

# AUSTIN



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# NEWS

## Incentives During Finals

### Changes in Incentives Programs have affected both students and teachers alike

Charlie Stovall

The infamous and stressful finals week isn't what many look forward to; however, this year all grade levels got the brand new opportunity to incentivize two of their finals. If a student had less than eight absences and no more than four in each class, they qualified to "exempt" two finals. If they were unable to hit those marks, any student under 12 absences could qualify for one "exempted" final. While the word "exempt" was thrown around, all students had to take all exams and each exempted exam score would be replaced by the student's average grade that semester. Mr. Pool and Ms. Mast proposed this system to boost the attendance of students, hoping to appeal to TEA standards.

This new system didn't just result in forgotten scores, it improved the stress levels of many Austin High School students. Chemistry Teacher Mr. Almanza noted the excitement and relief many students felt during finals week. Because students were already aware of the classes they were hoping to exempt "there was a lot more calm during finals than there normally is," explained Mr. Almanza. Sophomore Ruby Cartwright stated that she felt "significantly less stressed" after being able to "exempt" her Spanish final. Sophomore Luzbella Diaz also explained that "you can study all you want, but sometimes it's just not enough." Luzbella felt like her incentives improved

stress as well. As for any improvements, both Luzbella and Ruby jokingly suggested receiving more than just two incentives.

Many students were excited to use their incentives, resulting in some not trying their absolute best on final exams. Some students answered randomly since they were granted immunity by the incentives. Mr. Almanza acknowledged that some extra planning might need to be done on his end to combat this issue. After perceived 'pointless grading,' Almanza stated, "man, why am I even grading these?" He continued explaining that he told his later classes, "Look, if you know you did not try and you don't want me to grade it, please tell me that!" Otherwise, Mr. Almanza's experience with grading got much easier once he better understood integrating incentives into the grading platform. From an AP's perspective, difficulties stemmed from "communicating expectations to students, parents, and staff," stated Mr. Pool.

Freshmen and Sophomores were definitely happy about the new incentives, but teachers noticed their juniors and seniors feeling upset. Mr. Almanza noticed this was "because they could usually get more than two." Mr. Pool also dealt with students feeling wronged for what counted against them, but he explained that "it's not meant to be a punishment, it's meant to be an award for near perfect

attendance." Since this system is hoping to improve Austin High's attendance, it is no surprise that it is tied so closely to it. Freshman Teacher Ms. Warren noted that many of her students were confused by the system when she first introduced it. However, changing incentivized grades was "as easy as when Gru stole the moon," stated Ms. Warren.

Senior Cameron Fish felt like it was "unfair in comparison to how the incentives and stuff worked before." He didn't enjoy the way the incentives have been tied to attendance. However, he wishes to continue having incentives and believes they inspire students to show up and participate in class. His only issue being that once you don't qualify for any incentives it can cause students to show up even less, creating a new issue.

This system is still new and hasn't been confirmed to repeat next year. Mr. Pool explained that the administrative team conducts lots of reviews on policies. Mr. Pool spoke about how Austin High has received feedback and will "take all [feedback] into account this summer. And the big determining factor [for them] is did this program actually improve attendance?" All this to say, the effectiveness of this new system, ultimately determines if it will stay. While that is still being discussed, the second semester of the 2025-2026 school year will see the return of this program.

## Losing Lakespot

### Mr. Pool's Takeover and Future Plans

Solomon Stephens

"Lake Spot" has always been an iconic spot in Austin High history, known as the best place for teenagers to smoke and avoid the school's attention. Just off campus and near the Lake Austin rowing dock, some students may take part in illicit activities. Recently, Mr. Pool and Mr. Bond have been visiting the area to investigate and shut these activities

down.

"When Officer Bond and I walked back there a few weeks ago, there was a lot of trash everywhere," Mr. Pool recalls. "There was also evidence of things like vaping, we found alcohol back there, and it all boiled up about a week ago when we had an altercation during lunch." Overall, Lake Spot seemed like too large of

a threat to student safety, but most students who went there did not see it that way. They viewed it as a place to socialize away from supervision.

"I used to go there so I could smoke a cigarette and make friends," one anonymous student commented. "I thought the people looked cool... The best thing about Lake Spot was the scenery of

the spot; it's a really nice spot." While friends and drugs may seem enticing, there were also downsides, mainly that drugs are bad for you. "It's just a place to go chief up with other chiefs who have no ambitions or goals," Another student stated. "A place where ambitions go to die."

Although it is city property, it is within 300 feet of the school, meaning the APs are responsible for the students

and can enforce rules. While the AP team wants students to be able to socialize and spend time together, the influence of drugs can be extremely destructive to students in the community. Lake Spot is too dangerous for an administration to allow students to be there. “We want students to have a place where they can feel safe, they can hang out with friends at appropriate times, and socialize in a healthy way,” Mr. Pool explains.

Along with patrolling the area, Mr. Pool is also planning other ways to discourage kids from visiting the spot. For example, Mr. Pool has been “creating more spaces around campus where students can hang out,” making alternatives that are safer and closer to the school.

While there’s no doubt Mr. Pool’s plans will bring about change, some students are still skeptical. “They’re just gonna keep on going over there and patrolling,” one student commented. “But kids are just going to keep on coming back because it’s kind of an iconic spot.”

## New Faces for Attorney General

### The Candidates hoping to take Ken Paxton’s spot later this Year

Elliott Day



Chip Roy Photo courtesy of: Gage Skidmore

On November 3, 2026, the 2026 Texas Attorney General (AG) election is set to take place. For many, this will be their first chance to have their votes heard in this state-wide election. There are new candidates aiming to take the place of current AG Ken Paxton, including Austin congressman Chip Roy, who has officially declared his candidacy and will be running in the Republican primary. The Republican and Democrat winners of the primary will face off in November.

Ken Paxton has decided not to seek re-election, leaving the office without an incumbent candidate for the first time in

over a decade. Ken Paxton is challenging Texas’s U.S. Senator John Cornyn in the 2026 election. Cornyn has been a U.S. senator for Texas since 2002; with him finishing up his fourth term, many are calling for a new face in the Senate. Despite both candidates being Republicans, Paxton is running his campaign as the more conservative option.

