

THE MARQUEE
M

*Society's
scarlet letter*



6 Teacher recovers after near-fatal surgery complications

22 Pro soccer player becomes new head coach

26 Get to know this year's Mr. Marcus contestants

THE MARQUEE STAFF

EDITOR IN CHIEF

Samantha Thornfelt

COPY EDITOR

Ayra Charania

DESIGN EDITOR

Tara Connick

NEWS EDITOR/DIGITAL CONTENT EDITOR

Madi Olivier

FEATURE EDITOR

Reya Mosby

OPINION EDITOR

McKenna Cowley

SPORTS EDITOR

Michael Minton

ASSISTANT SPORTS EDITOR

Adriana Pueskens

ENTERTAINMENT EDITOR

Nikhita Ragam

GRAPHICS EDITOR

Emily Seiler

REPORTERS

Shriya Mukkavilli
Alyssa Cheatham

DESIGNERS

Amber Luther
Ryan Baker
Esmeralda Arellano

PHOTOGRAPHERS

Maya Hernandez
Kaitlyn Hughes
Celine Engel

ADVISER

LaJuana Hale

ASSOCIATE ADVISER

Corey Hale

PRINCIPAL

Will Skelton

The Marquee newsmagazine is a student-generated publication of Marcus High School. It is produced, edited and maintained through the efforts of the school's advanced journalism class. *The Marquee* is designed to serve the school and community as a forum for open discussion and student expression. *The Marquee* encourages letters to the editor as part of its mission to educate, inform and provide an open forum for debate. All submissions must be signed. The staff reserves the right to edit all material. Editorials reflect the opinion of the staff, not necessarily that of the administration. Signed columns or reviews represent only the opinion of the author. Advertising rates are \$70 per 1/8 of a page, with discounts available. Patron ads are available for \$100. Online advertisements are also available. For more information call 469-713-5196. *The Marquee* is a standing member of ILPC, TAJE, ATPI, CSPA NSPA, JEA and Quill and Scroll.



Freshman Claire Shepherd competes in the 200 Individual Medley at the district championship swim meet at Westside Aquatic Center. At the meet, 17 athletes qualified for Regionals and the girls team finished in third.

PHOTO MAYA HERNANDEZ

CONTENTS

4

FAITH OVER FEAR

Local pastor shares thoughts and experiences regarding church shootings

10

SEEKING A SENSE OF HOME

School and local shelter aid homeless teen population

12

LOSS AND RECOVERY

Local family faces tragedy after house fire

24

BE YOUR OWN CUPID

How to fake a relationship for Valentine's Day

LISD considers rezoning students

STORY MADI OLIVIER
DESIGN EMILY SEILER

In December, LISD started discussing moving students zoned for Lewisville High School to the Marcus feeder pattern as early as the 2020-2021 school year to counteract decreasing Marcus enrollment. However, LISD Superintendent Dr. Kevin Rogers recently decided to put all discussions regarding boundary adjustments on hold until next fall.

“We really try to make boundary decisions early and have them finalized before winter break. That way we can give everyone plenty of notice and that wasn’t going to happen,” Rogers said. “So with the needs not urgent and the timing a little bit off, I just decided we wouldn’t move forward with any of it.”

Boundary changes were brought into discussion in reaction to an imbalance in school enrollments, which is common for many school districts. Marcus is one of the few LISD schools with declining enrollment. As of last October, there were less than 3,200 students on campus, leaving some empty classrooms. Enrollment is predicted to drop to less than 3,000 students by 2022 and then 2,650 students by 2027. The enrollment is dropping because families are staying in the area, according to Rogers.

“Their kids graduate and they stay there,” Rogers said. “Those people aren’t selling their house to newcomers who then have a family, they go in the feeder pattern and so on.”

This decrease in enrollment could drop Marcus to a 5A rank, which includes schools with 1230-2219 students. This would mean that the teams on campus wouldn’t play against long time competitors such as Flower Mound and Lewisville. Additionally, it could potentially result in cutting groups from campus.

On the other hand, Lewisville High School is over its capacity with 4,400 students. One potential solution that

was considered before Rogers tabled the discussion was making boundary changes at the elementary school level, causing students that used to be in the Lewisville feeder pattern to instead be future Marauders.

Lewisville junior Jamie Sander believes that the plan is a good idea overall.

“That makes a lot of sense because I know that Marcus is definitely nowhere near as big as Lewisville and it would be nice having less people,” Sander said.

Enrollment at Marcus is predicted to drop to less than 3,000 students by 2022 and then 2,650 students by 2027. Dr. Rogers said the enrollment is dropping because families are staying in the area.

However, she said that Lewisville students have mixed emotions about the change and hopes that the district will listen to the students’ opinions and consider what it’s like to be in their place.

“In elementary school and middle school, I knew what school I was feeding into and... we would get hyped up to be at Lewisville,” Sander said. “Some people want to go... but a lot of kids, they’re going to be separated from their friends or all that stuff, which I wouldn’t want to do. I think that they should definitely consider the kids and what they want.”

Although a map was never drafted, the district was considering moving elementary students living north of FM 407 and west of Interstate 35E to Highland Village Elementary, which feeds into Briarhill. This would also reduce the

number of kids having to cross 407 to get to school.

“You look for natural barriers or roadway barriers to make it make sense to move,” Rogers said. “We’ll continue to look at those options and other options in the future.”

Freshman Sean Abrol thinks that changing the current boundaries within the district is the best approach to fixing uneven enrollment between schools.

“I think it’s fine, because the schools, they’ll level out a little,” Abrol said.

The idea to make changes to boundaries in LISD isn’t new. Marcus opened a little less than 40 years ago, and according to Rogers, it’s changed a considerable amount since then, including during the eight years that he was the principal. Additionally, there are ways to be exempt from changing schools if a student’s zone is changed. The district already provides open enrollment to its schools, meaning students can apply to be transferred to a campus other than the one whose area they live in. LISD also has grandfather rules in place to allow students to stay at their existing school if need be.

“It’s not really as drastic or tragic as some people make this seem,” Rogers said. “You probably go to school with some kids that really don’t live in the Marcus zone or boundary, but they choose to do that. They apply for a transfer. It happens all over our district.”

The topic will likely be brought up again in September, according to Rogers. If they decide to move forward with any changes, the information will likely be made public in October, which is when discussions would be help with the community.

“Do we consider people’s input seriously? The answer is absolutely,” Rogers said. “At the same time, we have to be good stewards of our facilities... We have a lot of different things that we have to focus on as we make a decision.”

TARGETING FAITH

Local pastor shares personal experience with first U.S. church shooting

STORY REYA MOSBY
DESIGN TARA CONNICK
PHOTOS KAITLYN HUGHES

Within the past few years, mass shootings have increased throughout the country. Places of worship have become a target, especially in Texas, the home of the first recorded mass church shooting and the most recent.

DEC. 26, 2019.
**WEST FREEWAY CHURCH OF CHRIST,
WHITE SETTLEMENT, TEXAS**

It was Sunday when Keith Thomas Kinnuen came into the church right before the 250 members of the congregation were about to take communion. He took out his shotgun and opened fire, shooting and killing Tony Wallace and Richard White before two members of the church's security shot and killed him.

Math teacher Karin Munro attends a Church of Christ in Lewisville, so the White Settlement shooting was personal for her.

"It should be a place that's safe," Munro said. "You shouldn't really have to worry about shootings and violence during your worship service. I just feel bad for the congregation, and I think it's going to be a long time before they really feel safe and normal attending their church service."

Although she said that she felt safe in her own church, this recent shooting at a church similar to hers did concern her.

"It does make me worry about attending church," Munro said. "People may be more worried now that there's been another shooting especially because this is so close to home."

For the pastor of First Baptist Church in Flower Mound, Donald Tittle, these recent events hit very close to home.

JUNE 22, 1980.
FIRST BAPTIST, DAINGERFIELD, TEXAS

Hymns rung throughout the sanctuary as the congregation was listening to the choir. Alvin Lee King III, a former high school math teacher, pushed his way through the huge wooden doors. He stood at the back of the church in two flak jackets and an army helmet. One hand held an AR-15 rifle, and the other held a M-1 rifle, both with bayonets attached. He interrupted the choir, screaming "This is war!"

He then fired in the sanctuary. People fell to the ground below the pews hiding from the bullets that bounced off of the yellow brick walls.

That day he killed five people and injured 10 others.

A few miles away, a young Donald sat in the car with his family on the way back home to Daingerfield, upset about having

Pastor Donald Tittle was directly impacted by the first church shooting in the United States at First Baptist of Daingerfield. This has impacted the way his church has handled security precautions. They currently have a police officer and security team on the grounds during church assemblies.





Pastor Donald Tittle was directly affected by the first mass church shooting in the United States. To this day, as a church leader, he makes it a top priority to protect the members of his congregation at First Baptist Church in Flower Mound.

missed church service that morning.

•••

The shooting at First Baptist Church in Daingerfield, Texas marked the first mass church shooting in the United States. Donald's family first heard about the shooting while on their way home and were immediately worried because they had family and close friends attending the church that day.

They soon found out that 7-year-old Gina Linam lost her life in this shooting. The family was hit hard because Donald's mother used to babysit the child. She was the youngest one to die during the shooting at Daingerfield.

First Baptist in Daingerfield decided not to repair the sanctuary after the shooting as an act of remembrance. To this day, there are still holes in the sheet rock of the walls where the bullets hit. Daingerfield commemorated those who lost their lives by renaming all the different baseball fields after children who had died in the shooting. Donald said that it reminds him that out of death comes new life and seeing other children playing baseball on fields named after children who are deceased reminded him of that.

He often finds himself trying to make his 8-year-old son aware that he is growing up in a violent and damaged world and has had to incorporate gun

violence awareness into his parenting.

"We teach them what foods to eat, we teach them to brush their teeth and now it's a part of parenting that we teach them if someone tries to harm you, this is what you do..."

Donald said. "Well now in the same way they had those discussions now we've added gun violence to it."

Being directly affected by this shooting shaped his opinions about the role church leaders have regarding security.

"We want to risk ourselves as leaders," Donald said. "We don't want to risk the congregation, but we don't want to risk [not] loving people at their brokenness

It should be a place that's safe. You shouldn't really have to worry about shootings and violence during your worship service.

-KARIN MUNRO, MATH TEACHER

because of all people, the church shouldn't be surprised that these things happen."

Two years ago, another church shooting at First Baptist Church in Sutherland Springs, Texas, which is just outside of San Antonio, killed 26 people. This has been the worst reported church shooting in the United States.

Both the shooters at Sutherland Springs and White Settlement had accessed guns illegally and had been reported as aggressive in the past. Several members of the church recall Kinnuen coming and asking the church for money and being frustrated and upset when they would not give it to him.

"We are put on the front lines helping

people at their most vulnerable weakest moments, and sometimes they are struggling through some things and their responses aren't healthy," Donald said. "We want to help protect them and protect the rest of our flock that we're over."

Donald said that having a shooting happen so close to him made him aware of gun violence as a whole. However, he did stress that in order to prevent more instances of gun violence, society needs to work on healing themselves and each other as people so nobody is in the mind space to hurt others.

"I think the church can do a better job creating a safer world," Donald said. "I think we can do a better job trying to teach how we communicate to one another."

This shooting has made some question the new Texas law regarding the policy in which a gun is permitted on a place of worship if the church allows it. Others say that because the church permitted weapons, the security team was able to shoot and kill the gunman, which saved lives.

Donald doesn't discourage or encourage his congregation to bring guns. His church has an armed police officer on campus. Donald feels as though it is something they need because they are a small church and could

be seen as an easy target. However, although they have armed security and a police officer, Donald has emphasized the fact that the church doesn't and shouldn't rely solely on guns for their safety.

