

**TOPS  
IN  
TEXAS**

ILPC SPRING CONVENTION  
APRIL 11-13, 2025

**more  
power  
to YOU**

YEARBOOK



# THEME SELECTION FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	STUDENTS	SCHOOL
MS/JH	Jules Faccone, Hannah Moreno, Caroline Le, Naina Nandigam	Ridgeview Middle School
1A-2A	Avery Applewhite and Samantha Angell	Burton ISD
3A	Abe Rheinheimer	Hill Country Christian School
4A	Brooklyn Gibson, Lauren Hornsby, Norah Jordan, Jace Ramos, Cassidy Rogers	Pleasant Grove High School
5A	Alyssa Fox, James Sanderson, Tylie Biggs, Willa Pursley	Cedar Park High School
6A	Raylee Mallett	Legacy High School

# THEME SELECTION

Brooklyn Gibson,  
Lauren Hornsby,  
Norah Jordan,  
Cassidy Rogers

Pleasant Grove High School

did you really think  
it was all that  
**simple?**

Did you really think that you could just sneak into Mrs. Watson's first period Physics class one minute after the bell without hearing about the importance of timeliness and how that will never slide in college?

And did you honestly believe that Tumlin would do its one and only job at 11:40 p.m. and allow you to turn in the Character Analysis Essay for Streb that you spent two weeks perfecting?

Maybe you were convinced that the day would go by without Coach Darby popping in to your journalism class on Cupcake Day for snacks and add in a story about how Harrison woke him up at 2:20 in the morning?

Well, that would be easy to believe, wouldn't it? And yeah, sometimes it really was that easy, but for the most part —

**it was never that simple.**

**002**  
It's not  
that simple



**Sneaking** at a library (11/16), Fred Walters (11), chooses his classes for senior year. "I was trying to figure out what classes would work for my schedule, especially since I'm going to do work sessions," Fred said. (Edgerton)



**Procrastinating** on her assignment, Emma Owen Staley (11) finishes her Spanish 2 project in Mrs. Anna Yabek class. "I thought that my year was going to be fun, but it ended up being more," Emma said. "Even though I have lots of things to do, like cheer." (Edgerton)

**Catching** inflatable pool tubes around her arms, Mariah Olsen (12) acts as a target at her favorite pool party game. "I love getting to be a part of the one who gets every week," Mariah said. "I can really enjoy connecting with the student section and being a part of the fun." (Edgerton)

**003**  
It's the  
Opening

# HEADLINES FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	STUDENTS	SCHOOL
MS/JH	Staff	Kelly Lane Middle School
1A-2A	Samantha Angell and Avery Applewhite	Burton ISD
3A	Staff	Sabine High School
4A	Ginelle Guerrero, Chloe Green and Staff	Incarnate Word Academy
5A	Staff	Cedar Park High School
6A	Staff	Lewisville High School





# AD DESIGN FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	STUDENTS	SCHOOL
MS/JH	Brooke Marshall	Pearland Junior High West
1A-2A	Avery Applewhite and Samantha Angell	Burton ISD
3A	Olivia Seiler	Hill Country Christian School
4A	Addison Son	Pleasant Grove High School
5A	Larissa Perez	Hendrickson High School
6A	Dulce Nuñez	McKinney High School



# AD DESIGN

## Dulce Nuñez

### McKinney High School




### Julianna Baar

Julianna, Congratulations!! No words can express how proud we are of your accomplishments and the young woman you've become! From kindergarten to graduation, now college! Keep shooting for the stars baby girl! Love you very much! Mom








You have worked so hard and achieved so many wins already. This is just the beginning of the next chapter of your life. Good luck to you and know your parents love you!

### Sofia Denehy



Josh, Congratulations on your senior year! We're so proud of you! May your future be as bright as your spirit! We Love You! Love, Mom and Dad

### Josh Chan




Hunter, from your start at Valley Creek Elementary then to Escondido Middle School and now graduating MHS, we have always been so proud of you. We are thrilled that you have chosen the challenging and exciting path of Airline Pilot Flight Training and look forward to seeing you in that role. Love, Mom, Dad, Gunnar and Lucy

### Hunter Fleming




### Rilyn Sandberg

I can't believe we are already here - high school graduation! We are so very proud of you! We'll always think of you as our little girl, even as you grow into a beautiful and strong woman right before our eyes. You are God centered, kind, passionate, focused, loving young lady. We have loved every minute of watching you grow into the person you are today and cannot wait to see what amazing, wonderful things God has planned for your future. You have greatness in you! Remember this is not the end, it's the beginning. We Love you so very much! Dad, Mom, Malaya, Amber, Lori & Lorena





Remember nothing is given and everything is earned. You must continue to focus. We are so proud of you and respect you so much for already setting the path towards your dream of being a doctor. You must stay the course, ignore distractions, and finish the dream. We are here to support you. You can accomplish anything you set your mind to. High school check, college is next, medical school is last. Now go do it! We love you! Rowetta, Laci, "Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and he will establish your plans." Dad, Mom, Teague, Isaac, & Cane

### Tatum Reeves





# INDEX SPREAD FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	STUDENTS	SCHOOL
MS/JH	Staff	Ridgeview Middle School
1A-2A	Tessa Braden	Elysian Fields High School
3A	Ezra Grubbs	Sabine High School
4A	Norah Jordan, Lauren Hornsby, Brooklyn Gibson	Pleasant Grove High School
5A	Claire Pribyla	Cedar Park High School
6A	Staff	Legacy High School





# CAPTIONS FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	STUDENTS	SCHOOL
MS/JH	Robert Moore, Diego Recalde and Daniel Reyes	Pearland Junior High West
1A-2A	Raegon Smith and Jynisha Randle	Burton ISD
3A	Ezra Grubbs	Sabine High School
4A	Ingrid Lopez	Seminole High School
5A	Willa Pursley	Cedar Park High School
6A	Jorge Aguirre and Mirabelle Estrada	El Dorado High School



# Cedar Park High School



# STUDENT-PRODUCED MARKETING CAMPAIGN FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	STUDENTS	SCHOOL
4A	Lia Lopez-Warren, Jinjer Royce and Gabby Haywood	Brownsboro High School
5A	April Padron	Frisco High School
6A	Staff	Midway High School



# STUDENT-PRODUCED MARKETING CAMPAIGN

# April Padron

# Frisco High School





# FEATURE SPREAD FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	STUDENTS	SCHOOL
MS/JH	Paityn Perlinger and Emma Iacobacci	Ridgeview Middle School
1A-2A	Ava Finch, Megan Johnson	Thrall High School
3A	Rhastin Nelson	Sabine High School
4A	Kathryn Murphy	Pleasant Grove High School
5A	Addie LoSurdo	Cedar Park High School
6A	Meerab Arif, Newton Nguyen, Hamza El-Ibrahim, Han Vu	Alief Kerr High School

# FEATURE SPREAD

**Meerab Arif,  
Newton Nguyen,  
Hamza  
El-Ibrahim, Han  
Vu**

**Alief Kerr High School**

## ON THE MENU

Diverse Options Serve Different Tastes

by Newton Nguyen



**Amy Pedraza**  
"I usually order food from Chick Fila because I always like it, and it's tasty. Specifically, I like their Waffle Potato Fries because it tastes delicious, especially with sauces like Ketchup. Having such delicious food nearby, it's no wonder why I order from there so many times." (with Eliza Lopez)



**Steven Tran**  
"I bring a whole assortment of cuisines, though I eat Vietnamese cuisine most of the time. The cuisine mainly consists of rice and other vegetables, such as bean sprouts and bamboo shoots. The rice and vegetables balance each other out, providing a consistently good meal, hence why they end up being my favorite dishes."



**Esai Moreno**  
"I bring a variety of cuisines from Italian to American cuisines, but I primarily eat Mexican cuisine. Usually, my parents make my lunch, but I occasionally help out by cutting or stirring the food. A common side dish in this cuisine are the rice and beans, and they go along with many of my dishes."



**Han Vu**  
"I bring Vietnamese food that are leftovers from the extras my mom makes. The food are usually traditional Vietnamese food like corn zawn (broken rice) or spring rolls. Out of all the foods in the cuisine though, I like the Vietnamese chicken wings the most."



**Madison Ho**  
"I would usually order Taco Bell, McDonald's, or Chipotle from DorisDah, in which I'll choose Chipotle most of the time. It gives you a bang for your buck with its bigger size portions and good deals. The food it offers also factors into my decision to order from there so I like the burrito bowl with chicken, rice, beans, and some veggies along with it."



**Khai Nguyen**  
"I generally order my food from McDonald's or Popeyes through Love Eats or DorisDah, though I eat Popeyes most of the time. The food there is really delicious, especially the chicken sandwich for me. But the sandwich with the signature hot wing sauce. Popeyes provides many options that make me go back to it."



**Harleigh Morgan**  
"It kind of varies. Most of the time it will be something more Mediterranean, so lots of veggies, and anything fermented. My dad usually makes my lunch for me, doing it every morning. The pickles from this cuisine are my favorite, especially when paired with a sandwich."



**Evalyn Nguyen**  
"I order my food from Wingstop since it is my go to place when I have a craving for chicken. I especially like their chicken sandwich, partly because of its popularity, but mainly because of its delicious combination of tastes. Indeed, I can always count on Wingstop to fulfill my chicken cravings whenever I order from there."

576 ONCE WE BEGIN

MEALS TO-GO

577

# STUDENT LIFE-FOCUSED SPREAD FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	STUDENTS	SCHOOL
MS/JH	Sophia Kim, Jules Faccone	Ridgeview Middle School
1A-2A	Mikayla Velasquez	Thrall High School
3A	Haileigh Garrett	Sabine High School
4A	Lynleigh Henderson, Hannah Hampton	Pleasant Grove High School
5A	Veronica Gallego	A&M Consolidated High School
6A	Ashley Carcara	Carroll Senior High



# Ashley Carcara

Carroll Senior High School

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# SPORTS-FOCUSED SPREAD FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	STUDENTS	SCHOOL
MS/JH	Kaylee Golden, Abby Colson	Ridgeview Middle School
1A-2A	Sarah Laurence	Thrall High School
3A	Haileigh Garrett	Sabine High School
4A	Mylee Blain	Pleasant Grove High School
5A	Violet Harmon and Willa Pursley	Cedar Park High School
6A	Mia Jade Colmenero	El Dorado High School



# SPORTS-FOCUSED SPREAD

**Mia Jade  
Colemenaro**

El Dorado High School

## TOO FLY

VARSITY GIRLS BASKETBALL SENIORS

**one last time**

Seniors celebrated on senior night.

"I definitely brought on that strong comeback and finished with nothing! I do credits and projects. I was kind of stressed about my phone being lost but I was able to find it."

**Mia Jade**

"I was kind of stressed on that through last week. I was kind of stressed on that through last week."

**Mia Jade**

"I was kind of stressed on that through last week. I was kind of stressed on that through last week."

**Mia Jade**

**senior night**

Points per game: 1.5  
Rebounds per game: 1.5  
Assists per game: 1.5  
Steals per game: 1.5

**senior night**

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**senior night**

Points per game: 1.5  
Rebounds per game: 1.5  
Assists per game: 1.5  
Steals per game: 1.5

TOO

WINTER // INVIERNO

SENIOR GIRLS BASKETBALL

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# ACADEMIC-FOCUSED SPREAD FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	STUDENTS	SCHOOL
MS/JH	Sophia Kim, Heidi Rich	Ridgeview Middle School
1A-2A	Abigail Dowling and Kolbie Parker	Burton ISD
3A	Abby Nichols	Sabine High School
4A	Staten Crossland	Pleasant Grove High School
5A	Lauren Hightower	A&M Consolidated High School
6A	Blanca Ramos	McKinney High School

# ACADEMIC-FOCUSED SPREAD

**Sophia Kim  
and Heidi Rich**

**Ridgeview Middle School**

## a YUMMY way to LEARN

What biome area did you create for Ms. Rice's class?

"I did the tundra biome. The hardest part was getting everything done in one period. It was difficult focusing on our priorities."

-Pa Karstik

"I did the tundra biome and rain forest biome. My favorite part was working with my group to make all the animals."

-Steve Patterson

"I did the ocean biome. The hardest part was time management because we had to complete the whole project in 10 minutes."

-Julia Galina

"I did the ocean and desert biome. The hardest part was working with my friends because it was hard to stop on time."

-Zane Nguyen

"I did the savanna and tundra biome. My least favorite part was when I got burned with a hot glue gun and I fell a scar."

-Phyllis Liang

### SHING FOR THE DYE

On Oct 6 in Ms. Rice's class, Juliana Thomas and Emily Fisher "decorate their biomes" by using different dyes and colored items. "We used white crushed up dices to make snow," Fisher said. Photo by Juliana Thomas

### CACTUS ANGES

Juliana Thomas presents her biome and biologically present to Ms. Rice. "I was talking about the animals that were in the biome. There were all different cactus fish and lichen," Thomas said. "We were trying to make a stable ecosystem." Photo by Juliana Thomas

### IT IS Elemental

"For my element project, I chose to write about aluminum. I got the symbol and the number of it in the table. My favorite part was going to make the hot because we got to heat it and do it by ourselves. My least favorite part was when we had to write something down because I hurt my hands."

-Isabella Thompson

To demonstrate Newton's Law of Motion, Ms. Barnhart's class created scooters with various materials to see how far they could go.

### 2. SCOOTER FOR ANGRY SCIENCE

Classroom experiment with marbles to learn about Newton's laws on Nov. 20 in the Motion, Mass, and Energy Lab. ("My favorite part was learning how to use the marbles.")

1. Byron Pham and Carson Jacobson  
2. Taylor Davidson  
3. Victoria O'Brien and Megan van der Meer  
Photo by Juliana Thomas

3. Addison Bellon  
4. Carson Jacobson  
5. Taylor Davidson  
6. Victoria O'Brien and Megan van der Meer  
Photo by Juliana Thomas

### What made your Newton Scooter move?

"We used a rubber band to power our scooter. We used kinetic energy from the rubber band to power the axle and spin the wheels."

-Julia Newman

"The balloon made our scooter move. We blew it up, and attached it to the bottle, then let it go and it went."

-Madison Brown

"So we used a rubber band to wind up, and used the mechanism to propel it forward. It worked not very well, but it still went."

-Quinn Nichols

Academic Science

Created by Sophia Kim, Heidi Rich



# CLASS SPREAD FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	STUDENTS	SCHOOL
MS/JH	Hadley Parscal	Ridgeview Middle School
1A-2A	Allie Biggs and Avery Applewhite	Burton ISD
3A	JR Jackson	Sabine High School
4A	Norah Jordan, Brooklyn Gibson	Pleasant Grove High School
5A	Chris Nicholson	Cedar Park High School
6A	Hannah Salz & Sara Hernandez	James Bowie High School



# CLASS SPREAD

# Hannah Salz and Sara Hernandez

# James Bowie High School



# CLUB/ORGANIZATION-FOCUSED SPREAD FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	STUDENTS	SCHOOL
MS/JH	Allie Pogor, Elledy Keraghan	Ridgeview Middle School
1A-2A	Trinity Pope and Andre Ortiz	Burton ISD
3A	Mune Nicholson	Sabine High School
4A	Martha Patterson	Pleasant Grove High School
5A	Willa Pursley	Cedar Park High School
6A	Abigail Smith	McKinney High School



# Abigail Smith

McKinney High School





# BLENDED COVERAGE SPREAD FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	STUDENTS	SCHOOL
MS/JH	Phoenix Alvarado and Carson Palmer	Kelly Lane Middle School
1A-2A	Karly Weyand and Raegon Smith	Burton ISD
3A	Staff	Hill Country Christian School
4A	Ava Harvey	Pleasant Grove High School
5A	Claire Pribyla	Cedar Park High School
6A	Mary Bahrami	Vandegrift High School



# INFOGRAPHIC FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	STUDENTS	SCHOOL
MS/JH	Jules Faccone, Sophia Kim	Ridgeview Middle School
3A	JR Jackson	Sabine High School
4A	Ingrid Lopez	Seminole High School
5A	Willa Pursley	Cedar Park High School
6A	Elena Verdugo	El Dorado High School



# El Dorado High School

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# STUDENT LIFE FEATURE STORY FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	STUDENTS	SCHOOL
MS/JH	Jules Faccone	Ridgeview Middle School
1A-2A	Allie Biggs	Burton ISD
3A	Staff	Hill Country Christian School
4A	Martha Patterson	Pleasant Grove High School
5A	Claire Pribyla	Cedar Park High School
6A	Arya Sharma	Westlake High School



# STUDENT LIFE FEATURE STORY

## Arya Sharma

## Westlake High School

### dancing in the moonlight

prom moves off campus for first time in four years

**D**ress up. Take photos. Eat dinner. Party with friends. Up until 2024, this is what the typical prom evening looked like for Chaps.

This year, administrators made the decision to move the prom from the school to Hyattsville Hall to encourage students to attend the event. The Moonlit Garden took hold from 7:00 p.m. to 11 p.m. April 27, featured a DJ, snacks and a cashbar for students to enjoy.

"We decided to go off campus as a 'last chance,'" assistant principal Carey Davis said. "It was 'make or break' for prom this year at Westlake."

Changing the event location was a risk for the school. As a result of COVID restrictions in 2020, prom was moved to the Commons.

For four years, the school struggled with low attendance rates, so it was difficult to provide students access to the off-campus venue.

"One of the challenges was the unknown of knowing how many kids would want to go up and support in having this," prom sponsor Andrea Chery said.

School Counselor shared officers and the Executive Board worked for months to promote and advertise the event to parents and students. When the tickets were sold, administrators and student leaders were pleasantly surprised.

