



BAYLOR LARIAT

News for the students by the students

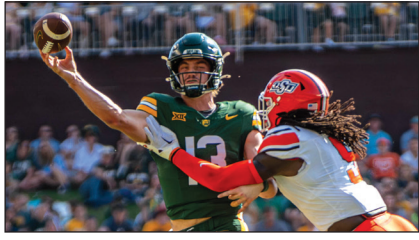
Thursday, November 21, 2024

baylorlariat.com

OPINION | A2

COLUMN:

Santa isn't real — your mom has been making holidays magical.



SPORTS | A6

FOOTBALL:

Bowl-bound Bears look to stay hot against Houston this Saturday.



A&L | A5

BOOKED & BUSY: There's a book fit for everyone's Christmas gift this season.



Kassidy Tsikitas | Photo Editor

CAFFEINE FIEND Many students feel the need to grab for stimulants such as coffee for an extra kick to study.

There is such a thing as too much coffee

SARINA TEJANI
Reporter

As finals season approaches, many Baylor students find themselves reaching for energy drinks, caffeine pills and other stimulants to stay awake and focused during long study sessions. The pressure to perform — combined with late nights and deadlines to meet — often leads students to seek a quick boost to keep them going.

For Dallas junior Shayan Madhani, energy drinks were a staple during November and December.

"I was drinking energy drinks every day just to keep up with all the late-night studying," he said. "It was hard to stay up so I felt like I needed that extra boost."

Over time, though, Madhani said he began to notice the impact it had on his body and energy levels.

"As I got older, I started to see how bad this was for my body," he said. "I wasn't getting real rest, and I could feel the effects catching up with me."

This finals season Madhani is taking a different approach, adjusting his schedule to avoid the need for late-night energy boosts.

"These days I wake up early and try to get my homework and studying done during the day, so I can get a good night's rest," Madhani said.

Chris Asikis, a staff clinician at Baylor's Counseling Center, said

COFFEE >> A8

A guide to safe holiday travels

KRISTY VOLMERT
Staff Writer

Experts say students should think twice before driving 12 hours back to their hometown on five hours of sleep.

With the holidays approaching, many students are going to be kicking off a long journey back home, whether it's going back down to Houston, just north to Dallas or all the way up to Missouri. Especially on the highways in the evenings, students can predict there will likely be quite a bit of traffic.

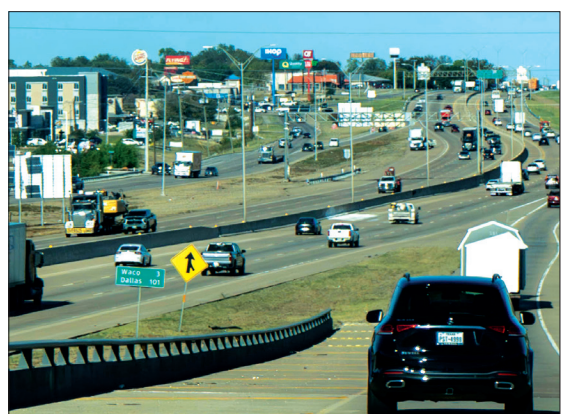
Jake Smith, Texas Department of Transportation Public

Information Officer of Waco, advises drivers to eliminate all distractions, even ones that seem minuscule.

"It's always important to stay attentive on the roadway, whether that's for a short drive or a long drive — just pay attention," Smith said. "Eliminate your distractions. Put away the cell phone so you can just focus on driving and those surrounding you."

The holidays — Thanksgiving, Christmas and especially New Year's — are times filled with big parties and celebrations. But with these festivities often comes both travel

SAFETY >> A8



Cameron McCollum | Photo Editor

ON THE ROAD AGAIN I-35 is ranked as one of the most congested and dangerous roads in Texas.

Waco, Baylor deepen ties to Affiliated Wichita tribes

RORY DULOCK
Staff Writer

In the midst of Native American Heritage Month, Baylor is holding many events that honor the history of natives in the Waco area. One Baylor faculty member is involved year-round to ensure their history is preserved.

James "Derek" Ross is on faculty at Baylor as an Indigenous Scholar in Residence and is a member of the Wichita and Affiliated Tribes, which includes the Waco, Tawakoni and Keechi tribes. He is from Anadarko, Okla., where the Wichita and Affiliated Tribes are located today.

Ross is trying to spread awareness about his tribe's history through building connections to the city. Last week, members of the Wichita and Affiliated Tribes visited Waco. Ross said the visit was a follow up from last year's as an ongoing effort to strengthen relationships with the city.

Among the tribal members who visited was Rachel Crawford, CEO of Quivera Enterprises, the holding company for the Wichita and



Photo courtesy of Baylor University

TRIBAL HERITAGE Baylor University celebrates Waco's Indigenous population with a number of events during Native American Heritage Month. In 2023, Baylor University invited native American tribes to showcase their culture at the Mayborn Museum.

Affiliated Tribes. Crawford said the trip is part of an effort to diversify the ways the tribe brings in funds. The funds the tribe receives help to support its community and ensure it has the resources to carry on their traditions and culture.

"[We want] to create self-sufficiency and to be able to

really help set up our next generations for success," Crawford said. "I've had the honor of not only serving on the economic board, but now coming over to help build this new effort of establishing this footprint in business to continue to grow those opportunities."

The trip allowed tribal members to reconnect with their tribal roots while looking for ways to use that to support what they're doing on economically, Crawford said.

"I'm excited also that having had these connections

HERITAGE >> A8

Scan to read more about how Baylor celebrates Native American Heritage Month!



EPA grant to advance food security, sustainability initiatives in Waco

MACKENZIE GRIZZARD
Staff Writer

This month, Baylor was awarded a near \$1 million grant from the Environmental Protection Agency's Environmental and Climate Justice Community Change Grants Program to alleviate food insecurity in Waco's underprivileged communities and drive sustainable agricultural practices.

It's part of a larger \$17.9 million EPA Community Change grant awarded to several local Waco nonprofits whose local investments will fund future sustainability efforts.

Dr. Stephanie Boddie, a principal investigator in the project, said there is a capable team working on the project.

"I think we have a team that is really helping us to bridge divides across socioeconomic, racial and ethnic groups as well as disciplines," Boddie said.

