UHD commends passionate champions against human trafficking

BY INDIRA ZALDIVAR

On National Human Trafficking Awareness Day, UHD honored alumna, Dr. Nissi Hamilton and Hope Pyx Global Spokesperson, Eileen Dong, for being vicious advocates against human trafficking.

Hamilton, a Navy veteran and UHD MBA graduate, narrated how she survived a multi-generational struggle with human trafficking in Houston, the nation’s top human trafficking hotspot. The City of Houston recognized her as survivor “poster child” of labor and human trafficking. She explained why it’s important to have more Black women be represented as survivors.

“When you don’t see yourself mentioned anywhere, you don’t think you deserve to be a survivor… to be a part of this mission,” Hamilton said.

Hamilton largely credited UHD for helping stay in school through scholarships and support.

“I can change my story because of what I have been equipped with from a powerful industrious giant like University of Houston-Downtown who I proudly stand with because they stand with me as a survivor of human trafficking.”

Her passion has led her to become the founder of A Survivor’s Voice of Victory and a fierce advocate for legislation. She led the nation’s first political campaign against human trafficking.

More recently, she was key in the new Texas law that now requires employees and patrons of sex-oriented businesses to be at least 21.

Eileen Dong, a petroleum engineer, survived sex trafficking far from her relatives in China. She is especially passionate about spreading compassion for immigrants who tend to be victimized by traffickers by promising to fulfill goals that led them to immigrate.

She credits Houston for being the place of her rebirth.

Dong now devotes her time with the local nonprofit, Hope Pyx, raising awareness and prevention of family violence, sex trafficking and sexual assault.

For more information on the signs of human trafficking, the power-control wheel, “adopt-a-survivor” program, and ways to volunteer or donate, visit hopepyx.global.org.
Dateline writer lists favorite study areas on campus

BY DIANA AMBROSIO

There are many places on campus to study. While each building has tables and chairs throughout that one can choose from, some buildings are deemed as favorite places to study over others for comfort granted by designated study sections.

The W.L. Dykes Library, located on the north side of the fourth and fifth floor of the One Main Building, offers unlocked study rooms on a first-come, first-served basis. Other rooms such as Group Study rooms and Presentation rooms can be reserved through the library website.

One of the unlocked study room on the fourth floor of One Main Building North. Credit: Diana Ambrosio

GROUP STUDY rooms offer a whiteboard and a monitor that can be used to connect a laptop. Presentation rooms have podiums with built-in computers, projectors, video players, whiteboards, tracking cameras and document cameras. They also have recording equipment for Zoom presentations.

The first floor of the library has computers and printers. All students get a $25 printing balance to print materials in black and white or color at the library. The second floor of the library is a zone reserved for quiet study that has various tables and individualized semi-cubicles. If this quiet study is filled up, more desks are available near the library entrance on the fourth floor of the One Main Building North. On the second floor of the One Main building, a study area labeled Gator Study Zone is available. This room is across from the Student Government Association’s office. On the same floor, there are tables and booths available for use.

UHD students Jose Guzman and Irvin Solano have many classes in UHD’s newest building, the Sciences and Technology Building, so they take advantage of the STB’s study rooms. On each floor of this modern building, there are tables and booths available, as well as whiteboards that can be used. Next to some of the tables and booths, there are outlets available.

Rhode Villareal, gardener, plants brussel sprout. Credit: Diana Ambrosio

BY DIANA AMBROSIO

The Center for Urban Agriculture and Sustainability’s mission is to develop sustainable solutions and raise student awareness. The center offers various programs which offer stipends to participating students. These programs aim to provide students with hands-on work and research for agriculture and sustainability. The CUAS also hooks students up with community partners in the field of sustainability and environmentalism.

The Eco-Reps program is a group of students that promote sustainable activities on campus and try to implement green initiatives. Their purpose is to reach out to fellow UHD members to collaborate on projects and spread sustainability awareness. The Eco-Reps are selected through an application process.

The SUSTAIN Scholars program focuses on current issues within food production and sustainable urban systems. Students from all majors look at these issues and create solutions. This year-long program opens every fall semester. It offers the 2021-2022 students a $500 stipend in the fall, another $500 in the spring, and a $2000 stipend linked to a summer internship.

Christina Sterna, environmental geoscience student, credits the SUSTAIN program with broadening her knowledge of sustainability and helping her closer to her career goals. She also earned an internship at the City of Houston Brownfield Redevelopment Program.

“Being a SUSTAIN scholar means that you’re willing to make a campus wide impact with sustainability. It means that you are willing to keep educating yourself about sustainability and, furthermore, educate your community,” Sterna said. “I was passionate about going into the field of geology with a sustainable path in mind. SUSTAIN gave me the knowledge and tools to make that path realistic.”

The UHD Garden Project works in conjunction with the UHD Garden and Compost Club to oversee the two food gardens. The newest garden is located on the southside of the STB. The UHD Sustainability Garden is located in front of the One Main Building’s mailroom entrance. These gardens were created to engage students in food production in an urban setting and to teach students the importance of composting.

UHD student, Rhode Villarreal, participated in the Garden Project of fall 2021 where she prepared the soil, planted and nurtured the plants in the gardens, and harvested delicious produce. All this work taught her how to create a sustainable garden.

