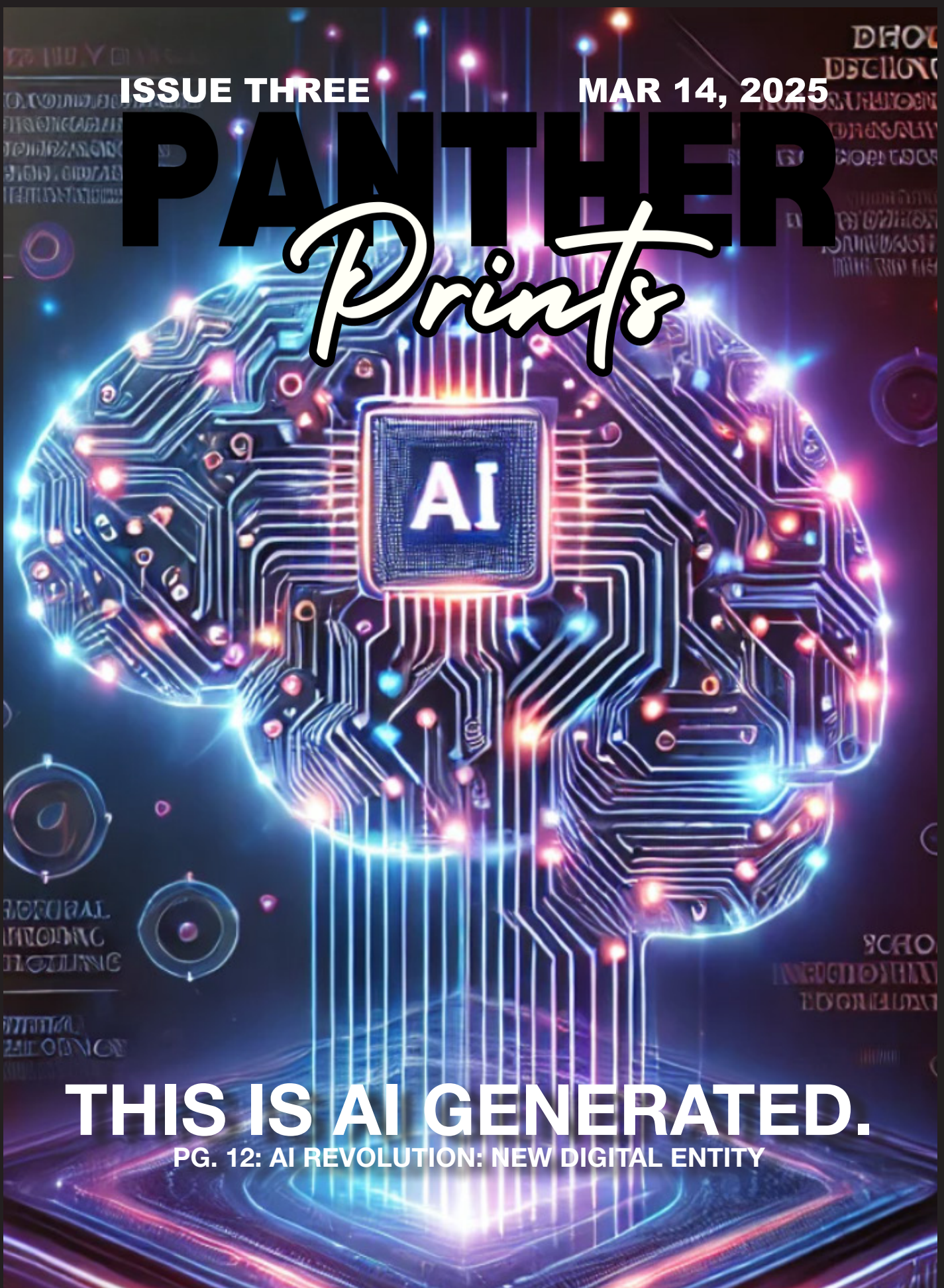


ISSUE THREE

MAR 14, 2025

# PANTHER

*Prints*



**THIS IS AI GENERATED.**

PG. 12: AI REVOLUTION: NEW DIGITAL ENTITY

# EDITORS

## *Adviser*

Mike Birnbaum

## *Editor-In-Chief*

Varsha Jhanak

## *Copy Editor*

Camille Wright

## *Multimedia Manager*

Celine Tan

## *Photo Editor*

Megan Glass

# REPORTERS

Aisha Zahrah Ali

Aycen Koa Matsumoto Castro

Jade Chu

Carter Fleming

Jewel Jeffery

Melanie Pinkerton

Kristhel Soto Castro

Reece Yeamans

*Cover Photo by Generative AI*

*Design by Varsha Jhanak*

*Scan the QR Code below to  
access more content on our  
website*



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

## LETTERS FROM THE EDITORS

As my time in newspaper comes to a close, I truly savored every part of this issue. It has been amazing seeing the growth of our writers and seeing them shine. I've also had the best time working with the best editors, Camille, Celine and Megan. I am so grateful to be a part of the Panther Prints. To my seniors, I'm excited to see what our last issue will hold for us. I hope everyone enjoys our third issue and their spring break!

While working on this third issue as Copy Editor, I have noticed that my job has become easier as the staff continues to improve, making my job as editor smoother and more rewarding. To the staff: Though this issue may have been more challenging in terms of tackling new article types and finding interviews, you all made it to the finish line and have great articles to show for it. Each of you is truly improving as a writer and a journalist, and I know our last issue will be even more amazing. To my fellow editors: Your dedication and attention to detail are what have kept this paper going strong, and I am grateful for all of the work you put into it. To our readers: Your support is invaluable to us. Thank you for being a part of our journey, and we hope you enjoy reading the articles we've worked so hard on this issue.

It is absolutely crazy to think that the school year is almost over. I am so proud of the other editors and the newspaper staff for all of the hard work they have put into creating another amazing issue. I'd like to thank Mr. Birnbaum, whose guidance as our adviser throughout my past two years in Newspaper has been invaluable. To everyone reading this, thank you for taking the time to read our writing; I hope you enjoy our latest issue! Happy spring break, everyone!

This has been one of the most beautifully rewarding issues I've gotten to be a part of. I feel so grateful to be surrounded with creative and determined people who are willing to learn and grow alongside their peers. This issue is full of entertaining, attention-grabbing and inspiring articles. Varsha, Celine, and Camille have been the easiest people to work with—making the last 9 weeks a breeze. I'm so excited to start our last issue of the paper soon!

## 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.

# CONTENTS

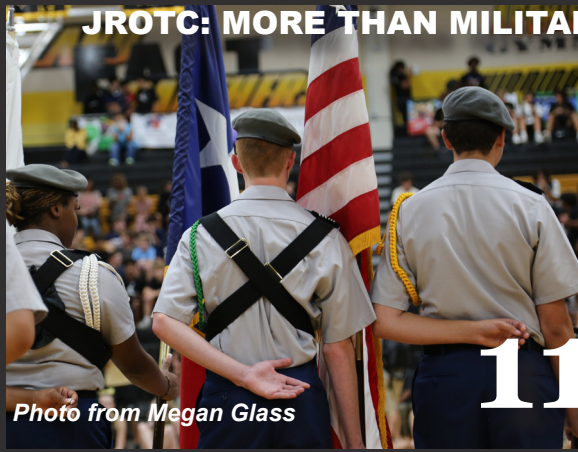
20

*Photo from Den of Geeks*



**THE SIMPSONS'  
STRANGE SUPERPOWER**

**JROTC: MORE THAN MILITARY KIDS**



*Photo from Megan Glass*

11

22



*Photo from Pillow Pets*

**THROWBACK TOYS**

**BEATING THE ODDS:  
LADY PANTHERS  
BASKETBALL'S  
HISTORICAL SEASON**

*Photo from @dfwsportshorts*



19

8

*Photo from ABC*



**TIKTOK'S FIGHT FOR SURVIVAL**

**TWITTER  
INSTAGRAM**

**@peshprints**

# College

## Prep

By Megan Glass

Securing a place to live is a crucial step in college preparation. Most colleges have online housing portals for applications, deposits and room selection. While some universities allow freshmen to live off campus, most require on-campus housing, which plays a significant role in the college experience.

Roommate policies vary as some schools assign roommates randomly, while others allow students to choose based on preferences. Each college has different deadlines, so putting down a deposit and clarifying housing preferences early increases the chances of securing a preferred living arrangement. Dorm styles range from pod-style and suites to singles, doubles, and triples. Suites tend to be pricier and more competitive, requiring early application.

Location is an important factor when deciding which dorm to reside in. Consider proximity to classes, dorm availability, and amenities. Schools also have rules on approved and prohibited dorm items—checking these beforehand avoids conflict. Some colleges also offer refundable housing deposits if students switch schools, so putting down the initial deposit acts as a safety net to secure a spot.

Gaining experience in a desired field is essential for seniors preparing for college and underclassmen building a strong resume. For instance, students making their way into a competitive field should look for shadowing opportunities, research programs or internships to stand out as an applicant. If an individual is interested in trade school, they should seek hands-on experience through apprenticeships, certification programs or part-time work in their chosen trade. It is wise to build expertise and make connections that will enhance future career prospects.

