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MAKATI SCIENCE LAUNCHES E-LIBRARY



"Out of our many school activities, I believe that more than any other, this one stresses the importance of making the learning resources accessible to our students in online distance learning." – Mrs Desiree Joy Gumapac

By Mickaela A. Aspuria

The Makati Science High School launched the e-Library to allow learners and teachers to remotely access more educational content, September 27 via MSHS official Facebook page.

A virtual orientation showcasing this new resource hub was held in Zoom and broadcasted live via the school's official

Facebook page that day at 6:45 AM.

The e-Library of MSHS includes books, images, papers, videos, and sound files that are stored in an electronic format which are accessible online.

"Since you can't visit our library because of this pandemic, we are bringing the library to you," said Miss Michelle Yakit, who was the master of ceremonies that morning.

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MSHS students bag cash prizes in game workshop, tournament



Team Makatizens, first-place winners in the ML tournament. [FACEBOOK.COM/SCOPE-FOR-CHANGE](https://www.facebook.com/scope-for-change)

By Mickaela A. Aspuria

Senior high students of Makati Science High School (MSHS) won a total of P45,000 in prizes in the Scope For Change Summer Gaming Workshop and Mobile Legends Tournament held from August to September 2021.

During this event, more than 120 Makati public school students aged 15 to 18 worked in teams of five, participating in a series of game development tutorials to create a "Makati City"-themed game within

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MSHS students bag cash prizes in game workshop, tournament

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three weeks and get the chance to compete in a Mobile Legends (ML) tournament.

Team MakSci Gaming claimed the second prize of ₱20,000 in the game development competition for "Agawan Base," a Monopoly-like game based on the City of Makati and its properties and landmarks. The team included Rafael Miguel Rocero, Julian Carlos Gatchalian, Tom Vincent Hermoso, Carl Miguel Rambaud, and Gabriel Dominic Hizon.

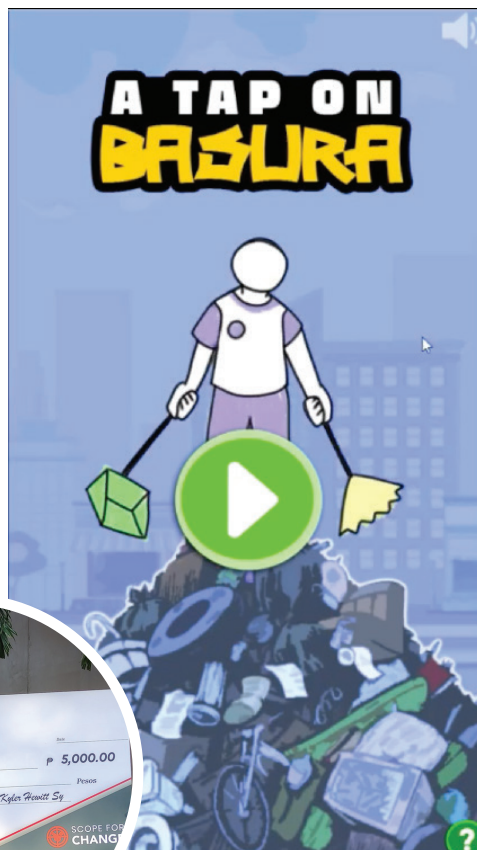
"When the announcement for a game development contest by Scope For Change was released, we realized we would form a great team," said Gatchalian. "We were composed of digital artists and budding programmers with a bunch of game ideas in our heads."

The game competition was judged based on the following criteria: Creativity, Playability, Originality, and Art Style. As one of the best three games in the held contest, "Agawan Base" earned the opportunity to be published on the Google Play Store.

Meanwhile, another two groups of MSHS students, Team Makatizens and Team Renaissance, secured first place and third place respectively in the ML tournament that followed.

Team Makatizens conquered the competition and took home the grand prize of ₱20,000. The winners were Emilio Carlos Diño, Erick James Lisay, Josef Gregore Velasco, Felipe Tabelin III, Aldrin James Camino, and Emmanuel Navarro.

According to Diño, he and his squad were looking forward to the tourney as it gave them another chance to compete in a sizable tournament. He believes that more educational e-sports tournaments such as the one hosted by Scope For Change should be held in the future.



Team Renaissance, third-place winner in the ML tournament, for their tapping-based rhythm game, "A TAPon Basura". FACEBOOK.COM/SCOPE-FOR-CHANGE

"Hindi lang po kami naglalaro, natuto pa po kami. Dagdag na rin po 'yung pagkakaroon naming na makalaro ang ibang mga participants," Diño reasoned. "Maayos po ang system sa pagpapalaro nila and mayroon pong sportsmanship ang bawat isa kaya masabi ko na nag-enjoy ang lahat."

As for Team Renaissance, its members put up a good fight and received ₱5,000. They are Vince Jomar Arenas, Dax Kendrick Dacara, Carl Jose Cayabyab, Alberto Torres Jr., and Troy Camarillo. Their tapping-based rhythm game, "A TAPon Basura," was also

among the five finalists of the game development contest.

"Little did I know that we have to make a game in order to play," said Arenas, who originally created a team with only the ML tournament in mind. However, the current Grade 11 student had the advantage of having used Scratch to make basic games at school when he was in Grade 7.

"Learning the program was relatively easy for me since the endorsed program, Construct 3, was somewhat similar to Scratch," he explained.

The summer workshop and tournament event was organized by Scope For Change, a non-profit initiative, in partnership with the Makati City Government, Makati Department of Education, and Makati Sangguniang Kabataan. Its sponsors were Lenovo and Logitech, which covered the prizes and donations, as well as any expense for the licenses of the game development platform Construct 3.

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times," said Gatchalian, quoting a novel by Charles Dickens. Gatchalian mentioned that creating a game for him and his team was one of their best experiences because they were able to work together despite the COVID-19 pandemic.

"I can also say that the game development experience was fulfilling for me because my programming skills were honed while creating Agawan Base," he added.

Scope For Change is the project of 16-year-old Kyler Hewitt Sy, who believes that video games and e-sports are a way for teens to help others in times of need and an avenue for them to develop their interests in the STEM field.

"I hope the workshop will result to a long-lasting interest so the students can develop their skills and knowledge in technology and programming," said Sy. "This, I hope will help them pursue career paths that can uplift the competitiveness of our country in the field of science and technology."

Makati Science launches e-Library

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With the tagline "Read, Learn, and Discover," the MSHS e-Library aims to provide the learners and teachers of MSHS with supplementary materials to encourage reading, learning, and discovery during these trying times.

"Out of our many school activities, I believe that more than any other, this one stresses the importance of making the learning resources accessible to our students in online distance learning," said Mrs. Desiree Joy Gumapac, the School

Partnership Focal Person, during the opening remarks of the program.

Learners in the MSHS who have access to a desktop computer, laptop, tablet, or smartphone connected to the Internet can access the educational resources in the e-Library wherever and whenever they may be.

After briefly discussing the benefits of digital libraries, Mrs. Gretchen Balao-Paracuelles, English language teacher and the Chairperson of the e-Library Committee, gave a virtual tour of the MSHS e-Library found on the school's official website.

The MSHS e-Library includes researches of the graduates, video lessons of some teachers, digital copies of self-learning modules (SLM), and links to free electronic books and teaching resources, such as ReadWriteThink, PBS Learning Media, and PhET Interactive Simulations.

The SLM and e-books can be viewed online or downloaded for later offline studying and pleasure reading. These e-books include literary classics, such as Lewis Carroll's "Alice in Wonderland" and Jane Austen's "Pride and Prejudice."

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DepEd implements pilot 'F2F', almost two years after schools closed

By Erik Y. Lenon

The Department of Education (DepEd), with the cooperation of 100 public schools and about 20 private schools, implemented the pilot implementation of face-to-face classes last November 15, 2021, almost two years after the schools closed because of the pandemic.

The Department of Health (DOH) and DepEd released a joint memorandum circular last September 27, 2021. It cites the guidelines and necessary details about the pilot run of in-person classes. Schools located in the low-risk areas (based on DOH's criteria) are eligible to join. A blended learning approach was applied, combining face-to-face and distance learning in the process. Parental consent is required to ensure that parents allow their children to go to school.

There are changes in the classroom set-up. For Kindergarten, a maximum of 12 students in a classroom are allowed. There are 16 students for Grades 1 to 3 and 20 students for Grades 4 - 6 in Elementary. The equivalent number of 20 students can go to school for Junior and Senior High School. For TVL workshops and science laboratories, only a maximum of 12 students are allowed to participate. There is only a maximum of 4.5 hours for classes, except for Kindergarten students with only 3 hours. Students should be 1 to 2 meters apart because of physical distancing. Schools may also utilize sound



Students wearing face masks as part of health protocols pray during the first day of face-to-face classes at the Comembo Elementary School in Makati City on Monday, December 6, 2021. AP/AARON FAVILA

systems for teaching. Maintaining proper ventilation is a must to prevent the spread of the virus.

DepEd has also written plans for the safety of the students, teachers, and other personnel. For wellbeing and protection, local health authorities will cooperate for contact tracing and quarantine process (in case of recorded infections). Schools shall also check for the students' vaccination records. Psychological support, such as *kumustahan*

during the first day and guidance office, is also present. The designated health personnel or the clinic doctor are always physically present on the school's premises.

