

COFFEEHOUSE RELOCATED AFTER FLOOD



After Shady Springs Party Barn flooded, Coffeehouse, the concert planned and hosted by the songwriting class, found its new home on a rental stage in the gym and theater platforms in the fine arts hallway. In the LBJ gymnasium the songwriting class runs a soundcheck to assure concert-worthy acoustics for the night. photo by Chelsea Banawis

see page 10

STUDENTS SERVE UP RESTAURANT STORIES



LBJ seniors Ariel Campbell, Dayton Weathers and D'Erica Rector work in the service industry as hosts and waiters. According to Rector, who is a waitress at IHOP, being a server means meeting lots of different people and being able to shift focus from one table to the next. photo by Victoria Mycye.

see pages 8-9

STUDENTS HOOP FOR TROOPS

During field day, LBJ and LASA students and faculty participated in the charity basketball game Hoops for Troops. The annual game is organized by students and raises money for military and veteran serving organizations. LBJ sophomore Kevin Johnson played on the Hoops for Troops basketball team sponsored by the LBJ Jaguar baseball team. photo by Chelsea Banawis.

see page 16



the liberator

Liberal Arts and Science Academy and Lyndon Baines Johnson High Schools

May 26, 2016

Volume 42

Issue 6

7309 Lazy Creek Drive, Austin, Texas 78724

Ladies of Distinction host inaugural young women's day



Above: Conference goes begin their day with yoga, Zumba or aerobic dance to loosen up before the day begins. Top right: A representative of a local Austin improv group leads morning stretches at the LoD conference prior to beginning the days' activities. Bottom left: Former representative in the Texas legislature Wilhelmina Delco addresses girls at the Ladies of Distinction Conference. "If you have the capacity to make a difference, you ought to be willing to stand up and make a difference." Bottom right: During the lunch break, conference goes mingle and visit various sponsor booths, including groups from the Austin Regional Clinic and the Paul Mitchell School.

SAM ZERN
Editor-in-Chief

Dozens of girls from high schools across Austin mix and mingle in the entrance hall of the Austin Independent School District (AISD) Performing Arts Center, trying to find out if anyone has taken college classes or is the baby of their family. They're playing an icebreaker scavenger hunt, and girls who have never met before are laughing and talking as they try to fill out the scavenger hunt worksheet at the inaugural Ladies of Distinction Young Women's Conference. The conference, put on by the LBJ Ladies of Distinction (LoD), was meant to connect high school girls across the city.

"The motivation behind [the conference] was I thought, 'I've had LoD at LBJ for four years' and I wanted to do something to where more people could know about what we're doing..." Kerrie Carter, LBJ AVID teacher and founder of LoD, said. "I just want girls to be empowered and to be motivated just to be great, because so many times people are so negative and self-esteem plays a factor in that and just how we feel about ourselves. I just want to make sure that girls get encouraged to find their purpose in life."

The conference featured interactive break-out sessions in various types of exercise, finance, music and cosmetology for students to attend. According to LBJ freshman and LoD historian Andrea Briones, the conference was a chance to interact with girls from all across Austin.

"[My favorite part] was seeing all of these girls, meeting them, seeing them having fun and having all different types of schools come together and forgetting labels, like 'oh you're Reagan, you're Anderson.' It was just all LoDs," Briones said.

According to Carter, another mission of the conference was to expose girls to different life paths. As such, the conference featured a career panel, which featured women of various professions, including a dentist, a banker, an electrical engineer, a police officer and an AISD instructional coach.

"I hoped to meet a lot of women leaders who could give advice, and I really did take

away a lot from that since they had that panel," LASA junior Sofia Espinoza said.

In addition to the interactive sessions and career panel, University of Texas Women's Basketball coach Karen Aston and former state representative Wilhelmina Delco were featured as keynote speakers at the conference. Carter said she hoped that the speakers would have a positive impact on the conference attendees.

"I know Coach Aston because I used to work the UT basketball games and I knew not just that she would say yes but that she was a positive influence in the community and so that's why I wanted to have her," Carter said.

LBJ LoD members were involved in the conference planning, contacting sponsors and speakers and writing the emcee scripts. Planning the conference was just one of the many community-building activities LoD has done since its inception four years ago. Other events the club has been involved in include homeless outreach and middle school support, as well as lock ins and sleepovers at the school to help strengthen the bonds between the girls in the club. LBJ sophomore and LoD president Maria Salgado, who emceed the conference, said the work the club does brings girls at LBJ

[My favorite part] was seeing all of these girls, meeting them, seeing them having fun and having all different types of schools come together and forgetting labels.

-LBJ freshman Andrea Briones

together.

"I dedicate my whole life to LoD because I see the girls and all of them are so nice to me and I've never had so many girls be so nice to me," Salgado said.

In addition to volunteering at various organizations in the community and running the city-wide conference, Salgado said that at a local level LoD gives members a safe space to share with other girls who want to support them.

"I guess everybody that's in LoD knows every girl, they don't know them as in like talking but they know their stories and what they have to do everyday to get to school and in order to have clothes on them or the food that they get..." Salgado said. "It just means a lot to have girls and to watch some girls actually look up to me or actually be like 'Maria, thank you for that.' This is great having them as friends and probably later on in the future, we're still gonna talk, which is great. Since I've been in LoD since eighth grade, it's really helped me with my high school years."

183 construction plan to expand Austin mobility

MINGYO LEE
Guest Writer

The new 183 South expansion project, having recently started construction, will expand US 183 by building a new 8 mile, 6 lane tollway that stretches between US 290 and SH 71. The non-tolled part of expansion of US 183 will have 6 lanes, while other improvements, like a new traffic monitoring system, bicycle lanes and connections to the local trail system will be added.

The project has a long history stretching back to the 1980s, when the Texas Department of Transportation was studying improvements to 183, from Highway 71 up to the Lakeline Mall area. However, plans for improvements were postponed due to a lack of funding and as time went by, additional studies and alternative financing were required. Steve Pustelnyk is the Director of Community Relations of the Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority (CTRMA), the agency that is in charge of the project.

"In 2011 our agency, the Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority became involved, and in cooperation with the Texas Department of Transportation, a new environmental assessment was begun," Pustelnyk said. "That assessment included the option of using tollway as a method of funding mechanism, so that study was conducted between 2011 and 2015 which led up to our current project being initiated."

continued on page 7

LBJ teacher Kerrie Carter invited to White House

LOGAN KRAMER
Editor-in-Chief

President Barack Obama declared the first week of May National Teacher Appreciation Week, and to celebrate, he invited the State Teachers of the Year and other 'great educators,' including LBJ teacher Kerrie Carter, to the White House. Carter, who teaches the Advancement Via Independent Determination (AVID) and Peer Assistance, Leadership and Service (PALS) classes, was nominated for the honor by LBJ principal Sheila Henry, and was the only teacher from the Austin Independent School District to travel to the White House.

"I guess my favorite part about the event was I think just when they said, 'And here's the President of the United States of America,'" Carter said. "When I heard that and I saw him walking in, [that] was probably the most fantastic part of my trip... just being as close as I was to the president."

When she's not in D.C., Carter is not only an AVID and PALS teacher. She also founded Ladies of Distinction (LoD) four years ago and is the sponsor of a program that

connects LBJ students with swim lessons to make lifeguarding jobs accessible.

LBJ sophomore Anissa Jones has Carter as a teacher for PALS class, and has also gotten to know her in LoD. Jones said Carter has been there to help her with friend issues throughout the year and has overall been an encouraging positive influence on all the students who join LoD or have her as a teacher. When Carter heard that she'd been invited to the White House, Jones was in Carter's classroom and said she was excited to be able to celebrate with her teacher.

"I was actually in her class when she got the email, and we were just looking at her because she got happy for a second, and so I guess it was very exciting for us being there when she first heard about it, we were the first people she expressed it to..." Jones said. "I really just felt happy for her."

While in D.C., Carter had the opportunity to tour the White House and connect with educators from around the country. One educator in particular from Alabama inspired Carter to think more about using e-books and other technological innovations in

the classroom, and she said she's excited to bring back these ideas to LBJ. However, throughout her years teaching Carter said no matter what program she's working on, she tries to help her students develop their own skills to be most successful.

"As a teacher [my job is to] just to make sure that I'm doing everything possible that I can to make sure that my students are not being taught to take a test but they're actually learning how to learn and how to take notes and how to study and how to develop socially, mentally and in many other aspects of education," Carter said. "So I think I look at education as a whole... child versus just teaching them how to pass a test."



LBJ teacher Kerrie Carter poses outside of the White House on National Teacher Appreciation Day before being recognized by the president. photo courtesy of Kerrie Carter

Seniors flying to new heights

At the end of each school year, seniors on the Liberator staff write -30s-, personal commentaries about their individual high school experiences which commemorate their past four years at LBJ/LASA. The following are a tribute to their years at this school, their staffs and the legacies they will leave. All graphics by Claire Cannatti



Sam Zern, Editor-in-Chief

Sam Zern

Vanderbilt University

As soon as I fell in love with Vanderbilt and Nashville, I figured I should also fall in love with country music (and by that I mean current country music, of course I already loved Johnny Cash and Waylon Jennings, that's just a given). It's been said a million times, but country music is chock full of cliches-- trucks, summer nights, red solo cups, etc. However, the cliché I find the most entertaining is that of the "high school glory days." Whether it's Tim McGraw talking about the carefree, rock and roll age of 17 or Kenny Chesney dreaming of going back, country pop has a tendency to glorify the teenage years, painting them as carefree, reckless and free of consequences. My

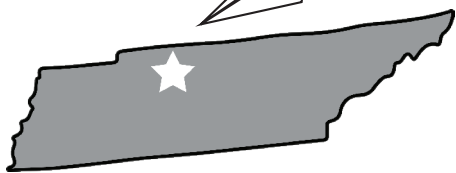
high school years haven't quite matched up with those lyrics. That's not to say I didn't enjoy high school—I did, and I can't thank LASA enough for preparing me for the years of my life that are yet to come, but I really hope these past four years have not been my glory days.

My first mistake was choice of hobby. There isn't a whole lot of music dedicated to journalists at all, much less country music. Newspapers are much better used as a table cover for a crawfish boil than as reading material, but nonetheless I fell in love with the "dying industry." This class, the source of most of my stress and a good bit of my pride, took over my life for the majority of my tenure at LASA and helped me determine what it is I want to do with my life. However, my time did not help me live my idealistic country song lifestyle. Instead of spending my Friday nights dancing in a truck bed in a taillight circle, I spent them in a windowless newsroom, staring at a screen and cursing profusely at inanimate Adobe products.

I will say, though, that outwardly, I fit the country profile. I'm super close with my family, we run cattle on a ranch and we own a horse, a mule, three dogs and 31 chickens, all of which live at our house. My boots are well worn and constantly dirty and I've attempted two-stepping at least once, but nonetheless, I know in my heart I'll never truly shed my suburban soul. Unlike my brother, I never developed a southern drawl, and the combination of my tragically poor eyesight and short arms has in no way helped me out during hunting season. Maybe I simply wasn't meant to live out the country song life.

If I were to write my own hit country single about high school life, the lyrics would be far more open textbook than open road, hauling a backpack larger than me (freshman year was rough) than hauling hay for horses. I didn't expect it to be quite like this- Carrie Underwood deluded a much younger me into thinking I'd be on the cheer squad and dating a football player, despite the fact that I'm not super big into sports and definitely do not have the bubbly energy of a cheerleader. Springsteen (yes, he's more folk rock than country, I know) made me think high school years were going to be the highlight of my life, the years I was coolest, most successful and, let's be honest about trends in country music here, hottest. Hopefully not. That's not to say I haven't enjoyed high school— quite the opposite in fact, I am lucky enough to say that I absolutely loved my time at LASA.

And I know that while my past four years might not have been the glory days, my actual glory days are just around the bend thanks to LASA and all that it has prepared me for. -30-



Logan Kramer, Editor-in-Chief

Logan Kramer

Scripps College

Four years ago, or even just one, if you'd asked me whether I would name swing dancing as one of my top hobbies I would've laughed in your face. I cannot dance. It's a well-known fact among my family and friends, and I've always been the worst dancer at school functions. When watching the awkward music videos I filmed for my Spanish classes early in high school, people always remark "Logan, you only have one dance move." They're mostly right—I do this clumsy combo that involves my arms attempting a strangely vertical version of the cha-cha and my legs shimmying back and forth, and that's pretty much it. I was convinced that this one move would be my entire dance

repertoire for the rest of my life.

But after hearing all my friends rave about how amazing swing dancing at the Texas Federation of Women's Clubs (lovingly known as the Fed) was, I went out on a limb and tried it last August. I arrived with extremely low expectations. I decided to give it a shot, hopefully making it through the night with minimal bruising, and with the resignation that I would be constantly reminded about my inability to dance. The term "beginner" was the perfect descriptor for me, but even at the beginner class I felt surrounded by people who had a much better grasp of the steps than I did. During that first lesson, and many lessons after that, I couldn't quite get the beat right, my feet were unsteady, and I stepped on my partners' toes a bit too often. I had to embrace being unsure and making mistakes and hoping that one day I might finally get the hang of it.

Surprisingly, after a few months of practicing swing dancing, I was actually exactly what I never expected to be. I was good. I could hold my own with the advanced dancers among the group. I felt confident and could look up at eye level for once, no longer straining my neck staring at my clumsy feet all night.

When I finally got the hang of swing dancing, it was such a surprise to me. But looking back at all of the things I've done during high school, it shouldn't have been a shock that I ended up loving swing dancing, something I never would've expected. My freshman self couldn't have fathomed winning a sermon-writing contest and then delivering my speech in front of 1200 people. My freshman self never would have thought I could successfully take on leadership roles in newspaper, youth group, PALS and more. I surprised myself over and over again, whether it was because I became fascinated with astronomy or managed to put together two clothing collections for Threadfair.

I have a funny feeling the surprises won't end when I walk across the stage at the Erwin Center. Just like how a year ago I would've doubted my ability to dance in any fashion, if you'd told me a few years ago that in August I'd be continuing my education at a women's college in California, I probably wouldn't have believed you either. In a serendipitous twist, this school that I fell in love with is well known for its social dance scene and ballroom dance club. I'm excited to bust out my newfound swing dancing moves when I get to college in a few months. But I'm also looking forward to spinning and rock-stepping wherever life takes me. If high school has been proof of anything, it's that the path that ends up being the best one might be completely unexpected. -30-



Meagen Allgood, News Editor

Meagen Allgood

Carleton College

Dear 14-year-old Meagen,
Believe me when I say I know that this feels like the end of the world. You've just found a group of friends you care about, you can finally walk the enormous halls of your junior high without ending up in the wrong wing, you finally feel like a real person. Now all of that seems lost. You've moved well over 700 miles away from the only real home you've ever known to Austin, a city that holds 97 times the number of people your old town called its own. I'll be blunt: it is absolutely terrifying. So I'll let you in on a few of the amazing things LASA will offer you; maybe your hands will shake a little

less on your way in.

You don't sit alone at lunch on your first day. Some girls take you in that never sit together again. It's fleeting, but it's fun, and it's something all of you cherish for the next four years. They may not have been friends for life, but they're nice enough to smile at you in the hall each time you see them which goes to show how easy it is to find people who care.

That being said, friends don't come easy. You'll learn to try harder and how to hold onto the people that matter. They aren't the friends you think you'll have—not even close—but a lot of them will definitely be friends for life, especially the ones you find in your last year. Your heart aches more and more as graduation grows closer, but you will make it through.

You find yourself thrown into so many families you never expected. After you get into the swing of things with the hours and hours of homework they give you each night, you will learn that you can do anything if you try hard enough. If you want to be president of LASA Pride Alliance, you'll find a way to do it. If you want to join theater but still be around for newspaper late nights, you'll find a way. And you do, every single time. You learn that "tired" can become a personality trait.

Your endless nights teach you that "pride" comes in many, many forms. You find yourself proud of your newspaper, your clubs, your families and your productions. You take pride in the work you do, and in yourself. You even take pride in the lack of sleep you get each night. That last one you'll get over. This is the most important lesson you'll learn: sleep is important. All-nighters, while fun to brag about, really suck. Try to cut back on those, it helps you in the long run.

There's so much that happens in high school—some bad, and even more good, but mostly stuff that's just flat out stupid. All that being said, there's not much you'll regret. The choices you might think are bad at first actually end up being great. They help you end up in theater, make the friends you love, and become the person you grow proud of. Do stupid things. It makes life more interesting and you usually end up in the place you were supposed to be all along.

I don't have a lot more to say to you; somehow you do end up clawing your way over that infamous "LASA Wall" that Mrs. Crescenzi talks about on everyone's first day. I know you'll keep on going, but if I'm going to leave you with a bit of advice, I might as well do it now:

Keep writing, it helps a lot more than you think it does. Don't overuse commas, everyone hates that. Start your college apps earlier, otherwise winter break sucks. Lastly, keep making an effort. You try hard, and while some people don't think that's cool, the people who love you think it's pretty great.

With love,
18-year-old Meagen -30-



Sesha McMinn, News Editor

Sesha McMinn

Stanford University

"Ogres are like onions. Onions have layers. Ogres have layers. You get it? We both have layers." -Shrek

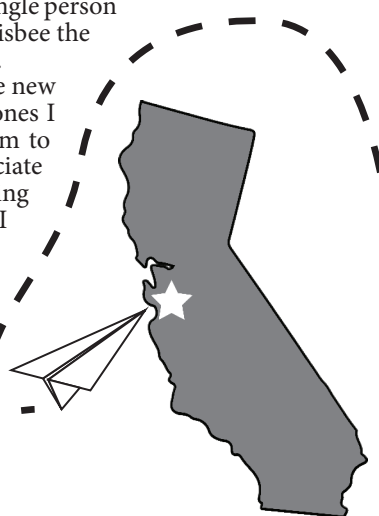
I like to think I'm onion-esque as well. Many things have defined me throughout my high school experience. I've been called a nerd, a goody-two-shoes, a friend, a mentor, and most recently I've even been called a jock (yes, I'm surprised too). There's not a single activity or event that has completely made me who I am. Over the past few years, I've tried newspaper, swim team, choir, piano, ukulele, Spanish, water polo and ultimate frisbee. Every single activity has introduced me to new friends and when I think back on high school, the most memorable parts will be the people I met.

I remember jumping in a freezing pool at 6 a.m. on the first day of swim team thinking I was going to die. The set seemed impossible, there were eight people crowded in my lane and Coach Car seemed intimidating. In hindsight, my first impression was way off. It turns out Coach Car is actually the coolest teacher—both in class and in her attempts to stay "hip and happening" by learning lingo from students and staying connected on Snapchat. After the first week of practice, upperclassmen started to befriend me, chatting in the locker room, cracking jokes and welcoming me to the team with open arms. It made me feel like I belonged and the team made my freshman year better than I could have imagined. The other day a kid in my class said, "Only here at LASA is the swim team cooler and more popular than the baseball team," and I think that quote perfectly sums up my sentiments.

I also remember walking into room 265 as a timid freshman, at first overwhelmed by Ms. Katopodis' enormous personality, but quickly drawn into the world of journalism, enveloped in the news section forever. Some of my most memorable laughs have taken place in the newsroom during late nights. I don't think anyone can tell a story as well or as comically as Ms. Katopodis, and for that I am appreciative. When we were hunkered down trying to finish an issue of the paper before the 2 p.m. Friday deadline, Ms. Katopodis always kept our spirits high. I can't imagine a high school experience sans newspaper. For all the difficult interviews and stressful evenings madly creating a page that wasn't too "text-heavy," it has been beyond worth it, because I've bonded with some of my closest friends and have always known that the news section will have snacks at arms length.

No matter what activity I'm talking about, I truly am only going to have positive things to say. Nowhere else could I join the ultimate frisbee team second semester senior year, never having played before, and have every single person on the team willing to teach me how to throw a frisbee the right way or stand in the proper throwing stances.

I don't think I'm ready (or ever will be) to make new friends and leave behind all of the unbelievable ones I already have. If I could leave one piece of wisdom to the underclassmen that they might actually appreciate (you know, none of the cliché advice about getting good grades and keeping your life balanced) I would most certainly tell them to remember this: You only have four years of high school, only four years to rely on your parents to take care of you, only four more years of getting to see your friends every day, so savor it. Also, more importantly, and yes a bit random, get queso as often as possible because most cities, especially those outside of Texas, have no idea how to make the perfect bowl of Kerbey (or Torchy's) queso. -30-





Eliza Cain

Brown University

I was pretty sure I had the election in the bag. I mean, the students who had devoured my homemade brownies had seemed more than willing to vote for me for freshman student council president. I'd even recruited my senior brother to hand out candy canes while I hung posters with clever slogans like "Cain is Able" (clearly I thought puns were a strong campaign strategy).

But when the winners were announced over the loudspeaker, my name wasn't on the list. I held it together just long enough to make it home, where I curled up on my bed and had a good long cry. For a moment, the

Eliza Cain, Commentary Editor

sharp ache of rejection had me convinced that no one at LASA even liked me. That first taste of high school failure hurt. A lot. I wanted to disappear; I vowed never to put myself out there again.

However, my hero's journey was not at its end. In May of sophomore year, I wasn't chosen as to serve as a LASA Ambassador. Even though I suspected this was because I had turned in my application after the deadline, I still felt that miserable sense that I wasn't good enough. When I finally made it onto the LBJ varsity girls basketball team junior year, I was thrilled, only to find out my athletic skills were hardly needed. I gritted my teeth through games when all I did was keep the bench warm and fight back angry retorts when a couple of younger players mocked me for not being a starter. And one of the worst blows came when AP scores were released last summer. I hate to even admit it, but I bombed the Physics 1 AP and canceled my Physics 2 score because it was probably worse. As someone who made A's in the class, I was beyond embarrassed. I thought those low AP scores marked me as less intelligent than my classmates.

But somehow, for every aspect where I failed at LASA, I made up for it in another way. I rocked the BC Calculus, English, Spanish IV and US History AP exams. I reapplied (before the deadline, this time) and was selected to be a LASA Ambassador senior year. And, even though I didn't see much playing time on the varsity basketball team, I contributed what I could, scoring four points in the two minutes my coach gave me in our last playoff game and providing comic relief when my teammates forced me to rap.

I even ran again for president, this time for NHS, apparently forgetting my brief and tragic history with campaigns. I spent hours preparing and practicing an earnest speech, and, unsurprisingly, I didn't win. But I was less heartbroken this time around, and luckily, the senior class came in clutch this year. They voted me "Most Likely to be President," an award given either in jest or charity—perhaps a nod to my inability to actually be elected president of anything.

