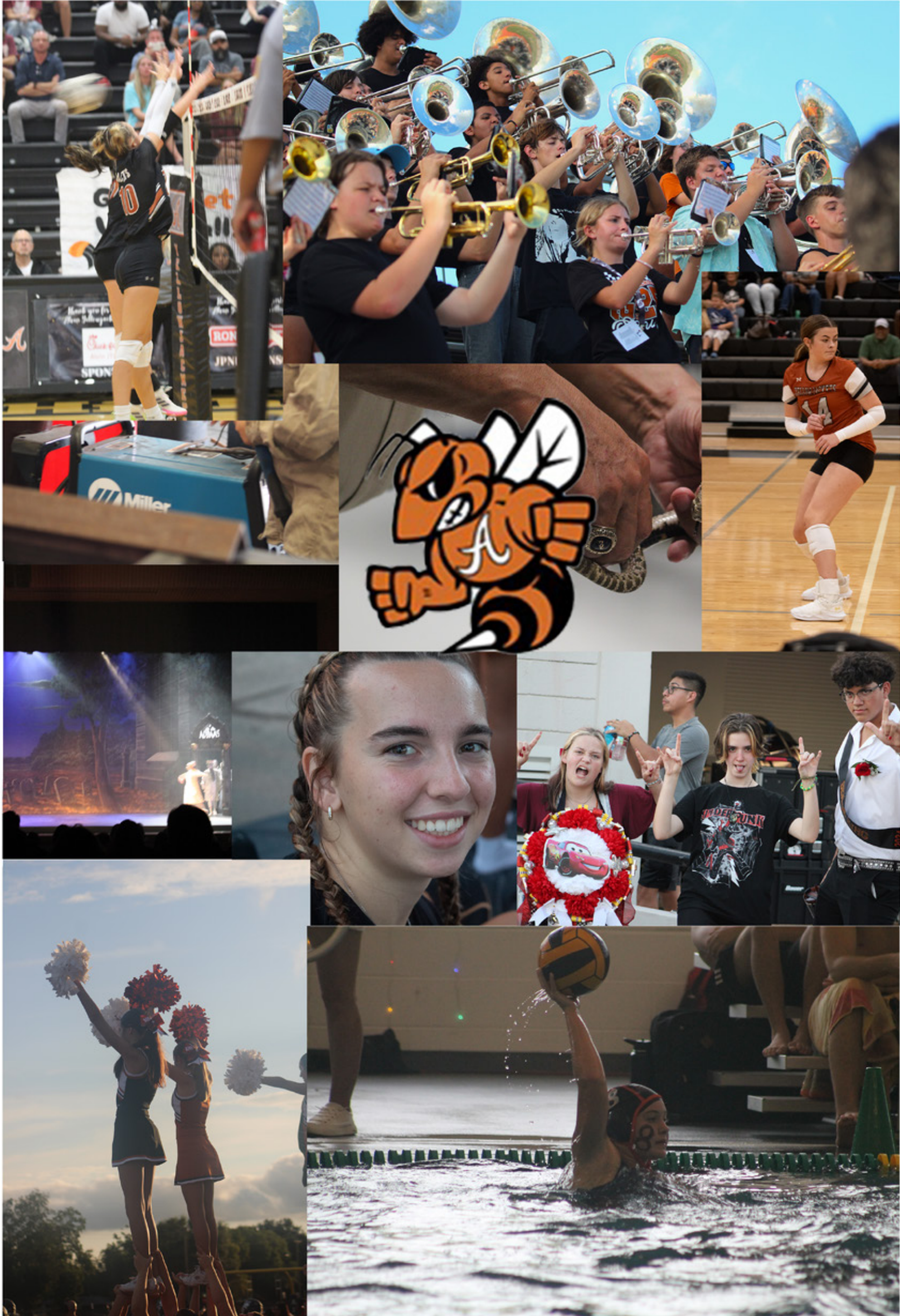




Jackets Always Shine



Fine Arts

Rising to the Rhythm

Annie Olvera
Staff Writer

Once marching season has concluded, the band shifts from late-night football games to sit-down rehearsals, but for a certain group, they can choose to march all year long.

Indoor drumline is a division of marching band composed of front ensemble and battery (drums) instruments. They compete against other bands similar to regular marching bands. This year is Alvin High School's first year starting its very own indoor drumline program.