Dr. Boddie will work alongside Dr. Joshua King, director of the Environmental Humanities minor and Dr. Kevin Magill, associate professor in the School of Education, to regenerate local



Kassidy Tsikitas | Photo Editor

GREEN THUMB Baylor will receive \$1 million from the Environmental Protection Agency to help promote food security and sustainability in Waco.

food systems and reduce food waste.

"If you look at a map of Waco, you can see that food insecurity, poverty and exposure to climate risks all overlap on the same neighborhoods, unfortunately," King said. "They tend to be neighborhoods that are low income and communities of color."

The 2023 U.S. Department of Agriculture Report shows Texas has the second-highest rate of food insecurity in the U.S. at 16.9%. In Waco, the

food insecurity rate is twice the national average, according to Shepherd's Hope.

"It's not always so obvious which students might be food insecure," Boddie said. "[It's about] taking away the stigma that can be so often associated with food insecurity and recognizing that food security is a collective challenge and one that can be easily addressed."

The grant will advance four central initiatives over the next three years: establishing outreach staff, partnerships

with schools and faith communities, promoting student-led community engagement projects, and the creation of a food systems and community resilience exhibit at the Mayborn Museum.

According to Andrea Valdez, the EPA grant is expected to expand the impact of the project into the community. Valdez is the Community Garden and Urban Agriculture Outreach Program Manager at Baylor's Office of Sustainability.

FOOD FOR ALL >> A8

GOT SOMETHING TO SAY?

We want to hear it. Send us your thoughts: Lariat-Letters@baylor.edu



James Ellis | Cartoonist

It's giving thanks

THE EDITORIAL BOARD

Thanksgiving can often have ironic timing. It could be that your year has been full of financial struggles. Perhaps you're failing a class or two. Maybe you've just lost someone you love and this will be your first holiday season without them.

While it can be difficult, it's important to keep in mind that blessings have also been abundant whether we have noticed them or not. Even if your thankfulness is a choice this Thanksgiving, we encourage you to find something that has been a blessing in your life this year and to focus your gratitude toward that gift. We here at the Ed Board decided to do the same.

So, without further ado, here are the things we are especially thankful for this year...

FRIENDS/FAMILY

I am about to say something nobody has ever thought before: I am thankful for my friends.

As boring as that sounds, it couldn't be more true. I am thankful for every time my best friend from home has listened to a minutes-long voice memo I've sent, for the camaraderie I feel from the coworkers in this newsroom that I

get to call friends, and for the helping hand I can always count on from these people.

I am a yapper, so I am constantly astounded that my friends still listen to me talk. Thanks guys. Major shoutout to y'all.

— Emma Weidmann | Editor-in-Chief

Like every day of the year, I'm thankful for my beautiful and intelligent mother. She is the person in everyone's lives with a clear-headed point of view and love at her center. Thank you for teaching me all things classic rock and being one of the only people that still reads physical newspapers.

My Baylor journey wouldn't be the same without my amazing roommates, the friends I've made in Zeta Tau Alpha and the lovely man in my life. Thank you for keeping me grounded and reminding me to laugh every day.

And I could never forget the best coworkers in the world. I couldn't be more thankful for everyone on the photo desk and the Editorial Board. I love y'all.

— Erika Kuehl | Opinion Editor

There are so many things I'm thankful for this year, but the most obvious ones that comes to mind are my sisters Ava and Lucia. Growing

up and going to college has helped me to realize how much I love my sisters, no matter how much I used to squabble when we were kids.

Every challenge I've faced this semester, each time something bad has happened, they've been there to lend a listening ear and occasionally a word of advice, even if only through the screen of a phone. We understand each other and are there for each other in a way no one else can be.

They are and always will be my best friends in the world. (You too, Ian.)

— Olivia Turner | Arts & Life Editor

BAYLOR

This Thanksgiving, I'm thankful for Baylor University. I know, I know. It's a cliché. But what can I say? I bleed green and gold. As a junior more than halfway through her Baylor journey, I can't help but reminisce on some of the blessings this school has brought to me.

Baylor has brought me friends for life, the chance to follow my passions, knowledgeable mentors and a wonderful spiritual community. Not to mention I can stop by the bear habitat anytime I need a serotonin boost.

Now I can't wait to bring friends and family to my alma mater and tell

stories of the good old days. Try to contain your eye roll, but I couldn't be more thankful.

— Ashlyn Beck | News Editor

GROWTH

This Thanksgiving is my last in my undergrad and I cannot think of anything better to be grateful for than the community that has supported me through my entire academic and personal journey. I am thankful for the professors who pulled me aside and asked how my week was going. I am thankful for my friends who stayed in Moody with me after hours. I am thankful for the rejections and the heartbreaks that have helped me grow into the person I am today. I am grateful for my family who loves me dearly, and I am thankful for the love I have felt these past few years.

I am thankful for my life here at Baylor and I will continue to be grateful for the person Baylor has shaped me to be.

— Cameron McCollum | Photo Editor

LITTLE THINGS

This Thanksgiving, I am thankful for the small things in life. I am thankful for the small observations

I make on my way to class and the moments of peace I experience when I switch between tasks. I appreciate how I feel when I grab my favorite pen or how my hands feel in the pockets of my sweatshirt when the weather is cold and brisk. I am thankful for the simple things. The simple things make me stay patient in life and help me enjoy the time I am here.

— Julien Hajenius | Web Editor

CREATIVITY

Something that I'm most thankful for, like many other people, is my family. My family has always been my biggest support, specifically my mother, who has always been my No. 1 cheerleader. She's always been there for me, encouraging me and pushing me to strive and do the best I can while still being me.

Additionally, I'm thankful to be able to draw, create and pursue art throughout life. As a child, I was always drawn to the various arts and animations on channels like Nickelodeon and Cartoon Network, and to pursue such interests in my adult life is a dream come true. Being an artist has given me so many incredible opportunities. I've met some of my closest friends through art, and I couldn't be happier.

— James Ellis | Cartoonist

Mrs. Claus is the true star of Christmas season

EMMA WEIDMANN
Editor-in-Chief



Recently, a holiday ad for a British retailer, Boots, sparked outrage for depicting Mrs. Claus as the mastermind behind the elvish operation at the North Pole instead of jolly Saint Nick. It paid homage to the labor of love that produces holiday magic year after year that falls mainly to women. Naturally, it made people mad.

