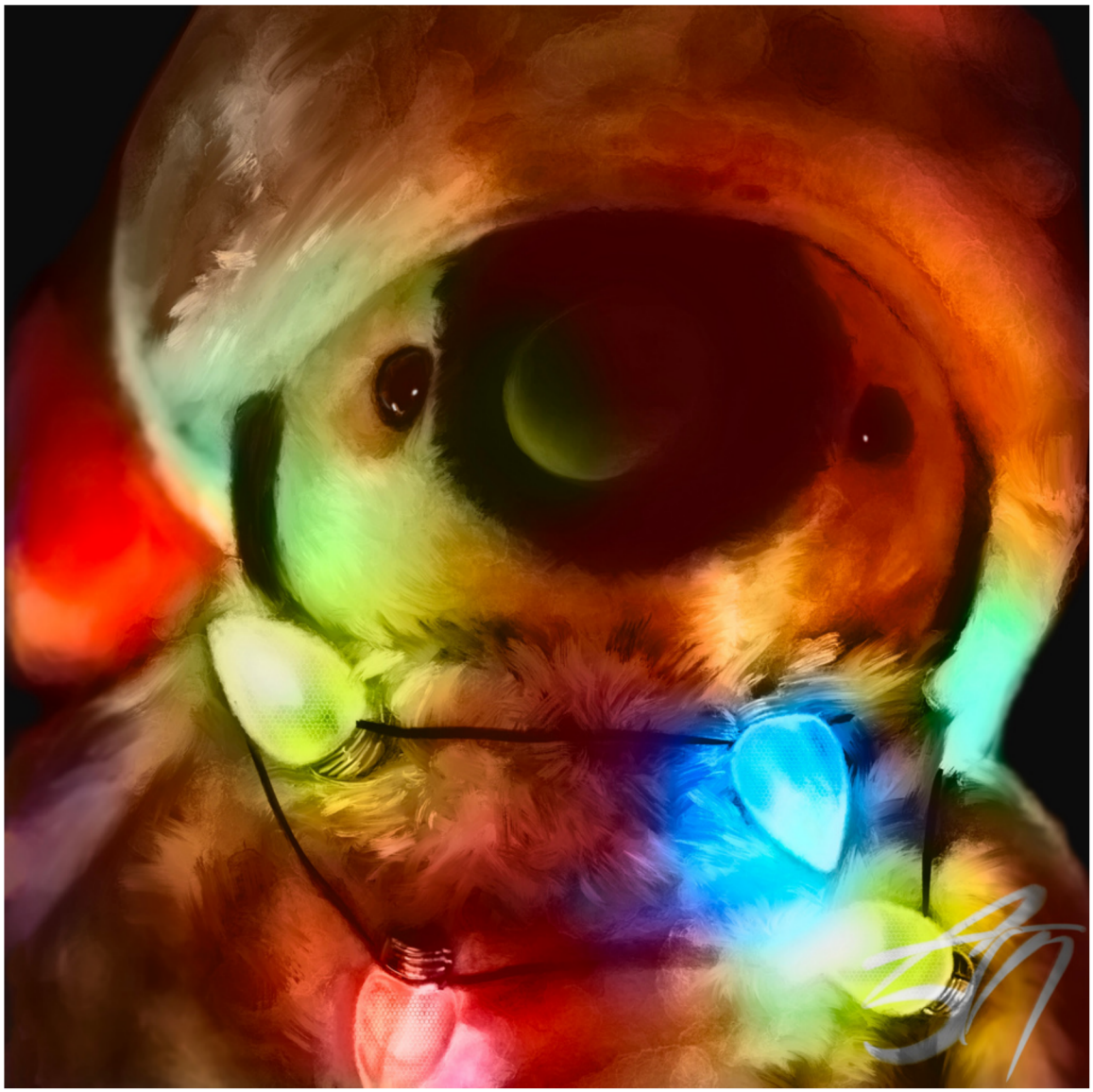
South Texas Virtual Academy Student led Newspaper

Holiday Edition

Phoenix News

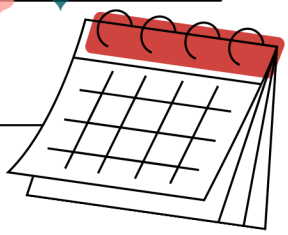
Issue No. 3 Vol. 3| Date of publication December 15, 2023



Pebble by in-house creator Samantha E.

