

the liberator

— Celebrating 50 years of publication —

Liberal Arts and Science Academy | 1012 Arthur Stiles Rd., Austin, TX 78721 | October 16, 2023 | Volume 50 | Edition 1 | lasaliberator.com

FIGHTING FOR A PIECE OF THE PIE

ETHAN STERN | staff writer

With their fresh Detroit-style pizza and retro vibe, Via 313 is an Austin staple, but with rising rent costs and declining working conditions, the workers feel that they should be treated better.

In August 2022, Via 313 workers filed for a union election in three of their nine Texas locations: Oak Hill, Eastside, and North Campus. The workers filed for unionization after experiencing harassment, being forced to work in kitchens as hot as 100 degrees, and receiving no sick pay. John Cuvillier, a former employee and current union organizer for workers at Via 313, felt the need to bring attention to these issues. “Via 313 was one of the hardest jobs, no, it’s the hardest job I’ve ever worked,” Cuvillier said. “We started our own union because we couldn’t find anyone else to take us in.”

Restaurant Workers United (RWU), a nation-wide worker’s union, was formed in August 2020 to support the restaurant, cafe, and bar workers of America. Because the restaurant industry is generally very unorganized, and RWU was able to help Via 313 workers organize and stand up for themselves.

“I’ve been a service worker since I was 15 years old, and I was sick of feeling powerless and feeling like I was replaceable,” Cuvillier said. “We decided enough was enough and we wanted to do something about it.”

Cuvillier said that the service industry is generally unorganized since there is a low union density. Union density is the percentage of workers who have unionized compared to non-unionized workers. The restaurant industry has only about a 1.2 percent union density compared to a 10 percent national average across all industries.

“Our industry is really overlooked, very exploited, and the majority of workers are Black and brown,” Cuvillier said. “A lot of people don’t see restaurant work as real jobs. Some people say it’s a job for kids to make pocket change, but in my experience, that’s not been the case. In reality, there are hard-working men and women that rely on these jobs to feed their families, to pay their bills. A lot of us work two jobs.”

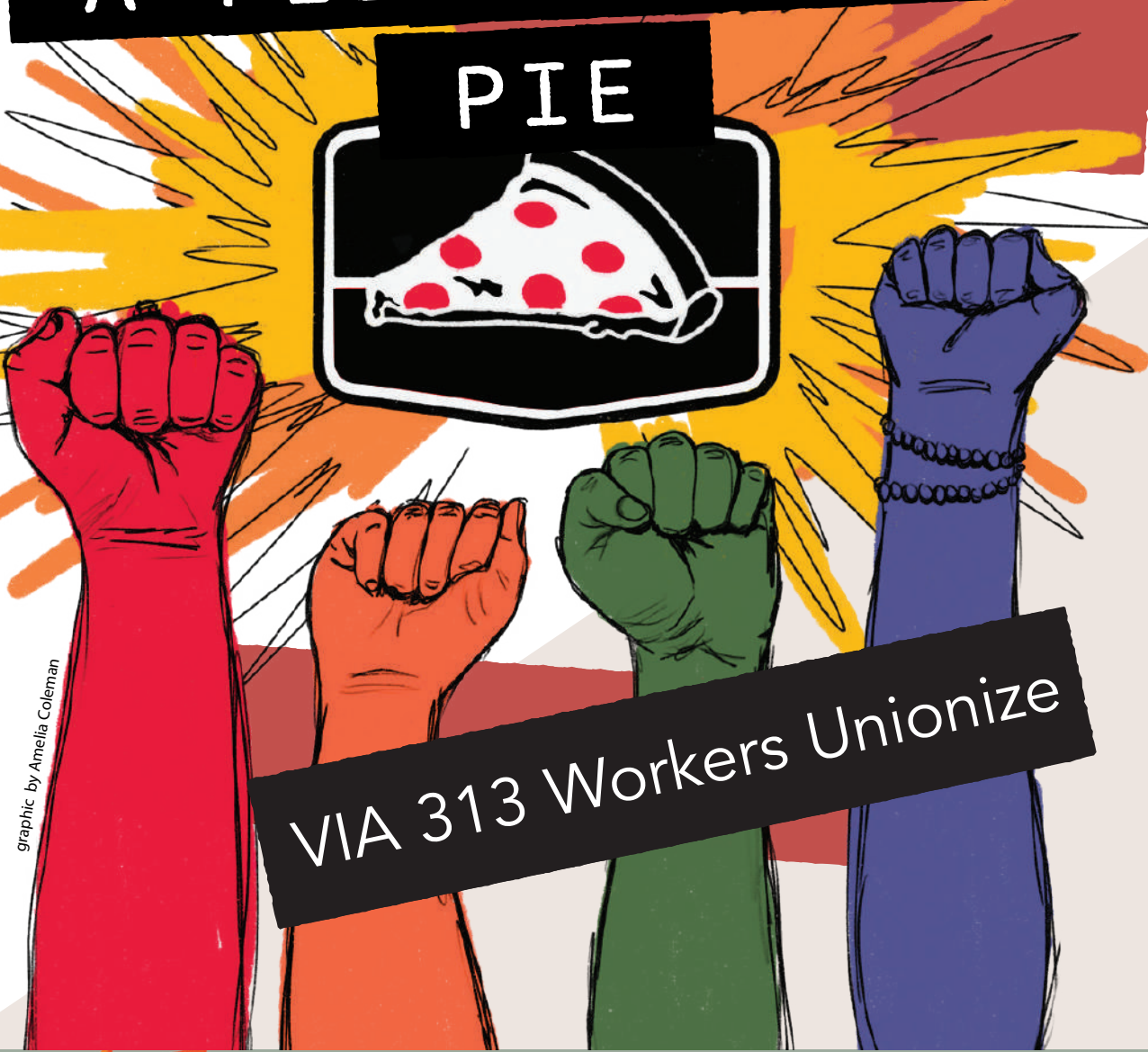
The workers at Via 313 felt it necessary to advocate once the company was bought out by Savory Restaurant Fund. Elyanna Calle, a server at the North Campus Via 313 location, has felt a big change in her day-to-day life ever since Via 313 was bought out by Savory.

“When things became corporate, a lot of standards started to decline,” Calle said. “Heat in the kitchen was one of the big things that applied primarily to back a house but still affects everybody in the restaurant.”

Savory, a private equity firm that started in 2020, is based in Lehi, Utah, and currently operates in eleven states. According to Cuvillier, private equity prioritizes profit over people.

“The goal of private equity is to make as much money for their shareholders as possible, to maximize profits,” Cuvillier said. “The only time they would come to Austin is when they flew out on their private jets to come cut costs.”

see **VIA 313 UNION** page 5



what's news



Mr. Walker helps develop science curriculum in Peru!

photo courtesy of David Walker

see **Q&A** page 10



LASA student section showcases school spirit!

photo by Deven Sharma

see **STUDENT** page 17



New conservation efforts are on the rise for Zilker Park

photo by Jolie Grogan

see **AUSTIN** page 5

MIC'D UP

Students Create Their Own Podcasts

MARGOT MORGAN
BENJAMIN GOODMAN | staff writers

From influencers like Emma Chamberlain to news outlets like the New York Times, delving into the world of podcasting has become a dominant form of entertainment in an increasingly connected world. According to the Pew Research Center, 64% of Americans 12 and older have listened to a podcast in their lifetime, over double the statistic from just a decade ago. Additionally, Spotify reports having over 5 million podcasts on the platform. This data tells a story: podcasts are quickly becoming a popular medium. LASA sophomore Beatrice Klein started a podcast in spring of 2023 with her friend Vivien Loving. The podcast is titled “YOLO” and was made with that sentiment in mind, according to Klein.

“In English, we had a podcast project, and they mentioned that you could enter an NPR contest,” Klein said. “So we decided we should enter the contest. And then, while we’re at it, [we decided] let’s just start a podcast because YOLO. You only live once, so you may as well make a podcast.”

Klein believes many influencers have followed the trend of making a podcast, as they see how much people enjoy them. According to her, as podcasts provide a deeper look into the lives of people who are seen mostly in short form content, they feel more fulfilling.

“I think that in our day and age right now, all the social media is very fast, just like one or two pictures or 15 second video, but podcasts are long form,” Klein said. “They [podcasts] enrich you, they give you information, and they’re entertaining. So I think podcasts make you feel kind of productive in a way but also you’re able to consume media.”

see **MIC'D** page 14

graphic by Kayla Le

RISING IN THE RANKS

LASA Improves Its Athletic Standing

HARRISON CHAMBERS
MILLER WILLIAMS | staff writers

The split of LASA’s athletics program from LBJ Early College High School (LBJ) occurred in 2020, just one year before the separation of campuses. Currently, LASA offers eighteen University Interscholastic League (UIL) sports and two sports that are not associated with UIL.

LASA made a massive leap in the Central Texas high school athletics rankings within the past year, moving up twenty-two places to rank 22. Thomas Jones, a writer for the Austin-American Statesman, wrote an article announcing this change. He attributes a large part of this jump to LASA’s athletic director Derrick Lewis’ direct involvement with the athletes across various sports.

“I was really impressed with Coach Lewis,” Jones said. “How he approached it [coaching], and how he worked with the kids. The thing with Coach Lewis is that he’s consistent with his approach each day in practice, and I’m sure each game, the kids know what they’re going to get from him. They know what the expectations are, and he has the same expectations for those kids in every practice.”

Jones used a mathematical formula called the Breazeale Cup to determine LASA’s athletic ranking. This system eliminates gray areas and subjective measurements when comparing LASA to other high schools.

“The Breazeale Cup is strictly mathematical points for qualifying for the playoffs, and for advancing the playoffs, regardless of the sport,” Jones said. “I would factor in, okay, who are they playing? How is the program progressing from last year? Do they have a lot of good players back? LASA finishing 22nd was pretty impressive.”

see **RISING** page 15

graphic by photo by Kayla Le



editorial Hazing Epidemic Wreaks Havok

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.

Many underclassmen hear upperclassmen speak of a pool on top of the T-annex. If not for the slight smirk that accompanies each senior who is a part of these conversations, it's possible that underclassmen would find themselves searching for water splashing off the roof's edge and wondering if they were gazing up at the wrong annex. This is likely the furthest "hazing" goes at LASA.

Ceremonies and traditions of induction have become a large part of certain high schools' culture, as well as a custom of Greek life at universities, but the objectives of hazing have shifted entirely from original purposes. Ensuring that candidates are worthy of being accepted and creating community between students entering organizations has largely turned to senior members of groups simply using their power to mock and degrade incoming members. Despite the lack of severe hazing incidents at high schools in Austin, the case is unfortunately different for institutions such as the University of Texas (UT) at Austin. Severe cases of hazing at UT have all been attributed to fraternities rather than sororities, including those instances in which students attempting to get into frats, or pledges, end up dead. The severe injury, mentally and physically, that comes along with hazing and that can end in fatality should not be tolerated at high schools and universities across the nation. No matter how strongly members of institutions believe that the grueling experiences can result in character building, the potential consequences of this harsh treatment should be far more meaningful.

According to the Dallas Morning News, seven students at UT Austin have died in hazing-related incidents since 1987. 2017 saw the most recent of these deaths with that of 20-year-old Nicky Cumberland, a new member of the historical student organization 'Texas Cowboys'. After drinking mass amounts of alcohol, witnessing animal abuse, and enduring severe physical abuse at a Cowboys event, Cumberland was driven home by an intoxicated member. The car crashed and in an instant,

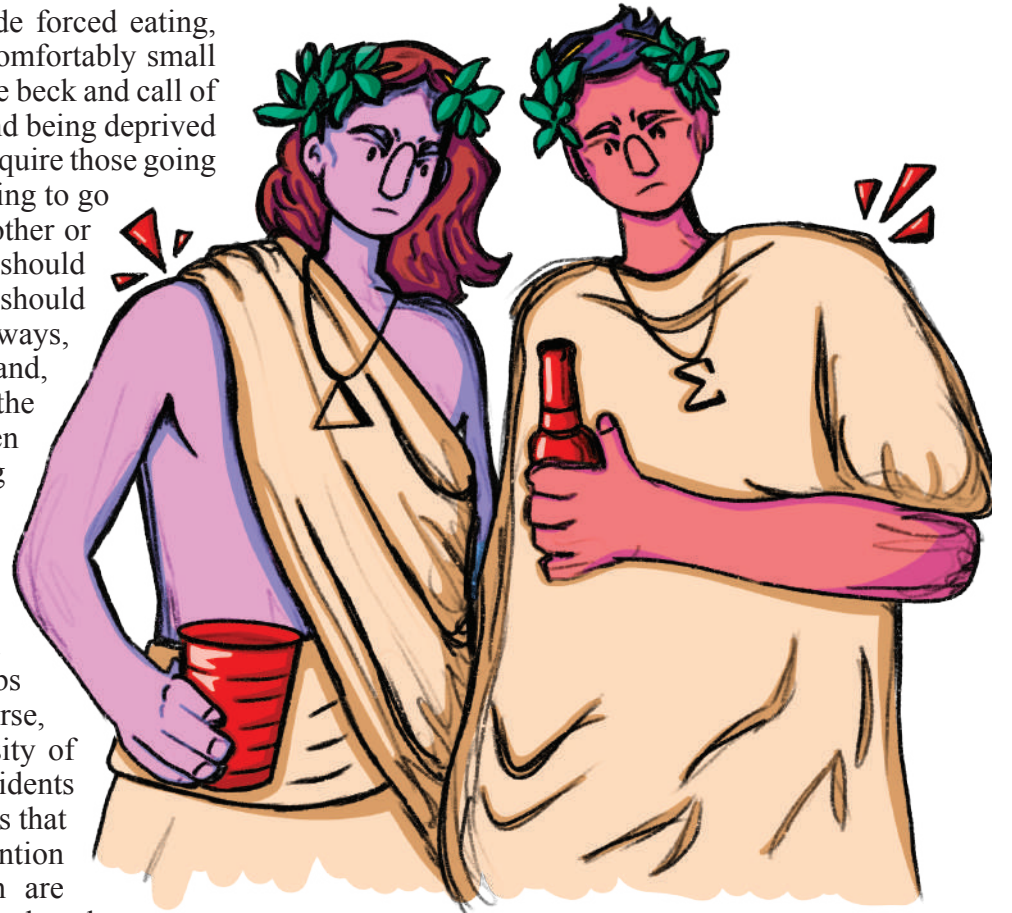
a young, bright mind was extinguished. In 2019, the Cowboys were suspended from being an organization at UT Austin for six years. However, they were approved to return to campus this year, bringing their punishment to an end two years short of its initial length.

Cases similar to the aforementioned have occurred in colleges across the nation, but the main cause of hazing deaths has been alcohol poisoning. A large amount of the pledges' ingestion of alcohol goes on during a single week known as "Hell Week". Most fraternities and sororities have this week of pledging to weed out candidates that are unwilling to show their determination. Horror stories from Hell Week include forced eating, binge drinking, being forced into uncomfortably small spaces with fellow pledges, being at the beck and call of senior members of the organization, and being deprived of sleep. Although these experiences require those going through initiation to show they're willing to go to great measures to be a part of a brother or sisterhood, there is no reason that these should be the methods used to do so. Hazing should be used to prove determination in safe ways, should be done in a humane manner, and, while determining which people have the right motives for joining, should happen with the goal of bonding incoming members together.

Similarly to the Texas Cowboys being allowed back to campus with what feels like scant punishment, hundreds of other incidents amongst organizations, sports teams, and clubs have gone undisciplined or, even worse, unreported. According to the University of Maryland, 95 percent of hazing incidents are not reported. With only occurrences that are egregious enough to catch the attention of law enforcement or those which are dangerous enough for students to need to be

rushed to the hospital being reported, there is no telling how far many hazing experiences go behind the scenes.

Hazing is a cycle that must be broken. Senior members of teams, frats, and sororities may hold the belief that because they had to go through intense testing to gain their spot, others should too. However, with this mentality comes severe injury and psychological damage-- both of which are not necessary in deciding whether a person is worthy of a position or not.



graphic by Amelia Coleman

Raptor Chatter

Do you think hazing positively or negatively affects students at high schools and universities?



Photo by Bridget Dunleavy

Neal Amin
Freshman

"In my opinion, hazing has a negative impact because I don't think the risks are worth it."



Photo by Bridget Dunleavy

Carson Lackey
Sophomore

"It really depends on the degree of the hazing. It can create community as long as it's innocent, it just matters how much you trust the perpetrators."



Photo by Bridget Dunleavy

Eloise Embry
Junior

"I think hazing can be detrimental to student development and cause mental health issues later on."



Photo by Bridget Dunleavy

Holly Adams
Senior

"I think hazing can be a bit extreme and go too far but a couple little traditions are okay. For example, freshmen put up nets in volleyball because they're freshmen."

- Advisor** Kevin Garcia
- Editors-in-Chief** Annabel Andre, Kayla Le
- Managing** LiLi Xiong
- Copy** Sanwi Sarode
- Commentary** Norah Hussaini, Wintyr Rice
- News** Sarah Garrett, Malvika Pradhan
- Student Life** Sadie Cravotta, Lasya Sangana
- Entertainment** Katie Busby, Megan Gerold
- Sports** Victor Martinez, Charlotte Whalen
- Web** Mars Leslie, Lily Wilkerson
- Photo** Griffin Beam, Avani Ganne, Jolie Grogan
- Graphics** Amelia Coleman, Asha Rountree
- Finance** Alexandra Valencia-Serrano
- Staff Writers** Apollo Dahmus, Ben Goodman, Bishop Britt, Bridget Dunleavy, Deven Sharma, Ellington Tough, Esmé Kessler, Ethan Stern, Fugo Tomii, Georgia Fink, Giovanni Alejo-Aguilar, Gordon Streber, Hagen Hobbs, Harrison Chambers, Inanna Murgor, Izzy Cravotta, Kamryn Reyes, Leah Lashus, Lilah O'Dair, Livia Hale, Margot Morgan, Miller Williams, Pratik Gurijala, Rebeca Gonzalez, Sadie Sarrat, Tita Gonzalez
- Club Contributors** Rahi Deo, Isabel Kramer

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 Liberators staff strive to produce a professional-quality publication that follows the Code of Ethics of the Society of Professional Journalists. The objective is to print the news in a fair and objective manner with the utmost regard for integrity.

- Editorial Content:
1. The students on The Liberators staff will print articles which have been researched to the best of their ability to obtain the most complete available information.
 2. The information will be presented in a truthful and fair manner.
 3. When personal commentary is given it will be in good taste on issues that have been researched, analyzed and where expert opinion has been sought.
 4. All commentary will be clearly labeled as such.
 5. No material which is obscene, libelous or that will cause an immaterial and substantial disruption of the school day, according to accepted legal definitions, will be printed.

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

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

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

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

Letters to the Editor: Letters to the Editor are accepted for topics of general interest to the readership of the newspaper. Letters must be submitted typed or neatly printed in ink and must have the signature of the writer and the writer's grade level. Editors reserve the right to determine which issue the letter will be published in, with every effort made to print the letter as soon as possible. The editors also reserve the right to edit the letter for grammar, length and repetition. No letters which are obscene or libelous will be published.

Non-Staff Contributors: Bylined contributions are welcome.
Correction of Errors: The staff makes every effort to print accurate information. In the case of substantial errors, a written correction will be made in the following issue of the newspaper.
Sources: In general, no anonymous sources will be used in reporting. Sources from within the school, as well as those not connected with the school, will be used. Under no circumstances will gifts, including coupons, etc., be accepted by the staff members from sources or advertisers.
Note: The Liberators will attempt to publish a range of opinions within reason.

Good luck on the second nine weeks, Raptors!



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.

Self-Driving Roadway Being Considered Proposition Would Repurpose Deserted MoKan Railway Line

SADIE SARRAT | staff writer



graphic by Amelie Coleman

Austin's population has been skyrocketing within the past few years, and in order to keep up with the increased number of people on the road, city planners created a proposal to expand roads and highways. In April 2023, the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) proposed the creation of a roadway for autonomous vehicles by repurposing the currently unused and deserted stretch of road known as the Missouri-Kansas-Texas (MoKan) railway. The plan would be to name the new route the Mobility for Connected and Automated Vehicles or MoCAV corridor, and it would be designed specifically for cars that do not require a driver for operation.

According to local civil engineer Brian Gettinger, Austin's government officials have always been willing to solve traffic issues in ways that are sometimes out of the ordinary. For example, the \$674 million ongoing Oak Hill Parkway project is a huge investment that will greatly affect the lives of many citizens of Austin and neighboring towns

like Dripping Springs by making transportation less stressful. According to the Oak Hill Parkway website, the plan includes the building of a new roadway with two to three lanes in either direction and many accommodations for pedestrians and bikers. Additionally, the roadway would have a stormwater detention pond, water quality treatment ponds, new landscaping, and a beautified corridor. Even though some of these ideas can be innovative and beneficial, creating an autonomous roadway is not something that will be beneficial to Austin and its surrounding cities.

Since the roadway would run through Austin, Pflugerville, Round Rock, and Georgetown, the plan could potentially affect many different people throughout the greater Austin area. Due to this, the city's capital planning organization decided to suspend all discussions of approving any proposals until the public was able to have a say in the decisions moving forward. Although the pitch was removed from the city's agenda, there is still a great possibility that in about two years, the city will start building the roadway in the MoCAV corridor, which could have numerous negative effects on Austin's drivers, roadway safety, traffic, and local nature trails.

