

# DIVERSITY INSIDE THE CLASSROOM

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**BANEEN RIZVI**  
Staff Writer

# SOARING WITH THE SKIES

## SENIOR LEARNS TO FLY

The bright blue sky surrounds him, a great feeling of freedom engulfs senior Caleb Sparks's mind while he maneuvers the plane around the palpable and puffy clouds. The view of the ground he was on not so long ago is visible, tiny pinpricks of buildings and cars laying among the canvas of greens and blues below as he flies by. The young pilot's face is plastered with a smile as he and his instructor fly the plane around and around. For some, the experience may be nerve-wracking, but it is a surreal joy for Sparks.

With his love for challenges and adventure, Sparks always had an interest in aviation from a young age and had chosen it as his dream career path. With the help of neighbor and Air Force Lieutenant Colonel Andrew Looser, Sparks even got to explore the Air Force Base Looser was working on. From that day forward, Sparks knew what he wanted to be- a fighter pilot for the Air Force- and started flight lessons towards the end of his junior year.

"That day I was able to see what the Air Force was really like. I had the pleasure of meeting an astronaut, running a battle strategy simulator, sitting in an assembly meeting and piloting a flight simulator," Sparks said. "I went back home with the biggest smile on my face and an amazing experience that has molded my passion to pursue the Air Force. If it weren't for Andrew, I might not have the same passion about what I want to do."

Since Sparks had started his flight journey, it has been a long and difficult process, but one Sparks

has also enjoyed. Sparks began lessons in a program at the AIM HIGH Flight Academy. AIM HIGH is a scholarship program funded by the US Air Force that intends to inform, influence and inspire the younger generation to pursue a career in the Air Force.

More than 2,000 applied, with only 72 people selected, including Sparks. Those selected were invited to attend one of three sessions that lasted three weeks over the summer and included 24 student pilots.

"Given my excitement and readiness to get started, I requested to join the first summer session and moved to Milton, Florida, less than one week after the conclusion of my junior year. At AIM HIGH, I was able to earn 15 hours toward my PPL in a Cessna 172, enhance my leadership skills taught by Air Force officers, and get up close to a KC-135 and an F-35," Sparks said. "At the end of the program, only the most qualified student pilots gained approval to solo their aircraft. On June 15, 2022, I successfully soloed my Cessna 172."

During flight lessons, Sparks first started flying with flight instructor Scott Cavalcante who taught him all the basics. After learning from Cavalcante, Sparks went on to doing maneuvers such as stalls, steep turns and slow flight. After learning all the maneuvers, Cavalcante took Sparks for a test flight to make sure he knew everything before flying by himself. Once he passed, Sparks was free to solo around the surrounding area. For Sparks, flying is

the best experience.

"Flying is peaceful to me. I truly feel no burden when I'm up in the air. It's just me, other pilots in the area, and the endless blue sky," Sparks said. "Another reason is [that] it feeds my sense of adventure. I get to see new things every time I fly. Also, I love the community of other pilots. They all have a common interest with one another. I have never met a mean pilot."

Now that he has passed his test flight, Sparks has an oral exam, written test and check ride left. So far,



Senior Caleb Sparks maneuvers the plane as he excitedly takes in the view of the ground below. His flight education has molded his passion to pursue a career in the Air Force. *Photos provided by Sparks*



Sparks has completed his required flying hours. After completing the other tests, Sparks will go on to become a certified pilot by the end of the year. Overall, Sparks is confident and excited to achieve this milestone for his future career despite the difficulty and time it took to accomplish this journey.

"I'm one to find satisfaction through memories and experiences, so flying is just right for me. I am confident I will be a pilot in less than a month and I am super excited," Sparks said. "The process was long and difficult but absolutely worth it."

# Tompkins Takes Win in KISD Competition: CHOPPED CHALLENGE



Tompkins' non-vegetarian meal: Three Pizettes and sliced dragon fruit.



Tompkins' vegetarian meal: Four quesadillas, sliced dragon fruit, and vegetable cups.



Nutrition and Food staff member Carolyn Lee washes quinoa for the vegetarian meal.



Nutrition and Food staff member Jessica Fernandez cuts up dragon fruit.



The Tompkins' team laughs and poses together in a group photo with both meals. Photos provided by Katy ISD

## SYDNEY JACKSON Staff Writer

A competition with Katy ISD coordinators and managers turns into a team building experience. During the last few days of summer, the Katy ISD Nutrition and Food department coordinators and managers gathered together and competed against each other in a culinary based competition, with the Tompkins' team taking the win.

The "Chopped Challenge" was a culinary based competition inspired by the Food Network TV show, "Chopped". In the show "Chopped", four chefs battle against each other to make a three-course meal for a panel of judges with the mystery ingredients they are given in their baskets. In an inspired version, each coordinator teamed up with the managers of the schools they supervised and created a non-vegetarian and vegetarian meal with five mystery ingredients they were given at the beginning of the challenge and any items the kitchen pantry, refrigerator and freezers. These mystery items included dragon fruit, purple potatoes and Korean BBQ. Kelly Kansas, Tompkins

Nutrition and Food coordinator, says that the challenge created an opportunity for her and the managers of each school she supervises to create a stronger relationship.

"Our Associate Director Julia Jarrell came up with the challenge to create a team bonding experience," said Kansas.

For their non-vegetarian meal, Tompkins' team created a pizzette, a mini pizza, topped with steaming Korean BBQ, broccoli, pickles and corn, drizzled on top with mozzarella cheese. On the side, they sliced some dragon fruit, creating a dragon fruit bowl. For their vegetarian meal, Tompkins' team created a creamy quesadilla stuffed with mozzarella cheese, corn and beans. On the side they created a dragon fruit cup with diced oranges and grapefruit on the inside and vegetable cups containing beans, corn, green peas and carrots.

"We created one vegetarian meal and one non-vegetarian meal," said Kansas. "For the non-vegetarian meal we mainly used Korean BBQ, and for the vegetarian meal, we mainly used, well, vegetables."

At the end of the competition, each team took pictures

of both meals and submitted their pictures to the Nutrition and Food Service office. Once they submitted their pictures, the heads of the Nutrition and Food Service office voted on their favorite vegetarian and non-vegetarian meal. Tompkins' team got first place. For first place, each member of the team received a cute pair of avocado socks and a certificate displaying their win. Although Tompkins' team ended up winning against the rest of the coordinators, each team, without a doubt, enjoyed the experience. Each team took away great team bonding experience from the competition that created an everlasting memory.

