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



The Lion's Roar

The voice of Liberty High School students

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FREE

“Don’t Say Gay”: Florida bans LGBTQ discussion in schools

By Ella Bracken
Copy Editor

Florida has recently made headlines with their new ‘Don’t Say Gay’ bill—a ban against LGBTQ+ discussion in schools. Causing an outrage in the media recently, this ban has been questioned tremendously: is the discussion of LGBTQ history really that ‘threatening’ to youth that it needs a ban against it?

The two bills causing this heated debate are Senate Bill 1834 which “prohibit[s] a school district from encouraging classroom discussion about sexual orientation or gender identity in primary grade levels or in a specified manner, etc.”, and House Bill 1557 which “requires procedures to reinforce fundamental right of parents to make decisions regarding upbringing & control of their children.” Although some details in the bill are unclear, such as the age range that this would apply to, the opinions of Florida Senators are very clear. For example, Floridian Governor Ron DeSantis argued in favor of the Senate’s decision to



As LGBTQ discrimination and scrutiny continues throughout some schools, students and LGBTQ+ allies continue to protest on Grand Street and National Avenue in Neosho, Missouri.

Photo courtesy of Andrew Jansen

pass this by stating it’s “entirely inappropriate” to discuss sexuality and gender identity in the classroom. He also

told reporters, “[Schools] need to teach

them science, history. We need more civics and understanding of the U.S.

Constitution, what makes our country unique, all those basic stuff.” Those who disagree, such as *Equality Florida*, an advocacy group focused on ending LGBTQ discrimination, argued that the Governor “is using anti-LGBTQ legislation as a springboard to serve [his] national political ambitions.” Another student agreed with teacher Mrs. Riddick, who previously explained that “[Pride] means to be proud of who you are.” They mentioned that the bill “makes Floridian youth afraid to be who they are,” and, “some states might catch on to this bill.” They furthered, “It could become more of a nationwide bill that could affect students on a larger scale like it did in Florida.” Some say that threatening LGBTQ+ clubs in Florida schools, other support systems for those students, and LGBTQ+ history being stripped from schools could cause detrimental damage to the morals and education of future generations. While this bill continues to advance, millions across the country rally around Florida parents and students fighting against it.

Blast from the past: The 1960s firetruck of Liberty High School’s Auto Club

By Lokesh Singh
Staff Writer

High school clubs across America

contain a diverse array of activities for enrichment in certain pursuits. These usually include club councils, practices, rehearsals, field trips, and compe-

titions. However, very few will offer you the chance to work on classical vehicles. The Liberty High School Advanced Automotive Club provides students with this exact opportunity, ranging from the flashing red 1961 LaFrance Pumper fire truck to the sleek and vintage 1965 Studebaker Commander.

The 1961 LaFrance Pumper fire truck, gifted to the Auto Club by the East Contra Costa Fire District, was the fourth fire engine the city of Brentwood had in service during the time period of the truck’s production. Liberty Auto Club member Jacob Hardin expressed his appreciation for being able to operate on the historical truck. Stating that it “...helps students understand larger engines and components that are more complex”. The LaFrance Pumper is undoubtedly an artifact of mechanical, automotive,

and technical revolution as it was one of the first land vehicles to feature a turbine-powered engine.

The engine configured into this fire truck is indeed large, as it was a Boeing manufactured V12 (12 cylinders) engine, pushing out approximately three-hundred and forty horsepower and idling at nineteen thousand revolutions per minute.

To support such a feat of automotive engineering, the components of this truck are rightfully complex. This is particularly observed in the gear-reduction box, which was connected to a third, isolated intake impaler and a flywheel, clutch, and five-speed transmission. This unusual setup of the gear-reduction box was necessary due to the heavy demands of the engine, which, as stated earlier, idles at nineteen thousand revolutions per minute. To put that number in perspective, the

average idling revolutions per minute for your everyday car is between six hundred and one thousand.

According to the Liberty Auto Club member, the club does not have any plans to build off of the truck’s complex components through modification. The current plan is to “...restore it, and then go from there”. The club has achieved advances on the restoration project as faulty water systems have been removed.

Although preserving the historical significance of a vehicle through restoration is a well-respected endeavor in the classic car community, many students at Liberty High School are honored to have the opportunity to participate. In the Liberty Auto Club member’s last statement, he concluded that “It’s age also gives the students an important lesson on valuing and giving care to the legends of the past.”



Most high schools do not even have an Auto Shop program, let alone have their very own fire truck. Pictured above is Liberty’s 1961 American LaFrance.

Photo courtesy of Jon Dorr

Cold war heats up Impacts of Russia’s war against Ukraine on the U.S.

By Michael Davidson Jr.
Staff Writer

Vladimir Putin has employed Russian forces in hopes of regaining the land which was formerly the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). Russian forces are currently pushing into the north of Kyiv, Ukraine.

In the U.S., many are speculating on what could happen if this war continues. Ukraine currently produces almost 30% of the world’s wheat supply, roughly 15% of its corn supply, combined with a large oil production which

could cause mass shortages of food products and gasoline with increased prices. Young Americans speculate and worry about a military draft, but military service members don’t think this is likely because of the volume of the current United States standing military. Even if a full scale war broke out with major U.S. involvement, what is more likely is increased recruitment bonuses to join the US military forces.

At right: Ukrainian Bay Area citizens gather to protest Putin’s attack on their homeland at San Francisco City Hall, February 24th. Valentina Hohler is of Ukrainian descent and resides in Brentwood.



Photo courtesy of Valentina Hohler



Anti-racism event uses musical to educate

By Nia Green
Copy Editor

Hairspray! director and LHS teacher Kyle Roman planned an event to change the status quo, bringing *Hairspray!* to downtown Brentwood and Oakley in an anti-racism event showcasing specific scenes and songs from the musical that showed racist intent and the need for change.

Senior and star of *Hairspray!* Celeste Pacheco expressed her opinion of the event: “I think it’s really easy to watch a show and overlook the main issue of the show then actually talking about the issue and putting into a real life perspective.” The cast interacted with panelists Dr. Tamela Hawley and Phil Arnold Jr. who shared their personal experiences with racism and avocation for change. They both shared why the younger generation needs to be the future leaders for breaking stereotypes.

Hear us roar some more!



Follow us on Twitter!
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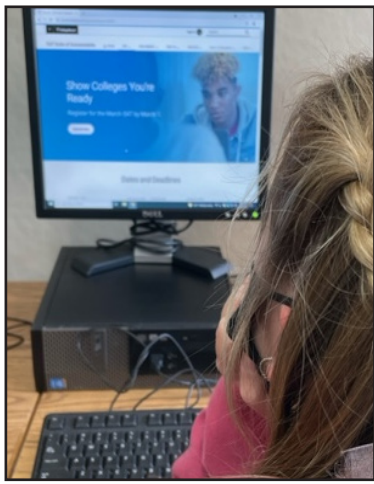
Read our issues!
Scan QR code with mobile device to see our issue archive

Upcoming events:

- No School, Spring Break: March 19-April 4
- CAASPP Testing: April 11-22
- No School, Spring Recess Holiday: April 25

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Digital SAT: Responding to a changing world



Pencil and paper will no longer be required supplies to take the SAT, although they may be used for no-tetaking and calculation. Photo by Anaya Tellado

By Anaya Tellado
Staff Writer

Every year, around one million students take the SAT to add to their college applications. Starting in the Spring of 2023 and 2024, the SAT will be offered and taken digitally. More specifically, the SAT will be digital internationally in 2023. This will not be implemented in the U.S until 2024. The digital SAT will be two hours long, an hour shorter than the current exam. Students will take the SAT in a school or at a test center, on a computer or tablet. If needed, devices will be provided to students. Calculators will be permitted on the math section of the exam, but students can either bring their own or use the one built into the test. Additionally, scores

will be delivered within days of taking the exam.

Furthermore, once the digital SAT is available, the pen and paper version will no longer be an option. During the exam, students will be able to mark questions they wish to come back to, and will have a countdown clock available, so they know when they are running out of time. To provide more security, students will each have their own version of the test. According to Priscilla Rodriguez at *College Board*, "Every student will still have access to free practice resources on Khan Academy, and the test will continue to connect students directly to important scholarship opportunities."

In short, the SAT is changing in 2023 and the current class of 2025 will take this exam digitally.



For further information about Senior Ball and its COVID-19 guidelines, contact class advisors Mr. Seipel or Mr. Zelaya. Photo courtesy of Adobe Stock

To vaccinate, or not to vaccinate: The requirements for this year's LHS Senior Ball

By Julian Nixon
Copy Editor

It's 10 minutes until operation Senior Ball is a "go". You remembered the tickets, you scored the date, and the outfit is perfected. The ride is on the way, mom and dad are finally done taking pictures and you even snagged a bite to eat before the big event. You've packed statement shoes, plus dancing shoes, and an abundance of breath mints (complete with a clever pick-up line or two) in your back pocket. But have you gotten the shot? That's right, the LHS Senior Ball is requiring either proof of vaccination or proof of a negative COVID-19 test for this year's admittance, striking controversy and concern both on and off the campus. This year, Liberty High school's Senior Ball is set to take place April 16th from 7:00-11:00 PM at Lake Chalet in Oakland. Since Oakland is in Alameda County, the guidelines for large-scale events differ from those in Contra Costa County. Even with proof of a negative COVID test within 72-hours of the event, unvaccinated students will still be required to wear a mask while indoors at the event. This is not the rule of the school or district, but of Alameda County.

While everyone is looking forward to

one of the biggest nights of the year, and many students' first-ever formal dance, the number one key in the district is public safety.

When asked their views on the predicament, KG, a Liberty parent of two expressed, "From a parent perspective I think it is a necessary precaution." They then went on to add, "Close contact is inevitable with this age group and the nature of the event."

