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INTERNATIONAL

A year of unrest

After Israel-Palestine conflict reached a critical point, UTA students continue to protest

BY PEDRO MALKOMES
The Shorthorn news editor

Editor's note: Some of the sources included in this article were attributed using their first name or nickname at their request due to safety issues. We believe including their perspectives is important to give our audience full understanding of the story.

A year has passed since the Israel-Palestine conflict reached new heights of unrest and awareness of the situation has expanded internationally.

On Oct. 7, 2023, Palestinian militant group Hamas stormed communities in South Israel in a surprise attack, killing an estimated 1,400 Israeli citizens and taking 239 people captive, according to *Al Jazeera*. The following month, Hamas released 105 captives in exchange for 240 Palestinian prisoners held in Israeli prisons.

Over 41,000 Palestinians and more than 1,000 Israelis have died since the conflict reached new heights, according to *Al Jazeera*.

The war has since extended to Lebanon and neighboring Middle Eastern countries. Two weeks ago, Israel announced that Hassan Nasrallah, longtime leader of the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah, had been killed in a series of airstrikes launched against Beirut, according to *NPR*.

Marking the past year, protesters gathered Saturday evening in Dallas, painting The Grassy Knoll red, white, black and green as hundreds donned keffiyeh scarves and Palestinian flags, demanding a ceasefire.

Across the street, dozens holding Israeli and American



The Shorthorn: Ronaldo Bolaños

Student protesters walk through UTA during a campus protest Oct. 7 during a student-led "Week of Rage." Participants made their way from the Central Library to the University Administration Building.



The Shorthorn: Ronaldo Bolaños

Anti-protesters gather across the Grassy Knoll during a pro-Palestine rally Oct. 5 in Dallas. Anti-protesters came in support of Israel.

flags gathered, too.

Roberto Moura, who spoke Portuguese, said he came to support Israel alongside at least a dozen other members of a mission group from Brazil. The group visited Christ for the Nations Institute, a three-year bible school in Dallas and prayed in local areas for Jerusalem.

The group didn't come to protest, Moura said. When they arrived in the area, they encountered some Americans supporting Israel and decided to join them and pray for peace.

Among Palestine supporters was Green Party candidate Jill Stein, who called for a permanent ceasefire and boycott of weapons and economic aid to Israel until they comply with the International Court of Justice.

Stein said while Gaza is currently the worst example of "destruction and genocide," other countries face similar conflicts, and the city has become a symbol among them.

Stein said it's time to put the congressional budget toward the needs of the U.S. — not war — such as housing, health care and the climate crisis.

"We have the power to take back our future, to create an America and a world that works for all of us, that puts people, planet and peace over profit," she said. "Together, we are unstoppable."

As a Palestinian, Mina Altusfah, officer for UT Dallas' Students for Justice in Palestine chapter, said she has family enduring bombs and destruction supported by the U.S. government.

PROTEST continues on page 4

ALUMNI

UTA alumni fill night sky

Sky Elements placed third in the "America's Got Talent" finals with their drone show.

BY ORLANDO TORRES
The Shorthorn sports editor

During the "America's Got Talent" semifinals, UTA alumnus Preston Ward honored his prematurely-born daughter Briley Rose, who died in 2020, with a drone tribute to "Butterfly" by Lily Meola.

The act left the audience in tears and judges speechless. To this day, Ward said he's still receiving emails and calls about how it hit home for people.

"Everybody was just so moved emotionally and crying," Ward said. "They were so blown away that it was just a totally different experience, and it was quite special."

The drone show required around 38 revisions and wasn't finalized until an hour before the taping, creative director Brian Geck said as they



The Shorthorn: Ronaldo Bolaños

Drones create a display of Texas behind Big Tex during a drone show Oct. 3 at the State Fair of Texas. The show was done by Sky Elements, whose owners include UTA alumni Preston Ward and Brian Geck.

tweaked and analyzed every detail from color theory and music to transitions.

Each iteration left the team in tears, Ward said, and with no time for any

more rehearsals or tests, this was the moment to secure their spot in the finals.

Over 100 acts auditioned for season 19 of "America's Got Talent" with about

44 competing in the live show. After surviving the audition round, Ward said nobody expected to make it past the quarterfinals.

DRONES continues on page 2

SOCIAL WORK

Students support survivors

School of Social Work students partner with Hagar's Heart to support domestic violence victims.

BY AMANDA ALDRIDGE
The Shorthorn associate news editor

Jessica Sánchez has always supported victims and survivors of domestic violence.

As a former Student Affairs director for Student Advocacy Services and current social work professor, she implemented a service learning project in her fall semester's intimate partner violence class, aiming to provide support and materials for survivors.

"I told my students I've

been wanting to do this project for a couple years, I just couldn't do it when I was in my director role plus teaching because my plate was way too full," she said. "Now that I'm just faculty, I get to do really cool things."

She eventually met Jennifer Jones, founder of Hagar's Heart, a domestic violence support nonprofit organization, and invited her to speak to her class.

"Her whole thing is really reiterating the script around self-love and self-care during the healing journey for domestic violence survivors," Sánchez said. "Her organization is one of a kind."

SURVIVORS continues on page 4



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Drones

continued from page 1

After nearly 13 months, Sky Elements stood alongside 10 acts in the finals, earning third place.

“That was just so unexpected, that whole run,” Ward said. “We were so grateful that we were able to do it.”

Of Sky Element’s four owners, Ward, chief pilot and general counsel, and Geck are UTA alumni who met on an online forum after finding out they had the same Mitsubishi 3000 GT car. Ward said they became best friends right away.

After Ward saw his first drone show, he asked Geck what it would take to create their own. They brought their buddies in and purchased the drones in 2020, becoming Sky Elements in 2021.

The team was already doing fireworks displays before diving into drone shows. One monthly show turned into multiple a week, and Ward said the team’s been fortunate to keep up with the rapid growth and demand.