The ensuing social media maelstrom was reminiscent of the Gillette toxic masculinity ad of notoriety. It's so much more fun to manufacture some good old-fashioned

culture war rage than to put on a thinking cap and look critically at a piece of media. How dare they imply Santa isn't real, and the real stars of Christmas are often the women working behind the scenes to make their children and loved ones feel special each year? How dare they tell... *checks notes*... the truth?

Obviously, fathers play an important role in the family, and that extends to the holiday season. This is not discrediting the labor they do. But, that's just the point. Why can't we talk about how much women do without it suddenly becoming some sort of radical feminist attack on men?

Anyway, if you still believe in Santa, I suggest you stop reading now. There is no magical being that comes down the chimney to deliver gifts. It's your mom, and she went to

Target. There are no elves running the show, baking holiday treats and decorating the house. In fact, there isn't even usually a team of people doing this at all. The burden of the holiday season likely falls on one woman's shoulders.

Mothers spend hours cooking Thanksgiving dinners, asking children and family members for Christmas lists, shopping, decorating and more. It isn't that fathers never do this, but it's more typical for domestic tasks like these to fall on the parent who is in the home most, and that tends to be the mother. Four in five stay-at-home parents in America are, according to the Pew Research Center. And according to the National Fatherhood Initiative, 7% of fathers and 28% of mothers stay at home full-time. Being a stay-at-home mom is an often thankless job. These women

put in hours of exhaustive and unpaid labor, yet the idea that they don't "work" is still rampant. Society has the tendency to downplay the importance of this role, partly because it has been considered the norm for centuries in America — more of an expectation than a commendable sacrifice of time, money, energy and emotional labor.

This holiday season, take some of the burden off the shoulders of the women in your life. Clean the kitchen after meals. Help decorate — not just because it's fun, but because you want to help. And finally, make sure that the holidays are just as magical for the people who make them happen as they are for you. Fill that stocking. Make sure there's stuff under the tree. Show some recognition of the work that goes into making it the most wonderful time of the year.

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Dean of business school to depart for Berry College

JOSH SIATKOWSKI
Staff Writer

Dr. Sandeep Mazumder, Dean of Baylor's Hankamer School of Business, announced that he will be leaving his current role at the end of the academic year to serve as the president of Berry College.

Mazumder, 42, joined Baylor in the 2021-2022 academic year. After four years in Waco and the Hankamer School of Business, Mazumder and his family will relocate to northern Georgia as the soon-to-be former dean begins his tenure as the ninth president of the sprawling, rural 2,000-student Berry College.

As Mazumder prepares for his departure, the Provost's Office is forming a search committee for the next business school dean, which will be chaired by Dr. Jason Carter, the current dean of Robbins College of Health and Human Sciences. The search will consider internal and external candidates and is expected to begin in the coming weeks.

Mazumder called his four years at Baylor "a real privilege" and said that his gratitude for Baylor will remain as he assumes his new role.

"I've just been very blessed and honored to be the business school dean here at Baylor the last few years," Mazumder said. "I thought that coming into the job, and it's true now that I've done it for several years. I still feel that way; it hasn't changed."

Mazumder, who will officially leave in July 2025, had a number of stops on his journey before arriving at Baylor. He was born in England and studied economics at the University of Cambridge before continuing his studies at Johns Hopkins



Courtesy of David Jabour

LEGACY Austin senior David Jabour poses with Dean Mazumder in spring 2024 as he receives his Beta Gamma Sigma Business Honor Society certificate.

University in Baltimore, where he earned a Ph.D. He spent 14 years on faculty at Wake Forest University, where he served as chair of the economics department before being named the William E. Crenshaw Endowed Dean of the Hankamer School of Business in the summer of 2021.

During his time at Baylor, Mazumder launched new initiatives for the business school in developing young faculty, providing more research for undergraduates and experiential learning.

Mazumder said one question he asked himself throughout these initiatives was how to "make sure our students are getting out there to meet businesses and banks and corporations in [the]

industry." He said this question is a crucial aspect to the business school experience.

Mazumder has also been a strong advocate for international learning. According to the dean, study abroad in the business school has tripled since his arrival, from just 8% of students in 2021 to now over 24% of business students studying abroad.

Mazumder has also strongly advocated for Collaborative Online International Learning in the business school, which gives students international experience in Waco.

Mazumder said that these initiatives will continue to be pursued.

"This is not just about the dean," Mazumder said. "These are deep initiatives

that should always continue in the life of the business school. And I think we've set enough of these in the process that they will keep going and live on for the next several years."

While Mazumder is sad about leaving Baylor, the student body reaction has been just as emotional. Bears of Business — the Instagram page for the Hankamer Student Organization — made a post last Monday full of tribute videos and lighthearted jokes.

"If you don't laugh, you'll cry. We'll miss you, Dean Mazumder!" the caption reads.

Austin senior and HSO President David Jabour said he was glad to get some laughs out of something that is emotional for many.

Jabour, who began at Baylor the same time as Mazumder, has been able to interact with the dean for all four of his years here. He first met Mazumder as a freshman and recalled being shocked to realize that the dean wanted to get to know him.

"Every single person that he interacts with, he tries to make a connection," Jabour said. "He's developed a lot of relationships with everyone [in the business school] whether it's faculty and staff, or whether it's a senior who's really involved or a freshman who just showed up on campus."

As Mazumder spent more time at Baylor, his relationship with Jabour and others grew. What began as professional relationships quickly became

close friendships and mentorships, Jabour said.

"As we continued to get to know each other, we worked together, but we really developed a friendship and did a lot of fun things like riding together in a CyberTruck," Jabour said.

In this year's homecoming parade, Jabour drove the dean and his family in a Tesla CyberTruck. It's one of his fondest memories with Mazumder, but also a testament to how much he wants to connect with students, Jabour said.

This connection might be best seen by another Bears of Business Instagram post — one in which Mazumder and other student ambassadors showcase how to tie a Windsor knot — Mazumder's signature tie style. The idea, Jabour said, actually came from Mazumder himself.

"He came to me and was like, 'let's make an Instagram reel of how to tie a tie,'" Jabour said. "He always has a perfect Windsor knot when he's walking around."

As Mazumder and the Baylor community prepare for their parting, the reaction on both sides is bittersweet.