"Our show is entitled 'Next Level....' The show is set in an arcade and the audience is the player. As the show goes on, the player learns how to play the game, loses, and then wins. The show floor consists of Tetris, Space Invaders, and Donkey Kong," student Alex Hernandez said.

Each band has an overarching theme to their show and they tell a story through their music and marching technique.

"We had three days of tryouts from our director, Mr. Garza to further think about the

selections he's made," Hernandez said.

"Recruitment works by practice a lot and later you have an audition if you are eligible to join," student Joel Munoz said.

Tryouts consisted of practice and learning the instrument the candidate wants to play. Later they have an audition to see if the candidate is eligible for the team.

"There's a much more artistic side to indoor drumline and winter guard [as opposed to marching band] as it's one individual section, there's a lot more than just music at play," Hernandez said.

Indoor drumline and winter guard are much smaller than typical marching bands, so they have to have a lot more going on to make their shows interesting.

"Indoor drumline as a whole is set on how artistic it is. I feel as if every season, the artistry of any show is determined by how well the performance members can sell it," Hernandez said.

Indoor drumline is great for marching experience, especially

if you're a freshman or sophomore.

"I'm incredibly interested in music and marching as a whole and I love building my experience as a second-year marcher," Hernandez said.

With a smaller group communication and effort are essential to making the show perfect.



Addams Fam Fun on Stage

Photos by:
Abigail Sampson

Yellowjacket theater company produced the show, The Addams Family, and performed in January. The lead characters were played by Andrew Martin, Ella Flores, Riley Johnson, Nathan Bryant, Grant Carbine, Jacob Hidalgo, Evelyn Janoch and Johnny Cano. Enjoy photos from this impressive production.



Rebekah Guerrero
Staff Writer

Just Dance! Jacketeers Take Nationals

Landing in the Orlando airport, the Jacketeer Elite Team and their directors got off the plane and headed to Disney World. However, fun wasn't the first thing on their minds. They were getting ready to compete in a dance competition they'd been preparing for over the last few months. In their first year, the Jacketeer Elite Team qualified for nationals, led by directors Eve Robinson and Abigail Winkenwerder.

"I've been doing this for 20 years, and I wanted a change," Robinson said. Over those 20 years, Robinson has seen the Jacketeers through their hardships and led them to win several awards in that time. The Elite Team is a new group Robinson decided to start in the 2024-2025 season, and they're already making waves. The team qualified for the UDA National Dance Team Championships in Varsity Interme-

diate D1 Jazz and Varsity Intermediate D1 Pom. Despite the adjustments Robinson has had to make, there's no doubt her successes will continue with this new team.

"We wanted to work one-on-one with a smaller group of people who might have an interest in improving or competing in collegiate dance competitions," Winkenwerder said.

In her third year at Alvin, the Jacketeer program has grown exponentially. The Finest Ladies of Alvin continue to win awards, but winning at nationals would be a different kind of accomplishment.

"I feel that we are trying to set the bar higher for the next elite teams, but there is a first time for everything," junior Ayden Kainer said.

Being on the first elite team in Jacketeer history comes with pressure, but it's nothing they haven't been prepared for. Joining

this team offers dancers many opportunities to learn and grow in their craft and as individuals.

"I learned that I can push myself beyond what I think my limits are," junior Kirsten Pallardy said. Many members shared this sentiment, saying that, despite the challenges, they've improved throughout this experience. Fortunately, their hard work and dedication paid off in Florida.

"I'm very proud of winning first place and watching all of our hard work be recognized," Pallardy said. At nationals, the Elite team received first place in their Jazz division. The Jacketeers brought home their first UDA Nationals trophy to add to their massive collection of awards. This accomplishment not only brings pride to their school but also validates all the hard work these students have put into this team. This Elite program adds more dances

and several practices to their already busy schedules on the other Jacketeer teams. Members have had to learn to adapt to their new schedule, and winning at nationals showed them just how well they adjusted.

"I would tell future Elite team members to come in with a good attitude— no matter what, try to be the best version of yourself," junior Lydia Guerrero said.

She plans on staying with the Elite team in her senior year and helping others adjust to the rigorous program. Through this challenging experience, she's learned so much and is excited to see what the future of the team will hold.

If this year is any indication, the new Jacketeer Elite Team has a bright future under their experienced directors.



