



Thursday, October 17, 2024

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EDITORIAL:
Think your vote doesn't matter? Think again.



SPORTS | B1
FOOTBALL
The Bears are back in action against Texas Tech.



A&L | B5
GIRL + GUITAR
Student musician is inspired by her Hawaiian upbringing.



Kassidy Tsikitas | Photographer

AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE America tends to go through cycles of presidential eras, broad periods of time defined by a president and their lasting impact on politics and the country's values. This November may decide if we're moving into a new era, or if the age of eras is over altogether.

Election Day will define the next presidential 'era'

OLIVIA TURNER
Arts & Life Editor

In three weeks, the next presidential "era," the overarching set of policies and values that America votes by, will be defined for the history books.

Dr. Curt Nichols, a political science professor who specializes in the presidency, supreme courts and political parties, said the reasoning behind why presidential "eras" occur is due to cycles within American politics.

"So you get these eras — you get the Jeffersonian era, the Jacksonian era, the New Deal, the Reagan Revolution," Nichols said. "You get these time periods that kind of fit together historically and create different contexts for presidents."

Nichols said that over time, these cycles have become more spaced out and that there's a good chance America is currently in a "post-cycle era." However, Nichols said he personally believes we are still in the Obama era.

Baylor political science professor Dr.

Dave Bridge recently had his students write a paper on whether or not America is still within the age of Ronald Reagan. Pittsburgh senior Luke D'Ambrosio said he thinks the age of Reagan is no longer upon us and instead, the country has entered the age of Trump.

"When Donald Trump came [onto] the scene in 2015, he really knew how to leverage social media and get fast attention and do it quickly, do it constantly," D'Ambrosio said. "Whether you like him or you don't like him, that's who has been the GOP candidate for the past three election cycles now."

On the other hand, Fairhope, Ala. senior Ann Marie Fedro said while America is out of the Reagan era, the new era is not defined by Trump. Instead, she said young generations have begun a new era not defined by a leader, with many more voters in the middle of the political spectrum than previously.

"A lot of the people in the country are moderate," Fedro said. "It's just that

the people on both sides of the extreme speak the loudest. We're seeing a lot of differences between how we vote now [versus how] our parents vote because social issues have changed our opinion on abortion [and] same-sex marriage."

Fedro said that while it's unlikely, she hopes to see more unity between parties as older members of office begin to move out.

Bridge said he has seen more pro-choice Republicans and more economically-conservative Democrats, but that there are certain qualities that each party will cling to no matter what presidential era America enters.

"One thing has held, and that is what defines the Republican Party and its tax cuts," Bridge said. "It'd be really great if we could work together, but I just think that we're incentivized not to."

While different presidential eras have historically been able to garner support

THE ERAS CAMPAIGN >> A8



Inside:

- ★ What to know about state and local races
- ★ Side-by-side policy comparisons
- ★ The big issues at the ballot box

Reject war-like politics, panel of speakers urges

MACKENZIE GRIZZARD
Staff Writer

When the shadow of Nov. 5 looms over the hearts and minds of American citizens, there is a light at the end of the tunnel — not in the next American president, but in finally waving the white flag on the political battlefield and treating each other the way Jesus intended.

Kevin Villegas, Dean of Intercultural Engagement at Baylor introduced two speakers to an audience of Baylor students in the Alexander Reading Room, searching for the intersection of Christian love and politics.

Curtis Chang is the founder of Redeeming Babel, a nonprofit "guiding Christian engagement with the broader world." Its goal, Chang says, is to pursue a "biblically faithful approach to politics."

Chang said our "war-like" behaviors concerning politics are turning us

farther away from Jesus, which reflects the turmoil so often seen. Chang warned the audience not to get too caught up in the "what" of politics like ideology and focus more on the "how," which boils down to community.

"I think for a Christian, there is no precedent in scripture to ever demonize or dehumanize the other person you're talking about," Chang said. "In the hyper-polarized media environment, the way we're trained to talk to each other is awful."

A study conducted by the PEW Research center in February found that 65% of adults in America felt "exhausted" by politics, and 55% felt angry talking about it. This polarization can only be rectified through a Christian lens,

CIVIL DISCOURSE >> A8

McLennan County District Judge race marked by party realignment, personal attacks from candidates

JOSH SIATKOWSKI
Staff Writer

Four District Judge positions will be on the McLennan County ballot on Nov. 5. Although three of these tickets contain unopposed Republicans, the race for the 19th District Court is a contested and contentious one.

Incumbent Republican Judge Thomas West, 59, faces off against Barry Johnson, 68, who became a Democrat in December 2023 before filing for election. It is safe to say that neither thinks the other is fit for office. The issue with the opposing candidate, both agree, is not a matter of political lean, but of experience and character.

Johnson — who had a long career as a civil litigator in Dallas and served as the McLennan County District Attorney from 2018-2022 — is returning to local politics by challenging West, who is in his first

term. Johnson said that much of the exigence to switch parties and run for district judge came from his perception of West's character.

"I have not seen any judges

"
I have not seen any judges with any poorer temperament or any worse character flaws...

BARRY JOHNSON | DEMOCRATIC CHALLENGER

"
You cannot move 5,000 cases with a bad temperament. I have a great temperament.

THOMAS WEST | REPUBLICAN INCUMBENT

with any poorer temperament or any worse character flaws than the incumbent in this case," Johnson said. "That's the reason I ran for election."

West, who had a long career in criminal law before becoming a

judge in 2021, said similar things of Johnson, calling his opponent "an angry man."

He also denied Johnson's claims that he has a poor temperament, saying that his efficiency as a judge disproves them. When West began his term in 2021, there was a growing backlog of 2,500 cases.

"I started with 2,500 cases in the backlog, and I get new indictments every two weeks, so that's about 6,000 [cases] in three and a half years."

Since then, West has held over 18,000 hearings and said he has reduced the backlog of cases to 800.

"You cannot move 5,000 cases with a bad temperament," West said. "I have a great temperament."

The reduction of the backlog, West said, is one of his biggest

THE RACE IS ON >> A8



Michael Aguilar | Photo Editor

TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS McLennan County has struggled with a long backlog of cases, which contributes to inefficiency in the local justice system.

GOT SOMETHING TO SAY?

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James Ellis | Cartoonist

Walz, Vance held back by running mates

JOSH SIATKOWSKI
Staff Writer



In a policy-heavy Oct. 1 debate, vice presidential candidates JD Vance and Tim Walz surprisingly found a lot of common ground. But the most glaring shared trait is they are both held back by their running mates. Being offered the job of vice president gives Vance and Walz a huge career boost.

The debate, hosted by CBS, was a perfect example of a Midwestern clash. Vance a native of Ohio and Walz of Minnesota, said as many as 10 times that they agreed with each other. All of the weighty issues — immigration, gun violence, home prices and even abortion — were met with civility. The debate, though considered to have a positive tone by 88% of viewers, also offered painful reminders that the refreshingly courteous dialogue on display last week was only a break from the current political climate.

For Vance, his weakest moment came almost undoubtedly at the end of the debate. The 40-year-old marine turned venture capitalist turned Ohio senator looked ready to close an overall solid night. He spoke fluidly, answering each question with clarity and substance and gave an educated twist to Trump's policies. However, at the end of the night, Walz turned to Vance and asked directly whether Trump lost the 2020 election.

Vance gave a dodgy response, saying he was "focused on the future." Walz got the last word, calling it a "damning non-answer."

Vance's opinion of the 2020 election's validity has been under fire recently due to a 2022 video that shows him agreeing that Trump won four years ago. In 2016, he called Trump "America's Hitler" and questioned whether he cared about the people he was running to serve. In 2020, Vance reversed his opinions as he vied for a Trump endorsement during his Ohio Senate campaign. Vance received the endorsement after admitting to Fox News that he "regretted" his prior statements.

Tim Walz is not entirely elevated by his running mate, either. The Minnesota governor had some missteps in the debate attributable to his own nervousness, like stumbling through his opening statement and struggling to answer a question about whether he was really in China during the time of the Tiananmen Square protests.

While Walz did find his footing, he too had to deal with the faults of his running mate. Maybe that challenge is best exemplified by what Vance told him early in the debate:

"Honestly, Tim, I think you've got a tough job here," Vance said. "You've got to pretend that Donald Trump didn't deliver lower inflation, which, of course, he did. And then you've simultaneously got to defend Kamala Harris' atrocious economic record."

While Walz did perform well against digs at immigration, gun control and abortion, he was clearly under-resourced for any talk of the economy — an issue many Americans care the most about.

Perhaps these two only seem held back because of the nature of the vice presidency. Walz and Vance themselves have limited impact and like all vice presidents, spend most of the campaign season acting as high-level groupies.

But the biggest disparity between these men and their running mates was that the former seemed exceptionally human. It might be the only glimpse of that humanity we get for the rest of this election, but it provides a glimmer of hope for 2028.

Ditch the tin foil: Diddy's trial sparks celebrity conspiracies

THE EDITORIAL BOARD

In the spirit of spooky season, Beyoncé had been dubbed a murderer and Kanye was the good guy all along — all of it was allegedly uncovered in the wake of rapper Sean "Diddy" Combs arrest in September.

We'll give you a little summary. Combs was arrested in September and charged with sex trafficking, racketeering and transportation to engage in prostitution. Since his arrest, more than 100 alleged victims have come forward with accusations against him. In addition to these allegations, TikTok sleuths have concocted countless conspiracy theories in conjunction with the charges.

Since the news, people have noticed his long-time friendship

with Jay-Z and Beyoncé. Conspiracists have slandered Beyoncé as the mastermind behind the deaths of Michael Jackson, Aliyah and TLC's Lisa "Left Eye" Lopez, with help from Combs and Jay-Z. The apparent proof lies in J. Cole's song "She Knows," where he references the three passed artists. To make the situation fishier, many have connected the song title with Beyoncé's maiden name, Knowles.

Now that we know Beyoncé is in actuality a stone-cold killer, let's look at some award acceptance speeches. When Adele won Album of the Year at the Grammy's in 2017, she thanked Beyoncé. The same thing happened with various, seemingly random artists who thanked Beyoncé when they received awards. The list includes Britney Spears, Lizzo, Lady Gaga

and now Jojo Siwa — yes, Jojo Siwa. As the theory goes, artists thank Beyoncé in their acceptance speeches so she will spare their lives.

If you're not done making your tin foil hat, don't worry. The conspiracy goes one step further. We all remember Taylor Swift's acceptance speech at the 2009 VMAs and Kanye West's interruption to — you guessed it — thank Beyoncé. What was in 2009 an obvious attempt to undermine a naive 19-year-old country music artist is now being dubbed a noble effort to spare Swift from Beyoncé's fury. It's a sweet sentiment, really, and we would love to think that Kanye was protecting her all along. We know TikTok loves the bad-guy-turned-good cliché.

So, there you have it. After the

arrest of Combs, Beyoncé — along with her bedazzled cowgirl boots — is a serial killer, J. Cole with his 2013 hit song is the boy who cried wolf and Kanye West is Taylor Swift's knight on his white horse.

Here's the facts of the matter: Combs was arrested because he did some horrifying things and deserves punishment. We won't go so far as to say Beyoncé is perfect (though we loved "Texas Hold 'Em"), but we also don't think she's a murderer. The bottom line is — there are hundreds of victims looking for justice in correlation with Combs' crimes. Focusing on petty conspiracies to entertain ourselves takes attention off of the bigger issue, and satirizing the situation reduces hundreds of victims' trauma to a fun dinner conversation.

Trend of the fall: an 'I Voted' sticker

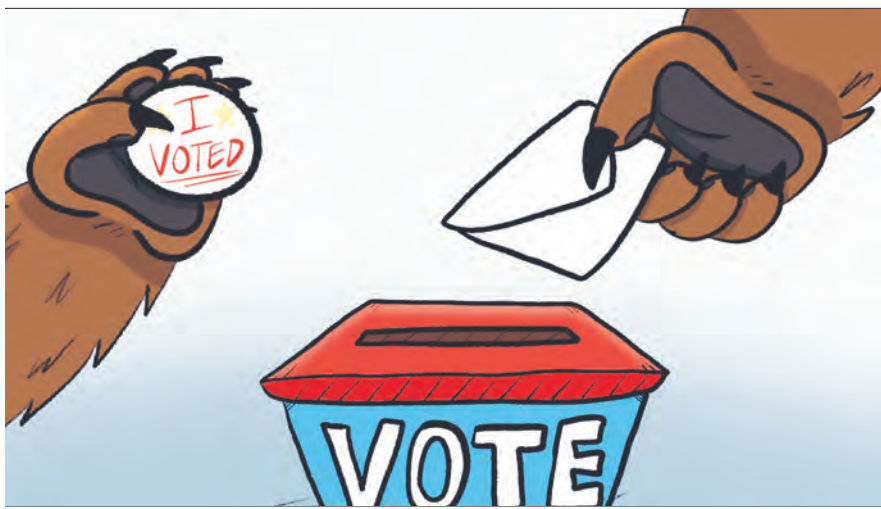
THE EDITORIAL BOARD

While a vintage 2023 census shows that 18 through 25-year-olds make up almost 15% of Texas' adult population, this age group is also known for not exercising their right to vote.