"The day after Berry offered me the job, I actually remember waking up sad because I'm excited about [the new role], but we love Baylor," Mazumder said.

Jabour said though he's sad to see Mazumder leave, he's excited for him to receive this new opportunity.

"Whenever I found out, I was sad for the business school, but more than anything, so excited for him, because he has such a good opportunity to be a leader ... Berry is extremely fortunate to have him," Jabour said.

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THANKFUL

Kassidy Tsikitas | Photo Editor



GATHER ROUND THE FOUNTAIN All-University Thanksgiving took place Wednesday evening on Baylor's Fountain Mall to accommodate the large crowd the event draws in.

Cameron McCollum | Photo Editor



Kassidy Tsikitas | Photo Editor

SWEET TREATS Traditional Thanksgiving desserts such as pecan pie and pumpkin pie were served as part of the All-University Thanksgiving meal.

All-University Thanksgiving



Cameron McCollum | Photo Editor



MAIN CHORUS Vail, Colo., senior Langely Cerovich performed his new song, "Shake From Your Worry," on stage.

Kassidy Tsikitas | Photo Editor



ALL SMILES Many families attended the campus-wide celebration as a part of their holiday traditions.

Kassidy Tsikitas | Photo Editor



FESTIVE TIC-TAC-TOE All-University Thanksgiving had holiday-themed classic games for all ages to enjoy during their meal.

Kassidy Tsikitas | Photo Editor



GIVE THANKS The event had multiple posters for people to document all of the things to be thankful for during the holiday season.

Cameron McCollum | Photo Editor

Read your bookworm's mind

There's a book for everyone this Christmas, Fabled says

KATHERINE HATCHER
Staff Writer

Fabled Bookshop & Café may very well be Santa's workshop during this time of the year, as told by Elizabeth Barnhill.

This book buyer, who is responsible for selecting and purchasing books for the bookshop, spoke Wednesday about which books to buy for loved ones this Christmas at the monthly meeting of the Baylor Club's Newcomers and Neighbors of Waco. The club consists of a group of ladies that meets to offer friendship and community to women in McLennan County.

The event lasted from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Here, the ladies heard Barnhill's recommendations of the best books from this past year and were also presented with the opportunity to purchase these books.

"It inspires them to read, and if they hear about a book that they love...it also helps with finding Christmas presents to different people in their lives," Barnhill said.

In order to find the perfect book this Christmas season, Barnhill said Fabled offers free appointments to direct customers as to which books they should buy. In these meetings, Barnhill talks about what books people like and offers a multitude of choices based on authors, books, genres, topics and more.

"I recommend my favorite books as well as [our] website," Barnhill said. You can meet with me and I can help you pick out books for yourself or for others."

Fabled's Communication and Events Manager Kai Jackson said that



Mary Thurmond | Photographer

PICK A PAGE-TURNER Barnhill, a book buyer for Fabled Bookshop & Café, advised Baylor Club's Newcomers and Neighbors of Waco on Wednesday to stop by the shop for a more in-depth advisement on the best books to buy.

these appointments are incredibly helpful, especially at Christmas time.

"I have an uncle who likes fish, and we will find the perfect book for him, or even some of our merchandise that would pair well with a book as a good gift or a stocking stuffer," Jackson said.

Even though most stereotypical dads are not on Goodreads every day,

Barnhill said that there are books for even them to enjoy.

"Red Notice,' by Bill Browder, is a really good dad book," Barnhill said. "Hampton Sides is a great author for dads. His last book is 'The Wide Wide Sea,' about James Cook."

Along with fathers, Barnhill said she had recommendations for books

that almost all mothers love.

"For mothers, I would recommend 'The Women' by Kristin Hannah," she said. "All the Colors of the Dark' is also another beautiful book."

When it comes to buying books for fellow college aged students, Barnhill said that a popular fantasy is 'A Song to Drown Rivers.' In addition,

she said that, 'Impossible Creatures,' is a fantastic book for middle schoolers, however, many college students enjoy it too.

"It's sort of like a Harry Potter meets a Tolkien adventure," Barnhill said.

Specifically for female college students and all women in general, Jackson said she will be shopping at one of their displays that they have in the shop for her own sisters.

"We're all rom com readers, and so we have a display up right now called 'Under The Mistletoe,' and it's just all the cheesy Christmas rom coms," Jackson said.

Along with the Newcomers and Neighbors event, Barnhill said there are plenty of free events for college-aged students. One of their most popular is an online book review that they do every quarter.

"Usually about 1,200 people tune in from all over the world on Zoom and we talk about the very best books coming out that season," Barnhill said.

Barnhill said that people can find book ideas on her Instagram at wacoreads and at Fabled's Instagram. If people are unable to make it into the shop this Christmas season, Jackson said they should attend their "Onyx Storm" midnight release party that is happening on Jan. 20 and 21.

"We're partnering with a local tattoo artist to do a pop up tattoo studio at the bookshop during the event, and it's gonna be a ton of fun," Jackson said.

Barnhill said that she loves helping people find books for themselves or others and not to hesitate to stop by the bookstore.

Special Collections brings comfort, joy with Victorian Christmas event



Cameron McCollum | Photo Editor

CHIPPER CHICKERING This square piano was crafted in Boston in 1880, but wasn't donated to Baylor until the 1970s.

OLIVIA TURNER
Arts & Life Editor

On a chilly November afternoon, students, professors and Baylor staff gathered in the warmth of Moody Library. Held on the third floor on Wednesday was the first Concerts on the Square: Victorian Christmas event put on by the Art & Special Collections Research Center.

In the room secluded from the quiet of the rest of the floor, Victorian Christmas hymns were played on a century-and-a-half-old Chickering piano and students created Christmas cards on an 1880 clamshell printing press. Toward the end of the event, Eric Ames, director of Advancement, Exhibits and Community Engagement, donned traditional Victorian dress and recited "The Night Before Christmas," accompanied by cheerful Christmas music on the piano. Even the baked goods offered for attendees to eat were made from Victorian recipes.

Bethany Steward, a music librarian from the collections center, said this was the first of the events to be held and that they plan on continuing the event in years to come. She said students who attended would likely recognize many of the songs which were played from the center's Spencer Collection, such as "What Child is This" and "Jingle Bells."

