THE REBEL REPORT

Pride, Class, Courage, The Will to Win

Friday, March 28, 2025 Strom Thurmond High School Vol. 2 Issue 6



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State champions go to nationals

STHS Mock Trial Team win back to back state titles



STHS Mock Trial Team celebrate their back to back state victory.
Photos provided by Michael Rosier

Once again the Strom Thurmond High School Mock Trial Team (HSMT) captured its 11th state championship on Saturday, March 8, 2025, at the Richland County Judicial Center.

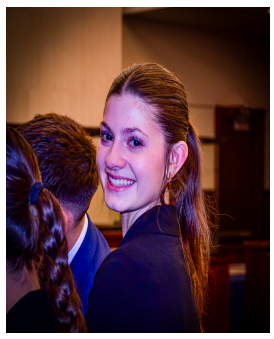
The win earns the Rebels back-to-back state titles for the first time since the 2019 and 2020 competition seasons and a return trip to the National High School Mock Trial Finals being held this year in Phoenix, Arizona, May 8-11.

This year's team members include Michaela Owen, Reece Lowe, Evan Williams, Dennis Fraser, Toney Robinson, Autumn Wingard, Mina Allen, Julianne Harper, Raina Barrs, Joseph Greene, Olivia O'Gorman, Carter Massey, Lilly Smith and Adelaide Zelmer.

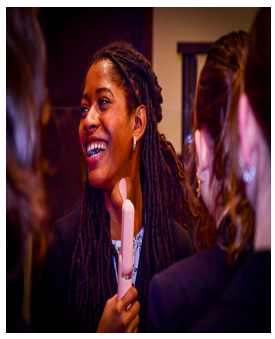
Team coaches include teacher coach Thomas Behr and attorney coach Blair Massey.

During the state championship rounds Evan Williams and Toney Robinson earned Most Effective Attorney and Most Effective Witness honors, respectively.

Mock Trial is an extracurricular activity that requires participants to dedicate countless hours of preparation.



Sophomore , Carter Massey will compete in Phoenix.



Senior, Mina Allen is overjoyed with the win

Carter Massey has been involved with Mock Trial since 6th grade.
Carter has been influenced by senior Mina Allen. "Mina has been a steady influence and inspiration not only for me, but for everyone else on the team as well. This victory feels like it's not just for the team, but also a way to honor the hard work and the dedication she has brought to our Mock Trial family," Carter said.

Daily practice has draw team members closer together. "Spending so much time together has really made us feel like a family," Carter said. To me, that sense of unity and friendship means more than a win ever could. Carter's hope for Phoenix is "crushing the competition."

Senior Mina Allen has competed in Mock Trial since her freshman year.
"I joined after my older brother's persistence, and I am happy I did," Mina said.

As a senior, "this win means everything to me. It took a while for it to settle in my mind. It did not feel real at first. After I heard that we won, I zoned out. It felt like it was going in slow motion, but it passed by so fast. We all tried our best to make this happen, and it is always encouraging to see your hard work pay off. I hope this win will push them to do even better next year knowing they have so much potential. It also feels good to be able to win my senior year, and spend more time with the team before I graduate and leave for college" Mina said.

Mina enjoys many aspects of Mock Trial, but her favorite is "the relationship we have with each other. We have all gotten close, and share many memories. We are able to walk into practice and be ourselves. I believe that it is one of the biggest things that makes us so good," Mina said.

Mina has never been to the West and looks "forward to seeing something new. I am very curious." Though nervous, Mina is "looking forward to competing, no matter how stressed and nervous I feel," Mina said.



Junior, Raina Barrs presents her case.

Junior Raina Barrs began her Mock Trial experience five years ago.

This win is "extremely important to me because it is truly an honor to be a state champion, especially a two-time state champion. I hope that we can return from Phoenix as National Champions," Raina said.

See page 9, Mock Trial

Advanced Placement options and rigor offered throughout the year

STHS students choose more challenging courses

By Mary Hamilton

Strom Thurmond High School offers nine Advanced Placement Program (AP) classes to challenge academically prepared students to experience college level studies in high school.

Strom Thurmond offers AP Biology, AP Chemistry, AP Human Geography, AP United States History, AP English Language and Composition, AP English Literature and Composition, (Dual Credit/AP) Teacher Cadet, AP Seminar, and AP 2-D Art and Design.

