



Thursday, February 13, 2025

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EDITORIAL:
This Valentine's Day, focus on self-love, sweet treats



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OUTFIELD OF DREAMS:
Bears return top three sluggers



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WILD FOR LOVE:
Animals couple up at Cameron Park Zoo

The possible dismantling of the Department of Education looms as the Trump administration shakes up the federal government, leaving educators asking...

WHAT COMES NEXT?

COLE GEE
Staff Writer

The Trump administration has been looking at the possibility of issuing an executive order to ban the Department of Education. This move is part of a strategic plan by Trump and Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency to cut back the federal workforce to relieve debt.

With the DOE possibly on the chopping block, many teachers are worried about what their classrooms will look like in the future.

The dissolution of the DOE

has long been a goal of the Republican Party. The effort dates back to the '80s with Ronald Reagan's campaign for president. He stated that "welfare and education are two functions that should be primarily carried out at the state and local levels." Despite Reagan's promises to eliminate the DOE, he failed due to a majority Democratic house.

Despite this loss however, the Republican Party has maintained this agenda for decades. Project 2025 is the most recent political initiative by Republicans to remove the department. The agenda also promotes

universal private school choice and would eliminate the Head Start program and rescind federal protections for LGBTQ+ students.

The issue some lawmakers and teachers have with Project 2025 regarding the DOE is the funding the DOE provides to thousands of local schools and programs through its \$80 billion budget. From supporting public school programs and students with disabilities to providing student loans for college, these people may be vulnerable if a bill passes to do away with the

EDUCATION >> A8



Kassidy Tsikitas | Photo Editor

LEARNING TO ADAPT Teachers and educators are confused about the future of education in the U.S. because of the potential dismantling of the Department of Education.

Aviation Sciences professor discusses flight safety



Brady Harris | Photographer
VETERAN PILOT Aviation Sciences professor Russell "Rusty" Sloan stands in front of his personal collection from his time in the Navy and Coast Guard.

JAMES LAIRD
Reporter

With recent tragedies in air travel as well as major airlines consistently being in the news, aircraft safety has become a concern for many in our society. Russell "Rusty" Sloane, lecturer in Baylor's aviation sciences department, analyzed some of these tragedies and went over some of the training and safety measures that are involved in aviation.

Sloane, who served in the U.S. Navy and Coast Guard as an aviator for 22 years, spent time flying the airspace where a military Black Hawk helicopter crashed into an American Airlines flight on Jan. 29.

"I flew that airspace pretty much every day, off and on for four years, so [I'm] really super familiar with that airspace," Sloane said.

Sloane said his main duty was providing security for that airspace which includes knowing helicopter and jet routes.

Sloane said that with an event like this, everyone wants to give their opinion on what happened and what went wrong but it is important to filter down the information and stick to what is really true.

"Everyone is coming out saying this airspace — and the airspace is called Bravo airspace or B airspace — is, 'Oh, it's so dangerous.' I would say that it's a little more contained,"

Sloane said. "It's a little more condensed than other airspace. But if you get familiar with it, it's not dangerous."

Crestwood, Ky. freshman and aviation sciences major Elliott Crumbo warns against speculating too much into what occurred.

"My first thought is, of course how tragic an accident like this is, regardless of reasons. My next thought is about all the projections people are making and trying to guess the cause for this crash as this happens every time there is an aviation crash in the news," Crumbo said. "But as one of my aviation

FLIGHT SAFETY >> A8

Remembering the 'Waco Horror'

The city remained silent about the tragic lynching of Jesse Washington for decades

BLAKE HOLLINGSWORTH
Staff Writer

On May 15, 1916, Jesse Washington, a Black 17-year old, was lynched in Waco after being convicted of murdering 53-year-old Lucy Fryer. The atrocity, infamously known as the "Waco Horror," occurred in broad daylight in front of at least 15,000 people according to retired Baylor history professor Dr. James SoRelle.

The mob's actions sparked a national outcry to outlaw lynching, with the National

Association for the Advancement of Colored People leading the charge. The organization condemned the execution in its monthly publication.

"Any talk of the triumph of Christianity, or the spread of human culture, is idle twaddle so long as the Waco lynching is possible in the United States of America," W.E.B. Du Bois, founder and chief editor, wrote in *The Crisis*, Vol. 12 (No. 3).

