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ISSUE 2

PANTHER PRINTS

PG. 12

**ACCESSIBILITY, AIDS,
ACCOMMODATIONS:
OVERCOMING OBSTACLES
IN EDUCATION**



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LETTERS FROM THE CO-EDITORS-IN-CHIEF

This issue has been the most fun and the most interesting part of this second nine weeks. From the planning to the finishing touches, this process was overall another learning experience for myself and the rest of the staff. I've come to the conclusion that everything happens for a reason and it will be okay in the end. As I've gone through the rollercoaster of emotions from this process, I'm glad to have had this staff by my side to help and learn with me. With winter break right around the corner, here is my gift to you, our readers, as a thank you for supporting and guiding us through this time. Thank you and we hope you enjoy this issue.

With the end of the semester and year coming to a close, I'd like to thank the entire staff for their efforts and hard work to get to this point. Through time crunches and burnouts, we were able to pull through to provide you another issue that I hope you will enjoy. Although exams are just next week, the winter break is soon to follow as well. Good luck to everyone on their tests and I wish you all a great break. See you next year.

LETTERS TO THE EDITORS

Dear Editor,

I can tell that you are very dedicated and put a lot of thought into this newspaper. The layout of each page is well thought out, the pictures you choose are perfect for each story and don't look out of place. It can be difficult at times to read a newspaper to the end but you did a great job keeping me invested in each story.

- Joanna Solorzano, 11

MISSION STATEMENT

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.

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

CONTENTS

6

**ALGAL
GROWTH, HER-
BICIDE TREAT-
MENT HARMS
POND WILDLIFE**

PHOTO BY NOAH WINTER

9

**NATIONAL MID-
TERM ELECTIONS**

PHOTO FROM UNSPLASH

20

**NECESSITIES OF
HUMANITIES IN
EDUCATION**

PHOTO FROM UNSPLASH

10

**STUDENT
CREATIONS:
CREATING
FUTURES**

ART BY ZAYEED ANWAR

19

**PLAYING
WITH PRIDE**

PHOTO BY VICTORIA HAYDEN

22

**STUDENTS
CELEBRATE
HOLIDAY
SEASON**

PHOTO FROM UNSPLASH

**TWITTER
INSTAGRAM**

@peshprints

Puzzled Panthers

By Varsha Jhanak

Why did the design for graduation gowns change this year?

After many years, the graduation gown design was changed. The new gown now includes a gold band around the arm and a Panther logo. Associate Principal Robert Eppler suggested this change after admiring the gowns of the Plano Senior High students after they changed their design last year.

"I brought [the idea] to the student leadership group asking if they would like to have an updated look," Eppler said. "I didn't want our students to miss out on any opportunities for a customized gown with Plano East logos. By running it by the student leadership and their excitement about it, I felt that it was something the student body would like, so I decided to move forward with that change."

How do absences affect exams?

Absences only affect the spring semester exams and seniors or students taking an International Baccalaureate (IB) or Advanced Placement (AP) exam. 10 or more absences will result in a loss of exemptions. These absences exclude any school related trips, events and documented college visits.

What are ways students can destress preceding exam season?

With exam season coming up, students can become overwhelmed. There are many techniques to ensure students don't become stressed and to allow for destressing before exams begin.

"You can't be cramming the entire time," counselor Emily Hoang said. "Allow yourself time to relax; allow yourself time to step away from the work. You have to let your brain rest. Whatever your enjoyment is, allow yourself that time and step away [to] refresh your brain."

Rise of Advertising

By Varsha Jhanak

For the first time this year, digital ad spend crossed the \$600 billion mark and is expected to keep growing. Recently, Netflix announced that they would be placing advertisements on their platform after 25 years in business without them. Prior to watching a video, users on YouTube noticed 5-10 unskippable advertisements playing. According to Oberlo, digital advertising spend rose 15.6% since last year and is showing no signs of stopping. While advertisements help to endorse a business, they gained a reputation of being irritating and tiresome.

"I know I'm not a huge fan [of advertisements]," marketing teacher Jason Duncan said. "If I'm paying a premium for a subscription, I would expect not to have to sit through ads."

Netflix decided to add advertisements to their streaming platform, a stark contrast to their advertisement-less platform for the past years. This decision came after the company lost nearly 1.2 million subscribers in the first two quarters of the year. On top of that, the service with advertisements still comes with a price of around \$6.99 per month. The cost of the subscription will be cut by 20-40%; however, it comes with the price of interruptions. According to senior entertainment and internet analyst Laura Martin at Needham & Company, this addition of advertisements may hurt the company's revenue, but it may help their subscriber growth.

"The ads are a way for them to mitigate some of the losses," Duncan said. "[They] bring in the difference between what it costs to produce and what we're going to pay. I think there's definitely going to be a price point at which someone is going to say 'I'm tired of this recurring bill and enduring these ads.'"

This increase occurred on not only Netflix and YouTube but also on platforms such as Hulu and Amazon Prime. On a website known as "Hulu Community," consumers complained about this increase saying that advertisement breaks which were previously around 80 seconds long have grown to two minutes

in length. This may not seem substantial, however these ad breaks are quite frequent even in short programs. Amazon states that these ads allow them to provide a premium selection of movies and TV shows for free on their platform, Freevee.

"I've had a subscription to Hulu for quite some time and it used to be that you paid the premium to not have ads," Duncan said. "Then, they added ads to the premium and I think 'what did I pay for?'"

Although advertisements are often looked down upon by consumers, Duncan says that advertisements will always be prevalent as they are a part of the business model.

"I think there's an acceptance among people," Duncan says. "I think that we accept that a portion of [ads] is a necessity and that ads aren't going to go away unfortunately. I can demand no ads, but I'm going to have to fork over more money. We accept on some level that ads are part of the game, they're part of the business model so that they will continue providing us with the content that we do enjoy."

According to Oberlo

**Digital
advertising
rose 15.6%
since last year**



Photo by Unsplash

Book Bans Increase Across Texas

By Noah Winter and Sydnie Grayson

NBC News reports that more than 1,600 books were banned in the 2021-22 school year across the United States. Texas is one of the leading states in the growing number of banned books from schools, with 801 banned books in the same year. A banned book is generally challenged by more parents, according to University of Cincinnati, with 50% of parents initiating these challenges. This year, there have been no books that have been challenged, but there are reasons why the banned books list is growing from the district level.

"There are rules set in place as far as which books that we choose," librarian Andrea Doerr said. "There's selection criteria and then once a challenge comes, we follow a set protocol."

The process for challenging a book is extensive. The challenger must read the book wanting to be challenged and fill out a challenge form explaining their reasons for the challenge. Once the book is challenged, the library has actions to take, but ultimately, they are not the only ones involved in this decision.

"It's not down to one person's decision," Doerr said. "There is a selection committee that takes place and it is made up of parents, administrations and the library."

With the books being taken off the shelf and no longer being readily available for students to read, reading opportunities can change. Moms for Liberty, a nonprofit organization, formed in 2021, gained national attention after challenging a book.

Since then, this organization has supported at least 50% of banned books according to PEN America. 49% of these books were targeted towards young adults.

"I think students should have access to books that portray a variety of different beliefs," Doerr said. "I think that if students read only one point of view, [it] is dangerous. I think that students need to

supports the curriculum of that class.

"I think that students need to have a very realistic, very open set of choices out there to read," English teacher Karen Quay said. "I think that it needs to dive into real life struggles and books should always be a little more mature."

With the banned books often covering topics of race, sexuality and mental illness, it limits the students' ability to read books on such topics. According to the Texas Tribune in the 2021-22 school year, 41% of banned books addressed LGBTQ themes and 40% of these address characters of color.

"If anyone wants to become more educated about specific topics in relation to topics such as gender, racism, or just current events, a good place to go is the banned book section because they're banning a lot of those topics," senior Noore Mawla said.

According to Middle Tennessee State University, people who advocate for banning books fear that these books will raise questions and ideas that society is not ready to address and contain information that they find inappropriate.

"I think I understand the intent to an extent because they're trying to protect the children and the people in different grades," Mawla said. "There are some books that need to be in libraries so that students can be educated and children can be educated."

68%
of students disagree
that books should
be banned by
school districts

**out of 323 students polled*

be able to select from a variety of books."

There are different requirements that books can fit between the library and the curriculum-based material that limits what students can read. According to the Cooperative Children's Book Center (CCBC), removing a book from a collection in the classroom versus a book in the library should follow the same general procedures when being banned. In both cases, they must be school board approved with the classroom collection books following what



Algal Growth, Herbicide Treatment Harms Pond Wildlife

By Maryam Ahmed

In early November, the geese returned to the school, coming back to a pond infested by algae. The school has done everything possible to treat the algae since it began early in the summer, but it did not recede for several months. A combination of rain patterns and supply chain issues make it difficult to effectively treat the pond.

“Over the summer, we went two straight months with no rain, and [the algae] was able to flourish like never before,” principal George King said.

Rain is usually what breaks apart algal growths in the pond, but the lack of rain in the summer allowed it to fester. The burst of rain in late October and early November helped push some of the algae to the banks.

“Rain in this case definitely helped,” AP environmental science teacher Emily Baker said. “The algae being pushed to the banks made it easier to remove by hand.”

