THE MAMMOTH TRIBUNE

"MADE BY STUDENTS FOR STUDENTS"







VOLUME 7 ISSUE 4

TABLE OF CONTENTS





3 **SLEIGH RIDE AROUND CAMPUS**
The winter edition of this issues around campus that explores our activitys over the last month

7 **WINTER FORMAL**
A recap of WCA's Murder Mansion themed Winter Formal

17 **BEST OF 2023**
A recollection of the best things of 2023 as decided by our student body

25 **HOLIDAY DELIGHTS**
A informative article that teaches readers how to prepare holiday desserts

29 **XIN XIN**
A look into Mexico's last Mexican owned Giant Panda and her very long life

33 **WORD GAMES**
Two pages worth of holiday games consisting of a word-search, anagrams, and a maze

5-6 THE HOBBIT
9-10 STUDENT SPOTLIGHT
11 STUDENT CHRISTMAS TREES
12 HOLIDAY TRADITIONS
13-14 ALUMNI NEWS
15 FINALS PREP
16 WORD OF THE HERD AD
19 MOVIE REVIEW
20 BOOK REVIEW
21 CHRISTMAS MUSIC
22 GAME OF THE YEAR
23 PUPPY PORTRAITS
24 WINTER WEATHER
27-28 WINTER WONDERS
31-32 ENDANGERED SPECIES



'tis the season



THE TRIBUNE STAFF



FRONT ROW: Isabella Maldonado, Aliana Alejo, Allison Herrera Gastelum, Lina Watkins

BACK ROW: Anastacia Ybarra, Kayla Simpson, Samira Seelhofer, Lily Hawkinson, Jayla Moss, Gabriela Ordaz, Lucas Land, Vivianna Ugarte, Isaac Shumaker

EDITORS' NOTE

Happy Holidays, Mammoths! The Journalism staff hopes you had a rewarding semester, and we hope to spread lots of holiday cheer with you all through this issue of *The Mammoth Tribune.* This issue features a variety of topics, including highly anticipated holiday albums, the heat of this year's winter, a couple of delicious seasonal recipes, special holiday traditions, and the Game of the Year awards. As we approach the new year, it's always good to reminisce about the year gone by and to look forward to the new year. We hope all of our issues this year have provided you with fond memories of school events, news, and pop culture. *The Mammoth Tribune* staff always strives to make every issue better than the last, and we hope we have achieved that again in this issue and that you all enjoy this issue as much as we enjoyed putting it together.

- Lily Hawkinson, School News Editor

"Made By Students For Students."

Sleigh Ride Around Campus

By **Lily Hawkinson**

The holidays are all about spreading festive cheer to the ones around you. Certainly, November and December perfectly encapsulate what it is to be festive and grateful, and we saw a lot of this on campus during these months at WCA.

November is recognized as Gratitude Month and was full of numerous activities for students and staff to show their appreciation for each other. To kick off the month, a Twin Day Spirit Day on Nov. 1 encouraged students to twin with one or more other students. The following Tuesday, Nov. 7, the advisory activity, “Gratitude Leaves,” had students writing something they’re grateful for and then hanging it around campus along with other student-created gratitude leaves. On Nov. 8, students painted “Hands Turkeys” at lunch and placed them on a poster on the ASB poster wall. To show their appreciation for teachers, students dressed like a “Teacher You’re Grateful For” on Nov. 9. ASB Candy Grams with kind messages and M&Ms to students on Nov. 16.







Yearbook took their annual trip to Disneyland on Nov. 16, where they learned creative skills by attending Disney's “Imagine Learning Bootcamp.” They practiced using the six senses in representing the scenes around them. ASB also got to go to Disneyland in November on a two-day trip to a CADA leadership conference. At the Disneyland Hotel, they learned leadership skills and ways to get people more involved in school. After Thanksgiving Break, students displayed their creativity with drawings and nice messages for the Chalk Art lunch activity,











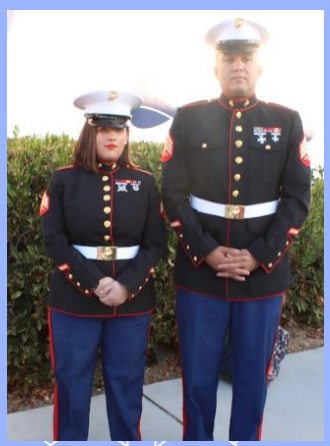
For the first time, WCA was able to have its very own float at Hemet's annual Christmas parade. The float's theme was the Christmas movie, "How the Grinch Stole Christmas," with many Whoville-esque decorations, a dance made by our Line Dancing Club, live music from our Rock Band, and candy handed out to the parade viewers.

In celebration of WCA Theater's second production of this school year, *The Hobbit*, students dressed as fantasy characters such as a hobbit, Snow White, a witch, etc. on Dec. 6 for "Fantasy Day." Students who wore their costumes to the show on Dec. 6 were offered free admission to celebrate the opening night at MSJC's campus. Students dressed in hiking gear, or anything camo on Dec. 7 for "Quest Day."

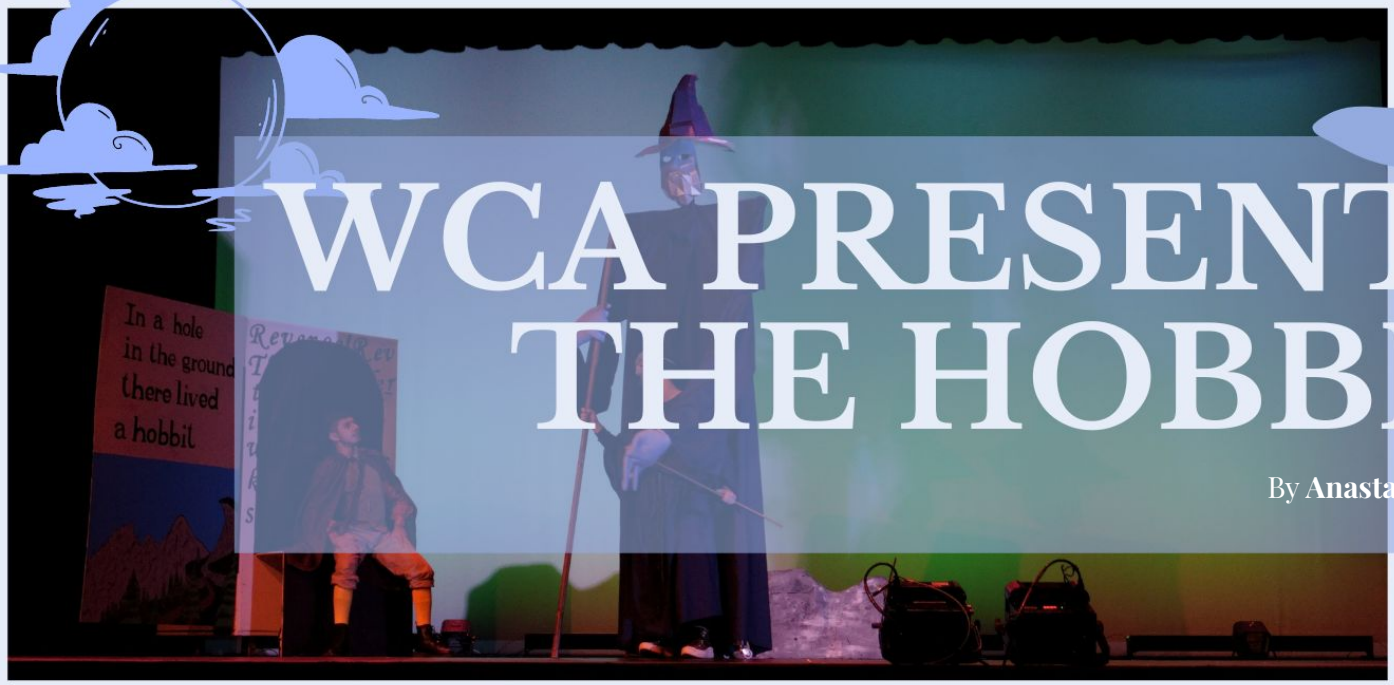




On Dec. 8 WCA held a toy drive to benefit "Toys for Tots." The event featured classic Christmas music, a snow machine, and a raffle for numerous prizes such as dance tickets and gift cards. Students who brought in toys were able to dress in PJs for the school day.







WCA PRESENTS: THE HOBBIT

By **Anastacia Ybarra**

From Dec. 6 through Dec. 8, the WCA theater program performed a play based on the critically acclaimed novel, *The Hobbit,* written by J.R.R Tolkien in 1937. The novel series also was into a film that directed by Peter Jackson from 2012 through 2014.

The play centers the hobbit, Bilbo Baggins, who is forced upon an adventure by the grand and eccentric Gandalf the Wizard. Reluctantly, he agrees, but not without the help of the leader of the Company of Dwarves, Thorin Oakenshield. Together, they must reclaim their treasure from Smaug the Dragon, who's lair resides in Lonely Mountain.



The WCA theater program was grateful to have the performance hosted at the San Jacinto MSJC campus, and took advantage of the new possibilities. The lighting emphasized the mood of each scene, flashing when Bilbo is struck by lightning, changing the colors when new enemies are introduced, and using the colors to allow the audience to understand where the characters are as they flipped through multiple environments. Theater tech's hard work paid off as the props added immensely to the different environments, and the character's microphone audio weren't overshadowed by the live band's performance.

The band **Fools Gold**, consisting of **Mckayla Binette**, **JJ Sadler**, **Sabrina Pareja**, and **Gabriela Ordaz (2025)**, featuring guest lead guitarist **Hayden Rodriguez (2026)** performed live music for the play. The band chose the songs, each of which added to the fantastical world of Middle-Earth. The bass added to multiple scenes, setting the atmosphere and increasing the tension. The crashing of the drums as Bilbo was thrown around the stage made the scene more impactful and fun to watch. Both guitarists added on little pieces to emphasize the environment, both of them shining on stage. The twinkling and daunting notes from Mckayla Binette, the pianist, raised the tension of multiple scenes throughout the play. The music allowed for an entertaining transition between scenes, and the audience could listen to the phenomenal music before the actors came back to perform the next scene.

