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EDITORIAL

Our future shuts down with the government

When the government shuts down, it's easy to shrug and think, "That's Washington's problem." But here's the truth: when the lights go out in D.C., the shadows reach our classrooms, our dorm rooms and our financial aid accounts. The shutdown may seem like political theater performed by distant figures in suits, but the damage has already spread not only to our campuses, but our faith in the system itself.

College students, especially, live in that in-between space where politics feels both omnipresent and irrelevant. We scroll through news about Congress the same way we scroll through TikTok drama: detached and entertained, but never engaged. It feels distant, until it's not. Because while we're busy saying "that doesn't affect me," federal aid officers are being furloughed, campus safety investigations are being delayed and the scaffolding of higher education — the part that makes it accessible — is quietly crumbling.

A government shutdown isn't just about parks closing or paychecks freezing. It's about the quiet erosion of the systems that keep opportunity alive. When 632 of the 747 employees in the Federal Student Aid department are sent home, that doesn't just mean slower FAFSA processing. It means real students, with real dreams, sitting in dorm rooms wondering how to make tuition work. It means delays, uncertainty and the subtle but powerful message that young people's futures can wait.

And maybe that's the deeper problem — the way this country treats young people as an afterthought. Shutdowns,

stalemates and political theater all thrive on the assumption that we won't notice, or worse, that we won't care. Politicians count on our exhaustion and bank on our cynicism, as apathy is their greatest ally. As long as we believe our voices don't matter, they get to keep speaking for us.

But if there's one thing history keeps proving, it's that disengagement is dangerous. The less we pay attention, the more those in power can afford to ignore us. And they do. They cut education budgets, underfund climate initiatives and treat student debt as though it's inconsequential — all while expecting us to simply wait our turn. Yet we're the ones who will live longest with the consequences of their short-term decisions.

Maybe that's why this generation feels so tired. We're inheriting chaos we didn't create and then being told it's our task to fix it. The government shuts down and we keep studying for midterms, filling out forms, applying for jobs — all while the institutions meant to support us flicker in and out of functionality. It's no wonder so many young people feel politically powerless. The system feels broken, because in many ways, it is.

But here's the thing: broken systems don't repair themselves. They're rebuilt by people who are willing to get their hands dirty. Every election, every protest, every piece of advocacy — these are the small acts of repair that hold democracy together. And that's where college students come in. We are not the audience of democracy; we are



James Ellis | Cartoonist

the architects of its future.

When youth voter turnout is low, we lose more than representation; we lose leverage. We lose the ability to demand better from the people who claim to serve us. Voting may not solve everything, but not voting guarantees that nothing changes. It's like refusing to study for a test because you think the teacher won't grade fairly; maybe that's true, but you've still handed over your control. The same logic applies to politics: when we check out, we hand the microphone to those who already have the loudest voices.

So as election day draws

near, don't let confusion be the reason your voice goes unheard. In Texas, early voting runs from Oct. 20-31, and mail-in ballot requests close Oct. 24 — deadlines that are quickly approaching. The Texas ballot is long this year, with 17 proposed amendments waiting for your attention. Don't treat this as a pop quiz. Read, research and show up, because silence is still a vote; it just benefits someone else.

The shutdown is a symptom, not the disease. It's what happens when political ego outweighs public service, when power becomes performance, and

when citizens — especially young ones — stop expecting more. It's easy to look at the boarded-up White House and see dysfunctions. But what we should see is a reflection of our own disengagement, the collective shrug that lets leaders trade accountability for theater.

So, yes, the government is shut down. But perhaps the greater tragedy is how many of us have shut down with it. We've become numb to dysfunction, resigned to gridlock and comfortable in our cynicism. Yet beneath that numbness, there's still a spark. Every student who

shows up to vote, who insists on researching the state of our democracy, who debates policy in class — that's proof that we haven't completely given up.

What we need now is a refusal to go quiet. A refusal to let the halls of power turn into ghost towns. A refusal to accept "shutdown" as the new normal.