Longer Holiday breaks?

Could students benefit from longer school breaks?



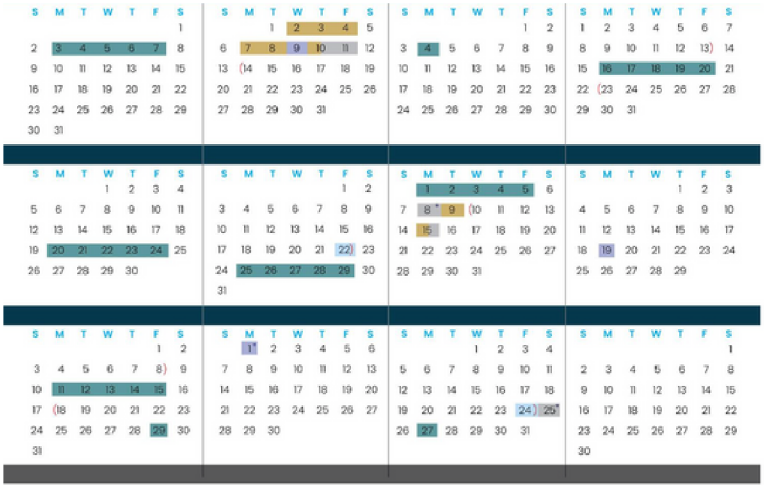
By: Vecktoria P.

Extending Holiday breaks to two weeks or more during the Fall has numerous advantages. Firstly, it allows families to fully embrace themselves with visiting their loved ones without the constraints of a tight schedule. With an extra week, people can participate in longer travel, attending gatherings with relatives who may be farther away. This extended time allows stronger family bonds and creates lasting memories.

From a mental health perspective, a two-week break is beneficial in reducing stress. The typical one-week break often involves a mix of activities, leaving little room for genuine relaxation. A longer break allows students and staff to decompress, rejuvenate, and return to their responsibilities with a happier attitude. This also benefits student overall performance.

The extra time allows for a more measured and deliberate approach to family gatherings and travel plans. Rather than squeezing in multiple activities into a tight small schedule, people will have opportunity for downtime. In a world run by constant busyness, the ability to step back, and recharge is essential for mental well-being. A two-week Fall break offers a hiatus from the relentless pace of work or academic commitments, allowing individuals to truly disconnect and engage in activities that bring them joy.

Overall, supporting a two-week fall break is about recognizing that our current one-week break often feels rushed, limited, and stressful which leaves little time for joy during this beautiful season. Extending the break allows us to dedicate ourselves more fully in the season of fall. It's a call for a more relaxing and unhurried approach.





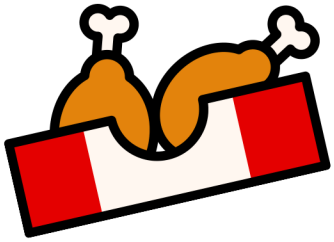
Two different RGV school calendars. Top shows an extra week break in the fall.

Holidays around the world



What does the holiday season look like in other countries? Grab your passport to find out

By: Belicia M.



Firstly: Japan! Christmas isn't a national holiday in Japan, but some of the Japanese that do celebrate have a fun way to do it. Instead of tamales or turkey, they head down to Kentucky Fried Chicken. In 1974 KFC launched a marketing campaign titled: "Kentucky For Christmas!" Now people wait hours each year for this fast-food chain.

Next, Switzerland. Families from Switzerland create advent calendars for each other during the holiday season. Each day everyone gets a different gift, but the best is saved for Christmas Eve.



