Jose Lezama, currently a 19-year-old student at Hancock, has friends, family, and is a great student. His grades never fall below a GPA of 3.0. He loves running track and enjoys activities among his friends. From a standard point of view, he seems like your everyday Joe, yet there’s something about him not everyone knows: he has autism.

Autism is a disability that affects a person’s brain that causes them to see the world a little differently. It’s often diagnosed at a young age and is a lifelong condition with no known medical solution. Autism creates difficulty in learning or socializing with others. Organizations like Autism Society of America and Autism Speaks have better improved life for people who struggle with autism. This becomes a must because it is estimated that 1 in 150 children in the United States has autism, mostly boys. It’s not certain why it happens.

Growing up, Jose has had problems staying in one home for long time. This led to difficulties in making friends and with autism it became harder to try restarting each new time. He explains there was this one incident in Mexico where he tried to be humorous among his classmates, and he licked a textbook saying that it tasted like chicken. To the other children, this was weird, and this stuck with him ever since.

A few weeks ago now in high school, there was an activity where he had to say something about himself that his list of his activities wouldn’t give away. He told the class that his list wouldn’t suggest that he had autism. The class broke into laughs, which left Jose confused since he didn’t think he said anything funny that time. This activity points out how autism is hard to notice by just a glance.
Autism From page 1

Not many can guess just by looking at Jose he has autism, and it comes to a shock when people find this out. For him it creates awkward tensions yes, but he goes onto explaining, “It’s not me,” when asked how autism plays a part in his life. It’s not easy in situations, but it doesn’t make him any less of a person.

He says, “It’s a funny aspect of life. I’ve learned to comprehend that there’s certain aspects you can laugh at. Life is just full of that.” Jose manages to learn to live with autism and is able to joke about it with friends. This has just merged to his everyday life.

However, not everyone with autism shares the same experience. Jose Porras is a 20-year-old Southwest side resident currently working, hoping to reach for college one day. His ordeal with autism is that he struggles to learn like his classmates do. Growing up in a traditional Hispanic family, they’d always lecture him about how he should do better in class and shouldn’t keep lashing out.

Yet because of autism, he wasn’t able to succeed. He often tried to no avail, to the point he gave up and only wanted to graduate barely scraping by. His family always joked about how he lacked conversation skills and how he was dumb. He’s been doing better however because of his job and his recent support from a few family members. He now has new hope and has recently gotten back into the idea of college. He now wants to be a game designer and has high hopes for himself.

Jose Lezama

Autism tends to be tricky because it has been newly diagnosed compared to other types of disabilities, abilities, and learning styles. It’s hard to find a solution and it’s even harder to understand. Recently, Sesame Street brought Julia to their world, who is their first character to have autism.

What’s Lezama’s opinion to deal with this issue? He says, “Just treat them like normal people. They’re people. They have emotion. I just want to be treated normally, like a normal person. Just because they have something different that doesn’t make them any less of person.”

Thank you for reading our school newspaper!

We’ll return next year.

Maybe we’ll see some of your writing, photography, or art in an issue. Submit.
**Whatchoo Got to Say?** A few readers’ responses

**Hancock Student Survives Cancer**

“The article is relatable to me because I knew someone with cancer and it was such a huge struggle and the impact it had on them was extremely drastic with them not being able to handle it.”

—Javier Trejo

“I believe that if you’re constantly over someone’s shoulder wondering if they’re okay, it just makes them feel like they’re not.”

—Vanessa Melendez

**Being Part of Louder than a Bomb**

“As a new student, usually most kids are shy. Deon wasn’t, this man legit took his love of poetry and made something of it.”

—Miguel Cantoran

"Poetry needs be pushed more at Hancock. It's almost like a lost art, hidden in remedial forms of art." 

— David Lomeli

“I agreed about not losing only learning because that itself is a life lesson beyond poetry.”

—Maria Martinez

**When Texting and Sexual Consent Get Misconstrued**

“Sometimes they mistake what they think a girl is saying and what the true intentions are. When I was taught about sex, this wasn’t shown or talked about.”

—Roberto Medina

“Unfortunately, sexual assault happens a lot in our society and we don’t speak up about it, not even in our school’s Sex Ed course.”

— Rafael Ramos

“Not only are my friends and many other people going through it, it seems as though it is increasing due to social media...They should also know nothing is wrong with not being ready which is why I appreciate an article written on this topic.”

—Megan Matias

**Hancock Student Gets Arrested in D.C.**

“She wasn’t causing any disturbance or criminal activity, simply standing up for herself.”

— Alberto Munguia

“Her writing highlights the fact that society and the government still need to learn to collaborate in order to express/conserve humanity.”

—Anonymous

**Life with Dogs Photos**

"I've never really seen the same amount of attention and affection for cats. I think both pets can make any person happy...unless they have allergies."

