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Catahoula Leopard dog is the new face of the Ragin' Cajuns

Joann Seow
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

As the lights dimmed at Our Lady of Lourdes Stadium during halftime of the home game Saturday against the University of South Alabama, a historical announcement was made. After a decade of being without an official mascot, the University of Louisiana at Lafayette unveiled a new face: a yet-to-be-named Catahoula Leopard dog.

As the Pride of Acadiana Marching Band, Drumline, Color Guard and feature twirler wrapped up their halftime performance, University representatives and leaders made their way onto the field.

University President Dr. Ramesh Kolluru and Student Government Association (SGA) President Emily Lamkin led the reveal, standing on each side of a veiled object propped on a stand. After an introductory video played, on a countdown, Kolluru and Lamkin lifted the veil to reveal a framed photo of the seven-week-old Catahoula Leopard puppy.

As the Catahoula was revealed, murmurs could be heard from the crowd of Ragin' Cajuns fans, with many gushing over the puppy's endearing appearance. For members of the community who have been long-time supporters of the Cajuns, watching the reveal of a new mascot sparked a reminiscence of previous mascots.

Wayne Olivier from Bonneville, a graduate of UL Lafayette 50 years ago, the University of Southwestern Louisiana at the time, said, "It's a change, we were the Bulldogs, now we're gonna be the Catahoula dogs."

Some crowd members also nodded at the cultural significance of the Catahoula. Phil from Lafayette said, "I think it's great. You've been looking for a new mascot for a number of years, we've had several, and this kind of melds in with the culture."

Native to Louisiana, the Catahoula Leopard dog has been the state's official dog since 1979, named after Catahoula Parish. The Catahoula dog developed in Louisiana's swamplands and has long been part of legends in state history.

According to a University press release, "The breed reflects the character and spirit of the place the Ragin' Cajuns call home."

Vice President for Student Success Dr. Andy J. Benoit Jr. said, "I think it's a great day for the University. We, our students, our faculty, our staff, our alumni, have wanted a mascot for years. This gives us an opportunity to represent Louisiana with the state dog, and we're all excited."

The puppy was not present at the game, but was instead introduced through a video. According to the press release, "He remains with his breeder for extensive training, including socialization, obedience and acclimation to crowds and loud noises. He will make periodic visits to campus as part of his training."

The puppy is expected to move to Lafayette in the spring, with plans to appear at a basketball game in January 2027.

Kolluru said, "In a few weeks he'll join the family of the Ragin' Cajuns, and I couldn't be more excited. I want the community to be excited. I want our students to be excited, because pretty soon he'll be walking on our campus."

The press release wrote that the puppy "has a striking blue merle coat, with silvery-gray fur splashed with charcoal and black markings." His face also "features lighter markings above his 'glass' eyes, a dark forehead and a soft gray muzzle."

One of the puppy's glass-blue eyes was featured as part of teaser campaigns that were launched on Oct. 28, which left the community curious.

The puppy's name will be left up to public vote from the five possible names selected by the University. The ballot will be open on the website louisiana.edu/mascot through Nov. 17, and the winning name will be revealed at the Nov. 21 home football game against the Coastal Carolina Chanticleers.

The shortlisted names are "Beau," "Louis," "Rex," "Roux" and "SLI," all chosen for reasons such as paying homage to either the southern Louisiana culture or the campus' heritage.

According to the press release, the new mascot initiative is being led by the Office of Communications and Marketing and the Catahoula Leopard was unanimously selected by a committee representing SGA, alumni, athletics, faculty, community stakeholders and University administration.

As the University's live mascot, the Catahoula puppy will go on to become an active member of the Ragin' Cajun community, participating in campus activities, community events and athletics traditions. A costumed mascot is set to debut in the 2027 football season.

Caroline Hutchison, a senior majoring in premedical psychology, said, "He's adorable, and I think he will really bring together like school spirit… I think it'll just bring like everyone together and like want to come to the games."

While the University welcomes a new mascot, teams will still remain the Louisiana Ragin' Cajuns.



Photo by Alyus Dick
Catahoula Leopard puppy revealed during halftime Nov. 7

Democrats gain control of Congress

Andrew Courville
NEWS WRITER

In a once-in-a-generation election, the Democratic Party gained control of both the House of Representatives and the Senate in the 2026 midterm elections on Nov. 3 as voters rejected the Trump administration's policy priorities. With less than two years until the 2028 presidential elections, both Republicans and Democrats will have to prove who can handle the country more effectively.

The Democratic Party flipped seven Senate seats, bringing their total from 47 to 54. Republicans have 44 seats, with Mississippi and Alaska still uncalled at the time of writing. The Democrats now have a stable 254-seat House majority, with the Republicans at 162 seats. 19 races have yet to be called.

By measuring the vote share for the House of Representatives, Democrats captured 58.2% of the national popular vote, a 15% swing up from the 2024 elections. University of Louisiana at Lafayette political science professor Dr. David Hughes asserted that this kind of shift hasn't happened since 1974.

Hughes said that Democrats won key voter groups, including Hispanics and white suburbanites.

Across the South, where Black voter turnout was high, Democrats outperformed the national average, with shifts of 20% to the left.

Hughes also remarked that the results are more of a rejection of Republicans and President Trump rather than a love for Democratic policies. He said, "Voters are fed up with the administration. They don't think the administration has been responsive to their priorities," such as affordability, inflation and tariffs.

The administration has instead focused on issues that did not resonate, such as military strength and White House renovations.

With their majority, Democrats have options. Hughes suggested that a careful, policy-based approach is key for Democrats to keep their progress in 2028. Both parties will be forced to negotiate moving forward to keep the government functioning.

