

# THE SEMINOLE

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# The STARS Of The Senior CLASS

**By: Sejal Mohan  
Reporter**

As the second semester kicks off at Seminole High School (SHS), it is a crucial time for everyone. Another semester means more assignments, opportunities, and the need for summer break. Usually more tiring than the first semester, the second term leads to a deeper understanding of academic material, as well as the approaching testing season for every student to prove how much they have learned. For the seniors, however, the time for college applications- if higher-level education is desired- has arrived, along with letters shaping the futures of the graduating class for more than just the next four years. Along with these important decisions, the seniors are aware that this next step requires leaving friends and the environment we've become accustomed to. However, it also means new beginnings. Let's look at where some of the Class of 2021 are going for their next chapter in life.

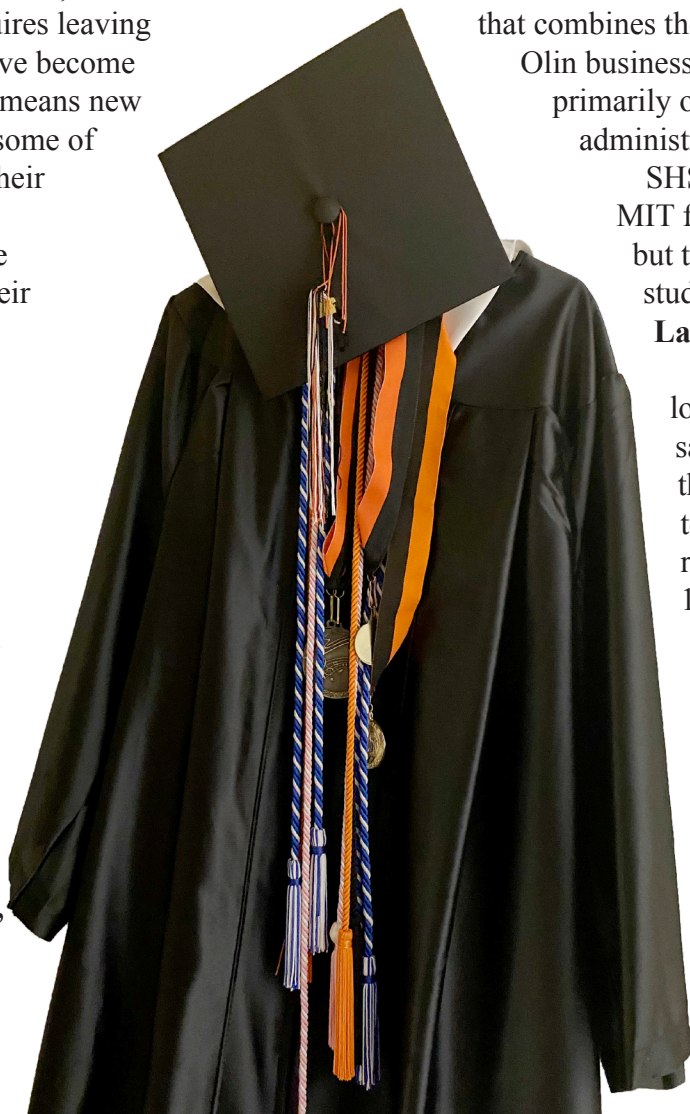
Earlier this school year, some seniors have been working on their Questbridge applications. Many students apply for Questbridge. However, only a few get considered by Questbridge schools, even fewer getting matched with one. To be matched, students need to have an exceptional academic record, satisfactory extracurriculars, and a special personal connection that makes them a good fit for certain colleges. That being said, going to college through Questbridge is difficult, and Seminole is proud of **Jordan Perez** and **Destiny Ukachukwu**, two of the students that have been matched this year. Perez has been matched with Washington University, while

Ukachukwu has been matched with Vanderbilt University.

Perez states "QuestBridge was a fantastic opportunity and I'm grateful that I got to go through the process. Knowing that I have a full scholarship to WashU is inspiring, and I'm confident that I'll make the most of it. It's transformational and I am ecstatic I got a match through Questbridge. I think I will do a lot of good things on campus and I'm excited to see what there is for me to do because from what I've seen, there's a lot of interesting things going on on campus. In the future, I want to pursue health care administration. My two passions are business and medicine, and I'd like to pursue a career that combines the two. At WashU, I am in the Olin business school, so I will be working primarily on the knowledge of business administration."

