

## A DOG IS A LASA STUDENT'S BEST FRIEND



LASA senior Milan Rivas plays with Addie, a service dog with Divine Canines. The dogs were brought to LASA during October as part of self care month. LASA wellness counselor Marissa Rivera and her dog, Bruce Wayne, work with Divine Canines and were responsible for bringing the group to LASA.

[see page 7](#)

## LBJ BOYS CROSS COUNTRY TAKES DISTRICT



LASA seniors Pablo Villafuerte and Bertram Jernejcic compete at the district 26-5A boy's cross country meet. The team won first at district but did not advance to state after regionals. "They all just had fantastic races, the energy was good that day," LASA counselor and assistant track coach Shannon Bergeron said. "I felt like the team was really supporting each other, we were all out cheering each other on. I feel like the energy kind of keeps you going."

[see page 15](#)

## THE LIBERATOR JOINS THIS CENTURY



Our all new website is up and running. Check out [lbjliberator.com](http://lbjliberator.com) for exclusive online content, featured photos and the most recent LASA and LBJ game scores. Be sure to follow us on Instagram at [lbjliberator](https://www.instagram.com/lbjliberator) and like us on Facebook.

# the liberator

Liberal Arts and Science Academy and Lyndon Baines Johnson High Schools

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## LBJ meets state standards, receives two distinctions

**SESHA MCMINN**  
News Editor

For the first time in two years LBJ has met all four indices needed to pass the state standards, making LBJ a formerly improvement required school. According to LBJ principal Sheila Henry, this achievement has been a long time coming and reflects positively on faculty and students, who made efforts to focus on the LBJ campus as a whole rather than a specific demographic group of students.

"We received two distinctions in closing achievement gaps and student progress and those are the main two that you need to get distinctions in because what it says is that you're looking at your whole campus and not focusing on a group of kids," Henry said.

Academy Director Bradley Clark said that LBJ would not have been able to pass its state standards this year without the dedication of students and teachers.

"This is quite an accomplishment for us," Clark said. "I believe that we were an improvement required school for four years or five years previously and... what brought Mrs. Henry to the campus was that the school needed improvement. Mrs. Henry, along with her leadership team, implemented instructional framework for everybody on the campus, for the teachers to be teaching, using the same language that has been proven effective... and it paid off."

According to Henry, she does not plan to do anything differently this year. She said that she wants to continue building and sustaining relationships between students and faculty, which will in turn lead to positive results on the state standards.

"The bottom line of everything we do... is about letting [the students] know that we care about what happens to them and all of those things," Henry said. "You have to care about yourself and I have to let you know that I care about what happens to you. I've always been encouraging and motivating the kids because they are all really smart kids. You have to have high expectations for your kids. You can't just let them do enough to [get] by because they would just do that. We should have to believe in possibilities because everything is possible."

[continued on page 6](#)



The LBJ band takes the field in full uniform during to perform their show, Architectonic, at the LBJ vs. Reagan homecoming game. photo by Greg Kreth

## LBJ Jaguar Band builds new show, completes season at area

**MAX RANDALL**  
Staff Writer

On Oct. 26, the LBJ Marching Band stepped onto the field at Gupton Stadium in Vista Ridge to show the UIL judges the show 127 LBJ and LASA students had been practicing for months. Named "Architectonic," the show blends pieces of Beethoven with different styles of architecture. The Jaguar Band placed 11th at area with "Architectonic." LASA junior Alec Gorsse said that though they did not make state, they were only one place away from qualifying.

"We did the best we could with what was possible," Gorsse said. "It was not a bad performance at all. I think

we could have done better, but it still proved how much hard work we've put in throughout the past few months."

The score was due to one bad score from a single judge, leaving LBJ out of the top 10 bands advancing to the next level of the competition. LASA junior Leo Praderas said that the other judges believed they did well, but that was not enough to push them into the top 10 of the 25 bands at the competition.

"One judge gave us a terrible score and two judges gave us a great score but that terrible score brought us to 11th, making us not eligible for state," Praderas said. "We were one away. We also generally just disagreed with his comments, so that's also a bit frustrating."

[continued on page 7](#)

## Environmentalism takes root at LASA LASA seniors restart environmental club with growth in membership, plan sustainable campus improvement projects

**EMMA MORAN**  
Staff Writer

LASA senior Isaac Metcalf gently shovels the dirt back in around the fragile seed, then leans back to water it and inspect his work. Around him, other members of the newly revived Environmental Club tend to the garden beds in the LASA and LBJ courtyard. Along with LASA senior Sally Jung, Metcalf restarted the LASA Environmental Club this year.

"Well Environmental Club wasn't started by me," Metcalf said. "It's actually been around for a long time but people had kind of forgotten about it. Last year we had fewer than ten members so this year we're trying to kind of restart it and give it a second birth."

This year, the club has grown significantly and now has over 40 members. LASA senior and vice president of the Environmental Club, Daniel Pyrek, said the club lends itself to all different kinds of people.

"You get the best of both worlds; you can do research and find out ways the cut down on electricity and that sort of things, or you can go outside and get your hands dirty and actually plant stuff, so it's a good mix of things," Pyrek said.

For LASA junior Katie Shi, Environmental Club has helped her put into action some of her ideas and concepts of how people need to change their environmental impact.

"I feel like we talk about [the environment] a lot in class, and just in conversation sometimes too, but we never really do anything," Shi said. "We're thinking of environmentalism as a concept. But I really like what we're doing in Environmental Club; we're setting goals and we know what we're going to do, not just in the club, but helping other students."

The club plans to look at the environmental impact at LASA and LBJ, Metcalf said. The club hopes to foster a culture of sustainability within the LASA community and help their fellow students notice the environment in their daily lives.

"We're going to start doing an energy audit of the school, and assessing the computer energy usage specifically, as well as a water audit of how much and when we are watering our grounds, and how we could be doing it better," Metcalf said. "And then in the spring semester, we're going to actually try and use that information to make policy changes and culture changes to the way that we use energy and water at LBJ."

In the future, the club hopes to widen their focus from just the school to the entire community, in order to have a larger effect.

"We're thinking that in the future...we can increase the amount of space that the gardens take up, so that people in the community can also maintain it, and it would be less of just the school, and more of the community as a whole," Shi said.

Every year, Environmental Club takes care of the gardens at the front of the school, but now they're also working on a new project; the Mindfulness Trail, which will be a trail behind the school where students can go to think and appreciate nature.

"We're maintaining the raised bed gardens in front of the school, which right now are just a bunch of weeds, but in two weeks are going to be full of plants," Metcalf said. "And we're also going to build a Mindfulness Trail in the back of the school for the wellness counselors. That's going to be a secluded natural spot for people to go and relax during the school day, when they need to de-stress"

Metcalf said that the gardens and the Mindfulness Trail, however small of projects they may be, are a big step to bringing on the Environmental Club's goal for LASA.

"We're trying to foster a culture of sustainability within the LASA community, and an important part of that is letting our peers recognize [and] notice the environment in their daily lives," Metcalf said. "So things like this trail and the raised bed gardens up front are just small projects that can call attention to our work at to the environment on our campus."

To learn more, visit Environmental Club's website, [lbjenvironmentalclub.weebly.com](http://lbjenvironmentalclub.weebly.com), or go to Stormberg's room, room 235 at lunch on Tuesdays.



LASA seniors Sally Jung and Alondra Martinez inspect plants for the beds at the front of the school, photo courtesy of Lesley Martinez

## 10 Years Later: LBJ SLIME Club documents students' experiences in historic Hurricane Katrina

**GRACE BODINE**  
Staff Writer

After staying two nights on a bridge in New Orleans, LBJ senior Johnnie Williams and his father set off to the Superdome. The chaos that surrounded them was highlighted by suicide jumps off the highest levels of the Superdome and the rush of people trying to get on buses. When Williams was about to get on the bus, the police put up a large gate in front of the buses and would not let anyone else on. Right when they stopped letting people in the buses, a woman passed out and died right in front Williams.

"I left my house after the storm in the water, we went to some hotel and the whole hotel was being broken into because everybody needed somewhere to stay," Johnnie said. "We stayed there for a couple hours actually... And when we left there, I remember seeing a whole bunch of dead bodies just floating."

[continued on page 12](#)

## It's not Greek to him: LASA junior elected vice president of statewide classics organization

**CAROLINA GOKINGO**  
Staff Writer

LASA junior Cass Plowman was elected first Vice President of the Texas State Junior Classical League, an organization dedicated to the study of Latin and Greek classics. TSJCL hosts annual competitions, which Latin clubs around the world compete in. His main responsibility is helping to organize and run the academic contests for the state convention.

"Cass gave very good speeches, and had several good ideas, including the addition of a Greek language test to State and more service projects, and he had experience from assisting in the organization of his Area competition," David Mann, the President of the TSJCL said.

Plowman ran for the position uncontested. He said he enjoys his new position with the TSJCL, which includes tasks such as pre-ordering and shipping ribbons and trophies to Houston. More specifically, the atmosphere, people and interest make the commitment worthwhile.

"What I enjoy most is that the JCL is such a great community of people," Plowman said. "It is different from any other group that I have seen in how close-knit, enthusiastic, kind and passionate everyone is. I have met some of my closest friends through the JCL, and the environment at JCL conventions is different than anything else I have ever experienced."

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Responsibilities of a Free Student Press: Serving the primary communication link within the Liberal Arts and Science Academy and Lyndon Baines Johnson High Schools and between the school and the local community, this newspaper accepts the responsibilities inherent in being a free press. *The Liberators* 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 Liberators* 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 Liberators* staff will be governed by an editorial board comprised of the following individuals: editors-in-chief, section editors and the business manager.

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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 and Lyndon Baines Johnson High Schools 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 Liberators* is an open forum.

The staff thanks: Kathy Cox, Nancy Allgood, Allison Kramer, Sherri Mycue and Becky and Jim Gduln

# STAFF STANCE

## Texas needs to expand access to free birth control and improve sex education curriculum

Texas isn't keeping up. The teen birthrate in the United States has declined dramatically in the past two decades, dropping an impressive 52 percent from 1991 to 2012 according to the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy. But the birthrate among teenagers in Texas, which is the fifth highest in the country, fell by only 43 percent. There are two major factors to explain this disparity: poor teens in Texas have limited access to healthcare--birth control included--and the state's sex education curriculum is extremely ineffective.

In a positive development, Texas state health agencies did recently announce that a new program will allow teens to receive free birth control. But the policy does not extend to many--only families that make a combined income 200 percent below the federal poverty level (\$4000 a month for a family of four) may qualify. In addition, Texas law mandates that teenagers must get parental permission in order to enter the program and receive birth control. This requirement will likely discourage some teen girls from trying to obtain the free contraception because they don't want their parents to know they are sexually active, which could lead to them getting pregnant. If Texas wants to reduce the cost of unintended pregnancies--a number that totaled 1.1 billion dollars in 2010 due to health care, foster care and lost tax revenue--it is the state's responsibility to make an effort to reduce teen births. With this new program, it seems Texas is at least trying. But there is so much more that can be done.

When faced with a similar problem, Colorado began conducting a six-year experiment to lower the number of unintended births in the state. With private funding from the Susan Thompson Buffett Foundation, Colorado offered free intrauterine devices (IUDs) and birth control implants to women that can prevent pregnancy for years. The results were unprecedented; not only did the teen birth rate drop by 40 percent from 2009 to 2013 according to the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, there was also a decline in the number of births to women under 25 who had not finished high school. With the rate of unplanned pregnancies down, the abortion rate also dropped by 42 percent in Colorado.

The benefits of Colorado's program cannot be denied. But, unfortunately, the private grant that funded it is running dry and the state refuses to subsidize the program, so Colorado is unable to fully continue the initiative. Other states should learn from Colorado, however, and

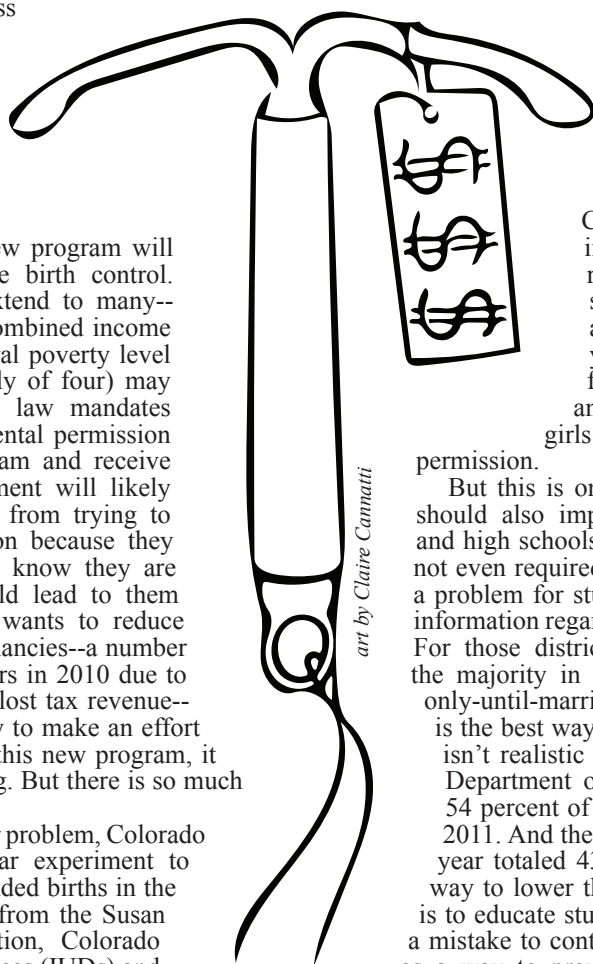
implement similar free birth control programs. Much of Colorado's success is due to the type of contraceptives that were made available. The advantages of IUDs, for example, cannot be understated. According to Planned Parenthood, IUDs are small T-shaped devices inserted into the uterus that can prevent pregnancy for a time period of five to 12 years, which is long enough for women to finish high school and college before having children.

The device and follow-up medical exams can cost up to \$1,000, but if provided for free, they are an extremely effective option for teens and young women. In addition, Colorado offered birth control implants, small matchstick-sized rods that are inserted under the skin of the upper arm and protect against pregnancy for up to three years. Texas needs to provide free birth control, both IUDs and implants, to a wider range of girls without the demand of parental

permission.

But this is only the first step. Texas schools should also improve sex education in middle and high schools. Under Texas law, teachers are not even required to teach sex-ed. This can pose a problem for students who do not learn factual information regarding safe sex from their parents. For those districts that do incorporate sex-ed, the majority in Texas follow strict abstinence-only-until-marriage lessons. While abstinence is the best way to prevent pregnancy, it simply isn't realistic in 2015. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 54 percent of high school students had sex in 2011. And the number of teen births that same year totaled 43,335. With this trend, the only way to lower the teen pregnancy rate in Texas is to educate students about contraceptives. It is a mistake to continue promoting only abstinence as a way to prevent pregnancy when teenagers are already having sex. Schools need to recognize the futility of the current approach and respond by expanding sex-ed curriculum. Students should be taught how to use and obtain different contraceptives along with the knowledge of which types of birth control also prevent the spread of STDs.

As we progress further into the 21st century, Texas needs to start focusing on the issue of unplanned pregnancy. Too many teen girls and young women are having children before they're ready, simply because they do not have access to effective contraception and sex education. But if Texas is able to both imitate Colorado's successful birth control program and improve sex-ed, girls will be able to become parents when they want to.



art by Claire Cannatti



liberated  
minds speak

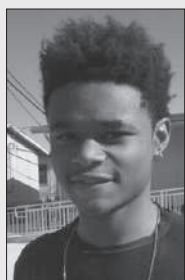
Should minors be able to get prescriptive birth control without parental permission?



### Gabriel Manners

LASA sophomore

I think yes, because it's up to them. If they are planning on having sex that early and they feel that that is what's necessary to make them safe, then they should go for it even without their parents' consent.



### Tony Holmes

LBJ sophomore

I mean, yeah the generation is all [messed] up. Kids are having sex around age 12, now.

### Brayan Delgadillo

LASA sophomore

While parents do have a reason to say no or yes, ultimately it should be up to the kid having the child because it's their body, and they should decide what to do.



### Jada Pickens

LBJ freshman

No. Yes, it's true that birth control is important because it keeps you from getting pregnant, but if you're having sex in the first place, you should tell your mom.



Have an opinion about a new school policy? Have a bone to pick with something the Liberators has published? Anything else on your mind? Write us a letter and drop it off in room 265 or in the boxes in the school offices.

### Praise for wide elective choice

Dear Editor,

I think that one of the best parts of LASA are the different choices in difficulty and subject that people have for all or most of their classes.

— LASA junior  
Ben Deterling

### More focus on college senior year

Dear Editor,

I wish that the first three months of senior English could just be about college and essays.

— LASA senior  
Raina Rahman

### Call for cake

Dear Editor,

I wish I knew where cake club was, so that I can get cake and give away cans to help people.

— LASA freshman  
Garrett Vandebout

### Meager time for makeup work

Dear Editor,

A bit more time for makeup work would be nice. A lot of kids come to school even when they're sick because of how much makeup work they'd have to do.

— LASA senior  
Zennie Wey

# The diary of a full-time LASA student

## Students argue why their current grade is the most difficult at LASA



ANDY DEGRASSE  
Staff Writer

**Ninth** I walk through the doors and look around at the rough, unfamiliar faces. Everyone here seems to be six feet tall with a full blown beard. I've gone from top dog at my old school to a mere chihuahua. I walk into the first class of the day, full of confidence and ready to learn, but the teacher seems to only speak gibberish.

While this was just my experience at LASA, I'm sure other freshmen can relate to me. This is the reality that freshmen must face when they come to high school. Eventually, they adjust to the rigorous schedule at LASA, but not without struggling first. While the academics in ninth grade may not be the most difficult compared to tenth, eleventh and twelfth grade, when you consider how disarming LASA's huge workload would be for a new student, it is easy to see why freshmen have it worst.

Another tough part of being a freshman at LASA is not knowing any of the people in this new environment. While the academics themselves are difficult, it's even harder for a student to take on these new challenges when they may still be forming their social groups. Sometimes friends are the only people that you can really confide in, and it's definitely not healthy to let these things bottle up while juggling everything you need to pass ninth grade.

Something else that people often forget about when they think of freshman year is the signature courses. These are not the blow-off classes that some people consider them to be. SciTech especially can force students to stay up very late, pondering their engineering problem or trying to finish log entries. These courses specialize in certain areas too--if you don't have previous knowledge in InDesign and Photoshop for example, it can be tough to feel comfortable creating a magazine in Ezine. While sophomore year also has signature courses, by then the sophomores are prepared and know what to expect from these classes. These are just some of the reasons why freshman year is the hardest at LASA.



SARAH LUCAS  
Staff Writer

**Tenth** Upon completing my freshman year at LASA, I naively felt like I had conquered some of high school. I thought that surviving one year relatively unscathed meant that I would be able to predict the difficulty of the remaining three. Sophomore year has forced me to face reality. You haven't experienced LASA to the fullest--and the toughest--until sophomore year.

In comparison to the smaller leap from eighth to ninth grade, the jump from freshman to sophomore year is similar to plunging off a cliff. One of the major struggles is the steep escalation in course load from freshman year. For one, sophomore year marks the dawn of AP World History, and for most, it's the first required Advanced Placement course. This course's workload is in stark contrast to ninth grade World Geography, where work generally consists of rare homework and a culminating project per six weeks. Although juniors and seniors typically are loaded with more AP courses, by that point they have taken at least one AP exam before and are accustomed to them. For sophomores, it's a brand new ballgame.

Even sophomore classes without an AP label are still difficult. A typical sophomore's schedule includes an upper-level math class which can range from Algebra II to Calculus, a higher level of their foreign language and the signature courses Planet Earth and Great Ideas.

Another change that comes with sophomore year is a change in expectations. With the entrance of this year's freshman class, I am no longer part of the youngest class.

Freshmen are still somewhat subject to remnants of less strict deadlines and late policies for assignments from middle school, but by sophomore year the jig is up. It's a matter of swimming or sinking by the second year of high school: either you tighten up your time management skills, or be prepared to deal with some serious consequences. These challenges that us sophomores face make 10th grade undoubtedly the hardest at LASA.



QUINN SIMPSON  
Staff Writer

### Eleventh

This morning at 5:45 a.m., I surfaced momentarily from my usual subconscious spelunking and literally rolled my eyes at the prospect of facing another day of junior year. I halfway hoped that the unkind ocular gesture would convince my Very Important AP classes to finally give up on me and find someone else who would flop yielding into the steep-walled academic abyss that is 11th grade at LASA High School.

The thing is, junior year was supposed to be great. At first, I deluded myself into thinking that it actually was, conjuring up the bright-eyed, open-hearted resolve of the enthusiastic learner I will someday pretend to be on my college applications. In defiance of my ingrained cynicism, I organized every single one of my binders with those divider things in the vain hope that they would make me organized as well. I did my homework on the day it was assigned, a habit which was as miraculous as it was short-lived. My solemn resolution to use that little school-issued planner for the entire year was pretty cute. I foolishly believed that I could get everything I wanted out of junior year through sheer force of will.

This facade of sickeningly eager competence sunk, along with my ignorant hopes and dreams, into the bottomless pit of drudgery into which I dutifully dig myself deeper on a daily basis. Fortunately, the block schedule ameliorates this monotonous task somewhat; A day is bad, and B day is worse!

Aren't I being a little dramatic? Absolutely not! Being a junior at LASA is just about the least dramatic experience that could possibly exist. We have all locked our souls into tiny soundproof boxes because it's quite distracting to feel anything at all when you're about to begin your third hour of homework in one sitting.

I will concede that freshmen and sophomores also have to stomach this entirely desiccating experience, but I also contend that junior year is much worse because the once distant spectre of college suddenly becomes suffocatingly real, interjecting doubt into our lives at every turn. We fear taking risks. We fear screwing up, not out of some immature compulsion to appear perfect but because we suddenly cannot afford to. Junior year is when our eyes are finally opened to the rest of our lives, and the outlook is grim.



graphic by Claire Cannatti



ELIZA CAIN  
Commentary Editor

### Twelfth

"You're going to flunk out of college with those study habits."

This marks the fifth time this week my mother has predicted my apparently dismal future. So okay, I

admit that I procrastinate on my homework, and maybe sometimes I wait to study for tests until the day before, but I'm not doing it on purpose. I'm just busy (as in, extremely busy), and like most LASA seniors, I've been finding it almost impossible to get everything done.