# Unpredictable Weather Conditions

By Aisha Zahrah Ali

Weather phenomena have a reputation for impacting plans; whether it is going on a date night, to an interview, to work, to another country or even to school—plans change. La Nina, known for being unpredictable, is a rare phenomenon sweeping across the tropical Pacific Ocean by cooling aquatic temperatures and amplifying jet streams. “As I’ve gotten older the weather tends to be more extreme in terms of hurricanes [and] tornadoes, the seasons are amplified,” AP Environmental Science teacher Michael Crane said. “Winters continue to get pushed further back, we get winter weather later in the year and summers are significantly hotter than [they were] when I was a kid.” La Nina affects the global climate primarily through atmospheric changes. According to ScienceDirect, flooding exposes vulnerable societies to sickness; the number of people infected with COVID-19 in the first wave of the pandemic increased due to floods during the pandemic. Atmospheric instability causes the risk of frequent flooding and storms that exacerbate the spread of diseases within populations. “It feels like it’s been a continuous issue, for what feels like the past four years, where snowstorms have been more common every winter,” junior Mahreen Bilal said. “I [enjoyed] getting time off school, especially since our houses here in Texas aren’t built for this type of weather; it really just gives us time to check on our houses [to take] necessary precautions needed that keep our homes safe.” For some people, weather issues just cause frozen pipes or icy roads, but it can be significantly worse for others. The primary goal of the Paris Accords was to advocate and improve climate change; however, attempts to reduce emissions lack enforcement mechanisms. The lack of initiative sparks larger environmental issues that become more noticeable as years pass. While weather conditions can screw up an entire day’s worth of plans,

for some people, it could ruin their entire life. “Frozen floods [in Detroit] and fire tornadoes [in California] aren’t really issues for Texas,” junior Aisha Hassan said. “It’s absolutely terrifying, but hearing about [fire whirls], it’s a really cool concept. Texas has dealt with about five winter storms now in the past five or so years, and we are still so unequipped, it’s amazing. We haven’t gotten many protocols, like storm teams for hospitals and schools. We had to wait till 5 AM on Wednesday to learn [whether or not] we are going to school in [freezing temperatures].” At the start of 2025, fires raged across Los Angeles, wreaking havoc on the city in California. According to an article by Todd Datz for UC Davis, wildfires began in early January, killing 29 people, destroying over 16,000 structures and exposing millions to toxic smoke. Schedules are often shifted around and compromised as a result of unpredictable weather conditions, but it is often overlooked how weather impacts us in even the simplest way: our health. “[Recently], I got really sick, it was so bad,” Hassan said. “Like my head was hurting, I felt super nauseous, my eyes were burning and I got a fever. I had to stay away from school because I was sick. I had to make up like 15 assignments from the two days I was gone.” While the effects of La Nina are dangerous, the impacts of global warming make it even worse. Global warming and climate change are close to irreversible, whether it’s reinforcing the Paris Accords or picking up trash in a neighborhood park, improving the environment we live in is worth the effort. “[My interest] for [La Nina] has a lot to do with how it affects the world, how it affects us today and how we are affecting it,” Hassan said. “Now we just need to make sure [the weather] doesn’t get worse by limiting greenhouse gases, how much a company can use fossil fuels, minimizing how much waste they can dump into water, and limiting how many artificial

synthetic things that we make and use in our day to day life.”






Photo from Global Health NOW

# Troubling Public Health Outbreaks: Why is Everyone Getting Sick?

By Celine Tan

This year saw a rise in concerns from the general public regarding the influx of various health outbreaks. Viruses from the past that were previously in an era of stability, including human metapneumovirus (HMPV), bird flu and norovirus are reaching new numbers. The rising cases are particularly concerning because many fear the possibility of another massive pandemic like COVID-19. Luckily, these viruses seem to be of a different nature. “With HMPV, there have definitely been surges, but from what I understand, it’s not really the same [as COVID-19] because it’s not a new virus—same with norovirus and bird flu,” IB Biology teacher Amanda Miller said. “Yes, there are lots of outbreaks, and that’s definitely concerning. But the thing that was the most troubling about COVID-19 was that it was a new virus, so there was nothing that we could do to counteract just how rapidly it spread.” According to Cleveland Clinic, HMPV is one of the viruses that cause a cold. While catching a cold is quite common, concerns over HMPV arose over how quickly cases accumulated and spread throughout China, a densely populated country where COVID-19 originated. HMPV has mild symptoms such as a cough and fever, but there is currently no available vaccine or treatment. “One of the most amazing things about the COVID-19 pandemic was how quickly

vaccines were able to get from conception to the public,” Miller said. “It was really amazing to see when we remove some of the hurdles and really pour our resources into something [that many people] want, what we can create and what we can do.” Humans are not the only ones experiencing a surge in health outbreaks though. The rising cost of eggs at grocery stores reflects the growing cases of bird flu. According to the CDC, as of Feb. 18, there were outbreaks of bird flu in at least 972 dairy herds across 16 states. The government has so far avoided vaccinating poultry to fend against bird flu; the past few months saw the euthanization of more than 160 million chicken, turkey, goose and other infected birds. However, this may change since the Agriculture Department granted a license to Zoetis, a New Jersey-based vaccine manufacturer, to pursue further research regarding a vaccine. “I think governments should be promoting vaccine campaigns,” Miller said. “Vaccines are the most effective preventative measure that we have against these viruses. To that end, not just vaccine campaigns, but also funding to provide for research so that these medical facilities can develop vaccines.” While viruses like HMPV and bird flu are not new, the current rising infections are due to new strains of these viruses. For example, the flu virus evolves

every year due to new mutations, and with the appearance of new strains, the vaccine changes too. With many of the current health outbreaks not having vaccines, though, it is crucial to be extra cautious of one’s surroundings. “I grew up in an Asian household, so I use a lot of home remedies, especially when I know that I’m getting sick,” junior Maya Shariff said. “Everyone has their telltale signs of getting sick, so I think it’s important to use preventative measures such as [taking] vitamin C [and] zinc.” According to Cleveland Clinic, with the surge of norovirus cases, which is a foodborne illness that spreads when someone who has the virus touches food before serving it to someone else, it is important to avoid contamination through other people or objects. Adhering to healthy habits such as regularly exercising, maintaining a healthy diet, staying hydrated, and getting enough sleep can also help fight off unwanted illnesses. “It’s important to stay on top of your health,” Shariff said. “[Normalize] being healthy, because when you’re down for that many days because you’re sick, you miss so many things. If you miss a day of school, you come back the next day and you don’t know what’s going on. So I think we should normalize treating symptoms before it turns into something bigger.”

# Our World's Happiest Countries

By Jewel Jeffery

Some people view the world as a happy place, and in some ways, it is. Researchers identified the world's happiest countries through studies. According to the World Population Review, Finland, Denmark, Iceland, Sweden and Israel are the top five happiest countries. The list goes on, but people wonder why these countries are the happiest. "I've seen the studies on this before, and a lot of times countries in Europe, especially Scandinavian countries, get ranked very high."

sociology teacher Adam Bull said. "It's one of the things that there are a lot of different ways to measure happiness but I do think that in some of the European countries, the emphasis isn't so much on work. It's more on living and they have a pretty high standard of living." These countries appreciate life itself and seem to enjoy simple things. They have strongly built communities, seem to admire and use their geography for their enjoyment and thrive in social equity. The education in these countries is very affordable and desirable. For example, Finland offers free education at all levels along with free meals and resources. In countries such as Finland, they focus on equity. This ensures that all children of all socioeconomic backgrounds have a chance to be successful and, most importantly, have access to high-quality education. Finland also has shorter school days and minimal homework. Finland encourages students to have a balanced life between work time and family time. Senior Reynaldo Rivera visits Mexico and mentions that nature differs from here in the United States. "Over there, you see more unpaved roads and you rarely see streets and when you do there are potholes everywhere," Rivera said. "Most of the time, there is some greenery in Mexico. It honestly depends on what season you visit." According to Visit Finland, nature makes people happier and oddly makes humans kinder. People believe that nature offers them opportunities and ultimate relaxation. Spe-

cifically in Finland, Finns are never more than a ten-minute walk from a park or forest. The other countries listed also have easy access to the outdoors. Due to this, the people in these countries love doing outdoor activities such as hiking, swimming, and skiing. According to the book 'Happiness: Lessons from a New Science', happiness also depends on the quality of the government. According to the U.S. News and Reports World website, all these countries have a very responsive and

ities is an important factor in a country's happiness status. In the World Happiness Report 2022, economist and professor at the University of British Columbia John F. Helliwell, observed that the pandemic brought not only pain and suffering but also an increase in social support and benevolence. This highlights how crises can strengthen community bonds, which are essential for the happiness of a nation. It is always helpful to have a good support system in life. Luckily, these countries

## World's Happiest Countries \* according to the World Population Review

1. Finland
2. Denmark
3. Iceland
4. Sweden
5. Israel

transparent government. A transparent government looks like a government that openly shares information, decisions, and processes with the public. There is a sense of trust between their governments and the public. According to the official Denmark website, Denmark has a wonderful economic system. For example, students pay no tuition and receive grants to help cover expenses while studying, and health-care is provided at no fee. Along with other mentionable benefits, Danes are happy to pay taxes because they see what they get in return. A helpful fact regarding this is the low unemployment rate. Their governments and their strong economy in these countries share a big responsibility for their happiness. Having good commu-

nities is an important factor in a country's happiness status. In the World Happiness Report 2022, economist and professor at the University of British Columbia John F. Helliwell, observed that the pandemic brought not only pain and suffering but also an increase in social support and benevolence. This highlights how crises can strengthen community bonds, which are essential for the happiness of a nation. It is always helpful to have a good support system in life. Luckily, these countries

have strong support systems and close-knit communities. According to the World Happiness Report, everyone in these countries knows each other and uplifts each other. In Israel, people frequently rely on their families and the community for support. They have a strong appreciation for life and are determined to live it to the fullest. The people of Israel have very positive attitudes about conflict and maintain a strong sense of encouragement during difficult times. In Iceland, because of the small population, the public fosters a close-knit community and feels connected. "My definition is just being happy, the people around me," Rivera said. "My friends, my parents, and being

close to people makes me happy." It all comes down to a deep appreciation for nature, strong trust in government, close-knit communities, and resilient economic systems- key ingredients in the recipe for happiness. A shared emphasis among these countries is the ability to pause and enjoy life's simple pleasures, along with an outstanding education system, a strong commitment to equality, and a collective sense of responsibility for social well-being. These elements contribute to their consistent happiness. "I think happiness involves the ability to enjoy your life, not just have to worry about work, bills, or just the struggle to survive," Bull said.

