

DEC 15, 2023

ISSUE TWO

# PANTHER PRINTS



PG. 12

SCROLLING THROUGH BLACK FRIDAY:  
ONLINE SHOPPING REACHES  
NEW PLATFORMS

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## **LETTERS FROM THE EDITORS**

After another great nine weeks, I'd like to give all of my gratitude to the people I've met throughout the making of this issue. While there were ups and downs in the process, the friends I've made along the way have made this issue much more sweet. As we close in on final exams, I want to take a moment to recognize those with several exams; it will be okay and we will pass them. Thank you to all of our continuous readers for your unconditional support. As an early Christmas gift, from the bottom of my heart, I hope you enjoy this issue.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, likely belonging to Sydney Grayson.

As like any other issue, this nine weeks has taught me so much and given me its fair share of challenges. But, I have had such an amazing working with our staff this semester. It's been quite a busy nine-weeks, but I'm proud of our amazing staff for putting in hard work and effort for this issue. To close off this year, we hope you enjoy the last issue of 2023. Good luck to everyone on their exams!

A handwritten signature in cursive script, likely belonging to Varsha Jhanak.

This issue has been a rollercoaster of emotions, but it has also been a learning experience. Amidst the busy season, the time I spent working on this newspaper has been a source of peace. I would like to thank our staff for all of their hard work, I hope that we can all come out of this semester with new skills and experiences. To our readers, I hope you enjoy reading this as much as I loved working on it. Let's finish off the year strong, good luck on your exams, and happy holidays!

A handwritten signature in cursive script, likely belonging to Varsha Jhanak.

## **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 unit 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.

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# Puzzled Panthers

By Aveesa Bhayani

**W**hat is the exam schedule this year?

The exam schedule was slightly altered this year to match the schedules of the junior high schools and better fit the bus schedules. As opposed to previous years, exams will be administered starting Monday, Dec. 18. Exams will start in 2nd period promptly at 9:00 a.m. and end at 1:00, buses will arrive at 1:15. Please arrange rides to adjust to the early release. Exams will end on Thursday, Dec. 21, adding an extra day to the break, however, bus schedules will remain the same for pickup at 1:15; plan accordingly.

**I**f I am absent failing, how do I make up hours?

All students must be present for 90% of a class in order to pass. Students cannot miss more than eight classes before they will be referred to the assistant principal's office to make up hours. To do this a student needs to have received a make-up sheet from their assistant principal and find a teacher, or sit quietly in the cafeteria during lunch to have a teacher sign off on each additional hour spent at school. For students with an abundance of absences, Saturday school may be available, check the announcements or ask your subschool for additional details.

**H**ow do I apply for financial aid?

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is designed to collect financial information to determine a student's eligibility for financial aid. Texas residents who are not eligible to complete this form are encouraged to complete the TAFSA, or Texas application for financial aid. In the application, students will be asked to report their family income in order for colleges to determine the amount of financial aid received by the student. Students should not complete both. The deadline for state priority is Mar. 15, 2024.

# Security Ensures Safety Across Campuses

By Sydnie Grayson

**F**ollowing several events at schools, campuses across the country are working to maintain better security measures to keep students safe. Over the past few years, schools have started using new policies that work to prevent the same events from occurring. "To be honest, that's the number one thing, staff and student safety," principal David Jones said. "At a campus like this, where we have an open campus, 3,000 kids, it's challenging. I think we do our best on the front end of educating students with the drills." In early August of this year, the school board approved a resolution that worked to better safety within schools; this included the implementation of school resource officers (SROs). SROs are Plano Police Department officers or officers from other local law enforcement agencies who stay on campuses to aid students in any safety or legal issues they may have. "With school campuses, it's a lot more working with school administration and what their procedures would be," Plano PD Officer Christian Boese said.

"We go through lockdown drills and we talk to them about what's most effective for us. It's a lot of collaboration with administration to figure out how we can work together to make it safer for the rest of the students." Currently, the school maintains two SROs on campus, Boese and Officer Akin. Aside from this, Plano schools also work with other departments, such as Allen and Richardson, as a way to serve the 73 schools across the neighboring five cities. Along with this, Plano ISD also implements safety drills to keep students educated on shelter-in-place, lockdown, lock-out, and fire drills throughout the school year. "I don't think most students know we have two full-time safety monitors in addition to two full-time SROs," Jones said. "Between the two of them, their main jobs are one, watching all of the security cameras and the second one walks the exterior of the building, just constantly all day, checking exterior doors." Schools across Texas are implementing new, yet similar, safety policies, including the use of student identification cards in order to maintain security. For example, One Source Security states that staff members can identify students at a short glance, even though only 18% of high schools require students to wear their student IDs according to the National Center for Education Statistics. "I think it's a little bit easier [to maintain safety in schools], in the sense that if everybody abides by the systems and processes we have, like if everyone wears their ID badge, it'd be very easy to identify who's a student and who's not," Jones said. "You just try to prepare and predict for everything."



# Older Politician's Health Causes Concern on Capitol Hill

By Camille Wright

As campaigning continues for the upcoming 2024 election, voters have concerns about the health of prominent candidates, raising questions about the ability of aging politicians to fulfill their roles in office. This is coupled with numerous incidents involving Senators Dianne Feinstein and Mitch McConnell. During a news conference on July 23, McConnell appeared frozen for around 19 seconds and could not answer questions from reporters.

"I think it definitely speaks to his capabilities to serve because public engagements are a huge part of the role," junior Ishya Jain said. "Not being able to portray yourself as fully capable to do that job definitely impacts not only public perception but also the perception that other people in Congress have [of you]."

Though McConnell released a doctor's note that proved he was not suffering from any major conditions, questions about his health continue to persist. Similarly, 90-year-old Senator Dianne Feinstein, the oldest member of Congress at the time, was captured on July 17 in a state of confusion during a voting committee meeting. When called upon to cast her vote, she began reading a statement instead and was prompted numerous times by a fellow member to just "say aye." Previously, in May, Feinstein started to use a wheelchair for her recovery process from encephalitis, an inflammation of the brain that is a dangerous complication of shingles or nerve infections. When first revealed, this condition caused debates about her ability to complete her duties effectively and raised broader questions about whether or not politicians should disclose their health to the public. Feinstein later died on September 29 after serving in office for 31 years.

"It should definitely be known to the public whether you have some sort of mental disability or something [else] that limits your abilities," Jain said. "But I think it should be left up to the voters of whether that handicap should impact their ability to serve." According to the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA), which governs the privacy and security of health information, politicians and their doctors are not required to disclose health information. Though some presidents choose to do so to increase transparency with voters, the details they reveal usually pertain to short-term illnesses such as a cold or contract-

ing COVID. This raises the overarching question of appropriateness in expressing concerns about the health and fitness of politicians without stepping into ageism. Former South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley sparked controversy by suggesting a mental competency test for politicians over 75. "The age of the politician has to be considered, but some people are still spry at the age of 90 and are capable of holding office," History of the Americas teacher Sarah Fischer said. "[However], there are some individuals that it just doesn't seem to work as they're getting older. Like Reagan, there was a lot of question, if, at the end of his second administration, he was starting to [show] signs of issues and everything like that with his mental health." A recent poll by NBC News revealed that 68% of all voters have concerns about Biden's mental and physical health as it relates to his capabilities of holding the office of President. Media attention to President Biden's mental health, fueled by Gen Z's compilation of viral memes showcasing his falls and age-related mistakes, increases doubts about his ability to serve effectively. Comparatively, 55% of voters had similar concerns about Trump's health. "Generally speaking, American politicians tend to be older than the populace," Jain said. "But it also speaks to the inadequacies within the system. If young people aren't running, young people aren't represented. So, I think voters should definitely take that into account for the future, but I don't think age should be a deciding factor for sure, especially not this election."

