

News

## Monera Continues Win Streak in Dancing with the Cypress Stars

Theater teacher Ms. Stewart finished 2nd with an act that included numerous costume changes

By JAYDEN KAY LINAYAO

Mrs. Monera continued her dominating win streak in the annual Cypress Dancing with the Stars competition on Jan. 16, 2025. The Cypress High Advanced Dance team fundraiser, which started in 2015, showcases the students' choreography and dance skills, by requiring each team in the competition to have at least one Cypress staff member dance with them.

After all performances were complete, audience members could vote for their favorite act by placing their show ticket in the box with their favorite staff member's name. Additionally, they could also add cash to make sure their favorite was the winner.

Participants included Principal Brown, campus security Carlos Garcia, Mr. Pfeiffer, Ms. Llewellyn, Ms. Winterton and Ms. White. Stu-

dent dancers included Justin Vo, Jordyn Barber, Genesis Rivera and many more.

Finishing in third place, Ms. Takacs and senior Julie Dubois performed a cheerful dance to "Singing in the Rain" using props and tap shoes. Theater teacher Ms.

Stewart and students Arina Matiesu and Kimaya Sharma finished in second place by utilizing their performance skills, including props and multiple costume changes, keeping the audience engaged throughout the entire performance. Continuing her every win streak, Monera and stu-

dents Yana Pakhunova and Nicole Thatch won over the crowd with their cohesive costume game and upbeat dance to "APT" by Bruno Mars and ROSE.

Groups had two weeks to prepare their performances, so the students were put on a time crunch, testing their

creativity and stress-management skills. The show consisted of all types of dances and genres, all choreographed by the students. "It was a lot of fun because I explored a different genre, but it was a little challenging," said Daniella Vega, Junior on Cypress Advanced Dance. "I felt very nervous, and I almost let it get to me, but it's okay because everybody makes mistakes."

After the performance, while the votes were counted, senior William Mack, MC for the night, sang an upbeat song to relieve some of the anticipation. "I chose a song that I knew I could sing really well, and I had confidence in singing it in a short amount of time," he said.

The judges, who were Cypress alumni, including dance coach Jordan Sims, a former Journalism staffer, added humorous commentary to keep the competition light.



Mrs. Monera and students Yana Pakhunova and Nicole Thatch finished in 1st place for their performance. (photo by Rehansa Kulatilleke)

## Controversial Site TikTok Banned Then Reinstated

Students Comment On How The Restrictions Effects Them

By TONY RODRIGUEZ



America Banning TikTok, why? (photo by Tony Rodriguez)

According to the New York Times, Donald Trump's opinion on TikTok has changed a lot over time, mixing both politics and personal gain. Back in 2020, he wanted to ban the app, saying it was a national security threat, but by 2024, he didn't want Biden to do the same. Even though he once claimed TikTok was dangerous, Trump now sees its political value. Trump, who has millions of followers on TikTok, calls it a "special way for free speech" and even

went to the Supreme Court to try to stop the ban. His change of heart came around the same time he got support from wealthy Republican donor Jeff Yass, who has money invested in ByteDance, the company that owns TikTok. Some people think Trump only changed his opinion for his own benefit, not because he truly believes in it. Concerns with TikTok go beyond just politics, with users worrying about its effect on

freedom of speech. Joaquin Deras, a junior at Cypress High School argues that banning TikTok would limit self-expression for many influencers, explaining, "there's, people that, are influencers, and that's how, they express themselves." If TikTok were banned, it might push users to other platforms like Instagram or YouTube. Leo Lopez, a junior at Cypress High School, said he wouldn't be affected much by the TikTok ban because he'd just switch to other

apps. "I just go to other apps or websites," Lopez acknowledges that banning TikTok would impact entertainment and media trends. While Deras sees TikTok as vital/important way for self-expression, Lopez sees alternatives that could reduce its cultural influence but allow creators to thrive. This reflects the broader debate: Is banning TikTok about national security or an attempt to silence a platform for free expression?

President Donald Trump proposed a plan giving the U.S. a 50% ownership stake, delaying the ban. This reassured service providers, allowing them to restore access for existing users, though new downloads are still blocked. The ban happened because a new law blocked apps owned by foreign adversaries, and the Supreme Court upheld it. This led to TikTok shutting down, causing frustration among its 170 million U.S. users and leaving concerns for businesses relying on the platform. Even though service was restored, other apps like CapCut and Lemon8 remained blocked, and new downloads of TikTok

are still unavailable. The ban also created confusion for companies that support TikTok, like Oracle, which hosts its data in the U.S. Service providers worried about facing huge fines, up to \$5,000 per user, if they continued allowing access. While Trump's plan gave temporary relief, companies still face uncertainty about future rules, and TikTok's long-term status in the U.S. remains unclear.

The TikTok ban shows how politics, business, and free speech are all connected. While some see it as a security measure, others believe it's more about power and control, leaving its future in the hands of the U.S. uncertain.

"I've played these games before"  
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# 2 TRUMPS' PLAN FOR PRESIDENCY

By ANTONIO SANDOVAL & BRYANA BENNETT

Donald Trump was sworn in on the 20, of January 2025 as the 47th President of the United States.

During his presidency, Trump wants to impose tariffs on all imports, adding a 10 to 20 percent increase on all imported goods. The most notable increases would be a 60% tariff increase on Chinese imports and a 25% increase on goods from Canada and Mexico.

Trump is promising that over the next four years, he will pay off the United States debt of \$36.17 trillion dollars. He also wants to try and collect oil from the US instead of importing it from other countries, which would drop consumer prices by almost half. His goal in collecting oil at home is to make America the largest energy producer, this promise would also help to decrease inflation. The 47th president also promised a tax cut of 15% to 21% which would be "the largest tax cut in our country's history," said Trump.

Trump is calling for a cut-back on diversity, equality, inclusion, or DEI programs. Wanting to end "boys in girls'

sports," and asking Congress they require there be only two genders recognized at birth.