The Philippines is the last country to re-open schools since they closed last March 2020 because of the rising infections. Recently, due to the alarming increase in COVID-19 cases, reaching at least 30,000 a day, face-to-face classes were suspended for the safety of everyone.

Makati Science launches e-Library

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The learners can watch the video lessons and tutorials on various math topics created by Mr. Mark Anthony Vidallo, Mathematics Department Head Teacher III, and Mr. Arnel Olofernes, Analytic Geometry teacher, by clicking the links to their respective YouTube channels listed on the website.

The learners can also read the abstracts that were written by the graduates of the MSHS. With the collection of these studies, the MSHS e-Library also serves as a virtual heritage of knowledge made for the future generations of student researchers.

According to Mrs Paracuelles, the MSHS e-Library is a work in progress and the members of the committee will add more content on a regular basis.

The MSHS e-Library was made possible through the efforts of Mrs Paracuelles, Mrs Dar-

ish Camla Marasigan-Gamit, English Language Department Head Teacher III, Miss Michelle Yakit, Science and Technology Department Head Teacher III, Mr Luvy John Flores, Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Coordinator, Mrs Sharon Catayna, School Librarian, Mr Owen Blanco Ombid, Senior High School Focal Person, Mrs Marlene Mercene, Science Teacher.

The collaborative efforts of everyone involved in this project would not be complete without the continuous support from the school principal, Mrs Eden Fredeluces-Samadan, MSHS Principal II, who emphasized the importance of providing learners a source of validated information at the tips of their fingers.

Mrs Samadan mentioned that by having a repository of learning content from legitimate sources, students may then be taught how to "distinguish the dirt from the gold." She add-

ed that the e-Library is expected to last beyond these times of distance learning.

"Not only would we like our learners to have access to resources during the time of pandemic, but of course, we would like this to be there even after this pandemic or even if we go back to school for face-to-face."

Whether education in the near future will be through online distance learning or regular face-to-face classes, the MSHS E-Library will be here to stay for the years to come as it continues to be updated regularly with teaching and learning resources.

Speaking on behalf of Mrs. Maria Del Socorro Leonida, who was the former teacher librarian, Mrs. Catayna in her closing remarks challenged every teacher, student, and parent to navigate and utilize the learning resources found inside the e-Library to its fullest potential.

Covid-19 vaccination begins for minors in Ph

By Gabriel Ace Capuz

The Philippines began inoculating adolescents aged 12 to 17 against the coronavirus on November 3, 2021, eight months after launching its COVID-19 immunization campaign — initially among health personnel. In 2021, the Philippine Statistics Authority estimated that there would be roughly 12.7 million Filipinos aged 12 to 17. As of December 31st, more than 5.2 million children have been fully vaccinated against COVID-19.

The administration opted to execute a national rollout of pediatric immunization rather than phased introduction due to a consistent supply of COVID-19 vaccinations. Minors must submit a signed consent document from their parent or guardian throughout the vaccination procedure, which is comparable to that of adults.

The planned return to face-to-face classes for everyone was delayed due to the recent surge of COVID cases across the country. The Commission of Higher Education has also said that colleges and universities in Alert Level 3 areas will not be able to resume restricted face-to-face classes on January 31, citing the current surge as the main cause. According to a September 2021 report by the United Nations Children's Agency UNICEF, the Philippines was one of 17 nations across the world where schools were shuttered for the duration of the pandemic. The decision to speed up vaccination for minors was made owing to the anticipated gradual reopening of schools for restricted face-to-face lessons, according to the health official.

Young persons aged 10 to 19 years old account for 7.5% of the 3.1 million confirmed COVID-19 cases. Fatalities in that group are quite rare, accounting for only 0.7 percent of the country's more than 52,000 deaths. On Monday, January 17th, the Philippines recorded 37,070 new coronavirus infections, one of the highest daily recorded cases of this pandemic. This month, new cases averaged 22,720 per day, up from over 2,000 in December. The Department of Health announced that as of January 16, 2022, over 50% of Filipinos have been vaccinated.

Crossing over and beyond: Sining Gang's 'Beyond Awareness' art exhibition



FACEBOOK.COM/MAKSCI-SINING-GANG-109068941050179

By Nicole Erika R. Resultay

Art is a wonderful medium for portraying experiences, emotions, and other concepts we can only hope to understand or to give us a sense of comfort and familiarity. In the 'Beyond Awareness' art exhibition, Sining Gang, in collaboration with the Makati Science High School Supreme Student Government, hopes to do just that.

This art exhibit will be held online via the official Makati Science website and available for viewing from January 20 to January 27, 2022. The Beyond Awareness exhibition will include the artworks from the visual arts club's members, that revolve around a theme of crossing that line beyond awareness and pushing for the inclusion of the people on the autism spectrum.

Chelsea Jemimah Gupo, the grade 11 batch representative of Sining Gang, shared her sentiments regarding the exhibit. "I believe that this art exhibit is a good instrument to visually tell a message to go beyond just being aware of ASD (autism spectrum

disorder). Hopefully, through the artists' pieces, the people who will see them can develop a clearer understanding of the disorder and correct misconceptions about it that can be harmful to those on the autism spectrum," she stated.

She also mentioned that this exhibit intends to 'make the people on the spectrum feel loved and accepted, and be seen beyond as liabilities, but as the people that they are,' and to 'motivate the people around them to be more supportive and respectful, in order to achieve a safer and more inclusive environment for the people and their families that are dealing with ASD.'

Truly, this art exhibit gives the spotlight for those that have to live with ASD, while encouraging all of us to go beyond awareness — beyond the fine line that separates understanding and action. And though acknowledgment is a big step towards a more inclusive world, to arm ourselves with more than just awareness, but with empathy as well, shatters the boundaries between our biases and stigma, and unlearning and growing out of it.



MakSci sets eLearning English 2.0 in motion

By Mickaela A. Aspuria

The Makati Science High School (MSHS) English Language Department began implementing its new eLearning English 2.0 Project, which was introduced during a virtual orientation as part of the department's Brigada Pagbasa celebration streamed on the school's Facebook page last September 2.

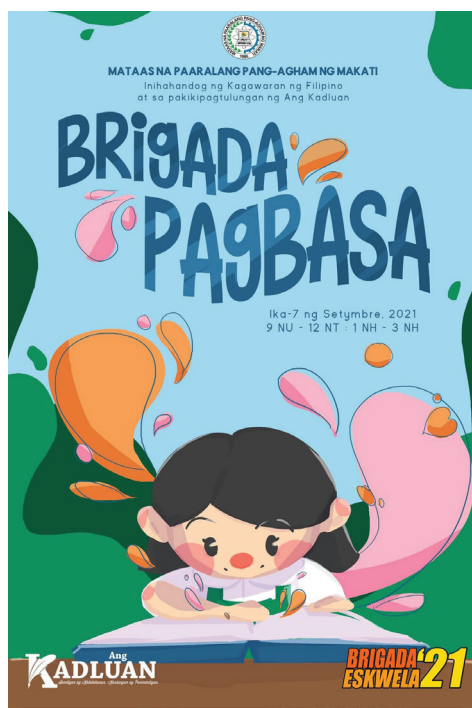
eLearning Systems, Inc. is an education technology startup by Techshare Corporation and Enable Technologies that specializes in computer-based education, specifically on the English language. For three years, MSHS students have tested their ability and knowledge using the startup's digital tool, which contains enrichment activities for sharpening their English language skills.

To familiarize the students, teachers, and parents with the online platform, resource speaker Ms. Eleanor Arevalo, Vice President of Techshare Corp., gave an overview of the system and provided guidelines on how to access it during the eLearning 2.0 Project launch held last September.

The eLearning Project, as well as its second iteration set forth by the English Department, offers learners educational content in the form of text, video, and combinations of both. To meet the particular needs of students in developing their English proficiency, Sunrise Enterprise Learning System also has interactive features such as adaptive speech pronunciation tests where students can answer by speaking through a microphone that the system detects.

Last school year, MSHS shifted from a laboratory-based eLearning program to an online-based program, a transition that came with a number of technical difficulties. However, this did not deter the English Language Department from fulfilling its commitment to improve and to continuously provide the students an excellent online eLearning experience.

According to Mr. Dino Lagdameo, CEO of Techshare Corp., their team recognizes that the pupils had issues with the speech recognition used in the eLearning assessments last year. They have been



FACEBOOK.COM/MSHSANGKADLUAN

working to make it more accessible for the learners, such as by putting more artificial intelligence into the audio signal processing and using more recognition references.

"We are indeed grateful that despite the changes in the current educational system during this pandemic, the eLearning Systems has continued to provide our students with supplemental programs that support language development," said Mrs. Gretchen Paracuelles, the School Reading Program Coordinator.

The MSHS English Department, in partnership with Techshare Corp. through eLearning Systems Inc., has been implementing the eLearning Project since 2018 to efficiently assess and develop students' language skills in vocabulary, reading and listening comprehension, grammar proficiency, and speech fluency.

This initiative is also in accordance with the "Every Child a Reader Program" of the Department of Education, which aims to equip learners with reading skills in order to become proficient, independent readers in their respective year levels.