And so, I'd like to thank LASA, not for knocking me down, but for teaching me to gather the strength to get back up again. In the brag sheet I provided to Ms. Kocian, I listed a series of anecdotes describing my disappointments. Being the spinmaster she is, her counselor rec letter detailed my grit in the face of adversity (a letter I think helped me get into my dream school). Maybe in the short term, being a benchwarmer or failing an AP seems like the end of the world, but these setbacks toughened me up and gave me resilience. Now, this Cain is definitely more Able, even if that campaign slogan never won me a presidential position. -30-



Victoria Mycure

Sarah Lawrence College

Standing in the hostess booth, I breathe in. It's the first calm moment after the night's "peak," which the head hostess, who is training me, says is usually around the same time every night: 7 p.m.

It's my first day of work. Two lanky busboys lean on the front of the booth during a brief lull in the commotion. The head hostess asks what school I attend, and upon answering "LASA," two of them blankly stare back in confusion while another nods his head, smiling. "That's a smart people school," he tells the other employees.

"Oh," the head hostess hums. "I think I've heard of LASA. It's the one with four stories

Victoria Mycure, Life & Feature Editor

right?"

"Oh, no, no. It's pretty small," I laugh. "It's two stories. Well, and there's the Dungeon. And the portab—"

"Dungeon?!" she interrupts.

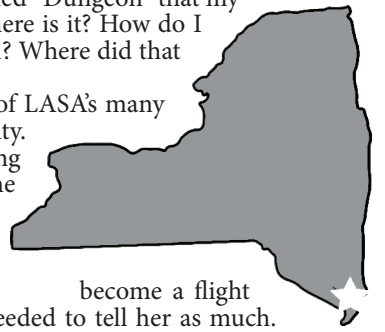
Her surprise, confusion and amusement at what we call our basement-like ground floor of the fine arts wing immediately reminded me of my own similar reaction four years ago. I had so many questions about this so-called "Dungeon" that my SciTech class was in. On the first day of school: Where is it? How do I get there? And later: Why do we call it the Dungeon? Where did that name come from?

I eventually stopped asking, accepting it as one of LASA's many oddities that add up to one school of lovable eccentricity.

After telling the head hostess that I'd be graduating soon, she asked about my post-high school plans. The list of accepted colleges I was weighing garnered a similar reaction to the conversation about the magnet school I attend. The head hostess stated that she's not going to college, but rather wants to become a flight attendant—which I think is super cool, and I proceeded to tell her as much. That said, I'd never met someone my age with such an aspiration. In fact, I know very few seniors who aren't planning to go to college. All of my friends were deciding between similarly selective colleges (many, if not most of them, more selective than mine).

Honestly, I felt smart. It felt good to be out in the real world, no longer surrounded by my brilliant peers who, through no fault of their own, make me feel comparatively dim. From my friends who have been on-track to go into pre-med since day one of high school, to the students I ask for help from in my computer science class just to end up more confused by their instructions littered with jargon all too foreign to me, from the students who know every detail of politics throughout the entirety of American history (way too much for me to hold a proper debate with), to the students who can deeply analyze an eighteenth century poem and write a top-scoring AP essay on it all in forty minutes.

Though my peers' intelligence and accomplishments are intimidating, I do not wish I went to a different school just to "feel smart." My peers inspire me, awe me, push me, amuse me and teach me. I have a certain level of expectation for myself because of them. And now, I'm parting from them and going to a school of only 1700 students, all of which I've never before met. I feel ready. I've started my first real job now—at the restaurant with the hostesses and busboys. I've entered the real world where I'll be judged for each facet of my personality and background that I choose to show. LASA is a badge I will wear proudly. -30-



Meris McHaney

University of Texas at Austin

As my peers and I began, went through and wrapped up our college application process, there tended to be a particular phrase that kept catching my attention. No, it wasn't "holy sh*t, this is the most stressful thing ever," but rather, "I wish I had gone to my home school, life would be so much better."

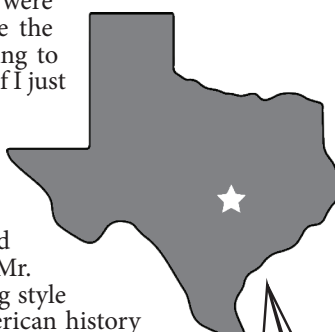
I applied to LASA at the last second possible. I wasn't even planning on taking the test you have to take on a random Saturday morning. It was my mom who made me wake up after a sleepover, eat an apple and get in the car to go head to the LASA campus for the admissions test. I was all set to go to Austin High until the day before decisions were due

when I picked LASA. I never revisited the decision again. I've never wondered about that month when I picked the place I would be for the next four years of my life.

At least until not too long ago, when I was at a dinner party. A couple with a sophomore at Austin High and an eighth grader at Kealing approached me. Their son, David, was having a hard time deciding between Austin High and LASA for next year because all of his friends were headed to Austin High. They asked me how I made the decision, and I stumbled over words for a while trying to find an answer. I left them with some stupid response of I just knew it was what I needed to do, and yes it was a huge bummer for me to lose the majority of my friends to the school down the street from me, but yolo, right?

It's been four years, but I think I finally know why I picked this place. I chose LASA because I wanted to be surrounded by people who loved to learn and would push me to try my hardest. I wanted teachers like Mr. Sharp who would give me a chance to find my writing style in Creative Writing and Mr. Flowers who made American history stick to the walls of my brain because he taught with passion. I wanted classes that would make me think in so many different ways I would lose count. My best friends at this school are driven. One is on track to be pre-med to med school while another is headed to one of the best undergraduate business schools in America while another one can't wait to get started in investment banking. At LASA you are surrounded by kids who want to go far and are more concerned with how many edits their English paper got than how well they can shotgun a beer. I can say wholeheartedly my life has only benefited by being here at LASA.

The students and staff are what makes this school incredible. If you took down the white brick building, the motivational posters, the debate team trophies and the confusing hallways, LASA would not change. I was lucky enough to get into, and attend the Liberal Arts and Science Academy, but I was even luckier to meet the people in it. -30-



Chelsea Banawis

Southwestern University

Love is an infectious thing in high school. Infectious in that almost terminal disease it-will-kill-you-kind-a-way but also in that poisonously happy way that makes you feel high on life. After four years of going through puberty, cat fights on social media and entering into adulthood at this school, I'm left with more than enough advice to deliver a substantial love advice column. However, since last year's newspaper commentary editor so rudely declined this offer time and time again, leaving the student body dry with no heart-wrenching and personal advice from yours truly, I'm here to finally deliver the good, bad and ugly advice to you all. I'm

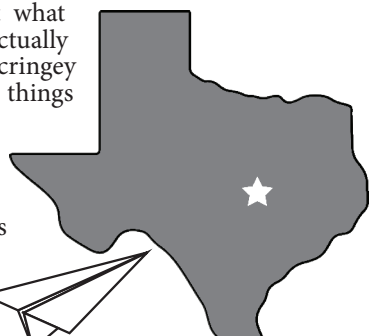
Chelsea Banawis, Entertainment Editor

claiming today to say my final remarks of high school to inform my audience of the things I've learned from my trials and (many) errors to find love in high school.

Let me start off by saying, my first real crush was terrified of me. I can't really blame him though, for practically ignoring the song I wrote about his hair, the stalker photos my friends took of him or the online diary entries. It worked out in the end—and we're chill now—but that time will never cease to haunt him, I think. During my sophomore year, I went through my first of many embarrassing interactions with upperclassmen boys. This one boy in particular was another staff member on the newspaper, and

I had stared at his beautiful curly locks and deep brown eyes until it started to get too creepy or too obvious in one class period. When prom rolled around that year, all I wanted as a love-struck 16-year-old was a chance to experience something I would later learn was just a mediocre school dance. This gorgeous boy with luscious locks was asked one day in the hallway if he was going to prom, and I, stout with a mouth full of saltines and my significant other at the time right by my side, burst out shouting, with crumbs flying, "I WANNA GO TO PROM WITH YOU!" How to not choke with my mouth full in front of gorgeous boys was just one of the first things I've learned. I've learned that the biggest tool in school might actually be a sweet guy deep deep down inside. Sadly enough, I've learned that a guy might actually be more infatuated with his car than you at some point in your high school career as well. In terms of social media, I've learned to go ahead and experiment with dating apps— they're fun, a little risqué but let's be real, nine out of 10 guys on Tinder use Tinder for Tinder while nine out of 10 girls on Tinder want to just find true love. Your chances of finding someone who isn't a catfish, aspiring rapper/model/entrepreneur or racist frat dude are slim to none. I've learned to not be afraid to ask someone out— the worst thing you can do is regret never talking to that one person in your friend group you were never close to, that cute upperclassmen in the hall or that boy in English you've known since middle school with striking beautiful eyes you could endlessly stare at while out for coffee. The list goes on and on about what I've experienced at this school, be it actually heart-wrenchingly corny or completely cringey for some of you. Maybe none of these things will apply to you or maybe you just got a chuckle out of some of these somewhat traumatic experiences.

Maybe I haven't learned that much about love in four years, but that's what college is for, right? -30-





Chloe Edmiston, Sports Editor

Chloe Edmiston

Rice University

I have found that, with increasing age and the looming threat of actual adulthood ahead, I have retreated into my true personality. I have named my true personality, and given it its own backstory. My personality's name is Irving, and he's an 80-year-old retired mailman and widower with two children and three grandchildren, who bother him by making him listen to their 21st century problems. His hobbies include reading the newspaper, reminiscing about the good ol' days, not finishing crosswords because he doesn't know the recent cultural references and yelling about the youths ruining this country. I am Irving, and Irving is me.

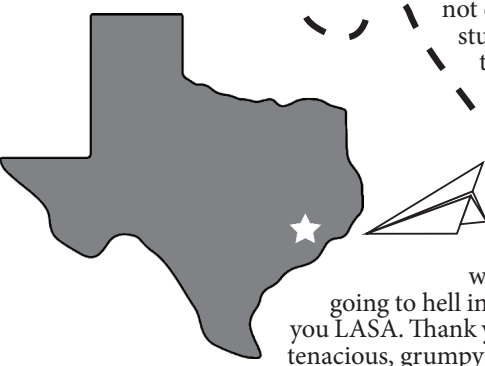
I had not been formally introduced to Irving before starting LASA. In middle school, my personality's name was Stephanie, a 13 year-old girly-girl who loved hanging out, getting Starbucks, giggling at the dumb things boys did and putting obnoxiously large bows in her hair. Stephanie tired me out, and keeping up with her was just exhausting and way too much work. Freshman year, Stephanie shrunk away as I actually put my head down and stopped caring about social interactions. There was no room for her nonsense amid the plethora of assignments and sports and activities.

Of course, with the disappearance of Stephanie, a gaping hole of teenage angst and lack of self-awareness appeared in my life. From this, I've determined that growing up and the hormones associated with this transition were made to make us crazy and stupid and completely unbearable. I'm thankful that my parents lived through my gaping hole phase, because I definitely wouldn't be at all functioning without them. I still have absolutely no idea who I am or how to adult correctly, but I do know that the people who can deal with you when you are like a giant black hole, swallowing up everything and leaving destruction in your wake, are the people you actually want around you.

Around junior year, I figured out the basis for my crotchety old man personality. I just really don't like people. The small circle of people I truly consider to know me, the relationships I actually enjoy putting effort into, is not inclusive. I'm sorry, but also I'm really not. I like who I like, and I seem to also believe that I'm too old to try to make everyone like me or be friends with everyone.

Irving fully came into being the second semester of junior year. I owe this mostly to Mr. Ed Davis, truly the epitome of what I aspire to be. From Mr. Davis, I learned that I'm pretty mediocre at math, but also that people really respect you for saying what you think and what needs to be said. It doesn't hurt that he also taught me one of my very favorite sayings, "You're dumber than dirt and twice as ugly." For the other part of my final transformation into Irving, I have to thank Mr. Jason Flowers. I felt as though I was not only a student of history in his class, but a student of blatant and hilarious sarcasm. At the end of this year with such rewarding teacher-related experiences, I had matured into the 80-year-old man I truly am.

Now, here I am, about to graduate high school, and complaining about the racket that underclassmen cause and the aches in my joints when the weather turns bad and how the country is going to hell in a handbasket. All I can really say is thank you LASA. Thank you for making me the sarcastic, stubborn, tenacious, grumpy and tired son of a gun that I am now. -30-



Claire Cannatti, Graphics Editor

Claire Cannatti

Wellesley College

I'm a sucker for a lot of things: chocolate, pretty shoes, stuffed animals... but perhaps most of all, I'm a sucker for children's movies. From "Wall-E" to "How to Train Your Dragon," I can watch kids' movies over and over again, and I never get tired of them. I can spend hours just listening to the soundtracks from "Tangled" and "Frozen," reveling in each score's complexity and the perfect way it fits its movie. I watch movies made for grown-ups too, on occasion, but given the choice, I'll always rewatch "Up" or "Mulan" rather than slog through some "critically acclaimed" piece of "cinematic art." Some people may view this as juvenile or think my lack of enthusiasm for

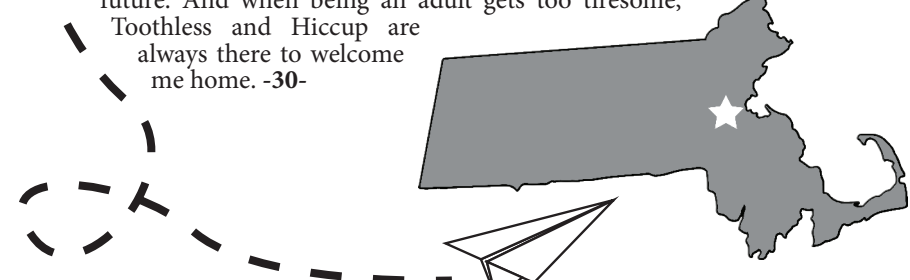
mature pieces reflects a lack of refinement in my taste. To them I say, have you seen "Big Hero 6"? That stuff is art.

I love kids' movies for a lot of reasons. I love seeing the changing animation styles through the years. I love the silly song-and-dance routines that are so common in this genre — "Enchanted", anyone? I love the wildly imaginative stories about animals and toys and princesses. I admire the storytelling, how it can make me feel for these imaginary, often completely zany characters — I mean, who didn't cry in "Toy Story 3" when the toys were facing their fiery deaths in the dump? No one, that's who. I get a thrill out of watching these movies tackle serious issues in an approachable way, from racial profiling in "Zootopia" to mental health in "Inside Out." I love how almost every children's movie has a happy ending. There isn't an aspect of the movies about which I can't find something to like.

As much as I adore the actual films, though, I mostly love how when I watch a children's movie, I become a child once again. This past year has been a process of shedding one layer of childhood after another in an attempt to ready myself for the mysterious, slightly frightening world of adulthood. Seniors are granted free periods and off-campus lunch privileges (yeah, I know that isn't exactly new for a lot of people, but it's official and recognized as a senior). At 18, I got my unrestricted driver's license and also notice that if I mess up, from now on I can and will be tried as a legal adult. I drove my own extensive college application process — quite literally 20 separate essays. My parents have restricted my movements less and less, and I have taken on responsibilities bit by bit that leave me no longer a child, even if I don't yet qualify for the term "adult" except legally — I schedule my own dentist appointments, but my mother still cooks dinner for me. It's a balance.

All of the new adult-y parts of my life can get overwhelming, and they can make my life crushingly boring at times. But when I sit down to watch "The Incredibles" for the tenth time, I get wrapped up in the excitement and the fantasy, and I can forget that college applications or decisions are looming. I retreat to one of my worlds where the heroes are my friends and I, too, am super. I sit, rapt, for an hour or two, hugging a pillow, eyes trained on the screen, before I have to return to my comparatively dull and objectively stressful life. Lying in front of my TV with the carpet pricking my elbows, I escape for long enough to make sense of my day, my week or my future. And when being an adult gets too tiresome,

Toothless and Hiccup are always there to welcome me home. -30-



Hannah Marks, Web Editor

Hannah Marks

Angelo State University

The day I filled out my freshman year choice sheet at LASA was unknowingly the day I decided my fate for high school. Out of concern, my mom turned, looked me in the eye and said I needed to stop isolating myself and join an organization where I would gain a group of friends. In middle school, I was the girl who sat alone, buried in a book. Who participated in class, but didn't interact much. Who sat at home on the weekends instead of hanging with friends. While I sat contemplating, Mrs. Crescenzi mentioned something called colorguard. It was part of the marching band, required no prior experience and I would get a fine arts credit plus half a PE

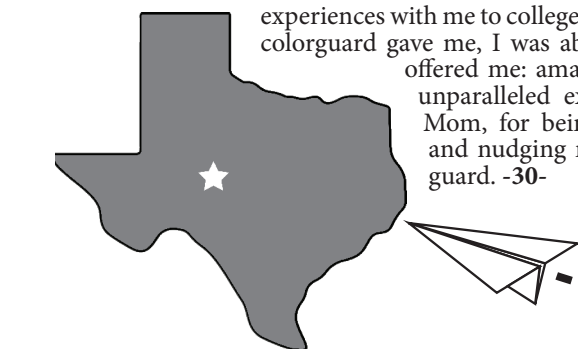
credit. My mom's words of joining a group, of putting myself out there, rang through my head, my hand hovering over my choice sheet. Biting the bullet, I decided why not be thrown into two entirely new experiences at the same time?

This meant my first day at LASA was not the actual first day of school. The last week of July and the entire month of August, I spent eight hours every weekday at summer band, learning marching and spinning basics with the LBJ Jaguar Marching Band. Here I was, this scared freshman, thrown into this new environment without any idea of what to expect. The list of things to learn was endless—drop spins, cones, pole hits, tosses, jazz walking—and all completely foreign. The work was hard; I left everyday aching with another sunburn. Still, those tired days, spending time with other students, working towards a goal were some of the best days I had.

Starting freshman year, I felt more comfortable than I expected. I had a group of people I already knew, had been given tips by upperclassmen friends in guard and knew where I was going to eat lunch. I felt ahead of the curve. I gained confidence in myself; I actually was willing to talk to my classmates who came from different middle schools, many of whom are still my friends now. I joined other organizations, such as newspaper and LASA Ambassadors, all because I had friends, both in and out of guard, who urged me to join.

Because of colorguard, I became more social than I was in middle school. Now, I am the girl still with a book but socializing. Who participates in class and beyond that, talks to classmates outside of class. Who has competitions or hangs with friends, instead of sitting at home on the weekends. Some of my best friends are people I met through guard. I wouldn't trade those long days under the sun or losing a month of sleeping in because it was spent with some of the greatest people I know.

My high school experience was unlike I imagined. Beyond colorguard, LASA prepared me for college and pushed me to work hard. I learned, from my teachers but also my peers. While LASA seemed to gobble up my time with endless homework, projects and studying, these classes are how I experienced things I never would have otherwise: presenting a logo I created for a company, seeing my short film at the Alamo Drafthouse, performing during halftime at the Russell Athletic Bowl and more. I will carry these experiences with me to college. Because of the confidence colorguard gave me, I was able to appreciate all LASA offered me: amazing opportunities and an unparalleled experience. So, thank you, Mom, for being part of my first family and nudging me to join my second one. -30-



Isabel Saralegui, Staff Writer

Isabel Saralegui

University of Alabama

"I'd rather be fishing," death row prisoner Jimmy Glass said before he was killed in an electric chair. Last Christmas, my brother and I spent hours looking up last words of death row criminals. Some of them were funny, some were creepy, but the worst were the sad ones. These men and women were at the end of their lives, and the words they had left showed the way they had accepted their fate. How they completely understood that it wasn't like they were going to sleep for surgery and might come back, they just knew that it was the end.

This isn't the end though. This is just one chapter of my life that is coming to a close, but even that isn't a total cut off. My step father's best friend was described at his funeral, at his end, as a man who had many people in his life. The man described his life as a train, and he had stops along the way and people and things would come on and off the train. The train would go through different parts of the world, sometimes returning to the same stops.

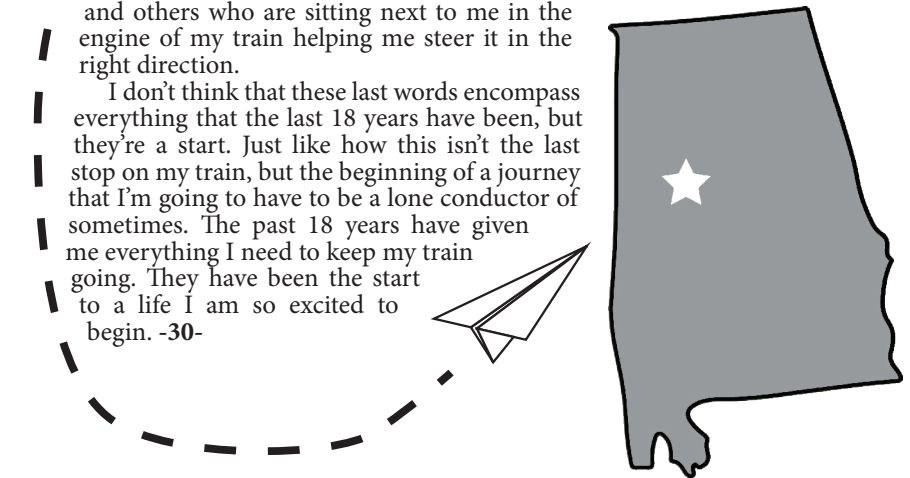
LASA and my whole K-12 experience has had some great stops. However, this isn't a stop I'm going to make ever again. You don't go through high school twice. It's a spot on a map that I've been to, and now I have to keep moving. A lot of people will probably get off my train, but a lot of people will also stay on. That's why nothing in life, except death, can ever be a true end. I know the things that are sticking with me, the memories that I'm going to keep.

I'll keep things like my first high school football game where the clouds over Nelson Field looked like giant pink tidal waves. I'll keep my homecoming dances that were classy and awkward and punctuated by my friends and me screaming the lyrics to "Don't Stop Believing," the 'midnight train' connection unintended. I'll remember staying up all night to study for tests. I will look back on high fives in the hallway and trying to follow in the footsteps of the seniors I met my freshman year, who I still try to emulate, even though I now have freshmen that look up to me.

There are of course a thousand other moments of passing notes, asking guys out, reading books (and spark notes), not studying and failing and pushing myself and succeeding. I tried new things like being on the soccer team and dedicating myself to what I believe in, religiously, socially, academically and personally.

I'll remember being roughed up more than a few times by LASA and homework and expectations of once again easily being a straight A student, but I'll also remember how it made me better. How I made so many new friends, some that might get off my train along the way and others who are sitting next to me in the engine of my train helping me steer it in the right direction.