"We sold over 1,000 tickets for prom this year," senior class vice president Mia Duffy said. "Compared to last year, that is so cool. Last year, we sold 40 tickets before the dance."

The boom in ticket sales both raised excitement among the

student body for the school dance and also increased hope of continuing the event to senior year.

"If the event is not being suggested, then we can't continue to host it off campus because Austin is just many experiences," Chery said. "We hope everybody sees this as actually fun and continues to support it."

Not only was attending the school dance important to its future success, but it was also an opportunity to meet with groups of friends who had different plans for the rest of the night.

"If you're there with all your friends, you'll have fun," Ryan said. "It's not so much about the place or the venue but rather if your friends are there. I think having groups at Hyattsville Hall will make more people come and have a good time."

Attending prom is an essential part of the high school experience, and students enjoyed the off-campus location.

"I really liked having it off campus," senior Alex Gardner said. "I think it made the night more special and personal and really gave us a night to look forward to and treasure."

As the end of the evening, many seniors and seniors were grateful for the chance to have fun with their friends and classmates at the school sponsored event.

"This is my first school dance, and I've wanted this for so long," Duffy said. "It's so cool that we're actually doing something together because we haven't done that in a long time."

*story by Arya Sharma*

### seniors served

soon-to-be grads help out around austin april 24

"Painting the benches with Olvera [Smorgas] was really fun. It was nice to get to know her over our time volunteering. Even something as boring as painting a bench would seem, it was by really fast, and we told jokes."

PARKER SANDERSON, 12



Photo courtesy: Mike Jones



"I went to Central Texas Food Bank and helped prepare boxes of food for those in need. Our favorite part was at the end of the shift they told us how many people we had helped put food on the table for and it was a good feeling."



Photo courtesy: Mike Jones

"I volunteered at Austin Humane Society. I picked it because I want to go down the vet track. I helped clean the cages for the animals to help them feel more comfortable. I liked seeing the pets and playing with them."

LEXI KLEIN, 12



Photo courtesy: Mike Jones

### BUT WE'RE NOT DONE YET

"I'm excited for this next chapter of my life and meeting new people and trying new things." *Isabella Spitzer, 12*



WITH FRIENDS, seniors Nina Kerpens, Patrick Foley, Katie Plouffe, Shania Monahan, Carey Verity, Chris Alvarado and Ty Hagins flirt pose at the photo booth during prom at Hyattsville Hall April 27. *photo by Anna Jones*



**TALKING TO FRIENDS** Seniors Katherine Miller and Caleigh Martin catch up on the dance floor April 27. "The prom was so special because a lot of people I know were there, and I was my first prom," Miller said. "It was so much fun." *photo by Anna Jones*



**ON THE DANCE FLOOR** Seniors make the most of their time at prom April 27. "Tonight at the prom was the biggest fun I had ever at a school of the senior of campus. It was that fun because I was with my friends and the dancers, Nathan, photo by Anna Jones



Seniors Anna Dargatz and Sarah Houtz take a group at the whole group party. "I enjoyed having able to be able to bond with my friends and people from our grade that I had not talked to in years. I think the music and the energy is really what made it fun," Houtz said. *courtesy of Anna Jones*

### seniors' parting thoughts

chaps leave with more than just memories

"I have made long lasting friendships and have learned how to have a good work ethic."

MAYA MORGAN

"I have had the privilege of being apart of an extremely creative and uplifting community that is a gem in the middle of Texas."

DANKENT

"I feel like Westlake has such a strong community being such a big school, which means I have truly gotten to meet and form friendships with so many people."

ALEX NICOLA

"I met so many incredible friends through many amazing organizations. My favorite by far has been Best Buddies and its wonderful members."

HADLEY McDONELL

"I am so excited for this next part of my life. I cannot wait to meet new friends at college while maintaining my friendships I made at Westlake."

RENIE LOYVE

### spring breakin'

177 seniors head to bahamas



Seniors posing on the beach before going to the Bahamas. "The Bahamas was the most fun part because everyone was into it," Shana said. *courtesy of Anna Jones*

### SENIOR EVENTS

by Anna Jones, main reporter & junior team lead

# ACADEMIC FEATURE STORY FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	STUDENTS	SCHOOL
MS/JH	Andie Duke	Ridgeview Middle School
1A-2A	Andre Ortiz	Burton ISD
3A	Mune Nicholson	Sabine High School
4A	Teddy Fleiss	St. Mark's School of Texas
5A	James Sanderson	Cedar Park High School
6A	Arya Sharma	Westlake High School



# ACADEMIC FEATURE STORY

## Arya Sharma Westlake High School

### all about anne frank



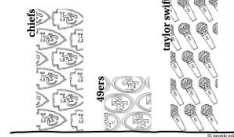
IN THE MIDDLE of a test, senior Sydney Bassett guides community members through the Anne Frank temporary exhibit as a student. Westlake led the honor of hosting the traveling exhibit from the University of Utah Center, the exhibit included more than 30 panels and artifacts donated by Anne's families. Students' modest donations focused about Anne Frank's life during the Holocaust and shared their knowledge with 1,000 students, parents and community members.

photo courtesy of Jiff Smith

### who are you rooting for?

"I supported Taylor Swift in the Super Bowl because she has worked really hard to become a role model for the other women in the music industry and has shown how work ethic can pay off."

KATEY TISDALE, 12



### new police force

1. RAISING TO THE occasion, new police officers join the force as the Texas 802 police force March 6. A Texas state law passed in 2023 required police officers to be certified at all school campuses. The new Texas 802 Police Chief, Mark Green, previously served as the district's safety and security director.

2. PLACED IN FRONT of the Performing Arts Center, one of our new police officers parked by the police force officers in the art district. The district chose the car based on three criteria: affordability, safety, and reliability. Today were required into maintenance and so on.



### what we care about

chaps are concerned about current events

"I support Ukraine, because they did nothing wrong. Because they're getting bombed, I want to pray and donate for them."

YAO YUAN ZHANG, 9

"I'm currently interested in climate change and the pollutants we release in our daily lives. I really want to find alternative choices and solutions to our current climate change problems, and hopefully we can make changes to our daily uses."

LUKE RIEZEBEEK, 11

"The accession of Ukraine into the EU should be discussed more than it has been. Membership would significantly change the course of the Russo-Ukraine War."

ITZEL GUZMAN, 11

"Unsurprisingly, I'm not very educated in the topic of war in the Middle East, but I think it's important to take steps necessary to prevent any more casualties."

CAROLINE HOUSLEY, 10

"The Russia-Ukraine war is very interesting to me right now. The war is still raging with very little end in sight. I find it interesting because it's the biggest conflict we've seen fought between two rivals in recent memory."

JONATHAN WOLFF, 12

"The conflict in Israel and Palestine is really sad. I feel like it's not really my place to take sides overall, but the war is devastating and makes me feel dreadful."

LELA LEBLANC, 9

### AND SO IT GOES

"The roads kept closing during the Hawaii wildfires, and we left early from our home." *ayana dauby, 10*

### generation ai artificial intelligence advancements spawn mixed reactions

Generative AI is shaking things up at Westlake High School. Students and teachers are diving into the world of smart technology to spice up their learning experience. From customized lesson plans to fun study aids, this new tech is making waves in the classroom. Get ready for a high-tech education like never before!

"That introduction wasn't written by a human. It was written by ChatGPT."

ChatGPT, one of the largest generative AI platforms, launched in November 2022 and has been growing rapidly. While many are enthusiastic about the new technology, others remain concerned about its ethical dilemmas and lack of reliability.

"It's important that students understand that generative AI is not 100% accurate," assistant principal Brian Shappley said. "The data that it's built on can be pretty biased."

At school, the rise of generative AI brought uneasiness regarding the issue of plagiarism. Some teachers, especially those in the English department, worry about the use of generative AI to complete tasks critical to academic development.

"In an English classroom, our goal is to learn how to write from the ground up," English teacher Jeff Montgomery said. "It's about looking at a blank page and figuring out how to create something out of nothing, and when we eliminate those aspects, generative AI inhibits our ability to think critically."

Yet for other Chaps, such as junior Parker Billman, generative AI programs are a helpful resource to supplement in-class learning.

"Since I'm in the engineering program, I use ChatGPT for math problems I do not know," Billman said. "Our recent unit was about earthquakes and earthquake prevention, and that's college-level math and physics. Our teacher is not expecting us to know that."

It's not just ChatGPT that is popular among students and faculty. AP history teacher Cathy Clark uses a transcription AI service, transcription, to create study notes from her lectures.

"I know my class is one very small piece of everything that students have to do," Clark said. "If I can make it easier for them to get the information and skills they need, I think it's worth it."

AI-generated lecture notes in Clark's classes not only save invaluable time for students, but it also has positive impacts on their in-class learning experience.

"I found that students in class are paying more attention to me," Clark said. "They don't have to worry about catching everything because they know it's going to be in the AI notes."

Despite multiple advancements, generative AI has not reached the writing quality and connection of a human.

"I don't think artificial intelligence will ever replace a human as far as the compassion and the human element that it takes to teach kids to be part of the human race," Montgomery said.

While the debate surrounding AI usage will likely continue, so will its integration into daily life.

"The thing about AI is that it's just like any other technology," Billman said. "Once it's out in the world, it's never going back. You just gotta get used to it." *story by arya sharma*



### path to safety

new state law requires greater consequences for vaping at school

"If you look at discipline across the state, our school is pretty good compared to the rest of the students being caught with the vapes. We have four security personnel on campus, and they patrolled the building during the day. They're checking lockers and locker rooms. And we're really fortunate to have the DAEP on campus. We have several staff members to help and make sure that students don't fall behind. The law is the law, and so we have to adjust our mindset and make changes."

RACHEL GREEN, FACULTY

CURRENT EVENTS  
by grace kim & arya sharma  
with assistance

125

# SPORTS FEATURE STORY FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	STUDENTS	SCHOOL
MS/JH	Leilani Bautista, Kate Canada and Lilliana Mendez	Kelly Lane Middle School
1A-2A	Avery Applewhite	Burton ISD
3A	Jordan Dollar, Aylin Rivera Vega	Sabine High School
4A	Miley Blain	Pleasant Grove High School
5A	Mai Cachila	Cedar Park High School
6A	Stone Chapman	Willis High School



# SPORTS FEATURE STORY

## Miley Blain

### Pleasant Grove High School



#### on the record

Hawks go undefeated, smashing school records along the way

When the football team set their goals for the upcoming season, breaking records wasn't at the top of the list.

It just happened on their way to a 12-1 season record and an eighth consecutive trip to the third round of the playoffs.

"I was not really surprised by how well we did because of how much talent we had on the team this year," head coach Josh Gibson said. "The record breaking season is a by product of that."

In August, there was little indication of what was to come. After a 10-7 win over Brock in the season opener, the Hawks defeated Shreveport Byrd 27-10 and Midland Christian 45-26.

But then the offense broke it open, rolling over Frisco 63-21.

"I was in the press box because I hurt my ankle and I was kind of nervous about upcoming games because against Brock it was kind

of bad, and they only won 10-7," Jamarion Richardson (10) said. "But after that game everything started to click and the offense started moving the ball."

The Frisco game started the barrage of points the Hawks scored each game, defeating Gilmer, Pittsburg, North Lamar and Spring Hill by huge margins, only letting up against LE, 42-27.

However, the record setting season didn't extend beyond the third round of the playoffs. The Hawks fell to perpetual playoff rival Carthage 31-34, preventing the team from achieving their primary goal of a third straight state championship.

"We should have gone all the way," Jaidun Scales (10) said, "but the season meant a lot because we had a very special bond. We fought to hard beat Carthage in that game."

Continued on page 63

#### continued from page 61

Despite the early end to the season, the Hawks set several individual records, including Coach Gibson's 100th career win.

Ahkhari Johnson (12) set the school record for pass completions with 135 and 32 passing touchdowns.

"I knew before any game I went into that I was going to dominate and take over the game," Ahkhari said. "I was especially really excited that I got to break records on senior night with it being my very last home game at Hawk Stadium."

To add to the senior night victories, Jackson Gibson (12) set the single game record for receiving touchdowns.

"I was surprised that things were falling my way," Jackson said. "After the game, I hadn't processed that I broke the record. It was a great feeling,

being in the books for the time, and I know in the future it will give me something to look back on."

But it wasn't just about the records. Coach Josh Gibson and the staff worked with the team to build character as well as football skills.

"The spirit of our kids and coaching staff is the best it has ever been," Coach Gibson said. "We believe that being better humans makes you better football players."

With all the records, however, there was one that stuck out for Coach Gibson.

"We broke the regular season record for points scored in the first ten games," Coach Gibson said. "It was the coolest record to break because it was the whole team working together instead of individually."

Page by M.Blain

# CLUB/ORGANIZATION FEATURE STORY FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	STUDENTS	SCHOOL
MS/JH	Sophia Lewis and Alondra Martinez	Kelly Lane Middle School
1A-2A	Trinity Pope and Andre Ortiz	Burton ISD
3A	Lillian Perkins	Sabine High School
4A	Salome Villarreal	Seminole High School
5A	Jane Yermakov	Cedar Park High School
6A	Laiba Shehzad	Richardson High School



# Jane Yermakov

Cedar Park High School

[illegible]

# PERSONALITY PROFILE FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	STUDENTS	SCHOOL
MS/JH	Chance Pearce and Finley Peterson	Kelly Lane Middle School
3A	JR Jackson	Sabine High School
4A	Garrant Hill	Seminole High School
5A	Henry Mueller	Cedar Park High School
6A	Ruth Kiija	McKinney High School



# McKinney High School



Autumn 066

Senior Amerah Wahab Zadah  
learns English, thanks to McKinnon

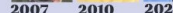
age," Sabatino said. "It was surprising the life she had in her country, and all the struggles she faced. She wants to do so many things she's never been able to do. When it comes to work, American had to take more classes than others to keep up with her graduating class.

Despite being overwhelmed she was able to confidently ask me questions about anything and everything. All literature was new to her. From the books, to reading college applications, she's eager to learn and do as much as the year progressed, that she no longer feels overwhelmed. It's a relief to see her authority she has adapted to our school."

Ameriah made plans to pursue a degree in psychology and later become an author and teacher. Through her journey, she has been able to find opportunities America offered.

These are my dreams.

Ameriah's mother told her people say that school is too hard, or there is too much to learn. She said that she heard that those are the keys things, it may seem impossible for you, but you can do it and you can. Achieve your goals. Nothing in this world is impossible.



**TIGHT KNOT** Amersn's first Eid celebration with just her family, of 2-year-olds. The years prior consisted of Amersn's house being filled with more than five families.

**THE JOYNEY BEGINS** Amersn of 5-year-olds posing for her first day of school picture in a white uniform. This was taken by her mother before Amersn was dropped off.

**BETTER TOGETHER** Amersn with her parents and brothers. This was the first family photo they took in the United States. It was taken after they walked around Adhikari village.

# SPORTS ACTION PHOTO FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	STUDENTS	SCHOOL
MS/JH	Allie Pogor	Ridgeview Middle School
1A-2A	Sarah Laurence	Thrall High School
3A	Jordan White	Hill Country Christian School
4A	Chloe Sanders	Pleasant Grove High School
5A	Emily McKithern	Kingwood Park High School
6A	Reese Mallett	Legacy High School



# SPORTS ACTION PHOTO

**Reese Mallett**

Legacy High School



# SPORTS FEATURE PHOTO FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	STUDENTS	SCHOOL
MS/JH	Elizabeth Cortazar	Chapa Middle School
1A-2A	Benjamin Schmidt	Thrall High School
3A	Abe Rheinheimer	Hill Country Christian School
4A	Madeline Smallwood	Pleasant Grove High School
5A	Aidan Hernandez	Midlothian Heritage High School
6A	Julio Mejia	Caney Creek High School



# SPORTS FEATURE PHOTO

**Benjamin  
Schmidt**

Thrall High School



# ACADEMIC PHOTO FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	STUDENTS	SCHOOL
MS/JH	Nadia Guzman	Chapa Middle School
1A-2A	Trinity Pope	Burton ISD
3A	Abe Rheinheimer	Hill Country Christian School
4A	Chloe Sanders	Pleasant Grove High School
5A	Grace Pickard	Midlothian Heritage High School
6A	Shea Southern	Richardson High School



# ACADEMIC PHOTO

**Shea Southern**

Richardson High School



# STUDENT LIFE PHOTO FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	STUDENTS	SCHOOL
MS/JH	Matthew Doan	Pearland Junior High West
1A-2A	Samantha Angell	Burton ISD
3A	JR Jackson	Sabine High School
4A	Chloe Sanders	Pleasant Grove High School
5A	Lilly-Anne Adams	Cedar Park High School
6A	Vivy Stillman	Westlake High School



# STUDENT LIFE PHOTO

**Chloe Sanders**

Pleasant Grove High School



# CLUB/ORGANIZATION PHOTO FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	STUDENTS	SCHOOL
MS/JH	Estrella Loreda	Chapa MS
1A-2A	Dakota Johnson	Thrall High School
3A	Sophia Daab	Hill Country Christian School
4A	Chloe Sanders	Pleasant Grove High School
5A	Madison Barber	Midlothian Heritage High School
6A	Mia Fillpot	Westlake High School



# CLUB/ORGANIZATION PHOTO

**Mia Fillpot**

Westlake High School



# Portrait Finalists

CONFERENCE	STUDENTS	SCHOOL
MS/JH	Aubrey Hahn	Chapa Middle School
1A-2A	Raegon Smith	Burton ISD
3A	Wesley Kwan	Hill Country Christian School
4A	Grace Godsey	Brownsboro High School
5A	Arav Neroth	Cedar Park High School
6A	Iolany Martinez	El Dorado High School



# Portrait

**Iolany Martinez**

El Dorado High School



# PHOTO PORTFOLIO FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	STUDENTS	SCHOOL
MS/JH	Isela Medrano	Pearland Junior High West
1A-2A	Dakota Johnson	Thrall High School
3A	Abby Nichols	Sabine High School
4A	Chloe Sanders	Pleasant Grove High School
5A	Madison Barber	Midlothian Heritage High School
6A	Leilani Gilmer	Richardson High School



# PHOTO PORTFOLIO

**Leilani Gilmer**

Richardson High School



NEWSPAPER



# NEWS WRITING FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	STUDENTS	SCHOOL
MS/JH-3A	Adrian Wren	Albany High School
4A	Joshua Truong	Lampasas High School
5A	Tony Escobar	College Station High School
6A	Caitlyn Concepcion	Coppell High School

# NEWS WRITING

## Board approves Pinkerton consolidation



Photo by Nyah Rama

On Sept. 30, the Coppell ISD School Board voted to close Pinkerton Elementary School. The proposed closure will save the district a projected \$2.1 million.