Statistics show that only 31.9% of Texas citizens between 18-24-years-old voted in the 2016 presidential election.

This number has been on the rise since then, with 43.3% of the same demographic voting in the 2020 election, but it is still significantly less than the 76.3% of voters above the age of 65 that participated in the 2020 election.

The Texas Tribune noted that student voters are not permitted to use student IDs as a form of identification and same-day, online and automatic voter registration is also not permitted. These laws pose an obstacle to out-of-state students, who registered to vote under different laws and expectations.



James Ellis | Cartoonist

Some of the most common reasons registered voters neglect to participate in elections is because they either feel that their vote doesn't matter or they haven't researched candidates and learned about the election.

There are countless places to educate yourself on the upcoming election. Whether it's going to a trusted political science professor here at Baylor, reading from a news outlet you trust or discussing politics with people around you, you can start to feel out what you believe

and value and match it with a candidate.

Your voice does matter — even if you feel like it doesn't. If you didn't register to vote, that doesn't mean you can't be involved. Continue to have conversations about local and federal laws with people who converse in respectful dialogue. In a political climate that has never been more polarizing, you don't have to be. Start by asking questions to people that you don't

agreewith. You'll probably have more in common than you think.

Election Day is Tuesday, Nov. 5 and The Hurd will be open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. for students to cast their vote. Baylor will provide shuttles during the day to additional polling sites in Waco. Early voting begins on Oct. 21 through Nov. 1. Students who are not registered to vote in McLennan County may apply for a mail-in ballot from their county of residence.

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Railroad Commissioner candidates to introduce new energy policies, not railroad regulations

RORY DULOCK
Staff Writer

Candidates from the republican, democratic, libertarian and green parties are all hoping to have the edge in the Railroad Commissioner race on Election Day.

Despite its name, the Railroad Commission actually has nothing to do with railroad regulations anymore. The commission no longer has authority over railroads in Texas since the remaining jurisdiction was transferred to the Texas Department of Transportation in 2005.

“Our mission is to serve Texas by our stewardship of natural resources and the environment, our concern for personal and community safety, and our support of enhanced development and economic vitality for the benefit of Texans,” the website reads.

The current three commissioners are Republican Chairman Christi Craddick, Republican Commissioner Wayne Christian and Republican Commissioner Jim Wright. Each term is six years long, and every two years there is a reelection for Railroad Commissioner. The candidates seeking the open Railroad Commissioner slot are Craddick, Democratic candidate Katherine Culbert, Green Party candidate Eddie Espinoza, Libertarian Hawk Dunlap and Richard McKibbin, a write-in candidate.

Christi Craddick (R) (Incumbent)



Craddick was first appointed commissioner back in 2012. She said via email that the main regulations she would push for if re-elected are ones that support Texas’ energy independence and rights.

According to Craddick, other important goals include providing consistent regulation to allow industry to innovate and develop new technologies. She said she aims to protect Texans’ health, safety and private property rights through these initiatives.

Craddick said during her past two terms as Railroad Commissioner, she considers the efficiency of her agency to be her biggest accomplishment.

“Ensuring the agency can serve the people of Texas in a timely, efficient and effective manner is a top priority,” Craddick said. “Under my leadership, we have overhauled the agency’s IT system, which has reduced permitting times significantly, in some cases allowing operators to receive a permit within 48 hours. In contrast, many federal permits can take over 12 months.”

Craddick said she understands and promotes “science-based regulation that fosters innovation and growth in the energy sector, while upholding the mission of the Railroad Commission to protect personal and environmental safety.”

“It’s vital that we continue to have experienced leadership in what is one of the most critical statewide offices,” Craddick said. “The Railroad Commission has regulatory oversight of an industry that is essential to the state’s prosperity and the nation’s security.”

Katherine Culbert (D)



Culbert said some specific regulations and policies she would push for if elected is try to change the name of the Railroad Commission, push for transparency within the agency and address the language justice issues within the commission.

“The railroad commission deals with a lot of oil and gas operations and a lot of the operations happen in communities where English is not the first language,” Culbert said. “Everything that is produced by the Railroad

Commission to communicate to residents, most of it is published only in English. They have started doing a couple things in Spanish, but we really need to expand that language with justice and really allow all our communities to be informed and to know what’s going on and how these decisions are affecting their lives.”

The commission just needs to enforce a lot of the regulations that are already in place, not necessarily add new regulations, Culbert said. According to Culbert, the Railroad Commission has had over 8,000 requests for flaring and venting exceptions since 2021, and the commission has approved all but 44 of them.

“We just need to enforce the rules we have on the books and make sure that these companies are doing the right thing,” Culbert said. “We really need a strong regulator that’s going to hold these companies accountable and not just give them a free pass and let them do whatever they want with our state.”

Eddie Espinoza (G)

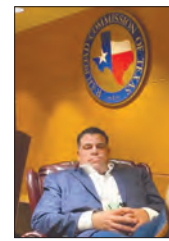


According to Espinoza’s campaign website, his action

plan includes cleaning up and phasing out the fossil fuel industry, protecting water, renaming the Railroad Commission, prioritizing lowering energy costs for Texans, stopping oil and gas bailouts, transparency and campaign finance reform.

“The Texas Railroad Commission can help Texas achieve affordable and sustainable energy independence by working towards 100% renewable energy and utility-scale batteries,” Espinoza stated. “Texas families need a railroad commissioner who will strongly advocate to cap orphaned, zombie and unplugged idle oil and gas wells. Our Texas environment needs a commissioner who will ban fracking and call for the transition of fossil fuel jobs away from drilling to plugging and cleanup.”

Hawk Dunlap (L)



According to Dunlap’s campaign website, he knows the need for reform especially in plugging wells effectively to prevent groundwater

contamination, blowouts and “zombie wells.”

“These problems not only endanger public health and the environment but also undermine the integrity of our energy industry,” Dunlap said. “With [my] leadership, the commission can enforce stricter regulations, improve well-plugging procedures and ensure accountability, thereby protecting Texas’ resources and communities.”

Richard McKibbin (Write-in)



McKibbin is running as the American Solidarity Party candidate as a write-in. According to his campaign Facebook account, he said his candidacy “offers voters an opportunity to exercise their conscience.”

“As a write-in candidate for Railroad Commissioner, endorsed by the American Solidarity Party, I represent a small yet growing pro-life organization grounded in Catholic social teaching and reformed Christian principles, welcoming individuals from diverse faith backgrounds and secular advocates,” the website states.

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OUR NONPARTISAN VOTING RIGHTS EXPERTS ARE STANDING BY TO HELP!





SPRINT TO THE FINISH With only a few weeks left in the race, Sen. Ted Cruz and congressman Colin Allred met Tuesday in Dallas for the only debate of the campaign. During, they went head to head on immigration, abortion, the Middle East and more.

Cruz, Allred tussle over immigration, abortion

EMMA WEIDMANN
Editor-in-Chief

The Tuesday night debate between Sen. Ted Cruz and congressman Colin Allred was the first and only between the two, but it touched on what the moderators named the two biggest issues for Texans this election: abortion and immigration.

"I agree with the United States Supreme Court that under our constitution the way we resolve questions like [abortion], questions on which we have real and genuine disagreements, is at the ballot box, is voting," Cruz said on stage in the WFAA studio in Dallas.

On the topic of abortion, many Texans fall in different camps. In 2023, The Pew Research Center reported that in states where abortion is prohibited, 43% of adults say it should be easier to obtain, and 62% of Americans think it should be legal in all or most cases.

Cruz and Allred are at odds on the topic, as Allred, a Baylor alumnus, has strongly opposed the 2022 Dobbs decision that overturned Roe v. Wade. On the other hand, Cruz has taken a much more anti-abortion stance, co-authoring an amicus brief to the Supreme Court in 2021, urging the justices to overrule Roe and Casey v. Planned Parenthood. In the debate, he sidestepped

questions about whether or not he supports exceptions for rape or incest with a simple, "Why do you keep asking?"

After a short verbal scuffle on the debate stage, the moderators moved the candidates to an equally divisive topic: immigration. Cruz has long been a proponent of former President Trump's border wall, while Allred downplayed the issue as a "right-wing echo chamber" in 2022. However, Allred has run a campaign largely focused on stricter border protections while Cruz voted against a bipartisan border bill that sought to secure an emergency supplemental allowance of billions of dollars for border security and combating fentanyl trafficking.

Dr. Felipe Hinojosa, endowed chair in Latin America and professor of history at Baylor, said candidates have figured out how to use the border for "bumper stickers" and campaign energy. However, Hinojosa said politicians' rhetoric has become dehumanizing and misses the heart of the issue.

"The language that they're using... which has just sort of painted all immigrants that are coming here as a threat to the nation... those sort of sound bites are, I think, what Trump and others have realized work in an election cycle," Hinojosa said.

Though he takes issue with Republicans'

language when dealing with immigration, Hinojosa also took aim at Allred's approach.

"I think the Democratic Party is not innocent in any of this," Hinojosa said. "They have responded to polling data they're seeing and how Americans seem to see this immigration issue as a major threat without speaking into the economic benefit, without speaking into the fact that immigrants have always been a plus in American society, without speaking into the fact that study after study has shown that wages do not decrease with an increase in immigrants."

Both issues are on the ballot on Election Day, as Cruz and Allred promise to deliver very different results in the Senate throughout the six-year term.

At his campaign stop in Waco in August, Cruz promised to "Keep Texas Texas." Meanwhile, on the debate stage Tuesday night, Allred told Texans "we don't have to be embarrassed by our senator. We can get a new one."

The Texas Tribune reports that last month, Allred pulled ahead in a statewide poll for the first time, and the latest numbers from pollster 538 have Cruz leading by only four points.

On Nov. 5, only one can prevail, but there's no clear prediction now of who that will be as the race remains nail-bitingly close.

POLICY BATTLE: Donald Trump vs Kamala Harris

Close U.S.-Mexico border, enact the "largest deportation" in U.S. history

No tax on tips

Defend the right to mine bitcoin

Send astronauts to the moon and Mars, develop assets and real estate in space

Prohibit China from buying American land, prevent importation of Chinese vehicles

Ban companies that outsource labor from doing business with federal government

Tax credits for unpaid family caregivers

Invest in growing military in research, technology and capability

Source: Donald Trump campaign

Cut taxes for families with newborns, credit for first-time homebuyers

Expand, strengthen Affordable Care Act

Advance climate action

Supports codifying pro-abortion legislation

Secure \$2 billion in funding for Offices of Civil Rights across federal government

Implement anti-discrimination protections for LGBTQ+ in health care, housing, education and more

Ban assault weapons and high-capacity magazines, require universal background checks, support red flag laws

Bring back bipartisan border security bill

Source: Kamala Harris campaign

RECORD BATTLE: Ted Cruz vs Colin Allred

Authored amicus brief urging SCOTUS to overturn Roe v. Wade decision

Cosponsored act to require proof of citizenship before allowing people to vote

Introduced act to allow sanctuary city police to cooperate with federal immigration authorities and pull taxpayer-funded grants from sanctuary cities

Supports school choice

Filed amicus brief to block Obama's "Clean Power Plan"

Source: Ted Cruz campaign

Supports expanding Medicaid to uninsured Texans

Worked to expand access to affordable birth control, over-the-counter contraception

Worked to pass revised USMCA trade deal with Mexico and Canada

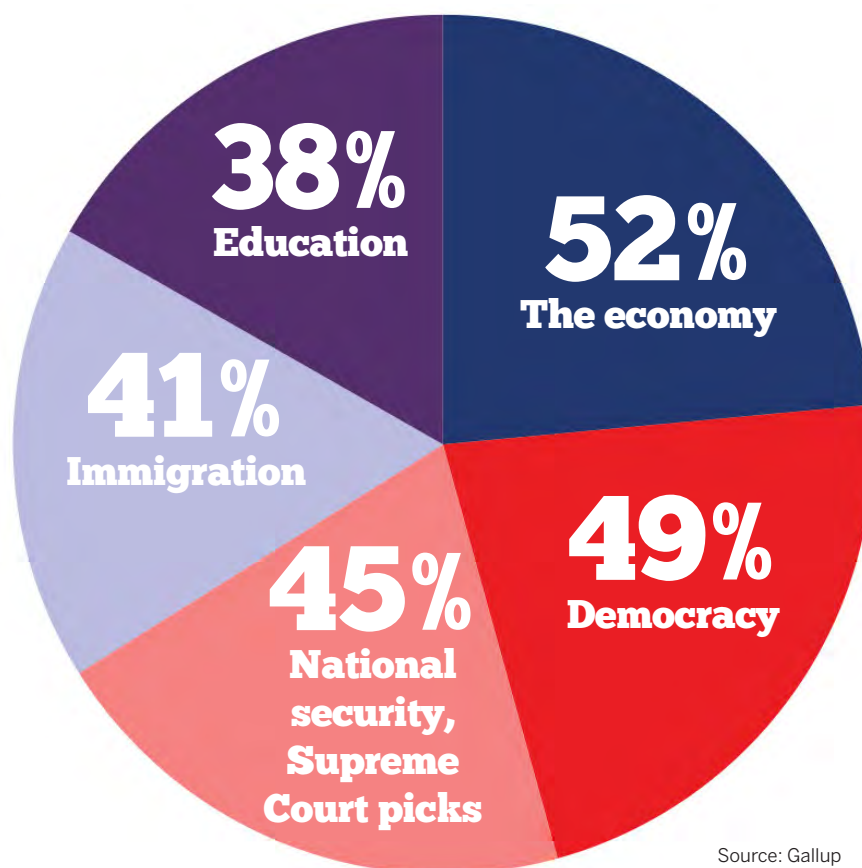
Voted for Paycheck Fairness Act to ensure equal pay for women

