



General News

Pepperdine students were killed from a car speeding on Pacific Coast Highway, a road similar to our Academy Drive.

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Features

Learn all about the Health Center cat Coffee and her popularity amongst the community members of LFA.

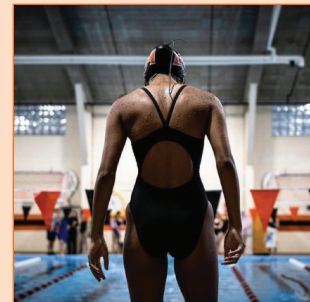
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Sports

The Girls Varsity Swim team broke three more records, and placed 2nd in the 2023 ISL Championships.

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Navigating discussions of the Israel-Hamas War

By Chloe Jhin & Esti Rosenblatt

Managing Editor of Politics & Managing Editor of Production

Israel and Hamas are at war in the Middle East. As they continue to fight, millions of people, including those in LFA's community, are affected. The war began in early October and has since then become a worldwide interest. With international conflicts, such as this one, it is hard to know the entire truth. The clouds of judgment and fake news on social media have made it much harder to fully understand this situation abroad.

At LFA, student involvement and interest in world events are a given. It is encouraged that LFA community members voice their opinions and discuss the war as it is personal to many, particularly to those who have emotional or familial ties with either group. In a community newsletter, Head of School Chris Tennyson recognized that "community members with ties to the region are bearing an especially heavy burden right now." From the beginning, it has been important for LFA to address this topic in a respectful and careful manner. In his newsletter, Tennyson stressed the importance of empathizing with, listening to, and learning from each other.

In hopes of achieving this, on October 19th, LFA held a student forum where students could discuss conflicts between Israel and Hamas in a safe environment. The forum was led by the Multicultural Prefects Advika Rangan '24 and Steven Zhang '24, the Dean of Equity, Pluralism, Inclusion, and Community Dr. Lusanda Mayikana, and the Assistant Dean of Students and AP Government teacher Ackim Mpofu. When asked about the purpose of this discussion Zhang said, "LFA students have a lot to say about the issue, and I found that it would be nice to have a place to recollect any information to try to see the full picture." It was important to Zhang that students could participate in a discussion without taking sides and putting out "biased or controversial statements that may harm or hurt community members."

To fulfill the goals of the forum's initiators, it was important to set ground rules. Due to the immense sensitivity evolving amongst LFA community members and beyond, the rules were established before

students gathered to discuss. When asked in an interview about what these certain rules were, Zhang stated, "We tried to maintain community norms by making 'I' statements and initiating original thoughts rather than pulling out something the students have heard or read."

With this, Mayikana elaborated that the focus of this forum was to not only allow students to voice their thoughts but also to educate one another. She particularly mentioned Mpofu and his practice of empathic neutrality, specifically his efforts of ensuring that students feel heard and understand each others' perspectives.

While the Multicultural Prefects, Mayikana, and Mpofu played their roles as moderators, counselors Jennifer Madeley and Nirali Dalia stood to provide support on the more emotional side. When asked why only certain adults were invited, Zhang explained that with more adults, students could feel pressured or uncomfortable in an environment meant to be welcoming to various voices.

Students had the option to attend this forum, which took place after school. Many people showed up--some eager to discuss, and some there to simply listen. The environment felt safe, but various students expressed tension as people knew that this topic was a sensitive one for many. Before anything was vocalized, papers and pencils were passed around for students to write questions or comments that

could be answered and discussed later. Mpofu began with informative slides as he stressed the importance of knowing historical context before discussing. He then described the background of Israelis and Palestinians while students occasionally chimed in and added points. After hearing the history, students were free to talk, using the handed-out papers as discussion starters. As students spoke about their personal perspectives and experiences with the war, everyone in the room was able to accept and empathize with each other.

A more difficult topic to discuss was social media as people in and outside of the room inevitably posted about the war and their opinions. Many posed questions about the spreading of fake news and the role social media plays during war times. As a result of high student engagement, although the first discussion was originally intended to be an hour long, it was extended for another half-an-hour, and an additional follow-up was held soon after. With the amount of beneficial effects the forums had on our community, it is safe to say that there are only going to be more.

As the war continues, the LFA community maintains its role as a safe haven for its members, not only by discussing the situation but also confronting any issues that expand negativity. Around the world, school campuses have been hubs of discussion and protests, but also hate. Alumni Nghi Doan '23 attends Brandeis Univer-

sity, where there have been many protests concerning the war. Doan said that there has been hate on campus, "aggressively catering to each side and spreading around the school on lamp posts and walls."

When asked if there have been any hate speech reports at LFA, Mayikana stated that one had come before her so far, but that does not mean more hate is not happening. When followed up with later on, she said there have been other reports, but not all of them are related to the Israel-Hamas conflict. She further explained that if students want to report a situation, they have several accessible resources, such as Safe to Speak Up, leaders of MO-SAIC, Multicultural Prefects, and Mayikana herself. As it is a difficult situation to navigate, LFA has supplied public places and private resources that allow students to reflect on the war and its impact on them.

Through these various ways of coping, whether it was during a forum or in private, students were ensured to feel comfortable and informed about the conflict. By addressing the pain, loss, and confusion, people were able to better navigate their feelings, not only as individuals, but also as a community. As Mayikana emphasized the importance of having a space to process these emotions, she further elaborated by stating, "When you're surrounded by people who are grappling with their feelings, you realize, 'I'm not the only one... There are other people sharing my pain.'"



Multiple LFA students enter by to attend one of the forums regarding the Israel-Hamas War.

Photo by Esti Rosenblatt

New PE fitness changes from prior years

By Erin Cho

Assistant Managing Editor of Production

The gym is a place where students can strengthen and challenge themselves. LFA has a wonderful facility on campus where students can work out and connect with people. This year LFA has introduced a new fitness program conducted through group sessions, led by Coach Zo.

Coach Zo, who graduated from Fort Lewis College in Colorado with a major in Exercise Science, started his career as a Performance Coach at LFA in August. He said his goal as a trainer at LFA was to “help [students] succeed in their sports, conduct workouts to develop athletes, and train them to be stronger.” Coach Zo’s goal is shown directly in the change of structured training. Students are separated into two groups, a beginner class, and an advanced class. The beginner class is for students who have less experience in the weight room and is more cardio-based with some strength training included. Advanced classes include more advanced strength training and lifting, as well as high-intensity interval training. These classes are great for students taking the season off to focus on their main sport, or students who are

more experienced in the training room. It is a clear change from previous years, where fitness programs were only accessible for free workouts without structured classes.

Regarding this new change, Almira Tepe ‘25, a student currently enrolled in PE fitness said, “I really like how it is accessible for students who do not have prior experience with weight training.” Previously, there were no specific gym classes for students, so it was the student’s job to ask the trainer themselves to get help. However, this year, students who are in fitness are required to take classes from the trainer to work out. Beginners can benefit from learning how to use gym equipment properly, and returners can benefit from an advanced section where they can challenge their athleticism. It was mostly the student’s job to figure out how and what to do at the gym. Students who are not used to using gym equipment have struggled, with the possibility of them getting injured. However, constant supervision and a workout plan for the students can elevate the student’s experience in the weight room. Almira also added the convenience of letting students choose their preferred classes. Students are encouraged to participate in classes they prefer, giving

them an option when starting the season.

However, other students have questioned the accessibility for off-season athletes who still want to train in the training room, even though they are not enrolled in the fitness class. Coach Zo said he allows students to train themselves in beginner classes; however, he does not allow students to enter during advanced training sessions. He added how he wants to give the advanced class students a training session without distrac-

tions and offer his full attention to them.

New rules were also been added after Coach Zo came into office. Phones are not allowed for the entire 45-minute training session. The sign-in process has been also become systematic by signing in by hand with a teacher rather than using the Member-Me application. Coach Zo coming into the department, starting this semester, has made significant changes in the structure, and inclusiveness of the fitness classes.



Photo by Joon Lee

Morrison Fitness Center sits empty prior to fitness classes beginning.

Drivers speeding on Academy Road

By Bela Bock & Ford Sweet

Managing Editor of Collaborations & Managing Copy Editor

On October 17th, four girls attending Pepperdine’s Seaver College of Liberal Arts were killed in a tragic accident. Niamh Rolston, Peyton Stewart, Asha Weir, and Deslyn Williams were seniors who were hit by twenty-two-year-old Fraser Micheal Bohm. He was speeding sixty miles per hour over the posted forty-five

mile speed limit on Pacific Coast Highway. The girls were on the sidewalk about four miles away from campus when they were struck. Bohm’s bail was posted at four million dollars with four accounts of first-degree murder. Due to reckless teenage driving, many more accidents similar to this one are bound to happen.

Pacific Coast Highway is very similar to our own Academy Road in the sense that it has sharp and sudden turns. These turns can easily be misjudged if a driver is

going too fast. The speed limit on Academy Road is currently thirty miles per hour and many drivers go well over that.

LFA’s Head Security Officer Norman Syndor, who has been working here for twelve years, emphasized the danger of speeding on campus. He said, “Over the years we’ve added a lot more cameras and have added car readers.” However, this has not ultimately deterred people from speeding on campus. Students are not the only ones speeding; Syndor added, he’s seen

it from visitors, faculty, and staff as well.

Living in Chicago in the winter means that ice is almost always on the roads. New drivers and those who are unfamiliar with harsh weather conditions are often not cognizant of the black ice [which is especially present around Academy Road’s S curve] as well. Speeding on campus is also just as bad. Syndor said, “You have to be really careful on campus because you’ve got faculty kids running around, kids riding their bicycles, and students walking around on campus.” Many people at LFA feel the same and can recount moments where speeding has been an issue.

One of them is Enos Zaah’ 25, who rides his bike to school every day from Warner dorm, and often worries about the speeds of cars on campus. He stated, “I definitely get scared, and there was this one instance where I was on the side of the sidewalk, and a car was going really fast and almost hit me.” He made it clear that because of the speed of cars on campus, he doesn’t know if the cars are going to stop or slow down for him to cross the road. It makes him feel unsafe when biking or walking on campus. Zaah suggested that to help regulate the speed, we should put a speed bump on campus. This way, students will not be urged to go as fast in popular zones.

Learning about the horrific details of the accident involving Bohm and the Pepperdine students, we should all be more careful when driving, especially in school zones.



Courtesy of @Lake Forest Academy on Facebook

Academy Road curves sharply as drivers approach the campus.

What does CROYA representation mean for LFA?

By Mimi Sexton

Managing Editor of Features and Social Media

CROYA is an organization that works directly with the extended Lake Forest and Lake Bluff community to help address the needs of these communities' youth. Although CROYA was founded in the 1980s, it was originally started in the seventies, when the community was prompted to help support the youths' needs.

Sophie Portalatin '25, a student at Lake Forest High School and CROYA Fundraising Chair, shared that, "CROYA strives to improve and help students throughout their high school and middle school years." She also said that it is an open and inclusive space, "where everyone is welcome, and the staff are always around to help you with anything." Regarding activities they do, she said, "They provide fun activities weekly for high school students, allowing students to meet new people they wouldn't have otherwise met."

LFA Liaison Jason Xing '24's role with CROYA is to act like a bridge between the two communities. He said, "It's a way for me to meet people outside of LFA, which is very neat for me to do." This is an experience that not everyone has the opportunity to take part in from other surrounding com-

munities. Xing is able to combine the community of LFA and Lake Forest through CROYA, so students should take part in this organization to take advantage of the opportunities for community involvement.

