

Pumpkins, paint and a pause for midterms

By Brandon Cortes
Features Editor

Inside the Psychology Library in Engleman Hall Room D055A, tables lined with coloring sheets, paintbrushes and small orange pumpkins gave students a creative way to take a break from their midterm workloads. Psychology major, Heather Rae Gaydowen, senior and president of psychology club said that every time around midterms, psychology club likes to do something to help people. “We know stress levels are high right now, so we wanted to give students a space to relax, regulate their emotions and have a little fun before going

back to studying,” said Gaydowen. The Squash the Stress event, hosted by Psi Chi and psychology club, aimed to help students decompress through hands-on activities and a sense of community. The event, held every fall around midterms, combines fun with psychology-based approaches to stress relief. This semester, students painted pumpkins and colored designs while music played softly in the background. Snacks were also available, creating a relaxed environment that contrasted the usual mid-semester rush. The organizers said that while Squash the Stress has been held

before, this was the first time it featured an arts and crafts approach. In previous years, the club hosted presentations and discussions on stress management. “We do a mix of social events and informational ones,” said psychology major, Eily Smith, junior and vice president of the club. “Our next two events will focus on graduate school applications, but this one was designed for everyone — not just psychology majors. We wanted something laid back for people who might be overwhelmed by midterms.” By blending relaxation with peer connection, the event also highlighted the psychology club’s mission

to support students both academically and emotionally. Gaydowen said that while research-based discussions are valuable, sometimes what students need most is a casual space to unwind and connect with others. “Even something as simple as painting or coloring can be therapeutic,” Gaydowen said. “It lets your brain take a break from constant studying and gives you a creative outlet.” Students filtered in and out throughout the afternoon, chatting with friends and painting plastic pumpkins with bright colors and encouraging words. Some participants wrote positive affirmations or reminders

on their creations before taking them home. Smith said she was pleased with the turnout and hopes events like this remind students that mental health and community go hand in hand. “It’s really important to have moments like this,” Smith said. “College can be stressful, but when you can laugh, paint and just exist with other people for an hour, it makes a big difference.” Looking ahead, both leaders said psychology club plan to keep hosting events that combine fun with mental health awareness. The next few months will bring workshops focused on graduate school readiness and

professional development, but Gaydowen said she hopes to keep balancing those with more casual, inclusive gatherings open to all students. For her and Smith, that mission defines the purpose of the psychology club: creating a welcoming environment where students can support one another, learn meaningful coping strategies. Whether it is through workshops, guest speakers or simple stress-free activities, they want students to know that help — and a friendly space — are always nearby. “We all need breaks,” Gaydowen said. “Sometimes taking an hour to paint a pumpkin is exactly what your brain needs.”

Music lub strikes a chord of community

By Brandon Cortés
Features Editor

When special education major, Madison Selander, a senior, first heard about music club at the university, it was not even an official organization yet. A year later, the club has not only become official but also found its rhythm as one of the most welcoming and creative communities on campus. Selander helped lead the transition from a small, unofficial gathering to a recognized student organization that hosts jam sessions, concerts and interactive events. “I love the club, I love the community and I’ve always loved music,” Selander said. “I wanted to have as many opportunities as possible to share

my passion with the Southern community, the music department and maybe even people who didn’t know they enjoyed music as much as we do.” As vice president, Selander balances leadership with creativity. She oversees communication between members, manages the club’s social media and reaches out to other campus organizations for collaborations. Despite not being a music major herself, she said she is always found comfort and expression in song. Music club meetings take many forms. Some are casual jam sessions, where students bring instruments, join impromptu groups and create music together. Others are structured events such as Guess That Song, a team-based game

night that challenges students to identify tracks for prizes — last year’s winners took home golden kazoo. The club also ends each academic year with a concert featuring student performances, rehearsals and a full-stage celebration. Anyone can join, Selander emphasized — not just musicians or music majors. “We try to advertise that you don’t even have to be good at music,” Selander said. “You just have to love it.” That open-door policy has helped the club develop what Selander believes is its greatest strength: community. Members keep in touch through a Discord server, chatting about everything from music to daily life, sharing playlists, song

recommendations, performance ideas or just things unrelated to music. “It seems more like a group of friends who hang out under the guise of a club,” Selander said. “We’re welcome to everybody and anybody.” The club’s growth has not come without challenges. As a new organization, Selander said it has been difficult to expand visibility on campus. Most collaborations so far have come through personal connections, but she is hopeful that with each event and semester, music club’s reputation will continue to grow. When asked what music meant to her personally, Selander did not hesitate. “Music has always been where I find solace,” Selander said. “It’s what

I do when I’m stressed, happy, sad — it’s my way to think things through.” She hopes the club will offer that same refuge to others. “I want everyone who walks into Music Club to feel seen, heard and like they were able to do something they love for an hour,” Selander said. “It’s that space where you can step away from the stress of being a college student.” Though the future of the club will soon be in new hands as several executive members graduate, Selander said her goal is for the sense of belonging to remain. Passing that legacy on and ensuring the next group of leaders carries the same energy, openness and enthusiasm has become her focus in her final year.

Selander said she hopes music club continues to bring gaps across majors and experience levels, bringing together people who might never have met otherwise. She believes the club’s inclusive spirit will help it thrive long after this year’s members move on. For Selander, that diversity is what makes the club special. Each meeting brings together students who simply love listening to music. “If I could describe the music club in one word, it would be community,” Selander said. “Music gives people a home — a place where you can love what you love without fear of being judged. That’s what we are. We’re a family of people that just love music and that’s enough.”

Owls Decide: Do you prefer cake or ice cream?

By Brandon Cortés
Features Editor



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“I really love ice cream — I’m an ice cream person.”
-Communication major Matt Pumarejo, a junior



“Ice cream because It tastes better.”
-Music therapy major Taylor Wilmott, a freshman



“Ice cream because you can never go wrong with it.”
-Nursing major Nataly Pavon, a freshman



“Ice cream. I’m not really a cake person.”
-Business administration major Amber McPherson, a senior



“Ice cream. I like it because it has more variety.”
-Exercise and sports science major Zayla Morrison, a freshman



“Ice cream because it has more flavors.”
-Political science major Georgi Kirtley, a freshman