

SEASONAL
SAFETY
PG. 10

PANTHER PRINTS

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ISSUE 2

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At Panther Prints, our mission is to serve as a connection between the Plano East student body and surrounding communities. Through inspiration and high-quality content, Panther Prints offers diverse coverage, passionate writing, relatable stories and a unique point of view. Our credible sources allow an in-depth experience that appeals to both the public and the individual. Our publication offers an informative and distinctive outlook on current interests.

Digital Media Policy:

We at the Panther Prints commit to responsibly utilize all of our media platforms to unite and inform the student body. We strive to create original content and attribute credit to all sources. We require our staff to uphold these values and to accurately report the news to the student body and community.

Letters from the...

Editor-in-Chief

This issue was made to focus on the positive elements of living through a pandemic. Through our latest cycle, we've learned that kindness and outreach know no borders, not only throughout school but throughout our community. The staff focused on kindness as they worked hard to find the stories unheard on our campus. I hope you find a little light in our stories to brighten up a dark season in the middle of a pandemic. Reminder to stay positive and happy holidays!

Bree Johnson

Editor-in-Chief

With the looming approach of winter break, and the resulting last-minute projects and assessments in other classes, this was a difficult issue to juggle. Our turnaround from the last cycle was very quick. Especially with the communication struggles posed by the pandemic, it was difficult to get interviews and necessary information in the shorter amount of time between brainstorming and first drafts being due. Despite these challenges, I'm so proud of our ability to produce such a well thought-out issue. I've experienced and witnessed the most growth in this class during this cycle — the hardships and challenges have helped us learn so much. As far as the topics discussed, we feel like this year has just been a great torrent of bad news, so we hope you enjoy a bit of more lighthearted content to close out the year, including holiday celebrations, entertainment and school spirit!

See you next year!

Myh Seyoum

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**All student polls were conducted
through Google Forms and shared
through social media.**

*Cover Model:
Sydney Conner (12)*

*Cover Photo:
Bree Johnson*

Letters to The Editors

Hello, Newspaper Staff!

First of all, I loved Panther Prints, Issue 1. It was so well executed, and I loved how pleasing it was to read. The cover is definitely my favorite! I loved the monochrome idea. I think that was a very smart move because in our age group right now, that is very popular. I also enjoyed the layouts of the pages, but I do think there could've been more visuals. I would've liked to see more photos or perhaps more creative ways to present the text. Knowing how our age group is, the amount of text seen will make the audience shy away from the print and make them not want to read it. I think that if there was a way where you guys could "disguise" the amount of text, it would catch people's attention and make anybody eager to read it. I also think that there could've been a little more colors in the spreads. Each spread has different colors that go blue/red, green/yellow, nude/brown, purple/pink, blue/green, and then all colors. Following the print, I definitely think that if the spreads had more of the colors appear in the spreads, it would look a bit more pleasing to look at. This goes back to having different visuals in the spreads. Having small bubbles, or having more shapes, will make a huge difference in how people will react to it. Other than wanting more visuals, everything else was great. Vocabulary was good, layouts and pictures were pleasing to the eye, and I know that the amount of effort put into the print was very high. I am so proud of you guys! You guys did a great job!

--Dora Leiva Granillo, 11th

To the newspaper staff,

Overall, I do like the topics you have and I feel like it's a good representation of things we may need to know and things we may want to know about our school. I really like the overview and the index of the newspaper that could give us an idea of what's to come. I feel that for the news section, it was good you added the mail-in voting article because sometimes us teenagers are not as invested in the news as much as we should be. By adding that article into the newspaper it shows us what's going on in our government and how big a thing this is for our time because of COVID-19. Adding the clubs into the feature section was a great idea because I know that at first I wasn't so sure how clubs were going to work because of our certain situation, but letting people know that they are still happening and in a virtually safe way really helps keep us involved in school while also maintaining safety and health. Now onto a bigger note your BLM section was probably by far my favorite one. It's a really huge issue and I really like how you used people and quotes to really express how Plano East is a school where equality is expressed and not suppressed. The sport and entertainment section were very fun and entertaining but I think I would have liked to see more things going on in school rather than just stating how things were changing because of Covid, like expressing how games go and what actually happens to ensure safety, or the overall feeling. I really liked reading it and I can't wait to see what else yall guys do.

-- Samantha Solis, 11th

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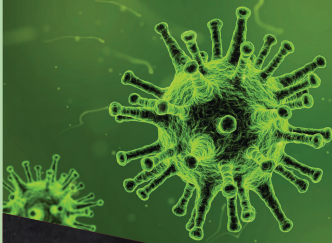


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PUZZLED PANTHERS

By Samantha Heath

If the students new to the school attend the campus in the 2nd semester after doing online, how will they know how to get to their classes?

New students can schedule a time with Mr. King to visit and tour the campus. Students are also provided maps and teachers are available to assist when needed in locating classrooms.

What will the first week of school look like when we return from winter break?

Jan. 5 will be asynchronous for all students. Jan 6 - 8 students will follow the cohort rotations (A- Thursday, B- Wednesday and Friday), but all students will meet synchronously online everyday regardless of cohort. Moving forward through the rest of the semester, Mondays will be asynchronous and Tuesday- Friday will be synchronous for everyone.

How are yearbook and newspaper operating this year with many staying at home? How are they getting their work done?

For the newspaper team, online articles have stayed the same since they're accessed digitally. Print issues have seen the biggest change in the way they are distributed. Now, instead of creating a physical copy to hand out to the students, print articles are published online. Yearbook also has limited access and with fewer students on campus, it is a struggle to obtain their usual impromptu photoshoots and interviews. This, along with interviews that now have to be conducted through online meetings, are the differences that both teams have had to adapt to this year.

MOVING FORWARD

District plans going into second semester

By Haris Kalam and Mohammed Modi

For the second semester, the school will increase the number of synchronous days from two to four. These changes are being implemented in efforts to increase student success. Cohorts A and B will still physically attend campus two days a week, but all students will connect virtually when not on campus.

Mr. King delivered an email Dec. 3 indicating the changes and also included additional expectations for remote learning. Requirements state that every student must have their cameras on during live calls and login at the start of every class, Tuesday-Friday. Monday continues to be an asynchronous day for teachers to work on lessons, participate in team collaboration, and for students to attend tutorials or catch up with work.

Technical difficulties such as wifi connectivity, Chromebook malfunctions and communication problems were among the challenges in the first semester.

"At the beginning of the school year my Chromebook was very slow and my live classes would lag very often due to wifi issues," senior Affan Khan said.

If students are facing any sort of issues, they should communicate that with their teachers. The goal is to increase communication while also being mindful of the limitations of online learning.