There are many things that young adults can take away from the CROYA organization. Xing also said, "It's an opportunity for us to partner with non-profits and community organizations."

CROYA hosts weekly meetings that last around an hour, and Portalatin shared, "The activities CROYA hosts are planned by the CROYA High School Executive Board. They are different each week and can vary so much." Events vary from water balloon wars and game shows to playing football and eating dinner with the Lake Forest Police Department.

CROYA is a resource that can help high schoolers distress and have fun. When it comes to getting LFA involved in CROYA, there are several roadblocks LFA needs to overcome – such as study hours, work load, and previous extracurriculars. Xing's role as the communication between LFA and CROYA is to, "bring LFA to CROYA, meaning if CROYA hosts some events, I would technically post posters or announcements via school." His role on the Executive Board is to keep the LFA students informed on upcoming events



Courtesy of @croyalflb on Instagram

Students from the Lake Forest and Lake Bluff area at the CROYA Winter Retreat on November 19th.

and announcements CROYA has while overcoming these roadblocks as well.

Portalatin also shared that, "LFA could get more involved by spreading the word through social media." Portalatin also stated that she could also get the, "Executive Board to visit LFA because we visited Woodlands to spread the word about CROYA."

For students interested in CROYA, LFA

will have an opening on the CROYA Executive Board next year. Students will have an opportunity to give a speech this spring in hopes to get a role on the board and get involved in CROYA for the rest of their LFA career. It's important to continue with LFA's role in CROYA to keep this partnership going, as LFA is part of the wider community.

New Assistant Dean of Admissions: Faith Ekakitie

By Joon Lee

Managing Editor of STEM

As we approach the end of the first semester, we have a new face on campus-- Faith Ekakitie. Ekakitie, born in Nigeria and raised in Canada, is a graduate of the LFA class of 2012. After he came to LFA as a boarding student, he has been living in the US since. He is currently a member of the LFA Admissions Department as the new Assistant Dean of Admissions. His position primarily entails interviewing prospective students and talking with their families. This season, he is also coaching JV Boys Basketball, as well as helping out as a dorm parent in Warner.

As an LFA alum, coming back to school after graduating was both weird and exciting for him. However, Ekakitie said he feels "great to be back on campus" and "loves the energy here and is good to be back home." One memory he has about LFA is his life in Atlass with the boys. He loved being a student here, "having fun and also getting into trouble." He used to play games with his friends as well as listen to and make music with them. In addition, playing football and basketball was a big aspect of his experience at LFA, which helped make LFA wonderful.

He wants the students to know that he is "here for [them]." Being on the admissions side of the school, he oversees the new generation of students joining this community. He also wants to make it the best for the students here to enjoy their time and grow as students, athletes, and as individuals. He emphasized that the adults in this community truly care about "you guys." As a boarding student himself, he had to leave his parents' proximity at a relatively young age. Going through this experience, adults in the community looked out for him, and he was really grateful for them. Now, he is the one looking out for others and is willing to help the students here with all he has.

Ekakitie is a dad outside of work. During his free time, he mainly takes care of his kids. He likes being active, going to places with his children, and gaming. He is a big 2K player and also a *Madden* player. However, recently, he has been boycotting *Madden* because he is tired of them releasing the same game and asking him to pay for it. Basketball is also one of his passions. Playing with friends and just shooting around are what he likes to do.

Ekakitie is looking forward to a lot of things at LFA, from an upcoming great basketball season with a great group of boy, as well as getting to see the cur-

rent group of seniors graduate, an important step in life and wonderful LFA tradition. Moreover, Ekakitie is look-

ing forward to recruiting the next class of 2028 and continuing to work with and amongst this amazing community.



Courtesy of @lfacademy on Instagram

Faith Ekakitie joins the faculty of LFA.

The renowned candy spots of LFA

By Tanya Ganesh & Claire Ireland
Sports Director & Managing Editor of
News

Bowls and jars filled with colorful cellophane wrapped morsels. Taking class trips during a break in the middle of a double to these sugary oases, or just stopping when you need a nice pick-me-up. These locations are the well-loved candy spots of LFA. While seldom discussed, candy spots are truly a part of the school culture.

One such spot exists tucked behind Admissions Office Manager Ines Morroni’s desk in the Admissions Office. In a stately glass jar lies these delicious treats. Morroni noted, “I know I’m pretty popular with my candy spot. Even when I’m not at my desk, I see that the [candies in] the candy jar goes down.” Morroni said that her candy variety consists of “a mix of both candies and chocolate.” Students have many favorites within the jar, as Morroni highlighted. “The gummy bears go quick, the Kit Kats go quick, some skittles and a few different [candy] choices go pretty quick.” Further emphasizing the popularity of the candy spot is the fact that, “The jar is restocked daily, and I go to the store every couple of weeks,” Morroni explained.

Another adored candy spot is found in Dean of Students Office Manager Maura Johansson’s office. Resting atop a coffee table is a small woven basket reminiscent of Halloween times brimming with sweets. Johansson said that while it “varies from day-to-day,” her candy spot brings “at least 30-40 [student’s] per day.” The typical mixing of the bowl are Starbursts and lollipops among other varieties of fruity, sugary treats; however, not chocolate as Johansson pointed out. “We try to stay away from chocolate because it has nuts in there.”



Photo by Tanya Ganesh

Students grab candy from the bowl in the DOS office.

There is a plethora of other candy spots as well. In the Health Center, while possibly not a “candy spot” in the traditional sense, there is a prominent “snack spot” that draws in many students. There, you can find the renowned Goldfish, and pack after pack of Nutella sticks. On the conference table lies jars of pretzels, Cutie oranges, and Twizzlers, with foods ranging from cereals to apple sauces. Additionally, there is tea and honey sticks, but they are primarily intended for community members who are not feeling well. There can also typically be found a candy stash in Athletic Director Darrin Madeley’s office, as well as the Advancement Office’s hallway in New Hall during the Halloween months (found in a spooky faux book that cackles when you open it). Recently, the beloved New Hall table hosted a decorative tin of gingerbread cookies, and the week

before that, Hershey’s Kisses. There are a couple more “underground” candy spots as well. In the Stuart Center, Roxanne Kruger, Director of Service Learning, hosts a candy spot with lollipops and mints. Ashley Kolovitz, Information and Media Literacy Librarian also has a glass jar filled with sweet treats on her desk in the Media Commons.

While it might seem like a simple formula--put out candy and students will take it--there is more to this practice than that. There is a true community building aspect to candy spots as well as a mental health aspect. “There can be hard days where a dose of sugar can be what changes that. In these times, candy is essential to having a healthy body and a healthy mind.” said avid candy spot supporter and attendee Theresa Fu ‘24.

Morroni additionally noted the benefits of candy spots for students. She said, “It seems to be enjoyable for students to

come and have a quick break, or some students say it’s a fuel before a quiz or test.”

Johansson continued this sentiment, highlighting how candy spots can promote happiness and conversation for students “[Students] like it for a treat and pick me up, and we like it because it brings them in here, and they say ‘hi,’ and we get to check in with them throughout the day.” Candy spots are a one-of-a-kind facet of the LFA community that strengthens our ties to one another, demonstrating the enduring power of a couple of pieces of sugar. Sometimes, a piece of candy and a subsequent kind interaction can truly turn around a bad day or simply make a good day even better.

Joy is such a crucial part of our lives. We have to find it wherever it exists. Candy spots just happen to be one of those locations, and luckily they’re a quintessential part of the culture at LFA..



Photo by Tanya Ganesh

The candy jar on Ines Morroni’s desk boasts Caxy spirit.

Mental and physical support in on-campus resting rooms

By Theresa Fu & Tanya Ganesh
Editor-in-Chief & Sports Director

Whether it be requiring treatment for illnesses, alleviating painful symptoms, or needing a break from exhaustion and social activity, many LFA students have visited the Health Center. Upon entering, they may have noticed how the structural design of the building parts into two— the left half is supervised by our on-campus therapists, and the right by our nurses. Resting rooms are available in both areas, but experiences differ based off of what the students needs—mental or physical care.

In order to access these resting rooms, a student must check in with either the nurses or counselors. Nurses can assess the situation and provide the student

with corresponding treatment and a resting room, while counselors are there to provide support to those experiencing something emotionally. “Rest” is necessary for a variety of reasons; however, it is also important to note that these rooms should be honored and truly used for this purpose. That being said, it is encouraged for students to attend class when they are perceived to be clear under the counselor or nurse’s assessment. Students may also use spaces such as the lobby couches and the conference room for their own leisure.

Part of the aforementioned protocol is to ensure that a student is receiving the rest most beneficial to their circumstance. The resting rooms designated for physical rest don’t allow electronics in order to ensure the student is fully immersed in rest— which



Photo by Tanya Ganesh

A student checks in with the front-desk nurse. includes staying off social media (often a source of stress) and leaving your backpack at the nurses’ front desk. Jennifer Madeley, one of LFA’s two therapists, reflected, “It’s a good protocol; it should be a really quiet space, and that is what it’s meant for.” Given resting rooms can contain up to three beds, this new change also intends to eliminate distractions for others who may be resting concurrently and further reinforce privacy. If a student requires more serious oversight, there is a suite with a bathroom attached available for overnight rest that is separate from other Health Center visitors.

As for the mental health wing, students

(with a counselor’s approval) can access a closed space adorned with dim lighting and soft seating to rest, but most importantly, Madeley noted “No one is kicked out,” and students shouldn’t question or invalidate the reason for their visit— no matter how seemingly “small” the issue appears.

As Nirali Dalia, LFA’s other therapist, elaborated, “The goal of the Health Center is to care for the kids, and we want them to be active members of the LFA community, including academically, socially, and emotionally.” The Health Center is a resource for everyone, and rest plays a pivotal role in sustaining a student’s holistic well-being.



Photo by Tanya Ganesh

A student uses the mental health resting room with blankets and pillows.

A closer inspection of Coffee: Our Health Center cat

By Cynthia Li
Managing Editor of Global

The cat residing in front of the Health Center and by the staircase of New Hall has come to our attention recently. She is frequently seen and noticed sulk-

ing around in that area. Students passing by enjoy interacting with this cat.

Leigh Ann Jacobson, Senior Director of Family Philanthropy & Volunteer Engagement, said, “Coffee is a female Tortoiseshell/Tabby feral cat who has chosen LFA as her home. She lives outside of New Hall,

which is where I work.” She continued, highlighting how long Coffee has been a member of the LFA community. “I have been caring for Coffee since I started working at LFA in 2020. She lives in the bushes right outside my office window. Over three years, she has begun to trust me enough to show me some affection,” she said.

Emily Kalis, Assistant Dean of Students, and Se-



Photo by Leigh Ann Jacobson

Coffee is laying near her shelter.

Jennifer Madeley, School Therapist and Health, Wellness & Community Teacher, added, “Feral cats can’t be domesticated. So, Coffee was brought back to campus and has been our campus cat since then.” She continued to emphasize Coffee’s eating habits, emphasizing how “Mrs. Jacobson started feeding her.” “Not a lot of food,” she said, emphasizing the importance for cats to hunt for their own food. Jacobson said, “We ask that the students not feed Coffee because food trash will encourage raccoons and other possibly dangerous animals to be attracted to Coffee’s home area. We do not want to overfeed Coffee since she is feral and needs to maintain hunting skills for her food and safety.” Jacobson exclaimed, “Seeing Coffee is the highlight of my work day. I just love her so much!”