Moving on, Mexico. The Christmas season starts during early December for them. They re-enact the journey of Mary and Joseph in their religion. They also like to decorate with bright red poinsettia flowers everywhere.





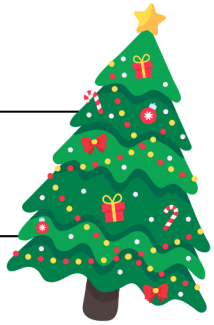
Lastly, the Philippines. There is no holding back in the Philippines when it comes to decorating! Each year, they hold something called a "Ligligan Parul." It features pretty lanterns that are supposed to symbolize the Star of Bethlehem. Each lantern has hundreds of thousands of spinning lights that bright up the sky. This festival takes place in the "Christmas Capital of the Philippines."





The Big Debate

Is The Nightmare Before Christmas a Halloween Movie or Christmas Movie?



By: Alberto Z.

This is one of the most asked questions regarding this particular movie. The movie is about a skeleton named jack and his adventure into a world of Christmas which is an entirely new compared to his. spookier world.

Many argue that this is Halloween movie because it stars a skeleton and start's in a Halloween style world in the beginning. While others argue it is a Christmas movie because it records the adventure of jack as he explores and experiences the wonder of Christmas and winter.

While people watch it in both seasons it should be know that the movie itself was released on October 29, 1993 and is therefore technically an October movie. But while it is true it is an October movie it has little to no fear factor which is essential for a traditional Halloween movie considering it is the month of freight and fear

With that in mind it does also lack some of the more Christmassy feelings you get from Christmas movies
like the feeling of belief in the Christmas spirit considering the main character jack latterly kidnapped Santa Claus. It also doesn't have the characteristics of a Christmas movie like a transformation of a Scrooge like character into a good person, a family getting together, or the importance of tradition.

In my opinion it is a Christmas movie because it is a story explore Christmas and its wonders like snow and associated with the month of December.



Virtual Academy staff beyond the computer

A look into the work the VA teachers do when not behind the computers



Mrs. Siragusa and Mr. Davila pose for cameras before checking out the desserts



Mrs. Reyes, Mrs. Ybarra & Mr. Robles smile for cameras before enjoying the delicious feast



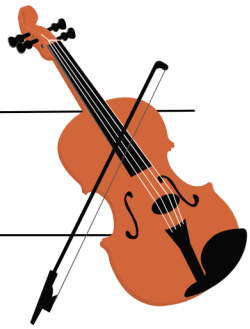
2 camera shy teachers head for dessert

grateful



Virtual Academy Student Feature

What do virtual academy students do outside the virtual setting?



By: Brandon G.

Camila Rojas is a junior at South Texas ISD Virtual Academy. Camila opened up about her passion for playing the violin and what inspired her to do so. Camila shared that she started playing the violin when she was six years old.

At first, when she was at the age of six she did not want to practice nor wanted to go to the classes that her mother enrolled her in. She used to give her a mom a hard time. Further into her classes she started learning how to manage the violin and express her feelings while playing it, as time progressed her passion for playing the violin also grew stronger.

She began listening to violinists like Ray Chen, Roman Kim, Hilary Hahn, Augustin Hadelich, and Itzhak Perlman. She states that her passion for the violin started shaping and that what makes a good violinist is putting time into practicing the same note over and over again until you get it perfect as well as willing to put effort. “the violin is a very emotional instrument, without emotion, it's not the violin, but merely another sound” she expressed.

She has been attending competitions and concerts with the help of her conductor. She starts by practicing four hours a day and prepares by studying the piece and understanding the BPM, notes, phrasing, and mood. One thing she has learned from preparing and practicing for these competitions and concerts is, after she learns the entire piece, she keeps practicing her mistakes, fixes them, and doesn't repeat the mistakes, because then she will just be practicing the mistakes.

These techniques have helped her look to improve until she’s comfortable, after that, she does it all over again until she gets to the designated tempo.

