

DATELINE

Volume 68
Issue 5
March 17, 2022

UHD Health Fair rewards Gators for gaining wellness tips, resources



UHD volunteer Marina Matamoros hands out grocery bags at the health fair on March 9 in front of the METRORail entrance. Credit: Anita Goolcharan

BY ANITA GOOLCHARAN

UHD hosted the biannual Health Fair on March 9. The event was sponsored by the Houston Food Bank and campus organizations such as Sports & Fitness, Community Engagement and Service Learning, Student Activities, and UHD Wellness Committee.

During the health fair, attendees got free groceries, snack packs, and entered a raffle for a chance to win prizes such as a Fit-Bit, AirPods, or an Apple Watch with the completion of a card signed by the vendors.

UHD student Veronica Castillo said that the card

incentivized people to visit every table. She enjoyed the event.

“Twice a year, our campus comes together to promote health and wellness to our UHD Community,” Associate Director of UHD Sports & Fitness Rhonda Scherer told UHD news. “Creating and offering such opportunities is a cornerstone of what we do as a university for our students, faculty and staff.”

The event hosted over 30 health care vendors and aimed to increase health and wellness awareness through promoting valuable information on health issues.

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O’Kane Gallery gives access to Andy Warhol’s exceptional works

BY AMY NGUYEN

The Public Art of the University of Houston System hosted a virtual Zoom conversation that goes along with the exhibition “Instantaneous Beauty: Andy Warhol and the Photographic Process” displayed at UHD’s O’Kane Gallery through April 6.

Several of Warhol’s artworks are free for public view on campus in the Girard Street Building (GSB322). The exhibit debuted with an opening reception on Feb. 23. Among the Zoom attendees were Public Art UHS Director and Chief Curator Maria Gaztambide, featuring special guests artist Jamie Wyeth and filmmaker and producer Vincent Fremont, and students interested in

the arts. Warhol was an artist well-known for works in the American pop style and “never met a person I couldn’t call a beauty.” In the mid-1960s, he went from painting to filmmaking and television before veering towards photography – a medium where the machine, not the hand, did the work – provided the perfect pathway for his return to artmaking.

“Instantaneous Beauty” explores Warhol’s process and experimentation in photography, especially its connection with beauty. It highlights Public Art UHS’ photograph collection from Warhol that were made between 1975 and 1985, received as a gift from Andy Warhol Foundation. UHS prides itself on this accomplishment as they want to

make its significant collections and museum-quality exhibitions accessible to audiences beyond the UH System.

“Warhol foresaw such contemporary mainstays as personal branding, celebrity and its commodification reality television, the idea of everyone’s 15 minutes of fame, and art at the service of capitalism,” said Public Art UHS director Maria Gaztambide. “The works on view confirm how long before these ideas became cultural values. Warhol made them indivisible from his creative process and front and center of his uncompromising stance. In doing so, he pushed the boundaries of what it meant to be an American artist.”

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“Portrait of Andy Warhol as he stands in front of six of his lithograph portraits” is on display in the O’Kane Gallery through April 6. Credit: Amy Nguyen



Credit: G. O.

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FIND US ONLINE!

Gators Success Center collaborates to host mental health workshops



Credit: Giselle Oviedo

BY ANITA GOOLCHARAN

The Gator Success Center's completed its fifth installment of workshops centered on mental health. March's "Mental Health:

Helping Yourself & Others" featured UHD's Counseling Services. Interns from the University of Saint Thomas, Chandler Cade, and Brittany Boudreaux presented on mental health awareness.

The webinar highlighted the stigmas that are associated with mental health. The presentation stressed that seeking counseling is not a sign of weakness and advocated counseling services.

According to the World Health Organization, mental health is a state of well-being where individuals realize their abilities, cope with the everyday stresses of life productively, and maintain their contribution to their community.

"There is often shame associated with counseling and we are here to help break that stigma," Cade said.

Mental health disorders such as depression and anxiety were highlighted in the webinar. They detailed the symptoms and ways on how to deal with these disorders. These disorders can look different in each case.

"Often times our body is telling us something is not

right," Boudreaux stated.

Depression can lead to a variety of emotional and physical problems including trouble sleeping or oversleeping, appetite or weight changes, irritability, frustration, loss of interest in activities, feeling nervous or restless, increased heart rate, hyperventilation, and trembling.

The speakers noted that self-care could help overcome some of these symptoms. Mental health can improve by integrating emotional, spiritual, or physical self-care activities. The hosts listed ways to improve mental health and asked students how they practice self-care.

Journaling is an activity recommended by UHD student Karen Valdez. She read an article that explained how gratitude journals increase levels of creativity and happiness. Valdez said journaling did not involve

purchases despite what social media people say.

"Gratuity journals are very real and an honest way to express yourself," Valdez said.

The webinar's second part focused on ways to help those who struggle with their mental health.

To help someone who may experience depression or anxiety, remember that mental health can look different for each individual. Asking what they may need can be more helpful than assuming their needs. Avoiding stigmatizing and invalidating feelings is essential.

UHD's Counseling Services are located on the second floor of the One Main Building next to the Food Market. Their services are free of charge to students. Appointments can be virtual via Zoom or in person.

Gators congregate on campus to celebrate Ash Wednesday

BY JESSE FITZGERALD RODRIGUEZ SR.

Faculty, students and staff of the Catholic faith gathered at the Wilhelmina Cullen Robertson Auditorium on March 2 to participate in Ash Wednesday. Paul Fortunato, associate professor of English and faculty advisor for the Catholic Student Association, launched the event which fell on the first day of Lent.

Ash Wednesday spans six weeks and leads up to the celebration of Easter. Christians worldwide believe this to be one of the most important spiritual seasons of the year.

Spreading the ashes across one's forehead or back of the hand represents the washing away of sin and asking for forgiveness, but more importantly, devoting oneself to give something up during Lent, an annual period of religious fasting and penitence.

"This Ash Wednesday event was a kick-ash way of getting people re-connected, a chance [for faculty, staff, and students] to face the truth, to come to God and say, 'I'm sorry, and I want

renewal,'" Fortunato said. "It's such a relief to face that, and to have a physical representation of it literally on your body."

In Christianity, Ash Wednesday's repentance is a decisive change in direction, a shift of mindset that leads to a change of thinking and a transformation in attitude. This chain reaction initiates a change of one's feelings and values that guides one to alter how one lives.

The event brought Rev. Richard McNeillie, vocations director for the Archdiocese of Galveston, Texas. McNeillie read from a special Bible, offered us spiritual blessings, and the tradition of the spreading of ashes on one's own body was performed, voluntarily, of course. This moment was a time of spiritual healing, continuous prayers, and gospel hymns to kick off the 40 days of fasting, self-reflection, meditation, and repentance.

When asked what the day signifies and why it is important, McNeillie noted, "A time to repent."

"Pray in secret and do not be a hypocrite," McNeillie recited during the



Rev. Richard McNeillie spreads ashes on UHD staff member's forehead.

Courtesy: Paul Fortunato

spreading of ashes. "God will take you back any day, if you repent in your heart."

Regardless of ethnicity or religion, people from different backgrounds attended the event. All Gators were blessed by McNeillie.

Moments later, the bread of life was offered, and "blessed are you forever," McNeillie said to those who rose to eat the "bread of life."

The event concluded with the universal prayer, the

blessing, and the dismissal of the faithful who attended that day, and everyone prayed together one last time.

Ash Wednesday is significant, in the Catholic world, more so because one must discipline oneself to give something up that they love or crave and cannot do without, said a Catholic UHD librarian that attended the event "to reconnect with his faith."

For anyone interested in connecting more with the Catholic faith, Fortunato will hold Catholic Student Association meetings this spring semester on Tuesdays from 11:45 a.m. to 12:45 p.m. in the UHD Cafeteria.