While rain certainly abates the algal growth, it was also the cause of the algae in the first place.

“Algae loves phosphates, and a lot of neighboring houses use fertilizers with phosphates,” Baker said.

“Then when it rains, those fertilizers get pushed into our pond. When you couple that with heat, you’ve got the perfect storm for algae growth.”

Rain in May and June caused the fertilizer to runoff into the pond, where it was then allowed to sit over the dry summer. As a result, the algae was able to prosper, harming the life beneath the surface.

“When algae covers the surface of the water like this, it blocks sunlight,” Baker said. “So plants can’t produce as much oxygen, but all the other organisms are still consuming oxygen. Since more oxygen is being consumed than produced, you can start to see die-off.”

While this die-off affects some underwater organisms like fish, the ducks and geese remain relatively untouched.

“The algae is probably not impacting [the ducks and geese] that much because the algae’s going to attract more insects which they are going to use as a food source,” Baker said. “You could have situations where little baby ducklings get caught in the algae but that’s really rare.”

Although the algae itself doesn’t pose a threat to the ducks and geese, the school’s herbicide treatment of the pond

does, as it toxifies the water. However, the school is taking measures to limit the herbicide’s effect on the geese and ducks.

“It’s not a very strong herbicide,” King said. “We’ve enjoyed having the ducks and geese visit and we wouldn’t want to use something more powerful for fear of disrupting the wildlife.”

Even though the herbicide’s effect on wildlife is minimal, so is its effect on reducing the algae. Herbicide treatments were delayed for over a month due to supply chain issues.

“We just ran out of our stock of herbicide,” Plano ISD Facility Services employee Manuel Rodriguez said. “We’ve had to order some more from out-of-state, and that’s going to take another month to get here.”

These supply delays mean the school has only applied two herbicide treatments since the beginning of the school year. However, the administration remains hopeful that cooler temperatures will diminish the algal growth.

“The real solution comes in a good hard freeze,” King said. “That ought to get the algae out of there.”

Islamic Center Brings Warmth During Winter

By Aveesa Bhayani

Amidst preparing for finals and winter holidays, the temperature drops, bringing a new wave of excitement for the upcoming break. With hopes of snow on Christmas Eve, the volunteers of the Salvation Army have something else on their minds as they prepare to take in the city's homeless population. This year, the organization is partnering with the East Plano Islamic Center (EPIC) to provide medical services and supplies during extreme weather events.

"[EPIC] will be working with us for the first time this year," volunteer Bill Howard said. "They have a medical vehicle with doctors. Not only can we offer our guests sleeping quarters and dinner and breakfast, but they will also be able to get medical checkups and elementary medical services."

The Plano Overnight Warming Shelter (POWS), works with the Salvation Army to dispatch a series of vans to patrol the East side of Plano when an extreme weather event is forecasted. When the temperature drops below 32 degrees or the city experiences precipitation with a temperature of 45 degrees or below, the shelter prepares for a long night.

"I joined a team of other volunteers who created POWS to save Collin County unsheltered from extreme weather," Howard said. "We joined with [The Salvation Army] to offer this service. It is a great operation with some of the best people in Collin County with a heart for serving our neighbors."

Joining their forces will be upwards of 25 volunteers from the Islamic Community. With many other contributions to the city's underprivileged, EPIC will be providing medical supplies, financial aid, cooking and transportation through the use of private shuttles.

"Outreach and social [volunteering] has been a big part of our DNA from an ethics perspective for a very long time," President of East Plano Islamic Center, Imran Choudhry said. "We have been running an EPIC med-

warm meals. The shelter has now also introduced a shower suite as well as the new prospects brought by the Islamic center.

"Serving God is serving humanity," Choudhry said. "Serving his creations is a core belief. As Muslim Americans, we are contributing to society. We are [a] part of society, we are [a] part of the DNA of society and that's what we believe in."

Social welfare is not new to this center; the East Plano Islamic Center is heavily involved in the makeup of the city providing clinics, food pantries and financial aid for refugees. The center aims to fulfill the needs of the public.

"It's all from the community; we buy these supplies or they are donated by people in the community," Choudhry said. "We have about 25 volunteers who are ready to do this job. We are just waiting for the next steps from POWS. We are now a part of POWS and want to be there when the temperature drops."

Looking ahead, EPIC plans to start a shelter of their own. Starting as a soup kitchen, they now plan to open up an overnight shelter. With hopes that their shelter will help prevent overcrowding with the use of new resources; they aim to be up and running by next winter. For now, awaiting instructions, volunteers are ready to jump to the front lines as the winter season approaches. Alongside EPIC, the volunteers of the Salvation Army are excited and prepared for their new partnership.

"We're really very encouraged by the support we've gotten from the community and everybody's ready to go," Howard said.

"Outreach and social [volunteering] has been a part of our DNA from an ethics perspective for a very long time. Every Saturday or Sunday we see many patients, Muslims and non-Muslims."

- President of East Plano Islamic Center Imran Choudhry



ical clinic for almost 10 years. Every Saturday or Sunday we see many patients, Muslims and non-Muslims."

The city of Plano experiences around 25 extreme weather events per season. During these events, volunteers provide cots, sleeping materials, clothing and

Health of Health Care Workers

Staff Shortages, Stress, Safety Struggles

By Kayla Vu

After Thanksgiving ended, an influx of COVID-19 patients entered into U.S. hospitals, joining the crowd of thousands bedridden with fevers and coughs from respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) and influenza infections. According to the Washington Post, more than 35,000 COVID-19 patients were being treated at the end of November which was the highest level in three months and almost 20,000 Americans were also hospitalized due to influenza during the holiday week. With the rising number of patients, health care workers struggle to keep up.

"Nurses are burnt out, doctors are burnt out [and] they're not [being] taken care of," patient care technician (PCT) and nursing student Amy Tang said. "[Hospitals are] expecting them to work more [and] have a faster response time when taking care of patients. Not every single patient is going to be like, 'Okay, I'll only request you from this hour to this hour.' It doesn't work that way. We have to almost fend for ourselves because there's no system that works to take care of our well being."

While COVID-19 subsided, health care facilities continue to work with pandemic safety measures as patients continue to be admitted. Although Health Science Academy teacher and registered nurse Deana Reed currently doesn't work at a hospital, she explains how the pandemic impacted hospitals and health care workers.

"It's a very different world," Reed said. "When I go visit friends that are working on the floor, it's almost unrecognizable how different the hospital has changed in the last four years. They can't socialize because everything is still in lock down. They're trying to control who is exposed to what and you understand that, but it also isolates workers a lot."

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, more than half a million health care

professionals throughout the nation left the industry during the COVID-19 pandemic with the nursing industry having one of the highest number of professionals leaving. A nursing workforce analysis, published in Health Affairs earlier this year, discovered that the total number of registered nurses decreased by over one hundred thousand during the pandemic. In order to counter this lack of employees, hospitals are able to hire outside workers such as agency nurses, outside health care

cide or self-harm. According to the 2018 U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, health workers also accounted for 73% of all victims of nonfatal workplace violence.

"If you're mentally not doing well, how are you supposed to focus and take care of your patients?" Tang said. "I've seen nurses who are crying in the hallways because they are so stressed out. Everyone's like 'You signed up for this. You knew what you're getting into.' Yes, I do know what type of world we are stepping into, but do we expect it to keep worsening? No, not really. We don't expect to get abused by patients. We don't expect to be afraid for the life of [others] or ourselves because somebody might come in with a gun."

Despite the challenges and struggles of the healthcare industry, workers continue to combat issues through protests to spread awareness. On Nov. 30, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) announced they would award over \$3 billion to reinforce the public health system, its infrastructure and help public

health institutes to provide training and technical assistance. Although other problems still exist, health care workers continue their jobs and thousands of students continue to pursue the industry like senior Sarah Khurshid who plans to pursue a profession in healthcare.

"It's because it's just so rewarding," Khurshid said. "From an outsider's point of view, it might seem like it's really stressful; there's a bunch of sickness [and] deaths. When you're actually a healthcare worker, student or any aspiring pre-med person, you realize how much goodness and sympathy there is in the world. It gives you interaction with other patients and with the world and [helps you] see things outside of a regular point of view. That's something that I just really want to keep in mind every single day in my life."

"If you're not mentally doing well, how are you supposed to focus and take care of your patients?"

- Patient care technician and nursing student Amy Tang

professionals that get assigned to health care facilities with temporary contracts.

"Although they have a commitment to nursing and their patients, they don't understand the flow of the hospital [and] they don't have the commitment to [the] community," Reed said. "We can't do without them, but the idea that they're making twice the amount of money for the same thing is a little frustrating."

Under the pressure of staffing shortages, isolating environments and stressful work conditions, health workers often experience mental health issues and are also often victims to violence and abuse. A 2021 study by the Journal of General Internal Medicine found that 70% of American health care workers experience symptoms of anxiety and depression while 15% had recent thoughts of sui-

National Midterm Elections

By Sumayya Ali

Midterm elections have begun wrapping up with the majority of states and counties releasing their results. This year, voting took place on Nov. 8 and could be done in person or through the mail. In the Senate, the previous party divide has been about 50-50, with 48 Democrats, 50 Republicans and two independents who caucus with Democrats. Senators' term for six years, and in every election a third of the Senate is voted on. In this election, 35 individual seats are being voted on. On the other hand, every year, all House seats are voted on.

