

THE CROSSING

Robert Turner College
and Career High School

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Excited students cheer for the teachers' team in the students vs. teachers volleyball tournament during the Homecoming Carnival on Oct. 29.



HOCO 2021

Railcats get back to business after a year apart

Railcats take band, color guard to competition

Young money: THS student entrepreneurs

Turner spotlight: Debate, AcaDec, basketball, FFA

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THE CROSSING

Robert Turner College and Career High School



To see the carnival and footage from homecoming week, check out RCN, Episode 2

WANDER THE HALLS: Students explore the culinary wing during the homecoming carnival.

"Only our juniors and seniors had ever experienced a high school homecoming week."

HOME COMING'S HOME COMING

After a year away, festivities resume

Homecoming, according to Student Council sponsor Robert Hoffman, is "an odd time for Turner." As a school without traditional sports teams, the question can easily arise: what should homecoming celebrations really be about for this school? But Hoffman believes the answer to understanding Turner's homecoming, and especially its traditional carnival celebration, is simple.

"I like to think the carnival gives students further insight into what makes Turner special. We have so much else to celebrate," Hoffman said. "The carnival provides an opportunity to celebrate their school

pride as well as the opportunity to learn more about the various clubs and organizations we have here on campus."

After a year when all such activities were halted due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Hoffman said, planning the carnival with student council this year felt especially important.

"Planning the carnival was an enjoyable experience for me, especially following a year where we were unable to host this kind of event," Hoffman said. "The absence of such events impacts the overall culture of the school. Basically, only

our juniors and seniors had ever experienced a high school homecoming week."

For senior Ayman Ahmed, having the event back was "incredibly refreshing."

"I am currently a senior and even though it has been a while since I last attended a Turner carnival, the carnival this year made me feel like a freshman all over again and feel like stuff was somewhat going back to normal," Ahmed said. "It was amazing to be outside and see students enjoy themselves at school, considering all that is happening around us."

After a Homecoming Week which included dress-up days and a hall decorating contest, on Friday, students explored a carnival in which twenty-three student organizations offered food and games, including two food trucks, a dance room, karaoke, a cake walk, a pie-in-the-face booth, and a teacher dunk tank.

Students also signed up to participate in a teachers vs. students volleyball tournament that ran eliminations throughout the week and culminated in the final game on Friday.

"We wanted to host some type of student tournament that we felt would attract a diverse group of students," Hoffman said. "Volleyball tends to be more co-ed friendly as well, which is why we chose it over other sports."

Eighteen total teams signed up. Hoffman estimated that between 150 and 180 students participated, "with even more being there to cheer them on."

Such a large event had its challenges, Hoffman said. Student council faced difficulties with food trucks, providing space for students who did not want to participate in the carnival or be in large crowds, and the "always chaotic" aspect of selling tickets beforehand.

Hoffman said he has received feedback on improving next year's carnival.

"Students would like to have the carnival last longer than one and a half hours, they would like more food options because a few groups sold out very early on and the food truck lines were extremely long," Hoffman said.

Students also suggested having a map of booths and prices available for next year.

Freshman Jessica Fernandez said she enjoyed the carnival and felt comfortable with the management of COVID precautions, but also voiced the desire for more activities and a more spread-out setup.

"I feel like things were maybe a little too condensed into the areas they were in," Fernandez said. "You have the whole track and I feel that it should have been utilized."

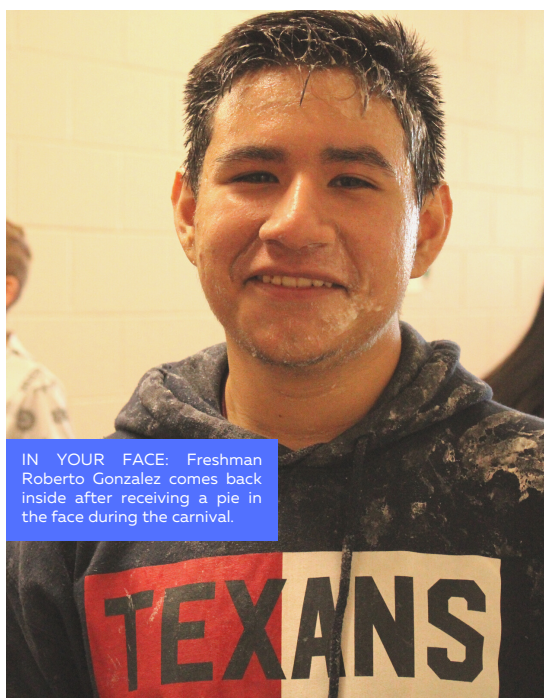
Despite organizational issues, overall Ahmed felt the carnival experience to be a positive one.