"The Spencer music collection is one of the gems of Baylor's collections," Steward said. "It reveals so much about life at this time — one of the most prominent pastimes. Music making in the parlor was how people lived and entertained each other and did important things, like meeting the person they're going to marry or hosting funerals."

"Singing is always a fun activity. It's a good way to bring people together and let loose."

NASHVILLE, TENN., JUNIOR CHARLOTTE MATTHEWS

Instead of listening to recorded music, which was not yet an option for most families during Victorian times, making their own music was all the

rage, Steward said.

"Silent Night' and 'The First Noel' and things like that were printed, sort of like a hymnal is printed," Steward said. "It would be published as single sheets of popular music, and people would go to the store and buy it."

The piano, which was gifted to the Moody Library in the '70s, was brought out this semester for the first time since the '90s, Steward said. The instrument was crafted in Boston around 1880 by Chickering & Sons. Its journey to its current home involved a boat ride, train ride, wagon ride and a lifetime with the Holmsley family before reaching Baylor.

As carols played, students chatted and created hand-made Christmas cards. One of these card-makers, Nashville, Tenn., junior Charlotte Matthews, said she may not be a good singer, but that she certainly appreciates and enjoys music and the unity it promotes.

"Singing is always a fun activity," Matthews said. "It's a good way to bring people together and let loose."

Conroe senior Emma Forney said she was initially drawn to the event to fulfill her CAE credits, but also because of the Christmas theme. She loves the holiday with a passion, especially the musical aspect. Her favorite Christmas song is "Carol of the Bells," she said.

"It's not only nostalgic, but it's a good symbol of tradition," Forney said.



Photo courtesy of Kat Kiesling

LET IT SNOW The Waltz of the Snowflakes, an iconic Nutcracker variation, is performed by Bear Ballet every year.

Bear Ballet to ignite Christmas spirit with 'Nutcracker' dance

SHANE MEAD
Reporter

Bear Ballet is hosting its annual rendition of "The Nutcracker" in the Barfield Drawing Room of the Bill Daniel Student Center (SUB) on Dec. 7.

Two days before the main performance, students will get a sneak peek of what they'll see by watching Bear Ballet perform excerpts of the dances at Christmas on Fifth Street.

According to Houston junior Eva Lampasas, vice president of Bear Ballet, "The Nutcracker" will run roughly one hour and 30 minutes with an intermission and will feature aspects reminiscent of the classic "Nutcracker" ballet, such as the "Snow Queen" and "Candy Cane" variations.

"I'm really excited this year, particularly because I'm Snow Queen," Lampasas said. "I get to do a little pretty ballet moment, which I haven't done in so long. I'm really excited to be in that role."

But what Lampasas expects students to be most excited for is the "Candy Cane" variation, which she said is typically a crowd favorite.

"I also really like 'Candy Cane,'" she said. "There's a lot of jumps, there's a lot of flips and we have hula hoops. It's definitely a lot of fun — definitely an audience favorite."

According to Junction City, Ark., senior Madalyn Lyons, Bear Ballet sits at around 15 members but is always welcoming

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Bowl-bound Bears gear up for Houston

FOSTER NICHOLAS
Sports Editor

Riding its first four-game winning streak since 2021, Baylor football is still looking to prove it can keep rolling with improved defense and steady offense against Houston at 6 p.m. Saturday at TDECU Stadium in Houston.

After the Bears (6-4, 4-3 Big 12) clinched bowl eligibility with a 49-35 win over West Virginia, the growth of the team was on the top of head coach Dave Aranda's mind. Despite a 5-13 record spanning from the 2023 season to the first bye week of 2024, there was always a "belief" that brighter days were ahead.

"There's a bunch of dudes that have just been through a lot of adversity, pressure [and] disappointment," Aranda said. "I think anytime you go through that, the easiest thing to do is quit, just to walk away from it and be like, 'Why am I doing this? Why?' So, having not done that, and to continue to fight through it... for you to now have success and flip the tables, I think that's pretty cool. So, to have another game and to celebrate all that is pretty neat."

On Saturday night, a Baylor spokesman confirmed that Aranda would return to coach the team in 2025. After a 2-4 start to the season and a sour 43-21 loss to a ranked Iowa State team before the bye week, the fifth-year head coach managed to pile negative momentum into the team's second-longest win streak with him at the helm.

"When I remember the Iowa State game, it was a pretty brutal feeling," Aranda said. "More than that, though, I think everyone knew we were a good team, and everyone knew we were way better than this."

Senior tight end Gavin Yates has been through the highs of a Big 12 Championship and the lows of a 3-9 season in 2024. The veteran said the bounce back and poise from the team this year was different than years prior. To Yates, there was no question Baylor football was going to achieve big things, even after a disappointing start.

"I think a lot of people would've folded [and] threw in the towel after Week 4," Yates said. "I think it shows the coaches really believe in us, and we have a belief in our coaches that they're going to put us in the best position and we're going to have a good strategy to win the game."

Above all else, Yates said the team was fighting for a bowl game appearance for Aranda as much as for each of the guys next



Cameron McCollum | Photo Editor

SETTING THE BAR HIGH During its four-game win streak, Baylor leads the nation in points and the Power Four in yards per game.

to him.

"I love that guy. I love playing for Dave Aranda," Yates said. "I love everything that he stands for and the man that he molded me to be. I want to see him here, and I want to come back for alum games and see Aranda on the field with his little glasses and his playsheet, screaming at the defense. I love it. It fires me up. So, of course, I wanted to go to a bowl game for Aranda."

Yates said the team has discussed the potential bowl game sites and opponents, but the goal is to conquer the regular season first.

"Obviously, you work for a national championship, but a bowl game is in the right direction," Yates said. "So, it's exciting, and it's an opportunity to be with your best friends and teammates in a different place. We know the more games you win, the better bowl game you get, so we're still trying to win out. That's the plan. We want to get the best bowl game we can."

Over the past four weeks, Baylor has averaged the most points (45.8) and rushing yards (259.5) per game in the Big 12. Behind redshirt freshman running back Bryson Washington, who has scored eight touchdowns in the last two games, and redshirt junior quarterback Sawyer Robertson, who is sixth in the nation in quarterback rating (84.9), the offensive tone set by Jake Spavital has been instrumental in the turnaround.

