

## Student Reporter



Justin Kim

Grade 11  
St. Mark's School of Texas

## Marksmen Multicultural Night at St. Mark's School



A student standing next to his cultural display table of Mexico during the Marksmen Multicultural Night. [Source: Lorre Allen]

Each day, students walk through school following a familiar routine, surrounded by the same classes and faces, rarely pausing to think about the diverse individuals they encounter. However, especially in a melting-pot of people like the U.S., being aware of and appreciating culture is im-

portant to build stronger communities and understand different, nuanced perspectives. Global connection through social media, travel, and international relations makes celebrating diversity not only valuable but essential.

Marksmen Multicultural Night is an annual festival held to com-

memorate the different cultures and ethnicities present in our community. Organized by the Inclusion, Diversity, and Leadership Council (IDL), the event invites students, families, alumni, and faculty to immerse themselves in a celebration of the many cultures represented within the school community. There are seven or eight pre-chosen countries to be represented during Marksmen Multicultural Night, with no countries being repeated two years in a row besides America. The night has multiple elements to explore in whatever order visitors wish, with the main attractions being the food, cultural display tables, performances, and activities.

The first attraction most people will see upon their arrival to Marksmen Multicultural Night is the food. Usually, a food truck or an open grill will be set up on the front lawn leading into the event; for example, last year, a cook grilled brisket burgers and fried mac & cheese balls for visitors to pick up on their way in. Inside the main hall, there are tables set up representing the national cuisine of each country. My personal favorite was the Korean fried chicken from two years ago, which was so good it ran out within an hour after the opening. Related to the food is cultural display tables, which are student-run booths

similar to a science fair display, usually including general information about the student's country, some activities, and some unique items relating to that culture.

Another part of Marksmen Multicultural Night is the performances, which are spread out during the event, consisting of a variety of different acts that change every year. Some examples from previous years include a flamenco dance, Texan line dances, and Chinese traditional lion dances. One tradition during the performances is an interactive one, where the performers teach the audience members to dance as the night comes to a close. The final facet of Marksmen Multicultural Night is the cultural activity tables. These tables are based on the chosen theme of Marksmen Multicultural Night and cater more to younger visitors, including coloring, mask making, and poster decoration.

Marksmen Multicultural Night is a unique experience that I am grateful to have been part of in the past and help plan today, and for schools without a similar celebration, I encourage creating one. This experience goes beyond promoting cultural awareness: it strengthens bonds within the community and leaves everyone richer for it.

## Student Reporter



Angel Song

Grade 10  
Harvard Westlake School

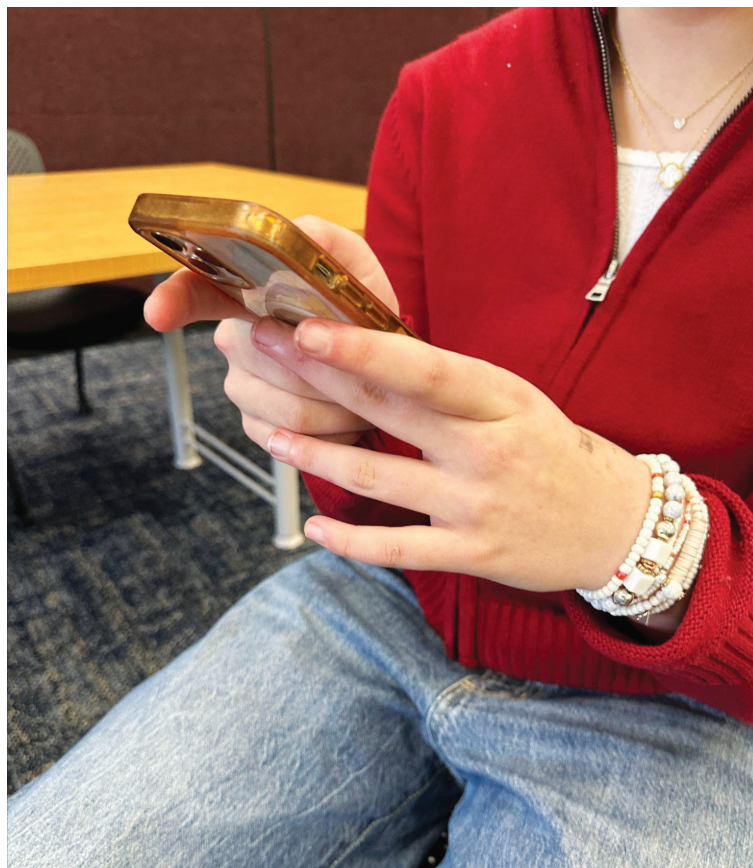
## We All Need Dopamine Detoxes

It's 10 P.M., and I snap back into reality. I realize I've been doom-scrolling on my phone, giggling at a constant stream of meaningless videos on Instagram. For many students, this is undoubtedly a relatable experience. But is short-lived happiness worth sacrificing the time we could have spent doing something more productive?

