

the liberator

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graphic by Emma McBride

The History Behind LASA's New Campus

SOPHIA CHAU | editor-in-chief

All buildings have a history to them, and LASA is no exception. Since the 1980s, AISD had two different magnet schools called the Liberal Arts Academy (LAA) and Science Academy (SA). The two schools merged into one magnet program on the LBJ Early College High School (LBJ ECHS) campus in 2002, and LASA was created as a separate high school in 2007. With various campus moves, combining of schools, and altering of programs, LASA's campus has a rich history that involves many schools and Austin Independent School District (AISD) decisions.

Just as these halls are filled with students, they are also filled with history. For example, LASA government and law teacher Ronny Risinger, who taught at LAA at the time, recalled a moment when a fire broke out in the boy's restroom near the 300s hall.

"I ran to the office, and they didn't have a fire extinguisher—this was a long time ago, now they're doing a lot better obviously," Risinger said. "I eventually put it out with just a trash can and water, and then I just went back to my classroom. Reflecting on that, I realized the only time I've ever seen a fire in the building, I actually didn't pull the fire alarm, I just put it out and then went back to work. I lost a silk tie that day, but that was the only casualty."



KICKIN' IT OLD SCHOOL Students from Johnston highschool practice color guard in the main courtyard. Johnston, having been established soon after Brown v. the Board of Education, was one of the first schools in its area to have Hispanic, Black, and white students all under one roof. photos courtesy of Maricruz Aguayo

In 2017, AISD voters decided to pass a \$1 billion bond that included funds for LASA's move to another campus, splitting from their combined campus with LBJ ECHS. The district decided to place LASA at the former campus of Eastside Memorial High School (Eastside), where the LAA was also once held before it joined with the SA at LBJ ECHS. LASA and Eastside moved to their new respective campuses in 2021.

But before this campus held either Eastside or the LAA, it hosted Johnston High School, which opened in 1960 when the campus was newly built. According to Johnston class of 1965 graduate Ricardo Mota, the school's beginnings were off to a great start, especially because of their first principal, Gordon Bailey. His leadership was so effective that they eventually named a school after him, Bailey Middle School.

"The first principal Johnston ever had was called Papa Bailey because he was into everything," Mota said. "There were times when students couldn't get to school, and he would actually get in his own beat-up car and go pick the students up and bring them to school, and then drop them off in the afternoon. He was a great, great person."

Johnston's demographics were also notable. The school was created after the 1954 Brown v. Board of Education decision, which ruled that segregation within education was unconstitutional. As such, the school was able to have Hispanic, Black, and white students. According to Mota, within the school, all students were relatively accepting and integrated—but the world around them wasn't.

"After [a football] game, the team stopped at a restaurant, and we went in there," Mota said. "The coach got off first, and he asked if they could handle so many students. And the guy said yeah, but then he said that if we had any Black students, they were going to have to sit towards the back of the dining area."

see HISTORY OF THE SCHOOL page 10

A Heartless Heartbeat Bill

ZOE KLEIN | copy editor

After publishing an opinion piece relating to the Texas Heartbeat Bill in the Liberator's last issue, the Liberator staff felt it necessary to publish an article representing the views of the majority of the staff. If there are any questions or concerns, please email the Liberator at lasaliberator@gmail.com.

It's hard to go a day without reading about the conservative majority of state legislators taking away Texans' rights. From trans rights to critical race theory to voter suppression, I'm tired. I'm tired of living in fear of the next legislative session headline. After the passage of the "Heartbeat Act," my exhaustion has only been amplified alongside so many other uterus-owners in the state.

Impassioned arguments about abortion have echoed through every government building in the United States since the Supreme Court ruling in *Roe v. Wade* in 1973. In the 48 years since, conservative Texas legislators have made consistent efforts to restrict the rights the ruling guaranteed. During the 2021 legislative session, they came closer than ever to getting rid of these rights completely.

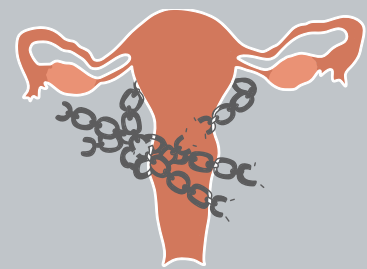
On Sept. 1, 2021, a Texas law called the Heartbeat Act went into effect, which banned nearly all abortions after six weeks of pregnancy or when a fetal heartbeat can be detected. By doing so, it violated a pregnant person's right to bodily autonomy—indirectly violating not only a number of Supreme Court cases, but explicitly and directly violating the precedent set by *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* (1992) that a pregnant person cannot face an undue burden (factors that would make doing something impossible) in seeking an abortion before the fetus reaches viability.

Bodily autonomy is the right to make decisions about one's own life and future. Supreme Court cases such as *Griswold v. Connecticut*, *Gonzales v. Oregon*, and *Lawrence v. Texas* all ensure Americans' right to bodily autonomy through the explicit right to choose what happens to their bodies.

A pregnant person's right to control their body is not an abstract understanding of the constitution that remains hanging in the abyss. As defined by Supreme Court cases *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* and the famous *Roe v. Wade*, abortion is a right.

The Heartbeat Act makes getting an abortion near-impossible. In six weeks, the symptoms of pregnancy are almost always limited to mild nausea, fatigue, and irritability.

see ABORTION RESPONSE page 3



Survey shows Life for Austin's LGBTQ+ is Not Straightforward

AVA SPURGEON | staff writer

In October of 2021, Austin City Council decided to fund the LGBTQ+ Quality of Life survey, surveying well over 2,000 identifying members of LGBTQ+ living in Travis and surrounding counties, 89% of which were people of color.

According to the survey, respondents said they felt safe with family and friends, but public spaces still felt generally unsafe. In addition, 4% of respondents reported consistently negative experiences with law enforcement, and discrimination against LGBTQ+ citizens seeking employment and housing was also a major issue, with housing being clearly ranked as the number one issue for LGBTQ+ Austinites, according to the survey results.

The Austin LGBTQ+ Quality of Life Commission began in 2017 as a commission with a purpose to inform and assist in advising the City Council on LGBTQ+ issues in Austin. Commission member Victor Martinez was originally appointed for a first term in 2017, and is now serving a second term until 2023. Martinez worked on creating this survey and will continue to work with the City Council to draft solutions.

"From our very first meeting of our commission four years ago, I believed that we needed data in order to understand what the needs of the LGBTQ+ community are," Martinez said. "Austin has never had a formal census or study on our community, so we needed to get data in order to be able to make informed recommendations to Council."

As for the issues themselves, City Council has not yet begun formally looking at solutions. Despite that, many possible courses of action are being considered by the commission.

"We need to provide better training to our police officers,

that's for sure," Martinez said. "In terms of housing and medical and mental healthcare, we know more funding is needed and we have made some progress already. Last year we secured funding to increase mental health services for the LGBTQ+ community in Austin, but we still have a ways to go."

Members of LASA Pride Alliance (LPA), like senior Eli Clark, agree that there is still a lot of work to be done. LASA Pride Alliance is a club for students who are both members of the LGBTQ+ community and allies to meet others and learn about the community.

"While Austin is definitely better than a lot of places, there's still a lot of work that can be done," Clark said. "We're still in Texas. As much as we love to talk about the blue bubble, the fact is we're still in Texas, so when things apply statewide, they're statewide. I think it's really important for people to understand it goes beyond what's happening in Austin, and we have to work on creating a better climate statewide as well."

LASA Principal's secretary Jo Koerth was surprised by the survey results because to Koerth, Austin feels so separate from Texas sometimes that she forgets about the depth of these issues in the city. Despite that, Koerth still agrees with Clark in the sense that although Austin feels separate from Texas, the city still experiences these issues.

"I'm a white, cisgendered woman who passes because my wife looks like my sister, so I don't encounter a lot of difficulties, so for me it's easy to forget that it's even a thing because I don't face that oppression," Koerth said.

see LGBTQ+ SURVEY page 5

what's news



photo by LiLi Xiong

Bibbity Bobbity Blast

Alleycat players conclude their first performance of the year, "A Cinderella Waltz."

see ALLEY CAT PLAYERS page 12



photo by Madeleine Van Slyke

Blazing the Trail of Lights

The Trail of Lights begins its second year in a drive-through format.

see TRAIL OF LIGHTS page 13



photo by JC Ramirez Delgadillo

Shooting Our Shot

In our second raptor run down, Annabel Andre joins the girls basketball team for a week.

see RAPTOR RUN DOWN page 16

editorial Gerrymandering Strikes Again

Texas Legislators Push Partisan Redistricting Plan

Staff Stance: Every nine weeks 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.

Every 10 years, the Texas legislature redraws congressional districts—or districts that a state is divided into in which one member of the national House of Representatives is elected. In theory, this is meant to account for demographic changes in the population, but in practice it has only acted as a weapon used to diminish the voting power of the minority party.

Gerrymandering, or the purposeful act of arranging political districts in a way that gives a political party an unfair advantage in elections, is at the heart of this decade's redistricting plan that was approved on Oct. 15 by Governor Gregg Abbott. Redistricting is a complicated process, especially in a state like Texas. The population is centralized in its cities compared to its spread out rural areas, so district shapes are bound to look a little strange, yet the approved plan still blatantly stifles minority voices in order to protect the party drawing the lines.

The Equal Protection Clause in the Supreme Court case *Reynold v Sims* (1964) required "equal legislative representation for all citizens in a State regardless of where they reside." The new congressional map poses a threat to this idea, as it fails to give individuals a fair say in who represents them in government. For example, while the new districts do reinforce Democratic strongholds, racial demographic groups are forced into carefully calculated and concentrated areas for their voting impacts to be minimized.

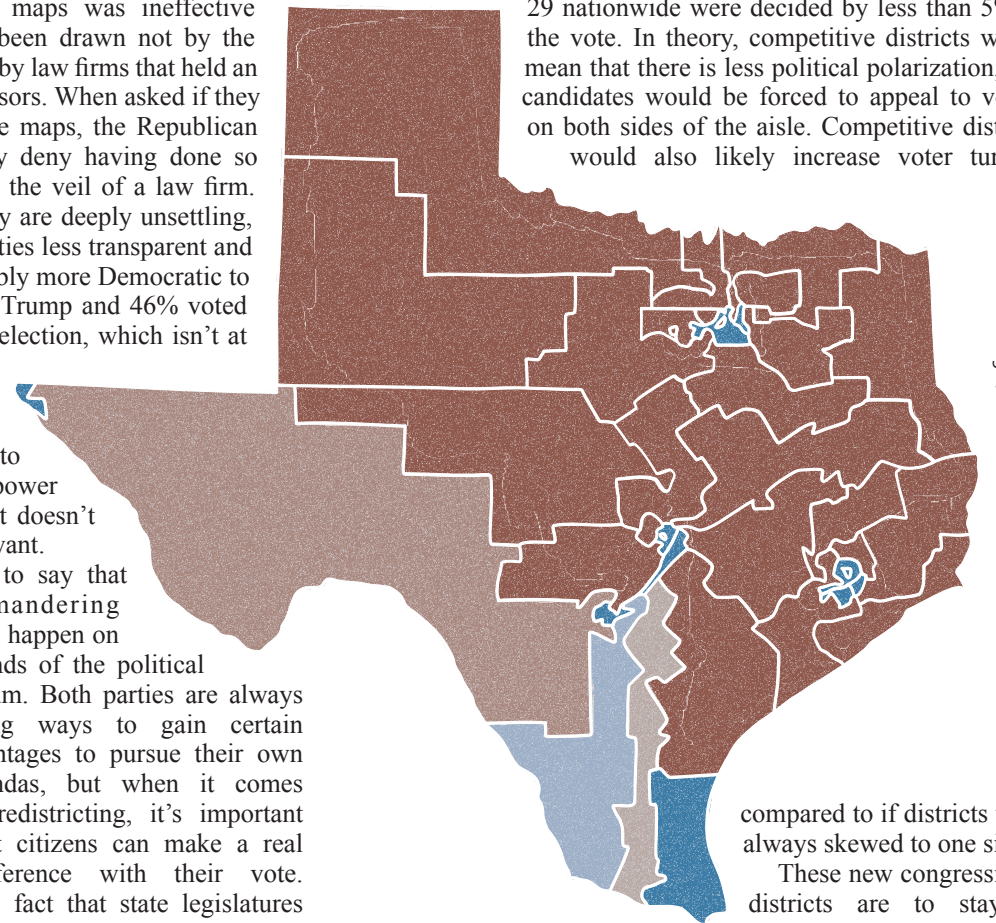
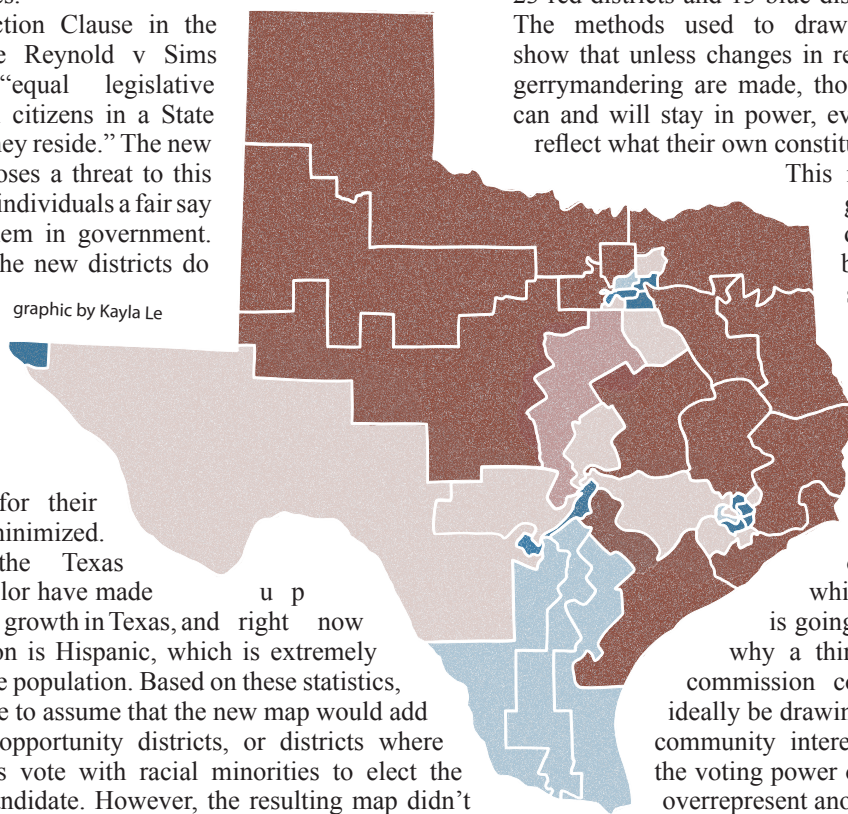
According to the Texas Tribune, people of color have made up 95% of the population growth in Texas, and right now 39% of the population is Hispanic, which is extremely close to the 41% white population. Based on these statistics, it would be reasonable to assume that the new map would add additional Hispanic opportunity districts, or districts where some majority voters vote with racial minorities to elect the minority-preferred candidate. However, the resulting map didn't represent the demographic changes in the last decade, but instead a sweeping and glaringly obvious suppression of minority voters. The plan gives white populations 23 majority districts, Hispanics 7 (despite there being an almost equal number of Hispanic and white voters), and not a single opportunity district for Black or Asian voters.

According to Texas State Senator Sarah Eckhardt (D-14), the Democratic push to question these maps was ineffective because the maps had intentionally been drawn not by the Republicans sponsors themselves, but by law firms that held an attorney-client privilege with the sponsors. When asked if they considered race in the drawing of the maps, the Republican sponsors of the map could truthfully deny having done so because they had been drawn behind the veil of a law firm. The implications of this on democracy are deeply unsettling, as it makes confrontation between parties less transparent and less productive. Texas has gotten notably more Democratic to the point that 52% voted for Donald Trump and 46% voted for Joe Biden in the last presidential election, which isn't at all represented proportionally by the 23 red districts and 13 blue districts. The methods used to draw them show that unless changes in regards to gerrymandering are made, those in power can and will stay in power, even if it doesn't reflect what their own constituents want.

This is not to say that gerrymandering doesn't happen on both ends of the political spectrum. Both parties are always seeking ways to gain certain advantages to pursue their own agendas, but when it comes to redistricting, it's important that citizens can make a real difference with their vote. The fact that state legislatures generally oversee the redistricting of their own state means that whichever party is in power at that time is going to protect what they have. This is why a third-party, non-partisan redistricting commission could be helpful, as they would ideally be drawing the lines in ways that best reflect community interests instead of trying to diminish the voting power of certain groups and attempting to overrepresent another.

A growing number of states have been dipping their toes into this possible solution to gerrymandering. For example, according to a New York Times analysis, the 2001 and 2011 maps of Arizona drawn by an independent commission produced some of the most competitive races in the country because the standard for independent redistricting commissions is to be as nonpartisan

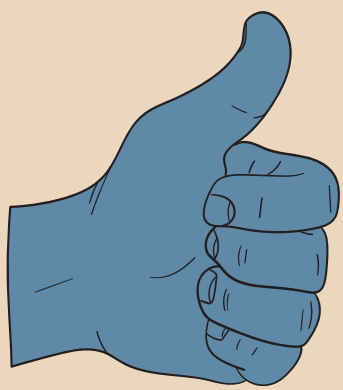
as possible. In 2014, the race of two of Arizona's districts out of 29 nationwide were decided by less than 5% of the vote. In theory, competitive districts would mean that there is less political polarization, and candidates would be forced to appeal to voters on both sides of the aisle. Competitive districts would also likely increase voter turnout



compared to if districts were always skewed to one side.

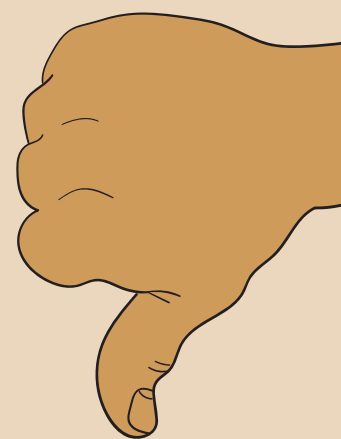
These new congressional districts are to stay in place for the next 10 years; they will determine the magnitude of our voices for the next 10 years. These are the districts in which every high schooler—and even middle schooler—right now will vote once they're eligible. Democracy should mean that a liberal's vote in Austin has the potential to have as much influence as a conservative's vote in Bastrop; it should mean that a white person's vote in Hays County matters as much as a Hispanic person's vote in Bexar County. The new congressional districts ensure that the votes of racial minorities have less of an influence, which jeopardizes many aspects of a functioning democracy. The new districts in Texas and nationwide should be looked at with scrutiny through the constitutional lens of one person, one vote instead of settling for incumbent protection and party bolstering.

Thumbs Up



Jimmy John's
Phone Cases
Magazines
Christmas Break
Collared Shirts

Thumbs Down



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The Flu
Long Lunch Lines
Black Licorice
Stubbed Toes

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

the liberator

Editorial Policy

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

Editorial Content:

1. The students on The Liberator staff will print articles which have been researched to the best of their ability to obtain most complete information.
2. The information will be presented in an objective, 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, and then presented with the best ability of the writer. In addition, all opinion or commentary will be clearly labeled as so.
4. No material which is obscene, libelous or that will cause an immaterial and substantial disruption of the school day, according to accepted legal definitions, will be printed.

The Editorial Boards and its Functions:

The Liberator staff will be governed by an editorial board composed of the following individuals: editors-in-chief and section 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 disciplinary or other inappropriate behavior of staff.
5. Vote on removal of staff members.
6. Change or add policy as necessary with three of four board members voting favorably.

Viewpoints:

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

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

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

Non-Staff Contributors: Bylined contributions are welcome.

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

Sources:

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

Note: The Liberator is an open forum.

Enjoy your
two weeks off,
LASA! See you
after the break.



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

Students Fight For Their Futures

An Increasing Number of Young People are Taking Part in Activism

LANA GILES | staff writer



Across the globe, now more than ever, student-led movements spark and spread awareness on issues that affect the majority of the world. Climate change, women's rights, education rights, racial equality, gun control, LGBT+ rights, and so many more issues are the topics of debate, protests, and calls for action.

Young activists are role models for the rest of their generation. Strong public voices such as 18-year-old climate change activist Greta Thunberg, 24-year-old girl's education activist Malala Yousafzai, and 14-year-old water access advocate Mari Copeny are motivators for fellow young activists to become involved and to raise their voices. Yousafzai, for example, broke headlines in October 2012 when she was shot in the head for speaking out against the Taliban and advocating for girls' rights to education. She continues to use her platform to advocate for the education of all girls. Yousafzai won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2014, inspiring millions across the globe to become proponents of change.

Student activism is essential, as it provides insight into the beliefs of the young people who will eventually inherit the world. Student activists educate their peers and draw attention to world issues that their audiences might not experience first-hand every day. Students who put in the time to educate themselves, form opinions, compare their knowledge and opinions with those of others, and express those opinions on whatever platform they have access to are at an advantage because of their involvement with local, national, and global issues.