"I loved how the carnival was not confined to being inside only, as the weather was gorgeous on the day of the carnival, so being outside really made it feel like an actual carnival," Ahmed said. "It was great to experience the carnival one last time, and be outside with my friends enjoying all the amazing activities."

CHEER SECTION: Freshmen Hannah Hawkins and Presley Mealer cheer for the faculty vs. students volleyball game.



SPIKE IT: Teacher Kyle Riggs sends the ball back over the net during the homecoming volleyball game.



IN YOUR FACE: Freshman Roberto Gonzalez comes back inside after receiving a pie in the face during the carnival.



SERVE'S UP: Junior Amelia Cantu serves the ball during the homecoming volleyball game on Friday.



LET'S ROLL: Junior Ivan Pochynyuk operates a robot as part the Pearadox robotics club activity at the carnival.



Above: Percussionists Danny Haton, freshman (bottom, second from right) and Alex Teal, senior (bottom, fourth from right) perform as a member of the Pearland High School band at the Bands of America super regional competition held November 5-6 in San Antonio, Texas.

THS STUDENTS

GET LOUD

Band, color guard members
perform at super regional
Bands of America competition

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The story of the Pearland High School band's trip to San Antonio to compete in the super regional Bands of America competition is a story told in moments.

Moment: curling up at 4 a.m. to catch some extra sleep in a parking lot after the bus arrived a few hours late.

Moment: meals almost primarily consisting of sandwiches grabbed between practices, performances, and more practices.

Moment: the chaos aboard a bus as color guard members shouted for lipstick, perfected each others' hair and ensured makeup matched uniforms before filing out onto the field.

Moment: when someone tripped and fell on the field during the performance.

Moment: waiting with bated breath for results to be announced and the rush of elation when the numbers were released.



Left: Pearland HS band and color guard perform on the football field. **Upper right:** Pearland color guard members take a break after practice. Turner students pictured include: far left, sophomore Morgan Rolater; third from left, freshman Rylie McBayne; third from right, freshman Kaylee Gray. **Bottom right:** Band students settle in for the long bus drive to San Antonio.

All those moments added up to the Pearland HS band placing 14th against seventy-two other 6A high school bands at the Bands of America super regional competition held in San Antonio on November 5-6.

Despite not advancing past super regionals as part of the top twelve, band members were proud of their hard-won place.

"According to a local radio station we were listening to while we were there, it's harder to crack the top fourteen in San Antonio than at super nationals," freshman Luke Carp said. "So that's pretty good."

Freshman Danny Haton, a member of the percussion line, felt that the band's performance was "decent," despite having a few issues with people tripping during the performance.

"Our director said it was really good," Haton said. "I think it was decent, although it wasn't our best one."

The trip itself was an adventure, according to freshman Bradley Pittman.

"Three of the buses arrived four hours late on the first day when we were supposed to leave," Pittman said. "We ended up sleeping on the ground in forty degree weather."

In San Antonio, Pittman said, the band got to visit the Riverwalk, Rivercenter Mall, and blow off steam at Dave & Buster's.

Freshman Rylie McBayne joined color guard after being "recruited from someone who had started going to practices, and I started liking it and started being part of it." Despite all the work involved in learning the routine, which she says "takes most of my time," McBane plans to continue color guard next year.

"It's something different, and it really takes the whole team," McBayne said.

DEBATE

BRAND-NEW DEBATE TEAM ADVANCES TO FINALS AT CLEAR BROOK TOURNAMENT

Senior Sarah Tansey and sophomore Zora Smith advanced to finals in the Clear Brook High School In-Person IQT speech and debate tournament Nov 5-6.

Both Tansey and Smith advanced in Program Oral Interpretation, an event in which students develop and deliver an argumentative script of thematically-linked selections from prose, poetry, and drama in order to advocate for a cause. Tansey's program, "Caged," focused on the dangers of emotional and psychological abuse. She finished first and second in two preliminary rounds, and took sixth place in the finals.