I know junior year has that reputation as the dreaded "AP year", but I think senior year beats junior year by a long shot. The equation is simple: a full load of AP courses plus quickly approaching college application deadlines equals frequent emotional breakdowns. Applying to college is like a part-time job, but the payoff is in the distant future, and it may not even come at all.

And teachers aren't exactly forgiving about the whole "college" thing. In just this week, I've had a Biology test, a Psychology quiz and four European History essay responses, not to mention other assignments in English and Economics. Plus, as commentary editor this year, I'm simultaneously trying to get my section done for the newspaper and turn in an Early Decision application. On top of all that, senior year is when students start taking major leadership roles. If you're like me, you're probably the president of a club which means you have to send out emails and plan meetings.

All I'm going to say is that I've almost mastered the art of multitasking as a senior. No, I still can't watch Netflix while I do homework, but I have learned how to make the most of my time. For starters, I composed most of this article in my head while doing the three-man weave at basketball practice. And the college center is my second home; I eat my lunches there, hunched over a computer, finishing homework or college essays.

I'm not saying that freshman, sophomore and junior year aren't hard; they are, without a doubt. But to all you non-seniors, as someone who's survived three years at LASA and is (somewhat) surviving the fourth, I can confidently say it gets worse. This may sound depressing, but at least I have spring of senior year to look forward to. It's reported to be the most relaxing time at LASA.

## A living wage



CLARA MORSE  
Staff Writer

Minimum wage was implemented in America in 1930 as a living wage. Franklin D. Roosevelt said that "no business which depends for existence on paying less than living wages to its workers has any right to continue in this country... By living wages, I mean more than the bare subsistence level -- I mean the wages of a decent living."

Today, millions of workers across the United States are not able to obtain a bare subsistence level with a minimum wage job. The Texas minimum wage is only \$7.25. The cost of living in Austin has skyrocketed in recent years. In order for a single adult working 40 hours a week to be able to afford housing, food, healthcare and other necessities, an hourly wage of over \$10 is required, and that number can skyrocket to over \$20 an hour if there are children in the household, according to MIT. Across the United States, prices for necessities like housing and food have been going up, while the minimum wage remains unchanged. Texas needs to raise the minimum wage to at least \$12 because this would help to support hardworking people who work minimum wage jobs as well as bolster the economy.

People who would be impacted by a minimum wage raise are not generally teenagers, as is typically argued by those against a raise. In fact, in Texas, only around 3 percent of those who would benefit from a minimum wage increase to \$10.10 are teens. Over 60 percent of minimum wage workers are 25 to 54 years old and around half of them have families with children, according to the Center for Public Policy Priorities. The people we are talking about are not upper-class teens working for pocket money; they are working age adults with families to and

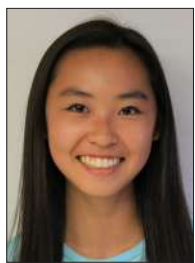
children to provide for.

If the minimum wage was raised, businesses would have to spend more on their employees. However, the negative effect of a higher minimum wage on businesses is overexaggerated. Price increases in most chain stores, such as McDonalds or Target, would be under 5% for the most part. Walmart would only have to increase its overall prices by about 1% to compensate for spending additional money on employees. And that is setting aside the money that businesses would gain because of lower turnover rates. Minimum wage jobs are not typically held for long periods of time, partially because of the extremely low pay, and academic research has shown that when minimum wage is raised, turnover rates decrease, which lowers training costs and additional expenses incurred by having short-term employees. Many people who earn minimum wage shop at stores and restaurants that also pay their employees minimum wage, so this would return money to these businesses.

Overall, raising the minimum wage would inject hundreds of thousands of dollars into the economy over time. Giving more money to the people who spend the least is an excellent way to provide a boost to the economy as they will likely spend much of that money on things like food and housing, not including reductions in welfare, according to the United States Department Of Labor. Seven billion dollars in welfare assistance was provided to families of fast food workers between 2007 and 2011. A higher minimum wage would drastically reduce that number.

A minimum wage raise in Texas is an excellent idea. There are 361,000 Texans working minimum wage jobs, and many of them are on welfare. The minimum wage should be raised in order to support them. Raising the minimum wage would help to boost the economy, and the businesses raising their wages would mostly be able to subsidize the cost through minor price hikes and an increased revenue. What are we waiting for?

## Student changes opinion on companies that benefit society



OLIVIA TUNG  
Staff Writer

I used to think people bought TOMS solely for the purpose of style and wearing a shoe that's trendy. I thought they were ugly and that, for the quality of the shoe, they were super overpriced.

With the ultra-thin arch support and canvas material, I was certain that I would never like them, let alone buy a pair.

But after hearing more and more people talk about their famous "One for One" slogan and learning TOMS' backstory, I felt so ignorant to judge this company so quickly.

Yes, even though I thought TOMS weren't the most fashionable shoe on the market, their purpose was enough to convince me to buy not one, but two pairs. For every product bought, TOMS gives a pair of shoes to someone in need. The one-for-one concept convinced me to help and support this business, just like it supports others.

But some people who do not support businesses like TOMS say that donating products to developing countries won't solve problems in the long run. According to blogger Johnathan Favini, it promotes a view of developing countries as helpless.

I don't think the people receiving these donations should be viewed as helpless. Companies such as TOMS are only trying to help others and promote awareness. Yoobi, a school supply brand that donates school supplies to classrooms in need, supports education in under-developed areas through its donations. It is impossible for countries in poverty

to develop quickly, but companies like TOMS and Yoobi can help expedite that process. Once people affected by these donations are living in better conditions, they will be able to make changes and develop quicker, therefore creating long-term benefits for their entire communities.

Not all companies that donate to a worthy cause are one-for-one. California-based Pura Vida Bracelets, for example, directly benefits workers making its jewelry. For every bracelet purchased, it provides full-time jobs for local Costa Rican artisans. Through this business model, TOMS, Yoobi and Pura Vida Bracelets have benefited many people. According to TOMS, since the company started seven years ago, over 45 million shoes have been donated to 70 countries. Yoobi, has 30 resource centers set up around the United States and over 200

hospital school programs have received donated school supply packages. Pura Vida Bracelets has expanded from two men peddling bracelets on a Costa Rican street to a booming business that now provides 85 other jobs for members of their community.

TOMS, Yoobi and Pura Vida are only a few companies that give back to society by selling unique merchandise. Though I made a quick uninformed judgement about TOMS and other socially conscious businesses in the past, I've realized what an impact I can make with the help of these businesses. All it takes is a bracelet or a pair of shoes or a new school supply to start a chain reaction to help support communities that need it most. So next time you see me walking down the hallway wearing my comfy TOMS, please don't judge me so quickly. In fact, consider buying yourself a pair and feeling good knowing that a child halfway across the world will be receiving one too.



graphic by Claire Cannatti

# Growing up biracial, accepting dual heritage



ALIA SHAUKAT  
Staff Writer

clothes typically consisting of pants and a long shirt. Our family stuck out like a sore thumb.

We always looked like two different families from two different cultures. My father came to America when he was 17, a budding engineer with grades that were (surprisingly) higher than his '80s hair. His story is one of many immigrants, where his parents sacrificed most of their time, money and energy on the education and well-being of their children. My mother's tale is a different one, growing up in the sizzling southern climate of Houston, Texas. Her high school years were filled with low expectations and "Grease"-esque boys with unnatural amounts of gel worked through the length of their hair. Despite their incredibly contrasting backgrounds, my parents' paths intertwined when they both enrolled at Texas Tech, located in the dusty college town of Lubbock.

Growing up in the South always seemed to be a gamble. In the movies, the South was always this magical place with dimly lit diners and old men sitting on their porches at 6 a.m. smoking cigars. But in reality, there is the South with Confederate flags that fly high and prejudices that run deeper than oil wells. I remember our day trips as a family to those small towns in Texas that my father never came to. I remember that even a wrong glance toward our mixed family could sometimes be fatal, with eyes that could cut into our throats like glass and with voices that were dripping with disgust. Not having my father by my side for the few trips seemed so unfair. Whenever I would bother my mother with questions about it, she would look away and keep her mouth shut tight, almost as if she was afraid that her stories of ugly people with ugly words would poison me.

Despite the struggles that are packaged into hailing from two completely different cultures, the good has always been crystal clear to me. When I was little, I used to watch my father cooking; he would lean over the counter, his forearms dusted in colorful spices, with

heavy language rolling off his tongue. I always liked to listen when my father spoke in Urdu; I would hide under the table and close my eyes, waiting for a word or two of English to slip into his conversation. Whenever my name was spoken, I would crawl out from under the wooden table on all fours, dust clinging to my knees and repeatedly beg to know the context.

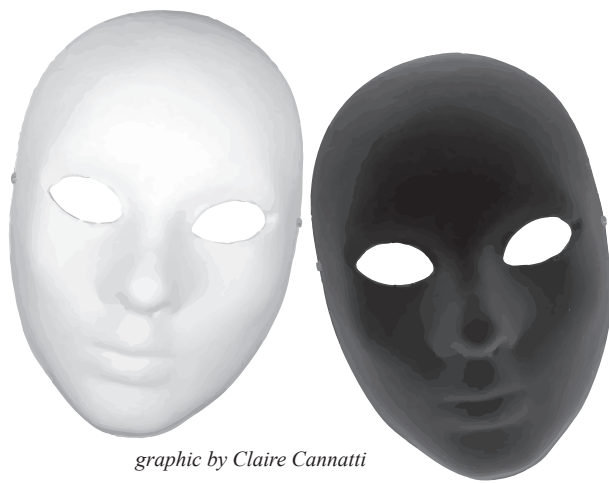
With my mother, Thanksgiving was a time of football, feasts and family. Our holidays were the postcard of "A Perfect American Celebration." Christmas season held smoky fires in the fireplace and warm mugs of 2,000-calorie hot cocoa to contrast the barely shiver-worthy winters. Whenever I spent time with my mom's side of the family, I felt chills run through my spine at the picture of this lily-white family, a spitting image of a Macy's catalog. I would think back to my family in Pakistan, shivering in their inadequate home heating systems, and I would imagine what life would be like if we were all together on the holidays.

We most definitely didn't need a heating system on the hot day we arrived in Pakistan. Having gathered our bags, we went to my father's uncle's home. I was in the middle of meeting the other half of my family for the first time when it occurred to me that we were no better than liars. I was a liar. There we were, drinking chai and speaking through smiles and the few words we shared. It seemed unfair to this part of me to pretend to be someone else. I was posing as this sweet, innocent Muslim girl with a traditional headdress and

sweltering clothes while I knew that these people who I met only three minutes ago would consider me a heretic if they saw the way I dressed in the U.S. I thought about my friends and family in America, and how they wouldn't understand if I dressed with a head covering every day. I thought about how they would assume I was oppressed and being forced into dressing a certain way.

There is an ongoing power struggle between two sides of my DNA. It's simple: I am either a "good" Christian girl who goes to bed on time and kisses her mother's cheek every night or I am a "good" Muslim girl who keeps her head covered and never talks back to her elders. This is when it occurred to me that no matter who I tried to be, I would never live up to the legacy of either side of my great family tree.

There might be some bad days where I feel unaccepted by both cultures, but after those days, there are always the hope of better days. Together, as a global society, we need to become more accepting of each other. Bi-racial marriages are beautiful and they have a lot to offer and one day, I hope my family in Pakistan, as well as my family in the U.S. realize that. Despite the problems packaged into my heritage, I am proud of being biracial and I am proud of who I am.



graphic by Claire Cannatti

# White nationalism rising



EMMA JANE HOPPER  
Staff Writer

likeminded wait in fear of 2044, going as far as proposing the building of literal walls on our borders in an attempt to prevent the Non-White-Armageddon. This newly minted edition of an old phobia is called White Nationalism. It's the idea that people of European descent are separate, a collection of their own. White nationalists believe in the White Nation, a group composed of only Caucasians. Not all white people are white nationalists, of course. However, all white people are under attack as we approach 2044, according to white nationalists.

Other races in this country have been living with minority status, subject to oppression, racial profiling and stereotyping. Perhaps the white nationalists are just worried they might finally get what they previously meted out once whites become the minority. Perhaps that's the reason they seem blind to the fact that it's never just black and white, especially not with races. Our country has historically been called a "melting pot," and the non-whites are varied, despite how some like to group them all together.

We've all heard the statistics: by the year 2044 whites in America will not be the majority. Donald Trump and his

Non-Hispanic white people will, as a group, still be larger than other groups as we approach 2044. So what's the worry? If anything, we should be attempting to integrate with the changing times, rather than moving to whiter neighborhoods in whiter towns.

Discouraging whiter neighborhoods, however, is "white genocide" according to the White Genocide Project, which warns of the extinction of Caucasian peoples. "The unabated influx of immigrants to [our country], has the effect of

context and then juxtaposed next to the 'forced' diversity of majority white culture by the organization, saying white people are under the same fire as the Tibetans. This is how the White Genocide Project justifies the idea that people of European descent ought to group themselves together, closed off from the world. "Because I love all races, especially my own, I am willing to fight to ensure the existence of all races into the future, especially my own," says a user on stormfront.org, a white pride site.

White nationalists are racist. There's no other way to put it. They're worried about losing their ability to control. They feed off of racial turmoil and injustices, fearing the Judgement Day of repercussions for their ancestral actions. Perhaps they should be scared. When other groups truly hold the majority, perhaps formerly oppressive citizens will finally be held accountable.

White Nationalism is regression of the human psyche in response to a progressive culture and nothing more. We as the progressive culture must not treat these ideas as any sort of rationale or else lyrics like "When the Afroman walked through the white land, houses went up for sale!" will never stop appearing with the biting clarity of a painful truth. It's up to reasonable citizens to stop that, to squash the message of white nationalism. We cannot allow racism to seem acceptable and commonplace. We will destroy it by fostering respect between all races. Long live America, land of the diverse and equal.



art by Claire Cannatti

overwhelming [our] distinct cultural and religious identity and reducing [my people] to an insignificant minority in their own country [and] amounts to a policy of cultural genocide," says the Dalai Lama, according to the White Genocide Project. This quote is taken out of



## Small Talk

### Fictional love: why we adore made-up characters



EVA STRELITZ-BLOCK  
Staff Writer

Have you ever finished a book and felt a deep sense of loss, like you have had to let go of a new best friend? Or perhaps you wrap up your final episode of a TV show, following a massive Netflix binge and feel empty inside? The next day you STILL feel like something is missing. Why is it that fictional characters start to mean so much to us?

I am no Taylor Swift Super Fan, but I understand why she named her two cats Olivia and Meredith, after Meredith Grey and Olivia Benson, the lead characters from Grey's Anatomy and Law & Order: SVU. I'm sure, like me, she grew attached. Meredith and Olivia are real to her, and she feels a need to keep them with her. Like many fans, perhaps Taylor Swift wants to embody the moxie, spirit and determination of her favorite fictional characters.

Like Taylor Swift, I too am a Meredith Grey and Olivia Benson fan. One of my favorite TV shows of ALL TIME is Grey's Anatomy, and I remember when the season ended last year and (spoiler alert) Derek died. I was so sad that I started to cry. I realized that I had shadowed the characters' lives for 11 seasons, and I was so attached to them that I was having a hard time letting go. Before season 12 began this fall, I actually counted down the days until I could reconnect with Meredith Grey and Alex Karev again. I know, pathetic, right? For a while, I admired Meredith Grey, a TV surgeon, so much that I decided that I wanted to be a surgeon one day. Unfortunately, I have realized that I cannot stand the sight of blood or guts, which might make that career path very challenging.

The connections I feel to the characters explain why I often feel pangs of "separation anxiety" when a book or television series draws closer to its conclusion. When watching a TV show, my tendency to get attached to the characters is exacerbated by the opportunities currently available to "binge watch" TV series: Netflix, Hulu and Amazon to name a few. Binge watching has become a way of life; it is how people today tend to consume entertainment. Once you go Netflix, it is hard to go back to waiting a week or more for the next episode, the next chapter of the stories you are following.

Another fictional inspiration of mine and one of my favorite TV characters ever is Leslie Knope, the strong, smart, hilarious, and super positive main character of Parks and Recreation. If only Leslie Knope were in charge. No doubt she could resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; she could bring peace to the Middle East; I bet she could even reunite North and South Korea with the sheer force of her good will and optimistic attitude.

I think I crave this instant Netflix access because books and TV shows are a way to escape real life and instead to live the life of someone else for a while. Maybe they allow me to try on the courage others possess. Or perhaps I am able to imagine possibilities for myself that seem a little outrageous. Sometimes I can even go down roads other characters pursue — that I would never venture down myself. My fictional attachments allow me to experience struggles and joys that leave me excited for my own adventures to come.

### Mystery of scholastic space-time continuum



LENI MILLIKEN  
Staff Writer

As I sit in World History class at the end of the second six weeks of my sophomore year, I wonder how it is possible for life to move by so fast—even as we still have one more week in the semester. My teacher's voice sounds slow and drawn out, the way a piece of warm taffy looks as a taffy-puller stretches it thin. The lights seem to dim further, and my face rests in my hands. My eyes slowly shut as I get pulled further into the scholastic space-time continuum, the phenomenon in which every class period moves so slow while simultaneously time in general flies by.

Every school day seems to drone on and on. I watch the clock, do a worksheet, watch the clock, read a book, turn back to the clock, and there are still 20 minutes until lunch. By the time I walk into my 4th period newspaper class, my feet drag and my backpack is 10 pounds heavier. Every day, I go through the same routine looking forward to jumping back into my cozy bed. The thought of this reunion helps me push through until the moment when I can finally rest my tired brain. But when I am tucked into bed and reliving my day, I can't help but think "What would happen if I took some time to enjoy the little moments instead of only looking forward to the part when I'm finished with everything?"

Noticing the processes you go through often makes an experience so much more enjoyable. Though, somehow it is still so hard for people to enjoy the process of life. Life seems to fly by when you look back at times so many years ago, but only a few of us take the time to enjoy how slow our day by day routine moves.

My school days are full of laughs, like when my friend falls off the picnic table at lunch, and crazy new solutions, like to a proposed problem in a history debate that I have never even considered. But only if I'm in the right mindset. Without being present in every moment, I wouldn't notice these important little anecdotes that can teach me lessons for the future. The day might seem like it's moving slowly in the moment, but by the end of the week, everyone is thinking "Wasn't it Monday just yesterday?" Every moment has to be treasured because that's the only way you can enjoy life as a whole. Being present in your daily life can help time move a little faster when you want it to and slow down when you don't want the day to be over. Maybe we can't time travel and maybe students will always be stuck in this scholastic time-depleter, but that doesn't mean we can't enjoy it.

## Thumbs Up

Cough drops  
Hotline Bling  
Early Action  
Therapy dogs  
The Martian



LASA sophomore Kyle O'Rourke



Mono  
Slow Wi-fi  
Paper cuts  
Late nights  
Reverse Evacuation



## Thumbs Down

## Commissioner looks to spend time with family, steps down

On Oct. 15, Texas Education Commissioner Michael Williams announced that he was stepping down from his position. Williams has worked in Texas politics for 16 years and will remain in his position until the end of the year.

"While carrying out my responsibilities, I have kept my house in Arlington and managed to maintain a long-distance partnership with my wife," Williams wrote in his resignation letter to Gov. Greg Abbott. "But after more than 16 years of weekend commuting, I feel it is finally time to simply head home."

Williams said that he has no plans for the future, besides spending more time with his wife. After working in Texas politics as the Texas Railroad Commissioner from 1999 to 2012, Gov. Perry selected him for the position of Texas Education Commissioner. He said that he enjoyed his productive time as Commissioner.

"I hope during the course of my tenure as Commissioner, the Texas Education Agency worked to provide some level of flexibility to school districts," Williams said. "[Our goal], whenever possible and within our power, [is] to strengthen instruction for students across the state."

Williams also said that throughout his tenure as Commissioner he worked to ensure as many students as possible make it through primary and secondary school to prepare them for life after high school.

"That's the goal—to prepare every student for whatever they choose to do beyond high school, whether that's pursuing a college degree, securing a job in the workplace or serving our country in the military," Williams said. "Although there are never any guarantees, a strong education is always a good first step in achieving whatever it is [that students] want to do."

## New AISD cameras [bus]t unlawful drivers at bus stops

Every day 400 buses transport about 20,000 students to and from school in the Austin Independent School District (AISD). A few years ago, the AISD Transportation Department began installing three point seat belts in their newer buses, and last year they added advertisements to the sides of some buses. This year's additions are stop arm camera systems. AISD Bus Transportation Director Chris Hafezi said the goal of this new addition is to keep students safer when boarding and exiting the bus by giving real consequences to drivers that ignore the bus's stop sign.

"The bus stop arm camera program will capture a video of the vehicle's license plate that may violate the law and pass our buses while the stop arm goes out," Hafezi said. "The whole idea is to reduce the number of violators and help to improve student safety."

AISD partnered with American Traffic Solutions to add these camera systems to 300 buses, which will be used in all 230 routes in the district. Hafezi said as Austin has grown, the number of drivers passing school bus stop signs has also grown. These cameras will always be recording when the stop arm is out. Right now, AISD police officers patrol bus stops in order to keep students safe and watch out for those who violate the law. Even with the added cameras, AISD police will still be patrolling to help ensure the safety of students when they get on or off of a bus. According to LASA security guard Ray Ephraim, it is a good idea to have both the police and the cameras; what one misses the other will likely catch.

"I think it's good to have something that is proactive and not reactive, something before anything else happens or somebody [gets] run over by a car," Ephraim said. "So I think [the cameras] will [help]."

Currently, there is a pilot program in which AISD buses are being equipped with cameras. According to AISD's Twitter account, there were 60 violations a day of cars passing these buses when its red lights were flashing. If a car passes a bus with its stop arm out once the cameras are attached, the driver will be sent a \$300 citation. This is up from the previous penalty of \$200 for the same violation. According to Hafezi, the more people receive the citations, the less likely they will be to pass the bus while the sign is out, and the safer the students will be. The money earned from these citations will be split between American Traffic Solutions and AISD. Ephraim said she thinks this should be enough of an incentive to keep people from passing the bus.

"If the proper consequences are in place I think it will work," Ephraim said. "If they receive some consequences, they will realize 'Oh I got a ticket I should not do that again.' Nowadays if you get a ticket you also have to pay a surcharge. That makes a difference."

LASA bus driver Ashley Rianess thinks it will be a while before people stop passing the buses, because the cameras are very small and not noticeable.

"I don't think they will notice it," Rianess said. "It does not stop them."

While AISD is in the process of adding the cameras, they are also improving the live GPS systems that have been in place since 2009. American Traffic Solutions has a new software for AISD, according to Hafezi, that will automatically connect to the routing software and give bus dispatchers a more accurate view of the traffic in Austin.

