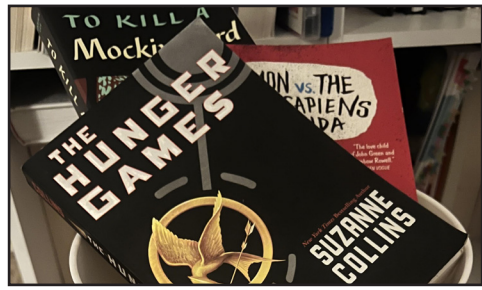


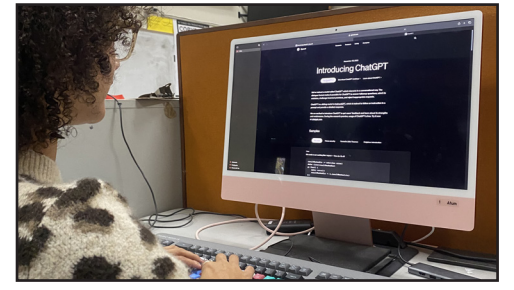
In this Issue...



Book banning on the rise Page 2



Heinz steps down as coach Page 5



AI in classrooms Page 8

1st Place award-winner from the American Scholastic Press Association



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The **INAUGURATION EDITION**

Liberty High School
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The voice of Liberty High School students

Issue 1, Volume 36

January 21, 2025

FREE

Project 2025: Effect on students

By **Hallie Munoz**
Staff Writer

In an effort to “build a governing agenda, not just for January but long into the future,” Kevin Roberts, President of the Heritage Foundation, established Project 2025.

Project 2025 is a handbook that consists of laws that some consider controversial because they believe they threaten their freedoms and rights, while other people consider it a governing agenda that could help the U.S. progress as an economic and political country.

When asked about what she knew about Project 2025, Mrs. Diamond

said, “It could affect our education system.”

She also stated that, “It would dismantle special education classes.”

Mrs. Diamond continued about how special education classes are necessary for schools to have because the population of people who need the classes has increased by 10%.

Project 2025 would also affect students with special needs if put into action. There is an increase in students diagnosed with autism, anxiety, and ADHD. For the students who need support, certain programs we currently have in place could be jeopardized and not exist.

In an article that the ACLU (American

Civil Liberties Union) posted about Project 2025, they stated, “Project 2025 includes a long list of extreme policy recommendations touching on nearly every aspect of American life, from immigration and abortion rights to free speech and racial justice. A number of its recommendations rely on support from the executive branch and from Congress. Many other initiatives are outright unconstitutional.”

The ACLU’s goal in publishing this article was to inform people on what Project 2025 is, and what, or who, it could affect.

Regardless of which political side one is on, people should learn about Project 2025 to form their own opinion.



In the ABC News Presidential Debate, President Trump denied any involvement in Project 2025, saying, “I haven’t read it. I don’t want to read it.” Photo courtesy of Charlie Neibergall/AP



Photo courtesy of Jimmy Carter Presidential Library

An Inauguration Day trendsetter, Jimmy Carter and his family decided to walk the 1977 Inaugural Parade route, rather than ride in a car. Carter was America’s oldest former President, passing away at the age of 100 on December 29, 2024.

By **Michael Hanlon**
Staff Writer

The President, the face of America and the person who influences the direction of the country is not just appointed into power immediately after winning the election. Ever since the first president George Washington’s first term, there has been an Inauguration in place which aids in the official transfer of power. This is a part of the U.S.’s vot-

ing process, which is why it’s so vital for American youth to be educated on this process.

The importance of the Presidential Inauguration can be very briefly summarized by Mr. Williamson, a history teacher at Liberty, who said, “It represents the peaceful transfer of power from one administration to another,” and later when commenting on the formality says, “It’s all about civil engagement.” One of if not the only way

A look at Inauguration Day, past and present

for people, no matter political affiliation, to see former and newly elected officials be civil even after great losses is the Inauguration. Trying to relate why it may be important for new voters to learn of the Inaugural process, Mr. Williamson said, “When you turn 18 obviously the first thing you should do is register to vote and part of that is being knowledgeable about our traditions and democratic process.”

Dating back to the beginning of 1778, Inauguration Day was scheduled for March 4th but had been pushed back due to electoral votes not being counted yet. George Washington had his first inauguration in New York, the American capital at the time. His second inauguration was held in the Congress Hall in Philadelphia, which was the new capital. This makes him one of the only presidents to be inaugurated in two capitals. From then until much later, Inauguration Day was March 4th.

The first real “controversy” of the Presidential Inauguration came in 1801 with

newcomer president Thomas Jefferson. His goal was to show off “Republican simplicity,” so he walked a little over one mile in what was described as the clothes of any other civilian.

Inauguration controversy didn’t stray away from Jefferson, because when he was elected president, it was against his former friend John Adams. This resulted in John Adams not attending Jefferson’s inauguration, which was big news at the time. John Adams’ Inauguration Day outburst ended up carrying on as his child John Quincy Adams skipped out on his peer Andrew Jackson’s Inauguration 28 years after his father did the same thing.

In 1849, Inauguration Day fell on a Sunday which was enough for president elect Zachary Taylor to refuse to be sworn in to “keep holy the Sabbath.” Because the event was already in place, President Pro Tempore of the Senate David Rice Atchison took his spot and was sworn in as president. To this day people still debate whether

David Atchison was or was not the 13th President of the United States. Either way, on David Atchison’s gravestone it reads, “President of the United States for One Day.”

A popular fashion tradition on Inauguration Day was for the elect to wear a top hat. This ended in 1961 with President John F. Kennedy. His predecessor Lyndon Johnson passed on the top hat tradition following Kennedy’s assassination. Johnson didn’t have a traditional swear-in as, after Kennedy’s assassination, Johnson was sworn in aboard Air Force One. He was inaugurated by Judge Sarah Hughes, making her the first woman to inaugurate a president. Inauguration Day began to become the tradition that is seen today when the 20th Amendment was passed. This amendment was meant to shorten the defeated president’s term in office after the election. So, starting in 1933, Inauguration Day was changed to January 20th which is the date that is still used to this day.

Election takes its toll on relationships

By **Mia Regalado**
Staff Writer

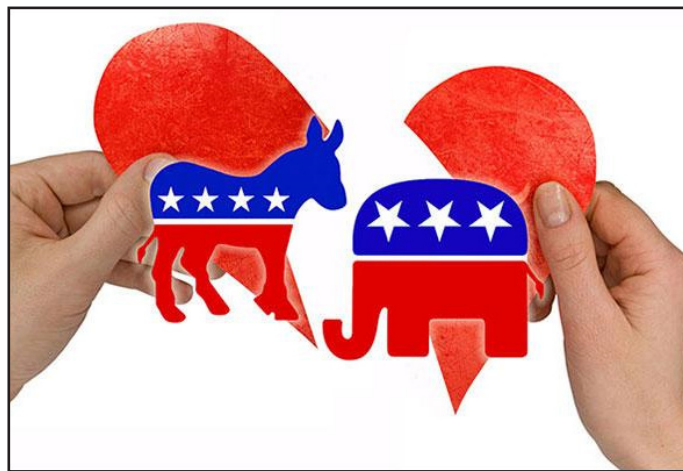
The election results and the recent inauguration have caused tensions to rise in social environments due to differences in opinion. Every presidential election is nerve wracking for both sides, but the 2024 presidential election was especially polarizing with citizens seemingly picking a side and leaving no in-between.

“The older I get, I know what I stand for and what I want, so I will go with the party that provides that,” said Sydney, a 12th grader at Liberty.

Since some viewed this election as morals versus money, trends surfaced on big social media platforms, such as

Tik Tok, consisting of ‘canceling out’ family members’ votes if they planned to vote for the opposing side. This increased anticipation surrounding the election.

“I definitely feel like my family background impacts my political beliefs because my parents’ morals have been passed down and since it’s what I grew up around, it’s what I’m most educated on,” said Brooke, an 11th grader at Liberty. The 2024 election has



22% of Americans – and 35% of Millennials – know someone “whose marriage or relationship has been negatively impacted” due to the election, according to familylawyermagazine.com.

Photo courtesy of familylawyermagazine.com

driven countless couples, friends, and family members apart as many see voting red as voting against human rights, and voting blue seen as voting against tradition and government. As Liberty High School is in a semi-rural area, some students lean right, toward the Republican party, due to environmental factors, but where does it become a problem when political opinions clash?

“Personally, the people I surround myself

with have similar if not the same views as me but the election still was a topic of discussion in my friend group as we observed how other reacted to the election either on Tik Tok or at school, if they even showed up at all,” said James, a 12th grader at Liberty.

On a high school campus where most students were not yet old enough to vote in the 2024 election, the adult voting population may be surprised to learn that politics have caused a wedge in student relationships and friendships. “I wouldn’t say the election caused a wedge in any of my relationships but, I did see a lot of people’s true colors and realized so many people are willing to sell themselves short for a little bit of cash and broken promises,” said Reese, a 12th grader at Liberty.