According to NASA, the global temperature has risen 1.18 degrees Celsius since 1880. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, this global warming is causing catastrophe for the ocean because of melting glaciers, extreme weather events, air pollution, and ocean acidification. Some of these effects will not be reversible for hundreds to thousands of years—if ever. As a result, activists like Thunberg are calling politicians to end heavy carbon emissions, which affect the global climate. In August 2018, 15-year-old Thunberg protested climate change by participating in a school strike for climate change, standing outside Sweden's Parliament building until their election. She has brought more than 10 million people onto the streets worldwide to demand climate action, as well as raised public concern on climate change. In response to the 2021 United

Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26), which took place from Oct. 31 to Nov. 12, Thunberg called out politicians for profiting from contributors to climate change. Her actions highlight the capability of students to be actively involved in issues that they fervently desire further attention to be called to.

An important aspect of student activism is getting as involved as possible. There are many ways to do so. Students can volunteer with organizations and events like Gobble Gobble Give, a holiday volunteer opportunity to make care bags and prepare food for homeless people. This experience is beneficial because students get the chance to actively participate in helping others and spreading awareness of a local situation. Attending protests and rallies is also a great way to become involved. On Oct. 2, 2021, Women's March ATX hosted a rally to protest against Texas' abortion bill, where girls as young as 8 years old stood up and expressed their opinions.

On a local level, students can participate in school clubs, which enable students to surround themselves with like-minded peers and discuss what they feel passionately about. LASA has clubs like the Women's Rights Club and Feminism Club, which have both taken action this school year to promote awareness on issues, such as providing free feminine hygiene products in school bathrooms. There are also groups such as Teens 4 Equality, a group that protests systemic racism and police brutality in which student activists can get involved. Teens 4 Equality was started by six teenage girls who wanted to speak up following the murder of George Floyd in May 2020. They set up one of the largest peaceful protests in Nashville, which shows that it's possible to make a difference even with a small number of people.

Another way to get involved is through reposting and sharing information on social media. Many reputable sources like The New York Times and National Geographic share information on platforms such as Instagram. Resharing reputable posts will allow for your friends and family to view and share them on their own accounts. Many people get their news from social media, so the more interaction they have with informational posts, the more they'll be aware of global and current arguments. Younger generations also rely heavily on social media for connection and communication. One repost can spiral into a collection of reposts, with each one gaining a wider reach of views. With so much interaction taking place online today, sharing information through social media is a great way to get it out there and spread awareness. However, it must be noted that digital activism can also risk misinformation and selective reporting. Taking steps to ensure one's sources of information come from reputable sources is crucial to making social media a productive battleground for student activism.

Students' voices play a role in the education and experiences of their peers. What young people hear in the stages of growing up affects their outlook on life and their environments. The awareness surrounding global issues facing today and the future are dependent upon the youth's mentalities. Student activism is key because it sets the stage for what's in store for this coming generation's future, encapsulated through the action and awareness of the social, political, racial, and ethical issues raging today.



Raptor Chatter

What do you think are the best ways for students to get involved with activism and make changes in their communities?



Roisin O'Driscoll
Freshman

I think that joining clubs and going to protests are always a good way. And always being aware of what's happening with the world and reading the news and stuff are always good ways.



Asher Press
Senior

I think that there are a lot of clubs that people can join for specific things such as the feminism club, and there are also events where people can go to where they can donate or do charity work.

Heartbeat Bill

From Page 1

But those are the exact same symptoms I feel when I have my period. In six weeks, someone with the average menstrual cycle would be just two weeks late for their period, but not everyone has the "average period." But menstrual cycles do not adhere to a particular standard or law: for some, going six weeks without getting a period is perfectly normal.

Besides the Heartbeat Bill placing an undue burden on a pregnant person's access to an abortion, laws like it have historically been ineffective and harmful to public health. When a pregnant person cannot access a legal abortion, certain extenuating circumstances can cause them to seek an abortion via other methods including black market medication, termination via someone who is not a licensed abortion provider, or inserting a foreign object into the vagina or cervix. All of the above methods of terminating pregnancy can cause long term health effects, or, in the worst cases, death. Banning abortion does not stop abortions. It stops safe abortions.

Abortion access is disparate across classes and locations. People who live in rural areas, live below the poverty line, don't have access to reliable transportation, or can't afford to take time off work have less of an ability to receive abortions on a timely basis or even at all. The gap that this law creates is agitated by the short time period before an abortion is illegal, and favors those with higher socioeconomic status.

Those opposed consider abortion to be "killing a child," but this characterization of the medical procedure has been debunked by scientists time and time again. According to the American Pregnancy Association, before 21 weeks, fetuses cannot live unsupported, even with a respirator. Until 24 weeks, fetuses cannot feel pain. These and a variety of other factors clearly refute the framing of abortion in this way.

Abortion has been described by opponents as an act of self-worship. But regardless of the medical necessity of an abortion, all abortions have a variety of possible adverse health effects and

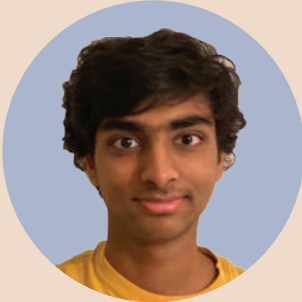
can cause intense physical pain and sometimes insurmountable trauma. Defining abortion as an act of self-worship completely discounts the reality of an experience that almost nobody would willingly participate in given the legitimate choice. Defining abortion as an act of self-worship is a perspective that unveils a lack of knowledge on the facts of abortion.

Abortion is a right that every person has—not only according to precedents set by those who defend our Constitution, but also according to common logic and morality. A pregnant person must be guaranteed the right to control their body. If the government does not allow American citizens to control their own bodies, it will set a dangerous precedent for the future. People deserve control of their own bodies. Abortion cannot be the exception to a right that has been in place since the founding of our nation. Every American citizen has the right to choose what happens to their body. Pregnant people cannot be the exception.

Tesla Revs Up for Relocation

Effects of Austin Becoming a Tech Hub

NAYAN KONDAPALLI | staff writer



For fans of the electric car revolution, it may be exciting to hear about the Tesla headquarters moving to Austin, in addition to the construction of a Tesla factory in Austin. This project could enable Tesla to produce

upward of 500,000 cars per year according to Automotive News, and haul in roughly 10,000 new jobs for the area. Despite this, many have concerns for the city because it has caused housing prices to rise and increased the total cost of living beyond what is considered affordable for many citizens. Regardless of how advantageous the factory construction may be, its downsides heavily outweigh its benefits.

Tesla is a company that was founded in San Carlos, California, and was previously based in Palo Alto. This means that the company is used to operating in a Californian environment, where taxes are higher, the average cost of living is 50% greater than the U.S., and the median housing cost is \$685,000, whereas the median house cost in Austin is \$575,000. As a result, when Tesla moves its high-paying jobs from a state with a high cost of living to a relatively lower cost of living in Texas, those people with high-paying jobs now have a significant increase in the amount of money they can spend.

One consequence of this is the increase in housing prices. In an already competitive housing market such as Austin's, buyers are willing to put in as much money as they can afford to obtain property in the location that they want to. Buyers coming from California with their salaries to compensate for higher living costs and their extra money from selling Californian homes have more than enough money to make irresistible offers for homeowners looking to sell. This has caused many homes to sell upwards of double the asking price, and on average, three out of four houses sold in the Travis county area have been sold at more than the asking price. Such reckless spending has caused property costs to rise by 40% in the

past two years, which puts many homes out of reach of the majority Austin population, where the median salary is just above \$50,000. There is no doubt that this increase in prices had been going on prior to the past two years, but Tesla's move here could continue to fuel this problem and exacerbate its root causes.

Having a company as massive as Tesla build a factory and headquarters in Austin is something the city should be proud of. The environment and culture has tempted Tesla and other companies such as Apple, Amazon, Google, and Facebook to move a significant portion of their jobs and expenditure here, but it will ultimately cause problems for native Austinites. These companies attract people with high salaries to work in Austin, and though it is beneficial for them to come here to develop Austin, this will cause fierce competition that may cause locals to move to other cities or suburbs, for they simply cannot afford living here.

The influx of people to Austin can be beneficial, but if the city wants to continue developing properly, regulations need to be put in place so that nobody living in this city feels left out. The city can pass laws to regulate the price at which houses are sold compared to their actual value, so that they are not being bought at such unreasonable and competitive prices, which should decrease the rate at which house prices increase for the following years.

In addition, communities subsidized by large companies looking to buy land in Austin to build large business complexes should allow for cheaper housing to be available to those who want to work in the new locations. This means that the company doesn't lose out on any capital or manpower due to shortened commute times, and allows most people in Austin to buy a genuinely affordable home, a win-win situation for all three parties involved. If changes like this were made, companies similar to Tesla moving their business to Austin can become an overall beneficial prospect rather than a burden to most.



graphic by Kayla Le

Virtually Perfect Media

Evolution of the Newspaper

SARAH GARRETT | staff writer



The decline of physical newspapers and the rise of online news has slowly been diminishing the already fragile print publishing industry. According to The New York Times, between 2004 and 2015, more than 20% of newspapers closed temporarily or permanently. According to The Atlantic, between 2000 and 2015, advertising revenue for print newspapers fell from \$60 billion to \$20 billion. This long-anticipated and gradual decline has affected newspapers, reporters, and readers alike. Though this change may seem negative, the adaptation of the industry is actually both beneficial and necessary to accommodate for this century's shift to digital media.

When print newspapers were first put into use, it was an easy way for people to get reliable information. Many of the first printed newspapers wrote about issues like war and politics, as well as local events, that remain pertinent today.

Since access to digital media has increased, the need for physical sources of information has become less necessary. With the introduction of the television, then the internet, and now cell phones that provide instant access to almost all information, the need for a paper newspaper has decreased substantially.

According to the Pew Research Center, 85% of American adults own a smartphone. This access to the internet makes online news sources easy to find, and is a cheaper adaptation that helps readers stay informed now that buying print copies



is no longer necessary. Major newspapers such as The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, and The Washington Post have all adapted to this change. These newspapers have websites to read articles online and social media accounts with news headlines and photos, making access to information easier.

According to NBC, The New York Times' Sunday paper costs \$5 in New York and \$6 in the remaining 49 states. The New York Times' basic online subscription, however, costs \$1 a week, and gives readers daily access to articles instantly. Online articles are cheaper to read than printed articles, making an online newspaper more cost conscious and accessible to low-income people.

Additionally, many articles can be read for free online without the need to purchase any newspaper's subscription. The internet is home to many articles from various credible newspapers around the world, such as The Texas Tribune, The Chicago Tribune, and The Portland Press Herald. Online-only news sites like BuzzFeed News exist as well. This adaptation of the news industry is making articles more accessible, allowing more people to be informed about important news, and sustaining the need for interesting articles.

Online articles are also more environmentally friendly than a paper newspaper. Though paper newspapers, specifically, biodegrade in approximately two to three weeks, deforestation, which is necessary to provide paper products, is still a process that harms the planet. According to The Conversation, 36% of timber in the United States is used for paper. While paper products are often recycled, deforestation still has to occur to create those products in the first place.

However, not all people are given the luxury of the internet. According to Pew Research Center, 43% of adults with lower income (less than \$30,000 a year) do not have internet access at home and 41% don't own a laptop or desktop computer. There are also people who just prefer to read paper newspapers, or are journalists or printers. The downfall of the newspaper industry, for these people, is an alarming event that is slowly harming their source of income and information. According to The New York Times, in 2020 an estimated 37,000 news media company employees were fired, had their pay reduced, or were furloughed. Fortunately, the print newspaper is not gone yet and will likely continue to exist into the near future, especially as a means of conveying local news.

The decline of the newspaper industry is forcing newspapers to adapt in ways that are making news easier to access, cheaper to access, and more environmentally friendly to produce. These inevitable adaptations are leading to a brighter future for news, and the modern newspaper will continue to rise, with traditional paper newspapers changed but not forgotten.

graphic by Ava De Leon

When the Joke Goes Too Far

The Role of Cancel Culture in Comedy

AMELIA COLEMAN | staff writer



Comedians have always used humor to bring up controversial subject matters. While it's acceptable for them to make jokes about these matters when they're drawing from their personal experiences,

every so often a comedian will say something blatantly racist, sexist, homophobic, or ableist, and try to pass it off as "dark comedy." There is a clear line that divides being humorous and being inconsiderate. Being "funny" doesn't make comedians exempt from the judgment of the masses; it just makes them insensitive to the very real struggles of minority communities.

For example, comedian Dave Chappelle's most recent Netflix special, "The Closer," has received backlash from critics and the LGBT+ community for including transphobic rhetoric. In the special, Chappelle stated that "gender is a fact" and that LGBT+ people are "too sensitive." This resulted in internet backlash and even a protest outside of Netflix's headquarters.

Comedians—and films in general—have been censoring certain topics for decades. For example, actors in the 1952 show "I Love Lucy" couldn't say the word "pregnant" so they had to substitute words like "expecting" or other euphemisms. In 1963, comedian Lenny Bruce was arrested for using sexually explicit dialogue during performances that were labeled obscene and blasphemous. In contrast, modern-day comedians have more freedom to speak their minds than they ever had before. Some comedy shows nowadays have comedians discussing sex, drugs, mental health, and other topics that would have been considered taboo back in the '60s.

The problem today is not that comedians are being censored, but that comedians believe their social commentary to be unheeded to the standards we place on the rest of society. Comedians should refrain from making comments on stage that essentially diminish a specific marginalized group and make fun of

them and their situations. Additionally, there's a comedic axiom of punching up versus punching down. Comedians can "punch up," or make fun of those with more influence or power, but should never "punch down," or insult those with less privilege or authority. Acknowledging that your own power affects the delivery of the joke is crucial to creating a healthy and positive culture in comedy. These are basic guiding principles a comedian can take into account in order not to get "canceled" by social media.

Comedians have a platform to speak their minds, and that platform can be used to talk about issues from people in marginalized groups and shed light on topics that are often difficult to discuss. Comedians can even make people who relate to them realize that there are people out there who share similar experiences to them. On the flip side, there are comedians who take advantage of their platform and use it to bully others. If comedians want to make the world of comedy more healthy towards people who don't always get positively represented in the media in the first place, they should not make fun of them for simply being there, and let them have the spotlight to talk about their own issues.



graphic by Zoe Klein

School Shooting Trends Once Again Rising After Pandemic Lull, In-Person Classes Bring Change

LANA GILES | staff writer

The following story was written before the school shooting that took place in Michigan on Nov. 30, 2021.

In the U.S., there were 2,100 mass shootings between 2013 and 2019, with 135 shootings occurring in Texas during the time period, according to the World Population Review. At least 101 incidents of school shootings have occurred in the U.S. during the 2021 school year, resulting in 56 injuries and 21 deaths, according to Everytown, which is the largest gun violence prevention organization in the country.

LASA school resource officer Christopher Roddy works on campus and is well aware of the threat of school shootings. He says that school shootings take on different meanings depending on the situation at hand.

"A school shooting, at least for our working definition, would be more of something that happens at school that involves a firearm and an active student or former student, and its targets are going to be teachers, staff, or students at that school, generally during school hours," Roddy said.

For junior Sophia Roberts, she recognizes that school shootings are events that could potentially impact her and her family. She

recalls one shooting in particular that stood out and emotionally shook her and made her consider what needed to change in terms of school safety. The Santa Fe school shooting fatally wounded 10 people, and wounded 13 others, which Roberts claims opened her eyes to the potential threat of a school shooting.

"The shooting that took place in Santa Fe, Texas in 2018 shocked me when I heard and I remember how awful I felt after hearing about all of the victims," Roberts said. "It was like it suddenly hit me that a shooting could take place at any school at any time. For a long time I couldn't help but be scared that my school would be next."

To ensure the safety and comfortability of people regarding the threat of school shootings, organizations such as Everytown provide evidence based solutions on gun violence across the country. Founder and director of Lock Arms For Life, Leesa Ross, says the organization teaches gun owners on how to properly store and handle guns. Through Lock Arms For Life, Ross says that she wants to educate gun owners and community members about safe gun practices and storage to save lives.

"Safe practices would be things like knowing what your target is," Ross said. "Beyond that, never pointing the gun at anybody. Never put your finger on the trigger until you're ready to shoot. And of course, safe storage means that your gun is to be locked into a safe, the most safest way to do it is locked, unloaded, and with the ammunition stored separately."

As part of her safe gun ownership education, Ross emphasized the difference between hiding a gun and securing a gun. She said the difference affects the safety of yourself, your surroundings, and others.

"You can have a child that's possibly looking for Christmas

"It was like it suddenly hit me that a shooting could take place at any school at any time. For a long time I couldn't help but be scared that my school would be next."

-Junior Sophia Roberts

presents or birthday presents going through the house, and there's an unsecured gun laying around for them," Ross said. "A two year old has the strength to pull a trigger."

According to Ross, gun deaths are something that will unfortunately never be eliminated. However, she says that the most effective path to preventing gun death is spreading awareness about safe gun policies.

"We are not going to eliminate gun deaths, we're going to reduce them," Ross said. "Safe storage is your low hanging fruit, it's the easiest step you can take to reduce gun tragedies. And it's the first step you should always take."

In preparation for an event in which your personal safety is affected, Roddy says that it's important to know beforehand what plan you want to carry out. He added that having a plan of action aids a real life situation that could potentially occur.

"Educating yourself on what the policies are by taking a moment to really listen and participate when we have drills," Roddy said. "Whatever the drills may be, those are great functional exercises to ensure that every student understands what's going to be expected of them."

Other than drills, Roberts says that she doesn't discuss school shootings in schools frequently. But following incidents that are close to home, like the October shooting in Arlington, it would be beneficial for discussions to arise about school shootings, Roberts says.

"Teachers don't really tend to discuss school shootings, but if they do they usually don't go into too much detail and give us the space to think about it on our own time," Roberts said. "I feel like talking about it could help to make people less scared or worried about something like that happening at our school."

Ross emphasizes the importance of education in gun safety. If more awareness is spread about how to properly handle guns, the safer life will be for many, according to Ross.

"Eventually, some of the people that you hang around with will be the next future gun owners, some of them already are," Ross said. "So the more we can share this message, the more lives we can save."



The Name is Bond, AISD Bond

SARAH GARRETT | staff writer

The Austin Independent School District (AISD) is in the preparation stages of a new 2022 bond, a package of money set to focus on equity for the district. According to AISD, they're looking toward past bonds to plan the 2022 bond. The bond issued in 2017 was focused on modernizing campuses, improving overcrowding issues at campuses, and improving technology for students and teachers. Said bond has benefitted campuses all throughout Austin, according to Michelle Wallis, the executive director of the Office of Innovation and Development. She feels that the 2017 bond was able to improve student's learning environments.

"I think everyone acknowledges there's still a lot of work to do on particular facilities improvements, but there are a lot of projects that have been implemented as a result of that bond that I think improve the environment in which students learn," Wallis said. "I think great teachers are teaching in all kinds of facilities all over the state. It's really neat to see in some of the facilities that have been most recently renovated or constructed, how thoughtfully they're designed with the different ways that teachers can teach more collaboratively."

Before a new bond can exist, though, some planning has to take place, according to AISD Board of Trustees member Kristin Ashy. Ashy said that bonds are able to upgrade buildings, buses, and technology. Currently, AISD members are working on a Long Range Facilities Plan that would update the current 2017 bond in place, working to modernize schools across Austin.

"There's actually not a bond that has been called at this point," Ashy said. "Where we are in the process is we are working on what's called long range planning, our long range plan process, as we consider our facilities, as well as our transportation, as well as technology."

Ashy is one of nine trustees and seven representatives for a single-member district. Part of her job is to work with the Long Range Planning Committee and use that information to benefit AISD.

"That's what my job is as a member of the Board of Trustees: to look at the recommendations that come from this Long Range Planning Committee, and decide if that is where we want to be looking for our district to go, as it pertains to those three entities to facilities to transportation and technology," Ashy said.

Jacob Reach, the AISD chief of Government Relations and Board Services, also works with the Board of Trustees. Part of his job is to work with the district and the Board of Trustees to ensure that they are

connected with AISD campuses and district activities, according to Reach.

"My first most important role is being a liaison between our Board of Trustees in the district to ensure that we're connecting them with our campuses and with district activities, that we're prepared for our board meetings, and any of the legally required activities that our board of trustees are taking every year," Reach said. "A big part of that, of course, is working with our staff to ensure that we're getting information back to our counties, so that they have the information that they need to write their governance story."

The other part of Reach's job is involved with the state legal and governmental services. Reach predicts that Texas's redistricting will affect AISD's Board of Trustees.

AISD districts have historically been broken into seven, with elected officials representing each district. However, AISD is now redrawing districts in response to new districts being drawn by congressional and house seats, according to Community Impact newspaper.