However, students' opinions prove to be evenly mixed. While some scholars argue there should not be a dance without the mandate, others would venture to call the requirement discriminatory.

Roberto J, a junior attending Liberty High admitted, "It's easy to say the vaccine as no big deal when you already have it, but for someone who doesn't, this definitely looks exclusive," when interviewed on the subject.

The conflict seemed to be in finding a middle ground to accommodate everyone in attendance while respecting the majority's beliefs.

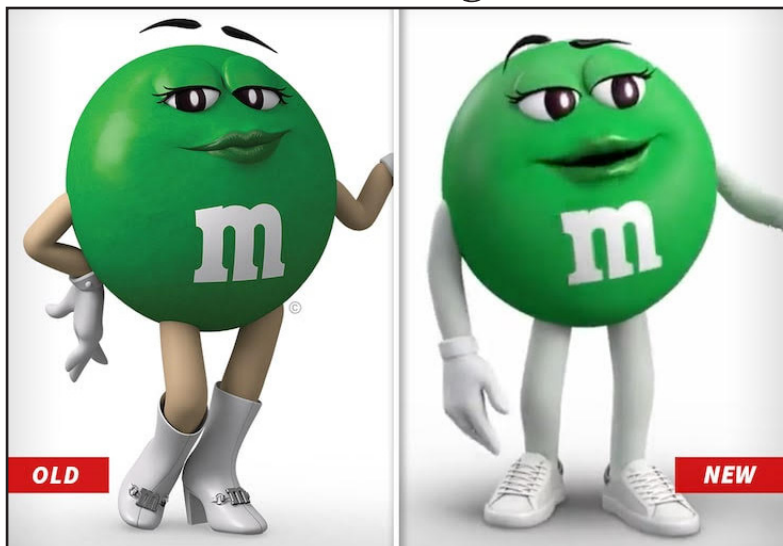
College and Career Center administration agreed, "Skepticism is only natural but even to this day we have a list of past vaccines that make in-person school possible."

The "de-yassification" of the green M&M

By Aiyana White
Staff Writer

In an effort to promote inclusivity and self expression, the M&M's brand has decided to redesign their Green M&M character, replacing her signature go-go boots with a pair of sensible sneakers. Many are calling this the reverse "yassification" of the character, meaning the character has been made worse, or "less slay" since the change on January 20, 2022. News sites all over the nation have had differing opinions on this change, with some calling it empowering for feminine people to be able to express who they want to be, and with others calling the change of shoes on an M&M "slut shaming."

An article by EJ Dickson for *Rolling Stone* calls this change, "A major error on Mars Wrigley's part," as the white go-go boots were symbolic of her character. The green M&M has been a fan-favorite among those who identified with the character, such as "libidinous women and gay men," who have embraced the promiscuity of the Green M&M. Dickson also claims that the M&M remaining in her old footwear is what she and the world want and deserve, and her new footwear is a huge misstep for the company and the M&M's brand. However, there are mixed opinions featured in an *AdWeek* article where a group of female ad executives expressed their reactions to the change



Green joined the M&M family in the 1990s but Mars inc. now (2022) updates her look.

Photo courtesy of Mars Inc. and TMZ.com

of shoe. One ad executive, Carmen Rodriguez, explained that she would have rather Mars Wrigley "introduce a new character to reflect those efforts instead of toning Green down," when asked what she thinks of the change. Another executive, Michelle Edelman states that the change is timely, as the M&M was a caricature of femininity when she was created, and she now reflects a more modern, relatable woman. However, the most popular question among the women in the article, and likely the question on everyone's lips, is "Does this really matter?"

In an anonymous *Google Forms* survey, one Liberty senior, when asked

why they thought the redesign of the M&M was a positive change, expressed that, "If she wanted to wear sneakers instead of wearing heels, good for her. Her feet must have hurt, so I sympathize." To contradict this, a junior implied that the change was anti-feminist, and the Green M&M and the M&M brand should embrace femininity and allow Green to wear her iconic go-go boots.

Since the change of shoes on the Green M&M, fans of the candy have been undecided on whether the change has been positive or negative. However, the most important question will always remain: who cares?

Moving into the red and yellow office: New ASB president at Liberty

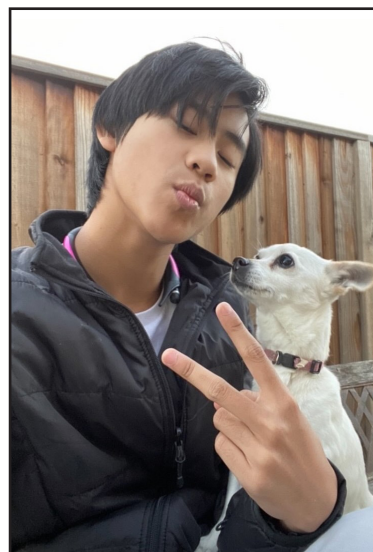
By Lexie Thomason
Copy Editor

A typical president is hardworking, kind, and a leader. Many believe that Tristan Rallos fits these qualities and more. Tristan is currently a junior at Liberty and has been involved in leadership during all of his three years. While serving in leadership, he has been able to observe the life of Liberty High School and what needs to be improved in the school and the students. Leadership is not the only interest Tristan has in school. In addition to his academic interests, he is starting a self defense club to teach students martial arts in order to protect themselves when in danger. He is also a member of Culture Shock and the Speech and Debate Club. Outside of school, the ASB President enjoys baking goods, shopping for the freshest clothes, swerving through the streets rollerblading, and eating his favorite food: a good steak dinner with all of the fixings, including potatoes, corn and bread.

Tristan believes that an ASB President is someone who enjoys being at school and someone who can understand and bring more fun to the student body.

His goals in office are to increase communication with the staff, students and other schools in the district as well as increasing culture on Liberty's campus.

"I want to raise morals with daring students in leadership and help out the crowd," he explains..



Liberty receives its new president as of January 28th, 2022, Tristan Rallos. Photo courtesy of Tristan Rallos

Tristan's inspiration to strive in the student body but also in academics comes from historical figures. He takes their actions and leadership skills and applies them to daily life.

This new position has given this Liberty student the freedom and hope to help enhance the student body and the school itself. Tristan is super excited to work with his peers and staff members to reshape Liberty.

2022-23 ASB Officers:

Tristan Rallos:

President

Rylee Guinn:

Vice President

Alyssa Orozco:

Secretary

Jayden Cabihi:

Treasurer

Allie Collins:

Treasurer of Athletics

Club Spotlight: BSU



Black History Month began in Mr. Oji's classroom with this year's theme of "Black Health and Wellness." Photo by Zaden Reeser

By Zaden Reeser
Staff Writer

Liberty High School offers many clubs. One includes the Black Student Union (BSU). During the month of February, Black History Month over time has gained recognition from multiple countries including the U.S and Canada. One of the most active clubs at Liberty High, BSU planned to affect the climate and the setting of the school for the better. After talking with Mikaylah and Makiah Lindsey, students and club members, they are both proud of BSU. The club gathers students' thoughts around the climate of the school. After a conversation with the twins, Makiah says, "We talk about how we feel as a black individual going to Liberty: do we feel safe? Do we feel any racism, or are there any changes that need

to be made?" Talking with the twins, both spoke very confidently about how much they like the club. After Black History Month, Mikiah and Mikaylah both explained what BSU was doing for Black History Month; they talked about being proud to be a black individual at school.

Black Student Union looks forward to keeping an impact and going bigger than just Liberty High, but setting a strong example for family, friends, and the city. Asking Kelechi Oji, commonly known as Mr. Oji and the advisor of the club what BSU did for Black History Month, Mr. Oji shared that BSU students held a baking event where they all made cookies. For the month, BSU provided a quote from a famous black individual each day. Although Black History Month is only in February, BSU plans to keep making moves in every month going forward.

CAMPUS LIFE

March 18, 2022

History of graffiti: Art or vandalism?

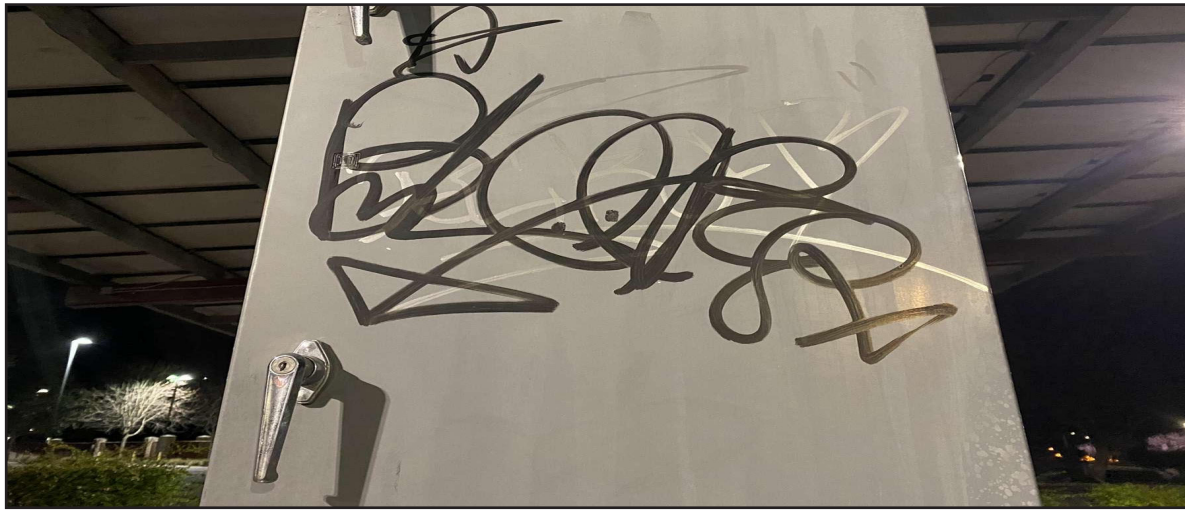
By Annabelle Smith
Staff Writer

Graffiti, by definition, is the act of writing or drawing illicitly on a surface in a public area. Graffiti has been around for thousands of years, and has continued to change as time goes on. However it has raised questions such as: "Is it vandalism?" "Is it art?"

