

MAY 1, 2026

ISSUE FOUR

# PANTHER

## *Prints*



Post Graduation: Senior's Next Steps

PG. 15

# Editors

## ADVISER

Mike Birnbaum

## EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Aisha Ali

## CREATIVE DIRECTOR

Kristhel Soto Castro

## MULTIMEDIA MANAGER

Inara Pabani

# Reporters

Ava Canaday

Katie Nguyen

Sydney Rocio Wade

Soha Syed

Isabella Tolentino

Aamna Umer

Models: Hannah Ly and Kennedy Lewis-Picklesimer

*Poll statistics were organized through Google Forms.*



# LETTERS FROM THE *Editors*

I don't know what to say. This fourth issue is bittersweet because I know it's my last. As much as I hate to admit it, while I am excited to move on and graduate, I also know a part of me is going to miss Newspaper. Panther Prints has been such a big part of my high school experience, I couldn't be more grateful. I especially appreciate our adviser, Mr. Birnbaum, for his guidance and always being there to help. Being the Editor-In-Chief and working with our amazing staff has been such a blessing, I love you guys so much! Inara, Katie and Sydney: congratulations! Each of you has worked so hard throughout the year and you all have grown so much. Don't doubt yourselves, you guys are going to do great next year. I appreciate our loyal readers for your continuous support this year and I hope you all enjoy our final issue!

A cursive signature in black ink that reads "Aisha Ali".

We're finally on our last issue and the endless planning and writing is over, for our seniors at least. We have come a long way since our first issue, and I've seen much improvement in our AP style and writing skills which I'm very proud of. Newspaper has been a long two years for my friend, Aisha Ali, and I as the only surviving juniors from last year. We've both grown a lot in various aspects of our lives, and I'm happy to see where we will go next. I had a lot of fun with my classmates, but also with our fantastic and incredibly funny adviser: Mr. Birnbaum. I'll miss my juniors, and I hope next year treats you well.

A cursive signature in black ink that reads "Kristhel Soto".

Finishing this final issue with my reporters, especially seniors, is very heartbreaking but an amazing experience for me. It has been an honor to serve as the newspaper's Multimedia Manager this school year. I'm proud of all the meaningful work we have done for this issue and all the challenging moments we endured together. I'd like to thank my lovely seniors who will be graduating this month. You all have my biggest inspiration and I'm amazed to see how far you guys have come. I'll cherish our memories as you all move onto your destined careers. As a new chapter begins for my favorite juniors, Katie T. Nguyen and Sydney R. Wade, I'm excited for what's ahead with next year's PeshPrints! To our readers: thank you for your support by reading our issues throughout the school year. I hope you enjoy this final issue and have a wonderful summer break!

A cursive signature in black ink that reads "Inara Pabani".

---

## 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.



# TABLE OF CONTENTS



Photo by: Madison Chambers



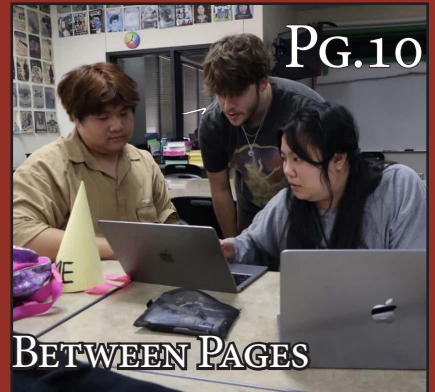
PG.4

SPARKS OF SOCIAL MEDIA REVOLUTION



PG.6

CRISIS SHIFTS PEOPLE'S VIEWPOINT ON TSA



PG.10

BETWEEN PAGES



PG.12

BRIDGING CULTURES AMONG SCHOOL HALLS

Photo by: Charlotte Morel



PG.15

POST GRADUATION: SENIOR'S NEXT STEPS



PG.20

ALEXA PIERRERA: SOCCER SUCCESS



PG.23

BTS BREAKS HIATUS WITH ARIRANG

Photo by: Jill Connelly Getty Images

## Sparks of Social Media Revolution

By: Soha Syed

From its introduction onto the online network in the late '90s, the presence of social media has transformed life and is now an integral part to the growth of rising generations. Gen Z is the first generation to be exposed to these compelling but addictive apps and therefore must face their consequences alone. Over the years, slight signs and concerns arose suspicions on the harm the apps may bring. Eventually, March marked a critical turning point in the battle against social media's adversities from a revolutionary and first-of-its-kind lawsuit, holding Meta and Google liable for harming young minds to social media.

"Access to the internet or social media is alarming," senior Samantha Bustillo said. "There are many ways to prevent it and [platforms] don't do enough to address the issues."

The California jury awarded Kaley G.M, the plaintiff, \$6 million from both Meta and Google. Kaley, aged 20, is a part of Gen Z and has grown up with apps like Instagram and Youtube since she was six. Similar to today's youth, life without social media is not remembered.

"[I didn't have social media] before 7th grade," senior Gabriella Flores said. "[Now], it brings a lot more political and social awareness."

Growing up with social media made it seem essential to life for Kaley. From her beginnings at a young age, Kaley became addicted and obsessed with the apps' features of scrolling, like counts and filters. The longer she was exposed to the apps, the more she became enraptured by receiving engagement on her posts.

According to Bloomberg Law, Kaley testified to spending 16 hours a day on Instagram.

"[I spend] somewhere around 1 to 2 hours [on social media per day]," Flores said. "I doomscroll before bed."

According to KVUE, these posts meant a lot to Kaley, as outstanding engagement was a personal assurance to her success. Not only were some of them Kaley's own creations, posting her artworks and creative film edits, but some of her uploads were herself. Though, she couldn't manage to post herself without Instagram's filters. This exacerbated the effects of her addiction, growing insecure and struggling with body dysmorphia.

"I always find myself looking at other people [on social media] and comparing myself," Bustillo said. "I want to be more like them, it's like chasing aesthetics."

While this legal fight is a landmark case in the battle against social media's harmful effects, there have been previous trials regarding platforms' outcomes on young users' overall mental health. According to Reuters, a case in October 2024 denied a claim by Meta, stating their platforms protected children from addictive habits. Due to this, the multimillion dollar company was forced to face lawsuits from over 30 states. While it was marked as a success and allowed for Kaley's case to proceed, Meta used Section 230 of 1996 Communications Decency Act to avoid some of its consequences. According to the Social Media Victims Law Center, the section was passed to protect companies from liability for moderating offensive content on the internet.

Now, these companies are still protected from liability when choosing to promote harmful content, as it gains more engagement and revenue.

"[Social media companies] profit from us," Bustillo said. "They use their platform and have strategies that know how to target an audience."

By prioritizing money through engagement, children are exposed to harmful content and subject to social media's addictive effects. The addictive habits stem from the apps' own algorithms. Though, Section 230 has prevented many of these large platforms from liability linked to its harms. Kaley's lawyers focused on targeting the addictive features of social media, rather than the apps' mental health harm. While important, they related Kaley's time on the app to her quality of life. According to the Daily Journal, this strategy allowed for Kaley to prevail and found Meta and Google liable, pushing for reform to the addictive scrolls, clicks and views children are vulnerable to.

"I won't say that [greater awareness towards social media addiction] is impossible," Bustillo said. "It is [more] likely that it will happen years from now, because it's overlooked. People tend to get on social media and keep scrolling because that's what the companies want you to do."



## Summer Jobs

By: Katie Nguyen

As summer approaches, students begin looking for ways to spend their time, and for many, that means getting a job. Whether it's to earn money, gain experience or stay busy, summer work is a chance for teens to take on new responsibilities and gain independence.

A popular option is Braum's, a classic summer spot known for its retro setting. With over 100 ice cream flavors available, it's a nice break from the Texas heat. Though the sweets can be tempting for anyone trying to eat healthy, overall, they can make for a fun and memorable way to earn money. The hourly pay for an entry-level position starts at \$10.

Another option students are getting excited about is Boba Lush, which is a mom-and-pop-style boba shop that is currently hiring. Rather than the unpredictable pace of a quick-service restaurant, it is a relaxed environment with colorful drinks and endless combinations of boba flavors that make every shift a little more interesting.

Smoothie King is a summer job that really picks up once the heat hits. With customers constantly coming in for something cold and refreshing, shifts can get busy fast, whether you're blending drinks, taking orders, or trying to keep up with the rush. It can be hectic, but that pace also makes the hours go by quickly.

Strike and Reel puts you right in the middle of a high-energy entertainment spot where bowling lanes, arcade games and food service all run at once. There's usually something happening every second, from helping guests get set up to keeping things moving during busy nights and weekends.

## Gen Z Modern Dating Culture

By: Sydney Rocio Wade

Modern dating is a widespread topic that is plastered all over the internet. Today, dating can be a challenge to navigate, especially amongst Generation Z, whose dating has been impacted by social media. In today's dating society, there is a lack of social connections, new terminology and even expectations introduced.

"I think people view dating more as a social tool, more than as an actual relationship with other people. They see it as something like instant gratification because that's kind of what their brains have been wired to," junior Ben Wilson said. "Today I think that relationship hopping is very normalized, where once the easy part is over, the instant connection is over."