SHS has not sent a student to MIT for college for a few years, but this year, our school sends two students: **Fatema Zaman** and **Divij Lankalapalli**.

Zaman shares that "I cried. A lot. But they were happy tears. I saw the confetti and really hoped they didn't give me confetti just to say 'Congratulations! You got rejected!' After reading it over 10 times, I realized that I got into MIT. It was such a liberating feeling to get in early and delete the rest of my regular applications for other colleges. I believe MIT is a good fit for me because I really hope to work for NASA on their software for their rovers. I want to develop exploration technology that could also be used on Earth. For example, CAT scans are a product







*Pictured above: Fatema Zaman, one of the QuestBridge scholars to MIT.*

of developing space exploration technology.”

It is important to keep in mind that you don’t always have to go to an Ivy League school to have a successful and happy future. Some people don’t even need to go to college at all in order to pursue their dreams. Due to COVID-19, many students may face obstacles regarding higher education that they did not plan for, whether it be financial complications or concerns about how college will operate with the virus still spreading. That’s why the next school year may have a slightly different turnout than prior years with the number of students pursuing college. Furthermore, college is not a guarantee or a requirement for success, although it does help some people depending on their performed paths.

SHS is proud of students pursuing any form of higher education beyond high school, as well as students who choose to pick a different path. However, pursuing higher education

is very difficult, and Seminole recognizes that. SHS still knows that its students are going to accomplish great things.

As the school year draws closer to the end, all of the seniors reflect on the hard work accomplished for their future, as well as their personal experiences and growth. We all came into high school scared and excited but learned to adapt to a new environment. We had spectacular school dances, with homecoming and club banquets,

although we are upset about missing our junior and senior proms. Unlike previous senior classes, our last year of high school that was supposed to be filled with senior privileges and

exciting social events didn’t turn out as planned. All we can do is just hope for a better college experience that allows us to have more social events after the virus.

Still, high school plays a big part at the beginning of academic endeavors in regards to college, so it’s important to stay focused and try your best. Even though most applications are submitted before second-semester grades are released, colleges still keep their eye on students to make sure they don’t slack off or succumb to senioritis during their last semester. Staying on top of your work will be worth it and you’ll hopefully be able to reflect on your high school academics with pride. Congratulations to the seniors who persisted through this difficult school year and proven their ability to commit to their bright futures. Juniors, it’s your turn next!



*Pictured above are Destiny Ukachukwu and Jordan Perez, headed to Vanderbilt and Washington University (respectively).*

# COP OR DROP

# Expected 2021

# Trends

**By: Christina Davenport**  
**Reporter**

As 2020 comes to an end, the year left a significant mark on history. The COVID-19 pandemic caused panic throughout the nation and a drastic change of mandated masks across the globe. Paired with nationwide demonstrations against systemic racism, the loss of numerous celebrity icons, and a contentious election season, 2020 left many rethinking their pre-pandemic lives, as they recognized the dire need for societal change and learned to appreciate the little things. Although there is no telling whether or not 2021 will be a better year, we can still predict that some trends from 2020 will find their way into our lives once again. Here are a few trends you should know that will probably continue in 2021.

## **SOCIAL MEDIA**

The future is here, and Hollywood has no choice but to get on board. The entertainment industry will spend 2021 processing learnings from a year that challenged its core values and capacity to pivot. Diversity and inclusion will remain top of mind; 2020's reckoning with discrimination will find heightened conversations around more frequent and positive representation of marginalized groups. TikTok continues to seal its destiny as a music-industry tastemaker in an official capacity, as the success of songs and albums hinge on the platform's unique ability to spread a track like wildfire. Not to mention, the rising stars from the app who have gained more popularity and traction than most celebrities. We can definitely predict that social media will not be going away.

## **FITNESS**

The health, fitness, and wellness spaces will continue to adapt to a changing landscape that has deeply affected how we approach our own well-being. At-home workouts are getting an upgrade with versatile equipment that can be easily tucked away, like multi-use kettlebells and foldable stationary bikes. As well as digital workout sessions to help boost those who choose to stay home. In fact, as more consumers enter the fitness market, many turn to popular social media platforms to look for guidance on how to start an exercise program. Health and exercise professionals that have a strong social media presence and know-how to leverage platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, or TikTok to engage potential clients will have a distinct advantage for attracting this new business. We can start to look at fitness going into 2021 as a positive benefit for everyone. With COVID-19 vaccines rolling out, people will be focused on keeping their immune systems healthy by integrating supplements into their regimens, like vitamin D for immunity and adaptogens for energy and stress relief.

