BRINGING BACK BUSING

The Lakota school board voted to reinstate busing to both Lakota freshman campuses beginning in the 2019-2020 school year.

AN EVOLVING THRILL

With the constant addition of new rides and removal of long time attractions each year, the entire landscape of Kings Island appears to be evolving.

Spark takes an in-depth look at what human trafficking looks like in Liberty Township, Ohio, the U.S., and internationally.
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Dear Spark,

As my first semester of college winds to an end and I wrap up my final exams, I’ve had a chance to reflect on the things I’ve learned at the University of Pittsburgh since I moved here in August.

First, I’d like to thank my many late nights in high school (mostly the ones I spent writing for Spark) for kick starting my caffeine addiction very early. I can drink my coffee before my 5 p.m. class when I start to hit a wall and still manage to sleep like a baby that night.

I’d also like to thank this magazine for giving me so much practice drafting emails to professors and scholars as well as giving me enough experience that I’m comfortable talking to them. With these skills, I landed myself a job at a research lab as a first semester freshman and will be conducting my own neuroscience research as early as the spring.

Probably what I’m most grateful for, though, is the teachers I had at East for teaching me as much as I did. I remember sitting at graduation holding my diploma wondering “what did I even learn here?” Tightly written at what the fall semester might bring. To my surprise, I retained so much more than I thought from Mrs. Gosky’s AP chemistry class, and I would sit in my Foundations of Biology lecture and remember that I had heard this material before when I was in Mr. Williams’ Principles of Biomedical Sciences class.

I hadn’t realized just how blessed we are in Lakota to get the education we do until I heard about how different people’s high school experiences were all over the country. I learned so much in my four years at East, and I’ll never forget these phenomenal opportunities that administration are providing for current students. I know that future Lakota graduates will be even more prepared than I ever imagined to be by the time they go and live their lives after graduation. Pitt’s mascot may seem like a bear from the outside, but Pitt’s missions to conduct research and to conduct my own neuroscience research as early as the spring.

For me, it meant that when I started school in Lakota as a doe-eyed third grader in March of 2011, I no longer had art, music, or gym each day. After the levy, these classes became once a week occurrences.

At my previous school, we learned Spanish, we painted trees and self-portraits, and played dodgeball—every day. And though I admit that I was not the best at any of them, I learned so much in my four years at East, in the classroom and outside of it, and I see the phenomenal opportunities that administration are providing for current students. I know that future Lakota graduates will be even more prepared than I ever imagined to be by the time they go and live their lives after graduation. Pitt’s mascot may seem like a bear from the outside, but Pitt’s missions to conduct research and to conduct my own neuroscience research as early as the spring.

In fact, classes such as art, music, and gym are crucial to not only the development of motor skills, but also the development of social-emotional skills, and even language development. And in other districts across the country, including those around us—Hamilton, Mason, Fairfield, cog—these special-education classes can be roughly 60 percent of its revenue (the idea that Lakota must do more with less is simply unrealistic). Lakota wasn’t able to bring busing back up from state minimums until the district’s first operations levy in eight years passed in 2013.

It was this levy that allowed the district to provide the RAPTOR security system that protects each Lakota door and the School Resource Officers that now stand guard at every Lakota building. It was this levy that allowed Lakota to pay for the Chromebooks every high school and junior high student now owns.

And in the fall of 2014, an additional rotation of art, music, and PE, was brought back at the elementary level.

These things cost money. But these things—a seven-period day, a ride to school on a big yellow bus, a chance to try out a new sport, or a period to sit and draw—these ‘specials’ aren’t special—they’re standards.

—Former Spark News Editor Rza Amsalu

Alexandra Fernholz

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Anna Mullins

Advisor: Dean Hume

The Spark encourages letters to the editor. Letters can be sent to the publication at lakotaeastspark2019@gmail.com or delivered to room 118.

This issue of Spark has an in-depth piece on human trafficking. The barcode signifies the way in which victims of human trafficking are sold just like items in a store.
Savor Schneider (left) uses an actual reality headset as P&G volunteer (right) points towards areas in the room to look. Schneider, along with other East students in a science class, attended the Engineering fair hosted by East in the Upper gymnasium on Nov. 22. The fair included devices and inventions such as a sandbox, virtual and actual reality, and a welding simulation.

"You put on these glasses and (unlike virtual reality) different items would float around you," Schrudder said. "I wish I [had] more time because we only went down for 30 minutes so I didn't get to see everything." - Leah McCain

"I think there's so many things that don't get taught in classes. Read out the dust and go off to college or the workforce they're going to. Life things that people need to know," Gosky said. "When seniors walk in the door tomorrow you know, like regular people." - Natalie Mazey

The Girls Athletic Leadership Club (GALS) launched with the start of the 2019-2020 school year in hopes of changing the face of women's athletics. GALS is founded on a few important features: women in athletics, basic principles of sportsmanship, and supporting female athletes, basic principles of sportsmanship, and supporting female athletes, and taping the attendance at supporting sporting events. "My biggest mission in my life is to empower young women," East sports medicine teacher Nikki Drew said. "I think an opportunity like this can help them grow, and inspire them to do more with it." - Natalie Mazey

At the beginning of the school year, early childhood and elementary Principals across the district were approached by Matt Miller about their interest in participating in the program. VanGorden Principal Gail Allshouse, a former child care provider, was eager to reach out to her community when she volunteered at the October event. She has since become a regular volunteer at the school. "It makes that bond that makes education successful." - Pravin said. "By coming out into the community and meeting (students and parents) in places that they're already comfortable with just makes us more, you know, more approachable." - Pravin said. "We are very invested in the community and we want them to know that," Pravin said. "I think this event is a successful event." - Aisha Moore, strong relationships benefit student's learning and the program is able to do just that.

According to Allshouse, by holding this event at IKEA, conversation and interaction are able to flourish because the environment at IKEA is very different from the environment students, parents, and principals are used to interacting in at school. "The environment lends itself to be casual and comfortable," Allshouse said. "I believe the parents and the children were comfortable being there, and that was very comfortable with them."

Through the time outside of the school day to invest in students and their community, Principals like Pravin can show parents their investment in every child's education. According to Pravin, this program is able to do just that. "We are very invested in the community," Pravin said. "And we want them to know that we're a part of their community."

After students have spent a few minutes decorating their pumpkins, they gathered in front of Pravin to listen to stories like There Was an Old Lady Who Swallowed Some Leaves and Skeleton Meets the Mummy. As Pravin encouraged the kids to actively participate in the story, exaggerated "scholar," silly faces, and laughter echoed around the room.

According to Diversity and Inclusion Officer for Lakota, Christy Pavlinac, strong relationships benefit student's learning and the program is able to help reach that goal. Moore said busy schedules don't always allow for one on one interaction with students and their principals.

"It builds community, [allows you] to get to know the parents, and the kids get to spend time with their Principals outside of school," Moore said. "It makes that bond that makes education successful." - Pravin said.据Allshouse，by holding this event at IKEA, conversation and interaction are able to flourish because the environment at IKEA is much different from the environment students, parents, and principals are used to interacting in at school. "The environment lends itself to be casual and comfortable," Allshouse said. "I believe the parents and the children were comfortable being there, and that was very comfortable with them."

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It gives an opportunity for students that they didn’t have before. [Now] Butler [Tech] has an avenue directly into the business aviation world.”

-Rich Parker, Former Employee in Avionics at Ohio State University

Butler Tech is now offering a program at Middletown airport for students hoping to pursue a career in the aviation field.

story megan miranda | photography used with permission

I n a Middletown airport, students are learning about unmanned aerial systems while a plane lands outside on the runway, and skydivers parachute down. Not exactly your typical classroom experience. This is the environment students of the brand new aviation exploration program by Butler Tech experience on a day-to-day basis since its opening on Oct. 14, 2019.

“The program is really well set up,” student Bryce Marvin, a junior, said. “My favorite part is just the campus. Being at the airport and seeing all the planes take off [makes] a really cool environment.”

Rich Packer after previously working at Ohio State University in Avionics now works every day with the class of approximately 30 students as they gain training in aviation avionics and electronics.

“It gives an opportunity for students that they didn’t have before,” Packer said. “We’re teaching and preparing students who might not otherwise go to college or who can’t afford college.”

Within six months of the program, students can test for their drone license and be able to fly drones commercially by the age of 16. After spending junior and senior year with Butler Tech Aviation, students can go into the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) upon graduation. According to Matt King, Butler Tech is the number one school in southwest Ohio to offer the most college credit offerings in any public school.

“The program, unique to any other Butler Tech experience, gives students the opportunity to be enrolled in the aviation program but still be able to complete academics at East, or whatever school the student was previously enrolled in. King encourages students to give the program a chance.

“One thing offers programs that other schools can’t offer. You’re learning on amazing equipment, great instructions, and then you can get college credits and graduate.”

King is really looking forward to revitalizing Middletown. This is an indirect factory network, King said. “Students are surrounded by leaders, executives, and business owners, so there’s a form of mentorship that happens there.”

New graduation pathways have been made available for the classes of 2023 and beyond by the Ohio Department of Education. Much like the graduation requirements of the classes before it, students in the class of 2023 are expected to pass the required state tests and earn a certain amount of subject credits at their school.

These pathways are considered by the Ohio Board of Education to be broader than the pathways that are offered to the classes of 2021 and 2022 or the class of 2020. There are several options being offered to students in order for them to demonstrate competency in order to obtain their diplomas, such as showing proficiency in career focused activities, enlisting in the military, or completing college coursework through Ohio’s College Credit Plus program during high school. Students must also obtain at least two diplomas or endorsements designated by the state of Ohio, which are supposed to align with an individual student’s goals and interests.

The new pathways for the class of 2023 are designed in a way that puts less focus on standardized testing, and more emphasis on the interests of individuals, as well as whether a student has a collection of soft skills for the workforce.

Prior to these pathways, the attainment of a high school diploma in Ohio demanded certain scores on state standardized Algebra I and English II AIL tests, but the new graduation pathways for the classes of 2023 and beyond put less emphasis on these tests and allow for other ways to obtain a diploma.

“When I first [joined the Board], there was a heavy reliance on end-of-course exams,” Ohio Board of Education Vice President Charlotte McGuire told Spur. “The end-of-course exam is really just a snapshot in time, but it doesn’t really reveal what the students know.”

These pathways were designed with the idea that not all students plan on pursuing higher education upon obtaining their high school diploma, and are thought to be beneficial to a wider variety of students, including those that don’t plan on attending college.

Lakota Director of 7-12 Curriculum and Instruction Andrew Wheatley views these changes as a way for students to receive a high school diploma in a way that suits them as individuals.

“I think one of the main goals that we’re trying to do with this is to provide more options for students to demonstrate their success and find ways to graduate,” Wheatley said. “Generally speaking, when students have more options, it tends to be a good thing.”

Of 210 East students surveyed, 163 students said that they believe their academic careers would benefit from having more personalized graduation pathways, much like what is now being offered to the class of 2023.

Throughout the fall, the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) is holding sessions that intend to break down the new graduation pathways for the class of 2023 for Ohio educators and administrators.

Of 245 East Main Campus students surveyed, only 24 students were aware of the changes in the graduation requirements.

“Obviously we’d like to start every school year with a really solid lockdown [on graduation requirements], and think ‘We got it,’” East Principal Suzanna Davis said.

“But we’re really looking forward to that opportunity during the fall to go to [a graduation session] to really unpack the standards and know exactly what we’re looking at.”

Due to the new changes being implemented this year, the current four high school classes are being held to three different graduation standards by the state of Ohio.

“The impact that this has on East’s students and faculty cannot be measured yet due to the uncertainty surrounding the class of 2023’s graduation standards.”

“The Ohio Board of Education wants to be sure that, number one, we’re empowering our students, we’re challenging them,” McGuire said. “And that they are always in a discovery process of who they are and what they can become.”

NEWS | AVIATION

CHANGES FOR 2023

The class of 2023 graduates can now graduate with more individualized pathways.
HIGHEST HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATE RATIOS IN OHIO

A. Grandview Heights 100 Percent
B. Mapleton 100 Percent
C. Miller 100 Percent
D. New Bremen 100 Percent
E. New Knoxville 100 Percent
F. Tri-Village 100 Percent
G. New Riegel 100 Percent
H. Newbury 100 Percent
I. Pleasant 100 Percent
J. Russia 100 Percent
K. Western Reserve 100 Percent
L. Cincinnati College Prep 100 Percent
M. Walnut Hills 99.7 Percent
N. Ross 99.5 Percent
O. Steubenville 99.4 Percent

BY THE NUMBERS:

64 students committed to a military branch or academy in class of 2019
(source: Lakota East Student Survey)

65% out of 205 Lakota East students knew that school districts receive school report cards
(source: Ohio Department of Education)

Lakota East and Lakota West received an overall school grade of B
(source: Ohio School Report Cards)

812 College-level classes taken for college and high school credit
(source: Lakota East Student Survey)

81% of 2017 Lakota graduates are going to receive secondary education at a university or college
(source: Lakota Quality Profile)

24.6% Lakota students graduated with an honors diploma in the class of 2017 and the class of 2018
(source: Lakota Quality Profile)

Components of Overall School Report Card Grade

- Achievement: 20%
- Progress: 20%
- Graduation Rate: 15%
- Gap Closing: 15%
- Improving at Risk K-3 Readers: 15%
- Prepared for Success: 15%
THE LEARNING CURVE

The Lakota Local District recently received a “B” on the overall school report card for the 2018-2019 year. Lakota Administrators discuss plans to improve individual components for the upcoming year.

story shiloh wolfork | photography andrew marshall

T he Lakota Local School district recently received an overall B on the annual 2018-2019 school report card, the same grade that the district earned for the 2017-2018 school year. The grades are determined by the Ohio Department of Education (ODE), the body responsible for overseeing the state’s public education system.

According to State Superintendent of Public Instruction at the ODE Paula DeMaria, the school report cards serve as a way to communicate specific information to the public.

“They are a mechanism for sharing the measurements of the performance of schools and districts in the state of Ohio to the public,” DeMaria told Spark. “[They are meant to allow] communities, parents, citizens, and those who work in education to better understand how districts and schools are performing, [As well as] allowing schools and districts themselves to use the data to drive these improvement and focus attention toward continually seeking excellence.”

There are six distinct elements that contribute to the overall letter grade given to each district and school, including Achievement, Progress, Prepared for Success, Graduation Rate, Improving At-Risk K-3 Readers, and Gap Closing.

The Achievement factor represents the number of students who have passed state tests and the scores they received. The Progress element considers student growth based on past performances. Gap Closing represents how well districts and schools are meeting expectations for every student, specifically more vulnerable populations and how well English learners are becoming proficient in English.

The Graduation Rate component shows the percentage of students who are successfully completing high school diplomas within either four or five years. Prepared for Success considers how well prepared Ohio students are for future opportunities. Lastly, the Improving At-Risk K-3 Readers factor looks at how successful districts and schools have been at getting struggling readers to proficiency in third grade and in the future.

According to DeMaria, certain elements of the report card have the largest impact on the overall district grade.

“The two components that are weighted the highest are achievement and progress. Those are each weighted at 20% of the total grade,” DeMaria said. “The other four measures are weighted at 15% each.”

Compared to the 2017-2018 component grades, this year, Lakota maintained a “B” in Gap Closing and a “C” in Improving At-Risk K-3 Readers. The district upheld an “A” in both Progress and Graduation Rate and a “D” in the Prepared for Success Category. The district distanced itself from a “B” to a “C” in Achievement.

Lakota Executive Director of Curriculum and Instruction Keith Koehne told Spark that the indicators on the school report card are an essential piece of a larger puzzle.

“We’re consistently looking at our practices. We’re using all the data that’s available to us,” Davis told Spark. “If we look at the report card as a singular piece of data in terms of a much larger conversation, our shift towards personalized learning is definitely going to move us in the direction that we have set as a school building and as a district. It’s certainly going to empower individual students to reach higher performance levels.”

Out of 202 East students surveyed, 65% were aware that East receives a school report card.

For East graduate and attendee at the University of Cincinnati Grace Abdurrahman, the Advanced Placement (AP) classes offered at East have helped prepare her for college.

“College is definitely better at time management and note-taking and also I feel like because I’ve been surrounded by diverse people [during high school], I’m able to talk to people easily,” said the double major in Political Science and Law and Society. “I definitely use a lot of my reading and writing skills but I wish East taught different types of essay writing because in college, professors don’t want the five-paragraph essay that we learn in high school. Also it would be helpful to incorporate more projects instead of taking home worksheets every night.”

Koehne said that the district is planning to directly address Achievement, Prepared for Success and Improving At-Risk K-3 Readers.

“We have different plans in place for each of those. But those are the areas that we’re working on,” Koehne said. “And we think we can raise all of those at least one letter grade by next year.”

Part from the district grade, individual schools within the Lakota district also received a report card grade. Although the Improving At-Risk K-3 Readers category in non-applicable, East earned the same grade as the district in every other component category for the 2018-2019 school year.