Voted to raise minimum wage

Supports earned pathway to citizenship

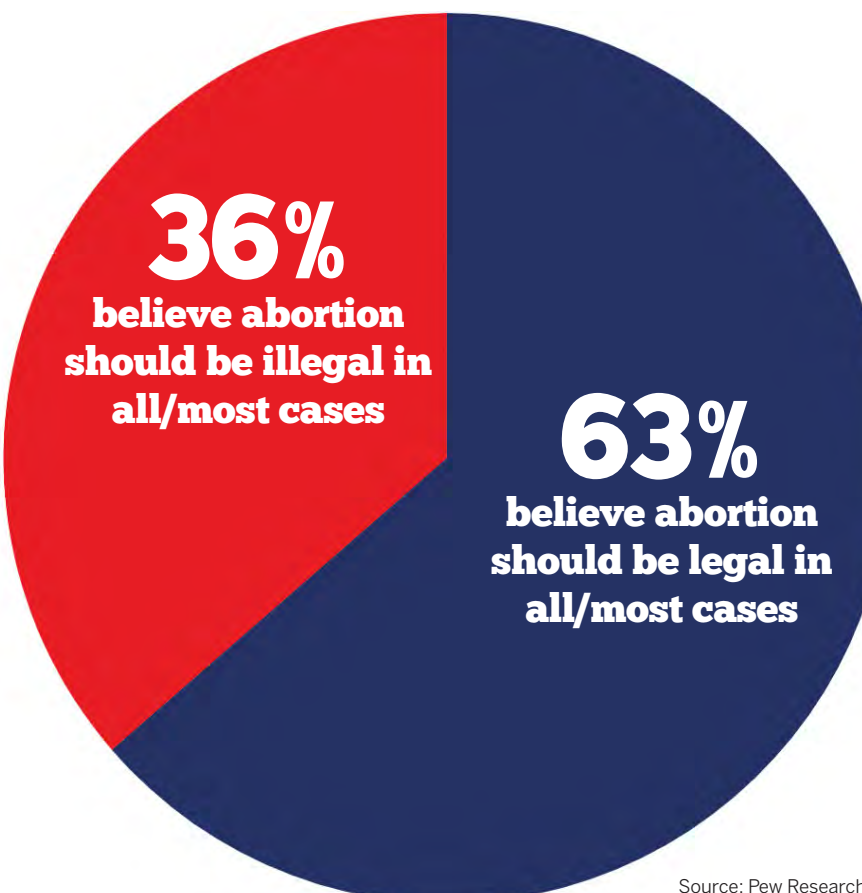
Source: Colin Allred campaign

The issues voters call "very important"



Source: Gallup

Views on abortion amongst U.S. adults



Source: Pew Research Center

ASHLYN BECK
News Editor

In an especially contentious election season, and as many Americans vote contrary to their party, a few issues might sway this presidential election either way.

One of the biggest issues impacting voters' decisions is abortion, and Baylor students are no exception. Texas law currently prohibits abortion except in cases where the life or health of the patient is at risk.

Allen junior Abigail Fair is the president for Bears For Life, an anti-abortion group on campus, and said the candidates' abortion stance is one of the biggest influencers of her vote in this election.

"I oppose all abortion, and I try to vote according to that belief because I believe that human life is the most important issue," Fair said. "I always try to vote for the party and the ticket that will cause the least loss of life."

Heartbeats are detectable beginning in the sixth week of pregnancy. However, Fair said she believes it is never justifiable to obtain an abortion, even before a heartbeat is detected.

"At any point, it's always going to end a human life, whether it's early in the pregnancy or not," Fair said. "Every abortion will stop a beating heart."

Glendale, Ariz. senior and Texas Rising Campus Organizer Brynley Jones takes the opposite stance. She said that although Texas Rising is a non-partisan organization and does not take a position on the issue, she is in full support of abortion in all cases.

The issue of abortion is riddled with misconceptions, Jones said. Many believe it's a form of birth control, but Jones said this just isn't the case.

"There's just so many different scenarios that play into it that people have the privilege of not having to think about," Jones said.

Additionally, Texas' current ban on abortion often puts medical professionals in difficult spots. Texans who perform abortions can face life in prison or fines up to \$100,000. Doctors in the state have already been sued for providing the medical procedure.

Jones said anti-abortion laws take away a woman's right to make decisions for her body.

"I don't believe it is my business to be making any decisions about what you can and can't do with your body," Jones said.

Despite such opposing views, Jones and Fair agreed that it's essential to talk about the issue with civility. While they hold differing positions, both of them acknowledge that the issue is very personal to many women, and charity and grace are imperative in these conversations.

"I do think that it is so important to recognize how this issue can be extremely intense and emotional for many people to talk about, especially women," Fair said.

It's possible and important to have conversations that don't attack specific people or their views, Jones said. Conversations can simply explore the logic and science of the issue to hopefully come to a similar conclusion.

"There are people that I have had just really passionate conversations with [about abortion]," Jones said. "We haven't ended in a resolution, but it's helped me better understand them and their perspective."

Jones said she has felt difficulty at times discussing abortion at a Baptist university. Despite this, she is resolute in continuing to advocate for women's rights.

"I get really sad about the notion that is afforded to me that I don't care about babies," Jones said. "I also care just as much about the mother's rights. I care about human rights. I care about bodily autonomy. I believe in personal freedom."

Jones said she finds creative ways to advocate for women's rights and believes it's essential that people continue to have hard conversations.

"If nobody talks about women's rights, they're just going to keep getting smaller," Jones said.

Jones said it's tragic that abortion became so politicized and now it's voters' responsibility to bring about the change they want.

According to Fair, who expressed her distrust in the presidential candidates, both have said what is necessary to win their party.

"[Harris] supports abortion through all nine months, so up until the point of birth," Fair said. "This is really just problematic, because obviously life begins at conception, so any abortion at any time would be a loss of life."

While Fair said she supports the Trump administration, she said he doesn't have the strong "pro-life" platform he claims, but continually says what is necessary to win the majority of the Republican vote.

"My overall message to anyone voting, if they are interested in looking into this issue... [is] at the end of the day, fewer babies will die under the Trump administration," Fair said.

Jones encouraged students on both sides of the abortion issue to show up at the polls on Election Day and to do research on both potential administrations before voting.

"I want to make it very clear that I don't care how you vote. I just really want you to vote," Jones said.

Baylor students say abortion major issue in 2024 election

Democratic, Republican candidates vie for seats in the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals Office



Cameron McCollum | Photographer

UP FOR GRABS Texas Democrats and Republicans alike vie for three available judge positions in the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals Office, and each candidate has their own goals for the position.

AUDREY VALENZUELA Staff Writer

One of the key races gaining attention this election season is for the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals, the highest court in the state for criminal cases.

The CCA serves as the final appellate court for all criminal matters in Texas, particularly those involving serious offenses, including death penalty cases.

Made up of nine judges, including a presiding judge, the court is elected statewide for six-year terms. Each year, voters have the opportunity to select a portion of the court's judges, and terms are staggered to ensure continuity.

Given Texas' size and high number of criminal cases, the decisions made by the CCA affect not just defendants and law enforcement but

also the broader framework of Texas jurisprudence. Its rulings can set statewide legal precedents, impacting issues such as constitutional rights, law enforcement practices and standards for trials.

Three positions on the CCA are up for election: the presiding judge or Place 1, Place 7 and Place 8.

With issues like the death penalty, bail reform and wrongful convictions in the spotlight, the results of this election will have significant implications for Texas's legal landscape. Moreover, with rising public interest in how courts affect social justice, civil rights and public safety, voters are more likely to tune in to this critical race in 2024.

Republican David Schenck is running against Democrat Holly Taylor for presiding judge or Place 1, a position currently held by Judge Sharon Keller.

Schenck is a Baylor Law graduate with over 25 years of

private practice and government service.

"If elected, I will advocate for an efficient system of justice" Schenck said through his campaign. "I have made it a centerpiece of my campaign as I run for the presiding judge seat on the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals."

Democrat Holly Taylor, meanwhile, is known for her work in public integrity and civil rights. She serves as the assistant director in the civil rights division of the Travis County District Attorney's office, focusing on appeals and wrongful convictions.

"As a candidate for leadership of the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals, I offer a unique combination of experience and values to meet the needs and challenges of this critical position," Taylor said through her campaign. "Years of legal experience ... have prepared me to handle

the important work of the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals today."

Republican Gina Parker, a Waco-based attorney, is running against Democrat Nancy Mulder, a judge from Dallas for Place 7, which is currently held by Judge Barbara Hervey.

Parker, with more than 30 years of accomplished attorney work, has built her campaign around a strict constitutionalist approach. A Baylor Law graduate,

Parker said she plans to speak on the importance and operations of Texas' two high courts, The Supreme Court and The CCA.

"I will work to implement changes by upholding the rule of law and never legislate from the bench and to increase the number and timeliness of opinions written and the number of oral arguments set for hearing," Parker said. "In addition, [I will] consider

a limitation on the amount of donations from lawyers and litigants appearing before the court."

According to Mulder's campaign website, she has "more than 20 years of combined legal and judicial experience" and currently presides over Texas Criminal District Court 6. Mulder stands on fairness, preparedness and dignity to ensure her clients are getting what they deserve in court.

"Everyone has a right to a fair day in court and a process that treats them with dignity," Mulder's campaign said.

Running for Place 8 are Democratic Judge Chika Anyiam and Republican Lee Finley.

Anyiam currently presides over Texas Criminal District Court No. 7 in Dallas County. She made history in 2018 as the first African immigrant to be elected as a state district judge in Dallas.

"I go to work each day honored that I am able to serve my community and be a part of the justice system that is so fundamental to our society in this country,"

Anyiam said. "I am running for Texas Court of Criminal Appeals because we need change in our statewide courts to add diversity of perspective and legal experience."

Lee Finley, a licensed attorney with over 20 years of practice in Collin County and a U.S. Marine Corps veteran, has extensive experience in magistration, indigent defense and mental health cases.

"Lee Finley will serve on the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals with honor and integrity. He will strictly interpret our constitution and honor the rule of law," his campaign page reads.



Lee Finley



Holly Taylor



Gina Parker



Chika Anyiam



David Schenck

District 10 board of Education race picks up, introduces fresh faces as Election Day looms

GRANT MORRISON Staff Writer

Texas State Board of Education Republican, Democratic and Libertarian candidates are fighting for the upper hand in elections and Nov. 5 draws closer.

The Texas State Board of Education is made up of 15 single-member districts, five of which feature contested

elections. This year, as some members retired while others faced primary challengers as part of the Texas GOP's ongoing internal conflict around education savings accounts, or school vouchers. The State Board voted in Nov. 2022 to urge the Texas legislatures to reject voucher programs, but reconvened in February to remain neutral and punt the



Tom Maynard

District 10 spans much of central Texas, bending around Austin and Waco, stretching

from Henderson County southeast of Dallas down to Brazos county, then stretching around the Austin metro through Williamson county down to Comal county north of San Antonio.

The Republican candidate is incumbent Tom Maynard, who was first elected in 2012 and led the Board's February reversal from their anti-voucher position. He was a

former school board trustee in Williamson County, and the first slide on his website declares that

"work ideologies have no place in Texas education."

The Democratic candidate is Dr.

Raquel Saenz Ortiz, an assistant professor of education at Southwestern University in Georgetown. Her platform highlights a more equitable education system and ensures that educators have a voice in decisions that impact their classroom.

She also bemoans the number of teachers leaving the profession at higher rates than ever before due to the politicization of schooling.

McLennan County Commissioner candidates strive for unity, fixed roads, developed economy

RACHEL CHIANG Assistant News Editor

When Election Day arrives on Nov. 5, voters will have the option to choose between Republican Donis "D.L." Wilson and Democrat Jeremy Davis for McLennan County's Precinct 2 county commissioner.

County commissioners serve on an elected county where they oversee county day-to-day policies. These decisions include maintaining infrastructure such as bridges and roads, ensuring proper allocation of taxpayer funds and developing healthcare and the local economy.

A Waco native and current board secretary on Waco ISD's board of trustees, Davis said he understands the area, the

people, their plight and their needs at an intimate level, so he is excited to serve the community in that capacity.

"For me, it's huge. Just being a native to Waco, being able to help uplift the community that I love and that pours so much into me," Davis said.

According to Davis and his website, the main issues he will address if elected are developing the economy, developing infrastructure and supporting community programs.