Twenty-First (21st) congressional district representative Chip Roy’s campaign came as a surprise to many. While a republican, Chip Roy has faced criticism from President Trump, particularly over his response to Trump’s 2020 election re-

action, which led to Trump calling for a primary challenge against him. The AG race is already packed with Republican candidates, making the competition especially fierce. Roy is running on a platform focused on securing Texas’s borders, protecting Texas property from being bought by non-American groups, and backing law enforcement. Senator Ted Cruz has endorsed Roy, his former chief of staff.

The Democratic primary election has three candidates: Tony Box, Joe Jaworski, and Nathan Johnson. Joe Jaworski ran for AG in 2022 coming in second in the Democratic primary runoff. This election’s Democratic primary will take place on March 3, likely settling with a May run-off if none of the candidates secure 50% of the votes. Nathan Johnson, a State Senator representing Dallas County, has raised the most funding so far, with approximately \$650,000 for his campaign. He has described his top priority as “rebuilding the Office of Attorney General by serving the public interest.” Tony Box, a private attorney in Dallas and a decade-long special agent in the FBI, shares a similar sentiment. He plans to “restor[e] integrity and accountability to an office that has been turned into a laughingstock.” Joe Jaworski, a mediator, lawyer, and former mayor of Galveston, has centered his campaign on making Texas more affordable for young adults.

With the departure of Ken Paxton from the race, the attorney general’s seat is wide open. No matter what, Texans are guaranteed a new AG for next year, which will no doubt bring change. Go vote this November to share your voice in our State government.

## Track and Field

### Off to the Races

Phoebe Miller & Ian Thomas

Following the recent long-awaited construction, the Austin High track has reopened for use by our sports teams. The rough, natural grass has been replaced with a clean, brand-new turf field, ready for play. This is just in time for the beginning of the Track and Field season, whose first meet is this month. Track and Field is a highly competitive sport consisting of meets where students compete in various timed races and field events, and their Spring season is currently in session.

Many would think of Track and Field as an individual sport because, aside from relay races, most events are competed solo. However, Rory Yonnone – a star track runner, Dartmouth commit, and senior at Austin High – says that “it’s still very much so a team competition.” He explains that each athlete “[is] training with the same group of people.

[They] are racing against probably the same group of people in your district, and [they’re] trying to be the best.” To Rory, on the track, “you are competing for yourself, but you’re also competing against these other runners.” This is why consistent practice and team chemistry are crucial for the Austin High Track and Field team’s performance and success.

Running is a sport of pain and discipline rather than constant engagement. While other team sports include the stimulation of constant action and teammate interaction, running can require a unique type of mental concentration and control. Aside from furthering physical performance through constant, consistent training, there are strategies to improve the mental performance of a track athlete. One such strategy, Rory mentions, that has pushed him to perform at his best is rivalries. “What is he doing? What am I not doing for him to be running faster? What can I do to get faster than him? Can I outwork him?” These internal questions invade Rory’s head as he runs, pushing him to search for ways to become stronger and faster in order to outcompete

others. “It’s shifting goals, because these people are also constantly improving... So I take that, I shift the goal, and I keep on moving.” Maintaining mental and physical health, practicing, and setting higher goals can all contribute to a faster running time, and sometimes the best motivation is the urge to catch up to the success of others.

Rory has ultimately found success through his sport, reaching the goals he set out to pursue when he initially started running in the 6th grade. He will be attending Dartmouth University in the fall of 2026, running track events from the 400 to the 800. Ultimately, the biggest advice he offers to those attempting to pursue a similar path is to maintain consistency. “You can’t really stop too much. Taking breaks is fine, but just consistently getting some form of running.” On days when one feels unmotivated, even the smaller workouts count. Ultimately, to see progress in the long run, workouts must be completed each day. The small efforts, even when motivation is low, accumulate into progress and endurance.

# FEATURE

## Little Libraries Launch to Success

Mika Henriksson

Over the past decade, demand for volunteers has continued to rise. Many people don't think about volunteering often, but it plays an important role in supporting communities and helping nonprofit organizations function. Volunteering also benefits students by providing service hours for graduation and making your college resumes stronger, all while making the places we live better.

In the month of January, my friend Jack Zipfel and I contributed to the volunteering effort by helping install

a Little Library in his neighborhood cemetery. We did this project to give more access to books for families and to help draw more people to the cemetery, bringing the community together.

Little Libraries are small, weather resistant boxes where people can take a book, leave one, or both. They have become a simple but effective way to share books without cost. The new library was stocked with a lot of different types of books including children's books, novels, and non-fiction books to serve a wide range of people.

Jack and I built a little library using a 4x4 piece of wood for the post, pole cementing foam to secure it in the ground, and a pre-built kit for the library structure. The kit came with all the pieces to build the actual box except paint. We painted it white after putting it together to give it a more polished look and to make it easier to see.

Since its creation, our Little Library has been used by many people in the neighborhood, including families visiting the cemetery, children looking for books to read, and people who stop by during walks. Since the Little Library has been installed several books have been taken and replaced, showing us that the library is working as intended and making books more accessible to the community.

As volunteering becomes more important, projects like this show how students can support people while gaining experience and contributing to a stronger, more connected neighborhood.



Photo By: caroline Strama

## The Dangers of Dirt Lot

Charlie Stovall

The parking crisis here at Austin High School has resulted in many students searching for alternative parking spots. Possibly the most inconvenient lot is the dubbed "Dirt Lot," which is located under the MoPac highway bridge, and is open to students and trailgoers alike. The majority of the students parking in the "Dirt Lot" are sophomores who currently are not allowed to attain AHS parking passes. Along the dirty, unpaved roads, students can easily spot the pieces of broken glass. Not only is there an excessive amount of smashed bottles, some of the glass on the ground is the remnants of car windows. Recently, on January 20th, Sophomore Finley Perez had her car broken into.

Finley had just finished a long day at school and made her way to her car in the Dirt Lot. She unlocked her car door, unassuming to the rob-

bery that had just taken place. Before she could finish opening her door, Finley spotted the smashed window sitting in the passenger seat. Upon further inspection she realized that her swim bag had been stolen. Her first course of action was to call her dad, the second was to show her friends who had also parked in the Dirt Lot. Finley stated "I was scared that other things would have been taken [or that] this could have happened multiple times and it could have been worse."

Caroline Strama was one of the first to see the damage to Finley's car. Caroline has been parking in the Dirt Lot for months and no longer feels safe leaving her stuff there. Caroline noted that it looked like the car next to her had been broken into since there was glass on the floor. "It was really scary," stated Caroline. "It looked like someone was going on a spree." While

it is societally expected to hide all of your belongings, students and parents feel that there lacks safety measures for students at AHS.