Fortunato's involvement with the CSA spans more than 17 years in connection with UHD.

University learns from leading strategist of student success at equity summit

BY JORDYNN GODFREY

The UHD President’s Lecture Series on Justice, Equity, and Inclusion welcomed Timothy Renick on March 4 as he detailed the successful strategies implemented by Georgia State University to improve their students’ success and graduation rates. Renick’s presentation, “Inclusive Excellence, The Way Forward: Recommitting to Student Success,” was Part I of the UHD Spring 2022 Student Success and Equity Summit.

Renick directed GSU’s student success between 2008-2020 as executive director of the National Institute for Student Success at GSU. During his time, Renick oversaw a 62% increase in graduation rates and the elimination of all equity gaps based on students’ race, ethnicity, or income level. More than any other not-for-profit college or university in the nation, GSU has graduated more Black students with undergraduate degrees for six consecutive years.

Holding a doctorate in religious studies from Princeton University, Renick has served as chair of the Department of Religious Studies, director of the Honors Program, and senior vice president at GSU.

Additionally, Renick has testified on university student success strategies before the U.S. Senate and has been invited twice to speak at the White House. His work has been covered by The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, Time, and CNN and

cited by former President Barack Obama.

Notably, Renick was named one of the most innovative people in higher education by Washington Monthly and one of the world’s 50 greatest leaders by Fortune magazine. He received the award for National Leadership in Student Success Innovation and was awarded the McGraw Prize in higher education.

President Loren Blanchard helped introduce the event and Associate Vice President of Academic Affairs Sheila Lloyd moderated the event.

Renick presented various statistics emphasizing the importance of ensuring students’ success in higher education.

Bachelor’s degree holders experience only 1/3 of the unemployment that non-bachelor’s degree holders do, he said. Additionally, bachelor’s degree holders nationally earn \$1 million more in income than those who do not hold a bachelor’s degree.

The most important takeaway from Renick’s presentation was that higher education institutions are often “their own worst enemy.” He pointed out how universities and colleges often create more barriers to student success rather than helping to alleviate these barriers.

“Yes, equity gaps exist before students come to [college/university], but that does not mean you cannot control it,” he said.

Once Renick helped GSU identify that the way

their institution was structured was prohibiting students from making the most of the college experience, they were able to identify ways to assist students most effectively and efficiently. Renick emphasized that there are “scalable, affordable, implementable” strategies to help students and revolutionize universities. Additionally, he stressed the importance of student-centered design.

“Students care about seamless support,” he said.

At its core, Renick’s presentation highlighted how utilizing data analytics helped improve design, data visualization, and understanding of where exactly students were struggling and why it empowered GSU to take the steps necessary to alleviate these struggles.

Furthermore, the strategies Renick detailed were institutional. Instead of focusing on factors such as how public K-12 schools prepared students to enter higher education, GSU focused on how its institution could help students succeed.

GSU now graduates 3,500 more students yearly, an 80% increase. Most notably in improving equity gaps, GSU’s people of color and low-income students are graduating at the same rate or higher than white and higher-income students.

Renick received much praise from staff and faculty working to achieve similar student success rates here at UHD. UHD plans to improve their student equity, inclusion, and overall success.

THE DATELINE

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Submission Policy

The Dateline staff consists of students from UHD who complete all tasks required to produce the newspaper, which serves all UHD campuses. The opinions and commentaries expressed within reflect the views of the contributing writers. No opinions expressed in The Dateline reflect the viewpoints of UHD, its administration, or students.

The Dateline reserves the right to edit or modify submissions for the sake of clarity, content, grammar, or space limitations. All submissions become property of The Dateline and may not be returned. All paid writers must be currently enrolled students at UHD. All paid writers must also complete vendor registration with the University of Houston System prior to contributing. Press releases, story ideas, news tips and suggestions are always welcomed. We encourage all students to contribute.

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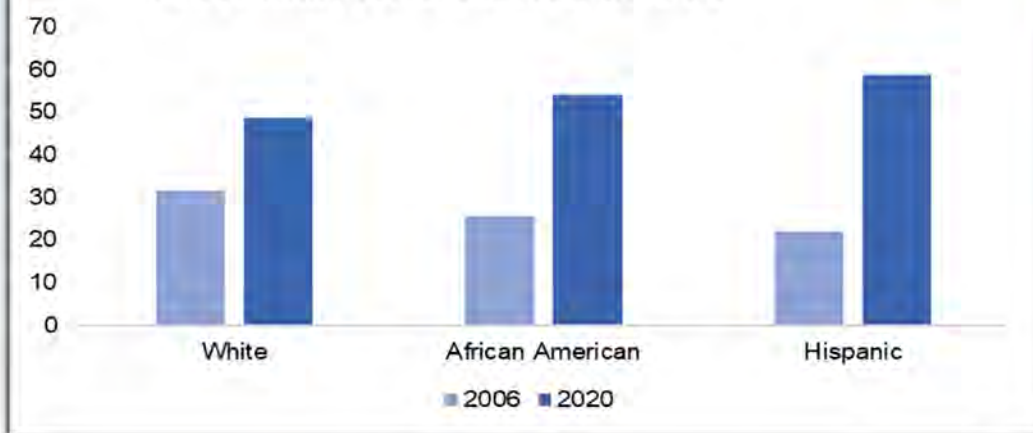
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Six-Year Graduation Rates of First-Year Freshman Who Started at GSU



Credit: Jordynn Godfrey

Health fair (continued)

UHD student Veronica Castillo said that the card incentivized people to visit every table. She enjoyed the event.

“Twice a year, our campus comes together to promote health and wellness to our UHD Community,” Associate Director of UHD Sports & Fitness Rhonda Scherer told UHD news. “Creating and offering such opportunities is a cornerstone of what we do as a university for our students, faculty and staff.”

The event hosted over 30 health care vendors and aimed to increase health and wellness awareness through promoting valuable information on health issues. Some vendors included Harris County Public Health. They gave information about COVID-19 prevention, testing, and other vaccines. Other vendors included Student Counseling Services, which enlightened students on the importance of maintaining emotional well-being and raised awareness of the free services for students.

The health fair also hopes to promote better health outcomes by providing the univer-



UHD student participates in the alcohol awareness exercise set up by UHD Police Department at the health fair. Credit: Edward Saenz

sity community with free health screenings. Other services of the health Fair included free STD screenings and blood donation sites.

UHD officer S. Flores tabled with officer C. Williams to host the interactive alcohol awareness exercise. Participants wore goggles that would make them experience the effects of alcohol at different levels while being tasked with walking on a curvy path. Flores invites students to take responsibility for oneself and for others. His suggestions include designating drivers, using Uber, or parking

your car at UHD while you get a ride home from a sober friend.

“You can go anywhere in the world and drink,” Flores said. “As an individual... friend or partner you should be responsible. If it’s a special occasion, let that person celebrate, but be the responsible party and friend.”

This year’s Health Fair was received positively by many including UHD Gator Miranda Johnson.

“It was not only informative,” Johnson said, “but you actually had fun with all the games and networking opportunities.”

sharing” not debating.

“We are here to validate the feelings of our fellow Gators,” he added.

When he opened the floor for students, several expressed feeling bad for Ukraine and wishing they could help. Some said they felt guilty for not knowing how to feel. One student spoke out on his anxiety around the situation.

“I have a news app on my phone. And things escalated so quickly I started to get anxious when I see the notification pop up on my phone. What am I going to see? Is someone dead? Did the U.S. shoot down a Russian plane, and we’re going to World War III.”