"Everyone worked so well together and had a lot of fun," said Kansas. "Winning was just the icing on the cake."



The team works together to make their non-vegetarian meal.

# Cut, Block, and Score

## Arnett Brings Lacrosse to Tompkins

**BANEEN RIZVI**  
Staff Writer

Donning his lacrosse gear with an air of confidence and determination, freshman Gabriel Arnett gets ready for another day of lacrosse practice. Although it might seem like a mundane part of his schedule, the game of lacrosse means the world to Arnett. As Arnett steps into the indoor field, he is determined to make this practice a successful one. For Arnett, lacrosse has always been an important part of his life. He started to play in third grade when a soccer teammate suggested Arnett would be good at the sport. Arnett signed up with the Katy Cavaliers, playing with them and a few other travel teams. Upon joining the travel teams, Arnett grew fond of lacrosse as he got a chance to meet new people, one of his favorite things to do. Since then, Arnett has played lacrosse, originally starting with field lacrosse.



Eyes on the other team, Arnett plans his next move. He attended tryouts in New York.

“At first, I only played field lacrosse. I started playing indoor lacrosse, or box, about four years ago when I joined 3D Texas which had both an indoor and outdoor team. I do face offs and play in the midfielder position,” said Arnett. “Now I play both, which means I play all year round. I like box because it’s faster.”

Box lacrosse has a 30 second time clock, a smaller field that often resembles hockey rinks and a smaller goal. In order to score, the players have to move in closer while also having good dodging and stick skills. Both box and field teams are on the USA Lacrosse team, and Arnett was invited to participate in the US Box team tryouts.

“I was invited to try out for the USA box lacrosse team. I then had to go to three tryouts in New York and play against athletes from all over,” said Arnett. “I was excited to make the team, but it meant I had to miss school to play in the 16U World Championships in Buffalo, New York. I hope that by making the USA Box team as a freshman, I will be able to play on the team all through high school.”

As well as playing on the USA Box team throughout high school, Arnett strives to participate in the 2028 Olympics. The Olympics are to include box lacrosse as an event, and Arnett gives it his all to make it on the team. However, before chasing his dream of the Olympics, Arnett trains so he can play lacrosse in his college years as well. Unfortunately, most of



Determined, Arnett prepares for his throw. During junior high, he participated in lacrosse camps at University of Michigan and Ohio State University. Photos provided by Arnett

the colleges Arnett researched do not include a lacrosse team in their sports.

“I have attended camps at both University of Michigan and Ohio State University during the summer. Unfortunately, lacrosse isn’t as big in Texas as it is in other states so most of the colleges don’t have teams,” Arnett said. “Because of that, I am thinking of applying out-of-

state.”

Although lacrosse has its highs and lows, Arnett continues to play the sport. With his many dreams and aspirations about lacrosse, Arnett is determined to make a career out of what was once a light hearted hobby and continue it throughout the future.

### Did You Know?

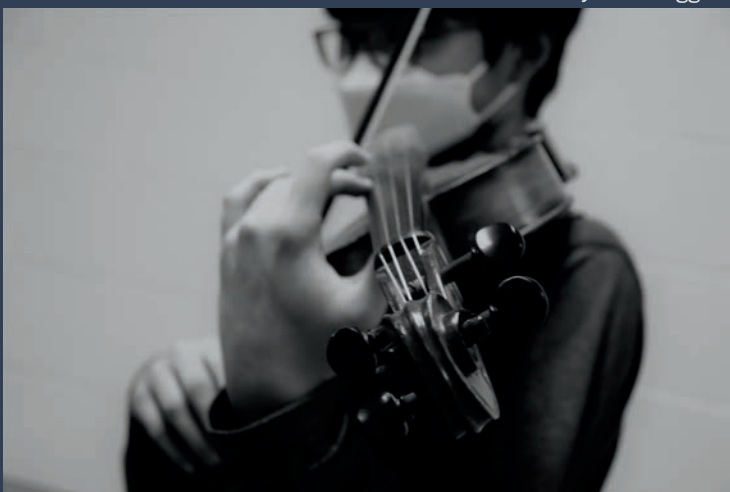
Arnett has played for the USA team in the Junior World Championships against countries including Canada and Poland!

# Yujin Chung:

## HOUSTON YOUTH SYMPHONY VIOLIST

ELAINE LIU  
Co-Managing Editor

Photos by Bella Riggan



While softly playing on the A string of his viola, Chung checks if his intonation is precise. He started his last concert cycle with the Houston Youth Symphony at the start of this school year.

Standing tall, with his viola gently placed on his shoulder, senior Yujin Chung suspends his bow lightly above his instrument. After an inhale, his bow hits the string with force, attacking the accented note. An explosion of warmth from the viola fills the air, slowly emulating its comfort further from Chung. He crisply accentuates each pitch and highlights the melody. The notes float and dance throughout the air as if they were thoughts passing through one's mind.

Chung has participated in the Houston Youth Symphony (HYS) for the past several years. This concert season, he led the viola section from the first stand as the group performed Gustav Holst's *The Planets* suite for their debut on Nov. 13. HYS played the movements *Mars*, *Mercury*, *Venus*, *Jupiter* and *Uranus*, accumulating overall in a 40-minute performance. Chung has the most excitement for *Mars* because of its dynamics.

"I've actually performed *Mars* before but *Mars* is always that one cool movement, where brass plays loud and we (violas) also get to play loud," said Chung. "There's triple fortes that don't usually exist in orchestra settings."

However, if Chung had to

choose his favorite movement for musicality, *Venus* receives his praise. He finds the serene character of the movement enjoyable for listeners, even if it is one of the most difficult in the suite to perform. From his years of playing in orchestras, Chung has learned that the most important part of ensemble performance is learning the music and listening to recordings.

"It's necessary because sometimes composers don't necessarily put in all the details of the music and you want to bring out the character of the piece without having the composer to tell you like Mahler— direction by direction," said Chung.

This year marks Chung's seventh year with the viola, having started playing the instrument in the winter of fifth grade. Violists usually experience less competition than other instruments in the orchestra, leading a lot of prospective musicians to choose it. Chung, on the other hand, chose the viola after listening to a Houston Symphony violist perform at an orchestra fair.

"The viola sounded cool because it was a mixture between high notes and low notes," Chung said. "I think [the violist] was showing off all he can do."

Ironically, Tchaikovsky's Vi-

olin Concerto was the first classical piece that amazed Chung. He first heard the concerto on a bus in seventh grade, heading to Six Flags for a field trip. Now, whenever he hears the piece, the memory of that day chimes in the back of his head.