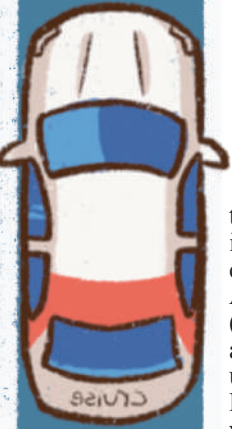
Driverless cars have proven to be unreliable. Cars from companies like Cruise and Gyn0 have started to pop up around the downtown Austin area in the past few months. Many car crashes involving autonomous cars turning into bike lanes, causing car crashes, and stopping traffic at stoplights have occurred across Austin. Self-driving cars can also be distracting to drivers on the road. If a person is not aware of the new autonomous vehicles, seeing an

empty front seat may cause concerns to arise about where the passengers are, showing that self-driving cars can be distracting and dangerous.

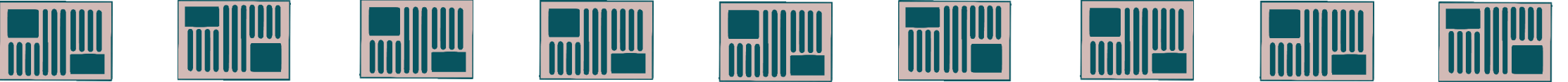
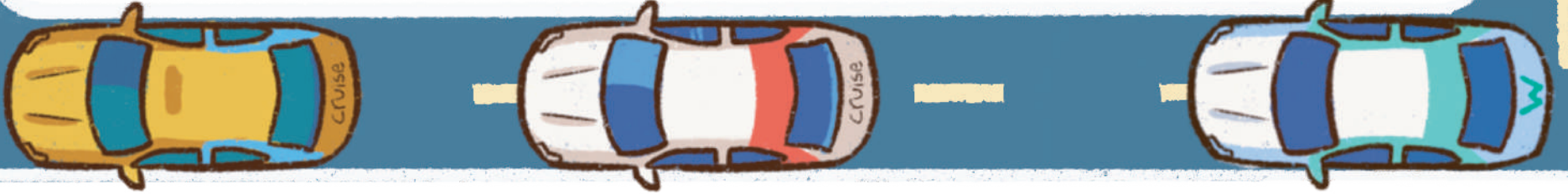
Earlier, in September, Austinites from East Austin petitioned for the removal of self-driving cars. After the University of Texas at Austin (UT) football game was finished, a traffic jam occurred involving over 20 Cruise self-driving cars. According to the National Law Review, autonomous vehicles have more than double the crash rate of human-driven ones. With more self-driving cars on the road, the city becomes even more dangerous. If the roadway is sent into effect, Austinites face potential harm every day when using it.

The MoCAV corridor would also harm natural spaces in Austin, as it paves over parts of the Southern Walnut Creek Trail with a four lane road. This specific trail is an East Austin treasure, and all of the lush greenspace would be disrupted and polluted if the roadway was built, making it harder for locals to enjoy the dwindling greenspaces of our growing city. Animals would inevitably be hit by cars and die, litter would accumulate on the shoulders, and hikers would be disincentivized to continue using the trail.

It is relieving to know that government officials have decided to temporarily postpone discussions of a proposed roadway that could harm Austinite drivers and restrict their access to local hiking trails. However, as automatic technology evolves and increases in popularity, more self-driving vehicle roadways will be proposed and built, and will not only endanger Austinites, but change the delicate balance of urbanization and nature in our city forever.



graphic by Asha Rountree



Freedom of Press Increasingly at Risk

GEORGIA FINK | staff writer



graphic by Amelie Coleman

Recently, many newspapers have been shut down, raided, or censored according to the Student Press Law Center. Freedom of press laws protect the rights of reporting news and circulating opinions without government censorship. The shutting down and censoring of these newspapers breaks the freedom granted by these laws, and for this reason should not be happening. One example of this was in Marion, Kansas.

On Monday, Aug. 11, a raid was conducted by authorities on the Marion County Record, a local newspaper in Marion. The raid was

conducted after an accusation that Phyllis Zorn, a reporter on the newspaper, committed identity theft on a local restaurant owner. Zorn was actually accessing public records on the restaurant owner's previous DUI, not committing identity theft.

The police involved in the raid seized computers and phones from both the building and the house of the owner of the newspaper, Eric Meyer, despite the fact that the police chief, Gideon Cody, did not have the legal documents required to raid the building. This introduces quite a few issues for newspapers around the United States. The first amendment protects the right of freedom of speech and press and is clearly being broken in the context of the Kansas newspaper raid. If even the amendments that make up the premises of our country are not upheld, it is all too easy for other laws to be ignored, leading to a potential uptick in reporters being censored or shut down.

Over the years, there have been a few school newspapers shut down by admin and district authorities around the United States. In late 2022, Northwest High School in Grand Island Nebraska had its newspaper shut down by the district due to an article about LGBTQ+ rights in their pride month issue. This article was shut down for no reason other than that the district administrators did not like the topic and found it "inappropriate", according to NPR. This is hardly a valid reason to shut down an article, much less a whole newspaper program.

In April 2022 at Texas High School in Texarkana, Texas, one of

the Editors-in-Chief of the school newspaper wrote an editorial about the increased number of canine searches on students' vehicles, causing an environment of fear among the students. Legally, the editorial was not disruptive, but the school tried to censor it because of how unflattering the article was to their reputation. Later it was allowed to be published, though the author had to make admin-suggested changes. This is another classic example of oppressing the opinion and critical thinking of students for the sake of maintaining a good name. If students are not able to express their concerns in a supposedly safe environment like school, then what does that teach them about society? Banning newspaper articles only leads to students learning that if they want to be accepted, they have to sit down, be quiet, and agree with the most favorable opinion without thought.

Although all of these issues were resolved, the mentioned events raise problems for all newspapers. These issues show that people of higher authority, like police chiefs and district officials, are not afraid to censor and shut down newspapers, even if it is unconstitutional, and especially if the articles in question are unflattering.

As a member of The Liberator, the fact that districts have the ability to censor or shut down our newspaper if it were to write something not in their favor makes me question my freedom as an academic journalist. Not only should I, and The Liberator team, be able to freely express our opinions in a professional manner, but so should everyone. We should not be debating a constitutional right.

graphic by Asha Rountree



Raptor Advice Column

Commentary editors answer the questions of LASA students to offer a helping hand. To submit questions DM @lasaliberator or email lasaliberator@gmail.com

Are course requirements easy to check off? When should I take the classes I need to take to graduate?

LASA's signature courses, while unique and extremely informative, take up several course spots both freshman and sophomore year. Because of this, it can be difficult to fulfill requirements while also taking classes that interest you personally and which contain subjects you are particularly passionate about. Trying to check course boxes during junior and senior year is not something which is enjoyable, so finish classes like PE early. With fine arts, you should try to complete a course before junior year if you haven't already filled your one leftover schedule spot in freshman and sophomore years or, if you have take your fine art junior year rather than senior year.

How many extracurriculars should I join? How do I know which ones?

Because LASA has so much more work than other schools, you have to be careful not to overload yourself. If you take band or other classes that use up a lot of after school time, you may only have time for a few lunch clubs. You also have to take into account when your teachers have office hours. If most of them are during lunch, and you know you'll have to visit them often, avoid joining clubs on those days. Above all else, make sure that your extracurriculars are ones that you enjoy, not just ones that'll look good on college applications.

DeSantis Bans AP Classes

College Board Bends to Florida Governor's Will

ETHAN STERN | staff writer
SANWI SARODE | copy editor



In January 2023, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis banned Advanced Placement (AP) African American Studies in classrooms. The act that halted this AP course from being approved was the Stop WOKE Act which DeSantis signed in April 2022. According to the Florida government, the curriculum was banned because it supposedly lacked “educational value and historical accuracy” and was deemed too inappropriate to teach in schools. However, I strongly disagree with this and believe the curriculum should continue to be taught because it discusses many prevalent topics in history, such as the history of systemic racism, gender and sexuality, and environmental concerns that are relevant to today’s society.

To “fix” the course to align with Florida’s standards, numerous Black authors and scholars who were involved in queer theory, critical race theory, and Black feminism had their names purged by College Board nationwide. It also made topics such as critical race theory and Black Lives Matter optional from the curriculum. The CEO of College Board, David Coleman, made a weak attempt to persuade opponents that the change was not from conservative pressure. “At the College Board, we can’t look to statements of political leaders,” Coleman said. He instead claimed that the College Board used “the input of professors” and “long-standing AP principles” to address why subjects were left out. However, it is evident that College Board’s hasty curriculum change



graphics by Amelia Coleman



was only made to accommodate Florida’s ban of the subject. The fact that educational entities such as College Board feel pressured to bend under the will of often unreliable politics elucidates the large-scale influence and threat to education one ban can have.

In early August 2023, AP Psychology was also banned by the Florida education department because it included content about sexual orientation and gender identity. The following day, the department said that AP Psychology can be taught in its entirety in a manner that is “age and developmentally appropriate.” This statement in and of itself is contradictory: how can AP Psychology be taught in its entirety if certain units are removed? Not only is the ban limiting the quantity of education available to students, it also makes the false claim that gender identity and sexual orientation are inappropriate topics for AP students, most of which are high schoolers. According to the Williams Institute, approximately 9.5 percent of youth in the age range 13-17 in the United States identify as members of the LGBTQ+ community. If one in every ten students in a standard AP classroom are queer, then to say this issue is irrelevant and “inappropriate” for these students is absurd.

Censoring educational content for the sake of furthering a political agenda is nothing but an abuse of power. To remove and subdue lessons concerning racism from students’ education blatantly undermines the disproportionate amount of violence committed against Black Americans, as the rate of police shootings of Black Americans is at 5.8 per million people, much higher than other racial groups according to Statista. Removing topics on race from AP curriculums will not only give students a lack of situational and societal awareness, but also make it easier for them to take Black history for granted.

Seeing that the Florida ban has remained untouched, there is a chance that if we continue down this path, our state and other red states will follow the same trail as Florida. It is up to the us to recognize the lethal effects of banning crucial topics in education and advocate for educational entities like the College Board to stay firm on their curriculums and sever communications with government departments on their AP classes. I hope for a future where education won’t be censored and instead will be discussed in a way that acknowledges all of society’s viewpoints and concepts.

Disney Swaps Looks

A Step Forward for Inclusivity

ESME KESSLER | staff writer



When the cast of Disney’s live action version of “The Little Mermaid” was announced, members of the far-right political community voiced their outrage across social media over the decision to cast Black actress Halle Bailey as Ariel. They wished to see an actress with straight, silky red hair and white skin, as displayed in the classic animated movie from 1989, play the role of Ariel. These wishes, along with their belief that it is necessary for live-action remakes to be cast according to their animated counterparts, are flawed. Opponents are unable to see that a lack of diversity in movies, especially of the iconic Disney princesses, does much more damage to children than to the insignificant nostalgia of opposers who cling to outdated representations of characters.

Growing up Jewish-American, I was hurt by characters like Mother Gothel in “Tangled,” so obviously written to have stereotypical Jewish features and characteristics such as a hooked nose, dark curly hair, and greediness. I saw the Disney princesses that I aspired to be like, with their tiny button noses, long golden hair, and other Eurocentric features, and it broke my heart. Those characters were always portrayed as beautiful people with kind souls while characters that were more like me were portrayed as materialistic and disgusting. In second grade, I started a habit of pushing down on the bump on my nose to try to look more like the beautiful girls that I saw on TV. This is not at all an uncommon experience for children who aren’t represented in the media.

Yara Shahidi, who is also Black, was cast as Tinkerbell in the live action movie “Peter Pan & Wendy,” which was released in April 2023. Her role was also met with mixed responses from the same community. In an interview with “Good Morning America,” Shahidi expressed her excitement to be playing Tinkerbell. She opened up about her childhood and growing up dressing in Disney princess costumes, but always looking like the “Black version” of the character. She explains that it is confusing for children to only see characters in movies who are not like them and, in some cases, seeing characters that do look more like them pictured in a negative light. Casting actors of color in roles like these change the narrative for children growing up. With Disney’s decision to change the races of characters in recent films, new generations will have the opportunity to identify with their favorite characters on screen and grow up believing that they can “be a princess” too.

According to Temple Now, amidst the backlash from conservative fans from casting Bailey as Ariel, there was also a heartwarming and viral response across TikTok and Instagram displaying the delighted reaction of Black children watching the teaser for “The Little Mermaid” for the first time. Many reactions are emotional, showing these children crying because they rarely see representations of themselves in Disney princesses. In and of itself, these reactions make it evident that race-swapping characters can uplift children who rarely get the chance to see versions of themselves on screen. Clearly, representation has a positive impact on children’s perspectives of the world and of their place in it.

The film industry should continue to implement diversity into movies and live-actions with characters whose identities are not based on their appearance. Every child deserves to see someone who looks like them, celebrates like them, and has the same traditions. As a society, we should learn to acknowledge and value diversity, prioritizing the children of future generations over the views of the past.

PragerU Curriculum Makes False Seem Factual

WINTYR RICE | commentary editor



There’s a new wave of far-right propaganda coming for schools, only this time it’s wrapped in the shiny veneer of state-sanctioned educational materials. In late July, Florida approved Prager University Foundation (PragerU) videos and lesson plans for use in classrooms. Oklahoma and New Hampshire followed suit in September, and Texas is expected to do the same. In addition to inevitably harming the education of countless students, this decision provides an easy bridge to extremist politics — one built on logical fallacies, historical inaccuracies, and outright disinformation.

PragerU is not an accredited university, which is glaringly obvious the second one takes more than a passing glance at any of

their content. Not only has their founder, Dennis Prager, admitted to using PragerU to indoctrinate children, but their videos are also riddled with basic examples of cognitive dissonance and analytical failings. For example, in their video “Fossil Fuels: The Greenest Energy,” they graph the correlation between the use of fossil fuels and increased access to clean water, using this as evidence that fossil fuels lead to cleaner water. However, this is far from accurate. According to the Environmental and Energy Study Institute, millions of gallons of water are contaminated by gas fracking wells, and coal mines resulting in numerous oil spills and toxic runoff that sully our water supplies. PragerU’s video is a basic example of the false cause fallacy, which states that just because two events correlate, one does not necessarily cause the other. Unfortunately, this is not a one-off occurrence.

PragerU also uses these fallacies as tactics to repackage illogical beliefs as reasonable conclusions to a primarily young audience, with over 60 percent of their viewers being under the age of 35, according to their 2019 annual report. Many of these lies are especially common in their content for kids, such as with “Leo & Layla’s Historical Adventures” — a series that features a brother and sister traveling through time to meet various historical figures. In one episode, “Leo & Layla Meet Frederick Douglass,” PragerU makes the claim that in the 1800s, “slavery was a part of life all over the world. It was America that began the conversation to end it.” In actuality, the U.S. was nowhere near the first country to end

slavery. The Republic of Ragusa outlawed the slave trade in 1416, Vermont (an independent nation at the time) abolished slavery as a whole in 1777, Spain followed in 1811, Britain in 1833, and France in 1848. The U.S. didn’t until 1862. However, PragerU doesn’t care about facts if the truth can be warped to serve their own interests.

In another video aimed towards children, this one titled “North Korea: Learning the Truth,” PragerU misdefines communism as a system under which “people are not free to make decisions for themselves” and where “the government has full control.” This is also known as totalitarianism, not communism, but it’s a little generous to expect PragerU to understand the intricacies of sixth-grade social studies. All jokes aside, PragerU’s “educational” videos that inaccurately explain their topics or spread blatant disinformation about them should never be allowed to enter a classroom, yet several states have decided otherwise. All of these videos, each brimming with analytical leaps, unscientific ‘facts’, and irrational arguments serve a single purpose—to further PragerU’s goal of indoctrinating children to believe in far-right conspiracies and ruin their education with lies. PragerU’s promise to produce “content you can trust to be engaging for students and educationally sound,” according to their website, is laughable. PragerU should be considered a threat to education and therefore a threat to society, teachers, and students. Activists and lawmakers must do their part to ensure the safety of their children’s education.

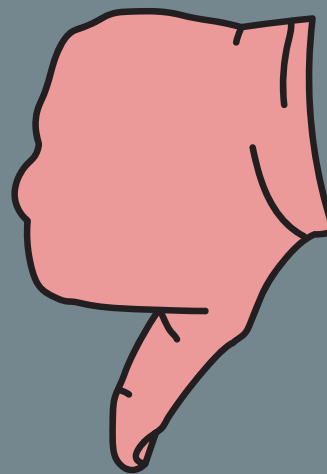
Thumbs Up



graphics by Amelia Coleman

Snails
Iced coffee
Socks
Citrus
Honking at people

Thumbs Down



Supplementals
Paywalls
Coughing
Brunch
People honking at you

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.

Texans Take on Constitutional Propositions

LILAH O'DAIR | staff writer

Texas is holding a constitutional amendment election on Nov. 7 over 14 new measures, or proposed plans of action, that cover numerous topics ranging from creating new Texas funds to abolishing certain government offices.

One topic that multiple measures cover is financial assistance for teachers and childcare providers. Proposition Two concerns property taxes on child care facilities while Proposition Nine allows the state legislature to make cost-of-living adjustments to eligible educators in the teacher retirement system.

Gonzalo Barrientos is a former Texas state representative and senator who served in the House of Representatives from 1975 to 1985 and as a senator for the 14th district of Texas from 1985 to 2007. Barrientos believes that voters, particularly high school-age voters, may be interested in the measures covering the subject of education.

"Anything having to do with public schools I would look at a lot more specifically," Barrientos said. "And I would advise the students, led by the teachers and parents, to look more into that."

LASA's AP Government and AP U.S. History teacher, Houston Goodell, agrees that it is important for students and non-student voters to research a candidate or measure prior to voting to prevent any kind of misinformation. Goodell hopes people will make an effort to know what they are voting on before heading to the polls.

"I would say the best thing that any student or any voter could do is to research the candidates and research the issues," Goodell said. "There's a lot of information out there about who you're going to be voting for."

Barrientos particularly believes in the importance of Proposition Two. This proposition would allow local governments to exempt child care facilities from property taxes.

"Daycare centers serve a lot of people who have children," Barrientos said. "They're not rich, they don't have very much money, so to exempt certain facilities like that, who usually are not owned by national or world companies, you give them a little break. They're taking care of kids, for goodness sake."

Barrientos noted similarities between his time in office and the current measures. During his career in the Texas Senate and House, he made a push for advancements in childcare, particularly in the world of Texas politics.

"When I was first in the Senate, Emma, my wife asked me, 'Are there a lot of employees around the Capitol?'" Barrientos said. "I said, 'Yes' and she said, 'Well, where did the women keep their children when they weren't over there?'" I said, 'I don't

know.' She says 'Yeah okay, big shot. Why don't you pass a law to set up a daycare center for state employees?' So I did."

Madeline Pierce is a LASA freshman and a member of the Youth and Government club at LASA. Pierce, who has an interest in politics, also recognizes the importance of Proposition Two and its role in improving daycare centers.

"I think it's good because the people that work at these places

voters should be cautious of amendments like these.

"Sounds like a good idea," Barrientos said, "but you have to ask questions like, 'who are these water developers?' 'Is it some national or international corporation or is it a nonprofit organization which is going to do the general good instead of mak[ing] money?'"

The vagueness in Proposition Six and Seven also stood out to Pierce. She agreed that they should be questioned and researched in advance.

"That's a really big question," Pierce said, "because I feel like, who are they funding?"

While Barrientos and Pierce have concerns with Propositions Six and Seven, Goodell noted the positive effects that they may have for Texans. He believes that voters should support these causes.

"I would say Proposition Six is incredibly important," Goodell said. "And also [Proposition] Seven because they're both infrastructure, and the role of government is to provide adequate infrastructure for its citizenry."

However, there has been an increase in the number of voters in the state. Between January 2022 and January 2023, there was an increase of around 300,000 registered voters, according to Texas Secretary of State voter registration data. Goodell hopes to see this trend continue.

"I would like everybody who is of voting age to get involved," Goodell said. "Every issue pertains to every citizen in some way, even if you're not directly affected."

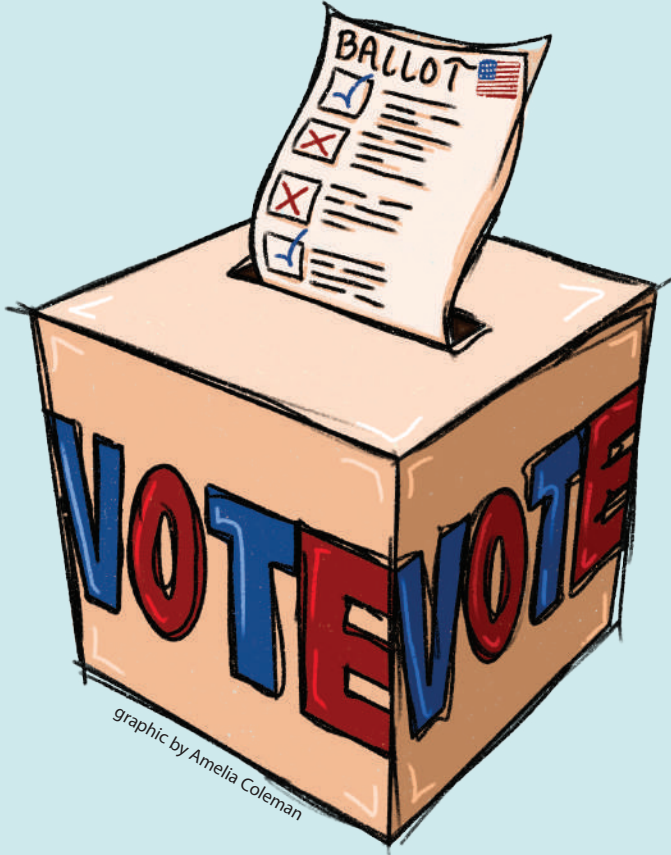
Pierce also believes that everyone who is able should vote. He said despite any feelings of apathy, every person who is eligible should head to the polls this November.