Hudson was quick to tell all students their feelings were valid and even spoke on his own emotions with the situa-

O’Kane Gallery (continued)

UHS prides itself on this accomplishment as they want to make its significant collections and museum-quality exhibitions accessible to audiences beyond the UH System.

“Warhol foresaw such contemporary mainstays as personal branding, celebrity and its commodification reality television, the idea of everyone’s fifteen minutes of fame, and art at the service of capitalism,” said Public Art UHS director Maria Gaztambide. “The works on view confirm how long before these ideas became cultural values. Warhol made them indivisible from his creative process and front and center of his uncompromising stance. In doing so, he pushed the boundaries of what it meant to be an American artist.”

Throughout the

conversation were Wyeth and Fremont’s reminiscence on their moments with Warhol, his works, and the art scene in New York during the ‘70s and ‘80s. In his lifetime, Warhol was associated with many people from creative fields, such as artist Brigid Berlin from his film “Chelsea Girls” and Nico from rock band The Velvet Underground to name a few. During his portrait process, Warhol often used polaroids, shot multiple portraits, then made silk screens from the images, as well as be accommodating as possible to “make everyone look like a movie star”.

While Warhol was a private person, he was a “social observer who was generous, mischievous, nonjudgmental, and had to be in control of his vision” to those

close to him.

The conversation followed with a Q&A of Fremont and Wyeth’s thoughts of how Warhol lived and would have lived today.

“I think he would have been a wonderful old man,” Wyeth said. As accessible art enriches our society forward, Warhol’s “provocative collections and indelible impact on culture make him one of the most iconic visionaries of recent times,” said President Loren Blanchard.

“It is our distinct honor to welcome guests to our campus to discover, consume, and reflect upon the notions his pieces represent,” Blanchard said.

O’Kane gallery is generally open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Gallery tours are free on Tuesdays from 3 to 4 p.m.



Multiple polaroids and gelatin silver prints by Andy Warhol on display at O’Kane Gallery through April 6. Credit: Amy Nguyen

Inclusive talks comfort Gators during Russia-Ukraine war

BY EDWARD SAENZ

The Center for Diversity and Inclusion held its first speak out event on March 4 for the ongoing war in Ukraine. The event allowed students to talk about their feelings about Ukraine in a safe and inclusive environment.

CDI Director John Hudson hosted the event and described the event as a “time for

tion. After several of the students spoke up, two Ukrainian students told their personal stories with the events happening in their homes.

“What is happening in my country, it’s really outside all things that could be moral,” one Ukrainian student said. She said she wishes she could help in any way possible.

In a second virtual CDI event with the same theme titled “All

About Ukraine,” two Ukrainian UHD students presented virtually on the history and culture of Ukraine. The two talked on March 8 about everything from food to music, to traditional dress, as well as the history of how the country came to be.

Among the many things we were taught, a couple of the interesting facts we learned are that Ukraine’s Arenalna station is the world’s

second deepest metro station, at 346 feet below ground. Ukraine is also the largest producer of wheat in the world and has enough sunflower farmlands to cover the entire country of Slovenia.

The International Association of Business will run a bake sale to raise funds for Ukraine on March 23, from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. and again from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m.



Credit: Sarah Ramirez

Climate change blamed for mass bleaching of Great Barrier Reef

BY SERGIO PRESA JR

In 2020, teenage snorkeler Ava Shearer saw the reef. The color that it once had was gone, due to it becoming a victim of a mass bleaching event. A mass bleaching event is due to unusually warm sea surface temperatures which causes the algae in coral to be expelled and leaves the coral a white color instead of pink. A United Nations climate report showed that the Great Barrier Reef's future is in danger and is suffering extreme consequences from climate change.

"I fear there might not be anything for me to study," Shearer, who is also marine science student said.

The reef's worst bleaching event was in 2016, when 90% of

the reef was affected. With 1,400 miles in length, the reef is the largest living structure on Earth, and it is the only living thing that is visible from space. Dolphins, whales, birds, and over 1,500 species of tropical fish call the reef home. It is also a big tourist attraction for Australia, bringing in around 6.4 billion Australian dollars (\$4.56 billion) into Australia's economy every year.

The continuation of bleaching is certain, even if the world reaches the goal of limiting future warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit). Which would still not be enough to stop mass bleaching events.

The data on the report has implications for more than just the Great Barrier Reef. Scientists

predict that marine heat-waves and above normal water temperatures will lead to "widespread destruction" of tropical shallow coral reefs and other marine ecosystems. What is happening in the ocean also will transfer to land. Certain animal species are at risk and the risk of wildfires is also rising. Koalas are at risk of local extinctions due to warming temperatures and droughts.

"We're seeing conditions which really weren't projected for some decades," said Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change vice-chair Mark Howden. "Yet they're appearing pretty much now, and so to some extent we could well be under-estimating the risks associated with things like fires."

Jury finds ex-officer not guilty in Breonna Taylor shooting

BY SERGIO PRESA JR

The former Kentucky police officer who fired shots into Breonna Taylor's apartment has been found not guilty on charges that he endangered neighbors.

Former police officer Brett Hankison was part of a drug raid on Taylor's apartment when he fired shots that were said to endanger neighbors. The verdict was delivered three hours after the jury heard closing arguments from the prosecution and defense attorneys. The raid happened March 13, 2020, and none of the officers in the raid have been charged with Taylor's death. None of the bullets that Hankison fired killed Breonna Taylor. Hankison did not give a comment after the

verdict, but his lawyer Stewart Mathews said that he and Hankison were "thrilled" regarding the verdict.

"I think it was absolutely the fact that he was doing his job as a police officer," Mathews said when asked about what he believed swayed the jury.

Kentucky Assistant Attorney General Barbara Maines Whaley said she respects the verdict but did not have any further comments on it.

Tanika Palmer, Taylor's mother and her family left the courtroom after the verdict without leaving a comment. After Kentucky Attorney General Daniel Cameron declined to seek charges against the officers in connection to Taylor's death, months of protests ensued.

President and CEO of the Louisville Urban League was not surprised by the verdict. The said Black residents of the city were "experiencing a certain amount of frustration" because no officers had been charged in Taylor's death. Hankison's case was not about whether he killed Breonna Taylor. His case was due to bullets that he fired piercing a pregnant neighbor's apartment walls and endangering her and her boyfriend.

Taylor's boyfriend fired shots saying he believed intruders were breaking into the apartment. Taylor was killed when officers returned fire. Hankison's attorneys said he fired 10 bullets because he thought his fellow officers were "being executed."

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Democrats make strides in Texas primaries, fall short to Republicans

BY JORDYNN GODFREY

Texas primary elections ended March 1, concluding the first races of the 2022 midterms and, notably, the first elections conducted since Republican state lawmakers enacted new voting restrictions.

Texas voters chose party nominees for statewide seats, such as governor, attorney general, lieutenant governor, and district-based congressional and legislative seats.

Nominees who won in their party will face off in the general election in November. If no candidate in a primary election received a majority of the vote, 50% plus one vote, the top two vote-getters will face off in the runoffs in May.

Gov. Greg Abbott won the Republican nomination for governor, earning 66.4% of his party's votes. Although Abbott has received criticism from

the right as well as the left, he easily beat right-wing candidates such as former state Sen. Don Huffines and former Head of the Texas GOP Allen West.

Abbott will face former El Paso Congressman Beto O'Rourke who won the Democratic nomination by a landslide, earning 91.4% of his party's votes.

Incumbent Ken Paxton, failing to gain the majority of the Republican party votes for the attorney general nomination, was forced into a runoff against Land Commissioner George P. Bush, who is carrying on the Bush family political legacy.

Rochelle Garza, a former lawyer for the American Civil Liberties Union from the Rio Grande Valley, earned 43% of the Democratic votes for the attorney general nominee. She is projected to head into the runoffs against Joe Jaworski, whose 19.8%

of votes is just ahead of Lee Merritt's 19.4%.