Networking opportunities were also opened as she was invited to attend other events that related to agriculture and sustainability. At these events, hosted by the Organic Horticulture Benefits Alliance, she met professionals from fields that are outside of her major. She found that being part of the project was a “meaningful hands-on experience.” For information on these programs, visit the UHD CUAS website, email the CUAS at cuas@uhd.edu, or contact the sustainability coordinator Juan Martinez at martinezju@uhd.edu.

Christina Sterna, SUSTAIN Scholar, presents at the Food Sustainability and Security conference on Nov. 13. Courtesy: Christina Sterna.

UHD CUAS teaches students about sustainability in urban settings
SGA swears in new president

BY ANITA GOOLCHARAN

The UHD Student Government Association has a new president. Michelle Duvall, the former vice president, was sworn in as president during a general assembly held on Dec. 13.

Duvall said she aims to implement a grassroots approach during her term to rebuild a team and highlight respect during her time in office.

Her presidency began after the previous president, Shamika Jefferson, resigned.

Students who attended the assembly were given a chance to express their concerns and questions to the president.

The students suggested changing snacks in the vending machine and adding more student lounge areas and designating more parking areas for people with disabilities.

Laporsha Belle, a graduate student enrolled in the MBA program, expressed her concern for Gators to graduate despite financial issues.

"Can we have a financial aid event geared towards first-generation college students?" she asked Duvall.

As vice president, Duvall helped run two financial aid events and acknowledged she suggested would be considered, during her term as president.

Duvall plans to implement panels during Black History month with speakers including family members of Rodney King and George Floyd. Other events include financial literacy workshops and the Spring Fest to encourage student networking.

Dateline writer explains scholarships

BY SAVANNAH MIMS

UHD offers several unique scholarships to its students including internal, departmental scholarships, foundational, and private and external scholarships.

Below are a few examples and definitions of the scholarships, starting with “scholarships offered by organizations.” UHD offers scholarships just for being a freshman or transfer student and for studying full-time or part-time.

More institutional scholarships include the Deans Scholarship and the Red Rose Leadership Scholarship. Endowments, for example, are used to fund these activities.

There are also “Scholarships offered by departments.” Departmental scholarships are chosen at the departmental level, but the Office of Financial Aid & Scholarships is responsible for award processing and management. The University of Houston Foundation is also accepting applications. Across the board, there is the Dr. Karin and Leo Shipman Family Scholarship, Society of Iranian American Women for Education Endowed, Sandor Turanyi Scholarship for Hungarian Students, and Scholarships on behalf of Sharon K. Johnson.

Private and external scholarships are handled differently, according to UHD’s website. Scholarships from both the private and public sectors are available.

Outside programs processed via the Office of Scholarships and Financial Aid are referred to as private and external scholarships.

External organizations launch these programs, but they are eventually included in the financial aid/scholarship process. Scholarships offered by external organizations are distributed according to the donor organization’s requirements.

Following the disbursement of scholarship awards to students’ accounts, cash will be available for credit toward the students’ tuition and fee bill. Suppose the money given exceeds the student’s tuition and fee bill. In that case, a credit will be provided. The Student Accounting Office oversees payment refunds for students.

Some external and private scholarship examples can be found on the university’s website under “Scholarship Search Engines,” along with a wealth of information under the university’s “Scholarships & Financial Aid” tab on the UHD Website. Go Gators!
### Payment deferral plan continues to help students in emergencies

**BY DIANA AMBROSIO**

The Emergency Deferral Plan is a payment program available each semester at UHD for qualifying students. It is for students who may need additional time for financial aid, allowing a student to have a reduced feeling of financial burden.

There are three qualifications listed for emergency deferment. A student must be a Texas resident, pay resident tuition rates, and enroll in the current semester. There should be no financial holds or past balances due with the university.

According to The Dateline’s Editor Indira Zaldivar, the enrollment process was simple and “easily done in minutes.” Students sign up through UHD 2.0 and the program locks in enrollment even if the funds are not available to the student at the beginning of the semester.

This plan is done in a four-installation schedule. A $10 fee is added to the final bill total if a student misses a payment. Zaldivar considered the fee “minimal.”

By using this plan, you will stay enrolled in your classes regardless of a missed payment.

This plan cannot be used to pay prior unpaid balances. A 5% interest is implemented each time a payment plan is created. The plan is offered once a semester. The tuition bill must be paid during the term it was acquired before a student can register for future semesters.

Determined to stay in school, Zaldivar entered graduate school despite financial circumstances that aligned with her career goals that are available only as an enrolled UHD student.”

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### UHD subsidizes METRO fare costs for students, faculty and staff

**BY MADIHA HUSSAIN**

UHD Parking & Transportation Services continues to partner with METRO to provide an additional mode of transportation, dubbed RideSponsor.

This program is available for UHD students, faculty, and staff who rely on METRO to travel to the UHD campus. UHD will sponsor 25% of the monthly fare cost for participants of the RideSponsor program.

There are four zones across the Houston metropolitan area that have been predetermined by METRO. The cost of public transportation varies from zone to zone.

Participants will receive a METRO Q card that grants a 50% discount to METRO’s fares.

