

# ORACLE

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## FROM LESSONS TO LEGACIES

With the 2024-2025 school year coming to an end, many of our beloved teachers are retiring. Take a trip down memory lane as we revisit their memories, experiences and adventures since they started working at Troy.

Compiled by Emma Gong, **FEATURE EDITOR**, and Anastasia Efremova, **NEWS EDITOR**, photos courtesy of the teachers, graphics courtesy of Canva



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# TEACHING TALES

With the 2024-2025 school year coming to an end, many of our beloved teachers are retiring. As they step into their next chapter, read about their experiences, memories and hopes for the future.

Compiled by Emma Gong, **FEATURE EDITOR** and Anastasia Efremova, **NEWS EDITOR**, articles by Kylie Tien, Sarah Lee, and Jessica Kim, **STAFF WRITERS**, photos by Aiden Chong, **PHOTO EDITOR**, graphics courtesy of Canva, photo courtesy of Dave Bainter

After a 29-year long career, Troy’s beloved Advanced Placement United States Government and Politics teacher Dave Bainter is embarking on his next adventure beyond the school. He is thankful for his time at Troy teaching and being part of the tight-knit community.

Bainter first came to Troy as a student teacher in the early 90s. After working at a different school for a few years, he returned to Troy in the fall of 1996. While his primary role is teaching AP Government, he has also been Troy’s boys junior varsity golf coach this year and boys varsity golf coach the previous five years. When Bainter first came to Troy, the AP Government class was not offered. Instead, he taught Economics and a freshman class called Non-Western Culture as he prepared the foundations for a new AP curriculum.

“Mr. Muruka, who was the principal way back when I started here, [asked me] my second year if I wanted to develop the AP Government class,” Bainter said. “So I am the only person ever [to] teach that class here at Troy High School. I started the program in fall of ‘97.”

Bainter appreciates having had the opportunity to make a profound impact on students. He describes teaching at Troy as a symbiotic relationship in which both the students and teachers support each other.

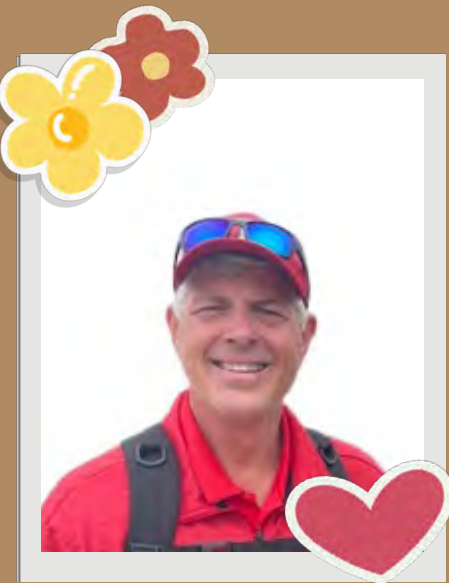
“I still have all the letters that I would get from students at the end of the first semester or at graduation, just little ‘thank you’s’.” Bainter said. “I may not even have realized that they felt that way until the very end of the semester when they finally [told] me.”

Bainter has spent almost 30 years

in the classroom, helping students learn and grow. With retirement ahead, he is looking forward to taking some time for himself to ride his bike and play golf more often, as well as traveling with his wife and friends.

According to Bainter, he is grateful not only for his colleagues who helped him grow and learn new ways to teach, but also his students who brought new perspectives into his life. Bainter hopes that he and his students will take more time for themselves as they move onto the next stage of their lives.

“If you have been getting ready to graduate, enjoy your next chapter,” Bainter said. “[When] you get to college try to let go, smell the roses a little bit more and enjoy life. You just never know how long you have, whatever age you are, so enjoy every day.”



**dave**  
**B-R-aINter**



**TiNa-RRific**  
**Scott**

Tina Scott is the current district librarian and long-time International Baccalaureate Standard Level Chinese and Advanced Placement Chinese Language and Culture teacher. She has spent 29 years in the classroom making her mark through her passion for language, her dedication to students and heartfelt teaching style.

Scott’s teaching career at Troy began with the establishment of the Chinese Language program in 2011. Starting with only two classes of Chinese 1 and one class of Chinese 2, the resulting demand for the courses was high. Through long hours and unwavering dedication, she steadily expanded the Chinese program into what it is now: a full four-year curriculum.

“I [think] about how to attract

more students to take Chinese and how to make learning a new language more applicable in their life,” Scott said. “It really taught me to be more compassionate and understanding. I have utilized [those values] in every aspect of my life.”

Every day, Scott strives to integrate the joys of Chinese culture into her classes. As Scott reflects back on her journey at Troy, she recognizes the amount of work her students have put into her classes. One of her all-time favorite memories with her students is the Chinese New Year celebration she hosts as a yearly tradition. There, she gets to interact with students and bring traditional food and activities for attendees to enjoy, which brings her fulfillment

and happiness during the holiday.

As she heads into retirement, Scott plans to step away from the classroom to focus on her family, especially caring for her husband. She also looks forward to spending peaceful days traveling and tending to her garden, a hobby that embodies her passion for life and growth. Just as she cultivated her classroom with care and heartfelt lessons, Scott hopes to nurture her garden with the same dedication.

“I [believe] my students will continue to work hard, never give up and continue to be admitted to top universities. I have no doubt about that,” Scott said. “[This] is the most rewarding experience I have ever had and I am really grateful that I had this opportunity to make a difference.”

Ken Koci, a devoted math teacher currently teaching Advanced Placement Precalculus Honors and AP Calculus BC, has spent 37 years pouring his passions into helping others grow. Known for his high standards and genuine care for his students, Koci dedicates himself to creating a classroom environment rooted in growth, discipline and life’s small joys.

Koci’s path to education began with a love for mentoring and coaching, sparked by tutoring peers and his sister throughout high school and college. These experiences laid the foundation for his teaching career and led him to a teaching conference, where he met John Roche, Troy’s math department chair at the time, who invited him to apply for a position at Troy. Today, whether it is by connecting sports with math, or saying “good morning” to his students, he believes in the importance of appreciating the small, meaningful things in life. He frequently shares inspirational quotes with his students as a monthly tradition, including one of his personal favorites by Mother Teresa.

