

# the ORACLE

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## 05

Check out our interview from when

we sat down with the new interim principal, Mr. Barnes.

## 8-9

Learn about Black History

Month with stories and quotes from the school's administration and a student.

## 15

Hear what students have to say about

what different qualities they seek in the next principal.



## News in Brief

COMPILED BY MCKENNA TANNER

• **Jan. 21:** Art students Amie Yoo and Bea Jeon earned top awards in the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo art competition, with Yoo receiving Best of Show in 2-D and Jeon earning the Gold Medal.

• **Jan. 25:** 13 members of the Stratford choir earned top scores at the Solo and Ensemble competition. Complete names and photo on shsoracle.org

• **Feb. 25:** Members of the Houston Area Recruiters' Network visit Stratford, including Baylor, UT Dallas, and TSU. Check out shs-spartans.com for the full list.

• **Jan. 13:** The Houston Astros fired manager A.J. Hinch and general manager Jeff Luhnow following disciplinary action from Major League Baseball resulting from revelations that the team used cameras to steal signs during the 2017 and 2018 seasons.

• **Jan. 19:** The 48th annual Chevron Houston Marathon and 18th annual Aramco Houston Half Marathon took place, with Stratford students and teachers among the approximately 35,000 participants.

• **Jan. 2:** A U.S. airstrike in Baghdad killed Iranian General Qassem Soleimani, prompting backlash and concerns that an escalated conflict between the U.S. and Iran would result.

• **Jan. 15:** The House voted to give the Senate the articles of impeachment they had passed against President Donald Trump.

• **Jan. 26:** A helicopter crash in southern California, killed nine people, including former NBA star Kobe Bryant and his daughter.



## One Last Bow

PHOTO BY MADDIE DAWSON

We say goodbye to the auditorium with the last performance of the Drowsy Chaperone taking their final bow. Construction for the new theater will be underway soon.

## Concluding a Legacy

Preparing for the final moments with the current auditorium

WRITTEN BY MICHAEL BENES AND ISABELLA WALTZ  
GRAPHIC PROVIDED BY PBK ARCHITECTURE

As the Stratford Playhouse's winter show, "The Drowsy Chaperone", comes to an end, so will the time spent at the current auditorium. The school district has decided to invest money in a completely different kind of auditorium.

The history of the current auditorium goes way back to 1974 when the school opened. Productions under the name of The Stratford Playhouse did not begin until 1980. In the fall of 1980, Tim Driscoll, theatre director and drama teacher, brought in a new style of directing. Before directing his first performance, he officially named the auditorium "The Stratford Playhouse."

His goal was to increase involvement in theatre and opened auditions to the whole school, rather than to just those in theatre classes.

Driscoll made history when Stratford became the first school in the Southwest to produce the show *Merrily We Roll Along*. After 15 years of successfully leading the playhouse, Driscoll passed away in 1995. Following Driscoll's passing, former student, CeCe Prudhomme, took over the department. She brought in many other directors with her, including former choir director, Peter Steinmetz, and a technical director, Dusty Davidson.

Since the installation of the original auditorium, there have been several renovations that have included new seating and the addition of the scene shop and black box. At this same time the new fine arts wing was also opened.

The theatre department has made many achievements performing on the stage, which include being the first high school to perform several musicals and winning a handful of awards along the way.

The auditorium has been host to more than just the Stratford Playhouse and has a bigger purpose than just putting on theatre shows. Every spring, the



**Sneak Peek** An outside look at the new design of the auditorium as renovations will begin this spring. The new design gives teachers, students, and parents an insight of what's to come.

Spartanaires present their recital, which consists of a variety of dances from the whole team. The band and orchestra use the auditorium for their concerts including the winter concert, the spring concert, and the full orchestra concert. There is also an annual talent show and the Mr. SHS competition that takes place in the auditorium. Throughout the year, the stage is used for a variety of events from staff meetings to awards ceremony. Every student could confidently say that they have spent at least some time in auditorium.

Teachers and students, especially the ones that participate in theatre, have become attached to the auditorium and are sad to see it go. Prudhomme did shows in the auditorium when she was a student. Even after she graduated in 1986 from Stratford and then A&M in 1990, she still ended up coming back to work with Tim Driscoll, who mentored her as a student. She has continued to work in the theatre department, even after Driscoll's passing.

"I have known this auditorium for a long time and cherish the memories

I've had in it," Prudhomme said. "I know it's just a building, but it has become a very important part of my life. It's where I was mentored by Mr. Driscoll. The Stratford Playhouse will be very different without it."

Despite the fact that the old auditorium unfortunately has to go, there is already a plan for the new one, and it is slated to begin construction soon after the production of "The Drowsy Chaperone" closes.

"We'll start moving out of the auditorium as soon as the show ends," said technical director David Clayton. "We must be finished moving out by March 1."

In the meantime, the theatre department has already set up locations

for their productions that will take place during the construction of the new auditorium, which is scheduled to open in 2022. The spring show, *Mamma Mia*, will take place at Northbrook High School.

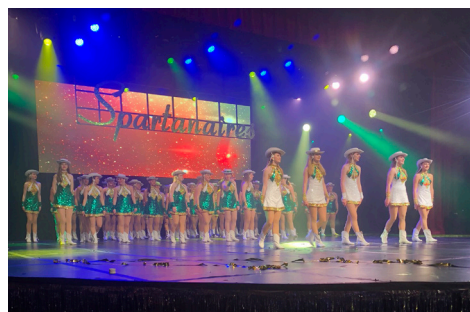
Following this year, the winter musical will be at Zilka Hall, located in the Hobby Center. The location of the fall and spring musicals are still to be determined.

The Spartanaires have also had to make accommodations for their annual spring show. Currently, they plan on performing at the Don Coleman Coliseum.

The remainder of the fine arts department, including band, orchestra, and choir are still looking at alternative venues.

The legacy of the auditorium will not disappear with the building itself. Students and teachers will share those memories with each other and make new ones as we welcome in a new era of auditorium performances.

PHOTOS PROVIDED BY SPARTANAIRE BOOSTER CLUB, LEIGH-LEIGH MELCHER AND THE ORACLE STAFF



**DCC Bound** The annual Spartanaire spring show that usually takes place in the auditorium will now be relocated to the DCC. The stage will be built and seating will only be available on one side.



**Surprise!** Playhouse's winter musical, "Drowsy Chaperone", is the last musical to be performed in the auditorium. Since 1974, over 100 shows have taken place on the stage.



**Festive Finale** The band performs their winter show every December where they play festive music. Mr. Yancey directed the Honors Band for their last performance in the auditorium.



news

# Business is Booming

## Stratford BPA competes at regionals

WRITTEN BY REED HOWELL AND JACK WEATHERLY

On January 25th, Business Professionals of America, also known as BPA, competed alongside many other schools at Aldine Davis High School in north Houston. Out of all the 61 individuals and groups that competed, 35 will be moving on to compete at the state competition on March 5-7 in Dallas, Texas.

“While at the competition, we will either do an individual competition, where participants take a test, or a group competition, usually where people give a presentation,” said senior Wyatt Miller, who advanced to state by placing second in the advance accounting competition. “Individual events will cover topics like advanced accounting, payroll, and spreadsheets, while the group events consist of economic research, financial analysis, and more”. Stratford has a total of four chapters, or groups, within the club. This allows all participants in the club to have a chance to compete at regionals. BPA gives many students across the country the opportunity to develop, lead and compete as they prepare

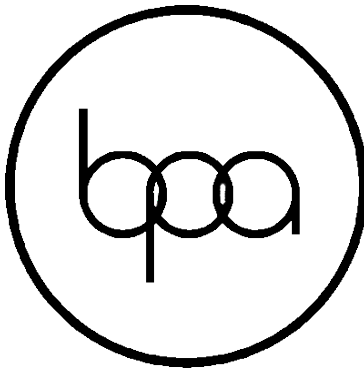
for careers in today’s modern business environment. Through BPA, students can also get many different scholarships.

The members prepared for regional competition by taking practice tests and working on their projects with their group. They have meetings once or twice a month to prepare for their competitions, get updates, and finish

up their group projects. Members from Stratford competed in a total of 24 total events at regionals.

“The testing room was a big open classroom with computers lining the perimeter of the room,” said freshman Hank Davis, who placed second overall in the fundamental spreadsheet

applications individual competition. “I was feeling quite nervous as I was unsure of what my competition would look like.” Despite many new members not knowing what to expect, Stratford did extremely well this year, with a first place finish in seven out of the 24 events. BPA members, prepare for state competition with comments from teachers and judges, and hope to have another successful finish.



# Warning Signs

## What to look out for to prevent human trafficking

WRITTEN BY ELEANORE WILLIAMS

Houston’s biggest issue is it’s most concealed. Thousands of people are affected by it, and thousands claim to understand it - but they don’t.