Principal of East Suzanna Davis said that the school report card is an essential piece of a larger puzzle.

“We can force everyone to take the ACT one data point. It’s one indicator. There are a lot of other indicators of student success. The things that [students] pursue after high school are an indicator of success.”

According to Koehne, the state report card is an accurate measurement of the achievements of East.

“The report card is one data point. It’s one indicator. There are a lot of other indicators of student success. The things that [students] pursue after high school are an indicator of success.”

Koehne told Spark, “The health and well-being of our students and how much they are involved in extracurricular activities. We’ve talked to parents and college admissions offices and employers. A lot of them say that academic success is one piece of the puzzle.”

In agreement with Koehne, Whearley said that the report card determined by the ODE doesn’t completely represent all that schools and districts have to offer.

“We look at all the different programs that our kids are apart of [like] band, music, art, internships and all of the other things that we know are really important. [But] they aren’t measured on the state report card at all.”

Assistant Superintendent Rob Vogelman said that the indicators on the school report card shouldn’t be viewed as mandatory components that change the dynamic of the school.

“We can spend thousands upon thousands of dollars to meet that one little indicator. But it doesn’t change what we’re teaching,” Vogelman said. “We can force everyone to take the ACT that indicator. But why? Because the state said we should! We want you to take the ACT to be prepared for whatever you want to do. We’re preparing you. [Our] situation is weighing out what the state wants and what we [as a district] feel is necessary.”•
BRINGING BACK BUSING

In its first major decision since election day, the Lakota School Board voted to reintroduce busing to the Lakota freshman campuses beginning in the 2020-2021 school year.

J

am. 18, 2020 will mark the ninth year since busing was available to Lakota high schools. However, due to a recent board decision, this situation is set to change.

On Nov. 18, after nearly 30 minutes of debate, the Lakota Board of Education voted unanimously to reintroduce busing to both Lakota freshman campuses starting in the 2020-2021 school year. The plan, which was formally presented to the board at their Oct. 28 meeting, calls for an estimated $2.7 million dollars to fund the reintroduction of busing for Lakota freshmen.

“I’m in the community. I hear people talking—want transportation,” Board Member Brad Lovell told Spark. “[Busing] has gotten some momentum because we have such a strong cash balance. There’s really no reason why we wouldn’t be doing it right now.”

For Lakota freshman personnel, this comes as a relief.

“Just about every year I get a number of questions, concerns, complaints about the fact that we don’t have busing,” West Freshman Assistant Principal Jason Jackson said.

The board was originally forced to cut busing down to state minimums in 2011 after the Nov. 2, 2011 levy failed with 53.46 percent of voters against the levy. The failure of that levy forced the board to cut the budget by $12 million, eliminating staff members, classes, and busing to the high schools.

[The board] wanted to keep as many dollars as possible [to implementing busing at the main campus],” Jackson said. “It’s definitely a conversation that looks a little different at the freshman campus and the main campus, simply because of student drivers.”

According to a Spark survey of 131 East students, 40 percent said that the board should have implemented busing for all high school students. About eight percent of students thought busing should not be provided to high school students. 77 percent of students surveyed said they would use busing services if it was provided to their grade.

“I think [the main campus] should have busing.” East senior Muhammad Anwar said. “It would be easier on the parents and students because they’ll never be late. Students would (wouldn’t) have to disturb their parents and wake them up to go drop them off.”

### Ohio Transportation Minimums:

- **busing to all K-8 students within two miles of community schools**
- **busing to all K-8 students enrolled in nonpublic schools inside the district**
- **a shuttle from the high school to a member vocational school**
- **transportation for students with Individual Education Plans (IEP)**

### Bringing back busing

In light of Lakota’s improved financial situation, the board surveyed 4,800 parents in the district. Over 86 percent of freshman parents and 87 percent of sophomore parents surveyed said they’d use the service if it were provided. However, only 57 percent of junior parents and 74 percent of senior parents reported that those students would use the service. According to O’Connor, these survey results may be higher than any actual usage rates.

“If I were a parent being surveyed I’d say yes [because] I’d like to know I had the busing option,” O’Connor told Spark. “So even though that number was what it was, I’m not sure that it would not be lower than [the number in the survey] in actual usage. Because families want to have those options and that’s understandable.”

For East freshman Julisa Muñoz, the decision came just one year too late.

“When I first heard of [the board reinstating busing], I got kind of mad. [I’ve] had to change my sleep schedule, and my parents had to accommodate the fact the fact that they had to drive me,” Muñoz said. “Not only does my dad have to change his routine, but my mom has to go into work super early so that she can pick me up from school. I don’t think that’s going to be easy to keep up with for three more years.”

Five possible busing plans were presented to the Board at the Oct. 28 meeting, though on Nov. 18, only three of those options were laid into a scenario with Lakota’s five-year forecast. The freshman-only busing plan estimated an annual cost of $1,870,000 for the transportation of all Lakota freshmen. The plan also estimated an additional cost of $825,000 for the transportation of area private school freshmen, whom Lakota is required by state law to transport to and from school if the service is provided to Lakota freshmen.

Currently, the district transports more than 1,240 students to 19 different K-8 non-Lakota schools, as long as they are within a 30-minute distance. The plan passed by the board assumes an additional seven non-Lakota schools would require transportation, including Moeller High School, Cincinnati Hills Christian Academy, and Bishop Fenwick High School.

“I can see how it is beneficial, and I’m glad that the freshmen of next year won’t have to struggle with time and things like that, which a lot of us freshmen struggled with,” said Muñoz, who has gone to Lakota schools her entire life.

One of the three options proposed reintroducing busing not only to freshmen, but also to their peers in the main campuses. This plan presented its own challenges, however.

“Probably [one of] the biggest obstacles [to implementing busing at the main campus] we’ve seen historically is that rider access at the main campus is significantly low,” East Principal Suzanne Davis said. “It’s definitely a conversation that looks a little different at the freshman campus and the main campus, simply because of student drivers.”

### Lakota East Spark Online December 2019

December 2019 lakotaeastsparkonline.com

### Lakota East Spark Online December 2019

December 2019 lakotaeastsparkonline.com
parents work and they probably don’t feel like getting up.”

The second option presented a plan to reintroduce busing to all grades 9-12 but with a change in schedule at the main campuses — moving the time classes began from 8:05 a.m. to 8:40 a.m. In this scenario, the school day would have ended at 3:15 p.m. rather than 2:40 p.m. This would allow buses to run multiple routes between schools, allowing for more efficient use of the vehicles. However, Board Member Kelley Casper was leery of the issues this plan would have posed for the schools.

“In that scenario we don’t know if we’d be able to keep the zero period,” Casper said. “I don’t want to take educational opportunities away from kids for transportation.”

Additionally, according to Lakota Chief Operating Officer Chris Passarge, the change in bell times at the high schools would pose an issue for the transfer of staff between buildings.

“If there are different times [between buildings] that spreads out the day too long or that teacher,” Passarge said, “I’ll have to make up staff for that because we have different start times” may be efficient for transportation, but it may cost us more on the staffing side to provide the educational opportunities we currently have.

However, according to Petermann General Manager for Lakota Transportation Sue Petermann, providing transportation to all high school students would not be possible without adding to the high school’s schedule.

“If [Lakota doesn’t] do the bell time changes, we cannot [provide busing] because it would add twice the vehicles to do that,” Petermann said.

Lakota has outsourced its busing services to transportation company Petermann since 2005. According to Passarge, the decision to outsource busing was made in order to save the 63 square mile district the rising operational costs of having to service its own fleet of buses.

“It saved about a million dollars a year for workers compensation,” Passarge told Spark. “Basically, [Petermann] buys the buses; they hire the staff; they run the daily operation, but they still report to us. They follow our board policy, they follow our rules. They do everything that we want them to do but they’re not on our payroll.”

Currently, Lakota budgets a base cost of $12,250,000 each year for busing. Factoring this expense into Treasurer Jenni Logan’s five-year forecast, the district is expected to enter a spending deficit in fiscal year 2023, the first time it has done so since 2013. With the additional $2.7 million annual cost of freshman-only busing, the district is projected to enter the spending deficit a year earlier, in fiscal year 2022.

“It is a shame the district does not have at least freshman busing,” Board Member Todd Parnell said at the meeting. “And I came in here ready to support that. Seeing it in the context of the five year forecast, however, this does seem rushed. We’re burning up cash.”

East PTSO parent Erin Short echoed Parnell’s concerns in a statement to the board.

“This vote feels rushed to me. Why next year? Why not take the time, really understand the numbers and our scenarios that are ahead of us and push it to the year after?” said Short, who has two high school students of her own. “It’s a statewide issue. I’ve talked about online school, honestly,” Williams told Spark. “We know enough people who’ve had good experiences, if she’s old enough to stay home, maybe that’s an option we will take advantage of.”

One of the main costs of the new transportation plan is the required expansions for the busing service center next to Liberty Junior High.

“We’ve talked about online school, honestly,” Williams told Spark. “We know enough people who’ve had good experiences, if she’s old enough to stay home, maybe that’s an option we will take advantage of.”

An additional problem Lakota will have to contend with is a shortage of bus drivers.

“We have 167 [bus] routes right now and we’re having a hard time keeping 167 fully staffed at times,” Passarge said. “It’s a statewide issue. I’ve talked to all my peers at different districts. Funding bus drivers is really hard right now, at least good ones.”

Currently, Petermann employs 200 drivers, 41 axles, and 25 substitute drivers to handle Lakota’s transportation needs, but with the additional routes freshman busing will require, the company is looking for another 45 drivers and 10 substitutes.

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Lakota parent Jeremiah York, who has two children in the district, has considered other options for his children’s schooling due to the lack of high school transportation.

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Lakota Superintendent Matt Miller: “I think because the freshmen are standalone buildings, it makes sense, just to do freshman.”

Lakota Treasurer Jenni Logan: “We have operated with a balanced budget for seven years. We are predicting that we would continue that until 2023. In this budget we could do [busing].”
For many students, entrance to their favorite college may be determined by a universal admission process required by the state of Ohio: the ACT or the SAT. However, that mantra may be eliminated for some students as select colleges around the country are no longer requiring ACT and SAT scores to be submitted as part of their college application.

In August of this year, Xavier University moved to a test-optional strategy joining more than 1,000 other colleges and universities in the U.S. The change in the admission process is to give students the opportunity to present themselves in the best way possible. According to Xavier University Dean of Admission Lauren Pancell, 20% of applicants have applied to the university for the 2020-2021 school year without submitting a test score.

“Students are more than their test scores, and this policy gives all students the chance to show how their abilities through their success in school, their essay, leadership, and letters of recommendation,” Pancell said. “If we take this one piece out that’s keeping minority students and under-represented populations out of the university, then we will increase our diversity.”

According to a national ACT Profile Report in 2018, the average ACT score is 21.8. However, there is a difference in the average scores when they compare ethnicities and races. Asian students’ average scores were the highest with a 24.5. White students were the second highest with a score of 22.2. The Hispanic/Latino scores averaged 18.8, Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander scores averaged 18.2. American Indian/Alaska Native scores averaged 17.5, and Black/African American scores were the third lowest with an average score of 16.9.

According to Inside Higher Ed Editor Scott Jachik, who is one of the three founders of Inside Higher Ed, Black and Latino students, on average, remain far behind because they don’t have access to college preparatory classes due to the lack of money.

The average household income by race and ethnicity corresponds to the test score. According to the United States Census Bureau, in 2017, the average salary for an Asian household was $81,321, and the average salary for a White household was $68,145; these numbers were both above the average salary for any household which was $61,372. The average salary for a Hispanic household was $50,486, and the average salary for a Black household was the lowest at $40,258.

In a recent East survey, 52.5% of students said that they will not consider taking ACT/SAT prep classes. Of those students, 18.3% said this is because the classes are too expensive. Only 12.4% of students said that they won’t consider taking ACT/SAT prep classes because they are happy with their score, and 36.7% said that they don’t have enough time.

East senior Tara Winkowski took the ACT three times and committed to swim at Denison University next school year. She took ACT test prep classes over the summer.

“If I didn’t take them (over the summer), then I would have made going to those classes [during the school year] a priority in front of everything else,” Winkowski said.

There are a few exceptions to not submitting an ACT/SAT score to test-optional schools. The NCAA requires that all student athletes wishing to compete at the collegiate level have to submit scores. However, the NCAA requirement says that Division I and Division II schools use a sliding scale that matches a student’s ACT/SAT score with their Grade Point Average (GPA) to determine eligibility, meaning the test score alone doesn’t determine eligibility to compete. If a student has a low test score, they will need a higher GPA to be eligible, and if they have a low GPA, they will need a higher test score.

Denison University is a test-optional school, but Winkowski decided to submit her scores before even knowing it was required by the NCAA.

“[Requiring athletes to submit a test score allows] colleges to see what the student offers other than just their ability to play a sport,” Winkowski said. “I would want every little piece of my academics to count towards where I wanted to go to school.”

Specific departments also require students to submit a score in order to be accepted, such as some nursing honors programs. According to the Xavier professor, this is because “the rigor is a lot higher” in the honor programs.

Some colleges, such as Xavier University, require home-schooled students to submit scores due to the variation in grading and transcripts. According to Pancell, the ACT and SAT gives colleges a “set standard to consider.” Owner of the West Chester and Hapers Point Huntington Learning Centers Dan Mathis believes that this is what the ACT is designed for, whether students are homeschooled or not.

“The ACT is intended to be an objective measure of a student’s academic ability,” Mathis said. “That’s the whole idea of the ACT and the SAT, it gives colleges a common measuring stick across all schools, regardless of your GPA. I have had some students who have a very high GPA... who came in here and scored very low on the ACT.”

Mathis believes that “grade inflation is cited to oppose going test optional.” Inside Higher Ed released a study on grade inflation in 2016. The average GPA increased from 3.27 to 3.98 to 3.38 in 2016. The study found that the average GPA at the high schools with the most grade inflation has hit a 3.56, while the average at schools that haven’t seen much grade inflation - largely minority - is 3.14.

The authors of the study also found that the proportion of students with A averages increased from 39.3% of students in the 1998 graduating class to 47% of students in the 2016 graduating class.

If a student does decide to take advantage of the test-optional policy, they may be ineligible for certain scholarships. Xavier University and other schools consider all applicants for merit scholarships; honors scholarships are only given to students who submit an ACT or SAT score.

“I doubt it would that would hurt the students that much [if they didn’t submit a score],” Colby said. “But it wouldn’t give [the admissions office] as complete a picture of your readiness as if you did supply them.”

13 states require that their public high schools give the ACT, eight require the SAT be given, and four states require a test, but in these states, the school chooses whether they give their students the ACT or SAT. Ohio falls in the former requirement.

“State laws allow districts the flexibility in selecting the test that best meets their needs,” District 8 Ohio Board of Education member John Hagan told Spark in an email. “This allows schools to continue existing robust college preparation programs that were already in place.”

According to Hagan, Ohio paid approximately $5 million dollars in the 2018-2019 school year for schools to administer the ACT and SAT tests.

“School administration provides access for all students as an equity strategy; it provides students with access to the test who may otherwise be kept out of college,” Hagan said. “[It] removes barriers that Saturday testing might cause, and alleviates costs for parents and families.”

The ACT administrators tests seven a school year - all on Saturday mornings. The SAT tests are set up the same as the ACT; seven Saturday morning tests a school year. If Saturday conflicts with religious convictions, then non-summer schools are allowed to pick the day they want to take the test on a day other than Saturday. When is it a school choosing?”

According to Lakota Executive Director of Curriculum and Instruction Keith Kochel, “As we sit in Lakota’s curriculum that requires teachers to give their students practice tests or teach test-taking tips.”

According to Inside Higher Ed, all eight of East’s junior English teachers give their students practice tests. East English teacher Amy Naylor started giving her juniors practice ACT tests when the...
The ACT is making changes to give students more options on how to take the test.

**story rachel anderson**

Starting in September 2020, the ACT is adding two new ways for students to approach the test: individual section retakes and online testing.

Section retaking is where a student can retake any of the four sections - English, math, reading, and science - without having to take the whole test.

The whole test takes two hours and 55 minutes excluding the essay and breaks. However, when a student goes to a testing location, section retake will be administered just the tests they wish to retake, and when they are finished, they will be free to leave.

“They can make the test and science courses again,” Avance said. “You could decide to take math and science courses again instead of the full test.”

Section retaking will be available to anyone who has taken the full test and students can retake as many times as they choose. The set up will be the same as the full ACT and they will be administered on the same national test days.

East junior Tiara Avance and Anthony Carter could take retaking individual sections instead of the full test.

If you got a score good on one section of the test and not the other, then I don’t think you should have to take the one you received a good score on,” Avance said.

All of the scores on the individual tests will be combined to create a superscore: an average of all of a student’s highest scores in each section.

“You’re looking at students who were the most predictive of success,” Colby said.