Harley King teaches AP Biology where "Students cultivate their understanding of biology through inquiry-based investigations as they explore topics like evolution, energetics, information storage and transfer, and system interactions," (College Board).

The AP Biology exam consists of two sections: a 90-minute multiple-choice section with 60 questions and a 90-minute free-response section with 6 questions. The exam is on May 21,2025 at 8 a.m.

Junior Raina Barrs said, "I chose to take AP Biology because I had already completed Biology Honors and Chemistry Honors, and science is my favorite subject. I've always wanted to pursue a career in the sciences, and this course will help me gain the knowledge I need."

Raina has seen self improvement since the beginning of the course. She can now read complex graphs effectively and understand difficult scientific concepts. She said that in the class "we complete labs, do worksheets, and work as groups and as individuals." She said that, "this class does align with my future career interests. If I do not become a lawyer, I want to be a molecular scientist. AP Biology will help me to acquire the knowledge I need to excel in that field."

The AP Chemistry course is taught by Amy Hardy. "Students cultivate their understanding of chemistry through inquiry-based investigations as they explore topics like atomic and molecular structure, chemical reactions, kinetics, equilibrium, and thermodynamics," (College Board).

The exam for AP Chemistry is a 3-hour and 15-minute test with two sections: a 90-minute multiple-choice section with 60 questions and a 105 minute free-response questions with 7 questions.

At Strom Thurmond, the AP Biology and AP Chemistry courses alternate each school year. During the 2024-25 school year the AP Biology class was taught, so the AP Chemistry course will be taught again during the 2025-26 school year.

The AP Human Geography course is taught by Brandon Ahrens. College Board explains that "Students cultivate their understanding of human geography through data and geographic analyses as they explore topics like patterns and spatial organization, human impacts and interactions with their environment, and spatial processes and societal changes."

The exam for AP Human Geography is a 2-hour and 15-minute test with two sections: a 60-minute multiple-choice section with 60 questions and a 75-minute free-response section with 3 questions. The exam is on May 6, 2025 at 8 a.m.

Sophomore Mckenzie Fleming, said "I decided to take the AP course instead of CP to have the chance of already gaining a college credit and being ahead." She expressed that she has benefited from taking the course since she has gained interesting knowledge about geography, but it has been difficult since she is taking two AP classes.

The AP United States History course is taught by Thomas Behr. When taking this course, "Students cultivate their understanding of U.S. history from 1491 CE to the present through analyzing historical sources and learning to make connections and craft historical arguments as they explore concepts like American and national identity; work, exchange, and technology; geography and the environment; migration and settlement; politics and power; America in the world; American and regional culture; and social structures," (College Board).

The AP U.S. History is a 3-hour and 15-minute test with two sections: a 105-minute multiple-choice/short answer section (Section I) and a free-response section (Section II). Section I has two parts, the first being the 55-minute multiple choice part with 55 questions and the second part consisting of a 40-minute short answer part with 3 questions. Section II has two parts, one 60-minute document-based question (DBQ) and one 40-minute long essay question (LEQ). The exam is on May 9, 2025 at 8 a.m.

The AP English Language and Composition course is taught by Francesca Pataro. College Board says that "Students cultivate their understanding of writing and rhetorical arguments through reading, analyzing, and writing texts as they explore topics like rhetorical situations, claims and evidence, reasoning and organization, and style." The exam for AP Language is a 3-hour and 15-minute test with two sections: a 60-minute multiple-choice section with 45 questions and 135-minute a free-response section with 3 essay questions (1 synthesis, 1 rhetoric, 1 argumentative). (College Board). Students must have excellent quick thinking and writing skills to take this course. The exam is on May 14, 2025 at 8 a.m.

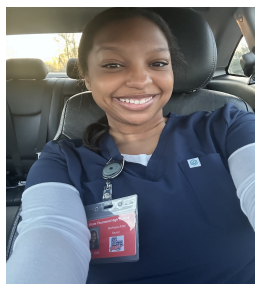


See page 11, AP courses

Rebels include volunteerism and entrepreneurship in their lives

From working in the medical field to owning a business, students display personal drive

By Kristian Brown and Isabella Mora





Senior Makayla Addy prepares for a health care career at Piedmont

Strom Thurmond High School senior Makayla Addy, though still a high school student is already involved in the medical field through health science courses and volunteering. Her experiences have shown her that healthcare is the right career path.