Davis said the experience of being on the board and of a team of eight who each bring diverse backgrounds, thoughts and strong views on various topics has allowed him to collaborate and find common ground, making him suited for the role.

In addition to his work in the local community, Davis interned with Black Men for Bernie, where he traveled to over 40 states with the Bernie Sanders campaign. He said his time on the campaign changed his perspective on how politics and elected officials can have an impact, making him want to be more involved in public service and providing him the tools to be more effective.

"I think the biggest thing that impacted me on during that time was really being able to see the correlation between my everyday life and the decisions that our leaders are making," he said.

Like Davis, Wilson has experience in the school system, and is currently serving as Riesel High School's chief of police after retiring

from being a state trooper with the Texas Department of Public Safety for over 20 years.

Wilson said his number one goal is to ensure safety of students in buildings and school grounds.

Wilson recognizes that not all Baylor students live on or near campus, so he said he wants to ensure those living in the area are safe and well-protected as well. He intends to increase safety by supporting local sheriff and police departments and ensuring that local volunteer fire

departments are well funded.

While the current court is predominantly Republican now, it has been historically Democratic, and Wilson voiced his disappointment in their lack of progress regarding improving road conditions. In addition to his time as a state trooper doing highway patrol, Wilson worked on road, bridge and roadway design as he studied civil engineering technology in college.

"I grew up in this area. The roads have been horrendous, and the roads are poor out here compared to all other roads and precinct, all the other precincts in McLennan County," Wilson said. "So it's time for somebody just to have some new vision and then some new eyes."

Davis shared Wilson's

concerns regarding road conditions surrounding the county and recognizes a need to ensure they are maintained properly.

"We have a lot of roads and bridges that need repair and fixing too, so we can't just patchwork it and try to do things as fast as possible," Davis said. "We need to do a comprehensive evaluation of our roads and bridges and come up with a strategic plan for longevity."

Despite being on opposing parties, both candidates said they hope to unite the precinct and work for all its residents, no longer pushing for division.



Jeremy Davis

Democratic, Republican candidates cross party lines to win South Texas House of Reps seats

ASHLYN BECK
News Editor

With Federal House of Representatives election races underway, political science professors say Democrats might have the change to flip the Republican-controlled House in 53 districts' "battleground races"—and three of those battlegrounds are found in South Texas.

In Texas, the battleground races are for three vacant seats: District 15, District 28 and District 34.

According to Interim Chair and political science professor Pat Flavin, the best chance Democrats have at gaining a majority is to overturn those vacant seats in the house, because it's unlikely a new candidate will win in a race against an incumbent.

"If you're a Republican waiting for a favorable district. You would wait for an open seat, but it's also an opportunity, for, say, the district's been controlled by a Republican for a while, it's probably the Democrats best chance to try to flip the seat," Flavin said.

Of the 45 open districts in the House right now, Democrats need to turn at least five to gain a majority.



Associated Press

BATTLGROUND RACES As the races in districts heat up, Democrats fight to overturn the Republican-controlled House.

"Republicans currently have a razor-thin majority in the House. That's evidenced by difficulty wrangling routine votes—such as passing a budget—and so it's very possible that the majority could flip after the 2024 election," Flavin said.

As for Texas, in the three battleground districts of South Texas, Republican and Democratic candidates alike fight for congressional seats.

Republican incumbent Monica De La Cruz and Democrat Michelle Vallejo

once again after De La Cruz's 53.3% to 44.8% win in 2022. De La Cruz was the first Republican to win the 15th District, but Vallejo returned to the race in hopes of turning the seat Democratic again.

In the South Texas District, De La Cruz said she is garnering support from the Hispanic community.

"Hispanics are also rejecting extreme Left-wing policies in urban areas like New York and Los Angeles. It's easy for elites to applaud utopian criminal justice

experiments from the comfort of gated communities. After all, it's not their bodegas that are being robbed. Nor do they suffer the consequences of reckless border policies," De La Cruz said in an opinion story for Newsweek.

As for the Democratic candidate, Vallejo vows to do whatever is necessary to secure the border—even if it crosses party lines, the Texas Tribune reported. Additionally, Vallejo is committed to providing abortion rights to women in Texas.

In District 28, the race heats up further as Democrat incumbent Henry Cuellar faces opposition from Republican Jay Furman. The race grew even more contentious after Cuellar was indicted on charges of bribery, money laundering and acting as an unregistered agent of a foreign government in May.

As another South Texas District, borders and immigration are hot topics in the race. According to Cuellar's campaign website, his goal is to "balance the interests of communities which are dependent both on international trade and small

town economies" on the U.S. and Mexico border.

U.S. Navy veteran Furman is challenging Cuellar for the seat and said he was shocked to return from the Navy to find "bad policies that are causing problems that are clear and present dangers to South Texan's safety, freedom and survival," according to his biography on Ballotpedia.

In District 34, Democratic incumbent Vincente Gonzales Jr. faces Republican Maya Flores. With Gonzales's narrow win in 2022, both Democrats and Republicans are pushing to hold the seat.

According to his campaign website, Gonzales wants to reinvest in the educational system to "keep classrooms open and children learning."

Flores's campaign focuses on securing the border, providing affordable healthcare and—like Gonzales—protecting the educational system.

While congressional elections often get overlooked by presidential elections, Associate Professor of political science David Bridge said that participation in congressional

elections is important for the American people.

"All 435 members of the House of Representatives are up for reelection, so it's the easiest way to make a quick dramatic change in American national politics," Bridge said.

Papillon, Nebr. senior Grayson Shirey did an internship in the House and said that participation in congressional elections is just as essential as participation in presidential ones.

"I think that a lower voter turnout in congressional elections is one of the most frightening things, at least for a young voter to look at," Shirey said.

Additionally, Flavin said that the lack of participation in young voters is one reason why the things they care about don't always get attention in Congress. Because seniors have a higher voter turnout, Congress doesn't make big changes in things like social security and Medicare.

"If it was flipped and younger people voted at the rates that older folks did, we'd probably see something totally different in Congress," Flavin said. "I think students should also think about that when they're thinking about why it's important to vote."

Democrats aim to unseat Republicans on Texas Supreme Court

MACKENZIE GRIZZARD
Staff Writer

The fate of the Texas Supreme Court is more uncertain than ever, as whispers begin of 74-year-old Chief Justice Nathan Hect potentially retiring after voters rejected a proposition to raise the mandatory retirement age for supreme court justices to 75-79 years old.

The Texas Supreme Court has a total of nine justices that deal with civil matters, with three justices running for re-election with opposition. According to Ballotpedia, all nine justices on the court are identified with the Republican Party as of April 2024. Justices Jimmy Blacklock, John Devine and Jane Bland are the three facing opposition on Nov. 5.

According to the Texas Court's official website, the Texas Supreme Court is the state's "court of last resort" for civil matters, and Texas is one of only two states with such a court.

The historically-red Texas Supreme Court battles to maintain its conservative tradition in the ballot box next month, making

this election especially important for Texas Democrats.

In Place 4, Democrat Christine Vinh Weems looks to unseat the Republican incumbent John Devine. Weems is the sitting judge on the 281st Civil District Court in Harris County. For Place 4 on the court, recent abortion rulings hang low on the red and blue battlefield.

In 2022, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled to overturn *Roe v. Wade*, eliminating previous protection for abortion. This ruling strengthened the Texas Heartbeat Act, which included a "trigger law" that would ban abortion completely in the event of the U.S. Supreme Court overruling previous abortion precedents.

John Devine has served as a justice on the Texas Supreme Court since 2013 and re-announced his candidacy despite being involved in a number of controversies.

"It is a tremendous honor to serve the people of Texas and I look forward to continuing to do it for another term," Devine said in an official press release.

According to the Texas Tribune, a leaked audio contains Devine accusing his fellow justices of being "brainwashed."

"My concern is that they all bow down to the altar of progress rather than to the fidelity of the Constitution," Devine said in the recording.

In the face of this controversy, Weems takes an opposing stance to the court's ruling, issuing a court order in 2022 blocking the Texas from enforcing a 1925 abortion ban, allowing clinics to remain open for an additional two weeks after *Roe v. Wade* was overturned.

"I've spent my career fighting to protect the rights of Texans," Weems said in a social media post. "But right now, our justice system is on the line."

More recently, the Texas Supreme Court ruled against several plaintiffs in *Zurawski v. Texas*, which sought clarification from the Texas abortion ban in life-threatening cases for the mother or fetus. Justices Jimmy Blacklock, Jane Bland and John Devine are among those seated on the court during the ruling, and are the three facing Democrat opposition this November.

Bland, Republican incumbent for Place 6, has served on the

Texas Supreme Court since 2019, appointed by Gov. Gregg Abbott. She previously served as a justice on the Texas Court of Appeals from 2003-2018.

"Beyond faithfully applying the rule of law, I work hard to improve access to justice for low-income Texans," Bland said in an interview with the Fort Worth Star-Telegram.

Democrat Bonnie Goldstein is running against Bland for Place 6, who is currently serving as a judge on the 5th District Court of Appeals. According to her website, Goldstein was licensed in 1990, giving her 34 years of legal experience.

"Ensuring access to justice, addressing juvenile justice and mental health issues — which are often overseen by the Texas Supreme Court — are a continued priority for me and my judiciary," Goldstein said in an email.

Blacklock was appointed by Gov. Gregg Abbott in 2018 and previously worked under the governor at the Office of the Attorney General where he presided over several high-profile cases in the state of Texas.

"The Texas Supreme Court works hard in every case to understand Texas law as it is, not as we like it to be and to apply Texas law fairly and equally to all parties before the court," Blacklock said in an interview with the Texas Tribune.

Blacklock is facing opposition from Democratic nominee Judge DaSean Jones for Place 6 on the court. Jones currently sits as a Texas District Court Judge in Harris County.

"In Texas, the constitutional rights of everyday citizens across the state are being attacked by individuals you espouse far-right ideologies and engage in extremist actions to promote their beliefs," Jones said in his official campaign statement.

The remaining Texas Supreme Court justices — Jeff Boyd, Debra Lehrmann, Brett Busby, Rebeca Aizpuru Huddle and Evan A. Young — will continue their six-year terms and are not up for re-election this year.



John Devine



Bonnie Lee Goldstein



Jimmy Blacklock



Dasean Jones



Jane Bland



Christine Weems

Bringing Healing

Domestic Violence Awareness Month

Light THE Night

Wednesday, October 23

Fountain Mall | 6 p.m.

Highlight awareness and support for Domestic Violence Awareness Month

Baylor University

EQUITY, CIVIL RIGHTS, AND TITLE IX OFFICE

THE ERAS CAMPAIGN from A1

from voters from all political parties, Nichols said that parties have found little middle ground in recent years.

“People don’t want their politicians to compromise,” Nichols said. “Almost all Republicans agree with certain things like... tax cuts, and almost all Democrats agree with other things.”

THE RACE IS ON from A1

impacts in this role. According to West, every day a prisoner spends awaiting trial can cost taxpayers up to \$200. On top of this, it creates a better justice system.

“Justice delayed is justice denied. And the victims are out there suffering too. They’re suffering through this five or six-year wait,” West said.

West also said his career as a criminal lawyer gives him more relevant experience to the work of a judge.

“I know both sides of the docket. I know what games they are going to play. I know they’re going to use the stall tactic to help their case. It’s part of the gamesmanship that you have to do as a lawyer, and I know all of that.”

It’s his experience, West said, that separates him from Johnson. Johnson, whose career has been almost exclusively in civil law, would have to learn the procedures. Even more than knowing the rules, West said that in his experience he has “lived the rules.”

Although the job of the Judge of the 19th District Court is to handle criminal felony matters, Johnson said his experience still gives him the necessary skills to serve well.

“If you’re a practicing trial lawyer, which I have been, you’re constantly in the process of preparing

Despite this, D’Ambrosio said there has been an increase in historically blue voters such as ethnic minorities going red since Trump won the office. He said our current era depends on what happens in November’s election.

“If Trump loses this election, then I think it’ll prove that perhaps we’re not in a Trump era and that it may have just been a fluke,” D’Ambrosio said. “If he wins this election, though, I think that he’ll solidify himself as a very consequential figure, if not the most consequential figure of this century to date.”

to go to trial, or you’re going to trial. That’s where you develop the skills you need to be a judge.”

Johnson switched to the Democratic Party on the day he filed for the election. While Johnson acknowledged that much of this change was to give him a chance to run against West, the Democratic Party is not entirely foreign to him.

“I think like the majority of people out there,” Johnson said. “I’m moderate to moderate-right on some issues and moderate to moderate-left on some issues...I think the majority of people fall into that [category].”

Just a few years ago, Johnson served as the Republican district attorney before losing badly to Josh Tetens in 2022. Johnson said that the election of Tetens, who is further right than him, influenced him to leave the Republican Party.

“The more extreme right-wing faction of the party took hold of the party, and they jumped in full speed to defeat me and did so in a 70-30 defeat,” Johnson said. “Republicans didn’t like moderate Republicans anymore, and there was room for a moderate Democrat, and so here I am.”