Human trafficking is a dangerous, city-wide epidemic. The greatest danger of the industry is its recruitment system.

Traffickers spend years infiltrating a victim’s life; they earn trust and respect and are often seen as a friend. These recruiters are called groomers: men or women that work in the industry whose main goal is to prepare a victim for the human trafficking industry.

The first step of the grooming process is targeting the victim. Groomers look for vulnerable people, whether that be emotionally exposed, financially distressed, or low in self-confidence. Teenagers are often seen as vulnerable as they are more likely to be emotional, distant from family, or self-conscious.

The groomer then spends the next months, or in some cases years, spending time with the victim: getting to know them, their family situation, their schedule. Groomers make sure that they are never intrusive and that they never make the victim feel unsafe or uncomfortable during this period.

After the groomer has established trust with the victim they elevate the relationship by buying gifts, exposing the victim to drugs and alcohol, creating a relationship in which the victim becomes dependent on the groomer in some way.

Finally, the groomer begins to abuse the victim by making them “repay” someone by using their actions, usually by sex. The process is slow, and groomers often seem like friends.

Teenagers don’t think that it will happen to them or their friends - but it can. Recognizing these warning signs can save a life.

In an attempt to spread awareness about human trafficking to Houston teenagers and families, the Students Against Trafficking club was created at Stratford. The club’s first task was

to host a school- and community-wide awareness event which was held at Family Point Resources on February 11th. Join the fight against human trafficking in our city by spreading awareness around our school.

## HUMAN TRAFFICKING in Texas

Sex and labor trafficking are more common than some people believe, experts say. The 2017 Statewide Human Trafficking Mapping Project for Texas report shed light on the state of human trafficking in Texas.

### HOW PREVALENT IS IT?



There are roughly **313,000** victims of human trafficking in Texas.



Traffickers exploit roughly **\$600M** annually from victims of labor trafficking.



At any given time, **79,000** minors and youth are sex trafficked in Texas and **234,000** adult victims are labor trafficked.

If you believe that someone you know may be caught in a human trafficking situation, call the National Human Trafficking Hotline: 1-888-373-7888.

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# Students Gather For The Local Leadership Summit

Local authorities take responsibility of teaching the youth leadership qualities

WRITTEN BY LAURA KOERNER AND KALEB VU PHOTOS BY DAN TATULESCU



## Spreading Culture of Community Involvement

Representative Murphy met with students to be interviewed on his involvement in the leadership summit on Jan. 15. He believes that the summit is a place to learn the necessary skills, in order to be an important asset to the community.

The date has been set for the fourth biennial West Houston Teen Leadership Summit on Saturday, February 22nd at the Norris Conference Center in City Center.

This event, hosted by Texas State Representative Jim Murphy, with the tremendous and incredible support

of his right-hand woman, Deanna Harrington, was created with the hopes of inspiring the future leaders of our country.

By introducing students to different leadership positions in the Houston area, Representative Murphy believes that the summit will cause students to be mindful of the future and focus on the next generation of leaders in America.

In the past, this event has been very successful, involving over twenty high schools within the West Houston area. Students from Duchesne, Katy Taylor, Kinkaid, Lamar, Memorial, Northbrook, St. Agnes, Second Baptist, Spring Woods, Strake Jesuit, Stratford, Westchester Academy, Westside, and other schools will all be attending the upcoming leadership summit.

Murphy is very aware that soon high school students will be filling leadership roles in the future, whether that be in business, politics, the media, or philanthropy, which are all topics that will be featured during this leadership conference. The summit

will provide a hands-on experience, as students will be able to engage with guest speakers, ask questions, and learn about why their jobs are so important.

Along with this, students will be able to sit in on different workshops hosted by many of the panel

speakers. Students will have the opportunity to learn who, what, and how they can make a change and fundamentally take on leadership roles in the near future.

Opportunities to integrate students with leaders in the Houston area are practically scarce anywhere else. However Murphy recognizes the development of leadership qualities in the youth as significant to his duties; to involve students in the conversation about the future.

Representative Jim Murphy says that “We have over 5 million students within grades K-12 ... {People}are a resource that you could not take care of, or you could take care of in order to make our community flourish.” Murphy hopes that students will take what they learn from the summit and apply it to their lives.

Representative Murphy says he wishes to “give students a basis of knowledge and relationships in networking with other people in various aspects of leadership, whether it is educational leadership, business leadership, or political leadership.” The task of building a strong foundation for students to grow into leaders is no small feat.

There is a lot of planning, time, and money that goes into hosting these summits. Yet, it costs nothing to attend the workshops, presentations, Q&A's, and, not to mention, enjoy the snacks!

According to Representative Murphy, the time to be involved in this summit is now, as it is “an opportunity to catapult into community involvement like never before.”

# Live Auction With FFA

Students gather to be involved in an opportunity to learn important life skills

WRITTEN BY GRACE HARE PHOTOS BY DAN AND MIRCEA TATULESCU

The Future Farmers of America program or FFA is an opportunity for any student to learn important lessons about responsibility, and an opportunity to earn scholarships.

FFA stands for Future Farmers of America. It is one of the largest Career and Technical Student Organizations in the country. The goals of FFA is to prepare students for a career in the Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources cluster. FFA members at Stratford raise farm animals in the Guthrie barn.

Any student that is enrolled at Guthrie can use the program's barn to raise an animal. Students in the class have an opportunity to raise cows, pigs, goats, lambs, rabbits, and poultry such as turkeys and chickens. Ultimately, these projects are terminal, which means the livestock will be butchered at the end of the program.

For Jennifer Pluchino, whose daughter Ava is active in the livestock program, raising these animals teaches students an important lesson. “That piece of meat you're eating comes from somewhere and someone had to raise that animal knowing it was going to be slaughtered,” she said.

The FFA program also helps students develop skills that last for life. Responsibility is taught by being mandated to visit the animals at least

twice a day and from cleaning up after them to maintain their living environment. Every student has an opportunity to sell their animal and make a profit from selling the cattle at a live auction. This teaches the students how to manage time and make mature financial investments in their animals.

Ultimately, however, there is a chance for everyone to be involved in this amazing opportunities for scholarships. “You will not find any other class offered anywhere that gives you this many real life lessons,” Pluchino said.

**A Girl and Her Goat**  
Sophomore Ava Pluchino spent a year raising a goat for the annual live auction.



## A group of winners

Students Lucas Riley, Ben Brady, Wheeler Cox, Luke Snelling and Connor Barker gather to take a picture. “I raised chickens and turkeys and sold them for \$17,500,” said Connor Barker.



## Raising Poultry

Student Connor Barker holds one of the chickens he raised for the event. He won the Grand Champion title for his chickens.



# In with the new

We had the opportunity to pick Mr. Barnes' brain on his first few weeks as principal

WRITTEN BY ALEXIS GARZA PHOTO BY JACKSON COSSEY

The day before students returned to school from winter break, every parent received the same email; Principal Chad Crowson would not be returning to Stratford in the new year. The note said Pam Metcalfe will handle daily operations and Raymorris Barnes will serve as the executive principal over Spring Forest and Stratford.

Student and teacher reactions ranged from shocked to excited. Mr. Barnes has a glowing reputation throughout the community due to his work over the past few years at Spring Forest Middle School.

Barnes starts his day when he drops off his two children at school and arrives at Stratford around seven o'clock in the morning. He gets here early to greet students and make sure they get to class on time. Make sure to look out for Mr. Barnes and give him a wave or high five when you get here in the morning.

After the bell rings, his day is full of meetings with teachers, parents, and administrators. A majority of his day is spent at Stratford because it is a bigger school. Spring Forest runs like a well-oiled machine in Mr. Barnes' absence with help from the SFMS administrative team.

Many people are anxious to hear about changes on campus, but Barnes is taking a different approach. When asked about immediate changes, Barnes said he does not believe in making change just to make change.

"I think any good leader should take time to go slow, to understand the fabric of the school, to see what works well, and keep those things. For the things that don't work well, don't just come up with a solution on your own. Talk to the students and teachers to find the best answer for the campus," Barnes said.

Barnes' leadership style is direct, but laid back, and he can usually be found with a smile on his face. He makes decisions while being a champion for the teachers and understanding students at the same time.

"I believe in preparing our kids to be productive adults but giving room for kids to still be kids," Barnes said. His secret for

success is tip-toeing that fine line with high school students.

Barnes makes it a point to stay in touch with what kids like and are interested in. He has even tried his hand at being in a Tik-Tok with his daughter. "Just knowing kids and what is out there and not saying 'Oh that's dumb and stupid', but being able to relate to them is really important," Barnes said.