"Personally, I think increasing the number of synchronous class days will harm students more than it will help them," senior Hassan Saeed said. "Most students are used to the current schedule and having to cope with the new plans will make it tough for students to adjust."

While this change will result in

another transition to adapt to new learning models, the hope is that it will allow teachers to cover the curriculum at a more normal pace while also increasing communication with students.

"Personally, I feel like this could help many students who struggle with learning on their own," Khan said. "Adding two more synchronous days would benefit them greatly."

A lot of the struggles centered around the abnormality of the learning schedule. Getting used to the two-day synchronous learning sessions was a big departure from the regular learning environment students were accustomed to. This was one of the driving forces for the district to shift to four-day synchronous weeks.

"We believe that the change to four days of synchronous instruction will more strongly correlate to the look and feel of a normal school year," Associate Principal for Curriculum and Instruction Sheela Daniels said.

Another consideration was the mental health for students who might be struggling with the limited amount of socialization they experience during the pandemic.

"Student social-emotional well-being should be enhanced by this return to a more familiar school experience," Daniels said.

The school continually evaluates the current model and works to find solutions that allow all to feel more successful given the challenges of school during a pandemic.

"I have learned that perseverance in the midst of a difficult situation can be attained and must be done as a team with collaboration, detailed planning and compassion," sub-school principal Brandon Johnson said.

COVID-19 VACCINES DEVELOPING STEADILY

By Samantha Heath

The state of Texas received the first shipments of the COVID-19 vaccine Dec. 14, the same day that nurse Sandra Lindsay received the very first vaccine in the U.S. Front-line health care workers are scheduled to receive the first round of vaccines, with more vaccines becoming available in the coming weeks for the public.

A total of 10 companies created vaccines. Moderna, partnering with the National Institutes of Health, did a case study in which 30,000 volunteers were recruited from over 90 hospitals and clinics across the country to test the vaccine. On Nov. 16, they announced that a preliminary analysis of the trial indicated that the vaccine was 95% effective and out of the 95 participants who caught the virus, 90 had the placebo and only 5 had the vaccine. On Dec. 15 they were given a clearing by the FDA that approved a second effective vaccine that was shown to have asymptomatic infections reduced by 63% after the first shot. They have a plan to have approximately 20 million doses available for the U.S. market by the start of 2021.

“I definitely support the administration of vaccines for COVID-19,” senior Nazeeha Muhammad said. “During the pandemic, many have lost their jobs, loved ones and were forced into a lifestyle that was both inconvenient and challenging. Vaccines have shown positive results in the past, so I have faith in the corona vaccine helping everyone during these tough times.”

The New York-based pharmaceutical company Pfizer and the

German company BioNTech presented their vaccine on Nov. 9 with a 95% effective rate with no serious side effects.



Scientists test different versions of COVID-19 vaccines to prepare for public distribution.

The vaccine itself requires two doses, and because of its structure based on mRNA which is similar to Moderna's vaccine structure, the fragments, which stimulate the human body, can easily fall apart unless in a deep freeze. Pfizer designed special boxes stuffed with dry ice and equipped with GPS-enabled sensors to be able to store their 100 million doses to be transported to needed destinations—which has not yet been approved as of publication date. Some individuals feel uncertain about the willingness to take the vaccine.

“Some people choose to be selfish and not care about other people's safety by refusing to wear a mask, which is why the coronavirus is spreading faster,” junior Amy Le said. “I can see

why others would not want to take the vaccine when it is given to the public, as everyone reacts differently to certain things, both physically and mentally.”

Compared to the others, Johnson & Johnson was one of the first to pursue a coronavirus vaccine, and while Moderna and Pfizer are built on a two-dose model, Johnson & Johnson's model only requires a single dose. Their lead scientist stated that all data needed for an authorization is expected to be done by February of 2021, where they can supply 1 billion doses of its vaccine.

Although most companies will be ready to distribute the vaccine by 2021, there is still

the question of whether or not there will be enough to go around as the U.S. population is over 330 million people. The Food and Drug Administration authorization states that they expect to produce enough to vaccinate about 12.5 million Americans by the end of 2020, which is around 3.7% of the U.S. population.

One of the factors that individuals make decisions about when it comes to something like a vaccine is driven in large part by their perceptions of a threat.

“They're wondering ‘Is this safe? What's it going to do to me?’” SMU professor Dr. Austin Baldwin said. “I think [self-interested motives] probably need to be a part of what's communicated, because it is a direct benefit, even to the individual, that a sufficient number of people get vaccinated.”

Photo Courtesy of Pexels.com



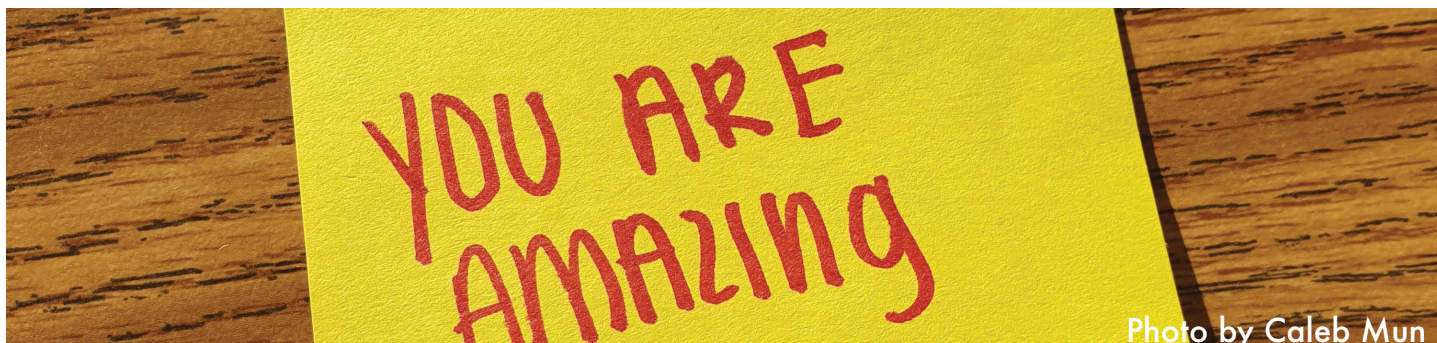


Photo by Caleb Mun

HOPE IN ADVERSITY: HOPE SQUAD



By Abby Nguyen

During a time of isolation, COVID-19 concerns, seasonal depression and stress over semester grades, feelings of hopelessness and burnout may arise. However, through the dark gray clouds shines a bright light of hope and kindness: Hope Squad. A class dedicated to providing a helping hand and promoting mental wellness, Hope Squad was recently added this year and reminds students that no one is alone during tough times.

