



The Jaguars beat out former 6A Austin High 57-13 at the Oct. 21 Homecoming game. LBJ is the District 25 champion for the third year running. photo by Sarah Mines

see page 15

Former class of 2017 member and Student Council Representative Raavi Asdar enrolled at international school overseas. photo courtesy of Raavi Asdar



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From dance to computer science, students reject gender norms to pursue their extracurricular and academic passions. photo by Meena Anderson

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# the liberator

Liberal Arts and Science Academy High School

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## Trustee forum addresses magnets



Three candidates for the AISD Board of Trustees speak at a forum in the LBJ/LASA library, responding to five pre-approved questions followed by audience questions. "I understand that we have capacity issues, I understand that the academics at programs like LASA are incredibly rigorous and are not for every student, but again my perspective on this is we should be fighting to get as many kids from across our city into programs like LASA," Quintanilla said at the forum. From left to right: Andy Anderson, Cindy Anderson and David Quintanilla. photos by Roxy Bonafont

**ROXY BONAFONT**  
Editor-in-Chief

In the latest election cycle, two of the nine seats on the Austin Independent School District (AISD) Board of Trustees were contested: David Quintanilla and Cindy Anderson both filed for the open at-large seat, and District 2 incumbent Jayme Mathias was opposed by Andy Anderson. Additionally, the incumbents for Districts 3, 5 and 7 all ran for re-election unopposed. Last Tuesday, Cindy Anderson won the at-large position with 56 percent of the vote, and Mathias retained the District 2 seat with 68% of the vote.

On Oct. 16, LASA Student Council partnered with the Parents and Friends of LASA and the Kealing Middle School Magnet Advisory Group to host a forum for Board of Trustee candidates. The forum focused primarily on the district's relationship with magnet schools and the candidates' short- and long-term plans for combatting the host of challenges faced by AISD's accelerated academic programs. Because magnet students are distributed across

AISD, their interests can be underrepresented when trustees focus on the campuses within a specific district, according to LASA senior and 2017 Student Council vice president Oscar Newman.

"Magnet schools are a really big issue in Austin, but they are an issue that is a lot of time overlooked when the trustees are running," Newman said. "LASA is just a really great place to hold that conversation about magnet schools."

Kendall Pace, the Board of Trustees president, said that the district's primary concerns regarding magnet schools relate to capacity and diversity.

"We have two at-large candidates that were elected city-wide," Pace said. "I am one. I do hope that the two of us can adequately represent the issues of the magnet students, but the entire Board has a legal responsibility to represent the best interests of the entire district."

The forum invited all candidates to attend and received submissions from Quintanilla, Cindy Anderson and Andy Anderson. In preparation for the event, the Student

Council polled the student body to develop five questions that reflected the concerns of LASA students.

"I think really one of the biggest issues especially to students and teachers was, how did the candidates see magnets fitting into the future of the district, because that's been a really contentious issue these past few years, especially with LASA and LBJ," Newman said. "There have been trustees who have not been as supportive of magnet schools, so I think it's really important to a lot of LASA students and community members that valuing magnets is something that the candidates do going forward."

All three candidates in attendance voiced their strong support for magnet programs at the forum, which was populated primarily by LASA parents, NHS students and some school and district administrators.

"We have to work with parents, with educators, with students to make sure that as School Board trustees we have the right information about what's working and what's not," Quintanilla said at the forum. "It's easy to sit and say, 'This is what I saw; this is what I think; this is what I heard,' it's a completely different thing to be in front of you all and have a back and forth conversation about what's really happening. So number one is making sure there's dialogue about what's working in magnet schools."

The issues of capacity and facilities dominated much of the discussion, in particular regarding the potential for

*continued on page 6*

## UNLASA thrives on crisis

**LISA MOOMAW**  
Staff Writer

On Saturday, Oct. 22, LASA Model UN held its third annual UNLASA conference after six months of preparation by its participants. High school students from several cities all over Texas attended, making it larger than it has ever been at 250 participants. This year, UNLASA has undergone many changes.

LASA teacher and UNLASA sponsor Kimberley Pettigrew is responsible for appointing who's in charge and handling finances,

such as ordering food and gavel. According to Pettigrew, one of the main differences from previous years is how the conference consisted of double the number of attendees it had last year.

"The challenge of hosting a conference is just the amount of work that goes into it," Pettigrew said. "We have to write the background papers; we have to organize everything, get staff, all of that, and it's a lot of work."

The issues discussed at the conference included the Taiping Rebellion, Congress of Vienna and New Zealand Land Wars. The first

UNLASA conference was formatted with traditional UN committees, meaning the discussions were more general instead of being oriented towards specific crisis events. However, this year's took place in the form of historical crisis committees, meaning students reenacted situational committees that took place in the past.

"One of the things in Model UN that's become more and more popular is to do historical crisis committees... [which are] much faster pace," Pettigrew said. "You're at war; you're doing all these things, so you have to move a lot faster than in a normal committee."

At the top of every committee, LASA students played the roles of chairs who prepared and moderated the discussions. Junior Rachel Fuller chaired for the first time in the Congress of Vienna committee, after previously participating as a delegate. Delegates, who each represent a country or observer in the committee, discuss and draft resolutions to the issues.

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## Students of color note LASA lacks diversity

**CLARA MORSE**  
News Editor

How do students of color experience LASA? For sophomore Kinza Pasha, a Pakistani student, race played into her high school experience simply because of the lack of students of color at LASA. She said she felt alienated sometimes because of the predominance of white students.

"Most of my middle school was either Hispanic or black, like there was really no white or Asian kids," Pasha, who attended Burnet Middle School, said. "But here it's sort of flipped, like it's mostly white kids. Like if you look into the assembly, it's just like a rainbow of white."

This experience, and alienation stemming primarily not from overt racism but from a lack of other students of color, was something that several students of color said they experienced at LASA. Only 2% of the LASA student body is black compared with 8% of the AISD student population, and 19% is

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LASA junior Jack Kappleman chairs a committee reenacting the Taiping Rebellion at UNLASA. photo courtesy of Kimberley Pettigrew

Liberal Arts and Science Academy

the liberator

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

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

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

- The Editorial board will:
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  2. Stress the editorial policy.
  3. Ensure the accuracy of the publication.
  4. Address disciplinary or other inappropriate behavior of staff.
  5. Vote on removal of staff members.
  6. Change or add policy as necessary with three of four board members voting favorably.

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

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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.

STAFF STANCE

Supporting death with dignity

While the most recent election cycle featured heated debates on a number of controversial issues, as well as an ongoing dialogue on the nature of "liberty," one issue that did not emerge as a hot topic or political differentiator is physician-assisted suicide (PAS). However, PAS is an important component of the full exercise of freedom, autonomy and personal liberty. On October 6, Nobel Peace Prize laureate Desmond Tutu wrote, "Throughout my life, I have been fortunate to have spent my time working for dignity for the living.... I wish to help give people dignity in dying.... I hope I am treated with compassion and allowed to pass on to the next phase of life's journey in the manner of my choice." In September, for the first time, a terminally ill 17 year old child was permitted to choose to die in Belgium after age restrictions on PAS were lifted and the government agreed that children should have the same rights as adults to die with dignity. Additionally, this summer a Californian woman suffering from ASL, Betsy Davis, held a party to say goodbye to her closest friends and family before becoming one of the first people in her state to utilize PAS. A family member noted that for Davis it was liberating to plan her own death after spending many years suffering and feeling trapped by her disease.

These events have provoked heated and complicated reactions in the public domain—some strongly against PAS, but most in support of it. In June Gallup reported that 69% of Americans support PAS. There is an emerging consensus that the right to PAS is crucial issue of both personal liberty and health care. We, the Liberator staff, agree that PAS should be a fundamental right and that for the government to prohibit this choice is an inappropriate intrusion on the individual and constitutional personal liberties we hold dear in this country.

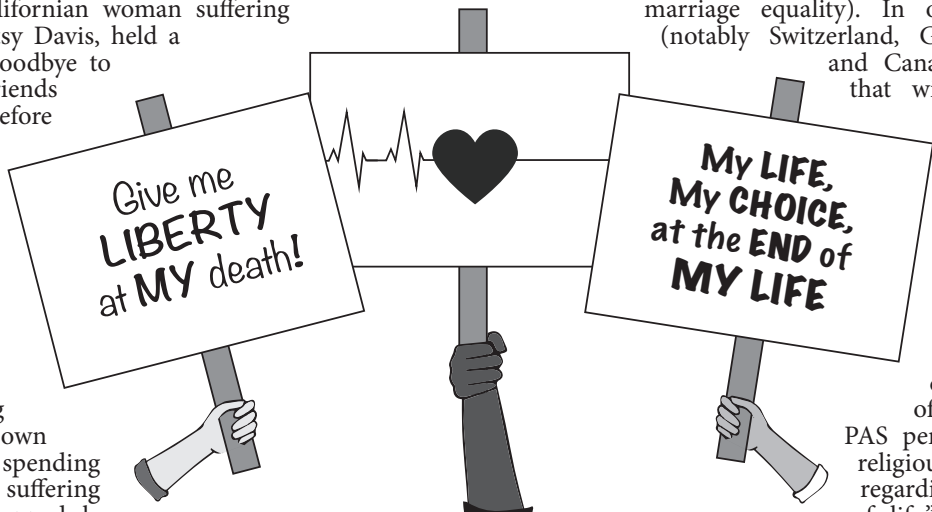
Proponents of PAS argue that it should be legal for physicians to provide the means for terminally ill patients to end their lives at the time and place of their choosing. In October 1997, PAS became legal in some states in the US with the passage of The Death With Dignity Act. Today, PAS is legal in California, Vermont and Washington. PAS is only available to patients dying of an incurable disease under certain constraints and in compliance with several regulations that include informed consent and demonstrated competence.

It is no surprise that people have strongly held opinions on this issue that reflect differing moral, ethical and religious views. Proponents of PAS argue that it is moral to allow people to die on their own terms. They note that for patients suffering from terminal illnesses, having the option to choose when to die is crucial to self determination. Moreover, for a physician to be compelled to keep a patient alive against his or her will or to be unable to support patients' health care decisioning at the end of life is a fundamental violation of the Hippocratic Oath, which requires physicians to "first, do no harm."

Opponents of PAS argue that legalizing PAS is a moral "slippery slope" that will lead to questionable ethical decision making. We note, though, that the "slippery slope" arguments tend to be invoked as a response to those advocating for individual rights (for example, challenges to Jim Crow laws, access to abortion and marriage equality). In other countries (notably Switzerland, Germany, Japan and Canada) it is clear that with appropriate oversight and the imposition of regulatory safeguards, PAS supports rather than undermines patients' rights. Another cornerstone of the anti-PAS perspective is the religious argument regarding the "sanctity of life." However, the argument can also be made that PAS preserves the "sanctity of life" by giving individuals control over their own destinies.

In the United States, the separation of church and state is a cornerstone of our constitution and it is our view that individuals, not the government or any other institution, should have the final say in these personal matters.

Ultimately, the debate on PAS makes clear the political hypocrisy that still exists in our country. It is highly contradictory to demand the government to remove itself from citizens' personal business but at the same time to advocate for government control of highly and inherently personal life course issues at birth and death. As Desmond Tutu noted, "Regardless of what you might choose for yourself, why should you deny others the right to make this choice? For those suffering unbearably and coming to the end of their lives, merely knowing that an assisted death is open to them can provide immeasurable comfort." We believe that democracy and the quality of our healthcare system is strengthened when we support individuals in making the most personal choices possible for themselves.



graphic by Grace Bodine



liberated  
minds  
speak

Should physician-assisted suicide be legal throughout the United States?



Nirali Devgan

Junior

"If a person is in a situation where they consent to physician-assisted suicide then it's their freedom of choice because it's their own body"



Yaseen Abdalla

Freshman

"As long as the person is consenting to physician-assisted suicide, it doesn't violate the sanctity of life."

Satvik Kolluri

Senior

"If the patient consents than it should be legal, but if the patient cannot consent then I don't know. I understand religious perspectives, that life is holy and you shouldn't end it. The patient should still always have the option."

Bela McScoggin

Freshman

"I think that if people want to die they should be able to, but if people want to end their lives because they're depressed or are suffering from something that can be managed, I don't think they should be able to."



Have an opinion about a new school policy? Have a bone to pick with something the Liberator has published? Anything else on your mind? Write us a letter and drop it off in portable 5A or in the boxes in the school offices.

Call for longer lunch

Dear Editor,

"Even though lunch is only a few minutes shorter this year it feels like it is only five minutes long."

- Clara Gibbs  
Sophomore

Student proposes change

Dear Editor,

"The paper towel dispensers in the bathrooms are very unreliable. Half the time they're empty or they get jammed."

- Jenny Lu  
Sophomore

Request for integration

Dear Editor,

"I wish we had more clubs joined up with LBJ so that we could have more of a connection with the students."

- Lina Tiblier  
Junior

Praise for friendship

Dear Editor,

"I appreciate the fact that although LASA is challenging, I have a lot of friends here and they make the work load easier."

- Jack Goulet  
Freshman

# Student reflects on natural hair ban



SARAH PORTER  
Staff Writer

This fall, students and parents of Butler Traditional High School in Louisville, Kentucky were welcomed to the 2016-2017 school year with a new and controversial policy. A ban of natural hairstyles typically worn by black people, such as dreadlocks, "cornrolls," twists, mohawks, and jewelry worn in hair, was added to the school dress code. Although the ban was promptly suspended due to outcry from parents, there are several reasons why even the idea of a prohibition of hairstyles or any other feature that specifically singles out black students is simply not OK, especially since Butler High banned "cornrolls" instead of "cornrows."

The main issue with this dress code (besides the fact that whoever wrote the policy didn't even care enough to ban the right hairstyles) is how it perpetuates systemic racism, which is any racism that is structured into social and/or political systems (including schools). But I could take this particular problem all the way back to the 1700s, when Africa was plagued by European Imperialism. By deeming natural hairstyles as "extreme, distracting, or attention-getting" Butler Traditional High School's dress code not only deprives students of their right to education by temporarily suspending them from school if they're caught with natural hairstyles, but it essentially condemns black culture in a school setting. Dreadlocks, cornrows, afros, and twists can pretty much be traced straight back to the good old Egyptian days. These hairstyles are ingrained in black culture. As a black girl, I take pride in my hair and the way it connects me with my mother's Caribbean heritage. So, if LASA were to adopt this dress code (just as an example. I know Mrs. Crescenzi would never allow this), I would transfer back to Bowie because I've had dreadlocks for about seven years now.

This dress code also puts non-black students (who aren't being attacked for their natural hairstyles) at a ridiculous advantage over black students. Many white students would have a problem with a school banning French braids or crew cuts, just as many black students had a problem with Butler High's new dress code. Dress codes that impose penalties for the display of cultural characteristics are simply absurd, unfair, and above all, racist. And racism in any institution is flat out unconstitutional. Personally, I think the administrators that proposed this dress code addition should be reprimanded. However, the case of Butler High was not an isolated incident in terms of American public school dress code controversies.

In 2013, a charter school in Oklahoma banned afros, mohawks, and other "faddish" styles. The dress code also

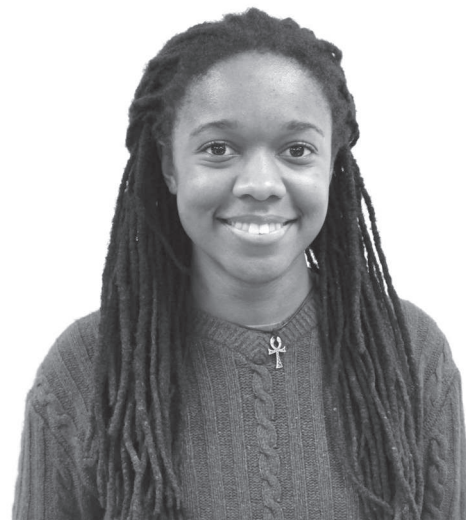
said such hairstyles are "unacceptable and a potential health hazard." Because of this prohibition, a seven-year-old girl with adorable dreads pinned up in a bright pink bow was sent home in tears. Her parents were deeply upset and enrolled her in a new school. That same year, a science academy in Ohio released a draft of its revised dress code. Parents protested the suspensions of afro-puffs and small twisted braids, causing administrators to withdraw that portion of the dress code. Even Hampton University (one of the most prestigious historically black universities in America) has had a no-dreadlock and no-cornrow policy for its male business students for 15 years now. The Dean of Hampton's business school justifies this prohibition with his belief that natural hairstyles will prevent students from getting corporate jobs. The fact that this belief is somewhat true is yet another example of systemic racism.