"It helps our schedulers make sure routes and stops are created in a more effective and efficient manner," Hafezi said.

With the new GPS system, there will also be an option for AISD to purchase an app from the GPS company. The app will show real time arrival times of the buses to the student's stop, so that students and parents will know if the bus has been delayed, or what time to pick their kids up at. The app has not yet been built, and Hafezi said it's still unknown if the district will purchase the new app or not.



Bottom center shows the new camera put in place to catch cars who illegally pass stopped AISD buses. photo by Mateen Kontoravdis

stories by Clara Morse & Mateen Kontoravdis

# Yasmin Wagner appointed interim District 7 representative, runs for Board of Trustees

BETHANY BISSELL  
Staff Writer

Yasmin Wagner was appointed to the Austin Independent School District (AISD) Board of Trustees to represent District 7 on Sep. 28. District 7 includes the Bowie High School vertical team. Wagner said that she had always wanted to work in education.

"Since I was a teenager, I was really interested in issues involving women and children and families," Wagner said. "When I became a parent and had my own children, I became involved with the schools at the campus level, with the PTA."

Until Nov. 8, Trustee Wagner will fill the vacancy left by the death of Robert Schneider in July. The District 2 trustee Rev. Dr. Jayme Mathias said that she has had large shoes to fill because Mathias was a good trustee.

Trustee

Robert Schneider [was] a great advocate for the Liberal Arts & Sciences Academy," Schneider said. "I respected him greatly for his advocacy for our students and their families"

Wagner has been involved in AISD organizations since her children entered school. She began at the campus level with the PTA. She later became involved in organizations

such as the Boundary Advisory Committee, which determines school zone boundaries, and the UpClose program, which allows parents and community members to look at programs and the infrastructure of features of the district.

"During the appointment process she consistently spoke with knowledge about a large variety of issues that affect District 7 and the school district as a whole," Board of Trustees Vice President and District 5 trustee Amber Elenz said. "She has vast experience working with nonprofits around Austin, many of whom focus on school, student, family and education issues. She also brings communication talents and expertise to our conversations and work. I am happy that District 7 voters again have a strong voice on the Board."

When a representative's term ends before an election, the board can decide if they want to hold an election or formulate an appointment process. In this case, the board decided to appoint.

"We took applications, and those requirements were the same as if they were running to be elected," District 4 trustee Julie Cowan said. "And then we set up the process and that was to have the three community meetings in District 7. We interviewed the candidates and people could come and listen. Following that, we got together and discussed what we heard from the candidates, Yasmin and Daniel Sump."

Since the board does not have the power to appoint someone for a full term, Wagner only fills the vacancy until the next election, in Nov. 2016. This is when the voters in District 7 will vote to fill the position. Wagner said her main goal for her term was to create effective

communication between the district and the community.

"I would like to establish more effective and regular dialogue and communication between AISD and the community," Wagner said. "My hope is that in doing so, the community will have a greater sense of awareness of the issues affecting their schools, AISD will have a better understanding of the community's needs and

concerns, and a greater sense of trust will be established between the two. She said she hopes that this will create awareness in the community about the needs of the schools, and in the schools about the needs of the community. She believes that this will create a greater sense of trust between the two organizations.

"I plan to be a present and accessible trustee," Wagner said. "For me this means regularly spending time at every campus, hearing directly from the community and bringing facts and current information to every discussion. I truly want to know what's on the mind of every member of my community so that I can be a strong representative and advocate."

**Wagner's Goals in Office**

- Address Overcrowding**  
Implement smart, measured, and proactive solutions to address overcrowded schools including setting a timeline for a decision on a new South high school.
- Give Our Community A Voice**  
Build an effective and transparent community engagement model that reaches families at a campus and community level, allowing for true dialogue and community building.
- Support Educators**  
Prioritize competitive teacher pay, allow more time for meaningful professional development and partner with teachers to create effective curriculum and policy.
- Work For Smart Budget Solutions**  
Identify funding strategies and collaboration with the city, county and community organizations to find new avenues for learning and development without sacrificing.

graphic by Claire Cannatti

## AISD sees decrease in public school enrollment

JORGE VILLA & SAM ZERN  
Staff Writer & Ed-in-Chief

This year the Austin Independent School District (AISD) started to see a trend that began in 2013: the number of students who are enrolled in AISD has started to decrease. They have predicted that this trend is going to continue until 2018 and that they will lose about 4,000 students by 2024. Assistant Director of AISD Planning Services Beth Wilson said that a number of factors have contributed to the

"If you look at the population as a whole, there's a couple of reasons why enrollment is declining," Wilson said. "One is a decline in birth rates during the recession. There were fewer children born during the recession, so fast forward five years, there were fewer children available to enroll in pre-k and kindergarten. So that's one. Two is cost of housing in Austin has increased substantially and a lot of our families with school age children are moving out of the area to access more affordable housing. And then the third is a greater competition from charter schools and from private schools."

Though AISD will be experiencing an overall decrease in student enrollment, some schools will

experience overpopulation and others will experience under enrollment. As part of their facilities master plan process the district will be meeting with the campus advisory councils of schools that are over enrolled, at above 125 percent, or under enrolled, at less than 75 percent, to decide how the community will tackle the problem.

"We can do boundary changes between schools, so if there's a school that's overcapacity in close proximity to a school that's under enrolled then we can move that boundary and that can help," Wilson said. "Sometimes we can take a grade level and move the whole grade level to another campus, like sometimes we do that with our pre-k students, we'll take them to an early child center. Or we can add capacity to a campus through a bond. We could build additional classrooms to a campus if they can accommodate that or we can we build new schools."

There are some drawbacks to this approach, as change can be hard and boundary shifts can be disruptive to families. However, Wilson said that past changes have been successful.

"We did a boundary change between Wooten Elementary and Wooldridge Elementary," Wilson said. "Wooten was at 156% of their capacity, so they were really full. We took a section off and assigned it to Wooldridge which was at 88% capacity. It was about 100 kids, so that brought Wooten's enrollment down. Wooten was at 156%, we brought them down to 133% which was still high, but better. Wooldridge was at 88% and that brought them up to

and in the community," Clark said.

According to Wilson, the enrollment issues tend to happen mostly at the elementary levels, when schools have less flexibility in their scheduling and building use.

"[Crowding issues are] more focused at the elementary level," Wilson said. "When you get to the middle and high school level. There are so many more things that a principal can do in terms of scheduling classrooms that help to offset some of those challenges. At the elementary level, you were in your elementary class all day long. In middle school and high school because you change every period, they can schedule things so that they're using the building more effectively."

Under enrollment can hurt the school funding, which is based on student population. All schools have to pay for certain fixed assets, like principal and associate principal salaries, as well as basic building maintenance expenditures such as water and power bills.

"The funding is based on the number of students that are enrolled in a school, but there are some fixed costs that every school has," Wilson said. "If you have fewer children in that school this makes it less efficient to run."

[The] cost of housing in Austin has increased substantially and a lot of our families... are moving out of the area.

-Assistant Director of AISD Planning Services Beth Wilson

97%. So it didn't completely solve the problem for Wooten but it helped a great deal."

Bradley Clark, the Academy Director at the LBJ high school, said that although AISD is losing students, LBJ enrolled 115 new students.

"We have enrolled since school started, approximately 115 new students in our building so they can make as many projections as they want but they can't account for the movement that we have here in AISD

**AISD**

fewer families with small children live in AISD because of housing price increases

reductions have been at Pre-K and Kindergarten levels in past years

charter schools provide increased competition

some areas will still be overcrowded while some will be under-enrolled

2015 student population expected to decrease by 4043 by 2024

vs. charter public

AISD AISD

graphic by Claire Cannatti

# State Standard

*continued from page 1*

Clark said that though LBJ used to be a school that needed improvement, if the test scores continue in this upward direction, LBJ will no longer be an improvement required school. This will allow more freedom within the LBJ administration.

"There will be less oversight of us, not to say that they will just leave us alone, but when it is an improvement required school, there is a great deal of oversight," Clark said. "You have different agencies and levels that you are accountable to and you have to hold a lot of data and documentation and improvement plans... If we are able to maintain our direction, which I am confident we will, we kind of get a little more autonomy back."

Once LBJ gains more autonomy, Clark said that he wants to offer a greater variety of electives to LBJ students.

"Our elective offerings are just not what we want them to be to provide students with a holistic and enriching learning experience," Clark said. "We [tried] to eliminate our electives because we had to bring our class size down for our teacher-to-student ratio so that our teaching was more one-on-one. We would love to offer more electives."

Additionally, according to Clark, if LBJ can continue to pass the state standards, teachers will have more freedom in their curriculum to teach what they want.

"I think that we are so focused on improving scores that I know a lot of our teachers, a lot of the team, feel like they are not able to teach more to what they want," Clark said. "We don't teach to the test but we do have to focus on that at times and teachers would like a bit more teaching autonomy and I know that frustrates them."

Henry said that she is proud of her students and the hard work they demonstrate daily. According to Henry, in the past, index four (postsecondary readiness), was always a struggle for graduating students. Now having met all four indices, Henry said that it is exciting to finally achieve postsecondary readiness.

"I think you have to have the will and the skill and at the end of the day it's all about the work you put in," Henry said. "It's not just about hard work, there's also effort because if you put effort into everything you do, you can

do a better job at it, and I think our kids really believe in themselves and their capabilities because they could have been doing this every year, not just this year... For me it's just postsecondary readiness was one of the big deals."

Even though LBJ reached its academic state standard this year, other schools considered academically unacceptable will face new oversight under House Bill 1842 passed on June 19, 2015. House Bill 1842 states that any public school in a "district of innovation" school district that has received an academically unsuccessful performance rating for two consecutive years will face intervention and sanction by the state. Austin Independent School District (AISD) Executive Director of the Office of Accountability and Assessment Debra Reedy said that under this new law, school districts are in danger of losing

**What works is getting a great principal and some great teachers and also getting the community to rise around the school.**

-AISD Chief Officer for Teaching and Learning Edmund Oropez

control over individual schools to the state.

"As we understand the new law, if a single school were to be rated academically unacceptable for [two] consecutive years, the commissioner must either appoint a board of managers to govern the entire district or close the school," Reedy said. "Given the instability of the state's accountability system, with changes to passing standards, test versions, index targets and accountability indicators each year as we continue transition to new system based on the STAAR assessment, we do think that this law could potentially give the state too much control over local school districts."

According to Reedy, this new law will not have any major changes in the way AISD has dealt with academically unacceptable schools in the past.

"The new law formalizes the requirement of including parents, the community and other stakeholders in the development of plans to improve a struggling school," Reedy said. "AISD has always considered it a best practice

to engage the entire school community in these decisions, so it will not have a big impact on our current practices."

AISD Chief Officer for Teaching and Learning Edmund Oropez said that he is not in favor of the management team concept in the new law and would prefer the provision be taken out of the law.

"In my opinion, parts of the bill are really good, but it makes it very difficult when you talk about putting a management team over struggling schools," Oropez said. "That doesn't ever really work in my opinion."

However, aside from the provision regarding the management team, Reedy said that there are positive aspects of the law that she supports. She said that she likes the community engagement piece of the new law because students, parents, teachers and the school community are most likely to have the best ideas about how a struggling school can be turned around.

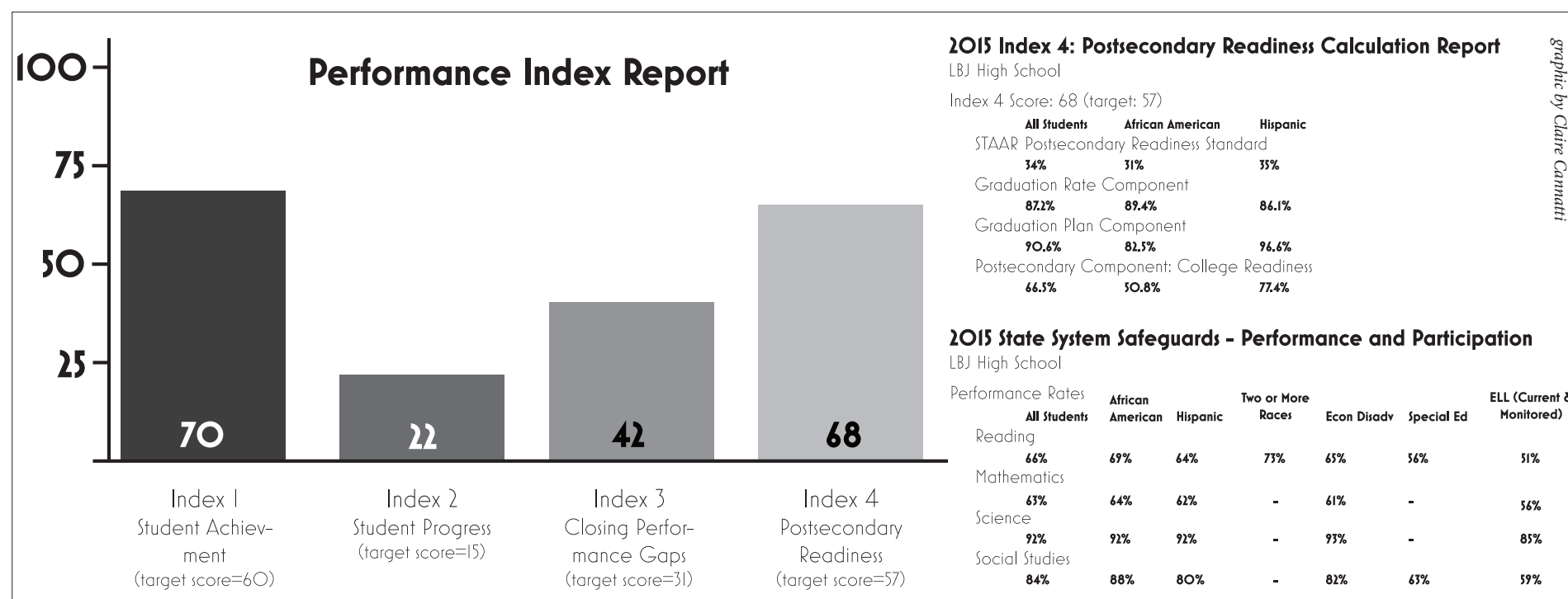
"In the past, schools identified as low performing for two consecutive years were required to develop a reconstitution plan that outlines significant changes to instructional programs and that had to be implemented in the following year regardless of whether or not the school met performance standards," Reedy said. "The new bill replaces the reconstitution plan with a turnaround plan. The turnaround plan also calls for significant changes to instructional programs, but the difference is that the turnaround plan can be withdrawn if the school is not rated academically unacceptable for a third consecutive year."

According to Oropez, the turnaround plan is similar to the reconstitution plan that AISD has already implemented into numerous school and seen positive results.

"What works is getting a great principal and some great teachers and also getting the community to rise around the school," Oropez said. "That formula has been proven to be really successful. We've seen that at Reagan, we've seen that at East Side, we've seen that at LBJ, we've seen that at Gus Garcia and also Bertha Sadler Means. So I'm more interested in turn-arounds built on those purposes."

Though Oropez says that there are pros to the new law such as student, parent and community engagement, there are also serious cons that must be considered.

"The cons [are] that management, that state level management, would look over the district and look over the schools and that's the part that I am just not in favor of at all..." Oropez said. "You lose local control, and then you have people from the state running the local schools, your local administrators and your local school boards."



## Re[constructing] MoPac

GUS ALBACH  
Staff Writer

A sea of red lights glare ahead as cars slowly trickle forward. Cars flick on their turn signals, trying to cut in before the lane closes. Behind cement barriers, workers shovel dirt and concrete into wheelbarrows. Bright lights shine from above, illuminating the dull asphalt and tire marks. Although at the moment the construction is causing traffic, once it is completed traffic should flow easily.

MoPac, a highway that runs north and south in West Austin, has been undergoing construction since Apr. 2013. The project, which has a budget of \$204 million, will add landscape features, sound walls and express lanes with the end goal of reducing traffic to cope with the growing population of Austin. According to the MoPac Project Director of Community Relations Steve Pustelnyk, the project is expected to finish in 2016, but could continue in some places into 2017 due to landscaping issues.

"[The construction] will provide some congestion relief for all drivers," Pustelnyk said. "It will provide a new and improved travel option with predictable travel times for people who ride the bus, vanpool or choose to use the express lane."

The construction will add a new lane in each direction. This new lane, known as an express lane, will be separated from the rest of the lanes by white plastic poles. Pustelnyk said the new lane will be especially helpful for public transportation vehicles. With a less congested lane to drive in, commuting times for buses should drop.

"[The express lanes] are intended to provide predictable travel times and reduce or eliminate travel delays for express buses, vanpools, emergency vehicles and individual drivers who have an important, time-sensitive trip to make," Pustelnyk said. "They are likely to increase express bus ridership and serve as a critical piece of the region's public transit system."

The project will add sound walls along neighborhoods to help reduce sound pollution, as well as trees, other landscaping components, improvements to bicycle and pedestrian paths and better travel downtown.

"Many drivers are looking forward to the added capacity and the option of being able to get to an important event or meeting without delay," Pustelnyk said. "There is also significant interest in the improved service that public transit will be able to provide using the lanes."

The project is expected to be finished by summer 2016. LBJ English teacher Curtis Clay said that as of now the construction is doing more harm than good.

"I lived right off of MoPac a couple years ago, and before construction started it would take me 15 minutes to get to work," Clay said. "And then they started construction right as I was about to leave and it was going anywhere from 30 to 45 minutes. Same trip, same distance, at least twice as long."

## Anti-Defamation league empowers students to teach teachers and peers about cultural sensitivity

QUINN SIMPSON  
Staff Writer

The LASA Diversity Council was created last year by LASA principal Stacia Crescenzi in preparation for the 2015-16 school year. The group, which is made up of sophomores and juniors who were selected for participation by their counselors, is responsible for sharing principles of cultural sensitivity with Crescenzi, LASA teachers and their peers.

"The Diversity Council is a group of students that Ms. Crescenzi pulled together starting in the spring of last year," LASA counselor and Diversity Council co-sponsor Carole McPherson said. "She felt like there was a need in our school to learn about cultural sensitivity and awareness, so [Council members] went through some diversity training and also went to a camp, and the Diversity Council now meets once a month with Ms. Crescenzi to keep her on the pulse of what's happening campus-wide culturally."

Diversity Council member and LASA junior Devin Ryan said that the activities she participated in at the three day Anti-Defamation League camp were geared towards helping Council members understand how hatred spreads and how to prevent that spread by understanding others' diverse backgrounds.

"It was three days over the summer where these people from the Anti-Defamation League came to the school and we did a whole bunch of activities over the three days to learn about gender biases, cultural awareness, diversity and hate," Ryan said. "We had this one activity...we were given a card and it said, you are a person who is homeless, for instance, and we had to discuss how that might impact our lives...to help us understand what it would be like so we can relate more to people who are in the situations."

According to Ryan, the camp also focused on training Council members in a variety of social issues. The

objective of the training overall was to prepare Council members to share the issues and principles they learned about with LASA teachers.

"We learned [about] racial, sexuality and gender issues," Ryan said. "We're supposed to take those things now and teach them to the teachers, and we can change them to suit our needs better."

LASA math teacher and Diversity Council co-sponsor William Kiker said that the Diversity Council fulfilled that responsibility by splitting into three groups, each meeting together to prepare and execute a unique training session for LASA teachers. Teacher response varied depending on the particular training they attended.

"It was a mixed response overall," Kiker said. "I think it is fair to say that, though, as we had three different sessions, each taught by three different groups of Diversity Council

students. The takeaway from each lesson was different for each teacher."

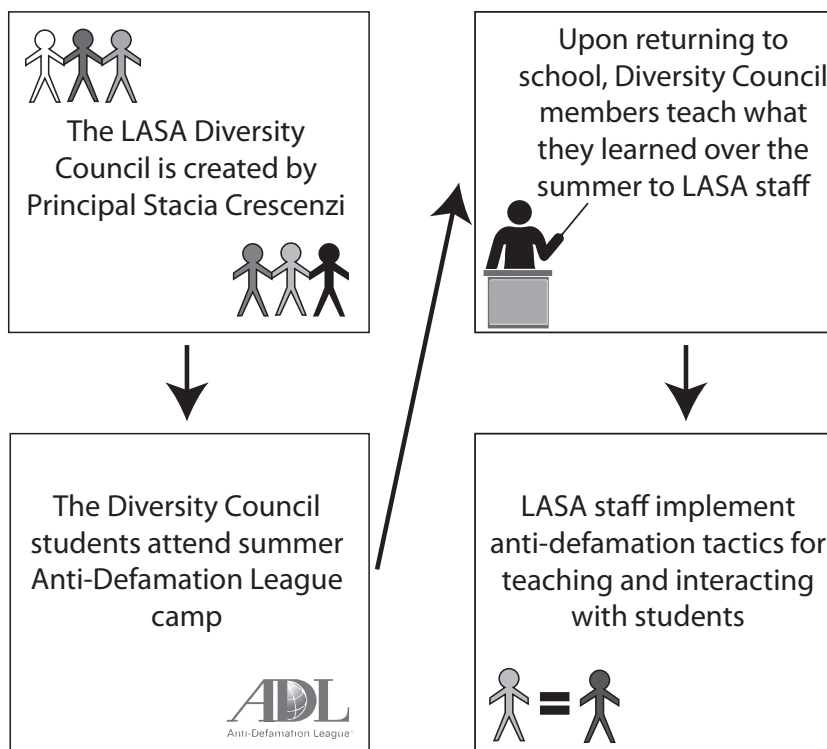
According to Kiker, the sessions ran the gamut of cultural awareness topics and introduced teachers to new ideas as they interacted with Council members and their colleagues.