Hear us roar some more!



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Scan QR code with mobile device to see our issue archive

Upcoming events:

100th Day of School - 1/23

Food Fair - 2/12

CSF Applications Due - 1/24

Late AP Exam Payments - 2/24

January 21, 2025

Off the shelf: Increase in book bans nationwide

By Morgan Haney
Staff Writer

As the word of Project 2025 buzzes around, the topic of banned books is also in the air. The forever burning question of whether or not this act is a violation of the United States' First Amendment is on people's minds. Books are typically challenged or banned because of the content contained within the stories. Butler University wrote that books containing people of color, mental health, violence, and LGBTQ+ characters or themes are some of the most common reasons why a book is questioned. After an organization or individual becomes aware of the contents of a book that is held in school classrooms and libraries, a book may be banned if they disagree with the contents. They may argue that the book is not suitable for the audience it is available to. "Many books have been banned or censored in one or more of these categories due to a misjudgment or misunderstanding about the books contents and message," mentioned Butler University. "Many books that have been banned or censored later were dropped

from banned books lists and were no longer considered controversial." Banning books is nothing new; it began centuries ago with abolitionist works. Since then, the Supreme Court has come to the conclusion, twice, that this is an infringement on the First Amendment rights of school children. The exact precedents of the ruling have been vague, causing schools to find loopholes. In addition, school boards have control over banned books and base their opinions on what they would consider "community values." Justice William J. Brennan Jr., the Supreme Court Justice that wrote the plurality opinion of the 1982 ruling, asserted that, even though "local school boards have broad discretion in the management of school affairs," discretion "must be exercised in a manner that comports with the transcendent imperatives of the First Amendment." In 2023, California Governor Gavin Newsom signed a law preventing books from being banned because of discrimination or portrayals of diversity. Thus, increasing the difficulty for a school district to bypass the rulings put into place.

"With this new law, we're cementing California's role as the true freedom state: a place where families — not political fanatics — have the freedom to decide what's right for them," Newsom addressed. Now, the efforts to ban books are at an all time high. In 2023, the ALA (American Library Association) documented that the number of challenges on books increased 65% from 2022, ending with a record-breaking 4,240 unique titles being tried in the U.S. by the end of the year. Although 2024's number of reports decreased, it is far more than any numbers recorded before 2020. Some say political division has been a factor as to why censorship has gained traction and why certain topics are being targeted in book bans when trying to push a political agenda. Sonya Douglas, the Professor of Education Leadership, discussed the impact of having access to a diverse selection of books to read as a child. Research has proven that there is a positive impact on students whose access to books on diverse topics is not limited. On the other hand, students that have less access could lead to a more limited understanding of the world around

them, as well as themselves. "It's a battle over the soul of the country in many ways; it's about what we teach young people about our country, what we determine to be the truth, and what we believe should be included in the curriculum they're receiving. There's a lot at stake there," she wrote. When interviewing Mr. Khan, an English teacher at Liberty, he voiced strong opinions on the social aspect behind the banning of books. He described the cause and rise of banning books to be the heavy involvement of parents on what their children are learning in school and the recent push of censorship. Mr. Khan went on to explain the importance of reading books that could be considered controversial. "I don't believe in book banning. In AP English, we read some pretty con-

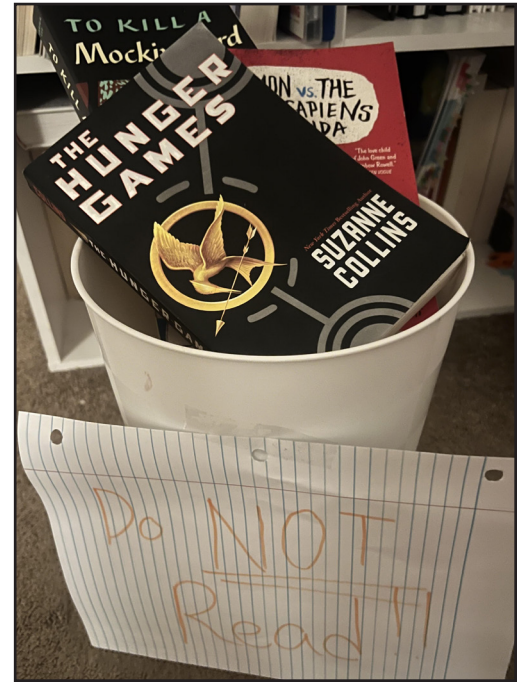


Photo by Morgan Haney

Books that have been banned from school districts across the U.S. include *The Hunger Games*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and the *Harry Potter* series.

troverial books, but I expect my students to have maturity when approaching the topics in class," he responded. "I think it helps them expand on their understanding of the world."

Lack of sex-ed literacy after COVID

By Hannah Grossetete
Editor-in-Chief

The five-year anniversary of the COVID-19 outbreak is approaching, and while most believe that COVID is a thing of the past, many professionals are discovering that its true impact is only now coming to light. The more obvious short-term impacts were economic setbacks and long-COVID complications, but some of the more concerning long-term impacts are on the education system, specifically sex-education. Sexual health education covers the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases, access to reproductive care, comprehensive knowledge of consent, and a basic understanding of one's body. A widespread debate in the U.S. began in early 1960s about having more comprehensive sexual education in schools, allowing for educators to teach about the dangers of sexually transmitted infections and reproductive care. This was also the era of people advocating for education surrounding contraceptive care, and separating schools from "abstinence only" programs. However, it wasn't until 1994 when Guidelines for Comprehensive Sexuality Education — Kindergarten — 12th Grade was integrated into public schools across the U.S. Despite backlash from conservative

and traditional communities, research has shown that these programs have had an overwhelming positive impact on the students who receive it. Douglas Kirby, the author of "Kirby's 17 Characteristics of Effective Pregnancy and HIV/AIDS Prevention Programs," stated, "They have, in fact, a positive impact on young people's sexual behavior — delaying initiation of sex and increasing condom and contraceptive use. This strong evidence suggested that some comprehensive sex education programs should be widely replicated." However, the upward climb of comprehensive sexual education was halted due to outbreak of COVID-19 in early 2020 and the consequent worldwide shutdowns of public schools. The integration of online learning impacted all students' education. In grades 7-9 (ages 12-14), most students completely missed out on sex-ed instruction due to the focus on keeping students caught up on core school subjects. These ages mark puberty along with many students growing curiosity about their own bodies. Sex-ed being delayed or even completely disregarded, set these students up for failure. The National Library voiced their concern on this topic in regard to COVID-19, "Sexual and reproductive health was also deeply affected, not

only because adolescence is a crucial age for sexual development through personal sexual experiences but also in terms of access to and use of SRH care, preventive and screening services, abortion care, and SRH education programs." Furthermore, many students took learning into their own hands within all subjects, which becomes concerning when considering the lack of sexual education. The curious minds of these young teens, along with a common embarrassment when asking questions to parents, led students to use the internet to find their own answers. The internet, despite its flaws, can be a very useful tool for personal learning and curiosity. However, this can lead students down harmful paths with misinformation and inappropriate sites. The future consequences of the delay of sexual education for young teens during COVID are only going to become clearer as more research and data comes out in the years to come. As a result, many public schools are trying to catch up their students and are becoming more likely to provide sexual wellness care, such as free STD scanning's, contraceptives, and a safe space to ask questions to better ones physical and mental safety and wellness. It remains to be seen what the future implications of this educational setback will be.

Photo courtesy of Larisa/Adobe Stock



Every 15 Minutes: The drunk driving prevention program that disappeared

By Loujain Habibi
Editor-in-Chief

Drunk driving takes lives. The Every 15 Minutes program tries to prevent this by immersing students in the aftermath of a drunk driving accident. Liberty High School participated in this program and was supposed to have it presented in 2020, but due to COVID, it was cancelled. Since then, Liberty has not had the program, making 2018 the last time the Every 15 Minutes program was at Liberty. "The two-day Every 15 Minutes program is very dramatic and emotional and purposely so. Teenagers are constantly reminded about the choices they have to make involving alcohol and how many others are affected by their decisions," as stated by the CHP (California Highway Patrol) on the Every 15 Minutes website. Created by the Chico Police Department in 1995, this program's name

stems from the early 1990s statistic that someone in the U.S. was killed in an alcohol-related accident every 15 minutes, according to the CHP. In 2022, someone in the U.S. was killed in an alcohol-related accident every 39 minutes, culminating in 13,524 deaths, according to the most recent report by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, a part of the U.S. Department of Transportation. The Every 15 Minutes program targets high school seniors and juniors since they are considered a high-risk group for drunk driving. This is evidenced by Mothers Against Drunk Driving, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, which reported that car crashes are the leading cause of death for teenagers, with one in four crashes involving an underage drunk driver. Before the program takes place, students and their parents sign waivers opting them into the program. From there, around 25 students are selected.