One member of theater tech, **Sienna Montoya (2027)** said that managing the sound for the production was quite difficult as she had to time it perfectly to the scenes on stage while handling the new backstage environment of MSJC. She loved handling all of the new equipment and was happy to see the final rendition of the play.

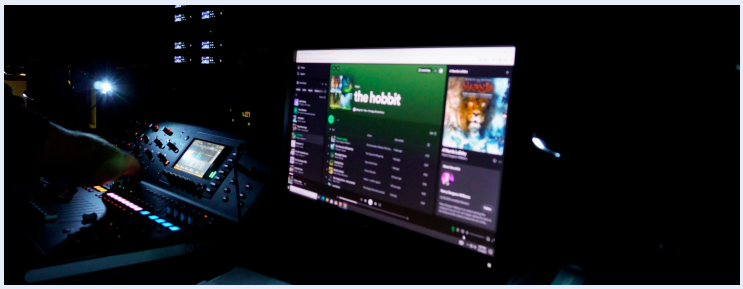


The co-stage manager for the production **Janele Ghereir (2026)** worked to manage all of the actors by giving them cues and prompts. As stage manager, she found it difficult not being able to answer all of the actor's questions, since she too was unfamiliar with MSJC's theater department, but learned that it's okay not to have all the answers. She enjoyed talking to all of the actors and sees herself being in the role of stage manager for more plays in the future.

The actor who played Thorin, **Trent Gifford (2024)** said his favorite part about the play was that he was able to be mean to **Ayman Al Jarjis (2024)**, who played Bilbo Baggins. While he loved to be mean, it was also a change of pace for him. Thorin is a mighty and abrasive character, which is different from the roles he previously starred in, such as Marvin, from *Marvin's Room*.









That didn't stop him from having an amazing performance, one that he'll never forget.

Many of the actors performed as several characters throughout the play and **Xavier Hernandez Flores (2027)** was no different. He played an elf, goblin, wolf, and was part of Smaug's ensemble. His favorite part was being able to show his individuality as an actor during his death during the Goblin Death scene, which was an iconic part of the play. The hardest aspect of it all was getting the timing and dialogue in sync with Smaug. He plans to continue to do drama in the future and hopes to have many speaking roles.

Hayden Rodriguez (2026), lead guitarist for the live rock band, said that he enjoyed being able to choose the genre of music— rock and roll— and matching it to the mood on stage. The rock band outdid themselves for the ending scene, displaying how talented they really are. He said while it took some time to get the cues correct, he enjoyed the experience and hopes to be able to perform alongside the theater team again.

The Hobbit was an excellent adaption of the book with the actor's performance nailing each scene and all of the characters perfectly. The lighting was colorful and added to the ambiance of the room. The rock band was a great addition to transition through scenes, and the actor's ability to captivate the audience 'till the end makes this production all the more memorable.





Winter Formal

Another Night to Remember

By **Samira Seelhofer**

As another year was nearing an end, we celebrated with WCA's annual Winter Formal. A night filled with laughter, the smell of tacos and tiramisu, the taste of the infamous lemonade, and the sight of everyone dressed in their best, looking dazzling. The freshman finally got to experience one of the most anticipated events of the year, and I'm happy to report, it did not disappoint, yet again. Freshman prince was awarded to **Mathen Brown**, and **Emily Brosterhous** was crowned princess. This year's stunning sophomores, **Lovina Seelhofer** and **Tenzing Carvalho**, took the crowns, **Alexander "Sasha" Bodrov** and **Sofia Martinez** were named junior prince and princess, and finally the crowned seniors everyone was waiting for were **Isaiah Suso** for King and **Nameera Hassan** for Queen.





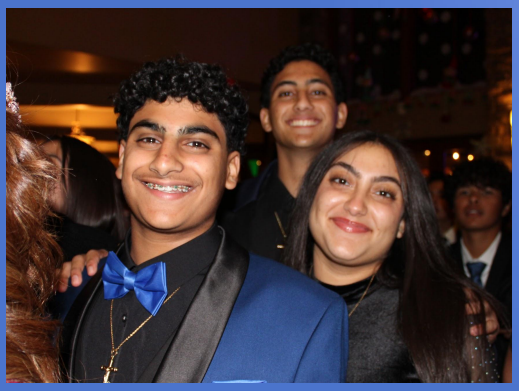










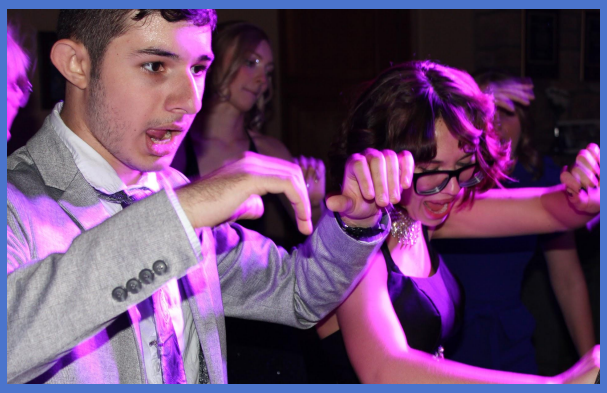


















Student Spotlight: The Wonder Twins

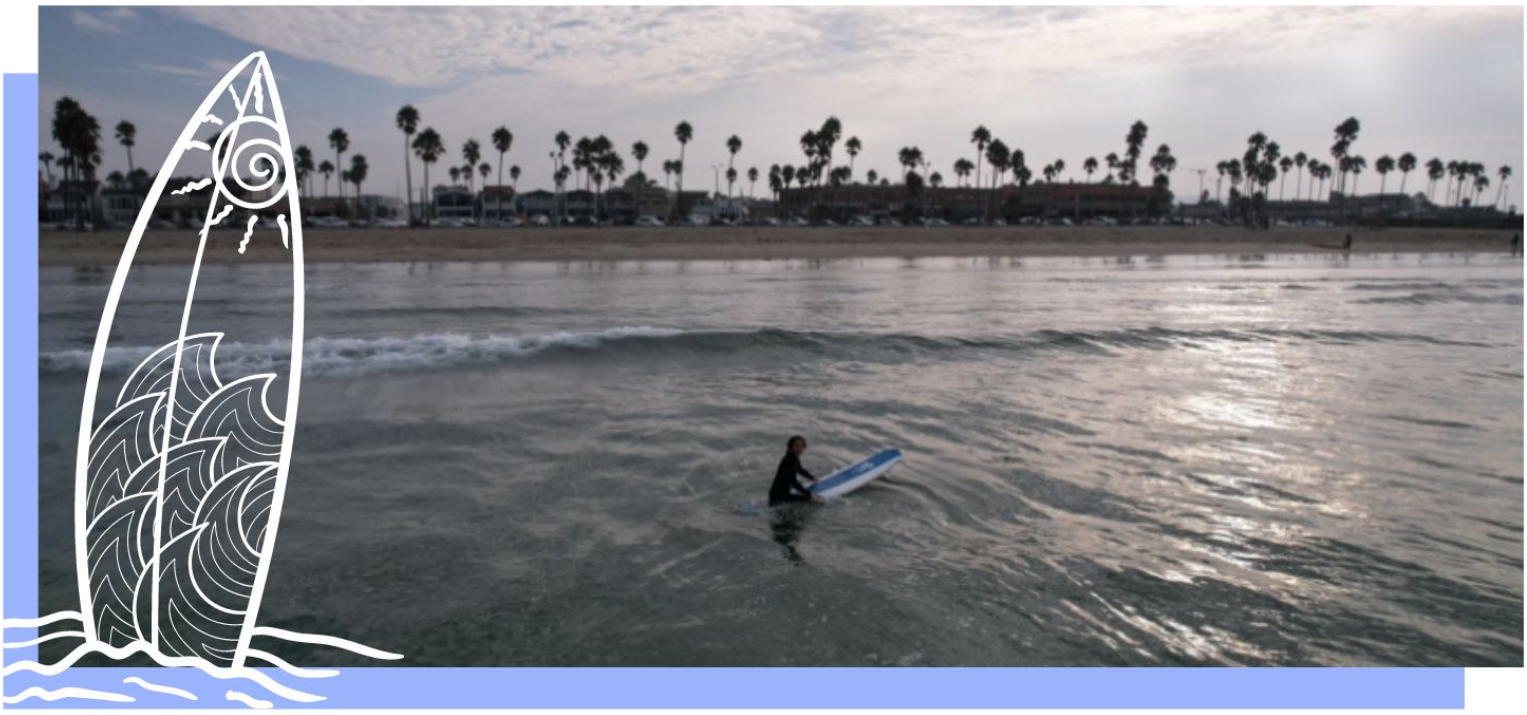
By **Vivianna Ugarte**



With it only being their first year in high school, as well as their first year at Western Center Academy, **Lucas Retmier (2027)** and **Riley Retmier (2027)** have set the bar high by balancing their school work as well as various extracurricular activities.

Since Lucas began playing water polo this year, he has grown to love the sport and the many opportunities it has to offer. Due to the sport being so team oriented, water polo has allowed Lucas to become really close with his teammates and has given him lots of new and dependable friends at Hemet High. Becoming closer to his teammates has helped to make the team better because they trust each other. Although the team provides lots of support and friends, Lucas admits that it is very difficult to balance both his school life and academic life. During the season Lucas has practice everyday, if not twice a day, leaving very little time for homework. He even finds it difficult to learn some days. Despite these difficulties, Lucas has quickly fallen in love with water polo and can't wait for the season to start up again next year.

Besides water polo, Lucas believes he will be able to handle another sport and is planning on joining Hemet High's swim team like many of his water polo teammates. Although you would assume that he would be done with all of the sports beginning to pile on one another, Whenever he gets a chance, Lucas finds time for some of his other sports: surfing and snowboarding. Even though he doesn't participate competitively, he still enjoys going out to the beach or the mountains and improving his skills every opportunity he gets.