Entertainment/Opinions

A Taste of Talent: Students Showcase Skills

Gabrielle Rodriguez
Staff Writer

Adrenaline pumping, spices and dishes everywhere, and the relief of finally being finished. These are the feelings that the two competitors of the culinary competition will feel.

Rather they win or lose isn't what's pushing them, but the love for what they're doing is.

Lauren Lewis and Zane Watson, students that attend AHS and are currently taking the culinary course. They are juniors that have big hopes and bright dreams.

They are also representing AHS at the culinary competition this February. Lauren has been interested in culinary for five years, Zane for four. They both plan to take on a culinary career in the future, using the skills they have gained from taking classes and courses. Although they

both haven't decided on a college, they have decided that they want to use their skills to fill stomachs and put smiles on faces.

"It's not an easy class, cleaning wise at least," Lewis said.

Luis said she thinks that there's so much to do in culinary class from cleaning to perfecting skills.

Zane agrees, but even though it is hard work, he believes that it's all worth it. In the end all of the hard work pays off. Cleaning may be the boring part but making a delicious dish and seeing others enjoy it makes it all worthwhile.

"Yes I'd recommend this class to others if they like to cook," said Lewis.

Both Zane and Lauren agree their favorite skill that they have learned in class is chopping skills. Being able to learn how to chop differ-

ent things in different ways is useful to both of them. They'd like to share the joy they found in cooking with others. They think that if you're debating on joining culinary class you shouldn't fret. If you decided to take on the course you definitely made the right decision.

They both think that out of all the meals they have made this year, the meal that they will make at the competition is their favorite. The meal is a Basil pasta Alfredo that they have been working to perfect in order to take a prize home.

This is Lauren's second year competing and Zane's first. Despite being inexperienced, they both plan to do their absolute best and can't wait to make it to their competition.



Lives Before The Lesson Plans

Ellie Jannise
Co-editor

Kiley Trahan

Educational chemistry lab on a college campus for four years for her master's program
Age 20

"My favorite memory was when we were preparing for the Science Olympiad. Students from elementary and junior highs came to the campus and competed in science challenges. We were in charge of preparing all the challenges and then we started at 6 am Saturday morning and didn't end until 6 pm that night. It was an exhausting day, but it was amazing to see how brilliant the students were in the competition," Trahan said.

Jared Wise

Bouncer
Age 19-27

"I managed the line for entry into the venue and helped escort any rowdy customers from the premises. I also helped the bands that were performing set up and break down their gear for their show. I guess the most notable part of the job was all of the bands I got to meet and hang out with. I got to see the best and the worst live music I've ever heard. Some of the performers were great people and some of them were absolutely terrible, so there are some great interactions with the bands as well. It couldn't have been more

different from teaching," Wise said.

Sandhya Das

Postdoctoral Fellow at Johns Hopkins University for understanding COPD and Lung Mechanics
Age 35

"I had worked at several labs during my research career and this lab was where I had the most fun. Even though this lab was a biomedical research lab, there was a mini engineering workshop in one corner where we innovated and built some of the instruments we needed for our work. I am holding a syringe pump that I made which can infuse liquid into surgically removed mouse lungs under constant pressure," Das said.

Paul Summa

Grocery Stacker at Kroger
Age Highschool

"I worked at Kroger. I started as a sacker of groceries, but my bosses recognized that I was destined for bigger things. They quickly moved me to the guy who took out the trash. My job was to go around the entire store, every department, and empty their stinky trash cans. It would usually take about 2 - 3 hours to do this, and by the time I was done, it was time to start the whole thing over again. Also, if there was ever a "spill on aisle 4" announcement, that was for me. I mopped

and swept up countless pickle jar accidents. I was always busy doing something so the time flew by. It was a fun job and I learned a lot," Summa said

Karen Taylor

Age:18-19
Southwest Audio/Video.
"It was a locally-owned movie rental place like Blockbuster. I only knew only a handful of people in Alvin, most were relatives. Along with renting VHS tapes, people could rent VCRs and TVs, too. It was my first "real" job, other than babysitting. Interestingly, my husband claims this is where we first met, although my memory of that encounter is different," Taylor said.