"It's super important to be involved in politics because [the] people who do vote, their choices will impact you," senior Julia Alves said. "If you don't vote for the school board, the people who are making decisions about your school and what you're supposed to do, that's very much [going] to influence you and the people you care about."

As of Dec. 3, Republicans have reached a majority with 49 seats in the Senate. Democrats have gained one seat this election with 48 seats. Georgia has progressed to a run off election, with the results being too close to determine. In the House of Representatives, Democrats lost nine seats putting them at 213 seats. Whereas Republicans gained eight seats, totaling to 220 seats. With Democrats leading, California and Colorado hold the remaining two undecided seats. Republicans have reached a House majority, for the first time since 2014.

"Usually, [small voter turnout] happens when it's a quiet year," senior Mikhail Rura said. "People don't see the reason to vote, they don't feel the need for change. There's a lot of stuff going on in the world, and a lot of problems. People really see that, and they think 'Oh I should go out and vote.'"

According to the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, an estimated 27%

of adults aged 18-29 voted. This documents the second highest youth voter turnout in almost three decades.

"Both sides did a good job of really motivating their base, based on fear largely, which is what campaigning is about," Dual Credit Economics Professor Daniel Sattizahn said. "I heard [campaigning] on every radio station, I saw it on sporting events, a lot of sporting venues donated like their stadiums, and you got a large base that came out."

79%
registered voters said
the economy will be an
important factor for
where their votes go

According to the Pew Research Center



In the midst of national midterm elections, discussions about issues such as inflation and abortion rights occurred. According to the Pew Research Center, 79% of registered voters said the economy will be an important factor in where their votes go. Voters are primarily concerned about gas, food and energy prices. While many issues voters prioritize shifted with recent events, the rate of importance for issues such as abortion stayed consistent hovering around 56%. Exit polls conducted by ABC

News show that 31% of voters primary reason for voting was inflation while 27% were concerned about abortion.

I think social media also plays a big impact on this, people share [the] news and what they believe is important," Alves said. "I know I do, most people do nowadays because it gets the word out that things are happening, politically and socially, around the world."

While social media can be used to spread information and express personal opinions, that is not always the case. Fake news and biased news oftentimes play a role in the candidate that people vote for.

"We've seen this in the past for maybe six to 10 years now, social media misinformation campaigns that are out there," Sattizahn said. "Which [is] just really taking its toll. We're seeing these campaigns specifically targeted to people on social media and they're attracting the clicks and giving you what you like."

In Texas, the two primary candidates on the ballot were Governor Greg Abbott, representing the Republican party, and Beto O'Rourke, representing the Democratic party. While Abbott had a history as a Governor since 2015 and centers his campaign on inflation and border control, O'Rourke focuses on issues such as abortion, gun control and immigration. This election, Ab-

bott won the election for Governor with a 54.8% majority, leaving Beto at 43.8% and a 1.4% on other candidates. The election is not limited to national issues; district bonds and supervisors are also on the ballot and affect local communities.

"In May, there's going to be another election and that's going to be when you vote for [the] school board," Alves said. "It's really important that people who can't vote right now, [and] that still want to get involved, can still register to vote and they can vote in those elections."

Student Creations: Creating Futures

By Aveesa Bhayani

As the calendar year draws to a close, students think about the legacy they want to leave behind. With an array of mediums, art shines through as a unique way for students to leave their mark on the school. For some, art is a way of life, for others, it is a way to relax. However, sometimes art isn't just about creativity. The idea of competition can be highly motivating, and for senior Zayeed Anwar, competition sparked his love for art.

"My passion for art started out of spite at first," Anwar said. "In second grade, there was this kid; he was so rude, but he was really amazing at drawing. I was like 'You know what? I can do better than him.' We had a drawing competition one day, and I finally beat him."

In his piece named, "Boy with Fruit," intended to be a modernized version of the work by Caravaggio starring Andrew Garfield, he painted a portrait with the use of oil pastels. Amidst a busy schedule, Anwar creates complex pieces as a way to recenter himself.

"I'm in many intensive classes and extracurricular activities, so it's really nice just to have something to do that relaxes me for two to three hours a week," Anwar said. "That's what really gets me motivated."

In a piece titled "Bricks in the Wall," junior Taarena Rathore uses a similar medium. Referring to everyday problems as 'not just another brick in the wall,' Rathore created a piece symbolic of issues faced by ordinary people. Creating a self-portrait, the piece contains many aspects of another passion for Rathore: music.

"There are song lyrics in the back of the song I was listening to when I was making this and cello sheet music, which is a cadenza to one of my solos," Rathore said.

Rathore was introduced to the world

of music at a very young age, playing a big role in her life and in her art.

"The guitar was the first instrument I played in first grade," Rathore said. "In sixth grade, I joined the orchestra and started playing the cello, which is the main instrument I play right now."

Barring physical art, Rathore also has an interest in digital art. Over the pan-

tal aspect of art," Rathore said. "I was watching a YouTube video and they asked if anyone wanted to join. At first, it was just an idea, but then it came together and we made it happen."

Each piece of art consists of ordinary materials made to be extraordinary. A fashion statement by junior Jaden Cao made for a drag competition promo on Valentine's day, Cao designed a unique take on the Queen of Hearts.

"I get my inspiration from a lot of fun, fabulous [and] extravagant things," Cao said. "[I] definitely wanted to go for a villain look here, but make her pretty and femme."

Consisting of a heart headpiece, a cage skirt, and a bouquet, Cao used unconventional materials such as cardboard, cardstock, and lace. In previous pieces, he took recycling to a new level using plastic cups and bags.

"Of course, I wanted to give it my drag style so I gave it my six-inch platforms with the white ostrich feather fuzz," Cao said.

Even the most extravagant creators are not immune to their doubts. These artists share some advice on how they continue to create, despite constant pressures to excel.

"You see artists that are your age and doing things that are so much better than you," Anwar said. "Sometimes I'm like 'I could never do that' and you could do that, it just takes practice. Practice after practice after practice."

Cao follows that with his own piece of advice: never be a slave to the ordinary.

"Do your own thing," Cao said. "Do your own thing and live your best life. You never want to be unoriginal or the same old, same old."



Junior Taarena Rathore's piece called "Bricks in the Wall," submitted to the Reflections Art Program and Scholastic competitions. Rathore took about three weeks to complete the piece. The piece is originally in color.

demic, she collaborated with creators across the world to experiment with a piece called, "The Marvel Project," a collaborative Marvel piece guided by a graphic designer. Each artist created a digital character that when put together, makes a mural of different artistic styles and characters.

"That's what got me into the digi-

PANTHER PROFILE

Love for Children Inspires Medical Interest

By Sydnie Grayson

As junior Berlin Drake walks up to the Sunday school doors, she admires the kids and hopes to teach them as much as she can. Throughout her time in the ministry, she ponders the thought of becoming a pediatrician, helping kids all over the world. Her love for the medical field and making sure children are taken care of helps inspire the passion of becoming a pediatrician.

"I know it's my calling to help children," Drake said. "People really hurt kids these days and I want to be a good doctor to help them. I've always wanted to be somewhere in life and be productive [and] I want my parents to be proud of me."

As a student in the Health Science Academy (HSA), Drake participates in medical assisting programs and enjoys working on labs in her different classes. These classes cover anything from medical training to medical concepts and specifics.

"I think [HSA] shows you the mindset you need for healthcare," Drake said. "You need to be overly helpful and explain everything you're going to do instead of just doing it. It's really good because it teaches you more in-depth and I don't know how it is for other people who don't do medical stuff in high school, but I think it's a really good head start for people who know what they want to do."

Regarding the programs she's in, she spends a lot of her free time studying and working hard to achieve her future goal of becoming a pediatrician.

"She expresses [her passion] through how she does things and how she carries herself," junior Cael Comito said.



Photo by Sydnie Grayson

Junior Berlin Drake takes notes in her third period Medical Assisting class, a class that focuses on lab procedures, clinical skills and office administration. Drake aspires to be a pediatrician and make a difference in the medical field.

"She carries herself in a very interesting manner, where she is steadfast and nothing is going to change her mind."

The motivation behind her passions and goals is her determination. She focuses on school and is looking towards how she can better herself in this field; through this, she can improve her actions in the future as a pediatrician.

"With her determination, if something is going to change her mind, she's not just going to accept the new information because she doesn't know how true it could be or she doesn't know where it came from," Comito said. "Part of her determination is that she wants the whole truth and she's going to look for it and find it. She makes an informed decision based on the new things that she has found."

While this passion is emphasized through her determination, she faces the difficulty of balancing time. In this case, she finishes her school work by the Friday and Saturday of that week and volunteers at the ministry on Sunday. She uses determination and motivation as she remembers how successful she plans to be and how she plans to help others succeed as well.

"I really want to make a difference," Drake said. "I like to know and learn the different things we do. It's cool to know it and then teach someone else how to do it. I just want to help with people's problems or just give them advice. I want to actually care about their problems instead of just making money."