The RideSponsor program first rolled out in the fall of 2017. It has garnered support from the UHD community these past years like Indira Zaldivar, The Dateline’s editor.

“I love it because I get to commute by METRO for free with this program,” Zaldivar said. “The stress-free bus ride is an advantage over having to drive for 20 to 40 minutes (with traffic) to school on the nation’s second deadliest interstate! Riding the bus helps me feel safer than driving a car and helps the environment by cutting down on carbon emissions.”

Participants of the RideSponsor will not be able to purchase a UHD parking permit. However, participants will have four parking validations per month to allow for any extenuating circumstances that require them to drive to campus instead of public transportation. The METRO Q card will be reloaded once the card’s balance is at $5 or below. The card will be reloaded only once a month if needed.

Visit the UHD Parking & Transportation Services in room N117 to enroll in the program! A form must be filled out before you contact them by email at parking@uhd.edu or call them on 713-221-8127.

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### Payment Dates

- **1ST PAYMENT** - **FEBRUARY 1**
- **2ND PAYMENT** - **MARCH 1**
- **3RD PAYMENT** - **MARCH 15**
- **4TH PAYMENT** - **MARCH 31**

### Qualifications

- **MUST BE CLASSIFIED AS A TEXAS RESIDENT AND PAY RESIDENT TUITION RATES.**
- **MUST BE ENROLLED FOR THE CURRENT SEMESTER.**
- **MUST NOT HAVE ANY FINANCIAL HOLDS WITH THE UNIVERSITY OR HAVE ANY PAST DUE BALANCES.**

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| Zone 1 | $22 |
| Zone 2 | $35.75 |
| Zone 3 | $41.25 |
| Zone 4 | $49.50 |

Credit: Giselle Oviedo

Credit: Edward Saenz

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ExxonMobil Complex suffers explosion, injures four people

BY SERGIO PERSA JR

The ExxonMobil facility in Baytown burst into flames which caused an explosion on Dec. 23 around 1 a.m. The refinery is located in the 5000 block of Baytown Drive. Residents who live near the refinery reported hearing a loud “boom” when the incident occurred. Four people were injured from the blast and were transported to Memorial Hermann in stable condition, according to an ExxonMobil spokesperson. Although a shelter-in-place was not imposed, particulate matter is known to pose a health concern after a fire. The refinery processes material with gasoline components. It has the capacity to process up to 584,000 barrels of oil each day and employs around 7,000 people.

In a press conference, an ExxonMobil spokesperson said there was no known impact to the air quality. “We deeply regret any disruption or inconvenience that this incident may have caused the community,” ExxonMobil’s statement read. This is not the first issue that the facility has had, including the death of a worker who suffered severe burns in 2003. In 2019, another fire at Exxon Mobil in Baytown injured 37 people.

Air Alliance Houston Executive Director Jennifer Hadaya said in a statement that chemical fires and explosions happen too often in the Space City because corporations are “allowed to operate in a way that endangers families and workers.”

Biden administration imposes greener vehicle standards

BY SERGIO PERSA JR

In an effort to fight climate change, the Biden administration has set the bar higher for vehicle mileage standards. The action is a rollback of a Trump-era policy that lessened restrictions on fuel efficiency standards. The Biden administration’s new rule would begin affecting 2023 car models and would have a target of 40 miles per gallon by 2026. That new standard is 25% higher than the number finalized by the Trump administration and 5% higher than the number proposed by the Environmental Protection Agency.

EPA Administrator Michael Regan called the rule a “giant step forward” in terms of delivering on climate agenda for the Biden administration. “We are setting robust and rigorous standards that will aggressively reduce the pollution that is harming people and our planet and save money at the same time.” Regan stated.

This newest attempt at passing climate policy comes after Democratic Sen. Joe Manchin opposed the bill because he believes it is too expensive and could spark more inflation. Market shares of zero emissions vehicles should also get help expanding under the new rule. The Biden administration has set a goal of battery powered and hybrid cars being 17% of new vehicles sold by 2026. By 2023, these vehicles are expected to have about 7% of market share in 2023. According to the EPA, the new rule will help slow climate change’s effects, increase public health by reducing air pollution levels and lead to lower costs for drivers due to improved fuel efficiency. Biden’s goal for the U.S. is to reduce emissions by at least half by 2030.

Why are you driving? Biking is safer for the planet!

Credit: Edward Saenz

US Justice Department sues Texas over voting maps

BY SERGIO PERSA JR

Two more legislative seats were allocated to Texas after the 2020 Census. Texas has yet to draw a new district with a majority of minority voters, Gupta said. “Our investigation determined that Texas’ redistricting plans will dilute the increased minority voting strength that should have developed since these significant demographics shifts,” Gupta stated.

The new seats in Texas both have white majorities. Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton called the suit “absurd.” He also said it was the Biden administration’s “latest ploy to control Texas voters.” This lawsuit is the second filed against Texas this fall over voting rights.

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Texas teen develops program, gives the gift of speech to little sister

**BY MICHAEL KOWIS**

In early December, 17-year-old Archer Calder, used his knowledge of coding and app development to build an augmentative and alternative communication application for his 14-year-old sister, Della.

Della has a rare genetic condition called Bainbridge-Ropers syndrome. Children with BRPS have moderate to severe intellectual disability, limited or absent speech, autism or autistic traits and significant feeding difficulties at a young age.