"We need to remind ourselves and our church that yes we've done things so that we can protect ourselves, but the weapon is the last resort," Donald said. "We have a much greater weapon, we have the truth, love and word of God that can change Man's heart."

A SECOND CHANCE

Teacher recovers after near-fatal surgical complications

STORY MADI OLIVIER
DESIGN EMILY SEILER

The man he saw in the mirror wasn't him. He barely saw himself in the overweight college freshman who stared back.



Journalism teacher Corey Hale was always bigger than most of his peers, but playing high school football helped him manage his weight.
PHOTO SUBMITTED BY COREY HALE

He still felt like the high school senior who played football. Back then, he was 6 feet 3 inches tall and weighed more than 300 pounds, but he wasn't concerned then. He towered over his classmates since elementary school and ate whatever he wanted. He'd burn it off in practice anyway.

But that kid was gone. The comfort he found in food, however, remained. He ate Taco Bell and pizza to cope with the anxiety and depression that drove him to skip class and stay in his dorm.

Within a year of starting college, he

had put on 50 pounds. Soon, 50 became 70. With each new pound, he isolated himself more. His friends invited him to the movies and Mavericks games, but he rarely went. He couldn't fit in the seats.

SURGERY

Something had to change. He wanted his life back, and he almost lost everything to get it.

For 15 years, journalism teacher Corey Hale was stuck in a cycle of bad eating habits, increasing medical problems and blinding self-reliance.

Eventually, he was too heavy to use a regular scale. When he used a special one and saw 409 pounds, reality hit him. He couldn't lie to himself anymore. The number he saw now started with a four.

He could handle a three. He convinced himself it was OK because of his past as an athlete.

But at 409 pounds, he felt like he was going insane.

"The old definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result, and that's kind of where I was," Corey said.

Corey tried everything to lose weight, but nothing worked. As his weight continued to rise, he suffered from anxiety, depression, high blood pressure and obstructive sleep apnea. Finally, he was diagnosed with type 2 diabetes.

"When they tell you you have type 2 diabetes, you just think, 'I'm going to have this for the rest of my life,'" Corey said.

After that diagnosis, his doctor recommended weight loss surgery. Corey was unsure. It had a 99 percent survival rate, but he wasn't worried about his safety. He didn't want the "easy way" out. The highest number Corey ever saw on a scale was 471 pounds, but he was still convinced that he could lose the weight on his own.

His doctor disagreed, insisting this surgery was likely the only chance Corey had at being healthy again.

"It was that window of opportunity," Corey said.

Corey decided to make a change and

scheduled his surgery for Aug. 13, 2012. It seemed to go well, and he was out of the hospital within a few days. Though he was in a lot of pain, it was his first time having surgery, so he assumed the discomfort was normal.

On Aug. 24, Corey sat in his empty classroom at Lewisville High School,

He wanted his life back, and he almost lost everything to get it.

preparing for the school year, but the pain made it impossible. Coworkers looked at his colorless face and grew concerned. The Corey they knew turned the school newspaper into an award-winning powerhouse and recently won Teacher of the Year. They continuously asked if he was OK. Corey had the same answer every time. He just had surgery. He was just trying to get by.

That afternoon, he had a follow up appointment, but the doctor said his pain was normal and sent him home. A few minutes later, it became unbearable.

"I pulled over on the way home because I could barely drive," Corey said.

As soon as he got home, Corey took pain medication, but threw it up. Suddenly, a radiating pain shot throughout his whole body.

"It was one of the worst pains I've ever felt in my entire life," Corey said. "I was like, 'Nothing about this is normal.'"

One of his internal sutures from the surgery had opened, causing an infection. He had developed sepsis, or blood poisoning. His organs were about to fail. Corey was at risk of being part of the one percent.

"I'm literally dying on the inside, not even metaphorically," Corey said.

His roommate called an ambulance,

but Corey was still more than 400 pounds. When they arrived, it was difficult to move him, costing them valuable time.

The sirens wailed as the ambulance sped to Denton Regional, where his surgeon was prepping for emergency surgery.

He saw one of the assistant principals from Lewisville High School as he was wheeled into the operating room.

The faces of his surgeon and anesthesiologist are the last thing he remembers.

He wouldn't be conscious again for weeks.

COMATOSE

Casey Hale gripped the steering wheel as she sped down the highway. Music streamed out of the car radio, but it did nothing to silence the thoughts racing in her mind.

Is Corey going to be OK? He has to be.

Casey drove for six hours straight from Arkansas, too worried about her older brother to even stop. Though she already knew that he was out of surgery and in a medically induced coma, 25-year-old Casey couldn't help but fear the unknown.

I need to see Corey. Will he wake up? How was this happening? Please God, let him be OK.

Her phone rang, bringing her back to reality. Another family friend was asking her for an update. She answered countless phone calls from worried friends and family during the drive.

"I felt like it was probably one of the

She laid her phone on his pillow and played his favorite songs to drown out the beeping machines and whispering doctors, just in case Corey could hear them.

longest drives that I've ever made," Casey said.

When Casey arrived, Corey was already in a medically-induced coma in the ICU. The doctors needed to intubate him and figure out how to treat the infection.

"I remember being kind of in a state of shock," Casey said. "I had just never seen my brother in that kind of condition. To me, he's always been my big brother and he was so big and tough and strong, and he just looked so helpless."

Casey was at her brother's bedside whenever she could. She told him jokes to try to get a reaction. She laid her phone on his pillow and played his favorite songs to drown out the beeping machines and whispering doctors, just in case Corey could hear them.

"I knew that my parents were really struggling and were really scared, so I tried to just stay upbeat," Casey said. "If I talked to him, I tried to be real positive and just make the room a little bit lighter."

Casey also sent daily updates to 85 people, who then passed them along to their friends and prayer groups. Though it was difficult, she tried to be uplifting.

"I wanted to have a positive every day so I tried to kind of keep that, but it was difficult to do because I was really scared," Casey said.

When things got to be too much, Casey stepped out into the lobby and called her friends back home. She'd let go of her fear and grief and allow herself to cry.

On Sept. 2, Corey took a turn for the worst. His temperature rose to above 103 F and his breathing was labored. The doctors used countless ice packs and medicines to try and control his temperature, but they began to lose hope. They told Corey's family to say their goodbyes.

"That was devastating," Casey said. "My dad was really strong in that moment and just said, 'This is not happening. We're not going to lose him,' but everybody was really, really scared."

Casey refused to give up. She typed out an update.

"We are needing immediate prayer...

we know that our Father is the ultimate physician," Casey wrote. "He can do all things, and He doesn't depend on modern medicine to do so. Please join me in praying for miraculous healing."

Those 85 people sent out the urgent prayer request and hundreds of people from all over the country prayed, including his students and coworkers at Lewisville. Assistant principal Kyle



Corey holds his niece Ava Grace. He tried to lose weight himself with different diet and exercise programs for 15 years before deciding to get surgery. PHOTO SUBMITTED BY COREY HALE

Smith was a special education teacher at Lewisville at the time, and when he heard that Corey was having surgery, he expected him to be back to normal soon. Now, nobody knew if he would ever be able to teach another class.

"In the department down there, it kind of left a big hole," Smith said. "You can't believe that he's not there. You go by his room or you go into his room and you expect to see him."

On Sept. 3, his doctor decided on another surgery to find the infection. The waiting room was crowded as 25 people paced across the floor and prayed.

"I think it was a matter of a couple of hours, but it definitely felt like a lifetime," Casey said. "Towards the end as we were waiting on the results from the surgery, it was really incredible to see the outreach that everybody poured out."

At 8 p.m., their prayers were answered. A nurse called them from the operating room. They found the source of infection.

"I remember us just screaming and celebrating and high fiving," Casey said. "The operating doors opened and the

nursing staff came out that were with him, and they were giving each other high fives and jumping around. I think everybody knew how intense it was and how on the verge of losing him we all were.”

WAKING UP

On Sept. 8, Corey finally opened his eyes for the first time in weeks, although he wasn't aware of it. His mom just wanted to see her son's eyes again. He had a tracheostomy a few days later. His earliest memories are a week later on Sept. 15.

“Even though he couldn't talk, we were able to communicate pretty clearly and I was laughing and joking with him,” Casey said. “It was just so good to see his eyes open and him look you in the eyes again.”

When Corey awoke, he recognized his mom but didn't know why she was there

The days blurred. Minutes felt like hours. He was trapped, but he had no way to escape.

or where he was. His family was overjoyed to finally see him awake, but he was miserable. They were the ones who waited for weeks, unsure if he'd make it through each night. Since August, Casey and their dad had been driving in from Arkansas every weekend. Their mom uprooted her life to move to Texas and stay with him, and she wouldn't leave his side until he was able to go home.

Corey, however, didn't know how close he was to death. He just woke up to weeks of his life missing and a body that no longer worked — he lost so much muscle mass and weight during the coma that he could barely lift his head off the pillow.

With time, Corey's mom explained everything that had happened. Even when he was able to start processing what was being said, Corey was unable to talk since he had a tracheostomy. His mind raced with countless questions about what was yet to come.

Will I ever walk again? Will I ever talk again? Will I sing again? Will I get to stand up and teach a class again? Who's with my students? What's the newspaper staff doing?

But he couldn't ask her because of the hole in his throat.

“I'm just trapped inside my own brain,” Corey said. “I can't ask those questions, and nobody knows those are the questions that are on my mind. I just remember her telling me all this, and me just rolling and turning my head the other way. I just wanted to go back to sleep.”

The ventilator was unhooked

and completely removed from his room on Sept. 18. Though most people are only on one for a few days, he'd had to stay on it for almost a month.

Even after the initial effects of the coma wore off, Corey was still stuck in a battle against his own mind. He was in the ICU for almost a month with beeping machines, white walls and lights that never turned off. An automatic blood pressure cuff tightened and released around his arm around the clock.

People rarely stay that long in intensive care. The days blurred. Minutes felt like hours. He was trapped, but he had no way to escape. Corey used to turn to food to cope, but he couldn't keep up the same unhealthy habits after surgery.

“It was hard and it was slow and I wasn't the best patient,” Corey said. “I was really angry... It was tough because I didn't really have any way to express it.”

Anybody who knows him knows he loves to talk and ask questions. Teaching journalism was his life. But nobody knew if he would ever be that person again. The weeks of lying unconscious in a hospital bed left his mind hazy. He was easily confused and overwhelmed.

If Corey closed his eyes for what felt like a second, he had vivid hallucinations. When he opened them, everyone was still there.

“I was trying to cope with some of the weird things that happened in the ICU,” Corey said. “It was super vivid and then once they moved me out of the ICU, I didn't even remember a single dream that I had.”

One of the few things that brought Corey comfort was watching the Weather Channel. His family tried to get him to watch the presidential debates or football, things he used to love. Corey refused. It was all too much, but he could deal with the weather.

“It just let me have something steady

It was like he was drowning and the surgery was the only thing that could bring him to the surface.



Corey faced near fatal complications after his surgery in 2012, but he doesn't regret it. Before, he used to wear size 5XL clothes, but the procedure allowed him to lose enough weight to wear XL. PHOTO SUBMITTED BY COREY HALE



Corey jumps over a small stream on a beach near Seattle after losing over 200 pounds from the surgery.
PHOTO SUBMITTED BY COREY HALE

and normal,” Corey said. “I kept hoping that they’d take me outside at some point.”

Corey felt helpless. The first day he tried to sit on the edge of his bed, he couldn’t hold himself up.

“It was just the cross between humbling and humiliating,” Corey said. “It definitely stripped me of any kind of pride that I had.”