Hughes said that Pete Hegseth will likely leave his position as Secretary of Defense, whether by firing or impeachment. Hughes also believes that although impeaching other cabinet officials is an option, Democrats will likely focus on policies, like "renewal of the Voting Rights Act… Healthcare… SNAP benefits," and tax cuts impacted by the Big Beautiful Bill.

Democrats must face the realities of internal divisions over conflicts in Ukraine, Israel and Iran, and smooth relations with allies across Latin America and Europe.

The turnover didn't stop at the national level. Democrats also flipped state legislatures and governorships. Hughes specifically mentioned Texas, Georgia and North Carolina, where districts gerrymandered for Republicans should've held for decades.

Hughes said, "I was shocked that Democrats won every statewide office in Texas," including James Talarico for Senate and Gina Hinojosa for Governor (the first Latina to hold the position), ending over 30 years of Republican dominance.

This election featured historic firsts. Keisha Lance Bottoms of Georgia will be the nation's first black female governor, while New Mexico's Deb Haaland will be the first Native American female governor in national history.

Michigan's Abdul El-Sayed will be the nation's first Muslim Senator. Amy Acton will be both the first woman and first Jewish elected governor for Ohio. New Hampshire's Chris Pappas will be the nation's first openly gay senator. The list goes on.

In Louisiana, Democrat Jamie Davis came narrowly close to winning the Louisiana Senate race against Republican Julia Letlow. Davis trailed by approximately 25,000 votes, a 1.8% difference. Louisiana hasn't sent a Democrat to the U.S. Senate since 2008.

In the 5th and 6th Congressional Districts, a Democrat and a Republican will each compete in December runoffs, narrowing down from busy general election fields.

Hughes said that these districts should be reliably Republican, but, "There is a scenario where the Democrat could win if turnout is really great for Democrats and it's really bad for Republicans."

The results were mixed on the 10 Amendments to the Louisiana constitution. All passed except for Amendments 2, 5 and 10.

Notably, Amendment 4 sets a term limit for Louisiana governors, preventing former governor John Bel Edwards from running for reelection. In-depth results are found on the Louisiana Secretary of State website.

Incumbent Don Landry will continue to serve as District Attorney for Lafayette, Vermilion and Acadia parishes, after defeating Kristian Earles by 12%.

Looking forward, Hughes believes Democrats have a significant chance at the Louisiana Governorship in 2027. Hughes said Landry "keeps putting constitutional amendments on the ballots for special elections, and they keep losing. So, Landry is already not that popular when it comes to some of his policy agenda."

The 2027 governor's race may become extremely contentious. Hughes predicts Democrats need to maintain the enthusiasm that Davis brought, and perhaps even convince Davis to run.

Contrarily, Landry needs to increase turnout for traditionally Republican blocs, such as rural, white, evangelical voters.



Photo by Chandler Thomas
Voting sign outside the Evangeline Room in the Student Union

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News

L.E.A.D's new ASPIRE conference

Gabrielle Mouton
NEWS WRITER

University of Louisiana at Lafayette's L.E.A.D Association held their first ASPIRE leadership conference last week on Nov. 7 for students from the University and from universities across the state.

The free conference featured multiple events, including speakers, interactive workshops, student presentations and a chance for students to network.

The two co-founders of L.E.A.D Association are Tafari Beard, a senior moving image arts major, and Christian Steward, a senior kinesiology major. The two started the association two years ago with the hope of giving students a space to be successful and grow into leaders. The ASPIRE conference was a way to expound upon that goal.

L.E.A.D stands for leadership, empowerment, aspiration and development, and is the foundation of the organization's mission. "We really saw the need to shine a light on aspiration," said Beard. "How much aspiration can really change the lives of so many people, and that's why we named it the ASPIRE leadership conference."

Beard and Steward felt that there was a lack of conferences held at the University. "I knew that bringing a conference for student leaders here on campus was a goal of mine," said Steward. "And once I pitched it to [Beard], and we had already created L.E.A.D Association, we knew that would be the first thing on our list."

At the conference, there were local brands and small businesses, featured speakers and rotating workshops that students could participate in. The speakers included Brandon B. Brown, an attorney and former federal state prosecutor, and Dr. Shayla Polk, executive director for the Louisiana Governor's Office of Drug Policy.

"All the speakers and students have come from connections we have made along the way," Beard said. "And we just wanted to allow them to use what they poured into us, pour into other students as well."

For Beard and Steward, the creation of L.E.A.D and the development of ASPIRE exist under the same goals and purpose. "That was us creating more and more, trying to be better and creating better spaces for students here on campus," said Steward. L.E.A.D is completely student-led and funded, so every facet of the conference came from their pockets.

"I think it's a great opportunity that we had a conference here on our campus," shared Grayson Kervin, Student Government Association treasurer, who was a part of the conference's student panel. "We don't ever really have them on our campus at UL Lafayette, so it's just really great."

Another student on the panel, senior biology major Konye Brown, added, "These panels and conferences is really awesome because you can always see yourself in somebody. We all have our own story."

ASPIRE conference is a vessel towards their greater Project ASPIRE, a plan to expand L.E.A.D association to other campuses. "We always talked about having L.E.A.D Association in other schools, but we didn't know how to make that bridge," said Beard. "Once we had the idea for ASPIRE, this was the key to allowing L.E.A.D to be planted in other universities."

Continuing the conferences and allowing students from other universities to participate brings L.E.A.D one step closer towards that goal, and eventually Beard and Steward wish to turn L.E.A.D into a non-profit and see it grow chapters not just in-state, but nationwide.





