Holiday Special

SOUTH TEXAS VIRTUAL ACADEMY

Phoenix News

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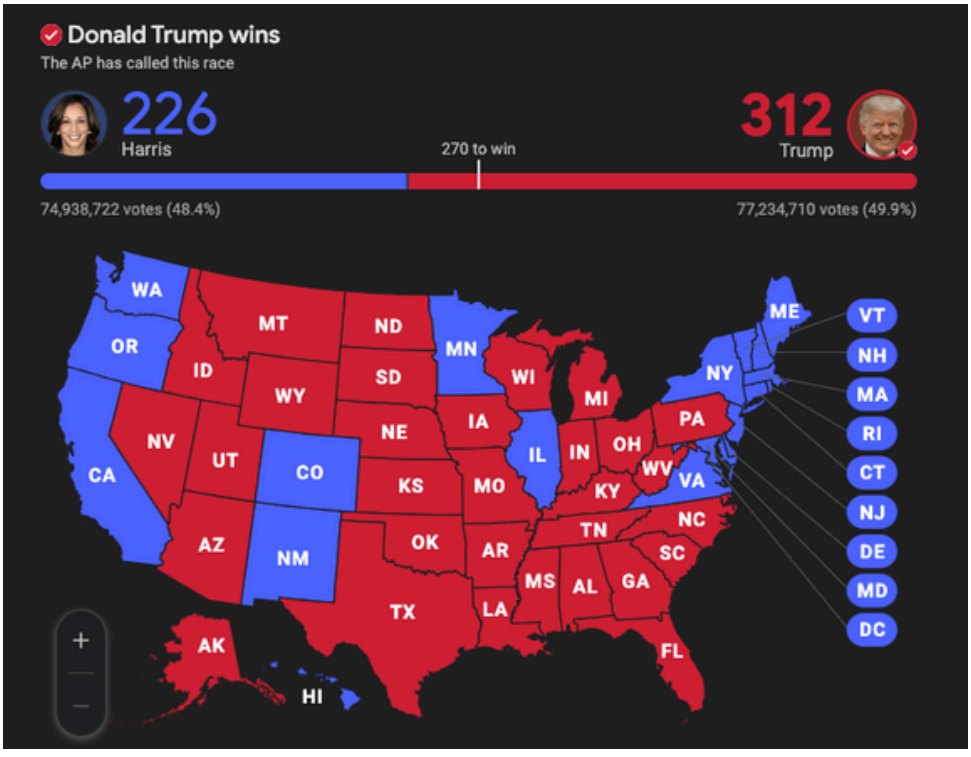
Elections 2024

By: J

Election day in the United States is important. It happened on November 5th this year. The Presidential Election happens every four years. Every four years, history is made when this day comes around. Citizens in the United States are able to influence elections and government by voting. Everyone's vote matters it is an opportunity for their voice to be heard and choose who they feel is a qualified candidate to run the nation.

On Elections Day November 5 2024 millions of people cast their vote. It was a crucial day because it is the future of the United States. There are several important elections to vote including the Presidential, Congressional, Senate, State, and Local elections

Polls opened early in that morning and typically closed at 7:00 pm. Many people do early voting or mail-in ballots. Every state counts the final result some states take longer than others. In seven swing states (key battlegrounds) Pennsylvania, Georgia, Michigan, North Carolina, Arizona, Nevada, and Wisconsin, Current president-elect Donald Trump won 6/7 of the states. Donald Trump won the Electoral College vote 312 to 226. The popular vote was 50% to 48.3%. He won by more than 2.5 million votes. The election was declared just after midnight on November 6th.