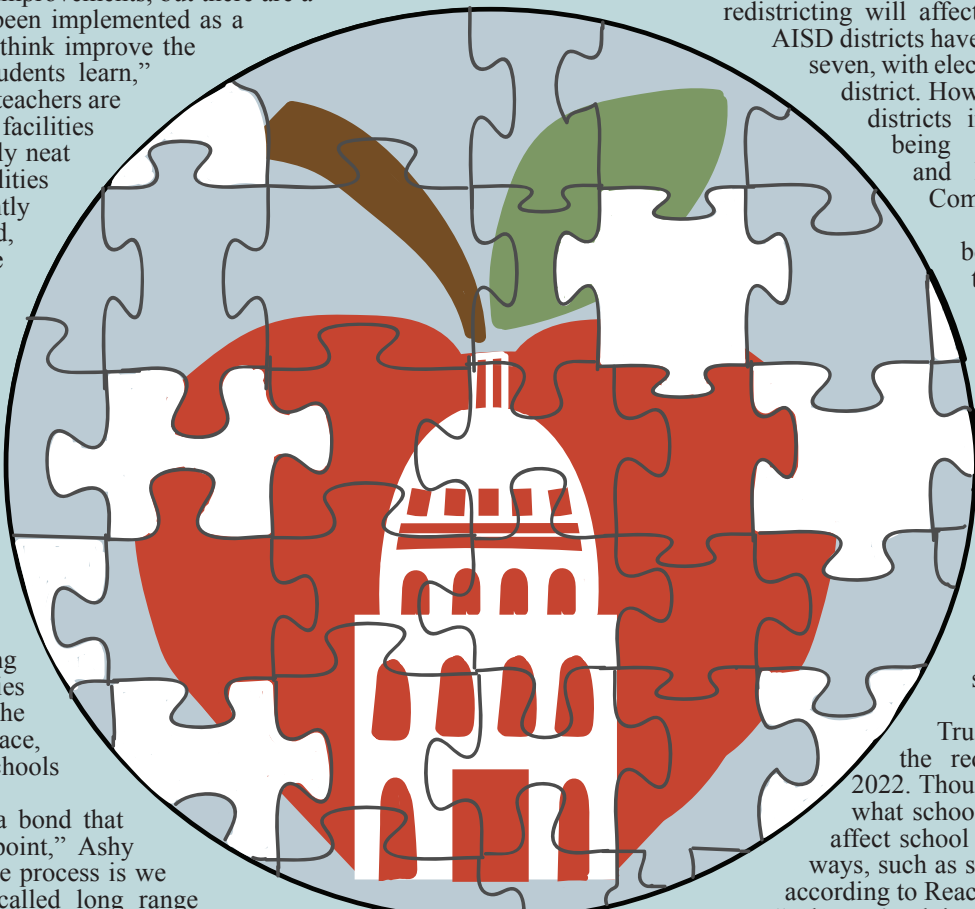
"When people think of boundaries, the first thing they think of is what's the school that you attend based off of where you live, and that is certainly a boundary, but that's not what redistricting is dealing with," Reach said. "Redistricting is focused on elected officials, with the overall goal of ensuring that people of a community both have a say in the governance of whatever governmental group we're talking about. In this case, a school district."

Currently, the Board of Trustees is hoping to complete the redistricting process by June 2022. Though redistricting doesn't affect what school a student will attend, it can affect school districts in a variety of other ways, such as student population or budgets, according to Reach.

"What we're doing here with our redistricting for Austin ISD is we're doing the boundaries of who elects the trustees," Reach said. "We'd be looking at just those single member districts because those largest trustees are district wide."

Until new boundaries are decided, Ashy says that there will continue to be nine AISD Board of Directors (seven single district members and two at-large positions) who oversee the district as a whole. And although she believes that the process of redistricting and creating new bonds can be extensive, she believes it is worth it.

"I believe that education is the door for most people to do different things or to try new things," Ashy said. "Educating yourself on the topic is the door to those opportunities. And so I've always been a big believer, and I think public education is free and public education is a cornerstone of our country."



graphic by Edith Holmsten

LGBT+ Survey

from page 1

"But I do know there are pockets of homophobia everywhere. And to some extent, it makes sense that they're still in places that can be pretty bureaucratic and involved with things like housing and law enforcement, which is terrible, but here we are."

As for determining the course of action for the issues brought up in the survey, the City Council has not begun drafting solutions, but both members of the LGBT+ Quality of Life Commission and citizens of Austin have ideas for what should come next. Austinites including Koerth hope the City of Austin will look into solutions and begin to take action soon.

"I would hope that they would look into the issues, especially with law enforcement, and are trying to determine where this is coming from and if there further education they could be providing to police officers or housing agents, if there are laws that can be made, or anything that could be done to address these issues," Koerth said.

Besides just action from the city, there are actions citizens can take as well to improve the current status of LGBT+ quality of life in Austin. Even students have ways they can get involved and make a difference, according to Martinez.

"Get educated on the issues and then get involved," Martinez said. "Call or email your City Council member and ask them to support the LGBTQ community and the recommendations from our commission. Make your voices heard, you are the future of our community and we need you."



graphic by Fiona Keenan

Mental Health and its Potentially New Policing Policies

LUCI GARZA
MALVIKA PRADHAN | news editors

In 2018, Austin was the city with the highest rate of fatal police shootings in relation to people experiencing mental health crises, according to KUT. A year later, the Human Rights Clinic at the University of Texas School of Law and the Austin Community Law Center conducted a report that said out of the 24 people killed in police shootings in Austin from 2010 to 2016, at least one-third had a confirmed mental health condition.

The city and Texas have been recently altering their law enforcement officers' response training for these scenarios, according to Kathy Mitchell, policy coordinator for criminal justice reform group Just Liberty. Mitchell began her line of work after volunteering for other nonprofits, such as the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), where she became a member of the ACLU of Texas Board for over a decade. According to Mitchell, several cities across the country have been trying to change their policing systems, using methods ranging from taking police out of the equation completely to adding more police officers.

"Quite recently, Dallas had a single police sector, where they changed how they were doing first response, and they basically had the police officer drive the car, and stay in the car," Mitchell said. "The alternative responders, the mental health professionals, were the ones who got out of the car, and if they needed that police officer, he was right there. But for the most part, they did not need him."

This model, known as the Meadows Model, was developed in Dallas by the Meadows Foundation, which has been advocating for mental health in Texas since 1948. In Austin, another model is being pursued in which those needing mental health care will be connected with a professional via tablet or telephone. However, this system is not without problems of its own, according to Mitchell.

"We have had issues scaling that appropriately," Mitchell said. "At this point, we are diverting more calls than we used to, but that still relative to the need, it's still a relatively small engagement, and we have to scale that and we have to do some work to put in place all of the staffing we need to be able to scale it."

Blair Lee, coordinator of outreach and communications for the Center of Justice Research, stresses the importance of decriminalizing mental health. The Center of Justice Research, based in Houston, Texas, conducts unbiased research on criminal justice reform through evidence-supported solutions and engagements.

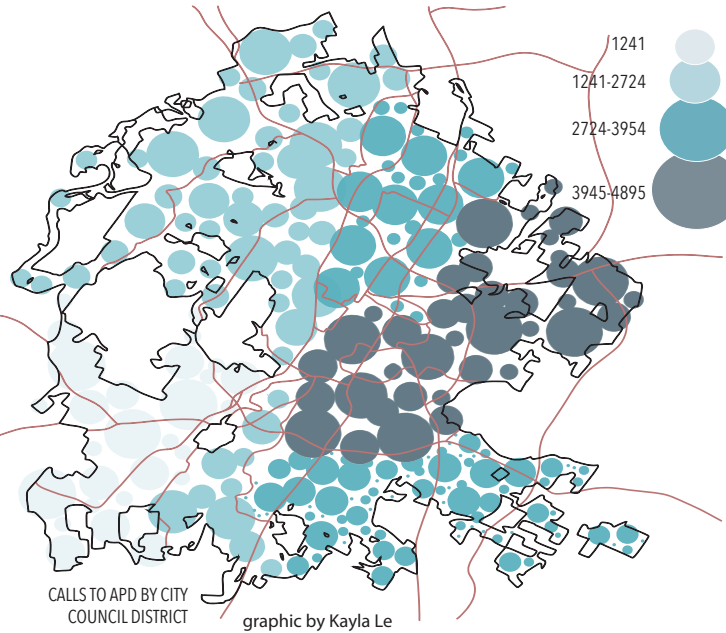
"Mental Health has not been taken seriously in this country," Lee said. "And when we stop criminalizing it, then we will see the seriousness of it."

Lee also added that both the decriminalization of drug use and mental health go hand in hand, and he believes that they are both needed for real change to occur. Since 2018, Austin City Council members, such as District 4 member Greg Casar, have been pushing to stop possession of marijuana arrests in Austin, and have not yet been successful until the last quarter of 2020, according to the Austin Chronicle.

"When someone is arrested for marijuana, or someone is arrested

for cocaine, what do we do? We call law enforcement," Lee said. "When you think about it from a service level, we're calling law enforcement and arresting someone because of something that they're putting in their body. So nothing is going to happen. The infrastructure will not get set up until we stop criminalizing mental health."

Currently, law enforcement officers receive 40 hours of training in order to respond to mental health crises, according to Matthew Lovitt, a peer policy fellow at the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI). In those 40 hours, NAMI affiliates sometimes give presentations to law enforcement to educate them about various mental health conditions, and one officer typically is designated to deal with the crises.



"In addition to that standard 40 hours there's an additional designation called the mental health officer who has to take an additional 40 hour training," Lovitt said. "They obviously get more extensive, more rigorous [training] and these officers, although in short supply, are generally better equipped to support people who are experiencing mental health concerns than just your regular police officer."

Proposition A, a new proposition that was recently declined by the voters of Austin, pushed to increase the amount of law enforcement officers in Austin, as well as more training for law enforcement in terms of responding to calls about mental health. With a growing public interest in police training, as well as different forms of response being created, officers have begun voicing their preference, according to Mitchell.

"The majority of police officers that I speak to about this explicitly say, 'You know, I'm on the wrong tool for the job,'" Mitchell said. "Most of the time, I'm sitting in this driver's seat, but

I'd rather it be someone else who was here helping this guy."

Although the promise of more training brought appeal to some voters, the proposition was overall not a good idea, according to Mitchell. Mitchell added that the main issue for her was that the bill focused money that could have been used for other emergency services, better equipped to handle mental health crises into the police department instead.

"Our EMS system is underfunded, and we should be putting more money into community health paramedics," Mitchell said. "And that is part of why prop A was just a terrible idea. Because it forced voters an up and down vote on one type of staffing for our emergency response system, when in fact, this is all about trade offs."

According to Lee, the term "defund the police" has gained more political popularity than ever. In 2020, the Austin City Council voted to cut the Austin Police Department's \$434 million budget by one third. In 2021 however, the Austin Police Department's budget was approved to increase to \$4.5 billion dollars, according to KXAN.

"Ever since George Floyd, defunding the police has become politicized," Lee said. "And people hear this narrative defund the police, and people are like, 'What the heck does that mean?'" Some people think that it means that we're going to take all funding from police officers, and that's not at all what defunding the police means. Defunding the police means that we want to make sure that the funding that police officers received is in the right places."

Lovitt agrees that defunding the police has become a highly contested political issue. He also says that the increased awareness has made systemic change more challenging.

"I think just how the issue has been publicized, or at least covered in the media, and politicized to a large extent has kind of stalled any progress," Lovitt said. "Just because from a political perspective, or policy perspective, trying to work with conservative policymakers who are beholden to their constituents, who are presumably largely conservative as well, and to engage them is unfortunately sometimes a non-starter because police is a very divisive issue, and unfortunately, more conservative legislators and their constituents are very outspoken in their opposition to anything that might resemble defunding the police."

Across the nation, law enforcement offices have been understaffed, especially in Houston which has caused issues with funding, Lee added. He also mentions the importance of community policing, a strategic method based on community built relationships, and regular officers visiting certain parts of their city, according to Lee.

"Houston in particular, where we're at, is super understaffed as well to now, and we need to definitely make sure that the police are funded, we need to make sure that there's more police officers on the beat," Lee said. "But something that goes hand in hand with that it's something called community policing. Community policing is the first big step on how we can address the staffing shortages that law enforcement officers are receiving, that they're experiencing."

Looking for Extracurriculars? Join the Club

CHANDANA DUBAKULA | club contributor

Literary Club

When: Fridays During Lunch, Park's Room (T112)
Contact: lasaliterary on Instagram

Several students at LASA wanted to promote both the reading and analytical aspect of the literature world, so they created the LASA Literary Club. The club was created last year during quarantine, and many students this year have shown keen interest in the club, starting with Sophomore Sameer Aragwal, founder of the club.

Aragwal said that they found joy in everyday reading and wanted to create a space for others with similar interests. Aragwal originally started reading more during quarantine, and wanted a place for students like him to get recommendations and discuss books.

"I thought it would be fun to create a space where we could discuss what we'd read and what we enjoyed or didn't enjoy," Aragwal said.

Although co-president of the club, Saffron Liu, a sophomore, enjoys reading in solitary, they find joy in reviewing the books with fellow readers. According to Liu, a student-run club is much more appealing than in-class reading.

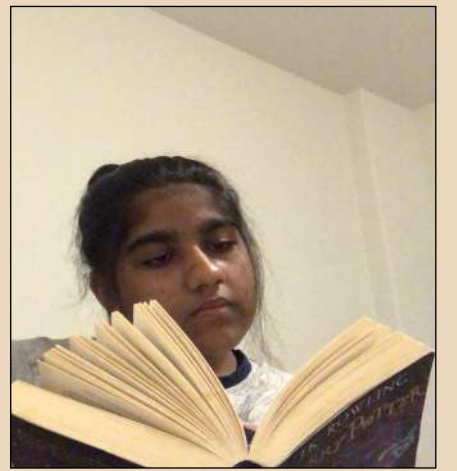
"Part of the fun has always been talking to someone else about the book and seeing what they thought about it," Liu said. "Normally, in English, discussion revolves around topics set by the teacher. We've been able to focus more on dynamics between characters or plot foreshadowing rather than things like the language used or literary devices."

According to sophomore and club member Marcus Lapina, reading can be very burdensome when it's assigned for homework in English classes. Although, when meeting for the club, Lapina says that members are able to read new material outside of class, of their own interest.

"My favorite part about the club is being able to take a break from reading in the context of a class and read just for our own enjoyment," Lapina said.

Along with engaging seminars, Lapina says that LASA Literary Club offers new friendships and connections. Members get to meet people who have similar interests in authors or styles of writing, that they might not have gotten to know otherwise, according to Liu.

"It's been super fun discussing books and making new friends," Liu said. "It's been cool to meet new people who also enjoy reading. There are a lot of people who come to the club that I would not have crossed paths with otherwise."



READING TIME Literary club member Javeria Maheen reads "Harry Potter." Members of the literary club meet and chat about books during lunch every Friday in room T112. photo courtesy of Javeria Maheen

Feminist Club

When: Thursdays During Lunch, Pettigrew's Room (304)
Contact: @lasafeministclub on Instagram

The LASA feminist club was created in September of the 2021-22 school year. The club aims to help members participate and have a greater impact on issues concerning women's rights.

The inspiration to start the LASA feminist club came from the Heartbeat Bill, formally known as Senate Bill 8. The bill, which went into effect on Sept. 1, 2021, bans all abortions after six weeks of pregnancy in Texas. Senior Amaru Marsee, founder of the feminist club, originally wanted to organize a walkout, but after talking to the principal, they decided on a more effective approach.

"We went and talked to Ms. Crescenzi about it, but she said that walkouts weren't an effective form of creating change because it brings publicity more to the people that are running rather than the actual issue," Marsee said. "After that, we created the club just to get people to participate and to have a greater impact on the issue."

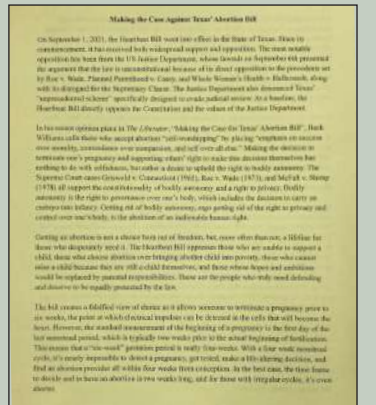
According to senior Ireland Cole, this organization has made a lot of progress with their effective ideas. The club is currently working on a variety of different projects, such as emailing companies about the issue, or teaching self-defense classes.

"I had an idea for teaching women basic self-defense," Cole said. "We could get martial arts trainers to volunteer and teach a course maybe in the gym during lunches to basically just learn how to get away."

As the club's president, Marsee is sure that with the determination and commitment of the members, LASA's feminist club will achieve their target and push forward for equal rights for women.

Senior Morgan Pascoe says the club's ultimate goal is to reverse the Heartbeat Bill. The club is starting to work towards this goal by getting companies to take a stance on the issue, which club members are helping to push by emailing them.

"Ultimately, we would like to have companies on our side," Pascoe said. "Right now, that's our main goal. And we're gonna focus on other issues, if we actually create change on that. But I think that this is an ongoing issue. So this is probably our primary motive."



RESPONSE In response to a commentary story in The Liberator's previous issue on abortion rights, feminist club wrote a public response, which was later posted around school. The club has said members were motivated to join after the abortion ban in Texas, passed in September. photo courtesy of Feminist Club

Science Olympiad

When: Tuesdays and Wednesdays after school, Walker's Room (G215)
Contact: @lasa.scio on Instagram

Science Olympiad is an academic laboratory engineering competition, composed of 23 separate events that students compete in. Students compete in two to four events in teams of two or three. Events range from academic events to building or engineering events to laboratory events. The Science Olympiad club at LASA was established in 2005, and frequently rank among the top 5 Science Olympiad teams in the country.

According to club member and freshman Naina Jacob, Science Olympiad is a club that has creative, studious, and constructive aspects. She says students can choose their desired competitive subjects.

"This club balances studying and socializing, leading up to a pleasant experience," Jacob said.

Along with varied subjects, Science Olympiad consists of many competitions all over the country. Club member Shantala Totada finds them very engaging and enjoyable.

"My favorite part about this club is the competitions and traveling to

different places," Totada said. "While competing, we get to compete at schools such as UT or CyFalls or Seven Lakes, and it is really fun traveling there and hanging out with friends."

It isn't all about the competitions that make up the complete Science Olympiad experience, Jacob expressed. The new friendships are what make the club fun, according to Jacob.

"I joined this club to be introduced to new people and learn about different science topics," Jacob said. "It's a lot of fun competing because you can work with friends and do work that can win you a medal."

This club isn't just about studying and preparing for competitions. There is a lot of behind-the-scenes action that needs to be done by science teacher David Walker, Science Olympiad's sponsor, in order to get members engaged.

"My main role is to get resources, find good textbooks, and find good internet sources for people to use," Walker said.

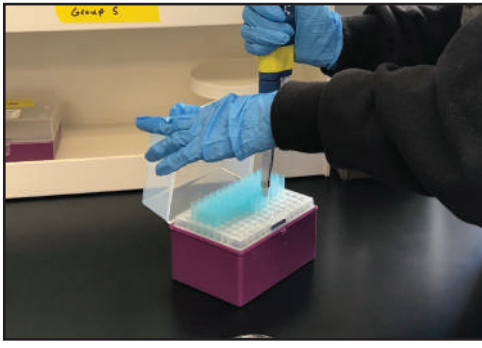
According to Walker, Science Olympiad is all about individual opportunities. He says students can decide for themselves how they want to approach the club and what subjects they want to take a deeper dive in.

"In general, I think that it's a fun opportunity for people to pursue science outside of class," Walker said. "It can be as intense or as not intense as you want it to be as a member of the club."



BUILD UP Milla Press drills into a piece of wood with the help of Mr. Smith, a volunteer. Milla was building a gravity vehicle in preparation for an upcoming Science Olympiad tournament. photo courtesy of LASA Science Olympiad

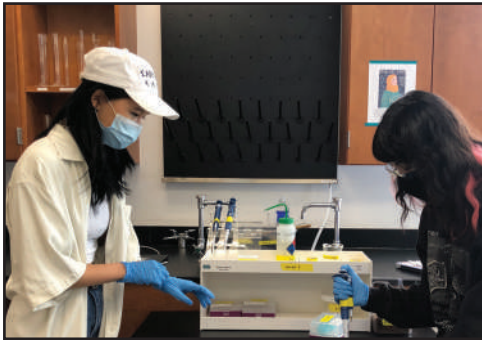
Biotech Recieves \$50,000 Grant for DNA Sequencer



PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT Junior Jimena Martínez pipettes a solution from a beaker into a microtube during her biotech class. The students are practicing making solutions to put into the DNA sequencer. photo by Edith Holmsten



STATE OF THE ART SEQUENCER Mr. Oleniczak poses with LASA's brand new DNA sequencer. LASA was able to get the DNA sequencer through a grant. photo by Nayan Kondapalli



TEAMWORK MAKES THE DREAM WORK Juniors Simona Kao and Jimena Martínez practice making liquid solutions with DNA. Eventually, the solutions would be put in the DNA sequencer. photo by Edith Holmsten

NAYAN KONDAPALLI | staff writer

Running a biotech classroom can be an expensive feat. Basic tools such as pipettes can run \$300 a piece, centrifuges at \$1,000, and PCR machines at \$3,000. But, this year, the LASA biotech class received a \$50,000 dollar grant to obtain one item: a DNA sequencer.

The grant was provided by the National Science Foundation, an organization that works to fund promising research projects from scientists and expand the scope of sciences within American schools and universities. A DNA sequencer, as explained by biotech teacher Joseph Oleniczak, is something a student can use to sequence DNA by loading samples in, allowing the device to go through a series of reactions that can reveal more information about the DNA.

LASA wasn't randomly selected by the National Science Foundation to receive the large grant. Rather, Oleniczak had to come up with a normal grant proposal, and later had the idea of using a sequencer in the classroom.

"The National Science Foundation has what they call a request for proposals that is on the National Science Foundation website," Oleniczak said. "I went and read through that request for proposals, and I came up with a project idea to bring DNA sequencing to our campus, and I wrote a proposal project for that particular request for proposal."

With the sequencer, Oleniczak plans to reduce the time required to perform certain labs in class while also exposing students to more aspects of a biotech-related environment. In the past he said students' samples would be sent off to a different facility.

"I'm excited," Oleniczak said. "I hope that the sequencing capabilities attract more students to the program, and I'm also excited to have my students trained on this high level instrumentation as a way for them to learn job related skills that they could use in a lab that had high level instrumentation."