I don't think that these last words encompass everything that the last 18 years have been, but they're a start. Just like how this isn't the last stop on my train, but the beginning of a journey that I'm going to have to be a lone conductor of sometimes. The past 18 years have given me everything I need to keep my train going. They have been the start to a life I am so excited to begin. -30-



Liberal Arts and Science Academy and
Lyndon Baines Johnson High Schools

the liberator

7309 Lazy Creek Drive, Austin, TX 78724

EXECUTIVE BOARD

Adviser Huma Munir
Editors-in-Chief Logan Kramer -30-
Sam Zern -30-

EDITORIAL BOARD

Commentary Editor Eliza Cain -30-

News Editors Meagen Allgood -30-
Olivia Lee
Sesha McMinn -30-
Life and Feature Editors Roxy Bonafont
Victoria Mycue -30-
Sports Editors Chloe Edmiston -30-
Oliver Powers
Entertainment Editors Chelsea Banawis -30-
Meris McHaney -30-
Graphics Editor Claire Cannatti -30-
Web Editors Hannah Marks -30-
Oscar Newman
Managing Editor Leila Nyandusi -30-

STAFF WRITERS

Bethany Bissell, Grace Bodine, Carolina Gokingco, Emma Jane Hopper, Emily Kolodney, Mateen Kontoravdis, Elan McMinn, Eleni Millikin, Oscar Newman, Max Randall, Alia Shaikat, Quinn Simpson, Jorge Villa Rangel, Charles Albach, Marlen Avila Moreno, Andrew Degrasse, Clara Gibbs, Maximilian Irby, Jeffrey Kovar, Sarah Lucas, Grant McCasland, Kenza McKerrihan, Emma Moran, Clara Morse, Delaney Phillips, Isabel Saralegui -30-, Eva Strelitz-Block, Ashley Thomas, Zoe Trungale, Olivia Tung

Editorial Policy

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

Editorial Content:

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

The Editorial Boards and its Functions:

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

The Editorial board will:

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

Viewpoints:

Printed material which is a view of a staff member or a contributing writer will be labeled as such. These views are not intended to reflect the view of the administration of Liberal Arts and Science Academy 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 Liberator* is an open forum.

The staff thanks: Judith Cooper, San Czaplinski



LASA and Fire Academy alumnus Dalton Ray prepares with his fellow firefighters to put out the fire in front of him. photos courtesy of Dalton Ray



Holding the hose, LASA and Fire Academy alumnus Dalton Ray puts out a fire with the Fire Academy in 2012, with his instructor standing by.

Fire Academy alum extends high school experience to fire department career

CLARA MORSE
Staff Writer

The Fire Academy is one of the defining programs of LBJ, providing firefighter certification to students before they leave high school. One of the Fire Academy's alumni just used those certifications from this program to move into a full-time firefighting position. LASA Class of 2012 alumnus Dalton Ray was recently promoted to full firefighter status at the Austin Fire Department (AFD) and became the first Fire Academy alumnus in the past five years to work for AFD. LBJ Fire Academy Director Lionel Bess said Ray was very passionate about firefighting while in the program.

"There are some people who when [they] discover something...[they] want to know everything you can about it, and that's the way [Ray] was," Bess said. "He was just born to be a firefighter. Once he found out that this was what he was born to do, this is what he [did]."

Ray said he originally applied to Fire Academy because the mechanical aspect appealed to him. After graduating LASA in 2012, he got a degree in fire science and then used his EMT and firefighting certifications to get a job with the Lake Travis Fire Rescue. He said the firefighting community and his coworkers were some of the best parts of the position.

"I live two minutes away from the fire station that I worked at," Ray said. "And the first crew that I worked with there was awesome. If you can imagine going to a place every third day with your best friends, and all you do is laugh... and have fun, that's what it was... And it was great."

Ray worked at Lake Travis for two and a half years before applying to AFD last year and getting in, coming off probation this March. He said firefighting was a career that drew a lot of people in. LBJ junior Robby Joseph said firefighting, although not something he expected to become interested in, was a career that he wants to pursue after high school.

"As a senior, when I graduate, I'm planning to go to a two-month course at ACC, so I can get my EMT certifications," Joseph said. "And then hopefully I'll get hired as a firefighter and go to college tuition-free."

The combination of rigorous academics and fun physical activities, Joseph said, was another highlight for him. In addition to firefighting techniques and physical training, Fire Academy students also learn the advanced scientific concepts behind fire.

"Just like you have to study for other classes... [you] have to study for Fire Academy," Joseph said. "You have to know the chemical science that goes into the fire stuff. So

"[Firefighting] helps them realize that you can overcome most challenges when you prepare yourself."

- LBJ Fire Academy Director
Lionel Bess

once a week we get a take-home quiz that we do, we read our book and then once every two weeks we get a test... so you have to have good study habits to make it work."

Both current Fire Academy students, as well as Ray, said that one of the biggest challenges of firefighting was a mental one: the need to stay calm and keep a clear head even in the midst of chaos.

"You have to be mentally tough," Ray said. "A lot of people have... [called me] an adrenaline junkie... But I think firefighting and being a good firefighter... isn't about being an adrenaline junkie, it's about being able to control your adrenaline and to control your emotions. Because if I'm an adrenaline junkie and I show up on scene, and it's a fire and my heart's racing, I can't think. You cannot think."

Joseph said that taking Fire Academy was without a doubt his best high school decision, and Bess said that Joseph was not alone in feeling this way. He said that for many Fire Academy students it is a life changing experience.

"I think [one effect on students is] the confidence that they gain in themselves and their ability to overcome challenges," Bess said. "[It] helps them realize that you can

overcome most challenges when you prepare yourself. We teach them that you have to be prepared to do things, and I think that helps us throughout life. We see kids come out who really are shy, hanging about doing things, and at the end of two years you can just notice the change."

Ray said that, in addition to giving him a purpose, firefighting really taught him to appreciate the value of life and how fragile it can be.

"It's taught me that life's short," Ray said. "Life's really short, and extremely fragile... Have fun while you can. You never know what's going to happen, so try and take advantage of every moment. Time is your only real commodity that you have, and you gotta use it wisely because you never know when it's going to be taken away from you."

Ray, who joined Fire Academy on a whim because he enjoyed mechanical work, said that he thought he would be going to law school at the start of high school. But instead Ray is now working at AFD and said that everyone should try something new.

"If anybody wants to give [Fire Academy] a shot, or thinks they might like it—try it," Ray said. "You never know. You never know what you're going to fall in love with... No matter what it is that you love, you should do it, you really should. Do something you love, because if you love your job, you never really work a day in your life."

Robert E. Lee elementary school campus advisory committee seeks name change, final ideas announced

GRANT MCCASLAND
Staff Writer

Robert E. Lee Elementary's Campus Advisory Committee (CAC) recently decided to rename the school. Robert E. Lee was the leading Confederate General during the American Civil War, and many residents, according to the CAC, objected to naming an elementary school after a slaveowner and racist. In late March, the Austin Independent School District (AISD) board voted in favor of renaming the school.

Lee Elementary librarian and CAC co-chair Jenny Day said she did not think too much about the name. Day said this was because traditional Southern states have schools named after Confederate veterans, or others with a controversial past. When someone mentioned that the school's name might be a problem, Day dismissed the suggestion, saying Lee was a part of history and that would never change. Recently, her opinion on the subject has changed.

"A friend of mine from Alabama

commented that she is proud of her Southern heritage, but if Robert E. Lee and the Confederate Flag have come to mean hatred, then it is time to make a change," Day said. "Then I thought about the swastika, which means good fortune and is a sacred symbol for the Buddhists [but] it has come to mean hatred and intolerance, and no one uses it anymore [because of this]. So I came around to agreeing to the name change."

LASA freshman and former Lee Elementary student Aaron Wheatley agrees with Day and said it is important to look back on past mistakes and understand them so they can be prevented from happening again.

"I disagree with the name change, because [what] Lee was fighting for [was] to defend his home," Wheatley said. "He lived in the South and was for the rights of all. Even though he was a Confederate general, naming something after him is not promoting any of the Confederate values."

Previously the CAC came up with eight options for the new name, five of which were not submitted to the

school board including Elisabet Ney, Harper Lee and Waller Creek. There were three names in the running for the school's new name on which the school board voted on May 23.

"The Lee CAC recommended three names to the school board - Russell Lee, Bettie Mann and Wheeler's Grove," Day said. "I [am] comfortable supporting any of those three names. Russell Lee had my early vote, but I know Bettie Mann and taught several of her grandkids."

Bettie Mann was the first African-American teacher at Lee Elementary, and her sons were the first African-American students to attend Lee in the 1960s.

Wheeler's Grove—now called Eastwoods Neighborhood Park—was a site near Lee Elementary where African-Americans gathered in the late 1800s and early 1900s, and was a site of Juneteenth celebrations.

Though these other two were options, in the end the majority vote chose Russell Lee, an influential photographer who lived in the school's area best known for his work with the Farm Security Administration.

Freshmen create volunteering club, send out support to community

MATEEN KONTORAVDIS
Staff Writer

The LASA Sending Out Support Club (SOS) was founded at the beginning of the year by LASA freshmen Jenny Lu and Sarah Chieng. The club was created to provide opportunities for LASA students to volunteer during and after school.

"I've always had this goal of helping others whenever possible," Lu said. "I previously often had trouble finding volunteer opportunities that fit to my schedule, so I wanted a way to create more fun, easy volunteer opportunities for both myself and my classmates."

In her LASA application essay, Lu wrote about creating a volunteering club, and now she is excited about co-running the actual club with Chieng. Chieng

came to LASA with the same dream of starting a club. Through the SOS club, both are hoping to spread the message that volunteering is not a burden, but something that can be incredibly rewarding.

"SOS Club offers opportunities to volunteer without cutting out too much time from students' schedules, so students never have to stress out about not having time for SOS Club," Lu said.

Lu and Chieng said they are excited to make volunteering fun with the different projects that they have been working on throughout the semester. Chieng and Lu's club has made

250 gift bags for the Marbridge Foundation, a home for adults with intellectual disabilities.

"Our most recent project that we finished was [making] Valentine's Day gift bags that

also worked on other projects, including creating Veterans Day cards for veterans. Chieng said that, in the future, they would like to bring more volunteer opportunities to SOS club. LASA freshman Emily Baker said she hopes that more students will be able to discover volunteering opportunities through the club.

"I joined SOS so I would have opportunities to volunteer," Baker said. "It makes me feel good to help out others to make them happy."

Baker helped with both the Veterans Day project and the Valentine's Day project and she said she is excited to help out

"SOS Club offers opportunities to volunteer without cutting out too much time from students' schedules."

-LASA freshman Jenny Lu

we donated to a foster and adoption kid program and a home for [adults with intellectual disabilities]," Chieng said.

In the past, the club has

on the club's future projects. The club is planning to continue next year, but funding has recently become an issue. Next year, the club is hoping to find new organizations to volunteer for, and to add more members.

"Everything is paid out of pocket which is why we try to do donations a lot," Chieng said. "But, donations can only go so far, so we hope to do fundraisers next year."

The club is hoping to find a source to help fund the projects that they work on. As the school year comes to an end, the SOS Club has started working on their final project of the year, "The Homeless Project." The project will include making goodie bags with food and other useful materials and donating these bags to homeless people around Austin.

Non-profit encourages creativity in LBJ classrooms

CLARA MORSE
Staff Writer

Imagine using drama to teach a math lesson, or using music in an English class. This soon will be the reality at LBJ. The Creative Learning Institute (CLI), a recent collaboration between Austin ISD, the City of Austin and a non-profit organization called MINDPOP focused on expanding creative learning in Austin, has chosen the LBJ vertical team, or LBJ and all its feeder middle and elementary schools, as its next location.

The CLI began in 2011, when the Kennedy Center for Performing Arts chose Austin as the next site for Any Given Child, a program promoting expanded fine arts education in schools. It began operating in 2013, and currently is working with the McCallum, Travis, Crockett and Eastside Memorial vertical teams.

The CLI works to bring arts-based teaching strategies into core curriculum and to use the arts to help expand students' understanding. One example of a teaching strategy based in the fine arts is a drama-based one called statues, according to MINDPOP Education Director Sloan McLain, where students use their bodies as statues to creatively depict a vocabulary word. Students also describe each other's statues and explain how they're related to the concept of the vocabulary word.

"It's the kind of [technique] that gets kids to reflect on their own interpretation of something," McLain said. "[It] really helps kids and adults and the human brain

to be able to change from one symbol system into the other... you've got words, but you're putting them into images, which helps fire the neuroconnections in your brain, which at a later time helps reconstruct that understanding to apply it to different concepts."

LBJ English teacher Sarah Strum said that she was excited for the implementation and the creative arts partners, and that the CLI was a good way to bring arts back into the schools.

"Part of the reason that this is seeming new is because so much funding has been cut for creative arts in general in schools," Strum said. "So it's a shame that the Texas legislature cut creative arts funding for those schools, but it's a great way to get creative arts back into the classroom where they belong."

McLain said LBJ core curriculum teachers will take part in two training sessions during the summer and fall to learn some of these techniques. She also said the creative strategies teachers will learn at training sessions could help

them move away from solely textbook learning, as well as "drill and kill" test prep. Additionally, these creative strategies allow for much more student driven learning.

"[This] gives the ownership back to the kids, lets kids direct the learning and really collaboratively share their understanding and disagree," McLain said.

"A part of these strategies is about allowing for multiple viewpoints, and allowing kids to bring in their own experiences into what they're doing. We just don't live in an age anymore where the teacher holds all the knowledge."

According to McLain, the emotional connection that students may form because of added creative elements in the classroom can help them learn. LBJ science teacher Brittany Morgan said she looks forward to the impact CLI could have on her classes at LBJ.

"I think it's a great idea for them to incorporate those new ideas and see if it works for the different types of learners," Morgan said. "Because not everyone thinks the same way or learns the same way, so I think it could help really round out lessons, and you've got kinesthetic

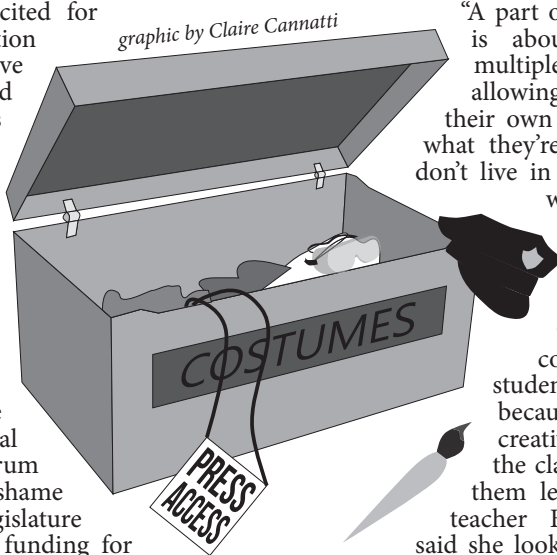
learners, or visual learners or auditory learners, so I think it would help a lot with that aspect."

Overall, McLain said, the impact of creative learning would increase over time, with kids at elementary schools also being taught with creative learning strategies. In addition, the CLI is working with the city's Parks and Recreation department to train them in the same creative learning strategies, so that if any students go to city-run summer camps or afterschool activities they'll be experiencing some of the same teaching strategies.

"Hopefully by the time the kids get to the high school level, they'll be so accustomed to this kind of learning that it will break down some of the barriers in terms of agreeing to disagree and the awkwardness of doing things you haven't traditionally done in your schooling experience," McLain said.

According to McLain another thing that will ensure that the CLI has staying power is its flexibility. It allows for a lot of feedback from teachers, students and the district which will allow it to adapt over time.

"I think the cool thing about it is that it's this big collective impact, and there's so many people collaborating to make this happen, and because there is no set curriculum it's also something that's constantly evolving," McLain said. "Because it's so open ended and because there's so many people working in it, the students have a really strong voice in this as well."



graphic by Claire Cannatti



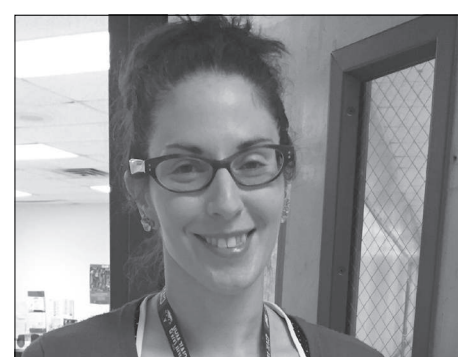
"It's really important to try and make [learning] interesting because we do have to do a lot of work, and this might actually be an opportunity to make what's boring to them more interesting." - LBJ social studies teacher Kristine Guzman



"I think it could be very useful, could benefit everyone.... We're always looking for ways to engage students, different ways, and...[this is] another way that we could use to get students engaged." - LBJ math teacher Richard Harrison



"I think this is an excellent addition to the curriculum. I think allowing students to explore more creatively using drama and other fine arts is a great way to understand the concept on a deeper level!" - LBJ social studies teacher Michael Shotts



"I wish that it were something we could have kept in schools all the time...It's a shame that the Texas legislature cut creative arts funding for those schools." - LBJ English teacher Sarah Strum

photos by Clara Morse

LASA accepts largest class to date, worries about space equity

QUINN SIMPSON
Staff Writer

As the result of a marked increase in both the quality and quantity of applications it received this year, LASA High School accepted just under 390 students from a total pool of 670 applicants to join its student body for the 2016-17 school year. Of these students, 362 are freshmen. Each of the other classes currently at LASA total 250 students on average, which means the class of 2020 will most likely number over 100 students larger than the school's typical class size.

Based on the increase in acceptances, LASA principal Stacia Crescenzi projects that the school's total student population will increase substantially next year, despite the students who will ultimately decline to attend.

"A total student population somewhere between 1140 and 1150 would be my best guess because there will be some students over the summer who move or change their minds," Crescenzi said. "That happens. It's a handful. So somewhere between 1140 and 1150 would be my guess."

According to Crescenzi, the jump in the number of applications submitted this year was surprising because it far exceeded the marginal increases she's observed in previous years.

"When applications came through, we had approximately 150 more applications than we had ever had," Crescenzi said. "And that's a significant jump. We've had jumps in the past, but on the level of like, 25. So, no idea why the 150 popped up this year."

LASA history teacher and Campus Advisory Council member Jason Flowers said there was also an increase in highly qualified applicants who met all criteria for acceptance, which was another factor that lead to a drastic increase in admitted students.

"Over the last few years, we've seen a very rapid rise in highly qualified applicants, and so we had to make some decisions about how many students we'd accept and how we wanted that incoming class to look," Flowers said. "The administration and the district made some interesting decisions about how many students and what students we should accept."

Crescenzi realized more applicants than usual would qualify for acceptance when the most common score achieved by the 2016-17 applicants on the CogAT, a problem-solving test all LASA applicants are required to take, was in the 99th percentile.

"We didn't get nervous until we got the CogAT scores back, which was the Wednesday before decisions, which were going to go out on Friday," Crescenzi said. "The

mode was 99th percentile across the nation. In English, nonverbal...people have always been in the 90s in each of those. But for the mode to be 99, meaning, really, they're the highest across the nation, and they're all in one pool—the cut score would've gone up multiple points."

LASA applications are evaluated on a 25-point scale, and every year a cut score is determined to maintain an appropriate class size. This year, the cut score was raised by one point over last year's cutoff. While the score has increased gradually over the past several years as the quality of applications has increased, Crescenzi determined that the cut score is already so high that raising it by more than one point this year to maintain the usual class size of 250 would arbitrarily limit qualified students from attending LASA.

"In terms of who's going to be successful at LASA, the difference between a student coming in as, say, a 17 out of 25 on the rubric, and coming in at 19 or a 20, the potential for success is no different," Crescenzi said. "The reasons

"We had approximately 150 more applications than we had ever had."
-LASA principal Stacia Crescenzi

people score higher in that scenario have to do less with their ability to be successful here and more to do with family income, parental education, whether they've filled out applications in the past and therefore are more savvy about how to do that. It's not whether they're more apt to be successful."

While the increased class size assuages Crescenzi's concerns about unrealistic admissions standards, it raises new questions about the ways in which the larger class will impact the school. LASA junior Lilly Andersen said that students in the class of 2020 will have a profoundly different experience from previous classes.

"I think that their class will be a lot less tight knit and consequently receive less attention from their teachers as well as less support from the rest of the students," Andersen said. "They may also end up being even more competitive than us because of all of the other geniuses that they'll have to compete with to be noticed."

Aside from cultural implications, adding 150 students also raises pressing questions about securing enough space and resources to accommodate so many students

next year. According to Crescenzi, LASA will keep pace with its swelling enrollment next year with the help of additional resources from AISD.

"They're looking at giving us portables," Crescenzi said. "My guess, totally a guess at this point, is going to be between three and four portables, so between six and eight classrooms. They've also agreed that they will give us more teaching units, they're just looking at how many at this point."

However, LASA science teacher Alex Salinas said increasing the number of portables on campus is not a perfect solution. For example, they don't address overcrowding in science classrooms because they can't provide the basic resources needed for laboratory workspaces.

"With science classrooms, there are caps with how many students you want in the lab," Salinas said. "You can't move them to portables because the portable would need at very least water and preferably gas as well. In biology, we could run with just water. In chemistry, we'd need water and gas."

LASA and LBJ share the same campus, and working with AISD to divvy up the available space in recent years has been challenging for the two schools as both their respective student populations have increased. Crescenzi said both she and LBJ principal Sheila Henry would like to see additional permanent space constructed for both schools to expand sustainably. However, AISD failed to implement a recent plan the principals proposed that called for the construction of a new building on the campus.

"I think that both Ms. Henry and I, in terms of a longer term plan, would love to see another building on this site," Crescenzi said. "Late last year we came together and came up with [a plan]— if we could have the perfect building, this is what it would have. The district specified that it would be just under \$15 million to build. Nobody moved on it."

Emphasizing that LASA can't hope to continue accepting classes of 350 students without the space needed to do so, Crescenzi said developing a long-term plan for the two schools is necessary to prevent a scenario where LASA and LBJ grow at each other's expense.

"I don't want to say no to students for whom LASA is a great fit," Crescenzi said. "I do not want to see the numbers or programming of LBJ to be stifled because of that. That's not appropriate either. Both of us need to be able to grow in the way that best serves the students of AISD, and LBJ should not keep us from being able to do that and we should not keep LBJ from being able to do that."

