

Spark

Lakota East High School
lakotaeastsparkonline.com
December 2019 \$5 Newsstand



GOLD

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

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.

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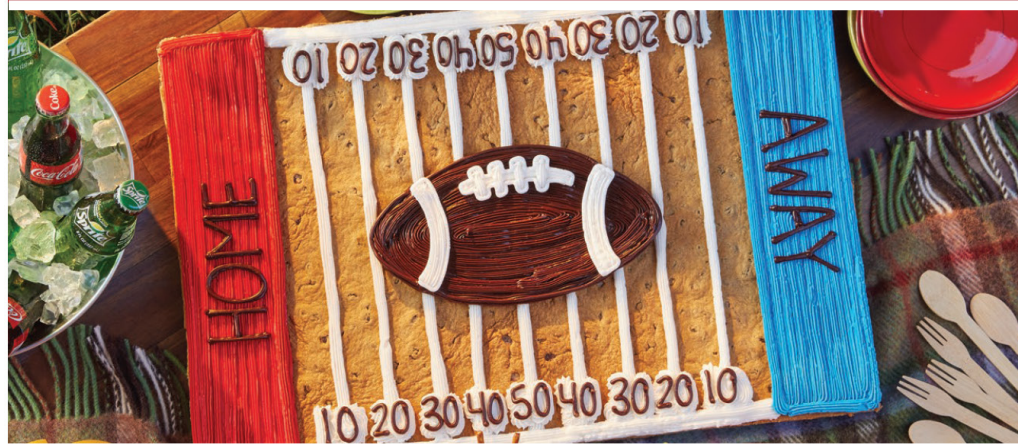
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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

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?" frightened 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, in the classroom and outside of it, and as 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 be a panther, but I'll forever be proud to have once been a Hawk.

—Former Spark News Editor *Bea Amsalu*

The accepted style for news publications is AP style. According to the AP style guide published in 2019 it is now expected that, when placed with a numeral, a percent sign will be used. Since this change occurred the Spark magazine has chosen to update our style from first to second issue and will now be using percent signs rather than spelling out percent.

The Spark encourages letters to the editor. Letters can be sent to the publication at lakotaeastspark2019@gmail.com or delivered to room 118 at the Lakota East High School Main Campus. Letters must be signed, and the staff reserves the right to edit the letters for length, grammar, invasion of privacy, obscenity or potential libel. The opinion editor will contact writers for confirmation.

ON THE COVER

photography **andrew marshall**
designed by **alexandra fernholz**



This issue of Spark has an in-depth on human trafficking. The barcode signifies the way in which victims of human trafficking are sold just like items in a store.

WE ARE THE LEVY KIDS

I first moved into the Lakota district in March of 2011, just five months after the November 2010 levy failed by 53.5% of votes. It was this failure which forced the board to cut an additional \$12 million from Lakota's budget- meaning the end of high school busing, the end of seven period days at the high schools, the elimination of sixth grade band, removal of elementary reading and media specialists, elimination of junior high athletics for the 2011-2012 school year, and increased class sizes, among other things.

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 my memories of this period are indeed hazy, I still remember the difference between school back home in Michigan versus school in my new Ohio home. School wasn't fun anymore.

Sure, I was still learning the same material. But fractions, division, and the water cycle weren't supplemented with periods to relax and just draw fish for a while. My day just wasn't the same without my daily dose of 'specials,' as they are known here- our art, gym, and music classes.

Having come from a district where these specials were everyday occurrences, I found it odd that we only got to learn about music once a week. I didn't realize that wasn't typical for a Lakota classroom.

My parents moved into Lakota because they were told it was the best district in the area. At that time, enrollment was at one of the highest levels it'd ever been- over 18,000 students. Test scores were consistently five to 10 percent above state averages. But in the first full school year, 2011-2012 after the levy, specials were put on a rotating cycle: meaning once a week for six weeks we would have one class, then switch to a different subject for the next six weeks, and so on.

For some voters, voting no on the 2011 levy was economic necessity. But for many more, it was the idea that Lakota had to do 'more with less' which obliged them to vote no. In this district, there seems to exist the idea that specials are extra- unnecessary supplements to a child's education. However, I found that Relator Lisa Phair put it best when she said at a recent community conversation: "Specials aren't special."

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, etc- these specials are routine. And as a district that relies on taxpayer dollars for 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 operating levy in eight years passed in 2013.

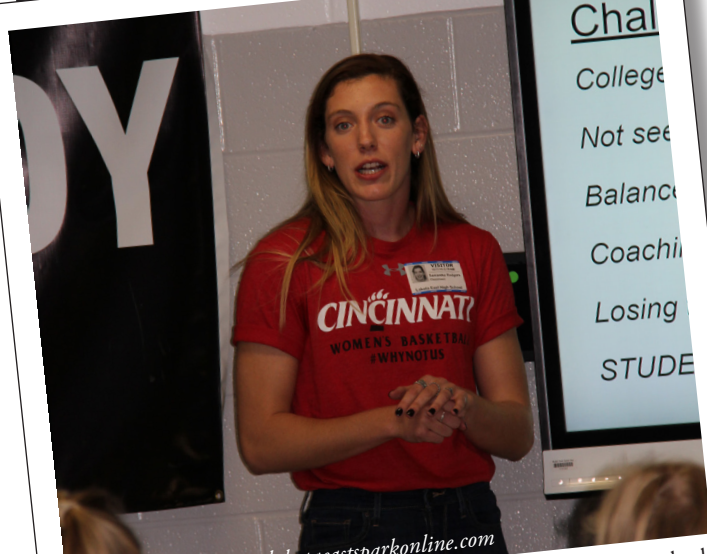
It was this levy that allowed the district to provide the RAPTOR security system that protects each Lakota door and the School Resource Officers that now stand guard at every Lakota building. It was that levy that allowed Lakota to pay for the Chromebooks every high school and junior high student now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

And in the fall of 2014, an additional rotation of art, music, and P.E. 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. •

column **alexandra fernholz**
photography **anna mullins**

LAKOTA



read the full story at lakotaeastsparkonline.com

The Girls Athletic Leadership Club (GALS) launched with the start of the 2019-2020 school year in hopes of changing the experience for women in athletics. GALS is founded on a few basic principles: promoting and supporting female athletes, supporting younger female athletes, and upping the attendance at female-led sporting events. "One of my biggest missions 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



photography marleigh winterbottom

East Main Campus is now offering an opportunity for students to purchase breakfast from a stand on Main Street in the morning during the 10 minute window of time between first and second period. The stand, which will be on Main Street all year long, offers fresh fruit and other breakfast items for students to choose from. This year is off to a successful start, with many students taking advantage of this option.

"We figure everybody should get a decent breakfast to start their day out," Lakota Child Nutrition Professional Deana Brown said. "So we come a little bit earlier and do this." - Megan Miranda



Spencer Schrudder (left) uses an actual reality headset as P&G volunteer (right) points towards areas in the room to look. Schrudder, 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 there because we only went down for 30 minutes so I didn't get to see everything." - Leah McCain



read the full story at lakotaeastsparkonline.com

East Honors and AP Chemistry teacher Liz Gosky has recently given students an option to learn about skills she believes they will need in college that are not taught in the everyday curriculum. The series of workshops is being called the "Game of Life," and each individual class is called a sprint. The sprints cover topics like getting an apartment, what to look for when signing a lease, renters insurance, interviewing, job skills, and doing taxes, to name a few. "I know there's so many things that don't get taught in classes. Real life things that people need to know," Gosky said. "When seniors walk out the door and go off to college or the workforce they're going to need to know how to do a lot of things." -Ava Hueskamp

RECAPS



STORYTIME WITH A LAKOTA PRINCIPAL

Once a month, IKEA is not just the place where people can buy anything from Swedish meatballs to coffee tables. After climbing up the escalator, one will find a Principal from the Lakota district in the restaurant, surrounded by students listening to books the principal has brought to read. The event, dubbed Storytime with a Lakota Principal, works to bring the community together in support of early literacy in a relaxed and comfortable environment.

Creekside Early Childhood School Principal Linda Pavlinac was the featured principal at October's event, bringing pumpkins for the kids to decorate as well as reading some of her favorite Halloween themed books. Pavlinac, who taught first grade at Winton Woods for many years, enjoys sharing her love of reading with kids from around the district.

"I really love to read to kids," Pavlinac said. "So I'm very happy and excited that I can be a part of this event, and give back to the community."

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 reading teacher, was eager to reach out to her community when she volunteered at the September event.

"I think it's a worthwhile program that allows [people] to meet various families from across the district and hear about their background," Allshouse said. "[As well as] their aspirations for their own children and their impressions of Lakota."

According to 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 lent itself to be casual and comfortable," Allshouse said. "I believe the parents and the children were comfortable being there, and I was comfortable with them."

Through taking the time outside of the school day to invest in students and their community, Principals like Pavlinac can show parents their investment in every child's education. According to Pavlinac, this program is able to do just that.

"We are very invested in the community," Pavlinac said. "And we want them to know that we're a part of their community."

After students had spent a few minutes decorating their pumpkins, they gathered in front of Pavlinac to listen to stories like There was an Old Lady Who Swallowed Some Leaves and Skeleton Meets the Mummy. As Pavlinac

encouraged the kids to actively participate in the story, exaggerated "aahs," silly faces, and laughter echoed around the room.

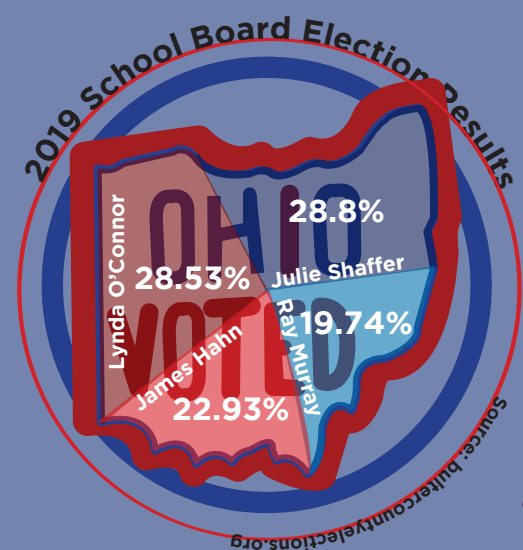
According to Diversity and Inclusion Officer for Lakota Outreach Diversity and Inclusion (LODI) Aisha Moore, strong relationships benefit student's learning and the storytime is able to help reach that goal. Moore said busy schedules don't always allow for one on one interaction with students and their 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."

Pavlinac said how holding a position of authority in the school system can sometimes make it seem as though Principals aren't like everyone else. Events like this are working to change that, showing both students and parents alike that their principals, like Pavlinac, are normal people, just like them.

"We are very invested in the community and we want them to know that," Pavlinac 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, like regular people."

-Natalie Mazey



SCHOOL BOARD ELECTION RESULTS

Every two years an election is held for the Lakota Local School Board. This year, two seats were open for contest. Of the four candidates running, two were incumbent, one had previously served two years ago, and one had never served on the board. The graphic above depicts the results from the election day. Both incumbent candidates, Julie Shaffer and Lynda O'Connor, were re-elected by at least five percentage points. This marks the beginning of Shaffer's third

term and O'Connor's fourth. Shaffer, who has 21 years of experience in finance and employee benefits and sales, has also been an active volunteer in Lakota schools for 15 years. O'Connor is also a member of the Butler Tech board of education and has a masters in special education and a bachelors in speech and language pathology.

The board controls the district's central office administration and makes several decisions which concern the district's operating budget of \$177 million. - Anna Mullins



TAKING FLIGHT

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**

In a Middletown airport, students are learning about unnamed aerial systems while a plane lands outside on the runway, and skydivers parachutes 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 Parker 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,” Parker said. “[Now] Butler [Tech] has an avenue directly into the business aviation world.”

The need for a facility like this in Butler Tech came to attention a few years ago when aviation was noted to have an upcoming shortage. Company Boeing’s 2019 Pilot and Technician Outlook projects that 804,000 new

civil aviation pilots, 769,000 new maintenance technicians, and 914,000 new cabin crew will be needed to uphold the world fleet in the next 20 years. This influenced the idea that people would be going into aviation.

“[Aviation] is one of the highest paying careers without a college education. So we decided to invest in it,” Drone Camp Organizer and Butler Tech Recruiter Matt King said.

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.

This 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.

“Our tech 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 said. “[I believe there is] no risk, so if this program intrigues you, go for it”

King believes this program is beneficial for students’ education in this department, but also for the Middletown community.

“This is the first step in 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.”

King argues students’ have the ability to build our future, so by enforcing the importance of opportunity in places that have room for growth can “lead to the development of that community”.

“[The program] is definitely going to give [Butler Tech] a step forward in the right direction,” Marvin said. “There are a lot of jobs in the aviation field and this [program] is going to get us ahead in the game.”•

“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

CHANGES FOR 2023

story **shelby alderman** | art **kelly johantges**

The class of 2023 graduates can now graduate with more individualized pathways.

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 diploma seals designed 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 AIR 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 Spark. “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.”

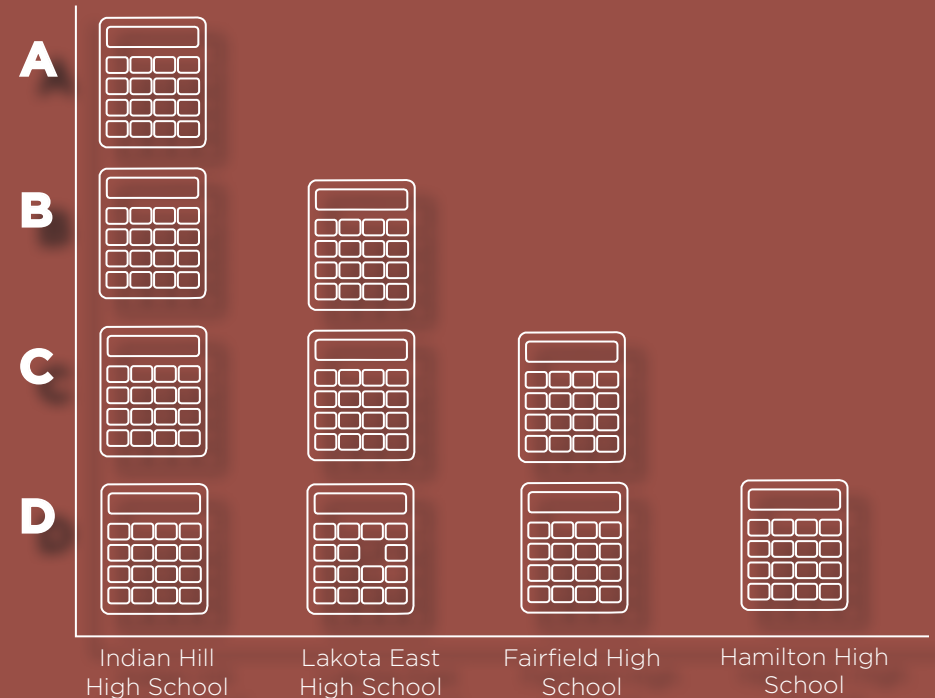
Due to the new changes being implemented this year, the current four high school classes are being held to three different graduation standards by the state of Ohio. The impact that this has on East’s students and faculty cannot be measured yet due to the uncertainty surrounding the class of 2023’s graduation 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.”•

OHIO GRADUATION RATES AND SCHOOL REPORT CARDS 2019-2020

infographic **kelly johantges**

GMCs High School Report Cards



source ohio department of education
infographic **shiloh wolfork**

Class of 2019 Graduation Rate



Lakota Local Schools
93.9 Percent
4-Year Graduation Rate



Ohio's Overall
85.3 Percent
4-Year Graduation Rate

source ohio school report cards

BY THE NUMBERS:

64 students committed to a military branch or academy in class of 2019

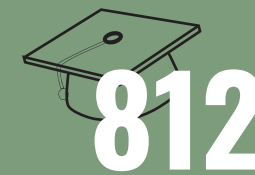


source lakota quality profile

65% out of 205

Lakota East students knew that school districts receive school report cards

source lakota east student survey



812

College-level classes taken for college and highschool credit

source lakota quality profile



Lakota East and Lakota West received an overall school grade of **B**

source ohio school report cards

81 % of 2017 Lakota graduates are going to receive secondary education at a university or college

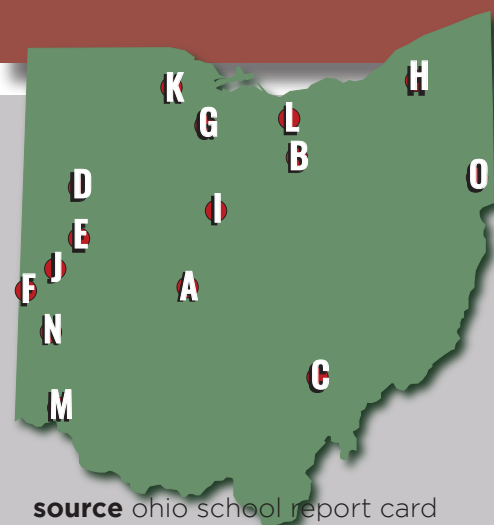
source lakota quality profile



24.6%

Lakota students graduated with an honors diploma in the class of 2017 and the class of 2018

source lakota quality profile

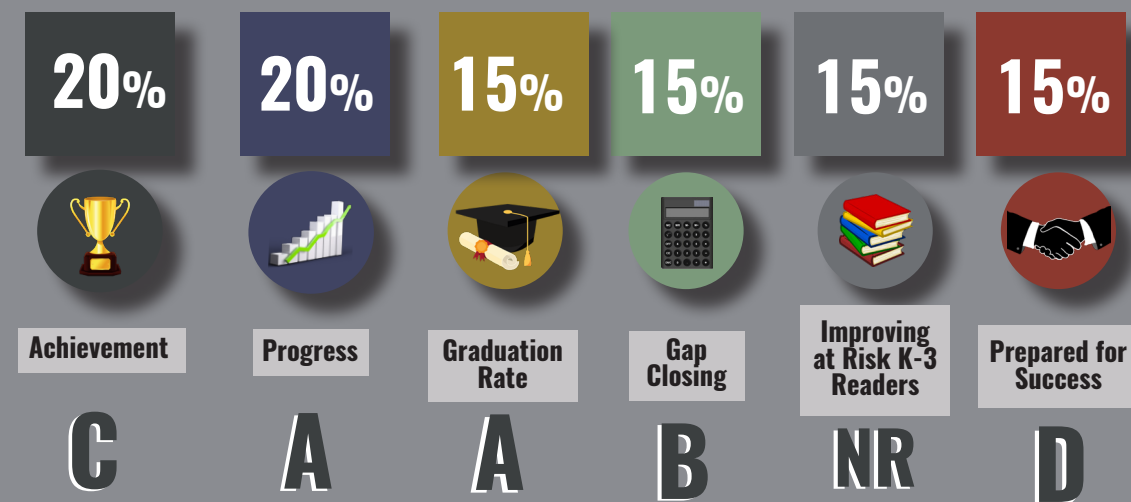


source ohio school report card

HIGHEST HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATE RATIOS IN OHIO

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

Components of Overall School Report Card Grade



source ohio school report card
*Lakota East's Individual Grades



While the district received a “B” overall, each individual building is graded. East received a “B”, the same grade as the 2017-2018 year.

