

PICTURE PERFECT SENIOR PORTRAITS



Senior Madeline Lee, along with seniors Casey Dawson and Kiran Topiwala, take free senior pictures as a project for photography club. photo courtesy of Kekeo MacAuley

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SOCCER SPRINTS TO START SEASON

Seniors Filippos Kallivokas and Vijay Veeraraghavan push themselves as they sprint fighting for their positions on the varsity boy's soccer team. photo by Oliver Powers

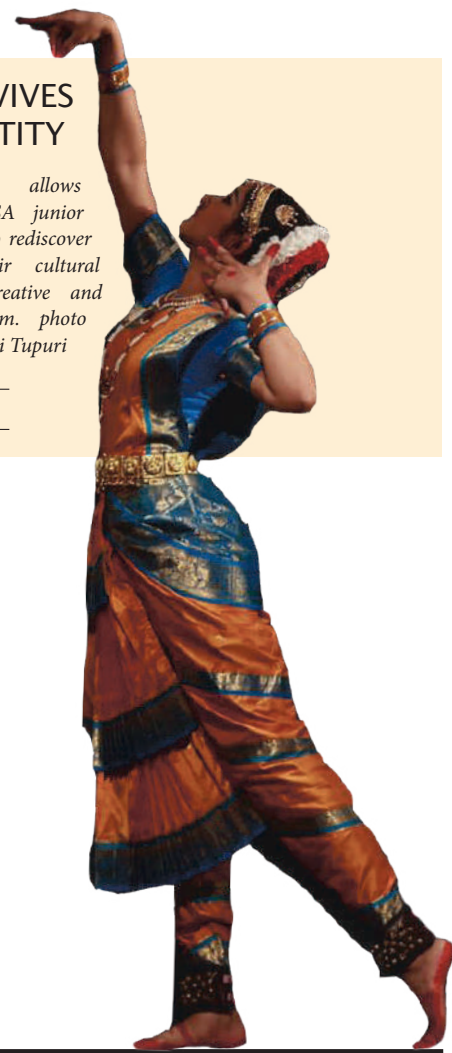


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DANCE REVIVES LOST IDENTITY

Traditional dance allows students like LASA junior Sreenidhi Tupuri to rediscover and explore their cultural heritage in a creative and challenging medium. photo courtesy of Sreenidhi Tupuri

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# the liberator

Liberal Arts and Science Academy High School

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## Facilities to be overhauled, LASA location in question

ROXY BONAFONT & OLIVIA LEE  
Editors-in-Chief

The Austin Independent School District (AISD) is in the process of assessing,

modernizing and reallocating its facilities to address a range of concerns, among them issues of safety and capacity. Projects ameliorating the district's most pressing problems will be packaged in a number of bonds to be introduced over multiple years. To this end, AISD Board of Trustees members each appointed two representatives to the Facilities and Bond Planning Advisory Committee (FABPAC), tasked with proposing to the Board a Facilities Master Plan (FMP) that outlines facility use for the next 20 years. Mark Grayson, District 3 representative to FABPAC and secretary of the LASA Campus Advisory Council (CAC), said that FABPAC members will also serve as ambassadors soliciting community input in district decision-making.

"A key goal of FABPAC is to consider what it would take to 'modernize' our schools," Grayson. "This means that when schools are renovated or adjusted, they should represent current and future approaches to education—more collaborative spaces, more flexible usage areas, better options for use as community centers, et cetera—rather than merely 'band-aid' style fixes to problems that repair issues but leave school buildings frozen in the same condition and configuration they had when first built decades ago."

This summer, the district contracted consultants to perform a comprehensive survey of every district facility, including the district's first systematic assessment of the crawl spaces beneath every school. It was during this process that T.A. Brown Elementary School was discovered to be structurally unsound and in danger of floor collapse, leading to its abrupt closure in early November. While this was undoubtedly the most dramatic result of the facilities assessment, AISD schools are, on average, more than 40 years old and often in desperate need of long-term solutions to neglected problems.

"The conditions of the district's facilities is both not surprising and surprising, all at once," Grayson said. "On the one hand, it's no secret that there has been a lot of 'deferred maintenance'—that means not fixing things right away if they might be able to wait. On the other hand, this is the first time ever that the district has done such a thorough examination of all aspects of all of its buildings, all at once, so there's a lot of things that have been surprises."

The results for each school were published in campus report cards consisting of two evaluations: the Facilities Condition

*When schools are renovated or adjusted, they should represent current and future approaches to education.*  
-FABPAC District 3 Representative Mark Grayson

Assessment (FCA) and the Education Suitability Assessment (ESA). The FCA rates a series of structural details following on-site evaluations of mechanical and electrical fixtures, exterior and interior architecture and surrounding infrastructure; the ESA scores how effectively a campus can support academic programs by evaluating classroom and community spaces, technology and security, among other factors.

The main building at LBJ/LASA received an FCA score of 67, indicating that the facility is in overall good condition, although its exterior stairs, windows and roofing were found to be poor. The theater building received a higher score. The ESA, however, found LASA to be "unsatisfactory," with very low scores for general academic and elective spaces, future ready student development and security. In a message to LASA students and parents, LASA principal Stacia Crescenzi said that this conclusion was informed by a meeting between the educational suitability consultants and LASA department chairs in early August.

"[The ESA consultants] sat with all department chairs and administrators and had a very open and in depth conversation," Crescenzi said. "At the end of the meeting the department chairs relayed that they felt really heard about their concerns and where they would like to see their departments go in terms of curriculum, instruction and programs."

Brailsford and Dunleavey, the consulting firm contracted by AISD to coordinate the assessment process, released a preliminary report in late November detailing options for the district's facilities. The recommendations included the possible closure of up to 10 elementary or pre-kindergarten campuses and the construction of six schools across the city. Notably, the report also suggests relocating LASA to Travis High School, Martin Middle School or Covington Middle School. Although not explicitly stated in the

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## JAGS ANTICIPATE STATE



LBJ senior Deandre Johnson jumps and wins the tip-off in the Nov. 6 game against Liberty Hill, who the Jags beat 69-64. LBJ has been ranked second in Texas, and is looking forward to dominating this season and at state. photo by Oliver Powers. SEE PAGE 15

## District combats segregation

CLARA MORSE  
News Editor

Austin Independent School District (AISD)

has taken the next step in its work to address school segregation: adding desegregation to the superintendent's scorecard. This addition was accompanied by a pilot plan detailing suggested desegregation policy. Superintendent Paul Cruz will now be evaluated on economic and racial integration of schools in addition to factors like attendance and graduation rates. District 1 Trustee Dr. Edmund Gordon was one of the main advocates of this plan.

"If the board sees that one of its values is desegregated, both economically and racially, school districts, then what it needs to do is it needs to ask the superintendent to be engaged in the kinds of programs and activities necessary to begin desegregating the school district and then to evaluate after a period of time progresses," Gordon said. "And [the scorecard] implements a way to evaluate whether the superintendent has taken [responsibility] and begun the process of doing something."

District 1, which is a main focus of the plan, constitutes much of the area east of I35, including LASA and LBJ high schools. Although District 1 is relatively diverse, many schools are under enrolled and 90 percent or more are Latino and black. Gordon said that integration's main challenge in this area would be convincing higher-income families to keep their children in the neighborhood schools instead of sending them to charters. He said the integration plan would involve increased academic rigor and opportunities at District 1 schools.

"[The plan] is based on just the educational performance of those schools," Gordon said. "In other words, making District 1 schools better and having better outcomes for the children that operate in those schools.... There's a strategy of lifting the quality of education offered in these schools and the academic outcome of students there, and providing choices for interesting or valuable new programming."

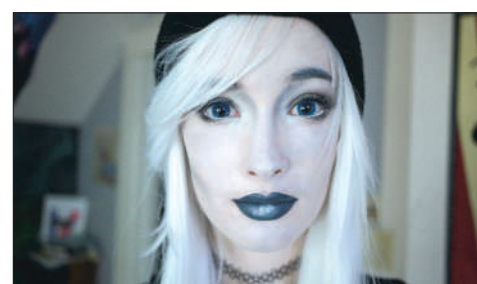
see page 6

## Makeup as an artistic medium allows for creative and personal expression

MARLEN AVILA  
Staff Writer

A camera is aimed at two friends chatting idly as one applies layers upon layers of makeup on the other's face. After a while, LASA junior Sally Miller sets down her tools to assess her handiwork. The special effects makeup has transformed the other girl's face into something almost sinister. Her soft features have been sharpened by prosthetics sculpted out of liquid latex and the addition of a fake eye. As the shot pans, the viewer is met with Miller's recreation of DC villain Harvey Dent.

"I got really into watching special effects makeup videos on YouTube," Miller said. "I was addicted to watching them: PinkStylist, Glam and Gore, all of them. I watched hours and hours. In early October 2015, I was like, 'You know, I want to do this, too.' I ordered a bottle of liquid latex and cream paint and started."



Junior Sally Miller experiments with different special effects styles in her makeup. photos courtesy of Sally Miller

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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:

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

Viewpoints:

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

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

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

Non-Staff Contributors: Bylined contributions are welcome.

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

Sources:

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

Note: *The Liberator* is an open forum.

STAFF STANCE

Recent election sparks intense debate on value and validity of the electoral college

The recent election of Donald Trump to the office of President of the United States is forcing us to reckon with many new political realities that pose threats to both our fundamental civil rights, as well as the fabric of social welfare that has offered an inadequate yet meaningful safety net to our most vulnerable citizens. Additionally, this election is forcing us to question the validity and utility of a core instrument of the Founding Father's vision for our Republic, the Electoral College. While Trump did win the Electoral College with 290 votes to Hillary Clinton's 232, Hillary Clinton won the popular vote by a margin of more than two million votes, and counting, as of this writing. This complicated outcome (not the first in recent times, see Bush v Gore) speaks to a deepening divide of not just political party affiliation but ideological geography: northern versus southern, urban versus rural, "coastal" versus "heartland" perspectives and concerns. It is sparking an important conversation about whether or not determining the office of the President of the United States via the Electoral College as opposed to the popular vote adequately and accurately represents the American people's vote. "One person, one vote" is, after all, a bedrock democratic principle. Here at the Liberator, we appear to be as divided on this question as the country as a whole, but we all agree, given the Electoral College's problematic history, that a reckoning with this history and a national conversation on this question, and more broadly, election reform is long overdue.

The Electoral College is often viewed as a fail-safe measure to prevent the election of an "unqualified" president. At the Constitutional Convention in 1786 the Electoral College was created as a compromise between those who wanted the President elected by the popular vote and those who wanted Congress to elect the President. At the time, there was deep concern that individual Americans did not have access to the information necessary to make an informed choice for President. This is no longer true today, even as there are important concerns about the substance and cogency of our news sources.

It is also worthwhile to consider how elections via the popular vote, where each person's vote counts equally (and Democratic voters in red states and Republican voters in blue states have as meaningful an impact on election outcomes as their contemporaries in the majority) would

lead to individuals' enhanced investment in the election process.

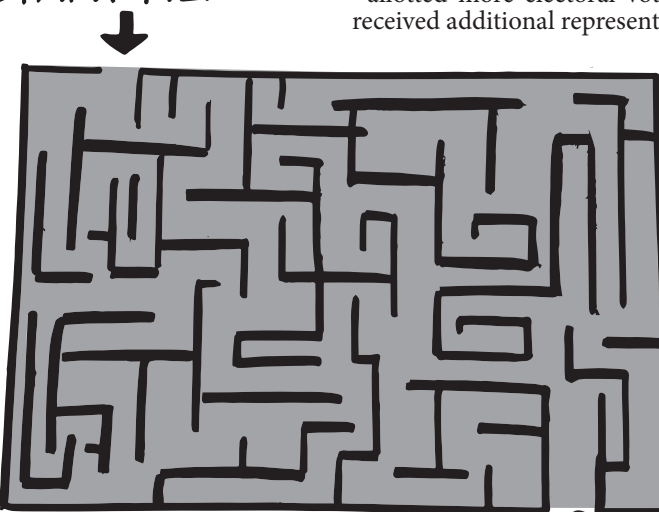
Of the many concerns raised regarding the Electoral College, one that is not discussed often enough is the uncomfortable reality that it is in fact a vestige of slavery, created, in part, to protect the interests and political clout of Southern slave states. In the late 18th century, Northern voters would have vastly outnumbered Southern voters in presidential elections based on the popular vote. While slaves were not viewed legally as "people" and had no rights, they were counted as part of each state's total population count (at three fifths of a citizen). Since the South had such a significant slave population, they were allotted more electoral votes and, voila, their interests received additional representation.

Even today, the complexities of the Electoral College, geography and statehood are such that individual voting power is not evenly distributed. When you divide electors by votes cast per state, voters in Texas, for example, have more voting power than voters in Oregon or Minnesota. Is this fair? Is it appropriate? Is it in keeping with our constitutional democratic principles? We agree that this history calls into question the current authority of the Electoral College. Electing presidents via a system that was designed to promote

slavery and institutionalized racism is wrong. It is certainly not in keeping with our core constitutional principles that promote equal rights and opportunities for all under the law.


Many claim that if the Electoral College isn't broken, why fix it? We disagree with this statement vehemently. Confronting concerns related to the Electoral College will require and enable us to address the deeper divides that are barriers to both unity and progress in this country. This will necessarily include exploring related issues such as campaign financing, and, significantly, gerrymandering (manipulating the boundaries of political districts to maintain and expand party control) and voter suppression (preventing people from voting by intimidation of unnecessary obstacle), both of which have been undertaken in recent times to undermine minority representation. It is time to consider comprehensive election reform. We need to learn from this election and work to change our system of representation to ensure that every citizen is adequately represented and has confidence that his or her vote matters, as do his or her concerns.

Electoral College  
START HERE



graphic by Grace Bodine





liberated  
minds  
speak

*Is the electoral college effective in today's political climate?*

 <p><b>Fedor Aglyamov</b> Sophomore "I think that the electoral college allows for representation of minorities so that they don't get completely ignored by city folk."</p>	 <p><b>Maya Ferede</b> Sophomore "The electoral college is flawed. It was created so that we wouldn't elect an unfit president, but in this case, it helped a bad person win."</p>
 <p><b>Shiv Mulgaonker</b> Senior "I believe in the concept behind the electoral college, but today it is not effective because the popular vote is more representative of the people's opinion."</p>	 <p><b>Greta Quill</b> Freshman "From my point of view, I don't think the electoral college should be a thing because it is outdated"</p>



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 quiet during pledges

Dear Editor,  
"I think the fact that teachers don't enforce quiet during the pledges is disrespectful. Everyone has the right to say or not say the pledges but the fact that students are allowed to be disruptive is not fair."  
-Nir Rauch Senior

Praise for mutual feelings

Dear Editor,  
"I really appreciate that everyone can relate to each other about feeling stressed out."  
-Micah Heilbron Freshman

On passing periods

Dear Editor,  
"I think that we should have slightly longer passing periods because the campus has expanded."  
-Willa Scanlon Sophomore

Push for integrated clubs

Dear Editor,  
"I wish we had more clubs integrated with LBJ. I wish it we could be more unified."  
-Lina Tiblier Junior

## Understanding both sides of the Trump presidency

*Trump will be a good, succesful president*      *Reviewing the downsides of Donald Trump*



GRANT MCCASLAND  
Staff Writer

In a historic presidential election win characterized by many as a backlash against the political establishment and status-quo, businessman and billionaire Donald Trump is set to become the 45th President of the United States. Republicans will also control the Senate and House of Representatives, meaning Trump will be able to exercise full control of his executive powers and pass significant policies with relative ease. A new age of international politics is being ushered in, one that was foretold by the surprise passage of the Brexit referendum; it can be seen in the populist candidates running for the upcoming French, German, Austrian and Dutch elections. But our election is over, and it's time to look forwards to the future of America.

President-elect Donald Trump has already begun a promising transition into the White House, starting off by giving a speech on Election Night with a positive tone in which he promised to unify America and give the country back to the people. Trump has begun dialogues with domestic companies and foreign leaders. Mexican president Enrique Peña Nieto and Canadian Prime Minister (PM) Justin Trudeau have both expressed willingness to work with Trump on renegotiating the North American Free-Trade Agreement. The proposed Trans-Pacific Partnership, which would only increase working restrictions and take jobs away from our country, is dead in the water. Trump has already talked to Apple and Ford about keeping their work in the country and successfully convinced Carrier to keep their Indianapolis plant here, which makes up over 1,000 jobs. Considering he has done all of these talks with both leaders and corporations during the beginning of his transition period points to a hopeful future for our economy and international diplomacy.

The leftover tensions between Russia and the United States from the Cold War will dissipate as Russian president Vladimir Putin has stated his interest in working alongside Trump on the world stage. Cooperation with Russia is particularly important because of the current involvement in the Syrian civil war, which is a proxy war that could have escalated into a war pitting Russia and America against each other. Luckily, Trump is planning on backing out of Syria. Trump is not going to be playing world-police with our military. He isn't interested in sending our troops overseas into wars we are not allowed to win and shouldn't be in. We will lead the world by example through Trump's policies of taking his citizen's interests to heart.

Trump will also be upholding immigration laws on the Mexican-

American border and has proposed building a wall to stop illegal immigrants from coming into the US. This is particularly important because borders are the very definition of a country and we would be nothing without them. As a reminder, the future First Lady Melania Trump immigrated from Slovenia and Trump will not forget how important the path to legal citizenship is. He also has a strong stance against ISIS and stopping the spread of radical Islamic terrorism, which shows Trump putting our country first. In relation to this, he has said during his RNC nomination acceptance speech that he will do everything he can to protect the LGBTQ+ community from what he calls a hateful foreign ideology.

"Draining the Swamp" is the last main thing Trump has promised, which means getting rid of the corrupt politicians in Washington and undoing the globalist

policies that have sold our country out to foreign special interests. He has already purged all lobbyists from the transition team and implemented a five year ban on being a lobbyist after leaving the administration. He has also banned all lobbying for foreign governments and plans to impose term limits upon members of Congress to keep politicians from holding office for sustained amounts of time without being challenged, all part of his first 100 days plan.

So if you're still questioning the upsides of a Trump presidency, I suggest you read and diversify your news sources, because the dishonest mainstream media has shown its true colors this election cycle. I'm looking forward to seeing how President-elect Trump does in office and truly believe that we can make America great again for everyone. As Trump said, "For too long Washington has tried to put us in boxes. They separate us by race, by age, by income, by geography, by place of birth. We spend too much time focused on what divides us. Now is the time to embrace the one thing that truly unites us. You know what that is? America, America, it's America. Because when America is unified nothing is beyond our reach."



GEORGE GUCKENBERGER  
Staff Writer

only "some connectivity" between human activity and global warming. He previously stated that he would like to pull out of the Paris agreement, but has more recently promised to keep an "open mind," even as he still seems to be leaning against this. He has planned to lift the regulations on the use of coal, promising to coal miners it will bring back "many millions of high-paying jobs", but that will be a difficult promise to keep because the coal industry has been declining for more reasons than how it is regulated. According to experts, the cheaper price for natural gas and the falling price of renewable energy has made it nearly impossible to revive the coal industry.