During the pandemic, Gen Z's social skills had been unlearned. Interactions with people decreased, and self-isolation became the norm. But when it came back to returning to everyday life, that included having to re-learn social skills. Gen Z had to navigate learning how to build friendships as well as relationships. As Wilson said, dating became a social tool rather than an actual relationship, and this was because of the pandemic and how social media became the primary source of communicating with others. Since society had relied on social media, when it came to in-person connections, it actually decreased face-to-face communication skills. According to The Queen's University Journal, people's brains had become dopamine junkies looking for the next text message or even likes on a post, which has actually begun impacting in-person relationships. Real relationships aren't like the instant gratification we get from social media; they take time to flesh out. Generation Z is accustomed to social media, and due to the pandemic, it is taking time to relearn basic social skills.

"People are normalizing three-month rules, talking stages, and situationships," junior Theresa Le said. "I feel like they're

month rules, talking stages, and situationships," Le said. "I feel like they're normalizing things that shouldn't be normalized, because everyone's on social media nowadays, they feel like they need to do the same thing as other people."

Social media has also introduced terminologies that have been normalized. According to UCLA's Feminist student magazine, terms like "situationships" and "talking stages" are a step away from an actual official relationship; they are more loosely based around non-committal. Society continues to create new labels of the steps to a developing relationship to avoid using the most important label, a committed relationship.

"I feel like the dating culture of this generation has been based on social media," Le said. "Whatever people see on social media, they feel like they have to do it with their partners themselves. Like if they see someone give someone a boo basket, they feel like they have to do that with their partner."

In addition to these terms, there are also trends that have heightened the expectations of what a relationship should look like. A popular trend that has taken place across the internet is the princess treatment trend, where someone grills their partner or the person they are seeing for what is considered the bare minimum. According to Dazed, these trends create expectations that start to get out of control. When it comes to dating, there is a need to be realistic and address these expectations that the internet feeds society. However, it's okay to be hopeful when it comes to wanting a relationship; it's just difficult to understand how social media will affect one's expectations.

"I think that people are honest in wanting a relationship, but they don't know what it looks like," Wilson said. "They see all these perfect couples online, and they just assume it's always going to be that easy. Where in reality, it is never that easy."

Photo by: New York Times

## Crisis Shifts People's Viewpoint on TSA

By: Ava Canaday

As prices gradually increase, the Transportation Security Administration has hit a major decline in workers from pay cuts from a decision to reduce TSA workers paychecks. Due to fewer people showing up to work daily, security lines times have increased, causing people to miss their flights without any refunds. With TSA being shut down over the past few months, many are reconsidering if flying is the best option.

"It's very irritating, especially depending on what country you're in," junior Lujain Qubbaj said. "From my personal experience, we go to Jordan a lot, so we stop from [the] U.S. to Germany, then to Jordan. It's very uncomfortable to say the least."

Traveling to different countries can become very stressful knowing that there will be fewer workers. Cutting resources leads many airports to have to use extreme measures to get the same or worse result. Many states are having to bring in reinforcements to help ease the pressure off of the TSA workers who are working overtime for the same job they started off with.

"Some things I would change about TSA would be the amount of people they let in each line," junior Humuah Syed said. "I feel like sometimes it can get really overcrowded and it leads to a lot of blockage which actually makes the process go a little slower."

Security lines blockage is a major effect of having fewer workers around. People are having to wait almost three times as long in security lines which causes frustrations along with having less time to buy things or to get to

their gate within the airport. Having longer waiting lines for things has caused some to second guess if traveling is something they want to spend their time doing.

"With immigration enforcement, especially now it's causing more issues [with traveling]," Qubbaj said. "If you're trying to go for even a vacation, they've been detailing people that are citizens. I think having them in an airport actually makes [things] less efficient. It causes more fear and more panic [in people]."

According to NPR News, the U.S is adding other forces into airports to ease the stress off of TSA workers. Having both of these forces in airports creates a sense of fear in the eyes of many passengers. They fear that they might be detained by these forces without their consent. Having higher amounts of armed forces showing up everyday, causes many to be scared to make a mistake knowing the consequence could be deadly.

"From my personal experience and from the people I surround myself with, a lot of people get sent to random TSA rooms [to get checked] and it's typically those that are not white," Qubbaj said. "It's typically anybody that doesn't necessarily have either a U.S. passport or is not U.S. characterized."

Freedom is something that everyone wants, so when people feel like that freedom is being taken away, they start to shelter themselves from those places. Measures have been taken to increase the amount of security found in airports. Airports are a big place where everything can go wrong at any time and having unnecessary forces there can cause extreme anxiety which can push people to make unknown mistakes that at times are out of their control.

"It falls under customer service, and I don't know about the rest of the world, but customer service is a really big part of the U.S culture," Syed said. "I know I have TSA pre-check and I love it. I think [having] longer lines really breaks our customer service satisfaction."

Having longer security lines causes many people to miss their flights. Knowing this many airlines have decided to not refund or provide a different aircraft for people stuck in lines to take. People are waiting in extreme conditions to miss their flights, losing all of their time and money to not even get to go on the trip they were planning on going to. Flights have become less appealing and more of a hassle to get to.

"You wasted your time and your money and that's something you're never going to get back," Qubbaj said. "Money you might earn again, but you will never get your time back."

**47.1%** of students believe TSA Workers should get paid more.

**41.2%** of students believe TSA Workers should not be paid more.

**11.8%** of students chose not to comment.



## Breaking Stigmas: Mental Health Awareness

By: Aisha Ali



By the time the final bell rings, some students are already heading to practice, others to work and many head home to hours of homework. The stress of school doesn't always end when the bell rings, as it follows many students home as stress and potential burn-out.

Today marks the start of Mental Health Awareness month, an occasion that focuses on reducing stigma, providing education and promoting support for mental health conditions. Students and staff alike deal with mental health struggles and stress. As the spring semester comes to a close, it is the peak season for AP Exams and final projects.

"I joined Hope Squad on behalf of a friend of mine, but I realized that we all have shared instances where we need hope in our lives," junior Carissa Marin said. "I believe that us portraying our imperfections as well as talking about certain themes that everyone experiences within life because, of course, high school can be quite a big stress. More dramatic events typically hold up our lives in that we aren't able to articulate our emotional intelligence."

This growing pressure is not from a single place, rather it is a collection of stressors that pile-up. With academic expectations, extracurricular activities and social life often overlap. This leaves little time to actually recover. While stress and mental health issues have been a continuous issue, health professionals believe that there has been an increase in visibility and awareness in recent years.

"There's two things, there's a strategy for attacking what's causing

the stress and distress," Psychology teacher and Hope Squad sponsor Giselle Devillier said. "For the de-stress, figure out what's going to work for you. I [talked] to my AP students about [this] and that when they have so many things going on, [the best thing to do] is to make a list and get started on it. It gives you a sense of accomplishment and that 'okay, this is not as big as I thought it was.'"

This shift over the years has changed how the education system addresses mental health. There are many events and programs that are set to help students throughout their high school journey, especially when it comes to dealing with mental health. Rather than separating mental health from academics, some educators acknowledge how closely the two are connected.

"[Students who are struggling with mental health] should absolutely seek an adult from school," Devillier said. "Any of the adults in school are trained to get them with our counselors and our counselors are trained to work with the families. You guys as students do not have the tools to help them with that. Obviously listen and be their friend, but if they're having real mental health struggles, grown ups need to be involved."

Even with this shift, stigma remains a barrier. Each generation has a different grasp of mental health, with many beliefs stemming from culture. Some individuals tend to downplay their concerns and avoid seeking help, worried about how people will respond or whether their concerns are serious enough. As a result, advocates of mental health encourage a casual

check-in or a conversation. A small moment of understanding or connection can mean a lot.

"Focus on your strengths, like having yourself a little outlet of things that you don't typically do on a daily basis but would rather spend time with," Marin said. "Just to be in touch with your humanity as I am aware that at times socializing can be quite exhausting so [this] time to wind down can really help you and perhaps give your mind some clarity in the situation that you're in."

Mental health awareness month highlights these efforts, but mental health struggles are not limited to a single month. As the school year comes to a close, the challenge of balancing expectations with well-being is continuous. Many students will be working on internships, studying or working during the summer. It is essential for students to find a balance between work and self-care.

"Personally, I definitely like to have my own downtime," Devillier said. "When the weather is nice I like to read [outside], I really enjoy working in my garden. But then [there's also times] when I splurge and get my nails done, I have a time I sneak out for myself. I try to prioritize my days and make sure I do something for myself, [like] carve out time twice a week during school. I go to water aerobics because that helps me with my health [as well]."

Photo by: Axios

## Gas Prices Surge in Texas as Oil Markets Fluctuate

By: Katie Nguyen

Drivers across Texas are seeing a change every time they pull into a gas station. What used to cost around \$30 or \$40 to fill up a tank is now climbing much higher, and for many people, the increase is concerning. While gas prices often rise and fall, experts say this spike is not random, instead, it is closely tied to growing global tensions.

“I pay almost \$20 for my full tank now, and obviously that really affects me because not everyone has infinite money,” junior Samrah Ali said. “It not only affects me, it affects everyone else too.”

According to reporting from the Texas Tribune, gas prices in Texas rose by over 60 cents within a short period earlier this spring. Researchers link the increase to changes in the global oil market, where crude oil prices have recently exceeded \$100 per barrel, when they used to range around \$70. Crude oil prices directly influence gasoline costs because oil is the primary raw material used in fuel production. When oil becomes more expensive, refineries and distributors pass those costs through the supply chain, resulting in higher prices at gas stations.

“I feel like what is going on globally does have a huge impact on gas prices,” junior Jed Ranario said. “The price of gas increased whenever the war in Iran started, so it’s clear to me why gas has gone up.”