So far, Makayla has volunteered at Piedmont Hospital for the past two summers and has a whopping 230 hours completed. Makayla loves her work. “I pride myself on being very empathetic and being very understanding and being that person that someone can talk to, so I use those things as I volunteer, especially because you don’t know what your patient is going through,” Makayla said.

Her motivation that keeps her working is her ability to make people happy and smile. She loves to talk and likes to keep a conversation going, and handling patients and talking to them really helps her get through the day.

Being in the medical field comes with a tremendous amount of benefits, but achieving her goals comes with its battles. Concerning patients, Makayla’s weakness is that she gets attached quickly and easily, making it difficult for her to let go of that patient that she’s grown a bond with.

Her commitment "is good to a certain extent, but it gets to a point where it starts taking over my life,” Makayla said. She’s also a perfectionist and if something does not go how she plans, she gets upset. On the positive side, her strengths are her kindness and how driven she is. She strives to show kindness and dedication to her patients.

Makayla has always wanted to do pediatrics, but she found a new interest in learning about the heart, so she would also love to work in cardiology. “I wanted to get into a field where I can help others,” she said. She loves being a part of the healthcare environment. Makayla has enjoyed socializing with her mentors, training newcomers and watching their growth, and the hands-on experiences of C-sections, live births, and even vasectomies.

With Makayla's involvement in the medical field, she is ready to go on to college and experience even more.

For Estefani Cortez, a love for flowers blossomed into a thriving business. Inspired by the happiness that flowers bring to others, she began selling handcrafted bouquets in the summer of 2023.
“I have always loved flowers, but seeing other girls happy with their flowers really made me happy,” Cortez said.

Her journey began a few months before summer when she started learning how to make floral arrangements. The first bouquet she ever created was a Mother’s Day gift for her mom. “From that, people asked me to make them bouquets, and they would pay me,” she explained.

Creating a single flower is a meticulous process, taking about 20 minutes. However, she doesn’t make bouquets one flower at a time. “I cut all the petals, then fold them, then shape the rose itself. It is a very long process,” she shared. Each bouquet is carefully crafted, with prices varying based on the number of flowers, whether they are eternal or natural, and any add-ons requested by customers.

To grow her business, Cortez relied on word of mouth. “I started my business by marketing to people locally, who then also helped spread the word,” she said.
Beyond financial success, running her own business has given her valuable experience in time management and entrepreneurship. “I will use these business skills in the future because they have taught me time management and how to run a business on my own while balancing other jobs and school,” she reflected.

What started as a simple gift for her mom has turned into a meaningful business, proving that a passion for flowers—and hard work—can truly bloom into something special.



Examples of Estefani Cortez's floral arrangements

For many, welding is a trade focused on construction and repair, but for one student, it has become a creative outlet. Combining craftsmanship with artistry, Reese Hidlay has found a unique way to turn metal into delicate floral designs.

“I started welding flowers because it gives me something to do and make a little money on the side,” Reese said.
She began making welded flowers in November of last year, though her welding experience dates back to her sophomore year. Using a MIG welder, MIG pliers, a vise grip, and occasionally a grinder, she carefully shapes each flower. “It depends on how many I make and the size, but it’ll usually take me an hour or two to make a couple,” she explained.



See page 11, entrepreneurship

Editorial

By McKenzie Fleming



Elephants are a part of a dying breed. Different types of elephants are all in danger of going extinct. Due to poaching, habitat issues, and human-elephant conflict the elephants have fallen under the endangered category. We, as people, should do as much as possible to stop the decline of the endangered animal.

The two types of elephants that are declining are African elephants, who are poached for ivory and tusks, and Asian elephants who are at risk due to habitat loss and human conflict. Elephants are the largest land mammals on earth, and they need an excessive amount of land to meet their needs. An elephant can feed up to 18 hours and consume hundreds of pounds of plant matter a day. As they lose habitat, they come in contact with humans as a competition for resources.