# Trump's New Executive Branch

By Reece Yeamans

The transition of presidents means many changes for the US government, notably its many cabinets, which have received new leaders. Alongside the new heads of cabinets, the Trump administration has focused attention on the United States Digital Service (USDS), now the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) as of January 20. What's important to note is that the cabinet members primarily carry out the president's will, they aren't completely independent actors. The president selects cabinet members whom they believe will further their political agenda. If cabinet nominees fail to appease the president, then they can be either fired or demoted. The biggest change on most people's minds is the establishment of DOGE. Elon Musk, the DOGE administrator, plans to cut federal spending by one to two trillion dollars. Between now and July 4, 2026, when Elon Musk's temporary DOGE appointment ends, the federal budget should be cut by 15-30%. DOGE will accomplish this by updating outdated government IT, as well as linking the databases of government agencies. DOGE will also make suggestions to departments for what expenditures can be cut or made more efficient; notably, this will not include any cuts to social security. "Elon Musk is trying to exert his control as the richest man in the world, despite

not being elected," senior Arnav Agarwal said. "I think he is willing to cut social security, maybe not all, but he is willing to impede a lot of benefits that go to Americans." So far, DOGE claims to have cut \$8.5 billion, while the fact-checked number from NPR is closer to \$2 billion. Assuming that DOGE was, in fact, able to cut \$8.5 billion, it is only 0.85% of the at least \$1 trillion budget cut promised. If DOGE continues at its current rate, the department will cut only 12% of what it promised, roughly \$122 billion. Some critique the establishment of DOGE as expanding the federal government, a traditionally non-republican policy. "It's a Republican ideal to have a small government, and Trump is doing the exact opposite of that," senior Zohaib Siddiqi said. "They should instead just start cutting out departments that don't have practical use." A major issue underlying politics is whether or not the average American can trust their government. For many this answer is a hard no. Perceived issues including corrupting influence, extremist views, and inexperience make it difficult for some Americans to look favorably upon Trump's administration. Of President Trump's cabinet picks, including DOGE, 35% have either no experience in their field or no political experience. President Trump's appointments to the cabinet, who have no experience in pol-

itics, creates the potential for inefficient management that will stifle the ability of the department to act and properly utilize its funding. There are those who believe, though, that private sector experience is so important that it offsets the potential harm of having an inexperienced secretary of the department. "I think it's a really uneducated thing for the executive branch to do," Siddiqi said. "Putting inexperienced people at the heads of departments could lead to a lot of bad decisions being made." President Trump appointed a few controversial picks as cabinet heads. Notably, Pete Hegseth, the Defense Secretary, has a rocky approval rating, with only two in ten Americans supporting his appointment. In addition, Hegseth faces charges and accusations of sexual assault, alcoholism, and political extremism. "Pete Hegseth is one of the worst possible picks for secretary of defense," Agarwal said. "His focus on DEI takes away from things we should be focusing on in the military." The appointment of Linda McMahon has also drawn criticism due to her support for dismantling the Department of Education. Trump and McMahon claim they want to return education to the states, to help schools run more efficiently, as well as refocus schools on education rather than social politics. "I think it's a very negative thing, it's one of the departments that keeps the nation running," Siddiqi said. "If you get rid of the management over education that will negatively impact your country, maybe not immediately but 20 years from now we'll start to see problems." The new cabinet will mean vast changes for the US as we shift from the left-leaning policy of Biden to the right-leaning policy of President Trump. Going forward, the American people have to accept President Trump's appointments, and understand that they are appointed to act with the nation's best interests in mind. "Trump just started, you can't see the impacts of policy immediately," Siddiqi said. "We need at least six months, and until then I'll stay neutral."

Photo from Yahoo



# TikTok's Fight for Survival

By Kristhel Soto Castro

On a random Saturday night in January, 170 million TikTok users found their video-sharing application unresponsive because of a deadline imposed by the United States Congress. On Jan. 19, the bill caused TikTok to voluntarily shut down its services to users nationwide, causing them to find immediate replacements for the sake of their media entertainment. "It's limiting our rights of freedom of speech and basically screwing over a bunch of Tiktokers whose livelihood is based off TikTok," junior Jubril Salami said. The US government focused on TikTok for years and threatened to ban the app because ByteDance, its parent company, has ties to China. US politicians feared the company would sell its users' information to the Chinese government, coerce the app to spy on Americans and influence them with provocative content on their feeds. "TikTok automatically captures vast swaths of information from its users, including Internet and other network activity information such as location data and browsing and search histories," President Donald J. Trump said on Aug.

6, 2020. "This data collection threatens to allow the Chinese Communist Party access to Americans' personal and proprietary information. Congress questioned the company's CEO, Shou Chew, for five grueling hours on Mar. 23, 2023, to determine whether TikTok protects its users' private and government-control-free content legitimately. Chew turned down any theories speculating TikTok's hidden ability of facial recognition and suspicion of spying on journalists, refusing to acknowledge the app's ability to go beyond any other basic social media application used in the United States. During the heated debate, Chew explained the inability of his employees to access any personal information due to the Firewall's duty to protect every user's privacy. In addition, he promised to keep the American feed free from the political control of other foreign nations. The Senate repeatedly questioned Chew's involvement with the Chinese political party. Chew retaliated against their claims by stating that he had citizenship in Singapore and had served in the Singaporean military. He

continued to express little to no involvement with the Chinese government. Despite his continuous attempts to inform Senators of the application's protection of private information, the algorithm that promotes content to users, limited interactions with ByteDance and management of younger audiences, Congress still denied Chew's claims. "To the American people watching today, hear this: TikTok is a weapon by the Chinese Communist Party to spy on you, manipulate what you see and exploit for future generations," former Washington State Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers said. On Apr. 24, 2024, Former President Joe Biden signed a bill giving ByteDance 270 days to sell TikTok or banning the app from the United States. From then on, TikTok had an official, definite deadline to cut its ties with Chinese involvement or face the consequences of a ban starting in Jan. 2025. "It's sad people have no way of making money, these are just people's lives," junior Tommie Brasly-Tave said. "And it's more than a dance video. It's a second home to some." Before TikTok reached its deadline, its users moved to other social platforms such as Twitter, Instagram and Facebook but argued it didn't feel as entertaining as TikTok. Under multiple posts, people commented on TikTok's expertise in providing satisfactory content for its users. These people sought better content on RedNote, a Chinese social media application similar to TikTok. These migrations to RedNote led to a direct interaction between the Americans and the Chinese. Despite their language differences, the TikTok and Rednote users interacted through images and translators. This strange cultural exchange allowed each side to learn a little of the other's language. Once the ban on TikTok had settled in, a large majority of its users settled on RedNote. "It's also embarrassing that [China] beat the United States on entertainment," Salami said. "It wasn't like, basically showing me any communism or anything. Honestly, the [RedNote] platform and the algorithm are much better than any other app I've ever seen." When the US banned TikTok in January, it was only a matter of time before Donald Trump brought it back within a few hours. Once Trump was in power, he granted TikTok a 75-day extension on Jan. 20, expecting the app to transition smoothly from Chinese interference. Although the app was accessible in the US again, Apple and Google removed TikTok from their app stores. It wasn't until Feb. 13 that TikTok became available in both stores. "I mourned when TikTok got banned just for the ban to not last longer than 24 hours," said Salami. "I'm so glad TikTok is back and working up again, I couldn't live without it."

**37.4% of students think social media is a daily necessity for them**

**45% of students think they can go a lot of time without social media**

**14.7% of students think they can live without social media**

**2.9% of students chose not to comment**

**\*out of 238 students polled**

continued to express little to no involvement with the Chinese government. Despite his continuous attempts to inform Senators of the application's protection of private information, the algorithm that promotes content to users, limited interactions with ByteDance and management of younger audiences, Congress still denied Chew's claims. "To the American people watching today, hear this: TikTok is a weapon by the Chinese Communist Party to spy on you, manipulate what you see and exploit for future generations," former Washington State Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers said. On Apr. 24, 2024, Former President Joe Biden signed a bill giving ByteDance 270 days to sell TikTok or banning the app from the United States. From then on, TikTok had an official, definite



