

February 6, 2025

St. Augustine High <u>School</u>

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Fires devastate Southern California

By Paddy Ward ('26) STAFF WRITER

Issue 4

Southern California has experienced a tragic start to the new year, as devastating wildfires have scorched over 50,000 acres of land. Tens of thousands of homes have been destroyed, entire neighborhoods set ablaze, over 100,000 people evacuated, and 29 lives lost so far.

The first two of the major fires were the Palisades Fire of Northern Los Angeles and the Eaton Fire of Pasadena. These two fires alone have brought destruction not seen to California since the devastating wildfires of 2021 and the catastrophic Camp Fire of 2018 in which 85 people perished.

The Eaton Fire has wreaked havoc upon the communities of Altadena, Sierra Madre, and Pasadena. According to ABC News Los Angeles, the Eaton Fire has been even more devastating than the Palisades fire, with more than 9,400 homes being lost, making it one of the most destructive in California's history of fires. According to Cal Fire, the Palisades Fire, the largest fire of the group as of January 29th, has reached over 23,000 acres. Spanning from Malibu to Santa Monica, the fire has raged on the coast and in the mountains, virtually eradicating the communities of Pacific Palisades and Topanga Beach. 6,800 homes have been destroyed, and tens of thousands of people displaced. Thankfully, after almost three weeks of unending fury, the fire has been contained.

Several other fires have also erupted this month. The largest of these (just smaller than the Eaton Fire) is the Hughes Fire of Santa Clarita, which has brought much anxiety and destruction to the region.

San Diego has not been immune from the wildfire spell. Though not starting as early as the Palisades and Eaton Fires, several wildfires broke out on January 23. The Gilman Fire and some other shortly lived fires broke out, but the Border 2 Fire has been a cause for serious concern in San Diego. SEE **FIRE**, **pg. 3**



Wildfires devastated Southern California for several weeks in January 2025, forcing over 100,000 from their homes and burning tens of thousands of acres.

Saints theater shines at CETA



By Sebastian Rodriguez ('27) STAFF WRITER

Saints Theater featured an incredible performance in its fall show *Trap*, and California took notice. The show won third place in Area 4 for the California Educational Theater Association, or CETA for short. Saints also took home a trophy for their third place achievement which is currently being displayed in the Saints front office.

This amazing achievement allowed the cast and crew of *Trap* to go up to Fullerton, California, to attend an event hosted by CETA at Fullerton Union High School. At the event they performed a scene from the show in the Festival of Scenes, a competition between schools who won second or third place awards for their respective areas. One scene from each play was performed, with an overall winner being announced at the end of the night. Though we didn't win the Festival of Scenes, the opportunity to perform in the first place marked new strides for the Saints Theater Program. This is the first time Saints has gotten in the top three in Area 4, and the first time we've been invited to attend this event. The event started on the evening of Friday, January 17, with a show, a welcome presentation, and awards for Area 4. Saints Drama director Mr. Blumer gave a Director's Award to two students, sophomore Pablo Romero and OLP senior Laura Allen. An Adjudicator Award, the best award that could be given to a student, was given to senior Max Leadley.



Avian health flu the coop

By Sebastian Lutteroth ('28) CONTRIBUTOR

It's flu season! While many of us Saintsmen have suffered from sporadic sicknesses, a bird flu has been ravaging the bird population. In 2024 alone, 58 million birds died or were euthanized, creating major concerns across America.

The bird flu is not a new disease, as it dates back to Italy in the nineteenth century. This avian influenza has recently broken out again in San Diego, marking the first major outbreak since 2015. It is so contagious that once one bird gets the flu, every other bird in that flock is also at

Saturday consisted of two workshops (which students individually signed up

Saints Drama holding their trophy at the California Educational Theater Association showcase. Colden Lamb

for) sandwiched in between two shows. There were a variety of workshops for all the students attending, including some for acting, auditions, improv, tech, accents, and many more.

The third and final day began with a show before the Festival of Scenes. In the Festival of Scenes, the cast performed Section 2 of *Trap*, the story of Norma Pike and the Oak Box. The scene went wonderfully, and actors Laura Allen, senior Evan Perez, and OLP sophomore Sophia McKay received a paid trip to Sacramento in March to represent CETA.

Overall, the students that went loved CETA. Junior Henry Barwick said, "Going to CETA was really fun. I enjoyed seeing all the different productions and meeting a lot of other people from various other schools around Southern California."

Coincidentally, another school there had performed *Trap* as well. We had a blast finding our counterparts and discussing the amazing experiences we all had during the show.

I personally had a great time at CETA and really hope I get to go at least one more time before I graduate.

The Co-director of *Trap*, Colden Lamb, also enjoyed CETA, and thought it was a really big accomplishment for Saints Theater. He said, "What I liked most and what put things into perspective for me was seeing St. Augustine's name in the CETA playbill alongside performing arts schools and other winners. That's when it really hit me that we won."

risk.

San Diego has experienced some major repercussions from the bird flu, with this strain of influenza causing some minor contamination of surfaces, clothing, and equipment. And that's not even the worst part. The most tangible effect has been the shortage of eggs, leading to a dramatic increase in egg prices.

Since dead birds don't lay eggs, egg prices have jumped. Although it doesn't sound like much, San Diego's average price of eggs before the outbreak was around \$3.50 - now it's \$7.

The good news is that the outbreak has begun to stabilize, but it will take time for the egg market to recover. With this year's improved flu shot, you're almost guaranteed not to get this bird flu, and there have been zero cases reported in San Diego.

With the flu season slowly coming under control, remember to stay healthy and safe.

WORLD NEWS

Cardinal McElroy Goes to Washington



By George Burrell ('26) STAFF WRITER

On January 6, 2025, Pope Francis appointed Cardinal Robert McElroy as Archbishop of Washington. His archdiocese will encompass not only Washington, D.C., but also five counties in Maryland.

McElroy, who has served as the diocesan bishop of San Diego for nearly the past decade, will be succeeding Cardinal Wilton Gregory in Washington not long after President Trump assumes his second term in office.

There was wide speculation that the pope's appointment of Cardinal McElroy was to send a message to Donald Trump at the dawn of his second term. McElroy, after all, enjoyed the reputation of being among the most progressive Catholic bishops in America, advocating stances such as greater acceptance of the members of the LGBTQ community; compassion and support for migrants (whether legal or not); speaking out against social and economic injustice; and in the Church, advocating against excommunicating pro-choice Catholic politicians.