Oleniczak's enthusiasm seems to resonate with students who have taken biotech or worked in a biotech lab previously. Senior

Nafi Baksh, who took biotech prior to the sequencer grant, is one of these students.

"Our biotech lab is already really cool to work in, but this sequencer is going to make it even more exciting to work in," Baksh said. "It kind of sucks that I took Biotech last year and didn't sign up for the internship this year, but it's cool to know future students get to work with such a machine."

Baksh understands the significance of bringing in a DNA sequencer to a high school classroom, and how it can benefit future students. Biotechnology combines subjects like biology and technology, to create products.

"I feel like biotechnology is an industry that is being slept on," Baksh said. "There's so much potential for growth in the field, yet I haven't seen too many students that understand the industry well. Hopefully future students can better understand the importance of biotechnology, and maybe there's a student that would love to work in a biotech lab, but hasn't realized it."

Junior Leelai Teshome is currently taking Biotech with Oleniczak. As one of the students who will be the first to interact with the sequencer, he says he is very excited to work with the machine next semester.

"I heard that in the second semester we'll be the first students to use a sequencer, which I'm going to brag about," Teshome said. "Jokes aside, I've been really enjoying biotech this year, and previous underclassmen have had the same sentiment. So for us to use the sequencer next semester even when I already know it's going to be fun without it, I can't wait to start using it."

Teshome also realizes that the sequencer would make the biotech class even more tempting to take than it already is, likely pulling in more students than in previous years. LASA is one of the only high schools in the country to gain access to a DNA sequencer on campus, according to Teshome.

"I'm pretty sure there's other students like me who've taken Biotech because previous upperclassmen have talked about how easy, fun, and cool the class is," Teshome said. "I have no doubt though, that the sequencer and future grants will make even more students want to take the class."

Supply Shortage Shortchanges Shoppers Stores Struggle to Get Supplies Amid COVID Pandemic

FIONA KLEEMAN | staff writer

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in early March 2020, the global supply chain has been disrupted, causing the price of shipping to go up and continuing shortages of certain products. Although multiple factors have contributed to the current state of the supply chain, it will continue to follow a distorted pattern, according to the MIT School of Business Management. Even small issues can cause disruptions in the supply chain, like a faulty machine, according to the Harvard Business Review.

Today, many corporate companies are being affected by the supply shortages. Jonathan Rookstool, a manager at Recreational Equipment Inc. (REI) located in Austin, says that for REI, causes of the issue are worker shortages and shortage of raw materials, and that these developments have caused customers to worry about a shift in prices that REI hopes to combat.

"We want to stick to our guns as to what we thought was fair pricing, no price gouging, like you see out there today and a lot of other businesses," Rookstool said. "We've been very good about keeping that standard and not taking advantage of that situation right now."

Cosmetics company Lush sources many of their products overseas from places including Tunisia, the Dominican Republic, and Hungary, according to local Lush manager Rachel Levy. Levy says that at the head office level, holiday products are being designed earlier, and raw materials and ingredients had to be ordered earlier than they have been in the past.

"We have had to switch up some of our suppliers due to COVID shutdowns," Levy said. "In some cases, this meant that we had to add additional suppliers. In other cases, we had to entirely replace suppliers."

Grocery stores across the country have had to raise their prices due to supply shortages, now known as "sticker shock," and Time Magazine says prices have increased 6.2% in the last year alone. William Pollock, a manager at HEB, shared what they have been doing to try and keep up to product demand.

"[We are] increasing inventory on items that are available to us by working with vendors who we have built strong relationships with," Pollock said. "[We also] Occasionally work with new suppliers who have the ability to supply us with similar products that we are struggling to acquire."

According to CNBC, with the holidays coming up, people should buy their presents early so they won't run out. Usually

"We had two to three weeks in May 2021 where we were not receiving any shipments."

-Rachel Levy, LUSH Manager

companies preorder things in advance to have enough, but that might look different due to the supply changes.

"Our buying cycle for us is 18 months out," Rookstool said. "We tried to foresee what we could foresee when COVID was rearing its head in 2019. Right now, we're telling customers if it's here, buy it now. Because it probably won't be here as we get closer to Christmas and after that. We're not a typical Black Friday, big box retailer that suffers the problems like Walmart and Target."

Lush sometimes has to raise prices when faced with a shortage for a long period of time, but has been steady so far during this shortage, although it has had to work around certain obstacles. For example, this could be Levy's store not receiving shipments at all, or certain ingredients being difficult to come by.

"The world's vanilla supply was struggling with crop production a couple years ago and caused vanilla to be rarer and cost more," Levy said. "We were sold out of certain vanilla-heavy items for a period of time. After we realized that it was going to be a permanent change, we stopped carrying lower-selling vanilla items and raised prices on popular vanilla products that we knew customers would be sad to lose. We've even lowered prices before when crops become more abundant."

Levy said they are having a little trouble training new staff without the new products that are meant to be sold. Not having certain products in-store for members to learn about for extended periods of time caused new hires to lose familiarity with them, according to Levy.

"We had two to three weeks in May 2021 where we were not receiving any shipments," Levy said. "We had raw materials stuck on boats in the Atlantic Ocean that weren't making it to us. During that time, we continued to schedule existing staff, and even hired a couple of new staff members, but it made training difficult when we didn't have products in the store for new staff to learn about."

Pollock said that HEB is no exception and that they have also been affected by the supply chain issues. Pollock also said that the vast majority of these problems have been due to a multitude of reasons, like labor shortages in production, packaging material shortages, and transportation struggles, although he believes that the cooperation is in a better position than other companies he is familiar with.

"I do believe, due to our focus on treating our employees as well as we do, I feel we are in a better labor position than many other retailers," Pollock said.



graphic by Zoe Klein

THE SKINNY

Global News

Nov. 28

Virgil Abloh, a fashion designer recognized for his work at Louis Vuitton, passed away on Nov. 28 after being diagnosed with cancer in 2019, according to ABC. Abloh was the founder of luxury brand Off-White, as well as Louis Vuitton's first Black artistic director, and claimed to be a musician, DJ, and furniture designer on his website. He was considered to be a groundbreaking for other Black individuals in fashion, according to ABC.

November.

The newest variant of COVID-19, deemed the Omicron variant, is "very high risk," according to the World Health Organization (WHO), and was first detected in South Africa in early November. Since then, the United Nations has been urging all eligible individuals to continue to receive vaccinations and boosters to help prevent the spread. However, the variant has already been detected in Portugal, Scotland, the U.K., Netherlands, Italy, and the U.S., among other countries, according to NBC.

Dec. 1

Nobel peace prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi was detained in a military coup on Feb. 1, 2021, and is facing 11 charges with a maximum sentence time of 102 years, according to The New York Times. She has only been able to speak to her lawyers, all five of which have been banned from speaking to the media in fear of "destabilizing the country," according to The New York Times. On Dec. 1, a judge ruled to delay the results of her trial, which had been held behind closed doors in Myanmar's capital, Naypyidaw, according to The New York Times.

National News

Nov. 30

At Oxford High School in Oxford, Michigan, four students were fatally shot, with many more students and staff injured after a mass shooting on campus on November 30. According to CNN, more than 100 calls were made to local 911 authorities within the first two minutes of the shooting, and later 15-year-old suspect Ethan Crumby was detained. This attack is now the deadliest U.S. school shooting this year, with the previous being in Santa Fe, Texas at Santa Fe High School, according to a CNN Tally.

Nov. 30

Dr. Mehmet Oz, a talk show host and cardiothoracic surgeon, officially declared his running for the state of Pennsylvania's open senate seat on Nov. 30. In a tweet by Oz that same day, he said, "I'm running for U.S. Senate in Pennsylvania because America needs a Conservative Republican to cure what's wrong with Washington. I'm a world-class surgeon, fighter, and health care advocate stepping forward to cure our country's ills." The Washington Examiner saw that Oz highlighted his medical experience in his campaign launch could be hinting at policy focus towards pandemic response.

Dec. 1

On Dec. 1, Pfizer CEO and chairman Albert Bourla announced on Twitter that the corporation had submitted their request to the Food and Drug Administration to expand the COVID-19 booster shot to individuals that are 16 and 17 years of age. As of the time of this writing, the U.S. is only giving booster shots to individuals 18 years and older six months after receiving their Pfizer or Moderna shots. A press release from October released by Pfizer claimed that 10,000 randomized individuals who received a booster dose were able to restore protection against COVID-19.

State News

Nov. 5

On Nov. 5, Houston native and rapper Travis Scott hosted his annual music festival, Astroworld, in which 10 people died from issues relating to panic from the almost 50,000-person crowd, according to CNN. Since then, 120 lawsuits have been filed against the rapper and festival promoter LiveNation in Harris County, seeking damages in excess of \$3 billion, according to Texas Lawbook.

Nov. 30

On Nov. 30, a Texas judge blocked a vaccination mandate for healthcare workers, as ordered by the Biden Administration, according to The Texas Tribune. In the following days, Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton sued the Biden Administration over the order, saying the order was an "unprecedented federal vaccine decree" on health care workers. Texas has also sued over other vaccine mandates, in relation to bigger businesses and corporations, according to the Texas Tribune.

Local News

Nov. 24

On Nov. 24, current City Council member for District 4 Greg Casar announced that he will be running for the United States House of Representatives. Casar, who has held council office since 2015, will now vie to represent Texas's 35th congressional district, which spans from East Austin to San Antonio, according to KUT. In an interview, Casar said, "I believe that working families from Bexar to Comal to Hays to Travis County deserve a progressive leader who will fight for and deliver on reproductive rights, Medicare for all, good jobs, and a better Texas."

LASA Winter Celebration

EDITH HOLMSTEN | student life editors
AVA DE LEON

From October through December, LASA students celebrate a variety of holidays as ways to connect with their family, religion, and culture. The following indepth focuses on Diwali, Día de los Muertos, and Hanukkah as three examples of student traditions and practices. However, these three holidays are by no means the only celebrations at LASA, and this is not meant to be an exhaustive list.

Hanukkah

Hanukkah is one of the oldest holidays in the world, dating back to over 2,000 years ago, and families still find ways to celebrate and honor their ancestors. Known as the “Festival of Lights,” Jewish families around the world celebrate the holiday for eight days.

Typically observed in late November or December, Hanukkah is a Jewish holiday celebrating the rededication of the Temple in Jerusalem in the second century B.C.E. After a successful revolt against a tyrannical monarch, the Jewish community could find very little pure olive oil to light the menorah which they thought would only last one day. However, the oil lasted for eight days, and today, families will light a candle on their own menorah for each of the eight evenings of the holiday. In Hebrew, Hanukkah means “dedication,” and for junior Carter Matheny, the holiday is important in remembering the dedication the Hebrews had against their oppressors.

“Growing up, I had thought that Hanukkah would just be to remember how Jews used to face discrimination. However, now it has become a celebration of how we have preserved through constant violence to this day.”

-Junior Carter Matheny



LIGHTING CANDLES Junior Carter Matheny lights the menorah with her mom. Matheny said family traditions are an important part of Hanukkah. photo courtesy of Carter Matheny

“Hanukkah to me, represents the tradition of thousands of Jews before me,” Matheny said. “Throughout history, Jews have been persecuted, and Hanukkah is just another story of persevering through violence.”

In order to honor the eight days of oil that burned, many families will eat foods cooked in oil. Matheny explained the significance of one of the foods her family eats during Hanukkah.

“We always make latkes,” Matheny said. “These are delicious potato pancakes that should be eaten with applesauce and sour cream. They are eaten because they are fried in oil, a connection to the oil that lasted for eight days. Some other families will cook other foods cooked in oil, but one of the most common is latkes.”

Sophomore Kir Kraus’ family also eats latkes along with other traditional dishes such as matzo ball soup, a broth with small balls made from matzo meal and an assortment of ingredients. They said that their family usually enjoys sufganiyot, a fried bread with jelly inside, for dessert.

“At least one night we have matzo ball soup,” Kraus said. “Other than that, your generic sufganiyot (jelly donuts) and latkes.”

Another tradition that is popular during Hanukkah is playing the game of dreidel. The game is usually played with a dreidel and gelt, or chocolate covered coins. According to Matheny, in America, the sides of the dreidels have the Hebrew letters that mean “a great miracle happened there.”

“The dreidel is also an important symbol for Hanukkah,” Matheny said. “In a game of dreidel, the players spin the dreidel and according to the letter that they land on they give or take coins, the goal of the game is to get the most coins at the end.”

Kraus explained that although they do not extensively participate in the religious aspects of Hanukkah, they enjoy spending time with their family. Matheny agreed that the holiday is an important time for families to celebrate their culture together.

“I look forward to all the traditions of my family such as making latkes, betting on which candle will last the longest, and having a target gift exchange,” Matheny said. “I also look forward to more family time and present exchanges.”

According to Matheny, Hanukkah this year will have more meaning in light of the recent violence against Jewish people in Austin. She said her own synagogue was set on fire which made her reevaluate what the holiday meant to her.

“Growing up, I had thought that Hanukkah would just be to remember how Jews used to face discrimination,” Matheny said. “However now it has become a celebration of how we have preserved through constant violence to this day.”

graphic by Kayla Le



Día de los Muertos

Día de los Muertos is a holiday where families can honor their ancestors by making altars, or ofrendas, for late family members. According to junior Natalia Hernandez-Barcenas, Día de los Muertos is traditionally celebrated on Nov. 1 and 2.

Hernandez-Barcenas said her family makes an altar for her late grandfather with photos of him and some of his favorite foods. According to Hernandez-Barcenas, she puts food out so the spirit of her grandfather can enjoy a meal with her family.

“You’re gonna put up a picture of the deceased and then a lot of things that remind you of them,” Hernandez-Barcenas said, “and many people believe that their souls come back, so whatever they would like to take from the world of the living [goes] back with them.”

Specifically, Hernandez-Barcenas said she puts candles and cempalxóchitles on her altar to guide the spirits of her ancestors to the ofrenda. Cempalxóchitles are yellow flowers also known as Mexican marigolds.



PHOTO COLLAGES Sophomore Ramona Gonzalez stands by an altar made at the Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center. Altars frequently have photos of the deceased at different ages to commemorate their lives. photo courtesy of Luis Ramirez



COLORFUL CELEBRATIONS In November, Austinites create altars at the Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center to celebrate Día de los Muertos. Many altars include papel picado, brightly colored paper designs. photo courtesy of Luis Ramirez

“In the darkness, they say that the spirits can get lost,” Hernandez-Barcenas said, “so you want light there so the light will lead them to the ofrendas.”

Spanish teacher Luis Ramirez also makes altars for his late family members. Ramirez said he puts icons of Mexican culture, such as La Virgen de Guadalupe and La Catrina, on his altar. According to Ramirez, La Catrina is a skeleton figure depicted to be wearing marigolds and other festive clothing.

“You have the iconic image of La Catrina, which was something that was created in the 20th century by the artist José Guadalupe Posada,” Ramirez said. “La Catrina is supposed to represent la muerte, the image of death.”

Some families also make tamales for Día de los Muertos. Ramirez said not only are tamales one of the oldest foods within Mexican culture, but tamales are also significant for Día de los Muertos because the preparation of tamales helps families connect during the holiday.

“When you make tamales, it is a community that makes this food,” Ramirez said. “You have people preparing the corn, you’re preparing the masa, the feeling that goes into some models, and then you have your assembly line of people that are preparing the tamales. It is something that brings the family together, they’re able to bond, and they’re able to reflect and share memories.”

Ramirez said the holiday is particularly special for him as a way to grieve for his late relatives. When Ramirez’ grandmother passed away in 2019, he said collecting photos and thinking of his grandmother while making his altar helped him grieve.

“It really started to really be very special for me when she passed away in 2019, and I think people need to realize that Día de los Muertos can really help us in the grieving process,” Ramirez said. “When we’re grieving a relative, it just helps us to look back on those memories and also letting go. So it really helps in the grieving process. I think it’s very fascinating to acknowledge I lost somebody, but I’m celebrating their memory.”

Ramirez and Hernandez-Barcenas agreed that Día de los Muertos is an important tradition for their families. Hernandez-Barcenas said she enjoys the celebration as a way to learn about late relatives she might not have gotten the chance to meet and keep the memory of her ancestors alive.

“I think it’s a great way to keep the memory of them present within the family,” Hernandez-Barcenas said, “and just remember them and their legacy and just keep the family connected on that day.”



DRESSING UP Students gather together in their costumes during Día de los Muertos. Some people wear outfits or paint their faces to resemble La Catrina, a skeleton figure who is thought to protect the spirits of deceased people. photo courtesy of Luis Ramirez

ns and Cultural Holidays

Diwali

Diwali is a holiday of light celebrated in late October or early November by many people of Hindu, Buddhist, and Sikh faiths, according to junior Anokhi Sheth. Diwali is based on the lunar calendar, so the date of Diwali is slightly different each year on solar calendars. Sheth said Diwali was celebrated on Nov. 4 this year.

According to Sheth, the celebration of Diwali is historically based on the victory over the demon Naraka, but there are slight differences in the main characters of the stories depending on traditions. Junior Satvik Chemudupati said in one version of Hindu mythology, Satyabhama and her husband Lord Krishna, an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, killed a demon. Sheth said there is another Hindu story called Ramayana where a different incarnation called Lord Rama killed the demon. Sheth said both versions depict a victorious leader of Ayodhya who conquered demons and darkness.

“Everyone in the kingdom loves him so much, and they were so scared that he was not going to come back alive,” Sheth said. “So when he comes back alive, they’re so happy. Diwali is them celebrating his return.”

To observe Diwali, Sheth said her family gathers with her relatives and other South Asian families during a time of celebration. In the evening, her family has sparklers and food to celebrate.

“A lot of times I’ll do fireworks with another Indian family,” Sheth said. “We’ll just eat together and then do fireworks afterwards. It’s just always been a fun tradition. Something that’s always meaningful.”

Chemudupati also gathers with family and friends to celebrate Diwali. He said his family traditionally makes sweets like laddu—sweetened rough dough balls—on occasion.

“Barfi, milk based sweet, and laddu are two Indian sweets that are made and exchanged on the occasion of Diwali,” Chemudupati said.

In addition to baking and sharing sweets for Diwali, Chemudupati said his family lights small candles called diyas during the week of Diwali. Diyas are colorful candles to represent Rama’s victory over demons and darkness.

“A diya, oil lamp, represents the good that can eliminate evil, darkness,” Chemudupati said. “The flame from one oil lamp can be used to light other ones, symbolizing how this positive and enlightening force can be shared among all.”

Sheth said her family also uses colorful representations of light and celebration during the week of Diwali. Sheth’s aunt makes brightly colored, circular designs on her porch called rangoli.

“People will sometimes do designs on their porch called rangoli,” Sheth said. “It’s designs made with color powder. It’s really hard to do, but it’s really interesting to see them.”

Lastly, Chemudupati said his family prays to gods for good luck during the following year. Chemudupati and his relatives hope that by celebrating Diwali and lighting candles, they can prevent negative events and darkness in the future as well.

“Another symbol that is important for Diwali is an offering to Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth,” Chemudupati said. “People pray to the goddess, hoping for success and prosperity in their lives.”

Chemudupati and Sheth agreed that Diwali is a significant part of their culture and hope to continue observing the celebration. Sheth said Diwali is important to her as a way to connect with her community and family.

“I think it’s always just been a fun part of my life,” Sheth said. “It’s a time where I get to spend time with friends and family.”



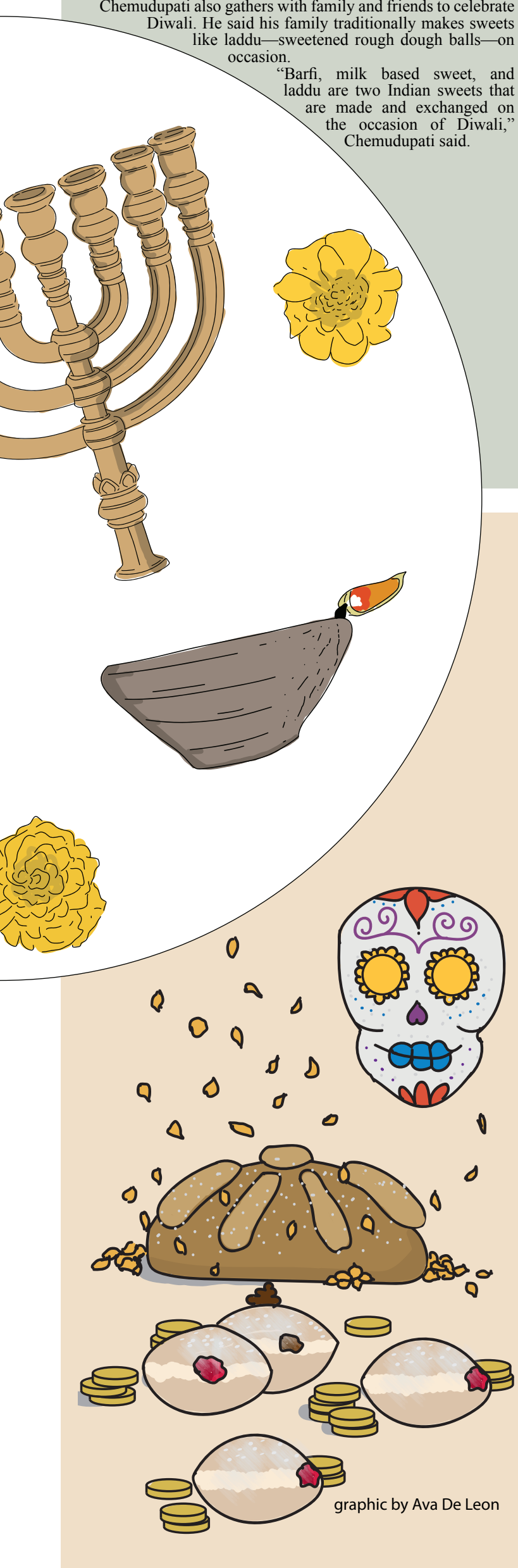
EATING SWEETS Arya Sharma eats an Indian sweet as she talks to friends at a Diwali party. Friends and family often gather to share meals during Diwali. photo by Malvika Pradhan



LIGHTING UP Mira Patel, Arjun Deshmukh, sophomore Anika Patel, and junior Kushaal Singh light sparklers in a circle. Sparklers are often lit for Diwali. photo by Malvika Pradhan



MAKING ART Mira Patel creates circular rangoli designs for Diwali. Some people place the colorful sand art on their porches or sidewalks to celebrate. photo by Malvika Pradhan



graphic by Ava De Leon

Festive Meals and Dishes

Food has been an integral part of many cultural celebrations from ancient versions of Halloween to present day Thanksgiving feasts. The long lasting factor that connects food and holidays is rooted in the cultural identity food provides.