“It just totally took off,” Ward said. “Our first ever drone show was for NA-SCAR, and then our second ever drone show was for the Oakland [Athletics]. We always were able to get those premium clients right away and take care of them.”

Now, Ward said Sky Elements has become one of the biggest drone show companies in the nation with 60% of its shows happening in the U.S.

“We thought we’d go to Pasadena, [California], to audition and we’d be done,” Ward said.

The audition, where the team flew 1,000 drones over the Pasadena Convention Center to recreate scenes from the moon landing, earned the show’s first Double Golden Buzzer in

history from Simon Cowell, judge and creator of “America’s Got Talent.”

Acts typically need at least three “Yes” votes to avoid elimination, but a Golden Buzzer progresses acts advances to the live shows, regardless of other judges’ votes.

“We had no idea how they would react,” Ward said. “We had no idea how the audience would react. We had no idea how America would like it or anything, so it was really just an unknown.”

After the high praise, the team had to prepare to do it again. Producing a drone show is unique compared to other acts, Ward said, and so the team had to push the technology to showcase different looks each week.

With many moving parts in an hour-long episode from production, cast and crew, Ward said viewers

don’t realize all the pieces behind the scenes.

“We were just so happy to be a part of it. We never thought we’d keep making it and keep advancing,”

Ward said. “America really loved us. They got behind our stories.”

Geck said, on average, one drone show requires 100-300 hours of work to create the

animation, produce the paths and more, with bigger shows requiring more attention.

In addition to the hundreds of hours spent creating shows, Ward said it takes five to six

hours to set up for a show that typically lasts 12 to 15 minutes.

“When we did the Deadpool show at Comic-Con, that was months of work for several people,” Geck said. “We can turn shows around a week or less if we really need to, but it’s still putting a significant number of man hours.”

San Diego Comic-Con’s *Deadpool & Wolverine* premiere drone show was the largest aerial display of a fictional character formed by multi-rotors and drones in America, consisting of 2,400 drones.

“I went to film school at UTA with the intent of going into visual effects and animation,” Geck said. “So, getting to be adjacent to those larger productions was kind of like a dream come true.”

Sky Elements set their ninth Guinness World Record for the most remote-operated multirotor drones launching fireworks simultaneously Oct. 2, showcasing a 1,200 pyrotechnic drone show in Mansfield.

The team has developed several of their own algorithms and scripts that are run through animation software to make it their own, Geck said.

Going through the competition, Geck said Sky Elements wanted to push what people thought drone shows could be. He said it’s a medium where not many people can tell stories to that level. It’s not just a slideshow in the sky; with creative planning, Geck said stories can be told similar to animating a film.

“Even though drone shows didn’t exist when we were at UTA,” Ward said. “Those skills became so valuable into what we were using here to make drone shows.”



Photo courtesy of Sky Elements

Sky Elements received the first Double Golden Buzzer and placed third on “America’s Got Talent.”



The Shorthorn: Christine Vo

A battle between an ice wolf and a fiery phoenix commences before the Guinness World Record pyro drone show Oct. 2 in Mansfield, Texas. The team broke the record for the most remote-operated multirotor drones launching fireworks simultaneously, their ninth record.

CORRECTIONS/CLARIFICATIONS

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THE SHORTHORN STAFF

Front Desk.....817-272-3188
Newsroom after 5 p.m.....817-272-3205
Fax.....817-272-5009
UC Lower Level, B100, Box 19038, Arlington, TX 76019

Editor-in-Chief.....Christine Vo
editor.shorthorn@uta.edu
Managing Editor.....Hannah Garcia
managing-editor.shorthorn@uta.edu

ENGAGEMENT
Engagement Editor.....Francisca Gomez
engagement-editor.shorthorn@uta.edu
Engagement Producers.....Jessica Arnold, Sairam Marupudi

NEWS
News Editor.....Pedro Malkomes
news-editor.shorthorn@uta.edu

Associate News Editor.....Amanda Aldridge
news.shorthorn@uta.edu
News Reporters.....Mohamed Alansari, Shelby Garten, Xena Dully, Matthias-Jonah Early, Angel Jefferson, Reyhan Kilic, Dang Le, Taylor Sansom, Sarah Simmons, James Ward

SPORTS
Sports Editor.....Orlando Torres
sports-editor.shorthorn@uta.edu
Sports Reporters.....Jakob Gorton, Logan Payne, Matthew Tilbebe, Stephanie Quintero

MULTIMEDIA
Multimedia Editor.....Ronaldo Bolaños
photo-editor.shorthorn@uta.edu
Multimedia Journalists.....Troy Broome, Samarie Goffney, Axel Hoge, Natanael Mazariego, Eddie Nguyen, Joel Solis

COPY
Copy Desk Chief.....Linelle Sánchez
copydesk-editor.shorthorn@uta.edu
Copy Editors.....Ash Guerrero, Rachel Kenealeay, Leslie Orozco, James Sanderson

DESIGN
Design Editor.....Hailey Walton
design-editor.shorthorn@uta.edu
Illustrators.....Jose Hernandez, Camara Mathis, Jay Montoya, Abigail Ponce
Page Designer.....Anayah Darrett

ADVERTISING
Business Manager.....Hailey Do
admanager@shorthorn.uta.edu
Account Executives.....Drashti Kadakia, Kyreon Woods
Advertising Graphic Designers.....Daniel Phillips, Ethan Sysavath

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CROSSWORD

Across

1 Give off, as light

5 Board game

10 Seal off

14 Went by car

15 Common sense

16 Roll call reply

17 Greek village

18 Muse with a lyre

19 Angry display

20 Old Glory

23 Cacophony

24 Roofing material

25 Anklebone

28 Viper

31 Lowly workers

35 Knighted Guinness

36 Keen

38 Fluffy scarf

39 Occurring in the same period of time

42 Frequently, in verse

43 Layered

44 Hankerings

45 Leaf opening

47 Born

48 Like some divorces

49 Increases

51 Fly catcher

52 Con game

61 Spoils

62 Houseboat actress

63 Baker’s need

64 Neutral shade

65 Words of wisdom

66 Dry riverbed

67 Work station

Down

68 French artist

69 Hogwash

1 Historical times

2 Shed

3 Inspiration

4 Canal, of sorts

5 G-rated

6 Warning device

7 “My stars!”

