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New Standards: Olympic Winter Games
Reshape Equality P.G. 13



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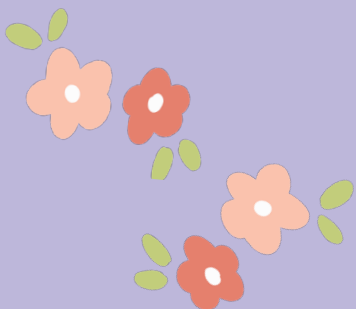
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Poll statistics were organized through Google Forms.



LETTERS FROM THE *Editors*

We are already preparing for our fourth and final issue and I am constantly reminded by how quickly everything goes by. There is never a dull moment in Newspaper, and while it can be stressful at times, I wouldn't have it any other way. To my seniors, I can confidently say that senioritis isn't going away anytime soon, so remember to savor these last moments of high school because tomorrow it will all just be a memory. Make the most of what little time we have left before graduation and finish this year strong without any regrets. As always, I hope you enjoy our third issue. Happy spring break and Ramadan Mubarak!

I'm extremely excited to finish of our third issue of the year. We've had our ups and downs throughout the school year, but we've overcome them. Working tirelessly to get our paper published has sharpened my time management and communication skills to improve the work of our team. I'm very proud of our writers, and I'm excited to see where our juniors will take our Newspaper class during their senior year! With Newspaper applications opening soon, hopefully you'll make part of our team next year as well.

I can't believe this school year is almost over! It has been one of the stressful months I've endured, but working beside my editors on issue three made it worthwhile. Putting this issue together was both incredibly rewarding and challenging. Every page represents our determination and our voice felt more confident. I'm so proud of what we created, working on this issue reminded me why I love being part of Newspaper. I hope you all enjoy our latest issue and have a wonderful spring break!

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.



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EDITORS PICK: SPRING FASHION TRENDS

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98th Academy Awards: A Year Marked In History

By: Sydney Rocio Wade

Award season is here, and some may say it's like the Super Bowl for cinephiles across the globe. This upcoming March, the 98th Academy Awards will be held to award the films that have been brought to life this past year. The nominations this year have not only broken records, it has also opened doors for new categories and made a shift in the film industry.

"I think it's awesome that horror movies are starting to finally get the flowers they deserve," Audio Video Production teacher Jordan Bratcher said. "I think horror movies for the past like 20 to 30 years have kind of had this B [low quality films] popcorn, kind of trashy vibe. Like people were like, 'oh, a horror movie can't be that good,' but I think in the past decade horror movies have started to really show that they have a lot of chops and that they can be really good."

Ryan Coogler's 'Sinners,' a horror action film that takes place in the 1930s, blends vampires and black culture with the power of music as a symbol for good and evil, broke the Academy Awards record, receiving 16 total nominations, making history for being nominated for nearly every category. Some of the other categories for which 'Sinners' is nominated include Best Picture, Director, Lead Actor Michael B. Jordan, Original Screenplay and the newly added category of Best Casting.

"I think that casting definitely deserves to be recognized, because what makes or breaks a film for me is the characters and how they interact with each other," IB senior JJ Erives said. "And that's more than just the writing. It has to be that the actors can be comfortable with each other."

It's been about 24 years since a new category was introduced to the Oscars, which was Best Animated Feature Film in 2001. In February of 2024, the Academy announced the Best Casting category would be added to this year's Oscars. According to the Los Angeles Times, this category is to acknowledge the work that goes into casting; it's based on how the casting director works with the director to form a cast. This means any newly discovered talent, assembling ensembles, or managing a large, complex cast. But it's not solely based on the ensemble or singular actor; it is based on the overall casting as a collective.

"The academy has definitely improved in trying to have a broader push for diversity in film," Bratcher said. "So whether that's behind the camera, directors, or on-screen talent, film, in general, is still a relatively new medium. It wasn't until about 100 years ago that movies started being taken seriously. So some of this is still in its infancy, but I'm glad that the academy's making strides for more diversity within film itself."

Besides the record-breaking and new categories, this year's Oscars

highlight the broader movements towards inclusivity and representation. According to Variety, Autumn Durald Arkapaw, the first-ever female cinematographer to shoot a feature on IMAX 65mm, makes Oscar history as the first-ever woman of color to be nominated for Best Cinematography for 'Sinners.' A field that is dominated by white men, with only ever three other female nominations in academy history. Timothee Chalamet also became the youngest actor in Oscar history to earn three nominations since Marlon Brando. This year's Academy Awards aren't just about film, but about historical breaking moments and how the future of Hollywood is constantly shifting. These nominations celebrate the stories and artistry that cinephiles have been raving about, showing the ever-increasing importance of the art of filmmaking.

"I used to watch the Oscars a ton when I was younger, like when I was in high school, I did every year," Bratcher said. "In fact, I remember I would always turn it on. And then my dad would be like, 'Why do you watch this?' And he'd leave. But it's still cool that we have an awards ceremony that's so prolific that it celebrates movies."



Photo by: TheGuardian

H-E-B Comes To Murphy: Long Awaited Arrival

By: Soha Syed

Since 1905, H-E-B has been a Texas staple providing its friendly customer service, exclusive Texan-style food offerings and signature Southern charm across over 430 stores. Yet, the beloved chain was strikingly absent from the Dallas-Fort Worth area up until late 2022, launching their first location in Frisco. The opening held great success with fans driving across the vast metroplex to take a taste of H-E-B's unique and diverse flavors. The Texas-exclusive hit plans to open an additional five stores in the DFW area, most notably its newest location in Murphy, opening this year

"It is kind of like the Bucces of grocery stores for Texas," senior Abby Marx said. "The quality of their products and the look of the store with the bright red [sign], that's what makes it special to me."

H-E-B holds its popularity due to their unique shopping experience. According to the Texas Department of Licensing and Registration, the new store will be a vast 122,175 square feet. This isn't unique to the Murphy location and in fact a norm throughout Texas, allowing the chain to offer a great array of grocery options. Many of the beloved chain's fans emphasize the store's specialities and fresh food selections.

"The one thing that I really enjoy about H-E-B is their flour tortillas," senior Rayaan Suhlary said. "That's the main reason I would go to an H-E-B."

According to Bon Appetit, H-E-B's fan favorite tortillas are made daily, with their in-store tortillerias. Fresh and buttery, the widely-acclaimed tortillas are handcrafted live

for customers to watch. Alongside their Tex-Mex style tortillas, H-E-B also houses original unique ice cream flavors, smoky BBQ treats and their popular Asian-American owned sushi line. While the store is known for its Texan-themed products, it also makes sure to capture international cuisines and locally-grown goods, representing the state's diverse populations.

"I've never had a bad experience at H-E-B," IB economics teacher Richard Sklar said. "You ask an employee where something is, they walk you to the product. They don't just go to the left side of the aisle."

Found in every H-E-B location is a dedicated set of employees who lead the store to achieve an optimal grocery shopping experience. The company refers to their staff as their 'partners' and is deserved for the measures they take outside of their expected tasks. According to Profile Magazine, H-E-B's partners traveled through deep dangerous floods during Hurricane Harvey and opened stores to provide and nourish for the affected community. This unique act of kindness is ubiquitous across the state's locations and truly sets the chain apart from its competitors.

"I would definitely be interested in getting a job at H-E-B," Marx said. "I really love their company values. Across Southern and Texan owned branches, they really make a point to

treat their employees well and that's really important."