"I think voting is something that everybody with the ability to do so should do," Pierce said. "Even if they feel like their vote doesn't matter, because everybody's vote matters."

Barrientos concurs. He believes that voting is an extremely important part of keeping democracy alive.

"The only way that we can keep this democracy, and this independence... is if a good majority of the people vote," Barrientos said.

Early voting is available from Oct. 23 to Nov. 3 and Nov. 7 is Election Day. To find information on polling locations and times, visit votetravis.org and for detailed nonpartisan descriptions of the propositions, check out the League of Austin Women Voters constitutional amendment election voter guide.



Graphic by Amelia Coleman

and the daycares themselves can pay less in money," Pierce said, "So instead of paying those things off by themselves, they can put that funding into things like learning."

Proposition Six, which would establish the Texas Water Fund, and Proposition Seven, which would create the Texas Energy Fund, both aim to support Texas infrastructure. Barrientos thinks

The constitutional amendment authorizing a local option exemption from ad valorem taxation by a county or municipality of all or part of the appraised value of real property used to operate a child-care facility

PROP 6

the constitutional amendment creating the Texas water fund to assist in financing water projects in this state

PROP 7

The constitutional amendment proving for the creation of the Texas energy fund to support the construction, maintenance, modernization, and operation of electric generating facilities

PROP 9

The constitutional amendment authorizing the 88th legislature to provide a cost-of-living adjustment to certain annuities of the Teacher Retirement System of Texas

Graphic by Amelia Coleman

Teens Bring Climate Case to Supreme Court

GORDON STREBER | staff writer

Teens across the U.S. are suing states, and winning, according to the New York Times. In 2020, Our Children's Trust, a nonprofit group from Montana that sues on behalf of youth fighting climate cases, started working on a case based on Montana's Constitution, Article II, Section 3 of which stated that the citizens had the right to "a clean and healthful environment." The teens thought that it was hypocritical since Montana has promoted fossil fuel development, which are a large contributor to climate change. Recently that case was brought up in a district court under Judge Kathy Seeley, where the students won against the state.

Senior Mia Larson is the head of the LASA Environmental Club, which hosts campus cleanups, writes letters to legislators, and promotes recycling. She believes the Montana student activists are doing great things by fighting against states.

"I think it's exciting," Larson said. "It's a great precedent for other cases, and I think a lot of other youth groups in other states are following their actions. I know in Hawaii and Oregon pushes have been made with similar cases. It's inspiring because it sets the precedent that it is the state's responsibility, and it is our government's responsibility to protect our right to a clean and safe environment, and that includes taking all possible action to fight climate change."

Freshman Alex Nguyen is passionate about fighting climate change. Nguyen said protesting is a good way to bring awareness to the environmental crisis.

"My community and family promote climate activism so that people can be aware," Nguyen said. "Lots of families come to our local park to raise awareness, and also other topics like current issues."

Sadie Russell is a freshman and a proud climate activist. She says that individuals make a grander change when they come together.

"At the moment, there isn't much that I can do as an individual, except for spreading awareness and being mindful of what I'm putting into the environment," Russell said. "That said, I think that individual responsibility is something that's placed on people

to make it seem like they're the cause of the problem, whereas companies are getting away with climate murder. I am doing everything I can to be aware and in the know of what I can do to help despite having limited power."

Larson has similar ideas to Nguyen's. However, she also

““

Individual responsibility is something that's placed on people to make it seem like they're the cause of the problem, whereas companies are getting away with climate murder. I am doing everything I can to be aware and in the know of what I can do to help despite having limited power.

- SADIE RUSSELL, LASA FRESHMAN

””

recognizes that some infrastructure in the energy business, and oil and fossil fuels, can't be dropped immediately.

"I think the best alternative is to switch to renewable energy,"

Larson said. "I know electric vehicles and carbon-efficient cars are emerging. You can't get rid of the need for oil, but trying to phase it out as much as possible is a great idea. A big part of that is where you spend our money instead of investing in these new oil projects, like investing in solar plants or wind farms. The way you address a lot of the admissions issues comes from how you invest and create the infrastructure for energy."

Montana, specifically, has been affected by climate change via glaciers melting and fishing climates being ruined, with 35% of cold-water climates being unsuitable for trout by 2080, according to USGS. Montana is one of three states that's constitution has a climate clause, enabling Our Children's Trust to sue.

"I think it's an angle that makes a lot of sense but I've never thought about it before, like suing the Constitution because of climate injustice," Russell said. "I think that's something that I wanna research in the Texas Constitution to see what role our state can play, and just keeping up with this in general. I think this is a great step towards change."

Nguyen agrees with this sentiment. He has a new interest in climate change debates like this.

"I think that Montana establishing and renewing oil projects is limiting the right for the citizens to have a clean and healthy environment," Nguyen said.

Because of the ruling, Montana must now consider climate change when it is deciding whether or not to renew fossil fuel projects, a big step for a state that gets one third of its energy from coal. This case is the first of its kind to have success in the courts, and has paved a new road for young climate activists to take.

Mortgage Rates in Austin Are on the Rise

LEAH LASHUS | staff writer

Housing: everybody needs it, and demand for it is high in Austin. In 2022, according to the Austin Chamber of Commerce, 47,442 people moved to Austin — tens of thousands more than other large cities like Toronto and Dallas. With this growing demand and a shortage of urban housing, many prospective buyers have chosen to move to Austin suburbs due to relatively more affordable prices.

Native Austinite and realtor Tammy Young said that in July, the average single-family home sold at \$550,000 in Austin, but the average in the Austin Round Rock area was almost \$100,000 cheaper. This statistic only measures single-family homes, which doesn't take into account condos, apartments, and other structures which are predicted to be even cheaper in the suburbs.

"A lot of people who are moving here don't even look in Austin," Young said. "They look in Georgetown, Round Rock, Lakeway, [and] Dripping Springs all the time. For them, that's Austin."

Living in the suburbs comes with a long commute time into the city, but this commute time can still be an improvement for home buyers. For residents seeking larger homes with more space, the suburbs are still the ideal place to move, according to Young.

"To get from Lakeway to downtown Austin, it's really only 40 minutes," Young said. "So if you're moving here from one of those bigger markets like LA or Atlanta, and only have a 30 minute commute downtown, for them that's actually an improvement in quality of life. Some people really want garages and big backyards and neighborhood pools, and in downtown Austin, you can't have all of that."

Those who choose to live in Central Austin have other concerns to think about. Freshman Megan Lorber has moved many times in her life, which has given her a full perspective on neighborhoods in Austin and the housing process.

"We've been able to get lucky and find houses that we like, but it's not been easy," Lorber said. "We've toured a lot of houses and they're expensive — a lot more expensive than they should be."

Lorber currently lives in Mueller after moving from The Grove, a planned community in downtown Austin. Two of her five moves were unplanned, due to unexpected house floods. Local policies currently don't offer short-term housing or any programs to repair damaged houses. Young says the process of buying a house usually takes about thirty days and can involve a number of steps.

"Someone will reach out to me and we sit down and do a consultation and walk them through everything," Young said. "If they're getting a loan, they need to get pre-approved first. We start looking at houses and shopping then we narrow it down to 'the house.' We make an offer, we negotiate with the seller, and then we inspect the home, and usually there's some repairs to

negotiate. From the day you find the house to closing and getting the keys, it's usually about a month."

Daniel Ackerberg, the centennial economics professor at University of Texas at Austin (UT), studies housing markets and trends using statistics collected over years of data. Predicting recessions and future costs for prospective buyers is a significant aspect of realty and housing.

"More economic activity in a location because of a big University [like UT] is likely to, on average, increase demands for property and construction," Ackerberg said. "Increased demand generally increases housing prices. One way to help decrease house prices, or at least slow down increases, would be to increase the supply of housing. That is the logic behind urban development projects like Project Connect, which will hopefully give more areas quick access to UT and downtown."

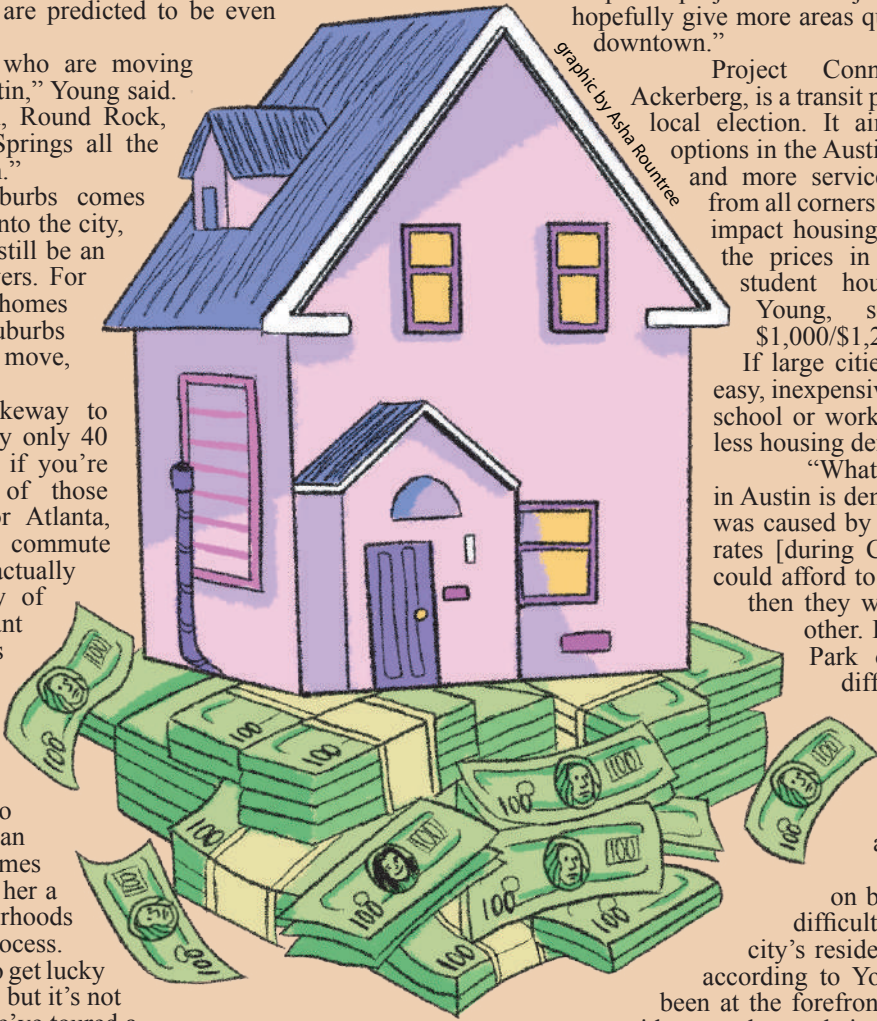
Project Connect, according to Ackerberg, is a transit plan passed in the 2020 local election. It aims to expand transit options in the Austin area, using light rail and more services to connect people from all corners of the city. This would impact housing around UT, deflating the prices in that area, especially student housing. According to Young, some students pay \$1,000/\$1,200 a room per month. If large cities like Austin provide easy, inexpensive ways to commute to school or work, many areas will see less housing demand.

"What drove up our prices in Austin is demand," Young said. "It was caused by the super low-interest rates [during COVID-19]. Everyone could afford to spend a lot more and then they would just outbid each other. If you go out to Cedar Park or Leander it's very different. So it wasn't necessarily inflation that drove up our prices, it was just the demand combined with accessibility."

Austin prides itself on being a "weird city": a difficult tagline to retain as the city's residents become wealthier, according to Young. East Austin has been at the forefront of this change, with residents no longer being able to afford to live there, a process known as gentrification.

"It changes the fabric of the city when first-home buyers are spending \$700,000," Young said. "It's a different community. Every time a house sells, it changes the taxes for the other houses. That's what really makes East Austin not affordable for long-time residents. The taxes are going up so fast."

Although Austin is currently struggling with demand, this doesn't mean it always has to. With new affordable housing propositions and plans like Project Connect passing, concerned citizens can rally, via votes and petitions, for an increased supply of houses and lower housing costs. According to Young, Austin residents just need to keep fighting for affordable housing and telling our leaders about neighborhoods that are struggling. It's just as much their Austin as it is yours.



Seton Nurses Go on Strike

HAGEN HOBBS
PRATIK GURIJALA | staff writers

On June 27th, 2023, in response to long hours, and staff issues, all of the nurses at Ascension Seton Hospital went on strike. The strike lasted for just one day but halted Ascension's operations, requiring the hospital to call travel nurse agencies, agencies that employ nurses across the U.S., to work for the day.

Registered nurse Taylor Crittendon was one of the many nurses who went on strike. According to Crittendon, management was not listening to nurses' concerns and complaints, which led to the decision to strike.

"We gave the hospital a twelve-day notice that was basically saying, 'we feel like they aren't listening to our concerns still about patient safety and we felt like we needed to escalate things to a strike,'" Crittendon said. "At any of those times... the hospital had the opportunity to come back to talk to us and say 'let's work on these issues, that we'll do better, and we'll try to make things better for you guys,' but they didn't do that. They had the time to find replacements and temporary staff to come and take care of the patients while we were on strike."

Alicia Murphey is the school nurse at LASA. Murphey used to work at a hospital and has experienced many of the same staffing issues that nurses at Ascension Seton are currently facing.

"There would be nights where I would have 10 post-op [post-operation] patients that just came out of surgery," Murphey said. "It's impossible to take care of that many patients that are coming out of surgery with just one person."

Understaffing and retention issues led nurses led the Seton nurses to unionize. Nurses claimed they were working longer hours with more patients assigned to them, lowering the standard of care for each patient. According to Crittendon, the nurses fought against the hospital's lack of care for patient health.

"72 percent of the nurses at the hospital voted yes to unionize," Crittendon said. "That was a big first step, because while we do know that we have the right to collective action, we wanted to make sure that a strong majority of nurses were supportive of unionizing and

supportive of fighting for safer patient care together."

LASA freshman Anishika Basu agrees with the nurses decision to strike. She thinks that nurses had unreasonable expectations placed on them by management, such as having an overwhelming number of additional patients to assist.

"I believe the nurses did the right thing by unionizing," Basu said. "Nurses operate and accommodate patients in unreasonable conditions and are assigned more patients than manageable, causing inefficiency of accommodation and burnout of nurses."

Crittendon also felt like there was a lower quality of care towards patients due to the sheer amount of patients each nurse had to take care of. According to Crittendon, these issues were caused by the hospital being understaffed.

"So, mainly, it's the staffing that is an issue," Crittendon said. "And that goes from staffing, the right amount of nurses and staffing the right amount of nurse's aides, and they help us to turn patients and clean them up. And we're very understaffed on nurses aides. I think our physical therapy team is understaffed. Pretty much everybody who is trying to help is understaffed."

According to Crindetton, the Seton nurses are still in negotiations with Ascension Seton, but it is proving difficult because they are attempting to work with management and lawyers who don't know the realities of working in a hospital. As someone who has had a very hands-on experience with both working a job and fighting for what workers deserve, Crindetton believes it is vital for the youth to learn about striking and the actions of unions before entering the workforce.

"I hope you guys [students] become more curious about this," Crindetton said. "I think that there's a lot of younger people who are very interested in unionizing, and in what unions do, and I think it's really good to learn about them at your age before entering the working force, the labor force. So I hope you stay curious about it."

There would be nights where I would have 10 post-op [post-operation] patients that just came out of surgery. It's impossible to take care of that many patients that are coming out of surgery with just one person.

- ALICIA MURPHEY, LASA SCHOOL NURSE

THE SKINNY

Global News

September

In late September, a Sumatran rhino calf was born in Indonesia. The calf is a member of an extremely endangered species, the Sumatran rhino. The species used to be commonly found in Southeast Asia, according to CNN, until they were nearly hunted to extinction by illegal poaching, and many lost their habitats to urbanization. The calf joins about 40 documented Sumatran rhinos, which live across the Indonesia islands of Borneo and Sumatra.

October 1

Outside Turkey's Interior Ministry building on October 1, a bomb blast killed at least one person and injured two others. The blast was carried out by two attackers, one of which is a confirmed member of the Kurdistan Workers' Party [PKK]. The PKK is classified as a terrorist organization by both Turkey and the United States. In response, the Turkish military carried out airstrikes on PKK centers in Iraq.

September

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau accused the Indian government of being responsible for the death of Sikh leader Hardeep Singh Nijjar on Canadian soil earlier this year. Trudeau says his statement is proven by evidence from Canadian intelligence. Nijjar was an outspoken advocate for the Khalistan movement in India, which promotes Sikh separatism in the country. India had declared Nijjar a wanted terrorist in 2020, according to the BBC.

National News

September 29

On September 29th, longtime Democratic senator Dianne Feinstein died at 90. Feinstein was mayor of San Francisco before serving in the U.S. Senate from 1992-2023, making her California's longest serving senator. As of October 2nd, California Governor Gavin Newsome is expected to name Laphonza Butler to succeed Feinstein. Butler is currently president of EMILY's list, a political action group supporting pro-choice women candidates. Butler will be the third Black female U.S. senator in the country's history.

September 29

On September 29, New York Governor Kathy Hochul declared a state of emergency for several counties in the state. According to the Governor's Office, several days of intense thunderstorms had triggered the announcement, as rain had caused flash flooding, travel disruptions and road closures. A record 8.65 inches of rain fell near the John F. Kennedy Airport in the state, breaking a previous record set in 1960.

October 3

On Tuesday, October 3, the United States House took a historic vote to oust Republican speaker Kevin McCarthy from his post. Far-right members of McCarthy's party united with a small subsection of Democratic representatives to vote McCarthy out of his speakership in a 216 to 210 vote. McCarthy never had full support from his own party, even when he became speaker in January of 2023. The House will have to elect a new speaker to replace McCarthy. According to CNN, no house speaker has ever been removed by a resolution to oust them.

State News

September 16

On September 16, Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton was acquitted of all 16 articles of impeachment by a vote in the Texas Senate. The articles alleged crimes ranging from bribery to corruption. However, according to the Texas Tribune, no single article garnered more than 14 of the necessary 21 votes to convict Paxton. Out of the nineteen Republican senators on the Texas Senate, only two voted for impeachment under any article.

October

The University of Texas football team rose to third in the Associated Press' ranking of college football teams, only ten points behind the University of Michigan as of October 3. Ahead of their upcoming game against the University of Oklahoma, the Longhorns remain undefeated and have won games against Rice, the University of Alabama, Baylor, and the University of Kansas.

Local News

October 6

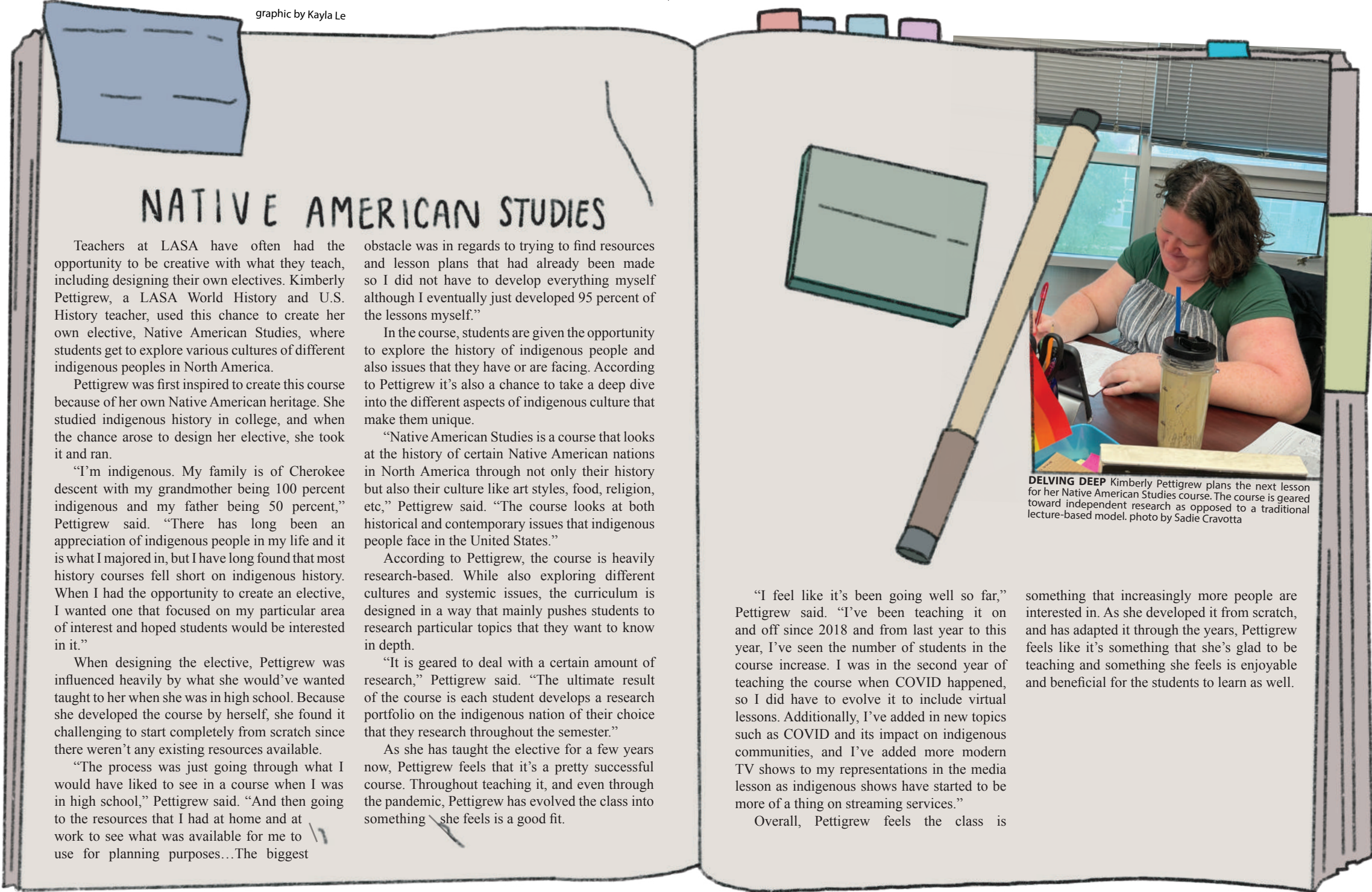
Austin City Limits kicked off on Oct.6 for the two weekends of their annual music festival. This year's headliners include Kendrick Lamar, The Lumineers, Kali Uchis, Foo Fighters, and Mumford and Sons. The festival lasts two weekends, Friday through Sunday, and takes place in Zilker Park with several food and drinks options for festival-goers.