The idea that natural traditionally black hairstyles are unacceptable in school and other professional environments is not a new issue. Black hairstyles have had negative social connotations since Europeans began selling African slaves. Like many other black people, I can personally attest to either having my natural hair negatively referred to, or being forced to change my hair to fit a more Euro-centric standard. Every time I have been professionally photographed (for school or family photos) until I got dreadlocks, my mother would straighten my thick, kinky hair. At the time, I never thought that by flat-ironing my hair, my mother was basically (and subconsciously) deeming my natural hair texture unacceptable for a professional photo. Thankfully, however, my mother has always taught me to embrace my natural beauty, which in turn, encouraged me to get dreadlocks. Now, I get secretly excited every time I see a little black girl wearing her natural hair.

When society looks down on natural black hairstyles and marks them as "unacceptable and distracting," people like me get discouraged, but it might help to remember that there are many celebrated people who would not be able to meet Butler Traditional High School's proposed standards. Toni Morrison, Frederick Douglass, Nina Simone, Lauryn Hill, Bob Marley, Angela Davis, and my mother would all be sent home from that school in Oklahoma, or any other school that prohibits dreadlocks, afros, jewelry worn in hair, twists, or cornrows. However, among this list of people, there are three world renowned authors (one of whom was a freed slave), four political activists, three singer-songwriters, a pianist, a rapper, a guitarist, a famed academic scholar, a pre-K teacher, and a former business owner. As a person who takes great pride in my culture, I want everyone to know that cultural characteristics such as hairstyles, music genres, language, religions, customs, traditions, and everything in between are to be celebrated and embraced, not prohibited.



Sarah and Hannah Porter at 2 years old. Photo courtesy of Sarah Porter.



Sarah Porter in 2016.

## It's always political in Philadelphia: Reflections on attending the DNC



MEENA ANDERSON  
Life & Feature Editor

This summer, people across the country were reminded of the rapidly approaching presidential election via the televised Democratic and Republican National Conventions, showing history in the making to the American people: the first time a woman has been a presidential candidate.

This election is a serious one. America is more polarized politically than it has been since the Civil War, and the issue causing that political split then was slavery. So the RNC and DNC were important in representing respective party beliefs and stances to undecided voters and people who didn't attend. As a person who lived in London and didn't really follow American politics until around 2013, I didn't know what to expect when my dad told me his friend invited us to the DNC. Walking out of the gate in Philadelphia International Airport, my dad and I immediately spotted three or four signs welcoming people to the DNC. Keeping in mind that Wikileaks released the DNC emails three days prior to the convention, I was kind of nervous going in. Many of the people at the convention were Hillary supporters, and although Bernie supporters were also strong in numbers, quite a few of them were outside the convention center protesting. On the first day of the convention, Debbie Wasserman-Schultz was booed on the convention floor and protesters were holding up anti-Trans-Pacific Partnership signs in the convention center, as well as many "Bernie or Bust" chants erupting outside of convention buildings.

As a Bernie supporter, I was slightly exasperated during many of the events I went to. There was an overwhelming amount of support for Hillary along with what I can only describe as "Bernie Erasure." For example, I attended a tea hosted by Nancy Pelosi that was advocating for women in places of political influence and power. Nancy Pelosi expressed her support for Hillary, and proceeded to invite all the congresswomen and senators up onstage to show their solidarity with Hillary Clinton.

Pelosi began saying the names of the people onstage, and, unbeknownst to me, Debbie Wasserman-Schultz was up there. When Pelosi announced Wasserman-Schultz's name, the entire room erupted into cheers. I was prepared for booing or silence, not a loud showing of support and approval. This moment offered a vivid, inside view of party politics for me; the media may have disparaged Schultz, and those on

the convention floor definitely did, but the people in the room with me at the event were proud and excited about the unjust and corrupt things she did to ensure the nomination went to Hillary. Don't get me wrong, I don't have a burning hate fire for Clinton brewing, but the clapping for Schultz really made me angry. I thought that the adults in the room would be able to realize that what she did was wrong, regardless of candidate affiliation, and be able to separate themselves from that. But again, that moment made me realize that party politics are a lot more complex than the media lets on.

From what I experienced at the convention, there are explicit and implicit ways to express where someone stands on issues in the party. There were caucuses and panels in which people talked about issues pertaining to their respective communities, as well as parties where congress people, senators, delegates, and party supporters would socialize, listen to live music and eat fancy food (cheese plates were commonplace).

Of the panels and parties and caucuses I attended, the one that stuck with me the most was the Native American caucus. Civil Rights activist John Lewis (who walked next to Martin Luther King Jr. during the Selma to Montgomery marches) spoke about his life as a boy and his activism in the black community. His speech moved me in ways that I can't really describe; hearing about the adversity he faced He urged the crowd to break the rules when they stop you from being the best you can be.

"Get in trouble! If you see something unjust, say something, do something, move your feet! It's time for us to stand up, to speak up, to get in the way," Lewis said. "We have to win this election, I don't care what you say. I don't want to go back. I want to save the land. We have a right to know what's in the food we eat, what is in the water we drink, what is in the air we breathe. I got arrested a few times in the 60's because I had to fight for the right to vote! I don't want to go back! I want to go forward!"

Listening to Lewis speak was one of the most moving things that happened to me at the convention. Hearing him speak about the adversity he'd faced to ensure that black Americans could have equal rights was incredible. I got to briefly meet him afterwards and he told me that I was an inspiration and to continue on the path I was creating. He told me this so sincerely that is brought tears to my eyes (and also to my mother's when I texted her about it around 10 seconds later), because hearing someone so influential tell me that I can make change was something that I needed. I want to stand up for those without a voice, I want to find solutions to problems like the way we treat victims of sexual assault, or address our country's problem with mass incarceration. I too, want to go forward.

To view the photos from this story, visit [libjournal.com](http://libjournal.com)

## Thumbs up

- Waterbottle flipping
- Apple cider
- Cold weather
- Hummus
- PSAT memes



LASA FRESHMAN MARCUS TITA

- Presidential debates
- Fall allergies
- Candycorn
- Carpool
- Late nights



## Thumbs down

Above are the opinions of The Liberator staff and not the individual featured.

## A sharp opinion on vaccinations



ANDY DEGRASSE  
Staff Writer

For many years the idea that vaccines cause autism has been something of a national punchline. Admittedly, it is hard to take a cause seriously when most of its prominent advocates are B-list celebrities. But in reality, this seemingly whimsical and comical movement has had real effects on the culture and future of America.

The modern incarnation of the movement began in 2007, when Jenny Mccarthy, a former Playboy model and MTV star, announced her son had been diagnosed with autism, and made the claim that it was a result of vaccines. While the idea of vaccines causing autism had existed for a while, this announcement brought the movement into the public eye. From the first day Mccarthy made this claim it wasn't taken seriously by the majority of Americans, mainly because the entire basis of her argument, a study made in 1998, had been proved to be false numerous times. However despite her claim being almost universally maligned, some people did latch onto it. From Donald Trump to Kirstie Alley, the cause gained popularity with a sizable amount of celebrities. While in recent years several of these celebrities have renounced this claim, by this time it was far too late. The belief had rooted itself in the American culture, and didn't seem like it was going anywhere.

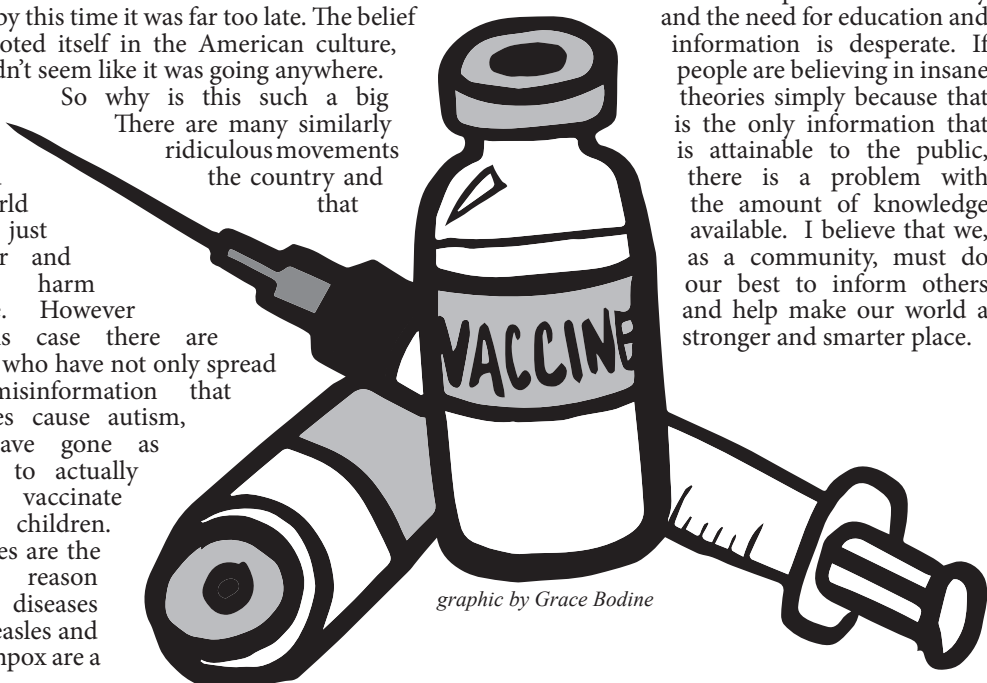
So why is this such a big deal?

There are many similarly ridiculous movements the country and that around the world are just popular and don't harm anyone. However in this case there are people who have not only spread the misinformation that vaccines cause autism, but have gone as far as to actually not vaccinate their children. Vaccines are the main reason that diseases like measles and chickenpox are a

thing of the past, and in recent years, there have been outbreaks of measles, with the total number of cases reaching 644, 97% of which were a result of unvaccinated children. This movement is not only spreading misinformation, but exposing innocent children to a potentially deadly disease. This could be devastating to our communities, rendering virtually everyone sick.

So what can be done to combat this dangerous movement? It seems to be an almost impossible task. The idea that vaccines cause autism have been disproven by science without question, and yet there are still people who stand by it. Despite the plethora of information which disproves their argument, they maintain this belief. Is this because they are stubborn and unwilling to admit they could ever be wrong? Perhaps, but I choose to take a more optimistic view. Maybe these people aren't deviants, who are willing to risk the health of their children just so they don't have to admit they were wrong. Maybe they simply don't know any better. Maybe they saw someone on the TV one day say that vaccinations were bad, and never bothered to question whether it was true. Often times, it seems like ignorance is the culprit for many of life's problems. Whenever people are uneducated about a topic, they choose to believe the most accessible opinion. This is devastating to our society, causing the divide between people and knowledge to expand even more.

The movement to disprove this theory has been a wake-up call for our society and the need for education and information is desperate. If people are believing in insane theories simply because that is the only information that is attainable to the public, there is a problem with the amount of knowledge available. I believe that we, as a community, must do our best to inform others and help make our world a stronger and smarter place.



graphic by Grace Bodine

## Police militarization in America



SOPHIE WYSOCKI  
Staff Writer

We think of police forces as created to protect citizens from danger and risk. They are in place to make sure everyone feels safe and secure in their communities. In recent years, many people have begun to think that protection of the people isn't always the police's top priority. What people believe is that their primary concern could be their own personal safety, which would cause these officers to utilize unnecessary force against suspects, in turn intensifying situations further. Using force to stop suspects isn't uncommon, but what circumstances justify this forceful detainment? Cases appear to show that police officers are unnecessarily escalating situations and creating more danger instead of stopping it. According to the Washington Post, almost 1000 people were brutally killed by police forces in 2015, and statistics show that there will be even more deaths this year than in recent years. Without proper training and regulations, I think that our communities will suffer heavily from the brutality and violence. This won't change without bringing awareness to the victims of police brutality.

Police training has been militarizing in the past 50 years, meaning that military tactics and more powerful weapons are utilized by the people trying to keep communities safe. Stress training, a type of police training modeled after military boot camps, can create an "us versus them" mindset that leads officers to view certain people as the enemy. The job of a police officer is to protect people, so arming them with military weapons and telling them to attack possible perpetrators can send them the wrong message. Some might agree that militarization is a viable option for our police forces, seeing as there is much social unrest and danger in our current world. I disagree with this belief, as the military uses these tactics in order to fight their enemies, and our police forces are meant to protect our communities. I believe that bringing militaristic ideals into our police forces reinforces the idea of a fight against an enemy, instead of for the people. There are many unforeseen consequences of police militarization that people don't take into consideration.

In effect, police militarization has been putting serious stress on cities and communities in the United States. Unrest and dissatisfaction with police forces has increased enormously, shown by the case of the shooting of police officers in Dallas this year. In the past year alone, there have been numerous cases of shooting innocent people due to situation escalation from police officers, following assumptions made about the suspect. Unfortunately, a common practice in police departments is racial profiling, wherein an officer targets an individual based on his or her race, ethnicity, religion or nationality.

One of the most publicized examples of racial profiling is the case of Trayvon Martin in February 2012. In this incident, George Zimmerman, the watchman for the gated community that Martin was temporarily staying in, began following him and this resulted in an altercation that ended with Zimmerman shooting Martin, who was unarmed.

This case received significant backlash; many people were very angry at the clear racial profiling and unnecessary escalation. Nevertheless, Zimmerman was acquitted by the jury. Across the country, some communities, particularly, communities of color, lost trust in their local authorities. Cases like Zimmerman's aren't uncommon and more often than not, they're not publicized. I was surprised to find that a case from Texas, the incarceration and death of Sandra Bland, wasn't as public as I'd thought. Many people I spoke to weren't aware of the case whatsoever and this brought the fact that the media can really influence which cases become known. When these cases aren't made known, the problem continues to manifest privately and victims of this injustice go unhelped.

Along with police brutality and racial profiling, there is also the issue of SWAT invasions. There is no reason to say that SWAT teams aren't necessary and important because they can be useful in many different situations, such as in cases with serial killers or terrorists. The problem isn't their purpose, it's the way they're trained to carry it out. SWAT teams take on militarized tactics in order to do their job, which can be helpful in extreme circumstances, but many raids end up being escalated dangerously without enough reason. There have been numerous invasions that are unjustified or unnecessary, which can end up injuring or even sometimes killing innocent people. SWAT raids have become all too common in some communities, creating barriers and tension between police and citizens. If these SWAT teams are doing more harm than good, then the need for change should be recognized.

The militarization of police training and the allowance of personal biases in their work environment has become extremely detrimental to communities across the country. That shouldn't be the way we want our communities and cities protected.

The militarization of police training and the allowance of personal biases in their work environment has become extremely detrimental to communities across the country. That

shouldn't be the way we want our communities and cities protected. Instead of someone who fights against people, we should want someone to fight for our protection and our rights. Instead of someone who makes assumptions based on race, we should want someone to view all situations objectively and equally for all people. No one should feel too scared of police officers to call 911 in cases of emergency. Police officers should be taught to de-escalate situations instead of further intensify the danger. I believe that everyone is entitled to a just law enforcement system and the only way to get that is to raise awareness to the issue at hand. Many Americans are unaware of the how deeply rooted the problem is in the police force and that it doesn't just start at a personal level, it begins in the militarized training. As I am not a person of color, I have never and will never understand the fears of those who have to deal with these challenges. Although I will most likely never experience this type of discrimination, I would like to help speak up for those who have to live with fear every day. I want to live in a country where everyone is treated fairly and equally by the police, no matter their race, gender, or religion. I don't want to be fearful of an unnecessarily escalated and violent situation with an officer for those in my community who may be subject to this type of treatment. Recognizing the issues with the current police officer training, developing informed opinions about the subject, and acting upon those will help enact change in our country.