Lucas, however, is not the only Retmier who is managing a rigorous WCA school schedule with extra-curricular activities. After a speaker discussed the Mayor Mentee program in her class at the start of the school year, Riley Retmier quickly became interested in the program and has been in it since September. When discussing some of her favorite parts of the program, Riley admits that she loves “being able to know how the city works.” She really enjoys being in this program as it allows her to build very strong relationships with the mayor as well as the city council. Riley admits that although she is required to miss her last two periods on Tuesdays, there are no real complications with having to balance the program with her school work.

Outside of the Mayor Mentee program, Riley also enjoys filling her time with many other hobbies including baking and crocheting, both of which she seems very passionate about.

Both of the Retmeirs make sure to do their best to balance out their chaotic schedules and always give 100 percent effort into whatever they are doing, and they continue to push each other to do better.



MAYOR MENTEE PROGRAM

The Hemet City Mayor invites Hemet students to apply for the launch of the Mayor Mentee Program, a program created to bridge Hemet's youth to learn about municipal government.

APPLY NOW!

Requirements :

- Currently enrolled at a high school in Hemet
- Must be able to attend all scheduled meetings and events
- Maintain a 2.7 GPA or above with good standing
- Business attire

Send Us Your Application:
admnstaff@hemetca.gov

More Information:
951-765-2301

CITY OF Hemet CALIFORNIA

Christmas Tree Extravaganza

By **Lily Hawkinson**

As the holidays are approaching faster, *The Mammoth Tribune* is glad to share student Christmas trees, and the joys that come with them.

Jazmyn Jimenez (2027)



Emanuel Cardona (2024)



Weston Holt (2024)



Cody Moore (2025)





Samantha Rodriguez (2026)



Matthew Askar (2026)



Kayla Simpson (2025)

Holiday Habits

By **Gabriela Ordaz**

"Me and my immediate family go to my Grandma's house along with my aunt and uncle. We do this before Christmas, this year it will be on the 16th of December. This is my very favorite tradition and I remember doing it since I was a child. It is nice to just have those three generations with my grandma, her two kids, and their families. Before my grandpa passed away, we had it with him, but I am glad the tradition has continued past!"

- **Emma Wright (2026)**

"Opening presents as soon as we can. My big family spends Christmas Eve together, everyone staying up all night partying. At 10 p.m. we send the young cousins to bed and wake them up at 12:30 a.m. to open presents just dropped off by Santa. We set them up, charging the hoverboards and electronics, putting the younger kids toys together and by 2 a.m. the party's over we all go to bed. The next morning around 10 a.m. we have breakfast and play with all our new stuff the whole day."

- **Rylie Veliz (2027)**

"I love our family potluck! It is held at my grandparents house on my mom's side. Everybody in our family goes to our grandparents' house and meets for dinner. So many people bringing a bunch of different homemade foods makes the Christmas family reunion an amazing time for sharing gifts, exchanging stories, and just being together during the Christmas season."

- **Joseph Hartel (2027)**

"We are Kenyan, so instead of Christmas, we celebrate Kwanzaa. Kwanzaa lasts from December 26th, to January 1st! It is an African-American celebration of our people and culture. On each night, a candle, called the Mishumaa Sabaa, is lit to observe the nguzo saba, the seven principles of Kwanzaa. The principles of Kwanzaa are: Umoja (unity), Kujichagulia (self-determination), Ujima (collective work and responsibility), Ujamaa (cooperative economics), Nia (purpose), Kuumba (creativity) and Imani (faith).On the sixth day, there is a communal feast called Karamu. These feasts often consist of foods like Ugali, Nyama, Geitheri, Irio, Stew, Matoke, and Kuku Paka. Some people often fast before Karamu or refrain from eating meat. It's very fun and a staple in our family and we invite others to celebrate it if they wish as well!"

- **Milo Wainaina (2027)**

KEEPING UP WITH THE HERD: EDGAR CORRAL

By **Lily Hawkinson**

Edgar Corral, a 2022 WCA graduate is currently attending UC Riverside as an English major in hopes of becoming a lawyer. While at WCA, Edgar was an active member of ASB's Mammoth Time, UNICEF, GSA, Yearbook, and Marine Mammoths. At UCR, Edgar is the media director of the Costco Club, where students get together and make group trips to Costco to help each other buy things in bulk.

What are some of your plans for the future?

I'm currently in the process of transferring, actually! I submitted my UC transfer app on Nov. 30th, and since transfer and undergraduate decisions are announced in the spring, I'll be seeing my acceptances at the same time that class of 2024 will too! Good luck, seniors! After undergrad, I'm aiming for law school. I've been pretty passionate about law for a while now, so I'm excited for future endeavors as a lawyer.





What is the best part of UCR?

Definitely the people! Everyone at UCR is so kind, including my professors.

What is college life like outside of the classroom?

College life at UCR is super fun. We have an event in the spring called, "Spring Splash" and it's a huge concert with a couple of artists performing. Last year, I got to see Wallows for the first time since they performed at Spring Splash, and it was so epic!

What is your favorite memory from WCA?

My favorite memory from WCA would have to be the Pep Rally. I miss the Pep Rally Spirit Week, and the frenzied costumes I'd put together with my friends to rack up points for our class. I definitely miss dancing in front of everyone too. If I could bring the Pep Rally experience to UCR, I would!

What advice can you give to current WCA students who are preparing for, applying to, and choosing a college or university?

Getting involved outside of the classroom is the best piece of advice I could offer. Joining clubs, sports, or even picking up a new hobby are great things to write down on a college application. Extracurriculars can show that you're a well-rounded individual, while simultaneously nurturing your social and collaboration skills. It can also serve as a talking point for your essays, or give you an experience worth writing an entire essay about!

How well did WCA prepare you for your college classes?

Too well. Despite starting my second year at UCR, the system has me labeled as "Junior" for my class level. College enrollment courses are the best way to get ahead, just saying!

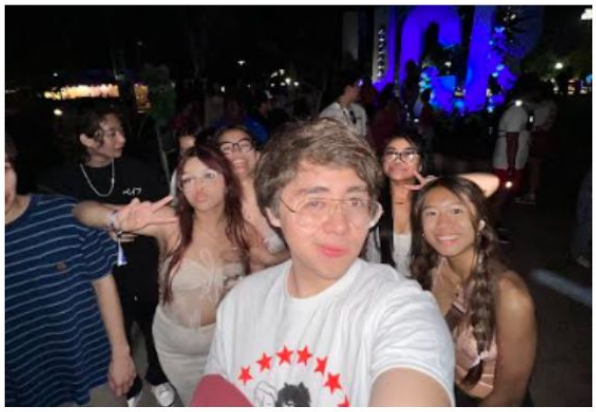








Image Credit: UC Riverside

Are there any experiences at college that students should prepare for?

I think it's important to keep in mind that college campuses are gigantic, and the student body is equally as large. Getting to know others can take more effort in college, just because the environment isn't as tight-knit as WCA. Don't be shy about taking the initiative and striking up a conversation with the person next to you in lecture! Forming new connections is one of the best parts of college, so put yourself out there and meet new people!

UC RIVERSIDE

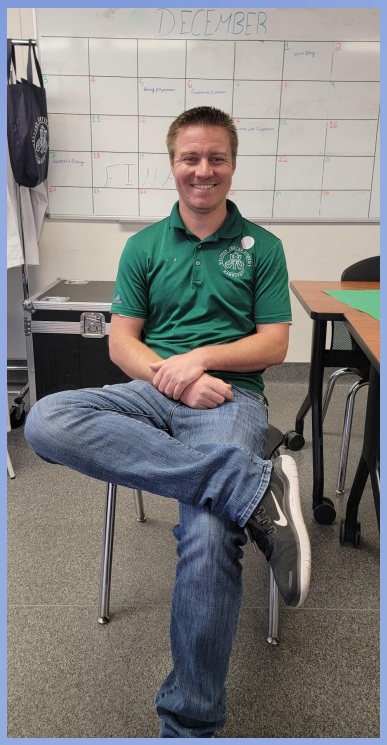


The Ways of Studying

By **Aliana Alejo**

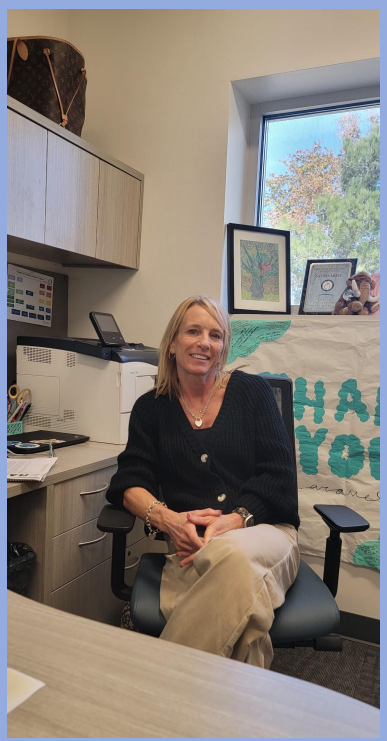
As everyone knows, finals week can bring stress, massive headaches, and a lack of sleep. This is a very stressful time for students. Most students find themselves doing this twice a year during the Winter as well as Spring. Students can often be found staying up until the early hours of the morning studying in order to achieve the best grade possible. To help you get through your finals and be prepared here are some important things to remember.

First and foremost, organization is key. Create a comprehensive schedule that allocates specific time slots for each subject. Breaking down study sessions into manageable chunks helps prevent burnout and ensures all subjects receive adequate attention. According to **Mrs. Arave** she suggests, "Prioritizing time management, making sure you have some down time from studying. I highly recommend studying with friends to have fun. Remember you've worked hard, there is more to life than just perfect grades."