8 Poses

9 Glenn of *The Right Stuff*

10 Holy place

11 Jalopy

12 Exhort

13 Gift shop offerings

21 Female sib

22 Mature

25 Fiesta fare

26 Skyward

27 Slow, musically

28 Skier’s mecca

29 Outlet

30 Thick soup

32 Orchestra group

33 Bread and butter, e.g.

34 Impudent

36 Athos, to Porthos

37 Modicum

40 Step, in France

41 Facial features

46 Inuit footwear

48 French sea

50 Kind of fork

51 Dubonnet and Bordeaux

52 Outbuilding

53 Nutmeg-based spice

54 Willa Cather’s “One of ____”

55 Lymph bump

56 Kind of race

57 Prefix with phone

58 Elliptical

59 Change the decor

60 Scissors cut

SUDOKU

To solve the Sudoku puzzle, each row, column and box must contain the numbers 1 to 9.

243

5

8

9

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THE SHORTHORN

PUZZLE SOLUTIONS

CROSSWORD

1 Give off, as light

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15 Common sense

16 Roll call reply

17 Greek village

18 Muse with a lyre

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67 Work station

SUDOKU

243

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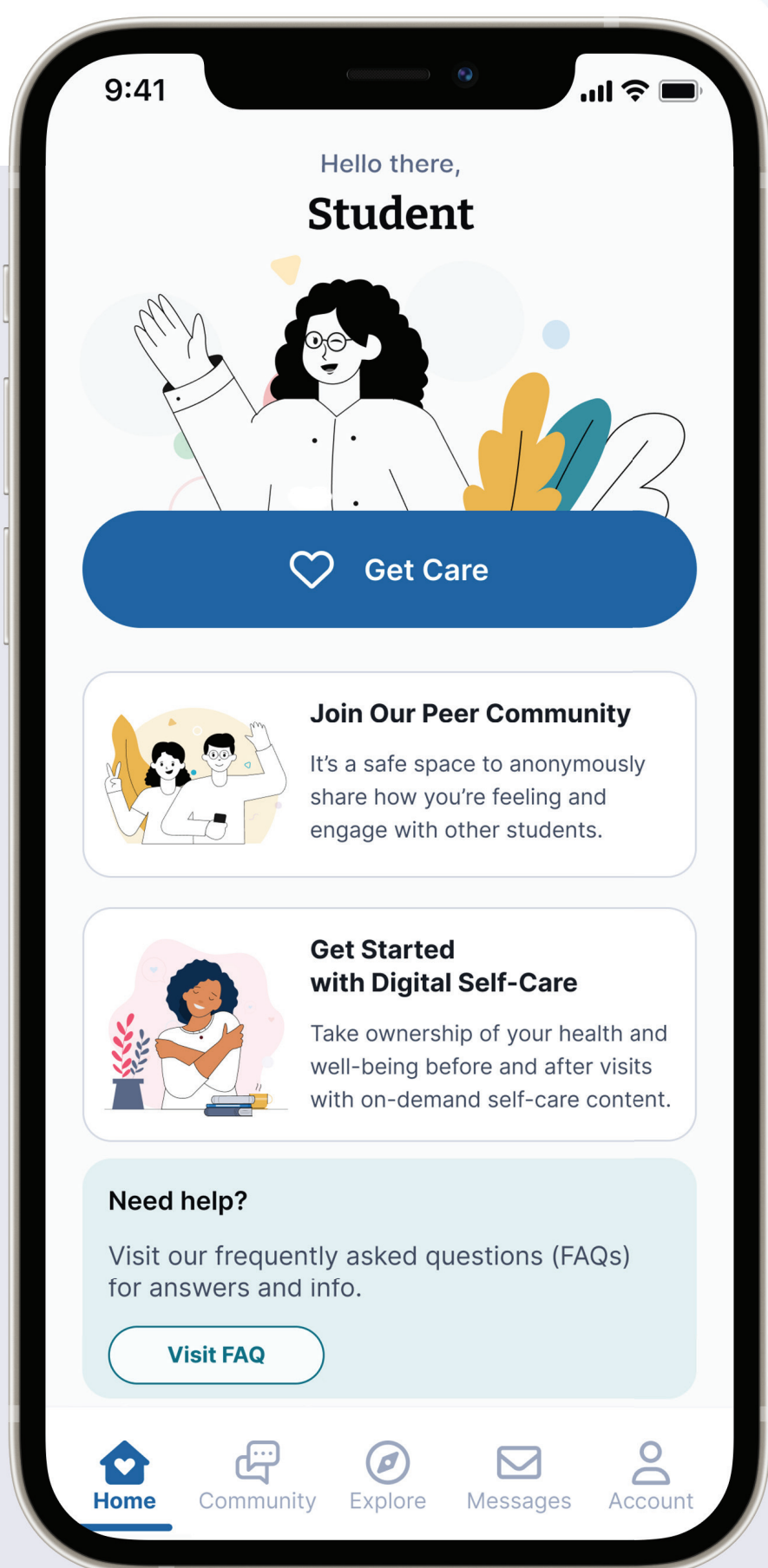
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The Shorlthorn: Ronaldo Bolaños

Architecture freshman Sana chants during a campus protest Oct. 7 at the Central Library mall. Students led chants throughout the march.