"The coaches were pouring into us and harping on us the little details," Washington said. "They knew we had it in us, but it was just like we needed them to push us a little more so we could see that we had the dog in us to do what we were capable of doing."

The Bears' next challenge is facing a Houston (4-6, 3-4 Big 12) team that Aranda considers "dangerous," with the best front seven Baylor has seen this season. The Cougars have allowed 22.5 points per game behind a top-6 rushing and passing defense. Already in a groove, Washington said he felt Baylor's winning impulse would give them the energy to keep rolling against a

strong run-stopping squad.

"That winning momentum is something serious," Washington said. "I never really realized it until I got to the collegiate level. I feel like the team is ready to play going into every week. Our practices are more hype and everybody has energy and everybody has juice."

Clinching bowl eligibility was sweet for the Bears, but Aranda was still fixated on allowing a garbage-time touchdown against West Virginia. Although the Bears have clawed together victories, they've allowed 33 points per game during their four-game winning streak, a number the defensive-minded head coach isn't pleased with.

"I think we've got a lot of things to work on," Aranda said. "It's one of those things where it gets to be a part of the year where you kind of are who you are. I was trying to say that in the right way. I was pretty pissed on Saturday night. When you'd like to get better by leaps and bounds and miles and miles, but it's a fight to get better by an inch. It's a straight fight."

Aranda said he hoped for a strong defensive response against the Cougars. Houston has allowed the second-most sacks and scored the fewest points per game (14.0) of any Big 12 program (30). Without sophomore safety Carl Williams IV, who underwent surgery for a torn meniscus, the Bears will rely on redshirt sophomore safety Corey Gordon Jr. and a group of young players with less experience to hold their ground.

"To not be discouraged and to continue to fight for that inch and to believe that you're going to get it and all that is the most important thing," Aranda said. "I think the game on Saturday is a good example of that. I wish that it would be way prettier than what it is, but you've got a new baby; it's an ugly baby. And you've got to love it, nonetheless."

Kickoff is scheduled for 6 p.m. as the Bears take on the Cougars in Houston for the first time since 1995 at TDECU Stadium. The game will be broadcast on FS1.

"I want to come back for alum games and see Aranda on the field with his little glasses and his playsheet, screaming at the defense. I love it. It fires me up.

GAVIN YATES | SENIOR TIGHT END



Mesha Mittanasala | Photographer

BOWLIN' ON THE BRAZOS Senior tight end Gavin Yates (43) and the Bears clinched bowl eligibility with a 49-35 win over West Virginia on Saturday at Milan Puskar Stadium in Morgantown.

Baylor tennis rallies in Day 2 of NCAA individual championships

GRANT MORRISON
Sports Writer

The second day of the NCAA singles and doubles championships saw Baylor men's tennis senior duo Oskar Brostrom Poulsen and Marko Miladinovic advance in the opening round of doubles play on Wednesday at the Hurd Tennis Center.

Baylor men's tennis sophomore Devin Badenhorst started the day against Wake Forest junior Dhakshineswar Suresh in the Round of 32. The first set was a competitive one, with the two players exchanging games back-and-forth until Suresh won two consecutive, taking the set 6-4. Suresh was more consistent in the second set, sweeping multiple games, and though he struggled to find his serve, he eventually overpowered Badenhorst to take the second and match, 6-2.

Baylor women's tennis seniors Cristina Tiglea and Liubov Kostenko faced USC's duo of senior Grace Piper and sophomore Lily Fairclough in the Bears' first doubles match. The first set was all USC, as Piper and Fairclough outscored Tiglea and Kostenko en route to a 6-2 first set lead.

Not to be easily defeated, Tiglea and Kostenko opened the second set with a sweep of the first game. The USC duo found a rhythm later and knocked the Bears out of the tournament, 6-4.

Badenhorst was teamed with junior Zsombor Velcz in a doubles matchup against Adarsh Tripathi and Alexander Hoogmartens of UCLA. After dropping the first set 6-3, the Bears were down 4-2 in the second before fighting their way back to a 5-4 lead.

A misdirect hit from Badenhorst sent the

two Bruins crashing into each other and the ball sailing harmlessly out of bounds as Baylor's pair took a 6-5 lead. But UCLA climbed their way back in, tying it 6-6 and ultimately winning the tie-break game, 7-3.

In the final matchup of the day, Miladinovic and Brostrom Poulsen faced Ondrej Horak and Karim Al-Amin of Middle Tennessee State University.

"It was a really personal match, all the tension building up," Brostrom Poulsen, who transferred from Middle Tennessee State last year, said. "All the boys in the stands made it a lot easier for me, so I'm really thankful for them."

Each game alternated winners, until the first set was tied 5-5. Down 30-0, Miladinovic and Brostrom Poulsen clawed their way to a victory in the game, then another to take the first set 7-5.

MTSU won the first three games of the second set and had possession of a 4-1 lead when a pair of strong aces from Brostrom Poulsen got the Bears right back in the match. The teams exchanged sweeps, then chants of "B-A-Y-L-O-R" filled the air when the duo tied the set 6-6.

Middle Tennessee State came away from the second set with a win, sending the deciding points to a first-to-10 tie-break set.

Baylor scored first but struggled against the sturdy defense of the MTSU duo. The Blue Raiders pummeled the Bears, scoring point after point until they reached an 8-3 lead before the pairs switched sides of the net.

With their backs to the wall and a crowd of Baylor fans above them, Miladinovic and Brostrom Poulsen closed ranks, putting together



Cameron McCollum | Photo Editor

LOCKED IN Sophomore Devin Badenhorst stares down a ball heading his way during the second day of the NCAA singles and doubles championships on Wednesday at the Hurd Tennis Center

a gritty series of points to claw their way back into the match.

"It was a true roller coaster," Miladinovic said. "If we were playing somewhere else, it would have been very tough to come back... this is our second home; we want to make Baylor proud because so many people were out there for us. We didn't want to let go."

As the crowd of Baylor fans roared their support, Middle Tennessee faulted their final serves and fell in the tie-break, 10-8.

"We showed what Baylor Bears [are] all about—fighting until the end," Miladinovic said. The duo will face University of Texas duo Timo Legout and Lucas Brown in the Sweet 16 Thursday at 2:30 p.m. at the Hurd Tennis Center.