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**

The 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 Paolo 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 in order to drive 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 earning a high school diploma in 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” 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 dropped from a “B” to a “C” in Achievement.

Lakota Executive Director of Curriculum and Instruction Keith Koehne told Spark that the district is planning to institute some methods in order to improve the Achievement

“[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.”

-Keith Koehne, Executive Director of Curriculum and Instruction

category.

“[For the district], the achievement category is something that we are focusing on. A lot of it is just involving our professional development, our teachers and our use of data. We have looked a little bit differently at our report card over the past couple of years,” Koehne said. “We’ve heard from students, teachers and parents that they felt a strong emphasis on test scores in the past and we’ve been able to focus more on classroom environment.”

According to DeMaria, there are some select characteristics that must be present in order for a school or district to earn an “A” in the Prepared for Success component.

“It typically takes having the programming in place as well as the disposition and willingness among the staff, students and others in order to enroll students or create the opportunity for students to participate in things that yield points in the prepared for success indicator,” DeMaria said. “One of the things would be to help many more students achieve the honors diploma. A second key feature is ensuring that the opportunity for students to earn industry recognized credentials is available. A third key feature is the creation of an educational program that allows students to be successful on the ACT/SAT.”

For East graduate and attendee at the University of Cincinnati Grace Abdelnour, the Advanced Placement (AP) classes offered at East have helped prepare her for college. However, other aspects of East have proven to be less beneficial.

“I’m 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 these. But those are the areas that we’re focused on,” Koehne said. “And we think we can raise all of those at least one letter grade by next year.”

Apart 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 grades 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’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 more personalized classrooms and more personalized learning is definitely going to move us in the direction that we have set as a 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 junior Lyna Sennoun Lakota provides helpful opportunities that prepare students for life after graduation.

“There are always options available. [We’re able to] take more rigorous classes such as honors and AP in all subject areas,” Sennoun

said. “[We can] join clubs and sports and take part in different national organizations such as National Honor Society (NHS) and Health Occupations Students of America (HOSA). These options are readily available and advertised. It’s just up to the individual student to take advantage of them.”

According to Koehne, the state report card is an inaccurate 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 officers and employers. A lot of them say that academic success is one piece of the puzzle.”

In agreement with Koehne, Wheatley said 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 Vogelmann 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,” Vogelmann said. “We can force everyone to take the ACT to hit 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’ve prepared you. [Our] situation is weighing out what the state wants and what we [as a district] feel is necessary.”

**SPARK ANNOUNCES...
THE 10TH ANNUAL MR. LAKOTA EAST**
WITH YOUR HOSTS
ASHLEY SWISSHELM & ELI TIVIN

FEB 13 2020



Buses sit empty in the service center parking lot outside of Liberty Junior at the end of the school day.

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.

story, photography, and infographic **alexandra fernholz** | additional photography **riley higgins**

Jan. 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 reinstate 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—people 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 votes 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 geared toward the classroom as we could and not have to cut more staff than we did,” said 12-year Board Member Lynda O’Connor, who was on the board at the time of the levy fallout. “That’s why we made the cuts that we did. It was really hard.”

Since that time, high school busing has

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)



Board President Julie Shaffer: “This is an investment that people in our community want to make in our students and our schools. It’s a pain point for families”



Board Member Brad Lovell: “As being a principal in the district, [I’ve seen] the impact that it’s had on our families. We need to be doing this.”



Board Member Todd Parnell: “Seeing [busing] in the context of the five-year forecast, this does seem rushed. We’re burning up cash.”

been an ongoing question for the now 16,500 student district, the largest suburban public school district in southwest Ohio. Currently, Lakota transports more than 9,900 students to 18 different K-8 buildings.

2019 marked Lakota’s seventh consecutive year with a balanced budget. Additionally, the district has a surplus cash balance of more than \$107 million, a balance which is conservatively projected to grow up to \$111 million by 2021. This cash balance has more than quadrupled since 2012.

“[Lakota is] pretty healthy,” Lakota Superintendent Matt Miller told Spark. “Our finances are probably the best they’ve ever been in a long time or maybe they’ve ever been. So financially, [busing] was something viable that we could look at.”

In light of Lakota’s improved financial situation, the board surveyed over 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 34 percent of senior parents responded that their 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 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 estimates 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 Suzanna 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.”

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 not 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 [wouldn’t] have to disturb their parents and wake them up to go drop them off. I bet their

“Our finances are probably the best they’ve ever been in a long time or maybe they’ve ever been. So financially, [busing] was something viable that we could look at.” -Matt Miller



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]."

parents work and they probably don't feel like getting up."

The third option presented a plan to reinstate 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 Operations 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 for that teacher," Passarge said. "[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 Prewitt, providing transportation to all high school students would not be possible without changes in the high school's schedule.

"If [Lakota doesn't] do the bell time changes, we cannot [provide busing] because it would take twice the vehicles to do that," Prewitt 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 me. 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 worth looking into the long term effects. I don't feel it is responsible to add a recurring expense to a forecast that already shows a deficit."

However, Logan emphasized that the five-year forecast is a notoriously conservative estimate of future expenses. According to Logan, part of the difficulty in forecasting the district's budget five years ahead is that the state's budget runs on a two-year schedule, meaning Logan must make estimates about how much state funding the district will receive.

"We can't forecast what's going to happen in

CURRENT BUSING PLAN:

NUMBER OF CURRENT ROUTES **167**

TRIPLE TIER ROUTES

ANNUAL BASE COST: **\$12,253,177**

ANNUAL OPERATING BUDGET: **\$177,000,000**

18 DIFFERENT LAKOTA K-8 SCHOOLS

19 DIFFERENT NON-LAKOTA K-8 SCHOOLS

9,901 LAKOTA STUDENTS

1,246 NON-LAKOTA STUDENTS

BUSING PROVIDER: **PETERMANN**

source lakota district

FRESHMAN ONLY BUSING:

NUMBER OF ESTIMATED ROUTES **216**

SINGLE TIER ROUTES

EST. ADDITIONAL COST PER YEAR **\$2,696,433**

\$1,870,994 FOR LAKOTA FRESHMEN | **\$825,439** FOR NON-LAKOTA FRESHMEN

2 ADDITIONAL LAKOTA SCHOOLS

7 ADDITIONAL NON-LAKOTA K-8 SCHOOLS

1,345 LAKOTA FRESHMEN

34 ROUTES FOR LAKOTA FRESHMEN | **15** ROUTES FOR NON LAKOTA FRESHMEN

BUSING PROVIDER: **PETERMANN**

source lakota district



Board Member Kelley Casper: "If we can make [busing] work and we can sustain it. I don't like the idea of doing it and three years down the road we have to take it back. I won't do that."

two biennium budgets," Logan said. "It's based on the information we have as of today. And we know we might know something different tomorrow. So as the assumptions change, the numbers will change."

Community member Jeremiah York, who has no students in the Lakota district, favored the board's decision.

"Busing is one of the most basic and helpful services a school district can provide. And yet this service was cut in 2011 and [has been] terminated for the last eight years," York said. "This is a dreadful shame. School busing should never be cut."

Lakota parent Jessica Williams, who has two children in the district, has considered other options for her children's schooling due to the lack of high school transportation.

"We've talked about online school, honestly," Williams told Spark. "We know enough people who've had good experiences, if I can't get my kid to school and 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 School.

"We would probably have to do some expansion to the service center," Casper said. "Part of the problem is just parking. If you start hiring 60 more bus drivers, [there's] already an issue with overflow parking into Liberty Jr."

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. Finding bus drivers is really hard right now, at least good ones."



Board Member Lynda O'Connor: "I'm concerned about our long term fiscal planning. You can only spend this once. If we do [busing] we should be doing it for the right reasons"

Currently, Petermann employs 200 drivers, 41 aides, 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.

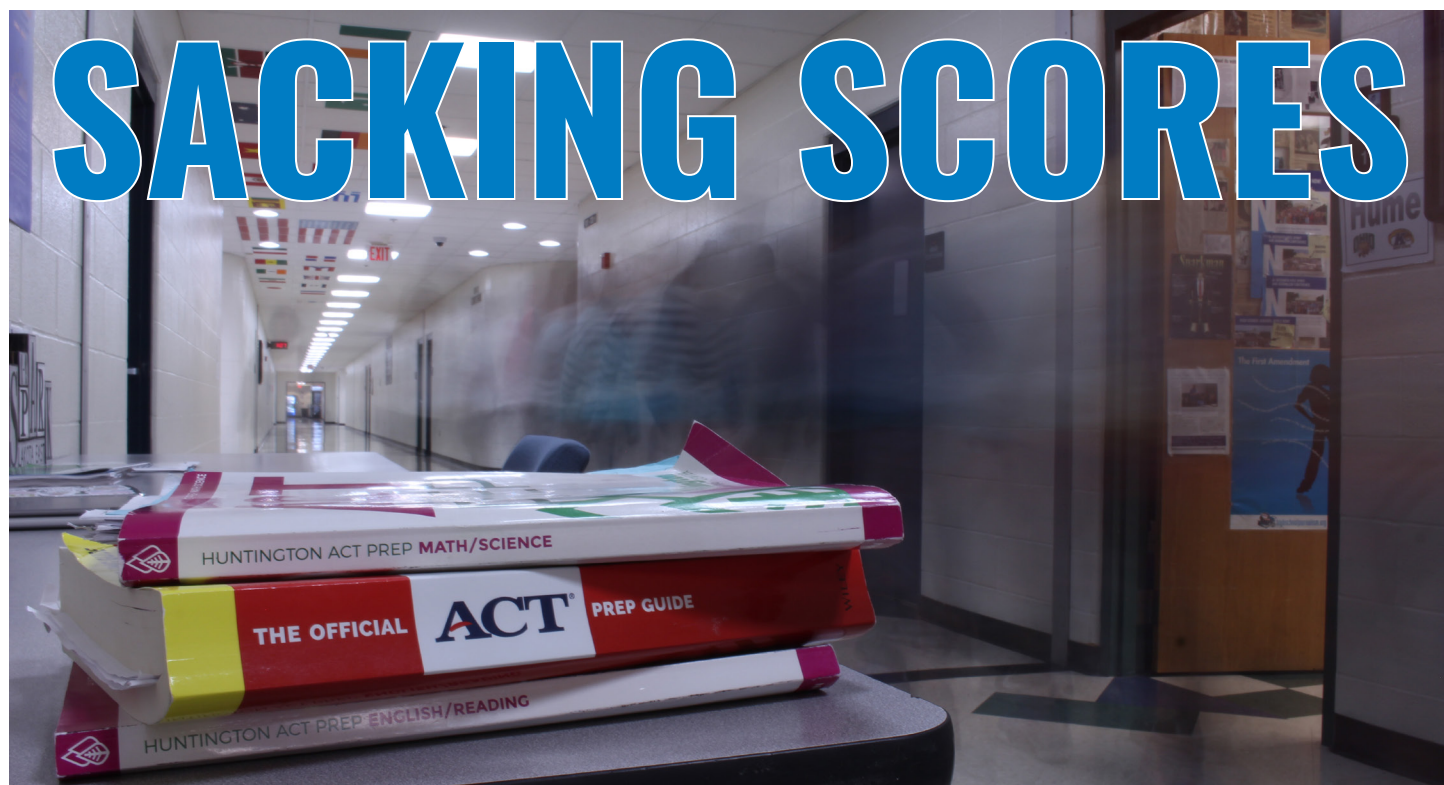
"[The district and I have] had several conversations over what it's going to entail," Prewitt said. "[Petermann is] recruiting as we speak. We've got nine [drivers] in our pipeline right now. I've already hired about 23 or 24 new drivers."

In the past, the board has investigated other options, including requiring families to pay a fee for busing. However, this option is not legal in the state of Ohio, since not every school district faces the same transportation issues. Lakota, the eighth largest school district in the state of Ohio, is the only district in Ohio's top 10 largest districts not to provide high school transportation.

"Regardless of where people fall politically, this is an investment that people in our community want to make in our students and our schools," Board President Julie Shaffer said. "It's a pain point for families, it's a pain point for businesses around our schools."

About 98 percent of Lakota's 1,324 eighth grade students will be eligible to receive transportation beginning next fall. Currently, private busing services are available at the high schools from Pride transportation. Busing service will not be available to any upperclassmen with zero periods, even though the classes would start at the same time as those at the freshman campus.

"I've been [at the freshman campus] for close to 10 years and [have seen] the stresses that the transportation issue puts on puts on our parents and their kids," Jackson said. "If there's a possibility of helping [parents] out in some way, I would encourage [the board] to try that." •



SACKING SCORES

Colleges and universities around the country are becoming test-optional, meaning that they are no longer requiring students to submit their ACT and SAT scores on their applications.

story **rachel anderson** | photo illustration **andrew marshall** | infographic **kelly johantges** and **nicco morello**

For many students, entrance to their favorite college may be determined by a universal rite of passage required by the state of Ohio: the ACT or the SAT. However, that anxiety 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 Parcell, 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 us their abilities through their success in school, their essay, leadership, and letters of recommendation,” Parcell said. “Test scores are only one piece, and the review process is really the same whether scores are included or not.”

ACT spokesman Ed Colby agrees that the ACT does not reflect the student as a whole. However, he argues that that is not what the test is designed to do.

“[The ACT] is designed to do one very specific thing. It is designed to measure the skills and knowledge that the student has mastered in those core subject areas,” said Colby, who has been a spokesperson for the ACT for over 18 years. “Your ACT score is not a reflection on

who you are as a person. It simply reflects what you’ve learned and how well you’ve mastered the important skills that you will need to succeed in the next level.”

A Xavier University professor in the College of Arts and Sciences, who wishes to remain anonymous because their statements reflect their opinion, rather than official statements of the school, believes that colleges and universities are making the switch to become test optional to make them more diverse.

“It’s proven that minority students score lower on standardized tests, therefore they are accepted into top tier universities at a lower rate,” the professor 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 20.8. 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 17.3, and Black/African American scores were the lowest, with an average score of 16.9.

According to Inside Higher Ed Editor Scott Jaschik, 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 \$81,331, 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 test 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 Witkowski 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,” Witkowski 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

Ten Notable Universities that have Test-Optional Applications



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 Witkowski 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 more than just their ability to play a sport,” Witkowski said. “I would want every little piece of my academics to count towards where I would want 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 Parcell, the ACT and SAT, gives colleges a “set standard to consider.”

Owner of the West Chester and Harpers

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 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.”

Jaschik 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 in 1998 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 39.8% 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.

“In-school administration provides access for all students as an equity strategy - it provides students with access to the test who may not otherwise participate,” Hagan said. “[It] removes barriers that Saturday testing might cause, and alleviates costs for parents and families.”

The ACT administers seven tests 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-Saturday testing is available. However, for most students, the only way for them to take the test on a day other than Saturday is when it is a school-sponsored test.

According to Lakota Executive Director of Curriculum and Instruction Keith Koehne, there is nothing in Lakota’s curriculum that requires teachers to give their students practice tests or teach test-taking tips.

Regardless of the curriculum, 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

“Your ACT score is not a reflection on who you are as a person. It simply reflects what you’ve learned and how well you’ve mastered the important skills that you will need to succeed in the next level.” -Ed Colby

school first required all juniors to take it.

“I think it’s a good way to get familiar with the test and then try to bump their scores up a little bit,” Naylor said. “It’s a weird test format that they’re not used to, so I think the practice test helps them.”

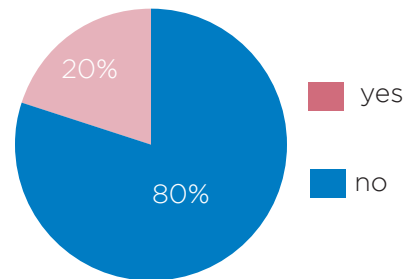
East Principal Suzanna Davis believes that integrating test skills and practice tests will help students in the future, whether it’s with the ACT or with any other standardized test.

“We want to put students in the best position to be successful,” Davis said. “And to have familiarity with [the ACT] so that the first time they’re seeing that test is not when they’re sitting down to take it in their junior year.”

Colby agrees that students should be prepared for success. He believes that the ACT will help students to see if they will be successful in the college they wish to attend.

“[ACT] would love it if every student did

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



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 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 still require a test score to be submitted.

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

NEW FACTORS

The ACT is making changes to give students more options on how to take the test.

story **rachel anderson**

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

Section retesting 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 to section retest, they will be administered just the tests they wish to retake, and when they are finished, they will be free to leave.

“Let’s say you take the ACT and you’re satisfied with your scores in English and reading, but [you think] your math and science courses could be higher,” ACT spokesman Ed Colby said. “You could decide to take the math and science courses again [instead of the full test].”

Section retesting will be available to anyone who has taken the full test and students can retest 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 Tiarra Avance would consider retaking individual sections instead of the full test.

“If you got a good score 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] again,” 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.

“Our research showed that superscores 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 supplying superscores in September 2020 as individual test retakes become an option. Colby expects more colleges to allow superscoring to 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, and they may decide that they don’t want to consider them. A lot of them already do [accept superscores] and we expect that more will [accept superscores in the future].”

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.

Schools who administer the test to their students have had 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 same 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 bubble 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.

Avance would consider taking the ACT online, however, East junior Anna Kluesener will continue taking the test with pencil and paper because she prefers being able to write on the test in front of her.

“They are small changes,” Kluesener said. “But they are good [for students taking the test] because people take tests different ways.” •

BLANKET CREW

The 13 year-old boy saw a man as he peeked his head in to the hotel lobby, looking miserable and cold. This man was just one of many homeless people he had seen looking for a place to get warm on his San Francisco vacation with his mother.