“When we took students highest scores across various tests, that was a better way to predict how successful they would be in college then taking scores from just one sitting.”

According to The Princeton Review, a college admission services company, 68% of colleges superscore the ACT already. However, starting in 2020, the ACT will start superscoring in September 2020 as individual test retakes become an option. Colby expects more colleges to follow suit, allowing students to superscore their score-use policy.

“We have another year to go before we start doing the superscore, so we’re going to spend that time talking to colleges to share our research with them,” Colby said. “And then it’ll be their choice. We will respect any decision that colleges make regarding superscores, they could decide that they don’t want to consider them. A lot of them already do [accept superscores] and we expect that more will.”

Students will also have the choice to take the test online. Online testing will allow students to get their scores on the multiple choice section in as soon as two business days, rather than the two to eight weeks it takes to get paper results back.

Online testing will give students who administer the test to their students the option to test the ACT online since 2016, and international students have had the option since September of 2018.

According to Colby, the paper and online test will be the exact same. The online tests will be administered at the ACT test centers on the same day as the paper tests are administered, but the online testers will be in a separate room.

“Students will take the test using a laptop or desktop computer provided at the ACT test center,” Colby said.

“Instead of filling in a bubbler on an answer sheet using a pencil, students will click on their selected answer on the computer.”

Students will also be able to type their essays instead of handwriting them and there will be an on-screen timer.

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Avance said that the ACT would love it if every student did.

**East View: Do you think that your ACT score reflects your efforts in school?**

**yes**

20%

**no**

80%

really well on the ACT,” Colby said. “Because that means that you’re doing well in school and you’re really prepared well for success in college.”

According to Koehne, the district is in constant contact with local college admissions officers in order to understand what a well-rounded college applicant looks like.

“A lot of time we hear from [local colleges], ‘we want something different to differentiate [students] from all the rest of their [peers] other than just your transcript,’” Koehne said. “So we want to have internships for every one of our students, and we want to have real-world learning opportunities with programs beyond just the core.”

Besides Xavier University and Denison University, other schools in Ohio such as Ball State University, Baldwin Wallace University, and Ohio Dominican University have all gone test optional.

Miami University, The Ohio State University, and University of Cincinnati all require a test score to be submitted.

“This is a movement that is growing,” Jaschik said. “And it’s a movement that is attracting a lot of attention.”

East senior Andrew Brauer started The Blanket Crew, a non-profit dedicated to donating blankets and other warmth items to those in need.

“I was so proud of him for recognizing that homelessness isn’t just a problem for people who are homeless, it’s a problem for everyone in America,” Jen Brauer said.

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ANGST BREAKING BARRIERS

Lakota’s Gifted Services team showed Angst, an IndieFlix film created to spark conversation and raise awareness about mental health and anxiety.

story marleigh winterbottom
photography fair use

I could almost hear people talking about it. I was so clear on the vision and what the purpose of the film was.

The purpose of the film is to make people watching feel like they belong, are heard, matter, and are enough as they are. It is meant to provide hope by giving several resources and tools those dealing with anxiety can utilize. “I feel a breath of fresh air,” said an Angst viewer, who didn’t want to provide their name. “It’s been good to be able to open up as a community and break down the walls.”

An important part of showing the movie is the connection between parents and their children that it creates. Often, with social media and new technology, kidsced with different challenges from their parents.

“The goal is for students and parents to help solve these problems together, and understand that these are not necessarily the same issues that we deal with in our generation,” Lakota Gifted Support Advisor Ron Henrich said.

After the overwhelming response to Angst, IndieFlix went on to create ‘Like,’ a documentary exploring the impact of social media and technology on the brain. The company also created ‘The Upstanders,’ which tackles the topic of bullying.

Andreen also wrote a book called ‘The Creative Coping Tool Kit,’ which outlines activities to help cope with anxiety and healthy methods of reflection.

“That’s the magic,” Andreen said. “When people are communicating.”

Anxiety affects 25.1% of children between the ages of 13 and 18.

source adda.org

It is 11:30 a.m. as students come bustling into the classroom. Legs are bouncing and feet are tapping the floor with built-up energy. They sit down as the bell rings, eager to learn what activity they will be doing.

The students learn that will be discussing current events after watching CNN 10, a daily ten-minute news show. As the teacher describes the day’s topic of Facebook, the room erupts in laughter.

“Facebook is for old people,” one student said while smiles spread throughout the room.

The students are able to learn about making real-world connections comes during a program called T-Hawk time, where they are given activities outside of traditional academics to build valuable life skills. Depending on the day, the students participate in teamwork building exercises, discuss world issues and making the right choices, practice mindfulness, or explore their personal identities.

As they discuss CNN 10, students begin to realize Facebook lead to Instagram and Snapchate, platforms kids their age are very familiar with.

Lori Jones, a health teacher at Hopewell Junior School, has broken boundaries in mental health awareness. She has helped to develop a program called T-Hawk time, which helps Hopewell Junior students with skills such as teamwork and dealing with stress and anxiety.

Jones was chosen out of 150 applicants to participate in the process of creating Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) standards for the state of Ohio.

“I am able to teach students how to cope with their feelings and personally,” said Jones.

Starting this past school year, T-Hawk time has been introduced to Hopewell Junior in an effort to focus on topics that do not deal with academics. These include team building activities, mindfulness exercises, and class discussions.

Hopewell students are given 30 minutes each day to participate in the teacher-planned activities.

"T-Hawk Time is used to help develop them [students] socially and emotionally, so that they can understand that they are not the only person here," said Jones. "They have to be able to get along with other students and learn how to show kindness and empathy towards each other.”

Going to the gym to build teamwork is popular among many students including seventh grader Campbell Bui.

“I like that I get time to interact with other T-Hawks,” said Bui.

Gifted Service Advisor Ron Henrich collaborates with accelerated students in Lakota and has seen the impact of T-Hawk time on the school.

"T-Hawk time is about working on the soft skills in life, which can lead to executive functioning skills or towards leadership skills that can help towards dealing with anxiety," said Henrich.

The program has been a success and is being introduced to other Lakota Junior schools. In September, three representatives from each Ridge, Liberty, and Plains met on a Professional Development Day (PDD) to share resources and ideas. Hopewell helped in reporting on how their program is running and giving ideas to the other schools.

“We helped guide them, but the schools have to design it to work towards their type of culture,” said Jones.

In the summer of 2018, the state of Ohio chose 40 individuals to help create K-12 SEL standards, Jones being one of them. The standards work to provide guidelines to better meet students’ social and emotional needs.

Jones and the other participants spent the summer brainstorming methods that fit their students.

“We were given a guideline. The standards needed to include self awareness, social awareness, self management, responsibility, and decision making skills, so those were our core,” said Jones, who’s ultimate goal is to help her students be heard and understood.

“I know you aren’t robots,” she told her students.
STRENGTH IN NUMBERS

For East sophomore Nate Kodish, community has helped them accept and love their identity.

story wudie amalu | photography ianni acapulco

According to Kodish, they find it essential to focus more on who surrounds them than their identity and how others view them, their sexuality, and their mental health. “Everyone views you as a different person,” Kodish says. “So it’s not as important to know who you are, but to know who others are.”

Struggles have hit Kodish left and right. Divorce, breakdowns, and self-doubt have plagued Kodish throughout their middle school and early high school years. Though life hasn’t been simplistic, Kodish says. “The moment you realize that you’re stronger than what people have told you.”

Kodish says. “The moment you realize that you're stronger than what people have told you.” •

ADJUSTING TO CHANGE

F rom checking out books to learning out Chromebooks; from typing on the desktops, to using green screens and Ipads to shoot videos; from playing Cool Math Games, to using Virtual Reality Sets, Marguerite Doll has seen it all in her 30 years of working in the school's Innovation Hub.

“Life is all about adjusting to change,” Doll says.

Before she started working for Lakota, Doll was a stay-at-home mother taking care of her two kids and volunteering at Hopewell Elementary’s Media Center.

Doll enjoys one-on-one interactions with students, especially helping them out with books and researching.

“Prior to this change, people would come in here because it was quiet, they would come here to do various activities such as research, using the green screen and virtual reality.”

“Students saw it as a bittersweet change. “We had students who were concerned that the books were going to go away,” Doll says. “But now most classes incorporate technology.”

Working alongside Doll is Ryan Corris, who has been working as the district’s digital learning specialist on and off for the last five years. He provides leadership, support, and training to teachers as they make their classrooms more technology-based.

“She’s willing to try anything and do anything to help [students] out,” Corris says. “I couldn’t ask for somebody more willing to help me.” •
A NEW SENSE OF HOME

story and photography eliza bush

infographic kelly johantges

Package editor Eliza Bush recounts her month spent in Guatemala over the summer and the lessons she learned from it.

This summer was the first time I made the trek to Guatemala alone. I was terrified. Tears rolled off my cheeks as I hugged my friends in my driveway and waved goodbye all the way downtown. I sat over my schedule repeatedly on the car ride to the airport, assuring my mom that I wouldn’t, in fact, miss my flight, get kidnapped, or lose my luggage. With my detailed, hand-drawn map of the airport in hand, I waved goodbye one last time and disappeared into the airport. In fact, miss my flight, get kidnapped, or lose my Guatemalan adventures. I was strangely sad when I left. I spoted the two of them, jumping up and down at the Zacapa dump. I was very friendly.

W

We talked until the plane landed on the runway in Guatemala City. I helped him fill out his arrival card. To my left was a middle-aged man who was bilingual and very friendly.

Each time I coughed or blew my nose, I would look at him, expecting the same disgusted reaction I had gotten from the passengers on my flight to Atlanta. He always looked concerned, but in a different way. A sympathetic smile would form in between his eyebrows and held ask if I was okay. Exhausted from the long day I’d already had, though, I plugged in my headphones and fell asleep. I woke up to a pair of wide eyes staring at me expectantly. My new Guatemalan friend helped me get my bags down from the overhead bins and wished me well in my Guatemalan adventure. I was strangely sad to say goodbye to my new friend.

You could probably arrive at the airport in Guatemala, turn around and go home, and still leave having had a cultural experience. I looked around at the sea of faces, all yelling things in a language I didn’t understand, for the only familiar faces I would see: Michael and Rocky Beene.

They arrived in Guatemala 10 years ago, responding to God’s call to “Go.” They met by chance on the road to a remote village and were married two weeks later. Since then, they’ve made a life of service and have become an extension of the Beenes and all the friends I had made that month. I waved goodbye as tears streamed down my face, recalling the same moment exactly 30 days earlier in my driveway as I embarked on this adventure.

M

My sense of home completely shattered in that moment. The past 30 days had completely redefined what home meant to me. It was no longer a place.

W

We hauled these supplies out from the boat about 250 feet to the shore. We drove several hours east to Rio Dulce, a town located on the coast of Lake el Golfo, which feeds into the Caribbean Sea. We make a trip to Punta de CoCoLá, a small village on the border of Guatemala and Honduras, only accessible by a boat-long, boat ride out into the deep blue Caribbean Sea. We were following a boat loaded with supplies for the clean water source we would be building, with a team later in the month. We hauled these supplies out from the boat about 250 feet to the shore.

I

In Guatemala, everything becomes fun. The Beenes have a way of turning everything into a game, so you don’t even realize you’re working hard. We made a line from the boat to the shore and passed each cinder block down to a thimble. Knee-deep in the water, I’d run to the next link in the chain and splash water on my face, bursting into laughter. The villagers sitting on the rocks rolled up their pants and jumped into the action.

Something about Guatemala makes me feel like a kid again. In that moment, dancing in the water, looking around at the people who have become family, the taste of salt in the air, I felt lighter.

A week later, we met our first team of the month. As an intern, it’s my job to prepare the mission bases for teams and serve them while they’re staying with us. We wake up early to prepare breakfast and clean up after everyone else goes to bed.

We spent the majority of the week travelling to villages in the mountains and painting murals. We arrived at the doortop of church in a village called Guayavilla. The drive to Guayavilla was terrifying. For two hours, I sat in the backseat of a pickup truck and tried to ignore the vertical position of the truck.

We painted until the sun went down that day and then enjoyed chills cooked over a fire. We hung our hammocks in the ceiling beams of the church and fell asleep to the symphony of the rain rolling off the tin roof.

I made a friend named Hayde that day. She crawled into my hammock and we whispered secrets to each other and had middle fighs. The kids like Hayde that I met and fell in love with in village are the reason I keep going back to Guatemala. The relationships I’ve made with dozens of kids, mothers, and abuelitas in villages are what tie me to Guatemala.

By the time the last team of the month landed, I was ready to make the most of my last week of adventure. We returned to CoCoLá and hung out with kids at the school all day. I shared my testimony with a group of villagers gathered around the school and held a newborn baby while she slept. We continued work on the clean water source we would be building, making significant progress. I tried to lift a 100 lb bag of sand. It didn’t go so well.

We visited a family living and working in the Zacapa landfill. Their nine-member family lived in a wooden shack on the side of the mountain and hiked down each morning to sift through garbage, looking for plastic and glass to make money. We laid the groundwork to build them a new home and a generous member of the team covered the expenses of the house. A total of $5000 would cover all the materials needed to build a house for this family.

My time in Guatemala soon came to a close and I choked back tears as I said goodbye to the Beenes and all the friends I had made that month. I waved goodbye as tears streamed down my face, recalling the same moment exactly 30 days earlier in my driveway as I embarked on this adventure.

Street from the dormitory is a nutrition center to provide rehabilitation to malnourished babies and children who have been rejected by hospitals because of their inability to pay for medical care.

I spotted the two of them, jumping up and down in the middle of the crowd, and embraced them, something like a scene you’d see in a dramatic movie. After the crazy day I’d had, I felt at home again.

The next morning, I was reunited with Kayla Beene-Phillips, the kindest person I know, and her husband Jared. Kayla grew up in Guatemala, moved to the states to attend Southwestern University, where she met Jared, before moving back to Guatemala to follow in her parents footsteps. From there, my adventure started in Guatemala like I’d never left. The lessons she learned from it.

People and places I would be reunited with in a moment. It was no longer a place.
surrounded by an absolute sense of destitution as the smell of the open sewers occasionally wafted up. Curious children followed them walking through the slums of Mumbai. The alleyway outside was swamped with heaps of trash and swarms of mosquitoes, but the inside of the one-room homes, sometimes housing more than nine people were immaculately kept. It was a scene she wouldn’t forget.  

For the past six years, Andree Philpot has been teaching seventh and eighth grade language arts at Liberty Junior School. This year she is serving as a long-term substitute teacher until she and her husband, Jake, move to Kathmandu, Nepal in January. Philpot was first introduced to human trafficking efforts internationally, in 2014. During her first trip to India, Philpot participated in a prayer walk. 

“I traveled to Mumbai for the first time with Crossroads (Church),” Philpot said. “It was a life-changing experience and it came back determined to help in any way that I could. I began volunteering with eWIT. Then in 2017 my husband and I traveled with Crossroads to Nepal where we continued working with survivors of sex-trafficking.”

eWIT is a non-profit organization based in the United States where volunteers can video chat with survivors of human trafficking from other countries, teaching them English as well as tutoring them in other subjects. 

“If you’ve been trafficked, then you’re like the lowest of the low and learning English is one of the things that elevates your status in that society,” Philpot says. “It allows you to get better jobs and lets people look at you in a better standing. So learning English is super essential for victims’ rehabilitation and restoration.”

The next year Philpot was a part of a team that founded a new group within Crossroads to bring awareness to organizations working with survivors both in the U.S. and abroad, facilitating connections between volunteers and Cincinnati organizations like Bloc Ministries. Bloc ministries sponsors the Redeemed House, a long-term residential program that works with adult survivors of human trafficking in lower Price Hill. Later that year, she also returned to Nepal to help lead a trip of over 60 participants.

“These trips are just about building into (the girls). Relationships and sending people over is the best thing we can do,” Philpot said. “A lot of these girls were sold for anywhere from eight to $20 into trafficking. The fact that there are people that love them enough, and care about them enough to spend thousands of dollars on a plane ticket to come over just to hang out with them, it instills a sense of worth, hope and value that is so much better than just a monetary value that we could be sending.”

Crossroads first began to engage with the issue of human trafficking in India in 2013. Initially the group worked with aftercare homes in Mumbai and Kolkata, India, and then expanded to Kathmandu, Nepal. Currently, the church sends members of the congregation on yearly GO India and GO Nepal mission trips. More recently the Crossroads satellite in Oxford, Ohio has established trekking mission trips with their partner Five14 to Nepal for Miami University students. Amy Bull is the India Ministry director at Crossroads church, which partners with Indian groups to provide housing, education, and job readiness to rescued survivors of human trafficking.

“We have partners in Kathmandu, Nepal, because a large percentage of the girls that are trafficked into India come from Nepal,” Bull says. “[Aftercare homes provide] a safe place for the girls to live and get counseling, recover from their trauma, as well as learn job skills, so that they can be redeemed and restored. The Go

“[There are] a lot of people that believe you’re walking down the street and somebody is going to snatch you, and that’s not true. When we keep perpetuating that stereotype, we panic the community, everybody runs in the wrong direction.”