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Photo by Jennifer Madeley

Coffee stands at the corner of the bush.

Reflecting during college applications

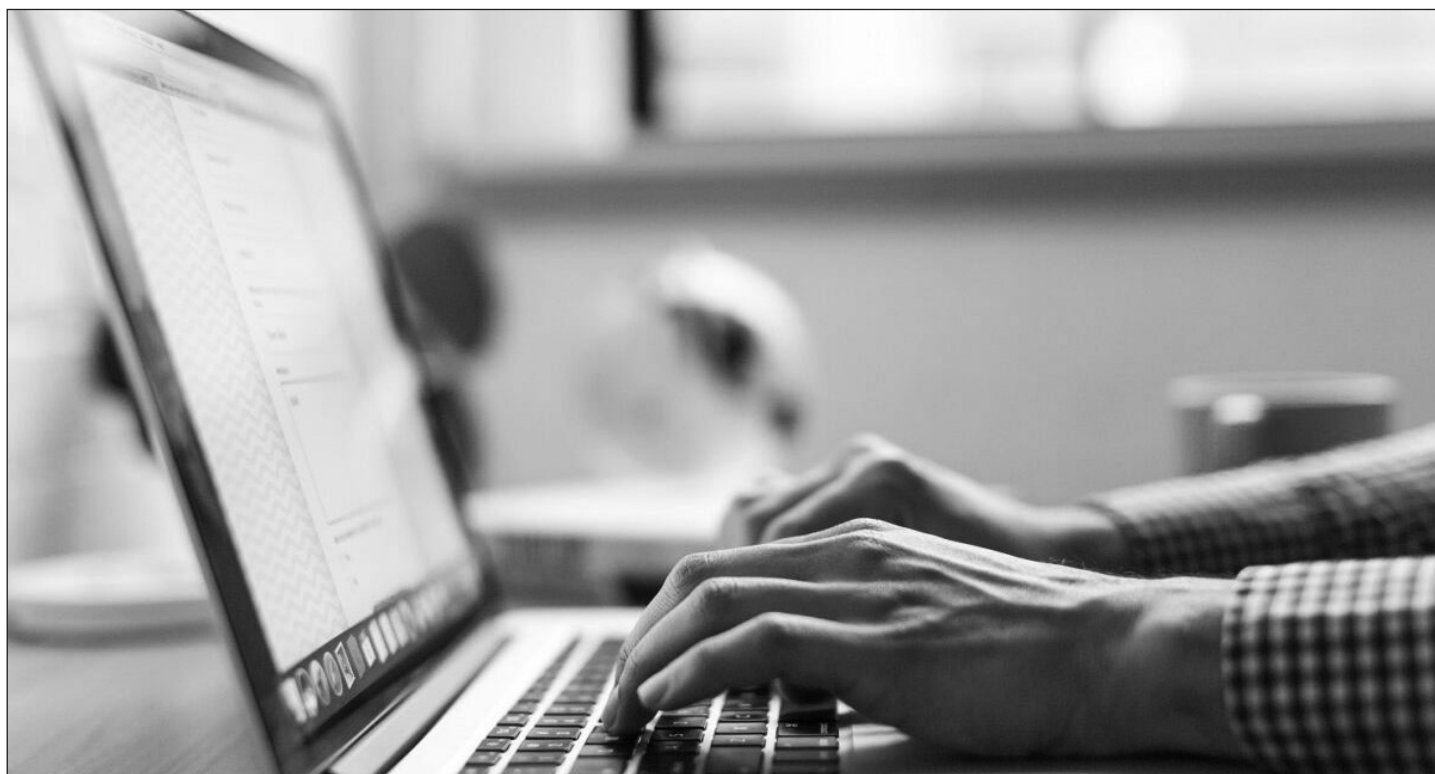
By Claire Ireland

Managing Editor of News

As November 1st and 15th fade into the past, and with it a partition from our Early Applications, it feels strange. We work hard on essays that contain pieces from our lives, small vignettes of who we are, all to portray a cumulative portrait of ourselves. And while this time is often filled with stress and angst and exhaustion, there exists a certain beauty in the madness.

There are few times in life where you are forced to reflect. Writing college essays is one of those times. When writing these essays, there is almost a necessity to comb through your life, pull out specific details, and confront moments that are typically resigned to the past. To portray yourself to a complete stranger in an effective manner simply through words is quite a unique feat, one that entails a rigorous process of contemplation of the past.

Sure, there are many faults with a system like this. The 650 words permitted on the personal essay for the Common App feel quite puny when you get down to writing and thinking: “Who am I in 650 words or less?” It’s impossible to say everything, to remember all the moments that changed your life grandly or subtly. But amidst all this distilling and sanitizing lies the essence of a life’s experi-



A student writes their college essays.

ence, even if it doesn’t make the final cut.

These reflections don’t have to be, and most likely are not, the unearthing of a profound truth. Stumbling upon memories of forgotten friends, forgotten kind gestures, forgotten conversations, brings about a sort of unparalleled nostalgia. It’s easy to forget that niche piece of advice you might have been given five years ago or that talk you had with parents that gave you a whole new perspective on something, but a specific enough prompt

or just a deep enough dive into one’s hippocampus can snap those moments back. Slipping into the past to retrieve these palatable bits tends to bring a lot more up to the surface. The good, the bad, the painfully awkward--moments that make up a life. Writing these essays is like preparing to write a biography and then sitting down and just writing the pitch for it. They’re succinct, incomplete, perhaps overly-confident, but there’s a gist of person. A sort of a sad reality, but it’s nice to couple that

with a renewed reassurance of your own identity through the implicit forced reflection brought upon by college essays.

The college application season is far from over. Lean into that sentimentality that comes with writing future essays. Regardless of its benefit to your writing, keep in mind what makes you you, where you’ve come from, and all the moments small and big. During pivotal times in life, it is all the more important to be reminded simply of who you are.

Picking activities for you--not the college

By Harry Luo

Managing Editor of Production

The first round of applications – Early Decision/Early Action – ended on November 1st. The majority of the senior class took advantage as they gave themselves the best chance of admission to the most selective colleges and universities.

Students have put effort into standardized tests, essay writing, and maintaining positive academic trends. Ben Wetherbee, Associate Dean of College Counseling, stated, “The vast majority of seniors should find solace in the fact that they’ve put their best foot forward in their applications.”

On the other hand, it is also essential to “realize that there are things outside of your control in this process,” said Wetherbee. Colleges cannot accommodate the many students who are beyond qualified and would undoubtedly thrive in the community. When I look back at my college application process, the most vivid events that appealed in my essays were activities that I was passionate about. Therefore, since much of the college decision process is out of our control, spending time doing things that would look solely “good” for the college transcript, if you’re not passionate about them, is not worth it. Most of the time, colleges aren’t looking for the most “success” or

“resume-wow-ing thing;” they’re looking to see that the applicant has found something they love and are dedicated to it--no matter how “insignificant” the activity is. This could potentially surface when students receive decisions, where some might find themselves in surprising positions; however, looking back as a whole, a question to ask is, did you really represent yourself during the process?

Despite the potential of disappointments, “It’s important not to take the decisions colleges render as an indictment on you, or your potential to find success in college or life thereafter,” said Wetherbee. It is never too late to change, and life isn’t defined by what college you attend. Instead of reflecting on the past and what you seemingly did wrong, it is essential to look forward to and work towards the future. Each institution looks for different qualities an individual carries as they evaluate if one fits their culture. The endless loop of praising organizations by trying to shape yourself to be a perfect applicant never ends, since I’m sure applications do not end after high school; thus, accept where YOU are, who YOU are, and BE YOU.

Just as Mr. Wetherbee concluded, “You live busy lives, and it’s important that they’re filled with activities that are meaningful to you.”



The College Counseling office celebrates as students turn in their applications.

Photo by Harry Luo

Caxy athletics and interests: A proposition for balance

By Junming Xing
Editor-in-Chief

Picture this: You finish school at 3:00 pm after going through an entire school day without free periods. Since you are taking seven classes, you grab a quick meal during your afternoon break. However, the absence of afternoon breaks on Tuesdays sends you straight to your Spanish Double, empty-stomached. Though there's the snack bar for you to tuck in an hour before practice, you are overwhelmed by the sheer amount of homework, projects, and review for exams in the upcoming days. You grasp onto the remaining 45 minutes to complete as much homework as possible

before grabbing your gear and heading to your 3:30 pm practice. After two hours of non-stop, strenuous exercise, the clock hits 5:00 pm and you head to dinner before returning to your dorm at 6:00 pm to work until lights off at approximately 12:00 am.

Now, this isn't a rant on LFA's workload or athletics requirement, but a means to offer a possible solution to help reduce student fatigue and balance the athletic requirement with one's separate talents.

In Lake Forest Academy's Student Handbook (2023-2024), it is mandatory for freshmen and sophomores to participate in the athletics program for three seasons (fall, winter, and spring) per year. Juniors and seniors are required to participate in



Courtesy of @lfacademy on Instagram

LFA's JV Boys Soccer practices during preseason.

at least two seasons and may participate in the third. Participation is defined as being a part of a team sport or the physical education program. The winter musical and fall play equates to one PE credit, which means all students participating in both--from freshmen to seniors--must fulfill their team sport credit during the spring. In summary, all students must participate in at least one team sport per year.

To address fatigue and create a balance, LFA must first designate a student's participation in Science Olympiad, FBLA, Robotics Team, Math Team, VOX, and COAX - including the fall play and winter musical - as one PE credit. Such clubs are integral to LFA's student life, and constitute a greater degree of competitiveness and merit that not only contributes to one's future passions

but cultivate school pride. Students who participate in the "teams" above will still participate in one required season of interscholastic sports, but invest the remaining two into developing their interest. By allocating one's efforts into an area of study, passion, or physical development that a student is genuinely interested in, it maintains the quality and work ethic on our teams, since everyone who is part of them chooses to be there. While athletics continue to take place from 3:30 to 5:00 pm, this will be a time for club meetings, rehearsals, or work under the student's own discretion. With this implementation, students will complete their work earlier, leave abundant room for studying as well as rest, and drive interest groups to rise to equal caliber and consideration as our sports teams.



Courtesy of @lfacademy on Instagram

LFA's Robotics Team showcases their craft at the 2023 Club Fair.

With holiday cheer, we offer advice once more

By Theresa Fu & Ela Jain

Editor-in-Chief & Managing Editor of A&E and Podcasts

Is it puffer jacket season? How do I even maneuver about school with it on or off?

Embrace the puffer. If it's small enough, try stuffing it into your bag-- if it doesn't fit, set it on your chair. You might overheat if it's on all day, but do what makes you feel most comfortable.

When do you stop holding the door for someone?

I think we've all been in this awkward moment. Personally, it's about the context-- just how far away is the next person from the door? When you hold the door for someone who's a hallway away, it compels them to run or jog or whatever form of disgruntled exercise to get to you. Perhaps try to think from the perspective of who's behind you; would you want the person ahead to hold the door?

How do I stop feeling bad about college and start feeling excited?

Remember to prioritize your own well-being. A lot of things and decisions are out of our control, and instead of disparaging the future, let's focus on ensuring the rest of our high school experience is phenomenal (and spent with the best people.)

Which comedy specials should I tune into on Netflix?

Great question! In these dark times, everyone needs a bit of fun in their lives. Here are the ones we most enjoyed.