Elephants are very important to the ecosystem as they maintain biodiversity and engineer their environments. They are considered ecosystem engineers, seed dispersers, and forest gardeners. A single footprint from an elephant can fill with water and provide a home for tadpoles. They also make paths for other animals and encourage tree regeneration.

Although it is very hard to save a whole species, if enough people work together and the consequences of harming the animals are decreased, the population of the elephant can increase its numbers to a safe amount. Elephants are a main part of the savanna and rainforest ecosystem and they should be protected to continue their job as environmental engineers.

FFA provides leadership and growth opportunities

By Shelby Waters

Strom Thurmond FFA is an extraordinary program that was established in 1962 when Strom Thurmond High School first opened its doors. It is a growing organization that has piqued students' interests over the years. FFA is an organization for students to participate in if they are interested in agriculture, leadership and personal growth.

FFA is a broad youth organization that prepares members for premier leadership, personal growth, and career success through agricultural education. Senior Piper Parkman said, “The leadership skills I've gotten from the FFA have really helped me open up and come out of my shell which is helpful for future jobs.”

FFA’s mission is to promote agricultural education and provide students with hands-on experiences. Jacob Laughlin FFA Advisor said, “All FFA members need responsibility, organization, and willingness to be a part of our program,” Many officers enter the program with those qualities, but FFA builds those qualities even further and students leave ready for the real world.

At Strom Thurmond High School, the local FFA chapter has been actively involved in numerous projects and competitions this year. Members have participated in many CDEs ranging from a tool identification contest to a public speaking contest. Mr. Laughlin said, “we always try to make sure we do the soils evaluation contest, veterinary science contest, nursery landscape, tool identification, and I also try to get a few people to do the public speaking contest as well,” This 2024-2025 school year, STHS had a group of students place 3rd in the Upper State Soils Career Development Event.

FFA can be a great experience for anyone who joins whether they are an officer or just a member. It can open many doors and bring so many new opportunities people didn’t even know they had access to. Senior Shelby Murrel said, “What I want future members to know about joining FFA is if it’s what you want to do, go after it. It is lots of fun and you will enjoy it and meet lots of new people,” .

Every FFA chapter needs a team of officers to plan monthly meetings and help with the organization of the chapter. For the 2024 - 2025 school year the officers are President Jared Bedenbaugh, Vice President Christian Haskins, Treasurer Kimberly Ramirez, Secretary Piper Parkman, and Historian Shelby Murrel. Piper Parkman said, “Responsibilities such as time management, planning, team work, and public speaking come with the role of being an FFA officer.” FFA has shaped and guided many students at Strom Thurmond over the years.

FFA is beneficial to all students involved and will teach them about the real world and possible future careers. Even if someone does not want to have a career in Agriculture, they can still be involved in FFA, teaching them many life skills for their future.

Track and field competition heats up for Rebels

Runners and throwers get serious about the season

By Aundria and Kamira Johnson-Williams

The 2025 spring track season has started for the Strom Thurmond Rebels. Many Rebel student athletes love this time of year. They can express themselves through running, jumping or throwing and compete against other schools around South Carolina.

There are many events to compete in while doing track and field. Sophomore Jakari Gordon's are the 100m, 200m, 4x1, and triple jump, and Madison Colemen does 800m, high jump and long jump. Everyone has different times and jumps and at the track athletes meet hard competition. Jakari runs 11.17 in the 100 meter dash, 23.69 in the 200 meter dash. Madison runs a 3.34 in the 800. In triple jump Jakari jumps 37-1 and Madison jumps 4 '8" in high jump and 13ft in long jumps. Most runners, jumpers, and throwers have a number of events to do each track meet. Jakari usually has 3 to 4 events and Madison usually has 2 to 4 events per meet.

Besides running and jumping, students also compete in throwing, which is a field event. That includes throwing shot put, javelin, or discus. Imani Gilcrhist throws javelin and discus. Adriyanna Johnson throws shot and discus. Imani's personal record is 21m in discus and 19m in javelin. While Adriyanna's personal record is "23.4 meters for discus and 8.44 meters for shot. Imani and Adriyanna usually only do two events per meet.