Aids, Accesibilities, Accommodations: Overcoming Obstacles in Education

By Sydnie Grayson, Maryam Ahmed and Kayla Vu

Throughout senior Reid's childhood, overcoming barriers in school was a prevalent issue after being diagnosed with autism. There were hurdles in the way that inhibited communication processes with classmates and teachers during the school day, especially during lessons. With difficulty being social with others, Reid would find ways to help themselves when they weren't sure how to handle these situations.

"I would always run off into the bathroom or run away without telling a teacher where I was," Reid said. "That wasn't because I was trying to skip class or anything; it was just because I needed to get out of there and get help. I just couldn't communicate that without them thinking that it was not that big of a deal [or] that I was making things up."

Advocacy, Legislation for Disability Rights in History

Although organizations for people with disabilities existed since the 1800s, it wasn't until the rise of the civ-

il rights movement that advocacy for people with disabilities began to soar in popularity. During the 1950s and 1960s, parents of children with disabilities started the Association for Retarded Citizens, now renamed to The Arc, in order to shift public opinion and initiate con-

fine the person," Reid said. "If we make these things less taboo of a subject and more informative and we talk with people and people learn, then people with disabilities won't feel like they have to hide it; they can feel like they're accepted and like they're there with the rest of the people."

On September 26, 1973, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 was passed to address issues of unequal access for people with disabilities. However, Health, Education and Welfare (HEW) Secretary Joseph A. Califano Jr. refused to finish regulations for Section 504 of the act which prevented recipients of federal funds and federal agencies from discriminating based on disabilities. Demonstrators, led by American disability rights activist Judy Heumann, staged a 25-day sit-in in front of the HEW office with over 150 individuals protesting. Secretary Califano eventually yielded and signed the regulations into effect after four years since the act was initially passed.

"I support the protestors who worked hard to get the regulations signed in the Rehabilitation Act," senior Aliza Ruttenberg, member of PALS, said. "The

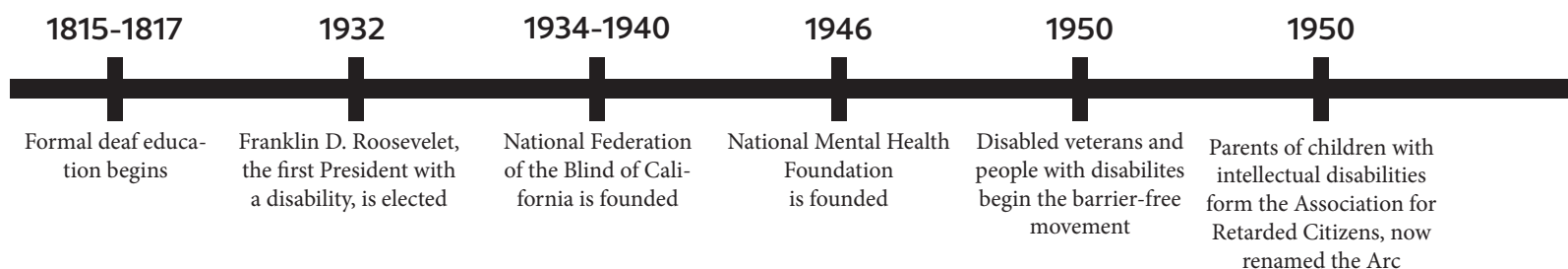
"They don't understand that the disability doesn't define the person."

- senior Reid

versation about intellectual disabilities. Parents and fellow activists advocated to remove children with disabilities out of institutions and asylums and instead into schools in order to give them the opportunity to socialize in communities like children without disabilities could.

"I feel like no one wants to talk about [disabilities], mostly because they don't understand that the disability doesn't de-

DISABILITY RIGHTS MOVEMENT IN AMERICA



Rehabilitation Act [was] an important step towards inclusivity and acceptance towards those with disabilities.”

Disability activists continued their mission in hopes to pass more pieces of legislation that outlined broad civil rights of people with disabilities. Although the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination based on race, religion, nationality and gender, people with disabilities were excluded from this protection. Finally in 1990, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was signed into law and prohibited discrimination based on disability; it ensured the equal treatment and fair access of people with disabilities to opportunities in the public sphere including workspaces, schools and transportation. With the passage of the ADA, businesses were required to provide accommodations and these accommodations were expected to be modified and improved on.

“Every student and teacher should have fair opportunities, not necessarily equal opportunities, but everyone should be on the same playing field,” Ruttenberg said. “Someone may need more accommodations of different things than others, but everyone should be able to have fair opportunities”

Over the years, other areas began to adjust to accommodate people with disabilities, especially in the education sector. In 1990, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act renamed itself to Indi-

viduals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The newly modified act required schools to consider the interests and preferences of students with disabilities during the construction of their accommodation plans. In the following year, the federal government classified autism as a special education category and public schools began identifying students on the

of lead the way and model what the rest of society should be for inclusiveness.”

Disabilities in Society

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), in 2020-2021, the number of students who received special education services amounted to 15% of all public school students. Out of these, the most common disability serviced were learning disabilities, totaling to 33% of students with disabilities. Out of this, according to the National Center for Learning Disabilities, 94% of these students received accommodations in some way, shape or form in high school, but throughout their college experience, only 17% of them received similar accommodations. Senior Andrew Hesse, is one of the students at this school with cerebral palsy, a motor disability that affects an individual’s movement ability, muscle posture or balance.

“Cerebral Palsy is a little bit hard to explain,” Andrew said. “Cerebral palsy is a disability that does happen at birth so it’s not genetic or carried down [and there are] many forms of cerebral palsy. You have people in leg braces, people that have their legs [with] one foot inward where they kind of limp a little, people that can walk but not far distances. One thing I’ve mainly learned is that people with cerebral palsy, their legs can give out at any time like they can buckle.”

54% of students think the school is somewhat accessible for people with disabilities

18% of students think the school is very inaccessible for people with disabilities

11% of students chose not to comment

9% of students don't think the school is accessible or inaccessible for people with disabilities

8% of students think the school is very accessible for people with disabilities

**out of 323 students polled*

spectrum and providing service

“When I was growing up the students that had disabilities were just all sheltered,” Principal George King said. “We’ve done a lot of the last few decades to find ways to include others. We certainly can do better, but in a public school environment, we kind

DISABILITY RIGHTS MOVEMENT IN AMERICA

1954

Brown v. Board of Education abolishes segregation in schools

1975

The Developmental Disabilities Assistance Bill of Rights and the Education for Handicapped Children Act are enacted

1977

Disability demonstrators occupy HEW Office for 25 days

1990

Capitol Crawl Protest occurs with protestors demanding passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

2009

Rosa's law is enacted, replacing the term "mental retardation" with "intellectual disability"

2017

ADAPT activists fight to save Affordable Care Act/Medicaid

Disabilities have been categorized into two main groups: invisible and visible. As stated in the definition, visible ones are noticeable, such as Down Syndrome and Cerebral Palsy, compared to those that are invisible which are not immediately apparent, including Autism and other different kinds of cognitive and learning disabilities, according to the University of Massachusetts. Invisible disabilities is an umbrella term that represents those conditions that are hidden or neurological. Both invisible and visible, however, affect a student's learning; the National Center for Education Statistics states that the majority of students who received special education services had specific learning disabilities.

"It's easy to forget invisible disabilities," AP English teacher Lauren Thompson. "As a teacher with 160 students,

it's easy to forget that 20 or so of them have individual needs. I try to do what I can. I tell students as soon as I am aware that if I am not meeting your needs, say something. Don't just sit back and let it happen, because I can guarantee you I will make every effort possible to make sure of those accommodations."

While disabilities have been documented in society since 1552 BC, they have been stigmatized since as early as this time due to Greek and Roman beliefs. According to Merriam-Webster, stigma means to leave or emphasize a mark of disgrace; in this case, stigma and sensitivity go hand in hand when being spoken about in regards to education as they can harm the social-emotional connection in classrooms, according to Community Psychology. What accounts for some of this stigma is the lack of awareness or un-

derstanding for what these disabilities are and how they truly affect a person as reported by a study from the Institute of Development Studies. With this, there could also be the understanding of misconceptions regarding visible and invisible disabilities. For example, there are the myths that people with disabilities are confined to their wheelchair, people with disabilities are dependent and always need help, and people with disabilities are a one-dimensional group. An article from Disabled Peoples' International explains that individuals with disabilities are people first and their disabilities do not define who they are as an individual.

"It's not just giving someone the upper hand, it really is leveling the playing field for people," Reid said. "It's like if somebody can't see, we give them glasses so that they can see. Everybody is not going to need glasses, but that does help that one person who needs to see. You wouldn't take away somebody's glasses or somebody's wheelchair because nobody else can use it or nobody else can get it. Fairness is not giving everybody the same thing, it's giving what ev-

erybody needs to succeed."

Educational Accesibility

While accessibility in education is a worldwide issue, the school takes certain measures to accommodate those who need it. The special education department is the largest department on campus and there is a 504 program working to meet the needs of disabled students.

"We're required by law, so we'll go to the district and access resources necessary to ensure that their accommodations are being met," King said.

Even with extensive infrastructure in place, many in the disabled community on campus feel it's not enough. Although there are physical accommodations built into the school, many are rendered ineffective, such as the handicap buttons. For example, the button near the bistro isn't functional and the button outside Building 3 has been repaired six times by Agriculture teacher Samuel Harrison, who is wheelchair-bound.