Barnes' plan is to see what is and is not working well. Stratford has always been a well-respected school in the Houston area. He asks "What are those traditions that make us Stratford? What are some areas we can improve upon?"

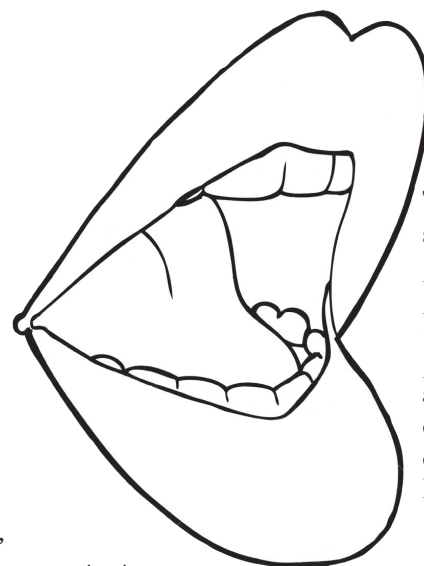
"There may be changes, but I need to hear from all the people and see the data. Until you spend time involved at the school and talking to teachers, parents, and students then it is hard to say we need to change anything at all," Barnes said.

Barnes is as excited to be here as the student body is to have him here. According to Barnes, he was refreshed to see how excited his former middle school students were to go to high school at Stratford.

Seeing such positive feedback from kids who he already taught was a good first impression. "My impressions were that this is a great place to be and I'm excited to be a part of it," Barnes said.

Barnes and English teacher Amy Hulshizer taught at Northbrook at the same time. After working with Barnes previously, Hulshizer is excited to see him leading Stratford. "He was my appraiser at Northbrook; I enjoyed him. He is down to earth and he has the students' best interest at heart," Hulshizer said.

His message and leadership style is universal and honest. What he says to the teachers, he says to the parents and vice-versa. With Mr. Barnes, what you see is what you get.



## students share

The student body here is showing an overwhelmingly positive response to our new principal. When asked how they felt about Mr. Barnes, each person had a slightly different answer, but almost everyone commented on his ability to connect with students and build positive relationships.

“He is a great principal, really nice guy, extremely smart and personable, he gets to know every student.” -Grace Hare

“I like Mr. Barnes. He gives people high fives in the halls, I like his bald head.” -Ellie Grizzell

“I liked him because he tried to interact with students and build relationships.” -Katherine Kim

“He is really nice and smart, and a fair principal.” -Kristen Perry

“He was always a happy principal at Spring Forest, and I'm happy he is here.” -Avery Cooper

## Through the years

In 2004/2005, Barnes graduated from Rice University. He went to Rice from Biloxi, MS on a football scholarship.

After graduating, Barnes taught in Pearland ISD for six years. He taught 8th, 9th, 11th, 12th grade English.

After leaving Pearland, Barnes moved to Northbrook High School as an Assistant Principal for four and a half years.

After working as an Assistant Principal, Barnes worked in the SBISD Central Office for a year and a half.

For a month and a half, Barnes was the interim principal at Stratford before Mr. Crowson was hired.

After his brief time at Stratford, Barnes was the building principal at Spring Forest for two and a half years.

Barnes now serves as the executive principal over Spring Forest and Stratford.



**Did you know?** Mr. Barnes is left-handed and he enjoys hunting and fishing in his free time. He graduated with both an undergrad and masters degree from Rice while playing football there. He also frequents school events so if you have an orchestra or band concert coming up, or a sports game, or anything of the sort, make sure to keep an eye out for him!



# 2020 Vision

## Students and teachers welcome the new decade

With each new decade comes new hopes, new fears, and a whole lot of predictions for what comes next. While the '20s get off to a roaring start, let's take a look at how far we've come in the past two decades and where we might go from here.

COMPILED BY MCKENNA  
TANNER  
PHOTOS FROM ORACLE  
ARCHIVES  
GRAPHICS BY MCKENNA  
TANNER

### Overview

Each decade comes with its own dramatic political and social changes. Here, we sum up some of the major points of the '90s and 2010s and take a look at how old some of our favorite pop culture will have aged in the 2030s.

### Decade on the Street

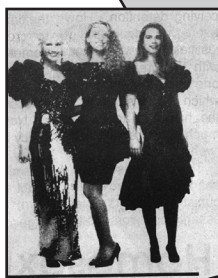
The best way to get to know a decade is through the people who lived through it. We talked to teachers and students about their thoughts on living in the '90s and 2010s and what they expect in the years to come.

### Predictions

For decades, people have tried their hand at gazing into our future and making their predictions about what comes next. Some of these have been eerily accurate, while others are pretty off-the-wall. Here are some of the closest and the wackiest prophecies for the past and future.

1990-1999

The '90s saw significant social changes, both in the U.S. and around the world. On a global scale, the Berlin Wall finally fell, marking the end of the Cold War. Closer to home, President Bill Clinton's affair with Monica Lewinsky grew into a scandal that changed the way the nation saw its president, and riots rocked Los Angeles in response to the acquittal of the four officers who assaulted motorist Rodney King.



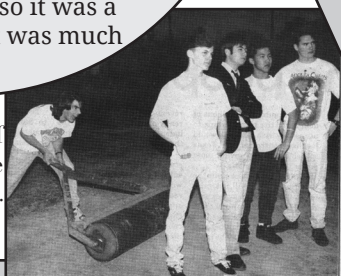
**Dress to Impress** An Oracle advertisement from the '90s shows some fashionable prom looks from the time.

Mr.

**Poetzel-** "I think we were just waking—like, I'm remembering the time period when we were waking up from the '80s, which was also rough sort of culturally and musically. Kurt Cobain and... Nirvana woke us up out of it from a musical perspective, but I was just like an awkward college kid trying to figure out my place in the world."

**Alyssa Davidson-** "The cool thing about the '90s is it's when we were like at the turn of when the Internet was coming to be and like computers and all that stuff weren't household items yet, so it was a cool time in that it was much simpler."

**American Band** The members of a Stratford band in the '90s pose for an Oracle photo shoot.



2010-2019

The 2010s was a decade of popular movements, dealing with everything from gender equality to racism in law enforcement. It had civil rights successes, like the legalization of gay marriage, and dramatic political changes, like Great Britain voting to leave the European Union and the House voting to impeach President Donald Trump. This decade also saw rising safety concerns in the U.S. as the number of mass shootings climbed, and natural disasters such as hurricanes in the Gulf Coast and wildfires in California occurred more and more frequently.



**Alex Lamprecht, 12th-**

"The 2010s were actually like a really good time for innovation. We had like new medicine come out, new techniques, new practices, a bunch of new jobs; the population grew a ton, and we explored space. We're going to Mars soon, look at that."

**Ashley Guy, 12th-** "Disney channel just went downhill."

**Ryan McCall, 11th-** "I think it was a really fun time. I don't remember a lot of it because, obviously, I was younger, but I think it was super fun. I really liked seeing the world in a different perspective as I grew up and matured because I was in elementary school at the beginning of the decade, and it's just kind of cool to see how my decade's been."



2030-2039

2030

- Freshman will be a few years out of college
- Taylor Swift will be 41
- Ed Sheeran will be 39
- "Hannah Montana" will be 24
- "Phineas and Ferb" will be 23
- "Toy Story" will be 35

2039

- The iPhone will be 32
- This year's seniors will be 38
- Billie Eilish will be 38
- Ariana Grande will be 46
- "Spongebob Squarepants" will be 40
- "The Force Awakens" will be 24

**Speak Up** Stratford students participated in the March for Our Lives walkout in 2017.

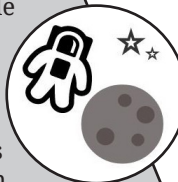
**Sophie Rustam, 12th-** "I think there's not going to be a lot of like hand writing; I think everyone's just going to be typing everything, even in like class. I think there's going to be flying cars in 2030."

**Evan Roberts, 12th-** "Hopefully we'll be back to the moon; we might be going to Mars. Elon Musk will hopefully do a lot of things and branch out."

**Will Larrabee, 10th-** "I think either it's all going to go downhill from here, and we're going to all die, or we're going to flourish in new ways that we never expected."

**Arthur Blanco, 12th-** "Chances are we're going to have like brain implants or something like that, like a virtual heads-up display for like texting and stuff like that."

**Mr. Poetzel-** "I hope we have a replacement for the cell phone, and I hope it's not nearly as ubiquitous. I hope we find a way to be present in what's going on around us. Yeah, I would imagine in the 2030s the smart phone will be a, 'Can you believe that's all we had?'"



**?:** NASA aims to spend the current decade exploring and, through the Artemis missions, developing the moon into a place that can support humans long-term, allowing them to use it as a jumping-off point for missions to Mars. NASA then plans to get humans on Mars in the 2030s.