"It was super interesting and eye-opening for many of our teachers," Kiker said. "There were many topics discussed ranging from race and gender identity to societal norms and stereotypes. One teacher

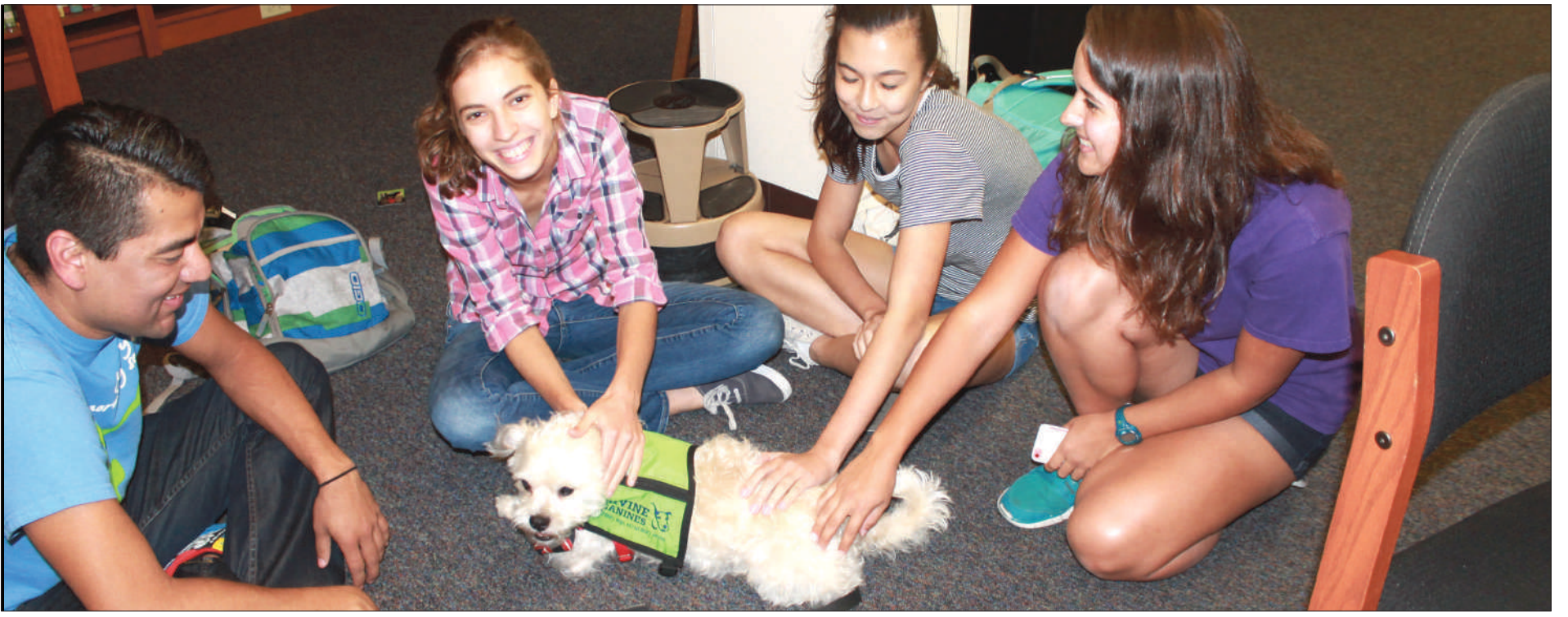
commented in particular that she really valued getting to interact with many of her colleagues outside of her department on such diverse issues."

Kiker said that Crescenzi hopes to replicate the success of this training in the future by having the Diversity Council plan and execute additional activities throughout the 2015-16 school year.

"Ms. Crescenzi is looking for the Diversity Council to do something like this multiple times throughout the school year," Kiker said. "Although, since the group is new this year, the exact details and time line of trainings is still being determined."



graphic by Claire Cannatti



A group of students gathers around Kaxan, a therapy dog who works with Divine Canines. LASA wellness counselor Marissa Rivera said that dogs like Kaxan are incredibly helpful during stressful times. "Divine Canines is the largest, oldest, and most well known therapy dog organization in central Texas," Rivera said. "The dogs are involved in hospitals, homeless shelters, Fort Hood, foster care, children's shelters, and nursing homes." all photo by Emily Kolodney

## Therapy dogs are here to [heel], Divine Canines visit LASA for mental health

EMILY KOLODNEY  
Staff Writer

LASA freshman Molly Dowe's face lights up with excitement as she enters the library. She sees a sea of students, each in groups clustered around an adult in a bright green vest. As she approaches, a dog comes into her sight. He is small, about two feet long and 15 pounds. The trainer tells her his name is Kaxan, and he is a therapy dog.

On Oct. 20 five dogs partnered with the Divine Canines therapy dog organization came to the LASA library for a lunchtime Doggie Study Break. The dogs and handlers shared their stories with students while students listened and pet the animals. Handler and small business owner Edward Flores brought his dog, Kaxan, to the event.

Flores said that, even though it took a lot of work, training Kaxan to be a therapy dog has been very beneficial. The Divine Canines dogs volunteer at hospitals, homeless shelters and foster care clinics, as well as other events and organizations, doing various tasks such as providing comfort for sick patients to playing fetch with energized children.

"He was named after the news station KXAN," Flores said. "[He] was found in their alley and he was running around, but there was something about him that was just really special. He became the news mascot, so he goes on TV all the time."

In addition to enthusiastically being on local television, Kaxan can also relax and spend time with injured veterans and soldiers. Flores said that he often brings Kaxan to Fort Hood to work with soldiers and comfort them. Even though the soldiers are sometimes too tired to play with him, Kaxan can sit and relax, helping them to unwind and be comfortable.

"We've visited soldiers at Fort Hood that are coming back from war that suffer from PTSD or war injuries," Flores said. "Sometimes [they] are just kind of closed off, so the dogs really kind of bring them out of their shell."

Adults are not the only ones who gain from therapy dogs; many special needs and disabled children benefit

greatly from time spent with the animals. For example, Flores said that he often takes Kaxan to elementary schools so the children can practice their reading to him. This way they do not feel embarrassed when they mess up a word because they are reading to an animal who will not judge them as a peer or adult would.

"He visits elementary schools to read with kids in a reading program to strengthen kids with dyslexia, kids with special needs," Flores said. "It's just a way to build confidence."

LASA wellness counselor Marissa Rivera said that therapy dogs are also a great way to handle stress. She said that she had seen how her therapy dog, Bruce Wayne, has benefited the school, and had the idea to bring Divine Canines to campus. She also said that Bruce Wayne has been a large part of stress management this year for many students.

"Therapy dogs act as an aspect of wellness," Rivera said. "Being in an academically rigorous environment, [Bruce] lightens the mood and provides an opportunity for students to calm down and put aside their stresses relating to school."

Therapy dog handler Marla Bost also brought her dog, Happy, to the library on Tuesday. Happy is a Havanese, the national dog of Cuba. They dogs cope very well with the heat, and that's how she got the idea to adopt him and bring him to Austin. When asked about the best effect Happy has ever had on anybody, she said that spending time with Happy has resulted in some pretty impressive outcomes.

"Well, every effect Happy has on people is a victory, but he has helped a stroke victim start talking by just sitting next to her bed and letting her pet him, she remembered that she used to have a dog and began talking about it," Bost said. "He also helped a woman who was suffering from frequent panic attacks as a result of her heart failure, and by just being together for 45 minutes a few times a week the panic attacks became less frequent and she started to recover."

Rivera said that she has seen similar effects first hand

with Bruce Wayne. She says that students who suffer from anxiety and have panic attacks are calmed easily after a visit with Bruce. Petting him soothes an overworked brain and lets students set aside the stress of academic assignments.

"In my experiences: as a handler, educator, and therapist, dogs have a stellar ability to break the ice and make people comfortable," Rivera said. "They bring people a sense of joy, but also bring stressful situations down a notch."

From a first-hand experience, the dogs had a great result on the teens of LASA. Dowe expressed her joy at seeing the dogs by posing for photos, intently listening to the handlers, and collecting all the 'therapy dog trading cards' that were being passed out. When asked about therapy dogs, she said that she knows they are important, even though she has never seen one 'in action.'

"I think therapy dogs help people because anybody can become comfortable around a dog; dogs just make people comfortable no matter where they are," Dowe said. "They also open people up and encourage them to talk about their problems."



## Band

continued from page 1

Before this competition, LBJ band had received mostly positive scores according to LASA senior and tuba section leader Alex Garcia. At the Westlake Marching Band Competition earlier in the season, LBJ placed highly among 16 bands, only two of which were 5A schools.

"We got eighth place at the Westlake Marching Band Competition which is pretty good considering that we were going against a bunch of 6A schools," Garcia said. "We actually managed to beat a couple of them which was pretty exciting."

According to co-band director Ponder East, the theme of the show overall was very well received by the judges across all the competitions. Planning of the theme and style of the show went as far back as January, where East and the other directors began playing with music theory and ideas of architecture.

"What happened this time around, better than years past, is that [the band directors and show planners] were all able to agree sooner on the concept of the show," East said.

The original idea behind the theme of the show came from a quote from German writer and poet Johann Von Goethe.

"We got the idea from a quote: 'Music is liquid architecture and architecture is frozen music,'" LBJ band director Brian Mayer said.

Gorsse said that he was initially worried about Beethoven as the directors' choice, because many bands do renditions of Beethoven for their competition pieces. Once he realized what the directors had done with the piece, though, he said he understood why they were so excited about the theme.

"At first I had my doubts because Beethoven is kind of considered cliché," Gorsse said. "I thought we'd go for something more original like last year but then I realized that we are taking melodies that people already know and that causes them to have this connection where they realize that 'Oh they did this differently' or 'That's different from the actual piece.' People are going to listen to that and think 'Wow that's a really interesting take on the original classical music.'" photo by Greg Kreth



## First AISD dyslexia conference brings awareness

GRACE BODINE  
Staff Writer

The first Texas Dyslexia and Related Disorders Conference was held at the AISD Performing Arts Center on Oct. 9 to spread awareness and educate professionals, teachers and parents about dyslexia and other related disorders. Dyslexia is one of the disorders protected under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 which is a civil rights law that prohibits organizations that receive federal funding from discriminating against those with disabilities. AISD's district 504 Coordinator Dr. Rachel Robillard was in charge of the conference.

"Awareness about dyslexia has been spotty over the years and I think we're just now really starting to bring that awareness up to the public eye," Robillard said. "We had over 500 people [attend] the conference and many of them came up to me and said 'Wow, this is great information. I didn't know a lot about this.'"

Robillard said there were panels at the conference not just about dyslexia itself, but all the other things that are involved when somebody has dyslexia. This included the psychological health of a dyslexic person and the neurobiology and neuropsychology of dyslexia. There were nationally known speakers such as Dr. Dilip Karnik, an expert on dyslexia and related disorders. There were also presentations for parents and educators on effectively managing behavior and creating a support system for dyslexic children. They also discussed the transition to college for a dyslexic student and the different accommodations that are available. Robillard teaches at UT and she said even her graduate students give her letters from the Office of Students with Disabilities to notify they need accommodations for their dyslexia.

"We do all of [the accommodations], even on a university level and it really makes a difference," Robillard said. "Undergraduates tend to be in colleges with lots of students in the classes, so if they can get all of their texts on audio and if they can get all of their lectures recorded... they don't have to focus so much on the [written] notes they do much better. It evens the playing field."

According to Robillard, educating the public is an important part of bringing awareness to dyslexia. He also said that the implementation of this education could be improved.

"[The] implementation piece is the piece we're really focusing on both federally and state wide to better implement what we know [about dyslexia] in schools so that students don't get through school just struggling on their own and figuring it out," Robillard said.

LASA Special Education teacher Tracie Gardner has taken on the role of LASA's Dyslexia Designee, a designated staff member who reevaluates dyslexic students' disability every three years. Gardner said she has a personal connection to dyslexia because her daughter has been diagnosed.

"[My daughter] just recently was identified as [dyslexic] and she has a reader and it does make a big difference for her in terms of comprehension," Gardner said. "[Overall], it does make a huge difference."

According to Gardner, the most common accommodations students receive are extended time on assessments and not being forced to read aloud in class. LASA junior Madeline Lee has dyslexia and receives some of these accommodations.

"These accommodations make me feel more equal to other people," Lee said. "I know that I can read or I can do problems like everyone else, but it just takes me a little more time. With these accommodations, I'm able to be the best I can be and they balance out the time I use to read problems or fixing all the wrong numbers I copied down or thought I read."

At the conference, Robillard talked about executive functions, which are the skills people have to help plan, organize, focus, start and finish tasks and inhibit behavior when necessary. These skills are controlled by the frontal lobe. Robillard also spoke about disorders of executive functioning such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), which are usually categorized medically as attention deficit disorders. According to Robillard, up to forty percent of dyslexic kids have ADHD,

### DYSLEXIA STATS

UP TO 40% of kids with dyslexia also have ADHD

80% of dyslexics also have dysgraphia

1/5 people have dyslexia

so it is even more difficult for them to learn how to read because they not only have a reading disorder, but they also have a disorder that causes them to have trouble focusing.

"I think a lot of people have dyslexia and are smart enough to figure out ways to compensate for it and figure out ways to make reading work for them," Robillard said. "I diagnose people who are seniors in high school that have known somehow that they have always struggled with reading, but they are smart. They have figured out how to make it work, so they haven't been diagnosed."

By the end of third grade, Lee's teacher suggested she had dyslexia because of her struggle with various reading assessments. She was not officially tested for dyslexia until last year so she could be classified as 504 for College Board.

"I was getting below passing grades on the benchmark and practice TAKS tests," Lee said. "I spent so long reading and could never answer the questions correctly. [I] didn't need to get tested; it's pretty obvious that I have dyslexia."

As a LASA student, Lee receives a large amount of homework which she said takes her hours longer than most students because of her dyslexia. Lee also has ADHD which adds to her troubles of focusing and paying attention when she's reading, especially if it's an extremely difficult and tedious text.

"Although it takes a really long time and I can get frustrated on how long it takes, I get through it and I've learned to be okay with it," Lee said. "But I've been dealing with this disability all my life and I've learned to come to terms with it. I love learning new things and being the best I can be."

# SEEKING REFUGEE IN AUSTIN

**UNITED STATES**  
-The U.S. took in fewer than 2,000 Syrian refugees in 2015  
-Obama announced that beginning October 2015, the U.S. will take in at least 10,000 Syrian refugees

**SYRIA**  
Since the start of the Syrian conflict...  
-More than half of the country's population of 22 million has been forced to leave their homes  
-More than 7.6 million have been displaced within Syria  
-More than 4 million have fled as refugees in neighboring countries  
-More than 240,000 people have been killed

LASA junior **Karma Dadoush** and LASA sophomore **Nasouh Dadoush** lived in Abu Rummaneh, one of the safest neighborhoods in Damascus, Syria. In 2012, their family moved to Brownsville and then Austin soon after.

**JORDAN**  
-As the country with the second largest population of Syrian refugees, Jordan is home to 629,000 Syrian refugees  
-80% of Syrian refugees in Jordan live in live in urban areas in the north of Jordan  
-20% live in the Za'atari, Marjeeb al-Fahood, Cyber City and Al-Azraq camps

LASA sophomore **Nasouh Dadoush** went to the Za'atari refugee camp with his father, a doctor, for a week during spring of 2015 to volunteer at a medical clinic for Syrian refugees.

**AUSTIN**  
-About 1000 refugees arrive in Austin every year  
-There are about 1000 refugee students in AISD  
-Austin has two refugee resettlement agencies, Caritas of Austin and Refugee Services of Texas, which place families in apartments and provide financial support for three months

LASA junior **Karma Dadoush** volunteers at Eixsys Healthcare, a free clinic for refugees in Austin

graphic by Claire Camatti

## After moving from Syria to Austin, LASA siblings assist Syrian refugees in Austin and abroad

VICTORIA MYCUE  
Life & Feature Editor

When she was 13, LASA junior Karma Dadoush's father took Karma, her 12-year-old brother Nasouh and her stepmom on a "trip" to the U.S. "We're going to visit for the summer, just for the summer, and we're going to come back after," her father told her. Shortly thereafter, the excited and anticipative Karma went to her mother's house, just a short walk from her father and stepmother's house. It was then she was met with her mother's hard words: "You guys are going to stay there."

"She just had a feeling," Karma said. "I don't think he told Mom. Everyone leaves and doesn't come back." Millions of Syrians have fled the country since the start of the civil war in 2011. Among them were many friends of the Dadoushes, so Karma was not unfamiliar with the concept of taking refuge from her home country. Accordingly, she said she trusted her father's decision.

"Dad would have thought it's just going to get worse—it's not going to get better—over the summer," Karma said. "And Dad knew that. And Mom knew that Dad knew that. We thought... 'Why didn't Dad tell us?' So we talked to Dad, and he was like 'Yeah, your Mom's right.'"

Though Karma had an intuitive heads-up from her mom, Nasouh didn't know until the day of travel that the trip was not a temporary family vacation but rather a permanent move. He didn't get to say an absolute goodbye to his friends, but he said that in retrospect they probably all knew he wasn't going to come back. Nasouh also had no context clues—they barely packed any of their personal belongings, much less any furniture or home decor.

"I only took a carry-on and my sister took a bag," Nasouh said. "Because the style here is different in clothing, we only brought the essentials, and once we got here, we bought the clothes."

Upon arriving to the U.S., the Dadoush family settled in Rancho Viejo, Texas, a town next to Brownsville, where Karma and Nasouh's father worked as a doctor prior to the family's move. He had to begin traveling to other countries to work after business at his clinic in Syria severely declined.

"His work was [slower] than usual because of the bad things in Syria," Karma said. "People just didn't leave their houses at that time. They were scared to leave. So no one went to his clinic, and while the clinic is still going on, it's not getting a lot of money. But he doesn't want to close it down because there are [people who need it]."

One of the few times Syrian children leave their houses is to go to school, Karma said. Because Karma and Nasouh's father was a doctor, their family could afford their attendance at a private school between 40 minutes and an hour from their house. There was a closer public school, but Karma said her family preferred the superior education of a private school. Though prestigious, the school was situated in a dangerous neighborhood far from their house.

"There, 40 minutes was a very long time—it was like five cities over," Karma said. "Because it was far away, Dad was scared every time we had to leave to [go to] school. We didn't know what was going to happen there, because the school is in a very not-safe area."

Even closer to the more dangerous parts of Syria was the school Karma and Nasouh's cousins attended. And although both schools frequently had to cancel school days and parts of days due to

high-risk conflict in the area, their cousins' school was more often cancelled.

"Sometimes [they] didn't go to school," Karma said. "Their school canceled it. Sometimes we had to leave early from school because our school decided to cancel because things were getting bad."

For most of her life, Karma knew very little about the Syrian conflict. She knew there were dangerous areas and she knew there were soldiers on guard everywhere. "Even though we were living in the safest area in Syria, our stepmom had to sit outside [whenever we went] out to the park," Karma said. "Even though it was right outside our house, our stepmom had to watch us because there were always soldiers in the park. We had to make sure. Kids got kidnapped from the park all the time."

The soldiers were pro-regime, working under Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, Karma said the soldiers, who patrolled everywhere she went, terrorized children.

"All my life, I could go wherever I wanted—like I could bike... to the supermarket after sunset," Karma said. "I couldn't do that anymore. Not [once] I was 11."

Karma's parents required she always carry her phone with her. She said people always ask why she had a phone when she was a young child, and she said it was expressly for safety precaution. "[The soldiers] looked really scary," Karma said. "Whenever I would pass them, I would pretend to not look scared, but I [was]."

Karma's best friend, her cousin who was two years older than her, lived within walking distance from Karma. The two would meet halfway between their houses and then go eat at a nearby restaurant. "We didn't do that the last two years, and if we did my brother had to be with us even though my brother is a kid," Karma said. "They wouldn't mess with girls if [they were with boys]."

Karma and Nasouh experienced the Syrian war not just through cautionary tales of their parents, cancelled school days and the omnipresence of pro-regime soldiers. There were many times when they were nearby violent conflict, even while living in one of the safest neighborhoods of Syria.

"Once, we were hearing gunshots and then we went outside to the porch," Nasouh said. "There were gunshots and people were running away. Someone got shot."

Still, both Karma and Nasouh said they feel fortunate to have lived comparatively affluent in Syria, and they also feel fortunate to have experienced such a smooth transition into life in the U.S.

"There are very few people who are lucky like me," Karma said. "Most of [the Syrian refugees] don't have the job that Dad got or all the education that Dad had because his parents were educated. It's just like a line of things that led to Dad being able to bring us here and get [us] accustomed."

After moving from Brownsville to Austin, the Dadoushes have helped a number of new Syrian families assimilate into a new life in America. Karma and Nasouh's stepmom, Mai, works closely with these families. Previously, when the Dadoushes lived in Syria, Mai

worked with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

"In UNHCR she worked with refugees in Somalia and Yemen," Karma said. "And then she got married to Dad a few years before [we left Syria]. We moved here two years after they got married. So she quit her job, and we moved here."

Using her experience with refugees, Mai has involved herself in a network of people in Austin who notify her whenever a new Syrian family arrives. She, or another in her network, begins by picking them up from the airport; then they help them with other aspects of resettling, like finding a house.

"Our family is there for them to help them with finding a job, translating [and] finding what they need for their kids," Karma said. "Their kids are going into school right now. They need extra help [because] they don't know any English, [and] they barely know any Arabic."

In addition to helping Syrian refugees new to Austin, Karma and Nasouh have also recently began translating during parent-teacher conferences at elementary schools in Austin.

"If you know how to speak the language of the parent of the family, then you help with parent-teacher conferences that are kind of weekly," Karma said. "So last week...I went and helped Iraqi refugees."

Karma and Nasouh went to different classes, so the meetings were between one or both parents, the teacher, and either Nasouh or Karma. The teacher would speak about the child's performance in English, and if they parents didn't understand, the translator would speak to the parents in Arabic.

Karma also helps her stepmother, Mai, who works with women in Syria who have a textile business. Mai travels back to the country and hauls their handcrafted bags, table runners and cloths back to the U.S. where she sells it for profit to return to the Syrian women.

"Mai sells them, and I help her a lot with organizing them and pricing them, because you have to have prices on them," Karma said. "Sometimes there are just random neighborhood fundraisers in our neighborhood. They do events, and we ask if we can do a fundraiser for Syria, so we sell these things."

Karma and Mai give the entirety of their profit to the Syrian women, and all the time they spend preparing the products and selling them is volunteer work. Karma also recently began volunteering at Eixsys Healthcare, a free health clinic for refugees in Austin.

"This [guy] who has a tech company decided that people needed free health care because some of them were refugees and didn't have the green cards," Karma said. "[They're] not just Syrian or Iraqi refugees, but a lot of them are because they're moving here right now."

The money used to fund the clinic comes from donations made by people who attend service at the mosque and the Hindu temple where the clinic is set up. Some volunteers handle funds; organizing donations, calling in prescriptions, and speaking to pharmacists about discounts for refugees. Karma said she prefers to make use of her Arabic by helping the patients who only speak Arabic to

understand the doctor's orders.

"Most people that volunteer do the stuff that doctors don't have time to do, like being a receptionist, putting in the patients [and] helping the patients with their forms because some of them may not speak English," Karma said. "I have helped people who [only] speak Arabic."