A report posted on the National Library of Medicine's webpage found that up to 95% of teenagers surveyed responded that they used social media daily. It's no lie that social media permeates our lives, affecting every part of it. We all feel the negative impacts of using social media, but considering that it's designed to keep us looped in, it feels as if there is no end to this hunt for more of the dopamine it provides.

This is why many of us could benefit from a dopamine detox. In the second semester of sophomore year, my dean and I began thinking seriously about college and my future, and I realized social media was part of the reason why I was distracted and sometimes failed to focus on schoolwork. I deleted my only social media app, Instagram, and hoped for a change.

A week into this new lifestyle, I am starting to see meaningful



A teenager on her phone looking through social media like every other teen, but is she using her time wisely? [Source: Author, Angel Song]

changes in my work habits, and mental health. Doing homework no longer takes hours; I find myself finishing all of my as-

signments in under an hour and staying on top of my work. When I had access to my phone and subsequently my Instagram page, I

would often go on my feed and stay there for at least half an hour. This also has helped me feel like I was achieving something. Previously, because I took so long to finish my work because of these social media breaks in between, it felt like I was being unproductive. Now, I feel fulfilled as I concentrate solely on doing what I must do.

While on my daily scrolling session, I would also be exposed to content that promotes a "lock-in" lifestyle that is unrealistic for many of us, which often involves focusing on work for the majority of one's day without getting sidetracked. Constantly comparing myself to the perfect lives that content creators were living impacted my mental health, whether I noticed it or not. However, removing social media helped me realize everyone has their own pace. It didn't matter if I wasn't locking in 24/7 as long as I was getting my job done, and removing the source of these toxic posts helped me heal mentally.

Social media may play a huge role in our lives, which means it's essential for us to review our social media presence. If one believes social media hinders their productivity, it might be time for them to consider a dopamine detox.

## Student Reporter



Joy Shin

Grade 10  
New Covenant Academy

## My Experience with Sports; The Ups and Downs

Most people have played at least one sport in their lives. Sports have both positive and negative impacts on people. I've played golf for about 8 years now and I started playing volleyball last year, and I can say that sports have lots of ups and downs.

I think that playing a sport is very important because it teaches you a lot. It teaches you you must work hard to achieve good results and that losing or doing badly in a tournament is okay. When you lose a game or do terribly in an important game, it encourages you to practice more. It also teaches you to accept your losses and try harder next time. I think this is very important to learn because it makes you more mature.

It's important to acknowledge the bad parts of sports too. When I did badly in tournaments for golf, I felt really sad and unmotivated to continue. I thought that maybe golf just wasn't for me and that made me feel really dejected. Also, when I was in the tournament and I did terribly, I felt really hopeless and it felt like I couldn't fix anything. When you do badly in games and sports, it

really affects your mental health. It's important to know that sports aren't your whole life and that even if you do badly, you can always bounce back. It's essential to take care of your mental health when playing sports.

Starting a new sport can be tough. When I started volleyball, it wasn't very fun and it was really terrifying when I played in my first game. Over time, when I played it for fun and not so seriously, it was more enjoyable. You shouldn't always take a sport super seriously. It's more important that you have fun when you play. When you have fun, you get better at the sport and it becomes more important to you.

Consistency in sports is very important. When you consistently practice your sport, you get better. I was very on and off with golf, which made it harder to get better at golf. When you don't play a sport for some time, you start not wanting to get back into it. You get lazy and you can forget how to play. You should always set aside a bit of time from your day to practice your sport a little. This is a really helpful way to get better.



Although at first a new sport might seem hard, and you may get down on yourself, practice will make you better and give you more confidence. [Source: Author, Heesue Joy Shin]

Sports can have a lot of downs and it can feel really hopeless sometimes, but it also has a lot of ups when your hard work and practice pays off. If you've nev-

er played any sports and you're scared of trying, remember it's never too late to start playing a sport as a hobby. It can be a nice, fun change to make to your life.