**?:** According to the UN in 2018, the world must limit global warming to no more than 1.5 °C by 2030 to prevent dangerous and drastic weather changes. Time will tell how global governments act on this prediction although measures such as carbon taxes have been suggested.

**?:** A UN report from 2017 predicts a world population of 8.6 billion by the year 2030. That would be an increase of about 1 billion from its current number.

**FALSE:** Because computers were programmed to record years only by their last two digits, concerns grew in the 1990s that, come the year 2000, the world's computer infrastructure would fail and create widespread chaos. People stocked up on supplies and prepared for a computer apocalypse, but experts were able to resolve the date-recording issue with years of work, and the people's Y2K bug fears were not realized.

**TRUE:** U.S. News and World Report in 1967 predicted that by 2000, approximately 80 percent of the U.S. would live in urban areas. The actual number? 79 percent, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

**FALSE:** A Stanford researcher predicted that in the '90s, people would have computer-linked telephones that could provide information such as their bank statement and the weather forecast. He was a decade early, but he still came up with a remarkably accurate description of the smart phone for 1967.

**FALSE:** The calendar of the ancient civilization of the Mayans ended its cycle on Dec. 21, 2012, and, in the early 2010s, the idea that this ending meant the world was going to end on this date became popular. This proved false, however, and Dec. 21 passed without incident.

**FALSE:** In 1992, the World Future Society predicted parts of Canada would be annexed to the U.S. by 2010. As of 2020, however, Canada remains a complete and sovereign nation.

**TRUE:** In 1983, the Japan Economic Journal predicted that a wide variety of information would be communicated to homes digitally by the year 2010. This prediction came true thanks to the ubiquity of the Internet.

**FALSE:** The organizer of the 1985 Future World Expo, Todd Mills, predicted that, by 2010, there would be underwater cities powered by "laser fusion." Unfortunately, there's no sign of any contemporary Atlantises so far.



# SCHOOL *spirit* TASTES GREAT



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# As We Stand in Solitude

WRITTEN BY ANA SOFIA MEYER & TAILOR WILLIAMS DESIGNED BY ANA SOIFA MEYER

As the nation enters the month of February, many will begin to observe Black History Month. Black History Month was officially recognized by President Gerald Ford in 1976, where he called on the nation to “seize the opportunity to honor the too-often neglected accomplishments of black Americans in every area of endeavor throughout our history.” But the little known fact is who actually started the worldwide phenomenon that is Black History Month. Originally “Negro History Week,” notable historian Carter G. Woodson created the idea with an intent to add black history as a topic in schools. Woodson selected the week of Feb 12 and Feb 14 especially to highlight the birthdays of President Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass. According to the Association for the Study of African American Life and History or ASALH, the celebration and recognition of Woodson’s initiative spread quickly. Through the 1960s, colleges and universities across the nation extended the typical week into a month. Black History Month (BHM) was made official on the fiftieth anniversary of “Negro History Week” and America’s bicentennial. Since then, BHM has morphed into a well-deserved celebration of all of those who have made contributions to the nation but may have been underrecognized in times of widespread prejudice. This year, on the centennial anniversary of the 19th Amendment (women’s suffrage) the ASALH has decided on “African Americans and the Vote” as the theme for the celebration. You can learn more about the history of Black History Month and this year’s theme by visiting the ASALH website at ASALH.org.



Carl Blaze is one of the most prominent figures of Stratford. As the senior grade-level principal, many students look to him as an example. But many don’t know how his experience in a diverse high school shaped him to be the pillar students know him as. “My mom was a single parent, so we moved around quite a bit,” Blaze said. “I decided I didn’t want to be moving from one place to the next, so no matter where we were, I decided I was going to finish high school in one place.” He graduated from Spring Woods High School in 1993, when it encompassed a very diverse student population. “[The diversity] helped shape the way that I look at a lot of things in life because I don’t just look from one particular vantage point,” said Blaze. “I can see diversity and the good in it and how it affects us and how we interact with one another.” Students had that advantage over the other schools in Spring Branch ISD, Blaze said, because of the large spread of cultures and ethnicities found in our hallways and classrooms. “As our kids transition into their post-secondary careers,” Blaze said, “They have an advantage in that they’ve had to interact with different people and learn conflict resolution skills and other things early on in life so that when they do get into college or wherever they go they’ve been around different populations of people.” Despite these advantages, nothing is perfect. In fact, things are still far from perfect. Looking at levels of diversity of the community, many would venture to believe that classrooms show the same spread of culture... they would be wrong.

Most AP or upper-level courses are mostly filled by white or Asian students, contributing to the stereotype and adding evidence of prejudice seen in society, despite how it may be an unintentional result of other factors. “I don’t think that kids really know the advantages of taking these courses,” Blaze said. “It’s likely that parents haven’t spent the amount of time they need to learn about these opportunities. I hesitate to believe that most parents know about the access their child has to classes that offer college credit and they do not push them to do that.” But this is not just a recent issue, “Since I’ve been here levels of diversity in upper-level classes have stayed pretty much the same,” Blaze continued.

To him, exposure and peer relationships rank as the biggest contributing factors to this deficit in diversity, saying “I think it goes back to the students and what their interests are and how much they push themselves,” he said. “If you get kids around like-minded people that are involved in school and pushing themselves and driving themselves to higher learning then they’ll come along the way.” He contrasts this with students who don’t find themselves connected to the school. The same students who “hang around” and don’t have a lot of interest in learning, following with, “Parents can put things in front of you, but peer expectations play a bigger role, depending on how genuine those relationships are. Peers should push each other to do better and challenge themselves with difficult classes.” Still, Blaze knows the difficulty of potential situations, “Walking into a class of about thirty and knowing that ‘I’m the only one’ can be very intimidating,” he said. “If there aren’t any genuine peer relationships [in that situation] and the teacher isn’t [aware] of what’s going on then that student may walk out of that class and never look back.” “I was in those higher-level courses and I was one of two African Americans [at my school] who was in those classes, but I come back to those peer relationships because there were people there who made the effort to include me.” In fact, when Blaze was in school, the pressures to prove implicit bias wrong was always there. “Being one of those one or two black people in the class certainly I wanted to make a good showing because I didn’t want to be a situation where people were thinking I shouldn’t have been in there in the first place,” he said. “There were times in some classes where people were talking about their grades and it would be funny because some would be shocked that I might have gotten the highest grade on something or maybe I held the highest average in the class at one point... It was like, ‘Why are you surprised? What about me makes you think that I wouldn’t ordinarily be doing this?’” Implicit bias may seep into even the most innocent and unintentional places, it’s a remnant of many years of segregation, lack of civil rights and slavery. The history is dark and long and terrible for many, but that makes it even more important to remember.

However, people still attribute this lack of diversity back to intentional means of keeping students out of classes based on the color of their skin or their native language, but Blaze disagrees, “I think that the lack of representation is unintentional, but we do lack the intentionality of exposure. [Over time] we make assumptions, like ‘oh they know’ and we don’t expose all of the ethnicities to these higher-level classes.” This deficit in representation of all races and ethnicities and even genders is seen in many places in the United States today, in politics and entertainment especially. “Unfortunately, I think that a lot of things that happen in race relations has to do with what’s happening in our country. If there’s a culture of climate of inclusivity then we’ll see that as a society, that’ll come along, but if it’s divisive then we’ll see that as well.” As Martin Luther King Jr. once said, “We must learn to live together as brothers or perish together as fools.” This says a lot about where the United States is right now, as a nation, Blaze said. We are the melting pot, let’s truly be that melting pot and embrace and celebrate everyone for what they bring to the table, and live in community with each other. Once we finally embrace everyone for their differences as well as their similarities, we will rise together, standing in solitude for the lives lost in every battle this nation has fought.