The clinic is not in a permanent location. Rather, it's set up at the beginning of clinic days and taken down and packed up at the end.

"We either set it up in the mosque, or we set it up in the Hindu temple, and people just come," Karma said. "We have a Facebook page and a website... [This way], you can know when the clinic is going to be open, because it's not open all the time."

Nasouh has also volunteered with refugee health clinics, though the clinics were at refugee camps in Jordan. In spring 2015, he spent a week volunteering at these camps with his father.

"I went to Jordan and stayed in a hotel and every morning we'd wake up, eat breakfast and then board a bus," Nasouh said. "We would go to a refugee camp or an area that needs help that has refugees. That day, we went to this abandoned city, with a lot of Syrian families there."

The clinic was in Za'atari, a refugee camp in Jordan that was set up in 2011 and is now home to almost 90,000 people who have fled the war in Syria. The doctor who heads the clinic is a friend of Nasouh's father, so the head requests he travel to the clinic and help as an additional doctor. When Nasouh traveled with him, he volunteered with the pharmacists.

"I know Arabic but the pharmacist didn't," Nasouh said. "People would come to the door to get a number, and when their number is called, the doctor checks them out. He writes a prescription on paper, and the patient comes to a clinic and hands the paper in where I was, and I would translate it and fill up the medicine in a Ziploc bag by looking at the instructions. I would just give it to them, but it was very chaotic. Sometimes we wouldn't have the medicine, so they would have to return to the doctor and get another prescription."

Karma and Nasouh both said many Syrians in refugee camps are sick for a number of reasons: they couldn't get the medical care they needed while living in Syria or their living conditions in the camps are conducive to illness.

"It was very sad," Nasouh said. "A lot of people had the same disease and everyone was sick. You could see them coughing all the time. They all live in compact areas, so they don't have that much room."

Nasouh said he feels fortunate enough to have lived healthily in Syria and to have been able to move to the U.S. without living in a refugee camp first.

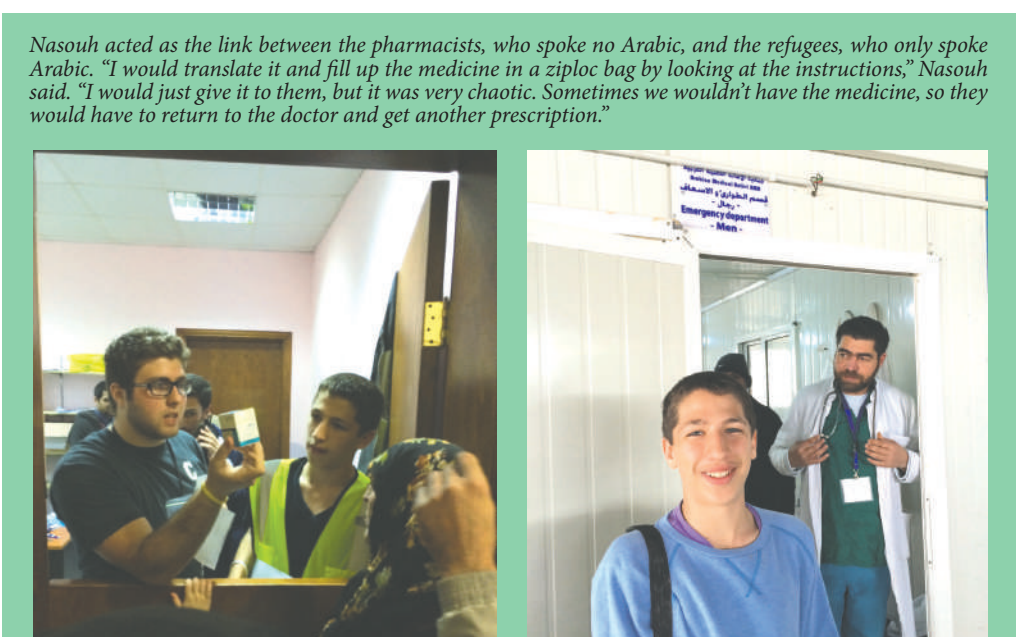
"I felt really good helping and being able to give back to my country after all these years," Nasouh said. "It felt right."

Four years after moving to the U.S. from Syria, Karma and Nasouh said they have still maintained close connection with Syria and the Arabic language, doing whatever they can to help Syrians who have suffered under oppressive rule.

"They don't have all the things I have, so I think it's important to help them because...I need to give back," Karma said. "I have the resources and the energy and the education to help them so why wouldn't I?"



Nasouh volunteered at a clinic in Za'atari, one of the largest refugee camps in Jordan. "There were kids playing—that was the most crowded camp," Nasouh said. "There were hundreds of people around the clinic."



Nasouh acted as the link between the pharmacists, who spoke no Arabic, and the refugees, who only spoke Arabic. "I would translate it and fill up the medicine in a ziploc bag by looking at the instructions," Nasouh said. "I would just give it to them, but it was very chaotic. Sometimes we wouldn't have the medicine, so they would have to return to the doctor and get another prescription."



On the third day of volunteering, there was a crowd of hundreds outside the clinic where Nasouh was taking and filling prescriptions from refugees. "Each doctor had his own room, and there were hundreds of people outside of the clinic giving us papers," Nasouh said.



Just outside of their hotel, Nasouh and his father helped distribute food and supplies to two different groups of refugees. "There were Palestinian refugees waiting outside," Nasouh said. "There were two companies, or groups, and the Palestinians came and then the Syrians came later."

photos courtesy of Hachem Dadouch

## Refugee students settle in AISD, district struggles to provide support

ROXY BONAFOONT  
Life & Feature Editor

At 10 years old, a Liberian boy leaves school and joins the army. He has been a child soldier for seven years when his father kidnaps him. With the aid of Methodist Ministries of West Africa, they escape the country, and three weeks later the boy is sitting in ESL teacher Betsy Markman's classroom at Lanier High School.

"He hasn't seen a classroom in five or six years, he hasn't seen his father, like his life just turned upside down," Markman, who now teaches at Murchison Middle School, said. "He doesn't know what to make of anything, and by the way he's a trained killer. And he's 17."

Such additions to ESL classrooms in Austin are increasingly common. There are currently approximately a thousand refugee students from around the world in the Austin Independent School District (AISD), and more will continue to arrive throughout the year. ESL teachers like Markman are faced with the challenge of how to educate a growing population of students who are alienated not only by language and cultural barriers, but also by their lack of consistent and adequate schooling prior to their resettlement in the United States. Many refugee students are classified as Students with Interrupted Formal Education, or SIFE, and may have missed years at the elementary or middle school level or only attended class for a few months each year.

"I have 31 refugees," Markman said. "I have 23 kids whose math skills, specifically math, are more than three years behind. So they are in sixth grade [or older] and in second grade [math] or below."

When Austin's refugee population started to grow, the district trained about 16 teachers including Markman in how to educate and understand SIFE students. One of the most immediate issues was coping with their, in some cases, severely interrupted educations, which leaves some students entering Markman's classroom with less than two years of schooling.

"The goal was 'How do you make up three years of math with a kid?'" Markman said. "You can't possibly make up a year per year and ever graduate. So how do you make up two or three years in a year: what do you do, what do you skip, what are the highlights, what's the rationale, how can you integrate English and math and get more bang for your buck as a teacher?"

Markman, who has a background in teaching at an elementary school level, helps her students with the fundamentals of math, reading, writing, technology and even handwriting so they can catch up with their peers. However, the complexities of assimilating refugee students into mainstream American education extend beyond the deficits in their schooling. The students are in a totally unfamiliar culture, and may be confused or frightened by everyday procedures like fire and lockdown drills, which could be perceived as threats they have faced in the past.

"I recently assigned two eighth graders to lunch detention when I saw them at 10 a.m.," Markman said. "I didn't think about the fact that they're both reasonably new to AISD and hadn't ever had detention before. Both spent the next three hours terrified that they would be beaten for using the school computers for social media instead of the spelling program. I felt awful!"

While students attempt to settle in a new school environment, their families are transitioning into life in an entirely new country. When refugees enter the city, the begin their resettlement process through either Caritas of Austin or Refugee Services of Texas, Austin's two local refugee resettlement agencies. These agencies help the refugees find housing, typically in low-rent apartment complexes, as well connecting them with any other basic needs and placing children in schools. From there, they are the responsibility of Maria Arabbo, Austin's Refugee Family Support Services Coordinator, who helps refugee students and families through the registration process and afterward, providing interpreters and counseling as necessary among other services. Arabbo's office is funded by a federal grant from the Refugee School Impact Program and consists only of herself and one other staff member.

"It's a really tiny grant—that's actually part of the problem, is that in many ways, resettling refugees is expensive because they need more support than they can get," Arabbo said. "For example, if I had more money to hire more people... it would make a huge difference, but it's just not possible. So that's why we're kind of just working with what we have."

Helping refugees resettle is a process that extends far beyond housing them and enrolling the children in school. Refugees still carry with them the experiences and traumas of their pasts, which have conditioned some students to never admit their religion or country of origin, or to panic when someone unfamiliar enters the classroom. Seated behind the desks in Markman's classroom are child soldiers, torture victims and survivors on opposing sides of a civil war.

"These kids have PTSD, these families have PTSD; they have suffered loss," Markman said. "We have one family where the dad... was tied up and interrogated in the house while the children were at school. My kiddo was 10 years old when she walked through the door at the end of the day and saw him. He's alright, I mean he has PTSD too no doubt, but she was 10 years old when she found him."

Teaching these students requires an understanding of the nuances of their situations and lives, and what those things mean for their wellbeing, education and relationships with other students. Initially, 16 teachers including Markman were trained in SIFE. Since then, however, federal budget cuts have significantly impacted the district.

"One of the pieces that fell off of educational funding was SIFE," Markman said. "So there's now three of us left in the district of that original 16 who have any idea what SIFE is or how to do it."

Most SIFE students are also categorized as ESL. Unlike Murchison, LBJ does not have a large enough ESL population to have classes dedicated exclusively to English learners; as a result, any LBJ class may have one or two students who are not fluent in English. According to LBJ English teacher Daniel Vogt, who is certified in ESL, it can be challenging to identify and provide the assistance an ESL student needs while in a busy classroom with many other issues that demand attention.

"That's what's heartbreaking, is I've got a student who's ready to run, she's chomping at the bit, and the best I can do with the time I have is give her a little bit, a little piece," Vogt said. "And that's what's kinda tough, is only being able to do so much when so much more needs to be done."

Markman said that that not only does the district lack the necessary staff to support refugee students, it also fails to provide her with the textbooks and workbooks she needs and asks for. She said she has emailed the district repeatedly requesting materials that she knows are in storage, only to receive more copies of a text she already has. As a result, she's forced to find and print out resources from the Internet.

"As far as I'm concerned, they're doing nothing for the refugees," Markman said. "We're not getting materials. Honestly, I could spend half my day just putting together materials. I work regularly an 11-hour day; at least two of those hours are doing things that I would not have to do if I had materials."

The lack of support for refugees isn't limited to the district. According to Markman, the resettlement agencies used to pay for their rent and other basic needs for a year and a half; that support now only lasts for three months. In addition, Markman said that the housing refugees are placed in is often run-down and unsafe for small children.

"I was as likely as anybody to repost the Facebook post of, 'If Germany can take this many refugees, the US should be taking 100,000 or 10,000,'" Markman said. "And then I go, well okay, if we took 100,000, does that mean each family only gets support for two months instead of four months? And who's hiring the new ESL teachers? And who's getting twice as many donations to Operation School Bell [a local charity that provides children's clothing] and its equivalent around the country? And who's teaching the parents English?... Taking them is one thing—then what?"

Texas, which is the largest refugee resettlement state in the country, accepted 7,214 refugees in 2014. Arabbo said that one of her goals is to help the district and the city take a more active role in supporting refugees, and that she is beginning that process through conversations with AISD.

"Am I angry at the way the system works?" Arabbo said. "No. But I think we can all do a lot better than we are doing, and I think that's part of what we're trying to do in this office. Really it's an overwhelming issue and I'm sure every city is handling this and feeling overwhelmed, because there are a lot of refugees that are coming and everyone wants them to come but we haven't really figured out the pieces exactly."

Among other things, Arabbo hopes to hire newcomer teachers that can address the needs of ESL students more effectively than a general ESL teacher. She also leads trainings for the staff and district to help them better understand what to expect from refugee students and how to help them.

"I ask everybody to try and be as patient and open and willing to be creative around this new matter, especially as new refugees come in and we're expecting more Syrian refugees," Arabbo said. "So more than anything I just always want to advocate for people to have a lot of patience and try to culturally understand where these kids and their families are coming from, because I think there's a lot of misunderstanding.... I think just having an open heart to families as they come is really important."

# The Name Changer

LASA students reveal why they changed their names, find comfort in new alias

MERIS MCHANEY  
Entertainment Editor

Sunken into a green library chair, a girl sits with her hands crossed on the table. Her hair is cut short, and thick glasses rest on her nose. She appears calm and collected, but takes in air to let out a sigh that lets me know she's told this story a few times already. She has a few rings wrapped around her fingers; one has a blue jewel that's held tight within its metal case. She wears a vintage rock tee and crimson lipstick covers her lips. LASA senior Red Ellisor opens her mouth to begin the story of why she changed her name.

"My first name was Rachel," she said. "I decided to change my name around the middle or end of sophomore year."

In the past year, a trend following a few LASA students occurred where they decided to drop their given name, in search for one that suited them more. Ellisor said she felt as if her given birth name didn't fit the person she truly is.

"I never really felt connected to my birth name," Ellisor said. "It was actually pretty funny because I wore so much red my freshman year, and I always wore this [red] color lipstick all the time. That was definitely a factor, but also I was having a lot of issues with gender identity. So I needed a name that was kind of gender neutral."

According to LASA Pride Alliance (LPA), LASA's LGBTQ+ organization, gender identity is the concept of oneself on a spectrum from male to female. One can be singularly male or female, both or neither. Gender identity can be closely tied to "gender roles," or the outward manifestations and perceptions of personality that reflect the person's gender identity.

comfortable with whatever gender I was feeling that day," she said. "That way I didn't have to keep switching it up on people. This way it goes across the board and I'd also be named after my favorite characters, Red Forman on 'That 70s Show' and Red from 'Orange is the New Black.'"

Changing her name allowed Ellisor the ability to be comfortable with herself. Ellisor noted she had struggled with identity issues for quite awhile. Becoming Red has helped her figure out who she is and allowed her to understand labeling better. Ellisor has found great success in doing so.

"After I changed, it felt very welcoming to have everyone immediately call me [Red]" Ellisor said. "There were some people I had difficulty with, but for the most part everyone was really accepting. If they had to they'd correct themselves but everyone was really nice about it. This year I had the courage to talk to my teachers about it. My mom also knows about it."

“After I changed, it felt very welcoming to have everyone immediately call me [Red].”

-LASA senior Red Ellisor

With positive reactions from her teachers and peers, Ellisor rarely has to correct people on her name. Ellisor has told students to call her whatever they are comfortable with whether it be Rachel or Red. Ellisor has found herself in a very accepting community at LASA.

"All my friends and even people I didn't talk to that much this year were consciously correcting themselves even though I've never explicitly told them to," Ellisor said. "I think that's great. And when someone messes up your name or your pronouns, it's not a huge deal, but I really appreciate it when they go 'Oh I'm sorry,' and they correct themselves. I really do appreciate people backtracking and correcting themselves. People learn and I really appreciate that and I've had a really positive experience."

Ellisor said she would urge anyone struggling with the same issues to do what makes them comfortable.

"Most [people] took [the change] positively," Ellisor said. "There are always people who will put my name in quotes like a nickname or will make fun of it or will treat it as not being real. I can understand why people would think that, but at the same time it's not their decision to decide what is real and what's not about myself."

LASA senior Ziggy Cooper is another student to feel uncomfortable in her given name. After moving from New York to Texas, Cooper felt a change was in order and changed her name from Ana to Katherine. How Cooper changed her name from Katherine to Ziggy is another story.

"I chose the name Ziggy because the name Ziggy Stardust is a David Bowie persona who is this androgynous space alien that came to save Earth, but eventually got sucked in by rock and roll and the lifestyle associated with it," she said. "He was amazing and everyone thought he was such a great musician, and I thought that was really neat. I like how David Bowie has done the name change thing a lot. He's done Thin White Duke, and Aladdin Sane, and they are all just various personalities that he represents himself through, and I think I am very much part of the 'glamorous' rock 'n roll lifestyle right now."

Cooper thought Ziggy was a name that would perfectly capture her current personality. Although most people comply with her decision, Cooper does run into a lot of comments making fun of her new name. The first month Cooper wasn't too worried about people's mistakes because she said it's hard trying to rename yourself and get other people to call you by that name. However, she said she corrects people because it does hurt her feelings when they don't use the name she repeatedly tells them is her preferred name.

"The first time [I changed my name] it was fine because Katherine was my middle name, and it was a 'normal' name, and I wasn't in a public school, so my social circle was pretty small," Cooper said. "When I moved here, and I changed my name again to Ziggy, people got really mad. I think it's because Ziggy is a weird name, and it isn't a name you come across very often, and people had trouble adjusting to it. A lot of people took it really seriously, like I was trying to make things more difficult for them, but it's not really about them. It's about me, just trying to define myself."

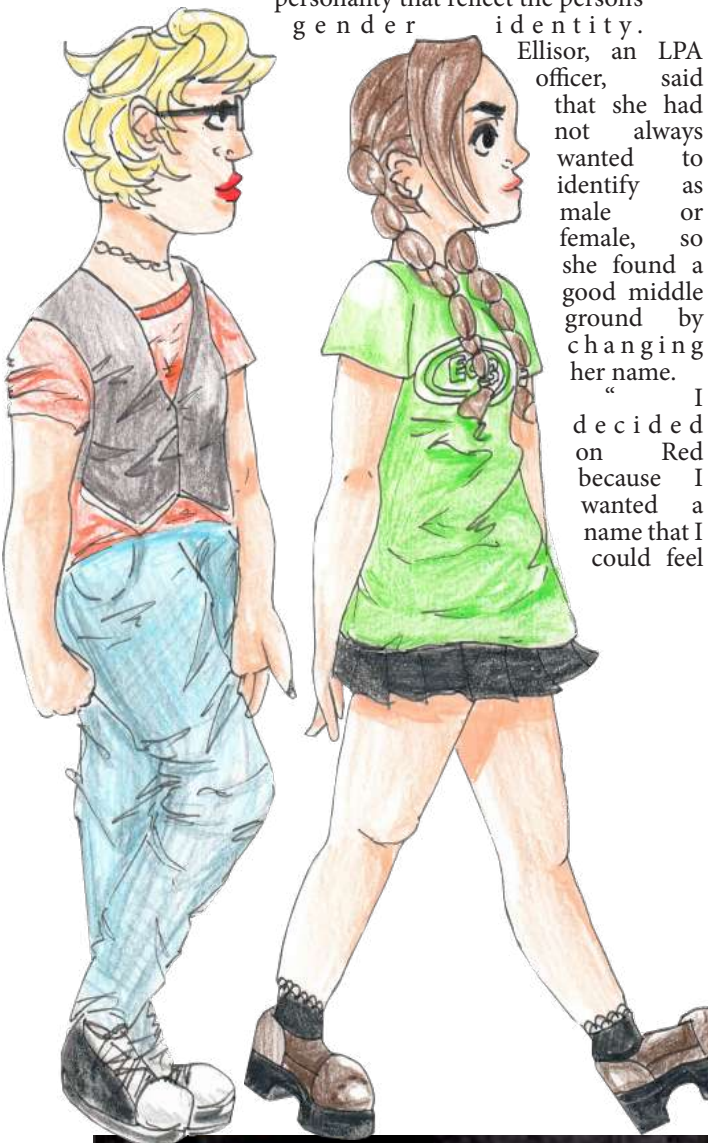
While Cooper found the transition to be easy and natural, some kids find it takes a while to get used to the new name. LASA senior Sylvie Pratt decided to change her name midway through her junior year. Due to her reasons for change being convenience and preference, she never bothered too much to correct people.

"I mean, once in awhile people will still call me Megan, and it doesn't bother me at all," Pratt said. "I don't like it when people apologize because it is just a thing, it isn't a big deal. My family still calls me Megan, and I don't tell them not to."

Ellisor believes the atmosphere of college, although very open, has a different dynamic than high school. Ellisor said high school is the perfect time for a name change because many students are trying to figure out who they are. She's found that the ability to introduce herself to teachers one-on-one is a great aspect of high school, that many kids can't find in college.

"A lot of people change their name just because they don't like their birth name which is totally fine, but a lot of people change their name because it feels the most right or the most comfortable to them," Ellisor said. "I don't think anyone should be afraid to do that no matter what other people's reactions are. It's not what other people think about you it's about what you think of yourself."

Graphics by Sylvie Pratt



## FFFtopacts

Wu-Tang Clan  
Chromeo  
Grimes  
Schoolboy Q  
ODESZA  
Rae Sremmurd

As the self-proclaimed "Live Music Capital of the World", Austin is lucky to host two large music festivals in the fall: the more mainstream Austin City Limits Music Festival, and the smaller, eclectic FunFunFunFest. Celebrating its ten year anniversary as an alternative to ACL, FunFunFun provides an opportunity to witness performances by both popular artists and underground acts and comedians.

Jane's Addiction  
D'Angelo and the Vanguard  
CHVRCHES  
Future Islands

Venom  
NOFX  
Coheed and Cambria  
Gogol Bordello  
Drive Like Jehu

Graphic by Claire Cannatit Info by Max Randall

## Student Finds Love in a [Hopeful] Place, Reflects on Her Years in High School

MERIS MCHANEY  
Entertainment Editor

Hello. My name is Meris McHANEY. Some of you may know me as "Merris Chaney" if you attended the recent Alley Cat Players (ACP) production of "Footloose." I guess some people would take offense to the misspelling of their name in a program, but to be quite frank, I was way too busy obsessing over my new friend group to care.

Six weeks ago I was asked to play drums for ACP in their fall musical. With my lack of abilities to stand strong and say no, I quickly found myself at five hour long practices after school five times a week. In all my time at LASA, I have never attended an ACP theater production. Maybe the times never lined up, or I never knew the play, but I never seemed to make it to a show. Boy, what a complete idiot I have been! Although my arms were close to breaking off from playing constant '80s disco music, I fell in love with everything theater.