MBB leaves for the Baha Mar Hoops invitational

JACKSON POSEY
Sports Writer

On the heels of a three-game winning streak, No. 13 Baylor men's basketball is headed to Nassau, Bahamas for the Baha Mar Hoops Bahamas Championship, where they'll play No. 22 St. John's and either No. 11 Tennessee or Virginia.

"St. John's, ranked top 25, off to a great start, great backcourt, and definitely going to be a real challenge," Baylor head coach Scott Drew said. "And then you have in the other bracket, Virginia and Tennessee, two other really good teams. So at the end of these two games, I think all us coaches will learn more about just what we need to improve on before conference and just what areas we maybe are better than we thought or worse than we thought."

This tournament-style invitational features four games, starting with two first-round matchups: No. 13 Baylor vs. No. 22 St. John's and No. 11 Tennessee vs. Virginia. The Bears and Red Storm will tip off at 6 p.m. Thursday, with the winner advancing to Friday night's championship match at 8:30 p.m. The loser will play a consolation game at 6 p.m.

The last time the Bears played in the Bahamas was 2021, when they swept Arizona State, VCU and Michigan State in the Battle 4 Atlantis invitational on Paradise Island. That year's team finished 27-7 and won the Big 12 regular season title before falling to North Carolina in the Round of 32.

"Obviously the main goal is to go out there and go 2-0," graduate wing Jalen Celestine said. "Just enjoy the time together. Some of our family is going to be out there, so it's going to be a cool little Waco getaway."

Five-star freshman wing VJ Edgecombe, who notched a double-double against Sam

Houston and has lit up social media with athletic highlight dunks and blocks throughout the season, was born in Bimini, Bahamas. This weekend, he'll get a chance to return home to play in front of familiar faces in his home country.

"If [my teammates] want to go somewhere and we have time to, I'm definitely showing them around," Edgecombe said. "Super excited getting to play in front of my family and everyone back home once again."

St. John's has taken strides under former national championship-winning head coach Rick Pitino, who took over prior to last season. The Red Storm are 4-0 behind massive scoring volume from junior guard RJ Luis (17.5 points per game on 48.9% shooting) and a defense that ranks 14th nationally in blocks per game.

Tennessee hasn't missed a step in the absence of former star wing Dalton Knecht, who scored 37 points for the Lakers Tuesday. The reigning SEC regular season champions lead the nation in both field goal percentage (58.1%) and limiting opponent rebounds (25.0 per game). Zakai Zeigler, a three-time SEC All-Defense team member, leads the team in scoring and ranks first in the conference with 7.8 assists per game.

Virginia entered this season on shaky ground following the sudden retirement of head coach Tony Bennett in October. But so far, they've looked like the classic Cavaliers: lethargic offense (65.7 points per game, No. 330 in the nation)

keeping pace for a top-10 defense (53.7 points per game). Bennett may have retired, but his legacy lives on in a team that ranks dead last nationally in pace by multiple possessions per game.

The Bears are 42-13 in regular-season tournaments under Drew, including seven titles — the latest of which came in 2023, when they knocked off Oregon State and Florida in the NIT Season Tip-Off in Brooklyn, New York. The quest for No. 8 starts at 6 p.m. on Thursday, against St. John's.



HOMEWARD BOUND Freshman guard VJ Edgecombe will be returning home to the Bahamas for the Baha Mar Hoops Bahamas Championship.



FREAKY FAST Freshman guard VJ Edgecombe races to the rim during No. 13 Baylor men's basketball's 104-41 win on November 17 at the Foster Pavillion.

"If [my teammates] want to go somewhere and we have time to, I'm definitely showing them around. Super excited getting to play in front of my family and everyone back home once again."

VJ EDGECOMBE | FIVE-STAR FRESHMAN WING

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SAFETY from A1

and alcohol. Smith said it's unwise for students to drive with any amount of alcohol in their system as it puts themselves and others at risk unnecessarily.

"Drunk driving is never necessary. There is always a safer alternative," Smith said. "There's just no excuse with all the ride share services out there. You can designate a sober driver, you can call a family member or a friend — just [do] anything to avoid getting behind the wheel if you've had anything to drink."

According to the Texas Open Data Portal, over 37% of traffic-related deaths in Texas between the years 2014 and 2023 were due to drivers who were under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

A 2018 news report from KXXV showed that Waco was rated among the top 10 cities in Texas with the highest drunk driving fatality rates. Waco alone had an average of 4.63 annual drunk driving deaths per 100,000 residents.

Students are also advised not to drive while tired. Baylor's Associate Vice President of Public Safety Mark Childers emphasized the importance of staying alert.

"This subject is extremely relevant to students," Childers said. "You need to always be aware of your surroundings, whether you are in the dorms, on campus or traveling. A student's best defense in staying safe is maintaining a heightened sense of awareness."

Childers also gave advice for preparing to take long road trips, whether it's heading home for the holidays or visiting family.

"When traveling alone, it's important for students to ensure they have had proper sleep and nutrition before driving. Extra water and snacks are always recommended," Childers said. "Another tip for students is they should be mindful of choosing a well-traveled route that is well lit and has large, well-established rest stops along your chosen route."

He also advised that students don't take long trips alone if possible.

Texas is among the states with the highest automobile accident death rates —especially during the holiday season — according to a report by the The Brinkley Law Firm in Beaumont.

"The holidays are especially worrisome because more people are driving back and forth and there is a chance that some will be under the influence, behave recklessly, drive drowsy, speed and commit other violations that raise the chance of a crash. Everyone should be cognizant of this," the report stated.

Maywood, Mo., sophomore Faith Post said this year will be her first year driving all the way back up to her hometown alone.

"I have driven four to six hours at a time by myself, but I have never made the 13 hour drive alone before," Post said. "I normally ride with someone else or take turns driving, so this trip home for winter break will be my first solo trip from Waco to Maywood."

Post said that listening to her favorite songs, audiobooks and podcasts helps keep her awake and pass the time. She advised drivers to keep in touch with someone and update them on their location, especially while making stops, in case anything happens.

"When driving somewhere alone, always make sure that someone has your location and keep them updated when you stop somewhere, such as a gas station," Post said. "If using Google or Apple Maps, I recommend downloading your trip map just in case you lose signal somewhere. I recommend not stopping at highway rest stops if possible and advise sticking to gas stations and more public areas."

