

# FROM BARREN TO BOOMING

by [samantha licon](#)

Located off of I-10 West and Hawkins, and just seven minutes from the campus, The Fountains at Farah has brought life back to an uninhabited plot of land once the home of the Farah manufacturing plant. The new outdoor mall is now a convenient attraction for people from all around the city, including teens who shop, eat and hang out there.

Customers fill the restaurant foyer. Orders rush in and out while junior Jamie Canales helps serve the constant flow of hungry patrons at Twin Peaks. This is how it is every day for many of the new restaurants and stores at the new Fountains at Farah.

"It's always crazy," Canales said. "There's always people coming in and saying how much they love the Fountains. It makes working there so much fun because people are seeing what El Paso is turning into and how the city is improving. It makes me proud of my city."

Since its opening Nov. 8, 2013, The Fountains has been a public sensation. The new shopping center, currently with 12 restaurants and eateries and 37 stores, has been especially popular among teenagers like senior Kayla Farias.

"I go there at least once a week," Farias said. "At first I thought The Fountains was going to be a bad idea and take revenue away from Cielo Vista Mall, but it has really made the surrounding area better and it's made El Paso better."

Built on the former 600,000 square foot property where Farah Incorporated was located for

45 years, The Fountains has the media and junior Marquis Boyd questioning why popular stores are the only ones included.

"From the beginning, I thought The Fountains was going to be a good idea," Boyd said. "I just think underground-type stores would help The Fountains be more diverse."

Two tiers of restaurants and stores, six fountains, an outdoor amphitheater, a trolley system, and more than 1,100 covered parking spaces stand on 55 acres of land. It is located right across from Cielo Vista Mall, which is a 1.2 million square foot shopping center.

The Fountains is the result of a three year construction period that developer West Miller said is not yet done.

"The land that was there before was just an eyesore," Miller said. "We wanted to put something on the property to get it back in production in a positive and fun way to reignite the Cielo Vista area. We kept the name to honor the Farah family for their contributions to this city. The Fountains is still a working project and I'm excited to see how it turns out, but it has brought something very unique to El Paso."

# COATED IN school pride

by jonathan castro & jasmine tabler

Earn it. Wear it. Show it off. From athletics to academics, a letter jacket defines what you accomplished in high school. Whether you got it freshman year or your last semester as a senior, it's something to cherish. It's not your average jacket. And now because of budget cuts, it's not free.

Letterman jacket in hand, junior Matthew Salazar heads to the west side of town to have a third letter stitched onto his jacket. The newest addition, a letter for football, will accompany his other two letters for baseball and academics. Like many athletes, he didn't have to buy his jacket. That's changing as the El Paso Independent School District (EPISD) will no longer fund athletic letter jackets.

"Everyone deserves a letterman jacket, athletics or not," Salazar said, "but the change is unfair. A letterman is part of the high school experience. It's part of the memories, and the district is taking that away."

It's all about the budget, Kenneth Owen, EPISD athletic director, said. The district has been wrestling with a \$17 million deficit, so cuts had to be made. Owen said the district's cost per jacket is \$50.95. The district provided, on average, about 1,000 jackets per year to all high schools.

"We go through a budget approval process each year," Owen said. "During the budget process, the letter jacket spending was not approved. The district was assigning approximately \$50,000 for this expense. We opted to provide a letter instead of the jacket, as the district is in a tight budget year. Many

districts, local and throughout the state, no longer provide jackets to their athletes. I don't see them coming back, but you never know."

Disbelief is what freshman Nyle Tabat felt when he learned of the change. He was moved up to varsity football mid-season.

"I'd love to have a letterman jacket," he said. "I don't like the idea of not getting a jacket anymore. Moving up to varsity is an accomplishment, and the jacket is an award for that. I think it's tradition for high schools to give the letterman to the varsity players, and I think they [district] should have kept it."

On the other hand, junior Jordan Steyer says the change levels the playing field for school involvement.

"I had to pay \$3.50 to stitch my letter onto a jacket that cost my parents more than \$250," she said. "Let athletes pay for theirs too. We [academics] pay for ours and still have a letterman as part of our high school experience. I work just as hard as any athlete. My season is all year with yearbook, but a lot of athletes don't think involvement in campus organizations is worth getting a letterman for free. This change makes it fair for everyone. It should be either we all get a letterman for athletics and academics or no one gets one for free."

# SWING OF emotions

by victoria aguiar

"Despite everything that happened, like losing district, we had a great season overall. I had a lot of fun with my teammates and opponents. Even though we liked to mess around, it wasn't always just fun and games. Tennis also takes lots of practice and dedication."

-victor parra-11

Swallowing her pride, senior Vivecka Valdez didn't say a word when the Hanks Knights called out another ball. The match ended with a 10-7 loss, leaving the team third in area. Failing to make regionals was a big shock for Valdez, bigger than placing second in district.