“Not all of us can do great things, but we can all do small things with great love,” Koci said. “It gets me off on the right foot, [by] doing little things. We can all do little things and make it a little bit better for [us] in life.”

As he looks back on fond memories, Koci has recognized determination and kindness in students across a wide range of levels and backgrounds. Many have expressed their gratitude with heartfelt thank-you notes, gifts and gestures that deeply resonated with him.

As Koci looks ahead, he is not stepping away from education entirely. He plans to continue teaching part-time at Fullerton College, a role he has held since 1997. Outside of education, he also plans to continue enjoying hobbies such as sports, travel and gardening during leisure time with his family.

“I try to give students the knowledge that Troy is not the only thing [in life], you gotta have some fun,” Koci said. “Math is [also] the keystone to [other subjects], so what I hope that students do is use what they have been taught [to] accomplish what they want to do.”



**ke-e-N**  
**koci**

## FAREWELL TO TROY: A POEM BY MR. KOCI

A teacher at Troy now  
for 30 great years  
It’s time to go,  
there may be some tears  
From lower to AP levels  
I have taught  
Minds of many young  
scholars I caught

...  
Now is the time to  
have some fun  
Traveling and volleyball in  
the warm summer sun  
Through 37 years did I  
lecture and teach  
It is now time to take a  
walk on the beach



Jacqueline Morck, a school counselor at Troy for 29 years, has engaged with students as they talk about concerns and their daily life. Throughout her career, she has been working to provide the students with the best advice, small joys and support systems while focusing on the importance of being present and attentive with her students.

Morck’s journey in the education field began with a credential as an elementary school teacher. However, after realizing she preferred working with older students, she came to Troy as a guidance technician and eventually grew into the school counselor we all know and love. Although the lack of counselors at Troy limited the one-on-one experiences with students at the time, Morck wholeheartedly embraced her role by always aiming to be the

students’ number one advocate. “Troy was and is still kind of our family,” Morck said, “This has been my identity for so long, a school counselor, and it [is] the only school I would ever work at just because of it being like a family.”


While Morck used to feel pressured with the need to solve all the students’ problems, she always strived to find the best ways to support them in their diverse challenges. She finds that the most rewarding things about her experience are being able to make a difference, seeing her students mature throughout the four years and receiving heartfelt letters showing their appreciation as they transition into adulthood.

“That is why I love what I do,” Morck said. “You work with them, starting as fourteen year olds to seventeen year olds.

Seeing that maturity and at the end, having them go off to nice colleges [feels] rewarding.”

Looking beyond her retirement, Morck still has an active and exciting journey ahead of her. As she continues to build onto her hobbies, she plans to get more exercise, travel with family, become fluent in Spanish and take some healthy cooking classes. As her last advice to students, Morck reflects on her core principle while working with high school students, which is to not let high school define their four years and to chase after their passions.

“Have fun, do things you like doing, find what you [are] passionate about and pursue that for four years,” Morck said. “[To the Troy community], Thank you for the great experience that I had and [for] being able to impact the kids.”



Jacqueline Morck-Counselor

Charlotte Kirkpatrick oversees Troy High School’s passionate learning environments throughout her roles as an International Baccalaureate coordinator and Cambridge A level Biology teacher. She has taught at Troy for 35 years and works to instill positive growth and development within the classroom. Every day, she challenges students to achieve their fullest potential by teaching them the skills they need to succeed.

Kirkpatrick first began her journey in education as a biology major at the University of California, Irvine, hoping to pursue a career in medicine. However, as her hopes of starting a family conflicted with her career plans, she found a coincidental opportunity for a teaching job at Troy in 1990, which marked the beginning of her teaching career. Now, Kirkpatrick is very active in the Troy community

as a coordinator for the Parent Teacher Student Association and IB diploma program, as well as the assistant coach for the Science Olympiad team. In all of her different positions, she plays the common role of challenging students to become their best selves.

“I feel very blessed to have been at Troy for 35 years because the students [are] just different here,” Kirkpatrick said. “They really enjoy exploring new areas and growing themselves in different ways.”

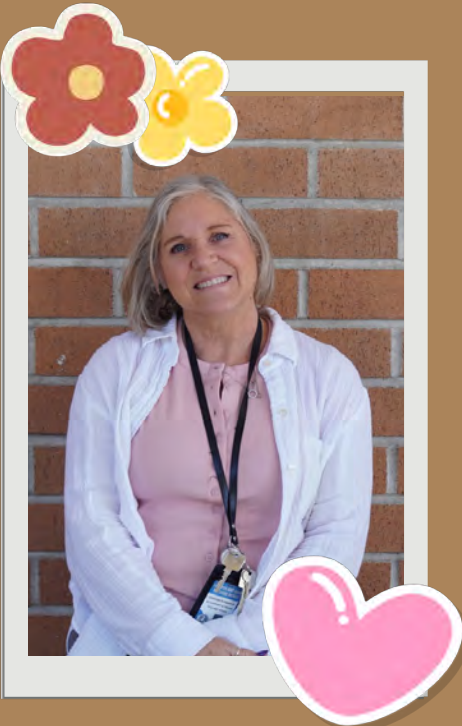
Throughout her career, Kirkpatrick faced challenges such as managing her schedule while having to support her family and learning to relate the content to students who may not be interested in the topic. Eventually, all these years of experience helped her bring the best out of her teaching. Her most memorable moments were watching her students win different titles at Science Olympiad

competitions and overseeing 15 classes of IB students graduate over the years as an IB coordinator.

“That is probably one of the greatest joys,” Kirkpatrick said. “Knowing that there are people out there that I played a part in who they became [is very rewarding].”

Kirkpatrick was met with devastation when her students heard the news of her retirement, which was a year earlier than planned. During retirement, she wishes to spend time with her parents and take care of her loved ones. As for her students, Kirkpatrick’s biggest hope is that they have taken something away from her teachings and will continue to challenge themselves and find success.

“[To the students], continue to reach for the stars, challenge yourself [and] step outside your comfort zones,” Kirkpatrick said, “To the staff, thank you for your friendship [and] support.”



