

a place of my own

There's really no place like home, but upon discovering a new place that few know about, there's a sense of freedom. So, whether it's the rocky landscape of a mountainside or the hollowness of a neighborhood tunnel, it's a place that feels new, but at the same time so familiar.

by [Jonathan Castro](#)

It's late. 2:36 a.m. to be exact. No matter that it's past curfew.

Most nights, by this time, senior Alicia Salcido would be asleep at home, but on this early spring morning, she sits at her favorite spot, about two miles from her home. She calls it 'The Circle.' She talks with her friends and enjoys a chicken sandwich.

"It was the second day of Neon Desert," she said. "When it ended, we weren't ready to go home, so we went to this spot by Radford to just hang out. It's a park I found while I was exploring."

Salcido goes exploring weekly and said she's found over 20 spots, including an underground bus that's supposedly haunted, and Three Kings Point on the westside.

Like Salcido, senior Adrian Gil found a place of his own while walking around the neighborhood.

"I needed to clear my head," he said,

"so I went out for a walk. I used to live in the Northeast. Around the corner from my house, I discovered this slope on the Franklins [Mountains] that serves as a reservoir. I actually met some guy while I was up there. He told me about his life. It was pretty cool. I have since moved back near Burges, but I still go hang out at my spot every once in a while."

Not all hangouts are located in isolated places. Sophomore Melanie Orona found her favorite place when she was five.

"By far the best place to go eat and hang out at is Whataburger," Orona said. "I always get the chicken strips. It's good food, just sensational. I like that it's a Texas thing because growing up here, it feels personal. It's good to have something that is our own. The first time I went I had the chicken strip kids meal, and I loved it. I've loved Whataburger ever since."

lunch time

Where do you and your friends like to hang out during lunch?

HELPING HAND

Determined to perfect his robot for class, senior Isaiah Leos assembles it during lunch in Noah Carrasco's room.

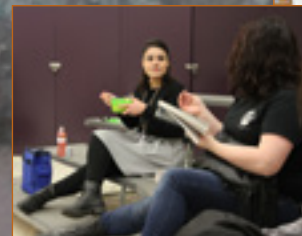
"I usually come in during lunch and work on it because I love robotics," he said. "Plus, I don't really like loud places and the classroom is quiet during lunch. It gives me time to work in peace." Leos worked on his arm for a week before finishing it.



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IN TUNE

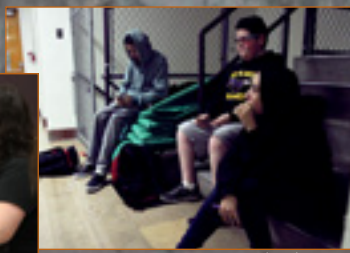
Senior Andrea Mendoza finishes her pasta while talking with friends in the choir room. "We always eat lunch in there," she said. "It's like a second home. We are so comfortable in there." Mendoza has been in choir since she was a freshman.



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DAILY SPECIAL

With his loyal lunch friend at his side, freshman Abel Medina watches a video on his cell phone while having lunch on the side of the freshman center. "Jullisa [Medina] and I eat lunch here most days," he said. "We don't really interact, but we always eat together. I come here because it is quiet and calm as opposed to the hectic cafeteria."

LUNCH BUNCH

Friends around him, freshman Matteo Flores, tells a joke after eating lunch in the band hallway. "I eat lunch there pretty much every day," he said. "I joined band in the eighth grade and I liked it so I continued into high school. Some people are into sports and they hang out at the gym or on the football field. Well, I do band so I hang out in the band hallway."

after the bell

Where do you and your friends like to go on your free time?



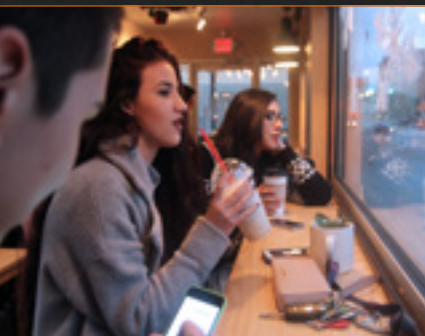
Rudee Valenciana

TEA TIME

It's another routine Friday afternoon for junior Juan Rodriguez as he sits at Tippi Tea located on the westside. "About two years ago I discovered it. Since then, I try to go once a week. The atmosphere in there is so calm. It's very hipster."



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HEAVEN ON EARTH

With her best friend, junior Jasmine Tabler shares funnel cake fries at French Fry Heaven, located on Edgemere. "They have the best fries in town," she said. "They have so many options. My favorite is the baked tater platter. I try not to go too often because I want it to be special."

BOXED IN

A white chocolate mocha in hand, senior Marissa Castillo watches people walk by at The Coffee Box, located downtown. "It's my place to go and unwind after a rough day," she said. "It's so small but there's beauty in it. In other coffee shops like Starbucks there are so many people, but here you're on your own."

tops in town

best...

PLACE TO TAKE A DATE

"Scenic Drive. It's a Sun City classic. You can go up there and look at El Paso's landscape. Plus, it's romantic and quiet."

-brian chavez -11

FROZEN YOGURT

"Menchie's because there are so many toppings to choose from. My favorite toppings are strawberries Oreos, crushed nuts and Reese's pieces."

-eric morales -10

STORE

"The best store in El Paso is H&M. They have such rad clothes, and it's new. I was so excited when they announced they were building one at Cielo Vista Mall. Now we have two."

-victor rodriguez -12

PIZZA

"Pizza Joint because I really like the crust. It's nice. It has sugar on it. It's not greasy, and it's not too salty."

-madeline ramos -11

UNDER GROUND

After a stressful day, senior Juan Grimaldo sits outside his favorite spot, the "tunnels" at Black Key Park. "I like checking out the art inside the tunnels," he said. "I even like to do some of my own art. A friend told me about these tunnels, and I thought it sounded pretty cool so I went. It's relaxing to just walk through them and listen to the silence. You can hear all the small cracks and drips of water." (photo by Jonathan Castro)