Protest

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“All the universities within the UT System directly invest funds that go to supporting companies like Raytheon, Lockheed Martin [and] Northrop Grumman,” Altusfah said. “These companies manufacture weapons that are then used to kill and destroy tons of people.”

She said there’s been a greater understanding of the Palestinian struggle this year than in the last 75.

Fort Worth resident Dom said while living in America, his tax dollars are put toward weapons that kill children. Helping the cause is a responsibility — they can’t forget that just because the conflict isn’t happening in this country, he said.

“It’s definitely encouraging, how much courage students have shown in their student movement and the risk that they’ve taken against repression by these repressive administrations,” Dom said.

It’s also up to others to step up and support these students, who shouldn’t be bearing that risk in their universities alone, he said.

Having grown up unaware of what was happening in Palestine, Dom said he later discovered the truth.

“It’s one side being armed by the U.S., billions at a time, to just commit genocide. So, it’s been some time, but my consciousness has grown with [protests] like this.”



The Shorlthorn: Ronaldo Bolaños

A Palestinian resistance fighter sign is carried across the street during a pro-Palestine rally Oct. 5 in Dallas. Marking the past year, protesters gathered painting the Grassy Knoll red, white, black and green as hundreds demanded a ceasefire.

Demonstrations continued at UTA on Monday with students rallying with signs and banners outside the Central Library to march for SJP’s Week of Rage.

“The people, united, will never be defeated. The students, united, will never be defeated,” protesters chanted, echoing the week’s sentiment: Students will resist until universities cut all ties they consider harmful to Palestine.

Nour, vice president and media coordinator of UTA’s SJP chapter, said the protest aims to express students’ anger at the U.S. and the university for their complicity. SJP demands that UTA deviate from companies like Lockheed Martin and allow students to see where their money goes.

She said they want all UT Investment Management Company schools to deviate, not just at UTA — a task made difficult following Gov. Greg Abbott’s ban on boycotting Israeli products.

As a Palestinian, Nour said it has been frustrating to witness people in their own land be stripped of their deserved lives. She said the movement has shown her how corrupt the world is in its entirety.

“This runs deep, and this will be a long fight, but we’re prepared to work for the long run, because this is what we want,” Nour said.

@PMALKOMES
news-editor.shorlthorn@uta.edu

1 year into Israel-Palestine conflict, how UTA students have participated in activism

Student organizations have united to bring awareness to the decades-old conflict from thousands of miles away.

Oct. 7, 2023

The Gaza-based militant group broke through Israel in a surprise attack. The Israel Defense Forces began counterattacks and airstrikes on North Gaza.

Oct. 18, 2023

The Department of Political Science hosted a Q&A about the Israel-Palestine war. During the discussion, multiple attendees cursed at faculty and each other. Outside, protesters marched from University Hall to the front of the Central Library to support Palestine.

Nov. 9, 2023

UTA students joined about 1,000 students across University of Texas schools who walked out from classes to protest Israel’s ongoing attacks on Gaza. President Jennifer Cowley previously issued a universitywide statement Nov. 3 about UTA’s “unwavering commitment to free speech and academic freedom.”

April 11

Outside of College Hall, the Progressive Student Union protested an event led by Zachary Marschall, Campus Reform editor-in-chief, to discuss how to combat antisemitism on campus. The event was hosted by UTA’s chapter of Turning Point USA.

April 30

Protesters hung “Free Palestine” and “Honk 4 Gaza” banners on the Cooper Street bridge.

Oct. 7

Students protested on campus, one year after the Israel-Hamas conflict reached a boiling point. The demonstration is the first event of PSU and SJP’s Week of Rage to bring awareness to the conflict’s impact on Palestine.

Oct. 8, 2023

Israel declared a “state of war” as its army faced off against Hamas fighters. As of Oct. 6, 2024, Gaza’s Ministry of Health reported over 41,000 Palestinians and 1,100 Israelis have been killed since the attacks, and thousands more are missing and threatened by illness.

Oct. 25, 2023

Morgan Marietta resigned from his position as chair of the Political Science department following the university’s response to the Q&A on Oct. 18. In his resignation, Marietta said the university’s policies attempted to halt the political science faculty’s public talks, curtail academic freedom and limit discussions potentially leading to criticism.

March 27

Gov. Greg Abbott issued an executive order calling universities to review and update free speech policy to address the rise in antisemitic speech and acts on campus. Abbott also ordered groups like the Palestine Solidarity Committee and Students for Justice in Palestine to be disciplined for violating these policies.

April 24

Pro-Palestine protesters marched during a campus walkout. At around the same time, student protesters at universities statewide were arrested during demonstrations.

May 2

The Progressive Student Union staged a campus encampment in front of the Central Library to call for UTA’s divestment from companies like Lockheed Martin and Raytheon, and for the university to complete an academic boycott of Israel. The university ended the encampment May 9.

The Shorlthorn: Haley Walton and Dang Le

Survivors

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As a licensed therapist, she appreciates Jones’ focus on mental health and prioritizing self-love and care.

Sánchez gave her class the choice to write a research paper or do a service learning project that partners with Hagar’s Heart, which won her students’ votes.

Hagar’s Heart gives out I See You Boxes, which contain 16 self-care tools and handwritten notes to survivors. Sánchez has students make these boxes while researching ways to raise money and purchase the items. They aim to make 200 boxes.

The students made a GoFundMe page, raising \$500 out of their \$800 goal in under 48 hours.

“They are rocking it, and they’re having so much fun with it,” Sánchez said.

The class focuses on lecture and curriculum for the first hour, then students work on the project for the remaining hour and a half. Students are divided into groups of eight with teams for marketing, handwriting letters and dividing items into boxes.

In every class, the team leads give updates on fund-raising and donations. They’ve begun tabling across campus to raise money for the project and educate their peers about October’s Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

Social work senior Elisa Hernandez is part of the marketing team, helps

manage their Instagram page @iseeyouuta and makes flyers to give out around campus that promote their tabling events.