Corey spent a month relearning to sit in a chair. To stand. To walk with a walker.

He hit a milestone when he took 25 steps without a walker. That afternoon, 477.

“A wise person told me, ‘They will fix your body, but they won’t fix the things inside you that will lead you to do this to yourself. You’re going to have to find different ways to deal with those emotions,’” Corey said. “That was one of the truest things that anybody’s ever said to me.”

As he recovered, the Lewisville community rallied behind him and hosted a spaghetti dinner fundraiser to help with Corey’s medical bills. Even people who normally didn’t get involved with similar events showed up to donate. To Smith, it was like watching a family come together to help one of their own.

“It just warms your heart,” Smith said.

“You hate to see somebody go through struggles, but then it also reinforces your belief in mankind. When somebody is in a bad spot, everybody on the team pulls together and helps anywhere they can.”

In late October, Corey was finally able to go home. Only months ago, Corey had been sitting on the side of the road, his pain making the trip seem impossible. Now, he could drive himself home.

ROAD TO JOY

Corey returned to his classroom in January of 2013. Although getting back into the routine he had before the surgery was difficult, it helped him recover more than anything. Lewisville welcomed him back with open arms. His life was finally getting back to normal.

“Everybody was excited to see him and greeting him and concerned about his health still, but it was a joyous day for sure,” Smith said.

Corey’s aunt promised him that if he pulled through and got out of the hospital, she’d take him on a trip to anywhere he wanted. He chose San Francisco. Corey fit in a normal plane seat and stood in the chilly waters of the Pacific Ocean.

In the next few months, he experienced everything he isolated himself from years before, going to the movies and Mavericks games and another trip the following year. This time it was to Seattle, where he hiked 12 miles up a mountain.

Corey loved the Northwest, but it was a few weeks later when he was driving on a quiet East Texas road that the reality of everything that he went through hit him. The early morning light peeked through tree branches above his car. Corey was on his way to Tyler to meet his newborn niece, Joy.

It had been less than a year since Corey’s surgery and he was still trying to process everything. When he sat down in his car early that morning to start the trip, Corey didn’t feel like he was lucky to have survived, but that changed as he drove.

“That was a moment, just driving out there going to see my new baby niece and just thinking that this really is a blessing and a privilege to be alive,” Corey said.

Corey has been asked the same

question countless times since his surgery, and it’s the easiest one for him to answer. Would he do it again?

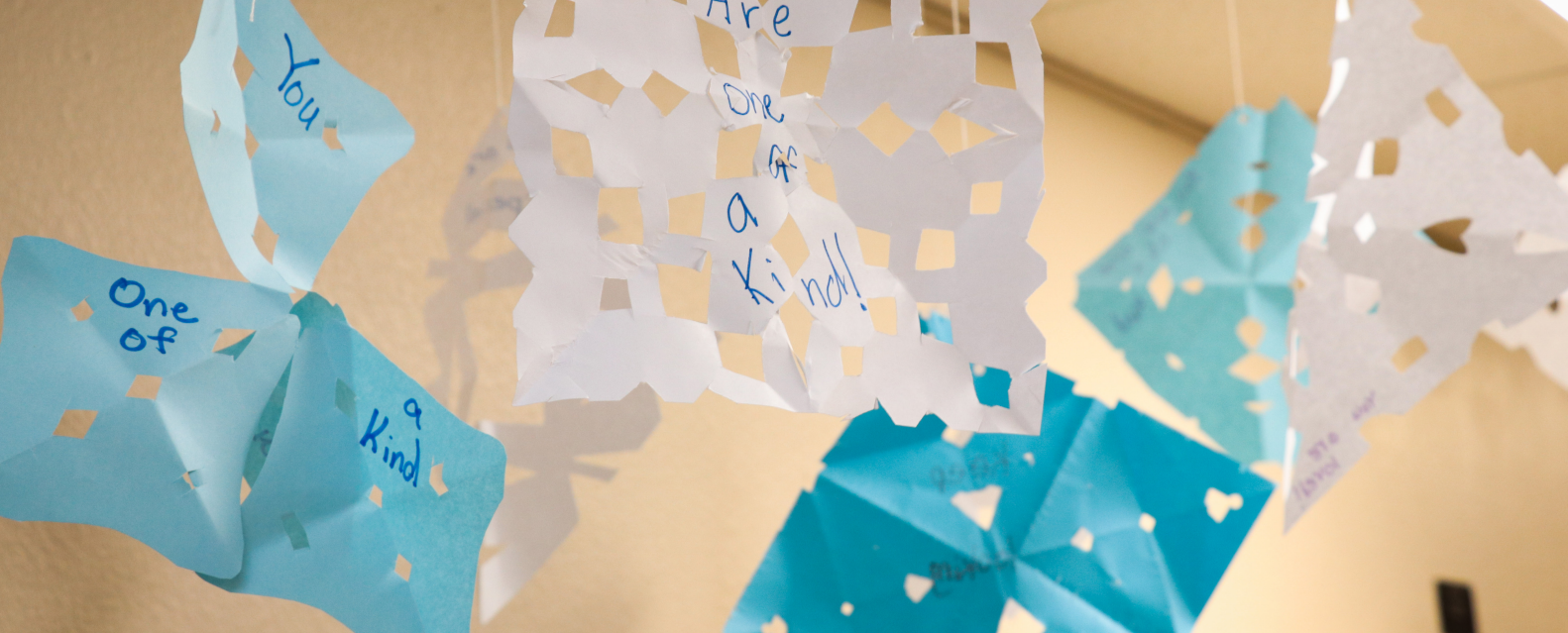
The answer is always yes without hesitation. The surgery nearly cost Corey his life, but his lifestyle was slowly killing him before. His quality of life declined with every diagnosis and every day spent alone. Having his own family in the future never seemed like an option. It was like he was drowning and the surgery was the only thing that could bring him to the surface.

Now, almost eight years since he woke up from the coma, Corey doesn’t have a single doubt that it was worth it. He has lost more than 200 pounds and his medical conditions were reversed. He now has a 2-year-old son with his wife of four years. He is healthy enough to be the dad and husband he wants to be.

“You wake up from something like that not really understanding how much people care about you, especially for me, who struggled at different points in my life with depression and with doubts about my self worth,” Corey said. “Seeing that outpouring of support from so many people... there’s no way that I deserved that much kindness from people, but that’s what they did.”



Two years after surviving complications of weight loss surgery, Corey met his wife. They have a 2-year-old son. Before the procedure, Corey never really considered that he’d ever have the opportunity to have his own family.
PHOTO SUBMITTED BY COREY HALE



Paper snowflakes decorated with encouraging messages hang on the ceiling of Kyle's Place during Christmas.

FINDING HOPE WITHOUT A HOME

Community works to uplift homeless teens

STORY AYRA CHARANIA
DESIGN AMBER LUTHER
PHOTOS KAITLYN HUGHES

Leah* never thought she would find more safety in her car than her home. She was parked in the middle of the pitch black Walmart parking lot, laying in the back seat of her truck with only a pillow tucked below her dark black waves and a pair of thin clothes. The heat choked her breathing and the wind violently rattled her car. Nevertheless, in all her discomfort, her eyes stayed focused on her window.

"I mostly felt uneasy and scared because I felt like someone was watching me," Leah said. "I don't think I ever slept more than half an hour at a time."

It was morning before she returned home. Her mother would finally have passed out from abusing alcohol and she could sneak upstairs to her room to change her clothes. While she would have to deal with the unbearable stench of feces and vomit, at least she was safe. She could even go to school and pretend everything was normal.

Leah was one of the 672 Lewisville ISD students experiencing homelessness during the 2018-2019 school year, according to the Texas Education Agency. However, like many other students in the same situation, her state of homelessness wasn't obvious.

"Homelessness appears to us at school like any normal person

would. Because these kids get up, they put on their clothes ... they still come to school, and they still sit at their desk and they still do their work," Student Assistance Counselor Michelle Schwolert said.

Often, homeless students move from place to place to find shelter, sometimes called couch surfing, according to Kim Smith, Journey to Dream founder.

"They are staying on people's couches, often times not even on the couch," Smith said. "We've heard stories of kids who had to sleep in somebody's closet."

Journey to Dream was initially intended to be a substance abuse prevention program when it was founded in 2004. However, as they began to interact with teenagers, they saw that students dealt with so much more than drugs and alcohol. So they established Kyle's Place in 2017, a teen transitional living center for homeless students in Denton County like Leah.

"We created a program that would just wrap their arms around hurting teenagers ... to support them," Smith said.

...

Paper snowflakes lined the ceiling of the room of Kyle's Place last Christmas, creating a feeling of festiveness. The same positive message was written on each one: you are one of a kind.

The teenagers at Kyle's Place sat under the decorations at a bench, gourmet jelly beans in one hand and frosting in another, ready to craft their gingerbread villages. Off to the side to aid them were volunteers and staff, Cathy Powers, Kandace Forooshani and Carol Nagel.

Nagel had never planned to volunteer after she retired from

“We discuss things. People have arguments like families. I would just say this is a big family which has 14 kids.”

-NESA GRIDER, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

being a banker for 45 years. No matter how much her friends would pressure her to try it. They told her it was good for her. That it would give her something to occupy her time. She still refused. She didn't see a point.

Three years into her retirement, she started to change her mind. It was February 2017 and Nagel was reading The Cross Timbers Gazette. She had come across an article about Kyle's Place and felt inspired.

"At this point I realized volunteering was about finding that special place where I could devote my time and energy," Nagel said.

It was unimaginable to her that there were so many teenagers in the community that didn't have a safe place to sleep or a supportive family. She wanted to do everything she could to help.

She said she wanted to make the kids know they were important and loved.

• • •

Carol was in the kitchen at work. A boy came in and offered to help her. She asked him to cut some onions. The boy grabbed them and was confused by their color.

"What's all this black stuff?" the boy asked.

Carol explained it was just dirt because onions grow in the ground. The boy began to chop it, his eyes watering. He called Carol over again.

"My eyes are tearing like crazy from this," he said.

It was the first time he cut an onion.

Carol was there for many of the teens' first moments. She was there when they mixed cookie dough for the first time or baked pizza. And at each first, she was excited to help them learn.

"The most touching moments are teaching the kids something," Nagel said. "It's just nice to give them some exposure to things and some joy."

Her coworkers could easily see her energy and encouraging attitude when it came to helping the kids.

"Miss Carol is a really encouraging individual," Kyle's Place staff member Kandace Forooshani said. "She encourages me, she encourages the residents."

Nagel wants to continue to uplift the teens at Kyle's Place in the future by making the shelter feel more welcoming.

"The smells of cooking, baking, making things like these happen makes it warm and homey, and it's memories," Nagel said.

Chief Executive Officer of Journey to Dream Nesa Grider says Kyle's Place aims to make the shelter feel like a family.

"We discuss things. People have arguments like families. I would just say this is a big family which has 14 kids," Grider said.

However, the shelter is not able to house every homeless student in Lewisville ISD. With limited space and resources, Kyle's Place accommodates as many as it can.

"We never say no. If we cannot support a teen that comes to our front door, we do not allow them to leave until we can find a resource for them, whether it's another foundation or we provide food or gift cards," Grider said.

Aware of the long waitlist at shelters, the counselors try their best to empower these teens and let them know that they can navigate through this.

"Regardless of whether it's going to be a two day waiting list or two month waiting list, we always want to make sure the students feel like they are trying to do something," Schwolert said.

Leah advises students who are in a similar situation as her to keep seeking as many resources as they can and find a stable environment.

"Fight to be independent. Do anything you can to get away from an unsafe situation," Leah said.