Next, effective study techniques can play a crucial role in final exam preparation. Active learning, such as teaching the material to a friend or creating flashcards, enhances retention. Practice tests that simulate exam conditions can help alleviate test anxiety and identify areas that require additional focus. You can create your own small tests on *Quizlet.com* to quiz yourself on what you know or don't know.

In addition, prioritization is essential when time is limited. Identify the subjects where you need the most improvement and allocate more study time to those areas. Don't forget to review class notes and textbooks, focusing on key concepts and theories. This targeted approach maximizes the impact of your study sessions. For students who are overcome with adrenaline, **Mr. Wolny** advises students to "fully read the questions on your test carefully to get the jist of it. Close your eyes, take a few breaths then look back onto your exams to understand what you're stuck on."



Finally, in the days leading up to the exams, focus on maintaining a positive mindset. Trust in the preparation you've undertaken to avoid unnecessary stress. Adequate sleep and a balanced diet contribute to mental acuity, ensuring you're in optimal condition come exam day. If you need extra help, make sure you seek out your teachers for extra clarification on your doubts or for additional resources. As **Mr. Brandt** advises, "Just take the next step."





WORD OF THE HERD

Are you a writer, artist, photographer, or poet? Would you like to show off your creativity? If so, then please submit your creations to the *Word of the Herd* !

DEADLINE:
SUNDAY,
JANUARY 28 AT
MIDNIGHT

HOW TO SUBMIT:
JOIN THE WORD OF THE HERD
GOOGLE CLASSROOM WITH
THE JOIN CODE **QMLHZMW**

Have your short stories, poetry, prose, photography, art, and scripts published in the *Word of the Herd!*



BEST OF 2023

By **Anastacia Ybarra**

This year has been a roller coaster of dearly awaited movies, shows, music, and all other forms of entertainment. This year, WCA students had the opportunity to vote for their favorite category and final winners of 2023.

This year's favorite T.V. show was highly competitive with three shows, *The Summer I Turned Pretty, Invincible,* and *Blue Eye Samurai,* constantly one-upping each other as the votes came in. However, as the voting died down, there was one clear winner. *Blue Eye Samurai* with a total of 29.5% of the votes. The show, created by Amber Noizumi and Michael Green, stars our favorite 9th-grade World History teacher, Mrs. Noizumi, with a line that can be found in the fourth episode of the show. Be warned that the show contains mature themes so viewer discretion is advised.

With high anticipation for *Barbie, Oppenheimer,* and *Five Nights at Freddy's* for months, this year came out with multiple box office hits that many enjoyed. But with 43.8% of the total votes, this year's winner was *Spider-Man Across the Spider-Verse.* The story and visuals were fantastic with the constant genre changes and the optimization of 3D media to its full potential, this movie brought out the best in the movie industry.

Podcasts and songs are two mediums that many love to listen to and this year was no exception. From Taylor's World Tour to a comeback from Hozier, this year was full of surprises. One group plowed its way to first place with the song trending at No.1 on Billboard, *Cupid by Fifty Fifty* with 33.3% of the votes. Podcasts are a great way to get your daily scoop from your creators. This year, one podcast blew all the other contestants out of the water with 50.5% of the votes, the best podcast was *Hot Ones The Classic Interviews.* Recounting the multiple celebrities and their reactions to the increasing Scoville scale, what isn't to love about the podcast?

Apps and video games are the most popular way for people to get their entertainment with both having high engagement rates among teens and young adults. This year's favorite app was a rough battle between *Spotify* and *Instagram*, with both constantly fighting their way to first place. Once all the votes were collected, the winner, with only a few more points lead, was *Instagram* with 33.3% of the votes. On the other hand, video games were set in stone with a clear winner that honestly shocked me, seriously, with a total of 34.3% of the votes--this year's best video game is *Fortnite!* By the votes, it is evident that the hype around this game has never died down.

This year was an amazing year for pop culture entertainment, and it is evident that this year's candidates shined through as the true best of 2023.

(Warning: *Blue Eyed Samurai* is rated TV-M for violence and adult content. *Invincible* is rated TV-18 for violence. *Oppenheimer* is rated R for language and adult content.)

Best TV Show: *Blue Eye Samurai*



Image Credit: IMDB

Best Song: "Cupid" by 50/50



Image Credit: Alkypop

Best Game: *Fortnite*



Image Credit: Fortnite

Best App: *Instagram*

Image Credit: Wikipedia

Best Movie: *Spider-Man Across the Spider-Verse*

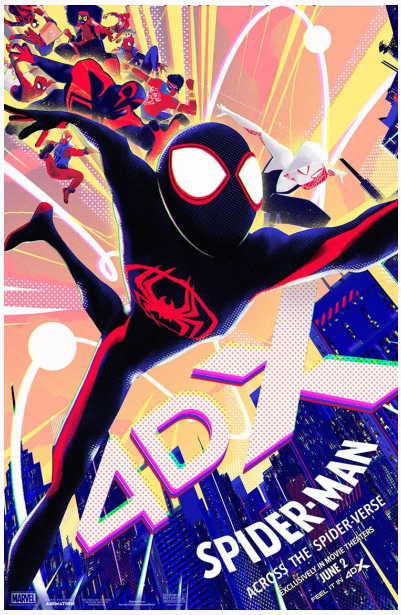


Image Credit: Halcyon Realms

Best Podcast: *Hot Ones*



Image Credit: Spotify

The Hunger Games: The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes

By **Samira Seelhofer**

The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes is a movie adapted from the fourth novel in *The Hunger Games* series written by Suzanne Collins. It is now the fifth in the movie series as one of the novels was separated into two separate films, with the intent of "film[ing] more of the book" according to Dustin Nelson in *Entertainment Weekly*. Francis Lawrence, who directed the majority of *The Hunger Games* movies, also directed this sequel which was released on Nov. 17, 2023.

The movie follows the young adult life story of the main antagonist, Coriolanus Snow, played by the actor Tom Blyth. Snow eventually becomes President Snow in the previous movies. If you haven't watched the previous four films, it isn't essential to understanding and enjoying this one, but it does make references to the earlier movies, so I do strongly suggest you watch them beforehand. The movie is about Snow's school days at the capital, in Panem. The school directory decides that every scholar needs to participate in the upcoming games as a mentor. The mentor with the winning mentee wins a prize and is said to become the next President of Panem. Snow's mentee is Lucy Gray from District 12, played by actress Rachel Zegler.

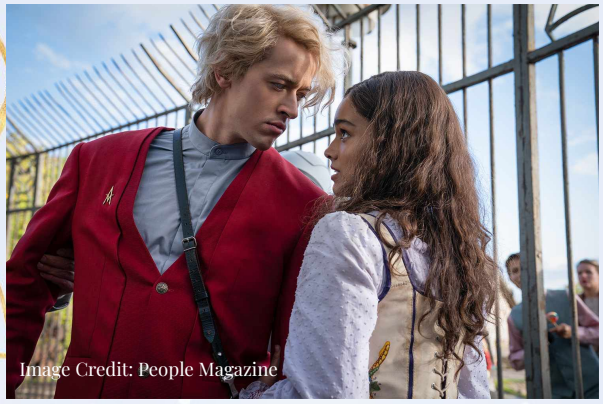


Image Credit: People Magazine



Image Credit: ABC News

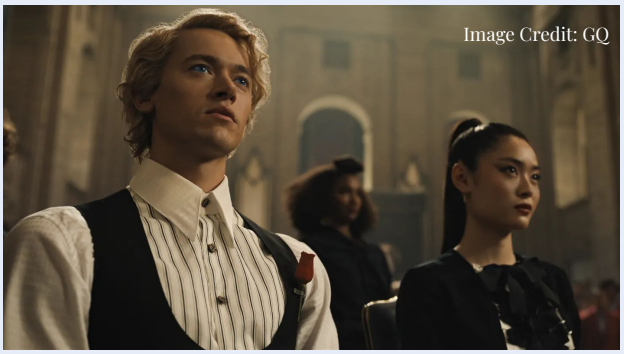


Image Credit: GQ

The central focus of the movie is the journey Snow and Lucy go on leading up to the games and then what happens during the games. Overall it showcases their growing relationship. *The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes* adds essential details to understanding how and why Snow becomes the ruthless, tyrannical leader of Panem. The movie covers several themes such as loss, privilege, and the philosophy in making choices and the consequences that come with making bad ones.

The film has made around $200 million in revenue, and public opinion seems to be in unison that the movie was extremely well executed. I have watched all of the previous *Hunger Games,* and while *The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes* is definitely an enjoyable movie, it is not as good as some of the others in *The Hunger Games* series. Although it doesn't make us sympathize with Snow, it was interesting to see his story, and the movie is very thrilling to watch with its suspense and betrayal.

Ghosts, Dragons, and Demons, Oh My!

By **Gabriela Ordaz**

The Ghost Bride, released in 2013, was Yangsze Choo's debut novel and was described by the *San Jose Mercury News* as "an impressive first novel [that] takes readers on one of the wildest rides since Alice fell down the rabbit hole." The book was met with many praises when it first released, becoming a Book of the Week on Oprah.com and a Goodreads Choice Award, and it is still being praised today. A comment on Yangsze Choo's website, left six months ago, reads "I wanted to drop by and say thank you for such a riveting tale. All of your characters had such depth, and I really loved following Li Lan's journey!"



Image Credit: **Harvard Magazine**

Set in 1890's colonial Malay, known today as Malaysia, the story centers around Li Lan as she navigates her way through an arranged marriage with Lim Tiang Ching, a dead man. Her life gets turned upside down when Lim Tiang Ching starts haunting her dreams. Desperate for one dreamless night, she accidentally separates her soul from her body. Li Lan must traverse The Plains of the Dead, avoid Lim Tiang Ching and his minions, and discover long-buried family secrets. Along with the help of a mysterious stranger, Er Lang, she must also uncover the corruption within the Courts of Hell, the same corruption that had allowed Lim Tiang Ching to chase after her in the first place.