Marie Tucker

Age:18
A&W Hot Dogs and More

"My main duties included helping customers, making hot dogs, fries and floats, running the cash register, and keeping the store clean. My parents were so proud of me getting my 1st job that they made a special trip, a five hour drive from my hometown, to take pictures of me working. I think they literally sat in the food court my entire shift to watch me work. It was sweet," Tucker said.



History teacher Jarad Wise was a bouncer in his younger years. He said he had many experiences, both good and bad.

Science teacher Sandhya Das was a biomedical researcher before she began teaching.



Hands helping; Hearts Leading

Abigail Sampson
Staff Writer

How do our students interact with our community? The AHS Interact club volunteers and helps the community.

"I love the community and friendships built. I love how we all share the same values of helping others," Club President Makayla Morales.

Interact club plans out events to sponsor and help out at. Interact doesn't just help out the community but they also serve on campus.

"My favorite activity is club day because I get to promote our club and spend time with my friends," sophomore Evie Gomez said.

Being involved in Interact inspires its members to join other clubs like Student Council, Technological Students Association, Debate, DECA and UIL. Being involved in school organizations has helped these students make an impact.

"I feel we make an impact, every year we continue to raise money

and donate to various community groups and activities like our local firefighters and schools," senior Kadence Kirkland said.

Interact helps in many different areas of the community and plan activities. They also get involved with other organizations.

"It gives me the opportunity to help others



and interact with others who are getting the same joy in the organizations," said Public Relations Officer Brenda Gutierrez.



Crime scenes, Finger prints, Skeletons

OH MY!!

Brenda Gutierrez
Staff Writer

Bodies are being dissected. Students are to help with finding the cause. Forensics is here at Alvin High School and is constantly seen as a great class. This class is about taking different lengths and measures to aid in solving crimes. The students are learning how to help with great teachings and hands-on activities.

Forensics teacher John Yokum strives to make sure he's able to educate students no matter the issue. There have been many conversations about how others feel about this class and how it has helped those who want to further look into the field of forensics or at least help make decisions about different fields.

"I love how his lectures are very descriptive and he gives us hands-on learning with the kabs we do," junior Sabra Rodriguez said.

It's an enjoyable class for many, careers are slowly having to be decided and by Yokum's teachings and help, students are leaning towards the forensics and science careers for their futures. It's a constant thing that students are being taught many different things that would not only work in their wanted career, but as well as different skills to aid daily life.

"I know for most of my students, they're not going to go and be forensics scientists. I know that most of my students would want to leave from here and go and be productive members of society, so my goal is not only just to give them the information that we have in forensics, but get some

help along the way, some guidance of things that are going to be important for the. Things like work ethic and integrity, their ability to be honest and looking at how hard they worked and looking what they've done and say this is some quality work," Yokum said.

Forensics is a complex and rather difficult subject due to the constant change of topics, there is always a new topic being discussed every few weeks, including but not limited to ballistics, fingerprints, DNA, and anatomy.

"I thought it was going to be in one direction where we were just going to be solving all these mysteries all the time, and that would've all been cool within itself, but then I found out there's a lot of information in forensics. So what I'm finding is that every two weeks or so we're changing subjects, we're changing topics, we're doing something new, something different.

Most of the topics that I cover--there's very few exceptions-- are things my students have never seen before and so I hope that because they've never seen it before, they would be engaged. What I'm finding though is that the information lends itself for me to be able to create new and interesting ways to show it applies to real life and show how it actually works when you go do forensics science, so it's not just about doing bookwork all the time it's about doing stuff and it being close to what if you're out on the field," Yokum said.



Weird History: Strange & Fascinating Animal Facts

There's talk about bees on when they've started to appear: for why exactly?

Recently, there has been the shocking discovery of the oldest recorded primitive bee dating back to 100 million years ago. Discovered by George Poinar Jr., this bee was found by being completely fossilized in amber. It's been analyzed that it was caught in resin when searching for larvae of dung beetles, leaving it

kept and perfectly stored in amber as years went by.

When being examined, there have been many similar traits between the modern bees and this primitive species. They both have plumose hairs (the hairs located where a bee picks up pollen), a rounded pronotal lobe (the head shape of bees), and a pair of spurs on the hind tibia (larger pieces of two bones, lower limb between the

knee and ankle). These features are identifiers to look for in bees, solidifying that this random insect from 100 million years ago is in fact the oldest recorded bee.