When he arrived home, what East senior Andrew Brauer had seen stuck with him. He realized homelessness was, in his words, not a ‘them’ problem but a ‘we’ problem. Wanting to do something to help, he started The Blanket Crew.

“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 society,” Jen Brauer, Andrew Brauer’s mother says.

The Blanket Crew is a non-profit organization that distributes warmth items, such as blankets to people in need throughout Greater Cincinnati, Dayton, and Hamilton. It all started with Andrew mowing lawns around his neighborhood.

“I started mowing grass and using allowance money and went to yard sales and bought blankets,” Andrew told Spark. “[Volunteers] would go downtown once a month and give out blankets.”

Since Andrew began The Blanket Crew

It’s his brainchild.”

Along with student and community volunteers, Andrew heads to different areas around Cincinnati to hand out hats, socks, gloves, and sleeping bags almost every weekend during the cold months. Last year, The Blanket Crew distributed more than 2,000 blankets and countless other items to the public.

“We only do it during the winter. We usually go down every weekend and give out supplies, or we also have a space at our law firm downtown where people can come to us,” Brauer.

The Blanket Crew has also partnered with multiple cold shelters, churches, and businesses to aid in distributing blankets.

“Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Over the Rhine have community meals for people who are homeless and we take blankets to them,” Jen says. “They also have a cold shelter that opens each year, and our blankets are [there] for people to use when they’re sleeping inside the church.”

Outside of his philanthropic endeavors, Andrew has been wrestling for six years. He earned a spot on the East Varsity wrestling team in 2018.

Senior Elijah Wood, who has been wrestling with Brauer since eighth grade, told Spark that he has never seen Brauer give up on anything

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

story **isis summerlin** | art **kelly johantges**

helps prepare students who are interested in a career in the health and science field.

“I would really like to go into the athletic training field,” Brauer says. “I enjoy helping people so [pursuing that career will] expand on that a little bit.”

Brauer’s friends, seniors Kevin Roth and Alec Barr, also mentioned his kindness towards others.

“He’s always there for you,” Roth says. “He doesn’t say ‘I’m always there for you’ but he is.”

Not only has Brauer founded his own organization but he also makes time to volunteer with other organizations, such as Matthew 25 Ministries, Hands Against Hunger, Habitat for Humanity, and Red Bird Mission.

“He is a person who is going to always do good in the world. Last summer, he went with Bethany United Methodist church to Puerto Rico to help rebuild houses that were destroyed in the hurricane,” Jen says. “For the last two years, he has gone to Red Bird Mission to help repair houses in the Appalachian region for people who

“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 society.” - Jen Brauer

so young, his mother assisted him in running the business side of the organization by becoming president of the board of directors.

“I do a lot of the business side of it, all of the reporting that’s required with the IRS and the state of Ohio,” Jen says. “However, everything we do is led by Andrew.

and that he is always the first one to offer help. “He always has a positive outlook on things and wants to make you laugh,” Wood says.

Last year the East wrestling team placed third in the Greater Miami Conference (GMC), tying the highest placement in the school’s history. Brauer himself finished the season with a 16-6 record.

Besides wrestling, Brauer is also a member of East’s Health Occupations Students of America (HOSA), an organization that

are impoverished.”

Reflecting back on the trip to San Francisco, Brauer said that the experience has changed his perspective.

“I could see other people’s points of view. I felt more empathetic towards people in that situation,” Brauer says. “It changed me a lot. I looked at things differently.” •

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**

Olympic Swimmer Michael Phelps sits in his bedroom. He has barely eaten. He has hardly slept. He doesn't want to be alive. To the public, it may seem he is on top of the world with 28 gold medals and millions of people to cheer him on, however behind the scenes, the famous swimmer has suffered through several spells of depression.

Phelps opened up about his struggles with mental health in a film Lakota's Gifted Services team showed at Lakota West High School in October. The movie, called 'Angst,' was followed by a panel of individuals who have battled mental health in their lives, helping other viewers with similar struggles. *Angst*, an IndieFlix film is screened in schools, communities, and corporations around the world to start a conversation around mental health and anxiety. Over the past two years, the film has been screened nearly 4,000 times in 59 countries and subtitled into seven different languages.

Although she was at first brushed to the side because the film carried such a heavy topic, Executive Producer and CEO of Indie Flicks Scilla Andreen made the decision to pursue the film after her close friend committed suicide.

"I saw [my friend] every week; we worked together at my foundation," Andreen told Spark. "I thought I would have known if she was in that much pain."

Once exposed to the reality of her friend's struggles, Andreen decided to pursue the film.

"There was this magical thing that happened when my friend died and I decided to make this movie," Andreen told Spark. "I saw the colors, sounds, I could feel the feeling of people watching it.

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

source adda.org

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, kids ced 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 dealt 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,"



Lori Jones teaching her class during T-Hawk Time

Hopewell Junior Health Teacher Lori Jones helped to create T-Hawk time, which provides students with lessons they can apply in their everyday lives.

story **marleigh winterbottom** photography **cassandra mueller**

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 Snapchat, 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 is 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 (PD) 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.

"We 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 amsalu** | photography **ianni acapulco**

When Nate Kodish comes home, they are hit by a myriad of senses. Exhausted from the rehearsal they had just attended, they make pleasantries with their mom and grandmother. Despite the sweat and residue of fish makeup, the redhead, who goes by they/them pronouns, can't help but smile at their family and their antics. Sitting on the springy couch in their warmly lit living room, they explain how family to them is not simply blood.

People have always played a large role in Kodish's life. As someone who lives with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder [ADHD] and generalized anxiety and depression, talking to others has greatly helped them to cope.

"If Nate is feeling down, I try to let them

vent," East sophomore Ali Owens told Spark. "We do that for each other. It's our thing."

Kodish is involved in multiple communities both in and out of school, including Junior Statesmen of America [JSA], Drama Club, and East Side Players. According to Kodish, it's "quite the honor" to be in East's Gender Sexuality Alliance [GSA] as a nonbinary lesbian.

"Nate takes so much pride in who they are. It's really inspiring," Kodish's girlfriend Olivia Marshall says. "[They have] inspired me to be proud of who I am and have pride too."

Having paternal grandparents who think that their grandchild's identity is a sin has been dreadful for Kodish. But, he doesn't focus in on every opinion thrown their way.

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 told Spark that they always manage to pick themselves up with the guidance of those around them.

"That's a proud moment for yourself," Kodish says. "The moment you realize that you're stronger than what people have told you." •

"Nate takes so much pride in who they are. It's really insprng. [They have] inspired me to be proud of who I am and have pride too." -Olivia Marshall



East Media Aide Marguerite Doll has seen lots of changes in her thirty years at Lakota Local School District.

ADJUSTING TO CHANGE

story and photography **ekra khalid** | infographic **kelly johangtes**

From checking out books to loaning 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 enjoyed spending her time with the little kids at the library and helping around in the classroom. In the fall of 1989, Doll got a job at Hopewell Elementary's Library and started her career as a media aide.

After spending two years at Hopewell, she was offered a job at the original Lakota High School. At first, Doll was scared to work with older kids for the first time in her career, but her son convinced her there was nothing to fear.

"I started with elementary students and I was a little afraid of moving up to the high school," Doll says. "But I'm so glad I decided to take the high school [job]."

Once again, a change came into Doll's life when she took the job in 1995. Three years later, Lakota was split into two high schools. Doll transferred to Lakota East High School

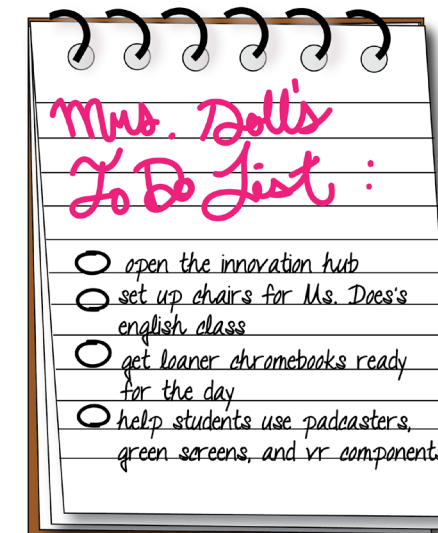
as the school's media aide when the main high school split.

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

East Alum Amali Zade met Doll as a sophomore at East through her study hall.

"She wasn't my teacher, but she was my favorite adult in the building and was like my therapist," Zade says. "She treated us like adults and not like kids."

Through Doll's years of being a media aide at East, she saw many changes, the biggest



being in the 2018-2019 school year, when the media center became the Innovation Hub.

"I knew change was coming," Doll says. "It was rather abrupt but, at the same time, my husband was having health issues, so it was good timing in a way, because it provided a distraction."

As the media center became the Innovation Hub, Doll saw a major change in the dynamics of the room take place.

"Prior to this change, people would come in here because it was quiet, they would come here to read, they would do their research or word process and get on games on the computers," Doll says. "Now, with this change, students come 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." •



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 down the street. I went 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 security line. As I waited, my mind went to the people and places I would be reunited with in a matter of hours.

I was really sick when I left for Guatemala,



but with a jumbo pack of non-drowsy Nyquill in my backpack, I figured I'd fare well. On my three-hour flight to Guatemala City, I started to see a change in culture. I was sitting in between two native Guatemalans. The one to my right spoke very little English, but we bonded as 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 crinkle would form in between his eyebrows and he'd ask if I was okay. Exhausted from the long day I'd already had, though, I plugged in my headphones and fell asleep.

Iwoke up to a pair of wide eyes staring at me expectantly. My new Guatemalan friend had been anxiously waiting for me to wake up. A little uncomfortable, I unplugged my headphones and waved timidly. Small talk soon turned into a full blown conversation. I found out that my friend was originally from Venezuela, but moved to Florida in high school. He ended up in Atlanta because the Florida heat was too much for him. I could tell you his story as if we'd known each other for years.

I've never met a stranger quite like my friend on the plane. He didn't care that by talking to me, he was risking catching my sickness. He didn't care that there was a whole library of movies to watch on our personal screens. He didn't care that he spent his whole flight talking

to a 17-year-old stranger.

To say that Guatemalans are friendly would be an understatement. We live in a world surrounded by people too busy to look up from their phones and make a connection with someone. Guatemalans crave connection. They'll invite you inside their straw hut for a cup of café con leche and talk for hours.

We talked until the plane landed on the runway in Guatemala City. He helped me get my bags down from the overhead bins and wished me well in my Guatemalan adventures. 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 30 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 lived their lives in reckless abandon for God and make every day an adventure.

They built their mission, Faith in Action, from the ground up and have established relationships with over 20 villages across Guatemala. They built a dormitory, where marginalized students from villages live while they receive high-quality private education at Oasis Christian School. Across the

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 Southeastern 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. We drove several hours east to Rio Dulce,

a town located on the coast of Lake el Golfete, which feeds into the Caribbean Sea.

We made a trip to Punta de CocoLi, a small village on the border of Guatemala and Honduras, only accessible by an hour-long boat ride out into the choppy 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.

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 rhythm. 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 strangers 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 doorstep of church in a village called Guayavilla. The drive to Guayavilla was terrifying. For two hours, I sat



(from left to right) a widow in the village of Pinalito, who is receiving food through the widow feeding program, a boy in CocoLi holding a stuffed animal gifted to him by a team member, one of five children living in the hut at the Zacapa dump.

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 chili 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 tickle fights. The kids like Hayde that I met and fell in love with in villages 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 CocoLi

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 and made 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 \$3000 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.

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. It's a feeling. The feeling of saying goodbye to my friend from the plane, of dancing in the water, and of giggling with Hayde in my hammock. How could I feel so connected to a place that was so far from everything familiar? My tie to Guatemala is so much stronger than people and places. It's home. •



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 that she won't forget, her walk through those streets impacted her and drove her decision to undergo a life change.

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 I 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 work 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

GLOSSARY infographic alexandra fernholz additional research anna mullins

Buyer: One who exchanges anything of value (money, drugs, food, a place to stay, etc.) for any 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 to or physical restraint against any person.

Debt bondage: when an employee owes their employer money for relocating them and their family and a portion of their paycheck goes to their employer. Becomes forced labor when employee enters a cycle of 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 surrender a legal right or to give up something valuable.

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, sex acts, sale of body organs, or slavery

Innocence Lost National Initiative (ILNI): an initiative started in 2003 by the FBI to address the national problem of youth sex trafficking in the US.

Modern-Day Slavery: It is an umbrella term used both nationally and internationally to refer to both sex and labor trafficking. Some international organizations will also include forced marriage as part of this definition.

Prostitute: The traditional term for a person who provides sexual services in exchange for anything of value, especially one who does so "of their own free will." The word is generally disfavored for its pejorative connotation.

Sex Trafficker: Also referred to as a pimp. The term "sex trafficker" is preferred, because it appropriately connotes the criminality and human rights abuses the person is engaging in and avoids some of the pop-culture stereotypes of a "pimp."

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. Minors under the age of 18 engaging in commercial sex are considered to be victims of human trafficking, regardless of the use of force, fraud, or coercion

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

**"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**

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

As part of the programming, 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 Philpot, 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,” Philpot said. “She was from a more remote region of India. When we were doing team things, she was quiet and very hesitant to jump in. She was sitting by herself one day at dinner, so my husband and I asked if we could sit with her, and we started talking to her. It was very cool to see her open up throughout the trip. We would invite her into different games 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 sobbing 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’re 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 refers to the control and exploitation of others for profit. It is a crime that is 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, is “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 Revised Code, varies 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 official international 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 as a tripartite 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 first 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 sex trafficking and human labor trafficking, and forced marriage.

“There’s a lot of varying factors that can contribute to differences in the way 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 be focused on labor trafficking, some 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 can sometimes cause confusion around who is at risk and how traffickers obtain their victims. The stereotypical human trafficking conjures up imagery from the movie “Taken”, and stories of children being pulled into a white van or being snatched off the street and kept in chains. According to Celia Williamson, Executive Director of the Human Trafficking and Social Justice Institute, and a Professor of social work at the University of Toledo, these stereotypes are not always true.

“There [are] a lot of people that

very basic conversational level,” O’Brien says. “And then the second thing we’re taught is to have sensitivity to their situation and their background and what they have been through.”

Anyone can volunteer with this organization no matter what a potential volunteer’s day job may be, as long as they have gone through the proper training.

One of the many people in charge of creating the curriculum for the tutors is Camille Prado, who has been working with the organization since its creation. Her masters degree in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESOL) gives her the experience of working with people who do not regularly speak English and allows her to create the most effective curriculum.

“Our goal is to get them out of that kind of hole that poverty has on them, which has led to them being either sold into trafficking or remaining in trafficking,” says Prado.

Andree Philpot, former teacher at Liberty Junior High School, is a volunteer that works with tutoring the children and knows first hand the impact that speaking english can have on them. According to Philpot, knowing how to speak English is a gateway for many different job opportunities.

“We also learned about all the trials and hurdles that they still had to overcome to completely live a new life,” says Philpot. “One of the trials, is learning English, to get a job to raise their status in society.”

Volunteers video chat with the students using Zoom, a video conferencing service, once a week at 6:45 A.M. for an hour.

“Even those of us who are not at all morning people can wake up at 5:15 A.M. without an alarm if I know I am going to be tutoring that day because it’s such a shared joy,” says Prado.

The volunteers also have the ability to travel to meet some of the students that they work with during the week.

“It is very important for the children that you’re working with, to actually meet their tutors,” says O’Brien. “It makes a world of difference and they certainly appreciate the fact that people from halfway around the world come to see them.” •

I AM GLOBAL ACADEMY

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

story **hannah fuller** | additional research **anna mullins**

With the possibility of being human trafficked at such a young age, students in Nepal and India work to increase their opportunities in the future by working with the non profit organization, I am Global Academy.

Formally known as eWIT, I am Global Academy works with survivors of human trafficking and children who are at risk of being trafficked to help them learn English. With the 129 collective volunteers that help run the organization and over five years of experience since their launch in June of 2014 with only two students, I am Global Academy has helped 111 students improve their ability to speak English to better themselves for their future.

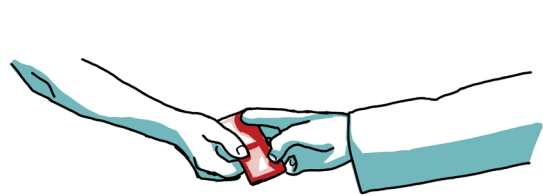
Rick O’Brien, Retired Product Management Director at Liberty Mutual Insurance, has volunteered with I am Global Academy for four years as part of the tutoring team and the operations team. Anyone can volunteer with this organization as long as they have gone through the proper training. Along with the other volunteers, he had to go through training. One of the main things the volunteers are taught through the training is the importance of building trust and relationships with the students.

“The first thing would be an orientation on how to go about teaching English at a

Populations at Risk:

Certain groups of people are more vulnerable to traffickers, but just because someone may fall into a certain category it does not mean they are going to be trafficked.

infographic **alexandra fernholz** | research **anna mullins**



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

believe you’re walking down the street and somebody is going to snatch you, and that’s not true,” said Williamson, who also founded Ohio’s first anti-trafficking program in 1993. “[Traffickers] are looking for kids that are vulnerable, stigmatized by society and invisible. When we keep perpetuating that stereotype, we panic the community, everybody runs in the wrong direction.”

According to Busch, despite these mainstream horror stories, traffickers intentionally recruit people with vulnerabilities that they can easily build relationships with and then exploit. It is a crime that is affecting vulnerable youth in urban, suburban, and rural communities, not just youth in specific cities.

According to Williamson, there are youth populations that are more susceptible to trafficking than others, such as those with lower socioeconomic status or those with LGBTQ identities. Other common risk factors that traffickers target, include runaways, youth with mental health issues and those who have had prior contact with the criminal justice system.

“It’s more about manipulation, befriending someone, getting that victim who’s already very needy, needs love, needs attention,” Williamson said. “Getting that young person to participate along with you in their own victimization. Like ‘I’m your boyfriend, I love you, do this for us.’ It is not about snatching and grabbing and chaining people.”

The three ways traffickers hold a position of power over their victims is through force, fraud, or coercion. According to the Polaris Project, 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.