A main topic that was focused on while Trump was running was deportation. There are an estimated 11.7 million illegal immigrants in the US and Trump is promising a mass deportation of these illegal immigrants. Trump isn't against people immigrating into the US but wants it to be done the right way. Trump wants to close the border because 573 thousand pounds of illegal drugs were seized by Border Patrol in 2024 and it's estimated that only 10% of illegal drugs are seized. Trump wants to end the fentanyl pandemic by fortifying the border and strengthening military power.

Part of the plan for the next four years is to cut off the cartel's access to the global finance system. Trump pledged to destroy the drug flow into America by deploying the US Navy to ensure that drugs can't be smuggled via the region's waterways. The Department of Defense is being asked to make appropriate use of Special Forces and

cyber-warfare to damage cartel leadership, infrastructure, and operations hoping to cripple the cartel. Trump is also asking that Congress reinstate the death penalty on anyone found guilty of drug smuggling and human trafficking because it is estimated that 60% of children who attempt to cross the border alone are captured and used explicitly by the cartels.

During his presidency, Trump plans to shut down the US Department of Education wanting to give the states full power over education as well as forbidding gender identity, sexual orientation, critical race theory, or any inappropriate or political to be taught in the classrooms. Trump is proposing a plan to create "The American Academy." He plans to finance it by taxing large private universities to create a "world-class education available to every American, free of charge" This new Academy would directly compete with expensive four-year universities by granting full degrees equivalent to a bachelor's degree that would be recognized by the US governments and federal contractors.



Donald Trump and his wife paying respects to former President Jimmy Carter on Jan. 8, 2025, before Trump's 2nd Inauguration. (photo by Google)

## New Wellness Room Opens For Overall Wellbeing On Campus

By ADAM HAWARI

Room 309 is now the Wellness Room, where students can get a helpful "15-minute break". In this 15-minute break, students are allowed to rest through relaxing and therapeutic activities. Including; napping, sitting down, coloring, puzzles, and sound and aromatherapy. "It gives students a timeout like in sports," Mr. Hurtado, the school counselor said.

Additionally, the Wellness room will be open for the school's psychologists, social workers, and student counselors. "Staff members and social workers plan to assist in running the

Wellness room by taking turns to monitor students using the space," school social worker **Bristol Lopez** said. Social workers in the Wellness room allow students to hold social-emotional groups and provide individual sessions for students.

**Valentina Villarreal**, a 2024 grad, and her team, worked with Waymakers to "create an overall set of goals and visions for the space," Villarrael explained. The group's passion for mental health advocacy inspired them to create the room, envisioning that students need accompanying resources for

High School. They utilized vision boards, to make the space including fitting shades of colors, and a natural theme for the room's atmosphere. They also helped come up with activities and coping mechanisms essential for students in the room.

The emphasis of student resources becomes relevant now more than ever in schools. Mr. Hurtado explained, "Our emphasis as academic counselors is making sure students are on track to graduate," but, "without your mental being, all that is meaningless." With the addition of the Wellness room,



The new wellness room is opened for students. (photo by Adam Hawari)

the importance of student balance can be achieved. "Forgetting to take care of myself got in the way of my academics," Villarreal remembered.

The future for student resources has more potential since the Wellness room is added. Hopefully the utilization of the Wellness room will help the wellbeing of students.

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# Streaming Platforms Raise Prices Despite Consumer Backlash: Will the Cost of Convenience Be Too High?

By GRACE KIM



The increased subscription prices is affecting both old and new users and is now becoming a common trend line with the most popular streaming platforms. (drawing by Grace Kim)

With 2025 on the rise, Netflix, YouTube, Hulu, Apple TV+, and Disney Plus are increasing their prices once again which means their millions of subscribers will now have to spend more to use the services. The steep increase in prices has made quite a few viewers ask themselves whether the value of these services is worth the ever-increasing subscription fee. Other factors include the new features being constantly introduced, and competition increasing the already expensive content.

The trend of increasing the subscription prices is affecting both old and new users and is now becoming commonplace with the most popular streaming platforms. Although most people are quick to point out that inflation and competition

are the causes, it's easy to see why consumers say otherwise.

## Netflix:

Among the many platforms, Netflix has made some of the most drastic changes. Business Insider notes, the company had its third price increase within two years in October 2023. The plan with advertisements now costs \$6.99, while the ad-free standard plan costs \$15.49 per month. In addition to the jaw-dropping \$22.99 per month, Netflix now charges for the premium plan which boasts the highest video quality without interruptions. The company has also begun to crack down on password sharing, forcing users to pay \$8 dollars for each additional person outside the primary household.

## YouTube TV:

YouTube's primary service package has also had steady price increases in recent years. Based on the information provided by Associated Press, while YouTube started with a base price of \$35.00 a month in 2017, the new customers are now charged \$82.99 a month; this recent change is in fact an increase from the \$72.99 rate the company was previously using prior to the change. The company attributes "increasing content cost" to be the major justification for their price change. This claim is being repeated throughout the industry. As YouTube TV raises its prices, it finds itself in direct competition with other live TV streaming services, where Hulu + Live TV also put up their prices to \$82.99 for the ad-based service. The trend of increasing rates in live stream services is driven by the increasing demand for package subscriptions which offer Disney+ and Hulu services together with other benefits.

## Disney+ and Hulu:

According to USA Today, Disney+ raised its subscription prices across various plans starting October 17, 2024, impacting both current and new subscribers. The basic Disney+ plan with ads increased from \$7.99 to \$9.99 per month, while the ad-free Disney+ plan rose from \$13.99 to \$15.99 monthly or from \$139.99 to \$159.99 annu-

ally. For those bundling Disney+ and Hulu, the ad-supported bundle price increased by \$1 to \$10.99, while the ad-free bundle remained at \$19.99. ESPN+ saw a \$1 price hike to \$11.99 per month, and standalone Hulu increased to \$9.99 monthly with ads or \$18.99 without ads. Hulu + Live TV also saw increases, with the ad-supported plan rising from \$76.99 to \$82.99 monthly and the ad-free version climbing from \$89.99 to \$95.99. While Disney integrated Hulu into the Disney+ app for those subscribing to both services to simplify access earlier in 2024, the prices will continue to skyrocket as better "deals" are being provided.