In Della’s early teen years, she was introduced to a variety of AAC devices and equipment. However, Della would not use one piece of equipment, and another brought Della and her family to spend thousands on said equipment.

For contextual clarity, the glasses I use every day, which some refer to as jordies, cost the state $1,800. If my family had to buy me glasses at this price the way Della’s parents buy her AAC equipment, they would go broke.

Enter Archer and his web-based application called Freespeech.

This simple website lets users program buttons with images of their choice to represent words. When clicked, the word is sounded out loud. In addition, the buttons are easily editable.

This is important because it allows the words, and thus the language, to be reflective of Della’s mood and personality. The biggest aspect of this application was its learning curve.

“It wasn’t long before the Calder family noticed a change in how Della was communicating with them,” according to CNN. Currently Freespeech is free and hosted on GitHub.

GitHub is an online free-to-use coding platform where Archer connected with other talented coders to help implement new features into the site. One such feature is password protection which was needed because Della would try to go into the backend of the website and edit/remove various features.

Finally, this development comes as a boon to those who work in the medical field and see patients like Della. Children’s National’s Division Chief of Hearing and Speech Tommie Robinson, Ph.D. told CNN that “additions to accessibility and individualization are greatly needed, and devices like an app can be an important part of enhancing the communication process.”

As it is now, Freespeech is a work in progress. The next goal is to make it available offline. However, in its current iteration, Freespeech is the gift that keeps on giving. Wheels in motion rolling on.

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State appeals court rules Harris County’s mask mandate can proceed

**BY SERGIO PERSA JR**

Harris County leaders are allowed to implement a mask mandate, a Texas third court of appeals in Austin ruled. The court’s ruling challenged Gov. Greg Abbott’s executive order that bans local government entities from requiring the wearing of face masks.

Local leaders in Texas called the ruling a victory.

“If you want to be responsible and require masks, continue wearing masks, unless the Texas Supreme Court rules against this,” Harris County Judge Lina Hidalgo said. “They won’t make a ruling on this for quite a while. You’re within your rights to continue with this requirement.”

Ken Paxton, Texas Attorney General has planned to appeal the decision to the Texas Supreme Court.

Abbott’s office was quick to address these new legal developments.

“The Governor’s executive order remains in full effect until those appeals are resolved, which means local mask mandates are still illegal under Texas law,” Abbott’s office stated.

Harris County Attorney Christian Menefee argued that Abbott does not have the authority to ban mask mandates through executive orders.

“What we’ve seen the courts continue to say is that the governor’s power is not unlimited,” Menefee said.

Hidalgo said the ruling will help save lives. She raised Harris County’s COVID-19 level to red on Jan. 10. She also strongly encouraged adults and children five and older to get vaccinated and boosted.
Magnus Carlsen defends World Chess Championship title for the fifth time

BY EDWARD SAEZ

After a 10-game long series, Carlsen defeated his opponent, and fellow Grand Master, Ian Nepomniachtchi, to win the FIDE World Chess Championship for the fifth time in a row.

The FIDE World Chess Championship is an event held every two years. The event is preceded by the Candidates Tournament, which is an eight-player tournament to decide the challenger for the World Chess Title. The first half of the 2020-2021 Candidates Tournament was held in Yekaterinburg, Russia in March 2020 and later postponed at the half-way point until April 2021.

The match between the Candidates Tournament winner and Carlsen was originally meant to be held in late 2020 but was delayed until 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The event took place in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates from Nov. 24 to Dec. 12. The series began with five consecutive draws before Carlsen won a closely contested eight-hour struggle in Game 6. With 136 moves, this was the longest ever game in a World Chess Championship and the third-longest in recorded history.

Following this loss, Nepomniachtchi started to feel the pressure and would make a series of “surprise blunders” and go on to lose Games 8, 9, and 11. This gave Carlsen a convincing series victory with four wins, seven draws, and no losses.

“The things that happened to me here never happened to me basically at any event,” Nepomniachtchi said. “In my career, I lost quite some stupid games, I should find out why it happened.”

Carlsen, a chess prodigy, has held the number one position in the FIDE world chess rankings since July 2011. In 2013, Carlsen won his first world championship and has since defended the title five times.

In late 2019, chess saw a massive rise in popularity on the streaming site Twitch. This is where a lot of antique dealers reside, and a walk-through of the aisles will feel like traveling through time. In more recent years, newer and durable structures have been added surrounding the main building. These new structures offer a sturdier space for vendors than the tent space on the outskirts of the market.

The expansion will not stop there. Cole’s announced on their website their plans for Comida Park. This addition will feature up to 40 spots for local food trucks and will be open seven days a week.

Cole’s Flea Market has much to offer locals and tourists alike. If you have enough patience to sit in traffic as you wait for a parking spot, stop by and peek at the wonders this flea market boasts.

Expansion of Cole’s Flea Market increases its well-deserved popularity

BY CAROLINA VALDEZ

Sunday mornings at the intersection of Beltway 8 and Telephone Road are usually heavy in traffic. A long line of cars patiently waiting as they drive into the crowded parking lot of Cole’s Flea Market, and it does not clear up for hours.