Student Reporter

## Sustainability vs. Style: The True Cost of Fast Fashion



**Bailee Kim**  
Grade 11  
Crescenta Valley  
High School



The stacks of rapidly overproduced clothing sold at a popular fast fashion brand may be inexpensive, but what is the real cost? [Source: Author, Bailee Kim]

Fast fashion, defined as inexpensive clothing produced rapidly by mass-market retailers in response to the latest trends, is something we all know we need to give up but never can. Especially to students, who generally do not have a stable personal income, fast fashion brands are of extreme popularity due to their

worldwide presence, trend-following pieces, and most importantly their inexpensive prices. Students look past the humanitarian and environmental issues and continue to support these types of clothing because they are able to purchase a variety of pieces without spending a fortune. However, the environ-

mental cost of fast fashion may be much more significant than many students expect. With the growing market, fast fashion now makes up for 10% of global carbon emissions and it is on track to exponentially worsen.

Although the fast fashion market is continuing to grow, with the industry making \$136.19 billion according to Uniform Market, overproduction is still one of the most harmful issues in this industry. Due to the industry's trend-relying nature, companies must always accommodate to the latest trends and sell as many pieces as possible while the trend is ongoing. However, trends end as fast as they start, causing extremely rapid production when they start and an overload of unsold inventory that is eventually thrown out. Even the clothes that are bought are often poor quality since brands compete with each other to attract the younger audience with their cheap prices, resulting in clothing with a short lifespan. Fast fashion pieces last an average of 2.2 years, which is a stark contrast from the clothing passed on for generations from our grandparents. Textile waste is detrimental to our environment because of the industry's significant water usage for production and the fibers in it that prevent decomposition. Especially for cheaper clothes,

synthetic fibers like polyester and nylon are used, which take over 200 years to decompose due to their non-biodegradable nature and tightly woven structure. Even though recycling campaigns and chemical recycling techniques are in action, the amount of textile waste that ends up in landfills is incomparable to the small amount that is recycled. Therefore there still are not many efficient methods of reducing textile waste because fast fashion brands rely on rapid production to sell as many products while a global trend is in place.

The environmental consequences of fast fashion are well known by students but the switch to buying pricier, higher quality clothes and purchasing fewer items is a constant struggle. However, brands with sustainably produced clothing and methods of conserving waste are starting to gain popularity. One example is thrifting, which has become a common hobby in the past few years, reaching the younger audience attracted to fast fashion as a sustainable yet inexpensive alternative for their go-to clothing brands. Choosing sustainability over consistently cheap products is difficult but as the market continues to grow, it is crucial for our generation to limit our fast fashion consumption to slow down environmental degradation from the fashion industry.

Student Reporter

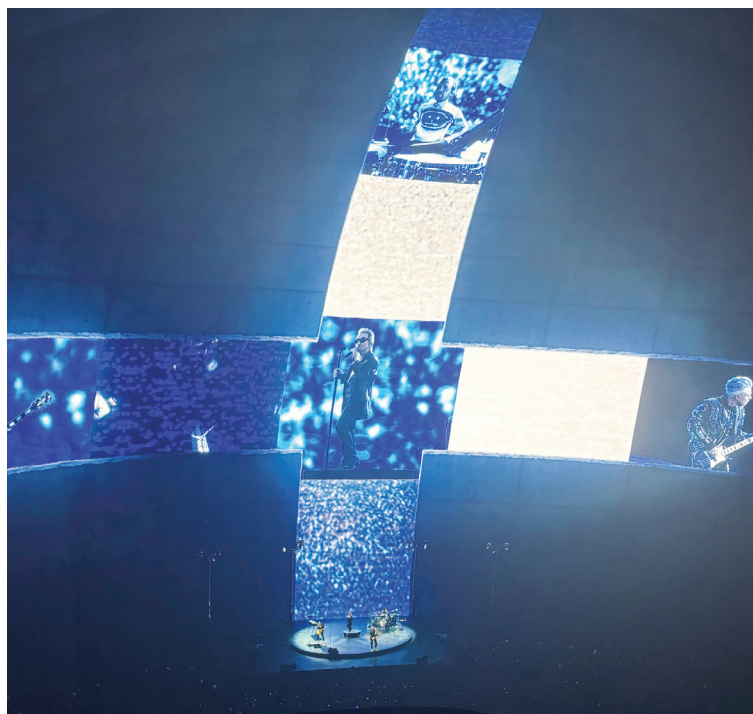
## V-U2: The Return of the Legend



**Jaeyun Park**  
Grade 10  
Hillcrest Christian School

With album sales in excess of 100 million copies, U2, an Irish rock band, is one of the most influential music groups in the history of popular streaming. They are an icon of Irish music culture, and one of the highest-earning bands in the world, with enormous commercial success and numerous musical achievements. In particular, their 1987 album *The Joshua Tree* is historically mentioned when discussing the best albums of popular music. Moreover, the band is known for its wide and diverse musicality that crosses between alternative rock, disco, pop, and country, as well as its socially critical lyrics inspiring social activism, such as songs on *Bloody Monday*, German reunification, and racism. U2 vocalist Bono's global influence is almost on par with that of a president of a country.