## **THRIFT SHOPPING**

In 2021, we'll see the reinvention of "shopitism." We are witnessing a collective, conscious effort to cut down on fast fashion, trend-chasing, and waste as people search for brands that do good while making them look and feel good. In the year to come, expect an even higher standard for the way brands create their products; we'll see items that are well-made, more sustainable, and able to seamlessly slide into any wardrobe. Stores like Goodwill and Plato's Closet will definitely become more





*Photo Credit: The Peak*

popularized in 2021. Overall popularity would increase in clothing categories such as upcycled fashion.

## FOOD

The food world is one that will definitely expand and evolve flavor-wise as the year goes on. Restaurants have continued to give their visitors more convenient dining options with menu QR codes and remote wait lists. It's more vital than ever to support local businesses, and consumers will order more takeout, share their recommendations on social media, and use new apps to rate restaurants' COVID-19 restrictions and cleanliness. Of course, the rise of home cooking has also already begun and international chefs are now doing live video classes to help upcoming chefs. Even Chef **Chris Scott** agrees that the expansion of live video classes could help benefit the general population.

"Since 2020 was the birth of the Zoom Cooking Class, I certainly see that continuing. But I think chefs/cooks/artisans are going to get even more creative with their content. We need to focus more on food origins—non-Eurocentric foods that should have a place at the global table and are long overdue. Focusing on ingredients from these cultures would be a breath of fresh air beyond what we already see and do over and over again," Scott said.

## CAREER

We can hope to predict that 2021 will offer us an easier way to balance our home from our social life. Those who are working from home can prepare to see more flexible work hours and routines that combine remote and in-office work. However, many people chose to work outside of the home, and with the vaccine, that may be more likely and safe in the future. In 2020, many people had gotten jobs as a way to distract from the different situations we currently live in due to the pandemic. Now, we have more skills to present for future business opportunities and an increase in our ability to adapt to what we have been given.

## TRAVELING

With the possibility of international travel being allowed, it's no doubt that in 2021, traveling will become more popular than before. Exploration already leaves the mind open to discovering new locations and taking in the scenery. With the easing of restrictions and the new releases for the vaccine, those itching to get away or reunite with long-distance family members are also looking ahead to the future, continuing to beef up their bucket lists with dream destinations like Bora Bora and saving up for those big-ticket expeditions. Once it's deemed safe to responsibly travel outside of the country, there will be no hesitation in booking those faraway vacations. Passports, get ready for some new stamps.

# THE SEARCH FOR SCHOLARSHIPS

**By: Samhitha Katuru**  
**Reporter**

It is common knowledge that higher-level education does not come cheap in the United States, and those who attend must be prepared to pay heaps of money for a University education.

“For many people, college is hard to pay for, especially since over the years, college tuition rates have only been increasing,” states IB Junior **Samantha Jayakody**.

To assist with such a feat, financial aid in the form of scholarships or grants are offered to students. With the help of these money-makers, students can take a step back and slightly relax without the burden of possible excessive student debt in the future. This is exactly the thought process of the graduating class of 2021 and current juniors.

“I do believe that scholarships are essential for students as they are financially helpful when it comes to applying for favorable colleges or universities,” expresses Junior **Kamala Sairaman**.

Scholarships offered are not only a reprieve from the burdens of possible student debt but a chance of hope for those with financial issues. The monetary aid provided is not based on gender, race, or culture, but on academic and athletic prowess, successfully offering an equal chance to those in need.

There are numerous opportunities for graduating seniors and rising juniors to earn such scholarships. College Board is a prime example of such an opportunity. The renowned non-profit organization is a bridge between students and higher-level education, connecting high school students with multiple educational possibilities. The organization itself has a scholarship program: The College Board Opportunity Scholarship program.

“This program is open to students regardless of their family income. At least half of all scholarships (over \$2 million) will be designated for students whose families earn less than \$60,000 a year. Whenever students who meet these requirements complete a step, they’ll earn an extra entry in monthly drawings for scholarships,” offers the College Board Website.