**15.1 % of students believe there should not be an age limit for politicians**

**54.2% of students believe there should be an age limit of 70 for politicians**

**16% of students believe there should be an age limit of 80 for politicians**

**3.6% of students believe there should be an age limit of 90 for politicians**

**11.1% of students chose not to comment**

**\*out of 332 students polled**

# Tiktok: Addictive, Yet Informing

By Varsha Jhanak

TikTok, arguably one of the most popular social media platforms, reached 1.5 billion users in 2023. The popular social media app, first launched in 2016, allows users to create and watch short videos. Through its rise, the app became a keystone part of popular culture today, setting and creating trends “I know it’s like my most used app so it’s probably a good four to six hours,” senior Amanni Koutsakis said. “[I watch] either sports, video games, or funny stuff. Sometimes I just get lost and scroll.”

Teenagers and young adults are particularly fond of the app. According to Wallaroo Media, 32.5% of TikTok users are between the ages of 10 and 19, with 60% belonging to Generation Z. TikTok’s enormous popularity can be attributed to a variety of factors. According to the Guardian, the app has simple creation tools that make it

easy to use. However, the secret weapon behind TikTok’s success is its ‘For You’ page, which tailors content to each individual. In addition, the short-form content seen on TikTok contributes to the ease of addictiveness. “These media companies purposefully make it as addictive as possible,” senior Kai Gilleland said. “For example, the short form content is easier [to get addicted to]. Because it’s like 10 seconds, it’s like ‘Oh it’s not that long right.’ But then you’re scrolling and scrolling and you can stay there for an hour, two hours, et cetera. But, it’s also playing off of the fact that our attention spans are so small that it can keep our attention because of those short videos.” Along with the success of TikTok came criticisms. The app garnered contro-

versy over security concerns earlier in the year, as many were concerned over the collection of customers’ personal information. In early 2023, TikTok faced attempted bans due to its ownership by ByteDance, a Chinese company. The company faced controversy as it was said to have put users’ personal information in the hands of the Chinese government. In addition, cyberbullying on the platform is a known problem. As users may not face real-life consequences, they

**Tiktok reached  
1.5 billion users  
in 2023**

may be more prone to cyberbullying. “People on TikTok are mean,” Gilleland said. “They don’t care if what they say is mean or terrible. I know there are people like that on every platform, but I’ve seen it the most on TikTok.” The lethal combination of the ‘For You’ page and the short-form content of TikTok make the app extremely addictive. According to Choosing Therapy, when using TikTok, there is an ongoing dopamine drip. The brain develops a desire for this continuous dopamine, which is sometimes referred to as a dopamine addiction, causing people to return to the platform. This causes many people, especially in the youth, to develop addictions to the app. “I have personal experience with [TikTok addiction], it was bad,” Gilleland

said. “I downloaded it a couple of months before the pandemic started in early 2020 and I had it until June of that year. I got addicted to it. I would stay up every night scrolling on it until like 4 AM. It was quarantine so we didn’t have anything to do so I’d be on it constantly. It got to the point where I was like ‘I can’t do this anymore, this is too much of my life.’ So I just straight up deleted it and never went back.”

Along with its criticisms, TikTok is praised for its unseen benefits. According to Macquarie University, TikTok includes benefits like informing younger audiences on social issues and current news. “It’s a quick way to disseminate information quickly,” Gilleland said. “I know NBC and NPR make quick, one-minute videos of the biggest news from this week. That way, you can still stay informed but it’s quick and you don’t have to spend 30

minutes watching the news on TV.” According to Macquarie University, TikTok helps facilitate care, even though there are careless aspects to it, just like other platforms. TikTok provides opportunities for children and young people to have fun and build connections with each other. These benefits contribute to the high usage of TikTok by teenagers. “You can find a community for anything on TikTok,” Gilleland said. “I’ve heard of a lot of people getting into new hobbies or new interests through TikTok. There’s content for everybody there. There’s cooking, there’s politics, there’s news, there’s crafting. Literally, anything you can think of, it’s there on TikTok. Having that community can be beneficial.”



# Primary Elections Spark Controversy Across America

By Shar Kiefer

As the 2024 election approaches, many begin to cast their votes for who they believe will make a better future. The primary elections will narrow down which candidates move on to the general ballot on January 9th, 2024. As primary Republican candidate, Ron DeSantis' approval rate plummeted, many believe he will not make it past the general ballot. DeSantis prevailed as a keystone candidate but made vital mistakes that led to his downfall in the campaign. Fellow Republican candidate Donald Trump, faces criminal charges and Democratic candidate Joe Biden's approval rate decreased significantly due to his recent policies. With each candidate's drawback, political polarization hinders the election as many find it hard to find a politician to stand by. "It does seem like [DeSantis'] campaign has flamed out of the Republican primary field," American Studies teacher Joe Russell said. "A lot of [candidates] with low single-digit approval ratings are fighting it out to [outrun each other]. I don't know that he has any real impact other than as governor of Florida." With DeSantis' campaign fading out, the primary republican candidate reveals itself as none other than former president Donald Trump. The Democratic party, however, has only one primary candidate compared to the four on the Republican ballot. This dilem-

ma is what some believe could lead to a downward spiral for the Democratic party. With Biden's recent policies, he lost the support of many young voters. "Gen Z is a lot more inclined towards activism as opposed to other generations," senior Sneha Kar said. "A lot of this has to do with greater social media presence. We basically grew up on the internet, so we know a lot about these sorts of things like politics and what's going on in the world." With increased voter turnout among younger audiences, many are unsure of how they will vote. The lack of Democratic candidates compared to Republican candidates creates fear among Democratic voters as they don't support Biden but vote for him for his party affiliations. "Biden is the incumbent and has done good things for the Democratic party, he's also done things that do not sit well with a lot of the Democratic [party members]," Kar said. "I feel just because of that controversy in Biden's presidential term, that's definitely going to impact his chances for success in the future, while the more loyal Democratic voters may still vote for him just because he's a better alternative." With Donald Trump still on trial, concerns over Biden's old age, and DeSantis' sub-par campaign many feel the political climate of this election will change Texas voting. Texas is a pri-

marily Republican state, voting Democratic last in 1976, 47 years ago. This statistic, however, has many believing the possibility of Texas turning blue is unlikely because Texas has voted Republican consistently for decades. "I don't think Texas will flip Democratic just yet, but I do believe things are being set up for Texas to reach that point," Kar said. "With the influx of Gen Z voters as well as the fact that Texas is also expanding with more people, especially from places like California moving to Texas because of the lower living costs. As of right now, just the way Texas stands with the results of the recent government gubernatorial election, I don't think Texas is headed in that direction right now, but it definitely will be there in the future." The recent criticisms and internal party divides create much for the voter population to think about. The outcome of next year's vote will determine the platform for politics for the next four years. As the political climate changes, it becomes increasingly difficult to foresee the future of American diplomacy. "Politics is not a business for ideology," Russell said. "You have to make some calculation about what's the lesser of two evils. There's never going to be a candidate that's going to be 100 percent what you want."