For lieutenant governor, the second-highest executive in the state, Democrats Mike Collier and Michelle Beckley were forced into a runoff in May with Collier earning more votes than Beckley. Republican nominee Incumbent Dan Patrick trounced his opponents, winning the nomination with 76.6% of his party's votes.

Incumbent Lina Hidalgo won the Democratic nomination for Harris County judge by a landslide with 75.1% of her party's votes. Republican candidates Alexandria Mealer and Vidal Martinez will face off in the May runoffs for the Republican nomination, as neither won the majority of their party's votes.

Republicans mostly beat Democratic opponents in the GOP primary. And while progressive Democrats made some strides in

the primaries, they fell short of their goal of an immediate sweep that would reshape Texas' U.S. House delegation. Election day for runoff elections is May 24. The general elections will occur Nov. 8. Notably, AP News reported that 10,000 mail

ballots were tabulated but not counted in Texas' most populous county, delaying determining winners. Of those votes, 6,000 were Democratic and 4,000 were Republican. However, these votes were counted Tuesday, March 8. The Texas 2022 pri-

maries were the first elections that took place under the new, tighter voting restrictions. As a result, thousands of mail-in ballots were rejected throughout the state for not having the new required identification.

Texas 2022 Primary Elections Results



Governor

Republican

• Greg Abbott 66.4%

Democrat

• Beto O'Rourke 91.4%

Attorney General

Republican (Runoff)

• Ken Paxton 42.7%
• George P. Bush 22.8%

Democrat (Runoff)

• Rochelle Garza 43%
• Joe Jaworski 19.8%

Lieutenant Governor

Republican

• Dan Patrick 76.6%

Democrat (Runoff)

• Mike Collier 41.7%
• Michelle Beckley 30.1%

Harris County Judge

Republican (Runoff)

• Alex Mealer 29.7%
• Vidal Martinez 25.6%

Democrat

• Lina Hidalgo 75.1%

Credit: Jordynn Godfrey

Harris County finds about 10,000 uncounted mail-in ballots

BY SERGIO PRESA JR

Harris County, Texas' most populous county, had around 10,000 mail-in-ballots that were tabulated but not counted. Elections Administrator Isabel Longoria said the uncounted ballots from the March 1 primaries were never misplaced but went untabulated due to extreme fatigue among staff members.

After expressing her concerns, Longoria said the county's Republican party told her that neither she nor her staff could take breaks and would need to work through the night to count all the votes.

"As you can see that led to the issue at 1 a.m. with those 10,000 mail

ballots that, by the way, were not lost," Longoria said. "They were tabulated. They were always in the room. It was a situation of exhaustion and my staff just trying to compensate and cope with the Texas election code in complying with this 24-hour continuous count rule, which does not take into account the human capacity to stay up that long."

The uncounted ballots caused a delay in determining winners in the Texas primary for the 2022 midterms. Six thousand votes are Democratic and 4,000 are Republican.

They were added to the official count once they were all counted.

"While the votes were scanned into our

tabulation computer, they were not transferred and counted as a part of the unofficial final results as they should have been," the Harris County Elections Office said in a statement.

The March primary was the state's first election that took place under Texas' new voting laws. Thousands of mail-in-ballots were not accepted because they did not have the newly required identification on them.

Both the Republican and Democratic party chairs in Harris County said that the issue should not cause voters' confidence in elections to waiver.

Texas judge protects trans teen from state-led investigations

BY SERGIO PRESA JR

A federal judge in Texas blocked state authorities from investigating the parents of a transgender teenager regarding gender-confirmation treatments.

Amy Clark Meachum, a district judge, issued a temporary order that stopped the investigation by the Department of Family and Protective Services. The parents of the teenager sued over both the investigation and Gov. Greg Abbott's order that tasks officials with looking into reports of those treatments as abuse.

In her order, Meachum wrote that the teen and parents "face the imminent and ongoing deprivation of their

constitutional rights, the potential loss of necessary medical care, and the stigma attached to being the subject of an unfounded child abuse investigation."

The judge also set a hearing date for March 11 when she will decide whether to issue an order that is broader in blocking Abbott's order. The lawsuit is the first involving parents being investigated under Abbott's directive. In a nonbinding legal opinion by Attorney General Ken Paxton, certain gender-confirmation treatments were labeled as "child abuse." The American Civil Liberties Union sued Texas on behalf of the teen.

Paxton's and Abbott's offices did not

respond to requests for comment, however a spokesperson for DFPS said "deliberate discussions" for next steps would be underway. President Biden criticized state laws that target transgender people in his State of the Union Address. The directive goes against the country's largest medical groups, including the American Medical Association. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services encouraged anyone who is a target of a child welfare investigation due to Abbott's order to contact the agency's civil rights office.

Russia hit by international barrage of sanctions after invading Ukraine

BY MADIHA HUSSAIN

Multiple sanctions have been imposed on Russia after its invasion of Ukraine on Feb. 24. Russia has now overtaken Iran as the most sanctioned country in the world.

Several corporations and government entities have temporarily ended their economic or social ties with Russia. Some of these sanctions have also been placed on Belarus because of their unwavering support for Russia's invasion.

Sporting sanctions vary in severity. Russian and Belarusian athletes and officials have been banned in international

sporting events related to baseball, softball, basketball, ice hockey, taekwondo, ice skating, esports, and many more.

Other international sporting events have solely banned the countries, not the players.

The International Tennis, Chess, and Gymnastics Federations, currently allow Russian and Belarusian players to compete, but have banned players from competing under the Russian or Belarusian flags nor will their national anthems be played.

World Taekwondo has even gone so far as to strip President



#StandWithUkraine mural painted by artist Shelbi Nicole in downtown Houston.

Credit: Edward Saenz

Vladimir Putin of his honorary taekwondo black belt. The International Judo Federation has also cancelled their Grand Slam competition that was supposed to occur in May in Russia.

The U.S., E.U., Canada, Japan, Taiwan, and other countries have cut off numerous economic and political ties with Russia. High-ranking Russian and Belarusian officials have specifically been sanctioned, including Putin. Multiple Russian officials have been placed on travel bans and have had their assets frozen in foreign banks. Russian bank ac-

count assets have been frozen in numerous countries and owners of these accounts are prohibited from accessing their own funds.

Visa and Mastercard announced on March 5 that they were suspending their operations in Russia. Other corporations have followed suit. McDonald's announced on March 8 that they were also suspending operations in Russia, along with Starbucks, Coca-Cola, and PepsiCo soon after.

Harris County drops 2 COVID-19 threat levels within 2 weeks

Protect Yourself & Others



Credit: Brittany Henderson

BY BRITTANY HENDERSON

On Feb. 24, Harris County Judge Lina Hidalgo announced that the COVID-19 threat level was lowered from Level 1: Red to Level 2: Orange, the second-highest possible level. Flash forward to March 10, Hidalgo lowered it by another level to yellow and cited a decrease in positivity rates and hospitalizations and higher vaccination rates as reasons.

The red status, representing a "severe" COVID-19 threat level, had been in place for

Harris County since Jan. 10 after the emergence of the omicron variant sent COVID-19 hospitalizations surging. Since then, the county COVID-19 dashboard has reported only 170 new cases.

"The omicron wave hit Harris County very, very hard," Hidalgo said. "In fact, only now have our hospitalization rates dropped to levels that don't immediately threaten the capacity of our healthcare system."

Hidalgo's announcement came amid Houston Mayor Sylves-

ter Turner's announcement that due to the steep decline in COVID cases and hospitalizations, masks will no longer be required in city buildings.