Graffiti was first used to commemorate hunting victories or parts of rituals on rock walls during prehistoric times. Then in Roman cities with topics such as wine, money, and politics all the way to World War II as being used to create a motif of connection for soldiers. Continuing through to when the Berlin Wall was built and graffiti was heavily used on it as protest.

In the 1960's contemporary graffiti arose, specifically from Black and Latino neighborhoods within New York City accompanied by music and street cultures, pushed further by the creation of the aerosol spray can. New York is considered to be the place where graffiti culture grew and changed from prior types of graffiti.

Early graffiti artists were known as writers or taggers. Taggers would simply tag areas with their names and the principle of graffiti became to get one's work seen by as many people in as many places as possible. As a result of this, subway cars and trains became massive targets for artists, since their



Graffiti at the Brentwood skatepark may be viewed as vandalism by some; however, graffiti is a universal form of art and is amongst the most common compared to traditional art.

Photo by Annabelle Smith

work would be spread anywhere trains went.

Alexandra Henry, a street art chronicler stated, "It started with tagging—teenagers putting their names on public property—and evolved from there, with people using spray paint to write bigger and better, breaking into train yards at night, and creating large murals on subway cars."

Eventually though, everyone was putting their names on these trains so artists had to find new ways to stand out, causing calligraphic styles and "tags" to be turned into large, bright pieces.

As more and more graffiti appeared on property, it was viewed as a major vandalism problem. Graffiti was seen as a

lack of order, and it would present all people as victims to disruption of order leading to fear.

To stop this problem, police began to follow suspected students after school, check for graffiti paraphernalia, etc. Increasing measures such as the Clean Car Program launched in 1984 which was supposed to completely eliminate graffiti on subway cars by inspecting each car for vandalism at the end of its route. If vandalism was present, it would be immediately removed, or the car would be removed from service in hopes of keeping artists from tagging on trains.

Opposed to the result wanted, writers began to see this as a challenge and

committed themselves to hitting their targets and becoming more territorial towards other writers. Graffiti began to spread greatly across the US and connected with movements like the Hip-Hop and Punk movements.

Graffiti moved on from just being tagging, but becoming a form of expression on things like life, love, and politics.

"I laugh at the way some people think graffiti is all selfish tagging and vandalism." Stated Carla Krueger, a street artist, "Thoughtful street art is like good fiction – it speaks out on behalf of everyone, for us all to see."

Graffiti is seen as a way to express feelings just as in drawings, paintings, etc.

Could we leave behind the five day workweek grind?

By Michael Ybarra
Editor

Wake up, brush teeth, get dressed, clock in, start the work grind for about 8 hours, clock out, and go home. Rinse and repeat for five days a week

and you have the schedule of the average employed American. But is this schedule the most beneficial for workers and businesses? Is it better for workers to take three days off every week instead of only two? And is it even more profitable for businesses

and employers?

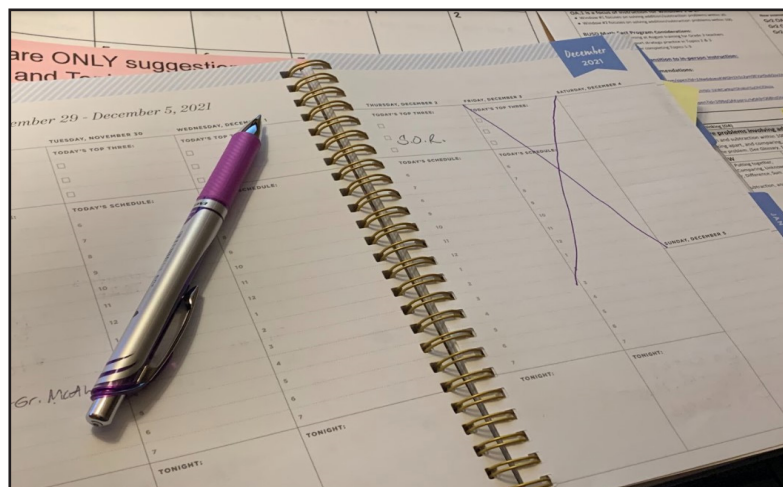
Usually, a five-day workweek consists of 40 hours and a four-day workweek is 32 hours. But typically, in a four-day workweek, employees will work Monday through Thursday and take Friday off. There are variations where the employee chooses which day they take off. Studies have shown that a traditional five-day workweek exhausts workers to the point where productivity worsens as the number of hours worked increases. And as the pandemic has shown, there are other ways to work other than what people have been doing for decades.

Four-day workweeks could also be implemented in schools as the effects would be massively beneficial to students. In an article by *EducationWeek*, a study of over 400 students, teachers, parents, and administrators in states that have adopted four-day school weeks proved much better results compared to a five day week. Students in four-day schools spent more of their time on homework, at jobs, school ac-

tivities, school sports, and on hobbies than students in five day schools. High school students also told the researchers that they felt much less tired with the four day weeks.

According to *Forbes.com*, the Society for Human Resource Management found that 60% of organizations that implemented a four-day workweek went through a boost in productivity and a surge in employee satisfaction. Companies that made the switch from five-day weeks to four-day weeks saw the increase of better work-life balance in employees.

There are advantages and disadvantages to working four days per week. However, businesses might be left with no laborers when the rest of the businesses around them are staffed, which could be bad for profits. Employees might take advantage of the four-day week and become lazy. With that said, laborers can use the time they have off to better prepare for their next workweek and plan out how to get their work done better and faster.



Having an extra day off opens up more time for activities, hobbies, and rest.

Photo by Michael Ybarra

All students entitled to free school lunch

By Yasamin Tarinn
Staff Writer

The state meal program is a state funded nutrition program in California. Breakfast and lunch is provided to all students at their school as part of the program. By California establishing an unrestricted school food program, many other states began to join in, such as Maine. Since the beginning of the pandemic, the USDA (United States Department of Agriculture) funded districts to provide free

lunches to all kids. Districts were only compensated for feeding students who were registered in the National School Lunch Program prior to the COVID pandemic.

Having the ability to feed students without having to verify if they were eligible for free meals, they claimed, allowed districts to assist more families at a time when many were experiencing hunger and hardship. Previously, families had to disclose their family income, the number of individuals living in the household, their

children's immigration status, and whether or not their children were homeless or runaways as part of the National School Lunch Program application process. Some families were hesitant about exposing such information, and students may have felt humiliated about receiving a free lunch while others had to pay for it. Fruits, vegetables, and milk are offered with all school lunches. Orange chicken rice bowls, cheeseburgers with fries, bean and cheese burritos with salsa, grilled cheese with chips,

turkey caesar wraps, and more are among the menu items. Some students, like Esteban Lopez, take advantage of the free school lunch and enjoy it. "I look forward to having school lunch since it's free; my favorite is the deli sandwich with chips," he stated.

Receiving free or reduced-price school lunches has been shown to reduce food insecurity, obesity rates, and bad health. The new nutrition criteria for school meals seem to have a favorable influence on student food selection and intake.

Lion's Cafe: A review of Roadee's sandwiches

By Norah Simmons
Staff Writer

Last Friday was a long day of school. Due to a late night and a rushed morning, I missed breakfast. I couldn't wait until after school to get some food. After driving through downtown Brentwood, a cute chalkboard sign caught my eye. On it said the name "Roadees". Walking in, I was greeted with big smiles on all the employees' faces. The walls were Tiffany blue with a western dinner vibe. The smell of freshly baked bread filled the room.

After analyzing the menu, I realized Roadees mostly sells a variety of sandwich options, along with three different types of salads, chips, and pizza bagels. A nice lady named Cherie took my order. The service there was amazing. Cherie made me feel so comfortable with all the questions I was asking her. She explained that on the menu there are stars next to the sandwiches that are the best sellers. I was having such a hard time choosing what sandwich to order. So, I decided to get two of the best seller sandwiches.

I ordered the Italian Sub and the Chicken Parmesan Sub. The Italian Sub has Salami, Mortadella, Pastrami, Provolone Cheese, Garlic Sauce. And the Chicken Parmesan sub had grilled chicken, marinara sauce, mozzarella and Parmesan cheese. Not only was the service amazing but the sandwiches came out super-fast. I took the food and sat on the side of their restaurant. They have a super cute outside patio to enjoy your food. Both the Italian sub and Chicken Parmesan Sub were delicious. Out of the two sandwiches, I

would say I liked the Chicken Parmesan sub more than the Italian Sub. The prices are slightly steep for a sandwich, but they are very high quality. The Italian sub cost 8.25 and the Chicken Parmesan cost 8.35. After devouring both sandwiches I decided to go inside and get a smoothie as well. I ordered a strawberry banana smoothie. It wasn't horrible, but I probably wouldn't get it again.

My afterthoughts of this whole experience are that I really enjoyed it. I loved the service and most importantly, the

Graffiti is a way cities can be brought to life and to replace these plain walls, by covering them with imaginary creation of all genres, with different colors and styles.

Banksy, a graffiti artist, stated, "Some people become cops because they want to make the world a better place. Some people become vandals because they want to make the world a better looking place."

In the early 2000's artists, such as Banksy, began to change public views and get graffiti selling in galleries. The change from entirely street art to getting it into galleries demonstrates a growing acceptance for graffiti, in mainstream art and in art history.

Presently, in the insanely technological, twenty-first century graffiti is being spread through social media platforms like Instagram and Snapchat allowing the work to be seen across global audiences.