Photos by Gabrielle Mouton
Brandon Brown presenting (left); Members of the featured student panel (right)

Food Review

Priya's: Bringing India to Lafayette

Isabelle Brumley
BEAUCOUP EDITOR

Located at 4807 Johnston St., Ste L, Priya's J&J Indian Foods is a local, family-owned restaurant that specializes in South Indian cuisine. The restaurant offers a variety of dishes that feature homemade spices, fresh ingredients and traditional recipes. This restaurant has become a community staple, winning Best Indian Restaurant under Acadiana's Choice for four consecutive years, from 2023-2026. Their menu offers a variety of classic Indian dishes, including samosas, soups, salads, meat entrees, vegan entrees, biryanis and naan, along with homemade lemonades.

Samosas are a traditional Indian appetizer: a crispy pastry filled with fresh vegetables, herbs and special seasonings. Biryanis are a traditional, slow-simmered basmati rice prepared with special seasonings. Naan is a traditional Indian bread, often soft and buttery. The meat dishes include a variety of chicken and lamb options, while the vegan dishes include a variety of fresh vegetables and spices.

Priya's opened their first restaurant in 2021, after being in the Lafayette food scene since 2016. The owner, Priya Joseph, had built a following by being the first Indian woman to sell her homemade food at the Lafayette Farmers and Artisan Market. Joseph's passion for cooking began long before opening her restaurant. Growing up in India, she learned traditional recipes and cooking techniques from her grandmother that she eventually brought with her to Louisiana.

Her primary goal starting out in the food scene was to serve the community with meals that she would make for her family and to share her culture. The atmosphere of Priya's was comforting and intimate. The restaurant had only a few tables and was so small that it felt homey and welcoming. Artwork lined the walls, along with pictures of her family. My colleague and I had the pleasure of visiting this restaurant on Friday, Nov. 6. As we walked in, the owner greeted and seated us.

For our appetizer, we chose the chicken samosa. While we waited, we were given complimentary lentil soup. I have never tried lentil soup, but it was the most flavorful soup I have had. The mixture of spices gave it a rich and savory flavor. The chicken samosa was equally savory with the spices. For our entrees, we each ordered a chicken dish and naan. I ordered the chicken tikka masala, while my colleague ordered the butter chicken. When the meals arrived, I noticed they came piping hot and looked like they were made to order. Each dish also came with a side of rice and salad.

After we finished our meals, we spoke with Joseph, who said "I started in 2016 selling one variety of samosas at the [Lafayette] farmers market. Our most favorite ingredient is love. We serve with love, and we cook with love too." She recounted moving to Louisiana and starting a family while working as a vendor at the farmers market, "I used to go when my baby was like six months old… holding him with one hand and serving with the other, everyone loved it… that's when I fell in love with the community… that's where I got like so much love from the people. I have always had a love for cooking and God brought me here for this purpose."

Overall, I enjoyed my experience at Priya's. The food was absolutely amazing and it was a pleasure talking to the owner and getting to learn more about her.

If you would like to visit, Priya's is open Monday through Friday from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. and 5 p.m. to 8 p.m., on Saturdays from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. and closed on Sundays.





Photos by Ellie Schmidt
Better Butter Chicken (left); The interior of Priya's (right)

Police Reports

Compiled by Caitlyn Comeaux

Nov. 6

- At 4:24 p.m., an investigation was completed regarding damage to a 1998 white Chevrolet 1500 at the New Iberia Research Center.

Nov. 4

- At 10:08 p.m., officers were dispatched to the Student Union in reference to a fire alarm that went off due to a kitchen boiler.
- At 9:41 p.m., officers dispatched to the Recreational Sports Center after the Lafayette Parish Sheriff's Office requested assistance.
- At 1:53 p.m., officers were informed of a student who was being followed and harassed at the Student Union by someone trying to incite prostitution. The suspect was identified by officers and told to leave the area. No arrests were made.
- At 11:10 a.m., officers were dispatched to the Cypress Lake Dining Hall in reference to a fight between two students. Both students were located and arrested.

Nov. 3

- At 4:30 p.m., officers received a report that someone stole a leveling laser from the construction site at DeClouet Hall.

Nov. 2

- At 10 a.m., officers received a report from someone who stated that their Ninebot Max G2 electric scooter was stolen from in front of Oliver Hall.
- At 1:26 a.m., officers responded to a disturbance in Baker Hall. No arrests were made.

Nov. 1

- At 10:30 a.m., officers responded to a suspicious incident at Baker Hall. No arrests were made.
- At 1:47 a.m., officers were dispatched to Bonin Hall in reference to suspicious circumstances. No arrests were made.



PLEASE RECYCLE THIS NEWSPAPER

WHERE'S ALLAN?



The new mascot is so cute and I'm glad we won the game! Between you and me, Allan should be his name! Where am I?

Win a free sandwich from Roly Poly

The first UL student to recognize where The Vermilion's mascot, Allan the Alligator, was photographed on campus, and email the correct location of Allan to **TheVermilion@louisiana.edu** will receive the prize. The Vermilion will continue this contest each week until the end of the semester. Participants cannot win more than once a semester, and must be attentive to their emails.

Weather

Thursday 11/12	Friday 11/13	Saturday 11/14	Sunday 11/15	Monday 11/16	Tuesday 11/17	Wednesday 11/18
High: 74°F Low: 44°F	High: 70°F Low: 42°F	High: 66°F Low: 41°F	High: 66°F Low: 45°F	High: 70°F Low: 47°F	High: 74°F Low: 54°F	High: 77°F Low: 57°F

Isabelle Brumley
BEAUCOUP EDITOR

- Meteorologists are keeping a close eye on a developing El Niño that could become one of the strongest on record. The weather pattern is already influencing conditions across the country, contributing to unusually warm temperatures in parts of the central U.S. and heavy rainfall across portions of the South.