## Is the Cost Still Worth It?

For many consumers, these price increases are beginning to feel like a step too far. While the companies behind these services are arguing rising costs and the need for more investment in original content to justify the hikes, viewers are left questioning whether the value of these services still holds up.

The addition of ads to previously ad-free services has also left many frustrated, especially when these platforms have previously promised a better user experience in exchange for higher fees. Senior **Katherine Cho** said, "The price rising sucks and I feel like the companies will keep raising prices until people completely

stop using it. They are trying to make as much money as possible by stretching the max amount of money people are willing to pay."

In addition, the crackdown on password sharing is viewed by many as a direct attempt to squeeze even more money from users who have traditionally shared subscriptions with friends and family. As these platforms continue to push for higher prices and more ads, viewers may soon find themselves wondering if the convenience of streaming is worth the ever-increasing price tag. Freshman **Joy Kim** shared, "These platforms should be accessible amongst families because we want to spend time together watching our favorite shows. Putting in more ads and even adding more subscription fees for additional members is ruining the purpose of having quality time that is supposed to be promised by the companies."

As the competition for subscriber money intensifies, the pressure on streaming services to maintain user satisfaction and profitability remains high. However, with rising subscription fees and the declining value for consumers, the streaming boom could face new challenges in 2025 and beyond. For now, many are left weighing the costs of their favorite streaming services against the entertainment options available in the evolving media landscape.

# Winter Outfit Staples for the Upcoming New Year

By AMY PARK

As the cold season approaches, Cypress High School students were asked for their "must have items" for their winter outfits. Influencers and trendsetters have become the center of attention, shaping teenagers' wardrobes while leaving a lasting impression on fashion trends.

Everyone has their own must have item in their wardrobes for winter. These consist of a wide range of items including skirts paired with knee high boots, warm and puffy jackets, cardigans, trench coats, scarfs, and more. All these staples are essential for the winter season as they keep you warm while adding a touch of uniqueness.

**Jude De Leon**, a senior at Cypress High School said, "I thrifted this vintage Ralph Lauren half trench coat which is khaki colored, which is my winter essential this year." Recently, trench coats have come back in style with their chic, mature, and classy look. Many people pair their trench coats with trousers, jeans, a dress, and skirts

with a simple top underneath. Puffer jackets have become increasingly popular and have remained consistent with their practicality. **Mr. Payne**, an English teacher at Cypress High School said "My winter staple this year is this puffer jacket from Costco that my wife gifted me. I wasn't too sure about it at first but after wearing it for the first time, I received three compliments on it. It's super comfortable so this is a must-have for the cold season."

Regarding accessories, **Patrick Cheung**, a senior at Cypress High School said, "Some nice warm socks are always nice to have in my wardrobe." During winter many people wear fuzzy socks, knee length socks, fleece lined socks, or cable knit socks mainly for their thickness.

**Joie Do**, a senior at Cypress High School said, "I like wearing fleece lined tights under my pants to keep me warm." Wearing fleece lined pants can be paired with even skirts to create an illusion while the fleece

lined texture keeps one warm while maintaining its style.

**Gabby Duran**, a senior at Cypress High School said, "I really like pairing my winter outfits with scarfs to make my outfit

cuter." Lately, scarves have made a big comeback on social media. Many influences include big chunky scarves in their winter outfits to add a warm but stylish accessory to their outfits. Investing in classic winter sta-

ples not only offers warmth but also adds a classic signature to the winter season. These pieces are more than comfort; they are the perfect blend of personal style and functionality everyone needs.



A Collage of Cypress High School Students and Their Winter Essentials. (photo by Amy Park)

# New Year, New You: Setting the Tone for 2025

By REINA TAKAGI

As we head into 2025, people from all over the world look forward to making New Year's resolutions. Symbolizing growth and change—these resolutions are an opportunity to continue practices, accomplish personal goals, and improve behavior.

For Junior **Devan Forester**, carrying over last year's habits is important. Some would include doing Bible devotionals in the morning, stretching, and singing. Forester's inspiration for setting and accomplishing goals come from the people around her. The theater student recently starred as Laurie in Cypress High School's production of Little Women, and said she is, "inspired by all the people I act with and the people that I look up to for their skills." In 2024, Forester learned that hard work

best to "refocus and resituate." Like many others, Sophomore **Gabriel Camacho's** resolutions include focusing on mental health. Camacho said, "2025 is the year I want to be more focused on myself, and branch out to set ways to emphasize who I can be." Social media is a tool that inspires him to accomplish his goals. "Although it can be controversial and sometimes leads to unrealistic mindsets, seeing people my age accomplishing the goals I want pushes me to an extent where I want to keep going." Camacho is inspired by the videos and posts he sees online, which he plans to continue using to motivate himself. He said, "2024 was a year that taught me it's okay to feel behind amongst your peers." Camacho expressed his gratitude for social media and his closest friends, who helped him through the year.



People celebrated the New Year all around the world. (Photo by Reina Takagi)

pays off. "I appreciated seeing me be able to do things that when I was younger, I always wanted to do," she expressed.

Junior **Kaylee Valdez's** goals for the new year are to get her grades up and participate in activities that will benefit her in the future. Valdez's support and inspiration comes from her friends and family. She said, "I don't have a lot of high expectations from everybody. They just want me to do the best I can do, and people trust the choices that I go through." Valdez learned a lot from the past year's experiences, and also from the advice she got. From this, Valdez expressed how she "learned more and more how to carry [her]self mentally, and how to be better as a person."

Junior **Lain Bui's** resolutions for the new year are to be more active in school and to keep in touch with friends. Bui's inspiration for setting and accomplishing goals is, "Looking around and seeing my friends who seem to be really passionate." It is hard to stay accountable, and Bui admitted that she does tend to get off track. However, when it does happen, she tries her

**Daphne True**, an English teacher at Cypress High School, suggests for her students to have new semester resolutions and habits that they want to enact for this new year. Breaking down work into smaller chunks, and following a more consistent schedule are some of her own resolutions. True competes with herself, which inspires her to set and accomplish goals. She said, "I try not to compare myself to others, but instead look at times that I have felt successful and times I feel not so successful." To stay accountable for goals, True suggests and is planning on giving herself regular reminders, checking on stress and workload levels, and "addressing the things I need to address in the moment," True explained. When asked what she learned from 2024, True answered, "Even when it feels like the world is ending, things are going to be okay."