Trump says he is pro-life and will appoint pro-life justices willing to overturn Roe V Wade; this would send the decision about abortion back to the states. In my opinion, Trump's win is a major step backwards for women's reproductive rights. Another problem is that Trump has said he would like to appoint justices that would overturn its decision legalizing gay marriage. Trump has also pledged to sign the First Amendment Defense Act, which would protect discrimination and permit the refusal of service based on religious grounds.

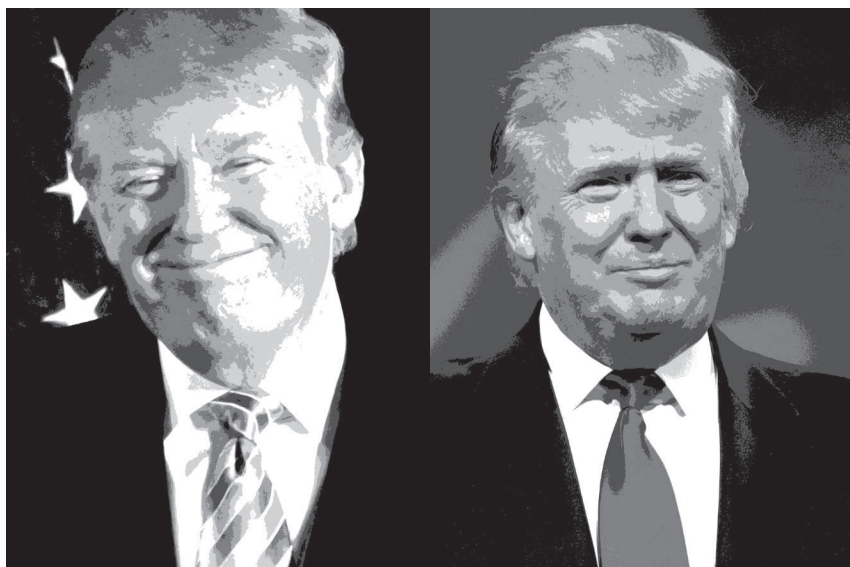
Trump's immigration views are very bold to say the least. In addition to softening on his wall proposal as previously mentioned, he still plans on temporarily banning Muslim immigration from "high risk countries" and limiting refugee intake as to prevent terrorists from entering the country posing as refugees. One of his other immigration view is about birthright citizenship; he has called for ending the practice of extending automatic citizenship to children born to undocumented parents in the US. The United States is a country of immigrants, and Trump proposes changes to legal immigration as well. He wants to choose legal immigrants based on merit, skill and proficiency, which is very different from the current system that gives priority to family reunification. This change would make it so some families would have to wait months, possibly years, to see their loved ones.

My final big concern is that his administration's policies will be shaped by his commercial interests rather than the interests of the United States. I am worried that Trump has refused to release his taxes and has not yet placed his business in a blind trust. His financial involvements could erode years of efforts that have been made by Democrats and Republicans to promote transparency in government, as described in the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act.

Overall I feel that Trump will not be a successful president for all the diverse people of America. His proposed policies do not accurately reflect his attitude of openness that he displayed on his election night victory speech, and I feel that he has said and done too many vile and inexcusable things throughout his career to deserve my support. I look forward to voting in four years and hope to see some more widely appealing Democratic candidates than we had in this election.

Overall, Trump has held 141 stances on 23 relevant issues throughout his campaign according to NBC News. His inconsistency and current stances on issues such as climate change, abortion and immigration are particularly worrying to me. It scares me that he plans on undoing all of the progress that Obama has made in the past eight years.

I am concerned about his ever-changing views on climate change, which have shifted from him claiming that climate change is a hoax perpetrated by the Chinese, to now admitting there is



## How LASA changed my mentality on education



SARAH PORTER  
Staff Writer

People say that high school years are supposed to be the best years of your life. Although I genuinely hope my life gets at least a little better after graduation, I'm really thankful for my high school experience so far and everything I've learned from it.

I'm a Junior at LASA, but I spent my freshman year of high school at Bowie. Looking back on my first year in high school, I don't have too many regrets (aside from doing weird things that typical freshmen do). I had my best friend from middle school with me, and I made a few more good friends there. I made the varsity track team and found my place at school. My high school experience at Bowie was nothing out of the ordinary, which was exactly why I applied to LASA.

During my freshman year, I made all As. I hardly ever did any of my homework, I never went to a single tutoring session and I never really had to study for any tests. Despite my lack of effort, I thought I was being prepared for college because I was still getting good grades. I didn't think about college because when it came to this topic, my counselor and teachers' motto was "Just wait until the end of your junior year." I thought high school really was supposed to be the best time of my life, so I spent my time skipping a few theatre classes and walking off campus to Sonic during lunchtime with my friends, just like all of my peers did. I was completely unaware of what my future would be like if I kept giving minimal effort.

Fortunately, my mother noticed the lack of academic rigor at Bowie, so she forced my sister and I to fill out the application for LASA. My family and I had heard of the magnet school before, but because we had only recently moved to Austin, we had decided to continue on the more comfortable and familiar path with my neighborhood school. I was upset that my mom was making me leave my friends and easy classes at Bowie because, at the time, I didn't understand why this change would likely impact my life for the better.

For the record, I'm not trying to bash Bowie High School. They have a racially and economically diverse population and an incredibly wide range of electives to choose from that allow introduction to and development in different career types. Their course list includes everything from Child Development to Hospitality Services to Medical Microbiology. However, because there are so many students there, it's basically impossible to make sure each student has the resources they need to prepare for college. This pretty much leaves students to their own devices when it comes to getting ready for their future.

With that being said, Bowie just wasn't the best place for me to prepare for the future. Once it was confirmed that I would be a LASA student, I forced myself to be excited to start my sophomore year at a new school. I had no idea what to expect, though. My parents kept saying that it would be like college, so I was also terrified of what my classes and teachers would be like. Most of all, I was afraid of the students. I was convinced that some miracle had occurred that made me get accepted into LASA, and all the other students were geniuses. Luckily, my theory was debunked during my first week of school. From what

I could tell, I was at a similar academic level compared to most of my classmates, and the teachers were really nice and seemed eager to help everyone understand and be excited by the curriculum.

I was surprised that I wasn't totally struggling after my first six weeks at LASA. I was taking Great Ideas, Spanish II, Geometry, Computer Science and all the other sophomore core classes. After the first six weeks, I noticed an increase in assigned homework that I wasn't used to, and I didn't do anything about it. My mother kept telling me that LASA was different than Bowie, and I wouldn't be able to blow off my homework until the end of the grading period, but I didn't care. I began to feel so overwhelmed by the workload that whenever I got home I had no idea where to start. I couldn't make the decision between studying for my WHAP test or finishing my Geometry homework. The worst part is that I didn't know that I was feeling overwhelmed; I thought it was just me being regular lazy me.

My cluelessness affected me the for rest of the year. I suffered the most in Chemistry and Computer Science, but I still did pretty badly in every other class (except for English). One thing that discouraged me even more is how my peers would talk about their academic success all the time. Throughout the year, my mother noticed how I had become less motivated, more tired, and less social, so she made me visit the school counselor a couple times. This didn't really help because I wasn't very comfortable opening up to my counselor about what was going on. Looking back, I wish I had been more up-front with my mom about how I was feeling about struggling through the school year.

Fast forward to the beginning of this year: I was genuinely excited to start the new school year at LASA. I had done some serious self-reflection over the summer, and I had an attitude-changing reality check when I realized how fast time was going by. I knew I didn't have very much time between then and graduation. But, I had signed up to take classes that I was actually interested in, and my mother helped me create a system to help me organize and prioritize my responsibilities. I was prepared for my junior year at LASA.

Now, when I'm assigned homework or due dates for projects, I write it in my agenda and make plans to complete it. I take pride in my schoolwork. This has motivated me to not only make good grades, but also make an effort to understand what I'm learning in class. I also understand that being prepared for college doesn't have much to do with grades. College readiness includes knowing how to take control of your own education. Now, I can actually think of LASA as being a good place to learn, challenge myself and prepare for my future, whereas last year, I thought of it as a stressful environment that I needed to do whatever possible to get out of. I think about moving forward and learning from my mistakes more than I do avoiding my responsibilities.

### Thumbs up

- Dreidels
- Concerts
- Big sweaters
- Holiday leftovers
- Long breaks

LASA sophomore Connor Ferro

### Thumbs down

- White colored pencils
- Speed bumps
- In-class essays
- Porta-potties
- Gentrification

# Giving thanks every day



ELENA VENEGONI  
Staff Writer

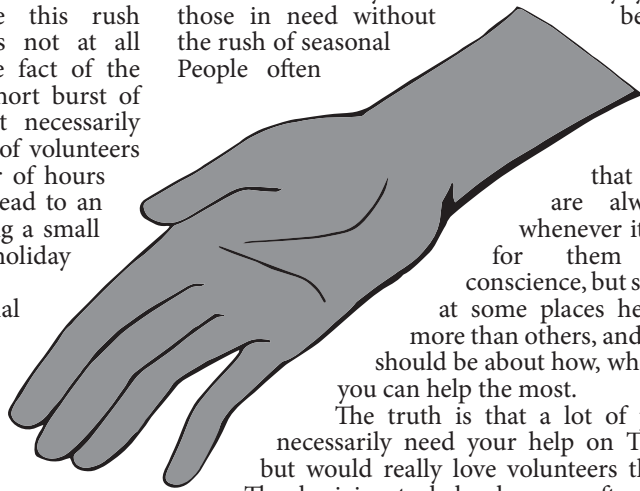
It wouldn't be Thanksgiving without the guilt of affluent Americans. Every year during the holiday season, those who lead more fortunate lives count their blessings and begin to realize the lifestyle privileges that they indulge in. Thankfulness often goes hand in hand with guilt, therefore those throughout the country who don't usually do so, sign up to volunteer.

At first glance this rush of volunteers seems not at all problematic, but the fact of the matter is that the short burst of volunteering during the holidays doesn't necessarily help in the long term. While the number of volunteers increases during the holidays, the number of hours spent helping decreases, which can often lead to an unmotivated group of volunteers dedicating a small amount of time for no reason other than holiday guilt.

I myself am no exception to this seasonal volunteering pattern. Two Thanksgivings ago my family decided to sign up to volunteer at Operation Turkey—a charity whose purpose is to provide traditional Thanksgiving dinners for the homeless and less fortunate. We drove to the designated area ready to help, but once we got there we were dismayed to see that the group of volunteers were milling around with no purpose, and those in charge were preoccupied with logistics that we could not help with. After about 30 minutes people began to get restless and after about 45,

some left. Eventually a line began to form and after waiting another half an hour we finally had the opportunity to help; we each fixed a package of food. By that point we figured there was more help than needed, so we drove away. I left with the mentality that at least I'd tried, and with my guilt quenched I promptly forgot about it for a year until the next round of Thanksgiving guilt came around, and I remembered all of those in need.

What seems to be the best solution to the guilt felt during the holidays is the most obvious one: volunteer at other times of the year. This way you can help those in need without being part of the rush of seasonal volunteers. People often make the



assumption that volunteers are always needed whenever it's convenient for them or their conscience, but some days and at some places help is needed more than others, and volunteering should be about how, when and where you can help the most.

The truth is that a lot of places don't necessarily need your help on Thanksgiving but would really love volunteers the day after Thanksgiving to help clean up after the rush of volunteers, or even the day after that one. There are opportunities all over Austin: food pantries to stock, soup kitchens to volunteer at and even school-wide fundraisers that lots of people don't even bother to participate in. There is so much to do year round that volunteering someplace that doesn't need your help is almost pointless.

Holidays only make up a couple of days a year. People in need don't just go away the other days when we don't think of them. There are always charities and volunteer options in which someone could spend their time, so instead of following the pattern of half-hearted holiday volunteering people should find other times to offer their help. That's why this holiday season I'm insistent on not giving into this guilt-based holiday mentality, and instead I signed up to volunteer in January. It shouldn't take a commercial holiday to get us to care about the people we share the Earth with.



## Small Talk

### Student's reflections on journey to accept his differences



JEFFREY KOVAR  
Staff Writer

On November 1, I reclined on the couch eating the Skittles I was supposed to pass out to the trick-or-treaters the previous night, watching the highlights for the most recent round of European Soccer games. The show broke to commercial, and I was shocked to see a Target commercial on their Christmas sales for the year. From the moment the kids stopped trick-or-treating, all the way to Dec. 25th, the shop aisles are stocked full of Christmas themed gifts, and the media dominated by ads for Christmas sales and products. Christmas gets more hype than any other holiday by a mile in the United States. Christianity is the most common religion, however, Christmas gets even more promotion emphasis than it should. Being a religious Jew, I find the sheer amount of attention Christmas gets to be over the top, and a very lonely time for those who do not celebrate Christmas.

In elementary school, I was the only religious Jew in my grade. There were a few kids who claimed to be ethnic Jews, however the still celebrated Christmas. In the month of December, I felt alone and isolated. In art class, we would do some Christmas themed project, in storytime we read "How the Grinch Stole Christmas" and each year we would take a field trip to go watch "The Nutcracker," etc. Every activity would include at least a sprinkle of Christmas, or the Titanic's worth of it. I never partook in these activities, however, and I spent those times sitting in the corner by myself working on a non-Christmas themed activity. Even discussion on the playground was dominated by what everyone thought they were going to get from Santa. I spent those recesses sitting by myself near the slide playing with rocks in silence.

Some of my worst memories from elementary school were from the pre-Christmas, post-Thanksgiving time. In kindergarten, I was the one who broke to my kindergarten playmate that Santa wasn't real, and went to the principal's for a stern talking to. I cried the rest of the day. Skipping forward to second grade, when a close friend of mine told me I was: "a dumb-butt for celebrating Hanukkah, and only pigs celebrate that holiday". I proceeded to cry for the rest of the day, again.

Back then, I hated being Jewish. I wanted to have a decorated pine tree, I wanted to get presents from a fat man in a red suit, I wanted to drink eggnog and I wanted to fit in with all the other kids and celebrate Christmas. Though the holidays are supposed to be a time of togetherness and love, I felt alone and like an outcast. Everyone else was happy and cheery with Christmas spirit, gossiping about the various presents and gifts they had gotten, and I had my socks and underwear I got for Hannukah. Unlike what many of my Christian friends thought, I never got any fancy gifts or presents for Hanukkah. The holiday itself holds no religious significance, but is instead a memorial and symbolism of hope. The only reason there is so much attention surrounding the holiday is because it falls around the Christmas time. I did occasionally get a nice gift, however most of the time, I was lucky to receive anything.

As I grew older, this difference bothered me less and less. I learned to love my Jewish heritage, and embrace being different from the herd. Being Jewish at this time of the year doesn't bother me anymore. I learned that being Jewish was more than just not celebrating Christmas, but a religion and heritage that connects me to other Jews. I've found more Jews to spend Christmas with, and I even visited to my synagogue last year to play poker and eat Chinese food with the others. The "Christmas season" isn't a lonely time for me anymore, but rather a chance to embrace my religion and spend time with my community.

# Celebrating Obama

## Student thinks back on Obama's legacy and last years in office



SOPHIE WYSOCKI  
Staff Writer

Barack Obama was elected President of the United States in 2008, initiating a huge leap forward by U.S. government. He is the first African-American president that we've ever had, making his presidency an immensely important event in our history. As he only has a short time left in the White House, it is important to think about his legacy for our country during his two terms in office.

Although I was alive during both of George W. Bush's terms, I have no memory of what that felt like. I was seven years old when Obama was elected and I have some vivid memories of my parent's support for him. My elementary school held a mock election for his first term and my second grade self was an adamant supporter. My trust in him only grew from there and throughout my adolescent life, I have had tremendous support for his message and his policies. As I grew older and my understanding of politics developed, I became extremely attached to Obama. I recognized him as this eloquent, courageous leader of the diverse country we call home. His speeches inspired me and my peers with his commanding tone and persuasive words. Alongside him is Michelle Obama, a powerful woman who I'm proud to say is one of my role models. She has used her position as First Lady as a platform to advocate for better education in this country, something that is very important to me, and she does it very effectively. These two powerful figures sparked my interest in politics and in government. He's the only president my generation has really known and it's hard to see him go. In his two terms, he has reformed healthcare, environmental effect and equality in ways that I believe have contributed to the welfare of our country. I believe that investing time and money into acts that will benefit both short term and long term America is important and necessary, and his dedication to these three things has me convinced that he cares about the future of our youth.

Barack Obama achieved many reforms throughout our country to help aid those in need of more accessible healthcare. He passed the Affordable Care Act in 2010 to try to create universal access to healthcare coverage. It covered 32 million Americans in 2014 and gives many Americans access to healthcare that they wouldn't previously have been able to have. Although there is a lot of debate and conflicting opinions on this act, I believe that he has been more successful than previous presidents at securing healthcare coverage for those in need. Obama allowed the FDA to regulate tobacco products, making companies disclose ingredients and label their products honestly. Obama passed the Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act in 2010 to create higher nutritional standards for school lunches. I have some memories as a child of the types of lunches my school cafeteria would serve and as I've grown up,

and I've seen definite improvement in the food provided. He passed the FDA Food Safety Modernization Act in 2010 to increase regulation on food and to issue direct food recall if necessary. Obama supported embryonic stem cell research, overturning Bush era restrictions that prohibited extensive research. He also increased the budget for the Department of Veteran Affairs in order to provide more services to those coming back from war with mental and physical health problems.

In addition to working to aid our citizens, Barack Obama was able to achieve environmental reform to help our natural resources. He increased EPA restrictions on mercury and toxic pollution, which led to closing some of the dirtiest power plants in the United States. The EPA also determined that carbon dioxide is a pollutant and now that agency could regulate its production. I believe that restricting our emissions is necessary to sustain our planet's environment and it's honorable that Obama did so. In order to help our country reduce our impact, he invested \$90 billion in research on cleaner energy, such as smart grids, electric cars, cleaner coals and biofuels. It's clear to me that he wanted to protect our natural resources and the environment we live in and I am impressed by his progressive stance. He also passed the Omnibus Public Lands Management Act, which designated two million acres as wilderness and protected thousands of miles of rivers, as well creating many trails across the U.S.. This, in turn, increased protection for our natural resources and landmarks, something I think is valuable and significant.