On the first day, a student is pulled out of class every 15 minutes; these students are referred to as the "living dead." "When fellow classmates have to stare at an empty chair throughout the day, they are continuously reminded of the loss of their friend and/or classmate," wrote the CHP. Their obituaries, which remain posted in the classrooms for the rest of the year, are read by an officer and counselor. When the program was at Liberty, a rose would be left on the student's desk. The parents of the living dead are notified about their child's death by an officer. Tombstones of the living dead are placed in a temporary cemetery on campus. "A simulated drunk driving collision involving pre-selected high school students is staged on or near the school grounds for the benefit of the entire student body," the CHP explained. This production is recorded.



The members of *The Tardy Sweeps*, from left: Paul Taylor, Officer Michael Rucker, Michael Mauro, Juan Gonzalez.

Photo by Abigail Thomas

Don't be late, run for The Tardy Sweeps

By Abigail Thomas
Staff Writer

What began as a small idea between teachers full of melody has transformed into Liberty High School's first teacher band, *The Tardy Sweeps*. It was formed to enhance and encourage the artistic and musical minds of Liberty's students. "We play what you'd call 'Dad Rock' I guess," said Paul Taylor, a teacher at Liberty. "So *Arena Rock* from the 60's up through today." October 18 marked the official debut of *The Tardy Sweeps*. The band consists of four Liberty staff members who have previously played together: Paul (Romulus) Taylor, Officer Michael (Gunther) Rucker, Juan (Giuseppe) Gonzales, and Michael (Quimby) Mauro. "Mr. Gonzales and Officer Rucker and I had played a couple times earlier in the year," said Taylor. This group has even performed with the Liberty Choir once. Through their performances, they became aware that it would be fun to put together a "teacher band." So, they came together and created

what is now known as *The Tardy Sweeps*. "As teachers, it is always fun to see students panicking to get to class on time. We figured that if we named our band 'The Tardy Sweeps,' each time the band is getting promoted, at least a quarter of the student population will think that they need to run to class that day rather than watch a bunch of old guys play cover songs," explained Mauro. Therefore, with school support, *The Tardy Sweeps* formed with Rucker on Bass guitar, Taylor on Lead guitar and vocals, Gonzalez on Drums and vocals, and Mauro on Rhythm guitar and vocals. This band's popularity has grown immensely since their debut as their music makes for an entertaining show during students' lunch. "Right now, we have quite a few offers from different bands to go out on tour," Mauro joked. "Just maybe, the *Tardy Sweeps* will be able to squeeze in another lunch time performance." "Just listen in the announcements for 'The Tardy Sweeps,'" said Mauro. *The Tardy Sweeps* will continue playing at lunch on the Senior Stage throughout the rest of the school year.

Law enforcement and chaperones take the living dead to an overnight retreat where they write letters to their loved ones about what they would have said if they hadn't been killed. On the second day, a student body assembly is held, and the production recording from the day before is shown. Afterwards, the living dead students read parts of the letters they wrote. "They share with their friends and classmates what it felt like to die without having the chance to say goodbye," the CHP wrote. Members of the community, such as emergency responders and police officers, explain how they are affected by drunk driving accidents before the

assembly ends with a call to action to make responsible choices about alcohol. "The program helps the students see members of their community in a different light. They are no longer just cops, doctors, paramedics, or firefighters, but also friends, mentors, and human beings who care about the kids in their community," the CHP concludes. Efa Huckaby, Principal at Liberty, mentioned how, if the program were brought back, it would raise awareness about driving under the influence. "You're told not to, but you don't necessarily know 'because of this, this is what life turns to,'" said Principal Huckaby.

January 21, 2025



The characters of Danny Zuko (played by Tanner Andersen) and the boys of Rydell High rehearse for their upcoming opening night. Photo courtesy of Kyle Roman

Lost in the system

How teens navigate through foster care

By Genesis Palomera
Staff Writer

Many foster children who age out of the foster care system have a hard time transitioning into adulthood because of the lack of support funds that they have limited access to; once adolescents reach the age of 18, they are removed from the foster care system unless they qualify for Extended Foster Care (AB 12) programs. Extended foster care or (AB 12) is a program that keeps foster children who are supposed to age out at 18 in foster care until they are 21 or also have the option to go on their own and come back when they want because they are still in the system. According to the California Department of Social Services, adolescents can get into these programs by completing at least one criteria of having good behavior while in the foster care system, a type of high school completion, enrolled in college, be employed at least 80 hours a month, or be in programs working towards gaining employment; if unable to do so because of medical conditions, one may get a pass. Although this may seem simple, a lot of these students don't have the right support or knowledge about these programs to help them transition into

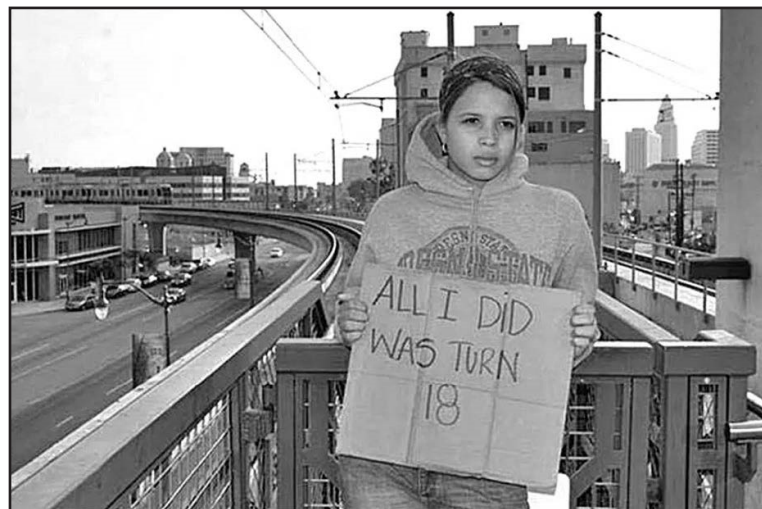


Photo courtesy of baptistmessage.com

Every state has varying programs for foster youth. Shantel, pictured above, was part of Louisiana's PathFinders program, providing safe housing, meals, medical care, and life skills at no cost. Residents must be drug/alcohol free, working and/or going to school, responsible for chores, and responsible for developing an exit strategy.

adulthood and end up homeless. Adolescents with criminal records have higher risks of being homeless because their records can act as barriers to housing, education, and employment. The Center for Coordinated Assistance to States reported that 46% of youth who have experienced homelessness had been held in juvenile detention centers at some point. Many adolescences get too over pres-

sured about aging out of the system and lose hope in their future because they aren't properly educated on the programs there are to help them plan for themselves. To prevent these struggles from increasing around the world we need to educate the children in our community about these programs that are available for them so, that they can have receive the help that they need to succeed in life.



By Ashton Goelz
Staff Writer

Audition process puts students' nerves to the test

side of high school. "Singing and dancing at the same time is always challenging. This requires constant practice. Many times we find an actor nailing their song when they are not in motion and then not being able to sing it comfortably while dancing," explains Liberty Playmakers vocal director Cielo Capio. Progress, according to sophomore actor Sawyer Bevill, is realizing that there are times for playing around and times for being mature and knowing when to "flip that switch." When asked about how to study for the audition, two words that would come up often were confidence and preparation. "I look to see if the actor is prepared. It's disappointing when they have to constantly be looking at their lines and having to start over. When an actor is prepared, that aids to their confidence and also speaks to their work ethic," says Cielo.

The lights dim, three rows of chairs are displayed on the stage. Every few hours a group of different actors take the stage to determine if they are capable of handling a role in Liberty High School's production of *Grease the Musical*. Auditioning can be quite a heart-pounding situation as mentality comes into play. On the day of the audition actors have to sit in silence as they wait for their name to be called upon. "Your mind controls all of your nerves," says Tanner Andersen, who is playing the role of Danny Zuko in *Grease*. "Being mentally prepared for everything is the best way to set yourself up for success." Andersen admits that he loves the challenges that come with doing these shows and can't wait to do more out-

Liberty Club Corner: Speech and Debate

By Sophia Cantin
Staff Writer



Photo courtesy of Dilrabo Absadikova

With Liberty High School's many clubs, its Speech and Debate Club is an academic club which allows students the opportunity to understand different perspectives and to discuss important topics with peers in a fun after school environment. "The goals of the club were to help students develop speaking and arguing skills to effectively engage in public speaking," stated Ms. Ondek, one of the club advisors. She said that the club initially started aiming to help students gather courage and confidence when public speaking. "It started with a COVID lockdown email from a student asking me to advise the club. We started with meetings and began to enter in speaking competitions," she explained. Once the club became official, meetings were conducted and these meetings eventually presented new opportunities for the club, such as speaking competitions. Ms. Ondek explains, "The club is now participating in the Lions Club Student Speaking Contest, with students participating from Livermore, Brentwood, and Discovery Bay. They have moved onto the second round."

Proudly showing off her award is LHS junior Rebecca Vincent, alongside her brother, Matthew Vincent.

Interested in joining the Speech and Debate Club?