**Caitlyn Concepcion**  
Staff Writer  
@caityncn

Ninety-six years of history, put to rest in six board meetings, with the last meeting being under four hours long.

On Sept. 30, Coppell's oldest and only operating International Baccalaureate elementary school, Pinkerton Elementary School, was voted by the Coppell ISD Board of Trustees to close. The school will consolidate into undecided remaining elementary school campuses within the district.

On Oct. 23, a resolution was approved to move the IB program to Wilson Elementary School and the Dual Language Immersion program to Denton Creek Elementary School after Pinkerton closes next school year.

The consolidation of Pinkerton is projected to save CISD \$2.1 million of the projected \$13.4 million budget deficit from the 2023-24 academic school year.

"It is so much more than numbers on a sheet," Pinkerton Elementary parent Julia Valero said. "We chose Pinkerton because we wanted our kids to put their best foot forward, and it feels like that has been taken away by premature choices

that have come as an afterthought, a last ditch effort."

Established in 1928, Pinkerton evolved into a "choice" school, permitting all CISD students to enroll into the IB Primary Years Programme, an inquiry-based learning environment.

Additionally, 8% of its student population is enrolled in the Dual Language Immersion program.

"I just do not understand why or how this is the only viable option," Pinkerton parent Sadie Bauer said. "If we look at this budget crisis as a whole, is shutting down one elementary school that holds so much value and tradition going to save us from what is happening at the state level when it comes to funding?"

Since 2020, CISD has seen a decline in student enrollment at the elementary level which has compounded the district's existing budgeting issues.

"Realistically, we cannot keep every school open and smoothly maintain operations as it is without digging into our other running expenses," CISD Board of Trustees President David Caviness said. "To close an elementary school like Pinkerton was not something we would have liked to see happen, but it is instead a way of minimizing potential layoffs or

program cuts."

On Sept. 30, a protest held by Pinkerton and surrounding elementary parents, faculty and students rallied to keep the school open, and lined outside the Vonita White Administration Building on Denton Tap Road.

"Basically all the memories that flood my head when I think about my time at Pinkerton are positive and I hate to see it close just because of money problems," said Coppell High School junior Saddarth Morisetty, who attended Pinkerton. "I liked my teachers, I did not find myself dreading going to class every day like at my previous school and most of all I felt like I was getting something out of my education doing IB."

Serving more than 13,100 learners across Coppell and four surrounding communities, the quality of education at CISD schools has been a longtime pull for new families to move into the area.

"I do not think this will stop Coppell from being a destination district," Caviness said. "For years, our schools and choice programs have excelled in what they do and this closure should not come as an end all be all for the district going forward despite our current financial situation."

**Caitlyn  
Concepcion**  
Coppell High School



# NEWS FEATURE FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	STUDENTS	SCHOOL
MS/JH-3A	Natalie Pritchett & Bailee Hosak	Union Grove ISD
4A	Hilton Sampson, Linyang Lee, Matthew Hofmann	St. Mark's School of Texas
5A	Fallon Head	Kingwood Park HS
6A	Elizabeth Yowell	James Bowie High School

# NEWS FEATURE

## School's focus remains strong as business landscape evolves

*With finance and business on the rise in Dallas, many students are looking to pursue the field after graduation. The character and leadership curriculum here provides key skills for those interested in these areas.*

BY HILTON SAMPSON, LINYANG LEE  
AND MATTHEW HOFMANN

He doesn't know what it is exactly — but there's just something about being in Texas that Jake Yarkin '19 loves.

This is where he grew up. Where he went to college. Where he and his friend started work, founding their own summer camp, finding interest in business.

And through a scholar award, he ended up being part of the Texas Business Hall of Fame Foundation — showing him how powerful the business network is in Texas.

Graduating from McCombs School of Business at the University of Texas, though, he was mainly looking at jobs in New York. After all, it is the finance capital of the world.

But when he came into contact with the Private Credit Group at Goldman Sachs in Dallas, he found his chance to stay here.

He jumped at the opportunity, and he's been there ever since. Yarkin's been in Texas basically all his life.

He wouldn't change a thing.

Goldman Sachs began construction on a massive complex—a planned 800,000 square feet, 14-story building located in the heart of Dallas—which is a venture that will create another 5,000 jobs.

Rob Kaplan, Vice President of Goldman Sachs and father of Michael '32 and Alexander '36, knows the growing buzz surrounding finance in the region is no joke.

Especially with the planned launch of the Texas Stock Exchange (TXSE) and firms like BlackRock and Citadel Securities already backing the venture, investors are ready to capitalize on the state economy. Kaplan foresees Fortune 500 companies taking advantage of the new market, potentially co-listing on both the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) or NASDAQ in addition to the TXSE.

Though he recognizes the growing emphasis on Texas finance, Kaplan still believes that the place to be for investors is still New York City.

Despite this continued emphasis on New York City as their center of operations, Goldman Sachs aims to dive deeper into the business scene in Dallas as the finance industry takes off in the city.

Over their 50-year-plus tenure in the

and strategy, there are a few crucial reasons for Dallas' selection for the major campus.

First, the business environment in Dallas is incredibly friendly and has a good quality of life. This environment is only augmented by the fact that 21

**THE REASON WHY I LIKE THE ST. MARK'S CURRICULUM IS THE FACT THAT IT'S GROUNDED BY WHAT I BELIEVE TO BE CORE SKILL SETS ANYBODY WILL NEED, BUT THEY'RE OPEN TO UNDERSTANDING AND MODERNIZING THE CURRICULUM TO ENSURE THAT IT'S IN LINE WITH WHAT FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES ARE GOING TO BE."**

**Mary Bank, Goldman Sachs Managing Director**

Fortune 500 companies and 42 Fortune 1000 companies have headquarters in the city. Ranging from high tech and telecommunications to logistics and healthcare, Dallas has a diverse business environment with ample room for

when working on case studies and projects translates well into the workforce, allowing students to be great team members. Furthermore, the focus on how to present yourself, be present and attentive and communicate articulately and effectively further benefits Marksmen in the collaborative world that is business.

Though Yarkin feels such a curriculum would benefit students by allowing them to decide early on what they'd like to major in at college, he also doesn't think it necessary to have a specialized finance course in high school.

"They teach you from day one in college expecting you not to have already taken a finance course," Yarkin said. "There's a lot of building blocks that go into finance, and I think the economics classes at St. Mark's did a good job of preparing for that."

Even without specialized finance courses, Yarkin felt like he had a headstart at McCombs because of high school. Everything from math and history to knowing how to write well gave him the opportunity in college to get through the first year or two of core classes pretty easily and have more time to think more about what he wanted to

Hilton Sampson,  
Linyang Lee,  
Matthew  
Hofmann

St. Mark's School of Texas



# EDITORIAL WRITING FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	STUDENTS	SCHOOL
MS/JH-3A	Avery Everitt and Cade Fairchild	Albany High School
4A	Staff	Episcopal School of Dallas
5A	Adele Seeboth	McCallum High School
6A	Kate Duncan	Prosper High School

# EDITORIAL WRITING

## Just for the health of it

All responsible parties should limit how much social media young people consume

### Shield staff

In today's digital age, social media and early access to phones are damaging young adults' social, mental and physical health causing a spike in mental illness. Because of this harm, we think social media platforms should be more rigorous with their age restrictions and younger children should have limited access to cell phones.

Social media is addictive. Studies have shown that scrolling through social media and being on your phone can create certain stimulating effects that are addictive, causing you to spend more time on these apps. Teenagers are especially susceptible to this addiction. The more time you spend scrolling, the more your health is negatively impacted. It has been shown that the blue light produced by cell phones can disrupt your melatonin production, causing you to get less sleep. According to the CDC, teenagers should be getting 8-10 hours of sleep so anything less than that will cause a decrease

in physical activity and attention spans at school.

Social media has been shown to promote dangerous activities and harmful behaviors through "trends." Teenagers participate in these trends to look cooler or more interesting to other people on the internet, causing more damage to their health. A popular trend that teenagers participate in is the Rice Purity Test, an online survey you take that shows how "pure" you are, making you check boxes for things you have done. The lower the score, the more cool you appear on the internet. This type of social media activity can cause teens to perform unsafe activities in order to check boxes including shoplifting, getting arrested, smoking, etc. Then of course there is the ongoing fad of editing pictures and dieting that promotes unhealthy eating habits and disorders, leading to a decline in mental health.

Finally, according to the National Institute of Health, the human brain is not fully developed until the late 20s; therefore, the younger the age the more social media



cartoon by Elli Grace Hodges

will have lasting effects on the brain. The teen brain is already more vulnerable to mental illness and factors such as social media can only increase the possibility. There can be a loss of social and cognitive skills and unnecessary

stress in relationships and school. Some of the things we have observed happening to teenagers who regularly participate in social media are negative self-talk, increased anxiety, risk of self-harm and loneliness. These things are

becoming a regularity in more teenagers since the popularity of social media has increased.

Although some argue that not allowing social media to teenagers could cause them to get bullied or feel left out, this is not a valid reason since this could happen even with social media. A child could see a post of their friends together without them or a stranger posting their luxurious life causing them to feel jealous. While it is unlikely that all social media apps will disappear, we believe that students should take steps to curb their social media use and in the absence of that self-policing, parents should limit their kids' access to social media platforms. Since most kids are already addicted it will be hard to abandon social media completely, but all parties—teenagers, parents and the social media sites themselves—should start limiting the time that teenagers are able to spend on the apps. The sites should also closely monitor the content being shared on their apps to prevent access to dangerous and harmful posts.

## Adele Seeboth

## McCallum High School



# SPORTS NEWS STORY FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	STUDENTS	SCHOOL
MS/JH-3A	Keira Caudel	Albany High School
4A	Lawrence Gardner, Michael Jimenez	St. Mark's School of Texas
5A	Camilla Vandegrift	McCallum High School
6A	Caroline Baxter	James Bowie High School

# SPORTS NEWS STORY



## Camilla Vandegrift

McCallum High School



# SPORTS FEATURE STORY FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	STUDENTS	SCHOOL
MS/JH-3A	Logan Balliew	Albany High School
4A	Jack Coben	Episcopal School of Dallas
5A	Sydney Ortiz	Kingwood Park HS
6A	Grayson McCrate	Flower Mound Marcus High School

# SPORTS FEATURE STORY



Junior Grant McTaggart, who battled cancer as a child, plays on the high school golf team. He met Hall of Famer Craig Biggio, a spokesperson for the Sunshine Kids, when Grant was undergoing chemotherapy. Photo by Sydney Ortiz. Background photo of Grant with Biggio at St. Thomas High School by Melanie McTaggart. Background photo of Grant taking his final chemotherapy pill by Melanie McTaggart.

## Grant McTaggart tees up courageous fight

By Sydney Ortiz  
Staff Writer

Grant McTaggart watched as his father stood a few feet away and called Hall of Famer Craig Biggio.

Grant had just taken his two daily chemotherapy pills, each wrapped in a Fruit Roll-Up by his mom Melanie. That special touch and the phone call to Grant's favorite baseball player were the only ways the 3-year-old would swallow the pills.

Biggio never answered the phone. Grant's father David never actually dialed it. David had no direct line to Biggio, but David McTaggart knew that pretending to brag about his 3-year-old son to Biggio would convince Grant to take the pills needed to save his life.

### Discovering the cancer

Grant was in Waco visiting his paternal grandparents in 2009 when he started running a low-grade fever, and his stomach was notice-

ably distended.

"I just had a sort of mother's intuition and felt like something wasn't right," Melanie McTaggart said.

Grant's parents took him to the emergency room and got blood work done on May 23, 2009. When the results came back abnormal, David McTaggart called his father, a Waco pathologist, to look at the results.

Grant's grandfather Dave M. McTaggart saw the leukemia cells and diagnosed Grant with Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia at 2 a.m. the next morning.

"Initially it was kind of like life stopped and I was in shock," Grant's dad said. "It just didn't seem real."

The cancer treatment started immediately, and the McTaggarts

were relieved with how well it went. Grant's cancer became the focus of the McTaggarts' lives. They spent more of their days at Texas Children's Hospital than they did at their home.

The calm lasted only two months.

### Serious setback

In August of that year, Grant's bowels began to shut down. The doctors decided to do a 24-hour infusion of methotrexate. The infusion went into his spine and then into his brain. Normally it flushes out, but Grant's did not. It caused major damage to his cerebellum, the part of the

brain responsible for balance and movement.

Grant lost his ability to talk and walk.

"It was a big kick in the face,

sort of a reminder that this is really serious and he may not make it, he may not survive this," David McTaggart said.

Grant spent a full week in the Texas Children's Hospital intensive care unit unable to eat or drink. When he got out of the ICU he started another round of chemo. He also had to begin physical therapy.

### Meeting Craig Biggio

As Grant continued to heal through rehab and take his chemotherapy pills, his dad continued to make daily calls to Biggio.

In September 2009, the most unlikely connection was made. Grant's doctor, Dr. ZoAnn Dreyer, was to be honored at St. Thomas High School, where Biggio coached at the time. Dr. Dreyer was friends with the Biggio family and shared the story of how the McTaggarts got Grant to take his pills.

With the help of Biggio, Grant was invited to help Biggio announce the award to Dr. Dreyer. After the ceremony, Biggio spent

## Sydney Ortiz

## Kingwood Park High School



# FEATURE WRITING FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	STUDENTS	SCHOOL
MS/JH-3A	Jamie Russell	Union Grove ISD
4A	Hilton Sampson, Linyang Lee, Matthew Hofmann	St. Mark's School of Texas
5A	Sydney Ortiz	Kingwood Park HS
6A	Elizabeth Cohorn	Prosper High School

# FEATURE WRITING



Flavia and Fabio Salima Marciano hold the Venezuelan flag their family brought with them when they sought political asylum in the United States in 2017. Millions have fled the country in the last decade to escape economic hardship and political repression. Photo by Sydney Ortiz.

Flavia and Fabio Salima Marciano take a selfie with their parents in the Fort Lauderdale airport before the family's flight to Houston in August 2017. The family had just escaped Venezuela to seek political asylum in the U.S. In that moment, the children thought they were visiting the United States for a vacation. Photo submitted by Daniela Marciano Latuff.

## FOR THE KIDS

By Sydney Ortiz  
Sports Editor

Flavia Salima Marciano, then 10, was sad and excited for the surprise vacation her parents planned. She didn't like leaving her family and friends in Venezuela, but she was looking forward to visiting her cousins and aunt who lived in the United States. What Salima Marciano didn't know was that the "vacation" was permanent – and that her family was about to leave everything they knew behind. Daniela and Frank Salima were scared to tell their two young children the truth.

The Salimas were not in support of the Venezuelan government. Both Daniela and Frank were college-educated and had successful careers, but they were unhappy with the changes coming into

place. Groceries became difficult to purchase. They realized that they were not going to be able to pay the next school year's tuition for Flavia or her younger brother Fabio. Not being able to send their kids to their private school was the turning point. "I told Frank, 'Ok it is time to think of a plan B,'" Daniela Marciano Latuff said.

Just like it is today, leaving Venezuela was not easy in 2017. Sometimes the Venezuelan government separated families at the airport so they could question kids on the reason for their travels. Pretending the move was a vacation was the only way to keep the family safe and keep from risking

the family's chance to escape. Since 2014 with Venezuela in turmoil, 7.7 million Venezuelans have fled the country, according to the UN Refugee Agency.



Wikimedia Commons/Creative Commons

When the family arrived in the United States, they sought political asylum. Their case continues pending, which allows them to live and work legally in the U.S. Though that brought relief to their parents, the kids thought they were still on vacation.

It took Flavia less than a month to realize the stay was permanent. She made the connection when her mom and dad started telling her that they were looking at soccer clubs she could join in the United States.

"I was mad," Flavia said. "I was sad. I was everything but happy." It took Flavia's younger brother, Fabio, even longer to realize what had happened.

When Fabio's parents told him they were also looking for a new soccer club for him, he reassured them that they didn't have to worry about that. He said he would just wait to play soccer again in Venezuela once their vacation ended.

That was really difficult for his mother to hear, partly because she wished it was true. She hoped things in her birth country would improve soon.

"I thought maybe this is not going to be for a long time," Daniela Marciano Latuff said.

Marciano Latuff described their life in Venezuela as "perfect." The family had a big house and lived quite comfortably before the political destruction.

With hope for a brighter future for their children, Daniela and Frank Salima left Venezuela to seek political asylum in the United States in 2017.