This flea market has been around since 1968 and has grown in popularity in recent years since expanding. They now sit on 44 acres of land with over 1,300 vendors. What makes this place special is its longevity and what it means to the surrounding community.

Latin culture flourishes here as a large majority of the vendors offer cuisine and a plethora of goods from Mexico and Central America. Spanish music of all kinds can be heard playing as one walks through the entire flea market. The loud music, aroma of food, and the vibrant colors of the products create an enjoyable sensory overload for any first-timer.

“Growing up, my family would take me there every Sunday,” Alondra Mora said. “We would eat so much food, and it was real Mexican food – not Tex-Mex or fancy restaurant food.”

Mora said one of the food vendors offers “the best gorditas,” but does not have a sign or a name to identify the place. One must know their way around the market in order to find them.

This outdoor market is open every weekend, year-round and even with Houston’s unpredictable cold fronts and blazing hot summers, it thrives. Towards the center of the property, there is a large building to protect attendees from the weather. In the summers, this building is a refuge with an air conditioner. In the winter, it protects from the harsh cold.

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By Carolina Valdez

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Vendor stand at Coles’ Flea Market. Courtesy: Luisa Bermude Berrios

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Must-see film, ‘Red Rocket,’ channels pride in Texas culture

BY JAMES JUREWICZ

How is it that a smarmy and sarcastic rapper/actor like Simon Rex is now being talked about as a possible Oscar favorite? Prominent actors like Leonardo DiCaprio and Joaquin Phoenix were both praising Rex’s performance in the film released on Dec. 10. “Red Rocket” was released on Dec. 10, and it was shot in Beaumont, Texas, and the surrounding areas. Some scenes were shot in Beaumont. “Red Rocket” is about Texas City native Mickey Saber (Simon Rex) who was once a successful adult film star in Los Angeles, California. Saber returned to rebuild his life after he was shot in the adult film industry and claims to be the victim of a supposed “sabotage.” Returning to his mother-in-law’s house where his estranged wife Lexi Davies (Bree Elrod) resides, Rex gradually talks his way into the house from the street, ending up with a couch to surf for the reasonable monthly price of $200.

Saber eventually starts an inappropriate relationship with a 17-year-old named Strawberry (Suzanna Son) in her film acting debut. Due to his inability to find work because of his unique past, Saber begins selling cannabis out of the donut shop where Strawberry works. His best customers are all mostly employed in the surrounding Texas City petroleum and chemical plants.

Those familiar with Simon Rex or his rap persona “Dirt Nasty” will be pleasantly surprised and entertained by “Red Rocket.” Did Baker just take Rex to Texas City and follow him around with a camera? Are these lines of dialogue, or is it all his real life? Rex is an actor whose main genre is comedy. Slapstick and satire are his forte. To see the man cast by an auteur filmmaker who is wildly popular at Cannes Film Festival is truly surreal. The idea that Rex has been mentioned as a possible 2021 Oscar nominee for acting is mind boggling.

Rex is a talented actor and his performance in “Red Rocket” is good. He embodies a character that is intensely vain and self-involved. Saber seems content freeloading from his estranged wife Lexi Davies (Bree Elrod), meanwhile starting an inappropriate ongoing relationship with the underage Strawberry.

What makes Rex such a glove-like fit for Saber is his history in the adult entertainment industry, which is how he got his start in Hollywood. When asked about compliments and praise, a continued and lasting career is the outcome Rex hopes to achieve from the experience.

“There can be all the buzz, talk and all the compliments in the world, but really all I want out of this is to continue to work,” Rex told ET Canada.

Director Sean Baker is known for his films “Tangerine” and “The Florida Project.” A24 movies contain an outstanding realism that places the viewer within the story. Baker’s films feature regular people and trained or established actors. This contributes to Baker’s ability to truly capture an area and the local residents with authenticity.

What makes “Red Rocket” such a great film and superior performance is the detestable Saber can generate audience sympathy regardless of his horrible behavior. Saber is charming and hilarious. He is handsome and a smooth talker. The audience wants him to succeed even though he may not deserve to.

Adam Sandler is not known for his dramatic talent but accomplished a similar sensation with “Uncut Gems” in late 2019 early 2020. Sandler was famously snubbed at the 2020 Oscars. A nomination is still yet to be determined for Rex.

Baker also manages to recreate the slang, tone, and feel of the local people. Anyone from the area can relate to the characters represented onscreen. The heat and humidity of the Texas Gulf Coast are apparent on screen. The characters glisten with sweat in the Texas sun.

The Kemah Boardwalk, the Mall of the Mainland and Highway 146 all appear in the film. For anyone from the surrounding area, they will instantly recognize familiar landmarks and the flat, humid, marshy landscape of Texas City. Saber and Strawberry both take a ride on the Boardwalk Bullet rollercoaster in Kemah and the Donut Hole is a popular and familiar donut chain in Texas.

The film is not only entertaining but very well made and acted. It is also a must see for anyone from the Houston area. It would be fantastic if more films were produced in Southeast Texas.

“Red Rocket” has a runtime of 128 minutes (about 2 hours) and is now playing in movie theaters.