"The able bodied children here constantly beat every handicap button on this campus," Harrison said. "They don't realize that while it's fun to them, it's [an] accessibility to someone else."

While there are physical accommodations like elevators and handicap buttons on campus, the bulk of the school's resources go towards invisible disabilities. The special education department customizes students' accommodation plans based on their needs before the start of the school year. Disabilities can also change and develop over time and the administration accounts for students' changing needs through Admission, Review, Dismiss (ARD) committees, or student-staff meetings that adjust students' accommodations to fit their new requirements.

"I think it's good for students to advocate for themselves," Thompson said. "It's important for them to take control of their accommodations. More teachers and students can work together to meet those needs."

While there are resources available for a range of disabilities, many students need an environment in which they feel comfortable speaking about their needs, which can be difficult to achieve when

53% of students think the schools should do a lot more to help people with disabilities

25% of students think the school should do a little more to help people with disabilities

3% of students don't think the school should do more to help people with disabilities

19% of students chose not to comment

**out of 323 students polled*



there is such a stigma around disabilities.

"I think there is definitely more education that could be done," Ruttenberg said. "Most students tend to not interact with them, kind of like 'Out of sight, out of mind.'"

In addition to the special education department and 504 program, students and teachers need to compromise on accommodations to ensure everyone's needs are met, but not all teachers are necessarily understanding of students with disabilities. While all teachers go through an annual training on disabilities, they don't always choose to abide by that training.

"Because the administration is good about following the laws regarding disabilities, issues with accommodations usually happen at the individual teacher level," Thompson said.

Despite the range of resources available to those with disabilities, many in the on-campus disabled community feel the school could improve both in physical accommodations and educating teachers about disabilities.

"The people that make those decisions need to be on campus more and see the effect that their decisions have on students," Harrison said. "They don't see what you and I and the administration see and because of that, they only go by the letter of the law. If they've never been around someone who's ever needed more than them, to them it's enough."

Current Action to Advocacy

Disability rights groups continue to advocate for better accommodations and opportunities for people with disabilities in the education sector concerning issues of segregation, inadequate teacher training and poor transition planning into adulthood. Organizations such as the Arc@School provide parents, educators and others services such as training and resources to help under-

stand the special education system. Other disability advocates aim to normalize representation and spread awareness about different disabilities through social media platforms and in various industries.

"People could look at me and say, 'Oh you're normal,' when I'm not normal," Reid said. "Some people have these ideas of what an autistic person looks like. They think that they're loud, they speak with a tablet [or] they can't communicate well and that's just one form of autism. It's a spectrum; some are worse than others."

While there are activists such as Aar-

"There's no use in treating people as if they're the same when they're clearly different. It's just that people equate different to bad."

- agriculture teacher Samuel Harrison

on Philips, performative allyship, a term used to describe the basing of ideas on self-gratification with no essential improvement, is connected to certain minority groups, such as those with disabilities. Performative allyship concerns itself with surface level activism rather than material action that actually helps the disabled community. According to PennState Law, true allyship comes in the form of providing viable solutions.

"I consider myself to be handicapped, but there's people that take offense to that for some reason," Harrison said. "There's no use in treating people as if they're the same when they're clearly different. It's just that people equate different to bad."

Some of the dangers of performative allyship occur when individuals attempt to speak for marginalized groups they're not a part of. According to Kerri Fisher,

senior lecturer for Baylor University's School of Social Work, it's important for others to shift their focus to reflecting on a marginalized group's experiences rather than reacting with judgment.

"We have to listen to the disabled," King said. "I think we have to be more in touch on how we can optimize their experience. They are the clients who receive those services and accommodations so we need to be more sensitive as to how this is working. We should do more of a review of how those accommodations are working. You have to build time into the structure of what you do to just do that. For students, there are annual reviews, [but] sometimes it requires tending to it more than annually."

In order to educate others about different disabilities, Andrew believes that schools should organize presentations to teach students about different types of disabilities and give students insight on what people with disabilities experience.

"I can come into the classroom and explain what a VP shunt is and what cerebral palsy is to shine more light on what it is," Andrew said. "It's important that they know what it is and how they can help. For example, if somebody fell down the stairs and they have cerebral palsy, [students] can help them out and lift them up."

Although Andrew recognizes his limitations, he still tries to persevere despite any mishaps and encourages his peers to do the same.

"Even if I fell, I'd still try," Andrew said. "No matter what disability people have, whether that'd be autism, cerebral palsy, whatever, don't let anyone say you can or can't do something. [People with disabilities] can do anything they put their mind to no matter what it is."



Legacy Students

By Sumayya Ali

Chilly mornings greet students and families as they fill the audience while athletes prepare to toss their disks in the air. Junior Isabella Mitchell winds up her arm as she rotates the discus in her hand. As the crowd erupts in cheers, one person's encouraging yells stand out to her. As a former athlete himself, Mitchell's dad's love for sports has been inherited by his kids.

"My dad has always [said] 'if we have kids, they're going to be [sporty]' and that really affected me," Mitchell said. "That's mainly the reason I started [playing] in the first place. I started soccer at the age of three, then I did softball and then I moved to basketball. I definitely did a lot."

Whether a student competes in or participates in sports can be largely affected by their parent's athletic background. A study done by New Zealand scientist Melissa Wilson compared athletes ranked at different skill levels with parents' athletic history. The study discovered that athletes at a higher level are three times more likely than medium level athletes to have parents who participated in competitive sports. They are also twice as likely as non-athletes to have athletic parents. The study argued that while the environment plays a role, the convenience of an athlete will be determined by the parent's genes.

"I think genetics definitely helped with my dad playing football and my brother's [athletic background], and [we] started at a young age," junior wrestler Logan Atchley said. "Since [we were] young, we've played really well in sports. I mean anything [we tried], we were good at."

While genetics do play a role in whether children end up being as athletic as their parents, it is not the sole determinant. According to a study done by Medlin - ePlus, environmental factors play a more extensive role in a child's ability to be athletic; these include whether a child was put in a sport at a young age, the num-

"[My dad] definitely gives me advice and tells me to work harder," Atchley said. "[He] pushes me to be my best."

While family plays a role, they don't necessarily determine the sport an athlete chooses. Atchley's older brother plays baseball, and his dad played football in college while Atchley competes in wrestling.

"For wrestling, it's a really active sport; it gets you in really good shape, and it's really fun," Atchley said. "It's not so much of a team sport, but it is at the same time. You really bond with your teammates. It's fun to [play]."

While having an athletic family and competing in a sport has benefits, it's not always primarily for fun. Opportunities for college, scholarships and higher level sports scouting are all advantages parents, like Mitchell's dad, may want for their children.

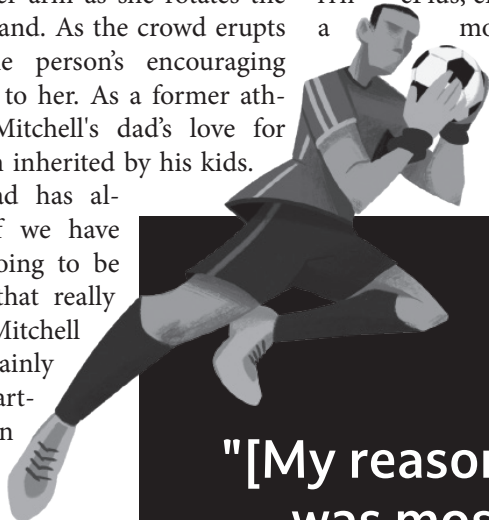
"It's mostly for college as in I can put it in my college resume," Mitchell said.

"They'll look at it like I'm doing a team sport

but there is that element of fun to it that makes it worthwhile.

For Mitchell and Atchley, their families energize them and motivate them to work harder.

"[My family] are my biggest supporters," Atchley said. "I mean my grandma is always there, my whole family is there, my brother likes coming to watch, it's awesome having them at my games."



"[My reason for joining sports] was mostly my brother. I wanted to be like him and be good at a sport. He pushed me, [so] I pushed myself."

- junior wrestler Logan Atchley



Valor Behind Victories

By Michelle Mendez-Arreaga

For the past three months, members of the wrestling team have been attending practice meetings five days a week for two hours to gear up for the season. On top of being physically and mentally strong, a wrestler must be disciplined and dedicated.

"I've been preparing for the season since the end of school last year until now, so seven months," varsity co-captain and senior Aaron Rodriguez said. "When we didn't have school practice, I would go to my wrestling club, [the] Power Training Center, for practices and ever since then, I haven't missed a single practice. I am so ambitious to compete in state competitions this year."

To prepare for a match, members practice the techniques they've learned from coach Bryan Kenney and coach Noel Peterson. They drill with one another and exercise to get their muscles warm. Other than jogging and stretching, the team practices shadow wrestling, which is when team members perform wrestling techniques without a partner. Additionally, the coaches tell the team to make an image of how their opponent looks for a more effective practice.

"It is really helpful to get a good idea of how exactly we want to use different techniques and what works best for us," senior Isabella Soheili said.

The team had a lot of success throughout the years. During February 2022, alumni Peyton Madawi, senior Aariz Habib and junior Aidan Miller competed in UIL state competitions with Madawi placing in fifth. During the spring, three students qualified for nationals in greco-roman wrestling, something the school hadn't seen in 15 years.