Making New Year's resolutions gives us the chance for a fresh start. Universally known about and practiced, goals made in the New Year provide a sense of direction for the future and motivate us to be our best selves. What better time to set a goal than now?

## What Is The Hardest Class At Cypress: Some students have many AP classes on their schedules-but which ones are the toughest?

By MINNEL VEGA



Teachers and students have strong opinions on how to survive a difficult class. (Photo by Minnel Vega)

Every student has a class that stands out as the most challenging. Some classes are hard because of the workload for projects, tests, or homework assignments, while other courses are hard because of the subject matter itself.

Cypress High School has several challenging classes involving AP Calculus, AP U.S. History, AP Physics, AP Biology, and AP Literature, pushing students to their limits. Senior **Emily Hong** said, "I think the hardest class is one of the math classes like Calculus B.C. From what I heard through my friends, they struggle with it a lot." Junior **Vinuthna Kuchibhotla** says, "For me, I think it is Physics because it takes one equation and goes into another one and you have to memorize all the information."

But what makes a class hard? A class can be hard for many reasons, but is it the subject itself that's hard to understand or the number of tests or homework that comes with it? Freshman **Yashika Patel** shared, "I think the material makes a class hard. If the subject matter is hard, then the class will be hard. If the topic is easy, then the class will be easy."

Depending on the AP class, the difficulty level can differ for students who take them. How-

ever, to encourage students to succeed in these classes, teachers motivate students while preparing them for the AP test. AP Government teacher, Mr. **Scott Eastridge** explained that for a student to be motivated they have to change their perspective about school, "I think it's fair for a student to say 'Why am I learning all this stuff?' And then if a student can come to their own understanding, like 'This is why I come to school and this is why I'm here,' I think it's so much easier for them to be motivated. They're not doing this for their parents. They're not doing it because their teacher made them. I think the 'why' is helpful for some students that may not be motivated about their education." AP World History teacher, Mr. **Ryan Rueter** says, "I'm super lucky that the students I teach already have a lot of internal motivation, so I think on top of that making sure they understand they can do it that when it's challenging and even when we're grinding our way through DBQ's and writing. It's just a matter of being able to produce those skills when the time comes and that way they can do well in the class and do well in the exam so I think it's just making sure everyone kind of believes in themselves."

AP Language and English II Honors teacher Mrs. **Hiba Taylor** says, "I think it's in my passion for the subject and my enthusiasm for certain texts that get students curious about what we are reading. I do a lot of "cheerleading" and try to offer feedback to push students to improve in writing and analysis. Also...I have a generous grading curve."

Teaching students in an AP class is challenging. But to make sure students master the advanced course, teachers have to enjoy teaching them. Mr. Eastridge said he decided to teach AP because he thinks, "It's a privilege because you work with students who are more committed to really trying and more genuinely interested in trying to learn." Mr. Rueter added, "It's students who have chosen to take the class, rather than being forced into it. It challenges me, the idea of getting a group of students ready every single year to take an AP exam and hopefully pass an AP exam." Mrs. Taylor says, "I earned my Master's Degree in Rhetoric and Composition, which is essentially what the class covers, so it seemed like a natural fit and I loved the content of the course."

In the end, is it the bigger impact on student's time management or the amount of work teachers assign? 10th-grade counselor Ms. **Amanda Lu**, says, "I think that time management is a skill many students are very much still learning. With regard to what teachers are assigning and the amount of work that teachers are assigning, ultimately all of that is intended to help students prepare for exams whether it's an AP exam or even a quiz that they might be having." Of course, all students have a challenging course, but with the guidance of a good teacher and hard work, they can succeed in it.

## Sarah Binford Named 2024 Teacher Of The Year

By BETTY LANGRINE

A dedicated educator at Cypress High School, **Sarah Binford** has been named CHS 2024 Teacher of the year. Binford teaches AP U.S. History, and is the adviser for ASB. She has had a career in education for 11 years, and started her teaching career as a substitute in 2009 before she went on to a full-time position in 2013. This recognition is particularly special for Binford, as Cypress High School is also her alma mater.

Throughout her years at Cypress High, Binford has demonstrated her commitment and passion for her profession. Her dedication has not gone unnoticed in fact she was nominated other times. This year, though, is the first time Binford won the award.

Binford expressed her gratitude and honor at being recognized by her peers. "There were a lot of great teachers nominated," she said, "so I

feel very happy to be selected for the Teacher of the Year." Her humility and appreciation for her fellow educators highlight the collaborative spirit that she puts into her work.

**Seana Brief**, a nominee, spoke highly of this year's teacher of the year. "Binford is incredibly busy and does everything," Brief remarked. "She's involved in ASB and all kinds of other activities on campus. She truly deserves to win."

Binford's involvement in ASB showcases her dedication to enriching the student experience beyond the classroom. Her ability to juggle various responsibilities while maintaining a high standard of teaching shows why she was chosen for teacher of the year. "She is an amazing teacher who shows she cares with how she treats us. She's a teacher who deserves it," said ASB President **Aimee Bunsirisert**.

Sarah Binford's impact goes beyond the classroom through her involvement in various school activities. Her work ethic makes her a deserving winner of this award.



Sarah Binford is the ASB adviser, but she is often mistaken for her twin sister, Head Counselor Mary Binford. (Photo by Betty Langrine)

# Introducing Best Buddies: A Beloved Tool to Bring the Cypress High Population Together

By ZOE CHUNG



Attendees of the 2024 Best Buddies Prom enjoy spending time together while taking pictures at the photobooth. (photo by Deborah Son)

Best Buddies, a student-run club at Cypress High School, fosters relationships between students with disabilities and the general education community.

**Emily Whiting**, the club's advisor and special education teacher, gave insight on the goings-on of the club. "It's common for students with disabilities to have a hard time making friends, so it's awesome to give them the opportunity to be included," she shared. When reflecting on the positive impact of Best Buddies on the Cypress High community, she explained that "while students with disabilities get to make friends and expand their relationships at school, the club notably has a positive impact on the general ed population who don't often have much experience with students with disabilities."