Charting Their Own Course

Liberal Arts and Science Classes Designed by Creative Teachers

LASYA SANGANA
SADIE CRAVOTTA | student life editors

graphic by Kayla Le



DELVING DEEP Kimberly Pettigrew plans the next lesson for her Native American Studies course. The course is geared toward independent research as opposed to a traditional lecture-based model. photo by Sadie Cravotta

NATIVE AMERICAN STUDIES

Teachers at LASA have often had the opportunity to be creative with what they teach, including designing their own electives. Kimberly Pettigrew, a LASA World History and U.S. History teacher, used this chance to create her own elective, Native American Studies, where students get to explore various cultures of different indigenous peoples in North America.

Pettigrew was first inspired to create this course because of her own Native American heritage. She studied indigenous history in college, and when the chance arose to design her elective, she took it and ran.

"I'm indigenous. My family is of Cherokee descent with my grandmother being 100 percent indigenous and my father being 50 percent," Pettigrew said. "There has long been an appreciation of indigenous people in my life and it is what I majored in, but I have long found that most history courses fell short on indigenous history. When I had the opportunity to create an elective, I wanted one that focused on my particular area of interest and hoped students would be interested in it."

When designing the elective, Pettigrew was influenced heavily by what she would've wanted taught to her when she was in high school. Because she developed the course by herself, she found it challenging to start completely from scratch since there weren't any existing resources available.

"The process was just going through what I would have liked to see in a course when I was in high school," Pettigrew said. "And then going to the resources that I had at home and at work to see what was available for me to use for planning purposes...The biggest

obstacle was in regards to trying to find resources and lesson plans that had already been made so I did not have to develop everything myself although I eventually just developed 95 percent of the lessons myself."

In the course, students are given the opportunity to explore the history of indigenous people and also issues that they have or are facing. According to Pettigrew it's also a chance to take a deep dive into the different aspects of indigenous culture that make them unique.

"Native American Studies is a course that looks at the history of certain Native American nations in North America through not only their history but also their culture like art styles, food, religion, etc," Pettigrew said. "The course looks at both historical and contemporary issues that indigenous people face in the United States."

According to Pettigrew, the course is heavily research-based. While also exploring different cultures and systemic issues, the curriculum is designed in a way that mainly pushes students to research particular topics that they want to know in depth.

"It is geared to deal with a certain amount of research," Pettigrew said. "The ultimate result of the course is each student develops a research portfolio on the indigenous nation of their choice that they research throughout the semester."

As she has taught the elective for a few years now, Pettigrew feels that it's a pretty successful course. Throughout teaching it, and even through the pandemic, Pettigrew has evolved the class into something she feels is a good fit.

"I feel like it's been going well so far," Pettigrew said. "I've been teaching it on and off since 2018 and from last year to this year, I've seen the number of students in the course increase. I was in the second year of teaching the course when COVID happened, so I did have to evolve it to include virtual lessons. Additionally, I've added in new topics such as COVID and its impact on indigenous communities, and I've added more modern TV shows to my representations in the media lesson as indigenous shows have started to be more of a thing on streaming services."

Overall, Pettigrew feels the class is

something that increasingly more people are interested in. As she developed it from scratch, and has adapted it through the years, Pettigrew feels like it's something that she's glad to be teaching and something she feels is enjoyable and beneficial for the students to learn as well.

graphic by Asha Rountree

HOW TO BE AN ADULT

When students are not ready to be faced with the crushing disappointment of not getting a job, the stress of finding the perfect (and realistically affordable) apartment, or the perplexing task of writing their own epitaph, the elective How to be an Adult offers a trial run. Corey Snyder, a LASA English III teacher, feels that students are often ill-prepared for the challenges of adulthood and decided to create How to be an Adult to address the issue. In the elective, students learn lessons and skills about adulthood that often aren't taught in class.

"I realized that there were a lot of things that don't get taught that I thought needed to be taught," Snyder said. "Nobody ever taught me how to balance a checkbook, only that I have to take all these science classes, and nobody ever taught me how to cook. I'm going to cook and eat food every day but how often am I going to use algebra? And yet, I spent way more hours in school learning algebra than learning about cooking."

Snyder mentioned that some of the difficulties of implementing his own course were bypassed since at LASA, teachers have more freedom to choose what they teach. However, when explaining the course to students or other adults, he finds trouble describing exactly what subject or department the class fits into.

"It doesn't even really qualify for what they would call a life skills class," Snyder said. "So to try to explain to people that this is a really important class is [difficult] because I can't tell you exactly what kind of class it is because there's not an official qualification for it. Technically, it's categorized as a speech class, which I guess, because I speak in it, and they speak in it. But it's very strange."

Now that the course has been going on for a few years, Snyder feels more comfortable telling his students to trust the process. Through his experience, he has perfected the course and has figured out what lessons work and which ones don't.

"It's hard to prove to people that it's going to work or that it's a good idea when you've never done it before," Snyder said. "Now that it's been going on for a few years, I can rely on that and tell the new people coming in 'just look, we've been doing this for a while I promise you it works.' Once people get the concept, they're usually the students who take the class and come back with good reviews. I have a lot of kids who come back from college and say, 'I used my How to be an Adult skills today.'"

In his course, Snyder wants students to envision their life beginning to end and to start thinking about what their life would be like. He teaches them a variety of valuable skills that they'll eventually need, from basics such as how to cook a meal all the way to what to expect at a funeral or when a death of a loved one occurs in your life.

"We start with food, nutrition, and cooking and groceries," Snyder said. "Then we basically go up Maslow's hierarchy. So starting with the most basic needs that we teach little kids, we teach

them how to eat. Then we go to how to manage your time, and then how to find a job... then at the end of the unit, we talked about what happens when death happens. What happens when we lose loved ones? What is a funeral?"

In comparison to math or English classes, Snyder says there is a lot of immediate gratification that comes with the course. While teaching how to analyze literature, he says the learning process takes a while to develop, but with this class, it's instantaneous.

"It's way easier," Snyder said. "The kids say, 'oh, I never understood that', 'that's how it worked', or 'I'm gonna go use this right now.' That's much more satisfying to me when I can see that kids can immediately and practically use things that we taught."

Snyder wants students to understand that while making a plan is beneficial and helpful, oftentimes things don't go according to plan. He wants them to understand that the unexpected will happen, and their life in the future may not look like what they envision it to be now.

"Make a plan," Snyder said. "Understand that the plan is not going to happen. Right now, for me, this is not what I thought I expected or hoped my life would be like when I was 16. But I'm really glad I didn't get what I wanted when I was 16 because I don't want to be a 46 year old professional skateboarder. I'm really glad that you know my life and perspective changed and so did my goals."

While he wants them to learn to dodge unexpected obstacles, Snyder also aspires for his students to have a better understanding of themselves when the course ends. Along with the course material, he wants them to understand that they are individuals and have their own unique paths.

"I think the most important thing for my students to understand is that each one of us is simultaneously an individual," Snyder said. "Each individual has to figure out what is best for them uniquely and individually. What do you care about, but also, human beings are social animals, none of us lives on an island alone. The trick is finding a middle ground between where you do what you know and what is right for you, but that also plays well with everybody else."

MONEY MONEY Corey Snyder guides his "How to Be an Adult" class through monthly budgeting. The class is aimed at teaching students skills that are not traditionally emphasized in an academic setting. photo by Sadie Cravotta



graphic by Asha Rountree

Constructing Mathematics

For students who can't get enough of math and want to know not just the essentials of math, but also where it comes from, Constructing Mathematics is a class that is designed to meet those interests. This year, James Laughead, a LASA math teacher, is teaching Constructing Mathematics, a class he created where students get to explore how math works and the complex concepts behind it.

Laughead was first inspired to create Constructing Mathematics after teaching Advanced Mathematical Reasoning (AMR). He felt that in AMR, math was presented in an interesting and nuanced way that he and students taking the class found more enjoyable.

"I wanted a class that would deliver an experience like the one I had teaching AMR," Laughead said. "Students work in a relaxed setting focused on understanding rather than memorization or using formulas, with topics that were more familiar to students so that they could see that all math is as interesting and nuanced as the math in AMR, even if they may not have seen it presented that way. This idea quickly led to me designing the course to cover 'all' math."

With Constructing Mathematics, Laughead felt like he had a chance to explore the intricacies of math and let students actually dive into math topics in depth instead of just memorizing and applying them. The course involves a lot of proving why concepts work, and later students have the opportunity to choose what sort of proof they want to focus on whether it be related to Algebra, Calculus, or Physics.

"Constructing Mathematics is a class in which students focus on why ideas in math work," Laughead said. "We prove that a circle's area is πr^2 rather than finding the area of a specific circle that people don't really care about, for example. We start by assuming as little as we possibly can, and aim to prove everything the students have seen in math classes up to Algebra II, and many things they haven't, by building our understanding and theorems from the ground up."

However, the process of creating the elective itself was

very taxing for Laughead. Before creating the class, he had to make sure he understood the content well enough to teach it, which meant doing an extensive review of different math classes and making sure he could retain all the information he learned.

"If I know it well enough to teach it, I want them to be able to explore it," Laughead said. "The process was, honestly, immensely taxing, but very fun. I've been working on this class for about six years and, until very recently, had been spending all of my time merely making sure that I understood the content well enough to teach it. Sure, I know to tell students that multiplying by a negative flips the inequality, but why does that happen? I needed to learn so much, and write it down so that I wouldn't forget it later."

After spending years collecting information, Laughead transferred that into classwork students would be capable of doing and understanding. This summer, he perfected the logistical assessments, classwork, and lessons for the class.

"My summer was busier than it had ever been," Laughead said. "I spent every weekday while my wife was at work either teaching myself new math, writing down my results, creating a lesson to walk students through the ideas, so that they found it more approachable than I did, or making assessments or some other logistical elements of the class."

Since this is the first year Laughead is teaching this class, the main obstacle he experienced was the amount of work that it took to get everything ready. Due to the curriculum being fairly broad, Laughead had to make sure it was manageable for all students alike.

"I do feel like I missed out on summer break almost entirely, which has made it difficult to handle the year so far," Laughead said. "Because the second semester is student-selected content, I also needed a way to standardize lessons and assessments so that students had a similar workload and schedule regardless of what they were working on. This wasn't too hard, as I've always been a man of uniformity, but I know it's impossible to balance it perfectly, so there

will definitely be days that are bumpier than others for some students."

Apart from organizing the curriculum, Laughead said the class is more time consuming compared to other math classes and has different rubrics and grading scopes. Additionally, since it's his first year, Laughead also has to adapt a lot to his students and constantly adjust the workload accordingly.

"It's a lot of work to make content for," Laughead said. "The grading takes far longer than what I'm used to, since I'm judging their logic rather than their result, but it's worth it. I know I want to keep learning new math, so I'll try to find a way to integrate anything new I learn into the course for future years. I've got a to-do list that's quite long already."

Overall, Laughead states that the class seems to be going pretty well so far, with only a few hurdles. According to him, the students seem optimistic about the class, and for the time being he's just taking it lesson by lesson and working on smoothing things out while going through.

"This is meant to be my idea of a perfect math class," Laughead said. "I take every speed bump rather harshly, but it's definitely been enjoyable for me and I hope that they've [the students] felt the same despite what are sometimes some chaotic days. I want my class to reflect what I know how to do myself, and I want to keep learning, so my class will keep growing in scope to match."



SHOW YOUR WORK James Laughead looks over a student's proof in his "Constructing Mathematics" course. In this course, students set out to justify mathematical principles that we often take for granted. photo by Sadie Cravotta

graphic by Asha Rountree

astronomy

Astronomy at LASA is an immersive and hands-on experience for students. Ellen Owens, the Astronomy and Physics II teacher, made changes to the curriculum to make the class more immersive and engaging.

In Astronomy, students have the opportunity to understand what astronomy is and the history behind it. The class counts as a science credit that is weighted like an AP class and is usually filled half with juniors and half with seniors.

"It's a survey of astronomy topics," Owens said. "The main goal being to get students to understand the history of human's relationship with the sky, how we know where in the universe we are, how old the universe and our solar system is, and what the possible futures of the universe are."

Originally, Owens was handed down the coursework from Allison Earnhart, the previous teacher. Although Owens didn't create the Astronomy elective, she has added and removed many lessons over the years and heavily personalized it to what she believes will be the best possible astronomy class for the students.

"LASA has had an astronomy course for a long time," Owens said. "I believe I am the third astronomy teacher. I've made a lot of changes. I've incorporated a lot more lab work, particularly labs that have been put out by the European Space Agency and the University of Nebraska. I've also put a little more about the early philosophy of astronomy and now require students to do one night of observation during the year."

The main obstacle Owens has found with managing the course is finding a balance in what level of difficulty she wants to incorporate into the assignments. Especially with students

at LASA, Owens tries to elevate the difficulty level a little but simultaneously make sure it isn't too challenging.

"A lot of premade content for astronomy tends to fall into two categories," Owens said. "One is content focused on earth and space courses that are primarily middle school level or the other content aimed at university physics and astronomy majors which is a little beyond what we want to do in this class. So finding ways of making assignments both accessible and challenging for LASA students has been the biggest obstacle."

Owens wants the course to connect to modern thinking, which she accomplished by adding more labs and lessons into the course. Additionally, Owens wants to add big changes in the coursework, which she plans on adding when she has time.

"I put a lot more focus on physics labs and ancient philosophies and how they relate to the modern view of the universe to help students connect more to it," Owens said. "I've done it [astronomy] so much I can walk in and do it but as I said, it's due for an overhaul soon. So next year or the year after I might give it a big change."

Currently, the Astronomy class has been going pretty well, according to Owens. The only thing she's planning on fixing with the course this year is updating the coursework to match more recent discoveries. Otherwise, she feels the class is nailed down.

"I'm on year six and I love the course," Owens said. "I've gotten better at teaching it, it's almost due for an overhaul now that we have so many new discoveries. There is a lot of change going on in astronomy right now and I'll soon need to change the course to suit, but it's a great elective because it's naturally fascinating to many people, but a topic very few know the ins and outs of."



ALL THE STARS Ellen Owens shows off her poster of luminous stars. Though the Astronomy course has been taught for years now, the curriculum is updated periodically to accommodate new discoveries. photo by Griffin Beam

Q&A About David Walker's Experience In Peru

TITA GONZALEZ | staff writer

LASA Planet Earth, and Organic Chemistry teacher David Walker traveled to Peru for a study abroad teacher-based program over the summer. The program, called the U.S. Fulbright Program, gave him the opportunity to design a science curriculum for Peruvian schools and participate in several culturally significant celebrations such as the Incan celebration Inti Raymi and the Catholic celebration Corpus Christi. He will host a lunchtime lecture in the library on Friday, October 20 to share his experience.

The Liberator: Where did you stay in Peru and for how long?

Walker: I lived in Cusco, Peru, during June, July, and the first week of August. Cusco is in the alpine region of Peru and has an elevation of 1,150 feet above sea level.

The Liberator: Why did you visit Peru, and what did you do there?

Walker: The U.S. Fulbright Program gives teachers the opportunity to travel abroad and gain teaching experience. I designed an environmental science program for secondary school students in the city of Cusco.

The Liberator: What was the primary language spoken?

Walker: Most of my colleagues spoke Spanish and solely Spanish. It was very much a learning experience for me; I didn't come into the experience being fluent in Spanish.

The Liberator: Did you notice any differences between Spanish that you might hear in Texas and Peruvian Spanish?

Walker: Sure, there are expressions in both places that are

unique to those areas. Cusco has a lot of unique phrases like "¡que papaya!", which means "that was super easy!", and no one in Mexico would understand what you were saying.

The Liberator: I find the cultural differences between languages fascinating.

Walker: I agree. For example, Peru is very Catholic, and there's an interesting dichotomy because Peruvians are also very attached to their Incan heritage. The reason why there's a lot of Catholic influence in the area is because the Spanish conquered the Incas. While I was in Peru, there were many things being celebrated, both Incan heritage days and Catholic heritage days. June was a prime month for both of those things happening simultaneously. It felt like every week, there was something different that was being celebrated. They have this main plaza, El Plaza de Armas, which is the big spot where everybody meets.

The Liberator: Did you ever go to any festivals in the plaza?

Walker: Yep, in my work with the school we even participated in some of them. In June, they celebrated Inti Raymi, which is the most famous celebration of the Inca. It's a celebration of the sun, and it occurs around the winter solstice, which marks the beginning of the sun's return to Earth. There was a huge celebration with parades associated with it, and we all participated. I got to dress up in the traditional garb. They brought all this stuff for me because I was in the parade. That day, the people parading were from all of the different schools in Cusco. The festival was so large and every day there were people from different disciplines and different walks of life. We did a parade for Corpus Christi as well, which is a famous Catholic holiday.

The Liberator: Do you have new insight or experience that

you can take into the classroom?

Mr. Walker: I learned a lot more about environmental science. I've never taught AP Environmental Science or a strictly environmental science class. The first thing I did to prepare for this is that I just read environmental science textbooks because there are a lot of things that we do in Planet Earth that are in the context of environmental science, but not the whole discipline. In my experience, I learned specifically about Peru, which is incredibly unique in terms of the environment and biodiversity there. The Cusco area is a biodiversity hotspot and has some of the most unique species on the planet.

The Liberator: With this experience studying abroad, what will your next steps be in the future involving travel?

Walker: It's my favorite type of professional development! I enjoy traveling. I enjoy experiences that challenge me and prompt me to learn about new things. If I can keep myself excited as a teacher about the natural world, then that will spill over in terms of improving my ability to teach.



CELEBRATING IN CUSCO David Walker participates in a parade for Inti Raymi. He is dressed in traditional clothing. photo courtesy of David Walker

AI Affects the Classroom

FUGO TOMII | staff writer

The extensive growth of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the 21st century has caused the education landscape to rapidly evolve, according to The New York Times. With the emergence of writing generative AI, such as ChatGPT, many LASA teachers have enforced policies to both capitalize on and reduce the damage of AI.

Various educational departments at LASA are taking different approaches to implementing or blocking AI in their curriculums. Classes such as AP Statistics encourage the use of AI if it is beneficial to the learning process, asking students who use ChatGPT to mark AI as a collaborator on their homework assignments. Meanwhile, LASA English classes are taking the opposite stance and are strongly discouraging students from taking advantage of it. They have taken measures to prevent academic dishonesty using AI, such as using AI plagiarism checkers and requiring students to submit a link to their Google Docs to check their editing history.

Benjamin Rodriguez, a LASA AP Physics One teacher, is an advocate for the benefits of AI within the school environment. He believes in the power of AI and the potential of providing students with invaluable resources and personalized learning experiences.

"As the teacher, I would encourage my students to use it," Rodriguez said. "I was a fan of all of the opportunities that generative AI was presenting to me. I am very interested in the ways that I can use it naturally. I was encouraging my students to explore, not just so that they can understand what generative AI is actually doing, but also so that they can get an intuition for what this specific generative AI like Chat GPT could possibly do for them."

Rodriguez has witnessed the real-life benefits of using AI as a learning tool for students. His students use ChatGPT to fine-tune their physics concepts and get clarification on harder material, especially in labs.

"In my classroom, students take data from a lab and put it into tables, expressing the physics behind what that data table is representing and then allowing a generative AI like Chat GPT to either critique their thoughts or help them elaborate on the types of observations they have been making in a lab," Rodriguez said. "It's in those lab reports that I've really said 'Yeah, plug in what you think might be useful and see

what kind of information it spits out. See if that actually spurs your imagination or helps you to actually get your thoughts on paper.' Because sometimes it will, in an effective way."

While Rodriguez emphasized the potential of AI to enhance the learning experience, there are also some disadvantages to AI, according to LASA English Department Chair and English III teacher Caroline Pinkston. She pointed out significant drawbacks to AI, specifically mentioning instances where ChatGPT has negatively impacted a student's learning ability by generating an essay on their behalf.

"The real goal is having you go through the process of coming up with the ideas and revising your work and articulating those ideas," Pinkston said. "So if you've got something to create the product for you, then you've kind of missed the point and lost the learning that we were hoping you would get."