Because when the government shuts down, our generation's future is what's really on the line. The question isn't whether we're affected — it's whether we'll finally decide to act like it. Our future relies on taking accountability.

You're trapped in a confirmation algorithm

ALEXIA FINNEY
Staff Writer



Every time a college student opens TikTok, Instagram or YouTube, they're stepping into a digital hall of mirrors where their beliefs are reflected and reconfirmed. The "For You Page," that students use for entertainment, has become one of the strongest engines for confirmation bias.

Generation Z prides itself on being well-informed; however, I think we often miss how media habits have shaped the way we think. Subsequently, the way we interact with one another.

Instead of broadening perspectives, the internet has become a place that encourages partisan thinking and like-mindedness. Ultimately, confirmation bias, amplified by media platforms, influences the beliefs and interactions of today's college students.

As defined by Britannica, confirmation bias is "people's tendency to process information by looking for, or interpreting, information that is consistent with their beliefs." While this bias is something we have all fallen victim to, it becomes potent when applied through media streams and their mass availability and consumption. Students aren't just consuming content; instead, they are selectively shown content that they'll like to keep them engaged.

This process is controlled by an artificial algorithm or filter that dictates the content we want to see. An algorithm is made to match a user's interests and niches to available content created by others. Although the algorithm quickly becomes curated to our interests, the outcome has created a polarizing divide where groups reconfirm pre-existing beliefs and hate on others for holding their own, neglecting mature conversations

with indifference.

Algorithms and confirmation biases create an "intellectual comfort zone," where it feels good to be right and not explore other ideologies or ways of thinking — especially now when your algorithm tells you what you want to hear.

College students may think they are conducting research and being insightful when they watch informational content online. However, in reality, their online habits are tracked and subtly dictate the content they watch and ultimately believe.

Algorithms and confirmation biases not only affect how we cherry-pick information but also influence our interactions with peers and our conduct in discussions. Today, I feel this is relevant in politics. If a student thinks one political ideology is correct, they'll unconsciously find videos, posts or articles

A huge indicator of confirmation bias is the decline of journalism and the rise of social media as a primary news source.

that reinforce that pre-existing belief. Now the student enters a political conversation with more resistance to opposing views and potentially acts overconfidently in their stance.

A huge indicator of confirmation bias is the decline of journalism and the rise of social media as a primary news source. For example, newspaper distribution peaked in 1984 with 61 million handled, but had dropped to 23 million weekday papers by 2021, according to the Pew Research Center's 2023 State of the News Media Fact Sheet.

There has been a drop in audience numbers tuning into local TV news across morning, evening and night programs. As professional news outlets continue to shrink, students will turn to social media, where content is curated to maximize engagement and align with the user's existing beliefs.

Our generation's reliance on social media over traditional news isn't just a shift in where we get information, but a shift in how we form beliefs. Our understanding isn't what creates meaning; our feeds do.

Algorithms and confirmation bias swaddle students into an intellectual comfort zone, where we feel confident in our beliefs because the content we consume rarely tells us otherwise. If we want to understand the world better, we need to challenge our ideas with the possibility we could be wrong; otherwise, we are not thinking, we are scrolling.

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Free Farmers Market brings fresh foods to students

LEXIE RODENBAUGH
Arts & Life Writer

Fountain Mall was lined with tents Wednesday, each bearing baskets of fresh produce. Even a live DJ was present as Baylor students and Waco locals stopped by the Free Farmers Market, open from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Organized to promote sustainability and community, the market — hosted by the Baylor Collaborative on Hunger and Poverty and The Store — featured local vendors selling everything from honey and homemade bread to fresh fruit. Students wandered through the tents, enjoying the break from class and the chance to shop small without ever leaving campus.

Students formed a line that stretched to the back of the Sid Richardson building, showing the excitement and need for an event like the farmers market.

“I had a class this morning and decided to walk through before lunch,” Hobbs, N.M., junior Peyton Goff said. “It’s so nice to have something like this on campus. I got some local honey and a sourdough loaf — it’s way better than anything at the grocery store. It was worth the wait.”

For many students, the event was a refreshing change of pace and a reminder to slow down.