Graffiti has changed over time whether it is the subject matter or the way it is spread. The future can only further change graffiti, but maybe in different ways such as peoples' opinions towards it.

Graffiti is an illegal act that is highly frowned upon by many, however some believe that graffiti should no longer be viewed as a simple, destructive drawing, but instead as an art form.

Average American owes \$37,000 in student loans

By Anushka Bhogal
Staff Writer

About 43.4 million Americans are in student loan debt, due to the rising costs of college tuition. How does carrying the burden of debt impact their future?

Student loan debt can impact anyone's future negatively, especially in the delay of life goals, such as buying a house, getting married, starting a family, or traveling. Pursuing further education may also be delayed.

Crystal Hernandez, a former college student from Colorado who has \$9,000 worth of debt to pay off while working a minimum-wage job, says that "I feel trapped. I feel like I'm drowning."

Of course, student loan debt doesn't just impact life goals, but also impacts finances. College students who are already struggling with paying off their debt (with the average loan debt of \$37,113) may also be struggling with other financial issues.

This may result in some bills (either related to student loan bills or other finances) not being paid on time, resulting in a poor credit score. It can take years to rebuild a credit score, affecting several aspects of finances in a person's life, possibly for a long period of time.

Thus, student loan debt is a struggle that millions of American students face everyday, just to get a proper education to find the ideal job of their lives. With the amount of debt rising every year, the student loan debt crisis will worsen over time.

food was delicious. I would recommend stopping by the next time you're driving through Downtown Brentwood looking for something to eat.



Photo by Norah Simmons

Above are two of the best selling sandwiches at Roadees: the Italian Sub and the Chicken Parmesan.

March 18, 2022

Human trafficking: A different kind of pandemic

By Keira McIlvenna-Davis
Editor

A sticker on a car, a man offering something a little too good to be true, an oddly phrased advertisement; all of these seemingly innocent things may actually be deadly. Human trafficking is a form of modern slavery in which people of all ages and ethnicities are sold for things such as prostitution and exploitation. The signs are often not obvious, and they target specific audiences. Many teenagers may be greatly at risk of these predators and may often be oblivious to warnings. An array of factors could be at the root of this, and some simply have to do with a lack of information. The National Human Trafficking Resource Center (NHTRC), reports that the majority of human trafficking cases reported in the U.S. each year originate in California. According to the Evolve Treatment Blog, this is largely due to the fact that San Francisco, San Diego, and Los Angeles are some of the worst child sex trafficking cities in the United States. This could be due to a plethora of reasons, some being that they are cities with diverse, large populations, there are often drugs in many places, and in these areas where homelessness is typically common, human traffickers find their victims. Human traffickers are typically orga-



It is estimated that there is 34.9 million victims of human trafficking around the world at any given time.

Photo by Keira McIlvenna-Davis

nized, and often are not alone in their goals. These people tend to come from a hierarchy system and have many accomplices within their circle to aid with their plan. Human traffickers can be anywhere, and according to the Law Enforcement Bulletin, "Traffickers represent every social, ethnic, and racial group. [...] Traffickers use force, drugs, emotional tactics, and financial methods to control their victims." There are many different tactics utilized for these heinous acts, and some of the most common are the "Loverboy" technique where a man seduces a woman into trafficking through his charm. Another very common method is false job advertisements, which allows traffickers to collect their victims' personal information. These people may also simply resort to manipulation and abuse of their victims in order to achieve what they want. The signs of these conspiracies may

be found anywhere, and yet there are a great many who may not see them. Describing his experience of one such event, alongside fellow senior at Liberty High school, Kaedyn Shuttlesworth, Kai Cummins explains that "Kaedyn and I were walking out of Target when we noticed something on Kaedyn's window [...] a yellow piece of paper with a free gym pass on it for a local gym. When we looked around, we noticed that the papers were only on the windows of traditionally "feminine" cars. The more we looked at the paper the less and less sense it made. [...] We began to think it was somebody marking the car." While Cummins and Shuttlesworth recognized this more subtle sign, many teenagers their age may not have made the connection. This could be due to a multitude of reasons, one of them simply being that the conversation is difficult to have. Cooper Siemers, junior at Liberty, ex-

presses how "It's a hard subject to talk about, many people would rather stay silent than have a difficult conversation. I just think that the subject is slightly sensitized in general." While human trafficking can occur to anyone, it appears to be especially common in underage females, as traf-ficjam.live states "In 2020, 50% of human trafficking victims identified in Federal cases were young girls, children under the age of 18." When asked why she believes human trafficking is so common among teenage girls, Liberty junior Elizabeth Estrada answered that "Human trafficking is so common among females because they can be so easily manipulated. [...] Nowadays with social media, traffickers have access to these young, impressionable women right at their fingertips. [...] It's so unfortunate that our bodies make us a target, but we need to be ready to protect ourselves." Traffickers often look for victims who

appear to be vulnerable, and this generally may be younger women who are easy to manipulate and overpower. These women often come from backgrounds where they have a lack of support, generally from family. These perpetrators have been trained to look out for, and prey upon, these types of people, and many think the only way

to combat this is for parents and adults to have these more difficult conversations with the young people in their lives, so that they can recognize the signs and avoid becoming another statistic. While it may be difficult to find a concrete solution to combat issues of human trafficking, there are still measures that could be taken in order to bring down the numbers of adolescent and adults alike affected. Many find this subject burdening, and yet it can be found everywhere in the world. However, providing information and resources for teenagers may make all the difference in this uphill battle.

National Human Trafficking Info

Hotline:

1 (888) 373-7888

Website:

<https://humantraffickinghotline.org/>

Training:

<https://polarisproject.org/training/>

Sliding into a new career: Waterslide tester

By Mary Grace Contreras
Online Editor

Sliding down on water slides in theme parks or hotels as a guest sounds en-



Waterslide tester, Keanu Santana begins to work at Wet 'n' Wild, Hawaii. Photo courtesy of Aaron Yoshino

tertaining, but may sound more captivating as a career. The job itself may sound fun, going on water slides all day, but is often complicated and could be difficult to maintain. To become a water slide tester, no degrees are required. One should aim to have qualities of enthusiasm, courage, and patience to go into the career field. Specifically, individuals who want to become a water slide tester must be 18 years of age or older, must have a strong physique, must be participating in regular exercises, and have a regular diet. The job is more than just going down water slides.

Keanu Santana, a 22-year-old water slide tester in Hawaii, expresses, "Being a water slide tester is something we learn on the job. Testing water slides can be super fun, especially for those who are adrenaline junkies. The job becomes stressful when slides need fixing or become closed. Once we pass first-aid and CPR courses, along with customer service training and preventative, we do internal training for rules, tube types, dispatch rates, and inflation. Before one can be a professional water slide tester, one must go through precautions and follow safety guide-

lines. They have to be able to know how to swim and keep stable physical health. As a water slide tester, one has to check the safety measures, height, speed, water quantity, and time taken to complete the water slide. Noticing the specific details regarding the water slide is crucial as the tester is assessing the safety of the ride for visitors to enjoy. Santana shares that his toughest experience as a water slide tester was, "The day we had a power outage, causing all the water slides to turn off. As soon as we got the power back on, I had to make sure all the slides were test-rid-

den before allowing guests back on." Safety is the main priority of water slide testers." Water slide testers typically enjoy their jobs as they are paid to observe and test water slides all day. Most water slide testers are paid (on average) \$22 per hour, earning an average of \$45,611 annually. However, the job contains negative aspects as well. The job is only needed during the summer since most water parks are only active during the hot season. In addition, the job may cause minor injuries during the testing of water slides. It can be dangerous and more intimidating than it sounds.

Self-driving cars: Are they really the future?

By Josh Buenafior
Staff Writer

Auto piloted cars may seem like something out of a science fiction novel, but they are starting to become a reality.

Tesla, most notably, has begun rolling out their self-driving featured cars. The feature is controversial at best and glitchy, at worst. There is already rampant mistrust around robots so how can society trust them to drive our own cars? The self-driving feature has been constantly tested and updated; however, it is far from perfect. According to the CDC, car accidents are the number one cause of death in teens. When it comes to

driving, safety should always be a top priority. Yet Tesla claims that they "are not aware of any collisions, injuries, or fatalities related to the feature". On February 1st, Tesla announced that they would recall all 53,822 self-driving vehicles due to them being "intentionally programmed to roll-through stop signs." A feature that has been on self-driving Teslas since October of 2020. These recalls would happen digitally and Tesla owners would not have to take their cars to a dealership. Tesla has also stated that "full self-driving" requires an attentive driver who is ready to take full control of the car at any time. The driver would also have to press buttons on the steering wheel every couple of minutes to

ensure they're paying attention to the road. This means that a driver can't sleep while driving or start texting on their phone. "If you have to take control of the car every [few] minutes, I don't think that's really self-driving." Ashley Newman, a senior at Liberty, expresses. Tesla has also been reprimanded by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration for concerns on its self-driving features. The administration, which moderates motor vehicles, deemed the rolling stop feature unsafe and was one of the main reasons for Tesla's recall. They have also made it so that the driver can no longer play games on the car's touchscreen while the car is in motion.

The administration said in a statement, "The Vehicle Safety Act prohibits manufacturers from selling vehicles with defects posing unreasonable risks to safety, including intentional design choices that are unsafe. If the information shows that a safety risk may exist, NHTSA will act immediately." The U.S Government currently has no measures regarding assisted-driving features. Along with Tesla, other companies have ventured into the future and tried to create their own versions of self-driving cars. Companies like Ford have claimed to offer self-driving taxis by 2021. Uber and Lyft have been reported to do the same. The future of self-driving is uncertain,

but not distant. A new form of transportation could arise, like the bullet train or hover cars. The future is now, just make sure it isn't on autopilot.