- Michael Che - *Shame The Devil*

- Mae Martin - *SAP*

- Seth Meyers - *Lobby Baby*

What are some good Advent calendars to spruce up my own personal life?

Almost every brand has one-- but we've amassed a fun collection below.

- Happy Socks 24-Pack Happy Holidays Socks Gift Set

- LUSH Advent Calendar

- Cades and Birch K-Cup Advent Calendar

- LEGO *Star Wars* Advent Calendar

- 15 Days of Holiday Faves Advent Calendar.



Courtesy of @froglovers.club on Instagram

Two frogs rejoicing on a rock.

How do I register to vote?

Visit ova.elections.il.gov, and fill out your personal information. Now, you're ready to exercise your voting rights from local to national elections! Make educated choices.

How to parallel park (pls)?

Parallel parking is an extremely difficult task and must be avoided when possible. However, when absolutely necessary, here is a step-by-step guide to parallel parking.

- Find a parallel parking spot, and take a deep breath. Don't be nervous!

- Move your car as close to the front car as possible, then reverse.

- Give yourself space to move the car back, and later, to straighten out your car.

- As you reverse into the spot, straighten your wheel. This will move your car to be diagonal to the spot.

-Lastly, adjust your car, pulling forward and back until you are parallel to the curb.

Redo these steps if you mess up, and good luck!

How to dress stylishly in the cold?

Layers! The easiest way to dress well is to layer clothes. Layer collared shirts under sweaters, tights under skirts, flannels over jean jackets. Since the weather is so volatile, layers are easily removable, depending on how much the weather has changed.

How do I decide more efficiently on what I really want to watch so I don't scroll forever looking for something good?

Personally, the way I solve this is with my best friends, Letterboxd and Serializd. Both are media tracking apps that allow you to add things to your watchlist, and store that information. Whenever I find something in my life, or am recommended a piece of media to watch, I add it to my watchlist so I have a variety of TV shows/movies to choose from. Then, I sort by genre, length, and decade, until I find something that interests me in that moment. Another option is to start a long-running TV show, preferably 10-11 seasons. Whenever you are bored or don't have anything to watch, turn on that TV show. The best part is, when you finally do finish that show, it will fill you with pride, as well as an acute sense of how much time you have wasted. Then you can check your Serializd for another TV show to watch.

How do I live, laugh, and love with the fact that the days become dark so early?

One of the worst parts of Daylight Savings Time is that it's not only dark, but also cold. As brutal as these conditions are, there are ways to survive. Get a sunlamp. Go stargazing, or just don't look outside :o. Get extra comfy and celebrate the dark with blankets, sweaters, coats, earmuffs, and more.

Movies to check out this Winter Break!

By Mimi Sexton, Ela Jain, & Jessie Ji
Managing Editor of Features & Managing Editor of A&E & Managing Editor of Podcasts

Anatomy of a Fall

Anatomy of a Fall, directed by Justine Triet, made its debut at the 76th Cannes Film Festival in 2023 and received a Palme d’Or, the highest prize a film could be awarded. The film, a crime/thriller, is about the investigation into a husband’s death. His wife is the prime suspect and his son faces a complicated moral dilemma after witnessing his father’s death.

While the plot may seem fairly simple, and the film at first glance is a court case accusing the wife for her husband’s fall, it reveals a harsh reality to the audience in the family. When layers of the mystery are unpeeled, what’s encapsulated is intimacy, fear of failure in life, and exhaustion that we all will experience at some point in our lives. While “fall” in the movie title ostensibly refers to the husband’s death by falling off the building, it also refers to the impermanence of lives.

As the investigation of husband’s death and court case happen at varying and coinciding times, the truth of his death is revealed as well as the truth of life. The director uses her way to tell us seeing sometimes should not be believed. The characters live in ambiguous evidence and each other’s subjective assumptions and so do we.

All of Us Strangers

Premiering at the 50th Telluride Film Festival in August and coming to theaters

in December, *All of Us Strangers* has already proven to be a critic favorite and an Oscar prospect. A loose adaptation of Taichi Yamada’s novel *Strangers*, an extremely popular and critically acclaimed Japanese novel, the story follows two neighbors as one of the neighbors feels a fantastical presence that draws him back to a time when his parents were still alive. It stars Andrew Scott, best known for his work on television like *Fleabag* and *Sherlock*, and Paul Mescal, best known for *Normal People* and the Oscar-nominated *Aftersun*. Directed by indie darling Andrew Haigh, *All of Us Strangers* is clear to be a hit.

Wonka

The *Wonka* movie has been on the receiving end of endless press, jokes, and memes, but it will definitely be a must-see for many. The spin-off follows the origin story of Willy Wonka as he meets the Oompa Loompas and experiments with chocolate, leading up to the creation of his famed chocolate factory. The team behind the film is impressive, as it’s directed by Paul King, and written by both Paul King and Simon Farnaby, both best known for the *Paddington* film series. They have also done expert British comedies like *Ghosts* and *The Mighty Boosh*, cementing themselves as an indie comedy television darling. They have proven themselves as incredible childrens’ film writers, and are apt to take on such a classic as *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, which is the basis for the *Wonka* movie. We cannot wait to see *Wonka*, even if it’s terrible, it is a film thats bound to amuse.



The poster for the film *Priscilla*.

Priscilla

Priscilla is the movie adaptation of Priscilla Presley’s own memoir, detailing her and Elvis Presley’s life together. Priscilla first met Elvis when she was fourteen and Elvis was twenty-four, which is captured in the movie, describing how young she was. It features Jacob Elordi as Elvis and Cailee Spaeny as Priscilla. The director is Sofia Coppola, and this was released into theaters October 27, 2023. Sofia Coppola is very well known for her previous movies she has directed, such as *Marie Antoinette*. She has received a Primetime Emmy award, an Academy Award, as well as a Golden Globe award for her work.

Mean Girls

Many of you have probably heard about either *Mean Girls* the movie, which was released in 2004 or *Mean Girls* the musical ,which was released on Broadway in 2017. With both of these being very popular successes, *Mean Girls*, an adaptation of the Broadway musical, is going to be coming to theaters on January 12, 2024. *Mean Girls* is based on high school cliques and stereotypes. After playing Regina George in the Broadway version, Renee Rapp will be starring in the musical’s movie adaption as Regina George as well. The musical will be featuring a mix of original cast members from the musical and new ones as well. Well-known for playing Conrad in *The Summer I Turned Pretty*, Christopher Briney will star as Aaron Samuels. Angourie Rice is playing Cady Heron who is the new girl in town who just moved from South Africa.

Nyad

Nyad is a newly released documentary film of 2023 based on the true life story of Diana Nyad, a journalist and long-distance swimmer. Nyad’s fame comes from her wild achievement: swimming from Cuba to Florida at the age of 64. The direc-

tors Jimmy Chin and Elizabeth Vasarhelyi have been dedicated to producing extreme sports films for years that highlight the endurance of the human spirit. Besides the shots showing one surpassing their bodily limits and consciousness and the awe for the ocean, the documentary is a sports narrative centered with female gaze: the directors includes flashbacks to Nyad’s teen trauma, her final conquest to swim across the ocean, and the bond between two female side characters are what’s uplifting.

Killers of the Flower Moon

Another crime drama movie of 2023 *Killers of the Flower Moon* is set in 1920’s Oklahoma. The director, Martin Scorsese, presents the history of white businessmen’s exploitation and brutal murders of members of Osage Nation based on journalist David Grann’s book of the same name. As the investigation digs deeper, the FBI (newly founded at the time) unfolds a conspiracy rather than a simple murder case. The three-hour-long movie is challenging, yet the director paces plot information with vivid fluency in storytelling.

Killers of the Flower Moon makes an epic critique on the capitalist industries. The movie opens on a classic 1920s Railroad Station. Workers and lackeys gather together, drawing the social landscape for the rest of the film. While oil brought wealth to the Indigenous people, it also casted an eternal curse on them—the murder conspired in the movie is for the purpose of securing money and their oil grant.

Scorsese’s radical adaptation of the original novel is a wedge of great expositional expression. All the pent-up tension and mystery are revealed at the last moment, where reality and allegory converge into an absurd drama. Scorsese, cutting the fluff of visual elements that many movies may adopt to create suspense, portrays a brutal dirge in a matter-of-fact stroke.



Advertising for *All of Us Strangers*.

Courtesy of @aoustrangers on Instagram

New additions to the Starbucks menu

By **Bela Bock & Liv Kelly**
Managing Editor of Op-Ed & Managing Editor of Collaborations

As the weather gets colder and people gravitate towards the comforts of the holidays, one of the largest, most anticipated days approaches--the release of Starbucks winter menu. Whether it's from seeing what the new holiday cups will look like, trying new drinks, or having the nostalgic feeling of your favorite holiday treat, the Starbucks winter menu is essential to elevating the holiday spirit that it provides every year. Olivia Rogalski '25, expressed the feeling of comfort the Starbucks Holiday drinks bring her. When asked about what

she thinks regarding the drinks she said, "I like them a lot, my favorite is either hot chocolate or the gingerbread oat milk chai latte because it was so festive!" Adding on to this she emphasized that her favorite would probably have to be the Hot Chocolate because it is a classic and has been around forever. She stated, "It is a form of comfort for me and reminds me a lot of my childhood around the holiday season." She explained that over the years, the holiday drinks have gotten very popular because of marketing on social media apps. This is also where the public casts their opinion on the different drinks and it helps determine what drinks stay for the years to come. Not only does Starbucks go out of their



Courtesy of @starbucks on Instagram

Starbucks's new Iced Gingerbread Oatmilk Chai. way to change their menu, but they also continue to add to the festive spirit by the very cups that the drinks come in. Beginning in 1997, Starbucks began to introduce the idea of festive cups. Starbucks has continued to make their designs more artistic each year by promoting the holiday spirit nationally and internationally as well. Although the cup did first come out for the first two years in purple, the signature red cup was introduced in 1999 and has remained the same since with added designs. With each cup, Starbucks hopes to capture moments and create traditions for families around the holidays. Starbucks has also introduced "Red Cup Day." Red Cup Day is arguably the busiest day of the year because with every holiday drink a customer orders, they get

a free reusable one to eliminate waste. Most importantly, Starbucks has countless collaborations with different brands annually. This year was a collaboration with Stanley Drinkware & Gear to create a limited edition holiday themed water bottle. Released on November 2nd, customers camped outside for hours just to get a hold of one of these. They are currently getting re-sold for hundreds of dollars online. Another iconic collaboration has been with Vivienne Tam - with Starbucks rolling out a bird and floral print mug, water bottle, and tote bag. Though this merchandise is only available for stores in Asia, it is highly coveted among Starbucks consumers globally. Therefore, with their festive cups, deals, and merchandise, Starbucks never fails to make the holidays jolly.



Courtesy of @starbucks on Instagram

Starbucks' recent selection of holiday cups and drinks this year.

A review of 2023's newest albums



Courtesy of @champagnepapi on Instagram
Drake's album *For All the Dogs*.



Courtesy of @postmalone on Instagram
Post Malone's album *Austin*.

"Austin" has been less successful than his other albums, getting a lower number of album sales. "Laugh It Off" is definitely the best song on the album, while "Overdrive" is also a wonderful song giving us a look into Post Malone's life. Overall, *Austin* is Post Malone exploring his pop music side in a fantastic emotional way, creating an amazing album despite the mixed opinions.