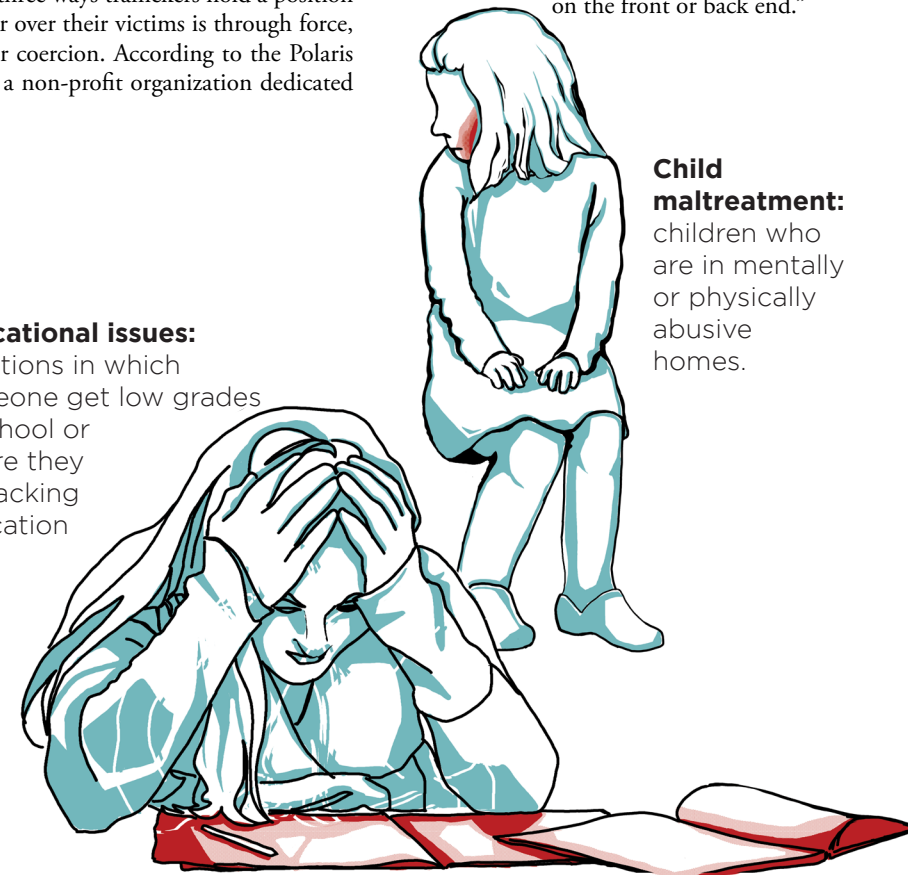
Survivor data from the 2018 National Human Trafficking hotline shows a peak in victims between the ages of 12-14 years old. According to Busch, Ohio has reported victims as young as three years old.

“That narrative of kidnapping and strangers is really not what trafficking looks like in Cincinnati,” Samantha Searls, who works for the Intercommunity Justice and Peace Center (IJPC), said. “We’ve learned through our partners that coercion is the more common way people [are] controlled. 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 around the use of illegal drugs. On their own drugs already have a notorious reputation with the current heroin epidemic. According to Williamson young people, trade sex for drugs are often putting themselves in the company of traffickers, increasing their risk of becoming sex trafficking victims.

“Drugs are connected to trafficking in two ways, a trafficker or a recruiter will get [a victim] hooked on drugs and then use that to sell them.” Williamson said. “[Or] somebody is sold into sex 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.”

Educational issues: situations in which someone get low grades in school or where they are lacking education



Child maltreatment: children who are in mentally abusive or physically abusive homes.

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’ve really got to challenge some of your preconceived notions,” Searls 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 Searls says is following individual cases of human trafficking and using them as examples of the bigger issues that exist, such as Cyntoia 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 and understanding of the issues. To further this effort they funded the creation of educational toolkits to dispel falsities 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,” Searls 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

Kasik 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 Kunze 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.

“Young 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 Searls, 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

SUPPORT FOR THE SUFFERING

Against the tormenting actions of human trafficking, works coalitions, fighting for the freedom and rehabilitation of victims who endure the inhumane ideals of a buyer.

End Slavery Cincinnati founded in 2007 through the Salvation Army rebuttles the damage and potential damage Human Trafficking brings about in the Cincinnati community and lives of victims. Providing aid through many services grant victims not only the simple needs including food, shelter, and transportation but also help in legal aid and advocating for the relevant problem.

“I’ve always been an advocate for human trafficking,” Erin Meyer, the coalition manager and anti-human trafficking program manager for the Salvation Army said. “[We] work to address the issue from a macro level... Where are the gaps in services? Where are the gaps in education? Where are the gaps in legislation, [while] also working with various organizations and serving individuals who are survivors of Human Trafficking.”

The Salvation Army works together to combat the demand for forced labor by partnering with an extensive list of organizations such as Shared Hope, Bloc Ministries, and Ohio Justice Policy Center.

The program Tamar’s Center through Franciscan Ministries, is another day center that works specifically with women who suffer through addiction and who are exploited through trafficking. Steps are taken with social workers on site, medical care available, and does much advocating for its visitors.

“There is a basic value to every human being, and unfortunately these women very often are overlooked, and they need people to advocate for them, and walk with them,” said Marcie Peebles who for 8 years has worked with programs at Franciscan Ministries.

Coalitions are needed for the healing of victims who have battled against human trafficking and for further prevention of trafficking in Cincinnati. While these issues are important they can be pushed out of perspective by societies who are ignorant to the issue, which is why the Tamar Center and End Slavery Cincinnati work to bring awareness to the troubling topic.

“It’s a bigger problem than people realize,” said Peebles. •

story **megan miranda**
infographic **leah mccain**

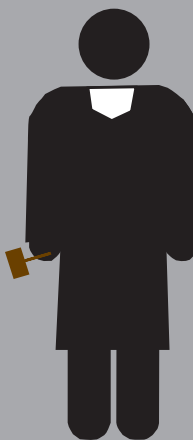
Many coalitions in the Cincinnati area work to benefit the lives of those human trafficked

Who Should Be In an Anti-Trafficking Coalition?

Federal Law Enforcement and Local Police Departments



Representatives from court



Universities



Interested Community partners



Faith-based Groups



source humantrafficking.ohio.gov

“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

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.”

TRACKING & DETECTION

Two important tools needed to effectively combat trafficking are knowing how many victims it effects and where it is occurring. The University of Cincinnati (UC) conducted a statewide human trafficking prevalence study funded by the Ohio Office of Criminal Justice Services. The principal investigator was Valerie Anderson, an assistant professor of criminal justice at UC. The study was initiated in 2017 and finished in early 2019.

“The [first prevalence] study was conducted and published in 2010,” Anderson told Spark. “The state has made a lot of progress over the last 10 years, in terms of having different agencies actually track human trafficking cases. So they were really interested in getting that updated number of how many victims there are across the state.”

Prevalence is difficult to measure, as there are many factors that add complexity to correctly identifying human trafficking. One of the challenges Anderson found while conducting the Ohio prevalence study was that reporting agencies do not necessarily have the infrastructure and capacity necessary to track human trafficking cases. Another factor was that agencies are also collecting information for their own needs with differing variables, leading to gaps in data. This creates a challenge when trying to integrate data from several different sources.

“Some agencies weren’t collecting information about the demographic characteristics of victims,” Anderson says. “Some agencies collected information about perpetrators, but some agencies didn’t have information about the offender or what the relationship was between the victim and the offender.”

According to Busch, victims of trafficking may never touch the justice system or might be serviced by a social service agency for 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



Influential others: situations in which someone has someone else who is in a position of power over them.



Substance use disorders: addictions that traffickers can bribe their victims with



Gang affiliation: young adults who are affiliated with gangs



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

TEENS FOR ANTI-TRAFFICKING

Students and professionals with the same goal work together to help eliminate human trafficking.
 story **ava huelskamp** | additional research **anna mullins**

People shuffled into the marble-walled room adorned with tall pillars and large windows, with a stage and wooden podium nestled at the front of the room. Hushed voices and wide eyes are common around the room, as the attendees wait for the presentation to begin.

Students, adults, and teachers gathered on Nov. 22, 2019 for the 3rd Annual Human Trafficking Youth Prevention Summit in the Statehouse in Columbus hosted by Senators Teresa M. Fedor, Stephanie Kunze, and Representative Tavia Galonski.

Fedor expected an average of 200-250 teachers and students to attend the summit. When Senator Fedor found out about how big the issue was, especially in Toledo, she created the summit to have a day when Ohio youth can come be a part of the solution to human trafficking.

"It shined a light on the issue and shined a light in my heart," Fedor said. Involving young people in the movement is very important to Fedor.

"Having the youth engaged was part of my response to ending demand," Fedor said. "Ending demand is to get the youth 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 local community," Fedor said about the summit.

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

"We've got some active arts performances throughout the day," Fedor said. "We also have a selfie station where the students prepared [props] they can use as part of a

selfie experience." One of the centers presenting at the event was the Renee 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 minors can get trained for. The training lasts for a period of three months, on Saturdays for four to five hours at a time. So far about 10 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 stuff like this," 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 and learn.

"Being a human trafficking victim I am still vulnerable," Mango said. "That's why I learned to come to [the summit] because I learned something new, and you young people help me."

Mango believes the summit is important to bring awareness to the issue human trafficking is.

"We are fighting about people doing this, doing that, gas prices and everything, but we do not put human trafficking first when it comes to making decisions," Mango said.

Senator Fedor hopes to continue efforts to stop human trafficking through the summit and a possible future bills. She hopes her passion for the issue will keep making a difference.

Fedor concluded her passionate speech with a call to action: "I know that change will happen when compassion and awareness meet," Fedor said. •

adult is charged." Once Senate Bill 13 has been signed by Governor DeWine, Fedor plans to move onto other protections. She has several bills she would like to pursue including 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 passionate about prevention education in 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 for rescuing, restoration, 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 schools K-12 will be 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.

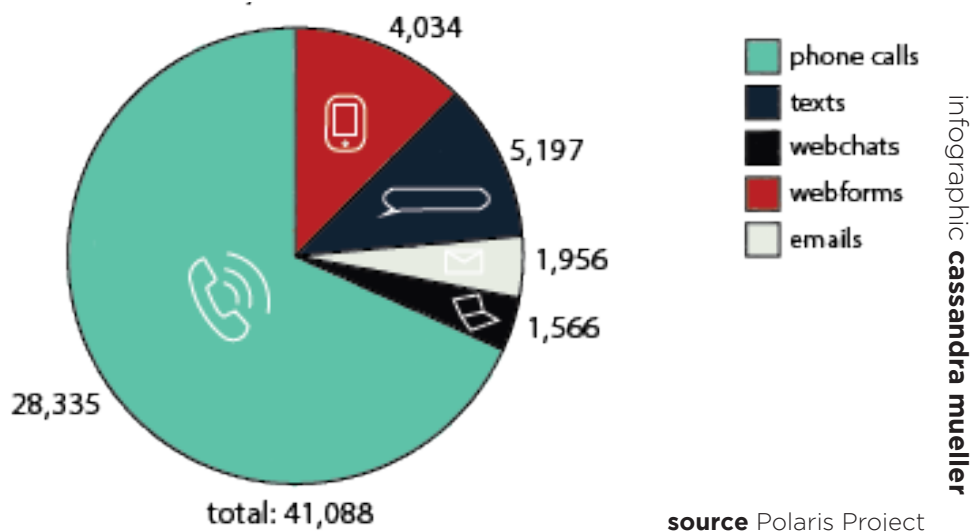
"I think a lot of times youth, if something's going on with them, the first person they might tell is a friend" Busch said. "Not necessarily their teacher or their parents. So equipping youth to identify others who might be vulnerable to trafficking would be a huge way that we can respond in a more proactive way."

Nonprofit organization Renee Jones Empowerment Center in Cleveland, have already started work in this area with their Youth Ambassador Training Academy. They are equipping youth and young adults ages 16 to 24 with prevention and awareness training. Students receive training from law enforcement personnel, certified human trafficking survivors who have been certified as peer counselors, and Renee Jones Empowerment Center staff. Once they have completed the academy, ambassadors act as advocate against human trafficking within their schools and community.

One Cincinnati non-profit anti-trafficking organization that is working to raise the awareness and education of the community is the Intercommunity Justice & Peace Center (IJPC). Schools or community organizations can invite IJPC to visit their classrooms or meetings to present details of human trafficking as well as what actions they can take to help the fight against human trafficking.

"Trafficking can happen to anyone and students especially are vulnerable to being forced, fraud, or coerced into trafficking," Searls said. "We need everyone to know what the issue is, what the fines are, and how to help each other. Especially for young folks, building healthy relationships, having self-

Methods of Contacting the National Human Trafficking Hotline in 2018



infographic cassandra mueller

LAWS

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-pronged 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 crimes."

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 Criminal Section of the Civil Rights Division within the United States 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 all been sponsored or 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 issue 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," Fedor said. "Ohio has a distinction saying that 16 and 17 year olds must prove force, fraud, or coercion before an

a third party person," Williamson says. "Some will count commercially sexually exploited kids and trafficked kids as one. Some will only count trafficked kids."

Anderson and her research team collected data at the state, local and national level for the prevalence study, sourcing from child welfare organizations, law enforcement agencies, legal services, the courts and the department of youth services. They worked with agencies that interact with minors such as the Ohio Network of Children's Advocacy Centers and the Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS).

"One (part) was working with the state to identify who is collecting data and the other part of it was really being creative based on previous research," Anderson says. "Where might trafficking victims end up? Or [with] what systems might they interact? And then reaching out and partnering with those different systems like the juvenile justice system."

According to the Polaris Project 2018 report on statistics from the National Human Trafficking Hotline, the total number of cases reported in the USA from 2007-2018 was 51,919, with Ohio responsible for 2,040 of those cases. In 2018 Ohio was considered part of Polaris "Dirty Dozen" list, ranking as the fifth largest state in the USA for human trafficking cases reported, behind states like California and Texas. According to Ohio State Senator Teresa Fedor, who has proposed several bills around human trafficking, Ohio's location along with the fact it has several major highways, makes it more vulnerable to human trafficking.

"Ohio is susceptible to [human trafficking] because of the highway system," Fedor told spark. "We have the turnpike which crosses across America, and we're close to the Canadian border. We also have a lot of colleges in Ohio [which] is another marker."

The Governor's 2019 Ohio Human Trafficking Task Force Report, which included the results of the Ohio Prevalence Study, does not conclusively determine why Ohio is so high on the Polaris list. It is not necessarily because Ohio has an abnormally high amount of human trafficking. A contributing factor is the efforts Ohio has made to educate people on how to identify victims and to report them.

"If you look at the data from the National Human Trafficking hotline, for the last few years Ohio has reported the fourth or fifth highest number of human trafficking cases. Whether or not that means that human trafficking is increasing and it's happening more frequently in Ohio compared to other states, we don't really know," Busch said. "[The hotline] is really just capturing data from folks that are calling that number. Ohioans are increasingly aware of human trafficking. They call the hotline and there have been cases that have come out of the calls."



TEENS SPEAK OUT

story **eliza bush**

At the third annual Youth Human Trafficking Prevention Summit in Columbus, Ohio, several Ohio Senators and Representatives hosted a press conference for Ohio students to express their thoughts on Senate Bill 13, for which testimony will be held on December 4th at the Ohio Statehouse. At this press conference, 11 students shared their views on the bill and how it would impact their future.

Jada McIntyre, Toledo

"[Human Trafficking] is not discriminatory. It could happen to your family, your children, your son, your daughter, your wife... It shouldn't have to be a race against the clock to get information to prove whether it's coercion, force or fraud."

Luke Buckingham, Akron

"Blaming victims of being complicit of someone else's crime is not acceptable. We don't blame a teller if a bank it's robbed, so why would we blame the victim of sex trafficking for being sex trafficked? Using people's vulnerabilities to exploit them is unacceptable."

Sarah Sahmarani, Toledo

"I believe it is necessary for this bill to be passed, not only to protect 16 and 17 year olds, but also to protect what Ohio should be about... We have all these steps going forward with human trafficking, that it's almost as if we're going backwards [because] this one bill is not getting passed."

Ben Scavnak, Sandusky

"If one person can say that they are a victim without having to prove coercion, force, or fraud, then that influences people around them and it helps to protect [others] against human trafficking, which needs to end now."

esteem and knowing your worth, in terms of someone trying to take advantage of you in that vulnerable moment is just crucial to understand in protecting each other from being victimized by human trafficking."

In Ohio, state law requires that all teachers and staff must receive some form of human trafficking training. According to Busch, the problem is that the training could be comprised of just a quick video because the depth of training is determined by each individual school district.

"I think it is important to talk to all the vulnerabilities that are at play, especially [for the] youth the traffickers are preying on," Busch said. "So talking about emotional vulnerabilities, the physical vulnerabilities. Would be hugely important. Learning how to engage, approach those youth can be difficult, because maybe they're displaying symptoms of trauma that they've experienced, and training on how to identify the indicators of human trafficking."

In the Lakota Local School district teachers and staff are required to complete human trafficking training once every five years. Lakota utilizes the SafeSchools online programming by Vector Solutions for many of their required trainings. Director of student services Lori Brown, says there is a distinct human trafficking course every five years, but it is also mentioned in courses discussing healthy relationships and safety prevention. The objectives of the human trafficking specific module include describing the scope of human trafficking, recalling key stories and case studies, explaining methods of identification, recognizing warning signs, and describing ways to respond.

"[Lakota has considered a] more in-depth [overall prevention training], with human trafficking being one aspect," Brown says. "Taking an online module doesn't always hit exactly what we want to hit, so we're trying to balance the time that we have with our teachers and what's most important, along with the student safety piece, and balancing all the requirements that we have to get done."

Lakota students do not receive human trafficking prevention training as an individual class. According to Brown Lakota students receive prevention training around topics like drugs, alcohol, and mental health that build resiliency skills. Prevention training extends to the kindergarten level through topics like healthy community, understanding how to build healthy relationships and how to identify a safe adult. According to Brown, these type of prevention tools could be reapplied into a human trafficking prevention training if Lakota needed to create a specific trafficking tool.

"We have a mental health steering

ADVOCACY TAKING FLIGHT

The play Lily's Wings is using theatre to spread awareness about human trafficking.

story **natalie mazyer**

A young girl named Lily comes face to face with danger as her older sister's friend is being trafficked by her boyfriend. Difficult choices in a difficult situation save Lily's life, but not everyone is that 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.