Photo from CBS Austin

# Increase in Popularity of Korean Skincare

By Celine Tan

Korean dramas and K-pop groups recently rose to popularity, ushering in a new trend: Korean skincare. While Western skincare focuses on simplicity, Korean skincare focuses on hydration and usually encompasses more complex daily routines. A defining characteristic of K-beauty is how lightweight the products feel on the skin; it also uses different key ingredients than skincare brands in the U.S. “What got me into Korean skincare was actually K-dramas,” junior Addison Duke said. “They always have some episodes where they showcase a product and I’d [want to try them], and snail mucin was one of them.” According to the Mayo Clinic, snail mucin is a hydrating mucus that snails secrete to create a protective barrier around themselves. While it may sound questionable at first, the COSRX Advanced Snail 96 Mucin Power Essence went viral on TikTok, and many people were intrigued enough to try it. However, snail mucin is not always obtained using ethical methods. This is why many people are now using Mixsoon’s Bean Essence, which comes from fermented beans and serves a similar purpose. Other products popular amongst K-beauty buyers have ingredients that soothe the skin and reduce redness and irritation like cica. “Because I’m a swimmer and [I have] a job as a water safety instructor, I’m in the pool all day,” Duke said. “The main ingredient I look for in brands is cica be-

cause it’s really moisturizing and it helps the skin retain that moisture. Chlorine dries my skin out [a lot] so I really tend to gravitate towards [products with] cica.” Along with cica, heartleaf is also an ingredient that gained traction because of its anti-inflammatory properties. The Anua Heartleaf 77% Soothing Toner is the number one bestselling toner in Korea because of its ability to control sebum and prevent blackheads, while also acting as a humectant to trap moisture. Similar to the COSRX, Anua’s path to global recognition is largely attributed to TikTok as well. However, even though many people swear by Korean skincare, there are also benefits to Western skincare. “A brand I use is CeraVe: the CeraVe moisturizer, specifically,” junior Katie Tran said. “[I like] that it’s more affordable and easier to access [than Korean skincare]. It’s also dermatologist-approved, and it’s just what has worked the best for me.” For many, CeraVe has always been a trusted drugstore brand in the U.S, but it became a cult favorite amongst Gen-Z largely because of influencer Hyram Yarbro. Yarbro emphasizes products with simplicity that are unscented and have a short, pronounceable ingredient list. Yarbro also stresses the importance of wearing sunscreen daily, which Koreans have used for decades now to prevent fine lines and premature aging, allowing them to perfect the formula. “I use the Beauty of Joseon sunscreen,” Tran said. “Sunscreens are definitely

something I think Korean brands do better. It has no white cast, it’s SPF 50, and it’s not oily. It’s very lightweight, which makes it easier to follow the idea that you’re supposed to wear sunscreen every day.” Korean sunscreen formulas are generally more comfortable on the skin as they feel less suffocating to the pores while also offering less white cast than Western sunscreens. Sunscreen protects against UVA and UVB rays, which are both connected to skin cancer. Korean sunscreen usually specifies the SPF, which measures UVB rays and utilizes the PA system to describe UVA protection. Meanwhile, Western sunscreens are specified as broad spectrum protection and don’t use the advanced filters that Korean ones use, because they are not approved by the government in this country as of yet. As social media continues to facilitate the spread of different trends, people learn about new cultures, increasing globalization and allowing people to become more open-minded. The idea of a skincare routine, whether dominated by Western or Eastern products, has evolved greatly, bearing different meanings for everyone. “Skincare just gives me confidence [on] those days when my skin is looking really good,” Duke said. “I know everyone has those days where they’re worrying about a pimple, which skincare can help prevent and treat, but it’s also just a little hobby. It’s like a fun little collection, seeing how many products I can get.”

Photo from Unsplash



# Pickleball: An Unexpected Rise in Popularity

By Aveesa Bhayani

With the holiday season fast approaching, those who return home may find that their family football games have been swapped out for some paddles and a wiffle ball. Pickleball, originating in 1965 has taken over the internet in recent years as prominent celebrities like the Kardashians rave about “the sport for everyone.” Starting as a small family activity, the sport comes full circle as it becomes America’s fastest-growing sport for the third year in a row, according to the Sports & Fitness Industry Association. This comes as no surprise to Washington State, which has already made pickleball their official sport. “I’ve heard people talking about it but I’d never heard about it until last year or two years ago, but now it’s growing,” junior Cooper Johnson said. “It’s a family activity so we bought some pickleball equipment and we found it fun, so we just kept playing.” Pickleball has yet to reach its peak as its popularity continues to grow exponentially. Reaching across generations, the sport has something for every player. It’s easy accessibility and simple rules are the building blocks that allowed this sport to boom throughout the pandemic. With record-breaking numbers, demand for the sport rose 40% between 2019 and 2021. Pickleball is officially in as the high-class population abandons their clubhouses for a chance to get in on the action.

“Every time I come to the court it’s always a group of people who want to come in and we just talk and play and have a good time,” junior Dallas Andres said. Unfortunately, the jury is still out on where the name “pickleball” came from, however, there seems to be a consensus that the story involves a dog named Pickles. Though Pickles may no longer be here to witness the success of its namesake, the tennis, badminton and ping-pong hybrid is picking up speed, drawing a crowd of people unique to the sport. “I made a lot of friends that I wouldn’t necessarily be friends with,” junior Kylie Grant said. “A lot of people of different ages, especially when I go down to the actual pickleball courts; meet a lot of people. It’s a good way to make friends.” As holiday celebrations begin, many learn the first rule of pickleball while preparing for the Christmas feast: stay out of the kitchen. Played as either singles or doubles the sport utilizes a whiffle-type ball, and a paddle that is shorter, lighter and slightly bigger than that of a ping-pong paddle. Starting with an overhand serve, the server must be within the confines of their box and serve to the player to their direct diagonal. After that, the players must underhand their swings until the ball goes out of bounds or lands in the “kitchen,” the 7-foot non-volley zone around the net. “I play with one of my good friends

who I don’t see often in school so it’s kind of a fun way for us to see each other and have fun together,” Grant said.

The sport’s inclusivity is also a selling point as the official Pickleball website includes a separate rule book for those who may require a wheelchair. This widens the demographic as senior citizens are pushing 30% of the participating population. However, younger generations bring new meaning to “the sport for everyone” as participation rates continue to climb and pickleball courts become the next big TikTok trend. While pickleball may not be the next football, its carefree environment is a breath of fresh air for those who seek a light-hearted escape. “I play softball out of school and in school so it’s kind of a lot of pressure to be a student-athlete,” Grant said. “So, playing pickleball is just a fun thing that is not a lot of pressure and fun to do that I don’t need to worry about messing anything up, it’s just a fun sport and a fun atmosphere and no one really cares if you make a mistake.”



## PANTHER PROFILE

# DJ Hall: Rookie to Champion

By Eva Gonzalez and Sydnie Grayson

Excited chatter fills the gym as the game begins. As the crowd of eyes watches the court in anticipation, the buzzer rings. It's a stimulating adrenaline rush and an experience many players savor while on the court. Division 1 athlete and a varsity basketball player, "DJ" Hall shows an affinity for the fast-paced environment on the court. For Hall, each tournament is an opportunity to showcase new skills, bring the team to new victories, and cherish playing the game. "A few minutes before the game starts, I get nervous," Hall said. "But, whenever the first buzzer rings, everything else goes away. I just start playing." Starting his athletic career as a soccer player, Hall became captivated by the basketball

court and dedicated himself to the sport. Throughout his childhood, Hall and his teammates trained and competed together, forming many lasting friendships as they grew up. "I met DJ back when I was in the third or fourth grade and we were always good teammates [and] good friends," senior Isaiah Brewington said. "We used to work out together and train together." Though Hall created meaningful friendships with other players like Brewington, his participation in practices and team bonding stagnated. He maintained the skills he developed for several years, but this

changed his freshman year when Hall sustained an injury that hindered his ability to play the game for months. "My freshman year, I tore my [shoulder joint] and was out the whole season," Hall said. "That's probably the biggest downfall I've had. [The injury] made me open my eyes."



DJ Hall on the court.