Depending on how a food is prepared, where the ingredients come from, and who prepares it, a lot can be told about the cultural significance of the dish and the culture it stems from. When people started spreading across the world, they brought their cultures with them and consequently, interacted with different cultural groups. One of the ways that people remembered where they came from was through the food they prepared for special occasions and holidays.

Diwali is known as the festival of light and unlike some other South Asian festivals, there is no fasting during Diwali, but rather a celebration of sweets or “mithai.” Traditionally, the sweets and desserts are often made with a nut or vegetable base and condensed with sugar or milk, ingredients that are considered “pure” and able to be eaten by everyone.

Barfi, is a fudge-like sweet that is made from powdered milk and sugar and is flavored with nuts or fruit. The dessert is used as an offering to the gods and is commonly included in worship during Diwali.

Another traditional mithai is laddu, or laddoo, a round snack made of flour, ghee—clarified butter—and sugar. Laddu is commonly flavored with spices, nuts, or even dried fruit. This sweet dessert is very popular during many other Indian festivals as well.

Día de los Muertos is also well known for its delectable sweets and grand feasts. It is common to see many altars decorated with an abundance of traditional food as well as the preferred foods of those who have passed. The offerings are meant to guide the souls of loved ones home, and allow them to take what they wish back to the land of the dead.

One of the most well known dishes made during the holiday is pan de muerto, translated to “bread of the dead.” The pastry is a sweet, round bread that symbolizes the circle of life. Traditionally, six sticks of dough are baked on top of the bread to represent the bones of the dead.

Calaveras de Azúcar, are also placed on altars as offerings to the deceased. However, the sugar skulls are usually not eaten because of the intricate, hard decorations placed on them. The sugar skulls are decorated with bright colors and made out of pure sugar. Some people even add glitter and feathers to the sugar designs. Different sized skulls are meant to represent different ages or children that have passed.

During Hanukkah, families make a plethora of oil-based or fried foods to symbolize the small amount of oil that burned for the eight days of Hanukkah. A signature dish is latkes, also known as potato pancakes. The flat, round food is made from potatoes and is mixed with onions, eggs, flour, and various seasonings. Latkes are also served alongside a bowl of applesauce or sour cream for a flavorful topping. A sweeter, fried dish known as sufganiyot is also common during Hanukkah celebrations. Sufganiyot is donut-like dessert filled with different types of jams.



DISHING UP DESSERTS Junior Satvik Chemudupati made laddu (left) and barfi (right) with his family for Diwali. The two sweets are traditionally made in southeast Asia and are often baked during early November to celebrate. photo courtesy of Satvik Chemudupati

Matzo ball soup is also a traditional food served during Hanukkah. Matzo balls are made from matzo meal, eggs, water, and butter, and are traditionally eaten with a chicken broth.

Not only has food provided a connection to people’s ethnic identity, but it has also served as a common ground amongst people who use food as a means of communication and symbolism. Just like a home cooked meal can remind people of their childhood, special food made on holidays can remind others of their cultural roots.

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History of the School

from page 1

The coaches said, 'No, we don't do that where we come from.' So, we all sat back there. We hung together. We stuck together. That was one of the first times that I had experienced that."

As the years went by, the calls for integration increased. In 1980, AISD started a busing program to try and integrate the schools more. According to class of 1970 student and Johnston Alumni Association President Larry Amaro, busing changed the look of the building in addition to its demographics.

"The biggest changes came when the busing started," Amaro said. "The school was remodeled at that time, the auditorium that you have in the back by the parking lot was built because of that—to attract new students. The band room was expanded, as well, to make it more attractive."

However, in 1986, the busing stopped, and the school became more segregated as a result. So, in 1987, AISD opened up the LAA as a magnet program to try and draw more students to the campus. According to social studies teacher Neil Loewenstern, who taught at the LAA, Johnston and the magnet program were relatively close.

"The friendships were very close across the school, and I think everybody felt pretty involved in and invested in the community as a whole," Loewenstern said.

LAA students were able to participate in the vocational schools housed at Johnston. They also had combined traditions, like having car clubs come to the school, according to history teacher and former LAA student Kimberley Pettigrew.

"They would come through the courtyards and drive into where the courtyard for the cafeteria was," Pettigrew said. "Then, there was a bakery here where the college center is now. So, people who came here could learn how to be a baker with HEB."

Another important tradition was the communal lunch, where

there would be a different section in each courtyard with food, music, and activities for students. Unfortunately, the tradition died out when the LAA merged with the SA in 2002, according to former LAA teacher and current LASA history teacher Maricruz Aguayo.

"We tried to take it to LBJ, but there weren't spaces to accommodate that, and it died out pretty quickly," Aguayo said.

The LAA's split with Johnston and subsequent merge with the SA was caused in part by the fact that Johnston and the LAA had the same Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) number, which is a code given to each school to identify them in data reviews. This meant that LAA's top 10% and Johnston's top 10% were in the same pool, so there was less opportunity for Johnston's students to be automatically admitted to schools like the University of Texas at Austin. However, even though the reasoning was sound, according to Pettigrew, the decision still felt rushed.

"It felt like a hostile takeover," Pettigrew said. "It was a top-down decision from the superintendent at the time, Dr. Forgione. There were plenty of legitimate complaints from the neighborhood about how the situation worked. But it certainly, as a student, did not feel like our voices were taken into account. It was a sort of fait accompli."

Around that time, there was turmoil surrounding the leadership on campus. According to Loewenstern, there were multiple principals within a relatively short period of time.

"It zapped a lot of positive energy out," Loewenstern said. "Moving from principal after principal really was a blow to morale for teachers, and created inconsistency in the programs for students, as well."

After the LAA split from Johnston, the school's failing test scores were revealed. AISD decided to close and then reopen the school in 2008 under a new name, Eastside Memorial, to honor the multiple Johnston alumni whose lives were lost in the Vietnam war. In 2010, two other schools, Green Tech and Global Tech, were housed in the same campus alongside Eastside and International High School, a program that was opened up within Eastside to help new foreign residents.

"You had the Eastside campus, the International High School, and then you had Green Tech and Global Tech," Aguayo said. "That's where the G and the T come from for the annexes—because the schools were housed based on the annexes."

Global Tech and Green Tech closed the next year, 2011. According to Amaro, the rapid closing and opening of schools threw the community through a rollercoaster of emotions.

"It is sad for the community to see," Amaro said. "All those alumni and the families and businesses that supported the schools have lost those schools, and the alumni from those schools no longer pass by those schools. It's a sad situation."

In 2013, the alumni association unveiled a veteran's memorial to commemorate the deaths of former Johnston students resulting from the Vietnam War. Amaro said many Johnston students, including Mota, who was injured while serving in the Navy in Vietnam, were drafted into the war or joined it.

"Unfortunately, some of them made one way trips because Johnston has the most students that went to Vietnam and got killed or died as a result of injuries related to Agent Orange," Amaro said.

This year, LASA split from their once-shared campus with LBJ ECHS. According to AISD director of Bond Planning and Controls Drew Johnson, who helped facilitate LASA's move, the decision on where to place the new campus was based on factors like location because of LASA's unique position as a magnet school.

"LASA students come from all over the district, and the district pays for that transportation, so we want to be mindful of what those implications are," Johnson said. "There were not a lot of solutions that passed a high level due diligence test. The Johnston solution ended up being one of very few that would have worked."



UNVEILING A speaker stands in front of a large glass globe at the unveiling of the sculpture. The Globe Project was a research project to study the correlation between societies and their organization. photo courtesy of Maricruz Aguayo



PUPPET PROJECTS Students at the Johnston campus working on a project. LAA and Johnston High School were on the same campus until 2002. photo courtesy of Maricruz Aguayo



MONKEY BUSINESS LAA teachers having fun on a school outing. Mr. Loewenstern and Ms. Aguayo were a part of LAA before the school moved to the LBJ campus. photo courtesy of Maricruz Aguayo.



IN MEMORIAM The Vietnam veteran's memorial in front of the campus. The memorial was erected in 2012 to honor former Johnston students who died in the Vietnam war. photo by Sophia Chau.

COVID-19 and the Road to College

DELIA RUNE | staff writer



graphic by Kayla Le

of in-person visits. College counselor Vyasar Ganesan said that despite being slightly more attended, face-to-face conversations still offer better opportunities to relate to admission counselors.

"I think in-person is way better," Ganesan said. "There's no doubt about it. In an in-person visit, you get to see your admission counselor. You get to have a real conversation with them. It's less PowerPoint and more one-on-one conversations."

Ganesan also said that students have liked LASA's in-person visits more than virtual visits because virtual college visits serve as a rather unpleasant reminder of last year, when everything was conducted virtually. He said that a virtual Zoom setting can make the college visits less enjoyable for students.

"Online settings are not quite the same," Ganesan said. "We're sick and tired of Zoom. We did a whole year of it. Let's be done with it."

According to senior Veronica Engle, since many students were not able to travel to colleges last year, college visits at school are even more important this fall. For some students, this will be the only opportunity they have to hear about the school from a representative before applying.

"Last year with COVID and being online, I didn't do many college visits," Engle said. "And I haven't done many college tours this year because COVID has just made traveling and visiting schools a little harder."

The lack of in-person tours on college campuses last year has led to an increase in attendees at LASA college visits this year, according to Ganesan. LASA college counselors have been surprised to see a large jump in the number of students getting involved in college visits.

"I would say I've seen more students attending the visits than previously since students are so excited to be back in-person," Ganesan said. "Everyone wants to make this year feel more normal."

Even the junior class is eager to start learning about their options after graduation, according to Ganesan. He said that this spike in interaction might be driven by a desire to return to the normalcy of junior year college preparation.

"The junior class has been extremely involved and active," Ganesan said. "I would say on any average visit there's at least one junior there, and on bigger visits, at least a third to half of the people are juniors. So the juniors have definitely been a driving force as to why things are bigger this year."

But virtual college visits are not the only hold-overs from the beginning of the pandemic. One college trend that

has continued is the shift schools have made to being test optional. At first, many universities made submitting SAT or ACT scores optional to accommodate students who could not take the SAT or ACT due to COVID-19 restrictions. Now, some universities are deciding to leave this change in place for good. For students like senior Sedona Heaney, who don't like taking standardized tests, this is a relief.

"The only school I applied to without test scores is Notre Dame because my scores are lower than their average," Heaney said. "I think I definitely prefer the test optional because I have a good resume and a good GPA, and the test scores are the only thing that are hurting me."

Critics of the SAT and ACT argue that it is not a fair way to evaluate students. Affluent parents can put their children in private tutoring or prep courses to improve their scores, a resource that isn't always available to low-income families.

"I don't think everyone has an equal opportunity to score well on the SAT," Heaney said. "I really wish it wasn't a thing because it's one test that's determining whether we'll get into a good college."

Though some students prefer to go without ACT or SAT scores this year, it remains to be seen whether next year's seniors will receive the same SAT-optional choice when applying to college.

COVID-19 safety precautions changed many aspects of college applications, but this year, colleges are returning to some aspects of pre-pandemic applications and students, like Heaney, look forward to returning to normalcy.

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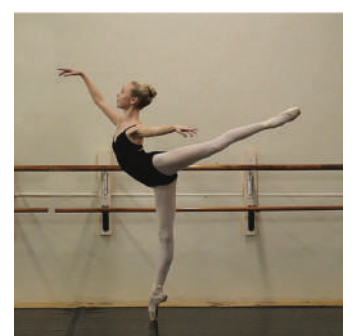
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Studious Students and Study Buddies

ELLA LILLY | staff writer

Algebra, physics, biology, and chemistry are common sources of struggle for LASA students, according to parent Suparna Roy. There are resources available like office hours, tutoring, and help from friends, but members of the Parents and Friends of LASA (PFLASA) group have put together another way to work through problems: after school study groups in the library.

The study groups take place three times a week on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday from 4-6 p.m. in the library. While these study groups have been going on for a couple years now, students might be unaware of the specific benefits these groups provide, according to Roy.



STUDY GROUPS Students work in the library after school to get help from study group leaders provided by PFLASA. There are groups for chemistry, physics, algebra and biology. photo by Ella Lilly.

With study group leaders who are considered experts in their field by Roy, students can attend after school groups in the library where they can ask questions, work through problems, and study for tests in their more difficult classes.

University of Texas at Austin (UT Austin) student Tony Lee, who is a LASA Class of 2020 graduate, now helps lead the physics study group. He provides insight to the groups and why students should take advantage of them.

"We've got algebra, physics, biology, and chemistry," Lee said. "If you're in any of those courses, any level, you can just come ask questions, get help with homework, study for a test, kind of an office hours deal."

Roy co-founded the groups a couple years ago as part of PFLASA. When office hours started becoming overwhelming for students, Roy set out with the goal to provide less formal help and additional resources for students.

"This was mainly set up about four years ago to help students have some informal help especially from folks that are almost peers but have a little more experience in those subjects, especially as LASA kids sometimes hesitate," Roy said. "So this is a good way in an informal environment to go and just get some help, ask a question, or get a discussion going. And also maybe just sit in or just use that time to do homework."

Students attending the study groups said they find them beneficial. Junior Kayla Lassiter started attending the physics study group in September and has found it useful to work through physics problems and have office hours that fit better with her schedule.

"It's been very helpful so far," Lassiter said.

"I don't have time to go in the mornings for office hours, and office hours for my teachers are usually twice a week, but this is three times a week, so I find it a little bit more accessible."

Study group leader and UT Austin student Paris Hookham said that differing from office hours that teachers hold during lunch or after school, the study groups are collaborative and void of pressure. Hookham explained the benefits of learning from someone other than the course teacher and the comfort that comes with a study group leader.

"I think learning from people who aren't your teacher and who know what they're doing can be really helpful because there's not that the fear that like, 'Oh, my teacher is gonna think I'm dumb if I come to them,'" Hookham said. "You get that third party to come in and help."

Study group leader Aja Procita also leads math and physics study groups. She explained why going to study groups just a couple times can steer students in the right direction.

"Sometimes you've just missed that one thing when you're sitting in class for whatever reason your brain dips out for just a second, and now suddenly, you're lost," Procita said. "Some people just need to be pointed back in the right direction. Sometimes it's nice just having someone there to give you the confidence to know each step you're doing is correct."

Another benefit is the amount of flexibility provided by the study groups, which Lee agreed with. The flexibility allows students to learn either alone or in groups depending on what they want to achieve from the groups.

"There's a lot of group work," Lee said. "People often come with friends, which is



BETTER TOGETHER A study group leader and LASA student work together to solve a problem. Study groups consist of a leader and multiple students who collaborate on homework and class work. photo by Ella Lilly.

encouraged. You can work on homework together, brainstorm, and then there's also the people who come alone, which is completely fine."

According to Procita, the study groups should be a great source of additional help with finals coming up. Study group leaders and students all agreed that they are a great option for those struggling in class who want a place to do homework and extra help with comprehension.

"Overall, it's a good way to check your understanding, improve your understanding, and ask any additional follow up questions that you might have," Procita said.

The study groups will continue during the spring semester in the library. Students meet after school Tuesday through Thursday to get help on work or review material. Students do not need to sign up ahead of time to go to the study groups.

What is the most **EFFECTIVE** way to study?

*Polled 73 LASA students via Google Forms 11/14-11/25

When do you usually **START** studying?

10% before thanksgiving break
after thanksgiving break 47%
32% 1 week before finals
1 night before finals 4%
7% do not study

How do you **STUDY** for finals?

1. Re-read notes/past exams
2. Watch review videos
3. Practice with Quizlet
4. Make physical flashcards

*(1-most popular, 4-least popular)

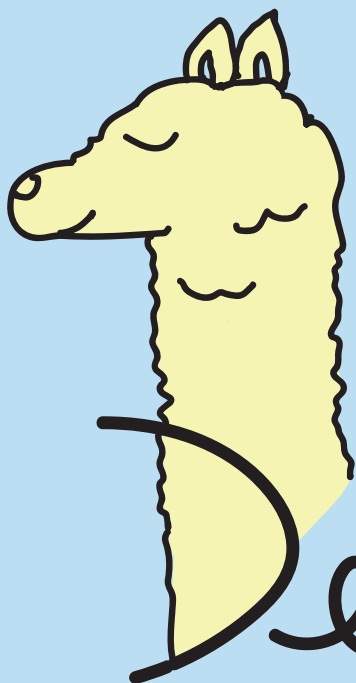
CRAM SESSION

graphics by Kayla Le

What is your preferred **TYPE OF FINAL?**

- 50% Group Project
- 40% Individual Project
- 10% Timed Test/Essay

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The Alley Cat Players and the Glass Mask

JC RAMIREZ DELGADILLO | photo editors
MADELEINE VAN SLYKE

There may be many Cinderella adaptations out there, but few have the chance to boast the presence of a potentially homicidal village idiot.

This semester, the Alley Cat Players, LASA's extracurricular theatre troupe, hosted a production of "A Cinderella Waltz." The cast and crew worked on it for the majority of the first semester, and it was their first play of this school year. "A Cinderella Waltz" is about a girl named Rosey Snow who is trapped in a not-so-fantasyland with a cast of characters full of personality. This includes her stepsisters Goneril and Regan, her crazy stepmother, her oblivious father, a bewildered Prince, a fairy godmother who sings old sailor songs, a troll, and the aforementioned potentially homicidal village idiot.

Past productions hosted by the Alley Cat Players include "Marisol," "Puffs," "Ducks and Lovers," and spring musicals such as "Sweeney Todd," "Legally Blonde," and "Rock of Ages."



GLASS SLIPPER Senior Olivia Griffin-Erickson, who plays the main character Rosey Snow in the Alley Cat Players' "A Cinderella Waltz," holds a glass slipper as part of a scene. It's the group's first play back since being fully in person. photo by Katie Busby

Any LASA student can be a part of the plays, but many of the actors and theatre tech students also take the theatre elective. For sophomore Sydney Mims, this was her first year officially in person and working as a theatre tech crew member. With this being a new experience for her and others, it was interesting for her to see how everything went.

"I did theatre tech last year, but it was on Zoom, so I guess being in person was weird for everyone," Mims said. "However, it was really fun as well. When you're all building something collectively and all working towards a goal in mind, it's really satisfying when everything comes together in the end."

Junior Samantha Mason, who played Mother Magee in the show, said that she really enjoyed being back fully in person. One of her favorite parts of returning to in person productions is getting the chance to interact with fellow cast and crew members.

"I participated in both shows we put up last year, 'Ducks and Lovers' and 'Rock of Ages,'" Mason said. "Although I had such a great time working on both of the shows, being fully back for 'Cinderella Waltz' was very nice. Being able to have more time to rehearse and bond with company members outside of rehearsal really helped our performances."

In order for the whole production to come together, it takes a lot of different parts of the theatre department, according to Mims. The cast and crew work together over the course of a month to come up with a show to be held at the Austin Performing Arts Center. The individual and group roles of the cast and crew work together to make everything come together, and it's not just the actors and theatre techs that work on pieces of the play. Theatre classes also play a role, providing time to work on many of the props and set pieces, according to Mims.

"I specifically built the stage and props," Mims said. "Like for 'Cinderella Waltz,' my class was in charge of making the well, hog trough, decorating the house sets, and some other things. Basic scenery that is needed for the show to work. I know other tech kids also worked on lights and show production as a whole."

This was also the first production created at the new LASA campus. According to Mims, that came with some of its own challenges that had to be overcome.

"When we first started, we were already two weeks behind because we had to clean out the theatre and organize the stuff that we brought over from LBJ," Mims said. "So we were kinda working overtime, but I'm really proud—and a little surprised—that everything worked out well."

With a variety of characters in the play, the actors would often have to find ways to both give the character its intended purpose in the play while also giving it a unique twist only the actor could pull off, according to junior Douglas Brito. Brito played Zed, the village "idiot," and for his character, he decided to get inspiration from himself.

"When thinking of characters, I try to get inspiration from deep inside me," Brito said. "Characters are a way you can represent a little part of you, and so when thinking of my inspiration for Zed, I looked inside myself to the part of me that wasn't afraid of how society viewed me."

According to Mason, she did the opposite with approaching her role. Her character was very different from what she usually is.