Theater can be a powerful tool for social change, and the team behind the play sought to utilize this power to spread awareness surrounding human trafficking.

Lily's Wings began in 2012 during a semester course entitled social issues theater at Bowling Green High School. The course, taught by Jo Beth Gonzalez who holds a PhD in theatre, allows students to pick a topic that is important to them, research it, and turn it into a scene.

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. Their scene quickly garnered attention, which led to the student's winning the Liberator Award created by the SOAP Project in 2018.

"Since 2012, I've had different groups of students be a part of it, to watch it grow and take shape is really exciting," Gonzalez said. "The students received [the Liberator Award] which was really exciting for me to see."

Gonzalez approached playwright Roxanne Schroeder-Arce about turning the scene into a fuller script, so that the message the play

voices could be shared on a national scale.

"It's not just the play alone," Schroeder-Arce said. "The play hopefully opens doors to conversations [about human trafficking]."

Through the drama medium, the dangers and warning signs of human trafficking are conveyed in an engaging way to the audience. Adults and students alike can come away from the play with a newfound understanding of human trafficking that lends itself to be applicable to the real world.

"We want people to recognize that [human trafficking] is very much a problem that exists in Northwest Ohio as well as in communities all over the country," Gonzalez said. "We want kids to know that there are people out there who do really terrible things to other people, and they have to have their danger radar activated."

For Schroeder-Arce, one of the benefits of using theatre for advocacy is that it allows for the audience to find parts of themselves within the characters and apply the character's story to their own lives. The emotional connection Lily's Wings provides is one of the things that makes the work stand out.

"When our emotions are invested, we can more viscerally understand the situation," Gonzalez said. "In a play, [audiences] can find threads between the characters and themselves. And so that generates a connection."

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're 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 create a dialogue concerning human trafficking.

"If there isn't an open dialogue, then [young people] won't feel comfortable, won't feel confident, and won't feel like they'll be listened to," Schroeder-Arce said. "We have to use our art form to help people think about these situations that are very real." •

committee and we've been talking about tying all of our prevention efforts together into a cohesive model, and human trafficking is right in there with bullying and drugs and alcohol," Brown says. "Looking at how we have a K-12 model and then how we connect with the community, parents and staff on all those topics."

RESCUE EFFORTS

According to the FBI, human trafficking is believed to be the third-largest criminal activity in the world. The FBI works human trafficking cases under its Crimes Against Children and Human Trafficking program and in 2003 they, in conjunction with two other groups, created the Innocence Lost National Initiative (ILNI) to address the national problem of youth sex trafficking in the US.

One of the pivotal human trafficking cases in the U.S., which ended up kick starting the Ohio anti-human trafficking movement occurred at a truck stop in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania as part of the FBI campaign "Operation Precious Cargo." According to Fedor, 151 victims were rescued, of which 45 were children. Of the victims, 78 were from

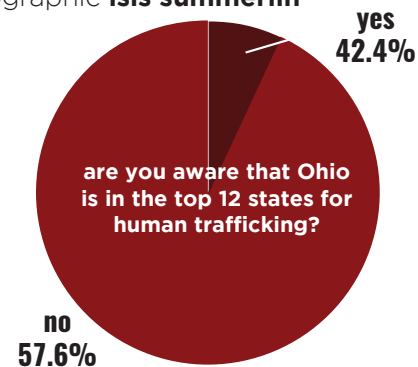
Toledo, with one victim as young as 10 years old.

In response, the ILNI initiated Operation Cross Country (OCC), a national campaign targeting child commercial sex trafficking venues. In 2019, the OCC was reevaluated to create the Operation Independence Day campaign. The new program, coordinated by the FBI's Crimes Against Human Trafficking Unit and the Department of Justice, continues to focus on recovering child victims of commercial sex trafficking. The first initiative of Operation Independence Day occurred in July of 2019. It consisted of 161 operations conducted nationwide where the FBI rescued or identified 103 child victims. Of these victims three were from Ohio. In preparation to make sure victims assistance was a priority in the aftermath of Operation Independence Day, the FBI's Victim Services Division worked closely to put internal and external resources in place.

"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"



infographic **isis summerlin**



According to the Ohio Revised Code, all law enforcement officers are required to receive human trafficking training through the Ohio Peace Officers Training Academy. Local law enforcement must also report the number of human trafficking cases to the Attorney General's Office every year. West Chester Police Officer Jeff Newman has served as a Student Resource Officer (SRO) for 10 years and currently works at Lakota West.

"Periodically, we have what's called comprehensive training," Newman said. "We spend the whole day, and we hit four or five different topics. Human trafficking has been one of those topics. It's not just our in-house officers. I'm pretty fortunate to work with a lot of impressive and educated guys in our police department,

and we have guest speakers that come in."

The West Chester police department partners with the local Cincinnati branch of the FBI to combat human trafficking. The branch has a West Chester detective who is assigned to the FBI on a full-time basis. In the West Chester, area there have been two cases of human trafficking reported. According to Newman, one of the problems with human trafficking is that there may be more that the police don't know about because they aren't reported. Both reported cases involved victims coming from other states into our area.

"We don't just look for the prostitution, that

we're also constantly watching our restaurants and hotels, for other things," Newman said. "I worry about our folks going to other states, and then we never hear about it. Obviously I want our girls to be aware and be safe. It goes back to the reporting. If something starts looking weird and begins to be odd in an online interaction with somebody, bring it to somebody's attention so we can do something about it."

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. "[If] it's a safe community or someone who works at [their] school, [the 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 the physical inability to leave due to violent behavior, the psychological fear that the trafficker will either hurt them or their families, 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.

"That happens quite a bit, where 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 isolation, economic abuse, threats, emotional abuse and physical abuse. This type of trauma affects the victim's ability to have successful relationships and friendships.

"From victims they have to become survivors, and from survivors they have to become thrivers," Williamson says. "There's a lot of psychological and emotional trauma, that's why young people who are trafficked have to get trauma treatment services and therapeutic services so that they can recover psychologically and emotionally."

Trauma affects everything. Physical trauma, depending on the situation and how long the trafficking lasted medical care may be needed. Donna Sabella, an

international expert in human trafficking's clinical implications for women and a clinician with broad experience in forensic nursing, says victims can suffer symptoms such as anxiety, depression, and PTSD.

"The people I work with say that the emotional piece of this recovery is more difficult than the medical [piece]," Sabella says. "If you have an infection, you can take an antibiotic. If you have been stabbed you can get it treated, but if you have [mental] health issues they take a lot longer to heal."

Victims often have a hard time reintegrating themselves into society because of the stigmas around being human trafficked. There is a societal misconception by some that the victims voluntarily agreed to be trafficked and that they wanted to be exploited for commercial sex.

"I think people still misunderstand and call young people prostitutes, and sometimes that can get back to a young person's school. Then they don't want to go to school anymore," Williamson said. "What they are is a victim of a crime. Sometimes a young person feels ashamed, because they think that they were stupid, and they didn't know that these were traffickers and they have internalized sort of blame for themselves."

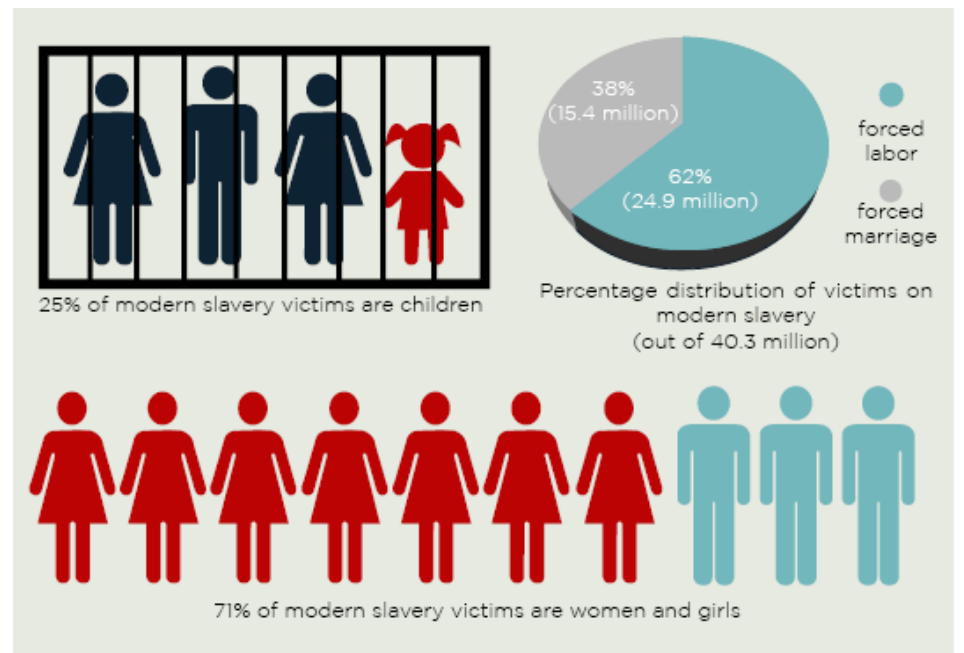
According to Busch, rehabilitation for youth victims always includes comprehensive case management, which includes trauma therapy, counseling, and potential family reunification, if that's the appropriate next step. It is possible that a youth's family could be involved in their trafficking which makes it so that they cannot safely go home; in these cases, social workers are brought in to the home to help the young person.

"It is on a case-by-case basis. Some people are more resilient than others, so they can bounce back quicker. They might have more support, family, health and friends," Sabella said. "But maybe not the person next to them. I've had some people commit suicide, because the trauma just wouldn't go away."

While awareness can be instrumental to stopping human trafficking, once victims have been rescued they need a safe place for them to go. They require resources so that they can integrate themselves into society and receive the assistance that they require. According to Williamson, one of the best ways to help survivors and victims of human trafficking is to fund the groups that provide programs and services geared towards recovery and healing.

Aftercare programs like the F.R.E.E program offered by the University of Toledo's Human Trafficking and Social Justice Institute help survivors to become thrivers. The program serves adult victims of human labor and sex trafficking that have already received initial formal support, such as housing and being linked to a trauma informed mental health care individual, as part of the next step in their recovery. According to LaDonna Knabbs, the

Victims in Modern Day Slavery



infographic rachel anderson

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 also be able to thrive," Knabbs says. "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.

"There are very [few support services] for children who have been human trafficked; there's a lot of red tape for kids," Sabella said. "The women who get arrested for prostitution, some 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 we didn't have to go that route."

Even 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 go deep on the issue," 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."

INTERNATIONAL PREVENTION

The ILO has offices in every region around the world, as well as offices in most individual countries. Since the needs and interests of different countries vary, the ILO work to tailor their approach specifically to each country's needs through these local offices.

"One of those main targets that I work in that pertains to human trafficking is Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) target 8.7," Data Scientist at ILO Kelly Gleason told Spark. "It's pushing governments to take effective measures to combat forced labor, child labor, human trafficking, modern slavery and all forms of child labor by 2025."

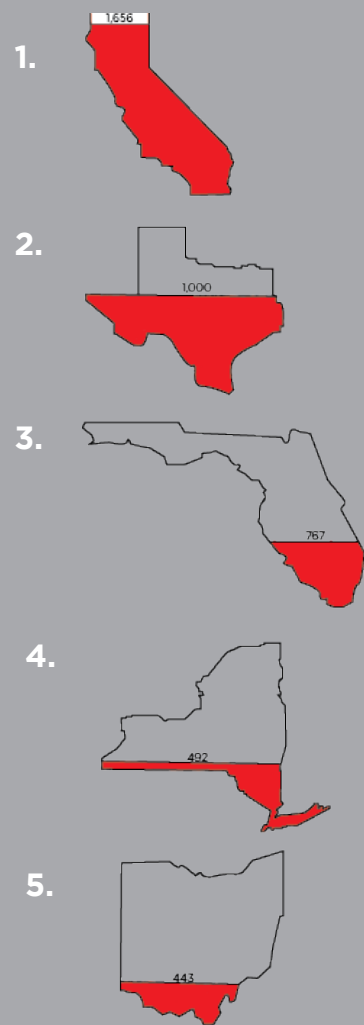
The ILO has worked to help various governments' national statistical offices incorporate forced labor survey modules into their census. The ILO gathers data through these surveys, but because many people in those situations are not aware that they are being coerced, they ask questions targeting telltale signs that trafficking is occurring. According to Gleason, these are questions such as 'Does your



infographic **cassandra mueller**

In 2018, there were 10,949 human trafficking cases reported nationwide. This graph shows the top five states where the most cases were reported.

*These graphs are out of 2,000 to make the differences clearer.



employer hold your passport?’ or ‘If a family member were 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 issues that are notoriously hidden, because they’re mostly criminal activities,” Gleason says. “Most people that are involved in some form of forced labor don’t know that they are [being trafficked], for instance debt bondage.”

Internationally, the economic development of a country can influence the prevalence of human trafficking. 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 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.”

At the Alliance 8.7 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.

“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 at for a long time in the same way.”

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 that we have trafficking, but we’re doing a lot to combat trafficking,” Williamson said. “Tier three countries have trafficking, but the government is not doing a lot to combat trafficking. That kind of trafficking can be pervasive, very violent, and with a serious lack of humanity.”

Human trafficking varies vastly from

country to country. In countries like India, trafficking is often a poverty-driven issue. 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 that’s not really the case.”

While living in Nepal, Philpot and her husband will be partnering with Apple of God’s Eye, an aftercare home in Kathmandu, Nepal for survivors of human sex trafficking, working with girls 10-25 years old. Apple of God’s Eye has a school that Philpot will be teaching at for part of the day. For the rest of the day she will be working one on one with survivors.

The Apple of God’s Eye program, created in 2000, consists of four houses with 160 children in total. They work on rescuing girls who have been trafficked into sexual slavery as well as girls who are at risk. According to the Apple of God’s Eye website, they are concerned about both the remedy and the prevention of human trafficking and have begun to distribute “Scholarships” especially in the poorest districts. They have funded more than 1300 scholarships and have launched an awareness campaign for families, encouraging them to keep their children out of the hands of traffickers.

“Our mission is, through different ways: houses, prevention program, school etc; create the environment for girls and boys that were trafficked, abused, neglected or at risk to have their fate changed and receive adequate living conditions, so that those who would never have the opportunity to live in dignity may now live and develop their talents, abilities and dreams,” the Apple of God’s Eye website said.

According to Philpot, there is a need for supplies and a need for government level change. There is so much that can be done, but there are not enough people that know or care. She and her husband have decided that helping human trafficking victims is a worthy cause, so they are dedicating a part of their lives and moving to Nepal.

“It is really hard to understand it until you’ve been there and seen it,” Philpot says. “We don’t want to think about it. We don’t want to look at our eight year old children, and think there’s kids this age being raped as we speak. It’s an ignorance thing, but it’s also a blind eye thing, where people just don’t want to think about it because it is terrible.” •

LARGEST GHOST HUNT IN THE WORLD

Located in the German Village at the Carriage House, Hamiltucky Paranormal hosted an investigation on National Ghost Hunting Day.

story **olivia rigney**
 photography **riley higgins**
 infographic **kelly johantges**



The Carriage House is located on Wilks Lane in Hamilton.

Hamiltucky Paranormal Investigations started in 2009 as just a Facebook page. They are a company committed to investigating the unknown with their expert ghost hunting material 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 Sean Clark and Shannon Biehl.

The last Saturday of every September is also known as National Ghost Hunting Day, established in 2016. Events around the world take place in the United States, Mexico, Canada, Philippines, India, England, and Australia. This international holiday was started by Hamilton, Ohio residents Maria and Bob Schmidt.

From 8 p.m. to midnight, participants who purchased tickets online were able to witness the paranormal activity in a historic community meeting place. People from all around Ohio came together in hopes of seeing the reported paranormal activity.

One of the 25 participants was northern Ohio resident Allison Lausche, who came to affirm her belief of ghosts and spirits.

“A lot of people are interested in the paranormal,” Lausche says. “I just want to know what is out there.”

The German Village is one of the many historical attractions in Ohio and benefits from people coming together for events like the ghost hunt. Hamiltucky Paranormal raises money for the community during every one of

these events.

“All of the money goes back into the German Village. We enjoy helping out the community that gives us these opportunities,” Biehl says. “We’re not getting paid to put on a show, like other investigation groups.”

Hamiltucky Paranormal has been located in Hamilton since its beginning. The constant sightings of the unknown make for lots of opportunities to investigate. Outside of this company there are ghost hunting tours and events all over the southwestern Ohio area.

“We definitely gravitate towards wherever the most paranormal activity is going to be,” Clark says. “This particular area in Ohio just so happens to be great for connecting to spirits.”

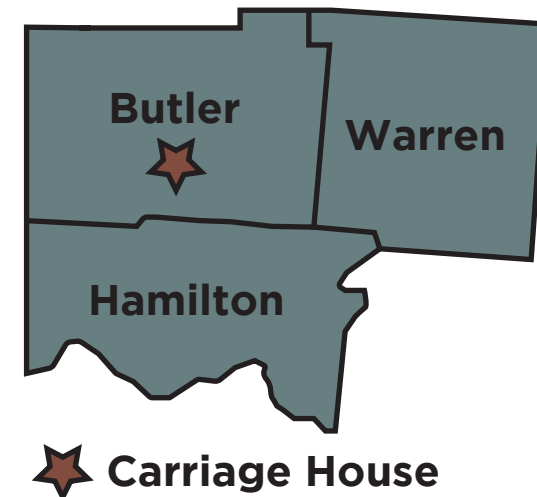
According to Clark, ghost hunting is very popular in Ohio and Hamilton especially. Hamiltucky Paranormal has always had good results while investigating in Ohio and while talking to the spirits they encounter.

“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, “And sometimes that reassurance that they are still here and still with them can make all the difference.” •



★ Carriage House



Corner view of the Carriage House.

PIC SIX: VEGETARIAN BURGER EDITION

reviews and photography alexandra fernholz

#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 gooey 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.

7598 Cox Lane West Chester, OH | \$6.99



#2 Northstar

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 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.

7610 Sloan Way Liberty Township, OH | \$14.00



#3 Bagger Dave's

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. My first impression of the burger-it was enormous, topped with lettuce, guacamole, pico de gallo, and tomato. It was pleasantly spicy, though the spice tended to overpower the taste of the rest of the burger.