## Sydney Ortiz

## Kingwood Park High School



# ENTERTAINMENT REVIEW FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	STUDENTS	SCHOOL
MS/JH-3A	Charlotte Wright & Hannah Caperton	Union Grove ISD
4A	Cam Hurley	St. Mark's School of Texas
5A	Olivia Brenner	Kingwood Park HS
6A	Cooper Seaver	McNeil High School

# ENTERTAINMENT REVIEW

## 'Beetlejuice Beetlejuice' Proves Just How Good a Sequel Can Be

Story by: Cooper Seaver, Design Editor

Thirty six years after the Tim Burton classic *Beetlejuice* released, Warner Bros. said his name three times in an attempt at a hit in this long string of legacy sequels. Sept. 6, 2024 saw the release of the not much long-awaited sequel, *Beetlejuice Beetlejuice*. Burton's past decade in film has not inspired much confidence in his future projects, but *Beetlejuice Beetlejuice* is a simple yet effective return to form.

Six Batman adaptations and 10 Presidential terms later, Michael Keaton comes back to the titular *Beetlejuice* role to give yet another unforgettably raunchy performance. Alongside Keaton, Winona Ryder and Catherine O'Hara also reprise their roles from the original. Seeing these actors come back to the wonderful world of Tim Burton is exciting, but newcomers Jenna Ortega and Willem Dafoe make a strong case for themselves.

Ortega worked with Burton on Netflix's *Addams Family* reimagining Wednesday, it's not hard to see that this is just the beginning of a long-lasting working relationship. She plays the character of Lydia Deetz's daughter, Astrid and acts just like her mother did in the original—a snarky, gloomy teen caught in between the living, the dead and Michael Keaton. When she finds herself stuck in The Neitherworld (the movies version of an afterlife) due to a botched deal between her and a deceptive ghost, Lydia and *Beetlejuice* reunite to save her from being stuck there for an eternity.

Ryder is just as youthful and

silly as she was in the original *Beetlejuice* at 15 years old. Though Lydia Deetz has become a mother and found a career in hosting her own ghost-hunting show, she's still the same quirky, gothic teenager audiences fell in love with all those years ago. It's not only a testament to Ryder's acting, but Burton's directing that they were able to bring that character back with such little trouble.

Dafoe is so much in his element in Burton's twisted world that it feels almost wrong that this is their first time working together. Dafoe's ability to portray any emotion in the human index with just his mouth has been landing him roles for decades and it's shocking that not one of them have been in Burton's colorful filmography. In the very early stages of Burton's 1989 *Batman* adaptation, Dafoe was briefly considered for the Dark Knight himself as Burton was looking for an unknown actor to don the suit, before Michael Keaton's unstoppable 80's Hollywood magic would eventually land him the role.

This is not the first time Keaton has reprised an iconic role from Warner Bros. back catalog, as he returned as *Batman* in 2023's less-than-stellar *The Flash*. Unfortunately, Keaton only has so much magic and audiences should be lucky that he decided to spend the rest of it on a *Beetlejuice* sequel. Keaton is just as gnarly and juvenile as our favorite bio-exorcist was in the 1988 original. Much like Ryder, he hasn't aged a day, his costume looks nearly identical to how it looked all those years ago, and in some cases looks better.

One thing that has aged is the state of movie-making. Though



the reach of digital shooting is unavoidable, it takes something away from the magic of a Tim Burton adventure. Something intrinsic to the nature of a film, its grain. The mixture of shooting on 35mm film and Burton's

commitment to practicality is part of the identity of his filmography. To take that away is to take something from the heart of the movie. *Beetlejuice 2* using digital to shoot over film feels almost uncanny, like it isn't quite right. A Burton picture without film grain is like an unfinished painting, and therefore already at a disadvantage competing with the original. Even a visionary as talented as him isn't free from the grasp of the increasingly ugly-looking nature of films, every indoor scene shot during the day looks like it was filmed in a warehouse in front

of a green screen. It completely takes viewers out of the moment especially compared to the lively and colorful look of the zany underworld Burton has lovingly recreated.

*Beetlejuice Beetlejuice* is a fun return to a classic world with beloved actors new and old, plot-lines that don't really go together and a 66-year-old Burton that is brimming with life. Though it's not perfect, it's a promising look at what Burton is still capable of and it shows that a true commitment to making an actual, tangible world with real props and sets can bring great results. The digital look isn't doing the movie any favors, but Burton's magic still manages to shine through.

## Cooper Seaver

## McNeil High School



# ENTERTAINMENT FEATURE FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	STUDENTS	SCHOOL
MS/JH-3A	Jamie Russell & Peyton Hancock	Union Grove ISD
4A	Kevin Ho, Tejas Allada	St. Mark's School of Texas
5A	Zachary Ford	Kingwood Park HS
6A	Ella Sotiriades	Bellaire High School

# ENTERTAINMENT FEATURE

**Kevin Ho and  
Tejas Allada**

St. Mark's School of Texas



Football fans watch the Colorado vs. Nebraska game. The curvature and bright LED lights that Cosm features on its screen create a feeling of actually being at the game.  
Photo by Ellen Kagan

**Winn '64 redefines live entertainment;  
co-founds, opens Cosm Dallas**

*With dreams inspired from the addition of the school's telescope, Cosm co-founder Steve Winn '64 completed his quest of creating immersive, virtual-reality entertainment.*



# PHOTO STORY FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	STUDENTS	SCHOOL
MS/JH-3A	Natalie Pritchett & Alley Hale	Union Grove ISD
4A	Melissa Gutierrez, Colten Fehr, Ivy Flores	Seminole High School
5A	Emily McKithern, Sydney Ortiz, Fallon Head	Kingwood Park HS
6A	Cooper Seaver	McNeil High School

# PHOTO STORY



Junior Madison Staggs screams after winning the pyramid competition in the patriotic pep rally. "I was really excited because we finally won a competition and we have a lot more spirit this year," said Staggs. Photo by Emily McKithern.

**Emily McKithern,  
Sydney Ortiz and  
Fallon Head**

Kingwood Park High School



# PERSONAL COLUMN FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	STUDENTS	SCHOOL
MS/JH-3A	Jamie Russell	Union Grove ISD
4A	Kayden Zhong	St. Mark's School of Texas
5A	Chloe Lewcock	McCallum High School
6A	Raksha Jayakumar	Flower Mound Marcus High School

# ETERNAL COLUMN

## Texas' dubious distinction

Registration process in Lone Star State an unnecessary barrier for new voters

Chloe Lewcock  
co-editor-in-chief

I filled out the register to vote form exactly two months before my birthday. As a September-born Virgo, and technically out of my own registration a summer birthday, the prospect of getting to vote was always one that thrilled me.

If Texas allowed online voter registration, I would have been registered on the spot, but Texas requires registration by mail, so instead of registering immediately, I signed my full name on the dotted line at the end of my voter form, added the date July 20, 2024, to the paper and stamped it with one single American Flag stamp. I tucked the form—the form I had waited 17 years and 10 months to send—safely in its envelope on my dining room table. But then my busy life got in the way, and the letter remained on that table, unmoved, for 32 days until I finally got around to sending it.

Texas, one of eight states that still employs the antiquated paper voter registration system, creates an extra and unnecessary step for its residents to cast their votes in elections. Saddled with one of the lowest voter turnout rates in the nation, according to the Texas Tribune, Texas has a registration process and voting procedure that are—if not impossible—so annoyingly inconvenient that they discourage new voters from voting by making the process take ridiculously longer than it should take.

As I checked my voter registration status online, after finally mailing the form, I saw a series of "NOT REGISTERED" on various websites. The giant red "X" next to my name indicated that my prospect of being a new voter was in doubt. When I finally did get my registration, my name was misspelled, something that would not have happened if I had entered my own name during an online registration process. Instead I had to go back to the beginning of the mail mail process. In this new generation of cellphones, smartwatches and artificial intelligence, the idea that I had to register to vote with pen and paper seems out of touch with my generation. At least I had the time and the resources to navigate the labyrinthine

**Voter Registration**

2024-2025

DECLINED

Year of Birth: [blank] Gender: [blank] Congress: [blank] State Sen: [blank] State Rep: [blank] COM: [blank]

Valid From: [blank] City: [blank] Precinct: [blank] ISD: [blank] ISD DIST: [blank]

X [Signature]

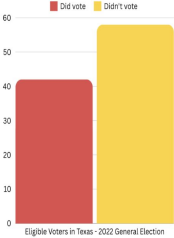
process. The difficulty of it obviously reduces the likelihood that new voters will make it to the polls this November. And that's simply unacceptable.

The state needs to come up with a better system. In the 2024 presidential primary, 3.2 million Texans voted, way down from the 4.1 million voters who participated in the 2020 presidential primary election. In fact, Texas has been awarded the title of "most restrictive pre-registration law in the country," according to the Tribune.

Wisconsin, Michigan, Connecticut and Illinois, just to name a few, have a policy that allows their voters to register and vote on the same day. Texas, on the other hand, requires voters to be registered by Oct. 7. This unnecessary detour disqualifies people from resolving issues with their registration, as I am having. These potential voters may not get their registration resolved in time. The lack of a voter registration card, or confirmation places stress on the voter,

and requires considerable research to make sure everything is in order for election day. Another issue facing voters in Texas, especially those unfamiliar with the system is mail-in ballots. Unless you qualify as disabled, incarcerated, pregnant, above the age of 65 or outside the county throughout the voting period, you are disqualified from being able to vote by mail. For teens, the unpredictability of scheduling whether it be work or school, the possibility of a mail-in vote would create a sense of ease that no matter the circumstance your vote will be counted whether or not you can make it to the polls. Nearly 88% of California votes, according to the California Secretary of State website, are conducted by mail. That's just one example of a state that allows for universal mail-in ballots and sees how that provision allows more citizens to vote efficiently without having to visit the polls.

Compare Texas, with its less than 50% voter turnout rate, to Minnesota, a state where over 80% of registered voters cast their ballots. With same-day voter registration, as well as less strict identification standards, the state sees the majority of its registered citizens voting. If Minnesota can simplify its process to enable voting and attract voters to the polls, why can't Texas? The disparity raises troubling questions about why Texas has such a convoluted process.



While the possibility of voting early exists throughout the U.S., including in Texas, many voters will wait until Election Day and a certain percentage of those people will end up missing the vote. In order for Texas to raise its voter registration numbers and low voter turnout numbers, the state needs to implement new methods that make it easier to vote.

## Chloe Lewcock

## McCallum High School



# PERSONAL OPINION COLUMN FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	STUDENTS	SCHOOL
MS/JH-3A	Jamie Russell	Union Grove ISD
4A	Will Clifford	St. Mark's School of Texas
5A	Nate Williams	McCallum High School
6A	Maddux Horn	Bellaire High School

# PERSONAL OPINION COLUMN

COMMENTARY

## When the bottle goes dry



Will Clifford  
Digital Managing Editor

**I**t just doesn't stick. Why should I even try? It's useless.

I used to not be able to do school. I couldn't sit still in class. I couldn't pay attention to my teachers and I couldn't stay on task.

I promise I tried. You watched me sit at the table for hours and study.

I reached my breaking point. I was nearly falling half of my classes. As tears streamed down my face, I literally cried for help.

My parents took me to a doctor who diagnosed me with ADHD and gave me a prescription for Focalin, a medicine similar to Adderall.

The first time I took the medicine, everything clicked. I felt like I took off sunglasses that had been glued to my eyes for my whole life. With my medicine, I could do school. I stopped disrupting class, I didn't zone out during lectures, I didn't need to be reminded to stay on task and I started to remember things when I studied.

For years, as long as I took my meds, I didn't struggle in school.

But this year, two weeks before I was scheduled to take the ACT, the bottle went dry. The ADHD medicine shortage hit at the worst time, and I had to scramble to try to find a prescription.

It was like I was back in middle school. I was thrown back into the harsh reality of going through school unmedicated. Just a couple of days before I had no issue paying attention in class or taking notes or studying, but now focusing for 45 minutes straight felt like running an uphill marathon without shoes. My grades started slipping, and I knew that if I didn't get my prescription filled soon, I'd never be able to bring my grades back up. I felt the same feelings of helplessness, anger and confusion - no matter how hard I tried, *nothing* stuck.

My parents and I were constantly



**EMPTY** The ADHD medication shortage has plagued the country, leaving countless students without the tools they need to succeed.

PHOTO / WILL CLIFFORD

on the phone with pharmacies, trying to find somewhere that could fulfill my prescription. All of them had the same response - no.

A whole week passed, and still, no meds. With the ACT just days away, I entered full-on panic mode. All of the time I spent preparing for the test would go down the drain if I couldn't get my prescription in time.

While my story has a happy ending, many other students across the country were not as lucky. Fortunately, one of the pharmacies told my doctor they received a new shipment of Focalin and I picked up my prescription before the end of the week. If I had a different doctor, lived in a different city or took a different medication, I would still be one of many students suffering from the nationwide ADHD medication shortages.

Since the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) classifies all ADHD medication as controlled substances, there's a hard cap on how much factories can produce. Recently, more and more people have been diagnosed with ADHD, however the DEA has not adequately adjusted the

production limitations. The government administration that is supposed to be keeping Americans safe is inadvertently harming students. Nobody should have to go through school worrying that their ability to learn will suddenly disappear.

If you think you are experiencing symptoms of ADHD - please go get tested. It can't hurt. The Markman Wellness Center is full of professionals who will guide you through the examination process.

It's hard to truly realize how much having ADHD negatively impacts you until you experience life with the aid of medication. If you are worried about the side effects, do some research. And don't just use the internet - consult a medical professional. When you think you have a concussion, you don't hesitate to get medical help because going through life with one is incredibly difficult and could severely damage your brain. So, why is there a stigma against seeking help for ADHD treatments? If you can help yourself live an easier, healthier life, why wouldn't you?

Like I said, when you have ADHD,

it's like you have sunglasses glued to your eyes. But, if you try going on medication, the sunglasses will fall off, and you will be able to see the bright world the same as everyone else.

## ADHD BY THE NUMBERS

**129 million**  
Kids between the age of 5-19 have ADHD in the U.S.

**77%**  
Of children diagnosed with ADHD consistently take medicine for treatment

**300%**  
Increase in the cost for some ADHD medicines since the shortage started.

## Will Clifford

## St. Mark's School of Texas



# SPORTS COLUMN FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	STUDENTS	SCHOOL
MS/JH-3A	Sam Potts	East Bernard
4A	Linyang Lee	St. Mark's School of Texas
5A	Marie Wakefield	Kingwood Park HS
6A	Will Zwerneman	Bryan High School

# SPORTS COLUMN

## For each other

*For senior Linyang Lee, rowing is so much more than just a sport. It's a burning fire of heart and resilience in times of self-doubt.*

### COMMENTARY



LINYANG LEE  
Managing Editor

Our bodies — slumped.  
Our legs — burnt. Our  
breaths — heaving.  
I thrust my feet, socks  
and all, off the sides of the  
boat and into the water.  
It was 100 degrees out,  
and my shirt and shorts  
were already soaked with  
sweat. Who cared if I had to  
drive home with wet socks?  
I could feel the heat  
leaving my body, but my  
legs and back were still  
smoldering with lactic acid.  
My chest was still  
heaving. Sweat was still  
dripping off my nose.  
I closed my eyes. Still  
trying to catch my breath.  
The lactic acid just  
wouldn't leave me alone.  
It burned the last bit of  
our row into my mind.  
This is where you meet  
God! Evan McGowan had  
shouted from the launch.  
Any rational person  
would've stopped a minute  
into our piece.  
But we kept pushing.  
Straight through the pain.  
Not just for ourselves.  
But for each other.

As we caught our  
breaths, Evan's voice  
came once again from the  
megaphone.  
I didn't really hear it.  
Something about  
needing better togeth-  
erness. Good swing. Dog  
mentality.

I heard one word though.  
Believe.

I stepped out of the  
hotel shower. Skin red  
because I'd turned the heat  
all the way up.  
Man, I was still cold.  
Opening the door out of  
the steamy bathroom was  
like stepping into a freezer.  
Why did this have to  
happen?



The SMERIGOS rowers on their way back to the dock after finishing 9th in the Time Trial, the highest placement in school history.  
Photo courtesy Linyang Lee

I had chills. My throat  
was sore. I could barely eat.  
And there I was.  
Sarasota, Florida. The day  
before Nate.  
The practice row  
already fried me.  
How was I going to race?  
The light steady state  
jacked my heart rate up. My  
mind didn't work straight  
at all. No amount of Nicola  
could save me.

But Ian, our stroke seat,  
pulled me aside after.  
I've got a good feeling  
about this race, he said.  
He believed. Eli and  
Hewes believed.  
Where was my belief?

I woke up the next  
morning, feeling a bit  
better. I'd stayed the night  
with my parents.

That tylenol helped.  
And orange juice.  
I prepped a few Nicolas  
and stepped into the  
shower.  
Hey, no chills today.  
As the water hit my face,  
I thought of my shower last  
night.

Who would be crazy  
enough to race with a fever?  
Who would be crazy enough  
to even think about it?

Only me.  
That fired me up.

I was the first at the race  
course.  
As the rest of the quad  
and coaches walked up to  
our trailer, I smiled.  
How're you feeling? They  
asked.  
I gave a double thumbs  
up.

The thumbs up wasn't  
enough to tell my quad how  
dialed I was, though.  
I added my pinky and  
made a double surfer sign.  
I was so ready to give  
everything I had for them.  
I was so dialed.  
I believed.

### Belief.

That's what I love about  
rowing.  
The foundation of  
rowing culture is that we  
know each of us is putting  
out and giving everything  
we've got for the boat.  
It doesn't matter if it's  
Nate or just balance drills.  
The best rowers put out.  
I'm far from being a  
perfect rower. But those  
days I know I put every-  
thing into the chain on the  
erg or into the water —  
that builds confidence.  
Because I know I'm not  
just doing it for me.  
Because it's for each  
other.