Madison and Imani are motivated but in different ways. Imani said " Coach Felton motivates me the most and beating my pr motivates me". While Madison said " the finish line" is what motivates her. They both had similar answers when they were asked what is their favorite thing about track. "My favorite thing about track is bonding with my teammates," Imani said. Madison feels her motivation is " the people we are around and how you are able to build a relationship with them. It's like a little community." Track and field brings everybody together and creates a very social atmosphere.

In most sports people have their weak points and some strong points. Jakari's weak points are his start and his lack of energy, but his strong points are his top end speed and his aggressiveness. Adriyanna feels "strong when I place top three in a meet, but my weakness would be not having any improvements in my event".





Track teaches teenagers responsibility, and reliability. At track meets no coaches are around to babysit and watch athletes; the athletes themselves have to listen to the calls and announcements to know when their event is up. Besides learning to take repsonsibility, Imani stated that "track has also taught me how to convert meters to feet".

Track doesn't really intertfere with school work. However, if an athlete's grades are too low, they can't attend the track meets. Imani states "since I care so much about track I have to keep my grades up". Which is a wonderful mindset to have while doing sports.

Track athletes have a lot of work to maintain and competition to face, but the Rebels love traveling and going against other schools to win metals or just placing.





More pictures on page 6, Track

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Celebrations and traditions bloom in Spring

By Isabella Mora and Kristian Brown

Students at Strom Thurmond High School reflect on their traditions, beliefs, and thoughts surrounding the recent St. Patrick's Day celebrations. Many students, including Aerial Brown and Cassandria Tilson, wore green, either as a tradition or to avoid being pinched. Abby White saw wearing green as a necessary precaution to avoid playful teasing.

Celebrations varied among students. While some, like Cassandria and Rayterrious (Ray) Richardson, hosted small family gatherings, others, such as Aerial, took part in large outdoor festivities. Many students simply acknowledged the day by wearing green without additional celebrations.

Various symbols come to mind when thinking about St. Patrick's Day, including leprechauns, four-leaf clovers, and the color green. Aerial associated the holiday with Ireland, while Ray immediately thought of gold. Abby noted red-haired individuals and shorter stature, reflecting common stereotypes tied to Irish folklore.

The event first started out as a religious holiday, but over the years, it became a world wide Irish celebration. This holiday highlights St. Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland. Many commemorate this day with symbols such as shamrocks, a green plant used by St.Patrick to explain the Holy Trinity, wearing green to show their Irish pride and culture, and the magical leprechauns which are known as magical fairy figures in many Irish stories that were often seen on this day.

If given the opportunity to find a pot of gold at the end of a rainbow, students had a variety of ideas for how they would spend it. Aerial and Abby would purchase a new home, while Ray would invest in cars, real estate, and gaming equipment. Serenity would use it for thrifting, and Avia Sherry expressed a more personal choice—spoiling her pet axolotl, Burnt Toast.

The concept of luck drew mixed reactions. Cassandria and Avia believe in it, with Avia stating that sometimes "there's no other explanation" for certain events. Ray, a self-proclaimed "pro gambler," also embraces the idea of luck. However, Aerial and Serenity remain skeptical, with Serenity expressing a stronger belief in manifestation, or the idea that one's thoughts and actions shape their outcomes.

Regarding St. Patrick's Day parades, most students have not attended one but expressed curiosity. The most famous parade, the New York City St. Patrick's Day Parade, is one of oldest and largest parades, dating back to 1762, and is a world renowned celebration of Irish culture. It attracts millions of attendees. There are many other famous parades located in Savannah, Denver, Boston, Chicago, San Francisco and more.

Traditional Irish cuisine also sparked discussion. Serenity, Aerial, and Ray have tried Irish food and enjoyed it, with Serenity noting the prevalence of potatoes in the cuisine. Others, including Avia, Abby, and Cassandria, have yet to try traditional Irish dishes.

For example, the most popular Irish dish made is corned beef and cabbage. The classic St.Patrick's day dish is an amazing, delicious, American invention. Corned beef became a more affordable alternative to the traditional Irish dish of ham and cabbage.

If given the chance to visit Ireland, most students expressed interest in exploring the country's natural beauty. Serenity and Ray were particularly eager to experience the landscapes, while Aerial and Avia looked forward to sampling authentic Irish cuisine. Abby, on the other hand, was most curious about the prevalence of red-haired individuals.