Ongoing conflict involving Iran has increased concern about potential disruptions to oil supply. Iran is located near the Strait of Hormuz, a major shipping route through which a significant portion of the world’s oil

supply passes. Any threat to transportation through this region can affect global supply expectations. According to The Guardian, there are concerns over shipping risks and instability that have contributed to the recent increase in oil prices.

“The other weekend, my parents told me I need to start only driving to places that are necessary because going to random places is a waste of gas,” Ali said.

Drivers who drive daily have seen a steady increase in their weekly fuel expenses as gas prices rise, with even short trips adding up over time. What used to be a manageable cost each week now takes up a larger portion of many people’s budgets, especially for those who rely on their cars for work or long commutes. Students who depend on their own vehicles to get to school, part-time jobs or extracurricular activities have also felt the impact. Many now have to spend more of their own money on gas or rely more heavily on their families for financial support. In some cases, higher fuel costs may lead students to limit how often they drive, combine trips to save gas or reconsider participating in activities that require frequent travel.

“I hope that eventually gas prices will decrease like how they did after Covid,” Ranario said. “The price of gas is insane now, and it looks like it’s still going up.”

The future of gas prices remains uncertain, and there is no guarantee that prices will go down anytime soon. While some experts can expect prices to ease if the conflict settles, others say they may stay elevated for longer depending on how global sup-

ply is affected. According to reporting based on the Houston Chronicle, gas prices are expected to remain higher than normal throughout the year and may not return to pre-conflict levels quickly, even if conditions improve. Because of this, drivers could continue to see prices fluctuate rather than steadily drop, and any decrease would likely happen slowly instead of all at once.

“Even though the problems that are happening are global, students are facing the consequences of the war,” junior Ashley Le said. “This shouldn’t have an impact on students, and I feel like it’s concerning that it is.”

Rising gas prices are affecting more than just drivers at the pump, they are shaping daily budgets, travel choices and overall costs for families and students. The situation highlights how global events can have direct consequences on local communities, and uncertainty around supply and international tensions means prices may continue to shift. For now, Texans and others across the country will likely need to adapt to these higher costs while watching how the situation unfolds in the coming months.

“I hope that the prices go down because it comes out of my pocket,” Le said. “The gas price [increase] adds more things for me to worry about.”



## Measles Cases Surge: Vaccination Gaps Cause Concern

By: Aamna Umer

The recent measles outbreak in the United States is increasing concern among communities. According to CDC, This outbreak continues to spread across several states such as Texas and South Carolina, with health officials warning this number to only be gradually increasing. As measles is a highly contagious disease, studies by NYP show that experts are discussing the amount of time it would take for it to spread.

“It all depends on the infectious disease and how quickly it can spread,” Human Anatomy and Physiology teacher Will Cozart said. “Though I feel like sometimes some people may be a little uninformed when they’re making a decision about their child.”

According to recent CBC, measles in the United States have surpassed 2,200 cases, marking a significant rise. Many of these cases are confirmed by FDA to be linked to individuals who have not received the full medically recommended doses of the measles vaccine. According to CNN, this has made particular communities more vulnerable to this outbreak. Health officials at NVC stress that measles is completely preventable through proper immunization, yet these gaps in vaccination coverage have been the main reason why these communities are more likely to fall victim to it.

“I would like to hear about how many people have been protected by some sort of vaccination protocol, and acknowledge the unfortunate cases where someone had an adverse effect,” Cozart said. “Whether their immune system is just a little more sensitive, there’s a lot of factors that can go into

that.”

According to CDC, measles is one of the most contagious diseases which spreads through the air when an infected person coughs or sneezes. Because of this, environments with a presence of larger crowds create perfect conditions for it to fester. For example, with the World Cup expected to attract millions of attendees from around the world, the possibility of exposure increases significantly. Experts from KCK advise against traveling as international travel could allow the virus to move quickly between countries, turning local outbreaks into a larger global issue.

“Previous views or personal experiences can definitely shape the way that they [people] see health-care workers,” senior Javeria Muqet said. “But they would be given more importance because a lot of people are going to go to doctors to help figure out what’s wrong.”

According to AAP, local communities and health organizations are taking steps to raise awareness about measles and its symptoms, which include fevers, coughs and runny noses. Schools and healthcare providers are working to inform the public about how to recognize these signs and what actions are required to take if exposure is suspected. By increasing awareness, officials at Cleveland Clinic hope to reduce the spread.

“With any medical intervention, there’s always going to be a potential for an adverse effect,” Cozart said. “From my perspective, I feel like sometimes the media likes to highlight some of the bad things that can happen.”

In addition, NBC media coverage has played a major role in informing the public about the outbreak. News organizations have highlighted both the risks of measles and the importance of vaccinations, helping to accurately spread information. However some experts at Fox news note misinformation on social media continues to act as a hurdle.

“They might not give as much exposure to that topic, but the people who are finding out they definitely would stay home,” Muqet said. “It would increase the outbreak further because not many people are educated about it.”

As the outbreak continues, experts stress that prevention remains the most effective solution. Vaccination, awareness and responsible behavior play a key role in limiting the spread of measles. With proper precautions, the risks associated with large events and increased travel can be managed. The current situation serves as a reminder that even preventable diseases can become serious threats if not properly addressed.

“Oftentimes, people like to talk about bad things more than all the good that’s happening,” Cozart said. “The sun rose today, the Earth’s still spinning. There’s a lot of good weather around the world, but some people like to focus on disasters, and so when you do that with the concept of vaccination and immunity, getting everybody in the community mostly protected from infectious diseases, I think sometimes it might confuse people what to do.”

## Between Pages

By: Katie Nguyen



Laughter, camera clicks and the hum of computers fill the classroom as students work on the pages that will capture memories of an entire school year. Guided by their senior Editor-in-Chief, Carson Long, yearbook members balance creativity while learning skills in photography, writing and graphic design. Students from every grade bring their own perspective, shaping a keepsake that will preserve memories for years to come. Yearbook distribution day will take place from May 4 to 6, giving students a chance to receive and enjoy their memories together.

Yearbook sheds light on achievements, highlights clubs and sports and preserves memories that might otherwise be forgotten. Beyond creating a keepsake, it fosters a sense of community, showing how each student contributes to the larger school experience. For many, the yearbook is not just a book, but it is a reflection of the school's spirit, accomplishments and shared experiences throughout the year.

"I have a passion for photography, so when I was at McMillen, I kept trying to find a program where it's photography-based," junior Ike Wang said. "My counselor suggested that I try out Yearbook, and it turns out I like every aspect of it. That's why I continued to do it [this year]."

Yearbook thrives on a strong sense of community, where students support each other and collaborate to meet deadlines. Everyone has a role, whether it's taking photos, writing captions or designing layouts, and students often help one another troubleshoot problems or offer creative ideas. This teamwork creates an environ-

ment where students feel comfortable sharing their perspectives and experimenting with new skills. This friendship and teamwork in the class not only makes the work more enjoyable, but also ensures that each issue of the yearbook reflects the combined effort and creativity of the entire group.

"[The editors] are really responsible people with a strong work ethic and also creative skills," Wang said. "They've made this program interesting, and they've raised all of us with a sense of really good work ethic and also how to actually have fun and enjoy this program."

As the school year comes to a close, the yearbook class has selected its editors for the 2026–2027 edition, marking a transition of leadership. Long and other editors have spent time mentoring the incoming editors, sharing tips on organizing pages, managing deadlines and guiding the creative process. This 'passing of the torch' allows the new team to step into their roles with confidence while continuing the traditions of the class. Students say the process not only prepares the next leaders for the responsibilities ahead, but also strengthens the sense of continuity and community within the class.

"As the editor-in-chief, the workload is definitely a lot," Long said. "I work from the process of creating the book to it being finished. I would work on it at least an hour to two almost every single day outside of school as well. It's a lot, but you find a way to space it out."

Yearbook students also work under constant deadlines, making time management an essential part of the class. Beyond the deadlines, the

yearbook itself is part of a long-standing tradition. Each edition builds on the work of past staff members, preserving memories and reflecting how the school changes over time. Former yearbooks become records of past classes, styles and events, showing how traditions evolve while still connecting students across different years. By contributing to the book, students are not just completing assignments, but adding to a lasting history that future classes will look back on.

"My favorite memory would be having some friends' [in] Yearbook this year, and shooting football games and just going to other events and taking photos with them outside of school," Long said. "[It gives me] a way to hang out with them even outside of school."

As the final pages come together, the yearbook becomes more than just a collection of photos and captions. It represents the effort, creativity and dedication of every student involved. While the book marks the end of one year, it also reflects the growth of the students behind it and sets the foundation for those who will continue the work in the future. In the end, the yearbook stands as a lasting reminder of the people, experiences and memories that shaped the school year.

"I have gotten to build relationships with all of the editors continuing next year," junior Abby Muy said. "I'm excited to see what we're going to do with the program, and just getting to see how far each editor has grown throughout the school year. I'm super proud these are the people chosen to represent our yearbook."



## Next Generation of Armed Forces

By: Isabella Tolentino

The end of senior year is approaching, some students are currently preparing for college and some are preparing to head into the workforce. For students who are enlisted into the armed forces, their post-graduation plans look a little different.

“So there’s two routes,” Sergeant Gabriel Martinez said. “If a high school senior enlists in the marine corps, after graduating they usually have a ship date.”