In a world with so much  
isolation and insecurity —  
it's hard to find self-con-  
fidence without a team.

Last year, the Surgeon  
General released an  
advisory to call attention  
to the public health crisis  
of loneliness and lack of  
connection in our country.  
The mortality impact of  
being socially disconnected  
is similar to that caused by  
smoking up to 15 cigarettes  
a day.

In the 44 years from 1972  
to 2016, Americans lost  
trust in each other — going  
from 45% to 30%.

Surveys found that  
about half of U.S. adults  
report experiencing lone-  
liness — with some of the  
highest rates among young  
adults.

But we don't have to live  
like that.  
Find your team. Your  
tribe.  
Become closer with your  
family. With your friends.  
Find a group of people  
you'd race sick for.  
Because that's how you  
find belief.

# Linyang Lee

## St. Mark's School of Texas



# IN-DEPTH NEWS/FEATURE PACKAGE FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	STUDENTS	SCHOOL
MS/JH-3A	Landon Balliew, Holden Sanchez, Rowdy New	Albany High School
4A	Staff	St. Mark's School of Texas
5A	Sydney Ortiz, Fallon Head, Tricia Darcy	Kingwood Park HS
6A	Staff	James Bowie High School

# IN-DEPTH NEWS/FEATURE PACKAGE

## Students support community following tornado

*The tornado's devastation wasn't restricted to St. Mark's campus. In fact, it tore through significant parts of the Preston-Royal shopping center, damaging stores like the familiar Central Market.*

BY NEIL YEPURI

The Central Market at Preston and Royal is a Preston Hollow icon. Since 2012, it's been serving the community as a grocery store and servery, with fresh food prepared each day.

Employees there feel a very close connection to the area - and their regular customers.

"The team that works there say that the people that shop there are really family members to them," HEB Managing Director of Public Affairs Mabrie Jackson said. "They have deep relationships that go back many, many years with the neighbors."

So, when the October 2019 tornado hit, Jackson and other Central Market team members sprang into action. The store was near closing time at that point, but still had some customers in the store on that fateful Sunday night.

"When it hit, I was watching TV, and I grabbed my husband and I said 'I'm driving,'" Jackson said. "I didn't know how we're going to get in there, because I knew there was a ton of devastation."

For Jackson, getting to the store and making sure people were safe were her only priorities.

"I was actually driving through people's front yards in my car to get as close to St. Mark's as I could, because there were trees on the roads and you couldn't get through," Jackson said. "And so I got to St. Mark's, got out of the car and I told my husband, 'Just go drive and somehow get to the store. I don't care how long it takes you.'"

Despite a treacherous scene of debris, fallen power lines and police sectioning off the store, Jackson was determined. When she arrived at the store, she saw a mess — the roof had been partially torn off of the store, there was broken glass everywhere from fallen items and the whole store was in a watery disarray.

But, in the days and weeks that followed, the Central Market and HEB team's focus shifted. Instead of worrying only about their own store's damage and rebuilding efforts, they decided to open the Central Market kitchen, serving first responders and neighbors in the local community who were also reeling from the disaster.

"When the neighbors were hurting, we were hurting, and it just felt like a real bonding experience for a lot of people," Jackson said.

Central Market mobilized quickly. The HEB mobile kitchen was open on the morning of Tuesday Oct. 22, just over 24 hours after the initial hit on Sunday night.

"They were able to start breakfast, lunch and dinner for the neighborhood, all the workers and police officers and anybody who was around there that needed to eat," Jackson said. "We had food for everybody, and we were able to load up a bunch of pickup trucks and stuff with bags of cleaning supplies and some food to take to all of the neighbors nearby."

However, the effort to distribute both food and supplies couldn't have been accomplished alone.



St. Mark's students (mostly seniors and juniors) work to help move supplies and food in the Preston Royal shopping center for the HEB mobile kitchen. Photo Courtesy: John Ashton

The owner of Central Market, Stephen Butt, actually reached out to the St. Mark's Community Service department to ask for help.

Marksmen were there, ready and able to answer that call.

"(Stephen Butt) asked me if we could put together a team of students to help pass food around here,"

Director of Community Service and Spanish instructor Jorge Correa said. "They had set up an emergency truck, with a whole full kitchen with stuff in it to cook."

The HEB workers needed hands and transportation to deliver this food to the community in the surrounding area. So, Correa sent an email.

"I emailed our Community Service Board and faculty," Correa said. "I copied faculty because I thought that we would need more adults. We were looking for anybody who could help."

If people were going to organize and help out, it wouldn't be on campus, meaning that Correa and the board had to improvise.

"We were not allowed to come back on campus because of the damages in the area," Correa said. "We had to walk all the way over to that corner where we

do McDonald's week (near Central Market). Then, we got instructions and food, and then we started start driving around and helping out."

Many of the people who were delivered food either couldn't access their kitchen or couldn't make their own food, which made the work that the Community Service Board did that week all the more necessary.

"I remember walking to the apartments over there (on Royal) near where the fire station is," Correa said.

"Most of them were elderly. Those people ended up with nothing to cook and no place to find food."

The selflessness of those involved helped ease the burden on the families and individuals whose homes were damaged in the storm. Students were at the center of that effort.

"We call St. Mark's for assistance often, and they've always been so helpful," Jackson said. "You've just got a great student body who understands that helping others is a cornerstone of growth as you mature. It's really nice to see a group of students that understand the importance of coming to support the community in terms of need."

Hilton Sampson,

Linyang Lee,

Lawrence

Gardner, Akash

Manickam, Neil

Yepuri

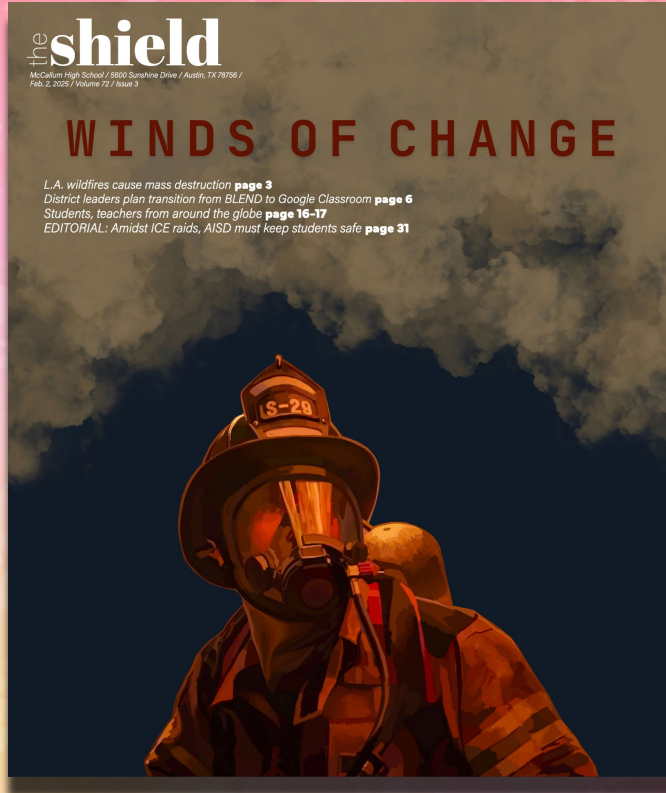
St. Mark's School of Texas



# STUDENT ART FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	STUDENTS	SCHOOL
MS/JH-3A	Alexis Lee	Union Grove ISD
4A	Joshua Goforth	St. Mark's School of Texas
5A	Mira Patel	McCallum High School
6A	Sophia Sepulveda	James Bowie High School

# STUDENT ART



**Mira Patel**

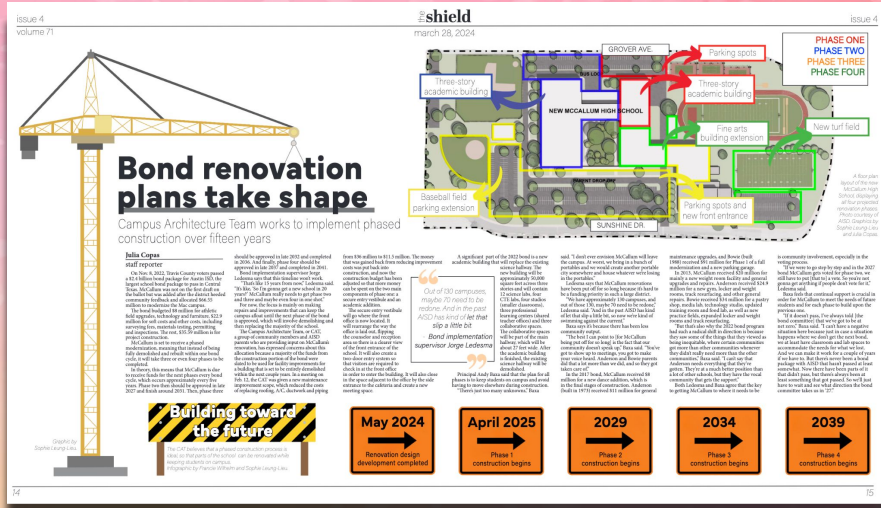
McCallum High School



# INFOGRAPHIC/SIDEBAR FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	STUDENTS	SCHOOL
MS/JH-3A	Holden Sanchez	Albany High School
4A	Valentina Boltchi	Episcopal School of Dallas
5A	Julia Copas, Sophie Leung-Lieu and Francie Wilhelm	McCallum High School
6A	Elizabeth Yowell	James Bowie High School

# INFOGRAPHIC/SIDEBAR



**Julia Copas,  
Sophie  
Leung-Lieu and  
Francie Wilhelm**

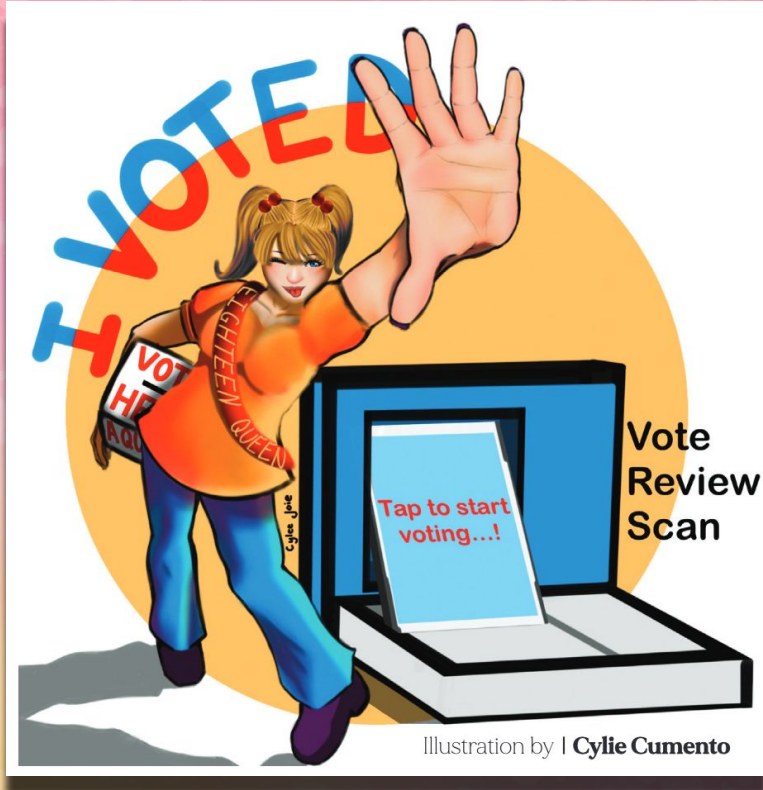
**McCallum High School**



# CARTOON FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	STUDENTS	SCHOOL
MS/JH-3A	Briana Westmoreland	Union Grove ISD
4A	Alexa Sardiña	Episcopal School of Dallas
5A	Cylee Clemente	Hendrickson High School
6A	Sophia Sepulveda	James Bowie High School

# CARTOON



**Cylee Clemente**

Hendrickson High School



# SPORTS PAGE/SPREAD DESIGN FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	STUDENTS	SCHOOL
MS/JH-3A	Gabby Lopez	Albany High School
4A	Michael Jiminez, Weston Chance	St. Mark's School of Texas
5A	Sydney Ortiz	Kingwood Park HS
6A	Manasa Borra	Coppell High School

SEE **DIVING** ON PAGE 29



# FEATURE PAGE/SPREAD DESIGN FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	STUDENTS	SCHOOL
MS/JH-3A	Avery Everitt	Albany High School
4A	Hilton Sampson	St. Mark's School of Texas
5A	Mira Patel	McCallum High School
6A	Manasa Borra	Coppell High School





# ENTERTAINMENT PAGE/SPREAD DESIGN FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	STUDENTS	SCHOOL
MS/JH-3A	Jamie Russell & Briana Bowling	Union Grove ISD
4A	Hilton Sampson	St. Mark's School of Texas
5A	Kaitlyn Sitton	Kingwood Park HS
6A	Cooper Seaver	McNeil High School

REVIEWS

PAGE 52

ST. MARK'S SCHOOL OF MUSIC

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 27, 2001

COMMENTARY

VERMAN SINGH  
music dir.

Destiny Lonely's  
latest album: A  
major shift in style

“LOVE LASTS FOREVER” is Destiny Lonely's second studio album and his first album of new music.

Although the album has some phenomenal tracks, it seems to lack and lacks in many ways. It has a few of the classic oldies including an a cappella in songs, making it very far removed in minutes.

Destiny Lonely has been an ongoing name in the hip-hop scene, signing independent artist Popfunk City from the likes of Busta Rhymes. He has released an incredible amount of records, with his new one being “LOVE LASTS FOREVER” from Island.

However, this time was mainly due to his loneliness which was what was driving to create production from the likes of Busta Rhymes. The album was produced by Busta Rhymes, who provided some instrumental with a very good sound. It has a very good sound, with tracks of both acoustic and electronic sound, making it very good.

However, on “LOVE LASTS FOREVER” the entire album has been mostly produced by Busta Rhymes. This is a very good thing, but it is not the best kind of the new year since his last.

Although 2001 has been certainly established as one of the best years in music in the producing world, he has to provide more of the album, with many of the tracks being very good. In many ways, which, over the course of one year, it is not a very good thing.

Moreover, one of the selling points of Destiny Lonely's new album is that he has been the first to produce his own music, which is a very good thing. However, this album doesn't live in the same way as his previous ones.

This can really be attributed to his lack of production, and his lack of production in the mainstream scene of hip-hop production. It is a very good thing, but it is not the best kind of the new year since his last.

That being said, this album is still definitely worth the listen, especially for those who are looking for the mainstream sound of artists such as Future and Lil' Kim.

Photo: A/R.fm

Garfield, Pugh star in  
stirring love story

COMMENTARY

CARL MITCHELL

Love is fleeting, and that's especially apparent when it comes to creating a love story. Garfield's new album, "Stirring Love Story," is a love story that is as good as a love story. It's a love story that is as good as a love story.

The album is a love story that is as good as a love story. It's a love story that is as good as a love story. It's a love story that is as good as a love story.

This conceptual approach to telling a true emotional story lives up to the material, but sometimes, especially in the first half, the music flows a touch like a song. Despite the fact that the structure is the juxtaposition of a completely different style, with some changes in the way the music is presented, it is a very good thing.

This conceptual approach to telling a true emotional story lives up to the material, but sometimes, especially in the first half, the music flows a touch like a song. Despite the fact that the structure is the juxtaposition of a completely different style, with some changes in the way the music is presented, it is a very good thing.

Over the film's late 20s, however, it finds an emotional balance that finds just right with all the beats being made by Garfield's music.

Pugh especially shines, her performance being reminiscent to a three-dimensional character. It's a very good thing, but it is not the best kind of the new year since his last.

At times, the characters themselves find love and longing, in no small part due to the performance, but it is a very good thing, but it is not the best kind of the new year since his last.

On the film, the characters especially find it to make one to make one. In the end, the story is a love story, and it is a very good thing, but it is not the best kind of the new year since his last.

At times, the characters themselves find love and longing, in no small part due to the performance, but it is a very good thing, but it is not the best kind of the new year since his last.

UPCOMING  
CONCERTS THIS  
MONTH

WEEZER

Weezer is continuing the legacy of the Blue Planet tour, meant to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the "Blue Planet" tour. Their debut album in professional music was their first major release.

When: September 29

Where: American Airlines Center

USHER

Usher is continuing his Past Perfect tour, which started in August, meant to support his newest album, Coming Out. Over the three days, Usher will play his new songs and many more.

When: October 3-5

Where: American Airlines Center

RHETT MILLER

Rhett Miller is a solo artist who has released several albums and played many live shows. His latest album, "The Cycle of Life," is his most recent.

When: October 20

Where: Granada Theater

Photo: iStockphoto.com

B+

# Hilton Sampson

St. Mark's School of Texas

[illegible]



# NEWS PAGE/SPREAD DESIGN FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	STUDENTS	SCHOOL
MS/JH-3A	Bailee Hosak & Natalie Pritchett	Union Grove ISD
4A	Kevin Ho, Andrew Ye	St. Mark's School of Texas
5A	Sofia Saucedo	McCallum High School
6A	Cooper Seaver	McNeil High School

# NEWS PAGE/SPREAD DESIGN

## A 48-hour incentive scare

Baxa responds to community concern by reinstating no-risk final exam policy

**Sofia Saucedo**  
social media specialist

After initially telling parents at a Campus Advisory Council and PTSA meetings on Monday Dec. 2 that McCallum was pausing final exam incentives and not offering this semester, principal Andy Baxa on Wednesday Dec. 4 informed the community via email that the program would continue as is for the fall semester and with stricter student requirements to earn them in the spring.