The chain's partners commitment is directly reflected by H-E-B's love for their treating employees & community. According to Glassdoor, the company has been honored every year on Glassdoor's Best Places to Work list since 2018. This year it takes the 13th spot, supported by its inclusivity, opportunities for further growth and sincere respect for their employees. This can also be seen through H-E-B's efforts in times of crises. According to H-E-B Newsroom, the company donated five million dollars to aid those affected by the Central Texas floods last year. They provided them with necessities, volunteers and meals that exhibit the close ties the company holds with their staff and customers.

"When [people] feel good about a brand, they buy more stuff," Sklar said. "It is possible [that the sales tax will increase], because a lot of people think H-E-B is great and it's better than anything we have in this area."

H-E-B will bring a huge benefit to the community, providing economical growth and a budding partnership with the city. While Murphy's new H-E-B is yet to have an official opening date, fans can expect the store to arrive soon. According to TDLR, construction is slated to be complete by late April. This summer may be accompanied by some Texas-shaped snacks and famous H-E-B-style barbeque.

"H-E-B is this magical thing that has slowly been moving towards us and now it's finally here," Marx said. "I think people are really excited."

68.5% of students reported going to HEB before.

31.5% of students reported not going to HEB at all.

Student Success Tool: New Era Texas Testing

By: Inara Pabani

Since 2011, students across different grade levels were required to take the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness to measure their academic progress and ensure schools are effective by influencing student advancement, however, since House Bill Eight passed, Texas decided to replace the STAAR testing with a new, supportive program.

“When I heard this, I thought it was a good idea,” English teacher Lauren Thompson said. “I do think overall, it’s superior in testing progress over the years for students. I do prefer looking at the student’s process three times a year,”

STAAR tests have been designed for students’ academic level in each grade to check their knowledge of their core academics such as Algebra one, Biology, English one, two and U.S History. In a state as large and diverse as Texas, students’ performance across districts helps identify their school’s statistics and where support is needed.

“We’re taking benchmark practice tests constantly,” Professional Communications teacher Miranda Villanueva said. “Any teacher would try to get a baseline of what students know by tracking their performance along where there’s some sort of summative at the end.”

The new STAAR testing system, known as the Student Success Tool, was authorized by Texas House Public Education Chair Representative, Brad Buckley. The SST focuses on their objective of helping students throughout the year by preparing them for the final exam that determines their

overall performance. In the past, students waited months for their results, often arriving in mid-June, but SST scores plan to release results within days, providing data for teachers to support their students throughout the year.

“I’m sure they did a lot of research over the program,” Villanueva said. “It’s a bit better than the other STAAR exam so teachers could track your progress. It seems better for progress monitoring.”

The program features three shorter yearly exams, where an assessment will be given in the beginning, middle and end of the school year. In the beginning of the year, the first test’s goal establishes the student’s baseline understanding of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills standards and identifies those in need of extra support. In the middle of the year, this exam evaluates their effectiveness of knowledge and makes adjustments. Lastly, at the end of the year, the exam measures the student’s final proficiency whether they passed the subject and gathers statistics for state accountability ratings.

“I don’t think [standardized testing] is effective,” an anonymous student said. “It doesn’t help anybody and it just stresses kids. There’s an analogy where it’s a bunch of kids who are different animals are all being told to climb a tree and they got a kid in a fish bowl. A fish is not gonna be able to climb that tree, so why are we forcing that fish to attempt without not having any legs or arms? It’s never gonna be effective to be able to actually measure how good kids are.”

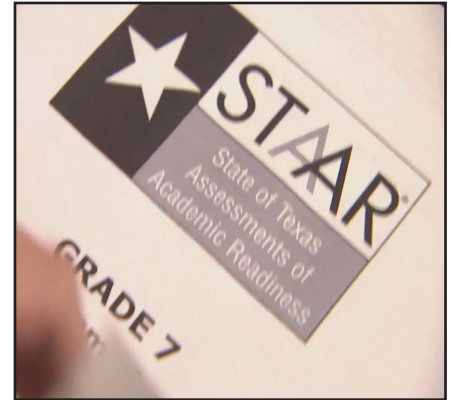


Photo by: ABC7 News

As standardized testing increases each year, parents of students against testing argue about stress levels increasing often such as causing anxiety for their children. The state also decided to remove English two assessments and a graduation requirement. With this requirement removed, students may experience reduced stress while still demonstrating their academic readiness through remaining exams.

“I can’t imagine we are saying to students that if your english is influential enough by ninth grade, then you’re good,” Thompson said. “It doesn’t really matter as much what you learn or how you grow over the remainder of your courses. But I can also see why they might say that because we don’t do two maths or two science tests. So why do we have two different English exams? So I can kind of see it either way.”

Quick Glances Ultimately Take Lives

By: Ava Canaday

Using phones while driving creates additional distractions and increases the risk of liability. Phone use while driving can delay the drivers reaction time, as it is a form of distracted driving. According to Fisher and Talwar, nearly 37% of people are substantially impacted by having their phone while they are driving.

“If you’re using your phone, I’m [normally] looking down slightly, while trying to pay attention on the road,” junior Preston Tran said. “You’re gonna lose focus on the road and you could drift over and [that could] cause an accident [which could] cause [you] to lose control.”

Car crashes are one of the major side effects of people being distracted. Many car crashes end up being minor with some bumps and bruises. However, many crashes end with major life altering injuries or even death. Additionally, fatal car crashes dropped nearly 13% in the first six months of 2025.

“Even talking from experience, there will be times I’m sitting at red lights, and I know it’s not necessarily something we should do, but I’ll check my phone,” junior Julie Pinkerton said. “That’s caused me to get honked at. And I’ve been almost hit so many times by someone I pass by and I’ll see them on their phone.”

When students are getting picked up or dropped off in the school parking lot, minor car accidents may raise some concerns for students safety. With many people trying to manage too many tasks at the same time. Many people are trying to get out of the school quickly to miss the traffic.

the school quickly to miss the traffic. Thus, leading to more reckless driving and higher crash rates. Distractions create a wall between good driving and mediocre driving. Things like phones and long distances play an important role in removing this barrier.

“If you drive for long periods of time, that’s probably the most distracting thing for me,” Pinkerton said. “You start getting used to all the sensations and you’re not as aware.”

Safety is another key aspect many drivers fear, the creation of phones is a key component to the recklessness people are seeing in others driving. Basic things that if done correctly without the use of phones or rushing could give driving a safer outlook.

“Around school, I don’t feel very safe,” Pinkerton said. “I’ve driven miles and miles for various reasons, but I struggle a lot with the school because it’s a lot of teenagers in one area. So the driving gets really, really reckless.”

As more people start driving the higher the chances of crashes rise. More students want to get their license for the sense of freedom. However, as those people start getting their

license more people start to question when is the right time and age for students to start driving.

“Now I can just go out to eat, take my friends, just whenever I want,” Tran said. “I wanted to take zero hours, so I can go home early and study. And do whatever with extra time.”

Many teenagers value having freedom while on the road. Time to do whatever they want, if they want food they can go and get themselves food. However, with this freedom comes higher stakes. Many teenagers are easier to get angry behind the wheel and take that out on other cars around them. Thus making vehicles a constant danger to everyone around them. Safety is something that can be implemented to help people when driving. Eliminating distractions like phones can help prevent smaller distractions while on the road.

“[Focus] more on the road, because some drivers aren’t the best and [can] be unsafe,” Tran said. “If you have other passengers, you don’t want to drive recklessly, because if something happens, their parents are going to be very worried.”