By **Myles Haight**
Managing Editor of Photography and Digital Content

For All the Dogs - Drake

Drake's album, *For All The Dogs*, reflects a rapid release pattern that has marked his work thus far, but its reception is mixed. The project has a lot of great new songs like "Slime You Out", "Virginia Beach" and "First Person Shooter" (feat. J. Cole). However, the album's lack of focus and occasional throwaway tracks contribute to its overall inconsistency. Drake attempts a blend of R&B and rap, nodding to his roots and diverse influences, but the execution feels clunky. The album's 90-minute runtime feels far too long, and it gets boring after a while. Though *For All The Dogs* has some good moments, it is mostly a boring and forgettable album.

Utopia - Travis Scott

Utopia is Travis Scott's fourth studio album. There was a lot of anticipation for this album from fans, as his last record, *Sicko Mode*, was released five years ago, and was a massive success. Because of all this, the album had a lot to live up to. *Utopia* showcases Travis Scott branching out musically with some tracks stepping away from his signature psychedelic sound. This is exemplified by amazing tracks such as "God's Country" and the opening song, "Hyaena." While the album is a great listen, it does lack lyrical depth that would have been great to see. That being said, *Utopia* is still a great listen and a top contender for Best Rap Album of the Year at the Grammys.

Austin - Post Malone

Post Malone's album *Austin* is a departure from his past work, as he embraces a guitar-based and rock-influenced sound, and plays guitar on every track. *Austin* is a departure from the trap-heavy production of earlier hits, and is a gift for fans of post Malone's pop music fans, but awful for his older, rap-centric style fans. "Austin" has been less successful than his other albums, getting a lower number of album sales. "Laugh It Off" is definitely the best song on the album, while "Overdrive" is also a wonderful song giving us a look into Post Malone's life. Overall, *Austin* is Post Malone exploring his pop music side in a fantastic emotional way, creating an amazing album despite the mixed opinions.

1989 (Taylor's Version) - Taylor Swift

1989 (Taylor's Version) marks Taylor Swift's reclamation of her 2014 masterpiece, which was a pivotal shift from country to pop. Swift has re-made many of her past albums before, so many fans wanted her classic *1989* next. The album was very well received. *Rolling Stone* gave it a perfect score, and fans love it. Her song "It is Over Now" is a sequel to "Out of the Woods," and is masterfully crafted. Swift does a great job of keeping the atmosphere of the album the same, while still changing it to a more mature angle. I would say that *1989 (Taylor's Version)* is better than the original, and shines a lot brighter.



Courtesy of @travisscott on Instagram
Travis Scott's album *Utopia*.



Courtesy of @Taylorswift on Instagram
Taylor Swift's album *1989 (Taylor's Version)*.

Britney Spears finally breaking her silence

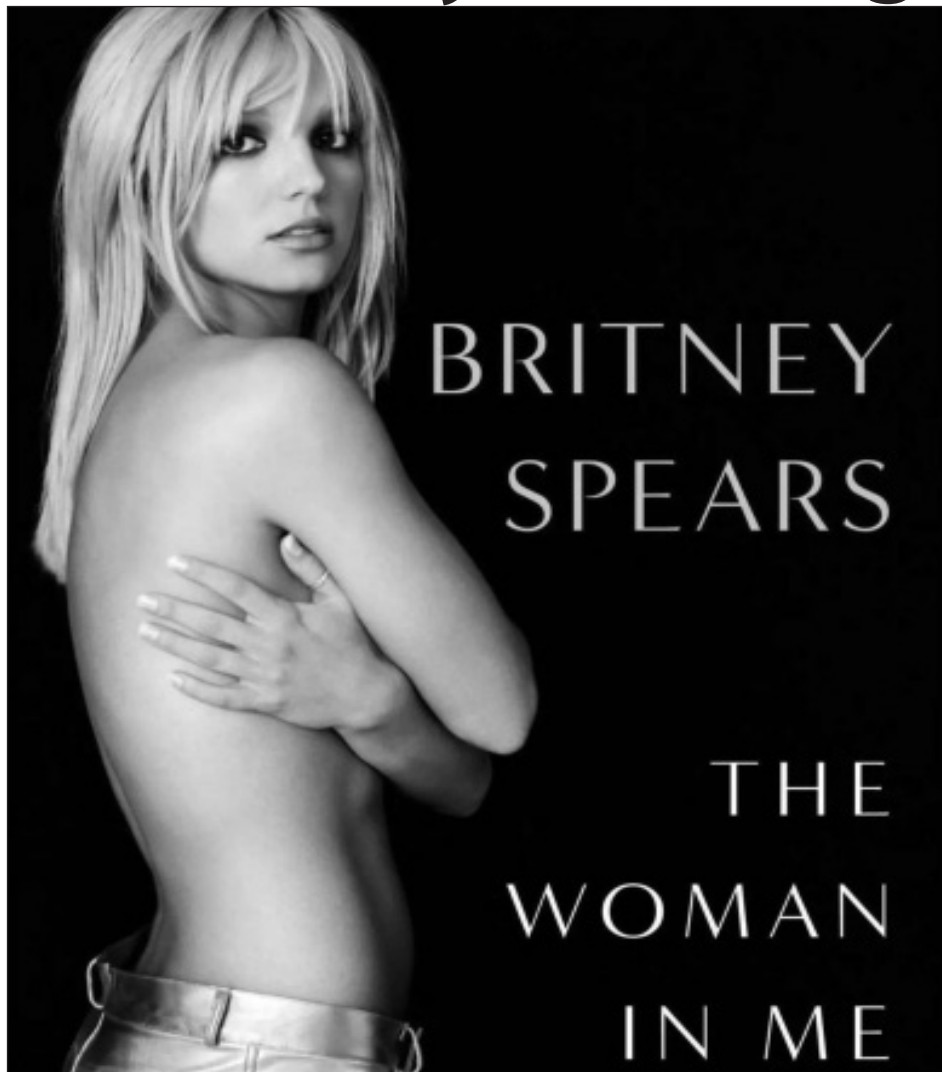
By **Jessie Ji**

Managing Editor of Podcasts

To write about Britney Spears, you can't just write about Britney Spears: she was the pop star of the early 2000s; she was hospitalized twice by her own father; she was bled dry by her family, her romantic relationships, and the voracious media who tried to put her on a pedestal while dehumanizing her. She was an icon, a phenomenon, a symbol, but rarely herself.

In her memoir *The Woman in Me*, Spears finally writes about herself. She starts with her childhood in Kentwood, Louisiana, where she stores most of the fond memories. "When I sing, I own the world," Spears recounts in her book. Her path to fame starts off rather early. She started auditioning at the age of four for a Christmas program at her mother's workplace, and gained popularity during her time on *The Mickey Mouse Club* at age eleven. Spears released her smash-single "Baby One More Time" at eighteen. In the autobiography, Spears recounts that eighteen was "probably the moment in my life when I had the most passion for music."

Spears undisguises feelings as she writes about her wounded relationships. Exploitation comes in the center of most of her relationships: the men around her, especially her own father, have utilized her for fame or money. After a public break-



Courtesy of @pagesix on Instagram

The cover for Britney Spears's new book.

down, a thirteen-year-long conservatorship started in 2008 when her father petitioned for a court-ordered conservatorship which meant that he would handle all of his daughter's personal and financial affairs. Spears has since lived under his con-

trol until recently. Throughout this time, she still continued to produce best-selling albums and made many appearances on headlines, magazines, and onstage performances. The public eventually became suspicious and concerned about the pop-

stars personal being. Fans conspired that Britney Spears' freedom was completely taken away by her father. The #FreeBritney movement was started by her fans trying to spread awareness of her situation. The conservatorship ended in 2021, and Spears began to openly speak about her experiences with her father. She discusses that during this time, her struggles with depression were accompanied by a lack of autonomy and personal will. *The Woman in Me* has been dubbed "Spears's truest voice".

The men around her were not the only ones exploiting her: the media uses Spears' hyper-sexed image to shame her, promoting a national fascination with white femininity and virgin appeal. Spears was constantly pictured as the Southern girl from next door, someone charming, innocent and young, but in interviews often asked about her breasts and virginity. Regardless of her creativity on fashion choices, the media criticized her clothing while obsessively sexualizing America's sweetheart.

Misogyny sets the foundation for Spears's horrific experience in the music industry--the industry that somehow turned her from talent to tramp. Finally, in her own words and voice, *The Woman in Me* helps her regain a long-lost aphasia in public under constraints. More than a form of amusement, reading this memoir is a good way to review the rise and tumbles of a pop-star's life as well as her enduring optimism.

Mourning the tragic loss of Matthew Perry

By **Esti Rosenblatt**

Managing Editor of Production

On October 28, actor and comedian Matthew Perry passed away. At age 54, Perry drowned in his home in Los Angeles, California. His death is still being investigated by Los Angeles officials. His untimely death has saddled close family and friends and most everyone who has seen Perry on the big and small screen. Perry's spirit was contagious. When watching him act and make jokes, people felt connected to Perry. While mourning, we will remember his best jokes, his strength in overcoming addiction, and the support he gave to those who also struggled with that disease.

You might have known Matthew Perry better as Chandler Bing. Chandler Bing was a loveable, quirky, sarcastic character in the TV show *Friends*. On *Friends*, Perry was one of the six main twenty-somethings living in New York City. His role was iconic. *Friends* has increased in popularity because people long to see Perry on the screen again. Perry was close with his co-stars. Jenifer Aniston, who played Rachel Green, a friend of Chandler's, has publicly mourned Perry, sharing a heartfelt tribute on Instagram. She said, "We were always the six of us. This was a chosen family that forever changed the course of who we were and what our path was going to be."



Courtesy of @mattyperry4 on Instagram

Matthew Perry posing for his new memoir: *Friends, Lovers and the Big Terrible Thing*.

Another group statement by five of the cast members reminisced, "We were more than just cast mates. We [were] a family." The cast members on *Friends* were close

to each other but also to the millions of people who watched the six friends' messy lives take course. Die-hard *Friends* lovers at LFA have re-watched the show af-

ter Perry's death, reminiscing on his life. *Friends* took their audience from the highs of life, finding love and celebrating with friends, to the very lows, saying goodbye.

If watching him on *Friends* is as far as your Matthew Perry encounters have gone, his life seems filled with humor, sunshine and of course great friends. However, life was very different off set. Matthew Perry had a history of drug abuse. After an accident, Perry was prescribed pain meds. Eventually, he became addicted and took up to 55 pills per day. His disease of addiction became a dark cloud over his early fame. Perry recounted hangovers on set, even shaking before filming. Many years later, in his book, *Friends, Lovers and the Big Terrible Thing: A Memoir*, Perry recounts his struggles. After thousands of Alcoholics Anonymous meetings and countless of times in rehab, in 2022, on a book tour, Perry established his sobriety. After his own struggles with drug addiction, Perry prioritized helping others. In his remembrance, the Matthew Perry Foundation was formed. According to the foundation's website, The Matthew Perry Foundation was started from the "realization of Matthew's enduring commitment to helping others struggling with the disease of addiction." Before his death, Perry said, "I would like to be remembered as someone who lived well, loved well, and was a seeker."

Editorial: Taking a stance within academia

We are currently in a political and social environment where silence is equated with complicity. With a plethora of pressing, deeply polarizing, deeply personal, global and local issues, there is more demand than ever to take a stance, regardless of direction. Not only on an individual level does this demand exist; from corporations to brands to celebrities, people are turning for a call to action, a call for support in so many varying and contrasting ways. Schools simultaneously are facing these calls. But this begs the question: “Should they answer?”