“It just feels good to be outside and not in a rush,” Richmond, Va., sophomore Elinor Daniels said. “I tried this homemade apple butter that was incredible and everyone’s just in such a good mood. It’s definitely one of my favorite campus events so far.”

Others said the market gave them a chance to connect with local businesses and learn more about sustainability in an easy, hands-on way.

“I don’t usually think about where my food comes from, so it’s cool to actually meet the people who grow it,” Katy sophomore Kaitlyn Criswell said. “It makes me want to support local more often.”

Even some students who didn’t plan to shop ended up leaving with full hands.

“I just came to hang out with friends, but then I found out it was all free, so I thought, ‘Why not get something?’” San Antonio sophomore Abigail Vierling said. “I like that you can find stuff you can’t find at H-E-B. Plus, I feel



Sam Gassaway | Photographer

FOOD FRENZY Some students waiting in line for over an hour to take a trip through the Free Farmers Market tent Wednesday on Fountain Mall.

better about getting it.

As the afternoon went on, the mall stayed lively with laughter, music and the sound of vendors chatting with students. For many, the market was a simple but meaningful reminder of the community on campus.

“I love that Baylor does things like this,” Criswell said. “It makes campus feel more personal, like there’s always something happening that brings people together.”



Sam Gassaway | Photographer

THE MUSHROOM MAN In addition to orange peppers, cucumbers, potatoes, rice and beans, fresh mushrooms in a bag were handed out at the Free Farmers Market on Fountain Mall.



Sam Gassaway | Photographer

AN APPLE A DAY KEEPS THE BAD GRADES AWAY Baylor provided thousands of free red and sweet apples to students as part of the Free Farmers Market.

Blood drive brings all students into Bluebonnet Battle

ARDEN BERRY
Staff Writer

This week, Baylor students took on the bloodiest battle yet against TCU.

Baylor Health Services held a blood drive from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Tuesday and Wednesday outside of the Bobo Spiritual Life Center. However, they were not alone, as TCU held its own blood drive at the same time.

Robinson graduate student Uriah Yarbrough, the outreach coordinator for health services, said he has been planning this blood drive for about a month.

“I’m hoping to get 500 units of blood across both campuses,” Yarbrough said.

Each unit of blood represents one donor, and each unit has the potential to help three people.

“1,500 people — that’s like a small town,” Yarbrough said.

Carter BloodCare provided the buses, and P.F. Chang’s provided the raffle prizes. At the end of Tuesday, the Baylor Student Health Advisory Council (SHAC) Instagram reported on their story that 73 people from Baylor and 100 people from TCU had donated blood.

“TCU is pretty pumped up, as it is their first homecoming since 2018 with a full schedule of events leading up to the game, and this is one of them,” Yarbrough said in an email to his campus partners.

Houston junior Sravya Dutta, president of SHAC, said having the

battle with TCU as an incentive went well.

“But, in general, Baylor students are great with being open to donating blood and helping the community,” Dutta said.

Frisco junior Abhi Rajkumar, vice president of SHAC, said the blood drive theme brought a “competitive mindset.”

“Every Baylor student wants to win against TCU,” Rajkumar said.

For students who missed this blood drive, Dutta said the next one will likely be next semester. Last semester, she said they did it in February for Valentine’s Day.

“The blood drive is a great way to get a spotlight on what we have here,” Dutta said. “Not just giving to the community, it also highlights the Health Center, SHAC and Carter BloodCare and shows that we are also here for students as well.”

Dutta said students considering giving blood can familiarize themselves with the process to feel more comfortable.

“Everyone from Carter BloodCare is super welcoming, and they’ll educate you about exercises to do while you donate,” Dutta said.

Rajkumar said further education about what the blood is used for can also encourage students.

“I think actually understanding that educational aspect is going to essentially drive students to have, like, a bigger incentive to donate blood and help out the community,”



Caleb Garcia | Photographer

SIC ‘EM DONATIONS Ashville, Ohio, freshman Presley Hamilton gets her blood drawn at the Bluebonnet Battle Blood Drive Wednesday afternoon outside Old Main.