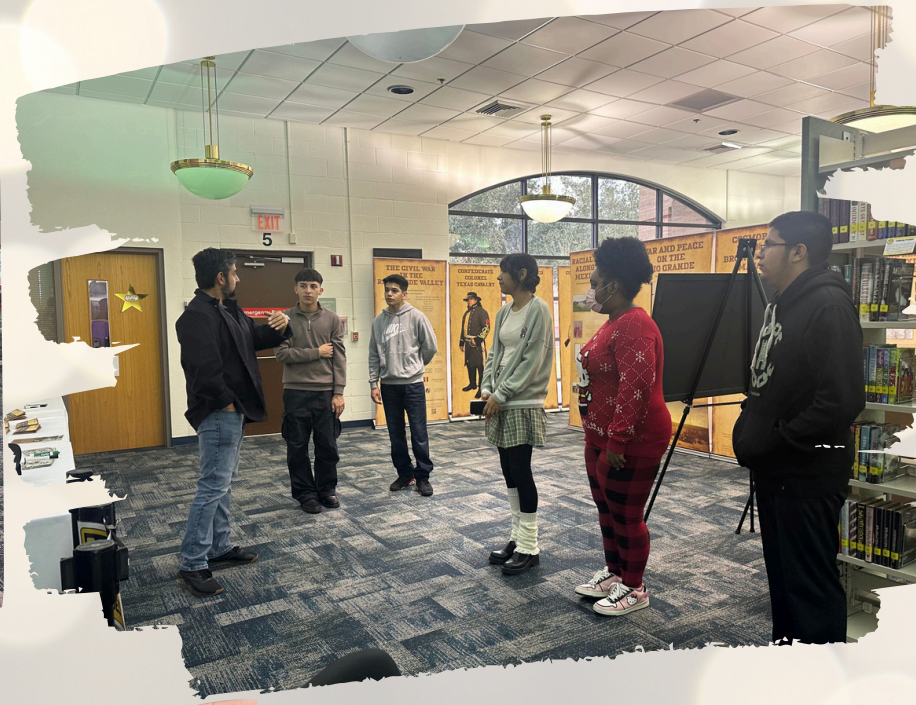
VA Club News

Keep up with the exciting things the VA clubs are doing

The VA clubs came together for Klerbsgiving

“In the Klerb we all fam“







For more information on club meetings please contact your sponsor

VA Club News

Keep up with the exciting things the VA clubs are doing



Season's Greetings

Left: BPA club members Angelyn and Elias drop off food donations



Right: Ryan, Sophia and Brandon represent Virtual Academy at the McAllen Holiday Parade

For more information on club meetings please contact your sponsor



College? Free?

Student opinion



By: Jazmin

The debate on free college focuses on access, economic opportunity, and educational quality. Supporters say it would allow more people to achieve their career goals without student debt. Opponents warn of overcrowded campuses and strained resources. Looking at both sides clarifies the potential impact of free college on students and society. If you look back to before the 1980's college was free, but now it isn't. You may wonder why we have to pay for college? In 1981 Ronald Reagan began his term as president, and made sure colleges would begin to charge tuition since he believed that free college fostered an entitlement rather than responsibility among students.

Pros of free college:

Sources such as https://outlook.monmouth.edu/ indicate that free college provides everyone with equal access to education. This would allow more individuals to pursue a degree and attain their desired careers. Additionally, free college could eliminate student debt, encouraging people to engage in various activities. With the knowledge that they don't have to worry about loans, financial aid, scholarships, or other financial concerns, more people would likely want to enroll in college.



Cons of free college:

Due to the availability of free college, more individuals may be inclined to pursue higher education since they no longer have to pay tuition. However, if a significant number of people attend college, it could lead to negative consequences such as overcrowding in meal plans, on-campus housing, and class sizes. This overcrowding might also result in limited resources for students, including access to computers in the library and required textbooks for classes. Additionally, some students may lack motivation to perform well in their courses since college is free and their financial investment is not at stake. Furthermore, colleges might struggle to remain operational if professors are not adequately compensated. Even if funding comes from the government or private donors, such financial support may not be sustainable for the growing number of students seeking admission. Free college will also hurt the economy since there will be higher taxes, and budget trade-offs.

Free college is an appealing idea because it makes education accessible to everyone. It can help students who cannot afford higher education. However, challenges like overcrowding, limited resources, and pressure on government funding must be considered. We need to balance access to education with maintaining quality and sustainability in colleges. College should be free due to economically disadvantaged people that can not afford college even though they try their hardest to study and achieve their goal of going to college. Moreover, parents who are poor and try their best can't send their children to college, so their children sometimes get student loans and have to suffer paying off their student debt. According to https://pewresearch.org there is a rising amount of people getting student loans. So far 39% of undergraduates took a loan out during the 2016 academic year, compared to 26% in 1996.