The club meets bi-weekly on Wednesdays in N-17 during lunch.

Questions? Contact Mr. Mundy at mundym@luhsd.net

Or

Ms. Ondek at ondeka@luhsd.net



The Speech and Debate Club is advised by both Ms. Ashley Ondek, and Mr. Mike Mundy, shown above.

Photo courtesy of Dilrabo Absadikova

Show dates for Grease the Musical:



- *February 28th
- *March 1st
- *March 6th-March 8th
- *March 13th-15th

Tickets available at:
www.lhsplaymakers.com

Meet the cast of Grease

T-Birds:
Danny Zuko- Tanner Andersen
Kenickie- Luke Homa
Doody- Sam Krey
Roger- Alyx Olson
Sonny- Andrew Giles

Rydell High Staff:
Miss Lynch- Elicia Vasquez
Principal McGee- Zohar Ben-David
Blanche- Kyra Quallick

Pink Ladies (Frenchy Cast):
Sandy- Alivia Torres
Rizzo- Addison Saylor
Marty- Joey Young
Frenchy- Addie Homer
Jan- Lola Ehrlich

Pink Ladies (Rizzo Cast):
Sandy- Cianna Clingshoff
Rizzo- Clover Pokorney
Marty- Annalee Killingsworth
Frenchy- Levi Holton
Jan- Avery White

Minor leads and student leaders:
Eugene-Cameron Payne, Sawyer Bevill
Patty Simcox- Romey Wingard,
Zoey Boisvert

Jack:
Logan Kruse, Tyler Holton

Heart-Throbs:
Teen Angel- Jacob Peccorini
Johnny Cassino- Jaxson Rose
Vince Fontaine- Travis
Cha Cha-Cianna Clingshoff, Alivia Torres

Cheerleaders:
Brea Griggs, Lexi Mathews,
Kiera Morales, Janessa Meade,
Addy Gunderman

Dance Ensemble:
Abby Alex, Molly Redman,
Kiera Morales, Sydney Anthony,
Janessa Meade, Michael Kromer,
Jayden Libby, Felix Dalrymple,
Sophia Alexander, Nariah Hodges,
Nathan Dela Paz, Geven Pokorney, Alyssa Huffaster,
Gabiella Mottashed, Ava Bizieff, Lexi Mathews

You are what you eat? How food standards of the United States impact students

By Julius Keys
Staff Writer

By eating a “normal” American diet, the average person consumes about 12 plastic bags full of plastic each year. Not having better and safer food standards by the Food and Drug Administration causes these and many other issues Americans have today.

Popular food and drinks such as Gatorade, Powerade, McDonalds and other foods have many additives people may not know about. Certain nations, like the European Union, have stricter regulations and mandate warning labels on foods that contain specific artificial colorings, like Red 2, Red 40, Yellow 5 and Orange B, which are still permitted in the US. These additives are still found in a lot of sports drinks in the U.S and other beverages.

All of these artificial food dyes can cause hyperactivity, inattention, restlessness, and other behavioral problems in children, and can make ADHD

symptoms worse for children. Recent studies show that all these dyes can end up leading to kidney damage, tumors, skin rashes, migraine, asthma, sleep disturbance, and many other illnesses. Another fact that isn't brought up is how they are made, for example all of these artificial dyes were made by chemical compounds meaning they are lab made. Orange B is no longer allowed in the U.S but is still used in

some sausages according to FDA.org. Orange B could lead to serious health issues, including cancer, and birth defects.

Comparing these FDA approvals to the European Food Safety Authority exemplifies the amount of additional additives America allows as a country even though it is harmful to people's health.

Additionally, the meat regulations in

Europe are typically stricter than the U.S because of their animal welfare laws, antibiotic use, growth hormones, and additives used in their meats, according to the European Food Safety Authority. Many of the fast food organizations in the U.S.A. use processed, frozen, artificial, and soy meat. An example of this being used in what Americans eat is in chicken nuggets that contain Yellow 5, MSG (monosodium glutamate), bones, and tendons.

When asking Liberty student Isayah Hill about how he felt about all these extra additives to chicken nuggets and sports drinks he said, “I would not eat or drink that if I actually knew what was in there.”

In conclusion, the widespread use of artificial additives and dyes in the American food system raises serious concerns about public health. While these ingredients are still allowed by the FDA, there is still potential to cause a range of health issues, from hyperactivity and behavioral problems in children to long-term risks like kidney damage and cancer. The difference between the stricter regulations in the European Union and the more lenient standard in the U.S. expresses the need for better safety standards for food additives in this country. The use of harmful chemicals, such as artificial dyes and preservatives, not only compromises the quality of our food but also poses risks to our health, putting people at risk.



Photo courtesy of onchappyhousewife.com

Photo courtesy of Billy F Blume Jr

Students are “holding it,” but that could be holding back their health

Potential impact of LHS bathroom restrictions

By Tapanga Lewis
Staff Writer

You were too late, the door is locked, no getting in now...well, at least not for fifteen more minutes. This year, there have been restrictions added to student bathroom use at Liberty, which begs the question: Are these restrictions healthy for Liberty students?

For starters, why have bathroom restrictions been implemented at Liberty? There have been ongoing issues of cleanliness, vaping, and student wandering during class time. Administration wants to ensure the safety of the students and staff, and these restrictions are just one way to ensure everyone on campus is in the proper place at the proper time. While some students and staff have noticed an improvement in bathroom problems since the installation of new vape-detection technology, the school wants to remain vigilant about the restrictions.

Some examples of the restrictions include the following: Bathrooms are locked the first and last fifteen minutes of class; students must sign out of class on the Five Star system in order to use the restroom; lastly, students have seven minutes out of class to use the restroom and return to class. These restrictions, along with the issues mentioned above causes many students to avoid using restrooms at school altogether. For most students without unscheduled class periods, that's roughly seven hours of not using the restroom. Is “holding it” for that long affecting long-term bladder health?

According to Ridgecrest Regional Hospital's article, “Why You Shouldn't Hold Your Pee,” holding urine for long periods of time can cause many problems, from urinary tract infections (UTIs) and weakening bladder muscles to increasing

likelihood of kidney diseases. Studies have shown that females are at greater risk of UTIs than males. Since a UTI is an infection, this means that in severe, untreated cases, the bacteria can eventually spread to the bloodstream, requiring immediate medical attention. So while using the restroom at

Liberty may seem complicated, the health risks of not using the restroom during the school day outweigh the inconveniences. Students with medical needs that do not align with the bathroom restrictions should speak with the assistant principal of their Den in order to figure out solutions.



Waiting for the bathroom is an accepted fact of life, but when LHS students have seven minutes to use the restroom and get back to class, the wait can be stressful. Photo by Tapanga Lewis

FASHION SPOTLIGHT: All eyes on LHS sophomore, Gia Gonzalez

By Jasmine Morales
Staff Writer

Students are always finding new ways to dress to impress, especially at Liberty High School. One student in particular is Liberty sophomore Gia Gonzalez. Gia has a range of styles that she puts her own unique spin on, she never fails to amaze everyone with her glamorous chic.

come to mind when hearing the word “preppy”, but this timeless style can be easier to attain than one might think.

“It is actually super easy to find the basic pieces from online clothing boutiques,” explains Jill Turner from her article *Preppy Look on a Budget, How to Style*.

Aside from this traditional prep, or preppy style, Gia has a few other influences as well. Some of which are known as Coquette style and Stockholm style.

Originating in Europe, Stockholm is a fashion trend that has been around for decades. The key to this style is having a wardrobe that's easy to blend. A closet including basic colors and patterns, basic t-shirts, knit sweaters, and baggy jeans make it easier to create these sensible outfits.

The name comes from the city of Stockholm whose residents, due to transportation, require clothing “both stylish and practical,” according to fashion blog *Girls Life: Fashion*.

In addition to being stylish, what is exactly is Coquette style? This



Photo courtesy of Gia Gonzalez

While she has multiple sources of inspiration, Gia says her most influential is “definitely traditional prep.” With elements seen in many of her outfits, “traditional prep” is a style that has been around since the 1950s. Some components of this include blazers, loafers, and polo shirts. School uniforms may

is cute bows, pigtails, pearls, pastels. It is usually associated with Pinterest and Lana Del Rey; this is the “girly” look. Regardless of what she's wearing, Gia combines these styles to make her outfits both “cute and stylish,” says Liberty High School student Kyleigh Madigan.

LIBERTY IDOL AUDITIONS

**January 22nd
January 23rd**

**7:00 PM-9:00 PM
Liberty High School PAC**

Further Information:
Contact Mrs. Seipel at seipelj@luhsd.net

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Book lovers rejoice

The Brentwood location of Barnes and Noble will hold their grand opening on Wednesday, January 29th, at the Streets of Brentwood shopping center.