## Does your vote really count?



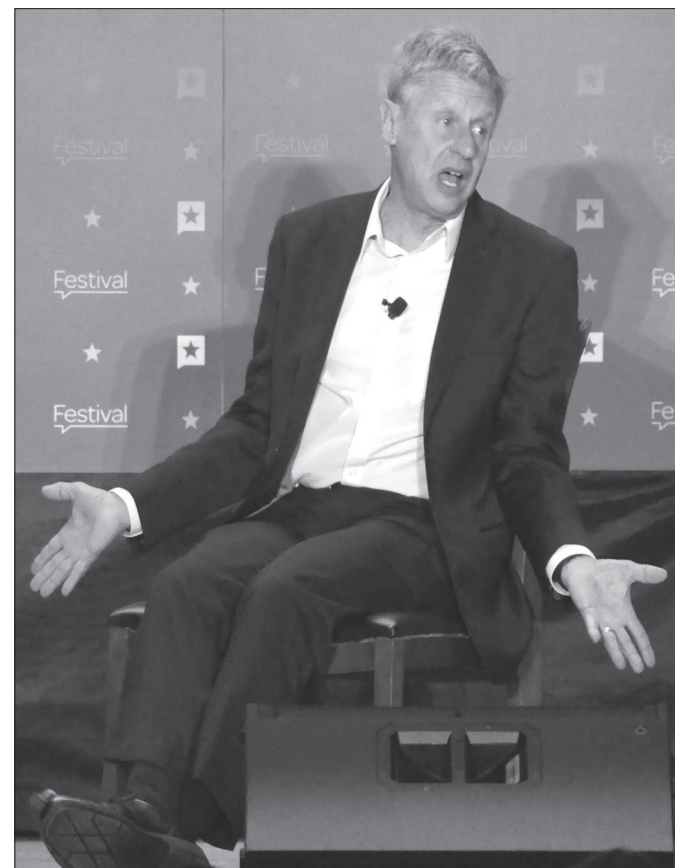
TREVOR ANDERSON  
Staff Writer

The election has happened. The country has voted to elect its new leader, and I personally hated both of the major party candidates, but what other options did voters have? Earlier in the race, there were two major third party candidates on the ballot: Gary Johnson of the Libertarian party and Jill Stein of the Green Party. Unfortunately, neither was able to scrounge up 15% in the polls, the required amount of support needed to secure a spot in the presidential debates. As the election drew nearer, their fan base dwindled. Although, with both main party candidates coming under heavy

scrutiny, in the future people may be more open to third party candidates.

I questioned the leadership and intelligence of such candidates, seeing as Gary Johnson couldn't name a foreign leader he admired, and he had no idea what Aleppo was. For me, that is completely disgraceful. How can you possibly not know about the biggest humanitarian crisis in the world? And how can you not name a foreign leader, someone who you would be working with as president? His policies weren't that bad in my opinion, but I did disagree with just blindly admitting third party candidates into the debates, especially if they were, in my opinion, as inept as he seemed to be. Now, if the candidates boasted a devoted following and had plans with actual implementations in mind, I would have no problem with that. But other than that, I thought it would be useless more than anything to let third party candidates into the debates—if they couldn't hold their own on crisis like Aleppo and couldn't name one of their would-be comrades, then they had no place on a national stage competing for becoming "leader of the free world."

For those who have never heard of Jill Stein, she was a returning president candidate from 2012. She ran for governor of



Gary Johnson speaks at the Texas Tribune Festival in Austin, Texas. Photo courtesy of Liberator staff.

Massachusetts, but didn't win, which gave her almost no political experience. To me, Jill Stein had some good ideas (healthcare as a basic human right and universal child care), but, in my opinion, the bad outweighed the good—her plans to cut military spending by 50% and for total nuclear disarmament were completely ridiculous. Some of her other policies were, for me, just too vague to be taken seriously, such as "America's youth should not be put in jail for offenses they commit." This might be true for some cases, but to put a blanket statement on the issue like that seemed incredibly weak and poorly thought-out. What is worse is that she had plans with no way to implement them: she said that we "should end discrimination against former offenders who have paid for their crimes." Sounds great in theory, but how could that be implemented across the entire country? To me, her even more extreme positions sounded more like communism than anything else we've ever seen in a free economy. She said that "the unemployed would have the enforceable right to make the government provide work." This just seems completely ridiculous to me. Why should we just give out jobs to people just because they ask for it? It is the right of the company to pick employees based on qualifications that they seek. Unfortunately, no one is entitled to anything in this life. If you want something, work for it. Don't expect handouts, because you won't get them.

Overall, I do think third party candidates have a place in our election system, but not in this specific election. If push comes to shove, and third party candidates are able to hold a debate and talk about important issues, then people probably would vote for them. Next election, I might even consider voting for a third party if the main candidates are unbearable. But I think the only way they could ever wind up in the Oval Office is out of sheer necessity. If the American people absolutely cannot justify supporting a main candidate, then that is the only way a third party candidate could ever hope to make it. For me, most years I won't need the 3rd party candidates, but as they years go by and people's desperation grows, who knows? Desperate times call for desperate measures.



## Halloween spirit at any age



SARAH MINES  
Staff Writer

childhood?

Some candy-givers turn down anyone who appears to be over ten at the door. Halloween night for teens is known for pranks and parties, so understandably, some adults may have a problem with them on their property and in a disguise. By this age, the trick-or-treater can most likely find a job and buy a value pack of fun-sized M&M's for themselves instead of walking door to door. The situation is only made more uncomfortable when an adult is expected to hand out candy to someone who simply threw on a t-shirt and hat and calls it a "costume." Personally, I understand this perspective and would probably feel awkward in that situation, especially later in the evening.

On the other hand, age is nothing compared to spirit. My friends and I somehow settled on the idea that this was our last year to trick-or-treat without getting a disapproving look with every piece at candy. We dressed up, said please and thank you and received no complaints from any house we visited. Ultimately, if the trick-or-treater at the door is polite, conscientious and has clearly put effort into their costume, who should take that away from them? After all, there are much worse things for teenagers to be doing than putting on a costume and asking for candy. Although I may one day find handing out candy to someone who's a head taller than me a little strange, it's not my place to tell them to grow up and move on.

Most teens decide that walking miles through the neighborhood and spending hours going door-to-door isn't worth it for a couple of candy bars. In a world that urges us to grow up quickly, there is something special to be found in holding on to these pieces of our childhood and making memories for as long as we can. If anything, I would want my child to be doing something they are "too young" for, rather than doing dangerous things in an effort to grow up. I believe that at the end of the day holiday spirit has no age limit and should be enjoyed by everyone who is respectful and clearly displays a little effort.

## Daily reflections: why keeping a journal is important



RILEY MURPHY  
Staff Writer

A journal can be used for writing out all the day's events and noting down every little thing that happens during the week, or it can be a palette for stories and profound thoughts that have no place off the pages. I use my notebooks as a collection of my thoughts through any time and any situation. When I need a place for my ideas to go, the blank pages of an empty notebook seem like they are begging to be filled.

I find that I fall towards writing when I can't tell how I'm feeling or thinking. My journal listens and has no judgments, no negative thoughts towards me or anything I write. Writing is often more helpful than talking to people, as I can get what I'm thinking about out into the open, which allows me to figure out how I'm feeling and why. That's not to say I never talk to people though. The notebook just helps me organize thoughts and feelings to make it easier to talk.

At times, I'll have a good idea for something I want to write, but other times I'll have nothing coming to mind at all. Sometimes I have to force myself to write something, anything, just to get words onto the paper. Inspiration for good writing tends to come from many outside stimuli, like music and surroundings. When I'm drawing a blank, I'll put on a good playlist and take my notebook with me on a walk. It's surprising how much more I notice by shutting out one of the five senses. As I walk, I watch everything happening around me, and write, or draw, everything that I'm thinking. I consider myself a more visual person, meaning drawing comes much easier to me, so I end up sketching a lot more than I write. I've filled up more sketchbooks than I can count. However, this lets me use the things that I've drawn as a base for my writing, adding more detail to the original piece or creating new worlds and stories from a single sketch.

My journals are full of incessant ramblings and rants, unfinished sagas and stories of people unknown to me, and even leaves and papers that I find interesting. When I see things that I find interesting, I think about it's story. Everyone and everything has its own story, most that I'll never know, so I make them up! I take in everything I can about a person and then make wild characters in various worlds and settings based only on what I know and what I imagine. Doing this allows me to see people and the world around me in new and exciting ways that I wouldn't have thought of before.

Writing in a journal everyday has made my life a lot more interesting. I am able to pull more out of the things I observe, and I've been able to write a lot more and a lot easier. I don't worry about having a finished or published piece of writing, I just think about writing all the time. By writing every day, I've noticed that I've been less stressed because I can just rant and get things off my mind. I have been able to move past issues that stick in my mind and I've become a better writer overall.

# Counselors welcome freshmen with concert to raise mental illness awareness, build stress coping strategies

ASHLEY THOMAS  
Staff Writer

To kick off the 2016-2017 school year for LASA's incoming class of 2020, a special presentation about mental health took place at freshman orientation over the summer inviting students to open up about mental health and battle the stigma against it. The presentation was organized by LASA guidance counselor Shannon Bergeron, who viewed the idea of a concert promoting open conversation of mental health as a great way to introduce freshman to the world of LASA.

"The 'concert' is a lot of just bringing attention to the fact that you're going to have a hard time, things like school are going to be hard at times, so what are you going to do about it?" Bergeron said. "One of the main things [Eddie Kroger] advocates for is really talking to people and sending out these messages, like talk to people and talk to each other, but it's not... in your face, 'Talk to each other and take care of each other!'. It's more laid back and fun. He encourages people to get up and dance and get people moving. So it's really just a fun way to get people talking and send out the message that, hey life is difficult sometimes, but it's okay to take that stress away and talk about things."

Singer-Songwriter Eddie Kroger, who is a close friend to Bergeron, travels to different schools in Texas to send out his message of what Bergeron describes as brilliance conveyed through improvisation. As a classically-trained opera singer and an accomplished musician, Kroger travels around the country and gives free concerts and presentations in order to inspire conversation on mental illness.

"I was hoping freshman could walk away from this experience validating what they were already feeling," Bergeron said. "That it's a normal thing to feel sad or stressed sometimes and be able to accept that and move forward even though that may be hard to do sometimes, but use these fun exercises and activities in order to help with that."

Kroger's mother founded the Texas Crisis hotline when he was only a child according to Bergeron. Bergeron said that because he grew up in a household where he was so connected to mental health, he was able to evolve his involvement into this new idea that will soon be traveling across the country. Bergeon thought that this would be the perfect kind of way to connect to LASA students in a fun way that they could relate to.

"One of the reason I thought freshman orientation might be a good time is that these are kids that have never been to LASA before, they don't know, yet, what they're getting into," Bergeron said. "This is a really stressful place for a lot of these kids, and I think it's really hard. Even as much as we can say, go to friends and ask us for help,

nobody wants to be the one to ask for help. It's a really hard thing for a 13 or 14 year old to do. To be able to go out and say, 'Wow this is hard,' is something a lot of people struggle with, especially when it's probably something they've never struggled with their entire life. There's still this stigma of talking about mental health issues."

A case study conducted by the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) and National Institution of Drug Abuse (NIDA) on 2,000 teens across the country during the 2014-2015 school year showed that one in five teens suffer from a mental illness, with only about a third of those showing symptoms. LASA Wellness Counselor Megan Butler deemed it important for new students to understand that they can come to a difficult school like LASA and be able to ask for help from their peers and teachers whenever they are struggling. One of LASA's main goals as a campus, according to Butler, is to be able to create a safe place

*LASA students deal with stress in a different variety of ways. There's a lot of unhealthy coping.*

-LASA Wellness Counselor  
Meagan Butler

for students to come and destress from whatever they're struggling with and deal with those issues in a healthy manner.

"LASA student deal with stress in a different variety of ways," Butler said. "There's a lot of unhealthy coping, and there's some healthy coping as well. I think students do talk to their friends and that can end up being one of the best solutions because they're able to relate and understand certain issues better, but a lot of students don't sleep according to our current survey and that seems to be a recurring issues from the past couple of years."

According to the same study conducted by the NAMI and NIDA, recreational drug usage as a coping method is at an all time low among high school teenagers, although when reviewing teen sleep schedules, researchers found that only about 15% of students sleep the recommended

eight and a half hours each night. Butler addresses the fact that a lot of the stress comes from the workload assigned to students by teachers, and she wanted to emphasize the fact that she understands how stressful it can be at times, but that LASA counselors are trying to work with students and teachers to find the solution to a healthy learning environment outside and inside of LASA.

"I know that over the years a lot of teachers have tried to reduce the workload and make it more manageable for students, as well as try to embed study skills into their curriculum that will at least try and help them succeed, and I think that needs to continue," Butler said. "I really think that teachers need to reflect on what they're assigning and try and make it so that students can learn the material and not have to stay up all night doing it. It's hard to find a medium, or some kind of balance where both students and teacher win, but I think we're getting closer to being there. I think one way to do that would be by asking students how much time they spend on homework and continuously asking what students are struggling on and how to get them to receive the concept better without spending hours trying to figure it out on their own."

Butler said the LASA guidance and mental health counseling team are designing new mental health initiatives to put in place based on the feedback they've received from the survey sent out earlier this year. Butler said every two years a new initiative is put in place to cater to the needs and areas of struggle among LASA students. Previous initiatives include sleep week as well as pride week from the survey conducted two years ago. Butler strongly encourages freshmen to fill out the survey to create a plan that can cater to freshman needs, as well as freshman creating healthy sleep and study habits now as opposed to later.

"Set all of your habits now," Butler said. "Get into a steady sleep routine that's healthy and learn all of your healthy coping skills now. Asking for help early and often is definitely a key to success, and truly be open to your friends if you're struggling."

Freshman Amalie Whitewinner said she thought the presentation was very valuable to her in preparing to attend LASA because it helped to counteract fears about the demands of the program that she had acquired during other orientation events.

"For me it calmed me down entirely about LASA," Whitewinner said. "The orientation with the seniors freaked me out more because they were all kind of just saying how hard each of the classes you'll be taking are and how you're not supposed to do your homework the day it's due, which everyone still does anyways. But, it really just calmed me down about the school... I feel like this presentation really just helped me open up my shell more."

## New Magnet Admissions Policies AISD changes residence proof deadline; Kealing allocates slots geographically

JEFFREY KOVAR  
Staff Writer

The Austin Independent School District (AISD) has changed its policy on admitting students who live outside its geographic boundaries to its application-based magnet schools. Those applying to magnet schools such as LASA for the 2017-18 school year must supply proof of residence within AISD at the date of their application, which for LASA is Jan. 21. For previous classes, the deadline for proof of residence was Aug. 1. This policy affects not only LASA but also the other application-based schools in the district, including Fulmore and Lamar Middle Schools and McCallum High School. Andy Paulson, the Academy Director at LASA, said that the change was made primarily because of pressure from in-district parents.

"Essentially, so many of the parents that have grown up here, or have kids that have grown up in Austin and lived here their whole life said: 'This is an AISD program for Austin residents,'" Paulson said. "If they don't pay taxes, you shouldn't be able to come to LASA."

LASA and the other magnet schools in AISD came to this conclusion because the residents in Austin who pay taxes to keep the schools running wished for it to change, according to Paulson. The settlement ultimately came after the school board approved the decision after hearing from the cabinets, made up of superintendents, who conversed with the individual principals at each school.

"We turn away 100 applicants a year that are totally qualified to come here," Paulson said. "With a school this size, we can't get any bigger. We just can't take any more, and last year, we took even more. Basically, the school board changed the policy because of internal pressure in the district by taxpayers."

LASA sophomore Aly Hirani does not support the new policy. He cites the possibility that LASA could have potentially missed out on top students because they were not in the AISD area at the time of

application. "Personally, I don't really like it because it excludes a lot of people from applying and coming here," Hirani said. "Some of the friends I have made from last year came from out of district, and I wouldn't have met them and been friends with them if they didn't come here. It's honestly a shame that they changed the policy. This school has really missed out on some quality students."

Kealing Middle School Magnet Program made an additional change besides the policy for out-of-district applicants. For the 2017-2018 school year, Kealing is using the Dallas Model for their admissions policy.

"Our desire is to serve students from every part of AISD," a statement on Kealing's website said. "As a result, we have made a few adjustments to our admissions practices.... 50% of acceptances will be based purely on the top ranking of total rubric scores. The other 50% of the seats will be

*If they don't pay taxes, you shouldn't be able to come to LASA.*

-LASA Academy Director  
Andy Paulson

proportionally divided by feeder pattern within AISD to students who meet the requisite rubric score."

LASA, besides the change surrounding out-of-district applicants, kept its application the same for those applying there for the 2017-2018 school year. Paulson said he would not have changed the application and that he would have left the Aug. 1 deadline for out-of-district students the same.