Fortunately, Finley was safe and unharmed, but the security issue at hand still remains. Since the lot isn't owned by AHS, there isn't a clear way to bring safety to Dirt Lot parkers. The responsibility of safety extends past the school and onto the students, who need to put every possible safety precaution into place. While this is true, Finley wished that there would have been "more security" in the Dirt Lot. Stay safe out there drivers!



Little Free Library  
Photo By:  
Mika  
Henriksson

# Half Life 3

## Hope and Dispair of Fans at the game awards

Jack Moore

Half-Life is a series of first-person shooter games created by Valve that were the first of their kind, combining storytelling, shooter combat, and puzzles. The first game in 1998 was awarded game of the year by over 50 publications and critics, and established itself as one of the most influential first-person shooter games ever. Its story was continued in Half-Life 2 in 2004, and was also considered a landmark in video games for its immersive physics, which were groundbreaking at the time. Most people who have interacted with the series consider it a masterpiece, but there is one thing wrong, one thing missing. Half-Life 2's story ends on a massive cliffhanger, leaving fans of the series waiting for a third game that has yet to be released.

The date is December 11th at The Game Awards 2025. Recently, large rumors have been spreading that Valve has been developing Half-Life 3 for a while now, and these rumors aren't baseless. Dataminers were able to find some information on Valve's projects through game updates from Valve's other games that use the same game engine, Source 2. These rumors spread far and wide; even non-Half-Life fans were hearing about it and getting excited. Everyone was now hoping for Half-Life 3 to be announced at The Game Awards. Millions of people watch the event live as it can be seen on a record-breaking 171 million livestreams across multiple digital networks. The end of the event nears as the final game is about to be announced, millions of Half-Life fans sit on the edge of their seats, hoping they will get to know how the story ends, hoping for closure, only to see Megaman appear on the screen. Half-Life 3 was not announced, confirmed, or even



HalfLife 3 Illustration By:Jack Moore

officially addressed in any way. Millions were able to see the exact moment when Half-Life fans snapped, giving in to hopelessness and madness. Before the Game Awards segment for Megaman was even finished, fans were already debating if they should "sacrifice Gabe Newell," who is the CEO of Valve. Other fans wanted to take their anger out on Geoff Keighley, the host and creator of The Game Awards. During The Game Awards, some Half-Life fans claimed they had a heart attack due to the poor wording of a game trailer. The trailer for Control Resonant used the words "rise and shine" before you could tell what game the trailer was for. These words are a famous line from Half-Life 2, and are heavily associated with the game. Because of this, for a solid 15 seconds,

people truly believed they were watching a trailer for a new Half-Life game, only to be disappointed once again. A publisher for PCGamer even said, "You're just being mean," and he's not wrong at all. It's believed this is the main factor that put Geoff Keighley in the line of fire to be violently sacrificed by fans for Half-Life 3.

Many say it's not a question of if we will get Half Life 3, but when. Dataminers are almost positive that the game is near the end of its development. Another Valve project that's near the end of its development is the Steam Machine, a brand new console by Valve that's scheduled to be released in early 2026. With this new hardware, it's likely Valve will want to release new titles along with it, and of course, fans are hoping Half-Life 3 will be re-

leased alongside the Steam Machine. However, don't get your hopes up, there's a real chance the Steam Machine will be delayed purely because of RAM prices, which have increased by over 400% since late 2025. This increase in price is due to AI companies making large purchases and deals with manufacturers for RAM, causing a shortage. Because of this, Valve doesn't seem to have a solid retail price for the Steam Machine yet, as RAM prices are still increasing. But still, some fans have set the new goal post for Half Life 3 at the release of the Steam Machine, but we can't really be sure if the game will come out this year or if it will even come out at all. The only thing we can do is hope.