Li Lan is a likable, sympathizable character. She is naive in a believable way, and impulsive in all the ways that make her feel like an actual person within all the magical and mythical happenings. Er Lang is an intriguing mystery, though I believe he should have been introduced earlier into the story.



Image Credit: **Rotten Tomatoes**

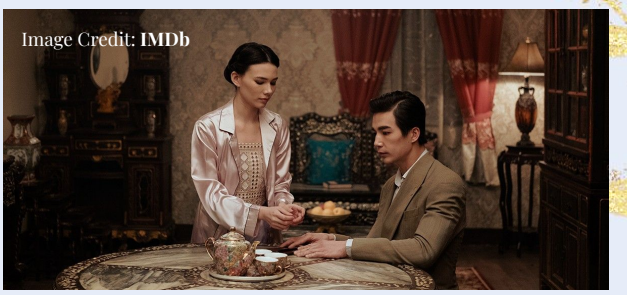


Image Credit: **IMDb**

There are hints of political intrigue within the novel, but do not be mistaken, *The Ghost Bride* is a romance and a coming-of-age story, not one about grand, intricate plots. I can imagine that a common criticism of the book is its slow pace. The plot only starts truly picking up halfway through the book. I was disappointed that the political intrigue aspects of the books ended up being resolved outside of the text, but regardless, I greatly enjoyed reading *The Ghost Bride*.

The Christmas Music Revival

By **Lily Hawkinson**

Image Credit: *Spotify*



During the holiday season every year, many music artists take it upon themselves to release new holiday albums, songs, and covers of iconic Christmas songs. In the past, we saw this with, among many others, Mariah Carey's popular "All I Want for Christmas is You," Wham!'s "Last Christmas," and Bing Crosby's "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas." Several recent musicians have released well-liked holiday music as well, such as Taylor Swift's, "Christmas Tree Farm," and Ariana Grande's "Santa Tell Me." Now in 2023, it is no different with two artists, Laufy and Sabrina Carpenter, who have rapidly risen to popularity releasing holiday music to transport their listeners to a scene of holiday joy.



Image Credit: *People*

Up and coming Jazz artist, Laufey, released her cover of the hit holiday single titled "Winter Wonderland," on Nov. 14. She released multiple holiday singles or covers in the past, including "Love to Keep Me Warm" featuring dodie, "Ain't Christmas" with Alexander 23, and "Better Than Snow" and "Have Yourself A Merry Little Christmas," both featuring Norah Jones. Laufey first gained popularity in 2020 after the release of her first single, "Street by Street," but gained much media attention in 2022 with her album "Everything I Know About Love."

On Nov. 17, Sabrina Carpenter released a new EP, titled "fruitcake," featuring five new tracks and a single she released last year, "A Nonsense Christmas." Sabrina Carpenter is also a rising star who first gained popularity as an actress on "Girl Meets World" from 2014 to 2017. She then jumped into the music scene in 2015 with her album "Eyes Wide Open." She rapidly gained popularity, however, after her last album, "emails i can't send," released in 2022.



Image Credit: *The Harvard Crimson*

The Game Awards

By **Lucas Land**

December is finally here, which also means that it is time for *The Game Awards*. This year's annual event was held on Dec. 7, and was streamed live on all platforms. *The Game Awards* are a yearly awards ceremony dedicated to the video games that have been released during the year, along with awarding Esports teams. Several gaming companies collaborate with *The Game Awards* to promote their products and up-and-coming games, and nominated games are usually on sale after the ceremony.

The Game Awards are hosted and run by Geoff Keighley, a Canadian video game journalist, and offers 31 different categories for games to be nominated, with the most prestigious category being Game of the Year. The Game of the Year is mainly decided by a voting jury, who has around 90% influence on who wins game of the year--the other 10% being fan votes.This year, the nominees for Game of the Year were *Alan Wake 2*, *Super Mario Bros. Wonder*, *Baldur's Gate 3*, *Resident Evil 4*, *The Legend of Zelda: Tears of the Kingdom*, and *Marvel's Spider-Man 2*. Some other categories are: Best Indie Game, Best Debut Indie Game, Best RPG, Best Video Game adaptation, Best Esports Team, Best Audio Design, and Best Ongoing.



Image credit: **Shacknews**


Image Source: **Digital Trends**



Image Source: **Nintendo**



Image Source: **baldursgate3.game**

With these categories, there is also Player's Voice, a category where the results are 100% decided by the voters, with no judges involved. This year, most of the categories were dominated by *Alan Wake 2*, *Balder's Gate 3*, *Legend of Zelda: Tears of the Kingdom*, and *Marvel's Spider-Man 2*. Along with the usual awards, Nighttimes and Studio 568, have also partnered with Geoff Keighley to hold votes for *Fornite*'s best creator made islands.

This year's Game of the Year ended decently, with *Baldur's Gate 3* winning Game of the Year, along with 6 other wins in different categories, including the Player's Choice Award. Surprisingly, Sony was only able to take a few awards this year, despite having several nominations, while Xbox also took several. Sony's biggest project, *Marvel's Spider-Man 2*, wasn't able to earn a single award in any of the categories it was nominated in. *Cyberpunk 2077* won the award for Best Ongoing, composer Masayoshi Soken won Best Score and Music for *Final Fantasy XVI*, and *Alan Wake 2* won the Best Narrative award.

Puppy Portraits

By **Isabella Maldonado**

It's the most wonderful time of the year! With the Christmas season upon us, you might be thinking to yourself, "What is something fun that I can do that relates to the holidays?" Well for you dog lovers out there, you can try out this DIY Christmas dog portrait background for your furry friend. It is a fun and easy activity to make, and you will only need a few supplies.

The supplies you'll need are a cardboard box, Christmas-themed wrapping paper, a Christmas ribbon, a pair of scissors, a glue stick, a hot glue gun, a box cutter and a couple of ornaments.

First things first, you're going to cut a hole in the center of the box with your box cutter. You want to make sure that the hole is large enough for your dog to fit through. For larger dogs, just cut it big enough to have its neck fit in comfortably. The next step is to take your glue stick and apply it on the back of the wrapping paper. After that, press the wrapping paper down into the cardboard box. With scissors, cut the wrapping paper to match the hole in the box. For the next step you're gonna take the hot glue gun and put glue on the ribbon. Then attach the ribbon into the box across the opening. You want to place it below where your dog will have its body through the hole. And for the final step you will take the ornaments and glue each one of them into the box with the hot glue gun.

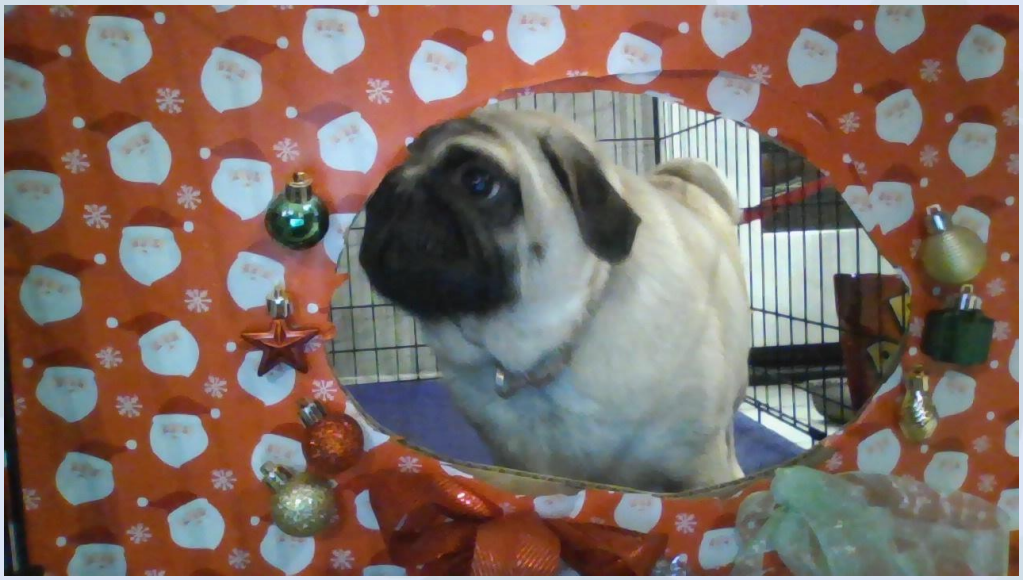
Ta-da! There you have it! You just crafted yourself a portrait background for your dog. Share this idea with your friends and family. You can even give this to someone who has a dog as a present for Christmas. Happy holidays!











Winter Weather

By **Lina Watkins**

Climatologists first noticed the current *El Nino* earlier this year during the summer and expect it to become stronger in the coming months. This year's El Niño has the possibility of being one of the top five strongest *El Ninos* seen before. Even though it is anticipated that *El Niño* will give us a wetter winter this year, it is not certain that it will. There have been years in the past when *El Niño* has not been in effect, yet we still got a wet winter. For example last year, California received 141% of the average rainfall, making it the tenth wettest winter for California. In the same way, there has also been at least one instance where *El Niño* was in effect where we didn't receive a wetter winter. Most *El Niños* do, however, give us a wet winter, which means it is likely this winter will be wet.

This year it is expected that the weather pattern coming from *El Niño* will be stronger than usual and that this winter will be wetter than normal. With this being said, it is not certain that all areas in California will receive extra rain this year. The effect of the weather pattern is likely to change across different areas in California. Typically *El Niños'* weather patterns have a greater effect in southern California than in northern parts.