"I like how Tchaikovsky... starts out with a theme, but he goes a million different directions with it," said Chung. "Each one of them [is] so characteristically different."

Despite the many late nights and hours of practice, rehearsals, concerts and lessons, Chung's passion for music has stood strong. Over the years, he has added instruments and experience, causing his musical tone and technique to improve. He saw the progress in himself as an intrinsic motivator.

"When I first started off, I was like, 'Oh my gosh this is hard,' but once I got into an orchestral setting I was like, 'Wow, just violins and violas and cellos and basses can play like this together?'" said Chung.

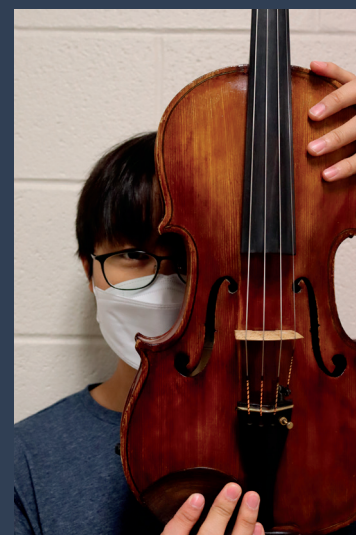
In the future, Chung wants to join a college orchestra and possibly minor in music since it has been an integral part of his life. Currently, however, his favorite piece is Gustav Mahler's *Symphony No. 2 in C Minor*, also known as the *Resurrection Symphony*. Chung performed the first movement of this symphony with the All-State Orchestra last year, developing his admiration for how Mahler creates harmonies.

"It's intense but at the same time it has its calm moments," said Chung. "Essentially what Mahler did when he was composing this piece was he got together snapshots of his life, and if you take a look into his life, it's tragic in a sense, like a lot of things he's experienced, but the way he was able to meld all these emotions together without falling into despair and then encapsulating the story of his entire life into this new symphony that branches off the first."

Chung first discovered Mahler two years ago in the HYS. Although he found the complexity of the *Resurrection Symphony* difficult, he eventually came to love it and wished he could perform the symphony again— only this time, he would like to play all the movements. Similarly, HYS might play the entirety of Mahler's *Symphony No. 1 in D Major* for its last concert cycle in the spring of next year, according to Chung.

"It's possible but it's going to require a lot of work and I anticipate that but at the same time I think it's a really good piece to end my Houston Youth Symphony journey with," Chung said.

With little to no hesitation, Chung devoted himself to the viola and classical music. His perseverance through the years, practicing pieces, attending rehearsals, and performing solos, ensembles, and concerts, has led to his immense knowledge of classical music and musicianship. Music has touched every part of Chung and he will continue to carry those aspects of community and ambition toward his future.



Holding up his viola, Chung emphasizes the role it plays in his life. In addition to having played in the Houston Youth Symphony, Chung was elected co-president of Tompkins Orchestras by his peers.

# Push Through It:

## ATILANO HELPS SENIORS WITH POST-SECONDARY PLANS

**ELLA RAY**  
Editor-in-Chief

While most seniors sweat at the thought of starting their college applications and planning their futures, College and Career Facilitator Enid Atilano has made it her mission to erase this fear and help students embrace finding their new path of life after high school as she had recently joined the staff last year. Atilano explains that when she had graduated from Mayde Creek High School, Obra Tompkins was actually her principal. Continuing his legacy, Atilano could not have been more thrilled to come back to work on campus. Taking on the job, Atilano explains that she wanted to show that she is a product of Katy ISD.

"When I applied to this school, it just had this spark in my heart," said Atilano. "It was like a full-circle moment to come back here to Tompkins."

During the fall semester, Atilano is mainly focused on the seniors, helping them with doing their college applications, FAFSA, scholarships and resumes for any students interested in joining the military or going into the workforce. Although Atilano gets to talk to more of the juniors and underclassmen in the spring semester, she reiterates that her main purpose of her presence on campus is to help the students transition from high school to whatever their post-secondary plans may be. Atilano is aware that students have struggled over the years with the application process, fueling her determination to eliminate that struggle and make the process easier for students.

"When I was in high school, this role wasn't available. For myself, I want to be able to help students have more options that perhaps even I had," said Atilano. "That's why I'm here at this high school."

Atilano basks into the campus's welcoming environment as her favorite thing about the job is to converse with the students. As they come into her office and

she gets to bond with students over buying their prom dress or tickets for homecoming, Atilano knows she is right where she is supposed to be. Atilano hopes to create a culture of having a college counselor on campus that includes bringing in speakers during enrichment or university representatives during lunches as well as resources that can help students finish their applications, helping them transition from being a kid into young adulthood.

"It is a moment where you all are excited but you're also a little bit afraid," said Atilano. "My purpose is to hold your hand and help you get to that place."

Atilano believes that it is crucial for her to assist students in knowing what school and career they want to pursue. She insists that not only does that serve the students themselves but it also serves the community. Atilano wants to help all students become good contributing members of society. Atilano feels as though she is relatable to young kids, and that she would be a person who would help in this transition from high school to post-secondary plans.

"In my opinion, between the ages of 18 to 22, it's a moment in your life where you can do anything," said Atilano. "Whatever path you choose can set the next 15-20 years of your life."

To make an appointment with Atilano, students can scan the light purple QR code that is posted around campus. During appointments, Atilano has had students who know exactly what they need help with such as questions about FAFSA forms and scholarship opportunities. However, Atilano has also had students that come into her office and have absolutely no idea what to do. With those students, Atilano takes the time to learn what their strengths and weaknesses are, using SchoolLinks as a useful tool when trying to figure out students' future careers.

"I let every student know that

I am here for them," said Atilano. "Even if getting through the process seems scary, you're not alone."

Atilano offers students the general advice to be organized and to do everything in a timely manner. Atilano warns students that if they wait until the last minute, it is extremely difficult to get everything submitted as those students are pushing against other students who also have not finished their college applications and obtained the required documents. Atilano encourages students to start early, using their resources to get those applications turned in like reaching out to English teachers to edit their college essays.

"You can do anything in this life. I want every student to know that they have options," said Atilano. "You are your biggest barrier sometimes."

### ✓ College Checklist

- Create a list of possible colleges
- Request recommendation letters
- Send test scores and transcripts
- Draft and edit admission essays
- Fill out FAFSA and scholarship forms
- Visit campuses of top colleges



Atilano stands with pride with a bright smile across her face as she overlooks her students' success. Atilano racks up several appointments each day in order to ensure each senior has completed their college applications.