Sports

Going bowling: The Cajuns beat the Jaguars in narrow 29-26 win

Alyus Dick
PHOTOGRAPHY COORDINATOR

The Louisiana Ragin' Cajuns earned their sixth win of the season against the South Alabama Jaguars. With the 28-26 victory, the Cajuns extended their bowl appearance streak to nine consecutive years, the ninth-longest active streak in the Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS).

Saturday was a special tribute to United States veterans as the Cajuns held their yearly Louisiana Salutes game, recognizing those who served in the military.

The Cajuns marched their way through the tunnel donning their all-black uniforms, ready for war against the Jaguars.

The Cajuns wasted no time putting points on the board. On the opening kickoff, Cajuns running back JJ Garner returned the kick 100 yards to the house, putting the Cajuns up with only 12 seconds taken off of the clock. An extra-point kick by Tony Sterner put the Cajuns up 7-0 very early.

Both teams would exchange a punt until two minutes left in the first quarter, with Jaguars' quarterback Bishop Davenport running the ball in for a one-yard touchdown. The Cajuns would answer with an 86-yard drive in only five plays. The drive ended with a 65-yard run by Garner for a touchdown, his second of the night.

The next drive for the Jaguars only lasted three plays, but it would be their defense that tied up the game. With the Cajuns at South Alabama's 36-yard line, quarterback Lunch Winfield rolled out right looking for his tight end Caden Jensen. Unfortunately, the ball would land in the hand of Jaguars' cornerback Jaylen Moson, returning the interception all the way for a pick-six.

Winfield refused to make the same mistake when Louisiana got the ball back. He completed a 41-yard pass to Jensen on a play-action fake, followed by a 14-yard quarterback-keep run to score the Cajuns' third touchdown of the night. The Jaguars would make a field goal before the end of the half, bringing the score to 21-17 going into halftime.

The second half got off to a slow start for both teams, as they would trade punts for the first five minutes. The Cajuns' second drive of the half saw Winfield roll out right on first & 10, completing a beautiful pass to wideout Trenton Chaney near the sideline for 35 yards. The next pass Winfield threw found his other wideout Shelton Sampson Jr. in the endzone, connecting 27 yards with an accurate back-shoulder throw.

The momentum the Cajuns gained was quickly halted, as despite starting their drive at their own 11-yard line, it only took the Jaguars two plays to score a touchdown of their own. Davenport once again found the endzone using his legs against the Cajuns' defense, scoring on a 45-yard run.

After a field goal to start the fourth quarter, the Jaguars were on the verge of a comeback only trailing 28-26. Louisiana tried to put extra points on the board, but each attempt came to no avail. The first drive for the Cajuns in the fourth ended in a missed 48-yard field goal attempt. The Cajuns drained the clock heavily, as that drive lasted six minutes, giving the Jaguars the ball back with four minutes left to go in the game.

South Alabama's potential game-winning drive started gaining traction, with the Jaguars at the Cajuns' 42-yard line with two minutes left to go. On first & 10, Cajuns' linebacker Jake St. Andre sacked Davenport for an eight-yard loss. On the very next play, other linebacker Micah Johnson intercepted Davenport's pass with a minute-and-a-half left in the ballgame. The Cajuns burned out the remaining time to seal the win with a final score of 28-26.

This was a good bounce-back win after Louisiana's loss to the Southern Mississippi Golden Eagles their last time out. The Cajuns proved that they could hold and maintain a lead until the end of the game. The standout offensive player for the Cajuns this game was Garner, logging 239 all-purpose yards. Winfield also had a good game besides the interception in the first half, logging 147 yards in the air and 107 on the ground.

A clear standout on defense was St. Andre, leading the game in total tackles with nine, on top of the clutch sack in the fourth quarter. Other defensive standouts include Johnson with the game sealing interception, cornerback Brent Gordon Jr. with two pass breakups and safety Collin Jacob, who recorded eight total tackles in his first game back from injury.

The Cajuns will play their next game this Thursday on the road against the Louisiana-Monroe Warhawks. They return back home Nov. 21 to play the Coastal Carolina Chanticleers.



Photo by Alyus Dick
Tight end Caden Jensen (88) hurdles a South Alabama Jaguar defender Nov 7.

Allons

What makes "Dancing with the Stars" so culturally significant?

Kinsey Waits
ALLONS EDITOR

What do a celebrity chef, TV news reporter and professional NBA basketball player all have in common? They have all been featured as stars on the hit reality show, "Dancing with the Stars."

The show has been on air since 2005 and has since garnered millions of fans across the globe.

The show spotlights different well-known figures as they are partnered with a professional dance partner and required to learn and perform a dance each week. These dances range from traditional Latin ballroom dances like the samba to more modern styles such as contemporary.

The contest requires intense preparation from participants, since many lack a dance background. Despite the sport being incredibly technical, the show has become a defining spectacle of entertainment for the 21st century.

The origins of "Dancing with the Stars" lie across the pond in England, where a similar show by the name of "Strictly Come Dancing" captured the attention of millions of viewers according to an article published by The Independent. This show was practically identical to the version that was produced in America, and was highly successful.

According to an article published by Reuters, BBC producers workshopped the idea for "Strictly Come Dancing" to American producers, who were less than warm to the proposal.

In an interview with Reuters, ABC programming executive, John Saade said, "It was everything you feared the concept would be: fairly stiff ballroom dancing… very quaint, very cute, very British – but not a show anybody would watch."

Although they were hesitant, the executives watched the first season of "Strictly Come Dancing" when it aired in May 2004. After being thoroughly surprised with the captivating first episode, they started lobbying for ABC officials to greenlight an American version.

So, when you think about it, there was a pretty significant chance that "Dancing with the Stars" would never have been created. I, for one, am so glad that we don't live in a world where that is a reality!

