

JAGUARS WRESTLE FOR DOMINANCE



Senior and LBJ wrestling team captain Teague Hartigan grapples with an opponent at the Jan. 25 game against Lanier. photo by Emma Jane Hopper

see page 15

RISINGER LEADS TRIP TO THE MALL

LASA students and government teacher Ronny Risinger travel to D.C. to witness the 2017 presidential inauguration, and reactionary protests, first hand. photo by Trevor Anderson



see pages 8-9

CELEBRATING THE NEW YEAR

Junior Roy Stracovsky yoyos at the Jan. 21 Chinese New Year festival at Connally.



see page 7



photo by Olivia Tung

the liberator

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LASA relocation plan recalls painful history



Members of the LASA community discuss the FABPAC's plan for district facilities with AISD Superintendent Paul Cruz and FABPAC members at a Jan. 24 community engagement meeting hosted at McCallum High School. The group provided feedback on LASA's proposed relocation to the site currently housing the Alternative Learning Center, a plan that is no longer being considered as a serious possibility. photo by Roxy Bonafont

ROXY BONAFONT
Editor-in-Chief

A plan to move LASA to the Alternative Learning Center (ALC) has been abruptly walked back after members of the LBJ and East Austin communities expressed outrage at the proposal. Passionate objections to the relocation arose in a Jan. 26 community engagement event hosted at Gus Garcia Young Men's Leadership Academy and led by representatives from the Austin Independent School District (AISD) and the Facilities and Bond Planning Advisory Committee (FABPAC). Ana Irizarry, a member of the LASA Campus Advisory Council (CAC) who was present at the Jan. 26 meeting, recalled the "very strong sentiment" that dominated the evening.

"People were very angry and were passionate about LASA not going to the ALC," Irizarry said.

The FABPAC, a trustee-appointed committee tasked with proposing a 20-year plan for the reallocation and modernization of district facilities, released its preliminary recommendations at the end of January, which included the proposal that LASA move to the central-east Austin site where ALC is currently located. The aforementioned community engagement event was one of six held at various campuses around Austin in late January and early February, in which the public was invited to review and respond to FABPAC recommendations. Although Irizarry characterized the severe response to LASA's relocation as unexpected, the issue is unavoidably entangled in decades of local history, and for many, the proposal twists the knife in old wounds.

ALC is housed at the site of the old Anderson High School, an all-black campus that was closed as part of district integration efforts in the 1970s. Austin

was traditionally and intentionally segregated by region, and Anderson became an institution central to the black community that grew in East Austin. Dr. Edmund Gordon sits on the AISD Board of Trustees as a representative for District 1, which includes LBJ and ALC. He said he had concerns about the plan for LASA's relocation, and finds the continual reference to the site as "ALC" to be a disingenuous means of avoiding addressing the true implications of the proposal.

"That's a very painful history for black folks in Austin," Gordon said. "The closing down of the old Anderson High School was a kind of key event in the eventual disintegration of the black community on the east side of Austin. The whole thing is painful: the

busing [of minority students to West Austin schools], the closing it down, the loss of black economy over there and the disintegration of the black community in East Austin."

The historic Anderson High School remains standing, and the space is used to support programs such as Boys and Girls Club of America. For LASA to move to that site, the building would need to be seriously renovated, and it's unlikely that much would be preserved.

"So what symbolically people are seeing in AISD's consideration of making old Anderson High School the new headquarters of LASA, which would include the razing of the historical building and the building of a completely new building, is the elimination of a landmark that is essential to the black memory in town and the replacement of it by an institution which would be largely for white people," Gordon said. "And parts of the black community are quite upset about that, and some see it as kind of the ultimate gentrification of East Austin."

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Revised admissions process strives for increased diversity

CLARA MORSE
News Editor

The culmination of many efforts to diversify LASA occurred Monday, Jan. 23, as LASA Principal Stacia Crescenzi publicized the admissions policies that will be used in accepting students for the 2017-2018 school year. For the first time in LASA's history, factors outside of the holistic rubric are being taken into consideration for some students.

Admission for the first 80 percent of admittees will still be based solely on the holistic rubric, which includes standardized test scores like the STAAR and LASA admissions test (COGAT), middle school academic transcripts, teacher recommendations and personal essays. However, the final 20 percent of students admitted will also have special circumstances taken into consideration—if three of the five special circumstances considered apply to them, and they meet a base cutoff score, they will be admitted. Crescenzi said that the policy was one result of several years of work to increase LASA diversity.

"Over the last few years, both the staff, groups of students and groups of parents and I have talked about different ways to make the application process and acceptances such that the student population better represents the overall city of Austin, in terms of diversity," Crescenzi said. "And it was so after a variety of those conversations, then a smaller group of us that met this summer with representatives from all the departments and some parents and some students who visited with us."

The five circumstances include students zoned to middle schools with a student population that is over 70 percent economically disadvantaged, students who belong to racial or ethnic groups underrepresented at LASA in comparison to within Austin as a whole and students who

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Alley Cat Players deliver 'Nice Work'



LASA seniors Nica Lasater, Angelo Sole and Kyle McGee take the stage in "Nice Work if You Can Get It," a Gershwin musical that covers new ground for the Alley Cat Players. photo by Max Randall

AMANDA PHARES
Staff Writer

Large numbers of people burl past each other, walking this way and that all with a different task occupying their immediate attention. Kids carrying paintbrushes stroll past while others walk by carrying large set pieces meant for the stage. The excitement for theater fills the air while the massive crew for "Nice Work If You Can Get It", the upcoming LASA musical, all works together to bring a production to life.

Opening on Jan 26, the theater department at LASA is putting on a show that's very different from others they have done before. "Nice Work If You Can Get It" follows the story of a wealthy playboy who begins to fall for a woman who is using his Long Island mansion to store liquor for a notorious bootlegger, and the trouble he finds himself in due to the temperance laws during the time. A lot of preparation has gone into "Nice Work If You Can Get It," according to Sarah McGee, a LASA sophomore working on tech for the show.

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Baseball steps up to the plate

CURRIE LARRIMER
Staff Writer

After a 12-4 district record in the 2016 season, meaning the team lost one fourth of their games, the Jaguars baseball team is looking for redemption. According to Harrison Lee, junior captain of the varsity team, the standard to which the team would like to live up to is not met by the .750 winning percentage of the 2016 season.

There are three new captains this year who are focused on moving their team to perform even better than they have in the past.

"This year the senior captains are Kekoa [MacAuley] and Seamus [Quinn] and I'm the junior captain," LASA junior and LBJ Baseball captain Harrison Lee said. "I think we've done a really good job so far and I feel like we've worked well together so far to help the team."

The loss of many seniors from the 2016 varsity team was a wake up call for many of the rising seniors who felt it was their position to step up to the plate. Losing older players with more experience is generally a challenge for sports teams, but LASA senior and LBJ Baseball captain Kekoa MacAuley is confident in his team's ability.

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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

Zoos must be abolished: our humanity depends on it

On January 19, 2017 the Washington Post published a stunning report suggesting that non-human primates are facing a "mass extinction event" and are currently on track to become extinct due to wildlife habitat destruction. Moreover, the likelihood of such a dire prospect seems more and more assured given signals that President Trump is sending regarding his lack of interest in addressing climate change and protecting the environment. Indeed, the first full week of his presidency saw the erasure of climate change from the White House website, the reported proposed staff reduction of the EPA (Federal Environmental Protection Agency) from 15,000 to 5,000 employees and the greenlighting of the Dakota and Keystone oil pipelines. In short, a strong and sustained campaign to ensure the survival of vulnerable wildlife species does not appear to be forthcoming despite the fact that animal welfare concerns seem to be resonating more with the public of late. There was a resounding outcry when pictures surfaced the summer of 2015 of wealthy Minnesota dentist and trophy hunter Walter Palmer smiling for the camera, posing with the dead body of "Cecil," the 13 year-old lion renowned to visitors of Zimbabwe's Hwange National Park for his impressive black mane. It was also front page news when, a year later in May of 2016, the silverback gorilla Harambe was killed by his Cincinnati zookeeper in order to protect a young boy who had scaled his enclosure. Public outrage at exploitation of endangered wildlife has seemed to be gaining some traction, succeeding, for example, in forcing the famed Ringling Brothers circus to commit to phasing their usage of elephants by 2018. Ultimately, this resulted, in the January 16th announcement that they will be holding their final performances in May of this year.

Cumulatively, these events are adding fuel and urgency to animal rights groups' longstanding calls to examine the social, cultural, environmental and educational role that our nation's zoos play in preserving species, encouraging environmental stewardship and promoting ethical treatment of animals. Do they strengthen conservation or do they further the exploitation of wildlife and endorse the perspective that exotic wildlife is valuable principally as a source of human entertainment? It is our view that while some zoos aim to go beyond basic carnival-like displays, unless their mission is specifically oriented around conservation, not entertainment, they are exploitive and ethically

compromising.

There is an important distinction that must be made between a traditional "zoo," and an animal "sanctuary." Sanctuaries function as animal refuges; injured or abused animals are rescued and taken to protected spaces for treatment, rehabilitation and public education.

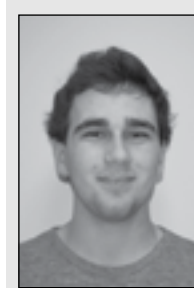
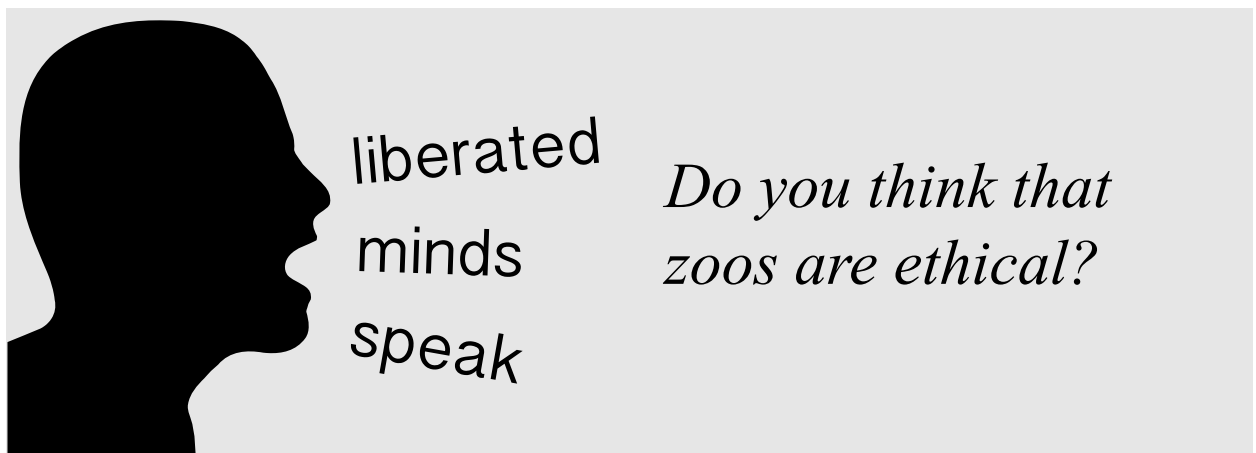
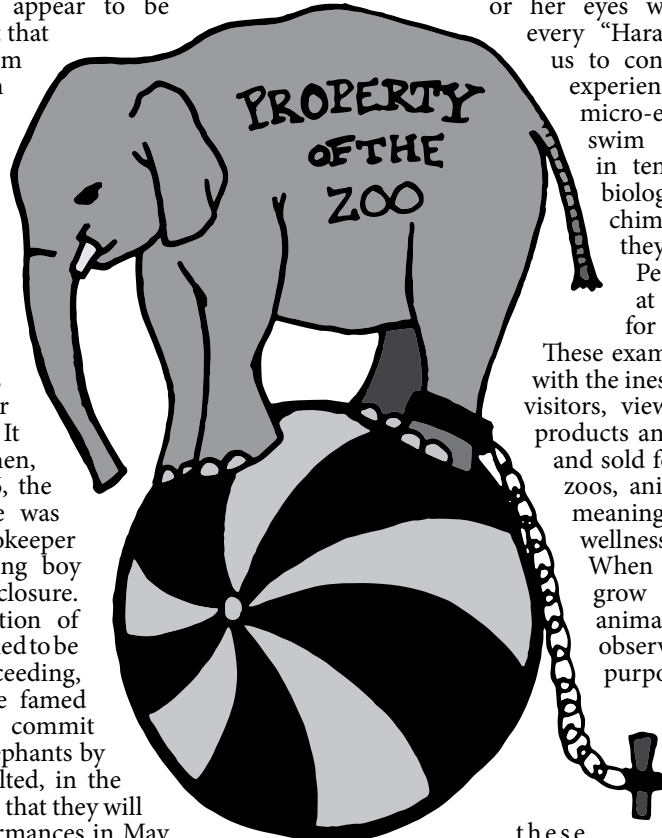
Traditional zoos, focused principally on entertaining their human observers, remain prevalent in the US. There are approximately 350 zoos in operation today, less than half of which are accredited (conform to basic standards of care). Is the diversion they provide worth the harm they cause and the ethical price we pay for our complicity in that harm?

Anyone who has ever visited a zoo with his or her eyes wide open knows that for every "Harambe" headline that forces us to confront our exploitation, the experience entails innumerable micro-exploitations. Polar bears swim in faux oceans sweltering in temperatures for which their biology is ill-suited. We watch chimpanzees or gorillas as they watch us watching them. People throw food and trash at animals, antagonizing them for their own amusement.

These examples force a hard reckoning with the inescapable truth: zoos, and zoo visitors, view animals as commodities, products and experiences to be bought and sold for a profit. In the context of zoos, animals' quality of life is only meaningful to the extent that their wellness drives ticket sales and visits. When we visit zoos, we inevitably grow acclimated to exploiting animals. We become comfortable observing animals for the exclusive purpose of our own enjoyment.

This may contribute to our readiness as a people to exploit one another. Exploitation begets exploitation. We see these dynamics as intolerable both for animals and people.

In times that seem increasingly imperiled, traditional zoos may begin to look like an uncomfortable but necessary evil. "Better to have wildlife in zoos than no wildlife at all" some may say. However, the intersection of the extinction crisis and our emerging awareness of the ethical implications of zoos suggests that far from being the answer, zoos are fundamentally part of the problem. Just as "carnival freak shows" were phased out due the growing consensus in the early 20th century that exploiting people for profit was brutal and wrong, not in service of science and ethically compromising to observers, it is time to acknowledge that the same holds true for zoos. Preserving our humanity depends on it.



Reed Hanson
Senior

I think that they are ethical. As long as the zoo staff is treating the animals with respect and are treating them as animals instead of just as captured objects, I definitely support them. It's just important that they are humane.



Kathryn Christian
Sophomore

No, I do not believe that zoos are humane unless they are saving a hurt animal that would die in other circumstances. Sanctuaries are a lot better, where the animals could potentially be released back in the wild. Zoos for pleasure where they just take animals out of their natural habitats are not right.

Arthur Embry
Freshman

No, I don't see a problem with them as long as the animals are treated well.



Vasanti Varma
Junior

I think they can potentially be inhumane. It's hard to generalize, but I think when they have a real purpose and don't serve solely as a form of entertainment, they're fine. But if they serve as a tool to abuse animals for others' delight, I definitely do not support them.



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 healthy snacks

Dear Editor,

"I wish we had better, healthier, more substantial food in the vending machines."

-Caroline Verdict
Freshman

Student calls for needed break

Dear Editor,

"I think LASA can get too competitive sometimes and teachers and administrators need to lighten up."

-Vijay Veeraraghavan
Senior

On LASA start time

Dear Editor,

"I wish school started later because teenagers need more sleep."