Though the recovery from his injury required large commitments to physical therapy, the setback motivated Hall to spend more time working out and preparing to return to the sport he loves. He focused further on practicing basketball and spent more time off the court with other players on his teams, creating stronger connections for when he returned after the injury. "Everybody's close," Hall said. "We all joke [and] laugh together, [and] go to eat together. After games, we take people home. The [last] three years have been like that." In the years since Hall's shoulder injury and the increased dedication to basketball

that followed, Hall became especially accomplished on the court. He became the only sophomore on the varsity team during the 22-23 season. His previous team went to the playoffs last year and placed fourth in state and the varsity basketball team Hall currently plays for is undefeated and ranks first in the district. Though Hall puts effort into maintaining his skills during the season, he also values his own improvement on the court and ability to communicate with other players. "[I like] mostly my teammates and seeing how well I do each year," Hall said. "It's an improvement of myself, my skills, and how I grow as a person each year." Hall's willingness to im-

prove over the years caused several colleges to take an interest in him. This is especially rare, given that Hall is a junior and has not begun his college applications. Two major schools that Hall received offers from are Texas State University and Southern Methodist University. Hall's dedication to practicing and developing his strengths over the past few years caused colleges to show interest in what he describes as his passion. "[Hall's] very special," Brewington said. "He's a very good player. He has a lot of confidence in this game. I feel like that's basically who he is."

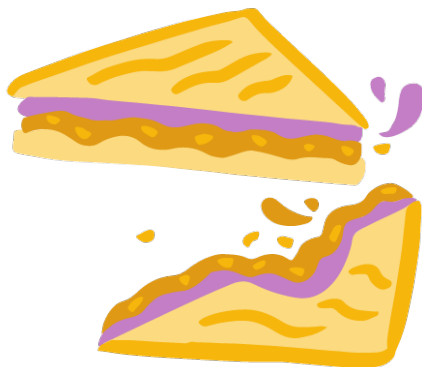
# PB & Joy: Spreading Awareness in the Community

By Liliana Aguilar

The impact of a peanut butter and jelly sandwich goes further than one may expect. The PB and Joy club illustrates this by providing over a thousand sandwiches for the homeless in the North Texas community at their first service event. The students involved strived to find a new and effective way to help the people in the local community. PB and Joy's main goal: produce a semi-healthy, yet semi-nutritious filling meal for the homeless. "It was a fun and simple way to help those in need," sophomore volunteer Colin Ngyuen said. "Making sandwiches was very quick and easy, but I was able to help many members of the community by making them." A group of International Baccalaureate (IB) students originally formed the PB and Joy Club as a creativity, activity and service project, a requirement for the IB diploma. PB and Joy originally formed in collaboration with Allen High School's PB and Joy, providing support in their first meetings, service events and sponsorships. It first formed in the fall of 2020 and continues its impact to this day. Students and club members would prepare sandwiches to be taken to Al-

len High School to prepare them for donation. Making peanut butter and jelly sandwiches happened to be the simple solution to helping the homeless community. "I love the focus on feeding those who are food insecure and the hands-on nature of the service project," IB coordinator Karen Stanton said. "We also believe in the reciprocal nature of service, so we benefit when we serve others." PB and Joy's President, junior Alisha Senghani, leads her first official year as president of PB and Joy. Senghani works hard to help prepare the service events and she believes it is rewarding to give back to her community. Most of PB and Joy's donations come from the local community. The club offers service hours to students who donate items such as bread, jelly/jams, peanut butter, utensils and gloves. The donation center is commonly placed in the IB fishbowl in the green box labeled PB and Joy. Alongside student donations PB and Joy also accepts any local support, such as Sprouts and Walmart. "It has been so rewarding to see our hard work come to fruition at the service events," Senghani said. "I've learned that there is so much that goes into planning service events, such as coordinating with local food banks and collecting donations from the students." PB and Joy's first service event took place on November 2nd in the IB Commons. The officers prepared tables with utensils to be all set for the students to be able to make as many as possible in a timely manner. Dozens of students showed up and showed

out for their community. The members and volunteers prepared over 1,000 peanut butter and jelly sandwiches for the North Texas Food Bank. "My experience with the first PB and Joy event was truly an unforgettable experience," sophomore Archana Annampedu said. "It was really amazing to have the whole club come together and work towards a great cause." Annampedu is one of the officers for PB and Joy. Being in PB and Joy continues to impact who she is in her community and her social life. PB and Joy is a learning experience for everyone involved. Finding sponsors and volunteers is not always easy and can often take a lot of time. Planning out service events requires organization and a well-thought-out plan. Annampedu believes patience is the way to successfully host a service event. "My experience in the club [PB and Joy] changed me as a person as being involved in the community and helping others," Annampedu said. "[I] look forward to seeing everyone at our future meeting and continue working hard and contributing positively to this cause." Stanton, as IB coordinator, watched the creators of PB and Joy start and learn how to plan service events and find local support from the community. She is a huge fan of what PB and Joy continues to become today. "The IB focuses on global engagement, and Zero Hunger is one of the United Nations Sustainability Goals," Stanton said. "In IB, we are encouraged to 'think globally, act locally,' and PB and Joy is a perfect example of doing so."





# Scrolling Through Black Friday: Online Shopping Reaches New Platforms

Photo from Unsplash

As the holiday season rolls around, the wishlists get longer as the lines in malls get shorter. Traditional in-store shopping now shares a spotlight with online shopping. The convenience of virtual carts and doorstep deliveries transformed how people view holiday shopping. Not only does online shopping rise during the holiday season because of Black Friday deals and Cyber Monday, but it remains busy throughout the year due to sales and the ease of purchasing items online. “[Online shopping] is coming up with some really interesting things that businesses are having to consider,” economics teacher Julie Meek said. “I was reading some articles

a year or two ago and they were talking about how some businesses are seeing people go in and shop the product but then go home and buy it online. Versus, you have other people who are looking around online and wanting to go in and get something in the store. I think the implications may very much matter about exactly what the product is.”

## Rise of Online Shopping

Online shopping has been present since 1979, when English inventor, Micheal Aldrich laid the groundwork for online shopping. Aldrich invented the first secure

data transmission originated from using a transaction-processing computer and a doctored television, changing the commerce industry. After this, in 1982, the first online marketplace, the Boston Computer Exchange, opened for business. Combined with the world waking up to the internet in the early 1990s and the launching of many known online shopping platforms like Amazon, online shopping only gained popularity around the mid-1990s. Since then, the popularity and usage of online shopping have only gone up. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic contributed to the rise of online shopping as people did not have to shop in person.

**6.6%** of  
students shop  
online everyday

**4.8%** of  
students shop  
online every  
other day

**16%** of  
students shop  
online every  
week

**40%** of  
students shop  
online only  
during  
holidays

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"I don't remember buying a lot that would be shipped pre-pandemic," Meek said. "I did some when it was something I didn't think I could find locally. I don't remember pre-pandemic going into a store and expecting it to be shipped to me." A variety of factors contribute to the popularity of online shopping. For one thing, online shopping allows consumers to shop from the comfort of their own home. For some, this makes shopping easier, faster, and more convenient. Furthermore, instead of wandering around a store, consumers can narrow their search for items by searching on websites. "I just find it easier to look things up and find the exact piece of clothing I was looking for rather than going to a bunch of stores just to



find a specific [item] I'm looking for," senior Anna Kaipallimali said. "I try to go in person but I usually come back empty-handed. I guess I'm more picky when I'm in person. But, I do enjoy the experience, so I still try to go." In addition, many find that online shopping offers more sizing options for consumers. According to Huff Post, many plus sizes were sold online but were nowhere to be found in stores. This adds to the convenience of shopping online. "I'm on the smaller side for clothes and there's a few stores that have specifically petite clothing sizes," Kaipalliami said. "It's easier to just find something that you know is gonna be in my size rather than going in person and wasting the gas just to find something out of stock or not being made in my size in general." Along with all of its benefits, online shopping also faces criticisms. Many popular online stores, such as SHEIN, are known for their use of child labor and unethical clothing sourcing. In addition, online shopping is also part of a larger environmental issue. According to Packaging World, when compared to the emissions associated with the use of plastic/paper bags that consumers typically bring home

from the mall, shopping online produces five times more emissions from packaging for online orders, such as bubble wraps or boxes. "You should look into what you're buying and who you're buying from because it's really easy to unintentionally contribute to child labor or to an environmental issue," Kaipalliami said. "Research should be done, you should be educated while [online shopping], and you should do it in moderation if possible."