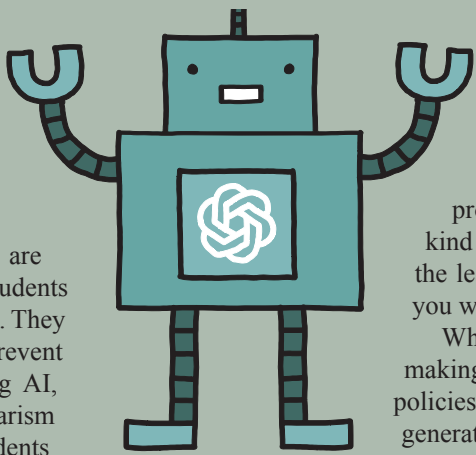
While Pinkston explores making changes to classroom policies to make up for AI-generated cheating, students such as junior Samuel Li are taking note of the way their learning is being impacted. Li believes that AI can be a helpful resource for students when there is no teacher around to explain class material.

"When I'm studying, if I don't know how to solve a problem, I can ask AI how to solve it," Li said. "This can be really good for students since they can learn from the process."

Although Li has personally witnessed the benefits of AI, he recognizes that AI has been more harmful than beneficial for students who prioritize grades over learning. He believes that the policies monitoring AI lack enforcement power.

"I feel like while the policies are good in nature, without any enforcement, it is impossible to stop students from using AI," Li said. "Many just use AI as a way to [get] better grades on certain assessments or certain projects. There are always ways to make it so that it doesn't look like AI answered the question, so it's very hard to crack down on this type of behavior."

LASA policy for AI-generated learning is still being modified as updated versions of technology like ChatGPT keep being released. Subject departments will continue to evaluate the effects of AI and adjust curriculums accordingly.



graphic by Rahi Deo

New College Counselor

APOLLO DAHMUS | staff writer

As LASA seniors scramble to meet college deadlines, they turn to college counselors for advice to help them finalize their college materials. This year, Rubi Zeledón has joined the college guidance team as a new college counselor for the school. She will be in charge of seniors with A-L last names.

Previously, Zeledón has had experience as a college counselor for 11 years in Nicaragua, but she expects there will be some differences in her responsibilities and experience here at LASA. While in Nicaragua, Zeledón was more of a general counselor for seniors rather than strictly an academic one. Although some aspects of her job are the same, the major differences she is experiencing at LASA are mainly an increased number of students she works with and a more specific area of focus she works with them on.

"It's bigger, that I can tell you, a lot more students," Zeledón said. "In my previous job, I was in charge of 60 students, here I'm in charge of more than 100. Also, in my previous job, I was also the social-emotional counselor for seniors. Here, I'm able to focus mainly on college applications and the college application process for students."

For senior Bahar Aghili, meetings with Zeledón have been incredibly helpful as she prepares to apply for college. Her meetings have been filled with advice on college essays, how to fill out her Common Application, and narrowing down the list of colleges she wants to apply to.

"When I had my meeting with her, we discussed specific supplemental essays of mine," Aghili said. "She really

opened me up to new ideas and was really supportive, but also guided my choices in a way that was beneficial to me and really helped me realize what the question of the supplemental prompt was asking."

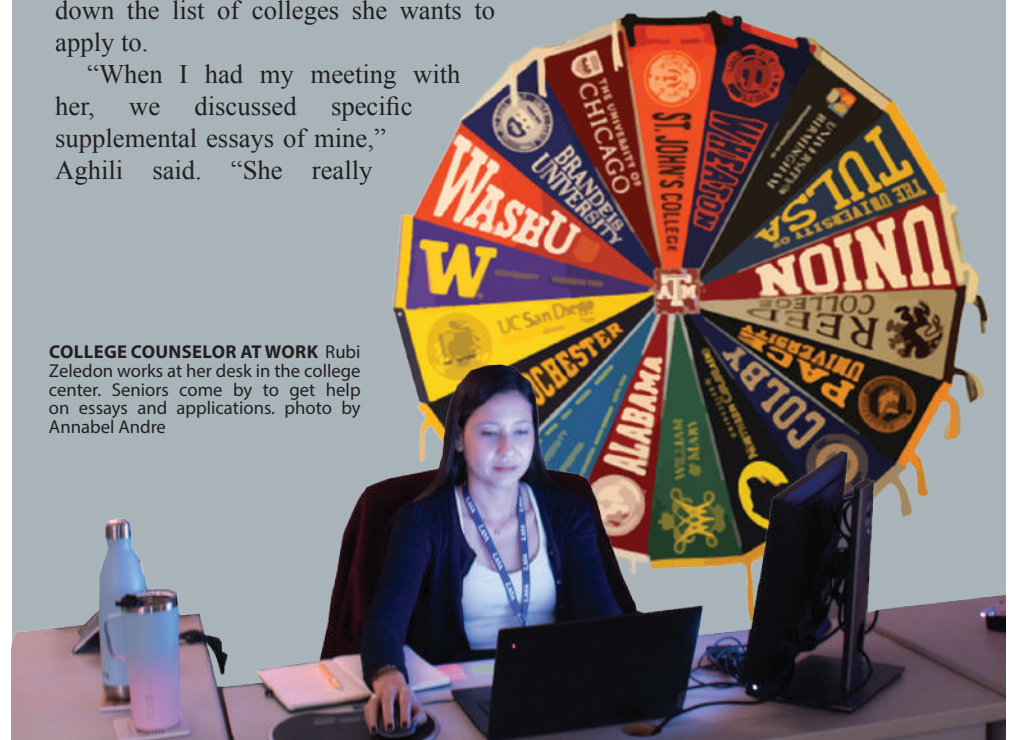
Senior Mia Larson has also had meetings with Zeledón and said that she has made her feel more confident about the college application process. Larson feels that Zeledón relieves some of the stress seniors take from trying to find colleges that fit them and navigating the application process.

"I would recommend other seniors talk to her, especially if they don't have a private counselor," Larson said, "or [if they] are feeling behind or confused about any aspects of the application process. She reviewed my college list and my personal statement and provided feedback that I will definitely use to revise them."

Zeledón has met with over 50 students so far and said she has loved every single meeting. She wants to give the students time to communicate with her and hopes they will come to believe in her.

"I want to be an asset of support for students," Zeledón said. "Someone who students can reach out to get guidance to pursue and achieve their dreams. Whenever I get to meet with students, I just feel so happy and I leave so happy."

COLLEGE COUNSELOR AT WORK Rubi Zeledón works at her desk in the college center. Seniors come by to get help on essays and applications. photo by Annabel Andre



Growing Incoming Class Size and its Impact on LASA

HARRISON CHAMBERS | staff writer

Jammed hallways and dwindling parking spaces are the symptoms of LASA's increased student population, which is larger than Johnston High School's biggest ever. This year's student body tops last year's total of 1,309 students with around 1,520 students, but there's also an overall teacher and staff shortage. As a result, many concerns surrounding traffic, class sizes, and funding have risen.

According to LASA Principal Stacia Crezensci, when LASA shared a campus with Lyndon Baines Johnson High School, limited space forced admissions to be capped at 200 people per grade level, which didn't allow her to accept all the students who were qualified for LASA. Moving buildings allowed her to fix this problem and admit more applicants.

"Part of the reason for us to move to this building, one of the major parts, is that we were actually saying no to more students that qualified than [we] were saying yes," Crezensci said. "Out of 700, there would be 600 kids that would have qualified. And now [we] can accept more people that qualify."

However, as the school year has started with a significant increase in students and fewer teachers, the impacts can be felt across all areas of LASA, according to freshman David Buckley. He observed several examples of issues resulting from the larger student population, including the extensive lunch lines and crowded hallways.

"It's been a very big problem actually," Buckley said. "I've seen individuals having to wait their whole lunch in line, and they don't even end up eating."

Buckley mentions similar problems with overcrowding in buses and parking lots, which not only impacts students, but the neighborhood around LASA as well. In regard to this, Crezensci explains

that the increase in student population isn't necessarily the cause of stress for the neighborhood.

"It's not us slowly getting bigger that really is the big factor of stress with the neighbors," Crezensci said. "It's that we're here with this many kids at all. Any school coming in with double the number they've ever seen, that's crazy. Now over 20 times the number that they may have seen in the virtual year, and because we're not a neighborhood school, we have more kids that drive than the average school."

Shaun Cuttill, a Sci-Tech teacher, also mentioned that larger classes have come with their own hassles, including teaching more students per class, which require him to go the extra mile to make sure every student understands content. However, Cuttill supports the decision to increase class size because it allows more students the opportunity to be at LASA.

"The more kids that are in class, the harder it is," Cuttill said. "Especially when we're doing things we do in Sci-Tech like large projects and such, right. So making sure that everybody is on task all the time is difficult. However, in the past, we weren't able to accept everyone that would have qualified to come to LASA. So now having our own campus and being able to accept more students

allows more students that would qualify for LASA to come to LASA."

A larger class size means it will be difficult for students to personally know the faces of everyone in their grade. Crezensci hopes to focus on maintaining a tight-knit community at LASA, even as the number of students increases.

"As you add students, it's important to still have a culture that is collaborative and focused on learning," Crezensci said. "We want every student to feel like they found their place, know lots of people, and don't feel like 'wow this is so big I feel like being on an island.'"

While there have been many challenges with the rise in the student population, Crezensci feels that, overall, this is for the better. Aside from all the drawbacks, there have been many benefits from the more diverse student body and the perspectives that are offered.

"The more students that you have, the more depth you can have in various extracurriculars," Crezensci said. "When you accept more students, you can accept more diversity in each grade level. And the more diversity you have, the richer the conversations are in the classroom."



graphic by Asha Rountree

LASA Implements New Rules Around Campus

IZZY CRAVOTTA | staff writer

Throughout the years, the regulations at LASA have changed gradually. However, this year, there have been larger changes regarding the administration's rules and expectations. Examples of these changes include stricter phone policies in the hallways and classrooms, thorough regulation of student IDs, especially when entering the building in the morning, and increased monitoring regarding hallwalking.

For students who have been at LASA for several years, like junior Mia Sledge, it is important for them to remind themselves of the new regulations to set an example for underclassmen. However, according to Sledge, this can be difficult as the new policies sometimes feel bothersome.

"We barely used our IDs [last year], at least that was my experience," Sledge said. "We had more freedom in bathroom breaks and stuff like being able to take phones out and not needing IDs. Freshman year, we barely even had hall passes."

Though Sledge finds following some of the new rules to be tedious, she understands the importance behind implementing them. With school violence and intruders being a constant presence in the news, she believes that many of these rules are necessary to maintain the safety of the student body and faculty. However, there are still some rules that feel pointless to her.

"I mean, they [the rules] are kind of warranted because of the danger schools are in. The IDs [make sense]," Sledge said. "However, I think it's not warranted to make sure only seniors are leaving during lunch because anyone with a license should be able to go. Also, I don't really think no phones outside the classroom or no clubs on Friday is warranted. No clubs on Friday is just a weird and random [rule]."

According to Principal Stacia Crescenzi, freeing up Friday lunches is meant to allow teachers who sponsor clubs to use that time to either

socialize or plan lessons. Sledge feels that the old rules were easier to follow. There were less conditions and specifications involved, which she said was preferred.

"I felt pretty good about them because they weren't strict, so there weren't as many things we needed to remember to bring or leave behind whenever we left class," Sledge said. "It would depend on the rule. I think asking for IDs is a pretty fine way to enforce it."

Junior Leo De Los Santos believes the rules have many additional beneficial effects than safety, such as teaching discipline to students. While De Los Santos believes the new rules have gotten much stricter from last year, they don't interfere with his day-to-day life.

"The rules are honestly not that bad," De Los Santos said. "I think it's not that big of a deal but you know, it's definitely different. I do wish juniors could leave during school to get lunch. The IDs aren't that bad because I can just carry it in my pocket."

The stricter policies surrounding IDs are in accordance with the rise of gun violence in schools. According to Everytown for Gun Safety, there have been at least 102 incidents of gunfire in schools in 2023. Senior Anya Ruttala recognizes this concern and the need for extra precautions.

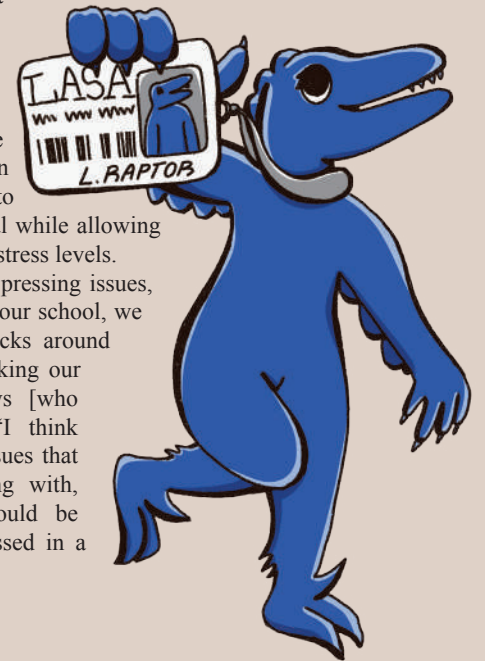
"For IDs, I think the administrators are just worried about safety with our political climate in America, and the fact that everyone is scared to go to school in this country," Ruttala said. "It's just to put an extra safety precaution. They're weird about leaving the parking lot too; you have to have your ID to leave, especially because you have to be a senior to park there."

However, Ruttala believes that stricter rules can sometimes have the opposite effect of reassuring students as they can bring the realities of the dangers of school into the forefront of students' minds. She believes that a student's comfort should be taken into consideration when enforcing these rules.

"I think if you talk to students, you'll realize it is more important to make them feel like they're going to a safe school without feeling uncomfortable," said Ruttala. "I feel like having an ID everywhere is just extra. The parking rules are weird too, like I get parking in the lot only if you're a senior, but leaving the lot and having IDs is just making people's lives harder without enforcing the [safety] rules that they want to enforce."

Ruttala believes that there are more important issues to be worrying about if the school wants to focus on student safety and comfort. She also believes that the current regulations can be enforced differently to accomplish the same goal while allowing students to maintain low stress levels.

"I think there's more pressing issues, like we have asbestos in our school, we have people moving bricks around the parking lot and blocking our cars and nobody knows [who it is]," said Ruttala. "I think there are more urgent issues that they need to be dealing with, and safety concerns could be gone about being addressed in a different way."



graphic by Amelia Coleman

Students Spend Break At Summer Camps

BISHOP BRITT | staff writer

This summer, LASA students had opportunities to explore various sorts of camps around the world. Some students had a chance to cultivate their skills in their extracurriculars or academics whereas others got to try completely new activities.

Whichever summer camp they went to, students had

a lot to say about their time there and their experiences.

For sophomore Gabe Reynolds, his experience involved spending two weeks in the summer heat at Texas Ultimate Frisbee Camp to hone his skills for the upcoming season. The chance to keep up with his extracurriculars during summer months was a key factor for him choosing a camp so that he would be prepared when the school year began.

"As I keep playing ultimate, I want to keep improving," Reynolds said. "The best part about this camp is definitely the really nice coaches, also the sheer amount that you can improve your skill, or at least retaining your muscle

memory so you don't lose any skill over summer. It's also a really friendly environment. You have a lot of fun everyday, you can get out a lot of energy so you don't feel so lazy during summer."

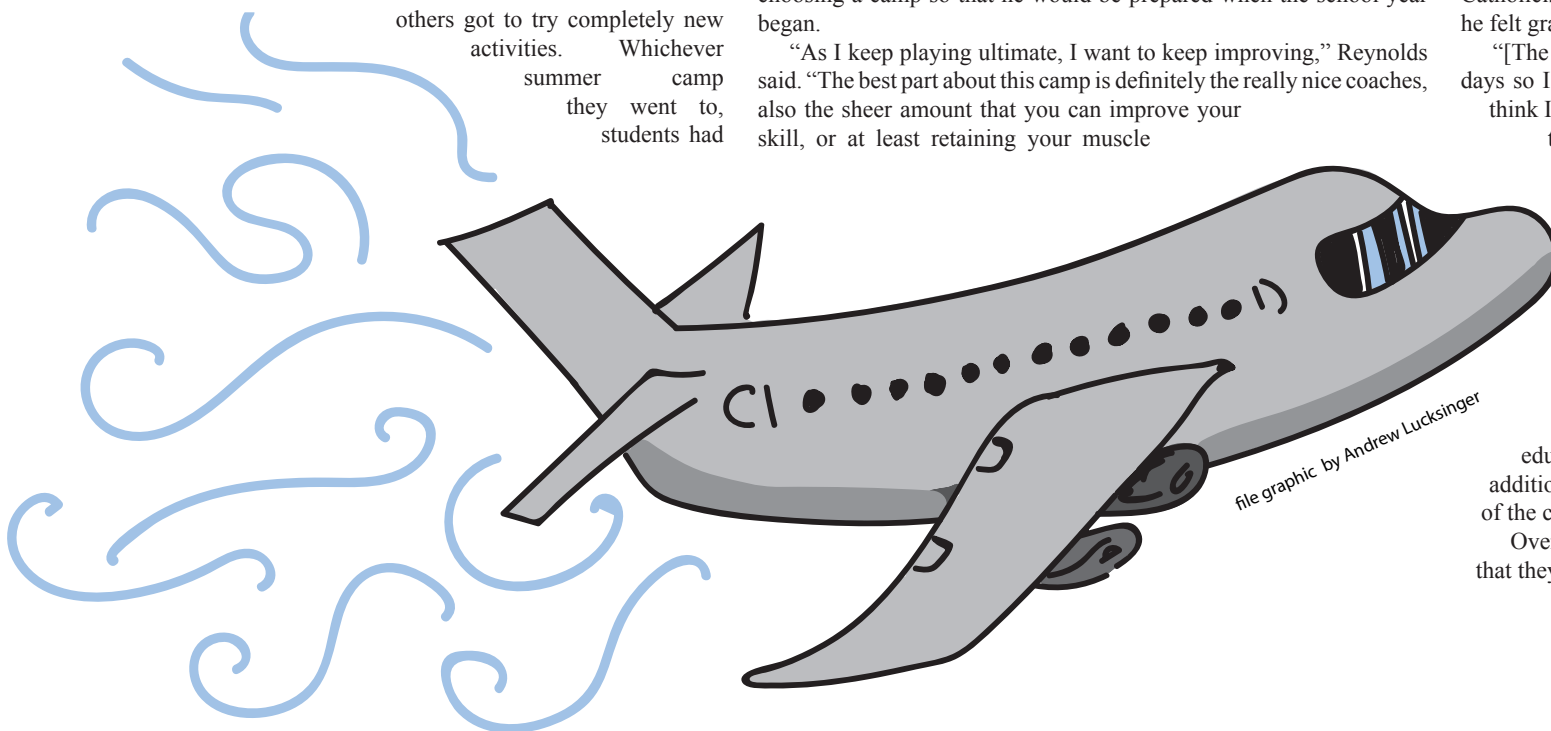
Halfway across the world, sophomore Emiliano Moreno traveled to Barcelona for El Campamento Catolico de Barca to learn more about Catholicism. It was a quick two-day spur-of-the-moment trip, though he felt gratified from it, as he learned a lot about his family culture.

"[The trip] was kind of out of nowhere, and I only went for two days so I didn't get the full experience of it," Moreno said. "I don't think I'll ever go again, it's more of a one and done type of thing as they most likely just teach the same history every year, but it was really cool to see a lot of cool buildings in Barcelona."

Sophomore Anya Weintraub enjoyed her experience in a different way, explaining how her camp, the Austin Chamber Music camp, helped her stay up to date with her violin skills. Although it was tiring for her, Weintraub felt like the work was fulfilling and the people she got to meet were worth it.

"It did really help me with my music career in the long run," Weintraub said. "I think the best thing about this camp is the people there; they are all really talented and educated in music and it's really great to learn from them in addition to the coaching. This camp is different from others because of the community we build."

Overall, for all three students, camp was a memorable experience that they will try to keep with them into the school year.



file graphic by Andrew Luckinger

Female Movies go Gerwig

Reviewing Films Directed by Greta Gerwig

MEGAN GEROLD | entertainment editor

Lady Bird

Films directed by Greta Gerwig often explore the relationships between women, and for Lady Bird, that relationship is between mother and daughter. Lady Bird is a story of motherhood, daughterhood, and the changing of those bonds when coming of age. It's also a painfully accurate story depicting identity and how we grapple with the way we were born versus the identity we are making for ourselves.

Little Women is a winter classic filled with warm tones and baked goods that are almost possible to smell through the screen. The movie is sisterhood and girlhood tied up in a comforting package. However, it's also a slightly depressing and truthful tale of the realities of life. The dramatic themes of love and loss played out in 1860s Massachusetts are themes that continue to be relevant today. Gerwig's adaptation of Little Women is one that exemplifies sisterhood: the highs and the lows, and everything in between.

LITTLE WOMEN

Barbie is a new star-studded film that explores what it means to be a woman. This Gerwig movie portrays relationships between all women — from the president to the most stereotypical Barbie, the women in Barbie Land represent all of the hopes and dreams of little girls around the world. Barbie is another one of Gerwig's heartfelt movies that still reflects the harsh reality of the negativity that comes from being a woman.

Barbie

graphics by Amelia Coleman

SAG-AFTRA Strikes Back

APOLLO DAHMUS | staff writer

Writers and actors alike want higher minimum pay, guaranteed residuals, and reassurance that their jobs will not be replaced by the growing threat of artificial intelligence (AI) in the Hollywood industry.