Smith's program, titled "Breathe," focused on the impact of exposure to police violence on mental health. She finished third and first in the preliminary rounds and fourth in finals.

"I enjoyed the experience. For the next competition, I really look forward to living in the moment, absorbing the talent around me, and grasping what it means to be a true competitor," Smith said.

This year's debate team is comprised of all first-year debaters, according to debate coach Trebor Holland.

In Lincoln-Douglas debate, sophomores Elham Pharayra and Reese Townsend debated through four preliminary rounds on the topic of the right of workers to strike.

Sophomore Zora Smith, left, and senior Sarah Tansey, right, show off their medals at the Clear Brook High School In-Person IQT speech and debate tournament. Smith and Tansey both advanced to finals.

"I'm proud of my students' courage and tenacity in the face of so many obstacles presented at the competition," debate coach Trebor Holland said. "They went into each round with courage and dignity. I can't wait to see what they do in the spring."



ACADEMIC DECATHLON

TEAM MAKES TOP 10 AT FRIENDSWOOD

After a long day of test-taking, the Academic Decathlon team claimed a spot in the top ten teams at the Friendswood Invitational Academic Decathlon meet Saturday, Nov. 14.

Freshman Lydia Greer led the team as the highest individual scorer overall. Greer also placed second in the mathematics portion of the competition.

The team will compete next at Pearland High School on December 4.

Photo above, top left to right: freshman Lydia Greer, junior Teagan Decker, freshman Caleb Fincher, freshman Marvin Ruiz-Martinez, senior Kaylee Castro, freshman Mathew Trigueros, sophomore Thomas Lambert, sophomore Antonio Davidson, sophomore Reese Townsend, junior Michael Jones, sophomore Benjamin Chicoria, sophomore Henry Delacruz, sophomore Andrew Jolly. Bottom left to right: junior Mya Copper, freshman Aminah Ahmed, sophomore Katalina Torres, junior Samantha Talavera, and sophomore Kaytlynn Norman.



FFA

FROM LEFT: Freshman Lydia Greer, freshman Riley Dahlstrand and freshman Owen Gray pose with FFA advisor Macey Mockel after placing second in Greenhand Quiz at Area competition. Because the top two teams in each category advance to state, the three freshmen will represent Pearland FFA at the upcoming state competition.

NINE FFA TEAMS PLACE AT AREA, GREENHAND QUIZ TEAM ADVANCES TO STATE

Three freshman members of Pearland FFA will advance the Greenhand Quiz team to state after placing second at the Area competition Nov. 18.

Freshmen Lydia Greer, Riley Dahlstrand, and Owen Gray make up the advancing team, which focuses on memorizing and recalling vast amounts of information related to FFA and agriculture.

Although only the top two scoring teams in each event advance to state, Pearland FFA's Ag Advocacy team and Senior Radio Broadcasting team placed third at area. Pearland FFA also received the Area III Sweepstakes Runner Up banner.

Other winning teams included:

- Senior Creed Speaking: 9th Place
- Greenhand Creed Speaking: 4th Place
- Public Relations: 5th Place
- Ag Issues Forum: 6th Place
- Job Interview: 7th Place
- Greenhand Chapter Conducting: 3rd Place
- Senior Chapter Conducting: 4th Place
- Greenhand Radio Broadcasting: 6th Place
- Greenhand Skills Demonstration: 3rd Place
- Senior Skills Demonstration: 6th Place

Left: Seniors Julia Palmer, Keillie Brandenburger, Paige Arends, and Emily Carpio pose with their third place Ag Advocacy flag at the Area competition.

Right: Pearland FFA poses with their awards at Area.





BASKETBALL

FRESHMAN GIRLS' BASKETBALL TAKES FIRST AT FBISD

After winning first-place team in the Fort Bend ISD tournament, the freshman Lady Oilers advanced to compete against Humble.

Freshman guard Zoey Piedras described long nights and 5 a.m. practices as the team prepares to go to district.

"It's been kind of hard and easy at the same times. The day we stay at away games, we get back around 11, so we don't get to sleep until 12:30," Piedras said. "Home games are a lot easier because you're right there, and we have later practices."