Photo by: verywellmind

This article was written prior to the passing of a McMullen student due to a car accident. It should be noted that another driver was responsible for the horrific accident. Our deepest sympathies and condolences go out to his friends and family.

Photo by: Security Industry Association

Professional Degrees: Impact On Loans For Future Education

By: *Kristhel Soto Castro*

The Big Beautiful Bill Act has enacted a new bill that will greatly impact the affordability of degrees for graduate and undergraduate students. Enacted on June 25 of last year, the BBBA affects the new student loan options for undergraduate and graduate students alike. Donald Trump's new policy will take effect on July 1 and will significantly impact future education.

"I definitely have to keep in mind how [many less loans] are going to be covered now that professional degrees are being categorized differently," senior Marium Mubashir said. "Certain things I may want to pursue in the future, they might not be the same anymore, considering if I may or may not be able to afford the schooling for it."

Starting in the next academic year, the bill will impose new limits on undergraduate and graduate students, including borrowing limits determined by the degree the student chooses to study. While professional degrees, often medical or legal occupations, are capped at \$50,000 per year, \$200,000 in total; other graduate programs are capped at \$20,500 a year or \$100,000 in total.

"I'm still pretty open to any careers in healthcare, so I would probably look more into MDS or a bachelor's degree and even maybe nuclear medicine, maybe other careers, depending on the loan amount," Mubashir said.

Students worry that their affordable loan options may decrease, pushing them to take riskier loan options with private lenders. Private student loans often have their cons, such as no income-driven repayment or loan

forgiveness.

"My guess would be that private loans would probably be at a higher percentage interest because you don't have the government backing them up," AP economics teacher Julie Meek said. "Well, if the government is the backer, then they don't have to worry as much about getting as much interest, because they're not, for instance, having to show their stockholders that they're performing and making profit."

To afford college, certain students may have to consider different options like scholarships or grants as a way to pay for further education. Achieving set academic goals may come with higher rewards regarding scholarship availability for students, such as the national merit scholarship or full-ride scholarships due to exceptional academic performance.

"There are some other options, like work at the college and scholarships and things like that," Meek said. So you do have some other options. I think you're going to have to look out at a wider array of what you could get help with. So going in and talking to the universities about, you know, work and study kind of programs, doing a lot more research into what kind of scholarships and applying for them and things like that."

Despite some people's fear that the effect it may have on future medical care could potentially lower the number of doctors, nurses and anesthesiologists and many other medical degrees that are employed in the future. With fewer healthcare workers, people are at risk of falling ill and

international health may decline.

"I do not agree with the bill, and I think it's really destructive," Mubashir said. "Considering nurses and physician assistants are essentially the backbone of healthcare, we're definitely going to need [replacements], and this [can] cause even more of a shortage and more difficult working conditions. We always have a demand for healthcare workers like these."

However, the new cap may push students towards better spending habits for college; it may also help students pursue less debt-causing degrees or inspire universities to lower their tuition. It can also be useful in teaching students about loan management and debt repayment.

"I agree with these limits because they encourage people to borrow responsibly and help students and families from taking on a significant amount of debt that they might not be able to repay," an anonymous student said. "The cost of tuition has left many graduates strained before they even begin their careers, especially in careers where education can take years."

Whether students decide to pay for college with loans, pursue a costly degree, or take other career paths, the cost of borrowing money ultimately affects their future relationships with loans and similar monetary situations.

"There's a world of differences in between those, where some of them you have to pay back part and not all, and some of you don't," Meek said. there's also things about what field you go into, about whether or not you could get some forgiveness of loans."

New CTE Center Brings Success to Students

By: Inara Pabani

Plano Independent School District plans to open the Career and Technical Education center this fall. The CTE center allows students to choose from a wide variety of certifications, degrees and credits for specialized careers.

"I'm looking forward to the new facilities and student activities," junior Renad Alhaj said. "I'm excited to be interacting with professionals and getting a glimpse into real-life work. I'm also hoping for mentorship opportunities."

CTE Programs are designed to prepare students for professional careers fields by providing them opportunities such as hands-on experiences classes and practical skills. The center features courses to support a wide range of career pathways, including health science, engineering, culinary arts, information technology, cybersecurity, automotive, media production and cosmetology programs.

"It's gonna give those kids an opportunity to take those high-level classes," Principal David Jones said. "It's designed to be the state of the art building that's going to allow students to choose practical classes towards their CTE pathway."

In 2022, Votes approved the \$72.2 million project and PISD has now planned out a new 150,000-square-foot CTE center at Alma Drive and West Park Boulevard. designed by Huckabee Architects and led by Principal Jean Laswell, the facility focuses on industry partnerships and students' interests and standards. PISD invested in the new CTE Center to better prepare students for whether they choose to enter the workforce,

attend college or pursue any technical certifications.

"We went to a middle school fair to advertise Audio/Visual," senior Vanessa Segura said. "I think it's super cool. They'll have editing rooms, computers, studios and cameras that students can borrow. I think I also heard there was a podcast room too."

The Audio/Visual and communications program lets students explore media, broadcasting, film production and digital content creation using professional studios and editing software. The center also features an Automotive Collision Repair Program, where students work with auto body repair technicians. By working on actual vehicles in a professional workshop, students build a strong foundation for careers in the growing automotive industry.

"I think it's really interesting because it'll specialize in a lot of things," Segura said. "One of our biggest issues is our classroom because it's really tiny. We might want to film something but there's so many of us in one room but the next people who are doing audio/video will have so many options."

For inspiring culinary students, the program will also feature its own student-run restaurant, giving the opportunity to practice professional cooking and hospitality by serving real guests. TONI&GUY Hairdressing Academy, a two-year cosmetology program offered through a partnership between Plano ISD, allows students to participate in hands-on instruction in theory, technical skills and practical salon work with the goal of earning a Texas cosmetology

by the time they graduate.

"It's really fun," junior Charlotte Bailey said. "It's a hands-on class where you cook a lot throughout the school year. Sometimes people bring stuff from home or the store and we'll just make anything from it."

The program also includes a student-staffed Credit Union of Texas Smart Branch Bank, part of a new partnership between Plano ISD and CUTX that brings real-world financial experience to students. With a full-time Credit Union employee to support and guide them, students will have the opportunity to work as bank tellers, customer service representatives and more learning experience essential skills in money management. The center is also featuring a cybersecurity program, as part of the recent donation from Toyota Motor North America. The program provides students with hands-on experience in protecting networks managing digital security by learning to use standard tools and software.

"They are also going to be expanding programs in the future," Jones said. "I'm excited to see what we can do at the CTE Center that maybe we couldn't traditionally do on campus."

As the doors open this fall, the CTE Center marks a shift towards education in PISD. This facility stands as a testament to the district's commitment to workplaces, turning students' interests into lifelong careers.

"I would encourage students to talk with their counselors and get their questions answered," Jones said. "There's just so many opportunities that I don't want any kid to miss out on something that might be interesting to them."



Identical Twins, Double Trouble: Hallway Deja Vu

By: Aisha Ali

The television tipped over before anyone could react. Ian Garcia's nudge to move the TV out of the way caused it to topple straight onto Ethan Garcia's head. The chaotic moment between the two seniors has since become one of their favorite sibling stories to tell, and they are unable to bring it up without cracking a smile. The memory captures a mix of mischief and closeness that embodies the relationship between twins.

For the few students who have an identical twin, they are frequently confused for one another. Whether it is at home or in the school hallways, sharing a face means sharing experiences and never going through life completely alone.

"I don't have anything to compare it to, but I don't think that being a twin is that different from being just like regular siblings," junior Elliott Harper said. "Some people still say that we look alike, but that's really the only part that makes it different from having a regular sibling."