Top: Luke Silvers

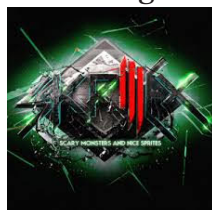
## Five Favorites

Bottom: Hazel Griffin

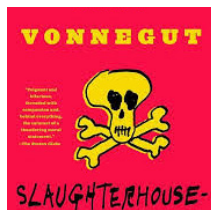
Movie



Song



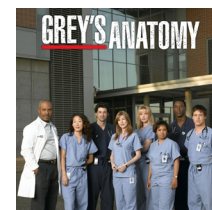
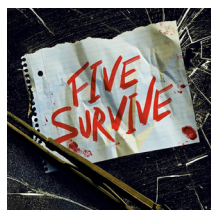
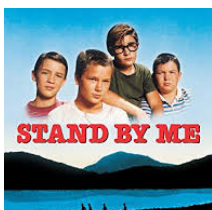
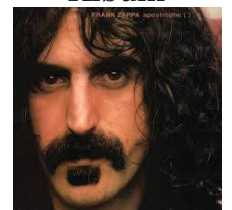
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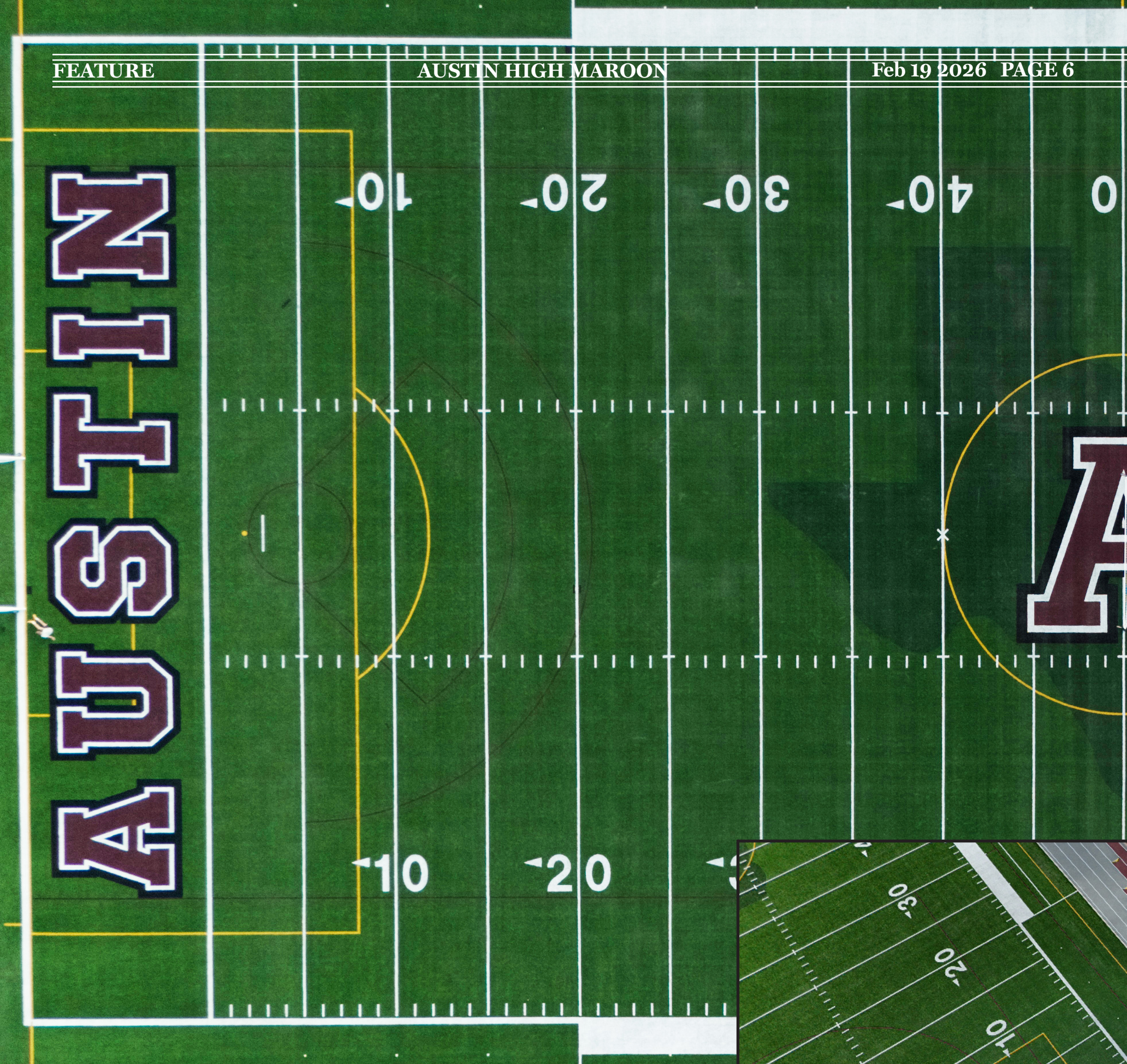


TV Show



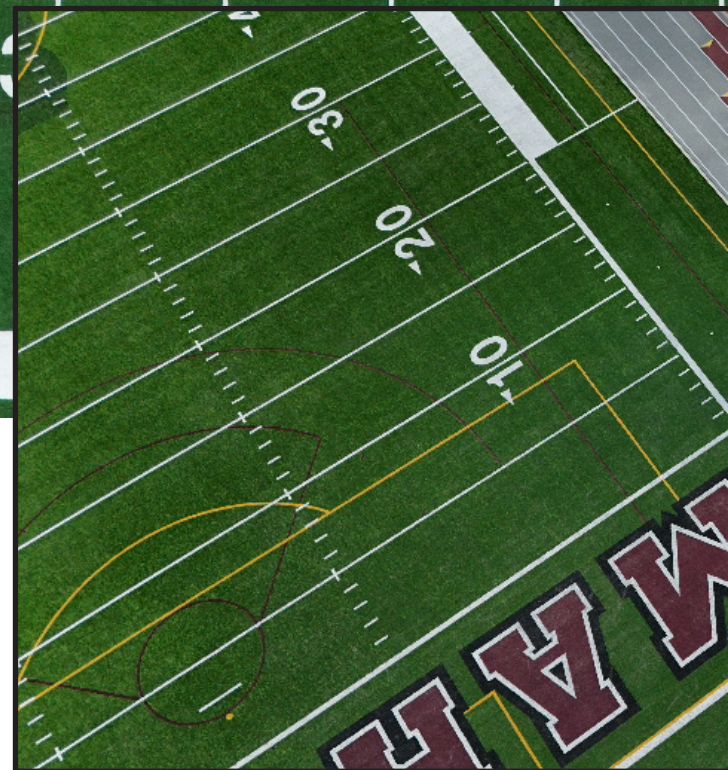
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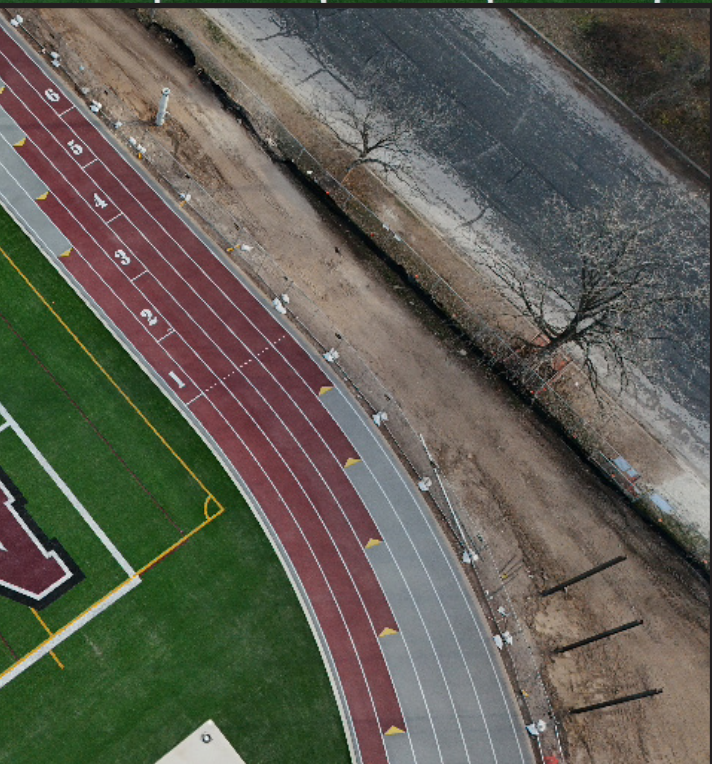