A ship date is when those who enlisted are sent off to bootcamp, for the marines, they go to San Diego, California. Enlistees are put through rigorous training, oftentimes coming out stronger than they’ve ever been.

“It’s one of the most challenging things they’ll do in their life,” Martinez said. “But it’s also one of the most rewarding things as well, how I see it, is that if you went through something so challenging, everything else becomes easy.”

All marines start at bootcamp, they earn their ranks and work to move forward. In bootcamp, students cannot have phones, fast-food and other things civilians have easy access to. In order to communicate with family, they have to send letters manually to their immediate loved ones. These students will spend 13 weeks before their ship date in bootcamp, or basic training, until they split up into designated areas.

“After bootcamp they go to marine corps combat training,” Martinez said. “From there they do a little more training, around a month long. After all of that they go to their schoolhouse.”

All branches of the armed forces

have ‘schoolhouses’ or formal training schools for designated jobs. Unlike the marine basic training in San Diego, these schools are located at various bases and sometimes mixed with other branches. Students who take the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery test and pass go to the Military Occupational Speciality school. Students pick an MOS based on their ASVAB scores and they pick their schoolhouse before they ship off to bootcamp.

“If you go on active duty you go to your duty station,” Martinez said. “That can be anywhere in places like Japan, Hawaii, California, anywhere really. If you go reserves you can come back here to Plano and then be a full-time student, only serving part-time.”

Once they graduate and earn their credentials and certifications, they can choose to go either active-duty or reserve-duty. Choosing the reserve route is what most students do when they want to continue their education and serve only one weekend out of the month.

“Another route is the [Naval Reserve Officers Training Corps] scholarship,” Martinez said. “If a kid wins, it’s a full ride scholarship to any school that they want to go to with any major they want to do. They go through school, in the summer they go through training, and when they graduate they come in as an officer in the marines.”

Students who win the NROTC scholarship have their tuition paid for with a stipend that usually increases when you’re a senior in college. To be eligible for the scholarship, applicants must be a U.S. citizen, meet either the SAT or ACT score requirements,

pass the physical examination and be accepted into an NROTC affiliated university or college.

“I want to go to college and get the college experience without enlisting in high school,” junior Vanessa Buitrago said. “After continuing [Junior Reserve Officers’ Training Corps] in college and earning my degree, I hope to go into the military. Intelligence is what I scored best in on the ASVAB.”

Compared to enlisting and going straight into the armed forces after high school, students who are currently part of the JROTC in high school can continue in college as part of Reserve Officers’ Training Corps. After graduating college, they’ll be an officer in the military and will enlist after earning their degree. Being part of ROTC in college enforces students to go through a structured process that trains them to be officers once they graduate. ROTC students pick either the active enlistment route or the reserves route. Unlike the marines, they went through advance camp, a 35 to 39 day training event in Fort Knox, Kentucky. Cadets between their junior and senior years attend advance camp and receive the training they need to be army officers.

“Doing ROTC in college will allow me to have already completed my advance camp,” Buitrago said. “I would’ve already gone through what most people would go through when they enlist straight out of high school.”



## Bridging Cultures Among School Halls

By: *Kristhel Soto Castro*

Before graduating, students around the world have the opportunity to continue their education in other countries while diving into unfamiliar cultural experiences. It allows them to break language barriers, challenge cultural differences and form new relationships. Our school homes exchanged students from various cultural backgrounds worldwide, allowing them to experience the American lifestyle of a high school teenager.

Transitioning into a whole new world overnight can feel anxious for some and exciting for others. But being open to the possibilities that foreign exchange programs provide for these adolescents keeps them eager for any new adventures they might come across.

“We have to find a program that does it, you just subscribe, pay and they take care of everything,” junior Charlotte Morel said. “They take your plane tickets. They take care of the high school. They find your whole family. They find everything. And even while I’m here, I still have like a coordinator that lives an hour away. So she’s like, in case I have a problem, there’s always people from the program that are around.”

Foreign exchange programs offer students live with host families that provide necessities while they enjoy their high school experience. Each meeting is different, but over time they evolve into a second family.

“I was so shy, I think that I became more extroverted now because you have to be open-minded, but it’s kind of hard to,” junior Maren Orthous Garmendia said. “You don’t know these people in their house, but now I feel like I’m not a visitor [any-

now I feel like I’m not a visitor [any-more] and I [became] part of their routine and lifestyle.”

The riveting idea of the American high school experience, often depicted in movies, excited these students with memorable dances like prom, or hyped school rallies fueled by aerobic dance routines of the cheerleaders. Apart from dealing with quizzes, tests and the occasional group presentations, the students get to form memorable friendships and experiences.

“The school spirit in high school, I feel like that’s so cool,” Garmendia said. “Like, I would love to have that back in Spain, but we don’t. And here, it’s so fun coming to school and having pep rallies or football days. Because I’m doing soccer, we get t, be in a pitfall. [It’s] so fun in the football games, the performances that they do there are [thrilling].”

Learning another language is the first step, but often the hardest one. Moving in with host families, meeting new faces and adjusting to a new lifestyle can be nerve-racking at the start.

“It’s pretty scary at first, at the beginning, being in a country where you don’t know the language, you don’t really know anybody except your host family,” junior Galith Humeau said. “It’s pretty scary, but at the same time, it’s very amazing to get to learn a new culture, new people, getting friends, getting close to your host family and discovering a bunch of traditions and customs.”

Because of their similar situations, this group of students sticks together. Different cultures, religions, beliefs and languages all come together as friends.

“I have [foreign exchange students] that I know in the school and at

home, I can talk to them and compare our experiences and our doubts and stuff,” Humeau said. “If I feel kind of homesick or I doubt something, I can just talk to them, and they understand what I’m feeling, because they’re living the same thing. So it’s pretty cool to have someone very close, because we’re having the same experience, we can have more in common than if we were just random people that just knew each other.”

Foreign exchange programs strengthen cultural diffusion, giving value to society. Understanding and learning from different experiences from people of different cultural backgrounds helps people better understand how diverse the world is. Culture is not only an important identity to individuals, but also to humanity.

“Like, just because I’m in track, I’m gonna miss doing that a lot because we don’t have a sports team in high school in France, so it’s kind of different,” Morel said. “I’m gonna miss my friends, my host family, and everything, just the routine here.”



Photo by: Charlotte Morel

## Raising Senior Spirits

By: Aamna Umer

The gym buzzes with energy as the students anticipate one of the most beloved school events, which is the pep rally. For seniors it represents something tangible to remember their last year by. Each pep rally was meticulously curated to keep all the students upbeat with energy and excitement as they came together to show school spirit and support for their peers. This past year, senior Maritza Sieders was bestowed with the responsibility of hosting the pep rally by being the MC.

"I've been in the school for four years," Sieders said. "So, I've seen a lot of pep rallies. I was very honored to be able to be a part of this and be responsible for making it a good experience for everybody."

Sieders' experience in attending past pep rallies gives her a comprehensive understanding of how a crowd stays energetic during different performances and what makes the theme special. She witnessed the excitement first hand, and now has the opportunity to use that in her own MC abilities. Being a senior as well makes this rally special not only for other seniors who attend it, but for Sieders too. As graduation nears, Sieders gets the chance to end her high school years on a high note.

"I try some different things, but often I try to sound excited myself," Sieders said. "That's the first thing, but I also ask 'are you guys ready?', and if I don't get a response, I'll ask again."

She emphasizes the importance of keeping your energy high, so that the crowd reflects it back. She realizes the significance of reading a crowd and understanding the energy of the audience, so she can respond appro-

priately. By keeping her own enthusiasm high and making an effort to actively engage students, she is able to turn a routine event into a memorable experience.

"At heart, I am a shy person, but I've learned how amazing it is to not be a shy person," Sieders said. "There are still times where I get a little bit shy and [a] little nervous, but I kind of push past that."

During Covid, Sieders was pushed to communicate and socialize more. It helped her develop the skills she needed to allow her to stand confidently in public places. She cultivated her ability to be well-spoken and extroverted through the years.

"Pep rallies build a really good school community," Sieders said. "It's really fun to see your friends, support your friends, see what they're doing, and also learn more about your school. I didn't know we had nearly as many sports as we did."

Pep rallies are an opportunity to connect students across grades and interests. They get the chance to support and celebrate their peers, which directly fosters new connections among students. And while this makes a pep rally significant, it's not the only thing required to achieve a successful rally.

"I try to make sure everything is on schedule," Sieders said. "I make sure it runs smoothly, and I try to make it a fun environment, but also effective."

Other than keeping the crowd alive, Sieders has technical responsibilities as well. She was kept in charge of the schedule of the pep rally, and utilizes her leadership and organization to make sure everything runs smoothly. She balances both sides of being an MC, and thanks to her attention to detail, makes a positive pep rally possible.

"The first thing for people who are shy and kind of want to start expressing themselves is to start off slowly," Sieders said. "It's taken a lot of time to develop, have fun and be really happy that you're there."

Taking small steps towards confidence helped Sieders overcome her shyness, and she encourages her peers to do the same by stepping out of their comfort zones gradually. She embodies how challenges can lead to some of the most memorable experiences in high school.

"It's kind of like you're saying goodbye to high school," Sieders said. "I feel like pep rallies are kind of like the essence of high school spirit, so it's a way to remember your high school career."