Barack Obama contributed tremendously to our national progression towards equality for all people. He repealed "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" and formalized policy that enables people to serve openly in the military regardless of their sexual orientation. He also signed the Hate Crimes Prevention Act in 2009 to expand protection for crimes based on a victim's gender, disability or sexual orientation, in addition to what already previously existed under that category. I'm a huge supporter of equality and any policies that will help our country move towards that are important in my eyes. I believe that all people deserve the same protections, rights and freedoms and it became clear to me during his presidency that he felt the same way as I do. It is during the Obama administration that same-sex marriage was legalized by the Supreme Court. I remember when my dad shared this news with me; I was overjoyed that now all people, regardless of their sexual orientation, could now enjoy the same rights. One additional act that Obama signed that's very important is the Lilly



*I would like to say thank you. Thank you, Barack Obama, for seeking to provide rights, freedoms, and happiness for those who need it the most.*



Ledbetter Fair Pay Act in 2009 that gives women who are paid less than men for the same work the right to sue their employers regardless of the time frame. Previously, the statute of limitations ran out after 180 days so any cases that lasted longer than that couldn't be taken to court. Although there are still issues of unequal pay in the United States, this freedom allows women more opportunity to advocate for themselves and against discrimination. As a young woman growing up in this country, it's empowering to know that Obama is interested in my welfare and wanted to help fight for gender equality.

Barack Obama is a powerful man who fought for the equality and welfare of all people. I believe wholeheartedly in his mission and that what he did for our country is momentous. Compared with previous administrations, he has helped our country reach new standards of health, equality and environmental protection. As his second term is ending, I and many others will seek to preserve his legacy. He will forever be remembered as a monumental figure in the 21st century. Finally, I would like to say thank you. Thank you, Barack Obama, for seeking to provide rights, freedoms and happiness for those who need it the most.

# AISD Northeast Austin plan revised by LASA and other area schools

QUINN SIMPSON  
News Editor

The LASA Campus Advisory Council (CAC) participated in a planning meeting on Nov. 29 hosted by Austin Independent School District (AISD) to incorporate feedback from individual school communities into the region-wide Northeast Austin Plan. According to LASA senior and CAC member Oscar Newman, the plan was created this summer by a slate of people who are stakeholders in Northeast Austin schools in order to create programmatic and facilities proposals for the future.

“The AISD Northeast Plan is a comprehensive plan developed by the Northeast Austin Planning committee to address a wide range of issues across schools in the area,” Newman said. “Parents, teachers and students came together for months to look at the issues the district faces with schools in the area and seek solutions.”

LASA CAC co-chair Ann Phipps explained that AISD Superintendent Paul Cruz initiated the planning process for the Northeast region specifically as a way to empower the voices of community members who are chronically underrepresented in district decision-making surrounding resource allocation.

“Because of the historic and ongoing inequities suffered by residents of Northeast Austin, Dr. Cruz offered this part of town the chance to say what they want to see improved in their schools that goes beyond facilities but has implications for facilities,” Phipps said.

According to Phipps, these implications mean the report’s recommendations will ultimately go to the school district’s Facilities and Bond Planning Advisory Committee (FABPAC), which is tasked with allocating resources to AISD facilities based on programmatic and other needs. While the ideas set forth in the Northeast plan are broader in scope than just facilities improvements, many recommendations require them.

“My understanding is that the Northeast Austin vertical team constituents were given an opportunity to provide programmatic input to the FABPAC process through the development of this plan,” Phipps said. “The FABPAC is meant to address just the physical aspects of schools throughout the district, looking at their condition and suitability. The Northeast Austin plan inputs will feed into the FABPAC so that their recommendations will reflect the desires of these constituents.”

Phipps said that after the committee of stakeholders completed its work, AISD administration compiled their ideas into a plan and invited community members

and Campus Advisory Councils from every school in the Northeast region to review the document and give comment on it.

“The meeting on Nov. 29 was convened to get input from all of the District 1 (Northeast Austin) Campus Advisory Councils,” Phipps said. “CAC members from each of the involved schools attended to give their comments on the plan. A large number of community members also attended and were able to comment on the plan as well.”

Newman said that the participants in attendance from LASA consisted of the school’s principal as well as various parents and students and community members who serve

was thoughtful and productive. We submitted our thoughts to the meeting coordinator and will review them at the December CAC meeting.”

Newman said that those thoughts amounted to a statement of preferences, in which LASA CAC members essentially ranked the options presented in the plan and qualified them with conditions— for example, the group said that remaining on the LBJ campus would necessitate the construction of a new building to allow for growth.

“At the meeting we discussed two primary options,” Newman said. “Our first choice being to move LASA to a new campus as a comprehensive high school to allow both LASA and LBJ to naturally grow in the future. Our second preference was to remain at the LBJ campus on the condition that a new building be constructed for both schools to again allow them to grow both programs in the coming years.”

According to Phipps, AISD administration will factor these comments along with comments from the other area schools and community members into a new draft of the plan that will be published before it is submitted to the FABPAC early next year. She said the LASA CAC will remain involved in the plan’s development to ensure LASA’s objectives are communicated.

“The comments from last night’s meetings will be reviewed and incorporated into the next draft of the plan, which I think will be available in January,” Phipps said. “FABPAC will take it into account and make plans for a series of bond measures, the first of which will go to a vote next November. The LASA CAC will stay close to the process and continue to work for the best outcomes for LASA.”

*Parents, teachers, and students came together for months to look at the issues the district faces.*

-LASA senior Oscar Newman

on the school’s CAC.

“At the LASA table were many members of the LASA CAC, Newman said. “This included former and current parents, myself, Quinn Simpson and Ms. Crescenzi.”

According to Phipps, these members focused their discussion on the only portion of the plan that concerned LASA, which was the question of whether the school should remain co-located with LBJ Early College High School.

“We discussed the only part of the plan that mentioned LASA, which was the question of whether LASA should continue to share a campus with the LBJ Early College High School,” Phipps said. “I thought the conversation

## District enrollment decline slows, but concerns persist

ANDY DEGRASSE  
Staff Writer

In late October, the Austin Independent School District (AISD) announced that its total 2016-17 enrollment exceeded its projection by 500 students. According to AISD Executive Director of Community Engagement Reyne Telles, this number was encouraging in the face of the district’s recent efforts to combat its declining population.

“We are cautiously optimistic. We know that the projections show we will see declines in enrollment, but this was the first large-scale effort to proactively address the problem, and it showed that our efforts are working,” Telles said.

The demographic report against which this number was evaluated projects that

Beyond the FABPAC, Cowan said AISD is also seeking to combat declining enrollment by going into the Austin community and informing people about newly-created programs with valuable academic specialties.

“AISD staff has directly reached out to families in certain parts of town to invite them to re-engage with our neighborhood schools,” Cowan said. “The superintendent is studying whether to add special programs to certain schools that might be attractive to many families. Trustees changed policy to allow students from other districts to enroll in AISD (out of district transfers).”

Cowan believes that Austin’s growing affordability crisis coupled with a rise in the popularity of charter schools has been the driving factor behind recent

*We are cautiously optimistic.*

-AISD Spokesperson Reyne Telles

AISD enrollment will drop by 6,000 in the next 10 years. According to Telles, the report is based on outdated information and is due for replacement.

“At this point that report is very outdated,” Telles said. “We are due for another one this January.”

According to AISD District 4 Trustee Julie Cowan, the district has responded to declining enrollment in recent years by creating the Facilities and Bond Planning Advisory Committee (FABPAC) to help identify areas that are in need of more attention in regards to enrollment.

“Each board member appointed two members to the FABPAC to study the condition and educational suitability of our schools and other buildings and to re-write the Facilities Master Plan,” Cowan said. “The work done by the FABPAC, its consultants and AISD staff will inform trustees on whether and/or when to call for a bond, on which schools need immediate attention, on where growth is or is not happening in Austin, which affects school enrollment.”

population declines.

“I think there are two major factors for underenrollment in certain parts of the district,” Cowan said. “First, I think it is becoming unaffordable for many families who lived in North, Northeast, East, Central East parts of the city to stay in their homes. Second, I think charter schools are establishing themselves in these same parts of the district and those families who are staying have more choices than to just use AISD schools.”

According to Telles, AISD has made combatting underenrollment central to its mission in the face of Austin’s demographic shifts and growing abundance of educational options.

“The competition to keep students enrolled in public schools has never been more fierce,” Telles said. “Facing decreasing enrollment due to an increased cost of living and a number of charter schools in the area, Austin ISD aims to become more competitive. This work is an important part of our mission.”

## Health through Science Initiative promotes STEM

GRANT MCCASLAND & CLARA MORSE  
Staff Writer & News Editor

LASA junior Alex Mancevski created the Health Through Science Initiative in partnership with AISD’s School Health Advisory Council (SHAC), Dell Medical School and Dell Children’s Texas Center for the Prevention and Treatment of Childhood Obesity to promote health sciences at AISD schools. Participants, drawn from National Honors Society (NHS) members, create presentations on health-based topics and present at elementary schools. The presentations are designed to interest the children in health education and possible future STEM involvement. They are given to those in fourth and fifth grade, a time when students typically get involved in health and science fairs. Mancevski said he created the club in order to spread awareness about health and health science.

“When I was volunteering at a Title I middle school, I met a student, barely a teen, with Type II Diabetes who was bullied [and] embarrassed to tell even his teacher about his illness,” Mancevski said. “I wanted to help him, and I tried to inform myself about this disease. The more I read, the more I learned that preventable diseases like [these] are so widespread that some Title I schools neighboring LASA have disease rates that are double the national average. I joined SHAC to do something about this.”

Mancevski said the initiative is a win for everybody since LASA students can build leadership and presentation skills while building a relationship with the staff and students of neighboring elementary schools.

“From the very beginning it was very clear that this initiative had many levels that benefit the community,” Mancevski said. “It promotes health, but it also impacts STEM. It gives LASA students an opportunity to hone their presentation skills and show community leadership. It also builds a relationship with LASA and the neighboring schools,

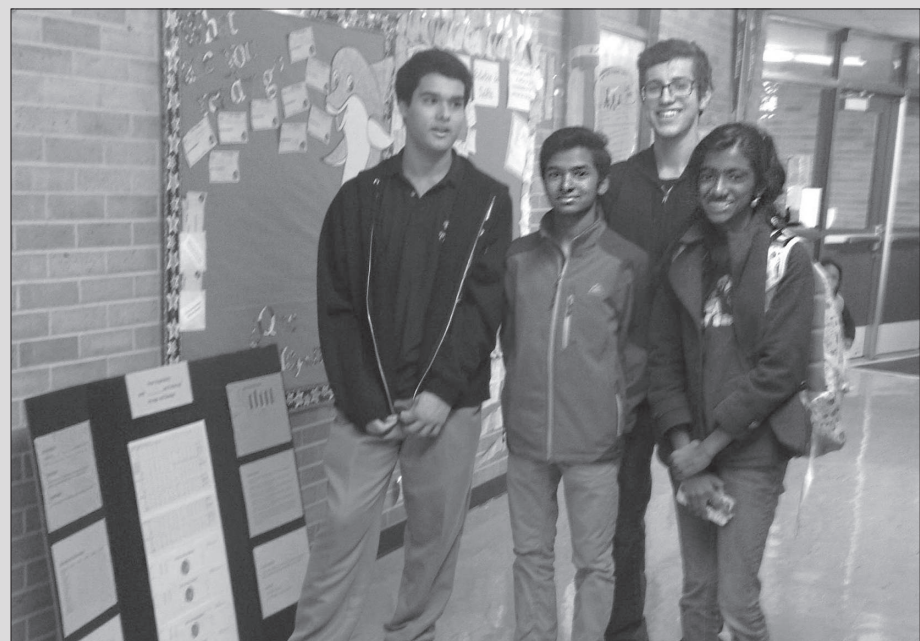
putting LASA on the map because most elementary school kids haven’t heard about LASA. It also helped teachers and elementary school students, who are now called scholars, to fulfill the science fair curriculum requirement in a fun way and be rewarded.”

LASA sophomore Connor Fierro was involved in the initiative at various elementary schools throughout Austin. Fierro said he first heard about the program through a friend and saw it as an opportunity to give back to the community.

“I think the part I enjoy most about the HTS initiative is getting to work with the kids,” Fierro said. “They’re some bright individuals with great ideas, and it always brightens my day to get to see them and work with them. I’m hoping that through my involvement, more kids will have the chance to know about STEM and STEM careers, make healthy life decisions and be able to understand and enjoy what they’re learning about.”

Student leaders did a presentation about science fairs, from basic elements of the trifold to generating data. In addition, they talked about health topics including nutrition, healthy living and preventable, communicable diseases. Mancevski emphasized the positive impact presentations will have on the elementary schoolers, which has earned many volunteers commendations from the AISD Board of Trustees and the mayor of Austin.

“The topics we’re focusing on... will hopefully show them that how we enjoy our future depends on how we live now, on the habits we adopt now,” Mancevski said. “All parents want their kids to be successful, but they should also work on their kids adopting healthy habits now. Some parents haven’t realized the importance of this; they just think what matters is attending school and doing well in class. We have to call the parents’ attention and start changing attitudes.”



Health through Science volunteers Alex Mancevski, 11, Mihir Kamble, 11, Connor Fierro, 10, and Sruthi Ilangovan, 9, stand inside Dawson Elementary with a sample science fair trifold poster board. photo courtesy of Alex Mancevski

# THE SKINNY

## Discourse around Prop 1 LASA impact

SOPHIE WYSOCKI  
Staff Writer

Proposition 1, which was approved by voters in the November election, is a controversial \$720 million mobility bond program for the City of Austin that will enhance roads, sidewalks and urban bike trails. Over the next six to eight years, this program will fund corridor plans and mobility projects throughout a rapidly growing Austin. Some Austin residents aren't exactly sure whether this program will improve Austin's mobility problems or just create more traffic issues within the city. Austin Independent School District (AISD) Associate Superintendent of High Schools Craig Shapiro thinks that there are large benefits to this plan.

"This is only going to help," Shapiro said. "100 people move to Austin every day. So there's a lot of people, the infrastructure just can't keep up with the growth. [This] is a great problem to have because that means you're increasing your budget and everything else for the city, but it's a pain for those of us who already live here to deal with, and it's hard to keep up with that growth. Long term, it's gonna be awesome."

Shapiro, who deals with traffic issues when scheduling, thinks that this plan will help solve some of the problems caused by traffic-based lack of mobility. LASA Academy Director Andy Paulson has hopes that this project will increase mobility around Austin when the project is completed. Paulson drew parallels between Prop 1's planned construction and the construction of upper-level 183 several years ago, which was inconvenient in the short run but beneficial post-completion. Although this project is projected to last six to eight years, Paulson said that in the long term, the traffic due to construction will pay off in the form of reduced commute time.

"Short term, I think it'd just be more of a hinderance, like 'Oh great, this is going to take forever,'" Paulson said. "But once it's done, it'll be beautiful."

Paulson has high hopes that these projects will bring a positive outcome and overall help movement in the city. In contrast, LASA senior Caroline Varela thinks that the negatives caused by the short term effects outweigh the positives in the long term.

"For me, driving to school is already horrible," Varela said. "It usually takes me around an hour to get to school, less on a good day. More construction from Prop 1 would mean a longer commute for most of us trying to get to LASA."

LASA can be very difficult to access, depending on the traffic and direction one is coming from. Varela said that the outcome of Prop 1 won't be much better than what students are already used to, especially taking construction into account.

"Eventually Prop 1 could make it easier to get to and from school, but Austin was never designed to accommodate so many people, so only so much benefit will be seen," Varela said.

LASA sophomore Emily Baker holds a similar opinion to Varela on this issue. She said that when Prop 1 is put in place, that will make her commute to LASA even longer than it already is.

"More and more people are moving to Austin which is creating lots of traffic," Baker said. "Adding more construction is only going to make the problem worse."

Baker is going to be driving herself to school soon, and she said she is worried about her future commutes as a new driver and having to deal with the stress of traffic and construction. On the other hand, Shapiro believes that the traffic flow will improve after Prop 1 is enacted and all of the projects are complete.

"Anything that has an opportunity or chance that would reduce the travel time between schools or getting schools to events truly will help us out," Shapiro said. "I'm not familiar with all of the different aspects of the plan but overall, once installed, the promise is that we will have better traffic flow in many of our neighborhoods."

Shapiro said that he definitely sees the effect that traffic has on scheduling and transit within AISD and understands concerns about short term construction. As he is in charge of scheduling different events, he always has to keep the traffic in mind, and this has added stress to transportation across the city.

"We have had to take traffic into account when scheduling games, especially when teams are coming either north to south or south to north," Shapiro said. "I know that LASA students that are coming from the southwest or south trying to travel north are sitting in traffic, and we're hoping some of these plans will alleviate some of these traffic issues."

Although there is a potential for short term increased amount of traffic because of construction, Shapiro said that anything helping relieve traffic and congestion in the Austin area will improve the quality of life of people living in AISD.

"Do I think it's going to go back to the old days when I was here eight and a half years ago, or how many Austinites who have been here since the beginning remember getting through the city?" Shapiro said. "No, I don't think it's going to return to free-flowing traffic 100 percent of the time, but I do think that some of these projects... will help with congestion."



Cars are parked in the LASA parking lot. Many LASA students oppose Proposition 1 because they believe the short term construction traffic will outweigh any possible benefits. photo by Clara Morse

## Desegregation policy plan developed, added to superintendant score card

continued from page 1

AISD has been criticized in the past for its segregated schools. Although AISD overall is very diverse, there is an uneven distribution of students of color and white students throughout its schools. But how will this affect LASA? Nuri Vallbona, co chair of the LASA Latino Outreach Committee, said that increased academic choice and programs at District 1 elementary and middle schools would create more District 1 students who were prepared to apply to LASA. This could increase both socioeconomic and ethnic diversity at LASA.

"I think that it could have a very positive effect in that kids will be more prepared," Vallbona said. "One thing that we hear from the African American and Latino community is that they question, 'Do I belong here?' And I feel like if they feel better prepared, they will feel more confident coming in.... I think the elementary schools need a lot of help, especially in Title 1 schools; I really think that is a great place to start, and I hope that is successful."

In addition to raising academic standards at lower-performing schools, the plan may involve increasing magnet opportunities, by increasing the number of students at LASA or creating other magnet middle and high schools. The Northeast Austin initiative, which is exploring expansion of academic opportunities in Northeast Austin, has a strong focus upon socioeconomic desegregation, and LASA's new equalizing admissions policy is also targeted at integration, both racially and economically. Gordon said that expanding academically "rigorous" middle and high school experiences was a priority.

"We have many more students who are both capable and also desirous of the rigorous academic high school and middle schools experience than we have places at the magnet schools for them," Gordon said. "So one of the things that we definitely need to do is to increase places and increase those type of opportunities. I would be pleased to have District 1 be an area where those places are increased."

A disproportionate amount of LASA applicants and admittees are students who attended magnet or

charter middle schools, and Gordon said that improving academics at elementary and middle schools could help with desegregating and diversifying all schools, including LASA. Desegregation has been a focus for AISD for several decades.

"We need to diversify the population that is able to take advantage of those places at schools that offer a rigorous academic opportunities," Gordon said. "I think we need to do that, and we have been beginning to do that. Making parents and students more aware of these opportunities—and I also think that the kind of things we plan on doing on terms of enhancing the academic outcome in District 1 in particular—will also increase the number of students who are both

capable and desire these academic opportunities, and that will diversify the population of the magnet schools."