## Track and Field Schedule

Date	Opponent / Location	Teams
Thursday Feb. 12	Manor Relays / Manor High School	JV Girls and Boys
Thursday Feb. 26	Comfort Relays / Comfort High school	JV Girls and Boys
Saturday Mar. 7	Highlander Relays / St. Andrews Relays	JV Girls and Boys
Thursday Mar. 12	AISD Relays / Burger Field	JV Girls and Boys
Thursday Mar. 26	Donald Holland Relays / Burger Field	JV Girls and Boys
Tues. & Thurs. Apr. 7&9	District Track / Burger Field	JV Girls and Boys
Wednesday Apr. 15	Area Track Meet / Eastview High School	Varsity Girls and Boys
Fri. & Sat. Apr. 24&25	Regional Track Meet / Heroes Stadium	Varsity Girls and Boys





Austin High's New Track Photo By:Ian Thomas

## Soccer Shedule

### Varsity Boys

Date	Opponent	Location
Sat. Feb. 21	Dripping Springs	House Park
Tue. Feb. 24	Westlake	Westlake
Sat. Feb. 28	Akins	House Park
Sat. Mar. 7	Bowie	Burger Stadium
Wed. Mar. 11	Lake Travis	House Park

Austin High's New Field Photo By:Ian Thomas

### Varsity Girls

Date	Opponent	Location
Fri. Feb. 20	Dripping Springs	Dripping Springs
Tue. Feb. 24	Westlake	House Park
Fri. Feb. 27	Akins	Burger Stadium
Fri. Mar. 6	Bowie	House Park
Tue. Mar. 10	Lake Travis	Lake Travis HS

# Fossil Fuel Fasion

## Is Cheap Apparel Now Worth More Than Earth's Environment?

Harper Glass

Picture this: you are looking to treat yourself to something pricey, but a brand beckons you, advertising retail with no more than a \$20 price tag. Because less really isn't more, you decide to splurge on a pile of cheap clothing that, within weeks, would find itself



Photo By: Harper Glass

disposed of in a landfill after being worn only once. In a society obsessed with staying stylish, it's clear that nothing burns cash faster than a shopping addiction. Now, with the introduction of affordable, convenient, and trend-mimicking clothing that arrives on your doorstep just days after a purchase, it seems that this compulsion has only intensified. Yet, rapid spending is only a minor symptom of a much bigger concern: fast fashion's contribution to ecological destruction.

Fast fashion is beyond being just a current fashion trend; it's become a major cornerstone of increasing global pollution, and the climate has begun to bear its consequences. As the fast fashion industry has continued to skyrocket in sales, a climate crisis characterized by soaring carbon emissions and the widespread release of toxic microfibers has emerged due to its production cycle. Regardless of this, millions still purchase fast fashion daily, prompting many to question why exactly fast fashion is so addictive despite the known risks.

"Personally, I own lots of jeans from Urban Outfitters, but I try my best not to get a lot of fast fashion, and instead buy a lot of my clothes at Uptown Cheapskate and Goodwill," says Clementine Lewis. "However, I think a lot of peo-

ple feel like they have to turn to fast fashion because of rising inflation, and environmentally friendly clothing is already so expensive on its own." Clementine shares why she believes many invest in fast fashion, highlighting factors such as rising inflation and the current cost of living as possible reasons why many turn to cheap apparel over high-end brands. Clementine then shares the potential benefits of buying pricier clothing once in a while, stating, "It's better to spend more money on one item that will last longer rather than spending less money on several items that you'll eventually throw away." Clementine's response gives a better understanding of how buying clothing that is durable and designed to last years offers a more environmentally friendly wardrobe over buying fast fashion in small quantities.

Given this perspective, it's clear that shoppers don't deliberately disregard the environment when buying fast fashion; rather, many rely on it as a necessary, affordable substitute for the latest looks. Many shoppers themselves stress that authentic pieces, while being more eco-friendly, are often out of budget and not worth the purchase when an inexpensive version can be bought for half the price.

While this is understandable, shoppers must become aware of the several environmental dangers fast fashion poses and consider shifting towards more ethical options with the same price range, such as thrifting or secondhand shopping online.

"I don't always use Depop, but when I do, I normally look for nicer clothing being sold for cheaper instead of buying from Shein, H&M, and other fast fashion brands," comments Sophomore Charlie Wright, describing the benefits of using Depop, a popular secondhand shopping platform he particularly uses himself. "A lot of the time, I can get more expensive items for the same price as something made poorly, and I have a lot of luck on Poshmark, another site too." Charlie expresses that when shopping on this site and others, he has been able to get high-end pieces of clothing for the same price as fast fashion brands. The student then recommends another secondhand shopping site called Poshmark, and says that it is comparable to Depop.

With trusted alternatives available, it seems as if there is no need to purchase fast fashion at all, but what about when you simply can't stop shopping at all? As of this past year, the average shopper now purchases 60% more than shoppers did 15 years ago. The fast fashion industry encourages this compulsive behavior, profiting from cheap synthetic fibers that are easy to produce and easier to get rid of. Without an immediate change, this consumption rate is only expected to continue growing as shoppers now value speed and style over environmental stability. Ultimately, shoppers must choose whether fashion is worth the cost of a potential climate crisis.

# Full Steam Ahead?

## Austin's Project Connect

Kaleb Perez

As Austin continues to develop and evolve, the focus of today appears to be our ways of transportation; This is where Project Connect kicks in. In 2020, voters opted for a transition towards more modern public transportation. This movement was officially dubbed "Project Connect" and has been in development for the past 5 years.

What is Project Connect? Project Connect is a full 10 mile electronic light rail system, running from 38th Street through downtown and the University of Texas campus, and extending east along Riverside Drive. Project Connect has also aimed to expand bus routes and enhance commuter rail service by improving access to festivals like SXSW, ACL or Pecan Street. Overall Project Connect is a potentially grand change to accessibility, scale, and level of Austin's public transportation system.

Now, Project Connect will undoubtedly change Austin's commuting accessibility. It could cause a metamorphosis in everyday life in the city. Providing more reliable schedules, thanks to transit-priority lanes allowing buses to bypass traffic, is one such example. Additionally, the improved Pickup Service could provide on-demand, neighborhood-based shuttles that connect citizens from more "rural" areas to ma-

lor transit hubs, reducing the need for excessive car trips. Project Connect is making an impact all across various neighborhoods in Austin.

This is also why people like Kirk Watson continue to advocate for Project Connect. Watson made the statement that the highway will "connect pieces of Austin." Working with the Texas Senate to meet demands and align towards budget goals will ensure Project Connect develops at a steady pace. Watson truly believes that Project Connect is worth working for for the people of Austin.