# Tackling Senioritis

By Varsha Jhanak

As the final months of high school approach, many seniors find senioritis plaguing them. Senioritis is more than simply a reason to take it easy. It is characterized by a decline in motivation, procrastination, and a renewed respect for the time that is left. The emotional and mental change that occurs as seniors close one chapter and begin a new one is reflected in senioritis. “I think that this is a very special time in people’s lives,” Government and IH teacher David South said. “I think that you’ve just been in this routine for the past 12 years of your life: go to school, pass, get good grades. You’re just kind of stuck in that loop. With 12th grade, you are now looking forward to something so different. You’re looking towards the future but then you’re also like ‘I’ve been doing this for 12 years, I can do it in my sleep.’ I think there’s a lot of elements but I think looking toward the future and closing this chapter of your life gets people all nostalgic and weird.” According to Merriam-Webster, senioritis is defined as “an ebbing of motivation and effort by school seniors as evidenced by tardiness, absences and lower grades.” For most seniors, senioritis symptoms tend to be increased procrastination, declined interest in academics and a tendency to miss class or assignments. “I feel like my standards for my grades are, at this point, [that] I want to do good but I don’t want to stress myself out to the point that I’m going to spend hours on one assignment for one class to get a bad grade on it,” senior Brynn Downs said. “I’m just going to do the work to the best of my ability and I’m just not going to spend too much time revising

it unless I need to. My mental health is more important than all the work for these classes.” According to Upeople.edu, many factors lead to the symptoms of senioritis. To start with, many students experience academic fatigue or burnout from their time as a high school student. In addition, for many students, their senioritis deals with the future. For some seniors, senior year brings the fear of the unknown world that comes after graduation. But, for

make more memories. “There’s some year where I’ve taught juniors one year and the same kids the next year and I’m like ‘who are you?’” South said. “Where is that kid who is grind, grind, grind all the time? It’s kind of fun for me to see some kids loosen up a little bit and take a breath. I think there’s some elements of senioritis that can be good. Because, that kid who’s just nose to the grind, I’m like ‘do you hang out with people outside of school?’ In the

**“Kind of listen to that senioritis voice a little. It might be telling you maybe you haven’t hung out with these people as much as you wanted to. Use it as a tool to help you know what you’re going to miss. There will be some things that you’re going to miss about high school. Senioritis can give you that hint about what you’re going to miss.”**

**- Government and IH Humanities teacher David South**

senior year, they’re like ‘I might not max [a class] but I went to the football game.’ You need that nostalgia to come into where you can see what’s going on around you.” For seniors trying to combat their senioritis, there are many methods. Students can set goals to reach before the end of high school, find a routine that works for them and be sure to stay relaxed. “Remember that you’re so close to finishing,” South said. “I would

some seniors, senior year builds up the anticipation for what is to come in life. “I think so many face these problems [of senioritis] because we get piled on so much work,” Downs said. “Even if it’s an easy class, a lot of classes assign homework and busy work. We don’t want to keep doing this every single day. We’ve been doing it every single day for four years and now we’re so close. [Most people] say senior year is supposed to be your easiest year. It does not feel like that. We’re done with it, we don’t want to do this five days a week.” Although senioritis has negative consequences, it also poses benefits. As students approach the end of their high school career, they relax and

encourage you to write down what your goals for high school career were. Remember what those are so you don’t look back in a few months and think ‘I just blew that off.’ - But also, kind of listen to that senioritis voice a little. It might be telling you maybe you haven’t hung out with these people as much as you wanted to. You could study or you could go to Sonic real quick. Use it as a tool to help you know what you’re going to miss. There will be some things that you’re going to miss about high school. Senioritis can give you that hint about what you’re going to miss.”

# Nailed It: Young Entrepreneurship

## PANTHER PROFILE

By Aycen Koa Matsumoto Castro

Daniela Gonzalez's eyes stay focused, paying no attention to her surroundings. As she starts to observe it closer, she begins to see even more around it. She starts to notice its features; it possesses a light brown shade, covered in many different creases. As she brings her eyes back to the object, she sees that it now has a glossy texture to it, with light shining right back towards her. There is no doubt about it now; what she is seeing is a nail that she herself is working on. Gonzalez is a 17-year-old student and the owner of Nails by Danny, her own self-proclaimed nail business, which is run right in her very own home. Gonzalez started her business during her sophomore year and continues to run it to this day. Interestingly, Gonzalez started her business unintentionally. "My mom really didn't want to take me to get my nails done anymore, so she told me to start learning by myself," Gonzalez said, "I started doing them on me, and my cousins and my friends, they started wanting me to do [their nails] for them, and I started liking them, taking clients, and then I started with this whole business thing in 2023." Despite starting off unintentionally, Gonzalez focused on starting her own business, taking step-by-step procedures to help get it off the ground. "I was working with my mom, and started saving up money little by little, then when I had enough I bought supplies," Gonzalez said, "I started practicing on friends and family, I started figuring I really like doing this." Gonzalez started recording her journey on TikTok, where she would regularly post videos of herself working on others' nails, as well as the results. As her business started to grow, she eventually delved into Instagram, where she gained even more clients for herself. "I started making my Instagram account, started getting a following of people asking me [if] can I do their nails," Gonzalez said, "On TikTok, I will show the nails I've done, the process of me taking it, steps of how I do other



things. On Instagram, I will post how the nails are looking." Although Gonzalez was on the right track for herself, she still experienced plenty of adversities on her journey. Despite taking the proper steps to advertise her business, she saw that the success of advertisements was not guaranteed. "The hardest part was getting clientele, getting that attraction. At the beginning I really thought that I was gonna get clients right away, but that process did take a while," Gonzalez said, "It was really a slow process, a lot of patience is necessary. If I didn't have my patience, I probably would have give up." Gonzalez's problems were not only internal but external as well. When it comes to working on big projects such as starting your own business, support is a huge factor that is needed by amateur entrepreneurs. Gonzalez, however, did not receive this factor. "A big thing that this has taught is that your clients will be more of your friends than friends will," Gonzalez said. "I have really close friends, but back then, I was a beginner, the trust wasn't there. The trust was strangers, completely strangers, that really loved my work. They saw my work online and everything, and they really liked it. Don't get me wrong, my friends still support me and everything, but it did take them a while to trust me." Despite the problems that Gonzalez faced, she still pushed herself through all of them. She now enjoys working in

a field that she loves and expresses her passion for it, so much so that she even explains her plans for the future when concerning herself in the beauty industry. "At first, that's the only thing I wanted to do, but my parents always told me you need to have a Plan B," Gonzalez said. "I really love doing nails, I really do see myself doing them in the future, but as a side hustle, because I really do want get to do real estate. But, I still wanna go to nail school, get licensed, to have that profession, no less." After years in business, Gonzalez uses her own experiences as a self-made business-owner to give others honest advice when it comes to entrepreneurship, especially in today's economy. As her business continues to grow, Gonzalez continues to enjoy working passionately for herself in the job she loves. Although she voices her concerns when it comes to starting a business, she still encourages others to have the same dream to follow through with them, just as she did. "If you have a dream on doing it, go for it," Gonzalez said. "Don't give up, it will start coming, slowly by slowly. There's gonna be ups and downs, so if you wanna start doing it, just don't give up on yourself. I like being my own boss, it's something that I really enjoy doing. And I like having clients come in, it's my safe spot. It just came naturally."


 Photo from Megan Glass

## JROTC: More Than Military Kids

By Carter Fleming

The Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (JROTC) is a class famously known for its relations with the military. The students fly the flags, run the pledges at football games and pep rallies, wear uniforms and learn the basics of the military. However, that's what is often thought of when it comes to the JROTC. What truly is this class though, what are their goals and what do they strive for? "The mission of the JROTC is to develop young adults to become the best versions of citizens they can in their communities," Sergeant Major (SGM) Anthony Henry said. "The family and the comradery that they get out of this four-year period is not like any other class." JROTC does more than just wear uniforms and march. JROTC is also focused on STEM with a VEX robotics program and a room for building, coding and practicing for competitions. Cadet Battalion Commander Senior Peyton Anderson is a lead programmer for this robotics team. "It's really fun," Battalion S-4 senior Alec Cruz said. "After school every day we have practice from 5:00 to 6:30 and that's when we're able to get all the team together and all the cadets from McMillen and Williams as well, to go over game plans and build a robot." The JROTC includes eight different programs. These programs do different things depending on whether they are school-related or competition-related. The JROTC has a robotics team, an academics team, a drone

team and a cyberpatriot team that all participate in competitions relating to their specific fields. For example, the academic team competes in competitions that require them to answer SAT/ACT level questions. There is also the drill team, color guard team, leadership team and the physical training team. These teams all participate in more activities relating to the school itself. "It's a very unique program, so them choosing it, I tell all of them go give everything a try," SGM Henry said. "For the first nine weeks, it's a matter of just letting everybody go out and give everything a try, see where they feel. There are some [students] that don't like some things in robotics but they can code, so they become coders in robotics. Then I've got the [students] that just want physical fitness. That's fine, go out there, get dirty, jump up and down, tear stuff up. That's how they figure out what their niche is inside the JROTC. We have one for everybody." The JROTC is a student-run class built on a leadership foundation. Each class is built with a classroom leader and treated as its own company. When SGM Henry isn't teaching on Mondays and Wednesdays, students lead the class, practice their formations and do uniform inspections. The entire class and their rankings are all decided on a student's leadership, education and training levels or LET level, which is dependent on how many years they've been in the JROTC. Then, the whole

program is led by a group of staff like Anderson, the Cadet Battalion Commander who oversees everything, making sure the JROTC program stays in the top 10% of all JROTC in the U.S to keep receiving grants or Cruz, who maintains all the clothing, issuing them out and making sure they are collected at the end of the year. "I take pride in wearing the uniform," Anderson said. "I'm representing the program, mainly because I'm in the uniform but also because I'm Battalion Commander, so I need to make sure I'm wearing it properly, so all my followers wear it properly as well." JROTC is more than a class. It is a close community or a family of people who are together to be the best they can be while working towards their future. The goal of JROTC is not to send high school students to the military; the goal is to get the students to graduate while being the best versions of themselves. This class shows students who struggle to find a goal in life or can't figure out what they're good at and help them through that. These students become very involved in their community whether it be participating in school events or doing community service. "I'm deeply rooted in JROTC. Every single cadet is my kid," SGM Henry said. "I look at it in that exact way. Parents give me the opportunity to work with their child, which ultimately becomes mine and I get to watch them for four years and help assist and give them leadership potential."