Starting October on a Menacing Note

By: Joshua Cantu

Starting December on a cold note

Regardless if you celebrate Christmas, most can agree that for one the atmosphere is great, seeing flashy lights and huge inflatables in peoples front yards are nice but it's not just pretty lights which make up the holidays. You may ask yourself well what are the holidays besides lights and decorations, well you're forgetting the Holiday Starbucks menu returning once again with its signature flare.

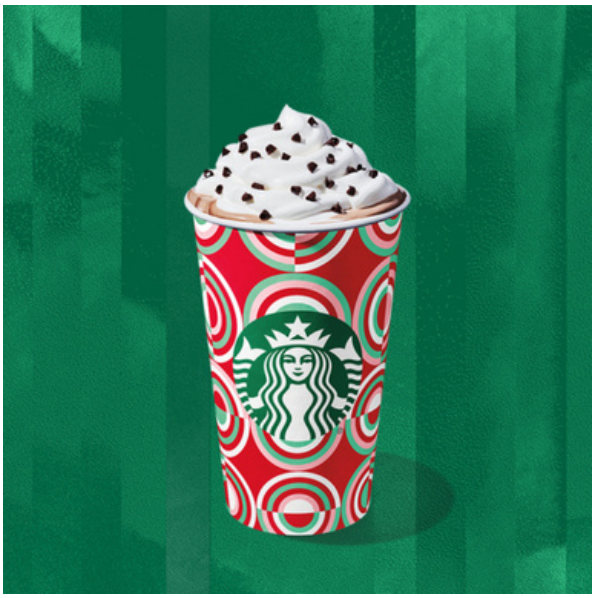
Disclaimer: many of the drinks mentioned in this review contain varying amounts of caffeine depending on how you customize the drink or how it's prepared so remember, drink with caution and be extra weary if you have had heart complications in the past. Additionally be weary of potential allergens within each product before consumption.

New Cran-Merry Orange Lemonade Refresher



Starting on a refreshing note, the Cran Merry Orange lemonade is on the sweeter side while still containing coffee, green coffee to be exact which usually is more bitter than regular brown Coffee. Moving forward the main flavors you will taste while drinking this beverage go as follows, Green Coffee extract, Lemonade, and Blood Orange concentrate but as we are on the topic of flavors note that the drink contains freeze dried cranberries so you will also be tasting those while drinking the beverage.

Peppermint Mocha



A returning favorite the Peppermint Mocha is again a sweeter beverage (a running theme with this menu) featuring major hints of Peppermint, espresso Coffee, and whipped cream while containing minor hints of Dark Chocolate, and vanilla. Accounting for all the ingredients within this beverage makes it a one of a kind in this menu lineup making it a must try for any Holiday enjoyer trying to get into that holiday spirit.

Iced Sugar Cookie Almond Milk Latte



Again, like I said, many sweet drinks that will make you feel the cholesterol in your blood rise but moving forward this beverage has some major hints of Sugar Cookie, espresso Coffee, and almond milk while containing some slight undertones of Powdered sugar. A real holiday treat we have here perfect for those mornings where you're struggling to get out of bed and just want something sweet but energizing.

Iced Gingerbread Oat-milk Chai



An interesting take on the menu this year as Coffee is not the base but chai is the base of this beverage. This in itself isn't an oddity but for the flavoring specifically gingerbread is a real interesting choice. This beverage contains some stronger hints of Chai as it is the base but also Gingerbread flavored cold foam Non-Dairy I might add, and pumpkin spice topping sprinkled on top making this one of the stars of the lineup this year perfect for any afternoon stroll through the park.

Caramel Brulée Latte



Returning to the classics, caramel you just can't beat returns this time on the holiday menu. Due to the caramel being in the title you may think this is your ordinary basic drink and you would be correct but that's what makes it such a classic. Moving forward what to expect when drinking

Food Items

New Turkey Sage Danish



This unique take on the danish formula uses the breading you get on your average Danish and combines it with turkey sausage perfect for when you want to get into the holiday spirit but you don't feel like making the Turkey.