Fast forward to fall of this year and "Dancing with the Stars" has skyrocketed in significance, as it is now one of the highest rated reality shows on television currently, according to an article by the Los Angeles Times.

Throughout each season, one couple is eliminated per week. The eliminations are based on a combination of the judges' scores and votes sent in by viewers. Viewers' votes engage the audience with the show even more, as they have a say in rankings of couples at the end of the season.

The 35th season of "Dancing with the Stars" has been airing since Sept. 15 of this year and has broken both viewing and voting records, according to the show's host Alfonso Ribeiro. Throughout the years the show has been on air, it has transcended the traditional scope of network television. Through the genesis of social media, the "DWTS" team has harnessed the popularity of platforms like Instagram and TikTok to promote the cast of each season.

Although each style of dance is demanding in its own way, the personal element is what attracts some viewers. Before each contestant dances, there is a media package that plays in the ballroom and on the TV program. This is a review of their week with footage of the star's rehearsals and moments from interviews. These packages give the audience a chance to see the star's personality and work ethic behind the scenes.

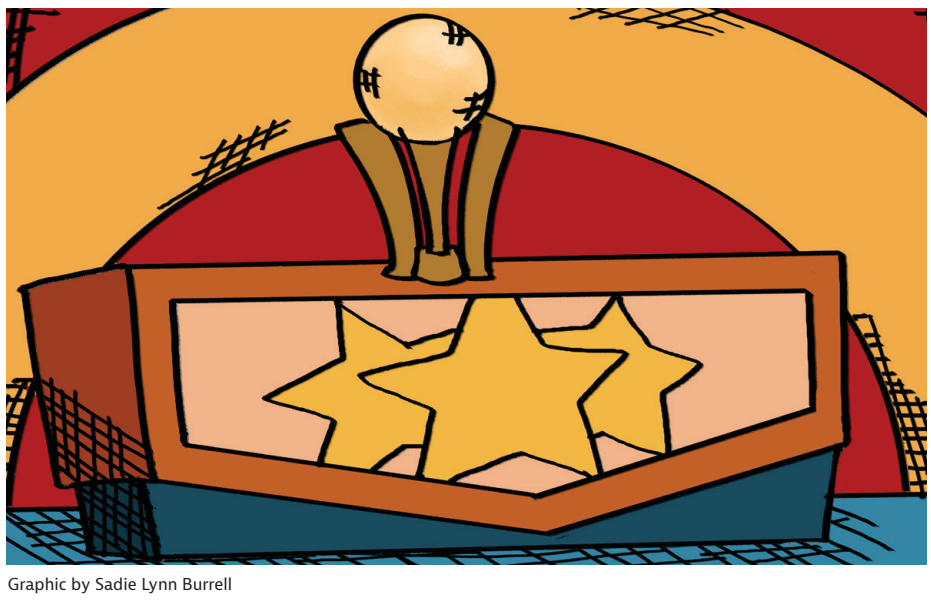
When viewers watch their favorite stars progress through the weeks, they form connections that make them want to tune into the next episode. This framework has been one of the main reasons the show has skyrocketed to popularity. The stars themselves are also to thank for the show's record-breaking numbers.

This season features a wide variety of stars. From famous actresses to an olympic athlete, "Dancing with the Stars" finds a way to connect celebrities from different walks of life through their love for dancing. The stars also find themselves in an environment that is out of their comfort zone, as many of them have little to no dance experience.

In an interview with Entertainment Now, comedian and podcast host Connor Wood said, "I have been more vulnerable on this show, on TV and with Rylee [his dance partner] than I have ever been in my entire life," in reference to the emotionally demanding performances. Although this show takes a serious amount of work from each contestant, many of them would echo this same sentiment.

As the season progresses, the couples are required to work with one another as they compete in team dances. In these dances, the contestants and their respective partners are split into two teams and required to choreograph, rehearse and perform their dances during the show for additional points.

Whether you are a long-time viewer or a new fan, "Dancing with the Stars" is a great way to spend time connecting with family and friends. Make sure you tune in each Tuesday on Disney+ and ABC at 7 p.m. Central Daylight Time and vote for your favorites!



Graphic by Sadie Lynn Burrell

Keep going or stay still? How grief is a thorn in the routine of society

Ja'lyn Braud
ALLONS WRITER

The longer I live in this world, the more regret and heart ache I'm filled with. Aching, due to the lives that are no longer present with me on this temporary island of time, and the regret due to the repercussion of the shame that takes place for never feeling like I spent enough time with them.

See, time is an interesting thing. I would argue that there is, and never will be, enough of it. It's a cruel thing if I'm honest, with its hand constantly ticking at each minute of my life. The major problem is that it doesn't allow us to stop. The sun will still rise as the moon falls, leaving no moments of pause.

Usually I wouldn't think about this as deeply as I am now, but this past month I've found myself in a rough season of grief. Within these moments, I have noticed that nobody paused, stopped or even took a break. My classes kept going, assignments were still due and meetings were still mandatory.

I don't think anyone will tell you that grief has ever been easy. However, for something that's so notoriously known for being difficult, no one really provides a sense of relief.

Unfortunately, I have been invited to my second funeral of this semester. I don't know why but, subconsciously, I think I assumed that since it had already happened once, there would be a familiarity that would keep me afloat.

Oh, how I wish that were true.

Instead, I found myself taking this grief even harder than the first time, a literal sinking of sadness was wrecking my life. Now, as I reflect on the past few weeks, I genuinely believe this is because, since that first death I experienced this semester, I have forced myself to keep up with the pace of the world. I haven't slowed down once.