Photo by Ben Sanchez

# CULTIVATE CULTURE:

## Clubs on Campus Maintain Diversity

ELLA RAY  
Editor-in-Chief

Ever since its opening year in 2013, Tompkins has built its beliefs and customs on a foundation of diversity, welcoming an assortment of contrasting ideas and cultures from its student population. Wanting to grow a sense of unity among different lifestyles, students have taken it upon themselves to create organizations that cater toward a specific range of interests. Founder of PSIVision, senior Sarah Michel explains how diversity is often watered down to a checklist of physical and practical attributes. However, Michel also insists that the community has to move past the traditional meaning of diversity, exploring scopes of other perspectives.

“Don’t get me wrong, it’s beautiful that diversity in the way we look, talk, and act is being celebrated more each generation,” said Michel. “We have to understand that diversity delves into deeper and often unconscious concepts.”

Although Michel believes that diversity stems from variety in belief and morals, she also insists that it shoulders the nuance in anything from cultural to individual attitudes towards honor, moral matrices, concept of mind and sense of self. Michel keeps this idea in mind as she further explores this perspective through the activities in the PSIVision agenda. The main focus of the club is to nurture these differences in lifestyles and form a deeper connection within the student body.

“It’s these subtle diversities that bleed into our more surface-level facets like who we vote for or what books we prefer reading,” said Michel. “By being able to understand these abstract roots in diversity, we can better appreciate the complex forests they grow and how our social ecosystems interact.”

As Michel believes that the school environment should be greatly appreciated for the opportunity for growth it inspires, she uses the events and meetings of

PSIVision to further maintain that growth. Michel expresses that behavioral and cognitive sciences have taught the community that countless social functions and mentalities can only truly be developed through lived experience, rather than mere lecturing.

“Creating a school environment that fosters and embraces diversity is an effective means of ensuring that students are shaped into ideologically and culturally open-minded individuals,” said Michel. “A generation of progress is created when they are shaped by diverse tools and opportunities.”

Similar to Michel, senior Zahrah Jilani, president of the Muslim Student Association, pushes the idea that diversity does not have to specifically be about culture or race. Jilani explains that different interests also contribute towards diversity, students with contrasting mindsets being able to engage in insightful conversations. As a result, Jilani tears down the racial expectation of narrowing down the audience of MSA to a specific demographic, opening up the floor to anyone and everyone.

“At Fish Camp, we always tell everyone that they don’t have to be Muslim or Pakistani to join because that’s what people think,” said Jilani. “This year, we have tons of people who are not even Muslim that are in the club.”

Determined to make all the members feel included, MSA plans activities for those who are not Muslim. With social events like their annual ice cream social, club members are able to form bonds as they share facts about themselves, their fellow peers gaining the opportunity to hear about their thoughts and culture. Another event that prioritized diversity within the organization was when MSA invited its members to make prayer beads, encouraging them to share their thoughts on it during the process.

Jilani also explains how MSA will occasionally collaborate with other clubs on campus in order to

receive outside feedback and general conversation. An example of this welcoming behavior would be when MSA invited members from the Astronomy Club to converse as well as help out with their T-shirt design contest, creating a melting pot of ideas and opinions.

“For the people that are there to learn and experience religion, they’re also getting their fill,” said Jilani. “We have things for everyone, not just activities that fit one specific culture.”

Jilani insists that without diversity, students would feel left out and like they could not make any meaningful connections with their peers. Although she enjoys building relationships with students from all backgrounds, Jilani explains that there is a homey feel when students see someone from their homeland, emphasizing the need to preserve cultures within the student body. As a result, MSA tries to incorporate everyone, and share each other’s cultures.

“When you interact with everyone’s cultures, you feel like you know them inside and out,” said Jilani.

Holding the position of Co-President of UNICEF, senior Samshritha Pochanapeddi uses the concept of diversity consisting of a variety of different thoughts, characters and personalities to reshape the purpose of the organization. Pochanapeddi further explains that diversity does not have to just be in terms of physical characteristics as it can also be in terms of who students are as well as their strengths and weaknesses.

“Everybody has their own thing to contribute to the table, so that variety truly is diversity,” said Pochanapeddi.

Pochanapeddi expresses that UNICEF is a club that works off the goals and aims of the actual international branch of the organization. While the club is not always able to directly help international communities, they do try to help the local commu-

nities of all different ages and backgrounds.

“With anything like donations and drives, all of our profits go to the international UNICEF fund,” said Pochanapeddi. “Its mission is to give equal opportunities for children across the globe.”

Pochanapeddi hopes that the agenda of UNICEF will help students realize the community contains individuals who experience a variety of struggles and lifestyles. Pochanapeddi believes that this realization will help students become better individuals who are kinder to people and create a more welcoming environment.

“I think it’s important because we have to look beyond who we are and what we represent,” said Pochanapeddi. “It takes a lot to realize there are people who aren’t just like us.”

Some Clubs to Try at School

- Black Student Union
- Best Buddies
- Bollywood Bound
- East Asian Traditional Games
- Fellowship of Christian Athletes
- French Club
- Genshin Club
- Hindu Student Association
- Hispanic Cluture & Language
- Indian Heritage Association
- Model UN
- Sexuality and Gender Alliance
- Tompkins South Asian Association
- UNICEF
- Muslim Student Association
- PSIVision

KATHERINE MOZISEK  
Staff Writer

As students walk down the hallways of Tompkins High School, one is confronted with a flurry of the diversity found in the school. With Tompkins being located in Fort Bend County, one of the most diverse counties in the nation, it is not a wonder how welcoming the students try to be, but then there is a threat lurking in the shadows... stereotypes.

Diversity and stereotypes constantly seem to be hand in hand. People strive to have a diverse classroom or work group but with that comes stereotypes about ethnicities that have the possibility to damage a person’s view of themselves. Students are tackling this issue by spreading awareness and teaching about stereotypes.

Stereotypes exist in every race and culture, leading to false rumors that can change how students view one another. Moreover, these stereotypes can create distrust and misinformation about races and cultures. The worst part of stereotypes is that they can be easily corrected with the view that everybody is different. There are common factors in race, but that does not define the individual. Stereotypes can be detrimental to mental health.

“In AP Seminar, there are a lot of Asians and I am blonde. I constantly feel like they are smarter than me because of the stereotypes about their intelligence, while one of the stereotypes about blondes is that they are dumb. It’s hard,” said sophomore Mary Katherine Schmidt.