Hope Squad, a peer-to-peer suicide prevention program, acknowledges the fact that depression and suicide are prevalent issues in society and works toward promoting a positive and non-judgmental atmosphere where students don't have to be afraid of reaching out.

"There's so much stigma around talking about suicide, depression and anxiety, and I hope that Hope Squad can break that stigma and open people up to talk about it more," Hope Squad Student Relations Officer senior Emma Richards said.

In a world where teenagers struggle with mental health, people may feel uncomfortable and vulnerable asking for help or talking about their mental health, but Hope Squad provides a wide variety of resources necessary for people.

"It's just being there for people tangibly, where they can literally reach out to us and come to the classroom, and also intangibly, where they can still reach out to us through social media or email," Hope Squad President junior Tiana Amos said. Despite the fact that the class's main

focus is centered around suicide prevention, the class also covers all aspects related to mental health and self care.

"One of the main things we can do is help people have a more positive mindset," Hope Squad Adviser Abby Cole said. "We talk a lot about self-care, gratitude, being kind and helping others, so it's not all just about suicide prevention and awareness."

Whether someone is in need of support or even someone to talk to, Hope Squad values openness, empathy and compassion when providing help.

"We are able to spread positivity, spread tips, be there for people to talk to us and unburden their load, and because we're fellow students, they might feel more comfortable to talk to us," Richards said.

As an opportunity for the trustworthy class officers to use their knowledge and resources to be a friend to someone who needs support, Hope Squad encourages connectedness and kindness through self care and outreach to others.

"I wanted to do something that's bigger than myself and make an impact in the midst of the pandemic and not just solely focus on myself since I knew other people were hurting," Amos said. "I have a big heart and I care for others and I saw Hope Squad as a way to implement that into my everyday life."

Through mental health education, QPR (Question, Persuade, Refer) certified training and peer intervention, Hope Squad has the necessary resources and knowledge to make a positive impact on students' lives.

"I hope we can make the conversation around suicide prevention and awareness more of a common thing for people to feel comfortable talking about and educate people on the fact that it is preventable and there are actions we can take to help people in crisis," Cole said.

Hope Squad recognizes that people don't know who to turn to when they're struggling with mental health or that they may not be able to handle the situation themselves, but they aim to normalize the idea it's okay to struggle with mental health. They want to let people know that it is okay to not be okay, but they are there to make life a little easier.

"If someone was to say hello, give a simple smile or just show that they care in the slightest bit, it can go a long way," Amos said. "One act of kindness goes such a long way and that's the whole point of Hope Squad."



Members of Hope Squad chalk positive messages on campus for students to read on Dec. 7.

Photo by Caleb Mun

PANTHER PROFILE: ANIME AFFICIANDO

By Mallika Chahal

Among the student body, one junior describes herself as a quiet introvert, but beyond the shy impression she emanates, her spontaneous hobbies may surprise you. Though generally seeming more timid and reserved, down-to-earth Evelyn Alvarez speaks on her creativity and cultural interests that are unknownst about her.

Alvarez fostered her love for reading in middle school, where she found the library a sanctuary to peacefully scour for books with friends after transferring schools. Years later, Alvarez never shies away from a good graphic novel, particularly the fascinating genre of Japanese manga comics.

“I think reading is important because you get to immerse yourself in a world different from the normal one,” Alvarez said. “There are new characters, different places, plots, conversations and it includes a lot of everything. It’s really cool to be part of another person [‘s world].”

Along with enjoying manga, Alvarez has seen over 100 Japanese anime-style television shows and movies. Anime and manga comics go hand-in-hand as the comics usually inspire the production of an anime television series. Currently, Alvarez’s favorite anime is “One Piece,” a series about pirates.

After discovering the imaginative world of anime and manga, Alvarez stumbled upon Korean pop music, commonly referred to as “K-pop.” Alvarez is a fan of EXO, NCT and BTS, which are various popular K-pop boy-bands. She had fun going to her first k-pop concert for NCT in 2019, however, Alvarez says there is stigma surrounding enjoying K-pop as well as anime, such as the misconceptions about anime plots.

“I don’t get people who hate K-pop and anime,” Alvarez said. “There’s

not one specific genre, there’s something everyone can enjoy.”

Fellow K-pop fan senior Nitya Nagpal speaks on overcoming hesitation on the inclusion and acceptance of K-pop in mainstream media.

“Music defies language barriers and I think that the introduction of K-pop into the American music industry allows for our cultures to conglomerate,” Nagpal said. “It allows us to be more understanding and appreciative of cultural differences.”

Aside from being interested in Japanese and South Korean entertainment, Alvarez also likes another aspect within East Asian culture. Alvarez

“I don’t get people who hate K-pop and anime,” Alvarez said.

“There’s not one specific genre, there’s something everyone can enjoy.”

is bilingual and speaks Chinese and has been taking the language class at school for three years.

“Chinese is such a fun language to learn,” Alvarez said. “At first I was taught [Chinese] really well and then it started getting progressively harder for me, but

I think I’m doing pretty good so far.”

Alvarez hopes to attend the University of North Texas at Denton to study to become an accountant.

“I had a fourth grade teacher who went there and she was my favorite teacher of all time. [UNT]”

There is more to Alvarez than meets the eye as she may appear intimidating, but she wants people to know despite that first impression, she is calm, apathetic and not a scary person. Alvarez admits high school can be stressful at times, but she is overall enjoying her junior year.

“Getting to experience a bunch of new things in school [is the best] and I’m actually really glad to be able to go to school and meet new people and try new things,” Alvarez said. “I’m looking forward to moving forward.”

*Out of 310 students polled.

Do you/have you watched “Death Note”?

37%

Of students said yes

62%

Of students said no

1%

Of students had no response

HUA'S HAND CHAINS

By Risa Khawaja

In the middle of summer quarantine, senior Noah Hua posted a picture of hand chains they made based off the character Kurapika in the popular fantasy-adventure anime "Hunter x Hunter" on Twitter. The post gained a lot of attention with 50,000 likes and 10,000 retweets and among the replies praising their craftsmanship, many people asked Hua if they could buy the hand chains. At the time, Hua declined, saying they didn't sell and didn't even know how to, but as time went on and quarantine left them with nothing else to do, they opened their Etsy shop, Noah Lauren Jewelry, in August. Since then they've made over 500 sales with jewelry inspired by "HunterxHunter" as well as "Death Note" and "Sailor Moon."

"My mom really contributed," Hua said. "She's a really creative person. She knows how to sew, but she also knows how to make jewelry. She helped me start because she wanted to share that with me."

Making jewelry has always been a big part of Hua's life. At a young age, they would make jewelry for Girl Scouts and fundraisers. To them, it is their only creative outlet.