When I received the call a few weeks back that my aunt had passed away, such a beautiful day had been transformed into the worst day of my life. Yet, with such thoughts in mind, not once did the world say, "I'm sorry," or stop for me to take a breath. Instead, it felt like the world had gone faster, like some messed up joke.

I was met with the 11:59 p.m. deadline again and, to no surprise, no classes or events had been canceled. There was still an obligation to keep going, and since the world had told me it wasn't going to stop, neither could I.

This thought right here is when we mess up. As soon as we fall into this cycle of routine, or "forced" tasks, we become trapped in a system that only we ourselves are programming.

Why, though? Why do we have this need to rush? To complete everything under the sun. Why haven't we fought it?

We become stressed, tired, burnt out and not once think to go against this norm.

It wasn't long before the consequences of ignoring my grief got the best of me. Towards the end of the week I had begun to completely fall apart. All my plans, the stability I thought I had, were gone and I had officially broken down.

I finally was met with mourning, but not in a healthy way. Due to my lack of stillness beforehand, I had let my grief build up so much it felt like there was no recovery. My grades started slipping, my relationships felt stale and worst of all, I was so alone, only met with the continuous grace of my sadness.

My only next step was to fall back into the program. I carefully stitched a smile onto my face and continued on with the rest of the world.

I want to tell you I have learned my lesson, that I have allowed myself to pause in the contrast of society. I yearn to tell you I have healthily mourned and processed all that I'm feeling. However, I'm forced to tell you that I don't have a guide to grief and I don't think I understand what it means to say no to the rules of time.

Grief, still to this day, has been residing in my heart, and all I've managed so far is the consistent checking things off of my to-do list. Some days have been a lot harder than others, but then there's days I forget that there are even such troubles in my life. It's weird, and I know there's some balance out there, I just need to be willing to stop for a moment and look for it.

And there's that idea of pausing again. You and I, we deserve to grieve and not be rushed by the rest of this world. Yet, we also owe it to ourselves to keep going and not trap ourselves in the darkness. I guess you can tell I'm still learning this whole thing, and frankly, I think that's where the beauty of all this lies; in our free will, with the power to learn and decide what happens next.

We're given a choice in how we live our lives, but you must make sure that, ultimately, the choice is yours, not one of this world.

If not, well, you'll be just as stuck as me in this horrid cycle.



Graphic by Ray Bardales

Reading has become a competition

Maggie Jordan
ALLONS WRITER

BookTok is a subcommunity on the social media platform TikTok where readers share their favorite books, newest reads and encourage others to engage in reading culture. Originally, the community emphasized its positive ideas.

However, as the community began to grow, its influence extended beyond encouraging people to read. Despite its positive intentions, BookTok developed into a competitive platform where the number of books read is often celebrated more than the books themselves.

BookTok has made reading much more accessible, especially to a younger audience. Instead of reading being treated as a solitary hobby, reading has become something of open discussion.

A sense of community has been created, where people can talk about their excitement around literature and connect with others who may share those sentiments.

The BookTok community has also had an impact on the publishing industry as a whole. Increased sales and industry revenue have grown significantly in recent years, showing that BookTok can be a great marketing tool for an author or publisher.

However, the same influence that allows emerging authors to gain attention can also create an increasing dependency on online popularity.

Despite the positive influences on publishing, there have been negatives as well. Trends may be prioritized over originality, with popularity overshadowing the actual quality of novels. Unrealistic expectations for future authors may be set, while unequal exposure and algorithmic favoritism are evident throughout the industry. This influence does not stop at publishers. It extends to readers, shaping their expectations of what a book should offer and how they should engage with it.

There is nothing inherently wrong about putting down a book and being unable to finish it, whether that be because of lack of enjoyment or because it begins to feel like a chore. However, BookTok sometimes encourages an immediate judgment on a book; novels may be dismissed simply because they do not follow a specific trope. Social media has made many readers less willing to engage in a book that requires patience.

A challenging read can be useful and effective, but can also create an unnecessary pressure on someone who casually reads. Because of review websites such as Goodreads, readers may begin prioritizing finishing books over truly reading and appreciating them. This idea of a yearly reading goal was not established by the BookTok community, but has been reaffirmed by it. Because of this, books become numbers that contribute to an annual goal rather than something read out of enjoyment.

BookTok seems to be full of performative readers, meaning books are read purely as an aesthetic and as a status symbol. Do you seriously believe that someone is reading 25 books a month? More than 300 a year? If that were the case, those books would have been finished in a day, a day and a half at most.

Now, consider the fact that these books are first purchased to be read. When would someone have the time for work if they're finishing an entire book in a day? That's not to say it's impossible, but it becomes unbelievable when the numbers get so high. It raises an interesting question about the purpose behind these accomplishments. When does reading stop being about enjoying a story and start becoming about having another title to add to a yearly total?

Reading for quantity over quality has a negative impact on a reader. It shifts the focus from enjoyment to achievement. It doesn't leave room for reflection and diminishes the emotional impression a novel is meant to leave on you. Furthermore, prioritizing the amount of books read may cause a casual reader to compare themselves to someone reading for bragging rights. Someone may read 50 books throughout the year and feel incredibly accomplished, then see someone post about reading hundreds.

When reading becomes a comparative competition, it will no longer be something that is enjoyable. Reading is not inherently productive, nor does it have to be. Its value isn't determined by how many books someone can finish in a set amount of time. Someone who reads five books and carries those stories with them may gain just as much, if not more, than someone who finished fifty and doesn't take the time to appreciate them.

Readers should not feel invalidated because they read less. A community should uplift all its members, regardless of their respective accomplishments. Instead, BookTok can sometimes promote borderline excessive reading habits, encouraging others to measure their own accomplishments against those of others. In doing so, the community risks undermining the enjoyment of reading which originally brought its members together.