Char-Ming-Lotte Kirkpatrick

Lisa Avila is retiring after 30 successful years of being a counselor and Advanced Placement coordinator at Troy. Throughout her career, Avila discovered her family at Troy and supported the diverse community.

Avila first came to Troy as a guidance technician: an uncredentialed role focused on working with college representatives and scholarships; she temporarily filled in for someone else before becoming a full-time counselor a month later. When Avila first started, there were only two counselors who would split the alphabet equally. Now, it is much easier because there are five counselors who are able to support each other.

Avila also said that she applied for another job, but fell in love with

Troy’s welcoming environment. Avila says she loves this school and has an amazing community here.

“I love working with the students, and I really enjoy working with the staff [who] have become kind of like family,” Avila said. “I feel blessed that I got to work at Troy for all those years. [I have] never dreaded coming to work in the morning, so I am going to miss it.”

Avila’s core principle is to treat each student as their own individual and understand that they all have their differences. Avila hopes that, throughout her time here, she has helped students find their life passions and guided them through the numerous challenges and obstacles that they faced.


Avila’s hobbies include shopping, playing with her dogs and spending time with her family.

During her retirement, Avila looks forward to relaxing, traveling and continuing to help others.

“Hopefully [I will be] volunteering, whether it is at school or if it is in a hospital or just helping other people,” Avila said. “I want to still have that fulfillment of helping people.”

As Avila looks forward to her next chapter, she hopes that her students will stay resilient and hopeful for the future. Although she is leaving, Avila still cares deeply for her students and hopes they continue their journey.

“I love helping students and seeing them smile and hoping I make an impact on them towards their future,” Avila said. “[My advice is] just keep believing in yourself and you can put your mind to whatever you want to do.”



Love-Li-Sa Avila



# Warriors Win at the StellarXplorers National Space Design Competition Finals

StellarXplorers, part of NJROTC and run by the Air Force, promotes engineering and science interest among cadets.

By Soahn Chung  
STAFF WRITER

StellarXplorers’ Stellar Warriors competed and won first place at the StellarXplorers National Finals at Denver Sheraton Tech Center Hotel April 24-26.

Founded in 2023 by former Troy High School student Orion Kessler, StellarXplorers offers opportunities to learn about aeronautical sciences and enter satellite design competitions for students interested in scientific fields. After Kessler’s leave, sophomore Merritt Lee and junior Manisha Bosam took over as team captains and are currently in charge of overseeing the team and the entire program.

StellarXplorers incorporates aeronautical engineering, space design and online simulations into rocket and satellite launch practices. The team uses Systems Tool Kit Software, a 3D simulation used for digital mission engineering during practices and competitions. The program allows members to experiment with

different configurations, satellite components and weight components while maintaining a budget.

Run by the Air Force, StellarXplorers is a part of Troy’s Naval Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps program. The current team was the first NJROTC team to compete and win nationals in the history of StellarXplorers.

In preparation for the competition, teams received a scenario packet and the Stellar Warriors practiced together and reviewed errors from their online practice simulations. Students held weekly practices every Thursday after school and additional practices on Sundays to build stamina for the eight-hour round. Leading up to the competition, the team continued to practice together in their hotel rooms.

The competition was held over a span of eight consecutive hours where the team conducted orbit plannings, managed satellite components and launch operations. Groups also prepared a presentation which competitors presented after the competition and took individual quizzes on rocketry concepts.

According to Bosam, the team’s unexpected win made it worth the stress that occurred during the preparation process. Their results



PHOTO COURTESY OF AIR AND SPACE FORCES ASSOCIATION

**STELLAR SPACE:** *StellarXplorers stand proudly as the first place winners at the national space design competition finals.*

brought more recognition and interest to the club than before.

“People thought that this was a spontaneous team that did not deserve recognition,” Bosam said. “After we won that national title, I think a lot of people saw the potential that this program could grow up to be.”

As a relatively new team, several incoming members at the beginning of the 2024-2025 school year were inexperienced in the program. Returning members

had to dedicate additional time to familiarize new team members with aeronautical engineering skills and the STK Software.

According to Bosam, each member’s commitment to the team was a key factor to the team’s success. Despite having busy schedules, the members’ hard work brought meaning to the past season.

“The motivation and dedication that kids brought to this team to commit and just try their best,” Bosam said. “I think [it] really helped.”

# Troy Launches Summer Humanities Workshop for Incoming Students

English Teacher Deliana Park is hosting a workshop that teaches writing skills, journalism, storytelling and more.

By Gia Patel  
STAFF WRITER

English Teacher Deliana Park will host a new summer workshop at Troy High School aimed at bringing creativity to the campus June 16 to 19.

During the summer, the workshop will give students an introduction to creative expression, public speaking and storytelling. Troy High School offers a range of summer programs, with many students participating in STEM or athletic camps. According to Park, there are fewer organized opportunities for students interested in writing, performing or other humanities-focused activities.

The four-day program offers an introduction to the fundamentals of storytelling, vocabulary development, sentence crafting, journalism and debate. Over the course of the workshop, students will engage in a variety of activities

designed to build their confidence and skills in these essential areas. Students will be introduced to the basics of journalism, including reporting techniques, news writing as well as debate. According to Park, workshop dates were planned to avoid any conflicts with existing summer commitments, including summer school classes, band rehearsals and science camps. The workshop is designed to offer students a new opportunity, one that might otherwise be unavailable to them during the regular academic year, Park said.

“We will work on storytelling, vocabulary and writing fundamentals like crafting sentences, skills that often get skipped in a typical classroom,” Park said. “Many students arrive at Troy with strong academic skills in science and math, but without exposure to the humanities.”

Although the workshop is a new initiative, Park said it faced challenges when advertising the camp to middle school students and their families. Many parents

are unfamiliar with enrichment programs outside of STEM and are unsure how writing or communication workshops fit into college preparation and future careers. According to Park, she hopes the program will grow each year as more families begin to see the benefits of humanities-focused enrichment.

Proceeds made from the summer workshop will go toward supporting humanity focused activities at Troy. Funds will support competitions, productions and club start-ups in speech, theater and journalism.