The abundance of toppings made it hard to taste the actual black bean patty, and the bun was greasy enough to warrant three napkins. The burger's main shortcoming, however, was that it was the messiest one I've ever eaten. It literally fell apart in my hands. Perhaps this was an issue that may have been solved with utensils, but there was no silverware present at the table and we were unable to ask our server for any as she was otherwise occupied.

9421 Civic Center Blvd. West Chester Twp, OH | \$14.00



PIC SIX: VEGETARIAN BURGER EDITION

#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 substituted the Impossible Burger patty onto the "Say Cheese" Burger.

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 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.

7622 Blake Street Liberty Township, OH | \$8.59



#5 Wayback

For a weeknight around dinner time, Wayback Burger was surprisingly quiet- only a few other customers and no background music to accompany the meal. The service was one of the shortest waits of all restaurants- it took less than 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 and the bun was prepackaged.

But when I bit into the burger, I was surprised to find that it tasted like something- in fact, it was one of the few burgers where the addition of ketchup only contributed to the flavor rather than becoming the flavor of the burger. 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 so dry it began to crumble apart as I ate, and the texture of the patty reminded me of the tater tots which accompanied my burger.

7690 Voice of America Centre Dr. West Chester, OH \$5.99



#6 Burger King

Being 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, but this did not make up for its 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.

7387 N Liberty Dr Liberty Township, OH | \$7.79



COURAGE ON THE GO

story and photography **anna mullins**
 A group of girls from Union Elementary participate in the Girls On The Run program



Sara MacGuire and her mother put on their running bibs.



After donating to the Broken Bus Ministry, girls were invited to sign its interior.

On a cold Saturday morning in November, 16 excited faces stand at the starting line waiting for the countdown to begin. They wait, proudly displaying team unity in homemade blue tutus and blue fleece scarves, surrounded by girls their own age from all over Cincinnati. The cheers of the spectators and the ringing of cowbells creates a cacophony. The announcer's voice rises over the crowd to start the countdown, the race begins. They are Girls on the Run.

Twice a week for the past 10 weeks, 16 Union Elementary fifth graders have met to prepare for this moment. Each practice, they have worked with their coaches, discussing a different character development topic, completing a warm-up activity, and playing fun running games to prepare them for the 5K at the end of the Girls on the Run (GOTR) program.

"Every practice is designed so that there's a topic that we talk about," Union Head Coach Kara Woeller says. "We talk about empathy, and how to recognize [it] and react in a positive way. We talk about expressing emotion. [Everyone has a] topic and it's intertwined with running activities."

Erin Hamilton is the 5k director for the

celebratory 5K run at the end of the GOTR program. This fall three Lakota elementaries - Union, Cherokee, 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 team 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 Rabin's sister, Ashley Rabin, 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 girls and their running buddies then celebrated with free pancakes donated by First Watch as Miley Cyrus's "Party in the USA" played in the background.

"[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 pay 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 like 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 dresses 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."•



After the signal gun was fired the runners took off from the starting line.



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.

story and infographic **brayden barger**

Lining the skyline of Mason, Ohio with 364 acres of steel and wood, Kings Island is the premier source of entertainment for locals and travelers alike.

From the thrilling roller coasters to the award-winning children's area Planet Snoopy, the Cedar Fair operated park has something for everyone. This is evident by their consistent yearly attendance of roughly 3.47 million people, which ranks second in the nation for seasonal amusement parks.

With such a high attendance rate, it is imperative that Kings Island constantly updates the park's attractions. However, in recent years, it seems that there has been an overall increase

in the amount of changes the park implements.

In the last two years the amusement park has updated park scenery, removed two popular roller coasters Firehawk and Vortex, added the Kings Mills Antique Autos, and announced its first giga roller coaster Orion, which will be the park's tallest, longest, and fastest steel roller coaster.

A giga coaster is a ride in which the initial height or drop is between 300 and 399 feet, and while Orion's initial height is only 287 feet, the initial drop is exactly 300 feet, just making the mark for the giga coaster label.

The ride reaches speeds up to 91mph, making it the seventh fastest roller coaster in

the United States. Along with being the seventh fastest, Orion is also tied for the seventh tallest drop in the world.

Chad Showalter, the Director of Communications for Kings Island, says that next season Orion will join the likes of Cedar Point's Millennium Force, Carowinds' Fury 325, among other giga coasters.

"In 2020, the world's seventh giga coaster will join Kings Island's coaster line-up," Showalter says. "We expect Orion will be very popular for our loyal guests and passholders as well as coaster enthusiasts around the world."

Orion is designed by Switzerland-based company Bolliger & Mabillard, who also

"To get to ride on the last train though, was a good bit of closure for all of us. We used to ride it several times a day when we worked there, so it was awesome to get the last ride."—Jeanne Bauer

designed Diamondback, Banshee, and many other high-end American roller coasters.

Seven of the top 20 ranked steel roller coasters in a 2018 poll conducted by Amusement Today were designed by Bolliger & Mabillard, the most by a ride manufacturer among the top 20.

East senior Jaycee Vincent, a supervisor for the merchandise department of Kings Island and self-proclaimed roller coaster diehard, says that she is very excited for the new addition.

"I am so excited for Orion to come to the park," Vincent says. "Everyone at Kings Island has been preparing for the new ride."

With new major additions to a park with limited space, there must be major removals. One of them being Vortex, as it was recently announced that Vortex will be closed after being operated for 33 seasons.

Vortex, which gave rides to 46 million people since its opening in 1987, was manufactured by Arrow, an American-based company that went bankrupt in 2002.

Vortex had replaced the original Bat roller coaster, and upon its debut it was the tallest full-circuit roller coaster in the world, and was also the first coaster to feature six inversions. Also credited to the ride's debut, attendance at Kings Island exceeded 3 million people for the first time in park history.

Vortex's closure was due to the ride reaching the end of its service life. According to Showalter, the park's in-house maintenance team determines the service life of a roller coaster, and a roller coaster can generally be maintained despite the status of the manufacturer.

"Retired coasters are generally a result of the maintenance team determining that they've

reached the end of their service life," Showalter says. "Sometimes it involves the closing of the company that manufactures the ride [like Arrow]. Most Arrow roller coasters last 25-30 years. Because Kings Island's maintenance team took such good care of Vortex, we were able to reach 33 seasons with it."

Jeanne Bauer, who was a member of the original daily operating crew for Vortex from 1987 to 1988, was given the opportunity to ride on the final train sent through before the coaster closed for good.

"I understand why they need to take the coaster down, but it is sad for me and my friends that worked there," Bauer says, who worked at the park until 1993. "To get to ride on the last train though, was a good bit of closure for all of us. We used to ride it several times a day when we worked there, so it was awesome to get the last ride."

Added this past season, the new Kings Mills Antique Autos ride is an updated version of the previous antique car ride Les Taxis that operated at Kings Island for 32 seasons, from the park's opening in 1972 to 2004. The ride runs on a quarter mile path and features cars that are 2/3 scale replicas of the 1911 Ford Model T.

According to Showalter, the attraction was brought back solely because "guests wanted them to come back."

In 2018 the flying coaster Firehawk met a similar fate to Vortex. A flying roller coaster is a ride that simulates the sensation of flight by laying riders in a prone position, keeping riders in place using heavy restraints.

Firehawk, which originally operated at Six Flags Worlds of Adventure under the name X-Flight from 2001 to 2006, opened at Kings Island in 2007.

The ride, which was manufactured by Dutch company Vekoma, was demolished in early

2019. 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" which 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.

Apart from attractions, the park has had some aesthetic changes as well. International Street, which houses many of the park's gift shops, Royal Fountain, and replica Eiffel Tower, was completely updated this past season.

From the walkway, to the greenery, to the shops themselves, everything was given a new vintage look.

Don Helbig, the Area Manager and Digital Marketer for Kings Island says that the International Street renovations will allow guests to relive the magic of International Street as guests experienced when the park was first opened.

"No element of International Street was left untouched," Helbig says. "The renovation takes guests back to what Kings Island looked like when the park first opened, allowing guests to discover the magic of International Street again."

With the movement to reintroduce nostalgic elements of the park and add brand new elements, while also removing mechanically outdated attractions, the landscape of Kings Island is evolving.

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 hormann



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 art 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.”

East freshman Olivia Borke attended on the night of Oct. 11. One of her favorite pieces, entitled “Crescendo,” featured a piano under a tree that, when a key was pressed, a corresponding string of lights hanging from the branches would light up.

“[The children playing with it] looked pretty confident in themselves,” Borke says. “I saw a lot of smiles on their [faces].”

It wasn’t just the faces of the children that lit up during BLINK. Many adults, including Bock, were amazed by the sights.

“I have a bit of a mixture of tech and art background,” Bock says. “I’ve actually done some similar things in the past with projections, animations, and video on large surfaces. And to see that expanded in ways that I couldn’t even have imagined, it was really interesting. It makes me want to go out and create.”

Borke believes the festival is a great representation of the people and culture of Cincinnati.

“Where we are, it’s all about art,” Borke says. “[BLINK] shows Cincinnati and how creative and artsy people are here.” •

BANDITO TOUR



review and infographic emily sanden

After the end of the Emotional Roadshow tour on June 25, 2017, Tyler Joseph and Josh Dun went on a year-long hiatus from concerts, music videos, and posting on social media. With a dramatic return in July 2018, they announced dates for their Bandito tour and released music videos for two songs from their upcoming album, *Trench*. The album was set to be released on Oct. 5, 2018, and they released one more music video for the song *Levitate* on August 8.

After such a long break from any interaction with Twenty One Pilots, fans were crazed to receive so much new content, and jumped on concert tickets. The first leg of the tour, from October–November 2018, was across the continental U.S., but the duo decided to reach out to fans across the world with the second and third legs of their tour, including countries in South America, Europe, and Oceania.

Fans received 141 shows across the world, with three more to come later this year in the U.S. and two in Germany in June of next year. After being unable to attend shows so distant, but yearning to see them live once more, I was ecstatic to hear that the band would be playing local. My aunt produced free tickets to this concert, my cousin and I traveled downtown on the cool Tuesday night.

To quote Tyler Joseph himself, “You won’t believe the hype,” but after seeing the concert for myself, the hype could never be enough. Ask any of the 200+ fans that slept on the ground in the cold the night before the concert at U.S. Bank Arena.

After spending years on tour, graduating from a van with a U-Haul trailer to a small fleet of tour buses and tractor trailers, the Ohio-native duo knows how to throw a party. The setup included multicolored lights, a raised platform, a second stage with a chandelier, confetti, platforms held by fans in the pit, and a flaming car alluding to the *Heavydirtysoul* music video. Lead singer Tyler Joseph was able to walk through the rambunctious pit as if Moses parting the Red Sea, and walk to the second stage, where he performed two love songs written for his wife,

“Tear in My Heart” and “Smithereens,” which are personal tear-jerkers.

The band is PG, and while some may not correlate children and concerts, there were numerous young kids attending the concert in their Twenty One Pilots merchandise. The audience swung upwards as well, as many older attendees enjoyed the two hour-long concert, as well as the adult beverages that were served.

Doors for seating and pit opened at 6 p.m., and fans were already lined up from the previous night to get the best standing space around the stage. Many of the 13,418 fans were adorned in olive green clothes, yellow duct tape, as well as handkerchiefs around their necks to mirror the band members in their music videos that were released in July and August of 2018.

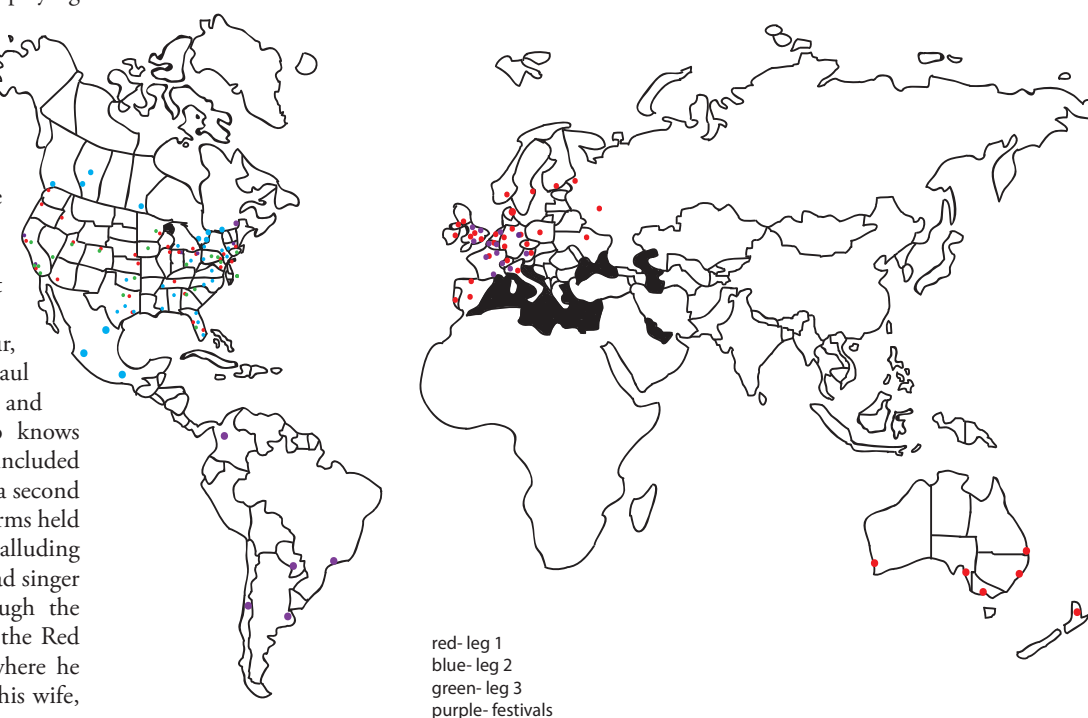
The opener, *Misterwives*, started their show

two hours after doors opened, allowing people to get settled. The band hyped the crowd, full of charisma, lead singer Amanda Lee Duffy performed many hair flips and high kicks that prepared the audience for the stunts that Twenty One Pilots would perform, including backflips and jumps off a piano.

Finally, the experience came to a close with a performance of *Trees* from Tyler’s first untitled album, as well as a release of yellow and green confetti above the pit. This ties in to the previous tour done by the band, *The Emotional Roadshow*, in which they released red confetti.

As the second show I’ve seen performed by the duo, the last being May of 2017, it is easy to say that the group has grown as performers. The confidence that Tyler Joseph exuded over the crowd could only be achieved from performing hundreds of shows in front of hundreds of thousands of people. •

WORLD TOUR DESTINATIONS



red- leg 1
blue- leg 2
green- leg 3
purple- festivals

FROZEN 2



The long-awaited sequel to Disney's Frozen finally came to theaters on Nov. 22. Since then, Frozen 2 has broken global box office records by making \$738.6 million less than two weeks after its release.

The film follows Elsa (Idina Menzel), Anna (Kristen Bell), and the rest of the original cast as they venture out of Arendelle and into the Enchanted Forest to find the source of Elsa's magic. With new songs and characters, the two sisters work to find the answers the past holds.

The mood of Frozen 2 greatly differs from the first film. The animation and special effects were higher quality. The soundtrack had less sing-alongs and more complex pieces, including a 90s themed solo from Kristoff and a mysterious lullaby sung by Queen Iduna.

I went to see Frozen 2 twice over Thanksgiving break. My friends and I walked into the theater and we couldn't help but excitedly talk about how long it had been since the first film. We were only 12 when Frozen came out, and now we were in the process of graduating.

With this in mind, I think that the second film isn't just for kids- it was for the generation that grew up with the original. I find it hard to believe that the underlying messages, such as change, personal growth, and grief presented throughout the film were well-received by younger audiences. Despite this, Frozen 2 is a film that anyone can enjoy. —Isis Summerlin

DISNEY +

The Walt Disney company did it again. According to Forbes.com, as of July 2019, Disney owns 37 %of the US movie market. With over 80 years of timeless films 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. Upgrading to 13 dollars a month, viewers will subscribe to Disney Plus, Hulu (with advertisements), and ESPN+. If you are a big fan of Marvel, Star Wars, or have a child, I would highly recommend this for you.

— Kelly Johantges

2019
November 12th Disney Plus launches. On launch day Disney Plus already has ten million subscribers.
2010
February 18th The HBO television channel launches a streaming service with just their content. As of 2017, there were 54 million subscribers.
2008
March 12th Hulu launches and currently has 26.8 million subscribers.
2007
January 15th Netflix announces an online streaming service. Currently there are 61.7 million subscribers.
2006
September 7th Amazon video is announced. As of 2017, there were 26 million subscribers.

*domestic subscribers only

GIRLS BOWLING TEAM WORKS TO OVERCOME COMPETITION IN GMCS

With the majority of his team being brand new to the world of bowling, 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. After six games, Hamilton had a score of 23/50, while East had a score of 15/78.

"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

(Right) Returning 500m state champion Jacob McDonald practices for the Mason Mantarays and Lakota East's swim team.

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

"I just want to get better and have the team get better," says Bustle, who transferred from West to East in her junior year. "We have a lot of junior varsity people who have never bowled in their life before who are going to try to go for varsity next year."

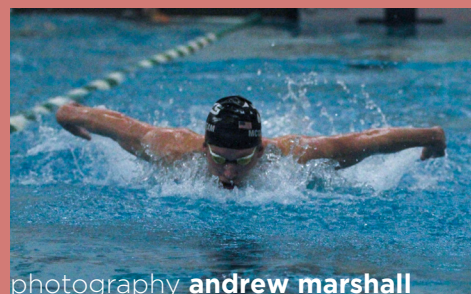
Bustle was one of two players to return from last year's varsity team. She and returning junior Sophia Varelmann are working to build the team up for next year.

"This is kind of a regrouping year for the girls," Varelmann says. "I expect next year to be much more organized."

While having lost the majority of his varsity players last year and knowing that he will lose at least two more next year, Meno is focusing on training new bowlers.

"Our team is looking forward to developing the JV squad to become varsity players next year," Meno says. "I only have two varsity girls that are seniors this year. So that means I'm gonna have to develop two girls or three girls on the JV for next year."

— Mary Barone



photography andrew marshall

...continued from page 56

The coaches are also working hard to create practices that benefit the swimmers, requiring them to attend five weekly challenging practices.

"The coaches really want us to do well this year," Devine says. "I'm even hoping to get some individuals at state."

Along with other men on the team, Devine hopes to be able to compete in districts this year. Last season, he swam in state on two relays, placing eleventh overall.