Additionally, Camila has goals she wants to achieve with her violin path: she wants to get into All State, and learn Carmen Fantasy and Sibelius Violin Concerto someday. Those two pieces are her inspiration to get to the skill they have and to play them. She has been playing the violin for ten years now, since she started playing. Camila's devotion for playing the violin grows stronger and stronger the more she plays it.





VA Club News

Keep up with the exciting things the VA clubs are doing

VA ART CLUB

Sponsored by Mr. Cellar

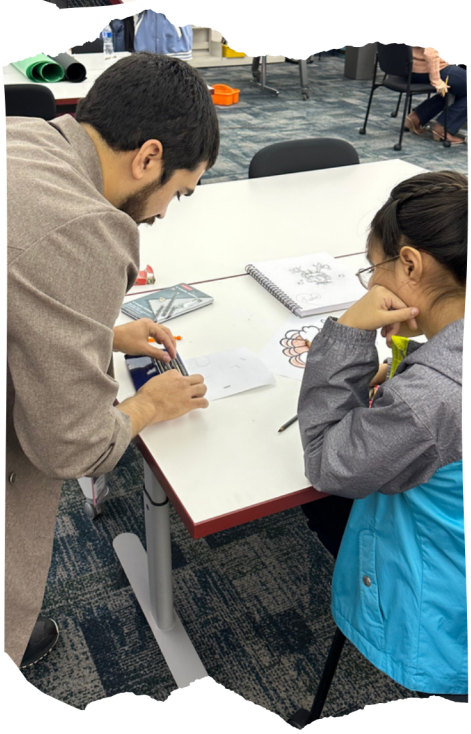
Spanish Club

Sponsored by Mrs. Galnares

VA's clubs had a face to face meeting in November. The Art club focused on creating new pieces and working on their skills with Mr. Cellar's guidance. The Spanish club had presentations about Latin countries around the world and brought in food dishes that everyone enjoyed.









For more information on club meetings please contact your sponsor

VA Club News

Keep up with the exciting things the VA clubs are doing



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Roast or Rave Reviews

Staff of the journalism class either roast or rave about trending pop culture and events

Loki Season 2

by: Andrew C.



Loki season 2 continuing from Avengers Endgame was created by Michael Waldron, the new season's trailer shows Loki appearing into multiple different time branches. The first season was really good because it showed a different personality of Loki's character, this new season shows how Loki starts to save people and how he changed from avengers 2012.

In the new season Loki learns how to control time skipping and Loki finds out he who remains was the creator of the TVA, the trailer shows the TVA's workers original lives and time branches. The Loki show gave us a different side of Loki and how he can choose to make the right decision instead of trying to claim his throne. Loki is portrayed by Tom Hiddleston and he said this is one of the. main reasons he likes this new show. This is a good show because it expands on Loki's story.

Rave, worth getting back into the Marvel Universe for Loki's P.O.V

Trolls Band Together

by: Ricky S.

In November, the new Trolls movie *Trolls Band Together* was released. In this movie Bridget and King Gristle are getting married and the trolls get to celebrate together with the bergens now that they don't have to worry about getting eaten anymore.

But before they can say their vows an unsuspecting troll arrives revealing himself as John Dory, Branch's long lost brother. Branch reveals that he had a bad relationship with his
brothers and says he was in a band with his brothers called Brozone. Branch was a baby during this time and he was known as Bitty B and they all sang and danced happily together until a failed concert and all his brothers got angry at each other and went their separate ways leaving Branch all sad and devastated.

John Dory asks Branch and Poppy to help find the rest of their brothers and get the band back together. They hear that one of their brothers, Floyd, is trapped in a Diamond Prison by superstars Velvet and Veneer and it's up to them to save him.

Rave: Worth, movie theater pricing & There is a N'Sync reunion for the 90s boy band fans out there



Motion Picture Recipes

Enjoy recipes from your favorite movies, and t.v. shows

By: Angel C.