According to the CDC, COVID-19 Data Tracker, more than 62% of Harris County's population is fully vaccinated. Hospital usage of ICU beds are down by 14% and over the last week there were 416 new cases reported per day, down from an average of 985.

"While we're moving in the right

direction, there are no guarantees we won't see another wave in the future," Hidalgo said.

"My hope is that the on-demand availability of vaccines and treatments will help us to avoid another dangerous spike."

Houstonians can receive the COVID-19 vaccine for free at multiple locations and vaccination hubs around the city, including Walgreens, CVS, Walmart Pharmacy, and HEB Pharmacy.

Hospitals such as Texas Children's Hospi-

tal, Memorial Hermann, Houston Methodist, and St. Luke's Health also administer the vaccine.

As part of UHD's Vaccines and Testing Initiative UHD students, faculty, and staff can earn \$5 in GatorCash each week through May 22 when they receive free COVID-19 testing on campus at the Curative kiosk, located outside the Jesse H. Jones Student Life Center. Students can sign up through the Curative portal and testing is available Monday through Sunday from 8

a.m. to 6 p.m.

Free vaccines are available at on-campus vaccination clinics for everyone 5 and older. These vaccination clinics are hosted monthly and will be announced in advance by President Loren Blanchard. The next vaccination clinic will be taking place March 22 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Local mineral show exhibits stunning artifacts, offers fun paleontology talks

BY JAMES JUREWICZ

Every year, the Clear Lake Gem and Mineral Show at the Pasadena Convention Center attracts enthusiasts of paleontology and geology with gems, dinosaur fossils replicas, and historic artifacts. The Clear Lake Gem and Mineral Society hosted this year's convention from Feb. 26 to 27. Judging by the fully packed parking lot on the second day, it was an overwhelming success.

"Don't go home and tell your mom or grandma that you were touching poop at the gem show," The Dinosaur Guy joked while displaying the fossilized dinosaur dung also known as coprolite, during his "Dinosaur Chat."

The Dinosaur Chat was the star attraction,



Dinosaur fossils on display at the Gem and Mineral Show. Credit: James Jurewicz

people were clamoring for chairs or standing in a space with a clear view of the action. The audience had a look at both dinosaur bone molds and actual fossils which were explained in depth.

"These are not all real specimens, if they were real, I would be inviting you all to my private island," The Dinosaur Guy joked.

The Dinosaur Guy was humorous and animated. The chat lasted about a half hour and included a holy Hadrosaur femur and eggs,

a Coelophysis skull, a heavy meteorite fragment, and more. The speaker explained that most fossils are found and discovered by children.

"These are holes from bullets when the Hadrosaur fought in World War II."

The massive convention center held precious colorful stones that were optically magnetic. The geologic selection was vast and varied including multi-colored gems, flawless natural pearls, and ancient rare fossils.

The booths were an extension of brick-and-mortar stores as well as online only and home-run businesses. Many booth names were displayed prominently on carved wooden signs with creative and appropriate names; Pendragon Jewelry, Rock N Gemstones, Eternal Rock, and one was actually called Rocks Rocks.

Eddies Rocks and Relics had a treasure trove featuring a cornucopia of history. Roman coins and arrowheads, Spinosaurus teeth, Civil

War uniform buttons were part of the collection. The booth also had small glass fragments of desert sand that was instantly liquified by the heat of the blast of the original atomic bomb test.

Notably displayed for sale was a portion of the jaw of an extinct Cave Bear also known as the Short-Faced Bear, a leftover relic from the last ice age. Three pieces of mammoth tusk went for \$40 with each being about the size of a bar of hotel soap. The fossils can be found

on tundra where the permafrost has melted. Mammoth tusk is one of the few remaining legal types of ivory that can be traded or sold.

Amber Way Jewelry out of Houston was selling beautiful Baltic amber jewelry. Amber is fossilized tree sap varying in age and hue with some types up to 120 million years old. The material could sometimes capture insects, forever preserved by the sap.

Leaving empty handed was difficult, everything was easily accessible and reasonably priced. Look out for the shows return next spring. Don't miss out on beautiful jewelry, ancient bone fragments and free parking at the Clear Lake Gem and Mineral Show.

White Oak Music Hall features rock-genre dance groups

BY DALLIA JUAREZ

The rock-genre dance group Cherry Bombs, and bands Them Evils and Backdrop Violet performed at the White Oak Music Hall on March 2. The event was rescheduled from Jan. 21 due to concerns of the omicron variant.

During the performance local Houston band, Backdrop Violet, kicked-off the show with their songs "American Paranoia" and "Break Me In." Their music involves alternative rock and indie elements.

California-based rock band, Them Evils followed by introducing their blend of classical and heavy rock music to new listeners. The group consists of lead singer/guitarist Jordan Griffin, bassist Jake Massanari, and drum-

mer David Delaney.

Griffin called the audience, "A great crowd!"

The headliners were a group known as Cherry Bombs. The group was originally created by leader Alicia Taylor who recruited talented dancers all over the United States.

Their performance includes choreographed dancing to heavy rock music from well-known artists such as Metallica, Rammstein, and Taylor's husband Corey Taylor from Slipknot and Stone Sour. Their dancing techniques involved aerial fabric silk and fire dancing.

Once the show concluded, all performers engaged with fans and asked for feedback on the event.

"I love White Oak! The way the stage was set up helped us perform properly," Taylor

shares of her experience at the local venue. "The venues in Dallas and Albuquerque had carpet on the floor, and it was difficult dancing with the fire."

Another Cherry Bombs member, Kym Possible, described the challenges the group overcame from their last performance at the beginning of the pandemic.

"The last time we came to White Oak, it was outdoors, and it was raining. I was sad that people were not having fun," Possible said.

Overall, White Oak Music Hall provided a great venue for Cherry Bomb, Them Evils, and Backdrop Violet. All artists were excited to return to Houston, reunite with old fans and impress new ones.

First Black good witch takes stage in Broadway's 'Wicked'

BY TAYLAR STOWERS

This past Valentine's Day, history was made as Broadway veteran, Brittney Johnson, took the stage playing the good witch Glinda. For 19 years straight, a Black woman had not been casted as Glinda in the professional Broadway theatre productions.

"Wicked" is a Broadway musical based on the 1995 novel "Wicked: The Life and Times of the Wicked Witch of the West" written by Gregory Maguire. Wicked tells the story of two unlikely friends named Elphaba and Glinda, who continue to rival each other based on their polar opposite personalities and viewpoints.

The Wicked character Glinda is based

on the principles of love, determination, and overall goodness. Johnson wanted to use her newfound character assignment of Glinda to become an example for all African American kids.

"Seeing someone that looks like you being loved is so important to see," Johnson said.

Johnson wanted to show every young child that anything can be accomplished if there is hard work and determination involved. Growing up not seeing many racial representations that look like you on Broadway and numerous other entertainment outlets can be discouraging. Johnson wanted to show that the theatre belongs to everyone.

"Theater's supposed to be the mirror of what the world looks like, and that's what the world looks like," she added.

Representation is important because without it, young children can be discouraged from following their dreams due to the fear of not being accepted based on how they look or where they are from.

Feb. 14 marked the special day Johnson stepped out on the Gershwin Theatre stage and gave her performance as the first ever Black Glinda.

She will play Glinda full-time, so if you are ever in the area, go check out what breaking down racial barriers look like.



Reviews

‘Uncharted’ showcases the action audience wants in 2022

BY JAMES JUREWICZ

“Uncharted” is a 2022 action-adventure movie derived from the video game series of the same title, released on Feb. 18. Mark Wahlberg, Tom Holland, Sophia Ali, and film villain Antonio Banderas shine on screen.