Whether through family celebrations, festive attire, or a simple acknowledgment of the holiday, students at Strom Thurmond High School hold a variety of perspectives on St. Patrick's Day. Regardless of their level of participation, the tradition of wearing green—and the playful pinching that comes with it—remains a notable aspect of the holiday's presence on campus.





Easter

By Shelby Waters

Spring is a time for new beginnings and along with this season comes a very popular, widely known holiday, Easter. The Easter bunny is a largely known staple on Easter Sunday; however, with this holiday there are more traditions than what meets the eye.

For small children, Easter is usually celebrated with the Easter bunny bringing sweets and partaking in Easter egg hunts.

Sophomore Avia Sherry said one of her favorite childhood Easter memories was "painting eggs and hiding them for my parents."

Easter is also a time for Christians to remember what Jesus sacrificed for his followers all those years ago because of his love for others.

Many teens and adults think of Easter as a time to "Celebrate the resurrection of my savior Jesus Christ," Sophomore Addie Derrick said.

In addition to its religious significance, Easter is a time for family gathering and celebrations. Some STHS high school students' traditions may include, "Going to my aunt's in Georgia after church and eating with my family," Sophomore Rahlyn Widener said. Easter is a time of joy, renewal, and hope, celebrated by millions around the world.

Easter is a holiday rich in meaning and tradition, celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the promise of new life. It can bring families and communities together, encouraging a spirit of joy and renewal. Easter not only honors its religious roots but also creates lasting memories and connections among loved ones and communities, celebrating the hope and love that Easter brings.

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APRIL 25 AT 7PM
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By Chandler Gagnon and Nathaniel Gagnon

Strom Thurmond has an extensive arts program, part of which is musical theatre classes. The theatre classes, along with Mr. Mckinney the musical theater teacher, will be staging Frozen Jr. which will be Mr. Mckinney's last production before retirement.

There has been great anticipation for the Frozen play. The play has now been in preparation for the last few months. Costumes have been obtained and blocking has been completed. Blocking is a theater technique where people learn where to stand, how to dance and sing each number.

As with any STHS Theater production, Frozen Jr. will incorporate all the best efforts of those on stage and backstage. Currently, play practice runs on Monday and Tuesday from 6:00 pm-8:00 pm. Although ticket prices are yet to be determined, tickets can be purchased online.

The play will be performed for schools on April 21-24 at 8:30 am. For the public, shows will be performed once April 25, twice April 26-27 for a total of nine shows. Frozen Jr. will be a treat for the entire community.

Women celebrated internationally in March

By Jamirah Lites



International Women's History Month, celebrated in March, is a time to recognize and celebrate the achievements of women throughout history. It focuses on the progress made toward gender equality and highlights the challenges that women still face today.

The month encourages everyone to reflect on the contributions of women in various fields, from science and politics to arts and sports. It's also a reminder of the importance of empowering women and ensuring they have equal opportunities in all aspects of life.

Through stories and raising awareness, others can be inspired to continue the fight for women's rights and create a more equal world for everyone.

The month encourages education and awareness about women's history, highlighting the importance of learning about the diverse experiences and perspectives of women throughout history.

By celebrating the achievements of women, International Women's History Month inspires young people, particularly girls, to pursue their dreams and make a difference in the world.

It provides a platform for open conversations about gender equality, encouraging critical thinking and reflection on the issues that still exist.

March 8th was International Women's Day, which falls within Women's International History Month and was a global day celebrating the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women.

The following women are celebrated for their contributions to American history:

Elizabeth Blackwell - first woman doctor
Harriet Tubman - abolitionist
Clara Barton - nurse, founder of the Red Cross
Jeanette Rankin - first woman elected to congress
Amelia Earhart - pilot
Elanor Roosevelt - first lady and activist
Babe Didrikson - first woman to play in a PGA tournament
Hattie McDaniel - first African American woman to win an Oscar
Chien-Shizung Wu - nuclear scientist
Shirley Chisholm - first African American woman elected to the US House of Representatives
Sandra Day O'Connor - first woman Supreme Court Justice
Sally Ride - first woman in space
Misty Copeland - first African American woman principal dancer for the American Ballet Theater
Sarah Thomas - first woman NFL referee
Carla Hayden - first African American woman Librarian of Congress
Ilhan Omar - first Somali-American US Lawmaker

Mock Trial, continued from page 1

Raina shares the same feelings as Carter and Mina towards her teammates. "I'm looking forward to spending more time with the team and creating more memories at the competition.