For this Holiday recipe I've decided to write about a funny holiday moment from a show called “Friends'. Season 6 episode 9 "The One Where Ross Got High" In this episode a character named Rachel makes a dessert for thanksgiving. She was making an english trifle but accidentally mixed up the recipe with half trifle half shepherds pie. When she is making it, two characters Joey and Chandler notice and warn everyone to act like they enjoy it so it doesn't upset her. The funniest part is when everyone didn't like it but Joey enjoyed it and say’s "What's not to like? custard, good. jam, good. beef, good!”

Ingredients:

- 3/4 lbs of ground beef
- 1/2 diced onion
- 3/4 frozen green peas
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon pepper
- 1- 7 oz package of Lady fingers, cut in half
- 1 cup raspberry jam
- 4 cups vanilla custard or pudding dvidied
- 2 cups fresh raspberries
- 2 bananas sliced
- 2 cups whipped topping



Step 1 in a large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat, add ground beef and crumble with spoon until fully brown. Add onion to ground beef and cook, stirring constantly for 4 mins. Add peas and season to taste with salt and pepper. Cook for 1 minute. Remove from heat and seat aside.

Step 2, Line bottom of trifle dish with half of the lady fingers, artfully arranging them around the perimeter of the dish. Top lady fingers evenly with jam. Spread 2 cups of custard over jam and top with raspberries.

Then add remaining lady fingers in a single layer over the custard. Top evenly with sautéed beef mixture and remaining custard. Add sliced bananas and top evenly with whipped topping.

Once you have remade this classic dessert enjoy it with friends while watching Friends!

GIRL POWER

The Future is Female

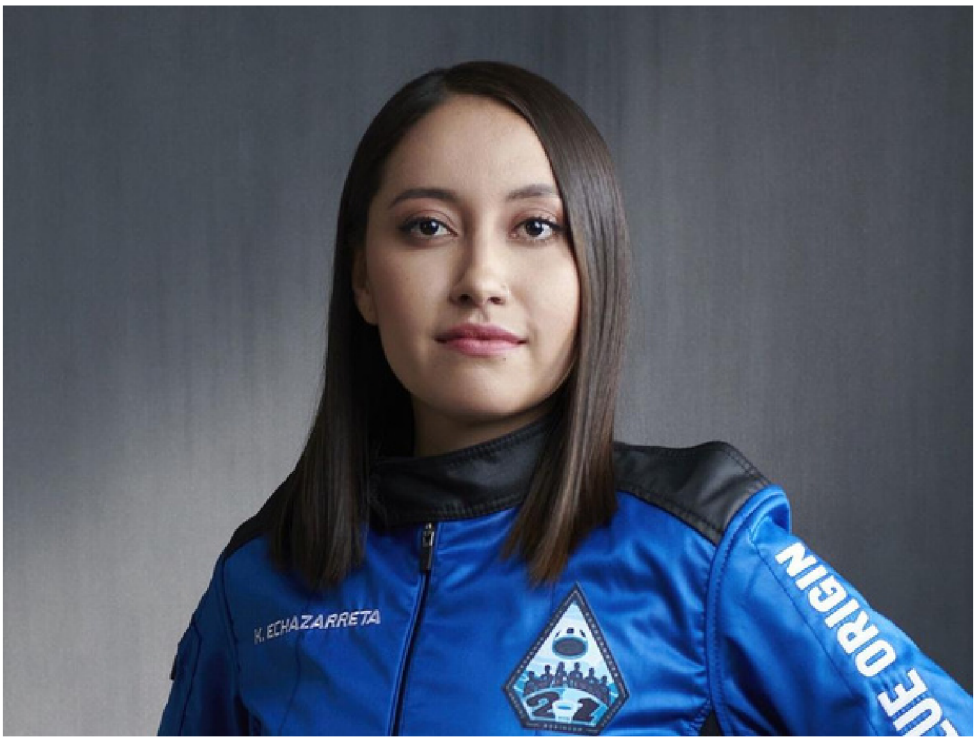
Learn about females in various industries that are breaking down barriers

By: Ivory C.S.