The film is about amateur treasure hunter Nate (Tom Holland) who joins up with seasoned treasure hunter Sully (Mark Wahlberg). The pair are both determined to find the location of the treasure laden ships from the Magellan Expedition.

Globe-trotting, ruthless competition,

and complicated puzzles await Wahlberg and Holland’s characters in “Uncharted.”

While the slower first half is mostly setup, the swifter second half of “Uncharted” is exhilarating. The trailer promised adventure similar to the video game series.

A major contribution to the quality of “Uncharted” lies in the performances. The actors all perform well with the characters they portray. Wahlberg and Holland are both well-versed in the action genre and their onscreen chemistry resembles a brotherly relationship.

“I’ve done my fair share of action and physicality and Tom is entering his prime,” mentioned Wahlberg in an interview MTV News.

The actor has embraced his position of the older, wiser brother. Wahlberg was connected to the film for so long that he aged out of the role of Nate, into the role of Sully.

The film was directed by Robin Fleischer. He is known for the action comedy “Zombieland” and the superhero film “Venom.” Pre-production “Uncharted” bounced around Hollywood

since 2008, constantly changing names for a potential director. Fleischer made the film as a prequel to the video game series. Fleischer also conjured fantastic performances from his cast. Spain and Germany served as the filming locations for “Uncharted.”

“Uncharted” is highly reminiscent of the “National Treasure” film series. Puzzles, booby traps and action are hallmarks within the films. Unless the viewers are familiar with “Uncharted,” it is not apparent the film is based on a video game series.

The exciting climax involving carrier helicopters and Spanish Galleons alone is worth the admission price. More “Uncharted” films could be expected soon, as the film has two post credit scenes which are important to the overall story.

The series “Uncharted” is a collection of action-adventure video games produced by the Sony electronics company. The original game was released in ‘07 and the most recent hit store shelves this year. The treasure hunting game was both commercially successful and critically acclaimed.

“Uncharted” is the first major release from Sony’s PlayStation Productions. The company was developed to deliver Sony video game characters to cinema screens, including “Crash Bandicoot,” “Tomb Raiders: Laura Croft,” and characters from “The Last of Us.”

The combination of an entertaining adventure story and enjoyable performances make “Uncharted” 2022’s best action film so far.

“Uncharted” is now playing in cinemas.

‘The Batman’ comes full of action, but topics overwhelm plot

BY JAMES JUREWICZ

The newest Batman film, “The Batman,” is directed by Matt Reeves and stars Robert Pattinson as the iconic hero. This is possibly the most violent Batman ever portrayed on screen.

The plot focuses on the history of Gotham and is reminiscent of the city in the 2019 film “Joker.” Crime and crumbling city infrastructure have led to the necessity for a vengeful vigilante.

A dangerous new drug called droppers is destroying Gotham, being pushed by the mob. Most of the police and city officials are corrupt and the mafia unofficially runs the city.

Pattinson’s Bruce Wayne believes it is his duty to save Gotham, as his late father had wanted to do through politics. When serial killer, The Riddler, starts murdering city officials, Batman is joined by Lieutenant Jim Gordon

(Jeffery Wright), Selina Kyle (Zoe Kravitz), and his butler and mentor Alfred (Andy Serkis) to stop the killer and dismantle the mafia. Pattinson and Kravitz are well-matched and display genuine chemistry together.

Director Matt Reeves does a wonderful job with the material. This Batman film is action packed with car chases and fights that particularly stand out. Expect more of an action crime thriller than a superhero film.

This film was only a few vulgar words away from an R rating. The violence is extreme and constant. This is what should be expected from such a dark character as Batman, Gotham is so violent it needs a hero to match.

“The Batman” was good, although the film was too long. So much is packed into the film that the plot becomes overwhelming. Simpli-

fying the script would have been beneficial; there is so much going on in the plot. After three hours it becomes difficult to wait for an after credits scene that is little more than a stinger and not worth the wait.

Drugs, the Mob, a serial killer, corrupt police, family history and a crazy cat lady. There were just too many topics. The biggest topic of “The Batman” is vengeance. The word is repeated throughout the film by the heroes as well as the villains.

Pattinson’s batmobile is one of the best aspects of the film. The vehicle is a monstrous matte black growling muscle car, complete with a thick metal ram plate and an over-powered jet engine that spews sky-blue flames. The car roars and glows, tearing up the Gotham streets during a perfectly choreographed car chase with the Penguin.

The new bat suit

looks great. All black combat armor and boots with a helmet like cowl, exactly how a vigilante would prepare, save the cape. His technology has been significantly upgraded compared to other versions and comes complete with go-pro like contacts, constantly recording everything he sees.

Villains in “The Batman” include the crime boss Penguin/Oswald Cobblepot (Colin Ferrell) and The Riddler (Paul Dano). The unrecognizable Ferrell does a fantastic job, and a Penguin HBO Max series is now in development. Dano’s serial killer Riddler is the reflection of a modern-day domestic terrorist, arguably the scariest Batman villain yet.

Pattinson does a fantastic job with his Batman. The actor is slight for the role though his movement as Batman is filled with

intimidating menace. His mopey soft voiced Bruce Wayne could use some work as his voice sounds emo.

Each portrayal of the dark knight highly reflects the period in which it was conceived. The 80s and 90s versions were over the top action and devolved from Tim Burton’s entertaining, dark vision to eventual comic book garbage. Michael Keaton was great as Batman, Val Kilmer, and George Clooney, not so much.

In the 2000s, Batman fans were spoiled by Christopher Nolan who helmed a successful three-peat of films with Christian Bale as the titular hero. Nolan’s films won awards and topped box office charts. Terrorism and technology were hallmark themes of these films.

Director Zach Snyder took control during the 2010s with his highly divisive vision of the

character. Ben Affleck’s pessimistic Batman of the Snyder films was portrayed as older and murderous. Snyder was willing to break Batman’s traditional no killing/no gun’s rule. The redeeming character arc Snyder wrote for Affleck’s Batman was fantastic, executed in the Snyder cut of the 2021 film “Justice League.”

It is yet to be determined if “The Batman” will spawn a sequel or if the movie universe will include science fiction or supernatural elements. So far, the action in the film is grounded. “The Batman” is well done and worth watching. The action makes it worth a theater view though the three-hour runtime expresses otherwise.

“The Batman” is now playing in cinemas.

Fighting game tournaments make epic comeback, post-COVID-19

BY BRYCE CALABAZA

Since day one, fighting games have been a part of esports, but COVID-19 affected the community. The industry managed to adapt in a number of ways.

The fighting game community has been growing since the 1980s, with games such as Street Fighter II and Mortal Kombat taking the world by storm. No matter the game, the FGC, as commonly referred to, has relied on tournaments to cultivate community engagement. Tournaments are as few as three or four people or as many as thousands. However, due to COVID-19 in 2020, tournaments had to be shut down, and the FGC lost a massive part of its identity.

The FGC had to switch gears and go entirely online, with various events either



Bryce Calabaza (L), Cuong Nguyen and Sam playing Soul Caliber at Winter Brawl 3D
Courtesy: @3VPhotos on Twitter

held online or delayed until it was safe again. Although online is not a perfect substitute for offline play, the FGC stayed strong and adapted to the new changes.

It was not until 2022 that tournaments such as Frosty Faustings and,

recently, Winter Brawl were held again. For many, these events are an opportunity to revisit old friends and rivals around the country.

2022 has just begun, and many events have been announced, such as Combo Breaker,

CEO, and more locally Texas Showdown, which is held in Houston between April 22 and the 24. Texas Showdown has been around for 22 years. The tournament is Texas's premier FGC event, in 2019 the event had over

1000 entrants, making this event one of the largest in the country. The largest tournament being, Evolution, held in Las Vegas. Texas Showdown streams its various events on Twitch.tv to thousands of viewers. More infor-

mation about the Texas Showdown can be found at txshowdown.com. Due to COVID-19 safety protocols the 2022 event will have an entrance cap of 1000.