Photo courtesy of Barnes & Noble (Streets of Brentwood, CA) Facebook

January 21, 2025

Getting paid to play: How college sports reform impacts high school athletes

By *Jorge Juarez II*
Staff Writer

Under the brightest lights, high school athletes compete not just to win but to showcase their potential to the next level. Now more than ever, that potential alone can secure paychecks for these promising young talents. Over time the ability for college athletes to profit from their developing prowess has evolved from not possible, to NIL (Name, Image, and Likeness) benefits, and now direct payments from college programs. However, the new situation raises the question: what changed? Early on in 2024, the NCAA agreed to a proposed settlement, referred to as House v.s NCAA, in which part of the settlement has schools now sharing

broadcasting revenue with players. This settlement only impacts the programs within the Power 5 conferences (ACC, Big 10, Big 12, SEC, and the Pac-12). These Division I institutions will be given roughly 20-22 million dollars a year to distribute among its players, which is projected to grow as time advances. However, it is left to the schools to choose how they use this allowance, for they are not required to pay all their players. Additionally, this deal will send \$2.78 billion over the next ten years of back pay to former college athletes who were denied NIL opportunities as far back as 2016. Sports media personality Stephen A. Smith exclaimed that the NCAA finally giving justice to Division I Collegiate players is long overdue for they have, "been exploiting these kids for years.



Coach Jon Heinz walks away from the gym as Liberty's basketball coach, leaving behind a legacy of 250 wins and countless memories. After 18 years of dedication, he prepares for his last season with the team before stepping down to focus on his roles as Athletic Director and teacher.

Photo by
Addyson Ambrus



Duke University basketball player Cooper Flagg is just 18 years old, yet projected to be the #1 pick of the 2025 NBA Draft. Photo by complex.com

This ruling is important... not just because you won a case for \$2.77 billion, it's the fact that you have to retroactively go about the business of compensating athletes from the past you took advantage of... at the expense of kids and their families." Moreover, this deal benefits future Power 5 Conference athletes as soon as the 2025 high school class. Today's top high school students are more skilled than ever, assisting the rapid growth in talent and competitiveness in each and every sport. For some athletes this opportunity offers more than just athletic advancement, but a chance to ease financial burdens and

create paths to brighter futures. It allows athletes from all backgrounds to access resources and opportunities that were once out of reach. When speaking on his perspective on the rectification for college athletes, 11th grade Liberty High wrestling phenom David Calkins Jr. said he absolutely loves the reshaping, and that he personally told his, "parents they wouldn't have to pay a dime for college... and the first college I talked to gave me a full ride. But knowing on top of that, they don't have to worry about expenses on food, extracurricular activities, you know things on the side... and also... if I wanna do something nice I wouldn't have to lean on my parents to do that."

Liberty High School Basketball Coach Jon Heinz to step down after 250 wins and 18 years of service

By *Addyson Ambrus*
Staff Writer

250 wins later, with the help of one man, Liberty High school's Basketball coach Jon Heinz is done. The team would celebrate their last game with Jon Heinz at the end of January. Heinz has been coaching for 18 years, and after 3 championship wins, he decided its time, and that this year will be his last. Jon Heinz, also known as Coach Heinz or Mr. Heinz could celebrate his last win this season with his team. Not only does Heinz coach for the basketball team but he also teaches here at Liberty High School. He is starting to teach Sports Management class, and Health Careers. To add to teaching and coaching, he is the Athletic Director here at Liberty. When asking about the team members, and what Heinz will miss the most about being the coach he says, "The relationship with the players, and assistant coaches. You have a different relationship with the players and especially my students. We're around each other so much year-round and I've gotten close relationships from it."

Additionally, Heinz is going to miss the relationships he builds with the players and other coaches. Heinz also is going to miss the experiences he's had being a coach, he states, "The best experiences, I've got to travel a lot being a coach, I've got to work with Stephen Curry, and multiple NBA players, and I've got to look back on the big moments like, winning championships. It's hard, I'm closing in on three more years of breaking the all-time school record." Heinz realized that being the Athletic Director for a school this big is very time consuming and a lot of work. Usually, in other schools that are as big as ours, the athletic director is a full-time job. Heinz has been struggling with doing both jobs equally, saying, "I felt like I can't, it's hard for me to do both jobs really well, it's almost two full time jobs." Nevertheless, Heinz wanted to bring his experiences to all the sports programs and thought it was time to step down as a coach. Heinz has some advice for future players that he will not be coaching next year; he says, "For future players, be a student of the game. Do it because you're passionate about it, not because

somebody else wants you to do it. You must have passion and be willing to learn." When Heinz was growing up he had some coaches who went the extra mile for him. To help all the coaches that helped him out, he coaches to help the players out now. He talks about accomplishments, traveling, and helping the team, but he also talks about how balancing all he does. Heinz goes onto say, "It's the hardest thing I've ever done in my life. I generally wake up to 50 emails, and I'll get phone calls and text messages from 6am to 11pm." Heinz says to succeed in something, you have to be passionate about it. He also has some advice for future coaches; he states, "It's a tough job, you have to have thick skin. But you have to do it for the right reasons. Do it because you want to help players, you want to see the game get better." Mr. Heinz is very proud of what he accomplished. Being Liberty's basketball coach for 18 years is an unusual achievement. Liberty will miss his coaching, but he will still be at Liberty teaching classes or in meetings.

Golden State Valkyries: A new era for Bay Area sports



The Golden State Valkyries make their debut as the WNBA's newest team, bringing excitement and pride to the Bay Area sports scene.

Photo courtesy of nbcbayarea.com

By *Nicholas Howard*
Co-Editor

The Bay Area is making history once again, this time in the world of women's basketball. The Golden State Valkyries, the WNBA's newest team, have officially arrived, and their presence is already exciting fans and reshaping the area's rich sports culture. From the moment their brand was unveiled earlier this year, the Valkyries

have captured the hearts of Bay Area residents, uniting a community known for its passionate support of sports excellence. "Our goal was to construct a roster that embodies both versatility and depth," stated Valkyries General Manager Ohe-maa Nyanin, highlighting the importance of the team's first major milestone in the WNBA Expansion Draft. In this draft, the Valkyries selected players like Iliana Rupert and Maria Conde, two

international stars with impressive careers. Rupert, a French center with championship experience in both the EuroLeague and the WNBA, brings defensive strength and an inside scoring presence. Conde, coming from Spain, is a versatile forward known for her playmaking skills. Together, they represent the team's goals of building a competitive and dynamic group of players. The Bay Area's newest team also

stands out for its deep connection to the region. Team President Jess Smith has emphasized that every bit of the Valkyries' identity was crafted with the community in mind. "The Bay Area is at the heart of all of that," Smith noted earlier this year. The team's debut has already ignited a wave of enthusiasm across the region. Fans have rushed to buy merchandise, with limited-edition items selling out quickly, and ticket pre-sales for upcoming exhibitions attracting long lines. Beyond the court, the Valkyries have revealed initiatives to increase their community engagement, such as partnering with local organizations to promote youth sports programs, hosting clinics, and participating in events that highlight the Bay Area's vibrant cultural diversity and shared love for sports. The introduction of the Golden State Valkyries marks a pivotal moment in women's sports history. Women's professional basketball has made tremendous strides since the WNBA's inception in 1997, and the Valkyries' arrival brings a fresh wave of visibility and enthusiasm, reinforcing the importance of representation in sports. Their presence symbolizes the growing momentum for gender equality and elevates women's basketball. For the Bay Area, a place known for its innovative and outstanding sports, even more reason to be proud

of its position as a major sports powerhouse. From the Golden State Warriors' championship history to the San Francisco Giants' and Oakland Athletics' iconic accomplishments, the Bay Area has historically served memorable sporting events. The Golden State Valkyries are more than just a new addition to the WNBA—they represent a new chapter for women's professional sports in the Bay Area. With their strong roster and commitment to community, the team is already making an impact both on and off the court. This is a team poised not only to compete but to inspire future generations of athletes in the Bay Area and beyond. As the Golden State Valkyries prepare for their 2025 debut, the team aims to inspire the next generation, promote harmony, and carry on the Bay Area's tradition as a center of excellence in sports.

Catch the season opener for the Valkyries on May 16th as they take on the LA Sparks at 7:00 PM

January 21, 2025

Silent but deadly? The health effects of scented candles

By Mia Ramirez
Staff Writer

An aisle filled with pumpkin spice, coco, and pine tree. Or the aroma of floral scents: lavender, rosemary, and jasmine. Has it ever occurred to people that all these delightful fragrances could be harmful?

During the winter season, it is nice to light a candle for the ambiance or a romantic evening. But be careful because scented candles can harm people. Even with the nice smell and pretty color, at what point does the scented candle become harmful?

Initially when a scented candle is lit, the primary gases released are carbon dioxide and water vapor from the burning of the wax. Then potentially harmful volatile organic compounds (VOCs) which depend on the fragrance of the candle. These candles can include chemicals “such as naphthalene, anthracene, and pyrene.” But not all people are affected

by these chemicals. One does experience any allergic reaction from these candles the symptoms include: headaches, mucosa irritation, respiratory issues, watery eyes, sneezing, stuffy nose, chest tightness, and a dry or irritated throat. Furthermore, Dominic Adams a chemistry and AP Environmental Science teacher at LHS also states that lit candles contribute to indoor air pollution and can cause people to have allergic reactions or respiratory issues.