The McDonald family has set a pathway for success within the East swim team. They are leading the way towards multiple titles this year. Jacob McDonald was 2019 state champion last year, continuing his family tradition.

This year is going to be one worth watching, and the boys are working hard to make this season better than ever. — Jillian Simon

THE HIGHEST FINISH



The East varsity girls' cross country team was runner-up at the OHSAA State meet. This was the highest finish in program history.

Everything grows silent. The cheers from the crowd are far away and it seems as if the starting gun will never fire. 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 runners' ears. 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. Beaver creek won first with 51 points, placing four runners in the top nine. Their fifth runner placed 56th overall but 36th among scoring runners. Beaver creek had the number one and number two runners overall: senior Taylor Ewert was first with a time of 17:22.5, and senior Savannah Roark finished second with a time of 17:48.6.

"We were hoping for that state championship... and then Beaver creek 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 says. "I think [the East girls] were still pretty happy 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 Spletzer earned 28th with a time of 18:49.2, senior Danielle Horter placed 38th with a time of 19:04.0, freshman Jocelyn Willis with a time of 19:06.4 placed 40th, and junior Paxton Oberhaus placed 46th with a time of 19:08.8.

"This 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, I was improving my time so I was really proud of myself because I was in a good place mentally about racing."

The final two runners for the team were senior Hailey Wilson, who placed 85th with a time of 19:30.5, and sophomore Cali Reynolds, who placed 113th with a time

story and photography rachel anderson
infopgrahpic spencer li and abbie westendorf

of 19:57.1.

While East missed the state title by one spot, state runner-up is the highest place any cross country team has won in East history. No one on the team was disappointed in how they performed.

"When I finished, I was over the roof," Oberhaus says. "We were so proud of what we did."

Prior to the race, Milesplit, the premier site for national tracking of high school cross country and track teams, predicted East would rank in third place, right behind Hillard Davidson and Beavercreek. However, Hillard Davidson ended up placing

third behind East.

"One of the biggest reasons [East] was second that day was because they were running to win," Thomas says. "The fact that they were chasing Beavercreek, who ran so good that day was the reason why they beat all those other teams."

Only the top 20 individuals make it on the podium. The highest place East earned was 25th.

"[Becoming state runner-up without placing anyone on the podium] shows that we all work really well together. It shows the depth of our team," Horter says. "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."

Harris believes that placing no on on the podium shows the depth and strength of the team.

"It shows that when you have a huge pack like us that all runs together, you can still do really well," Harris says. "You don't have to have that one person up in the front to get you a low point."

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.

"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 159 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.

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.

"I didn't get to run any of the big meets [last year]. 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 overdoing it, 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 the state meet is when they taper and lower their mileage so their legs aren't sore during the race.



Girls Div 1 Points 5k: 248 pts
Girls Div 1 Points 2 mile: 263 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

2017

The Lakota East Girls Cross Country team placed 10th overall with a score of 248 points in the 2017 OHSAA State Cross Country Championships with Carly Spletzer having the best time for the East Girls Cross Country team which was 19:04.6 in the 5k.

2018

In the 2018 OHSAA State Cross country Championships, Kelsi Harris of The Lakota East Girls Cross Country team lead 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.

2019

Finally in the 2019 OHSAA State Cross Country Championships, The East Girls Cross Country team placed 2nd overall with a score of 121 points and the quickest time in the 5k was made by Kelsi Harris of Lakota East with a 11.5 second improvement from her last year time in the 2018 State Championship with a time 18:49.2.

ASHTON GIBBS Q&A

Spark interviews Ashton Gibbs, East sophomore and boys varsity cross country runner.

interview **riley higgins**

How do you prepare for the season?

We started around August. [That is] when our season really started, but we conditioned before that. We did a couple races, a few off weeks. And I went from about 17 [minutes] to 16:40.

What is your training regiment?

We'll practice, some days we'll have some normal distance run at a sustainable pace, and then other days will be hard speed workouts, and that can be a hard easy, which is just a certain amount of time we're running for certain increments of that time. Some are harder than others, like race pace, and then we'll have interval workouts.

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. •

"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 Horter

"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," Horter says. "Coach tailors 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," Horter says. "I'm really proud of the team and everything we accomplished. I can't wait to see what else they accomplish." •



(top left): Senior Hailey Wilson (back), junior Carly Spletzer (middle), and sophomore Cali Reynolds (front) sit in the team tent lacing their spike
(top right): Senior Hailey Wilson runs past the two mile at the Nike Regionals cross country meet in Terre Haute, Indiana.
(bottom): The East girls' cross country team debriefs their race at Nike Regionals with their coach.

FLIPPING INTO THE NEW YEAR

story **ava huelskamp** | art **kelly johantges**

After 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 Scanlon, Lydia Brengelman, Taylor Terrell, and Celia Griffaw to compensate for their lost

seniors.

"[Griffaw] has been a part of the team for four years and she provides us the consistency," Dagley says. "She won't necessarily go out and hit the biggest number but she always gives us a consistent, solid performance."

The season opens with a meet on Dec. 12, with East facing teams including Lakota West and Centerville as their biggest rivals.

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 complete that 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

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

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 her 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 said. "She's not necessarily going to go out there and get a 9.5, but you know you can count on her when it's time. She's cool and calm and confident, and she'll get us started."

Districts will take place on Feb. 22 with East, West, Cincinnati Country Day (CCD), and Sycamore as some of the competing teams.

"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." •

**"We don't really have a goal other than to be at our best by districts, wherever that places us."
-Mardi Dagley**

YOUNG GIRLS' TEAM TO CONTINUE IMPROVEMENT WORK IN REBUILD MODE

After going 9-15 last season, East head coach Dan Wallace 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.

The team, 3-0, with all of their 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 Tenover, and Ashley Fohl. French is already averaging eight points per game, and has provided a spark for the young team.

Wallace pushed conditioning in the offseason, mentioning the impact 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 really get after it in the weight room. So, you know, a lot of it is just when changing the culture of work expectations."

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 talent we have from the underclassmen," junior forward Maddy Bley says. "We're playing a lot differently this year and we look like a whole new team from last year."

Not only do they have a strong group of underclassmen, but they also have five returning seniors. This should give them some good leadership to help develop the younger players.

This girls team is looking to make a real push into the GMC and state tournament, and they know that they will have to bring their A game each and every night.

"I expect to get more playing time this year with a big leadership role and get a lot more assists," senior guard Camryn Eddy says. "I will also try to keep my assist to turnover ratio down as I am trying to become a much better distributor this year." **-Nick Hetterich**

photography **nick hetterich**

Guard Madison French drives for two of her 11 points in a 54-33 loss to Mason.

(Left) East junior Nate Johnson prior to a reverse dunk against Mason. Johnson finished with 16 points, seven steals and five assists in the 44-40 victory.



photography **riley higgins**

BOYS BASKETBALL LOOKS TO UNDERCLASSMEN TO DEFEND 2019 GMC TITLE

With the loss of superstar Greater Miami Conference (GMC) player of the year, Bash Wieland (Bellarmine U.), who averaged a conference high 19.5 points, as well as the second-leading scorer, Will Johnston (Mt. St. Joseph), who averaged 10.7 points, East coaches still look to continue the dominance.

East looks for other ways to put the ball in the basket. 2018 GMC Coach of the Year Clint Adkins says Grant Spicer, since graduated, was the best leader he has ever coached.

"Obviously we lost a lot of scorers last year," Adkins says. "[this season] has to be a great team effort where everybody just does a little bit more."

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 parody [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 Taft, 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."

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 upperclassmen to go along with many younger players, including six sophomores.

Adkins says they don't like to take out individual players and preaches everyone on the team as having equal importance. Players like junior point guard Nate Johnson, forward Furhmann, and senior forward Alex Mangold, the 6-7 center, who is returning from a broken leg last season, will be headliners of the team because of their scoring.

"We've got a lot of really good other players that maybe won't get the notoriety that others may," Adkins says. "But everyone on this team plays a role."

Mangold feels like defensive IQ and intensity will dictate who will play this year. Another key to success is maturity and consistency from all players, on top of running a smoother offense.

"We have room to improve on running our motion offense," Mangold says. "Things like moving the ball and making the extra pass will help us a lot."

Although the team is talented, they know nothing is going to be given to them. But with hard work, the sky's the limit.

"We need to lay it all out there every single day," Furhmann says. "We can't have success without hard work." **- Drew Bachman**

BOYS SWIMMING TEAM LOOKS TO RETURNING STATE CHAMPION JACOB MCDONALD IN TOUGH GMC

The East Men's Swim Team is looking forward to a new season with their squad of new freshmen as they kick off the season with tri-meet at Mason with Princeton.

Coaches Dennis Beck, Stephanie Hewitt, Richard Hamilton, and Tim Richman have been already training their swimmers throughout the school week in preparation for their upcoming season.

After the loss of graduate Joey Kelly last season, who competed in the men's 200 medley relay last season along with Jacob McDonald, Adam McDonald, and Evan Devine, the team will have to make up for his "cheerful, positive" personality and his success," said McDonald.

"Joey was a really fun person to have on the relay. He always had high energy and had a fun mindset," state champion McDonald says. "He was happy to be there."

Evan Devine, a junior on the East swim team, is hoping to be able to go to state once again to be with his teammates. He especially wants to compete in the relays and go for a personal event best.

"Watching some of the relays and seeing the time drops at sectionals will be really exciting this year," Devine says. "Everyone's got the drive."

The team has had multiple state title winners, including Jacob McDonald, who was named Putters' Athlete of the Week and competed in the 200 and 500 freestyle events at the state meet.

Jacob McDonald was state champion last year in the 500 meter freestyle, swimming a 4.22.12. He was awarded with a parade on Main Street as he was cheered on by East students.

"It was an honor. I really liked doing it through Lakota East," said Jacob McDonald, who swims for the Mason Mantarays as well. "Our [East athletic director [Rich Bryant] does a good job making athletes recognized."

Sophomore Adam McDonald knows he has to follow in his older brother's championship footprints. He hopes to be able to compete at state once again this year in the 100 breaststroke, and he wants to be there to hype up the relay.

"My brother shows me what my potential could be and what I could do if I work hard," Adam McDonald says. "I don't want to let anyone down."

...continued on page 50

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 johantges**

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

It was a crisp fall morning as teams from the Greater Miami Conference (GMC) gathered at Walden Ponds 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 went 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' tenth 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.

East senior Peyton Houston, who is committed to play collegiate Golf at Wright State University and won Second Team All-GMC honors, mentioned 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

"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

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 benefitted 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.

Houston says that strong chemistry not only helped this year's team, but was also something that existed on every other East team he had

been apart of, dating all the way back to his freshman year. In essence, this was the key to East's continued dynasty.

"What made this team, and every other team I had 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."

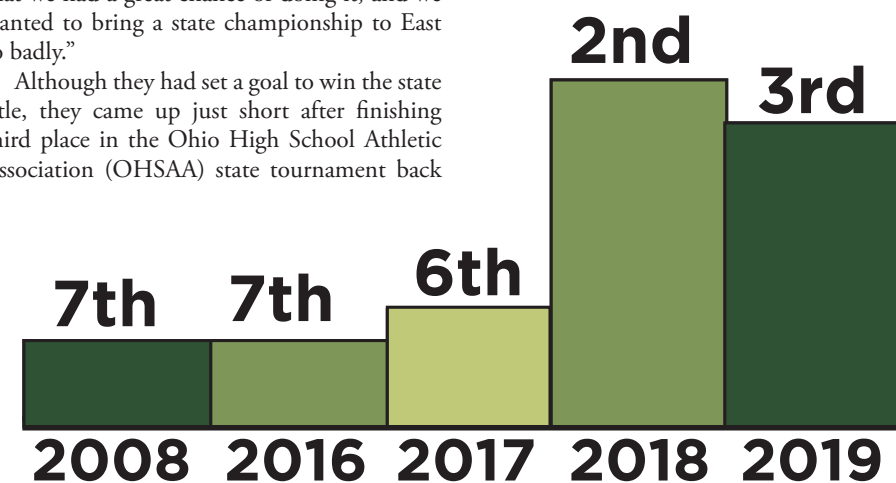
After another historic season in the books, East is now focused on next year and is looking forward to adding to their established dynasty. With four of the six varsity players being seniors, they will certainly have a lot of youth on next year's roster.

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."•



Lakota East Boys Golf Team Rankings at OHSAA State Tournament

source eastthunderhawks



Senior Eyad Qaqish dribbles the ball in a 1-0 victory against West.

PARTY LIKE IT'S 1999

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.

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, exactly 20 years ago in 1999. Head Coach Jeremy Hilén played for that East team in 1999, and pointed out a few similarities that the two teams share.

The makeup of the final four teams were very similar as well as talented. Each had three All-City players, who all played the same positions.

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

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

"Both teams played with relentless effort," Hilén 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 a n e v i d e n t s t r o n g p o i n t 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 acrobat 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.

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

"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 uncontested 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 leave 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," Hilén "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 three wins coming from behind in the postseason.

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

"In our mentality, we focused on bouncing back from anything," Shapiro says. "Every single day we would get better from practices."

Despite the strong finish, things were not exactly smooth sailing early in the season. Through the team's first 10 games, they were 4-3-3. After those first ten games, the team rattled 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."

Hilén 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 equalize the score," Hilén 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."

Advanced to State Semifinal - lost to Westerville North 2-1



Advanced to Elite 8 - lost to West



Advanced to Sweet 16 - lost to Centerville 1-0



Advanced to Sweet 16 - lost to West 1-0



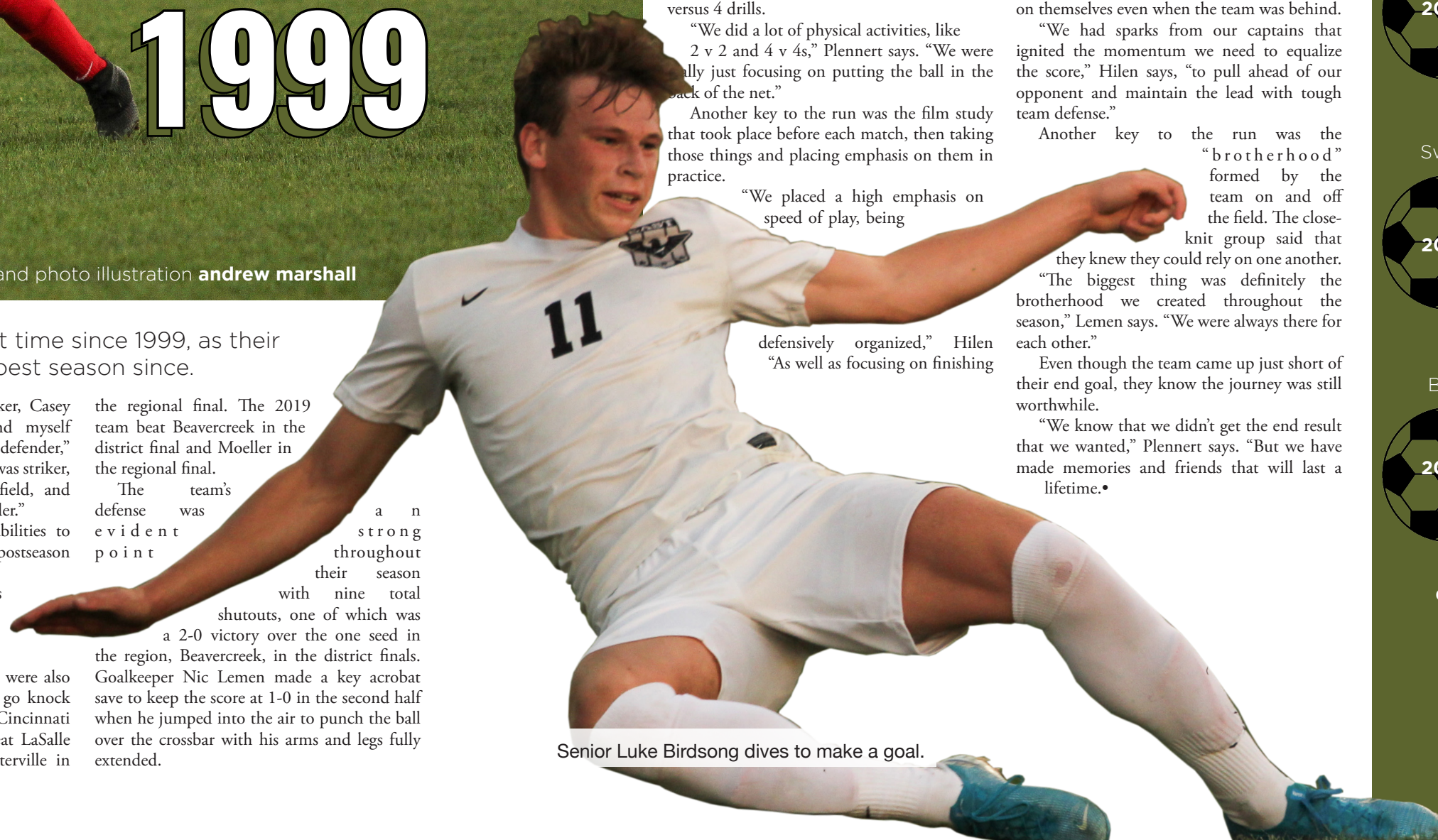
Advanced to Elite 8 - lost to Beavercreek 3-2



infographic **drew bachman**



Senior Luke Birdsong dives to make a goal.



NO

abbie westendorf

Every fall, thousands of high school students and families gather under the Friday night lights to watch their team represent their school in America's most watched sport: football. The fans, the players, and the sport itself creates an electrifying atmosphere that only a few get to experience. It has been a tradition in the U.S. for nearly a century.

In some games, there are certain calls made by the referees that can be very controversial, and can often alter the outcome of the game. This is especially prevalent in high school football due to the lack of an instant replay system, which requires referees to make tough calls at game speed in just a matter of seconds.

As technology has become more advanced in recent years, there has been a strong push for high schools to implement an instant replay system for football games, similar to the systems used by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) and the National Football League (NFL).

However, a disadvantage that is often overlooked is the extremely high expenses that are required for schools to maintain not just their football program, but their athletic department and school as a whole.

As of 2019, the Lakota Local School District's fiscal budget is over \$177 million. Although this number seems very high, Lakota's five year forecast predicts the district will go into deficit spending by 2023. This means the district as a whole will be spending more money than they bring in each year.