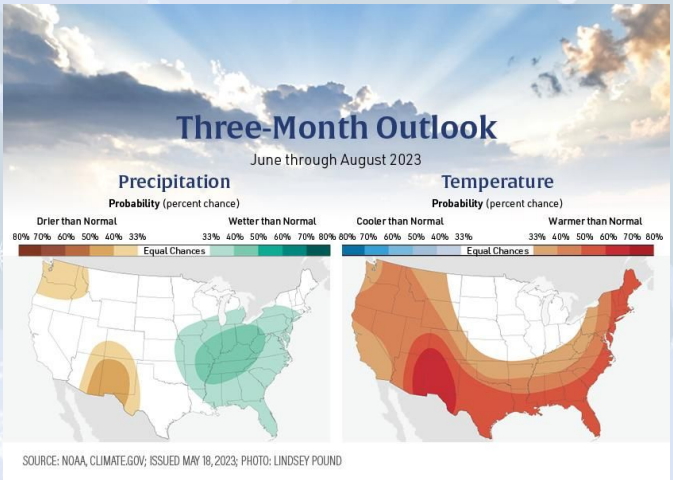
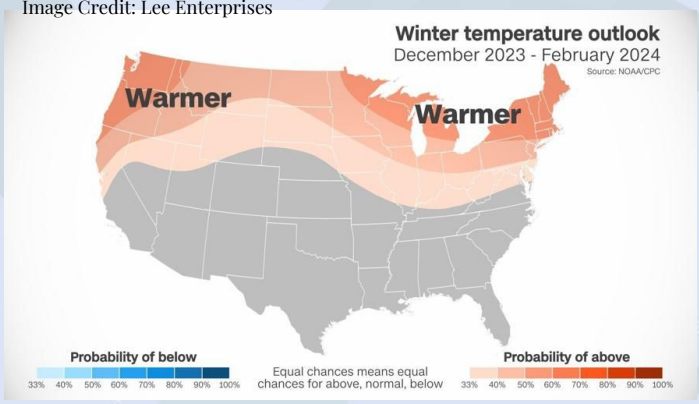


Image Credit: AgWeb



Image Credit: ACHR News

Image Credit: Lee Enterprises



El Niño is caused when the surface water in the equatorial Pacific reaches higher temperatures than average along with weaker east wind than normal. There have been around 30 *El Niños* since 1900, with the most recent one occurring in the years 2018-2019. Even though the Southern U.S. is expecting a wetter winter, the effect of *El Niño* is different in other areas. In areas toward the Northern U.S., they're expecting a warmer and drier winter.

Having another wet winter would be an overall benefit to California due to the drought throughout the state not long ago. We will not be able to catch as much rainfall this year, however, with reservoirs still much fuller than they were at this time last year. There will also be a higher chance of flooding this year, so state officials are working on preparing flood control infrastructure. The flood risk goes throughout the state, but there is more concern for areas along the coast that don't have extensive flood control systems.

Holiday Delights

By **Allison Herrera**



Reindeer Brownies

Equipment:

- 8 x 8 Baking Pan
- Cooking Spray
- Parchment Paper
- 1 Medium Bowl
- 1 Large Bowl

Ingredients:

- 2 Large Eggs
- 2 Tablespoons of water
- ½ teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 ½ cups of granulated sugar
- ¾ cups of all purpose flour
- ½ cup of powdered sugar
- ½ cup of semi-sweet chocolate chips
- ½ cup of canola oil
- ¾ teaspoons of sea salt
- Fudge Chocolate Frosting (Store bought)
- Holiday (red, green, and white) M&M's
- Mini pretzels twisted
- Candy eye sprinkles (small)

Steps:

1. Preheat the oven to 325 degrees.
2. Spray cooking spray lightly on the 8 x 8 baking pan. Then line it with the parchment paper and spray more cooking spray onto the parchment paper.
3. In a medium-sized bowl add flour, cocoa powder, powdered sugar, sugar, sea salt, and chocolate chips. Then whisk the ingredients together.
4. Using the large bowl add the two eggs, canola oil, and vanilla extract and mix together.
5. Combine Medium the dry ingredients into the wet mix and stir until it's perfectly combined.
6. Pour the mixture into the baking pan, and use a spatula to smooth it out.
7. Bake the brownies approximately 45 minutes. Check occasionally using a toothpick. When the toothpick comes out clean, the brownies are done!
8. Cut the brownies evenly into squares.
9. Once that is finished add frosting onto the top of the brownies where you are going to put the pretzels, eyes, and M&M. Two pretzels on the top, two eyes in the middle, and an M&M on the bottom.





Buche de Noel

Ingredients

Cake:

- 4 eggs, yolks and whites separated
- ¼ cup of all purpose flour
- ½ cup of sugar
- ½ teaspoon of instant coffee granules
- ¼ cup of unsweetened cocoa powder
- 1 teaspoon of baking powder
- ¼ teaspoon of salt

Filling:

- ¼ cup of powdered sugar
- ½ teaspoon of vanilla extract
- 1 cup of heavy whipping cream
-

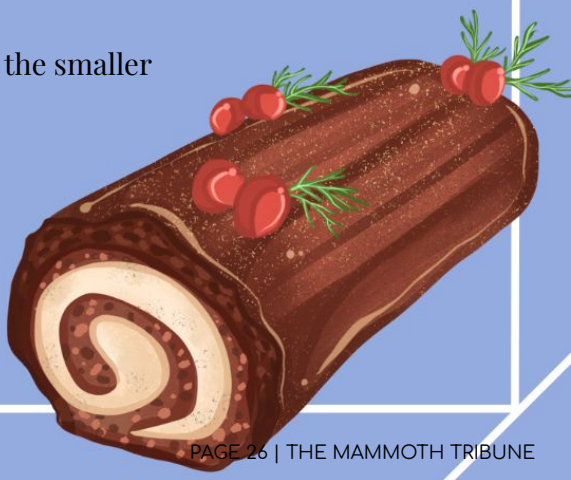
Frosting;

- ¾ cups of semi sweet chocolate chips
- ⅛ tablespoon of unsalted butter (soften)
- ½ tablespoons of vanilla extract
- A rosemary sprig for garnish
- Any kind of fresh berries can also be added for the garnishing



Steps:

1. Preheat the oven to 425 degrees then get your baking pan and lineit with some parchment paper.
2. Separate the egg whites from the yolks and set both aside. Using a mixer, whisk the egg whites for 2-3 minutes until soft peaks form. Set aside.
3. In a large bowl mix the egg yolks and the sugar together until the color looks pale.
4. In a smaller bowl mix together the flour, coffee granules, cocoa powder, baking powder, and salt. Then add the dry ingredients to the bowl that contains the egg yolks. Mix until the batter becomes very thick.
5. Then add half of the egg whites and use a rubber spatula to mix lightly. Then mix in the rest of the egg whites and continue mixing lightly.
6. Pour in the mix to the pan, and use your spatula to smooth it out lightly. Do not tap the pan or move it side to side because you do not want to ruin the air bubbles you've made with the whipped egg whites.
7. Bake for 6-7 minutes and then let it cool for 2 minutes.
8. Sprinkle powdered sugar lightly over a kitchen towel. Flip the cake onto the towel and gently peel the parchment paper off one inch at a time. Take the shorter end of the cake then roll it to the other short side gently. Keep the cake rolled until it's cooled.
9. For the frosting add the chocolate chips, coffee granules, vanilla extract, unsalted butter into a medium bowl. Then heat up the heavy whipping cream until it's hot but not boiling. Mix these ingredients together with a spoon until smooth. Cover the bowl with plastic wrap and put it in the refrigerator for 30 minutes.
10. While the frosting is cooling, pour heavy cream into the mixer, and mix on the highest setting for one minute. Add powdered sugar and vanilla extract and whisk until the frosting is thick for the filling.
11. When the cake is cool, unroll it and spread the filling on the cake making sure not to add it to the ends. Roll the cake back up the same way as before (not including the towel).
12. Use a knife to cut off 2 inches from the one end of the cake and place the smaller section next to the rest of the cake making it look like a log.
13. Whisk the frosting in the mixer to whisk it for 15 seconds, not any longer.
    Then smooth it onto the cake and make your own designs.
14. You can add berries or rosemary as decor, and also you can also sprinkle powdered sugar to make it look like snow.



Winter Wonders

By **Kayla Simposn**

Whether you like to go shopping, play in the snow, or see fun decorations, winter is one of the best times to get out and do fun activities with friends and family. Here's a list of fun places to visit and things to do during this winter season.Image Credit: Youtube

123 Farms Christmas Nights, Cherry Valley

Christmas Nights takes place at 123 Farms in Cherry Valley, California, and it's a great place to go if you love seeing lights and spending time with family and friends. This festival includes a display of over one million lights, a Christmas market full of many little shops, a holiday maze, smores pits, and festive foods and drinks. It is open from 5 p.m. to 10 p.m. every day of the week, except Tuesdays. This festival will be open until Jan. 7.



Tickets may vary from $8 to $28 depending on your age and the day you plan on going. It is recommended to get tickets online because they are less expensive than at the door. There's also a parking fee, which will vary depending on what type of parking you want.



The Polar Express, Arizona

This attraction is held in Williams, Arizona. The polar express is a 90 minute train ride from Williams to the "North Pole." It operates twice a night at 5:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. MST. It will be open until Dec. 30, so it's recommended to get your tickets as soon as possible. Tickets prices do vary, as adult tickets can be $70 to $97 (adults include ages 16 and up) while children's tickets are $53 to $67 (children's tickets include ages 2 to 12). This is a great attraction to visit if you want a relaxing activity and fun experience, as you get to relax, enjoy hot cocoa and cookies, and listen to holiday stories as you make your way to the North Pole.

Big Bear

If you like to take trips to the snow, then Big Bear is the perfect place for you. With an average rate of 120 inches of snowfall per year, be prepared for plenty of snow day activities. An excellent place to visit in Big Bear during the winter season is Big Bear Snow Summit. It's an amazing area to go if you like to sled, ski, or snowboard. You can even go there just to hang out and play in the snow with family or friends. If the summit is too crowded for you, there are plenty of other places you can stop at in Big Bear to enjoy the snow, including snow tubing at Alpine Slide and Big Bear Snow Play. After a long day of fun, you can stop by the Big Bear Village and enjoy a nice cup of hot cocoa, or other warm drinks and foods, at one of the many village shops. You can also warm up at one of the many fire pits that are set up around the village during the winter season.