In an interview with the Shield on Tuesday Dec. 3, Baxa explained his rationale for terminating the exemptions. He said the incentives aimed to improve student attendance and ultimately student learning.

"Final exam incentives were introduced as a way to motivate students who were unmotivated to engage with the curriculum," Baxa said. "They were introduced during COVID so that kids could feel motivated to log on. We decided to continue this plan after COVID to see if it had a positive impact on the students' attendance and grades, and this was not true."

In addition to not achieving its intended results, Baxa said that he felt the incentive system undercut the school's mission to prepare students for life after high school. "Not having final exams kind of sets up a false narrative for students as they move forward in life after high school," Baxa said. "In life, you don't get to do 80% of the work and skip the last 20%."

While Baxa still believes that the reasons for discontinuing incentives are valid, the community pushback since the Dec. 2

meetings persuaded him that it would be unfair to end the program this semester. In an email to parents on Dec. 4, Baxa said the Google form to request an exemption (or a no harm final) would be available on Blend this by the end of the day on Thursday Dec. 5. The Google form remained open until 5 p.m. on Tuesday Dec. 10.

After the Monday meeting explaining to parents the concept for the new initiative, the Shield posted a story on the MacJournalism Instagram on Tuesday soliciting student opinion on the decision to end the finals incentive program. All 25 respondents to the Instagram story said they were against the new incentive plan, and nearly half of them (48%) said they were unaware that the administration had ended the finals incentive plan until the story was posted.

One of those respondents, junior Chloe Verastegui, said in a subsequent interview with the Shield that the final incentive plan was flawed from the beginning because it was never going to accomplish its intended goal. "I think people are going to skip regardless of any type of bribery or policies that are put in place," Verastegui said.

She added that she thought it was unfair for the administration to announce the removal of a policy pertaining to finals two weeks before students began testing.

"It's upsetting because even though some people haven't kept up their attendance, there's a lot of people who have just to exempt a final," Verastegui said. "There are people who are struggling and are relying on exemptions so to randomly find out so close to finals is just very annoying when you were already planning on what to exempt."

Baxa told the Shield in an interview conducted before reinstating the final

### Exam

#### SECTION ONE

1. How many colonies were there in the United States?  
a. 15  
b. 2  
c. 8  
d. 19

2. During what period did the Roman Empire exist?  
a. Roman Republic  
b. Napoleonic Europe  
c. Soviet Union

3. What was Michelangelo's last name?  
a. Brunelleschi  
b. Brunelleschi  
c. Botticelli

4. Which of these is not a part of the Renaissance?  
a. 1515  
b. 1825

5. Which of the following was NOT a part of the Renaissance?  
a. Humanism  
b. Humanism

Under the terms of the final incentive program, qualifying students select a course for which their final exam score cannot hurt their final average in the course. Graphic by Sofia Saucedo.

incentives that the administration was considering getting rid of the exemptions over summer break.

"It was something the administration leadership team looked at over the summer and talked about at the beginning of the year," Baxa said.

He admitted that the administration should have communicated the change more clearly. "I will admit that communication should have been better," Baxa said.

Baxa initially thought the school had not communicated that incentives would be in place this year, but a parent pointed out that information about the final exam incentive was on the school website.

"At first I wondered, 'Who ever said they were going to have final exam incentives?'" Baxa said on Dec. 4. "However after fielding emails today, a parent pointed out to me that our website still says there will be final exam incentives."

Baxa also discovered that final incentives were a topic presented during the school's

advisory lessons.

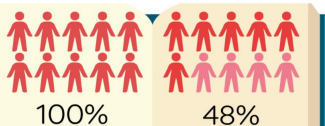
"When I looked back on our September third advisory lesson, it left some ambiguity in there about the final incentive program."

After discovering this news, Baxa ultimately decided it would be unfair to go against what students were told throughout the year, and reinstated the final exam incentives.

Ultimately, I had to go back on what my intentions were this semester and look back on what we publicly have posted," Baxa said.



Scan the QR code to view the full story or visit [macshieldonline.com](https://macshieldonline.com).



Twenty-five students responded to a MacJournalism Instagram story asking for comment on the final incentive program. All 25 opposed getting rid of the incentive and nearly half said they learned of the proposed change when they saw the story. Graphic by Sofia Saucedo.

**Sofia Saucedo**  
McCallum High School



# EDITORIAL PAGE/SPREAD DESIGN FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	STUDENTS	SCHOOL
MS/JH-3A	Sara Clark	Vanguard College Prep
4A	Charlotte Traylor, Jamie Henderson	Episcopal School of Dallas
5A	Lillian Gray	McCallum High School
6A	Vivi Lopez Stern	James Bowie High School

# EDITORIAL PAGE/SPREAD DESIGN

## Cost of consumption

Growing popularity of reusable water bottles defeats intended purpose

**Lillian Gray**  
staff reporter

The reusable water bottle, a staple for an environmentally friendly lifestyle, has in recent years become environmentally unfriendly. Water bottle trends like buying Hydroflasks and most recently, Stanleys, have taken over the internet and consumers' wallets. As social media quickly promotes these products, consumers rush to stores to get their hands on the latest bottle despite already owning one, which makes the eco-conscious goal pointless.

According to CBS News, Stanley, the company behind the latest water bottle trend, made an estimated \$750 million last year, compared to \$70 million before 2019. The trendy Stanley cups aren't the only reusable water bottles that had their moment of internet fame. Hydroflasks, which saw a large increase in sales in the late 2010s, were a brief trend that lasted a little over a year. After this cup started to go out of style, buyers moved onto other cups like Stanleys.

The quick change from bottle to bottle due to internet popularity totally defeats the purpose of water bottles in the first place. The use of reusable water bottles is to decrease the use of plastic water bottles and reduce waste. But with our culture of moving on from things so quickly and buying the new popular item, it seems to be doing more harm than good.

In the past year, as Stanleys began to grow in popularity, I have known multiple people who have bought more than one Stanley. I don't understand this since I have had the same water bottle for over a year and, it still works just like it did when I got it. Stanleys also say that their cups "last a lifetime," which has been proven to be true due to events like a woman's Stanley cup being caught in a car fire and surviving, barely damaged, a story she relayed on TikTok.

This begs the question, if the cup is so durable and should last for such a long time, why are consumers collecting and buying multiple cups?

For starters, although the company knows the cups' durability, it promotes its new cups in a way that makes consumers want to buy more. Stanley has posted videos talking about the different cups and their specific uses, making consumers think that they need to have more than one for different scenarios. One might be bigger and be better for hydration, the other might keep the water colder, and so on. The company also releases cups like the limited edition Starbucks Stanley that

has become discontinued due to its high demand and crowds that were too eager to get the cup. Now the cups are selling for over \$300 on resale sites.

As the Stanley company continues to build hype around the bottle and market it as a collectible and not a way to combat harmful plastic water bottles, people will continue to buy more than they need.

Many influencers have made videos showing off their Stanley cup collection that consists sometimes of 10 or more cups. Even though more people are buying

reusable water bottles due to these trends, which should be a positive effect of the hype, instead, overbuying the water bottles and getting more than what people actually need is having a negative impact on the environment.

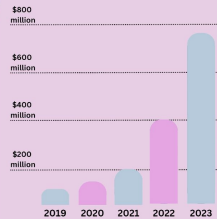
Although I believe that water bottles are a good way to combat plastic waste, they have become too much of a trend to the point that the bottles are not effective towards their original environmental purpose. I think that everyone should have a reusable water bottle, but should try to keep it for a long time and not just get rid of it as soon as the newest trend emerges.

“Although the company knows of its cups' durability, Stanley promotes its new cups in a way that makes consumers want to buy more.”

The point of water bottles is to reduce waste but it seems that the growth of these trends lead people to buy them in excess, which creates more waste.

### Stanley revenue

Stanley's overall revenue has grown from \$70 billion in 2019 to almost \$750 billion in 2023.  
Data from CNBC. Infographic by Lillian Gray



Buying multiple Stanley water bottles defeats the environmental purpose of buying a water bottle in the first place. Graphic by Sophie Leung Liu

## Lillian Gray

## McCallum High School



# PAGE ONE NEWSPAPER DESIGN FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	STUDENTS	SCHOOL
MS/JH-3A	Avery Everitt	Albany High School
4A	Hilton Sampson, Joshua Goforth	St. Mark's School of Texas
5A		
6A	Peyton Dorsey	James Bowie High School

# PAGE ONE NEWSPAPER DESIGN



**FEATURE**  
Senior Peyton Dorsey  
focuses on academic excellence  
leading to the University  
of the Pacific

PHOTO BY JAY DORSEY



**PHOTO ESSAY**  
A young Peyton Dorsey  
enjoys a quiet moment  
reading a book in the  
library

PHOTO BY JAY DORSEY



**SPORTS**  
Peyton Dorsey  
enjoys a quiet moment  
reading a book in the  
library

PHOTO BY JAY DORSEY



**ENTERTAINMENT**  
The Peyton Dorsey  
enjoys a quiet moment  
reading a book in the  
library

PHOTO BY JAY DORSEY

**THE DISPATCH**  
FRIDAY, DEC. 13, 2024

4103 W. Slaughter Lane, Austin, TX 78749  
**Pride in Publishing**

Vol. 20, Issue 3  
www.thedispatchonline.net  
James Bowie High School  
Pride in Publishing

## Vending Machines appear on campus



By Kayla J. Hootch for the Dispatch

Snack and drink  
options provided for  
students in the arts  
and athletic buildings  
providing students in  
extracurriculars a fast  
way to get a snack  
or drink on campus.

The Austin Independent School District (AISD) has placed vending machines in the arts and athletic buildings, providing students in extracurriculars a fast way to get a snack or drink on campus.

The AISD Independent School District (AISD) has placed vending machines in the arts and athletic buildings, providing students in extracurriculars a fast way to get a snack or drink on campus.

The addition of vending machines has been long in the making. The machines are now in the arts and athletic buildings, providing students in extracurriculars a fast way to get a snack or drink on campus.

The AISD Independent School District (AISD) has placed vending machines in the arts and athletic buildings, providing students in extracurriculars a fast way to get a snack or drink on campus.

## ELECTION Republicans big election win Final results prove a dominant conservative presence in the country

Peyton Dorsey  
Senior Editor

The winner of the 2024 United States presidential election, Donald Trump, was announced at 1:13 p.m. on November 8, 2024, as the Republican Party secured a victory over the Democratic Party, leading to a second term in the White House.

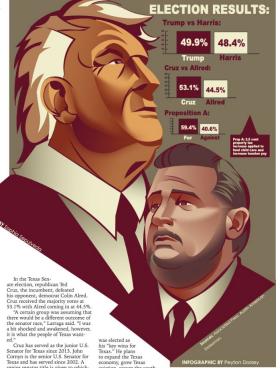
The results of the election were a surprise to many, as the Democratic Party had been favored by many analysts. The victory of Trump, who had lost the 2020 election, was a significant upset.

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PHOTOGRAPH BY PEYTON DORSEY

## ELECTION Donald J. Trump's first 100 days in office

By Kayla J. Hootch for the Dispatch

Donald J. Trump's first 100 days in office have been a period of significant change and controversy. The President has implemented a series of executive orders and policies that have sparked debate and criticism.

The results of the election were a surprise to many, as the Democratic Party had been favored by many analysts. The victory of Trump, who had lost the 2020 election, was a significant upset.

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# Peyton Dorsey James Bowie High School



# PAGE ONE NEWS DESIGN FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	STUDENTS	SCHOOL
MS/JH-3A	Zoey Johnston	Union Grove ISD
4A	Jinjer Royce	Brownsboro High School
5A	Mira Patel	McCallum High School
6A	Joseph Larios	Lamar High School

# PAGE ONE NEWS MAGAZINE DESIGN



**Mira Patel**

McCallum High School



# GENERAL NEWS PHOTO FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	STUDENTS	SCHOOL
MS/JH-3A	Julia Vega	Albany High School
4A	Winston Lin	St. Mark's School of Texas
5A	Kiani Ramirez	Port Neches-Groves
6A	Katie Grumet	James Bowie High School

# GENERAL NEWS PHOTO



**Kiani Ramirez**

Port Neches-Groves  
High School



# FEATURE PHOTO FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	STUDENTS	SCHOOL
MS/JH-3A	Julia Vega	Albany High School
4A	Winston Lin	St. Mark's School of Texas
5A	Sophia Manos	McCallum High School
6A	Stacy Duong	Midway High School

# FEATURE PHOTO



**Sophia Manos**

McCallum  
High School



# ENTERTAINMENT PHOTO FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	STUDENTS	SCHOOL
MS/JH-3A	Chloe Raabe	East Bernard
4A		
5A	Andrea Foster	Hendrickson High School
6A	Stacy Duong	Midway High School

# ENTERTAINMENT PHOTO



**Chloe Raabe**

East Bernard  
High School



# SPORTS ACTION PHOTO FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	STUDENTS	SCHOOL
MS/JH-3A	Jaxon Ledbetter	Union Grove ISD
4A	Winston Lin	St. Mark's School of Texas
5A	Jasmine Birge	Port Neches-Groves
6A	Aubree Denton	Midway High School

# SPORTS ACTION PHOTO



**Jasmine Birge**

Port Neches-Groves  
High School



# SPORTS FEATURE PHOTO FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	STUDENTS	SCHOOL
MS/JH-3A	Iliana Robles	East Bernard
4A	Sophie Guenther	Seminole High School
5A	Izzy Zeig	Port Neches-Groves
6A	Will Olenick	James Bowie High School

# SPORTS FEATURE PHOTO



**Izzy Zeig**

Port Neches-Groves  
High School



# Portrait Finalists

CONFERENCE	STUDENTS	SCHOOL
MS/JH-3A	Jamie Russell	Union Grove ISD
4A	Winston Lin	St. Mark's School of Texas
5A	Sydney Ortiz	Kingwood Park HS
6A	Elizabeth Cohorn	Prosper High School

# Portrait



**Winston Lin**

St. Mark's School of Texas



# PHOTO PORTFOLIO FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	STUDENTS	SCHOOL
MS/JH-3A	Jamie Russell	Union Grove ISD
4A	Winston Lin	St. Mark's School of Texas
5A	Celia Ruiz	Port Neches-Groves
6A	Ryan Zuniga	James Bowie High School

# PHOTO PORTFOLIO



**Celia Ruiz**

Port Neches-Groves  
High School



# HEADLINES FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	STUDENTS	SCHOOL
MS/JH-3A	Staff	Union Grove ISD
4A	Staff	Episcopal School of Dallas
5A	Staff	McCallum High School
6A	Staff	James Bowie High School





BROADCAST

# GENERAL NEWS STORY FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	SCHOOL	STUDENTS
MS/JH-4A	Willow Springs Middle School	Adelynn Pickard, Taylor Hanna
5A	Walnut Grove High School	Christopher Munchmeyer and Hudson Acosta
6A	Coppell High School	Staff



# GENERAL NEWS STORY



**Anoushka Sharma, Ian Sullivan, Sai Sashank  
Cherukuri, Larry Liu, Jack Mancuso**

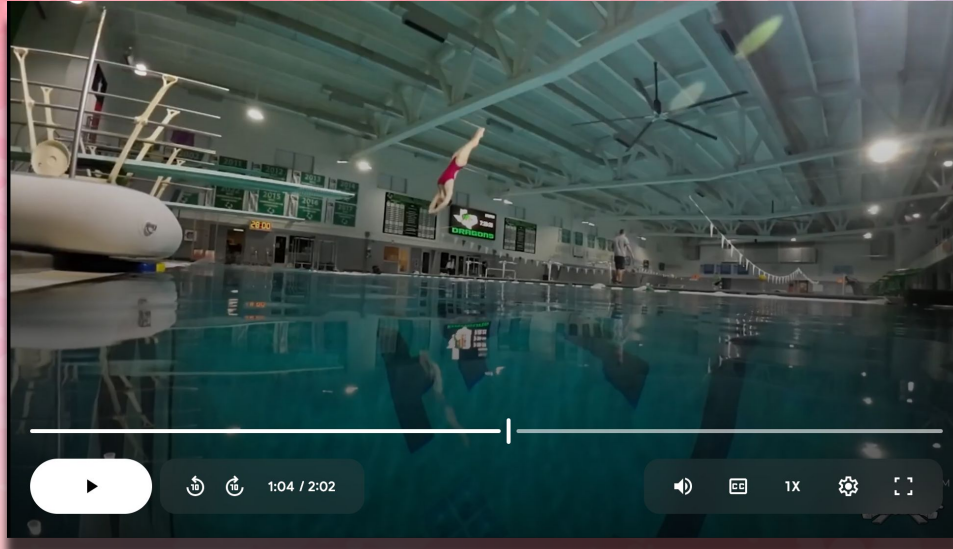
Coppell High School

# GENERAL NEWS WRITING FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	SCHOOL	STUDENTS
MS/JH-4A	Buffalo High School	Yuliet Gonzalez
5A	Cedar Park High School	Jack Cooper
6A	Coppell High School	Larry Liu