"I don't draw, I don't paint and I don't really dance either, so making jewelry is much different for me," Hua said. "It makes me feel like I get to share a piece of my art with people."

With 26 different designs and more to come, Hua shows dedication to their jewelry and truly puts their heart into it. Despite how overwhelming it may seem, their time management keeps them steady. Since school started, they've reserved the weekends for making and packaging orders. While it takes a lot of planning and focus, their business doesn't interfere with their school life and their passion holds them through.

"I wouldn't say it affects me much other than it just makes me happy and balances my life and makes it better," Hua said.

Connecting with their customers means a lot to Hua and it is their biggest tip for others looking to start their own small business. Reaching

out and messaging people to let them know their order has arrived makes it feel more personal and gives you the reputation of a caring and genuine seller.

"Just showing how you are and how you operate shows them that you're an actual person," Hua said. "I think that's really cool and that's what makes small businesses too."

Marketing is another big thing for Hua. They post on Twitter, Instagram and TikTok, showing their process and progress. While their shop is anime-inspired, they keep it subtle so it can still appeal to a wide-range audience.

"It's all about knowing your audience and that's great for me because I am my audience," Hua said. "I know how to target people my age."

Aside from their expertise in management, Hua's jewelry itself is commendable. They have 5 stars on Etsy along with many satisfied reviews. Even people who are sensitive to fake metals, like senior Megan Mendez, haven't had any allergic reactions.

"I've had their Mirror Bubble Earrings for a good four months now," Menendez said. "They hold up really well, they haven't tugged at my ears or dragged them down and made the holes bigger. I'd say they're really good quality."

Occasionally they have run into comments saying they could find Kurapika hand chains on Amazon for cheaper, however, these comments have not fazed Hua.

"It doesn't make me mad because I understand," Hua said. "Ten bucks over 30 bucks for hand chains, I understand. But a lot of people do understand the value of buying from a small business and why it has to be that expensive and I think I'm really grateful for that."

As a senior, Hua is preparing to go to college which will mean changing the way they operate their shop.

"I want to keep up my business, but not maybe to the same intensity," Hua said.

They plan on reducing their stock and exploring different inspirations. After college, Hua hopes to look into

metalworking and making rings- their favorite accessory.

"It would be great for me to, I don't know, learn and just embark on a new exploration in jewelry," Hua said.

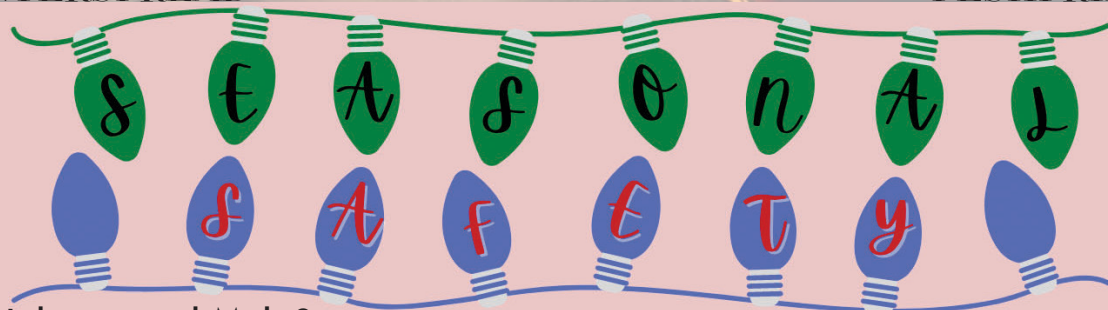
Making jewelry goes back a long time for Hua and is what makes them happiest. Designing pieces that people can buy from them rather than "big corporations who plow through and make money" is a heartwarming experience for them, one they hope to sustain for the rest of their life. Above all else, the joy of making art that others can show off and feel confident in is the biggest reward for Hua.

"As artists, that's really all it's all about," Hua said. "Sharing your art, and loving it."



The tiny details of crosses and beads makes Hua's jewelry so popular. Hua made these hand chains to ease summer quarantine boredom.

Photo by Noah Hua



By: Bree Johnson and Myh Seyoum

HOLIDAYS BEFORE COVID-19

Surrounded by the chatter of family, the smell of home cooked meals in the kitchen and the sparkling lights of decorations all around, senior Yasmin Palmer reminisces about her previous holidays, a favorite time of the year for her.

“We have company over for Christmas dinner where we serve a mixture of Jamaican and Greek dishes to represent both cultures,” Palmer said. “Fast forward to New Years, we have a massive party and a lobster dinner to bring in the New Year.”

Those traditions will be different for Palmer because of the pandemic. Her family plans to follow CDC guidelines meaning only her immediate family will be the ones at their Christmas dinner this year.

On the other side of the world, junior Hannah Tran took in the sights and sounds of Paris. She stared in awe at the bright lights strewn up around the city, hanging over restaurants and the bustling crowds. The sounds of the city overtook her — with people speaking in French all around her and cars rushing past. In the distance, the Eiffel Tower provided the perfect backdrop to her wonderful winter Parisian night.

“Being in Paris made me feel happy because it was such a beautiful city with historical and European architecture,” Tran said. “[I was] excited because I could experience new adventures and memories everyday by just getting lost within the city.”

It’s no secret that the winter holidays will look very different for everyone this year. The approach to holiday gatherings was tested in Thanksgiving, for which the CDC recommended celebrations be within singular households or virtual. The health organization also warned against the risk of traveling for the holiday. According to Statista, a total of 50.6 million Americans

traveled for the Thanksgiving holiday this year, compared to a 55.3 million in 2019.

For travel during the winter holidays, the CDC has provided similar guidelines, with a checklist to determine the risk level of travel as well as guidelines for reducing risk level. However, according to Statista, only 30.7% of survey respondents said they relied on official travel advice in order to base their travel decisions. Instead, 38.8% of respondents indicated that the COVID-19 curve in their travel destination would most influence whether or not they chose to travel.

Regardless of whether individuals or families choose to abide by the CDC guidelines for the winter holidays, many traditional holiday events have been canceled or re-strategized in order to prevent COVID-19 transmissions at large gatherings and events.

CELEBRATING THE HOLIDAYS

The COVID-19 travel restrictions limit Tran in her ability to celebrate the holidays traditionally this year. Whereas she traveled with her family during every school break in previous years, she will not be able to travel this year.

“Next year, with hopefully effective vaccines and the decrease of COVID-19 cases, my family and I will travel more and be able to visit my other relatives,” Tran said.

Junior Kayla Ngo also says that her holiday plans have been affected this year, but not too drastically. In past years, she has either celebrated with extended family or, at the very least, within her household. However this year, that is not a possibility especially due to the increased risk posed by two of her family members already having contracted the virus. The CDC puts the risk of prolonged time spent with those previously contracting COVID-19 at nearly double that of someone with no previous

positive lab-confirmed tests.