Image Credit: Big Bear Property Services

Image Credit: Idyllwild Town Crier



Idyllwild

If you like visiting the snow, but don't like to be waist deep in it, then Idyllwild is an awesome place for you to visit. On average, it gets around 32 inches of snowfall per year, so not nearly as much as Big Bear does. The snow play areas are a little smaller than those in Big Bear, but that doesn't make them any less fun. With plenty of hills, and not as many people crowding the area, Idyllwild is a fantastic place to go if you like to sled. Some awesome snow-play areas are Pine Cove and Mountain Center Snow-Play areas. These offer limited parking, along with restrooms, plenty of space to play in the snow, and sometimes showers as well. Just like Big Bear, you can stop by Idyllwild village to get hot coco and other warm foods after a long day in the snow.

Xin Xin: The Last Mexican Panda

By **Vivianna Ugarte**

With Xin Xin already being 33-years old, many people are watching in anticipation wondering when her time will expire, which would leave only two pandas left in the world that are not owned by China. After the Chapultepec Zoo had been gifted two pandas in 1975 as a gift for all of Mexico, they have been one of the most successful panda breeding institutions. It is the first zoo to ever have a baby panda other than China's breeding facilities.



Image Credit: Zoo Chat

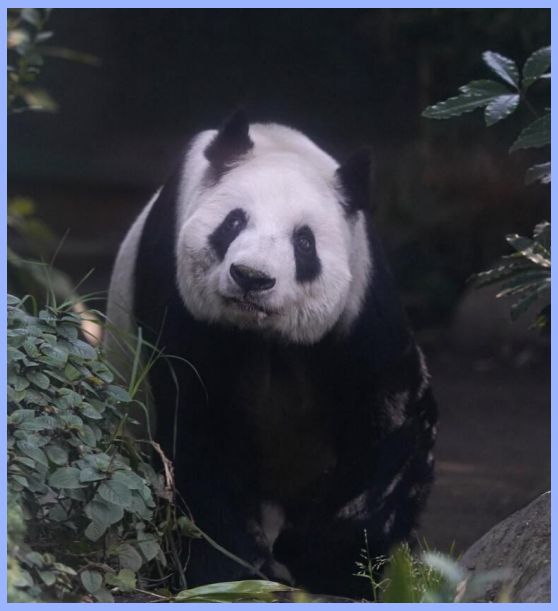


Image Credit: Castanet

There are no plans of replacing Xin Xin because China no longer gives pandas out. Xin Xin had refused to have children, so sadly when Xin Xin inevitably passes away, that means it would be an end to the almost fifty years that the Chapultepec Zoo had their very own pandas. Many don't know about Xin Xin since there are so many other attractions in the town. Thus the only visitors that she gets is typically from locals in the area.



Image Credit: Excelsior



Image Credit: Milenio

Photographer Alejandro Cegarra spent months photographing Xin Xin and was enamored with so much of what she does, even the littlest things like watching her eating bamboo. Cegarra used to photograph pandas other than Xin Xin, but now he mainly focuses on her.

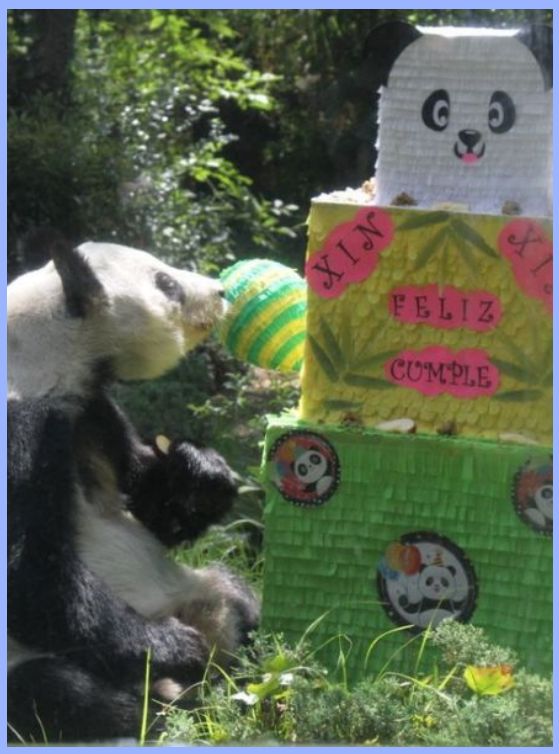


Image Credit: El Sol De México

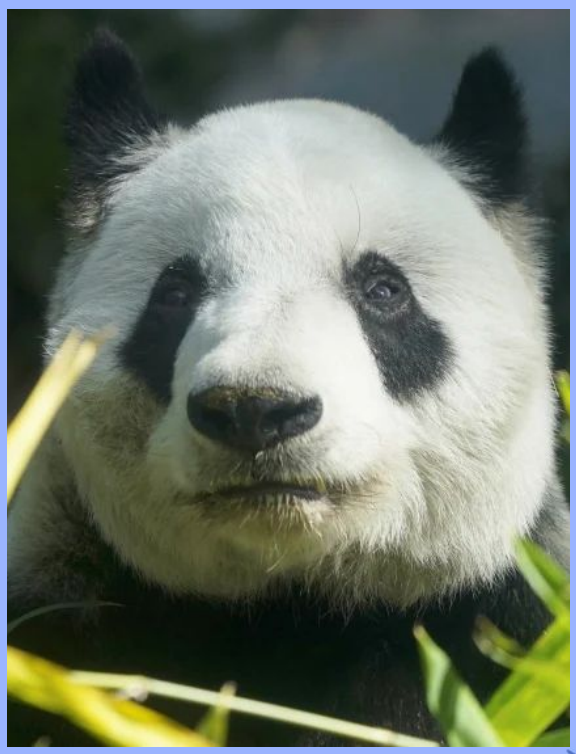
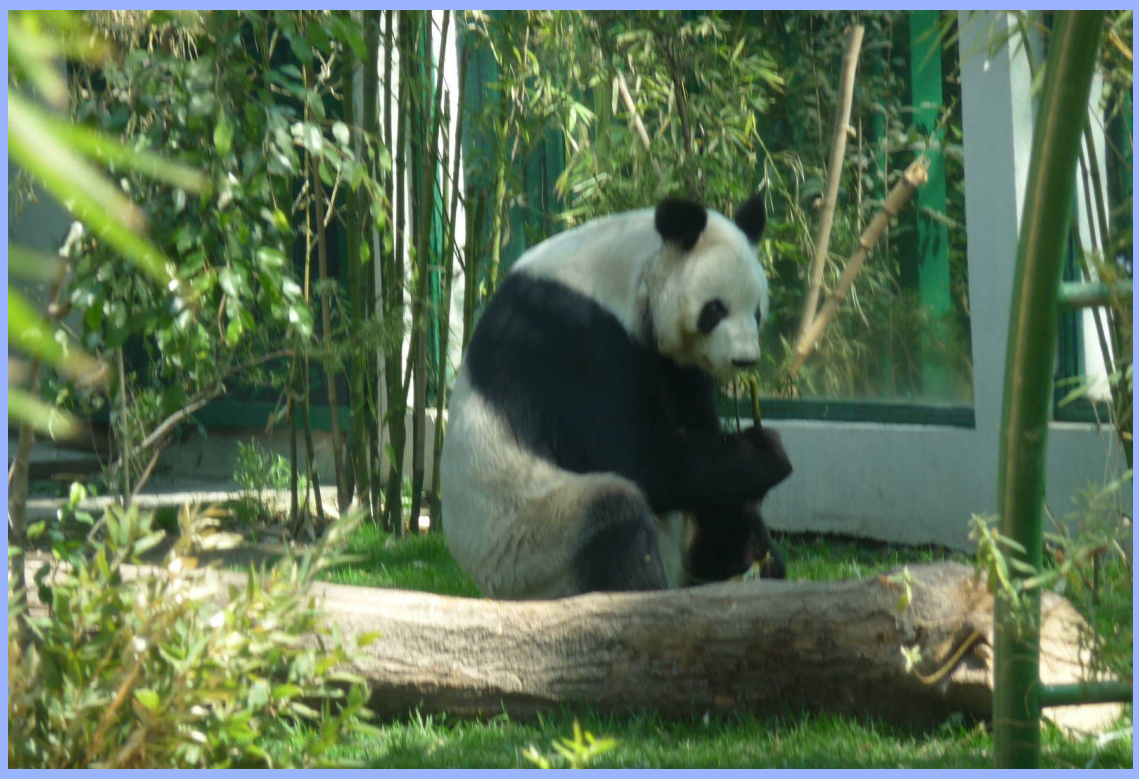


Image Credit: NBC News

Xin Xin is only expected to live about five more years and is just now achieving some notoriety because she will most likely be the last Mexican panda ever. Her long-time caretakers and veterinarians are sad to think of the possibility of losing her soon, and they understand that the long-term care they have given her will very soon be coming to an end.

Image Credit: Zoo Chat





Endangered Species

By **Isaac Shumaker**

Woodland Caribou

Woodland Caribou are the most unique member of the deer family. They have incredibly adaptive bodies and habits that have led them to become effective travelers. Every year, herds of caribou travel at least 400 miles in search of fresh grazing with some herds making 800 mile migrations. Caribou hooves are large and concave, they spread apart and let the animals traverse across snowy trails with ease. Their hooves also enable them to swim with incredible speed and efficiency. Caribou are the only member of the deer family where both the males and females grow antlers.



Image Credit: **Canva**



Image Credit: **Canva**

They live in mountainous forests, particularly in the Northern United States and Canada. Their unique adaptations allow them to be less accessible to predators and gain solitude as a herd.

Sadly, in 1984, the Woodland Caribou was considered endangered by the Endangered Species Act (ESA). According to the Department of Fish and Wildlife, when they were declared endangered, there were 17 herds remaining, each with around 50-100 specimens. Since then, six of the herds have been extirpated and the remaining have fewer than 50 specimens. The cause for their endangerment can be attributed to many factors including climate change, deforestation, sparsity of populations, highway collisions, and hunting.