Walking into the theater my first day of rehearsal, intimidated and quite nervous, I found the group of theater kids to be some of the most welcoming and talented people. I think a lot of times in high school we find ourselves stuck in our groups. We limit ourselves to the people we hang out with, eat lunch with or talk to inside and outside of school. I admit to being a part of this tendency 100 percent, but it's as if we do this subconsciously. (Or we're all completely conscious and just judge

people, in which case we should all check ourselves, but what do I know? I'm not a doctor.) It's not that we don't talk to people outside of our social circles, it's that people will never think of us as being anything more than the one we're already in. This sucks. These



theater kids I spent weeks with are some of the coolest people I have ever met at this school, and the fact that I will never be thought of as "a part of them" is heartbreaking.

I fell in love with the entire cast and show, from Alec Hunter's flawless execution

of Ren McCormack to Nick Blacklock's perfection in portraying Reverend Shaw Moore to Isabelle Dickey's insane talents. So much so, that I now feel obligated to call out a few other people: Cameron Carr, you slayed as Ariel. Seamus Quinn, who knew you were

in theater? Good job. Campbell Stuart, I'd like to personally thank you for sitting with me for those first few dinners during practice due to my lack of friends in

theater. Oh, and you sing really well. And last, but not least, Antonio Skillicorn, I'm at a loss for words. Let's be friends forever. Although I thought rehearsals were rather excessive, I found myself never

wanting my theater experience to end.

I must say, during my freshman year of high school I felt like I was a part of a much more unified class. My SciTech partners were two people who I recently reconnected with during "Footloose." Ezine forced me to work with people outside of my friend group, which might I add: I hope these people put my grave in the ground, so they can let me down one last time. Either way, your classes freshman year allow for a lot more unity in your grade. As you go through high school and find yourself standing proud in the halls of LASA your senior year, you're going to notice you haven't talked to those people in your SciTech group in three years. You'll find yourself pushed in between the walls of the band kids, the robotics team, the computer science students, the theater troupe and the sporty kids. Although you may find a door on one of those walls that allows you to try out new groups, you'll probably still find yourself with a title stapled above your head.

This is not a plea to be accepted into the theater group (well...). This is a reminder that many of us have less than a year left here, and may not know half of our grade, or have lost touch with the people that used to be our best friends. We are given four amazing years at this school, so go meet the freaking future billionaires that are walking the halls.

Next week, I'm comin' for you band! people!

# A Midsummer Night's Dream

## ACP puts on their second revival show with a Shakespearean twist, brings back former LBJ alumnus and ACP member

ASHLEY THOMAS &  
CHELSEA BANAWIS  
Staff Writer &  
Entertainment Editor

only the patter of footsteps toward an Enchanted Forest. Modern language is forgotten, as tongues only speak in Shakespearean language for this performance. The curtains rise up and the stage is ready.

"A Midsummer Night's Dream" will be put on by the Alley Cat Players (ACP) and open on Nov. 5 after long weeks of rehearsal and anticipation for their second revival show. The play will continue through Nov. 6, Nov. 7 and Nov. 9. As a part of the revival season, the production will bring back LBJ alumnus Jeremy Polk, who graduated in 2010, to direct the show.

"We went on the process of looking at the shows we've done over the last 10 years and it was either between ["A Midsummer Night's Dream"] for me or "Treasure Island," Polk said. "This happened to be my very first show with the Alley Cat Players when I was a student here so it was only fitting that I chose this show."

All costumes have been hung up, ready to be swapped in and out of, and the frantic rush of bodies backstage has been hushed to the first production of this show was directed by LBJ/LASA theater teacher Melissa Alexander-Driscoll in 2007. Polk was approached for the

position as head director as part of the revival season's effort to include alumni actors like LASA senior Roberto Guzman reflect on his influence in the department

"It's kind of his projection and looking at it, a lot of the characters are being shown in a different way compared to the first time," Guzman said. "A lot of their roles are being changed and it started off taking an

interesting twist and being really dark and not so much the way Shakespeare wrote it to be a comedy." When ACP last performed "A Midsummer Night's Dream," the theater troupe was able to appear in the newly built Don Haynes Theater for the first time. Eight years since the theater's opening the production will show again and Guzman will play his first lead role, Dimitrius, in the play.

"It's a very big deal for me," Guzman said. "The pressure of everyone relying on you is kind of nerve-

wracking and it's definitely difficult when trying to portray exactly what the director wants, memorize the lines and perform them in a way that makes the character look the way the director wants them to be portrayed."

Another lead role, Puck, will be portrayed by LASA senior Malik Offor, who said he was so excited to be a part of this show and to see the hilarious hijinks.

"The weirdest part for me is the lead role thing," Offor said. "[This is] the first one and it is also Shakespeare so the language is really hard. The character is a pretty simple character but it's just really hard to do it with the language."

"Footloose" and "A Midsummer Night's Dream" are both part of the ACP revival series. Many LBJ alumni, such as Polk, have returned to the theater to be a part of the experience and help out. However, current LBJ and LASA students are also taking on an extra role. LASA junior Corey Cochran-Lépiz was asked to be assistant director to Polk after Polk realized his work and school schedule conflicted with rehearsals. During rehearsals, Cochran-Lépiz acts as assistant director when Polk is absent and as an actor on stage.

"I wanted to be a part of the straight play that was being put on this year," Cochran-Lépiz said. "I'm not very fond of singing or dancing on stage, but I still like performing, so a straight play was the only solution in this case."

According to Polk, the production of this play is different because it's 10 years later. The play will be a shorter, abridged version and "in the realm" on stage.

"In the realm means that we're on stage so it's a more intimate setting," Polk said. "The audience can be more involved in the show because they're right up on the actors

so the actors have to break that fourth wall in order to engage the audience."

Polk said that, to fit his artistic vision, he was not trying to redo the original production he was in, which he still remembers a lot from. In this year's play, he said he hopes to incorporate new things not included in the first production.

"It's different in the sense that, because it's in the realm it [allows] me to be a little more creative as to how the flow of the show goes and...have the actors not do what I remember," Polk said. "I tend to point out [by saying], 'Hey, I've seen that before. You can't do that,' and just try to get the actors out of their own and out of what I know this show was and just creating something just completely new and different."

To some extent, Polk still hopes to have small subtle parts of the play that also happened in the original, to carry on inside jokes between himself, Alexander-Driscoll and other alumni who acted in 2007.

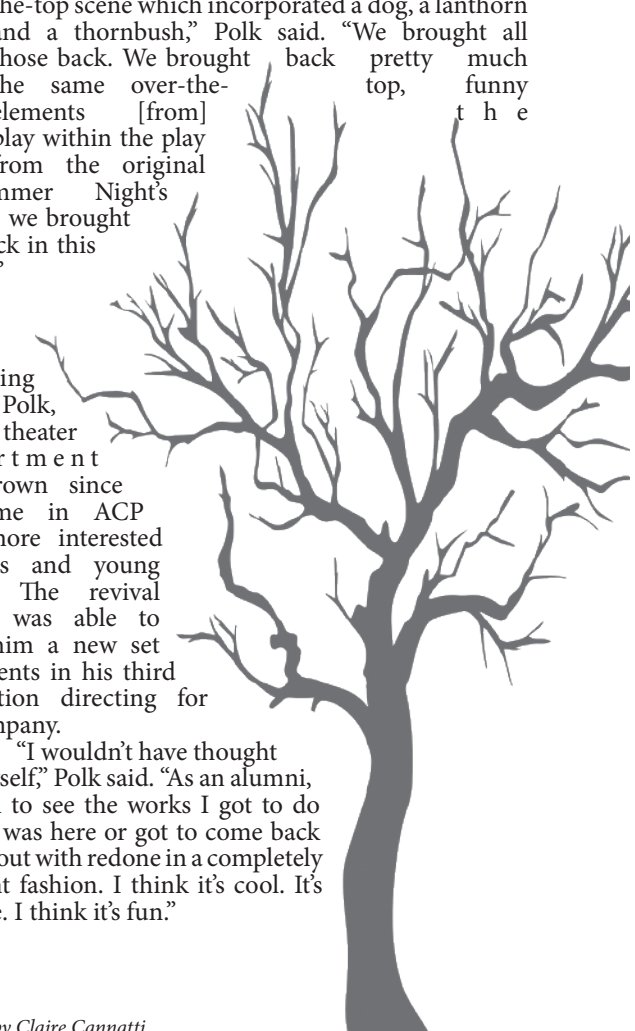
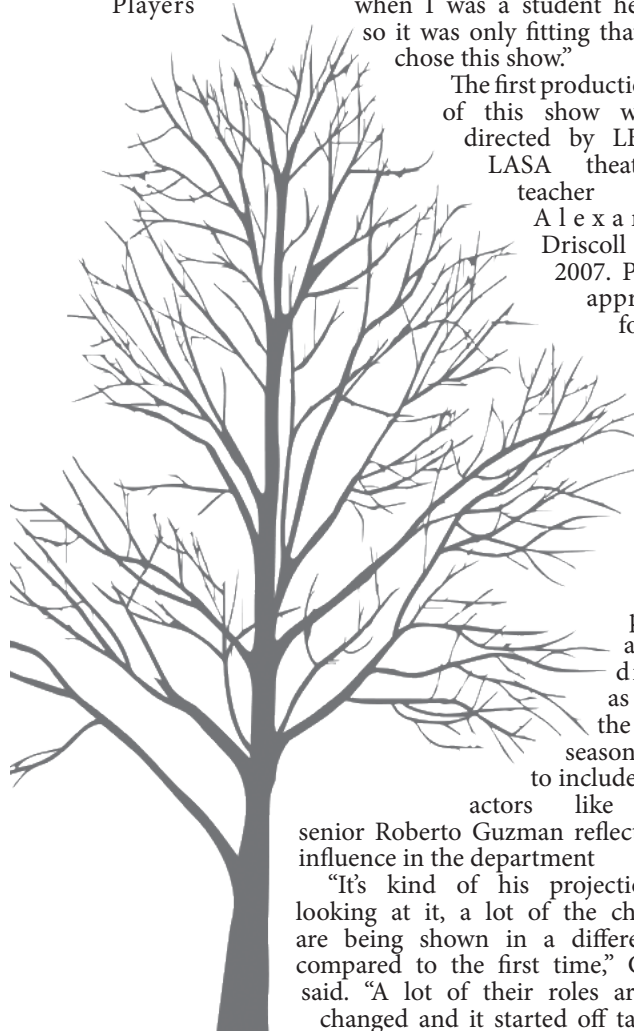
"In the very first production of "A Midsummer Night's Dream" there was a very funny and over-the-top scene which incorporated a dog, a lantern and a thornbush," Polk said. "We brought all those back. We brought back pretty much the same over-the-top, funny elements [from] the play within the play from the original Midsummer Night's Dream, we brought that back in this revival."

According to Polk, the theater department had grown since his time in ACP with more interested students and young actors. The revival season was able to bring him a new set of students in his third production directing for the company.

"I wouldn't have thought of it myself," Polk said. "As an alumni, it's cool to see the works I got to do when I was here or got to come back to help out with redone in a completely different fashion. I think it's cool. It's creative. I think it's fun."

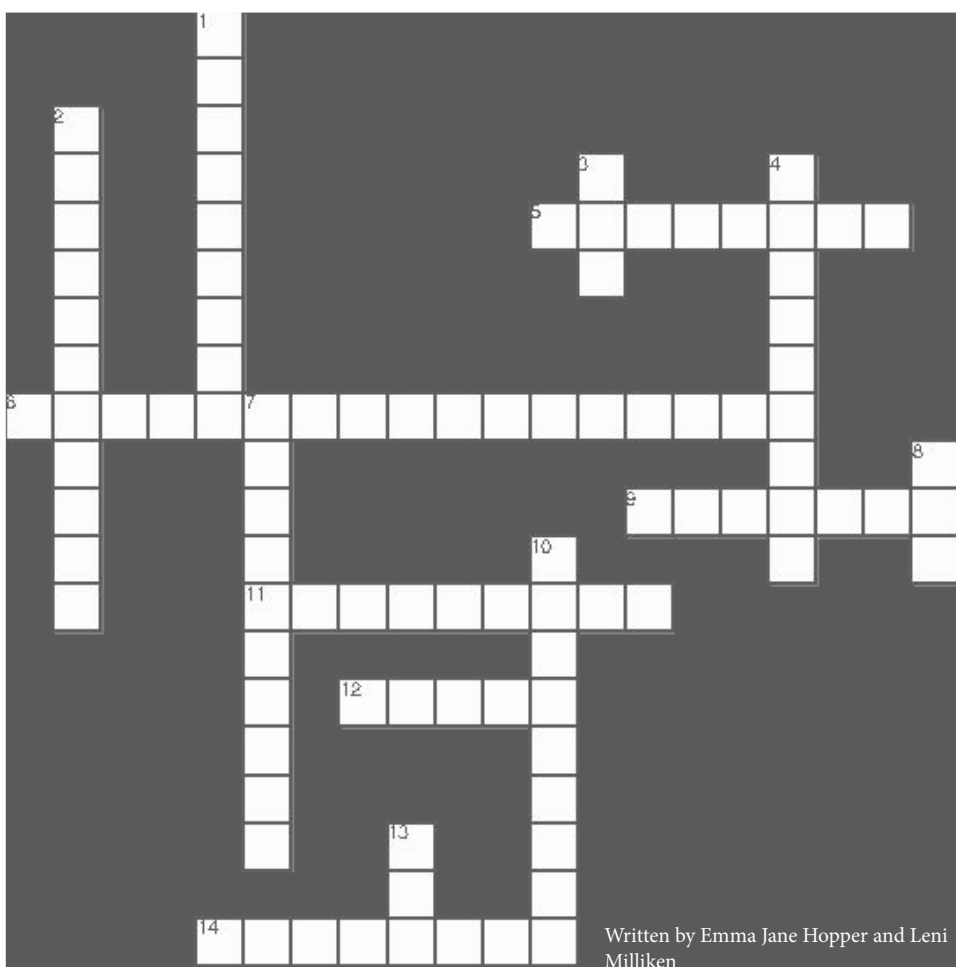
*As an alumni, it's cool to see the works I got to do when I was here or got to come back to help out with redone in a completely different fashion.*

-LBJ alumnus Jeremy Polk



Graphic by Claire Cannatti

## LBJ/LASA Crossword Puzzle



Written by Emma Jane Hopper and Leni Milliken

### Across

- 5. When you get to know the kids in your first block class way too well.
- 6. Your car rests here, with or without a permit.
- 9. Where you used to get yelled at for eating but now it's fine. There are books, but most kids ignore them for the computers.
- 11. These are on opposite ends of the school, so if you have an injury you may as well just take the stairs.
- 12. The place you forget to buy your homecoming ticket from or line up for tardy slips.
- 14. This bakery opens from 5am to 1pm and sells the cheapest donut holes!

### Down

- 1. The only thing worse than getting called out for breaking this is having to wear forest green sweatpants for the rest of the day.
- 2. Admins handed students this themselves in the Student Section during the LBJ vs. Reagan football game.
- 3. Savior if you're ever hurt on any football, soccer or baseball field - or the field of really any sport. You name it.
- 4. None of these work. Literally like one in a hundred.
- 7. Frozen paper towels and band-aids cure everything, right? This lady thinks so.
- 8. If you don't sport, you pep rally here! Unless you go to the cafeteria, in which case: where's your school spirit at?
- 10. Good luck getting to any math class on time from here. Hint: It's not the theater.
- 13. Let's go get \_\_\_\_'s tacos!

## TOP 5

### Teachers I Wish Were My Parents

By Kenza McKerrihan and Emma Jane Hopper

#### Ms. Aguayo

If you grew up with Ms. Aguayo you would have endless homework help. You wouldn't even need to know what Google was because she has all the answers. If you ever got stressed out, you could talk it out at the dinner table or, as she likes to call it, "circle time."

#### Ms. Collins

Don't worry about attendance, your cool mom can still get you places on time, but you'll probably be stuck jammin' to "Beach House" all the way there. For eternity, you'll be considered her "Rae" of sunshine.

#### Mr. Sharp

Having Mr. Sharp as a parent might get confusing-- his facial hair changes so often that sometimes you might wake up not knowing who he is! Not to mention the awkwardness of freshman year. There's no guarantee he'll break his moratorium on interacting with freshmen just for you. He'll wake you up on your first day as a sophomore with a nice timed essay over the "Iliad" and a cup of coffee for breakfast.

#### Chief Firefighter Bess

Being in Chief Bess's family would be fun if you're a biker-- he may put you up to a Tour De France-esque endeavor every weekend. Just be sure not to use his pots or pans! You can eat meat, but he doesn't want it touching where he cooks his vegetarian dishes. And, quick tip-- as a child of Chief Bess you might want to pick up Spanish, so you can interpret his Latin Jazz.

#### Mr. Risinger

Scared of monsters under your bed? Risinger will scare them. Mean ex-boyfriend? Risinger will have them running. Ever need help getting your way with anything law-related? Risinger will defend you until you get justice. There is no doubt that you would feel the safest in your own home if you grew up with Risinger, especially with the multiple firearms we assume he has locked up around his house.

# Dancing through life

**MARLEN AVILA**  
*Staff Writer*

Feeling the wooden floor glide underneath her feet, LASA freshman Sanjana Aluru finds her way through the array of dancers. She knows her way like the others as they perform their piece. As the performance comes to an end, she hears the uproar of applause from the audience. She joins her fellow performers and looks upon the crowd with satisfaction. She has finished her dance.

"I would say Bharata Natyam is an amazing style of dance," Aluru said, "And it's a foreign style of dance, too."

Aluru is a dancer in Bharata Natyam, which in its current form is a style of dance that originated in South India, in the state of Tamil Nadu. This style of dance is an ancient Indian cultural dance that uses classical Indian music mixed with hand symbols and facial expressions to convey the meaning behind the songs. According to Aluru, these elements, along with the geometric and symmetric ideas that the dance was originally based off of, clearly distinguishes this style of dance from all others.

"It's nothing like the flash mobs that you see on Bollywood movies today," Aluru said. "Bharata Natyam is pretty hard because some of the movements are kind of like ballet."

Like ballet, Bharata Natyam requires strong leg muscles in order to perform some of the dance moves. According to Aluru, you need both a strong body and a lot of endurance. Some of the dances in Bharata Natyam last for long periods of time, such as the Varnam which can range from from half an hour to at least two hours.

Aluru began dancing at the age of five. She said choosing to dance was the natural decision because her family opened her up to various genres of music, art and dance as a child. She said that beginning this dance at such a young age has allowed her to build up experience and form better than those who start later.

"Throughout those nine years, I have been learning from one teacher," Aluru said. "Her name is Anuradha Naimpally. Five is really young age, most people think, to start dancing, at least for this dance because this dance is really intensive. I believe that if you don't start from a young age, then you won't be able to build up technique as well as you if you start later in life. And also my teacher, in my opinion, is an amazing teacher, especially for teaching younger students as well as older students."

According to Aluru, Bharata Natyam requires constant practice and is very time consuming. Aluru said that the time commitment of two hour dance classes every Tuesday and Thursday has made her debate her decision to continue, but she always returns because of how much she loves dancing and loves her troupe.

"To be honest, I have wanted to give up before because it's hard and also it's a huge time commitment," Aluru said. "I think the main reason I stayed with the dance is because I love it. Our company is basically a family because we all have been together for quite a long time. I mean there are a few newer dancers that

only been with us for a year or even less. Since we all share this love of dancing, we all sort of clicked together. Just the love and passion for the dance has made me [keep] going and also you have goals because at what is considered the end of your learning stage, we have a performance called the Arangetram."

The Arangetram requires the dancer to dance by themselves. Every piece of the dance is performed by yourself, and according to Aluru, it is very important in the dancer's life. The Arangetram shows that the dancer has the stamina, endurance and strength to keep dancing for long periods of time.

"The Arangetram sort of signals you leaving your child age of the dance world," Aluru said. "So it's pretty big and it's also pretty symbolic, also after you're done with the Arangetram, then you can technically start teaching, too."

Aluru has not yet done her Arangetram, but she had begun preparing through other performances. According to Aluru, she is one of the few people who has stayed with the same dance teacher for this long and not have their Arangetram. This allows her to sometimes

teach the class, because she is one of the higher experienced dancers in their dance group and continues to have a lot of dances in her repertoire. According to

Aluru, the passion she has for the dance and the experience she has gained makes the dance pop.

"So there are many styles and sub styles that you have to have a lot of strength and endurance, you also have to have an overall love and passion in the dance because you have to bring out a lot of emotion and expression in it," Aluru said. "So if you don't necessarily like your dance, then there is no way you can actually make it look beautiful."

Aluru said that, not only is strength and stamina is required to participate in Bharata Natyam, there is a need for a group effort. Another Bharata Natyam dancer in her company Soumya Ashok said that each performance highlights the necessity of cooperation and trusting your fellow dancers.

"A typical solo presentation will consist of six to seven pieces, beginning with an invocation, and going on to more complex pieces, building in intensity of content and choreography," Ashok said. "The central piece usually lasts between 25 to 40 minutes. To perform a full-length solo recital requires a great deal of physical stamina and mental focus, not to mention the capacity to remember choreography for multiple complex pieces."

Although Bharata Natyam is a widely popular dance in India, Aluru said that it is still a foreign dance style that most people are unaware of, especially in America.

"People should open themselves up to things from around the world and to do this, just start by going to concerts or performances," Aluru said. "I mean, it's a good thing to expose yourself to other people's culture and I think that starting small ways like watching other people do things from their culture, that is a great way to start in immersing yourself in other people's culture."

**“The love and passion for the dance has made me [keep] going.”**

-LASA freshman Sanjana Aluru

# ROOKIE ARTIST GOES PRO

**ZOE TRUNGALÉ**  
*Staff Writer*

When LASA sophomore Ella Carlander went to Book People late last September, she expected to give her favorite author, editor, and one of her role models, Tavi Gevinson, a drawing and, if she was lucky, get a picture with her. Instead, she ended up becoming a weekly artist for the online teen publication, Rookiemag.

"She came to Book People to do a book signing, and I went to go see her and I gave her this drawing that I'd done of her," Carlander said, "Then I guess somehow she found me on instagram and then Direct Messaged me and she asked for my email and then we just went back and forth."

Rookie is an online magazine for teenage girls that publishes art and writing from a wide variety of contributors, including the magazine's readers, professional journalists, and celebrities. Each monthly issue is built around a designated theme, and the magazine encourages a range of submissions: anything and everything from DIYs, stories about social issues, pop culture commentaries, and feminist opinion pieces.

"I like it because there's not really another online magazine like it," Carlander said. "It has such a big audience and is created by teens."

After Rookie editor Tavi Gevinson reached out to Carlander, she began her work for the website as an illustrator for the weekly "Dear Diary" section. Carlander said that she uses inspiration from her week to create visual diary entries that reflect current goings-on in her life.