Reading does not have to be a competition. Reading can be fun and something you genuinely look forward to instead of feeling less than because you didn't read 300 books this year. You do not have to compare yourself to performative readers and feel like the four books you read this year don't equate to enough. Do what you love in the way that you love it.

Stop letting people ruin your hobbies by turning them into a competition.



Graphic by Ray Bardales

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Beaucoup

How To Adult

The Beaucoup section writes about the things in adulthood that should be discussed more often.



Graphic by Caitlyn Comeaux

Gracelynn Guillory
NEWS WRITER

I have officially been an adult for 60 days, and I can confidently say it is nothing like I expected. Growing up, turning 18 always seemed like a milestone that would bring freedom, independence and excitement. While it does bring those things, it also comes with a lot more responsibility than I ever imagined. One of the biggest surprises is how quickly people begin treating you like an adult. Suddenly, you are expected to know how to handle situations, make important decisions and have your life somewhat figured out. People expect you to know things that nobody ever really taught you. There is no instruction manual or warning before everyone starts expecting more from you.

I am only 60 days into adulthood, and I am already realizing that growing up is a lot harder than it looks. Maybe nobody ever really has it all figured out, and that is part of being an adult.

Sadie Lynn Burrell
GRAPHICS EDITOR

I think something that we don't talk about often is the realization that there is no one who really knows all of the answers.

As we grow up, we start to realize that adults who seem so together are really just people who are trying to make it work.

Our parents don't have all of the answers; the authority figures we were told to look up to as kids often don't have our best interests at heart. The world is not run by anyone particularly clever or all-knowing; it's run by the people who were rich or lucky enough to get positions of power, who are as flawed and human as everyone else but whose mistakes hold far more dire ramifications.

However, I've also realized that, as an adult who doesn't feel cut out for it, I am not alone and find community and joy with people like me that I didn't have access to as a kid.

Ray Bardales
GRAPHIC DESIGNER

Adulthood is scary, plain and simple. A good part of university life is learning how to be an adult, mistakes and all.

I like to think I have learned a lot in the past few semesters: how to be a good roommate, how to be a bad roommate, how to cook and clean and properly do laundry in a way that will not flood the washroom.

The one thing I see nobody ever talking about is how fast time starts to go after 20.

It feels like yesterday that it was January; now it's November, and you have almost a month left of the fall semester. Next thing you know, all of your friends' birthdays fly by, your siblings get older, your animals pass away and you still feel like you haven't moved in time.

Time gets faster and it won't stop; that's what it means to be an adult.

Kinsey Waits
ALLONS EDITOR

Something that I have encountered in my early adulthood that I feel many people do not talk about is the joy that comes from discovering new passions on your own.

Throughout high school, I was very involved in my school's clubs and various extracurriculars.

I learned so much through these experiences and I'm so grateful for the opportunities they gave me. Through these outlets, I discovered my love for singing, public speaking and theater.

Since starting college, I don't have access to all the programs I used to participate in, but this has given me the opportunity to learn about new hobbies I enjoy.

For example, I have always wanted to write for a student publication and now I have that opportunity!

Cajun Crossword

Compiled by Vallen Power

No. 9

INSTRUCTIONS

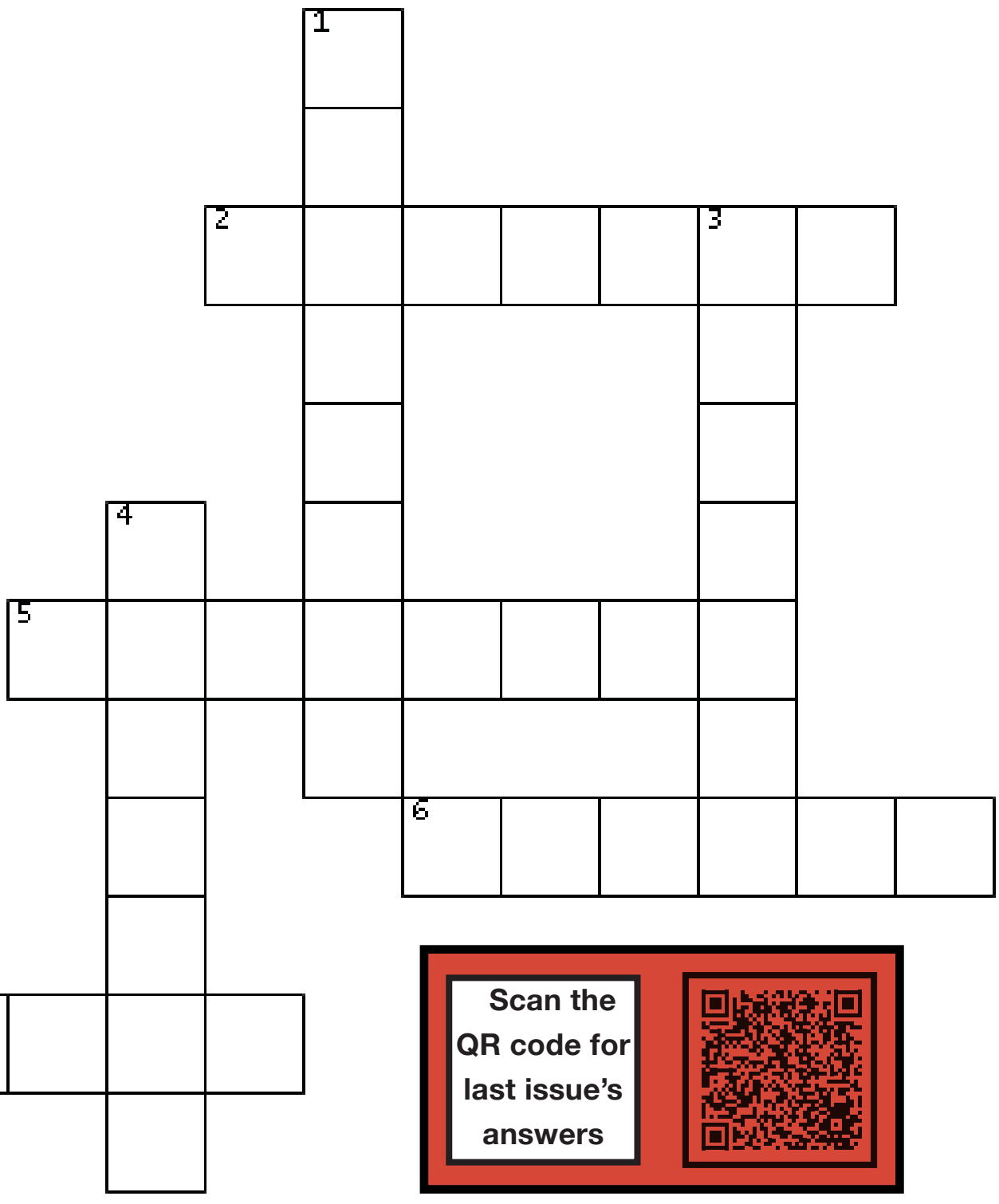
The answers can be found throughout the newspaper, so make sure to thoroughly read each story. Try to find all of them and see if you got them correct in the answers provided in the next issue's crossword search!