As the community prepares to celebrate Black History Month, Counselor Crystal Arrington gave her perspective on diversity in schools, using her own experience in high school to compare with what she may see now. Arrington graduated from Cleveland High School, located in the suburbs of Cleveland, Ohio, in 1990. “My high school was very much like Stratford, in a sense,” Arrington said. “[There were] little sprinkles of many different cultures, we prided ourselves on diversity and embracing it, which was a blessing and a curse because I was living in a small ecosystem where everybody was about loving everybody.” But as many know, schools were not always as diverse as we know them now. In 1954, the Supreme Court officially declared school segregation unconstitutional, although the laws were not enforced in many areas until the 1970s. When Stratford was founded in 1974, the corresponding area included predominantly white, upper-middle-class families, newspaper advisor Janice Cummons said. Back then, Stratford’s biggest problem was students chewing gum in class. A lot has changed since then, Cummons continued. The school has grown to be the most diverse high school in the district, with a large spread of cultures, languages, customs, and practices shown in many places around the school. Despite this, “Some things have stayed the same,” Arrington said. “Even if you embrace diversity, there’s still a sense of comfort being with people that have things in common with you.” “If you come and visit the cafeteria you’ll see groups of students together, and sometimes that’s based on culture and sometimes it’s based just on having things in common,” Arrington said, continuing on diversity at school. “I think just being exposed to different cultures afforded me the opportunity to embrace diversity. And from that, I learned to exercise acceptance rather than tolerance.” The difference between the two being the concession that some are inferior, rather than an understanding that everyone is equal but different. In Arrington’s case, things were very different for her after high school, “I attended a PWI (predominantly white institution) after high school, and my expectation was that they were going to be operating essentially the same way as

Junior Tenaj Lowery came into her freshman year at Stratford like any other student, nervous and not sure what to expect. After her first week of class, Lowery realized how different she was from the majority of her peers. But this is common for most minority students. The ratio of minority to majority students has made it difficult for them to feel like they belong. At school, 51% of students are white, while 11% are black. “We feel the need to do more to be noticed,” said Lowery. “[It seems like] when a teacher looks at [majority students], they automatically think that they know the answer,” Lowery said. “They already have [good] expectations for them, and when they look at us, it’s the opposite. Not that they’re being racist, but they just don’t expect that from us.” These expectations make learning in some environments more difficult. For example, if the class was more homogenous then the variation in expectations may not be as much of a factor of implicit bias, rather in how hard the student works. “Sometimes we feel like we don’t meet the expectations to be in these upper-level classes. It’s really challenging when it doesn’t have to be,” Lowery said. “I feel like the [majority students] I’ve been around feel like they’re better than other people,” Lowery said. “So when it’s my turn to answer a question, I’m nervous because I don’t want them to feel like they’re better than me [if I answer incorrectly.]” Teachers play a large role in how minority students feel. When teachers don’t understand how these minority students feel when no one else in the room looks like them, the issue deepens. “The best teachers make me feel comfortable even if I have the wrong answer. They don’t try to hold it against me, they let me try over again until I have the right answer or rephrase the question to help me.” This is the way teachers should act instead of just giving up on a student after

my high school, and that was not the case,” she said. “There were a lot of students who were not willing to accept or tolerate diversity. So being in a situation where I still had to be myself, but be concerned about how I was perceived by others, some of who had never been exposed to people who looked like me, was a challenge at times, but it built character. It made me into the woman I am today.” These experiences are possibly some that high schoolers now may echo, in one way or another, whether at school or in public, they are more common than a lot of people may think. According to Arrington, experiences like hers are the reason she feels so strongly about the acceptance of everyone. “Once we can get to a point where we can accept each other for who we are and appreciate each other for who we are, despite implicit bias, and have the discipline to stop and think before we act. That’s where we’re going to see real change,” she said. Although strides have been made, Arrington continued, there is still a significant gap as it relates to the contributions that African Americans have made in all entities, and how they are recognized, in school’s curriculum and in publicity. “I think there’s been a shift since I’ve been here,” she said. “There are teachers who are taking active stances on being more inclusive to their students, they realize that when they do this, they will have more buy-in from the kids, especially if they depend on them to do well in their classes.” But inclusivity in the lessons learned isn’t the biggest issue seen in classrooms; it’s the diversity found in advanced courses. Imagine finding two random core-subject classrooms in the school; could you tell which one was grade-level and which one was advanced? Although this is not always the case, the lack of diversity found in advanced classes is prominent. “After being in AP classes since my freshman year, I’ve noticed that there is little diversity in my classes. The majority of students are white or Asian,” junior Kara Nagasaki said. Arrington credits this lack of diversity to a lack of exposure to the advantages of upper-level classes to some students when added to low parental expectations or lack of parental involvement. “I think there is a disconnect in parental expectations and student ability. By all means, I’ll be the first to say that we encourage students to aim high and take more advanced courses,” Arrington said. “I think it all comes back to socioeconomic status and exposure. Here at our school, [there are] some minorities [who are] just happy to be going to a good school.” Still, there are instances where implicit bias creeps in when students may say or think about what an AP student really looks like, their mental image may be based on people they’ve seen in these classes, however, an AP student can be defined as anyone willing to work hard in a challenging course. One of the many purposes of Black History Month is to recognize issues like this lack of diversity and work to make changes towards correcting it. As Nelson Mandela once said, “Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.” they give the wrong answer, Lowery added. As well as diversity in classrooms, one of the issues Lowery feels most passionate about is the use of the ‘N’ word. “I think [white people are] so comfortable with saying it because they weren’t taught how offensive it is,” said Lowery. The comfort in saying such a negative word is shown throughout pop culture. Rap music has normalized the use of a word with a racist, discriminatory and bloody history. “In music, you hear it a lot and a lot of people listen to the same music so they use the excuse that they heard it in a song so they can repeat the lyrics,” said Lowery. “[But] I don’t think black people should use it as comfortably as they do. I think that if we have something for others, it should be for us too.” The ‘N’ word was repopularized with the rise of legendary rap group NWA and many other popular rap artists in the 1990s. Since then, the use of the word throughout pop culture has been prevalent despite calls from activists to stop use of the word entirely. Conversations about issues like the use of the ‘N’ word show the need for change in society, despite strides made, the conversation is far from over. “I don’t feel like anything has really changed because we’re still discriminated based on the color of our skin, excluded from things, and overall just dealing with the same stuff,” Lowery said. “We have to be so perfect in everything because automatically when a person sees us, they’re already judging us by the color of our skin. We shouldn’t have to live everyday feeling like we’re being judged or that we have to change the way we are to fit people’s expectations.” Discrimination is one thing African American people deal with on a daily basis, Black History Month is used to bring awareness to issues still prominent in race relations today.





# A World Series Title with an Asterisk

The Astros walked away with a World Series title in 2017, but a new factor debates that award

WRITTEN BY JACKSON ALLRED

It is just about 9 p.m. local time in Los Angeles, CA on Nov. 1, 2017. The 54,000 attendees at Dodger Stadium twiddle their thumbs while Jose Altuve calmly executes a ground out to Yuli Gurriel; a play Altuve has performed 2,528 times before.

Only this time, it was anything but ordinary. With that out, the Houston Astros had just won their first World Series title in its 55-year franchise history in spectacular fashion. Astros players rushed the field in jubilation while embracing teammates and coaches. In a thrilling 7-game World Series, the Houston Astros took down Yu Darvish, Clayton Kershaw, Cody Bellinger, and the rest of the loaded Los Angeles Dodgers.

Just a few months after the infamous Hurricane Harvey devastated the city of Houston, the Astros were a glimmer of hope for H-town. Houstonians welcomed back the Astros with a parade to city hall where hundreds of fans gathered around the downtown streets to celebrate the Astros' first title. For the next several weeks, a sense of elation and triumph flooded the city.

Several seasons have passed since, but the 2017 Houston Astros

PHOTOS COURTESY OF LUKE BROUSSARD

team still holds a special place in every Houstonian's heart. This team was the epitome of Houston Strong; a team that was at the bottom of the standings at the end of the 2013 season to a team that overcame



## Astros Pride

More than 43,000 baseball fans pack Minute Maid Park to watch Game 5 of the 2017 World Series. At five hours and seventeen minutes, this game is the 3rd longest World Series game in MLB history.

adversity to win it all in 2017. The 2017 Houston Astros was more than a baseball team; they represented perseverance, committed, and hard work.

But that all changed in November

of last year. Two years after the Astros defeated the Dodgers, former Astros pitcher Mike Fiers publicized disturbing news about the 2017 Astros.

Fiers, who was a part of Houston's roster during the 2017 season, informed The Athletic that the Astros used a secret camera beyond the outfield to give their batters an advantage. According to Fiers, the camera in the outfield would film the opposing catcher giving signals to his pitcher. Astros staff members in the dugout at Minute Maid Park would see the video in real time and decrypt the signals through noises to inform the batter at the plate what pitch would be thrown at him. You can call him a snitch, a whistle-blower, or even an informant. But one thing is for sure; Mike Fiers brought to light something that had been swept under the rug by the entire Astros organization for more than two years. Shortly after Fiers' statement that indicated a cheating operation in the Astros' organization, the MLB began an investigation. During the league's two-month investigation, a number of rumors and speculations about

the Astros' sign-stealing campaign came to life. But it wasn't until Jan. 13, 2020, that the MLB would release its findings. The MLB confirmed that the Astros used cameras targeted on the opposing catcher to relay messages to its batters. As punishment, Houston was fined \$5 million, lost its first and second round draft picks for the next two years, and suspended both manager A.J. Hinch and general manager Jeff Luhnow from the league for one year. Subsequently, Astros owner Jim Crane fired Hinch and Luhnow from the organization.