This, however, is mere speculation, as there is no evidence that the timing of his

appointment was meant to make some sort of statement.

As archbishop of Washington, Cardinal McElroy will not assume the role of some sort of American pope. As archbishop, he will only enjoy jurisdiction over the faithful in his Washington archdiocese. As cardinal, he will continue being an advisor to Pope Francis, and when the time comes, he will function as a papal elector and will indeed become a candidate for the papacy himself.

Even though Cardinal McElroy doesn't have civic political power, he nonetheless will rub shoulders with a lot of politicians in Washington of both parties. As archbishop, he will continue to speak out on moral and social issues he considers important, advocating for peace in our country, greater justice in our laws, and mercy toward the lowly.

As the diocesan bishop of San Diego, he was a kind, humble, and compassionate pastor. Let us pray for Cardinal McElroy in his new ministry as archbishop of Washington.

His installation as the eighth archbishop of Washington is scheduled for March 11, 2025.



Trump takes office



President Trump (left) offering free high fives at the inauguration alongside *Star Wars* bounty hunter, Cad Bane (right).

By Leo Mangine ('27) CONTRIBUTOR

On Monday, January 20, 2025, Donald Trump and J.D. Vance were sworn in as the 47th President and 50th Vice President of the United States, respectively. The inaugural ceremony began at noon Eastern Time.

As a result of cold and harsh weather conditions, the inauguration was moved inside the White House. After being greeted by former President Joe Biden, Trump and Vance were sworn into office, officially assuming their roles in the U.S. government.

Trump became just the second president to serve two non-consecutive terms (the last being Grover Cleveland way back in 1892). He also became the oldest person to be sworn into office, and first convicted felon to serve as president. J.D. Vance is one of the youngest vice presidents in U.S. history, and he is the first president or vice president to sport a beard in almost 80 years.

During this second inaugural address, Trump spoke about his plans for the country, mentioning mass deportations, declaring a national emergency at the U.S.-Mexico border, and promising the "golden age of America."

The inauguration was attended by many politicians, CEOs, and celebrities. Among the attendees were Meta's CEO Mark Zuckerburg, Apple's CEO Tim Cook, Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, and influencers Theo Von, Logan Paul, and Mike Tyson.

In the first few days of his presidency, Trump has signed dozens of executive orders which are declarations by the president that bear the force of law.

His major directives include allowing the country to "drill, baby, drill" for oil in Alaska, delaying the TikTok ban, ending birthright citizenship, renaming geographical features such as the Gulf of Mexico and Denali to the Gulf of America and Mount McKinley, respectively, and withdrawing the United States from the World Health Organization and the Paris Climate Agreement.

Regardless of whether you love Trump or hate him, it is hard to deny his ability to take the spotlight in the American political landscape. Hopefully, the next four years will help lead to a better future for the United States.

Possible peace in the Middle East?



By Kieron Scanlan ('26) STAFF WRITER

At long last, after 15 months of fighting between Israel and Palestine, a ceasefire deal is finally coming to fruition. Even with this new glimmer of hope, there are still plenty of questions regarding the agreement between the two nations. In the wake of the ceasefire plans, there still lies a long road towards recovery.

Israel and Palestine have been fighting on and off since 1947, but this most recent conflict has been the most destructive war between them. The violence has caused an estimated 100,000 casualties, and it has also resulted in large-scale desolation in Palestine. According to the BBC, around 60 to 70% of buildings have been destroyed, marking a reconstruction cost at several billions of dollars. The ceasefire went into effect on the morning of January 19, 2025, and the two nations were aided in negotiations by America, Egypt, and Qatar. The ceasefire is separated into three stages that would gradually lead to a more permanent peace in the Middle East. The first phase of the ceasefire will involve Israeli forces leaving Gaza paired with a hostage exchange. Over the course of six weeks, Hamas will release 33 Israeli hostages while Israel will release around 2,000 Palestinian prisoners. Displaced civilians will be allowed to return to their homes, and relief aid will be brought into Gaza to help with reconstruction. Israel will

remain along the border of Gaza, but it will leave all populated areas of Palestine.

Many of the Palestinians who returned home were unfortunately faced with unrecognizable ruins. Because of the constant bombing and fighting, many civilians have been left without homes. Many relief organizations, including the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), have worked to provide help for those who have lost everything.

During the first stage, both sides will begin negotiations for the second phase. The second part of the ceasefire will involve a permanent ceasefire deal, more hostage exchanges, and Israeli forces will completely withdraw from Palestine. The last stage will be the longest, as it calls for the reconstruction of Gaza and the return of all remaining hostages and prisoners on both sides. The rebuilding of Gaza is by far the most complicated step of the ceasefire as it will likely take years for the region to recover from the mass destruction which it endured. This ceasefire deal has been influenced both by the Biden and Trump administrations. President Trump had given many warnings calling for the end of the war before he assumed office, which may have factored into the deal. President Biden's administration also affected the direction of the negotiations, as the ceasefire deal is nearly identical to the deal that Biden had proposed back in May of 2023.



Israel had rejected earlier pressure

for a ceasefire, with Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu stating that he wanted to crush Hamas with "full force." It appears that the intensified international pressure has caused him to back off, as his cabinet approved the deal in mid-January.

By the end of January, 15 Israeli hostages and hundreds of Palestinian prisoners had been released. Many people, including President Trump, have said that the ceasefire is not likely to hold. There have been at least six attempts at a ceasefire in the past, and none of them have lasted for a considerable amount of time. Unless this relationship changes between the two countries, a permanent ceasefire this time is likely unattainable.

Further developments do not provide a very hopeful outlook for the future. Effective January 30, Israel will prevent the UNRWA from providing humanitarian aid to Palestine, creating yet another obstacle for the ceasefire negotiations.

Despite the fragility of the new ceasefire deal, it provides hope that Israel and Palestine can work to help end the disastrous conflict. America seems poised to play a large role in the negotiations, and hopefully this will contribute to a more permanent end to the violence in the Middle East.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY February 2025 Is the clock ticking on TikTok?