Penguin Cookie



With a heavy heart I must announce, they replaced the oh so famous Snowman cookie, loved by many rest in peace the snowman cookie. Anyway, the penguin cookie is here is here featuring the buttery cookie dough the snowman had and features white chocolate for the actual penguin design. All in all the snowman cookie will be missed but it's time for a new cookie to rise from the ashes reborn as the penguin.

Snowman Cake Pop



A new addition to the Starbucks menu the Snowman cake pop appears. The new rendition of the popular cake-pop features a snowman design on the front which is made of chocolate icing making for a unique but appreciated take on the cake pop.

Cranberry Bliss Bar



The Cranberry Bliss bar returns in style just in time for the holidays. The Bliss Bar consists of Blondie cake base with a cream cheese finish on top and sprinkled with dried cranberries. An interesting combination of ingredients here making it a must try if your looking for a new way to experience the holiday's

What this means for the Holidays.

With Item's as casual as the caramel Brulée latte or as unique as the turkey sage danish this years lineup has a little something for everyone sweet or bitter, hot or cold starbucks has it all.

All photos used in this article where sourced from the official starbucks website linked below.
https://about.starbucks.com/stories/2024/starbucks-holiday-menu-returns-with-festive-new-refreshers-and-food-beginning-nov-7/
https://www.starbucks.com/

CAN CREATIVITY BE CONSIDERED AS A SKILL OR GIFT?

BY AZULGRIS G.

Can creativity be considered as a skill or a gift? The science shows it can be both! Creativity is one of the most celebrated and complex human traits. From groundbreaking inventions to timeless works of art. Creativity shapes our world in profound ways. But is it something you're naturally born with, or is it a skill that can be learned over time? Creative thinking is partly fueled by our ability to imagine the future in a variety of ways. Whether we're planning a meal or imagining an upcoming vacation, we often rely on our imagination to visualize what lies ahead in our day to day lives

A key debate in creativity research revolves around cognitive control, the ability to manage and direct the flow of thoughts. Does creativity emerge spontaneously, or can we consciously guide it? On one hand, loosening the mental filter and allowing our minds to wander, an activity controlled by the hippocampus and default network can lead to unexpected novel ideas. On the other hand, chance and spontaneity alone don't guarantee that these ideas will be both original and useful. We often need to consciously shift our thinking away from familiar patterns and critically assess whether our ideas are feasible. This underscores two essential aspects of the creative process: generating ideas and evaluating their viability.

While it's still uncertain whether long-term creativity (trait creativity) can be enhanced, there are strategies that may temporarily boost creativity (state creativity). One such approach involves tapping into the brain's default network, which is linked to flexible and generative thinking. When faced with a problem or "fixation," taking a break and allowing the mind to wander may help overcome mental blocks and lead to creative solutions. Another strategy is priming the episodic system recalling past experiences in vivid detail has been shown to increase creative idea generation.

Even if conclusive research on creativity training is lacking, engaging in creative hobbies, such as painting or learning an instrument, may lead to gradual improvements in creativity. Studies suggest that practicing music can enhance musical creativity, but it's unclear if these benefits extend to general creativity. This highlights a limitation of cognitive "brain training" programs, which typically improve performance on specific tasks but don't necessarily translate to broader creativity. Until more research on neuroscience-based interventions is available, traditional arts education remains a reliable way to foster creativity.



Animated Film Review

By: Argent Corvus

Mobile Suit Gundam: Iron Blooded Orphans

Content Warning: This show contains Gore, Suggestive themes, Implied CSA (child sexual abuse), Dehumanization, and Human experimentation.

Mobile Suit Gundam: Iron Blooded Orphans, or "**Ibo**" as fans refer to it, is yet another entry into the Gundam Franchise. Released October 4th, 2015, with lead director, Tatsuyuki Nagai, head writer Mari Okada, and music composer Masaru Yokoyama. Produced by MBS and Sunrise. You can Watch Gundam: Iron blooded orphans on Hulu, Crunchyroll, and Amazon Prime Video.