"I adored my character, Mother Magee, in the play," Mason said. "She was so much fun to embody and interact with others. It was such a cool experience to play a character so different from myself. My performance was most notably

inspired by Bernadette Peters as the Witch in 'Into the Woods.' Her portrayal's zaniness and comedy was so helpful to base Magee off of."

The play's success was a great start for the Alley Cat Players. Mason says it was a great personal experience as well.

"I had an overall really positive experience during this show," Mason said. "It was wonderful to be fully back in person with everyone, following our shows last year. Performing at the PAC was a cool experience too. My favorite part of doing theatre is absolutely the people. I've met some of my very best friends through these shows and this program."

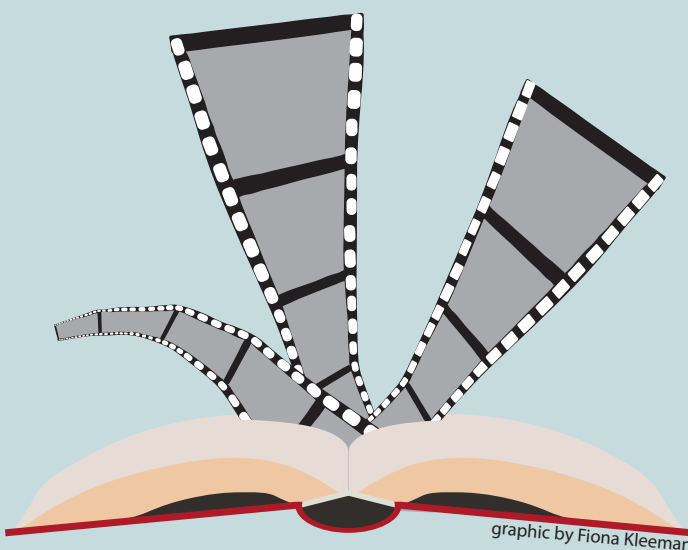
The next play is the musical "Beauty and the Beast," which will be showing from Feb. 10 to Feb. 14.

See page 18 for more photos



FAIRY GODMOTHER Junior Samantha Mason plays Mother Magee, the fairy godmother (left), in the play. She performs with the village idiot, played by junior Douglas Brito (middle), and Rosey Snow (right) in an energetic scene. photo by Katie Busby

Liberator's Picks Holiday Movie Mashup Edition



graphic by Fiona Kleeman

Little Women (2019)

ZOE KLEIN | copy editor

In Concord, Massachusetts, there resides four sisters: Jo, Meg, Amy, and Beth. When their father leaves to fight in the Civil War, the March sisters must learn to thrive without him—but not without difficulty. Over the course of their teenagehood, the four come of age together in weaving storylines. Decked out in pastel petticoats, they battle with romance, illness, and internal strife. After the success of Greta Gerwig's first coming-of-age film, "Ladybird," living up to the expectations of her newfound fans proved to be an easy feat. With the help of "Ladybird" stars Timothee Chalamet and Saoirse Ronan, seasoned actresses Florence Pugh and Meryl Streep, and some signature Greta Gerwig flair, "Little Women" (2019) remained ranked in the top ten at the box office for over two months after its release. This polished, emotional film, like the novel "Little Women," will become a cult favorite in years to come.

Crazy Rich Asians (2018)

KATIE BUSBY | entertainment editor

"Crazy Rich Asians" isn't your typical romcom. Filled with beautiful sets, vibrant colors, and over-the-top parties, this movie brings Kevin Kwan's book of the same title to life. Rachel, a professor in New York and daughter of a hard working immigrant, goes with her boyfriend, Nick, back to his home in Singapore for his best friend's wedding. While in Singapore, she meets his demanding and very well off family, and struggles to fit in and live up to their standards. They experience trials in their relationship due to the people around them, all the while immersed in a lavish lifestyle that Rachel is not used to. This movie shows the strength of family values and how even the unexpected can end with a happily ever after.

Twilight (2008)

NORAH HUSSAINI | web editor

The miniscule, rainy town of Forks, Washington seems like a personal hell for protagonist Bella Swan, who leaves sunny Arizona behind to move to a town where it rains more than half of the year. Everyone is already part of an interconnected community, where, to Bella's surprise, vampires reside. In "Twilight," director Catherine Hardwicke transfers Stephanie Meyer's 2005 novel skillfully from page to screen. The film, which stars Kristen Stewart and Robert Pattinson, tells the story of 17-year-old Bella and 108-year-old vampire Edward. When Bella stumbles into her biology class, Edward is immediately intrigued and bewildered by Bella's antisocial, quiet nature. Despite Edward's numerous attempts to stay away from Bella in order to avoid doing her harm, and Bella's suspicions that Edward may not be exactly who he says he is, the two eventually collide in a romance that is unparalleled by all others. The angst, occasionally cringeworthy, and iconically blue-tinted movie is a fantastic dose of 2000s nostalgia and showcases a romance that is able to overcome any obstacle.

A Song is Born at LASA

Songwriting Class Learns the Ins and Outs of Music Production

MAIRIN BACHSCHMID | club contributor

Now that school is back in session, so are electives. Songwriting, an elective taught by junior English teacher Corey Snyder, is taught in the spring, and is behind Coffeehouse every year.

The class is meant for students to develop performing skills in front of a live audience, but students are expected to already have some basic writing skills beforehand. Senior Elizabeth Smith took songwriting this year.

"Having creative writing skills before you go in is pretty much necessary," Smith said. "He really can't teach you just creative writing skills, so you kind of have to be able to write."

Instead of focusing on how to write creatively, the writing time provided to students during the beginning of class is centered around developing lyrics. The main aspect of songwriting class is the performance, Snyder says.

"Instead of the teacher, or a video, or something telling them how to write a song, it's more about doing it by experimentation," Snyder said. "Every three weeks, you get up in front of a group of people, you play a song, and you see what happens."

Former LASA student Matt Dagleish took the songwriting class his senior year, and recommends it because of Snyder's teaching style. He agrees that the performance aspect allows students to improve their performance and songwriting skills.

"I could consistently finish songs, which was always a really satisfying experience," Dagleish said. "Songwriting also helped me develop more confidence around performing."

After students perform a

new song, they receive feedback and critiques from their classmates. According to Dagleish, this type of performance creates a positive space for the students to share their songs and experiment with different styles of music throughout the semester.

"You got to perform your work in a safe, non-judgemental space, and then get notes on how to improve your song," Dagleish said. "For me it at least made performance songs exciting."

Songwriting class is primarily student-run. Students create their own music and performances rather than learning through specific lessons taught by the teacher. According to Snyder, all of the students have different interests, and the class is about developing those interests.

"I just sort of make mental notes, like I wonder where this one is going, and I wonder what she's going to do in a few months, and I wonder what this guy's all about," Snyder

said. "They always surprise me."

Even Coffeehouse, a performance set up by the songwriting class that normally premieres around late May, is completely student-run. Snyder views his job as being one of support for students and their visions.

"I see growth individually," Snyder said. "I see it in their songs, I hear it in their songs collectively, and I see it in the production of Coffeehouse."

Coffeehouse allows students perform in front of a larger audience instead of just performing in class. It helps to combine all the students' development into one performance.

People learn how to put their own stuff aside, how to work with a group, and do something big," Snyder said. "Coffeehouse is big. It's a lot of people, a big venue, and there's a lot to worry about. Every year, Coffeehouse comes through and is a successful thing."

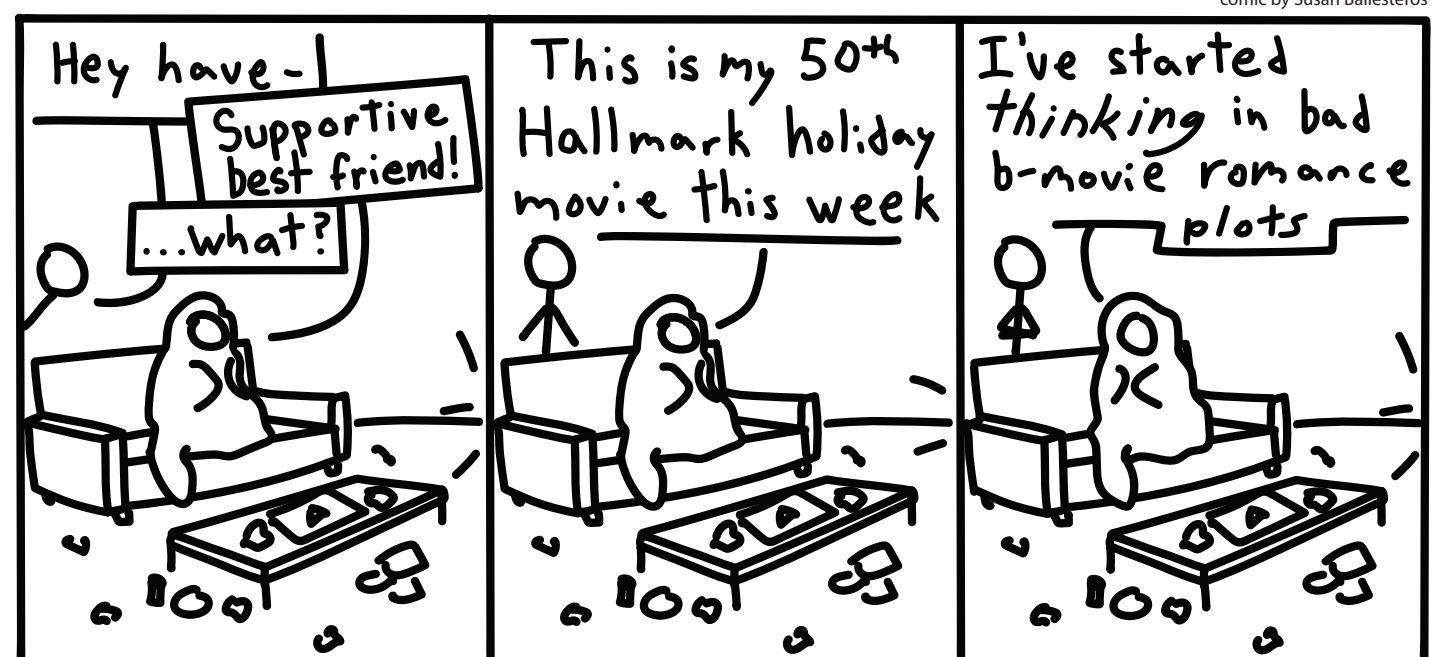
Students also get the opportunity to participate in smaller group activities, which Snyder believes allows students to create music they did not believe themselves to be capable of doing. According to Smith, this experience is also really important to the students because it allows them to adapt and evolve their music style and learn from their experience.

"When I thought that I had done something amazing, I could see their faces light up, like when certain things would happen in the song," Smith said. "It would validate that I'd done a good job, and it was one of the best feelings I think I've ever felt."

graphic by Annabel Andre

COMICS

comic by Susan Ballesteros



graphic by Susan Ballesteros

Museums of Austin

- Museum of the Weird**: A dime museum that features oddities of all kinds.
- Elisabet Ney Museum**: Set in her studio, the museum showcases the sculptor's life and work.
- Mexic-Arte Museum**: An art museum that promotes Mexican and Latino culture.
- Texas Memorial Museum**: A natural history museum within UT that features many fossils.
- George Washington Carver Museum and Cultural Center**: A museum that exhibits African American history, culture, and art.

graphic by Fiona Kleeman

The Trail of Lights Sticks to Roads Again

AMELIA COLEMAN | staff writer

The Trail of Lights is a staple of the Austin holiday season. Originating as a festival centered around the lighting of a yule log, the Trail of Lights is filled with lights, music, games, and fun for the whole family. The trail runs from Nov. 27 through Dec. 31 this year. Freshman Margareth Contreras has attended it in previous years.

"Just walk through and just look around it," Contreras said. "You get showered with beautiful, festive lights."

Another activity available at the Trail of Lights is a ferris wheel. The ferris wheel is senior Devon Hobbs' favorite part of the Trail of Lights.

"It's something I really enjoyed going through as a kid," Devon said. "It had all these different patterns going on, which is super pretty."

Other features have included a tunnel of lights and live music. Hobbs enjoyed a depiction of a beach scene when she visited.

"They had a section that was like, Christmas at the beach," Hobbs said. "[A] Santa on a beach chair, drinking a pina colada, stuff like that."

According to freshman Maxine Teleki-Avery, one thing from past trails that she enjoyed the most was the different cuisine available. She also likes how the trail can be a way to connect with family.

"I don't see my extended family that often, they live pretty far away, and it's cool to see them," Teleki-Avery said. "Also, the holiday spirit is kind of a fun time."

In past visits, Hobbs has also taken that chance to spend time with family. Her primary reason for attending has normally

been for girls choir events, however.

"We got up on the stage, which is near the entrance, and sang for about an hour," Hobbs said. "A lot of people said it was very noisy, but it was so fun."

According to Contreras, there are reasons to go to the Trail of Lights apart from the lights themselves. She likes the holiday spirit of the experience.

"I know for me personally, seeing families, their kids, spouses, wives, husbands, just enjoying and being like, 'Wow this is amazing,'" Contreras said. "Even me personally with my own family, it gives us this feeling of closeness, of happiness."

According to Contreras, though, the trail can sometimes get crowded. That makes it harder for people to enjoy the scenes.

"I do get a little overwhelmed," Contreras said. "I have this panic that I'll get lost, and I just like it when things are emptier because you have more time to breathe in and take it in, but with crowds you got to go with it."

This year, the trail will be a drive-through to promote social distancing. According to Hobbs, that can give people the opportunity to see the lights without having to interact with people. Contreras believes there are benefits and downsides to the drive-through.

"You won't get as close and personal,"



LIGHT SHOW Above: cars drive through the Trail of Lights entrance. The trail is friendly and festive to Austinites. Below: a car dives through a light tunnel. This is the second year that the trail has been a drive-through. photos by Madeleine Van Slyke



Contreras said. "I understand why it's there, like it's a good thing, but you're cramped in a car. My brother doesn't like sitting in one place for more than 10 minutes, so it's gonna be an issue, but I feel like it won't give you that same experience, at least to have something to enjoy."



CANDYLAND A car enters a section of the Trail of Lights called Candyland. The trail includes various themed features and activities that were forced to be adapted due to COVID-19 and consequent protocols. photo by Madeleine Van Slyke



THROWBACK CHARACTERS One feature in the trail was based off the children's book "Where the Wild Things Are." Light features this year include ones on Winnie the Pooh, SpongeBob, and The Simpsons. photo by Madeleine Van Slyke

graphic by Fiona Kleeman

Lights, Camera, Austin Film Festival

Advanced AVP Filmmakers Go Behind the Scenes of the Movie Making Industry

AVA SPURGEON | staff writer

From Oct. 21 to Oct. 28, LASA's Advanced Audio Visual Production class (AVP) had the opportunity to attend the Austin Film Festival. Students were able to interact with professionals and learn more about film creation and production. AVP is one of the multiple film electives offered at LASA, along with electives such as The Art of Cinema and Hitchcock. Unlike LASA's other film electives, AVP is focused on learning how film production works, as well as actually practicing and creating their own films.

Film is a unique experience for students, and a unique art in general, according to Marcelo Teson, founder and director of Austin Youth Cinema Collective. The Austin Youth Cinema Collective is a program for teens to learn and practice the art of filmmaking and develop their creativity.

"Film is unlike every other art out there," Teson said. "It combines so many skills—artistic expression, writing, creativity, logistics, scheduling, budgeting, people skills, acting and improv, creative problem solving, tech, time management—it just encompasses all the different things you need to know to be a successful artist and person. Even if you don't go into the film industry, making movies is a great way to level up on a lot of the life skills and adulting skills that teens need to transition to college and beyond. It also pushes you to express yourself creatively to your limit. It just takes so much work and thinking and planning."

AVP provides an introduction to film, and some students continue through the different levels. Junior Kyra Kleiman is in one of the upper levels of AVP, where students build upon

knowledge from previous levels of the class and participate in more film-related opportunities.

"I think that film's really cool, it's very different from just watching movies," Kleiman said. "I think that taking AVP has made me realize that. Now that I'm in AVP, I'm considering having a job in the film industry a lot more than I ever did before."

With different levels of the class, students have a chance to start with AVP now and continue to build on what they're learning. The class is an opportunity to start participating in film.

"I think that the class is a really great way to get into film," Kleiman said. "A lot of people just take it because it's a tech credit, but I remember when I first took it I really started to think about watching movies differently, and I noticed a lot more things about the movies."

Attending the festival was an opportunity for students to develop their interests in film and get more real world experiences, according to both students who attended and the festival's directors. Austin Film Festival's Young Filmmakers

Program director Kelsey Walker believes that the festival is an important opportunity for students.

"Students who attend the Austin Film Festival have the opportunity to learn about the art and business of screenwriting from industry professionals, as well as attend a plethora of screenings," Walker said. "The festival creative team curates student-specific programming aimed at deepening students' understanding of the entertainment industry and illuminating paths to creative careers. The festival is a great way for students to get inspired and meet other creatives."

These goals of the festival's team were met, according to students who attended. Kleiman believed attending the festival was inspiring and insightful.

"It was really cool because it was a lot of smaller filmmakers and screenwriters, so you kind of got to see, 'If I tried to get a job in the film industry what that might look like?'" Kleiman said. "There was one session

where we were all at a table with a filmmaker, and they were giving us advice and we could ask them whatever. It was really cool."

Film production is accessible to almost everyone, according to Teson. Even for students not taking AVP, there are still a multitude of opportunities. Teson says outside of programs and classes and professional equipment, even just filming and practicing on your phone is valuable.

"Filmmaking is going out there and making films, and sometimes they suck, and sometimes they're great, and the more you do it the better you get," Teson said. "While everyone else is talking about their projects that they're never going to actually make, you've made a dozen different movies, and learned skills, and built relationships, and built up your stamina and effort."

According to Teson, filmmaking takes time and experience, and more practice in creating films is the biggest thing that improves skill and the films produced. Even for students not in AVP, filmmaking is an exciting opportunity for everyone. There are ways for teenagers to get involved even without attending festivals or being in classes.

"The one piece of advice I would give to anyone who wants to get more involved in filmmaking is to make films," Teson said. "That's it. Get your phone, get a friend, and go shoot something somewhere. Then, edit it on your phone or on a computer and put it up on YouTube. Show it at your school. Then turn around and make the next one. Make a film a week for six months and you will get so good at it. You'll get better and better and better with each one."

graphic by JC Ramirez Delgadillo



Austin Studio Tour Continues to Honor Local Artists' Work

SARAH GARRETT | staff writer

For two weekends a year, one can enter a West Austin room covered in paintings. Acrylic, watercolor, and mixed media of various sizes, colors, and textures are shown floor to ceiling. Walk further, and a sign titled "More Art" points one in the direction of even more paintings. One small room has a painting still on the easel, a piece of notebook paper folded and taped to the stand, warning a viewer of wet paint.

This display is part of the The Austin Studio Tour, an art show displayed in different locations across Austin. This year marks the tour's 20th anniversary. The tour is spread out through three weekends. The weekend of Nov. 6 and 7 is a showcase for studios in West Austin, Nov. 13 to Nov. 14 is for studios in both West and East Austin, and Nov. 20 to Nov. 21 reveals studios in only East Austin. The tour, which is hosted by Big Medium, a nonprofit dedicated to supporting artists, showcased 530 artists' work this year.

John Swanger, an artist showing his work in the Austin Studio Tour, has been doing the tour for 14 years, the entirety of the time he has lived in Austin. In order to prepare for this year's tour, Swanger picked out the art he wanted to showcase.

"My decision-making in paintings—it's, of course, some kind of internal, kind of intuitive," Swanger said. "It often has to do with how they relate or may have to do with what my experience had to do within the process of making the painting. At this point, my work has a pretty strong consistency, so most of my work looks pretty good together. In some ways, it's not that tricky."

Swanger has been working on some collections of art for over a decade. His inspiration for a series that he started around 15 years ago was a crumpled piece of paper.

"One day, I was in my studio, and I was doing some work, and

I crumpled up a piece of paper that I'd been writing on or drawing on or doing some very common action, and I just crumpled up the piece of paper and threw it on the floor," Swanger said. "And then a minute later, I just thought, 'Oh, wait, let me take a look at that.' And I picked it back up, and I kind of unfolded it, and I got pretty fascinated by what I saw, what I discovered in all the folds and creases and shapes and so forth. And so I [created a] whole body of work based on that random action, and then using that, eventually, as a ground for the paintings."

Jan Knox, a surrealist and abstract artist, finds inspiration in other places. Over the pandemic, Knox painted to relieve anxiety.

"For quite a while, I had trouble getting any inspiration and ideas to work on," Knox said. "I felt depressed and anxious. I did some simple, small 12 by 12 collages interpreting my feelings on the virus. This helped to relieve some of my anxiousness." Knox said.

Knox's preparation process for the Austin Studio Tour involves hanging her art. She also makes sure to have things like flyers and her iPad, which she uses for credit card transactions, at hand.

"I try to get all my paintings priced and hung in my studio or gallery space, prepare greeting cards, and place them in the basket for the public," Knox said. "Then I get our West Austin Studio Tour signs mounted on easels, for placement out front of our location in the Northcross Center."

Other artists' processes for preparing for the studio tour are different. Amy Toth, a full-time veterinarian and self-taught artist, prepares for the studio tour by creating more art and deciding how to present it in a studio.

"In the last month, I've been trying to crank out a little bit more art to try to have a little bit more to show," Toth said. "Preparing for this is totally new for me. I don't really know how I'm preparing for this. I'm just trying to inventory everything

that I have and come up with prices, which is also difficult, and also come up with little synopses, descriptions of my paintings."