"We are indeed grateful that despite the changes in the current educational system during this pandemic, the eLearning Systems has continued to provide our students with supplemental programs that support language development." – Mrs. Gretchen Paracuelles

MakSci Mathletes bring in gold, silver, bronze awards in THIMO Heat Round

By Jillianne Renee M. Almeda

Five mathletes of Makati Science High School (MSHS) bagged awards in the Thailand International Mathematical Olympiad (THIMO) 2021 Heat Round held October 24, 2021.

Namely, the students are Christian Jozef Dimaunahan (gold medalist), Jon Louis Macopia (gold medalist), Samantha Mykhyle Francisco (silver medalist), Frances Debbo-rah Arcalas (bronze medalist), and Rhianna Mikaella De Sotto (bronze medalist).

This event aims to hone the skills of mathematically inclined students from kindergarten up to Grade 12 in number theory, geometry, arithmetic, combinatorics, and logical thinking. The competition consists of three stages of examination: a heat round, a final round, and a mock examination in between.

Macopia, gold medalist, expressed his worries before the exam, "Before it started, siyempre I was anxious. Hindi ako nakaka-exercise ng mga 'maths' ko. Nangalawang ba ako? What if mas mahirap na pala 'yung mga questions?" he said. "And it turned out na nakaya ko 'yung mga questions."

Mr. Mark Anthony Vidallo, Mathematics Department Head, relayed to the Makati Science Vision how training was adapted for the pandemic through the use of NEO LMS – "In our department, we have what we called Mathematics Intensive Training Program (MITP). During these challenging times of pandemic, we came up with a strategy on how we can prepare the students in the upcoming competitions. We created a class (via NEO LMS) where the student-contestants answer the past contest papers asynchronously. I hope that through this, somehow it can help our contestants to prepare for the upcoming contests."

He adds, "As a math enthusiast and head of the department, of course, I'm proud of the accomplishment of the students despite the fact that we have limited access to math contest resources...To all MakSci mathletes, just do what you do best — solve! solve! solve!"

The final rounds for THIMO will be held online on April 2, 2022. Other upcoming mathematics competitions this February include the Bebras Challenge and 24th Philippine Mathematical Olympiad.



Are face masks truly helpful, or are they just another layer of COVID misinformation?

By Ana Zoe V. Davad



PIXABAY.COM/USERS/CDD20-1193381/

In the simplest terms possible, a face shield is made up of a plastic transparent visor attached to a strap secured around the head. These personal protective equipment devices are used by many workers in the medical field but have also seen wider use among the rest of the population during the COVID-19 pandemic. They

come in many different forms, but their main purpose is to protect your eyes, mouth, and face in general from contamination.

It has been proposed before that face shields may be more effective than face masks at reducing the transmission of COVID-19, but how much water does this actually hold? Mandates to wear masks have met with resistance from the general public for a variety of reasons. Despite matters being very clear that the coronavirus is something to be taken seriously, some still refuse to put on a mask. The reasons range from anywhere to denial of how serious the situation is to simply being uncomfortable wearing masks.

Face shields protect the entire face — wearing one is automatic prevention from absentmindedly touching your hands to your face. There's also no way to wear a face shield wrong; no matter how you put it on, it's basically impossible for it to slip under your nose or mouth like with a mask. They may be viable as well in situations where the ability to view the speaker's mouth is necessary.

However, it is not as effective as face masks when it comes to protecting yourself or others from respiratory droplets. A study from the Florida Atlantic University has shown that though a face shield can stop airflow from the mouth, aerosol particles can still travel around the face shield. Even wearing a face shield, additional protection may still be required in the form of a face mask. It can also become a source of infection if not cleaned properly as the coronavirus can remain viable for up to a few days on plastic surfaces, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). Another disadvantage of face shields is that it becomes foggy more easily. It's more bulky and less portable than, say, a mask.

To conclude this article, I believe that face shields definitely have their place as protection against the coronavirus. They are a good supplement for face masks but aren't viable as a substitute of any kind. Anyone still using face shields shouldn't forget to wear it along with a face mask and to disinfect it after every use.

Attention: Give students a break

By Leila Angelique Kunkel

With the ongoing Covid-19 outbreak, families appear to be drowning in an ocean of grief. Many adults work in restaurants, stores, movie theaters, gyms, and other companies that have closed, limited their services, or shortened their hours of operation. This closure resulted in their loss of jobs. Not only adults who lost their jobs are suffering from this crisis, but also students. Students need to accomplish a humongous pile of requirements and schoolwork within the given school days. What makes this case worse is that not everyone is as privileged as the others. Some suffer due to financial issues, continuous disruption of internet service, etc. — these are why students fail to learn efficiently and pass the required activities given by teachers.

A lot of students, as well as parents and some teachers, proposed a national academic break. Many posted their opinions on why there should be an academic break on different social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook. The hashtags #AcademicBreakNow and #AcademicEaseNow has been trending as netizens call on the government — particularly the Department of Education (DepEd) and the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) — to declare a national academic break.

Even though a mass number of people agree on the idea of having an academic break, some don't. According to those who disagree, there are multiple issues in our educational system that need to be addressed, including questionable modules, overworked professors, defective systems, and apathetic students, to name a few. It's futile to insist on an academic break unless these issues are resolved. While a systematic demolition and reconstruction of the educational system are ideal, there's no need to set ed-

ucation for the many on hiatus to pander to the wants of the privileged minority.

But still, there are several challenges in our country, including the lack of internet services that go around, wherein various pupils share a home with parents who use data and mobile devices. They were also assigned home responsibilities, such as cooking, cleaning, and sometimes assisting younger siblings with their modules.

One student and other unidentified students at Saint Louis University (SLU) have already committed suicide, allegedly caused by a heavy workload. Last October 30, students organized a candlelight protest to demand justice for the students who committed suicide and urge officials to announce a break.

Because it has already resulted in deaths, this issue must be taken even more seriously. Some disagreed on implementing this break, but I personally think we should all consider the mental health of students, not just the problems stated to contradict the implementation of an academic break, such as questionable modules. Additionally, a lot of students are struggling to cope with the new way of learning. Most of them are used to face-to-face classes. Not all schools provide electronic gadgets needed for online classes. Students who opted for modular learning have a hard time understanding the lessons since there are no teachers to discuss it for them. Their parents are busy most of the time which is why they have no choice but to understand and answer it all alone.

If this break is implemented, it would give us more time to get through our struggles. We are less worried and irritated and more comfortable and innovative if we are given a break. Students are entitled to a break from the turmoil they are witnessing and experiencing in their everyday lives. Due to the pandemic's severe effects on the students' mental health, the implementation of a break is important for many.



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www.makatiscience.online/vision

The skeptics' dilemma: Should minors be vaccinated?

By Nicole Erika R. Resultay

Last November 3, 2021, the vaccination program for all minors between 12 - 17 years old commenced. Before last month, the program had already been launched for the 12-17 years olds who had comorbidities. The program aims to vaccinate 80% of the 12.7 million 12-17 years olds by the end of the year.

Surely enough, this opportunity will open up the chances of face-to-face classes for K-12 and college students soon. The vaccination for minors would also provide protection not only for the minors themselves but also for the people around them. Despite minors being less likely to contract severe Covid-19, pediatric vaccination would prevent them from passing on the virus to other people.

However, we can't deny that there are still a large number of people who are skeptical about being inoculated, including parents who refuse to vaccinate their kids because of their worries regarding the vaccine. Long story short, we can't blame them, but we can try to educate ourselves about the subject: should minors, like us students, be vaccinated?

Simply put, yes, we should encourage minors to be vaccinated. I definitely believe that we should encourage parents to vaccinate their children. However, there are several reasons that contribute to vaccine hesitancy that we should address.

As mentioned earlier, the Covid-19 vaccines prevent us from contracting the Covid-19 virus. Additionally, it regulates the number of people infected around us. Although getting the vaccine in the first place isn't a 100% guarantee you are protected — you can still get infected — however, it's better to have some sort of protection in the first place. The vaccine also greatly minimizes the chances of contracting severe symptoms and death due to Covid-19.

For minors, the vaccines used are Pfizer and Moderna, which have both been granted emergency use authorization. The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are mRNA vaccines that instruct our cells to create a harmless piece called spike protein, which is also found on the surface of the Covid-19 virus. The mRNA is removed by our cells after the spike protein has been produced. Our cells exhibit the spike protein on their surface, and our immune system responds to it when it identifies that the spike protein shouldn't be there. It produces antibodies to get rid of it. This teaches our body to fight against the Covid-19 infection because our immune system will recognize the spike protein on the virus and get rid of it.

Additionally, the vaccine efficacy of both vaccines against symptomatic Covid-19 infection is 95% and 94.1% after two doses, respectively. This shows high efficacy and is hopefully even more encouraging to let children be vaccinated.

Meanwhile, the side effects from acquiring the vaccine are mostly mild, such as sore arms or aches within the body, headaches, chills, fever, and fatigue. This is a good sign because this means our



ILLUSTRATION: JOELLE GRACE MAULIT

immune system is reacting to the vaccine properly; side effects are also generally temporary.

