

# THE SPRESS

April 15, 2026

\* FLAG FOOTBALL

\* AUTISM AWARENESS

\* SHUT DOWN



## Spiking out childhood cancer

On April 2, 2026, Mini-THON Board hosted a volleyball tournament to raise money for Four Diamonds and the fight against pediatric cancer. The double elimination bracket saw Team Block Party walk away as winners in the end. The team consisted of senior Mason Shrubb, juniors Morgan Pastorik, Stephanie Vamossy, and Kacey Ziegler, and sophomores Lucas Guzek, and Deependra Subedi. Mini-THON raised \$700 towards their overall total, but it's not too late to get involved. You can still join a team and raise money to take part in Mini-THON which will take place May 8, 2026.

## Strengths in differences

Cassie Oxford

What does the infinity symbol and puzzle piece have in common? In math class, they generally have nothing in common, but in society, they are symbols of awareness and acceptance towards those who live with ASD.

Every April is Autism Acceptance Month, which is meant to celebrate those with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and promote acceptance for people living with ASD. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 1 in 36 children in the United States had been identified as having ASD as of 2023. Because ASD has become more common in the United States, it is important to recognize this and encourage education, provide resources, and work on removing the stigma associated with autism.

Autism Acceptance Month was formerly known as Autism Awareness Month; however, the name change was meant to shift the emphasis away from the perspective of autism as an illness to the importance of accepting autism as a natural part of society. The term "awareness" only focuses on the awareness of the condition itself, but "acceptance" fosters

inclusion, understanding, and celebration of each individual with autism.

Autism is usually defined by impairment in social interaction, repetitive and restrictive behaviors, and delays in functioning. Additionally, impairments in autism include poor eye contact and trouble maintaining conversations. ASD can be different for each individual, but just because someone is classified with this disorder, it does not take away from who they are as a person.

There are many symbols representing autism awareness, such as the rainbow infinity symbol, the butterfly, and the puzzle piece. The rainbow infinity symbol represents neurodiversity and inclusion, while the butterfly symbolizes the beauty of diversity, personal transformation, and development. Additionally, the puzzle piece was created to represent the mystery and complexity of autism. However, this symbol has faced a lot of controversy, as many people feel it implies that autistic people are "missing a piece" or do not fit in. Ms. Larner, a Special Education teacher at South Park High School, *Continued on page 2*

## Strengths in differences (con't)

Cassie Oxford



sees it a different way, though. She feels that the puzzle piece is a symbol that represents each person as a different piece of the same puzzle, each unique in their own way.

Mrs. Miller, who is in charge of the South Perk Coffee Shop, believes that “we are all individuals, whether we have autism or not,” and therefore we should “treat everyone according to how they should be treated.” At the end of the day, despite our differences, we are all humans living on the same planet. While we should be aware of what other people are going through, it is important to accept them for who they are. People with ASD are still human and are not defined by their disorder.

To acknowledge the significance of this month, go out of your way to say hi to people and include them in everyday conversations, because you never know what someone is going through, and it is important to treat everyone with the same amount of kindness.

## Flags flying for Fanatics

Kolby Kostelnik

Even though the 2026 Winter Olympics just wrapped up, the 2028 Summer Olympics are just around the corner. Flag Football is also making its debut at the Summer Olympics in Los Angeles in 2028. Flag Football is gaining popularity in many countries, with 7 million participants around the world.

Flag football is a non-contact version of American football where defenders stop plays by pulling a flag off a belt worn by the ball carrier rather than

tackling. Many choose flag football over tackle football because of the significantly lower chance of injury, and also due to it being mainly based on speed and agility rather than physical contact.

With this being a new Olympic sport, Fanatics organized a flag football game to promote the new Olympic sport. There were three teams in this organized league. The first team was Team USA. This team was made up of members of the men’s national flag football team. They were coached by Jorge Cascudo and led by Darrell Doucette III and Aamir Brown. The second team was The Founders. This team was a mix of professional athletes and famous influencers. They were coached by Sean Payton and led by Tom Brady and Jalen Hurts. The last team was The Wildcats. This is also a team of professional athletes and famous influencers. They were coached by Kyle Shanahan and led by Joe Burrow and Jayden Daniels.

Everyone knows that you can’t have some fun without trash talk. Players were getting chippy with one another during these games. The main two were Tom Brady and Logan Paul. Maybe all this trash talk distracted them from the games because Team USA rolled their way through the tournament dominating all their games and winning the championship. Team USA proved that it doesn’t matter how good some are in professional tackle football, professional flag football is way different.

Despite the rough losses from the NFL players, they are still expected to join the pros and participate in the 2028 Summer Olympics. Do you hope to see your favorite player in this new Olympic sport?



**Tom Brady and Logan Paul after some trash talk.**

## 2026 Sidemen Charity Match

Jeremy Oxford

It all started on June 3, 2016 when the first Sidemen Charity Match was held. The first game was held in St. Mary's Stadium in Southampton, England, and it raised over £110,000 (\$128,524) for the Saints Foundation in the UK. This game inspired the Sidemen to continue hosting these matches in the coming years.