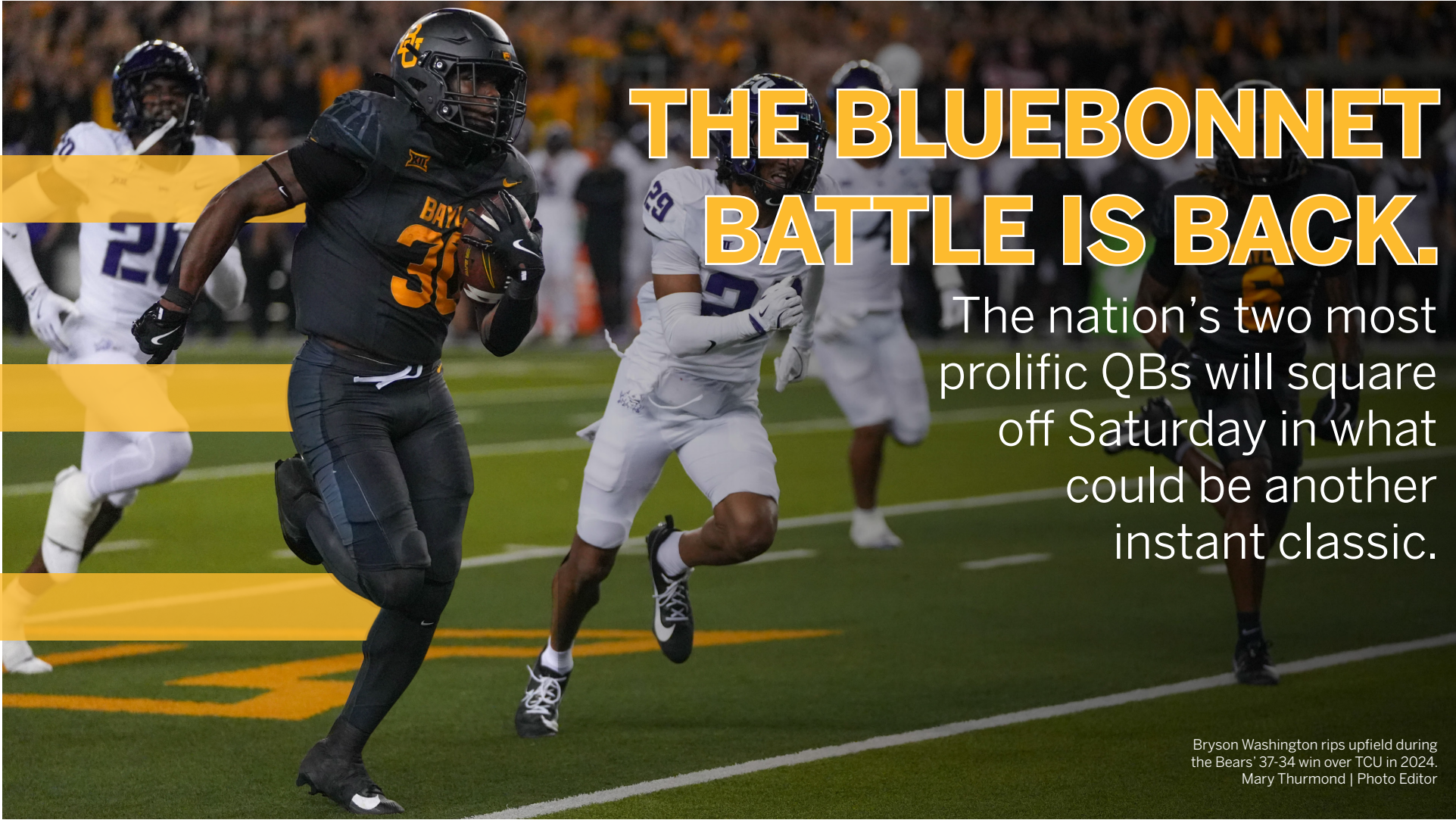
Rajkumar said.

The Carter BloodCare website provides this information and offers a text-based initiative that donors can opt into, allowing them to see

when and where their blood is sent to be transfused.