However, in the past, the project has failed to show such results, running into several blockades including a cost increase of \$4.5 billion. This nearly doubled the original cost of \$5.8 billion. Consequently, the design suffered a reduction in the first phase. The first phase now consists of a 9 -mile line connecting north Austin to South Austin via downtown, when originally planned to be 20 miles long. Project connect's progress was halted due to a lawsuit until it was cleared on December 24 2024.

In other news, the project's controversy with Dirty Martin's has concluded. This is thanks to the constant support from Austin's community, including a Change.org petition with over 24,000 signatures and a legal challenge. The Austin Transit Partnership (ATP) announced on February 2024 that a redesign would spare the restaurant. By re-evaluating station locations and traffic flow between 27th and 29th Streets, planners found a way to route the rail without seizing the property. Ultimately, while Project Connect faces significant hurdles, its success or failure will define whether Austin can truly become interconnected through public transportation.



Light rail courtesy of:Scott281

# Cafeteria Crusader

## Back and Hungry for More



Photo By: Cafeteria Crusader

As former president Barack Obama says, “Breakfast is the most important meal of the day.” Is this true for the Austin High cafeteria? I’m here to find out.

Hi, it’s me, the Cafeteria Crusader. Or, as many prefer to call me, Mr. Steal Yo Girl. In this issue of the Maroon, I’ll be guiding you through the breakfast options at Austin High.

It’s Monday morning. You’re tired. Feeling glum. Worst of all, you forgot to grab breakfast on the way out. Your stomach’s growling all over the place. What a terrible start to the day. “If only there was some easily accessible and cheap way to get breakfast on campus,” you mutter to yourself. Well, there is! And it’s not as bad as you think it is!

The breakfast options at Austin High are, contrary to student belief, actually super duper. They’re a healthier alternative to other breakfasts around the city and are consistently of phe-

**In the beginning, there was nothing. Then, the lunch ladies arrived.** Getting to the school as early as 6:00 AM to start making that bread, the cafeteria workers at Austin High are incredibly devoted. It’s clear to regulars of the lunch line just how much effort they put into every little meal. “I wish people knew how

hard we work.” Says Argelia Cathey, the manager of the Austin High cafeteria. “I think it would be good if everybody knew how much food we serve, and how good the food is.” I agree with her. Austin High offers breakfast to students each and every day. Not many choose to use this opportunity. This is why I’ve devoted myself to a mission of spreading the word

nominal quality. Guaranteed to make your morning better. The best part about breakfast is the diversity and creativity it allows, so let’s dive into the lineup of your choices.

Every breakfast, the cafeteria offers a few constant items. They have cereal, for which they offer little serving packets of brands like Chex Mix, Cocoa Puffs, Trix, and, the best one, Cinnamon Toast Crunch. Paired with milk, these can all be pretty delicious. Though I have met some people who just eat it raw, I would not recommend this at all.

Another constant item they offer are muffins, of the blueberry and banana variety. They’re fantastically made. Though tiny, these muffins are very dense. The only downside is the packaging they’re in. There’s nothing more embarrassing than not being able to open a muffin wrapper in front of all your peers. Plus, it traps the condensation and makes the muffins inside a bit wet. The same goes for the Snack’N waffles and the Corn Stars. The Snack’N waffles have two flavors, blueberry and confetti. The Corn Stars have one flavor, corn. All are afflicted with this packaging curse.

The last two items that are always on the breakfast menu are also the best ones. These would be the yogurt parfaits and the breakfast tacos. Holy cannoli. Oh my goodness gracious. Where do I even begin.

The yogurt parfait is a lot like Kevin Hart: easy to pick up. It’s a perfect grab and go cup, containing granola, gurt, and fruit, which changes every week.

about the Austin High cafeteria, about the flavor it contains. There’s such a negative connotation with school cafeteria food, but the Austin High workers prove all this wrong. They really do put love into every meal. I hope this article can reach just one plebe freshman who’s never had school lunch before, and convince them to give it a try. Breakfast at Austin

The parfait is a pretty good method for getting some vitamins into your Monster Energied stomach. In addition, you get to mix the ingredients of the parfait yourself, providing a great opportunity for hands-on learning.

The breakfast tacos, in my opinion, are even better. Bacon egg and cheese, bean and cheese, and potato egg and cheese. Austin is a breakfast taco town and that legacy is carried on through these supreme tacos. I personally like the bacon egg and cheese the most, because I’m not much of a bean guy, but they’re all fantastic. The tacos are pretty mobile as well, coming in tinfoil that you can take on the road. There’s also a scrumptious salsa you can add on top. It’s pretty mild, but it creates a whole new dimension of flavor for the taco.

Now, aside from the constant items, which are there every day, the cafeteria also offers a changing entree. There’s a lot of these entrees, and for some of them, I’d probably just recommend getting a taco instead, but a few do stand out. I’ve made a list of my top three. On mornings when one of these three are out, they’re definitely the move.

Coming in at the #3 spot is the chicken biscuit sandwich. This baby is on the menu every Wednesday, and it sure deserves it. It’s very simple, just chicken, bread and a smidge of honey. A wonderful item. The only problem with the sandwich is the structural integrity. It falls apart rather easily, and the biscuit can crumble. However, the savoryness more than makes up for it.

Next up, in the #2 spots are the french toast sticks. This dish comes and goes, but it is one of the more popular ones on the breakfast menu. It comes with three sticks of french toast goodness and an optional sausage link, for palate cleansing. At the register,

you can throw on some syrup as well, taking the sticks to the next level. Your tongue will be so happy. The french toast sticks used to be number one, but I had to take them down a spot because they made my breath smell funky. Overall though, a spectacular and admirable bite to eat.

Before I talk about my favorite thing on the breakfast menu, I do, sadly, have to address my least favorite: the Tangerine juice box. Beware. It’s the evil-est item of them all. Making orange juice healthy is not a good idea. Sometimes I take one of these just to give it to my opps. I am a proud hater of the Tangerine juice box. However, its counterpart, the Apple juice box, is actually quite good. It’s fun, flavorful, and you can carry it in your pocket. The stupid Tangerine cannot compare.