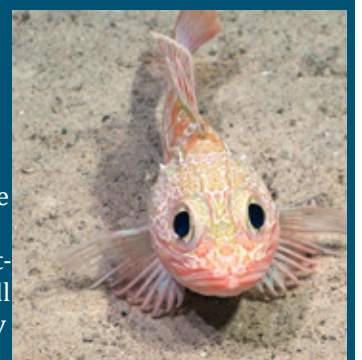
oregonstate.edu

Alien-like fish species seem to be a hit, so let's meet the rare fish, the Helicolenus Lengerichi. A rather small fish, being only 30 centimeters, they're hidden in the deep sea and are quite cute when looking from afar. They don't get seen too often because of their size and hiding abilities.

These fish have known common features such as 12 dorsal spines, 13 dorsal soft rays, and

irregular marks around them. Although they stay hidden, they've been rediscovered in Peru, Argentina, and Chile and are considered harmless to humans by having size as a major factor.

These deep-sea critters are hidden so well that there's barely any information on them in countless websites.



oregonstate.edu

Features

Flagging Down Junior Varsity Colorguard

Brenda Gutierrez
Staff Writer

Dancing and spinning around a flag isn't quite as easy as many think, dancing in general isn't easy.

The Color Guard strives to get recognition in their sport of the arts. For years, the color guard has been settled on focusing on one team until recently. It had been roughly four years since there was both a Varsity and a Junior Varsity team for the Color Guard and now it has been brought back.

Both teams are performing two great shows, Varsity performs, "Revolt-ing Children" from "Matilda The Musical" and JV performs, "It's Partytime" from "Hotel Transylvania 3". Both teams put in effort as well as having a great coach leading them to their full potential.

"It's different having two teams, but I like that it's a new concept because it can showcase Alvin," sophomore Esmer-

alda Ibarra said.

Although they are both separated from one another due to their different shows, there are close friendships and sweet bonds with one another despite the difference in practice days and schedules. Many have grown in their different positions, and have even stepped up and earned leadership roles within their teams.

"It's really fun being able to help my team like this and as a whole it's really nice being able to see what we're able to achieve with each other," said JV Co-captain Khloe Seals.

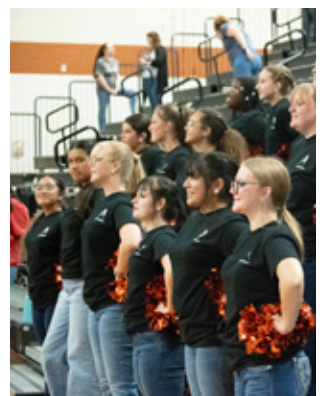
Being able to share their different skills and simply being able to perform for each other is a joy to one another. They help each other during competition days although they may not see each other half the time. Varsity helps JV with their mat when it's their

turn to perform and even cheer the loudest when watching them perform.

"I like seeing JV perform, it makes me proud of what they do and it reminds me at the end of the day that we're like a big family even if there's two different things going on," junior Abigail Tijerina said.

There has been double the work for Coach Nevills now that two teams are back at AHS, but it hasn't stopped her from having amazing ways to coach both teams to greatness. It's a process creating ideas and having the ability to help two different teams.

With the help of her technicians and her student leadership, both Varsity and JV will have made great progress from previous years.



The Prize of Honor

Coach Wins Award of Distinction

Ellie Jannise
Assistant editor

He stood in the middle of the weight room surrounded by his athletes. They all looked at him as the glass award was set in his hands. They all clapped and smiled watching his face light up, recognizing him and his commitment to them.

The Marine Corps gave James Shewmake the Semper Fi award, which is awarded to one coach a year and recognizes and highlights their loyalty, respect, courage, respect, and commitment. These are all values that the Marine Core is built on.

"I felt very honored to win an award with the Marine Corps involved. I had two uncles and two cousins that were Marines and several ex-players that were Marines," Shewmake said.

Shewmake has been a coach for 46 years and has spent that time not only helping with athletics but also being a kind and fun person who builds relationships with the students and encourages them to push themselves.

"Teaching young



men and helping them become great husbands, fathers, business owners, and workers is what drives me," Shewmake said.

Shewmake denied being given the award at the Houston Glazier Clinic to be surrounded

by his students, just showing his commitment to putting his students first. His goals and priorities are simple, he says.

"My favorite part about coaching is the kids," Shewmake said.