Uber and Lyft leave Austin after prop 1 fails in special election

CLARA MORSE & JORGE VILLA
Staff Writers

Earlier this year, a political action committee funded by Uber and Lyft submitted a petition open to the public, called Proposition 1 or Prop 1, to talk about regulations wanted by Austin. One part of those regulations that the ride sharing companies were fighting against was fingerprinting in background checks; all Austin taxi drivers must be fingerprinted, and the regulations would extend the fingerprinting checks to Uber, Lyft and other companies of that sort. The identification of ride sharing cars was another issue, as were restrictions on loading and unloading in travel lanes, to name a few.

Prop 1 would keep Uber, Lyft and other ridesharing companies from being required to abide by these restrictions. LASA senior Luis Lopez, who voted early for Prop 1, said the extensive background checks in the regulations were not bulletproof.

"I know just how important Uber and Lyft are to Austinites, especially young people," Lopez said. "It is important to keep Uber and Lyft on Austin streets because it reduces the amount of drunk drivers on the road... I [also] know Uber provides a steady extra source for income, and employs a great deal of Austinites."

Uber and Lyft opposed the additional regulations,

especially fingerprinting, according to their websites, because they believed that their system of background checks was thorough enough. LBJ senior Evelyn Campos said she voted for Prop 1, and voted for Uber and Lyft.

"I voted for Uber and Lyft because I believe that both companies should have the right to do whatever they think will benefit their customers and workers," Campos said. "When I found out about what Austin was trying to do to those companies, I just thought that it was unfair... [the city] wanted to mess up the way Uber and Lyft have been working for the past few years."

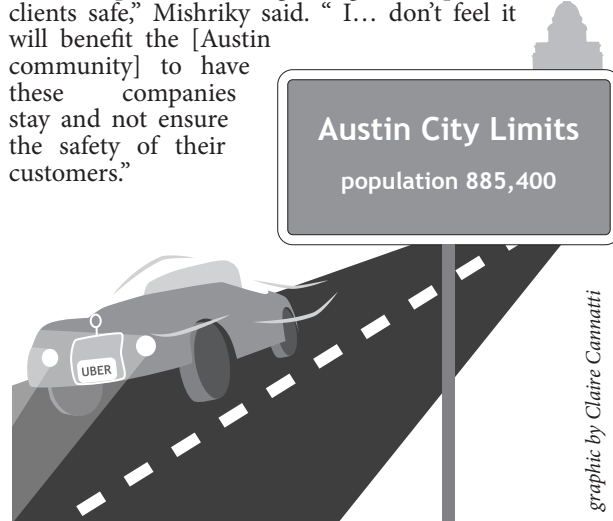
Voting against Prop 1 left the city's regulations as-is, meaning Uber and Lyft would have to comply with the fingerprinting requirements by Feb. 2017. Voting for Prop 1 would have replaced the city's regulations with a new set written by Uber and Lyft without the previous fingerprinting requirement.

"Obviously voting for prop 1 has some downsides," Lopez said. "It is scary and sketchy thinking the person driving you could, on the very off chance, be not a good person. But even with extensive background checks that will almost always remain a possibility, and this danger can be avoided if traveling in groups."

On May 7, 2016 the results came out, showing that almost 56 percent of voters voted against Prop 1. This meant that Uber and Lyft would have to start

implementing Austin's new regulations. Before the election results were released, Uber and Lyft announced that they would leaving Austin if they had to follow Austin's rules. LASA English teacher Lisa Mishriky said she voted against Prop 1.

"I voted against Prop 1 because I don't feel like these companies are doing enough to keep the [ir] clients safe," Mishriky said. "I... don't feel it will benefit the [Austin community] to have these companies stay and not ensure the safety of their customers."



graphic by Claire Cannatti

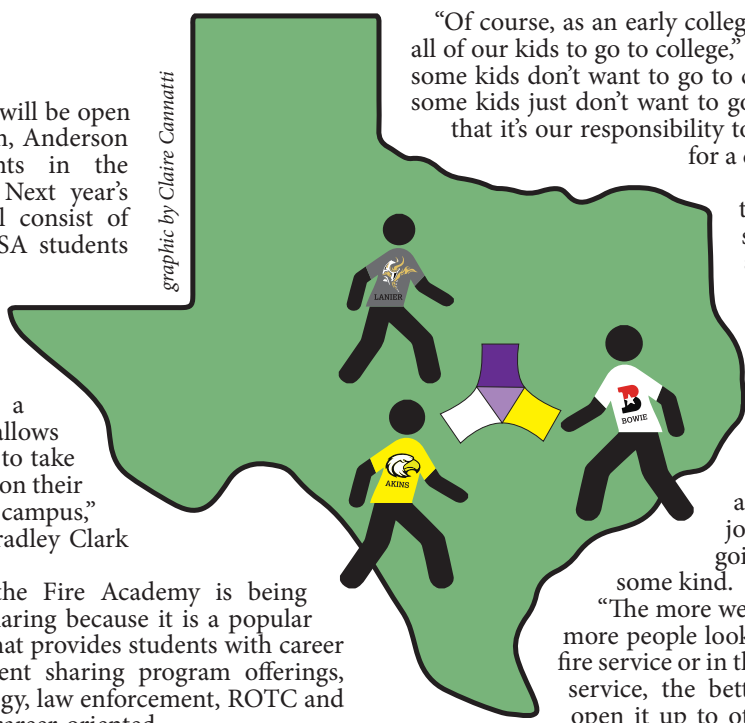
Fire academy to accept out of district students

BETHANY BISSELL
Staff Writer

The LBJ Fire Academy will be open to Reagan, Lanier, Austin, Anderson and McCallum students in the upcoming school year. Next year's Fire Academy class will consist of 14 LBJ students, 14 LASA students and two Anderson students. This is part of the district-wide program called student sharing.

"Student sharing is a district initiative that allows students on one campus to take classes that aren't offered on their own campus at another campus," LBJ academy director Bradley Clark said.

According to Clark, the Fire Academy is being opened up to student sharing because it is a popular and desirable program that provides students with career opportunities. The student sharing program offerings, which include cosmetology, law enforcement, ROTC and autobody classes, are all career-oriented.



graphic by Claire Cannatti

"Of course, as an early college high school we want all of our kids to go to college," Clark said. "However, some kids don't want to go to college right away, and some kids just don't want to go to college, so we feel that it's our responsibility to at least prepare them for a career as well."

Chief Lionel Bess at the LBJ Fire Academy said he thinks that the academy becoming a student sharing program is a good thing because it increases the number of the people that will go into emergency response. He says that a lot of the students that join the academy are going into medicine of some kind.

"The more we offer the students, the more people looking for a career in the fire service or in the emergency response service, the better," Bess said. "If we open it up to other schools we might actually get some people who actually

want to go out and work as firefighters and EMT."

LASA junior Ivy Smith thinks that the program is a good thing because it will introduce the Fire Academy to more individuals and increase diversity within the Fire Academy. However, she thinks it might also make students from the student share program feel left out.

"They might also feel excluded since they don't go to school here," Smith said.

In addition to this, Clark thinks that the program is a good opportunity because it allows students to get quite a bit of work experience quickly after graduation. When students graduate from the Fire Academy, they are eligible to pursue a job in a fire department. Clark said that if a student goes right into firefighting after graduating, they can collect their 20 year pension at a fairly young age.

"So you can actually retire at 38 as a firefighter, have your pension set away for when you turn 65, and you can begin a second career, let's say as a teacher," Clark said, "You can do another 20 years as a teacher, you're only 58, and you can retire with two pensions at 60, and at 65 you can collect two pensions."

Clark says that he is glad he can provide this opportunity to more than just LBJ and LASA students. He says that he is happy that LBJ is a school that provides so many opportunities for students to find what they like to do.

"In high school students should be trying as many different things as they can," Clark said, "I'm proud of the fact that at LBJ we offer students a lot of opportunities."

LASA robotics team High PHidelity attends FIRST Tech Challenge world competition

CAROLINA GOKINGCO
Staff Writer

On the morning of Apr. 26, the members of the LASA robotics team 4290, better known as High PHidelity, boarded a charter bus that took them on a 17-hour drive to the World's competition in St. Louis, Missouri.

Out of about 4500 teams worldwide, 128 teams competed in St. Louis, Missouri, at the world level for FIRST Tech Challenge (FTC), an international robotics program in which participants ages 14 to 20 build and program a robot in teams that compete head-to-head. LASA senior Kyla Hayworth, marketing lead and driver of the team, meaning she is in charge of driving the robot during competitions and looking after the overall appearance of the team at competitions and on social media, describes the robot the team had built for World's.

"The shell of our robot is made entirely from plywood which we laser cut to make it easy to assemble," Hayworth said. "It's like a puzzle, with tabs that interlock with each other to allow us to glue the pieces together. We designed it to collect balls and cubes, called debris in the game, into goals on a raised and elevated surface. Since this design came so late in the season which we

know there is an abundance of teams that score in the highest goal, we decided to aim for the medium goal to be the perfect companion robot."

The robot used to compete in World's took five weeks to build since the team decided to build a new one from scratch after the previous competition. This was the second time during the season they decided to completely redesign the robot.

"Our first robot was also made out of wood, and to symbolize the transition from it to the new one, we burnt the outer shell of the robot and christened the new one 'PHoenix,'" Hayworth said. "It's spelled with a capital PH as a nod to our FRC team, 418 Purple Haze."

At World's, High PHidelity presented to a panel of judges to determine their eligibility for awards. Afterwards, all teams' robots were sent through hardware and software inspections to ensure their robot met all the constraints and criteria. Once every team has been cleared, matches proceeded for three days. The best 12 teams in each division of 64 formed alliances and competed at the end of the third day for the title of champion.

"There is a wide array of things that we had to do to prepare for this competition," Hayworth said. "We had to get our robot up to par for higher level competition, as well

as optimize our code for the autonomous period of the matches. On the marketing side, we had to entirely revamp our posters because of those changes, so that we can present to judges at the competition the most recent data that we can."

Overall, the World's competition both an exciting a learning experience for the LASA robotics team, High PHidelity. According to Hayworth, because the team was in a building skills year, they didn't do the best in robot performance. LASA freshman Ted Howard, apart of the High PHidelity team, also went to World's and said the competition was a great experience for the entire tea. In addition, High PHidelity was nominated for the control award with software.

"Our team learned a ton at worlds, and we were in the finalist group for the control award," Howard said. "This award is given to the team with the most innovative code [or] software for the robot. We were a finalist for this award because of our vision software. This program distinguished a game element and registered the red and blue sides of said game element for point scoring."

In the end, both Howard and Hayworth share similar opinions in regards to the overall experience at World's. According to Howard, It was an enriching experience

to compete and meet other teams.

"We had a lot of fun competing and learned a lot by seeing other robots there," Hayworth said. "My favorite part of the trip was getting to meet a bunch of people and hang out with some that I only get to see once a year."



LASA robotics students pose with PHoenix, their first robot design for worlds. photo courtesy of Gerry Cocco



In Jan. High PHidelity burned the wooden shell from their previous robot. photo courtesy of LASA robotics

183 Expansion

continued from page 1

The project is estimated to cost \$743 million in total and has amassed around \$856 million to fund it. The 183 South project is paid for by a complicated mix of multiple financing options: \$370 million from toll revenue bonds, \$282 million from federal loans under the Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act program (TIFIA), \$60 million in loans from the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) and \$143.4 million in grant money also from TxDOT. The loans, totaling around \$342 million, come from a variety of sources.

"The primary source of funding are toll revenue bonds. These are bonds that are sold by our agency, tax-exempt, government bonds that are sold to private investors and then we collect tolls and repay those investors with the toll revenue," Pustelnyk said. "[The TIFIA loan] is a loan that will be repaid through the toll revenue to the federal government... and [the State loans] are also loans that need to be repaid."

Grant money would help pay for non-toll elements of the project, such as the general purpose lanes, property acquisition and bicycle and pedestrian facilities. While the CTRMA estimates that it will take 30-40 years to pay off the loans, depending on the bond issue, Pustelnyk says that CTRMA isn't committed to removing tolls from the roadways.

"That'll be the decision future elected officials can make when we reach the point when debt might be retired," Pustelnyk said. "Too often in the past people have promised to get rid of tolls, and 30 years later it doesn't make sense to do that. Somebody has to be the person that says 'Well, we know we promised you that, but we're not going to remove the tolls.' So we have not been willing to promise things for elected officials who will be elected 30 years from now. They can make those decisions at that time."

Pustelnyk also said the City of Austin emphasized a desire to push development east rather than south or west, where there are more sensitive environmental areas. The project would boost the growing development of business and residential areas on the east side of town and improve the economic viability of the area. Margaret Gomez, Travis County Commissioner of Precinct 4, agreed with Pustelnyk. She sees the project as a benefit to East Austin, which consists of a large portion of her precinct.

"Any time you have any roads put in anywhere it

gives opportunities to people in the area to put a service station or put up a grocery store; it adds to the economic development of the area, in addition to the services for people who haven't had those services before," Gomez said. "[Gas and service stations] are starting to fill in along 71 because SH 71 is a state road as well, so it goes right by the airport. So I notice as I go out there, that service stations are going up... these are the kinds of projects that are attracted to an area when a road or a nice road is built."

However, the new tolls may face opposition from citizens. Last year, Texans Uniting for Reform and Freedom (TURF) and Texans for Toll-free Highways (TTH) reveled in light of Cintra's bankruptcy, the Spanish owner of the SH 130 tollway. In addition, last year Texas lawmakers, mainly Republican, filed more than a dozen bills that tried to slow progress on new toll road projects or dismantle the Texas's current tolling system entirely, according to the Texas Tribune. That sentiment is at

"Any time you have any roads put in anywhere it gives opportunities to people in the area."

-Travis County Commissioner Margaret Gomez

odds with many Democrats, who feel that tolls will help relieve Austin's traffic problems, which stem from Austin's booming population. The problem is further compounded by the fact that the state gas tax, used to finance highways, has not changed since 1991, while construction costs have more than doubled. This means that the purchasing power of the 20-cent fuel tax now is the equivalent of 8 cents, according to Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT). Gomez said instead of raising the tax, the legislation preferred to create the CTRMA in junction with both Travis County and Williamson County.

"Well I think that it's either [tolls] or we're going to be stuck permanently if we cannot relieve traffic congestion," Gomez said. "The problem goes that there's not only that problem that the gas tax hasn't been raised since 1991, and that was because politically, the officials have not wanted to raise taxes in Texas for that purpose. That gas tax was supposed to build roads to keep up with the growth of the area... I think in the 70's the assumption was made that

if we did not build roads, people wouldn't move here and obviously that was a wrong assumption."

Gomez also said she understood the sentiment against toll roads because it requires people to pay more money, which is something many people dislike.

"We didn't like toll roads because people were going to have to pay, and we would prefer to have what we call 'free roads,'" Gomez said. "They're not necessarily free because you have to pay those free roads with local taxes and so it's just an ongoing argument over the years... [toll roads] seem to be the only alternative to building additional capacity on roads so that people can move and not just sit there for hours and not get to where they need to be and cut down on the congestion."

When asked about alternatives to tollways or other plans to reduce traffic in Austin, both Pustelnyk and Gomez were skeptical about the effectiveness and plausibility of expanded public transit. Pustelnyk said the CTRMA was concentrated on increasing the effectiveness of the current public transit.

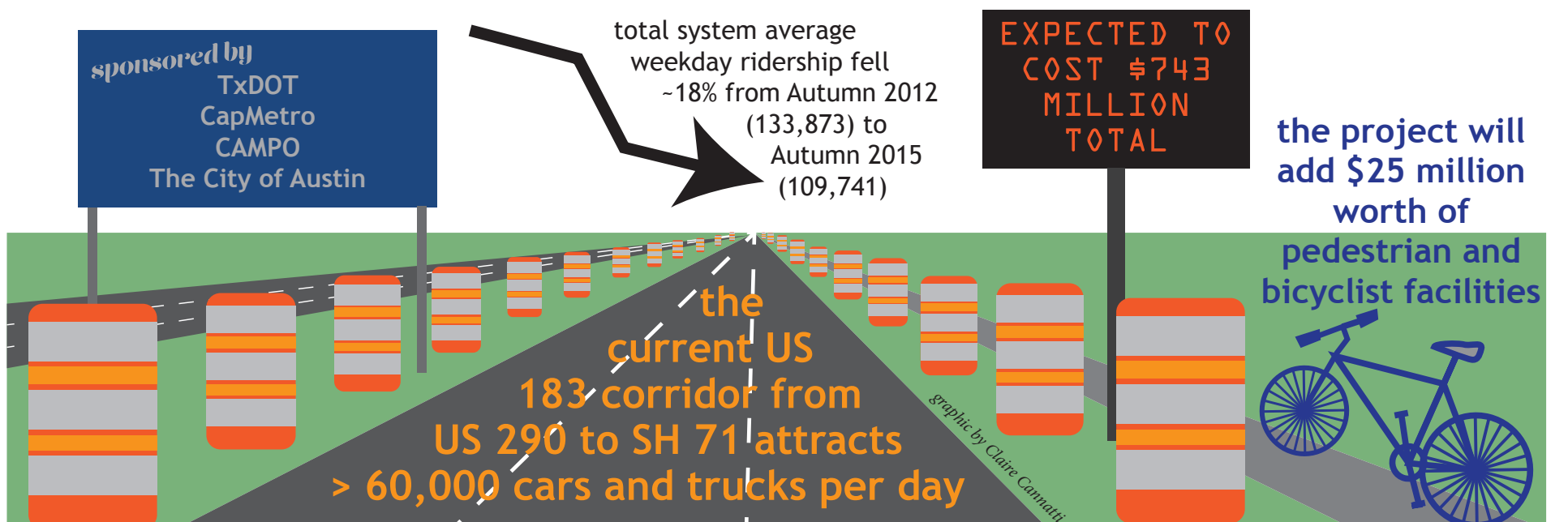
"We are moving forward with something called 'express lanes,' the first of which will be on Mopac North," Pustelnyk said. "We're also looking at them for Mopac South and that 183 North Project North... and the value of express lanes is they use tolling to manage the number of vehicles in the lane to ensure the lane is always moving, even if the adjacent lanes are at a standstill. That ensures that transit buses... [that] use the lane can count on it being free-flowing."

Gomez was less certain about the future of public transit in Austin. As a board member of the CapitalMetro, Gomez said the agency had trouble convincing people to leave their cars and take buses and rail.

"We just couldn't get people to ride the bus. The only people who were riding the bus were poor people and disabled people because they can't drive... people did not seem to ride the bus," Gomez said. "The ridership on the bus, the last time I looked had decreased... so we're still not being successful. A lot of money has been spent on trying to get people to get out of their cars and use the bus."

While public transit may have an uncertain future in Austin, parts of the 183 South tollway are expected to be open to traffic by 2019 and the tollway is slated to be finished by 2020. Pustelnyk said he remains optimistic about the 183 South Project and its impacts.

"[The project's] going to help boost the economy in East Austin, which has historically been challenged, and it's also going to help insure that as the region grows we have some capacity to handle those new trips that will occur," Pustelnyk said.



BEHIND THE COUNTER: Students and parents find jobs and entrepreneurship opportunities in the restaurant industry

LASA parents own restaurants, juggle family and business

ROXY BONAFONT
Life & Feature Editor

LASA junior Shawn Lee and his family moved to Austin from South Korea in December 2009. Just two years later, Lee's parents opened their own sports bar and grill, Wingzup, with the help of an experienced business partner. When their partner moved to Florida, the Lee family took over the restaurant.

"It hasn't been easy," Lee said. "I know my parents have been working super hard all night for a couple of years now.... It's such an experience to have; it's different from all the other kinds of businesses."

Located near central Austin, Wingzup serves American cuisine and bar food. The Lee family has run Wingzup for five years and now plays a mainly managerial role. However, as recent immigrants trying to run a fledgling and understaffed business, the Lee family struggled to make ends meet.

"When we first opened it [my parents] didn't really talk about it, but now my mom has been telling me that it's been really hard, and there were times when they just wanted to quit, just scrap everything up," Lee said. "For a long time we didn't have any income. It's hard."

Low on employees, Lee's parents would spend all day at the restaurant and work in the kitchen on busy nights. Lee said he occasionally helped out or served as a translator, but that often he and his younger brother were left at home alone.

"They would just stay there the entire day, and I would have to provide for the family and everything," Lee said. "I'll be honest, I didn't like it sometimes. I wish my parents were there."

Lee said that owning a restaurant isn't nearly as glamorous as it appears, especially because his parents' dedication to their business has taken so much time away from the family.

"Nowadays it's better, but when they first began it was hard," Lee said. "And just like physically and mentally, it's very tiring. Yeah, there were struggles. But we just kind of pushed through it; we just kind of overcame and now it's turning out to be good."

A few minutes south of Wingzup is Flour and Vine, a restaurant and wine bar owned by the father of LASA junior Naveen Yarlagadda.

"[My father] used to spend upwards of 60 hours at the restaurant, but now it's a lot more manageable," Yarlagadda said. "He spends maybe a couple hours a day. It was, at first, all administrative and also had to do a lot with all the books and finance and stuff, but now that he's gathered suppliers and built relationships with a lot of people that he's already working with, it's not really something to be concerned about."

Around the same time as Wingzup was established, Yarlagadda's father quit his job as a computer engineer to go into business for himself. Yarlagadda said that his family's greatest difficulty was in getting the restaurant up and running.

"There were a lot of times when we were really scared about the future of the restaurant and that's because of all sorts of hidden expenses that there were," Yarlagadda said. "My dad got swindled by the contracting company by upwards of \$50,000, so we took them to court, and then [we had] lawyer fees, and we weren't sure if we were going to get that \$50,000 so for a while we were really worried about whether the restaurant would even be built."

Ultimately, Flour and Vine was successfully built and began serving American cuisine. Like Lee, Yarlagadda said that the early days of the restaurant were a time of financial difficulty.

"We were penny-pinching for a while and we took a lot of financial risks at the same time," Yarlagadda said. "I had to be very careful, we all had to be very careful about what we ate, how much we spent, how often we went out and all that. But it was okay because my dad ran a restaurant so we never really worried that much about food. I mean, basic necessities were covered."

Even after a restaurant finds its footing, Lee said that a significant aspect of ownership is a perpetual process of experimentation, such as testing out new dishes and evaluating their success with customers and in the kitchen.

"The entire business is trial and error," Lee said. "Even now we're just kind of trying things out and a lot of them don't work, but the things that work, work out really well, and those are the things that motivate us to reach for more and more."

For Lee, motivation also comes in the form of rewarding experiences and relationships that give the hard work of owning a restaurant a sense of value.