“All the profits from this workshop will go back into supporting our journalism, speech and debate and theater programs,” Park said. “Whether it is for competitions, performances or starting clubs, the goal is to get more students involved.”

According to Park, this small summer experiment could

spark a shift in the school’s culture—one where creative exploration stands alongside scientific discovery. She hopes it will encourage students to pursue a more balanced academic experience that values both analytical and artistic growth.

“This is not just about four days in June,” Park said. “It is about making sure every student has the chance to discover their voice—both in and out of the classroom.”



CARTOON BY HANH DINH



# E-XU-BERANT ON THE SLOPES

With every twist down the mountain, Ben Xu shows how his love for skiing can carve out something unforgettable!

Compiled by Seungwoo Lee, **SPORTS EDITOR**, article by Lucas Yun, **STAFF WRITER**, photo by Aiden Chong, **PHOTO EDITOR**, graphics courtesy of Canva

Surrounded by jagged mountaintops, freshman Ben Xu skis downward onto the snow-blanketed pathway. After a deep breath, he launches into motion, zig-zagging down the slope before soaring into the air. Initially introduced to skiing by a friend, Xu has been in the sport for the past four years and started working with a private coach a year in. Since then, his goal has developed into being a competitive skier. Xu trains 12 hours a week, with six hours each weekend. He starts his routine by waking up at 6 a.m. and driving up to train at 7 or 8 a.m. He then warms up with laps and gets himself used to the snow. “Snow softens up in the morning, so I do not push myself at the start. Starting in the afternoon, I concentrate on learning new tricks or general practice,” Xu said.

All these training sessions served as the foundation of Xu’s dominance in regional competitions. He placed first in the regional Southern California series, opening at Mammoth Mountain. Yet, there was a moment when Xu slipped off from the steady slope of awards. He had to resign from the 2023 Nationals tournament after suffering broken ribs and a lung injury during practice the day before. “Arriving at midnight and with three hours of sleep, I felt out of condition in the morning. After the injury, I was transported to Denver, Colorado, and it was horrible,” Xu said. Despite the incident that could have ended his career, Xu climbed again

to the top, longing for the view that he once had. Another exceptional accomplishment includes Xu’s notable 10th out of 32 ranking in the 2024 Nationals. This year, he believes in his potential to become one of the top eight players qualifying to the national finals. As Xu plays in nationals, minute point differences can be the deciding factor of a winner. Similar to the Olympics, high school slopestyle skiing consists of two rounds, with the score being the average of three judges’ evaluations. Xu made certain to focus on this individual competition which places more emphasis on the skills rather than the speed itself. In these rounds, he devised a strategy of concentrating on better scores for the first

and new tries for the second. For the second round, Xu refers to the backjump he learned a week before the competition, requiring a 540 degree rotation. “It is scary up there as I was blind in the first 360 degrees, lost balance in the air and ended up sore. Fortunately, I tried the day before the real rounds and succeeded a couple of times,” Xu said. Xu especially enjoys the moment midair where body control is important. While skiing might be seen as an out-of-reach sport for some, Xu believes that it can be accessible in terms of cost. “You need \$500 for equipment, winter clothes, boots, bindings and a pair of skis,” Xu said. “Anyone can become better at skiing because once you can turn, everything [becomes] similar. It is like riding a bicycle for the first time, so do not be scared of failing.”



# CHEN~ERGY ON THE ICE

On blades of precision and grace, Celine Chen glides past all expectations, turning setbacks into spins and dreams into gold medals!

Compiled by Seungwoo Lee, **SPORTS EDITOR**, article by Yatee Nagpal, **STAFF WRITER**, graphics courtesy of Canva, photo courtesy of Celine Chen

On the rink, the nerves slowly build for freshman figure skater Celine Chen as she focuses on impressing the judges during her warmups. When the competition begins, she can only focus on her routine. But in her head, Chen displays a beautiful, graceful routine on the ice. Six years ago, Chen started figure skating with the intent of joining her brother, Nathan Chen. They have been training, skating and competing together ever since. In figure skating, there are various disciplines, such as pairs and singles, that offer different levels of competition. The Chen siblings participate in ice dancing: a unique form of dance and skating. In ice dancing, they do not have to do overhead lifts and stunts, and instead focus on the dance portion, making ice dance a little less dangerous. After a year of training, Chen began competing with her brother.

“Competing is really fun. You get to see all these amazing skaters at different levels, which is really nice, and you also get to travel for different competitions,” Chen said. Chen’s competition season begins with qualifiers, which are usually in June. Chen has regularly advanced to sectionals and then nationals alongside her brother. These competitions are run by the US Figure Skating Committee and happen across the country, usually on the East Coast. In competitions, Chen and her brother have achieved many awards. “I have gotten second at nationals and fourth at nationals. And then for sectionals, I got first and third,” Chen said. At these competitions, progression to different levels is based on the points earned. “It is very technical. There are two panels of judges. One judge gives points based on the grade of execution, so how good it looks. That is on a five to negative five-point scale. The other panel of

judges is the more technical panel, where they actually look at the moves you are doing. They look at entries and exits and give you points based on that,” Chen said. Figure skating is an expensive sport, which makes it harder for Chen and her brother to compete regularly since they have to stay within their budget. “For the good coaches that teach professionally, it is about \$100 per lesson. For ice time, an hour would be \$15. Ice time can get expensive,” Chen said. During competition season, their training consists of as many two-hour skates after school with a program that focuses on lifts and spins. Chen used to train with

a lifting coach, but now works with two ice dance coaches and exercises independently. After coming so far with her brother, she considers the fact that he will be leaving for college soon. “I am just going to try to get as far as I can because at this point, Nathan is approaching college, so I am not sure how that is going to work. So I am just going to try to do the best, where I can win a few more competitions and just end my career as a really good skater.”