As things go back to normal, the community that thrived on human connection and social interaction is now coming back stronger than ever. At this point in time, it is the perfect opportunity to become interested in fighting game esports, which is filled with stories of heartbreaking defeats, game-changing comebacks, and rivalries that have been around for decades.

Twitch star creates tournament spotlighting Black gamers

BY ERIN HOUSTON

Twitch content creator Wemakeup Steam, better known as "Makeup," hosted a Black History Month Apex Tournament to recognize Black Apex Legends community members. This event shined a light on talented players that are more than deserving to compete in big name tournaments like the Apex Legends Global Series or Global Loot League. Competing in events like these give players a chance to win up to \$500,000.

Looking at recent tournaments like ALGS and GLL, you normally see the same faces and usually they are all white males. It's also very rare that you see

a woman competing in these tournaments when some are very deserving. The same white male streamers and one woman, LuluLuvly, competed in the popular Twitch streamer Nickmerc's Apex Gauntlet tournament.

In 2021, Makeup hosted the Winter Kill Race and the Summer Circuit, but few were able to attend. She wanted to gauge interest from those tournaments, although there was no prize money just bragging rights, both tournaments turned out to be successful. Which left people wanting more tournaments to be created. After both successful tournaments, she decided to create

another one. She was able to reach out to 150+ Black men and women Apex content creators for her upcoming Black is Legendary tournament.

"I didn't know of many Black individuals that were participating (in the ALGS), so I wanted to make that change for myself." Makeup said in an interview with esports.gg.

This event is sponsored by Gen.G Esports and Grinding Coffee Co. and will have a ALGS commentator for all the games. The prize pool for this tournament will be \$3,000 plus free coffee courtesy of Grinding Coffee Co.

Call of Duty prepares for unsteady future amid poor fan reception

BY EDWARD SAENZ

After nearly 20 years, the Call of Duty franchise may finally break its yearly release schedule.

Following the poor sales of Call of Duty Vanguard and negative reception to the recent updates to Call of Duty Warzone, Activision executives are making changes to the franchise.

In a recent string of leaks and announcements, Activision is rumored to delay the release of Call of Duty 2023 to 2024. Meaning that the popular franchise will break its yearly release schedule for the first time since Call of Duty 2 in 2005.

"We have an exciting slate of premium and free-to-play Call of Duty experiences for this year, next year and beyond," a spokesperson for Activision Blizzard said in a statement to IGN.

"Reports of anything otherwise are incorrect. We look forward to sharing more details when the time is right."

Along with the delay to the main franchise, Treyarch, creators of the fan favorite Call of Duty Black Ops series, are rumored to be making a free-to-play Call of Duty title.

Something the Call of Duty fans have been asking for since the release of the incredibly

popular Call of Duty Mobile in 2019.

In January 2022, it was rumored that Infinity Ward were working on Warzone 2, a sequel to their popular battle royale game that took the gaming world by storm in 2020.

On Feb. 11, it was confirmed by CharlieIntel that Infinity Ward had begun development of the game. The developers admitted that the current state of the battle royale is "[explicit] embarrassing," and are "determined to fix the issues with the game."

Gas prices rise amid oil shortage, experts say gas will stabilize soon



Credit: Giselle Oviedo

BY JESSE FITZGERALD RODRIGUEZ SR.

China, India, and the United States alone account for over a third of the world's oil consumption, according to a report by the British Petroleum Company.

However, the U.S. consumes more than 20% of the oil production in the world, an estimated 20 million barrels a day.

The U.S. is also a top oil producer in the world with an estimated oil production of 18 million barrels of oil a

day as of 2019, according to Investopedia. Saudi Arabia, Russia, China, and Canada are not far behind.

Americans pay more at the gas pump because, unfortunately, America imports more oil than it exports.

As of December 2020, according to a report by the U.S. Energy Information Administration, the U.S. currently has 38 million barrels of proved oil reserves. This is not enough to last more than five years. As a result, the U.S. imports an estimated 8 million barrels of crude oil per day to accommodate the high demand in America for gasoline, jet fuel, and other commodities.

So, who are the oil cartel superpowers as of today? In the western hemisphere Venezuela's oil reserves hold an

estimated 300 million barrels of oil, according to the International Petroleum News and Technology Journal.

Canada, another key player has 168 million barrels, with an estimated 564 million barrels in total for the western hemisphere.

As for Russia, it leads Eastern Europe with 80 million barrels with an estimated total of 119 million barrels in oil reserves.

On top of all that, we cannot overlook the Middle East. Saudi Arabia alone holds an estimated 262 million barrels. In total, the Middle East holds a whopping 860 millions barrels of oil reserves, which dominates the world in production, consumption, and export in oil trade. Saudi Aramco is the world's largest oil producer and

is based in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia.

As gas prices rise, analysts from EIA forecast that "crude oil prices will remain high enough to drive U.S. crude oil production to record-high levels in 2023, reaching a forecast [of] 12.6 million barrels per day."

Is there light at the end of the tunnel? Yes, because the U.S. has close relationships with Saudi Arabia, Canada, Mexico, Iraq, and Colombia to name a few, and the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, a massive intergovernmental organization or oil cartel of 13 countries.

As for high gas prices, they will continue given the fact that America's oil reserves are drying up and as of February 2022, America is highly dependent on

foreign oil. Not to mention, the current Biden Administration is trying to shut down our natural resources like crude oil, which is the liquid fossil fuel that is extracted from the ground.

Roughly one-third of the world's primary energy is created this way. Also important, the Biden Administration is pushing for renewable energy from a source that is not depleted when used, such as wind or solar power.

Regardless, the bitter truth is crude oil is essential and the most actively traded commodity in the world.

The country with the most oil in its reserves has the upper hand.

Media literacy empowers users beyond knowledge of trending topics

BY ANITA GOOLCHARAN

Media literacy is a fundamental skill in the 21st century. Often, media exposure can be passive. According to a study conducted by Ball State University, it is estimated people are intentionally involved with media for 30% of their day and are using media while multitasking for an additional 39% of their day.

Apps such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram reach a wide range of audiences. Since the pandemic, social media use has skyrocketed by a 50% increase. With much of the population relying on apps for their information and a tendency to be passive, people can fail to acknowledge their responsibility as a media consumer.

In the age of social media, media literacy is of utmost importance.

With the widespread availability and accessibility features, social media allows for individuals to absorb media at their leisure.

Contemporary lifestyles are dependent on mass media. Social media is an inescapable symbiotic relationship since many use social media as their primary lens of communication.

Responsibilities such as fact-checking, and recognizing disinformation or misinformation can be overlooked if you remain passive.

In a press release, Director General of the World Health Organization Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus stated that COVID-19 related misinformation has led to dangerous situations.

"Just as COVID-19 has spread around the world, so too have rumors, untruths and

disinformation. And they can be just as dangerous," Ghebreyesus said.

Often referred to as the "infodemic," there have been numerous misinformation articles spread on social media platforms. In 2021, ivermectin, a drug typically used to treat parasitic worms in horses, became the headline of several news outlets after people began taking the drug to prevent and treat COVID-19.

The misinformation about the drug circulated on Facebook with pages and picked up traction among anti-vaxxers. This is a prime example of why media literacy is important.