However, when running for a position that relies more on competence and character than political views, the party label is unimportant, Johnson said.

“It’s my position that if there were an area of elected offices where it really wouldn’t matter if you say ‘I’m a Republican’ or ‘I’m a Democrat,’ it would be in the Judiciary.”

CIVIL DISCOURSE from A1

Chang argued.

“One of the best things you can do to prepare yourself as a Christian engaging in politics is to find someone who disagrees with you and try to listen to them,” Chang said.

In a time where many vie for political power, Rev. Aaron Zimmerman of St. Albans Episcopal Church in Waco warned against the pleasures of power.

“The scriptures as a whole are very skeptical of the long-term efficacy of political projects to really do anything,” Zimmerman said. “And you see this because Jesus Christ — twice recorded in the Gospels — rejects political power when it’s offered to him on a silver platter.”

Despite the separation of church and state famously outlined in the 1st Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, Zimmerman argues that Christians belong in politics. Or at least, Christian love does.

“Trying to make America a more moral place is an act of love,” Zimmerman said.

The idea of Christian love

is something woefully needed in this political landscape,

“All of politics now has been reduced to a binary choice of A or B. Don’t reduce [people] to that binary choice.”

CURTIS CHANG | FOUNDER, REDEEMING BABEL

according to Chang.

“Here’s the thing about love, especially the Christian version of love — love does not equal agreement,” Chang said. “[God] loved us while we disagreed with him.”

For Baylor students, voting and Christian values don’t always intersect, Rachael Murdoch, second year graduate student from San Jose, Calif., said

“I’ve experienced a lot of different perspectives politically, and I think that’s such an important part of the Christian call,” Murdoch said. “Loving other people is learning about them, knowing them and wanting to know them deeply.”

Political polarization is a wide-spread, pervasive issue dominating the minds of Americans. Chang says the solution to this is to treat others how “Jesus would.”

“All of politics now has been reduced to a binary choice of A or B,” Chang said. “Don’t reduce [people] to that binary choice.”

The panelists reassured listeners that despite what happens in November, hope will always fuel faith.

“Jesus is going to win out in the end over all forces of death, destruction and oppression,” Chang said.

FREE FARMERS MARKET



Rory Dulock | Staff Writer

GREEN AND GOLD THUMB The Baylor Free Farmer’s Market set up shop on Fountain Mall Wednesday, providing free fruits, veggies and more to the campus community.



Cameron McCollum | Photographer

MUST POLITICS BE WAR? Dr. David Corey (left) moderated the discussion on America’s divisive politics Wednesday night. He was joined by Curtis Chang (middle) of Redeeming Babel and The Rev. Aaron Zimmerman (right), rector of St. Alban’s Waco.

GET OUT TO VOTE



Emma Weidmann | Editor-in-Chief

CIVIC DUTY On Oct. 7 — the last day to register to vote in Texas — multiple student groups held voter registration drives on campus in order to boost voter turnout this November.

SENIORS

THIS YEAR’S TO-DO’S

- GET MY BOOKS
- FIND N
- UPDAT
- GO TO
- BUY S
- TAKE
- PUT
- LOOK FOR A JOB!
- HANG OUT WITH FRIENDS

TAKE MY SENIOR YEARBOOK PORTRAIT

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ROUNDUP YEARBOOK

BAYLOR UNIVERSITY

Back from the bye



Mary Thurmond | Photographer

UP FOR GRABS Senior wide receiver Monaray Baldwin lays out for a pass during Baylor football's 34-28 loss to No. 13 BYU on Sept. 28 at McLane Stadium.

Baylor football set for clash with Texas Tech

FOSTER NICHOLAS
Sports Editor

Coming off a bye week two games below .500 at the halfway point in the season, Baylor football has a strong sense of urgency. Head coach Dave Aranda and the Bears caught their breath and rolled out a new game plan as the team prepares to clash with Texas Tech at 3 p.m. Saturday for the Red Raiders' sold-out Homecoming game at Jones AT&T Stadium in Lubbock.

Despite the early season struggles that have put the Bears (2-4, 0-3 Big 12) second to last in the new-look Big 12, Aranda feels he has all the players, pieces and parts to pull his team back into the hunt for a bowl game.

"The positive is that we've got potential to be a really good team," Aranda said. "We have talent. I think we've got playmakers on offense. I think there needs to be consistency, particularly in the run game, and I think those playmakers come to life even more. Our quarterback play has been positive. Our receiver play has been more consistent than it has probably ever been... All of those things are going to be severely tested here on Saturday."

Baylor hit the bye week after a 43-21 loss to then-No. 16 Iowa State, where the Bears allowed 265 rushing yards and a 40-7 Cyclones run to

close the game. With extra time to dissect the film and make changes, the green and gold tried to focus on the positives and configure an approach to fix the miscues.

"The bye is always hard after a really tough loss because you're just kind of sitting in it. But I think if you use that feeling to really try to get honest with what needs to improve and how you need to improve it... you have a chance to get better," Aranda said.

The Bears' "get right" game comes against a familiar foe, as former Baylor assistant turned third-year Texas Tech (5-1, 3-0 Big 12) head coach Joey McGuire poses the next threat. The Red Raiders sit third in the Big 12 and boast a top-25 offense in the nation, averaging 460.5 yards per game with 6.31 yards per play. Under McGuire, Texas Tech leads the conference in points per game (39.3) and has the league's leading rusher, super-senior running back Tahj Brooks, who is averaging 135.8 rush yards per game.

Sophomore outside linebacker and Lubbock native Kyler Jordan sees an opportunity for Baylor to march into enemy ground and replicate Baylor's blowout win from 2022. While the Texas Tech offense has shown signs of excellence, they have also been forced into the most third down plays of any school in the Big 12 (92) and have converted on 44 of those

chances. However, the Red Raiders have the worst fourth down conversion rate of any team in the conference (30%), meaning stops early in drives could force miscues.

"The season's not over. We've got six more games to make a bowl game and make something of this team," Jordan said. "A couple of those games bounce a little bit differently, we'd be sitting here feeling a little bit better about ourselves. We've got a big one on Saturday. Half the battle in football is believing you can do it. I think going in with confidence gives you a better chance to win a football game. I really think that we can do it. I think the guys here think we can do it."

As the green and gold hit the home stretch, consistency will be key, with the team aiming to close tight games. Baylor has dropped two one-score games, and the four losses have come against teams with a combined record of 20-4, including two undefeated squads, No. 9 Iowa State and No. 13 BYU.

"Looking back at our season, we've had a lot of close games. We probably haven't capitalized on that," senior offensive lineman Campbell Barrington said. "We've just had that mentality that we come out swinging. We're doing all the stuff, we're moving the ball just fine. We just have to keep staying consistent throughout the whole game and know that these moments will

come when it's tight ball"

Aranda and the Bears focused on improving the run game after failing to record more than 80 yards on the ground in the past two games. Texas Tech has recorded the second-fewest sacks in the Big 12 (6) and allowed an average of 148.2 rushing yards per game. Barrington and the offensive line practiced winning one-on-one assignments in space and allowing the running backs to beat both zone and man coverage.

But opening the game on the right foot and staying strong was seen as the key to rebounding.

"To start fast really means that we're not going to wait and see what new plays they've got. We're not going to wait and see what adjustments we have to make. We're not going to wait and see how different this is from what we practice. It means we're going to run through the smoke," Aranda said. "This is the big leagues, and so the scheme and the mismatches and all of it is happening fast, and we've got to be able to respond fast. If all that happens for four quarters, I think we'll be in a position to close it out."

Kickoff is scheduled for 3 p.m. at Jones AT&T Stadium, and the game will be broadcast on ESPN2. This marks the Bears' sixth consecutive game aired on national TV. In 2023, Baylor only had five games on a national network, with seven being broadcast exclusively on ESPN+.

Lenard, soccer looks to hit the win column with Utah road trip

NATE MAKI
Sports Writer

With the final home game of the season in the rearview mirror, Baylor soccer is looking to scrape together road success as it travels to Utah for matchups against BYU and Utah. Kickoff against the Cougars is scheduled for 8 p.m. on Thursday at South Field in Provo. From there, the Bears will travel an hour north to clash with the Utes at 2 p.m. on Sunday at Ute Field in Salt Lake City.

The Bears (7-6-3, 2-4-2 Big 12) have fought through conference play as tough opponents filled the docket. Four of their losses have come against ranked or receiving votes opponents, with both conference wins being 4-0 shutouts against Houston and Arizona State. With three games left in the regular season, Baylor must stay in the top 12 in the conference to secure a spot in the Big 12 Soccer Championship.

"We're excited, but there's also a lot of pressure," graduate midfielder Kai Hayes said. "Where there's pressure, there's also a privilege to go out there and compete to win. That's what we need to do on the road. We're just going to have fun with it and show everyone what we're really made of."

The Cougars (6-5-4, 4-2-2 Big 12)

roll into the matchup on the heels of a shutout victory and have yet lose a home game in the conference play. Head coach Michelle Lenard is doing everything she can to prepare the team for a fierce opponent and strong home field advantage.

"It'll be a lot colder than this," Lenard said. "[BYU] is aggressive. They have a lot of confidence that can be dangerous to play against. Man-to-man I think we're better, the question is just consistency. We need points, so this is our opportunity to climb the rankings a bit."

After their match against the Cougars, the Bears will take on the Utes (6-5-4, 3-2-2 Big 12) for their second-to-last match of the season. With the end so close, junior defender Hallie Augustyn knows the importance of closing strong and valuing the moment.

"It's sad that we're coming toward the end of the season, but it's been so much fun," Augustyn said. "I think that's why it's gone by so fast. We have such a great environment here and every moment is fun. Seeing the end gives us a push, it's an incentive to do better so we can keep playing in the tournament."

Kickoff against BYU is scheduled for 8 p.m. on Thursday at South Field in Provo.



Michael Aguilar | Photo Editor

NOT TODAY Junior goalkeeper Azul Alvarez leaps for a save during Baylor soccer's 1-1 draw against TCU on Sept. 29 at Betty Lou Mays Field. Alvarez has recorded 72 saves on the season and been in goal for five shutouts.



Foster Nicholas | Sports Editor

CONFIDENT AND COMPOSED Freshman right-handed pitcher Cayden Baker rocks, reaches and hurls a heater to the plate during an intrasquad scrimmage during fall camp at Baylor Ballpark.

‘Predators, not prey’: Baylor pitching staff on the attack under Sean Snedeker

FOSTER NICHOLAS
Sports Editor

Looking to rejuvenate the pitching staff, Baylor baseball hired Sean Snedeker to revamp the production on the mound. Just a few weeks into fall ball, the new pitching coach is already changing the culture and making a mark on the pitching staff.

“We’ve been calling him Master Oogway, like from Kung Fu Panda, because he’s just full of wisdom,” redshirt senior right-handed pitcher Cole Stasio said. “He’s been amazing so far, and the guys have all just clung to him. It’s been pretty cool to see what he’s done already.”

When head coach Mitch Thompson brought in Snedeker in the summer, former players flooded social media with support. Looking to elevate the team, his coaching style, which rubbed off on MLB stars, has already made an impression on current players.

“Confidence is a huge thing, no matter where you’re at or what you’re doing. And that’s part of my job is to instill confidence, but the confidence comes from results. I can tell them how good they are, but until they see that tangible evidence, there’s always those doubts.”

Snedeker said. “Pitching is tough. It’s not as tough as hitting, but pitching is tough. So, I’ve really tried to simplify this from an approach standpoint.”

Snedeker’s approach to pitching has translated to more than 60 pitchers he’s worked

with at the college level who later went pro. So far, the 31-year veteran has preached a strike-throwing mentality that sets the foundation for later development. Although throwing strikes sounds basic in theory, the approach sets the baseline for building on complexity and game

planning. Leaning on the strike zone has created confidence and a mantra surrounding “positive self-

talk,” as described by Snedeker. “I want our guys to be the predator and not the prey, you know, to be on the attack, to force hitters to put the ball in play. Then, as you do that, the counts start to roll in your favor, and now you’ve got a chance to punch guys out. And we’ve got plenty of talent, plenty of depth to be really good on

the mound.”

The green and gold finished with the highest earned run average (6.51) in the Big 12, second highest batting average against (.284) and recorded the second-fewest strikeouts (450). But Snedeker isn’t going to let the past define the future.

“I know in the past, Baylor struggled a little bit on the mound, and I’m here to try to right the ship. This certainly is not about me. It’s about the guys in the uniform. But I see enough from these guys that we have here to have more than enough to be super competitive in this league,” Snedeker said. “And even better, I don’t even like to try to predict things, but I’m expecting big things out of this pitching staff.”

Senior catcher Cortlan Castle has been behind the dish and at the plate against Baylor’s pitching staff his entire college career, and he’s already noticed the difference Snedeker is making in intrasquad scrimmages.

