very demanding and hands-on at CAMP, according to Schuppe. The camp requires them to complete a week of training before attending camp, and their camp schedules often require them to wake up early and be very attentive.

“It's a lot of hard work but very rewarding,” Schuppe said. “We have to wake up at 7:30, then get ready and get the campers ready and up. We give them their medicines, then do breakfast and activities, then it's lunch. Then we do more activities, have dinner, and do a night time campfire show. We're basically awake from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. most days.”

CAMP is available for summer volunteers from the beginning of the summer to the second week of August. According to Schuppe, making connections and friendships while volunteering made the experience incredibly memorable.

“I think anyone who can work here should,” Schuppe said. “It's an amazing experience different from anything you can typically get. You get to meet so many nice people, both campers and volunteers. I get to meet people I wouldn't get to meet in the outside world because some places may not be accessible for them. I think anyone and everyone should come out and have fun because it's an overall great experience.”

Photo Editor Griffin Beam contributed to this story.



**SUMMER FUN** CAMP offers many activities for campers to enjoy the summer weather including canoeing, horseback riding, or swimming. These activities help volunteers and campers to bond, which is one of the best parts of volunteering at CAMP, according to Schuppe. photo courtesy of Maylis Schuppe