"If you test and you qualify to come here, you should be able to come here," Paulson said. "Hundreds of people move to Austin per day from Washington, England, from Australia that are moving here to work at the University of Texas, or in the tech industry, etc. I hate that those people can't get their kids in because of the Jan. 21 policy."



Dayln Gillentine (12), Model UN teacher sponsor Kimberley Pettigrew, Amir Downing (12) and Theo Lavier (12) listen at the Model United Nations conference hosted by LASA. photo courtesy of Kimberley Pettigrew

## UNLASA

continued from page 1

"What I'm really enjoying [about being a chair] is the ability to frame an issue as you see fit," Fuller said. "It has been fun to create [the delegates'] directive."

Behind the scenes of the conference were secretaries who typed position papers and helped run the committees. Junior secretary Sreenidhi Tupuri was new to the challenges of managing the event, although she participated in 2015 as a delegate.

"It's always interesting to see how delegates are able to come to resolutions to problems that in real life, the countries wouldn't or couldn't come to," Tupuri said. "This was my first time staffing, so it was exciting to be on the other side of things as I usually am one of the people attending the conferences."

Crisis director and LASA senior Finlay Scanlon was in charge of organizing the event ahead of time in addition to informing committees of new crises throughout the day. From finding costumes for major historical figures to choosing the topics themselves, Scanlon's role as a leader comes with a lot of work.

"You have to order pizza and call sponsors who are fighting over who runs the St. Augustine Model UN team," Scanlon said. "But it's also super fun to coordinate all the chairs' outfits, plan crisis costumes and come up with committees."

Once the conference started, Scanlon and the crisis committee worked to coordinate between conferences how the event would play out. Every room held a separate conference, and crisis directors kept each flowing as planned.

"So halfway through a session, when all the delegates are being boring and droning on about the blandness about nuclear weapons, I run in and say 'you, North Korea just bombed you' and then chaos ensues," Scanlon said. "But the kind of chaos that people learn from."

Tupuri said that she enjoys Model UN

because it allows her to gain insight on world issues as well as converse with others to come to a solution for the given problem. In her opinion, seeing it from the perspective of the decision-makers changes the way people see the issue.

"It's always interesting to see how we are able to come to resolutions to problems that in real life, the countries wouldn't or couldn't come to, or to see how our resolution varied from a past resolution of the nations," Tupuri said.

Pettigrew said Model UN equips students with valuable skills such as compromise and listening. While certainly necessary to UNLASA, Pettigrew believes they are also useful for later in life.

"I think the skills of Model UN are super important, because it's all about listening to the people around you and compromising," Pettigrew said. "I really, truly think that that's something that people aren't as able to do as well anymore--certainly compromising and being able to hear out your opponent without shouting over them."

These skills come hand-in-hand with enjoyment, according to Scanlon. Though much work is involved to coordinate a conference, Scanlon says the exertion is worth it.

"I think Model UN is all about being power hungry and knocking people to the ground. Also flirting your way to the top," Scanlon said. "But really, it's about loving what you do and being committed."

According to Pettigrew, despite the challenges attached to sponsoring one of the largest clubs in the school, the output is rewarding. All of the work and preparation needed to execute a successful conference pays off.

"It's a good chance for new kids to Model UN to get some experience within our program, and also it just shows the ability that delegates have to come up with all of these things," Pettigrew said. "I'm just super proud of all my kids for putting this together."

# UT study evaluates student stress

ASPEN KISSINGER  
Staff Writer

This September, a large cohort of LASA freshmen participated in a study conducted by researchers from the Yeager Lab at UT Austin. According to LASA principal Stacia Crescenzi, the study was conducted to examine how the transition from middle school to high school affects teenagers' stress levels.

"[Professor Yeager] came to me late last year about this other study...that would focus specifically on the transition made between middle school and high school and the stresses associated with that change, and how a student thinks of those stresses, how that impacts physiologically their reaction to that stressor," Crescenzi said. "And the question being, 'If we changed the way you think about that stressor, does that then have a physiological impact on how you perceive that stressor?' And so it took a long time and a lot of paperwork with the [Austin Independent School District (AISD)] to get them to accept the study. But they did, in August we got the go ahead to participate."

Students who chose to participate were given three online surveys, ten short check-in surveys, and were asked to give 10 saliva samples over two weeks of testing. Most of the surveys and samples were conducted in student's double block SciTech or Ezine class, but students were also asked to answer questions outside of school before they went to bed or after they woke up to examine how a student thinks differently depending on time of day. LASA freshman and study participant Terry Patten said she enjoyed participating in the study and is

curious about her results.

"The study started off as more interesting mind stuff, like in so many turns figure out how to move the ball from here to there, in a certain pattern, so it would be testing how you think," Patten said. "Then it became a twice a day answering questions on how your day went, what was something positive, what was something negative, and what were your feelings on it."

The study was designed to help researchers find out

*That feels like a lot of money, potentially, for students who may otherwise... never be able to study abroad during high school.*

-LASA Principal Stacia Crescenzi

how variables can affect what a student thinks of their day. The results are determined by the students' answers on the survey they were given and the amount of cortisol in their saliva. Hae Yeon Lee, a 4th year PhD student in Developmental Psychology and researcher at the Yeager lab, said the data collected would help quantify assumptions about teenage stress.

"People often make general claims about how much teenagers these days are stressed out—like the popular

notion of 'stressed-out teens' or 'burnouts,'" Lee said. However, surprisingly little is known about the extent to which high school students are distressed due to academic, social, and other environmental factors; and even less has been reported to what extent biological and psychological stress in adolescence vary across different developmental and school contexts. So it is our hope that the current research study can contribute to provide more empirical evidence about stress in adolescence and how to better assess and address this in the school settings."

Patten said that LASA's rigorous academic standards and its impact on students make it an ideal place to measure how variables like sleep and workload affect stress.

"If you're at LASA, you usually care about your grades, so you get stressed about more stuff in general and also you get less sleep," Patten said.

According to Crescenzi, the lab report for the study should be finalized in the spring and shared with both LASA and AISD. The students will also be given an individual report of how they responded to stress and ways to respond more effectively to stressful events.

"I'm hoping that the students who participated, when they get their readouts, can examine that information and try to figure out in the future when I have a similar stressful event if I think about it like this, and see it as an opportunity instead of a stressful event, like can I manage it differently, can I get more out of it," Crescenzi said. "I'm hoping that in an individual level, it's actually going to assist those students cope better in the future with stressful events."

## THE SKINNY

*National Merit Semi-finalists earn praise and scholarship opportunities*

MARLEN AVILA  
Staff Writer

On September 15 LASA announced this year's National Merit Scholar Semi-Finalists. Out of the 22,000 juniors who participated in last year's Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT), 24 LASA seniors scored in the top one percent in the nation.

The PSAT is a required test that LASA freshmen, sophomores and juniors take every year in October. For freshmen and sophomores, it is simply a practice test. But for juniors, the PSAT gives them the opportunity to qualify for the National Merit Scholarship. If they receive the scholarship, there are several schools in the US that offer full tuition and other opportunities for recipients. According to LASA college counselor Jamie Kocian, it is to the student's benefit to score well on the PSAT to receive the opportunity of scholarships and money.

"If you get a high enough score, you can qualify for National Merit Recognition, National Hispanic Recognition and maybe even get scholarships from certain schools from that," Kocian said. "Really, it is just a practice SAT before you take the real thing for college admissions tests."

For juniors, the PSAT is one of the most important tests since it decides how much practice and dedication they need in order to score well on the SAT and if they are able to receive benefits for universities. However, the new formats of the PSAT and SAT issued last year brought clear changes. Kocian noted that this year's selection of students has decreased from previous years.

"The year before we were right around 32 or 33 students and this year it was 24," Kocian said. "This year was a higher cut score. There's a selection index number [that in] previous years was around 219. This year it jumped up to 220 and that's the highest it's ever been. So we had fewer students qualify for a semi-final."

The PSAT scores were released in January, and the National Merit Scholar Semi-Finalists were announced several months later in September. Additionally, the range of scores released helps compare the student's PSAT score with the scores required to achieve in order to qualify as a Semi-Finalist. LASA senior Oscar Newman says that he thought that the announcement would be more grand.

"It was good to hear when they finally announced the list and surprising to see how high the cut-off score because it was a lot higher than I think anyone was expecting," Newman said. "There were a lot of people who didn't get it that got scores really close to mine who really should have gotten it. But now that was really the biggest surprise like seeing how small the group of people who did get it."

The changes to the cut off score was only one part of the PSAT and SAT changes announced last October. The new SAT test was first officially administered in March 2016. Since then, there had been four opportunities for students to take the new format. According to Kocian, the new SAT is supposed to appeal to student's strengths.

"It's supposed to be more about what you learned over time," Kocian said. "I feel that the SAT before was very aptitude based and this is what you're supposed to know as opposed to what on the new SAT and what you learned."

There have been much debate about how beneficial the changes have been for students. There were many students who were left dissatisfied with the changes or relieved with the changes. However, Newman believes that the new format makes the test more practically applicable.

"Overall, I think they are very good changes," Newman said. "They make it more like the ACT which I think is good, it increases more consistency between the tests and I think that they made the SAT more practical and no more weird vocab, the math is harder in places, a lot harder. But everything feels a little more reasonable and relatable to what you're actually going to apply these skills for in your life."

The PSAT score reflects the possible scores that a student might receive on the actual SAT in their senior year. LASA senior Sameer Pusapaty said that he will be utilizing the benefits that NMS provides.

"I'm going to take advantage for the money because college is really expensive," Pusapaty said. "I applied to become a finalist. Hopefully I get it."



U Teach student Juan Martinez teaches Pre-AP English 1 alongside Ms. Icaro. photo by Sarah Porter

## U Teach students learn in LASA classrooms

GABRIELLE JABOUR  
Staff Writer

Every year, the University of Texas sends undergraduate students to observe and teach at schools across the state through UTeach - an undergraduate teacher certification and preparation program. Essentially, the UTeach program gives student teachers the tools, skills and opportunities they need to one day earn their teaching degree. Throughout the years, LASA has continually been a recipient of a UTeach student teachers. At LASA, UTeach students work with a cooperating teacher, or CT, to create lesson plans, sit in on classes, teach lessons and complete other tasks that their LASA CT would do on a daily basis. Two UT students, Juan Martinez and Devin Barbee, are spending a semester at LASA working in their areas of interest through the UTeach program. So far, Martinez has spent his time at LASA observing and teaching Pre-AP English 1 alongside freshman teacher Josephine Icaro.

"The great thing about UTeach is that it allows college students to receive their teacher certification while completing the requirements for their bachelor's degree," Martinez said. "UT-Austin has three main UTeach programs—UTeach-STEM, UTeach Urban-Teachers and UTeach-Liberal Arts. Because my major is English, I am a member of UTeach-Liberal Arts, which mainly focuses on training Language Arts, Social Studies and LOTE teachers."

What separates UTeach from other teacher certification programs is the widespread opportunities it provides to gain teaching experience. All participants in the program spend time teaching at both the elementary, middle and high school levels. According to Barbee, who has been observing and teaching in Cody Moody's freshman World Geography class, the system is especially helpful in terms of getting experience and seeing different parts of the education system.

"There are some programs that are like 'Oh, you get to go to school for like a month and then you get certified' whereas with UTeach, you go at each level," Barbee said. "You start at elementary and you go

an hour a week and then you go to middle school and you do two hours a week and then you get to high school, which is where I'm at right now, and you do [around] three or four hours a week, or however many to get to 45 hours. Then, during the final semester, you full time student teach for 12 weeks."

Martinez also weighed in, mentioning that the comprehensiveness of the program is helpful in getting to understand the interactions between students and teachers at different grade levels.

"In terms of pedagogy, [the program] is great not only because student-teachers get to see how teachers at different grade levels handle class management and structure their lessons, but also because it gives us the opportunity to see how students' abilities and critical thinking skills develop as they get older," Martinez said.

As time has passed, teacher

*Although knowing one's curriculum and content is important, what's even more important is knowing how to engage students.*

-Student Teacher Juan Martinez

certification programs have become more intense. Moody recalled on his own student teaching days, commenting on the evolution of present day teaching certification programs.

"It seems like from when I was doing the intern part when I was training to be a teacher and getting my certification...all you did was observe and then followed that in the next semester with actual student teaching where you're actually in charge of the class for the semester," Moody said. "What has changed now with UTeach is that even during the observation, or the interning period, UTeach students are also required to teach lessons. That's something new, so it sounds like [teacher certification programs] are getting a little more rigorous and demanding with what they want from the teachers they're training."

The UTeach program has also proved to be very beneficial for existing teachers. In addition to providing a fresh and new perspective on teaching strategies and topics, it allows educators to reflect on their teaching through the mentoring of a

younger undergraduate student.

"I like being able to mentor a young, eager-eyed teacher-to-be because it not only gives back to the program that shaped me as a teacher, but it also allows me to think more about my own pedagogy and teaching practices," Icaro said. "The conversations I have about my student teachers regarding best practices, classroom management, curriculum development, etc. force me to be more mindful about my practices and to reflect on what truly is best for my students. I think the benefits of having a student teacher are not only being able to mentor someone but also being able to better myself as an educator."

As a graduate from UT with a degree in Plan II, English, and a certification through UTeach, Icaro has first-handedly experienced the whole student teaching and mentoring cycle. Icaro said that UTeach has been an invaluable experience to her teaching career because of the preparation she received, and of how it impacted her beliefs and experiences as a teacher.

"I have had (and continue to have) great experiences with the UTeach Program," Icaro said. "I only take student teachers through the UTeach Program not only because I want to give back to the program that helped

shape me but also because I like how well-prepared they are when they enter the classroom."

Through the completion of the program, students teachers gain many skills that become essential later on in their teaching career. Barbee credits UTeach for helping him improve his time management and organizational skills. Martinez also attributes his organization and new outlook on teaching to the program.

"For me, it really comes down to the connections I've made with the students I've had in the past," Martinez said. "When I first joined UTeach I did it mostly because I loved literature and wanted to find a way to have it be a part of my life. What I've discovered, however, is that being a teacher is much more than just about being knowledgeable. Although knowing one's curriculum and content is important, what's even more important is knowing how to engage students, knowing how to push them to challenge themselves, and knowing how to guide them to not merely tolerate learning but actually appreciate it."

# Mock presidential election ignites civic interest

## LASA Results

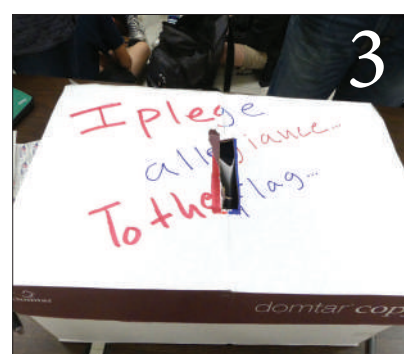
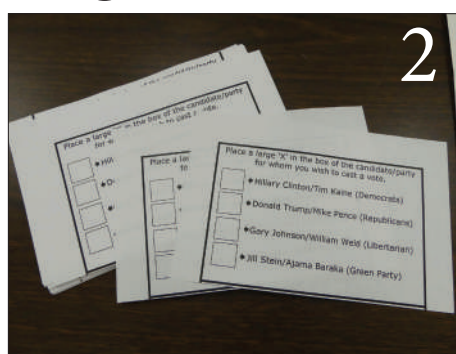
**Hillary Clinton:** 60.5% popular vote  
**Donald Trump:** 19.6% popular vote

**Hillary Clinton:** 461 popular votes  
**Donald Trump:** 149 popular votes  
**Gary Johnson:** 95 popular votes  
**Jill Stein:** 57 popular votes

## Real Results

**Donald Trump:** 56.9% electoral vote  
**Hillary Clinton:** 43.1% electoral vote

**Hillary Clinton:** 59,681,098 popular votes  
**Donald Trump:** 59,480,726 popular votes  
**Gary Johnson:** 4,047,740 popular votes  
**Jill Stein:** 1,209,326 popular votes



1. Kate Poore, 12, and Eli Naron, 12, tally the votes from their ballots stationed at front of the library.  
2. Students cast their votes by marking the box belonging to the candidate of their choice.  
3. The first part of the Pledge of Allegiance decorated the top of the ballot box.  
4. Students Warren Zhou, 12, Andrew Kim, 12, Akshara Anand, 11, Shivang Singh, 12, and Reed Hanson, 12, collect ballots in the fine arts hallway on mock election day.  
5. Stickers reading "I Voted" were given to all students who cast mock ballots in the election.  
6. "Vote here!" posters were present at each voting station, encouraging students to make their voice heard.  
photos by Clara Morse

## Student council dives into new year with freshman elections, homecoming

JORGE VILLA  
Staff Writer

This fall, even before the freshmen Student Council elections were over, the LASA Student Council was already beginning to plan out the homecoming dance. The LASA Student Council facilitates communication and creates a positive school environment for all students. Student Council is in charge of planning and executing school events, such as the glow-themed homecoming dance this year, which drew over 700 LASA and LBJ students. Freshman President Winn Philpott said she enjoys making school events like homecoming fun for all students.