# GENERAL NEWS WRITING



**Larry Liu**

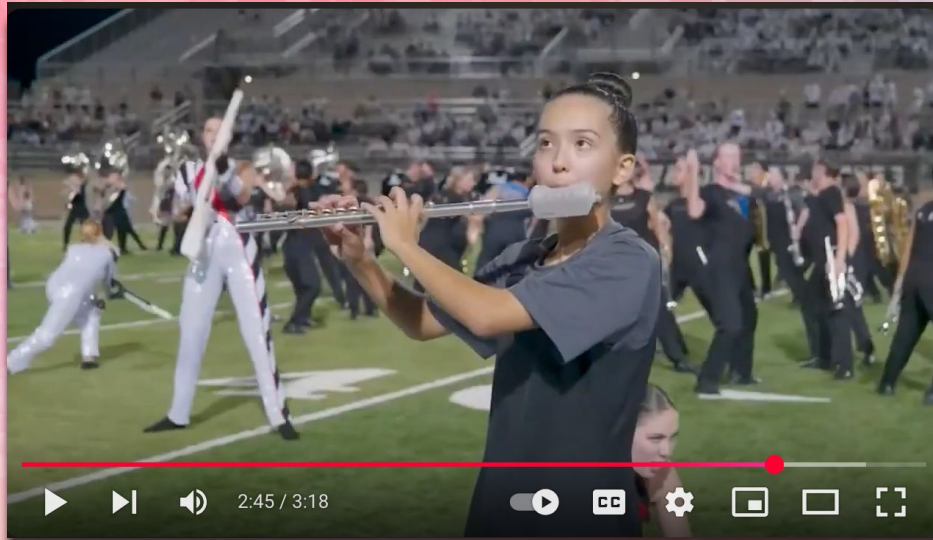
Coppell High School

# GENERAL FEATURE WRITING FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	SCHOOL	STUDENTS
MS/JH-4A	Buffalo High School	Ashtyn Barzda
5A	Cedar Park High School	Mia Morneault
6A	Hebron High School	Emma Duong and Marcelo Sanchez



# GENERAL FEATURE WRITING



**Mia Morneault**

Cedar Park High School

# GENERAL SPORTS WRITING FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	SCHOOL	STUDENTS
MS/JH-4A	Buffalo High School	Liliana Ramirez
5A	Lufkin High School	Kate Amend
6A	Prosper High School	Colton Boston & Bradston Swick



# GENERAL SPORTS WRITING



**Kate Amend**

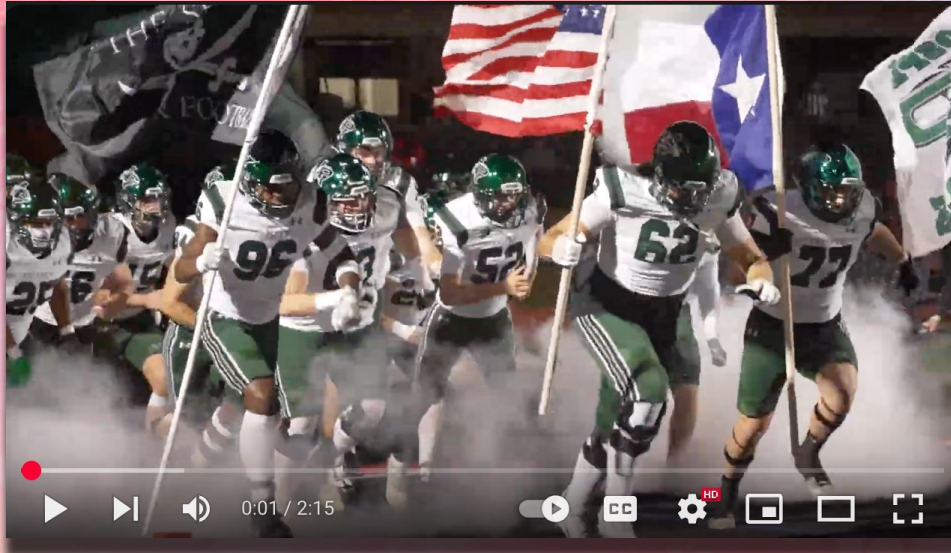
Lufkin High School

# FEATURE STORY FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	SCHOOL	STUDENTS
MS/JH-4A	Salado	Eme Black
5A	Walnut Grove High School	Emma McQuitty
6A	Prosper High School	Nuala Adams & Bradston Swick



# FEATURE STORY



**Nuala Adams and Bradston Swick**

Prosper High School

# DOCUMENTARY FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	SCHOOL	STUDENTS
MS/JH-4A	Salado	Eme Black
5A	Walnut Grove High School	Emma McQuitty
6A	Prosper High School	Nuala Adams & Bradston Swick



# DOCUMENTARY



**C.J. Larremore**

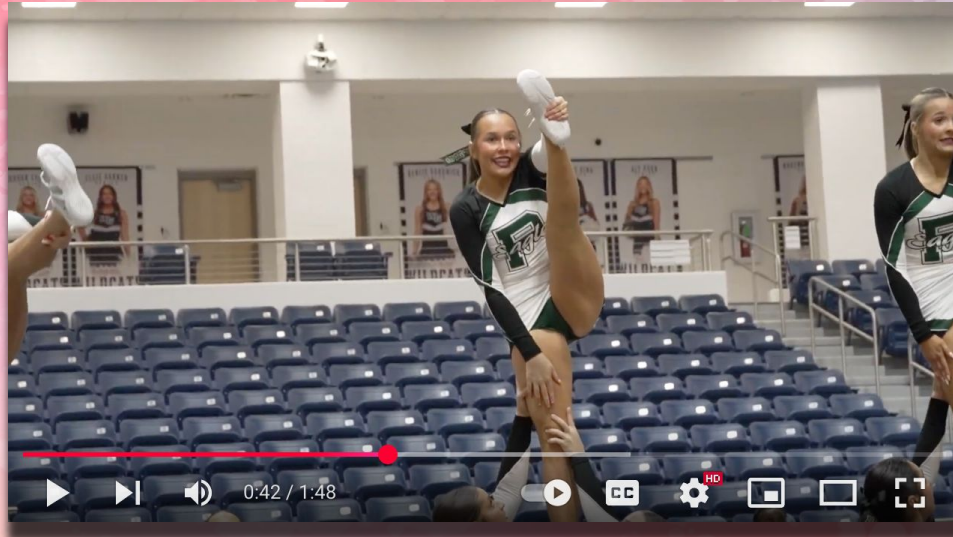
Salado High School

# GENERAL SPORTS STORY FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	SCHOOL	STUDENTS
MS/JH-4A	Fairfield High School	Christopher Mettlen
5A	Lufkin High School	Kate Amend
6A	Prosper High School	Cali Swick



# GENERAL SPORTS STORY



**Cali Swick**

Prosper High School

# SPORTS FEATURE STORY FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	SCHOOL	STUDENTS
MS/JH-4A	Willow Springs Middle School	Aiden Cole, Jeremiah Johnson
5A	Heritage High School	Jackson Williamson and Vishwajit Yogaraj
6A	Prosper High School	Madi Koepp & Bradston Swick



# SPORTS FEATURE STORY



**Jackson Williamson and Vishwajit**

**Yogaraj**

Heritage High School

# ANCHOR TEAM PRESENTATION FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	SCHOOL	STUDENTS
MS/JH-4A	Willow Springs Middle School	Charlie Mata, Camryn Barney
5A	Cedar Park High School	CPHS News Staff
6A	Prosper High School	Bradston Swick & Isabel Multer



# ANCHOR TEAM PRESENTATION



**Bradston Swick and Isabel Multer**

Prosper High School

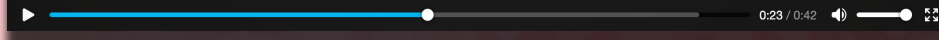
# GRAPHICS FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	SCHOOL	STUDENTS
MS/JH-4A		
5A	Leander ISD	Kyran Botello
6A	Westlake High School	Devin Schueppert



# GRAPHICS

JUST TO SUM  
THINGS UP...



0:23 / 0:42

**Kyran Botello**

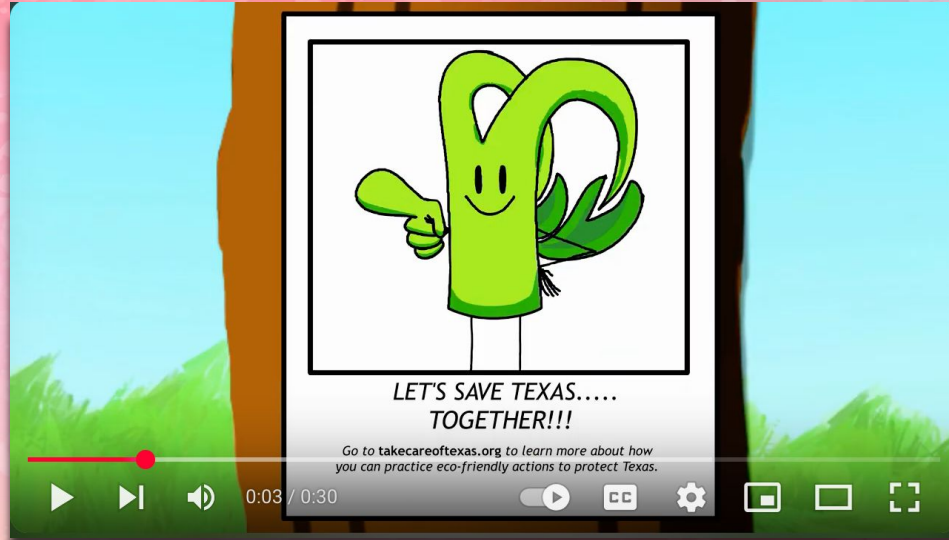
Rouse HS

# PROMOTION/COMMERCIAL/PSA FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	SCHOOL	STUDENTS
MS/JH-4A	Salado	Segiv Eldridge
5A	Leander ISD	David Moon
6A	Rock Hill High School	Maxwell Lee, Ricky Yanez, Brian Telles



# PROMOTION/COMMERCIAL/PSA



**Segiv Eldridge**

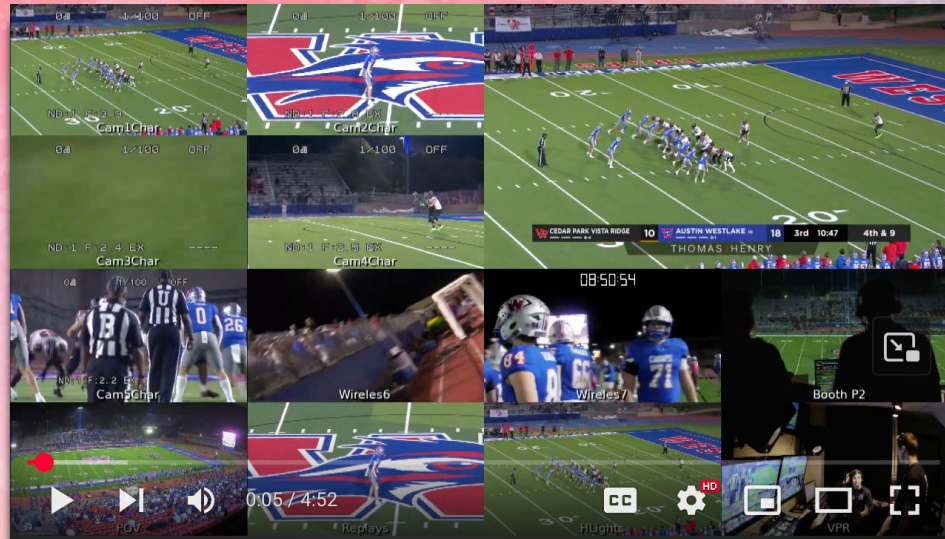
Salado High School

# TECHNICAL DIRECTING FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	SCHOOL	STUDENTS
MS/JH-4A	Willow Springs Middle School	Staff
5A	Walnut Grove High School	Ryan Shelton
6A	Westlake High School	Braden Peays



# TECHNICAL DIRECTING



**Braden Peays**

Westlake High School

# INTRO SEQUENCE FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	SCHOOL	STUDENTS
MS/JH-4A	Salado	Tait Bailee
5A	Reedy	Daniel Trevino & Summer Sherred
6A	Rock Hill High School	Maxwell Lee



# INTRO SEQUENCE



**Maxwell Lee**












Rock Hill High School

# DAILY ANNOUNCEMENTS FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	SCHOOL	STUDENTS
MS/JH-4A	Wakeland High School	Caroline Angle, Ella Lundy
5A	Heritage High School	Kaelyn Johnson
6A	Allen High School	Aivry Lemons, Charlie Cole



# DAILY ANNOUNCEMENTS

SUNDAY FEB. 9TH	MONDAY FEB. 10TH	TUESDAY FEB. 11TH	WEDNESDAY FEB. 12TH	THURSDAY FEB. 13TH	FRIDAY FEB. 14TH	SATURDAY FEB. 15TH
yogurtville ALL DAY	5-9 PM McDERMOTT LOCATION ONLINE ORDER: WALKUP! Scotty's ALL DAY	Chick-fil-e ALL DAY BOTH ALLEN LOCATIONS MOBILE ORDERS: EAGLES	Cane's 4-9 PM HAT CREEK 5-9 PM	Amelia's 4-8 PM	jason's deli 5-9 PM	yogurtville ALL DAY
	DRESS UP!	DRESS UP!	DRESS UP!	DRESS UP!	DRESS UP!	
	United in Hope 'Merica Monday Red, White, Blue 	Hot Mess & Hopeful Mismatched, clashing color & prints 	Hope for the Future College & Career shirts 	Decades of Hope Decades: Affire 	Share Your Hope Love Week Shirt or Purple 	
KID/TEEN CLOTHING & SHOE DONATION DRIVE @ ALL SCHOOLS ALL WEEK 				CUPID'S CARNIVAL @AHS 6-8 PM \$5 FOR 10 TICKETS 	DOLLAR DAY BRING \$1 TO SCHOOL OR SCAN TO DONATE 	

**Aivry Lemons and Charlie Cole**

Allen High School

# INDIVIDUAL ON-AIR TALENT FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	SCHOOL	STUDENTS
MS/JH-4A	Kilgore High School	Yoselin Canchola
5A	Cedar Park High School	Kyra Cox
6A	Rock Hill High School	Aiden Richmond



# INDIVIDUAL ON-AIR TALENT



**Aiden Richmond**

Rock Hill High School

# SPECIAL COVERAGE FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	SCHOOL	STUDENTS
MS/JH-4A	Kilgore High School	Nate Perez
5A	Leander ISD	Davin Kim, Aidan Plante
6A	Princeton High School	Bryson Kahindo, Liam Pagano, Khloe Pajaron, Kiri Bunch



# SPECIAL COVERAGE



**Davin Kim and Aiden Plante**

Rouse HS

# HYPE VIDEO

CONFERENCE	SCHOOL	STUDENTS
MS/JH-4A	Brownsboro High School	Landen Adame
5A	Walnut Grove High School	Blake Schallmo
6A	Rock Hill High School	Aiden Richmond



# HYPE VIDEO



**Blake Schallmo**

Walnut Grove High School

ONLINE  
NEWS



# NEWS WRITING FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	STUDENTS	SCHOOL
MS/JH-3A	Bailey Holland	Fairfield High School
4A	Kevin Ho, Andrew Ye	St. Mark's School of Texas
6A	Logan Day & Breshad Robinson	Caney Creek High School

# NEWS WRITING

**Logan Day  
and Breshad  
Robinson**

Caney Creek  
High School



# NEWS FEATURE FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	STUDENTS	SCHOOL
MS/JH-3A	Ashtyn Barzda	Buffalo High School
4A	Arjun Poi, Hilton Sampson, Joshua Goforth	St. Mark's School of Texas
5A	Priya Thoppil	McCallum High School
6A	Leslie Benitez	Caney Creek High School

# NEWS FEATURE

**Priya  
Thoppil**

McCallum  
High School



# EDITORIAL WRITING FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	STUDENTS	SCHOOL
MS/JH-3A	Jaxon Hardin	Buffalo High School
4A	Riley McGaw	Stephenville HS
5A	Lanie Sepehri	McCallum High School
6A	Ethan Chatelain	Prosper High School

# EDITORIAL WRITING

**Lanie  
Sepehri**

McCallum  
High School

Opinion

## A rampage of rules

Constantly changing policies erodes trust, norms

Shield editorial board

May 9, 2024



# SPORTS NEWS STORY FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	STUDENTS	SCHOOL
MS/JH-3A	Kynzee Payne and Johnnie Sims	Fairfield High School
4A	Sam Morse	St. Mark's School of Texas
5A	Tricia Darcy	Kingwood Park HS
6A	Logan Day	Caney Creek High School

# SPORTS NEWS STORY

**Tricia  
Darcy**

Kingwood Park  
High School

Dayton, Kingwood Park boys dominate  
field at District Championships

Tricia Darcy, Visuals Editor

October 10, 2024





# SPORTS FEATURE STORY FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	STUDENTS	SCHOOL
MS/JH-3A	Liliana Ramirez	Buffalo High School
4A	Sophia Lopez	Stephenville HS
5A	Sydney Ortiz	Kingwood Park HS
6A	Logan Day	Caney Creek High School

# SPORTS FEATURE STORY

## Sydney Ortiz

Kingwood Park  
High School

### Pushing through pain

Kendall and Courtney Daniel form unbreakable bond after near-fatal car crash.

[Sydney Ortiz](#), Sports Editor

December 18, 2024



Kendall Daniel cheers her younger sister Courtney on in the shot put at the 2023 UIL State Track & Field Championships. Photo courtesy of Courtney Daniel.