# AI Revolution: New Digital Entity

By Camille Wright, Melanie Pinkerton and Reece Yeamans

Within the past five years, the world has grown even more accustomed to Artificial Intelligence software and its place in technology and media. These new advancements enable computers to replicate human tasks, and in recent years it crossed into the field of creativity and everyday work. Concerns grow over what computers will be able to accomplish within the next few years, and if they will ever replace human skill, intellect and morals. Others don't believe that will happen, as AI is fueled by human example and often falls short where human creation excels. "I think AI is a tool, depending on who is using it, that is where the skill comes from," 3D art teacher

Alex Thornley said. "I don't think AI will be able to surpass the human element essential in the art-making process."

## Rewriting Classrooms: AI's Impact on Education

Classrooms continuously evolve with technology. Chalkboards became whiteboards, paper assignments moved to digital ones, and now, ideas are shifting from human creativity to artificial intelligence. The introduction of ChatGPT on Nov. 30, 2022, introduced a new era in education, where AI-powered tools generate essays, solve math problems and even mimic human thought processes. As

schools adapt to this rapid change, students are left navigating school with these new tools and navigating the fine line between using AI as a learning tool and relying on it too much. "At first, I didn't really know a lot about it," junior Kennedy Lewis-Picklsimer said. "In sophomore year, teachers started complaining about students who used ChatGPT. I had never heard about it before, because I'm not the most techie person. So at first, I was just confused." AI tools quickly became popular with students as they became more widely available. Originally launched as an advanced chatbot, ChatGPT and similar platforms evolved into a go-to learning tool that allows students to summarize complex texts, create

Photo from NPR

**59.7% of students think AI can be both harmful and helpful to a student's education**

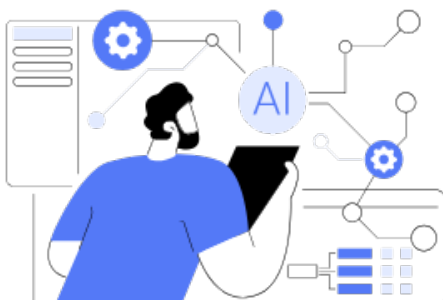
**9.7% of students think AI is very harmful to a student's education**

**9.2% of students think AI is somewhat helpful to a student's education**

study guides and receive instant explanations for complicated concepts. According to a recent Digital Education Council survey, 86% of students now use generative AI regularly for their studies, though its use varies widely from simple brainstorming to entire essay generation. “I used ChatGPT a lot for math stuff because I have a really hard time in that, so it’s really good to have someone who can break down concepts for me,” Lewis-Picklsimer said. “I try not to use it to just get the exact answer, but rather to explain how to do it.” Tools like Chat GPT immediately raised ethical concerns because while some students use AI as a learning tool, others use it to complete assignments with minimal effort. The convenience of AI-generated writing has led to concerns that students may miss out on critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Teachers reported increased AI-assisted plagiarism, leading schools to implement stricter academic integrity policies and employ AI de-

tection tools to monitor student submissions. “If people just use ChatGPT to write their entire essays, first of all, you’re not learning,” Lewis-Picklsimer said. “And then second of all, I feel like that’s why our generation is so illiterate—because they’re not doing it themselves.” Teachers have varying opinions on how to integrate AI into classrooms effectively. While many see it as a distraction or a form of cheating, others see it as an opportunity to improve their teaching methods. AI-powered tutoring systems have the potential to provide personalized feedback and adapt lesson plans to students’ individual needs. At the same time, its increasing presence raises concerns about how it might shape the future workforce. As automation advances, businesses may prioritize AI-driven efficiency over human labor, impacting job markets in industries traditionally relying on skilled workers. “A lot of businesses are going to start cutting corners and using AI instead of hiring actual people to do human jobs,” Lewis-Picklsimer said. The debate over AI’s role in education concerns more than just ethics but also whether the technology’s benefits outweigh its drawbacks. On the one hand, AI can help personalize a student’s learning

experience, automate grading for teachers and can bridge the gap for students with disabilities by performing real-time translations or audio transcriptions. On the other hand, though, overuse of AI can cause students to be over-dependent on it, discourage creativity and reduce student engagement in class. A study from the National Education Association found that while AI can boost efficiency, over-reliance on it may take away from fundamental writing and critical thinking skills over time. “AI has helped me get a better understanding,” Lewis-Picklsimer said. “It can be a good source of information if you don’t rely on it too much. But also, I think it leads to decreasing creativity because people aren’t writing their own essays.” Responsible usage is the key to AI’s role in education. While it can be a helpful tool to students, over-reliance may take away from actual learning. Schools now face the challenge of teaching students to use AI as only as a tool or supplement rather than a complete substitute for academic effort. “Just don’t rely on it too much, because then you’re not going to learn,” Lewis-Picklsimer said. “If I rely too much on AI, I don’t really do the physics work myself. I feel like that makes me struggle.”



**8.4% of students think AI is very helpful to a student’s education**

**6.7% of students think AI is somewhat harmful to a student’s education**

**6.3% of students chose not to comment**

*\*out of 238 students polled*



## Creative Intelligence: AI in Art Industry

One of the biggest threats that people believe AI poses is its ability to generate works of art and even short videos or animated clips. People, especially artists, worry that the computer-generated works will surpass real human talent and replace several opportunities creators have to show off their skills. “A large part of creativity comes from the human experience, and each artist has a unique way of seeing the world and how they express that experience,” Thornley said. “AI takes what others have done and creates a composite.” Within the span of a year, AI generated art went from extra fingers and strange clothing to legible pieces of art and video. Fake whimsical scenarios and obscured realities come to life on the screens faster than they ever have in real life through human hands. Despite AI’s progress, many can tell the difference between computer-generated and man-made art, and describe AI as “lifeless” and “lacking personality” compared to works created by real people. “A lot of AI images have missing

or irregular shapes within the work,” Thornley said. “If you look closely enough you can see the signs that the work isn’t original.” Regardless of the differences, a handful of businesses and corporations utilize AI art in favor of its efficiency and the lack of wages that a real artist would get paid. A great example is Coca Cola’s advertisement for the 2024 holiday season, featuring artwork generated by Real Magic AI. “Many artists work off commission, they survive by creating,” Thornley said. “When AI enters the picture, it takes jobs away from real artists.” Companies including Coca Cola received backlash for running artists out of a job and utilizing AI for their projects instead. Many artists are afraid that their talents will go to waste if AI continues to learn, grow and replace their jobs. Others, however, believe that computer-generated art will never be as renowned as human art, and that this is just the same as any other human occupation taken by a machine. “This reminds me of when self-checkout counters became popular. Many people were concerned that those jobs would disappear too, but even now there are still a lot of issues with them,” Thornley said. “I think this is very similar.” Not only do artists experience a lack of job opportunities due to computer-generated works, but many also face plagiarism of their original work through computer-generated recreations of projects they worked hard on. Artists and creators used

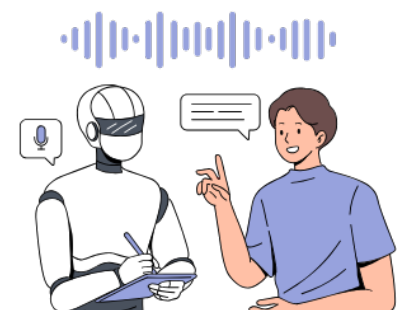
to fear other people plagiarising or stealing their artwork, however now they have to be wary of AI-generated copies as well. “For the most part I stay away from AI,” Thornley said. “I don’t want to be involved with artists’ work being used in AI algorithms and they aren’t given credit. This applies to visual arts, literature, even music and video.” On the consumer side of the industry, customers and guests don’t appeal to AI works, and often search for authentic pieces. Artists fear their work will lose its value and charm to what they believe are preferred robotic renditions, however, many people still seek the natural beauty of man-made art for admiration and even purchase. “I don’t see AI taking over the art industry any time soon,” Thornley said. “In fact, more and more I see people looking for original art, at art festivals, in galleries and online platforms like Etsy and TikTok. The viewers’ experience with art make it meaningful, and people want meaningful objects in their homes.” With this, many argue how AI should be used in the art industry, if at all. Although many companies dove headfirst into utilizing AI for advertisements and promoting items, most artists generally believe that AI should not interfere with creative endeavors. “AI could be useful in spaces of restoration or generating ideas,” Thornley said. “But I hope that moving forward artists get back to their creative roots and make art that is original without the use of AI.”