Thousands of students across the nation have been helped through this program’s grants and scholarships. The program offers a variety of scholarships, each specific to a different goal or aspect of education. For instance,

taking the PSAT allows students to unlock scholarships of different value based on their score such as the Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship (PSAT/NMSQT).

Another highly acknowledged organization offering scholarships is a Florida-based program called Bright Futures. Known for its generous grants and monetary aid, this program is an immense help to Floridian students staying in-state for college. Bright Futures funds college education for high-school students across Florida based on academic success and achievement. Anything from a respectable PSAT score to phenomenal grades or extracurricular performance is rewarded by this program. Bright Futures is a perfect option for any high-school student planning to attend college in Florida. Many SHS students have admitted that staying in-state is a possibility due to Bright Futures’ scholarships or grants.

“I do consider staying in-state as an option because of Bright Futures. It has different levels of money one can receive, so I will try my best to get what I can. I also think having Florida prepaid is a huge benefit that will hopefully help,” explains Jayakody.

However, a drawback of this program is the citizenship requirement which doesn’t allow immigrants or international students to apply for such financial aid.

Sairaman ponders that she “plans to apply for Bright Futures but is not sure if she is allowed to apply for many of the scholarships as she is an international student and not a citizen of Florida.”

For more information on the Bright Futures Scholarship Program, visit the Florida Student Scholarships Grant Programs website. The requirements for each scholarship and details of each are listed.

Other scholarships are available through community service opportunities and organizations such as The Red Cross. Being a charitable community member through extracurriculars such as that previously mentioned can make you eligible for local scholarships or grants. Many seniors of the graduating class this year were able to be matched for a renowned scholarship program known as Questbridge. All in all, the scholarships available are for the benefit of the SHS juniors and seniors. Farewell and good luck, class of 2021!



# The Questbridge Scholars of Seminole

By: Mahalla Hynes  
Reporter

Everywhere around the country people struggle to pay for college. To get around this, students can apply for scholarships to relieve some of the financial pressure associated with paying for college. Aid is especially important for middle and lower class students as college tuition rates become more expensive each year. For students meeting certain criteria, QuestBridge scholarships can be used to connect the students with leading institutions of higher education while providing financial compensation for their personal and academic achievements, taking away a majority of the economic burdens off of the shoulders of students and their families.

**Destiny Ukachukwu**, an International Bachelorette (IB) senior and QuestBridge recipient says “I think scholarships such as QuestBridge and Thrive Scholars are important because they encourage and enable minority populations to gain sufficient access to higher education. Without these such programs, I would not have ever applied to some of the nation’s top universities yet aspire to attend one. I always thought that my family would never be able to afford these schools or that I would have no chance of being admitted. These programs informed me of everything I need to know about the college application process. They inspired and encouraged me to dream big and aim higher, and for that, I am forever grateful.”

QuestBridge is an organization with the main aim to help students finance college. It is a non-profit based in California that helps low-income students across the country gain equal access to elite colleges. This helps create more equality in higher education and higher-level jobs. It matches the most exceptional low-income students and leading higher education institutions, helping future job prospects and opportunities. This also helps students become the first in their families to go to college. In fact, 70 percent of QuestBridge scholars are the first in their family to attend college. QuestBridge scholars receive full four-year college scholarships with the school they match with, making this scholarship highly competitive. Students accepted by QuestBridge can attend top colleges for free and utilize the education they gain positively.

Another QuestBridge recipient and IB senior, **Jordan Perez** says he was inspired by his parent’s hard work and his grandfather who created a new life in America after emigrating from Colombia. He also credits his guidance counselor, Mrs. Frye for walking him through the application process.

Perez said “The application process was a little daunting at first. There were a lot of components that I felt were difficult to manage, but things became very facilitated very quickly.

Once I began to ask questions, either to people I had met through QuestBridge or to my counselor, the process became more manageable and in some ways, enjoyable, as I was filled with excitement through each phase of the process to see the results.”

Ukachukwu also credits Mrs. Frye for her help but was also motivated to apply due to her personal past. Ukachukwu states, “For the first half of my life, I lived in Nigeria which is a developing country in West Africa. During my time there, my family was fortunate enough to be able to afford proper healthcare and resources to support ourselves. However, for the majority of the population, this is not the case. Many Nigerians died from common ailments because they lacked access to quality and affordable healthcare. Upon moving to the United States, I observed the quality and widespread accessibility of the healthcare system here. Though it is not perfect, it is much more developed than the healthcare system in Nigeria. This has inspired my goal of aspiring to bridge the disparity in healthcare systems across the world.”