"Every year on Superbowl Sunday it's just packed. It's crazy," Lee said. "We're always understaffed and sometimes I would just be there to help them out. It's hectic but it's also super memorable. Also it's really nice to have like, there are some people who are there just every single day in the morning, like this couple is there every day eating wings. It's really nice, now we know them pretty close[ly]. Something like that really keeps us going."

The menus of both Wingzup and Flour and Vine consist of primarily American cuisine to appeal to their target demographic: central Austinites. In this way, the restaurants are reflections of not only the families that run them but also the city they serve.

"We eat there a lot, mainly because it's free, but because it's a celebration of not only the food that our family had a part in creating but also a celebration of Austin's culture, because the food is made by an Austinite chef and run by an Austinite family," Yarlagadda said. "So I'd say more than a defining factor of our family it's more a defining factor of Austin."

Running Wingzup isn't as demanding as it once was, but Lee said it is still a time-consuming responsibility that keeps his parents working 10- and 11-hour days. While Yarlagadda considers it possible that Flour and Vine will fall into his hands eventually, Lee doesn't have any expectation of or interest in taking over his family's business. However, Lee said that the restaurant has had a significant and undeniable impact on him.

"Owning a restaurant, it's hard," Lee said. "It's not something that you should go into if you don't know what it's like entirely. But it is going to change your life, both negatively and positively. There's definitely a lot of things you can learn out of it. It's an adventure, honestly."



graphic by Claire Cannatti

THE MAINE COURSE: LIBERATOR STAFF REVIEWS LASA PARENT'S DRINK COMPANY

Maine Root is an organic, Fair Trade Certified™ soda company owned by Mark Seiler, father of LASA senior Alex Seiler. Alex told the Liberator staff her favorite of the soda selection is Mexicane Cola. However, we decided to find the best flavor for ourselves through a staff-wide taste test. We tested four flavors: Mexicane Cola, Ginger Brew, Root Beer, and Blueberry. The two life & feature editors and four staff writers rated each soda from one to five, while others simply offered their verbal opinions.



MEXICANE COLA • GINGER BREW • ROOT BEER • BLUEBERRY

MEXICANE COLA 3.9/5

Mexicane Cola received the highest average rating of 3.9 out of 5. Most of the testers noted its distinct and pleasant sweetness, more so than the popular soft drink by The Coca-Cola Company.

"It's like a better version of Coke." - Quinn Simpson, staff writer

"I [Maine]ly root for Mexicane Coke." - Mateen Kontoravidis, staff writer

GINGER BREW 2.75/5

Ginger Brew received the lowest average rating of 2.75 out of 5. This soda is true to itself; most of staff agreed how it tasted exactly like real ginger (and wondered what is in the popular drink Ginger Ale, as it doesn't taste like real ginger). Though we praise the quality of its ginger taste, the drink seems to be only for those with a special hankering for its unique, fiery flavor.

"Not for the casual soda-drinker." - Roxy Bonafont, Life & Feature Editor

"It burns." - Sessa McMinn, News Editor

ROOT BEER 3.75/5

Root Beer tied for second place with an average rating of 3.75 out of 5. Most of the taste testers concurred that it tasted almost exactly like a Root Beer-flavored Dum Dum lollipop. A solid, not-too-strong root beer flavor.

"Would go great with ice cream on a hot day." - Emily Kolodney, staff writer

BLUEBERRY 3.75/5

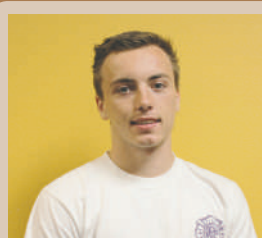
The other second-placer was the Blueberry soda, a surprisingly delectable drink. Though some asserted similarities between its taste and that of some medicinal syrups, others noticed hints of blueberry pie. Overall, the taste testers found the Blueberry soda better than expected.

"Tastes like a combination of sparkling grape and apple juice." - Carolina Gokingco, staff writer

"It tastes like medicine syrup, but I like medicine syrup." - Victoria Mycue, Life & Feature Editor



LBJ and LASA students find employment in restaurant industry



LASA junior Chris Valentino has been working at Taco Bell for about five months. When he first began working, he learned about all of the behind-the-scenes processes of making food at the chain restaurant, some of which he said he found surprising.

"When it comes to food, it's a little strange," Valentino said. "There is this thing called a thermalizer. They ship food in frozen bags in dry packaging, like vacuum sealing. We don't prepare any of it—we just drop it in this thermalizer. It's a vat of boiling water and something else, and it heats it up and we take it out and that goes to the food. We do prepare like the rice and the sauces and pico [de gallo], but a lot of things come ready to go."

Valentino also said dealing with customers is sometimes a little bizarre.

"I once had this guy ask me, who had only ordered one thing, he came to the window and asked for a cup of water, so I got him a cup of water," Valentino. "And he was like, 'No, I wanted a cup of water.' And I was like 'It is a cup of water, and he was like, 'I don't want this water,' and I was like, 'Okay.' So, I went in and left the window open and showed him me putting the water in the cup, and then I was like, 'Can you please go? There are people in line.' ... I don't really know what was going on with him.... It was the weirdest thing. I eventually gave him three cups of water and his food, and he eventually got fed up with me and drove off."

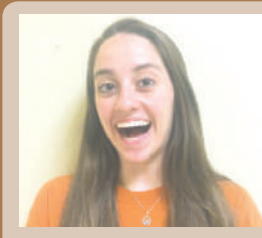


LBJ junior Robby Joseph was offered a job at Taco Bell after receiving a \$3,000 scholarship from the Boys and Girls Club of America, which is sponsored by the chain. Joseph began working about two and a half months ago.

"You have to know the menu, you have to be fast; you can't be slow because you start running out of time and you get into trouble for that," Joseph said. "You have to be a fast learner because they'll always be throwing new stuff on the menu and you've got to know how to make it."

The world of fast food is true to its name, and Joseph said that it can be challenging to keep up with the expectations of management and the whims of customers.

"People change their orders all the time," Joseph said. "One time I was taking someone's order and they pulled up and it turns out he ordered the wrong thing for his son so he actually called his son and handed me the phone and I had to take his order."



LASA junior Mathilda Nicot-Cartsonis started working at Galaxy Cafe in June 2015. She said she wanted to make money for college, and since food and cooking have always been part of her life, working in a restaurant made sense.

"There's this deceiving thing that if it's calm where the customer is then it's calm in the back, which is totally not true at all, 100 percent," Nicot-Cartsonis said. "Just yesterday I was at work and I was looking, the dining room was super peaceful, there were a couple tables with some families and in the back we were screaming at each other because everyone's ordering to-go. We call Tuesdays 'to-go Tuesdays.' So the customer in the front gets frustrated more easily because they're under the impression that they should get their food faster because there's no one there, but in reality we're slammed."

To succeed in the restaurant industry, Nicot-Cartsonis said she needs to be able to think on her feet and accommodate the sometimes strange requests customers have.

"I think it's a good place to learn how to comport yourself in a public setting," Nicot-Cartsonis said. "It's definitely taught me a lot about compartmentalizing what I'm feeling outside of work and just being nice and getting customers to tip me a lot—which is an art form."



LBJ senior D'Erica Rector began working as a hostess at Taco Cabana when she was 16. She then became a carhop at Sonic and now works at IHOP.

"IHOP is crazy, honestly," Rector said. "Being a server, you meet a lot of different people. Like a lot of people are crazy, but a lot of people that come to IHOP are nice.... I notice this older couple [who] come in like every day."

The pay rate for an IHOP server is around \$2 per hour, and Rector said she ends up making nearly nothing because of taxes. Since a vast majority of her pay comes from tips, she said one of her main focuses during her shift is to satisfy customers as much as possible.

"The hardest part is trying to keep everybody happy, because if you have like six tables at once, everybody has to get the same amount of attention," Rector said. "You can't just talk to your first table the most."



LASA senior Sylvie Pratt has been a hostess at Mother's Cafe for over a year. She said the cafe's entirely vegetarian and vegan menu appealed to her, and that she enjoys working with an eclectic group of coworkers although the whims of the owner can be difficult to deal with.

"Possibly the worst part about Mother's is the fact that the owner acts like a meteorologist," Pratt said. "Mother's has been open for like 30 years and he's owned it the whole time, so he's usually got a sense for when it'll be busy, which means hosts will get cut 30 minutes into a shift if he's 'not feeling it.' He's a weird old dude in general, but in a mostly-endearing way."

Overall, however, Pratt said she likes the eccentric atmosphere, and that the customers are typically friendly and generous tippers.

"Weird things kind of happen all the time," Pratt said. "Tonight for example, as I was cleaning a table, a college kid came up to me, clearly nervous, and asked if he could have a plate of leftovers I was in the process of bussing. I was like, 'I'm not going to stop you,' and the end result was him licking the plate clean and ordering a second slice of cake."



LBJ senior Ariel Campbell has been working at various restaurants and summer camps since she was 14 and started working at Whataburger about a month and a half ago.

"Fast food isn't for everyone," Campbell said. "It's a lot of pressure, and it's hard with handling school."

Due to friction between her and her manager, Campbell said she plans to quit soon.

"There was one time where I was talking to the manager and he was like.... 'Can you wash the dishes? Can you wash the dishes?'" Rector said. "The other manager would notice it, and would be like, 'Why are you talking to her like that? [It's] because he always wanted me to do his job.'"



LASA senior Becca Salsberry has had four jobs over the past few years. Although she said some of her previous positions haven't treated her very well, she is enjoying her most recent job: as a

hostess at Fork & Vine. "I like it especially because it has a good work atmosphere, like it's a nice place to work, like everyone's super friendly and they're very family-oriented," Salsberry said. "My manager is super approachable. I like it but it's still very new so everything is still being thrown at me, you know? I haven't exactly gotten the hang of everything yet."

Salsberry said even though she's really liking it already, it's starting to be difficult at times.

"I have to remember what I say when I pick up the phone or what I say to people who come to the door," Salsberry said. "I have to learn the program on the computer to figure out what tables are for which waiter and then where I seat people and then like all the restaurant lingo. It's just a lot to remember but the longer I work there the more I will remember everything."



LBJ senior Dayton Weathers has been working at Long John Silvers for about 10 months. He said he began working to help his mother out and it's been an interesting ride along the way.

"I was working in the drive-through, and this lady was screaming at someone from the passenger seat, saying 'I'll cut you,'" Weathers said. "She pulls up to the drive-through and has a knife out pointed at the dude, telling him to 'Get my food,' and he was like, 'Alright, my wife is crazy.' Then he just drove off yelling. That was just weird."



LBJ senior Sierra Hurrell started working at Sonic in her sophomore year because she wanted to see what the working experience was like, but she has since switched restaurants and began

working at Whataburger this past January. "I changed to Whataburger because I wanted more hours and a better challenge for me," Hurrell said. "It's actually not harder, it's pretty easy like Sonic. I wanted a different place where it was open 24 hours because Sonic closes at 11. I have worked overnight for Whataburger, but it was hectic and I am never doing that again."

Although it might be hard to do the all-night shift, Hurrell said she still really likes the job and looks forward to what she's going to do with the money.

"My favorite thing about it is making money," Hurrell said. "I'm not saving at the moment, I'm buying things for college and getting ready. My least favorite thing? I don't have one. It's a job. You're going to have your ups and downs—you can't really change that."



LBJ senior Destiny Harris works with an activist group that she's passionate about, and said her job at Taco Bell is just a way to make money. Harris said the customers can be challenging to deal with,

but despite this, she spends most of her time outside of school working.

"My mom, she's sick and stuff, and I've got to fend on my own, buy my own stuff," Harris said. "I'm not a person who likes to really ask for things, so I get out and get it."



LASA students participate in annual music and dance concert

LANEY PHILLIPS
Staff Writer

The fluorescent lights beam inside the LBJ Gymnasium on the evening many students look forward to throughout the year. Pounding against the musical overtones of young artists inside the Fine Arts Hallway, the hard beat and exciting performances of similar students is heard echoing in the gym. This year Coffeehouse will not only have new and exciting acts, but also a new, unexpected stage to go along with it. The amount of singers and artists are continuously growing, much like the necessity for performance space. LASA English teacher, director and main coordinator of Coffeehouse, Corey Snyder had to decide on a venue that would best suit LASA's growing population. This year, Coffeehouse featured two unique stages. One completely dedicated to acoustic acts while the larger stage will accompany fully arranged songs, according to Snyder.

"On the [fine arts] stage, we'll have acoustic, spoken word, and smaller acts, more intimate feel," Snyder said. "Out on the big stage we'll have bigger, louder stuff. It gets louder as it goes on in the night. As the sun goes down, the volume goes up."

LASA senior and host for the evening Nick Blacklock said that having two stages allows students to experience Coffeehouse the way they want to, going from stage to stage similar to the way massive music festivals are set up.

"I hope having two stages works out because it's really allowed Coffeehouse to transform [from] a small almost open mic into its own little festival," Blacklock said.

While Mr. Snyder coordinates and makes sure all the acts are set and ready for the stage, PFLASA settles logistics to make sure the show runs smoothly and everyone gets a chance to show their talent. There are many things that occur aside from just the main performances.

"PFLASA really does all the hard work, they book the venue and the sound guy," Snyder said. "They set up the food, the security and deal with all the money. I get to do the easy fun part, just book the people that are going on stage."

Snyder is in charge of the audition process and oversees all the acts and makes sure they are well-prepared for the big night. After knowing most of the students through the years or just having them as his own students, he said he is amazed to see the talents they possess when they audition.

"[The audition process] is very fun," Snyder said. "It's good to hear how creative the kids are and how diverse

Rahman, whose jobs were not to just show up and put on a show, but also to set up and make sure everything ran smoothly.

"I'm helping everyone get set up and helping the songwriting class get their act together," Blacklock said. "I'm writing jokes that I can do during technical difficulties and I'm writing some of my own stuff. Everyone's really helping each other get everything put together."

According to Blacklock, students should have expected a different, but bigger, experience compared to years past. "We were all pretty disappointed that we had to do this in the gym, but I think it was still an awesome show and both stages added some diversity to the lineup," Blacklock said. "I didn't get to see the small show but I heard it was awesome."

On the night of the event, Blacklock and McHaney ran as hosts for the stage inside the gym while Rahman and Woolley managed the stage in the fine arts wing upstairs. According to Rahman who also performed later in the night, hosting the stage was really fun.

"The small stage was a lot more intimate and the acts were more emotional," Rahman said. "I couldn't follow up such emotional acts with jokes in between but I still tried and I got some laughs. Performing was just awesome. It went a lot better than I expected. It was really nice because I could see all my friends and everyone."

Snyder said he mostly tries to delegate between all the people helping plan the event. For him, his goal is to make the show a lot about the kids.

"Every year this is the best night of the year for me and I am so proud of all the kids always when they perform," Snyder said. "It is very gratifying to me to see them."

I hope having two stages works out because it's really allowed Coffeehouse to transform into a small almost open mic into its own little festival.

-LASA senior Nick Blacklock

their interests are. I just see them in class, they write their papers, they do their homework and it never occurs to me that they go home and do that, that they make music like that. It's pretty amazing."

Preparing for the show is not just Snyder's and PFLASA's responsibility, but also the responsibility of Snyder's songwriting class and the performers themselves. LASA seniors and hosts for the evening included Meris McHaney, Nick Blacklock, Philip Woolley and Raina

Netflix connoisseur find new comedic show

ZOE TRUNGALÉ
Staff Writer

The next time you're scrolling through Netflix after rewatching "The Office" a ninth consecutive time, searching for a new show to keep you from spending too much time with yourself, thus being forced to address your deep psychological fears... consider "Portlandia." I started watching "Portlandia" with my friends one day out of boredom, and was instantly charmed by the awkward weirdness. Not only will this show fill up every spare moment of your life, but it has the unique characteristic of being truly funny and a very clear example of what the culture in the city is like. My favorite characters are often referenced within my friend group, and the funniest lines have become inside jokes between us that make me cry with laughter.

Despite at first seeming really goofy and way too weird, the many layers of "Portlandia" will undoubtedly draw you in. The show was created by Fred Armisen and Carrie Brownstein who star in the show, along with Jonathan Krisel, who directs it. It focuses on both the eccentric characters of Portland and their home city. The show's sketch form is certainly different from other mainstream comedy, presenting a hilarious platform for comedy vaguely reminiscent of Saturday Night Live's short skits. Many of these shorts are recurring, featuring characters like Toni and Candace, two middle-aged feminists who own a women's bookstore, played by Armisen and Brownstein. The two always have something to say about society and/or the male gender as a societal construct. It's the exaggerated characters like these that make up "Portlandia" and compose the hilarious mash-up of stories and skits which poke gentle fun at Portland.

The show generally follows a few consistent duos, typically played by Brownstein and Armisen. Other than Toni and Candace, other pairs include Nina and Lance, a couple where each character is the ultimate embodiment of their gender. Nina loves parties, shoes and romance, while Lance is passionate about fixing his car and riding his motorcycle, but get this, Nina is played by Armisen and Lance is played by Brownstein.

The role reversal will definitely throw you off at first, but creates incredibly weird and funny situations.

In one recurring sketch, Brownstein and Armisen play themselves as a charming best friend pair who just happen to be friends with the mayor, played by Kyle McLaughlin. Brownstein and Armisen explore all of the city's nooks and crannies together. In one episode they accidentally end up dating the same girl... It's pretty funny, not going to lie.

Despite how obnoxious the show sounds, it is truly one of my favorites. From the first episode, which begins with a ballad commemorating 90s culture living in Portland, to the episode where a middle-aged man, Peter, goes to rehab after attempting to give up pasta then suffers from a dramatic relapse, the show is without a doubt a gem.

When all of these random skits are thrown together, the show is able to paint a stereotypical picture of the city Portland perfectly. Exaggerating each part of what everyone hates about "hipster culture" and living in a growing city, Portlandia is able to capture just how weird everyone thinks Portland is while also making hilarious jokes out of it. I can see similarities between the weird and quirky parts of Portland culture that are at the center of every joke and my own quirky city Austin. From the protesting biker gangs to the brunch restaurant lines that stretch down 10 blocks and have people camping out to get a blueberry pancake, "Portlandia" captures all the weird and annoying things about Austin too.

My other favorite part of "Portlandia" is the extreme extent in which they are able to reach random. Let me paint you a picture. Imagine a group of middle-aged women on a nature retreat standing in a line in a flooding river calling upon the moon to stop the flood. Now imagine watching a couple sit down to eat at a restaurant, but they end up visiting the farm where their meal was raised, only to discover the farm is run by a polygamous man and his many wives, after which the couple joins the family. Needless to say, the show is creative; exploring and exploiting every little quirk of Portland, and bringing the weirdness of the city to a whole new level.

I ♥ PORTLANDIA

graphic by Grace Bodine

Ninth year instalation of Threadfair

KENZA MCKERRIHAN & CHELSEA BANAWIS
Staff Writer & Entertainment Editor

Models sit in a loft area getting hair and makeup done while designers hand sew finishing touches in a frenzy. Less than two hours are left until the fashion show, and the designers' nerves kick in as they approach the judging table. The judges for the evening, coming from fashion backgrounds including the Austin School of Fashion Design and founder of Katastrophic Designs, examine the quality of the clothes before the event starts. As the show begins, the lights turn off and the runway is lit up in bright colors. Guests take their seats awaiting the culmination of the hours of work that the high school-aged models, makeup artists and designers put into the show, including the work of LASA senior and Threadfair director Emily Etheredge.

"I spend many late nights every year slaving over my collection just trying to make it perfect," Etheredge said. "It's worth it. When my models walk down the runway I'm so proud of myself because I have created something that somebody can actually wear and that's pretty freaking cool."

For nine years students have

hosted, organized and designed for the event known as Threadfair. Threadfair is an annual fashion show open to designers, models and makeup and hair artists in high school from all over Austin. Etheredge worked with a team throughout the year to manage the student-run production, find new things to add to the show and make sure the show ran smoothly. According to Etheredge, the feeling of Threadfair changed this year as more people have gained interest in the event.

"It just feels a lot bigger this year," Etheredge said. "The

I spend many late nights every year slaving over my collection just trying to make it perfect.

-LASA senior Emily Etheredge

fact that we have a big venue helps because last year we could only have 100 guests and this year we can have 200, which doubles our capacity and doubles the amount of people that we've reached. I think a lot more people have heard about it and are really excited about what we do."

A large part of making the show come together is the fundraising done by the team. According to Etheredge, a portion of the funds collected by ticket sales will go to the same charity as last year, Dress for Success.

"A big part of Threadfair is giving back," Etheredge said. "We not only want to provide a great place for Austin artists to showcase their work but we want to then use that to give back even more."

Following the judges' evaluations before the show and while the models walked down the runway, the winners of the event were announced. This year, LASA senior Logan

Kramer won first place with her '50s collection. LASA sophomore Asher Eaton won second place and Etheredge won third.

"I never expected to win," Kramer said. "All of the collections this year were amazing and I felt so lucky to be a part of such a talented group of people."

This year, Saulsberry took on a role to help organize the event and said it was fun for her to see underclassmen getting involved who are taking over the organization for the next year.

LASA senior Maya Haws-Shaddock, who was also on the management team as event manager, said it was exciting to be a part of something so big in her third year working on Threadfair.

"Threadfair is just a testament to how much teenagers can achieve when they put their minds to it, so I was very excited to be a part of that," Haws-Shaddock said. "Being able to run something independently without relying upon outside adult leadership and working completely on our own is an amazing thing to see come together."

graphics by Grace Bodine



“HANDS” PUT EMOTIONS INTO UIL

ACP put on fourth revival show, placed at area, moved onto region with “The Hands of its Enemy”

CHELSEA BANAWIS
Entertainment Editor

The LBJ/LASA theater troupe, the Alley Cat Players, advanced to the semi-finals in One Act UIL this year for the first time in the troupe's history with their smash performance and revival of “Hands of its Enemy” written by Mark Medoff and directed by theater teacher Melissa Alexander-Driscoll with her assistant director, LASA senior Malik Offor. The play was written as a realistic piece in order for the audience to believe its similarity to real life and Alexander-Driscoll said it helps the audience relate to the performance.

“It was great to see realistic theatre which is what we do to break through,” Alexander-Driscoll said. “You don't typically see that in UIL theatre, like that hardcore realism. You see a lot more flash and dance and big concepts and money and so it was really heartwarming to see basic, real storylines make it as far as it did.”

Alexander-Driscoll said she chose “Hands” because she believed the show would work best in front of the UIL judges to give ACP the best chance to advance this year. Around the same time in April as the UIL competition, ACP was also preparing for their one act show, “After the Fall” to show to the community and according to Alexander-Driscoll, the competition was not what they were focused on.