The magazine's July 1916 edition also featured an eight-page supplement detailing the events, as recounted by suffrage activist Elisabeth Freeman. It

included gruesome photographs of Washington's charred body and the tightly packed crowd, many smiling as they watched. These momentous pictures were captured by American photographer Fred Gildersleeve, at then-Waco mayor John Dollins' request.

The uncensored nature of the story opened Americans' eyes to

HISTORY >> A8

New book tackles greed as root of systemic racism

ELLIOTT NACE
Staff Writer

The Institute for Faith and Learning hosted a book launch party on Tuesday afternoon celebrating the release of Dr. Malcolm Foley's newly-available book, "The Anti-Greed Gospel."

Foley, a historian and special adviser to President Linda Livingstone for equity and campus engagement, informed "The Anti-Greed Gospel" through his doctoral research on Black reactions to lynchings in the early 20th century, and in turn presents an alternate account of historical incentives behind racism and racial disparity.

"It became clear to me that our conversations about race are

not fundamentally conversations about hate or ignorance or identity," Foley said. "What they really are are conversations about greed. Race shows up as a justifying and mystifying narrative."

Foley's outlook on greed as the source of racial bigotry, strives toward greater reform as opposed to just inclusivity.

"That's not the future that I'm looking for," Foley said. "I want a future where everyone has the resources that they need to be able to flourish because the evil at root here is exploitation."

Foley noted that the issue of race spins out of economic opportunities

ROOTS OF RACISM >> A8

GOT SOMETHING TO SAY?

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

By James Ellis | Cartoonist

Embrace the sweet treat, a form of self-love this Valentine's Day

THE EDITORIAL BOARD

When you're a college student, the routine of going to class, doing homework and having a job while remembering to eat and cram in time to sleep — can be exhausting. Your Google Calendar is probably full of colorful blocks telling you just exactly what you're doing each day, and odds are by the time you get off campus for the day, all you want to do is take a nap or start scrolling.

While starting off into space or trying to drown out the chatter in your brain can be tempting, we encourage you to do one more thing before you totally check out. But unlike the other things you might be up to day-to-day, this last thing is for you and you alone: the sweet treat.

No, that doesn't just mean going and spending \$10 on a pastry and a coffee in Moody Library — though that's certainly one way to go about it. It's really about doing something simple and easy that brings you enjoyment, and it could be anything.

It could be grabbing a sweet treat or a coffee without thinking about what you have to do afterward. It could be taking some time to call a friend or family member, or finding a nice place to sit on campus and take in the scenery. Whatever it is, do something that brings you a little bit of peace and enjoyment.

Whatever it is that you do, the spirit of the sweet treat is finding some time — even just a few minutes — to give yourself a gift.

In the process, you'll find yourself breaking up the tedium of each day while giving yourself something to look forward to, rather than counting down the weeks until spring break, Dia or summer break. And during the depths of February, when walks to class are cold and windy and the next 10 months of the year are looking longer by the day, that might be the thing you need.

This time of year is sneaky with how quickly the Valentine's Day excitement can have us caught up in romance, bringing the potential to neglect self-love. Many college students are busy chasing romantic partners



and doing everything they can to make a

date on Feb. 14. And while there can be nothing like the excitement of a new romance, it can be a time when you're especially vulnerable to overcommitting yourself to plans or trying to be someone you're not in order to impress another person.

On the flip side, by doing something every day for yourself, you are constantly reaffirming that you're as worthy of your time and attention as the people around you that you care about and attend to.

Meanwhile, February happens to be one of the toughest months for those struggling with seasonal affective disorder, according to the American Medical Association. The days are long and get dark fast, and it feels like you've been living in one sweatshirt since December, doesn't it? While the only thing to make seasonal depression go away is for Spring to arrive, indulging in some self-love is one way to alleviate those hardships for a little while and can help you get through the season.

This Valentine's season, don't forget to love yourself, too — and go get that sweet treat.

Practice 'Grunity' this Sing season

CLAIRE-MARIE SCOTT
LTVN Reporter



With All-University Sing on the horizon and the level of competition increasing each year, it is natural to feel some sense of comparison to other

competitors and chapters. But, as a Panhellenic community, we should be uplifting and cheering on our fellow chapters.

Sing is a competition where student organizations perform Broadway-style routines complete with costumes, props and live singing. Each year every organization picks a new theme, which is kept secret until opening night. What makes Sing so competitive is Pigskin, held on homecoming weekend, where the top eight acts get to perform again.