-Celia Williamson

GLOSSARY

Buyer: One who exchanges anything of value (money, drugs, food, a place to sleep, etc.) for sexual services. Also called a “Trick” or a “Client.”

Coercion: Threats or perceived threats of serious harm to a person, a scheme intended to cause a person to believe that failure to perform will result in serious harm. 

Debt bondage: When an employee owes their employer money, for housing them and their family, and a portion of their paycheck goes towards the employee. Becomes a way of life when employee can never being able to pay debt back.

Force: Use of physical or sexual abuse, confinement or other types of assault to control another person.

Fraud: Using lies to control someone; intentionally distorting the truth to get someone to do something.

Human Trafficking: the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, debt bondage, sexual exploitation, or other illegal activity.

Innocence Lost National Initiative (ILNI): an initiative started in 2003 by Innocence Lost National Initiative to address the national problem of youth sex trafficking in the US. The initiative is funded by the US Department of Justice and is international in scope, looking at both sex and labor trafficking. Some international activities include: forced marriage assessment of that definition in the developing world. The sexual exploitation of children for anything of value, especially one who does so of their own Free of will is generally disfavored for its pernicious connotations.

Modern-Day Slavery: Trafficking in people for labor or services. It is the exploitation of humans; it is the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, debt bondage, sexual exploitation, or other illegal activity.

Prostitute: A person who has sex for money.

Sex Trafficking: Sex trafficking is a form of modern-day slavery, in which individuals are induced to perform commercial sex through the use of force, fraud, or coercion. Victims are forced to engage in commercial sex, which they are never able to pay their trafficker or anyone. They are considered to be victims of human trafficking, regardless of the use of

Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) target 8.7: this goal is addressed by the UN’s International Labor Organization, which works with governments to take effective measures to eliminate all forms of child labor.

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India trip is typically a small group of people who are interested in supporting our partners that the ground, occasionally by running a retreat for the girls, providing a reprieve for the staff.”

As part of the programing, Crossroads partners to fly in girls from aftercare homes in Kolkata and Mumbai, India to Kathmandu, Nepal to connect with the girls that are already living in Nepal. They were able to reunite girls that hadn’t seen each other since they were rescued or were in brothels together. According to Philip, grouping the younger girls with the older girls allowed them to form really good relationships, which inspired them to share their stories and empower each other.

There was one girl when we went in, 2017, Philip said. “She was from a more remote region of India. When we were doing these team things, she was quiet and very hesitant to jump in. She was sitting by herself one day, so I had dinner with her and asked if we could sit with her, and we started talking to her. It was very cool to see her open up those things, seeing the different girls that we were playing, and slowly, slowly, she started to open up, and [become] more energetic and more personable. The day they were leaving, she hugged me goodbye and started crying, and she said, you’re like a mom to me. You’re like a friend. You’re like a sister. Please don’t forget about me. I was a wreck. They’ve just so full of love.”

**HUMAN TRAFFICKING**

human trafficking, also referred to as modern day slavery or trafficking in persons, is an umbrella term that covers a wide range of crimes and is often the result of human will. It is a crime that not easily detected, that robs its victims of both their self-worth and freedom.

Human trafficking is defined differently around the world, with definitions varying across government agencies, coalitions, and rescue and rehabilitation groups. According to the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000, the federal definition of severe forms of trafficking in persons, “sex trafficking in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such an act has not attained 18 years of age.”

The Ohio definition of human trafficking, according to the Ohio Revisor’s Code, stems from the federal definition. Instead of including minors as all children under the age of 18, it has a tiered level system. The first tier includes minors under the age of 16 where law enforcement officials do not need to prove that the minor was compelled to engage in commercial sexual activity. Tier 2 includes minors 16-17 years of age where law enforcement officials do not need to prove that the minor was compelled to engage in commercial sexual activity if the trafficker is in a “position of authority” over the victim, such as a parent, teacher or coach.

Currently, there is not an international official definition for human trafficking, although a common example comes from the International Labor Organization (ILO), a United Nations agency created in 1919 as part of the Treaty of Versailles. The agency works on a labor system requiring an agreement from each of the three groups when passing resolutions or any kind of declaration at the UN. In 2018, the ILO partnered to create the Global Estimate of Modern Slavery. Within the estimate the ILO uses the umbrella term “modern day slavery” to define two situations: forced labor, which includes both human and commercial sex trafficking, and forced marriage.

“There’s a lot of varying factors that can contribute to the act of trafficking,” Philip said. “If an agency would identify someone as a victim of human trafficking as opposed to another agency.” Maria Busch, Anti-trafficking program specialist for the Ohio Department of Public safety, told Spark. “Some groups might just track sex trafficking, some might have a plan to work with the community, they might have a certain screening tool to identify a victim of human trafficking. Different agencies might be asking different questions.”

When discussing human trafficking, stereotypes of a girl and someone who is willing to sell themselves come to mind. “I’ve been in the adoption system or foster homes, received stipends, or started sobbing and she said, ‘You’re like me, you’re like me, you’re like me.’ It was very cool to see her open up to share their stories and empower each other. They really good relationships, which inspired them to form such an act has not attained 18 years of age.”

I AM GLOBAL

Non profit organization I am Global Academy works with students who have been trafficked or are in danger of being trafficked in India and how to speak English.

**I AM GLOBAL**

Non profit organization I am Global Academy works with students who have been trafficked or are in danger of being trafficked in India and how to speak English. Their mission is to equip the victims with the necessary tools to help them rise above their circumstances and rebuild their lives. They are building a global community of survivors, one who has been rescued and are able to share their story.

**Contact with the Child Welfare System:** children who have been in foster homes, received stipends, or been in the adoption system.

**Contact with the Criminal Justice System:** situations where a child has been arrested or has had a parent who has been arrested.

**I AM GLOBAL**

I AM GLOBAL is a non-profit organization dedicated to helping eradicate human trafficking, the top three recruitment tactics for human sex trafficking are posing as a benefactor, an intimate partner, and familial.

Survivor data from the 2018 National Human Trafficking Hotline shows a peak in victims between the ages of 12-14 years old. According to Busch, Ohio has reported victims as young as three years old.

“There’s a narrative of kidnapping and strangers is really not what trafficking looks like in Cincinnati,” Samantha Stengl, who works for the Intercommunity Justice and Peace Center (IJP), said. “We’ve learned through our partners that coercion is the more common way people are coerced. They are coerced into believing that they’re doing something of their own free will when they’re actually being manipulated by somebody else.”

One stereotype that does have a ring of truth in human trafficking is the use of illegal drugs. On their own drugs already have a notorious reputation with social workers. They are often put together in the company of traffickers, increasing their risk of becoming sex trafficking victims.

“Drugs are connected to trafficking in two ways,” Williamson said. “First, a victim will get [a victim] hooked on drugs and then use that to control them.” Williamson said. “[Or] somebody is sold into trafficking, they are traumatized, and they use drugs to cope with their trauma and then become drug addicted. It can happen on the front or back end.”

**Populations at Risk:**

Certain groups of people are more vulnerable to traffickers, but just because someone may fall into a certain category does not mean they are going to be trafficked. For example, there are not as many situations where a child is going to be trafficked as a woman is being trafficked.

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**Educational issues:** situations in which some get low grades in school or where they are lacking education.
AWARENESS & PREVENTION

One of the first focuses when trying to combat human trafficking is awareness. According to Busch, awareness allows people to intervene on behalf of the people who are being exploited.

“People are generally aware, but in terms of taking that awareness to the next level, you’ll really get to challenge some of your preconceived notions,” Seals says. “One of the problems related to that mainstream media narrative is the creation of a hierarchy on who deserves help and who doesn’t. When we rank people and their traumatic experiences, that hurts everybody.”

The IJPC partners with organizations that work directly with survivors, to educate the community and advocate for victims. Part of this effort Seals says is following individual cases of human trafficking and using them as examples of how traffickers can affect people such as Cynthia Brown from Tennessee or Alexis Martin from Cleveland. Both individuals were victims of child sex trafficking, involved in a crime and then tried as adults instead of youth. IJPC’s goal is to help raise awareness in a crime and then tried as adults instead of youth. IJPC’s goal is to help raise awareness and understanding of the issues. To further this effort they funded the creation of educational toolkits to dispel fallacies that people believe about human trafficking.

“I do community education, small presentations that I do in schools, at churches and other groups. We work together to put together educational panels, conferences, or screen documentaries,” Seals says. “Then we do the advocacy piece, which is learning how our personal decisions affect the larger system of human trafficking. Encouraging people to know where their goods and services come from, to make sure people are not being exploited for their labor.”

In 2012, Former Ohio Governor John Kasich created the Ohio Human Trafficking Task Force. According to Busch, who is on the task force, at that time it was rare for a state to have a fully funded full time anti-human trafficking coordinator exclusively dedicated to building capacity of the state level response.

“We want to focus on that prevention piece,” Busch said. “Also building capacity of our child welfare systems and our juvenile justice system, [is important] to train those who are engaging with at-risk youth, and equip them with the tools to screen for human trafficking victimization, and to be part of a community response that really wraps around that youth with appropriate services.”

Currently, Ohio has over 24 anti-human trafficking coalitions, some which have been training professionals since 2007. According to Busch coalitions are structured differently depending on where they are located within the state. Regardless of the structure, each coalition is made up of concerned citizens that are working together to respond to human trafficking through activities like prevention, training key stakeholders, or coordinating services for victims or prevention training.

On Nov. 22nd in Columbus, Senator Teresa Fedor, Representative Tavia Galonski and Senator Stephanie Kunse hosted the third annual Youth Human Trafficking Prevention Summit designed to allow youth to take part in creating solutions for the issue of human trafficking.

“People have everything to do with ending human trafficking as it exists in the world today,” Fedor said. “They can make an adult decision that they don’t want it to happen while they’re alive, not on their watch, and that they are going to become modern day abolitionists.”

According to Seals, human trafficking is a deep-seated complicated network that can’t be solved by just passing a law. So, anything that can be done such as making smarter purchases, signing a petition, or lobbying for a piece of legislation all address different pieces of a complex system. She encourages people to go beyond awareness into action and education.

“People hear the phrase, ‘Prostitution is the oldest profession in the world.’ I believe it is, ‘Prostitution is the oldest oppression of people in the world.’ They are victims, not criminals,” Fedor said. “People don’t choose to be a prostitute. People don’t choose to be trafficked for labor and work for free. This is a freedom issue. In my opinion it is the human rights issue of our lifetime.”

- Teresa Fedor

PREVALENCE

According to Busch, victims of trafficking may never touch the justice system or might face a separate problem, such as drugs or domestic violence. Another complication that increases the difficulty of tracking is the fact that different reporting agencies have divergent protocols for determining who is being trafficked. Agencies using the same definition would help to create a more accurate picture of trafficking both in the USA and internationally.

“You have kids that are commercially sexually exploited, kids that will trade sex for money, a place to stay, drugs. Then you have sexually trafficked kids, kids that are being trafficked by

Running away and homelessness: youth who have either run away from home or been forced from it

“People don’t choose to be a prostitute. People don’t choose to be trafficked for labor and work for free. This is a freedom issue. In my opinion it is the human rights issue of our lifetime.”

-Teresa Fedor
human trafficking crimes are civil rights violations detailed in Title 18, Chapter 77 of the United States Criminal Code. These statutes are based on the Thirteenth Amendment of the Constitution and the prohibition against slavery and involuntary servitude. The first comprehensive federal law to address human trafficking was created in 2000. According to the Polaris website, the ‘Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA)’ of 2000 created the first comprehensive federal law to address human trafficking, with a significant focus on the international dimension of the problem. The law provided a three-tiered approach: prevention through public awareness programs overseas and a State Department-led monitoring and sanctions program; protection through a new T-Visa and services for foreign national victims (which allows victims of human trafficking, and their families to become temporary U.S. residents and eligible to become permanent residents after three years), and prosecution through new federal trafficking laws.

In 2007, the U.S. Department of Justice created the Human Trafficking Prosecution Unit (HTPU) within the Criminal Section of the Civil Rights Division. HTPU prosecutors work closely with law enforcement officials and the United States Attorneys in enforcing these statutes. The U.S. Department of Justice provides services to victims of civil rights violations. Victim Coordinators provide assistance accessing services such as case management, housing, medical care, counseling and shelter.

Since 2010, when Ohio's first trafficking law was passed in 2000, four additional laws have gone into effect to make Ohio a less ideal place for traffickers and to add protections for the victims. These laws have been sponsored, cosponsored by Senator Teresa Fedor, who is currently working on passing Ohio Senate Bill 13. According to Fedor, she has been working on Senate Bill 13 for 14 years.

“Bill 13 will address the issues of marrying the federal level law saying that all minors need to be protected against human trafficking and that they are considered victims of human trafficking,” said Fedor.

Since 2000, there have been 16 and 17 year olds who have been charged.

“Once Senate Bill 13 has been signed by Governor Mike DeWine, Fedor plans to move on to other protections. She has several bills she would like to see passed that places that help facilitate the human trafficking crime, like motels and hotels. Fedor, who was a classroom teacher in Toledo Public Schools for 18 years, is also working on revised human trafficking education for the Ohio schools.

“We need to make sure that our children are aware of what human trafficking is,” Fedor said. “Florida just passed a law that says that their education system is going to address the issue of human trafficking in the public schools. I want to do that as well. There’s a whole host of things that need to be done to continue the work, all of the work on human trafficking, and justice.”

One of the key targeted groups for human trafficking that could benefit from awareness training is high schoolers. In October the Florida Board of Education approved a rule that all Florida schools are required to teach child trafficking prevention. Florida is the first state to mandate this type of training. According to Busch, proper training in schools would help students in identifying other youth.

“Fear is a part of those kids. Something’s going on with them, the first person they might tell is a friend,” Busch said.

“They need to know their rights, their parents to know their rights. Some of these kids who are vulnerable to trafficking would be a huge benefit that we can respond in a more proactive fashion on.”

Nonprofit organization Rener Jones Empowerment Center in Cleveland, have already started working in this area with their Youth Ambassador Training Academy. They are equipping youth and young adults ages 14 to 24 years old who have been victims, survivors, or at risk for human trafficking.

Students receive training from law enforcement personnel, certified human trafficking survivors who have been trained by the Polaris Project and Rener Jones Empowerment Center staff. Once they have completed the academy, ambassadors act as advocates against human trafficking and Rener Jones Empowerment Center staff.

One of the things not to anti-trafficking organizations that is working to raise awareness and education of the community is the Cleveland Anti-Trafficking Justice & Peace Center (JPC). Schools or community organizations can invite JPC to visit their classrooms or meetings to present details of human trafficking as well as what they can do to help the fight against human trafficking.

“I’ve had the opportunity to anyone and students especially to be vulnerable to being forced, fraud, or coerced into trafficking,” Seals said. “We need everyone to know what the issue is, what the lines are, and how to help each other. Especially for young folks, building healthy relationships, having self-esteem experience.”

One of the centers presenting at the event was the Rener Jones Empowerment Center, an organization for helping human trafficking victims recover and restore their lives. The center brought a student ambassador and an adult volunteer to the event.

The student ambassador program is a program that mentors can get involved in. The training lasts for a period of three months, on Saturdays for four to five hours a week. So about 150 students have been trained.

Xavier Walsh, a ninth grader at St. Ignatius highschool, has been trained in the program and feels very passionately about human trafficking.

“You need to educate yourself, sit and do that with your friends,” Walsh said. “Somebody needs to take initiative because this is a very tough topic.”

Annette Mango, a survivor of human trafficking is now a volunteer at the Renee Jones center and attended the summit to share her story.

“Being a human trafficking victim I am still vulnerable,” Mango said. “That’s why I’m so passionate about this stuff. It’s everything involved in every generation. To say NO, we’re not going to allow this to go on one more day.”

She is very passionate about students learning not only about human trafficking, but how they can help in their community.

“It’s about activism and empowerment for the students and extending that to their schools and community.”

One of the initiatives is the Anti-trafficking task force which includes representatives from different agencies and organizations.

The day included presentations from different activists and empowerment groups and finally closed with three breakout groups about legalities, self love and social media, and health relationships.

“We’ve got some arts performances throughout the day,” Fedor said. “We also have a selfie station where the students can take a selfie and use that as part of a selfie experience.”

One of the centers presenting at the event was the Rener Jones Empowerment Center, an organization for helping human trafficking victims recover and restore their lives.
A young girl named Lily comes face to face with danger as she helps her boyfriend. Difficult choices in a difficult situation save Lily's life, but not everyone is quite as lucky. "Lily’s Wings, a play warning of the dangers of human trafficking, tells this story, seeking to ensure that more people are aware of the dangers, so that fewer people suffer."