“I had an argument with my parents about spending the holidays with our extended family,” Ngo said. “If two of our family members have caught COVID, then it’s likely that other members will too, because they are essential workers out there every day. It’s just something to be cautious of.”

Ngo says her family is impacted in a minor way regarding celebrations, including not being able to shop for dinner ingredients with which she and her sister cook since her family limits grocery trips to one person. She also says she will not be able to fulfill her family’s tradition of seeing holiday lights each year. Tran is also unable to participate in looking at lights. Whereas she would usually attend a limousine event to look at lights with her Girl Scouts troop, she can’t do so this year.

“Even if we’re just in our cars, it’s not worth going out, just because it’s also flu season,” Ngo said.

Senior Justin Guthrie has occasionally gone to look at lights during past winter breaks and plans on going this year as well. He feels this is safe due to the limited interaction and freedom of remaining within a car while driving by displays.

“I love seeing how creative people can get with their Christmas lights,” Guthrie said. “They might time music to their lights displays, use blinking lights, or make really cool images with their lights — it’s fascinating.”

SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES AND OUTREACH

Despite the challenges of the pandemic, the KEY Club has continued with previous service projects, like their partnering with the Salvation Army. The club managed to adapt service requirements and opportunities from previous

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years. With their Protect the Period Drive partnering with City House, members can either donate menstrual products to underprivileged women in need, donate to funds going toward the purchase of these products, or send text messages and emails inviting others to donate. This latter option was a revised addition to accommodate for members who cannot physically donate to the drive due to COVID-19 or have the resources to donate money.

“The lack of menstrual products is such a broad topic,” Ngo said. “There’s so many different sectors you can go into, whether it’s children, trans people, homeless [people]. Besides giving them the actual products, spreading awareness also makes it a little more normal in society, because it’s such a taboo thing. When we have it as a required service, it’s unavoidable to that extent.”

Assistance League of Greater Collin County President Judy Wharton says that organizing service projects during the pandemic has been difficult, especially since her staff mostly consists of retired teachers and other older volunteers. Their monthly meetings for members are now held over Zoom, and this as well as other technological necessities has posed a difficulty for not only membership but also their outreach. Wharton’s organization, which is a chapter of the National Assistance League, describe themselves as a “nonprofit, nonpolitical, nonsectarian charitable organization whose goal is assisting people in our community.” This year Wharton says they are focusing on donations rather than service, due to COVID-19 delaying a lot of their original service based outreach.

“[We have] a Christmas stocking program that we are doing here at a senior facility in Frisco,” Wharton said. “The residents will receive a stocking that is hand sewn by our members and then hand stocked with items for Christmas.”

Many outreach programs throughout the country are using donation based programs like Wharton’s as a way to work around issues that have arisen during the pandemic. Betty Montenegro, who is the co-director of a non-profit organization called Messengers of Hope, has always relied on

donations locally in order to help with her outreach, which is based in Guatemala.

“When you’re really in need you don’t have toys and when you’re little, toys make a huge impression,” Montenegro said.

Messengers of Hope — which deals directly with children and families in Mayan villages — bring toy gift boxes to impoverished children in Guatemala every Christmas. Local families can usually go to a church service at Christ Fellowship Church in McKinney and find an area to adopt a gift box for a child in Guatemala. With COVID-19 cancelling church services, it was hard for Montenegro to get in touch with the usual amount of people who adopt, yet this obstacle was nothing compared to Montenegro’s even bigger problem: international travel.

SAFE HOLIDAY PRACTICES

According to a Travelocity survey conducted in Sept., 80% of those who planned to travel during the holidays would do so by car and about 66% plan to travel 250 miles or less. The CDC recommends that travelers check travel restrictions and get tested for COVID-19 before their trip. The CDC also recommends activities to replace normal holiday traditions and reduce the spread of COVID-19. Besides virtual family or friend group celebrations, it encourages socially distanced decoration-viewing, dropping off gifts or cards to loved ones, and outdoor snow activities as alternatives.

“I really like those ideas,” senior Alicia Daley said. “I think the virtual calls for eating and opening gifts are really smart. It’s good that you can still do a lot of the same things you used to do, just in a safer manner.”

The CDC also puts consideration in for mental health during the winter holidays in its “Coping with Holiday Stress” article. It suggests people make the best choice for their household, whether it be staying at home or visiting others in the safest manner possible.

“If someone had told us that at the beginning [of the year] that we would be facing all these challenges, we probably would have thrown up our hands and said, ‘No way, we can’t do this,’” Wharton said. “But when you’re faced with a challenge, you figure it out and that’s just what we did.”

36%

Of students, said that COVID drastically affected their holiday plans

53%

Of students, said that COVID somewhat affected their holiday plans

9%

Of students, said that COVID did not affect their holiday plans

2%

Of students, had no response

*Out of 310 responses

SPECULATING SUCCESS

First round of COVID-19 vaccines are high-risk

Staff Editorial

Since the start of the COVID-19 quarantine in March of 2020, efforts toward creating a vaccine have been debated and researched. Although individuals have explained their impatience for this preventative measure in order to return to a normal lifestyle before the start of 2021, some question whether or not it would be adequate to take the first round of vaccines with such a time crunch and risk.

A new technology was developed for the vaccines; although this type of vaccine has been researched for three decades, both its human testing and application to the coronavirus only began in 2020. The technology is a two-dose vaccine that replicates proteins of a virus for the immune system to create antibodies. This science was first proposed in the 1990s when BioNTech began research with further development in 2010 when Moderna received billions of dollars from investors to assist in their experimentation- although they never informed the public on the specifics of their analysis. Due to this, it doesn't come as a surprise when in mid-2020 Moderna and Pfizer with BioNTech were named some of the leading companies in vaccine making. They had human trials with over 30,000 participants with 94.5% and 95% success rates from first-dose results respectively. These results provide hope for the new technology, but it is wise to stay cautious and up-to-date as new facts are released.

During vaccine testing, both Moderna and BioNTech had different ethnic percentages in human testing compared to those who died of the virus. According to the Center of Disease Control, the number of coronavirus-associated deaths for people of a Hispanic heritage are 24.2% while those of African American heritage are 18.7%. Moderna tested approximately 20% Hispanic and 10% African American participants out of 30,000 in total. Within the United States, Pfizer tested 13.1% Hispanic participants and 10.1% African American participants out of 43,661 total participants. Although these differences may exist due to an increase in COVID-19 deaths after testing began, because testing doesn't reflect the population's experience, these results may be less accurate.

Lack of information in the past and present makes it difficult to understand long-term effects of this type of vaccine.