As of November 3, 2021, there have only been around 30 minor cases of adverse reactions and at least 2 cases of allergic reactions in the Philippines. There have also been concerns about myocarditis, or the inflammation of the heart muscle and pericarditis, or the inflammation of the lining outside the heart after being vaccinated by the Covid-19 vaccine.

However, these cases are very rare and almost all cases are mild. Most cases were settled quickly when immediately acted on, such as receiving medicine and rest, and some got better on their own. One study says that the risk of myocarditis a week after receiving the second dose of the Pfizer vaccine to 12-17-year-old males is about 54 cases per million doses. Nonetheless, it is much more common to get myocarditis when sick with Covid-19 than to get it as a side effect from the Covid-19 vaccine.

Another reasonable concern people are skeptical about getting the vaccine is the very quick development of the Covid-19 vaccine. How can we ensure that the vaccine is reliable and effective when it was made so quickly?

First of all, the development of the Covid-19 vaccine didn't start from scratch. The SARS-CoV-2, or the virus responsible for Covid-19, is part of the coronavirus family, which has been studied by scientists for more than 50 years.

Apart from this, an international collaboration to stop the ongoing risk of the Covid-19 infection created an opportunity to hasten the process. When researchers shared information internationally, combined with the numerous volunteers for clinical trials, this immensely helped speed up the development of the vaccine. The clinical trials consisted of three phases that overlapped with each other. It's important to note that while the phases

were overlapped to speed the development of the vaccine, no phases were skipped.

Governments worldwide also made vaccine development and distribution a top priority. There are also very thorough guidelines that need to be followed before vaccines are approved for emergency use authorization. Even after vaccines are distributed, the CDC and the FDA continue to monitor and collect data regarding our safety and inform the public about health problems after vaccination.

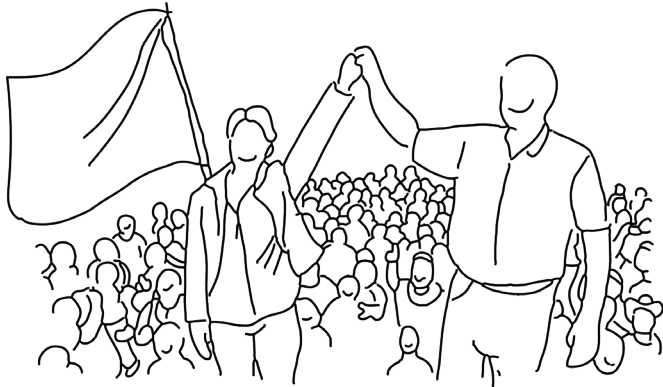
Notably, one of the largest incidents that greatly impacted vaccine hesitancy in the Philippines is the Dengvaxia controversy from last 2016. In 2015, 95% of Filipinos believed in the great importance of vaccines, but by 2018, only 32% agreed that vaccines were important.

Still, there are plenty of trustworthy immunization programs. Plenty of these programs proved themselves significant, especially with the numerous lives it has saved and the diseases it has prevented.

During this pandemic, fake news is rampant, and doubt plagues us on whether we should inoculate children, given the dark history of what shouldn't have been. We've lost the lives of our fellow children, and we continue to grieve for them. However, let us be vigilant and see through the facts. Our trust must be built by proper research and statistics instead of gossip that can easily be proven wrong these days. There are numerous and trustworthy reassurances that we can rely on. However, we can only let ourselves be reassured if we choose to set aside our skepticism and believe in science.

It is a common feeling to want to protect our family, and right now, the best way to do it is by vaccinating not only minors but all of us. Let us be empathetic and choose to be vaccinated now.

Political parties: Corrupt cronies or coordinated candidates?



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By Julian Paul "JP" Busiños

A political party is a group that coordinates its candidates to compete in the elections. Different parties are likely to hold different ideas about issues and how things should be run. However, in the Philippines, politicians use the political parties as a stepping stone to winning the elections. The article Building the Philippine Political Party System said: "However, the political situation in the Philippines, as well as its political institutions, makes Philippine political parties more of a detriment rather than a boost to the country's development." It also stated that the weakness in the Philippine political parties is because they are dependent on personalities rather than the goal to make the Philippines better. This controversial topic raises many questions. Should we maintain political parties? Are they still useful?

The Republic Act 7941: Party-List System states that: "political candidates have the right to create multiple parties." This has opened the door for politicians to create numerous parties for personal benefit. For example: if politician 1 is in party A but is not nominated for an important role, he can change parties to get another position. This means that anyone can now become an important political leader regardless of qualifications and quality. All that is required for someone to move up the ranks is power and money. Right now, in the midst of the pandemic, many corrupt officials are stealing from funds and using their roles for corrupt purposes. All this is due to the inconsistencies in the party system. Nowadays, the political parties are used for the interest of the politicians. What is now the use for political parties, if they are just a means of corruption for greedy officials?

Because political parties are not efficient and are often corrupt, in 2002, the government issued a reform of the Political Party system in the first Philippine Political Party Conference. The conference was chaired by then-Speaker and Lakas-NUCD chairman Jose de Venecia who authored the bill in the House of Representatives, whereas Senator Edgardo Angara filed a version of the bill for the senate. However, as 2004 approached, Gloria Macapagal Arroyo (GMA) announced her candidacy for the 2004 elections. This presidential legitimacy led to a halt in the Political Party reform despite its endorsement in GMA's 10-point "legacy program" and its addition to the Medium-Term Development Program. The political party development act was finalized in 2010.

Even though the political party development act has strengthened the political parties by (1): Maintaining loyalty to a political party and penalizing defectors. (2): Minimizing the instances of corruption by regulating financing to make sure they are all even. (3): Making political parties professional through state subsidy and supporting them to become effective democratic officials. This may have lessened some corruption, but it still has not uprooted the corruption. We must be the ones to choose which political parties to support that we know will help the Philippines. There are some political parties that just create new popular problems to "solve" instead of focusing on real problems and giving solutions that can really help the country.

I can say with the data collected that the weakness of political parties is not solely due to the mistakes in the system but is also a result of the characteristics of the politicians. The worth and morals of a political party are based on the politicians themselves. If the Philippines is to have a strong political party system, we must first have upright — not corrupt — politicians.

Crossing the fine line

By Joshua Jay B. Busiños

Last 4th of November, it was announced by the presidential spokesperson, Harry Roque, that the alert level in Metro Manila would be decreased from alert level 3 to alert level 2, starting from November 5. The easing of restrictions allows more businesses and establishments such as theme parks, cinemas, and tourist attractions, to become available to the public. This also increases the capacity allowed for restaurants, religious gatherings, and other businesses and activities of the like. Children are also now allowed to go to malls and other establishments. All of this was done in an attempt to boost the country's economy, which had been severely damaged by the pandemic.

But while it is necessary for more businesses to open in order to boost the economy, we must also remember that we are still in the midst of a pandemic. We must also keep in mind that most of the population is not fully vaccinated. According to Rappler, as of November 27, only 32.27% of the population has been fully vaccinated. This means that 67.73% are still either partially vaccinated or haven't been vaccinated at all. And with the easing of restrictions, malls have gotten crowded. Many more people are going out to theme parks, arcades, and other indoor activities. With the huge masses of people going to these places, there is an enormous threat of transmitting the Covid-19 virus. Infection is especially concerning for places like arcades and theme parks, which are very crowded. These include children that touch and use the same items that a lot of people have used before them. Places like arcades and cinemas are also indoors, so there is little to no air circulation. Some



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people argue that these places are needed to boost people's mental health. However, I believe that outdoor parks, which are safer since they are open-air, can boost people's mental health all the same. Establishments like these are not only unnecessary but could also endanger people's lives.

On the other hand, the reopening of businesses is also needed to boost the country's economy. The pandemic and the lockdowns forced small businesses to shut down.

Even big companies were negatively affected. The easing of restrictions offers new opportunities for establishments to "make up for lost time". This would allow businesses to get increased profit and recover. Restaurants can now operate at an increased capacity and increase their profit. Shops that rely on malls to bring customers are now able to make a decent profit. The increase of customers allows businesses to get back on their feet. We can see this as the first step for our country to recover from the pandemic's effects.

Given this information, I believe that there is a balance that we need to make. We need to find a balance between letting more establishments open and minimizing contact with others. Yes, it is true that we need to let more businesses open to boost our economy. But it is also true that we still need to minimize the risk of transmission of Covid-19. I think that unnecessary establishments like arcades, theme parks, and cinemas should remain closed as they increase the chances of transmission of the Covid-19 virus. However, other businesses that offer needed services like restaurants and malls can remain open. I also suggest that social distancing would be strictly followed to lessen the risk of exposure. This will help our economy recover while also minimizing the risk of covid-19. Overall, we need to find a balance between business, the economy, and our safety. We must not cross the fine line.

Love at first spite

By Fiona de Guzman

“A world full of literacy is pretty boring, don't you think?”

Huh?

Just another day, admiring the works.

Class has just ended and like any other day, I decided to, *again*, visit the art gallery. And what do I have my eyes set on this time?

Why of course, this beautiful piece called, “Desire”

Honestly, I could go on and on with how amazing this piece is, from the contrast between red and black to the varying strokes of harsh and soft, but I think I should save people from my rambling. To summarize, this piece has a majestic aura yet simple meaning.