Students can contribute to helping homeless teens in the community by not only donating to Kyle's Place but also giving supplies to the Marcus Market. The Market is located in the front office and provides drinks, snacks, school supplies, hygiene products, and clothes to students in need.

Scholwert said students can offer support in other ways too by "not treating [homeless students] any differently, not bullying, and being kind."

"Just talk to them ... because they are humans and they should be treated with respect," Schwolert said.

**This name was changed to protect the identity.*



Volunteer Carol Nagel stands outside of the Kyle's Place garden. Nagel plans to eventually expand the garden and plant with the teens.



Kyle's Place is the only teen homeless shelter in Denton County. It was opened in 2017.

SMALL BLESSINGS

Family finds hope after loss due to fire

STORY MCKENNA COWLEY
DESIGN ESMERALDA ARELLANO

Highland Village resident Kristie Baysinger went outside with her kids and called 911 while her husband tried to tame the flames in the attic with a water hose. After the operator told everyone to evacuate the house, the family stood across the street and watched the fire unfold. At first, Kristie was calm, assuming that the fire was minor, unaware that within the next few days she would be searching through rubble for any remnants left of their lives.

...

Church on Sunday afternoon is a routine for the Baysingers. On Jan. 5, Kristie, her husband Orrin and their children sophomore Wyatt and 11-year-old Lucy got home around 5 p.m., changed into their pajamas and started a fire in the fireplace like they always do.

Shortly after the fire was lit, Orrin called for Kristie from the living room.

"Kristie, do you hear this?"

An unnatural crackling sound traveled up the wall next to the fireplace. Then, Orrin told Kristie to go outside and check for smoke.

"Usually when you look out there and there's a fire, you can see smoke coming out of the top of the pipe," Kristie said. "Ours was coming out of the top and the bottom right by the roof, and it was a different color."

She knew something wasn't right, so she ran through the house to check the garage wall, since it backed up to the fireplace.

When she opened the garage door, the wall was bubbling out.

Her eyes caught the attic door, which was close to the wall. She yanked it open and saw that the attic was full of flames. Kristie ran back inside to warn her family.

Their Google Nest system was too late to warn them, and by the time Kristie was telling Wyatt and Lucy to grab the family's two French bulldogs and pet bird

and get outside, the monotone voice was repeating, "There's smoke in the kitchen. The fire alarm is very loud."

Kristie felt reassured that the fire would be easily tamed and leave little damage, but as time went on she became more and more worried.

"I don't know why I thought that fire is not fast and quiet. I just thought, 'It's not going to be that bad, it will be okay,'" Kristie said. "Never did I think, 'I need to grab things.'"

The firemen arrived after a few minutes and hosed the fire down, but they didn't

wallet and keys. Lucy wanted to save her Mickey Mouse Beats headphones, which were a gift from Santa.

Later, Wyatt remembered an item he needed to ask for. The picture that he kept hanging in his room, a pocket-sized photo of his childhood friend Dylan who tragically passed away at age 5.

"Wyatt would keep that in his closet so when he opened up his closet door he would see Dylan," Kristie said.

He asked one of the firefighters if they could retrieve it, but his room was unsafe to go in.



From left to right: Mariah Baysinger, Kristie Baysinger, Lucy Baysinger, Orrin Baysinger and Wyatt Baysinger. The Baysingers have received around \$11,000 from the community donating to their GoFundMe. PHOTO SUBMITTED BY KRISTIE BAYSINGER

leave after it was extinguished. If the embers were hot enough, the fire would relight.

In the meantime, the firemen gave the Baysingers an opportunity to save only one item from each of their bedrooms.

"I was thinking of all the things that I use every single day and that I can't live without and I asked for my airpods and he got them... I was kind of shocked at the same time about what was happening," Wyatt said.

Kristie chose her collection of rings which included her and her husband's wedding bands, and Orrin chose his

After around two hours of waiting, the Baysinger family eventually decided to leave the scene around 8:00 p.m. With a debit card given to them from the Red Cross, they drove to Walmart for some clothes.

"I don't even remember driving to the Walmart I was in such shock about what had happened. Trying to walk around and find socks, underwear and an outfit was so hard for me," Kristie said.

Then, she received a call from her neighbor.

"My neighbor said 'Kristie I'm so sorry to tell you this, but your house is on fire

The fire began in the attic of the Baysinger's 1983 house. The family is currently living in a hotel until they can find a place to stay while rebuilding their house.

PHOTO SUBMITTED BY KRISTIE BAYSINGER



People interested in helping the family can use the link below:

<https://www.gofundme.com/f/help-the-baysinger039s>

again. There's 30 foot flames in the air, we just called 911, I'm so sorry." Kristie said.

Orrin convinced her that returning would only result in more hurt for the family and it was best to get a hotel room and visit the house the next day.

"The next morning, we honestly thought we were going to come back to

to their GoFundMe page. But even with all of the help, the Baysingers still lost irreplaceable items that they could not get back.

"It's hard. It's really hard... it's been an emotional 11 days," Kristie said.

•••

Kristie Baysinger

climbed over the hill of charred rubble of her life that now occupied her garage, wearing the large working boots that her neighbor had left outside for her. If the ceiling of the room was still intact, the top of her head would be bumping it.

She searched through the rubble

until she finally reached what she had been looking for the now-charred dresser which was a gift from her husband's grandmother. It was to be a wedding gift for her eldest daughter someday.

The baby books, the family photos, the passed down recipes, they assumed everything was gone. However, upon a conversation with a family member, Kristie remembered the two boxes in that dresser in the garage, which held what might possibly be the only family photos the Baysingers had left.

Kristie opened the drawer of the dresser, and there were two unharmed boxes sitting side by side. Just like she had hoped, they were full of family photos. She opened each one and began sorting

through the pictures until she reached the bottom of each box. At the bottom of one of the boxes she found a card pictured with Jesus Christ.

She held the card and flipped it over. On the back were notes of the story of Dylan's passing, told by Dylan's mother at a church camp Kristie attended a year after his death.

Upon finding the card, Kristie immediately called Dylan's mother, Darylin Farar.

"Not only is Heavenly Father watching over us, but your son, he has a hand in this too," Kristie said on the phone call.

Kristie knew that Wyatt was upset over the loss of the small picture of Dylan, so she asked Darylin to send her a new one.

A few days later, Kristie received the picture in the mail and gave it to Wyatt as a surprise.

"The first couple of days when people would say 'How are you doing Kristie, I would say 'I'm in a nightmare' and now... I'm starting to see the blessings out of it," Kristie said.

The recovered pictures and the card were a symbol of hope for a family who had lost almost everything.

The family is currently looking for a rental house to live in while they work on repairing their home. In the meantime, Kristie and her family are staying hopeful about the future.

"Heavenly Father's got to have some kind of plan for us," Kristie said.

“Now... I'm starting to see the blessings out of it.”

-KRISTIE BAYSINGER

ashes on the ground," Kristie said.

Wyatt even began telling his friends that his house was completely destroyed, and the family began to wonder if they had anything left at all.

"I was like, it's all gone guys, it's all gone. But we have each other, we're gonna make it through," Kristie said.

Upon returning, they found that the overall structure of the house was still intact, but all of their personal belongings were now destroyed by the fire, including the picture of Dylan.

Many people and organizations have reached out to help the family, such as local schools, coaches and other community members through items like gift cards, clothes, toys and donations

60 SECONDS

COMPILED REYA MOSBY
DESIGN TARA CONNICK
PHOTO MAYA HERNANDEZ

DREW HOWARD, ASSISTANT CHOIR DIRECTOR

WHAT'S YOUR GO-TO KARAOKE SONG?

"'Total Eclipse of the Heart' from 'Glee.' That was amazing."

WHAT'S YOUR GUILTY PLEASURE?

"I've been playing 'World of Warcraft' for 10 years."

IF YOU RULED THE WORLD, WHAT IS THE FIRST THING YOU WOULD DO AND HOW WOULD YOU DO IT?

"I would put statues of me everywhere. There would need to be at least one in each country and probably all of my best poses. Also they would be a lot better looking as well so that the world would know that I'm a really good looking guy. And how would I rule the world? I would be so kind until somebody got in my way."

WHAT WAS YOUR BIGGEST FEAR AS A CHILD?

"High ceilings. I once passed out in one of the Smithsonian museums in DC because the ceiling was too high, and I still have that by the way."

TELL ME ABOUT YOUR WACKIEST AND ZANIEST DREAM.

"Sometimes all the choir kids will be in my room trying to learn their music, and I just can't get them to go away. I guess it's more of a nightmare than anything."

WHAT WOULD YOU BUY IF YOU HAD A MILLION DOLLARS?

"I would buy a trampoline. Like a real good one. That was my favorite thing as a kid — going in my backyard and jumping on the trampoline for like two or three hours."

IF YOU COULD BE ANY WORD IN THE ENGLISH DICTIONARY, WHAT WOULD YOU BE?

"I don't want to say something like cool because that's super easy, but like another word for cool. Like uh fergalicious maybe? Can I? That's in the dictionary right? Yeah I would be fergalicious if I could be anything, and I could spell that for you too. The song taught me how. F-E-R-G-A-licious. That's me. Mr. Fergalicious."



JET'S PIZZA
IS A PROUD PATRON OF
THE MARQUEE

(972) 221 5387
2001 Cross Timbers Rd,
Flower Mound, TX 75028

JOIN A JOURNALISM STAFF!

Interested in Newspaper, MOB,
Yearbook or Lit Mag?

**PICK UP AN APPLICATION
IN C108 TODAY!**

Applications are due Feb. 19.

JIMMY HUGHES

jimmy@hughescain.com

214.995.1034

2221 Justin Road, Suite 119-329
Flower Mound, TX 75028
www.hughescain.com

**HCA HUGHES
CAIN &
ASSOCIATES**

Professional Manufacturers Representatives



永 NEW CHINA 合
CHINESE RESTAURANT

All entrees
come with
plain fried rice



1940 FM 407 # 112
Highland Village, TX 75077
(972) 317-0589

JOURNAL ENTRY 4
What am I going to do now?

Starting a new life

PHOTO KAITLYN HUGHES

Former LISD student Blaklee Briggs stood in the bathroom watching two solid pink lines appear on the stick of her pregnancy test. It was positive. It was her 16th birthday and she was pregnant.

“When I saw the test my jaw dropped,” Blaklee said. “I just didn’t know what I was going to do.”

Pregnant pause

Teen mom adjusts life after having baby

STORY SAMANTHA THORNFELT
DESIGN TARA CONNICK

Former LISD student Blaklee Briggs felt her throat tighten as her mom parked the car.

"You know you don't have to do this," LeAnn said. "This is your choice. This secret will stay between us."

Blaklee sat quietly in the car. She held back tears as they walked inside the building.

As she sat down and began to fill out the papers in her lap, Blaklee was scared and confused, but this felt like her only option.

She walked back to the front desk to finalize the forms. At the bottom of the page, she began her signature but her hands were shaking. She stopped with her name unfinished on the page.

Sobbing uncontrollably, Blaklee ran out of the building. She bent over on the cement steps in front of the clinic, tears streaming down her cheeks. Thoughts raced through her head.

Am I really about to not be able to fit my clothes anymore?

Am I going to have to put somebody before myself?

Am I going to give up nine months of my life?

Blaklee heard the doors open and turned to see her mom standing in front of her.

"What's wrong?" LeAnn asked.

"I can't do it," Blaklee said.

Her mom wrapped her in an embrace.

"You don't have to do it," LeAnn said. "I'm going to support you. I'm going to love you and this baby, and we're going to get through this together."

...