Firstly, in 2010, Moderna didn't publicly state research analysis on the technology testing; later, on Oct. 8, 2020, Moderna publicly stated they would not patent their vaccine and instead focus their resources on ending the pandemic as soon as possible. However, Moderna hasn't published their human testing studies into scientific journals for others to validate. Instead, they sent their success rate straight to the media, sparking speculation on accuracy. Second, if numerous individuals decide to take the first round of vaccines and experience negative consequences, this could weaken communities. In fact, during phase 3 testing, both Moderna and Pfizer volunteers had fewer than 2% of people with high fevers ranging from 102.5 to 104 degrees. Although this may seem miniscule, combining Moderna and Pfizer vaccine announcements, there may be 50 million vaccinations to distribute in the U.S. within the first quarter of 2021; that could be 400,000 people with severe fevers. This does not include other side effects such as muscle pain, joint pain, fatigue and headaches found in less than the 10% of vaccine volunteers. Thirdly, when the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine was released on Dec. 14, 2020, the CDC and government officials stated masks must still be worn after getting a COVID-19 vaccine due to incomplete research on if vaccinated individuals can still carry and transmit the virus. Ultimately, with coronavirus research pressured, not obtaining thorough information may create undesired scenarios for vaccine-takers.

Regardless, everyone fantasizes about going back to the days before COVID-19 and some believe a vaccine will do just that. No more masks, no more fear of illness and finally being able to see family and peers again. Everyone keeps discussing an "end to the virus" but this most likely won't happen. Too much has changed and people have already adapted. If one does not have a dire-need for the vaccine, waiting for later vaccination rounds would be the wisest decision. With time and greater attention to detail, companies may learn from the results of the first vaccine round and make it safer for the public.

*Out of 12 members of staff, 11 voted that they would not receive the vaccine and 1 voted that they would.

*Out of 310 students polled.

59%

Of students said they would take the COVID-19 vaccine.

31%

Of students said they wouldn't take the COVID-19 vaccine.

5%

Of students said they were unsure of if they would take the COVID-19 vaccine.

5%

Of students said they had no response regarding taking the COVID-19 vaccine.

BEING POLITICALLY ACTIVE, AWARE AS TEENAGERS



By Abby Nguyen

As teenagers are closely approaching the voting age, it is a personal responsibility to become aware of current events and be knowledgeable about the basics of the nation's politics. The phrases "I don't care about politics" and "I don't want to be involved in politics" are often repeated by teenagers and even adults above the voting age, but they fail to recognize the importance of the young generation's voices for the country's future.

Believing that politics does not affect teenagers is a negative mindset that is detrimental to the future of this country. Governmental decisions and actions have far-reaching effects that can range from gas prices and job availability to something as major as freedom, liberty and equality. During a time of racial injustice, economic instability and COVID-19 concerns, being politically aware is of utmost importance in not only acknowledging these topics, but taking action to achieve progress as well. Being politically involved does not have to be a daunting task and it is not limited to spending time studying politics. Simply watching the news or staying updated on political events can make an immense difference in forming educated opinions that align with personal beliefs. In a study done by the Institute of Social and Economic Research, 42% of participants ages 16 to 24 had no interest in politics, while 21% of participants over 65 had no interest. As the next generation of leaders, being aware that politics affect everyone can promote political activism and demand change towards a greater good. Many stray away from the topic of politics because they believe it has evolved into a corrupt game of power that they refuse to be involved in. However, that is the exact reason why people should educate themselves and hold politicians more accountable by paying close attention to their actions.

One of the most common and vital steps towards upholding

a successful democracy is active political participation. By actively participating in real-world political situations, people can gain a better understanding of how the community works. Voting usually comes to mind when discussing politics, but there are a variety of ways to be politically involved as teenagers in the community through contacting representatives, joining school clubs, attending local meetings, joining nonprofit organizations and volunteering for a campaign. In addition, voting is a fundamental process that allows people to use their voice and by not voting, they allow someone else to make decisions for them. Young voters, consisting of millennials and Generation Z, are predicted to become the largest portion of voters. Despite the U.S. historically having one of the lowest voter participation levels- with people ages 18 to 29 having the worst voter turnout- in the recent 2020 presidential election, 53% of eligible youth voters voted, which was the highest youth voter turnout since 1976. The future lies in the hands of young voters, especially since the youth is an incredibly diverse group that can bring about the change that this country needs. People have a say on the issues that affect them along with the ability to use their voice to stand up for what they believe in. The right to vote is not only a responsibility and a civic duty, but it is also a privilege that many others unfortunately lack in oppressive countries. Although some may argue that high schoolers are still children and therefore should not be able to form opinions on mature topics, people must take responsibility to educate themselves early on in order to make an informed decision when they are able to vote.

Not only is being politically aware a vital step toward progress, but keeping up with current events and the news is important to be aware of global issues as well. According to a survey done by Common Sense

Media, although 78% of teenagers- ages 13 to 17- say that it is important to keep up with the news, 54% of them do not watch reliable news stations and instead receive news from social media. Despite the fact that posting on social media platforms, such as Instagram, increases voter turnout and encourages the youth to be aware of current events, only 37% of teenagers watch televised news according to Common Sense Media. A study done by the Journal of Pediatrics shows that kids find the news scarier than the violence they see in TV shows and movies. As a result, some believe that preventing teenagers from watching the news protects them from the cruelty of the world, but ultimately, it only harms them by making them think that there are no solutions to these major world issues. As kids grow up, exposing them to real-life issues is the first step in preparing them for what the future holds. People need to realize that there is much more going on than just themselves and the news opens up their eyes and forces them to face reality. The world is far from perfect, but society has the ability to do better and change the things that need to be fixed. By knowing how the political world works and staying updated on what is currently happening, people are able to form their own opinions and gain more knowledge on how to change the world for the future.

Staying updated on current events and politics encourages people to become aware of the world around them and use their voice to foster change. Everyone's feelings and opinions are valid and as a democracy built around the idea that everyone's voice should be represented, people need to take responsibility to ensure that their voices are heard.



AN UNDERLOOKED ISSUE: ASSIGNMENTS BEING DUE AT 11:59



By Haris Kalam

With the current influence of a global pandemic, daily routines such as attending school have been a challenge for some due to fear of exposure to COVID-19. All students have the option of virtual learning in order to stay safe from contracting the virus and due to the requirements from the district and measures for attendance, online work is due at 11:59 p.m. Using a handful of platforms, such as Google Classroom, Schoology, EdPuzzle, etc., teachers assign work with a certain time limit. However, there are drawbacks and issues with assignments being due at 11:59 p.m.