Smith also reminds drivers to be aware of their route and avoid excessive speeding at all costs.

"You never want to put yourself in a situation where you feel compelled to speed or go fast to get there, so give yourself plenty of time," Smith said. "Take your time and get there safely."

HERITAGE from A1

we had some of our tribal leadership join us, the stakeholders, the owners of our business to come in and ... really just be a part of what we do [and] hear about our mission," Crawford said.

On Nov. 12, Waco Mayor Jim Holmes met with Ross as well as Wichita and Affiliated Tribes President Amber Silverhorn Wolfe to talk about the possibility of a history center for the tribe in Waco since their roots are tied to the city. The tribe was forcibly removed in August 1859.

"One of our greatest strengths is our resilience," Ross said. "It's a miracle that our tribe has not only survived but is thriving."

According to Ross, the tribe had met with Baylor's Mayborn Museum to discuss plans to build a traditional Wichita and Waco grass house. Construction would begin early 2025.

"About two years ago, we created a Wichita Indian grass house village. It's a miniature village for the Mayborn, which is there now, and then we now have a contract to build a full-scale grass house," Ross said.

Baylor made a land acknowledgment in November 2022 after the Indigenous Peoples' Advocacy Committee pushed for recognition of the tribes and their history. At the time, Baylor and West Virginia were the only schools in the Big 12 not to have any land acknowledgement.

"In recognition that these native nations are the original stewards of Baylor's campus locations, the university strives to build sustainable relationships with sovereign native nations and indigenous communities through education offerings, partnerships and community service," the statement reads.

Ross said the land acknowledgement statement from the university is "wonderful" and is a start to get the community engaged with the tribes' history.

"I am hoping that I can be a catalyst for this [statement], especially the idea of partnerships," Ross said. "I want to be involved in the Waco community by engaging and educating people about our language, culture, heritage, our history and our future."

NUTCRACKER from A5

new dancers to join.

"We accept all skill levels," Lyons said. "We've had people who have never done ballet before come and join up. In fact, we have a couple this semester who have never done ballet before."

Additionally, Lampasas said the inclusivity the team offers enhances their team dynamic.

"We try to incorporate everyone we can and everyone that is interested," she said. "I feel that kind of makes our group a lot of fun. There's definitely a 'no judgment' type of thing."

That positive team dynamic also comes from the close relationships the dancers have built during their time with the team, Lampasas said.

With multiple two-hour-long practices per week and performances in the winter and spring, Lampasas said she's been able to build close relationships with other dancers

and strengthen the group's chemistry on the dance floor.

"I feel like a lot of us are really close friends," Lampasas said. "We try to hang out outside of ballet as well, just to get a feel for one another and build that chemistry. The people that we've had are really committed, and I feel like we all really dance well together."

Lyons said the performance will put students right into that Christmas spirit because the SUB leaves all of its Christmas on 5th decorations up in Barfield, including the Christmas tree.

"I think that it sets up the theme pretty nicely for us," Lyons said. "The ambiance really just screams ballet to me."

The Nutcracker performance is free to attend and seats will be offered on a first-come, first-serve basis.



Photo courtesy of Kat Kiesling

GRACEFUL Dancers of all backgrounds, experience levels and body types are welcomed with open arms by Bear Ballet.

COFFEE from A1

many students turn to caffeine and energy drinks to keep up with the demands of finals, hoping to improve their productivity and focus.

"Students often think caffeine will help them study better or stay more alert, but they may not fully understand the potential risks," he said.

According to Asikis, these risks can include dependence, heightened anxiety and poor sleep quality.

"Caffeine has a long half-life, so even if you drink it earlier in the day, it can affect your sleep at night," he said. "Lack of sleep can make it harder to focus the next day, creating a cycle that's hard to break."

Asikis said long-term reliance on stimulants like caffeine can have lasting impacts. Over time, students may develop a tolerance, needing higher doses to achieve the same effects.

"When caffeine use becomes excessive, withdrawal symptoms like headaches, irritability and fatigue can occur when you stop," he said. "These effects can make it even harder to manage stress during finals."

Asikis said students should focus on self-care practices to maintain their energy and manage stress in healthier ways.

"Regular sleep, balanced meals and physical activity can make a huge difference," he said. "Instead of relying on energy drinks, students might try switching to lower-caffeine options like tea and avoid caffeine after noon for

better sleep."

Asikis encouraged students to reflect on their habits and seek support if they find themselves struggling to maintain balance.

"It's easy to get caught up in the pressure, but sometimes it's about taking small steps to prioritize your well-being," he said.

For students who need help managing stress and energy levels, the Counseling Center offers resources and strategies tailored to the unique challenges of finals week.

"We're here to help students find ways to manage their energy without putting too much strain on their bodies," Asikis said.

The National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health says too much caffeine can cause an irregular heartbeat and high blood pressure. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention also warns that energy drinks can lead to dehydration, heart issues, anxiety and trouble sleeping.

By understanding the long-term impacts of stimulants like caffeine and exploring healthier alternatives, students can take steps toward managing finals with a focus on both their performance and well-being.

"It's easy to get caught up in the pressure, but sometimes it's about taking small steps to prioritize [your] well-being," Asikis said.

FOOD FOR ALL from A1

"Not only are we going to increase production to be able to give back to the community, but [we're] also going to provide workshops to give them the education that they need to be able to model this everywhere else on Waco's community," Valdez said.

Waco's Sustainable Community and Regenerative Agriculture Project has just concluded its first year of collaboration with the Baylor community garden (BCG), turning it into a hands-on lab that promotes regenerative agriculture.

"So when you think about it that way, being able to create a local food system can go a long way in helping people grow their own food," Boddie said.

This multidisciplinary effort will be concentrated in Baylor's campus as well,

according to King.

"One thing we'll also be doing is to create these micro-grants," King said. "[They] are basically going to go to faculty and community partners to form projects and direct student projects that directly benefit work across all kinds of disciplines."

Aligning with the university's new strategic plan Baylor in Deeds, the BCG and grant investigators are excited to see what the project will bring.

"The opportunity to support the flourishing of students is an important part of this project as well as the interdisciplinary work," Boddie said. "We're excited about the opportunities to live out this new strategic plan in ways that can engage students, faculty and staff, as well as our community partners."

2025 YEARBOOK

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