At the end of the day, a school’s number one responsibility is to foster an environment of learning. What is so crucial for a good learning environment is a breadth of opinions, but more importantly, an ability to state opinions (of course to a certain extent). Learning exists within conversations, within cementing or changing beliefs through discussion, through acknowledgement that in most cases, people on the other side of an issue are not heinous

monsters, but rather people with nuanced and individual point of views. If a school were to take a stance on polarizing issues, these sorts of conversations would cease to exist.

Academia itself shouldn’t be political. It should serve to equip students with tools to navigate the political world and make subsequent informed decisions, however they may choose to lean or not lean politically. It is a fact that politics are personal. Each policy to support, each politician to support, each side to take in a geopolitical argument is informed by personal preference that is the result of one’s own life experience. To assign such an evidently nuanced requirement of “picking a side” to an institution negates the reality that doing so would be largely performative. While policies can be implemented and donations can be given, schools exist as a collection of people, not one entity with one single opinion.

That is not to say that schools don’t have a responsibility to stand up against hatred and

inequity. In fact, this responsibility perfectly aligns with academia’s utmost responsibility—to create a healthy learning environment, as bigotry is antithetical to learning. But ultimately, this responsibility lies both in the general and immediate sense. On campus, issues necessitate being addressed. Movements of cultural significance do as well. But what these cases lack is the alienation of a certain portion of the community. It should not be required for a school to pick a side of a difficult political conversation if in doing so, they put the “other side” in an uncomfortable or even sometimes dangerous position.

Still, schools cannot sweep polarizing issues under the rug. Providing safe spaces for dialogue, resources for those affected, and a general attitude of compassion for all sides is so important. In the context of academia, it remains clear that taking a stance can be far more detrimental than simply acting in a way that legitimately supports community members.

The Lake Forest

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EDITORIALS

Opinions of the staff are presented in the form of unsigned editorials. Personal views are bylined or presented as formal dissents.

LETTERS TO THE EDITORS

The Spectator welcomes responses to its articles in the form of Letters to the Editors in addition to letters on subjects of the author’s choosing. Please e-mail Letters to the Editors to Mrs. Krause at akrause@lfanet.org

AWARDS

The Spectator has been awarded several prestigious journalism awards in recent years. It has consistently taken first place in competitions against schools of similar size held by the American Scholastic Press Association and the Kettle Moraine Press Association.

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

“I am grateful for what I am and have. My thanksgiving is perpetual.”
-Henry David Thoreau



Scan for the Advice Column!

Hockey injuries and safety procedures

By Ford Sweet & Quinn Knight

Managing Copy Editor & Managing Editor of Sports

These past few months have been very rough for the sports world. There have been countless injuries that could have been prevented with small safety precautions.

Adam Johnson was a very respected hockey player. He played for the Pittsburgh Penguins before moving to England and spending his final years playing for the Nottingham Panthers. On October 28th, during a game against the Sheffield Steelers, he was struck on the neck by an opposing player. This incident serves as an example of the gruesome sports injuries that can occur if one does not follow the proper safety procedures.

Evan Stastny '24, Prep Hockey captain, reflected on this incident, as several players on his team have adjusted in order to play comfortably and safely. Stastny emphasized how scary the incident regarding Johnson was for him and his hockey teammates: "It's really hard to see someone get killed doing the sport they love, and a sport I do as well." In other words, this injury will further push members of LFA's hockey teams to follow safety precautions they may have brushed off before.



Courtesy of @Cookiejarry35 on Instagram

Adam Johnson plays in an NHL game.

Hockey, being a fast-paced, physical sport, means injuries are common. Some of the most common injuries include concussions, overuse injuries, and skin lacerations. In any sport, concussions happen frequently, especially in a sport as physical as hockey. With big hits to players and check-

ing towards the head area being prevalent in hockey, concussions tend to be caused by those big hits and checking toward the head. In terms of overuse or musculoskeletal injuries, these also happen through falls or collisions. These injuries have an extensive range of severity. Skin lacerations

are common in hockey, as skate blades or sticks often cut players. These injuries can range from minor cuts to more serious lacerations that require stitches or surgery.

"It was a wake-up call for the entire world to implement safety protocols," Stastny stated. Pro hockey leagues have attempted to make the sport as safe as possible while trying to prevent these injuries. Players should wear a helmet that fits properly and is made to protect the head from impact in order to avoid concussions. They should also be mindful of their surroundings on the ice and refrain from checking to the head. Players should warm up and cool down correctly before practices and games to prevent musculoskeletal injuries. To maintain strong and flexible muscles and joints, athletes should train and stretch regularly. Players should wear gloves, elbow pads, and shin pads to prevent skin abrasions. Additionally, they should refrain from using broken or sharply edged sticks when playing.

If players do these things, the amount of injuries will be reduced, and when injuries happen, the severity of them should be reduced. The incident involving Adam Johnson was a sorrowful moment for the sport, and the hockey world will do whatever it takes to help make the sport safer for all the players.

Lionel Messi wins the Ballon d'Or again

By Quinn Knight & Myles Haight

Managing Editor of Sports & Managing Editor of Photography and Digital Content

Lionel Messi's move to the US with Inter Miami was seen as the biggest news in the soccer world until now. A couple of weeks ago, Lionel Messi collected his eighth Ballon d'Or after a very successful 2023 with Paris Saint-Germain, the Argentinian National Team, and now with Inter Miami FC.

Most people agree that Lionel Messi is one of the best soccer players of all time. He has received honors and recognitions such as the FIFA World Player of the Year title in 2009, a record six European Golden Boots, and a record seven Ballon d'Or titles (receiving his eighth in 2023). Along with his many individual awards, as part of the teams he has played for, he has won four UEFA Champions League titles, seven Copa del Rey trophies, and ten La Liga titles with FC Barcelona.

Messi was a clear favorite to win the Ballon d'Or award due to his outstanding performance during the 2023 season, which ended in his winning performance with Argentina at the FIFA World Cup. His accomplishments this year had a great influence on football fans across the world. Messi led a very strong Argentinian national team to a FIFA World Cup victory in December over France, solidifying him as the best player of all time. Messi's leadership,

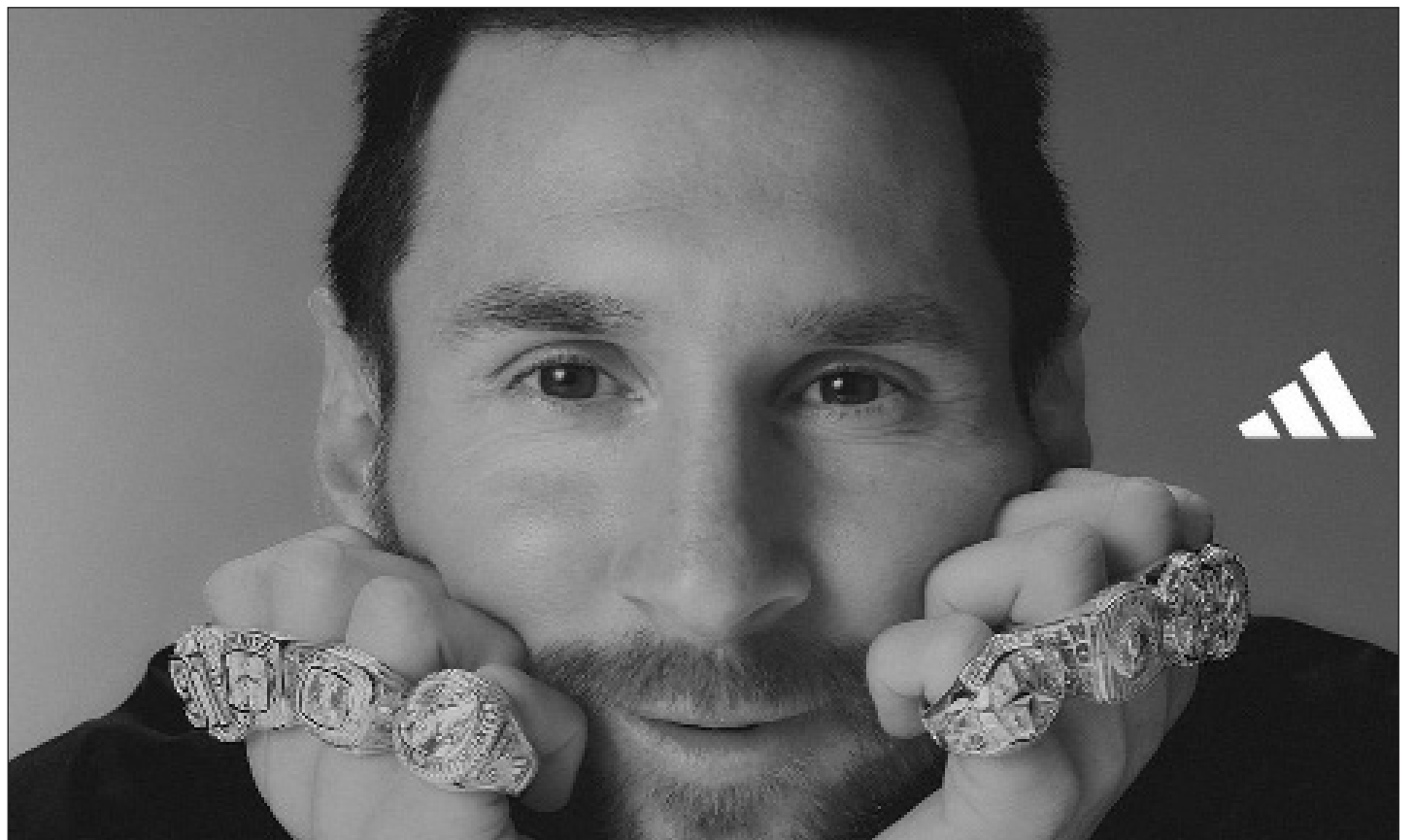
determination, and inspirational play were big in Argentina's victory. His six goals throughout the tournament showcased his ability to deliver on the biggest stage.

Although Messi was very successful, this award was somewhat controversial as many believed Norwegian soccer player Erling Haaland deserved it more. Haaland is a young player playing for Manchester City in the Premier League. Sy Rosenblatt '25 disagreed with Messi's win of the Ballon d'Or explaining, "Haaland won the

Treble with Manchester City and broke the single-season scoring record [in the Premier League]. His performance this year was incredible." Haaland led the Premier League this year with 36 goals which broke the single season record. Haaland was the leader of a Manchester City team that completed the football treble winning the Premier League Title, and FA Cup, along with the UEFA Champions League. Compared to Messi, Haaland had over 35 more goals than Messi and 2 more trophies in the year.

Many people believe that due to these statistics, Haaland deserved the award, but others believe Messi's World Cup success propelled him to victory. In talking about how this award affected Messi's legacy, Rosenblatt said, "I do think [Messi] is the best of all time, but this Ballon d'Or didn't change his legacy at all."

Many insane records and stats have been held by Lionel Messi; however, the debate over his 8th Ballon d'Or and his status as the "Greatest of All Time" is still up for debate.



Courtesy of @leomessi on Instagram

Lionel Messi shows his custom made Ballon d'Or rings.

Girls Varsity Swimming sets multiple new records

By Junming Xing
Editor-in-Chief

On October 28th, LFA's Girls Varsity Swimming team won second place at the ISL Championships. In the meet against the Latin School of Chicago and University High School, Lake Forest Academy attained a total of 168 points, winning seven events and setting three new records for the 2023 year.