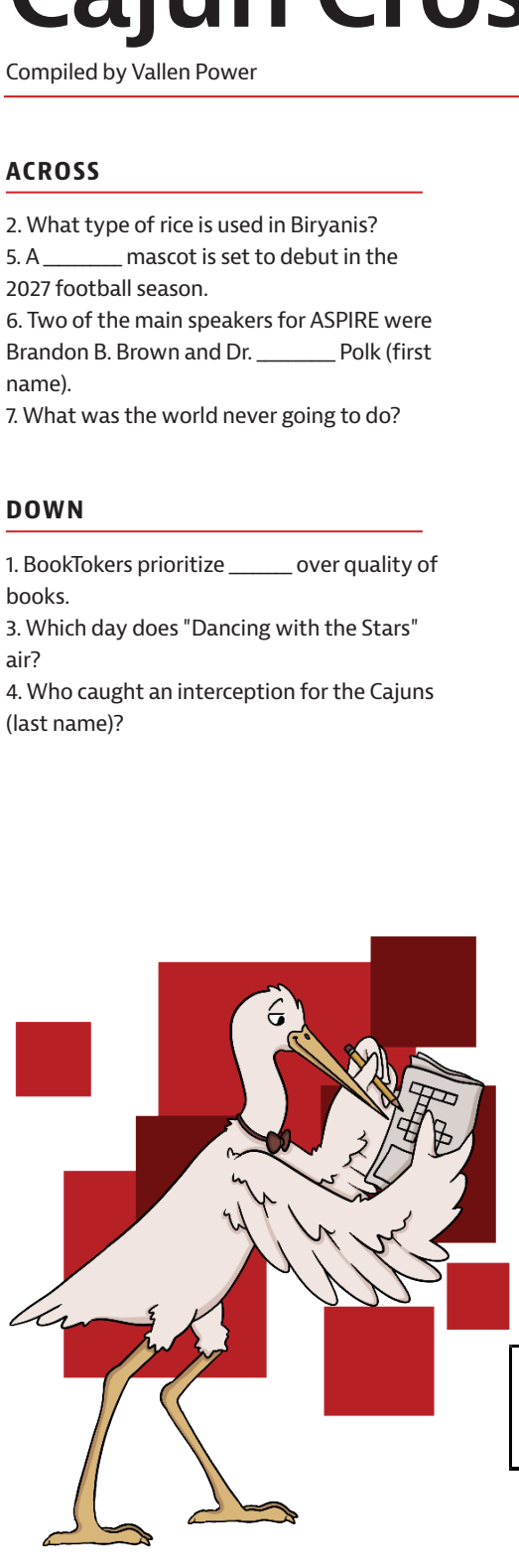
ACROSS

2. What type of rice is used in Biryanis?
5. A _____ mascot is set to debut in the 2027 football season.
6. Two of the main speakers for ASPIRE were Brandon B. Brown and Dr. _____ Polk (first name).
7. What was the world never going to do?

DOWN

1. BookTokers prioritize _____ over quality of books.
3. Which day does "Dancing with the Stars" air?
4. Who caught an interception for the Cajuns (last name)?





Scan the QR code for last issue's answers

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SOUNDING OFF

"What do you think having a mascot does for a school?"



Myjha Holmes
STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS JUNIOR

"Where I come from, anytime we had our mascot... people were always excited and hyped..."



Bryce Oubre
NURSING FRESHMAN

"Gives the school entertainment, fun at games and it gets the crowd rowdy..."



Corrine Thibodeaux
MASS COMMUNICATIONS FRESHMAN

"Mascots kind of give the community... a figure to look at, and have a collective love for..."



Naomi Pollock
DANCE FRESHMAN

"It brings the hype, and it definitely brings the school spirit to games..."



Serena Bellard
PSYCHOLOGY JUNIOR

"Provides more student engagement, it gets students more involved, it gets them excited for sports events..."



Braeden Bovie
FINANCE JUNIOR

"Having a mascot is a school's identity..."

Sounding Off is a section devoted to the voice of students.
Views expressed in Sounding Off do not reflect those of UL Lafayette administrators, faculty, staff or other students.
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Photos and interviews by Alyus Dick and Joann Seow

COMIC
Music Land



Comic by Sadie Lynn Burrell

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