Ibo is often regarded as one of the grittiest Gundam series to date. Following a mercenary company composed wholly of child soldiers. And while Gundam is no stranger to the militarization of children forced to fight for the "Greater good", Ibo is set apart from other series because instead of watching the effects of children being forced to carry a large weight of the fighting during war times, we are instead presented with a group of children already accustomed to fighting and killing in war zones, while also living in a harsh uncaring environment. This capacity for violence is partly due to the fact that the children of this mercenary company are orphans. Orphans who have had to struggle and fight to survive on the harsh impoverished streets of the Mars colony, and who were forced to receive cybernetic implants frowned upon in society just for an opportunity to make less minimum living wage.

When it comes to the visual presentation of the show, well suffice it to say you will not find much to complain about. The animation flows smoothly and the art style presented in this show emphasizes the power of the machines, and the gritty aesthetic of the show. Another cool thing about the presentation of the show is that during important dramatic scenes, they use light and shadows in such a way that really helps to emphasize the emotions of the scene.

The sound track for this show is nothing to scoff at either. The music in this show is reminiscent of older mobster and crime family films, and the sound design for the show is spectacular. They know how to pull on your heart strings, playing the right songs at the right times really amplifying the emotions of the scene. Even having a song commissioned by the band "MAN WITH A MISSION", which is titled "Raise your flag".

IRON-BLOODED ORPHANS
MOBILE SUIT GUNDAM

Another thing that helps set Ibo apart from other series, not just the ones within the Gundam franchise, is the writing and storytelling of the show. In Ibo we watch as our protagonist rise to the position of "Heroes" in the story and slowly watch as their position changes to that of the "Villains", and while that plot may not sound unique the way it's portrayed is really what gets you invested in seeing where the story goes.



Sports 101

PREVIEW OF THE 2024 NFL SEASON

JC

November 2024 has been busy for the NFL so far the Kansas City Chiefs started with their first defeat of the season, supplied by the Buffalo Bills. This defeat restructured the power dynamics in the AFC as the competition for playoff spots narrowed, and marked the end of the unbeaten streak of the Chiefs. At the same time, a 9-1 exhibiting DetroitLions is leading the NFC, continuing their stellar performance with quarterback Jared Goff and head coach Dan Campbell.

Player injuries and changes to personnel have also been significant. New York Giants quarterback Daniel Jones was benched for Tommy DeVito, a move that had several talking about the rebuilding of the team and how much attention will be given to draft positioning. In Contrast, the Indianapolis Colts finally showed some grit: their rookie Anthony Richardson led an exhilarating comeback against the Jets after having previously struggled. Moreover, there have also been some pretty notable returns and absences, including San Francisco 49ers star Brock Purdy and Nick Bosa dealing with injuries of their own that are costing the past NFC champions games.

The coaching carousel is starting to spin within the NFL. Mike McCarthy of the Dallas Cowboys is under scrutiny despite regular-season success because of repeated playoff disappointments. Matt Eberflus of the Chicago Bears is also feeling the heat after a slow start with high expectations following a rebuild that included drafting quarterback Caleb Williams. The Cleveland Browns' Kevin Stefanski has to answer many questions as injuries and team struggles have made for a terrible season. Antonio Pierce of the Las Vegas Raiders and Brian Daboll of the New York Giants are also in tough situations with piling losses and uncertain futures. The whole "hot seat" dynamic reflects how serious things can get with coaches in a performance-based league.



Basketball 101

By:DR

Top Teams and Stars

The Golden State Warriors, led by Stephen Curry, have been dominant for years, but they now face strong competition. The Milwaukee Bucks are one of the top teams, with Giannis Antetokounmpo and new addition Damian Lillard looking to bring another championship to the city. The Boston Celtics, with Jayson Tatum and Jaylen Brown, also have big dreams of winning it all, especially with new addition Kristaps Porzingis.

In the West, the Denver Nuggets are defending their championship with Nikola Jokić leading the way. The Lakers, with LeBron James and Anthony Davis, are always contenders for the title, despite an older roster.