Senior Tuana Turhan '24 won two individual titles in the 200 freestyle and 100 butterfly, setting a school record of 58.97 seconds (100 butterfly) while Katherine Graham '24 won the 50 freestyle, and junior Defne Kocak '26 took first place in the 200 IM and 100 breaststroke.

"We had shining results, but everyone achieved their personal best time, and that's what the kids and myself are proud of," said Kee Ng, Head Coach of the Girl Varsity Swim Team.

To Ng, the girls' formidable achievement is evident in streamlined training. "My approach consists of four main components: Technique, Strategization, Hard Work, and Tapering," said Ng. "Water is 800 times more resistant than air, and we must find ways to reduce resistance as we learn how to approach the specific events. More importantly, all swimmers engage in tapering to recover from muscle pains, soreness, and cramps before the championships," Ng stated.

To the swimmers, the effective-



Courtesy of @david.atas_photography on Instagram

Saathvika Narayan '26 prepares for a race on the Girls Varsity Swimming team at LFA.

ness of training stems from maintaining a strong rapport between students, managers, and coaches. "We are motivated by the rest of the team," said Henry Gold '24, Manager of the Girls Swim team. "When everyone puts in the effort, we see it, we emulate the efforts, and embrace it together," Gold stated.

As Manager, Gold taught novice swimmers by demonstrating techniques, optimized the lineups to best face our opponents, and assisted the coaches while enhancing the team morale as captain Kate Graham led the stretches and pep talks.

With robust morale, each swimmer can dedicate themselves to perfecting the necessary techniques. To maintain optimal performance, swimmers spent hours mastering stroke technique and aerobic strength.

At each practice, older swimmers stood on the decks to guide younger swimmers in practicing their breaststroke pullout and block dives.

"You are competing against the water," said Ng. "You are not racing against other swimmers, and it is im-

portant for you to focus right as you start from the block," Ng mentioned.

The presence of camaraderie instills one with the motivation and competitive drive that prompts swimmers to practice their technique until it becomes second nature.

With ISLs also having concluded with two new school records for both the 200 medley and 200 freestyle relays, we look forward to the girls swim team continuing on as they look to their achievements as inspiration to strive for future excellence during the season next fall.

LFA's new class explores sports through American identity

By Trevor Reenan
Staff Writer

Lake Forest Academy added a new class to the curriculum for the 2023-24 school year, called "Sports in American History: Culture and History." The course is offered to juniors and seniors as a semester-long history elective to replace a traditional U.S. history course.

"Sports in American History," a fascinating new course taught by History Teacher Philipp Velgach, gives students a thorough understanding of the significant influence that sports have had on the American identity. This special course explores fan culture, the importance of athletic events, and the social, political, and historical impact of sports. Students gain a stronger grasp of the complex bond between fans and athletes as well as the influence of both men's and women's sports on American culture, identity, and mindset by looking at historical examples and contemporary occurrences. This reading and writing-intensive course encourages students to participate in debates, research, and argumentative writing, with an emphasis on the philosophical, ethical, and economic movements in 20th and 21st-century America. The approach offers a well-rounded perspective



Photo by Amanda Krause

Filipp Velgach instructs his class.

on the complex world of American sports and its wider societal impact. Its introduction this year was a success, with many students signing up for the new offering.

In talking to some students who are currently enrolled in "Sports in American History," it was possible to gauge their initial reaction to the class. Ethan Dandrow '25 said, "'Sports in American History' with Mr. Velgach is one of the most unique and thought-provoking classes I've ever taken. The class has opened my eyes to various aspects of

sports I hadn't been exposed to before."

Dandrow went on, "Rather than talking about last night's Bears game and athlete statistics, we as a class search to find a deeper meaning of sports, and the true origins of why sports are the way they are." Dandrow seemed to have nothing but good things to say about this new class.

Gavin Berlin '24 was also interviewed and asked if he would recommend others to take the class. He responded, "I like the class a lot, especially being a huge sports fan. If you are a sports fan, I would

100% take the class. It approaches sports at a very different angle, and it's very interesting," giving the course high praise and clearly showing the value "Sports in American History" brings to the History and Social Science curriculum.

Both Dandrow and Berlin were asked about the homework load in the new class. Dandrow said, "We don't get much homework, but when we do, it's usually writing. 35% of your grade in the class is engagement, which allows everyone to find a voice in the class and give their own opinions."

Berlin responded similarly saying, "The homework that Mr. Velgach assigns is mostly writing, and we have no tests, only graded discussions, but if you are a sports fan, it's easy to participate because it's just like having a conversation about sports."

Overall, the student response to "Sports in American History" has been positive with multiple accounts of praise and enjoyment of the class. There is always uncertainty when launching a new course, but "Sports in American History" seems to have done very well in its first semester. If anyone is in search of a second semester course, "Sports in America: Economics & Politics" – the continuation of "Sports in America: History & Culture," may be just the right fit.

Meet some of your 2024 presidential candidates

By Chloe Jhin & Theresa Fu

Managing Editor of Politics & Editor-in-Chief

Republicans

Donald Trump

Even with his 91 cases across four indictments, former President Donald Trump is currently in the lead out of the Republican candidates given that he has the most support, mostly stemming from his previous campaigns and years in office. Although he has not attended any of the GOP debates yet, Trump has maintained his presence amongst his opponents by calling them “human scum” and “vermin” via X. With his media company Truth Social going bankrupt, Trump may not have enough finances to survive in the race.

Chris Christie

As the former Governor of New Jersey, Chris Christie is on his second presidential campaign after an unsuccessful run in 2016. However, unlike before where he’d endorsed Donald Trump’s rise to presidency, Christie has transformed into one of Trump’s most vociferous opponents, deeming Trump a “failure” in several public interviews. In terms of Christie’s current performance, he has marginally qualified for the first few republican debates and as of mid-November, ranks third on polls behind Trump and Nikki Haley. He has also been vocal on his pro-life stance, and addressed abortion as a state issue while also pushing for Tiktok bans, stricter immigration policies (without a path to citizenship for illegal immigrants so as to “not award” them for breaking the law), and to limit the wealthy from receiving social security.

Vivek Ramaswamy

Owner of three private jets and worth close to a billion dollars, Vivek Ramaswamy is the second wealthiest candidate competing in the Republican primary— behind who he noted as “the best president of the 21st century” Donald Trump. The son of immigrants, Ramaswamy graduated high school as his class’s valedictorian. He then graduated from Harvard *Summa Cum Laude* with a bachelors in biology and later attended Yale Law School. One key part of his presidential campaign is his opposition to environmental, social, and corporate governance (ESG) which expands upon his position towards climate change; he perceives fossil fuels as critical to human flourishing, and noted that past policies regarding climate change have been both “cult[ish]” and a “hoax” in the Republican debates. Regarding elevating diversity, he’s been vocal on building a race-blind meritocracy and eliminating affirmative action. Other stances of his include supporting six-week bans on abortion on the state-level, using aggressive militant force to secure the border, eliminating unions, and banning transgender care.



Courtesy of Flickr

Marianne Williamson campaigns in Des Moines, Iowa, at the beginning of her election campaign.

Ron DeSantis

Desantis is firing workers from his campaign due to recent fundraising issues. Although he is not as ahead as Trump in the Republican Primary polls, Governor of Florida Ron DeSantis has been working his way up in the race. As president, DeSantis’ stance on abortion relates to a bill that he passed that allows women in Florida to get an abortion only within 6 weeks in the pregnancy stage. With regards to culturally educational issues, DeSantis passed the Parental Rights on Education Bill, which allows parents to make more decisions about their child’s education with subjects on sexual orientation. As a supporter of Trump, DeSantis plans to construct a border wall if he becomes president. With the Ukraine issue, DeSantis has not been as vocal about the topic as he has been with

other ones, such as the economy. More specifically, DeSantis wants corporations to invest in the US for long-term benefits.

Nikki Haley

As the only female Republican candidate, Nikki Haley is currently behind DeSantis in the polls. Haley’s experience in office consists of being a former Governor of South Carolina, as well as a former US Ambassador to the United Nations. The stance Haley takes concerning abortion is that she believes it should be available, but she does not fully support “late-term” abortions. Haley has also proposed The Freedom Plan, which would eliminate federal gas, reduce income tax rates, and make small-business tax relief perpetual. Regarding the Israel and Hamas War, Haley plans to support Israel and

strengthen the US military as president.

Democrats

Joe Biden

Although it was stated from his campaign for the 2020 election that current President Joe Biden would not run for re-election in 2024, he is the leading Democratic candidate so far. Throughout his presidency, he has been building his legacy by lowering costs of families’ expenses, growing the economy by creating more job opportunities, raising taxes on the wealthy, supporting the middle class, extending healthcare, and more. But, Biden is not only losing support from Hispanic and African American demographics, but he is also losing support from swing states that contain large populations of Muslims during the Israel and Hamas War.

Marianne Williamson

Despite trailing heavily behind current President Joe Biden in polls, 71 year old Marianne Williamson is running for the second time. Prior to her entry into politics, she’s most notable for publishing over a dozen books in the self-help or spiritual genre and founding Project Angel Food which provided free meals for the ill. Her ongoing campaign carries similar themes regarding economic inequality with pushes towards universal health care, increasing minimum wage, enforcing paid parental leave, and more. She intends to create a Federal Department of Peace to develop nonviolent conflict resolution, pay reparations for slavery, and establish abortion as a federal right. However, she’s facing criticism for her lack of political background and her comments in 2019 that promoted dubious theories on deteriorating mental health as the lack of “spiritual, not medical” wellbeing.

Dean Phillips

From Minnesota’s third congressional district, multimillionaire Dean Phillips assumed office in the House of Representatives in 2019 and only recently stepped down from a position of leadership to prepare for the presidential elections. Despite running against Biden, Phillips has stressed that this is not in opposition, rather he believes it’s “time for the torch to be passed on to a new generation of American leaders.” In addition, part of his agenda includes bringing down the cost of living with pro-worker and pro-business policies (influenced by his entrepreneurial history in the liquor and gelato industries) and improving community safety— but he’s also incited tension with other democrat members for his decision to run and potentially jeopardize the success of Biden.

Note: This list does not include all presidential candidates. As the election proceeds, there may be changes and details missing from what’s above. Remember to vote!



Courtesy of @nbcnews on Instagram

From left to right: Chris Christie, Nikki Haley, and Ron Desantis stand at the third Republican debate.