In addition, U2 has not just improved society but has also influenced the culture of its band community. In particular, among modern rock bands that occupy a mainstream position in the indie scene of each country, there are many bands that use a style that is almost identical to U2, such as Coldplay. In addition to their music activities, the members of the band are also social activists



As a part of V-U2, Bono, a vocalist for U2, is performing for fans. [Source: Author, Jaeyun Park]

who actively participate in human rights, anti-war, and environmental movements. Many of their representative songs contain such social messages, and Bono is a regular candidate for the Nobel Peace Prize every year. U2 is one of the artists with the

strongest ticket power to this day. The songs made U2 the winning band, but the performances also played a role. This is due to U2's great innovations in performance, especially in the use of stage lighting, which led to tremendous advancements in the band

community's performance techniques.

U2: *UV Achtung Baby Live* at Sphere was a concert residency by the Irish rock band U2, held at the Sphere in Paradise, Nevada, in the Las Vegas Valley. The show took advantage of Sphere's compact video and sound capabilities, including a 16K 160,000-square-foot LED video screen and speakers featuring recursion forming and wavefield synthesis technologies.

Historically, and even today, U2: *UV Achtung Baby Live* receives widespread critical acclaim. Many reviews highlighted the show's successful fusion of U2's anthemic music and the grandeur of the concert venue, and noted the show's potential impact on live entertainment as a whole. Originally scheduled for 25 shows through December 2023, the residency was extended by 15 more shows through March 2024 due to high demand. The residency sold 663,000 tickets and grossed \$244.5 million, making it the fourth-highest-grossing concert residency ever. The performances were filmed for the immersive concert film *V-U2*, which premiered exclusively at Sphere in September 2024, and *V-U2* is still available to this day.

Student Reporter

## Game, Set, Match: Tryout Season



**Claire Kim**  
Grade 10  
Lake Braddock High School

High school sports season is rapidly approaching! For both new and experienced student-athletes, it is an exciting and nerve-wracking time. How are students preparing for their sports? What are their concerns? Let's hear from some of Lake Braddock High School's new athletes.

Curious about their worries, I asked these new athletes what weighed most heavily on their minds. To this, Luciana, a sophomore trying tennis out for the first time this year said, "Honestly, I'm nervous I won't make the team. Because I'm a sophomore, it'll be harder to make the team with decent skill since the coach prioritizes freshmen. I also only started seriously playing tennis a few months ago."

My next question was how she's been preparing to fight these concerns. Luciana told me the following: "I've been getting private and group lessons three times a week. Coach Tony told me if I wanted to make the team, I would have to come that often. He did say it's looking pretty good, but regardless, I'm still worried."

After all, some of the girls on the team have played for several years."

I found her concerns both valid and understandable. I had felt the same jitters trying out as a freshman last year, so I could imagine how nervous Luciana would be with the extra pressure of being a sophomore. I wanted to compare these answers to what a previous player might tell me.

Victoria, a sophomore who joined as a freshman, is trying out again for tennis. She has played for roughly three years now. I was curious to see what she thought, being a preexisting player. For her worries, she told me,

"I'm so scared [Coach] Maxwell will think I haven't improved. I know he's going to be paying more attention to the new players, but that doesn't mean I can get away with it forever. I really just want to show him that I deserve a higher spot on the ladder this year."

I followed up with how she has been preparing for this. She answered, "Even after tennis season ended, I did lessons on



Lake Braddock High School's girls varsity tennis team taking a team picture together. [Source: Author, Claire Kim]

the regular to really make sure I don't lose skill and hopefully improve. I also tried to run on a somewhat regular basis, but I will say I wasn't that consistent with my running schedule. Thankfully, we only have a short running drill."

Both Luciana and Victoria have differing worries, understandably, as neither of them is in

the same position in the coach's eyes. However, it is notable to see that both of them are preparing with consistent lessons. Lessons may not always be accessible to every athlete, but this goes to show how important consistency is. To every athlete out there trying out for a spring sport, good luck and keep your head in the game. You've got this.