Josiah and Elliott used to look a lot more alike when they were younger, however as they grew older the two diverged in appearance. According to Twinstrust, it is essential for twin siblings as children to develop a sense of self. Although the bond as siblings is central to who they are, there is a balance to be struck while growing up to build their development as individuals.

"My experience as a twin has been having someone close to me that I can rely on that connects to me on a deeper level than some of my friends," junior Josiah Harper said. "[It's

having] someone to rely on. A lot of times, people claim they can't tell us apart. I'll be in the hallway and one of his teachers will say 'hi Elliott' and it's me, I'm not Elliot."

According to Twinfo, it is generally easier to tell twins apart when they are together. During school, twins aren't always together, so it can be more difficult for people who are less familiar with both of them to identify and differentiate who is who. On the bright side, it can make academics easier to have someone learning almost the exact same stuff at the same time.

"When we were younger, we really didn't have classes together," Elliott said. "I think that it's some sort of policy where twins can't be in the same classroom. But as we grew older we were allowed to be in the same classes together."

Elliott and Josiah run track together, and Ethan and Ian both do wrestling. Both sets of twins play the same sport.

"My favorite memory is when we were in a wrestling tournament, we both went 0-2 at the same time and that was really funny to me," Ian said.

Typically in films that portray twins, there is always that one iconic moment where the two switch places. For example, 'Parent Trap' explores the relationship between two sisters who trick everyone and switch places, similar to what the Garcia twins once did.

"The first ever time was in middle school, 6th grade," Ethan said. "We decided to switch places because we were bored. We thought that we could've gotten away with it. For a

good 30 minutes we did, but after my teacher realized."

Twins learn to find humor in every moment together. Despite facing the same difficulties in the typical sibling dynamic, being the same age with similar experiences further connects them and strengthens their bond.

"Twins are intertwined with each other no matter what, because you go through life together, you're experiencing all the milestones that you have with your twin," senior Claire James said. "Sometimes [Charlotte and I] completely hate each other and sometimes we're like best friends, but we're always best friends even when we're at war. When your parents are gone, your siblings are the only ones keeping the family connected."

Having a twin, like any pair of siblings, has its ups and downs. According to Psychology Today, shared experiences create a strong bond and behavioral synchronicity.

"The best part of having a twin is knowing that you have someone there for you even when you feel at your lowest in life," Ian said. "It's knowing that you're not forever alone and there's always another half of you in the world."



Top One Percent Test Takers: National Merit Semifinalists Rise

By: Inara Pabani

Every October, juniors are eligible to take the Practice Scholastic Assessment Test to determine their academic readiness for English and Math along with earning national recognition. At the start of their senior year, only a small percentage of students across the country earn acknowledgement through the National Merit Scholarship Program.

"[This award] means a lot to me because it opens up new opportunities," senior Ryan Theiu said. "You get to see and meet a lot of people who do the same thing who have the same initiative as you and it shows there's so many hardworking people. I think it's a really big achievement and something I'm really proud of."

The National Merit Scholarship Program recognizes students who excel academically through a rigorous competition, starting with high PSAT/NMSQT scores in junior year, leading to designations as semifinalists, finalists and scholars who earn scholarship money towards their education. These students showcase outstanding academic ability, achieving this status involves strong grades, extracurriculars, essays and recommendations letters.

"I got a 1500, which was a 740 on the reading and writing selection and then a 760 on the math," Theiu said. "I did SAT tutoring prep so that definitely helped a lot, so I think just being prepared and knowing to study in advance will help prepare for the best."

For many students in the NMSQT program, their academic success is the result of their journey.

Alongside challenging courses, they make time for socializing, extra-curricular activities and personal interests, understanding that balance plays a key role in staying motivated and focused. This balance helps them remain fulfilled social life throughout their high school experience. These students value experiences that allow them to grow as individuals.

"I think having the national merit title is really important," Baylor admit Amber Gesell said. "Especially in applying to higher ranked colleges because they'll look at the hard work and academics of the person that is applying. But, there are also a lot of opportunities for scholarships and can help getting into an honors program at your specific college that you want to go to."

During college applications, the NMSQT title helps students throughout the process. As around 1% of test takers earn semifinalists in the country, the recognition is associated with strong performance that can help students stand out academically towards selective universities. Overall, the NMSQT serves as a valuable status, guiding students through an important transition with success for their future.

"It's amazing," Counselor Jessica Godwin said. "There are so many things that I wish that I could even come close to accomplishing that they do. I can't even imagine myself at that age. It's really amazing to watch these kids, it's impressive."

Many colleges across the country offer generous scholarships that can reduce or fully cover the cost of attendance for high-achieving students.

Strong academic performance on standardized tests can help students become competitive candidates for these opportunities as colleges often use their achievement as a key factor in scholarship consideration including honors programs. These programs make higher education more accessible and reward their dedication for years.

"I think what's helped is time management and growing those skills early on," Gesell said. "I would say just figure out good organization skills, because you definitely have to be proactive, determined and motivated."

Throughout their academic journeys, students are guided by teachers and counselors who have supported them over the years. Teachers and counselors offered mentorship and guidance through challenging coursework, these educators play an essential role in students' growth. Counselors help students plan their future after high school while teachers encourage curiosity, discipline and confidence in the classroom. Their long-term support helps their students develop skills and mindset needed for future challenges.

"I would definitely say just be very prepared," Theiu said. "When I searched for the SAT, I spent about 30 minutes a day, and so just taking those little steps over time, because even though you may not see improvement from day to day. But if you look at it over the course of like weeks or a month, you'll be able to see so much growth and you'll be able to realize that you can do so much more than you really think you can."

Health Science Academy: Pushing Teens Towards Medical Success

By: *Kristhel Soto Castro*

Plano ISD offers a 4-year curriculum for students interested in pursuing a career in the medical field. The Health Science Academy offers multiple classes that teach foundational knowledge over a variety of medical career paths. When students graduate, their HSA classes offer unique experiences that guide students through the ins and outs of the healthcare world.

“The goal at the end [of the academy] is to get a certification that can get you a job,” Health Science Academy teacher Deana Reed said. “They choose what track they want to apply for, and the tracks change based on the needs of the community and the job placements that are available.” For the first two years of their track, students take general courses, such as medical terminology and communication, as the basics of the curriculum. During their sophomore year, students will officially decide what course they want to focus on: medical assistant, emergency medical technician, patient care technician and electrocardiogram. Upon graduation, students will also receive an associate’s degree along with their medical certificates.

“I’m working on the senior PCTs,” Reed said. “They’re about to go out to the hospital first, and they’ve already become CNAs. They became CNAs as juniors. Now the seniors are going to the hospital, [starting] next week, and they will do physical activities with the patients. Then at the end of the semester, they’ll take their PCT exam and their EKG exam.”

Each class offers lots of hands-on experiences with fake medical equip-

ment, plastic dummies and made-up scenarios. They often practice how to record heart rhythms, draw blood and enhance their soft skills. Depending on their track, students will focus more on certain activities than others respective to the program they chose during tenth grade. Once they have enough experience, they apply their training at professional medical institutions during their junior or senior year.

“Right now we’re working on phlebotomy, so we’re preparing to draw blood on each other, which is a scary thing, but our professor trains us really well before we actually draw blood on each other,” junior Audrey Stark said. “So right now, we’re doing fake arms with fake blood, and we learned how to set up our needles and all that. Not many people, like 17, can be like, ‘Oh yeah, I can draw blood.’ That’s kind of cool.”