“Desire”

So simple

So familiar yet-

“How boring...”

Huh?

But as my mind wanders, something distracts my thoughts and interrupts.

That something being a person.

“A world full of literacy is pretty boring, don't you think?”

Huh?

“Excuse me?” I utter, sounding and feeling rather slightly offended at the sudden comment.

The person continues, “Sure, this work may look like it, but that doesn't mean that it actually conveys such deep meaning.”

Excuse me? What is this pompous idiot going on about?

I look at the stranger, his rather overconfident seeming attitude throwing me off even more.

Not a great first impression, one might say...

“And what makes you think you can do better?” I retort.

I know I shouldn't even bother arguing over something so trivial and stupid, but something in me just can't seem to help it. Especially when it comes to a painting as magnificent as this.

“I never said anything of the sort, but I at least have the right to critic, don't I?” he answers back, for some reason not really sounding angry or offended but rather positive still.

His response and demeanor just cause my annoyance to increase.

Calm down Alex, this is just a petty farce, calm yourself...

After calming myself down a tiny bit, I start to pay more attention to the actual person himself, more specifically, his outfit. The person wears what looks like a school uniform underneath a hoodie, though the school seems to be different from mine.

A fellow student? Doesn't look like we go to



the same school though...

“You're a student as well, aren't you?” he asks.

Huh, guess I was correct?

“Uh, yes?” I answer quite unsurely, for some reason.

He laughs slightly, “Well, so am I. It's refreshing to see another student who's also interested in the arts instead of some other adult boasting about how their belief in art is more superior.”

His comment causes me to frown out of disapproval for his hypocrisy and lack of self-awareness.

Hypocrite...

“Anyways,” he cuts in, “Apologies for my rudeness. Why, I forgot to even introduce myself.”

“I'm Kyle, I'm from TIAS University, what about you?” he asks.

“Uh...” I blurt out, rather hesitant, “Alex, I'm from MIM University.”

After introducing myself, albeit somewhat confused and reluctant to do so, the boy starts commenting about how it's a nice coincidence how close our schools turn out to be.

“...almost like fate,” he laughs, positive and smiling.

“Alright alright,” I end up cutting him off and forgetting to keep my cool, despite being in a public place such as an art gallery, “Enough we get it you're happy. Now tell me what exactly did you mean that this piece wasn't ‘good enough.’”

My words seem to have taken the boy off guard.

“Huh? When did I say that? I just said that, while this work may look like it, that doesn't mean that it actually conveys such deep meaning. I never said it wasn't ‘good enough.’” he says, raising an eyebrow, almost as if in shock or disbelief.

His face then softens into a rather kinder expression, a gentle look with eyebrows tilted and a small empathetic smile. He then looks downwards, almost like they are in thought while also being rather...

Regretful...

And then, he looks up to look back at me.

“Hey, um,” he stutters, suddenly with a tint of awkwardness for some reason, “I'm sorry if I... came off as...rather ‘obnoxious.’”

He seems to struggle slightly with his choice of words. Breathing slightly more nervously while thoughtful.

“Honestly, it's not new for people to have a bad first impression of me, especially due to how I talk without thinking too much of it, only thinking about my beliefs and ideas instead. It's rude, I know.”

“I should really improve that...” I hear him mutter.

“It's just that, I really admire people's unique ideas and works. How they improve and how they put their thoughts into reality. So most of the time, I can't help but critic people's works. But a lot of the time, people don't improve. People just stay in their safe space, in familiar ground because they are afraid of the unknown.”

To be honest, now that I think about it, I think I also agree with the words that they have been saying. It's true, after all, people have and continue to be too comfortable. So comfortable that they practically become fragile sheep in a dark and dangerous world. Weak glass among a valley of spikes with only one tall platform keeping them all from falling.

That one platform being familiarity.

Wait, does that mean that when he was talking about literacy...

Huh... I guess I shouldn't have judged him so badly...

Maybe, I should give him another chance...?

And that is why, currently a nervous boy is in his casual attire, a polo shirt with some pants, holding the gallery pamphlet while holding the number of the same boy he met back at the gallery. Cheeks flushed slightly as he takes a deep breath before proceeding inside to meet his date.

“The intangible versus the literal world, huh?”

“Well, let's see what else you have to offer, hypocritical weirdo.” I whisper to myself.

You're lucky you're cute...

Urge



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By Avegayle Marybless Lumawag

Bones are interesting, skeletons are too. Gliding my fingers lightly from my collarbone, sternum, pelvis... and finally onto my ribs. I sigh as I think of what could be if only I could feel my bones properly. My melancholy spreads like an ugly disease, like wildfire caused by fireworks on New Year's Day. The glittering light from the sparklers never reflecting from my eyes.

Even if my stomach is rumbling, no mind. Doesn't destiny exist? If so, I'm destined to be gone from the face of this world. Slow dancing with corpses in the dead of night, the revolting scent of the remains of thyself... such an exquisite view. Daydreaming about my own death has become a pastime, from dusk till dawn — I'm intoxicated by the thought of my blood running cold and becoming breathless. I am my own assassin, hired by the wrath only visible to thee.

Life is mundane. I would spend my days living a normal life. I've encountered things that everyone does on a day-to-day basis. I admit, I've had and still have problems. But everyone does, right? Some even have it harder than me. It's just that... I wonder why I haven't done it yet, I've had so many perfect chances to do so - but how come? I want to scream at the top of my struggling lungs. I love myself, I really do — but maybe it's time for that love to come to an end.

I kept that in my mind always, more often than not, I considered the things that could potentially harm me as "normal". Oh, normal, a word I now dread. Yet I digress. It started during the middle of high school, I developed the urge to scratch my neck. To scratch until it went away, at least I hoped it would.

So, I kept scratching.

And scratching...

Scratching

Scratching

Scratching

Scratching

Why won't it go away?!

Hmm, perhaps I would be able to touch the bones in my neck soon if I scratch through enough. Haha.

As much as this nagging feeling tells me to end it all, I can't go yet, I need to prove to everyone and especially myself, that they're wrong. So incredibly wrong...

.

.

.

.

But what if they're right?

for the hyacinth, solitude i seek

By Joan Gabrielle Alegario

oh, ever ceaseless
ever restless in
this uproar of
morality and
indecency

to have withheld such suffering from
the indifferences of men, the opposition of my brethren,
from blood rather than water, to whom do i owe the pleasure
of life, of love, of laughter,
lift my hands
in fervent pray'r
my nimble fingers
still trembling and
unending, with ev'ry
breath pleading, crying
mercy, my sister! hold this
vessel of fraught and lift from
my shoulders, the burden of life
of love, of laughter, oh ever
ceaseless, ever restless in
this uncertainty

Fifteen

By Joan Gabrielle Alegario

Fifteen.

Approximately one and a half decades.

Fifteen.

Mature yet naive.

I thought everything I had learned so far was enough to get by.

Fifteen.

The year I confused myself for being 13 still.

Nothing in my life had changed, and certainly not my height.

Perhaps if I slumbered like the dead last summer I would've gained an inch at least.

Fifteen.

2 years past, and I had only realized

Marveling at the charm of a friend turned stranger

Was not admiration alone

Fifteen.

3 months spent pondering a lifetime.

Would it have been better to become an economy slave

Than to chase a dream no one believes in anymore when they're 20?

Fifteen.

Probably it wouldn't hurt to be a vegan for once.

On second thought, it would hurt my being to do so.

Fifteen.

The semester I chose French instead of Journalism

Because she did.

Learned to love Cavetown

Because she did.

Found beauty in my own poetry

Because she did.

Gave up myself for a while

Because that was the only thing she would like about me.

Wrote these poems

Because she would never know.

ABECEDARIAN POEM

Like one has never seen

By Lizzie Annika I. Montemayor

Alunsina, much like a queen, black hair of beauty and preen but with jealousy, flees with her light leaving darkness like one has never seen

Bagatulayan gives being to the whole celestial ring yet in his laws absolute and unyielding, disobedience meets punishment like one has never seen

Kadaklan, generous with knowledge and rain, customs must be maintained, change might just bring eternal sunlight, waters of the earth to the drain, drought like one has never seen

Dayang Dayang Mangilai, with greens of healing as her crest, then comes greed burning the forest, and eternal disdain, the sordest like one has never seen

Empuq, weaver of life, of variety without strife, what might he see when differences are never set aside, prejudice is a vengeful wife with destruction like one has never seen

Gaygayoma of gigantic shine, actions are of freedom, divine, strong and never benign, and for those who decline, left for stars to dine on, meeting an end like one has never seen

Habagat, wielder of storms, brings balance for all forms but with a wounded earth,

equilibrium reforms, monsoons wreak havoc, forlorn nothingness like one has never seen

Ibabasag, goddess of conception, loving affection, when women and children are met with deflection, harsh correction like one has never seen

Lalahon of fluid flame, in peace, when she's tame, with anger eager to maim, her heat destroys and births, fires devour and claim like one has never seen

Maka-andog intimidates with size and with gentle touch the littlest things apprise, fishes swarm abundance agnize, easy to seize when there's much but few are quick to be nothing, leaving demise like one has never seen