"[Being published] was really cool because I've read rookie for so long, and so to see my stuff on there was really cool," Carlander said.

LASA art teacher Jessica Michlik has known Carlander since last year when she started at LASA in Art 1. Michlik said what makes Carlander successful is that she takes the time to practice techniques and has confidence in her ability to make a successful work of art.

"She knows when a piece is complete and when something needs more time," Michlik said. "She never overworks her art and will try the entire concept/image again to make it even better. Ella's hard work and dedication to her art making practice really shows, and she is confident in everything she makes."

Carlander said taking on a new obligation has created some changes in her art and routine. Her newfound importance from being published has changed the way she said she sees art.

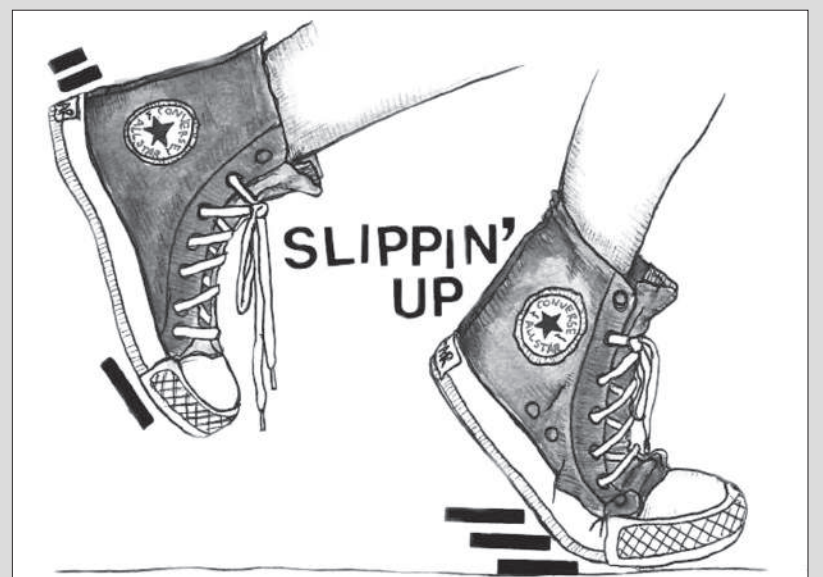
"I've felt an increase in responsibility because there's a deadline so you have to get stuff in every week, so that's another thing I have to get done," Carlander said. "Being published makes art less than just a hobby."

The shift of art from hobby to obligation is has helped Carlander learn what it's like to do art in a more professional setting, so she can think about going into art as a profession.

"I think being an artist would be cool, or I definitely want to do something with art," Carlander said. "[Writing for Rookie] kind of helps me see what it would be like to be more serious about art."

Regardless of what Carlander does in the future, her work has the ability to impact people right now. Carlander said that she hopes for her viewers, who ever they may be, are able to relate to her art, and take something from it.

"I'm in school and [Rookie readers] are probably in school, so I guess some of the things I struggle with and put into my art, they probably struggle with too," Carlander said. "So they can probably apply the concepts of my art to their lives too. If they can just relate to my work that would be cool."



LASA sophomore Ella Carlander creates weekly visual diaries for Rookie, an online magazine for teens. Much of her published art involves a combination of sketch and digital graphics. art courtesy of Ella Carlander

# LASA freshman reaches new heights with unusual sport, gains confidence

**ZOE TRUNGALÉ**  
*Staff Writer*

After trying gymnastics, dance, rock climbing, horseback riding and soccer, LASA freshman Macy Nelms was never passionate about a sport until she tried aerial. Now, five years later, it is a part of her life that has made her stronger physically and mentally.

"The sport is very different," Nelms said. "Most people can't say that every week they climb 30 feet in the air and flip around."

Nelms started aerial when she was 10 years old on a whim. Her mother, Lynna Williams, found a Groupon for her studio Blue Lapis and thought it would be a good experience for her. Nelms has stuck with it for five years now and is continuing to learn new skills.

Aerial is both physically and mentally straining, as the sport requires a lot of technique, and involves working with the cloth and relying on it as much as your own body.

"The hardest part of doing the silks is that everything hurts — every move or trick hurts," Nelms said. "It can be reassuring knowing that the material is going to catch you, but at the same time it is squeezing you so much you can barely breath."

The physicality of aerial is not the sport's sole characteristic. Nelms said that running through the dance moves and tricks is what consumes her mentally as she practices. She said that learning new skills can be very satisfying because they take so much work to accomplish.

"I enjoy the feeling that I get when I perform or I complete a difficult trick or move that I have been practicing for a long time," Nelms said.

Nelms said that aerial has helped her strengthen herself mentally and physically. She said that aerial has changed the way that she approaches situations both in and out of athletics.

"I feel a lot more comfortable with flipping upside down as well as participating in things where I am very high off the ground," Nelms said. "In other parts of my life, I feel like doing this sport has helped me to become more comfortable with performing in front of others."

Williams, who originally got Nelms involved in aerial, said that she loves that Nelms is in the sport. She said that she has seen her grow over her years participating in aerial.

"I think that it has made Macy more confident," Williams said. "She is also very proud of her work."

Williams said that the trainers and facility have influenced and built her daughter's self-confidence through their own confidence.

"Macy's instructors are very confident," Williams said. "They don't use big mats which inspires the students to be confident as well. They methodically teach the students to wrap themselves carefully and be sure about their holds."

Nicole Whitehouse, Nelms' trainer, started teaching aerial in 2007 but has been a dancer her entire life. Whitehouse said that she enjoys teaching kids because of how resilient they are, but it can also be challenging teaching kids because of the element of fear that surrounds the sport.

"I teach them to trust their bodies — to be responsible to understand [their] limits, and to know that the number one priority is to get to the ground safely," Whitehouse said. "The most important thing is getting down to the ground. So [I work on] teaching people to be conscious and have respect for the parameters."

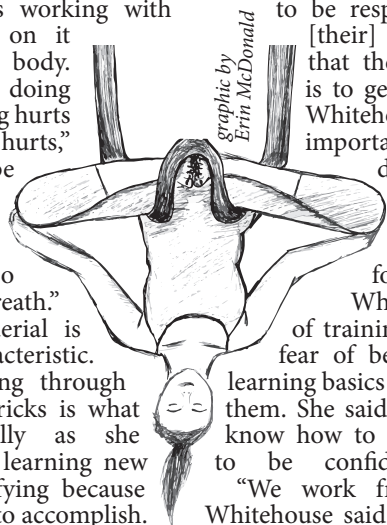
Whitehouse said that part of training and getting past the fear of being off the ground is learning basics and then building upon them. She said that it is important to know how to wrap yourself properly to be confident and successful.

"We work from the ground up," Whitehouse said. "We learn things that lead up to a move; other times we will have to break a move down. Sometimes we will sit on the ground and learn how to wrap ourselves up and then try it in the air."

Whitehouse has used this style of training to build Nelms' set of skills as well as her endurance. Learning these new skills culminates in a performance that incorporates both art and physical skill.

"The aerial performances are very dramatic and graceful," Williams said. "The dances are set and choreographed to music. The music that they use are often current hits, so it is familiar to the audience."

Performing can be nerve-racking for Nelms, but she said she always enjoys doing it. "I usually feel very proud of myself, because I'm doing something that not many other people do," Nelms said. "I'm showing it to a new audience, and that's always a very fulfilling feeling."



graphic by Erin McDonald

# SLIME

continued from page 1

Johnnie Williams is one of three LBJ students who will be featured in a documentary the LBJ Significant Leaders in Male Education club (SLIME) are currently creating about their experiences during and after Hurricane Katrina 10 years ago. Johnnie's cousin, LBJ senior Ashton Williams, and LBJ junior Kigel Gleason will also be participating in this film. The Williams cousins and Gleason were around seven and eight years old when Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans in 2005. The SLIME club is focusing their film on the students' transition from New Orleans to Austin and their life after Hurricane Katrina. LBJ Special Education and Life Skills teacher Ryman Barnes is one of the SLIME advisors overseeing the documentary production.

"We really want to show their everyday life as far as their Texas lifestyle," Barnes said. "And then hopefully... eventually going a week or so to New Orleans with [the students] and see how they would be living in New Orleans."

Barnes said it is important to film this documentary because he believes Hurricane Katrina is an important time in American history. He also thinks it is important to shed light on the positive aspects of the students moving to Austin and their transition of ten years since Katrina. At the same time, Barnes said he wants to focus on the students' accomplishments since moving away from New Orleans.

"[The students' situation] is sad, but with the same token they had a new start to come to Texas," Barnes said. "They're doing really well academically, sportwise and also socially. They have a lot of friends here. They blended with our culture in Texas."

After being asked by Barnes, the Williams cousins agreed to participate in the documentary. Johnnie and Ashton said they want people to know about the tragedy they went through and how that has shaped their lives.

"The whole ordeal was just traumatizing, but I don't think about it as much anymore," Ashton said. "I do things how I want to do them. I think about the consequences, but I want to learn for myself because I want to live. Because you never know when you're going to go and [Hurricane Katrina] was one of the instances where I thought I was going to die."

Another motivation for Ashton and Johnnie to participate was how their story will benefit others. Ashton said the film will be helpful to others because it will help make people not feel

as closed in about their situation and show them other people also go through these struggles. Johnnie wants to share his views on how these tragic events have affected his views on the world.

"I just want to show people nothing should be able to stop you from doing what you want to do," Johnnie said. "[Don't] take life for granted. Care for the people who are around you."

Barnes explained that the first step in the documentary-making process is the video diaries the students have already started. These videos are supposed to capture the students' daily lives, so they film their surroundings and themselves in class, during football practice and coming to school. Next there will be interviews with the students and their family members about their experience with Hurricane Katrina. LBJ and LASA teachers and staff who were working at LBJ or LASA during Katrina will be interviewed about the time when the school was housing displaced people from New Orleans. At the end of the process, SLIME club hopes to arrange a discussion about Katrina with everybody who was involved or impacted by the hurricane.

"So [this documentary is] like a big puzzle, but we are just letting [the students] do the groundwork of doing the video diary right now," Barnes said. "We don't want to focus on the negativity but on the aspects of them coming from New Orleans to here."

The SLIME club began in 2012, and is continuing to expand their horizons. Barnes said they don't want to only focus on one aspect of the community, but also do more film and radio broadcasting, community outreach and sports tournaments.

"We filed for nonprofit status this summer, so we're still a club of LBJ but we still want to be a worldwide organization that does different stuff," Barnes said. "I think the documentary will help with that."

The SLIME club will work on the film throughout the year and they hope to enter the final product in a competition next school year. Johnnie said he wants to show people through the documentary that even though this tragic event happened, it is not holding him back from working hard toward his goals of going to college and making it into the NFL. Neither of the Williams cousins said they are nervous or worried about sharing their story to the public.

"I'm more excited than anything," Ashton said. "I'm excited to share my story because people actually want to listen to it."



LASA sophomore Vada Andrews practices horseback riding at Rio Vista Farms under trainer Amy Monfries, running through her show performance with the horse she's been riding with for competitions. Andrews has been riding and competing in the English style, a more disciplined style of riding and competing, since she was eight, when she was introduced to the sport at a summer camp her mother signed her up for. "I've liked being around animals since I was little [and have] been really interested in animals, and I've wanted to be a vet, so [horseback riding] was just another way to get more time with animals," Andrews said. photo courtesy of Vada Andrews.

## LASA sophomore [horseback] riding solo

**LANEY PHILLIPS**  
Staff Writer

LASA sophomore Vada Andrews takes her horse out of the stable and leads her to the ring, starting with a simple canter to prepare for the upcoming show. They do a few laps around the ring to warm up, and practice trotting and jumping. During rounds, Andrews' instructor raises the jumps and shouts critiques to improve her position. After working to improve her technique and consistency during practice, Andrews finishes by grooming her horse and giving her a treat.

Andrews kicked off her long-lasting passion for horseback riding by attending a spring break camp as an 8-year-old, but became hooked after just a few days at the barn. This immediate attraction began her love for the sport and her long commitment of seven years.

"I liked being around the animals, because ever since I was little I've been really interested in animals and wanted to be a vet," Andrews said. "So that was just another way to get more time with animals."

Andrews invests about three hours each day a few times a week into becoming a better rider. During practice, there are many things she does to improve her technique such as working with her trainer, Amy Monfries, focusing on what the horse needs and learning how to communicate with the horse better. There isn't very much training to do outside of practice, so Andrews spends extra time at the barn caring for her horse and working on technique.

"We warm up on the flat first and then jump, with Amy raising the jumps or changing the course as the lesson progresses to make it more difficult," Andrews said. "She watches us ride and corrects position, decision-making, whatever it is we're doing wrong."

Horseback riding is not just about the riding itself. The riders have much more responsibilities than just showing up for practice. Andrews spends time learning what her horse likes and dislikes in and out of the ring, and gives effort in communicating with her horse as well. What Andrews means by tack up is putting all the horses equipment on such as the saddle.

"Being at the barn is immediate stress relief," Andrews said. "Before lessons I groom my horse, which involves picking his feet, combing his name and tail, and brushing his body and face. Then I tack up and get on. Afterwards,

if it's hot enough, I'll hose him off, and then take him back to his stall and give him treats."

Andrews said she remains committed throughout her many years of riding by recognizing her accomplishments and improvements. She said she has improved her relationship with her horse and trainers through participating in many shows. There are many aspects to riding that she said keep her loving the sport and striving to improve.

"I love getting to see how I progress, especially since I've been doing it for so long, seeing how far I've come

*"I love getting to see how I progress, especially since I've been [riding] for so long, seeing how far I've come since then."*

-LASA sophomore Vada Andrews

since then," Andrews said. "It really makes me want to keep doing it so I can see how far I get from now."

Andrews has noticed extreme improvement in herself as well as her horse since starting horseback riding. She said has begun to further understand and develop her love for the sport and the important skills she's learned.

"Understanding what the horses want from you as a rider is something you're always working on, and I've definitely seen that improve," Andrews said. "Understanding the reasons for why they do things that you might think are bad or misbehaving as being actually they're trying to get you to change the way you communicate with them."

Each horseback riding competition that Andrews participates in varies in level of intensity. Circuit shows are more intense while a schooling show, which is more like practice, isn't as competitive. Judges are very particular in what they like and dislike; they judge the first impression, the rider's position and the harmony between the horse

and the rider.

"Judging is entirely subjective, which can be good or bad depending on the impression you make and whether or not the judge likes your horse," Andrews said. "Some days you can make a lot of really obvious mistakes and still do well because there's something about you or your horse the judge likes. I've had times where I felt like I had the best round of my life and I didn't place."

Monfries, has been teaching horseback riding for eight years. She coaches jumping and hunter, which means judging the horse and its movement.

"We mostly focus on improving the rider's position, learning to make our horses go straight and making their horses more adjustable," Monfries said. "Learning to adjust the horses canter on course allows the rider to adjust better to find the fences and get the correct number of strides."

Monfries gives Andrews high expectations during practice and outside of practice. Monfries' students are not only responsible for themselves but an animal as well. They must groom and exercise their horse. One of the exercises they typically do is flatwork which is any practice excluding jumping.

"I expect my students to come out at least one additional day a week and work on their flatwork outside of the lessons," Monfries said.

Monfries finds it very important to lead Andrews and all of her students to becoming better riders and to keep them motivated to perform at their absolute best.

"My students all try very hard and are constantly learning to communicate with their horses and care for them better," Monfries said. "I am proud to be their trainer and feel it is my job to make them good ambassadors of the sport."

Andrews said she has developed a passion for horseback riding and continues to strengthen her abilities. She said she has trained and worked to improve her technique and to better communicate with the horse. Andrews has seen it all when it comes to competitions, she knows what to expect and how to perform proper etiquette, she said.

"Riding horses was actually not my own idea," Andrews said. "When I was eight my mom signed me up for a camp over spring break, which I'm sure she regrets, and after that I was hooked. I started lessons the next fall."

## Boxing gloves & ballet slippers

LASA freshman participates in both ballet and kick boxing

**GUS ALBACH, ANDY DEGRASSE & CHLOE EDMISTON**  
Staff Writers & Sports Editor

Moving lightly on her toes, LASA freshman Rachel Moon calmly lands the quick combination of assemblés and pliés she has been working on for the last few weeks. In synchronization with the other dancers, she moves swiftly across the floor to the left side of the stage. With a sharp turn of her body, she moves back towards center stage. She then flashes a quick smile at the audience before collapsing into a split to finish the dance.

After taking off her makeup and hurrying across Austin, she arrives at her boxing gym, throwing on some gloves, she begins her boxing practice with a few laps around the gym, before beginning a long and tiring practice full of footwork and sparring drills.

Kick boxing and ballet, two sports with very different stereotypes assigned to them. How could these two things ever blend together? The answer is Moon.

"[Kick boxing] helps relieve stress for me," Moon said. "Dance has always been a passion, so I wouldn't want to quit either one."

Moon's sister, LASA junior Caelynn, said that this sharp contrast in her sister's activities is representative of Moon's personality. Additionally, she said that the addition of kick boxing added an outlet for Moon's frustrations.

"The kick boxing to me is a lot more representative of her normal personality, but the ballet represents her nice insides," Caelynn said.

Moon said that she found her motivation to attempt kick boxing from one of her favorite movies, "Rocky".

"I've always really loved Rocky," Moon said. "I saw that movie and was like 'wow, that's cool!'"

After seeing "Rocky" and being introduced to the sport by a friend, Moon found love in boxing. At the time, she had already been doing ballet, specifically the pointe technique, a classical ballet technique where dancers support all of their body weight on the tips of their feet. Despite the two sport's different styles, one gritty and physical, the other methodical and enchanting; each sport does have a

*"The kick boxing to me is a lot more representative of her normal personality, but the ballet represents her nice insides."*

-LASA junior Caelynn Moon

positive effect on the other.

"Boxing builds up strength and some similar muscles that ballet needs," said Moon. "Ballet also helps with the footwork required for boxing."

Although many students tend to narrow down the number of sports they play in high school to, Moon has avoided this by using both kick boxing and ballet as breaks from the demands of LASA.

"I like both sports, and boxing helps me with stress relief, and that translates over to homework," said Moon. "I went to a [magnet middle school], so I was already pretty adjusted to the LASA setting."

Moon has plans to continue the sports through her high school years. Ultimately, Caelynn said, it is the high level of skill and the competitiveness of both ballet and kick boxing that keep her sister involved in and enjoying both.

"I think she just likes the physical exertion of [kick boxing and ballet]," Caelynn said. "I think she likes pushing herself to her limits, and so, with ballet her pointe, and the physical extremities of her boxing."

## LAX is BACK

**JEFFREY KOVAR**  
Staff Writer

Kate Sheblak runs down the field, cradling the ball and dodging defenders left and right. She shoots the ball into the goal and scores. All the girl's lacrosse fans cheer.

The girl's lacrosse team encountered big changes before the start of the upcoming season. They lost their old coach, Casey Wyatt, and hired Bridget Haby to take her place as the new head varsity coach, with additional assistant coaching. Haby is familiar with lacrosse, as she attended LASA and was an All-State player on LBJ lacrosse and District her junior and senior years. Haby then continued her lacrosse career at the University of Texas, playing defense for four years on the women's team and attending multiple National Tournaments in her time there.

With the new coaching staff, the girl's lacrosse team has high expectations for their season. Both junior varsity and varsity are hoping to go undefeated, according to Coach Chuck Newell, the junior varsity coach. He is also looking for growth from experienced players during pre-season practices. and through the season.

"We have a strong senior class and a large number of incoming freshmen and sophomores," Newell said. "I hope there will be mentoring and support from the experienced players to help the rookies."

Many of the players like what Coach Haby has brought to the team with the detailed instructions she gives her players. LASA senior Kate Sheblak said she really enjoys Haby's work ethic because she always runs through the drills.

"Personally I like our new coach better," Sheblak said. "I feel like this coach is better at telling us how to improve and and [she] tells us 'You need to be better.' She also practices with us, like if we have to run, she'll run with us. She shows us how to do the drills."

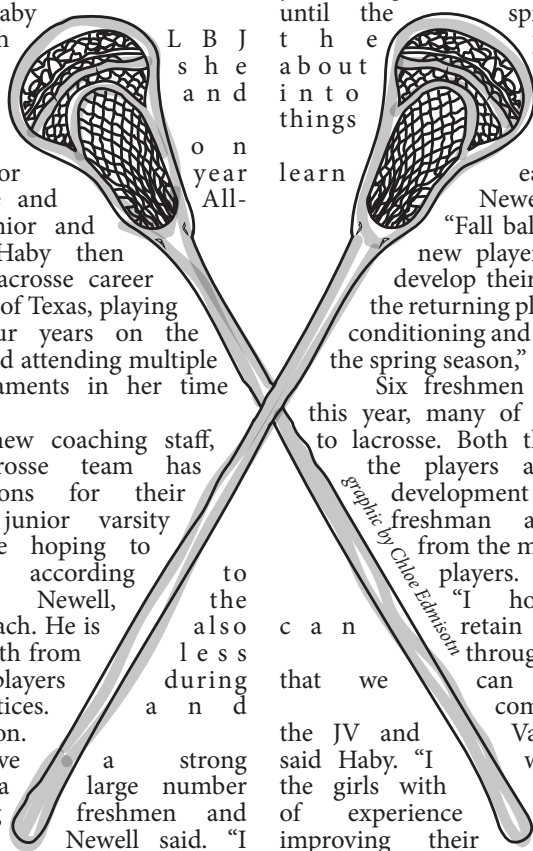
The girl's team wanted to start preparing for the season early, according to Newell. They started practicing for the season at the beginning of the school year, though their season doesn't start until the spring. For them, preparation is all about getting back into the swing of and for new players to learn early, as stated by Newell.

"Fall ball is the time for new players to learn and develop their stick skills and the returning players to get their conditioning and timing ready for the spring season," Newell said.

Six freshmen joined lacrosse this year, many of whom are new to lacrosse. Both the coaches and the players are hoping for development from the freshman and mentoring from the more experienced players.

"I hope that we can retain enough girls throughout the season that we can have successful competition at both the JV and Varsity levels," said Haby. "I would like to see the girls with several years of experience playing and improving their field strategies and their ability to work together as a team during games."

Haby said she feels positive about the season. Competition is very tough but Haby said she still thinks the girls can do very well and finish a strong season. "I think we will have a competitive season and definitely pull out some wins against our tougher opponents in our district," Haby said.