Gordon emphasized the importance of keeping families zoned for AISD, especially in District 1, excited about sending their children to AISD schools, and Superintendent Paul Cruz agreed. He said that the district's work to maintain enrollment was connected to its desegregation work.

"We're really trying to get more students in our schools," Cruz said. "As the Austin community changes, there are some students who choose AISD,

some who don't. And we want to make sure that as many kids as possible come to Austin ISD. I think that, in and of itself, is going to change some of the many types and compositions of our different campuses."

Boosting enrollment is one of AISD's desegregation techniques, and research has shown that desegregation is one of the most effective ways to close achievement gaps between white students and students of color—another of the district's priorities. Vallbona said that she was excited that AISD was intensifying its integration work, and that desegregation had effects that benefit all.

"I think desegregation should be a priority of anything, private and public," Vallbona said. "I think that we are better as a society and richer as a society by having different cultures, different voices. I think it enriches our lives."

## Recruitment revamped with application mentorship program, mailed LASA flyers

JEFFERY KOVAR  
Staff Writer

Administrators at LASA have beefed up the school's recruiting efforts in order to increase diversity for the 2017-2018 school year. The school has come under scrutiny for the lack of minority students attending, including 1.7 percent of the student population being African American and 18.7 percent being Hispanic, compared to AISD's student population, which is 8 percent black and 59 percent Hispanic. LASA has started offering help with the application process from parents of LASA students and alumni, along with mailing out flyers to neighborhoods that it does not receive many applications from. LASA Principal Stacia Crescenzi stated the initiatives were started in order to increase diversity within the application pool.

"The main reason it was started was because we understand that some students are [not] in a household where the parents or the caregivers have either the time or the background... [to] advise their child in a way that can eventually help them," Crescenzi said. "We wanted to level that playing field. We wanted to ensure that other students can obtain that same assistance, whether it's having a conversation about how to get a recommendation... or editing on short answer and essays. We wanted more students to have that assistance."

The parents of the LASA students, along with either a counselor or another administrator, visit targeted middle schools that have little applicants from. They offer assistance to prospective applicants on a range of topics, including teacher recommendations and help with the short answer and essay prompt responses. LASA Academy Director Andy Paulson is assigned to Garcia Middle School to offer assistance.

"I'm going to Garcia, and I'm going to meet five or six different students over there," Paulson said. "All the administrators and counselors have each selected a school where we may not have a whole lot of applicants, so we meet with those parents, we

meet with those students. If they want to apply, then we offer them help for the next six weeks."

51 parents of former and current students were trained in order to aid in the application process. When the mentors went to Martin Middle School, 14 students requested help. This is significantly higher than in previous years, where on average only two students applied. Lorraine Koeper, one of the mentors, hopes her work will help the applicants toward a bright future.

"I strongly believe that having access to high level academic opportunities like LASA can level the playing field for dedicated students from varying socioeconomic backgrounds and provide a launchpad for access to rewarding career opportunities," Koeper said. "I hope the mentoring program will encourage more students from different backgrounds to seek access to the opportunities that LASA provides, and I am happy to support their efforts."

The flyers include the date and time of the showcase, a link to the school website and interesting facts about LASA. Crescenzi said both the flyers and the mentorship program are aimed at boosting diversity, both racially and economically.

"Our hope is that [the flyer] has a similar impact to the long term goal of the mentorship program, which is to increase the diversity of student applicants in the pool, particularly in what middle schools they attend," Crescenzi said. "We want students to feel like 'Hey, I got this in the mail! Maybe I should try to apply to this place!' We targeted successful middle schools students and reached out to them."



The LASA flyer, which was primarily mailed to students in areas which apply to LASA at lower rates than average, shows some of the different activities and experiences available at LASA. photo by Clara Morse

# Facilities

# Assessment

# Process

*continued from page 1*

report, Grayson said that if LASA were to remain on the LBJ campus, an additional building would be necessary to allow for growth at both schools. These suggestions are being considered by FABPAC, which will propose a definitive remedy to LASA's growing pains among a number of other district concerns.

In response to the range of options on the table for LASA, the CAC met on Dec. 7 to establish a consensus regarding which decision would be in the school's best interest. A position statement was produced, which asserted the council's preference that LASA be relocated to a single, independent campus with space to expand the student population to at least 1,600.

"In general, what CAC is pitching is moving to another high school sized campus on a property meant to support a comprehensive high school," Crescenzi said. "If that is unable to happen and LASA remains at LBJ, then additions need to be made that will accommodate both campuses goals for growth. If we remain at LBJ the suggestion is to make that a more permanent statement by having the signage of the building reflect that LASA is there. What the CAC does not want to see is co-location at a different facility, the splitting of LASA into multiple campuses, LASA moving to a new location that is too small to allow us to be comprehensive or LASA remaining at the current location with no new building construction planned."

In the coming months, FABPAC will draft a

Facilities Master Plan to be presented to the public in late Jan. and Feb. 2017 before making an official recommendation to the Board in March. If the FMP is approved, FABPAC will begin formulating the first of a series of bond proposals to address the district's highest priorities. Bonds bearing funding for projects outlined in the FMP will be rolled out over a number of years, and the first could be up for election in Nov. 2017. According to Grayson, any transition for LASA would most likely happen a few years away at the soonest.

"Our job as the FABPAC is to combine the FCA and ESA with information about which schools are crowded or under-enrolled, and what the demographic trends for the next ten year are, and then factor in what we know about the community in general to make sure the recommendations are 'Austinized,'" Grayson said. "This must not be merely a paint-by-numbers exercise that ignores the many factors and issues that can't be measured with a number."

The allocation of district facilities and resources is always a highly political process, and presenting a draft of the FMP to the public is one way the Board is hoping to avoid a negative response that could overturn future bonds. District 1 representative to FABPAC Roxanne Evans said it's hard to predict what aspects of the discussion will prove contentious.

"Certainly, any change must be rolled out strategically and in a way that minimizes opposition," Evans said. "I am grateful for the trained professionals

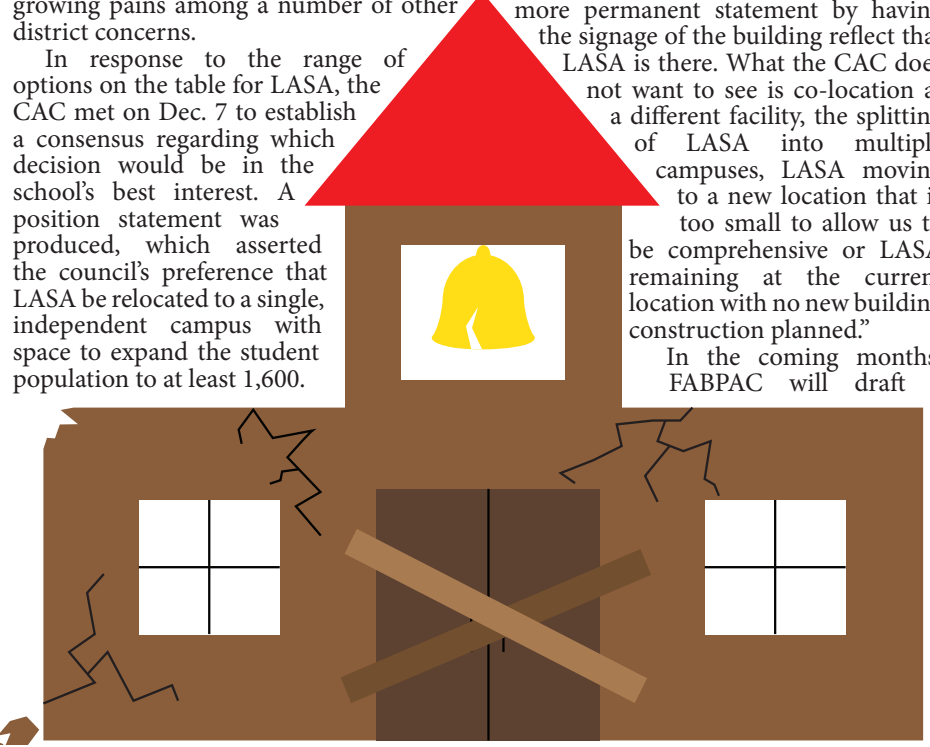
working with FABPAC on messaging and other aspects of the public education and communication process."

Factoring politics into the equation is one significant role of the FABPAC, and a necessary contrast to identify when understanding the difference between the initial consultants' report and the projects that will eventually appear on bonds. The recommendations made by the consultants did not take Austin politics into account, and in many cases will not be realistic for the district.

"[The consultants'] recommendations are made based on the FCA and ESA numbers as well as other data such as the demographic and populations trends and projections for AISD," Crescenzi said. "Seriously, once politics comes into play all bets are off the table. I very sincerely doubt the plan you see adopted by the school board will look anything like these recommendations."

Grayson said that the process of synthesizing the myriad issues faced by the district into an effective plan that accounts for community input will require significant time and patience, and that it is likely not everyone will be happy with every decision. Crescenzi encouraged LASA students and parents to attend community engagement events once FABPAC's proposal has been made.

"Regardless of our location LASA will always be a magnet school that focuses on giving our students the best academic experience possible," Crescenzi said.



# Faculty and counseling staff work to soothe LASA students post-election

**ASHLEY THOMAS**  
Staff Writer

What had been predicted by several polling sites such as FiveThirtyEight and Gallup to be an easy victory for Hillary Clinton turned into a shocking event for America early on the morning of November 9th. Donald Trump surprised the world when he won the 2016 United States presidential election. According to LASA wellness counselor Marissa Rivera, Wednesday was an emotional time for many students as they prepared for what a Trump presidency will entail.

"I think the day right after there were some students who were happy, you know he was their candidate and he won so that's a good thing for them, but for the most part I think students were feeling hesitant about the future of the country," Rivera said. "From a personal standpoint, we have a really diverse population of students from different ethnic backgrounds, religious backgrounds and intellectual backgrounds...all of which at one point were targeted during Donald Trump's campaign. So I think for a lot of those students there was fear about what their future might look like in this country."

The popularization of Donald Trump's campaign since June 2015 has increased the tension between ethnic groups across the world. Over 867 cases of hate or intimidation crimes within public areas have been reported within just 10 days of the election. This phenomenon, referred to as the "The Trump Effect" especially when it manifests in classrooms, has become the subject of several case studies throughout America. Rivera reported that though bullying may not have had a significant increase within LASA, the so-called Trump Effect was felt on campus by many.

"I certainly had students that week come report to me incidents between peers where maybe that person said something that made the other person very aware of their identity," Rivera said. "Whether that be ethnic or religious or their sexual or gender identity it really

made them feel uncomfortable at school. That happens. I think that happened before the election, but I think for a number of people they did experience a tad more following the election. I can only speak with the students that I've seen and students that have come to me with concerns, but I think the other counselors very much saw similar things happening throughout the school."

Teachers and faculty took the stress of students into their own classrooms all throughout LASA pushing lectures aside to address concerns of students for the state of America following the election of Trump. LASA history teacher Kimberley Pettigrew emphasized the importance of taking time to openly talk about students' stances on this issue and exercising tolerance on both sides of the matter.\*

"It impacted people through the fact that they were afraid largely of what the outcome of the election would mean to them," Pettigrew said. "Donald Trump had said things that were threatening to whatever identity they hold, and there was a lot of disappointment since we were expecting the first female president, and that obviously did not go into commission either. We talked through the results, and we discussed what a Trump presidency might look like, but we also talked about ways to make your voice heard if you were not happy with the election and the importance of voting during the election."

Pettigrew said she primarily talked to students about the ethics of going out and voting in order to make your voice heard. Pettigrew claimed students reacted to this well, knowing that in large numbers their voice can make a difference.

"I know the day after the election a lot of teachers really allowed for discussion to take place in their classroom and kind of just put their lesson plans aside so students would be able to openly discuss their feelings and thoughts and really feel supported, and I think that was

great," Rivera said. "Here in the math hallway they let students watch Hillary's concession speech, and at the end of the day, it really is a moment in history. Any presidential election is historic. So I thought that was really great, and I really think it's important that teachers allowed students to do that. As counselors of course we kind of had an open door policy that day and anyone who was having a tough time would be able to come by."

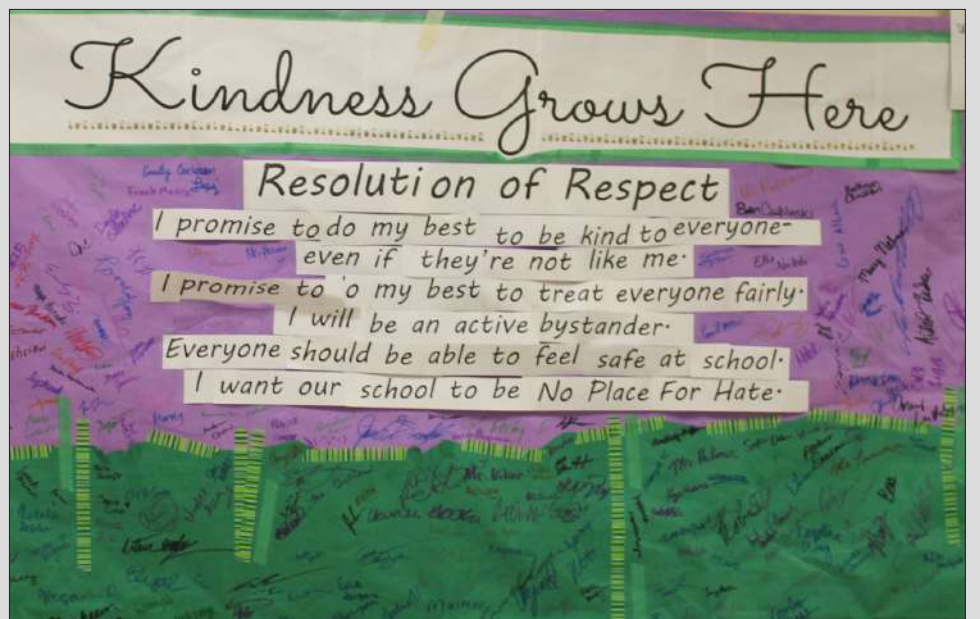
LASA guidance counselor Megan Butler along with the rest of the LASA wellness counseling team, administrators and staff chose to reassure students that LASA will remain a safe place throughout Trump's presidency even though America is unsure of what exactly that will entail.

"A lot of [students] had really personal based fears," Butler said. "I was concerned about that for them so we talked about how to cope with this, and one of the things that we did reassure them was that Austin ISD and our school, LASA, are safe places that are supportive and the day-to-day at our school is not gonna

change based on who the president is, so that they're safe here and we support them."

As a new political reality sets in, Butler said that she's beginning to see students turn to activism and civic involvement as a way to express their feelings about the election. She's been encouraging those who fear for the future to channel their concerns into positive change.

"It all depends on where they fall politically," Butler said. "I think now people are understanding this is the reality of the situation and we need to move forward. I know a lot of people have said 'I'm going to be a lot more involved in politics now,' which I think is great. A lot of people are interested in activism and being more involved, which I think is an appropriate response. I always encourage people to channel their frustration, disappointment or anger and all that into positive change. It's okay to feel your feelings and be upset and move forward with that and channel that into making a difference."



The LASA counseling team created a No Place For Hate poster team and hung it by the main staircase. Hundreds of LASA students and faculty signed their names to show support for the Resolution of Respect. photo by Clara Morse

# AISD families encouraged to vote on three calendar options for 2017-18

**ALDO ORDÓÑEZ**  
Staff Writer

The Austin Independent School District (AISD) has released three possible calendars for the 2017-18 school year to be voted on by the AISD community. According to Carla Roberson, project coordinator for school, family and continued education with AISD, there are substantial differences between the proposed alternatives. The new week-long Thanksgiving break is at risk of being cut back down to three days as only Option A shows the week-long break remaining. While the dates for the start and end of the school year won't shift in any of the options, winter break is subject to adjustment. Option A's break runs from Dec. 20 to Jan. 2. Option B takes two days from the Thanksgiving break and pushes winter break's start date back by the same amount. Option C's break is the same length as Option B but it runs from Dec. 22 to Jan. 8.

LASA Campus Advisory Council (CAC) member Sondra Marks explained that calendar alternatives are generated each year by a community group put

together by AISD. "Every year the district has a volunteer calendar committee," says Marks. "It looks at all the various parameters and makes two to three proposed calendars."

According to Roberson this group, formally called the Calendar Task Force, is comprised of 25 volunteer members drawn from AISD and the community. "[The Task Force develops] draft calendars for the upcoming school year... and present[s] to the families, students, teachers and the community to be voted on by all these groups," Roberson said.

According to Roberson, community feedback factors heavily into the Task Force's planning not only during the voting process but also as the alternatives are being developed.

"As concerns and suggestions are raised by parents and the community, the Calendar Task Force reviews them and tries to add the suggestions to the proposed calendar drafts that are developed," Roberson said.

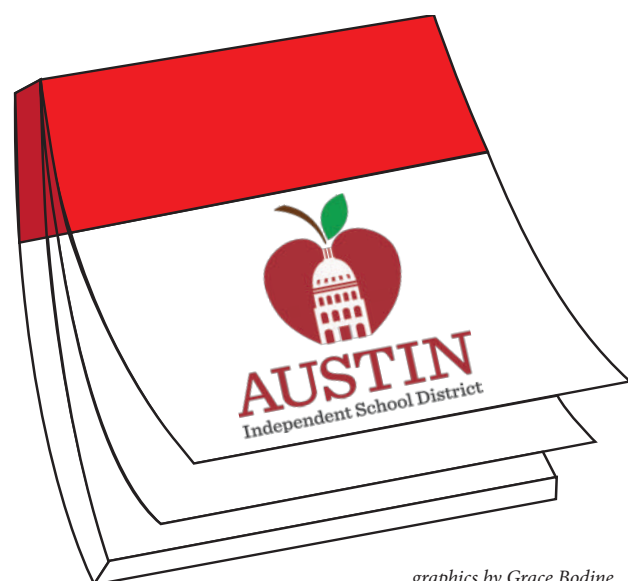
This community feedback process enabled the suggestion and ultimate incorporation of a week-long Thanksgiving break into the calendar for the 2016-17

school year. "A suggestion to lengthen the Thanksgiving break was raised many times, and a draft calendar was created with this as an option," Roberson said. "Last year that calendar was presented for community vote."

Thanksgiving break had always been Wednesday through Friday of Thanksgiving week. This year, AISD schools had the entire week of Thanksgiving off because the alternative that incorporated the change received the most popular support from the school district community.

