

# THE SPRESS

May 01, 2025

\* BLUE ORIGIN

\* EARTH DAY

\* SHOWCASE

## National Decision Day

Savannah Booth



Seniors have been waiting for what seems like forever to graduate, but with the time coming, they have some big decisions to make. May 1 is National Decision Day for most colleges, where incoming students will have to make a final decision on their plans. South Park students have been very excited about these decisions and to finally leave their home of South Park High School. Of the students who responded to a poll asking about their decisions, 86.7% stated that they are going to a four-year college to pursue further education. The remaining 13.3% said they were going to either a two-year college, taking a gap year, going into the workforce, or enlisting in the armed forces. No matter what each senior decides, South Park High School is filled with joy while watching each senior make their decisions and how hard they have worked over the years. To show how proud this Eagle family is, the administration put up the senior photos for each graduate. Families, administrations, and teachers are filled with adoration towards the class of 2025 as these eagles leave the nest, making this a bittersweet ending.

Seniors should check their emails and the 2025 senior group chat for all upcoming information. The seniors' award ceremony will be held on May 19, 2025, at 6:30 pm. The Outreach Club will be holding the first Baccalaureate in quite some time, since before COVID. The event will be held on May 22, 2025, at 6:30 pm in the auditorium to highlight seniors through the encouragement of faith. Seniors' last day will be on May 28, 2025 which is also when students should plan to bring all school materials that need returned. June 2 and 3 will be graduation practice, where seniors will also receive their caps and gowns. On these dates, seniors will need to report to homeroom to check in and then report to the field for practice. June 4, 2025 will be the commencement ceremony at 6:30 pm, where these seniors finally get to say goodbye and move on to their own plans.

## Volleying FTK

Rhi Lord

On Thursday, April 17th, Mini-THON hosted a volleyball tournament for students. Students could either participate in the tournament or buy a Get Out of Class Pass to watch their friends and classmates compete. Raising Canes and Texas Roadhouse donated gift baskets for a raffle, and Primanti Bros donated appetizer coupons.

The tournament provided a fun transition from school to spring break and raised over \$1000 for Mini-THON. Out of all the teams in the tournament, the Block Party won, with Jace Tomasek, senior, Jake Frenchione, senior, Emma Burnett, sophomore, Deeprendra Subedi, freshman, Andrew Paul, senior, Laney Farine, freshman, Joey Anselm, senior, and Lucas Guzek, freshman. They all received a Chick-fil-A gift card and lots of fun memories.



Volleyball teams in action



Sophomores Alaina Barbara and Dalya Jabra



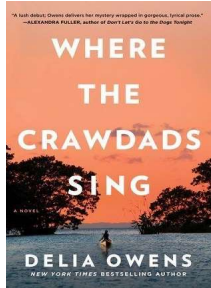
Block Party takes home the win



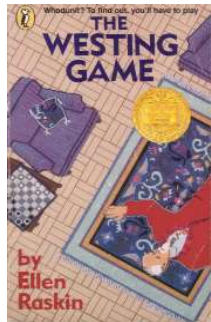
Students cheer on their favorite teams

## Ox 'n' Koh's book corner: Mystery edition

Ox 'n' Koh's book corner is highlighting mystery and thriller novels this month. We sent out a form asking students their favorites to be added to our review.



“Where the Crawdads Sing” by Delia Owens is Bailey Vietmeier’s, junior, favorite book. She says this is her favorite mystery novel because “it is unlike any mystery I have read and the wording made me want more.” “Where the Crawdads Sing” is about a girl, Kyra, who was abandoned and had to raise herself in the dangerous marshlands of North Carolina. For many years, there were rumors that spread about a marsh girl that haunted Barkley Cove, causing Kyra to be isolated from her community. Drawn to town by two young men, Kyra finally opens herself to a new and startling world. But when one of them is found dead,



Ta’shaun Poole, junior, enjoyed “The Westing Games” by Ellen Raskin. He says this is his favorite book because “I love how you can feel the characters’ emotions.” “The Westing Games” is about sixteen unrelated people who become surprise heirs to the fortune of a recently deceased Samuel W. Westing. The characters all first must participate in a bizarre game to discover the truth about Westing’s death and to find out who will win the inheritance.