The Pearland Lady Oilers pose with coach Jere Adams after winning first at the Fort Bend ISD tournament. Turner student players pictured include freshman Zoey Piedras, freshman Suzy Velasquez, and freshman Hannah Hawkins.

Freshman Suzy Velasquez said that if the team keeps winning their games, they'll advance to district. The team plays two games a week.

"Whoever wins that will be district champions," Velasquez said.

PEARLAND ISD MAKES LIST OF TOP 2021 HOUSTON WORKPLACES

Pearland Independent School District was named a 2021 Top Workplace in Houston in a list published by the *Houston Chronicle* Nov. 11.

In a Nov. 17 email, PISD superintendent Dr. John Kelly congratulated employees, whose anonymous feedback submitted earlier in the year provided the basis for the award.

"We thank everyone for their participation and for the accompanying feedback. This will help us to continue to grow and support one another," Kelly said.



According to Kelly, only 175 companies and organizations made the 2021 list.

"Clearly, this district is the most outstanding place I've ever worked for. I thank God for the expertise, compassion and perseverance you constantly display. You are an incredible example to me and to so many others," Kelly said. "Despite the unprecedented challenges of this school year, we have much to be grateful for. Among many difficulties, you have combatted COVID with compassion!"

*Turner students turn passions for animals,
engineering into business prospects*

YOUNG MONEY



LIKE PRINTING MONEY

Freshman
converts STEM
passion into
profitable side
hustle

Freshman Marvin Ruiz-Martinez is already out of filament.

It's not a huge problem; he can always order more. But he's only had his 3-D printer a month.

And he ran out of filament, the material the 3-D printer uses to create objects, in the first week.

Originally, Ruiz-Martinez said, he didn't plan to turn his new piece of equipment into a business opportunity. The freshman, who describes himself as "really into engineering" and came to Turner CCHS for video game design, just wanted to learn about technology and engineering on his own time.

Working for his brother earned him the printer, and then he set about trying it out.

"You use a 3-D model, which you can find online. A lot of them are free. And then you tell the -- it's called a splicing software -- you tell it what you want and the software creates these little pieces of code to tell the printer what to do," Ruiz-Martinez said. "And it makes it."

In this case, "it" was a 3-D printed plastic octopus with jointed tentacles. The model took about two and a half hours to make, he said.

"I made a few gifts for my friends," Ruiz-Martinez said. "And people saw them and really liked them, so I started selling them."

"It's one of those things that cannot be explained, but it just makes sense why you like it so much."

Ruiz-Martinez so far has made about twelve octopi and a couple of owls that he describes as resembling the cartoon mascot from the language app Duolingo. He's also made rings inspired by fictional characters, including TV's *The Flash*. He sold each of the items for \$2 each to friends.

And while he struggles to put into words exactly why the little plastic models appeal to so many, the fact that they do appeal is clear.

"People usually go crazy over them," Ruiz-Martinez said. "I don't really know why people like them. It's one of those things that cannot be explained, but it just makes sense why you like it so much."

For Ruiz-Martinez, the appeal really lies in learning more about science and technology, and exploring the limits of his new piece of equipment.

For that, he's going to need more filament.

"I'm going to be ordering more colors, make different color octopi, and make cartoon versions of owls and other animals," Ruiz-Martinez said.



SCALING

Top: Moose the crested gecko explores her environment. **Bottom:** Sophomore Abigail Myers, 15, shows Moose to junior Wesley Baete during college mentoring.



Sophomore's love of reptiles grows from niche interest to thriving business with pro-environment ambitions

Sophomore **Abigail Myers, 15**, was bitten by a snake when she was ten years old.

After playing with her mother's classroom pet, a rat, she'd stepped across the hall to hold another teacher's class pet: a five-foot-long red-tailed boa.

Myers was thrilled.

"Some of my earliest memories are catching lizards and snakes in the back yard," Myers said. "And I didn't know you could have them as pets. So I was like, 'Oh my gosh, I want to hold her.'"

It was feeding time for the snake, so the teacher stepped away to fetch the rat that would be its dinner. However, having just handled a rodent herself, Myers must have smelled delicious.

The boa's fangs sank into her neck. "And it bled a lot," Myers said. "But it didn't hurt."