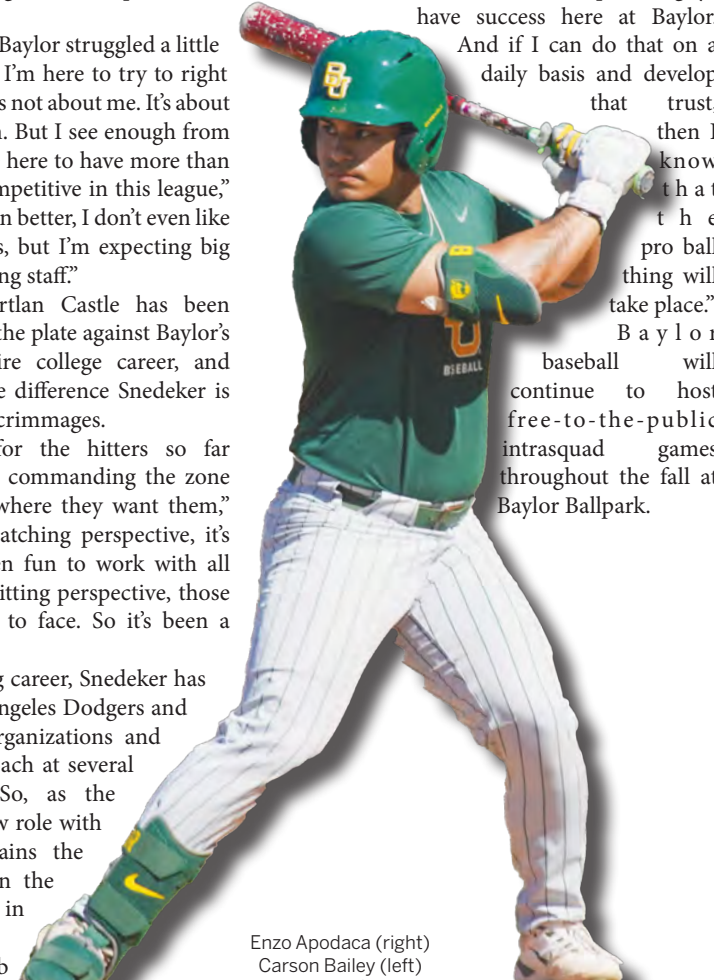
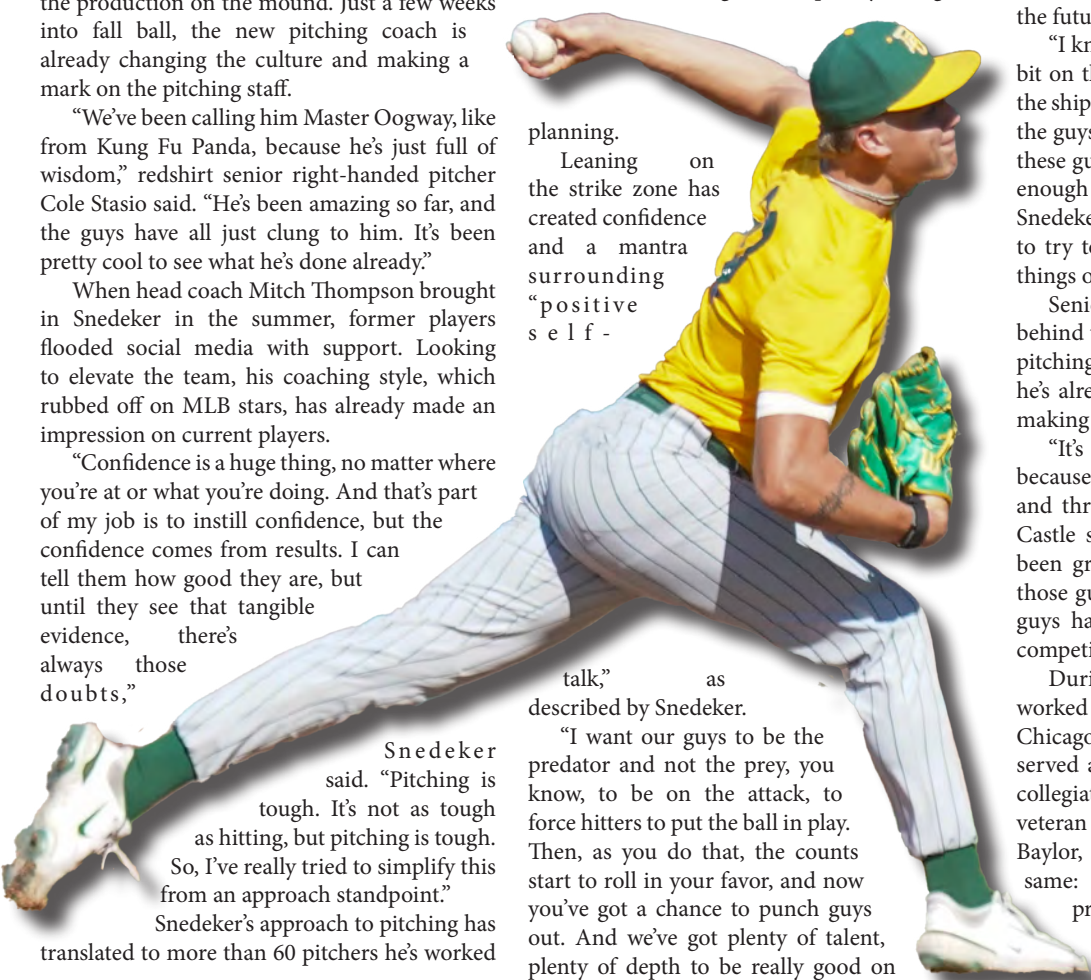
“It’s been tough for the hitters so far because these guys are commanding the zone and throwing pitches where they want them,” Castle said. “From a catching perspective, it’s been great and it’s been fun to work with all those guys. From the hitting perspective, those guys have been tough to face. So it’s been a competitive offseason.”

During his coaching career, Snedeker has worked with the Los Angeles Dodgers and Chicago White Sox organizations and served as a pitching coach at several collegiate programs. So, as the veteran steps into a new role with Baylor, the goal remains the same: Have success in the present to thrive in the future. “My job

is to help them have success, and I take that seriously. There are a lot of guys here that are talented enough to play professionally, and my task is to help them achieve that. But my first goal is to win here at Baylor,” Snedeker said. “I want to do whatever I can to help these guys have success here at Baylor.

And if I can do that on a daily basis and develop that trust, then I know that the pro ball thing will take place.”

Baylor baseball will continue to host free-to-the-public intrasquad games throughout the fall at Baylor Ballpark.



Enzo Apodaca (right)
Carson Bailey (left)
Foster Nicholas | Sports Editor

No. 22 volleyball looks to bounce back against Cincinnati

JACKSON POSEY
Sports Writer

The Bears are back in town as No. 22 Baylor volleyball looks to stop a three-game skid on Thursday night against Cincinnati after dropping road games to No. 22 TCU, No. 23 BYU and Utah.

Baylor (10-6, 2-3) opened Big 12 play in late September with four-set home wins over Arizona and then-No. 14 Arizona State. Undefeated in conference play, and on the heels of a nine-game homestand, the Bears lost in Fort Worth before dropping both halves of a long road trip to Utah in three sets apiece.

“I really felt like there was some really high-level volleyball play, especially at BYU in the first couple of sets,” head coach Ryan McGuyre said. “It’s not necessarily learning how to win; we gotta find our strengths late in the match. I thought we played to our strengths really well, and tactically did good things, but then maybe played away from our strengths at some key points.”

Senior outside hitter Elise McGhee, who led the team with 16 kills during the Utah trip, said that the team can’t take any games for granted after upsetting Arizona State. Getting back in the win column will take what McGuyre calls “true grit.”

“Cincinnati’s a great team,” McGhee said. “I think we know what we need to do and we need to compete and go out there, and we all know we need to win and play united. And so, kind of building back that confidence again in ourselves and knowing that we are a good team also.”

The Bearcats (11-5, 2-3) have lost two straight at home since sweeping UCF in their Big 12 home opener two weeks ago. Led by Carly Glendinning (3.72 kills per set), the offense features a balanced attack with four players notching over 100 kills this season. That unpredictability, paired with recent substitution changes, have made the team harder to prepare for.

“Watching film, I know that they have great middles, great outsides, great opposites,” McGhee said. “They are a great all-around team. They’re going to hit high and swing hard, and so, knowing that no matter what, we have to do the same: we have to be able to serve and pass well, and we have to also be able to swing hard.”

Back at the Ferrell Center, the Bears have an opportunity to get back in the win column for the first time since Sept.

27. Sophomore outside hitter Kendal Murphy, whose 2.54 kills per set rank second on the team, thinks things are finally coming together.

“I feel like we’re growing a lot, together,” Murphy said. “I feel like pieces are finally coming together. There’s always more room to grow, but I think we’ve finally found a connection with each

other on the court.”

Even amidst the losing streak, Baylor remains ranked ahead of BYU (No. 24) in the latest AVCA Top 25 poll, which features six Big 12 teams. The Bears are set to host Cincinnati at 7 p.m. on Thursday at the Ferrell Center before taking on Houston and TCU next week.



Cameron McCollum | Photographer

DIG IT! Senior libero Lauren Briseño dives for a dig during Baylor volleyball’s 3-1 win over Arizona on Sept. 25 at the Ferrell Center.

Sports

Dominating the net: Alicia Andrew finds role, home, community, playing volleyball with Baylor

GRANT MORRISON
Sports Writer

As a young student-athlete in Ridgefield, Wash., Baylor volleyball redshirt junior middle blocker Alicia Andrew didn't consider herself primarily as a volleyball player. But her perspective changed when her mother signed her up for volleyball camp as a teenager. "I always thought basketball was gonna be my path to college," Andrew said. "It definitely turned my head a bit. Getting to play in high school and club was really huge."

As the years went on, she continued to concentrate and hone her craft. Playing sand volleyball with her two younger sisters grew her love for the game, and soon she knew the sport was something she wanted to pursue at the next level.

Like many volleyball hopefuls looking for a college home, Andrew wanted to be a dual-athlete, competing in both beach and indoor

volleyball. But as the search for a school to play for went on, her priorities shifted.

"I was looking for a place that felt like home, that even without my sport, I would love it there, and I would love the people," Andrew said. "The environment that you're in impacts you so much."

On her first visit to Baylor during her sophomore year of high school, the environment she craved was exactly what greeted her.

"Getting to meet [head coach Ryan McGuyre and] the rest of the coaches, and meeting the girls, you can just tell that there's something special here," Andrew said.

In her first year on campus, Andrew was at the bottom of the depth chart behind



middle blocker Kara McGhee, the older sister of current senior outside hitter Elise McGhee.

Without an avenue to the court as a freshman, Andrew chose to redshirt and develop under Kara.

"I learned so much," Andrew said. "Getting to take a year to get my feet under me and figure out, 'This is what high-level volleyball looks like, this is what playing in that environment looks like,' and how to be successful in that."

"Kara was like my older sister middle [blocker], just seeing how she handled the pressure and how she played for something bigger than herself, she was a really good role model for me."

Now a redshirt junior, Redshirt junior middle blocker Alicia Andrew (18).
Michael Aguilar | Photo Editor



Michael Aguilar | Photo Editor

FEROCITY AT THE FERRELL Redshirt junior middle blocker Alicia Andrew jogs out of the tunnel to cheers before a 3-1 win over Hawaii on Sept. 21 at the Ferrell Center.

Andrew is the new "older sister middle" to underclassmen like sophomore middle blocker Victoria Davis and freshman opposite hitter Grace Carroll.

"Everything I've learned from freshman year — the role that I played then, and the role that I play now... there are very different aspects, and things than I've learned to help younger teammates and pour into them with," Andrew said.

And for every opportunity she gets, Andrew pawns off her knowledge.

"[She's] really inspiring to all of us that are around her... learning how to play at the level that she's playing at," Carroll said.

As for the middle blocking position group, senior Manuela Bibinbe occupies the other starting role with Andrew. With Davis and senior Ava Grace Haggard coming in off the bench, the four are what Andrew calls "Middle Buddies Four Life."

"It's so special. [Manuela and I] pray together before

every game, and it helps recenter and reframe what we're doing. I absolutely love playing next to her."

But as a redshirt junior, there's a bittersweetness that accompanies this year for Andrew. So many members of her freshman class— Bibinbe, McGhee, Haggard and libero Lauren Briseño— are now in their last season at Baylor.

"One thing that I've focused on this year is enjoying the moment and being present," Andrew said. "They always say, 'Oh college goes by fast!'... I didn't realize how fast."

The season is moving just as quick. Just over halfway through the season, Andrew and the Bears (10-6, 2-3 Big 12) are refocusing their energy after road losses to No.18 TCU, No. 24 BYU and No. 20 Utah. The opportunity to reset and defend the Ferrell Center is one that the team relishes.

"We're happy to be home, happy to be back in the gym... Using that time to put in the work, train and

sharpen all the things we need to sharpen," Andrew said.

That work ethic—the always grinding, constantly improving, never satisfied mentality that Andrew exhibits—is seen by her teammates and coaches as a vital part of her game.

"It's a testament to who she is, and what she's willing to give for the team. It's cool to see her step out of this role she was in, into a new one, and it's been a big light for our team," junior opposite hitter Allie Sczech said. "From a statistical standpoint, she's helping our team a lot... To have a middle that's just that dominant is extremely effective in the game."