“Girls Who Burn” by M.K. Pagano is Jeremy Oxford’s, freshman, favorite book. Jeremy says “I don’t read a lot of books, but this one was good”. He said it was his favorite because “it created suspense and created questions like who the killer really was.” “Girls Who Burn” is about a girl named Addie who lost her mother and sister. Throughout the novel, Addie tries to figure out who killed her sister after having a terrible fight with her. She feels at fault for her sister’s death, so she is determined to find who truly did it so the regret doesn’t eat at her.

## Blue Origin: Success or failure?

Addi Yochum

One step for science, one giant step for women. Or is it? As you might know, on April 14, via Jeff Bezos' Blue Origin company, six women got the chance to go to space for about 11 minutes. The women included Aisha Bowe, Amanda Nguyen, Gayle King, Kerianne Flynn, Katy Perry, and Lauren Sanchez.

This short adventure into space was said to have meant to inspire young girls to pursue STEM careers and believe in themselves as women, so essentially for feminism. However, people have opened their eyes and realized that this probably wasn't the best way to express that, hence the rise of climate change and pollution from the past decades and the many other reasons. On average, a space rocket can emit up to 300 metric tons of carbon emissions, which we could have easily restrained from putting into the atmosphere for a silly little flight, right?

Another controversial topic going around: is this really what we should be focusing on and putting money into right now? There are countless economic and social issues we could be working on to benefit an average family and struggling individuals that are either new or problems that have been happening for years, yet we put our attention on an almost 30 million dollar spaceship that launched for 11 minutes.

It's great to be able to do this in order to advance our knowledge of space and science every once and a while, however a fun trip to space just to go look out a window doesn't seem very inspiring or advanced.



The women before the flight to space. Photo courtesy of Today.com

For a few of the women this could be seen as a breakthrough in their career as an astronaut. Amanda Nguyen, a social entrepreneur and civil rights activist, was named the first Vietnamese woman to go to space after this flight. After Amanda's experience at Harvard, she aimed to become an advocate for all sexual assault and rape victims around the world, and to raise more awareness to this topic. She published *Saving Five*, a tribute to her resilience and healing throughout her life leading her to this career and legacy. She is one of the only ones who has had experience and knowledge about space and being an astronaut, and this trip was able to recognize her accomplishments.

Aisha Bowe was also one of the women who really earned this flight. Aisha is a former NASA rocket scientist, an entrepreneur, and a speaker. She hopes to go on more flights in the future. Aisha is the founder and the CEO of STEMBoard, which is one of the fastest growing companies in America right now. She is also one of the few women of color who has raised over one million dollars for her company. This flight might not have been a breakthrough in her career, but it sure has helped bring a spotlight onto her more and helped educate others on her who may have not been up to date.

However Katy Perry, Gayle Bowe, and Lauren Sanchez, who is Jeff Bezos' fiancée, were benefited by their celebrity status and connection to Jeff Bezos to go on this flight.

Even though the cons outweigh the pros, this has helped recognize successful and inspiring women, and was able to get people talking about the potential of space exploration.

## Showcase: Expect the unexpected

Callie Heynes

On May 7, South Park should prepare to be dazzled and entertained when students take the stage in this year’s Showcase. In the interlude between the musical and school ending, the Drama Club hosts an annual talent show on our own stage. In past years, traditional dances, soaring vocals, and musical bands have performed, and hopefully, this year will be the same. Who knows what hidden talents are waiting to be discovered?

The hope this year, as with every year, is to reach out to students who otherwise wouldn’t have an opportunity to express their talents. As Mr. Baker puts it, the expectations for this year are to have more turnout and more diversity in acts. He states, “There are surprises every year. That quiet girl in the back of the class? Yeah, she’s a dancer, and an amazing one at that.

And that one boy in your gym class? He plays guitar like a pro.” There is a deep talent pool in the community, and this is an opportunity to be able to, well, showcase it. It’s in the name after all. Also this year is the second year that it is open to not only high school students, but middle school and staff members as well. Teachers aren’t just grading machines, but have talents themselves. At times even have similar interests to students. Showcase is about being able to express yourself on stage and for teachers who participate, this can bridge that classroom gap.

If students are interested in participating, they can reach out to Mr. Baker in room 212 or email him for information at [josh.baker@sparksd.org](mailto:josh.baker@sparksd.org). The event itself will start at 7:00 P.M. in the auditorium. All acts are welcome!