"I'm really proud of the character of our team and obviously the success as well," Kenney said. "We took a program that had 12 kids in it when I started six

years ago to about 100 now. We're getting students wrestling in college and traveling the country. We're really building our program [and] building something that people want to be a part of."

To many students, the sport is used as an outlet to release tension caused by external factors. Peterson asks the team to lie down and close their eyes while he gives them a motivational pep talk, then

ing with me mentally," varsity co-captain and senior Tory Strickland said.

The team has a motto called HOURS which stands for honor, outwork, unity, respect and strength, which not only helps members put up a good fight, but ultimately improves their character.

"There's a saying 'once you [wrestle] everything in life is easy,'" Coach Kenney added. "I would change that to 'everything in life is easier.' 'Once you've battled, controlled your diet, and lost under the lights in front of your friends and family, it teaches you a work ethic.'"

After the season ends, the athletes start from square one and do the process all over again. Students go back to the weight room to prepare for the next season and build even more strength.

"I intend to keep competing in the freestyle and greco season in hopes to compete for Team Texas again," Rodriguez said. "For the team, I believe that we'll go undefeated in duals; we had a couple of bumps in the road last year, but I think this is the year it happens."

The team's bond remains the same on and off the mat. The members of the wrestling team continue to support and push each

other to not only become better athletes, but better individuals as well.

"The wrestling team feels like a family," Strickland said. "They're very hard workers and incredibly fun to be around."

Kenney agrees as he adds a heartfelt message to the team.

"I appreciate you guys; you guys are a big reason that we were able to change the culture here," Kenney said. "Y'all brought into what we were trying to build and bore with us as we were building it. Now, you're seeing the results from the work you put in."




Junior Logan Atchley and Sophomore Talaal Habib practice wrestling techniques on Nov. 15.

tells students to visualize tranquil images to calm down their pre-game anxiety.

"Being a part of the team has given me the opportunity to block out any stress and get in a good fight," Soheili said. "It is a really good break from academics where you can push yourself past your limits."

The sport not only helped the team become better athletes, it has also helped them deal with their own personal problems.

"It helps me in the real world and everyday life by making me push through something that's been mess-



Marching Band Faces Technological Errors During Area Competition

Photo by Noah Winter

In the football game against Rockhill on Sep. 9, junior Evan Lin plays in the pit for the halftime performance.

By Varsha Jhanak and Noah Winter

Bright lights hit senior Dhanush Jain's face as he leads the band during the football games. The feeling is surreal with hundreds of people watching as the band marches and plays in unison. The band performed their show "The Letter B" for each football game every Friday night and competed in an area competition where they had the chance to advance to a state level. Due to technological errors, the band was not able to advance. According to students and directors, the preparation for marching season can be intense at times. Band directors start forming shows for the next year in November. For students, preparations begin in July during the summer band camp where the band practices for 6-8 hours every day for 3-4 weeks in July. Once school begins, the band can put together the school during their after school practices.

"It can get really intense because putting together a marching band show is really hard as unexpected challenges always arise," Jain said. "Sometimes, it can feel like nothing is going right or that the show is not going well. But it takes everyone to keep practicing and keep persevering for it to finally lock in. It always finally locks in but it just takes a lot of motivation."

As the band practiced throughout the summer, the color guard had different expectations for them, which were just as intense. For colorguard, the process was more dance intensive as the color guard members learned new dances and built upon each part they learned to slowly complete the whole performance.

"I practiced a lot outside of school because it was really important to me that I did the best that I could," sophomore Eleanor Ashford said. "I would take my stuff home and like every waking moment I'd either be going over the choreography in my head or I'd be physically practicing."

Before their area competition, the band was confident and prepared to give it their all on the field. They had solid practices during the week and were on track to succeed during areas. However, the band faced a technology problem during the competition and did not advance further to the state level.

"It wasn't the way we all expected," sophomore Anusha Nagaraddi said. "We were really excited because it was the end of the season. We were ready to go to the state, but then we had an electronic error. We didn't get to end our season off the way we wanted to. I think we were so

proud that we made it to the area and that we had a show to perform, but we were just kind of disappointed that we didn't get to show off the way it's supposed to be."

Despite the disappointment at their area competition, students and directors are proud of their effort and preparations.

"I'm very proud of the progress this group has made," band director John Brennan said. "We had some issues at the area contest. That was disappointing because our last contest performance of the year wasn't our best run so that would be the only disappointment."

Regardless of the disappointment of the area competition, the band still had a lot to learn from this marching season and experienced great things while performing. The students didn't just learn lessons relating to band, but relating to life as well.

"I learned a lot from a musical standpoint," Jain said. "But just from a general standpoint, I think I learned a lot about communication. Being the head drum major, I have to facilitate different sections interacting with each other and organize different parts of the show. I learned a lot about talking to people and being supportive."

Playing with Pride

Special Needs Athletic Program Brings Joy to Players

By Kayla Vu

Although dozens of people crowd the stands, a silence envelopes the gym as onlookers watch in anticipation. Senior Justin Lembree takes ahold of the ball and as he approaches the hoop; his legs bend down to prepare for the jump. With determination in his eyes, Lembree leaps up and takes his shot. The crowd erupts into a series of cheers as the ball makes it in. A smile forms on Lembree's face while his coaches and fellow players join in to celebrate the victory.

"[I feel] good and confident [during the games] because I like being the best of the team," Lembree said. "At first, I'll be really nervous, [but] during the game it will be good. I like to help [my teammates]. [My favorite part] is helping them score and defending."

Originally known as the Special Olympics, the Special Needs Athletic program was established in 2007 by Coach Tommy Guynes. In 2014, Guynes stepped down and passed on the responsibilities to the current coach, Anthony Ruttenburg. Since then, Ruttenburg manages the team and events through organizing schedules, recruiting volunteers and getting approval for new ideas.

"I felt good about [getting the position]," Ruttenburg said. "It gave me an opportunity to work with the kids and recruit more kids. The success is seeing it all come together, getting support from the staff and student body and seeing the smile on all of the kids' faces."

Throughout the year, the team of 23 players competes against different sports teams and organizations every Thursday, including the Plano Police Department. To prepare for each game, Ruttenburg

promotes team bonding through activities such as outside basketball gatherings and team dinners. Outside of their games at the school, the team also participates in the Summer Special Olympics every year.

"I think [the games are] great for the students to express themselves and

burg said. "When I [took] them to state tournaments, I got to have a lot of one-on-one time with them and see their personalities and everything outside of an academic and sports setting. I let them know that they're some body and I put them up on that pedestal."

Although the gameplay is the focus of the event, there are other parts of the game that the players and crowd can have fun with such as the halftime show. During this time, volunteers pause the show and play a song for the coaches and players to perform a line dance to.

"Everyone gets out of the stands to dance; all the coaches, players and everyone gets out there," Melissa Huddleston, parent of player Samuel Huddleston said. "It's really fun to see them all out there together. They're all smiling, laughing, working up a dance and jumping together."

While the Special Needs Athletic Program is currently only at this school, Ruttenburg hopes to expand the program to all three senior high schools and at some point have city championships. For now, Ruttenburg encourages students to attend the games to cheer on the team. The Panther Pride team will kick start

their first game of next year on Jan. 12.

"Come out to the games and show support," Ruttenburg said. "These kids deserve it and they work hard not only in the classroom and on the court, but in life too. They just wanna be like their other peers, so go out and cheer them on."



Photo by Victoria Hayden

Johnny Morin walks out to a cheering crowd during the team's game against the wrestling team on Oct. 13.

show love for a sport," Ruttenburg said. "It also helps them in regards to relationship building and trusting their teammates and the staff around them."

Over the years of coaching and working with the students in his special education class, Ruttenburg developed stronger relationships with each student.

"I've learned so much over the years on how to relate with them," Rutten-

Necessity of Humanities in Education

Staff Editorial

Technology has been growing since the invention of the first computer in 1822. From this point on, technology and science have been ingrained in society as a necessity; this idea can be transferred to different sectors of society including education. The main classes in education are Science, Technology, Engineering, Math (STEM) classes and humanities classes. For STEM, there are significantly more classes based around this field, such as clinicals, biochemistry and computer science.

According to a 2020 report from Education Data, students who graduated with a degree in the STEM field accounted for 18.3% of graduates. Compared to this, students who graduated in the humanities field accounted for 11.1% of graduates.

While STEM is essential to education, humanities-based classes should be held to the same level of importance as that of STEM-based classes.

With humanities classes, creativity and perspective can be implemented into the course work. Charles Sturt University states that creative thinking and emotional intelligence are skills gained from taking a humanities course. These

skills are defined as soft skills, which Merriam-Webster defines as personal attributes that allow someone to interact harmoniously with others. Classes that offer these skills include professional communication, debate, any writing class and project-based classes. These courses are essential in offering creative mindsets to the students who participate in them as they can work with others and become exposed to different ideas and personalities, enhancing their creative outlets.