Photo by Josh Buenafior

Teslas are the leading brand of self-driving cars. Model-Y Teslas are among the most common model ordered by consumers.

Experience life in a full house

By Shelby Smith
Staff Writer

The dining room table is set and the fresh scent of pasta lingers throughout the room. The dining room begins to fill with blasting chatter as you make your way to the table. All your siblings pile in and you can hear the remarks of numerous topics coming from all sides of the table. You try to keep up as you take your first bite. For some students it is a reality to have such a constantly busy and buzzing household, especially when you live with at least five siblings.

Colette Headley, a junior at Liberty High School, is part of a family with seven children. Her household is

made up of her two sisters, four brothers and parents. Colette explains that having such a big family can be difficult as it is expensive and overcrowded, but well worth it. All the downsides are overpowered by the upsides. She informs that "there's so much love to go around and the support that having a large family offers is phenomenal." One of the most common struggles large families are faced with is making space for all the children to live comfortably. Not everyone can relate to the complications of having to share a room, but Colette recalls the strain it put on her relationship with her older sister. "Now since we have space from each other, our relationship has been the best it's ever been." After her older

sister got her own room, Colette was paired up with her baby sister. She vocalizes the battle of always picking up children's toys and sometimes just needing a break from a kid's room. Although it can be overwhelming, Colette pushes through and understands how to be content with what she has. Kids and teenagers often take for granted that they do not have to buy items and necessities at their own expense. However, children with many siblings oftentimes do. Growing up with so many others, it is quickly realized how important a job and license can be. Colette states that "it's easier for your parents when you can step in and help pay for a meal or even drive them around." Having to work hard at

a young age can be tough, but when it relieves her parents of some stress, it is often rewarding and makes having her job worth it. Living with six other siblings is not all cloudy skies; being a part of a big family also means having great connections, people you can always rely on, and making enjoyable, long lasting memories. When asked about her favorite family memory, Colette recalls "we were in Tahoe and we rented a cabin for a family reunion. We spent hours in the snow every day we were there. I loved going sledding and my favorite part was building an igloo." Experiencing these memories and being able to be included in family traditions gives life more excitement. Co-

lette added that on her mother's side, it is a tradition to visit their aunt in Nevada and enter themselves in the rodeo for fun. She says her family's memories will stick with her forever. Being born into such a large family has greatly impacted Colette, she explains that she hopes to teach her future kids everything she learned from it. Colette describes, "during my childhood there were never a ton of materialistic things, it was always busy, but no matter what we made time for each other. We always sat down and ate together even if it was only for a few minutes." Colette concluded that not everyone is made for this kind of lifestyle, but her family makes it work and she would not change anything.

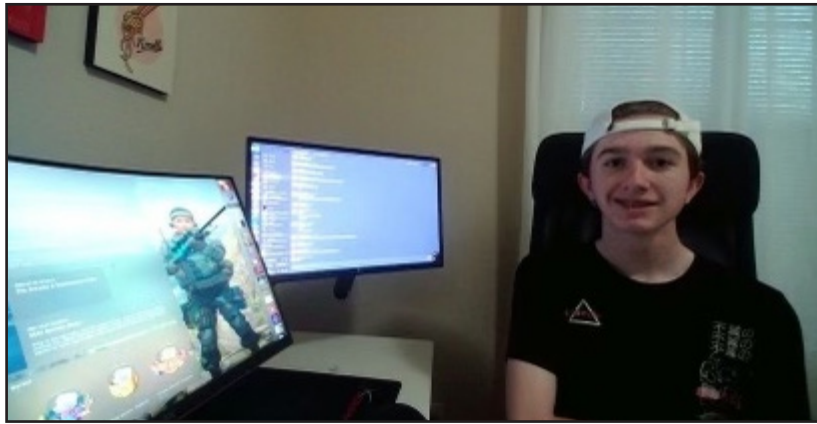
March 18, 2022

Game on: E-sports are back at Liberty

By *Ria Sanghera*
Editor

After staying at home for a whole year, the increase in video game participation comes as no surprise, but students now have an avenue to express their interests competitively with the renewal of the Esports Club to Liberty. At Liberty, this is the first year the school will recognize esports to the same degree as other sports and award players with letterman jackets and varsity status when winning championships. The step could make a world of difference for the interest levels and exposure the club receives along with battling stereotypes. "There's often a negative, nerdy connotation to esports when many who play other sports likely also play video games—just not as intensely. Just like Mahomes and Brady are leaders for football, in esports there are people who are the best at their craft, and it takes similar dedication and commitment," Juan Cebreiros, Liberty senior, esports player since the pandemic, and now club member, compared. At Liberty, skills are built as players practice inside and outside of school and are enrolled into leagues through the PlayVs organization. Coach Kev-

in, a campus supervisor at Liberty, also runs the program and sets players up with games and matches across the state. "I think my favorite part about playing would have to be just having fun, hanging out, and winning competitions as a team. It's hard to find competitive teams and leagues to join so when Juan told me about the esports club at Liberty, I was immediately interested," Ashton Ramirez, a newer member to the club this year continued. Time commitment seemed to be a common theme for all as Ramirez and Cebreiros joked about the number of hours they spent practicing outside of the club as "probably too much." As esports has continued to make its way to mainstream popularity, the dedication compares as many players seek to work their way up to heightened status and teams. Truett Knepp, a senior at Liberty, who has participated in esports for most of high school notes that "NBA investing into an entire league, individual teams like the Bucks and Warriors investing to Golden Guardians and FlyQuest, and even UC Irvine building an entire building for their program gives me hope that esports can make serious impact in the future." Impact that has already been witnessed as Insider Intelligence estimated that



With about 100 hours spent toward gaming, Truett Knepp, senior at Liberty, is an E-sports player.

Photo by Truett Knepp

there will be 29.6 million monthly esports viewers in 2022. Primary benefits of esports that seem to draw the large audience and ever-growing number of members including primarily the chance to meet new people and discover a new passion. The young club at Liberty currently has around twenty-five to thirty members, though it is entirely male. While Knepp currently competes outside of the club due to limitations like game availability and the nature of esports being so broad and hard to get into, he comments on the gender gap he has witnessed throughout his journey playing. "I think the reason why we don't see as

many women competing in esports is partially due to how esports are structured and also because women in esports are driven away by how toxic men can be towards them such as harassment and yelling, many clips of which can be found online." Knepp stated. The esports environment, especially that finding a home at Liberty though works to prioritize having fun and enjoying the games and competitions, no matter who someone is. Many sports are gendered and implicitly exclude minorities, and esports has felt this significantly more this year because of how hard it is to advertise clubs and outreach to certain groups.

"I planned to join the club freshman year but there weren't any real options other than Super Smash Bros. It can be hard to learn about esports competitions and it often requires digging to find opportunities which can push people away, especially when paired with stereotypes and not being taken seriously." Ramirez furthered. With the pandemic and its effects on clubs at Liberty like limited time slots to meet and limited support, renewing the club was a struggle. But, now that esports is finally back to Liberty, players hope the space can expand and that everyone has the chance to join, have fun, and build skills both individually and as teams. "(If I was to advise someone planning to join, I'd tell them) don't be scared to go into it. No one will judge you for how you play or for being good or bad. Just play how you normally would, be you, don't change styles because of others or anything like that—have fun and enjoy the experience as yourself!" Cebreiros encouraged. As those in the club prepare to play their first games of the season, they hope Liberty will cheer them on and award esports and each player the recognition they deserve.

More alike than we think? Letterman jackets throughout the years

By *Kayden Watts*
Staff Writer

Letterman jackets date all the way back to 1865, when Harvard's baseball team sewed large "H" patches to the front of flannel pullovers. The trend soon spread all across the country, evolving into the jackets seen today. Brentwood residents are familiar with the current Liberty letterman jacket, but what about jackets from the past, or from other schools? Some of the Liberty staff below show off the jackets they earned from various sports and activities.



Raegan Ternes
English Teacher
Freedom High School
Lettered in: Softball

Paul Taylor
Social Studies Teacher
Liberty High School
Lettered in: Swimming

Andrew Strawbridge
Assistant Principal
St. Patrick's St. Vincent High School
Lettered in: Cross Country/
Basketball

Sandy Overly
Special Ed Teacher
Liberty High School
Lettered in: Gymnastics

Stephanie Darling
Social Studies Teacher
Liberty High School
Lettered in: Track/Soccer/Tennis/
Academics

Kristina Busch
English Teacher
East Union High School
Lettered in: Cheerleading/
Swimming

Health, weather, and athletic performance

By *Jonathan Cervera*
Staff Writer

The weather can change your plans, what you decide to wear that day, and most importantly, your mental health and physical performance. Athletes all across the world deal with extreme weather and temperatures and humidity. For example games in Manaus, Brazil, a city along the famous Amazon River, have been played in temperatures in the high 80's and humidity levels approaching 70%. This is very extreme weather for athletes and can affect their ability to perform at full potential. The humidity causes the athletes to get hotter, leading to quicker fatigue. While rain can cause outdoor sports to face the challenge of a slippery turf. Even NBA basketball fans have seen the effects of high heat and humidity,

During the NBA Finals in San Antonio, the arena's air conditioning went out and temperatures neared 90 degrees. So the weather does not only affect the players but also the spectators. Student athletes also get affected by this. Liberty volleyball player Julian Nixon stated, "While volleyball is an indoor sport, the squeaking of shoes is always tedious on a rainy day." She then went on to add, "With all the distractions it takes a lot longer to get into focus." Indoor sports are affected by the weather as the hot weather can lead to humidity inside the gyms. Outdoor sports are heavily affected by the weather and can affect players in a lot of ways. "It affects us all because if it is hot, we are all sweaty, tired and mentally drained." stated Liberty football player Samuel Stone. He also went on to add, "If it is cold, our body feels tight, contact hurts, and we complain about it being



Photo by Jonathan Cervera
Liberty football player Samuel Stone covers up his face as he gets ready for a cold battle against the Freedom Falcons.

too cold." Mental and physical health plays a major part in people's normal day to day lives, and athletes lives when they step onto the playing field.