Katya Echazarreta, Full name of Katya Celeste Echazarreta Gonzales made history on June 4, 2022. She was the first Mexican-born women to travel in space, and the youngest American women to have achieved the accomplishment. She was born on June 15, 1995 in Guadalajara, Mexico.

At the age of 7, her family moved to California, USA. When she first started elementary school, in a new school and new country, she had difficulty trying to learn English, but within two years, she managed to become a fluent English speaker. She went to college at UCLA from 2016-2019, although she was very aware of the lack of women in the engineering field. This was hard for her because she did not have many people she could ask for advice about several topics such as the implicit biases that women and people of color face often.

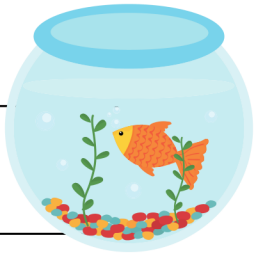
Previously, before UCLA, she went to San Diego city college from 2013-2016. During her time in UCLA, she got the chance to be an intern at NASA JPL. Soon after, she became a full-time engineer, and worked on 5 NASA missions including Perseverance and Europa Clipper. Currently she s working on her Masters Degree in electrical engineering at Johns Hopkins University. Not only is she an electrical engineer, but she is also a science communicator and a citizen astronaut.





Pets of Virtual Academy

The best thing about learning virtually is that pets get to attend class also!





Patches

Mr. Garcia's pup

Patches loves Modern Art and Classic Rock.

Mr. Garcia and family adopted Patches after he was born and was a gift from his in-laws.

Salem & Princess



Salem the black cat and Princess the striped cat enjoy cuddling up to one another and scaring Zephyr's rabbit. Both cats despise loud noises and being picked up without warning. They also have a mutual hatred for lemons.

Salem was found on Thanksgiving one year on Zephyr's porch, she was just a kitten. The day after they found Princess in the animal barn. It was quite the Thanksgiving that year.

Sierra & Rosalinda

Sierra the Siberian Husky likes chicken but Rosalina enjoys peanut butter. Both pups dislike taking baths.

Valerya and Xymena received both pups as gifts. Sierra was a gift from their parents and Rosalinda was a gift from their grandmother.







Rocky

Rocky enjoys chewing on dog toys and nice long baths.

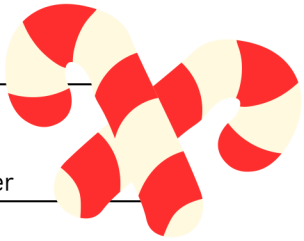
He is the third generation of Isaiah's rescue dog.





Rounding up RGV events

Check out these local events that will be happening during the month of October





December 23rd.

Tres Lagos Market . The event features food and small business vendors. It takes place at 4350 Tres Lagos Boulevard McAllen

Price: Free, cash/card for vendor purchases

Time: 9 am- 1 pm



December 28th

Mcallen Convention Center presents the Nutcracker ballet

Price: $30-80, tickets can be purchased at Ticketmaster

Time: 7 pm

December 7th- Jan 3rd

Mcallen celebrates Christmas with their annual South Pole illuminated Festival. Individuals can experience Holiday fireworks, live concerts, Santa's Castle and a Artisan Market

Price: $12 for individuals 13 years and older

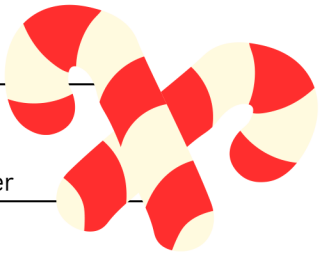
Time: Monday- Thursday 5:30- 9:30 pm, Friday & Saturday 5:30- 10:30 pm.





Rounding up RGV events

Check out these local events that will be happening during the month of October





December 30th

Ring in the year of the Dragon with other runners at Bentsen Palm Park.