Humanities can also help students with common sense and communication

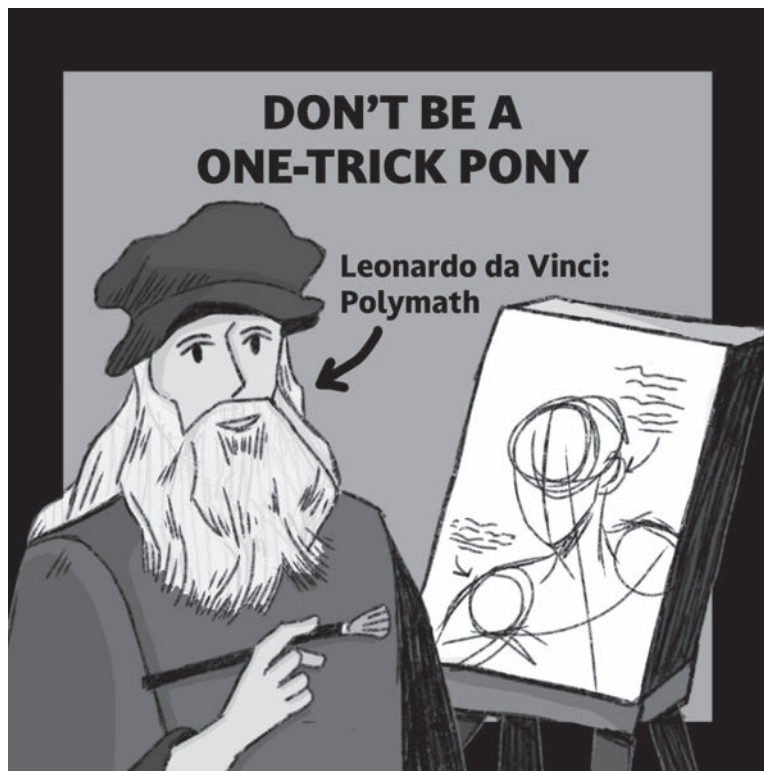
skills throughout their life. According to an article by The University of Texas Permian Basin, skills gained from these courses include communication, critical thinking and personal and social responsibility. All of these skills can be applied in educational situations as well as day-to-day scenarios. Humanities classes including English and history courses can provide life lessons through literature, textbooks and other pieces of writing. Especially in literature classes, books can be impressionable among

be used to apply knowledge to STEM-based subjects. Carnegie Mellon University, according to a study conducted by the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, offers a minor that is believed to provide STEM majors with an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of different texts and concepts discussed in humanities classes, such as business communication, reading and writing. Particularly for college students, although STEM courses tend to have less writing,

they do have to write at some point throughout their time in that class. Along with this, high school students applying to colleges have to write supplementals in order to be considered. In this case, humanities courses offer skills that could be useful in future circumstances.

Although humanities can be applied to every aspect of life, there are those who believe that because the world is full of technology, STEM-based classes are more useful in the real world. While this may be true, humanities-based skills, such as reading and comprehension, aid with the understanding of the technology we use in our daily lives. While technology

is important, technological literacy must be understood before obtaining a job in the STEM field as this can better the knowledge of technology in an industrialized society. Fortunately, colleges have been attempting to bridge the gap between humanities and STEM culture by including aspects of humanities in different STEM-based courses. By bridging this gap, STEM-based classes and humanities can be realized as equals and work synonymously together as two halves of a whole in education.



students, including "The Catcher in The Rye" and "The Great Gatsby," some of the most popular books read in high school English classes, according to Edutopia. Along with common sense and life lessons, students can learn basic communication skills. An article by the School of Professional Advancement at Tulane University explains that students in humanities courses are able to communicate, gain the opportunity to interact with others, and understand their peers regarding substantial concepts.

Through these, humanities classes can

**The Panther Prints staff voted 7 - 1, with majority opinion believing humanities classes are as important as STEM-based classes*

Technology Companies' Effect on Consumer Taste

By Maryam Ahmed

In recent months, both Apple and Samsung released new models left and right. However, there isn't much difference in software or hardware in these new releases. In terms of product quality, the cell phone industry is stagnant, yet technology companies' revenues have increased in recent years. This points to the growing influence of companies on consumer opinion.

While technology companies in the past have gone out of business because they couldn't keep up with consumer tastes, technology companies are the primary drivers of consumer opinion today.

In the dawn of the cell phone age, consumer tastes were changing rapidly and many companies had to fight to keep up with all the fluctuations in demand. Some companies, like Nokia and Blackberry, left the market because they couldn't keep up. Blackberry and Nokia began to decline in 2009 with the rise of software-oriented, touchscreen devices like the iPhone. Both companies kept their original product design and were eventually edged out of the market as consumers chose touchscreen phones over keyboard ones. As the market value of Nokias and Blackberries plummeted, both companies were forced to abandon the smartphone industry. Although they've been out of the market for some time now, Blackberry only officially decommissioned its legacy software in early 2022, meaning all classic Blackberries can no longer be used.

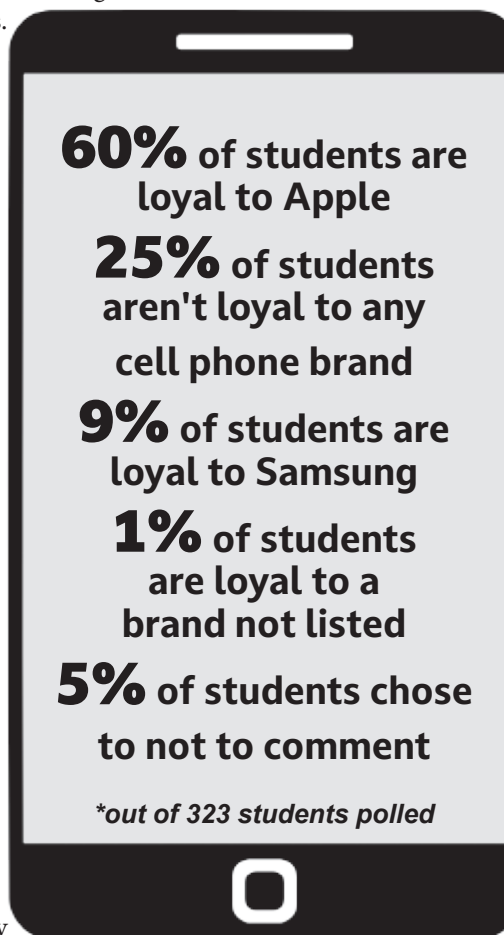
Although Apple and Samsung dominate the smartphone industry, their improvements to the technology decreased with time. While Blackberry and Nokia failed as smartphone producers, almost every new device they put out had major modifications in software and hardware, from screen size to user interface to the amount of storage. On the other hand, the second generation of smartphone companies, Apple and

Samsung, have made hardly any changes to their devices in their latest models, but they have consistently brought in increasing profits. Between the iPhone 12 series in 2020 and the latest iPhone 14 series, the only features that have changed are screen size and camera

tastes rather than adapt to them. Apple and Samsung are both notorious for their brand loyalty, which contributes to their consistent profits. According to Retently, Apple has 87% brand loyalty, meaning 87% of Apple customers would continue buying Apple products regardless of price. Samsung has a lower but still relatively high brand loyalty rate of 45%. Since both companies have such high customer loyalty, they have control over their customers' tastes. They can create new models with as many or as few modifications as they wish and they will still have customers willing to buy from them.

While big technology companies certainly have more sway over their customers' tastes than in the 2000s, this phenomenon is prevalent primarily in teenagers and young adults. According to The Wise Marketer, 73% of consumers ages 13 to 21 shop at a fixed set of stores, including technology brands. Older customers tend to pick the cheapest option rather than fixating on brand names. Even though brand loyalty is more applicable to the younger generations, their spending power is climbing. According to Forbes, Generation Z made \$360 billion in disposable income last year, making them the second largest group of consumers, barely trailing millennials. As younger generations make up a larger portion of consumers, the effects of brand loyalty becomes ever more important in determining the future of the technology industry.

The smartphone industry has transformed rapidly in the last two decades, not just in the technology itself, but also in how the products are marketed and sold. Technology companies have tightened their grip on consumer opinion to the point that they release almost identical products and still make a profit. Given that these companies appeal mainly to younger generations, this phenomenon will likely continue for decades to come.



quality, yet Apple made \$42.6 billion off this line alone. Samsung follows a similar trend. In their new Galaxy Series, the only major difference from earlier models is screen size and camera quality, but their smartphone sales went up by 5% from last year to 64 million phones sold.

All this points to corporations' tightening grip on consumer taste. The failures of companies like Blackberry and Nokia proved that keeping up with consumer taste was not sustainable. As a result, companies have to influence

Students Celebrate Holiday Season

By Michelle Mendez-Arreaga

During the winter break, many students use this time to celebrate the holidays in different ways.



ANOINTING OKEREKE

Sophomore Anointing Okereke celebrates Christmas and Thanksgiving during the break with his family. The feasts consist of Nigerian food such as jollof rice, sew-sew and pounded yam. Additionally, Okereke loves listening to holiday music. Carol Of The Bells, Klezmer Christmas and Silent Night are some of his favorite songs to listen to during the holiday season.

"My favorite part about the holidays is being able to enjoy all the food [and] I also like sleeping in," Okereke said. "We celebrate with food and prayer because that's how it usually is in African culture."



THOMAS KRUEGER

Senior Thomas Krueger watches movies with his family, in relation to the specific holiday they're celebrating. His favorite holiday movie is an old movie called A Christmas Story. His favorite part of the break is getting to see extended family members from Los Angeles, since he only sees them roughly once a year. In addition, Krueger enjoys time off from school.