Namtogan, a whole becomes greater when incomplete, a god needs no perfection to be great, plentiful as prosperous luck ornate, ego inflates and to ingrates, he must berate like one has never seen

Okot, his whistles provide guidance for the hunt, not always about grunt rather of mind's lunt, mortal's wit, a runt in comparison, get clever and bear the brunt like one has never seen

Paalulong, chief of the dead, the end all dread, glorious honor of loss ahead, a soul in evil embed deserves to be condemned like one has never seen

Rawtit, hero matriarch, woodland creatures rejoice in her mark, strength and speed million times greater than that of a barque, as a defender yields weapon anarchy like one has never seen

Salakap, a scent from the northwind, deadly, was once friendly but deception came along dreadly, trust broken, diseases spread like a medley long and unending like one has never seen

Talagbusao, wrath abhor, passionate pain from the teeth of a blood-hungry carnivore, red of blood surges valor, encourages gore like one has never seen

Ungaw, bees hard at work, providence perk in his delight, bees sting when irked, no time to lurk running in a dizzying circle like one has never seen

Waytiyap, monster in guise of a leader, trickery and treachery of a cheater, a feat to overpower, a challenge nothing but meager, like one has never seen

Yawa Sinagmaling, truly a woman, one that breaks a man, one that ruins a land, starter of warfare caravan like one has never seen

The Art of Faith

By Nicole Erika R. Resultay

The Art of Faith
By Coal

Not everyone believes in mountains, yet there they are, in plain sight.

Scientists insist, rather halfheartedly, that mountains are the bulging results of tectonic shifts along massive rock plates. Mountains developed naturally over the course of billions of eons, millennia, scientists say under their breaths.

Most people believe that mountains aren't there at all. Even when mountains are visible, as they often are, nonbelievers will explain that our minds create sensory illusions to help explain what we cannot understand, like the shapes of gods and monsters in the stars, or messages in tea leaves, or government codes in cloud patterns.

Mountains real or not, finding this desert like the rim of an empty dinner plate, scattered sparsely along the flat middle are small towns with names like Red Mesa, Pine Cliff, and, right in the center, Night Vale.

Above Night Vale are helicopters, protecting citizens from themselves and others. Above the helicopters are stars, which are completely meaningless. Above the stars is the void, which is completely meaningful.

Through this crowded sky, mysterious lights often pass. These are just alien spacecraft, or the auras left by interdimensional travelers, but these simple explanations are boring. The people of Night Vale often come up with elaborate stories to

FILMS AND “SHOTS”:

A moving picture of the pandemic and vaccines

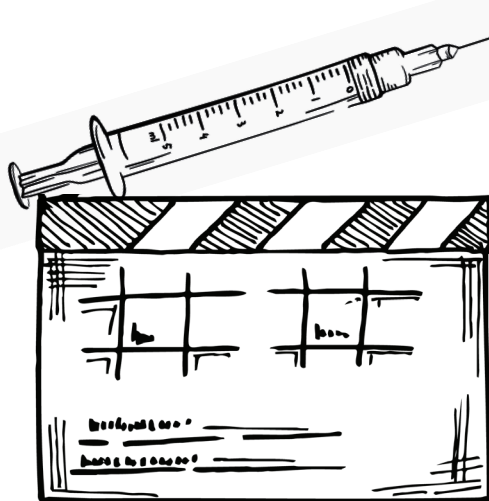
By Erik Lenon

Our life was a film—a motion picture of laughter, conversations, hangouts, and even procrastination. It was a movie where everyone was the main character, where everyone constantly acts as time passes by. People talk, eat together, gossip with each other, study in school every day, or work in their jobs. They go places with friends, then take photos and keep them as memories.

Life was a vivid movie; it was busy, fun, and colorful until it wasn't. Everything changed, and every cutscene went out of place. The life that was deemed normal suddenly went quiet. But the film didn't stop, it just went on but with a completely different story and an unexpected twist. You faced the television screen, trying to process the news. “Two or three weeks? I can wait,” you said as you hoped to meet your classmates and friends again. Stuck inside your home, you kept on waiting—and you got nothing. The news was all just the same each day. The numbers kept increasing; people got infected or, worse, died. Schools and businesses all around the globe closed. The hospitals reached their limit, and it was exhausting for all the health workers. The economy collapsed and dropped into a free fall. It was past three weeks, and time flew by. Now that it's been more than one year since you're stuck at home, one question remained in your head: Is it ending soon?

As you tried to answer the question, curiosity struck you. Where did it even start? Experts can trace it back to December 2019, where several strange pneumonia cases emerged in Wuhan, China. In January the following year, the SARS-CoV-2 (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2), the cause of COVID-19 disease, was discovered. China shared its genetic code with the public for the production of testing kits. You might have also heard something from the news about the infamous seafood market in the city, right? According to various news sources, it was the origin of the outbreaks. How about in our country? Where did it even start? A traveler who arrived from Wuhan to our country via Hong Kong confirmed positive for the virus. And that was it. Fast forward to March, the first strict lockdowns (ECQ, MECQ, you name it!) started. The supposedly month-long lockdown went for longer and longer until everyone just lost hope.

The solution to this growing problem? Vaccines. You stumbled upon this question, what even are they? A vaccine is a substance that instructs one's body's immune system to fight against a particular disease. Vaccines contain the virus replica that will teach antibodies to destroy them. It helps the antibodies recognize the virus so the next time they encounter the real



one, they can successfully disrupt them and prevent sickness.

There are various ways to instruct these antibodies. Some vaccines contain an inactivated or disabled virus that mimics an active virus so it won't cause disease. Vaccines can adopt a more straightforward way by using a nonpathogenic part of the virus, like its spikes, to help the antibodies recognize it. Viral vectors, or harmless viruses with their genetic code, are complex yet work. The most famous one, mRNA vaccines, contains mRNA or blueprints that help produce viral proteins and antigens.

It was a long list of types of vaccines, and suddenly you realized how its development went quickly, doubting its ability. How come researchers and scientists developed these vaccines a year after the first cases emerged? Before the start of the pandemic, studies about SARS had already started. When SARS and MERS (Middle East respiratory syndrome) emerged, researchers took time to develop a vaccine to prevent a destructive pandemic that time—and they were successful. No pandemic took over, and the study for these vaccines stopped. The research on these diseases and their corresponding viruses gave a head start to the scientists who developed the COVID-19 vaccine. There were also significant amounts of resources like money and government funding that made way for quicker study. Another factor was the overwhelming support of volunteers who joined in the vaccine's clinical trials. In short, the COVID-19 vaccines are backed up with past studies, funded well by companies and the government, and supported by volunteers.

One thing about these vaccines? They're effective! According to the Department of Health, common vaccines like Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna have about a 95% efficacy rate near the hundred percent mark. Some brands like Astra-

Zeneca and Sinovac CoronaVac sit on about a 70% efficacy rate, which is lower than previous brands mentioned but used by most people to immunize themselves.

The public has mixed opinions about these vaccines. The world was delighted when successful COVID-19 vaccine trials made their way to the news and media. It gave everyone a sense of hope—a sign that this unexpected turn in history would end soon. Most people want to get the shots. Some in this group, who agree on vaccination, are either the “I want the vaccine ASAP!” or “I'll wait and see” person. The minority of people had decided not to get vaccinated—or at least, get the shot only when required.

Anti-vaxxers, or people against the vaccination process, have made appearances and exposures in the media as the COVID-19 vaccines started circulating in the market. Why do these people exist, especially in our country? Most Filipinos are hesitant in getting the immunization shots because they don't trust science enough; they prefer believing in social media rumors but not a more legitimate and intelligent source of information. One factor is rooted in the fears of possible vaccine accidents, like the Dengvaxia controversy in 2017. The issue and the reports of severe side effects and deaths erased the people's trust in the vaccines. Some people are afraid of the slightest and the weakest of side effects. The thing is: they're normal.

Like all medicines and other substances, COVID-19 vaccines can cause these mild and common side effects: pain and swelling in the injected area, tiredness or fatigue, chills, headache, body pains, and nausea. These mild effects are signs that your body is adjusting to the vaccine and a cue for your immune system to train itself in defending you. These side effects are typical, and it only says one thing: Your vaccine is working.

Some side effects opposite of previously listed were reported; severe and life-threatening side effects. One common yet dangerous side effect is anaphylaxis or severe allergic reactions. It is rare, having a rate of 6.42 cases per million doses administered (according to Food and Drug Administration, DOH). Still, being mindful is the best thing everyone can do—let's not take it for granted. An unusual condition of blood clotting with low platelets, known as thrombosis-thrombocytopenia, has been reported. Signs like shortness of breath, chest pain, leg swelling, blurred vision, and tiny spots near the injection site tell that there is a presence of blood clots. It is uncommon, too, but people must take it seriously since it's “unusual.” Heart inflammation, accompanied by breathing problems, chest pain, and irregular heartbeat, is one of the risks the

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NFTs are bad for everybody involved, and here's why

By Ana Zoe V. Davad

If you're an artist using social media as a platform for your work, a follower of anything to do with cryptocurrency at all, or even an avid player of hit gacha game Cookie Run, chances are that you've heard of NFTs, or non-fungible tokens - one of the worst things humanity has invented since styrofoam. As stated by *Forbes*, an NFT is a digital token that represents real-world objects, most commonly art. NFTs have skyrocketed in notoriety especially in the last year.