A lot of stereotypes are about how intelligent someone is and how their physical appearance reflects these ideas. If someone is Asian, it is assumed that they are smart, but if they are Hispanic they seem the opposite. It is a faulty way of thinking because color does not change the amount of brains a person has. These stereotypes damage confidence levels in classes because everyone feels that everyone else is better than them.

“I am most affected by white-washing, and stereotypes of every

## Diversity Breaks Down Stereotypes

black person being loud and athletic,” said sophomore Hope Kungu.

Kungu has to fight against those stereotypes with swimming, which tends to have less people of color. This trend is hard to go against since swimming is pretty “whitewashed”, there is not as much diversity due to less exposure in general.

“Stereotypes put people of color in a box that’s sometimes really hard to come out of,” said Kungu.

Boxes are the worst part of stereotypes. Being told to step out of the box, means to break everything and risk being looked at weirdly. Kungu constantly has to do this otherwise, she is the same as everyone else.

“Everyone thinks I have crazy Indian parents that are really controlling, which I find hilarious because they are actually really nice and let me do a lot of things,” said sophomore Arthi Bhavaraju.

The topic of parents is a funny issue for Bhavaju, on one hand it lets her get out of social events that she does not want to attend, but it also means that her parents get a rough reputation whenever she does not go to events. Parents can seem controlling to other people while other parents seem too lax on rules. Students blame parents when things do not go their way or are unable to hang out, but as seen with Bhavaju’s parent, it could be the opposite.

“One of the major effects is not meeting people’s expectations of being smart as an Indian which makes me feel less secure in myself,” said Bhavaraju.

Stereotypes also affect Bhavaju’s mental health, along with many others. Certain stereotypes portray Indians as insanely smart, but high expectations of intelligence lead to competition and obsession over grades that will not matter in the whole of life. If Bhavaju does poorly on a test she feels like a disappointment, creating a loop of uncertainty and a loss of confidence that affects how she does in that class.

“Because of cultural discussion, I feel like I am not affected by stereotypes as much,” said senior Wuheng Zhang.

Cultural diffusion is one of the best ways to target stereotypes and change people’s way of thinking. If every culture has multiple stereotypes and students are surrounded by multiple cultures, they will lose track of stereotypes rendering them useless.



Sophomore Hope Kungu



Sophomore Arthi Bhavaraju



Students walk through the brightly-lit hallway as they pass one another, taking in each other’s cultures. Maintaining both a visual and mental perspective of diversity has been a main goal within the community on campus. Photos by Derek Lee



## Ray Prepares Players for the Upcoming Basketball Season



The basketball team huddles together to receive a pep talk from coach Ray. The team strategizes about how to win. *Photo by Angela Meza*

The squeaking of tennis shoes echoes audibly throughout the gym as blaring orange basketballs bounce from player to player across the court. It is chaotic, the cacophony of voices yelling, the

basketballs dribbling, and the shrill sound of a whistle occasionally interrupting the boisterous atmosphere. Its owner stands along the bleachers, watching the players unnervingly, observing their every move while making note of what to continue in later practices. Head girls' basketball coach Tamatha Ray is determined to unleash her team's potential this season and will do everything it takes to come out successful. Ray is gearing up for this year's basketball season, as she coaches and prepares the varsity girls' basketball team for success. Practices are scheduled for after school but vary based on what the team needs to work on or who they will be playing against in the next game. The girls' varsity basketball team had their first game on Nov. 4 against Bridgeland.

"Practices are scheduled after school and are two hours long," Ray said. "A lot is covered during practices, but I have the team mostly focus on conditioning and drills."

Being one of the best teams in the district, constant pressure can be a problem for players to do well during games. Players have various ways they cope with the pressure in order to stay successful. Senior and key player Macy Spencer tries to keep her attention on the problem at hand while offering her team support.

"I don't really try to keep pressure on myself. Instead I mainly focus on getting the job done and working with my team to better ourselves throughout the process," said Spencer.

Their main goals this season are to make it to the district

**BANEEN RIZVI**  
Staff Writer

game and to beat the competition including Cinco Ranch and Katy. The team is especially looking forward to beating their biggest competitor, Seven Lakes. To achieve these goals, the team plans to work hard throughout the season, and work on improving themselves as players and people.

"Our goals for the season are just being the best we can be as a team, winning for sure, but just growing as basketball players and people, and I think if we can do that consistently we have a shot at something big," said Spencer.

## Compete with Confidence on the Court

The sun shines incandescently on the tennis players' necks as they stride to the courts. Each athlete knows that when they step foot on the court, the match's outcome depends on them and them alone. No team member can sub for them; they cannot slow their pace when the ball is on the other side of the court; everything lies in their hands and their steps. No matter the number of matches played, and competitions participated in, each tennis player has an ounce of doubt that they might let their teammates down. However, their confidence trumps that self-doubt; they have the support of their team and coach.

Tennis head coach Renee Richardson has coached at Tompkins for the past two years, though she has coached tennis for 15 years overall. This fall season, she has led the tennis team to the regional quarter-finals, placing Tompkins in the top

32 of 128 teams. In the pressure of competitions, Richardson has prioritized her athletes' mental health to increase their overall well-being as tennis players.

"A lot of the times you're out there by yourself and so if you're hard on yourself you start to self-doubt and we've worked a lot this year on clearing our mind and overcoming self-doubt and playing with confidence," said Richardson.

Starting tennis at 11 years old, Richardson understands the physical and mental challenges young athletes face. Therefore, she plans team bonding activities to help relieve the stress that tennis players experience, such as embarking on overnight trips, journaling and reading books together. Richardson specifically hopes to help her athletes with tiebreaks, the tennis version of overtime.

"This year we've had girls

that historically in the past have struggled with tiebreaks, and this year they are the tiebreak queens like can't lose in a tiebreak because they have so much confidence in themselves," said Richardson. These small actions prove especially important because high school tennis lasts throughout the entire year. In the fall season, the boys' and girls' tennis teams compete together as one, cumulatively losing and winning together. Individual tennis occurs during the spring, meaning athletes only have off-season during the second half of October and the entire month of November. The collective experiences the athletes have encountered have strengthened their bond with each other.

"We had a tough loss this season and after the tough loss—without me doing or saying anything—the kids came together, huddled together, stretched, and helped each other through it. And that was a great thing to watch," said Richardson.

Senior Arjun Kumar has played tennis for roughly seven years, starting when he was 11 or 12 years old. Looking back at his tennis career, he often recalls a trip the team took to Corpus Christi during his freshman year, where he played well at the tournament. This year, he looks forward to the Dallas spring trip but he most enjoys tennis for how it tests his skills.