## Shifting Futures: AI Workforce

The perceived end goal for AI currently speculated is the technological singularity, a point at which an AI will be able to iteratively improve itself without human assistance. Before this point is reached, however, artificial general intelligence (AGI) must be created. AGI will be capable of something akin to real thought, functioning nearly identical to how humans do. Sam Altman, the current CEO of OpenAI, expects AGI as early as 2025. Massive tech companies including Microsoft, Google, Nvidia, Amazon, and Meta invested billions of dollars into AI development, and as projected market values continue to rise, so does funding. Despite this, many experts in the field still believe that we may be several years away from AGI, due to unforeseen challenges regarding the development of common sense reasoning. When asked whether or not they were concerned about AI's impact on future employment, 68.5% of students said they were. Despite their fear, there are some big things people want to see from AI. "I hope AI can be used to better humanity and also better the world," Senior Kai Sawai said. "I can see us becoming too dependent on it though." Much like a search engine today, AI has the potential to become a window into the wealth of human knowledge. Many already use AI in this way to aid in school work

and learning. AI will affect more than just education and personal lives. Industry today has already jumped on the AI bandwagon and shows no sign of slowing down. As AI becomes more integrated into the workforce, existing human jobs will be phased out while new ones are created to service the technology. "I want to be an engineer in the military and I think AI would definitely be helpful," senior Peyton Anderson said. "It would be great for the programming, brainstorming, and running simulations." What most people wonder though is if humans will be secure in the future. For many, AI will help with financial security as more advanced technology represents more opportunity for productivity and pay. For some, however, AI represents a threat to financial security. Companies across various industries including Google, Ikea, and Duolingo have all already begun replacing human workers with AI. There is a strong indication that the economic decision many companies will make is to use cheaper, more efficient machines instead of human beings. "If these companies are too reliant on AI and it gets taken away what do they do then?" Sawai asks. "So, I am a little scared of AI takeover" The government too plans on utilizing AI. The US military plans for by 2040 large-scale integration of AI-based technology with human beings. The goal is not machines controlling machines, or ma-

chines controlling people. Instead, there are plans for human beings to use AI-based operatives much like military dogs. In addition, AI will be largely in control of logistics for the military, meaning that the inner workings of moving people and equipment will be incredibly efficient. "For certain things like drones, explosive ordinance disposal, and jobs like that, it's too dangerous for humans," Anderson said. "AI will definitely replace dangerous jobs in the military." AI may be able to save humans from dangerous jobs in the military, and may in fact be able to phase humans out of the military entirely. Some question the efficacy of AI in the military. "In certain situations the incorporation of AI may be beneficial, but not overall," Sawai said. "We were able to be effective without AI in the past and I think we can still do it." While the benefits vs harms that AI will bring to humanity are debated, what's unavoidable is that AI is here to stay. As AI grows in prevalence, humanity must learn and adapt to use it as a tool that some people see it to be. "AI should be an enhancement for humanity," Anderson said. "AI won't phase out humanity completely, so we'll have to start working alongside and adapting to it."



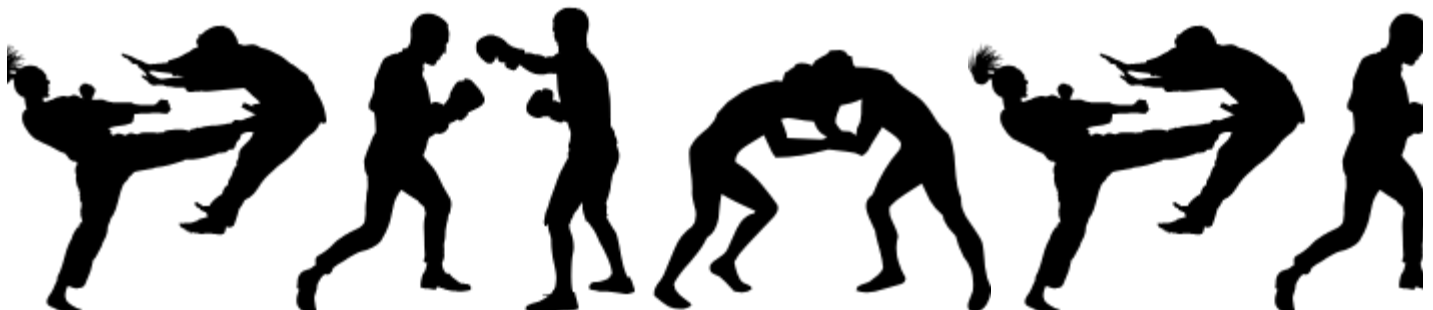
# Grappling, Grit, Glory

By Celine Tan

Combat sports are highly competitive, with one-on-one matches and a clear focus on winning and earning titles. With roots in traditional martial arts like Tai Chi, Karate and Aikido, combat sports evolved to include boxing, kickboxing, mixed martial arts (MMA) and wrestling. For wrestling, specifically, the goal is to gain control over an opponent and pin them down against the mat to score points; the person with the most points wins. Compared to popular team sports like soccer or basketball, the intensity of wrestling is unmatched. “There’s no place to hide when you’re in a wrestling match,” assistant wrestling coach Noel Peterson said. “It’s just you against him. In a team, you can kind of hide, so [combat sports are] a different kind of sport.” Wrestling practices are very intense, with each session lasting for one hour. The goal is to stay moving the entire time. During in-season practices, athletes typically train with lots of sprints and go live in the ring to wrestle against other opponents. Due to the physical fighting involved, some people have the stereotype that wrestling is only for aggressive people. However, this is not always the case. “I don’t think wrestling is only for aggressive people,” sophomore wrestler Sania Kasturi said. “Obviously, a lot of my friends on the team have this side of them that comes out

when they step onto the mat that’s aggressive. But those same exact people, I know them outside of wrestling, and not everyone’s going to be aggressive. You can have any sort of personality and still be a wrestler.” The combative aspect of a wrestling match makes it a perfect place for athletes to go and relieve stress by channeling their anger and frustration into a physical stimulus. For emotions like anger that stem from negative experiences, it can be beneficial for people to channel them into a socially acceptable activity. Specifically, this act is called “controlled fury.” “For me, [wrestling practice] was a place where I could go and forget everything else that was going on and everything that’s bothering me doesn’t matter,” Peterson said. “I’m in that room for two hours and for two hours, all that matters is [in] that room. It’s two hours different than the other 22. It was a good way to [relieve stress] when I was younger and was able to really get out there and work out more with the athletes.” While it may seem like a dangerous sport, wrestling includes rules that aim to prevent injuries. For example, according to REFR Sports, holds such as the full nelson, “which involves placing both arms under the opponent’s arms and locking hands behind their neck,” are illegal due to the high risk of injury. Performing illegal moves or engaging in unnecessary roughness

results in a point for the other opponent. In order to avoid injury and win a match, it is imperative to stay focused until the very last second. “You have to be very self-motivated [as a wrestler] because not only do you have to be ready to compete day in and day out—it’s grueling—but there’s also the weight aspect of it,” Peterson said. “You have to make a certain weight class, and that requires self-sacrifice from eating anything you want and everything you want to maintain [that weight]. It’s a very disciplined sport.” As with many other sports, wrestling requires an athlete to be mentally strong. It can be easy to look at an opponent’s track record and think they are the better fighter, but Kasturi emphasizes that “you can’t let the nerves take over.” Inevitably, there are times when a match goes the wrong way. At that point, the only way to move forward is to figure out why and how to improve their performance next time. “Wrestling has taught me that if you have goals in life, you obviously have to work towards them [physically], but you also have to mentally work towards them,” Kasturi said. “And so it is connected a lot to mental health because it has taught me to believe. Belief is one of my favorite words because it really defines a lot of aspects [of] wrestling. You really have to believe in yourself in order to be successful.”





# Prioritizing Passions: Music, Culture, Dance

By Aisha Zahrah Ali

Music and creativity are key elements that build the foundation of dance that connects students with common interests in the art. The first step of any choreography is finding the perfect song. Music plays an essential role in allowing the dance to remain meaningful and artistic. “[Music] is a combination effort,” dance teacher Nikki Marquez said. “A lot of times we will brainstorm together, [students] will come up with a whole bunch of ideas and then [we] narrow it down to something that we can choreograph to.” By considering students’ opinions, the music choices resonate with students while challenging them. Music is a fundamental part of dance that allows students to further hone and refine their skills while expressing themselves. Like any other sport, students need to stay focused so that they can properly utilize their time. “We are given plenty of time to learn and refine choreography during class,” senior Kira Taylor said. “I make sure to stay focused so that it doesn’t interfere with my other activities.” The majority of the time spent practicing outside of class depends completely on the students’ goals and dedication. Since coaches can only do so much, certain students might dedicate additional time depending on their skills. “It depends on how committed the kids are to improvement,” Marquez said. “There’s not a whole lot that needs to be done outside of school, but if they have specific goals they want to reach then they need to be doing stuff at home to supplement what we do in class; 45 minutes here isn’t going to necessarily be enough to reach a lot of the goals that they want.” Athleticism and flexibility are determining factors of how much time might be spent outside of school practicing. Students that are both beginners and advanced join dance classes at

school, so the curriculum manages to accommodate both needs. “The best part of dance is having the creative freedom to express myself and the opportunity to choreograph routines with and for my friends,” Taylor said. “It’s a great way to connect with others while showcasing our passion.” Drill team is similar to dance; however, the drill team’s competitive tryouts require dedication and are potentially stress-inducing. “Tryouts are a full week process,” junior Kiara Leask said. “You learn the dance, and then

tions,” Leask says. “It’s a really good environment and a good way for me to talk to my friends and spend time with them before going to the floor. Then, obviously, I love the performing aspect of it, so at the end of the performance it’s very like ‘oh my gosh, that was great,’ so it’s really fun.” Drill team members build a positive environment by hyping each other up after routines or performances. Dancers in the graduating class of 2025 look back on some of the best moments, reflecting on how the experience made their senior

year all the more memorable. “One of the most bittersweet moments is our school’s drill team spring show,” Taylor said. “It’s our final time performing together as a team, making it an emotional but beautiful experience.” Aside from being a fun extracurricular activity and sport, the drills contribute to teamwork and other skills that go beyond high school. “[Drill team] is a great experience. You gain a lot of skills, not just in dance, but in learning how to work with other people, it’s stuff you can [apply] in your future life or career, and [overall] it’s just a great experience.” The class invites new opportunities through leadership skills and other qualities that colleges seek from incoming university freshmen. The experience extends beyond college extracurriculars; it allows students to enjoy their time at school and the years before college. “When we come into the dance room it feels like a separate entity from the school,” Marquez said. “The class kind of becomes its own family and they create really great bonds with each other. [Dance] gives [students] an opportunity to disassociate from everything, school, and all the stresses of the day. Just kind of be present in space [where] they can exercise and just have fun for a portion of the day.”