Not only have the players on the squad noticed how much Andrew moves the needle for Baylor's deep postseason run aspirations, but also the coach staff that lured her in more than five years ago.

"I'm really proud of her, just for the work ethic, it's a great example," McGuyre said.

"She's continued to persevere, and her volleyball IQ has been good. She really owns the net up there... it's great to see her take her game to another level."

Moving into the second half of the season, in the second half of her collegiate career, Andrew has taken the few extra days between matches to reflect on her Baylor experience.

"Throughout the rollercoaster that it's been, I'm just really grateful. College athletics are something that are so special. It's an opportunity that can be taken for granted at times. But it's such a cool environment, getting to represent a school, playing a sport that you love, with the people that you love, for a bigger audience than just yourselves is huge," Andrew said. "How cool is this? Not a lot of people get this opportunity."

Baylor volleyball will be back in action at 7 p.m. on Thursday against Cincinnati (11-5, 2-3 Big 12) at the Ferrell Center.

Men's basketball ranks No. 8 in first AP Top 25

JACKSON POSEY
Sports Writer

On the heels of a busy offseason which saw two big-time transfers and two five-star recruits head to Waco, Baylor men's basketball earned a No. 8 ranking in the preseason AP Top 25, its fourth top 10 placement in the past five seasons.

The Bears finished last season ranked No. 16 following a second-round NCAA Tournament loss to Clemson, 72-64. Head coach Scott Drew spent the offseason retooling a roster that returned just three rotation players, bringing in over a half-dozen players to compete for minutes.

The new guys bring a lot of pedigree to Waco. Fifth-year senior transfers guard Jeremy Roach (Duke) and forward

Norchad Omier (Miami) each have Final Four experience and All-ACC honors to their names, while graduate guard Jalen Celestine (Cal) ranked among the nation's top three-point snipers before getting injured, shooting 44.0% on four attempts per game.

The green and gold find themselves in the midst of, again, arguably the toughest conference in America. The preseason top 10 features five Big 12 teams — No. 1 Kansas, No. 4 Houston, No. 5 Iowa State, No. 8 Baylor, No. 10 Arizona — with No. 20 Cincinnati peering in and Texas Tech, Kansas State, BYU and Arizona State receiving votes.

Between a characteristically tough Big 12 slate and a loaded non-conference schedule, the Bears will play six of their fellow top 10 teams, as

a showdown with two-time defending national champion No. 3 UConn and a late-night, season-opening tilt against No. 6 Gonzaga loom large.

Analytics back up the Top 25 poll, which coincided with the release of KenPom's preseason Adjusted Efficiency Margin rankings. Baylor slotted in at No. 11, trailing Big 12 foes Houston (No. 1), Kansas (No. 6), Iowa State (No. 7) and Arizona (No. 8). No other conference has more than five teams in the top 21; the Big 12 boasts eight.

The Bears are set to open their season at 10:30 p.m. on Nov. 4 against Gonzaga in Spokane, Washington. It will be the teams' second matchup since the 2021 National Championship game. In 2022, Baylor knocked off the Bulldogs in South Dakota, 64-63.



Foster Nicholas | Sports Editor

LOCKED IN Fifth-year senior guard Jeremy Roach takes an elbow jumper during a practice at the Foster Pavilion.

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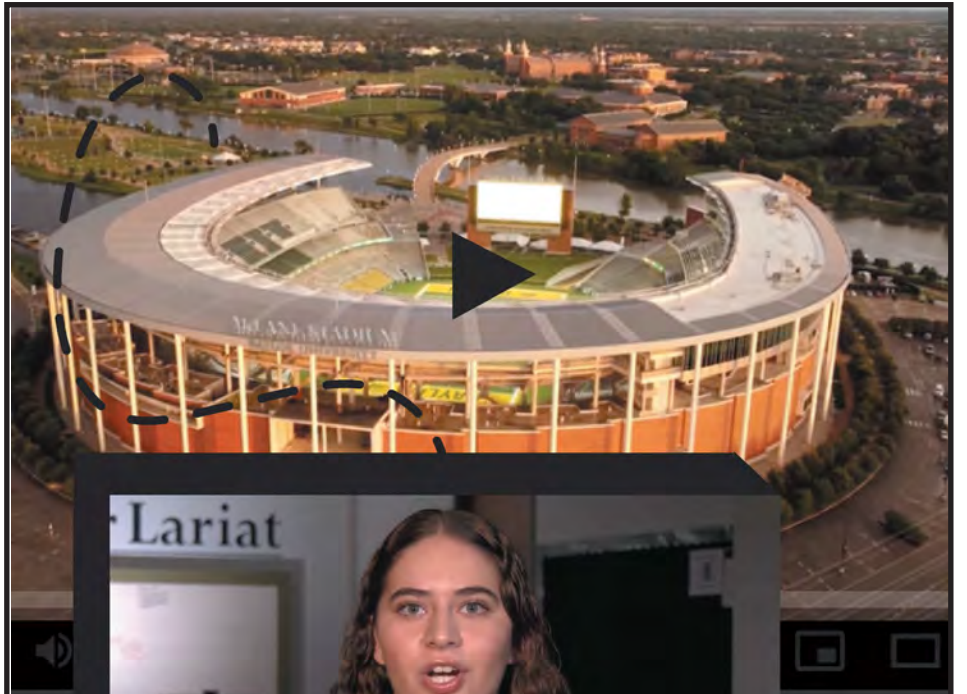
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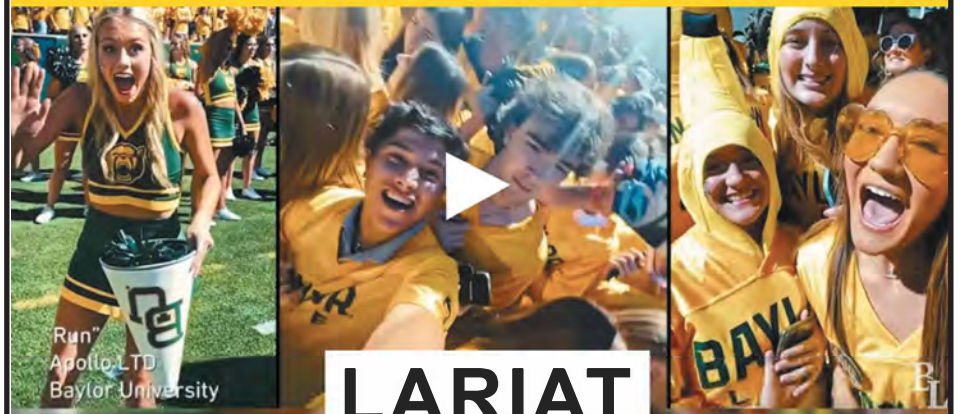


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From brotherhood to bandmates: Kappa Sigmas form student band Dog Watch



Kalena Reynolds | Staff Writer

NO ONE-MAN BAND Student band “Dog Watch” consists of Roseville, Calif., senior Ethan Cole, Houston senior Greydon Fenn, Columbia, S.C., sophomore Evan Todd, Dallas senior Jackson Thornton and Dallas senior Jack Swaner.

KALENA REYNOLDS
Staff Writer

Brought together by brotherhood, six Kappa Sigma members found more than just community within their fraternity — they found a lifelong musical passion. Their band, Dog Watch, has ignited a spark and created a musical journey that goes far beyond Baylor.

The group’s roots trace back to the spring of 2023 when several members, inspired by a band hired to perform at a Kappa Sigma event, decided to start a band of their own. In the spring of 2024, after a few name and member changes, Dog Watch became a serious endeavor for the group.

Roseville, Calif., senior and lead guitarist Ethan Cole had been in a band before starting college. After joining Kappa Sigma, he decided he wanted to find other members with whom to start a band.

“I knew that I wanted to be a part of a band, and kind of seeing the opportunity I had with the large amount of members in our chapter, I figured there’d be people around that played instruments,” Cole said.

Initially, the group started by playing covers of alternative rock songs; eventually, they graduated to writing their own songs.

Dallas senior and keyboardist Jackson Thornton said that once the band started crafting

their identity as a group and songwriters, they began playing local shows around Waco to gain traction and experience.

“We started playing at Freight a couple of times last semester, and then we eventually kind of got out of Waco,” Thornton said. “We made it to Dallas last September and played a show there. It was a great turnout, and it was our first ticketed show. We were able to draw a decent audience, so it was pretty exciting.”

While the band’s core sound is rooted in rock, their music spans a range of styles. Some songs draw influence from punk rock, others embrace indie vibes, and still others lean toward alternative rock.

The band’s songwriting process starts with one of the members sending a riff into the band’s group chat, which is then transformed into an entire arrangement.

The lyrics are written solely by Columbia, S.C., sophomore and vocalist Evan Todd. He noted that the process is both cathartic and creative.

“I write down for five minutes as much as I can on a paper, and it’s not lyrics or anything,” Todd said. “It’s just a stream of consciousness, just getting everything out of my head onto the paper. And usually by then, I’ll use the riffs that they sent in, and I’ll use the music that we have, and put what pops in my head and see what sticks.”

One of the band’s songs is titled “Dough,” which Todd said he wrote as a criticism of generational wealth and the privilege that

comes with it.

“It does feel nice to write about stuff you’re going through in your own life,” Todd said. “It might not be exactly direct, but it always comes through without trying.”

On Nov. 22, the band will release four songs on every major streaming platform.

“We are looking to release about four of our songs,” Todd said. “We have about nine or 10 that we can whittle down and choose from. A lot of these songs are different genres that we just like to see how they fit together. We have a lot of harder punk stuff. We have a lot of more modern alternative rock, and we have a couple of things like, you know, little funky songs that we like to put in there. So the writing process has been really fun for us.”

While the band — other than Todd — is composed of seniors, the group is enthusiastic about continuing to pursue creating and performing together after they graduate.

Dallas senior and bass guitarist Jack Swaner said that the members plan on moving to nearby towns in Texas to stay close and prioritize playing shows. Houston senior and rhythm guitarist Greydon Fenn said that when the time comes, he’s even willing to sacrifice his job for the band’s success.

“So I think we’d all kind of like to at least meet up a couple of times a month and keep stuff going and play on the weekends,” Swaner said. “As far as Evan goes, I’m not sure he’s going to do these next two years. I’d say that we can tour in the summer, and I think that’s the ultimate, or that’s the kind of year-end goal to have just at least a May tour this summer.”

“It does feel nice to write about stuff you’re going through in your own life. It might not be exactly direct, but it always comes through without trying.”

EVAN TODD | DOG WATCH VOCALIST

Review: Coppola’s ‘Megalopolis’ is a mega messy milestone for cinema

BELLA WHITMORE
Intern

Francis Ford Coppola’s *Megalopolis* is a monumental and ambitious work decades in the making that pushes the boundaries of cinematic storytelling.

The visionary director behind “The Godfather” and “Apocalypse Now” presents a bold science fiction epic that feels like a fusion of ancient history and futuristic utopianism. At its heart, “Megalopolis” explores themes of power, idealism and the fragility of societal structures, all wrapped in a visual spectacle that is both awe-inspiring and disorienting. And it will certainly not be for everyone.

Set in a reimagined futuristic version of New York City, the film follows Cesar, played by Adam Driver, an architect with grand ambitions of creating a utopia. He opposes the city’s mayor whose primary goal is to maintain the established order. This central conflict mirrors historically the power struggles and corruption of ancient Rome. Coppola’s vision for *Megalopolis* takes this historical framework and reinterprets it for a more modern audience.

The ensemble cast brings this tension to life, with strong performances from Driver and Giancarlo Esposito. However, the film’s more surreal elements often seem to overshadow the narrative, and the supporting cast including Aubrey Plaza, Nathalie Emmanuel and Shia LaBeouf, sometimes

struggle to find their grounding within Coppola’s unorthodox storytelling methods.

There seems to be a belief within the film community that if a film is confusing and convoluted, that must mean it is genius. Somehow, when the audience cannot grasp the illusive brilliance of the filmmaker, it is their own fault. I think that sums up this movie well. It is a complex and messy movie that many people will defend simply because they know Coppola’s prestige and capability. However, great directors can make bad movies, and a movie being confusing isn’t necessarily always a sign of genius.

This unusual and ambitious take on filmmaking will certainly intrigue the film bros, but just because something is determined to push creative boundaries, does not necessarily mean it is executed well.

On the other hand, *Megalopolis* is certainly visually breathtaking. The cinematography outshines the story with stunning shots that evoke the beauty of ancient Rome and a decaying futuristic cityscape. The use of IMAX technology also enhances these sequences, especially when the screen splits into multiple perspectives, immersing the audience in this crumbling setting of the story.

Megalopolis is certainly not without its flaws. The film’s pacing can be erratic, with some scenes dragging on too long. Coppola’s peculiar decision to leave the camera rolling after calling “cut” creates moments of emotional intensity but also leads to confusion, as if certain narratives and concepts have been left unexplained.

“This unusual and ambitious take on filmmaking will certainly intrigue the film bros, but just because something is determined to push creative boundaries, does not necessarily mean it is executed well.”