The following scene introduces a set of ranchers at a farm led by brothers, Phil (Benedict Cumberbatch) and George Burbank (Jessie Plemons) respectively. Cumberbatch adds to his wide range of characters played in his acting career with the mysterious Phil Burbank. Throughout the story’s five parts, the audience observes Phil’s cruel comments and emotional manipulation and must make assumptions about his character.

From beginning to the end, the film demands a lot of attention as every detail is extremely important. Through Ari Wegner’s cinematography, multiple views of the characters are captured that would normally go unnoticed. For example, a larger focus is placed on Peter’s beautiful facial features in his first appearance. The shot also depicts his artistic talents. This contrasts with Phil’s first appearance. A far shot portrays him covered in dirt leaving livestock after work.

The first interaction Phil has with Pete is extremely tense from their differences but not exactly for the reasons the audience suspects. The movie has twists that imply Phil’s internal insecurities as well as the self-pity he feels when he is alone.

“The Power of the Dog” already won the 2022 Golden Globe for best drama film, best supporting actor and best director. It is an anticipated nominee for best picture in the 2022 Academy Awards. Hopefully, the film will create an even larger name in the industry soon.

BY YASMEEN AMOURAH

“The Power of the Dog” is a Western psychodrama and a potential Oscar nominee. Jane Campion directs the movie after an almost ten-year hiatus and does the 1967 novel by Thomas Savage justice.

Set in 1925 Montana, the film opens with a sympathetic monologue from the main character, Peter Gordon (Kodi Smit-McPhee).

“For what kind of man would I be if I did not help my mother? If I did not save her?”}

Copyright: Netflix
‘American Underdog’ pays tribute to NFL player’s true-to-life story

BY JAMES JUREWICZ

“American Underdog” is a 2021 sports biopic about the meteoric rise of quarterback Kurt Warner. The film follows the NFL player’s fascinating story from stacking shelves at a local grocery store to winning the Super Bowl. Directed by Andrew and John Erwin, who also directed “Good Morning America,” the film was released on Dec. 24 on Netflix.

Warner spent time as the Iowa Barnstormers quarterback from ’95 to ’97, slowly becoming the best player in Arena Football. His coach Jim Foster (Bruce McGill) offers him $100 for every touchdown he makes during a game, eventually requiring a large pickle jar to hold all the touchdown cash.

Arena Football quickly becomes key in Warner’s football ascension. After three seasons, he finally attracts the attention of the NFL. Warner was a backup second-stringer with no regular season starting experience for the St. Louis Rams.

During the break between his pro stint and college sporting career, Warner stocked shelves at a grocery store in Iowa. The Los Angeles Rams were last in the Super Bowl after the 2019 NFL Season. They lost to the New England Patriots. The Rams last super bowl win was in 2000. Following the 1999 season, the team had the moniker “The Greatest Show on Turf.” Warner was the team’s starter during their Super Bowl win.

At times throughout the film, Zachary Levi looks just like Warner. This is especially true when he sports the Rams blue and yellow-gold uniform. Levi is well cast and imitates Warner’s slight Iowa accent with accuracy.

Oscar winner Anna Paquin portrays Warner’s loving spouse Brenda. Paquin also resembles a younger Brenda Warner with the familiar pixie haircut. Paquin replicated Brenda’s strong personality with personal thorough research.

The film is as much about their relationship as it is about Warner’s career. Brenda is selflessly patient and emotionally supportive of her husband. Levi and Paquin were both able to embody the Warners’ personality traits in the film’s big moments. The Warners were directly helpful for the actors’ research for the role. In an interview with Good Morning America, Levi calls the Warners an incredible resource.

“He and Brenda were on set about half the time we were making this movie,” Levi stated.

On the Kelly Clarkson Show, Brenda Warner talks about the film being more than a sports movie. She expressed that the movie had to be about life and how she wanted “the good, the bad, and the ugly.” “American Underdog” is the first wide-theatrical release from the Kingdom Story Company. The company specializes in Christian Films and “American Underdog” is their 3rd film released.

Without seeing any other film in their library, the Christianity portrayed onscreen was notably subtle. Brenda speaks with Warner about how her Christian faith “defines her” and later, in a moment of utter tragedy, Warner prays, asking for strength.

True-life inspirational stories like Warner’s translated into a good film. “American Underdog” is enjoyable and entertaining. Warner has a likability that followed him to a television sports analyst career after pro football.

See “American Underdog” it is worth the watch. The film is about more than football, and the story is truly inspirational. “American Underdog” is now playing in theaters.

‘Don’t Look Up’ creates comedic parallel with current world struggles

BY JAMES JUREWICZ

“Don’t Look Up” is Netflix’s latest satirical comedy about a deadly earthbound comet and the ridiculous efforts made to stop Earth’s destruction. Directed by Adam McKay, the film’s all-star cast includes Leonardo DiCaprio, Jennifer Lawrence, Meryl Streep and Jonah Hill.

The film follows Kate Dibiasky (Jennifer Lawrence), a Ph.D. candidate, discovering an incoming comet with an earthbound trajectory. The comet’s path is confirmed by her professor, Dr. Mindy (Leonardo DiCaprio). If the comet is to strike the earth, no life is expected to survive the aftermath.

The two astronauts begin a media tour after their initial meeting when President Orleans (Meryl Streep) and son and Chief of Staff Jason (Jonah Hill) fail to generate any real concern.