The poster features a dark blue background with a large yellow spotlight beam shining from the top left. The word "Showcase" is written in a large, light blue, bubbly font at the top. Below it, three white four-pointed stars are arranged vertically. To the right of the spotlight, the text "SEIZE THE STAGE" is written in a curved path, followed by "ALL ACTS ARE WELCOME!" in bold white letters. In the center of the spotlight beam, the words "OPEN TO ALL!" are written in large, bold, dark blue letters. At the bottom left, there is a QR code with the text "Join the Google Classroom for updates!" and a small arrow pointing to it. Below the QR code is the code "Code: 6tvgybek". At the bottom right, the date and time "WEDNESDAY, MAY 7 7:00 PM" are written in yellow.

**Showcase**

SEIZE THE STAGE  
**ALL ACTS ARE WELCOME!**

**OPEN TO ALL!**

Join the Google Classroom for updates!



Code: 6tvgybek

**WEDNESDAY, MAY 7  
7:00 PM**

## Preventing an uproar

Megan Beam



Photo courtesy of Discoveryuk.com

More than 16,300 species worldwide are listed as endangered. Every year more and more of them risk extinction. According to the World Wildlife Fund, the following animals are the top ten most endangered species in the world.

**Javan and Black Rhino:** Despite their armoured skin, horns, and huge size, weighing in anywhere from 2,000 to 5,060 pounds, rhinos are gentle giants. Rhinos are herbivores, eating leaves, shoots, twigs, and fallen fruits. Unfortunately, the Javan and Black rhino populations are declining rapidly due to poaching, habitat loss, and disease. These tender beasts play a crucial role in their ecosystems as they are keystone species, a species that would dramatically change the environment if removed. The rhinos control and maintain plant life and growth, and help disperse seeds.

**Amur Leopard:** Commonly referred to as the rarest big cat in the world, the amur leopard, is critically endangered. Deforestation, poaching, and the declining of their prey species all have led to these gorgeous animals becoming endangered. Amur leopards are essential in maintaining their ecosystem, as they are a top predator. Populations of this rare cat seem to be steadily recovering and have a chance to expand beyond China and Russia. However, amur leopards are still endangered and we need to continue to protect the environment so they can repopulate.

**Sunda Island Tiger:** Even though friendliness is rare from a tiger, they still are very much needed



Photo courtesy of Earth.org

in the ecosystem. Tigers help maintain the herbivore population to prevent overgrazing, protect water sources, contribute to biodiversity, and they are apex predators. Human-wildlife conflict, habitat loss, and poaching are causing endangerment. Same with the amur leopards, the tiger population is growing. In 2010, there were an estimated 1,706 tigers in the wild, and then in 2022, there were around 3,682. The current tiger population is almost 4,000 with the majority of them living in India.

**Mountain Gorillas and Orangutans:** Orangutans and gorillas are two of the closest relatives humans have and somehow we are driving them towards extinction. Gorillas share 98% of DNA with humans and orangutans share about 97% of DNA with humans. All three species of orangutans and all species and subspecies of gorillas are critically endangered. Both species of apes are endangered to habitat loss and hunting or poaching. Gorillas, however, are also being faced with disease and conflict with humans. Both play a vital role in dispersing seeds and maintaining the health and biodiversity of their ecosystems.

**Yangtze Finless Porpoise:** With only 1,249 left in the world, the Yangtze Finless Porpoise is critically endangered and getting close to extinction. There are various threats contributing to their lowering numbers. The Yangtze River is a heavily utilized waterway and pollution, overfishing, ship traffic, habitat degradation, and construction of dams are all too common. These cute marine mammals are the only species of freshwater porpoise in the world,

## Preventing an uproar (Con't)

Megan Beam

help maintain balance in the river's food chain, and they indicate a healthy Yangtze river. If they were to go extinct, it could risk the stability of the river.

**African Forest Elephant:** Due to the ivory tusks of elephants being considered a luxury material, they are being poached and hunted, contributing to their peril. Habitat loss, conflict with humans, and climate change are also reasons for their endangerment. Much like rhinos, elephants are a keystone species and aid in seed dispersal.

**Sea Turtles:** Of the seven types of sea turtles, five of them are endangered and the other two are vulnerable to becoming endangered. Much like the other species on this list, they are endangered due to habitat loss. However, that's not all, human exploitation, accidental capture, pollution, and climate change are also playing a role in their endangerment. Sea turtles are important to their habitats as they regulate populations of other sea life, maintain the health of seagrass beds and coral reefs, and contribute to nutrient cycling. Sea turtle populations have been increasing due to protection of nesting beaches and reducing bycatch in fisheries, but as previously stated climate change is still a big contributor to their vulnerability.