# The ice bucket challenge is a rare win within the realm of social media

By Chelsea Engelhardt  
PUBLICITY



USC’s Ice Bucket Challenge is a great way to engage wide audiences to a central cause. In recent weeks, the Speak Your Mind Ice Bucket Challenge has exploded all over social media. This challenge was started on March 31 by the University of South Carolina to raise awareness and funds for mental health. The founder of the challenge and the Mental Illness Needs Discussion club, Wade Jefferson, started the trend to break the stigma behind mental health discussions and prevent suicides by spreading awareness and raising money. He did this to honor his late best friends who he lost due to suicide. Piggy-backing off of 2014’s ALS Ice Bucket Challenge, Wade’s challenge has had a great impact on today’s youth. Although this challenge started out as a way to call attention to suicide prevention and other mental health issues, it has expanded the ideas behind online activism. Despite critiques on the focus of this social media trend, this campaign has been a great example for using social media for good. USC’s Ice Bucket Challenge is a great way to connect people all over the world under the issue of mental health awareness. With the nominating aspect

of this challenge, the exponential growth of posts and interactions on social media platforms is substantial. Not only does this contribute to the virality of the challenge for many people, but it also introduces more and more people to the cause than ever previously possible. The Speak Your Mind challenge quickly spread across the country and beyond. With this mass expansion, the challenge became more than just a trend, it became a global outreach for mental health awareness. According to Carolina News and Reporter, “High-profile figures such as James Charles, Peyton Manning and USC football head coach Shane Beamer have joined in, helping amplify the message nationwide.” Social media not only helps to spread the trend, but it also connects people from different backgrounds, countries and beliefs under a central purpose and cause. This mental health challenge is a breath of fresh air in terms of social media. Mental health is now being talked about more openly online and even in classrooms. While social media is also a common cause of mental illness, a mental health-focused challenge is a healthy break from the negative aspects of social media. According to the Certified Public Accountant Journal, both the current and ALS-oriented ice bucket challenges have introduced the idea of using social media to reach broader audiences and raise awareness. By introducing a trend to

counteract the effects of social media, this challenge is working in a positive light against other negatives of social media. Not only has this trend created a social media frenzy, the Speak Your Mind Ice Bucket Challenge has also raised significant amounts of money and mental health advocacy for more than just the club and university. In total, the challenge has raised over \$250,000 towards the nonprofit organization Active Minds, a nonprofit organization dedicated to opening up youth to mental health advocacy and transparency. With

surpluses in donations, the club decided to use the money for both themselves and Active Minds. Overall, this trend has turned into an ideal that will change the direction of mental health transparency. USC’s Speak Your Mind challenge is a significant contribution to the world of social media and mental health awareness. Despite the negativity of many online platforms, this trend is a light in the darkness. With awareness being spread and money being raised, this challenge is a great example of using social media for the betterment of society.



PHOTO COURTESY OF TELEGRAM AND GAZETTE

# Vacations are not just fun escapades—overtourism is destroying society

By Rishika Singh  
STAFF WRITER



Overtourism is buying local residents out of their own homes. While millions prepare to travel around the world, popular destinations brace for the problems associated with overtourism. Severe cultural erosion, environmental degradation and communal displacement are becoming prominent in tourist oriented locations, with the loss of cultural diversity and exploitation of local workers also climbing. If overtourism continues, many iconic landmarks may lose the very qualities

that made them so special in the first place. Many travelers are allured by the diverse culture in many famous tourist locations, but the exploitation of these local customs are compromising their genuineness. The unique cultures and traditions of countless popular regions are being overshadowed by generic tourist experiences. According to a 2024 Native Tours article, excessive tourism is forcing local communities to adapt their traditions to the expectations of visitors, costing their authenticity. For instance, Hula dancing, once a sacred form of storytelling in Hawaiian culture, has now been reduced to a simple stereotyped performance, stripping it of its deep spiritual significance. The growth

of tourism should not force businesses to exploit nor dilute local cultures. Rather, it should strive to empower communities to maintain their traditions and lifestyle. The Columbia Climate School documented that in 2021, over 70 percent of national parks located on indigenous land receive no financial benefits, causing government officials to seize community members’ property. This demonstrates the lack of respect and perpetuation of stereotypes towards the domestic population. It is beyond unjust to diminish the cultural richness of a society and manipulate residents; actions must be taken against this. With travel rates on the rise, the use of temporary housing to accommodate for visitor influxes has sparked many negative remarks from locals. According to Travel Advisor, many residents face displacement in their own cities as property prices soar due to short term rentals like Airbnb opening for tourists. The website also emphasizes how large amounts of people places unnecessary stresses on rudimentary infrastructure and natural resources. By putting pressure on basic necessities, a severe strain on resources will only continue to negatively impact local communities and their survival. Overtourism is burning out essential infrastructure and vital services. As a result, locals are suffering from a poor quality of life and loss of their cultural integrity. Overtourism exacerbates issues like climate change by contributing to the loss in biodiversity, habitat destruction and pollution. A 2024 climate report tracking human activities illustrates that Thailand has experienced severe coral loss due to

pollution from visitors who lacked the knowledge on how to protect this fragile ecosystem. This caused the country to shut down the coral reserve for two years in hopes to restore the population. A similar occurrence has been documented in Tulum where a sudden influx of travelers encouraged the coral reserve’s worsening sewage problem. Places like Tulum and Thailand have not built sustainable tourist infrastructure, and it is taking a toll on the environment. Changes in the habitat have greatly affected the livelihoods of residents by severing their connection to the land and limiting their ability to carry on ecological knowledge and culture. Overtourism is a growing global challenge that must be addressed through the building of proper, sustainable infrastructure to support the environment and local communities standing in the area. There is only one Earth, one shared tapestry of culture, and irreplaceable individuals who make tomorrow possible. Together, society can make a place where diverse traditions and ever-changing ecosystems have the ability to thrive further while maintaining their natural, iconic beauties that attract billions of people from all around the world. A gem is a gem until it is not, and with the rise of tourism, places that were once beautiful are now being overridden with crowds and waste. Overtourism is a growing problem with detrimental effects on the world. While relaxing on vacation might be important, travelers must consider the effects of their travel and the many interests of local residents.