Prior to COVID-19, students would attend school and teachers would expect students to turn in homework and assignments as they walk into class the following school

day, or teachers would pick up homework during class. Now, with virtual learning, students are required to submit all their classwork at 11:59 p.m. This places extra pressure on students to gain attendance credit and submit homework within a shortened amount of time. With virtual learning, students do not have the option to do homework in the morning or when they are free during class, which saves a lot of time. Now students must finish all their homework after they are done with their classes; this has an impact on students' grades and academic performance.

This timeframe also takes a toll on the mental health of students. With these assignments being due late in the night, students are required to stay up later, which slowly affects

students' sleep schedules. This leads to more fatigue and overall negative productivity, with students sleeping later and being more fatigued throughout the day, it also takes a detrimental effect on students' overall grades.

Attendance is also an issue when it comes to assignments being due at 11:59 p.m. Students start relying on finishing assignments by 11:59 p.m. in order to gain attendance credit rather than actually attending virtual lessons. This creates a divide between the student and teacher. Students will do the daily lesson rather than actually pick up on something to learn. However full assignments are not due daily whereas the daily attendance checks are; this could be of benefit to students in that they have a little less work depending on the day.

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Junior Brandon Hardison makes a basket at Nov. 28th home game against McKinney Boyd.

BACK TO BASKETBALL

Preventing COVID-19 spread this fall/winter sports season

By Myh Seyoum

Basketball season officially began for girls Nov. 7 in a game against Dallas Lincoln and for boys Nov. 14 against Berkner. During both practices and games, players, coaches and officials must enforce and follow safety measures in order to reduce the spread of COVID-19. Although a girls' game against Sachse was canceled Dec. 1 due to COVID-19 on the other team, no players on either the boys' or girls' team have yet contracted the disease.

The boys' team started conditioning again mid-June and the girls have remained in practice since March. In order to reduce regular contact between players, the teams split up their JV and varsity practices. Players are required to wear masks while not playing, bring individually washed jerseys and towels, provide their own water bottles and fill out online symptom check forms each day before practice.

"I feel safe going to practice every day and I'm sure other people on the team do as well," senior Connor Johnson said. "I feel like UIL and Plano East [are] taking measures to prevent students and players from getting sick,

so I feel safe with the games [too]."

During games, head boys' basketball coach Matt Wester says he can no longer have his usual discussions with players as they come off of the court, instead directing them to sanitize their hands and sit in their designated seat. Head girls' basketball coach Jessica Linson says coaches and players experience disconnect since masks obstruct facial expressions and social distancing guidelines impede body language cues.

"You just have to be so mentally locked in," Linson said. "If a kid's having a bad game, you're kind of trying to talk to them. [But] you don't feel their spirit. As a coach, I'm hot, octane, I'm high emotion, but they can't feed off of my emotion because they're so far [away]. So yeah, it's way more draining than what it was before."

Basketball is the second indoor sport, after volleyball, to play their season. The CDC recommends young athletes to "prioritize participating in outdoor activities over indoor activities" due to better air flow outdoors. Compared to volleyball players, basketball players are also in more con-

stant contact with each other.

"Well, inside it's a really big, open space as well," Wester said. "I would think it'd be like football or baseball where the risk is really more in the stands than on the court."

The basketball season has been extended to March to account for rescheduled games and may be shut down if conditions worsen. However, both players' and coaches' biggest concern is the health of the team. Linson and Wester say that even outside of practice players have been responsible about reducing risks.

"One of the biggest struggles playing basketball during COVID is staying around the people that are in your 'bubble,'" junior Kayla Cooper said. "Everyone on the team is very social and loves to adventure out to new places. Staying in one area gets kind of hard sometimes, but it's all worth it because we are all trying to stay safe so we can all play together. My greatest hope for this season is to leave a legacy of winning State for the first time for Plano East!"

Photo by Brooke Humphrey



Senior Austin Weeks at Oct. 2's game against Lake Highlands.

PANTHER PRIDE PERSISTS DURING PANDEMIC

By Kashaela McGowan

"Plano Plano, East East!" This is a common chant heard from the student section at sporting events. It keeps the students entertained and keeps the athletes motivated as they hear their peers cheering for them. Fans attend games to "pack the jungle," but this year the student section was anything but packed due to COVID-19 guidelines.

So far the 2020 sports season is like nothing ever seen before. Socially distanced seating, stadium capacity reduced, masks enforced and even rows of seating made unavailable for anyone to sit or stand on. This all created a very different environment for both the fans and players. It also played a big factor in how much school spirit there was. School spirit isn't always about yelling and screaming, but more about support and showing up for the school. A large crowd in attendance for any school event always has a positive effect on the players and the athletes believe it helps motivate them.

"I feel like when you have school spirit in the school, it's a big factor," senior wide receiver Chase Tryon said. "We had a lot of fans this year. The school spirit was there, it just wasn't our year."

This year's activities so far, in comparison to previous years, have been

minimal with limited student body participation. However, efforts were made to bring some sense of normalcy by trying to find ways to incorporate traditional activities, such as virtual pep rallies and virtual spirit weeks.

"I really just want to motivate and promote school spirit whenever I can," Golden Girls sponsor Mackenzie McCall said. "I also wanted to uplift our students with something fun that they can be proud of."

Although virtual pep rallies are cool adjustments people enjoy, not all the changes have made people happy, like Kimbrough stadium cutting more than half of the maximum capacity of 9,800. Also ticket purchases were limited to four per transaction for football and basketball. Normally, football and basketball players would start preparing for the upcoming season in March, but due to COVID-19, preparations for football got pushed back to the summer, and basketball players didn't start practicing until October. This gave both teams a very late start and left players feeling unprepared.

AVID teacher and football coach Nathan Collins feels that this year was essentially unpredictable and brand new to everyone.

"Everything was turned upside down and was shook up a little bit, and

then boom, there's the product," Collins said. "Everyone in America right now kind of has the same feeling about this pandemic and just how it greatly affected not only sports, but life in general. I feel like not having the sheer masses — and that's for everyone, even our opponents — that was a transition."

People remain hesitant to participate in large events with crowds of people.

"Last year there was more school spirit because COVID wasn't a thing," senior Rulan Lewis said. "It can be hard for some athletes to stay motivated and school spirit gives them that motivation."

School spirit may not be the main thing to affect how sport seasons turn out, but it definitely is a component for sports.

"I think we have school spirit because of the amount of people who show up for sporting events year in and year out to support the players," basketball captain senior Deuce Hardison said. "We don't lack school spirit because you can tell how much people interact with the school and how much pride they take in being a panther."