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5K RUN & WALK

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@ 9:00AM

VETERAN'S PARK,
BRENTWOOD CA

MILESFORMAYO

A local event honoring the life of LHS student, Matias Rogers. All proceeds benefit local school and youth running programs. Register online at www.milesformayo.org

March 18, 2022

The hidden online culture of eating disorders

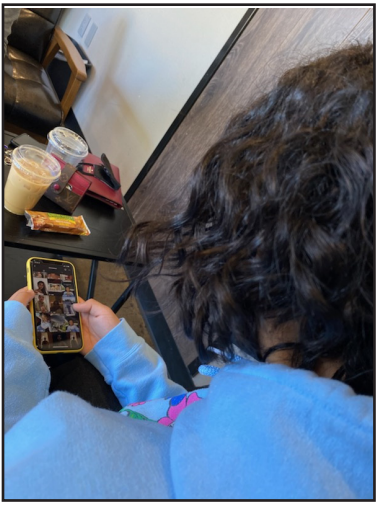


Photo by Kylie Dourgarian
The average person spends an estimated 145 minutes per day scrolling social media, viewing posts that are potentially harmful to their mental health.

By Lauren Davidson

Staff Writer

Amongst so many other issues, body image is something that hundreds of thousands of teens and young adults

struggle with. Opening social media almost always guarantees finding a photo of some sort with an unrealistic body expectation. Whether a boy or girl, there is a way people of any gender are expected to look in the eyes of society, there are a myriad of ways people are taught to achieve this "ideal image", many of them being dangerous.

Disordered eating has become so glorified that the term "eating disorder culture" was coined. Whether it be encouraged to only eat a certain amount of calories a day, or over-exercise to the point of exhaustion, people find they should do what they can to meet the standards of society.

Outside of social media, many teens find themselves suffering from disordered eating even without the influence of what they see online. This can come from needing to feel a "mastery" in every aspect of life, especially self image. Parents can also have a large influence on their kids, pushing them to look the way they deem acceptable. Teens struggling with self harm will also use withholding food from themselves as a

form of punishment.

Social expectations are the cherry on top of it all. It being imperative for men and women to achieve the ideal body type has been so normalized within society that many people don't realize the toll it takes on them, as they chase an imaginary standard.

"A lot of the time I'll see trends on TikTok that bash a certain facial or body feature and I'll find myself upset if I have one of those features, such as a soft jaw," says student Leilani Ford, who often finds themselves being directed to look a certain way not just by social media, but by people in their life as well.

Scrolling on TikTok is a good example. As of 2021, 1 billion people are active on the social media platform. As teens scroll, a video can be found of a woman talking about how much weight she's lost from being in a severe calorie deficit for months.

While in many cases calorie deficits do aid in weight loss, cutting too many calories for too long can become dangerous. Long-term severe calorie de-

fects can result in a slower metabolism, nutrient deficiencies, and in women, reduced fertility.

As the scrolling continues, another video is found of a man talking about how long he stays in the gym per day, working on his physique. Working the body to the point of pain is a position many gym-goers find themselves in. Bent on the idea of achieving their dream body, they will push themselves for hours, even when it hurts, and even when their body can no longer take it. Their exercise habits begin to leave their control. Over exercising can alter heart rate, induce insomnia, increase injury and leave someone feeling sick.

A few more minutes of scrolling produces yet another video. Not only does the woman in the video discuss her harmful weight loss habits, she encourages them. "If you want to lose weight," she says, "here are some things you need to do". After hours of scrolling, it's not uncommon for someone to turn off their phone with a coil of dread in their stomach. "Do I look the way I'm supposed to, and what should I do if I don't? What will

"...I'll see trends on TikTok that bash a certain facial or body feature and I'll find myself upset if I have one of those features, such as a soft jaw"

happen if I don't look the way I'm expected to?"

The scope of people that a video encouraging an eating disorder can reach is unfathomable, and the ways that they affect the people who see them are saddening. Many say that seeing harmful posts on social media is unavoidable, but the fact is that many would agree that seeing something so dangerous in the first place has become standard.

2021 NFL season in review

By Juan Cebreiros

Staff Writer

It's been roughly a month since the Rams defeated the Bengals in Super Bowl LVI to claim their second Lombardi trophy in the team's history, but that alone doesn't explain the complete chaos that went on during the NFL's first ever 17-game regular season. There were many teams that defied odds and surprised audiences, while others couldn't quite live up to expectations and completely failed.

The Cowboys were set to face the reigning champion Tampa Bay Buccaneers as the very first game to kick off the season. The game was action packed with the two teams trading blows back and forth and eventually ended with Bucs kicker, Ryan Succop, drilling the game winning kick as time expired to win the game and set the tone for what would be the most wild NFL season in history.

The beginning of the season was a confusing one, with teams such as the Chiefs and Packers taking unconventional losses to start their campaigns, especially with the Chiefs who stumbled into the season starting just 2-3 and sitting in dead last in the AFC West. Other teams who started off rough were the San Francisco 49ers, who spotted a 3-5 record after nine weeks of play, and the Miami Dolphins who sat at 1-7, tied with the 2nd worst record at that point in the season with the Houston Texans. These two teams overcame huge obstacles and ended the season on high notes; however, there were two obstacles that no team could avoid no matter what they did, those being injuries and COVID-19 outbreaks.

No matter if you were the star-studded

Quarterback like Lamar Jackson of the Ravens or 3rd String Quarterback like Nick Foles, the injuries and COVID were something that seemed to plague every team in the NFL. The Ravens lost nearly their entire defensive back unit due to injuries, the Browns were forced to play with only 7 out of 22 healthy starters while the rest were quarantined, hoping to test out.

Surprisingly however, only three games were postponed due to COVID-19 outbreaks with all three coming during week 15. Despite all of this there were playoff spots and division champions to be determined and with an extra week added to the NFL season, this only added to the drama that had been cooking over the course of the entire season.

Week 18 started off normally with teams having playoff clinching scenarios like the Colts beating the Jaguars to clinch an AFC Wild Card spot, and the 49ers beating the Rams to clinch an NFC Wild Card spot. The Raiders and Steelers had minimal odds at making it entering the week needing the Jaguars to upset the Colts. But as the game went on, the Colts playoff hopes began to fade away, with the Jaguars pulling off the 26-11 upset win. This knocked the Colts out of the playoffs and opened the door for the Steelers, Raiders, and Chargers. The Steelers had done their part by pulling off a last second win against the Ravens and now it was no longer in their hands; it was in the hands of the Raiders and the Chargers with the Steelers needing anything but the game ending in a tie for them to make the Playoffs.

However, before the Raiders vs Chargers showdown that was set for that Sunday night, the 49ers played the LA

Rams with one simple goal in mind: win and make it to the playoffs. The 49ers found themselves in a 17-3 hole at halftime, but with a ferocious pass rush lead by Nick Bosa and quarterback Jimmy Garoppolo finding a stride after playing with a brace over his right thumb, the 49ers mounted a comeback, leading the team to a game tying touchdown drive with less than 90 seconds in regulation and no timeouts. The Niners got out of LA with a playoff spot as Stafford threw a game-ending interception in overtime, leaving only a singular game left in the 2021 NFL regular season.

Wild Card weekend didn't quite live up to the hype it was supposed to, as only two of the six games ended within one score; however what was to come was said by many to be the greatest weekend in NFL history with Jay Busbee writing, "After last week's cavalcade of underqualified and underperforming dogs, this was a joy from first kickoff to final fireworks". Right he was: all four games ended with walk off scores, but most importantly, all four kept audiences glued to their screens and on the edge of their seats. Blocked punts returned for touchdowns, Brady trying to engineer another comeback, five touchdowns scored in just two minutes of play; this weekend seemingly had it all.

Championship Sunday was arguably as eventful as Divisional Round Weekend, but the fact is the championship games were viewed as sloppy compared to the other playoff games with five interceptions being thrown between the four quarterbacks. The Rams were able to mount a comeback against the 49ers as were the Bengals able to against the Chiefs, setting up for a high

flying Super Bowl for the ages.

This Super Bowl was everything fans asked for from the game to the halftime show to the ending. Throughout the game, both the Bengals and the Rams traded blows back and forth until the fourth quarter where Burrows' number was called one last time to produce a game winning drive for the Lombardi trophy. However, the one thing keeping him back from his goal was Aaron Donald who Colin Cowherd after the game stated, "Bottom line is the Bengals never had an answer for Aaron Donald", as he was the one who made the game saving play and gave the Rams their first Super Bowl since 1999.

As eventful as this season was, all good things must come to an end and that was seemingly the case here as well with future Hall of Fame Quarterbacks Ben Roethlisberger and Tom Brady announcing their retirements after their seasons concluded. Brady and Big Ben were just two out of five starting quarterbacks that were drafted before 2010 and still playing in the league. Brady left the league with a solemnly stated message explaining, "When you're in it every day, you really don't think about any kind of it ending". However, just 40 days into his retirement, Brady dropped a bombshell announcement that he will be returning to play for Tampa Bay next season, stating that, as a team, they have "unfinished business." Some say that he had been dropping hints about this for quite a while, and some speculate that the retirement as all a publicity stunt. But the official announcement still came as a surprise to many.

Only one thing can be said with guarantee: there may not ever be another NFL season as chaotic, as heart wrenching, and as surprising as the 2021 NFL season was.

Cancer Research: Is the cure hidden in time and patience?