-TJ Arora
Sophomore

Desire for more windows

Dear Editor,

"I wish we had more windows in classrooms and hallways because the lack of windows makes school feel like a prison."

-Amber O'Rourke
Sophomore

Mental health destigmatization

Calling for a reform on the discussion of mental health



SOPHIE WYSOCKI
Staff Writer

I no longer remember what it's like to live without a mental illness. The past two and a half years of my life have been ones full of struggling to learn and accept the changes that have reshaped my mind. It all began in 8th grade. I had been a dancer for my entire life and I had recently switched to a new studio. At first, I had been excited about the new experiences and opportunities that this move

wanted to do all they could to help me. I saw a therapist and she gave me a diagnosis that finally confirmed that what I was feeling was real. I wasn't just weak and cracking under pressure. I had anxiety.

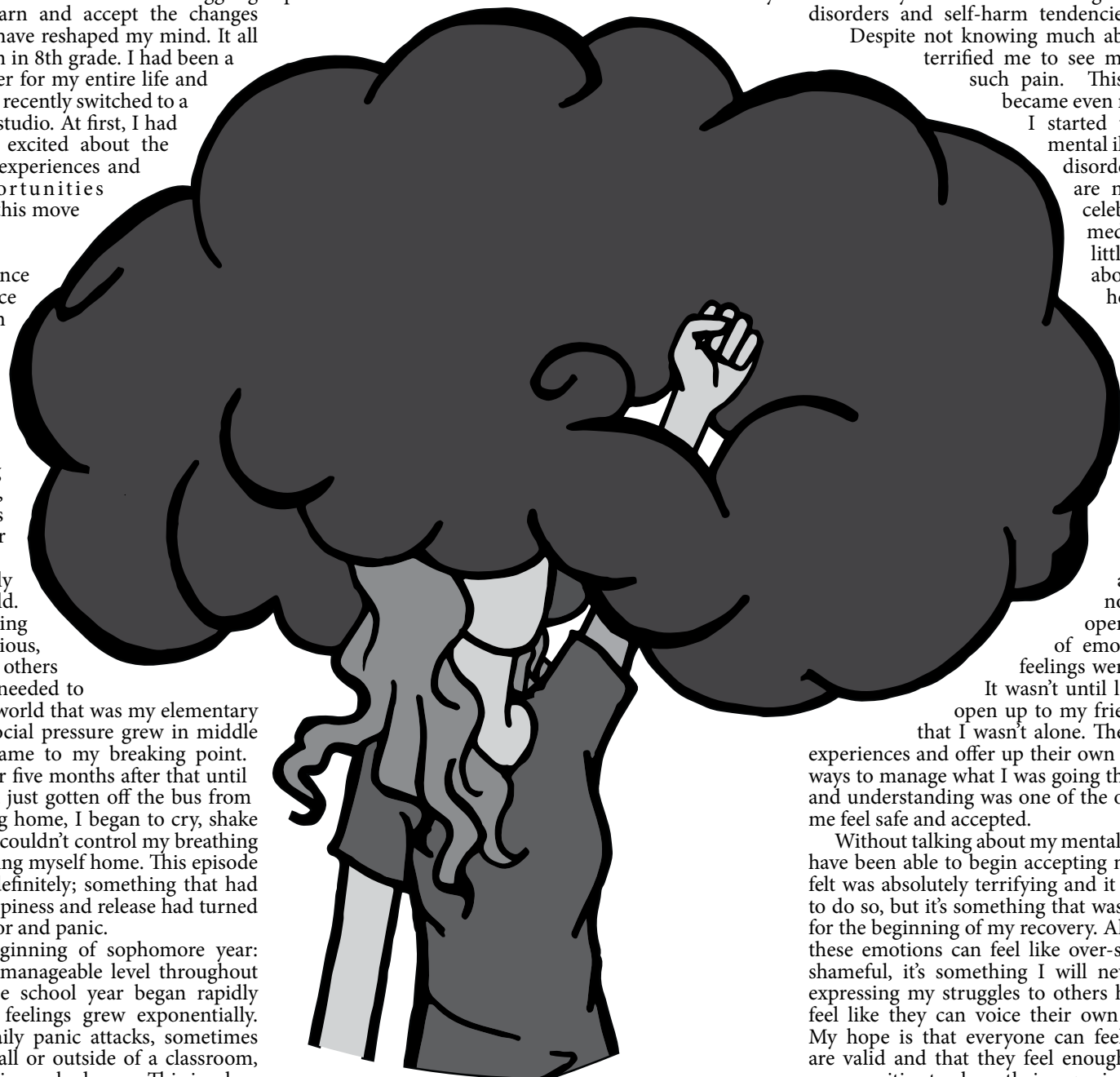
feelings as "wrong" for almost my entire life. I thought that no one felt the way I did. That no one was always scared like I was. In the early part of middle school, I learned that some of my friends were suffering with depression, eating disorders and self-harm tendencies. I was devastated.

Despite not knowing much about these feelings, it terrified me to see my friends experience such pain. This growing awareness became even more confusing when I started to notice that some mental illnesses such as eating disorders and depression are normalized and even celebrated on some social media forums. Still, I had little to no education about other mental health issues.

It is my sense that because my public school education omitted mental illness and disorders, I grew up suppressing rather than confronting the anxiety I was experiencing. I felt ashamed of it. Since no one in my life spoke openly about these types of emotions, I felt like my feelings were invalid and wrong.

It wasn't until later when I began to open up to my friends that I found out that I wasn't alone. They could relate to my experiences and offer up their own to help me figure out ways to manage what I was going through. Their support and understanding was one of the only things that made me feel safe and accepted.

Without talking about my mental illness, I would never have been able to begin accepting myself. Sharing how I felt was absolutely terrifying and it took a lot of courage to do so, but it's something that was absolutely necessary for the beginning of my recovery. Although talking about these emotions can feel like over-sharing or something shameful, it's something I will never stop doing. And expressing my struggles to others has allowed others to feel like they can voice their own stories and feelings. My hope is that everyone can feel like their emotions are valid and that they feel enough acceptance in their communities to share their experiences. One of the only ways that people who struggle with mental illnesses will feel comfortable is if we destigmatize the topic. No one should feel guilty about feeling differently from those around them, and no one should feel the need to hide it. Mental illness is nothing to be ashamed of, and I will stand with that message for the rest of my life.



graphic by Grace Bodine

represented; however, once I started attending dance classes, I felt alienated from everyone there almost immediately. When I began to hear whispered comments and passive aggressive suggestions, I felt like an outcast. I became terrified of being judged by those around me, and this gave me anxious feelings like nothing I'd ever experienced before.

I had always been slightly anxious as a young child. I remember often feeling nervous and self-conscious, always worrying about what others thought of me and what I needed to do to succeed in the small world that was my elementary school. This escalated as social pressure grew in middle school and eventually, I came to my breaking point. These feelings continued for five months after that until my first panic attack. I had just gotten off the bus from school and as I was walking home, I began to cry, shake and panic uncontrollably. I couldn't control my breathing and I just had to keep pushing myself home. This episode led me to quit dancing indefinitely; something that had always been a source of happiness and release had turned dance class into a daily terror and panic.

Fast forward to the beginning of sophomore year: my anxiety had been at a manageable level throughout the summer, but when the school year began rapidly approaching, my nervous feelings grew exponentially. I began to have almost daily panic attacks, sometimes at school in a bathroom stall or outside of a classroom, sometimes at home locked in my bedroom. This is when I knew that I needed to get some help. It had gotten to the point where it was no longer feasible for me to live this way. I sat down with my parents and told them what was going on with me. I needed to explain that my feelings were not just stress and that it was something more serious. I'm lucky enough to have accepting and understanding parents who

had an utter health education. I never learned about mental illnesses or disorders, not even those more commonly spoken about in school like ADHD and ADD. I perceived my anxious

New year, [no] new me

Student calls for change, sensitization of school shootings



JORGE VILLA
Staff Writer

Everyone starts somewhere in life; usually this sort of opened mentality comes to us around New Year's Eve when we come to think of where we are in life and where we want to get. The day when your whole family comes to your house for that not so amazing dinner that was obviously not cooked by your mom. During dinner, kids run around the house like crazy lunatics and the rest of the family starts fighting over politics. Finally, a few minutes before midnight you start thinking about your New Year's resolutions—Your new goals for the new year, when you're going to become a new person. Out of nowhere you get this sensation that you can accomplish anything in life. You make a list of all the new goals you are going to set and accomplish in 2017.

I personally did not set up any goals for 2017 because I have a lot of experience not accomplishing them. For example, for the past five years, I've always set a goal to eat healthier in the New Year. I manage to give up unhealthy, greasy foods like tacos for about two weeks, but then I simply can't handle it anymore. At the beginning of every time I fail, I honestly get disappointed and mad at myself because I simply wasn't strong enough to resist the delicious and juicy unhealthy food. But as my grandma once said, time heals everything, and after I forget about my fail I start to once again build self confidence. It definitely is a difficult phase to go through, but that's simply the struggles of working to accomplish new year's resolutions.

My other main goal for the past few years has been attempting to be more open to talking to and meeting new people. This usually only lasts for a couple of days. Obviously, this means that I simply can't keep a New Year's resolution. Knowing that there are more people like me in the world helps me feel better about myself.

I, like most of my friends, am simply incapable of changing and accomplishing my goals. I've always felt that for the first week of every year people are motivated to accomplish their new goals, but then after a few weeks people start to lose that motivation and realize that just because it is a new year it doesn't mean that anything should or has changed. This is important because it makes us realize that we are never alone, regardless if you fit with the people who work really hard and those who gave up. We all go back to school right after New Year's. We all have to leave school to go home with many hours of homework after New Years. Nothing changes. Usually, there are some people in the world that are capable of fighting for their goals. My brother for example was capable of accomplishing his New Year's resolution. It was not easy for him, but after a few months he was able to lose 30 pounds. I've also met people like my life tutor, Jeffrey Kovar, who for his New Year's resolution was to make the varsity soccer team, which he has. There are some people like Jeffrey and my brother which sometimes motivates me and gives hope that maybe, maybe, maybe one day I will be able to become a newer and better version of myself. Not only that, they have also helped shape me into the type of mentality that I now live with. They taught me that nothing in life will come to you, nothing is easy and that the only way to get what you want is work for it. There aren't any shortcuts in life, and life itself is going to push me to my limits.

I've always believed that anything is possible, regardless of how hard it could be. Everything depends on how hard you are willing to work and how much time you want to dedicate. I've had plenty experiences with failing, but I always try to get back up because in life it doesn't matter how many times you fall, it's all about how many times you get up and keep fighting for what you believe. This is how I've come to think about New Year's resolutions. One year you might fall to the ground, but there's always opportunities to climb back and get on your feet.



ELENA VENEGONI
Staff Writer

We've all heard it before on the news. Some gut-wrenching story of a public shooting in somewhere-that's-not-my-hometown, USA. High body counts with police involvement and mourners shouting slogans and saying it should never happen again. But eventually somewhere in the world there will be another shooting. A quiet one. No thousands of condolences, no news headlines, no outrage. There will be a smaller-scale shooting and no one will seem to notice. The large-scale casualties, the massacres, are far in the minority when it comes to public shootings. Most people have become so desensitized to gun violence that it takes deaths in the double digits to earn our attention. I believe that this desensitization is ultimately harmful because it normalizes gun violence and allows it to continue.

The University of Texas Massacre of 1966 occurred right here in Austin, Texas. It was one of the deadliest school shootings in history, and it occurred when school shootings were practically unheard of. Despite its horrific casualties, the common person in Austin probably wouldn't remember hearing of this devastating event. This is not only due to the passing of time in my opinion, but also due to the public's increasingly desensitized attitude about shootings and gun violence, which I believe can only lead to the continuation of shootings.

The Columbine shooting in 1999 is another occurrence that is arguably one of the most infamous school shootings ever. It had a very high death count but the part that outraged people was the question of how it could happen, why it had happened.

It was too horrific to comprehend an explanation. Now, no one bats an eye when schools prepare for lockdown drills or a person or two is injured in a public shooting. We have somehow distinguished a line invisible to the eye that divides tragedy from day-to-day accidents. It is unclear what defines this line. Perhaps it's the amount of lives lost, whose lives were lost or maybe a combination of the two, but its presence is distinctly there.

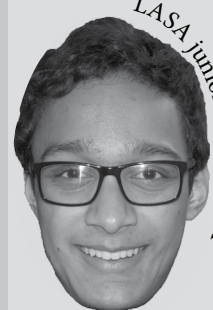
This distinction is evidenced by the fact that most LASA students would probably remember the Sandy Hook shooting or the Orlando Nightclub Shooting due to the high death and injury toll as well as the extensive media coverage. Far fewer would even think of the multiple shootings with one to two deaths that occurred in the past year. Unless the death toll is high or the victims are ones that gain sympathy, no one seems to give the alarming increase in gun violence and the subsequent shootings a second thought. It is all too easy to Google search for the number of public shootings in the past five to ten years, yet few people would guess that the Gun Violence Archive reported 58,168 incidents of gun violence in the United States in 2016 alone.

Despite the number of public shootings increasing, it is rare for any large-scale protective measures to be employed, and thus the cycle of desensitization is continued. I believe this desensitization to smaller-scale shootings is in part due to people not wanting to have the difficult conversations about gun control and having guns in homes. The majority of minors who are the perpetrators of shooting crimes found the gun in their own home. Instead of speaking of the larger issue which is gun culture in the United States, people resort to ignoring the problem and justifying it as "not as bad" as other tragedies.

It's important that we do not get accustomed to this level of desensitization because it lowers our standards as human beings. When we begin ranking tragedies we distract from the reality that to someone this is a tragedy of the severest sort. Just because gun violence crimes show a rising pattern shouldn't mean that we pick and choose which ones are important and somehow more horrific than another. Instead of ignoring the smaller shootings and only noticing other events when they are publicized, we should find ways to deal with the problems at their root. In the past, public and school shootings were so rare that any occurrence, regardless of casualties, was treated like the tragedy that it was. I believe that if we slowly emerged from our desensitized state and observed the nature and sheer number of shootings, then we would realize just how much needs to be changed.

Thumbs up

Thumbs down



- Apple Cider
- Chocolate cake
- Girl scout cookies
- Carrots
- Women's march



- Empty pantries
- Bad writing
- Cold rooms
- Cloudy days
- Rotten food

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

Valentine's day for all

Valentine's day is a day to celebrate all love



AMANDA PHARES
Staff Writer

Candy hearts, red roses, various pink and white decorum a surplus of love in the air—these are the things commonly associated with Valentine's Day, which is unfortunately not given as much

appreciation as it should.

Valentine's Day is a sore subject for a lot of students, mainly those who are single. Lots of people like to argue that the occasion is unnecessary and stupid, since love should be celebrated every day instead of allotting one day to the expression love. Valentine's Day is worth celebrating because it's a chance to appreciate human connection and love, and it allows people to have an extra special day to be with the person they love. I have had many experiences with Valentine's Day that didn't include a romantic relationship—, fun times with my family, going out to dinner and having special dessert that we doesn't usually get to have.

Whether it be shared between family members like I previously described, or between lovers, one of the greatest things about being a human is that most of us have the ability to experience romantic feelings for other people, which is something very special in itself. If you are lucky enough to have someone in your life that you love who loves you as well, then a holiday where you can be extra nice to them is all the more fun. I think that those who look down upon Valentine's Day just have a harsher outlook on love and on life, and might even be a little jealous of those around them who have someone to celebrate with. I believe there are a lot of people out there who are subconsciously looking for a companion, and those who are bitter about the holiday most often don't have someone. One of my really good friends despises the holiday, but it's not because she believes the holiday to be silly, it's because it reminds her of her ex-boyfriend, and the thought of others celebrating love while she is hurting is hard for her. That is perfectly acceptable, it's when people trash the holiday that it's unnecessary.