By Jose Manuel Prado Gonzalez ('27) CONTRIBUTOR

The app which over 150 million Americans utilize on a daily basis almost disappeared for good. This app, of course, is the short-video creation and viewing site TikTok. The majorly addicting, albeit entertaining app was banned by Congress and the Supreme Court, but was revived by the newly inaugurated President Trump not even a day after the ban went into effect.

The ban was a long time coming, with arguments dating all the way back to early in 2023. In March of that year, Congress gathered to discuss issues and speculations with the TikTok CEO, Shou Zi Chew. This would set the seeds for the future Supreme Court hearing held on January Wednesday 15th, 2025 where TikTok would be banned "for good."

The 2023 hearing was largely unproductive. The TikTok CEO was grilled about ties to China, data privacy, misinformation, teen addiction, and fentanyl. Several of these themes were renewed in the recent battles, though the emphasis was on national security threats.

The Congressional hearing saw five hours of relentless back and forth between the CEO and members of Congress, many of whom were remarkably unfamiliar with how TikTok functions. Some questions posed during this hearing had blatantly obvious answers such as "does TikTok access the home

WiFi?"

The CEO was also asked whether TikTok studied the pupil dilation of its users to better its algorithm, and whether or not he was ever associated with the CCP (Chinese Communist Party) or was a Chinese citizen. This led to an out-of-hand line of questioning because the CEO indignantly rebuffed these insinuations, reminding the Congressman that he was a Singaporean citizen and had served his country for two years.

In January of 2025, the Supreme Court made its decision to ban TikTok. Per Scotusblog, "Congress has determined that divestiture is necessary to address its well-supported national security concerns regarding TikTok's data collection practices and relationship with a foreign adversary."

Basically, TikTok was given an ultimatum. Either have it be banned on American devices, or sell its American branch to an American distributor. Some offers from notable entrepreneurs made to buy TikTok included Shark Tank host Kevin O'Leary, Mr. Beast, and a controversial streaming service called Kick.

Arguments brought up against the ban claimed that the central law being used against TikTok, the Protecting Americans from Foreign Controlled Applications Act, was an infringement on the First Amendment. The rebuttal, however, focused on the fact that the law was created to "deal only with control by a foreign adversary" and was "part of a broader effort to counter



threat posed by the People's Republic of China."

Following the Supreme Court's decision to uphold the ban, on January 19, 2025, TikTok was wiped from the face of American devices...for fourteen hours. It just so happened that President Trump offered a 90 day postponement of the ban that restored TikTok on American devices. It should be noted that Trump used to support the ban against TikTok but changed his mind after he "won youth by 34 points."

Across social media platforms including TikTok and Twitter, thousands of TikTok users expressed their grati-

a well-substantiated national security tude towards Trump for saving their platform.

> The whole ordeal was dragged out over a couple of years with many ridiculous trials, and once action was finally taken to ban the app, its ultimatum was extended even longer. Who is to say that after the 90 day extension we will end with a solution to our problem? Time is tick-tocking down until we see the end to this conflict, which hopefully will be a good one for all of our American citizens.

Meta cuts ties with facts

By James Burrell ('26) STAFF WRITER

"The Earth is flat! Australia doesn't exist! The Illuminati is controlling all your thoughts and actions! Wake up, sheeple!"

Many people are expecting comments like these to arise on Meta platforms, such as Instagram and Facebook, after the company's recent removal of third-party fact-checkers on their social media sites in the United States.

On January 7, Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg released a post explaining that the two branches of the company needed to "get back to their roots of free expression" by firing fact-checkers for being too "politically biased," citing concerns that they have "destroyed more trust than they've created."

Meta has said they will begin using a form of "community notes" similar to Elon Musk's system with X. With this format in use, multiple accounts need to pose similar concerns about the validity of



Image created using generative AI

FIRES

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I myself witnessed the Border 2 Fire erupt from a tiny plume of smoke to smoke enveloping the entire mountain and sky in less than 30 minutes. Saints students in affected areas have been put on high alert, with some even receiving evacuation warnings.

Currently, a large majority of these fires are being effectively fought. According to Cal Fire, as of Wednesday, January 29, the Palisades Fire is currently 96% contained, the Eaton Fire is 99% contained, the Hughes Fire is 98% contained, the Gilman Fire is fully contained, and the Border 2 Fire is 90% contained.

A crucial part of fighting these fires isn't only containing them, but also providing aid to those affected. We must help those who have lost everything and give our support to those who risk their own lives everyday to save others.

There are many ways which you can donate, with many organizations who offer support. Simply look up on Google and you will find numerous ways and places to donate. Some organizations to donate resources to are the Wildfire Recovery Fund, the Los Angeles Fire Department Foundation, the San Diego Fire-Rescue Foundation, and the American Red Cross. Here are specific directions to donate to The American Red Cross: visit redcross.org, call 1-800-RED CROSS (800-733-2767), or text the word CAWILDFIRES to 90999 to make a donation to the American Red Cross which will go to helping "prepare for, respond to, and help people recover from" the fires. Please consider donating to causes that help support victims of these devastating fires and to those who work for hours on end, night and day, to save our lives.

a post to remove it.

Meta isn't the only company that has opted towards using X's system of community notes. Big companies, like Google and LinkedIn, are reducing the funding for their fact checking efforts, as they state that these efforts are not appropriate nor effective for their services.

The "politically biased" justification that some companies are using seems to be coming out of the recent inauguration of President Donald Trump just a few weeks ago. Zuckerburg attended the inauguration and attributed the removal of fact-checkers to be a symptom of the rightward swing in the political pendulum, calling it a "cultural tipping point towards, once again, prioritizing speech."

This is because in addition to "draining the swamp" of certain politicians in Washington, D.C., Trump pledged to make conservative media great again by uncensoring right-wing voices on social media platforms.

The real question is how much the

new guidelines will impact the 3.29 billion people who use Meta platforms. Facebook is already swarming with accounts posting AI images of Jesus as a shrimp, people hugging polar bears, and intricate toothpick statues with the caption stating "I made this with my own two hands, please leave a like!"

But Facebook is also home to more subtly misleading posts. Many posts concerning the most polarizing issues are extremely oversimplified, biased, speculative, or just plain false. Misleading posts on Meta platforms have been known to create dangerous and destructive turmoil, perhaps most notably in Myanmar in 2017 and Sri Lanka in 2018. In these instances, misleading and false content paired with an algorithm that values engagement over truth, encouraged ethnic cleansings and religious violence in the respective instances.