By Madden Rios

Staff Writer

With the progression of modern science and technology it seems nothing can't be beat, but a majority of people don't feel the same about cancer research. Cancer patients have been battling cancer for more than one hundred years, but the question is, do we not have the right technology? Or are we not finding anything new? Fueled by research discoveries made over the last five decades, molecularly targeted therapeutics and immunotherapies have substantially increased five year survival rates for patients with formerly intractable cancers, including lung cancer (from 12.3% in 1975-1977 to 21.7% in 2011-2017) and melanoma (from 18% in 2006-2012).

Cancer is a disease caused when cells divide uncontrollably and spread into surrounding tissues. It is caused by genetic changes to DNA. There are no cures for any kinds of cancer, but there are treatments that increase the chances of remission. Many cancer patients are treated for cancer, live out the rest of their life, and die of other causes. However, most are treated for cancer and still die from it, although treatment may give them more time to live.

There are many branches of cancer that we may never be able to cure completely, but scientists are optimistic that vaccines, personalized medicine and smart lifestyle choices will help prevent and treat a much greater proportion of cases than currently happens. Most cancers that are likely to come back will do so in the first two years or so after treatment. After five years, you are even less likely to get a recurrence. Some types of cancer can even come back many years after they were first diagnosed. The main causes of cancer are genetics alongside certain environmental or behavioral triggers. The tendency to develop some types of cancer is believed to be inherited — that is, the genes you were born with might carry a predisposition for cancer.

According to Erika Evans, leukemia survivor, "It's possible not just to survive, but to thrive and to live a healthy, wonderful life again."

Bulk up on the benefits of weightlifting

By Abigail Wright

Staff Writer

Trends in working out change constantly, but one trend that seems to always stay consistent is weightlifting. Weightlifting is a way to continue building and working one's muscles. Even after one weightlifts, the body continues to receive benefits from the workout.

For example, according to healthline.com, as muscles grow, metabolism is boosted. That means that even while resting, the body is burning more calories.

When it comes to sports, weightlifting helps prevent injuries as well (healthline.com). Though weightlifting ben-

efits one's physical appearance, it can also help internally and mentally. Anxiety is often decreased as endorphins are released. But what are the other benefits of weightlifting, and more specifically what are the benefits that Liberty high school students have found?

In a survey with 55 Liberty students, 36% of students weightlift often and 18% weightlift every once in a while. One anonymous student stated that weightlifting made them "Mentally healthy, reduced stress, and [helped me] get stronger" where another student stated that it "keeps me more organized". These benefits could help every aspect of these students' lives, such as more organized school life, and

less stress in school as well.

Weightlifting can also help students' social life; one student said that "It gets me closer to friends and it gets me motivated for the day". Another student says, "I've been able to feel more confident about my body".

87% of the students interviewed say that after weightlifting, they have seen a change in their appearance. 83% of students say that weightlifting has improved their overall sports performance. One student stated that it "improved my mood, strength training, improved my explosiveness in sports, and makes me more awake throughout the day". These are all benefits that can help people through all aspects of their lives. Anyone wanting to try these ben-

efits out can check out the Weightlifting Club or register for the Strength and Fitness class.

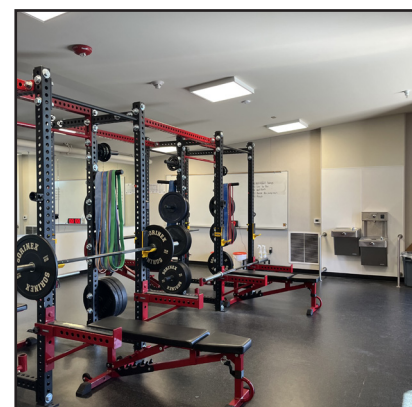


Photo by Abigail Wright

March 18, 2022

Literature: the possible prescription

Could more mental-health themed reading in school help students?

By Kylie Dourgarian
Staff Writer

As more and more students struggle to cope with mental illness, especially due to Covid-19 restrictions, should there be more opportunities to integrate lessons on managing mental health issues into the regular school curriculum?

Some children may be struggling with a wide variety of mood disorders, but may not have access to treatment or support; whatever they may be experiencing might also not be identified or diagnosed.

Though by consuming more relevant media that could pertain to how a student is feeling, it could not only help with their participation and willingness to engage, but provide a source of

information in a safe space.

Exposure to the experiences and feelings of others will mitigate the sense of isolation that many students feel.

“If you look at the prevalence of kids who have school adjustment difficulties and mental health problems, it was too high before the pandemic—and it’s going to be higher now,” says Roger Weissberg, a distinguished Professor Emeritus of Psychology at the University of Illinois.

It’s not very common for schools to expose children to mental health, but if they were going to find a way to incorporate it, English literature would be an excellent start. Younger children, anything under sophomores, tend to be shielded from anything deemed ‘too serious.’ Often times, stories regarding suicide, drug addictions, and eating

disorders may be labeled as too morbid.

Teachers, who children spend the majority of their time with, simply are not often trained to properly present information regarding serious mental health topics to students. Literature has the advantage of keeping experiences at arms length from immediate reality, while still conveying information.

Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, while only currently read by seniors, is a step in the right direction towards exposing students to the causes and effects of anxiety and high paranoia. Sticking to Victorian literature, Arthur Conan Doyle’s *Sherlock Holmes* would also subtly teach children about the dangers of substance abuse and mood disorders all while following an interesting story line. It’s rather uncommon for mental

health issues to be discussed in men, however in *Sherlock Holmes*, Doyle does not shy away from this. “I personally love reading books concerning mental health; I think the subject is not talked about enough in classrooms, and it opens up doors to many helpful conversations between students.”

Says Keira McIlvenna-Davis, a senior at Liberty who enjoyed the story *The Yellow Wallpaper*, specifically chosen for its coverage of mental health issues. “It’s also very nice to see representation of mental illnesses in literature because it is not very common but it’s nice to have something that people are able to relate to and talk about.” She says.

While it would be easy to stick collective heads in the sand, ignoring, shielding, or denying the looming presence

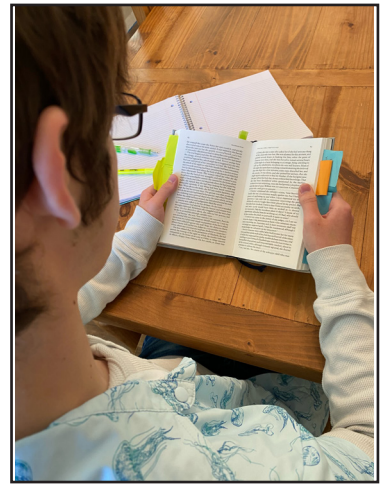


Photo by Kylie Dourgarian

A student submerges himself into Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*. The tense situations and deep discussions of mental health in the novel are enough to draw anyone in.

of mental health problems amongst students, will improve nothing and may amplify the issue.

Cost of AP exams: unfair and inequitable

By Eeman Dela Torre
Staff Writer

Liberty High School attracts students from a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds, with that said, financial restrictions prevent some from enrolling in the topics they wish to take which boils down to the question: “Who really benefits from AP classes?”

Since the College Board is attempting to persuade lawmakers that AP classes and exams are one of the most effective methods to boost test results in impoverished schools and districts, there have been a few attempts to assist students with their financial challenges.

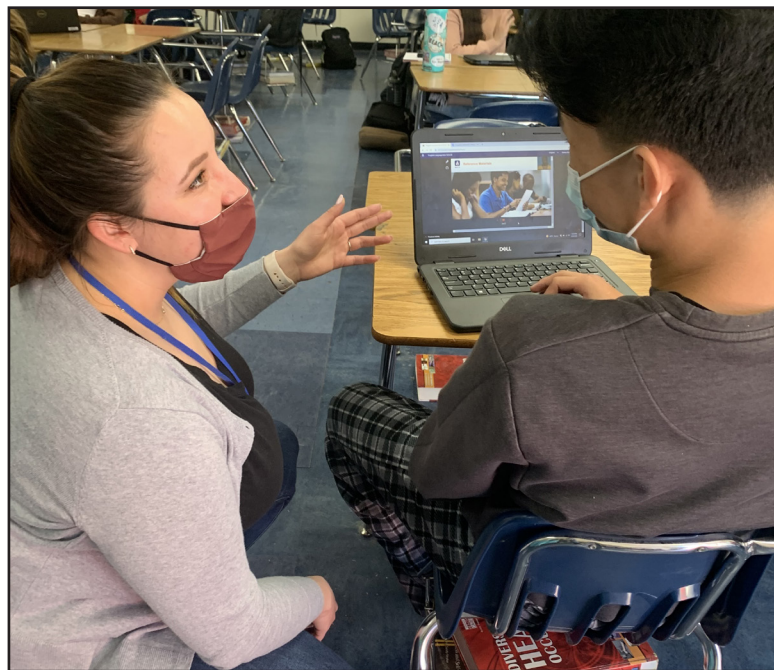
According to the article written by Alina Tugen in 2017, “In New York City, Mayor Bill de Blasio’s ‘AP for All’ initiative, which started last year promises that by 2021 all city schools will provide students with access to at

least five APs, at a cost of \$41.5 million annually for teacher training, student tutoring and materials.”

Even individuals in positions of responsibility in the Department of Education have come out to say that the AP tests and testing businesses have different interests than the pupils and are only interested in making money.

According to the paper Diane Ravitch, a former assistant Secretary of Education appointed by President George H.W. Bush – and a fervent critic of the growth of standardized testing in American education stated, “The AP has become a cash cow for the College Board. If it really wants to promote equity, offer the tests for free.”

It seems strange that a test that public school students are encouraged to take actually costs quite a bit of money. For the 2021-2022 school year, the College Board has set the prices of most of the



Because of the high cost of AP exams, some students are seeking guidance from teachers.