The Writers Guild of America (WGA) was originally on strike from May 2 to September 26, but The Screen Actors Guild and American Federation of Television and Radio Artists (SAG-AFTRA) joined the strike on July 14. This was the first time writers and actors have been on strike together since the 1960s, and this time the number of those on strike surpassed 65,000 people. While the WGA was able to successfully reach a deal with studios, SAG-AFTRA is still fighting for their rights in Hollywood. Similar to the reasoning of the WGA strike, part of the purpose of the SAG-AFTRA strike is to ensure that human jobs have a safety net against AI, which can be used to replicate the voice or image of a performer. The importance of human-operated jobs is, in my eyes, crucial to the product and quality of the work. AI can make mistakes or create poorly generated work, but man-made content usually feels less robotic. AI doesn't have the ability to feel, meaning it could be hard for it to make convincing or realistic work, especially for some entertainment genres such as horror.

According to law firm DLA Piper's article about the SAG-AFTRA guidelines, those on strike may not accept any jobs or advertise upcoming or previously created films. However, that hasn't stopped some celebrities, like Selena Gomez, from breaking the strike. After she posted on Instagram about her series on Hulu, she received comments informing her about how it was disrespectful to the strike and the people on strike, telling her she should delete the post.

Crossing the picket line, as Gomez has done, is disrespectful towards the strike and the people striking, even if the picket line isn't physical in this case. It demonstrates complete disregard for the strike, as well as the sacrifices people have put into it and the risks they are

taking to stand up for themselves and others in the industry.

Many involved in the strike are worried about finances. For the duration of the strike, many in the entertainment industry hadn't been earning a salary. While this wasn't a problem for A-list celebrities, many smaller actors or writers faced economic fallout. For some people involved in the Hollywood industry, finance can be unstable and unpredictable, which was intensified by the length of the strike.

According to Business Insider, an unnamed Hollywood insider said that they were planning to let the writer's strike drag on until writers ran out of money. Allowing those on strike to continue until they run out of money or lose their homes, and then ending it after strikers are rendered bankrupt is absolutely horrible and disgusting. Even if this sentiment was a merely scare tactic, it left writers and actors feeling anxious and disrespected.

37,700 jobs and around \$2.1 billion have been lost from the economy of California, according to the Milken Institute. Movies and series have stopped being produced, and the production will continue to be paused until the end of the strike. According to the Writers Guild of America (WGA), the amount that writers get paid has decreased by 4 percent throughout the decade, and 23 percent if you adjust for inflation.

The best end to the strike would definitely be Hollywood agreeing to the terms the WGA and SAG-AFTRA have laid out. The terms are reasonable and more than fair for the writers who have been underpaid for far too long. Plus, after the end of the WGA strike, SAG-AFTRA has been negotiating the end of the strike and the terms that come with it with several studios and corporations. Hopefully, the WGA strike also ends soon with both writers and actors receiving the proper and just compensation.



graphics by Amelia Coleman

Survival of the Fitted

Liberator editors chose some of their favorite outfits from the hallways of LASA.

ANNABEL ANDRE | editor-in-chief
LILI XIONG | managing editor



Found at a craft fair



YESSTYLE

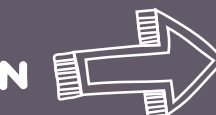
Rebecca Scaramuzzi

Favorite part of outfit: dress

"I like how sparkly it is, and wearing it makes me feel very powerful."



PACSUN



YESSTYLE

Dr. Martens

Bo Wang

Favorite part of outfit: skirt

"I like how cute it is."



JASTUDIOCO

Student owned business

shirt and jeans from:

MONKIES
Vintage & Thrift

NIKE

Riley McKinley

Favorite part of outfit: shirt

"I like how worn it is, it has personality to it."

Día de Los Muertos

graphic by Asha Rountree

Symbols of Celebration

MEGAN GEROLD | entertainment editor
AMELIA COLEMAN | graphics editor



Calaveras

Calaveras, or sugar skulls, can hold different meanings for people. For some, calaveras brighten up the altars of their deceased loved ones, representing the sweetness of life of departed souls. For others, calaveras are meant to be given to children with their names written across the top in order to protect them. They also range in size, color, and decoration. From purples to blues, and flowers to leaves, calaveras are bright artistic pieces of culture.

Marigolds

Of the many flowers involved in Día de Los Muertos, marigolds have become a well known symbol of the celebration. Marigold flowers are thought to attract deceased souls, so they are often used as arches, on ofrendas, and as petal paths.

Papel

Papel picado flags, which are hung up around Día De Los Muertos, are meant to signify the link between life and death. The tissue paper, which the flags are usually made of, represent the fragility of life. The paper blowing in the breeze shows that a family's loved ones have returned for the celebration. Papel picado is usually made of layers of tissue paper folded and cut in such a way that when unfolded, the paper flags all show the same beautiful design

graphics by Asha Rountree

Day Of The Dead in Austin

REBECCA GONZALEZ | staff writer

Since the Aztec Empire, Día de los Muertos has been a time of reverence to honor those who have come before. It is a celebration of the lives of lost loved ones and a way to remember one's ancestors. Celebrated on Nov. 2, the holiday is an essential part of Latinidad heritage and culture. Recently, the celebration has become more widely acknowledged, with many people from different cultures using it to recall their lost family members.

One of the most essential pieces of the celebration is the altar, according to LASA Spanish teacher Luis Ramirez. Altars are brightly decorated and adorned with pictures and objects that represent the ancestor's life. They also contain food and alcohol due to the belief that this will give one's ancestors nourishment for their journey to the afterlife.

"We use an altar for praying," Ramirez said. "It's really something to remember someone's story or your ancestors, those that came before you, and celebrating their life. I would consider it like a memorial."

Remembering and celebrating the life of a loved one is a heavy topic. Although the altar is used to honor life, the altar can make celebrating more complicated when families see and are reminded of objects and pictures of their loved ones.

"When I create my altar every couple of years, I add somebody, and that's something that really hits," Ramirez said.

Even though Día de los Muertos started as an intimate holiday, throughout the years it has become a public celebration with parades and parties. At LASA, the Hispanic Student Association (HSA) hosts the celebration. Senior Miguel Urrieta is an HSA committee member who helps with organizing the festivities.

"Last year we had an altar set up at the library, and it was decorated with important Mexican icons like Selena Quintanilla," Urrieta said. "It's important to have [these types of] pictures because it's the way that we remember them."

Alongside the growth of Día de los Muertos throughout the country, LASA has also celebrated this tradition more over the past few years. As more people have tuned into Día de Los Muertos, the celebrations have grown into many different types of commemorations.

"Last year I definitely saw that many students participated regardless of being Hispanic or not because they liked it, and I think they found the

significance behind it," Urrieta said.

Austin's Día de los Muertos parade hosted by the Mexic-Arte Museum is one of the larger celebrations in the city. The museum has historically celebrated Día de los Muertos with its extravagant parade and altar. Lusía Perez works at the Mexic-Arte Museum as the Education Curator and her job entails introducing the celebration and other crucial aspects of Latinidad to schools and organizations around the city.

"The museum and the organization were created as a way for Chicano and Latinx artists to have a platform for their art," Perez said.

Her job allows her to connect with her recently immigrated community and educate others about theirs. For many, this reconnection of culture is crucial after recently having moved to the United States.

"I love to be able to reach a community here in Austin," Perez said. "I'm away from my home, but I feel like I'm at home. There's just so much to love. So much to do, so much love."

Unlike LASA's celebration, the Mexic-Arte museum's citywide celebration has a much higher attendance. With this large number of people comes a large amount of planning for Perez.

"We start [preparing in] August," Perez said. "It's a challenge. I think we're 12 people. And among us 12, we do everything."

Last year, the parade had around 20,000 people attending, which can be a large undertaking to coordinate with a small number of people since there is so much to be done, according to Perez. The event has many small components making it even more complex.

"Artists are more involved in the creation of the pieces rather than the parade itself," Perez said. "It's very diverse. That's why I like it. And we also have the festival where we do have an educational booth and we do have vendors and those vendors include artists from the community."

Overall, this holiday has become a meaningful celebration in the city and at LASA, and especially to families across Austin. The city has also been an essential factor in the celebration.

"I think it would be impossible not to like to collaborate with them [the city]," Perez said.

This holiday is becoming more than just a celebration within families that are a part of Latinidad — it has grown to encompass the whole city. For many, like Perez, it is a beautiful and bright celebration with a complex meaning to celebrate ancestors and heritage.

For the Record: Local Austin Vinyl Shops

Austin has donned the title of the "Live Music Capital of the World", and with that title comes an extensive selection of record stores. According to the Texas Music Industry Directory, the Austin area is home to around 44 record stores. With the resurgence of vinyl records in recent years, we search for something tangible in our ever-changing digital world, and many people have started investing in record-collecting. Below are some iconic places in Austin to find your vinyl fix.

KATIE BUSBY | entertainment editor

South Austin's End of an Ear holds an extensive selection of records. Everyone can find their niche — especially those looking for psych records or experimental reggae, genres that are hard to come by in other record stores. The owner, Dan Plunkett, has enjoyed collecting music across different genres since a young age, and that interest is still shown in the store's extensive selection.

"There's some [people] that are super hardcore," Plunkett said. "And then some are just casual, like, 'I've heard this band. Do y'all have it?'"

Plunkett and his partner, Blake Carlisle first opened End of an Ear in 2005. Just

a couple of years later, vinyl made an unprecedented comeback into mainstream culture.

"People want something tangible that they can touch," Plunkett said. "You scratched it, but the click becomes your copy. Like, I miss having that click there, that's my copy."

The store was originally on South First St. until the landlord sold it in 2016.

They then relocated slightly farther north near Ben White.

"There'll be whole families that come in here and maybe one of the kids is buying something," Plunkett said. "The grandmother, she recognizes certain things, like 'Oh, I used to love this record.'"

IN BETWEEN THE GROOVES Antone's Record Shop's mural (left) shines among vinyls. Waterloo records (middle) basks in the sunlight of downtown Austin. End Of An Ear (right) stands tall against the gloomy sky. photos by Katie Busby (left), Megan Gerold (middle), and contributed by Allison Gerold (right).

BENJAMIN GOODMAN | staff writer

Nestled on a busy stretch of Guadalupe St. and flanked by the big burnt orange buildings of UT Austin (UT) sits Antone's. The walls are lined with a diverse range of genres of records, from classic Texas country to funk to new pop records. People trickle in off "The Drag", the nickname given to the section of Guadalupe St. lined with shops on the west side of UT, to encounter old posters all over the walls, music playing over the speakers, and a friendly staff. Manager Ray Colgen appreciates the variety the store provides for people including both used and new records, CDs, and vinyl accouterments.

"I like that you can kind of dig, find some treasures when you're looking through everything," Colgen said. "I like that there are a lot of different types of stuff, different kinds of music. It's not just one genre. Also, [I like] just the stories you get to hear working here and the good music. Shopping here, you get to be around good music and you get to look for different types of stuff that maybe you've heard about."

According to the store's website, when Clifford

Antone first came to Austin, he founded a nightclub called Antone's, which quickly started hosting performers, especially those who played in Blues music. Continuing the legacy of the nightclub, Antone's record shop was opened in 1978, right across the street from where the nightclub was at the time.

"There's a lot of cool people that come in, so you get to meet all kinds of different people from all over the world," Colgen said. "People looking for music that they like, and you get to help them find stuff that they're interested in, and it makes them happy."

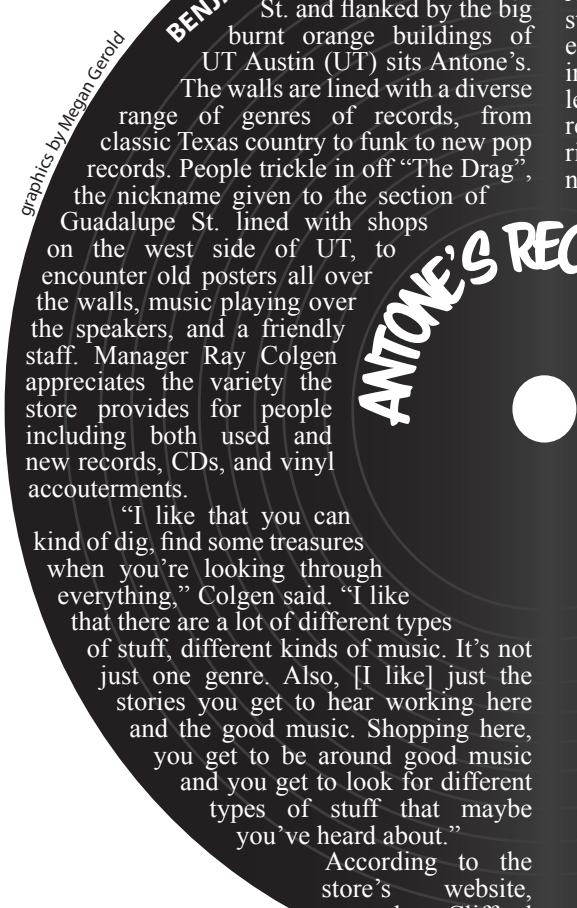
END OF AN EAR

ELLINGTON TOUGH | staff writer

Opened in 1982, Waterloo Records has been a part of Austin's music history for a long time. Andy Pluta is an employee at Waterloo who has worked at the store for over 20 years, around half the lifetime of the store. According to him, the store has changed a lot over that time, but has always remained a core part of the Austin music scene.

"We've always been very supportive of the local music scene, and we have our in-store performances that are still pretty big. It's been a hub for music lovers in Austin for over 40 years now," Pluta said.

The record store is a well respected landmark in Austin, having been voted "Best Record Store" by the Austin Chronicle Reader's Poll every year since the category



graphics by Megan Gerold

editorial All For One, Concerts for All

MILLER WILLIAMS | staff writer

Ticketmaster was founded in 1976 by two Arizona State University students, Albert Leffler and Peter Gadwa. The company was founded to make concert tickets more accessible and affordable, but results show that the exact opposite is happening. On the release day of tickets for Taylor Swift's Eras Tour, ticket prices ranged from hundreds to thousands of dollars, or at least that's what Ticketmaster told its customers. With fees and extra taxes, tickets ended up being outrageously priced. These prices have still gone up significantly after the release of Eras Tour tickets, and prices for other concerts have gone up drastically since then as well, according to Time Magazine.

Taylor Swift announced her Eras Tour in November 2022, which caused extreme excitement and engagement from Swifties looking to buy tickets for U.S. concert dates. The popularity of the Eras Tour is unmatched by any past musical tour, with a predicted gross of \$2.2 billion in ticket sales for just the North American leg of the tour, according to Time Magazine. In November of 2022, Ticketmaster set up a verified fan presale beforehand that was meant to regulate the chaos of mass ticket purchases. Unfortunately, this did not go as planned. Rather than regulating website traffic, fans waited in the queue for up to a day, and by the end of the presale, there were no tickets left for a general sale.

The general sale ended up being canceled due to lack of ticket availability. "I'm not going to make excuses for anyone," Swift said on her Instagram. "We asked them [Ticketmaster], multiple times, if they could handle this kind of demand, and we were assured that they could."

Not only have the prices of tickets sold on Ticketmaster become outrageously high since the announcement of the Eras Tour, but they've been rising for decades. According to late night host John Oliver on his show "Last Week Tonight with John Oliver", "the average price of a popular concert has more than tripled since the mid-nineties,

vastly outpacing inflation." This not only makes concert tickets extremely inaccessible, but it also raises the possibility of bots and scalpers getting all tickets.

Before the introduction of the online ticket market, resellers had to stand outside of a venue or ticket booth in hopes of finding tickets to resell. Now, with Ticketmaster's online website, scalpers are able to create multiple accounts and buy tickets immediately with the intention of selling them at a much steeper price. According to Audience Republic, a ticket promoting company, unknowing fans often pay way more than necessary for a show, as they mistakenly think they are buying tickets directly from the source.

With all this being said, are inaccessible, expensive tickets the new normal? Will the accessibility of tickets be improved upon in the future because of this? Unfortunately, Taylor Swift's tour isn't the only one that's forced fans to reach deep in their wallets for tickets. In September 2023, country and folk singer Zach Bryan announced his U.S. tour, the Quittin' Time Tour. Once again, Ticketmaster and scalpers took advantage of people wanting to go to the concert, forcing tickets to be priced in the hundreds, with some up to \$600. Julia Soeder, a writer for The Loyola Phoenix newspaper, said in her article regarding the negative effects of Ticketmaster that she "began to feel her jaw tighten, eyebrows furrow, and palms sweat." Many ticket buyers shared a similar experience, making the concert-going experience overall more stressful and frustrating than fun.

Unfortunately, Swift's Eras Tour, as well as Bryan's Quittin' Time Tour, are all telling examples of the future of ticket-buying as we know it. The accessibility of Ticketmaster is increasingly getting lower, and the concert experience has become more stressful and much less enjoyable. Although it seems like ever-soaring ticket prices are the new normal, it needs to be stopped, and accessibility of tickets needs to be addressed by ticket sellers and buyers.

Mic'd Up

from page 1

Gio Rangel and Jared Reyes are seniors at LASA and hosts of the newly released podcast *Chistes y Chismes*, a name that translates to "Jokes and Gossip". Their podcast focuses on making listeners feel like they are a part of the conversation.

"I think the appeal is if you're in a third point of view and you're in the middle of a friend group that's just having a conversation," Reyes said. "I think that's the main point of it, that we're trying to replicate what a normal conversation with high school kids would probably sound like."

The appeal of having a point of view on a conversation is a sentiment that can apply to podcasts in general. Making these podcasts can be a long process that normally involves many people and a lot of post-production. Matt Cooper is a producer who used to work on the *Kirkus Reviews* podcast *Fully Booked*.

"To record a podcast, you need to have some kind of software," Cooper said. "And when you're dealing with writers and hosts and talent, the engineering side is not usually their strong point. So they need someone else, who's usually called a recording engineer, to push the buttons, hit record, connect everyone, and make it sound as good as it can."

According to Cooper, the quality of a podcast can be increased through the side of the medium less seen: engineering and production. He believes the versatility of podcasts is one of the many appeals of this type of medium.

"You can find a podcast that suits the amount of time you have to drive to school, or work or a podcast you like listening to when you go to bed at night that just kind of lulls you into sleep, or something to pass the time when you're on an airplane," Cooper said.

Podcast development is a talent to be learned, according to Cooper. He believes seemingly small factors can dictate whether a podcast can draw more interest and more listeners.

"The guests are going to be what makes it popular, so your host needs to just kind of have a talent for the medium," Cooper said.

"And you can always teach that skill, it's kind of a combination of their personality, the sound of their voice, and the engaging things they say. Those are the types of things that people relate to, and why people want to keep listening to certain personalities over and over."

Klein and Loving drew inspiration for their podcast from the popular podcast from internet personality Emma Chamberlain "Anything Goes," which draws people in with its comfortable chatty feel. Klein believes that for a podcast to work, you need to be interested in what you are talking about, and be able to talk comfortably for long periods of time.

"I think that you should talk about stuff that's engaging to your audience, but also something that interests you," Klein said. "Because if you're not in the podcasting groove, then it's not going to be interesting to yourself, or the person listening."

That's not to say people can't make their own podcasts without that experience. In fact, LASA has recently gained its very own podcast club, which meets in room 406 during lunch on Mondays. All it really takes to make a podcast is to get the courage to pick up a microphone and record yourself talking about something that you are passionate about, according to the hosts of *Chistes y Chismes*. For Rangel, this is "the passion for talking to other people."

"We had thought about this before, like Gio [Rangel] said, in previous years," Reyes said, "but we took it more seriously this year, and we just got our computer and just did it."

Since the interview, new episodes have continued to be released, furthering this passion. Whether it's a full-time job or a passion project, podcasts continue to proliferate in modern society.

"I think podcasts are as popular as they ever were," Cooper said. "They haven't seen any leveling off of podcasts. So, anyone who is interested in creating their podcast, I think they should give it a shot."

graphics by Kamryn Reyes

Editor's Picks

Songs of the Summer

Kid by The Revivalists

MEGAN GEROLD | entertainment editor

During the hot summer of Austin, Texas, "Kid" by the Revivalists was my solace. While the Revivalists have been making music since I was born, the release of "Kid" on June 2 of this year has reminded me of the best parts of 'stomp and yell' music. The song's upbeat drums with Noah Kahan and the Lumineers' qualities transport me away from the 100+ degree days of Texas to memories of listening to this song while walking in the chilly air on my trip to Seattle. The loud and optimistic melody is a true highlight of the brightening song, but the reassurances of good tucked away into the story of the lyrics are what remind me to focus on things other than the bad in the world. While the entire song automatically gets my foot tapping, the lyrical repetition of "living for the spirit" is one I can't get out of my head. Whether it was a ride to scorching soccer practice or a late-night trip to get ice cream, "Kid" was a staple in my car, lighting up my day with its perpetual reminder to remember change happens and life sucks, but there is always the opportunity to "get that darkness out your head."

Kick it to Me by Sammy Rae & the Friends

KATIE BUSBY | entertainment editor

As the voice on the New York subway rang through my ears announcing my stop, I grew more and more excited. After getting off the subway, I walked through Central Park, so full of life, among New Yorkers with their friends, families, and pets. This summer, I attended a Summerstage (Central Park summer concert series) show of Sammy Rae & The Friends. The band's gospel-inspired mix of jazz, pop, and rock, has always enthralled me, as well as the wide range of instruments and powerful vocals that make their sound very unique. "Kick It to Me" was not particularly one of the songs I went to the concert hoping to hear, but after the concert it occupied my thoughts for the rest of my trip. The optimism exhibited in the song, the jazzy sax, and upbeat lyrics lodged themselves in my brain, quickly making it one of my most listened songs of the summer. Not only is this song melodically beautiful, but something about it never fails to make me smile when it pops into my head. I may not relate directly to the situation, but when she says "I ain't been singing the blues nearly as much", I have a little more hope for the future. That hope carried me through my last summer before continuing on to my future at college, possibly in New York.