"Honestly, it's hard to think of something I don't like about Student Council," Philpott said. "Even with the very limited power that we have, we are still able to have a lot of fun doing what we can do and making the most out of it."

Student Council is much more than just a place where officers are able to represent what the students need. Student Council officers are also in charge of organizing school events such as the prom and many fundraisers. They encourage students to be an active part of the LASA community by creating things such as Spirit Week, with different themes every week. Hannah Saquing is the sophomore vice president and she has been in student council since freshman year because she loves to get to know students in her grade and to work for what they need.

"The more work you put into it, the more that you get out of it," Saquing said. "From picking themes to selecting the decorations, it's amazing to see everything that you work on for weeks come to life."

Student Council officers work hard and dedicate their own personal time to organize and come up with events that will help bring

LASA together. Every Wednesday, the student council meets at lunch in the theater to discuss new ideas and continue developing and organizing school events. Junior Vice President Nirali Devgan decided to be part of the student council because she thought it would be really rewarding to help plan and carry out all events on campus as well as forge relationships with many individuals.

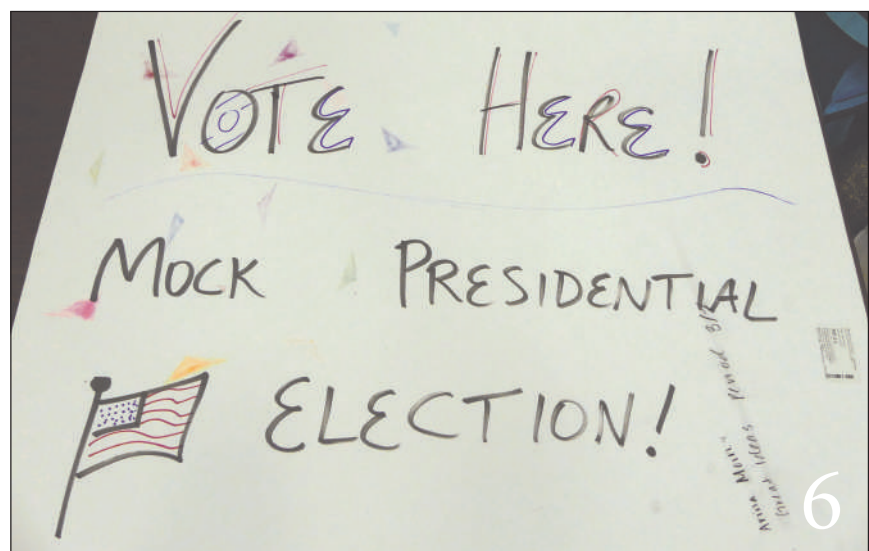
"We plan dances, homecoming and prom, community events such as Mr. Jag and fundraisers such as candy carnations for the holidays and selling shirts during football season," Devgan said. "Each class council works with the class student body to create socials, spread information and connect each other together."

Every year student council tries its best to remove the things that did not work and keep the things that did. They sort the things that worked and change the things that needed improvement. For example, according to Shawn Lee, the senior treasurer, one of the changes student council is making this year is prioritizing team communication, both within student council members and students.

"It is going to improve student council's ability to serve the student community more efficiently," Lee said. "Not only will it expedite the process of us tailoring to the classes' needs, but it will also allow student council to get to know the students better."

According to Lee this will improve student council's ability to serve the student community more efficiently. Sophomore Treasurer Danika Luo believes that because of the aforementioned changes, student council is running smoother than ever.

"I wanted to be part of student council to represent my fellow classmates and act as a leader of my class to advocate for the students and plan fun social events," Luo said.



2016 LASA Student Council (back row: Shane Aung, 11, Oscar Newman, 12, Joanna Ma, 11, Quinn Simpson, 12, Corey Cochran-Lepiz, 12, Sophia Blaha, 9, Sarida Morejon, 10; front row: Lisa Moomaw, 10, Danika Luo, 10, Sofia Moore, 9, Winn Philpott, 9, Rachel Pierron, 9, Sreenidhi Tupuri, 11; unpictured: Hannah Saquing, 10, Shawn Lee, 12, Nirali Devgan, 11) photo courtesy of Lisa Moomaw

## AISD Trustees

continued from page 1

relocating LASA or establishing a new magnet program in South Austin. Cindy Anderson stressed the singularity of LASA's current dynamic and its relationship with LBJ; the schools share custodial and cafeteria staff among other things, which would add to the fiscal impact of moving LASA to a new campus, and LASA-heavy extracurriculars like band complement LBJ-heavy extracurriculars like football. A major relocation, she warned, could change something fundamental about the program.

"LASA does have such a very strong state and national reputation, we don't want any unintended consequences of the decisions that we're making to negatively reflect back on what the program is today," Cindy Anderson said. "So I think we absolutely have to have the conversation, but we also need to be very specific about what problems we're trying to solve, and it may be that a South Austin high school is in need and a new solution for LASA is in need, but those may not be the same thing."

More immediate options for dealing with LASA's space constraints were less concrete than the candidates' discussion of long-term relocation efforts. The importance of creatively using available facilities was emphasized: Cindy Anderson raised the possibility of establishing a ninth grade center at a proximate under-enrolled campus, and Andy Anderson addressed the option of leasing additional space and converting an industrial park.

One major point of contention between the two candidates for the at-large position was the end game of expansionary enrollment policies at magnet schools. Quintanilla advocated for maximizing LASA's accessibility to all students as a means of encouraging a more diverse student body. He pointed to Broward County, Florida, where he said the admissions policies of magnet schools were changed to make them an option for every student.

"It's had profound effects. In fact, a University of California, Berkeley study showed that in the last few years, black students being represented in the accelerated programs have gone up by 80 percent and Hispanic students have gone up by 130 percent. That's real change,"

Quintanilla said. "And again I'll be the first to say, looking at options like this would come with a host of challenges. We have to take them on. If we're serious about equity and if we're serious about truly challenging the lack of diversity that we know exists in our schools and our magnet programs, we have to go from conversation to action."

Cindy Anderson, a former LASA parent, pushed back against Quintanilla's proposal. She maintained throughout the forum the importance of reserving LASA for only the highest-performing students, even pointing to its problematic location as a means of weeding out less motivated individuals.

"The rigor and the programmatic content of LASA is a large part of what makes LASA, LASA," Cindy Anderson said. "And so you have to make sure that regardless of expanding capacity, that you do preserve what's important in terms of those educational opportunities. And to be fair there's a lot of kids right now that are qualified, meaning they meet the scores to get in, and that is the intent of creating capacity in my opinion. It's not expanding it to students who we know would not be successful, because it doesn't work to change the dynamic of the academic program to make it more accessible; it changes what LASA is."

Magnet schools have always been a controversial aspect of the district, but all three candidates articulated their strong support for accelerated programs regardless of differing visions for their future. According to Newman, the forum was a highly successful opportunity to engage the candidates in conversation and debate, especially those opposing each other.

"The board of trustees, given the way they have to deliberate probably won't have much of an immediate impact on LASA, but they're really what define the long-term plans," Newman said. "Every time the superintendent walks into a planning board meeting to plan a new school, to build a new school, to upgrade a school, to do this or that, especially involving money, it has to go through the Board of Trustees. If they don't sign off, not much can happen. They are really the key to getting things done here."

# TOP 5

## Homecoming Disasters

by: Currie Larrimer  
Staff Writer

### 1

Your date wears a suit he wore to a wedding in 7th grade because no one told him that when you can see more than an inch of your socks that means it's too small.

### 2

You try to take pictures with good aesthetic at Mayfield Park but a peacock attacks you.

### 3

A nice guy asks you to the dance but he's 13 so his parents have to drive you.

### 4

The waiter tries to bring all of your food at once and spills the entire tray on your dress.

### 5

Everyone that goes to your school is awkward so you either mosh to avoid the fact that you can't dance or stand like a statue on the outside of the crowd so no one tries to interact with you.

# Banding Together For Music

TALIA WILLCOTT  
Staff Writer

Music can be a big part of a person's high school experience, whether it is playing in a school's orchestra, or cheering in the crowd while watching the marching band at a football game. Music is very influential in many LASA students lives and a big majority of them participate in musical extra curricular activities, specifically playing in a band. Three students in particular, LASA junior Zoe Czarnecki, LASA junior Nate Culbert, and LASA junior Sally Miller, are able to balance their school work with their involvement in music.

Grace London, a junior at McCallum, and Zoe Czarnecki met in the summer of 2014 at a camp called Girls Rock Camp Austin and really enjoyed playing with each other. After the camp ended, Grace wanted to continue to play music as a solo project but was in need of a bass guitarist; that is when Zoe stepped in to help and together they formed the band that is now called Misimplicity.

Misimplicity has only released one solo EP titled Misimplicity, but that does not mean that their band isn't constantly active. The two girls spend a few hours a week practicing, but the amount of time working is dependent on the amount of shows played that week. The students do their homework and study in between sets because of the time they spend running around practicing and performing their music. Even though it causes some stress on occasion, the girls believe all the hard work pays off.

"[Being in a band] can make it really hard to get all my schoolwork done, but I love it and it makes me happy so it's absolutely worth it," Czarnecki said.

Czarnecki believes that being in a band has primarily improved her technical skills as a musician, but that it has also taught her a lot about self advocacy. Because the girls mostly play at bars around town, it is not uncommon for them to encounter disrespect, but they have learned to stand their ground. According to Czarnecki, advertising is also key in creating a name for yourself.

"You have to do a lot of self-promotion that can be really uncomfortable," Czarnecki said. "You have to work past that if you want people to come to shows or listen to your stuff."

Zoe enjoys many things about being in a band, but she has already figured out what she likes best about it.

"My favorite thing about being in a band is getting to play music with someone I really like and getting to put something positive out into the universe and being proud

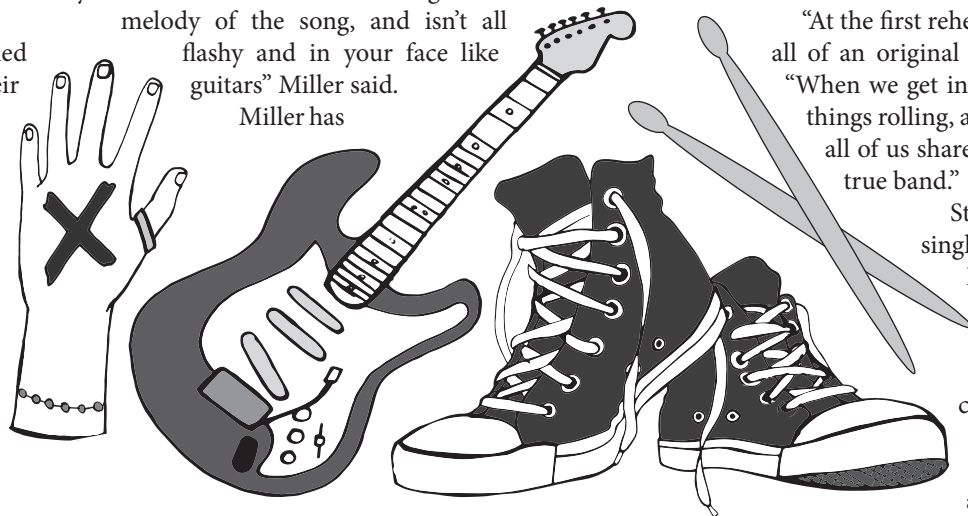
of it," Czarnecki said. "I also really love performing. It feels different than doing just about anything else I get to do."

Many students also participate in a band-like music organization called the School Of Rock (SOR). It is a nation-wide, private company that allows kids to explore their musical interests through lessons and performances privately and with other students. In the SOR, a group of 20 kids attend private lessons to learn a song that the teacher's picked, mainly centered around 60-80's jazz or rock, and come together at the end to perform it as a band, usually at the North Door. It is different than a normal band or normal music lessons because the students learn independently then join with other students that they have never played with before to create a small band.

Sally Miller is active in the School of Rock community. Miller plays electric bass in the School of Rock.

"Bass holds down the groove and melody of the song, and isn't all flashy and in your face like guitars" Miller said.

Miller has



graphics by Grace Bodine

been in other bands before but she found that the School of Rock is what she is looking for. "School Of Rock is not just a place to learn, it's a community," Miller said. "All the teachers are more of friends. And all the kids are super friendly and helpful. I've made some of my best friends at SOR."

Another student band at LASA is Status Loco. There are currently five people in Status Loco, four from LASA, Avi Hurewitz (Junior), Jongwook Mah (Junior), Jason Brady (Sophomore), and one from McCallum, Matan Benyamin Bos Orent (Junior). The newest member of the band is Nate Culbert, who joined in September to replace the former lead guitarist. From the get go, Culbert felt that being in Status Loco was right for him, even if it was with some people he didn't know yet.

"I went to a normal practice at Jason's house, who I had

never met, and learned the songs and played along with them," Culbert said. "I was playing 'Can't Stop' by the Red Hot Chili Peppers in front of some guys I had never met."

In the band, Culbert plays lead guitar with a sleek and minimal style, modeled after Jonny Greenwood of Radiohead, John Frusciante of the Red Hot Chili Peppers, Nick Valensi of The Strokes and David Gilmour of Pink Floyd.

"I'm a really big fan of Gilmour-style bends during solos, which create a huge sweeping sound that I think makes a solo sound super awesome," Culbert said.

The band has a few long term goals they are working towards, most of them established by Avi Hurewitz, the band's rhythm guitarist and vocalist. They plan on releasing a full-length LP within the next year, and playing three or so gigs before the school year ends. They get together two or three times a week for rehearsals.

"At the first rehearsal I attended, we cranked out almost all of an original song in under an hour," Culbert said. "When we get in a room together and warm up, we get things rolling, and I think it's a really strong quality that all of us share that enables us to work together like a true band."

Status Loco does not have many original singles yet due to the age of the band.

Because there are five band members that all enjoy different types of music, they different backgrounds and viewpoints to the table which creates a style that is similar to that of The Smashing Pumpkins -- alternative-rock, with some heavy rock thrown in, and some soft rock as well. Status Loco

draws inspiration from a number of different artists like the Red Hot Chili Peppers, Led Zeppelin, Weezer and Pearl Jam.

"We have so many ideas that are yet to be created," Culbert said.

Since joining the band in September, Culbert said he has learned a lot more about the culture of music.

"Music isn't a math formula," Culbert said. "Music is free-flowing, and can be anything. You can't put it in a box. Music has taught me to be open-minded about the musical ideas of others, and to at least hear something before I shut it down. Everybody's opinion is valid, because the music is of all of us, not just a select few."

# Halloween's HOTtest attraction

ASPEN KISSINGER  
Staff Writer

Every year the House of Torment (HOT) opens in late September and continues to scare Austinites and tourists year after year. This year the house had a new location on Ridgepoint drive, two miles away from LASA. Now the attraction is bigger than previous years and is arguably "bigger and better".

Although you can buy fast pass or no line tickets, the general admission ticket may be even better not just because it's cheaper, but because of the experience you get in line. You can talk to your friends and other people you meet in line, bonding over how scared you are and will be when you enter the haunted house. Actors are also outside walking around in line, antagonizing visitors, getting the butterflies in your stomach prepared for what is coming up.

The House of Torment consists of three "houses" with corresponding themes. This year the themes were "Dawn of Evil", "The Frenzy", and "Graveside Manor", where ghosts and the undead haunt. Each house has a path that guides you through a maze of special effects, actors, and gory props. Every house takes you through multiple tight hallways and small rooms making it easier for actors to hide around corners.