Students get to explore unique opportunities in their classrooms and sites that not many people their age have the opportunity to do. As juniors prepare for clinicals, they’re taught to take notes during their visits. They often write about their experiences, unfamiliar medical information or notes as they shadow doctors in a medical environment.

“Healthcare is a different language, and they have to learn the language,” Reed said. “So they have to write down that they heard these things or they had questions, and they have to find out what that is, so that they can [understand] that language. When they come back to class, they talk about what they learned.”

The HSA program allows its stu-

dents to discover the multiple paths they can take by sending them to experience them on their own. Practicing soft skills and medical skills allows students to traverse through many different health care jobs.

“I want to help as many people as possible,” Stark said. “So like being able to do this at such a young age, it’s like such an accomplishment, in my opinion, because I just love, I love seeing people walk out happy and feeling better.”

For some students, it’s challenging to pursue certain duties at their clinicals because of the nature of the activity. The medical field pushes these students out of their comfort zone, often having them participate in bathing the elderly or viewing live birth and delivery, which is commonly unsettling for young students. Although the academy doesn’t guarantee an immediate role as a PhD healthcare worker or spot in medical school, it gives students the opportunity to explore what careers in the medical world interests them the most and to understand the responsibilities of the jobs.

“The student that we send into the nursing home is a totally different student than the one we get back in 12 weeks,” Reed said. “Because they have taken care of people, they’ve seen people in really bad shape, and people are just desperate to see them. They see that they can make a difference. I think that’s my goal.”



PLANO ISD
HEALTH SCIENCES ACADEMY

New Standards: Olympic Winter Games Reshape Equality

By: Aisha Ali, Inara Pabani and Kristhel Soto Castro

Following gold-medal victories by both the men's and women's ice hockey teams, the Games renewed the longstanding debate about gender inequality, disparities in pay, recognition and treatment of female athletes in sports. This year's Winter Olympics stood out for its political significance. Despite these tensions, the Games shifted towards balanced treatment and structural changes within the Winter Games.

"[The Olympics] is pretty cool, because it's such a national event, it brings everyone together," senior Christina Bell said. "They spent so much time getting where they are, [people] should respect them."

VIRAL VIDEO REIGNITES GENDER EQUALITY DEBATE

Sporting prowess following the U.S. victories of the Winter Olympics raised expectations for how athletes conduct themselves both during performances and outside of the sporting ring. A video showed President Donald Trump calling the men's hockey team in the dressing room just moments following their win over Canada to congratulate them. As he was inviting them to the White House to celebrate winning gold, a passive comment about having to invite the women's team made by the president emphasized double standards between the two teams.

"It was definitely in very poor taste, especially for a president to say

thing like that," Bell said. "It's very unnecessary and quite rude. Especially because [both] teams did the exact same thing, but the only difference is [gender]."

Supporters believe that the comment was just a joke, while others believe that the joke was misogynistic. Critics argue that dismissing the comment as humor risks reinforcing negative long-standing attitudes toward female athletes, since situations like these shape sports culture.

"The fact that a women's team, just because they're women, were being viewed as less than men, I think that's pretty wrong," Bell said. "Being the president gives [him influence] over people. Who's gonna say something to the president? It's just a hard situation, even if they didn't support what he said."

Some argued that the conversation became political because the comment came from the president, so the athletes shouldn't be at fault. Others argue that the athletes should have spoken up regardless. Despite laughter from most people in the room, only two male voices spoke up in the video defending the women's team. This action proved that individuals don't need to be hostile or confrontational to stand up to sexism, but the importance is to acknowledge it.

"[Female players] shouldn't [explain themselves] because women have to fight to be [equal]," senior Jasmine Daniel said. "They're still not even equal to men, so yes it does become political due to the fact that we have fought so much for it. So it is about politics because [Trump]

brought it up. It was a sexist comment, but what if somebody else said it? It wouldn't have been about politics."

According to CBC, people on social media are calling out most of the team for being complicit in belittling female athletes. According to NBC, Trump's casual remark has ignited a cultural war.

"Nothing really changes if you just say 'oh it's a joke' because it normalizes the behavior," Bell said. "Even if it's just a subtle comment and you think it's okay, so then it just keeps going. It might start as a comment but then no one says anything so people think it's okay to say something [negative about women] and it just gets worse."

It is easy for male athletes to say they respect their female counterparts, but it is harder to put that belief into practice. According to Psychology Today, the men's ice hockey scenario was a test of respect and equality, but the failure rate was concerningly high. The video has gone viral and online backlash has been swift.

"[The players] didn't want to deal with the backlash," Daniel said. "Most people don't want to take accountability or own up or stand up for other people. Especially men, it's [easier]. Forget gender, it should have been the sport itself and we shouldn't worry about gender or anything."

Advocates believe that the issue isn't just about Trump's comment, but about how the men's team reacted. It proved that women are still fighting for equality.

“Women have been downgraded for thousands of years,” Daniel said. “It’s about the future and who’s going to teach that it [shouldn’t] be normalized and it’s not okay, it should have never been okay. Educate the young and make sure we understand why it’s not okay to degrade women.”

After the phone call, both teams were invited to the White House. According to Inside HigherEd, the women declined due to prior commitments. According to ESPN, the women’s team is focused on celebrating the team’s accomplishments and the effort invested into winning the Winter Olympics. The Winter Olympics prides itself on fairness, merit and respect. Since the two teams achieved the same victory, equal recognition should follow.

“It’s not okay, because it’s 2026,” Daniel said. “Why are we normalizing sexism? If you don’t acknowledge something it repeats itself. It’s more about [learning from] the past, the present, and [fixing] the future.”

EQUALITY IN PERFORMANCES: REDEFINING WOMANHOOD AT MILANO CORTINA

Female athletes’ success during the 2026 Milano Cortina Winter Olympics highlighted the significance of their accomplishments. This year, women participants filled a record 47% of athlete spots, transforming the Games into a platform for representation and rewriting sports history. While the Olympics have achieved near-total gender parity in athlete participation, men and women are often treated differently in competition.

“I feel like the progress toward gender equality at these Winter Games was good,” junior Sarahby Fernandez said. “I loved seeing a woman win our country’s gold in figure skating.”

The Olympics historically discriminated against women through bans that severely limited event options also with facing unequal race distanc-

es and exclusion from competitions based on stereotypes. According to Milano Cortina, women first competed in the Olympics in 1900. According to ABC news, Women’s sports were judged based on aesthetic components and often faced stricter clothing requirements. During the 2021 Beach Handball Match, the Norwegian’s women team was fined by the Federation for wearing shorts instead of required bikini bottoms, highlighting mandatory revealing attire.

“The visibility of women athletes at the Olympics is very crucial for young women back home,” Fernandez said. “It gives us representation in an event that the whole world sees.”

The 2026 Games featured over 50 women’s events, up from 46 in 2022, with 12 of the 16 sports achieving full gender parity. For decades, women in cross-country skiing raced shorter distances than men. This changed recently when, for the first time, women and men were allowed to compete over the same distances in all cross-country skiing events. This ensures both genders compete in an equal number of events, fair scheduling and nonstereotypical competition structures.



“I think within athletics, every gender has a chance to make a difference in their sport,” junior Aidan Forthman said. “In women’s athletics, there are champions, just like the men can be.”

This year’s program added several new women’s events to bridge the gap in specific disciplines such as allowing women to participate in double luge, large hill ski jumping and dual moguls for the first time. Previously, these events were only men’s events but Italy’s Andrea Voetter and Marion Oberhofer won the gold medal for doubles luge on Feb. 11. These additions represent a historic milestone in expanding the competitive landscape of the Olympics.