This year is Toth's first year at the Austin Studio Tour, and her first time presenting her artwork in public. Even though she is nervous for the tour, she looks forward to showing her art.

"I'm so excited to have people see my artwork, even if they hate it," Toth said. "It's one of those things where I get to be really vulnerable and put it out there, something I've never done before. I'm nervous, but I'm just as excited."

Along with Toth, the Austin Studio Tour is meaningful to many artists, including Nia Olabesi. An abstract and mixed-media artist, Olabesi is excited to present her art.

"The Austin Studio Tour is important to me because it is such an incredible opportunity for Austin artists to share their work with the public, not just for one day, but for three consecutive weekends on various platforms, like in-person, virtually, and outside around town. I mean, wow! Is that phenomenal?" Olabesi said. "I just love it. I am so blessed to be part of this wonderful community of artists, lovers of art, awesome volunteers, supporters, and members."

Olabesi comes from a family of artists, and knew from a young age that she wanted to be one, too. She gets inspiration from many places, including her mother.

"My first inspiration was from my mother, who is a gospel singer," Olabesi said. "My dad and my brothers were always doodling, drawing, or painting, and I also have a few cousins that are wonderful painters. So, at a young age, I embraced that dream of becoming a painter, a singer, a dancer, a musician, and an actor. My heart would have it no other way."

The Austin Studio Tour is becoming an important part of many artists' lives. From being an anticipated tradition, to making connections, to making sales, the Austin Studio Tour is a meaningful art tour to all of Austin.



ART OBSERVATION A LASA student looks at a colorful painting at the Austin Studio Tour showcase. The tour allows many visitors to engage and connect with artists and a home to observe a lot of local art over the course of three weekends in November. photo by Kayla Le



BRUSH TO CANVAS An artist joyfully works on a painting incorporating lots of lighter colors and intricate details. 530 artists and collaboratives based in the Austin area are featured throughout the Austin Studio Tour, including Swanger, Knox, Toth, and Olabesi. photo by Kayla Le



A DIFFERENT SPOTLIGHT Formerly known as Austin Psych Fest, Levitation started in 2008 and has only grown since then. It is not as focused on big artists as other festivals but has found success nonetheless, giving new experiences to fans. photo courtesy of Rebecca Harshman



SPREADING MUSIC Levitation features more underground talent and gives people an opportunity to see these artists. It has done so well that they have a four-day weekend festival plus a showcase at South by Southwest and others Levitation events. photo courtesy of Rebecca Harshman

Storytellers and Reading Lovers Assemble! 2021 Texas Book Festival Successful Online

ELLA LILLY | staff writer

Whether it was in-person, virtual, or a hybrid mix, the Texas Book Festival has brought together authors, book lovers, and Austinites alike to create meaningful conversations and connect over books since it was founded in 1995 by former First Lady Laura Bush. The literacy festival features a variety of sessions from reader's favorite authors, venues—most notably the State Capitol—food trucks, and activities for families. It has featured many authors over the years, including Matthew McConaughey, Sandra Cisneros, Elizabeth Strout, and Margaret Atwood.

Communication and advertising coordinator Ke'ara Hunt started working for the festival in January. She's passionate about the festival and spreading love for it.

"[People come] to meet their favorite authors and their favorite writers," Hunt said. "They're just huge, huge storytellers, and they enjoy meeting other people who share a common interest."

The festival is free to attend, and the organization itself is a nonprofit. In 2020, they connected with more than 75,000 people virtually through social media by streaming author conversations, story times, and more.

"I love that our mission is to maximize the amount of books we can share through sessions and the amount of people there," Hunt said.

Even though the festival was altered during COVID-19, it was still able to reach thousands through Zoom sessions and Q&As. Within the overall festival, there's also the Teen Texas Book Festival that is directed towards young adults and teen readers.

"There's so much content that is specifically for teenagers, and it's just a time for them to kind of meet their favorite authors and to share any ambitions in terms of literature or writing that they would like to pursue in the future," Hunt said. "They can get that motivation and encouragement to go towards those career avenues."

English teacher Lauren Williams provides an extra credit opportunity to her students if they attend a session at the book festival. They then have to write a paper on the contents of the author's talk and what they took away from it.

"What's pretty impactful is not only the opportunity to see some of your favorite writers that you may have read back in elementary or middle school, but really just the opportunity to hear new voices and to be exposed to different voices," Williams said.

Over the years, she's attended many authors' sessions that introduced her to new works of literature she wouldn't have normally picked up. She loves being able to share her love for the

festival and experience powerful talks with her students and even their families.

"When we got to listen to Tim O'Brien, the author of 'The Things They Carried,' speak, that was definitely such an engaging experience," Williams said. "It was cool to not only just look up and see my students, but also to see their families there, too, because some turned it into a family event."

"They're just huge, huge storytellers, and enjoy meeting other people who share a common interest."

—Communication coordinator Ke'ara Hunt

Sophomore Lyssa Lashus took part in Williams' extra credit when she logged on to award-winning author Sandra Cisneros' session on her latest book, "Marita, I Remember You." While she attended the session virtually this year, she hopes to attend in person next year for the complete experience.

"It's really interesting to hear all the different perspectives of writers, especially if you're interested in writing, because you get to learn their strategies and kind of what's going through their head as they write stuff," Lashus said. "It's kind of like the Wizard of Oz, peeking behind the curtain."

Hunt said the festival was an exceptional success. She thought having content online made the event more accessible, but she looks forward to providing more of the traditional festival experience next year.

"We were able to basically have something for everyone," Hunt said. "For those who couldn't make it out physically to our festival, we had all of our content online...and to those who just really missed that traditional customer experience in person, we were able to have those two dedicated days at Symphony Square and Austin Public Library, where they can actually come out and meet those authors, do book signings, and meet each other to kind of get that old festival back. And hopefully next year we can do more in person."



SHAPING ART An artist works with clay in a studio. The Austin Studio Tour includes many different studios and artists from all around Austin, combining the two events that had been held previously, the east and west Austin art tours, into one citywide tour. photo by Kayla Le



SHOWCASING A visitor of the Austin Studio Tour stops to look at an artist's work: artsy frog creations in different styles and shapes. The tour is an opportunity for attendees to interact with many forms of art, but also for artists to show off and sell their work. photo by Kayla Le



BLINDING LIGHTS A band performs on stage before a close, packed crowd at the Levitation music festival. Some of the musical acts this year include Black Midi and the Orange Tree Boys, reflective of the festival's push for equal time for diverse music. photo courtesy of Rebecca Harshman



NEON EXPLOSION Another band takes over the main stage at Levitation, utilizing decorative and moody lighting to entertain the crowd. All attendees had to be vaccinated unless they were too young, according to freshman Maya Cannedy-Azim. photo courtesy of Rebecca Harshman

Not Like Your Average Music Festival Psychedelic, Shoegaze, and More Genres Shine at Levitation

SYDNEY JONES | staff writer

Levitation, a smaller music festival held in Austin, was founded in 2008 under the name Austin Psych Fest. According to Levitation, the festival has been gaining popularity in recent years, and similar fests are spreading all over the globe. Levitation brings in smaller psychedelic bands to play local venues around Austin. This year, the festival took place from Oct. 28 to Oct. 31. Senior Rebecca Harshman attended a show at Levitation.

"It's a group of shows that's a festival in Austin in October," Harshman said. "It's kind of like a counter to ACL fest. I don't think it started after or anything, but ACL will bring in these big acts, like big pop acts, but then Levitation is more about celebrating small venues in Austin, like my shows [that I attended], like the Mohawk, which is a small venue, and smaller artists."

Levitation required all people attending to have a proof of

vaccination card or a negative PCR test result within 72 hours of the show. Audience members had to wear a mask at both indoor and outdoor venues when in lines, ordering food, in the restrooms, or where social distancing was not possible. Though there were restrictions, Harshman believes people still had lots of fun being back at concerts.

"It was really fun to see everyone for some new music I like that I found over the pandemic and see them come out to see this band live," Harshman said. "So I really enjoyed that."

Other music festivals like ACL also had COVID-19 precautions. Freshman Maya Cannedy-Azim, who attended ACL, said that festivals can be very crowded even with regulations, but vaccine mandates are enforced.

"You had to be vaccinated to be there unless you were too young," Cannedy-Azim said. "You had to show your vaccination card. There was also a vaccine tent where you could get your third shot."

According to Harshman, ACL and Levitation provide similar

types of music. However, ACL tends to feature mainly pop bands while Levitation leans toward musical diversity.

"There's also just a lot more variability of kinds of music," Harshman said. "I know there was a show for shoegaze music that had three local shoegaze bands. And then, I know there was an electronic show that had a lineup for electronic musicians and stuff like that. They do have a diversity of music at ACL, but it's difficult to see different smaller artists because of the way that the artists get bigger as the night gets later."

Though many of the bands aren't extremely popular, they can give a whole perspective into music, according to Harshman. With more popular bands like The Hives, to lesser known bands like Equip, Levitation has a full range.

"I would recommend it, especially if there's shows you never heard of," Harshman said. "They're just small intimate settings most of the time that are just great to be, but then they also will pull some larger artists for the scale of the festival."

editorial Viva Los Verdes: Austin FC Inaugural Season Recap

LANA GILES | staff writer

Austin Football Club (Austin FC) is the first professional sports team to compete in a top division from Travis Country. The 2021 season was its inaugural season, but due to COVID-19, the season started a month later than usual on April 17 and ended on Nov. 7. Austin FC's home field is the new Q2 Stadium, located in North Austin. Austinites loved the team before the season even started, buying their green and black t-shirts, hats, scarves, and flags all plastered with the live oak logo en masse. The team spread their roots deeper into Austin culture and community as the season went on, and in the future, those roots will continue to grow.

One of the key factors for a successful team is skilled players. A few players this season stood out as competitors and leaders. Captain Alex Ring, a Finnish defensive midfielder who wears number eight, has played for Major League Soccer (MLS) teams since 2017. As one of the best defensive midfielders in the league, Ring was picked for the 2018 MLS All-Star game, a match that takes place



AUSTIN FC'S SEASON

between the All-Star team from the U.S. 's league and another team from abroad. This season, he was at times positioned in a more offensive role, scoring four goals and three assists in total. His exceptional performance in the game against the Houston Dynamo on Oct. 24 enabled him to be selected for the MLS Team of the Week for Week 32, meaning that for that week he was recognized as being the best in his position. Ring succeeded in fulfilling fan's expectations of him this season with his precision and solid defense, as well as offense.

Tomás Pochettino, a central midfielder signed from Argentina's Club Talleres for \$2.5 million, also played a significant role this season. He wears number seven and made 29 key passes and scored two goals this season. His offensive skill in a game against the Houston Dynamo earned him MLS Player of the Week for Week 17. Going forward, fans expect that Pochettino will take on a bigger offensive role and that his skills on the

field will continue to develop.

On the other hand, the team suffered this season due to a loss of outstanding athletes like Danny Hoesen. Hoesen, a striker who wears number nine, was expected to be on the front lines for offense this season. But in October of last year, he sustained muscle tears and underwent surgery to repair them. Hoesen was cleared to play through the 2021 season, but unfortunately he only played the initial five games before sustaining a hip injury. Because of his value as an offensive player and a guaranteed goalscorer, his presence this inaugural season was intended to jumpstart the team to many victories. Later in the season, Austin FC brought in Senegalese striker #99 Moussa Djitte and Austinite forward #23 McKinzie Gaines, who both started to fill that gap.

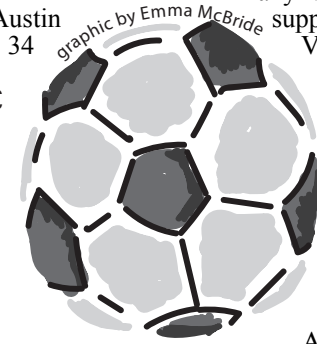
Similarly, Ben Sweat was expected to be a top defender and starter this season before sustaining a torn anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) in the game against the Colorado Rapids on April 24. He underwent surgery and missed out on the remainder of the season. Sweat was lined up to be one of the leading defensive players, but on Nov. 30 it was announced that his contract option for next season had been declined by the club. It was announced that seven other players would be leaving before 2022 as well, meaning Austin FC has 19 players registered for next season so far.

This season, Austin FC played a total of 34

games. They celebrated nine wins this season, lost 21, and ended four in draws. Fans still took to the road for away games to show their crazy support for the team. They were ranked 21 out of 27 teams from both Eastern and Western conferences in MLS during preseason, which feels adequate for an inaugural season. Next season and the seasons following, fans want to see improvement in all aspects of the team. With more wins comes more reason for celebration. Austin FC finished their satisfactory season on Nov. 7, ending in spot 12 out of 13 in the Western Conference.

As for competition, a rival arose in FC Dallas. Austin FC's first match against FC Dallas ended in a crushing 2-0 loss for Austin FC and its hundreds of traveling fans. According to captain Alex Ring, they played well the first half, but were sluggish in the second. The second match, a home game at Q2, offered the team a chance for revenge and redemption after a new winning streak, but unfortunately they were met with another loss, this time by a score of 3-5. Their final game against FC Dallas ended in a close game 2-1, but Austin FC still lost, losing their chance to win the Copa Tejas Trophy (the winner has the most head-to-head points against the other two Texas teams). Hopefully in next year's season the team will make a comeback, building off of key players like #41 goalkeeper Brad Stuver, #14 forward Diego Fagundez, and #25 attacking midfielder Sebastian Driussi.

Although Austin FC didn't do as well as the players or fans hoped, they will continue to be supported. Fans packed into the Q2 Stadium at every home game, chanting and cheering for the team, and they will continue to do so for many seasons to come. Fans and supporters of Austin FC like Los Verdes, an independent group that follows the team and creates enthusiasm and team spirit through their colorful green clothing and boosting chants, fill the crowd with energy and positivity. Austin has been a welcoming community for the professional soccer team, and the team has welcomed Austin in return, adapting to cultural traditions and embracing the lively city.



Graphic by Emma McBride

10/24/2021 Houston Dynamo FC 1:2 won and went on to the next game of Copa Tejas.

10/30/2021 FC Dallas 2:1, lost their chance to win the Copa Tejas Trophy.

10/25/2021 Alex Ring is selected for MLS Team of the Week for Week 32

10/30/2021 AFC loses 2:1 to FC Dallas and their chance to win the Copas Tejas Trophy

11/4/2021 Sporting Kansas City 1:3, won final home match.

11/7/2021 Season ends with after losing to Portland Timbers 3:0

April

August

October

November

Toto, I Have a Feeling We're Not in High School Anymore

Inside the World of College Athletics from LASA Student-Athlete Alumni

ANNABEL ANDRE | sports editors
SANWI SARODE

College application season is almost over, and it's time to look to the future. Every year, LASA graduates attend colleges all over the world to pursue art, science, math, literature, athletics, and many other fields of study. Although athletics aren't usually highlighted at LASA, many alumni are competing today in college athletic programs.

Crystal Zhou, a college freshman who plays tennis for Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, said that she prefers college tennis to high school tennis, despite the added pressure. According to her, in college it's much easier to form closer relationships with your teammates, which is important to her, especially due to the individual nature of tennis.

"In high school there's a lot less freedom to bond with your team members," Zhou said. "But in college, it's on a daily basis. You hang out with them like family and tell each other stuff. It's just a much closer connection, and as a tennis player, this is something that you almost never feel because it's such an individual sport."

Josephine Wilson, a freshman rower at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, also said the bond shared between team members in college athletics is valuable. As a freshman athlete, she and her teammates live together and spend much more time together than high school athletes would, which according to her, results in a closer friendship as both friends and teammates. "We spend all our time together," Wilson said.



ROWING TO SUCCESS College Freshman and LASA graduate Josephine Wilson rowing for Southern Methodist University during team practice. photo courtesy of Josephine Wilson



SPEEDING TO THE FINISH LINE Josephine Wilson practices rowing with her fellow teammates at SMU. The bond she shares with her team members is stronger than ever. photo courtesy of Josephine Wilson

"We're either in the room studying, going to practice, at practice, or eating together. I think it's more of a sibling dynamic than anything. We all love each other a lot. When you're on a high school team, you only see [your teammates] at practice. I don't think the relationships were as strong."

Although college athletics does give you a close group of friends and found family, it's not all rainbows and butterflies. According to LASA cross country coach Mary Beth Metcalf, students wanting to play college sports should be aware that it also comes with a sacrifice of your freedom.

"All of a sudden, you might have a recommended time you have to be in bed by, and maybe they're keeping track of your diet, or all your workouts, and you have to give this number of hours in the athletic room," Metcalf said. "So there's lots of controls on your life that you need to factor in. Being a college athlete is a privilege, but it does come at a cost."

Not only are there more restrictions in college sports, but there is also more pressure, according to Zhou. She is expected to

perform both academically and athletically at a high level, and juggling that makes time management incredibly important for her.

"There's a lot more pressure because you want to make a good impression, especially as a freshman," Zhou said. "My school is also academically challenging, so for me personally it's been a rough ride. I'm very busy, so time management is a skill that I need to master. There's also a lot more traveling in college as well. The amount of traveling I've had to do at the beginning of the fall was really overwhelming at times."

Similarly, Wilson's rowing and academic schedule have changed drastically since high school. Because of her intense and rigorous rowing schedule, many of her classes are not taught at times she is available, forcing her to take them asynchronously.

"Our practices [during high school] were five days a week for two hours," Wilson said. "[In college], we have 20 hours with coaches a week and then more on top of that. And just because of the nature of college athletics, being an athlete

is your job. I think I'm doing 17 hours right now for my classes. It's definitely a lot and it's very intense to balance academics and athletics."

Another important factor to Metcalf is considering scholarships. According to her, athletics in college can help, but students must be grounded in reality about their skill and position compared to other applicants.

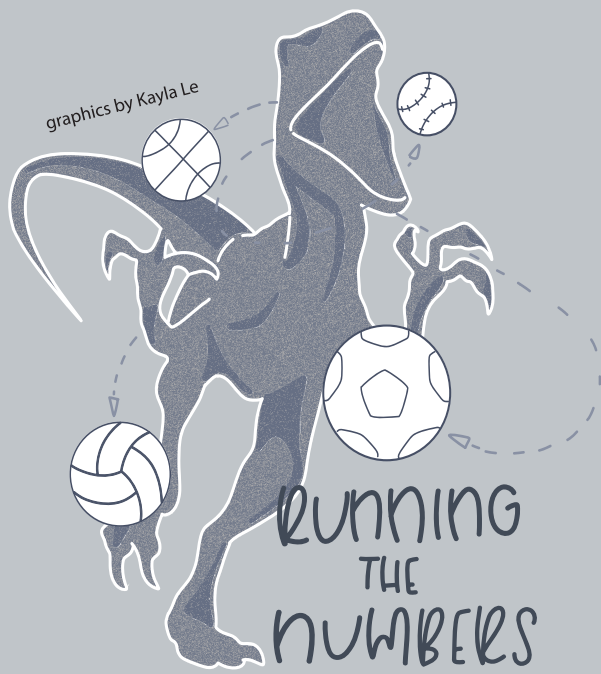
"The process was eye opening because it's one thing to be a superstar in your high school, but when you get to college you find out pretty fast that you are now just a smaller fish in a much bigger pond," Metcalf said. "It's not like there's a lot of money in a pot out there just waiting for talent in young athletes. You have to be careful with that dream of getting a full ride because there really isn't a lot of that out there."

While Wilson has greatly enjoyed her experience with college athletics so far, she believes that students' college research shouldn't be solely based on athletics. According to her, it's important to pick a college that will provide a fulfilling and satisfying experience beyond athletics as well.

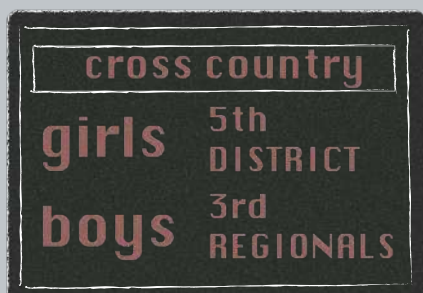
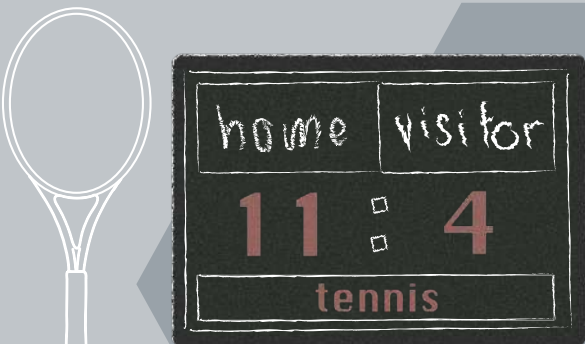
"You definitely need to look outside the lens of athletics," Wilson said. "You don't just want your college experience to be athletics. There are very few college athletes who are going to go out of college and be professional athletes and make their living as athletes. Going somewhere that's going to set you up for the rest of your life is also very helpful, and athletics enhance that. But if you choose somewhere purely for athletics, it's going to take away from it."



GAME SET AND MATCH Crystal Zhou, a former LASA student, serves to kick off the point. She plays division three tennis as a freshman at Carnegie Mellon. photo by Annabel Andre



LASA's Wins and Losses



Oh No! My Ankle! It's Broken!