North Atlantic Right Whale

One of Earth's gentle giants, the North Atlantic Right Whale, is the most critically endangered large whale species in the world. They are baleen whales and incredibly social and happy animals, pods are often seen near the surface playing and socializing with other whales. These creatures live in the northern Atlantic Ocean, and can be found anywhere from the Boston Harbor to the Icelandic Coast. During calving season, they can be seen as south as Cape Canaveral, Florida. Each and every whale species is incredibly important to ocean food systems. Whales provide food for countless species and help regulate plankton populations.

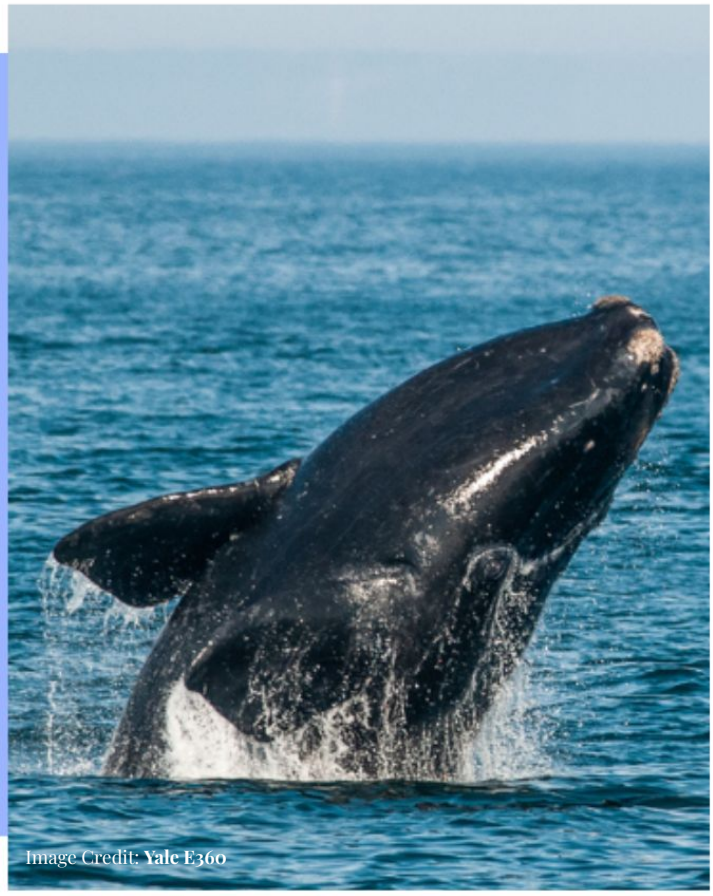


Image Credit: **Yale E360**

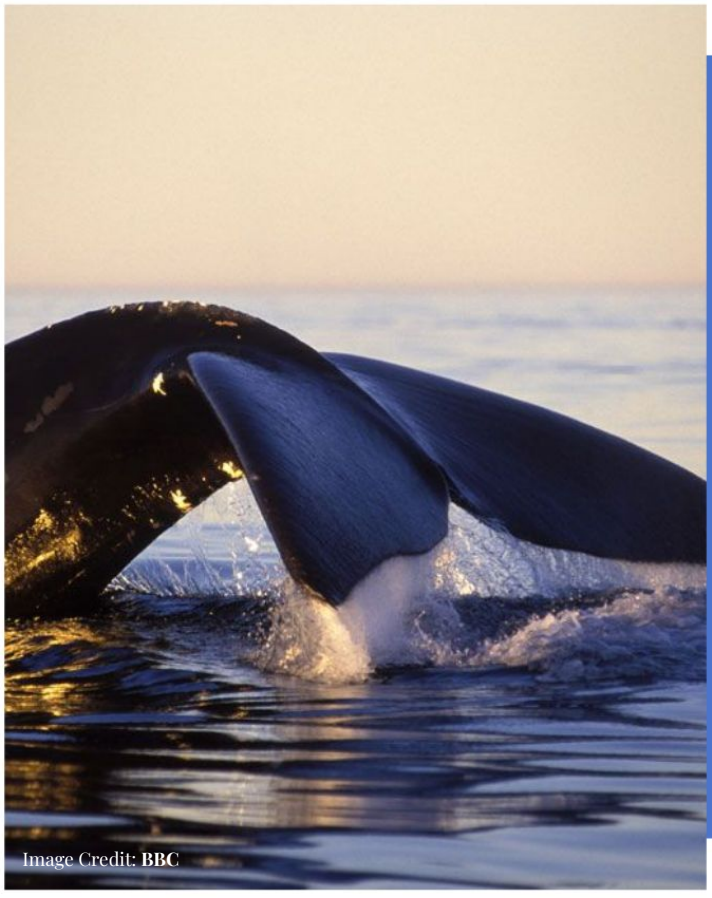


Image Credit: **BBC**

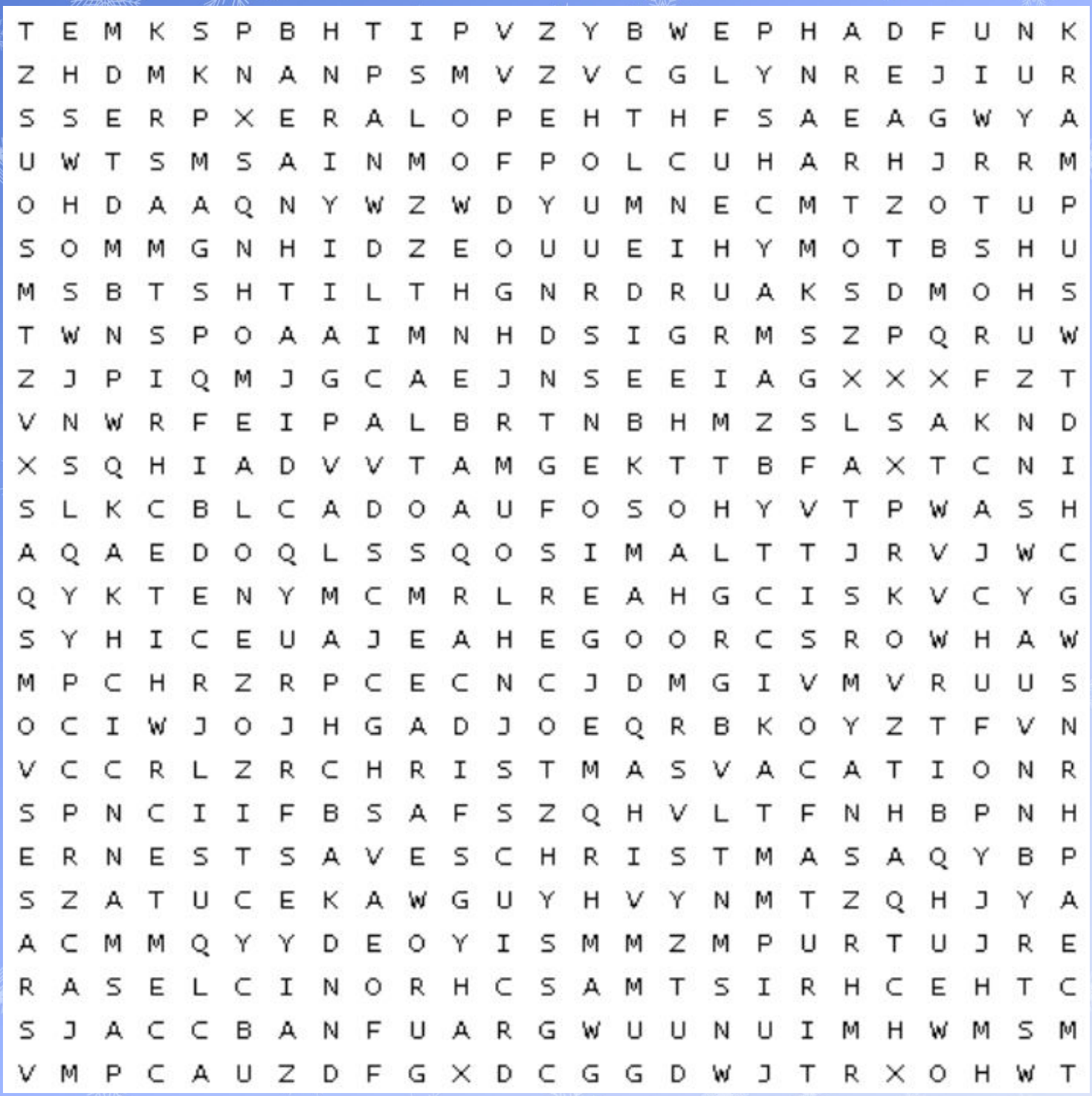
The main cause of Right Whale extinction lies within entanglements. Whales will swim into a fisher's net unknowingly and get caught. The second highest cause of death is vessel strikes. NOAA Fisheries is the leading organization in the preservation of these whales. Their main means of preservation lie in habitat protection and detangling caught whales. These whales have been declared endangered since 1970, and it is speculated that less than 350 specimens remain, with only 70 breeding females. It is unsure whether or not the species can be saved, but teams all around the Atlantic coast are working towards preserving these amazing creatures.



Image Credit: **Center for Biological Diversity**

Christmas Movies Word Search

By **Lily Hawkinson**



Home Alone
Christmas Vacation
Jack Frost
Nightmare Before Christmas
The Santa Clause
Ernest Saves Christmas
The Polar Express
Elf
Spirited
Rudolph
A Christmas Carol
Krampus
The Grinch
Scrooge
The Christmas Chronicles
A Christmas Story
Frosty the Snowman
Gremlins
White Christmas
Die Hard

Christmas Anagrams

By **Lily Hawkinson**

sioockes

dyihloa

hmsirctas

tspserne

evsle

astna

raocl

wshtera

lraagnd

Letter Bank

_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

Clue: Don't get caught standing under this!

Fill in the blank!

_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

Mini Christmas Maze

By **Lily Hawkinson**



The Mammoth Tribune



Made by Students for Students

Western Center Academy