At their table, Hernandez said they have a mirror students can place inspirational messages written on sticky notes and a way to donate to raise money for the boxes.

With the domestic violence field being one of her top picks for a career, she said Sánchez’s class helps her gain real-world experience.

“A really big message that [Sánchez] sends is, your social work journey doesn’t start when you actually have the career or after you graduate. It starts whenever you want it to,” Hernandez said.

Being a hands-on visual learner, she said she really likes how the class provides more than lectures and readings.

“I actually get to go out into the community and find what works for me and what doesn’t,” she said.

Sánchez said her students will hand off the boxes to Hagar’s Heart in November, before their final class.

Social work requires involvement in the community, and Sánchez said the project teaches the importance of networking.

She remembers her best learning environments being the ones with innovative professors who were hands-on with the community, and Sánchez said she wants to embody them.

“I’m just trying to provide that exact environment for my students so that they want to keep showing up,”



The Shorlthorn: Ronaldo Bolaños

Jessica Sánchez, social work assistant professor of practice, left, and Hagar’s Heart founder Jennifer Jones helped implement a service learning project in one of Sánchez’s classes to provide support and materials for survivors. The I See You Boxes boxes contain 16 self-care tools and handwritten notes.

she said.

Overseeing this project, Sánchez can see her students’ growth and the “lightbulb” moments they have while working.

“They have this energy and spirit about them where they just want to help, and that’s a social worker,” she said. “Social workers, we are helpers, and we are healers.”

Jones founded Hagar’s Heart in May 2020. When the pandemic started, she was concerned for victims stuck in lockdown with their abusers.

“A lot of the women and men who were being abused, they had no way to communicate with anybody else,” she said. “So, they were locked in with their abusers.”

In the process of learn-

ing more about domestic violence, Jones acknowledged that she was a victim of domestic abuse. She initially thought her situation didn’t align with those shown in the media.

“There is no level of domestic violence. If someone is unkind to you, whether it’s physical, emotional, verbal, financial, sexual coercion,” she said. “Whatever it may be, it is still the same.”

Beyond the I See You Boxes, Jones organizes EmpowHER Monthly Events that give survivors time to rest, recover and focus on self-care. Santa’s Shack will allow children to give their mothers a free gift for the holidays, and Women’s Day Brunch will have women come together and receive

community support.

Survivors can also shop at the free Hagar’s Heart Pop-Up Shop. Six boutiques donate clothes to the shop, and women are able to pick out five new outfits.

Jones said she felt hopeful after talking with students because of their willingness to listen to her story and help others.

“As an educator myself, prior to [Hagar’s Heart], when it’s real-world learning, it’s more meaningful, and there’s more effort put into it because you know you’re making a difference,” Jones said.

Social work sophomore Areli Ramirez said her group does a little bit of everything. Currently, they’re working on contacting UTA

organizations so they can spread the word and get more students involved.

“At the end of the day, we just want to make as many boxes as we can,” she said. “We did say 200, but realistically, I feel like we can surpass our goal.”

While still undecided, Ramirez said after learning more about domestic violence, she’s interested in working in the field.

“It does feel like actual community service. You’re seeing the impact that it’s causing to the community and just being able to say, ‘I put in my little part of that,’” she said.

Going into social work as a child of immigrants, Ramirez said she wants to help minorities and smaller communities who lack access or knowledge of where to go for resources.

“Seeing how one little thing can cause an impact to someone, I think that’s rewarding,” she said. “That’s very heartwarming. I feel like that would make my day, even if the paycheck isn’t as big, I know that I’m actually helping someone in the community.”

For those experiencing forms of domestic abuse, the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1(800) 799-7233 provides 24/7 support.

@AMANDALALDRIDGE
news-editor.shorlthorn@uta.edu

STUDENT LIFE



Photos courtesy of LGBTQ+ Program records at UTA Special Collections; Photo illustration by Ronaldo Bolaños, Dang Le, Christine Vo

The state of LGBTQ+ pride at UTA

Student leaders are stepping up to foster a LGBTQ+ community as the university complies to new state law

BY DANG LE
The Shorthorn staff

Jenna Schroeder never forgot the loneliness and isolation of her freshman year at UTA in 2022.

Schroeder was a gay girl from Austin who didn't communicate her sexuality to others, she said. At UTA, she had no friends outside of her roommate, and clubs for LGBTQ+ students weren't very active.

Becoming president of the Lavender Alliance in fall 2023, which she calls a safe space for UTA's LGBTQ+ community, was nothing but a coincidence, Schroeder said.

The organization had no leader, so she stepped up.

The following academic year has been a whirlwind. Texas Senate Bill 17 went into effect Jan. 1, prohibiting public universities from maintaining many diversity, equity and inclusion practices on campus. Because the term is broad enough to include many underserved communities, resources for LGBTQ+ students also went away.

Within weeks, the website and social media platforms of the LGBTQ+ Program, which advocated for gay students on campus, disappeared. LGBTQ+ student organizations began losing funding for their events as the university complied with state law.

This October, instead of celebrating Campus Pride Month like in previous years, flyers for events focus on celebrating LGBTQ+ History Month. Currently, the Intercultural Student Engagement Center, UTA Libraries, the School of Social Work and The Queer Social Work Association are promoting five events in total.

UTA is allowed to recognize historical events, such as LGBTQ+ History Month, Black History Month, Hispanic Heritage Month and Women's History Month, according to the UT System compliance code with SB 17.

Last year, the LGBTQ+ Program promoted about 20 events on its Instagram to celebrate Campus Pride Month, according to UTA Libraries' Special Collections archives examined by *The Shorthorn*.

After SB 17, Schroeder said the Lavender Alliance had neither money nor faculty support. She also went into debt after funding got pulled. It then became a journey of learning curves while maintaining a full course load and having other personal obligations, she said.