Whichever team wins, Rajkumar said the outcome for those who need blood will be the same.

“Of course, Baylor may be a winner, TCU may be a winner, but it’s the people receiving the blood at the end, they’re the winners,” Rajkumar said.



Bryson Washington rips upfield during the Bears' 37-34 win over TCU in 2024.
Mary Thurmond | Photo Editor

Baylor kicks into gear for Revivalry

Baylor, TCU set to continue Texas' oldest rivalry Saturday in Fort Worth

JACKSON POSEY
Sports Editor

There's something special about rivalries. Every bounce matters more. Every spin, every sin, every errant pass and point-after attempt — the faintest hint of foul play takes on continental significance. Nothing stretches the countenance quite like a towering scoreboard echoing, in mock indifference, a string of glowing numbers long after the losing team has left the field.

"You lose," the scoreboard operator seems to say with a silent poetic flourish. "Victory tastes so much sweeter at your expense."

Stretching back to 1899, Baylor (4-2, 2-1 Big 12) and TCU (4-2, 1-2 Big 12) have faced each other more than any other pair of Texas programs. The Bluebonnet Battle has defined seasons and careers and broken the spirit of any team foolish enough to muster a sense of overconfidence. When green and purple collide, seasons tend to crash on the rocks like ships before the sirens. When Revivalry calls, the sweet sound of chaos is irresistible.

"I think [the emotion] is good to have, if it's always kind of underneath the surface," head coach Dave Aranda said. "When it's kind of boiling underneath the surface, it's a good feeling, because you know it's there, you know it's pushing people."

The game has seen soaring highs and cresting lows through the years. In recent times, that's meant a lot of anxiety-inducing field goals in Waco.

Baylor's Aaron Jones cashed a last-minute, come-from-behind game winner in the team's final nonconference matchup in 2011. (TCU joined the Big 12 the following season.) Three years later, Bryce Petty led the Bears to a 21-point comeback in the fourth quarter,



Mary Thurmond | Photo Editor

HANK YOU VERY MUCH Baylor kicker Isaiah Hankins drilled a walk-off game-winner in 2024 to beat TCU 37-34, the latest in a long line of dramatic finishes in the rivalry.

capped by a walk-off Chris Callahan field goal that kept the Horned Frogs out of the College Football Playoff.

Baylor nearly did it again in 2022. The Bears led No. 4 TCU 28-20 with just over two minutes to play, then stuffed a 2-point conversion attempt to put the game away — almost. The Horned Frogs got the ball back and raced downfield, setting up a historic scramble-drill field goal by Griffin Kell to keep their playoff hopes alive.

TCU's return trip in 2024 felt awfully familiar, but backwards, as the Horned Frogs led 27-20 entering the fourth quarter. This time, it was Baylor kicker Isaiah Hankins who played the role of the hero, slicing through the same uprights as Kell. Ten years after Petty and Callahan's 61-58 classic, Baylor students again flooded the field at McLane Stadium.

Rusty McAllister waited outside the wrong house for "something amazing, I guess." The greatest drama this side of the Mississippi can

be found between two end zones every October.

"It's going to be high-[intensity] from the jump," senior safety Devyn Bobby said. "You can't get too high when it's a rivalry game ... that's where things can go left. So just trying to stay level-headed, try to stay at the same pace throughout the whole game."

Back and forth, the pendulum swings. Time takes no prisoners.

Between Callahan's and Hankins' kicks, TCU won eight of nine matchups, including a 4-0 mark in McLane Stadium. The Bears haven't followed a win in Waco with a win in Fort Worth since 1995, when Chuck Reedy led his Sailor Bears to a 27-24 victory.

This year's matchup will feature two unstoppable forces — and two very movable objects. Baylor quarterback Sawyer Robertson has been the nation's most prolific passer, leading all signal-callers in yards and touchdowns passing. TCU quarterback Josh Hoover is hot

on his heels, ranking second in both categories.