PHOTO COURTESY OF GETTY IMAGES



# The federal government has built a wall between America and morality

By Jayden Beaumont  
STAFF WRITER



Since his inauguration, Donald Trump has enacted several drastic changes to the United States’ immigration policies, all characterized by intense nativism and animosity. On Jan. 20, Trump signed an executive action that almost completely banned asylum by pausing the US Refugee Admissions Program and pulling funding from the Special Immigrant Visa program. These changes make it much easier to send immigrants back to countries run by terrorist organizations and military regimes. One such refugee is Muhammad, who escaped to the US from Afghanistan when his life was threatened by the Taliban. If he were to return, he would most likely be murdered. Conservatives and liberals heatedly debate all of Trump’s initiatives, but there are certain topics that should warrant no debate; there can be no justifying the country’s current treatment of refugees. The Trump administration’s asylum policy is not only unconstitutional, but profoundly inhumane.

The asylum policy completely violates the US Constitution and human rights. Refugees from all over the world are drawn to America as a beacon of safety. In the past, immigrants were able to receive asylum in the US if they proved that they would be persecuted in their home

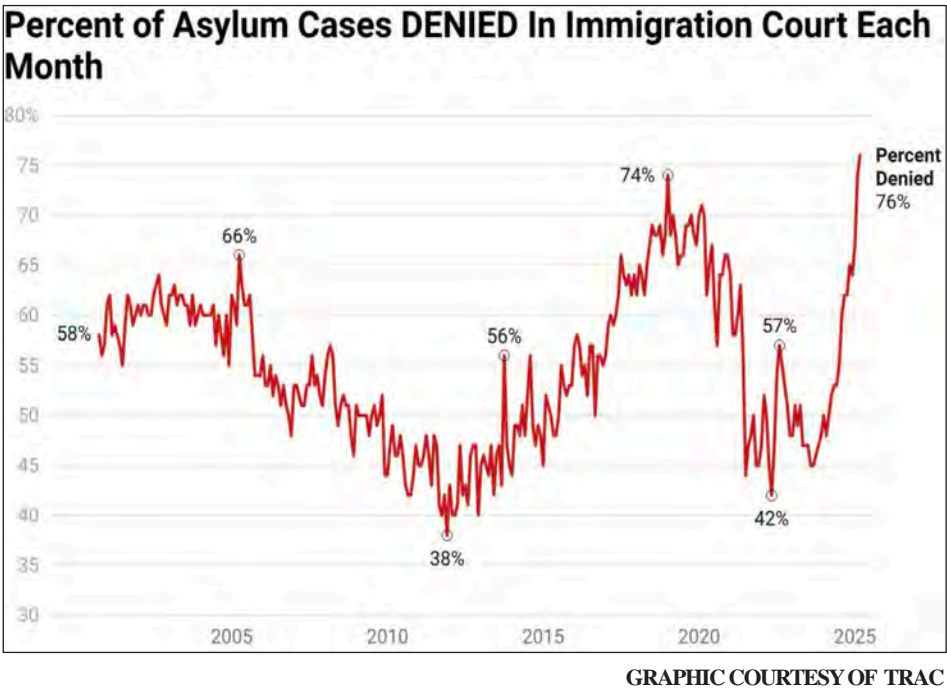
country, but new policies have nearly dismantled this process. Elora Mukherjee, director of the Immigrants’ Rights Clinic at Columbia Law School, called them “blatantly illegal and unconstitutional.” In an incident reported by NPR, an unnamed woman escaped to the US from Cameroon fleeing from a corrupt military. Before she could file an asylum claim with the border patrol, she was put in a detention center and deported to Panama. Three hundred other asylum seekers, removed under Section 212(f) of the US Immigration and Nationality Act, went through the same process and are now stuck somewhere they never intended to end up. Rachel Schmidtke, a senior advocate at Refugees International, noted that the legality of these new policies is “murky.” The fast-tracking or denying of asylum cases is a clear violation of due process and the Fifth Amendment. If America still values justice and constitutional rights, then these new policies are unacceptable.

Trump’s asylum policy lacks the fundamental humanity and compassion that all people should be treated with. The decisions of the administration have put thousands at risk. After the withdrawal of US troops and the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan in 2021, there are currently 40,000 Afghans seeking resettlement in America. But with the new policy, those who are trying to apply for asylum and even those who have been granted it are at risk of being sent back.

Mohammad, who requested NBC omit his last name for security reasons, is one example of an Afghan in the midst of an asylum application process. According to NBC, “he could be swept up by federal immigration agents before—or even at—his first court hearing.” Mohammad worked for the US Air Force during the war in Afghanistan. He was an ally to the US and because of that, he is no longer safe in his country. If the US does not grant him asylum, or deports him before it can be granted, he will be tortured to death by the Taliban. This is the reality for thousands

of other immigrants fleeing from countries like Venezuela, Ukraine and Haiti, who will be faced with death should the US force them to return. How can America condone this—a policy that is so devoid of empathy and morals? Human lives are at stake, but that does not seem to matter.

The immigration policy toward asylum seekers undermines the principles and dignity of the nation. America needs to focus on what is right and what is wrong—what is humane and what is undeniably cruel. Never has the US had an immigration policy quite so shameful.



# When public dollars fund private beliefs, America trades equity for exclusion

By Ellen Tan  
STAFF WRITER



If America truly believes in the separation of church and state, religious charter schools must not be allowed. Charter schools are publicly funded schools that operate under a charter agreement with the state. In 2023, Oklahoma’s Statewide Virtual Charter School Board approved St. Isidore of Seville Catholic Virtual School, the nation’s first-ever religious charter school. Later, in October of that same year, Oklahoma’s Attorney General sued the charter school board for its violation of approving a religious school to be state-funded, leading to the case of St. Isidore of Seville Catholic Virtual School v. Drummond, which was heard by the

Supreme Court April 30. The Supreme Court must not pass this case as religion should not interfere with government systems.

The funding of religious charter schools violates crucial rights of American citizens. Putting taxpayer dollars towards religious charter schools directly undermines the First Amendment’s Establishment Clause, which separates the church and the state. By passing this case and allowing religious charter schools to be funded, the government would violate the First Amendment. It is important to preserve the Constitution, as it is a foundational safeguard that ensures the state remains neutral in matters of faith. Funding a religious school like St. Isidore of Seville indicates a government move from neutrality to endorsement and favoritism towards a particular set of beliefs, which sets a dangerous precedent that public institutions can be

compromised to promote religious agendas. The Supreme Court should not rule in favor of St. Isidore of Seville to protect America’s constitutional rights.