This is a time to come together for "grunity," — or Greek unity — a term coined by many Panhellenic communities. The term encourages women of any affiliation to work across chapters to show love and support. This should be applied throughout the year, but specifically during the Sing season. As women, we should be uplifting and kind, cheering loudly for each other's acts and supporting one another during the highs and the lows.

There are many ways that we, as Greek women, can support each other. The biggest is to just cheer on

every chapter. No matter if you are watching a show in the audience or Roxy Grove, positive reinforcement does a lot to boost confidence and attitudes while doing something as stressful as Sing. Check up on your friends and make sure they are taking care of themselves during this hectic time. Each chapter pours so much heart into their acts that it can sometimes be hard to practice self-care in this season.

Cheering other chapters doesn't have to stop at Sing season, either. Research from Harvard Business Review suggests that women who are seeking leadership positions in the workforce benefit from having a close circle of female friendships who can share information with each other. These contacts can help women find more job opportunities and navigate challenges.

The article even adds statistics that women who have a circle of one to three women "landed leadership positions that were 2.5 times higher in authority and pay than those of their female peers lacking this combination." Additionally, Forbes found data showing that women not supporting each other in the workforce "can negatively impact organizational performance and talent retention."

At the end of the day, Sing is made to be a fun, enjoyable experience, where chapters show off their creativity to the public. There is already so much animosity in the world, especially when it comes to pitting women against each other. We should be quick to unite to make a positive impact and show the strength of "grunity."

Why I think 'Cowboy Carter' deserved Album of the Year

LAUREN HOLCOMB
LTVN Reporter



It's been one week since this year's Grammy awards, and as always, the Academy's decisions have caused uproar. One award in particular has been

upsetting for some — Beyoncé's first-ever Album of the Year, earned for "Cowboy Carter." Amid the arguments, it can feel ostracizing to agree with what seems like the minority opinion. However, I'm here to say loud and proud that I completely agree with the Academy. "Cowboy Carter" deserved Album of the Year.

However, I do not think it deserved its other big win, Best Country Album. The album pushed the boundaries of the genre and the definition of what country music is. But, that is what makes it stand out against all music — not just country. I do not think the album was solely country, so that award should have gone to a different nominee. If you watched the ceremony, we all saw that this award even shocked Queen Bey.

"Cowboy Carter" was up against seven other incredible albums, and in no way do I want this to come off as me saying those albums are bad. Most of them have made an impact on me as a person, a listener and a young adult in a world where musicians influence our culture.

I have to admit I've never heard

of André 3000's "New Blue Sun" or Jacob Collier's "Djesse Vol. 4." I respect the artists and applaud their nominations, but I have not heard of anyone upset that they didn't win.

Chappell Roan's "The Rise and Fall of a Midwest Princess" was groundbreaking for her career and brought hits that made their way onto my playlists, but its pop nature lacked variety. The same goes for Sabrina Carpenter's "Short n' Sweet" and Charli XCX's "Brat." These pop princesses owned the charts, but their storytelling was simple and not groundbreaking.

Moving on to the two I heard the most backlash about — Taylor Swift's "The Tortured Poets Department" and Billie Eilish's "Hit Me Hard and Soft." I am not a huge Taylor fan (sorry, Swifties), but I appreciate her music and artistry. Both Swift and Eilish used these albums as personal breakthroughs. They told stories of what they've been through, where they want to go and how they see themselves as artists. Their storytelling was unique, but not as universal as an Album of the Year should be.

"Cowboy Carter" has never been done before.

Each song is unique. All 27 sound different and take me on a sonic journey. The flow of one into the next is smooth, and listening to the album from top to bottom is an experience. When I first listened to the album last Easter weekend, I was screaming in my car. I remember sitting in the Walgreens parking lot by my house in Houston, unable to move. It felt like I was at a concert, and that is what makes albums great.

There are two acts inside the album, smoke breaks, transition tracks and guest artists that bring diversity to an already distinctive album. It challenges the very idea of complacency in music. Starting with "AMERICAN REQUIEM," she begins the story by saying, "them big ideas are buried here" and "it's a lot of talkin' goin' on, while I sing my song." She articulates from the top that her take on country music was bound to ruffle feathers, but it was time to take a stand. There's music for dancing, like "YA YA," "RIIVERDANCE" and "SWEET HONEY BUCKIIN." I was in tears listening to "PROTECTOR" and "II MOST WANTED." We even got to hear from country icons Willie Nelson and Dolly Parton in "DOLLY P" and Beyoncé's take on "JOLENE."