Rising Young Stars

There are also plenty of young players ready to make their mark. Luka Dončić, with the Dallas Mavericks, is already one of the best in the game, and his team is looking to make a deep playoff run. Zion Williamson, back from injury, is hoping to lead the New Orleans Pelicans to success. Ja Morant, known for his explosiveness, will also be a key player for the Memphis Grizzlies, despite serving a suspension.

Veterans Still Shining

Even with the rise of younger stars, veteran players like LeBron James and Kevin Durant are still playing at an elite level. Durant, now with the Phoenix Suns, has joined forces with Devin Booker and Bradley Beal, giving the Suns a potent trio of scorers.

A Competitive Season Ahead

The 2024-25 season is packed with strong teams and rising stars. The competition in both the Eastern and Western Conferences is fierce, with teams like the Cleveland Cavaliers, Miami Heat, and Dallas Mavericks all aiming for the top. It looks like it will be another exciting year of NBA basketball.

Conclusion

The 2024-25 NBA season is full of promise. With many strong teams, standout players, and plenty of drama, it will be a season to remember for basketball fans. The race for the championship is wide open, and every game could bring something special.





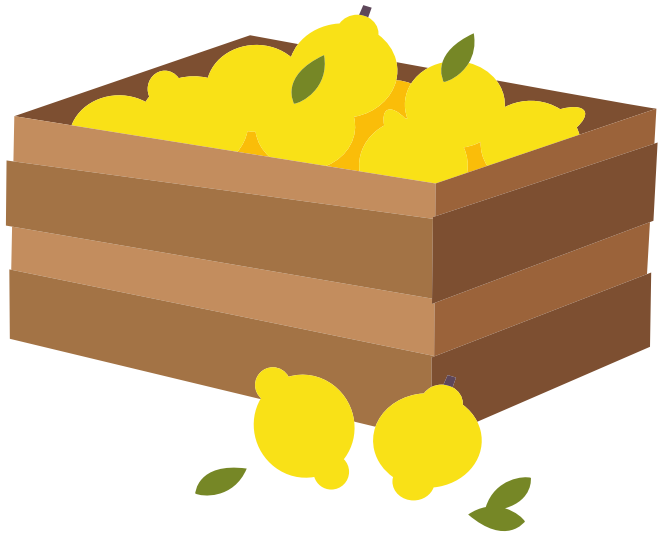
Winter's Citrus Wonders

By: Donaven. P

In November and December the harvest that happens in the valley are varieties of fruits and vegetables like cabbage, lettuces, Meryer lemon tree and onions.

What allows for all four of the vegetables and fruits to grow in the valley during the fall season and winter is because of the temperature and rainfall, humidity. Humidity and temperature are the most important in my opinion because what humidity does to the vegetables is reduce the risk of fungal disease growing onto the vegetables. For temperatures the best temperature daily for vegetables is 50F and 75F winch helps with less risk for frost. One plant I would like to mention is the Meyer lemon tree during the fall and winter season. The tree will have a certain time to harvest the lemons during September-November. The lemons will not be ready to harvest because the lemons are beginning to ripening.

The perfect time to harvest the lemons will be during winter time which is December-February at this time the lemons are ready to be picked and also fun fact: Meyer lemons can stay on the tree for several weeks after ripening without spoiling, allowing for a flexible harvest period. Additionally, to see if the lemons are ready to be picked is by observing the color of the lemons the tools to use for the lemons are pruning shears. What you do to pick the lemon probably is by cutting the stem a bit above the lemon. After that you can store lemons in the refrigerator for up to two to three weeks.