On Nov. 18, Lakota's school board made the decision to reinstate busing for all freshmen living in the Lakota district. This will add another \$2.7 million to the district's spending every year, making the district go into the red sooner, in 2023.

Out of the \$177 million, East football spent nearly \$15,000 in the 2019 fiscal year, which was more than all other East athletic programs, excluding boys' Basketball and boys' Golf. Implementing a replay system at the high school level would add several thousands of dollars to East Football's federal expenditures in each of the next few years.

In the state of Alabama, where the use of instant replay in all high school football games was approved by the Alabama High School Athletic Association (AHSAA) in 2018, schools are expected to pay \$3,000 in the first year of use, then an additional \$1,500 annually in subsequent years. These costs cover



Sports writers Abbie Westendorf and Mason Wise debate whether instant replay should be implemented into high school football games.

HEAD TO HEAD

photography jake ratliff

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

YES

mason wise

and maintenance support.

Obviously, not every school is able to afford these costs, but out of the 380+ football-playing schools in Alabama, a total of 96 of them played in at least one game that 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 \$40,000 in the 2019 season alone.

Not only that, but they only spent a total of around \$15,000 throughout the season, so 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 for 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 (OHSAA) Board of Directors approved the use of instant replay during the state finals, which took place Dec. 5-7 at Tom Benson Hall of Fame Stadium in Canton. The decision was made back on June 3.

This specific system, similar to the one in Alabama, allows officials to review calls involving fumbles, interceptions, scoring plays, and any other instances that are deemed significant by the officials and would not disrupt the flow of the game, according to a statement released by OHSAA Senior Director of Officiating and Sport Management Beau Rugg.

Although it was only approved for use during the state championship game, it is very likely that we could see instant replay 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 the game of football and ensure that the rights calls are made during the most important games, but it would lead to a much better experience for the fans and would make calls even easier for the officials, who already have a tough job as it is. •

equipment, training, and maintenance support for the replay system.

Assuming these prices would be the same for high schools in Ohio, this would cost East nearly \$10,000 in a span of five years. With the district's five year-forecast in mind, this would send the district into an even further budget deficit.

Not only would it affect the district, but also the players and their families. Raising the football budget would require raising participation fees as well. This could exclude certain athletes who are considered financially unstable from participating.

Because the instant replay system would only be used for football games, the program would be forced to pay additional money out of their own budget. This would add to expenses that are already allocated to security, medical care, equipment, and coaches' salaries.

Financial issues are not the only problem at hand when it comes to instant replay. Every time a play is reviewed on the field, the referees have to go through a complicated replay process that could take several minutes to complete. For every review issued throughout the game, these short intermissions would slow down the pace of the game.

These interruptions would also come in addition to other instances that require a stoppage of the clock, such as 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 take away the fast-paced nature with which the game is played, arguably one of the most important elements of the game. As a result, fans would become less interested, games would take longer, and any attempt for a team to gain momentum could be abruptly stopped at any moment by an official review. •

On Sept. 27, the Princeton Vikings paid a visit to the Hawks Nest to play in what has become one of the most vicious Greater Miami Conference (GMC) rivalries 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, as the two teams exchanged heavy blows. East dominated the line of scrimmage for the first three quarters, which gave 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 controversial calls that were made throughout the game. Notably on Princeton's game-winning touchdown, where the quarterback's knee appeared to be down before he broke the goal line.

It was third and goal at that point, and if the quarterback was marked short of the goal line, then Princeton would be forced to kick a field goal to tie the game. To say the least, it

was a very crucial play in the game. Instead, the ruling on the field was a touchdown, and with less than 10 seconds left in the game, Princeton had taken the lead after storming back from 14 points down to win the game.

Coaches and players on the East sideline were very upset with the call, and photos from multiple camera angles show that the quarterback's knee was clearly down before he crossed the goal line. This game, as well as many others that featured controversial calls throughout the game are a strong indication as to why Ohio high school football desperately needs instant replay.

States like Alabama and North Dakota have already approved the use of instant replay in all high school football games statewide. In 2018, the Alabama High School Athletic Association (AHSAA) partnered with DVsport, a company that specializes in instant replay.

DVsport provides their equipment to any school who chooses to implement the system, as long as they have sufficient funds to do so. The system that 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

The last bell of the day echoes through the school as the student body begins to flood the halls. Slamming lockers and laughter fills the silence as friends begin leaving the school building, car keys in hand, all except those who can't drive. Sophomores, juniors, and even seniors occupy stairwells, main street, and the flexible learning center waiting for rides while those who have been able to get their license are already on their way home.

Students without a ride home are forced to go to places like the Edge Teen Center as they're pushed out of the school by East's administrators after 3:30. East's freshman campus is most strict, with getting students out of the building because freshman have the choice to walk to the main campus and stay there until their rides arrive.

During my freshman year at East, my only form of transportation was my brother who was a senior at East. Everyday, no matter the weather, I was walking across Bethany Road to make it to my brother's car.

During budget cuts in 2011, busing was one of the many things cut affecting all Lakota students in grades K-12. The consequence? Miles of traffic on Cincinnati-Dayton Road in the mornings that cause attendance to be held for five more minutes and parking lot jams that hold up students, staff, and parents for an extra 20 minutes.

According to the United States Department of Labor as of 2016, 66.1% of married-couple families with children had both parents working. Therefore, transporting students to and from school everyday becomes difficult. When

demands of high school and homework. Tom's Superior Driving School costs roughly \$600 for the entire program- too expensive for many low-income families. As a result, teens are being forced to wait until they're 18 for their license because then they won't have to take classes or do in-car sessions.

On Nov. 18, the Lakota Board of Education voted to bring back busing for East and West freshman campuses. This decision will be put into action beginning in the 2020-2021 school year, costing an estimated \$2.7 million dollars each year to fund the entire operation. The board did not want the main campus to get busing 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 be driven by their parents. For teen drivers that are new to the road, their safety increases by 50 times.

Busing needs to be implemented in both the freshman and main campus so that people don't have to wait at school for hours. Not all

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

When given the opportunity, a high schooler will 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 schoolers 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 eighth largest public school district in Ohio and the only district within the top ten largest school districts to not provide busing to all 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 buses are housed connects with the Liberty Junior School parking lot. According to board



HEAD TO HEAD

Should there be busing to grades 9-12?

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.

YES

column **leah mccain**
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 until 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 when they weren't available, 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 amount of reasons, therefore, they shouldn't have 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.

Mason and Kings are a few of the many districts in southern Ohio that still offer busing for their high schoolers. Before Lakota tries to compare themselves with other schools they should first focus on the transportation of their students.

parents have adjusted.

Surveys conducted by both Spark and the Lakota School Board showed that a majority of main campus students and parents would not utilize a busing service if provided.

A Spark survey of 134 East students reported that 72% of students drive themselves to school everyday and 77% would not use busing if it was provided. The school board survey of over 4,000 high school parents found that 87% of freshman parents would use the service but only 34% of senior parents would.

With numbers this high, the district has no reason to extend busing to students past ninth grade. Reinstating busing to the East and West freshman campuses, as well as providing the required busing to in-district private school freshman students will cost the district roughly \$2.7 million per year, as reported by district treasurer Jenni

member Kelley Casper, there is already an issue with overflow from this parking lot, so the service center space would have to be expanded to accommodate the additions, costing the district even more time.

It is not practical both economically and socially for Lakota to provide busing to both East and West main campuses. The monetary cost of freshman busing already projects the district into a spending deficit within two school years. The expenses along with the fact that it would be underutilized by upperclassmen, show how main campus busing would be an inappropriate institution.

NO

column **regan denham**
art **alexandra fernholz**

DEMOCRACY IN PERIL

JR KELLEY

photography and art alexandra fernholz



GUEST COLUMN

For the last five months, the residents of Hong Kong have been pouring out 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 protestor in the chest, marking the first use of undeniably 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 seized 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 most importantly, liberty. All of these are completely opposite of the Chinese system.

Sparking these recent protests was the 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 essentially abduct residents of Hong Kong away from their more democratic judicial systems.

Over time, the police force in Hong Kong has become increasingly violent and subversive. They allowed Chinese 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 China, fired tear gas from potentially deadly heights, assaulted journalists and medics, the list goes on.

Despite all this, the protests are only gaining more traction. It's become an international story, forcing people to address it.

Companies such as Blizzard Activision and the NBA have been criticized for

their submission to the Chinese government. Companies such as these have a history of lucrative symbiosis with China - and offending Beijing could represent huge financial losses.

Blizzard came under especially heavy fire when they banned a professional player of one of their video games for expressing pro-Hong Kong sentiment. The NBA received outrage for kicking out attendees of one of the preseason games for wearing shirts that advocated for freedom in Hong Kong.

As someone who's been watching the events unfold day by day, nothing has disappointed me more than when LeBron James bent the knee to China by saying that another player was 'misinformed or not really educated' when he supported the protesters in Hong Kong. LeBron has always been a philanthropist and generally good person, but to see him give up his morals just so the NBA can rake in more money from China is heartbreaking.

Part of the reason people don't care about this story or give it the attention it deserves is that American politics 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 voter in America might be disappointed if their pick for president doesn't win, but a protester 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 protest 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

ANNA BIDDLE

photography and art alexandra fernholz



Alexis Martin was desperate. At only 15 years old she was stranded in a horrendous situation. On Nov. 7, 2013 the 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 exotic 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 survivors braved 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 Cyntoia 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 parallels in the cases, however, failed to gain Martin clemency and the same national status as Brown.

In an age where the endorsement of a Kardashian can earn one Presidential pardon, it's ludicrous that Martin is still sitting in jail, especially when the Safe Harbor Law exists. The law, which was passed in Ohio in 2012, the year before her arrest, is meant to protect people who have been trafficked. Under this law, the charges of juveniles who have been trafficked can be suspended pending their participation in court-mandated services. Despite Martin's case clearly being one of human trafficking, she was not offered a guardian ad litem during her juvenile court hearing. Soon after, her case made its way to adult court where she pleaded guilty to murder and felony assault.

This year, the Ohio Supreme Court ruled that though Martin was a minor engaged in sex trade, the Safe Harbor law doesn't protect her.

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 1,719 state prisons, 109 federal prisons, 1,772 juvenile correctional facilities, 3,263 local 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 Kinsley told Spark.

The level of fear imposed upon Martin by Kerney is not 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 petition. However, the hope that current Ohio Gov. Mike Dewine could grant her clemency still lives in Martin's supporters. There is a legal system and process to help set Martin free, and she intends to use it. On Nov. 18th Martin had a parole board

meeting in which eight out of ten reviewers voted for her to be released immediately. The documents are currently on Dewine's desk awaiting the signature that could set her free.

Martin hasn't let her sentence deter her from starting over and has been using the past 6 years to work toward building the life she was cheated out of. A year after being convicted, she earned her GED at 16 on her first try and now participates in the HVAC program (Heating, ventilation, and air conditioning) in which she has received two of the three certificates offered. Martin also worked on training dogs for a while through a prison program before realizing that she wasn't a dog person. She even started a human trafficking support group for herself and fellow inmates.

"The group has been really healing for her," said Kinsley "Its allowed her to grow, she's been working really hard and has plans for her release and life after."

On Nov. 18 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. •



RADIO RECESSION

JAKE RATLIFF

photography **regan denham** | art **alexandra fernholz**



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 displeasing 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 records 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 trendy songs and limiting their advertising breaks, but ultimately have failed.

Companies that note their own failure have already begun to sell their properties. Cumulus Media, one of the largest radio companies in America, sold many of their largest stations, including stations in New York City, San Francisco and Atlanta.

Modern day listeners are accustomed to having every bit of information at their fingertips, so it is evident that they would want the latest and greatest songs as soon as possible. They want to be able to listen to a certain popular song over and over again and not have to wait for it to come on the radio.

This type of listener most likely

fits in the Gen-Z demographic that are used to having limitless information. The issue with radio is that big stations are trying too hard to market to the wrong demographic. According to another study from Nielsen, radio has the largest reach with Generation X (ages 35-54), with 80.5 million listeners tuning during an average month. This accounts for 97 percent of the Gen X population.

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 I 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 kill 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 SICKO MODE, for the 187th time. •

THE SHAME GAME

MIA HILKOWITZ

photography and art **alexandra fernholz**



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 savoring 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 Bennett 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 lifes” 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 “protect” their self-esteem.

Despite these embarrassment-focused efforts hurting the cause, people still apply them without a second thought. One reason for this is society’s antagonistic views of people whose mannerisms 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. Or 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 cuts deep.

These views don’t encourage people to change; instead, it can make them internalize the stigma. If 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 You.gov 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 51 percent said they would feel embarrassed.

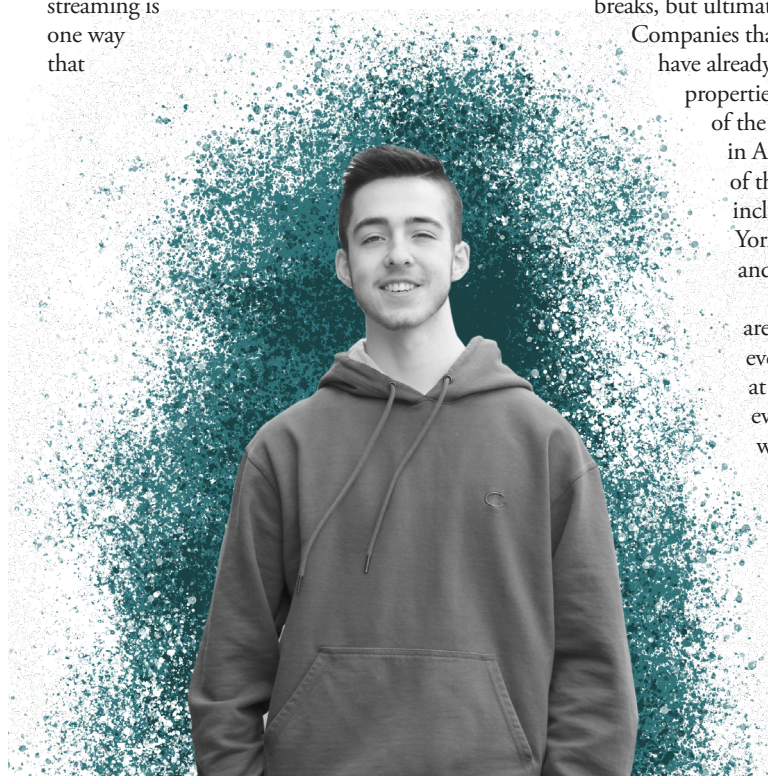
According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), one in six U.S. youth experienced issues with mental health in 2018. These statistics are especially alarming. When such a large number of people are facing these challenges, the prevalent opinion that they should feel embarrassed is dangerous. 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

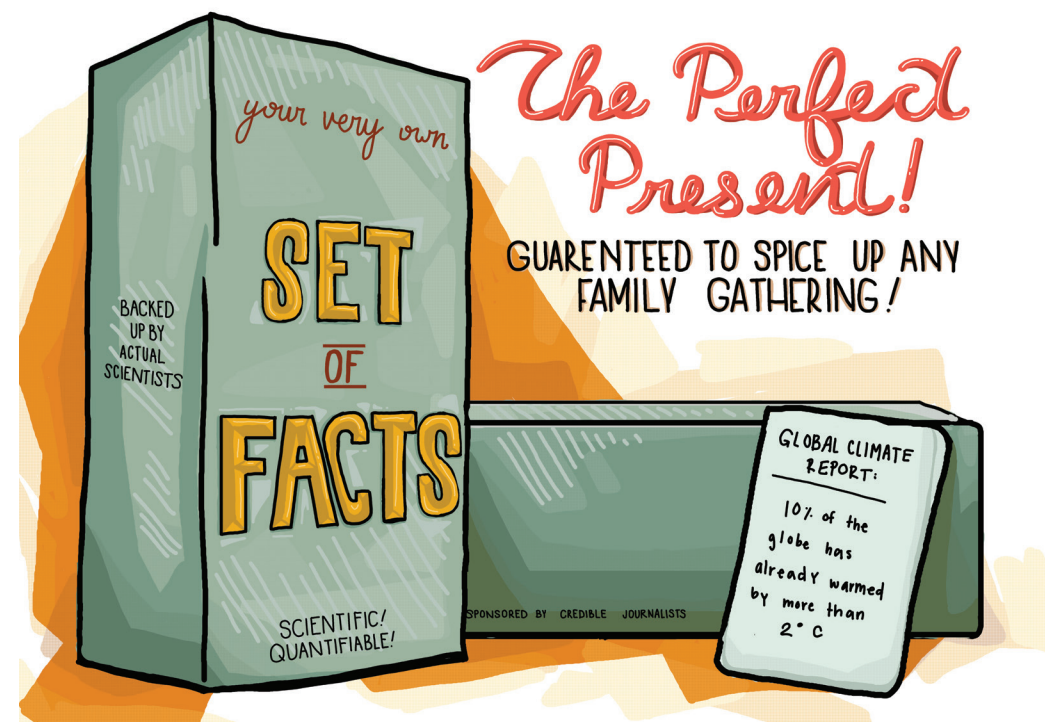
programs is also necessary in order to combat the problem. Even in Butler County where there are 7 registered hospitals within a 20 mile radius, his may pose an obstacle. According to Northwestern Mutual, the average cost of a 45-minute talk therapy session is between \$75 to \$150. For many families, 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 recurring 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. •



editorial cartoon alexandra fernholz



OUT OF THE PARK

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 too daunting, just tedious. I started senior year believing that once I applied to college, the majority of the work would be over. Welp, I was 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 in 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—nine actually—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 are on this journey with me, so 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 hard—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 also 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. •

EAST SPEAKS OUT

Are realistic school shooting drills desensitizing students?

interviews rehab jarabah | photography riley higgins

AMENA BIDIWALA



FRESHMAN

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

JENA GHUNIEM



SOPHOMORE

"Yes I think so, because they're trained to know what to do. We have drills for it, they make sure we know what's happened in school shootings, [and what to do] like going out the window."

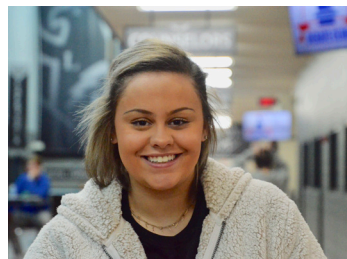
DANA STEWARD



JUNIOR

"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."

EMILY KINER



SENIOR

"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."



column rebecca breland
photography alexandra fernholz

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