This album did exactly what she set out to do — challenge what a genre is and what it should be. It shows that Beyoncé is more than just a pop star — she is a true visionary. She did not say that country should start over or be something completely new, but rather that its depth and history should not be forgotten during an era of change.

There is a reason her popularity has stood the test of time. Yes, she has wealth and immense power, but no amount of money can buy raw talent. She is a performer and truly one of the best creatives of our generation. "Cowboy Carter" is beautifully versed, intriguing, individual and most importantly, the best album of 2024.

And no — put your jokes aside — she did not pay me to say this.

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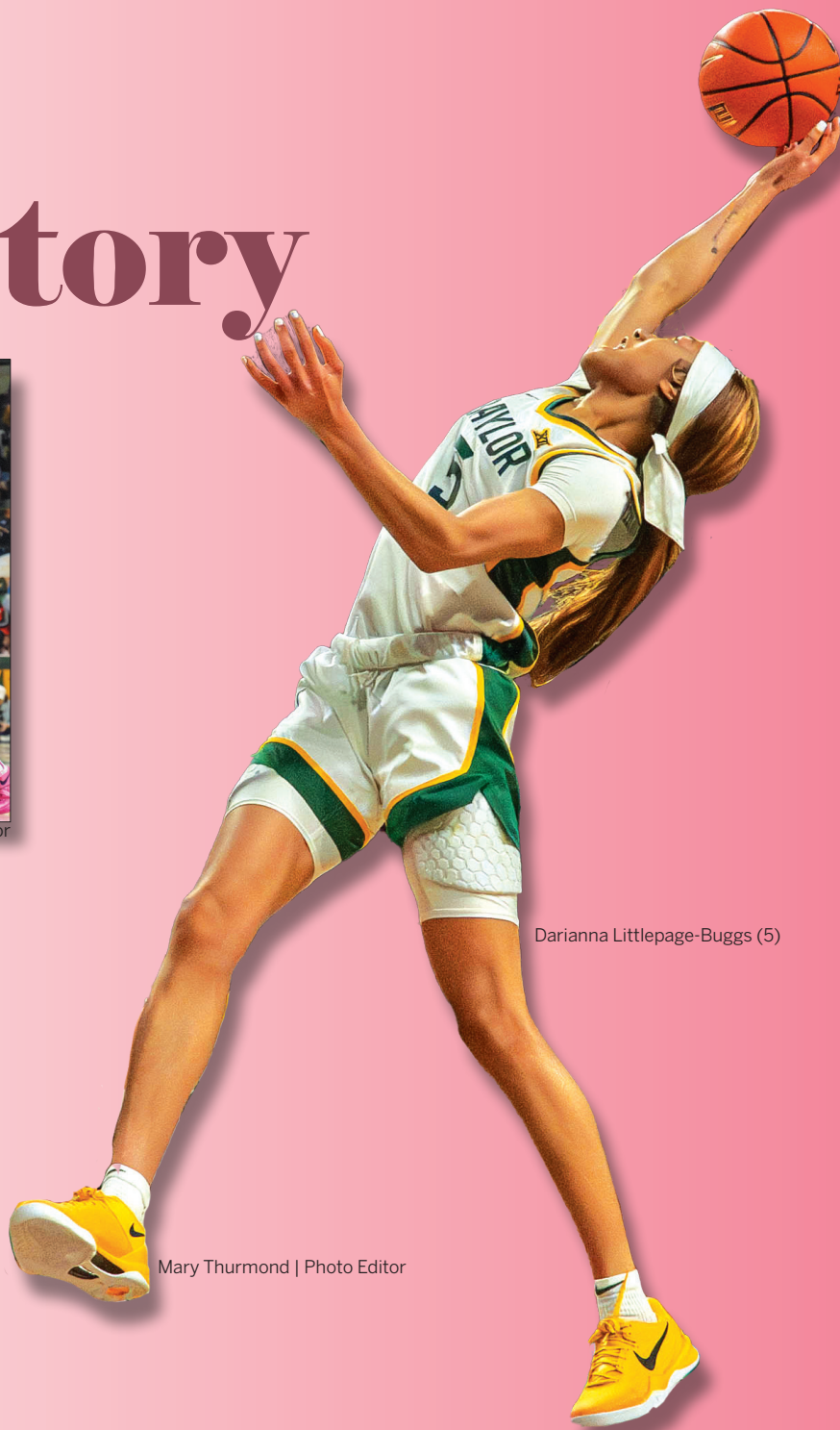
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Love, Basketball & Sweet Victory



Mary Thurmond | Photo Editor

PURE MOTION Senior guard Yaya Felder pushes through the defense before going in for a layup during the second half of No. 25 Baylor's 75-65 win over No. 18 West Virginia Tuesday night at Foster Pavilion.