Finally, at the #1 spot, the champion of the cafeteria, is, definitively and indisputably, the sausage, egg, and cheese bagel sandwich. You have to eat it to believe it. This sandwich will put the break in your fast. While the bagel sandwich is more niche than the french toast sticks, its flavor reigns supreme. Ever since I started eating these, my quality of life has greatly improved. In conclusion, the bagel sandwich is a most dope experience. If Christiano Ronaldo went to our school, he’d be having this.

There you have it. The ultimate guide to your breakfast choices at Austin High. But I’m not finished yet. These dishes would be nothing without the passion put into them. Let’s talk about the people behind the meals.



Photo By: Cafeteria Crusader

# Texas' First Freeze of the New Year

## What the Winter Storm Had in Store for Texas This Late January

Harper Glass

On the morning of January 24th, hundreds of Texans stepped outside in disbelief to witness what they considered to be a winter miracle: a combination of breezy winds, freezing temperatures, and almost an inch of sleet. For a population that is accustomed to typical southern warmth, this rare icy weather was a stunning, shocking sight for the area, leaving the state briefly frozen.

For the first time since 2021, Texas was hit with a storm so severe it left the usually hot and arid state still for the following weekend. Starting Friday night, small hints of a nearby freeze began to emerge. With snow flurries falling from an overcast sky and harsh breezes out of Texas' ordinary, Texans began to plan for the arrival of an abrupt, chilly cold front, but no one expected the wintry surprise that would soon follow the next morning. Overnight, these subtle hints had transformed into a major winter storm, leaving Texans with a long weekend of barren grocery shelves, closed schools, and empty roads.

"When we saw the storm coming, we didn't freak out because we had food and water, we prepared minimally, I'll say, but we definitely saw the signs of a nearby freeze coming," Says Mr. Texas Quezada, one teacher who recalls the night before the freeze. Mr. Quezada states that he watched as the winter storm began to unfold, but luckily, he and his family had enough supplies to prepare them for a long, snowed-in weekend at home.

Fortunately for Texans, food shortage wasn't a huge problem, as similar to Mr. Quezada, many stocked up on food and other essential supplies prior. Instead, the biggest challenge most Texans faced during the freeze was boredom. Being stuck at home involuntarily made finding en-



Photo By: Harper Glass

tertainment almost impossible for Texans, especially for four long days. By the time the sleet melted and temperatures began to rise, several locals were unenthusiastic about returning to their usual schedule, as the storm had disrupted their everyday routine and left them extensively hibernating.

Sophomore Evelyn Walker says that she fell victim to the lethargy after a long weekend stuck indoors, commenting, "I was extremely exhausted coming back to school! Going back to the weekly schedule was personally a big shift from sleeping in to waking up to early mornings, having to get ready and use my brain for seven hours again." Being so used to the break's irregular schedule, it's expected that many dread the rude awakening of falling back into routine. Unsurprisingly, Evelyn's experience is no different than others, as clearly, the storm has left Texans with common side effects after a not-so-eventful

weekend of sleeping in and staying inside.

Despite the statewide standstill the storm brought, many embraced the frigid, icy conditions during the break. By participating in activities ranging from ice sledding to collecting intricate icicles, locals ventured out in clever ways to enjoy the freeze and make the most out of the temporary winter weather. Many Texans occupied themselves by engaging in activities outside of their Texas norm, appreciating the unusual phenomena instead of staying in bed and viewing the storm solely as an inconvenience.

In Texas, even a light dusting of hail and chilly temperatures is enough to put everyday life to a halt. While the recent winter storm brought a mixture of disruption and even unusual winter scenery, it gave Texans an extended weekend break and a rare "white January" experience defined more by slick sleet than soft snow.

# Reporting Back

## Life After High School

Phoebe Miller

One of the most exciting parts about becoming part of the Austin High School community is its role as the origin for a vast network of human influence. Austin High alumni expand far across the country and beyond, taking on new, exciting challenges, and placing the Austin High education in a broader context. The same seniors who once paced the halls and sat in the very plastic chairs as current students now face entirely novel environments. Austin High students attend colleges from coast to coast. They study a variety of subjects and are exposed to a rich diversity of communities that contrast with the familiar city of Austin. We are proud of our impressive network of alumni and excited to see all that they achieve.

One such graduate of Austin High is the Maroon Newspaper's very own Jorie Midwood, who shares advice on her transition from high school to college. Jorie graduated last year, moved to California, and currently attends the University of California, Santa Barbara. One such challenge Jorie came across when transitioning into a new university was the responsibilities college requires her to take on. Jorie explains that expectations are higher in college. When in high school, there is some "leniency" with assignments, projects, and homework; in college, this flexibility is absent. Because of this, she has learned to effectively balance her schedule in order to take on the demanding workload of college, while still living a fun social life.

In college, "you almost have a choice to study," Jorie continues. While a support system of family, friends, and counselors pushing students to complete their work may be an option in high school, college is much more autonomous. Students must make their own time to prioritize learning and studying, building it into their

schedule rather than letting work pile up. These responsibilities are more important than in high school to many students.

According to Midwood, University classes are much more in-depth and interesting than high school classes. Having more autonomy to build a schedule around one's own interests can help college be more exciting, and provide a greater initiative to learn and have an interest in academics. The ACC English classes offered at Austin High were good preparation for the more intensive work university-level course rigor demands.

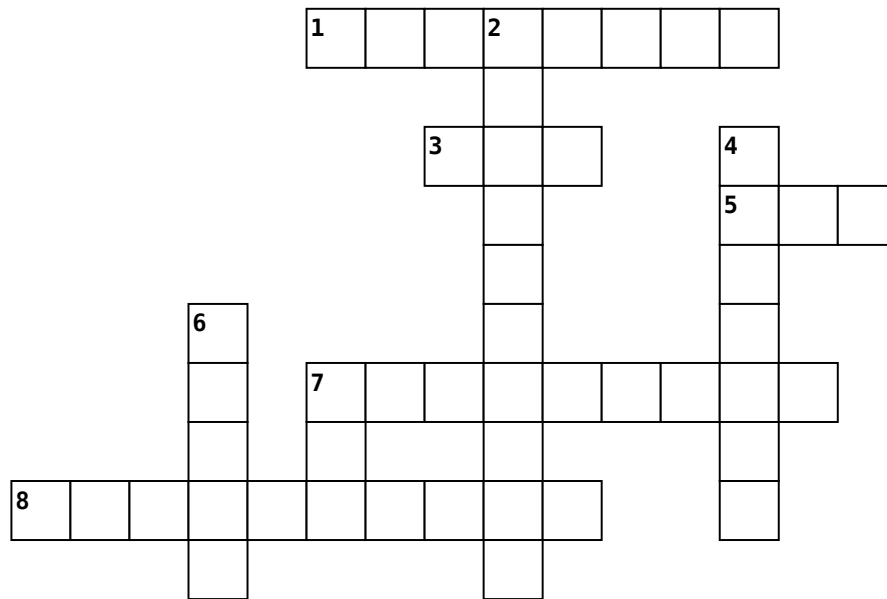
On the social side, Jorie suggests joining a fraternity or sorority in order to forge stronger social connections with peers. Being involved with the school community and reaching out to new people can enhance the college experience.