Ukachukwu was matched with Vanderbilt University and aspires to become a neonatologist. As for Perez, he was matched with Washington University in St. Louis at the Olin school for Business. Originally he was not interested in business, but the story of his grandfather’s progress and his parents’ work inspired him to take an interest in business when applying to colleges.

When asked about how he will use his education, Perez says “In the future, I’d like to engage in health care administration. I have a strong attachment to both business and medicine, and I hope to engage in both in the future so that I can help people in any way I can through business”

All in all, these students worked extremely hard for these opportunities made possible with the QuestBridge scholarship and will continue to use their work ethic to learn and establish themselves in their careers, setting examples for future Seminole High School students just like them.



As the end of the school year approaches, seniors are getting ready to leave their highschool careers behind. For many students, college is the next step. Questbridge offers an opportunity for students (such as Jordan Perez and Destiny Ukachukwu, pictured above) a chance to embark on their journeys without the stress of expensive college fees. *Caption By Ashley Dang*



# ARTIST OF THE ISSUE



**By: Samhitha Katuru  
Reporter**

**Toni Curry**, an IB sophomore and aspiring musician, is our Artist of the Issue. Introduced to music in sixth grade, Curry found passion, relaxation, and a newfound love in the art. Music was a creative way for her to “take a breather” and loosen up from time to time. In the school band, Curry is one of the talented percussionists, playing mallet instruments, different drums, and auxiliary accompaniments. It is a well-known fact that quarantine was incredibly restricting. However, for Curry, it was also a great time to expand her passions.

“Since I had a lot of free time, over quarantine I spent a lot of time focusing on music. I worked a lot on my piano skills, but I did slack on my other instruments,” tells Curry.

Curry stresses the fact, however, that no matter how much she loves being in band, time management is critical. As a student in the IB program and the Seminole Band, Curry has to manage her time wisely.

“At an average day of band practice, we would wait to march out onto the field and then practice on field, sometimes with our instruments and sometimes without. With corona it has been different. We haven’t had any rehearsals, except for one to know where we would be for the football games. Usually practices are demanding and take time,” describes Curry.

Between the intense school program and set band practices, she needs an efficient way to do her work and maintain the motivation to keep going.

“It is really stressful to be an IB student and in band. Sometimes, I lose motivation to keep myself going. I try my best to keep a schedule each week to help me organize my homework and plan ahead. It helps me motivate myself as well,” expresses Curry.

For Curry, the challenging extracurricular always pays off in the form of her favorite moments: Friday Night Lights and Concert Performances.

However, as with all performing artists, there is always an element of stress before a big event. For Curry,

that often occurs before a football game.

“I’m always questioning myself: Are my hands in the right place? Am I on the right foot? Am I even in the right spot? It’s a lot of pressure and stress,” states Curry.

What usually grounds Curry is not just simple reassurances, but the comfort she feels when she realizes that she is not alone in her worries. Everyone on the field is a family. According to Curry, all the people you get to know are the best part of band.

“Through the four years we get to know each other, we all become a big family. We may not get along all the time, but the memories we make together are great,” says Curry.

Curry plans to stay in band for all four years, as well as continue playing percussion in college. Her future goals include expanding on piano, as she wants to become better at playing the keyed instrument. She also hopes to do solo and ensemble in high school as she had not earned any awards in high school yet due to time.

When asked to offer advice to those who plan on joining, Curry emphasizes:

“My advice to middle schoolers would be definitely join band if you enjoy music. Do not just join band just because you know people because without proper motivation, it can get really stressful. If you really have a passion for it and you really enjoy making and playing music, then this program is for you.”





# ATHLETE OF THE ISSUE



We are proud to announce **Mikayla Mahabir**, IB sophomore, as our Athlete of the Issue. Currently a varsity golfer, Mahabir is one of the few sophomores playing on the team despite only joining this current school year. She plans on playing for the rest of high school, and hopefully college, as well. She was first introduced to the sport through her family, who all play golf at their nearby golf course. Mahabir may only have started playing golf in 9th grade but has a deep appreciation for the sport. Mahabir states that golf is a difficult game, both physically and mentally challenging. For Mahabir, the hardest part of being a golfer, however, is finding the motivation to continue after a bad swing or putt.