Photo by: Yearbook



Photo by: Eagle's Eye Finds

## Post Graduation: Senior's Next Steps

By: Inara Pabani, Soha Syed and Ava Canaday

As the year comes to a close, graduating seniors begin a new chapter in their lives. College marks an important transition, shifting focus toward professional preparation and career planning. While academics and networking are key priorities for university students, maintaining a healthy mindset is equally important. College traditions bring excitement and encourage community engagement, while helping students gain independence as they grow adulthood and develop a stronger sense of self.

"[I'm excited to] move out and learn new things," Texas A&M commit and senior Heidi Lim said. "I am really interested in biology, so I would like to learn more about that. [I want] to make more diverse friends and put myself out there."

### MORE THAN JUST COLLEGE: STUDENTS EXCITED ABOUT THEIR FUTURE

College provides students with opportunities they might not have if they stay home. Colleges show students that there is more in the world than the little bubble they have called home. Sporting events, dorms and meeting new people helps make college a place that many students eventually call home.

"I really like the idea of dorm life, so freshmen can make new friends easily and feel connected," senior Claire James said. "I am not sure if I will join a sorority my freshman year, but I definitely will in my sophomore year if not."

Joining a sorority can expand social circles and provide opportunities

to stay actively involved in the campus community. Some students are able to live in their sorority dorm which can serve as an opportunity to open more friendships. Dorm life is one of the most exciting aspects for incoming freshmen. Meeting new people and creating lifelong friendships is one of the major things college provides for incoming students. Although joining a sorority or a fraternity can seem appealing to some, it requires a significant time and energy commitment that may not be the right fit for everyone.

"I am so excited for the tradition of Purple Thursdays," James said. "This is a day when everyone wears purple to show school spirit."

Different schools bring different traditions to the table. For example, Claire is planning on attending Tarleton University for a few years then transferring into Texas A&M to further her education. Some schools love sporting events like football and basketball games and provide students with the opportunity to get yearly passes to come and support their favorite college teams. Purple Thursday is a great example of how colleges can turn just an average Thursday and make it something that students look forward to.

"I plan on focusing more on school first, then spending the rest of my time by myself or with my friends," senior Kaylee Epperson said.

College allows students to build connections that might not be possible outside of a campus environment. Whether living on or off campus, students learn to balance social life with

independent study and daily responsibilities. However, some students find the academic side of college to be more boring than high school academics leading them to misuse their time. Time is something that goes by fast in college. It is a time when students can build long lasting relationships and get their dream education. Being able to use your time wisely can help students feel less pressured to get things done while also giving them time to spend with their friends and their families.

"I will not be living in my house anymore and will be making a lot more decisions on my own," Epperson said.

For most students, their parents were always there to make sure that they were on task or that they had everything they needed. However, once they get to college everything changes. Trying to balance life, school and having a job can become overwhelming at times. Finances are something that students spend the most time trying to work through. As costs continue to rise, everyday expenses can begin to feel overwhelming. However, it is in these times that students start to figure out who they are and what they want to achieve. Parents are big in this decision as well. They help walk their



students on tours, talk about finances and even can give encouragement that many students need in these stressful times.

“When I think of college, the first thing that comes to mind is purple because that’s my school’s color, and my parents, because they have motivated me all my life and supported me in every way to get to where I am today,” James said.

## STEPS INTO ADULTHOOD: COLLEGIATE INDEPENDENCE

The daunting but exciting distance between one’s home and their future college is beyond the measure of miles and grows greater when incoming college students begin to imagine life alone. Whether seniors decide to reside close to home or pack their bags and venture off to distant coasts, all students take on the universal transition to life after high school. Graduating seniors begin to balance their schedule, face difficult college courses and take care of their own expenses, all of which contribute to becoming truly independent.

“I’m pretty independent now,” New Jersey Institute of Technology commit and senior Malachi Terry said. “[I’m excited because] I wanted to go somewhere far away, so I got what I wanted.”

According to the US Census Bureau, over 43% of Americans in 2020 attended college away from home. While a college decision comes down to a plethora of reasons, the idea of moving away is at the forefront of most students’ minds. And for good

reason, as living on a college campus offers a variety of opportunities that set students up for adulthood. However, adjusting to life where familial tasks become a student’s sole responsibility can be difficult without proper preparation.

“This summer I am going to make a makeshift dorm kitchen and learn how to cook with nothing there,” University of Texas at Austin commit and senior Purbaaz Chahal said. “[I] also am going to try to make my space smaller and pick out what I actually need [because] I am living with someone.”

Dorm life is one of the biggest challenges to incoming freshmen, as they not only have to move alone, but also adapt to life in a shared and cramped space. According to Texas Tech University, the school’s most common double rooms range between 195 to 199 square feet. While dorm sizes and amenities differ across campuses, most double-occupancy dorm rooms in the United States fit within or near that range. As a result, it can be difficult to adjust to a smaller living space. Strategies like maximizing space through storage, maturely communicating with roommates and

schools offer services and facilities to help students transition into independent living.

“I know how to cook already,” Terry said. “[Additionally] I have food [at the dining hall] when I get there.”

Meal plans and dining halls are some of the several resources that students can use during their freshman year to help balance coursework and a new environment. While cooking is a foundational skill for adulthood, taking on that responsibility without proper appliances in dorms can worsen eating habits. According to the American Dietetics Association, 15% of college students lose weight during college. While the ‘Freshman 15’ fearmongers students’ food intake, the majority of freshmen only gain 2.5 to 3 pounds during the year. Not only do the facilities ensure safety and proper health, but they also provide opportunities to socialize in communal spaces on campus.

“I’m excited to join student organizations,” Chahal said. “[I want to] see what fits and find my world [at the University of Texas at Austin].”

Living alone is a fresh start to venture into further life. Being in a new city or campus, students will need to

**64.7%** of students don’t know if they are going to college in-state or out-of-state.

**35.3%** plan to attend college in-state.

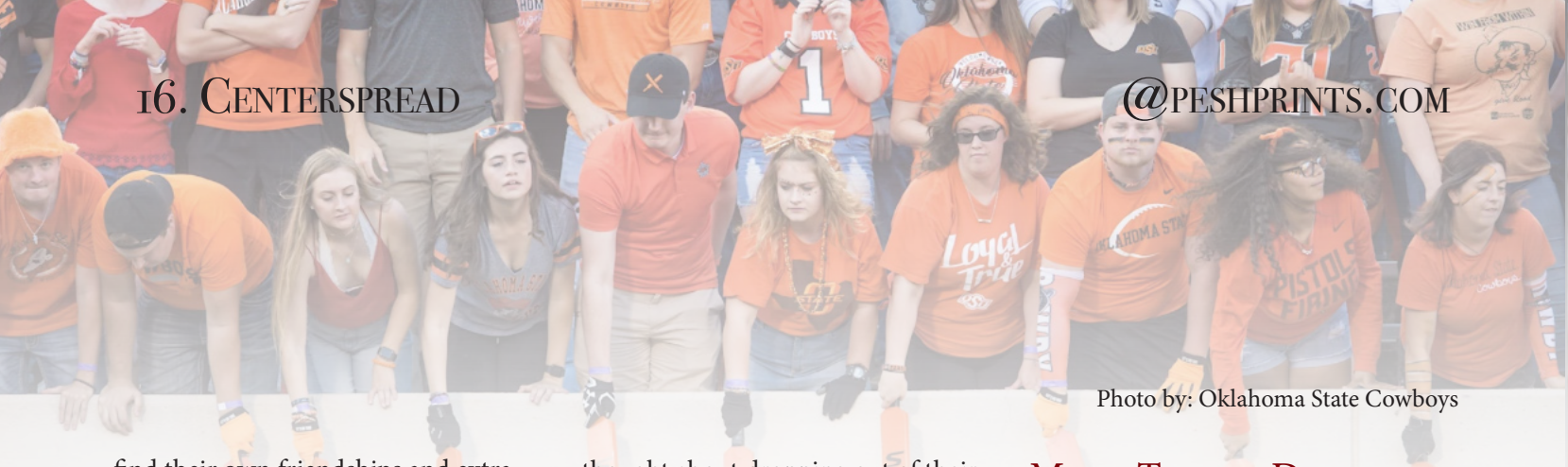


Photo by: Oklahoma State Cowboys

find their own friendships and extra-curriculars without the connections they might have had back home. Joining student organizations and clubs strongly influences a student's path to their next four years on campus. Whether college students are involved in rush culture or join educational organizations, all university-related activities push students to network and prepare them for their professional pathways.

"It's a passion for me to go to college for psychology," Collin College commit and senior Luke Walter said. "It's something that I would love to do and I think that really helps with staying motivated."

Incoming college freshmen will be exposed to a world of choice and take courses they are truly interested in. However, professors and classes can be difficult and often have competitive pre-professional environments. Holding good qualities like dedication and perseverance can maintain a student's academic success throughout their college career. While academic stress is a concern, financial pressure is often greater.

"Finances have a lot to do with [fear of independence], especially once I [transfer later to Colorado State University]," Walter said. "I think it is a little nerve wracking to deal with that."

College education prices in America are widely considered unaffordable and difficult for young new adults to manage throughout their 4-year experience. According to the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators, a study found that over 59% of college students have

thought about dropping out of their institutions due to financial stress. Some students plan to get a job the summer before moving to pay for their fees. Others consider applying for scholarships and loans to help pay for the experience. While the fear of finances is a common concern for incoming freshmen, planning beforehand can help ease some of those concerns.

"My parents are helping me out [to pay for college]," Walter said. "[But] I am paying for most of it."