Where: Bentsen Palm Park Mission

Price: $25

Time: 7 am



December 31st

Ring in the New Year at Pharr's annual ball drop. Musical guests The Spazmatics

Price: Free

Time: 8:30 pm- Midnight



December 16th

Downtown shopping in Harlingen with live music.

Where: Downtown Harlingen on Jackson street

Price: Free

Time: 7:00 - 10:00 pm



Meet the Phoenix Journalism Elves





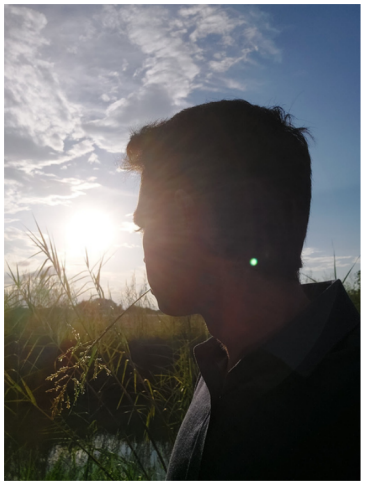
Raziel is a Junior at Virtual Academy. He likes to play video games and guitar in his free time. His favorite subject to learn about would be Egyptian Gods.



David enjoys weightlifting, video games and anime. In addition to these things he also enjoys meeting new people, going out and the cold weather. Some of his favorite games are Party Animals, Call of Duty, Roblox and Garry's Mod.

Andrew's favorite hobbies are collecting Neca figures and Shoes. He also enjoys playing games, watching movies and playing football. He enjoys reading *Dog Man* and *Captain Underpants*. His favorite movie series are Lord of the Rings and Star Wars, His favorite game is Insomniacs Spiderman.





Juan is an outdoor person with too many hobbies and interests. He likes to watch the stars, fish, and play video games. He is also guitarist and loves to listen to all sorts of rock.



Vecktoria enjoys going on walks, hanging out with friends, reading, watching movies. Two of her favorite movies is *The Lorax* and *Spirit: Stallion of the Cimarron.*

Alberto enjoys watching movies, and series shows. Mr. Iglesias is. his favorite show on Netflix. He has no official pet but have claimed a stray black cat that comes by as mine and named her Blanka.





Dylynn is a witty, sweet, introverted student. She immerses herself in a myriad of interests; she is an avid movie watcher and book reader, and her favorite movie is Saw. She loves music and anything cute or horror-related. Her goal for the future is to be a librarian.

Madisyn who enjoys cooking, playing horror games, collecting hot wheels to fill up her walls and doing makeup.When she is not cooking or playing games or practicing making she is sleeping. She is always asleep, never awake.



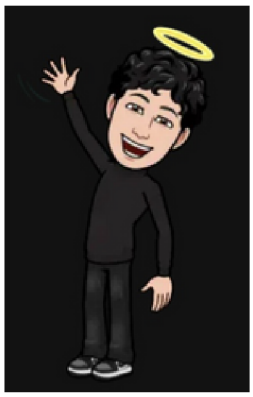
If you are interested in contributing to the Phoenix Newspaper please contact roberta.zamilpa@stisd.net

Meet the Phoenix Journalism Team!



Angel's favorite hobbies are collecting Neca figures, Reading graphic novels, drawing, listening to music and his favorite anime is Naruto Shippuden. He enjoys playing *Red Dead Redemption 2*, Assassins Creed franchise, *We happy Few, High on Life.* He also enjoys reading about Greek mythology.

Brandon G. enjoys working out and hanging out with his friends on the weekend. He also enjoys working and spending time with his family. His favorite food is wings and in his free time he likes to spend money.





Samantha enjoys being within the confines of art and is in constant turmoil by the concept of it. She also heavily indulges in listening to music and talks over anime with her sister. *Mob Psycho 100* remains her favorite topic to discuss presently.

If you are interested in contributing to the Phoenix Newspaper please contact roberta.zamilpa@stisd.net