“We were actually focused on just our show week and what we were going to be doing in our two one-acts within our community because of the shortened time frame for UIL,” Alexander-Driscoll said. “We were very excited when we advanced and then when we kept advancing and we kept working on it it was even more exciting, but [UIL] was never our focus.”

In her first lead role during a UIL One Act, LASA junior Catherine Dickey played deaf playwright Marietta Yerby and communicated with American Sign Language throughout the play. She said that sign language has been something she has loved for a really long time and that the

role she had to play was a big, but exciting, challenge to portray. During the competition, she said advancing was a shock.

“After every round we just kept thinking, ‘Oh this will be the last one,’” Dickey said. “We were still really proud of how far we had gotten. After district we were just hoping that we still got on. After bi-district every round was just like a complete shock to me so it was just really shocking but so amazing.”

“The actual competition doesn't really matter as long as you have a good show and do as well as you can because at the end of the performances if I was happy with how I did... it was worth it to do everything.”

-LASA junior Catherine Dickey

At each level of the UIL competition the judges for the event pick an all-star cast and while advancing to the semi-finals, the troupe won the best actor award for LASA senior Lukas Keel's performance. This award is given to the overall best actor in each level of UIL competition, and ACP won in twice for the first time in history. Additionally, according to Alexander-Driscoll, they received a lot of recognition from the judges.

“We took a lot of all-star cast medals, even our small characters that normally in UIL they don't get noticed because they try to give the awards out to as many schools as possible,” Alexander-Driscoll. “Ivy Smith has a smaller supporting role in it and she got an all-star cast. We got a lot of recognition from judges. We also had judges who didn't like us, and judges who did really weird things so I think it was amazing.”

The play was not the company's priority before they

advanced according to LASA senior and actor Antonio Skillicorn, who played Edgar “Skip” Donner. According to Skillicorn, ACP is committed to a certain kind of theater and was happy to advance without changing anything about their style.

“We are not going to compromise that because of what judges think,” Skillicorn said. “This year we did not change anything. We were still doing the show we really loved and the type of theater we really wanted and we just happened to continue and that was just an added bonus and it was really awesome.”

While directing two plays, one for UIL and one as an in-class assignment, Alexander-Driscoll chose Offor to be her assistant director and right-hand man. During the competitions, UIL rule forbids directors from any verbal and nonverbal communication so Offor was present to act as the head of that community and to keep everybody calm according to Alexander-Driscoll.

“People get very nervous they can have different reactions, they can freak out, things can go wrong, etc.,” Alexander-Driscoll said. “You have to have one person that they can trust and that they can depend on like they would do me as a director here for shows, that they can take everything to. They have to have someone they trust.”

As their revival season ends, Alexander-Driscoll said for the next season and next UIL competition she wants to reduce the amount of stress the department feels by keeping the same style of theatre that the students appreciate. Alexander-Driscoll said the students were not focussed primarily on the competition, but instead on their play they were putting on for their community, and Dickey agreed.

“The actual competition doesn't really matter as long as you have a good show and do as well as you can because at the end of the performances if I was happy with how I did and I felt like we had a good show it was worth it to do everything,” Dickey said.



ACP actors and LASA seniors Lukas Keel, Geoffrey w, Sky Blaw and LASA juniors Catherine Dickey and Ivy Smith perform their UIL show “The Hands of its Enemy” in their performances at LBJ for the community. The original show week had to be rescheduled when the company continued to advance in the UIL One Act Play competition, making it to the level of region, further than ACP has ever advanced before. Photos by Carmen Fann

Top 5 things I learned from high school

written by Meris McHaney, Entertainment Editor

1 Keep your opinions to yourself: Throughout my years here I have found that if you express your opinions on anything ranging from how crispy you like your pizza crust to how you feel about the presidential race, you will without a doubt be attacked by your one-sided peers. So, if you're wanting to wish someone a Happy Chris Kyle Day here, just don't.

2 How to work on and accomplish something with Chelsea Banawis: I would recommend conversation topics over Tinder, ethnic men, One Direction or snacks.

3 No matter how hard you try, you will never understand poetry: From Romanticism to Transcendentalism, it goes in one ear, pisses off my brain and then exits through the other ear. I know you tried Mrs. Swan, I'm sorry, I just can't.

4 People are ignorant: Have you tried to walk in our hallways?

5 How to make an A on a project the night before it's due: Stock up on all the energy drinks you can find and pretend like you know what you're talking about during your presentation. Trust me, it works everytime.

FEMALE FEVER

ASHLEY THOMAS
Staff Writer

I love ‘Girls’. It's the millennial's version of ‘Sex in the City’, following four unusually paired young women struggling to survive adulthood in the mess that is New York City. Hannah, Jessa, Shoshanna and Marnie take on the roles of ‘girls’ who together learn how to “adult”, a complex process that includes tasks like writing a check. These girls are essentially children. They're all deeply shallow and selfish, yet hilarious at the same time.

In the very first scene you get introduced to the emotional, narcissistic, insensitive train-wreck that is Hannah Horvath. Marnie is the mom of the clan, appearing to have her whole life together. Working her way up to owning her own art gallery, Marnie works at one of the hottest showrooms in town. She has the dream job AND the dream boyfriend: Charlie. Then there's Jessa, the ex-junkie who left college after developing a heroine addiction to travel the world and live her life as a character in a cliché indie film. Last of the girls is Shoshanna. Award-winning, fast talking, know-it-all Sosh is plowing her way through college to fulfill her dream of becoming a multimillion dollar business mogul who travels the world.

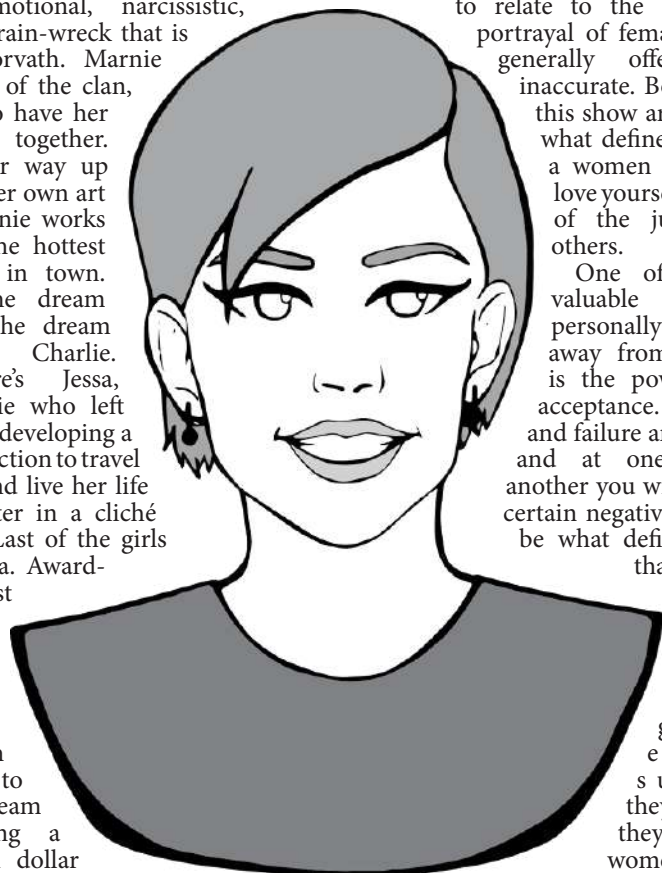
Supporting roles are what really propel the story to its greatest potential, among my favorite is the BEAUTIFUL Adam Sackler, portrayed by Adam Driver, who is Hannah's deranged love interest. Sackler has the most in-depth personality

of all the characters on the show. Though he has his problems, Sackler essentially holds the team together, serving as their rock and bringing the girls back down to earth in their times of need.

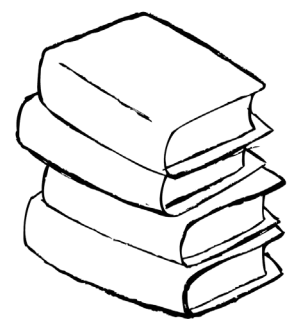
On the more political side of the show, ‘Girls’ is one of a few in a new rare breed that feature strong females in the leading roles. Female characters finally have substance. Their personalities and life goals revolve around their own personal interests and emotions rather than around the men in their lives. Women have personalities, and stories that the female audience can engage in rather than having to relate to the stereotypical portrayal of females that are generally offensive and inaccurate. Boundaries in this show are broken on what defines beauty for a woman and how to love yourself regardless of the judgment of others.

One of the most valuable things I've personally taken away from this show is the power of self-acceptance. Humiliation and failure are inevitable, and at one point or another you will think that certain negative things will be what define you, but that couldn't be further from the truth. The flaws that these girls have eventually subside, they grow up, they become women and it's fascinating seeing how far they have come in the end. Taking myself further and venturing out into the unknown without regret and hesitation, these are the things I need to do to make myself grow, and watching this show is giving me the courage to do just that.

graphic by Grace Bodine



English teacher as author: a review of “The Scourge”



EMMA MORAN
Staff Writer

The Scourge is a 2016 novel written by LASA's very own English teacher, Mo Harry. At first I wasn't really sure about this article; it seemed strange to read a young adult book written by a teacher, because students tend to think of teachers as aliens rather than humans, but it was actually a rather normal and interesting book to read. The Scourge is a futuristic dystopian novel featuring teenage protagonists that I was really able to connect to, and whose enthralling adventure on the edge of existence made this a book that I just couldn't put down.

The novel takes place in a future where almost all human have been wiped out by a highly it seemed strange to read a young adult book written by a teacher advanced species called the Cuoxel, which were once almost hunted to extinction. The story follows the incredible paths of three very different yet deeply connected characters. Meolchwik is a young human girl who herds goats in a society that has survived on First Earth by hiding for generations in Deeprock, a system of hidden caves under a mountain. Meolchwik has always yearned to break free of the confinement of the cave she calls home, but when she actually gets her wish, her whole world is turned upside down. Tagla is a young mason who lives in Haltain, a large human community on Second Earth that is strictly governed by

gods and priests. But Tagla has always had doubts about their leadership - could it be even worse than he imagined? And then there's Keshtau, a Cuoxel mother of millions, one of the very first, who has always had a soft spot for humans. Soon the worlds of all of these characters will be completely turned upside down, and the question is - who will survive?

This awe-inspiring dystopian sci-fi book can be read as an independent novel or as a sequel to The Returning, a novel that Harry published in 2013. I did find it somewhat

“Reading this book would be a great read for Harry's students to learn more about their teacher and see his lessons illustrated outside of class in his own life.”

confusing in the beginning, having not read The Returning and thus struggled to keep up with all the separate stories that seem to have no relation to each other, yet Harry synthesizes all of these

stories quite incredibly into one great tale. In this imaginative work, Harry is able to illustrate so many great themes and issues that people face today in a novel set in such an unfamiliar place and time, so much so that it stretches readers' imagination and definition of the possible. I would absolutely recommend this book to any high schooler, especially any student interested in reading their teacher's book. I definitely enjoyed it, and look forward to reading more by Harry in the future. Reading this book would be a great read for Harry's students to learn more about their teacher and see his lessons illustrated outside of class in his own life.

graphic by Grace Bodine

Q&A WITH RETIRING LASA TEACHERS FENNELL, PACE

VICTORIA MYCUE & EVA STRELITZ-BLOCK
Life & Feature Editor, Staff Writer

It was fall of 1984 when Jackson Pace began teaching at LBJ High School. It wouldn't be until the following year that the school would establish the Science Academy (SA), an inter-campus magnet program. Two years after that, the Liberal Arts Academy (LAA) would be established at Johnson High School (now Eastside Memorial High School). Six years later, in 1992, Tim Fennell began teaching at SA. Finally, in 2002, LAA and SA joined to form LASA on the LBJ campus. Now, in 2016, we say goodbye to Pace and Fennell, two of LASA's most legendary and formative science teachers.

Tim Fennell

The Liberator: What were you doing before you became a teacher?

Fennell: I worked two years as an exploration geologist for Exxon USA exploring for oil and gas out of New Orleans. I was exploring for new deposits of oil and gas in the southern Miocene plane of Southern New Zealand. It was petroleum geology.

The Liberator: What did you do after that? Did you go right into teaching?

Fennell: Exxon was interesting and they treated me very well, but I realized pretty quickly that my life was not going to be an office job, and so I actually resigned but they let me go on a leave of absence instead. I told them I was resigning to go to grad school, but that was completely made up. I already had a ticket to go to London. I was going to travel around Europe and Africa for at least 6 months and then I was going to figure out what to do.

The Liberator: After your travel abroad, how did you get into teaching?

Fennell: [I] came back to Austin and took a class in Economics and Spanish. [My] girlfriend at the time was getting a teaching certificate, and I took a look at her catalogue and saw that I, with all the classes I had taken, could get a teaching certificate in 6 months and thought it would be good for my bag of tricks, [teaching] temporarily when I needed to. Little did I know that 30 years later I would be retiring as a teacher, because I figured it would be temporary thing.

The Liberator: What did you teach when you first started?

Fennell: I taught junior high for six years, and then after that I taught at Kealing for six years when that opened up as a magnet program. After about six years [I] thought well maybe this isn't really what I want to do.

The Liberator: How did you begin at LASA?

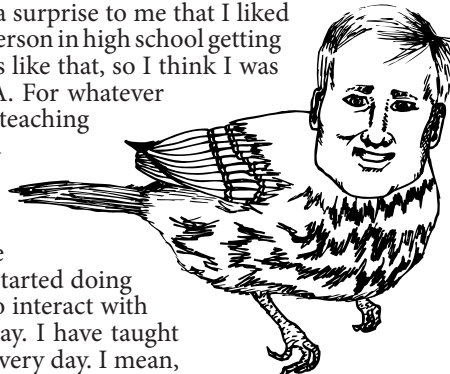
Fennell: The curriculum coordinator for what used to be the Science Academy was recruiting [at Kealing],... and she said, "There's this class Planet Earth and it's not going very well, and the people who teach it don't really like it, and the students don't like it, and would you be interested—it sounds like it's your cup of tea—would you be interested?" And it turned out to be. So I came over and my colleague... had taught it for a semester.... That first year we really turned it on its head and changed it up a lot, and here we are 24 years later.

The Liberator: What is memorable about teaching at LASA?

Fennell: I mean really it's been the students. It's more of a collaborative atmosphere, and I think that's just a LASA thing, but maybe it's what I enjoy more. I mean when you have students who are really taking responsibility for their learning, then it is just more collaborative rather than me being up here saying, "Okay, now do this, this and this." So, especially in those early years, even though I knew things about birds, I had a lot more to learn, and I knew nothing about woody plants or arthropods. So I consulted a lot of experts, and they helped me kind of come up with a plan to design data-taking techniques, and, you know, I was learning right along with the students. We were sitting down at microscopes thinking, "Hm, what bug is this? What plant is this?" Overall, it's just been the collaborative approach I've been able to do here with students.

The Liberator: Why do you think you've enjoyed teaching more than you would have another career?

Fennell: I'm an accidental teacher.... It was a surprise to me that I liked teaching. I was never the most comfortable person in high school getting up and talking in front of people and things like that, so I think I was lucky that I ended up at Kealing and LASA. For whatever reason, I think that the way I approach teaching was a good fit for these populations. Would it be a good fit for everywhere? I don't know, because these are the places I have taught. There was no preconceived plan. I probably thought at one time, "Teaching? Are you kidding? I'm never going to do that." I started doing that, and I found it a very interesting way to interact with science and the students. I like that interplay. I have taught planet earth for 24 years, but it is different every day. I mean, it is never the same twice. One of the things about Exxon, although they treated me wonderfully and when you talk about what I was doing, it was really intellectually interesting, it was kind of just me doing my own thing, isolated instead of interacting as much as I do as a teacher.



Tim Fennell is known for his deep passion for birds. graphic by Naia Sipas

Jackson Pace

The Liberator: Why did you decide now was the right time to retire?

Pace: You don't see a lot of six [foot] six 90-year-olds walking around... because they're all dead. I would like to be healthy enough to do some things before I go instead of being tied to the school.... I love my students. I love the brilliance that AISD puts in front of me every year. I feel like I was a big factor in creating the place, and I know I have made my mark in the hearts and the minds of lots of students.

The Liberator: A huge part of your legacy at LASA will be SciTech. What was it like creating that class?

Pace: We won a second grant to help write SciTech and Planet Earth, so it's really odd that Tim Fennell and I are retiring at the same time, because he wrote Planet Earth at the same time that I wrote SciTech. And we wrote it all under the exact same grant so we were being paid to write it in the summer. And of course we were both creating absolutely new, never-done-before stuff, and it is so odd that we are both retiring at the same time.

The Liberator: What were you doing before you became a teacher?

Pace: I was in a national company, and I was a manager of an organization and making quite a bit of money and percentage of the profit.... But I wasn't happy making money. I have a really sick altruistic mode in me.... You have to be kind of weird to be a teacher anyway, and I wasn't using my science degree. I was in a company that wasn't using my pre-med [degree]. I was a pre-med major, biology, and then got a composite science degree before I started teaching so I could teach any of the sciences.

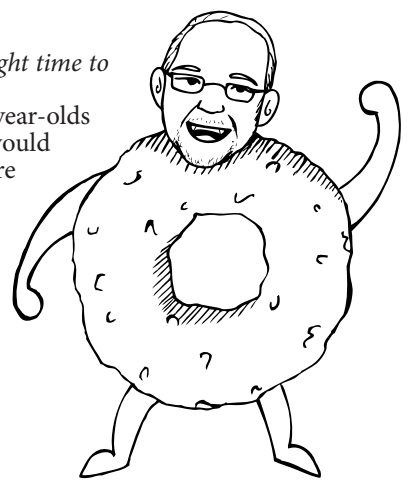
The Liberator: If you had a science degree and a career in business, why did you become a teacher instead of working in either of those more lucrative fields?

Pace: I feel very blessed that I found the career that I was happy with and good at... I just have a knack for messing with kids. I had always been a teacher or coach or something. I was a college athlete and I taught my high school friends. I was the smartest guy in my group, and I taught them math and I would help them all with science. And then coaching, I was the captain of every team I was on, and then I went into coaching in college for a little while... I have always been engaged with young people and teaching people around me, even peers around me... It was just an instinct, an intuitive decision to come and teach, and sure enough I fell into the right place, the right time, the right group of people, and just never moved. I've never taught anywhere else but LBJ. I bleed purple and white.

The Liberator: How have you been involved in impactful experiences for LASA students?

Pace: I've had incredibly impactful events that I would never have gotten to do anywhere else but here. So those are the ones that I remember the most. I picked the first kids to ever do research at NASA's reduced gravity laboratory. We flew them up in space, and when you are floating in Zero G, you know those memories are things you will never forget. And I would never had gotten to do that if I had not been teaching the gifted and talented people of Austin. And those kids have never forgotten and we always reminisce whenever we see each other.

I get the biggest kick out of telling these stories. My daughters are sick of travelling with me for only one reason. [They say,] "We can't go anywhere without a kid coming up." They are 28 and 25 years old. [They say,] "Nowhere in our lives have we ever gone that we haven't run into one of your students." I took my youngest on a senior trip—anywhere she wanted to go—and she picked New York City because she is a fashionista and wanted to go. And we were walking down Fifth Avenue on her senior trip. And we were walking and this guy comes running out of this deli and he goes "PACE! How in the hell are you here on Fifth Avenue? I was thinking about you yesterday!" And my youngest, my 18-year-old daughter, I mean imagine you were at that age—she rolled her frickin' eyes back in her head and goes, "Oh my god."



Jackson Pace is known for calling his freshmen students "fruit loops." graphic by Grace Bodine

Local youth group Litzor BBG spins to win, raises funds

EMILY KOLODNEY
Staff Writer

There's a dark room, booming with fast and loud music. It's quite hot, maybe a little stuffy, but there is water and Gatorade lined up against a wall. There are three rows of stationary bikes, each one occupied by a teenage girl. They're smiling, laughing and biking while socializing. The bikes are across from a wall covered in mirrors. In front of the wall stands a session leader with a microphone, instructing the girls to the beat of the music. What lies in this room is the Litzor BBG Inaugural Spin-A-Thon Fundraiser.

Litzor BBG is a chapter of Austin BBYO, the leading pluralistic Jewish teen movement and youth group across the world. BBYO has existed internationally for over 90 years, and has existed in Austin for 7 years. There used to be only two chapters in Austin, one for girls and one for boys. When the original girls chapter, Ra'naan BBG, grew to over 90 girls, a new chapter, Litzor BBG, was created. Vice President of Programming and LASA sophomore Anna Davis was one of the founding members of Litzor.

"When I heard that there was going to be a [new] chapter for like a year and then when they actually told us it was official, the international president [of BBG] came and had dinner with me and five other girls," Davis said. "It was really cool and I [thought] 'maybe I should actually do this,' and I ended up going with it."

For a BBYO chapter to be created, there must be at least

12 people that want it to exist. Davis became a founding member when she decided to place her name as one of the 12 on the original charter. When Davis and fellow founding member, Treasurer and LASA sophomore Hannah Whellan, got together after being elected to brainstorm fundraising ideas, they went searching on the internet for inspiration.

"[We started by going] online because it was my first time being in charge of something," Whellan said. "On one of the [websites] there was a walk-a-thon, so I was thinking about that and then Anna told me that one of our advisors is a spin instructor. She [said] she was willing to do free spin classes. So I thought we'd do a spin-a-thon and raise money."

Spinning is stationary biking, so Litzor's spin-a-thon incorporated participants on stationary bikes, asking for pledges from friends and family members to bike for a certain amount of time. After coming up with the idea, they met with Austin BBYO City Director Nick Tosh.

"We talked with our city [director] and he said that we should set in a goal," Davis said. "So we [wanted] to go for \$1000. We ended up getting, I think, \$1,700."

Now that the date was set and the room was reserved, Davis and Whellan publicized to get people to come and spin in exchange for pledges. They advertised on Instagram, Facebook and Snapchat by posting almost daily with links to the GoFundMe page where they were collecting the money. Little did they know just how much

they were going to make.

"Honestly, when I calculated it, we expected a lot more people," Whellan said. "[It was] just kind of shocking, the amount of money we raised with only 20 people. A lot of it was Anna [Davis], like \$795 of it."

After collecting over \$1,700 at their spin-a-thon on March 27, the girls of Litzor BBG have some big plans for the future. The amount of money they made allows them to provide scholarships for girls in the chapter to attend tri-yearly regional conventions and summer experiences plus plan bigger events for the chapter. Although Ra'naan BBG was her original chapter, Whellan said it was quite large and didn't provide the opportunity that she wanted when it comes to leadership positions.