Both teams average over 35 points per game, but neither has played inspired defense. The Bears have allowed 29.7 points per game, outside the top 100 nationally, while TCU allowed a season-high 41 points in last week's loss to Kansas State. (The Wildcat's previous high-water mark, 38 points, came in a Week 2 nailbiter against FCS North Dakota.) A shootout could be brewing.

"They're explosive on offense," Aranda said. "When they don't turn the ball over, they are really effective at making explosive plays."

Eleven years ago, a 5-foot-9 freshman kicker walked into McLane Stadium as a marked man. He was 1-for-6 on field goals, including five straight misses. He hadn't made a kick since the first drive of Baylor's season opener, and that was 45 days ago.

But something happens in October.

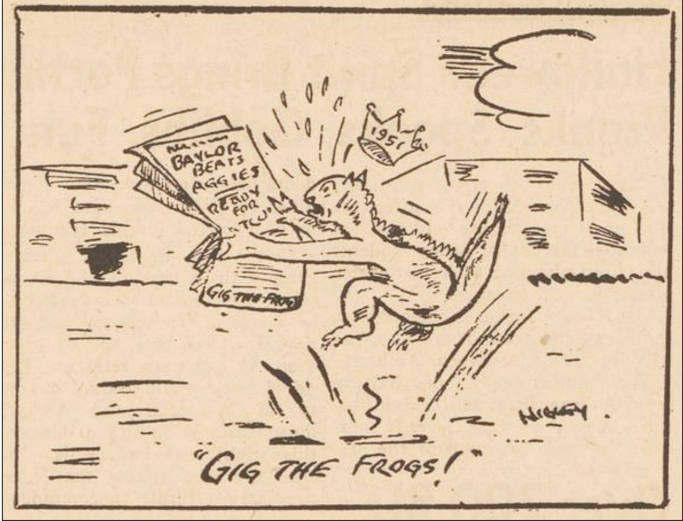
Maybe it was magic; maybe it was just the Revivalry. But when Callahan drilled the biggest kick in program history, capping off a career-best 4-for-4 performance, he wasn't merely winning a game. He was rewriting history, line by line, kick by kick, in a story that has never grown old.

Callahan watched the plot unfold alongside everyone else. He saw it first, a split-second before the raucous crowd, standing on one leg in the calm of the storm. The whispers turned into roars as the referees confirmed what he already knew.

It's good.

"I saw that kick go up and how it came off my foot; I knew it was in," Callahan said after the game. "I had no doubt."

The Bears will again stare down the Horned Frogs at 11 a.m. Saturday at Amon G. Carter Stadium in Fort Worth. The game will be broadcast on ESPN2.



Lariat file photo

GIG THE FROGS Baylor was fired up ahead of its 1952 Revivalry game against TCU. The teams tied, 20-20.



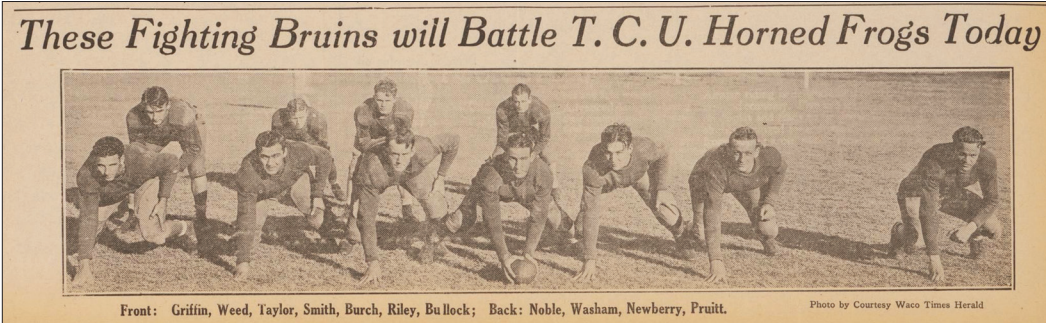
Mary Thurmond | Photo Editor

WHY SO SERIOUS? Baylor fans were all-in on the Bears' 2024 blackout win over TCU, but the green-and-purple-clad Joker played both sides.