"It was a very sad day," Valdez said. "We were all very quiet on the ride back to the school. We were more than capable of beating Hanks, and we knew that. Being a senior, I wish we would have won. It would have been nice to finish off winning regionals one more time before I graduated."

With seniors playing their last matches, players didn't expect to see their leader, Scott Spivey, coach his last Mustang team. After 27 years at the campus, Spivey suddenly left in mid-January. Ironically, he left to serve as an assistant coach at rival El Paso High. Under his leadership, his team won 16 district championships.

"I left for two reasons," he said. "I wanted to coach my son who plays for the Tigers. That has always been a dream of mine, and two, I feel like I accomplished everything there was to accomplish here on campus."

Learning everything that she could from Spivey, sophomore Jaymee Saldivar was understanding of his reasons.

"He was tough on us because he didn't want any slip-ups," Saldivar said. "For me, tennis was a good way to stay active and keep busy. I think tennis is a very unappreciated sport. Lots of people think it isn't exciting or challenging, but it actually is plenty of both."

# a change in tone

by sarah sartain

Tightened bows quiver as they settle over tuned strings. Tensions thicken the air as the musicians wait for the start of the song. When the conductor's baton reaches its first downstroke, the song begins. The musicians remain completely in sync from start to finish. Keeping the same pace as they play is vital. A song could fall apart if even one section is a hair off from the rest of the orchestra. Practice keeps music flowing during concerts.

"Our teacher, Mrs. [Amy] Jaquez, helped us a lot as a group and individually," sophomore Gabriela Pivetta said. "She showed us what we needed to really put a lot of work in and make better. We had meetings on stage to practice for performances. That way, we would know how it would sound during a concert."

With Jaquez teaching middle school orchestra the year before, she found herself embracing new perspectives that took hold as a result of teaching high school students for the first time.

"I really enjoyed it a lot," Jaquez said. "Teaching here had its own unique challenges because the ages of the students differed so much from those I previously taught. I plan on staying here for a very long time. I want to expand the program in any way that I can."

Along with a new teacher, students were faced with a number of other changes.

"We weren't used to [Jaquez's] teaching style, so that was new to us," senior Elizabeth Acuña said. "We also got new uniforms. We didn't wear the dresses that I used all three years, so that was a bit of a bummer at first. The new outfit is a lot more comfortable though, so there were also good sides to that. The cello section got a lot smaller and a lot of people left after our former teacher Ms. [Gloria] Mendoza retired, so having a smaller orchestra was different."

Though none of the musicians received perfect scores for their solo and ensemble competition pieces, students were still able to develop their skills further.

"I spent about an hour or two practicing, just on a normal day," sophomore Stephanie Flores said. "But for my solo and ensemble piece, I practiced so much more than that. I spent about two months learning how to play my piece, and it really paid off. I was the only one to make All-Region, where only 80 of 500 or so qualified out of the city. It took a lot to make it this far."

# STRENGTH and sparkle

"People think that cheer is easy, that you just need to be strong, when what you really need is a lot of practice and technique. I like showing pride in my school as opposed to just doing it for fun."

-jesus aviles-12

by sarah sartain

Noise. Waves of noise meet senior Robin Benoit's ears as she and the energetic team spirit their way onto the field. From the rustle of the metallic purple-and-gold pom-poms to the deafening crowd, a feeling of familiarity washes over her. As her third and final year of cheerleading and second as captain, Benoit has a special place in her heart for her team.

"I loved being a part of the school," Benoit said. "I got to spend all of my high school years with the girls. I love the rush that comes with performing, and the fact that I'm not in this by myself, but with the whole team. I consider us family."

Though this is the final year of Benoit's presence on the team, it also became a calling passion to new faces, from first-time freshmen to inexperienced upperclassmen. New to cheerleading, freshman Kiesen Snowfleet was also one of the team's five male cheerleaders.

"When people found out that I was a cheerleader, they seemed really surprised at first," Snowfleet said. "They never made fun of me for it though. I plan on sticking with it. I really like it."

With dedication also comes hours of practice. Team members could expect to give three hours after school to practicing and find themselves leading their own practices. As Jamie Sillas was the only coach running the show during the first semester, time between the three squads - varsity, the Mare-ettes, and junior varsity - was divided.

"It was hectic, but there never was a lack of supervision," Sillas said. "When I wasn't there, Ms. [Monica] Seymore was. I would still schedule the team's practices, but they would sometimes have to organize them, so I've noticed there was more drive and more dedication this year."

As the team's second year of competitive cheer after a four year break, dedication was essential.

"It was something new for the team, to use their skill to compete," Monica Seymore, student activities director, said. "We don't usually do that. It was a way for them to venture out into the community."