They claim to be "one of a kind" (hence the word non-fungible) and create an artificial scarcity of art through making a single copy the original copy and selling it at high prices, far more than a normal digital artwork would normally make.

Setting aside the fact that NFTs are actively killing the planet, they are also completely useless. Money is being paid for a token that basically says "I own this artwork and nobody else does", but not the artwork itself. What is being paid for is the receipt to the product, but not the product itself. Your copy of the artwork remains the same as all other copies; there isn't anything to make it something unique that only you can enjoy. NFTs are a bubble of Dutch tulip craze proportions, one that is going to pop - and soon. There is no reason that Jack Dorsey (CEO of Twitter)'s first tweet should sell for approximately three million dollars.

There are arguments going around



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that NFTs help digital artists receive more money for the work that they do, to which I say: commission the artist directly. Want to make sure your favorite artist is compensated for their labor's worth? Want a personalized piece of art for your eyes only? Just commission the artist. Why would you jump through all these hoops and make things harder for everybody when there is a tried-and-tested way that does not involve hiking up carbon emissions?

True, NFTs can be used by any artist, but the vast majority of people profiting are those who are already making money off their art without NFTs. According to Kimberly Parker's analysis of various NFT marketplaces, all of that wealth goes to a tiny number of artists making a small number of

sales while the vast majority either make no profit or actually lose money.

NFTs don't help anyone, least of all artists getting their work stolen and tokenized.

However, despite the debate on whether or not NFTs are useless, one thing that won't change is how the technology used to create them is sending the Earth's environment hurtling closer and closer to destruction. Estimations of carbon emissions may only be estimations so far but even the lower estimates are huge when you remember what all that energy is used to make.

This technology is known as cryptocurrency mining and is notorious for involving vast amounts of computing power using nonrenewable energy. There are those who argue that there are other things that use just as much energy that NFTs do, like social media. But compared to something like social media, which helps billions of people all over the world communicate with one another, NFTs have no value of their own. Social media actually has a use; NFTs don't.

So, with all of these disadvantages, why are they so popular? Surely there must be some reason why it still hasn't died out over the past few months. However, NFTs in and of themselves hold no actual value; it is the perceived value of what the NFT represents that gives it value. The answer lies here - NFTs rely on positive media coverage, market demand, and the overall public perception for the market to stay afloat. For anyone investing into it, it is essential for their wallets to convince large numbers of people to also invest after them.

Films and "shots"

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12

COVID-19 vaccine gives. According to the FDA's report, there are less than ten incidents tallied, and they continue to study and monitor these to prevent an increase in the number of these cases possibly.

While there are many side effects listed, getting the vaccine shots is still highly recommended. Most of the familiar side effects resulted in no deaths, and they went away after a few days. The severe and adverse tallied impacts in this country are rare and few too. COVID-19 is fatal and has brought many deaths not just in our country but in the world. Hospitals were full because of the severity of most cases that people

protect themselves very well to avoid getting infected. This vaccine is an excellent opportunity for everyone to shield themselves against the disease. The numbers don't lie, and COVID-19 illness has brought more than the vaccines themselves. If worried about the listed side effects, try asking a doctor personally and allow them to do tests on you to see if your body is eligible for vaccine administration.

Acquiring the COVID-19 shots is better because it protects you from the virus itself. It trains your body and immune system in fighting this disease, saving your life. Aside from you, it benefits the health workers who have constantly been working hard since early 2020. This type of prevention won't exceed their capacity, and health workers can avoid exhausting themselves. It also helps your community achieve herd immunity, minimizing the possibility of experienc-

ing a new wave of infection. Vaccines have eradicated (or almost) diseases like polio and measles, proving that they work!

It's been about two years since the virus made its way through the news and media, and because of vaccines, we might see the very end of this twisted story. As long as vaccines continue to roll out among communities, the probability of the pandemic ending will eventually reach a hundred percent. Talk to your circle of friends about the COVID-19 vaccine; ask them if they got it and motivate them by reminding them of things they used to do when we had our "normal lives." The pandemic has been a long, moving picture full of hopes, prayers, anger, and disappointment. The film has been running for over a year now, going two. The only thing we can do is to wish for its end, to close this chapter in our history and finally say, "Cut! Thank you, next!"

Well, well, look who's inside again: Filipino time in the pandemic

By Nicole Erika R. Resultay

I'm sure all of us have had that sinking feeling that time sits still, but one blink and a whole week has gone by. Waking up each day and realizing that nothing's changed can make time — and us — feel like it hasn't moved at all. This pandemic has led all of us to spend most of our time staying inside our homes (and for good reason too — stay inside folks!) and really, it's been one doubt after the other.

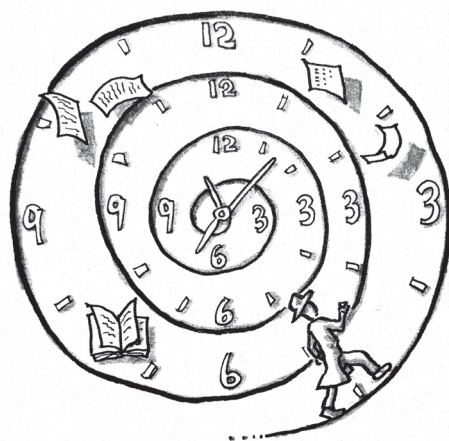
Although the appeal of staying at home certainly had its charm, it's been almost 2 years in and it's safe to say we want nothing more but to stretch our legs outside and talk to friends we haven't met in a long time. It is worth noting that not everyone has the privilege to stay at home, and we're grateful for what we have, but there's no doubting the negative effects of being cooped up in the same four walls of our home, every day.

The unchanging scenery and the numerous nerve-racking issues that seem to pile themselves one after the other have become our new normal. And with it, our perspective of time and how we make use of it has started to change too. We've spent whole months without proper face-to-face conversations and the lack of variety in our schedules, greatly affected by the many restrictions in consequence of the ongoing pandemic.

The lack of structure around time really messes with our perception of time, because we're used to working towards a direct goal: going to school, going to work — there is a blessing in routine because it is familiar. But when this routine is all broken down, we've been given time to redo everything all over again. We've considered this pandemic temporary, so right now, we're in this state where it feels like we've stopped — right now, it just feels like we're waiting for something to happen. For all of this to end.

However, our sense of time has always been culturally different from others. 'Filipino time' has been a part of our culture since the Spaniards colonized us. Filipino time is essentially the practice of being late — this can span from a few minutes, five minutes, even thirty minutes! Although, we can't fully blame it on us: the overwhelming traffic especially here in Metro Manila is one of the biggest reasons we're always late.

There's also that trademark of being 'fashionably late': it's notorious for showing up late on purpose, but there's nothing like a grand entrance and being the center of attention when everyone else has arrived. Filipino time has also been constantly practiced



by big companies and famous politicians, so it's no wonder it's been catching on. Once a person or two starts coming in late, it's hard to stop everyone else from doing it too.

Our deep-rooted cultural practice of Filipino time, combined with our now warped sense of time during this pandemic is like adding fuel to the fire. It was hard enough to come in early — and when our time has been given less structure due to this pandemic, it's even more difficult to maintain our punctuality.

Although online classes held through Zoom meetings give us a sense of schedule to follow, do you notice yourself entering late — maybe 3 minutes before class, maybe even 5 minutes after class has already started? With this pandemic and the ingrained practice of Filipino time in our culture, we've gone from waiting on each other to show up, to not showing up at all.

It's hard enough to cope during this pandemic, amidst all this chaos, that even our sense of time has been affected. It's easier to stay in bed and let it all pass, and in some regard resting our minds help. However, let's never forget that the world hasn't stopped yet — perhaps it never stopped at all. It moves slowly, but surely, especially now with everything opening back up.

There's no doubt that punctuality is an important skill to practice, but sometimes it's hard to ask for it, with the negative effects brought by staying at home for long periods of time in the pandemic and our concept of Filipino time. As the world opens up, we too must do what we can to provide ourselves some structure and stability to follow our daily schedules. The worst has yet to pass, but time keeps moving on — let's not wait for it to catch up on us when the present has always been here, waiting.

Oh, the warmth taken away from us...

By Jillianne Renee M. Almeda

A feeling so distant it's almost out of reach — the sun filtering through the windows, its heat harsh, yet, looking back, endearing, if not by nature, then perhaps due to the fact it is inseparable from this experience, this far off memory. Our classrooms — nothing much on their own, as what is more noteworthy lies in the people in them — the classmates, teachers, and dear friends we saw every day. This fond reminiscence of a time we once had burns at the back of my mind as we face our situation that is nowhere close to what was once normal.

Online classes at this point are nothing new to us — a part of the routine of our everyday lives, and at the time of writing, it has been this way for almost two years. Two years of uncertainty and isolation, its first few moments caught up in a flurry of change and unfamiliarity. Two years, two very long years, which have seen us change, adapt, learn, and grow from our hardships.