# JAGUAR FRIDAY NIGHT LIGHTS

CHLOE EDMISTON & OLIVER POWERS  
Sports Editors

The epitome of the Friday Night Lights experience, the LBJ Student Section, is alive and well at every football game, yelling for defense or throwing powder and silly string in the air after a touchdown. LASA senior and avid student section-goer Luis Lopez said that the student section is a chance for students to let loose from school and enjoy the game.

"The student section is just a wonderful experience because you have everyone just [relieved], because we're leaving behind all our emotions and stresses from school," Lopez said. "We're all just there for the high school football."

One look at the LBJ student section, however, and it's quick to see that it doesn't quite live up to its name. While the student section labels itself as LBJ, the majority of students that make up the section are from LASA. Former student section leader and LASA alumnus Aniket Patel said this can be chalked up to a lack of communication between LASA and LBJ.

"I think there was less communication than we would have liked to have," Patel said. "While we felt like we're LBJ when we play sports, there was not a huge sense of camaraderie on a daily basis in the halls and that can be attributed to a variety of factors: separation of the schools and difference in cultures to name a few. I think these things led to less communication in terms of overall outreach between students from both schools."

Current student section leader and LASA senior Sam Pastor claims that he, as well as the other student section leaders, has made efforts in order to promote more active participation by LBJ students.

"We post to the Facebook group every week when we have a game, and then there's some LBJ kids in our group, and I've got friends in LBJ, that know that we're going to be there," Pastor said. "So they have that knowledge that we're there. We don't usually get a lot of folks from LBJ but we would like to."

Pastor said that he is in part to blame for the lack of participation. Pastor claims that poor organization plays a role in the difference between attendance, but cites other reasons in addition to that.

"I think it's partially on organization, on my end," Pastor said. "Sometimes we don't get the info out until the day before so that's on me. There's also definitely a gap between the schools, that we have to bridge sometimes. Not all LBJ kids are in the Facebook group. I think it's also because the student section has been mostly LASA-led, throughout history. There haven't been many LBJ kids involved."

While Pastor credits the separation to organization, according to Lopez, the gap in attendance is caused more by a cultural divide. Lopez said that different friend groups have also led to the small amount of interaction between LBJ and LASA students in the student section.

"I think do with the cultures the schools," "Even though two floors; it is a very campus in a the majority in the student are student The only time LBJ kids mix athletics, football field. LASA people

*While we felt like we're LBJ when we play sports, there was not a huge sense of camaraderie on a daily basis.*

-Former LASA student Aniket Patel

it has to be different between Lopez said. we say we're one school, separated way. And of the people section athletes. LASA and is during and on the So all the that know

LBJ kids are probably playing or on the field and vice-versa. Most of the LBJ kids don't know us, so they're like 'I'll stay with my friends away from these crazy obnoxious LASA kids.'"

The lack of communication and organization has been felt by many of the LBJ students including LBJ student Xavier Jett. According to Jett, most LBJ students feel unwelcome in the LBJ student section, despite it being all inclusive.

"To be truthful, I don't think they would want to join us," Jett said. "They don't really show that they like us, so we keep ourselves separate. I wouldn't mind sitting with them."

This mindset isn't shared by all LBJ students however. LBJ freshman Cameron Nelson said that he feels that the student section shows good demonstration of school spirit from everyone involved.

"It was the best, the best school spirit," Nelson said. "It was all positive, nothing negative, everyone showing love to each other. It was just the best."

Pastor said that the positive school spirit brought to the games by the student section is beneficial for the players. According to Pastor, giving the players a fan base to cheer for them makes the game more fun for everyone.

"It's important because you get fans out to the games," Pastor said. "The players are in high school, they're not pros or in college so they want fans there. It means a lot to the kids to have fun when your friends are there watching you, even though it might make you a little nervous."

The reason for most students' participation remains the same, regardless of school. Pastor maintains that the student section is about having a good time. According to Pastor, it's a good way to decompress after a busy week at school.

"It's a lot of fun because you can get loud, you get rowdy," Pastor said. "It's a relief from all the school work you have to do for both LASA and LBJ students. It's a good time. I mean I have a good time, and I've been doing that for four years and it's hard to get away from that."

Even if the student section isn't as integrated as the section leaders would like for it to be, according to Patel, everyone in the student section feels a sense of camaraderie. He said that the most important part of the student section is that everyone is connected, regardless of the score.

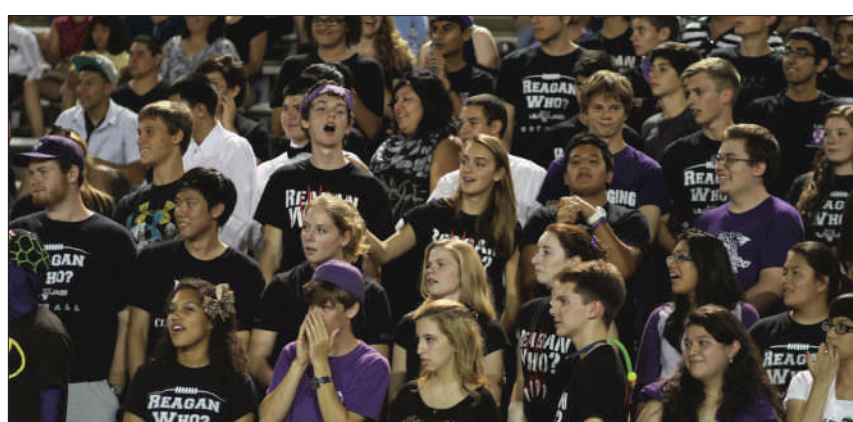
"I don't think that I have seen such a hyped up crowd at anyone else's high school," Patel said. "We go out to represent our school in numbers and we yell as loud as we can. It really can't get better than that. Most importantly, at the end of the day, win or lose, we stick together. That's what makes our student section amazing."



Student section leaders conduct the load, expansive LBJ students section in a cheer for the Jaguars during the LBJ versus McCallum game on Oct. 10, 2014. The Jaguars lost the game 42-23, and ended the season with a record of 11-3, after a loss in the 26-5A quarterfinals to Vandegriff. "I just like leading the chants [as student section leader], because that's pretty fun," LASA senior and 2015-2016 season student section leader Sam Pastor said.



The LBJ student section celebrates the LBJ football team during the LBJ versus McCallum football game on Oct. 21, 2011. The Jaguars won the game 26-22, with a final season record of 6-4. "We don't usually get a lot of folks from LBJ but we'd like to," LASA senior and student section leader Sam Pastor said.



LBJ and LASA students watch the LBJ versus Reagan football game on Oct. 12, 2012. The Jaguars won the game 17-7, with a final record of 4-6. "The student section is a wonderful experience because... everyone [is] just leaving behind all emotions and stresses from school," LASA senior Luis Lopez said.



The LBJ student section cheers on the varsity football team at the LBJ vs. Crockett game on Oct. 17, 2013. The Jaguars lost the game 28-14, with a final record of 4-6. "We never identified ourselves as LASA, even though the [student section] was mainly LASA [students]. For football, [LBJ] and LASA were certainly united as one," former LASA student and 2013 football season student section leader Aniket Patel said.

## Profile of a student section leader

Sam Pastor, LASA senior and one of three student section leaders for the 2015-2016 school year, talks about what it's like to lead the student section, his duties as leader and takes us through what a day in the life of one of the loudest members of the student section looks like on LBJ football game days.

**Q:** What does a typical day as a student section leader look like?

**Pastor:** "I go to school and I wear a bunch of gear. Sometimes I have my visors and sometimes it's a hat, sometimes it's my frisbee jersey, sometimes it's just a purple shirt. [I mix them] up. And we have a pep rally so I go lead that some of the time, and then I go eat before games; change it every week. Sometimes I go home and watch Netflix. And then I go to the game around 7 p.m., 30 minutes before, and then I find a good area for us to sit and get going. [After the game], I clean up trash because a lot of people leave it. Sometimes I'll go get food afterwards with some friends. Other times, I'll have something the next morning early or I'm really tired after the week, so I'll just go home and pass out."

**Q:** How do the chants and yells work?

**Pastor:** "We look for if we're on offense or defense, and usually that dictates what chants we go off of or which kind of chants we would use. We also look at the score of the game or, if there's a penalty, we might pull out a 'You can't do that.' It basically depends on what's going on at the game, even though a lot of people don't really watch the game or understand football. [The chants] kind of bring them back in, and hopefully they'll understand the sport more from [them]."

**Q:** What was a defining student section moment for you?

**Pastor:** "I'm totally going to remember how the administration called us in the week of the Reagan game, and told us 'Don't bring all these things' and listed things off like powder or silly string, and told us to get the word out. I told people 'Don't bring it, it's not going to be tolerated, you'll get thrown out.' [When] we scored against Reagan, nobody did anything, like we were told. Then, Reagan scores and [their fans] sitting at the top of the bleachers away from the field throw powder. Our fans decided 'You know what, we're going to pull the powder out of our pockets that we snuck in that we weren't supposed to have' and they just let all hell hang loose."



LASA senior and student section leader Sam Pastor leads the LBJ student section in cheer at the "pink-out" LBJ versus Cedar Creek game on Oct. 16.



## Boy's Cross Country

**MEAGAN ALLGOOD**  
News Editor

LBJ boys cross country took district this season, placing first in the meet. LASA counselor and assistant cross country coach Shannon Bergeron said that the district meet was the perfect set of conditions for the boys to run in, and after all of the training they had gone through, the boys pushed through and took the win.

"I think that we had a solid group of boys, for sure, who kept improving and pushing themselves, and had a great race," Bergeron said. "You just never know, on any given day...I feel like we just had some really great conditions for the race that day, the weather was good, they felt strong, and they were rested. They went for it."

On Oct. 26, the boys team competed at the regional meet in Corpus Christi, where they did not place. According to LASA sophomore Dylan Cox the performance at regionals was disappointing, especially after the win at district.

"We were definitely a lot happier with our district performance than at regionals," Cox said. "Regionals was kind of a disappointment but then again we weren't expecting to go to state or anything. We were really happy with district, it was a good morale boost."

Bergeron said that, though the boys did not place in regionals, they still fared well considering the circumstances.

"Once you get to that level of competition it's very, very competitive," Bergeron said. "It was right after we'd had all the rains that weekend, and because the band competition had been rescheduled for the same time, only six out of the 11 students went. We had a team plagued with several injuries [and] people had been sick, so it was going to be kind of rough anyways."

Bergeron said that they needed to take five of the top scores to place, and the team was not able to do so. According to LASA sophomore Dylan Cox, the new conditions threw the team off, slowing their times

"I think honestly what could have been best is if we had conditions like we saw in Corpus to train in, but obviously we can't do that here," Cox said. "I don't think there is really anything else we could have done since we only had a week in between district and regionals. I think all the other guys trained really hard and they put in their best training and in the race, so we can't feel too bad about how we did."



LASA senior Sam Lynaugh and sophomore Hew Willis compete at the district 26-5A boys' cross country meet, where they won first place and continued on to regionals in Corpus Christi, TX on Oct. 26. photo courtesy of Carter Pace.

## Jaguar Swim Team

**OLIVER POWERS & EVA STRELITZ-BLOCK**  
Sports Editor & Staff Writer

L B J swimmers line up along the side of the pool, taking their positions on the diving block and waiting for the signal to come for the race to begin. The signal comes and they take off with a dive and a splash. The LBJ jaguar swim team erupts in cheers as their swimmers lap the pool.

"Our team is definitely prepared for our upcoming Round Rock Invitational meet," Sajbel said. "It is a very fast meet because we're competing with teams that aren't in our district as well as with the usual, McCallum and Ann Richards. That being said, we definitely have some swimmers that will end up placing at this meet. Coach has been kicking our butts at practice, so even returning swimmers should have faster times. The whole team is really excited for this meet."

This year's tryouts have been some of the most competitive, according to head coach Chloe Cardinale. Because of the high level of skill in the underclassmen swimmers, Cardinale has been forced to cut returning upperclassmen in favor of younger students.

"The freshmen and sophomore classes that came in this year are the most competitive and fastest kids I've ever seen," Cardinale said. "It is not just one or two fast kids, every single kid is fast and competitive and swims for Nitro and swims for Longhorns which are the best, most competitive clubs. That in and of itself set a whole different standard for the pace of the rest of the team. I ended up cutting a lot of the returning swimmers for new swimmers so that definitely changed."

Beyond its commitment to performance, LBJ Swim Team is notable for the supportive environment it creates, according to Sajbel. With that in mind, Sajbel said that she hopes to see that spirit persist through this year.

"The team last year was pretty close, so this year I'm hoping to see the same levels of camaraderie," Sajbel said. "One of the reasons the team is really excited for this meet is because we're doing big/little reveals the day before, and so it's the first meet that they will have their special buddy."

With the increasing level of skill over the years, the expectations have also been raised, said Cardinale. The team has also become more of a place for swimmers looking to compete in high school and potential in college, according to Cardinale.

"When I started it was 23-25 kids that didn't swim competitively, kids just enjoy swimming as a pastime, that just wanted to get a PE credit and have fun. Consistently I have seen club swimmers come in and competitive swimmers come in and kids wanting to swim at collegiate level come in," said Cardinale. "I think the relay teams have a good chance of maybe not beating the 6A teams but not being close off from beating them which is really outrageous to consider. I think people are going to be surprised."

## New UIL policy limits transgender students

**ASHLEY THOMAS**  
Staff Writer

In early October a new policy was proposed by the University Interscholastic League's (UIL) 32 legislative council members asking superintendents across the state to vote on a policy that states students must identify with the gender printed on their birth certificate in order to participate in a UIL sport. LASA wellness counselor and sponsor of the LASA Pride Alliance club, Meagan Butler, said she's appalled by the policy that will take effect Aug. 2016 if passed.

"I think that if someone identifies as a different gender than what's on their birth certificate, they should be allowed to participate in sports," Butler said. "I think that we are in effect saying that if someone is nonbinary or transgender that they aren't allowed to participate in a sport even if they identify that way."

According to the UIL website, nondiscriminatory policies are already in place stating that children cannot be disallowed to play a sport based on their race, gender, religion or national origin nor if they have a disability. In Texas, changing the gender on your birth certificate is possible, but can tend to be tedious, costly and requires a reassignment surgery with a court order. For some transgender people this won't be an issue, but those who haven't met the qualifications will be forced to not participate in UIL events, or will only be allowed to participate as their birth gender. LASA sophomore Lia Wiese, a LASA Pride Alliance (LPA) officer, said the real issue lies in the difference between gender and gender identity.

"This rule would mean that

athletes of any gender would be able to participate in sports, but athletes whose gender doesn't match their birth certificate would have to participate on a team they don't identify with," Wiese said. "Other states do have laws that allow transgender athletes to participate in sports as the gender they identify as. In these cases, the critics' worries that transgender athletes would dominate sports and cisgender athletes would try out for teams of the opposite gender in order to gain an advantage haven't happened, and there's no reason to expect that

on a daily basis.

"Apart from this there's a lot of violence and harassment that comes with being transgender, especially with trans people of color," Ellisor said. "Right now the murder rate of transgender people is at an all-time high, and the transgender teen suicide rate is high as well. Although it's good that people like Laverne Cox are voicing these concerns, that doesn't do [anything] if people don't listen to them. Trans people are people, and we just want to be able to go about our daily lives."

Starting next school year, the policy will bar students that choose to identify with a different gender than what appears on their birth certificate looking to participate in any UIL athletic event. Ellisor said that the issue at hand may be the difference between gender identity rather than gender assigned at birth. Only gender is recognized by the UIL.

"Gender is an identification that someone assigns to themselves, whereas sex is what's on our birth certificate," Ellisor said. "Those are two separate things and I don't think many people see that. I understand why they do it however, which is with the intent of preventing cheating. My issue is that these instances are limited, and there are many people who identify with a particular gender, or don't, who currently cannot compete in the category they are most comfortable in... Gender is fluid, and some people don't know their gender until much later in their lives. Some people never know their gender, and that's okay. I think we just need to accept that."

*Trans people are people, and we just want to be able to go about our daily lives.*

-LASA senior Red Ellisor

they would in UIL. The only thing I see coming out of this planned rule is discomfort for many, many students."

According to Times Union and the Youth Suicide Prevention Program, there are an estimated 700,000 transgender citizens in the United States. In grades K-12, 75 percent of transgender students are harassed on a daily basis, with 35 percent experiencing physical assault, 12 percent experiencing sexual violence and a 14 percent dropout rate due to bullying. Additionally, more than 50 percent of the transgender community will try to commit suicide before the age of 20. LASA senior and LPA co-president Red Ellisor said that being restricted in options for playing school sports is only one of many issues transgender teens deal with



LASA seniors Will Goodwin and Dylan Kreth, and LASA sophomore James Hardin simulate passes and defense during ultimate frisbee practice. "I feel like [ultimate frisbee] is a very approachable sport," LASA sophomore and LASA ultimate player Finn Uyeki said. photo by Chloe Edmiston.

## The {layout} of ultimate frisbee

**ELAN McMINN**  
Staff Writer

Ultimate frisbee's rising popularity in Austin has motivated many organizations, such as the Ultimate Players League of Austin (UPLA) to further their effort to expand the sport. However, despite the quick growth of the sport, many school districts, such as Austin Independent School District (AISD), have not sponsored it as a University Interscholastic League (UIL) sport. Despite this, ultimate clubs have thrived in Austin-area schools, and have greatly accelerated the spread of ultimate.

"I think at this time it is not a super huge sport, but it is definitely growing and I feel like in five or 10 years it will have the following that it needs to be a UIL sport," LASA sophomore Finn Uyeki said.

Uyeki said that even though the LBJ ultimate team is a self-run sports team, the environment that the club sport creates is inviting and may even be better than if the sport was sponsored by AISD.

"I like the current club setting a lot because it really allows for a lot more flexibility and you really have more options," Uyeki said.

Uyeki said even though there has been a large increase in ultimate's popularity, the following isn't large enough across all of AISD to make it a UIL-funded sport. Something unique about the LASA ultimate team is that they don't have a coaching staff, but a student coach who founded and runs the club. LASA senior Sam Pastor founded the club as a freshman because he was really passionate about

the sport, and enjoyed the rising community.

"Managing the team is hard sometimes with the amount of people involved, but I've had some great experiences that help me lead everyone else in drills at practice, or in our games," Pastor said.

Pastor was recently the captain of a U20 competitive league called Texas Two Step, which won 11th in nationals this year at the Youth Club Championships. The experience

*I think at this time [ultimate] is not a huge sport, but it is definitely growing.*

-LASA sophomore Finn Uyeki

allowed him to get more out of the team, and gain expertise to help him coach LASA's club.

"I was a captain this year for Two Step which was a great experience because I got to play and lead on an entirely new level," Pastor said.

Pastor said that he is adamant that ultimate should be adopted within school districts, but thinks that the sport is misunderstood, and will need a large push to get into school funding, and UIL competition. Pastor suggested that in Austin, the semi-professional team coming soon might be the push that is needed.

"Ultimate has had a rise in popularity for sure, but the majority of players start playing ultimate in college," Pastor said. "I think that school districts haven't adopted the sport because the administrators of the district still don't understand

totally what the game is about and have some misconceptions about the sport and its players in general."

Another organization that has helped push ultimate into the spotlight is the UPLA. The organization sets up opportunities to play ultimate recreationally and competitively. This includes weekend tournaments, and youth leagues, all to increase the spread of ultimate throughout the city.

UPLA president Henry McManus said that the rise in ultimate frisbee's popularity can be attributed to coverage from sources like ESPN Top Plays and local television channels showing ultimate games. Additionally, the team aspect of ultimate creates strong bonds within

them, and can bring even the farthest in backgrounds together.

"[UPLA] supports the mission of spreading ultimate and providing opportunities to players that may not otherwise have formal 'teams' to play on," McManus said.

At this time, McManus said that it would be very tough to integrate such a different sport into schools because change doesn't just happen overnight. McManus thinks with the right amount of exposure and time, ultimate will be able to make it and become a supported, and possibly UIL, sport.

"Ultimate is still, for now, perceived as a fringe sport," McManus said. "Breaking the mold is difficult in the public school system and would require new support systems, funding and resources the school isn't used to allocating or monitoring."



The LASA Ultimate Frisbee team competes at a tournament in College Station, TX in 2014 (left) and the state tournament in Waco, TX in 2014 (right). "Ultimate is on the rise certainly in all levels," LASA senior and LASA team captain Sam Pastor said. photo courtesy of Sam Pastor.

# GHOULS IN SCHOOL

*Amidst tornado warnings and surprise power outages, LASA and LBJ students and faculty stayed in high “spirits”, with creative costumes and competitive pumpkin painting.*



**1** Along with a group of their friends, LASA sophomores Sophie Dreslinski and Alabel Chapin dressed up as princesses for the day. “We decided to be princesses because we loved them when we were kids and kind of wanted to reflect on our childhood,” Chapin said.

**2** A group of LASA juniors including Dayla Woller show off their Beanie Babies costumes, which was decided on weeks after initial deliberations. “Usually weeks before Halloween we brainstorm possible ideas we could do,” Woller said. “Some of the possible ideas were breakfast foods, Christmas carolers, and Barton Bellas from Pitch Perfect but they were all rejected.”

**3** LASA seniors Kate Stankiewicz and Mark Moreno dressed up as Dora the Explorer and her cousin Diego to celebrate Halloween after brainstorming couple costumes. “We were at a football game and we were just trying to brainstorm ideas and we I thought of Nickelodeon and eventually Dora the Explorer came up,” Moreno said.

**4** LASA world geography teacher Neil Loewenstern was one of many LASA and LBJ teachers to dress up Friday. The LASA English department dressed up as Saturday Night Live characters, while Loewenstern opted for a Willy Nelson costume. “I thought dressing like Willy Nelson would be fun, because it was pretty easy for me to find stuff for a costume,” Loewenstern said.

**5** Posing in the library as Madea, LBJ sophomore Howard Griffin said his friends encouraged him to wear his Halloween costume to school. “Everyone wanted to see me in this costume, and it’s Halloween so I wore it,” Griffin said.



photos by Chelsea Banawis, Mateen Kontoravdis

## JAG-O’-LANTERNS

LASA has a long-running tradition of hosting a pumpkin decorating contest for Halloween. This year, Forum classes battled it out with renditions of *Starry Night*, Donald Trump (a la Trumpkin) and abstract art all painted or otherwise decorated onto pumpkins. The rules prohibit carving or cutting the pumpkins in any way, because the pumpkins are washed off and donated to the Capital Area Food Bank after judging for the competition ends. Here are a few of *The Liberator’s* favorite entries. photos by Olivia Tung