Social Justice

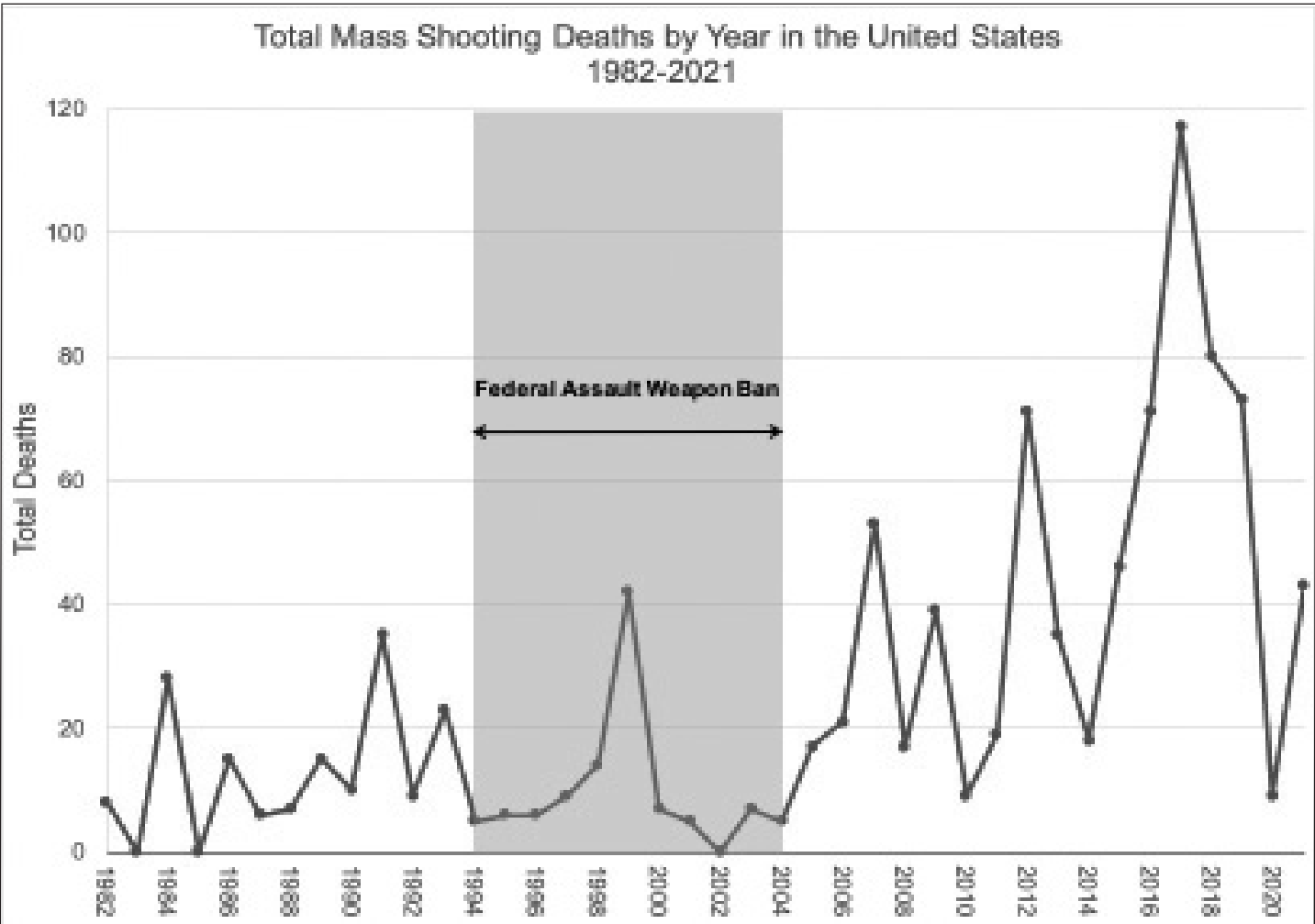
Gun laws and college decisions: Has gun violence become normalized?

By Emma Swanson & Liv Kelly
Managing Editor of Social Justice &
Managing Editor of Op-Ed

We live in a world of politics. Politics are everywhere we look; they're in our family discussions, our classes, and our relationships. It seems no matter where we turn, politics factor into every aspect of our lives. One of the most pressing issues in high school students' lives is where we will continue our education as we ponder what college will best suit us and our needs. As multiple factors go into making this life-changing decision such as destination, majors, and finances, one would assume that politics would factor in as well. We went into this article with intentions to write about how various state gun laws could affect students' college decisions. However, after talking to many people within our community, including college counselors, we were surprised to find out that gun violence and differing weapon laws are not usual topics of discussion when it comes to the college process. While this may be a result of students being unaware and feeling unaffected by the gun violence problem, with such a grand scale decision such as college, one would think that this issue would at least be considered. However, the truth is that it's not an unawareness issue. It's the fact that gun violence occurs so often within our society that we have gone numb, not taking the time to even consider the gun violence crisis occurring in America that could affect our college lives.

According to Everytown Research & Policy, "Every day, 120 Americans are killed with guns and more than 200 are shot and wounded (in the U.S.)" Unfortunately, many believe our government has contributed to gun violence becoming a crisis in the U.S. due to their lack of measures on national firearm registry and monitoring gun ownership. In fact, as of April 2023, eight out of the 50 states have concealed carry permit laws that include a judgment call—when a gun is only administered after the applicant is observed and the administrator, themselves, believes the applicant is well-suited to carry a weapon. However, other states give out a concealed carry permit to anyone who applies and meets the requirements (have no judgment call) or the states do not require a permit and consider conceal carry constitutional in their state. The eight states issuing permits through judgment enable a decrease in the amount of firearms concealed carried throughout the state which then lowers the amount of violent crime. These laws are especially important in determining what states to continue one's education in, but yet again, it doesn't cross the majority of our minds.

We came to this realization that gun laws aren't affecting the college process while interviewing Ben Wetherbee,



This graph includes statistics showing the horrific increase of mass shootings' deaths in the United States from 1982 to 2021.

LFA's Associate Dean of College Counseling. He stated how the tragedies of shootings on campuses are not only not a consideration when it comes to college decisions, but they are also largely ignored. For students in America, the issue of shootings on campuses has turned into something that is almost bound to happen, Wetherbee stated, "I think about what happened at Michigan State in February. As tragic as that event is, I wouldn't say that I've had anyone not apply to Michigan State because of that piece, which I think speaks to the normalization of it. I don't think a lot of the students that applied this year were even aware that that had occurred." Unlike

abortion laws, where the decision does come down to the specific state, the danger of school shootings can happen anywhere, which could also explain why it is not a factor in college decisions. It's not just colleges, as we've seen high schools, parades, local businesses, and almost everywhere we look affected by shootings.

Gabi Stewart, a senior at LFA, said, "I do think about it but not to the extent of picking schools because dangerous mass shootings can happen anywhere, like it just happened a little while ago in Highland Park. So I think it's hard for me to mitigate that so I think I'm just choosing my school and hoping I stay safe along the way."

As shootings happen time and time again with the tragedy of it seeming to not even make people flinch, along with Americans' lives coming down to "hoping," one would think that active measures would be taken to stop these events from happening regularly. But somehow, there is nothing. Many lives have been lost and altered due to the neglectfulness of this topic, but there is always the hope that in the future it will no longer be something that is just expected and ignored. As students go about their college decisions, it is a great loss to our country that something so hefty and violent is not even considered and is seen less as a "what if" but more as a "when."



Protesters fight against gun violence.

Courtesy of Creative Commons

Environmental impacts of war

By Erin Cho & Joon Lee

*Assistant Managing Editor of Production
& Managing Editor of STEM*

We are all aware that war has a great impact on the economy and the people who go through the time of war. However, war goes beyond the battlefield – its harmful impacts reach far and wide leaving a lasting impact on the environment. The ecological repercussions of conflicts can be vast, ranging from sudden devastation to long-term damage to our natural surroundings. One of the consequences of war is the extensive destruction of forests and natural habitats. The use of explosives, machinery, and the targeting of landscapes results in deforestation as well as loss of habitats.

The array of weaponry used in warfare introduces a range of pollutants into the environment. The remnants from explosives and the deployment of weapons can contaminate the air, soil, and water. The Russo-Ukraine war shows how war is an environmental catastrophe with global consequences. Russia has sought to cripple Ukraine's infrastructure by attacking homes, farmland, energy, civilian nuclear



Courtesy of Creative Commons

Image showing the effects war has on the environment with pollution.

facilities, drinking wastewater systems, and mining facilities. The environmental consequences are nowhere more evident than the Nova Kakhovka Dam, which was destroyed last July 2023. The dam's destruction has caused serious damage to the drinking water sources by being contaminated with 150 tons of heavy fuel oil, in addition to polluted sediments. This led to disease among the civilians and the lack of drinkable water. Furthermore, as the water gets contam-

inated, natural habitats underwater also get impacted leading to the restriction of food for civilians. Furthermore, the loss of the dam has threatened the water available to cool the reactors of the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant. As the cooling system had been destroyed, it was a dangerous situation, having a possibility of Even though there wasn't any accident, there could have been immense damage affecting the environment globally if the nuclear plant exploded.

Jessica Kapadia, Chair of History and Social Science at LFA, said, "Environments are getting demolished as Ukraine and Russia are fighting to take over cities." She explained how countries win a war by laying claims to the large cities eventually leading to loss of lives, and damage to the environment. As Russia is constantly attacking Ukraine cities with the use of heavy machinery, and explosives, soil quality is degraded, resulting in long-term damage to the environment. These materials can remain radioactive and dangerous to human health for thousands of years. The alterations disrupt the delicate balance of ecosystems, leading to the loss of biodiversity and threatening the survival of countless species.

The ultimate answer for solving environmental problems caused by war is not getting involved in warfare. However, it is not a realistic solution. Instead, the world should support countries that are going through hardships with environmental catastrophes, by building more resilient and sustainable cities and communities to improve the health of the people and the environment to enable rapid recovery from human-made disasters.

Buckthorn removal on campus



Photo by Kyle Haines

Buckthorn clearing on Academy Road.

By Emma Swanson

Managing Editor of Social Justice

Although many of us have been taught that all plants are good for the planet, some cause damage to our ecosystems. These plants are called invasive species. Invasive species are any type of living organism that is not native to an ecosystem. Unfortunately, buckthorn is one of the worst invasive species in America. Originally native to Eurasia, buckthorn was introduced to North America in the 1880s and was used for hedgerow pur-

poses. Since then, buckthorn has been taking over forests across the continent, out-competing other native plants with its dense leaves and ability to grow quickly, which degrades wildlife habitats. Not only that, buckthorn poisons the soil by implementing higher nitrogen levels which is the exact type of soil that weeds like to grow in. The lack of native plants causes the soil to be less absorptive and can lead to problems of erosion.

With the help of Kyle Haines, LFA's Grounds Manager, LFA became aware of the buckthorn issue that our campus was

facing. He stated, "Given my background in plant and soil sciences, and experience with buckthorn eradication at previous tenures, I have been aware of the negative impacts the invasive species has been creating in our area over a short period." Putting those ideas into action, Haines said, "The spring of 2021, I was approached by a restoration ecologist from Lake County Forest Preserves District who informed me about a grant program they had in place from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation called the Chi-Cal Rivers Fund. This grant op-

portunity funded the vitality of the Chicago and Calumet River Watersheds; including buckthorn removal work."

Since LFA is next to the Middle Fork Savannah, in which the Chicago River runs, LFA was able to use some of the grant money to fund the process of clearing out the invasive buckthorn across campus. The first year this initiative began, Haines and his team cleared the areas on Academy Drive and Faculty Circle. This year, the academy has cleared near the baseball fields and Wood House, along with the sections in between the turf fields and Warner.

Not only that, Haines has been communicating with those living in Academy Woods, devising plans to assist them with invasive species removal and restoration work. He has goals of continuing to get Academy Woods involved while also finding ways to involve the LFA community in taking action.

In conclusion, the buckthorn removal and habitat restoration that Haines has been leading on campus is a major milestone in LFA's commitment to environmental conservation and one worth continuing to focus on. Buckthorn along with other invasive species can severely damage ecosystems across the country and making the effort to mitigate these effects is crucial. LFA's commitment to taking this environmental action has not only set an example for its community members, but also for other institutions surrounding us to make the same change.