Truly a stark contrast from the previous school setting, we were thrust face first into online classes due to none other than the pandemic — an uncertain time which has brought with it and highlighted many doubts, fears, and anxieties.

And with all those doubts accumulating and bottling up, with everything going on now in the world, one cannot help but feel overwhelmed. Facing life with these fears looming in the background is a weight burdensome and exhausting to carry, yet one that we unfortunately have to. Like a candle whose flame is down to its last dying flicker, we are worn out and tired over the years.

Burnout is a common problem in academic environments and it has only heightened in online classes. The continuous stream of homework and assignments has you balancing on a tightrope. One misstep may lead to another and suddenly, you find yourself stuck under an accumulation of tasks, obligations, responsibilities, all tangled up until rendered too overwhelming to tackle. Coupled with the fact that online learning relies on you doing these tasks alone (without close supervision from the teacher), you are unaccompanied by the guiding hands once customary during face to face classes, and doing schoolwork seems ever lonelier.

Indeed, we are left without any guiding hands as the many restrictions of the pandemic brings social isolation. "Being away from my friends has made me miserable and I pray every day for the pandemic to be over as soon as possible so I can finally see, talk to, and embrace my friends in person again," a Grade 10 student relays to the Makati Science Vision. The lack of face-to-face interaction with the people we care about has robbed us of comfort, happiness and just being together — during these troubled times, even the people who we can find solace in are out of reach.

Night

By Lizzie Annika I. Montemayor

I sighed exasperatedly as the eyeliner broke as I lined my eyes like my life depended on it. It was a long process from ripping my tights to painting a creepy mask. I sat on my work desk clad in all black as I waited for the call. This was the night. Yes, the night of... You guessed it!—Halloween. I was filled with giddiness and joy. It was a different kind of joy, one filled with nostalgia and connection, that was once lost after the world was struck by the pandemic.

My best friend and I like to bond over TikToks, I know, typical Gen Zs. For one, I say that this app is a lot more than what people make it out to be. As October approaches, our For You Pages were filled with nothing but Spooktober content, we were constantly sharing party ideas, and we were not covering up our enthusiasm, sending chats in uppercase letters, and sending videos every other minute. And then, we knew. It was time. It was time for us to hold our own Halloween party. And Virgos like we are, everything comes down to details, from costumes to program. If you are confused, yes you read that right, we had a “program”. When I look back, it might not just be our perfectionist tendencies that made us put that much effort into this event, it might just be our eagerness to share a meaningful moment as we have gone two years without physically seeing each other.

Now, let me put you on our plans. As we all know, pandemic, social distancing, limited meetings. Bonding with friends is now mostly, if not always, done virtually. We decided to use Discord for our video call. Discord is a convenient choice as it allows streaming, making it perfect for a movie night, which is the main part of our said program. Video conferencing apps like Zoom, Google Meet, and Discord are now more important than ever. They serve as an alternative to face-to-face meetings as they allow us to see and hear each other in real-time.

It doesn't end with that though. We decided to do Halloween slam books. We created editable files using Canva as we created a personalized slam book for each other. Canva is a graphic design platform hosted online through an app or a site. The use of programs like this has been on the rise as different modes of communication and entertainment have shifted online. Teach-

ers have been using interactive quiz apps. Businesses have focused on social media marketing. Even government registrations can now be fully accomplished through the internet. The pandemic has led people to utilize the internet as an all-around platform. This goes from our daily lives, online shopping, e-wallets, and messaging apps to special occasions such as holidays. Families even share hilarious slip-ups as they try to gather everyone through Zoom calls during Christmas celebrations.

Ingenuity and resourcefulness have been everyone's weapons in tackling this pandemic. Speaking of which, it is almost an abomination to celebrate with no costume or worse, with a boring one. So for our Halloween event, we decided on a common theme—“The Purge”. Again, this comes down to convenience, as it only calls for modern day-to-day clothes, a little bit of darkness, and bloodied makeup. Elaborate costumes are a no-go as shopping for materials may even impose a risk on our health. Our situation has conditioned us to rely more on what is already accessible due to limitations with socialization. The use of easily recognizable characters which can be curated with simple clothing is the best choice for Spooktober fans. Undergoing this preparation was not only a fun time for

me, but it has also provided me with realizations. It reminded me of, yet again, the struggles of living in a pandemic. I felt like, as I was sitting on my swivel chair that looks misplaced at the corner of our living room, in full costume, I was the striking image of the “new normal”. What was once a ridiculous image has become the norm.

Do norms only exist to be changed? Changes are mostly hard to accept and welcome, yet change is the only thing constant in our lives. In our human fragility, I see the concept of foundation that saves us from the fear of change. A lot may have changed in the pandemic but one thing has not changed, it was our connection with one another, and this is reflected by how we go through such lengths just to be able to be “with” each other. Surroundings and environments may change but those we treasure always stay. And so in the cold brought by the absence of each other's warmth. On the night of me sitting alone in a big room, I felt an embrace as I saw my friend in her scary-looking makeup on my tablet screen. In the two years of loneliness, emptiness, and darkness and what almost seems like a never-ending night, in which sunlight seems impossible, our light might just come from the comfort of warmth and embrace through our togetherness.



BEIJING 2022 WINTER OLYMPICS

Tropical PHL pins hopes on country's lone representative to Winter Games



By Mickaela A. Aspuria

The Philippines' lone athlete at the Winter Games is Filipino-American Asa Miller, who will compete in the alpine skiing men's giant slalom event on February 13 and the slalom event on February 16. While vying for gold like anybody else, Miller's goal is to improve upon his 70th place finish in giant slalom during the Pyeongchang Games four years ago.

Amid criticisms and controversies, Beijing is holding the 2022 Winter Olympics from February 4-20 after preliminary games were held last February 2, making China's capital the first city in history to have ever hosted both the Summer and Winter Games despite surrounding COVID-19 and human rights concerns.

Beijing, with its little to no natural snowfall, doesn't seem like a place you can go skiing. However, with artificial snow, this year's Olympic host is here to show that anything is possible.

The international multi-sport event with expected attendance of 91 national bodies is the second Olympics competition to have occurred during the pandemic, taking place just over six months after the 2020 Tokyo Games held last July to August 2021. It is also the second time Beijing organized the Olympic Games, 14 years after the city was home to the 2008 Summer Olympics.

This year's Winter Games is set to have 2,871 athletes participating in a record total of 109 events in 15 disciplines across seven sports, namely, skating, skiing, snowboarding, sledding, curling, biathlon, and ice hockey. For these events, Beijing 2022 is the first Winter Olympics to completely use artificial snow.

On February 10, two-time Olympic champion Yuzuru Hanyu, a crowd favorite in the men's figure skating scene, failed two jumps in his routine – first, a quadruple axel and later on, a quadruple Salchow, earning him only 283.21 points and costing his place in the free skating podium.

Hanyu, although disappointed, said that he gave it his all and has no regrets. His fellow Team Japan competitors Shoma Uno and Yuma Kagiyama claimed the bronze and silver medals respectively, while American Nathan Chen bagged gold with a staggering 332.60 points.

Two days later, three must have been the lucky number of Ayumu Hirano, who clinched gold in the men's snowboard halfpipe event where he landed the first triple cork in an Olympic competition, doing the dangerous stunt in each of his three runs. His win came after the crowd's clamor and the online outrage at the 91.75 score the judges gave his second run that placed him only in second after the 92.50 scored by Australian Scott James.

Hirano says that the anger he felt helped him focus more on his third run, where he scored a 96 and was awarded a gold medal for his groundbreaking performance. He previously won silver in the last two Winter Olympics, making him a three-time Olympic medalist snowboarder. Hirano is also the first Japanese athlete to have reaped medals three Winter Games in a row.

Meanwhile, after Russia's doping scheme got uncovered in 2019, Russian athletes have had to compete in the 2022 Winter Games under the name of the Russian Olympic Committee (ROC). Three years after tampering with laboratory data, Russia takes center stage at Beijing for yet another doping scandal.

Kamila Valieva, a 15-year-old skating prodigy originally known in this year's event as the first woman to land a quad jump in the Olympics, was revealed to have failed her drug test more than six weeks prior. Valieva and the ROC team had already won gold in the women's figure skating team contest last February 7 by the time the results came out. Her Olympic fate hangs in the balance until the Court of Arbitration for Sport decides its ruling on February 13, a day before Valieva is due to compete in the single's competition.

As for a new discipline that made its Olympic debut this year, monobob is a single-woman sled event that slid its way to the bobsleigh track during Beijing 2022. Unlike other bobsleigh events with customized sleds, monobob athletes all use the same standard sled, removing any technological advantages and placing more focus on the individual rider's skill.

Canadian-American Kaillie Humphries, who won the World Championships in both the two-woman and monobob events last 2021 and American Elana Meyers, who won the overall World Monobob Series in 2021-2022, are some of the contenders for the said addition to the Winter Olympics. Both bobsledders are representing the United States in the monobob event starting February 13.

As of February 12, Norway and Germany are neck in neck for the most gold medals, both garnering eight so far in the games. However, Norway has more medals overall with a total of 17. This is followed closely by Germany and Austria each bagging 14 medals but with Austria four gold medals behind Germany. The final medal tables and rankings can be viewed by the end of the Olympics competition on February 20.