The Less I Know the Better by Tame Impala

AMELIA COLEMAN | graphics editor

"The Less I Know the Better" by Tame Impala was my song of the summer. It seems that every summer I get really into Tame Impala again because the best songs for rotting in your room tend to be the groovy semi-psychedelic ones. This song is about a guy who learns his crush is with another man and wishes that he never found out so it wouldn't dominate his mind. This song really defines summers for me in the sense that I don't really enjoy summers: I always have too much time to think, and when I have too much time to think my mind sometimes wanders to sad and depressing places that I would prefer not to go to. The period from June to August always devolves into me romanticizing my extreme boredom while I sit in my room doing absolutely nothing. The song really holds true because at the end of summer, I have thought too much and know too much about the fun things my friends are doing without me, so I really feel that "the less I know the better."

45 by Bleachers

LILI XIONG | managing editor

"45", written by Jack Antonoff, paints the picture of two 45 records spinning out of time, which was a state of mind that consumed my summer. The gentle guitar that slowly revs up in intensity as the song goes on, paired with the anthemic chorus, made for the perfect soundtrack to my summer. I went home to Taiwan for the first time since COVID-19, and I spent my time there visiting the landmarks of my old life: the gym I first started playing basketball in, the only restaurants that could perfect my comfort foods, and the barely-there sidewalks that guided me to school. But even surrounded by the places that had shaped who I was, I still found myself repeating after Antonoff, "Am I the worst compass I could know?". "45" encapsulates the complex feelings of returning to a hometown — both the love of and loyalty to that place, but also the pangs of realization that most of the changes you've observed around you happened within yourself. And while the message is a little depressing, "45" is still an upbeat love song that could be blasted on summer night drives. The song, and the lyrics "I'm torn exactly into two pieces / One who wants you and one who's gone dark" put a feeling I found to be indescribable into words.

LASA Rising in the Ranks

from page 1

In Texas, LASA is considered to be one of the top five public schools in terms of academics, according to US News. Jones said that part of LASA's athletic rank jump can be attributed to the discipline of academically driven schools.

"Having that discipline to make sure you get to practice every day, on time, retain what you've already learned from the coaching staff, and apply that to the next day in practice [is significant]," Jones said. "If you can get the discipline that a student shows in the classroom, studying, doing homework, listening to teachers, and apply that to athletics, you're gonna have success. And you see that across the state. And I think you're seeing that from LASA right now."

LASA moving into its own campus four years ago has given it the capacity to host more student athletes. As LASA's athletic program grows, there has been more excitement surrounding the sport teams, according to LASA freshman and varsity tennis player Mahir Vallabhaneni. Vallabhaneni recognized that LASA was the perfect program for him after meeting former Varsity Boys' Tennis Captain Milind Mutala and being recruited by other members of the team.

"I chose to join LASA tennis because of a kid named Milind Mutala," Vallabhaneni said. "He was the captain at some point and he played some tournaments that I played in. After that, I went to POLO [tennis club] over the summer and met Rishi, Ted, and William. William got my number and contacted me regarding the team. Those were all factors in my decision."

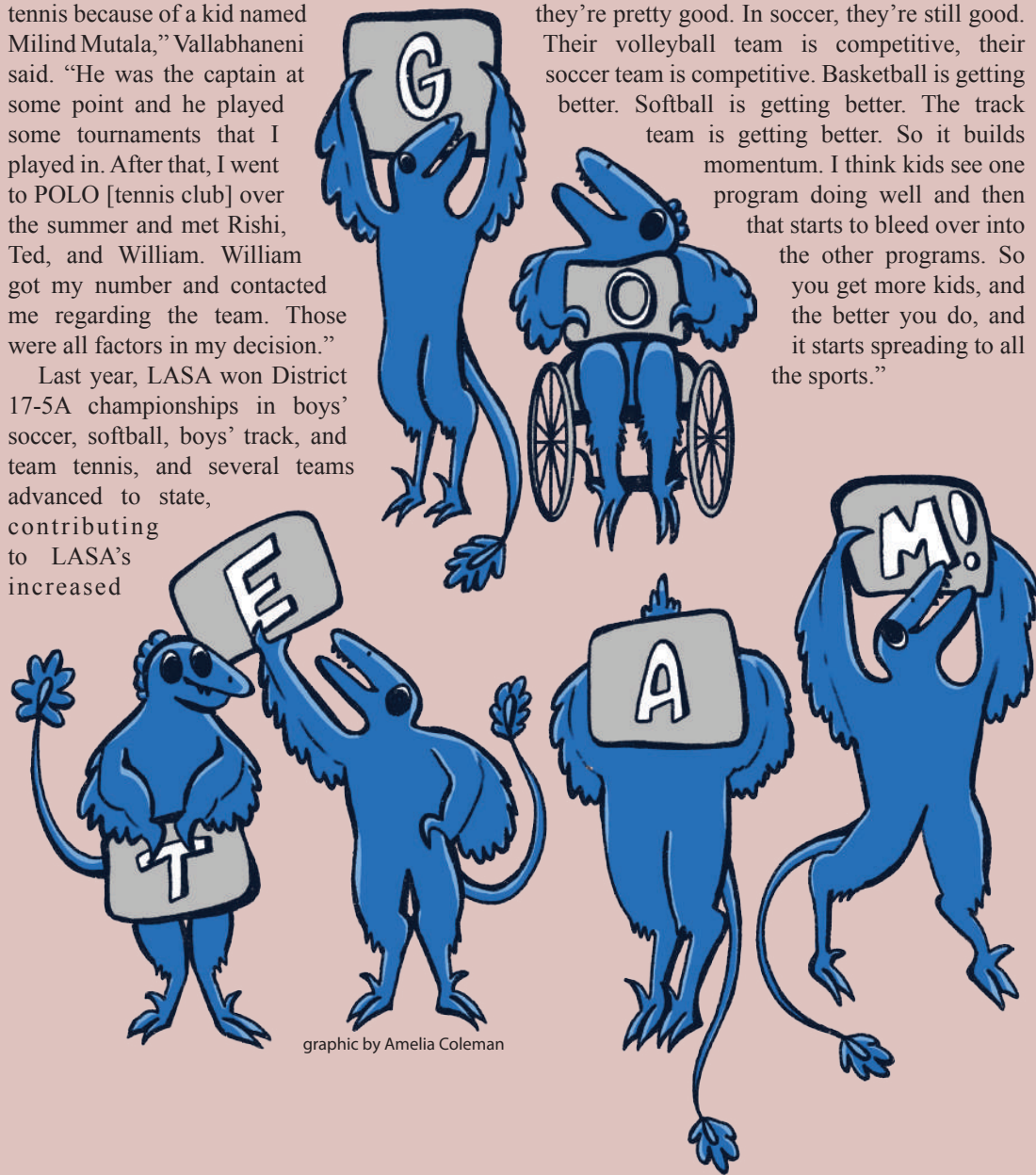
Last year, LASA won District 17-5A championships in boys' soccer, softball, boys' track, and team tennis, and several teams advanced to state, contributing to LASA's increased

athletic ranking. This year, even more LASA teams have high hopes for advancing far in the district, regional, and state competitions. According to Vallabhaneni, the tennis team in particular is predicted to go far once again, currently boasting an undefeated record.

"I think we are going to go undefeated the entire season," Vallabhaneni said. "And maybe at state we might pick up our first loss, but hopefully [we still] go far."

The tennis team's 10-0 record includes major wins against schools like Austin High School and McNeil High School, both of which have 6A athletics programs that are much larger than LASA's 5A program. LASA's tennis program started three years ago and has skyrocketed ever since, with the team reaching the UIL state competition in the fall of 2022. According to Jones, tennis's success is starting to be seen in equal measures in other LASA sports. For example, LASA's football team has started the season off with a strong 4-1 record.

"The first year of athletics for LASA was three years ago," Jones said. "They were ok. They were very good at tennis. And now you're starting to see it [in other sports]. In baseball, they're pretty good. In soccer, they're still good. Their volleyball team is competitive. Their soccer team is competitive. Basketball is getting better. Softball is getting better. The track team is getting better. So it builds momentum. I think kids see one program doing well and then that starts to bleed over into the other programs. So you get more kids, and the better you do, and it starts spreading to all the sports."



graphic by Amelia Coleman

New Athletic Trainer

PRATIK GURIJALA | staff writer

This year, LASA hired athletic trainer Calvin Ta to support LASA's ever-growing number of athletes. Having graduated with a master's degree in athletic training from Texas Tech University, the Houston native is eager to apply his knowledge and new ideas to LASA's sports medicine program.

Being an athletic trainer is Ta's passion. As an athletic trainer, Ta does his best to help students in LASA athletics to succeed. He corrects athletes' forms and teaches them stretches and exercises to heal or prevent major injuries.

"I can prevent student's injuries, correct their forms during weightlifting and... teach athletes forms that make their performance better," Ta said. "I can't say it was enough to have us win every single game, but I'm trying to help in a way I think I can impact LASA."

Sue Torres, known by LASA athletes as 'Doc', is the other athletic trainer at LASA. Torres has been a high school Sports Medicine teacher at LASA for over 15 years and has gained valuable knowledge and experience over her years. One of her primary duties as an athletic trainer is to treat sports injuries immediately, even in the middle of games.

"If you watch a sporting event, and someone gets hurt, and somebody runs out there, those are athletic trainers," Torres said. "We take care of them in the acute phase. And sometimes that involves emergency care... like Damar Hamlin when he went down, an athletic trainer was one of the first ones to him and started doing CPR. That was an athletic trainer, so we do emergency care. And then after the emergency part of it, we do rehab and treatment just like a physical therapist."

Ta went to a magnet school himself and understands LASA's academic culture, recognizing the amount of school work students receive. His awareness of what students are typically stressing about allows Ta to better connect with the student athletes he serves.

"I actually used to go to a magnet school in Houston," Ta said. "So I understand how the pre-AP and AP courses go, and the struggles of trying to get into top-tier high-ranking and prestigious colleges."

In the same way Ta feels he can act as a guide for magnet student athletes based on his expertise, Ta feels that Torres is a great mentor to him. Because of Torres's vast expertise, Ta feels grateful to work with her.

"I think she's great," Ta said. "[She is a] great resource to have, especially with so many years under her belt, whether it be at this school in AISD, or from the collegiate

experience that she has, and even military experience, she's a great resource. And I am glad to have been picked by LASA because of her, just because of that."

Being an athletic trainer has been a large part of Torres's life. She has struggled with the amount of athletes she has to take care of in the past, but says that Ta will lighten the workload for her.

"Athletic trainers have long hours, that's part of being an athletic trainer, that's part of the course," said Torres. "But now we've got Calvin, so that makes the whole lot nicer."

Athletic trainers attend sports games that often run late into the evening. In addition to helping Torres with the long hours, he is also helping more students out like junior Abby Aardema, a LASA volleyball and softball player.

"Prior to this year, Torres was outside helping with football during our practices, which made it hard when injuries came up," Aardema said. "Since Coach Ta is here, he is able to help us with injuries in volleyball. This past year, both Coach Torres and Coach Ta have helped me with my injuries. They have kept me accountable and have also given me the resources to do rehab for my injury and also be educated on my injury."

Torres also agrees that Ta will impact LASA in a good way. She thinks that Ta can bring new and original ideas to LASA and prevent athletes from getting injured.

"It's fun and he is young, so he's bringing fresh ideas," Torres said. "I've been doing this for a very long time. I worked at the college level for 15 years before I came here. He's a year out of grad school, so he's got professional ideas."

Aardema is a student in the Sports Medicine class and she says that she is learning a lot from Ta. She thinks that Ta is a great teacher and is knowledgeable about the recovery process for injuries.

"Coach Ta has been extremely helpful, not only for all the different sports, but for the class itself," Aardema said. "...In the class, he has provided new modern research about certain modalities or exercises. For example, he has been teaching us the new research on the effects of ice and it has really helped us understand why we do certain modalities."

Through the time Ta has worked here, he's managed to improve the health of many student athletes and prevent injuries that could affect sports careers. Although Ta is only just starting his first year as a Raptor athletic trainer, he already feels at home at LASA.

"I like the community," Ta said. "It feels like I'm being supported as well, especially from other faculty, but also through people and coaches."

editorial Pregnant Athletes Tackle Discrimination

LILI XIONG | managing editor

Dearica Marie Hamby is a Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA) All-Star, a back-to-back winner of the WNBA Sixth Woman of the Year award, and helped the Las Vegas Aces win the 2022 WNBA championship. She is also a mother of two — but her pregnancies were met with neither respect nor support from Aces management and staff. Hamby was blamed for getting pregnant, accused of signing her contract's extension knowingly pregnant, and says she was met with "coldness, disrespect, and disregard from members of management." She was also traded to the Los Angeles Sparks after announcing her pregnancy, which Aces head coach Becky Hammon says had nothing to do with Hammon's pregnancy.

In an investigation involving interviews with 33 different staff members and players, the WNBA found that Hammon had in fact violated WNBA workplace rules, including promising impermissible benefits in Dearica Hamby's contract extension and harassment towards Hamby based on her pregnancy. Hammon was suspended for two games, and the Aces lost their 2025 first-round draft pick — consequences that seem light compared to, as Hamby puts it, the trauma she endured from management over the course of her pregnancy.

In an industry already rife with pay disparities and discrimination, pregnancy in women's professional sports has proven to be just one of the many issues faced by women who are both athletes and mothers. These are problems athletes in every sport face. For instance, National Women's Soccer League (NWSL) player Jessica McDonald was traded across six teams in her first five years as a single parent, which made it difficult to find, as well as afford, childcare in different cities. At the time, she was making a mere \$15,000 per year as a professional athlete and she would only receive, in her words, dabbles of support here and there from the NWSL. Scrambling to come

up with solutions, McDonald and her then-8-month-old son would resort to sharing a hotel room with her teammate, and she often had no other choice but to bring him to practices. It is unacceptable for any mother, nevermind a world-class athlete, to struggle with having these basic needs met.

The first player to sign with the WNBA in 1997, Sheryl Swoopes, was expecting when she did so. In fact, the WNBA took advantage of the situation, filming her pregnancy process to market Swoopes as an everyday mom and the league as family-friendly. But it's only been in recent years that significant progress in protecting the rights of pregnant players has been made, and it's clear more needs to be done. Ratified in 2020, the provisions in the WNBA Players' Union Collective Bargaining Agreement ensure that league members retain their full salaries during maternity leave — but the length of maternity leave is up to individual players to negotiate, and only elite players who have been in the league for at least eight seasons are eligible for fertility benefits, which include reimbursement for relatively progressive family expenses such as adoption, surrogacy, and egg-freezing.

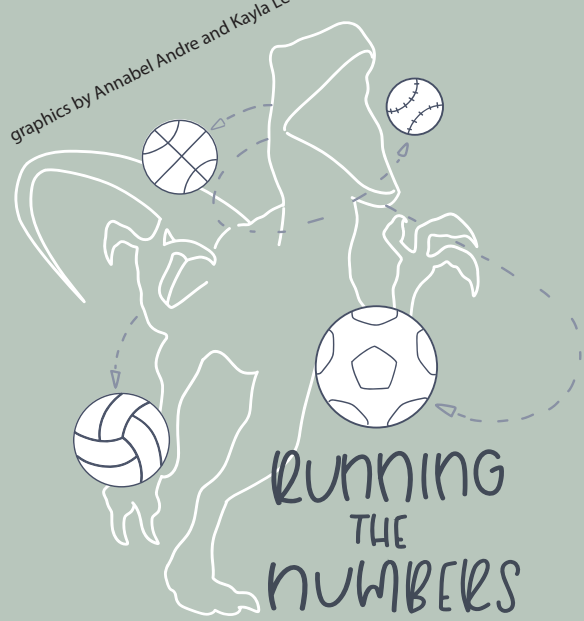
It's also important to understand that discrimination against pregnant athletes goes far beyond the actual laws and policies set in place. There's a stigma that athletes who become mothers will deprioritize their sport and be less qualified to compete on a professional level: a stigma that has serious consequences for athletes' careers. For instance, in 2019, Olympic runners Allyson Felix and Kara Goucher spoke out about Nike slashing their pay for getting pregnant. Many athletes postpone motherhood until their retirement, as Felix says pregnancy is "the kiss of death" in women's sports. McDonald has also expressed that people's attitudes towards her have changed since becoming a mother, as people would blame her son and her responsibilities as a mother if she had a bad game. During COVID-19, children were

prohibited from being in men's league bubbles, yet for women's leagues, the sight of children in strollers cheering from the sidelines wasn't uncommon. This phenomenon speaks volumes as to the weight women are expected to pull when it comes to parenting. Mothers are expected to find ways to incorporate their children into their workplaces, whereas it's socially acceptable for fathers to isolate their careers from their parental duties.

The double standard is stark: no one ever questions a male athlete's dedication to his sport when he becomes a parent, but for a female athlete, motherhood could end her career. Yet despite this, time and time again, pregnant athletes have proved their ability to juggle motherhood and competition at the highest level — pro-tennis player Serena Williams won a grand slam 8-weeks pregnant, beach volleyball player Kerri Walsh Jennings won an Olympic gold medal 5-weeks pregnant, and star athlete-mothers such as Dearica Hamby and Candace Parker continue to excel in every WNBA game they play.

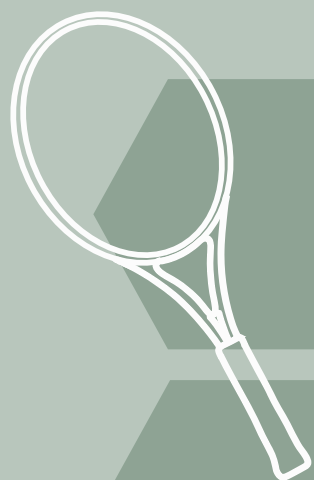
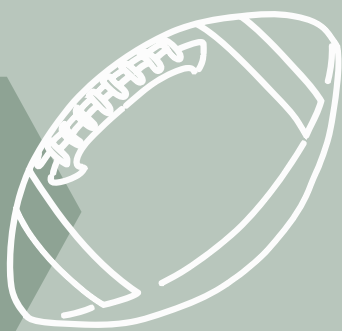
The hypocrisy of it all comes down to the fact that leagues like the WNBA and the NWSL are run by women. Many coaches and staff members are mothers, many of whom claim to have been in the shoes of these female athletes. They preach female empowerment and they tell their athletes that they have their backs, but in the case of Hamby, and countless other female athletes, this sentiment has proven to be a lie. It's disappointing to see sports leagues whose existence in themselves are staunch examples of women's excellence in sports, who have been faced by scrutiny and inequalities from the outside, fail on promises of equity from the inside.

graphics by Annabel Andre and Kayla Le



RUNNING
THE
NUMBERS

LASA'S WINS AND LOSSES
as of Oct. 9



Pickleball Popularity Explodes

GEORGIA FINK | staff writer

With the widely felt feelings of isolation brought on by the COVID-19 lockdowns, many looked for ways to reconnect and spend time with other people. The age-old yet newly repopularized sport of pickleball has proven to be a popular avenue for people to find a place in a community once again.

Created in 1965 by U.S. Congressman Joel Pritchard and his friends Barney McCallum and Bill Bell, pickleball has been named the fastest growing sport for a third year in a row, with a reported 30 percent increase of U.S. pickleball members from 2022 to 2023. According to ESPN, many professional tennis stars such as Wimbledon finalist Eugenie Bouchard and Wimbledon champion Jack Sock have even switched to pickleball playing careers, with the two signing deals to play full-time in the Pro Tour of Pickleball.

Blaise Timco is a pickleball coach at the Jewish Community Center in Austin. As a coach, he has seen the popularity of pickleball in his local community center grow exponentially in recent memory, which he attributes not only to a friendly playing community, but also to the sport's lack of physically demanding activity.

"In pickleball you are not hitting the ball as hard [as in tennis], it's more of a strategy game of placement," Timco said. "So, it allows people as they get older to be able to continue playing a racket or paddle sport."

Henrick Kjallbring is a recreational pickleball player and a weightlifter in Austin. While Kjallbring lifts frequently, the strenuous exercises are not what he would describe as fun. In contrast, the relatively low amount of equipment and physical exertion needed to play a pickleball game are what he would describe as pull factors.

"I go to the gym [but it] doesn't really have a pull factor for me," Kjallbring said. "I can force myself to do it, but it's not like I feel, 'oh, well, I'm gonna go to the gym, and I'm gonna have so much fun,'... Pickleball is [something] that I really want to go [to]."

Throughout the past few years, coaches have been seeing more kids and young adults coming to play pickleball too. Timco has witnessed this change. Although most pickleball players are around 50 years old, he has seen many more kids get involved.