In fact, Meta's fact-checking pro-

gram was first established in 2016 after Facebook received heavy criticism from spreading misinformation in the U.S. presidential election. After its establishment, the operation grew so large that at its peak it included nearly 100 organizations working in more than 60 languages globally.

This begs the question of what "facts" and biases will be censored. Do posts need to be so outlandish, so unbelievable, so political that they can't be ignored, or will these dangerous nuances be addressed?

Users of Meta products can only hope that the shift from professional factcheckers to community notes is in the interest of spreading truth, rather than misinformation or overly biased news. The changes also make user diligence even more important, highlighting the responsibility all users bear in the pursuit of truth.

CAMPUS LIFE Sports Saints needs

Ye olde Saints sports



By Benjamin Nault ('26) **EDITOR**

If you've ever looked up at the banners hanging in Court '64, you may notice an interesting one: roller hockey. That got us thinking: what sports did Saints used to have?

In Saints' history, there are two sporting events that have disappeared: roller hockey and a Navy Seal recruitment competition.

Sensei da Luz was the varsity coach for roller hockey for the majority of its existence at Saints, taking the reins from Mr. Alcoser after the league was split into different geographic sections.

Saints competed in the Metro Conference CIF league as there was no other CIF roller hockey league in the state at the time, forcing teams to compete at the club level, and then travel to south bay to compete in CIF.

At the club level, Saints initially competed in the Mesa conference before shifting to the North County League, the most competitive of the three available conferences, after a league win in 2008.

According to Mr. da Luz, the sport was phased out because the number of teams to compete against started dropping and the practices were difficult to get to as they were too far from campus. Also, sports such as lacrosse and rugby began to attract athletes that would otherwise have played roller hockey.

"Could it return in the future? Who knows... I am not sure roller hockey's popularity will return anytime soon, [but] it was a blast being part of its history here at Saints!" said Mr. da Luz.

The other sporting event that Saints used to participate in was a SEAL challenge that the Navy SEALs sponsored every year.

The SEAL challenge took place annually at the SEAL base in Coronado. Eight guys would participate in the challenge, with multiple parts. Notably, they would have to run the obstacle course, open water swims, different climbs, and beach runs.

When Saints competed in the SEAL challenge, we were quite successful, winning four golden fins, awards given to those who placed in the top three of competing schools. Saints won first place in 2013, 2014, and 2016, and placed third in 2015, a dominant stretch in the competition before it ended for a brief time.

The SEALs stopped the challenge for a couple years, and after they revamped it it simply didn't feel the same. Mr Linville said that we attempted to compete again once after it restarted, but stopped after seeing the altered competition and how it all carried out.

He also said that while talk of reentering the competition arose, COVID quickly killed off that idea.

All in all, these sports were mostly put to unfortunate ends because of less participation and simply uncontrollable circumstances surrounding the organization of these events. These sports (given the events continue to run in the future) could in theory be revived with a strong wave of support from numerous families. Even if they are not revived, they'll at least remain part of our sports history here at Saints.



Because Saints doesn't yet have hobby horsing, Ben had to superimpose his face on the best Google image we could find. guys

By Benjamin Nault ('26) EDITOR

While there are some sports that Saints has jumped ship from over the years - not too many because we are too good at sports to get up and leave them behind - there are a decent amount of sports that we really should have but don't.

1) <u>Water polo</u>: This is probably on the top of my list of sports that we NEED at Saints. According to Coach Lowe, if water polo was offered when he was here, he'd have been the first person to sign up. "I'm a swimmer," he offered as ample evidence to why he'd compete.

Well, Mr. Lowe, we do also have a swim team. Maybe the overlord Saints admin simply doesn't see the need for a sport where swimmers must claw and grab their opponents while gripping a big yellow ball and trying to shoot it at a big net guarded by a guy in a banana hammock that's wayyyyy too small. Let me tell you, though, we need this. I need this. Let's compete in water polo,

2) Polo: Yes, there is a common theme to my thinking. Just take away the water, the banana hammocks, and some other minor details, then buy a horse, and you got polo. We are a sophisticated school that enrolls boys and graduates men, and do you want to know what a real gentlemen's game is? Croquet. Then polo. Actually

3) Croquet: This one is self-explanatory. A true gentleman's game, and doesn't take much space to play. This is even a sport our editor-in-chief could play, so you know we'd win CIF if our players had at least decent hand-eye coordination.

4) Hobby horsing: We already have the perfect set up in Court '64 just waiting to happen. Add some PVC pipes as hurdles for young men with mops to jump over while playing some really hardcore rock. Trust me, that will get people in the grandstands. Especially if the players start making emotional Instagram reels over the special bonds between them and their large wooden sticks. I mean horses. Sorry.

Cook actually cooks



By John Cook ('26) COLUMNIST

Of the many features that make Saints a great school, Intersession is one of the best. Having the month of January to focus on an elective of your own choosing helps not only to give students a fun time coming back from break, but also an opportunity to expand upon their personal interests.

Having been around for 17 years, the cooking class is an Intersession staple, with tons of applicants every year. This year it is taught by four teachers: Mr. Lamerato, Mrs. Crachy, Mr. Thomsen, and Mr. Oliwa, each of whom brings their own culinary experience to the class.

Mr. Lamerato has taught the class

ing on to more iconic treats, including banana bread and cheesecake.

Throughout the class, students participate in portioning ingredients, chopping them, cooking, cleaning, and other typical kitchen activities. While the teachers are not directly involved in preparing the meals, they often check in to make sure that everyone is on track.

The class is split up into seven different groups that work together to make the meal of the day, helping to ensure that everyone is participating in the cooking process. Some meals require a lot of work, so having a group not only makes it faster, but also more satisfying once the cooking process is done, knowing that everyone pitched in. Who says too many cooks spoil the broth? While actually cooking the dishes is fun, it is only about half of the class. Washing dishes takes up a large portion of the time as well. Cooking for a class of about 40 people requires a lot of dishes, and they do not clean themselves. Mr. Kouta kindly lends his classroom for the month, and his four-sink setup really helps to speed up the cleaning. The class encourages students to work beyond the recipes, and this is exemplified by two days in particular. The Chili Cook Off and Chopped Challenge are both occasions where groups work together to use their skills to try and make their own culinary masterpieces. According to Mr. Lamerato, these challenges are his favorite part of the class, because they allow everyone to express their natural competitiveness and face off against each other.

both chili ingredients and objects for their theme. On the day of the cook off, ten faculty members come and judge every group's chili and theme separately. The winners of both are revealed at the end of the class.