Chasing the Diamond Dream

Bianca Cervantez
Staff Writer

Hit, Run Score! Three words every softball player knows by heart, words they strive to hear every time they step in the box. Every year, the Alvin High School Softball Program's two teams play a number of games each season, but this year, a third team was added to the roster.

There have usually always been two teams: varsity and junior varsity. But this year, the freshman-sophomore team was created. For the 2024-2025 year, over 20 freshmen joined the program. The surplus caused the need for a third team. Although this was the highest number of freshmen that joined in a while, it was not the first.

"We did have a freshman team years ago when our numbers were high," Head coach Kelly Bemby said. "Then with new high schools opening, like Manvel and Shadow Creek, our numbers went down."

The opening of other high schools, including the relatively new Iowa Colony caused many students to leave Alvin. Even though the numbers were thought to decrease, the AHS Softball program's numbers

have continued to grow, causing this surplus. The freshman-sophomore team was also created to keep a fourth coach on staff. Every year, the program has had 4 coaches, each with their own job to keep the teams all running efficiently. This year, Coach Rudi Cantu-Torres was brought aboard the program.

"We are very fortunate to have four great coaches on staff which means we have to have a third team," Coach Rudi Cantu-Torres said. "We are able to build more athletes, as well"

Having a third team also means that the numbers of each team are more spread out, allowing more playing time for each student-athlete, rather than being in just two teams. With the original two teams, playing time was

constricted due to only 9 players allowed to be on the field at a time.

"Another team adds to more playing time per athlete on each team," Kelly Bemby said. The freshman-sophomore team allows student-athletes to build themselves physically and mentally as they have more opportunities on the field, while also allowing for a fourth coach to help the program. It gives the athletes the opportunity to get more practice in and more time to grow and succeed.

The addition of this third team will affect both the Alvin High School Softball Program and the coaching staff for the better as many are anticipating the 2025 season.



News

Check Up With The Nurses

Harvey Real and Benny Neace
Staff Writers

Right in the B building tucked away in a lovely room two nurses reside, one being nurse Dina Connor who's been a nurse for 30 years. From doing things ranging from pediatrics, adult medicine, and high risk pregnancy and the other nurse Jacque Kincaide. Chances are if you ever experienced a headache, stomach pain, fever, or just came down with something yuk, and need a quick check in, then you have been to see the nurses.

Nurse Connor has been working at the highschool for 18 years often seeing 50 to 60 kids every day. Sometimes it could even reach an extreme total of 100 students a day. Most of these students' complaints are about stomach pain or headaches. In the case of stomach pains or headaches, there is not much Nurse Connor can do, but she will be able to provide mints, ice or a short rest.

"We just can't send you home because you don't feel good. You need to have a fever, copious amounts of drainage from your eye, active vomiting not vomiting in the bathroom where no one saw, but active in here, or an injury that happened here that can be seen on tape," Nurse Connor said.

Some students have specific medication and the nurses are required to administer

the medication that is kept on campus. The nurses also do vision and hearing screening for roughly around 260 kids that includes an audiometer designed to measure hearing and snellen eyes chart where students read the letters off a poster. School nurses are even supplied with a PPE (personal protective equipment) to protect them from any disease they might come into contact with. Even though Conner has a lot of paperwork to do every single day, due to the fact both nurses mentors to ACC nursing students who are trying to get a certificate. Nonetheless the paperwork and the administrative tasks isn't the hardest part of the job.

"The most stressful thing about my job is not being so busy and being too busy," Nurse Connor said.

The constant hurry up and wait leaves the nurses on the edge. One second they might be finding something to pass the time the next they are packed with several kids needing

individual attention. Conveniently the positive of having all the time to take care of the students students get the chance to foster a caring relationship with Nurse Connor.

As a result of all the students she sees all day nurse Connor has heard and seen some crazy things. She said the weirdest report being told a kid had bit the head of a lizard in class.

Currently, Conner expresses the most concern about students health in general is vaping.

"We have had kids come in here with heart rates of 160s, for reference your heart rate should be in the 80s because they have been vaping," Nurse Conner said. "Just don't vape because it is really bad," nurse Kincaide followed up to say.

Both our school nurses provide the needed tools and assistance for a variety of emergencies. The entire campus is safer with them being around.

"Know who you can go to when you need help," Nurse Connor said.