## Globalization Increasing with Online Stores

With several pros and cons to shopping online, its popularity only increases with 70% of Americans shopping online. In 2022, there were 268 million digital buyers in the United States, and by 2025, this number is only expected to rise to 285 million. Since the pandemic, online shopping emerged as the new alternative to shopping in-person when most people bought products online to stay quarantined. "I don't think [online shopping] changed the economy itself," Meek said. "I think what you're seeing is a

**40.1%** of  
students shop  
online every  
month

**12.7%** of  
students shop  
online once a  
year

**10.8%** of  
students  
do not shop  
online

**9%** of  
students  
chose not to  
comment

\*out of 332  
students polled

## 14• FEATURE

differentiation in how people are buying certain things. The major impact will be on where the jobs are and who the winners and losers of the firms are. Some are doing well with this and some aren't." Throughout the world, products are shipped and bought from several different regions, one prominently being China. Mainly manufactured in China, products tend to be imported to other countries, according to ARC Group. This means that these products can be imported into the US, where the main suppliers of online products are Amazon and Apple. Forbes advises that by 2026, 24% of global e-commerce will take place online, increasing online shopping around the world. Other than simply manufacturing, other countries also benefit from providing the products themselves with China sending these products directly to Amazon fulfillment centers. As of 2023, the US has the second largest e-commerce market in the world at \$340 billion in revenue, following China. "I think shopping in person is a lot healthier because you have that experience of trying something on and looking at it and looking at the price," Kaipalliami said. "To me at least, being in per-



son and spending the money, it feels more real than just spending the money online." As of this year, the majority of online shoppers are millennials and Generation X. With these numbers, according to Enterprise Apps Today, 96% of

**6.6% of students shop online everyday**  
**4.8% of students shop online every other day**  
**16% of students shop online every week**  
**40.1% of students shop online every month**  
**12.7% of students shop online once a year**  
**10.8% of students do not shop online**  
**9% of students chose not to comment**  
**\*out of 332 students polled**

Americans have purchased at least one product from an online store. Out of these consumers, 53% prefer Amazon over any other online store because of its better pricing and better product variety, as well as the benefit of free shipping for members. "Online shopping is way easier in my opinion," senior Lolo Lambert said. "You don't have to waste gas and go to a place and buy stuff. With Amazon, you can find pretty much anything on there." When it comes to teenag-

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ers, with 27.7 million teens in the U.S., the estimated total spending is \$63 billion annually, according to the Lexington Law Firm. While most teens spend their money, whether it's from allowance or income from their job, on food, the popularity in clothing stores based on social media trends, such as Lululemon and Nike, has increased over the past several years with the rise in TikTok users. Based on a poll conducted through the student body, 40.1% of students shop online at least once every month. "I shop online about 90% of the time," Lambert said. "I prefer it over going in-store only because during COVID, that was the only thing we had and I just stuck with it and I like it better."

### Holiday Frenzy: Swapping Lines for Virtual Carts

In recent years, the shift of technology being used for communication to enable convenient online shopping has transformed the traditional holiday shopping experience. As COVID-19 made in-store shopping increasingly tricky by enforcing strict rules on customers, people found it more suitable for them to shop online. In the hectic time of the holiday season, people caught on to the trend of purchasing many gifts online in an instant rather than spending hours browsing a mall, uncertain whether they would



find what they were looking for. “I see more things in their [online] cart, rather than in person where you see like two things in their hand,” junior Joslyn Griffith said. “It’s not really a multitude of things in their physical shopping cart compared to online shopping carts.”

The convenience of online shopping has become a game changer as consumers now can scan the internet with just a few clicks to find an array of products where they can compare reviews and prices from the comfort of their homes. Additionally, creating and finding personalized gifts allows someone to take a more unique approach during the festive season, as the internet has many

quirky options. As indicated by Statista, 57% of shoppers intend to shop online during the holiday season rather than strictly shopping in-person retail. “You can just look up specifically what you want or need, and they give you those options,” Griffith said. “If you go to a store, they might not have it, so you would have to go to a different store and see what they have.” Extensive browsing services, where various products are available in seconds, quickly replace the overwhelming and time-consuming endeavors

spent navigating malls around the holidays. The ease of digital exploration as one browses through websites focusing on a specific occasion enhances the ease of finding a fitting present for a loved one. “If it’s stuff for my parents or if I am getting gifts for other people,



**“The sales, the coupons, if someone wants something and gets a really good deal online, they will buy it online. That’s what attracts people to shop online.”**

**- junior Joslyn Griffith**

I’d still stick to online shopping for Christmas gifts,” Lambert said. “I feel like because in my case, a lot of people are like that.” With retail stores and online shops grabbing consumers’ attention through flashing sales, deals, and discounts, the race to purchase gains speed. Black Friday is known for its significant discounts as it attracts many shoppers to stores in-person and online, marking the start of the holiday shopping season. The sales are booming at the in-person retail stores, and online shops have significant

deals that draw consumers in. According to CNET, after the pandemic many stores have shifted their Black Friday sale focus to online shops to not crowd store in person. “The sales, the coupons, if someone wants something and gets a really good deal online, they will buy it online,” Griffith said. “That’s what attracts people to shop online.”

As technology advances, online shopping will remain an important part of the modern holiday experience. This further shapes the future of how people celebrate and navigate the shopping landscape by allowing them to turn an overwhelming outing at the mall into a time of relaxation as they browse at home. “I think [online shopping] is a positive experience,” Griffith said. “I enjoy online shopping more than in-store shopping because if I’m scrolling and I see something cute, I add it to my cart and keep scrolling. It’s just a really fun experience.”

# Simone Biles Makes History As World's Most Decorated Gymnast

By Celine Tan

**S**imone Biles is now the most decorated gymnast of all time, male or female. Biles recently won four gold medals and one silver medal at the 2023 World Artistic Gymnastics Championships from Sep. 28 to Oct. 8 in Antwerp, Belgium. Her gold medals in the all-around, balance beam, floor exercise and team competition events, as well as her silver medal in the vault, brought her to a total of 37 medals from both the World Championships and the Olympics. This impressive feat comes after Biles took a two-year mental health break from the sport.

"[My favorite thing about her] is how she's not scared to do anything; [she has] bravery and confidence," IB sophomore and former gymnast Anyao Zhu said. "She doesn't let anything get to her and she's not afraid to fail. And when she does, she just gets back up to try again."

At the World Championships, Biles

also received a new skill on the vault named after her called the Biles.