The Chopped Challenge emulates the TV show of the same name, with each group getting three surprise ingredients and the task of incorporating them into a dish. This time, the four teachers are the judges, and they critique the dishes based on taste, texture, presentation, and how cohesive the dish is as a whole.



Overall, the class gives everyone the practice to comfortably cook meals, along with the expectation of what it would look like. It also teaches students to take their time when cooking and to follow the recipes properly in order to create great meals.



since its second year, and shaped it into what it is today. Mr. Thomsen is the resident grillmaster, being the go-to for any grilling operation. On top of that, he knows a world famous method for cooking rice.

Mrs. Crachy guides the class in using the countertop cookware, and also plans all the portion sizes to ensure that everyone is fed. Mr. Oliwa keeps the class motivated with his constant quips and is always on the watch to save fingers by ensuring that everyone has proper cutting technique.

The class is pretty straightforward, spending most of the day cooking food, culminating in a nice meal every day. The usual meal includes two entrees, accompanied by a dessert. The class serves a wide variety of meals, ranging from chicken bakes to spinach and artichoke dip to frikadellen. The desserts are no less impressive either. On the second day, the class makes a key lime pie, before mov-

The Chili Cook Off is judged on two categories: chili and theme. Each group is given \$50 in total, which is used to buy

These are just a few dishes prepared by the cooking class. Jameson Grohman ('26)

CAMPUS LIFE Procrastination (we'll make the headline later)

CHEM

By Mattie Gosling ('26) STAFF WRITER

Procrastination: the word itself is enough to make the students of the world shudder. Whether it's writing that essay or completing that math assignment or preparing for finals, all of us have put off doing homework at some point. But what makes us procrastinate? And how can we defeat procrastination?

Procrastination isn't simply being lazy, but a complex sea of emotions and decisions. Every human experiences procrastination, especially high school students with lots to worry about. Here are some reasons why we procrastinate:

Fear of Failure

Many students tend to procrastinate on assignments when they think they are going to fail them. This attitude ultimately makes us even more nervous as we persist in avoiding the task. In the long run, this avoidance behavior can turn into a pattern of problematic conduct that becomes difficult to shake off.

Perfection

The desire to achieve perfection in an assignment can paralyze students right at the onset. Setting high goals can leave people feeling intimidated, and overthinking prevents them from even starting. Ironically, this results in low-quality work that isn't even close to the original standards.

Poor Time Management

Being able to manage time effectively is essential for overcoming procrastination. Most students have difficulties in managing school, extra-curricular activities, and social events, and it's very easy to lose track of time if not planned well. Procrastination often occurs because of an underestimation of the time required for a particular task or an over-scheduling of one's agenda. This can lead to last-minute rushes, which are extremely stressful.

Lack of Purpose

When a task feels irrelevant or dis-

connected from personal goals, it's hard to find the energy to complete it. A lot of students struggle to understand why an assignment is relevant because they can't connect it with their future aspirations, making the tasks seem meaningless and unmotivating. When students have an idea of what they are working toward, such as problem solving or college preparedness, the work is worth more than just a grade.

Without a reason to push forward, nothing else matters. Once we find our purpose that will make us our best self, procrastination will become something of the past.

Solutions How can we fix these procrastination problems and dominate those tasks we so dread?

Set Specific Goals

Be specific to what you want to achieve and by what time. Instead of saying, "I'll study later," say, "I'll review science notes for 30 minutes after dinner." Having specific goals is easier to monitor and measure, thus keeping you responsible. Writing these goals down or sharing them with someone can also reinforce your commitment.

Eliminate Distractions

We can all benefit from fewer distractions, and it starts with not letting your phone disrupt our focus. Turn off notifications when studying and over time good habits will form.

Image created using generative AI. Find the WHY!

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Most importantly, we need to find the "why" behind each task and obstacle thrown our way. Once we discover the "why" behind our studying, the "why" behind the long practices, the "why" behind our desire to be great, it makes the "how" so much easier. We all know how to study, but it's making the effort to invest in studying as opposed to watching Netflix. Having the strength to recognize procrastination as an option but still choosing what is better for our future is when we defeat procrastination.

Remember that everyone procrastinates, but those who can manage it better come out on top. The more we learn about why we procrastinate, the easier it becomes to overcome procrastination.

How to stay trendy in 2025



By Ben Bayona ('27) STAFF WRITER

The new year always welcomes a fresh batch of trends. While inherently fickle in nature, what's "in" and what's "out" is always a point of fascination. What will Saints look like in this new year?

In: Marveling at these Rivals

Everyone loves a good shooter game. Overwatch, Valorant, Fortnite, and others have had their time in the spotlight. Just recently, Marvel released their take on the genre, Marvel Rivals, allowing for teambased gameplay with iconic characters from Marvel's catalog. This take on the genre has attracted swarms of players,

on the night of February 15th, on track to be a constant in the Saints schedule. It will be a night to commemorate the women who brought us into this Earth, rather than spending time with a significant other or hanging out with friends. While you could simply take out your mother for a mother-son date at a nice restaurant (i.e. Corvette Diner), it would simply be more fun to dress up and take her to see what Saints is all about.

Out: Betas

We have both criticized and fallen victim to the works popularized by Generation Alpha. That generation is over, which means Generation Beta is next. With the connotations associated with betas, this generation is going to be absolutely destroyed. Not only do we naturally perceive betas as lesser, but how could they relate to us? The people born in Generation Beta will have missed entire lifetimes worth of events. While we brutally berate the betas, a new wave of brain rot will come to tarnish us more.

mat. We have begun to embrace it, and its influence can only grow.