In the first house, "The Dawn of Evil", the characters and rooms are based on a deadly virus outbreak transforming people into zombie like creatures. This house is definitely full of gore with walls dripping in fake blood and actors without ligaments.

In the second house, "The Frenzy", many mentally ill characters wandered throughout the house, approaching you. There were multiple rooms in this house that were based on hospital rooms where an actor tied to the wall screamed and reached out for you. Each and every part was realistic and just like any stereotypical horror movie where the 'hospital goes wrong' scene occurs.

The final house, "Graveside Manor" is based on ghosts and paranormal activity. This house is full of special effects that disorient you and make it seem like ghosts could be haunting each of the narrow spaces and unexpectedly moving walkways.

The actors in all three houses will do anything short of touching you to make you scream, they will whisper in your ear, blow on your neck and use jump scares to get you on your feet. Each and every actor has their own elaborate costume and makeup which can be frighteningly realistic up close. An actor can be dressed as a clown, have a wig, full costume, props, and make their voice several pitches higher just to make you scared.

To give a comical, almost unreal, effect, strobe lights are used to transform moving actors to pictures in your mind that keep changing just like scenes in a comic book. Lasers are shined across a whole room, forming a layer of green light, making it seem like



graphic by Grace Bodine

you are walking through liquid because you can't see anything below your torso. Another effect used to disorient you in the house was shaking floor boards, which confuse your mind and feet.

Along with all the special effects and actors interspersed throughout the house there is a lack of light which compliments the overall theme and makes anything and everything unexpected. Every component used to make the House of Torment is clearly thought out and put together to make full experience as frightening as possible.

In my opinion the House of Torment is a must-do for any Austinite. It is one of the most well done haunted houses you will see across Texas. Going to the house is a great experience for anyone to face their fears with friends or family. I recommend visiting the House of Torment once, so that you can brag to everyone about how you survived.

# PIECING TOGETHER THE SCHOOL

## LASA club focused on the arts beautifies classrooms with massive mural masterpieces

**AMANDA PHARES**  
Staff Writer

A group of students armed with brushes and brightly colored paints spend their time with other students that share a love for art, working together to plan projects and create bold artwork for the school. These students are members of Art club, a student driven club interested in art. The members create everything from small projects such as henna designs on students to larger scale projects like murals in classrooms around LASA, and projects outside of school and in the community. Art club is open for anyone to join and does not require previous art experience.

"We really want to include a lot of different people from the school and get more diversity into our club," LASA junior and Art Club member Piper Neulander said. "So we are hoping to do things that are group oriented so that all grades and genders can hang out in Art club and do stuff together."

According to the members of the group, art club gives students the opportunity to create art and be around others who are enthusiastic about art outside of the classroom setting.

"I initially wanted to get involved with art club because I wasn't taking an art class last year, and missed making art," LASA junior and Art Club member Kari Siegenthaler said. "So I thought I could fill that void with the club."

Students do not have to be in an art class or have previously taken classes to be part of the club, which is one of the reasons why art club labels itself as welcoming to everyone. A recent mini project art club took part in was providing henna tattoos to students during lunch, where students could come to the art room and have the opportunity to experience using and drawing with henna, a paste made from dried henna leaves.

Last year, art club started doing murals in classrooms for teachers who wanted them, and they plan on continuing to paint murals for willing teachers this year. According to the members, the murals are usually graphic, bright, bold and are unique to each teacher.

"The first one we did last year was in Mrs. Harrelson's room, and it's a big tree and flowers," head officer of Art club and junior Ruth Mewhinney said. "We are just going to ask teachers what they want and they really give us a lot of freedom. We can basically paint whatever we want and it's a great way to improve the school and have fun."

The murals typically have about three to five people

*"It's cool to leave an impact on the school and make the classrooms a little more beautiful. We just want them to have a positive impact and be something pretty to look at in the rooms."*

-LASA junior Piper Neulander

working on them at a time, and there is no specific skill set requirement for students to help paint them. Usually, the murals reflect a quality of the teacher whose classroom it's in or an aspect of their class. According to the members, art club strives to produce projects and murals not only for the improvement of the school but also for the students and teachers.

"I hope the murals add atmosphere to the classrooms and make [the classrooms] more interesting and more artistic," Mewhinney said. "Something fun to look at for the students and teachers."

LASA English and Great Ideas teacher Chloe Cardinale has a painted mural in her room, which she feels directly affects her students and the room.

"I see a lot of classrooms with white walls and white desks and white floor, and so it's just something else for [the students] to focus on so that it doesn't look so dull," Cardinale said. "Obviously it makes them happier."

The art room provides materials for the club to use for school projects, but art club also goes beyond school and into the community. Many art club members participate in volunteer work that incorporates art.

"Some of us are volunteering to paint faces at the Walk to End Alzheimer's, which will be supporting a great cause and also fun to do," Siegenthaler said.

Another upcoming school project is a collaboration with Environmental club to help them gain some exposure around school. Environmental club will be providing Art Club with nesting pots to be painted in order to raise awareness for using reusable goods.

"We really just want to get the word out about art club and get people more interested in it," Neulander said. "It's also cool to leave an impact on the school and make the classrooms a little more beautiful, so we just want them to have a positive impact and be something pretty to look at in the rooms."

Art club has many projects lined up for this school year, and the club hopes this will be the year to grow in numbers as well as skill. The club meets every other Tuesday and the members make a collective decision on what projects they are interested in doing. According to the artists, art club is a good way to express themselves and allows them to be a part of something they love.

"I feel very proud to have helped create the murals," Siegenthaler said. "It's a great tangible way to represent my love for art."



Art Club's mural in English and Great Ideas teacher Chloe Cardinale's classroom. photo by Amanda Phares  
"I hope the murals add atmosphere to the classrooms and make [the classrooms] more interesting and more artistic," head officer of Art Club Ruth Mewhinney said.

## Extreme Movie Makeover: Remake Edition

**JEFFREY KOVAR**  
Staff Writer

The 350 foot tall monstrous green lizard, Godzilla, wreaks havoc on the streets of Tokyo yet again. It is the 46th time Godzilla has demolished the Japanese city. "Shin Godzilla", also known as "Godzilla Resurgence", is another remake of the original movie, and the newest film to bear the Godzilla name. It marks the 47th movie to be produced in the franchise. Three more movies are already in production featuring the behemoth beast, and presumably more to follow after these. This is unacceptable.

Every Godzilla movie follows a simple formula. First, tease the monster at the beginning of the film. Second, introduce main characters with little to no depth emotionally, who are also impossible to get invested in. Third, set up exposition and filler for 40 minutes to tease the "giant" battle at the end. Fourth and finally, show the "giant" battle/monster for five minutes and end the film. For some, this formula produces a product worth shelling out the money for a movie ticket. However, the draw of watching the film isn't so much about the quality of the work, but rather the brand name surrounding the film. There is nothing new to the film, nothing more to add to the overall story of the franchise, but just a visually captivating, special effects-heavy version of the first. Godzilla is not the only franchise to come out with another movie in their family.

"Blair Witch", the "sequel" to the 1999 horror classic "The Blair Witch Project", appeared in theaters Sept. 16. Being optimistic, I went and saw the movie hoping for a proper thrill, like the original "Blair Witch" movie produced. I was horribly disappointed. The plot, the scares, the general idea behind what the 2016 "Blair Witch" was a near perfect carbon copy of the original. I decided to go see "Blair Witch" in large part because of how great the first film was, buying into the illusion that the sequel would properly scare me.

There is no denying that the originals of both movies were revolutionary for their genre, and are quality films that will be classics for generations to come. However, the new films that I went and saw are nearly the opposite. They're forgettable, and not nearly on the same levels as the original movies in terms of quality and storytelling. In other words, the remakes were a waste of time and money when comparing them to

the originals. "The Blair Witch Project" was never intended to be a franchise movie. The ending of it was chilling and left a lot of mystery to what really happened and went down. For horror films, especially supernatural ones, this adds to the lasting effect on the audience on the plausibility of the supernatural. The 2016 "Blair Witch" intended to pick up on this cliffhanger. This not only tarnishes the reputation for the original movie, but sets the future movies up for failure.

"Shin Godzilla" represents a similar problem to "Blair Witch." Like I mentioned earlier, 46 other Godzilla movies have been produced before the most recent one. I understand the appeal of making modern version of the film. It's a film based on a giant lizard wrecking a city, and with modern technology, it would look visually appealing if done properly. "Shin Godzilla" was that: a pleasing movie for the eye, and even had decent character development and acting. My problem with the movie was the fact it was even produced. The Godzilla franchise had just recently produced a Godzilla movie in 2014, using the same techniques and equipment as "Shin Godzilla." "Shin Godzilla" had no reason being produced, seeing as we already got the modern Godzilla movies just two years previous.

These two movies represent a deep rooted problem in Hollywood. Movie remakes are becoming all too common in the film industry. There seems to be a lack of creativity from the movie capital of the world. Instead of producing a new fresh product, producers are using previous movies' success for their own monetary gain. More focus is put into movies regarding how much money it would make rather than the story it tells, and the feeling it leaves the audience with at the end. Some of the most widely revered movies in history: "The Shawshank Redemption", "The Godfather", "Forrest Gump", and many others who top the list of the all time greats, all contain a moving plot with originality. When was the last time a movie came out and was placed in that category with the all time greats? No right-minded professor is going to show Blair Witch to their film class as an example of a quality movie. Hollywood needs to stop producing these cash grab "Shin Godzillas" and "Blair Witches" and make something original.

## She Kills Monsters: The New D&D

**RILEY MURPHY**  
Staff Writer

In early November, The Alley Cat Players geeked out in their new show "She Kills Monsters," written by playwright Qui Nguyen. This Dungeons and Dragons (D&D) inspired show follows Agnes, played by LASA Senior Andi Feddler, who attempts to learn about her recently deceased teenage sister, Tilly, through a D&D module her sister left behind before her death. The play's heart wrenching tragic moments are balanced beautifully by somewhat mature comedic scenes, and all the actors switch between these instances flawlessly.

"The actors had to find the character's personality and put it on stage," actor and LASA junior Erick Medina said. "They were able to work between two different worlds, one real and one in the game."

While the actors are entertaining the audience, it's the tech's jobs to make sure everything looks great and runs smoothly. The game scenes take place on an astral game board where Agnes can interact with Tilly and learn about her through their actions.

"The transitions from the real world to the game were very fast in the script, so we played around with how to switch over," Aidan Sankar said, a tech working on sets and props for the show. "We thought about making pieces that rotated to reveal their game version when the transition happened."

Unfortunately, the schedule was very tight and the techs were unable to complete these ideas.

"That was too time consuming, so we decided to have game pieces that would come out to cover the real world items on the stage," Sankar said.

Many of the techs were able to incorporate their D&D knowledge into the sets and props, creating weapons and enemies straight out of the game.

"We sat in a big circle and designed whatever came to mind and looked the best," Sankar said. "We also took stuff out of past sets and props and incorporated those into the show, with some alterations."

While many props were assembled without issue, some of the major pieces required more time and attention to get them in working order.

"Some of the larger set pieces and props went through many iterations and broke multiple times before we could come up with the final versions, which look amazing and function well," Sankar said.

One of the problems surrounding this show was the actor's lack of D&D experience. Most had never had anything to do with the game at all.

"At the beginning, everyone was on different playing fields regarding who had experience with Dungeons and Dragons and who didn't," Medina said. "Those who had played taught the basic rules and mechanics so the actors could better understand certain scenes."

A typical D&D adventure is run by an omnipotent, all-knowing dungeon master who has control over the events that occur and the monsters to fight. Most actions are determined by multiple dice rolls, which also find effectiveness or damage. Showing this on stage wouldn't be the most entertaining thing, so the actors play as their characters taking their actions in real time, as the Dungeon Master, also known as the DM, explains what is happening.

"Managing players doing anything they want is tough, and directing them through a coherent, important story is very important," LASA junior and DM of a current D&D campaign, Ryland Quirk said. "D&D is like a choose your own adventure with a main storyline that doesn't necessarily have to be finished all in one go. Depending on how the DM runs their world, players can go as far off track as they want, or they can stick to the story."

She Kills Monsters brings a story of loss and coping together with comedic elements blended to create a breathtaking experience for any audience. It pulls viewers in with relatable characters, taking them on the adventure played by the actors. The show features a roller coaster of high points and low moments that leave the audience wanting more.

"It doesn't matter who you are, or where you're from. All are touched by this production in the best way possible," LASA junior Jacob Nannapaneni, who composed the show's music, said. "You laugh, you cry, and you feel the inspiring happiness of a good story ended."



LASA senior Andi Feddler fights a dragon in "She Kills Monsters." "[The Actors] were able to work between two different worlds, one real and one in the game," LASA junior and actor Erick Medina said. photo by Riley Murphy



## The Paper Jaguar

with Emma Jane Hopper

*The Paper Jag is an experiment in "participatory journalism" which was pioneered by George Pimpton. Pimpton wrote a book called The Paper Lion detailing his tryout with the Detroit Lions professional football team.*

*Inspired by the idea, intrepid former sports editor Jake Stewart practiced with a different LBJ athletic team each issue and cataloged his experience here. In this issue of The Liberator, staff writer Emma Jane Hopper practices with the LBJ Wrestling team.*

Taking an unreasonable amount of time to lace up my borrowed wrestling shoes—two sizes too small—I surveyed my surroundings, hoping no one had already noticed my ineptitude. The room was hot and stuffy, weights on one side, a large purple mat on the other. Around the edges of the purple mat ran the wrestlers, a group of young men and women of both LASA and LBJ, covered head to toe in workout clothes: tights down to their shoes with basketball shorts on top, full sweatshirts proudly declaring "LBJ Wrestling". I looked myself up and down, realizing that perhaps my shorts shorts and tank top were not the best choice in athletic wear for a sport that involved full body contact with strangers in the throes of what I now consider one of the most physically exerting, and therefore sweat inducing, activities. This six weeks I decided to pretend I haven't spent the last four months of water polo off-season eating Doritos, gasping at the tops of stairs and driving down the street because I didn't want to lose my breath to try wrestling, and I got quite promptly destroyed.

I found myself sore not even halfway through the warm-up, as though my body had been out of shape for so long that the smallest presence of lactic acid had me craving ice and an Ibuprofen. After running around in a circle in shoes that were essentially wool socks with laces, the actual wrestlers and I lined up for a series of exercises that involved a lot of dragging myself across a ground covered in other people's sweat. I knew then more than ever why everyone else was covered head to toe. Coming up from my Exorcist-esque crab crawl and wiping the bodily fluids of strangers off of my hands and onto my regrettably short shorts, I was officially twenty minutes into the practice and still an hour and a half until I could sit in a tub of ice and wait for death to come.

My humiliation continued, however, this time with walking on my hands, following along like an untalented fourth grader who's only still on the gymnastics team because the coach felt bad. I found myself nearly doing an unintentional back walkover several times as I tried to check the time to see for how much longer I would have to suffer through my muscle pain. I was not properly conditioned as the regular wrestlers were, and I spent almost all of the practice out of breath. Soon the warm-up ended, however, and I found myself staring down the minute hand as it told me that I still had more than an hour left. The coach started teaching us moves, starting with one that involved getting out of a headlock. I struggled to find a partner, as not many people wanted to partner with the girl who was sweeter than a morbidly obese man after he'd run a marathon, but finally one kind freshman took pity on me and offered to be my partner. We went through the exercise and I found myself consistently on the floor as a freshman shorter and skinnier than me got the advantage nearly every time. I slowly started to catch on, though, and by the second activity and my fourth water break of the hour, I was starting to do pretty well. I was practically swimming in either my sweat or my partner's, but either way I was heavily regretting my clothing choices. My hair, too short to fit in a proper ponytail for long since I've cut it, had to be re-tied after every try at the exercise, and was messy and disgusting after being shoved into armpit after armpit, as the exercise demanded. At one point my partner was meant to hold me by my chin, but ended up with her arm against my throat. I tried to play it off, asking her to kindly move her arm to my chin, but I'm sure it still sounded pathetic and strangled from my lack of oxygen. She quickly got off of my and apologized. I waved at her as if to say, "No worries! Happens all the time!" to soothe her guilt as I massaged my throat and blinked dots out of my eyes.

I found myself in her position soon enough, though, as in the last exercise I was holding her down and she was trying to get out of my hold. Something happened to her knee—likely because of my ineptitude, a sure example of why Paper Jags perhaps should not be done on sports involving high amounts of physical contact—and she was soon on the floor cradling her knee, blinking away tears. I sat awkwardly, unsure of what to do. I told her I'd help her to the bus, because it was the least I could do, but in the end I felt too awkward to follow through on that promise because I am a horrible person.