How could the beloved Astros that gave the city a glimmer of hope after Hurricane Harvey cut corners during the historic 2017 season? How could the players that represented Houston Strong just two seasons ago now be called cheaters? This sign-stealing scandal has certainly left a metaphoric asterisk next to the Astros' 2017 World Series title that will ultimately damage the credibility of that team's success and character. But it is up to you, as a Houstonian and an Astros fan, to decide for yourself what that World Series championship means to you.

## Boys' Soccer

PHOTOS BY JACKSON ALLRED

As the boys' varsity squad enters the last stretch of their regular season, here are some of their best moments thus far



### Free Kickin'

Senior Milan Jokic analyzes the goal as he prepares for a free kick against Cy Ridge. Jokic has been on the varsity team since he was a sophomore



### Gooooaaalll

The boys' varsity team celebrates a goal from senior Francies Galdino. Galdino's goal during the second half was the last score in the Spartans 3-0 victory over Cy Ridge.



### Fan Appreciation

The boys' varsity soccer team walks over to the sideline while clapping their hands after a district victory over Cy Ridge. The team does this after every match to show appreciation to the fans who came out to support.

### Boxing Out

Near the end of the game, junior Chris Mandundu shields the Cy Ridge defender from the ball on the sideline. After playing on the JV team for two years, this is his first year on varsity.



## New XFL Season

This new style of football will be a big success or a huge fail

WRITTEN BY KYLE ZABROSKI

The XFL is a new football league that WWE owner Vince McMahon is reinstalling. XFL stands for extreme Football League. It is a planned professional football league that will have higher scoring games and more highlight plays.

There are some new rules changes that are questionable but most of the rules come from the NFL and NCAA. Some of the new questionable rules are allowing two forward passes before the ball passes the line of scrimmage and no extra point kick. Instead they will have three options, a one point conversion from the two yard line, a two point conversion from the five yard line, or a three point conversion from the ten yard line.

It will have 8 new teams that will start playing each other on February 8. They will play in the spring so they do not cross paths with the NFL and NCAA and have less competition. The XFL was first created in 2001 but due to lack of viewers and poor planning, Vince McMahon had to shut it down after one season. At the end of the season we will see if the XFL is a huge success, or will it be a big fail ... again.



# 1 ONE ON ONE

## with Coach Siemers

WRITTEN BY REED HOWELL  
PHOTO FROM COACH SIEMERS

**Q:** What are your goals for the track team this year?

**A:** The team goal is always to win district, progress past regional, area, and then state. Individually, the goal is for every person to compete at PR (Personal Record).

**Q:** How do you individually prepare runners for the meets?

**A:** Every event has their own training plan so nobody is doing the same things. We always take them from where they are now and work to progress them to the next level. I know what level we need to be at to win in varsity, we just go through the steps to get you to that point.

**Q:** What are you most excited about for this upcoming track season?

**A:** There's 13 events so I'm excited about 13 different things. On that note, I guess I'm really excited to see how the relays come together. With that event we pull from all different events to make it happen, so that is kind of a showcase of our program as a whole.

**Q:** How do you integrate the Cross Country runners and their early morning practice into track season?

**A:** Cross Country practices in the morning work on all of the long distance events, and the afternoon practice is all of the sprints.

**Q:** How do you plan to make sure that Stratford can separate themselves from the other track teams they will compete against this season?

**A:** Honestly, I don't think about the other track teams when we are training. I'm focused on making each of our athletes the best at what they do. Then we will find out during our meets how we match up against

the other schools. Not being here last year, I'm not really sure how things are different with the Stratford track team this year.

**Q:** Do you have any other thoughts or anything else to say about this year's track team?

**A:** We're going to be good, we are going to be really good.



### Race to the Finish

Coach Siemers pushes his daughter, Anna, through the finish line during the Houston Marathon on January 27. This was their fifth time running the Houston Marathon together.

## ATHLETE OF THE WEEK

Senior Luke Reed looks forward to upcoming Water Polo season

WRITTEN BY NATHAN SICILIANO PHOTO COURTESY OF STRATFORD BOOSTER CLUB

Normally waking up at 5:30 for practice every morning, Stratford's swimming program takes a lot out of its swimmers. But for people like Luke Reed, things are the way they should be. Luke has been one of Stratford's top swimmers over the past three years. Recently competing in the regional and district meet, Luke has qualified for State. Luke placed 3rd at the district meet, and then in the Top 8 at the regional meet in the 200 IM and 100 Breast events. Competing in the 200 Medley relay, Luke along with Max Zuanich, Henry Genez, and Keagan Firenza, won district and then qualified for State at regionals. Luke and the rest of the Stratford Swimming Program have definitely displayed that their willingness to work hard has paid off.



## Signing Day

Six seniors officially sign to where they will be attending next year for various sports

PHOTO BY PAIGE CLARK



Tyler Zyroll committed to Vernon College, Jackson Ware committed to Millsaps, and Clayton Miller committed to Wash U (St. Louis); All three will be playing baseball. Continuing their football career, Jaevon Brandon committed to Sul Ross, Van Heitmann committed to Rice, and Pius Njenge committed to Southern Nazarene.

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# Spartan Baseball: A lot to look forward to

An early glance at Stratford's baseball program with Junior pitcher Luke Broussard

WRITTEN BY NATHAN SICILIANO PHOTOS COURTESY STRATFORD SMUGMUG

Finishing with a 22-11 overall record and a Bi-District Championship under their belt, Coach Humphrey's boys were pretty darn good last year, and they might be even better this coming season. Spartan Baseball ended district play in 3rd place with a 13-3 record. This was then followed by run into the second round of playoffs where they heartbreakingly lost to Ridge Point.

Away from the diamond, however, the team managed to generate a lot of support. After a statement win against Memorial @ MHS, Stratford America was excited, and so were the players. Junior pitcher Luke Broussard is new to varsity this year, but shares the same excitement for the 2020 season.

Key contributors to the Spartan's success last year were a select group seniors. Cullen Hannigan, Jackson Ware. Kyle Storemski, Ben Janacek, and Brady Putnik all signed to continue their baseball careers at the next level. Joined with six others, the standard was obviously pushed to a high level. With these eleven gone, it is easy to think that the team cannot possibly as good. However, guys like Clayton Miller, Mark Perkins, Bryce Calloway and Tab Tracy have stepped up. Clayton Miller is committed to

the University of Washington in St. Louis, while Mark Perkins is verbally committed to Rice University. When asked what its like being teammates with Clayton and Mark, Luke Broussard said "It is really cool to see how these guys prepare and how they go to work every day." Broussard also added "If I can replicate what they do, then I'm going to be in pretty good shape and so are my teammates."

Besides being just baseball players, the team "is a close knit group of guys" said Broussard, "and we all have a goal in mind, we know what we want to do."

The team also competed in the TASO tournament this past fall. Scoring 54 runs in 5 games, they advanced to the finals and finished in second place.

With plenty of baseball still to play, the team's early success has them fired up for what is ahead. Asking Broussard what he thinks of the team this year, he said "I think were gonna be pretty good this year. I'll leave it at that."

For an extended baseball schedule, go to [www.shsboosterclub.com](http://www.shsboosterclub.com).



The Fall Varsity Group poses for a picture after the TASO Championship. Coming in second place, the team learned about themselves as a group and how to move forward.

## Baseball Schedule

2/14 @ Tompkins 4:30 p.m.  
2/18 @ New Caney 5 p.m.  
2/21 @ Travis 4 p.m.  
2/24 @ Grand Oaks 6 p.m.  
2/27 Home 2 p.m. and 7 p.m.  
2/28 Home 2 p.m. and 5 p.m.  
2/29 Home 3:30 p.m.  
3/3 @ Spring Woods 7 p.m.

3/5 @ Smithson Valley HS 8 p.m.  
3/6 @ Smithson Valley HS 3 p.m.  
3/6 @ New Braunfels HS 8 p.m.  
3/10 Home 7 p.m.  
3/12 @ Frankie Field 11 a.m. and 1:30 p.m.  
3/13 @ Ridgepoint 11 a.m. and 1:30 p.m.

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# — perspectives — Iranian Conflict Story

The story of the ongoing Iran conflict from a new perspective

WRITTEN BY GRACE HARE

PHOTOS BY THE ECONOMIST

When President Trump ordered Iranian General Soleimani to be killed, the world buzzed with the news. A heavy question mark hung over the event, and tensions rose within hours between Iran and the U.S. Throughout America, people have conflicting opinions on current events, but many feel that the decision that President Trump made was in the best interests of the nation, even if the secrecy is suspicious.

Iranian junior Taha Addwi has seen the tensions arise from the lens of someone with was born in Iran and lived there until he was 11. When he was younger, conflict between the two different Muslim tribes led his mother to seek asylum in the U.S. “We lived in a Sunni city and the Shia came to house, seeking to invade the city,” he said, “They were banging on the door, so she told us to run into the back yard, and the men tried to kill her,” Addwi said.