"Five years ago, I very rarely saw any kids

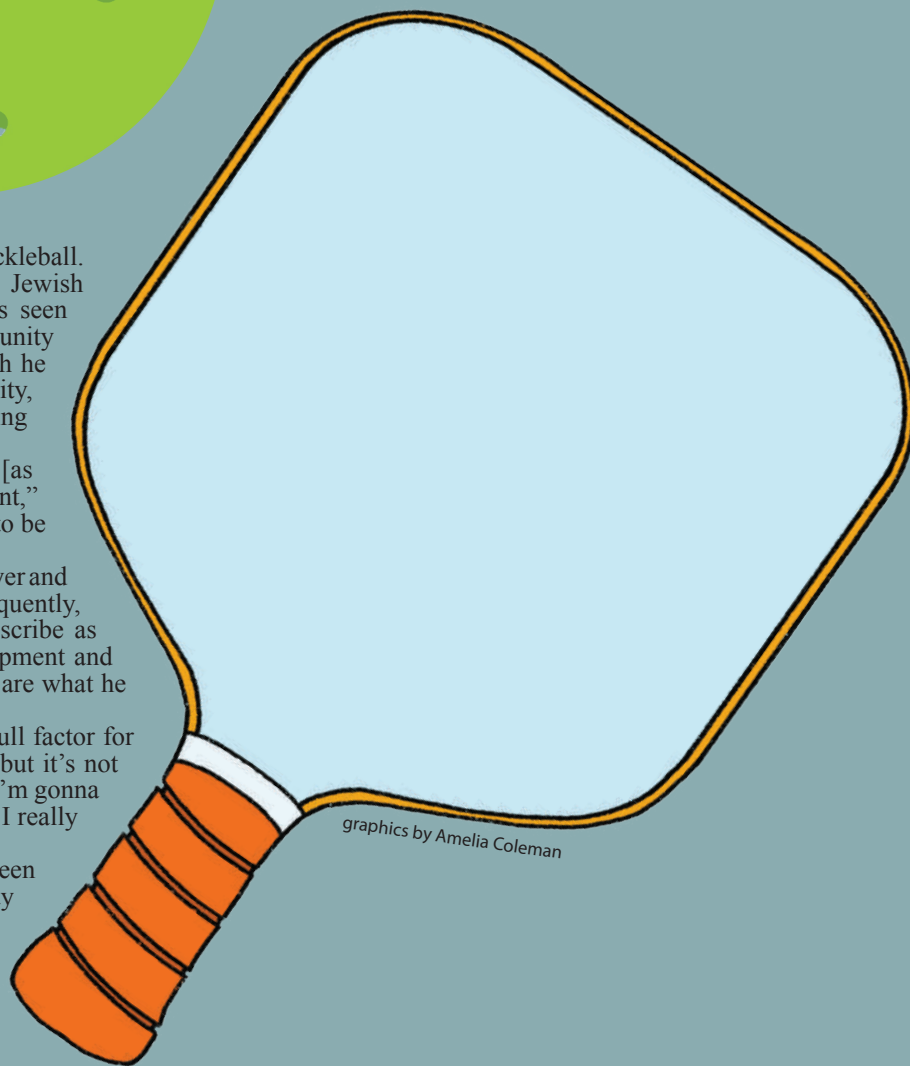
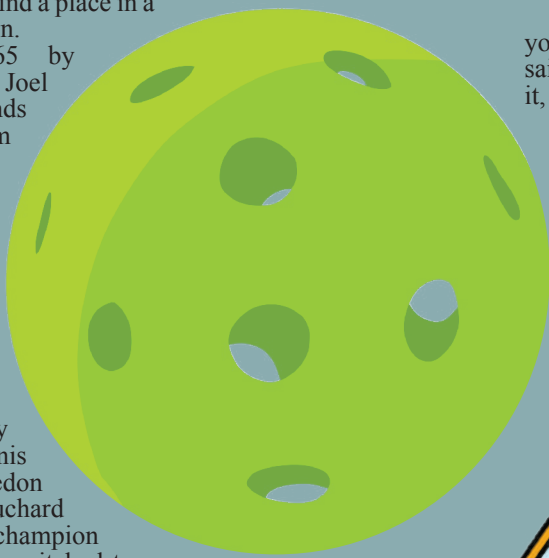
come out and play," Timco said. "[Kids make up] probably only 10 percent of the demographic, but it is definitely growing."

Amy Yarbrough is another Austin pickleball coach. Yarbrough believes the perennial nature of the sport is what makes it fun for anybody, no matter their skill level or age, echoing Timco's sentiments.

"As long as you're playing with other people that are similar in your ability level, then you're going to have a good time," Yarbrough said. "So I think that's why it's grown so much, everybody can play it, everyone can have fun, and it's also very social."

There are many ways to get involved with pickleball, such as attending open pickleball at community centers around Austin. There are also sports apps to connect with other pickleball players online. According to Yarbrough, today, pickleball has become a sport where people can not only connect and have fun with older people, but also with any age group.

"I would stress that it's not just for old people anymore," Yarbrough said. "It is really fun. It's like playing ping-pong but on a little bit bigger court."



graphics by Amelia Coleman

THE RAPTOR RUN DOWN

ALEX VALENCIA-SERRANO | finance editor

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

Every time I sit down to watch a tennis match with my family, I always see the flawless movements of tennis players on screen. Entrapped by the beauty and effortlessness of their movements, I thought that tennis would be a piece of cake, but, as with a lot of things, I was proven wrong.

Two weeks ago, I participated in one of LASA's tennis Junior Varsity (JV) practices and got further insight and first-hand experience in the sport I had originally perceived as easy. I immediately learned that the mind-blowing movements I always see on TV of tennis players serving and hitting the ball are far harder to replicate than I thought.

Practice officially started when everyone started warming up by doing high knees, half-vines, and jogging half-way across the tennis court. The most challenging part for me came when we started serving across the court by ourselves. At first, I really struggled with getting the motion of serving right while being in the correct position. The movement consisted of pulling my right hand all the way behind my back while throwing the tennis ball as high as possible with my left arm, which was scary at first because it felt like the ball could hit me at any moment. Lexi Chavarria, a member of the girl's JV team, was really welcoming and helped teach me the basics of serving. She also gave me a great pointer when it came to serving, which was to always keep both my feet pointing inward to the pole that was holding the tennis net at the center of the court to stabilize my form. After I had practiced the movement a few more times, I started to get more comfortable with it and finally decided to carry out the skill.

Later on, we also practiced hitting groundstrokes, which are the forehand and backhand. I found that I still struggled, especially with making contact with a ball barreling at me. It was further into practice when Coach Vizcaino noticed me struggling and helped me adjust my grip on the tennis racket by aligning my knuckles to the far left edge of the racket handle. This gave me a stronger grip and facilitated my ability to slide my hands into different positions in response to the direction the ball came at me, making it easier for me to hit it. I also adjusted my stance by keeping both my feet steady on the ground and only moving my whole shoulder together with the racket either left or right. By only moving my shoulder instead of my whole body, I was able to hit the ball more efficiently and without exerting too much energy.

I'm proud to say that by the end of practice, I was able to serve once and hit the ball twice during my rounds of hitting the ball back and forth with the other players. Overall, I really enjoyed playing tennis with the rest of the JV team's girls. I came to understand that determination, hard work, and overcoming challenges are some of the few things that it takes to perform those impeccable movements and the experience has definitely made me appreciate the sport a lot more.

Personally, I would play tennis at LASA again because of the welcoming community that created for me an atmosphere



TENNIS, ANYONE? Finance editor Alex Valencia-Serrano tosses up the tennis ball as she prepares to serve. Through her brief time with the LASA tennis team, she learned some tricks on proper serving form. photo by Kayla Le

where I felt safe and confident that I could learn and develop my skills without any judgment despite my lack of knowledge on the sport and poor skills. I always like trying new things and joining extracurriculars where I feel welcomed, and that the community has an interest in what they're doing, which is what I felt from the JV team and why I would play tennis again. I want to thank LASA's JV team for having me and wish them, along with the varsity team, the best of luck in their upcoming tournaments. Go Raptors!

Student Section Shows Spirit and Support An Inside Look Into The Stands Of Fans

ESME KESSLER | staff writer

The role of the student section is to bring energy and excitement to sports games and events as well as motivating the players through chanting and cheering. LASA's sports program has improved a lot over the past few years through tropes and themes in the media, a hype student section, and our own student traditions.

High school football, especially the "jock" trope appears in many highschool movies such as High School Musical, Mean Girls, The Breakfast Club, etc. Lots of elementary and middle school students wait for years to be a part of the experience and understand first-hand what they have seen in movies and television shows, says LASA freshmen Kavya Gupta.

"It's definitely a hallmark and something that every single American dreams of when they're at a high school football game," says Gupta. "Its everywhere, it's in movies, it's in TV shows it's the thing you go to football games with your partner, with your friends, there's concessions so it's definitely been a new experience its very very widespread and it's very large compared to middle school football games."

Student section leaders are seniors who are responsible for creating and leading the chants as well as coordinating other events. The hype they bring to the experience is unmatched, section leader Anya Ruttala describes.

"My first game with a big student section was last year with our friends as student section leaders," Says student section leader Anya Ruttala, "It was really fun, they get really hype and so we all join them and they start chants and it kind of feels like you're in a high school movie."

Our LASA student section has undoubtedly improved throughout the past 4 years. Section leaders have revolutionized our culture through publicizing and making the games a better overall experience.

"The first year I was a freshmen, we didn't have anyone show up to football games," Says LASA senior Lyssa Lashus, "Sophomore year, it was a little better, people went to the homecoming game, still not much turnout, my junior year, we started picking it up. But yeah our football culture hasn't been very strong until this year and I think that has a lot to do with the student section just trying to publicize it a lot."

LASA football coach Derrick Lewis has made serious improvements in all aspects of our football program, as well as

just encouraging a hype student section, according to Ruttala.

"I think he's been working really hard to build up the sports program in general," Says Ruttala, "So he wants media, he wants a great student section, he wants everything and he's made the football team better so for us to be cheering on team that's actually winning games is pretty helpful."

Apart from our student section and football coach, LASA has some of its own homecoming traditions that help keep the culture alive, like the gallon challenge.

"Basically everyone goes to the parking lot and everyone brings either a gallon, or some people go for a half gallon of milk and your goal is to chug the whole thing," Says Lashus, "There's no time limit you just have to drink the whole thing and not puke and your best friend in the whole wide world has to hold a trash bag for you to puke in right next to you because you can't do that and not puke. It's disgusting, it smells so bad, it gets all over the pavement, it's disgusting but tradition."

Homecoming is undeniably hype. Though the challenge may be disgusting, it is fun to watch and participate and it builds a sense of community.

"It's definitely a very normal, fun high school thing that LASA does that I don't think we quite have enough of" Says Lashus.

Apart from the gallon challenge, LASA students also like to participate in the homecoming week themes.

"There's also homecoming week where there are different themes every day," Says Lashus, "For example they'll be like twin day, 70's day, just dress up, etc."

Pep rallies are also a significant part of our football, sports, as well as just LASA culture. The fun, community-building activities are what many students look forward to throughout the school year.

"Then, of course, we have pep rallies," Says Lashus, "We only have two or three a year but they're about an hour long at the end of the day and you can have like student-teacher

games like we had a water balloon fight last year, there's tug of war every year, the cheerleaders will do a dance, the dance team will do a dance, last year they actually had the basketball team do stunts for the cheerleaders. We did a fantastic job."

Our student section is definitely a huge part of our school's culture in general. Sports were never LASA's specialty, but students say our section leaders, football coach, and long-standing student traditions are huge contributors to this season's strength.



BYOB (BRING YOUR OWN BLEACHERS) Fans use lawn chairs to create makeshift bleachers for the first football game of the season. The game was played against St. Andrews. photo by Deven Sharma



TIME FOR TEMPO The LASA Raptor Band drumline performs on the sidelines of the field to energize the student section. photo by Deven Sharma



GRINNING FROM EAR TO EAR The LASA Velocity Dance team is all smiles as the student section celebrates a win. photo by Deven Sharma.

editorial The Blind Side's True Sides

KAMRYN REYES | staff writer

"The Blind Side, a 2009 feel-good film, tells the real-life story of thea former NFL player, Micheal Oher. The movie is highly regarded and won several awards; including 'Best Sports Movie' ESPY Award in 2010. The story portrayed within the film is heartwarming, but recent developments have created controversy regarding the Touhy family's actual relationship with Oher.

The movie rendition portrays the Touhy family as Michael's saving grace. His character is homeless, doing exceptionally poor in school, and having little to no experience with sports. In reality, Oher was well on his way to becoming an NFL star before the Touhy family stepped in. He wasn't even homeless upon meeting them. Oher was temporarily staying with Big Tony, a character portrayed with a much smaller role in the movie than he actually had. Lastly, Micheal was befriended by Sean Touhy before anyone else, not one of the children as occurs in the film. Oher's character is distorted into a impotent, slow-witted kid without the potential to prosper on his own. It's a disappointment to how mentionable Micheal's efforts to succeed were; before the Touhys ever met him. He suffered through the real story and was rewarded by a degrading movie portrayal from which he made no profit.

If all of this isn't enough cause for discourse, the Touhy's never legally adopted Micheal Oher. This has recently come to the public's attention after Oher drove a lawsuit against the Touhy's for tricking him into signing conservatorship. A conservatorship is a legal status allowing a person to manage the financial and personal affairs of a minor or incapacitated person. It is nothing like adoption and does not legally relate either of the two participating parties to each other.

Micheal expresses that, during his childhood he was led to believe the documents he was signing would legally make him a part of the family. He was extremely upset upon realizing that it in fact provided him no familial relations to the Touhys. The conservatorship also funneled all the money Oher should have accumulated from 'The Blind Side' to Tuohy's biological children. Based on what has been brought to light along with the previously distorted rendition of Oher's life; it's clear to see the Tuohys intended to recruit Oher. It was never a matter

of adding Micheal to the family, he was viewed as a dollar sign from the start. This seems to be an extension of the evangelicals adoption crusade. A development in modern years where white, christian families seek orphaned children to 'save', (often of an ethnic minority). It is entirely intended to impress the other members of said families community. They want to be praised for their charity and outstanding humanity. It's an appalling manifestation of white savior complex that gives adopted children a false sense of family. A real family isn't built off of financial or status based motivators to provide care.

The lawsuit Oher has filed against the Touhys is long overdue. It is a deserved enactment of justice not only upon the 'Blind Side' family, but for all corrupt custody arrangements. They lied by omission, choosing to not explain the legal meaning of the documents Micheal was signing. In interviews the Touhy's have claimed to be 'devastated' by Oher's lawsuit. But based on their past actions, I don't feel like they have the right to be upset. Oher is completely in the right to fight for the financial assets taken by the conservatorship; one he was tricked into binding himself to. I hope for his success in his endeavors to account for the way the

Touhy's took advantage of him. He deserves his story to be told in a far more flattering light. Micheal Oher remains the true underdog.



Graphic by Asha Rountree

editorial World Cup Woes Women's World Cup Lows and Highs

REBECA GONZALEZ | staff writer

Every sport has its positives and negatives, especially when you're talking about soccer's World Cup. Every four years, a group of countries brings together their best players to compete globally in one of the most viewed tournaments. The World Cup, therefore, becomes not only an expression of pride for each country but also a platform to discuss the inequalities in sports and this year, the tournament has caught many people's attention not only with its amazing plays but its strong activism and scandals.

The 2023 Women's World Cup broke Australia's record for the most-watched sporting event in history. With the first Women's World Cup beginning in 1991, the tournament has always set a huge example for women's soccer deserving more attention. The tournament's winner this year, Spain, has always held a high interest in soccer, but this year, it's apparent that the interest has skyrocketed for young girls. 40% of all youth players in Spain are girls, with these numbers never ceasing to decrease throughout the past decade. The country's clubs and teams for girls have also grown in size and professionalism. The good of the Women's World Cup is the representation and encouragement it provides to women to play a sport dominated by men, but most of all is the spirit and love it brings to the sport and the people who truly care about it.

The Women's World Cup has never received enough resources, support, or coaches, which restricts not only the tournament's success but women's soccer altogether. This year, soccer teams had to not only play month-long games but also the inequality that comes with it. Countries such as France, Spain, and Jamaica were public about their criticisms and protests. Along with them, the United States

Women's team has always been known and criticized for being outspoken with its famous

captains, Alex Morgan and Lindsay Horan, and player, Megan Rapinoe. Even if these protests cause controversy or unwanted attention, it's evident that they have a reason to be mad. First, the prize money was only \$110 million, whereas the men's was around \$440 million. This vast difference is even recognized by the , saying that FIFA is even championing its equality. However, the inequality expands beyond FIFA, especially regarding the tournament's marketing. The most common concept for these ads is very feminine and works to target women, specifically to increase their interest in the game. However, this makes the Women's World Cup seem like it's only the Women's World Cup, whereas the Men's World Cup is commonly marketed more widely. These advertisements convey the message that women soccer players should be presented as role models to only little girls, whereas, in reality, they should be presented as heroes to all genders, and the Women's World Cup should be marketed to all ages and genders. Ultimately, it takes more than just equal pay for these two tournaments to be equal.

Lastly, this year's infamous scandal following Spain's win. Spain's soccer federation president, Luis Rubiales, nonconsensually kissed Jenni Hermoso, igniting protests and a massive conversion on the male-led soccer federation. This led to Rubiales resigning on September 10th, almost a month after Spain's win on August 20th. The incident tarnished Spain's first historical win and took away from the attention deserved by the soccer players. A huge moment for women's soccer became one of the most controversial sexist moments in the tournament's history.

The Women's World Cup was historical for its good, bad, and ugly. This year inspired thousands of girls to play soccer and yet exposed the amount of improvement and respect FIFA needs to be giving women's soccer. But most of all, it brought many countries and communities together to talk about women's rights through the scandals and, of course, the fantastic games themselves.



graphic by Asha Rountree

AWESOME ART IN AUSTIN

Graphic by Amelia Coleman

JOLIE GROGAN
AVANNI GANNE photo editors
GRIFFIN BEAM

These particular qualities of street art are its primary staples in the culture of Austin, and are often involved in the creative processes of artists when about to create a new piece such as Niz describes her art process to be. As she became more versed in urban culture as a young artist, she decided to prioritize the experiences of

“I create each piece with the neighborhood and community in mind” Niz said. “For East Austin it’s important to acknowledge the generations of black and brown people that have been there.”

To be able to emphasize concepts like this that are important to street artists, they also have to plan out their technical process of creating street art. Each artist has their own way of doing things, which is shown by how Murphy and Niz prepare for the actual creation of their pieces.

“I’m really into photography too, and when I see something that I really like, I really want to draw it or paint it” Murphy said. “So I’ll usually I usually start with a reference picture and then go on from there. Sometimes I’ll just have like a burst of inspiration and it’ll inspire me to make something whether it be a drawing or a painting.”

Murphy’s way to create her street art includes a distinct amount of using inspiration found from her own ideas or things she sees around her. In comparison, Niz has a different and more hands-on approach.

“My process involves a mix of water painting and hand-cut stencil art” Niz said.

While street art is a beloved cultural norm in Austin, the community still faces pushback to its growth according to Walpole. Walpole also identified some issues that are known for popping up during the technical process of street art creation in Austin Texas.

“Street art is known for being political and bringing up social issues in communities” Walpole said. “When it comes to the more technical bits of painting murals and/or street art, you could find some community pushback. Nowadays, it is more often for street art to be viewed as gross and not good for business.”

Despite the distinct dislike of street art by some Austinites, it is still highly valued by many people for what it does for both the general community as Walpole, Niz, and Murphy described before. However, it also makes a lasting and significant impact on the artists themselves as well.

“I really enjoy starting my day or ending my day with art” Murphy said. “I think if you can find something like that, if anybody could find some kind of creative outlet for themselves, it would help them to just de-stress and find a great way to express themselves.”

When exploring almost any part of the City of Austin, Texas, many visitors and Austinites alike will often find street art splattered, painted, and drawn across many of the buildings surrounding them. It doesn’t matter whether they seen graffiti or a mural dedicated to someone the artist lost. Every piece is an example of the huge cultural impact street art has on Austin. Even more than that, every piece was created by someone who wanted to share part of their story with everyone who had the chance to see it.

Street artist Niz agrees with this interpretation of street art as a form of art many people use to express their personal experiences. As a creator of art in Austin for 14 years, she has a strong belief in the power of street art to help many different kinds of people in many different kinds of ways.

“Street art is a platform for diverse people to express themselves and voice what is important to them” Niz said. “It is a crucial element for free speech and equal representation.”

This idea of street art allowing for many different people to share their stories adds to LASA Junior Julia Walpole’s belief that street art has a big impact on the community of Austin in particular. Walpole is one of the Junior Lieutenants in the LASA Art Honor Society, and focuses on how street art is often used as a form of sharing the love artists have for their community.

“Street art, such as murals, brings the community [together] outside of the walls” Walpole said. “When I am involved in painting a mural, I like to imagine painting the heart of the community on its public walls. [It’s] almost like putting your heart on your sleeve. It shows character, personality, caring, and love.”

Junior Lucy Murphy’s interpretation of the effect of street art on the Austin community reinforces Walpole’s explanation as well. She additionally focused on specific ways that she’s observed artists incorporate community values into their street art.

“Especially in East Austin, I’ve seen that the murals are so rooted within the community and can connect to the members of the community is a really special way” Murphy said. “I think that’s really, really cool, and I’ve even seen some near LASA that are super in touch with the community. I think it’s really important for people to grow up and feel accepted by art pieces like these which have public figures, and a lot of other things that connect to people’s heritage.”

DOWNTOWN AUSTIN: LAMAR UNDERPASS

HYDE PARK

DOWNTOWN AUSTIN: LAMAR UNDERPASS

graphic by Kayla Le