Out: Squid Game

The release of season two of Netflix's Squid Game revived a cultural phenomenon, returning the show to the public consciousness. While the show itself tackles the failures of society and commentates on the lengths people will go, any nuance and deeper thought into its

morals are ignored for the funny games and the quotable lines. Popularity for the show at Saints saw an uptick initially, but these games have been played before. Its prominence has since dwindled, a much quicker decline compared to the first season. A third season will definitely revamp the excitement, but until then, the show stands stagnant.



the ranks of which include many Saintsmen. The drive to clip clean combos is one that has stood through many games, and *Marvel Rivals* will provide a unique channel for the desire.

Out: A massive loss

What else is massive? The stacks of work awaiting us post-intersession? The growing dread of our collective zeitgeist? The forehead of someone walking down the hall?

The word "massive" has never incited a response of a comedic nature. Even if it did, what would be the point of keeping it relevant for this long? What would it even reference, a manchild who confidently flossed in front of a whole crowd with no response? A low joke like that would taper and fade.

In: Motherly love

With the tragic death of the junior formal, the Mom Prom emerged like a phoenix from its ashes. Celebrating our love for moms everywhere, this event commences

In: Artificial intelligence

The convenience of AI has been a point of contention on the implications of daily life. Recently, the prominence of AI has become less emphasized and more so expected. Over the past few years, AI has become gradually integrated into daily life, increasing in subtlety with many advancements in technology. I'd argue that it has been accepted into the functions of daily life. In the context of Saints, it seems we have partially leaned into it. While it stands as a potential threat to academic integrity, we are provided tips on how to properly use AI as an aid. AI prompts now have official ways to cite them in MLA for-

COLUMNIST

Every 25 years the Church celebrates a Year of Jubilee. The tradition of the jubilee year in the Bible was a year in which debts were forgiven, prisoners freed, and things were "reset" in preparation for the coming ordinary years.

In modern Catholic practice, the jubilees started in the year 1300, first at 50 year intervals and now at 25 year intervals. It is a practice somewhat akin to the Islamic tradition of the "Hajj" pilgrimage to Mecca, only Catholics are encouraged to go to Rome on these special years.

I have just returned from Rome with Mr. Bier and 12 Pilgrim Saintsmen. We were able to visit the four major papal basilicas, and to pass through the threshold of the "Holy Door" of each one. The Holy Door in each of the basilicas is a door which in non-holy years is literally bricked over so that no one can accidentally pass through. In preparation for the this past Christmas Eve the Holy Door of St. Peter's Basilica was opened by our Holy Father Pope Francis.

Passing through the door is a reminder that Jesus is the source of our salvation. We do not save ourselves, rather it is Jesus who saves us. Passing through the door is rather deceptively easy - we would like the Holy Doors to be "difficult," but this reminds us that Jesus did the work of salvation, and all we have to do is "pass on through."

If you and your family this year have the opportunity to go to Rome, I highly recommend it - just ask any of the other Saintsmen from the Italy 2025 pilgrimage. If you can't make it, there will be another Holy Year in 2033 to commemorate 2,000 years of the salvation of Jesus, and then again in 2050. May all of us live out this Holy Year with great joy and great hope, in gratitude for all that the Lord has done for us.

HUMOR The Augustinian's Guide to Imperialism

By Liam Olds ('26) EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

As is the case for most powerful countries, the U.S. has a rich history of expansion. Today, while many choose to stuff our colonial history into a closet with the other skeletons of our past (namely Deflategate, Milli Vanilli, and worst of all, the Broadway musical Cats), newly-inaugurated President Donald Trump has sought to revive the Great Game.

Now that he is once again allowed to play with the desktop globe in the Oval Office, Trump has begun sharing his imperial ambitions. So far, he has expressed interest in acquiring Greenland, the Panama Canal, and joked(?) about making Canada the 51st state.

Because the president is a perennially busy man, I thought I might save him some time and offer my suggestions for expansion. Donny, old boy, this one's for you.

<u>Canada</u>

Canada is home to some of the friendliest people on Earth. While abrupt new regimes can often lead to instability, we all know that nice people don't revolt. Canada would be SO perfect for expansion that I'm starting to think we should've taken it in 1812 when we had the chance. You got a problem with that, eh?

South Africa

As many are aware, wannabe First Lady Elon Musk, was born in South Africa. In preparation for his presidential campaign in 2028, Musk needs to find a way to become a natural-born citizen. Because he has not yet invented his time machine (he plans to do that yesterday), Musk must instead change America's borders.

<u>Norway</u>

In 2018, during his first presidency, Trump was criticized for complaining

about immigration from, shall we say, *less desirable* countries like those in Africa and Haiti. In the same breath, he wished for immigration from countries like Norway. Well, Mr. President, why long for immigration when we've got imperialism?

The Philippines

A former U.S. territory, the Philippines would rejuvenate the spirit of South Pacific island vibes. In his Inaugural Address, President Trump expressed a desire to take back former "gifts" given by the U.S. government. While this makes him a total killjoy at Christmas, Trump could use this idea to argue that the U.S. "gifted" the Philippines their independence in 1946 and could just as easily take it back.

Scotland

Mr. Trump's love for golf is no secret. Retired golf legend Jack Nicklaus was quoted saying Trump "loves the game of golf more than he loves money." Tragically though, golf was invented in Scotland.

If he wants to stay true to his "America First" attitude, Mr. Trump cannot worship a foreign game more than the American dollar! Instead, the game must become American. If the U.S. were to acquire Scotland, we could all rest easy at night knowing that technically it's the Golf of America.

Ireland

Trump's return to the Oval Office was marked by the reinstallation of the ondemand Diet Coke button. During his first term, it was reported that Trump would drink an average of 12 cans of Diet Coke per day (over four liters). Ireland is home to Coca-Cola's largest concentrate manufacturing facility and would be a crucial asset in fueling the President's sweet tooth.



From left to right, President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi of Egypt, King Salman of Saudi Arabia, Melania Trump, and President Trump plotting world domination.

Egypt

Trump has a great relationship with Egyptian President Abdul Fattah al-Sisi, calling him a "fantastic guy," and has on occasion been known to plan world domination with him (see image). And I don't know about you, but "America and Egypt's Empire" just doesn't have the same ring to it.

Argentina

Mr. Trump was once the trademark holder of "The World's Greatest Steaks" with his company Trump Steaks. When the business failed, the cause was obvious: no, it wasn't the high price tag on the meat or the 52 health code violations that closed a Vegas restaurant location - it was the quality of meat. Should the president revive Trump Steaks, Argentina's famously high quality beef would be vital.