Schroeder, however, persisted.

"I need to make sure that people have resources because I didn't have resources, and they need to have social connections that I didn't have, you know?" she said.

'The only difference is we're queer'

This October marks The Queer Social Work Association's first anniversary. Using their background in social work, members want to be advocates for LGBTQ+ students on campus.

Within days of its creation, the association pushed for the display of pride flags inside the Social Work and Smart Hospital Building last November to commemorate Transgender Awareness Month. In March, the group spoke for transgender rights and denounced SB 17 at the Texas State Capitol.

The group of five is working with Student Government to expand all restrooms at UTA to be labeled as "all gender," said Elwim Sorto, the association's CEO and co-founder.

Between the state political climate and the limitations in place, surviving has been a hassle, Sorto said. Discouraging moments have arisen, and group members have grown frustrated over the past year. But, they would talk to people who appreciated the association's assistance.

"People are just out there being silent. People are isolated, and they don't deserve to feel like that," he said. "Everyone deserves to be happy."

LGBTQ+ student organizations are no different from any other social student clubs on campus, as they all have members who share interests, said Brayden Wilder, software engineering sophomore and Lavender Alliance member.

"Our interest is just talking about the queer community, discussing the problems within it, discussing how we can solve it, and it's just no different," Wilder said. "The only difference is we're queer and they're not."

'I just want people to not feel excluded'

Before Schroeder joined Lavender Alliance, Violet Murguia was a club member in fall 2022 when it had about five active members.

Murguia was still in the closet back then, questioning her identity as a trans-

gender woman, she said. However, using the group's Discord server and asking members questions, she began to come to terms with her identity.

"The only way to find out I'm trans is to go through it and having people there to support me," she said.

Murguia, the club's public relations executive, these days forces herself to be more social and outspoken despite her anxiety. Whether it's messaging members on Discord or attending meetings in person, she wanted people to know they have at least one friend, she said.

"I just want people to not feel excluded," she said.

Among one of the promoted events on Lavender Alliance's Instagram, the group posted about Lavender Graduation last April. The ceremony, which celebrates identity and culture for the graduating class, included remarks from UTA alumnus Jacob Reyes, news and rapid response coordinator at the GLAAD.

"When I gave my speech, I made sure not to beat around the bush. I made sure to say 'LGBTQ.' I made sure to say that students who were at the Lavender Graduation ceremony were not just there to celebrate their creativity and their individuality," Reyes said. "They were there to celebrate the fact that they were queer and allies of the community, and it's important to say that."

Seeing students being impacted by SB 17 restrictions hurt Reyes personally, he said. It was at UTA that he was able to express his truest self. He returned to school in his late 20s and found his identity through the LGBTQ+ Program and the then Multicultural Affairs.

Reyes wasn't alone. A 2023 presentation at New Maverick Orientation showed the LGBTQ+ Program's survey of 183 LGBTQ+ students, the majority of which felt that UTA supported their identities and allowed them to express their authentic selves in class, according to archived material from Special Collections.

In 2022, UTA's LGBTQ+ Program received a five-star Campus Pride Index rating based on the university's commitment to LGBTQ-inclusive policies, programs and practices from Campus Pride — a national nonprofit organization working to create safer, more LGBTQ-friendly learning environments in higher education.

Reyes knows how much it means to have programs and safe spaces like the LGBTQ+ Program, he said.

On one of the floating shelves in his room displays his Lavender Graduation stole.

"Having that stole, just being able to see it every day, it reminds me that I'm in a better place because of UT Arlington," he said.

'I felt like I was heard'

Wilder grew up in Cypress, Texas, then moved to Katy, Texas, where they were surrounded by conservative individuals who didn't accept queer people. Despite this, they found other queer friends and built a community.

Wilder joined the Lavender Alliance a week or two after coming to UTA, hoping to find a community just as close-knit as the one back in Katy, and they said they found it.

"I felt like I was heard, like I belonged somewhere," Wilder said.

At around 11:55 a.m. on a fall Wednesday afternoon, more and more LGBTQ+ students showed up for a weekly meeting at the Sabine Room at the University Center. At noon every Wednesday, the group discusses educational topics related to queerness. On Fridays, they meet to socialize.

These days, Lavender Alliance has mostly recovered from debt and has received financial help through fundraising and fellow students.

The club has around 60 total members. Its growth has been overwhelming, Schroeder said, but she hopes to continue expanding, putting on events and providing resources. When people attend meetings, she wants them to feel supported and not isolated.

As the meeting went on, people continued sharing their stories. One spoke, and the others listened. At times, a student would gasp listening to their peers' experiences.

"They should feel like they're among friends and that they should be comfortable," Schroeder said, glancing at a group who stayed after the meeting to chat. "That's what I work to achieve every day."

In the 16-by-34 foot room, students had different skin colors, different gender identities and came from different backgrounds.

Yet, in that moment, they had something in common: They wanted to listen to others' experiences as a member of the LGBTQ+ community — and be heard for theirs.

@DANGHLE
news-editor.shorthorn@uta.edu

AROUND TOWN

Residents band together with Irish music

The musicians meet 7 p.m. every Tuesday at J. Gilligan's Bar & Grill to play



The Shorthorn: Joel Solis

Fort Worth resident Michael Gatch, 63, tunes his instrument during a session Sept. 17 at J. Gilligan's Bar & Grill in Arlington. Gatch played the mandolin and penny whistle.

BY JOEL SOLIS
The Shorthorn staff

A pub is more than a place to get a drink. For a group nestled in J. Gilligan's Bar & Grill, it's a place to gather friends, tap their feet and play traditional Irish music.

The musicians meet 7 p.m. every Tuesday to play traditional Irish music and invite passionate people to join the community.

This community helped Arlington resident Katherine Kalinowski pursue her interest in Irish music. When Kalinowski first heard recordings and live sessions, she wanted to give it a try. Members helped get her hands on an instrument and she began taking lessons.