“I think that it’s definitely gotten better,” junior Eleanor Power said. “Nothing super [concrete]. I think we all have the same level of coaching.”

By introducing high-impact disciplines, the Games gave an opportunity for female athletes to redefine “athletic identity” by bringing their full, authentic selves to the competition. Inspiring female athletes such as Alysa Liu and Amber Glenn, embraced their alternative aesthetic and queer visibility, proving that personal expression doesn’t detract from performances.



Many women in the Olympics advocate for gender equality and prove that the modern success of female icons is the measure of their generation of women in sport.

“I do feel like it’s catered more towards men as the stereotype is that men are the athletes,” Fernandez said. “But then there’s also Alysa Liu who recently won gold and I’ve seen her get covered a lot.”

Liu was the first Chinese-American woman to secure gold in women’s singles and team events at the 2026 Winter Olympics. She inspired the youth by redefining success through joy and expressed her authentic self-expression over medals. Liu inspired a generation to by staying true to her identity and showing that achieving the highest level of success is accomplishable by being oneself.

“Alysa Liu has made a significant impact as a talented figure skater,” junior Hamna Amin said. “Her confidence has inspired many young skaters to pursue the sport.”

The Winter Olympics will be remembered as a turning point of gender equality by achieving record-breaking participation of women athletes. The Games proved that female athletes are no longer restricted by outdated rules or perfectionism. These women have rewritten the Olympic narrative as their success serves as an inspiration for the next generation.

“At future Winter Olympics, I would like to see more women in leadership positions,” Amin said. “Stronger policies supporting equal

funding, coaching opportunities and athlete resources would also strengthen equality long term.”

KA-CHING: WAGE GAP BETWEEN WOMEN’S AND MEN’S SPORTS

Since the introduction of women in the hemisphere of professional sports, the gender wage gap loudly defined the underlying inequality for women across the world. Despite women’s contributions surpassing those of men, women were often undermined in their categories, excluded from pre-Olympic advertising, and treated unfairly compared to their male counterparts.

“Olympians spend time with numbers and hours perfecting their craft,” junior RJ Robinson said. “A lot of people aren’t privy to the fact that there are a lot of women doing the same thing, doing their own thing. So I would just shed light on their [wage gap] situation.”

The biological differences between men and women are a plausible cause as to why the entertainment industry favors men’s over women’s sports. Controversies over wage equality between men’s and women’s sports often stem from misconceptions about women’s inability to perform as well as men, further widening the wage gap. Society-led standards place greater attention on men’s sports due to their physical attributes being favored over women’s, which often results in women’s sports being overlooked. “The strength, like [the men’s] build, that makes a huge difference,” junior



Joaquin Jimenez said. "It's very different when it comes to being athletic. For men, it's more for rough." However, both genders go through grueling training to be physically fit for their selected sports. According to Aldelphi University, male athletes are paid 15% to 100% more than female athletes competing in the Olympic tournaments. Hundreds of hours are spent by every athlete as their training is year-round, sacrificing their physical and mental prowess to prepare against the abilities of opposing teams. Despite their contributions, women remain undermined in professional sport settings.

"At the Olympic level, the women have done all the training stuff and all of the things to get to that level and have put in the same amount of time as all the guys have done," junior Sophia Mitchell said. "The pay should be equal, equal between women and men, women and men counterparts, that they should be even because you're both competing at the highest level."

According to the Commerce Senate, men and women equally dominated the 2024 Winter Olympics, with a balanced amount of both parties represented in the Olympic sports. In these games, women and men competing for Team USA were guaranteed equal pay for their tedious labor and patriotic representation, demonstrating further advancements in closing the gender wage gap.

"If you knew that you're being paid less, it feels like you're being undermined, especially because of what you have already put into this work," Mitchell said. "Money-wise, like to get to that point, it's really expensive, and so to not be getting as much out of it as other people, just because of your gender, it kind of undermines what you've been like, what you've been doing."

From 2022 to 2024, women's sports began growing amongst the entertainment industry as more fans rolled in. According to McKinsey, by 2030, women's sports revenue would increase by 250%, transitioning from

\$1 billion to \$2.5 billion. Although the wage gap between men's and women's sports remains, as the years progress, the representation of women in professional sport settings will continue to intensify, while women devote as much time and practice as men.

"Even if it is likely to make a little dent in the system, I would make it [a] responsibility to try and invoke change or anything, whether it be speaking out, speaking out against kids, speaking out against [this system]," Robinson said. "People in the Olympics spend time with numbers and hours perfecting their craft. So obviously, there should be such a big display for women too."



Photo by: The Pollack Group

Rise In Driveless Cars

By: Aamna Umer

Self-driving cars are a more popular concept lately. As the roads of the United States are littered with cars with empty driver's seats, more people are raising concerns about the increase in accidents related to these automated vehicles. According to PC MAG, self-driving services sweep up cities like Los Angeles, New York City, and San Francisco. By this year, Waymo is one of the self-driving companies that is coming to five more cities by this year, and it has people questioning the safety and how much trust they can provide to them.

Driverless cars aren't safe and shouldn't be trusted with human life.

A key concern raised by opponents is a certain level of trust required to ride in a fully autonomous vehicle without human drivers present, which raises questions regarding its safety. As the list of things that can go wrong is long. Self-driving cars raise a safety concern despite their advances in technology, as these vehicles depend on software, cameras, and sensors to understand their surroundings. And this technology will never be perfect.

According to Robotics MIT, there have been countless efforts made to ensure safety measures are reliable when self-driving cars are operating, especially during poor weather conditions, such as in snow or rain. However, even the most high-tech vehicles have failed when it comes to safe navigation. This is due to extreme weather conditions, it disrupts the functionality of the sensors and camera responsible for navigating the roads.

Another major issue with self-driving cars is the potential loss of jobs. Millions of people rely on driving-related work, including delivery workers, rideshare operators, bus operators, and truckers. If the widespread use of self-driving cars continues as it is currently, then many of these jobs, too, are at risk of being replaced by automated systems. This would cause the unemployment rates to rise even more and cause financial instability for those workers who depended on this for their livelihood, especially if it was their primary source of income. According to Stick Shift, more than four million jobs are at risk of being lost due to the rapid increase in such driving services.

According to Intelligent Transportation Systems, the technology for self-driving cars costs around \$100,000 per vehicle. Many corporations like BlackRock pour egregious amounts of money into this project, with hopes of an automated future. According to ARPU, Automotive software supplier Applied Intuition recently announced having raised \$600 million, despite the failures caused by these machines and the growing public concern. The hundreds of billions of dollars invested could very well have been utilized in more public sectors, like finding a solution to homelessness and investing more in health services. Luxuries such as these cars take away money utilized for several other things that have reason to be prioritized.

These cars create ethical and legal challenges as well. When a car accident is caused by a human driver, then the responsibility is usually clear, and it's easy to determine the people at fault. However with driverless cars, it becomes tricky to decide who becomes responsible. The fault could fall on the company, the owners, the manufacturers, etc. Additionally, self-driving cars may face situations where they make decisions that inevitably affect human lives, which raises questions over the moral grey area these autonomous vehicles fall under. These issues can make the use of these cars complicated and controversial.

However, it can be argued that these vehicles are useful for the elderly, people with disabilities, and anyone who isn't able to drive on their own. Autonomous vehicles can allow them to travel on their own schedule and have an increased sense of independence, but despite that, a car handled by a human being is much safer than relying on a robot. Human beings have a sense of empathy and care for those people who aren't able to travel on their own and need assistance, since they're much more vulnerable than robots could mimic.