"I thought, 'This is my chance to actually do something,' because there are just so many girls in the other chapter," Whellan said. "I'm really glad I [switched] because it's been cool to have the power to set up a whole other chapter and start a legacy."



Maia Suez cycles at the the spin-a-thon. photo by Emily Kolodney.

LASA teacher Alison Earnhart discusses STEM education at White House

SARAH LUCAS
Staff Writer

A long table is filled with various professionals and educators who are engaged in discourse over STEM education across America. Among them is LASA science teacher Alison Earnhart. Behind them, a presidential portrait hangs on the wall. While this meeting is only one of the four board meetings that the National Consortium for Secondary STEM Schools (NCSSS) holds annually, the setting for this one vastly differs from those prior, as these members are seated in chairs at the White House in Washington D.C.

The consortium was invited to go to the White House to meet with the President's top advisors on STEM education and national policy on April 15. As a group that unites all the top STEM high schools in America, the board aids in fostering communication and collaboration among its member schools. Additionally, it serves as a collective voice for schools when it comes to public policy and best practices for STEM education. Members of the NCSSS board met with the heads of the Office of Science and Technology, and discussed a breadth of topics, including recent accomplishments, success stories and potential programs.

"Firstly, we shared what is going on at all of our member schools (we represent over 100 schools across America) and what great things we're accomplishing and how these schools are doing it," Earnhart said. "The White House was very interested in hearing about success stories and figuring out how to share our best practices with other schools."

NCSSS board members were not only able to inform the government about their recent successes at STEM schools while at the White House. They were also briefed on emerging government programs in support of STEM. Under the Obama administration, the White House and Department of Education have asserted that early STEM education is a measure critical for the nation to assume a more competitive social and economic position.

"They also had a lot to speak to us about," Earnhart said. "They are promoting a number of really fantastic

programs that aim to help STEM education in schools, and they are looking to our organization to adopt them and promote them among our membership."

According to LASA science teacher Jackson Pace, the Consortium's discussion over national education issues at a forum like the White House shows the development of the organization as it furthers its national presence. It has been a longstanding tradition for LASA to have representation on the board of directors. As the representative from LASA on one of the original founding boards of NCSSS, he noted the progress and growth the organization has undergone since its creation.

"I love giving presentations and attending talks on what's new and successful in STEM education all over America."

-LASA teacher Alison Earnhart

"We created that board," Pace said. "Because there were magnet schools around the nation that knew they were special, and we're different than other high schools, and we have common needs, common national policy needs, and so we were one of the original thirteen science academies."

Pace said that the organization's work somewhat died down following his time on the board. However, he said that Earnhart's generation has gotten much more involved and reinvigorated the board.

"The original intent of that organization... it kind of got lost for a while," Pace said. "[Earnhart] is a spectacular leader. She is the best that ever walked through here, and I am happy to say that I helped to hire her, because I knew she was gifted."

Still, the growth in the years since the organization's establishment is what attracted Earnhart to becoming LASA's representative years later. According to Earnhart,

seeing the national conference in Austin allowed her to witness first-hand the work the organization was doing and convinced her to be part of it.

"In some ways, it's a lot of extra work throughout the year, but in the end it's worth it. I really enjoy working with my colleagues, all of whom are really passionate about STEM education and come from schools all over the country. It's interesting to work with them and learn about all the cool stuff that is going on at our peer schools like Thomas Jefferson High School and the Bronx School of Science. I especially enjoy putting on the national conferences in November. I love giving presentations and attending talks on what's new and successful in STEM education all over America, and helping other teachers and administrators network and collaborate on improving what they're doing at their schools."

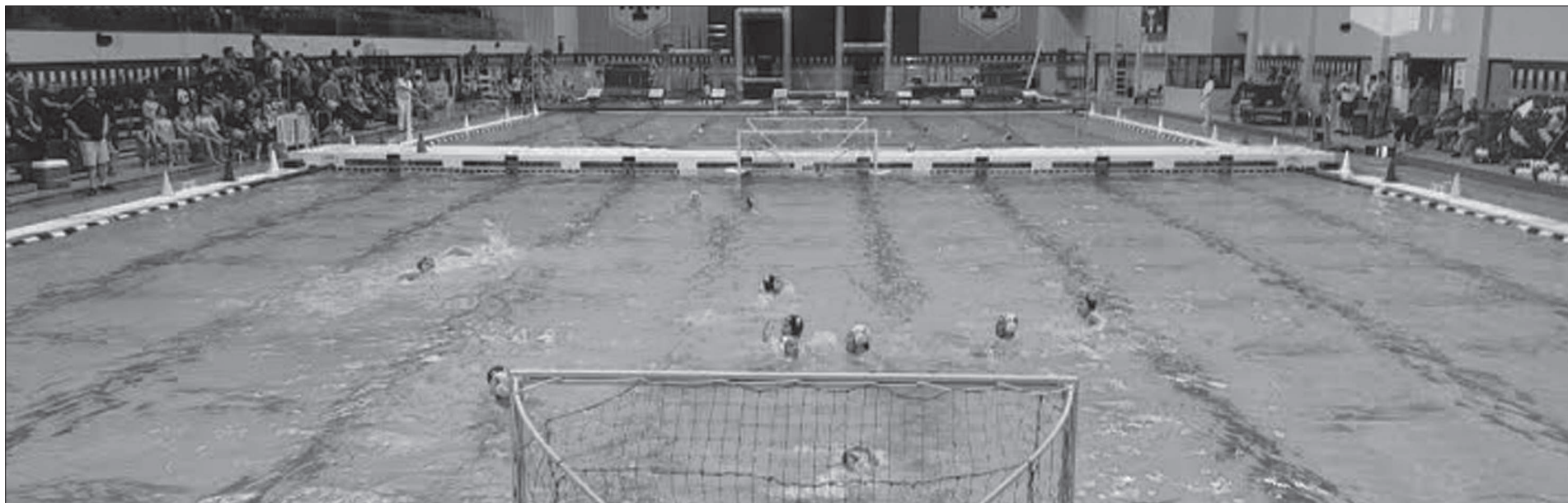
A current initiative of the board is about scientific research conducted by students at schools like LASA. While some members of the NCSSS schools are able to facilitate internships

and lab research opportunities for their students, others are not, so the board is trying to publish and promote these methods so that more students at member schools across the country can have the best access possible to these activities.

"For most teachers, it's really tough to line up internships and figure out how to help students conduct really high-quality research in and outside the classroom," Earnhart said. "We want to try to make this process easier and more effective."

Earnhart said the outcomes of the meeting were positive, and hopes that the government will become more involved with the board's work in the future to come.

"All in all, it was a very productive and informative meeting," Earnhart said. "We (NCSSS) are hoping that this is the beginning of a long-term relationship with the White House, and that we can continue to help inform that government about what is going on at our very successful STEM schools."



The LBJ boys play in the state tournament at the Texas A&M Natatorium against Jersey Village High School, who they eventually lost to 18-2. The team played in the second day as well but lost to Clear Springs High School 18-1. "The people at state were much more competitive [than teams we had played before]. A lot of the teams trained year round for that chance, so I guess there was a lot of pressure on them," Zhao said. Photo courtesy of Derian Golden.

LBJ boys water polo goes to state after two years

EMMA JANE HOPPER
Staff Writer

In only its second year in existence the LBJ boys water polo team has made its way to the state tournament held in College Station at Texas A&M. The event was co-hosted by their natatorium, which is an arena for water sports, and the Cypress Creek High School Water Polo Club. Being a new team to the sport, the LBJ players said they were excited to try their best and enjoy themselves.

"The natatorium was a cataclysm of noise, the fans were cheering and the coaches were yelling and the water was splashing, just chaos," LASA senior and water polo player Derian Golden said. "We were ready to play hard and have a good time."

While the team did not win the games they played, the fact that they made it to the state tournament in only their second year softened the blow.

"Texas is a very competitive state for water polo," LASA senior and water polo captain Etienne Denis said. "Considering that LBJ water polo is a new team and from one of the weaker regions we didn't expect to do great. We just went to have a good time and set a good precedent for the

team."

While some schools in Texas have been competing in water polo for a while, most Austin teams have only sprung up in the recent decade.

"Austin area water polo teams have been going for just a few years but according to [LBJ water polo] Coach Sean, Houston and Dallas have been going strong since the 70s so that was impressive," Golden said.

Teams from areas where water polo has been present for a long time were much more intense about the competition, according to LASA sophomore and second year water polo player Mingxuan Zhao.

"A couple of the teams from Houston and Dallas were super serious about the whole thing. The parents were insulting the refs and all that," Zhao said.

Water polo parents are notoriously tough, according to Denis.

"Water polo parents are like soccer parents but worse," Denis said. "One of the

moms had a shirt that said 'Dominate or Drown.'"

Because this tournament was the state championship, the LBJ teams faced teams much harder than those they'd played in the past, according to the Denis.

"We were honestly happy to have gotten some shots in," Denis said. "When playing such a good team any good play on our

losing wasn't too bad."

"The team we played ended up getting second in the state," Zhao said. "But we knew that we were just there to have fun, and seeing as how our team is only two years old, we were happy just to go."

Even with harsh odds to face, the guys still managed to stay positive and look at the trip as a chance to do what they love rather than an end all be all competition, according to Golden.

"After the first game we were obliterated, they got about 9 times as many points," Golden said. "I knew we probably weren't gonna win, but to lose by that much was a bit overwhelming. I was less concerned on winning and more concerned with having fun."

Having seen what kind of odds they face in the state competitions, Zhao has decided to work hard the whole year to catch up and hone his skills. This year's trip to state may have been fun, but for next year the guys have their eyes on the prize, according to Zhao.

"Me and a couple other guys on the team are gonna join the longhorn water polo club team. We'll go to practices with them and hopefully improve our skills, and maybe bring home a banner from regionals next year," Zhao said.

I went in feeling that we had very little chance to win our games but had a super high chance of having a great time.

-LASA senior Derian Golden

part is something to be proud of."

According to Golden, the team went to state expecting little more than a fun chance to play hard, what with being such a recently formed team.

"I went in feeling that we had very little chance to win our games but had a super high chance of having a great time," Golden said. "The atmosphere was good because we knew we'd give it our all but

Track races to end of season

ELAN McMINN
Staff Writer

The gun sounds and the lead runners take off down the first straightaway with their eyes set on the hand of the next runner. The crowd is roaring with unrecognizable cheers that blur into one loud noise; the volume only increases as the runners make the last hand off and dash down the final straightaway.

On April 14, the Regional School track meet for the season was starting and the LBJ Track and Field Team had their hopes up for a big showing. LBJ track coach Francis Jones said he came into the meet with high hopes and wanted the best out of each of his runners. The team had 10 students competing in the regional meet and the team had personal records in two of the relays. Jones was surprised and happy about this because one of the faster runners wasn't able to attend the meet. Looking past the relays, Jones said that individually, his team did well. LASA sophomore Dylan Cox ran personal bests in the mile and two mile race. Cox earned sixth in the mile and seventh in the two mile.

"Only the top two are able to qualify for the state meet, so [Cox] finished just out of that hunt for that meet, but keep in mind he is just a sophomore," Jones said.

The team only had one senior competing in sprinting, so Jones said he is looking at next year with all of his athletes coming back. The boys relay team was LBJ senior DeAndre Wytaske, LBJ junior Alaric Frederick, LBJ sophomore Deon Collins, LBJ sophomore Treyln Thomas and LBJ sophomore Ty-Ron McDonald. They placed second in the sprint relay, third in the 4x100 meters and fourth in the 4x200 meters.

"They made personal bests in individually, and together they made a team that I was proud to call part of mine," Jones said.

LASA freshman Christian Salines was another runner

who had a strong season participating on the boys Junior Varsity relay teams. He was moved up to the JV team from the freshman team after finishing with personal bests in his individual races. His relays placed second in the 4x400 meters, fifth in the 4x100 meters and fourth in the 4x200 meters. This performance at Districts would have earned them the chance to advance, but only the varsity teams advance.

"When they moved me up to the JV team, I was extremely excited, but at the same time I started getting nervous about performing for the relays," Salines said.

The girls team progressed to state individually and with their relay. The season ended with a sixth place finish in the 4x100 meters and eighth in the 4x400 meters. LASA freshman Rachael Horowitz made it to state-- as a freshman, she said it was an amazing experience. She participated in both of these relays and in the 100 meter dash, coming in eighth.

"State is really competitive, so even though I came in first at regionals, I got eighth in state," Horowitz said.

LBJ is in one of the less competitive districts and area in Texas according to Horowitz, so often athletes will have extremely strong performances in Districts and Areas, but have trouble keeping up with the runners when they get to state. Jones said this happens in many of the high school sports and that all the athletes can do is keep training.

"We usually have hard workouts in the weeks leading up to meets, but as we get close to the meets, we start lowering the millage and focus on running technique," Horowitz said. "It is important that we are not exhausted before our meet, so our coaches make sure we are well rested."

Now that the state competition is over, Jones is already focused on next year.

"With this season over I can look to next season with my sights high," Jones said. "Our team is relatively the same so we can only improve."



LASA freshman Rachel Horowitz runs the 100 meter dash for LBJ Track at the state meet this year, placing eighth in the event and eighth in the 4x400 meter relay. "Going so far was amazing and I'm excited for next year," Horowitz said. Photo courtesy of Becky and Jim Gdula.

LASA junior competes in regional golf tournament

ANDY DEGRASSE
Staff Writer

The crack of a golf swing pierces the tense silence of the course. Alec Gorsse watches the arc of the ball as it flies onto the green. Gorsse has enjoyed one of the most successful golf seasons in recent memory for a LASA student, even reaching regionals. However, Gorsse speaks humbly about success.

"I did alright for my standards, but luckily it was enough to get me to regionals" said Gorsse.

Gorsse has been playing for close to ten years and plans on continuing to play and work on his skill over the summer and through his senior year. Despite his personal achievements, Gorsse is much more enthusiastic when asked about his team.

"Golf is a lot more casual at LASA, and we care a lot more about having fun and showing other schools that we are a presence as a team," Gorsse said.

The LASA team has historically not gone very far in golf tournaments, according to Gorsse.

"I have met people who played on the team in the 70s who said the team was very good, but it's hard to be good at golf when most of the players are studying or just picked up the game recently, and most of the Vandergriff kids were born with a club in their hands," Gorsse said.

To most people, golf may seem like a completely individual game, but Alec knows the importance of supporting his team while also focusing on his personal goals.

"In my mind we competed as a team trying to get any sort of placement and then I also had my separate goals of trying to get first or second or third," Gorsse said.

This past season, Alec not only achieved his personal goals, but did something no LASA golf player has done in years: he made it to regionals. For the first time in his golf career, Gorsse was a small fish in a big pond.

"It was a little intimidating to be the only LASA kid there, but it was great to meet new people who cared about golf as much as I did. Also I learned a lot from the kids there, so even though I didn't advance past regionals, I still would say it was a positive experience overall," Gorsse said.

A swing and a miss for LBJ baseball team

JEFFREY KOVAR
Staff Writer

The cacophony of noises routinely heard throughout the spring months after school, fall silent as the weather grows hotter and the summer months draw ever so close. With school coming to a close, the boy's baseball team has been playing the last games of their season. The end of the season means lots of goodbyes to the seniors and general mutter of next season.

"I thought it honestly went very well," LASA freshman Nathan Moore, pinch runner on the varsity baseball team said. "I wasn't on varsity the whole time of course, but I went to some of their games and ended up getting promoted later. The season when I was there definitely went well. Obviously we would have liked to win district, but overall it was a good season and something I definitely enjoyed being a part of."

The boy's baseball team finished the season 13-8-1, including a trip to the playoffs. They finished third in the district behind McCallum and Cedar Creek, perennial powerhouses in the district, according to Moore. Coach Ruben Covarrubias, the varsity coach for the LBJ baseball team, said his favorite memory from the past season was a win over Cedar Creek.

"When we went out to Cedar Creek and beat them 4-3," Covarrubias said. "That was a big game, a hard fought game, a full seven inning game, it was the back and forth battle. It was a good win for us because we played good baseball from start to finish and got the win, which was the main thing and play at a high level. Cedar Creek was in the playoffs as well, so they were a really good team."

Not every game the past season went as great, according to Moore. Covarrubias said the team struggled with getting base hits and relied heavily on their defensive efforts to keep them in games.

"We got better on defense, we just needed better timing on hitting," Covarrubias said. "The defense has been there. If you play good defense, you can compete with anyone. Getting that key base hit with the runner in scoring position, that's what we're trying to improve on going forward."

Despite all the work on the defensive end, the team still couldn't put points on the board, according to Covarrubias. The team suffered a 10-0 defeat against Dripping Springs in the first round of the playoffs.

"We had some chances to score some runs and put runners in scoring positions, we just needed to get the key base hits," Covarrubias said. "Dripping Springs did what I thought they would do, which was getting those key hits and we didn't."

The baseball team didn't make a run in the baseball playoffs like Moore had hoped, but he said the future looks bright. As many as nine players are returning as varsity players, with most already being starters.

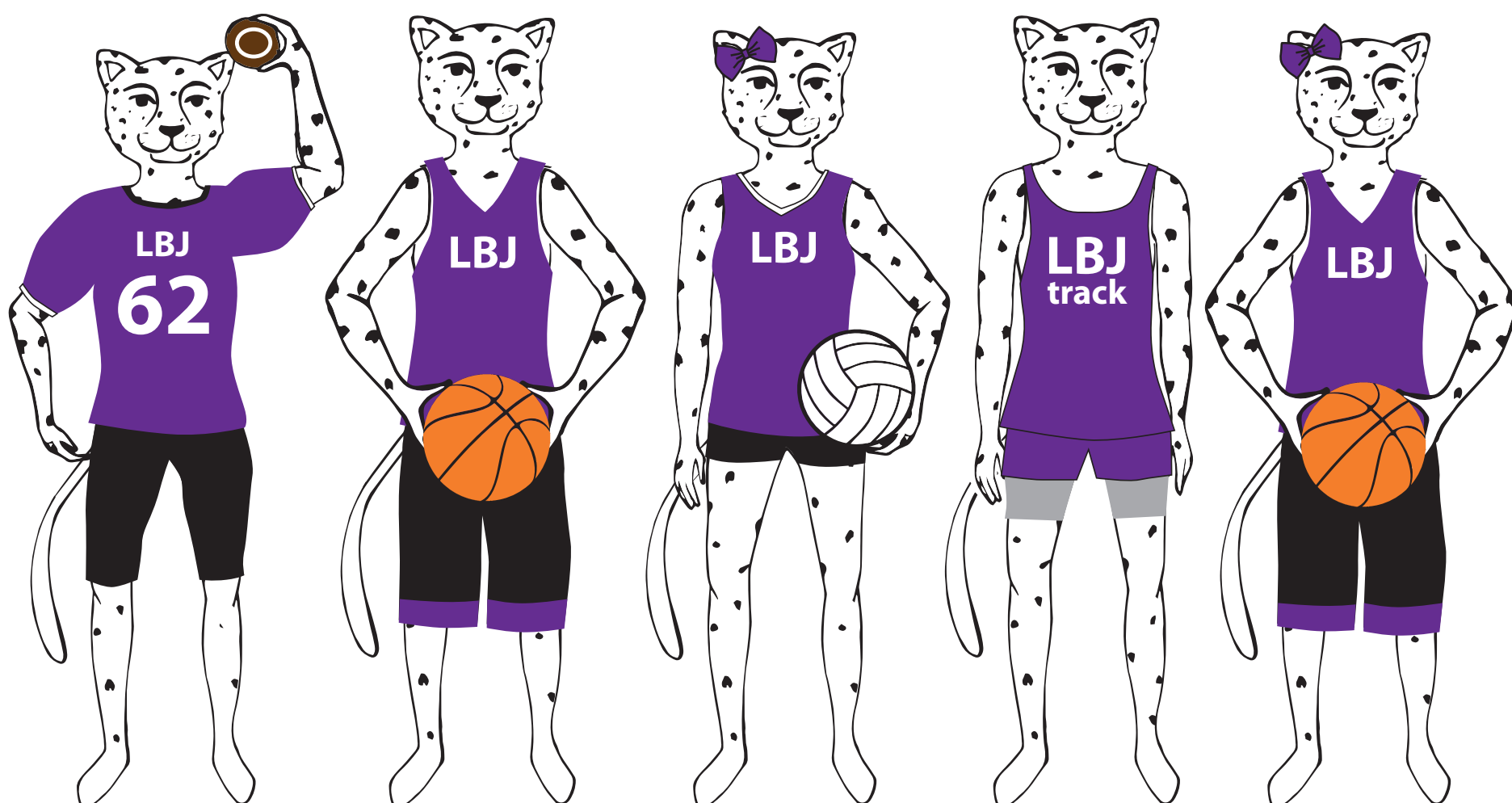
"Next year, we are solid," Moore said. "We have many players on our starting lineup coming back. We also have some solid freshman coming up from JV and some really good players on the bench, so the future is definitely bright. I definitely think we will have a shot at McCallum."



LASA junior Keegan Anderson pitches for his team. "Overall it was a good season and something I definitely enjoyed being a part of," LASA freshman Nathan Moore said. Photo courtesy of Becky Gdula.

2016-2017 LBJ sports highlights

Written by
staff writer
Ashley Thomas



FOOTBALL

Football season came to an end after the varsity team lost in the first round of playoffs to Vista Ridge back in November. The team finished the season with a record of 8 - 4 overall. Even though the team went undefeated in district, Degrasse said that some of the best times were just coming together as a team.

"We have a lot of different things we do all year to build camaraderie between players," Degrasse said. "We of course have football class. Everyone works out together and stuff like that, but during the season of course we build up a ton of camaraderie because you're out on that field everyday and practicing and then you're all playing together. I'd say that builds a lot of the closeness on the team, and then we also have to come up on Saturdays for film sessions as well so really a lot of the guys on the team are hanging out with each other continuously from Friday at 3:40 till Saturday morning. So that and probably playing the games is where we get the closest to our teammates."

This is the second year in a row that the Jags have made it to playoffs, but the first time that they've defeated their rival, McCallum, since 2011. LASA junior and right tackle Daniel Degrasse said that he'll forever look back on that moment as the prime of their season.

"My favorite moment of this past year in football was easily when we beat McCallum," Degrasse said. "We haven't done that in several years and it was really, really awesome to finally show them that we were a much better team and we played our best that game for once and it actually paid off."