As the club's adviser says, she "[serves] as the liaison between the students with disabilities and the Best Buddies board. [She helps] with coming up

with ideas that will be of interest to [the] students and support them with the budget." The club is mostly student-run, with the board being in charge of handling the meetings and events. In support, she makes efforts to embolden the student board to be creative and come up with fresh, fun ideas.

Something Best Buddies hopes to accomplish in the next few years is to attract more students, while giving them the incentive to stay committed throughout the whole school year. "We usually have a lot of members at the beginning of the school year, and then attendance declines by the end of the year, so we want students to stay committed throughout the whole year," says Whiting.

Whiting's favorite part of being Best Buddies' adviser is that it leaves many lasting impressions on her students and the general education population at Cypress. "I love watching my students grow in the amount of relation-

ships and connections they have at school, and I like hearing how families are impacted and thankful for their students getting more of a 'quintessential' high school experience." she stated. Her favorite event for Best Buddies is the annual Best Buddies Prom. "My favorite event, and I think this is pretty universal, is Best Buddies Prom, which is usually held in the first week of May." This event is open to Best Buddies members, as well as any Cypress students interested in attending. Best Buddies Prom is held "either at Cypress Community Center or Cypress Senior Center." However, some students might describe Halloween Movie Night as their favorite event, making both Best Buddies Prom and Halloween Movie Night the most beloved events.

If you are interested in what this club has to offer, Best Buddies meets every other Thursday in the Media Center, with the next meeting being held on February 13th.

# On the Road to Change: Advocating for Safer Crosswalks

By DEBORAH SON

**Kalayarasan Thangamani**, a senior at Cypress High School voiced his concerns regarding unsafe crosswalks at the intersections of Moody Street and Marion Avenue to the Cypress Traffic Commission Committee on Dec. 10, 2024. He has worked on this issue for four months and has made significant progress toward his goal.

In Cypress High School AP Government classes, students are required to construct a civic action project as part of their curriculum. These projects are intended to push students into the real world by encouraging them to participate in addressing social, political, personal, and community issues. By taking the initiative, students have the opportunity to engage in advocacy and service while empowering individuals to make lasting changes.

Thangamani aimed to raise awareness regarding the dangers of inadequate quality crosswalks while physically making our community a better place. "The success I have had with my civic action project makes me feel I have actually made a dif-

ference in our community. Being able to physically make our community safer makes me feel satisfied, and brings on a whole new level of accomplishment," he said.

Despite facing multiple obstacles including a lack of time and extra hands in bringing his project to life, he persevered and raised awareness regarding the issue he encountered in hopes of making others feel safer. After countless hours of research, he was able to bring forward an effective solution: adding lights to the affected crosswalks. "The civic action project helped show me how I can make a real difference in our community, and I hope that the pedestrians who frequently use that crosswalk will feel safer when crossing the street," Thangamani said.

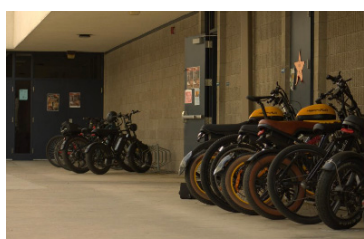
Not only does this civic action project actively challenge students to apply their understanding of government processes to the real world, but also allows students to contribute a meaningful change to society. Thangamani is a true reflection of what this goal means to the school community.



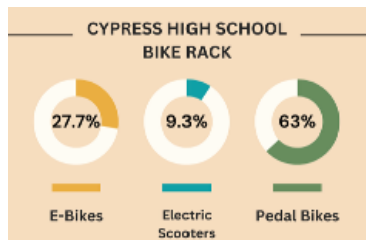
Kalayarasan Thangamani, a senior at Cypress High School has been working on this Civic Action Project for four months and felt the traffic commission was supportive and open minded of helping the community. (photo by Deborah Son)

# The Rise of E-Bikes: Convenience Meets Controversy at Cypress High School

By YAZEED ALBADARIN



More students are riding e-bikes this year. (photo by Yazeed Albadarin)



A survey conducted on January 14th, 2025 showed a noticeable increase in E-bike usage. (photo by Yazeed Albadarin)

E-bikes have become a common sight in high school bike racks. A recent survey conducted by a Cypress High School student revealed that 27.7% of bikes and scooters on campus are e-bikes, while 9.3% are scooters, and 63% remain traditional pedal bikes. E-bikes are so great because they don't require a license, registration, or insurance.

Eighth-grader **Amro Obid** from Lexington Junior High School shared his experiences with e-bikes, highlighting both their convenience and the dangers he has faced. "Riding an e-bike is really enjoyable, but I've been in a few crashes," he explained.

"I've been hit by a car. At first, I didn't care much about safety, but after breaking my leg I had to be on crutches and I wasn't able to do sports, I've learned to be more cautious."

Amro also noted the mental and physical toll of these incidents, saying, "Not wearing a helmet during those crashes made things worse. I had to take bike safety classes, and now I always wear a helmet and drive carefully." Despite the challenges, Amro acknowledges the convenience of e-bikes. "My dad works a lot, so having an e-bike gave me a

way to get around. They're quick and affordable, but it's important to use them responsibly."

With the rise in e-bike-related accidents and thefts, some community members advocate for stricter regulations, including registration and speed limitations. These measures aim to improve safety and accountability, especially as more teens adopt e-bikes as their primary mode of transportation.

Eleventh-grade **Elias Al-Hawari** from Cypress High School says "I've had amazing experienc-

es with e-bikes." But, he proposes that "bikes that can hit speeds of 50+ miles per hour should be registered. Or you should take a safety class."

E-bikes have revolutionized how teenagers commute, offering a practical and eco-friendly alternative to traditional bikes. However, as their popularity grows, so do the challenges of ensuring safety and proper use. Parents, schools, and local governments must work together to promote responsible riding habits and implement measures that keep everyone safe on the road.

# Cavetown Fall Tour

By YOSUANY (YOSHI) VAZQUEZ MORENO



Cavetown performed at the Knitting Factory Concert House in Spokane. (photo by Vivid Seats)

Beginning February 11, 2025, indie band Cavetown will be returning to their Fall Tour after a brief hiatus on November 14, 2024.