For many people, such experiences are often the stuff of nightmares and the foundation of phobias. Bad encounters with animals at such a young age often leave lasting impressions and fears. The teacher who owned the snake clearly had a similar thought upon returning to find Myers had been bitten. Myers, however, had a different reaction.

"He was like, 'Oh my god, I'm so sorry,'" Myers said. "And I was like, 'Oh, no, that's fine.' And then the next question I asked was, 'Where can I get a snake?'"

Myers' parents agreed to take her to a locally-owned reptile shop to pick out her first snake.

"So we go, and I've been wanting a ball python, but I fell in love with one of the Desert King snakes, which are actually native to West Texas," Myers said. "She's black and yellow. She's absolutely beautiful. So I ended up getting her as my first snake."

That was in August. By November, she had a second snake.

"I went to Petco to get some feeders and some stuff for the rats, and there was a snake sitting there, like, not in one of the tanks, but just on a table in the middle of the store. And I was like, 'What's the story about this snake?' And they're like, 'Oh, yeah, somebody abandoned him at the doorstep,'" Myers said. "And he was terrified of people. He, like, I can't even describe him. He was just terrified of people because he'd been neglected his whole life. So he was false striking, which is like striking that usually to the left for some reason with his mouth closed. He was hissing, he was rattling his tail. He was doing everything you can think of to be the biggest, scariest snake, but he was just so skinny and so tiny."

The employees were scared of him. The only other person who wanted him was a breeder who wanted to start breeding him immediately.

"And I was like, 'No, thanks. He's not healthy enough for that.' So I adopted him because I just felt so awful for him," Myers said.

Now, Myers said, he's "made a complete turnaround." And while most people might be surprised to learn it, she has found snakes to be affectionate animals with personalities just like any other pet.

"They are very affectionate to people they love. Like my big ball python, he'll sit on my shoulders, and he'll kind of hold on tight a little bit. And he's one of my ambassador animals. So when I go to different events and stuff, I take him with me," Myers said. "And he's helped over thirty people overcome their fear of snakes. But whenever if he gets stressed out or doesn't want to be held any more, he will just curl up into a little ball on my chest and sit there until he feels happy again."



Zeus, Myers' ball python, perches on her shoulder. "I named almost all my snakes after Greek gods," Myers said. "My first snake was Urus, and then Zephyrus, which are the gods of the east and west wind, and then Zeus and then Aphrodite. And I have a lot more."

After getting her first snakes, Myers delved into what she describes as one of her "favorite things in the world": doing research.

That was when she discovered reptile shows.

"With reptiles, there's a whole community online. It's huge. And the main place that people go for reptiles is reptile shows," Myers said.

Some reptile shows, like the North American Reptile Breeders Conference, boast hundreds of attendees. But there are also small local shows, and Myers found one held in Pasadena that convened three times annually.

"I found them, and it's like, it's only forty-five minutes away. Like, why wouldn't I go?" Myers said.

Once she was firmly in the reptile world, Myers saw something that piqued her interest: art created from the shed skins of snakes.

"I've seen people put it in picture frames, because they wanted to show how much their snake has grown. So they'd had the first shed in a frame next to the biggest shed, and I was like, 'I love that. But what if I could make it into jewelry?' So I started looking into it," Myers said.

"I wanted to make a charm bracelet out of all my snakes' sheds so that I could have all my snakes on a little bracelet. I still haven't done it yet. But I started making necklaces and earrings. And then people just loved them. I just did it as, like, a one-and-done thing at first. And I sold out at my first show. People loved them. So I kept on doing it."

Myers' official business, SATECE, or Saving Animals Through Environmental Conservation Efforts, launched in February 2021. She sells her products on her website, www.satece.com, as well as at reptile shows.

"I specialize in eco-friendly reptile products. My main product is a bioactive enclosure, which is basically a reptile enclosure that has a mini-ecosystem in it that is

self-cleaning because of the insects that are in there that eat the shed skin, mold and feces. And I'm hoping to expand into cat and dog product soon as well," Myers said.

For Myers, the shows are about more than just selling her jewelry or her custom snake environments. It's also about sharing the love of snakes with people of all ages.

"I'll bring Zeus my ball python with me, and the kids just love him. And I'm like, well if you want to remember him forever, then I have the jewelry too.