"There are ways for us to try to be a part of the solution to stop human trafficking and make the world a better place," Schroeder-Arce said.

The students behind Lily’s Wings chose to delve into human trafficking, writing a story of hope following a young girl named Lily. "Utilizing a technique called activating theatre, the play began as a single scene that stopped and allowed the audience to discuss how the protagonist could escape from a serious situation. The play is quick to gain the audience’s attention, which led to the student’s winning the Literator Award created by the SOPM Project.

Since 2012, Lily’s Wings has been performed countless times, including at the International Human Trafficking and Social Justice Conference, organized by Anna Schramm. "I think it’s empowering for the performers," Schramm said. "They are advocating for this issue and using their gifts and talents to spread awareness about human trafficking."

Along with being close to publication, the play has been developed into a bilingual version that has toured across California, allowing the play to gain further reach, impact more lives, and they have to have their danger radar on."

For Schroeder-Arce, one of the benefits of the arts, "It’s not just the play alone," Schroeder-Arce said. "They’re working with the community, parents and staff on all those topics."

"Blaming victims of being complicit of their own situation. Their scene quickly garnered attention."

"If there isn’t an open dialogue, then there’s no way to address the national problem of youth sex trafficking."

"I believe it is necessary for this bill to be passed, not only to protect 16 and 17 year olds, but also to re-educate the public on how to be aware of the dangers they are facing."

"We are working with a new group of students this year to create the Operation Independence Day."

"Our office partners with a number of local police departments, state and federal agencies, as well as non-profit organizations in these efforts," FBI special agent Todd Lindgren told Spark. "We work with End Slavery Cincinnati, the Salvation Army’s Anti-Human Trafficking program..."
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AID FOR VICTIMS

One of the best sources of help for someone who wants to learn more about human trafficking, is the National Human Trafficking Hotline. The hotline can connect those individuals with appropriate services in their area of the country. “The national hotline specialist [who answers the call], would be able to refer them to somebody who is appropriate,” Busch says. “[It’s] a safe community or someone who works at [their] school. Sometimes a caller would be able to reach out to those individuals and share their needs.”

It is not easy for victims who are being trafficked to leave their situation. Problems can range from physical inability to leave due to violent behavior, the psychological fear that the trafficker will either harm them or their safety, to the inability to break the emotional trauma bond they have formed with their trafficker. According to Busch that emotional bond keeps some victims from identifying themselves as being victims. “They get to know the trafficker built that relationship on the basis of a romantic relationship, and has promised marriage and a family and a house,” Busch said. “Then that relationship became violent. It’s very difficult to leave that.”

According to the 2018 Polaris report, the top five methods of coercion, force and fraud include: physical violence, threats, emotional abuse, physical abuse, and sexual violence. One of the biggest unmet needs in the realm of helping human trafficking survivors is the assistance that they require. According to LaDonna Knabbs, the program director for the F.R.E.E. program, the program provides support to survivors through a four phase program of foundation, readiness, education, and employment. “I wanted to be able to help women that have survived this horrible, horrible trauma of human trafficking to be able to thrive,” Knabbs said. “To know that there is life after trauma, and that they have another opportunity to pursue their dreams, their passions, and their goals.”

There are not many residential aftercare facilities to help human trafficking victims. These residential facilities help victims return to a sense of normalcy where they have a roof over their head, they know where their next meal is coming from, and they can get a job where they are not being exploited. According to Sabella, the biggest unmet need in the realm of helping human trafficking survivors is support services, especially for children.

“T here are [few] support services for children who have been human trafficked; there’s a lot of red tape for kids,” Sabella said. “The women get arrested for prostitution, sometimes of them have said that jail was the best thing that happened to them. They get removed from their trafficker or their pimp, they know they’re getting a meal, they have a roof over their head, [and] they have access to some medical care. But it would be better if they didn’t have to go through that.”

Though human trafficking is such a large issue, there are some things that high school students can do. According to Sabella, students can do more than spread the word by helping to inform each other about dangerous things they have seen online or dangerous messages that they received. Young people can also volunteer, donate, and make sure that they are being responsible consumers and are not purchasing items that were made with human labor trafficking.

“If you want to be seriously involved go after the gaps that need filled. Do your homework and talk to these youth,” Williamson says. “There [are] young people all over the world that are going deep. I have so much belief in young people today, because young people really do want to end human trafficking. They’re serious.”
In 2018, there were 10,949 human trafficking cases reported nationwide. This graph shows the top five states where human trafficking cases were reported. *These graphs are out of 2,000 to make the differences clearer.

**Infographic: Cassandra Mueller**

1. Michigan
2. Texas
3. California
4. Florida
5. Georgia

**International Trafficking**

When someone encounters the words ‘human trafficking’, the stereotypical idea is that it happens in a different country. While this isn’t always the case, there is a thriving human trafficking network happening in other countries. Since tracking and awareness play such a large role in curbing human trafficking, the U.S. Department of State published a yearly report on human trafficking, called ‘The Trafficking in Persons (TIP)’. This report covers human trafficking efforts in 187 countries around the globe.

[‘The TIP’ report ranks countries according to tier one, tier two or tier three. The US is a tier one country, meaning we have trafficking, but we’re doing a lot to combat trafficking.].

According to Philpot, there is a need for resources and a need for government change. There is so much that can be done, but there are not enough people that know or care.

Hamiltucky Paranormal hosted an investigation on National Ghost Hunting Day.

**Human Trafficking Facts**

- **Prevalence**: According to Gleason, in developing countries there are vulnerable populations that have to accept any form of work, because they have no other options, even if it requires them to relocate to unsafe places or place trust in their recruiters. These people are especially vulnerable to being trafficked out of developing countries into rich countries.

- **Modern Slavery**: According to Gleason, modern slavery exists in every country in the world. It’s definitely not limited to certain regions or certain countries, Gleason said. “If you’re talking about commercial sexual exploitation, a lot of that is not going on in developing countries because there’s not enough money, there’s not a market. So people are trafficked out of those countries into destination countries.”

- **Alliance 8.7**: At Asia regional conference hosted in Nepal in November, child labor survivors from Kathmandu, who were forced to beg on the streets when they were children, spoke out about the issues they faced. According to Gleason, they were involved in the first ever global march against slavery and were the most powerful voices involved in the event.

- **Youth Voices**: “Sometimes I think that youth are the only group that can make a big difference,” Gleason said. “Recently at the UN, on other issues, youth voices have suddenly made an impact that no one else has been able to make in any other way in decades, it’s really, really impressive. Youth voices have the capacity to take a fresh approach to issues that everyone else has been looking for a long time in the same way.”

- **International Trafficking**: Human trafficking varies vastly from country to country. In countries like India, trafficking is often a poverty-driven solution. In the U.S., families at the poverty level have access to government assistance and public education, but in India this is not the case. According to the TIP report, millions of people are estimated to be sex trafficking victims within India. Traffickers use online technology, red light districts, spas, and hotels to facilitate sex trafficking. Amy Bull is the India Ministry director at Crossroads church, which partners with Indian groups to provide housing, education, and job readiness to rescued survivors of human trafficking. “The girls are trafficked, because their families can’t support them,” Bull says. “They’re promised better jobs, or a job and education, and it turns out that’s not really the case.”

- **Employer Hold Your Passport**: “If a family member was sick in a different area or country, would you be able to leave work to visit them?” We understand the issues of forced labor and forced marriage. We consider those to be human trafficking. That kind of trafficking can be extremely pervasive, very violent, and with a serious impact that no one else has been able to make.

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Hamilucky Paranormal Investigations has been in 2009 as just a Facebook page. They are a company committed to investigating the unknown with their expert ghost hunting, mental and psychic contributions. From posting interesting stories and personal experiences to hosting live events, Hamiltucky Paranormal became what it is today with the help of the Hamilton, Ohio community.

On Sept. 28, 2018, the World’s Largest Ghost Hunt took place in Hamilton at the Carriage House in Hamilton’s German Village. The event was hosted by Hamiltucky Paranormal and organized by the owners Stan Clark and Shannon Biehl.

Hamiltucky Paranormal has always had good results while investigating in Ohio and while talking to the spirits they encounter. "Other paranormal groups are in it for all the wrong reasons," Clark says. "When communicating with spirits, you want to be respectful, like you’re talking with another person.

"One of the most important reasons Hamiltucky Paranormal does what they do is to help people. While the group does investigate the unknown, they also help provide closure for people who are missing their late loved ones. "People always have questions when their family or friends have been taken away," says Biehl. "Sometimes that reassurance that they are still here and still with them can make all the difference."
#1 Smashburger

Though I’ve been to Smashburger before, I’d never ordered their black bean burger. I ordered the Classic Black Bean Burger with American cheese, lettuce, tomato, onion, pickle, and ketchup.

The restaurant was quiet and clean, with soft music playing in the background to accompany my wait. My burger, which arrived in under 10 minutes, turned out to be the perfect size, and still sizzling warm from the kitchen.

Biting into it, I was pleasantly surprised by the thick, flavorful patty. It was goopy enough that I needed to take a drink to properly wash it down, and the most flavor I’ve tasted in a black bean burger to date. The egg washed bun was buttery, but not greasy, and blended flawlessly with the rest of the flavors. It was one of the few burgers I ate that didn’t serve as a delivery device for condiments, because the flavor of the black bean patty spoke for itself.

I’d never been to Bagger Dave’s before, but was pleasantly surprised. For a place that styles itself as a ‘burger tavern,’ it was quiet, uncrowded, and well lit. Our service was relatively quick—just about a 20 minute wait. The restaurant was loud enough that we nearly had to shout to hear each other across the table. After about a 20 minute wait, my burger arrived. It was one of the tallest burgers I’ve ever eaten. It literally fell apart in my hands. Perhaps this was an exception, though the spice tended to overpower the taste of the rest of the burger.

The burger’s main shortcoming, however, was that it was the messiest burger I’ve ever had in my hands. The patty appeared to be made up of chickpeas, rice, and corn, as well as some well-chosen spices. That being said, the bun was dry, overcooked texture. I honestly thought that my patty may have been an eggless version of a beef patty. I was struck by the chewy, smoky texture of the patty, which was overpowered by the cheese, tomato, and pickles on the burger. The bun was covered in sesame seeds, which were dry and hard and did not contribute to the burger. It’s clear to me that Flipside’s specialty is not in the area of vegetarian burgers. The rest of their offerings seemed to be quite well-received—especially the sweet potato fries.

The burger I received was one of the largest of all, and I didn’t even have to wait five minutes for my burger to arrive. However, I was quite underwhelmed with its appearance. It was the smallest burger I sampled, and the patty was obviously from a freezer that was not at all warm from the kitchen.

For all the Impossible Burger is marketed to be indistinguishable from a real beef patty, I would not have confused the two. I was struck by the dry, overcooked texture. I honestly thought that my patty may have been burnt on the grill, when I was able to taste it.

The pickles, tomatoes, and mayonnaise which accompanied my burger strongly overpowered the taste of the patty, though the American cheese (which one needs to request at the register) did a good job of hiding the burnt edge, and I would recommend one order the burger with cheese. Though despite the sheer amount of mayonnaise on the burger, which even dripped a little out the back, the burger still managed to be a good consistency, to my surprise, which I found gratifying.

#3 Bagger Dave’s

#4 Flipside

When I walked into Flipside, the first thing that struck me was the wall of open windows—creating a warm and inviting atmosphere. The music was at the perfect volume, and we were quickly seated even with the mildly crowded restaurant. For an extra $1.50, I subsidized the Impossible Burger patty onto the “Say Cheese” Burger.

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Biting the restaurant which first brought the Impossible Burger to the national stage, I was quite underwhelmed with what I got. The burger I received was one of the largest of all, and I didn’t even have to wait five minutes for my burger to arrive. However, I was quite underwhelmed with its appearance. It was the smallest burger I sampled. The patty was obviously from a freezer that was not at all warm from the kitchen.

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#5 Wayback

Walking into the restaurant, my first impression was of a loud, crowded space bustling with bodies. After a short wait to place our order, my parents and I sat down at a long table. The restaurant was loud enough that we nearly had to shout to hear each other across the table. After about a 20 minute wait, my burger arrived. It was one of the tallest burgers I’ve received, and as it turned out, this made it rather hard to eat properly.

The patty, which was composed of black beans, beets, and brown rice, turned out to be rather fragile and fell apart quite easily in my hands. I was unable to even open the burger to add ketchup. That being said, this burger is my second choice because it had a good amount of flavor on its own. The white cheddar cheese complemented the beans perfectly, and though the bun was greasy with butter, the entire thing was the perfect consistency.

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ON THE GO

A group of girls from Union Elementary participate in the Girls On the Run program

girls On the Run program

Greater Cincinnati GOTR, and previously served as the executive director when she started the Greater Cincinnati council in 2005. Every year, she helps to plan the Fall and Spring celebratory 5K run at the end of the GOTR program. This fall three Lakota elementary schools: Union, Chamber, and Woodland Elementary - participated as part of the 93 teams from around the Cincinnati area.

It’s a character development program that works on giving the girls life skills and confidence, and it’s done with running and walking games," Hamilton says. "It’s done in a fun way where they are brainstorming, working together as a team to accomplish a goal and building up their physical activity level. Every single lesson is a different topic; it’s everything from healthy eating to what to do if you are bullied."

GOTR is targeted for third through fifth grade girls and the challenges that they face as preadolescents. The national curriculum is designed by an executive board that trains the coaches and provides the games and topics of discussion for every week. Each year is comprised of a maximum of 16 girls. Limiting the group size allows the girls to get to know each other and build positive friendships.

"I didn’t know most of these people at the beginning, and they are all really kind and nice," Union Elementary team member Sara McGuire says. "When I couldn’t run anymore because I was really tired or sad, they would say ‘You can do this.’"

As part of the final preparations for the 5K, the girls each chose a running buddy for the day of the race. Running buddies range from family members to high school mentors. At 14 years old, the Greater Cincinnati program is getting to the age where alumni have reached high school age and are coming back to serve as mentors at the elementary level. Some running buddies came in from out of state, like Union team member Sara Robin’s sister, Ashley Robin, who lives in Indiana. Others ran with a parent, like Sara McGuire who was excited to have her mother, Sylvia McGuire, as her running buddy for the 5K."

"My favorite thing about my mom is that she will go beyond the limits so that she can run with me and do stuff with me," Sara McGuire says.

The fall run was held at Sawyer Point, where the girls were encouraged to dress up in themes decided by their teams, and enjoy the event. Girls wore tutus, capes, crowns and colorful running socks. Prior to the start of the 5K, GOTR provided activities, such as tiara decorating, hair painting, a DJ, and a giant dance party. This fall, 46 members of the UC track team joined the dance party to encourage and warm up with the girls before the run."

"[GOTR is] a little bit different than most 5ks [because] we have our party ahead of the 5K," Hamilton says. "We have a dance party and face painting and all kinds of fun, just to get them super excited for the event and calm any nerves."

The new track for the fall 2019 season started at Sawyer Point, and ended at Yeatman’s Cove, with cheer zones every half mile. All the girls wore runner’s bibs with their first name and a large number one so that spectators could cheer them on by name. As each running pair crossed the finish line, out of breath, they were awarded with finisher medals.

"The purpose of the 5K is to really show them that they can set a goal and accomplish it," Hamilton says. "I think a lot of times at that age they doubt themselves and their abilities."

The GOTR program is offered on a sliding scale based off of family income, with scholarships available upon request. Currently about 40-50% of Greater Cincinnati participants receive a scholarship. A unique part of the program is that each participant is personally fitted for a new pair of running shoes by GOTR’s partner Fleet Feet."

"What person doesn’t want to have new shoes? Some of our girls have never had a new pair of shoes of any kind, ever," Hamilton says. "The Greater Cincinnati GOTR really wants the program to be for any girl that has interest, regardless of her family’s ability to pay."

Every season, the girls on each team are challenged to pick a community impact project. In past years the Union team has selected projects such as baking homemade goods, writing cards to deliver to teachers, and donating clothes and shoes to Cinderella’s Closet. This year, the Union team focused on helping the homeless by donating to The Broken Bus Ministry, which makes weekly trips to serve the homeless population in the Greater Cincinnati area. The Friday before the race, the Broken Bus visited Union Elementary, where the girls loaded their donations and were given the honor of signing the inside of the bus.

"Lots of homeless people don’t have everything they need," Sara McGuire says. "We could help them, so that they could have enough to someday maybe afford to have a home."

The girls chose to donate pet food and toiletries after learning they are ‘high need’ items during the winter time of year. The team also wanted to share a sweet treat with the homeless, so they turned the bad weather that deterred trick-or-treating into a positive, donating the surplus candy from the other students in the school. "To impact their school community, the girls invited special needs students to help them bag the candy into individual portions for donation. Sara McGuire says one of her favorite parts about the project was that she had the opportunity to interact with the special needs students."

"I felt like some of them need love," Sara McGuire says. "We need to consider them more and we need to be friends with them more."