According to CBS, the Biles consists of a backflip off of the vault and two full rotations in a pike position. In gymnastics, skills get named after the first person to complete them at an international competition. Biles is the first woman to complete this difficult skill, also called the Yurchenko double pike, which is the fifth skill named after her. With the addition of her new skill and her return to gymnastics, Biles gained much media attention and support. "She brings a lot of attention to the sport, which is great," junior gymnast Liam DeWeese said. "Although men's and women's gymnastics aren't exactly the same thing, it makes people more aware of what we do. It brings more support, and it makes it a lot easier to keep going when you're getting that kind of support." Biles' last competition was in 2021 at the

Summer Olympics in Tokyo. She withdrew since she was suffering from the "twisties," which according to BBC, causes someone to lose their sense of space and dimension while in the air. This mental block brought on by stress can lead to accidentally performing extra twists in the air, landing unevenly or even severe injuries. With her difficult decision to step back from the demanding sport, Biles stressed the need to take care of one's personal well-being. Her break allowed her mind and body to find a steady harmony once again while also helping to normalize the importance of mental health for others. "Sometimes when I have bad days, I just think about how many bad days she's had to get there," Zhu said. "It's just part of the journey; it happens, but at the end of the day, she still has a good attitude and [that's inspiring]." Now fully recovered, Biles hinted that she plans to compete in the 2024 Olympics in Paris on the TODAY show in October. With athletes like Biles and gymnast Sunisa Lee planning to compete, gymnastics fans have much to look forward to next summer. Biles' emphasis on both hard work and mental health is a fine balance that everyone can strive for, inspiring the new generation of gymnasts to achieve their dreams. "You see other people succeed and you just don't want to waste all of your hard work," DeWeese said. "Knowing that you have to strive for greatness, not only in gymnastics but also in school, it [can be] a lot of stress, but it really pushes you to reach your limits."



Simone Biles at the 2023 World Artistic Gymnastics Championships in October.



# Caitlin Clark Brings New Audience to Women's Basketball

By Eva Gonzalez and Aveesa Bhayani

Photo from Fox News

Caitlin Clark celebrates during a game.

During the 2023 Women's Basketball National Championship, viewership on ESPN platforms alone grew by 104%. As professional athletes become more reliant on viewership, popularity has quickly become a deciding factor for athletic success. Caitlin Clark, an athlete for the Iowa Hawkeyes, is highly credited for the increase in popularity of collegiate women's basketball. Winning just about all "Player of the Year" awards, - one of the most notable, "Associated Press Player of the Year," Clark brought with her a slew of new viewers, breaking records with her skills and charm. "I feel like college women's basketball is just really bringing light to why women's basketball should really be appreciated," senior Anaya Smith said. "I feel like college girls who are playing basketball right now are showing how women have to put in effort to really be seen." The disproportionate support between women's and men's basketball became increasingly apparent in recent years. Men's basketball is also covered by several more channels than women's basketball and average attendance in the 22-23 season of the NBA was ten thousand people more than that of the WNBA. Professional women's basketball players often have to go overseas for sponsorship deals, and these games generally have less coverage than college basketball

games. College teams have high attendance to games and viewership that professional basketball still lacks. "[Women's basketball] has made a lot of strides and boosted in popularity over the last few years, but I think that is a result of the women's college game really improving over the last decade to become what it is," basketball coach Derrick Richardson said. "I pay attention to the [professional] game, but I follow the college game a little closer." College athletes like Clark and Louisiana State University Tigers basketball player Angel Reese take the spotlight as their television audiences grew exponentially through each game leading up to the Women's Basketball National Championship. Clark's popularity climbed to record-breaking heights recently, following her victory with the Hawkeyes earlier in the year that drew in over fifty thousand people. "I feel like [Caitlin Clark]'s a really good player, and I love her mentality, and I love the way she plays," Smith said. "Once those college girls go to the leagues, they'll bring that same energy, and it will really improve recognition in women's basketball." It is predicted that some of these famous college athletes, including Clark and Aliyah Boston, plan to join the WNBA as soon as 2024. Common collegiate basketball spon-

sorships known as Name, Image, Likeness (NIL) deals allow brands to capitalize off of the growing fame of student-athletes. Though these athletes may lose some notoriety or income through leaving the confines of college basketball, the development of their careers will heavily change how professional women's basketball will be viewed. "With the NIL deals that allow the top players, Caitlin Clark and multiple women from LSU that played in the championship, they actually make more money now than they will when they come out and play in the WNBA," Richardson said. "And I think once those top players start moving into the WNBA, it's going to boost [women's professional basketball]." As college athletes hone and control their skills on a professional platform, students fresh out of high school will take their places. These new athletes will not only gain the experiences and the chance of fame that comes with playing college basketball but will also have the opportunity to change how women's basketball is perceived in the future. "[College basketball] is definitely blowing up," junior Sema Udo said. "There are some really great players in the spotlight right now. It's one of my goals to play in college, and it's really great to see that women's basketball is getting the recognition it deserves."



# Power Within Student Athletes

By Liliana Aguilar

The sound of the volleyball hitting the ground and shoes running back and forth on the court, Senior Ashby Daniels serves the ball across the court. Daniels is a Division One athlete who recently committed to the University of Alabama. In September, she received the Athlete of the Month award. Described

as hard-working, ambitious and friendly by peers, this athlete perfected the balance of her social life, academics and extra-curriculars. With all eyes on her, she and her team took the school to the volleyball playoffs this semester, taking them all the way to the state championships. Together, they finished out a great season with the help of Daniels and her leadership. "It motivated me to be a better player overall and it

gave me a chip on my shoulder and caused me to play with more intensity than ever knowing that [a] majority of Plano East was watching our volleyball games knowing that I was athlete of the month," Daniels said. Daniels first started playing volleyball when she was 13 and played volleyball all four years of high school. This season, Daniels ranked in the top 82 of Region II for total blocks and was also top 89 in Texas Conference 6A; in terms of hitting percentages, she is also categorized as top seven in 6A Region I District 6. While holding these ranks she also takes time off of the court for her academics and earned the title of academic all-district. "[Daniels] is an athlete that shows

that academics are just as important as keeping a level head with decisions all around," assistant coach Dean-na Ugawa said. "This season she was one of our top scorers with kills coming in at 43.7% kill percentage, as well as one of her best, which is blocking." After her recent commitment, Dan-

ents always told me 'You can't succeed on the court without exceeding in the classroom' and that has kept me motivated throughout my volleyball career." Her coaches believe Daniels works and plays hard during the season to prove that she's worthy of the title of Athlete of the Month. She is described as a leader

on and off the court. She shows her dedication with her role in volleyball and she continues to help her younger teammates be as motivated and successful as her. Daniel chases her goals as she works to find the right techniques to make her a better player. "[Daniels] would work toward a goal each time we talked and she made adjustments to meet these goals each time," Uwaga said. "Ashby has a great future ahead of her and it will take work, but the way she elevated herself this year for our team



Photo by Derek Edwards

Senior Ashby Daniels serving the volleyball across the court

els plans to be spending her next four years at the University of Alabama. Following college, she plans to continue to play volleyball overseas. While athletically accomplished, she continues to keep up with her academics as well as pursuing volleyball. As an academic all-district, she carries her academic strengths on top of being a Division One athlete. It's not always easy to maintain both academics and extracurriculars but she finds her parents are her biggest motivators when it comes to both school and the volleyball court. "I always make sure to leave time either before or after my extracurriculars to make sure my school stays a priority in my life," Daniels said. "My par-

shows that she is capable of anything!" Daniel's teammate Megan Nguyen shares her volleyball experiences. She was also a key player during the season. Daniels continues to inspire Nguyen on and off the court. Daniels is not just a role model to her but also to the younger fans watching her take on the court. Daniels is a big inspiration to all the girls on the Varsity volleyball team this year. Daniels helps them see that putting effort into their passions can bring great opportunities. She played her role as athlete of the month with dedication and ambition. "This year has been a very successful season," Nguyen said. "As a senior and our starting middle, [Ashby] has a big role as a leader on and off the court."