Get a Leg Up In Anatomy

Jadyn Gomez
Staff Writer

Organs, muscles, nervous system, diseases, all of which the Health Science club had the opportunity of observing at the Body Worlds exhibit and the "Superhuman Body" movie at Moody Gardens.

On Jan.11, several members of the Health Science Club went on an enriching journey to Moody Gardens, taking a boat ride, eating lunch with one another, and exploring an assortment of exhibits.

What prompted teachers Christi Walton and Teresa Luneau, both advisors of the Health Science Club, to arrange this visit was the Superhuman Body movie?

"The movie offered insights into the human body, anatomy, and advancements in medical technology," President Destiny Geraldon said.

Many students found this trip to immerse them into career pathways in healthcare.

"I went on this trip to understand how far our healthcare has come and to see if being in the medical field is something I want to do in life," Duran said.

These students also had the opportunity to tour an assortment of other exhibits around Moody Gardens.

"The Rainforest exhibit, the Aquarium, and the Human Body Worlds exhibit," Geraldon said.

"One of my favorites

was the Rainforest, where I was able to observe an environment that somewhat closely resembled the animals natural habitat," Student Joshua Duran said.

They also experienced various of activities with one another. The students spent time with one another on the "the ropes obstacle course and boat ride," Geraldon said.

The most memorable part of the trip wasn't only about learning but also experiencing the exhibits with one another.

"My favorite part was spending time with some of our Health Science Club members and

"One of the key things I learned during this trip was how factors affecting the body internally can lead to significant changes, which may not always be visible on the outside," Duran said.

This experience gave them a better understanding of the world of healthcare and medical technology.

"The trip reinforced my interest in pursuing a career in the health sciences, sparking curiosity about the many ways innovation can impact patient care," Geraldon said.

This was an enjoyable experience that allowed for students to learn and have fun with one



learning cool educational things about the human body," Health Science Club Advisor Teresa Luneau said.

This trip provided a profound and enriching experience for the students of Health Science Club.

another.

"We all had a great time, and we hope to take our club members on more fun field trips," Luneau said.

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Features

The Architect

Josie Gertson
Co-Editor

of Faith

In the summer of 2022, Jacob was at a low point in his life, and seemingly out of the blue, his family decided they wanted to go to church again. So they started looking and then stumbled upon their current church; New Hope in Alvin. Initially, he didn't like the church. He had yet to fully understand what was being taught to him. He refused to listen and fully comprehend what was going on. But then in the summer of 2023, he went to his church's summer camp and that is where religion really became important to him.

"It was one night in particular, at my church's summer camp, where we were in worship and I cannot describe it in full but I felt an overbearing sense of love and joy be poured onto me, and for a solid 15 minutes after worship ended I was in tears. Tears of joy as I had finally seen the full scope of God's endless love and grace for us," senior Jacob Hidalgo said.

Since then, Jacob has been regularly volunteering at his church and has been on several mission trips with the church. He is a leader of CITY (Christians in the youth) and is now set on a path to start a church.

"I am hoping to have the church be based in the greater Houston area. Realistically, we will probably start by leasing a building. But as the church grows, I plan on buying a plot of land and

building the church myself, along with the help of friends and family of course. I want the church to have a good community," Hidalgo said. Jacob has started to research, plan and put together some preparations for his church, like saving 30% of all of the money he makes as well as starting to ask some of his close friends if they would be interested in being a part of the church, whether that means helping by donating or by being core parts of the church, like leading worship.

"The last night of our high school summer camp for our church is when I realized I wanted to keep the spirit of the Lord going. We were in a moment of worship. The presence of the Lord was strong amongst everyone in the room," Hidalgo said "while this was happening I saw a series of images such as me standing in front of many people giving a sermon and I clearly heard the words "This is what you will do." And so I am. Though I know it will be hard to get the church going, I know it will all be worth it in the end. I know the Lord will provide. Jacob struggled with deciding a name for a long time until recently he settled on the name Amity Christian Church. In deciding the name, he wanted something that really represented what the church would be like."

"A church that has a

good, christ-centered community where all are welcome. I wanted a word that conveyed how we are all one under God and a good relationship between us as a community and our relationship with God. I came across many words that seemed like they would fit but just didn't stick properly. As I was searching, I found many words that meant together or close relationship. But the one that stuck out was amity. Because the word Amity perfectly represents what the church is trying to achieve; a good relationship with the people and a good relationship with God, I saw it to be a good fit," Hidalgo said.