Darianna Littlepage-Buggs (5)

Mary Thurmond | Photo Editor



Mary Thurmond | Photo Editor

BREAK AWAY Junior forward Bella Fontleroy maneuvers around WV Senior guard Kyah Watson after receiving a pass.



Mary Thurmond | Photo Editor

FANCY FOOTWORK Senior guard Jada Walker contemplates her options for a pass around the Mountaineers' aggressive defense.



Aliyah Matharu (9)

Mary Thurmond | Photo Editor



Mary Thurmond | Photo Editor

CUPID'S SHOT Junior forward Bella Fontleroy shoots a three-pointer despite an attempted block by WV fifth-year forward Kylee Blacksten.



Mary Thurmond | Photo Editor

STEADY RYTHMN Graduate guard Sarah Andrews dribbles a rebound back to Baylor's side of the court.

Animals find love at Cameron Park Zoo

JANAY BOYD
Reporter

At Cameron Park Zoo, Valentine's Day isn't just for humans. Some of the zoo's most beloved residents are celebrating love in their own way. From lifelong bonds to budding romances, the animal kingdom has its own version of love stories, and this year, the zoo is embracing the season with festive decorations and special events for both animals and visitors alike.

While Fort Worth senior Landon Rossi is a frequent visitor to see the capybaras, he admits he hasn't given much thought to animal relationships.

"The last time I thought about animals being together was when I was a kid," Rossi said.

Among the most devoted couples at the zoo are the African penguins, who, according to the Maryland Zoo's website, are known for forming lifelong bonds. The Cameron Park Zoo is home to 22 penguins, 11 of which are happily paired. Holley Day, education coordinator at the zoo, said some couples have successfully raised offspring or even acted as foster parents.

"When you go to our exhibit — when you come visit the zoo — there is a board with their names and who they are next to is who they are actually paired with," Day said. "Cosmo is paired with Newton, Sushi — such a cute name — is with Theodore, and Finley is with Possum."

Penguins aren't the only lovebirds at the zoo.

Giraffes and orangutans have also established strong familial units. While male giraffes are polyamorous according to WorldAtlas, Dane is a proud father to a baby giraffe at the zoo. Meanwhile, orangutan couple May and KJ are raising their young one.

Other relationships are still in the early stages — like sloths Chewy and Malohi, who are taking things slow.

"They're still dating, if you will — still getting to know each other," Day said. "Hopefully, in the future ... they become boyfriend and girlfriend."

While some animals form lifelong bonds, others take a different approach to relationships, like Vivian, the zoo's 70-year-old king vulture.

"She's very old, and when she's done with a boyfriend, she definitely breaks up with them," Day said.

Throughout the zoo, festive Valentine's decorations — including pink boxes and hearts — add to the romantic atmosphere. But for human visitors, the zoo is offering a

unique way to celebrate: the "Mating Game," a themed trivia night on Friday from 6-9 p.m.

For Rossi, spending Valentine's Day at the zoo followed by a game night seems like an unexpectedly perfect way to celebrate.

"Seeing the zoo couples would be a fun way to spend the day, especially with a significant other," Rossi said. "Before a Valentine's reservation, you can enjoy nature's love with your own."

For \$100 per ticket or \$200 per couple, guests can enjoy a champagne toast at the new Gloria and F.M. Young Penguin Shores exhibit, a three-course dinner, four drink tickets, animal encounters and a playful trivia-style game.

"We will have trivia about animal mating behaviors, which is fun and silly, and this year, we're adding a champagne toast at our new penguin exhibit, so that'll be a lot of fun," Day said. "Then we'll come back to our new education center and have dinner."

While the zoo hosts the Mating Game annually, this is only the second year incorporating the trivia component, Day said.

According to the Cameron Park Zoo website, proceeds for the Mating Game event help to fund the zoo's education department. Tickets for Mating Game are sold out, but these many animal pairs can still be seen at the zoo.



Brady Harris | Photographer

Column: The Lariat's favorite love songs

SHANE MEAD
Staff Writer

We've officially reached the season of love! What better way to kick it off than reminiscing over some classic love songs? Get to know the Lariat staff by learning about the love songs that hold a special meaning in our hearts.

