

aric shah - photojournalist of the year

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W H S
Y E A R B O O K

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Contributions and what I have learned-

I was in waaaay over my head.

Head photographer for a yearbook? And not just any yearbook, but one that pulled in national awards and had the responsibility of covering a student body of 2800? As a junior with one year of yearbook experience?

The past head photographer is currently traveling the world to take photos for a living, and there I was, still feeling like a sophomore, unsure how to manage a staff or produce a competition ready book. But, I couldn't be more excited for the future.

My first photography class was in 9th grade - photojournalism A and B. We learned the basics of a DSLR, the history of photojournalism, and about some of the most impactful journalists in the world. The class structure revolved around our photo assignments, which was perfect for me. One reason that I love photojournalism and the art of photography is that you often get out of it what you put into it. I remember walking around my kitchen, slowly adjusting the focus ring on every coffee mug, orange, or parent making dinner, thinking shallow depth of field was the coolest thing in the world. I still do. At the end of that year, my teacher convinced me to join the yearbook staff, telling me it was the best way at our school I could improve my photography.

After about a month in yearbook, I was in love with everything that journalism offered. Becoming best friends with other students working late nights together. Meeting people from different walks of life at our school. Being able to capture a moment of pure joy, and the ability to share it with others.

One contribution I made to the yearbook that I am very proud of was covering our boys basketball playoff run. I took pictures of seven home games and every playoff game except one. I was able to document their progress and success throughout the season, including how they were the first team in Westlake history to make it to the state championship. I worked on two full spreads about the team, and I'm proud that I was able to make something that will help them remember this historic season for the rest of their lives.

Another large contribution I made to the publications at my school was teaching younger students about photography. We had a required "shoot something" assignment, and I offered to take two underclassmen who were brand new to sports photography to a JV soccer game.. We walked through how to assemble a camera, which settings to start with and how to adjust when the sun goes down, where to stand and other tips for shooting soccer. I enjoyed helping them go through their pictures and making a folder of their best few. It was very rewarding for all of us to see that some of the pictures they took are now on the JV girls soccer page in our yearbook. I also contributed by mentoring the lead photographer for our newspaper on some occasions. She was unsure about the more technical aspects of photography, but I was really proud of the level of her work after I assisted her.

I already understood the basics of camera settings and composition going into this year, but I still learned a lot over the course of this school year. I learned mostly about myself. I learned that I don't mind working long hours after school or on weekends, if the work I'm doing is rewarding or leads to a bigger goal. This year I was in the classroom almost every day after school, and I drove all across Texas to cover our sports teams. I learned that journalism seems like a perfect career for me, and that I only want to apply to colleges with a journalism undergraduate program.

However, more than all, this year I learned ambition. I already knew that if I put more time and effort into photography the results would show it, but this year I learned to want to put in as much effort as I possibly could. I always want to have my photos ranked superior or be the dominant on a spread, and I take the time learning and shooting to make it happen. Ambition is a valuable trait that I can take almost anywhere I go. I've been lucky enough to be able to use my ambition in my yearbook class this year. We had always talked about making a website to sell some of our thousands of leftover pictures, so I took the time to learn website design and made the site. I've begun renovating our cluttered camera closet into a portrait studio because I wanted to learn studio photography and teach other students in my class about it.

For my upcoming senior year, I will be working as a co-Editor-in-Chief and head photographer of our yearbook, *El Paisano*. My primary goal is to continue teaching photography and sharing what I have learned with others on the Westlake publications staff and in photojournalism classes. I am very proud of not only my work, but also the work of the other photographers on our staff. The central responsibility of a head photographer is to bring up the photographers around you, and I'm confident I achieved that. Although this was the strangest year to ever be a student, I was excited to be a photojournalist, ready to cover the strangest year ever.



unstoppable

caption

Flexing towards his teammates, point guard senior Eain Mowat celebrates scoring while power forward junior Preston Clark jumps to secure Mowat's layup Dec. 12. "In terms of getting hype, we do whatever helps us lock in and focus on the game," Mowat said. "There's nothing better than seeing success."

description

This is by far my favorite picture of the year. As soon as I got home and looked at it on my computer, it felt like all the time traveling to games and shooting practices had paid off. To me, this picture perfectly represents the team as a whole - Eain "Mo" Mowat celebrating and showing off to his teammates after getting past three defenders, while Preston Clark puts in effort and secures the points. The happiness and energy in his face and his pose create an image that's both powerful and fun to look at.



blur

caption

Trying to make contact with the ball, left junior left fielder Denton Apple follows through with his swing against Lockhart High School. Westlake defeated Lockhart 10-2 March 6.

description

During a normal year, our yearbook staff doesn't have the chance to take pictures of baseball games because their schedule is so late in the season. This year, due to schedules being switched around, I was able to take this picture at a cloudy baseball game and it printed in our newspaper. I had the idea for the ball to stand out behind a player warming up in the back, and this picture was the result of working that shot for half an hour.



pink

caption

As she comes up for air during the Oct. 27 meet, senior Erin Lopez-Lin races against Lake Travis. “COVID may have affected how much we could do together, but it made us a closer team than ever,” Lin said. “I’m really grateful to be able to spend my last year of high school with them.”

description

I took this picture at the pool across the street from my house, because it was one of the few chances we had to shoot swim and dive. Although it was raining and a very restricted shooting area, I’m proud of this image I was able to produce. The frozen drops of water, the pretty blues and pinks, the framing of the swimmers mouth, and the facial expression all contribute to why I chose this picture.



#24

caption

Jumping over an Atascocita High School defender, guard senior KJ Adams tries to score a contested shot March 9. The Chaps defeated Atascocita 57-42, which secured Westlake a spot in the 6A State game.

description

This is another picture I took while covering the Westlake boys varsity basketball team's road to State. KJ Adams is ranked top 50 in the nation for his class, and he was a great leader and contributor to the team's success. I really like this picture because of how strong and overpowering KJ seems and it shows his hard work and determination.



eanes kids first

caption

Eanes Kids First members organize a rally Tuesday, Aug. 25, in front of the Eanes administration building in support of returning to in-person school after closures since March due to the spread of COVID-19.

description

I attended this rally to take pictures because I knew it was a historic and significant event to our community, and it is the picture that I think can make the biggest impact. There are many things that I like about this picture, but the strong, confident pose that the girl is making is my favorite. It is also interesting to me because it makes the viewer think about the situation: Did she make the sign? Does she even know what it says or means?