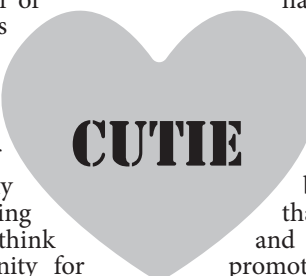
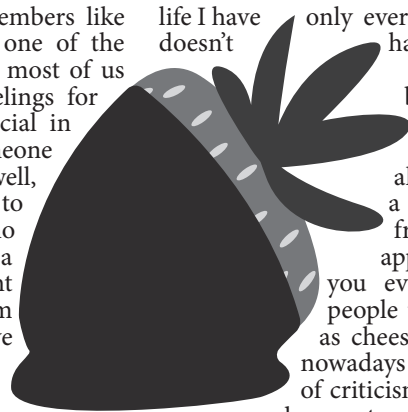
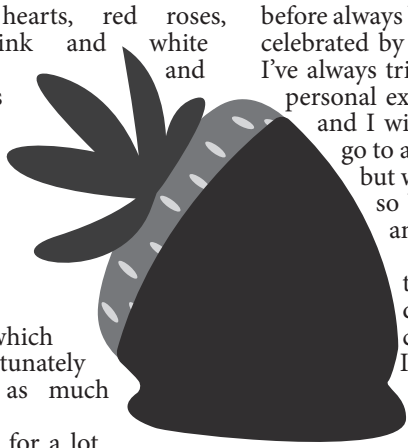
The holiday might be unenjoyable for people like my friend, but I think the idea of Valentine's Day is still really sweet. Especially for teenagers, relationships or even just hanging out can feel really special and new, so I think Valentine's Day is a really good opportunity for young people to show their appreciation for each other. A lot of people I have talked to

before always believed Valentine's Day to be a holiday only celebrated by people in a more serious relationship, but I've always tried to prove them wrong by explaining my personal experiences. Most often, my mom and sister and I will go out to dinner, maybe see a movie, or go to a museum. These things seem pretty normal, but we don't do any of those activities very often, so Valentine's Day gives us a chance to go out and do something special together.

While Valentine's Day is mostly geared towards people in relationships, the occasion doesn't have to pertain just to them. It can be celebrated by people who share a friendship. I remember when I was in elementary school, every Valentine's Day we used to all decorate paper bags and then set them out in our classrooms. Kids would bring lots of candies or little toys and notes and put them in each of our bags and we would all be able to go home with cute little bags full of candy. I was always so excited for this time of year because I loved to know what my classmates would write me on the little Valentine's Day cards, and I also loved being able to share things like candy with all of my friends and just generally be able to do something we didn't get to do often at school. Many of my friends also shared this experience, which proves to me that Valentine's Day doesn't have to be a romantic holiday, because for the majority of my life I have only ever celebrated it as everything that doesn't have any romantic affiliation.

Valentine's Day is also special because all the chocolate at grocery stores is discounted the day after, which is great for all the chocoholics out there. It's a great opportunity to show your friends that you love them and appreciate them hanging out with you every day. Valentine's Day gives people the chance to go full out and be as cheesy as they want to. Being cheesy nowadays is embarrassing and garners a lot of criticism, but on Valentine's Day, cheesy love gestures are welcomed (the cheesier it is, the better the day will be.).

Ultimately, love, whether it be romantic or platonic, is natural and should be celebrated, not put down. I believe that Valentine's Day is essentially a celebration of love in general, whether it be between friends, family, or even acquaintances. I've never read in any book, article or textbook that Valentine's Day could only be observed between two lovers, and I will never believe that. I have always enjoyed Valentine's Day and will continue to celebrate it, because it promotes love and care which this world is in desperate need of, and I will always be an advocate for showing love for others.



graphic by Grace Bodine



Small Talk

Student's reflections on importance of being represented in the media



LISA MOOMAW
Staff Writer

When I was four, I remember that my biggest dream, a higher priority than even becoming a princess (and also president of the United States), was to be blonde. More specifically, I wanted the long, cascading, shiny blonde waves that Barbie was blessed with in all the Barbie movies. I didn't even care that she was disproportionately skinny with ginormous breasts. Really, I just wanted her hair.

Unfortunately, though, that was far out of reach for me. My mom is Korean and my dad is yee-haw white Texan, but I look nothing like Barbie—although I get a wide range of guesses as to what my race is, it's hardly ever 100 percent white. I don't have luxurious blonde curls and beautiful crystal blue eyes and porcelain skin. When I looked in the mirror, I dreaded seeing my straight brown hair and yellow-y complexion, even though I was too young for the pervasive hatred of my appearance that my older counterparts experienced. More deeply than that, though, I longed to be rid of my Asian side.

But one night, everything changed. At my very first sleepover in kindergarten, my best friend brought over a VCR of "Mulan". I cannot underscore enough that it truly changed me. For the first time, I saw a girl who had my family's dark hair and "squinny" eyes portrayed as beautiful, and (very roughly) the culture that I had grown up in as complex. As it turned out, Asians could be princesses. I could be a princess. And that is why, in simplest terms, representation matters.

For millions of minorities and women, their depiction in the media is often limited to only a one-sided stereotype or nothing at all. This is problematic because it effectively pigeonholes them into only these roles. A black girl, for instance, isn't going to see herself as a likely candidate for a CEO if she's never even seen a movie with a black woman in an executive position, and a boy who uses a wheelchair isn't going to see himself as a scientist if none of the ones he sees on his favorite science TV show do, just as four-year-old Lisa never saw herself as someone who could be a princess because she'd never heard of an Asian princess.

Furthermore, our perceptions of others, not just ourselves, are shaped by media portrayal. If the books we read (for those of us that still do) and movies and shows we watch only depict certain people in one specific way, the general populous will be inclined to see those people in our daily real-world lives as just that. After watching thousands of movies where the only Latinx character is a drug dealer, it's almost hard for our society to see the Latinx people in our lives as anything else, even if it's light-years away from the truth.

A single movie opened my peers and I to seeing Asians as beautiful, powerful and princess-worthy. But this is a rare occasion for virtually all minorities. Luckily, the solution to at least this one issue is simple. Let's advocate for a media that includes real diversity with real variety in portrayals for all types of people. Maybe then we will be able to live in a world where anyone can be anything, without being an exception.

Affirmative action takes a step towards equal opportunity



MEENA ANDERSON
Life & Feature Editor

During college acceptance season last year, I was sitting in newspaper class minding my own business, when I heard someone talking about college admissions. My ears pricked up, wanting to know where my friends would be going after graduation. Then, I hear one of the head editors --also the valedictorian, a dancer, and fantastic headline writer-- say that a girl she knows said she didn't get into Brown because she was "too white." My mood quickly shifted from mild interest to irritation. Why was this about

race? What had blinded her to the point where she didn't understand that people of color don't actively steal spots at schools from white students? Here's the thing: this view of affirmative action assumes that a minority student can "steal" a spot that "rightfully belonged to" a white student. But what does that mean, exactly? Why is the white student automatically entitled to that spot? Clearly, a student of color didn't sneak in the window in the dead of night and snatch this white girl's spot at Brown while she slept. So why does she feel like she's lost something? When you're privileged, any move toward equality feels uncomfortable and upsetting. It feels like a loss. Affirmative action gives minority students a chance to prove themselves. Not everyone has a life that leads them to the doorstep of a school like LASA. Not everyone has parents familiar with application processes and opportunities that pave them a pathway to an Ivy League education. Affirmative action isn't "racist" or "discriminatory" --it's an attempt to right a systemic wrong. Slavery was real. Jim Crow was real. Mass incarceration is happening. These historic events affected--and continue to affect--the lives and opportunities of people of color in America right up until today. This is why affirmative action is so important; it's an acknowledgement of a historical, racial struggle, and an attempt to lessen some of the remnants of that.

When an institution decides on affirmative action, they decide to take American history into their decision making. Black people aren't "stealing" white spots. Black and Hispanic people are just as smart as white people, but by and large, they haven't had access to the same opportunities. Consider our own schools, LASA and LBJ. There are just as many smart people downstairs as there are upstairs, but many of our LBJ counterparts don't have the privileges we have, like familiarity with the application process, or both parents having a college education. For many minorities in America, a reality like LASA, a school that routinely sends students to Stanford, MIT and Harvard, isn't in the picture.

So, let's rewind. Is it meritorious to be in a school like ours? People say "merit-based" as if that's an entirely objective standard. "Merit" is something that's much easier to attain from a position of privilege. An 'A' at LASA is different than an 'A' at other schools in the district, in the sense that it has more merit. It's easy to say that admissions should be based solely off merit when you go to a school like ours (see also: more than 50 percent white and high income). The "LASA kids want to be here because they applied" philosophy isn't taking enough into consideration regarding our lack of black and hispanic students. Yes, LASA students are smart, but we are also lucky. The reality is that we are privileged with our opportunities and quality of education. There are plenty of students who have barriers that prevent them from applying to schools and programs like LASA that are more complex than being "intelligent enough". Barriers like living in an economically disadvantaged neighborhood, barriers like having parents work multiple jobs to support their family, barriers like not having parents that are college educated or familiarized with the application process.

During early voting for the election last year, the Young Conservatives of Texas at UT Austin stationed themselves near a voting station and sold cookies at different prices according to the race of people that approached the table. Asian people paid the most, white people second most, then african americans, hispanic people and finally native

americans getting their cookies for free. The purpose of the sale was to illustrate the "insanity" of associating race with merit, and to advocate a "colorblind" approach in the admissions process. Their point itself was actually quite racist, further enforcing the idea that black, hispanic, and Native American students are not accepted into an institution based on skin color and only on intellect. Thus, there is the double edged sword of affirmative action: during admissions season, it's the minority's fault for "stealing" a spot, during their school careers, minorities are viewed as an affirmative action case, not as possible intellectuals. While affirmative action does help minority students, not all students of color need that help. Black and Hispanic excellence can and does exist.

But, there's another, more factual problem with the logic of the YCT. If scholarships and admissions were entirely merit based, they would be skewed more to

the advantage of white people than they already are. According to a study by Mark Kantrowitz (publisher of fastweb.com and finaid.org), white students receive more than 76 percent of all institutional merit-based scholarship and grant funding, even though they represent 62 percent of the student population. This isn't because white people are intellectually superior, it's because in general, white people are in a position of privilege. That privilege correlates with economic prosperity and as a result, better schools from the elementary level. Yes, hard work is merit-based, intellectual curiosity is merit-based--innovation, tenacity, intelligence--all these characteristics are meritorious. But some of the evidence of merit is much more easily acquired from a position of privilege. In some ways, lack of merit translates as merit because of systemic racism that white people created and institutionalized. It's slightly hypocritical to complain about affirmative action stopping you or your child from getting into an Ivy League, considering it's a result of something your ancestors created.

Finally, white students aren't currently suffering a lack of educational opportunities. Kantrowitz's study also reveals that they're 40 percent more likely to win private scholarships and grant funding than minority students. Unsurprisingly, in states that have banned affirmative action (California, Michigan, Washington, Florida, Texas from 1997-2005), enrollment for Hispanic and black students declined after affirmative action was banned.

Why? Because white students simply have more "merit"? Because white students are more deserving of higher education? (Or because they haven't had to bear the brunt of systemic racism, which can be quite detrimental to things like quality of education.) In 1997, UC Berkeley's enrollment rate for black students was eight percent, the same percentage as the amount of college aged black residents in the state. Compare that to 2011, when nine percent of the state's college-aged residents are black, and the enrollment rate for black students was two percent. Affirmative action maintains diversity in schools and gives minority students the access to a quality education they might not otherwise acquire. A diverse learning environment is key to a healthy educational experience, and I will continue to support affirmative action until a diverse campus is a given, not a rarity.

Facing History class impacts development of new AISD ethics courses for high schools

ASPEN KISSINGER & QUINN SIMPSON
Staff Writer & News Editor

AISD plans to offer ethnic studies courses at Anderson, Austin, Akins, Travis, LBJ and Reagan high schools starting in fall of the 2017-2018 school year. The idea of implementing a new ethnic studies course in the district arose after research from the Stanford Graduate School of Education and others demonstrated that graduation rates increase and test scores improve as a result of students taking ethnic studies courses. AISD has assembled the ethnic studies innovation and design team to develop a single ethnic studies course that can be widely implemented.

According to Elizabeth Close, a social studies teacher at Anderson High School who serves on the ethnic studies innovation and design team, the group was put together in October 2016 and has been meeting twice weekly to create the course. The team has looked to existing ethnic studies courses like Facing History: The Holocaust and Human Behavior, which is taught at LASA by Neil Loewenstern, in planning their survey curriculum.

"The course, called Ethics Studies Part 1 and 2, has been approved on some level to at least go forward in six or seven high school campuses, starting next school year," Close said. "This course was specifically designed to create a wider range of subjects for students. At the last meeting [Facing History] came up, because we had looked at other courses that would roughly go over the electives under the ethnic studies and humanities umbrella."

Loewenstern's course is the only LASA elective focused specifically on ethnic studies. It uses a curriculum developed by a national organization called Facing History and Ourselves. The course discusses issues of identity and society that are relevant to ethnic's planning.

"A lot of the course is exploring identity of individuals then thinking about the society that we live in, and how society impacts identity and kind of puts pressure on us

to be a certain way," Loewenstern said. "Looking how those identities also in that society creates a 'us vs. them' mentality, and that becomes very dangerous when you start looking at discrimination, prejudice and worst case scenario, things like the Holocaust."

The course covers many more topics than just the Holocaust, including this year's presidential election and dictatorship in general. According to Loewenstern the class also covers other current events that can be discussed freely within the classroom environment.

"I think there's a lot of interest [in the way that]

To already have a better understanding with diversity, having these alternative perspectives and a wider lense on society, I think that that's something that a lot of universities really value.

-Anderson teacher Elizabeth Close

you can really see how this is not just a history class," Loewenstern said. "It's about who you are at this current moment of time. It's very much focused on current events, if it's happening in contemporary American society or around the world. There's that part of it that makes it very relevant to what we are doing right now.... It's about our relationships here at LASA, how do we treat each other here? Who's represented and who's not at school? What's our relationship like with LBJ students?"

Close, who teaches an ethnic studies course at Anderson High School, said that this method of engaging students with current issues that impact them is effective in opening their minds to new perspectives.

"I have taught often under represented [students], or kids that have been pushed to the side, that have found a place in this course, and I think that is really powerful," Close said. "It also gives students access to a variety of different perspectives and perspectives about history. What's sort of happening today as well, on perspectives they might not necessarily get somewhere else, and it can be really empowering I think for students to learn about all sorts of different groups, and different kinds of people, and it can be very relevant to them."

LASA Junior Sora Sunby recently completed Loewenstern's course. She said that discussing current events not only helped the class feel more relevant to her but also helped her empathize with her classmates' concerns as individuals in society.

"I think ethnic courses would be really interesting to share because I learned a lot about other people's views of the world that are different ethnicities, ages and genders [from] me," Sunby said. "Currently with the election and with Trump, a lot of people are worried about creating a dictator, but now that I've been in that class, I have a lot more knowledge about how dictatorship can grow from democracies. Now I feel a lot less worried, and also I feel like I have a better understanding of my classmates."

Close said that ethnic studies courses, including the one currently in development by AISD's ethnic team, are especially valuable for schools because they help students develop advanced reasoning skills that give them a head start in college.