Furthermore, taxpayer dollars should not be used to fund religious schools. As a result of the increase in religious state-funded schools, non-profit organization Common Dreams predicts that an increase in taxes will be implemented

**Funding a religious school indicates a government move from neutrality to endorsement and favoritism towards a particular set of beliefs, which sets a dangerous precedent.**

\$5,000 less per-pupil funding than traditional public schools, highlighting a lack of funding for charter schools. Driving money away would only widen these disparities, cutting funds for teachers, resources, and programs in current charter schools. Moreover, NPR predicts legal disputes over certain charter laws on religious schools, such as what should be taught in the curriculum, because it could contradict with

religious beliefs. These disputes will likely send the charter school system into a series of complicated court cases. Public education is meant to provide equal opportunity for all regardless of background or belief, but if St. Isidore of Seville passes, this future will crumble. Religious schools should keep to the status quo of private funding; public money should remain for institutions that are open to all.

In order to protect the Constitution and the rights of the people, the Supreme Court must refrain from passing the case of Isidore of Seville Catholic Virtual School v. Drummond. In a nation founded on the separation of church and state, the approval of a publicly funded religious charter school is contradictory to the very values on which the nation is based. The government must not abandon its duty to preserve fairness in education. Religion must be kept separate from federal legislation and decisions. Public dollars should serve the public good—not promote private beliefs.



GRAPHIC COURTESY OF DAME MAGAZINE



# SUMMER BUCKET LIST BLISS

With classes winding down and finals wrapping up, it is time to swap your schedules for a summer of fun and bliss, and what better way to do that than to compile a bucket list?

Compiled by Kailey Reichman, **LIFESTYLE EDITOR**, article by Skylar Zhuo, **STAFF WRITER**, photos courtesy of Pinterest, Canva and Fullerton Farmers Market, graphics courtesy of Audrey Liang, **GRAPHICS EDITOR**

With spring ending and summer around the corner, it is time to celebrate the season and wrap up those final exams. What better way to do so than to create your very-own personalized summer bucket list? It is a great way to plan out your summer break to maximize joy, relaxation and meaningful experiences. Customized specifically for you, there are no right or wrong choices for what you add on your summer bucket list. Whether you are unsure of where to start or just in need of some suggestions, read on for steps on how to curate your personal bucket list.

For those of you who are unsure of where to start, take it slow. First, ask yourself, do I want to center my summer around relaxation, personal growth, adventure or trying new things? Embrace your individuality as summer is all about personal journey. That being said, be sure to try out new things, and branch out! After getting your goal for the summer clear, then ask yourself the following 3 questions:

- 1.) Is there a skill or hobby that I have always wanted to try?
- 2.) How can I recharge and take care of myself this summer?
- 3.) What does my ideal “lazy day” look like?

Now that you roughly know

what you want your summer to look like, you can now start jotting down some plans you may have on your bucket list. These plans may range from something as simple as having a relaxing day at home to volunteering with your friends. Feel free to pour out all your ideas that you have for the summer during this process. This is your time to turn those daydreams into tangible goals. Instead of letting your summer goals stay as vague thoughts, create a concrete list of fun activities to try out during summer. A great tip is to make a section in your notes app and write down ideas you have when they come. This is your time to accomplish all of those things you put off during the academic school year. Here are a few ideas for inspiration: Visit a local farmers market to pick up fresh produce and other local goods (Fullerton, Laguna Beach and Irvine have great options). Plan an activity with friends that involves moving, such as yoga or hiking, get some fresh air for the ideal digital cleanse that is surely needed. Make ice cream or sorbet at home using seasonal fruits such as cherries, watermelons and peaches to embrace the summer spirit. Use sidewalk chalk to create a mural with your friends.

Finally, once you have your plans figured out, it is time to solidify your list by compiling everything together. Turn this into a fun activity with your friends as a way to step into summer break. Grab a poster board and sketch out an outline of how you want it to look. This is a fun process so do not hold back and be sure to go over the top by adding personalized stickers, glitter and photos that align with your now curated list! If you are experiencing bucket block. Pinterest can be a great tool if you want some inspiration for some decorative ideas.

Now that you have your summer sorted out, you should hopefully be more ready for what is to come following our final day of school. Also, it is important to note that this is not a strict schedule, more of a laid-back guide of what you think your summer will look like. That being said, do not feel the need to stress over checking every box. It is important to have fun and take a break from the stress of the school year. Be sure to give yourself some time to relax during the summer as a reward for being able to pull through this school year. Whether it is chasing sunsets or savoring ice cream, make this summer one you will not forget!



## Fashion Feature

Looking to jump from spring into summer? Check out Oracle’s inside look into Ahn Nguyen’s super summer style!

Compiled by Kailey Reichman, **LIFESTYLE EDITOR**, article by Taliha Baqai, **STAFF WRITER**, photo courtesy of Anh Nguyen

With her polished aesthetic and sustainable mindset, senior Anh Nguyen is redefining what it means to be stylish in the fast-paced world of fashion. Focused on elegance and simplicity, her style is “classy and timeless,” Nguyen said. She tries to choose high-quality essentials over momentary micro-trends, emphasizing her value of quality over quantity. She also emphasized how she tries to make environmentally conscious choices, while also staying true to her own style. “It’s sustainable, but it also stays true to my own essence,” Nguyen said. All of her outfits are unique, and she can still be herself through them. For Nguyen, her everyday style consists of tank tops and off the shoulder tops, paired with baggy jeans. Preparing for the heat with these items, she has mastered the art of looking put together, while wearing what makes her feel most confident. Some advice that Nguyen has shared for others looking to build their closet is to explore different styles as you grow up. Fashion is a lifelong journey, and it is constantly evolving. “There is never a point where you find your style,” Nguyen said. Every year as different trends arise, it is important to be true to yourself.





# A Sincere Sensation

Come immerse yourself in the dreamy soundscape of Kali Uchis’ captivating new album “Sincerely,” a genre-blending journey that invites you into her world of sultry melodies.