"The calendar draft with the five day Thanksgiving break garnered the most votes and was presented to the Superintendent and the Board of Trustees,"

Roberson said. The voting process on the alternatives for 2017-18 closed Dec. 7. Along with several other potential changes, the results will determine whether this year's new Thanksgiving break stays or goes.



graphics by Grace Bodine

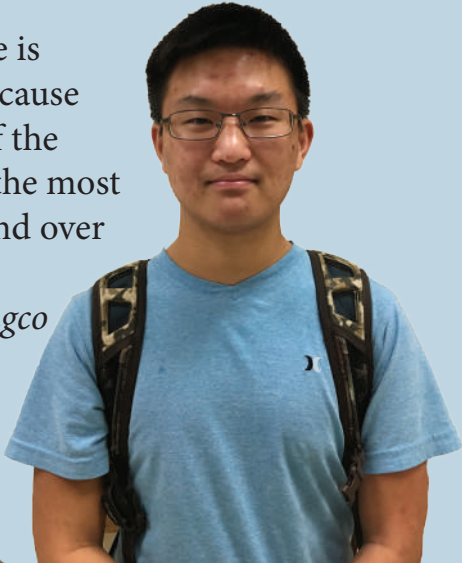
## Lisa asks LASA: What's your favorite movie?

**LISA MOOMAW**  
Staff Writer

As winter break approaches, many students are on the hunt for movies to binge watch while they still have time. In order to get a variety of good suggestions, I conducted a "man-on-the-street" interview, meaning I walked around campus asking people, randomly and out of the blue, what their favorite movie was. While some people looked at me with discomfort or ran away, these were the impromptu responses I managed to glean from my more willing participants.

"My favorite movie is 'Finding Nemo' because it's probably one of the movies I watched the most growing up over and over again."

*Stephenson Gokingco*  
Senior



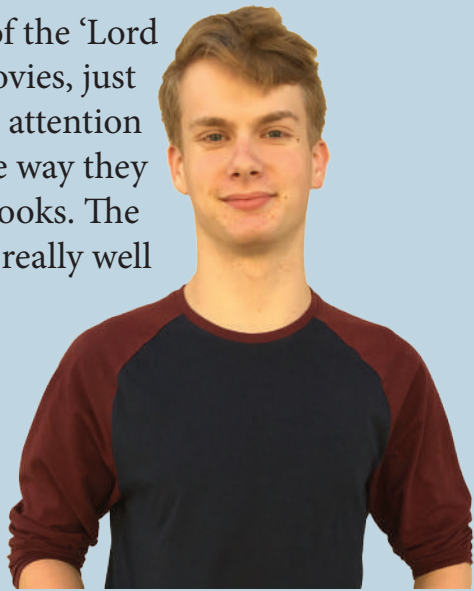
"'Home Alone' Because it's a Christmas classic!"

*Abby Rindfus*  
Freshman



"Probably one of the 'Lord of the Rings' movies, just because of their attention to detail and the way they translated the books. The conversion was really well done."

*Evan Hadd*  
Freshman



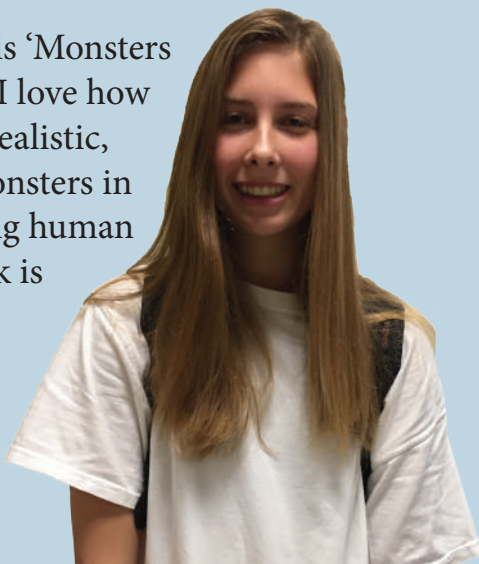
"'Forrest Gump', because it's touching and cute"

*Michelle Su*  
Sophomore



"My favorite movie is 'Monsters University' because I love how the animations are realistic, and they portray monsters in a human world doing human things, which I think is really interesting."

*Kathryn Christian*  
Sophomore



"'V for Vendetta', because I'm a nerd and I'm into comic books"

*Chet Fagerstrom*  
Junior



## Holiday Tradition Returns to LASA



**MAX IRBY**  
Staff Writer

The day is December 13th. Waking up and getting ready for the day is the same as any other Tuesday, and as you stumble into the car and make your way to school, Christmas is probably overshadowed in your mind by the countless midterm exams that you are nervously anticipating. But as soon as you step into the building, the scene around you explodes with holiday themed life. Everywhere you look you can see holiday sweaters, and green, red and white colors shine out amongst the normal clothing.

This is Holiday Flair Day, a spirit day similar to the ones during Homecoming week and throughout the school year. An old school LASA tradition that was brought back during the 2015-16 school year, it is an organized day for students and staff to dress up for the holidays and express their creativity. According to counselor Meagan Butler, they can even serve as an outlet for relieving stress before the end of the semester.

"I think it is a fun way for students to dress up before the stress of finals sets in and celebrate with their friends and teachers," Butler said. "I think spirit days are a way for students and teachers to be quirky, creative, and festive, so I am a fan."

According to LASA sophomore Kendall Kucera, students can use this day as a creative outlet as well.

"I support Holiday Flair Day because I enjoy being creative and showing my passion for the holiday season," Kucera said. "I always enjoy dressing up for occasions like spirit week, and so I support and participate in Holiday Flair Day as well."

Holiday Flair Day is a school wide event, so both teachers and students can get involved in it, which Butler spoke on.

"Sometimes Ms. Aguayo hosts crafting parties for teachers, and one year she made elaborate holiday flair headbands," Butler said.

Events like Holiday Flair Day are useful as receptacles for creativity and pent up stress, but they also can bridge gaps in the student population at LASA, an idea that Joanna Ma, LASA junior and member of Student Council, expanded on.

"Student Council is a social organization, so we facilitate social bonding and school spirit," Ma said. "Coordinated days for dressing up are really great for that because everyone comes together as

one and we're all thought of as one student body."

Events like these are present at most other schools, but Hannah Saquing, a LASA sophomore and a member of Student Council, spoke about how they feel unique to this school.

"I think that [spirit days] promote a lot of closeness in the student body that I think is really unique to LASA," Saquing said. "We have a very unique student population and doing something that brings us all together is always really fun."

Spirit days happen occasionally at LASA, sometimes for special dates and sometimes for no reason at all, other than because students want one to happen. Kucera spoke about how he wants these days to occur more frequently throughout the school year.

"I absolutely think that coordinated days for dressing up should be more common at LASA, because I think that these events can bring nothing but benefit to the student population," Kucera said. "If these events happen more frequently, this will also bring more attention to them, which might result in more student participation and an overall better experience."

Student Council organized LASA's Secret Santa event this year, during which students and staff who signed up were each given another person for whom they bought a gift for without the person knowing. According to Ma, she plans to try and be more involved in planning events like Holiday Flair Day this school year.

"We're going all out this year, because in previous years it wasn't really hands-on for Student Council," Ma said. "This year is more active and we have a lot more activities this year."

Holiday Flair Day was organized by the LASA student council, a group of students elected by the student body to represent them. According to Ma, the council encourages more participation in the event this year.

"The more people that get involved with this flair day, the more excitement and more spirit there will be," Ma said. "That can be accomplished by people wanting to participate in it, succumbing to the idea of dressing up for their holiday of choice. This year was the first year that Student Council took over it and organized it, but we're hoping that as the years go on there will be more and more people participating."

graphics by Evan Hildebrandt

## TOP 5 Christmas Albums

**OSCAR HERNANDEZ**  
Staff Writer

Starting out with a big jammer, there's "Miracles: The Holiday Album" by Kenny G. Opening with "Winter Wonderland", this album instantly transported me into a different dimension of cookies and warm fireplaces, in which I could literally smell the snow around me. I jammed out to some other first-class carols when suddenly, "Silent Night" came on out of nowhere and I could literally see the Christmas tree in front of my eyes, until the tears of sweet, sweet, nondenominational joy streamed down my face. As the album went on, you got some sick beat drops in songs like "Little Drummer Boy", beats which only Kenny G could perfect. Despite this, the album isn't perfect, with somber tones such as "The Chanukah Song", which did not fill me with the holiday spirit the other songs were able to do. Overall, I would give this album 7/9 metal candelabras complete with candles to be lit once a night for nine nights in memory of the Jerusalemites that hid from the Romans for nine nights despite only having enough lamp oil for one.

Following with slightly less of a big lit-fest, but quite the lit-fest nonetheless, we have Noel by Josh Groban. Despite it starting out with "Silent Night", this album definitely did not keep me silent. We instantly got the return of "Little Drummer Boy" with a beautiful guitar to start out in the background. Not a complete rager, but I could feel his voice travel from my eardrum through my brain, and it was pure winter heaven. I kept listening and suddenly R&B artist Brian McKnight himself popped out in an amazing duet of "Angels We Have Heard on High," their singing intertwining like the blaster things in "Ghostbusters". The album continues, suddenly getting real when Faith Hill comes in for "The First Noel". By the end of the album, the soothing voice of Josh Groban had blessed me, with the final song, "O Come All Ye Faithful", being too much for my poor heart. This album was a huge event full of winter joy and definitely deserves 1/1 non-denominational evergreen trees to be decorated for the birth of a shepherd in Israel approximately 2000 years ago.

Third on this list, but still a classic, Mariah Carey comes into play with Merry Christmas. Just hearing the name Mariah Carey was enough to send chills down my spine and as soon as I pressed play and "Silent Night" came on, I died and went to holiday heaven. A couple days before this album listening sesh, I had already jammed to "All I Want for Christmas is You" for at least two hours, so I would consider myself a Mariah Carey enthusiast. But as soon as that song came on again it was as if I had never heard it before, and I loved it as if it was the last song I would ever hear again. The album then continues on, full of songs ranging from fantabulous tunes like "Joy to the World" to even bigger bangers like "Santa Claus is Coming to Town". As I went through the album, there was not a single song I disliked, making this album a huge 13/12 sacrificial goats to promise the return of the Sun God after the solstice.

Now here is a majorly righteous album, These Are Special Times by Celine Dion. As "Holy Night" comes on, the spirit of Christmas can instantly be heard blasting through my earbuds, as I can see people gathering around a non-denominational tree and singing this song. "Blue Christmas" then comes on full blast which is a song which I don't think should exist because there is only one type of Christmas, and that's a white one. The album then instantly makes a comeback with "Ava Maria" when Celine Dion's voice can be heard, which although is semi-tolerable, I could still hear the Christmas angels swimming through the musical notes towards me. One thing this album does include, is "Christmas Eve", a classic which I appreciate, but definitely shouldn't be part of the Christmas spirit of jamming. This is followed by music like "Happy Xmas" and "Feliz Navidad," classics which make this album deserve 4/5 gold rings, 3/4 calling birds, 2/3 french hens, 1/2 turtle doves, and a partridge in a pear tree.

Last but not unbangerly, Christmas in the Aire by Mannheim Steamroller has earned it's spot on this list. A very classical style of music, Joy to the World starts out with an interesting but I guess technically pretty lit instrumental, giving headway to the rest of the delicious journey. "Joseph Dear" is okay but then comes "Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer" which is just a bunch of electronic noise. Not only is it not okay to have that song without any lyrics, but having noises which barely sound like the song itself is completely against what the spirit of Christmas would want. The things that makes this album such an obese wager, though, are songs like "Angels We Have Heard on High" and "Los Peces En El Rio", their usually underappreciated presence is brought up by the following litness of none other than "Steamroller". The album ends with the classic "Jingle Bells", aka an almost perfect ending to this list with 7,650/10,000 gremlins burned alive in a theatre after destroying most of a small midwestern town.

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## A Dance with Dragons

Students connect with cultural roots through traditional dance

GABRIELLE JABOUR  
Staff Writer

Living in an urban American city can sometimes make far away cultures feel distant and unreachable. For LASA students Nishtha Tripathi, Sreenidhi Tupuri, Allison Lee and Angela Li, engaging in traditional dance has provided an opportunity to explore their heritage through immersion in ancient stories, traditions and cultural dances.

Junior Sreenidhi Tupuri and freshman Nishtha Tripathi both spend their weekends participating in Bharatanatyam, a 2000 year old traditional Indian dance from Tamil Nadu, a region of India. Known for its intricate footwork and detailed facial expressions, the poised dances typically depict the stories of Hindu gods and goddesses.

"I got involved with Bharatanatyam when I was six years old," Tupuri said. "For all students, the first years are used to learn the basic movements. Expressions are then added and perfected. All of this prepares the student for their debut, also called arangetram, which translates to 'ascending/entering the stage.' This signifies the beginning of a student's 'career' in dance. I completed my arangetram two summers ago and am currently continuing learning."

Tripathi, who is also involved in Bharatanatyam dancing, began attending classes at Shiksha, a local non-profit organization, when she was five years old.

"I have lessons every Sunday for two hours, with extra classes leading up to [performance] time," Tripathi said. "We usually perform at one event every year called the Telugu Cultural Association. It's [comprised of] all these dances, performances and comedy stand-up acts from Southern India."

Performances are often the highlight of a student's career in dance and provide some of the best experiences to truly connect with the history behind traditional dances. Tupuri says that it is these moments that make dance such a valuable and thrilling experience.

"With my dance school, Austin Dance India, I have been given the opportunity to perform all over Austin in different events. I have also been given the opportunity to go



Junior Sreenidhi Tupuri performs a form of traditional Indian dance known as Bharatanatyam

me become connected and coordinated with my body, as well as provided satisfaction from successfully executing moves," Lee said. "It has also been extremely rewarding to have been able to work my way to the top, and [to] finally [be] able to learn and perform the Ribbon Dance. The Ribbon Dance is a peaceful and beautiful dance that uses long, colorful silk ribbons that is only performed by the senior class, and is considered the hardest dance of the entire repertoire of the school of dance. It requires lots of upper body strength as well as extreme control of the ribbons, otherwise resulting with tangles which can interfere with others."

Junior Angela Li also mentioned the benefits of dance, saying it provided an insight into better understanding her Chinese culture.

"I've always had a disconnect with being Chinese and I wanted to interact more with my culture," Li said. "Doing dance has helped me interact more with my culture because the music and choreography are all from the teacher's background in actual Chinese and Taiwanese cultural dancing. Also, the events we perform at are often for Chinese and Taiwanese celebrations so I get to see how those play out."

In addition to teaching about popular rhythms and movements valued in different societies, dance helps to communicate cultural rituals and languages.

"Doing traditional dance has helped me connect with Chinese culture through the background stories of the dances, as well as the music we dance to," Lee said. "It has introduced me to famous songs from China and Taiwan, which has told ancient traditions/stories to me. I have also become more familiar with the practices of ancient Chinese people through dances like the Equestrian Dance and Dragon Dance, which shows what people used and how they celebrate certain holidays. Through this experience, I have also improved my understanding of the Chinese language, as I've learned many new phrases through the dances and classes."

Tripathi credits Bharatanatyam for helping her connect with her Indian culture and heritage through the universal language of dance.

"Even though I am North Indian, the dance I do helps me connect with India because it's the closest thing I get to being Indian. I can't write or read the language, so [dance is] the only connection I have. [Dancing] has also brought friends to me because I've grown up with the same group of girls and through the years we have all become really close."

Looking back, Tupuri says that dance has not only given her an outlet for exercise, but also a meaningful hobby.

"Dancing is enjoyable to me, no matter what kind, and Bharatanatyam has provided me with an enjoyable activity," Tupuri said. "Since I was only six when I started, it was my parents who put me in the classes, but it was me who chose to continue onwards. I always loved to dance when I was little, but as I was growing up, I noticed that not only did I enjoy dancing and performing, I liked learning more about my culture through dance and using dance as a way to get things off my mind. Bharatanatyam has helped boost my confidence in my beliefs and in general. The community that I am a part of is really rewarding as well."

For anyone who is looking to learn more about their background, Tripathi suggests experimenting with different forms of traditional dance.

"It's good to try new dances and definitely do something that connects you with a culture that you might have lost touch with—especially here in America."

photo courtesy of Sreenidhi Tupuri

## 2016: A Year in the Making

January

David Bowie dies at age 70



"The Fifth Wave" premieres in theaters

Sia releases concept album "This is Acting"

"Life of Pablo" is released by Kanye West

Deadpool peaks as highest grossing R-Rated film

Kendrick Lamar wins five awards at the 2016 Grammys



March



"Zootopia" is released on March 4th

Kendrick Lamar releases "untitled unmastered"

The annual SXSW festival is held in Austin from Mar. 11th-20th

April

Drake's "Views" hits the Charts at No. 1



A remake of "The Jungle Book" premieres

World-renowned artist, Prince, dies on April 21

May



The MCU expands with "Captain America: Civil War"

Ariana Grande releases her third studio album "Dangerous Woman"

June

Nick Jonas releases "Last Year was Complicated", which debuts at No. 2

Ellen DeGeneres stars in "Finding Dory"



July

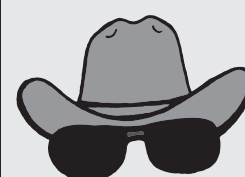


"Major Key" by DJ Khaled is released

Netflix premieres its original series, "Stranger Things," starring Winona Ryder and newcomer Millie Bobby Brown

August

Neo-Western film "Hell or High Water" hits the box office, starring Jeff Bridges and Chris Pine



Awaiting fans receive highly anticipated Frank Ocean album "Blonde"

September



The Weeknd's "Starboy" hits No. 1 on the Billboard 200

"Perfect Illusion" by Lady Gaga is released

"Miss Peregrin's Home for Peculiar Children" hits theaters

October

ACL takes place Sep. 30 to Oct. 9 in Zilker Park

Daya releases "Sit Still Look Pretty"

Emily Blunt stars in "The Girl on the Train"



November



Netflix revives teen cult classic "Gilmore Girls"

Harry Potter spin-off "Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them" premieres

December

Star Wars fans celebrate the release of "Rogue One: A Star Wars Story"

The Trail of Lights lights up Austin



Graphics by Grace Bodine

Information by Aspen Kissingler

## Grandmaster to Kendrick: The History of Hip Hop

SARAH PORTER  
Staff Writer

Hip hop is defined by Google as "a style of popular music of US black and Hispanic origin, featuring rap with an electronic backing", however, hip hop is much more than a music genre. It describes a subculture of fashion, dance, media, and other art forms. Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five, the Sugarhill Gang and Afrika Bambaataa are credited as the pioneers of this subculture. Today, Kendrick Lamar, Drake and Beyonce are known as some of the best hip hop artists in the game. To understand how hip hop went from Grandmaster to Kendrick, you must understand the evolution of hip hop.

Hip hop can be traced back to black Americans' roots in Africa. It was essentially born from West African tribal drum beats and soulful slave spirituals. But disco music from the 60s and 70s made a truly momentous contribution to hip hop music. The slow death of the disco era triggered the founding of hip hop when disc jockeys like DJ Kool Herc and Grandmaster Flash invented and developed the art of manipulating beats and creating music using turntables, or turntablism. Throughout the 70s, hip hop was gradually developing a foundation that resembles music today by incorporating MCs who would rap to an expanding range of beats.