For the last five minutes we ran back and forth across the mats, as the fastest person got to stop running with each lap. I was the last person running. They kept saying "It pays to be a winner!", as they pulled the fastest person, but I figured I'd rather half-ass thirty laps than full-ass one lap. Because that's the kind of person I am.

Overall I enjoyed wrestling. It was just like swimming! Or at least, I got just as much liquid on me. My mom made me bathe in Selsun Blue Anti-Dandruff Shampoo when I was home to prevent Staph infection. If I ever wrestle again, I'll know to tough out the heat of the weight room and cover myself head to toe. It was interesting seeing so many people care so much about a sport I hadn't really thought twice about before. Now to start my madly successful WWE career, right?

# LASA Students Tackle the NFL

MAX IRBY  
Staff Writer

The NFL is one of the most followed topics throughout the year. As one of the "big four" sports of the U.S. (football, basketball, hockey and baseball), it plays a large role in the lives of many. Almost every region of the country has their own team, and as a result there are countless opinions and heated debates among fans. With the 2016 season almost halfway over, narratives have begun to develop and the top teams have started to emerge. Many students at LASA follow the NFL and have their own unique opinions on the current state of the league.

Most people who follow the NFL have a favorite team, typically based in where they or their family are from. This is no different at LASA, as sophomore TJ Arora said. "My favorite team is the Indianapolis Colts because I was born in Indianapolis and have family that lives there," Arora said. "My uncle is a die-hard Colts fan and owns season tickets, and took me to Colts games. I am also a huge fan of the Dallas Cowboys, from growing up in Texas."

While some, like Arora, stay true to their roots when choosing a favorite team, others feel that it is still important for fans of the sport to be knowledgeable about other teams and to recognize that their favorite team may not be the best one in the league. Walker Holmes, a student at LASA, explained how his favorite team differs from what he considers the best team.

"Personally, I am a fan of the New Orleans Saints, and I think that they have a lot of talent on their team, but I would say that the Minnesota Vikings are the current best team," Holmes said. "They're still undefeated five weeks into the season, and I think that they can ride their currently turnover-less offense and elite defense to a Super Bowl."

Oftentimes fans are drawn to certain players even though they may not play for their favorite teams. It might be their style of play, or the numbers that they put up, as LASA student Marcel Gonzales explained.

"While it's possible that I am biased because I have

I feel the Super Bowl will be ultimately won by the NFC this year, with the Dallas Cowboys being my favorite.

-LASA sophomore TJ Arora

As one can clearly see, the way that each person views the NFL is different. It can be analyzed through the eyes of a die-hard home fan or a statistician,

and the more opinions that form around the sport, the more it grows. The midseason is an exciting time for anyone following the NFL, and even teams with losing records still have a chance to come back and win it all. At this point in the season, the top teams have begun to separate themselves from the herd. Many people have already begun to form an idea of which two teams will make it to the Super Bowl, including Arora.

"I feel the Super Bowl will be ultimately won by the NFC this year, with the Dallas Cowboys being my favorite," Arora said. "They will face an AFC super power like the Broncos or Patriots but there are a balanced team that has good depth and will be able to survive the rigors of the NFL season. They are built for cold, January football and are currently the best team in the NFL."



LASA ultimate frisbee captain Zoe Czarnecki runs a drill with Carly Atwell at practice. "Our team has a cool really cool culture and like history, I guess, of captains running practices, so not a ton has changed for me in terms of how I feel at practice with my teammates." Czarnecki said. Photo courtesy of Sports editor Oliver Powers.

## New Captains for the New Season

TREVOR ANDERSON  
Staff Writer

Green grass and sunlight highlight the day. Frisbees fly through the air as a new year begins, bringing new changes to Liberal Arts and Science Academy's Ultimate Frisbee team, the Vertikills. This year, two new team captains are being introduced to LASA's seasoned team.

The Vertikills have participated in numerous championships over the years. One of the captains, LASA junior Zoe Czarnecki, is excited about all of the opportunities and responsibilities that being a captain gives her. She also shares her responsibility with LASA junior AJ Marks.

"AJ and I have to do things like manage tournament registration and jersey orders and right now we're running practices so we have more responsibilities," Czarnecki said.

As for her day-to-day role, Czarnecki said that not much has changed, seeing as captains are still functional players in the sport.

"I think our team has a really cool culture and like history, I guess, of captains running practices, so not a ton has changed for me in terms of how I feel at practice with my teammates," Czarnecki said.

Zoe also loves the overall game, so to her, being a captain is like being both a player and a coach. This allows her to explore and view the game from both perspectives.

"AJ and I have to plan practices and teach concepts and run practices which is a new thing for me definitely," Czarnecki said. "I play on a club team over the summer called Texas Tango and I ended up co-captaining that team this year. That was my first frisbee leadership experience and I'm really glad I got that before this season."

Zoe also keeps in touch with the previous team captains, too, in order to get advice for what direction to take the team, and this has helped her.

"I am definitely missing our captains from the last two years, we had the same captains my freshman and sophomore year, I think they did a great job and we're actually still in contact with them," Czarnecki said.

Vertikills player and LASA junior Calvin Coulbury loves having new captains. To him, the change is a welcome one.

"The captains this year are absolutely phenomenal," Coulbury said. "They make our weekly practices an environment that has room for fun as well as learning, while simultaneously doing all of the behind the scenes work like registering for tournaments or procuring jerseys. Their job is so difficult and I would never attempt to do half of the things that they're making look easy."

He thinks that the experience the new captains have will do a lot for the team. To him, they seem to provide the perfect mix of rigorous work and practice as well as fun.

"I like the fact that they keep practice fun, while making sure that everyone on the team is developing," Coulbury said. "Everyone on the team sees that the captains are knowledgeable and experienced, so there is a lot of respect going on."

Having new captains may provoke more involvement by newer players too, according to Coulbury. Coulbury thinks that the new captains bring a good tone to the team- he thinks that they truly want to help those with less experience.

"They bring a connection to the veteran players that they gained last year, and they also bring a genuine commitment to helping the new players adjust to and flourish in a high school ultimate environment," Coulbury said.

Addressing the people who might still have doubts, Czarnecki explained she feels about the team atmosphere and what it is like after the change in Captainship.

"I like working to develop a team that I love and being involved in a sport that I love," Czarnecki said.

These new captains are not only changing the dynamics in the team with new leadership, but they are also using these dynamics for the betterment of the overall team, according to Marks, through coaching their teammates.

"Our team has always been very collaborative in the respect that most, if not all, tips and tricks come from each other and not as much from a coach," Marks said. "In that respect, I suppose I give a little more individual comments to players this year just because of taking on the leadership role I have."

Marks expects a good season for the team, saying ultimate frisbee is a game they'll be able to play now and when they graduate.

"I expect us to perform fairly well this year, but more importantly learn a lot of skills to help all of our players not only this year, but next year at tournaments and for our players to go on to play frisbee in college or on other club teams as adults," Marks said.

According to the LASA ultimate team, things have never looked better. Teammates such as Coulbury have said that the new captains give a great balance of intensity and a genuine desire to help each and every player on the team. To them, wins are important, Coulbury said, but making sure everyone gets better and has a good time is paramount. The Vertikills are getting ready for an action packed season, so be sure to check them out.

"Spring semester is when stuff really starts going for us," Czarnecki said. "I am really excited for where we are headed!"



LASA sophomores Emma Moran (left) and Ali Parker (right) fence against one another. "We like to be openly supportive of all of our new fencers. They're like our rivals. Were the only two clubs in Austin." Ali Parker said. Photo courtesy of Moran family.

## LASA students fence in Junior Olympics

MARLEN AVILA  
Staff Writer

With hopeful eyes and her small arms wrapped around a pillow, child Emma Moran watches *The Princess Bride* for the third time that week. She closely watches the swift movements of the characters and the beautiful love story that comes together on the screen. With an exciting cast of characters, she hopes to be just like Princess Buttercup or to have the skills of master swordsman, Inigo Montoya. After watching the film repeatedly and years of practice and work beyond her TV, her dreams come true, as she stands in the stadium for the USA Fencing National Championships.

"When I was little, I was really into *The Princess Bride*," Moran, now a sophomore at LASA said. "I watched it at least two or three times a week... I asked my parents for Christmas to have a fencing lesson and my dad was like, 'Okay, you can go and watch but you're not going to start. You're going to do a real sport like soccer.' And he ended up loving it just as much as I do and he started fencing, even though he's not very good."

Fencing is the modern rendition of swordsmanship which developed from the 18th century. There have been changes to the manner of the sport such as having more protection and the inclusion of more rule sets than a traditional duel. Modern fencing combines the different weapons of *épée*, foil and sabre. Each weapon specializes in a different target and dueling technique. According to Moran, the *épée* is a thrusting weapon that targets the entire body. The foil is a light thrusting weapon and targets the torso. Sabre's valid target is specifically the upper body and allows chopping. Additionally, in foil and sabre, there is a unique technique called right-of-way, which determines who has the attack.

"My coach likes to call it 'physical chess' because it combines the idea of the strategies that you might use in chess with the physical aspect that you don't have," Moran said.

In the Austin area, there are two major fencing clubs: Austin Fencers Club and Texas Fencing Club (TFA). Moran and LASA freshman Ali Parker are regulars at TFA. There, Parker's father is the coach and founder of the club. He began fencing in college and met Olympian fencer Vinnie Bradford, who competed in the 1984 Summer Olympics. From there came the creation of the Texas Fencing Academy.

"[My dad] really likes it," Parker said. "It's kind of just spreading the sport, it's not a popular sport. Not very many people know about it. So I think the most important thing to him is to collect and gain interest from people around the city and make sure they like it too."

TFA is a non-profit organization that focuses on the development of each individual fencer. According to LASA sophomore Aaron Wheatley, who also fences at TFA, the level of experience when beginning is not important as the

level of dedication which is what makes up the repertoire of the player.

"It's not that hard to join but a lot of times, keep in mind whether you're going to go competitive or not to balance how much you practice versus your schoolwork and really to keep in the mind, the level of dedication that you want," Wheatley said.

In the US, there are multiple opportunities for fencers to compete in tournaments. These include the USA Fencing National Championships in the summer and the USA Junior Olympic Fencing Championships in February. Although they are similar, the Junior Olympics are presented with higher prestige and skill set in the fencing field.

"Junior Olympics is pretty much like the top level of fencers," Wheatley said. "It's the highest level that there is for the Under 17 and Under 20 age group. It's definitely the hardest field that there really is out there, aside from summer Nationals."

The Junior Olympics are annually held in various locations in the US. In order to qualify for the Junior Olympics, the fencer must either attend regional points or a Qualifying tournament and place in a certain percentile. After completing that, the competition is similar to ordinary tournaments except for the level of fencers which is very apparent when dueling begins.

"[Junior Olympics is] only for Cadets and up so you're only going to have the 16 years old and up," Parker said. "I was younger but if you're fencing up then it's mostly 16 years olds and up."

Parker and Wheatley have both competed in the Junior Olympics but in different sections, based on their age groups. Parker noted that her experience was unique because the environment was very supportive and it was her first time going last year.

"If my friends are going then it's going to be great because we have team dinners," Parker said. "It's just really fun. The Junior Olympics was in Cleveland, Ohio last year, so me and four other fencers went and we're pretty tight so it was a good experience."

However, like most sports, fencing does have its fair share of injuries. Last year, Moran injured a nerve tendon in her arm which caused her to be unable to fence with her dominant hand. This injury was followed by several months of rest and more injuries.

"I'm right-handed but I switched to fencing left-handed," Moran said. "It's like starting all over again. So you know what you

have to do, you know how to win but your body won't do it. So I've been fencing left-handed for four and a half months and I fenced left-handed at Nationals."

Although there is always the risk of injury, fencing does provide substantial protection for the fencer. According to Parker, there is enough protected wear that the fencer has their entire upper and lower body covered with the exception of the back part of the neck and hands.

"It's not very dangerous but you still have to take care of yourself if you are doing it," Wheatley said. "You really have to make sure that you're being safe about it. Most of my injuries were from me being reckless, not stretching, going off, not being prepared, going too hard, being reckless while doing footwork. So it's easily avoidable."

Despite the occasional injuries, fencing continues to be a significant part of Wheatley's life. It helped him keep active and learn responsibility. Additionally, there was the realization that practice and hard work is important in order to improve. He recommends it from his personal experience.

"It's an overall great sport to do," Wheatley said. "Whether you want to do it competitively or recreationally, it's all round good for both of those things. For me, it was a really good outlet to get a lot of my competitiveness out because I'm a really competitive person."

The impact of fencing can be seen in the excitement and support from the fencers for new fencers to join. After years of experience from starting at a young age of five, Parker believes that fencing does have potential to become a more popular sport.

"I feel like a lot of people stereotype it," Parker said. "[They say] 'Oh sword-fighting!' And some people think it's cool and others will be like, 'Oh, you can't have rules like that you're sword fighting, you're supposed to kill the other person. I think they need to be more open to the idea because you can't have that nowadays, that was back in medieval times. People need to give it a shot before they judge it like that. I think it's really fun so more people should try it out."

## LBJ XC goes the extra mile

ANDY DEGRASSE & OLIVER POWERS  
Staff Writer & Sports Co-Editor

The feeling of wet grass on your shoes, the smell of fresh dew on the air. If you have ever run cross country before, these sounds and experiences are likely very familiar to you. This year the cross country team has had unprecedented success, reaching as far as regionals with a couple of the runners even going to state. According to LASA counselor and LBJ Cross Country coach Shannon Bergeron, the team's unexpected success was mainly due to the hard work and dedication of the runners.

"I think the success of this year's team is a combination of talented runners and a positive environment," Bergeron said. "We have a large group of runners, but everyone seems willing to work hard." Despite the fact that Bergeron did not take credit for any of team's accomplishments, LASA junior and LBJ Cross Country runner Dylan Cox told a different story.

"The coaches are amazing this year, especially when it comes to team building and boosting morale," Cox said. "The positive energy of the captains and coaches and the team building that they stress makes workouts better and more productive."

Bergeron believes that her hands-on attitude is a result of her counseling skills. While she never ran cross country herself, she has been an avid runner for five years. She said her positive attitude combined with her love of running has been key in her transition to coaching.

"I think I am more aware of what each person needs, rather than bringing a 'one-size-fits-all' aggressive approach," Bergeron said. "I think that by nature, I am a more nurturing person, and I think that does translate into how I communicate and treat the athletes. Don't get me wrong, if I'm frustrated, or need to speak up, I definitely can! But in general, I try to listen to the needs of the group."

Whether Bergeron's attitude is the

reason for the team's success or not, they have still accomplished a lot, surpassing last season's performance in which no runner made state and the girls' team did not make regionals. According to Cox, the achievements seen this season were far greater than what was previously believed and the two runners progressing have even more to prove.

"The performances exceeded my expectations with both teams placing top 3 at district and the boys varsity almost breaking the top 10 at regionals," Cox said. "I still want to run my best time at state to say I'm satisfied with my personal season but I haven't had much to complain about overall."

The team has reaped the fruits of their labor, going further than they have in recent memory, but the experience has been rewarding for Bergeron in another way. According to her, working with the runners has been extremely fulfilling.

"[I enjoyed] watching the growth of the entire running group. It's pretty exciting to see someone who has never run before take minutes off of their 5K race time over the course of six weeks," Bergeron said. "I also love getting to know students on a different level than being a counselor. This is an incredibly fun group of kids. And I hope I'm able to share my love of running and things I've learned along the way to everyone."

The team has not only experienced success as a group but has also seen individuals runners accomplish a lot. Cox, along with LASA sophomore Cameron Kleinman, have made it to the state level of competition. According to Cox, he is proud of his success but still looking ahead to the future.

"The performances exceeded my expectations with both teams placing top 3 at district and the boys varsity almost breaking the top 10 at regionals," Cox said. "I still want to run my best time at state to say I'm satisfied with my personal season but I haven't had much to complain about overall."