"As far as campuses go, I'm seeing that a lot of colleges are looking at things like ethnic studies as being very valuable to go to college with," Close said. "To already have a better understanding with diversity, having these alternative perspectives and a wider lense on society, I think that that's something that a lot of universities really value. Seeing a school that pilots that type of program or supports that type of program, and I think it should be seen as a very positive thing towards the community."

Students mentor at Magnolia Montessori in new partnership

ALDO ORDÓÑEZ & QUINN SIMPSON
Staff Writer & News Editor

A new organization is providing LASA students the opportunity to mentor local elementary school children. Members of the Magnolia Montessori Student Partnership (MMSP) travel every day after classes to the campus of Magnolia Montessori for All, a charter elementary school one block away from LASA. From 4 to 5 p.m., they assist the elementary school children with any academic situations they may be struggling with or simply exemplify good behavior if none of the students need help.

LASA senior and MMSP coordinator Isabella Hansen was alerted to the opportunity last semester when LASA staff asked her for help in starting the program. Hansen serves as the Service Chair in the school's National Honor

Society.

"I founded the program because one of the school administrators reached out to me and expressed the need for more after-school tutoring help," Hansen said.

According to LASA junior and assistant club officer Hanna Bottema, members of the program sign up at the beginning of every week for the days they can mentor. Each day they arrive at the school and are assigned one, two or three students to work with.

Roberto Guzman, the coordinator of the program at Magnolia Montessori, said that the school will decide later in the semester how they'd like the nascent partnership to develop in the future.

"We launched the pilot in the beginning of November 2016," Guzman said. "The plan is to assess this pilot program by March and determine what the next steps will be."

The opportunity to initiate the partnership was appealing to Hansen because mentoring holds benefits for all parties involved. Motivated LASA students earn service hours and Montessori students learn new skills from their role models.

"I saw this not only as an incredible opportunity to have a positive impact in the development of these kids, but also provide LASA students with convenient service opportunities for those who are eager and motivated to get involved," Hansen said.

According to Hansen, the mentoring relationship with younger kids requires LASA students to apply their interpersonal skills in a way that represents mature behavior.

"[Part of the mission of the club is for] LASA students to hone their abilities to lead, communicate and connect with others while being positive role models for the Magnolia Montessori kids," Hansen said.

Bottema believes MMSP has been successful in its mission so far and hopes it will continue for the foreseeable future. She said the model used by the organization could expand to additional schools.

"So far, this program has been very successful," Bottema said. "We hope that LASA students and Montessori students will continue this partnership in the future and maybe even extend the partnership to other schools in the community."

According to Guzman, MMSP's success so far stems from the strong relationships LASA students have developed with the elementary school children over the course of successive visits.

"The biggest impact is when the LASA students show up consistently and continue to engage our children by getting to know who they are, where their interests lie and simply showing them some love," Guzman said. "After all, everyone, regardless of what background and social identities, wants to be loved."



LASA Plan

continued from page 1

some see it as kind of the ultimate gentrification of East Austin."

Following the community engagement event which brought the controversy to light, the FABPAC is reevaluating its proposal for LASA. Although the move to ALC is said to still be on the table, FABPAC has turned its attention to other options, according to District 3 representative to the FABPAC Mark Grayson. Irizarry confirmed that the plan is also no longer being considered a viable solution by the LASA CAC, another nail in the coffin of a once-promising proposal. Initially, the CAC supported the move to ALC because it appeared to meet LASA's needs with regard to space and location without displacing the population of another school.

"We felt that we were actually not going to infringe on anybody, but now that we know we are, we are saying, 'Okay, forget that,'" Irizarry said. "That's not what we're after. We want to be respectful and we really want to listen to what they're saying. We want to honor that."

LASA's future location is once again up in the air. With the latest series of community engagement events concluded, the FABPAC has regrouped to review the input it received and adjust its proposals before once again presenting their recommendations to the public. Although no specific plan B has been identified for LASA as of yet, a number of options remain on the table. LASA CAC co-chair Ann Phipps said that while ALC seemed promising, it was not the only attractive idea.

"The LASA CAC has approved a statement indicating that we are open to any location that meets our needs to grow, remain a comprehensive high school and better serve the district," Phipps said. "Being more centrally located would be a big advantage for many students and families, but we leave it to the FABPAC to identify possible locations. We do not want to displace any existing school populations."

FABPAC developed its proposals using

data and recommendations generated by district contractors that surveyed every AISD facility in the summer of 2016. The contractors provided a number of possible directions the district could take in designing a long-term Facilities Master Plan. One such suggestion, amid many others proposed for LASA, was that the program remain at LBJ and be expanded into a new building constructed on campus, most likely in the empty lot adjacent to student and staff parking on Pecan Brook. Gordon is strongly in favor of such a plan. LASA's presence at LBJ is an effort at integration, and he worries about the implications of separating the schools.

"What does that mean for the school district, and more than that, what does mean for Austin, that people from different socioeconomic backgrounds and

campus," Grayson said. "But others in the LASA community are concerned that having LASA displace another campus's students is not fair either.... There are also other district properties currently used for warehouse facilities and distribution centers that might be able to be repurposed. Also, depending upon whom you talk to, the ALC option for LASA may still be on the table, despite the opposition of some to the idea."

The controversy that arose from FABPAC's recommendation for LASA is exactly what the district wanted to avoid facing when attempting to pass a bond later this year. In the past, AISD bonds have sometimes failed due to unexpected community pushback and politically unpopular objectives. This time, the district is making a deliberate effort to get

targeting "special campuses" in AISD, including LASA, Ann Richards School for Young Women Leaders and ALC. AISD superintendent Dr. Paul Cruz welcomed the attendees and emphasized the need for community feedback in developing a Facilities Master Plan.

"It's not baked; it isn't," Cruz said at the meeting. "But it will be. And there will be a decision point. And right now is a time to be able to respond to what's before you. We truly, sincerely want the input."

Participants were provided with outlines of the FABPAC's proposals and feedback forms. Community members were grouped based on the school they represented, and a district facilitator led discussion of the plan while a note-taker recorded feedback. Around 20 members of the LASA community were present at the Jan. 24 meeting, including LASA counselor Shannon Bergeron. Because she is also a LASA parent and coach, Bergeron felt she had a unique perspective to offer when evaluating the proposals.

"I think the format was fine," Bergeron said. "If they had talked less in the beginning and gotten us into talking with each other earlier, I think we could have spent more time; or if they had had specific questions, like 'Here's our objective for tonight, here's what we want to accomplish, I need you to answer these questions,' or if they'd asked for specific feedback about this or that. But it felt like 'Give us all your feedback about everything,' which felt a little counterproductive, because thoughts were really all over the place, so I wasn't sure how they were going to take that information and refocus."

Despite the lack of structure to the meeting, Bergeron said she felt all her points were made and questions answered. The FABPAC is now in the process of reviewing the feedback it has received, and will return an updated plan to the public at the end of the month, which is expected to include a new proposal for LASA; however, the potential for an ALC move does still exist.

"I think the back-up plan for LASA is for LASA parents to stay engaged in this process," Phipps said. "The ALC seemed promising for a time, as have some other options. There will be more options to consider if LASA families keep communicating with the committee and the trustees."

Giving up on the project of being able to have the kinds of families and students that are represented by both LBJ and LASA be able to go to school together, it is something that I'm not in favor of. I think it's an admission of failure.

- Dr. Edmund Gordon

different races and folks with different kinds of academic needs can't go to school together?" Gordon said. "I'm someone who thinks giving up on that project is the wrong thing to do. Giving up on the project of being able to have the kinds of families and students that are represented by both LBJ and LASA be able to go to school together, giving up on that project is something that I'm not in favor of. I think it's an admission of failure."

This option is being considered by the FABPAC, according to Grayson, although he noted concerns that separating the schools into two buildings could serve to further divide the communities. However, it's far from the only solution being looked at.

"Some residents of East Austin proposed that underenrolled Eastside Memorial High School be consolidated into LBJ, and LASA move to the Eastside

the community involved throughout the process and to be as transparent as possible.

"I think the community engagement meetings have been really useful," Phipps said. "I have been following the FABPAC process closely for the last six months and I am impressed with the sincere and thoughtful effort displayed by the committee members to this large, complicated task of reconciling the differing needs and conditions of 135 AISD schools. These people really do want community input and they have done a commendable job of seeking it in a variety of ways and settings. I do feel that they are hearing what the LASA community has to say, but we all need to stay engaged all the way to the end."

Close to 200 parents, staff and AISD representatives crowded into the McCallum High School cafeteria on Tuesday, Jan. 24 for a community engagement event

THE SKINNY

New breakfast policy brings change of locale

OSCAR HERNANDEZ
Staff Writer

New systems now implemented into both LASA and LBJ have changed several aspects of breakfast. For instance, LBJ students are offered free breakfast in the classroom, and LASA students breakfast via a new food cart. According to Anneliese Tanner, AISD director of food services, LASA was never actually meant to have breakfast for free because the economic demographics at LASA don't justify the provision of free breakfast to all LASA students while LBJ demographics support the free breakfast program.

"Well, the breakfast was free before when we were serving LBJ because LBJ is required to have free breakfast for all based on their demographics," Tanner said. "And so when we are serving only LASA students, LASA doesn't qualify for campus-wide free meal."

To qualify for campus-wide free lunch, a school needs to have 85 percent or more of their students on the free or reduced lunch program, which LBJ does meet but not LASA. Due to this, LASA switched to a new system, which includes the new breakfast cart. LASA Principal Stacia Crescenzi states she is looking forward to improving the breakfast system.

"Across the country including Austin, normal schools who have very large numbers of students who get free or reduced lunch, are going to get what's called Breakfast in the Classroom," Crescenzi said. "So the cafeteria puts the breakfast out in front of the rooms prior to the start of classes, and the first couple of minutes of class while teachers are taking role and all those sort of basics, kids grab their breakfast. LBJ decided to go to that, and [as a result] there was no way for the cafeteria to continue to justify just giving LASA students free lunch. So any student who is on free or reduced and qualifies for free breakfast absolutely still gets free breakfast."

Tanner said that the food cart located across the art room in the yellow hallway would provide more convenience for LASA students when getting their breakfast before classes. This new breakfast cart includes an array of cold and warm food for a small price and can be bought by anyone, with changes being planned already to further improve what is happening.

"As we were planning breakfast for both LASA and LBJ we wanted to make breakfast more accessible for LASA," Tanner said. "We know that the students are upstairs in the morning and so we wanted to bring breakfast to y'all."

Crescenzi also stated that right now they are "just trying to figure it out," with improvements coming in the near future. For those who miss eating in the cafeteria, Crescenzi is already looking for ways to go back to both LASA and LBJ eating together in the cafeteria like they once did.

"That would be my hope for the upside," Crescenzi said. "I do think there is something about the communal space of the cafeteria that is really nice and I think it's too bad that that's lost, but maybe we just need to find another way to make that happen."



Food services employees Rosario Angeles (left) and Maria De León stand with the new LASA food cart, which provides LASA students with breakfast each morning. Prices range from Photo by Liberator staff photographer.

AISD freezes high schools to transfers

GRANT McCASLAND
Staff Writer

The Austin Independent School District has announced their frozen transfer plan for the 2017-18 school year, which blocks all transfers to high schools Akins, Bowie, Lanier and McCallum, three middle schools and 16 elementary schools. This is the third year in a row that AISD has blocked transfers to specific schools, and non-frozen schools are accepting only priority transfers for the second year in a row. According to AISD Senior Communication Specialist Tiffany Young, a transfer freeze plan is released annually based on evaluating projections and permanent capacity across the district, and schools are frozen to keep balanced demographics and populations.

"Different areas of the city are growing or declining in school-aged population, which impacts the number of students assigned or projected to each school," Young said. "A part of the city that is growing rapidly, for example, may have many children assigned to a particular school, which may then exceed the capacity for which it was built. In the future, schools will be added or deleted from the list depending upon these criteria."

This transfer plan should not have any effect on LASA's population or demographics. According to Academy Director Andy Paulson, this is because LASA accepts students through the application process, and does not draw students from normal tracking patterns like other schools.



One piece of conceptual design art of The Grove at Shoal Creek. Designers have planned for affordable housing specifically for Austin teachers in this new development. Image courtesy of The Grove at Shoal Creek

TEACHERS PRICED OUT

Amid Austin's ongoing affordability crisis, developers partner with AISD to house teachers in new projects

GEORGE GUCKENBERGER
Staff Writer

On Dec. 15, 2016 the Austin City Council approved zoning for The Grove at Shoal Creek, a plan which will offer park land, trails and apartments, as well as affordable housing specifically dedicated to AISD teachers. The Grove will offer 19 homes specifically for teachers at a price nearly five times cheaper than the average home price in the Shoal Creek area, which is \$550,000. According to AISD School Board president Kendall Pace, The Grove's affordable housing for teachers is a step in the right direction.

"I think affordable housing for teachers would be a great option for AISD teachers," Pace said. "We have heard interest in the program. This will help by providing subsidized housing and giving them options to live closer to where they work if they work in schools nearby. Rent and housing is very expensive in this area and typically unaffordable for teachers living on a single income."

An average home in Austin costs over \$300,000, while apartment rents are some of the most expensive nation

wide, and this combined with the \$48,000 average salary for teachers has contributed in a large amount of teacher turnover in AISD—around 900 leave each year, which causes monetary issues. Hundreds of AISD teachers must live in areas far away from their schools because of exorbitant Austin housing costs. Pace claims that The Grove's affordable housing program will improve this issue for teachers because it will allow them to be closer to their schools.

"[The Grove] will help in a small way, but probably not in a large way," Pace said. "We have over 12,000 teachers and many are leaving [AISD] due to pay [and] affordability but also for other reasons. We are exploring options with the City of Austin and Travis County looking at excess land."

The plan contains affordable housing for both teachers and people earning 30 to 80 percent of the Median Family Income. There are at least 14 schools within five miles of the development, which means it is in a convenient location for teachers. Affordable housing is important for teachers because it will allow for a shorter commute and will provide incentive for staying in Austin.

"The Grove has committed to make 10 percent of all rental units and five percent of all for-sale units affordable long term in one of the most expensive and least integrated areas of Austin," The Grove at Shoal Creek management said. "Under our proposal, this commitment would result in more than 100 affordable units distributed throughout The Grove."

Affordable housing for teachers has been a main priority for AISD because of high rent and house prices in Austin, and this development marks a major commitment to that priority. LASA teacher Chloe Cardinale thinks that increasing affordable housing for teachers would be good.

"The big issue is that we are in the state capitol, and it's one of the most expensive cities in the state, and we are actually the lowest paid district in the state," Cardinale said. "So you have all these teachers who are really highly qualified, but have nothing to entice them to teach here, and they can't afford to live in the city, and it takes forever to get anywhere in Austin especially when you don't live close to your job. So yes, I think it is absolutely a good thing. But I think it should happen on a larger scale."

Social Emotional Learning program impacts students

MARLEN AVILA
Staff Writer

A recent grant gave a \$2 million boost to one Austin Independent School District (AISD) program. Since the 2011-12 school year, AISD has been implementing several Social Emotional Learning (SEL) programs throughout the district. SEL focuses on helping students to develop academic and social skills, benefitting their overall "life effectiveness." The program consists of five main categories that intend to enrich understanding and communication among students and their peers. According to LASA wellness counselor Meagan Butler, although LASA is not one of the beneficiaries of the new grant, LASA has been utilizing different aspects of the SEL program to reflect the needs of the student body each year.