Therefore, all these chemicals in scented candles can cause irritation for some people but not all. Always check the candle label before buying it. Even with all the negatives about scented candles people still love them.

Karen Cailotto the Teaching and Learning Careers (TLC) Academy Coordinator, absolutely loves candles. She uses scented candles mostly during the winter season for a “cozy ambiance.” Cailotto also knew that scented candles are harmful, especially the chemicals of certain scents. That is why she does

not use any scented fresheners in her classroom because students may be allergic to these scents without knowing. Additionally, Mr. Adams knows that scented candles are harmful, but he occasionally uses them for the nostalgia of the fragrances.

Though the chemicals can cause respiratory issues and headaches. People use scented candles as a relaxant or for nostalgia. But, there are alternatives.

“Candles made from natural materials like beeswax, soy, and coconut wax offer a healthier, eco-friendly option.” affirmed from *2024 Guide to Non-Toxic Candles: The Best 13 Natural Candle Brands* by Liliya Bairamova. Cailotto suggests candle warmers, which are an electric bowl or lamp that only melts the wax, with no flames and a longer lasting scent

Overall, natural candles are more beneficial or a candle warmer. They do provide the same calm and relaxing atmosphere without the harmful effects of scented candles.



A close look at the moment of relaxation—though soothing, the scent of candles may come with hidden risks.

Photo by Mia Ramirez

Childhood connections

The psychology behind attachment to blankets and toys

By Mia Torres
Staff Writer

Think back to when you had your favorite plushie, blanket, or toy. Remember how it brought you comfort and such joy to just have it in your arms? There's a reason as to why one feels such a strong connection to items that may seem insignificant now but meant so much to one as a child.

There is a psychological explanation for why children tend to be more attached to stuffed animals or blankets than adults and teenagers. There are different contributions as to why a child might favor one toy over the other. Certain objects can bring a child comfort in times of stress or sadness. They often are there for emotional support in times when a child is too young to understand, but is clearly showing and feeling big emotions. But they're also used to substitute a maternal figure they either may not have or is emotionally absent in their life.

Children feel more than others simply for the fact that they are more aware and open to questioning their surroundings. Children will always have a connection to their mothers, and it is often that they'll substitute a childhood toy for a mother's comfort that they may not have received in their early years. Separation from one's mother tends to be a huge stress factor in children and it's a reason as to why they create a symbol of her and attach it to an object.

Hannah Rivers, a Liberty senior, states, “I think we attach onto childhood objects because that sense of being a child is something we feel like could never last long enough.”

Additionally, the need for security and comfort also plays a big role in this. Children go through a process of wanting to be independent and wanting some type of small control in their lives. Having some type of object or toy helps them transition to these next steps of figuring things out themselves while having some type of emotional support

to back them up.

An anonymous Liberty senior recalled, “I had this light brown teddy bear that I couldn't sleep without. It would help me fall asleep whenever I had trouble doing so...it soothed me.” Childhood objects have and are emotional ties to the real world as well. The memories most of these objects contain tend to be related to how a child sees the world. Certain objects have meaning to them. A meaning that only children understand because they gave it that meaning. Memories have meaning and those meanings help children make connections with them. Depending on how deep and meaningful an object is, many adults end up sticking with whatever childhood object they grew up with due to the fact that they don't want to part ways with it or cherish the good memories that comes with them. Overall, childhood objects have a purpose and they help a child grown every time they come to light.



Working and eating at the same time during class highlights the struggle many face to maintain healthy eating habits amidst busy school schedules.

Photo by Ailyn Moreno

How high school schedules impact students' eating habits

By Jade Zulich
Staff Writer

A healthy diet is crucial for all teens. However, this standard of a healthy 3 meals a day is rarely met when looking into the diets of Liberty High School students. Why is this, and how does school change our diet and affect our eating habits?

When about 3,000 students must wake up every morning to go to school for 7 hours a day, 5 days a week, it can be devastatingly hard to keep to a healthy and stable diet. From many students skipping breakfast, not even eating a full lunch, or getting used to loads of snacks and junk food, this can harm the diet and eating habits of teens.

“I skipped not eating a full lunch or breakfast about 2 days out of the school week.” says former LHS student Milan Morales.

Maintaining school schedules and how you eat is hard to balance for many students. Waking up early and getting ready for school in the morning can make breakfast inconvenient, leading to breakfast being an often-cut meal. Dealing with homework, classes and stress can lead to bad time management of your meals

“I don't eat breakfast, and I definitely feel school and the schedule takes a toll on my eating habits,” Cole Shelton stated.

There are many students at Liberty getting used to skipping meals a day. It can be hard to get all the needed nutrients provided from food when it can be so inconvenient for teens to find the time to pack a good lunch. Students often go so hungry at school and if school lunch isn't enough for them, they deal with waiting another 2 to 3 hours to fill their hunger.

“I'm hungry the whole day, and I definitely don't think the school lunches are enough. They're not filling and have small portions,” LHS student Kayla Murcraay states.

When students are hungry, they try to find more convenient ways to fill their stomachs like bringing bags of chips, chocolate, or candy to school. They bring something that is easy to carry around and convenient to munch on.. This is because adolescence is the main time for growth and development, and what is put into their bodies highly impacts their future health.

The USDA, a governmental department for America that provides leadership for nutrition, suggests that there are a certain amount of foods that have limits or should be consumed daily. The USDA suggests highly that students consume fruits, vegetables, grains, protein foods, dairy, and fortified soy alternatives.

Ailyn Moreno says, “No, I don't feel students at Liberty follow the recommended nutrition diets, I feel most students at Liberty eat unhealthy and it affects how they eat every day.”

Walls of silent struggle:

For students who want to go into careers in law enforcement, how will their mental health be supported?

By Trent Grass
Staff Writer

Imagine sitting in class and a situation triggers a traumatic memory, yet the expectation is to carry on with business as usual. This is the average struggle that many police officers are faced with. With the frequent, intense situations the job brings on, many police officers struggle mentally, whether it be because of being stressed out or because of something more intense.

“Police officers are generally considered to be a high-risk group for the development of psychological illnesses due to the numerous significant and potentially traumatic events they experience during their careers,” says S. Santre.

Additionally, due to typical workplace stigmas, the discussion of mental health among police officers is often considered taboo. The immense stress caused by their job often leaves many ignoring or pushing down their feelings about what they are personally going through.

“One in every seven police officers worldwide suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or depression, and one in every ten struggles

from other mental illnesses,” S. Santre also said.

Some of what are considered to be the most common mental illnesses for police officers are Depression, Anxiety, PTSD, and Post-Traumatic Stress Injury (PTSI). All of which stem from the dangerous and intense work they face. With that information, “Conducting research to learn more about mental disorders and mental health promotion, as well as to assist distressed police officers, is critical,” S. Santre included.

That being said, when it comes to any workforce the discussion of mental health problems is stigmatized to include a notion that having any mental health issues equals being weak or in some cases, like with police officers, someone is unable to continue to hold a job because of their mental health. With how common it is for police officers to have some form of mental illness, paired with how dangerous and demanding their jobs can be. According to the US Department of Justice, the Law Enforcement Mental Health and Wellness Act of 2017 (LEM-HWA) was signed into law in January 2018, recognizing that law enforcement agencies need and deserve support in their ongoing efforts to protect the



Photo courtesy of Reuters

A New York police officer grapples with the weight of trauma and stress from his career. As mental health struggles remain stigmatized in law enforcement, the need for open discussions and support grows ever more urgent.

mental health and well-being of their employees. This support comes in the form of funding for departments to pay for various therapies for their officers. However, there is no nationwide requirement that mandates that officers attend therapy on a regular basis. This is left up to local departments; some may mandate therapy after an event such as a shooting, while others may simply recommend it. Some find this troubling, as Officer Dennis Benigo says the annual number of law enforcement officers who committed suicide almost equaled the annual number of officers killed in the line of duty.

OPINION

January 21, 2025

Did Kamala Harris have enough time to campaign for the 2024 U.S. election?

By Ian Smyth
Staff Writer

Here we are, four more years later with an inauguration facing America again. Campaigns were everywhere, from swing states to solid states, both Blue and Red. On July 21st, 2024, President Joseph R. Biden announced he would not be running for reelection and endorsed the his vice president, Kamala Harris, for president. The question is, was three and a half months enough time for Harris to campaign?

During July, Americans had seen constant changes and political chaos. Tensions were at an all-time high with the division of political sides in the country. With the election just around the corner, both democrats and republicans were campaigning throughout the country in various states. Many of these being “swing states” due to the split amongst voters political views. Presidential campaigns are a critical part of running for the oval office. This not only puts the candidates name out there, but it allows them to influence voters towards the nominee they trust most. In the past, the average presidential campaign starts no later than 531 days before the election. However,

democratic nominee Kamala Harris only had 107 days to campaign.