# FEATURE WRITING FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	STUDENTS	SCHOOL
MS/JH-3A	Casey Couture	Fairfield High School
4A	Linyang Lee, Joseph Sun, Eric Yi	St. Mark's School of Texas
5A	Sydney Ortiz	Kingwood Park HS
6A	Logan Day	Caney Creek High School

# FEATURE WRITING

**Linyang  
Lee,  
Joseph  
Sun, Eric Yi**

St. Mark's School  
of Texas



## **Spreading warmth amidst winter storms**

Linyang Lee, Joseph Sun, and Eric Yi

February 7, 2025



# ENTERTAINMENT REVIEW FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	STUDENTS	SCHOOL
MS/JH-3A	Ashtyn Barzda	Buffalo High School
4A	Madison Herbert	Pleasant Grove High School
5A	Elizabeth Nation	McCallum High School
6A	Krista Fleming	Hebron High School

# ENTERTAINMENT REVIEW

**Krista  
Fleming**

Hebron High  
School

**"Agatha All Along" is a bewitching sequel**

Krista Fleming, Editor in Chief  
September 23, 2024



Marvel's next big hit, "Agatha All Along" takes viewers on a witty and intriguing journey in an epic continuation of "WandaVision." I cannot wait to see what happens farther "Down the Witches' Road." (Photo via Disney+)



# ENTERTAINMENT FEATURE FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	STUDENTS	SCHOOL
MS/JH-3A	Nadia Hoskins	Fairfield High School
4A	Kevin Ho, Kayden Zhong	St. Mark's School of Texas
5A	Elizabeth Nation	McCallum High School
6A	Katherine Dale	Vandegrift High School

# ENTERTAINMENT FEATURE

## Katherine Dale

Vandegrift  
High School

Top Stories

Note-worthy musician: Sophomore creates  
band centered around traditional Chinese  
instrument



Katherine Dale, Editor

February 13, 2025



# PHOTO SLIDESHOW FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	STUDENTS	SCHOOL
MS/JH-3A	Staff	Harmony School of Innovation
4A	Dani Perez	Seminole High School
5A	Staff	Texas High School
6A	Logan Day	Caney Creek High School

# PHOTO SLIDESHOW

**Annie Smith,  
Yaniera  
Mendoza, Leah  
Crow, Grant  
Spicher, Caden  
Jackson**

Texas High School





# PERSONAL COLUMN FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	STUDENTS	SCHOOL
MS/JH-3A	Alayah Walker	Harmony School of Innovation
4A	Noah Cathey	St. Mark's School of Texas
5A	Sydney Ortiz	Kingwood Park HS
6A	Aisha Rashid	Vandegrift High School

# PERSONAL COLUMN

**Sydney  
Ortiz**

Kingwood Park  
High School

Escaping shadow of sisters a challenge to embrace

[Sydney Ortiz](#), Staff Writer

May 28, 2024



Sydney Ortiz, along with photos of her with her sister Kathleen Ortiz and her sister Maya Ortiz. Photos submitted by Sydney Ortiz.



# PERSONAL OPINION COLUMN FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	STUDENTS	SCHOOL
MS/JH-3A	Adalyn Pohl	Hallettsville High School
4A	Sumiko Lemari	Lampasas High School
5A	Mia Morneault	Cedar Park High School
6A	Deepali Kanchanavally	Coppell High School

# PERSONAL OPINION COLUMN

**Mia  
Morneault**

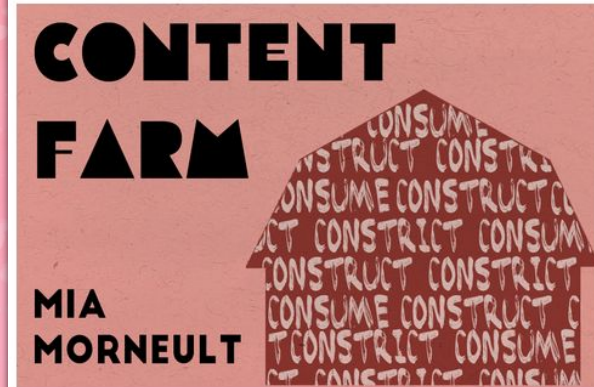
Cedar Park  
High School

Content Farms

Constrict. Construct. Consume.

Mia Morneault, Reporter

October 11, 2024





# SPORTS COLUMN FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	STUDENTS	SCHOOL
MS/JH-3A		
4A	Akash Manickam	St. Mark's School of Texas
5A	Sydney Ortiz	Kingwood Park HS
6A	Gavin Lambert	Hebron High School

# SPORTS COLUMN

**Akash  
Manickam**

St. Mark's School  
of Texas

## A fitting end: Defeating our biggest rival

Akash Manickam

December 13, 2024

Sports



Photo Courtesy Scott Peak Photography  
Digital Managing Editor Akash Manickam



# IN DEPTH NEWS/FEATURE PACKAGE FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	STUDENTS	SCHOOL
MS/JH-3A	Bethany George, Callie Morgan, Carlos Garcia, Casey Couture	Fairfield High School
4A	Daniela Duran & Sophia Lopez	Stephenville HS
5A	Jane Yermakov, Rania Adil, Kyra Cox & Michael Moracchi	Cedar Park High School
6A	Staff	Caney Creek High School

# IN DEPTH NEWS/FEATURE PACKAGE

## Staff

Caney Creek  
High School

In-Depth Package

**Burnout leads to trouble making choices, decision fatigue**

Report shows effects from burnout could be self-causing problem



Breshad Robinson, Opinion Editor

Dec 13, 2024



# COMPUTER ART FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	STUDENTS	SCHOOL
MS/JH-3A	Bailey Holland	Fairfield High School
4A	Riley McGaw	Stephenville HS
5A		
6A	Olive Trevino	James Bowie High School

# COMPUTER ART

**Olive  
Trevino**

James Bowie  
High School



# STUDENT ARTWORK/CARTOON FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	STUDENTS	SCHOOL
MS/JH-3A	Bailey Holland	Fairfield High School
4A	Cinthia Yanez	Seminole High School
5A	Claire Slaydon	Kingwood Park HS
6A	Juno Clark	Legacy High School

# STUDENT ARTWORK/CARTOON

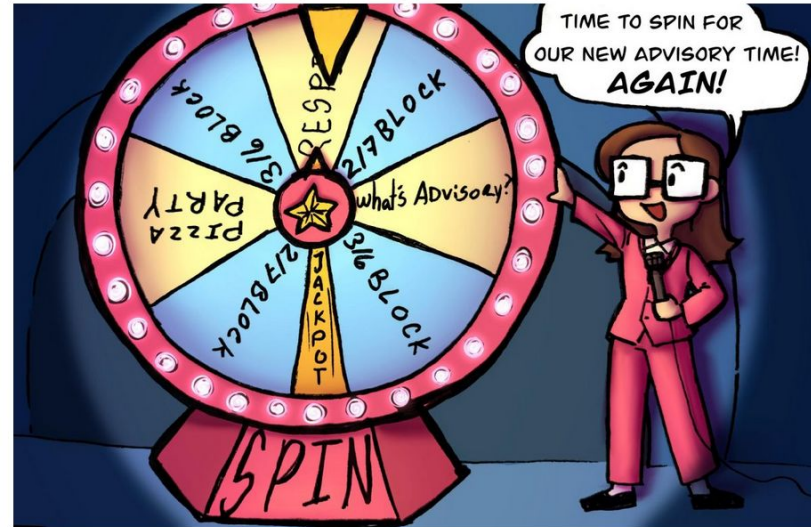
**Juno  
Clark**

Legacy  
High School

## Advisory Changes... Again

Juno Clark, Staff Writer

February 3, 2025





# INFOGRAPHIC/SIDEBAR FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	STUDENTS	SCHOOL
MS/JH-3A	Olivia Moore	Harmony School of Innovation
4A		
5A	Chloe Lewcock	McCallum High School
6A	Elizabeth Yowell	James Bowie High School

# INFOGRAPHIC/SIDEBAR

**Chloe  
Lewcock**

McCallum  
High School

**Eat, sleep, bike, repeat**

University of Texas grad bikes to Alaska with goal of  
raising awareness for cancer communities



Chloe Lewcock, editor-in-chief

January 28, 2025



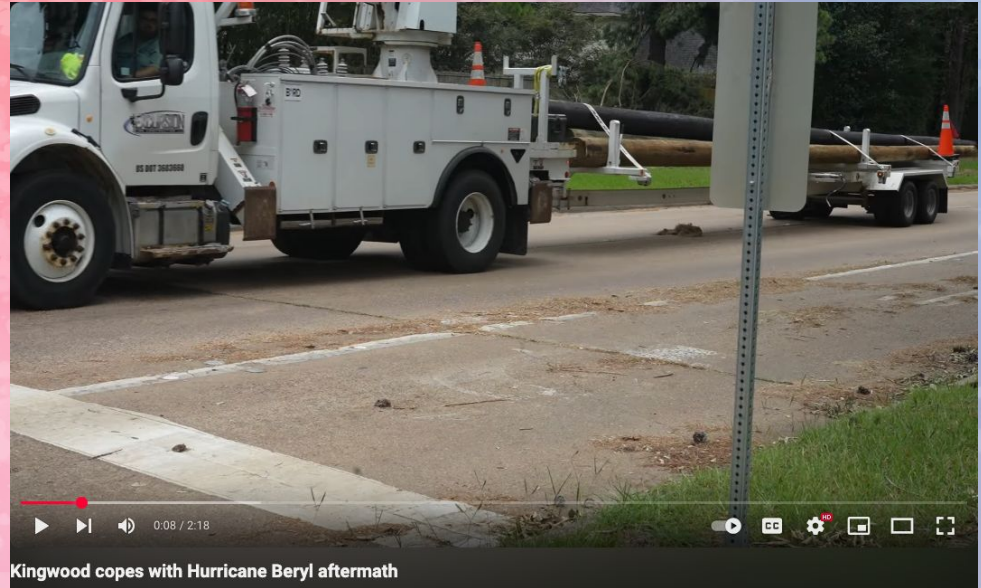
# MULTIMEDIA PACKAGE FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	STUDENTS	SCHOOL
MS/JH-3A		
4A	Hilton Sampson, Will Clifford	St. Mark's School of Texas
5A	Sydney Ortiz	Kingwood Park HS
6A	Lourdes Hernandez, Julia Bychowski, Mary Bahrami	Vandegrift High School

# MULTIMEDIA PACKAGE

**Sydney  
Ortiz**

Kingwood Park  
High School





# VIDEO STORY FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	STUDENTS	SCHOOL
MS/JH-3A		
4A	Hilton Sampson, Will Clifford	St. Mark's School of Texas
5A	Sydney Ortiz	Kingwood Park HS
6A	Lourdes Hernandez, Julia Bychowski, Mary Bahrami	Vandegrift High School

# VIDEO STORY

**Dylan  
Spiegelman**

Carroll Senior  
High School

TikTok Ban Will Affect More Than Just  
Screen Time

Dylan Spiegelman, KDGN Executive Producer  
JANUARY 17, 2025



Dylan Spiegelman



# GENERAL NEWS PHOTO FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	STUDENTS	SCHOOL
MS/JH-3A	Elizabeth Correll	Harmony School of Innovation
4A		
5A	Nate Williams	McCallum High School
6A	Logan Day	Caney Creek High School

# GENERAL NEWS PHOTO

**Logan Day**  
Caney Creek  
High School





# FEATURE PHOTO FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	STUDENTS	SCHOOL
MS/JH-3A		
4A	Dani Perez	Seminole High School
5A	Celia Ruiz	Port Neches-Groves
6A	Jorge Ventura	Caney Creek High School

# FEATURE PHOTO

**Celia Ruiz**

Port Neches-Groves  
High School





# ENTERTAINMENT PHOTO FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	STUDENTS	SCHOOL
MS/JH-3A	Alayah Walker	Harmony School of Innovation
4A	Morgan Parker	Lampasas High School
5A	Jozlyn Oglesbee	Port Neches-Groves
6A	Ella McDonald	Willis High School

# ENTERTAINMENT PHOTO

**Jozlyn  
Oglesbee**

Port Neches-Groves  
High School





# SPORTS ACTION PHOTO FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	STUDENTS	SCHOOL
MS/JH-3A	Ailyn Ruvalcaba	Harmony School of Innovation
4A	Sophie Guenther	Seminole High School
5A	Jozlyn Oglesbee	Port Neches-Groves
6A	Cash Arbury	Willis High School

# SPORTS ACTION PHOTO

**Sophie  
Guenther**

Seminole  
High School





# SPORTS FEATURE PHOTO FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	STUDENTS	SCHOOL
MS/JH-3A	Martha Samano	Harmony School of Innovation
4A	Grant Casey	Seminole High School
5A	Zachary Ford	Kingwood Park HS
6A	Seth Johnson	Vandegrift High School

# SPORTS FEATURE PHOTO

**Seth  
Johnson**

Vandegrift  
High School





# PHOTO PORTFOLIO FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	STUDENTS	SCHOOL
MS/JH-3A		
4A	Kylar Harcourt	Stephenville HS
5A	Annie Smith	Texas High School
6A	Cassidy Martinez	Duncanville High School

# PHOTO PORTFOLIO

**Annie  
Smith**

Texas  
High School





# HEADLINES FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	STUDENTS	SCHOOL
MS/JH-3A	Callie Morgan	Fairfield High School
4A	Cielo Puerta, Riley McGaw, and Sophia Lopez	Stephenville HS
5A	Staff	McCallum High School
6A	Staff	Bryan High School

# HEADLINES

**JoJo Barnard,  
Chloe Lewcock,  
Beatrix Lozach,  
Z Overstreet and  
Vera Petrowsky**

McCallum High School

## The elephant (not) in the (CFP) room



The College Football Playoff committee's decision to select SMU over Alabama has sparked massive arguments, as it disregards Alabama's harder strength of schedule (SOS), better record against ranked opponents and higher placement in the AP Poll. Additionally, the committee's rules about not punishing teams based on certain criteria have been inconsistently applied, raising questions about ... Continue reading



The Shield Online

6





# PODCAST FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	STUDENTS	SCHOOL
MS/JH-3A	Kaylen Sanchez and Tristan Cole	Buffalo High School
4A	Will Clifford	St. Mark's School of Texas
5A	Azul Cepero Cortes, Maggie Coulbourn, Ava Deviney and Sadie Roselle	McCallum High School
6A	Wendy Le, Safiya Azam, Hamza Zakir	Coppell High School

# PODCAST

**Azul Cepero  
Cortes, Maggie  
Coulbourn, Ava  
Deviney and  
Sadie Roselle**

McCallum High School





# SOCIAL MEDIA STORY FINALISTS

CONFERENCE	STUDENTS	SCHOOL
MS/JH-3A	Skylar Bonner and Preston Scott	Fairfield High School
4A		
5A	Staff	McCallum High School
6A	Panther Prints Staff	Duncanville High School

# SOCIAL MEDIA STORY

**Julia Copas,  
Tristen Diaz,  
Josie Linton,  
Sienna Martens,  
Callen Romell  
and Maya  
Tackett**

McCallum High School





PHOTO OF  
THE YEAR

# PHOTO OF THE YEAR

**Reese Mallett**

Legacy High School





# STORY OF THE YEAR

# STORY OF THE YEAR

## Sydney Ortiz

Kingwood Park High School



Junior Grant McTaggart, who battled cancer as a child, plays on the high school golf team. He met Hall of Famer Craig Biggio, a spokesperson for the Sunshine Kids, when Grant was undergoing chemotherapy. Photo by Sydney Ortiz. Background photo of Grant with Biggio at St. Thomas High School by Melanie McTaggart. Background photo of Grant taking his final chemotherapy pill by Melanie McTaggart.

## Grant McTaggart tees up courageous fight

By Sydney Ortiz  
Staff Writer

Grant McTaggart watched as his father stood a few feet away and called Hall of Famer Craig Biggio.

Grant had just taken his two daily chemotherapy pills, each wrapped in a Fruit Roll-Up by his mom Melanie. That special touch and the phone call to Grant's favorite baseball player were the only ways the 3-year-old would swallow the pills.

Biggio never answered the phone. Grant's father David never actually dialed it. David had no direct line to Biggio, but David McTaggart knew that pretending to brag about his 3-year-old son to Biggio would convince Grant to take the pills needed to save his life.

### Discovering the cancer

Grant was in Waco visiting his paternal grandparents in 2009 when he started running a low-grade fever, and his stomach was notice-

ably distended.

"I just had a sort of mother's intuition and felt like something wasn't right," Melanie McTaggart said.

Grant's parents took him to the emergency room and got blood work done on May 23, 2009. When the results came back abnormal, David McTaggart called his father, a Waco pathologist, to look at the results.

Grant's grandfather Dave M. McTaggart saw the leukemia cells and diagnosed Grant with Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia at 2 a.m. the next morning.

"Initially it was kind of like life stopped and I was in shock," Grant's dad said. "It just didn't seem real."

The cancer treatment started immediately, and the McTaggarts

were relieved with how well it went. Grant's cancer became the focus of the McTaggarts' lives. They spent more of their days at Texas Children's Hospital than they did at their home.

The calm lasted only two months.

### Serious setback

In August of that year, Grant's bowels began to shut down. The doctors decided to do a 24-hour infusion of methotrexate. The infusion went into his spine and then into his brain. Normally it flushes out, but Grant's did not. It caused major damage to his cerebellum, the part of the

sort of a reminder that this is really serious and he may not make it, he may not survive this," David McTaggart said.

Grant spent a full week in the Texas Children's Hospital intensive care unit unable to eat or drink. When he got out of the ICU he started another round of chemo. He also had to begin physical therapy.

### Meeting Craig Biggio

As Grant continued to heal through rehab and take his chemotherapy pills, his dad continued to make daily calls to Biggio.

In September 2009, the most unlikely connection was made. Grant's doctor, Dr. ZoAnn Dreyer, was to be honored at St. Thomas High School, where Biggio coached at the time. Dr. Dreyer was friends with the Biggio family and shared the story of how the McTaggarts got Grant to take his pills.

With the help of Biggio, Grant was invited to help Biggio announce the award to Dr. Dreyer. After the ceremony, Biggio spent

**"It was a big kick in the fact, sort of a reminder that this was really serious and he may not make it, he may not survive this."**

David McTaggart, father of junior Grant McTaggart

brain responsible for balance and movement.

Grant lost his ability to talk and walk.

"It was a big kick in the face,