"I celebrate the holidays in the same manner as what most people do with the traditional Christmas tree and Thanksgiving dinner," Krueger said. "The history of these holidays are important, but what's more important to me is that I get to relax and spend time with those I love."



INAAYA LODHI

Although junior Inaaya Lodhi doesn't celebrate the winter holidays, she loves the atmosphere during this time of year. During the break she can be seen at an arcade with friends or at the movie theaters with family. However, she also spends time studying for Advanced Placement (AP) tests. Furthermore, she adores watching holiday movies such as 'Home Alone' and 'Frosty The Snowman, because they remind her of when she was younger.

"Everyone's so happy and there's just good vibes all around," Lodhi said. "I also like how there [are] lights hung up and different [decorations] everywhere you go."



ABBY RODRIGUEZ

From Dec. 3 to Dec. 11, senior Abby Rodriguez and her family begin their annual novenario. On Dec. 11, they throw a party and invite their friends and families to celebrate the Virgin Mary's birthday. That same weekend, Rodriguez hikes from Mesquite to the Cathedral of downtown Dallas from 5 A.M to 11 PM to pay her respects to Mary. Abby celebrates Christmas Eve with Mexican dishes such as menudo, tamales, and champurrado.

"We have mariachis who sing for [the Virgin Mary] [and] we feast and then at night we pray," Rodriguez said. "My favorite part is seeing the joy in my mom's eyes as she watches the new generation keep the traditions she did as a kid in Mexico alive."



ESSIE DE VELASCO

Senior Essie De Velasco celebrates Christmas with her family from Spain. Christmas dinner consists of honey roasted ham, mashed potatoes, deviled eggs and many more saporous dishes. She attends church services where they have a candlelight remembrance for Jesus, and sing Christmas songs. De Velasco and her family also have traditions of their own.

"We'll set up the Christmas tree, have game nights, and also a gift exchange," De Velasco said. "We do something called the pickle game. Someone hides an ornament that looks like a pickle on the christmas tree, whoever finds it wins."



MATAN LIPSITZ

During this time of year, sophomore Matan Lipsitz celebrates Hanukkah, an eight-day Jewish celebration that commemorates the recovery of Jerusalem. This year, Lipsitz plans to spend Hanukkah with his family in El Paso. His favorite part of the break is getting home from school, as he gets to spend this time enjoying the festivities with his friends and family. Additionally, as a tradition, Matan spins a dreidel for gelt, chocolate coins given as presents during Hanukkah.

"To celebrate we light the menorah for each day of the holiday," Lipsitz said. "During this holiday, we eat oily foods like jelly donuts since the oil represents the one lantern of oil that remained for us to light the Shabbat candles."

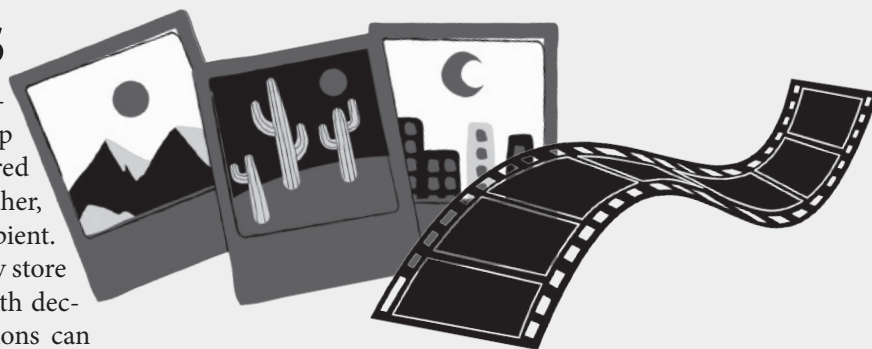
Holiday Gift Recommendations

By Varsha Jhanak

Holidays have long been associated with gift-giving. It can be difficult to choose a gift for someone at times. This gift collection can assist anyone running short on time, have a limited budget, or simply need help finding a gift.

PHOTO ALBUMS | \$-\$\$

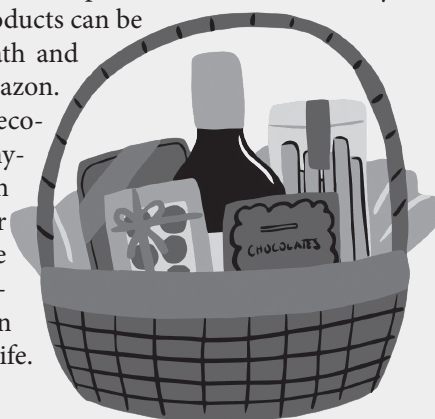
Photo albums are a cute, low-cost and straightforward way to express gratitude to others. It can help remind others of wonderful times and memories shared with them. In order to put the photo album together, make a collage out of memorable photos of the recipient. Photos can be printed at home with a printer or at any store such as CVS or Walgreens. It can be embellished with decorations such as stickers or stamps. These decorations can be found in places such as Michaels, Walmart, Amazon or any craft store. Stamps can vary from a price range of \$12 to \$18. Packs of stickers are extremely effective for decorating as most packs only cost about \$9 to \$11 and come in large quantities of 50 to 100. They can be made in a scrapbook format or as a photo album. The total cost of this gift may vary depending on the decorations, the printing of photos, and the album chosen.



SELF-CARE KITS | \$-\$\$

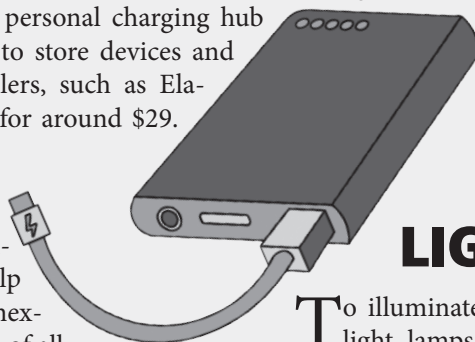
Self-care kits are easy to put together and make excellent gifts. These self-care kits can be found premade from a wide range of prices, ranging from as low as \$9 to as high as \$40. However, creating a collection of small gifts tailored to whoever's receiving the gift makes it truly from the heart, depending on what the recipient needs, wants, and enjoys. Some examples of gifts would be face masks, bath bombs, the recipients favorite snacks, body lotions and more. These products can be found at places such as Bath and Body Works, CVS or Amazon.

To bring the kit together, decorate a jar or basket with anything and place the items in it. This gift would be best for teenagers who need a little extra self-care in their life.



PERSONAL CHARGING HUB | \$\$

A personal charging hub can be extremely useful for anyone of any age, but especially teenagers in this day and age, where technology is so prevalent. A personal charging hub can charge multiple devices at the same time. Not only this, but many of these also have space to store other items. This personal charging hub is great to place near a bedside table to store devices and any other essential items. Many retailers, such as Elago and Intoval, sell them on Amazon for around \$29.



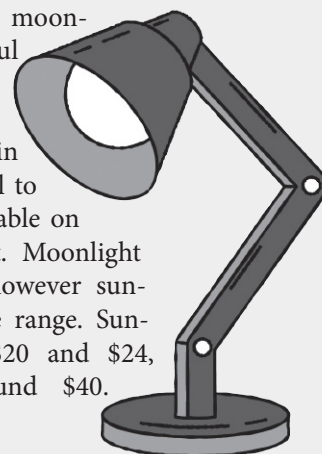
PLANNER | \$-\$\$

As the new year approaches, a planner is an excellent gift; it will help organize tasks. These planners are inexpensive and extremely useful for people of all ages. There are many different types and varieties of planners. For example, planners with basic calendars and weekly agendas are available, however some have sections for gratitude, notes, and spaces to write down thoughts. Planners are widely available and cost around \$21 at stores such as Target, Michaels and Amazon. As listed by the New York Magazine, according to productivity experts, some of the most popular brands for planners include Moleskine, Leuchtturm, or Lemome.



SUNSET OR MOONLIGHT LAMPS | \$\$-\$\$\$

To illuminate any space, sunset or moonlight lamps can create a beautiful skyscape. These lamps are reasonably priced and would look great in any room. They can elevate lighting in any space turning the room from dull to beaming with a glow. These are available on Amazon from brands like Streamlet. Moonlight lamps lean on the expensive side however sunset lamps are priced in a reasonable range. Sunset lamps typically cost between \$20 and \$24, while moonlight lamps cost around \$40.



Exam Schedule

Monday - Study/Review Day

Tuesday - 2nd/1st Period

Wednesday - 3rd/4th Period

Thursday - 5th/6th Period

Friday - 0 hour/7th Period

Enjoy your winter break!

Graduation Cap and Gowns

It's that time of year to get your caps and gowns for graduation! The deadline for the discount is Dec. 14, so be sure to order them as soon as possible. Here's how:



1. Go to: www.jostens.com
2. Scroll down and click on Graduation Shop
3. Scroll down to "Shop Now"
4. Scroll down to "New Custom Cap and Gown Unit \$50.00"
5. Select Appropriate size other information for the student
6. For the tassel, please know if you select "No thanks", you will receive a basic tassel with only the year on it. The other tassels have more elaborate options for the tassel.
7. Finish going through the options of other items to purchase and make your purchase.