Although many of these species numbers are diminishing, there is still more we as a society can and need to do to protect them further. The loss of one species can send a once so balanced ecosystem into uproar (no pun intended), and other species can die off as a result. To help these animals continue to grow their numbers, we can learn about endangered and threatened species in our areas and the threats they face, watch wildlife responsibly and from a safe distance, report marine mammals or sea turtles in distress, and so much more.

## April Students of the Month



**Creativity:** Andrew Walker, junior, is being recognized for creativity. Andrew’s creativity shines in a multitude of ways, but he was nominated mainly for his affinity for the arts, specifically music. While Andrew is also part of marching band and concert band, he also started the clarinet choir this year. It’s no wonder that his role model is also his clarinet instructor. Even though it is his love of music that highlights his creativity at South Park High School, his dream career is not in music at all. Andrew wants to become a civil engineer building bridges and road infrastructures. His creative mindset will certainly aid him well in his future career endeavors.



**Academics:** Sophia Hale, junior, is being showcased for academics. Sophia considers Polish humanitarian Irena Sendler and education advocate Malala Yousafzai among her influences. It’s no wonder then that she aspires to work for UNHCR aiding women and children refugees in the Congo. While Sophia takes all of her classes and academics seriously, her favorite class thus far has been 10th grade English with Mr. Tobias. The course offered challenging content and critique, but Mr. Tobias also “made sure to help [her] always achieve confidence in what [she] does.” Sophia’s confidence illuminates in many ways, but especially the classroom.



**Athletics:** Ryan Spitznagel, junior, is being acknowledged for athletics. Ryan was on the bocce team that went to the state championship, and he’s currently playing baseball during the spring season. While Ryan enjoys other sports, like bocce, he likes bonding with his dad, his role model and who he reported “always helps with [his] sports”, over baseball. To prep for each game, he drinks an energy drink so he’s alert and ready to win. The more energy drinks Ryan consumes, the more wins he helps bring home!



**Leadership:** Caxias Gaiter, senior, is being highlighted for leadership. Caxias is a color guard captain for the marching band, on MiniTHON board, and she also participates in Interact, and student council. While she is incredibly involved in her school community, she still identifies her mother as her role model, as her mother is the “strongest woman [she] knows”. One would automatically assume that as a leader in the school, she would be an extrovert, but she says not necessarily. Caxias said, “When I am comfortable with the people I’m around I am an extrovert, but when I’m with strangers I am introverted.” She took it a step further when she stated if she could have any superpower it would be to be invisible because she “could go anywhere”. South Park is glad she’s not invisible though!

## April Students of the Month (Con't)



Kindness: Kyle Furman, junior, is featured for kindness. While Kyle himself has proven to be an influence on South Park High School, he models himself after kindness in his personal life. He stated that his mother is the kindest person he's ever met as she's "thinking about others 24/7". Additionally, his inclusion by Norm Solomon, a South Park parent and school board member, to participate in the Appalachian work camp "altered [his] life forever". Kyle reported "it was the nicest thing anybody has ever done" for him. Kyle's own kindness is not only genuine and sincere but is illustrated by the fact that if he could have one superpower it would be for "others to live to their true potential" and he'd love to see change in the world where others don't judge each other. Judgement just "brings a large majority of hatred in this world." Kyle's kindness has certainly made South Park a more positive place.

Congratulations to all the winners!

## IMPORTANT DATES

**May 5: Cinco de Mayo**  
**May 5-16: AP Testing**  
**May 6: Band concert**  
**May 7: Talent show**  
**May 9: Prom**  
**May 11: Mother's Day**  
**May 13: Band concert**  
**May 13-15: Keystone testing**  
**May 19: Senior recognition night**  
**May 26: Memorial Day**  
**May 28: Seniors' last day**  
**June 2-3: Graduation practice**  
**June 4: Graduation**

## Earth Day

Dalya Jabra

Every year on April 22, more than a billion people around the globe celebrate Earth Day. Earth Day is a worldwide celebration that honors the achievements of the environmental movement and raises awareness of the need to protect the Earth. The more people that are part of this, the healthier and happier the Earth is to live in.

The Earth, like all the other planets in the solar system, started as a disc of dust and gas orbiting around the sun. The Earth came to be around 4.6 billion years ago, and it continued to grow thanks to the collisions between dust particles, asteroids, and other growing planets, including one giant impact that threw enough rock, gas, and dust into space to form the moon. Since Earth is the only planet where life has come to be, it is important to think twice about how it is getting taken care of.