Despite her minimal time, she did raise over 1 billion dollars for her campaign, setting a record in the United States in such a small time and many states did end up voting for her. For some reason though, it seems as if something else was missing. It wasn't a funding issue, clearly, so what happened?

Throughout the last four years with President Joe Biden, many people saw some issues with the president and administration that both political parties and many Americans saw bleeding through into the public eye and couldn't ignore. Many people were still rightfully frustrated even when Donald Trump was president and what he stood for. Even people from around the globe including leaders of allied and adversary countries saw the weakness of the United States. According to news sources like MSNBC and CNN, many people were seeking change with their lives and were fed up with the economy, state of living, and overall condition of the president. People wanted something new, but with the sudden rush of Kamala Harris needing to campaign just months before the election things weren't looking



Photo courtesy of Andrew Harnik/Getty Images
Vice President and democratic nominee Kamala Harris shares a moving concession speech to her devoted voters at D.C.'s Howard University.

good for her. In many of her campaign rallies she talked about uniting and rebuilding. She also talked about fixing the economy and creating jobs. However, her real policies and beliefs spoke different volumes. In the past

few years Kamala Harris has been on multiple news stations and broadcasts and has discussed what she would do as president. She previously mentioned banning fossil fuels all together and discussed new job opportunities that

never really existed that would eliminate many of the industry leading jobs our economy relies on. While some of her motives have changed, other ideas weren't so pleasing to hear, especially the way things were in America after getting past the COVID-19 pandemic. People today fear with the way things are going that we may end up in another recession and have economic failure which would affect many lives in America. People fear the recession would be shades of the 1930's Great Depression and the 2008 housing crisis, which affected many Americans. Given the evidence, it would seem that time wasn't the problem in Harris' campaign. Maybe time had a small effect, but her motives seem to have outweighed the lack of time. Having a small amount of time to campaign can be an issue, but with the money that was raised and how she campaigned, time didn't become an issue. In my opinion, Kamala Harris did have enough time to campaign across the country. While the 2024 election didn't favor Harris, she did the best she could, but she failed to address and make plans to fix the current issues like the economy and other social issues, leading to the loss of many Americans votes.



Photo courtesy of Maskot/Getty Images

A warm hug shared between a mother and child can create a safe space and open relationship for many years to come.

By Toby Bartling
Co-Editor

As the world learns more about children's mental health, it becomes more apparent that changes need to be made to the way parents raise their kids. Traditional parenting styles, especially authoritative, are proving to diminish the overall well-being of adolescents. Despite the traditional parenting styles

that often chose reprimanding and phrases like “because I said so”, it's been shown that a gentler style of parenting has led to less conflicts between the parent and child as well as conflicts within the child's own mind.

Gentle parenting is a modern style of parenting that centers the child's ability to make decisions, prioritizes empathy between the parent and child and provides a respectful environment for

The softer approach: The truth about gentle parenting

their child's development.

Although, many seem to misinterpret the meaning of gentle parenting, often leading to a harmful approach to disciplining their child.

Elizabeth Grace Matthew advocates against gentle parenting in an essay for the journal Law and Liberty. “...rather than countering that reactive indulgence of “traditional parenting” as the Cleveland Clinic defines it... with an equally authoritative but responsibly stoic alternative, gentle parenting merely extends to children as well as parents the fundamentally misguided reliance on emotion as a substitute for authority.”

Despite the successful nature of gentle parenting, there are drawbacks. It's often hard for parents who grew up in authoritative, traditional households to adjust to a new style of parenting. More often than not parents over the age of 35 have trouble prioritizing a child's emotions over the need for discipline and rules.

Matthew goes on to explain the prioritizing of emotions over authority with-

in gentle parenting, which is often the approach among new millennial parents. Despite this misunderstanding, gentle parenting actually prioritizes the importances of setting strong boundaries between the parent and child, assuring that there is mutual respect and being authoritative when necessary. The idea that gentle parenting encourages a laissez-faire approach to a child's development is extremely misguided.

In a *News in Health* essay on positive parenting, John Bates, who studies children's behavior at Indiana University Bloomington, “...encourages parents to focus on their child's actual needs instead of sticking to any specific parenting principles. It's never too late to start building a healthier, more positive relationship with your child, even if things have gotten strained and stressful.”

Bates explains how gentle parenting generates more success for both the parent and the child. Not only does gentle parenting create a healthy environment for the adolescent to develop

in, but it also maintains a long term, positive relationship between the parent and child. A common discovery of gentle parenting shows that those with parents who align with the more gentle approach to raising a child have healthier relationships with their child into adulthood.

Gentle parenting provides a structured environment for adolescents to explore making choices freely and with more confidence without the worry of being cruelly or unfairly slapped on the wrist for their mistakes. Gentle parenting's approach to reprimanding differs not by what many assume is ignoring the problem. However, by creating a learning environment for the child rather than utilizing corporal punishment like locking them in their rooms, taking their phone, or a firm slap on the wrist. Above all, gentle parenting follows one simple ideal: the collaboration of the child and parent is crucial to the growth of the relationship and the child's developing mind, overall providing a healthier environment for the entire family.

Does the birth of new generations mean the death of religion?

By Marina Hernandez Rodriguez
Co-Editor

Eight in ten Americans find the impact of religion in their lives depleting, according to Pew Research Center. Religions are based on beliefs; people shape their lifestyles and their values around them. This poses the question of whether or not religion is ‘fading out’.

In the past decade, participation in religion-based activities has decreased immensely. The cause of this trend is unknown, but some believe it to be because of a lack of unity within communities. According to pastor Aron Ambrus, with the Harvest Rock Church, there has been a decrease of 50 percent of church attendance after the COVID-19 outbreak. This potentially could be the reason for the loss of community among people.

Ambrus goes on to say that “Based on what I'm seeing in my generation and in the upcoming generation, less and



Photo by Marina Hernandez-Rodriguez

Despite many Americans loss of faith, there is still a large handful of the population remains Christian; in 2023, studies found 66% of Americans still identified with Christianity.

less people want anything to do with religion. There have been too many challenges and people getting hurt by other people in various organizations

and denominations...” Furthermore, people are typically intimidated by the strict and at times suffocating environment religion can cre-

ate. However, Ambrus declares that in order to raise participation in religion, we must create safe spaces and inviting environments for young adults to celebrate and socialize with one another. A place where they can lift each other up, regardless of their differences.

Similarly, Liberty High School junior, Marwa Majeed, a student devoted to Islam for her whole life, agrees with the idea of religion ‘fading out’, stating that “I think yes, especially in Islam since many people don't want to be different or be treated differently from society especially in countries where Islam isn't the main religion.”

Ambrus adds that there is no religion but rather the relationship one builds with the one they choose to worship. Likewise, Majeed voices that “...if your faith's strong then you won't be fading away from your religion.” Which further emphasizes the importance of building relationships in one's faith. In fact, religion may be fading due to its representation for young adults. To echo Ambrus, some church-

es only see money and a number of people to convert, instead of the actual individual. Which can be an off-putting environment for young adults.

Ambrus establishes his opinion on what the modern religious sector has become, stating, “It's all about the lights, the music, the cloths you are wearing and who you are hanging out with.”

Religion is fading. However, many people like Ambrus are attempting to aid in increasing religious participation. Similarly to Ambrus, a plethora of religious leaders are creating environments that are based on fellowship and rooted in community as well as the emphasis on openness. Majeed agrees, expressing that there are new programs created to help bring in youth, especially during Ramadan, where she has seen free lessons being given at mosques. Thrilling events with lively music and delicious food, along with the right company and support can change the perspective that is perpetuated surrounding different religions.