—Estephanie Espniosa

"When the author of this article said that 'without them, a slice of life would disappear for pet owners,' that's exactly what it felt like when they put her down right in front of me, my sister, and my dad. It's so heartbreaking when I get home and I don't hear any of their footsteps of excitement going towards the door." 

—Lizbeth Bahena

**Gun Violence Walkout**

“I liked how the Hancock journalists took students into consideration and what they thought about it. With this, you’re showing that students have a voice too and it’s not only teachers or administration.”

—Viviana Ordonez

“I think the article was well written because it contained quotes from several students that attend Hancock. Also, it wasn’t biased. It contained the opinions of many students.”

—Jovany Dominguez
Dealing with the Loss of a Pet  
By Joselyn Lemus

Just two months ago on the Southwest Side of Chicago, Angela Martinez went through a traumatic event -- her beloved dog died due to an animal attack. Losing her dog was the one thing she thought she’d never have to experience and has been trying to cope since. It’s been difficult for Martinez to get through this since she was there when the incident happened. “I know that I haven’t gotten over it because it still hurts. I still feel the pain and I don’t think I’ll ever get over this or ever get the images out of my head,” she explains.

Martinez has lived in the West Elsdon area for over 5 years and only had her dog Gato for 3 and a half years. One night she was out walking her dog when a loose pit bull came running towards them and attacked her dog. Gato was left in critical condition and died later that night. Martinez has been trying to find ways to overcome this loss, but she often finds herself thinking about what happened that night.

According to psychiatrist Naomi M. Smith, there is no single way to grieve and no single definition of “normal” grief. People grieve and learn to cope in different ways. Her boyfriend has been visiting animal shelters whereas she’s tried watching old videos along with looking at pictures of Gato to make herself happy and to reminisce, but she’s realized that that coping mechanism can only work for so long. “I don’t think anyone is on the same level as me. I hate to be sad when nobody else is or at least I don’t think they are. I feel foolish when I’m crying about him because I feel like people think it’s not a big deal anymore,” Martinez explains when being asked what’s been the hardest part about trying to cope.

The process of grieving and learning to cope can be hard for people because sometimes others learn to cope faster. In the article, “Grieving; Coping With A Loss Of Your Loved One,” the American Psychological Association states, “There is no ‘normal’ time period for someone to grieve.” People can grieve at different paces and take different steps. Even when it seems like someone isn’t melancholy about the situation anymore, it doesn’t necessarily mean that they’ve moved on.

Unfortunately, for Martinez, it’s been difficult because people began to belittle what happened to her. “My uncle started laughing when he asked me, ‘Where’s your dog? He died?’ I just wanted to hit him at that point because he didn’t know the story,” states Martinez. Martinez explained that although it meant nothing to him, it meant a lot to her because he was part of the family. She then explained that even if he was just a dog, he still had feelings and knew how to love.

In the article “Fourteen Myths About The Grief Process,” Bob Livingstone, a psychotherapist and a licensed clinical social worker, states the misconception that “there are specific steps in an exact order you take while working through grief and you will not be healed until you do so.” Livingstone then states, “Everyone has their own way of grieving and will do so at their own pace; not anyone else’s.” People may follow the 5 grieving steps, but they may not be in order or they may not go through each one. There’s still a chance that they’re still sad about it -- time doesn’t heal all wounds.

There is no certain way that people should cope with a loss and people don’t go through the same process even if they went through the same experience. In the article “Moving Through Loss: Addressing Grief In Our Patients,” Jane Hart, MD, states that “rarely do two people experience grief in the same way, and clinicians should be careful not to judge what types of loss should be grieved the most intensely or for the longest duration.” Judging others by the way that they’re choosing to cope won’t speed up the process or help them overcome their loss.
Marlen Martinez-Rodriguez was 25 and pregnant when she came to the United States under her student visa to study medicine. Once here, she received her G.E.D. and attended DePaul University. Having the experience of being a general nurse in Tijuana, Baja California, she began to feel her life was falling into place. She started receiving letters from different companies and hospitals, inviting her to attend conferences. She decided to attend one in hopes of landing a job as a nurse in an American hospital -- her dream.

But, the first thing they asked her was, “What is your Social Security number?” Suddenly she realized, despite her prestigious qualifications, she cannot become a nurse because of her immigration status.

Martinez and her husband were struggling to make ends meet to support their newborn baby. Both of them aren't legal citizens, so their job search gave them very few options. After her student visa had expired, they both came to the conclusion that in order to give their daughter a better life, filled with opportunities, it’s best that they stay in America.

At the end they both took up jobs at a meat factory. Nineteen years and 3 kids later, Martinez still finds herself working at a meat factory in the labeling department. She expresses the resentment she feels every time she takes her kids to the hospital in Spanish, “I see these nurses doing their jobs, and it makes me sad because I know what they're doing and how to do it, but just because of my immigration status, I can't do that.”