"A couple of times, people have asked me, 'I'm sorry, what's your age?' And then I tell them I'm fifteen. And they're blown away."

And then they're just all over it, like, 'Oh my gosh, I can remember my first snake forever!' So it's a very meaningful thing for those people," Myers said.

And if people aren't surprised by her snakes, Myers said they are often astonished at her age.

"I don't say my age most of the time, but people can tell that I'm younger. So a couple of times, people have asked me, 'I'm sorry, but what's your age?' And then I tell them, I'm fifteen. And they're blown away," Myers said. "They're like, 'I didn't even have snakes when I was your age' or 'I wish I could have done that.' And it's a lot of like, shock value, I guess, when people see how young I am and the things that I've been doing."

However, if Myers' plans for the future are any indication, the shock won't be wearing off any time soon. Her next venture is already underway.

"I've always been extremely passionate about the environment. And plastics are bad for the environment, as you know. Styrofoam is one of the worst ones because there's no way it can be recycled. But I found a research paper in the very early stages of being researched which shows that super worms, which are feeders for reptiles, can actually digest the styrofoam and break it down into usable soil," Myers said. "So I started doing it. And it worked incredibly well, they can live off of it healthily. And the paper said that they can even be safely used as chicken feed. So I was like, 'What if I could make soil for the enclosures that I make from that byproduct, and then sell the superworms as feeders?'"

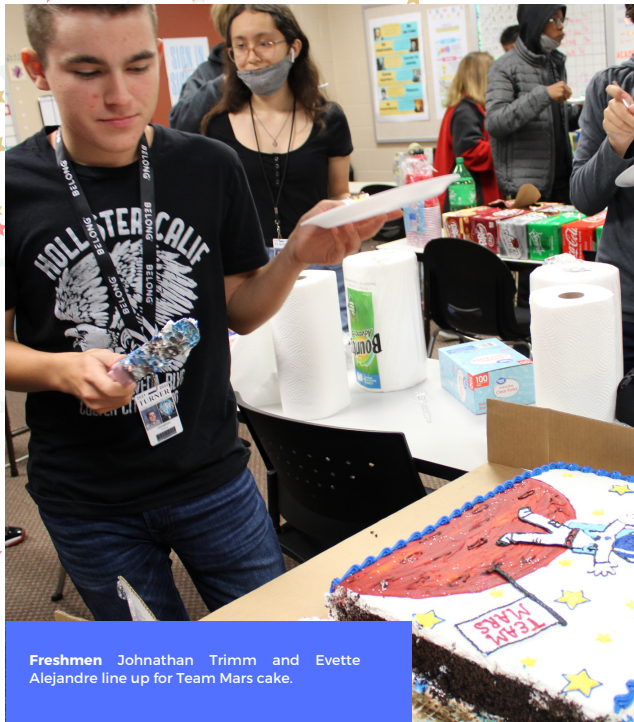
It will take a long time to research, Myers acknowledged. She's been "doing it in the background" while she raises funds and builds publicity with her other products. She's also exploring grant options with her business partner. In March, she's planning to meet with a marketing agency that works to promote young entrepreneurs. She wants to schedule a presentation to showcase her work at Turner. And then, of course, she needs to get caught up on her homework.

Her goal, however, is to turn that recycled soil, not just into her primary product, but ultimately into a viable option for cleaning up the planet.

"I want to clean up those areas, like in the ocean and the rainforests, take plastic from there and then put it into my system of the super worms. And then in turn that will be cleaning up the environment and producing a usable product. At the rate that I've been growing, I'm pretty sure that I can achieve that within the next ten to fifteen years."



Left to right: Freshmen Presley Mealer, Brookelynn Henry, Jaimeson Martin, Cody Cox, and Lily Carp pose with their Team Mars souvenirs.