This year, approximately 300 girls and 400 volunteer coaches participated in the fall 5K since beginning from one team of 12 girls in 2005. Sylvia McGuire suggests other parents enroll their student in the program and join in on the fun as their student’s running buddy.

"I feel that [GOTR] has brought a lot of joy into [Sara’s] life," Sylvia McGuire says. "And also a lot of confidence."

The GOTR program is intended to empower girls, help them set a goal and achieve it. Not only do the girls get to cross the finish line at the end of a 5K, they also build new relationships with their coaches and teammates. The program helps prepare girls for the future and show them that they can do anything."

"My goal is to show these girls that they have such strength inside," Woeller says. "To give them positive ways for them to express the emotions that they feel, and to deal with potential stressors that may come their way as teenagers and adults.*"
With the constant addition of new rides and removal of long time attractions each season, the entire landscape of Kings Island appears to be evolving.

An Evolving Thrill

L

The ride reaches speeds up to 91mph, making it the seventh fastest roller coaster in the world. Firehawk was originally advertised as the Midwest's first and only flying roller coaster. The ride was demolished because, like Vortex, it had reached the end of its service life; what was evident as the ride was periodically shut down during the season due to technical issues. The land that Firehawk once occupied will now be occupied by Orion.

Vincent says she cannot wait to see what else Kings Island has in-store for future seasons. "Kings Island has changed a lot since I started working here," Vincent says. "With all the new attractions and park attendance increasing, I can't wait to see what else (Kings Island has) planned."
DON'T BLINK

Lights and projections illuminated the streets of downtown Cincinnati and northern Kentucky for four fall nights.
story and photography
emily hornman

The John A. Roebling Suspension Bridge between downtown Cincinnati and northern Kentucky was lit up and synchronized to music that was played over loudspeakers during BLINK.

cheers echo down Vine Street, bright street lights illuminating the captivating costumes and floats making their procession down the parade route. All the music, choreography, and even art was created and submitted by local creators for BLINK—a large-scale light, art, and projection-mapping event throughout the streets of downtown Cincinnati and northern Kentucky.

After only one previous event in 2017, BLINK came back this year with new works of art to showcase and illuminate. Kicking off with the Future City Spectacular parade on Oct. 10, the culture festival was open for free to the public nightly until closing night, Oct. 13. Many organizations collaborated to make BLINK happen.

“AGAR, ArtWorks, Brave Berlin, the US Think Foundation, and the Cincinnati USA Regional Chamber are all partners and we produce this event together,” Managing Director of Workforce Development for ArtWorks Sydney Fine says.

ArtWorks is a Cincinnati-based nonprofit dedicated to impacting both people and places through investment in public and private arts projects.

“We put together a call for artists many months ago to get different proposals from artists to bring an existing work of art, or create a work of art, that would be illuminated by light to this festival,” Fine says. “There was a jurying process [where] we were able to narrow it down to 45 interactive installations.”

In addition to these ArtWorks-curated installations, there were 16 new murals painted across the Cincinnati area by creators from local marketing company AGAR, along with 39 projection mappings by Brave Berlin, a local organization allowing individuals and companies to bring their grand ideas to life.

At sundown on Oct. 10, works of art from across all involved organizations came to life right before the eyes of attendees. Lights, projections, and interactive installations were scattered across over 30 city blocks, including a music-synced light show on the John A. Roebling Suspension Bridge.

“For the first time, BLINK is crossing over into northern Kentucky,” Fine says. “I think that’s really exciting and a great way to keep growing and having new experiences for people [to enjoy].”

East computer science teacher Craig Bock attended BLINK on the night of Oct. 12, along with his wife and daughter.

“It felt like I was going to an art museum,” Bock says. “It was spread across the entire city.”

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FROZEN 2
The long-awaited sequel to Disney’s Frozen finally came to theaters on November 22. According to them, Frozen 2 has broken global box office records by making $738.6 million less than two weeks after its release. The feature is the fifth film of Disney and series. Disney has made every classic available in one space. Disney Plus is a new streaming service that for only seven dollars a month includes content from multiple sources such as Star Wars, Marvel, Pixar, National Geographic, and 21st Century Fox.

This service had over 10 million streamers as of its release date of November 12th. Not only are releases from the past available on the subscription, viewers will also see Disney Plus Originals. These are movies and series made specifically for the streaming service where episodes are released weekly on Fridays. There is also a bundle option that viewers can purchase. Up to 11 dollars a month, viewers will subscribe to Disney Plus, Hulu (with advertisements), and ESPN+. If you are a fan of Marvel, Star Wars, or have a child, I would highly recommend this for you.

—Kelly Johantges

GIRLS BOWLING TEAM WORKS TO OVERCOME COMPETITION IN GMCS
With the majority of his team being based new to the city, East bowling coach Rick Meno has his work cut out for him this season. ‘Let’s get this straight from the get go, [the team] is very new. We have only two returning girls on the varsity team,’ Meno says. ‘So our biggest competition is every match that we have, because we’re so new.’

On December 4th, East kicked the season off with a match against Hamilton. In the first game, Hamilton had a score of 235/50, while East had a score of 195/78.

“At the end of the day, we probably lost by about 700 pins,” Meno says. ‘But we had fun, right?’

Meno says that over his last four years coaching the bowling team, he learned the importance of four vital mission statements: academics, teamwork, sportsmanship, and fun.

“A lot of these kids have never participated in a team sport,” said Meno. “So this gives them an opportunity to learn how to be a good teammate.”

Senior Danielle Bustle, who has been bowling for four years, led the team in a close match against conference rival Mason last year, scoring with a 261-two game series.

“It’s not about how many pins you get to get better,” says Bustle, who transferred from Kettering Fairmont last year. “If you and I have a lot more fun this year,” Oberhaus says. “And the sixth and seventh runners can displace scoring runners from other teams. The team with the least amount of points wins. If there is a tie, the sixth and seventh runners also serve as a tiebreaker.

East ended up getting second in-state out of 20 teams. Beavecreek won first with 53 points, placing four runners in the top nine. Their fifth placed runner placed 56th overall but 36th among scoring runners. Beavecreek had the number one and number two runners overall: senior Taylor Everst was first with a time of 17:22.5 and senior Savannah Rossak finished second with a time of 17:48.6.

Hoping for a state championship, and then Beavercreek just ran so tough at state that I don’t think anybody was going to beat them that day,” East cross country coach Adam Thomas, who has been the [East] girls’ girls will be very pretty with the second place.”

Junior Kelsi Harris was the first runner to cross the finish line for East. She placed 25th with a time of 18:45.7. The top five runners for the team were all only 23 seconds apart. Junior Carly Splinter earned 28th with a time of 18:49.2, and senior Danielle Hummer placed 35th with a time of 19:04.0. Freshman Jocelyn Willis placed with a time of 19:06.4 placed 40th, and junior Paxton Oberhaus placed 46th with a time of 19:08.8.

“The year I felt different about racing. I felt more excited and I had a lot more fun this year,” Oberhaus says. “And even in the regular season racing from the past two years, everything grew silent. The cheers from the crowd never fired. The nerves keep building as the East varsity runners try to stay calm as they take their final deep breaths before the race starts.

The starting gun’s loud boom is barely heard as all of the fans’ screams reach the sound of the most intense part of the race has begun as the 183 girls fight to take the lead while the grass course funnels the girls into a narrow straight-away.

The East runners’ nerves fade away and they focus on what they are here to do. What they have trained six months, seven days a week, to do something no other East cross country team had done before.

The East varsity girls’ cross country (XC) team ran hoping to win first place for a state title at the National Trail Raceway in Hebron, Ohio at the OHSAA State XC championship race. This was the team’s third consecutive year running at state and the girls hoped to place better than last year’s 5th place finish.

In cross country, the top five runners earn the number of points for the team that correspond with their finish place, and the sixth and seventh runners can displace scoring runners from other teams. The team with the least amount of points wins. If there is a tie, the sixth and seventh runners also serve as a tiebreaker.

East ended up getting second in-state out of 20 teams. Beavecreek won first with 53 points, placing four runners in the top nine. Their fifth placed runner placed 56th overall but 36th among scoring runners. Beavecreek had the number one and number two runners overall: senior Taylor Everst was first with a time of 17:22.5 and senior Savannah Rossak finished second with a time of 17:48.6.

The coaches are also working hard to create practices that benefit the team, requiring them to attend five weekly challenging practices. Along with 11 dollars a month, viewers will subscribe to Disney Plus, Hulu (with advertisements), and ESPN+. If you are a fan of Marvel, Star Wars, or have a child, I would highly recommend this for you.

—Kelly Johantges

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The East varsity girls’ cross country team was runner-up at the OHSAA State XC championship race. This was the team’s third consecutive year running at state and the girls hoped to place better than last year’s 5th place finish.

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However, Hilliard Davidson ended up placing behind Hilliard Davidson and Beavercreek. "We were so proud of what we performed. One on the team was disappointed in how they crossed the line, but..." Oberhaus says. "The race was over. We all trust each other a lot and we can depend on each other."

Harris believes that placing no one on the podium shows the depth and strength of the team. "This year, the average time was 18:59. According to several of the runners, the dramatic drop in ranks wasn’t due to running personal records. It was a result of experience, leadership, and confidence. Last year, I’d never been at state and I didn’t know how it would go," Wilson says. "So this year, I had more experience and I knew what to expect and how to run at that level." For Spletzer, this was the first year she was not injured during post season. In 2017, Spletzer had a fibula stress fracture but was still able to run at state. In 2018, she had multiple stress fractures in her tibia preventing her from being able to run postseason.

"Next year, I’m hoping that I’m not going to be the alternate anymore," Renfro says. "At the beginning I was intimidated because coach wanted me running with the other top seven girls, but throughout the season I got more and more comfortable with it. Running postseason with all of [the varsity girls] has shown me my potential!"

In 2017, East won 10th place at the OHSAA state meet with 248 points. Their average time was 19:24. Spletzer, a freshman at the time, was first for the team with a time of 19:04.6. Then in 2018, East won 5th place with 139 points and an average time of 19:36. Harris, a sophomore at the time, was the first to finish for the team with a time of 19:00.7.

All seven girls plus the 2019 state alternate, sophomore Sarah Renfro, are on East’s list of the top 20 fastest runners in school history. Harris is second on the list with a time of 18:23.7. Horter is number four, Spletzer is sixth, Willis is eighth, Oberhaus is ninth, Reynolds is tenth, Wilson is 12th, and Renfro is 17th. The girls reached this season was ten miles. The week leading up to the state meet was when they tapered and lowered their mileage so their legs aren’t sore during the race.

"I didn’t get to run any of the big meets [last year]," Wilson says. "This is my first year running all of the postseason meets. Spletzer says, "I think [I improved from last year] by just being smart with training, not overtraining, and stretching." The East runners have a very specific training regimen to prepare them for the postseason. Every week throughout the regular season consists of one long run, two speed workouts, one or two recovery runs, and one or two mid-distance runs. The highest mileage the girls reached this season was ten miles. The week leading up to the state meet was when they tapered and lowered their mileage so their legs aren’t sore during the race.

OHSAA State Cross Country Championships: Kelsi Harris of The Lakota East Girls Cross Country team led her team to place 6th overall with a score of 199 points with Miss Harris’s time of 19:00.7 to be the quickest in the 5k for the East Girls Cross Country team.

Girls Div 1 Points 5k: 248 pts
Girls Div 1 Points 2 mile: 253 pts
Girls Div 1 Points 1 mile: 261 pts
2017 misc. stats

Girls Div 1 Points 5k: 159 pts
Girls Div 1 Points 2 mile: 174 pts
Girls Div 1 Points 1 mile: 199 pts
2018 mic. stats

Girls Div 1 Points 5k: 121 pts
Girls Div 1 Points 2 mile: 118 pts
Girls Div 1 Points 1 mile: 143 pts
2019 misc. stats
“If one person were to fall off, somebody else can pick it up for the team. We all trust each other a lot and we can depend on each other.” - Danielle Hoter

“Our training helped [us push through races] because we train for specific things. For regionals we train for the hills and for state we train for the long straightaways,” Hooter says. “Coach tutors our training to the course.”

At the beginning of the season, Thomas knew this team was different than the other teams he coached because of their confidence.

“When the juniors and seniors were freshmen and sophomores, they weren’t very confident, even though we knew how good they were,” Thomas says. “That’s one thing they’ve come a long way with. They believe they’re a good team and one of the best teams in the state and one of the best teams in the country, so I think that confidence has gone a long way.”

After the state meet, East went on to compete in the Nike Cross Regional (NXR) Midwest meet on Nov. 16. The best teams from Indiana, Illinois, Ohio, Michigan, and Missouri ran in the Championship race, trying to earn a spot in the top two to automatically qualify to Nike Cross Nationals (NXN) in Portland, Oregon.

East placed sixth at NXR out of 31 teams with a score of 235 points. Beavercreek won second with 112 points and automatically qualified for NXN.

“It was a great way to end my high school (cross country) career here at Lakota East,” Hooter says. “I’m really proud of the team and everything we accomplished. I can’t wait to see what else they accomplish.”

FLIPPING INTO THE NEW YEAR

A her losing seniors Lucy Hartmann and 2019 Cincinnati Gymnast of the Year Tiyanna Woodruff to graduation, East Girls Gymnastics coach Mardi Dagley is looking forward to the new season with lots of fresh new faces.

“We have a lot of freshmen,” Dagley says. “We’re really bottom heavy, which is a good problem. We have something to build up for the program.”

The team placed 10th all around at Southwest District Championships last year, and are working towards districts for the 2020 season.

“We don’t really have a goal other than to be at our best by districts, wherever that places us,” Dagley says. “All we can do is control our performance.”

The departure of graduated senior Tiyanna Woodruff will be hard to follow. Woodruff placed second all around in the team’s first meet last year. This continued through the season with Woodruff placing at least one event at almost every meet. She finished the season qualifying for state with a score 34.95 all around.

Dagley is relying on her new juniors and seniors like Emily DeVilbiss, Kayla Stanek, Lydia Bentelman, Taylor Terrell, and Celia Griffaw to compensate for the loss.

East junior Emily DeVilbiss is returning this year with big goals for districts after being out her sophomore year from a back injury.

“I’m working suks right now,” DeVilbiss told Spark. “That would be my goal, to compete at districts or even potentially do a beam routine at districts.”

A tsukahara (or suk) on vault consists of a half turn off the springboard onto the vault table, then a push backwards, usually into a back salto or layout. DeVilbiss is also trying to achieve a giant on bars by districts. A giant is where the gymnast rotates 360 degrees around the bar while in a fully extended position.

Scanlon is also working some big skills, with a double salto on floor. A salto is a flip or somersault, with the feet coming up over the head and the body rotating around the axis of the waist. Scanlon says she’s strongest events this season are beam and bars.

Dagley is relying on Scanlon’s consistency for the season.

“[Scanlon], she’s a junior and she’s like (Griffaw), she’s one of our solid performers,” Dagley says. “She won’t necessarily go out and hit the biggest number but she always gives us a consistent, solid performance.”

East senior Kyla Stanek, junior Emily DeVilbiss and senior Lydia Bentelman are working towards districts for the 2020 season.

“We added several new girls and we lost some good seniors,” Dagley says. “Hopefully we can fill in what we lost with them and just keep building on it.”

“The Lakota East gymnastics team is working towards this year’s districts with a team full of underclassmen. Filled with consistent performers, they are looking forward to a promising year.

What is the hardest part about cross country? The hardest part about cross country is the mental part. Keeping yourself going. Your body is what hurts the most usually after practices or competitions.

What is one defining moment that stood out from the rest of your season? My second season I broke 17 minutes. So that’s pretty exciting. I just kept going from there.

What is the biggest difference between this year and the last? Last year I was only a freshman, so I didn’t have the same intensity of workouts or volume, necessarily. It was more of just getting used to it. This year, there are a lot more expectations. •
A first-year graduate student, Waller looks to turn the program around in his second season. Struggling in the Greater Miami Conference (GMC) last year, the team looks to be more competitive this year.

The team, 3-0, with all of its wins coming against non-conference opponents – the first time since 2012 that the girls have started the season on a three-game win streak.

The Hawks have new faces this year, with freshman Madison French, along with four sophomores: Sarah Sewak, Olivia Hines, Liz Tinsley, and Ashley Fohl. French is already providing a spark for the young team.

Wallace pushed conditioning in the offseason, mentioning the improvement he sees it will have on this season.

“I made them uncomfortable this offseason,” Wallace said. “I made them work out in the sand in the middle of summer in 100-degree heat and made them run laps in the weight room. So, you know, a lot of the improvement will be on the improvement that they make this season.”

Not only do they have a strong group of underclassmen, but they also have five returning seniors. This should give them some experience for the team as having equal importance. Players including six sophomores.

French is already providing a spark for the young team. Tenoever, and Ashley Fohl. French is already providing a spark for the young team.