There are over 8 million undocumented immigrants working in the U.S. Many of them, leaving behind their occupations in order to receive better opportunities but soon face themselves with unemployment and having to take up dead-end jobs in order to make ends meet.

Still, Martinez has to cope with the fact she may never be a nurse again. “I am 43 years old, I haven't practiced medicine in 19 years. With the new technology and practices being taught, it's all too much for me now, even though this is something that I want to do,” she said.

At the end, she finds herself working from 5:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Coming home with body aches, swollen legs, and migraine headaches. “I try to look at the positives of my situation, I have a new job so I can see my kids more, and because of this, for the first time, I have insurance. Now I can go to the doctor and get my health checked out.” This is something she hasn’t done in 11 years. But, there are those who still, under D.A.C.A., can't seem to catch a break.

Maria Del Refugio Valdez-Martinez was 2 years old when she came to the U.S with her mom. According to The D.A.C.A. Population Numbers, “[As of September 4, 2017] there were 689,800 active D.A.C.A. recipients,” said Lori Robertson. Thanks to D.A.C.A., she was able to attend Wilbur Wright College.

After getting her associate’s degree in criminal justice, she applied to the police academy. Sadly, she was rejected-- because of her immigration status. “I didn't give up though. I just decided to get my Bachelor's degree [at Northeastern Illinois University] in social work because it was so flexible, and I would be able to get a job at just about everywhere,” said Valdez-Martinez.

Although some believe that immigrants are nothing but rapists and uneducated people, “The majority [of D.A.C.A. recipients] are still students and 17 percent are pursuing an advanced degree. By the contrary, most recipients of H-1B visas, [given to those who have special skills] are between 25 and 34 hold either a bachelor's degree or a master's degree,” Danielle Kurtzleben, Fact Check: Are D.A.C.A. Recipients Stealing Jobs Away From Other Americans?

Now working as a clerk for juvenile probation, she still faces limitations for other available jobs. She expresses, “My boss knows I'm overqualified for my job, but what else is there?” Valdez-Martinez, now married to her long-time boyfriend, will get her residency card and continue to build a new life in the United States. She hopes this brings her new opportunities and allows her put her degree into real use.
When Your College Plans Work Out Differently
Editorial by Alexandra Vargas

Searching for the perfect college shouldn’t be a bittersweet time for students seeking higher education. The anticipation of waiting for an acceptance letter with financial aid awards causes us to check the mailbox every day. Planning moving-in day and dorm decorations filled my mind. Opening my acceptances was exhilarating. For the first time, the last four years of hard work came full circle and it all seemed worth it for a moment.

It’s no secret that a quality college education can be expensive. Yearly tuition ranges from $20,000 - $60,000 depending on the selectivity of the college. Guidance counselors often inform students about financial aid opportunities to cover the hefty expenses. Their first comments usually include FAFSA, merit based scholarships, and MAP grants—money that does not need to be paid back. But what happens when these options still cannot make college affordable?

Some students fill out their FAFSA forms only to discover that they don’t get all the financial aid they need or expected because of their parents’ income. This leads them to search for merit scholarships, smaller scholarships with requirements, or they have to get student loans. For me, with an expected family contribution of $20,000 according to FAFSA, that would leave me about $80,000 in debt at the end of my four years at a university. With that in mind, I’m left with one option: two years in a community college with a transfer program.

Community college was never on my agenda but now it is the path I will take. With the STAR scholarship, students who have a minimum GPA of 3.0 and are at college level reading and math skills are eligible to receive a waiver for placement tests and free tuition and books for up to two years or until the completion of an associate degree at one of the City Colleges of Chicago. Despite the negative connotation, attending a city college of Chicago can save time and money for those diligently working towards a college degree.

A quality college education does not have to cost the equivalent of half a house. There are options for families who prefer to save money in order to eventually send their children to a university. Overall, it is up to the student to step up and direct their own future with practical solutions in mind.

Writing with Erasers  Poetry by Bigg Ceno (Cortez Stewart)

I write with a mentality that it’s not ready that it’s not good enough to be shown that people will react petty. Record with phones and then I freeze up like I turned into stone This setback takes me off track and makes saying statements suffering Sometimes I get nervous shut down then blame it on stuttering my progress is a sentence that stays and Doesn’t get deleted sometimes it only stays because but I really didn’t mean it sometimes a line stays because my energy’s depleted sometimes I write Less out of fear someone will question me Like they do the press like This the stuff that keeps me down keeps me depressed even right now this poem is hard to say when I write it’s too much man I contemplate will my actions without tactics come through and expose or will I persevere make it clear and write what's shown

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When I Took a Break from Technology because the Power Was Out  Editorial by Jordan Espinoza

My electricity had been shut off due to some electrical work being done in my house, and I was surprised when I tried to power on my Xbox and it didn't turn on (First World problem). After about ten minutes going by of just sitting on my floor being bored, I decided to go through my shelf. It's filled with various books that I enjoy reading ranging from Ready Player One to The Catcher in the Rye, but I noticed a stack of comics that have just been sitting there. Usually when I get the latest issue of a comic series, I'll skim through it and just set it with my other issues. This time I decided to sit down and catch up and it was an experience that I won't soon forget.