Many of the people who believed in the messages of the Facebook articles and groups that advocated for ivermectin failed to identify



Credit: Giselle Oviedo

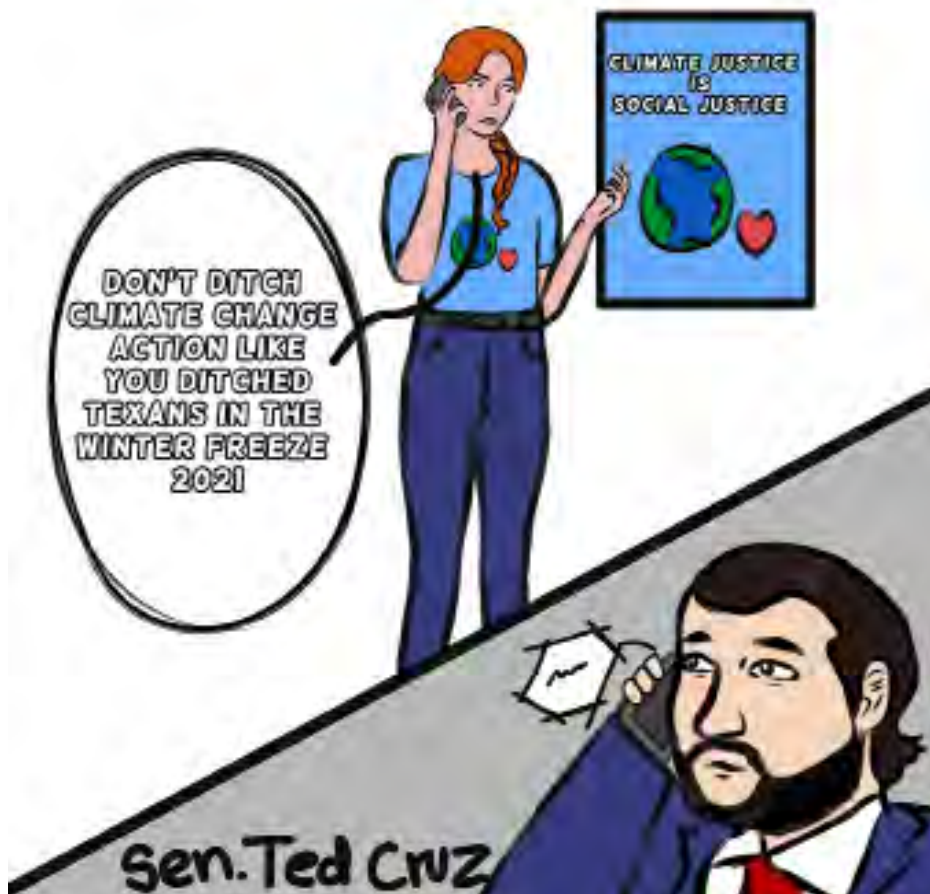
the reliability of the source, falling victim to misinformation.

Media literacy is more powerful than knowing what is

trending on Twitter or knowing the latest TikTok trends. It is an integral part of our lives. Media literacy helps people under-

stand the messages that they interact with and decreases susceptibility to misinformation or disinformation.

Gators should go green, call on legislators to mitigate climate change



Credit: Giselle Oviedo

BY PAYTIENCE SMITH

If you lived in Houston in 2017, you likely remember the traumatic Hurricane Harvey that absolutely destroyed the city with unprecedented amounts of rain.

If you lived in Houston in 2021, you likely remember the Winter Storm that kept millions of Texans in freezing temperatures as a deregulated power grid left many to endure rolling blackouts.

Even outside of Houston, you've likely noticed the increased incidence of wildfires, tornadoes, hurricanes

and other natural disasters around the world.

Climate change is the reason for not only the increasing amounts of natural disasters but for the extremely cold or extremely hot temperatures we experience on a normal basis. Climate change refers to shifts in temperature and nature patterns, which can be natural or driven by human activity.

The current shift in climate is believed to be a large result of human activity and already believed to be causing catastrophic effects on Earth. Thankfully, scientists believe

we are not too far gone and can solve this issue via legislation encouraging conservation and preservation, as well as humans beginning to pour back into our environment.

There are a number of ways humans have contributed to climate change. We have created cities that are reliant on cars and airplanes, leading to an excess of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.

Greenhouse gases are believed to be at their highest atmospheric concentrations in well over 2 million years, leading to temperatures

jumping up considerably since the start of industrialization.

Humans have also contributed to climate change via an increasing amount of deforestation. Trees are constantly being chopped down either to be used to create something, or to accommodate urbanization. This is concerning as trees absorb CO₂ which can help regulate the environment. Without them, we will release excess CO₂ into the atmosphere, contributing to the greenhouse effect.

From livestock farming, to increasing consumption to accommodate a quickly growing population, and harmful agricultural substances, these harmful habits exhibit how humans have contributed to climate change.

These behaviors have led to not only increases in temperature, but increases in ocean levels, loss of biodiversity, increased drought and so many other things that impact our ecosystem.

These things sometimes come across to some as minute or minuscule, but our ecosystem is extremely fragile. Continuing to alter it the way we are will destroy not just humans, but every species on Earth.

Proposed solutions to climate change are small and large. On an individual scale, we could turn off the sink when we brush our teeth in the morning, carpool or take public transportation more often, recycle more, etc.

One of the greatest ways we can individually impact this is by decreasing our consumption, forcing them to reduce their production, and lowering emissions and excess pollutants.

However, the largest contributors to our issues are big corporations.

Corporations are consistently expanding and majorly responsible for the large amounts of deforestation. Additionally, they are constantly increasing their outputs, being largely responsible for atmospheric changes and pollution.

Lastly, the Build Back Better act proposed by the Biden Administration is one of the largest proposals to address climate change with almost \$500 billion in spending. Seemingly costly? Absolutely. Will it likely be much cheaper than the spending that could occur if we allow the Earth to continuously experience increased natural disasters, biodiversity loss, deforestation, atmospheric changes, and rising sea levels? Absolutely.

I encourage all of my fellow Gators to read through the bill. Learn about what each of its sections could mean for your futures, or even your children's futures. Then get into contact with Sen. John Cornyn and Ted Cruz. Tell them what you like about it or what you don't. Let them know that climate change matters to you, and that you care about it.

Encourage your senators to work together with their fellow lawmakers to get the bill passed. Your elected officials are here to serve. Let them know exactly what you would like to see.

Climate change, while seemingly once a small issue, has blossomed into a major one. Having a direct impact on our environment and our economy. This issue is no longer something that is of the future as it directly affects us right now and will likely peak in the next 200 years.

As individuals, let's start recycling and carpooling. Let's push for large scale legislation that encourages preservation, cleaner emissions, and coastal restoration.

My fellow Gators, contact your leaders and encourage them to act on climate change before it is too late.

UHD seeks applicants for next Editor of The Dateline

The University of Houston-Downtown is seeking applicants for the position of Editor for The Dateline, the student-run, bi-weekly newspaper.

This paid position begins summer 2022 (\$425/issue; start date flexible), and the applicants must commit to at least one

semester. Duties include responsibility for the overall operation of the paper. Editors assemble and manage a team of student writers and sub-editors and assign them to cover news and events.

Position requires some familiarity with the use of Adobe InDesign page-making

software. The paper runs stories anticipating campus events as well as reviewing them, including student activities and organizations, academics, athletics and lifestyle, university administration, and student government; also cultural coverage of activities in the theatre, film, music, sports

and arts communities, particularly as they are of interest to UHD students.

Qualifications include at least sophomore standing, at least one semester in residence at UHD, successful completion of basic writing and communications courses, and a current 3.0 cumulative

GPA (3.5 preferred). Applications accepted until position is filled.

To apply, please send a letter of interest indicating your reasons and qualifications for applying for the position. Include your resume as well as an unofficial copy of your UHD transcript. Send these documents to

The Dateline faculty advisor, Joe Sample, Associate Professor, at samplej@uhd.edu.

Applications are sought immediately and will be accepted until position is filled.