The tour began on October 24, 2024 in Albany, New York, at The Egg and will end on February 16, 2025 in Spokane, Washington, in Knitting Factory Spokane. Previously, from October 24 through November 14, Cavetown performed with Frankie Cosmos, and will perform with illuminati hotties from February 11-16. Following the Fall Tour, they will continue to perform regularly through 2025.

The known setlist (posted but still open to change) is *let them know they're on*

*your mind, 1994, Sweet Tooth, heart attack, worm food, Juliet, frog, Lemon Boy, Pigeon, juno, fall in love with a girl, Guilty, alone, obvious, Boys Will Be Bugs, Home, and Devil Town.*

Tickets went on sale approximately two weeks before the concert began, and are still on sale as of January, with more on presale for concerts after the tour.

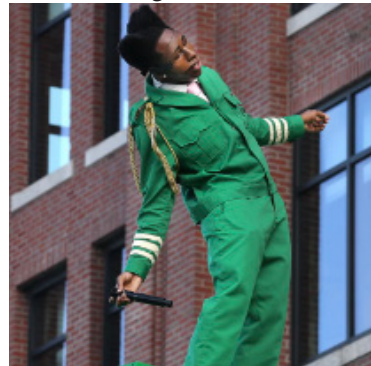


Indie band Cavetown will be returning to their Fall Tour. (photo by Greeblehaus)

# CHROMAKOPIA: World Tour

By YOSUANY (YOSHI) VAZQUEZ MORENO

Starting February 4th, 2025, Tyler, The Creator will begin a world tour for the eighth studio album in his discography, "CHROMAKOPIA", marking the seventh concert tour he's done for an album. "CHROMAKOPIA" was released through Columbia Records on October 28, 2024. The album was a follow-up to his 2021 studio album, "Call Me If You Get Lost." In contrast to most albums, it takes a deeper approach on his romantic situationships, worries of aging, and settling down. He also



Tyler the Creator's 8th album is "CHROMAKOPIA". (photo by Cosmopolitan)

expresses a constant fear of being judged as a public figure and reveals those same things he's scared of being judged for. There's a difficult choice to be made in his lyrics and "CHROMAKOPIA" isn't about which choice is right, it's about the com-



Tyler, The Creator performing in Camp Flog Gnaw for his new album. (photo by B-Sides)

plexity of the choice itself. The tour's setlist is compiled of all 11 songs in the album, written, produced, and arranged by Tyler, The Creator himself. The songs include St. Chroma (Featuring Daniel Caesar), Rah Tah Tah, Noid, Darling, I (Ft. Teezo Touchdown), Hey Jane, I Killed You, Judge Judy, Sticky (Featuring Glorilla, Sexy Red, and Lil Wayne), Take Your Mask Off (Featuring Daniel Caesar and LaToiya Williams), Tomorrow, Thought I Was Dead (Featuring ScHoolboy Q and Santigold), Like Him (Featuring Lola Young), Balloon (Featuring DoeChii), and I Hope You Find Your Way Home. Additionally, Lil Yatchy and Paris

Texas are performing at the tour as supporting acts.

The world tour starts on Tuesday, February 4th, 2025, at the Xcel Energy Center in Saint Paul, Minnesota, performing all over until it concludes on September 5th, 2025, at RAC Arena in Perth, Australia. As of November 1st, 2024, the tickets went on sale for the general public.



The tour will start on February 4th and end on September 5th. (photo by Greg Noire)

# Growing Alongside The King Before The Throne

By CARLY PEDROZA



Rising to the Challenge: Mufasa: The Lion King gives a glimpse into the origins of a kingdom's legacy. (photo by Carly Pedroza)

Disney released one of their newest animated films, "Mufasa: The Lion King" on December 20, 2024. Directed by Barry Jenkins, this film dives into the backstory of Mufasa, taking the audience through the leader of the Pride Lands. The movie gives fans a better view on one of Disney's well-loved characters. The film takes us to a time before Simba, showing Mufasa's early life, struggles, and how he took over the throne.

The film features the voices of actors, with Aaron Pierre as the voice of young Mufasa, Kelvin Harrison Jr. as the voice of Scar, Billy Eichner and Seth

Rogen as the voices of Timon and Pumbaa, John Kani as Rafiki, and Beyoncé as Sarabi.

The movie goes into Mufasa's childhood, exploring his origins and the challenges he faced before becoming king. We see how his relationship is with his brother, Scar takes a turn for the worst. The main focus of the movie is Mufasa's growth as a leader while learning to balance his kindness, on top of his relationship with his future wife/queen, Sarabi. The movie highlights loyalty, family, and destiny while sharing Mufasa's past, demonstrating that wasn't always the calm and wise figure. This film

brings the audiences closer to the character and takes us into the past of the Lion King universe.

"Mufasa: The Lion King" connects to the 1994 original and the 2019 remake by expanding more on Mufasa's backstory. It gives viewers an in-depth backstory on his rise to the throne. While the 1994 film focuses on Simba's journey, the 2024 movie shifts the spotlight to his father, showing how Mufasa became the strong leader who would one day guide Simba. The movie brings in the details of family and the Circle of Life with references to the newborn cub from the original movie. This scene connects the two films together, giving the audience a sense of continuity while adding depth to the world of the Pride Lands.

With an emotional and thrilling backstory to one of the well known characters in Disney history, Mufasa is a great addition to the Lion King. The film expands the world of the Pride Lands. While showing how Mufasa's past brings him to be how he is in his future.

## COMIC



# Squid Game Season 2: The Game Is Back With New Twists

By MIFRAH BAWANY



Squid Game is back with its long-awaited second season. (photo by Mifrah Bawany)

Netflix's popular series *Squid Game* is back with its long-awaited second season, which premiered on December 26, 2024. The new season, set in a secret location like before, follows Seong Gi-hun (played by Lee Jae) as he reenters the deadly competition. This time, Gi-hun has a purpose: to uncover the truth behind the organization

running the deadly games and stop them. Season 2 promises even more drama and suspense with new players and games.