<u>Brazil</u>

Mr. Trump is very fond of Brazil, so much so that he offered to help Brazil join NATO during his first term. Though this was ultimately ruled out, Brazil was still designated a "major non-NATO ally" in 2019 and given preferential access to American military equipment and training.

Some may chalk it up to a strategic move, but I think we all know deep down that's not the full story. Trump's dance moves have gone viral on several occasions and if you ask me, I suspect Mr. Trump just wanted an excuse to learn to shake those hips, Carnaval style.

<u>The Moon</u>

Before you write off lunar expansion, I beg you not to forget about the Moon's greatest asset: dairy. This floating blob of cheese is home to an entirely unique species of extraterrestrial bovine. Should the U.S. colonize the moon, Mr. Trump would undoubtedly be overjoyed to learn that, while tight on nuclear regulation, the Moon has no laws regarding the pasteurization of moon-cow milk.

eave it to Luzi: My two weeks as a cowboy



By Michael Luzi ('25) MANAGING EDITOR

This past month, I was interning with a forensic pathologist in Tyler, Texas. Now, while I was elbow-deep in human organs, I found myself in a bit of a culture shock from my home in San Diego. East Texas does not have the laid-back, sunsoaking atmosphere that I am familiar with in Southern California. During this trip, I took notes on all of the differences I experienced in East Texas in order to prepare you if you ever find yourself in the ol' Piney Woods.

Everything Really is Bigger in Texas When I say everything, I mean EV-ERYTHING. The roads were bigger, the stores were bigger, the food was bigger. The roads were so big, in fact, that it took me over half an hour just to get from my hotel to the hospital. It's a good thing that I didn't need to go there for any medical reasons, or I wouldn't be writing this article right now. On top of that, I have never seen so many big trucks and so few Teslas in my life. It seemed like every family in East Texas owned a minimum of two trucks. And these weren't some small Toyota Tacomas either. These were massive Ford F-350s souped up with lights and monster truck wheels to look like they were carrying Luke Combs and Willie Nelson to the Grand Ole Opry. And the total number of Teslas that I saw was three, and two of those were when we passed by a Tesla dealership.



two eyes in Dallas. Shocking, I know, but that's not even the worst part. Unlike here in California, there was no long line waiting to get inside. Obviously, the people of Dallas don't understand the importance that In-N-Out should have in their lives. Plus, if they already have Whataburger there, why do they need another burger place?

I propose that In-N-Out should return back to its home and never leave California again - okay, maybe a few in Arizona can stay. Texans do not appreciate it, and Californians do not appreciate it being taken away from them. I think this would be the best for society.

Jesus and Lawyer Billboards While I was driving on those long roads in the woods, I couldn't help but notice the absurd amount of billboards. But unlike the usual McDonalds or Funner California billboards vou see in SoCal. there were only billboards advertising the Law and the Lord. Now, this is something I would like to bring over to SoCal. What do we need less of in our lives? Gambling and obesity. And what do we need more of? Jesus and the Jury. Just think about it. Imagine you're going down I-15, eating your fifth Big Mac, and you're late to your next gambling trip. You consider going 20 over the speed limit to get there on time, but you see a lawyer staring straight at you, making you think about the legal consequences of your actions. Then, not a minute later, vou see Jesus Christ looking at vou as vou go off to sin city to lose your house mortgage. You get off the next exit and head back home, thinking about your actions.

Buc-ee's

Everyone knows about this famous gas station chain. Before I took my first

Luzi and his brother with Courtesy of Michael Luzi ('25) their hero, Buc-ee.

steps into Buc-ee's, I was a little bit skeptical of how a gas station could be worth all of the hype. What could be so exciting about a big gas station? Turns out I was dead wrong. Buc-ee's is so much more than that.

First, it wasn't just a big gas station, it was a BIG gas station. When I pulled into the parking lot for Buc-ee's, the gas pumps stretched from one side of the parking lot to the other side. Mind you, this was a big parking lot with other stores in it, including a Texas Roadhouse and a Walmart.

Second, walking in felt like entering a theme park. There were Buc-ee the Beaver mascots walking around to greet everyone, a whole restaurant, and, my personal favorite, a whole wall dedicated to Buc-ee's cotton candy.

Third, the bathrooms in that place

were amazing, and mind you, this is a gas station we're talking about. I've never seen so many bathroom stalls in my life, and each stall was like its own personal room. There were no gaps in the doors, and the locks could probably withstand a blast from a cannon ball.

When I left Buc-ee's that day, I learned a valuable lesson. Never be too skeptical before you try something out, and if I ever find myself stranded in Texas, I will definitely be finding a Buc-ee's to survive.

In-N-Out

You might be thinking, "Luzi, this is an article on Texas. Why are you talking about this beloved Californian delicacy that captures the essence of what makes SoCal so great?" I'm talking about In-N-Out because I saw one with my own



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Despite routinely publishing the best high school newspaper on the south end of North Park, we at *The Augustinian* are ever in the pursuit of improvement - and what better occasion could there be to share our aspirations than the new year?

For many common folk, New Year's resolutions may entail spending more time with family or committing to a new workout routine - but why stop there? We believe that such puny goals are fitting only for the feeble minded.

Because having a god-like physique is a prerequisite for all editors and, for all intents and purposes, we have no family but our fellow prisoners of the gulag*, the editing staff set our sights higher for the coming year. While you waste away toiling in your "gym," we will be sharpening our minds and preparing for total media domination.

As is customary for all of the most groundbreaking and revolutionary ideas, we will present our resolutions in the form of a five-point plan.

1) Improve article sources

The most important part of any article is the quality of information. While many sheeple fall for the trap of Mr. Chesser's tier list of sources and credibility, we at The Augustinian see through the conspiracy. That's why all of our articles from now on will contain only information that can be found on X or from AI chatbots.

With X's rigorous fact-checking sys-

tem built on "community notes," our readers can be sure that they are receiving only the most accurate information. After all, there is no better system of checks and balances than uninformed extremists scream-tweeting at each other from opposing sides of the aisle.