“You just can’t go around telling people there is a 100% chance that they are going to die,” President Orleans said.

Orleans laments the bad timing of the impending natural disaster getting in the way of the upcoming midterm election.

Lawrence and DiCaprio do a fantastic job portraying scientists who are clearly not suitable to spread sensitive and drastic information to the masses. DiCaprio’s character experiences extreme anxiety, among other ailments, which he与其有大规模的数字药物治疗。Lawrence’s Dibiasky becomes an instant meme when she loses her cool on a popular national television show. Both play their comedic roles incredibly well and prove they are anything but solely dramatic performers.

Oscar winner Mark Rylance delivers a fantastic performance. His portrayal of Uber-rich billionaire scientist, Peter Isherwell, is the standout of the movie. Rylance’s character is so obnoxious and memorable that Isherwell’s marshmallow voice echoes in the viewers’ head for hours after screening the film.

The voice he used is silky soft and angelic, though it is the ridiculous dialogue that makes the character great. His eccentric ideas range from hilarious to frustrating. The character is a mix of Amazon Owner Jeff Bezos and Tesla company creator Elon Musk, both successful businessmen and billionaires.

Director Adam McKay is known for some ridiculous and well-received comedies. He brought us Will Ferrell’s “Anchorman” and Ricky Bobby characters as well as the ‘08 cult classic “Step Brothers.”

“Don’t Look Up” is a film where the initial script required more of the unbelievable. McKay explains he penned the script pre-pandemic. After experiencing life during 2020, the director went back and rewrote the script to make it more realistic, and therefore unfortunately more ridiculous.

It subverts audience expectations through the film’s tone and delivery. Usually, a film so packed with Oscar-winners would have a more serious and grounded approach to the material. “Don’t Look Up” is a satirical dark comedy that borders on parody yet still contains genuine dramatic and serious moments. American society within the film becomes heavily divided about the comet.

Those who stand with the president inhabit the mantra “Don’t Look Up.” Everyone who believes in the science behind the meteor and the impending devastation repeatedly say, “Just Look Up.” The comet is a blatant and obvious metaphor for global warming as well as COVID-19.

This was originally a metaphor for the climate crisis, then [COVID-19] hit and a whole new wave of denial of science,” DiCaprio told The Today Show. The politically created division saturating this fictional society makes real and lasting change impossible. The film depicts numerous celebrities and important figures backing one side of the spectrum or the other, much like in real life.

The film is very reminiscent of the 2006 Mike Judge Film “Idiocracy.” That film involves the future and how IQ levels are lower due to a combination of ridiculous yet now realistic factors.

“Don’t Look Up” is long for a comedy, 138 minutes. The film is an enjoyable watch. There are so many famous A-list actors in the film. The characters are well developed and mostly likable.

Enjoy the film from the comfort of your home. “Don’t Look Up” was released on Dec. 24 on Netflix.
No more children should suffer at the cost of unrestricted gun laws

Editor’s note: If you are sensitive to the topic of school shootings, you may want to avoid this article.

BY YASMEEN AMMOURAH

With grade schools coming back in person for the first time in two years, there are lots of events going on once again in these communities.

Clubs are meeting, sports and games are occurring, the arts are holding shows, and gun fires are taking place in the lunchrooms once more. In 2021, after reopening schools 100% during the pandemic, 34 school shootings occurred and most took place after Aug. 1. What is causing this to occur once again?

Since the 1999 Columbine shooting, there has been a rise in shootings in all manners. Even after countless victims have suffered, there have still been no changes, especially in accessibility to weaponry. Since the March for Our Lives movement, middle schools and high schools have been calling for changes in gun restriction.

The leaders of this movement were the Parkland shooting survivors who witnessed the perpetrator, a 19-year-old former student with easy and legal access to a semi-automatic rifle. The shooter of the Parkland incident was younger than the legal drinking age in the U.S. and was able to easily get a gun with no psychological or background checks.

Though easy access to weapons is a large contributing factor in shootings, another issue is that some public schools do not take extensive and serious action regarding students who pose a threat. This past month in Michigan, Oakland High School saw the first extreme case of a mass school shooting in over two years perpetrated by a 15-year-old who had access to gunnery from his father. Though this wasn’t a legal source of weapons, the high school administration had knowledge of the student’s depression and fascination with guns.

When this information was brought to his parents, responsibility was passed to them to take him home that day, but they refused to. The prosecutor in the court case argued that “instead of paying attention to their son and getting him help, they bought him a gun,” which would provide there was a great deal of ignorance on the son’s antics.

More than 3,500 children are killed in shootings per year and 15,000 more are shot every year, according to Everytown Research and Policy. The idea that school perpetrators committing these acts because they were bullied is nothing more than a myth after over 20 years.

In almost every school across the nation, children are required to participate in shooting drills since Columbine. Why should there be a shooter drill every single year in all schools? Children are constantly scared of violent intruders but why is it something that except the bearer. To have laws written by a male majority government is misrepresentation of the extreme diversity in Texas. With 111 men compared to only 38 women in the Texas House of Representatives and 21 men compared to 10 women in the Texas Senate, an unprecedented bias can be foretold through these votes.