Earth Day began in 1970, but prior to that, the United States faced many environmental problems. Many cities, especially Pittsburgh, were filled with smog (smoke and fog), along with pollution. There were no legal or regulatory mechanisms to protect our environment. For example, a factory could spew black clouds of toxic smoke into the air or dump tons of toxic waste into a nearby stream, which was completely legal. The worse the conditions got, the more people began to gain concern over the environmental damage that was happening.

To take action against the pollution, this celebration was created to raise awareness about the environmental struggles the world was facing. On the first ever Earth Day, numerous events took place, such as speeches, rallies, and cleanup campaigns, where more than 20 million Americans participated. This special day devoted to the Earth led to several environmental laws being passed in the United States, including the Clean Air, Clean Water, and Endangered Species Acts, which significantly helped improve human health and environmental conditions.

Each spring, students involved in Interact Club participate in a township cleanup. At this event, they beautify the community by walking around

South Park while picking up trash. Along with this, the Environmental Club also celebrates Earth Day by growing plants, which are given to teachers. Every change a person makes, even if it is little, can have a significant impact on the conditions of the Earth. Earth Day has made a huge shift in the way humans take care of their planet, as now more people are playing a role in making the Earth a better place. People can participate in this annual event by picking up litter, planting trees, or recycling. Without the care and love that we put into the Earth, it could never be at its most beautiful state.



**Interact Club members from left to right: Josh Stringe (10), Dalya Jabra (10), Sean Swartzwelder (12), Will Macek (10), and Nicole Camargo (11)**

## Dancing in the desert

Melia Petrello

This year, many people looked forward to seeing their favorite influencers and artists gather in the California desert for Coachella, a giant music festival that has happened every year since 1999. Thousands of people travel to see performances from the biggest stars, classic artists, and the newest up-and-coming artists. Coachella takes place over Friday, Saturday, and Sunday over two consecutive weekends. This year, Coachella was headlined by Lady Gaga, Green Day, Post Malone, and Travis Scott.

Apart from these big artists, there is a great lineup of talented smaller artists. For example, Glixen is one of the best up-and-coming artists in the shoegaze genre. Vs Self is an extremely emotional and talented screamo band that recently gained popularity on TikTok. There was also a performance from HorsegiirL, an incredibly unique DJ act in which the performer wears a horse prosthetic and often uses farm-related puns. The festival's lineup even includes performances from the beloved Yo Gabba Gabba.

Coachella is also known for having artists bring out other artists. For example, Benson Boone brought out Brian May from Queen to perform "Bohemian Rhapsody". Furthermore, Zedd brought out Hayley Williams for "Stay the Night", along with Bea Miller, Elley Duhe, Maren Morris, and John Mayer. Lastly, many fans were thrilled when Troye Sivan, Billie Eilish, and Lorde accompanied Charli xcx on stage to perform their featured songs.

One of the most unexpected guests was Bernie Sanders. Before Clairo's set, Bernie came on stage to remind the youth that the future of the country is dependent on them and encouraged them to fight for justice. He also praised Clairo for not only her musical talent, but how she uses her platform to fight for women's rights and stand up for the people of Palestine.

Charli xcx also shocked the audience when she finally announced the death of her "Brat era". Charli had been teasing the end of this era for a few weeks now, posting images of the word Brat crossed out. This led many to believe that since this era is ending, a new album may be coming. However, when Charli finally announced that "Brat summer" is over and it's time for a new summer,

the names of artists releasing albums this summer appeared on screen, including Kali Uchis, Ethel Cain, Yung Lean, and many more. Charli shocked the crowd when she took the time to promote other artists rather than announcing a new album.

Many people perceived this Coachella as uneventful and a let down. Previously, Coachella was filled with fun, fashion, and drama. However, this year, social media showed the less glamorous sides of the festival, such as the dirty showers, mud everywhere, and unappealing food options. Coachella seems to be on the decline in terms of drama and performances.



### The Butter Bugs

T.C. Holmes



2025  
**Baccalaureate  
Ceremony**

May 22nd @ 6:30 p.m. in  
the SPHS Auditorium

Join us for a faith based  
celebration honoring our  
seniors

Seniors: Check email from Lily  
Oxford to RSVP by May 19th

Sponsored by Outreach