"SOMETHING STUPID" BY NANCY AND FRANK SINATRA

"This song takes me back to a time that's funny to look back on, which is when I started dating my girlfriend. It was always the perfect song to play with her while driving on the Pacific Coast Highway during warm summer evenings while enjoying beautiful sunset views.

It's funny because the song is about not wanting to say something stupid, specifically admitting love. I've always been the person to blurt out something stupid, so it's relatable in that way, and I was so cautious of what I would say in front of my girlfriend before we started dating."

Shane Mead | Staff Writer

"MAKE YOU FEEL MY LOVE" BY BOB DYLAN

"I just love this song. My parents would play it a lot in the car when I was little. It's a very simple song, but it's very elegant in its sound, and the words are very meaningful.

But I do like the Adele version better, because that's what I grew up on."

Olivia Turner | Arts & Life Editor

"I WILL" BY THE BEATLES

"This is one of the best love songs that isn't also a breakup song, but it's still a little melancholy. McCartney sings about a love he's yet to find, hoping they'll come to him the way the lyrics did — out of thin air.

I love this song for its hopeful tone with just a small twinge of yearning, mixed with its soulful acoustic sound. And McCartney's voice is just classic — unbeatable."

Emma Weidmann | Editor-in-Chief

"LOVE ME" BY ELVIS PRESLEY

"Unfortunately, this song is attached to one I cannot emotionally detach from yet.



Photo courtesy of Spotify

This song was played for me, and it was the first time that I actually realized that another person that's outside of my family could care for me. It showed that I could actually have an impact in someone's life.

It made me have a deeper meaning to life and love."

Kassidy Tsikitas | Photo Editor

"IRIS" BY THE GOO GOO DOLLS

"The band performed the song live in the early 2000s and it rained on them, and it was really iconic and is viral on YouTube now.

The guitar part is so unique and iconic. The song just resonates with your emotion and passion, and you can really tell it's heart grasping. It's a great song."

Kalena Reynolds | Staff Writer

"REMINISCING" BY LITTLE RIVERBAND

"The first time my boyfriend and I

ever hung out, I showed him this song. It just kind of became the anthem of our relationship."

Erika Kuehl | Opinion Editor

"HEY STUPID, I LOVE YOU" BY JP SAXE

"This is from my favorite artist, and I love the jokey-but-heartfelt nature of the song."

Foster Nicholas | Sports Editor

"NEW YEAR'S DAY" BY TAYLOR SWIFT

"This song encompasses the idea of finding someone who isn't only there for the highs, but in the quiet moments that follow. A love that occurs in the chaos and the calm, in the rush and rest alike is hard to find.

It's not all about the fireworks and the celebrations; it's about being there when the confetti has settled and you can be your own authentic self."

Hannah Webb | Copy Editor

These unique date ideas will leave your Valentine smitten

BELLA WHITMORE
Intern

When it comes to planning the perfect Valentine's day date, the options can be overwhelming. It's a good thing Waco offers a blend of creative experiences and charming local spots that help set the stage for the perfect date. Whether you're looking for something relaxed or interactive, these unique date ideas will make for a memorable time with your special someone.

A ROMANTIC PICNIC AT LAKE WACO

There's something so timeless about a lakeside picnic, and Lake Waco provides the perfect backdrop. With its scenic trails and stunning sunset views, this spot is ideal for a laid-back yet intimate date. Pack a picnic basket with your favorite charcuterie board essentials and a bottle of sparkling wine or cider. Bring a cozy blanket for the colder weather, and find a quiet spot at one of the local parks. If you're the adventurous type, rent a kayak or paddleboard to explore the lake before having the picnic. It's an easy yet meaningful way to enjoy each other's company away from the usual bustling restaurant setting.

GET HANDS-ON WITH A COOKING CLASS

For those who enjoy collaborating and trying new things, a cooking class is a fantastic way to bond while polishing up your culinary skills. Waco has several great options, from high-end experiences to casual, hands-on workshops. The Heir's Table offers cooking classes with a wide range of cuisine options, while Over the Plate offers a variety of classes including a Galentine's event if you find yourself more friend-focused this February. Whether you're kneading dough, stirring sauces or baking a dessert, learning together in the kitchen is a great way to connect. Plus, you'll have a new take-home skill to bring into future home date nights!