Overall, there is a larger risk in banning abortions than giving resources needed to help women. Overturning Roe Vs. Wade could end up as the second temperance movement and create secretive organizations for these actions at the cost of women’s economic and physical lives.

No more children should suffer at the cost of unrestricted gun laws

The fight against Roe Vs. Wade is a fight against women

BY YASMEEN AMMOURAH

Rights for women have always been off and on in the U.S. government and many other governments for that matter. Although the 19th Amendment was passed 101 years ago, the Texas government and right-wing states have taken away the right to have an abortion, creating an even larger barrier to women’s reproductive rights.

On Sept. 1, 2021 the Texas “heartbeat bill” took effect four months after the bill passed on May 19, 2021. The bill, formally known as Texas House Bill 790 and Texas Senate Bill 8, states that once a heartbeat in the fetus is detected, conducting an abortion will result in a penalty charge leading to a criminal offense. The earliest a doctor would be able to detect this would be three weeks into the pregnancy. At three weeks, many women still do not know that they are pregnant. Pregnancy symptoms may be overlooked as it could take pregnant women four weeks or longer to notice a missed period. Not to mention a myriad of other symptoms that may not become apparent until closer to two months into a pregnancy.

The knowledge of paternity wouldn’t even be able to be processed because now the labor of childbirth would be on the shoulders of the mother. The decision to abort or continue with a pregnancy is not one for Republicans to make. It shouldn’t be the decision of any outlier to the child.
“Pandemic brain” reaches far beyond just COVID-19 victims

BY ANITA GOOLCHARAN

As the U.S. approaches the second anniversary of the COVID-19 pandemic, many find themselves easily burned out. The lockdown that began in March 2020 quickly influenced a wave of exhaustion that has affected the mental health of millions in the working class. Business administration Professor Anthony Klotz coined the event the “Great Resignation”. Adjusting to the pandemic has created a state of constant pressure and stress.

Many have faced obstacles that could fit in an entire lifetime in the duration of the pandemic. According to research from Harvard Medical School, the pandemic’s mental strain can increase neuroinflammation even in people who’ve never had COVID-19. This phenomenon dubbed “pandemic brain,” explains many of the effects of lockdowns and other measures taken to prevent transmission such as working from home and distanced learning.

Neuroinflammation is often associated with major mood disorders like depression. The condition can contribute to symptoms such as brain fog, fatigue, increased stress levels, trouble focusing, and other neurological symptoms. The most prominent example of how pandemic brain has affected society is the healthcare staffing shortage. Doctors, nurses, and other health professionals have been met with a dramatic demand during the pandemic which has led to strikes, pay cuts and outsourcing.

These factors contributed to a massive exodus of other professions as well. Corporate America has also been severely impacted by the Great Resignation. In a study conducted by global management consulting firm McKinsey & Co., 42% of women and 35% of men in the U.S. feel burned out often or almost always.

For many professionals, the transition to work from home has led to a greater level of uncertainty. Uncertainty is the perfect incubator for burnout. Working from home can blur the boundaries between social and work life. For many working from home has become a hassle in parenting. Parents have to find a new balance when their children are learning from home at the same time they are working. For others, their workload has doubled or even tripled, increasing their stress levels which can mimic other symptoms of pandemic brain.

Pandemic brain has been used to describe the recollection of life before the pandemic and how many do not recall many social cues or topics of discussion. For instance, many topics of discussion during the pandemic reflect global efforts of relief, vaccines and public health.

However, many cannot recall conversations where these topics do not come up. Some find themselves forgetting social cues such as etiquette at parties or other social settings. The symptoms of pandemic brain are not definitive yet as scientists are still researching the effects of the pandemic. However, it is safe to say the pandemic has affected the mental health of more than only those who have been infected with COVID-19.

Credit: Giselle Oviedo
The season of giving should not end with the holidays

BY ANITA GOOLCHARAN

As the world enters the new year, many begin to focus on their New Year’s resolutions. For most, this means eating better, hitting the gym more often or spending more time with family. However, for many charitable organizations, January marks the beginning of a dry season.

The holiday season is the peak time for donations and volunteerism due to many people feeling moved by the holiday spirit. Charities often have more donations and services between Thanksgiving and New Year’s than any other time of the year. A prime example is when food banks and soup kitchens are fully staffed on Thanksgiving but normally understaffed and underfunded throughout the year.

Beginning in January, charitable organizations resume rationing their funding. Many will have their donations or volunteer numbers dwindle. The season of giving is never really over, especially in a pandemic. While it may feel gratifying to volunteer or donate to those in need when the holidays are around the corner, it is important to remember that there are people in need year round.

The recipients of charity are dignified people, therefore, gratitude should not be the center of why someone should donate their time or money to charity. Volunteering and other charitable acts should not be limited to the holidays.

Continuing to help others by contributing to a clothing drive or food bank year round is a simple way to start. Another way someone can continue their charitable acts can be to serve as a mentor. UHD College of Public Service’s Collaboratory for Aging Resources & Education are offering a pandemic-friendly service to help seniors. Led by CARE, the “Adopt a Grandparent” program aims to help console seniors who may feel isolated during the pandemic. Giving back to the community should not be limited to the holidays when there are those who may need help year round.

Credit: Giselle Oviedo

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