At the turn of the decade, the Sugarhill Gang perpetuated mainstream music with "Rapper's Delight". This 15 minute song is credited as the first hip hop record in history. Soon after, in 1981, one of the most popular rap groups was formed: Run-DMC. Run-DMC laid the foundation for hip hop music and fashion with their unlaced Adidas sneakers and hit singles such as "It's Like That". The 1980s proved to be a foundational decade for hip hop music as LL Cool J released his album "Mama Said Knock You Out", which is just as savage as it sounds while still incorporating hits entitled "Around the Way Girl" and "I Need Love". These 80s hip hop artists along with others such as the Fat Boys and Public Enemy were successful in expanding and developing the groundwork of hip hop culture.

During the late 80s, hip hop experienced an explosion of popularity and diversification that lasted into the early 2000s. This era was rightly named as the golden age of hip hop. If you ask anyone who listens to good hip hop

music about the greatest artists of this genre, they might name anyone from Dr. Dre to the Fugees to T.I. So many artists made significant contributions to hip hop during the golden age. Before the late 80s, hip hop music was mainly described as "gangsta-rap", as artists like NWA and Public Enemy made their debut and later released albums like "Straight Outta Compton" and "Yo! Bum Rush the Show" during the golden age. Although this style of music remained popular throughout the 90s, hip hop artists of all kinds were popping up across the east and west coasts. Because the East Coast is notably the birthplace of hip hop, it also remained the main hub of hip hop music. And the Notorious B.I.G (aka Biggie Smalls) was the crown jewel of East Coast style rap, which was popularized in the early 90s. This subgenre of hip hop music is laden with thick New York accents is known for its lyrical dexterity, and features artists like Erik b. and Rakim, Nas and Busta Rhymes. East coast rap was equally rivaled by West Coast rap, which was more heavily influenced by gangsta rap and party-style beats. Tupac Shakur almost monopolized West Coast rap while enduring his infamous beef with Biggie Smalls. Alternative hip hop also made its debut during the 90s when groups like Digable Planets, De La Soul and the Fugees were introduced. Although alternative hip hop is identified by avoiding the mainstream, it still earned an important spot in the hip hop scene. A Tribe Called Quest, for example, gained remarkable commercial success during the golden age without completely perpetuating the mainstream. Many of their songs, including "Award Tour", "Scenario" and "Jazz (We've Got)" are regarded as classics. While hip hop was largely dominated by record labels located on the east and west coasts, artists and groups like the Geto Boys and UGK inherently pioneered southern hip hop in the late 80s and early 90s. By the mid 90s OutKast, a rap group located in Atlanta, was the first southern style rap group to generate album sales with the same popularity as East and West Coast rappers. Female artists were another minority during the golden age. Artists like Lauryn Hill, Aaliyah, TLC and SWV were just as successful in the industry as their male counterparts, and paved the way for future female hip hop artists.

The most prominent and important theme of hip hop is how it provides a voice for the underrepresented struggles of racism, segregation, and a reclamation of cultural identity for black Americans against "the establishment", or

white America. This is why anti-establishment themed hip hop has remained a popular continuity in the subculture. During the golden age, rappers like KRS-One used their talents and fame to bring attention to adversities faced by black Americans through music and activism. In 1989, KRS-One formed the Stop the Violence Movement after DJ Scott La Rock was shot dead, and a young fan was killed at one of his concerts. He, along with some of the most prominent East Coast hip hop artists, including Heavy D, Doug E. Fresh and Public Enemy, released a single entitled "Self-Destruction" and donated all the proceeds to the National Urban League. Tupac's "Ambitionz Az A Ridah", Jay-Z's "Hard Knock Life", Public Enemy's "Fight the Power", and many more express conflicts faced by black Americans that would otherwise be underrepresented in the media.

After the Golden Age of hip hop ended, with the release of more alternative albums, such as Kanye West's "808s & Heartbreaks", the largely popular gangsta-rap style began to die off, and alternative hip hop became the dominant style. While Jay-Z made his debut during the 90s, he also made revolutionary contributions to hip hop with the release of "The Black Album" and "The Blueprint". Another important post-golden age event that occurred in the 2000s was the disbanding of Destiny's Child. Although this girl group was also widely successful during the 90s, Beyoncé, Kelly Rowland and LeToya Luckett made their solo debut after the group ended their career together. Female rappers like Lil Kim, Missy Elliot and later, Nicki Minaj began to pop up on the scene during the mid 2000s to 2010. Southern rap began to gain mainstream popularity during the 2000s. Nelly's debut album, "Country Grammar" was released at the turn of the century and played an important role in perpetuating southern rap into the mainstream.

Now, hip hop music is one of the most popular styles of music. Mainstream artists include Drake, Rihanna, Beyoncé, Future and Kanye West. Independent hip hop has become the recent trend in the industry with the release of award-winning, record label-free Chance the Rapper's mixtapes. Artists operating on Soundcloud or other music streaming services and artists without strong record label affiliations such as Vic Mensa, A\$AP Rocky, J. Cole and Kendrick Lamar have gained popularity outside of the mainstream.

## LASA MAKEUP ARTISTS

*continued from page 1*

Like many aspiring artists, Miller began her trek to special effects (SFX) makeup when she became interested in online tutorials. SFX makeup is the art of sculpting prosthetics and combining it with cosmetics to create characters. According to Miller, recording her own SFX looks have allowed her to gradually witness the progression of her skills. According to Miller, her first attempts at makeup were significantly different than what she is capable of doing now.

"The first SFX look I've ever did was a burn with liquid latex and coffee," Miller said. "It looked awful, looking back on it now. A month or two ago, I did the exact same look with the exact same materials and now I had a better camera. It looked so much better. It was definitely an improvement."

Miller has been inspired by multiple online tutorials and uses popular reference images as a base for her work. These include animated characters, holiday-inspired, gore and simple makeup effects. In addition to personal endeavours, such as, occasionally pursuing makeup challenges, as shown on her Instagram, Miller also has participated in other activities with her makeup skills. This past October, Miller assisted in the LBJ/LASA theatre production of *She Kills Monsters*. Her works included adding bold makeup to the array of characters of the production. Miller is not the only student to have makeup as a hobby, LASA junior Emmy Gentile has also offered her help to people. Gentile participates in Irish dancing and this gives her the opportunity to experiment and apply her skills.

"I do Irish dance and it's very conservative," Gentile said. "You're not supposed to wear the dark lipstick and it's kind of controversial. I find that I am able to wear dark makeup and it still looks nice. People will tell me, 'Wow, you look so beautiful. No one else is doing this.' That makes me happy."

Unlike Miller who mainly works with SFX makeup, Gentile focuses on "bold" makeup. Bold makeup is comprised of highlighting the face's natural looks with a grander style to accentuate the facial features. Initially, when Gentile began using makeup, she said she was worried that she was finally conforming to what society was expecting her to do. However, over time, Gentile said she was glad to discover ways to defy the stereotypes and expectations of makeup that society has created.

"You have those click bait articles like 'Ten Rules of Makeup,' 'Ten Things You Should Never Do' and it looks like bold eyes, bold lips and all that," Gentile said. "They tell you, 'This doesn't look good or this or you can't do things like this.' I think finding ways to prove that wrong and doing crazy makeup that I think is really cool, I've been told by other people is beautiful."

According to Gentile, there is a gradual change in the methods that modern cosmetics and makeup techniques are being used. She said that there has been a shift from the popularized "cover up your flaws" style to a more of a way of expression. She said this new revolutionized style has brought



Sally Miller shows off her bold makeup that uses shades of blue and yellow. This look was featured on her Instagram. photo courtesy of Sally Miller

her the motivation to continue doing makeup.

"I'm really glad, I don't know if I would have started necessarily if my mom hadn't made me because I think I've always been one of those hard core feminists," Gentile said. "I think this makeup has a bad reputation when it comes to how most people think it's used by people who are insecure to cover up pimples, [to] make your face more narrow and forehead smaller. I think it can be very empowering for women and I think whenever I wear it, I feel more confident because I like how it looks. It's my so called 'war paint.'"

Although Miller and Gentile are just one of the few artists that are part of the greater community, they said they would not pass the opportunity to continue doing their hobbies in the future. From their experiences, they strongly advise to just have the motivation and passion to begin doing any makeup style.

"Just go for it, all you really need is good quality liquid latex and cream paints," Miller said. "Go for it and watch YouTube tutorials, watch everything. Just watch a lot of YouTube, I mean, that's what everyone does. Go for it and keep practicing."

## Capturing the senior moment

**ELENA VENEGONI**  
Staff Writer

A group of LASA students gather at the top of Mount Bonnell. One senior, clad in a black dress, stands as others take pictures from various angles. The sunset is in the background, creating a picture-perfect feeling.

This is the scene of a LASA senior photoshoot conducted by the photography club. Senior portraits are typically expensive, but these students are offering to take them for free. LASA seniors Kiran Topiwala, Casey Dawson and Madeline Lee are at the center of the project, and are the ones planning and taking the photos for the photoshoots.

"I'm an officer for LASA's photography club, and one thing we love to do is have photo shoots and walks," Topiwala said. "I've had many friends ask if I'd take their senior photos, so I thought maybe I could make the shoots a club thing."

These freelance photographers shoot using their personal cameras, and use various local outdoor spots as their backdrops. While all of the photographers have different personal photography styles, each said they find satisfaction in taking senior portraits of their peers.

"I used to focus on street and landscape photography, but recently I've come to love taking portraits," Topiwala said. "I think it's because the subject's expressions are harder to recreate, and the portraits make for a more unique mood."

The service is neatly organized into multiple sessions of five to six people that last a couple hours. According to Dawson, the role of the photographer is far more involved than simply taking the photos. In addition to their camera work, they also help pick out outfits and provide input on locations and themes.

"We try and make the photoshoots fun and exciting and make people feel comfortable because a lot of the time people feel awkward in front of the camera," Dawson said. "When they're happy and forgetting that someone's taking photos of them is when you get the most natural and personal photos."

The mood is an important factor in a photoshoot, according to Lee. Luckily, the mood is usually an upbeat one.

"It's very giddy and wonderful," Lee said. "Everyone gets all dressed up and looks so amazing, and then we get to capture that beauty, which is pretty great."

While the stress of planning the photoshoots may seem daunting to some, these senior photographers approach it with ease, and according to them they take every possible opportunity to practice their skills with a camera.

"It's really fun taking photos, it's my favorite thing to do," Dawson said. "I get to be creative and express myself and connect with people through photos."



Casey Dawson, left, and Kiran Topiwala, right, two of the LASA seniors offering free senior photos. They do shoots for groups of seniors so they can save money on senior portraits. photos courtesy of Casey Dawson and Kiran Topiwala

## Siemen's foundation award

### LASA students participate in science competition, prove successful semifinalists

**GUS ALBACH**  
Staff Writer

The afternoon sun shines through the windows of the lab, and LASA senior Sameer Pusapaty's hand holds a clipboard as he tends to a group of algae. Moving to another table, he transfers data into an open laptop, and slowly working on the project he has spent many of his last few days working on. This project is his submission to The Siemens Foundation Competition, an annual competition that LASA Senior Gina Chen also competes in.

"The Siemens foundation competition is a research competition where high schoolers write a 15 to 20 page research paper about a math or science topic they're researching," Chen said. "It has to be new, original research. All of the stuff submitted is completely new work, which is really cool. You can do math related things, like finding new formulas and theorems, or you can do something computer science related, like optimizing search engines."

This competition hosted roughly 1600 projects this year, with 300 of these projects reaching the next round. Making it to the semi-finalist round does require effort and isn't something that one can expect to win by creating the project in one night, according to Chen. On the flip side, qualification for the next round isn't necessarily based solely on how complex an idea you have. The ability to actually complete the project is what plays a large factor in doing well according to Pusapaty.

"At least for the first round," Pusapaty said. "It's all about endurance: can a student persevere from idea to conclusion? Can they write out every aspect of their project in detail? That's where it really adds."

It's possible that many projects that were started weren't finished because completing a project can take large amounts of time out of a person's life. Pusapaty's project took over a year of solo work, and according to Chen, it can be difficult to find time to work with group mates on the project.

"My group spent about three months working on that project," Chen said. "We stayed up super late while at camp, since me and one of the other two members of my group were camp counselors, so we had to squeeze in extra time to work on the project while also doing counselor things, which was really hard."

Even with the difficulties of scheduling time for working on the competition Chen and Pusapaty were each able to create a successful project focusing on their respective subjects. Pusapaty's project covered the process of converting carbon dioxide to hydrogen gas through algae, while Chen's project studied hypergraphs and their relationship to neuroscience.

Chen's project was mostly completed at a summer camp called Honors Summer Math Camp, which is focused on grouping up, picking a research topic and then studying it. According to Chen the majority of the students at the camp end up applying to the competition, and that it is a useful tool in the process of working on the project. Meeting with a mentor also aided Chen in her completion of the project.

"[Dr. Lucas Rusnak is] the best mentor I've had in the last three years I've worked on projects, and definitely the most involved," Chen said. "We met with him two or three times a week just to go over new ideas or breakthroughs, and our meetings lasted up to two or three hours."

After the many hours spent working on the project both LASA students were qualified as semi-finalists but neither successfully qualified as a regional finalist. Despite this, Pusapaty believes the experience has been valuable.

"Unfortunately I did not become a regional finalist," Pusapaty said. "But I took this as a constructive experience and I look forward to continue my research."

## English teacher wins award

**SARAH MINES**  
Staff Writer

Josephine Icaro, LASA freshman English teacher, sits in her classroom with students who participate in PALS. Suddenly, Principal Crescenzi and Assistant Principal Hernandez walk through the door, a sight that often causes students and teachers alike to think the worst. But this time, they came to share the news that Icaro had received the Outstanding Teaching of Humanities Award from Humanities Texas, a state affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

"They just stopped in and were like, 'Sorry to interrupt class, but we have an important announcement,'" Icaro said. "I thought I was in trouble!"

Icaro said that it was nice to experience the moment with the students in PALS, as she has gotten to know them as both juniors and seniors. But even with her love for the humanities, Icaro was unsure if she should apply for the award.

"I had heard that some other teachers had at least been nominated and were applying too, and I was like, 'Oh, they're such good teachers, should I even try to apply? I don't know, oh well it's worth a shot,'" Icaro said.

Each year, Humanities Texas awards teachers in one of three categories. Ms. Icaro received the Outstanding Teacher of the Humanities Award. In addition to the award, each recipient is given a grant.

"The award includes \$5,000 for the recipient as well as \$500 for his/her school to support humanities instruction," Liz James, the Coordinator of Educational Programs at Humanities Texas, said.

Icaro said that this award shows the value in continuing to teach students humanities. In the future, she said she would like to help students further bring elements from the classroom, like writing skills and critical thinking, into other areas and subjects.

"I think for me at least there is value, again, in showing students that all humanities matter, certainly English, but you can bring in those same skills you learn in a class like mine to anything you do in life," Icaro said. "Just the benefit of writing and knowing what you're doing first and making it meaningful writing as a final product."

Humanities Texas arranges for a presentation of the award at the recipient's school and with their member of Congress or the state legislature, as well. Icaro's students had the opportunity to see Congressman Doggett present the award and celebrate Icaro's accomplishments with cake. According to the Humanities Texas board, Icaro stood out because of her use of many different forms of art and culture into the classroom.

"Ms. Icaro instills a love of learning in her high school students and motivates her students to think critically and to read, write and speak articulately and meaningfully, skills that are increasingly valuable in today's world," James said. "She infuses her lessons and classroom activities with creativity and innovation, making learning exciting and relevant for her students. Her interdisciplinary approach allows her students to develop an appreciation for the humanities. She is an inspiring and effective educator."



Humanities Texas Executive Director Michael L. Gillette, LASA English teacher and Outstanding Teacher of the Humanities Award winner Josephine Icaro, and U.S. Congressman Lloyd Doggett at the award presentation on October 24th. photo courtesy of Humanities Texas



## 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.*

Hanging from the wall by two steel pegs lay yoga mat upon yoga mat. The first few breaths were hard, the room so hot and stuffy that it seemed the air was compressed upon itself with so much pressure that a chemical change had occurred and I was breathing in water. Spread out were about twenty yogis, all in various states of undress. Some wore nothing more than speedos and sports bras, others basketball shorts, one a sweatshirt and leggings. The older and more dedicated people had brought their mats and towels, replacing the drab gray of the provided mats with splashes of pink and yellow and bright blue. I myself opted for the provided mat but I brought my own towel. I wore yoga shorts and a sports bra, positioning myself right in front of the instructor, blocking my view of my own self in the mirror. I didn't realize that part of the whole point of yoga, hot or otherwise, was watching yourself and inner reflection. I ended up being glad I'd chosen my spot as I glanced at the reflections of the room that weren't interfered by the instructor. I saw the people struggling with the intensity of the class and realized that I probably would have intimidated myself and given up.

A friend of mine left the room five times. He was too hot. He was one of the people I'd seen in the mirror struggling against his own ineptitude. So I stare at the mirror looking into all the struggles except my own. The only thing I could do successfully was wipe my mind of stray thought, and even then the voices of my conscience whispered their interactions in the back of my head, commenting on my proceedings. I spent the middle of the class mostly sat on the floor, trying to catch my breath on the mat, drinking water from the bottle I'd bought there and swiping sweat and salt and pain from my brow thinking about the air conditioning and pajamas and rich foods that awaited me when I finished.

I find it hard to be funny while discussing yoga. I felt like an intruder in another culture, an alien attending church. Yoga's purpose is to connect one spiritually, and as a person raised without spirituality, I felt as a bull in a china shop must. What I can tell you is that I didn't see anyone practicing to be closer to any God, from what I could tell. It really isn't my place to say, though. I enjoyed it. I'll go back. But I will feel awkward. Whether that awkwardness is my own innate awkwardness, the awkwardness of being someplace you don't belong, or the awkwardness of being sweaty and near-naked in a room full of strangers, I've no idea. I guess in the grand scheme of things, awkwardness is awkwardness. On a scale of coming out to liberal parents to accidentally revealing the adultery of another, I would say the experience was more toward the former. So there's that.

The line between cultural appropriation and cultural appreciation becomes more and more blurred as the world becomes more globalized. Who am I to say that people shouldn't practice yoga unless they practice for its intended purpose? Not that I would say that. I believe strongly in perpetuating the illusion of free will. It means a lot to a lot of people that their illusion of free will be unperturbed, else they lose the sense of purpose that propelled their lives.

The best part was the Dead Man's Pose. They called it Savasana also, its original Sanskrit name. What was meant to be spent in quiet reflection I spent breathing heavily and trying my best to ignore my rattling mind. If only I could spend my whole life laid still and quiet in that hot room. All rest must come to an end, tough, before the end itself.

I wonder if the hot part of hot yoga is meant to represent the heat of India. I doubt ancient yogis had air conditioning. They may have, of course, but I believe we would have found the rubble of heaters past by now. Perhaps I give humanity too much credit. After all, we still find new dinosaurs that have been hiding right underneath us for the mini-eternity of our existence.