"We really created our own curriculum based off of our student's needs," Butler said. "So our students need help with reducing stress, working with others; those are main two, so that's what we're focusing on. Our main goals for this semester are active bystanders, which is increasing empathy and having people look out for each other, increasing kindness and suicide prevention. Also adding on, sleep deprivation because that's something we do every year, so we'll do sleep week and that's SEL related because that's about reducing stress [and] self awareness of your own sleep habits."

At the beginning of each school year, the LASA wellness counselors send out a survey consisting of questions regarding students' social and emotional awareness of the environment at LASA. Based on the results of the survey, the counseling team decides which areas require the most improvement. There are several specific topics that the counseling team is focusing on this semester, which students are educated upon through assemblies during FIT or power point presentations during class.

"I'm planting those seeds," Butler said. "The first step is bringing awareness that [bullying] exist. [The second step is] figuring out what we can do to shift it, how are we going to change it. If people left that presentation thinking that [bullying] is a thing that exists at LASA, then that to me is a win."

For sophomores this semester, the LASA counseling team decided to place their focus on how to be an active bystander, a person who intervenes when bullying occurs. Unlike the majority of the previous presentations that incorporated SEL elements, this presentation featured students speaking from their own experience to explain several useful techniques that all can understand and implement in certain situations. According to Butler, the presentations provide greater opportunity for students to learn how to adjust with LASA's environment.

"I think in general, this will always be a rigorous, competitive program," Butler said. "It's going to be [a] stressful environment. Always. I have seen students throughout their time here, by the time they get to be seniors here learn how to cope their stress better."

Because LASA is an advanced and academically driven school, there is less emphasis on SEL skills in classrooms. It is unlikely that LASA would implement a course dedicated to SEL, partially due to time constraints. According to

Butler, SEL classes wouldn't fit into the curriculum at LASA. A typical high school SEL course primarily focuses on setting future goals and college preparedness, features that LASA already addresses. Despite these differences, there is an effort from teachers to include SEL aspects into their subject matters in order to further help students.

"I think our SEL looks different at LASA in that our programs are more right now about identifying students that need actual support and giving them counseling services," Butler said. "Then throughout counseling sessions, getting those students help by the time they're seniors. That's kind of how it looks. I think we can shift them over time [as] students learn those skills over time."

In addition to the counseling team, the teachers also have an important role in helping students. LASA teacher Caitlin Palmer said that she believes teaching is a reflective profession that can easily incorporate elements of SEL, such as times when teachers need to be emotionally flexible with their different classes by discovering how to get along with each class. At the beginning of her classes, Palmer does a "check-in" circle. The purpose of the check-in circle is to increase student awareness of one another and practice listening to others.

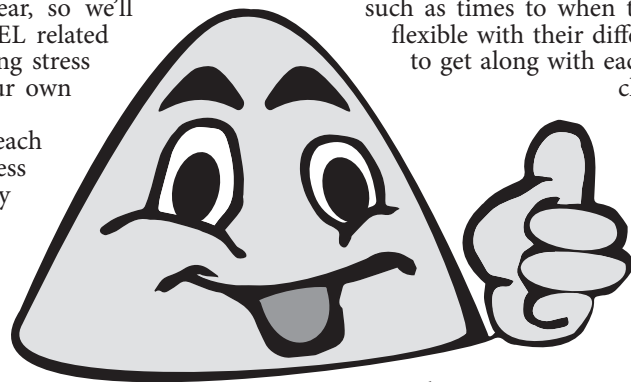
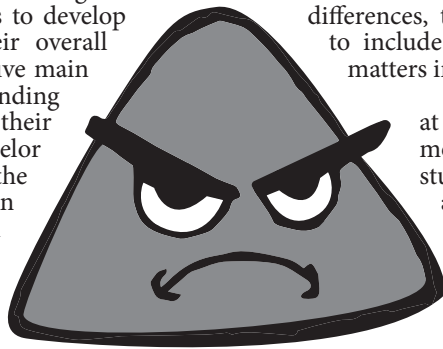
She said that she wants the check-in circle to be a safe environment for students to acknowledge their feelings at that moment and show empathy to each other. "I believe strongly in SEL in its aims and what it can offer students

are difficult to come by and hard for a lot of people in learning how to communicate to people and learning effectively in a way that again creates community," Palmer said. "That's why I [practice SEL], because it's a better learning environment if students know each other, can see other as individuals that are constantly changing just like they are and are accepting of one another."

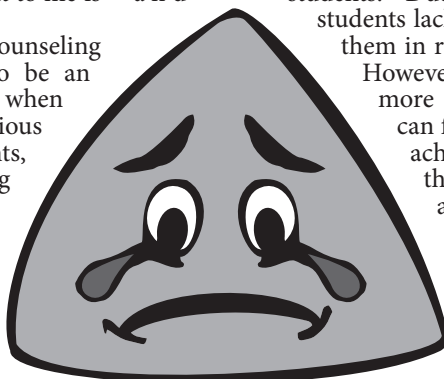
According to Palmer, LASA has room to improve with SEL, especially by increasing connections between teachers and students. Due to LASA's environment, students lack several skills that could aid them in reaching their particular goal.

However, Palmer believes that with more human connection that SEL can foster, it will become easier to achieve that goal. She also said that SEL allows both teachers and students to realize who they are, and helps to increase communication.

"I think that SEL is critical to a person's success, and by success, I mean happy relationships that are meaningful and based not on someone's 'value' but just on who they are," Palmer said. "I think that it's important to recognize all people have value and I think that SEL kind of contributes to that and creates an atmosphere that fosters community and equality, which is really important."



graphic by Jeffery Kovar and Grace Bodine



New admissions policy

continued from page 1

will be first-generation college students. They also include students who excel academically despite “unusually difficult circumstances” and those who embrace academic rigor. LASA Latino Outreach Committee chair Nuri Vallbona said that the policy was a good step towards achieving a more representative LASA.

“I think that right now we aren’t reflecting the community that [we] serve,”

Vallbona said. “For example, right now, LASA is 1.7 percent African American, but Austin is around seven or eight percent. So I feel we have some serious catching up to do in order to reflect the community. If we’re educating the community, we need to reflect the community.”

These special circumstances categories being considered are intended to increase diversity at LASA, which currently has a student population that is 1.6 percent African American, to Austin’s 7.7 percent, and has under half of Austin’s 35 percent

of Hispanic and Latino population. In addition, only seven percent of the student body is economically disadvantaged. LASA parent and Latino Outreach Committee member Elizabeth Torres said that the current relative lack of diversity hurt all students at LASA.

“I find that LASA may be lacking in [diversity] in terms of fulfilling our educational aspirations for our students,” Torres said. “You give them so much, but there’s a glaring missing piece: which is that we don’t have as many different kinds of people to get to know and experience their backgrounds their opinions and how to express your own opinions, which are important life skills, not just for college. And I think it helps to complete the big picture of what we see as education here at LASA.”

Crescenzi said that increased diversity would help LASA to more accurately mimic the environment of the real world and would benefit all students at LASA. Recent studies have pointed to enrichment and a more beneficial learning environment for all as a result of increased racial and economic diversity.

“Diversity helps everyone,” Crescenzi said. “The real world is ridiculously complex and diverse. If you’re not engaging with people whose backgrounds, in every possible way, are different from yours. Your ideas, your thoughts or way of lense through which they view the world is different from your own, then you’re not getting that look at any given topic. I truly believe that from everything from world languages to math, there’s not a class that a school can offer that diversity won’t have a benefit to the students in the class.”

Torres said she was excited for the new policy, but also acknowledged the possibility of social backlash and the otherization of LASA’s minority students as a result of this policy. She said that insensitive students could seriously hurt the LASA experience of others by invalidating their presence at LASA.

“I don’t think there’s a person of color who hasn’t had that [experience],” Torres said. “Every school I’ve been to, there’s always been someone who said ‘You are here because you have to be female or you have to be brown’... When you’re young, think of this age group, you’re trying to find yourself, there’s a lot of insecurity and vulnerability and then you’re told this by someone

and it’s hard to say, ‘Well no, I belong here,’ even if you know that you do.”

LASA parent and African American Outreach Committee chair Alys Porter said she had also experienced invalidation in educational and professional contexts as a result of her race and gender. She said that the policy would be worth the possible social pushback that could result, and that, due to the power of education as a “cornerstone” of equality, affirmative action programs were beneficial policies.

“Policies like affirmative action and quotas are things that work, and help to level the playing field and give more people access,” Porter said. “If you stayed within your community you would never reach out to other people... It may be something special that got [one] person into LASA, but you have to think about the work that that person has to do to stay there.”

The new admissions process is only one part of LASA’s outreach program, which includes the Latino and African American Outreach Committees and the mentorship programs in which LASA parents aided middle schoolers at Title I schools with completing the application process. Crescenzi said that one of the benefits outside from directly increasing student diversity at LASA would be that it could spread the message that LASA is interested in diversity.

“Partly, what is exciting about the new admissions procedure is that not only the procedure itself helps increase diversity at LASA but we help spread the message that we are interested in diversity,” Crescenzi said. “I think the biggest problem we have... is that our pool itself of students who apply is not as diverse as it could be.”

Porter said that this policy and its purpose would be helped significantly by an expansion of LASA. The LASA Campus Advisory Council has advocated for an expansion of LASA’s capacity to around 1,600 students, from under 1,000 now. She also emphasized the necessary nature of diversity, and the way in which it aids all students, not merely those admitted within the 20 percent of special circumstances.

“I think the students here really need to really realize that... everyone has something to offer and everyone is special,” Porter said. “You can learn from everyone... I think the student body really has to start embracing that everyone deserves access. I think if you start embracing that kind of concept, it makes it easier so you don’t see that person as an adversary or as undeserving. You can’t really tell if someone is here on the 20 percent or the 80 percent, but just see everyone in your classroom as someone. That’s the purpose they’re there for, to all learn from each other, not to judge.”

NEW LASA ADMISSIONS POLICY


Students will be ranked without any identifying information from highest holistic rubric score to lowest with the top possible score being a 25.

Graphic by Sarah Mines and Grace Bodine

80%

FIRST 300 ACCEPTED:
according to LASA’s blind holistic rubric alone

- 7th and 8th Core courses grades from Report Card
- EOC/STAAR, or other Standardize Test Scores
- Application and Student Responses (each item is scored individually and averaged)
- Teacher Recommendations (each letter is scored individually and averaged)
- LASA Admissions Test Score



20%

NEXT 60 ACCEPTED:
meets 3 of 5 special circumstances + base rubric score

- student will be 1st in family to attend college
- student’s zoned middle school where economically disadvantaged population is 70% or greater
- student’s racial or ethnic group is underrepresented
- student has demonstrated academic accomplishment against adversity
- student successfully embraces academic challenges



WELCOME FUTURE CLASSES!

Chinese club ushers in new year at local festival

GUS ALBACH
Staff Writer

To celebrate the Chinese New Year, LASA’s Chinese Club joined with Chinese classes from the Austin area to throw a festival at Connally High School. The festival occurred on Jan. 21 and included singing performances from multiple schools as well as Chinese cultural practices such as tea ceremonies or using a Chinese yoyo. This is LASA’s first year participating in a large-scale New Year celebration, and according to LASA sophomore Danika Luo, events like these help students to learn Chinese culture and add an element of fun to learning a language.

In order to prepare for such an event, Chinese students spent time learning a song which would then be performed in front of the other schools at the festival. This preparation took multiple weeks, and according to Luo, the class had been preparing for some time.

“We set time aside almost every class to learn the lyrics to the song Ms. Huang chose for us to perform,” Luo said. “Additionally, she made us take a lyrics quiz to ensure that we learned all the words.”

This effort isn’t invested into the festival solely for the purpose of celebrating Chinese culture. According to LASA Chinese teacher Xuemei Huang, the festival is also provides an opportunity for club members to show off what they’ve learned.

“We use it as an opportunity to showcase student knowledge and awareness of Chinese culture through projects—arts and crafts, plus performances,” Huang said.

The festival at Connally isn’t the only opportunity LASA students have to engage in Chinese cultural practices. According to Luo, Chinese students hosted a successful New Year celebration at LASA last year, and they intend to continue the tradition.

“The different Chinese classes at LASA prepared their own little performance, and we invited parents to come watch,” Luo said. “It was a potluck, and we also played fun games. This is a LASA tradition that we’re hoping to keep.”

Luo said the New Year festival is just one part of a regular series of Chinese cultural celebrations that LASA hosts. These events allow Chinese students to engage with Chinese culture and share what they learn with the student body at large.

“Every other Friday, we do something called ‘Fun Friday,’ where we do a variety of cultural activities such as calligraphy, paper cutting, bracelet making, et cetera,” Luo said. “Learning about Chinese culture is a big part of the class. Recently, we had a calligraphy contest where everyone practiced calligraphy in class for almost a month, and then we submitted a piece of calligraphy that was hung in the library for people to vote on.”

According to Huang, Chinese cultural learning is interwoven with the Chinese language curriculum by design. Students meet frequently to continue their practice outside the classroom.

“Chinese Culture Club and Chinese Yoyo Club both meet regularly and share and practice,” Huang said. “Culture is interwoven into nearly all Chinese language lessons, so cultural knowledge is always increasing.”



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1. Junior Roy Stracovsky’s performance features the use of a Chinese yoyo.
2. LASA sophomore Tania Rives and freshman Camille head the tea ceremony table.
3. LASA sophomores Alex Loia, Michael Chen, Jenny Lu, and Danika Luo sing the song they prepared at Connally High School.

photos courtesy of Oliva Tung

Punk to pop: student explores the musical tastes found at LASA

RILEY MURPHY
Staff Writer

One of the most difficult things to categorize is music, especially since new genres seem to spring up all the time. Listening to music is an everyday action for so many people. Music can be as diverse as the people that listen to it, and everyone has their own preference. Tastes can change drastically based on certain stimulus, like mood and location, but it all boils down to what someone wants to hear.

"Personally I'm all over the board when it comes to music," LASA junior Ryland Quirk said. "I listen to anything from house and disco to rap and alt rock. There are so many different artists and each artist has their own style. Each song has its own distinct sound."

Many people choose to listen to what they do based on their experiences and feelings. Music is most effective when it evokes thoughts and ideas from the past.

"I love most genres of music but I don't connect emotionally to them as much as I do with blues and jazz," LASA senior Christian Flores said. "I use music to connect to memories and emotions. Other genres don't seem to do that for me."

Appreciation of music is very much based around how people were introduced to it. Some were brought up with certain types and genres, while others didn't pay any mind to what they listened to.

"Music is important to me because I've grown up with it my whole life," Quirk said. "Since I was young, my parents have been bringing me to ACL and Morrissey concerts. When I got into alt-rock they brought me to a Jane's Addiction concert as well as Red Hot Chili Peppers. It's really my parents that have made music a huge part of my life."

Much of the taste for music comes from creating it for yourself. When a person knows the technical aspects of a song, it allows them to hear certain parts more clearly.

"I play cello and guitar, so I tend to listen more to the guitar lines in songs," LASA senior Devin Ryan said. "I grew up in the punk scene and I wouldn't be a part of that if I didn't listen to music. I love going to shows, and I listen to music for multiple hours almost everyday. It's a big part of my life."

Flores, a singer, listens to music to advance his own talents.

"I like to sing the more current stuff because, vocally, they are very challenging to duplicate and make my own when performing. I have always had more fun performing modern songs."

All genres are not universally enjoyed by people, and they don't typically fall into one specific category. There is a always healthy distaste for certain genres by some that



graphic by Grace Bodine

others tend to enjoy more.

"I don't like pop music at all," Quirk said. "It's all the same four line beat with nothing to separate one song from the next besides the name of the guy that scrolls across the radio. It's all just bland and uninteresting."