**ELAINE LIU**  
Co-Managing Editor

"When you're on the court, it's only you. You rely on yourself to see how you perform," said Kumar. "It shows the extent to what I'm capable of and I really like that."

Kumar attends tennis practices after school on Mondays and Wednesdays, working on match play and collaborating with coaches. Outside of practice, he refines his skills individually, showing that tennis has no set time limit. Sometimes, Kumar wishes that spectators could recognize the vast amounts of effort, energy, time and skill tennis players invest in their sport.

"People think it's a really easy sport to play. It's really not," said Kumar. "It requires a lot of hand-eye coordination and such and you have to be pretty fast to play it."

This year, the team has struggled with injuries, which partly led to them placing second at District compared to the past, where Tompkins had placed first. Despite the challenges, Richardson has enjoyed watching her athletes overcome obstacles and learn how to trust themselves.

"Our girls' team is a talented young team," said Richardson. "Watching them play against people with lots of experience and them figuring it out and learning how to win has been fun to watch."

Sophomores Andrew Walker and Hrida Mathuria work hard to win the match. They motivate each other to keep going.

*Photo by Marianna Mata*



# Make a Splash: Swimming Dives into a New Season

**SYDNEY JACKSON**  
Staff Writer

Splash! The boys' and girls' varsity swimming teams dived into a new season this September, returning from a streak of district meet wins and championships from last season.

This year, the varsity swim team is especially young. Both the boys' and girls' teams took a hit from the amount of leaving seniors. The majority of the varsity team last year was seniors that graduated, leaving an exceedingly large number of returning underclassmen and juniors to fill in the varsity positions and leadership roles. To compensate, head boys and girls varsity coach Kate Sweeso is trying to implement the leadership skills early on for underclassmen, many of them being freshmen. By doing this, she believes that it will teach them early on the importance of teamwork, which makes it easier for the team to win.

"We're really trying to get the younger kids and the underclass-

men to step up as leaders so we set ourselves up for the future," said Sweeso. "That's the big focus this year."

This implementation of leadership skills has been highlighted by two of the new team captains of varsity, senior Stefano Chaves and junior Jordan Musselmann. As team captains, Chaves, Musselmann, and the other captains are the biggest supporters of their fellow teammates, their main goal being inclusivity for the team as a whole. This is carried out by a consistent advocacy for the team as a whole and keeping everyone in high spirits year round by planning team events and continuing and starting team traditions.

"Usually, team captains are tasked with taking care of the team literally and emotionally; the coaches can only do so much when it comes to bonds and having one on one conversations which is where captains usually step in," said Chaves.

Seven Lakes is one of the biggest competitors for the varsity boys' team. Last year, the varsity boys had a gripping chance at

winning the regional championship for freestyle relay. However, near the end of the competition, Seven Lakes varsity boys gathered speed and beat Tompkins's team by a galling one and a half points, making them the current regional freestyle champions and a main target for defeat. Instead of dwelling on the loss, Sweeso wanted the race to be a learning experience for their team, showing them that they now know what it takes to do well. The mentality she calls it is "every single person matters, every single race counts, every single time."

"For the boys [ team ], for the district, it's going to be us VS. Seven Lakes," said Sweeso. "They've got a good boys team, we've got a good boys team, so the two of us will go head to head."

Winning the district meet was one of the most memorable moments for the team. A sense of pride ran through everyone that day, feeling that their hard work had paid off. To celebrate their achievement, the team celebrated the day with a team party the next Saturday after the meet.

"The most memorable moment from last year was when our boys won districts because it was a really emotional achievement and the team really came together to support each other at the meet," said Musselmann.

The meet for both varsity boys and girls is the district meet on Jan. 21 at Jordan High School. The team wishes to retake their place as district champions and hopefully progress onto regions.



Junior Jordan Musselmann competes at swim meet. Photo by Marianna Mata

## Dribble Through the Season

**SHRIYA RAJAGOPALAN**  
Co-Manging Editor

Drops of sweat fall on the floor as students race across the court, using stamina to persevere through their thirst. Their minds fill with the thought of victory. Pride soaring as their excitement grows within the team. They help each other push their limits and fulfill their potential.

Head boys basketball coach Bobby Sanders prepares the team for the tough games ahead. He builds the team up physically and mentally, by challenging them and pushing them past their limitations. While they work hard, the team also builds their confidence and gets out of their comfort zone to play against their rival school Seven Lakes High School.

"We've built up a pretty good rivalry with Seven Lakes over the years, and last year we split games with them so that was pretty exciting," said Sanders.

As basketball season starts, the team dedicated themselves to make up for the tall athletes that left last year. The most important games arrive in December for the district. The team must take a new approach to how they will be playing against schools. They use the first month of the season to prepare for these games

"I feel really excited because we are playing a totally different style than we have ever played here," said Sanders. We are going to play really fast with a lot of full court defense and [we] are going to shoot more threes than any team in the state of Texas."

Sanders feels positive about playing with a new style because he practices with the players constantly, and drives them to work hard. As a team, it is important for them to work together as a unit instead of separately. He wants to encourage the team to try new techniques in order to succeed this season.

"I enjoy being in the gym,

having a new team every year, and the excitement of basketball," said Sanders. "Every year I like to see the team grow and become as good as they possibly can be by the end of the year."

Being a basketball coach, Sanders thinks it is important to see growth in the team as a whole by the end of the season, not only skills wise, but also in the team bonding. Basketball requires team members to work together while on the court. They have to find ways to bond with each other and cooperate.

"We are getting used to shooting fast and playing really aggressive defense, taking a lot of risks on defense. Right now, we are better at offense, but we're going to be good at defense," said Sanders.



Senior Emmanuel Paul warms up before the game against Davis HS. Photo by Amber Gibson

# Meaningful Gifts for Anyone on Your List

**ELAINE LIU**  
Co-Managing Editor

Although the act of gift-giving can feel rewarding, it may prove difficult to find one that fits the recipient. The common gifts of socks, gift cards and cash simply do not fulfill the joy someone feels when they receive a gift the giver thoroughly decided on. Each person is unique; therefore, each person deserves a special gift for any occasion. If you want to give a meaningful gift, consider the following options.



*Blankets*

In the colder months, a blanket brings comfort and warmth. However, each blanket can hold a specific meaning: one from newborn days, one that a loved one sewed or knit, or one specifically for long trips. Gifting someone a blanket can metaphorically represent the security within the relationship.