How LASA Athletes Respond to Injuries

SYDNEY JONES | staff writer

Getting injured is a normal part of being an athlete in any sport. LASA offers 16 different sports over the course of the school year, and the chance for injuries in these sports is high. Injuries can affect student-athletes mentally and physically.

Athletic trainer Sue Torres typically sees three to four students a day and helps them manage their injuries. The injuries these students deal with can vary from simple scratches to critical issues, according to Torres.

"Normally, I try to do treatments and rehab during lunch," Torres said. "With run of the mill type injuries, we see a lot of wounds. Especially in football and volleyball; they get a lot of abrasions, the proper name for scrapes, and things like that. So [I] have to make sure that those are covered and clean and not getting infected."

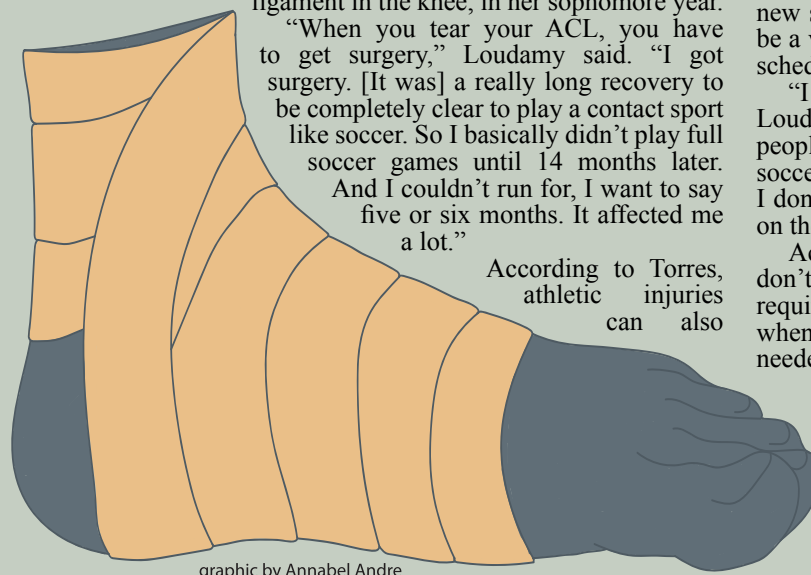
Having an athletic trainer at LASA is a beneficial resource for athletes. Torres helps students with treatment and rehab, helping them get back to practice and games.

"If there wasn't an athletic trainer, there's a lot of injuries that would be missed," Torres said. "Coaches are concentrating on coaching. They may not realize that an injury has happened. And kids try to play through things. Kids have access to me to get even just minor things taken care of. If you didn't have an athletic trainer, it would fall on the school nurse. There's a big difference between a nurse and an athletic trainer."

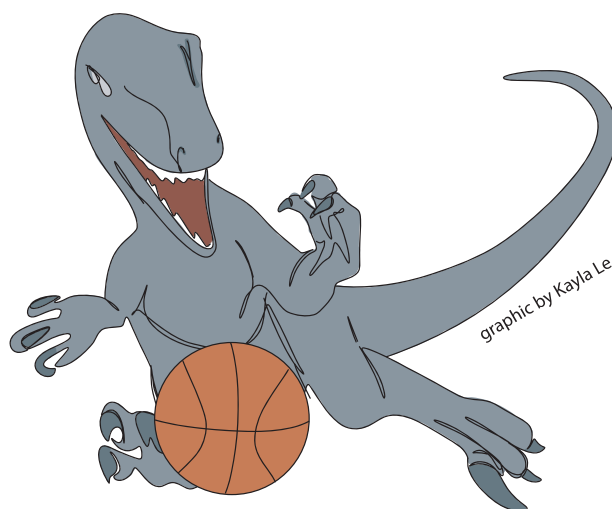
Being injured can cause issues for athletes, including, most directly, not being able to participate in activities they enjoy. Senior and soccer player Lane Loudamy tore her anterior cruciate ligament (ACL), a ligament in the knee, in her sophomore year.

"When you tear your ACL, you have to get surgery," Loudamy said. "I got surgery. [It was] a really long recovery to be completely clear to play a contact sport like soccer. So I basically didn't play full soccer games until 14 months later. And I couldn't run for, I want to say five or six months. It affected me a lot."

According to Torres, athletic injuries can also



graphic by Annabel Andre



graphic by Kayla Le

THE RAPTOR RUN DOWN

ANNABEL ANDRE | sports editor

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

I haven't played basketball in years, four years to be precise. But a few weeks ago, I decided I would go and play with the LASA girl's basketball team. Despite being confident that my skills from middle school were long gone, I decided that playing a sport I had experience in was still better than being thrown into something I had never done before. It turns out that I was right, and although I was nervous, I never needed to be.

On Friday afternoon, Nov. 5, I walked into the big gym, almost completely unsure of what I would be doing. The gym seemed to be more massive than I remembered, and every noise reverberated off the walls, making me even more jittery. The girls were gathered at one end of the gym warming up. Once I joined them, the girls basketball coach, Coach Tarter, directed me to find a partner to practice with. My partner taught me how to shoot hoops and how to throw the ball in a high curve so the opponent can't block it. I made a grand total of three in the basket. It was much harder than I remembered.

While regaining some distant memory of my basketball glory days, I was brought further back in time by 2010s hits, including some of my old Swiftie favorites, blasting from the speakers. I was already applauding my decision to play basketball for the week.

The practice on Friday was structured very differently than the others. Friday was a "Shoot-A-Thon," a day filled with only practicing shooting, which was great for me, someone who is essentially a beginner. We never stood still throughout the entire practice (Coach Tarter made

create a dent in a student's mental health. Not being able to play can significantly affect an athlete's outlook on their own capabilities and legitimacy as a player.

"Injuries that take more time, like season-ending types of injuries, can affect kids' mental health," Torres said. "Because they're used to being an athlete, then if all of a sudden we take that away, they can have some mental health problems. We try to make sure that they work their way through that."

There are many instances when athletes are forced to sit out due to their injury and it can take a toll on them according to Loudamy. From personal experience, she said that it can affect athletes mentally, but once they are able to get back to their sport they feel better.

"I think if you're an athlete, then you aren't an athlete for a period of time, because you're injured, I think that is difficult," Loudamy said. "Any of my friends who've gone through similar injuries could say the same, just having to sit out sucks. It definitely is something that you can recover from mentally, but also it's just kind of hard because your routine changes a lot."

The process for dealing with injuries can be long and painful, but in the end can really benefit the student, getting them back into the sport and helping to prevent further injuries, according to Torres. One of the jobs Torres has as an athletic trainer is to help students with the healing process.

"If they get injured, then I evaluate their injury, make a diagnosis, and I need to refer to a physician or another type of medical professional," Torres said. "Then, once they are cleared to begin rehab, then I do rehab in here."

When coming back to the sport, athletes have to deal with a whole new set of challenges. According to Loudamy, those challenges can be a variety of things, such as how students practice or manage their schedule.

"I think the process was difficult because I was just so impatient," Loudamy said. "It just took a really long time. But I think a lot of people would expect 'Oh, you'd be so scared to come back to play soccer.' But at that point, I just wanted to play soccer for so long that I don't think I was scared about it. Really, I was just tired of sitting on the bench."

According to Torres, injuries can often be exacerbated if athletes don't take needed rest. A simple sprained ankle can turn into an injury requiring surgery if the proper care isn't given. She suggests that when recovering, student-athletes should take all the time and care needed before returning to athletics.

"Little things can get worse," Torres said. "If you don't work on strength and balance you're just going to [injure] it again, it's just going to happen again, probably worse and then pretty soon you have an injury that might be a surgical fix that could have easily been strengthened, worked on in rehab and [by] wearing a proper ankle brace."



JUST WATCH AND OBSERVE Sports editor Annabel Andre receives instruction from commentary editor Lili Xiong during a LASA girls basketball practice. photo by JC Ramirez Delgadillo

us run in place even when we weren't doing anything), but despite that I still enjoyed myself and would definitely play again. I was expecting it to be more hardcore but I ended up having a great time. Luckily for me, most of the drills were incredibly intuitive and I didn't embarrass myself much.

My favorite part of practice was definitely near the end when we did some impossible—but undeniably fun—shots. We laid on the ground and attempted to get the ball in the hoop. Although it looked like it wouldn't be difficult, as soon as I laid down I lost all the power from my legs (which plays a much bigger part in shooting than I thought) and I was forced to awkwardly lift my head to see the basket. It wasn't surprising that I didn't make any. The gym was filled with screams and hands were flailing to protect heads from flying basketballs.

After the light and informal practice, the intense training the following Monday made me realize how easy I had it on Friday. I walked into the gym with more confidence than I did at the previous practice, and was immediately paired up to start our warm-ups. When we did a bunch of dribbling and running drills the ball always seemed to escape my grip and roll away from me no matter what I did. This practice left me with sore hips and legs and the realization that these basic techniques require much more dexterity than I have with a basketball.

With blood pumping quickly through my veins and my heartbeat loud in my ears, I was ready for our next drills. We were on to practicing defensive and offensive plays. These were confusing to me, but thankfully the players were there to guide me through it. If not, I would have probably just stood in the middle of the court, completely lost. For some of the more complicated drills, I stayed to the side and watched as they ran from sideline to sideline in patterns I could barely comprehend.

Despite being thrown into this very new experience filled with unfamiliar drills that had even stranger names, I adjusted surprisingly quickly. I owe all of this to the players on the team. They led me through all the drills when I was visibly lost, and made me feel like I belonged at their practice. Although I loved playing basketball and rekindling my interest in the sport, interacting with the players was the best part of the experience.



GO RAPTORS Annabel Andre poses for a picture with the LASA girls basketball team after a tough day of practice. Andre went to two practices for the Raptor Rundown. photo by Holly Tarter



JUMP SHOT Andre takes a shot during "Shoot-A-Thon" with girls basketball team. The team plays multiple basketball-oriented games in order to improve their skills. photo by JC Ramirez Delgadillo

LASA Football's Teamwork Makes the Dreamwork

AVA SPURGEON | staff writer

This fall semester marks the second year of LASA's football team as their own team independent from LBJ Early College High School (LBJ ECHS). Although their inaugural year was technically last year, some players thought of this as their first year as it offered more normal conditions for the players and more opportunities for students to watch games. The team's season began with a scrimmage against St. Andrew's Episcopal School in late August and finished on Nov. 4 with a win against Navarro High School.

This season, senior William Jachimiak was a new member on the football team, having recently switched from soccer. Jachimiak really enjoyed his time on the team and says it's been a very positive experience overall.

"My experience this fall has been really

good," Jachimiak said. "I feel like I haven't missed out on anything. I haven't come in and they've already had their own group, it feels like I've been a part of it from day one, even though there was a lot of getting used to it. It was a very new experience for me, but a very welcoming team."

Since the start of the season, many players have said that this semester has been successful in terms of organization and efficiency. Building a team almost from scratch and switching campuses made it a difficult adjustment, but according to the players, the team has adapted to the changes.

"We're a lot more coordinated, we run practice a lot better," Jachimiak said. "At the start, our practices were really rough and it took forever to do. We do mock games, and that used to take forever, but now we've gotten really good at those too. I would say we've grown a lot, even in just this season."

Senior Liam Green-Musselman, a returning

player on LASA's football team, says he's pleased with how the team has progressed this fall. Like Jachimiak, he said the team's fundamental organization has greatly improved, something influenced by the experience of the coaches.

"This year we have coaches who are more comfortable coaching our positions," Green-Musselman said. "Our head coach Bryan Crews used to have to coach defense as a whole, but now he just gets to coach linebackers, which is the position he played in college. There's more people to help facilitate that growth and people to teach who know what they're doing, instead of before where we just had one player who had played football before."

Besides becoming more organized, Green-Musselman believes that the team has become much more comfortable with football. According to him, the higher involvement and interest from all players has developed their teamwork and game.

"We have more returning players and new players who are more athletic and more keen to actually play the sport instead of just playing to play their senior year," Green-Musselman said. "At first, the biggest challenge was maturity, like actually taking the sport seriously. Now it's just understanding your position because football is the ultimate team sport. You have to know what your job is. You can't be a superhero. So if someone misses a tackle, I know it's not my fault, and if I miss a tackle, he knows it's not his fault."

As for next year's season, there's optimism but also worry from some players. Despite being nervous about the effect players leaving will have on the team, junior Adam Reisman can't wait for LASA football's success next season.

"Compared to last season we've definitely grown as a team," Reisman said. "Next year,



PRACTICE LASA Football practices after school to get ready for the next big game. photo by William Flukinger



we're losing a good amount of seniors, and so it's going to be a little bit hard to rebuild our team. I think at the rate we're going at now, we're going to come back stronger than before and win more games."

On the whole, the team has a lot of hope for continuing their streak of positive improvement. This year is only the second season playing independent from LBJ ECHS, and the team is still getting into the swing of things. Many players, like Green-Musselman, have a lot of optimism about future seasons.

"Now we have a sophomore quarterback who [will] have the chance to mature and get better in the weight room," Green-Musselman said. "Because we have a lot more sophomores and freshmen, and because our team is about 50 percent underclassman, they'll have time to get bigger and stronger and spend four whole years playing football."



GAME DAY The football team puts their hard work and practice to work on game day. photo by Goldie Klein



Mission for Recognition Appreciating Sports Outside of LASA

ELLA LILLY | staff writer

From coming-of-age stories to pep rallies, school athletics are typically the talk of the school: the homecoming game, practices, who beat who. However, there's a variety of sports other than the typical ones that many LASA athletes partake in. From rowing to fencing to ballet, sports outside of school can provide variety for students.

For sophomore Erika Torri-Karch, the amount of options available outside of school is plentiful. She fences, a sport which isn't offered by LASA or most public schools.

"There's more options I'd say," Torri-Karch said. "Something like fencing, you can't even do in school. So if you wanted to do one of the smaller sports, then you have way more choices by doing an out-of-school sport."

In addition to the larger range of options, sports outside of school can provide students with the opportunity to specialize or grow their skills outside of an elective sport. In addition to ballet at Ballet Austin, freshman Amber Wang joined LASA's drill team this year. While it's an extensive commitment for her, Wang loves both being involved with school and the benefits of school sports and being able to develop her skills outside of school as well.

"It's been really fun to be involved in something for my school," Wang said. "The dance team is giving me different styles that I can be involved in. It's widened my versatility as a dancer."

Sophomore Carter Brooks started rowing last year on Ladybird Lake and says he is loving it so far. Compared to in school sports, he appreciates the flexibility that comes with extracurriculars not counting for a grade.

"You can be a lot more flexible with your schedule because you can kind of pick and choose when you want to go, whereas with school it may be a bit more constrained," Brooks said. "It's also just a good opportunity to meet people from other schools."

On the other hand, Wang thinks athletics and school can be very separate and result in scheduling issues. She said schools generally try their best to fit sports into students' schedules and prevent overlap or issues, but outside of school, there will always be different districts with different schedules.

"Schedule wise, it's a lot less understanding of each other," Wang said. "A lot of schools schedule your education and dance classes more purposefully so that people have enough

time to go from one thing to another."

According to Brooks, school sports can provide another way to connect with peers. Through a fun environment, he said you can make friends at your school who you get to see everyday.

"For school sports in particular, I feel like it can help you to build some relationships with people at your school [such as] your teammates or the coach," Brooks said. "It's almost more convenient. You usually don't have to go somewhere else to practice like [for] football or basketball. And then also the convenience factor is something that you get out of it."

Torri-Karch agrees that building relationships with peers is also a benefit for the sports part of school, as she runs cross country for LASA in addition to fencing. She likes being able to spend time with people from outside of the school day and get to know them better.

"[With school sports], you get to make more friends that you can actually have in classes instead of only seeing them at sports," Torri-Karch said. "You know them a little better so it's just easier to bond with people that you see more often."

For Wang, the hardest part of sports outside of school is the convenience factor, as a long drive isn't ideal for her compared to just staying after school and taking the late bus home. She said the credit for AISD P.E. is also complicated because Ballet Austin doesn't count for credit, even though some dance studios do.

"I think it's mostly the transportation for one," Wang said. "[Ballet Austin] is around fifteen minutes away from LASA, so it's not

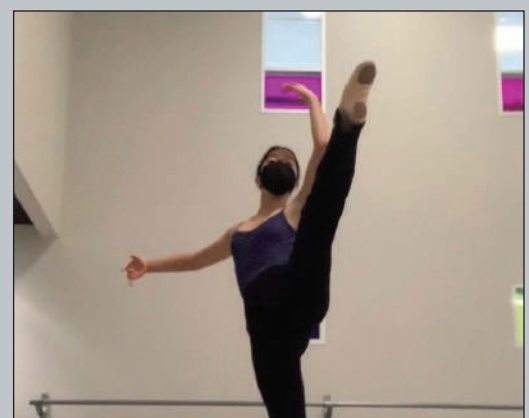


EN GUARD Erika Torri-Karch practices fencing outside of school as an extracurricular activity. She has to manage her personal pursuits with her work at school. photo courtesy of Erika Torri-Karch.

that bad, but it does take a little bit, especially with downtown traffic. It's the fact that me doing ballet for so many hours a week outside of school doesn't count as a P.E. credit. So I have to take another elective like the dance team as my P.E. credit. Some outside-of-school sports count for school credit if it's on the list that AISD has, but Ballet Austin isn't on that list."

Wang said that although sports outside of school can be difficult in terms of transportation and convenience, she enjoys participating in these sports. According to Wang, the relief it provides from school makes sports worth it.

"Outside of school feels like more of an escape for me," Wang said. "I don't really have to worry about people from my school being there. It's also a place to meet new people and make more friends."



STAYING ON POINT Freshman Amber Wang practicing at Austin Ballet. She does ballet outside of school while juggling being a member of the LASA dance team and keeping up with her school work. photo courtesy of Amber Wang.

Throw Caution to the Wind A Spotlight on Color Guard

ANNABEL ANDRE | sports editor

The LASA color guard season ended a few weeks earlier, giving way to the winter guard season which begins after break. After the color guard's season performing on the field with the band, winter guard participates in their own competitive season.

LASA's guard is divided into two different seasons: color guard and winter guard. Color guard's season takes place during the fall and performs as a part of the marching dance show with the band. Winter guard performs their own show without the band. Both color and winter guard are dance forms performed with pieces of equipment including flags, rifles, and sabers.

Color guard director Landy Robertson is



THE FOREST FOR THE TREES The color guard proudly waves their flags as they perform with the LASA band. As their season comes to a close, winter guard prepares to kick off their own season. photo by Kayla Le



HARD AT WORK The color guard practices in the LASA parking lot after school to prepare for their performance at the next football game. photo by Kayla Le.

proud of their success after finishing the season first in their division. Many of their members had never performed in a fall marching season before, and he was especially impressed by their progress.

"They had a fantastic fall season. We did our show, The Forest for the Trees," Robertson said. "We started working on it in July, and it's really amazing to see how far, especially the freshman and sophomores who had never done a marching season before, really grew to a high level of excellence throughout the fall season. We ended up getting first place Color Guard in our division at the last show that we went to, U.S. Bands Round Rock, which was really awesome. I'm super proud of them and how far they've come."

Robertson has new goals that he wants to achieve with guard every year. Although he is proud of them for winning first place color guard, he doesn't want to base the season around medals.

"Right now they're all getting something out of it, that's what's important to me," Robertson said. "What I want to continue seeing for the next several years is them enjoying what they're doing and continually getting better and better every season."

At the beginning of the color guard season this year, captain and senior Michael Lane was scared to face all the work ahead. According to him, the number of new members they had to teach seemed daunting, but the team made incredible progress despite this.

"We only had six people returning," Lane said. "I think our progression shows how much better and stronger we are collectively as a

group. It started off a bit rocky, but I think it's pretty solid now."

Lane's job as a captain is to manage the team and introduce new members to the dynamics of performing on the guard. He enjoys the benefits his position as a leader gives him.

"I mainly help others do better in guard," Lane said. "And I learned a whole bunch from my instructor to hopefully pass down to the newer members of our guard. All around, I just want to help everybody get better."

As a captain, Lane takes on the responsibility of helping guide the returning and new members of guard and passing down the skills he learned from his instructor. According to Lane, many qualities are required to show one's dedication to the sport to be able to have a position of leadership like his.

"For color guard leadership, you need to have at least one year of experience," Lane said. "You have to show determination, good time management, cooperation, meaning that you aren't troublesome, and overall, an interest for the sport."

Lane is positive the team will see even more success and progress in the winter guard season. Despite starting the season with limited experienced members, according to him, everyone has progressed quickly and if they continue to keep that mindset, the team will have success in winter guard as well.

"I see them going to be pretty successful," Lane said. "We made it so far within the fall season, and we've done so much. I'm really impressed by the new members and how quickly they obtain information and apply it and use their skills in new ways. I think we're going to have a really great winter season. We're going to be even stronger as a guard before I leave."

For Lane, doing guard at LASA was exceptionally important to him and motivated him to keep his grades up. He's glad he was able to participate in LASA's color guard community.

"Color guard made me actually stay in LASA," Lane said. "I wasn't really motivated to do any class or to be really good at LASA, and color guard gave me the push because I knew that I wanted to continue color guard throughout all my years here. I knew the only way that I'd be able to continue with guard is if I have good grades. Color gives you a new sense of purpose. It gives you something else to look forward to when coming to school every day."

ALLEY CAT PLAYERS WALTZING INTO FALL PLAY

JC RAMIREZ DELGADILLO | photo editors
MADELEINE VAN SLYKE



Photos by Katie Bubsy



Photos by JC Ramirez Delgadillo