We also plan to be the first publication to rely exclusively on interviews with AI chatbots for quotes. Too many people rely on eyewitness accounts and human experience to fuel their stories (they clearly haven't read Othello), but we believe AI chatbots can be the perfect unbiased source. They cannot be mistaken at the hands of a faulty memory, nor are they limited to the experience of one mere mortal. Instead, Conspiratron will be able to synthesize all relevant information from Reddit and 4Chan to comment on the latest topics.

2) <u>Do grammar good</u>

Though our diligent editing staff has come remarkably close to achieving the Nobel Prize for Perfection in Grammar, we remain a little short of Cudalian excellence. Yes, we do end sentences with a preposition from time to time, and yes, we do occasionally begin sentences with "however" - but that is not where the real issue lies.

The greatest bane to our beautiful language is the horror of the Oxford comma. This wasteful, unnecessary, insulting little dot is grossly superfluous and a waste of ink. I don't care if your feeble mind requires a double stop to comprehend big

boy sentences. As dictator of The Augusmy number one priority to outlaw it.

Editors' Note: We're going out on a limb here, but we think Liam took this one a little too seriously. We tried to explain to him that Oxford commas can actually be really helpful in clarifying, but he just called us "pedestrian" and withheld our chicken and waffles. :(

3) Buy out The New York Times

Widely regarded as the standard of journalistic excellence, The New York *Times* has had its day in the sun - but all great empires must fall. It's time for a new world order, one in which The Au*qustinian* claims its rightful place atop the throne. That is why we are happy to announce that we will be making an offer to purchase The New York Times with the very same \$20 In-N-Out gift card that our ungracious readers so rudely declined in the caption contest.

4) Enter an Irish jig competition

This may seem surprising, but every editor in *The Augustinian* is actually an experienced Irish jigger (we don't spend all of our time writing). In fact, Liam Olds has been rollicking to the Dropkick Murphys since he was in the womb (true story); Michael Luzi has taken professional Irish dance classes since he was three years old; Jonah Villafaña has done multiple jigs with the likes of Michael Flatley and Jean Butler; and Benjamin Nault is a

seventh generation member of a long line tinian, I, Liam Atticus Olds, will make it of Irish Riverdancers. That being said, Enzo Simon lacks experience. Despite our efforts to try to cram some sense of rhythm into that boy, his ignorance persists.

> Our Irish jigging has been noticed by top judges, which has granted us a chance to jig in the Oireachtas Rince na Cruinne, a renowned competition in the Irish jigging world. However, we need to step up our game if we want to win gold, which really means strengthening our weakest jigging link (*ahem* Enzo *ahem*).

5) Take a family vacation

Believe it or not, gulag is hard work. Balancing our dedication to journalistic excellence on top of our course loads and (albeit lackluster) social lives, we editors are in desperate need of a beach vacation. With that in mind, we plan to take a good old fashioned family Disney cruise to the Bahamas.

Fret not, dear reader, this does not mean our world class coverage is slipping - in fact, the oceanside relaxation will be but a detour on our quest to the Bermuda Triangle to find out what really happened to Amelia Earhart. What can we say? We can't help but always be on the lookout for the next great story for our readers.

*Named after the Soviet prison camps, gulag refers to the late-night editing sessions our editors so bravely suffer through for you ungrateful rats.



By Enzo Simon ('27)

2024: (W)rapped

Quick: 2023! What do you remember? Barbenheimer, spy balloons, some billionaire submarine operated by a video game controller, perhaps? Now it might be easy to discover those surface-level recollections, but could you venture deeper into your hippocampus to retrieve those sunken memories?

Or rather, would you?

In a day and age of complete submission to easily-digestible content, why should you have to exercise your brain in remembering 2023?

And scarily, the same goes with 2024. Sure it was more recent, but can you really remember all that happened in this monumental year? I mean it's hard enough to remember music taste during a year (if only Spotify had a solution), let alone an entire political and cultural progression.

But if there is one aspect of 2024 to be remembered: it's its revolutionary technological advancements. And though they may be slowly chipping away at our own mental capacities, they have allowed us to ease up, relax, and enjoy life significantly better.

And to keep up with this morbid reality, The Augustinian has brainstormed and curated a completely "original" cure to society's collective amnesiac rotting brains (or according to the Oxford Dictionary: brain rot).

Without further ado (and without the help of ChatGPT!), please enjoy our 2024 Wrapped:

Hi, twenty-twenty four, bye, Alaska Airlines door, A good year to leap, more like a year of the creep, That's Cringe, Cody Ko, and Diddy, "no means no," Now he's on the list, Mr. Kong's incarcerated, Luigi joins in, making Nintendo R-rated, Olympics too, Raygun and the Turk made it violent, Cardboard beds? Sing it, choirs, the night will be silent, Israel and Palestine still at war Bullets blazing, Trump's ear hears a roar, Monkey-See, Monkey-Do, now Monkey-Think Elon decides to release Neuralink, The two now sit atop with ease, After POTUS and FLOTUS chopped coconut trees, Only one of many duels of the year, Kendrick and Drake expertly rap up fear, Striking A Minor like Mike Tyson with Logan Paul, Drake the type of guy to have such a big fall, Chiefs beat the 49ers, is this deja vu? Taylor Swift makes audiences this Era brand new, But so is this summer, *brat* becomes the new beat, Then slowly fades away, it was Short n'Sweet,

Jo Koy thinks he's all it, wasn't even the fart, Bombs as host of Golden Globes, off to a good start Foreshadows Oppenheimer's explosive art, All throughout, TikTok strengthens its hold, Trends of "comedy" gold progressively unfold, "Like Him" becomes the anthem of edits, Tyler creates "Sticky" orchestra pits, If vou're a chill guy then answer this: "English or Spanish?" Hawk 2: "uhh, screw this," Lunchly in the thick of it, moldy cheese makes us spit, Ninja monopolizes "massive," will it continue to live? But we cannot end like this, would we get five big booms? That'd be low, let's taper and fade to the second of dunes, Paul Muad'dib Atreides was a box-office high,

Deadpool and It Ends with Us flew "Bye Bye Bye, Wicked most definitely defied all the gravity, The Minecraft movie (probably): "he's right behind me," And in recent times, aided with more than just dimes, The case of the Menendez brothers reached quite the new height, And with that, the 2024 season comes to an end. Goodnight!

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