Rounding Up RGV Events

Check out these local events that will be happening during the **Winter Season**



December 13th

Fleamarket

Where: 3401 W Business 83, Harlingen

Time: 8am-12pm

Price: Free Entry



December 28th

Oldies but Goodies

Where: 7610 N. FM 492 Palmview

Time: 7pm-10pm

Price: 8$ Admissions Fee



December 14th

Holiday Market

Where: North 10th Street 1009 McAllen

Time: 9am-3pm

Price: Charge on gifts, crafts, foods



January 2nd

Learn and Enjoy Hand Crafts

Where: 1501 N. Loop 499 Harlingen

Time: 8am - 12pm

Price: Free

By: Mannix

Rounding Up RGV Events

Check out these local events that will be happening during the **Winter Season**



December 26th

Nutcracker

Where: McAllen Preforming Arts Center 99 Center Ln McAllen

Time: 3pm or 7pm

Price: Depends on seating arrangement - Visit nutcracker.com for more info



January 12th

Funday at the Museum

Where: 411 Virgen de San Juan Blvd San Juan

Time: 12pm-4pm

Price: 15$ admission ages 12+. More activities+$



January 5th

Port Isabel Flea Market

Where: Beulah Lee Park Highway 100

Time: 9am-4pm

Price: Vendor prices vary



January 25th

South Padre Island Flea Market

Where: South Padre Island Convention 7355 Padre Boulevard

Time: 9am - 5pm

Price: 2$ entry

By: Mannix

Meet the Phoenix Journalism Team!

My name is Donaven and what my hobbies and interests are. I like to cook new things and make meals that make people happy. Also what I like to do in my free time is play some video games and also study different ingredients for new meals to make.





Mannix is one of the first, and few, seniors at the VA. He is known to enjoy playing guitar and fishing. He likes to listen to and talk about a variety of music and bands. Although he has the heart of an outdoors person he still enjoys the comforts of indoor activities like video games and being at the Virtual Academy.

JC is a football enthusiast. His favorite football team is the 3 time superbowl champion Denver Broncos. He has gone to sporting events. This past year he went to the superbowl. He met lots of NFL personalities like team owners, head coaches and hall of fame players.



Jazmin loves listening to music, watching movies, series, spending time with her family, and friends. She loves dogs, and animals. She has a dog named Oreo. Her favorite series is The Flash.





His name is Joshua. He's an eleventh grade student here at the virtual academy, his hobbies are gaming, listening to music, running, and making coffee. He's played a lot of game series but his favorite is the resident evil series, his favorite music artist is Low Roar and his favorite roast of coffee is blonde.

J unfiltered enjoys swimming, playing, and watching sports. She also likes spending time with her family and pets, traveling, and seeing new places. Also enjoy reading and writing, as well as watching movies and TV shows.



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

Meet the Phoenix Journalism Team!

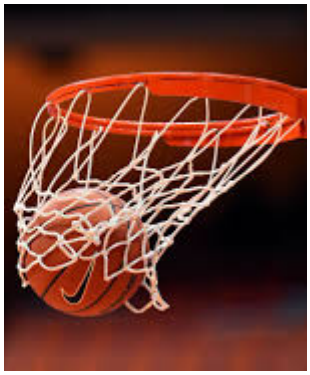
Argent Corvus is a Junior at the STISD Virtual academy. They Have 2 dogs named Ivan, and Maximus. A few of their favorite activities include listening to Music and podcasts on Spotify, making art, and Studying Animation.

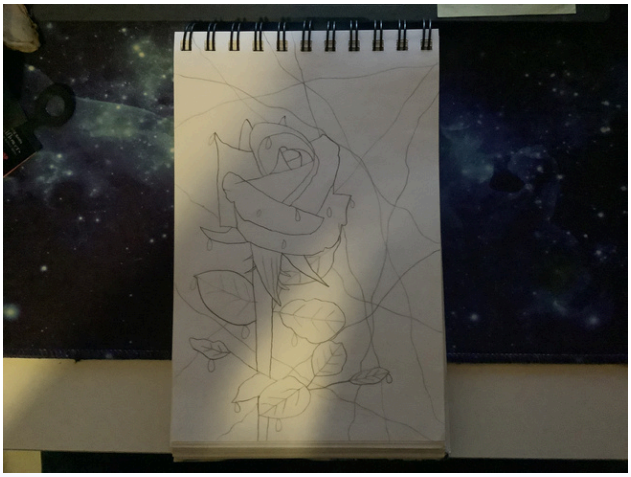




Ricky loves animals and collecting stuffed animals. in his free time he draws and is extremely creative.

Daniel likes playing basketball, running, and going fishing. He participates in Vipers basketball camps and tournaments. He does not like to read at all and has gone to 18 different states.





Winter is beautiful like a flower

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