On the other side, Flores advocates for his enjoyment of the pop genre.

"I listen to pop a lot because I am young and like to see how music develops over time and I always like to listen to the newest things," Flores said.

As with pop v. rock or any genre against another, a

major topic of dissent seems to be "is country music good or not?"

"I hate new country for sure," Quirk said. "Ride on my big green tractor" and "let's go out and drink beers on the beach and eat fried chicken" doesn't really resonate with me, but I believe Willie Nelson and Johnny Cash are some of the greatest artists of all time."

The feeling remains mutual with Flores. He suggests that the stereotypical country music seems to do nothing but objectify and has no true meaning other than its surface level.

"They always seem to talk about girls, trucks and beer," Flores said. "Older country seemed to have a lot more meaning to the music, but nowadays I can't bare to listen to it and will turn it off as soon as it comes on."

LASA junior Aaron Crisler stands on the opposite side of this debate.

"Country music resonates with me because it reminds me of my childhood in Nashville," said Crisler. "It brings back memories of long car rides in the middle of nowhere."

Certain musical tastes can change based on how a person is feeling a any given time, and how they want to feel. Music has the ability to elicit different responses in different people, causing a shift in attitude corresponding to the feel of the music.

"I usually listen to experimental music when I'm alone and trying to jam out, and I listen to more alternative music when I'm with friends or trying to be a bit happier," LASA junior Analisa Beard said. "When I'm sad, I usually listen to my actually good songs that I can play when the radio isn't good because it helps me pep myself up."

No two people will have the same tastes when it comes to music. They may agree on some songs and genres, then disagree on others. But whether someone listens to hardcore metal or soft jazz, it is the choice of the individual who listens. Music can change moods, bring up old memories and create new ones. It is the way music is interpreted based on experiences or lack thereof that makes it special.

"Music has been a huge factor in the development of my character and a major part of my life since I was born," Flores said. "Without it, I don't know who I would be."



Seniors Ivy Smith and Angelo Sole sing and dance in "Nice Work if You Can Get It". "You should expect lots of surprises, big stuff and plot twists at every corner," senior Trey Vivar said. photo by Max Randall

"Nice Work if You Can Get it"

continued from page 1

"There's about two months of pre-production," McGee said. "We build sets, find props, and work with the actors to help them understand what they are supposed to do. There's costume design, set builders, painters, sound and lighting guys."

Pre-production is part of the process of any theater production, and due to the larger scale of this show, the crew has been spending a lot of time getting things ready, according to Trey Vivar, a LASA senior working as a tech.

"We all put in lots of work, it's a lot of planning with tech directors, and designers and the theater director, trying to figure out what she wants and how she wants it."

While the amount of time for pre-production is usually a couple months, "Nice Work If You Can Get It" is different in a lot of ways for shows LASA has done in the past. According to Ingrid Kinney, a LASA junior on the chorus, this show is set during a time period that has never been done before at LASA.

"The show takes place during a totally different time period. Since I've been here we haven't done any production that takes place as long ago as the twenties, which is when this play takes place," Kinney said. "It's kind of around during the prohibition era."

Along with the setting and where it takes place, "Nice Work If You Can Get It" is also different due to the size of the set as well as the size of the orchestra, according to Vivar.

"The reason why we did this play was because it has a whole orchestra, so Mr. Mayor wanted a show that required a full orchestra, and 'Nice Work If You Can Get It' was that one," Vivar said. "It's also definitely bigger, and when a show is bigger that means we need a bigger set, which goes back into the two month planning period. Usually we have four or five piece bands that play complex music numbers, but this musical we do have a full orchestra."

In order to accommodate the full orchestra, the size of the set is a major factor for the musical and something that hasn't ever really been done before, according to McGee.

"The set is really advanced, there's a whole second story, which doesn't usually happen," McGee said. "It took a lot more time to get that ready and figure out how we were going to have the actors use the added space and height."

In order to build and produce the larger set pieces and coordinate all the bodies that are on stage, a larger number of crew members is required, according to Kinney. She says it's necessary for lots of the crew members to be there every day in order to have the show run smoothly.

"There's a lot of different jobs, there is probably like a hundred people, maybe not every given day, but there is probably about 40 to 60 people there every single day," Kinney said. "Techs are always doing a lot and making sure lights, markings and set pieces are where they should be for the show."

While the larger number of crew members is necessary for the show to run well, the number of actors in "Nice Work If You Can Get It" is also quite a bit larger this year according to McGee, and also involves a lot more dancing than usual.

"There's a lot more dancing involved that's very fast, and it's really hard to try and get everything organized in this short of a time, even though we don't actually have that long to rehearse," McGee said. "It's definitely going to be a really big show."

The dancing in this show is choreographed by LASA senior Isabelle Dickey, who will also be dancing in the show, according to Kinney.

"The actors really know what they are doing, and this show is really special because Isabel Dickey choreographed the whole thing and she's also dancing a lot," Kinney said. "So it will be nice to see her work come to light."

"Nice Work If You Can Get It" will be a musical full of lots of surprises as well as dancing, according to Vivar, and the musical should wow it's audience.

"You should expect lots of surprises, big stuff and plot twists at every corner," Vivar said. "Expect to see individuals who you wouldn't expect to be acting show up on stage."

Ultimately, "Nice Work If You Can Get It" should be a good laugh all around for anyone who comes to see it, Kinney stated. The older time period will be different and new for some veteran LASA audience members, but the intent for a good time is still the same according to many members of the crew.

"I hope everybody loves it and can take away some laughs, romance, smiles, and maybe appreciation for how life was back in the twenties," Kinney said.

Top 5 FIT's we wish we could have...

KENZA MCKERRIHAN
Staff Writer

1. Puppy Play Time

Could you imagine anything more relaxing than sitting in a room surrounded by soft, beautiful puppies?

2. Paintball

Release some aggression and make the side of our school look less like a prison and more like a Jackson Pollock.

3. Feast Fit

Have you ever dreamed of being able to eat anything as you walk the aisles of HEB? Do you have a craving? Need a snack? In this FIT you simply eat free snacks.

4. FIT (Functional Nap Time)

Imagine a giant college center: dim lights, couches, a nice scent - except it is bigger and this FIT lasts a full 90 minutes not 30.

5. Jumpoline

This would be jumpoline on a small scale. Trampolines would cover the walls of a classroom for the days when you actually feel rested and want to have some fun (this FIT is not heavily attended).

SXSW: who to see and what to hear

ASHLEY THOMAS
Staff Writer

South by Southwest (SXSW) 2017 is set to feature the work of several LASA students in categories such as music and film this March. The musical group Misimplicity featuring LASA junior Zoe Czarnecki is set to play for the second time as an official South By artist this year. On the film front, a group of Advanced Audio and Visual Production (AVP) students submitted their work to the film festival for a chance to screen their two feature films "Honey Down" and "The Watcher".

Music

In anticipation for her 2017 performance at SXSW, LASA junior Zoe Czarnecki has been busy at practice with fellow bandmate Grace Schmidhauser. Her band, Misimplicity, will be featured as an official SXSW music artist for the second time this March after their debut at SXSW 2015.

"I'm excited to play," Czarnecki said. "We haven't been playing a ton of shows recently, so I'm really excited to get back to it... I hope our shows go well and I'm also excited to see a bunch of other shows."

Misimplicity is set to debut new music and showcase their first ever line of band apparel at SXSW. This year they'll be playing in a lineup with hundreds of bands across the world all here to share the South By experience. Czarnecki says the biggest part of her experience is being able to say she was able meet such a diverse set of people all together for the same purpose of exposing their music.

"Being official during SXSW [instead of playing unofficial shows] is cool because you get to say you did it," Czarnecki said. "It's a source of pride I guess. It's also really cool because we get wristbands and get to go to the convention center and to the artist lounge. The last time we played officially was 2015, and one of the coolest parts was going to the artist lounge and hearing all the different languages. Lots of bands were there picking up their artist backpacks and it's super cool [to see] all these people from all over the world in one room for the same festival."

Film

LASA's advanced AVP class has submitted two films under review to be showcased at SXSW 2017. The feature films "The Watcher" and "Honey Down" will be set to premiere alongside major feature films such as "Song to Song" starring Oscar nominee Ryan Gosling. According to LASA senior Christina Winbigger, director of "Honey Down" and crew member on "The Watcher", she and her team mates are thrilled at the possibility to be featured at South By.

"Earlier in the year 'The Watcher' was accepted in the Austin Film Festival and I was so ecstatic to see my short on the big screen," Winbigger said. "But knowing that my film[s] will be screening at SXSW is absolutely crazy because I go there every year to watch their screenings and to know that I'm actually a part of it is really a dream come true."

"The Watcher" follows the story of a man who preserves the dead body of his girlfriend following her death while "Honey Down" follows a young boy desperate to give up his reliance on his deceased pet rabbit. Winbigger showed the parallels and differences between her two projects, but expressed how fun both of them were to shoot.

"Making 'The Watcher' was much simpler and smaller scale than 'Honey Down,'" Winbigger said. "When I placed 'Honey Down' in a party I knew it would be a challenge. I looked forward to it, and when the day came it was one of the most hectic days of my life. That being said I also learned more from that experience than I could've if I just watched lectures on filmmaking."

LASA students in TEDx

Youth led educational conference looks to promote "ideas worth spreading"

LISA MOOMAW
Staff Writer

In just a few days, the Westlake High School Performing Arts Center will flood with people from all over Austin eager to learn. Both a Los Angeles celebrity and a scientist studying Mars, two people who it seems couldn't be more different, will receive the attention and cheers of the audience. What links these polar opposites?

The common thread here is the annual TEDxYouth Austin conference on Saturday, Feb 11 from 12 to 6 p.m., put on by Austin youth including several LASA students after months of preparation. The event, which aims to bring together youth from all across the Austin community, will feature a lineup of speakers and interactive exhibits, called XLabs, curated by the TEDxYouth team.

LASA volunteers are scattered across teams that together organize the event. One of these students is junior Caitlyn Tibbetts, who is participating as a team member for her first time this year.

"TedxYouth is a very much youth-run event, so it's mostly youth and then a few adult mentors to keep us on track," Tibbetts said. "So really, anything that pertains to the event, [the] youth are doing."

The volunteers are divided into teams based on their skills and fields of interest. These teams' jobs range from designing the logo to finding speakers. According to a TEDxYouth press release announcing the event, this year's speakers range from professionals on augmented reality to Hollywood professionals. According to senior Alisha Ahmed, a couple adult mentors also help guide the students as they go through the planning process.

"We also have adult mentors who have connections," Ahmed said. "This year we actually got an astronaut and I don't know how we got him!"

Even the website is coded by youth, including Tibbetts, who is a part of the Website Team. According to Tibbetts, other teams, including Design Team and Photography Team for instance, create content for the site, tedxyouthaustin.com, and they implement changes.

"Basically, someone says to us, 'We need to add this to a page,' and we're the ones that go and do it," Tibbetts said. "So we're kind of that gatekeeper."

Senior Yash Sarda is the lead of the Production Day Team, which works with the venue and technology crew to ensure the event goes as planned. However, Sarda thinks it's especially important to acknowledge the role of another group, ambassadors, who spread the word about the show.

"While 'team lead' and 'team member' sound like fancy roles, it's the ambassadors we rely on the most," Sarda said, "as their job is to get students from LASA to come to the event."

The ultimate goal of bringing the event to the community, according to Ahmed, is to spread the new concepts brought in by the speakers and attendees. Beyond that, though, the organizers also reap the same benefits.

"Full Circle," "(In)visible," "Re:solve," and "Limitless."

"The beauty behind the theme is that we have a phrase like 'Common Threads,' or last year for instance was 'Full Circle,'" Tibbetts said. "Each person or speaker comes up with what they think that means in terms of their life and their person."

As Tibbetts, Ahmed and Sarda all describe, the vagueness of the theme intends to allow each person who participates in the event to understand the phrase in a unique way. So, while to Tibbetts it references the diversity of our community, to Sarda it's slightly different, serving as a call for less separation.

"To me, [the theme] means finding unity with one another in a time of division," Sarda said. "However, the theme means something different to everybody, as everyone will take away something different from the event. It all depends on you and the enthusiasm you bring."

For many involved in the event, attending was their first step towards joining the team. Such is the case for Tibbetts, who is participating for her first time this year.

"I've been watching TED talks with my dad for most of my life," Tibbetts said. "However, I went to the TEDxYouth event last year for the first time, and I just thought it was so inspiring and so interesting."

Once students join as ambassadors and team members, they can then assume higher leadership roles in the years that follow. For example, Sarda and Ahmed are both leads of their respective teams.

"Before, I was just an ambassador, so I was just doing that," Ahmed said. "Then, last year, I was on the registration team, but this year I'm leading the team."

Those running the show, however, are far from the only ones significant to the event. The impact on the entire community, according to Ahmed, Sarda and Tibbetts, is huge.

"Creating an event like this that inspires people is probably one of the most worthwhile things anyone can do," Tibbetts said. "Listening to accomplished people talk about what they're doing with their life and how important it is, it's just really inspiring."

“Creating an event like this that inspires people is probably one of the most worthwhile things anyone can do.”

-LASA junior Caitlyn Tibbetts

"The motto of TED is 'ideas worth spreading' which is really great," Ahmed said. "I know a lot of people love TED talks and it's great to be a part of something so big and influential."

On the day of the event, attendees will gather and listen to each of the speakers with a break in the middle to engage with interactive exhibits that the team curates, called XLabs.

"We'll have a bunch of booths set up with different themes—there'll be a 3D printing station, and a food station, and much more," Ahmed said. "It's just a way to have a break from all the TED talks for people to enjoy."

Each year, the event has a different theme that encompasses the overall idea behind the production. This year's is "Common Threads," and previous themes include

How well do you know LASA teachers?

ELENA H. LUCAS
Staff Writer

Match the teacher to their quote.



A "You cannot use 'alternative facts' on your essays"



B "Every student is my favorite student."



C "It's a magical world, Hobbes, ol' buddy... Let's go exploring!"
-Calvin and Hobbes"



D "Use common sense and good judgment."



E "That's the difference between me and all of you: I was born with good genes."

ANSWERS: 1. c 2. e 3. a 4. b 5. d

photos by Elena H. Lucas

Big movies only made for money

Is the way the movie industry changing good or bad?

TALIA WILLCOTT
Staff Writer

Movies are important and influential in our society, just like money, and in that sense the two go hand in hand. But how does money really influence movies? Some would argue that when films first started being produced, the plots had more depth, the actors conveyed clearer emotion and the cash was just a bonus. It seems that now a big profit is the objective and producers have given less thought to the quality of their work. Others would say that movies have improved drastically because of the technology that is possible today.

Andrew Thomas, a junior and film enthusiast, believes that the quality of movies has decreased over the years due to

be the only game in town; you would always go to the movies. [Movie producers] could do more things because they knew they had an audience. Nowadays there are so many different venues. You can get content everywhere. To actually get people to go to a theater is more difficult today than ever."

Due to the amount of competition throughout the film business, it can be hard to accumulate a big audience, but Mokry believes there are ways to do it.

"The movies they make now are based on previous existing IP (intellectual property), so that means they're only going to make a movie about a book that already exists," Mokry said. "Harry Potter' and the



the growing need for money.

"While I think writers and directors still, with a few exceptions, make films because they truly have a passion for it, I definitely believe that major motion picture companies such as Disney, Universal and Paramount have films created for the sake of making a profit," Thomas said.

Thomas followed this statement by listing a few examples of instances when movies lacked quality for the benefit of quantity.