“Finding the motivation to do my best is difficult. I know I have days I am off my game, but after every bad shot I just say ‘it could have been worse’. So, I walk it off and tell myself to do better in the next shot.” expresses Mahabir.

However, hard work and needless motivation always pay off in the end. Mahabir’s favorite moments occurred after hours of grueling training. Her favorite shots include putting from 30 feet, chipping a ball into a hole, and hitting the ball across the field through one whole game. However, she states that it is equally important to appreciate the worst shots to keep growing as a golfer.

The training for golf is approximately 12 hours a week. Mahabir and the rest of the team train for three hours on three days of the week, spending time on swings and shots to improve accuracy and gameplay. They also play a full game after usual training, totaling practice to be over ten hours. The training can sometimes conflict with Mahabir’s busy schedule as an IB student. A lot of training and much schoolwork can be overwhelming at times, so Mahabir changes her perspective. Rather than considering golf as work or training, she believes it to be a stress reliever from school and the rest of her worries. Therefore, her stress is limited and she’s able to unwind. Mahabir’s big long-term goal is improving her mental state in golf.

Mahabir quotes, “I’m already pretty positive when it comes to golf but I need to build up my confidence because a big part of playing golf is knowing and believing you can make the shot. Your mind can control how you play and it’s one of the biggest challenges.”

Her favorite part of competitive golf is meeting new people. During games or tournaments, the friendships one makes are eye-opening. Simultaneously, being able to observe different styles of golf from various people can benefit one’s game. However, before a big tournament, no matter how good the atmosphere feels, there is always that pre-game anxiety or stress. To prevent that, Mahabir tells herself that she can only do her best. At the end of the day, getting stressed will not help one’s gameplay or technique. Mahabir also believes that rather than focusing on the future, it is better to soak up the moment. The experience earned from the tournament is sometimes more important than the outcome.

“Every minute I’m playing golf is a challenge. You just have to know how to handle those challenges. Nobody helps me pick what club I’ll use next or how to hit the ball. Golf is an individual game and you learn to trust your instincts and if it goes wrong you know not to do the same thing twice. The challenge is what makes it a great game, though, because when that shot works out, it’s a great feeling,” passionately states Mahabir.

In the end, Mahabir has an inspiring attitude for many golfers when working through obstacles and accomplishing her goals. The game, challenge, and thrill all make up the difficult game of golf, and Mahabir could not love it more.







# Responsibility And The Future Of Energy

**By: Mahalla Hynes  
Reporter**

With rising sea levels and frequent, drastic weather, global warming is an ever-present problem. Despite the increasing issue of climate change, human ignorance pushes climate concerns away, leaving them for the next generation. Yet, with limited time left, these problems need to be addressed. This begins with addressing fossil fuel companies like BP and Exxon Mobil, whose impact on the environment is perilous. There has been a record in the United States of oil companies being prosecuted for wrongdoings in state courts. However, recent cases involve two main questions: should fossil fuel companies be prosecuted in federal courts, and are fossil fuel companies responsible for the economic damages caused by climate change?

The latter question harkens back to the lawsuits surrounding cigarettes in the 80s and 90s. The case uncovered that during the marketing process of cigarettes, companies knew about its addictive properties and possible affiliation with lung disease and cancer. In the 80s and 90s, cigarette companies were found to be liable for such cases, leading to the legislation of cigarette marketing, packaging, and settlements for large sums of money. Similar claims are being made about fossil fuel companies; companies reaped profit while knowing how damaging fossil fuels were to the environment.

Further, the damages that fossil fuels have caused will cost an enormous amount of money. Some of these issues lie within the basic infrastructure of many cities. The old water systems cannot handle the higher tides and increased rainfall, resulting in a backup of sewage systems and flooding. Cities cannot afford to replace or renovate these systems.

Another issue fossil fuels cause is a rise in global temperatures. In colder places where the air conditioning is not popular, ventilation units must be added to make living comfortable and safe. The rise in temperatures also causes an increase in heat strokes and other heat-related problems. Heatstroke can cause damage to vital organs-including the brain and heart, muscle breakdown, and even death. It can require nearly a full year of medical care to recover fully. The higher temperatures also tend to cause asthma attacks for those who suffer from the mentioned infliction. Aside from these two medical issues with hot temperatures, any heat-related illness or injury is serious.