Unless the dinosaurs are new, teleported in by trickster gods. Not to say that is certain, but it would certainly shed some light on how on Earth apes learned to talk, or do yoga.

I jest, of course. And I suppose, gun placed upon my temple by a lunatic chasing laughter, the funniest thing of the whole ordeal were the faces made by the practitioners. Faces were screwed every which way, in concentration, pain or both. I assume mine was in both, but again, I decided to place myself where I could not see myself. I guess I was trying subconsciously to avoid that inner reflection we were supposed to attain. It's always been hard for me to keep track of the thoughts flying about my mind, let alone reflect upon them. I hope that yoga might help me quiet the flurry, and perhaps, later on, learn to reflect as well.

The class seemed to speed by yet also last a million years. It made it more clear to me than ever that time is a human invention. I was sore for days afterward and too lazy to ice anything, and that is that. The endorphin rush was great, though, and I got to get burgers with my yoga buddy afterward. I mean, she got a vegan burger, which is in all honesty a bastardization of a classic American meal, but still. The calories were burned were soon replenished.

I've begun taking a class every week. Let's see where enlightenment takes me.

# Survival of the fittest

JORGE VILLA  
Staff Writer

As students enjoyed their juicy warm cooked turkey and freshly mashed potatoes this Thanksgiving break, LASA sophomore Christian Salinas woke up every day at sunrise to run his daily three miles in preparation for this year's soccer season. After his morning run he would bike to his neighborhood park to shoot some balls and practice his dribbling since he thinks those are his weaknesses as a defender. His passion for soccer started a little bit later than most soccer players. In middle school, after playing soccer for the first time, he found out that he was deeply passionate about what he calls "the beautiful game."

"I'm excited to play the beautiful game with my friends and get to know and make new friends," Salinas said. "I know that sometimes it kind of sucks to stay after school when you have so much homework, but it is all worth it when you see your friends smile as they play on the field."

This year the LBJ soccer head coach Cipriano Martinez decided to change some things that will benefit the soccer team in the long run. One of those things is that he decided to not host any tryouts for his students this year. Instead of having tryouts, Martinez decided to make the first week of "practice" intense so that players would decide to drop out and not directly be kicked out of the soccer team by Martinez himself. He also wanted to have students practice as early as they can because he knows that LASA students don't have a soccer class like the LBJ students. He wants the players to match more or be in the same place in terms of skill. LASA sophomore soccer player Ian McIntosh said that he's excited to be able to again play with his LBJ friends because he doesn't often get the opportunity to play with them.

"I'm honestly pretty excited because I've played soccer since I was around 4 years old and since then it has been my passion," McIntosh said. "I'm excited to play with all my friends a little bit earlier this season because it helps

We just have to keep working hard and play together as one single team.

-LASA senior Filippos Kallivokas

me release some stress."

Just like last year, this season Martinez decided to have two assistant coaches to help him manage the JV team and the freshman team. As the main coach he will be focusing more on the varsity, but he will spend some of his time supervising both assistant coaches to make sure the other teams are running smooth. The first week of practice will mostly consist of running because he wants LASA students to be as fit as the LBJ students who have been taking the soccer class since the beginning of the semester. According to Martinez, before all students can start practicing with a soccer ball, they all have to be equally in shape because LBJ and

LASA might be two different schools, but they are one team. LASA senior and LBJ varsity soccer co-captain Filippos Kallivokas has played for all of his four years of high school, and he believes that this year is the year the Jags get the district championship that they lost last year. LBJ senior and LBJ soccer co-captain Diego Mata will also be the other captain for the Varsity team.

"Last year we were not in the same page on how we wanted to play, we were just very defensive and never knew how to attack," Kallivokas said. "This year I feel like we should learn how to flow better together and I think it is going to come down to how we are going to get goals."

Like Martinez has said during every single practice for the first week, both Kallivokas and Martinez agree that their main goal this season is to go after the District championship. Martinez has also said that the first thing the Jags need to do is work really hard to get back what belongs to them and then step by step go to the playoffs, showing Texas what LBJ soccer is all about. Martinez along with both varsity captains Kallivokas and Mata believe that this season, as one team, the Jags have the potential and the dedication to accomplish all of their goals.

"I think we are going to win and everything so far looks good," Kallivokas said "We just have to keep working hard and play together as one single team."



LASA sophomores Nelson Barnes and Colby Tate both rush to win the ball during practice. Photo courtesy of Liberator Sports Editor Oliver Powers.

## Keeping up appearances

AMANDA PHARES  
Staff Writer

Sweat, tears and sore muscles. Going for a jog on a crisp fall morning while pushing to maintain a steady pace, and being conscious of the food going into the body to have the proper fuel to stay motivated to exercise. These are the things athletes do during their off seasons in order to feel good and in shape when their sport season starts up again.

According to competitive athletes, staying in shape throughout their off season is extremely important. Sydney Kelley, a LASA freshman, is a competitive rower who follows a regular workout routine during her rowing off season.

"In order to be good at your sport, you can't waste time when you come back from the off season," Kelley said. "If you are out of shape then you have to spend time getting back in shape and that wastes time when you could be getting better instead of getting back to where you were."

Starting a few months in advance and allowing enough time to stay in shape and build up fitness is also very important according to LBJ basketball player and LASA junior Ingrid Kinney.

"I usually start to train for my sport two months in advance," Kinney said. "I motivate myself by thinking about my teammates and how I want to be on the same level as them, and not let myself or anyone else down by not being ready for when basketball practice starts up again."

In order to actually stay in shape, it is important that exercising be done weekly and to eat fairly healthy according to LBJ basketball player and LASA sophomore Kathryn Christian and LBJ soccer player and LASA senior Aidan Henderson.

"I don't put myself on a strict diet during my off season because I think it makes it harder to stay motivated to be active," Christian said. "So I just try to be moderate and eat what I want but avoid over eating anything."

In Christian's opinion, eating moderately is the key to keeping a pretty healthy lifestyle during the off season. Eating well is also part of what determines a good first few days of the new season.

"Watching what you eat is important during the off season so that you don't struggle so much when the season starts back up," Kinney said.

While eating healthy is a big factor for making sure coming back to the season after the break goes smoothly, exercising regularly and often is also very important for staying in shape according to athletes. Exercising multiple times a week and being able to build up a steady routine that's easily followable is a key part in being able to stay motivated to keep exercising.

"I exercise three to four times a week so I can maintain my fitness," Henderson said. "It's important to work out regularly so that your body doesn't get used to being sedentary."

For those who aren't as motivated to stay in shape on their own time, exercising can be difficult, but athletes follow certain routines and exercises that allow for less struggle. According to these athletes, whether it be

through the help of coaches, friends, online resources or exercise logs, athletes find some sort of routine or schedule to follow in order to maintain their fitness.

"During our off season, my coach gives us an exercise log to follow and record in every day," Kelley said. "The log has us go on a run or do certain core circuits to strengthen our bodies, and make sure we aren't sitting around during the whole break."

Athletes each do exercises specific to their pace and preference, and have learned some good ways for staying motivated to exercise. They get out there and use those crisp mornings to their advantage, they get together with friends and they help push each other to keep going. These athletes have tons of helpful tricks for how to work out efficiently during the off season.

"I don't really enjoy running so I try to stay away from that.... Sometimes [our coach] asks us to do runs or she gives us a lot of different circuits that focus on different muscle groups that we need to work on," Kelley said. "It's like a series of exercises that we repeat, for example one circuit might be butterfly kicks, then a plank, then a Superman and then one more thing which we will repeat a certain number of times."

While core circuits may work for a lot of people, they don't work for everyone. According to Henderson, the gym is a great place to use to stay fit because of the fact that the gym gives you access to many different machines and forms of exercise all with the convenience of being in one place, and being surrounded by others also working out is inspiring.

"I normally run outside for three miles or I go to the gym and run on the treadmill," Henderson said. "Sometimes I do stairs or elliptical; easy stuff that doesn't take too much time but is effective."

In terms of innovative tricks for staying motivated, athletes Kelley and Christian have plenty of them. Both have learned over the years some helpful ways to get out and be active regularly.

"Doing a tiny bit every day is really helpful," Kelley said. "So maybe instead of doing an hour exercise all at once, try doing a 20 or 30 minute work out in the morning and then one at night, or you can just do a little bit every day."

Short circuits are great in many ways such as they use time wisely, seem to go faster and are usually more intense and therefore get better results, according to Kelley. But longer circuits are great too depending on preference. Christian said that getting together with lots of friends and all motivating each other is a great resource as well.

"Just going around your neighborhood and steadily increasing the time and distance that you're out there will make working out seem less daunting," Christian said. "Working out with friends helps too because it's fun to have someone you can be there with to encourage each other and share the struggle with."

Ultimately, whether it be in the off season or during the season, exercising is important because it's good for your body and mental, and as well as important for your overall life according to Christian.

"It's important to exercise in the off season," Christian said. "Not only for my sport but so I can function and be a happy person all around."

# Marks masters: how an active athletic agenda activates A's

TALIA WILLCOTT  
Staff Writer

Every year LASA students juggle the responsibilities of sports and schoolwork. According to those athletes, their extracurriculars have helped them learn how to better balance their lives. Because they have less available time, those students must learn how to effectively manage their time. Most students argue that sports do not affect their grades at all but there are always ups and downs associated with playing sports. Some ups and downs include having less time for school but staying active keeps students moving and focused.

LASA junior Laney Phillips participates in many sports on school teams as well as outside of school. Phillips' primary sport is dance, but she also enjoys running and swimming. Because Phillips dances and runs year round, her grades do not change much. On the days that she has dance, she drives straight to dance after school and is there until 8:30, which gives her little free time to relax. Phillips prefers to run before school in order to use her time after school to do things that she wants. Phillips explained that having a lot to do after school, especially sports, can be damaging to her grades.

"It's very hard to motivate myself to study at night when I know I'm exhausted and need sleep," Phillips said.

Phillips believes it can also be beneficial. Because playing a sport leaves little free time, students like Phillips master their time management skills and complete their work as soon as possible.

"I know I can't procrastinate because I will have no time to complete my work, so it motivates me to get my work done the day I get it instead of waiting until the last minute," Phillips said.

LASA junior Dylan Cox believes that sports do not affect his grades so much as his sleep. Cox ran for the school's cross country team and dedicates a lot of his time outside of school to running. He has practice 6-7 days a week for 2 hours a day. Because Cox trains year round, his grades and schedule rarely change. Along with running, Cox also plays for the school's ultimate frisbee team. It takes up 2-4 hours a week. Overall, Cox believes sports do not affect his grades so much, but he would get more sleep

if he wasn't so involved in running and ultimate frisbee. "Most of the time I either have to get up really early for morning practices or stay late after school to have practice and don't get home until 8 or 8:30 which means I eat late and stay up late doing homework," Cox said.

Mia Cooper, a junior at LASA High School, plays soccer for the school and for a club team. Playing on a club team like Cooper's team, the Rangers, takes up more of her time than normal, according to Cooper. She has 2 hour practices twice a week and frequent games that are not always in Austin.

"The way that club soccer mainly affects my schedule is that I spend the majority of my weekends out of town, for example a game in San Antonio at 4 is really an all day affair because of having to arrive an hour early, so 3, which means I have to leave

is year round, Cooper rarely sees her grades changing due to sports, although she will say that her grades are generally better when she is not playing school soccer.

"The thing I notice most is grade related stress is increased during soccer season, meaning I feel way more stressed about being able to make an A in a class where I wouldn't be stressed during soccer season, but it is manageable," Cooper said.

LASA senior Eunice Kim is a dancer for the school's dance team, the First Ladies. Since they only meet during football season, Kim's schedule is full of late night practices and last minute dance rehearsals. During this part of the year, her free time is limited and she has to choose how to spend it wisely.

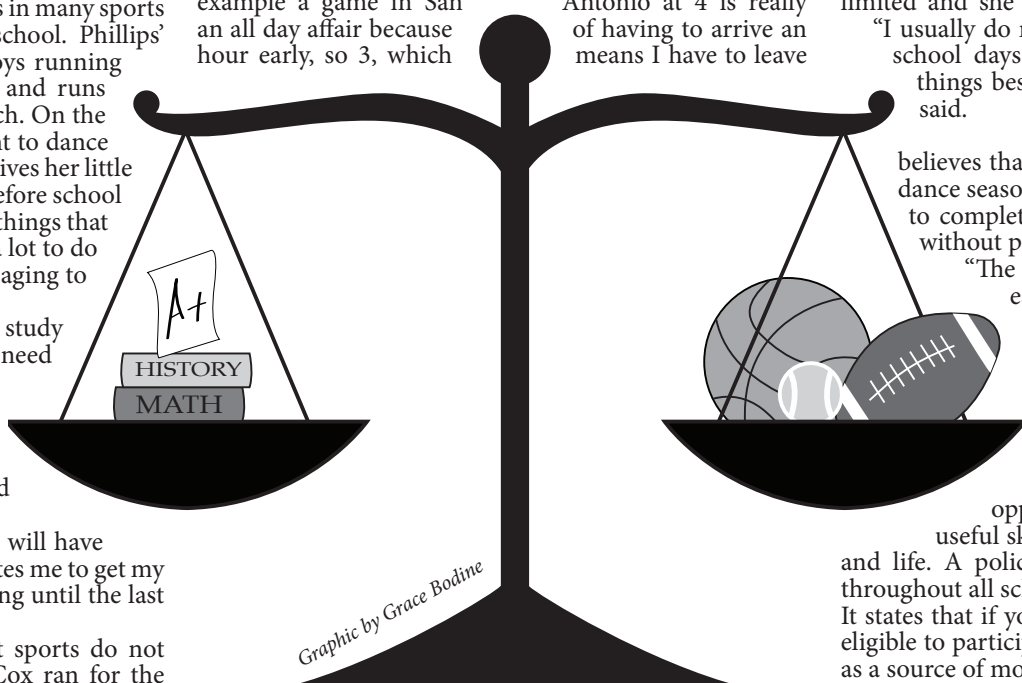
"I usually do not get home until 6:45-7:00 on normal school days so that leaves little time to do other things besides homework on school nights," Kim said.

Because her time is crunched, Kim believes that her grades are not as good during her dance season. She does have 30 minutes after school to complete her homework, but only on the days without pep rallies and football games.

"The time I miss during class when we leave early for a pep rally does affect my grades negatively because I don't have time to study for a test I have on Friday on Thursday, and I miss important information when I am gone from class," Kim said.

Although there are some downsides, dance has given Kim an opportunity to learn multiple important, useful skills that can be applied in dance, school and life. A policy within the First Ladies dance team throughout all school sports is the "no pass no play" rule. It states that if you do not pass your classes, you are not eligible to participate in the said sport. Kim said this acts as a source of motivation for her to do her best in classes, or at least pass. Kim said she has learned many other great skills like time management and focus, an assertion made by most of those interviewed.

"Being an officer on First Ladies has taught me dedication and determination, as well as it's taught me to stay on task, which definitely translates to school," Kim said.



my house around 1 and won't be home until 8." Cooper said.

When the school's soccer season starts, Cooper's schedule becomes even more crowded with practices and games almost every day of the week. Because club soccer



LASA junior and LBJ lacrosse goal keeper Anisah Aguilar defends the goal from an incoming shot during the team's shooting practice. "It's so fun getting to know people from different grades," Aguilar said.

## Look into girls' lacrosse lives, lasts long past male demise

RILEY MURPHY  
Staff Writer

They fly across the field, gracefully turning away from each other, staying just far enough not to crash with every twist. Their sticks clash together as LASA junior and LBJ lacrosse midfielder Lauren Mangibin launches the ball like a catapult, straight towards the goal. It flies fast, soaring past the goalie's head into the narrow net behind her. The players give a short cheer as they set up for their next point.

"Girls lacrosse is somewhat of a contact sport, meaning we are not allowed to push and shove people with our sticks or anything, but if you have an aggressive defense that sometimes ends up happening," LASA junior and LBJ lacrosse goalie Anisah Aguilar said. Since it is a low contact sport, major injuries are not too common in lacrosse. The players risk mostly bruises from clashes with sticks and other players, but sometimes things can go bad quickly.

"The most common injury is a concussion," Aguilar said. "Last year we had two girls out from concussions and two from getting their legs caught in holes on the field."

A concussion can put a player out for two to three weeks, which is very bad for the fairly small team. Some precautions are taken in the form of rules restricting certain conduct and penalizing overly aggressive behavior, but injuries still happen.

"We wear eye protection and mouth guards because sticks and balls can fly in our faces when we check people or throw the ball," Mangibin said. "Goalies have to wear all the padding and the large helmet to protect themselves because balls are crashing into them."

The lacrosse team is too small for two permanent teams, but they still play as both junior varsity and varsity by switching players out of each.

"There are two teams, if there are enough players, JV and Varsity," Mangibin said. "Usually if there are not enough, then we have swing members, who are girls, sophomores usually, that play on both JV and Varsity."

However, having so few players allows for heightened cooperation between the girls, since they all know each other well.

"Usually for varsity, we know each other a lot better and we communicate easily with each other," Mangibin said. "We know each other's mistakes and strengths and weaknesses, and worries because it's all part of the game. If you don't know your teammates that well, it hinders the progress of the team as a whole."

Having a smaller team also makes traveling to competitions easier, since there are less people and less gear to transport. It also improves cooperation between the players.

"While having fewer players will mess with the teams a bit, it benefits us by making travel easier and all the girls know each other and get along better than a very large team would," LBJ lacrosse goalie coach Sean Riordan said.

Since the team is smaller than usual, they generally accept anyone who wants to play lacrosse, regardless of their skill level - or lack thereof.

"A smaller team gives more opportunities to those who haven't played much before, and allows them to work harder and get more acquainted with the sport," Riordan said.

Girl's lacrosse competes against Bowie, Austin High, and McCallum during their season and play any other Area high schools with lacrosse teams. They participate in two tournaments through the year, the first used almost as a refresher for all teams involved, and the second as an actual competition against high profile schools from all around Texas.

"The tournament in January is meant to be a relaxed competition to get schools acquainted with lacrosse," Mangibin said. "Several different schools in Austin and Pflugerville come to play during the tournament, and the games are really short. It's a way to try things out and see what techniques will work and what won't. The second tournament is Aggieland and is only for Varsity. It's at Texas A&M, and schools from all areas come to the tournament to play. It's harder to win games because of the intensity of the teams, but it's still lots of fun."

## Lonestar, Lone League: Restrictions on Top High School Soccer Players

LASA soccer players have to give up school soccer for a more intense soccer environment

SERGIO FLORES  
Staff Writer

The soccer pitch is quiet as the players slowly file back into the locker room. Steam from the showers cloud the air as the team cleans up after a successful practice. But there's someone missing. Their absence in the locker room is surprising to anyone who has seen them play soccer.