Blaklee stood in the bathroom watching two solid pink lines appear on the stick of her pregnancy test. It was positive. It was her 16th birthday and she was pregnant.

"When I saw the test my jaw dropped," Blaklee said. "I just didn't

know what I was going to do."

Blaklee immediately told her mom the news. Hearing that her daughter was pregnant was a shock to her mother, LeAnn Briggs.

"She was still a child," LeAnn said. "At first I was like she can't be having a baby because she's still my baby."

About a week after finding out she was pregnant, Blaklee and her mom decided to make the drive to El Paso to get Blaklee an abortion. While Blaklee said she was never fully comfortable with the idea of an abortion, she decided to get one to avoid having to tell and disappoint her family.

"I knew that I didn't want to let anybody down," Blaklee said. "I didn't really want to do it, but in a way I did because I just didn't know what to do."

The moment Blaklee stepped into the abortion clinic she knew it wasn't what she wanted. After she left the clinic, Blaklee knew that she had made the right decision. Stepping into that clinic gave Blaklee a new perspective. She felt selfish.

It felt as if God had spoken to her. She now knew that going through with an abortion wasn't what He had planned for her. She had to go through with the pregnancy.

"I truly began to believe that this was part of God's plan," Blaklee said. "God had a calling for me to be a young mom."

...

After she committed to keeping the baby, Blaklee found out that she was three months pregnant and soon began to experience changes to her body. New hormone levels caused her emotions to switch, making her feel out of control. Some days she was so exhausted and upset she could barely get out of bed. She started showing at seven months, making it difficult to put on some of her old clothes. She couldn't fit into her favorite pair of jeans.

"That's when it all started to be real," Blaklee said.

...

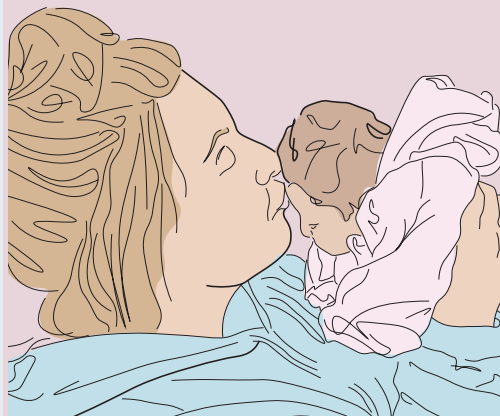
Aside from the physical obstacles of her pregnancy, Blaklee was met with emotional obstacles as well.

Blaklee had not attended an LISD school since she had moved from Flower Mound after her eighth grade year. However, she still received texts from students at Marcus who had

““

I realized that being a teen mom does not make somebody a loser. It does not define who I am in a negative way.

**-BLAKLEE BRIGGS,
FORMER LISD STUDENT**



known her once they began to learn about her pregnancy.

Good job. Who's the daddy?

What a slut.

Not only did others judge her for having a baby, but her friends became angry with her as well for not telling them about the pregnancy.

"It just added a ton of unnecessary stress on me and the baby which wasn't good," Blaklee said. "I was already going through a lot."

Blaklee also struggled at getting her education. She was kicked out of a collegiate school she had been attending once the administration found out she was pregnant, and it was difficult for her to transfer to an online school soon after.

"It was a long time trying to get into school. I missed almost the entire first semester," Blaklee said.

At first, Blaklee felt embarrassed by how others viewed her. However, rather than let others' comments get to her, she brushed them aside.

"I realized that being a teen mom does not make somebody a loser," Blaklee said. "It does not define who I am in a negative way. If anything, it's made me a better person."

Former LISD student Blaklee Briggs said that the support of her parents and boyfriend, Isiah Wright, is what helped her the most throughout her pregnancy. Today, she feels lucky to have such a supportive family, as she knows many young moms aren't as fortunate. **PHOTO SUBMITTED BY BLAKLEE BRIGGS**



Blaklee's forehead beaded with sweat. She was exhausted. She had been in labor for the past several hours and was finally able to hold her baby girl for the very first time. She smiled as she looked down at her newborn, Bentley Paige Briggs.

"The feeling when we laid eyes on each other, I can't even explain how joyful it was," Blaklee said. "I kept thinking 'Oh my gosh, this is actually my baby.'"

After nine months, Blaklee knew that it was worth it. She was a mom to a beautiful daughter. Though she didn't know much about what was to come in the next few years, Blaklee knew that she and Bentley already had a special bond.

"I feel like I knew her

because not only did I give birth to her, but we grew together," Blaklee said. "For nine months it was me and her."



Bentley Briggs was born on Nov. 14, 2018. Former LISD student Blaklee Briggs says one of her favorite memories from her pregnancy is when she and her boyfriend picked names out of a hat to choose Bentley's middle name, Paige. **PHOTO SUBMITTED BY BLAKLEE BRIGGS**

Today when she sees her 1-year-old daughter crawling around as she gets closer to taking her first steps, Blaklee knows there is never a moment where she can give up and quit. She knows she doesn't get to experience things that most teens get to experience. She won't get to go to her senior prom or attend her high school graduation. She attends online school and doesn't have a job, all so that she can focus her time on raising Bentley. She knows she's made a commitment and said that is why so many other young girls are not always able to make the same decision that she has.

"Not everybody can handle it because you have to grow up overnight," Blaklee said. "You have to mentally and physically prepare yourself that you are about to take on a big responsibility."

Since her 16th birthday, Blaklee's life was completely changed. Rather than focus on the obstacles she has faced throughout her pregnancy and raising her daughter, Blaklee chooses to look at the positives of being a young parent.

"A lot of people think that when you're a teen and you get pregnant, that it's the end of the world and that your life is over, but it's not," Blaklee said. "I feel like my life has actually just begun because I have a little girl and now it's not just me. It's her. She's before me."

Teen birth rate remains high in Texas

Even though the teen pregnancy rate has declined in the past 25 years, Texas had the seventh highest teenage birth rate in the United States in 2018, according to the CDC. Only Mississippi, Louisiana, Kentucky, West Virginia, Oklahoma and Arkansas surpassed Texas's rate of 25.3 births per 1,000 females who are

15 to 19 years old.

The cause of Texas' high birth rate compared to other states is up for debate. Potential causes include lack of sex ed, church and parental involvement and poverty.

Children

HAVING CHILDREN

STORY MADI OLIVIER & AYRA CHARANIA
DESIGN TARA CONNICK

Sex ed

Some groups credit the high teenage birth rate in Texas to the state's quality of sex education. Texas is one of 26 states that does not require public schools to teach sex ed. However, any schools that decide to do so are required by state law to emphasize abstinence until marriage and don't need to provide information about contraception.

According to the Texas Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy Director of Policy and Data Jennifer Biundo, research has shown that sex ed has many benefits, including the prevention of teen pregnancies. Some students, like senior Nathaniel Fika, agree with Biundo on the relationship between sex ed and pregnancy.

"What can be done to decrease that is properly teaching how to have safe sex, protection, what to do and what not to do," Fika said.

Marcus 2008 graduate Alyssa Helbig never discussed sex ed or contraceptives in school or at home, so she didn't know much about different forms of protection. Two months into her first year of college, she found herself pregnant after having sex for the first time.

"It was scary. You don't really expect that to happen to you because you are never going to be one of those people," Helbig said. "I remember during the end of my pregnancy I was in bed, wanting to sleep all the time and crying all the time and not really

wanting to do anything."

Helbig believes that schools should teach more than abstinence. As a parent, she says that she wants her son to be educated on the options available to him.

"I think no matter what, if you introduce it in a school or not in the school, there's going to be those handful of people who are going to want to experiment anyways," Helbig said. "I think if you are talking more freely about it, then there might be a lower percent of teen pregnancies because that way they're educated in what not to do or what to do."

On the other side of the debate, many parent-formed groups, including Concerned Parents of Texas, suggest that increased sex ed will lead to more teens having sex, putting themselves at risk of getting pregnant.

"The curriculum normalizes and teaches about all sexual behaviors, and falsely implies that everyone is having sex," Concerned Parents of Texas advocate Karole Fedrick said in a statement. "That absolves students who are sexually active and puts pressure to become sexually active on students who are not."

7 TEXAS HAD THE
TH HIGHEST
TEEN BIRTH RATE IN THE
UNITED STATES IN 2018.

*according to the CDC

Parent, church involvement

Some students suggest that lack of parental involvement plays a role in teen pregnancies. Senior Shalina Sabih believes that when parents don't discuss the potential consequences of unsafe sex, they are putting their kids at risk.

"I believe that if children open up to their parents, it would also help out," Sabih said. "I also feel like parents shouldn't be as judgmental."

Similarly, parent-based groups like Texas Values suggest that parents should be the primary educators of sex ed. They have also advocated for increased church involvement in teen pregnancy.

"Churches need to be more involved as well to teach those they influence about God's design for sex and the biblical purposes

and beauty of sexual relationships between husbands and wives," Fedrick stated.

Major religious institutions have recently become more involved in sex ed and teen pregnancy prevention. The United Church of Christ now offers sex ed curriculums for Kindergarteners through adults, as well as one focused on HIV and AIDS awareness.

Senior Kristine Chersey believes combining religion and teen pregnancy can have both positive and negative effects.

"On one hand, it can promote abstinence and circumvent teen pregnancy," Chersey said. "On the other hand, if someone doesn't identify strongly with their religious institution, it can add a sort of external pressure when given the choice to have sex."

IN 2017, IN
SOME DALLAS
ZIP CODES, TEEN
BIRTHS WERE

**FOUR
TIMES**

THE NATIONAL AVERAGE.

*according to the Dallas Morning News

Poverty levels

Teen pregnancy levels are also strongly linked to poverty, with low income teens more likely to get pregnant. About 52 percent of all mothers on welfare had their first child as a teenager, according to the group Fact Forward. Although there are many factors involved, the lack of education and healthcare are often considered to be the biggest reasons for the relationship between poverty and teen pregnancy.

"Teens are more likely to get pregnant if they are on the poverty line because they do not have money to buy things such as condoms or be put on birth control," Sabih said.

Additionally, pregnant teens are more likely to drop out of school and accept a low paying job to support their baby, possibly putting them in danger of poverty in the future.

"If one isn't inspired to push themselves further along in college or career path, for example, due to a lack of resources such as money, they can be more compelled to or be more fulfilled by having children early on," Chersey said.

In 2017, teen births were four times the national average in some Dallas ZIP codes, according to the Dallas Morning News. This contributed to the city's 38 percent childhood poverty rate at the time, which was the highest rate of any city with more than 1 million residents.

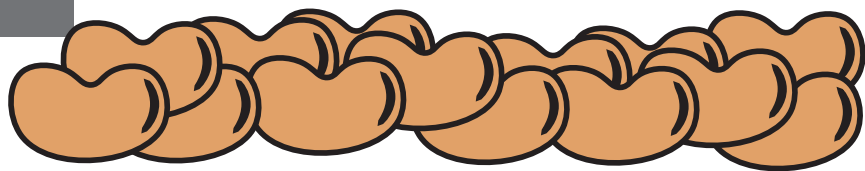
"We have to look at poverty as a generational issue," former Dallas Mayor Mike Rawlings told KERA News. "So if we want to deal with it in the next generation, we've got to stop babies having babies."

LUCKY CHARMS

Sports teams motivated by unique traditions

STORY MICHAEL MINTON

DESIGN RYAN BAKER



THE MAGICAL FRUIT

Before every wrestling meet, junior Zae McPherson goes to the mat room and does the same warm up routine to get himself loose. Then he goes to the locker room to get his essentials. His shoes, his headgear and, of course, his lucky can of El Paso Refried Beans.

That beat up can is the wrestling team's good luck charm, and they've been sure to bring it to every meet.