EXPLORE WACO'S VINTAGE AND ANTIQUE SHOPS

If you and your date love thrifting or hunting for hidden treasures, spend an afternoon browsing Waco's unique vintage and antique scene. Spice Village, located in the heart of downtown, is a must-visit for trendy home decor, accessories and boutique finds made by local artists and business owners. For a more classic antiquing experience, the LaSalle Shoppes and Junque in the Trunk offer a good mixture of retro finds and unique furniture pieces that make for unique additions to your space. You could even set a fun challenge for yourselves — like who can find the most unusual item or a gift under \$10 for each other — to add a playful twist to your shopping without breaking the bank.

LAUGH THE NIGHT AWAY AT THE WACO HIPPODROME THEATRE

End your date on a high note with a comedy show at the historic Waco Hippodrome Theatre. The beautifully restored downtown venue hosts a variety of entertainment, but the comedy nights are perfect for couples looking to unwind and share a laugh. From improv shows to stand-up sets, humor is a great way to break the ice for new couples or add excitement and fun to long-term couples. The Waco Hippodrome Theatre has Jesse Payton hosting a Valentine's comedy special called "Couple's Therapy" on Saturday.

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Camie Jobe | Photographer

ALL SMILES Redshirt senior outfielder Enzo Apodaca (3) started all 53 games for Baylor baseball in 2024 with a .333 batting average, 46 runs, 42 runs batted in and 108 total bases.

Outfield of Dreams: Baseball returns top three hitters to lead team on, off field

JEFFREY COHEN
Sports Writer

On Feb. 23, 2024, just five games into the Baylor baseball season, senior left fielder Hunter Simmons crashed into the wall and suffered a season-ending injury, leaving a group of three transfer outfielders to lead the team. Enzo Apodaca, Ty Johnson and Wesley Jordan did not just meet expectations — they excelled — and are ready for one last run together.

“We’re all obviously super concerned with how Scoob [Hunter Simmons] was doing,” senior right fielder Enzo Apodaca said. “As far as competing-wise, I feel like we weren’t too nervous, actually, because we have a lot of guys that were ready to step up and fill that role.”

All three seniors came to Baylor with experience and accolades, but none at the Big 12 level. Apodaca, manning right field, earned All-WCC honors as a freshman at Gonzaga. Johnson, who was previously coached by head coach Mitch Thompson at McLennan Community College, settled in center field. Left field was mostly handled by Jordan when he wasn’t designated hitting. Jordan was an all-region first-team outfielder at Navarro College before landing with the Bears.

Apodaca believes the experience they had with each other as transfers last season strengthened their bond on the field and prepared them for one more go.

“Coming in last year, we were all new guys coming into the program,” Apodaca said. “Just being able to play with each other through last spring, through this fall, we’ve been able to really bond, and honestly, it should just help our

team chemistry out in the outfield.”

As the season went on, the three outfielders emerged above the rest in the lineup. Apodaca led the team in almost every major hitting category, including batting average, hits and RBIs. Both Johnson and Jordan played their roles in the lineup — Johnson was the consistent and speedy leadoff hitter, stealing 10 bases and hitting .313, while Jordan launched a team-high nine home runs on .331 hitting. They also held the top batting averages on the team.

As leaders in the lineup throughout the season, the outfielders kept an unwavering team-first mindset, fixated on what the team could accomplish. All three credit their success to the confidence that someone is always ready to step up behind them.

“We live together now, so we’re always talking baseball and figuring out what’s best for the team,” Jordan said. “At the end of the day, we have 40 guys that can step up at any point.”

Entering the 2025 season, the outfield unit has some hype and high expectations following their strong performances the season prior. Again, the trio refuses to take away any credit from their teammates.

“As far as outside expectations go, we always talk in the circle, we’re really the only ones that know what we have,” Johnson said. “We’re with each other and that’s the most important thing is being where our feet are.”

Along with rising confidence and expectations on the field, the Bears have found that a renewed dedication to faith has been a leading factor in the team’s

growth on and off the diamond.

“This team has really all grown in their faith,” Johnson said. “That’s helped us be super present in the moment and not worry about what anybody else has to say about us.”

Like Baylor men’s basketball and head coach Scott Drew’s philosophy of creating a “culture of J.O.Y.” Baylor Ballpark is full of

players striving to become spiritual leaders throughout the program. Apodaca and Johnson mentioned how, in the past, the team had not fully reflected their dedication to their faith during team activities. They said the team had come together during the offseason and decided to pursue the spiritual aspect of the team. Apodaca credits the team’s weekly Bible study as one of the main ways they have grown closer off the field.