That person is LASA senior Tony Lopez. Lopez is a soccer star who plays for Lonestar SC in The United States Soccer Development Academy (USSDA). The USSDA is the highest level of youth soccer in the United States, with connections to professional clubs like AS Roma, a professional soccer club based in Rome.

"Soccer clubs have different levels of play or leagues, there's premier, division 1, division 2, et cetera," Lopez said. "Lonestar is the only club in Austin that has Academy, which is the best level of soccer you can play at before college and pro."

There are restrictions on when, where and who one can play for when one plays for Lonestar, because Lonestar Academy players sign a contract that restricts their participation in other soccer activities.

"One of the rules of the Development Academy Program is 'No outside participation for full-time Academy players,'" Lopez said.

There can also be severe consequences if a Lonestar Academy player gets caught playing for school, since they are contractually obligated to only play for the Academy.

"If we get caught playing school soccer, the U.S Soccer Development Academy fine the club and the player gets suspended from the league," Lopez said.

There are very legitimate reasons for Academy players not being able to play for school, Lopez claims.

"They don't want us to get injured playing outside of the league," Lopez said. "Another reason is that playing in the Academy is very time consuming, we practice four days a week, we have games on weekends, and we also travel a lot. Playing school soccer would just take up more time from our day."

Lopez has had school soccer experiences in the past. They were more lighthearted than his time playing at Lonestar Academy, he says, since he isn't

contractually compelled to play for the school.

"I had a bunch of fun and it feels good to represent and win for your school," Lopez said. "There was no worries about winning and performing well in front of U.S national scouts and college coaches, it was all fun and games."

LASA freshman and soccer player Gabe Price agrees with Lopez.

"It sucks that we can't play for school after we sign to Academy, honestly," Price said.

Lonestar Academy isn't the kiss of death when it comes to playing school sports, though. Players have other options, according to Lopez. The contract only applies if the players believe they are being treated fairly.

"Players have a choice of playing high school soccer or Academy," Lopez said. "Usually, players in Academy who don't get playing time quit to play high school. The main goal of the Academy is to develop players and get them to play college and professional soccer, that's why they want them to focus more in the Academy than other outside sports."

Lopez said his focus is on Academy as opposed to school at the moment, as it offers more opportunities than school, a fair reward for the rigor and loyalty required when one plays for Academy.

"I support Academy soccer more, it's way more competitive and it's filled with many opportunities," Lopez said. "U.S national scouts and college coaches watch us play, we go to college showcases, visits colleges and we play out of state. There's just more eyes on you, more recognition. It's a step closer to becoming a pro."

LASA sophomore True Pham plays for Lonestar, but not for the Academy. He had similar views to Lopez.

"Lonestar is more intense and so a benefit of playing for the school team is not having so much stress and playing more relaxing soccer," Pham said. "Also, there is a better feeling of comradery from being with the school players more than the Lonestar players because you'll see your teammates everyday during and after school."

Lonestar and school soccer both offer different opportunities for different people. True Pham and Tony Lopez offer important insight as to why a player would choose Lonestar Academy over representing their school.



LASA senior and Lonestar player Tony Lopez poses with his team for a picture. Lopez cannot play for the LBJ soccer team because of his time commitment to Lonestar. Photo courtesy of Tony Lopez.

## Say do you remember: dancing in December?

KENZA MCKERRIHAN  
Staff Writer

Finishing their hair and makeup, the LBJ First Ladies await their competition nervously after dedicating many hours of preparation. When they go out on stage in front of hundreds of spectators their routines are pristine.

The First Ladies dance team performs during football season, competition season and spring show season. They just finished football season and are headed into competition season, their dynamic changing with what their practices work toward.

"Football season is more restrictive dance-wise because we have to have traditional drill team dances [like] kick, pom [and] field jazz," LASA senior and LBJ First Lady captain Lydia Rodgerson said. "Apart from pep-rally dances, we have to dance to band music and wear layers upon layers of a sparkly cowgirl-like uniform. During competition season, we practice and perform lyrical, contemporary, hip-hop, jazz and novelty dances."

According to Rodgerson, competition season is the time of year where the First Ladies are able to perform and practice the more artistic aspect of dance. Another difference between football and competition season is that the First Ladies perform once or twice a week throughout football season and while competition season is longer, then they only perform once.

"During competition season, it's all about training and practice," Rodgerson said. "The majority of competition season is preparation, while the actual competition is one or two days. We try to condition our girls, build up endurance and technique and overall make the team more elite during this season."

According to LASA senior and First Ladies captain Eunice Kim, the First Ladies have grown a lot. Competition

season requires all the girls to be acquainted with different types of dance such as ballet, hip-hop and jazz, and the goal is for everyone to excel in all types, according to Rodgerson.

"We are starting to get so much more technical than when I first joined," Kim said. "As the captain this year, it has been my goal to introduce the First Ladies to more difficult levels of dance styles and techniques. I hope that we will prove that at this year's competition."

Rodgerson, Kim and LASA and LBJ dance instructor Shelby Miller have ambitious goals for the First Ladies. Rodgerson said she hopes to raise the First Ladies to a more elite level and bring home some trophies.

"[Competition season] is more about the team itself rather than the school and students the First Ladies represent," Miller said. "Starting in November we prepare at least three routines in different styles. We learn these routines, drill them, clean them and make whatever changes possible to perfect these routines. Then we compete!"

Competition season requires a lot more fine tuning, according to Rodgerson, who said that during competition season the First Ladies practice everyday for at least two hours. The team works with a choreographer or they start choreographing dances themselves.

"When it's getting close to competition day, we have dress rehearsals and practice performing in the gym, and typically we start practicing over the weekend as well," Rodgerson said. "Competition lasts all day, and it is the hardest workout of your life; usually it's hard for me to get out of bed the next day."

Not only are the practices hard, but in order to compete in the dances members of the team may have to try out, according to Rodgerson. Much of the time at practice is dedicated to perfecting the multitude of dances that

include three to six team dances, two to three officer dances, a senior dance and several solo pieces, according to Rodgerson.

"Every team participating in competitions prepares however many dances they want to compete," Kim said. "We have to figure out the music, costumes and the themes ourselves. We are scored based on our performance and showmanship—how we portray ourselves to the judges, specifically our emotions, costumes and makeup technique; the level of difficulty of our technique; and our cleanliness—how together we are as a team."

At the end of the show the highest scorers based on those combined scores are ranked. According to Kim, the months of practice that the team puts into preparing for the competition and all the minute details they must perfect, including facial expressions to style of dance, are all worth it because she loves competing.

"I love the rush I get at competitions, and I can't wait to compete our dances," Kim said.

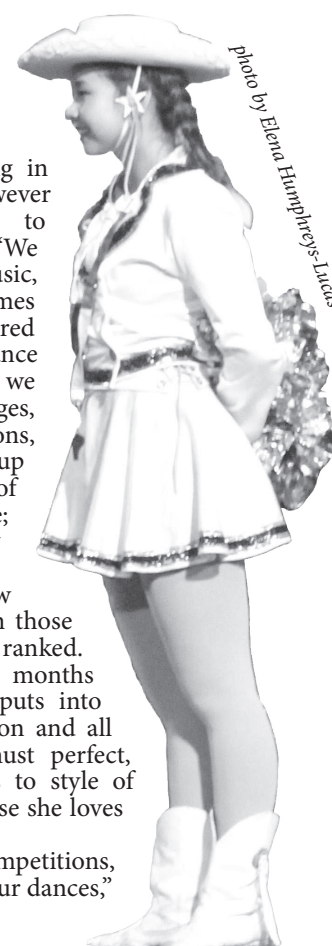


photo by Eleana Humphreys-Lucas

## Jags slam with the best

Jags keep a cool head going into the season

TREVOR ANDERSON  
Staff Writer

A new season brings many different things, but for the LBJ Jags, it brings new expectations and new challenges. According to the Texas Association of Basketball Coaches, the Jags are ranked number two in the state and are expected to do extremely well. Overwhelming victories against Stony Point and Round Rock highlight the early season. Now, LBJ basketball head coach Fred Roland and Assistant Coach Brandon Wilson and the rest of the team are ready to prove they can live up to the hype. Last year the Jags went undefeated in their district, and now they've got their eyes on the State Tournament.

The ranking doesn't mean much to Head Coach Fred Roland. Roland knows that all he can do is keep his team in line and let their hard work earn their place.

"I don't pay attention to those rankings much, because they're just a group of guys sitting around the table, making decisions," Roland said. "They may know what they're doing, but the game still has to be played, and anything could happen."

For Wilson, no mistake is too small. Wilson makes sure that in every practice and game, the Jags are as thorough and precise as they can be, so when the games really count, they don't happen.

"We have to really pay attention to detail, and be very particular in watching film, the tapes of a game, to analyze how we're doing," Wilson said.

To him, it's the small stuff that will matter the most when it comes time to head into the playoffs. All of the teams they will be facing have a good amount of talent, but what will separate the good from the best is the small, crucial details in everyday practice according to Roland.

"We have to be positively critical to our kids, dotting our i's and crossing our t's every week," Roland said.

Wilson agrees with this mentality and wants to continue this practice of comprehensive coaching.

"Not bypassing anything that is negative," Wilson said. "We need to be thorough, making sure everyone knows their job, and making sure they execute on it."

A real highlight of this season, for Wilson, will be the opportunity to see the seniors play. LBJ and LASA seniors are truly the backbone of the varsity squad, and the coaches are extremely excited to see how far they can go this year.

"I coached [the seniors] when they were freshman, so this is my first graduating class of kids since I've been here, and those guys were very successful guys when they were freshmen, they only lost like two or three games, and to see them grow up and mature, and have the opportunity to possibly go to state, that's a great feeling for me," Wilson said. "I love coaching these guys, and seeing them perform the way I know they're capable of is going to be great."

LASA senior and basketball player Zach Sessa is one of the team's top contributors, according to Wilson.

"[Sessa]s gonna be very pivotal coming off of the bench," Wilson said. "He was with me as a freshman, great kid, understands his role, doesn't complain, but when he comes in he's very positive."

Sessa likes to bring positive energy to every game, even when he's not on the court. According to Sessa, since he was a freshman, even when he wasn't playing, he always could be counted on for positive encouragement and a great attitude.

"I just want keep energy really high on the bench, and spread that energy throughout my whole team, and bring positive energy to practice and games every day," Sessa said.

This year, it'll take more than just seniors to get the team to the State Tournament. The varsity team needs strong underclassmen too but luckily the Jags have no shortage of those, either.

"Just about every single one [of the underclassmen] on our team are very good, we have some great underclassmen, sophomores: Bryan Batts, and Austin Roland, we have a very bright future with those two and the rest of the underclassmen," Wilson said. "Also, we have a senior, DeAndre Johnson, and he signed a letter of intent to go to a college in Kansas. We also have a junior, Shasirae Harvey, a sophomore, who's a very excellent, explosive point guard."

Harvey has been on the varsity team since freshman year and Wilson said he couldn't be prouder of him.

"He's been leader since he was a freshman, and he's been a very good player for us, and he's really matured especially this year, so I expect him to have a very good junior and senior year," Wilson said.

According to everyone on the team, the goal for this season is state, and they're doing everything they can to make it happen.

"For me, it's state or nothing else, we have to get to the state tournament, I'm not necessarily gonna say we have to win it, but I think it'd be a very disappointing year if we don't at least make it to state in San Antonio," Wilson said.

Roland thinks that they can't expect to just breeze through their games. It's when a team gets overconfident that they are the most vulnerable, and Roland has no intentions of underestimating everyone. To him, the game can be changed in a matter of seconds, and he doesn't want the varsity squad to ease off the intensity at all.

"In our district, right off of the bat, before we go into the holiday, we've got Reagan, and I'd put them right there with us," Franklin said. "And McCallum suffered a tough loss earlier this month, but they're well coached and have a good ball-club, and y'know, everyone in a bad night can be beat, everyone has bad days. It's hard to think that you can go undefeated, at any level, high school, college and the NBA, just because there's so many games, so we've gotta learn from the losses. We may not be good enough to win every night, but we want to be good enough to win the close ones."

To beat their opponents, Sessa expects nothing less than 110 percent from himself and his teammates, and he thinks that that will be the key to going to, and possibly winning, the State Tournament.

"I want them and myself to bring energy and make the most of out playing time, and I hustle my hardest whenever I have the chance," Sessa said. "If we do that, there's not many that could stand in our way."

The best part of the team, for Sessa, is the sense of family that the team has. He is glad that the team is as well-coached as it is, and he knows the players have great drive and truly want each other to succeed.

"[The coaches] are very smart and knowledgeable about the game, and I mean, [the players], you can just feel the passion that they have, for basketball, in that community, that's really awesome," said Sessa. "I love having the feeling that [the team] has your back and wants you to do well, but also the responsibility of having to cover someone else, that overall sense of community and being a tight-knit family."

## Past playoffs remembered

CURRIE LARRIMER  
Staff Writer

The LBJ Jaguars football team has recently proven to be strong competition based on their undefeated record of 6-0 in district play this year in the Austin ISD District of 25-5A. In 2014, the team went the farthest they had been since Coach Andrew Jackson became the head coach for the 2013 season. The team pulled together and competed through to the quarterfinals, when they fell to Vandergrift with a final score of 40-35. After losing teammate Jermaine Dillard, the Jaguars persevered and continued to play their best in honor of him.

"That team to me, was special because of the leadership we had," former LBJ quarterback Avery Jackson said. "We had a lot of guys on that team that just refused to lose. And also the adversity we went through losing Jermaine pushed us to play for him. Jermaine kept us going. Losing him just gave us that more motivation. From the start of the season I had already had it set in my mind that I wanted to make a deep playoff run and I refused to lose. And we had a lot of others with that same mentality. Plus the loss of Jermaine, we just had so much to play for."

Each and every teammate came together to dedicate the remainder of the season to Dillard, according to the team. There was a common goal to succeed for him and that brought everyone even closer than they already were.

"I believe the reason that we were able to go so far in the playoffs was that the team actually connected and we built a special bond that was increased by the death of Jermaine," former LBJ guard Dietrich Heard said.

In 2015 and 2016 the team only made it to the first round of playoffs before being defeated. The difference in 2014 was the family mentality which pushed them to compete to the best of their ability and encourage each other to do the same. Going so far allowed the team to bond and become more of a family than they had in past seasons.

"I was more scared to let down my teammates than myself," LBJ's running back Deon Collins said. "It taught me to never take anything for granted. You can be up at one point and down the next."

Deon was a freshman in 2014 but said he was still greatly impacted by the sense of community and brotherhood that came from the season.

"Honestly the best part of being a part of that team was how close we were to each other and how we were all playing for something bigger such as the community," Heard said.

When the team realized what they were playing for and that they each had something so important invested in their journey it became a season that was important to more than just the boys on the team.

"I think our motivation to play so hard

was that we wanted to honor Jermaine by not falling to our curse in the first round. When we got going we really brought a positive image to the community and we loved that as the younger schools came and showed their support for us and how all the younger kids looked up to us. That really made us proud and we felt a need to continue this image," Heard said.

The intense competition that came with going so far in the playoffs helped the team grow in areas other than on the field. They began to work toward proving themselves to everyone who thought they couldn't succeed and claiming the biggest achievement in recent history. While Vista Ridge has taken the Jaguars down in the first round of the playoffs before, in 2014 the Jags turned the tables.

"All of the teams we played were great opponents but I would have to say my favorite was when we played Vista Ridge in the first round of the playoffs," Heard said. "We consider them our across town rivals and they were picked to beat us so we played our hearts out that game and came through with the dub and it left all the sports casters wondering, 'How far can they actually go?' Even though they still doubted us, we prevailed and kept proving them wrong until they bought into our team and we became a local hope for the Austin area, especially the east side of Austin."

Not only did that season motivate the team to do their best for their school but it also prepared them to take on bigger things like college football. Multiple seniors went on to play football in college including Avery Jackson, Zae Giles and Dietrich Heard.

"That season gave me more confidence as a player and made me better as a competitor because we made it to the final eight," Jackson said. "That's how good the competition is at the next level so facing more of those next level players helped me."

This season changed the lives of the players, coaches and every fan who became so invested in the game as the team continued to push through and conquer what no one had expected. The Jaguars have not gone as far in the playoffs since the 2014 season but have made it to the first round both years since then.

"Playing on that specific team was an honor," Heard said. "We were looked on as the team that broke records and made history. Everyone says we were the best team to walk through LBJ and that's a privilege to be called and be a part of. That changed me to where I was more proactive with the team and I played with a passion not for the game but to be in a brotherhood and it was pretty awesome to play with all my family. That was truly amazing and I wouldn't change that for the world."





LBJ junior point guard Shasirae Harvey and LBJ senior power forward Allie Green corner Liberty Hill ball handler in the first of their 69-63 win on Dec. 6 at the LBJ gym. Photo courtesy of Liberator Sports Editor Oliver Powers.

# Students lend a helping ham


This year students were given a week off to enjoy Thanksgiving. With this downtime, LASA students were not only able to relax, but were also given an opportunity to display their thankfulness through helping their communities. LASA's Sending Out Support (SOS) Club visited Marbridge, a home for intellectually disabled adults, where a Thanksgiving event was being hosted. Students made crafts, played games, and visited with the adults. Other students also worked to spread the spirit of Thanksgiving over the break.




 Sophomore and SOS Club officer Sarah Chieng said Marbridge was a positive experience. “Marbridge was a really cool way for club members to see their hard work in action,” Chieng said. “We got to interact and form friendships with groups LASA students wouldn’t normally get to interact with.” *photo 1 and 4 by Olivia Tung*

 Sophomore Anna de la Fuente’s mother runs an organization called A-Tribe that meets every other Thursday whose main purpose is to provide a community for young adults. One of their meetings was supposed to fall on Thanksgiving so rather than putting the meeting on hold, de la Fuente said they decided to put out fliers offering a place for people to eat and talk if they didn’t have anywhere to go for Thanksgiving. “There were around twenty people total, from all walks of life,” de la Fuente said. “There was a man that traveled the U.S. in his van, a woman and her husband who were recently married, a man from Puerto Rico, and a man who was in visiting from Canada as well. We did this because that’s the whole point of Thanksgiving. Reaching out to strangers, opening the table, and rejoicing in the fact that there is plenty.” *photo courtesy of Anna de la Fuente*



 Senior Matthew Prinz volunteered at the Central Texas Food Bank Monday Nov. 21 and Tuesday Nov. 22, because he wanted to help his community. “On the first day, I moved food from collection boxes and gave them to other volunteers who sorted it and threw out the bad

stuff,” Prinz said. “On the second day, I sorted fresh produce. I worked with cans, boxes, bottles, and other packaged food.” *photo courtesy of Matthew Prinz*

 Sophomore Kimmy Wilson also volunteered at Marbridge over Thanksgiving.

“Marbridge was a super cool experience, and I had a great time working with one of the residents there to solve a puzzle,” Wilson said. “We’ve been planning this event for weeks, and it was super rewarding to see it all happen. Serving the community is something I enjoy doing and SOS Club provides those opportunities.”