Though college is the starting point to independence, students aren't truly alone. It is a great experience to budget and live alone, but its beginnings can be stressful. While graduating seniors should focus on preparing for collegiate independence, they should also be encouraged to reach out for support. Whether financial, emotional or physical, the transition into adulthood won't be as intimidating with that assistance.

"The more I think about [independence], it gets a little scary," Chahal said. "But I am pretty excited to [go to college] by myself and get away from home and be surrounded by other students."



## MORE THAN A DEGREE: SEARCHING FOR IDENTITY THROUGH COLLEGE TRA- DITION

Stepping away from their hometowns allows seniors to explore new freedoms and discover their passions. While seniors look forward to a new chapter in their lives, many embark on a journey of self-discovery.

"Just because I'm majoring in Actuarial Sciences, doesn't mean that's my real thing," Northeastern University commit and senior Elias Mohammed said. "I still love cooking. I'll always love cooking. Being able to separate my hobbies and professional life is something everybody should be able to do."

Many students find freedom in college by managing their own routines, meals, sleep schedules and social activities. The sense of independence shapes the college experience into a meaningful life experience. This major shift offers them a chance to design a lifestyle that reflects who they are.

"I'm a little nervous to be away from my family," Brigham Young University commit and senior Miriam Hawkins said. "I'll obviously still be able to call them and stuff, but I won't be able to fly home often, just for the weekends. I'm comforted knowing that I have extended family in Utah so I'll be able to see them a lot."

College serves as a key role for socializing and networking, offering students their own social circles that may have been absent in high school. Students are also encouraged to step



Photo by: Rhodes College

outside their comfort zones through a variety of electives, helping them to discover their interests in certain career fields.

“I’m looking forward to learning how to live on my own and being able to make decisions for myself,” Hawkins said. “I’m excited for that growing up process. It’s a brave step after high school.”

While many students enter college with a set career path in their mind, they encounter new opportunities that align with their interest, questioning what they want to do for life. Switching majors during college isn’t uncommon, rather it is a part of their journey. Changing focus isn’t a sign of being behind, it ensures the degree matches their true passion.

“One career I’ve been thinking about going into is architecture,” Hawkins said. “But [Brigham Young University] doesn’t have an architecture program so I’ll have to choose something else to go into for now or maybe I’ll switch colleges and go to a different one that has an architecture program.”

Many students start their first year with limited knowledge of their declared field, realizing later that it does not match their expectations, skills or passion. The transition into adulthood is stressful for some students because it involves academic and emotional pressure. Having a structured lifestyle during high school can lead to many questioning their intellectual skills

when independent. When a once-loved subject becomes a source of stress rather than inspiration, it is natural for students to feel a sense of uncertainty.

“Just working and building confidence in yourself will help you get over these challenges,” Mohammed said. “I would be scared to talk to people but when I started building myself up, I started realizing I shouldn’t be wary of what these people judge about me because who are they compared to me?”

Withdrawing from a university is another common occurrence, yet it remains one of the most difficult decisions a young adult can make. ‘Dropping out’ is frequently viewed through a lens of failure rather than a complex response. According to EstherFundsFoundation, around 39% of college students drop out within four years, with many freshmen returning for their sophomore year.

“I’m going to be moving into dorms,” senior Nincy Ochoa said. “I’m nervous and excited about my roommates because I can’t wait [to see] how their personality is, but [I’m worried that]we might not get along.”

Dropping out of college can be a valid choice if it aligns with their career pathway and matches specific goals for their future. While it can lead to financial risk, lowering earning potential and lost job security, it is sometimes necessary due to academic burnout, mental health or financial

conflicts. Many people drop out to pursue their goals and still manage to become successful.

“I’ve had other people who are older than me who tell me that gap years kind of break the rhythm of school,” Mohammed said. “I don’t mind college life so I’m ready to experience [it].”

The pressure to ‘have it all figured out’ is common, but the true value is having the freedom to explore. Education for students is more than a degree, they build their own legacy of themselves that will guide them for the rest of their lives.

“I’m going to miss my family and friends,” Mohammed said. “Moving is going to be hard for me but I know that in the long term, I’ll be okay because I always have people that support me.”

**58.8%** of students plan to play a sport in college.

**29.4%** of students are considering playing a sport in college.

**11.8%** of students are confirmed to play a sport in college.

## Wants vs Needs: What Salaries Say About Values

By: Inara Pabani

Sports is favored for its cultural impact and fostering a sense of community. Conversely, healthcare professionals provide essential and life-sustaining care for society. Entertainment purposes being chosen over health-professionals raises concerns about our economic preference for entertainment over essential life-saving careers. Athletes in championship games often win accomplishments over any field. However, healthcare workers perform under a pressure that no scoreboard can measure.

Health professionals should be paid more than athletes because of life-sustaining necessities, consequences of error and the long journey of preparation.

The main distinction between professional athletes and healthcare lies in the difference between “want” and “need.” Arguments for higher pay for doctors often focus on the value of their work compared to the entertainment of athletes. Athletes may drive billion-dollar industries based on their source of entertainment but doctors are essential for survival such as maintaining physical health and saving lives daily. According to ZipRecruiter, athletes in major sports can earn over \$100-\$200 million annually in salary and endorsements. While it’s true that athlete pay varies with some earning millions while others struggle around \$30k, valuing a game above a life is an ethical failure; people who save lives should be compensated more than those who provide entertainment. Doctors provide services that can pick up on diagnosis treatment but athletes salaries are based on entertainment revenue. High-need areas

face shortages that higher pay could help address. According to Stanford Medicine, around 45% of U.S. physicians report burning out during work hours due to long shifts and lack of support needed while athletes receive multi-million dollar contracts and extensive recovery teams to manage their performance.

The difference between errors and mistakes revolve around the unique ethical, legal and operational conflicts that arise when treating patients. An error from athletes includes missing a free ball, fumbling a ball or misreading a defense are expected parts of the game. Recovering from these mistakes often is what makes the sport exciting for fans. From healthcare professionals, an error is a failure of safety or judgment. According to Siegfried & Jensen, doctors primarily make mistakes from overworking hours that cause them to administer wrong dosage and misinterpreting a scan or surgical slips. While doctors must carry the legal weight of a life-altering mistake for the rest of their careers, an athlete’s error is wiped clean by the start of next season.

Most elite athletes reach their career in their early twenties, following a possible childhood dedicated to skill-based training and specialized coaching. This path is a shorter way towards high-level earnings. Many people in the medical field mainly experience academic pressure and financial endurance. It starts with four years of undergraduate study, followed by four years of medical school and anywhere from three to seven years of residency and fellowship, still receiving less than \$100k in most fields.

According to MDLinx, new doctors often graduate with over \$200k in student debt while residents only earn \$55k to \$70k a year. Due to extensive training, doctors start earning, saving and investing roughly a decade later than professionals. Financial difficulty is widespread throughout a medical career, ranging from medical school to full qualification often linked with stress from overworking that leads to workers wanting less hours but receiving less pay in return.

Critics of this argument often point out that the market value of the entertainment industry, noting that athletes are paid because they generate billions in revenue throughout ticket sales, sponsorships, merchandise and mainly, global branding. According to Montana, an athlete’s salary is the profit they bring to their career. However, entertainment should not be any more important than a professional that requires saving lives daily. Rebalancing about payment isn’t about fairness, it is about ensuring the survival of our healthcare.

Overall, the weight of life cannot be calculated through championship games. An athlete may provide a moment of joy, but a doctor provides the years of life necessary to experience that joy. As the audience increases towards a society that reflects true priorities in entertainment, investing compensation for healthcare professionals acknowledges their dedication to their community.

## Streaming is Killing Movie Theater Culture

Staff Editorial

Movie theaters have been a staple of culture since the 1900s, providing a popular platform for the community to enjoy new cinema. However, according to the Harvard Gazette, over the years, with the introduction of streaming services, 75% of Americans said they have started preferring streaming services rather than going to the theaters.

Streaming is ruining movie theater culture, but it can never match the immersive experience, communal atmosphere and even the special events movie theater culture promotes and provides.

When it comes to theaters, they are able to provide an immersive film experience that you can't get at home. Movies are meant to be seen on the big screen, with incredible sound and outstanding visuals. Watching films in theaters, especially IMAX, enhances both the artist's intent and the emotional impact. According to Stellan Skarsgård, in his Oscar acceptance speech, he described the theater as an endangered species and believes that cinema should be seen in cinemas. Skarsgård's claim is correct; streaming takes away the magic behind the immersive experience and just replaces it with accessibility, but films were never intended or made to be watched on a phone or on your couch. Watching movies anywhere, anytime takes away the true meaning of the cinema, the community.

Being able to experience a film in theaters rather than a solitary environment enhances the attention span of the audience. The captivating atmosphere engages the audience in the story with the communal experience of sharing laughter or even tears over

a film. This feeling is what makes the movie theater so enjoyable; one could argue that you could experience this at home, yet it is not fully true. With the evolution of tech, the attention span of many people has decreased, creating a lack of focus when it comes to watching films. According to the Child Mind Institute, it's easier for someone to pull out their phone at home and doom scroll; it takes actively choosing to turn your phone off, which helps create a distraction-free atmosphere. At home, devices can lead to missing the big twist, compared to an individual at the movie theater, because you are actively choosing to put your phone away to enjoy your experience.