If you don't already know who the Sidemen are, the influential group of seven are famous British Youtubers who create in-real-life videos and also play a variety of video games. The Sidemen have 23 million subscribers on Youtube, not including their three other channels along with their personal accounts. This group of seven initiated and organized the charitable act of the soccer matches to donate to charities of youth welfare, education, and improving young people's opportunities.

The Sidemen Charity Match is now an annual soccer game between Sidemen FC and the Youtube Allstars. Each team consists of seventeen players, and this year's match is held in Wembley stadium, located in London, England. The game is played as a professional Premier League match, competing as an 11-a-side game with two halves. The purpose of these annual matches is to raise money for charities in the UK, and this year the teams are raising millions for Bright Side, M7 Education, and BBC Children in Need. The 2026 charity match has already smashed expectations, selling out Wembley in under two hours. The cost of an average ticket was from £16.50 (\$19.28) to £38 (\$44.40) starting on February 2, and all 90,000 tickets were sold. It seems everyone is excited to see their favorite Youtuber or

Sideman compete, though it's going to be difficult choosing which team to cheer for.

Some of the notable players competing in this year's charity match are names like Lazarbeam, Marlon, Jynxzi, and all of your favorite Sidemen. Unfortunately, names such as iShowSpeed, Mr-Beast, and Logan Paul who competed in the 2025 charity match were unable to compete in this year's game due to scheduling conflicts and personal commitments.

For this year's match, three of the seven Sidemen decided to play for the Yubetube Allstars instead of their usual team Sidemen FC. This was most likely due to them wanting to shake up the team dynamics by playing on the opposing side, creating conflict for better entertainment.

With the 2025 Sidemen Charity Match generating over £4.7 million (\$5,493,501) for charity and racking up more than 20 million views on YouTube according to Verge Magazine, this year's match is hoping to elevate those numbers dramatically in order to raise more money for charities. The 2026 Sidemen Charity match will be held on April 18 at 11:00 AM, so be sure to tune in to witness the action and support an event that's making a real difference for charities in the UK.



Sidemen FC and Youtube Allstars posing for a picture after the 2025 charity match

### IMPORTANT DATES

**April 22: Earth Day**

**May 4-8: Teacher Appreciation Week**

**May 8: Mini-THON**

**May 10: Mother's Day**

**May 12-14: Keystone testing - virtual days**

**May 15: Prom**

**May 19: No school**

**May 25: No school**

**May 25: Memorial Day**

## Shut down again

Bailey Rorison

Would you still go to work if you knew you weren't going to get paid? This is a very real question that thousands of people must ask themselves as the government is shut down for the third time in six months.

Now I'm sure everyone has heard of a government shutdown, but what does that even mean? A government shutdown is when Congress does not pass funding legislation, preventing pay to government funded programs. There is also such a thing as a partial government shutdown which is when one department is not getting paid due to Congress being unable to agree on a budget for the department.

Most recently, there has been a partial shutdown for the Department of Homeland Security. This is due to a disagreement in Congress about ICE. Democrats want ICE to go through some reforms due to the deadly shootings that occurred in Minneapolis. Meanwhile, Congressional Republicans do not want to make any alterations to ICE. This stalemate started on February 14 and still has not concluded as of April 12.

The next question is what exactly does the Department of Homeland Security do? Well, this department is in charge of protecting the American people from threats that come from within the country, hence the name "homeland". This agency was started after the 9/11 attacks to protect the United States from various threats like terrorism and border control. This department includes Customs and Border Protection (CBP), Transportation Security Administration (TSA), the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the Secret Service, and the newly added Immigration and Customs Enforcement better known as ICE.

Due to this recent shutdown, all of these agencies are not being funded and therefore are experiencing extreme shortages due to many workers not reporting for work. Anyone who has gone to the airport knows that TSA can be a pain, but they also ensure that the country is safe from dangerous individuals. And with this shutdown, TSA has become even more excruciatingly slow as they become even more understaffed.

Clearly, this shutdown is not a good thing, but what's even worse is the fact that these shutdowns have been going on for extreme amounts of time. In

the year 2026, there will be a total of 82 days. The total number of days the government has been shut down this year is 57. Seventy percent of the year so far has had the government not paying a number of its workers. That means hundreds of families losing their main, if not only, source of income.

With all of that, it makes sense why so many people are antsy to get the government back up and running. But yet another problem occurs, Congress is so split between the two parties that it is seemingly impossible for a compromise of any kind to occur in order for the government to start back up. And the worst part of all of this is that the people making the decisions for the budget are still getting paid and making their normal salary, meaning they aren't affected by this at all.

No matter what side of the aisle you are, there should be no reason why someone should not be paid for the job they are doing. The only way we can do that is to compromise and find even ground in the middle, not continue bickering on who is right. People should not trade their morals, but they also shouldn't be so stubborn as to let other people suffer. Our country was founded on compromise and if we aren't able to do that then we are doomed to fall apart. Hopefully, Congress comes to a consensus before our country breaks apart.



- Mini-THON is a charitable organization that raises money for pediatric cancer research and patient support.
- Any student can join Mini-THON. If you missed out this year, you can always join next year.
- Mini-THON raises money all year long for this important cause.
- At the end of the school year, we have a huge celebration to recognize our efforts - Mini-THON!

If you want more information, please see Mrs. Peterson or Mrs. Sciallo!