Photo by Brooke Humphrey



By Claire Tweedie

HOLIDAY HAPPENINGS

In the kitchen of her sister's small apartment, junior Lacey Gordon remembers preparing a Hanukkah meal of latkes and kugle while her Bubby (the Yiddish word for grandmother) rambled on and on about Lacey's late grandfather, who passed when she was only four months old. Even though Lacey was six at the time, she can still recall the sound of laughter filling the room while her Bubby shared stories about her grandfather while Lacey was grating potatoes, happy to help with the festivities. To Lacey, family is the most important aspect of Hanukkah.

"It's my favorite holiday memory," Gordon said. "I remember giggling and having fun. That memory always seems to make me smile."

As the holiday season approaches, the diversity at school is further highlighted in the differences between how students celebrate the holidays. Students hold their own unique traditions and their religions and ethnicities play a role in how they're carried out.

"For me, family and friends are the most important part of the holiday season," junior Sophie Dieterlen said. "It's a time of getting to appreciate them and a time for being together with those you care about."

Dieterlen celebrates Christmas, but the nature of her festivities depend on which side of her family she is with. Her mom's side of the family is Vietnamese and has more religious traditions from her family's cultural roots in Christianity and her grandfather's position as a deacon. These holiday celebrations are characterized by her big family, parties that last long into

the night, plenty of Vietnamese food to go around and Christmas mass. Her dad's side on the other hand — which is German and Scottish — has a smaller and more traditional Christmas. Generally, that side of the family stays home and watches a movie, but their traditions are far from ordinary. Parents and grandparents hide the kids' presents, but leave a trail of yarn for them to follow throughout the house, making a fun game during which people get tangled together.

"I think my celebrations are different in that both sides have different cultures and values," Dieterlen said. "However, the spirit of the holiday stays the same."

While Dieterlen has separate Christmas traditions for either side of her family, junior Siddharth Turaga doesn't celebrate a Abrahamic holiday during December, but instead, celebrates Diwali, a traditional Hindu festival of lights that falls on a mid-November weekend. For Turaga's family, in the morning his mom and sister do a puja- or prayer- unlike Turaga and his dad who aren't very religious and therefore only take part in it occasionally. After puja, his mom and sister start making food, or offering to their god, which they generally eat for lunch. The rest of the day is spent hopping from party to party, some of which can have up to 70 people. Every house is decorated with lights and filled with sparklers, fireworks and lots of food. This aspect of celebrating, being able to see familiar faces at the various parties his family attends is Turaga's favorite. It gives him a chance

to see people he only hangs out with once a year and gives him another reason to look forward to the next Diwali.

"It's based around Hinduism but you don't exactly have to believe in Hinduism to take part in it," Turaga said. "It's the concept of the holiday that matters more than your actual beliefs."

Some of Gordon's winter festivities also revolve around religion, but in this case, it's Hanukkah at her father's and Christmas, which she celebrates at her mother's with her step siblings. Her parents are divorced and since she and her biological sister are the only Jewish members at their mom's house, they often light candles separately. While she appreciates the Christmas spirit and especially the music, to her it is more about spending time with family, doing puzzles and playing Yahtzee, rather than the religious aspect of the holiday. Time in the kitchen seems to be the unifying factor between both celebrations. A feast of latkes and brisket are prepared for her father's Hanukkah celebration, while ham, spinach and turnip casserole are present at her mother's. At her father's, she's joined by her cousins and great aunt — who they only see on Jewish holidays — for a day of cooking, lighting candles, catching up and opening Hanukkah presents.

"It's about tradition," Gordon said. "Hanukkah wouldn't be considered Hanukkah if family wasn't there. I feel that Christmas isn't about religion. It's about family and being together."

Photo by Sophie Dieterlan

ANTICIPATED PIECES OF MEDIA

By Mohammed Modi

With the widespread pandemic keeping the majority of the population around the world in their homes, people are looking for things to sustain their boredom while they are trapped in quarantine for the foreseeable future. With media constantly releasing every week, it can be hard to keep up with the abundance of entertainment. Here are some of the most anticipated pieces of media going into the new year.

Animation/Anime

Pixar is known for its adult messages delivered through animation and the newest Pixar production is no different. “Soul” follows a middle school band instructor whose life isn’t going as he wished it would, where after his uneventful death, he is taken to a different realm where he learns what it means to have a soul. This movie explores the themes of humanity, faith and what you want to be remembered for. This movie will be released on Dec. 25 on Disney+.

With the increasingly growing fandom of Japanese animation, otherwise known as anime, many shows have resonated with western culture, one being “Attack On Titan.” This anime starts as a survival narrative, but as the show progresses, there’s more than meets the eye with the Titans. This animated epic dives deep into the many themes, such as racism and human will, and has some of the best-portrayed characters in the anime genre. The final and fourth season is set to premiere on Dec. 13 and will finish around June. The first three seasons are available on Hulu and Crunchyroll and will be updated as the episodes are released weekly.

TV

By the same director and writer, Vince Gillian, “Better Call Saul” takes place six years prior to the events of the critically acclaimed masterpiece “Breaking Bad.” Like its predecessor, the show follows Jimmy McGill’s transformation into the flamboyant criminal lawyer Saul Goodman as he is pressured by the cartel, his personal life, and most importantly, himself. The show accumulated 32 Emmy nominations and is regarded as one of the best-written shows in recent years. The first five seasons are available on Netflix with the 6th getting ready to release in February 2021.

“WandaVision” is a new take on the already introduced Marvel characters and will follow Scarlet Witch and Vision from the already introduced Marvel characters in a sitcom-stylized show that plays with the reality of their world. The series will take place directly after the events of “Avengers: Endgame” and will set up phase four of the Marvel cinematic universe. “WandaVision” will be available on Disney+ in late December.

It is a major irony that through this bitter time where we are stuck in our houses and pulled away from reality, we have a chance to be distracted by huge production studios that have been dumping their content onto streaming services. As we wait for things to become better, it is beneficial to relax and enjoy some of the content that is continuously being pumped out.

Theatrical Releases

Based on one of the most celebrated sci-fi novels of all time, Academy Award-winning director Denis Villeneuve along with an all-star cast plan to bring “Dune” into a new light. The adaptation of the 1965 novel will follow Paul Atreides — played by Timothee Chalamet — in an epic that questions and addresses issues of religion and power. The film has been delayed and is set to release in 2021 with no official release date.

If movies with deep and philosophical messages aren’t your cup of tea, then “Fast and Furious 9” might be. Starting as a group of street racers into near superhumans saving the world several times, this is the perfect movie where you can rest your inner critic and enjoy the unreal action on screen. The ninth installment of the franchise will follow Dominic Toretto going up against his kin brother. “Fast and Furious 9” is set to be released on April 22.



Photo courtesy of Warner Bros.



Photo courtesy of Marvel Studios