Another effect of climate change is more severe storms. This was shown this year during hurricane season along the gulf coast. The Louisiana area was battered by hurricane after hurricane. Each one seemed to set in before they could even recover from the last. As climate change

progresses, this will become normal. Places affected frequently by hurricanes, like Florida, are going to be hit harder and will need to adapt to these new weather patterns. This is again going to cost money because structures will need to be rebuilt to become more durable. This is also going to affect local economies, giving communities less money to recover.

The main concern with severe storms in central Florida are trees. Large, heavy trees will fall when major storms hit, knocking down power lines and generally causing destruction. In many places, burying power lines can make recovery easy, but some will still need to hang because they cannot go over roads.

Thus, there are a plethora of reasons why something must be done about climate change. With a new administration comes new plans; The Biden administration is taking a more environmentally friendly approach to what energy supplies we use and environmental protections.

One of these changes includes rejoining the Paris Climate Accords that former President Trump left in November 2019. The Paris agreement is a treaty that was signed by 196 countries in December 2015. It laid out a plan to keep the global temperature rise below 2 degrees Celsius than pre-industrial averages. This means relatively nothing because there is not much known about what Biden will do to limit greenhouse gas emissions. Rejoining this agreement is not as controversial as people assume, as many fossil fuel companies understand the need to be a

part of this change.

One campaign promise that has much more of an impact is Biden's promise to stop leasing new land for all oil and gas pursuits. Most of its effect will occur in places like Wyoming, New Mexico, and other states with federal lands. This is only a pause for 60 days, but there is a significant push to make this permanent. Biden has also canceled development on the controversial Keystone Pipeline, which would run close to indigenous land and cause water contamination.

Many steps are being taken locally. The Orlando Utilities Commission (OUC) has a long term goal of reaching net-zero carbon emissions by 2050 and a 50% reduction by 2050. These interim goals are where all progress is being made in small ways to get to these aspirations. This includes phasing out coal, which is one of the most environmentally damaging methods to obtain energy. The commission plans to phase coal out altogether within the decade and by 2027, they will not generate power through coal. Instead, the commission will expand their use of solar and natural gas to make up the difference.

All in all, the transition away from fossil fuels is essential and happening right here in our backyard. There is hope because there is a commitment in many utility companies to change.



*Photo credits to Brian Kostiuk at <https://unsplash.com/photos/vHvaZym0qBM>*

# NEW TECHNOLOGY RELEASES

**By: Sejal Mohan  
Reporter**

During the past few months, technology continues to advance as new tech products have been released, causing mass excitement. The most popular among consumers are the iPhone 12, 12 Pro, and the Amazon Alexa Echo frames.

Apple continues to release new iPhones, with the 12 and 12 Pro released in Oct. The iPhone 12 is smaller and thinner than the past iPhones, which breaks the pattern of iPhones getting larger over the past few years. Additionally, damaging a phone screen will not pose as much of an issue as before with the new ceramic screen that has four times more protection when dropped. Not only are these new screens drop-proof, but they also protect against water damage. The cameras also have a dark mode, programmed to let in 27 times more light with the intention of taking better nighttime photos. Apple also took the time to improve the quality of portrait mode on their iPhone 12 and 12 Pro cameras. Capturing videos has been enhanced, as well, as the new products include 4K HDR with Dolby Vision. Another new feature with these iPhones is wireless charging, allowing users to charge the phone through Bluetooth as the charger attaches to the phone with a magnet. The compact frame and Bluetooth contribute to the carbon savings, as it removes unnecessary cables usually included in the iPhone packaging box. Those cables can usually be purchased separately from the iPhone and often are unused or kept as a backup, so the removal of these cables reduces the exploitation of resources needed to make them. It is estimated to reduce carbon emissions by 2 million metric tons. Cellular plans may affect the price of these phones but normally the iPhone 12 sells for \$799 while the iPhone 12 Pro goes for \$999. Overall, Apple consumers can expect to be shocked by Apple's new improvements.

**Chloe Sakr**, an International Bachelorette (IB) senior at Seminole High School (SHS), recently purchased the new iPhone 12. "I had an iPhone 8 before so I really liked the upgrade after 3 years. My new phone is a lot faster and has a lot more storage which was a really big problem for me with my old phone. I used to have to charge my old phone at least three times throughout the day, but with this phone, the battery life lasts all day."