Photo by Eeman Dela Torre

AP tests at \$96.00 each. Additionally, the cost of AP Seminar and Research tests are \$144.00 each. If an average student is taking two AP courses, they are looking at dropping about \$200.00 on tests.

Fee waivers are available, but only to students who qualify, and the waivers only offer a reduction of \$34.00 per test. Considering that there are students out there in financial distress who are probably too embarrassed to admit it, the cost of these tests is a major deterrent, and by default, makes testing an option only to kids from families in better financial situations.

This is unfair and needs to change. AP tests should be offered for free to students in need, rather than at a reduced rate. The College Board is definitely not in need of money and needs to stop lining its pockets with money from teenage students.

The Weeknd’s new album: “Dawn FM” takes listeners out of the dark

By Renee Bedard
Staff Writer

On January 7, 2022 Abel Tesfaye, also known as ‘The Weeknd’, announced his new album, “Dawn FM,” after teasing the new project for months.

The concept of the album is radio-themed, which is why the title of the album refers to a fictional radio station (103.5 Dawn FM). The meaning behind the album is very unique and even to some “dark and robotic”.

In describing “Dawn FM,” he explains, “Picture the album being like the listener is dead. And they’re stuck in this purgatory state, which I always imagined would be like being stuck in traffic waiting to reach the light at the end of the tunnel. And while you’re stuck in traffic, they got a radio station playing in the car, with a radio host guiding you

to the light and helping you transition to the other side.” (ricethresher.org)

The Weeknd’s concept is meant to be a one-hour radio show on an imaginary station which in the introduction opens up with a host talking. this narrator just happens to be the one and only Jim Carrey.

In the first half of the album, many people had different mixed reactions towards it. With his radio theme, the songs all have a dramatic effect with an 80s and retro vibe; it makes you want to not skip through each track and to listen thoroughly. In the second half, it consisted of mid-tempo tracks that were influenced by 80s R&B.

According to ricethresher.org, “This sense of purgatory, a wait for the gates of heaven and the afterlife, is something that resonates with our current

situation: a long wait for a return to normal, a life after the effects of the global pandemic.”

Dawn FM included not only Jim Carrey but also Lil Wayne, and Tyler, the Creator. There were also other big collaborators including Calvin Harris, Swedish House Mafia, and film director Josh Safdie.

To sum it up, The Weeknd continues to push the boundaries of music, offering something fans haven’t experienced before. “On ‘Dawn FM,’ The Weeknd introduces listeners to a purgatorial meditation on love and lust buoyed by kinetic, dance-influenced and 80s-tinged sounds. Tesfaye brings a new dimension to his sound with a coherent and ambitious concept album that opens him up to a bigger audience than ever before.” (ricethresher.org)



The cover for The Weeknd’s fourth album, “Dawn FM,” features him with an aged face. Photo courtesy of pitchfork.com

The “ugly side” of social media filters

By Xavier Dollente
Staff Writer

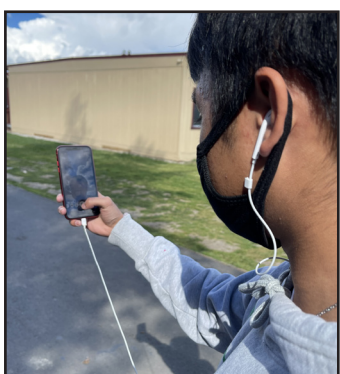


Photo by Xavier Dollente

Face and body filters affect how students view themselves in a negative way.

Enlarging your face, transforming into a dog, or putting on silly faces are just some of the features you can find with face filters on popular apps such as Snapchat, Instagram, and TikTok. Many of us have pulled out our phones and decided to throw some of these filters on just for fun or to make a post on social media. However, some may use certain filters in which they can make themselves appear the way they would want to appear in real life. These filters may be causing some to feel insecure about the way they look and which overall may cause body dysmorphia. Body Dysmorphic Disorder (BDD) is a mental illness where one is upset by their appearance because what they think they see in the mirror is not

what others see in reality. This mental struggle may increase as these filters are able to make one’s skin look more clear or have their nose shrink to the size that they desire. One may think to themselves that these changes only show how they don’t measure up to beauty standards which can lead to extreme decisions such as getting plastic surgery.

According to a recent study by the American Academy of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery, 55% of facial plastic surgeons stated that patients who wanted to improve their face because of filters increased by 13% in 2017. Along with this, according to an opinion piece by Dr. Neelam Vashi, these filters can worsen the

symptoms for those who tend to focus on their appearance and can also affect those with BDD.

Not only do these face filters and BDD may cause one to get plastic surgery, but it also may cause one to eat less or more in order to look the way they want to. Eating disorders are when one has an abnormal eating habit which is mostly caused by one’s psychological state. Just like plastic surgery, this may be caused by the face filters that one encounters and the thought of seeing a better version of themselves which is not real.

According to a study in 2015, it was found that girls who use filters before posting a picture online are more likely to have eating concerns which can lead

to eating disorders. Along with this, according to a Priory, a company known for medical care, people who develop BDD from face filters “will become fixated on their perceived imperfections, and can experience obsessive and controlling thoughts which may result in harmful behaviors such as restricting food intake, bingeing, purging, over-exercising and isolating themselves from friends and family.” Social media companies need to do more to regulate which users have access to face and body filters; starting to use these at a young age can cause deep damage that may be difficult to erase. Additionally, schools and families can do more to promote healthy self-esteem and body image.

Do schools need gender-neutral bathrooms?

By Gabbie Munoz
Staff Writer

As time continues to fly by, we continue to try to grow as a country alongside the individuals that need to be uplifted. As we grow more, individuals will continue to feel comfortable to be who they are, and expect more from the environment around them. This includes the transgender community, that consists of trans, non-binary, genderfluid, gender queer, etc. individuals who need a bathroom where they can feel safe and comfortable using without any worries.

There are many arguments against the use of gender neutral bathrooms in public areas or schools. Such as the argument that there is an increased risk of attacks against women or chil-

dren. This arguments has been proven false by a study team at UCLA, that confirmed that attacks against women/ children have no connection to non discrimination laws that would allow for gender neutral bathrooms to be mandatory.

Along with there not being an increased risk of attacks or harassment because of gender neutral bathrooms. Research has shown that trans-gender individuals are more likely to be at the risk of being denied access, physically assaulted, and verbally harassed while trying to use public restrooms. This is something that doesn't happen to most cis-gender (people who identify as their gender assigned at birth) individuals. But it is a very common fear amongst the trans community. Harvard has also done studies that showed nearly 36%

of transgender or non-binary students have reported cases of sexual assault. Not only in gender specific bathrooms, but also in locker rooms as well.

We also have to consider the identity of the people who fall under the non-binary umbrella. Not everyone who identifies feels the same, but many gender non-conforming individuals may feel off using a gender specific bathroom. This may cause them to experience gender dysphoria (clinical distress caused by being perceived as a certain gender). Gender dysphoria is a very hard thing to combat, especially when trying to do it in an environment that isn't fitting to the needs that these people may need.

When interviewed, Liberty students expressed their opinions towards the idea of having gender neutral bathrooms.

One of the students asked to remain anonymous but stated, "Sometimes I feel unsafe in the boys bathroom, I get so nervous that someone's somehow going to know that I'm trans".

Student Arius Fojas also had some opinions on the issues, vocalizing the fact that privacy is important. He stated, "Privacy is a huge thing for people, there should be a place where people feel comfortable while using the restroom".

Until the environment surrounding the transgender people who live in the US country changes, and they no longer have to worry about being harassed for who they are, there needs to be an established safe place for the transgender community to feel welcomed and not have to assume the worst will happen to them. As well as having a place for



Photo courtesy of Anna Orso

Assembly Bill #1732 in California requires single-user bathrooms to be identified as an all-gender facility.

gender non-conforming people to feel gender reassurance and comfort on a daily basis.

OPINION POLL:

Should student athletes be given less homework?

By Edgar Ortiz
Staff Writer



"Yes because it produces less stress."
10th grade
Gillian Woodcock



"Yes because it's stressful enough, they already go to practice so getting homework again makes them even more tired."
12th grade
Ralph Djantio



"Yes because they have lots of responsibilities already."
11th grade
Gabe Juarez



Photo courtesy of Walt Disney Company

Mirabel, voiced by Stephanie Beatriz, shows off her happy family in their colorful home.

Encanto enchants audiences

By Anayely Arreola
Staff Writer

The Disney film "Encanto" is based in a Colombian town. The backstory of this movie is that the main character Mirabel's (Stephanie Beatriz) grandmother (Maria Cecilia Botero) and her husband were fleeing conflict when suddenly they get caught and her husband sacrifices himself. This would result in their three children having special abilities.

The grandkids get special abilities but unfortunately for Mirabel she does not receive any abilities. She grows up to see her two older sisters Luisa (Jessica Darrow) and Isabela (Diane Guerrero) being praised for their gifts. One has the ability to lift up heavy objects and the other has the ability to grow colorful flowers.

Encanto was directed by Byron Howard and Jared Bush and it turned out to be an amazing and loving movie. The message behind this movie is that it's okay to be different. Throughout the movie Mirabel is trying to find her uncle Bruno (John Leguizamo) so he can explain why the house is falling apart. As Mirabel finds out the reason the house is falling apart her family starts losing their powers.

Towards the end Mirabel becomes sad which leads to her feeling like everything is her fault. This can be super upsetting towards viewers because when you see a character unhappy it can make you emotional. This movie was full of surprises and was an emotional rollercoaster. It was a movie that children, teens, and adults can enjoy. This movie came out November 24th, 2021 and can now be seen on Disney+.

**Congratulations
Mr. Heinz**

**Unanimously
voted
BVAL
Winter
Coach
of the
Year**

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