"We see this quite clearly in 'rights reserving films,' such as the recent 'Fantastic 4' movie made by Sony, where companies have a movie made revolving around a certain license to secure the rights to that license," Thomas said. "'Fantastic 4' was a pretty terrible movie and flopped the box office, but Sony doesn't care, since the rights to the brand are secured, and they can continue to make money off of it."

Another point Thomas made to defend his claim was that movie producers also make movies based on what is popular, like the new "Star Wars" movies.

"The production crew may have poured their heart and soul into the most recent 'Star Wars' film, 'Rogue One,' but Disney commissioned the movie for the sole purpose of making money," Thomas said. "Disney knows that people would want to see a film like that, and buy merchandise based on said film."

Ms. Mokry, LASA's Audio Video Production teacher, believes that everything in the world is influenced by money, whether it be good or bad. In the movie industry, money is key to improvement.

"All kinds of movies always have to be profitable," Mokry said. "But movies used to

'Hunger Games' and all those others come though, they know that's a built in audience, they know that's gonna sell and that's what they do. So now a days they get writers to come in and pitch to an idea they already know they want to make for IP that exists."

According to Mokry, before the competition increased, pitching and creating movies was much easier because nothing had been done yet.

"Back in the 90s we were in the time of brand new ideas and they would sell scripts that were written on speculation of being sold," Mokry said. "They had completely new and original ideas. But now, with all the screens, everybody is watching on their computer or at home or wherever. There is so much more competition. They have to have a built in audience. They only make really big movies that cost hundreds of millions or they make very small ones that will be their one Oscar contender for the year."

Some movies are released for the masses and Mokry believes the quality of those sometimes falter.

"Big blockbusters, although some can be okay, like 'Captain America,' a lot of them aren't going to be good," Mokry said.

Money is a powerful object today, and movies intertwine with society so the relationship between the two can be good or bad and is oftentimes both. Overall, money is essential for the production and continuation of movies, but generally it takes away from the quality.

"Movies have gotten better in the way that when they are playing to write a movie they think ahead," Mokry said. "But the ones that actually get released and make money probably aren't going to be as good."



"Practice is pretty tiring, but it means that we will be ready for the season, LASA senior Ari Takvorian said as he receives a pass from LASA junior Diego Laundry during a junior varsity practice. photo by Oliver Powers.

Boys' Soccer prepares for the upcoming season

MAX IRBY
Staff Writer

The LBJ boys' soccer season started off with a bang, with the varsity, junior varsity and freshman teams each playing in their respective Copa Akins tournament in the span of two weeks. The annual tournament is organized by the Akins High School soccer program. The varsity team, whose tournament began on Thursday, Jan 13, placed third in the finals standings after winning three of four games. The JV team, whose tournament kicked off on Thursday, Jan 19, tied one game and lost their other two.

Tournaments like the Copa Akins are typically scheduled before the start of the season. The fact that they occur in the buffer period between players coming back to school from winter break and the start of the regular season means that they serve as a good preparatory tool for the team, according to LBJ soccer head coach Cipriano Martinez.

"Experience," Martinez said when asked about what the LBJ soccer program gains from playing in tournaments. "All of our teams can be more prepared and get experience playing in games before the district season."

In addition to the team, players as individuals need to make the change from practicing to playing in the regular season. Varsity team captain and LASA senior

Filippos Kallivokas expanded on this.

"It helped me get used to playing, which is good because the transition from winter break to the season can sometimes be tough," Kallivokas said. "The tournament made that transition easier."

According to LASA sophomore and LBJ soccer JV player True Pham, tournaments can also help build team chemistry, which is essential in soccer.

"The team has bonded a lot and we definitely feel more comfortable with each other," Pham said. "Even if we didn't have a lot of success at this tournament, we know

The team has bonded a lot and we definitely feel more comfortable with each other

-LASA sophomore True Pham

what we need to fix as a team before the season starts, which I'm sure will help us down the line."

The LBJ soccer team doesn't have all of their players

in a single class like other programs, so players need opportunities to play together for the LBJ team to succeed, according to Kallivokas.

"The tournament helped us improve our play together as a team," Kallivokas said. "We have players from many different clubs, and getting on the same page and forming chemistry is important for the season."

But the benefits of playing in preseason tournaments don't come without potential costs. Playing multiple games within a period of days comes with the risk of players getting injured, which is why many head coaches like Martinez say they are sometimes discouraged from participating in multiple tournaments.

"When I first started coaching, I did as many tournaments as I could, sometimes up to three before the start of the season, but with playing more games comes the risk of having your players injured," Martinez said. "We only play one now because we want to have a full team to start the season."

Seeing how other teams in the area and district play is really beneficial, according to Martinez. He said that overall the benefits of playing in a reasonable amount of preseason tournaments and games outweigh the possible detriments.

"I definitely feel more prepared for the season," Martinez said. "We got to see how other teams in our area play, and we can plan around that for the coming district games."

Space issues solved

With improved goals the issue of sharing space has become less of a problem

JEFFREY KOVAR
Staff Writer

Corbin Schmeil dodges soccer defenders left and right, dribbling the ball with grace, speed and elegance on the LBJ practice soccer. Finding an opening to shoot, Schmeil rips the ball with veracity, sending the ball hurdling toward the goal. The ball goes past the goal post, barely sneaking past the goalies' outstretched arm. Instead of celebrating his top notch finish however, Schmeil is forced to chase after the ball after it flew into one of the many holes in the goal's net. This scene is a problem of the past, after The LBJ Athletic Office purchased two new soccer goals for teams to practice on.

The LBJ Athletics department installed the goals in December because they saw a glaring need for them. LASA junior and LBJ boys' varsity soccer player Corbin Schmeil likes the addition of the

goals, citing how they help free up space for practice.

"The new goals are really nice," Schmeil said. "They really free up

more space for us to practice and gives everyone a little bit more room, unlike last year. They're also not like super rusted and broken like the other ones, which is a plus as well."

The new goals are situated in the field near the portables, in between the four goals that were there last year, creating an extra field for teams to practice on. LBJ boys' soccer is currently practicing on the fields to prepare for their upcoming season. The new goals were requested by the Athletic Office, and after they saw the need for them, they had to comply according to LBJ Athletic Director Andrew Jackson.

"We needed them," Jackson said. "We needed some new goals. They knew we needed some new goals, so they got us a couple."

Last year, when there was only the two fields next to the portables, along with the pitch inside the track, space was limited for practice. Girls' soccer, boys' soccer and girls' lacrosse would all practice during the winter and spring months, and according to Schmeil it was a tight squeeze. Currently, all

those programs, along with ultimate frisbee, practice after school Tuesday and Thursday. This means that these days are a lot more crowded, but with the new goals, it added an extra field allowing the programs better places to practice according to LASA sophomore and LBJ boys' junior varsity soccer player Christian Salinas.

"Last year, I practiced on the field in the track and we didn't have a lot of room," Salinas said. "The goals added an extra field that really helped in terms of the amount of room and space we have to practice. Last year was pretty cramped and it made it hard to practice because we couldn't do a lot of the things we wanted to. Now, I practice on the field near the portables and we can practice a lot more and do a lot more game type situations."

The next goal in terms of field maintenance is to fix the field itself by re-seeding it, as well as filling in the holes, according to Jackson. The fields have a number of holes, along with many bare

patches of grass. Schmeil would like this project done because the field conditions make it hard to practice.

"The quality of the fields is still kinda bad in terms of all the holes and stuff that is there," Schmeil said. "It makes it really hard to practice and get things done when we need to, and it's also really annoying because the other schools have better fields than us. It puts us at a disadvantage in terms of what we can get done and what we can do at practice. I get that there just isn't a budget for that, it's still just a little annoying."

Despite these annoyances, players from soccer, football, ultimate frisbee and lacrosse practice on these fields throughout the year. The next step to solve the field problems that Schmeil complains about is to fill the holes to reduce possible injuries as said by Jackson, but this is a lot harder said than done, so Jackson hopes this will happen in the near future.

"What we need to get done now is get the land out there redone," Jackson said. "We need to re-seed it and smooth it all out. That's about it. It's just now about getting the fields done and then we should look good."



LASA freshman and LBJ swim team member Evan Hadd breaststrokes down the lane, his race coming to a head. photo courtesy of Marcella Cannatti.

Swimming district comes into view for LBJ swim team

SARAH MINES
Staff Writer

The swimmers gather together over a table, laughing in between bites of food. They pile their plates high with pasta, cupcakes, bread and lasagna in order to prepare for the meet the following morning.

The LBJ swim team competed in districts on Jan 27 and had the annual "carb-loading" party the night before. Swimmers load up on foods like pasta, bread and desserts in order to give them enough energy to compete the next day.

"Swimmers will load up on carbs to maintain stamina and endurance throughout a meet," LBJ Swim Team coach and LASA teacher Chloe Cardinale said. "They train so hard and burn a lot of calories. For us it has also become more of a tradition and a fun social event."

The team gathered to eat carbs as well as watch movies and paint their fingers and toes purple. In addition to the carb-loading party before districts, the team also has a hair-dyeing party where swimmers can dye their hair purple for the upcoming meets, and donut relays where swimmers sprint a length of the pool, eat a donut and swim back.

"We also have a bunch of social events for the team and a party for the kids that don't go to regionals," Cardinale said. "It's also really fun to see kids come to school with purple hair after the hair-dyeing party."

The Jags have won the district meet for the past three years. This year, the district has grown to accommodate two more schools, and some swimmers feel as if winning may be more of a challenge.

"We would always come in first, but it will be more difficult now," LASA senior and LBJ swim team co-captain Grace

Jensen said. "This district [meet] could be the last competitive swim meet I'm in. I know it will go well, but I think it will be tight competition. In the past three years winning for us would be pretty predictable, but it will be exciting and we'll hopefully be able to send a good group on to regionals and state."

Swimmers who qualify from districts are eligible to compete at regionals. The first person from each event at regionals can then compete at the state meet.

"It's the most competitive team that I have seen in six years," Cardinale said. "I'm really impressed with times and caliber of the team."

According to Cardinale, the team often moves on to regionals, but not to state. Last year, junior Alex Mancevski qualified to swim the 200 Individual Medley at State.

"We had a lunch, we made posters for [Alex] and we showed up to cheer him on and even Ms. Crescenzi was there," Jensen said. "State is really flashy and a really unique experience."

Last year the boys 400 free relay was four seconds off from qualifying for state. Cardinale believes that the new group of freshmen swimmers will help the team qualify in more events after districts.

"We have a ton of new, amazing freshman who are all really impressive and are showing up to all the practices and are participating fully in the team," LASA senior and LBJ swim team co-captain Finlay Scanlon said. "This year regionals will work a little different, but it will still be a nice end to the season in College Station. Hopefully some relays will go to regionals and then maybe one or two people or a relay will go to state. I'm really glad that I have had an amazing last year as a captain and doing swimming and it's been really fun."



Player (from left to right)	Sport	School
Kennis Justice	Football	Sul Ross State University
Kevin Best	Football	Southwestern Assembly of God University
Deandre Johnson	Basketball	Newman University
Isaiah Feaster	Football	Cisco Junior College
Kalil Thomas	Football	Blinn Junior College
Alaric Frederic	Football	Tyler Junior College
Bryson Johnson	Football	Southwestern Assembly of God University
Chris Sanders	Football	Tyler Junior College
Charles Arscott	Lacrosse	Southern Methodist University
Olivia Lee	Soccer	University of Houston
Allie Green	Football	Tulsa University
Kenza McKerrihan	Rowing	University of Texas
Antonio Lopez-Garcia	Soccer	University of North Carolina



photos by Sarah Porter

They won't re-LAX until they are UIL

MARLEN AVILA
Staff Writer

The sound of feet running on the field can hardly be heard over the enthusiastic cheers coming from the LBJ lacrosse team. Their liveliness can't be contained as friends are swinging around their lacrosse sticks and trying to catch the moving ball. LASA sophomore and LBJ lacrosse player Mallory Graham expressed the contentedness she feels when she's playing lacrosse.

"I enjoy it a lot and it's fun," Graham said. "I feel like a lot of people don't want to join because they never played and think they're bad but the most important thing isn't being good, it's having fun and even if you're bad, that's okay you can join and get better. The most important thing I think is having fun for us."

According to Graham, lacrosse focuses on teamwork rather than the individual player. This comes from the numerous practices that lacrosse holds throughout the year. Unlike other LBJ sports, which are all UIL, lacrosse is a club sport. This means that lacrosse does not have the same privileges as UIL sports which includes having funds from the district or being able to participate in district competitions.

"Since [other sports are] UIL, everything is provided for by the district which can be good and bad because some of our jerseys aren't very good and some of the things aren't great but no one has to pay," Graham said. "Everyone can join and buses are provided and so are all the fields."

Because lacrosse is a club sport, the players have to individually pay for their equipment, coaches and tournaments. According to LASA sophomore and LBJ lacrosse player Gracie Smith, the payments could become deterrents for people who are not committed to pay the various expenses. However, lacrosse does have methods to help people pay such as scholarships and continually holding fundraisers.

"We have to pay," Smith said. "All the players have to pay. We do fundraisers. We do bake sales so we can pay for tournaments."

For lacrosse, there are many opportunities for players to earn the appropriate amount of money to join. Although help is offered to pay, not that many people are aware of this information. According to lacrosse coach Robin Nelson, there could possibly be more players if they knew that money won't be a problem.

"Yeah, if we let people know that we do have a scholarship program and we're going to start doing more fundraising," Nelson said. "It's a really great way of getting to know people and do some volunteer hours and trying to help your team."

Although lacrosse has been known as an LBJ sport, the amount of LBJ players does not compare to those of certified UIL sports such as soccer or basketball. Since the lacrosse team is generally small, there are no tryouts and varsity and JV team can be interchangeable. Smith believes that despite the team being small, there is hope for it to become more known.

"Well, it's definitely getting more popular because we've been talking about it more and trying to get the word out so I think that's the biggest thing," Smith said. "Just making sure that the school knows about it. We've been getting more girls which is good and also it's spreading since it's getting bigger across the US."

As lacrosse is slowly becoming more popular, there is still a considerable amount of effort to be made in order to make lacrosse a UIL sport. UIL sports have more worldwide recognition but lacrosse is beginning to gain attention from several states and countries.

"I think it's going to take a few years in Texas," Nelson said. "We're going to keep working at it and we're going to keep building our program throughout Austin and Texas. Hopefully, it will get up there and moved higher on the list and become a UIL recognized sport."

Swim team dreams unbroken

ASPEN KISSINGER
Staff Writer

On Dec. 17 LASA sophomore and LBJ diver Willa Scanlon broke her foot while in diving practice at the UT Longhorn Aquatics practice. She is one out of the two divers that swim and compete with the LBJ swim team. This incident may affect the rest of the season for not only Scanlon, but for the swim team's altogether score.

"We do these things called dryboards which are like diving boards that go on a mat," Scanlon said. "I basically overshot the mat and landed on the concrete on the side of my ankle."

The LBJ swimming and diving team competes in meets as one team, scores adding together. LBJ divers participated in meets that include diving, plus Districts, Regionals and even sometimes State. The LBJ swim and dive team is currently being instructed by LASA teacher and LBJ Swimming and Diving head coach Chloe Cardinale.

"Basically diving is a separate sport, so they don't really have a role on the swim team on terms of swimming events, but their event is counted," Cardinale said. "It's actually event 15 and 16 on the line up, so all of their points we get. If they won first place, we get the same number of points as if a swimmer won first place in any of their events. So it actually helps a lot when you're trying to win a championship or win a meet because not a lot of other teams have divers."

LBJ's swim team had its district meet on Jan. 27 and had its regionals meet on Feb. 3 and Feb. 4 at College Station.