"I just love the sound of it," Kalinowski said. "I loved how joyful it was."

The group originally performed at O'Dwyer's Irish Pub located in Euless, Texas, from 2003 to 2005. When the bar was sold, the group needed a new home.

At the time, Arlington resident Bob Moore had little experience playing, but when he saw the group's concerns, he knew just the place. After some convincing from owner Randy Ford, J. Gilligan's became the group's home, doubling in size over the years.

It's not just the music that brings Irish music lovers together, it's the community.

Group member Andy Katz said each player alternates playing a set of three traditional Irish tunes of their choice. There's a silence between songs as members intently listen and try to follow along.

"There's thousands of tunes out there. Somebody walks in and plays any one of them, and you have to try to remember it," Richardson, Texas, resident Rick Roberts

said. "Sometimes it's a tune you play every week, sometimes it's a tune you haven't played in five years. There's a level of concentration to try to make it work."

Richardson, Texas, resident Ken Fleming created the Traditional Irish Music Education Society, a resource for those interested in learning and sharing the culture.

Music retreats and festivals serve as an opportunity to learn music or instruments. The society hosts the O'Flaherty Irish

Music Retreat, an annual three-day music retreat in October that invites instructors from Ireland and the United States to teach workshops and classes for attendees.

For those looking for Irish music around their community, The Session's website is an online community that shares events, discussions and music for people dedicated to Irish traditional music.

Instruments range from the fiddle, Irish flute, guitar, accordions, mandolin

and banjo, to unique ones such as the concertina, a mini handheld accordion and the uilleann pipes, a series of flutes and pipes and a bladder pumped with air similar to a bagpipe.

Michael Schulz, Denton, Texas, resident and guitarist, said the workshops are also known as informances, or performances with information. Instructors go in-depth on themselves, their music, their instrument or all three.

“You are immersed in Irish music,” Schulz said. “You go to breakfast at the dining hall and there’s a band that’s playing for your breakfast. You go to your lessons and you’re learning how to play the stuff from some of the best players in the world.”

Some Irish tunes date back hundreds of years, Katz said. Similar to when people sing along to “Jingle Bells,” members can recognize notes or learn the tunes by ear.

While Schulz isn't Irish himself, he enjoys the social aspect of Irish culture that he doesn't see in other music genres. Bringing his musical friends to join and have fun playing is something he's done almost every week for over two decades.

“There’s just something about the music that is very dynamic, very uplifting, very cheerful, infectious,” Schulz said. “There’s just the whole fact that people [are] coming together to just jam and play, and there’s a community.”



The Shorthorn: Joel Solis

Fiddle player Linda Relph, 60, plays during a traditional Irish music session Sept. 17 at J. Gilligans Bar & Grill in Arlington. Violins or fiddles are the most common instrument in Irish music groups.

The Bull-etin Board: A weekly comic illustrating astrology by The Shorthorn design desk.

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manipulation
and gentleness.

The Shorthorn: Camara Mathis

EDITORIAL

Election momentum is crucial

Registering to vote is only the first step in civic engagement

As those recently registered to vote anxiously await the arrival of voter ID cards, the excitement and proactivity must continue into casting your vote.

The Shorthorn Editorial Board believes this momentum and activism should continue throughout and beyond the election season. After registering, voters should stay informed on candidates and their policies so they can cast educated votes Nov. 5.

With nearly 40 million Generation Z members aging into voter

eligibility, these populations can largely impact the upcoming presidential election.

Leading up to Monday's voter registration deadline, various political figures and influencers encouraged audiences to register to vote. UTA has seen the same push with students volunteering to prepare their peers for voting in Tarrant County.

Citizens should take advantage of early voting from Oct. 21 through Nov. 1 and mail-in ballot applications before Oct. 25.

New voters should create a plan to help alleviate stress or anxiety the day of. According to Vote.org, a basic checklist includes checking your registration status, deciding to vote by mail or in person and informing yourself on the ballots.

If you're voting in person, find the closest or most convenient polling site. Tarrant County will host 51 voting locations, seven of them in Arlington and on campus at the Maverick Activities Center.

ing an understanding that we all share a common goal.

While UTA currently does not anticipate having Election Day off, the MAC will be accessible throughout the early voting period and the day of. Be sure to give yourself ample time to wait in line and take your time when casting your vote at the facility.

Even if a voter has decided who they will be voting for, they shouldn't let it stop them from continuing to do research through credible, trustworthy sources. It's important to understand the full scope of information available and to be wary of social media bias.

As the election approaches, take advantage of the various resources provided. Securing UTA's early polling location and registering students and staff were small steps toward a much larger goal of civic engagement.

The Shorthorn Editorial Board is made up of editor-in-chief Christine Vo; managing editor Hannah García; news editor Pedro Malkomes; associate news editor Amanda Aldridge; copy desk chief Jinelle Sánchez; multimedia editor Ronaldo Bolaños; engagement editor Francisca Gomez; news reporter James Ward; copy editor Leslie Orozco.

editor.shorthorn@uta.edu

THE ISSUE:

Energy has been focused on registering voters, but that's only the first step in participation.

WE THINK:

People shouldn't lose momentum while waiting to cast their vote.

TAKE ACTION:

Between now and the voting period, keep educating yourself so you can make the best, informed choice in the election.