**“The class kind of becomes its own family and they create really great bonds with each other. [Dance] gives [students] an opportunity to disassociate from everything, school, and all the stresses of the day.”**

**- dance teacher Nikki Marquez**

there’s mock tryouts, it’s like a trial-run practice version of it, and then the next day you have the full tryouts with judges and it’s like the [main] thing.” Within the rigorous routines, training and schedules, students like Leask find meaningful friendships through drill team. “Majority of my friends share interests [of either] dance or drill team, and that’s kind-of why we became friends,” Leask says. “Freshman year a lot of my friends did tryouts with me, but after making the team I [gained] a lot of new friendships.” Drill team members spend hours memorizing and practicing for competitions that allow them to bring back not just outstanding awards but also great memories. “I [enjoy] the time we spend getting ready for games and competi-

# Bigger Than Games: Culture, Impact of College Sports

By Jade Chu

The yelling crowd across the arena, loud noises filling the air, and the tension between the teams are just some of the customs behind college sports culture. Sports have a huge impact on college students who receive scholarships around the country, and the fans are always by their side to support them. Founded in 1906, the NCAA is a member-led organization that regulates the rules and regulations of collegiate sports. This was the foundation of college sports, and it slowly grew as athletes became more prominent and schools invested in their sports programs, leading to the modern impact the culture has on many Americans. “My experience as a college athlete, I wouldn’t trade it for anything because college sports have become a lot more serious,” football head coach Tony Benedetto said. “Typically, I’d have to work out from 5 a.m. to 8 a.m., then go to class, so it was like a full-time job. However, I think being a college athlete helped me prepare for life.” College sports serve as a platform for athlete development, and they aren’t just a sport but a lifelong impact on athletes’ lives. Benedetto played collegiately in NCAA Division II with the University of Sioux Falls, then transitioned into Plano East’s Head Football Coach. The influence of his college experience is how he builds his team to the highest level. “What I learned as a college athlete is a similar program I am trying to run at the high school level,” Benedetto said. “College sports have structured practices for a certain

amount of time, so do we. We want to do the same amount of work so that when they go off to college, they feel really prepared.” College athletes have a lot of pressure because the athletes represent the school. College sports culture fosters community and inclusivity, although athletes who want to commit must work daily to ensure they get recruited. “Football is a big part of the character I have built; it’s a big part of who I am,” football captain Andrew Earls said. “It’s helped my perseverance and leadership grow, and it contributes to a lot of parts of my personality.” Earls is committed to the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. Through high school football, he learned a lot about himself and reached his current position because of the sport. Physical health correlates with mental health, and many athletes support each other, with that bond growing stronger in college. According to PBS News, U.S. college sports generate billions of dollars every year for their schools, and this wouldn’t be possible without the support of the student section. “It’s a challenge to your academic life, although it ends up making you a better student because you overcome those challenges,” Earls said. “I’m ready to get into a bigger environment like college, which really loves and appreciates sports more than high school does. Just playing in front of a big crowd will be very fun.” Sports can get in the way of academics, as it can be a lot to juggle, although athletes are always encouraged to maintain the highest

level of balance in high school to be ready for when college hits. Benedetto makes sure his athletes are keeping up with their grades because being able to play sports isn’t the only important thing. Without education, there will be no college sports. “When student-athletes are debating between playing a collegiate sport or just going to college, I always say, ‘Play sports,’” Benedetto said. “Your resume will hold more weight if you can show that you’re a 3.0 student-athlete.” Athletes thrive off the crowd’s energy and the momentum of their team’s supporters. A strong fan base is crucial, and fortunately, many schools have collegiate sports programs. Game day—chanting and team colors—embody the all-American spirit. “If there is a strong student section and a lot of energy, it helps the athletes play the sport better,” Benedetto said. “The more people that are invested, the more it motivates athletes to know that they are bringing pride to the team.” These events foster community, showing school pride and appreciation for the athletes who worked hard to achieve their status. College sports are not only an opportunity for students to get scholarships but also a family that is created with their fans. “I am looking forward to a team full of guys who really love the sport,” Earls said. “Knowing that people are leaving their hometown to play football for one college is what I am looking forward to, and creating an environment where there is a strong brotherhood.”

Photo from CBS Sports

# Beating All Odds: Lady Panthers Basketball's Historical Season

By Melanie Pinkerton

This season, the Lady Panthers dominated the court with several wins and a unique team dynamic. With their first-ever performance at the state semifinals and an overall season record of 24-14, they've proven to be a talented and groundbreaking group. "It's been fun," coach Derrick Richardson said. "There have been some ups and downs and growing pains, but also gelling and playing really well and at the right time." The team only consists of two seniors and majority underclassmen, and at first learning how to play together with the gaps in experience was a challenge. Thanks to personal grit and dedication, Richardson is very proud of the team's progress and how they use their individual strengths to achieve their collective goals. "We've kind of had some ups and downs this year, being a young team," Richardson said. "We've just had to learn how to play together, because we have some talented players. We've grown throughout the season." The team practices every morning before school. Their practice sessions consist of focusing on individual skills at the beginning, and later, they tackle teamwork and reps of daily drills. Every Tuesday and Friday, they put these skills to the test at their games. "We come in early, and we start with what we call pre-practice," Richardson said. "The girls go through some general individual skill stuff so that we can really get to the team stuff once we get started." Each girl has something to bring to the team, and in senior Sema Udo's case, she finally reached her 1,000-point milestone earlier

this school year. This is an honorable achievement that basketball players receive after scoring 1,000 points throughout their high school varsity career. "When I scored my thousandth point, I'll always remember that," Udo said. "I wasn't expecting it at all. My coach called a timeout and then told me I scored my thousandth point, so that was really cool." Udo started basketball when she was in second grade, after she watched her sister practice. Since then, she has become a star player and gained lots of experience on and off the court. Although she doesn't envision basketball as a career, Udo still really enjoys basketball as a hobby. "My mom was really heavy on getting me and my siblings involved in sports, so she put me in basketball," Udo said. "I really liked it, and I was pretty good at it for someone who had never played, so I just stuck with it. "When the team loses or doesn't perform the way they want to, the teammates lift each other up and encourage one another for future games. During practice, they watch clips taken during their previous games so they can visualize what to work on. Udo especially tries to encourage her friends after games that didn't go so well.

"I encourage people if they're feeling down. I'll tell them that it's okay and to keep their head up," Udo said. "I try to give good energy to the team." Despite anything that comes their way, the team loves to bond and make memories on and off the court. They share laughs and fond memories along with a deep passion to excel and push boundaries to reach bigger dreams. "They're a good group," Richardson said. "They love to laugh and have a good time together, but are also competitive and want to be successful at basketball." Through a lot of grit, new experiences, and team bonds, the Lady Panthers swept the season and made East history. The girls worked hard and adapted to their environment, and through their resilience and passion they achieved goals that girl's basketball has never seen before. "[The season] has been really good, actually," Udo said. "We have a really good team, and everything's just been going really good."

Photo from @dfwsportshorts



# “The Simpsons” Strange Superpower

By Megan Glass

With over 36 years in the making and 781 episodes across 36 seasons, the iconic American sitcom by FOX proceeds to leave its mark on culture into 2025. Anchoring its role in society as a comedic and satirical show, “The Simpsons” remains a household name. The show strategically delivers sharp social commentary and absurd humor to heartfelt family moments. Its ability to adhere to cultural and social shifts, mirror trends, and even predict significant historical events reflects its persisting relevance to humanity. This show stuns audiences by accurately predicting some of the most notable events in history. These include the outcome of the 2016 Presidential Election, Kamala Harris’ iconic purple pantsuit, and several Super Bowl results. It also foresaw the Ebola outbreak, Nobel Prize winners and the invention of smartwatches. As a result, many people now speculate that the show might genuinely have the power to predict the future. Within their team of writers, they analyze social and political trends, producing relevant and relatable content to fans—even today—while drawing connections to future events. When these brilliant minds collaborate, they craft scripts infused with clever innuendos. By insinuating subtle humor and layered meanings, they engage with a wide range of ages within the audience. It is not the writers’ objective to predict the future but to simply put a satirical spin on

current events and society. At the time, Donald Trump was already a well-known businessman and public figure, fresh on Americans’ minds. The writers saw this as an opportunity to include a throwaway line about his presidency, referring to his brief run as a Reform Party candidate in 2000. When Bart to the Future aired that spring, most viewers overlooked Lisa’s remark. In Season 11 of *The Simpsons*, during her fictional presidency, she states, “We inherited quite the budget crunch from President Trump.” As reruns of this episode aired over a decade later, it seemed to apply to his 2016 presidential campaign. In the same episode, during Lisa’s fictional presidency, she wears a purple pantsuit and pearls. This outfit was almost identical to former Vice President Kamala Harris’s outfit at the 2021 Inauguration. The writers explained how Hilary Clinton’s attire possibly inspired this as first lady, but they were going for a dominating look for a powerful woman. The writers have not only demonstrated remarkable foresight into politics but also acute accuracy in the world of sports. Just days before the 1992 Super Bowl, they released an episode where Lisa correctly predicted the Washington Redskins would win. The following year, they correctly predicted a win by the Dallas Cowboys. This trend continued with moderate success over the years and ended with another correct prediction in ‘95 of the 49ers taking the dub. In the

early ‘90s, a *Simpsons* episode explored the theme of advancing technology. During an episode in season 6, Lisa’s boyfriend Hugh fumbles over his wedding proposal; he quickly improvises by speaking into his watch. The same episode offhandedly brings the idea of video chats to life—a popular mode of communication in the following years. When smartwatches, video chatting, and voice recognition became more advanced and widely accessible by the 2010s, it felt as if technology had finally caught up with *The Simpsons*’ vision of the future. In the 1960s, two Beatles fans sent Paul McCartney a mixtape, expecting never to hear a response. However, in the 2010s—more than 50 years later—they were shocked to hear back from him. Interestingly enough, *The Simpsons* predicted this moment back in 1990. In one episode, Marge reminisces about how she sent a painting to Ringo Starr during high school, only to receive a reply many decades later. The story of McCartney’s delayed response imitates Marge’s experience with Starr, adding another eerie prediction to the show’s long list of coincidences. While these moments might feel far-fetched at the time of airing, many of them end up coming true in ways that mirror what was shown on the show. The McCartney story reflects how the show has an uncanny ability to capture unusual yet possible situations, making its predictions stand out as more than just coincidence. The show has repeatedly predicted future sporting events, scandals, elections and technological advancements and even sparked amusing coincidences. While there is a vast amount of material to draw from, fans often manipulate episode details to fit a particular narrative. For example, after the collapse of Silicon Valley Bank in 2023, a *Simpsons* clip from 1995 resurfaced, supposedly showing a bank with the same name experiencing a crash. However, fans edited the clip, and the original episode featured the “First Bank of Springfield,” as the writers revealed. A series spanning 781 episodes leaves fans with a wide variety of material to connect to daily life. The quick-witted *Simpsons* writers are wise in their creation of these episodes by using current events and trends to form their storylines.