Ultimately, *Megalopolis* is a bold, polarizing work that will divide audiences. The film stands as a testament to Coppola’s enduring vision and willingness to push the boundaries of cinema, reminding us that even in an imperfect form, his storytelling continues to captivate the attention of audiences. Some may find it an inspiring reflection on the nature of civilization, while others may be frustrated by its narrative inconsistencies. However you feel about it, I think the film did its job.

For 75 years, local boutique provides customers with affordable retail therapy

SHANE MEAD
Reporter

Waco has grown to become a prime hub for home goods and decor with the Magnolia takeover in recent years. However despite some overlapping niches, local boutique Lane's on Austin Avenue continues to find ways to thrive as it extends its lifetime-long existence of over 75 years.

Before shifting to the focus on home decor, gifts and wedding registries, Lane's was a long-standing lamp store. After graduating from Baylor and being a long-time customer of the store, owner Kimberly Nielsen took over and began the revamp.

Nielsen relies on her keen eye for her product selection.

"To be honest, I just buy what I love," she said.

Nielsen tries to find a balance of prices for customers between the cherished product lines that the shop has held for generations and the newer lines she's added.

"We try to have a really broad range of price points, from a \$20 gift all the way up to a luxury item gift," she said.

Being in a college town, Sunni



Michael Aguilar | Photo Editor

SHOP TIL YOU DROP Owner Kimberly Nielsen said Lane's on Austin Avenue offers a variety of home decor and gift options which appeal to all prices and people, even Baylor students.

Ruffin, who works at Lane's, says their top brands present more of an appeal for students than meets the eye.

"I also think there's a misconception that our store is too

expensive for college students," Ruffin said. "There's definitely something in there for everyone."

Though the variety of products and varying price points are effective

in drawing customers, what Nielsen and Ruffin both highlighted was the store's emphasis on a positive work environment and relationships with customers.

"I would say that the part of what makes us unique is that we really strive to get to know our customers and what they like," said Nielsen. Much of the time, Nielsen, or others working at Lane's, know their customers well and are able to give suggestions because of their close relationships.

"When someone comes in the store, [Nielsen], or any of the rest of the team, comes up to them and it's like, 'Hey, how is your mom doing?'" Ruffin said. "It's just really great to see how much they care about the people and their shoppers."

Furthermore, Ruffin says she learned a lot from Nielsen about how to keep a store afloat. Ruffin said the positive work environment at Lane's is a huge reason she feels so blessed to be working there.

"[Nielsen] has never gone a day without making all of the people that work for her feel so special and feel so loved," said Ruffin. "I really feel like I have a voice at Lane's."

Ultimately, Nielsen said she wants her boutique to be for everybody.

"I want everyone to feel welcomed," she said. "I want it to be an experience. If you just want to come in and browse and clear your mind, I want that to be your place."

Waco Civic Theatre's take on 'Hunchback of Notre Dame' strikes raw, emotional tone



Photo courtesy of Sarah Gallaher

UPSTAGING DISNEY Executive Director Kelly MacGregor said Waco Civic Theatre's rendition of "The Hunchback of Notre Dame" takes on a deeper and darker tone, made possible by the talent of the actors.

KATHERINE HATCHER
Staff Writer

On Thursday, step into 1482 Paris, France, in Waco Civic Theatre's opening night production of "The Hunchback of Notre Dame."

The musical is a stage adaptation of the 1996 Disney film, but based more on the original novel, "The Hunchback of Notre Dame," by Victor Hugo. The story is a powerful exploration of love, acceptance and the human spirit, according to Waco Civic Theatre's website.

Executive Director Kelly MacGregor said that the plot is darker than the original Disney film and is more similar to the sad but beautiful "Les Miserables," also written by Hugo. Although the themes are heavy, MacGregor said that they were important to reflect on.

"The question is, 'Who is the monster and who is the man?'" MacGregor said. "And you should ask that throughout, and you should ask that as you go home."

Waco Civic Theatre's music director David Guess, who is also the conductor for the live 14-piece orchestra, said that he wanted to participate in this show because of its beautiful, complex plot.

"We're talking about a disabled bell ringer. We're talking about gypsies who are mistreated. We're talking about the reality of humanity, and so it's those kinds of things that draw me into that," Guess said.

In bringing the story to life, MacGregor said that the actors use their wonderful voices and performances to take the subject matter of a Disney children's cartoon and transform it into something deeper.

"Having the actors come in and take that material and not treat it loosely ... it's real, it's raw, it's heartbreaking and it's gorgeous," MacGregor said.

Guess, too, praised the actors for their performances. He said everyone is perfect for their roles, especially their protagonist, Quasimodo, played by Waco local Kevin Miner. Miner works for Friends for Life, a nonprofit that helps seniors and people with disabilities. Additionally, Miner's roommate and close friend stutters, which giving him a real-life representation of one of the challenges

his character faces, Guess said.

In addition to the wonderful actors and story he's working with, Guess said that he wanted to participate in the musical because of the challenge of the score.

"It's just a fantastic musical, you know. If you ever have done anything Disney, they don't do something halfway," Guess said. "The detail of this score and the expectations from singers and players is just really, really high."

Guess said that since Waco Civic Theatre is about to celebrate their 100-year anniversary, the team wanted to do something significant. Along with their 14-piece live orchestra, the theater is partnering for the third time with the Central Texas Choral Society, and using the choral society's amazing singers to bring their music to life as gargoyles, statues and other ensemble members.

While Menken and Schwartz have produced famous works of art including "Newsies," "The Little Mermaid," "Little Shop of Horrors," "Wicked" and "Pippin," Guess said that music in this show has a different style.

"You talk about the "Topsy Turvy" and the style of the music that's in the tambourine, the "Tavern Song," they all have really unique characteristics, musically different genres," Guess said. "Not only the text tells the story, but the music tells the story too."

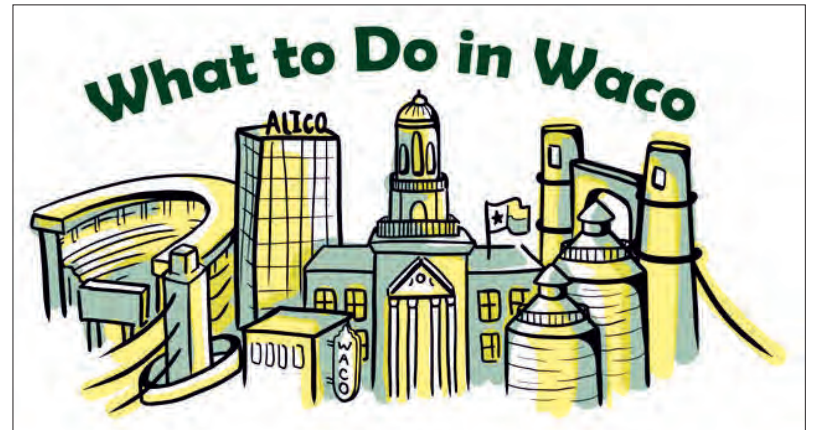
When it comes to costumes and the set, MacGregor said that everyone is very simple as some set pieces are being reused and slightly altered from other shows.

"Because the story is so big, we just want to eliminate all of the distractions and keep it really focused on the music itself and the story," MacGregor said.

The musical will have 15 performances in total on Oct. 17-20, 24-27 and from Oct. 31 to Nov. 3, with some shows performing only at 7:30 p.m., some only at 2:30 p.m. and some at 7:30 and 2:30 p.m. on the same day. Tickets can be purchased online for the show or the Box Office can be contacted for tickets via email or phone at (254) 766-1591.

Guess said the performance will bring talent, joy, pain, beautiful music and more.

"I promise, if you come to this show, you're gonna feel in this room like you're part of the show," Guess said.



What to Do in Waco: Oct. 18-24

OLIVIA TURNER
Arts & Life Editor

It's about time — there's finally a fall chill in the air! And with the weather comes midterms, so here are some fun fall festivities and Waco happenings to take your mind off the reading, writing and 'rithmetic.

BAYLOR THEATRE'S SWEENEY TODD: THE DEMON BARBER OF FLEET STREET | OCT. 18-20 | SHOWTIMES VARY | HOOPER-SCHAEFER FINE ARTS CENTER, 60 BAYLOR AVE | \$25 TICKETS

Spooky season is upon us. What better way to embrace the scariness than seeing Baylor Theatre's very own rendition of Sweeney Todd, a Tim Burton musical? Get tickets at the Box Office or online while they last!

DISNEY'S HUNCHBACK OF NOTRE DAME | OCT. 18-20, 24 | TIMES VARY | WACO CIVIC THEATRE, 1516 LAKE AIR DR | \$22-\$25 TICKETS

Venture back in time to 15th century Paris through Waco Civic Theatre's take on Disney's "Hunchback of Notre Dame." Enjoy this classic in musical form through November, but don't wait long.

WACO DOWNTOWN FARMER'S MARKET | OCT. 19 | 9 A.M. - 1 P.M. | 500 WASHINGTON AVE.

Take a stroll through this site where local agricultural and artisan vendors have gathered weekly since 2011.

OUT ON THE BRAZOS | OCT. 19 | 11 A.M. - 6 P.M. | 3516 N M.L.K. JR BLVD

Pride parades may usually take place in June, but in Waco, we prefer the cooler month of October. Join Waco Pride Network in a day of free performances, food and shopping from local vendors at Out On The Brazos.

OKTOBERFEST | OCT. 19 | NOON | PINEWOOD ROASTERS, 2223 AUSTIN AVE

Beer specials, live music and fall festivities are on the docket for Pinewood's Oktoberfest! Get in your finest lederhosen or dirndl to celebrate the change of the seasons!

DR PEPPER PARANORMAL TOUR | OCT. 19 | 8-10 P.M. | DR PEPPER MUSEUM, 300 S 3RD ST. | \$35 TICKETS

Walk the supposedly haunted halls of the historic Dr Pepper Museum and hunt for ghosts on this two-hour guided tour.

From Hawaii to Waco, Baylor senior's songwriting keeps her in tune with home

KALENA REYNOLDS
Staff Writer

For Honolulu senior Olivia Siegfried, music has always been intertwined with her personal world. From the time she was in a crib, she was humming along, perfectly in tune with songs that would later become inspiration for her own music.

When Siegfried was in first grade, her parents enrolled her in a performing arts school to nurture her creative gifts and surround her with like-minded peers.

"I think Hawaii just had a really big impact on music," Siegfried said. "For me, it's a very music culture-like island, and I went to a school of the arts for basically my whole life, from first grade to senior year of high school. And I think just being around a lot of students that were passionate about art, and it was a school of arts that was like painting, acting, dancing, I was immersed in that art culture."

Siegfried said she began singing when she was five years old and taught herself guitar in middle school. Since then, she has honed in on her talents and released her first single in 2020, "Springtime Sadness," under the name Olivia Anne.

"I released my first single, 'Springtime Sadness' when I was 18," Siegfried

said. "A couple of months later, I released 'Heart Melts Like Rain,' my second single. I then released my album during my senior year of high school, and I feel like that was probably the most transformative time for my music because I really got to see the process of creating, like art."

Siegfried's album, "Dreams of Saturn," was ultimately an ode to her adolescence and the experiences — both good and bad — that come with growing up. The album consists of seven songs and



So whenever I was feeling anxious or sad or, even when I was happy, I would just write music, and it was a way for me to release a lot of my emotion.

took her around two years to write and release.

Siegfried's dad, Scott, said that she got serious about writing songs around the age of 15. While it was clear that she was naturally gifted, her hard work and dedication propelled her to where she is now.

"Into her mid-teens, she really started to put

pen to paper and then those lyrics to music, and then piecing it all together," Scott said. "I'd say from 15 through 18 is where it really started, just showcasing her special talent."

Siegfried originally started writing songs as a therapeutic outlet. Channeling her inner emotions into her work as a form of catharsis, she created songs that expressed her feelings to the outside world.

"I started writing music kind of as a way of therapy, so anything that I was kind of going through, I would just write down," Siegfried said. "And I feel like a lot of people journal or they write stories. But for me, I found music to be a great outlet for that. So whenever I was feeling anxious or sad or, even when I was happy, I would just write music, and it was a way for me to release a lot of my emotion."

Siegfried said that she usually begins with a voice memo whenever she feels inspired to write. She records a quick lyric idea to save for later, which she re-visits once paired with a chord progression or melody that she feels fits.

Siegfried also plans to release two new singles in the upcoming year: "9 to 5" and "Over Again." According to Siegfried, both are heavily inspired by Texas and will have a country influence.



Kassidy Tsikitas | Photographer

TUNE IN Student musician Olivia Anne uses songwriting as a creative outlet and a way to process her emotions.

Listen to her music here!




FIJI FRIGHT NIGHT



Cameron McCollum | Photographer

ITS GIVING "BREAKING BAD" Phi Gamma Delta hosts their annual "Fright Night" to raise money for their philanthropy, Red Cross, to help victims of Hurricane Milton and Helene. Hosted on Fountain Mall until Friday, members dress up in spooky costumes to get the Baylor community in the Halloween spirit.

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