# Family Ties: Basketball Brotherhood Shapes Success

Photo from Kelly WaseMiller

By Sydnie Grayson

*Varsity basketball players cheer on their teammates as they play against Highland Park on Nov. 13.*

After years of friendship, senior Amanni Koutsakis and senior Seth Romero create a bond on and off the basketball court. After playing together for several years prior, the basketball team developed a great sense of sportsmanship between themselves. Passing and dribbling down the court, they work together in harmony to maintain the upper hand against their opponent. At the first home game of the season against Highland Park, the team won with a score of 70-54, leading up to a record of 9-0. “[The players] are all very close,” team manager Kaylee Hatcher said. “Being in there, it’s actually really fun because it’s so cool to watch them work together as a team. They’re more than friends, they are literally like family to each other.” During practices, the team participates in mainly shooting and scrimmage-type drills. By practicing for almost two hours from 3:30 p.m. to around 6 p.m., the coaches aim to keep the team’s eye on the prize in maintaining the same accomplishments from last year, such as becoming bi-district champions. “We just try to make sure everything’s sharp [like] our shooting and our plays, so we can put on a show for the fans,” varsity senior Narit Choti-

kavanic said. “[Our] main goal is to win district and win state this year.” With extensive practices and timed schedules for each drill and each break, varsity coach Matt Wester keeps the team on their toes in order to work towards his goals for the season. By maintaining the game-like atmosphere, Wester forces the team to be game ready at all times. “Practices are really designed to be competitive,” Wester said. “We keep track of who wins each drill and we always rank and who has won the most. It gets them to play hard and compete, which sets us apart from other people.” Currently, there are 12 returning varsity players and 13 current seniors on the team this year. After developing a bond over the past two years, the players know each other inside and out as they work to maintain and improve their work ethic. “We understand that there’s a target on our back because of our title as defending district champs so we are prepared to take it one game at a time as we will get everyone’s best shot,” Romero said. “The entire team is extremely tightly knit [and we] all have connections and trust each other, so it’s a very positive locker room environment.” During games, the team maintains a

strong bond with each other, allowing them to work effectively together. This bond reflects on the court as they swiftly pass to each other, predicting the next move. For this team, basketball is like a chess match where they are three steps ahead of their opponent. This translates from their history with each other as most of them played together in middle school and high school, leading up to their time on varsity. “My favorite part [of the team] is probably the brotherhood we’ve built,” senior Rachard Angton said. “Most of us have been friends since elementary school, so [my favorite part] is just all of us being able to be on the same team one last time before we go off to college.” As most of the varsity players are near their last year of high school, Wester hopes that the boys enjoy their experiences on the basketball team. “I love the relationship part about being a coach,” Wester said. “It’s rare to have the type of friendships and bonds that these guys have. I have a really good team with a lot of experience. What I really want to do is create the best experience of their high school career and make it a year they’ll never forget.”



# Stigma Behind Americanized Lunch

## Staff Editorial

As the bell rings students rush into the cafeteria to gather for their meal while the aromas fill the air. It is not uncommon to see the standard American lunch of a sandwich accompanied by chips, an apple and a cookie. Every lunch box a student brings contains a unique taste of home, however, that taste of home is not always accepted by all students. When a variety of cultural foods make their way into the scene, these traditional dishes change the way society views American food culture. Through the expansion of “TV dinners” in the 1950s, commercials would advertise the simplicity of popping a frozen dinner into the microwave or oven

while the family enjoyed television together. Not only were these meals easy and reliable, but they kept families on a consistent diet of foods like peas, corn, mashed potatoes, turkey and gravy. In today’s fast-paced world, Americans rely heavily on meals that take short preparation time. This inspires American parents to send their children to school with pre-packaged food, frozen meals or easy-to-make cold lunches such as sandwiches and fruit. Students, however, who have not grown up with these kinds of meals may turn to fast food for a quick and easy option. However, as the 20th century progressed and the American culinary landscape

expanded, so did the tendency to Americanize dishes from other cultures. The introduction of Taco Bell to America in 1962 increased the diversity in fast-food culture shaping the idea of Tex-Mex food. The assimilation of two different cultures allowed American ideas to take over the authentic qualities of Mexican food. The Americanization of cultural dishes such as Mexican, Chinese and Indian foods, may lead to polarization in the lunchroom as Caucasian students may be unfamiliar with authentic cultural foods. The paradox that those who are more accustomed to a typical American lunch would be taken aback by the smell of genuine cultural foods, leads to less cultural diversity in a cafeteria setting due to fear of judgment. Students who harbor resentment towards their fellow peers find themselves eating away from those who blindly follow the ideas of a typical American lunch. Although modern soci-

ety has done a better job at normalizing cultural foods, students find that while sitting in the lunchroom, the topic always lingers in the backs of their minds as their food will always be different than those of their friends. According to a poll conducted by the student body, 46.1% of students believe that there is a stigma behind American lunches. Therefore, by eating in the library, teachers’ classrooms, or the hallway, students feel free to eat their traditional comfort foods and pay less attention to the skewed perspective of other students. Some may believe that incorporating cultural restaurants into American society leads to the oversimplification of traditional dishes and the overshadowing of smaller authentic businesses. While this aspect of commercialization has flaws, the raised awareness of traditional foods in American society through the addition of cultural restaurants, truly brings diversity to America, further allowing it to be a giant melting pot of different cultures. As an American society that prides itself on diversity and cultural inclusivity, it is essential to recognize all the cultural foods that make up American lunches. Embracing this diversity expands our culinary horizons and fosters an inclusive environment where judgment does not have a seat at the table.

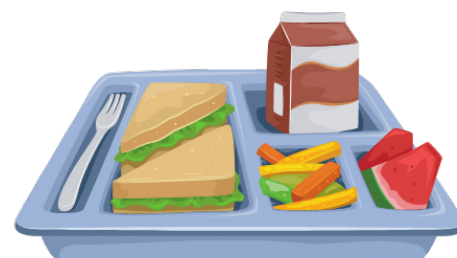
**46.1% of students believe there is a stereotype behind Americanized lunches because there is a set standard of what a typical American lunch is**

**19.3% of students believe there is a stereotype behind Americanized lunches because there is shame behind cultural foods that don’t fit in the “American” category**

**18.7% of students believe there is not a stereotype behind Americanized lunches because America is a melting pot of all cultures where food is not shamed**

**7.5% of students believe there is a stereotype behind Americanized lunches because American food is taken from all different cultures**  
**18.4% of students chose not to comment**

**\*out of 332 students polled**



*\*The Panther Prints staff voted 9-0, with majority opinion believing that there is a stigma behind Americanized lunches.*



# Battling For Control: Pay Gaps In Sports

By Shar Kiefer

According to CNN, for every dollar a male soccer player makes a female soccer player would make only twenty-five cents. Both teams are equal professionals, but this gap caters to an unfair standard for women in sports. The Washington Post states that “Women generally begin their careers closer to wage parity with men, but they lose ground as they age and progress through their work lives.” This creates the impression that no matter how hard they work, they will never be paid as much as men in the same sport. This unfortunate dilemma is known as the gendered sports pay gap. While the National Soccer League plans to close its pay gap, it is unlikely that other professional sports will follow. By closing the pay gap across all women’s and men’s professional sports teams, women will be given equal opportunities and better standards. The WNBA’s highest-paid player is Diana Taurasi, earning a salary of \$234,936, whereas the NBA’s highest salary belongs to Nikola Jokic earning a whopping 55.2 million dollars from only his contracts. While Taurasi is considered one of the best players in the WNBA, she is less likely to receive endorsements because of her gender. The Sports Financial Literacy Academy reported that women only received 0.4% of sports sponsorships. With the NBA housing over 40 shoe endorsements with their top players, the WNBA simply doesn’t compare. However, with the increase of NBA players earning the same shoe endorsements, lesser-known players in the NBA are given priority over women in these endorsements. While women don’t get as much media coverage, it doesn’t limit their performances. Legendary tennis player Serena Williams won her 23rd Grand Slam