Self-driving cars shouldn't be authorized to be on roads and be able to transport people without a person present to supervise them. In that way, human supervision can avoid potential fatal accidents, and it would also contribute to solving the issue of the loss of jobs.

Photo by: The Student Life

Cancel Culture: Ineffective Change

STAFF EDITORIAL

Cancel culture has become a prominent tool for holding large corporations accountable. It often takes the form of social media campaigns, boycotts or social shaming aimed at forcing companies to change policies or apologize for controversial actions. While it draws attention to issues, the rapid pace of online outrage can make it difficult to evaluate the situation fully.

Despite its popularity, cancel culture is not an effective way to hold large corporations accountable.

Corporations operate as complex systems with thousands of employees, meaning that punishing the organization often harms people who had no control over the corporation's actions. Employees can lose their jobs, suffer harassment or face reputational damage as a result of canceling large corporations. These unlimited effects raise serious questions about fairness and collective responsibility, highlighting that cancel culture often punishes the wrong people while leaving the decision makers, the executives or board members largely unaffected.

According to Marketing Dive, around 57% of market executives believe that threats of being canceled do not affect company sales. The debate over cancel culture shows that social media-driven accountability has its limits. Though it can make companies address the problem faster, it is more about looking good than actually fixing the problem. Many companies make quick apologies or small changes to calm the outrage, and then go back to business as usual.

Some companies get targeted

while others do not, which shows how selective cancel culture can be. Big-name brands with lots of social media followers or controversial reputations usually get the most attention, while smaller companies can escape completely, even if they do similar things. Online campaigns tend to focus on what goes viral rather than the seriousness of the problem, creating an uneven system of accountability. The amount of selectivity makes it hard to determine whether cancel culture really holds companies responsible or just punishes the one in the spotlight.

Online outrage can spread fast, and there is no limit to how much harassment a company can face. Once a post goes viral, users can pile on with tweets, comments or reviews, and it can feel endless for employees and executives. When a company is under constant attack, it often focuses on damage control instead of fixing the real issues, leaving little room for learning or reflection. This relentless cycle of harassment makes it hard for companies to understand their mistakes and also improve in any meaningful, lasting way.

When people join viral campaigns, they can easily fall into mob mentality, reacting without checking facts or considering context. This group pressure can turn minor mistakes into massive public scandals, creating a wave of harassment that grows faster than a meaningful discussion would. In the rush to participate or show support for a cause, individuals sometimes exaggerate the problem, spreading misinformation or contributing to online attacks. The result is that companies face backlash driven more by viral momentum than by thoughtful accountability.

Though cancel culture can unfairly harm employees or companies, it can also serve as an important part in accountability. By drawing attention to unethical behavior or harmful practices, cancel culture can pressure companies to take responsibility for their actions. It also allows the public to have a voice when corporations have controversial actions. However, many companies are not affected by cancel culture in the long run, especially large corporations with strong brand loyalty and financial stability.

Cancel culture can create a temporary outrage, unfairly targeting employees and encouraging reactive behavior. Lasting change comes from thoughtful action, clear policies and accountability that addresses the root problems. Approaches that go beyond viral outrage and focus on real improvement are more effective at holding companies accountable, while also not harming employees or encouraging mob-like reactions.

33.3% of students reported that boycotting large corporations is effective.

48.1% of students reported that boycotting large corporations is somewhat effective.

3.7% of students reported that boycotting large corporations is not effective.

14.8% of students did not comment.

19. SPORTS

Photo by: CNN

@PESHPRINTS.COM

World Cup: Football's Greatest Stage

By: *Kristhel Soto Castro*

Major soccer fans in the United States will be able to experience the excitement surrounding the World Cup this year. From June 11 to July 19, the United States, Canada and Mexico will host the 2026 World Cup. American and international players compete to win the FIFA World Cup Trophy every four years. With recurring winners competing this year, the stakes remain high.

"I think it's pretty cool, honestly," sophomore Rayon Sheik said. "You know, finally, the US gets a World Cup; all these other countries have been getting it [instead]."

Since 1930, the FIFA World Cup has remained the center stage of football. This international competition determines the best men's football team of the year, based on skill level, communication, coordination and athleticism.

"I'm very excited, but sadly, it's too expensive in Dallas, so I'm probably not gonna go," junior Hadi Sheik said. "My favorite is Mbappe. I'm a spanish supporter but Mbappe is good."

With fan favorites re-entering this long-awaited tournament, many people are looking forward to attending these rallies in person, although the prices may scare off a few. Since the United States was selected as one of its hosts, many fans now have the opportunity to experience the game on a more global level than on their television screens or radio broadcasts.

"Years in the past, people in my family would have it on," Sociology professor Graham Robinson said. "When I was in college, I was in a fraternity, [and] I'd come downstairs

and there'd be a game on the TV. People would be arguing about, oh, you know, so and so is a Barca fan. [It's] about all these things and they're all just like arguing with each other. It was super fun."

For many, the thrill of soccer came from their past experiences, watching these playoffs with friends or family. Others took their excitement onto the field and played the sport themselves. Either way, this sport has brought people around the world together through the national pride and passion it generates.

"I'm actually on the soccer football team here, I play for Plano East," Rayon said. "I may be going D2 [soccer for college]."

With teams such as Brazil, Germany, France and Argentina competing in the World Cup, tension, posing a thrill to spectators, accentuates the experience for soccer fans alike. With the addition of commentary, players can enjoy, understand and cheer when egged on by the sportscasters. "When you look at like different sports, the way that the crowd and the commentators behave can really impact how we feel about the sport and perceive it," Robinson said. "I really like the energy that comes from something like soccer, where they have those big kind of emotional outbursts."

Players from new teams that have not participated in previous tournaments will be competing this year for a chance at recognition and stardom. Fans are excited to see their country being represented for the first time.

"[I'm cheering for] Uzbekistan," Sheik said. "They made it to the World

Cup."

The most intense moments for players are when teams come close to scoring at the opposing field. It is an eye-catching moment where, in an instant, a score can be made to decide the winning team.

"If they're over on one side or the other side, like, close to the goal, I'm definitely going to put my phone away and start looking," Robinson said. "I also feel like, sometimes, the little moments of footwork [where] you can kind of just appreciate the artistry of a certain player, that's always really nice as well."

With the arrival of this huge tournament in America, many people will desire to learn more about the background surrounding the World Cup, hoping to appreciate the sport at a deeper level than before.

"It's, here and it'll be around, [so] people are going to be talking about it," Robinson said. "I'll definitely try to learn more and keep in tune. So, I mean, I think it's awesome that we're having it here."



Photo by: Major League Soccer

Lady Panthers Enter New Heights

By: Ava Canaday

The road to playoffs starts now as the east softball team brings the grit to make it all the way to the finish line. This season will have its challenges, but the grit of this team will rise above the status quo to deliver who they are. With not being able to play on their home field, the girls are already starting off as the under dogs ready to be let out of their cage.

"I'm not able to play on my own field, but I understand the fact that it's getting renovated, they're helping us out," senior Savannah Leonard said. "It's disappointing because I would really love to [play] on our field, being able to [represent] East side."