I am an avid comic book fan/collector. I tend not to read any comic books with male protagonists because for the most part they are one dimensional and have little personality, but I personally think female protagonists have the best stories. The characters who have always had compelling stories are those of the Bat-Family, particularly Batgirl and Batwoman with the occasional reads of Nightwing, Robin, and Batman.

In "The Killing Joke," Barbara Gordon -- who is Batgirl -- is shot through the stomach and damaged from the nerves in her spine and is left paralyzed from the waist down. Not being able to fight crime anymore takes a toll on her emotionally and she falls into a depression, but it is soon overcome. She realizes that although she won't be able to fight physically, she could aid her fellow crime fighters in another way, She becomes the Oracle.

As the Oracle, she aided the Batman with her computer expertise and also joined Task Force X / Suicide Squad as a part of their information unit. They're more human stories -- as well as human as a universe full of super-powered beings can be----with more levels of depth compared to an alien superhuman, an immortal mutant, a super soldier, and a man in flying suit of armor. I can't relate to those stories but stories of ordinary humans deciding to make a change in their city for the better pique my interest more.

Back to the experience: even when the power came back on, I kept reading and I finished the whole series up to now. I realized that there is a whole interesting world that was literally sitting on my shelf, but I neglected it and instead ran towards my plasma screen. I used to think that I could only entertain myself by playing video games and watching videos. Up until now that's how I spent my free time, but revisiting a pastime that I thoroughly enjoy brought so much life to a grey world that video games filled at a certain point in time. Video games were my entrance into a world where I could be and do anything. I play a lot of role playing games such as the Elder Scrolls Franchise. It may be a personal problem, but I tend to try and escape my reality as much as possible, which is the case for many who play video games.

“A survey of more than 1,000 teens found 92% of them go online daily, and 24% of them go online almost constantly,” says David Pierson, a writer for the Los Angeles Times. In the findings, they found that black and Latino teens report more frequent internet use. About 34% of black teens and 32% of Latino teens admit to going online constantly compared to a low 19% of white teens who said they go online as much. This may be due to the limited amount of activities minority teens are allowed to do outside of their homes.

Many minorities live in impoverished and dangerous neighborhoods, leaving them constricted to what's within the house. As it may be, there are still ways to entertain ourselves without the use of technology. Personally I play trading card games. I play games like Yu-Gi-Oh and Pokemon. Many friends of mine also do model building for Gundam figures.

This experience has opened my eyes and taught me to look beyond the screen in front of me. I want to explore the vinyl shops filled with dusty albums. I want to experience the nostalgic smell of an old comic book store. There is a whole world full of unknown information and I wish to see it.
The Benefits of Being an Athletic Student
Editorial by Alejandra Rubio

It’s 3:21 p.m, as I walk out of school. A rush of adrenaline goes through my body as I’m heading to the park to play soccer. As I play, I feel free, I feel light as a feather, like a bird who can soar through the wind with no fear.

Although I am exhausted from school, I’m eager to go out to play. Going into a sport, there were many things that had to change within my everyday schedule. When coming late from practices, my parents said to not continue soccer because it was just a complete waste of my time. I felt conflicted about whether to listen to my parents or follow my passion. In the end, I decided to continue with soccer because it’s something very important to me. Soccer is not only a sport to me but it’s something that helps me as an individual and it provides many other benefits.

In “10 Reasons Why High School Sports Benefit Students” by Grace Chen, we learn that “a 2002 study by the Department of Education found students who spent no time in extra-curricular activities in high school were 49% more likely to use drugs and 37% more apt to become teen parents. Just four hours in an extracurricular activity like sports each week dramatically improved those numbers.”

We build relationships with teammates, we stay fit, we become committed and confident and it will construct our self-esteem for our future.

Overall, soccer has affected my life positively in many ways. Being a student athlete has lead me to become very responsible and determined. Yes, I was challenged in the beginning to find time for all of my tasks. But in the end, I was able to manage my time and it was all worth it. I have also learned to strive to my fullest potential, no matter the obstacles. That is what soccer has taught me: to never give up. I may fall, but I have to pick myself up again. I have to bring out the inner ego in myself to win the battle.

At the end of the day, I feel proud of myself because I proved to my parents that playing a sport wasn’t going to affect me in a negative way because my character has become stronger and motivated me to continue taking on obstacles that await me.