Their family then contacted their uncle, who was

a police officer in Iran. “Just like American officials have different ranks of authority, so do Iranians,” Addwi explained, “My uncle was the highest level of authority, and he helped us come to America.”

Moving to America, Addwi traveled with his older sister and his mother, while his father stayed in Iran. “Right now, especially because Iran is next to Iraq he is very scared because he could be killed in conflict,” Addwi said.

However, these different tribes of Islam also led to conflicting beliefs on President Trump and the Iranian conflict. “Iran is very angry because they lost a very special soldier,” Addwi said. During the memorial service for the General, several people were trampled to death in the fury following his murder.

This is not surprising news, after the military honored Soleimani received for pushing out rebel forces in Syria. Yet, evidence had arisen that



## The rise of tension

With two political figures butting heads, uncertainty surrounds the future relationship of these two nations.

## It's No Laughing Matter

Bellaire HS shooting reignites gun debate

WRITTEN BY JACK WEATHERLY

GRAPHIC BY GOLDEN COSMOS

The sound of loud footsteps in a silent hallway get closer. Doors are slammed, locks are turned, lights are off. Heartbeats spike as a lock rattles only a few feet away. An eye peeks in through a window and sees high school students huddled together, all cowering. In an instant, gunshots and screams penetrate the air, increasing exponentially with every pop... Seconds, minutes, hours pass as the gunman is eventually caught. Fifteen are found dead, many more are injured. A community mourns its losses.

How has the tragedy of innocent children or teens dying in a place where they should feel safe become just another story on the 6 p.m. news? How is it that students around the country have become accustomed to the worry that one day, their school could be next? How is it that despite the countless lives lost, the chances of another one happening still go up?

Now this violence is hitting closer to home. On Jan. 14, 2020, Bellaire High School joined the many schools that know what the tragedy of a shooting feels like. This list most recently includes the Santa Fe school shooting in 2018, and the Bellaire shooting on Jan. 14, 2020, which occurred only 17.2 miles away from school.

After a few major shootings in 2019, more and more people have become numb to the fact that these devastations are becoming a motif in America's schools.

There have been 68 major school shootings since the Columbine tragedy in 1999 some of which include: Sandy Hook in 2012, Santa Fe and Parkland, Florida shootings in 2018. Since Sandy Hook, the United States has not gone more than 231 days without a school shooting.

This statistic should be startling to most, but it isn't. School shootings have become a trend in today's society, no one should have to go to school everyday with the lingering thought: There could be a shooter in my school today.

In an article for the Houston Chronicle, Bellaire HS junior Mizuki Kai said, “A 16-year-old should be choosing between chicken nuggets and sandwiches for lunch, not between safety and education. A high school student should be choosing between wearing a jacket and a sweater to school, not between whether a sound in the hallway was a gunshot or a textbook dropping on the floor.”



## New Year, Same Tragedy

The Bellaire High School shooting that occurred on Jan. 14, 2020 was the first school shooting of the new year. It occurred close to home, only 17.2 miles away.

In recent years, the U.S. is averaging a school shooting every 77 days. There have been 235 incidents of gunfire on school campuses that have occurred since 2018, resulting in 93 deaths and 168 injuries.

Students have become numb to the fact that these tragic and fatal school shootings are increasing.

People may ask, what about lock down drills? Don't they teach students how to get out of the school safely?

The simple answer is yes, but what about the possibility that the shooter is another student? This unnerving fact brings up an important point: are these drills even effective? We have them for a reason, but the statistics do not lie. A lock down drill will not save students from being in the wrong place at the wrong time, and losing their lives for it.

It's time to take this threat seriously; it's no laughing matter.

Soleimani was part of a plot to attack the embassy. “Before President Trump killed the Iranian General my mom thought he was a bad president, focused on killing Muslims, but my family thinks he did the right thing, because the general was plotting to attack the U.S. embassy,” Addwi said.

With the threats and concerns of World War III, many people question whether a war with Iran is a true concern. However, Addwi is not worried that the tension may lead to war.

“No, I do not think there will be a war,” he said, “Because no one wants to go to war with America, we spend a lot of money on the military, more than any other country,” Addwi said.

However, sophomore Lulu Saweh feels differently. Born in Houston, Lulu's family is from Syria. “We were going to move back to Syria 8 years ago, but stayed in America when the war started,” she said. “My family doesn't discuss politics behind Trump's decisions,” she said.

While Saweh is hopeful and “optimistic” that the tension will not lead to any further conflict or war, she believes that it might lead to further conflict out of retaliation. “I think it is possible but I believe the conflict has settled down a little,” she said.

## If School Starts To Snowball

A student's perspective on how to handle overwhelming classes

WRITTEN BY LUCAS BERTRAM

Do you ever get the feeling that no matter what you try, everything, and everyone, is just out to get you? Well you're not alone, I've been there before, and it really stinks.

Ever since sixth grade, it's been feeling like everyone is out to get me when it comes to school. I started to shut down. It felt like the work was too hard, or there was too much of it. I'd ask a teacher for help, but they would just say “You should have been listening.”

My grades started to drop; I even changed schools in 8th grade. It was like all of my problems began to get bigger, and bigger, like a snowball rolling down a hill, increasing in size the farther it rolled.

Meanwhile, my brother and sister were star students. They got all A's every year. They made honor roll, and eventually even went on to top tier colleges while I was stuck taking medication and seeing counselors, but nothing got fixed.

Then it was the first day of high school, and at this point, I had completely lost faith in myself. “I'm going to fail,” I told myself “after barely passing through middle school, there's no way I'm going to survive high school”.

I was right. After the first year of high school, I failed two classes, and had to do summer school. The next year, I couldn't even bring myself to look at my report card.

Even through all of this hardship, I never gave up completely. I'm still trying in my own way, and in some of my classes now, things are almost starting to get just a little bit better. So, if you find yourself getting crushed by the ever-growing snowball that is school, try not to give up. Tomorrow is another day, and if you keep trying, the snowball might even melt. It happens one assignment at a time, in one class at a time.



## Social Media Gone Sour

A glance into shifting Internet culture

WRITTEN BY ELLIOT SCHEIN

While early forms of social media were present as early as the 1970's, the past decade displayed the sharpest rise in the popularity of social media so far and marked a shift in the way people live their lives.

Before 2010, two of the largest social media platforms, Facebook and Twitter, were launched. Then, in the last decade, many more came into play, including Instagram, Snapchat, Vine, and Musical.ly.

In the beginning, social media platforms were a great place for anyone who wanted to document important events in their lives, connect with others, and express their creativity. Many social media users dedicated their time to creating lighthearted pages as a way to show off their personalities. It seemed like a miracle for people to have their own network of interests and a place where they could feel included.

However, this period of internet asylum was short lived. By the time the decade neared its end, an obvious change had occurred in the way people use and view social media. As people have become addicted to smartphones, their attitudes have changed.

The internet has gone from a place of sharing to a place of boasting and jealousy. Online trends happen more frequently now than they used to, perhaps because everyone has become obsessed with being like the people who show up on their feed. The increase of short, viral videos has shortened most social media users' attention spans and the importance of a good, online self-image has increased.

It's clear to see the difference by scanning through current vs. older Instagram accounts. Just a few years ago, accounts were valued by the quality of their content. It was normal to have hundreds of posts and to post weekly or even daily.

These days, it seems like it's only acceptable

to post every once in awhile, and the posts must be ones that show off the user looking their best or gloating the most fun things they've experienced. The rise in this egotistical mindset has not gone unnoticed. Recently, there have been movements to try combat the tension that's becoming more prevalent on social media. These include the trending of the hashtag #makeinstagramcasualagain and captions urging others to "make your insta more authentic to you."



## Movie Review: Little Women

A look inside the new film and how audiences are feeling

WRITTEN BY LAURA KOERNER

Most are familiar with the story of the March sisters: Meg the actress, Amy the artist, Beth the pianist, and Jo the beloved writer.

Louisa May Alcott's "Little Women" has been read and loved over generations for the message of family, individuality, and courage in the face of adversity. There have been different plays and movie adaptations made about the cherished classic, but never before has the story been encompassed as it has been by the modern flare of filmmaker Greta Gerwig. The scene layouts were completely different from the book and the beloved 1994 version starring Winona Ryder and Christian Bale. The scenes shifted seamlessly between the past and the future, which added to the emphasis of the story and helped the audience understand the characters and how their lives progressed throughout.



Gerwig incorporates modern language that transcends the message of the novel. She writes a quote meant to be spoken by Jo March, "Women have minds and souls as well as just hearts, and they've got ambition and talent as well as just beauty." This quote translates the message Louisa May Alcott had to share with the world from 1868 to 2020 about the individuality of any mind and soul, regardless of their gender or features.