As the team is gearing up for this upcoming season, they are led by four remarkable seniors. Striving for success these seniors have been coached by Coach Lauren Peterson and Coach Chelsea Anderson all four years of their high school career. Fostering leadership, grit and amazing teamwork within this year's team. For these seniors, being able to be led by an amazing coaching staff has led them to the people they are today. These seniors love these coaches just as much as they love playing their sport. Coach Peterson and Coach Anderson have helped push their astonishing seniors to continue playing the sport they love in college.

"I just committed to college in New York," Leonard said. "So [softball has] helped me get into a school where I can further my education and get better at softball. It's helped

me with a lot of things in my life. Like being more healthy, because I am working out more, wanting to get better at softball."

Playing a sport for the majority of your life can leave an impact on the player and their team. Being able to experience life with a group of people who share the same desire as you gives you a sense of purpose, something to look forward to. In times of need, playing a team sport allows you to find comfort in knowing. Knowing that this is something they can control, something that they could look into in times of anxiety, sadness and excitement. Sports gives people an outlook on the world that is built on the aspect of teamwork. Every person is not only there for themselves but rather for the greater good of the whole team.

"Teamwork has shown me how good things can happen whenever you work together, especially in a game," senior Audrey Hopper said. "I know last year at first we were losing games cause we weren't connected. But once we did that, once we connected, we started talking as a team."

For many softball has taught them something about themselves, something that teaches them something about themselves that they may not have been able to realize before. In most team oriented sports you are not alone. Each person has their job, that in the end leads the team to success. In softball that might be the connection between the catcher and the pitcher. Each has their own job,

Photo by: EastPanthers1



however, once they work together they start to raise each other up to success.

"When I broke my leg that was definitely difficult," Hopper said. "Just getting back in the group, playing softball and not having our field [for] any games."

Playing a sport comes with players. These people don't leave in times of need, instead they look for ways that push those around them, so that they do achieve the unimaginable. The things they believe they can't control. Playing a sport doesn't mean players are playing by themselves rather that they are playing with a group of people that care enough to lend a helping hand.

"Softball's taught me to control the controllable," Savannah said. "So getting mad about people doing things that you cannot control. People are always gonna get in your way of things, or they're gonna make you mad, or they're gonna do something that you don't like. But you need to control what you can."

Women Reshape Podcast Culture: Female-Led Voices

By: Soha Syed

Due to the digital age, the podcast space has grown immensely over the past couple of years. This style of entertainment has grown in popularity due to its accessibility for multitaskers who need a cooldown to help refresh them throughout the day. Celebrities, politicians and podcast hosts have grasped control of the audio form and draw listeners in with their conveying conversations. While the genre has grown in popularity among all audiences, the podcast world has been significantly dominated by men. According to NPR, male podcast hosts and even male featured guests hold the top spots in the most popular podcast genres. As March marks the beginning of Women's History Month, it is the perfect time to bring more visibility to female voices in the field.



Photo by: The Times of Israel

“Serial” by Sarah Koenig took the world by storm in its first season uncovering the murder of Hae Min Lee, an already solved case. Despite the investigation concluding with a determined conviction in 1999, Koenig still attempted to decipher what truly occurred in a time where technology couldn't keep up, evidence wasn't as reliable and racial profiling was more prevalent. Koenig uncovered plot holes and inconsistencies that questioned if the case was truly solved. She revealed her findings with present-day research to open the search back up. The listener joins her investigation and enralls them into the world where the case took place. Frightening at times, she explains the sites, people involved and facts in immense detail. Koenig successfully captures listeners as if they are a teenager in 1999 and brings a need for justice to the young girl who lost her life. This Peabody-Awarded true crime podcast led the genre to its breakout on the top of Spotify's podcasting charts. “Serial” is a great podcast to dive into the true crime genre with its dynamic and captivating storytelling.

Conde Nast's “Women Who Travel” podcast details the experiences of women traveling across the globe and gaining a newfound outlook on life. The podcast strives to increase female storytelling in the travel industry, which has historically been dominated by the male perspective. Its host, Lale Arikoglu, brings an emphasis on female solo travel, showcasing the practice's features of self-discovery, independence and personal wellness. With a diverse set of guests, the podcast gives a platform to women from all walks of life including the stories of immigrants tied to their origins, careers rooted in experiencing and interacting with a global audience and once-in-a-lifetime getaways. While the hobby can be inaccessible, Arikoglu leads the podcast and their weekly guests to bring the listener to connect with the unique and interesting traveling experiences. The narrative style podcast is perfect for travel-nerds and those who take an interest in personal growth.



Photo by: Spotify



Photo by: The Daily Collegian

SKIMS co-founder Emma Grede launched her podcast “Aspire with Emma Grede” featuring discussions with established business professionals across the entrepreneurial industry on how to achieve their personal goals. From Grede's journey to becoming a self-made businesswoman, she utilizes interesting examples from her momentous career to tell the truth about what she has experienced and how to reach her success. Through her motivational language, Grede strives to encourage female audiences to roles that hold little influence from women. Though Grede is in business, her voice speaks across the interests of all individuals aiming for goals that may seem impossible. “Aspire by Emma Grede” successfully prepares audiences to reach their goals and sets the new generation of the workforce.



Editors Pick: Spring Fashion Trends

By: Aisha Ali

According to Vogue, nearly 15 new creative directors debuted their visions for this season setting the stage for a true industry reset. The leading theme “fashion as a feeling” paved the way for a fitting sentiment that emphasized a common theme exploring a soft, relaxed elegance. With personality looks driven by wearability, this year’s spring fashion trends emphasize color and practical layering, with the return of staple pieces that can anchor any wardrobe.

Maxi Skirts:

From fitted to oversized, make a statement. Denim skirts offer a chic, everyday option, while pastels and lightweight fabrics create a softer feel. Both options offer versatile styling that embodies a seasonal shift towards freshness and femininity. The light and airy fabrics allow for a seamless transition into warmer weather.



Texan Twist:



Cowboy hats and boots are making a noticeable comeback, as they can be paired with various different outfits like flannels and flowy maxi skirts. Wearing a fitted neutral T-shirt or tank top keeps the adaptable. Denim jackets, cardigans or oversized flannels are optimal options for layering to create dimension.

Style Tip:

When piecing together a spring outfit, balance trendy styles with reliable staples to create a polished look. Adding oval sunglasses, painted metal belts, flower hair clips, bandanas or a patterned scarf are all key accessories that can elevate any spring look. Utilizing basic neutral pieces that are in almost any closet is cost effective. Choosing one or two statement accessories helps keep each outfit balanced and practical for everyday wear.



46.3% of students reported that finding outfits for the weather is their biggest fashion challenge

11.1% of students reported that balancing fashion trends is their biggest fashion challenge

31.5% of students reported that finding the right personal style is their biggest fashion challenge

11.1% of students did not comment.

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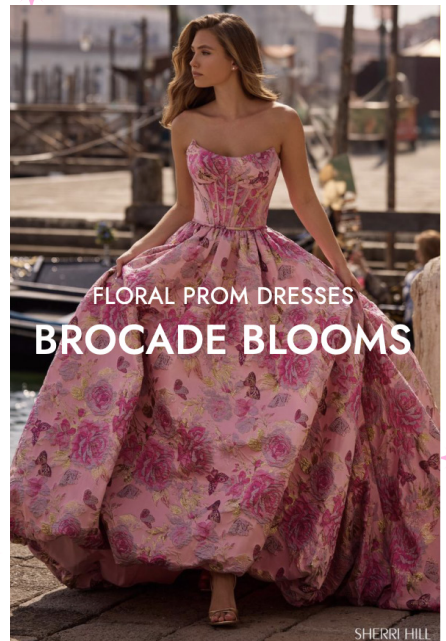
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