*Stickers*

Every person has unique interests, likes and quirks. Honor those qualities by assembling a collection of stickers that match someone's personality. Stickers can personify a variety of themes, from fantastical creatures to weird foods. No matter the person, stickers are an extremely customizable gift that can fit anyone's preferences.



*Tote Bags*

Known as sturdy, artistic, and reusable, a tote bag can help anyone who always has a lot on their hands. This inexpensive gift can serve as a grocery carrier, gym bag or backpack. The tote bag's versatility ensures your recipient will have a well-rounded gift.



*Jewelry*

Rings, necklaces, bracelets: emblems of heartfelt qualities. By gifting someone a piece of jewelry, you allow that person to carry a physical reminder of you throughout their lives. Eventually, that piece may develop into part of that person's identity, tying at least one part of your stories together. Most simply, however, jewelry can accent any outfit.



*Moleskine Notebook*

With the pervasiveness of phones and social media, a journal feels archaic. However, the simplicity of paper and graphite or ink can encourage anyone to feel calm. Journals can freeze a moment in time, capturing a person's specific emotions and thoughts. If you anticipate time apart with someone, give them a journal. Upon reunion, they can share whatever they wrote during the time apart.



*Poster/Tapestry*

Rings, necklaces, bracelets: emblems of heartfelt qualities. By gifting someone a piece of jewelry, you allow that person to carry a physical reminder of you throughout their lives. Eventually, that piece may develop into part of that person's identity, tying at least one part of your stories together. Most simply, however, jewelry can accent any outfit.

## FALCON Cries

What is Your  
Favorite Vacation Spot?



Allison Sinosic,  
9

Canada, because it's cold, and it's fun to swim in the lakes.



Nicole Murphy, 10

Azerbaijan, because I have family there, and the cities are beautiful.



Archie Nicoll, 11

St. John, because I love beaches and snorkeling.



Nico  
Osgnach, 12

Colorado, because I love skiing.

KATHERINE MOZISEK  
Staff Writer

# Holiday Crafts For The Home

As the air gets slightly colder with December cold fronts rolling in, schools let out and students finally have time for themselves. With the holiday season gifting the students ample amounts of free time, students are able to relax and participate in different activities which they enjoy, such as crafts. Crafts always make easy gifts and perfect house decorations. They are inexpensive and not time consuming. Crafts also bring a sense of warmth and security into a home.

## Reindeer for All Ages

Making reindeer out of Popsicle sticks is an amazing winter activity to make with kids. People of all ages love to simply color Popsicle sticks with vibrant Christmas colors. This craft is amazing because it allows creativity to shine through and they make impeccable ornaments for a Christmas tree. To make the reindeer, all that needs to be done is glue about four Popsicle sticks in the shape of a reindeer then color the sticks with markers.



## Holidays Oranges and Cloves

When oranges and cloves mix, the smell of an old fashioned Christmas swirls through the air. This orange and clove candle holder is perfect for gifts because who does not love homemade candles that are packed with a smell related to so many happy memories. It is small and easy to make since all you need is cloves, an orange and a tealight. To make it, use a small pointy object to press holes into the side of an orange, then you press cloves into the holes, remove the orange flesh and put in a tea candle.

## Winter Rocks

Painting rocks became more popular after the pandemic had hit, as it was a small way to bring color back to the community. Now, painting rocks is a simple, cute way to decorate basic rocks and can be easily related to winter. They can be painted with snowflakes, penguins, polar bears and anything winter related.



## Time For A Snow Day

Although Katy does not get snow very often, homemade snow globes are able to satiate the desire for a snow day by bringing snow to the community. To make this craft even better, it creates makeshift memories as it is customizable to any place, making it a quaint little gift of a relative's house in snow. A homemade snow globe can easily be made with charms, plastic figurines, fake snow, a mason jar and water. First make a scene with trinkets, put fake snow in and fill the jar with water before closing the jar tightly.



## Cut Out Pictures

Cookie Cutters are a common household item, but unfortunately not all cookie cutters get used and can create a space issue in a cabinet. Luckily, cookie cutters make interesting frames for photos and are small enough to be ornaments. Old family photos, fabric and patterned paper fill the inside of the cookie cutter and creates a warm mood for a Christmas tree and overall decor for the home.



## Ornaments For Memories

Ornaments are one of the easiest crafts to make, due to the high range of freedom in the production process. The base of any homemade ornament is just a clear ball ornament that can be filled with paint or trinkets. With paint, a landscape can be painted on the outside or be poured inside the ornament to give a marbling effect. By filling an ornament with trinkets, memories and emotions attracted to trinkets are saved and put on display throughout the holiday season.



ELLA RAY  
Editor-in-Chief



## *The Gift of Giving:* Volunteer Opportunities Available in the Winter

With the holiday season making its way around the corner, families begin to gift their loved ones with items from department stores and supermarkets. However, the community deeply desires to receive the greatest gift of all from its members: a helping hand. Volunteers and the time that they contribute make all the difference when it comes to improving the conditions and overall feeling of the community. Finding opportunities to volunteer proves to be anything but difficult as local organizations are always seeking assistance from citizens.

### ***Katy Christian Ministries First St. Resale Store***

In their store, located at 5510 First St., students are able to volunteer as greeters to warmly welcome customers while sorting and organizing donations, hanging clothing and keeping the environment of the store clean. The opportunity is available 1-2 times a week with shifts that last about 3-4 hours, the week lasting from Monday through Friday 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. & Saturday 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.. More information can be found on their website, [www.ktcm.org/volunteer](http://www.ktcm.org/volunteer), or by contacting Organizer Diana Miller's email, [Diana.Miller@ktcm.org](mailto:Diana.Miller@ktcm.org).



### ***Cinco Il Holiday Family Fest***

The Lake House (25202 Springwood Lake Drive) is hosting a community event for its residents to celebrate the winter holidays on Dec. 3 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.. This event includes interactive games, crafts, hot chocolate and coffee as well as a petting zoo, trackless train, and a picture station with Santa. Within the event, volunteers will be assisting in setting up the stations for the games, crafts, pictures with Santa and the hot chocolate/coffee area.

### ***Memorial Parkway Elementary's Breakfast With Santa***

Memorial Parkway Elementary (21603 Park Tree Lane) plans to hold a morning of joy for the children and Santa on Dec. 10 from 7:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. and from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.. To make this evening extra magical, the school needs volunteers to set up and take down the area activities. The school also needs volunteers to help students during the activity.

Memorial Parkway Elementary's mission is to make every child's potential a reality by engaging and empowering families and communities to advocate for all children.