Additionally, the release of the Alexa Echo frames allows Amazon users portable access to the information source of Alexa through a set of glasses. To get the frames, it is best to own an Alexa in your home and to have an android or iOS device, as well as an Alexa app on that device. You typically have to charge it daily, but streaming services for music may drain the battery quicker. The glasses turn on and off with a double press on the button and only respond to the voice you set. The Echo frames are glasses that can not only control the smart home like the Alexa does but can operate similar to a smartphone, as well. The glasses allow you to listen to music and podcasts, set reminders, access Siri, and control your smart home. The frames are compatible with any eyeglass prescription and are lightweight. They also direct sound to your ears and reduce the noise of others around you allowing for concentration and privacy. The Echo frames cost \$249.99 and have free shipping on the Amazon website.

Senior **Abigail Ragucci** believes that the echo frames seem unnecessary but can see the consumer appeal to the gadget. "It is probably easy to ask simple questions but using a phone or computer is more practical. But if the technology really influences your life positively, it would be worth buying," states Ragucci.

These new products are quite expensive, but the quality and advanced features they offer make them well worth their price. With new releases around the corner, technology consumers should anticipate more excitement with future releases.



# SUPPORTING SMALL BUSINESSES



**By: Christina Davenport  
Reporter**

It's been an unpredictable and disruptive year for small agencies. From moving to remote work in a matter of weeks, to sudden loss in sales; while many organizations have experienced hassle at the same time, others have found a silver lining. Whether it's a boom in efficiency and productivity, or mastering customer satisfaction and needs, every small enterprise has developed a new process from 2020 to be maintained indefinitely. Needless to say, many small business owners have a hopeful outlook on 2021.

Small businesses account for two-thirds of net job growth and 44% of U.S. economic activity, according to MIT Sloan finance professor **Jonathan Parker** and **Olivia Kim**, a Ph.D. candidate in financial economics at MIT Sloan. Further, small businesses tend to make up for a huge part of the economy and help control when it faces downturns and upturns. When a recession takes place, the downside is that small businesses are the first to cut down and reduce their spending and to lay off workers. On the upside, they are also the first ones to start hiring again, to grow when the business cycle turns around.

Seminole County, particularly the Sanford area, holds many well known small businesses. One business would be Marni's Dolce, a bakery located in Sanford. Marni's Dolce offers a large selection of individual desserts, two layer, three layer and four layer delectable cakes and cheesecakes. Despite the business only having one rural location, popularity has grown over Facebook over the wide variety of desserts. Some satisfied customers posted their favoritism for the bakery, online, including an overall five star rating. One customer, **Diego Huaranga**, a local had a few thoughts on the company.

"I thought the cake i ordered was absolutely delicious! These ladies take desserts to the next level and truly take time into what they bake. Extremely professional staff, and quality ingredients you can taste on every bite. I'd highly suggest this bakery to any one who's looking for good quality desserts." said Huaranga.

Although, just like Marni's Dolce, many other small businesses made cuts in spending during the pandemic. Small business revenue and business owners' personal

consumption both dropped around 40% in March 2020 compared to a year earlier. Even owners whose businesses didn't suffer significant revenue downturns still cut back their personal spending. Although some small businesses maintained a positive performance, owners were cautious of the virus and the potential impacts on their business, and still were not heavily spending. Such reductions in spending helped small business owners manage their finances better for future implications.

Despite the initial economic downturn of the pandemic, local businesses are slowly getting back on their feet. Particularly, with the help of "Small Business Saturday," an event to boost small business sales, popularity for such businesses is increasing. The event took place on Nov. 28 in the Historic Downtown Sanford and ever since, the sales increase in these buisnesses outweigh the harsh times at the beginning of the pandemic.

Businesses well known to locals such as: Boxelder, Washborn imports, and Wondermade are important to our communities. Small business owners put their whole lives into providing quality, personal products and services. The biggest thank you we can offer these individuals is to shop with them. This is especially true in Sanford, where the streets abound with unique offerings and amazing people. The holidays are the perfect time to show your support to your local shop owners and discover great new sources for everything you purchase.



*Photo credits to Ashley Dang*

*Several small businesses have struggled due to Covid-19, and continue to do so. One way to support these businesses is to consider shopping locally. Stop by if you can, it can make all the difference!*