Compiled by Celeste Hollingsworth, ENTERTAINMENT EDITOR, article by Riddhi Arora, STAFF WRITER, image courtesy of Felipe Q Noguiera

“Heaven is a home...” where the heart-felt melodies of Kali Uchis’ new album, “Sincerely,” fill every room. With popular hits like “telepatía,” Uchis grew in popularity on social media due to her soft take on R&B. Released on May 9, “Sincerely,” is a rose-tinted window into Uchis’ romantic yet authentic world, disclosing the ups and downs of her love life that made her who she is today. Uchis’ newest album shifts from danceable pop to syrupy tunes, making this album her most euphoric yet. Each song is made with a flowy blend of hypnotizing vocals, making “Sincerely,” an ethereal listen that lingers like the sweetest perfume. Though “Sincerely,” makes for a soothing listen, the repetitive melodies and stylistic choices blur the tracks together in an endless fashion. The majority of tracks showcase the lack of variation, relying heavily on airy synths, slow tempos and echoey vocals that have no melodic progression. Rather than featuring a variety of sounds like in previous albums, Uchis leans too heavily on a singular vibe, which makes for a great listen, but the overwhelming similarities fail to create a bold depiction of Uchis’ life journey.

The album does not demonstrate much variety, however, the singular sound of “Sincerely,” offers endless redeeming qualities that elevate the album’s appeal. Wispy clouds of fantastical jazz surround listeners in featuring smooth saxophone melodies that create a sultry and hypnotic sound. “Daggers!” overlaps layers of mellow guitars which envelop listeners in a warm bath of sound. The instrumental choices give the songs an alluring aura, but paired with her smooth, soft vocals, she elevates the album beyond classic R&B. In “Lose My Cool,” Uchis invokes soothing imagery with just her voice. The silky vocals use layered harmonies and a soft beat to convey a vulnerable romance. Uchis blends these moods seamlessly with her stylish, feminine voice to deliver a euphoric haze that feels like dancing through a dream. Even in its most laid-back moments, the album never loses its ability to create an intimate atmosphere, allowing Uchis’ lyrics to relate to her listeners. The moodiness throughout “Sincerely,” becomes the album’s heartbeat, giving it a hypnotic feel that lingers even when the music fades to silence. Though “Sincerely,” lacked any variation in its style, the album executes its sound which wraps listeners in a dreamy mist of breezy notes and her captivating voice. By bringing to life rich, colorful images with quirky jazz instruments, Kali Uchis makes “Sincerely,” feel like it is “For: You.”



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# THUNDERBOLTS\*

## *THE NEW AVENGERS*

Take a look at Oracle’s review of the newest Marvel movie, “Thunderbolts\*,” as it blasts its way through the box office in a revolutionary manner.

Compiled by Celeste Hollingsworth, ENTERTAINMENT EDITOR, article by Mawaddah Shabeer, STAFF WRITER, images courtesy of Marvel

“Thunderbolts\*” has emerged from the shadows as the new face of the Marvel Cinematic Universe. Released on May 2, the film tells the story of Yelena Belova (Florence Pugh), Sentry (Lewis Pullman) and Bucky Barnes (Sebastian Stan) as they join a group of misfit antiheroes from various MCU projects. In order to outsmart their manipulative boss, Valentina Allegra de Fontaine (Julia Louis-Dreyfus), this group of reformed villains are forced to go on a high-stakes journey and maintain their fragile alliances through rising challenges. Originating from the Marvel comic book series, “Thunderbolts,” this film breaks traditional superhero film stereotypes. From its unconventional cinematic lens to its emotionally developed storyline, “Thunderbolts\*” leaves the audience stunned at the deep sentimentality within the action-packed film that marks the beginning of a new era for Marvel.

With flawless cinematography and 4K production, “Thunderbolts\*” helps the audience to capture every shred of emotion. During the frequent fighting scenes, the shaky camerawork enhances the sense of urgency, creating an unmatched realism that transports the audience into the movie.

The camera quickly pans from one angle to another, creating dynamic transitions that make each

shot visually appealing. This film goes as far as avoiding CGI showcases, as Pugh performs a pivotal jump off the second-tallest building in the world in the beginning of the movie. By continuously emphasizing the authenticity in the plotline and cinematics, the movie attracts all audiences with its portrayal of realistic struggles and removal of idealistic views of action-packed films, essentially proving the legitimacy of a film.

Amidst the flying bullets, “Thunderbolts\*” portrays the human inside the hero. One of team members, Robert “Bob” Reynolds, partakes in medical experiments that result in godlike powers and the creation of an alter ego called the “Void.” Valentina exploits his powers, but the Thunderbolts help Bob reclaim his power and defeat his alter ego with physical strength and mental resilience. The Marvel Cinematic Universe often circulates around predictable plotlines. However, “Thunderbolts\*” adds further depth into the characters and the storyline by showing their characters as real people who struggle with their emotions. At face-value, the characters might seem as confident heroes in the midst of fighting, yet Marvel is boldly showcasing mental health struggles through them. The shift away from the idealized view of a “hero” demonstrates the progression of the MCU as they connect deeply with their audience, who have matured along with the franchise.

This film crafts the ultimate MCU experience by acknowledging psychological complexities in a world of physical conflicts.

Though much remains unspoken in “Thunderbolts\*,” the audience can feel the character’s suffering through the screen. Subtle gestures like physical touch builds sentimental layers beyond the action. Belova’s adoptive father and Russian super soldier, Alexei Shostakov (David Harbour), provides comedic relief to the scenes, creating a balance between humor and seriousness. On the other end of the spectrum, Pullman’s acting communicate the isolation and fear stemming from his childhood. His body language is portrayed with subtlety and depth, and his ability to emphasize authentic emotions allows the audience to connect with Bob’s internal conflicts. Even in a superhero setting, Pullman’s acting makes his journey as Bob memorable. The actions succeeds at portraying the multifaceted nature of these antiheroes.

“Thunderbolts\*” blends emotional themes with action-packed drama, presenting a thrilling movie. The movie explores the morally gray line between ethics and pain through the formation of lifelong friendships, instantly becoming a breath of fresh air with its mixture of drama and emotional complexities.