*Photo from Texas Monthly*  
**Billie Jean King and Bobby Riggs in the Battle of The Sexes**

title while she was eight weeks pregnant with her second child. Williams revealed in an interview with CNN that people had told her she should have given up when she didn’t win her 75th overall title. Williams voiced her concern that she believed people saw her as a female tennis player and not just a tennis player. In 1973, female tennis player Billie Jean King beat out number one tennis player Bobby Riggs in the infamous battle of the sexes match. The win fostered the idea that women could perform better than their male counterparts. King is an advocate for women’s equal paying rights and said that she believes that the battle will never be over. This standard doesn’t only apply to professional players, but also to college scholarships. Female athletes earn only 12% of scholarships in sports, whereas their male counterparts take the other 88%. When the stigma becomes a reality, the pay gap in sports becomes an unfortunate truth for women. While college athletes may not receive as much recognition as professional players, colleges decrease funding for their female

athletes rather than male ones. NPR states that Division One colleges have decreased funding to women to 47.1%, while the rest is given to male athletes. This creates an unfair advantage in favor of male athletes as women aren’t given the same opportunities to excel. There is a lack of viewer interest across all women’s sports as they are often less televised than male sports. The NBA has television deals with four major televisions, while the WNBA only has a deal with NBC. The decrease in funding across women’s sports creates the narrative that women do not compare to men because of their gender. While the decrease in television viewership is a key factor in their salaries, their talents should make up in entertainment or endorsements. By closing the pay gap in sports, opportunities flourish. In the future, women will continue to become professional athletes which will make the pay gap even more apparent in modern society. Gender is not a defining feature of performance, but rather a social divide, solidifying social inequality in sports.

# Staff Picks: Holiday Drinks Edition

By Aveesa Bhayani

## Sydney - Peppermint Mocha

The peppermint mocha, a Starbucks holiday favorite is back in season and making it to the very top of Editor-in-Chief Sydney Grayson's list. As a Starbucks barista, she has all the tips and tricks on how to make your favorite drinks but while she makes your venti matcha with four pumps of vanilla, one pump of brown sugar with cinnamon and vanilla sweet cold foam, she sticks to the classics with this hot and creamy drink with peppermint and mocha syrup added to two shots of their signature espresso. This drink is sure to bring a jolt of caffeine and a sprinkle of holiday spirit to your day.

"Ever since freshman year the peppermint mocha has always been my go-to drink during Christmas time just because it's the perfect combination of sweetness but it also has that same coffee taste," Grayson said.



## Eva - Hot Chocolate

Bringing in the holiday with a touch of nostalgia, senior reporter Eva Gonzalez chooses another classic, hot chocolate as her favorite holiday drink. With a range of options, hot chocolate is one of the most common drinks for the holidays with easily the most variations. With companies mass producing more flavors - one by Swiss Miss including a pumpkin spice collection - Gonzalez finds comfort in simplicity with this rich and creamy easy-to-make drink.

## Shar - Sprite Cranberry

With a little bit of sweet comes a little bit of savory as senior reporter Shar Kiefer chooses the Sprite Winter Spiced Cranberry as her favorite drink. Available only from October to December 31st, this unique flavor comes from a blend of spices and cranberry flavoring to create a caffeine-free lemon-lime soft drink combo. "A few years ago LeBron James promoted it in a commercial and after that my brother really wanted to try it but we couldn't find it anywhere," Kiefer said. "Last year we found it at Kroger and fell in love with it."



## Camille - Peppermint Chip Milkshake from Chick-fil-A

Top off the holiday season with a dollop of whipped cream with a cherry on top. Turns out Chick-fil-A, the largest chicken-based corporation in America is good at more than just the staple chicken sandwich. The exclusive Peppermint Chip Milkshake, made with vanilla ice cream and peppermint bark with a sprinkle of chocolate chips is junior reporter Camille Wright's favorite holiday drink. Although it seems counterintuitive to serve cold drinks during the winter season, luckily the Texas heat is sure to balance it out.

"I've just always gotten it around the holidays ever since I was little, anytime we go to Chick-fil-A and they have the peppermint chip I always get it," Wright said. "I've always enjoyed the seasonal drinks, I get the peach milkshake in the summer."



## Megan - Iced Gingerbread Oatmilk Chai

New additions to the Starbucks winter menu have had coffee addicts flocking to the nearest Starbucks. Among them is photo editor Megan Glass, who has found her new favorite winter drink: the Iced Gingerbread Oatmilk Chai. With a burst of flavors, the drink includes oat milk and black tea infused with cinnamon and various spices and a topping of pumpkin spice. Ironically the Starbucks menu does not list ginger or gingerbread as an ingredient, however, the drink is sure to be the closest thing to the holidays in a cup.





# Winter Memories: Holiday Events in DFW

By Camille Wright

Slide into the holiday spirit at the ice skating rink at the Galleria Mall. From Nov. 17 to Jan. 7, the Galleria's year-round ice rink transforms into a Christmas wonderland. The 95-foot tall tree in the center of the rink is complete with 250,000 LED lights and colorful ornaments, topped with a 100 lb. star. For a fee of \$12, visitors can enjoy the thrill of skating, with skate rentals available for an additional \$5. Both professional skaters and beginners will have the chance to enjoy this immersive experience on ice.



Photo from Galleria Dallas

For thrill-seekers, Six Flags over Texas offers classic roller coasters and unique rides that are specially decorated for a "Holiday in the Park". From holiday shows to light displays, Six Flags goes out of its way to immerse visitors in the seasonal spirit. There is even a special holiday menu that features treats like sweet potato casserole, latkes and hot chocolate. With the purchase of a Six Flags ticket, visitors can enjoy the thrills of the park with a holiday twist from Nov. 19 to Dec. 31.



Photo from Arlington.org

Experience the heartwarming tale of "How the Grinch Stole Christmas" in 3D at the ICE! Attraction. Carved from over two million pounds of ice, this magical experience brings Dr. Seuss's iconic characters to life in vibrant scenes. Visitors can experience the thrill of flying down a slide made of pure ice or step into the lives of classic characters like The Grinch, his dog Max, Cindy-Lou and even the Whos from Who-ville! Anyone can take part in this enchanting visual display, where the nostalgia of 'How the Grinch Stole Christmas' comes to life.



Photo from Gaylord Texan

Drive by the Deerfield Neighborhood on Legacy Drive in Plano to see a dazzling display of Christmas lights. During the month of December Deerfield's holiday lights shine from 7-10 p.m. on weekdays and 7-11 p.m. on weekends. The entire neighborhood is adorned with festive decorations, creating a winter wonderland that captivates visitors of all ages. Holiday Carriage Rides are available but must be reserved in advance at dfw-carriages.com. Tune into the radio station which will be posted on signs throughout the neighborhood to listen to music that is synced to the light show. Whether viewing the lights from a car or a carriage, guests are sure to have an exceptional experience.



Photo from Visit Plano





*Enjoy this study playlist  
during exam season!  
Have a great break!  
- The Newspaper Staff*



## SENIOR HIGH EXAM SCHEDULE

TIME	Monday, December 18	Tuesday, December 19	Wednesday, December 20	Thursday, December 21	Friday, December 22
9:00 - 10:55	<b>2nd Period Exam</b>	<b>3rd Period Exam</b>	<b>5th Period Exam</b>	<b>7th Period Exam</b>	No School
10:55 - 11:05	Break - 10 min	Break - 10 min	Break - 10 min	Break - 10 min	
11:05 - 1:00	<b>1st Period Exam</b>	<b>4th Period Exam</b>	<b>6th Period Exam</b>	<b>0 Period Exam</b>	
1:00 PM	Dismissal	Dismissal	Dismissal	Dismissal	
1:15 PM	Buses run at 1:15	Buses run at 1:15	Buses run at 1:15	Buses run at 1:15	
2:15 - 4:15	Optional tutorials based on campus-determined schedule				