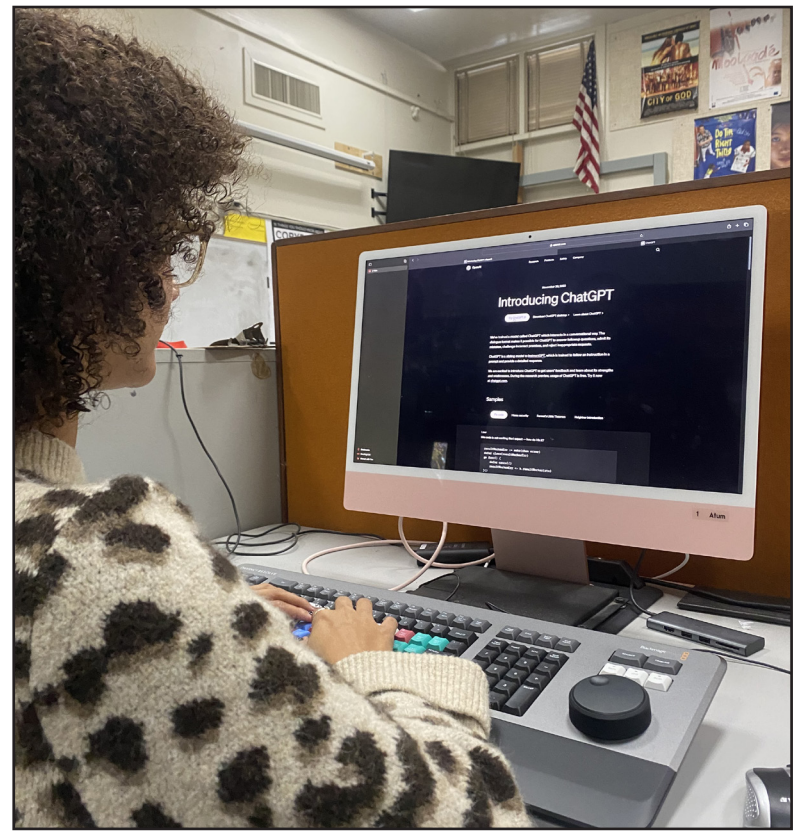
AI generates dangerous results

By Julian Reynoso
Staff Writer

Ease of use has made using AI tools, like ChatGPT, for schoolwork more common than ever. However, the benefits of this emerging technology are far outweighed by its negatives. Generative AI has taken the world by storm in recent years, its emergence seeming like a simple novelty. Now, it's in all the social medias we use. Tech companies have clearly taken a liking to it, with Google, Apple, and Meta each investing billions of dollars in AI development. For the future expansion of the investments in AI, it needs data centers, large buildings filled with computers storing and processing data. Over 7,000 data centers are constantly running across the world, and consuming more energy than entire nations, such as Australia. Much of that energy isn't clean, further contributing to climate change. "Overall, our total GHG (greenhouse gas) emissions increased by 13%," wrote a Google representative in their 2024 environmental report. "As we further integrate AI into our products, reducing emissions may be challenging due to increasing energy demands from the greater intensity of AI compute." Furthermore, generative AI has an increasing effect on the classroom now that it's in all of our pockets. Some stu-

dents have begun avoiding schoolwork by using ChatGPT to generate answers and essays. In response, schools have begun cracking down on AI usage. Using AI detectors, schools can check which submissions were likely not human written, although those detectors come with their own problems, such as accuracy. Some teachers have had enough, like Victoria Livingstone, who quit teaching classes at a technical college after twenty years because of her students' use of generative AI. "I found myself spending many hours grading writing that I knew was generated by AI," Livingstone wrote in her piece *I Quit Teaching Because of ChatGPT*. "I found myself spending more time giving feedback to AI than to my students. So I quit." However, what are the benefits of generative AI? Business magazine *Forbes* suggests a reduction of error in its list of advantages of AI, which makes sense. If AI is only given true data, then it should only output true information. Unfortunately, that isn't the case for most public AI models. The University of Maryland found that ChatGPT sometimes gives incorrect or even completely made up answers to prompts, especially when asked to give correct citations for its sources. Moreover, a team of researchers found that AI models can develop political biases and even generate hate speech when trained on biased material.

"Our findings reveal that pretrained LMs (language models) do have political leanings that reinforce the polarization present in pretraining," the researchers wrote in their paper *Tracking the Trails of Political Biases Leading to Unfair NLP (Natural Language Processing) Models*. This process of training on hundreds of thousands of materials is at the heart of another issue in AI. That being, that some of those materials are being used without the knowledge of the original creator. Even your own posts and images could be used at this moment to train the AI models of your favorite social medias. Take Meta, for instance, the owners of Facebook and Instagram. Simply open your Instagram settings, click Help, then Help Center to find a section titled About AIs on Instagram. Within, Meta discloses its use of user information in the training of their AI. "We use information that is publicly available online and licensed information," writes a company representative under the subtitle Where does Meta get training information? "We also use information shared on Meta's Products and services. This information could be things like posts or photos and their captions." Through these examples, it's easy to see how AI poses a threat, not only to your grade, but the environment, your privacy and way of life. So if not AI, what can you use instead? Our school



1 out of 5 students report using ChatGPT, 24% of those being 11th and 12th graders, according to Pew Research Center. Photo by Gia Gonzalez

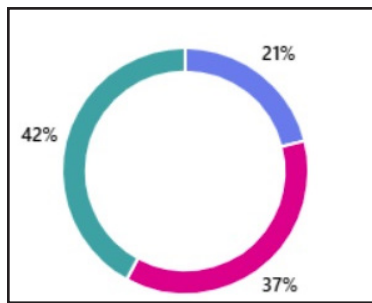
provides tools, like the Desmos graphing calculator for help in math. Educational YouTube videos from channels like Khan Academy and Crash Course could help with studying, and you can always ask teachers for help and advice, if need be. In the end, the only way to improve at something, is to practice. Give it your best shot. It's a better option than using ChatGPT.

AI usage in classrooms Opinions from LHS teachers

By Nathan Afolabi
Staff Writer

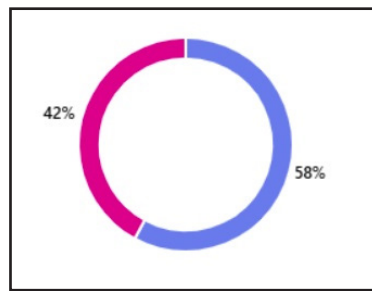
The future of education has ignited debates about the positives and negatives of artificial intelligence (AI) in the educational system. While some teachers recognize the potential of AI to boost learning experiences, there are teachers who have genuine concern regarding its impact. Consequently, in a recent survey at Liberty high school, the opinions on AI remain divided. On how to detect if a student is using AI, English teacher Rameez Khan said, "I know my students' writing, so anything that seems different from what they normally write is suspicious. I can also use online tools to determine cheating." Most of the teachers responded that they could tell if a student is using AI "format" by using several methods such as comparing the student previous work and, in some cases, ask the student to verbally explain the response and define the words. In addition, using tools such as Turnitin or ChatGPT sometimes helps them to detect. Khan mentioned that he can identify if a student is using AI by comparing it with their usual writing style and using online tools to detect inconsistencies. On the positive side, according to Social Science teacher Gina Capelli, "It is a good way to gather data for as-

signments and help to break a writer's block. It is an easy way to translate difficult readings into a more understandable format." However, English teacher Susan McDonald said, "It's boring writing. I want to hear what my students have to say not what some glitchy program fabricates." However, AI has its benefits, it can help students organize their work and study efficiently. Similarly, science teacher Sara Diaz added, "When used to better understand content through rephrasing, further inquiry, formatting, or revising I think AI can be a great tool. But the risk with AI utilization is the opportunity to abandon critical thinking for the sake of time and ease." On the whole, most of the teachers agreed that students should not use AI to cheat and get an "easy A" on assignments, but should only use it if they need help on an assignment. Clearly, the survey shows that the majority of the teachers at Liberty High School believe that AI should not be permitted to be used by students without proper caution even though AI holds some good benefits. The biggest concern is how it is being used; whether students will use AI to get help, seek a better understanding regarding an assignment, or to use it as an easy way out, they will only hinder their learning when using AI.



Should AI be banned in schools?

21%=Yes
37%=No
42%=Maybe



How many times have you caught a student using AI?

58%=10 or more times
42%=Less than 10 times

-Survey conducted via Microsoft Forms in December of 2024

Lion's Cafe: A REVIEW OF PARIS BAGUETTE

A SMALL TASTE OF FRANCE

By Yurithzi Lopez
Staff Writer

Few people will get to experience going to Paris but at Paris Baguette you can have a taste of what it is like. The cafe was a very clean and spotless place. This cafe is located at 5951 Lone Tree Way, Brentwood, CA. The environment feels cozy with its soft lighting. It felt welcoming as soon as I walked inside. The chairs were black and white with long couch-like seats along the walls, as well as mini booths. The floors were white, and the walls had deep blue tiles on them. Pastries were displayed very neatly and organized next to each other glistening below the lights. There are a wide variety of food options offered at Paris Baguette; they offer many different coffees, juices, and smoothies. The sandwiches can be customized with either, tuna, chicken, and turkey. The breads options included Italian bread or croissants. Prices were understandable because of the quality of the pastries and other foods offered. The pastries were very well-made and fresh. All of them look perfect and are very delicious. The drinks were also reasonably priced, the size of the drinks didn't make you feel like you were overpaying. The sandwiches were presented nicely but the prices for them did seem a bit steep for the content of what they



Photo by Yurithzi Lopez
Located near 24 Hour Fitness, this restaurant allows its customers to get a sweet treat accompanied by a mellow atmosphere.

had inside of them. The service was excellent, and the workers were very polite. If you needed to ask a question, they would answer it with no hesitation. Workers were also very patient while you looked at the menu and decided what to order. They also made you feel comfortable and were very approachable. Overall, the whole experience was amazing. You should definitely visit Paris Baguette with friends and hang out, talk, or to do homework. This is an inviting place to go to if you ever want a quick snack or to have some quiet time.

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