According to the South Carolina Bar Association, which organizes and leads HSMT, the goal of the program is to educate students regarding the American judicial system and the mechanics of litigation. Through participation in the Mock Trial program, students increase basic skills such as listening, speaking, writing, reading, critical thinking and problem analysis.

Each participating school enters a team composed of between seven and 18 students and a teacher volunteer.

Teams try each year's fictitious case against other teams at regional competitions in February. The top 12 teams then compete at the state championship in March. Finally, the South Carolina Bar High School Mock Trial champion represents South Carolina at the National High School Mock Trial Championship, Inc.

The Rebels have earned the title of South Carolina Mock Trial State Champions in 2025, 2024, 2022, 2020, 2019, 2017, 2015, 2012, 1987, 1985 and 1984. Additionally, Strom Thurmond High School was the South Carolina state runner-up in 2014 and 2011.

Strom Thurmond Mock Trial advanced to this school year's state competition by placing first at the Lexington Region Mock Trial competition.



Continued from page 2, AP courses

Sophomore Kamira Johnson-Williams is taking AP Language and said, “I decided to take AP Lang because I wanted to see my full potential. I didn’t want to just go into English 3 since I would rather do something higher.” She said that AP Lang has helped with her writing skills and vocabulary but has been a challenge since the tests are timed and she struggles with thinking fast..

The AP Literature and Composition course is taught by Thomas Behr. In this course, “Students cultivate their understanding of literature through reading and analyzing texts as they explore concepts like character, setting, structure, perspective, figurative language, and literary analysis in the context of literary works,” (College Board)

The exam for AP Literature is a 3-hour long test with two sections: a 1-hour multiple-choice section with 55 questions and a 2-hour free-response section with three questions. The pass rate for the AP Lit course is 72.4% (College Board, 2024) which is significantly higher than the AP Lang pass rate by 17.8%. The exam is on May 7, 2025 at 8 a.m.

Fortunately, for students taking the AP Language and AP Literature courses in 2025, the multiple-choice question (MCQ) portion of the exam has been reduced to four answer choices from the original five answer choices to hopefully boost exam scoring.

The AP Seminar course is taught by English teacher Misti Hinch and this is the first time Thurmond has offered this course with only six students enrolled. College Board indicates that “AP Seminar is a foundational course that engages students in cross-curricular conversations that explore the complexities of academic and real-world topics and issues by analyzing divergent perspectives.

Students learn to investigate a problem or issue, analyze arguments, compare different perspectives, synthesize information from multiple sources, and work alone and in a group to communicate their ideas.” If students complete and pass both AP Seminar and AP Research they become an AP Capstone completer.

The final exam for AP Seminar is a two-hour test with three short-answer questions and one essay question. Before the exam, students have to submit their two performance tasks with many different parts they completed during the school year including their IIR’s, TMP’s, IWA’s, IMP’s, to be graded along with their final assessment for their overall exam score for the class. The exam is on May 12, 2025 at 12 p.m.

Sophomore Joseph Greene is one of the six students taking the AP Seminar class. He said that he has benefited from the course because “It has taught me to be patient with my work and to set proper deadlines that I can follow.” It has also helped him with his formal writing skills and technique for writing a research paper. He has faced challenges within the class because it allows “too much self-direction. My wandering soul can't handle being a free agent, even if it is nice on occasion. It's also quite difficult to find topics to research.”

The AP 2-D Art and Design course is taught by art teacher Travis Selman. College Board says “Students refine and apply 2-D skills to ideas they develop throughout the course. The AP Art and Design framework included in the course and exam description outlines distinct skills that students should practice throughout the year—skills that will help them develop inquiry around the thinking and making of art.”

The exam for AP 2-D Art and Design is a portfolio-based assessment, not a traditional test, consisting of two sections: Sustained Investigation (60% of the score) and Selected Works (40%) and students have the whole school year to complete this up until the submission date. The course has a pass rate of 82.8% (College Board). The portfolio submission date is May 9, 2025 at 8 p.m.