LBJ sophomore quarterback Brian Batts takes the snap from the shotgun. "Our record is on pace to be better overall with only one total loss all season," Valentino said. Photo courtesy of Elena Humphreys-Lucas

## LBJ's district destruction

ELAN MCMINN & EMMA JANE HOPPER  
Sports Co-Editors

The swell of the band, the roar of the student section, the brightness of the overhead lights beating down on the players and the stadium. This is the scene laid out each week during football season, a show that is quickly approaching its final curtain call. This is not a performance that has gone on unsuccessful, though. Currently ranked first in District 25 this season, the LBJ Jaguars have suffered zero losses in their five district games this year. Of the nine total games the Jags have played they have won eight in what is shaping up to be quite the season for the players. LBJ football player and LASA junior Keenan Riordan said that the overwhelming success has been a result of hard work throughout the season.

"I think this season's win streak is a culmination of this team's talent and ability to devote our combined efforts in the offseason, and regular everyday practice toward a win every week," Riordan said.

The recent victories are not unheard of for the Jags. In the 2015-2016 season they had seven wins and went undefeated in their district, going eight to four overall. They lost in their first round of playoffs to Vista Ridge. LBJ head coach Andrew Jackson said this was because Vista Ridge wanted the win more than the Jags did, and came more ready to play.

"Vista Ridge was a better team than us, that's the bottom line," Jackson said. "That was a good football team; that's why they played in the state semi-finals. They were

a better football team. I think we are a little better than we were last year, so I think we have a better chance."

This year the team expects great things, however, according to LBJ football player and LASA senior Chris Valentino. The furthest the Jags have gotten in recent history was during the 2014-2015 season where they got to the quarterfinals of the playoffs before being taken out by Vandegrift High School, but it's possible the Jags may match that this year.

"A couple years ago we had a strong senior class and we were playing for a teammate that had passed away right at the end of the season," Valentino said. "This year we have another strong senior class and I think we're hungry enough to go as far as we want."

The undefeated in-district streak for the Jags is good tidings for their performance in the playoffs, but nothing is guaranteed. The team has done well in the district season to be met with unfavorable odds in the playoffs before, such as with their loss to Vista Ridge in playoffs last time around. According to Riordan the early loss last year was due to a more honed team.

"Vista Ridge played a good game on offense and defense and in the end we couldn't keep up," Riordan said.

With the regular season drawing to a close, the Jags are optimistic about their chances in the playoffs based on their performance in the regular season, according to Jackson.

"We just want to play well, every man we play against, so we play well, we do well. I think we have a chance," Jackson said.



LASA senior and LBJ swimming co-captain Grace Jensen swims. "Swimming is often said to be an individual sport, but with LBJ it is definitely a team sport," Jensen said. photo courtesy of Aspen Kissinger.

## Splashing all the way to districts

GUS ALBACH  
Staff Writer

A large group of students emerges from an east Austin YMCA, wet and tired after an hour of swimming lengths. Throwing on clothes, quickly applying makeup, they make their way to school for a stressful day of work and tests.

For members of the swim team this has been happening practically every school day morning since late September. Waking up at five o'clock in the morning is different from most sports, and according to LASA senior and swim team captain Finlay Scanlon, it adds a sense of family to the team.

"I think probably the camaraderie is the best part about swim team because everyone is up at five AM," Scanlon said. "Everyone is just an absolute mess so seeing people at their worst makes everyone really tight."

Waking up at five o'clock to begin with can be discouraging for anyone. The captains attempt to create more interesting workouts in an attempt to counter the fatigue and boredom brought on by the early morning.

"I'll try to have a goal of, like a certain yardage and then I'll just try to fill it in with adding up different kinds [of activities]-like trying to add variety to [the workout] because if it's just swim a thousand then that's boring," Scanlon said.

Adding variety to the workouts keeps the swimmers engaged, and by switching tasks it allows them to never get bored of one activity. Despite the switching of activities, one practice tends to have an overarching theme of what to focus on and follows a set path.

"We usually do just a general

warm up at the beginning of practice and then each day is focused on a different element of swimming," Scanlon said. "So we have a drag day where you have to use a construction cone and swim with it so that you have drag."

Focusing on different parts of the body in each workout adds to an overall better swimming performance in the pool. By the time districts roll around the team often performs very well. According to senior LASA captain Grace Jensen, the majority of the swimmers make it to regionals. This success can partially be attributed to the captains, and their roles in the team. The captains will sometimes set goals for they want to achieve for the whole team in a season. Beyond that the captains are also in charge of promoting team unity. According to Jensen, building a sense of family in the team is important.

"I like to think my primary responsibility is to foster team community and making sure every team member feels included and encouraged," Jensen said. "Since we are a large team captains make big and little pairs so younger swimmers have mentors and plan events and parties for the team."

The kinship created by the captain's efforts has an affect not only during practice but also at the meets that define the team's season.

"Swimming is often said to be an individual sport, but with LBJ it is definitely a team sport," Jensen said. "Their support makes me swim faster and makes meets more fun."

## Jags bring it home at HOCO

CURRIE LARRIMER  
Staff Writer

The Austin High Maroons are experiencing their first season in the 25-5A district after being moved down from 6A. The change in district put some hopeful thoughts in the minds of the Maroon football team but so far they have not been performing at the level they had expected. The Jaguars however have played well and with a common goal in mind: to prove to Austin High that they have competition in their new district.

"I don't really think that's a big deal, 6A just means they're from a bigger school it doesn't mean they're a better team," LASA senior and LBJ football player Daniel DeGrasse said. The team realizes that the competition can not be overlooked but they are confident in their ability to match it.

Before the showdown, the Maroons had made their presence clear but were ranked 3rd in the district with a 3-1 record in district play, the same record as the McCallum Knights.

"They're not a bad team and they're going to rise to the challenge when we play them but I'm not afraid of them because of their district," DeGrasse said.

The importance of this game and its implications for success in the future is clear to the coaching staff as well as the players. Every game it is essential that the team stay united and keep each other in check but this time it was especially important.

"When we're in the tunnel, before we run out onto the field, we have chants we do. Before we come out even into the tunnel we've got Coach every game will speak to us and kind of talk to us about what he expects from us and get us ready for the game," DeGrasse said.

The Jags went into this Homecoming game with a 3-0 district record and a 6-1 overall record. At the beginning of the season Edward Garcia, quarterback for Austin High, indicated to the Statesman that the Maroons were going to make history because the teams in 5A aren't as talented as those in 6A. This statement put the Jags in an aggressive mental state for the game.

"I just think it's laughable," LASA senior and student section leader Seamus Quinn said. "I

read that and I go 'ha'. I think they talk a lot of game for the play that they play and we'll see that on Friday night." It's not only the team who has a grudge against the Maroons, even the students who regularly cheer on the Jags in the student section have taken this comment to heart.

Garcia wanted to show LBJ that Austin High is in control of the 25-5A district but the Jags had other plans. It wasn't enough to just beat Austin High, the Jaguars wanted to show the Maroons that this district doesn't belong to them.

"They hadn't considered any of the games they'd be playing in or who they'd be playing against, they just presumed they'd win because they came from a different division," DeGrasse said. "I'm just looking forward to reminding them that this isn't their district, it's ours."

The Austin High Maroons haven't won a playoff game since 1957 and although this year they'll most likely get a chance, it doesn't look good. LBJ won their homecoming game 57-13 after a strong start by LBJ junior Deon Collins in the first two minutes of the first quarter when he returned a 50 yard punt for a touchdown, the first of eight by the Jags.

"I think the most exciting part of that game was probably past about the first quarter just knowing that we really had the game on lockdown and we were gonna be able to beat Austin High," DeGrasse said. From the moment the team stepped on the field, they showed Austin High that they were there to make their presence clear. By halftime the Jags were up by 34 and finished off the Maroons with a final score of 57-13.

The momentum of the entire game was positive and helped the Jags persevere and stay ahead of the Maroons from start to finish. After the game Austin High is still ranked third in district with a new record of 3-2 while the Jags remain on top with a record of 4-0 in district play.

"We play Crockett this week I don't think we've lost to Crockett in 12 years so if we beat Crockett then we will win district," Quinn said. "Notice how I'm not saying that we will win because as you might see from Austin High, saying that you will win something doesn't mean you will. So if we do that we'll win districts then we'll be off to playoffs and that will be pretty fun."



LBJ senior Khalil Thoms runs past Austin High defenders in LBJ's 57-12 route of the Maroons in the Jags' homecoming game at Nelson Field on 21 Oct.

# Equal Rights for eSports too?

## Why eSports are sports

## eSports? Where's the sport?

GUS ALBACH  
Staff Writer

As a young child growing up in first world America, I surrounded myself with video games. About every child I knew had a DS or a computer at home. This could be because I went to a privileged elementary school, but chances are, most every kid in Austin at that time knew about video games. Whether it be a violent call of duty game or a tranquil game of moshi monsters, kids were playing them. Throughout my lifetime, clear progress has been made in the video game industry with once "impossible" devices being mass produced on the daily. As the industry has grown, so too has the involvement of rich investors. According to a report by NewZoo, in 2016 companies will spend roughly \$325 million dollars on the esports industry. This number is huge compared to the amount of attention the esports industry received before the 2000s. The involvement of corporations in esports is a clear sign that esports are gaining in popularity, and with this popularity has come sporthood.

Now I'm not going to be the loser who defines sports using the Merriam-Webster dictionary, but it is the general public opinion that sports ought to have some form of physical activity in them. This viewpoint, however, is very outdated, and it doesn't reflect the fact that so many people on this planet are avid gamers. In the past it was thought that every young child should spend their times playing sports and exploring the outdoors but, realistically, every kid can't be out there playing in the woods in their free time. Not only do some kids not enjoy the outdoors but some are physically unable to do so for various reasons. Excluding these children from the world of enjoyment would practically destroy their childhoods and so what were once not considered sports become viable options: chess, checkers, card games, and of course esports. Ever since their invention these simple games have kept kids entertained and helped to create quality family time.

Looking past the positive effects non-physical sports one could still point out that, non-physical sports don't have any sort of physical attribute about them. I would argue that the necessity for concentration in esports is practically the same as in basketball

or any other sport. It is impossible to play a video game without proper communication between teammates about where enemies are and other important information. In football communication is also necessary as all players need to know what is happening on the field, and when substitutions are happening. The similarities between esports and other sports continue to exist if one were to look in other aspects of the game. In real football, a team of players who have never played before could not walk into a stadium and beat the Miami Dolphins. In the same way, an amateur "NCAA Football 14" player could not walk up to a well trained professional and win 44-42. The large amounts of concentration, skill, and communication involved in esports help to connect it to other sports and bridge the non-physical gap.

Although esports is a sport that has only recently gained popularity in the early 2000s other similar games such as chess have been around for hundreds of years. Chess, similar to esports doesn't involve physical activity of any kind, yet despite not conforming to the "rules" of being a sport chess is recognized as a sport in over 100 different nations across the world and the olympic committee itself. This recognition is so large it can't be denied that chess and similar sports such as esports are real sports.

It can be hard to accept the fact that sports, which once consisted of different physical activities have expanded to include online games such as "CSGO" and "League of Legends". However, in a modern world where views of what people can and can't do are expanding, this is the case.

AMANDA PHARIS  
Staff Writer

Computers, software, game controllers and headsets. These items do not make you think of sports, and they are pretty much the complete opposite of what sports are supposed to be, but they are in fact components of the phenomenon esports.

Esports are becoming an increasingly controversial topic due to the fact that the name insinuates that they are an actual sport. There has been a lot of criticism lately around the name, and I agree with the criticism that esports should not be considered real sports because there is no physical activity involved, players compete in a virtual environment instead of a real one, and they require mental abilities as opposed to athletic ones. According to LASA senior Ian Gollieher, the definition of sports is one of the main reasons why esports can't be called real sports.

"Esports are definitely a competition but they can't be

are all mental," Tien said. "They have no physical aspect to them at all besides moving thumbs during a video game."

Esports are a completely mental game, and while it does take a lot of strategy and training to prepare for tournaments, there is still no physical activity involved. While esports are a competition and do fit that aspect of the definition, competition is only a small part which is not large enough to allow esports to be called sports. Esports can be compared to chess or poker, both of which are mind games that require your brain and mental skills, but they shouldn't be held on the same level as football or soccer. According to LASA junior Holden Hunter, esports are predominantly a mind game.

"Sports, in my opinion, requires physical activity and while I do understand the argument that you are using brain power, you aren't getting any exercise," Hunter said. "Esports doesn't help your physical condition."

Physical condition is also a large factor of sports that is not required by esports.

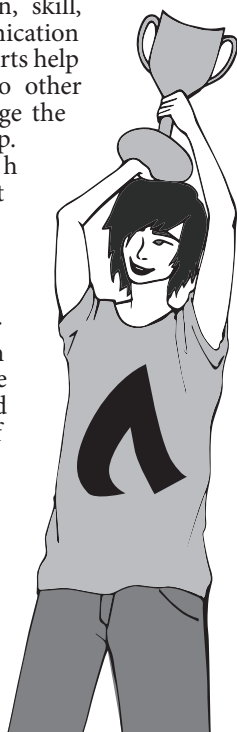
Chess and poker, both similar to esports in that they are mind games, at least take place in a real environment if they are being viewed by an audience. Esports take place in a completely virtual environment, which makes it difficult for me to think that viewers could have an authentic experience watching them like they could from a basketball game or tennis game. For this reason, LASA senior Mason Marriott-Voss believes esports do not constitute as real sports.

"I don't think esports are real sports because they aren't palpable since they happen virtually," Marriott-Voss said. "ESPN might air [esports] occasionally but that doesn't mean they are real, and I think a lot of people use that as a reason."

Entertainment and Sports Programming Network (ESPN) has broadcasted video game tournament championships before such as "DOTA 2" and "Heroes of the Storm", both of which displeased a lot of ESPN watchers because of the fact that it was not a real sport. Just because esports are broadcasted on ESPN, a sports channel, does not mean they are real sports.

Esports do have some aspects of real sports such as that they require training, a healthy lifestyle, discipline, and hard work. They also have a large fanbase and viewership, much like traditional sports do, but despite all of these things esports still cannot be categorized as real sports because they simply do not fall under the definition of sports and they require no physical activity or exertion.

Although people may be trying to convince the world that computers, headsets and game controllers are viable components of a legitimate sport, esports will never conform to what it means to be a sport.



graphic by Grace Bodine

called sports because esports are by definition physical competition while esports aren't," Gollieher said. "There is a distinct difference but nonetheless both require skill."

According to Merriam-Webster, sports are a competition of a physical activity that must follow a set of rules, or in a broader sense, any physical activity that one gets enjoyment out of. The main word to focus on in this definition is physical activity, which is the bottom line of what sports really is. LASA junior Dessie Tien believes esports to be completely mental as opposed to a physical activity.

"Esports aren't real sports because they

## Coming out to celebrate pride



1

The LASA Pride Alliance hosted a picnic to celebrate National Coming Out Day on Oct. 11. Everyone was invited to the Pride Picnic to support the LGBTQ+ community and raise awareness of their experiences. Students and staff that attended the picnic made name tags with their LGBTQ+ identity or “ally”. Attendees shared food, played board games, told coming out stories and discussed their ideas about coming out and being an ally of the LGBTQ+ community as well as messages for LGBTQ+ students and staff.



2

The picnic included a poster where people could write supportive messages to LGBTQ+ students and staff. “Basically, our goal is just to create a community where LGBTQ+ students can feel comfortable being themselves and we can work through topics that impact our lives,” Jewart said.

photo 2 by Sarah Porter, all other photos by Meena Anderson

1

LASA freshman Alex Austin, junior Ames Jewart and junior Charlie Diaz celebrate at the LPA Pride Picnic. Jewart, who is co-president of LPA, said that having a day dedicated to coming out makes the process feel less daunting. “Of course, coming out is not a requirement for any LGBTQ+ person, if they aren’t in a safe space or don’t feel comfortable, but coming out is freeing in a way that you can’t really comprehend without doing it,” Jewart said. “It feels enormously good to not have to worry about what you may be revealing anymore, and it’s also a huge source of pride both in your identity and just in yourself.”

3

LASA Guidance Counselor Meagan Butler said Pride Alliance officers Ames Jewart, Charlie Diaz, Harrison K, Lia Wiese and several other students help Caitlin Palmer and herself plan the picnic. “This was the 6th annual Coming Out Day picnic, and it was our biggest turnout so far with over 150 people stopping by,” Butler said. “We had a lot of fun and felt supported! The posters that we created had some educational and positive messages and we displayed them in the hallway for Austin ISD Pride Week.”