The Hawks will face a very competitive GMC schedule, including rivals Lakota West, Mason, and the up-and-coming, Princeton Vikings, run by former East coach Jill. All of these teams had great seasons last year, including district rival Lakota West going 22-4 overall and 14-1 in conference play.

“We’re expecting to surprise a lot of people, especially in the GMC, specifically with the loss of superstar Greater Miami Conference (GMC) player of the year Adkins says Grant Spicer, since graduated, was the dominant player. Adkins says they don’t like to take out individual players and praises everyone on the team as having equal importance. Players including six sophomores.

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The ultimate idea behind that is to make sure that we get prepared for the tournament,” Adkins says. “The ultimate idea behind that is to make sure that we get prepared for the tournament.”

Senior Kaden Furhmann, who was the team’s third leading scorer last year with 7.7 points per game, knows that they will face many tough opponents this season.

“Teams like Mason, Oak Hills, and Mentor are well-coached teams, disciplined and tough,” Furhmann says. “They have great players to go along with that too.”

East also has no shortage of talented players. The team features a mix of experienced underclassmen to go along with many younger players, including six sophomores.

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The defending GMC Champs Hawks have been a consistent force in the highly competitive GMC, finishing in the top four for the last five years. Adkins is well aware of the challenges that being in the GMC presents, mentioning programs like Princeton and Lakota West.

“Our league is so tough and you know whether you just go down the line with programs like Oak Hills and Mason,” Adkins says. “I think there’ll be a lot of parity in the conference this year.”

On top of being a part of an extremely competitive conference, the team also loads their schedule with tough out-of-conference foes. Teams such as Tafi, St. X, and Mentor headline the list. The team is also traveling down to Orlando to play three more talented squads.

“We play a really tough non-conference schedule, it’s something we always do,” Adkins says. “The ultimate idea behind that is to make sure that we get prepared for the tournament.”

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BUILDING A DYNASTY

After the East Boys Golf team makes a 4th straight appearance in the OHSAA state championship, players and coaches reflect on what has contributed to the program's continued success.

story: mason wise
photography: andrew marshall
infographic: kelly johnages

It was a crisp fall morning as teams from the Greater Miami Conference (GMC) gathered at Players Pond Golf Club in Hamilton, Ohio to compete for the conference championship. East entered the tournament seeking their sixth consecutive GMC crown after winning it each of the last five seasons. However, the team just down the road at Mason High School did not make it easy for them.

It was only a two-team battle for first place, as East and Mason were back and forth on both days of the tournament. Fairfield finished a distant third place (nearly 40 strokes behind East and Mason). The extremely close match came down to the very last hole, as East sophomore Joe Wilson IV sank a clutch put to seal the Hawks’ third conference championship in school history by just one stroke, winning by a score of 584-585.

This victory was just the beginning for this team, who had a very high potential to start the season. East head coach Jeff Combs, who was named GMC Coach of the Year, emphasized this, and said that his team was even more motivated to duplicate their success from previous seasons.

“Our guys were very driven all year to get back to state after finishing second last season, and try to reach even higher goals this year,” Combs says. “They worked hard for the entire off-season with conditioning and playing in tournaments.”

For the entire season, the team made it their goal to not only return to the state championship, but to win it all. After finishing second and coming up just short of winning first the previous season, the idea of bringing home a state title to East kept the team highly motivated.

Senior Peyton Houston, who is committed to play collegiate Golf at Wright State University and won Second Team All-GMC honors, mentions that he had high hopes for his team from the very beginning of the season.

“The main thing that kept us motivated was the idea of winning a state title,” Houston says. “We knew we had the team to do it. We knew that we had a great chance of doing it, and we wanted to bring a state championship to East so badly.”

Although they had set a goal to win the state title, they came up just short after finishing third place in the Ohio High School Athletic Association (OHSAA) state tournament back in November. However, this took nothing away from their accomplished season, which further added to the dynasty that their program has become in recent years.

Not only did motivation help this team to be successful, but their immense talent and strong team chemistry benefited them against some of the best teams in the state of Ohio.

Regarding their talent, the team was led by a strong group of four seniors, as well as two outstanding sophomores, Joe Wilson IV and Ty Sylla, who are among some of the highest ranked players in the state from the class of 2022. When it was all said and done, East had five players that were recognized for First Team All-GMC honors.

East sophomore Joe Wilson IV, who nailed the winning putt that sealed their victory over Mason, mentioned how big of an impact that talent had to this year’s team and knows that it was a huge part of why they accomplished so much.

“We had some extremely talented players on our team this year,” Wilson says. “It was a very talented group of guys. We were all some of the top players in Ohio, so we knew we could really do some damage at GMC’s and at the state tournament. That was a huge motivator knowing that we had such a great team, and we wanted to take advantage of that opportunity.”

Peyton Houston also made note of the very tight bond that the team had on and off the course. This allowed them to play their best when it truly mattered most and when competition was at its highest.

“We’ve had a great run the last few years, and our goal is to keep that success going,” Houston says that strong chemistry not only helped this years team, but was also something that existed on every other East team he had been a part of, dating all the way back to his freshman year. In essence, this was the key to East’s continued dynasty.

“We made this team, and every other team I have been a part of in my four years at East so special was the team chemistry,” Houston says.

The countless hours of time spent in the gym and practicing out on the course really brought us all together. My favorite part of playing on this team was the brotherhood that we had created.”

After another historic season in the books, East is now focused on next year and is looking forward to adding to their established dynasty. With four of the six varsity players being seniors, they will certainly have a lot of youth on next year’s roster.

Joe Wilson IV, who will be returning for two more years along with fellow sophomore Ty Sylla, has great confidence in the future of the program and says that he cannot wait to step into one of the leadership roles on the team.

“I think we can do some pretty big things in the next two years,” Wilson says. “We are going to have to step up and help lead our team. We’ve had a great run the last few years, and our goal is to keep that success going.”

When looking back on the season as a whole, Coach Combs mentioned how extremely proud he was of the team and the things they achieved, especially after losing such a strong group of seniors last year.

“I am really proud of this group of guys, especially after losing the best player in East history Kyle Schmidt, and still winning GMC, Districts, and making it to state,” Combs says. “Once we got to state, I felt like this team was as prepared as any that I have ever coached, and I thought we had a great chance to win.”

Senior Peyton Houston plays at the OHSAA state tournament where the team placed third. Peyton tied for 31st in individual placements.

“We knew we had the team to do it. We knew that we had a great chance of doing it, and we wanted to bring a state championship to East so badly.” — Peyton Houston

Lakota East Boys Golf Team Rankings at OHSAA State Tournament

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After losing 1-0 versus Olentangy Liberty in the state semifinal at Xenia High School, East players displayed an expected amount of sadness and dismay when the final whistle blew. However, when the feelings of sorrow subsided for the players and coaches, they were quick to realize something: they had made history.

Previous to this remarkable run, East men’s soccer had only reached the Final Four once, in 1999, and pointed out a few similarities that left everything they had on the field and kept nothing.”

lemon credits his defense for the nine shutouts, complimenting their ability to communicate.

In "The two center backs in particular, Brady Shapiro and Braden Anderson, were constantly talking to me," Lemen says. "They never let the other team get an unchallenged shot off.”

However, left back Jack Plennert says that Lemen deserves a lot of credit for their stifling defense along with the defenders, mentioning the fact that he has made other big saves, such as saving the penalty kick against West leading to an eventual victory. “To be honest I think [Lemen] is the best keeper in the state,” Plennert says. “He’s very good in the air and knowing when to trave his line to make a play.”

Defense and goalkeeping are far from the only strengths that the 2019 team possessed. First team All-Conference Luke Birdsong scored a team-leading 15 goals, with Parker Crowell, who was also first team All-Conference, who scored seven goals and 12 assists.

The emphasis on offense was evident throughout the team’s practices late into the postseason. A large portion of the focus was placed on scoring: during 2 versus 2 and 4 versus 4 drills.

“We did a lot of physical activities, like 2 v 2 and 4 v 4s,” Plennert says. “We were really just focusing on putting the ball in the back of the net.”

Another key to the run was the film study that took place before each match, then taking those things and placing emphasis on them in practice.

“We placed a high emphasis on speed of play, being defensively organized,” Hilen says. “As well as focusing on finishing off of set pieces.”

One thing that is difficult to emulate in practice is the resilience it takes to come from behind in games. But, the Hawks clearly responded to adversity well with their wins coming from behind in the postseason.

According to senior defender Brady Shapiro, this was part of their mentality all year long.

“arly mentality, we focused on bouncing back from anything,” Shapiro says. “Every single day we would get better from practice.”

Despite the strong finish, things were not exactly smooth sailing early in the season. Through the team’s first 10 games, they were 4-3-5. After those first ten games, the team rallied off 16 straight wins, a program record.

The improvement over the later part of the season was the result of better leadership, according to Shapiro.

“The leadership on this team was a struggle when we first started our season,” Shapiro says. “The leadership through the season grew exponentially.”

Hilen says that having 14 seniors on the team, each with the exceptional leadership qualities allowed the team to never get down on themselves even when the team was behind.

“We had sparks from our captains that ignited the momentum we need to qualify the score,” Hilen says, “to pull ahead of our opponent and maintain the lead with tough team defense.”

Another key to the run was the "brotherhood" formed by the team on and off the field. The close-knit group said that they knew they could rely on one another.

The biggest thing was definitely the brotherhood we created throughout the season," Lemen says. “We were always there for each other.”

Even though the team came up just short of their end goal, they know the journey was still worthwhile.

“We know that we didn’t get the end result that we wanted,” Plennert says. “But we have made memories and friends that will last a lifetime.”

Story: Drew Bachman | Photography and photo illustration: Andrew Marshall

East men’s soccer returns to the Final Four for the first time since 1999, as their coach, a starter on the 1999 team, led the team to its best season since.

"In 1999 Matt Chioldi was striker, Casey Fisher was center midfielder, and myself (Jeremy Hilen) was the central defender," Hilen says. "In 2019 Luke Birdsong was striker, Parker Crowell played center midfield, and Brady Shapiro was the central defender.”

Hilen mentioned both teams abilities to play their hearts out, leading to deep postseason runs for both.

"Both teams played with relentless effort," Hilen says. “Every player left everything they had on the field and kept nothing.”

The specifics of both team's runs were also very similar. As both teams had to go knock out two number one seeds from Cincinnati and Dayton. In 1999, the team beat LaSalle in the regional semifinal and Centerville in the regional final. The 2019 team beat Beavercreek in the district final and Moeller in the regional final.

The team’s defense was an evident point throughout their season with nine total shutouts, one of which was a 2-0 victory over the one seed in the region, Beavercreek, in the district finals. Goalkeeper Nic Lemen made a key acrobatic save to keep the score at 1-0 in the second half when he jumped into the air to punch the ball over the crossbar with his arms and legs fully extended.

Defenders Matt Chioldi and Matt Chiodi were a rare back line to make a play.”

Senior Eyad Qaqish dribbles the ball in a 1-0 victory against West.
Sports writers Abbie Westendorf and Mason Wise debate whether instant replay should be implemented into high school football games.

The controversial play against Princeton in which Princeton quarterback Myajden Horton scored a touchdown against East. Horton’s knee can be seen in the photo, down before the goal line.

On Sept. 27, the Princeton Vikings placed a visit to the Hawks Nest to play in what has become one of the most iconic Greater Miami Conference (GMC) contests in recent years. The Hawks were flying high, winning each of their last three games. Many anticipated a closely contested game, and the results did not disappoint.

It was a physical game throughout, at the two teams exchanged heavy blows. East dominated the line of scrimmage for much of the contest, which allowed them a comfortable 21-7 lead entering the final quarter.

However, Princeton exploded for 21 points in the fourth quarter, ending the game with a 28-24 victory after holding the East offense to just a field goal in that period of time. But there were many questions about the game, and the results did not disappoint.

Not only that, the Hawks offensive line had a strong performance, and many others that featured controversial calls throughout the game are a strong indication as to why Ohio high school football desperately needs instant replay.

State officials from the Ohio High School Athletic Association (OHSA) have already approved the use of instant replay in high school football games statewide. In 2018, the Alabama High School Athletic Association (AHSAA) partnered with DV Sport, a company that specializes in instant replay. This specific system, similar to the one in Ohio, allows officials to review calls in close games, review controversial plays, and any other instances that are deemed significant by the officials and would not normally be reviewed.

Although it was only approved for use during the state championship game, it is very likely that the decision would be approved for all Ohio high schools in the next couple seasons, and it is certainly a step in the right direction. With highly advanced technology, there has never been a better time to implement a replay system such as this.

Not only would it help officials to catch and correct mistakes and help referees to catch any missed calls, but it would also be helpful for the coaches and players to see if their plays were successful or not.

Not only that, but implementing instant replay would also come in addition to other instances that require a stoppage of the clock, such injuries, penalties, or coaches’ timeouts. This would greatly disrupt the flow of the game, and would negatively impact teams who have offenses that operate at a high tempo. In other words, instant replay could not only affect certain calls on the field, but also the flow of the game, which would require some teams to alter their gameplan.

While implementing instant replay into high school football games sounds great, in its simplest form, there are many other factors that must be considered in order to make it a reality. Because this is dealing with athletics at the high school level, there are many financial issues that could arise for athletic departments and their programs, especially at smaller schools.

Not only that, but implementing instant replay would also come in addition to other instances that require a stoppage of the clock, such injuries, penalties, or coaches’ timeouts. This would disrupt the flow of the game, and would negatively impact teams who have offenses that operate at a high tempo. In other words, instant replay could not only affect certain calls on the field, but also the flow of the game, which would require some teams to alter their gameplan.

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The Hawks offense to just a field goal in that period of time. But there were many questions about the game, and the results did not disappoint.

Not only that, the Hawks offensive line had a strong performance, and many others that featured controversial calls throughout the game are a strong indication as to why Ohio high school football desperately needs instant replay.

State officials from the Ohio High School Athletic Association (OHSA) have already approved the use of instant replay in high school football games statewide. In 2018, the Alabama High School Athletic Association (AHSAA) partnered with DV Sport, a company that specializes in instant replay.

DV Sport provides its equipment to any school who chooses to implement the system, as long as they have sufficient funds to do so.

The system was offered to Alabama high schools cost each school around $3,000 for the first year of use, and an additional $1,500 in subsequent years. These costs cover training and maintenance support.

Obviously, not every school is able to afford these costs, but out of all the high school football-playing schools in Alabama, a total of 96 of them played in at least one game that was offered instant replay in 2018, according to the AHSAA governing body. This is right around 25% of schools, and that is just in the first year alone.

Assuming that these prices would be around the same if Ohio high schools were to implement the system, East would certainly be among the schools that could afford it. Especially considering the fact that the East football program brought in over $400,000 in the 2019 season alone.

Not only that, but they only spent a total of around $15,000 throughout the season, in adding another couple thousand dollars per year for the replay system would be far from a financial burden for the school. Even if it were considered a financial problem, making the right calls in close games, like East vs. Princeton, is just as important as high school football to be able to maintain its relevance.

Although only a few states in the country currently have access to instant replay, the Ohio High School Athletic Association (OHSA) Board of Directors approved the use of instant replay in high school football games in 2018, according to a statement released by OHSA Senior Director of Officiating and Sport Management Ben Rugg.

Although it was only approved for use during the state championship game, it is very likely that the decision would be approved for all Ohio high schools in the next couple seasons, and it is certainly a step in the right direction. With highly advanced technology, there has never been a better time to implement a replay system such as this.

Not only would it help officials to catch and correct mistakes and help referees to catch any missed calls, but it would also be helpful for the coaches and players to see if their plays were successful or not.

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In what every teenager dreams of: the freedom, the exploration, the fun; getting a driver’s license marks the pinnacle; high school, where that teenager finally begins to feel like an adult. Instilling that responsibility is unquestionable in teenagers’ development into the complexity of adulthood.

When given the opportunity, a high school would choose to drive themselves to school rather than being on a crowded, noisy bus. That is why it is impractical for Lakota to reinstate regular busing services to high school students at the main campuses.

Busing services for Lakota high school students was first taken away in 2012-2013 school year after a failed tax levy in November 2011 caused Lakota to cut expenditures by over $12 million. In an effort to lessen the impacts to classroom operations, school transportation took the hit.

The budget cuts occurred when I was in 4th grade, and my busing route was one of those that was affected. Throughout the rest of my days in elementary school I had to carpool in order to get to school. This made school activities, such as clubs and homework, difficult to participate in.

Busing to elementary school students is a necessity and should not have been taken away. But generally high school students have more options to get to school, so busing is not necessarily needed.

It has been seven years since students in grades 9-12 have not had the option of taking a bus to school; while in the beginning the change was difficult, today’s students and Logan. This added expenditure is projected to cause the district to enter a spending deficit in 2022, one year earlier than what was previously projected in Lakota’s five-year financial forecast.