Sophomore Olivia O’Gorman, an artistically gifted student at Strom Thurmond, said “I have benefited from taking the AP art course because it has helped me explore new ideas and types of art that I haven't been able to before. It has also helped with my creativity because in the AP art class you come up with your own art pieces and assignments, therefore you have a lot more creative liberty. However, even though you come up with your own pieces you still have a deadline for when all of them are due. This has helped me advance my creative thinking skills as well as my time management

Olivia said “this course has been challenging for me because you have to have a lot of independence. There isn't a certain criteria you must meet for your art pieces so you have to be able to judge for yourself on whether your art pieces are well created. It also stretches your creativity and forces you to think outside of the box. You have to make 20 pieces based off of a certain inquiry question that you may have about the world. Coming up with that many pieces based on one topic can be challenging and some day you can run into a point where you have no ideas left. This class helps force you out of that point and pushes you to move forward."

The dual credit/AP Teacher Cadet course has been instructed by drama/chorus teacher Steven McKinney but due to him retiring, next year Amy Hardy will begin teaching the course. The courses through the University of South Carolina Aiken not College Board so students who take the course will become part-time college students at USCA.

Students work on “child development, building self-esteem, designing schools, governance of schools, and actual teaching in schools,” (USCA). Students do not have to aspire aspiration to be a teacher to take the course, but need to maintain a GPA of 3.0, be in 11th or 12th grade, pay the 10 dollar application fee, fill out an application, write an application essay, and get five teacher recommendations.

Teacher cadet, Junior Emerson Holmes said, “I decided to take teacher cadet because I wanted to exemplify my knowledge on what it takes to teach a class. Not particularly do I want to be a teacher, but taking the teacher cadet class will help me to public speak, and get my point across more effectively in any future job I will take part in.” The class is more than just learning about teaching and as Emerson said she has learned valuable skills that she can use throughout her life.

Emerson has benefited from taking the class. “I have developed how to be more confident in my ideas, and how to express them with efficiency. The Teacher Cadet course has allowed me to learn what actually goes on ‘behind the scenes’ in the classroom. It has taught me to appreciate all of the work that teachers actually put in.” Although she has learned a lot, the class was challenging since it has made her step outside of her comfort zone.

AP classes are a challenge for students who want knowledge application in complex contexts. The AP courses weigh more on the student grade point average than other classes as it boosts GPA by a full 1 point compared to the 0.5 point in an honors course.

AP classes are more work, faster paced, and more academically rigorous than a CP or honors class, but success is achievable for any student willing to apply themselves.

Spring break's local activity choices

By Abigail White

Spring break begins on March 31st for Edgefield County students and lasts for two weeks. It is often a period when people love to spend time with friends and family. Students especially love to be out of school.

The weather is usually mild, and it's nice to be outside when the weather is just right.

An outdoor option for the two week break includes going to one of the local lakes. These include lake Thurmond, and Lake Murray where families can go fishing and boating.

In Augusta, Putt Putt golf is open as is Top Golf, Active Climbing Ninja Center, Sky Zone Trampoline Park, and Fort Gordon Children's Park just to name a few.

Yelp is an online resource to find more activities, and details about what is available, schedules and pricing.





If an indoor activity is needed, a movie theater provides an option. Movie theaters in the area include Riverwatch Cinemas in Augusta, Regal Aiken Mall Cinemas, and Evans Cinemas. They all have a variety of movies to choose from.



Sometimes students look for options that are free and do not require many resources like transportation. These can include taking walks, doing simple arts and crafts projects, listening to music reading, cooking, and watching movies and shows at home.

Spring break can be a time for family to gather together or perhaps relax with friends. However, spring break will come to an end when students return to school on Monday, April 14th.

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Her pricing reflects the time and effort put into each piece. "It all depends on the size and what they look like," she said. "Regular flowers like roses would be $35, and the painted ones are $45."

Reese first gained customers by sharing her work online. "I made flowers and posted them on Facebook, and it started getting around," she said.

While welding flowers has provided her with an extra source of income, she sees it as a skill that will continue to serve her in the future. "I will probably use it to make things just for fun or if I need to fix anything," she said.

With a steady hand and a creative mind, Reese proves that welding isn't just for industrial work—it can also be a form of artistic expression.