In *Squid Game* Season 2, we meet familiar and new characters. Seong Gi-hun, the main character from Season 1, is back and more determined than ever to stop the games. The frontman,

Hwang In-ho (Lee Byung-hun), plays a bigger role by even joining the competition. New players include Kang No-eul (played by Park Gyu-young) a former soldier with a tough past, Kim Jun-hee (Jo Yu-ri) a young mom trying to care for her child, and Lee Minyeong-gi (Yim Siwan), a businessman who lost everything. Each per-

son has reasons for joining the games, and their stories make the season even more intense as they fight to survive.

Season 2 continues the story by exploring the dark and dangerous world of games. New contestants join the games, each with heartbreaking stories and reasons for being there. Gi-hun faces even tougher physical and emotional challenges as he tries to survive while also working on exposing the truth. One of the biggest twists is that the organizer of the games, Hwang In-ho also known as "The Front Man" becomes directly involved in the competition. After running the games behind the scenes in Season 1, In-ho entered as a player for initially unclear reasons.

Season 2 feels different from the first season. In

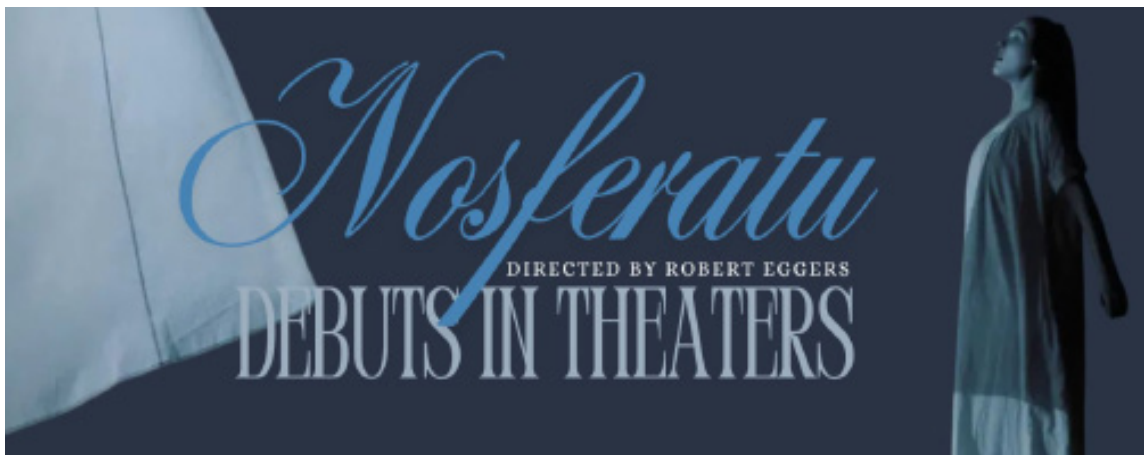
Season 1, the focus was on introducing the games and shocking the audience with the brutal challenges. It was all new and surprising, which made it hard to look away from. Season 2, on the other hand, is more about the character's backstories and exploring how the games are run behind the scenes.

In conclusion, Season 2 of *Squid Game* takes the story to a deeper and more emotional level. Some viewers thought that Season 2 focused more on ending the game, and now they are expecting Season 3 to be more about the people running the games and the games themselves.

Overall, Season 2 shows that the fight for survival isn't just about winning the game—it's also about uncovering the truth and standing up for what's right.

## Nosferatu Now Features in Theaters

By REHANSA KULATILLEKE



Nosferatu has earned over \$150 million in the box office. (photo by Amy Park)

Robert Eggers's remake of F.W. Murnau's 1922 Horror silent film, *Nosferatu* debuted in theaters on December 25th, 2024. The film stars well-known actors such as Bill Skarsgård as Count Orlock, Lily-Rose Depp as Ellen Hutter, and Nicholas Hoult as Thomas Hutter. Where fans of the 1922 cult classic have been waiting for over a century for its appearance.

The film follows the story of a vampire, Count Orlock (Skarsgård) who grows obsessed with the wife of an estate agent, Ellen Hutter (Depp). The film starts with Thomas Hutter (Hoult) being tasked to travel from England to the count's mansion where he is met with disturbing details of Count Orlock from the townspeople who have witnessed the horrors of Orlock. Thomas later grows aware of his past and tries to flee his mansion, but ends up getting trapped attempting his escape. Orlock

starts his journey to England while plaguing the people on his way. Meanwhile, Ellen has consistently been haunted by visions of Orlock. The resolution of the film results in a tragic act of sacrifice that leaves the audience devastated by the sudden turn of events.

While most of the main themes from both the original and novel were still kept in the remake, there were many new additions to the film, including how Ellen is introduced to Count Orlock. In the 1922 version, Count Orlock finds out about Ellen through a picture of Ellen in Thomas's locket, while in the remake Ellen calls out for Orlock in search of companionship.

Reading Movies: Film Literacy teacher, **Mrs. Monera** explained, "In the first iteration of it, Orlock sought her out and he had seen Ellen from her husband...In this movie,

the idea is that she summoned him." Another minor difference is the additional characters, Anna Harding (played by Emma Corrin) and Professor Albin Eberhart Von Franz (played by Willem Dafoe).

The original film by F.W. Murnau's 1922 Horror silent film, *Nosferatu: A Symphony of Horror* was initially inspired by Bram Stoker's novel *Dracula*, where many of the main themes were enacted in the film. After the production of the 1922 *Nosferatu*, Bram Stoker's wife, Florence Stoker sued the company for copyright infringement where all prints of the film were set to be destroyed. However, by then, it was pointless since the film already gained a large following from people all over the world.

*Nosferatu* continues to be one of the most influential films even after one hundred years of support from across the globe.

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# Cypress Boys Basketball: Start to the Cypress High Basketballs Season

By BRYANA BENNETT

Cypress boys basketball defeated La Habra at home on January 21, 2025, in a close game that had the crowd cheering on their feet.

In the last 40 seconds of the game, Cypress was down 60-63. Then **Gavin Kroll** (#22) made a two-pointer, lifting the score to 62-63. And in the last 14 seconds, **Hayden Roberts** (#4) made a three-pointer, securing the win for Cypress with a final score of 65-63. An achievement during the game was made by junior **Ryan Gov** (#1) who became the sixth person in Centurion history to score 1,000 points. Gov stated that "it was a big milestone and it feels really good to accomplish that."