“We do weekly Bible studies with the team, all player-led,” Apodaca said. “It’s able to put baseball away and focus on what’s really important, which is your walk with the Lord. It’s really a special moment to just be able to bond with your brothers in Christ like that and be able to just exchange and grow deeper on that spiritual level together.”

Faith has manifested itself in other ways, too. Seven players were baptized over the fall. Apodaca and Johnson also mentioned how redshirt senior right-handed pitcher Cole Stasio proposed having a poster board in the locker room where the guys could “write a bunch of quotes or Bible verses that they want to share with the team.”

Apodaca and Johnson said the same thing about their outlook on this season: “Soak it all in.” They believe the motto is also a common sentiment among the rest of the seniors on the team. Apodaca challenged the other veterans to “squeeze out as much baseball as we can” as the Bears look to make the Big 12 Tournament for the first time under Thompson.

“I think there was a little bit of nerves going in the last year,” Johnson said. “This year, I think everyone’s just happy to get going. Everyone’s just like, ‘Man, this is going to be so fun. I can’t wait to get going.’”

Jordan credited the team’s seniority as a part of why they were ready to take on the new season and bring success back to the Brazos.

“With how college baseball is now, being older is better,” Jordan said. “With a lot of guys that have shown that they can do it at this level, we can go in head held high.”

The Bears begin their 2025 campaign at 3 p.m. Friday against Youngstown State at Baylor Ballpark.



Wesley Jordan (33)
Camie Jobe | Photographer

Support from the sidelines: Bartley solidifies identity after injury

JULIA KONESKY
Reporter

Graduate forward Madison Bartley transferred to Baylor before her senior season but dealt with injuries for most of her time as a Bear. She announced her medical retirement on Jan. 24, but plans to remain with the team providing “support from the sidelines.”

Before transferring, Bartley started at Belmont, where she was a two-time First Team all-conference selection, averaging 11.6 points and 4.7 rebounds per game.

“Going to the NCAA tournaments for most of my career and helping Belmont get there was just really cool,” Bartley said when reflecting on her time before Baylor. “I just feel like everything was meaningful because it’s led me to be the person I am today.”

Bartley found a community at Baylor through her teammates, coaches and fans who embraced her. She continues to support her teammates and shows up for her fans at all team events.

“I think it makes it easy when you’re surrounded by great people and a great program,” Bartley said. “Being able to come to Baylor was hard but also easy with my teammates around me and my coaches who made it easy for me to get used to the environment and the team. I felt like it was always the right choice for me. I’ve always felt supported, and I feel even more supported now.”

Bartley wore No. 3 for the Bears and appeared in 21 games her senior year before missing a portion of the season due to a lower back injury. In her Baylor debut against Southern University, she put



Kassidy Tsikitas | Photo Editor

1K CLUB Forward Madison Bartley (3) scored 1096 points in her five year college career at Belmont and Baylor before medically retiring in January.

up her season-best 12 points, shooting 5-for-6 in 17 minutes. While dealing with her injury for the past two seasons, she averaged just 2.5 points per game.

She made the difficult decision public, when Baylor women’s basketball made a post to X.

“This was not an easy decision for me to make,” Bartley said in the post. “I want to thank God for the opportunity to play at Baylor and for the chance to play the sport of basketball that I love.”

Bartley is currently working on finishing her master’s degree, which is set to be completed in December. She is undergoing regular treatment for her back while preparing for her future aspirations of being a teacher and a mom.

“My identity is through Christ, so I don’t feel like my identity has changed much after making this decision,” Bartley said. “I think that I’ve just had a change in my life and my path, and that’s okay.”

BAYLOR BOLD WEEKEND

Baseball vs. Youngstown State

3 p.m. Friday @ Baylor Ballpark
2 p.m. Saturday @ Baylor Ballpark
Noon Sunday @ Baylor Ballpark

Men’s Tennis vs. No. 1 TCU

6:30 p.m. Friday @ Hawkins Indoor

No. 23 Softball vs. Hofstra

6:30 p.m. Friday @ Getterman Stadium
5 p.m. Saturday @ Getterman Stadium
12:30 p.m. Sunday @ Getterman Stadium

No. 23 Softball vs. No. 3 OU

2:30 p.m. Saturday @ Getterman Stadium
3 p.m. Sunday @ Getterman Stadium

Men’s Basketball vs. WVU

1 p.m. @ Foster Pavilion

No. 10 Equestrian vs. No. 4 OSU

Noon @ Willis Family Equestrian Center

A&T vs. LIU

5 p.m. @ Ferrell Center