The casting of the film was impeccable with Timothée Chalamet as Laurie, Laura Dern as Marmee, Emma Watson as Meg, Meryl Streep as the hilarious Aunt March, Saoirse Ronan as Jo, Florence Pugh as Amy, and Eliza Scanlen as Beth. These actors not only

masterfully reveal the true spirit of sisterhood that Alcott describes in the book, but they also divulge the solitary individualism behind each character.

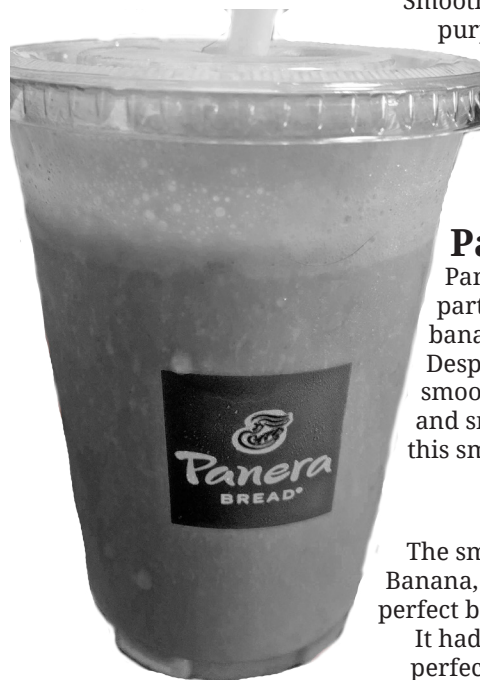
Just like the book, Gerwig takes us on a journey with the sisters. We fuss with Meg as she hurries to get ready for the dance, we stay up late with Jo, hands ink-stained from writing, we tremble with excitement with Beth as she sets her fingers on the keys of the grand piano, and we sketch by the ocean with Amy as she dreams of a future of her own making.

The story of Little Women brings people together to laugh, weep, and purely recognize what it means to be human while also teaching us a thing or two. The cast and crew of this outstanding beacon of a movie will move you more than you thought they could and will leave you with tears in your eyes.

## Smoothies of Houston: A Food Review

Take a look at some of the best smoothies in Houston

STORY AND PHOTOS BY JACKSON COSSEY



Smoothie King's mantra is "Smoothies with a purpose," so the menu is divided according to the smoothie's purpose: Fitness, slim, wellness, or take a break. If you're unsure of where to begin, and you're a fan of strawberries and bananas, start with Angel Food. The Angel Food smoothie has 350 calories, but you can say "Make it Skinny" and save 100 calories. This move cuts out the extra sugar in the smoothie. Angel Food is a bestseller for the franchise, and I can see why. The smoothie is sweet, luscious, and leaves you wanting more after the last sip. Although it's not particularly packed with nutritional value, the Angel Food Smoothie is a delight for your senses. I'd rate the Angel Food smoothie an 8 out of 10.

### Panera Bread

Panera Bread's Strawberry and Banana smoothie was overall satisfactory but not particularly life-changing. The taste of strawberries was much more present than the bananas. It tastes like the fruit used in the smoothie is very fresh and not old and frozen. Despite its sweetness, its after-taste was bland. Compared to Smoothie King's Angel Food smoothie, I would say that it's not as appetizing. Smoothie King's smoothie has a more even and smooth texture, while Panera's has notably more bits of ice in it. Overall, I would give this smoothie a rating of 7 out of 10.

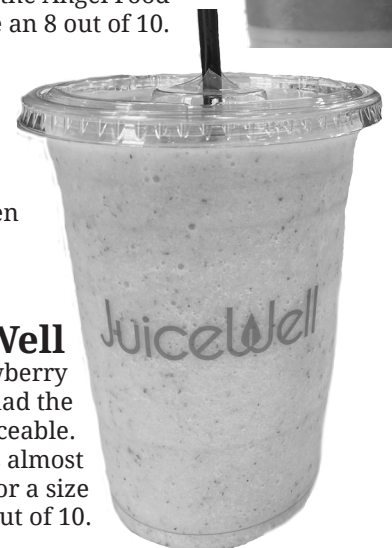
### Smoothie King

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### Juice Well

The smoothie I had was called Strawberry Sentiment. This is Juice Well's version of a Strawberry Banana, but with a twist of pineapple, mint, and orange juice. Overall, it was really good. It had the perfect balance of all the fruits, but just like the Panera smoothie, the chunks of ice were noticeable. It had a slightly minty aftertaste that left your palette begging for more. The smoothie was almost perfect, but it was almost too icy. It had a high price point at 8 dollars, which is a bit high for a size small smoothie. Overall, I would give the Strawberry Sentiment an 8 out of 10.





# The New Sheriff in Town

With an interim acting principal, students list qualities they want to see

WRITTEN AND GRAPHICS BY BLAKE TODES

With a new principal on the horizon for the future, students, faculty, and parents hope this new principal will be able to form a strong connection to the community. However, what students want from a principal generally includes empathetic and trusting attitudes towards the students, as well as a more personalized relationship with the students.

Senior Madison Peters puts great emphasis on an empathetic principal. “A good quality I would want in a principal would be empathy. Being able to relate to others and their struggles is an important trait to have,” Peters said.

Senior Catherine Wu elaborates on Peters’ belief of having an empathetic principal by prioritizing a close relationship between the principal and students that allows for significant transparency. “A principal should have honesty with a transparency that allows students to trust their principal just as they would trust their dad,” Wu said.

Students also believe a principal needs to be open-minded to the concerns of all. Senior Sage Pollock agrees with this assertion. “A caring principal who is a good listener, open minded, and puts students’ safety first is best for a school,” Pollock said.

Open-mindedness ties in with an empathetic attitude as a principal of this caliber is able to implement policies that are in the best interests of everyone on campus. Students on campus feel excluded and unheard by the administration and are looking for a principal that will listen to their concerns, rather than question or ignore them.

Junior Zoe Hancock is one of many students who feels she is not being listened to on campus. “I want someone who will genuinely listen to students, our feelings and compliments. Someone who will take our problems into consideration,” Hancock said.

## KEY PRINCIPAL QUALITIES

### EMPATHY

A principal should forge close relationships with their students. The principal should strive to seek stronger connections with the Student Council and Executive Board.

### OPEN MINDED

A principal must respect the opinions and ideas of students, parents, and faculty to allow for policies that accommodate the needs of all.

### ENGAGED

A principal should focus on being involved in the growth of students’ knowledge.

### ASSERTIVE

A principal must be able to stand up for their proposals and principles while maintaining the students’ best interests.

### INTEGRITY

A principal must be able to transparently communicate with students, parents, and faculty about school events or changes in school policy.

Sophomore Guilana Sodaro carries the same attitude regarding principals. “An understanding and empathetic principal is necessary because a lot of principals forget what it’s like to be a teenager,” Sodaro said.

While being empathetic towards students’ situations is an important quality to have in a high school principal, it is necessary to

understand that the principal’s actions go beyond the students and other significant qualities are also needed.

A high school principal must fully understand and be connected to the community they serve. Preferably, high schools should have a principal who has lived in the area for a significant amount of time, so they understand the unique

characteristics of the area.

A principal who is disconnected from the community they serve will be seen as out of touch by students, parents, and faculty and will likely not be respected as much.

The five students interviewed all agree on the top qualities of a principal. Let us know what you think by emailing us at [thestratfordoracle@gmail.com](mailto:thestratfordoracle@gmail.com).

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The Oracle serves as a public forum of student expression

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**713-251-3454**



# Food Truck Friday Joys

Instead of 60 minutes, students get 90

PHOTOS AND CAPTIONS BY PAIGE CLARK



## Not Only Food

Along with food, this special day includes games for the students. Sophomore Teddy Rutt takes advantage of the games while also enjoying his extra 30 minutes for lunch.



## Many Great Choices

Senior Connor Smith surveys the menu outside of the food truck. With an overwhelming amount of choices, it's difficult to pick. There's something for everyone, ranging in prices from \$5 to \$15.

## Enjoying Their First Year

Freshmen are always in for a treat when they discover the joys of Food Truck Fridays. Tatiana Britto acquired loaded fries to share with her friends, as well as enjoying each other's company.



## Everyone Wants a Taste

Food trucks are seen with record long lines. The wait is necessary to try the wonderful food served. This past Friday we had two new trucks added to the mix generating new excitement and new things for the students to try.



## Ready for the Rush

Before the bell dismissing a surge of students, food trucks line up. They're ready for the influx of kids and cash. Sometimes the trucks get here as early as two hours before in order to start preparing food and get a good spot at the beginning of the line. The trucks have to come prepared in order to be able to serve the large number of students.

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