"Our district use to be really small, this year it's not, and if you're a diver and there's not at least six people who dive, you automatically move on to regionals, so divers usually do really well, but we are in a really competitive region so they reach some stiff competition in regionals," Cardinale said. "But usually the first and second state divers come out of our region, usually from San Antonio or Houston."

Scanlon's sister and LASA senior Finlay Scanlon supports her sister with her diving, even after she broke her foot.

"I try to support her as much as she can, I love watching her dive, seeing her practicing, and her competitions. I think she's obviously committed to her sport," Finlay said. "I think one of the ways I support her, even just a little bit, is that I like to talk to her about what her goals are and what she's doing especially when I pick her up from practice so we can decompress after practice."

Willa should be able to continue diving within the next month if all heals well and she would be able to participate in her diving season outside of school.

"I know it's definitely different from swimming, and not to be mean to high school diving, but I don't set most of my goals off of high school diving," Willa said. "I was hoping to make state, but I still have two years to make state."

Quidditch: fact and fiction

LASA students take on the mythical sport from J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter series

TALIA WILCOTT
Staff Writer

"Harry Potter" is a book franchise that took the world by storm. Today people still fantasize about the extraordinary wizarding world brought to life by J.K. Rowling, and of the sport played by those wizards, Quidditch.

Quidditch is supported and played by

many universities and colleges, as well as a few professional teams, that indulge in bringing fantasy to reality. But there is still a constant debate between wizarding fans about whether or not Quidditch should be played as an official sport in high schools like soccer or football.

LASA sophomore Nick Venn, a committed "Harry Potter" fan, does not think Quidditch would make for a good sport in the real world.

"Even though I love the 'Harry Potter' series, I would have to say no to having Quidditch become a high school sport," Venn said. "It looks great in the movies, but if Quidditch was transferred to us Muggles, it would just look like a bunch of people running around with sticks between their legs."

LASA junior Kanoa Kelly said that playing Quidditch in real life may even take away the magic of reading it about it and experiencing it through the literature. Kelly has many questions about how the

mechanics of the game would play out, including how the brooms would fly or how the snitch would move.

"You're just running around on brooms then and it just kind of takes away from the whole fantasy thing," Kelly said. "I feel like if you make a tube that is blowing air so you can fly it would work, but that would just be too

complicated," Kelly said. "And the balls—would there be people on the

sidelines throwing balls at you? And the Snitch—are you going to have someone holding a golden ball running around the field while other people try and catch them? I don't understand."

Although it seems unrealistic to be played as a real sport, Kelly does support people who want to carry out their wizarding dreams in the real world.

"If enough students did it why not just go for it. If it's that popular why not?" Kelly said.

LASA senior Andi Feddeler has participated in many Harry Potter conventions and witnessed first hand how the wizard sport translates into the MMuggle world. Although her stance is relatively neutral, her opinion of Quidditch being recognized as a real sport leans towards no.

"I think Quidditch is fine as a hobby or recreational sport but I don't think it should be recognized as an official sport because half of Quidditch is flying on brooms and trying to catch a ball [the Snitch] that moves on its own," Feddeler said.

Quidditch is widely supported and accepted as a hobby, but many students, like Andi Feddeler, believe it does not have enough leverage to become a school sport.

"I think it's a fun game to put together for a school event or for something fun, but shouldn't be officially recognized (unless J.K. Rowling says it's okay)," Feddeler said.

Because Quidditch requires magic, most fans do not think it could realistically be considered a sport, but some people argue otherwise. LASA junior Amy Otnes reads the books every summer and believes that playing Quidditch is a good way to connect with the story.

"I think it definitely should if there is enough demand among the students," Otnes said. "It would be a fun and quirky addition to the lineup of the typical basketball, football, volleyball, etc. I think it would be a big hit with Harry Potter fans - like me!"

Quidditch will only truly

work with something people access. If students participate,

a rendition of Quidditch is possible, but because it lacks necessary components, it may have to stay a fantasy.

"Honestly I feel like most high schools students wouldn't really care for it, so overall I think it should be a real sport offered in high school if the students want it," Otnes said.

Baseball season

continued from page 1

"We lost a lot of seniors last year which was a little scary," MacAuley said. "The seniors last year were really good but I think that our team this year is going to be even better."

Not only have the new captains motivated the team to strive for success but the transition to a new LBJ Baseball coach Eric Martonovic has also improved the overall morale on and off the field. Martonovic previously coached at Reagan High School and with the recent leave of past LBJ Baseball coach Ruben Covarrubius, LASA sophomore and LBJ Baseball player Tucker Ebest suggests the new coach has fit right in.

"I really like Coach Marty," Ebest said. "He's been really great so far and I think the team has already gotten a lot better because of him. Especially since Coach Covo left. He's helped us with a lot of new drills in practice and it's turned out really well."

Even though practice has just kicked into gear, according to Lee the Jags feel more prepared than ever. The captains don't just focus on one area but make sure to help each player be the best they can be in every area.

"We mainly focus on hitting and fielding," Lee said. "Coach has us do infield and outfield drills and hitting drills during

practice and it's going pretty well. I think as captains me and Seamus and Kekoa have worked well with Coach to get the team back on their feet."

With new captains and a new coach the team has made some changes in the way that practice is run. The team continues to have fun on and off of the field and stays focused on improving their game, according to MacAuley. He also said that each captain is dedicated to making sure their players are prepared for upcoming games and, if all goes well, playoffs.

"I think we have a good chance of going to playoffs this year," MacAuley said. "Our team is really good and I think we've already made a lot of improvements. Hopefully we'll make it pretty far in playoffs because I think that's something that we all want."

The Jags will start off their season on Feb. 7 against the Hyde Park Panthers at Nelson Field at 6 p.m. The team has been focused on improving their weaknesses and building on their strengths in order to prepare for this opening non-district game.

"I don't think we have any weaknesses," Lee said. "I think we're gonna do really well this year because we're much better than any team in our district."



"Our daily stretches help us stay loose for each of our practices," LASA sophomore and LBJ varsity baseball player Jacob Greendyke said. photo by Sarah Porter.

LBJ Wrestlers grapple with difficulty of sport

JORGE VILLA
Staff Writer

The sound of bodies dropping onto a mat echos around the gym weekend after weekend when wrestlers all across the district participate in the regional tournament to show how much work and time they have dedicated towards their fights. This is what LASA sophomore and LBJ wrestler Elexis Kalar got herself into after deciding to follow her brother's footsteps. Kalar, like most wrestlers, believes that wrestling is the hardest and the most intensive sport in the world. She said that thanks to wrestling she has found a new attitude towards her challenges in life and her wrestling matches.

"Wrestling is different from other sports because it's six minutes of non stop all out energy," Kalar said. "There are no breaks, really, and it requires a lot of mental toughness. I have also noticed that the level of camaraderie is so much higher in wrestling than that of any other sport."

With tournaments each weekend, every wrestler has to grind during the week to prepare both physically and mentally for another challenge. Wrestlers individually fight against their opponent, but if they win they give their team a point. Who the wrestler has to fight is determined by their weight. LASA sophomore and LBJ wrestler Jason Jesudass has been in the wrestling team since his freshman year. He joined because he has been interested in one on one combat sports such as MMA and boxing since he was young. He said that another reason why wrestling is challenging is because he has to stay everyday after school for a two hour intensive practice.

"I manage my time better because in the past the time commitment threw me off guard and so my grades suffered," Jesudass said. "However after some time I learned to manage time well, a skill that's highly needed, and have been able to work around the time wrestling takes to study and do schoolwork."

This year, LBJ Wrestling coach Randy Bryant's main goal is to win a boy's district championship for the first time in LBJ history. The LBJ girls have won in the past, but

there hasn't ever been a year where both the girls and the boys took the district title. With that in mind, Bryant makes practice every day, Monday through Friday from 4:30 to 6:30 mandatory for all wrestlers to prepare them to accomplish their goals. In fact, Bryant said that their first goal this year was to build a competitive team. He said that this year's wrestling team will be the ones whose names are written in history books.

"We prepare by grinding every day at practice, we learn many maneuvers and counter to those maneuvers and we train for mental and physical toughness," Bryant said. "Physical endurance is probably the toughest sport known to man. I'm glad to say that our athletes are the hardest working student athletes in this building. I know that there isn't any other sport that has the physical language and mental language of wrestling at all."

LBJ Wrestling team captain and LASA senior Teague Hartigan is one of the

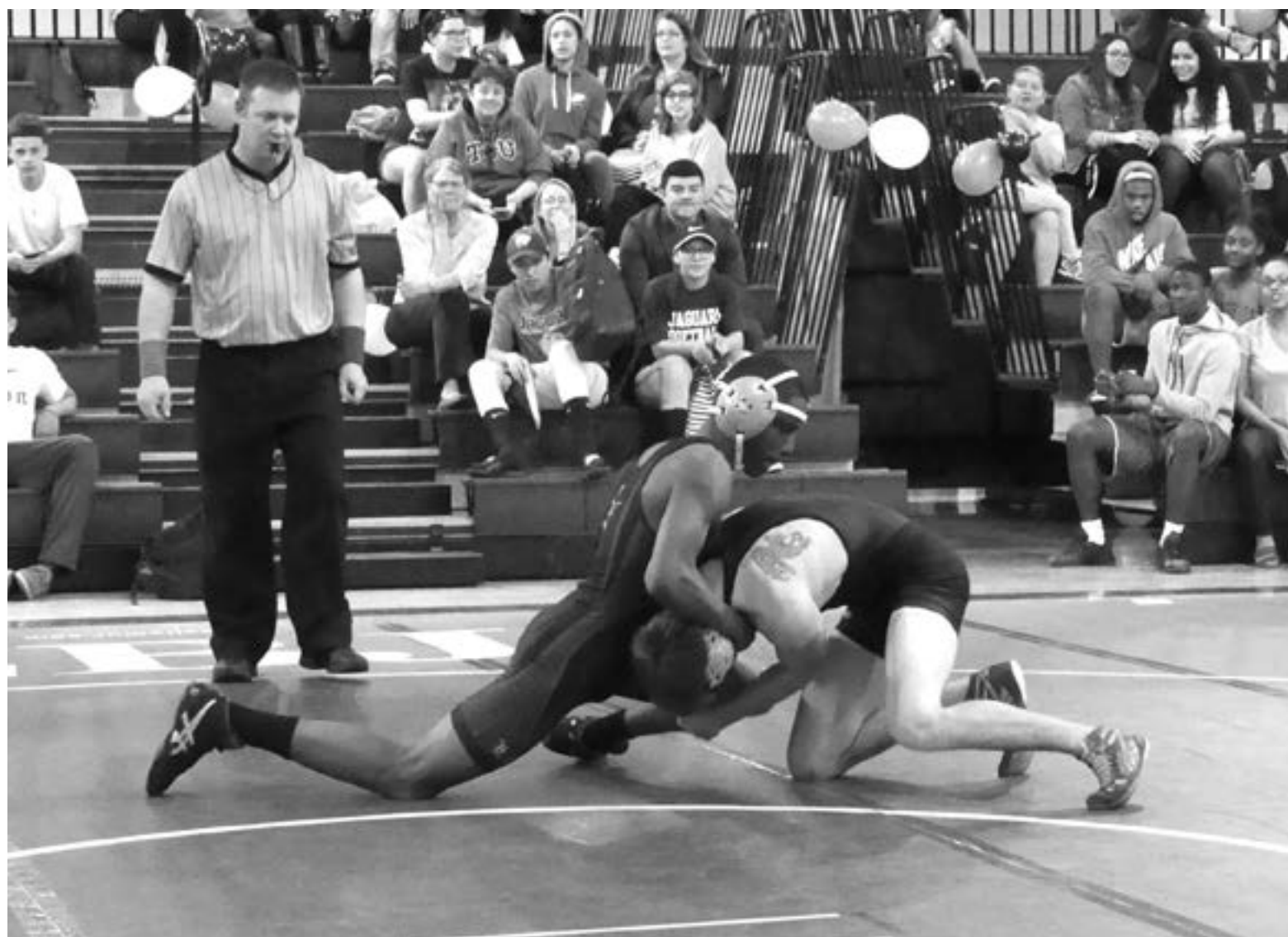
oldest members in the wrestling team. He joined his freshman year when he was told that he was too small to play football, so he decided to prove everyone wrong. Hartigan is currently in the 145 pound weight class. As the team captain, his role is to encourage everyone to give it their best. He also said that his role is to yell a lot, especially at the new wrestling members. He mentioned that one of the hardest things about wrestling is cutting weight for the tournaments. He and Kalar, agreed that cutting weight is physically and mentally difficult. He said that this is just one —of the many challenges wrestlers face day to day. He also said that thanks to these challenges they are able to have a new attitude which is that they can break any barriers blocking their goals.

"I didn't decide to become the wrestling team captain," Hartigan said. "I just was sort of a leader already, and I naturally would help and lead people and tell them what to do so my coach ended up naming

the captain. You have to cut weight which is terrible, and it's also far more intensive than any other sport and anyone who argues against that has definitely not wrestled."

Like Bryant and his student athletes have said, wrestling is completely different from any other sport. Bryant said that in wrestling you are the one that decides how much you want to put into the next fight, and it makes you go through mental challenges that wouldn't be found in any other sport. Bryant encourages everyone to join the wrestling team and become apart of the family—it's open to anyone at any time of the year.

"I love to see confidence," Bryant said. "I like to build confidence. When you see a wrestler walk down the hallway their chest should be high and their head should be high because they know that they are mentally and physically tougher than you. It's that simple."



LASA senior and LBJ Wrestling captain Teague Hartigan wrestles in a meet against Lanier. Hartigan has wrestled for LBJ for all of his high school career. "I really enjoyed wrestling in high school," Hartigan said. "It's helped me mature a lot as a person and be goal oriented and strive for success." photo by Emma Jane Hopper.

LASA goes mad for plaid!



The third annual national Plaid Daze invited students to plaid up and show their colors. English and philosophy teacher Mo Harry was responsible for organizing the event that took place Jan. 31 and Feb. 1. "Plaid has been used by the mainstream and many subcultures over the past several decades in America," Harry said. "For subcultures since the 1980s, it's been worn by many who want to assert their sort of rebellion against conformist values. And this makes sense if you look at a group of people wearing plaid. There are numerous colors coming together in myriad patterns. For me, this symbolizes the nearly infinite varieties of diversity in people around our society and in the world. Though a group is similar or united when all wearing plaid, each pattern of colors is unique so we retain our individuality at the same time we are united. Powerful, right? And on a basic tactile level, much plaidwear is also flannel- a soft, cozy, comfortable material. It's also ubiquitous: vintage stores, Goodwill, Target and specialty cowboy stores- you can find it many places for a whole range of prices. It's not reserved for one social class."

1 Senior Theo Lavier and his 3A English class participated in plaid day. According to Lavier, it was a unique way of bringing together the community. "I find plaid to be high fashion and a way to express my love of regular repeating square patterns," Lavier said. photo courtesy of Mo Harry

2 Wellness counselor Meagan Butler and college counselor Jamie Kocian said they were fans of coming together to create something colorful to celebrate diversity and plaiding-up to support Mr. Harry. "To me, plaid means flannel, and who doesn't like something soft and cozy next to their skin," Kocian said. photo 2 and cutout by Roxy Bonafont

3 Senior Maddison Ebest showed her colors while working on a German skit. "I like plaid because it's oversized and comfortable and it feels like wearing pajamas," Ebest said.

4 Seniors Erik Rhodes and Tellus Sanchez participated, because plaid is beautiful. "What else would I wear, a t-shirt with some edgy band on it," Sanchez said. "That would be much less formal." photo 3 and 4 by Olivia Lee