In addition to the communal atmosphere, movie theaters also host exclusive events promoting movie lovers and fans to come and watch their favorite films or TV shows. For example, many movie theaters host exclusive Twilight marathons where fans new and old can watch all the films in one night. Experiences like these can be special for people who

haven't seen the film before, or even for parents who want to show their kids the experience they had when they originally saw the film. But besides films, sometimes theaters hold screenings for TV shows, for example, "Stranger Things", and even older shows like "Twin Peaks", in remembrance of David Lynch. These events are what help shape the movie theater community and promote the culture of theaters.

Yet, it is understandable why people prefer streaming. It is accessible and more affordable. However, according to Tom Rothman, movie theater prices need to be reduced to provide an affordable experience for all movie lovers and to ensure the long-term stability of movie theater culture.

Although pricing is an issue, it is something that will improve over time, and just because of that, it doesn't mean society should let theaters die out. When it comes to film, the cinema is where it should be viewed forever; it is a significant part of pop culture entertainment.

**56.2%** of students occasionally go to the movies.

**25%** of students go to the movies all the time.

**18.8%** of students rarely go to the movies

Photo by: Alexa Pierrera

## Alexa Pierrera: Soccer Success

By: Aisha Ali

Today is decision day, the national deadline for seniors to finalize their college commitments and student athletes are finalizing where they will continue both their academic and athletic careers. After years of hard work and dedication, senior Alexa Perreira is committed to play soccer at the University of North Texas.

"This year was a bit hard, I was supposed to not play high school just because I was getting to a point where it was too close to being not committed," senior Alexa Perreira said. "But I was able to juggle both and being on both teams outside of high school and in high school helped me a lot."

Athletes often sacrifice sleep and mental health to manage heavy workloads alongside rigorous training schedules. For Perreira, her decision to continue playing soccer both in high school and on a team outside of it contributed greatly to her opportunities. Perreira wants to be a starter in freshman year and to be showcased. Soccer played a major role in her life, and some of her challenges turned out to be her favorite memories.

"Playoffs [was my favorite memory] because last year [my team] had made it after [the] 15 year mark, but then we didn't make anything past that," Perreira said. "Coming into this year was a bit harder, looking at the girls I could see it was a good group but the level that we were playing against was pretty hard. My favorite memory [was] making it to playoffs and then proving people wrong. We were very much just an underdog team and then always voted against to lose and all."

That experience of proving everyone wrong by winning was proof that

the hours of high-intensity training and discipline paid off. By focusing on personal growth instead of external validation, the team emerged victorious. While balancing two soccer teams is difficult, the experience can be highly rewarding.

"It helped me because there's different levels of competition and I was able to do really good and get really good film from that," Perreira said. "And then also from outside of high school for the club that I played with, it was the highest division of soccer. Just playing against those people built my mentality and just made me stronger as a player and person."

A strong mentality is essential to survive athlete burnout. Student athletes each have their own academic advisor to help balance both school and sport. Perreira plans to take summer classes to help maintain the same balanced lifestyle that helped her qualify for UNT. She committed to UNT with a full-ride scholarship after attending an identification camp.

"I'm [looking forward to] being in a different scenery," Perreira said. "I'm still close to home, which I'm very happy about, but meeting new people and [experiencing] a different level of soccer, [having] a fan section, I think it's gonna grow a lot just because a bunch of the people on that team have family from Texas so their able to come out for games a lot."

Attending university close to home has its benefits, like maintaining a familiar social circle to help with emotional support. Some families provide emotional encouragement and logistical support. This helps student athletes to manage intense schedules and mental pressure. Whether it's a parent or a coach, a strong, reliable support system can help student athletes by serving as a

cornerstone, or foundation for success.

"My father has been there with me since I started," Perreira said. "I started at a very late age, I was nine, starting at that age you're set back from a lot of people. He was there with me throughout the entire portion of my career, and [he] still is. He has helped me get to where I am today."

All student athletes who choose to continue playing their sport at a higher level have experienced that one defining moment in their lives. For some it may have been a triumphant victory, while for others it might have been a devastating loss or injury; regardless, this crucial moment serves as a catalyst for personal growth and dedication.

"[For me] it was random coaches or referees talking to me in the middle of the game telling me how good I am," Perreira said. "I didn't realize it because I thought I was playing horrible, but to hear people constantly say that about me changed my mindset about what I wanted to do. There were moments in my career where I thought I needed to stop or it was becoming too much, but as long as you keep going and fighting for what you want, you're going to be able to get it one day."



Photo by: Alexa Pierrera

Photo by: Pinstripe Alley

## World Baseball Classic Showcases Global Talent

By: Isabella Tolentino and Aisha Ali

The World Baseball Classic has experienced an explosion in popularity. Largely driven by its intense competition while igniting a sense of national pride, the 2026 iteration continued the momentum with record-setting viewership and attendance. For the first time since 2006, Venezuela won the World Baseball Classic, beating the United States with Maikel Garcia as the MVP.

“The world baseball classic is really unique and has really given baseball a lot more identity and popularity,” Baseball Coach Carey Willingham said. “So I’m really glad they do it.”

The world baseball classic is easily one of the most watched tournaments in the baseball season. With the average this year being 10.784 million viewers for the final game between the U.S. and Venezuela, this competition captivates viewers worldwide. Since the beginning in 2006, Japan has won three times, leaving the U.S with one win so far.

“They [the Venezuelan team] just has such a great group of players,” senior Tyler Lubow said. “For them baseball is everything. They’re able to go out there and compete against the best players in the world and perform so well at such a high level. It’s just them being able to come together and play as a team and do what they do best.”

Venezuela is known for having successful players like Miguel Cabrera, Luis Aparicio, Jose Altuve, and Ronald Acuña Jr. Players like these are what takes an MLB team from good to incredible. The current WBC 2026 roster for Venezuela features an all Venezuelan born team known for their skill and baseball IQ despite the

growing pressure.

“Whenever you’re at such a high level of a sport you don’t really fold under pressure like that,” Lubow said. “Being able to perform at such a high level, you’re obviously in it for a reason and performing like [Maikel Garcia] did was something that will be remembered by his whole nation for years to come.”

Debuting in 2022, Maikel Garcia is a Venezuelan born MLB player for the Kansas City Royals. Starting his baseball career in 2017, Garcia began as a minor league player for the Burlington Royals as a shortstop. He was later named player of the week for July 29 through August 4, 2019 for having an incredible batting average. To be considered professional in baseball, a player must have a .300 or 30% batting average, meaning they have to hit 30% of the pitches that come at them. Garcia’s batting average was .500 or 50%, meaning that he was hitting 50% of the pitches thrown at him. After successfully being one of the best players on the Burlington Royals, he advanced to the major leagues.

“[Garcia is] on an MLB team and he’s incredible,” Willingham said. “He had an incredible last game. It was just amazing, just lights out completely. [Garcia] deserved that award.”

Early on in the game, Venezuela had already taken the lead with the score being 2 to 0. In the 8th inning, U.S’ Bryce Harper hit a 434-foot home run that tied the game to 2-2. In the top 9th inning, Luis Arraez led off with a walk and pinch-runner Javier Sanoja stole second base. The winning hit came from Eugenio Suárez with a running base hit to the double left-center of the field, earning Vene-

zuela its first win in the history of the World Baseball Classic.

“I’ve played baseball since I was 5-years-old,” Lubow said. “Ever since I was able to walk, I was always around my brothers baseball games so I always had a really good understanding of what was going on. Sure enough, once I got old enough I was begging for my parents to put me in baseball. He was always a big part of that, him and my dad and so I’ve always been kind of inspired by them, and it’s what I love to do nowadays.”

The high stakes and nostalgic nature of the sport has captivated many individuals. Baseball combines global pride, international camaraderie and suspense. With a growing fan-base, the high stakes match-ups initiated a massive surge in interest and showcasing talent from across the globe.

“It’s the ultimate team and adversity game,” Willingham said. “It really prepares you for life because of the adversity that you go through in baseball because [hitting] a baseball is the toughest skill to master. It’s a great [way to] prepare for life as far as all the ups and downs that life has to offer, it prepares you for that very well. It’s pretty cool.”



Photo by: Yahoo Sports

## Ultimate Summer Bucketlist

By: Aisha Ali

Last Friday was National Bucket List Day. It encouraged people to stop waiting and start living in the moment by making the most of life. Instead of doom scrolling on social media and rotting in bed, explore different activities to make the most of summer without sacrificing relaxation and peace.

### Summer Sunrise, Perfect Picnic

There is nothing better than a warm picnic, but summer in Texas can get hot. While laying in bed and sleeping in is a tempting offer, waking up early in the morning to watch the sunrise is a refreshing change of scenery. Plan the perfect summer picnic by bringing portable, heat-stable foods. It is essential to pack smart and use containers that seal tightly to hold finger foods. Use a cooler with packs of ice inside for perishables like dairy, or mayo based salads. For any successful picnic, fruit and a cold drink is ideal to craft the perfect experience. The hot summer heat also paves the way for the perfect dessert. After eating snacks and sides, the temperature will rise with the sun. This is the perfect opportunity to lay out a bar of chocolate. The most common picnic trend is to lay out a bar of chocolate in burning hot weather so that it melts. Once it is time for dessert, dip strawberries in the melted chocolate to conclude the scenic morning. Another commonly overlooked step to plan the perfect picnic is to find the right location. Find a scenic spot under the shade, like under a tree, and remember to bring a quilt or blanket. Since the event is outdoors, sunscreen and bug spray are non-negotiable. Individuals can also bring an activity to lighten the mood along with the sun. Depending on the group's preferences, ideal activities include games like badminton or bringing a deck of cards.