"The [other wrestlers] just thought it was funny when I said, 'Alright guys this is our good luck,'" McPherson said.

It began one day when McPherson was eating his lunch in head wrestling coach Justin Peña's office when he noticed the bright yellow can of beans. He asked Peña if he could have it to eat later, and Peña agreed without much thought.

McPherson's hunger passed, so he spent his next period tossing the unopened can around, making the dents even worse and adding a few of his own. He left it in his locker, but when his friends saw it, they decided together to bring the can to all of their tournaments as good luck.

"The minute we decided we were going to take it everywhere everyone was on-board instantly," senior Logan Manuel said.

Besides being good luck for the team, this dented and now label-less can has a

second purpose.

"It has just kept things light," Manuel said. "The nerves before a match are crazy because it's just you and the other person, so that is super intense. Well now there's just this random can — you can't even say it without laughing."

While Peña recognizes the comedy in the can, he believes their training has led to this year's great season.

"I like to think their skills are getting better," Peña said. "If they see this as a comedic relief to their nerves and fear before they wrestle, go for it."

Even though he doubts the beans' magical abilities, Peña has won his first trophy in the three seasons since he began. After winning their second trophy from Flower Mound, the team is hopeful to make it to state. Beans must really be the magical fruit.



Boys wrestling has had one of their best seasons in years. At the time of writing the team is currently 14-5. PHOTO SUBMITTED BY AIDAN FORGAY



Members of the wrestling team show off their can of beans after a morning workout. The team practices Tuesday through Thursday from 6-7:30 a.m. to get ready for their meets. PHOTO SUBMITTED BY AIDAN FORGAY

IT'S IN THE HAIR



When senior Benny Roebuck moved to Texas, he expected everything to be bigger than in his home state of Ohio. When he got here, things were not as different as he had thought. He was looking forward to joining a new baseball team, but he didn't expect them to all be wearing mullets.

"In Ohio we didn't really have a look, everyone just did their own thing," Roebuck said. "I think it's cool that everyone has a look, like they all want to do the mullets."

This tradition began when the 2017-18 varsity baseball team all decided to get mullet cuts at the beginning of the season. After they finished their season with 29 wins and only 13 losses, the team decided to keep the tradition. While some players believe it

brings them good luck, others just love seeing people's reaction.

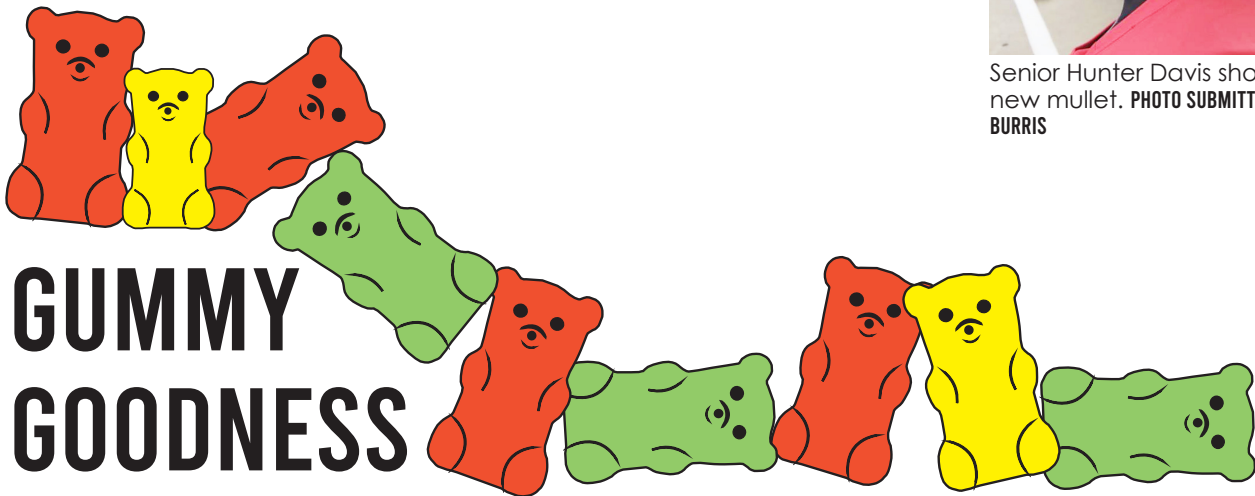
"The first day back is definitely the best part, the funniest part. Everyone just looks at you differently," senior Sam Hunt said.

Besides setting the players apart in the hallways and on the field, getting the haircuts brings the team closer together.

"It's fun for us to do, and it solidifies us as a team," Hunt said. "We play for each other."



Senior Hunter Davis showcases his new mullet. PHOTO SUBMITTED BY BOSTYN BURRIS



GUMMY GOODNESS

Senior Sarah Hill was lucky enough to inherit one of varsity soccer's most precious traditions. At their banquet last year, when the girls reflected on their successes that season, they also passed down to her their most highly honored gift — the jar.

Every year, one girl is chosen to carry around a semi-transparent jar full of gummy bears. At the team's first game, they all pick a number and a color of gummy bear to eat before every game, like Hill's two red.

"Everybody eats whatever they choose ...You just grab some and they have to be the same as our first game," Hill said.

According to Hill, there are several other passed down items, but none are taken as seriously as the jar of gummy bears.

"Some people are superstitious about it and they have to get theirs," Hill said.

This tradition has been part of the team longer than Head Coach Chad Hobbs, who is in his 10th year at the school.

"If it's something that can get them in the right frame of mind or take a little bit off and create some levity, then sure I'm good with that," Hobbs said.



Passing down the gummy bear jar at banquet is among many of soccer's traditions. During their banquet, they also pass down a band-aid to the player who suffered an injury.

PHOTO SUBMITTED BY SARAH HILL



The girls soccer team is currently in season and are 10-1. The team is ranked eighth in state. PHOTO SUBMITTED BY SARAH HILL

COACH COMES FULL CIRCLE

Former player leaves pros, now coaches soccer



Coach Sam Garza has played with the San Jose Earthquakes, Arizona United and Seattle Sounders in the Major Soccer League. He is now bringing his professional experience to coaching the Marauders.

PHOTO MAYA HERNANDEZ

STORY ADRIANA PUESKENS
DESIGN AMBER LUTHER

It was April 14, 2007. On the windy Saturday night, the Marauders were down 2-1 in the state soccer championship. The team had never made it this far in the playoffs. With only 10 players instead of the usual 11 on the field, and one minute to go, the Marauders scored a goal to tie the game 2-2.

“We had something about us that was difficult to beat. We were very committed and determined,” former Head Coach John Gall said.

For overtime, each team sent up five players to attempt to score, and junior Sam Garza was selected as the last player to shoot for his team. After

fans stormed the field. Everyone was screaming, and the seniors were crying.

Sam’s kick had just made them state champions.

“It was just a surreal feeling,” Garza said. “We all wore our medals to school and we were buzzing and super happy. We were just on cloud nine.”

• • •

Since the age of five, Sam has been used to cold games and early practices. As a freshman, he was good enough to be on the varsity team. In his senior year, he was part of a back-to-back state championship team and won MVP of the 2008 state championship. Garza also received Gatorade State Player of the Year, All-American title and was named a

“ [He’s] the perfect person for it. He knows exactly what it means to be a Marcus Marauder.

-JOHN GALL, FORMER HEAD COACH

four shots, the game was still tied. Gall normally put Garza third in the lineup, but this time he chose Garza for the closer.

“[He’s] incredibly talented,” Gall said. “He came in as a freshman, and I put him right on varsity based on his talent and ability.”

Garza was one-on-one with the goalie, with only five seconds to shoot. If he made the goal, they would win the state championship.

The atmosphere buzzed with a mix of excitement and nervousness as fans anxiously awaited a goal. All he had to do was make this shot.

He took a deep breath and kicked, and he watched the ball hit the net.

The crowd erupted in cheers and his teammates swarmed him. The

UIL All-Century team member.

Colleges were noticing. He had offers from multiple Division I schools nationwide, from colleges like The University of Tulsa, Southern Methodist, Cornell, Wake Forest, Brown, St. John’s, Maryland and Duke.

But it was never about the offers. He just loved the game and wanted to play, no matter where or how.

“It was cool, but I never let it affect me,” Garza said. “I was just more focused on soccer, and then everything else was like ‘It’ll take care of itself.’”

Eventually Garza signed with the University of Denver. However, in the fall of his sophomore year, he tore his ACL and was benched for

eight months. After coming back home to complete his rehab and college courses at NCTC, he transferred to the University of California at Santa Barbara the next fall. Garza felt like it gave him the platform he needed to advance his soccer career, and he played there for two years. Then a possibility of playing for the pros came, and he was given a chance at his dream.

• • •

JAN. 12, 2012.

The Kansas City convention center was packed with many of the top soccer players in the country and their families. Dozens of top coaches and professional

He had finally made it to the big leagues.

“I was ready for it, but it was another thing when you’ve got to execute up there in front of everybody. The lights are on you,” Garza said.

• • •

Garza played with the San Jose Earthquakes, Arizona United and the Seattle Sounders for a duration of five seasons in the pro leagues. But soon his passion for the sport began declining.

“It got to a point where I just started getting burned out,” Garza said. “I looked at it more as an obligation.”

After many physical and emotional

and could have looked for another head coaching job, but he wanted to stay at the school. So he was hired to teach freshman algebra, and during his conference period Garza continued to volunteer as a coach. His chance at the head coaching job came along just a few months later. In November, Rakestraw left and Garza was offered the position.

“Being able to take over was my overall goal. I just wanted to be a head coach,” Garza said. “I’m fortunate enough it happened at my alma mater. It’s kind of crazy to think about.”

After learning that Garza had taken his old coaching position, John Gall, who is now a head coach for FC Dallas, said he couldn’t think of anyone better.

“Sam grew a lot dealing with a lot of difficult situations and adversities from his injuries to dealing with different types of coaches,” Gall said. “I think it’s put him in a great position to be a successful coach.”

Gall remembers Garza as not only a good player, but as someone committed and determined to be successful. He said that Garza had always been a positive example on the team, listening to advice and executing it— a role model for the team.

“He’s an incredible advocate for high school sports and young people,” Gall said. “This news of him getting the head coach full time— I’m ecstatic. [He’s] the perfect person for it. He knows exactly what it means to be a Marcus Marauder.”

Coming back to coach meant that he was bringing the coaching that had shaped him back to his alma mater. Garza remembers the trust he had in Gall as a coach and wanted to be the coach players could feel confident in.

“A lot of coaches I’ve had, even at the professional level I just didn’t respect. I guess I just didn’t really buy into what they were doing,” Garza said. “I wanted to be better and I feel like that’s kind of what has fueled me to be a coach.”

Garza said he is grateful he has been able to come full circle — from playing for the school, going professional and coming back to strengthen the program that has influenced him.

“I’ve been here, I’m from here, I played here,” Garza said. “I know the program, I know what it’s about. I know the standards, how it needs to be ran... You know, it all just fits.”



Sam Garza passes the ball to his teammate in his signature gold cleats. He became recognized for the bright shoes that he wore on the field throughout high school. PHOTO SUBMITTED BY SAM GARZA

scouts sat ready to announce their picks.

Garza sat in one of the front rows, waiting to hear his name. Shaking with excitement and nerves, he squeezed his mom’s and dad’s legs in anticipation. He was bent over with his face in his hands, listening as each player was drafted. He didn’t have to wait long; his name came in the first round.

“Selected from the University of California at Santa Barbara... Sam Garza,” an announcer said.

Relief flooded him as he’d realized he’d made it. Congratulated with applause and hugs from his family, he made his way up to the stage in front of all of the Major Soccer League coaches to accept his position on the team.