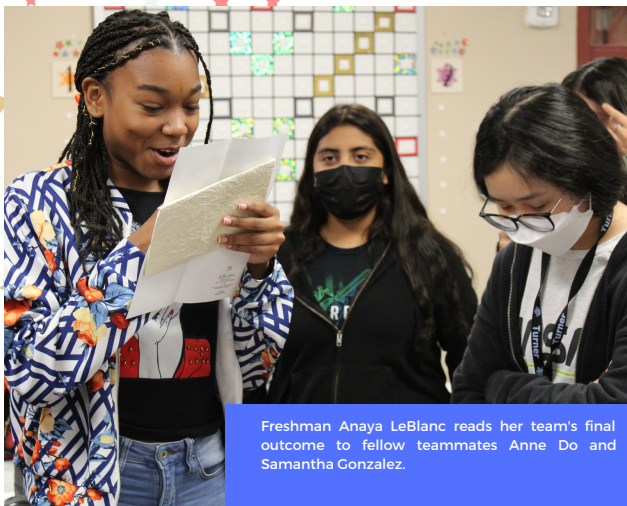


Freshmen Johnathan Trimm and Evette Alejandre line up for Team Mars cake.

WE SURVIVED



Left to right: Freshmen Bradley Pittman, Maya Shankar, Aerik Pettys, Alisha Ali, Sangeeth Mattathil, Luke Carp, Jonathan Trimm, Ronie Oommen, and Freddie Ruiz, members of winning Mars teams, pose with their prizes.



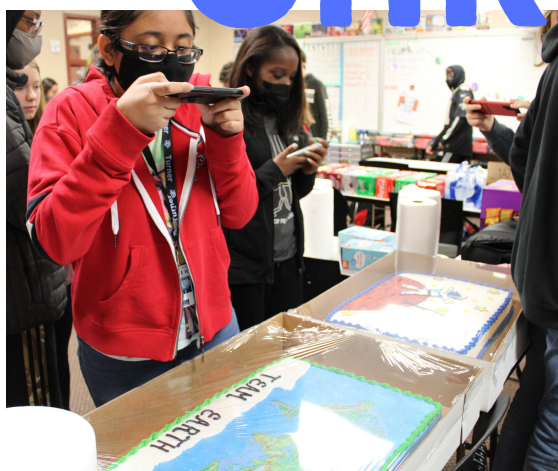
Freshman Anaya LeBlanc reads her team's final outcome to fellow teammates Anne Do and Samantha Gonzalez.



Freshman Daniel Tran reads his team's final outcome as classmates Mia Rhodus, Sophia Scarafille, Taylor Rogers, Brody Lovel, and Mary King listen.

Top: Freshman Maya Shankar shows off Mars-and-Earth-themed sugar cookies donated by a parent during the final party on Nov. 12. **Bottom:** Freshmen Alisha Ali and Rylie McBayne take pictures of the Mars-and-Earth-themed cakes, provided thanks to parent donations.

THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES



English I Pre-AP wraps up epic choose-your-own-adventure game

Some of them died alone on Mars, stranded for years on an unforgiving planet. Some of them died in the crossfire, amid uprisings or ambushes or fights for freedom. And some of them died watching bombs streak across the sky.

But they didn't *all* die. And that was the point.

For the fourth year, Kyla Mora's English I Pre-AP class wrapped up a unit spent reading Ray Bradbury's science fiction classic *The Martian Chronicles* with a party celebrating the end of the choose-your-own-adventure game they'd been playing since page one.

"I read too many of those choose-your-own-adventure books as a kid," Mora said. "And *The Martian Chronicles* is such a fantastic book that is structured so unusually that one day I asked myself, 'Can I turn this into a game?' And once I did, it evolved from there."

Students choose their teams at the beginning of the novel -- Team Earth or Team Mars -- and then vote on decisions that parallel the progression of the novel as they read. The goal is to make it to the end with the most members of the team still alive.

"It's harder than you'd think," Mora said. "This novel was written as a cautionary tale about colonialism, nuclear war, humanity becoming overrun with technology and giving in to its worst impulses. And Bradbury loves a twist ending. So the choices are all based on Bradbury's book or supplemental Bradbury stories, and the students have to apply logic and reason. It's always interesting to hear them debate the morality of a choice, or the potential outcomes of a choice -- trying to strategize, to outthink the future. It's a fabulous way to encourage lateral thinking, teamwork, and to engage with a text in a completely different way than they're used to. It's interactive, which literature should be."

Parents donated to for the the final party, held Nov. 12, at which time winners were announced and souvenirs and prizes were awarded.

"*The Martian Chronicles* was amazing," freshman Cody Cox said. "It exposed me and other students to different types of writing and literature."



NOVEMBER 2021