Whether living on campus or commuting, students should take advantage of voting at a familiar and comfortable location. Recognizing peers or professors at the polls can be empowering — foster-



The Shorthorn: Camara Mathis



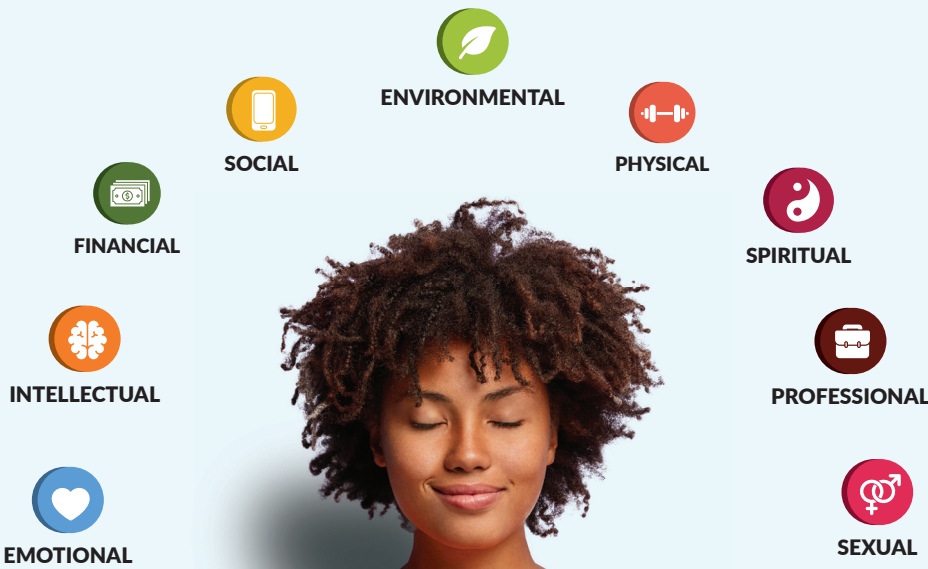
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ABOUT SPORTS

Orlando Torres, editor
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Wednesday, October 9, 2024

CLUB SPORTS

UTA's cricket club fosters community

The team provides a positive atmosphere, welcoming players of all backgrounds

BY LOGAN PAYNE
The Shorthorn staff

Cricket is more than a sport; it's passion, a cultural bridge and a growing phenomenon among students worldwide.

Although the sport isn't as prominent in mainstream American sports, it has found a special place at UTA, uniting students from diverse backgrounds.

According to World Atlas, cricket ranks among the top three popular global sports with over 2 billion fans, trailing soccer. Though popular in South Asian countries like India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, the sport has found a following at UTA, where a large portion of the students come from cricket-loving nations.

The UTA cricket team is actively working to make the game prominent and accessible to students and faculty. With the sport growing in America, due to the launch of Major League Cricket in 2023, UTA could become a leader in the expansion of collegiate cricket.

For club captain Mohammed Yusuf Shaikh, joining the cricket team was more than playing a familiar sport. He would go on to mingle with campus organizations who shared the same passion.

"I think the best way to meet people on campus is joining these organizations," Shaikh said. "The cricket team was something I'm interested in. I had a friend who was part of the cricket team, so he just introduced me to the guys, and I started showing up for practice."

Growing up in the Middle East, there was a cricket academy close to home where he would watch matches as a kid. Now at UTA, the interest has carried over.

For many international students, cricket isn't a pastime but a vital social bond. Connecting them to their home countries, the sport has helped build friendships and exchange cultural experiences.

"Most of my friends I've met was through the cricket



Photo courtesy of Bhaskar Inrivedi



The Shorthorn: Ronaldo Bolaños

Club captain Mohammed Yusuf Shaikh, left, and graduate student Rajat Ramesh Dungarwal both play on UTA's cricket team. The group is actively working to make the game prominent and accessible to students and faculty.

team," computer science senior Raziuddin Mohammad said.

A bowling all-rounder in the club, Mohammad said cricket unites people while bringing awareness to different cultures. Several teammates share similar academic paths, adding another layer of camaraderie.

Shaikh echoed the sentiment, saying time spent outside of practice plays a big part in cultivating the team dynamic.

"To grow the team, we try to

hang out outside practice and stuff too," he said. "Not just during the cricket matches, like hit the gym together [and] hang out on campus. When we're playing matches, if you know each other really well, you don't have that pressure on you."

As popularity at UTA grows, so does the team's commitment to establishing a lasting campus cricket culture. Players actively engage in events to promote the sport and recruit new members

who may not know the club exists.

"We try to go to [events] near the [University Center], and people are really excited when they hear there's cricket on campus," Shaikh said.

The team aims to break down barriers and help students, regardless of backgrounds, see cricket as a game and show how fun and inclusive it is. Club visibility has translated into a notable increase in tryout attendance.

"The first tryouts I went to, there was around 20 people, so it was a decent size," Mohammad said. "We had tryouts again last semester [and] we had a huge turnout. Like 30 to 35 people. There's more competition and more people knowing about the team."

For those interested, the team practices 5 p.m. on Fridays at the cricket grounds behind Allan Saxe Field. All students are encouraged to join, learn the game and make new friends. The group hopes to expand and integrate the sport further into campus life.

"We're open to everyone," Shaikh said.

For many, cricket is a gateway for spectators to develop social connections and experience cultural exchanges. Matches

are typically held on Saturday or Sunday mornings, offering opportunities for students to see the lively atmosphere and intense competition firsthand.

"If more people knew about this, they would come and watch the games and see it's pretty exciting," Mohammad said. "Sometimes the games go down to the wire."

Shaikh also noted a memorable moment when the team played against UT Dallas, highlighting the passionate rivalry between the schools. He said matches against the Comets always prove to be competitive and create nice memories.

"We all traveled the one-hour trip there and then beat them on their home ground," Shaikh said.

The cricket team provides a positive atmosphere where everyone is welcomed, regardless of experience level, Mohammad said.

"No one's going to judge you on your performance or anything," he said. "Just come have fun, meet everybody, learn about each other and just play cricket."

@LOGAN_P42
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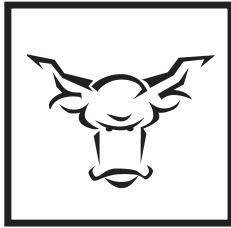
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