Lariat file photo

ALL WE DO IS WIN Baylor came back from down 21 to beat TCU 61-58 in 2014.



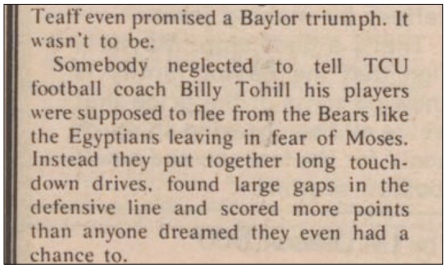
Lariat file photo

ROARING TWENTIES The "Fighting Bruins" played host to TCU in 1927, marking the fourth Revivalry game. The Horned Frogs left Waco with a 14-0 victory, then the largest scoring margin in series history.



Lariat file photo

GOOD Antwan Goodley caught two TDs in the Bears' 61-58 win in 2014.



Lariat file photo

EXODUS Grant Teaff promised a win in 1973, but it wasn't enough to make TCU "flee from the Bears" like the Egyptians from Moses.

‘The kindest Goodwill employee’

‘Angel of Goodwill’ turns thrifting into friendship

O’CONNOR DANIEL
Reporter

Walk into the Heart of Texas Goodwill on La Salle Avenue and you won’t need to look for customer service — it’ll find you first.

“Angela, Angela — you are her; they say you are so kind,” one Baylor student exclaimed, pointing at the name badge of Angela Long.

Upon stepping through the store’s threshold, one might catch Angela Long belting along to the store’s soundtrack, tossing a football down the aisle to a group of laughing Baylor guys or greeting a customer with a heartfelt compliment. Regulars know her as “The Angel of Goodwill” — a Waco native with a talent for turning an ordinary thrift store run into something memorable.

Long grew up in a military family and was born and raised in Waco. She’s worked at the La Salle location for several years and said her heart has always been in customer service.

“I love being around people,” she said. “Greeting others to make their day a little bit brighter is what I like to do.”

Long said she views her job as a way to meet people where they are — especially those in need.

“You’re always going to meet someone who needs that first interview outfit and they don’t quite have all the funds for it,” she said. “I’m their little angel in disguise that creeps up and says, ‘Come on, I got you. I’m going to meet you halfway.’”

Long paused when asked to share her most meaningful experience at Goodwill.



Brady Harris | Photographer

FRIENDLY FACES Angela Long (left), known by regulars as the “Angel of Goodwill,” shares a moment with store manager Donna Theriault (right) at the La Salle Avenue location. The pair are familiar faces to Baylor students and locals alike, known for their warm welcomes and joyful energy.

“I’ll try not to tear up on this one,” she said.

Last year, Long’s mother passed away. She and her siblings couldn’t afford the cost of her ashes. That’s when her coworkers at Goodwill stepped in to help cover the expenses.

“It takes a humble and compassionate heart and spirit to do what my Goodwill family team did for me at the store,” she said. “That would be the most amazing thing anyone on this earth can do for someone they truly hardly don’t know. ... You can work with anyone, but how often can you truly know their character, their spirit and what they hold within their heart?”

For many Baylor students, the La Salle Goodwill isn’t just a thrift store — it’s a weekly ritual, a study break and sometimes even a sanctuary.

“I probably visit the La Salle location once a week,” Torrance, Calif., senior Eva Brandt said. “Walking into the La Salle Goodwill when it’s not busy feels like a relief. It is my escape from school, from society, from stress. It is my place of creativity and exploration. It’s probably one of my favorite places in Waco.”

Brandt, like many students, has grown especially fond of one familiar face.

“Miss Angela is the kindest Goodwill employee I have

encountered, and I’ve been to many Goodwills,” Brandt said. “She always takes the time to make meaningful conversation and gives the most genuine compliments.”

From sorority girls donating dresses to elderly regulars stopping by for conversation, Long said she greets everyone with the same quality interaction.

“There’s one older lady who only comes in on Fridays,” Long said. “She always looks straight for me and gives me the biggest hug.”

For Long, it’s those familiar faces — the customers who remember her name, voice and presence — that make each shift memorable.