A blue San Jose Earthquakes scarf was placed around his neck as he approached the podium to thank his coaches, parents and agents.

Garza had been drafted in the first round as the sixth pick at the age of 22.

trials, he left pro soccer in 2016.

Looking for a change, Garza returned to Flower Mound and was a substitute teacher for LISD. Right after he returned, Head Soccer Coach John Gall resigned and the soccer team had a head coaching position available.

Garza thought this might be the change he needed. He was made the interim head coach for the 2016-2017 season, but because he hadn’t finished his college degree, he could not be a full-time teacher or coach, and the school hired Chad Rakestraw as the new head coach.

But Garza felt called to coaching, so for two years he assisted Rakestraw without pay. Since he now knew he wanted to coach full time, he moved back home with his parents and went back to college.

“Coaching the guys just kind of made me realize what I wanted to do. It was a big eye opener. It kind of changed my life a little bit,” Garza said.

Garza finished his degree last summer

Five easy steps to creating your own sweetheart

STORY MCKENNA COWLEY
DESIGN AMBER LUTHER

Valentine's Day can be difficult for single people, so much that there is even a movement to introduce a second holiday that falls on Feb. 15: Singles Awareness Day or SAD. This year, if you find yourself alone and wanting to fit in with your taken friends, use this guide to create a fake significant other.

1. Name your 'other' carefully

When beginning this deceptive process, it is important to be creative. Your friends and family will smell the lies from a mile away if your fake sweetheart is "Megan from Canada." If you're trying to squash any doubt of your new significant other being real, give them a creative, gender-neutral name. Do this by naming them after the first object you see. For example: "Expo," as in Expo Marker, or "Kindness," from the inspirational poster on your math teacher's wall that pictures a monkey hanging from a tree.

2. Shower yourself with gifts

Make sure everyone knows you are definitely in a loving partnership by loudly reading fake love notes to yourself in public places. If you need some inspiration, here is an example:

Dear Self,

You are so cool and fun. You are also intelligent and creative. Everyone should be friends with you. I am so happy that I am your boyfriend or girlfriend.

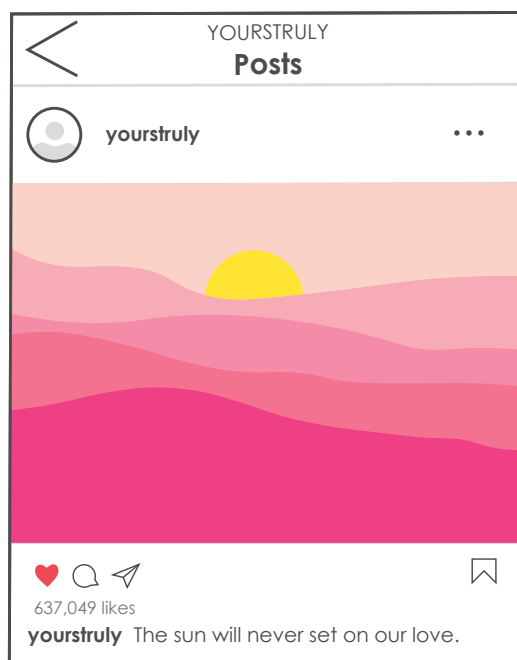
Love,

Rolling Chair.

Additionally, you can send yourself candy grams or carry big bouquets of flowers around school all day. Make sure to announce loudly that the love of your life bought you these gifts, and try to forget the fact that you spent \$7.99 on a bouquet of carnations from Target only to carry them around yourself. Happy shopping!

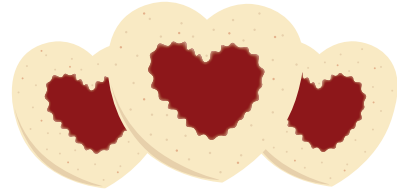
3. Social media

Once your friends and family think you are in a relationship, they will want to know more about your significant other. Therefore, some social media stalking is sure to happen. The simple solution is to create a fake profile for them. Make sure that every post on their profile is exclusively a confession of their love for you. For example, if the picture is a sunset, the caption could be "The sun will never set on our love." Awww!



4. Bask in the fruits of your labor

By Valentine's Day, it will be extremely hard for your loved ones to believe that any sane person would go through so much work to convince the world they are taken. Now it is time for a romantic Valentine's date with your significant other. Sit in the parking lot of your nearest Olive Garden inside your 2003 Honda Civic and take a selfie, making sure to get that beautiful logo in the background as if you are about to meet your special someone for a romantic dinner for two. Finally, make sure to stay out for an hour or so and don't reply to any texts while everyone thinks you're on a date. During this time, you can visit Walmart and eat heart-shaped, pre-packaged sugar cookies in the parking lot by yourself while listening to Adele.



5. Time to be SAD

On Feb. 15, announce that you and your significant other have sadly decided to part ways, but their love will remain close to your heart forever. Now, everyone will either give you their condolences or be too terrified to talk to you at all. Either way, congratulations, you're in the clear! Now you can wallow in your sadness with all of the other single people on Singles Awareness Day. Buy yourself some half-price chocolate at Tom Thumb, listen to Coldplay and hug your pillow for comfort. Good job on making the most of two holidays!



ista

Indian Cuisine

At Ista, it is our endeavor to present to you the flavors of India, in a selection we hope you will enjoy the taste as much as we love preparing them for you.



CALL US FOR ALL CATERING AND
CUSTOM REQUIREMENTS
Large Upscale Parties, Bartenders,
and Professional Waiters



972-355-4488
www.istaus.com
2221 Cross Timbers Rd, Suite 105,
Flower Mound, TX 75028

MEET THE MEN OF MR. MARCUS

COMPILED MICHAEL MINTON
DESIGN ESMERALDA ARELLANO
PHOTOS JENIFER BARNES

Andrew Gange



What's something not a lot of people know about you?

I am majoring in Lighting Design and Technology.

If you could have any superpower, what would you choose?

My superpower would be to have all of the knowledge in the world because who doesn't want to be the smartest person in the world?

Nathan Tonti



What's something not a lot of people know about you?

I enjoy swords. I would like to collect them one day and learn to wield them efficiently.

If you could have any superpower, what would you choose?

Telekinesis. It is underestimated. I can move anything with my mind, including myself.

Dylan Duckworth



What are three words to describe yourself?

Large, macho and gangly.

If you could have any superpower, what would you choose?

I would make anyone's day just by smiling. I think that would be the coolest superpower because kindness is the most powerful thing on earth.

Ethan Barr



What's something not a lot of people know about you?

I have a mowing business.

If you could have any superpower, what would you choose?

Shapeshifter. No explanation needed.

Tyler Robison



What's something not a lot of people know about you?

People don't know that I'm actually a really good dancer. I actually danced for the halftime show of the president's inauguration.

What are three words to describe yourself?

Tall, pale and lanky.

Chaitanya Bashyam



What are three words to describe yourself?

Athlete, Eeyore and TI-84.

If you could have any superpower, what would you choose?

I would choose whistling. I've gone through the Wikihow over 20 times and it's just not happening.

Landon Bradley



Where do you see yourself in 20 years?

Working at a university, being the lead music director.

What's your favorite movie?

"How to Train Your Dragon." Beautiful soundtrack, relatable and epic story and it has dragons!

Russell Raunam



Three words to describe yourself?

Hilarious, gorgeous and humble.

What's your favorite movie?

"Avengers: Infinity War!" No one saw that ending coming.

Siddarth Jayakumar



What are three words to describe yourself?

Long, dark and handsome.

What's your favorite movie?

"Chitty Chitty Bang Bang" because Chitty Chitty Bang Bang Chitty Chitty Bang Bang we love you.

Nick Underwood



What's something not a lot of people know about you?

I have a pet turtle named Myrtle.

What's your favorite movie?

"Avengers: Infinity War" because I love Thanos in the comic books and I thought the movie was a great adaptation.

Garret Karbs



Three words to describe yourself?

Cute, ticklish and thick.

What's your favorite movie?

"Teen Beach Movie" because the songs are a vibe.

Hayden Self



Three words to describe yourself?

Selfless, caring and hardworking.

Where do you see yourself in 20 years?

I see myself being a doctor and helping change people's lives for the better.

Ethan Rice



Three words to describe yourself?

Charismatic, outgoing and humorous.

What's something not a lot of people know about you?

While I was born in Texas, I am half Canadian.

Michael Carignan



What's your favorite movie?

"Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs" because I like meatballs.

Where do you see yourself in 20 years?

I see myself cooking meatballs.

APPLE PENCILS

The library now lets students borrow Apple Pencils during the school day. This is convenient for many students. They can now draw, do homework or work on projects in a more precise way than just using their fingers or a flimsy stylus.

NEW MHS INSTAGRAM

The new Instagram page increases the school's online presence by posting about school events like games and performances. When the page first opened, there was a competition for the page to reach 1000 followers. Fortunately, the Instagram page hit 1000 followers in less than two days.

RECOGNITION OF MORE GROUPS

The announcements make a good effort at recognizing many different student activities. We hear about Academic Decathlon's prizes, Debate students' accomplishments and Journalisms' awards. Honoring these students helps them feel appreciated for the hard work and dedication they put into the competitions.

FINDING MY IDENTITY

COLUMN SHRIYA MUKKAVILLI

My parents immigrated from India in 1997. They had me in 2004. I was born in Grapevine. Later, we moved to Flower Mound. While we had our community of Indians, neither place could be called "diverse."

In the first few years of my school, I didn't have a lot of friends with my skin color. I went to a majority white preschool and elementary school. While my parents made sure that I had an understanding of my culture through various events, I didn't have friends with whom I shared the Indian-American experience.


It wasn't until third grade that I made friends with other brown kids. Unlike my other friends, we had an almost instant connection through our similar backgrounds. When we hung out, we watched Vines and YouTube videos by other Indians who grew up in the West. We even mixed words from our native languages into English, creating a secret code that our non-Indian friends couldn't crack.

Even with Indian friends, I still felt isolated. Unlike me, many of them were fluent in their native languages. I understand mine perfectly, but don't feel brave enough to speak more than a few words, even to my parents.

At the same time, I didn't feel like I

could relate to non-Indian kids the same way. Most of them didn't speak more than one language at home and knew little about my culture. I tried not to discuss it in front of them because I was scared that they wouldn't understand or they would think I was weird.



 @shrishri_294

I felt like I faced judgement from not only white peers, but also from other Indian and Asian people around me. We smirked at girls who came to school with long braids and bindis the same way we did for girls who only hung out with white girls and pronounced ethnic words in an American accent.

We're supposed to blend in with white people, but not too much. We're supposed

to show pride in our heritage, but only to a certain point. Either way I felt lost. I constantly found myself questioning my identity and feeling insecure.

However, I was also guilty of this type of thinking. My friends and I made fun of brown people who, from our perspective, tried too hard to be friends with white people. Looking back on it, I think that attitude came from a place of insecurity. Those people made making friends look effortless, while I and some of my other brown friends found it more difficult.

Now that I'm older, my viewpoint has changed greatly. I've realized that it's not fair to judge people so harshly. My peers and I are still learning to become comfortable with who we are. A mindset where we are forced to choose sides or face the judgement of our peers hurts not only the person being judged but also us. Some people feel a greater need to assimilate to American culture because of their situations. Not all people are as lucky as me to have a group of brown friends. I can understand why some of them distance themselves from their heritage instead of embracing it.

As I've grown up, I've become comfortable with my identity. I have a supportive community that I can enjoy and share my culture with. At the same time, I have white friends who I can laugh with. While the judgement won't go away anytime soon, I try my best not to contribute to it. I won't let other people's standards of how Indian I should be define me, as long as I stay true to myself.