### ***10th Annual Snowdrop Foundation Race***

Snowdrop Foundation is holding their annual ULTRA 55 Hour Race & Relay from Dec. 29 to Jan. 1 at Buffalo Run Park, 1122 Buffalo Run Blvd. Missouri City, TX 77489. The organizations need volunteers that will support runners that plan to run, walk or crawl as many laps as they can in the allotted time of 55 hours. Volunteers are also expected to help maintain the aid station with food and liquids. The Snowdrop Foundation's main purpose is to provide scholarships for college bound pediatric cancer patients and childhood cancer survivors while raising awareness and funding for continued research to cure childhood cancer.

# FALCON Cries

What is Your  
Alarm Sound?



Jason Wang,  
12

It's a series of chimes, I use my Alexa as my alarm.



Lilian Salar,  
10

My alarm sound is Radar, it's irritating but loud.



Sofia Vik, 11

My alarm sound is By The Seaside, it's fun to wake up to.



Matthew  
Wood, 9

My alarm is the **Boys Are Back** from High School Musical, I don't really have a reason, it just sounds cool.

Photos by Jacob Miller

## A Spoonful of Sugar: LOCAL BAKERIES BRING JOY TO STUDENTS

**SHRIYA RAJAGOPALAM**  
Co-Managing Editor

As the end of the first semester approaches, students look forward to enjoying baked goods to embrace the upcoming holidays. Going to bakeries with friends and tasting the different flavors of pastries with each other is the highlight of the students' winter season. Light fluffy cake with thick frosting on the top and decorations all around entice the students. With the abundance of bakeries in the area, students have limitless options to choose where to relish during the holiday season.

### Kingdom Bakery

Kingdom Bakery, 3030 Falcon Landing Blvd #1000, Katy, TX 77494. Kingdom Bakery is known for their unique recipes on cakes, kolache, sandwiches, soups, crepes and other delicious freshly baked goods. They offer new types of pre-made cakes as well as the option to order custom-made cakes. Service options include dine in, takeout and delivery. Kingdom bakery also offers 3D made cakes with many types of decorations such as flowers and ribbons to add to the cakes. The bakery has a very cheerful atmosphere and aroma.



Photos by Emma Jamison

### Smallcakes

Smallcakes, 24437 Katy Fwy #400, Katy, TX 77494. They specialize in baked gourmet cupcakes as well as seasonal and featured flavors in their signature pink boxes. Their signature flavors of cupcakes include cookies n' cream, "famous" red velvet, hot fudge sundae and birthday Cake. Along with their cupcakes, small cakes also offers a variety of ice cream flavors for the hot summer. The small cakes factory gives off a home-like vibe to its customers. Smallcakes became known through appearances on food networks such as "Cupcake Wars" and "The View." It is also listed on USA TODAY as one of the top ten places to try in the country.



### Crumbl Cookies

Crumbl Cookies, Cinco Ranch, 23730 Westheimer Pkwy Ste. J, Katy, TX 77494.

They offer menus that differ on a weekly basis. For example, in the middle of October, one of the cookies offered was Dulce De Leche which is a spiced cinnamon cookie layered with creamy dulce de leche frosting. Another cookie that was deemed a favorite was the Triple Berry Cobbler which was made out of strawberry, blueberry and raspberry, with cheese cream frosting, this cookie uses a mix of ingredients to appeal to its customers.

### Kolache Factory

Kolache Factory, 10705 Spring Green Blvd #900, Katy, TX 77494. The Kolache Factory specializes in making Czech pastry made out of semi sweet dough and savory filling. The purpose of the Kolache Factory is to create a bridge between Eastern European culture and American culture. Serving many kinds of Czech dishes such as cinnamon twists, strudel nicks and cream spinach, the Kolache factory introduces a unique culture into society.



# HOLIDAY MOVIES

During the holiday season—when the Christmas lights sparkle along the streets and familiar songs play on the radio—we seek nostalgia and comfort. Although the holiday season may be difficult for some, a film can always change our mood. These films can lighten your spirit regardless of your religious background.



After 8-year-old Kevin McCallister fought with his brother, his mother sends him to his room in the attic. The next morning, the McCallisters unintentionally forget Kevin as they set off for the airport to start their Paris vacation. Kevin awakens, overjoyed by the possibility that his Christmas wish to have no family has come true. However, two burglars, Harry and Marv, attempt to rob the McCallister home, causing Kevin to realize he must defend the home himself.



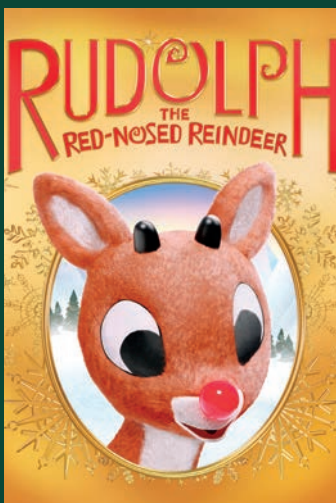
The 1966 short film of the classic Dr. Seuss book showcases the heartless and bitter Grinch, who envies Whoville's joy and excitement for Christmas. Wishing to create a sad Christmas, the Grinch dresses up as Santa Claus and attempts to steal Whoville's decorations and gifts.



Christmas-obsessed Jewish boy, Ira Finkelstein, is flying unaccompanied to his grandparent's house in Florida. To get the Christmas of his dreams, Ira switches airline tickets with a 11-year-old boy named Mikey on his way to Christmastown, Washington.



Pitch, an evil spirit, attempts to overthrow the immortal Guardians (Santa Claus, the Easter Bunny and the Tooth Fairy) by destroying children's belief in them. Jack Frost, a winter fairy, must stop Pitch's plan.



The stop motion animated television special tells the story of a young reindeer who wishes to be one of Santa's. However, his ostracized shining, red nose halts his dreams temporarily.



The toddler orphan Buddy was accidentally transported to the North Pole, where Santa's elves raised him as their own. Adult Buddy travels to New York City, meeting his birth father Walter Hobbs, a businessman with no Christmas spirit. When Walter's job is affected by his relationship with Buddy, he reevaluates his priorities.



Tired of the same Halloween celebrations each year, the pumpkin king of Halloweentown, Jack Skellington, stumbles into Christmastown. Enamored with the colorful lights and warmth of Christmas, Jack attempts to bring Christmastown under his control but finds that his plan has its flaws.



On Christmas Eve, three homeless friends—middle-aged alcoholic Gin, teenage runaway Miyuki, and former drag queen Hana—find a newborn baby while foraging for food in the trash. The three misfits wander around the streets of Tokyo as they search for the baby's parents.