The boys basketball team at Cypress High School is a close-knit team with dedicated coaches and an electric group of fans that help to bring energy to every game.

Round 3 CIF is the far- these we've ever gone for basketball, and we're going to try and do it again this

year," Hayden Roberts, a senior forward wing, said. This amazing achievement moved Cypress Basketball up to rank 65 in the state. These achievements make the current variety team feel empowered to make it even farther than last year.

One of the incredible things at the basketball games is the energy brought by the crowd. Senior forward **Jackson Houston** said, "It is really great to have people show up and support, it truly shows how close everyone is at Cypress."

**Ethan Mai**, a junior point guard, added "The Cyp-hype crowd really helps us bring energy to the game and rattles the other team." This energy really helps the crowd feel involved and makes the players happy to know that their community is showing up to support them. The team's success can be seen through the hard work all the coaches and players put in. Each player believes in the concept of "we" instead of "I." Mai

stated, "We're not individuals, we're a team, so when we come out, we come out as Cypress." **Head Coach Derek Mitchell** also tries to reinforce the players spirit and confidence. "Before every game, I try to find a quote that they can relate to," Mitchell said. The balance of discipline and enjoyment helps the team stay focused in a positive environment.

The team's spectacular dynamic has formed between the players and coaches. Senior stand-out **Kingston Birdsong** wanted to "thank my teammates and my coaches for making me better." **Assistant Coach Benny Hoang** highlighted this collaborative approach: "We are players' coaches; we understand, we empathize, we sympathize, and we want to get better together."

This family-like atmosphere makes even the toughest practices enjoyable. "My players are the best because I'm a hard coach and demand so much and they come to practice every day ready to work as hard as they can," said Coach Mitchell. The players' drive and commitment have helped to create a successful team and amazing environment.



The team huddles around the coach to reinforce spirit and confidence. (photo by Bryana Bennett)

# Girl's Basketball Returns to the Courts: Rebuilding After High Number Of Graduates

By REHANSA KULATILLEKE

Girls' Basketball returned to the courts in November 2024 with a challenging beginning against Marina High School losing 61-53. Losses to Sonora and Yorba Linda followed.

With Cypress' development in the athletics department, the Girl's Basketball team moved up their rank from Division II to Division I where they currently hold an 11-9 overall record. Although the team is currently maintaining a winning record, it can be difficult to continue the hard work, especially with a new group of players.

are...it's a learning process." Although it can be quite difficult to start from scratch, starting something new can be the start of making new memories. While perfecting a new sport while still being new to the team can be strenuous, support from other team members is a crucial part of building a team.

Captain, **Morgan Mok** said, "I think at first one of the biggest struggles was everybody was new...getting into a rhythm and forming the chemistry took a lot of practice."

from joining the court, it doesn't stop them from cheering for their teammates. Captain **Kaiya Choi**, who was injured before the season began, explained, "Since I'm off the court this season, my goal is to bring energy from the bench because that affects our players on the court a lot."

The team's hard work continues after every game no matter what the outcome is or how exhausted they are. Their uplifting sportsmanship continues



Girl's Basketball season debuted on November 18th, with a score of 61-53. (photo by Rehansa Kulatilleke)

# Girl's Wrestling Hopes For a Fourth Title of League Championships

By JAYDEN KAY LINAYAO



Girls Wrestling team smiling wide, celebrating senior night. (photo by Jayden Kay Linayao)

As the season comes to an end, the Girl's Wrestling team is working hard to close their season with the title of League Champions. The girls celebrated their seniors on January 8th, wrestling for the second to last time on their home mat.

Hoping for a fourth title of League Champions, the team has one more match to earn that trophy. "You have to get 43 points to win," **Darren Norris**, Cypress High School's Girls Wrestling Coach said, "once we get to 43, we win and then it's just icing on the cake after that."

Varsity seniors **Nathaly Granillos**, and **Jordan "JP" Puluti**, find that wrestling is their way to "release anger and aggression on the mat." "The hardest part is having the will to keep going. It's mentally and physically draining, so you have to mentally prepare yourself for what you're going to take," Granillos explained. There are many challenges that come with wrestling, one being the discipline of maintaining a consistent weight for weigh-ins. Senior **Kayla Pablo**, and **Ariel**

**Penelzoa**, Captains for the Girls Wrestling team, have spent the past few years learning the challenges and responsibilities of being a team captain. "Becoming captain, you had to be the one to lead everybody, and lead by example and show them what we're supposed to be doing," Penelzoa explained. Along with the responsibilities of being a captain, the girls have spent their seasons at Cypress growing their passion for the sport, and working through challenges that they faced along the way. "You get a certain feeling from winning, and you have to have a lot of heart for the sport, if you don't, there is no point in being there," Pablo stated, "...it's very time consuming and your mind can take a toll, if you have a poor mentality you're not going to do good in the sport, so you have to believe in yourself."

Wrestling is a tough sport that requires discipline, commitment, and hard work. These seniors are preparing to take what they learned through wrestling, and input it into their lives after high school.

# Boys Wrestling Adjusts To New Coach

By JAYSON KAI LINAYAO



Dylan Thiengern triumphantly defeats opponent from Sonora High. (photo by Jayson Kai Linayao)

The Cypress boys varsity wrestling team is currently 0-4 in League and 2-4 overall. Following the retirement of long-time coach **Jon Lundberg**, the team has a new coach, **Alex Driggers**. Driggers has been in wrestling for most of his life, "I started wrestling in 8th grade, wrestled all through high school, and wrestled all through college also," Coach Driggers said.

Seniors are lamenting the end of their high school careers, "Since the season is coming to a close, it's

kind of tough to realize, but overall I just accepted it," **Derek Vu** said, "It's over and I enjoy it." Derek has wrestled all four years at Cypress.

Through this season so far, the varsity team has a record of two wins and four losses.

"I'm really proud of this team and how hard they've worked all year," Coach Driggers said, "We got some guys on the team that have a really good shot of making it all the way to the state tournament."