Ultimately, the transition from high school to life after is a different experience for everyone. Jorie experienced homesickness at first, but was able to overcome these feelings quickly, ultimately deciding that leaving Austin and experiencing life in a new part of the world was the best decision for her.

While current seniors handle the stress of college decision season, in the words of Jorie Midwood, "it will work out." For Midwood, the applications were the most difficult part of the process, and she was equipped with the proper resources and preparatory knowledge to thrive in her college experience.

At Austin High, staff and teachers are committed to furthering the success of each and every student. Jorie Midwood would like to extend special shout outs to Ms. Cleaver, Dr. Purser, and Mr. Steele for believing in her and pushing her on to achieve success after high school.

# Entertainment



**Across**

**Down**

- 1. The pool by Pool Burger
- 2. Serves the "Loyal Forever" Burger
- 3. Running on a platform of securing Texas's borders
- 4. This project will install a 10 mile light rail system through Austin
- 5. What's causing the steam machine to be delayed
- 6. The Varsity Head Basketball Coach who has led the team for the past few years
- 7. Little \_\_\_\_: small, weather resistant boxes where people can take a book, leave one, or both.
- 7. Is located under the MoPac highway bridge, and is open to students and trailgoers alike
- 8. The program affecting both students and teachers for finals

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## The Moron

Zachary McEathron

**Austin High Football hires Ted Lasso Actor Jason Sudeikis to The Coaching Staff Next Season**

New rumors from the football player allege that the school has hired Sudeikis famous for playing "Ted Lasso" in the show of the same name. The character is said to be very

motivational and I personally think he would be a very good addition to the coaching staff if he's anything like Lasso is in the show. It is still unknown if he would be a teacher or just a consultant, but either way, the news is surprising considering he is still acting in Hollywood today. We managed to

get an exclusive interview with Sudeikis who only had this to say, "I only want to motivate the team, this is what they are paying me to do." We pushed him about his salary and he actually lashed out at our reporter leaving him with a black eye and three broken ribs. While unexpected we hope this energy is brought to the team next year.

### Austin High to Deploy "Parking Gestapo" To Enforce Stricter Parking Regulations

With the new semester starting, the admin staff decided that it is time to deploy their "parking gestapo"; a crew of masked agents who help enforce the parking rules. It is ruled that any car without a pass will be repossessed to a "vehicle detention center." The

Administration has refused to budge on these new rules stating, "all you need is the correct parking pass and proper documentation and you won't be repossessed." But there is still hope for change with student protests making bigger waves every day. Getting the attention of not just AISD staff, but state wide press coverage.

# Birds of Austin High

By Elliott Day

Austin High's location on Town Lake makes it a unique ecosystem for natural life, particularly our avian friends. Our faculty and staff have worked to keep birds around our school through bird feeders and growing plants. While there are a variety of bird species you can find, here are the most common we see flying around:



Grackle Photo courtesy of: Rhododendrites

You're sure to hear the **great-tailed grackle** all around Austin, North America's fastest-expanding species. Their name comes from the Latin word "graculus." These social birds typically fly together in flocks, called a plague, across Texas. In the winter, the number of grackles in these flocks can reach numbers nearing half a million. While these birds are known for their dark black color, their feathers are actually iridescent shades of blue, purple, green, and bronze, most visible in the sunlight.

The state bird of Texas is the **mockingbird**, which can be found around our high school. These birds can emulate more than 200 sounds and even recognize human faces. Their Latin name translates to "many-tongued mimic." The expansion of this species is in part due to the rise of the rambler rose, an invasive plant from Asia introduced to the US in the 1700s. Mockingbirds use these bushes to create their nests, featuring berries and branches.



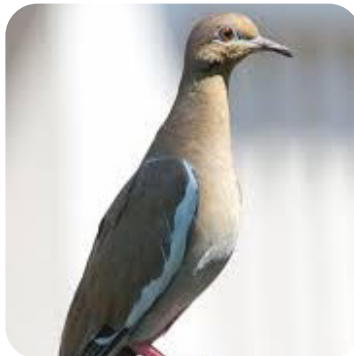
Mockingbird Photo courtesy of: Charles Ewing



Mourning Dove Photo courtesy of: Paul Denese

Austin's beloved **mourning dove** gets its name from its mournful-sounding call produced by the males to attract a mate. It is one of the most widespread game birds in North America, with over 70 million shot annually, yet natural causes continue to be the greatest cause of death. While there have been doves living upwards of 30 years, they usually only have a life span of a year and a half. The mourning dove is typically monogamous for the entire breeding season, and potentially even longer.

Sharing Austin's space with their counterpart, the mourning dove, the **white-winged dove** is often the most colorful bird in Austin's sky. While they generally reside in the southwest, these doves have been seen across the continent both horizontally and vertically. Due to hunting and habitat loss, the immense 12 million population dropped to 1 million in 1939 within Texas; however, this population has begun expanding, now boasting 2.2 million by the start of the millennium.



White-winged Dove Photo courtesy of: Dan Pancamo



Peregrine Falcon Photo courtesy of: Sharkchum74

Last but not least, Austin is home to the **peregrine falcon**, the fastest animal alive. These speedsters can reach almost 70 miles per hour when in pursuit of prey. These birds are widespread, being found on six out of seven continents. While these resident raptors are known to migrate through the year, one notable falcon, nicknamed Tower Girl, stays in the University of Texas Tower year round. Fans can observe the bird through UT Biodiversity Center's live broadcast.

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Walk This Way Dog

ChangeStartsHere

JILLOW

Valentine's Candy Bouques

Martin Photo by: Kaleb Perez



Broderick Photo by: Kaleb Perez



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Serving 512! We work off the customer's schedule

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KFP

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