Photo from Den of Geeks

# Sports Are Only Physical

## STAFF EDITORIAL

By Jewel Jeffery

What truly defines a sport? Several people argue that non-physical activities such as chess are valid sports. The essentials for an activity to be a sport lie in physical exertion and skill. A true sport demands movement, whether running, jumping or pushing, combined with endurance, strength and competition. Without significant physical activity, the activity leans more towards a mental concept or strategy rather than an athletic performance. Non-physical activities that people consider sports are chess, esports, draughts or contact bridge. Many people consider these examples and similar activities to be sports because of their titles, their minimal body movement requirements, or the fact that governing organizations recognize them. These reasons are arguably true, but the physical aspect involving these activities is the bare minimum. According to Forbes, a sport involves a combination of skill, competition and organization, all seen in a physical aspect. Non-physical activities focus more on mental capacity rather than physical capacity; therefore, they are not sports. People label those who participate in physical activities like swimming, soccer, baseball or softball as athletes. To be considered an athlete, the person must have speed, endurance and physical strength. Power Athlete states that it does not recognize participants in non-physical activities like chess, drone racing or esports as athletes. Because the meaning of an athlete only coor-

dinates with physical attributes, it is only right that physical activities are sports and non-physical activities are not. Physical activities also require a specific type of movement. Speed contributes to football for the game's benefit and that person. Another important physical factor to consider is strength. According to the National Strength And Conditioning Association (NCSA), multiple physical activities involve strength, whether it be the strength needed for someone to move a body part or the strength required to throw or push something. These two actions, along with others, require your body to not only move but also work hard. Athletes need stamina and endurance. Several sports require direct physical contact, which is seen as a direct component of competition. For example, rugby, football or wrestling. Competition is necessary for several activities but is taken to a different level when the activity is physical. What non-physical activities lack in physical movement, they make up for on the mental side. Although anything involving a challenge or goal to complete starts with your mind, non-physical activities almost only focus on the mental aspect. In comparison, physical activities require more than someone's mental capacity. Even though mental resilience is important, when someone plays a sport, their body is affected first, not the mind. For an athlete to perform at their best, being in good

physical condition is essential. The body needs to be functionally working to successfully achieve the sport. The majority of physical activities done in school require a physical exam. Because one is using their body to play a sport, it is important to ensure that the player or athlete is safe to participate. For non-physical activities, there is no physical exam because the body isn't used frequently. For an activity to be a sport, the activity requires a person's body to move. A sport involves specific movements like jumping, kicking, landing, or running. Along with these movements come speed, endurance, skill, and strength. When a person plays a sport, that person's occupation is as an athlete. To be an athlete, a person has to have physical strength. An athlete also has to have a functioning and healthy body to play. A lot of things happen when a person plays a sport, and one of the first things that are affected is the body physically. A sport also requires physical competition. This could mean direct or indirect competition that plays to the player's advantage. There are multiple reasons why only physical activities are sports. Any activity

without physical movement that focuses mainly on a mental aspect is not a sport.



The Panther Prints staff voted 7-6 believing that sports are only physical

# Throwback Toys

By Camille Wright

For kids growing up during the late 2000s and early 2010s, childhood was filled with some of the most iconic toys and gadgets ever. Whether gliding through the mall in Heelys (until security stopped you), clutching a Pillow Pet on road trips, launching a Beyblade into the plastic arena with full confidence or carefully brushing an American Girl Doll's hair, these toys shaped an era. They weren't just trends but essential pieces of childhood.



Photo from Grunge

## Heelys

Before the technology that led to hoverboards and electric scooters, there were Heelys, the prized sneakers that doubled as a skate. One second, you were walking like a normal kid, and the next, you were smoothly coasting across the sidewalk. Although they were banned in schools, malls and basically anywhere with a hard floor, those limits only made Heelys more desirable. Owning a pair meant you had taste, talent and possibly a few scraped knees and were a pair of shoes desired by every kid.

## Pillow Pets

“It's a pillow! It's a pet! It's a Pillow Pet!” The jingle constantly played in ads promoting the 2-in-1 toy, leaving every kid wanting to add the plushie to their collection. Pillow Pets were more than just stuffed animals; they were the ultimate bedtime buddies. Whether you had the classic ladybug, the cuddly bumblebee or the iconic unicorn, these plush companions made every nap that much better once they were unfolded. Pillow Pets weren't just for sleeping, either. They were a must-have for sleepovers, road trips and long movie nights. They could fold into a plush toy for the day and then transform into the comfiest pillow at night.



Photo from Pillow Pets

## American Girl Dolls

With their detailed backstories, era-accurate outfits and endless accessories, these dolls felt like real people. Whether you were into historical characters like Kit Kittredge and Addy Walker or preferred a custom “Just Like Me” doll that looked eerily similar to you, owning an American Girl Doll was special. Trips to the American Girl store were a core part of the doll experience. From the café to the salon and the outfits that cost as much as real clothes, the experience itself was worth every penny. And let's not forget the books because reading about the doll's dramatic historical struggles somehow only made the connection to them even stronger.



Photo from Smithsonian Magazine

## Beyblades

Before today's video games, Beyblades were the ultimate test of skill, strategy and playground supremacy. These metal-spinning tops turned recess into a battlefield with just the flick of the wrist. Each Beyblade had unique parts, including attack rings, weight discs and spin gears, allowing unlimited customization. Kids would swap parts and strategize, trying to build the ultimate battle machine. Beyblade tournaments were serious business. Whether at recess or a friend's house, whoever's Beyblade was left spinning was a legend.



Photo from DHGate

# Guide to Gatsby's Grand Gala

By Varsha Jhanak

As prom rolls around, many students contemplate what they wear to this once-in-a-lifetime event. This year's prom theme is "Gatsby's Grand Gala," a theme filled with fashion inspiration from the 1920s. But, many may wonder how to stay on theme. The 1920s reflected a time of great change and fashion at the time reflected this change. As society changed drastically, so did fashion. The mark of the 1920s style was simple elegance and balancing comfort with luxury. Whether inspired by the iconic flapper style or the sophisticated suits, Gatsby's Grand Gala is the perfect opportunity to channel the glamour of the 1920s.

Throughout the 1920s, women's fashion became more convenient and modern. 1920s fashion represented a shift from more restrictive styles in previous decades. Most iconically, the 1920s fashioned the flapper style, the La Garconne. The style embodied a more androgynous look with straight-cut dresses rather than dresses emphasizing curves. In addition, women's dresses featured beadwork, sequins and embroidery to create eye-catching pieces. Flapper dresses, sheath dresses and gowns with sequins or tassels were popular in the 1920s. These dress styles allowed for more movement and comfort.



Photo from Rokit



Photo from He Spoke Style

Similar to women's fashion, men's fashion in the 1920s also moved to a more relaxed yet put-together style. Instead of stiff-collared shirts and waistcoats, men began wearing simpler, soft-collared shirts. For example, many men paired silk shirts and suspenders for a stylish yet comfortable look. In addition, pinstripes were a popular pattern to elevate suits. Trousers, at the time, began being styled looser. Plus fours, shorter trousers gathering at the knees, and Oxford bags, extremely wide-legged pants, were popular pieces of men's fashion in the 1920s.

1920s hair and accessories complimented and elevated the fashion of the period. Women often had bobs during the beginning of the decade. However, towards the end of the 1920s, women began styling longer hair with soft waves or pinned-up curls. In addition, women would fashion adorned headbands for a touch of glamour. Men often wore their hair neatly slicked to remain looking polished. For accessories, the men wore cufflinks, pocket watches and tie pins to elevate their looks.



Photo from The Habitat

# GATSBY'S

## GRAND GALA

### PROM 2025

**Location:** Plano Event Center  
2000 E Spring Creek PKWY, Plano, 75074

**Date:** April 5th, 2025

**Time:** 8 PM to 11 PM

**Cost:** \$55 a person  
\$65 a person at the door

**Guest Rules:**

- Each student is allowed to bring ONE guest
- Guests cannot be over the age of 20
- Names of the guest must be provided when purchasing a ticket for them
- Guests are not allowed to bring large bags or purses to the dance; Only small clutch purses no larger than 4.5 x 6.5 inches will be allowed at the entrance

Scan here to  
purchase tickets