VOLLEYBALL

Volleyball finished out the season with a record of 9-17-1, defeating teams such as Lanier and Travis. LBJ senior and co-captain Bre Pickens said her final year on the team has by far been the most fun. She said her favorite part of being a part of the team was how the players were able to laugh at and with each other when on the court, especially being able to motivate each other when under pressure.

"My favorite moment was when we would be in an intense game and [coach will] call one of us out, and he'll scream at us, and we'll all look at each other like [you did it]," Pickens said. "And you'd know it'd be that person's fault. It would be funny though. I'd laugh on the inside at least."

The girls have adjusted well considering the coaching circumstances put in place for them this year. A new coaching staff was introduced at the beginning of the season and next year once again a new staff will need to be introduced to next year's team. As of next year there's no definite answer to who will be guiding the team. Pickens wishes the players her best with high hopes for the upcoming season.

"[My hopes for the future team are] maybe having a better record than us," Pickens said. "We had a better record than the team last year. I think the program gets better and better every year, maybe cause the coaching staff changes every year too, but I have high hopes for them. Hopefully they get better."

BOYS TRACK

Boys track advanced to regionals and placed third in the 4x100 and fourth in the 4x200 before the season ended. On his second year running for the LBJ track team, LASA sophomore Dylan Cox advanced to regionals for the second time.

"Winning district meant a lot," Cox said. "Making it down to regionals with the team, really and getting being able experience it all was amazing."

Cox said he hopes to maintain a positive look towards next year's season with his team and that he's enjoyed spending time with his teammates, as they give him something to look forward to during hours of anticipating his next race. According to him, next year's season should be just as good if not better with the team only losing a few seniors. Cox also said the team aspect of the sport has really drawn him back because no matter how he does in the race, having his team supporting him is like having a second family.

"I thought the team was really cohesive and we all worked really well together," Cox said. "Everyone cared about everyone else's well being and how well everyone else is running, and we were all really good about supporting each other and working with each other towards the common goal of being the best runner that we could be."

GIRLS TRACK

Track season has come to a close for the girls after several runners placed in state at finals. The girls successfully finished the season taking 6th place in the 4x100 and 8th in the 4x400 in state overall, and LASA freshman and runner Rachel Horowitz placed 8th in the hundred meter dash. Runner and LASA junior Kendall Brice advanced in the 4x400 as well as 4x200. Brice has been trying to improve her 400 by being able to run a sub 60, or when runners run less than 60 seconds for his or her leg of the race. This is Brice's third year on the team as well as the third year she has helped the team progress to state. Brice said the majority of the team's success comes from the young runners that make up the majority of the team.

"There were a lot of really good freshmen this year actually," Brice said. "Caroline Ant is amazing. She runs like a crazy 400 time. Rachel Horowitz is another freshman who ran a sub 60 400 this year which I've been trying to break forever, and I'm a junior."

With only one runner leaving, Brice said she's excited to see the team grow together for next season. Brice said the bond between each runner is what's made this team a success.

"It's a lot of laughing," Brice said. "We kind of all have a common hatred of the workouts that we do, but I think laughing about it makes it a lot easier to get through as a team. So overall it's a lot of bonding over the common struggle of working. There's a lot of motivation as well. We all want to do well, and we all want each other to do well. Everyone wants to hit their PR, everyone wants to go to state."

GIRLS BASKETBALL

The girls basketball team had a successful season this year overall, winning area and advancing to the third round of playoffs before losing. In addition to a strong season and a run in the playoffs, one of the team's standout players, Ashley Knight, signed to play with the division one college Alabama. Knight said she was disappointed at the lack of effort they put towards their last game of the season, but happy with the season overall.

"My favorite moment was when we beat Tivy," Knight said. "I guess they started slacking off because they didn't know we had as much heart as we did. So we had to show them... We lost against Vista Ridge though. I felt like nobody was playing their hardest that game because I know we could've beat them, we just had to push ourselves to a certain extent and nobody wanted to do that."

Knight said she hopes her team is able to continue to grow next year as they prepare for a tough season against Austin High for the first time due to redistricting. Knight said this was a team she'd be sure to remember.

"I don't have a least favorite [moment], every moment with my team this the best," Knight said. "Honestly we make a joke out of everything. If we have to condition we have to make it a fun condition or nobody's gonna want to do it. We have to laugh about it. Like the way Coach Brown counts she goes, 'UP one, UP two.' So we have to make it fun in order for us to do it."

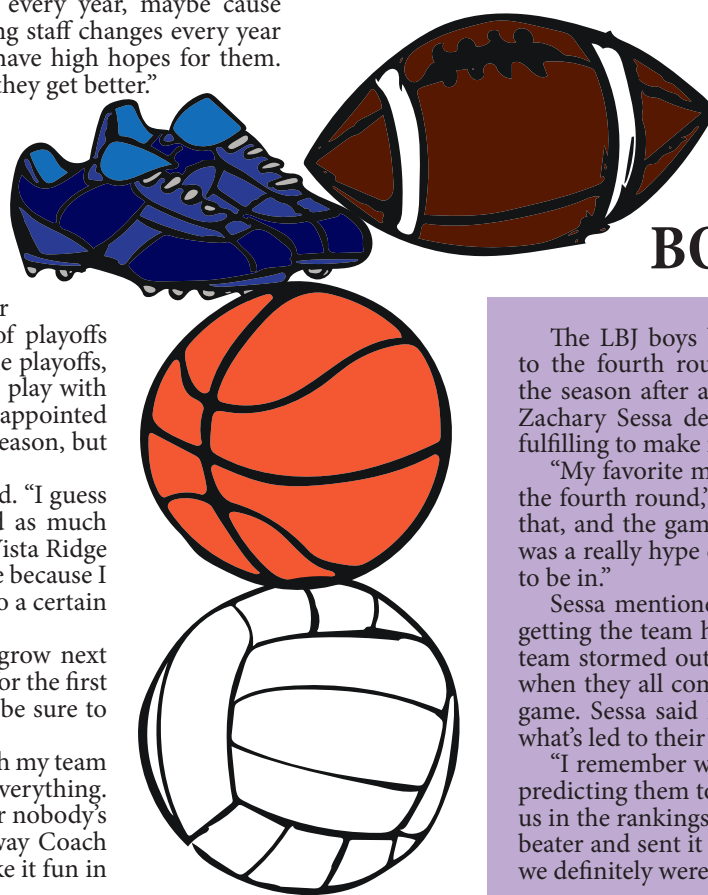
BOYS BASKETBALL

The LBJ boys basketball team of 2016 was able to advance to the fourth round of playoffs this year successfully ending the season after a loss against Nixon High School. Lasa junior Zachary Sessa describes the season as eventful, saying it was fulfilling to make it as far as they did this season.

"My favorite moment the run in the playoffs cause we got to the fourth round," said Sessa. "Being with the team throughout that, and the games were just really intense and fun, and there was a really hype crowd, and it was just a really fun atmosphere to be in."

Sessa mentioned the team's traditions of player Allie Green getting the team hyped by getting everyone to create before the team stormed out on the court. Sessa decries it as exhilarating when they all come gather for a moment of fun before a hectic game. Sessa said his team's ability to be close and have fun is what's led to their success.

"I remember when we were playing vista ridge everyone was predicting them to win on twitter and how they were way above us in the rankings for central texas," Sessa said. "We hit a buzzer beater and sent it into overtime. That was just a crazy game and we definitely were the underdogs there."



LBJ Sports: By the Numbers

A run-down of recent scores and statistics of LBJ sports for the past six weeks

Baseball

4/19 vs. Hyde Park, L (3-9)
4/26 vs. Eastside, W (3-2)
5/6 vs. Dripping Springs, L (0-10)

Golf

4/1 and 4/4 District Tournament:
Alec Gorsse 172, qualified for Regionals
Sam Pastor 215
Kate Stankiewicz 276

Ultimate Frisbee

3/14 vs. Cypress Falls, W (9-6)
3/14 vs. The Village, W (13-6)
3/15 vs. Belton, L (10-11)

Quenching thirst with the Gallon Challenge

EMMA JANE HOPPER
Staff Writer

As an enthusiastic but not necessarily skilled (what is skill, anyway?) athlete, I understand the importance of water as an abstract concept. While there's no solid number, nutritionists have said drinking anywhere from eight glasses to one's body weight in ounces divided in half is recommended. Despite my conceptual understanding of the need for water to fuel cells, I recently found myself ignoring everything I'd learned in ninth grade biology and consistently failing to drink enough water. At the beginning of April, this caught up to me. I was taking taekwon-do classes and playing water polo and found myself constantly dehydrated. My skin was a mess, and what little energy I had was manic and rushed. I've always had trouble drinking enough water, even when I'm not involved in a sport. I often label myself as a 'forgetter': I tend to forget to eat, drink, and generally take care of myself. As a result I suffer from strange mood swings and productive periods that depend entirely on whether or not I've managed to take care of myself recently. Being as active as I was at the beginning of April without proper nourishment or liquid intake was decidedly not good for me. By chance I heard of the gallon challenge, and I decided it was the answer to all of my problems.

The gallon challenge is not, as many of my peers feared, the infamous drinking of a gallon of milk in an hour. The gallon challenge I was doing was drinking a gallon of water every day for thirty days. I may not be willing to properly hydrate for myself, but I sure as heck will drink a gallon of water every day for thirty days if enough freshmen come up to me telling me that water poisoning is a thing and that I will die. And so my journey began, in part to carry me through the water polo season without passing out in the water from dehydration, and in part to spite my peers who said I shouldn't.

In the beginning I felt great. I was pacing myself, getting it all down early. My skin was clearing up and I had an enormous, pristine well of energy I'd never had before. Not to say I hadn't been energetic before, but it was the frenzied energy of a stress-induced proactive period. If anything I probably became more obnoxious to my peers, but the water had me in my own little bubble. I loved the attention I received for this great feat. People would come up to me in the halls to tell me they loved my Snapchat story, which in the beginning of my 30 days I'd devoted to personifying my plastic, one dollar, HEB distilled water gallon jug. The first day I had, in fact, consumed a gallon of distilled water, but I soon learned that was legitimately dangerous due to the utter lack of minerals. Distilled water doesn't really put anything into your system, it just does a very effective job of flushing out your necessary electrolytes. I wasn't planning on buying a new jug everyday anyway, so it soon became a gallon of tap water.

I had more energy during water polo too, having been consuming so much water that I was practically one with it. I had the energy to be more aggressive in the pool and in the dojang-- which, to the readers who aren't complete nerds like me, is what a taekwon-do studio is called. I think the gallon was truly beneficial when I was in sports situations, and I would honestly recommend it to keep hydrated if you're a serious participant, especially in the summer months.

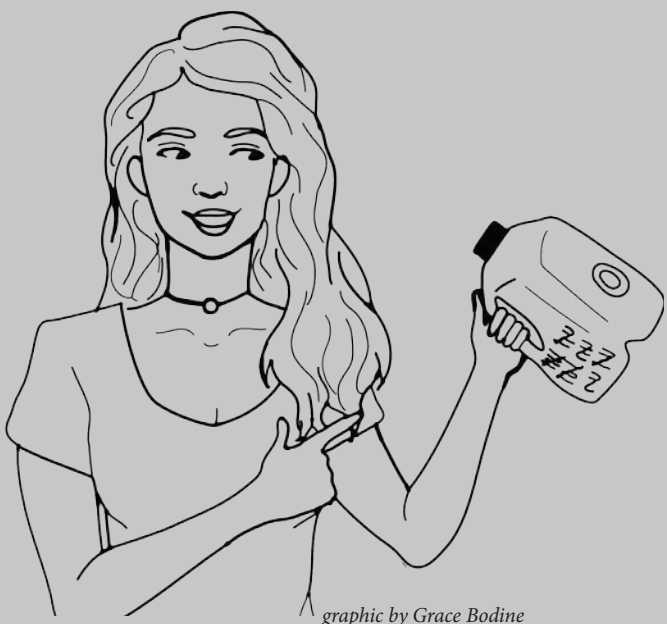
But then the tides turned. During one of my Planet Earth trips out to Gus Fruh for plant data collection I came into contact with poison ivy. The subsequent rash left me itchy beyond belief and unwilling to get back in the pool or the dojang for fear of making it worse. My sports out of the picture, the jug became my worst enemy. I started blaming all my problems on the jug. Getting bitten up by mosquitos was the result of the water, but being unaware and coming into contact with the poison ivy was a result of my deliriousness from the water too. I had to switch out jugs because my first had, after nearly three weeks, begun to taste like plastic. Without my sports I had no reason to be drinking all of that water, but I kept doing it anyway. I refused to back down from the challenge.

The water became harmful rather than beneficial. I spent most of my time inside and immobile, away from the heat and activity that would have made the water a friend rather than an enemy. I'd started a nasty habit of not finishing the jug until midnight, which interrupted my sleep with multiple trips to the bathroom. My vision was clouded on a regular basis, which is a symptom of water poisoning. I couldn't stop scratching at my offending arm and leg so the lesions got worse and I missed the last two weeks of water polo. What had begun as a good thing had become my own worst nightmare.

I finally went back to taekwon do the day before my last day of the gallon challenge. My limbs were looking slightly better because I'd taken to wrapping them during the night to prevent sleep-scratching, and a few days earlier my mother had told me I needed to finish the bottle before 9:00 PM every night, so my sleep was back to normal. With a little bit of exercise, the gallon became more helpful again. It wasn't as helpful as it was during water polo season, where practice consisted of an hour and a half of treading water, but it was certainly less harmful.

Jug, as my followers and I have taken to calling it, saw me through a lot of things. My driving test (I passed!), a first date, a losing (but spirited!) water polo season, a dumb fight with a dumber boy and the extended edition of every single Lord of the Rings movie in one day. Jug was stolen and moved by my friends, once even pettily poured out in the boys' bathroom while all I could do was wait outside. I suppose I shouldn't blame Jug for my eventual water-logged spiral. It wasn't his fault I didn't pay attention in Planet Earth and have no idea what Poison Ivy, Oak and/or Sumac look like.

The gallon challenge was interesting. While overhydration was horrible, when I needed it the extra water was actually incredible. As I entered the last half of the last week of my quest, water-logged and waiting for the end, I noticed someone else had begun the challenge. I could tell by the jug of distilled water in his hand-- hopefully it was tap by now. He held up his container to me in solidarity, and I smiled. "I love it!" I lied through my teeth. That poor sucker.



graphic by Grace Bodine



Rajan Topiwala, Grant McCasland and Robert Yam (left to right) play futsal at lunch. The club has only existed for seven months. "[The Fulmore Middle School Futsal Club] was a memorable experience and I had hoped to continue it at LASA," Yam said. photo by Elan McMinn.

New LASA futsal club kicks off

MAX IRBY
Staff Writer

Sun glints off the rough greens and whites of the tennis court and a soccer ball rushes by. A group of players race around the court, completely focused on the game. This scene is a regular played out by a group of LASA freshmen every Tuesday and Friday at lunch, at the LASA Futsal Club.

The club was founded by LASA freshman Robert Yam in October 2015. He played soccer at Fulmore Middle School and joined the LBJ soccer team this year, participating in both school's futsal clubs. The club meets twice a week, the days varying each week. The players rely on a text from Yam most days to find out when practice is. They meet on the tennis courts during LASA lunch but are often visited by their LBJ members. Yam is a player as well as club founder.

"I created the futsal club after three years of being in Fulmore Middle School's futsal club," Yam said. "It was a memorable experience and I had hoped to continue it at LASA. With the help of computer science teacher Mr. Mueller as our sponsor, futsal club took off starting in October 2015."

Futsal is similar to soccer, but played in a smaller area: in the case of the LASA Futsal Club, a tennis court. Futsal, when contrasted with the popular sport of soccer, has less players, smaller goals and, according to LASA freshman and futsal club member True Pham, less of a sense of competition than club soccer.

"I come to futsal club every week because it is a place where I can play without pressure," Pham said. "My club soccer team is very competitive, and it is refreshing to play the game I love without that competitive environment."

The players claim the casual environment draws all types of people, the common denominator being a love for the game of soccer. They come from all sorts of backgrounds in the sport; some of the members of

the club play soccer on competitive club teams and others haven't ever played before. LASA freshman Jacob Greendyk used to play soccer, and he said the futsal club has rekindled his interest in it.

"I think that as someone who hasn't played soccer competitively in a long time, it's a good way to have fun playing soccer without the same pressure of a club team," Greendyk said. "I have found a new love for the game of soccer from this club. I started practicing at home again, and watch any game I can get my hands on."

According to Pham, the mixed skill level of the players creates an easygoing environment to the futsal club.

"I think that the futsal club is a good way for people to relax at lunch and play some soccer. It doesn't really matter how good you are, because everyone seems to have fun, and it's just a great experience overall," Pham said.

The main message of the futsal club, according to Yam, is that anyone can play, no matter what skill level. This positive message promotes a fun experience for all, which is what Yam is trying to do.

"Futsal club is a place for all people of all experience levels as this club is for both improving your skills and having a good time," Yam said. "We encourage everyone to come and play with us, improve their play and overall just enjoy this beautiful game."

Yam said that as president he expects the club to grow in size and quality in the coming years. Currently there are only two teams playing at a time on one court, which he thinks can be built upon in the future.

"It would definitely be nice to be able to have full teams, schedules and better goals," said Yam. "I think that we will get those in the future though because the club has already doubled in size from when we started it just this year."

LBJ Tennis makes racket at regionals



LASA juniors Shawn Tan and Vijay Veeraghavan compete in doubles. (left) LASA juniors Shawn Tan and Vijay Veeraghavan pose after their third place victory. (right) "[The season] was a great opportunity to grow as a leader," said Veeraghavan. photos courtesy of Corey Snyder

EMMA JANE HOPPER
Staff Writer

The end of the year brought the LBJ tennis team another chance to play in regions, the competition that follows districts. The team faced other schools such as McCallum, including their rivals within the district and outside. They did, however, find the competition was not as steep as it has been in the past, with star players from rival schools having graduated or left, according to LASA junior and tennis team captain Vijay Veeraghavan.

"In district, we are generally rivals with McCallum, but recently they've been losing their better players so we've consistently dominated district," Veeraghavan said. "Coach Corey Snyder has Rouse High School as a rival, but they've also lost a lot of talent."

Three LASA tennis players placed third at regions. Veeraghavan said this was the best result for the Jaguars in the past two decades, but they don't plan on stopping there.

"It was LBJ/LASA Tennis' best showing, and although many of us lost in the first round to tough opponents, Naveen Yarlagadda, Shawn Tan, and I performed well, winning 3rd place," Veeraghavan said. "Next year we hope to advance even further and qualify for state."

LASA junior and team veteran Tom Gilburg agrees that this has been the team's best performance in recent playing history, both for the individual players and for the team.



"For the three years I've been on the tennis team, this season has been the best yet," Gilburg said. "We had the best turnout at Regionals and had four members make it to the semifinals. This year has been the best show in Regionals, not only for LBJ, but for any team from Austin in many years."

LASA sophomore and team member Angela Li said that even with the successful spring season, win or lose, she enjoyed the experience bonding with her team members.

"I got to be in a really fun atmosphere with everyone on the team," Li said.

According to Gilburg, the LBJ tennis team has no real rivals in the district.

"In Districts we have no rivals," Gilburg said, "Mac's got two or three good players but other than that they kind of suck. Go Jags!"

During regions and the overall season, the LBJ tennis team didn't have much trouble with their rival McCallum High School team, according to the players.

"We demolished them," Veeraghavan said. "Placing at regions has allowed the team to reflect on their experiences of this season. Veeraghavan made it known that LBJ is on top when it comes to tennis, and has managed to stay there."

"This season in regionals, we were able to retain our dominance in district, as many of us advanced to regionals," Veeraghavan said.

This year has been the best show in Regionals, not only for LBJ, but for any team from Austin in many years.

-LASA junior and player Tom Gilburg

LBJ and LASA take the field



Whether dancing inside with DJ club, playing in the Hoops for Troops tournament or enjoying a run on inflatable obstacle courses, LBJ and LASA students enjoyed a chance to end the school year on a high note with the joint Field Day on May 20. Students chose which activities to participate in throughout the afternoon.



1. Dodging inflatable obstacles thrown by their teacher, LBJ seniors Dominique Henderson and Taylor Clark race one another through the obstacle course. "Senior year, we've got a couple more days, this is a fun field day," Henderson said. "Go Jaggs!"
2. LBJ sophomore Jason Evans busts a move while DJ club plays music in the cafeteria. "I was bored and I saw my bro dancing and then we just made the whole party start," Evans said. "We were the two first people who made it start."
3. As she wins an obstacle course race against her friend, LASA sophomore Giselle Rodriguez slides down at the end of the inflatable outside on the parking lot. "I like field day because it's a chance to not do work," Rodriguez said.
4. LASA senior Sam Pastor attempts to pass the ball as LASA math teacher Charlie Barnes blocks him during the Hoops for Troops basketball tournament organized to raise money for the Wounded Warrior Project "My favorite part [of Hoops for Troops] was seeing Mr. Barnes play on a team even though there was no teacher team," Pastor said.
5. Upstairs while enjoying the air conditioning, LASA senior Campbell Stuart makes a paper craft in the arts and crafts room during Field Day. "We've never really done this kind of field day before where we have the inside option and I like being able to do the crafts and other things that as a high schooler you don't really get the opportunity to do," Stuart said.
6. In the arts and crafts room, LASA sophomore Emmy Gentile practices her makeup skills on LASA sophomore Asher Eaton. "It's really just like a form of self expression, like it's just really fun to experiment with colors and stuff," Gentile said.
7. In the ring, LASA freshman Eric Bowen attempts to knock his friend off an inflatable pedestal. "I think it's just great to just kind of relax from the worry of finals and not have to sit there in class panicking," Bowen said. "You just kind of get to hang out with your friends and beat them up with foam knocker things or fall on your face in an inflatable bounce house. It's just great to just chill out and have fun."
8. While the DJ Club blasts music in the background, LBJ freshman Essien Thompson dances amid a group of friends. "I just like dancing," Thompson said. "I'm good at it. That's how we do it."
9. Struggling to unstick himself, LASA senior Miles Kersten attempts to climb higher on the velcro wall with LASA sophomore Erick Medina. "This feels just like elementary school, it's great," Kersten said. "You know, before you can progress you've got to regress, know what I'm saying?"
10. After buying a snow cone from Marty's Snow Cones, LBJ junior De'andre Johnson feeds a bite to LBJ sophomore Shazirae Harvey. Although Johnson enjoyed his snow cone, he had another favorite at field day. "I liked the bouncy houses best," Johnson said.