NO FINE ARTS SIGNING DAY

Have you ever been to a fine arts signing ceremony? If you went to Lewisville High School you would have the chance. Student athletes have a ceremony where they commit to a college, so how about we do that for artists and musicians too? They also deserve recognition for their hard work at our school.

CANVAS VS. SCHOOL WIFI

It's a huge inconvenience when we need to turn in an assignment through Canvas and the WiFi decides to not work. Every time students change location, they have to log in to Canvas again, which becomes annoying quickly. Trying to reconnect to the school WiFi is sometimes harder than solving a calculus problem. Both Canvas and school WiFi need to learn to get their act together, or else students will be complaining for as long as they use Canvas.

SOME CLASSES ARE ONLY 9 WEEKS

For those of us with short attention spans, nine weeks is not enough time to learn a whole curriculum. For some classes, like P.E., it's understandable, but when it comes to college level classes, like AP Government or Economics, all the information seems crammed in. It would be a lot less of a burden if the classes were spread out over 18 weeks rather than a short grading period.

COMING OUT: AN EXPLANATION

COLUMN ALYSSA CHEATHAM

Seeing "Love, Simon" was a pivotal moment in my life. It was released not long after I came out to my family, and I watched it with my mom in the theater. I had barely ever seen gay characters on screen let alone as a main character. The ones I'd seen all had being gay as their main personality trait. The movie brought light to the fact that coming out, if we choose to do so, is uncomfortable. I was very vocal about my love for it and what it showed.

"It seemed pointless to me," a boy once said to me. "It was just a kid coming out for an hour and a half."

I didn't understand why so many people I knew didn't like it, and I couldn't pinpoint why the boy's statement upset me so much. I didn't realize my mistake until the boy in my church youth group unintentionally smacked me in the face with the cold hard truth.

People who haven't, and may never, have to come out don't have a true understanding of it because they've never had to deal with it.

So here it is, an explanation for all of you who don't understand it, why it is not what you may think it is.

I don't introduce myself by saying "Hi! I'm Alyssa and I'm a bisexual!" It's not a blinking LED sign above my head or a tattoo on my forehead. It's just a part of me. One that, to many people, is only apparent in the way I say partner or significant other instead of boyfriend.

Coming out never ends.

There are steps that you're unaware exist until you have to deal with them. Though I'd supported the LGBT community my whole life, realizing I was actually part of it was a different experience. Suddenly you're the one dealing with homophobia from those around you and from yourself. Hearing someone refer to something as gay

all of my friends and acquaintances that I'm bi. I don't try to hide it anymore, and will even make gay jokes around them such as calling mild inconveniences "homophobic."

Step two, the true test, is your family. I am lucky enough to have open-minded parents, but even then, I didn't look forward to coming out to them. It was showing a part of me that had been hidden my whole life.

Step three was telling my extended family, and if I'm being honest, most of my extended family doesn't know. I accidentally wore my "girls like girls club" Hayley Kiyoko concert shirt to a family reunion. It's a mistake I will never make again, not wanting to have to deal with that type of stress during a carefree family reunion. I never bring it up at family functions, and I've only ever made one gay joke, when I told my brother 'I'm hardly ever thinking straight.' Maybe one day I'll come back to this step, but for right now it will continue to be unchecked on my to-do list.

Step four is coming out to the new people in my life. Those are the people I get nervous around. What if they don't support gay marriage? What if when they find out I'm bi they shame me? Even if I know the person is supportive, the nerves are still present.

Coming out is uncomfortable and nerve wracking, but I look forward to the day that I can tell someone without feeling those nerves.



 @pidgeonpip

suddenly isn't as funny anymore. You realize that yup, you're gay, and you just have to work towards becoming comfortable with that fact.

Often times, step one is coming out to close friends. We know their views, and they are often the most comfortable for us to talk to about this possibly sensitive topic. The first few I told were not very supportive, wondering how I could follow this lifestyle if I was a Christian. At this point, it's a well known fact to

"I always smell like bread. Always. I don't know why."

- C HALL

"You were convicted guilty."
"For sheep stealing?!"

- W HALL

"Dude, Guy Fieri is from Flavortown. Of course he'd win in a fist fight."

- A HALL



"I don't care if it's for the aesthetic. We're not all Granola Girls like you."

- NEWSROOM

"You look like a walking matcha latte."

- M9

"You never eat an olive and forget about it."

- D HALL

A NEW ERA OF ACTIVISM

COLUMN NIKHITA RAGAM

Climate change. #MeToo Movement. Hong Kong protests. Rohingya Muslim ethnic genocide. Civil war in Sudan. Last year was characterized by the rise of protest culture, especially amongst teens. Time Magazine recognized 17-year-old climate activist Greta Thunberg as Person of the Year. As a social media activist, I have considered whether I was protesting because I was passionate about these causes or under pressure to appear politically woke.

On Sept. 20, nearly 4 million people marched in the name of climate change. I was one of them. The streets of New York were packed, and celebrities around the world joined in. Before attending the strike in Dallas, I felt guilty at the thought of not going. Climate change is one of the largest issues championed by youth activists. I felt obligated to attend.

The horrific fires in Australia and steady rise in global temperatures affirm that climate change is an urgent crisis. However, I didn't attend the climate strike for those reasons. I wasn't even educated on the impacts of it. All I knew were catchphrases of "the world is burning" and "there is no planet b." I went to the strike only to hold up a sign and appear liberal and politically aware.

However, upon listening to passionate speakers who tirelessly worked to advance environmentalism, I was inspired. An older man spoke about leading climate change protests in the 70's. It's a cause he's defended for decades. He's the activist I

aspire to be: dedicated and impassioned. I'm sick of promoting causes that mean nothing to me.

Social media is a double-edged sword. People can learn about international atrocities in a second. However, trendy movements of turning profiles to a certain color or changing bios also spread rapidly.



 @nikhita_ragam

If a popular influencer encourages their followers to turn their Instagram profiles blue to support the protests in Sudan, they do it.

They might not know what's happening but will still change their profile for appearances. In an increasingly turbulent political climate, people love to speak out even without knowledge of the issues.

When news broke that Donald Trump approved the assassination of Iranian General Qasem Soleimani, people jumped to social media to discuss the possibility of World War III. Others immediately

retaliated, arguing that one shouldn't joke about such issues with dangerous implications. If people were not posting their stance, it appeared as if they support airstrikes in Iraq.

In 2018, when Beto O'Rourke ran for senate, my Instagram feed was filled with posts of students who met him. I was both jealous and frustrated with myself. Everyone seemed to have a picture with Beto, except me. In my mind, not having a picture meant not being politically engaged. As someone who aspires to enter politics, I felt like I had to be at the forefront of his campaign. I was supposed to be block-walking and organizing town halls.

Over time, I've realized that many youth activists share my struggle. I've witnessed them hopping onto the latest movements without any background information, trapped under this pressure of appearing politically woke. If an individual mobilized their community on addressing climate change, they're expected to also speak up on other totally unrelated issues. Be it the Uighur Muslim crisis or the ethnic genocide of Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar, they are expected to have an opinion. However, the problem is that one cannot speak up on all these issues. Every day, new issues pop up. It's difficult to constantly stay updated and provide an educated opinion.

That's why I've decided to take a different approach to activism. This year, I don't want to overload myself with advocating for all causes. Instead, I want to focus on those that resonate with me the most. I want to protest for those I'm genuinely passionate about because that's the way I can create the most change.

REMARKS

WHAT ARE YOUR OPINIONS ON THE IMPEACHMENT OF PRESIDENT TRUMP?

COMPILED NIKHITA RAGAM
PHOTOS CELINE ENGEL

“ I agree with Trump’s impeachment because he is responsible for a bunch of not good things. He isn’t efficient. He’s no help to the United States and he might get us into World War III. I’ll be glad if he is removed.

-PEYTON RYAN, 10



“ I think [Trump] is just losing it. He’s not smart enough to be president. He’s put us in debt, a lot of it. I think he should be impeached because he’s not really doing anything for us. I believe his impeachment would be good for everybody.

-ABBY COLLINSWORTH, 11



“ I think for the most part it was justified considering what [Trump] did with making negotiations with Ukraine and the investigation with Joe Biden... I don’t think [impeachment] would have gotten as far as it did had it not been a Democrat-dominated House of Representatives.

-ANNA RYAN, 12



“ Impeachment is not as big of a deal that everyone wants it to be because it’s not going to change at the end of the day. I think it’s important to pay close attention to what else is happening.

-CALEB MATTHEWS, 12



CHANGING MINDSETS ON TEEN MOMS

STAFF EDITORIAL

In the 1960s it wasn’t acceptable to marry someone of the same sex, or someone of a different race. Divorce was frowned upon and teen moms were shamed. Now, in the year 2020, we are much more accepting of non-traditional lifestyles. The exception, however, is society’s view of teen moms. Though our generation preaches love and acceptance we, like our grandparents, often still throw out rude and disrespectful comments when we see a teen mom. We need to stop this judgmental, borderline bullying behavior and support the teenage girls who have chosen to keep their child.

Flower Mound, like every town, deals with teen pregnancy. According to the CDC in 2017 there were 194,377 teen births in the U.S. alone. All of us are aware that there are a large number of teenagers having sex, and the only reason these moms are getting shamed is because they are the ones that got caught. These moms need our support because they have weighed all of their options and made the difficult choice to keep their baby. They could have had an abortion or given up their baby for adoption. Instead they chose to raise a child, and shaming them is only causing harm.

Another reason these moms need support is because keeping their baby can

lead to a difficult future. According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, close to 60 percent of unwed teen moms drop out of high school and only two percent finish college by the time they are 30. With community support they will have a better chance at finishing their education and will be able to better provide for their child. While they are working on their education teen moms still have to find financial support as well, either from their parents or a minimum wage job. If they are working hard, then if communities shaming these women is just adding to their stress. An example of support in our community is LISD allowing teen moms to continue to go to school on their original campus if they choose and also have the option of attending the School Age Parent Program available at the Lewisville Learning Center. This has been a good way to support these young women by easing their transition into parenthood.

On top of the stress that comes with being a teenager including school, friends and extracurriculars, these young mothers now have the added stress of taking care of another human being. Having a baby can bring unforeseen challenges for the mother and everyone involved, but tackling the situation head on shows

strength. Choosing to keep their child shouldn’t determine whether we respect or shame them.

All teenagers make mistakes in high school. However, unlike teen moms, most don’t live with the evidence of their mistakes. For teen moms there is no hiding, but by owning up to their actions and keeping their babies, these moms show a level of maturity that most teenagers gain much later in life. If teenagers aren’t defined by the stupid mistakes they made in high school then teen moms shouldn’t be defined by their pregnancy. Treat them how you’d wish to be treated if your mistakes were out in the open like theirs are.

Teen moms need to be shown by the community that we believe in their worth and abilities. They deserve a community ready to help them through the obstacles they now have to face. Next time you see a teen mom, think back to your own mistakes from high school before you so quickly attack others for theirs. Let these moms know that they are still valuable as their own person and in their own accomplishments, instead of labelling them.

DESIGN TARA CONNICK
JAN. 31, 2020

31

GET A HEAD START ON YOUR NEW YEAR CHORES WITH



S.H.I. SERVICES

- **LANDSCAPING**
- **FENCING**
- **TILING**
- **FLOORING**
- **DOOR INSTALLATION**
- **DRYWALL**
- **PAINTING (EXTERIOR & INTERIOR)**
- **WOOD FINISHING**

ALL THIS, AND MORE!

CALL TODAY FOR YOUR FREE ESTIMATE

214 - 642 - 2319