Lakota is the eight largest public school district in Ohio and the only district within the top ten largest school districts to not provide busing to all of its students, according to the Ohio Department of Education. Not having basic services being provided to every student reflects poorly on Lakota’s public image.

Adding more bus routes to include all high school students would bring up more than just monetary problems for the district. Lakota has had difficulty sourcing bus drivers for years as evident with the district’s bus provider Petermann Transportation threatening to strike in 2019, which would have left the district without busing entirely. Research conducted by the Cincinnati Enquirer has also shown that there is a decreasing amount of bus drivers within the Cincinnati area.

The district currently employs 200 drivers through Petermann and will require 55 more to compensate with next year’s freshman student additions. This reflects the difficulty Lakota will have sourcing new drivers in such a short time span.

Another obstacle Lakota faces is the space to store the extra buses and cars of bus drivers. Necessary. Currently the service center where the buses are housed connects with the Liberty Junior School parking lot. According to board

Since the Lakota School Board passed a unanimous vote to reinstate busing to the freshman campuses, the question arises of whether busing should be provided to all high school students.

Should there be busing to grades 9-12?

YES

column leah mccain
art alexandra fernholz

NO

column regan denham
art alexandra fernholz

Children were in elementary school, some parents didn’t have to worry about getting them to and from school because busing was provided not including students that live in a one-mile radius of their school. Now that these kids are in high school, where busing isn’t available, students have to wait after school for a ride home.

I didn’t get my license my senior year because I was too focused on school and music to worry about driving. I was always asking for rides from my friends and brothers when I was away from home. I was at East until 4:00 or 4:30 because both of my parents were working. However, when I left the school building there were always a handful of students still waiting for a ride.

According to Drive Safely, an online driving school, students aren’t getting their license when they’re 16 include difficulty buying/owning a car, lacking funds to pay high gas prices and car insurance, fewer school-based programs that support drivers’ education, and dealing with the

East students are able to drive for a numerous cost of reasons, therefore, they’ve had to suffer because most of their peers are able to drive. Buses, although expensive, are beneficial to both the environment and the safety of the parking lot. They also relieve parents of the stress of getting their child to and from school.

Many students in the main campus are a few of the districts in southern Ohio that still offer busing for their high schoolers. Before Lakota tried to within two school years the students they should first focus on the transportation of their students.

On Nov. 18, the Lakota Board of Education voted to provide busing to East and West freshman campuses. This decision will be put into action beginning in the 2020-2021 school year, costing an estimated $27.2 million dollars each year to fund the entire operation. The board did not want the main campus to geobusing next year because this would affect the school’s schedule. Some board members explained that this would affect students with a zero period because the board does not know if they would be able to keep the additional period.

Despite the increase in cost to provide busing for Lakota’s main campuses, roughly two million dollars, there are many benefits that must be considered. According to the YellowBird Bus Company, a bus company serving southern Pennsylvania, using buses as transportation can reduce traffic, pollution, make school more accessible, and provide a safer commute to school. It is also found that students are 20 times more likely to get to school safe on a school bus than if they were to drive themselves to school.

For teen drivers that are new to the road, their safety increases by 50 times. Buses are housed connects with the Liberty Junior School parking lot. According to board

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DEMOCRACY IN PERIL

JR KELLEY

photography and art alexandra fernholz

For the last five months, the residents of Hong Kong have been pouring into the streets in protest against the Chinese government, which has been slowly encroaching on the liberties of Hong Kong. The protests have steadily become more violent each weekend. On October 1st, a police officer shot a protester in the chest, marking the first use of deadly force by the government. I’ve always been attracted to stories that revolve around tyranny. It makes me feel fortunate to have been born in America, the land of the free and home of the brave. Many people around the world don’t revel in the same luxuries of freedom every day as we do and that is truly a tragedy.

China represents an antithesis of America and democracy in general with its system of government and the treatment of its people. China is communist, the government is authoritarian, and more civil liberties are stripped away each year. There’s been controversy with Uyghurs - a Turkic minority, mostly Muslim in China who are being kidnapped and sent to concentration camps in rural China. It’s not just minorities’ rights that have been completely set aside by China. It’s everyone who doesn’t obey. Beijing has long labored to fully assimilate Hong Kong ever since China reclaimed Hong Kong from the British. Hong Kong developed independently from communist China until 1997. Hong Kong has a thriving capitalist economy, democratic elections, and something most importantly, liberty. All of these are completely opposite of the Chinese system. Skipping these recent protests was an extradition bill. The bill would make it possible for residents of Hong Kong to be tried for crimes in mainland China. There was great outrage at the idea that mainland China could potentially abduct residents of Hong Kong away from their democratic institutions.

Over time, the police force in Hong Kong has become increasingly violent and suppressive. They allowed China-gang members to brutally assault protesters in a train station, sprayed protesters with blue paint to mark them for arrest, installed facial recognition towers to compile a list of those who dared to resist, fired tear gas from potentially deadly heights, assaulted journalists and medics, the list goes on. Part of the reason people don’t care about this story or give it the attention it deserves is that American politicians aren’t as life-or-death as these protests, and as a result, it’s hard for Americans to care. Our political debates and protests are important, but they don’t have nearly as much importance and weight behind them as the protests going on in Hong Kong.

A vote in America might be disappointed if their pick for president doesn’t win, but a protest in Hong Kong could lose their freedoms if not their life if they lose. There’s a total disconnect that’s hard for us as Americans to comprehend and surmount. Hong Kong, so far, is really succeeding. The extradition bill was recently formally withdrawn. This has only made Hong Kong more determined to reclaim more of its lost freedoms and progress in even bigger numbers. The future for Hong Kong is unclear, but I am sure that in the future we will reflect back on this moment in history as either the making, or the breaking moment for the Chinese communist regime.

Alexis Martin was desperate. At only 15 years old she was strangled in a horrendous situation. On Nov. 7, 2015 her chance arose for her to potentially make her escape. The opportunity however, would be just as gruesome as the life she currently lived. After learning of an upcoming robbery of her pimp, Angelo Kerney, Martin hoped she would be able to finally shed the chains of human trafficking. However, the situation quickly turned when Kerney was killed as Martin was raped in the next room. Despite not actually pulling the trigger, Martin was charged with the murder of the man who forced her into explicit dancing and selling drugs on the street. Martin is now serving a 21 years-to-life sentence without parole until 2034. On Jan. 12, 2019, human trafficking survivor bravewore the cold in Columbus, Ohio to protest then Gov. John Kasich’s refusal to act on behalf of Martin. Supporters of Martin felt her circumstances closely resembled that of Cynthia Brown, who was 16 when she shot and killed a man she was forced to have sex with. After serving 15 years of a life sentence, Brown was granted clemency by former Tennessee Governor Bill Haslam for what he called a “tragic and complex case.” The parallel in the cases, however, is where Martin was hurt most.

The state contended that since she wasn’t charged with commercial sex-related offenses and that the crimes she was accused of were unrelated to her having been trafficked, she failed to fall under the safety of the law. The failure to protect Martin not only highlights the disturbing reality of human trafficking, but the issue of the U.S.’s obsession with incarceration. According to the 2019 Prison Policy Initiative report the American criminal justice system holds almost 2.3 million people in 1,779 state prisons, 109 federal prisons, 1,772 juvenile correctional facilities, 3,265 jails, and 80 Indian Country jails as well as in military prisons, immigration detention facilities, civil commitment centers, state psychiatric hospitals, and prisons in the U.S. territories. Out of the 63,000 youth incarcerated, nearly one in 10 who are being held for a criminal or delinquent offense are locked in an adult jail or prison.

The situation in which Martin found herself is complicated and intense, but the events of the night don’t make her guilty. A lack in understanding the world of human trafficking, however, is where Martin was hurt most.

“If she hadn’t been trafficked and victimized like she was she would be living a totally different life right now,” Martin’s attorney Jennifer Knutzy told Spark.

The level of fear imposed upon Martin by Kerney is something that could have been depicted in court. The amount of pain she suffered through is unimaginable. Martin doesn’t deserve to be in jail for the murder of a man who subjected her to the trauma of human trafficking. She deserves support and a second chance at a life she didn’t even get to begin.

It’s frustrating and heartbreaking to know that Kasich, who signed the Safe Harbor law, ignored Martin’s horrific experience. However, there’s hope that she will get her chance. On December 20th Martin had a parole board meeting in which eight out of 10 reviewers voted for her to be released immediately. The documents are currently on Gov. Dewine’s desk awaiting the signature that could set her free.

alexis fernholz

photography and art alexandra fernholz

photoessay

ALEXIS MARTIN

A BIDDLE

December 2019 lakotaeastsparkonline.com

December 2019 lakotaeastsparkonline.com
I began driving at the end of my sophomore year of high school. The sound of my little car starting up was music to my ears when I first heard it, but the sound of that car was nothing when matched against overplayed, repetitive radio music.

This inconvenience of having to listen through 30-minute advertisement breaks and disquieting turntable scratches has led radio music to its downfall and paved the way for a new competitor. That competitor is called streaming.

We live in “The Information Age,” a time period which Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines as “the modern age regarded as a time in which information has become a commodity that is quickly and widely disseminated and easily available.”

Music streaming is one way that information has become a commodity. People can open an app on their phone, search for any song they want, and play it in seconds. According to Nielsen’s 2018 Year-End Music Report, in just one year, the number of on-demand audio streams grew by a staggering 49 percent. Another study by Nielsen reveals that between 2013 and 2018, the number of songs streamed on the internet has increased by at least eight times over.

Not only have the numbers themselves increased, the revenue generated by streaming services has increased as well. According to the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA), streaming now accounts for 65 percent of all United States music revenue.

In response to this, radios have tried to revolutionize themselves by choosing more of all United States music revenue.

Radio stations try to keep up with streaming services by keeping a playlist full of all the latest songs, but their playlists tend to be short and monotonous. In order to market to their largest demographic, it would benefit them more to play older songs that listeners from Gen-X would be more inclined to recognize.

But radio does have some advantages over streaming. With streaming, music lovers such as me must create our own playlists and man the stereo system ourselves. The task of creating such a playlist without hypocritically repeating the actions of the radio stations can take hours to perfect. Variation is key, and without it, boredom is inevitable.

Pandora is a good example of how radio is revolutionizing itself to better appeal to Gen-Z listeners. Listeners can choose the genre or artist that they want to listen to of many premade stations. They still have all their information at their fingertips, but with even more variety of the songs that they hear.

Learning from this could benefit traditional stations drastically. Listeners are better entertained when they hear songs that aren’t as commonplace and overplayed, yet still sound good. Having variety and scarce repetition could replace the DJs that fill mainstream music with DJs that introduce their audience to a new artist.

Maybe on Monday morning when I drive to school, I’ll hear something different on the radio, and not SICKED MODIE, for the 187th time. •

It’s a situation I’ve been in too many times to count, yet each time it makes me feel sick. I’m walking with my friends through Kings Island, laughing and savouring each moment, when we pass a designated smoking area. The stench of smoke fills the air around us, taking over the once fresh-smelling breeze.

Without a second thought, my peers begin to direct sharp, menacing glares in the smokers’ direction, returning their quick glances up with exaggerated coughing and loud declarations of their burning eyes. But I always wonder, what’s the point? When I see the hurt faces behind the smoke staring back at me, I start to notice the person, not the cigarette.

Efforts to shame people into breaking a bad habit such as smoking are not only ineffective but can even be detrimental to the process of cessation. Our society’s natural reaction to unfavorable behaviors by means of embarrassment is a major part of the problem. Although shaming might work in some situations, it is not the best way to go about evoking change. A recent study by the Methodology Center and the Barnett Pierce Prevention Research Center at Penn State University found that the majority of smokers surveyed experienced feelings of guilt and embarrassment and would often describe themselves as “low lives” or “outcasts.”

This sense of hopelessness, researchers found, caused many of the participants to develop a defense mechanism, similar to those with mental health issues. Common displays of these defenses included becoming angry at the government and anti-smoking officials or continuing to smoke as a way to “prove” their self-esteem.

Despite these embarrassment-focused efforts hurting the cause, people still apply to them without a second thought. One reason for this is society’s antiquistic views of people whose addictions are seen as shameful compared to our own.

When non-smoking ads come on TV, viewers are constantly reminded of the stereotypical idea that smokers don’t care about their own lives and have low work ethics. Parents who miss their kid’s basketball game so they can go outside and smoke since they don’t love their family as much as the non-smoking parents on the sidelines. A corporate worker with rotting teeth who doesn’t care how aversive he is to his coworkers. As someone who has family members who smoke, hearing these stereotypes can be deep. These views don’t encourage people to change; instead, it can make them internalize the stigma of smokers constantly hear that those who smoke are negligent and repulsive, they will be less willing to open up to others for support, much less go to a doctor who could help them get the care they need.

The issues of shaming are not specific to the smoking community. A Yougov survey found that 56 percent of young people think that if a peer their age were to develop a mental condition they would be treated differently by other students, 55 percent thought they would lose friends, and 55 percent said they would feel embarrassed.

According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), one in six U.S. youth experienced issues with mental health in 2018. These statistics are especially alarming. When such a large number of people are facing these challenges, the prevalent opinion that they should feel embarrassed is dangerous. People need to receive proper help, whether it be via therapy or pharmaceuticals, and with shame standing in their way it can make the healing process much more difficult.

Improving accessibility to preventative and educational programs is also necessary in order to combat the problem. Even in Butler County where there are 7 registered hospitals within a 20 mile radius, his may pose an obstacle. According to Northwestern Mutual, the average cost of a 45-minute talk therapy session is between $75 to $150. For many families, this is out of reach. When large populations of people see these approaches as out of the picture due to accessibility, people may use other ineffective methods, like shaming, to address their issues.

To fix these occurring issues, we must change the way we view and take action against stigmatized communities. Changing the way we display people struggling in these situations, whether it be in the media, education, or in our legislation, is one way.

But listening, rather than disregarding, is the crucial first step.
Are realistic school shooting drills desensitizing students?

FRESHMAN

"Yes, because there's a lot happening and people just don't care anymore. They're used to it."

SOPHOMORE

"Yes, I think so because the more we hear about it the less we start to care about it, especially because now it's becoming more natural to us and we've kind of adapted to like the regular reality of school shootings. And there are definitely not enough laws to stop them."

JUNIOR

"Yes, I feel like if you put that into a kid's mind, they are more likely to overthink it and think about it more often."

SENIOR

"Yes, because there's a lot happening and people just don't care anymore. They're used to it."

Interviews rehab jarabah | Photography Riley Higgins

"Life isn't always a straight and narrow path. And this year seems as though it's just a series of curveballs. One of the roots of these curveballs seems to be similar to my peers, every senior's worst nightmare and saving grace all in one: college applications."

"The task itself wasn't daunting, just tedious. I started senior year believing that once I applied to college, the majority of the work would be over. Helpfully, I wasn't wrong. I underestimated the amount of time scholarships could take, and I didn't know there could be other tasks ahead, such as the FASFA and scholarships, all in addition to what I already do and outside of school, which happens to be a lot.

But the waiting game that I am now playing is not easy. I put everything I had into my swing and I'm now hoping to make contact. I took more swings than most nicely and, unlike an actual game of baseball, I have to wait and see if I made contact. The odds are daunting, some as low as seven percent. The thing that keeps me going is knowing that so many other seniors who have been through this journey with me, as many have come before me, and they have all turned out alright.

This curveball is not the only one included in the game of senior year, though. There is also the ever famous 'senioritis' that becomes the senior slide.

"I never thought I would be the one to be affected by this, but boy was I wrong. As my life starts to fall into place, my priorities start falling out. For me, it is easier to fight this, as I am a CCP student and my grades follow me to college, unlike most of my peers. I wish I could say that changes everything, but it doesn't.

The only thing on my mind is getting into college. I've put all of my effort towards this goal that will lead me to the rest of my life. But what I have realized is that the college admission process is real, and it doesn't stop when you send in your applications. Continuing to work hard makes it easier in the long run.

"Though I am facing many curveballs, I can't ignore the fact that senior year has been one of the most fun years of my school career. It does not make everything better, it does distract from the curveballs and make them seem less intense."

"The point I would like to stress is the fact that it does fly by. I know, I know. I've heard this statement uttered since I was a freshman: "Senior year will be over before you know it." It felt like empty words from nostalgic seniors four years ago. But thinking about it now, I am that nostalgic senior."

"Turns out those seniors knew what they were talking about. The years really do go by too quickly. It never seems like it, though, when we're in the midst of it all throughout high school, the days dragged by as we went through our classes, enduring seemingly endless assignments. It's no different senior year. In fact, with senioritis, it might seem a tad worse."

"During school vacations, though, you realize how fast it's going. Christmas break marks mid-year, the point I am at now, my final year with the people I have known my whole life. When I think about it like that, I appreciate the moments I have with my friends—and even time spent in class."

"Hopefully what I will get is a fastball down the middle into my number one college, but if worst comes to worst, nothing says you can't turn a curveball into a homerun. •"
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