### Swimming Through Summer



One of the best ways to cool off during summer is to go to the pool. Whether it's attending alone or with a group of friends, the water is calming and will cool down any hot head. The pool has many different options and activities as well. There are water sports like volleyball, water polo and diving competitions. But for individuals who would rather enjoy a quieter moment, there are numerous relaxing activities such as lounging on a float, reading, playing music or sun bathing. Swimming at the pool can be a playful activity and positive way to spend time during summer, but swimming is also a great sport to stay fit and in shape. Learning to swim is a great option, especially when it's a larger area. The pool could be used to swim laps for fitness and training. A casual pool visit isn't uncommon for summer time, but summer is the one season known for pool parties. Host an unforgettable summer pool party with floats and vibrant decorations, easy to eat snacks and lots of interactive games.

### Exploring Local Farmer Markets

Texas has many different farms and areas to go berry picking with friends and family. It is a good opportunity to purchase ingredients, meet local farmers and taste fresh samples. June to late summer brings opportunities for picking different fruits like strawberries, blueberries and raspberries for an enjoyable and interactive experience. Make sure the berries are vibrant in color and plump. In addition to choosing the right healthy fruits, preservation is also essential. It is important to keep the berries in the back coldest area of the fridge to avoid them spoiling early on. Some recipes with the fruits include making pie, jam, juice and different pastries. The farms are great for market journaling and trying local treats. Summer farmers are booming with berry-focused trends. From blackberry jam to local market hauls, the fresh produce is a healthy and fresh way to kick-off this summer.



Photo by: Photostocks

## BTS Breaks Hiatus With ARIRANG

By: Isabella Tolentino



**B**TS' new comeback 'ARIRANG' is hitting all-time highs on billboard charts after their 4 year hiatus, uniting ARMY across the globe.

"I think some of my favorite songs are mainly from their older albums," senior Madison Shewmake said. "The sound they had before their break was amazing, they changed k-pop for sure."

Announced on January 15, ARIRANG's release was highly anticipated to be even better than BTS' previous albums. However, some fans feel that ARIRANG was not at all what they expected and not at all like 'old' BTS. Many fans expected music similar to their debut days, yet, they were met with music that wasn't at all similar to the classics.

"I personally like 'ALIENS' a lot," senior Diya Mistry said. "I think it's the background vocals that just catch me and guide me through the song."

It's not about the album as a whole, many fans dislike certain songs or feel that BTS put less effort in this album compared to other previous albums prior to their hiatus. A few songs fans seem to dislike the most include 'Hooligan' and 'Into the Sun'. Despite mixed feelings on these two tracks, many ARMY's like Mistry enjoy songs like 'Swim', 'Body to Body' and 'Aliens'.

"My expectations were like it [ARIRANG] was going to be something cultural," Mistry said. "It [ARIRANG] was going to be something close to home. ARIRANG was definitely worth the wait, there's just so many good songs in the album, I find myself playing it [ARIRANG] over and over."

ARIRANG, a traditional folk song, is a piece of Korean cultural identity and history. When fans learned the title of the album, they expected songs that would resonate with BTS on a cultural level. The track 'Body to Body' notably samples 'Gyeonggi Arirang', blending hip-hop with traditional Korean folk music, creating a sound that is uniquely BTS.

"To be honest the animation seemed irrelevant to the album," Shewmake said. "I felt like they could've portrayed what they wanted without turning it into a video that caused backlash and controversy."



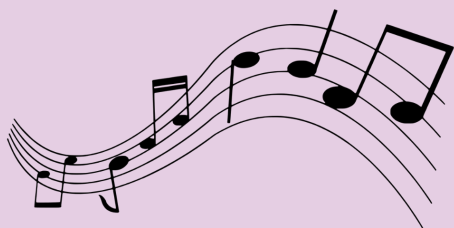
Photo by: Rolling Stones

**O**ne of the tracks in ARIRANG, 'Hooligan' hasn't sat right with fans either. Sparking backlash with its 'AAVE', African American Vernacular English slang. Fans don't agree with the use of AAVE in BTS' music, arguing that using AAVE is disrespectful and something that shouldn't be normalized.

"SWIM was okay," Shewmake said. "But I miss their old sound. I know they're changing, but I feel like this is a shell of what BTS is. I know they have a lot more creativity than this."

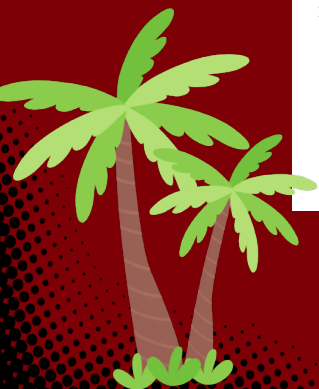
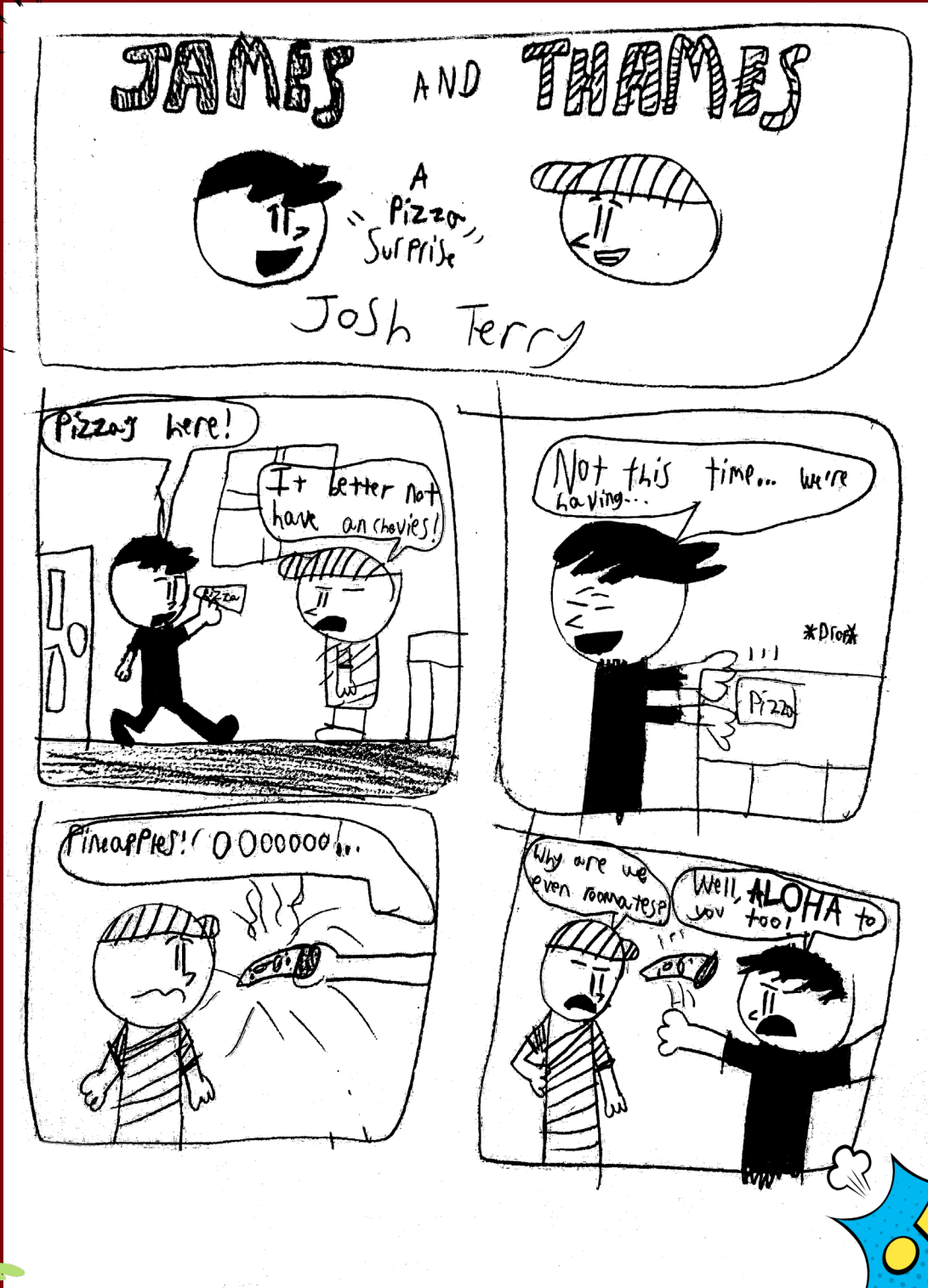
The title track of 'ARIRANG', 'SWIM' has been number one on billboard global charts for three weeks straight. As BTS' world tour begins, everything is revolving around 'SWIM'. On the Palais de Chaillot in France a promotional projection was shown for 'SWIM', a massive lightshow was held in Seoul, South Korea for the 'ARIRANG' comeback and on March 23, a 'SWIMSIDE' performance was held by BTS in New York City. All of these events connected fans worldwide and further proves just how connected BTS is to their fan-base.

"As an ARMY, it [ARIRANG] made me feel like we're back," Mistry said. "After 4 years of a hiatus we're finally back and they're [BTS] about to dominate the world with their music once again."





# Comic Book Winner



Follow @peshprints on insta!