Jacob said that he absolutely loves the community of the church he is going to. If it weren't for the good community of my current church, he probably would not be in the position that he is in now, wanting to start a church and all. Throughout this long process of planning and preparations Jacob said he knows that by the end of it all when his church is finally built it will all be worth it.

"As much as I say 'me' or 'I plan to' this is all in the hands of God. This is all for his glory not mine. The entire reason I do this is because if he can turn the life of someone like me around then he can for you. All it takes is a tiny bit of faith that can sprout into something beautiful," Jacob said.



Fluent in life

Josie Gertson
Co-Editor

Language does not separate people, but brings them closer. Language should not be used as a barrier, rather we should use it as a bridge, to connect to others and get a whole new perspective on life.

Senior Blayson Aultman can read and speak eight languages. He is not fluent in any of them besides English, but all of the languages he knows vary on different levels.

"I can have conversations in Spanish, go out and buy things, place reservations, teach other languages in it, and more because I use Spanish everyday to speak with my friends and family-friends," Aultman said.

"I can have conversations in Portuguese, and express myself and what I want without struggling. Though I type and write it better due to just starting it about a month ago. I'm not as good as I used to be with Mandarin and Cantonese Chinese, but now I can only read and speak a little. My Chinese is very basic now, but used to be great in both of them."

Matter of fact Blayson just resumed his journey in learning Chinese, due to tik tok being banned in the U.S.

"My Vietnamese speaking level is about the same as Chinese, I used to have conversations in it and be able to express myself, but I had stopped studying and lost my skill. Now I can only ask basic questions and introduce myself. For Egyptian Arabic, I actually used to be decent in this language as a beginner. I could talk to others, introduce myself, and say what I liked to do and ask others the same, but sadly gave up on it as I had no native speakers to speak with. The other languages that I can speak in a basic way, such as greetings and introducing myself in is in Italian, German, French, and Serbian. Again, I speak these languages at a very very basic level" Aultman said.

Blayson teaches himself these languages almost 100% by himself, but one thing he's found that is very necessary and helpful to his language progress is speaking to native speakers. He uses a language exchange app that lets him talk to



people all around the world that can help him with his languages, and he helps them with their English in exchange.

"One study hack I use for vocabulary is flashcards. I use them in a SRS (spaced repetition system) manner, so that everything sticks with me, and they're super easy to make and very useful," Aultman said.

One time he learned 143 words and phrases in two days from studying flashcards this way.

"Something else I do to learn languages quicker is to write a lot in your target language. Write things that you like, places you want to go to, things you eat in a day, your feelings, anything. Writing will not only allow you to make mistakes and learn naturally, but you'll also expand your vocabulary and topics you can talk on," Aultman said.

Blayson said that writing is a gateway to speaking, once you can write it, you can speak it too. "Another easy study tool I use which is helpful for speaking is talking to either myself, my pets, or stuffed animals! I talk to them like I would to a real person, and that prepares your brain for real and steady conversation" Aultman said.

For Blayson, the timeline to learn or acquire a language can range from a few months, to a few years. It really depends on how much time you spend on learning the language.

"It took me around three years to get conversational in Spanish because I never used it, and was on and off in study. Then when I

was learning Mandarin Chinese, it took me a few months because I really enjoyed the language, and I immersed myself in it" Aultman said.

Blayson said that he has chosen to study and acquire these languages not only because he has always been interested in other people's lives and ways of communication, but also because of his interests in different cultures and ways of life.

"I find it so interesting how different cultures express themselves, and how maybe they celebrate the same, or different holidays, and the foods that they eat during the year. Human nature has always been an interesting topic to me, and I believe that speaking languages can only bring you closer to people, give you a whole new world of opportunities, and give you a whole new view of the world and the people on it" Aultman said.

Blayson said that the best way to reach more people, and to really get to know and understand them, is to do it from their point of view.

"I have a quote that I really like by Mr. Nelson Mandela that says, 'If you talk to a man in a language that he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his own language, that goes to his heart.' And I find that quote to be completely true. If you want to really get to know someone, to really connect with them, speak to them in a language they are not only familiar with, but also comfortable in," Aultman said.



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