“It’s certain things your elders do that really do make your day brighter,” she said.

And while Long’s job is filled with joy, she doesn’t sugarcoat the reality that retail work has its challenges.

“There are moments that get a little strange,” she said.

She’s seen customers steal items from others’ carts, walk in under the influence or become aggressive with staff. In those moments, she said, safety becomes the priority.

“If someone walks in and they are either drunk or on other things, they can be very aggressive,” Long said. “Those are the moments we don’t like y’all to see as our customers.”

She always alerts a manager when a situation feels unsafe.

“The manager gets there right on time as soon as I make the call,” she said.

When asked whether she takes pride in her work, Long didn’t hesitate to answer.

“Pride is not one of my words; it comes straight from the seven deadly sins,” Long said. “You can’t have too much pride in this lifetime. I’d rather consider myself more humble and compassionate.”

Even in a job that some might overlook, Long said there is deep meaning to be found — if you’re willing to look with kindness.

“Don’t ever think about showing people humility just to show them,” she said. “If you speak humble and compassionate and love to others, that’s what’s going to reflect back — and that’s what the customer will always remember. That way, they will always return.”

Golden Green Boutique now offers rush styling sessions

LEXIE RODENBAUGH
Arts & Life Writer

Last November, Golden Green made its debut in downtown Waco and since then, it has taken on many ventures. Between pop-ups, events and now potential new member styling sessions, Golden Green is making its mark on the women of Baylor.

Golden Green sells a variety of different southern-inspired clothes, including gameday accessories, apparel and recently, sorority merchandise.

Fashion is important to a rush experience — especially in the past few years with the rise of RushTok. What started with Kylan Darnell at the University of Alabama has reached Baylor, sparking a rise of “OOTD” videos and increasing the pressures of rush even more.

The styling session isn’t a binding contract, and the women can decide if they want to buy the pieces from the boutique. Every session is free and comes with a complementary gift, according to Michelle Mortman, owner of Golden Green.

“Basically, they schedule a 45-minute block through a link, ... we’re doing them Wednesday through Sunday,” Mortman said. “But they come in, they’re free of cost. We also allow them to bring in their own dress, or skirt or something if they want us to accessorize that, too.”

Mortman said styling sessions can be scheduled via the boutique’s website.



Brady Harris | Photographer

BEJEWELLED BOUTIQUE A gold Texas-themed charm necklace and clear handbag sit on a display shelf at the Golden Green boutique.

Rush can be a stressful and difficult time, as not only are these young women trying to find their forever home, they’re also trying to display themselves in the most accurate and aesthetically pleasing way, Mortman said.

“A lot of times, girls for [panhellenic] previews and going into recruitment season aren’t always sure what to wear,” Mortman said.

Bainbridge, Wash., freshman Hannah Bounketh said she can attest to this and is looking forward to picking out her outfits for rush, she said.

“I’ve been watching videos to get some inspo, talking to some people

about it, so I feel like it’ll be a super fun experience,” Bounketh said. “I’m super excited to see everyone’s outfits ... I’m not too much in panic mode, but I’ve been keeping an eye out here and there for cute pieces.”

The boutique has made a name for itself in Waco, and this new addition only adds to that reputation.

“I love their boutique, I would definitely do a styling session with them,” Bounketh said. “I’ve seen they have super cute dresses and everything, and it’d be nice to get a few pieces that feel a little more personal and styled just for me.”

Getting pieces that feel personal to the customer encapsulates the goal of the styling sessions, according to Mortman.

“I try to sit down with my girls and talk about styling sessions we have next week,” Mortman said. “These are the girls who are coming in, this is who’s doing their styling session, this is their Instagram. We try to pull stuff ahead of time so that when they come in, we can say, ‘Here’s some stuff that we’ve pulled for you, but feel free to look around the store.’”

Golden Green Boutique is located at 319 S 4th St. The shop is open Sunday noon to 6 p.m., Monday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Wednesday to Thursday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Friday to Saturday 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.



Brady Harris | Photographer

ALL DRESSED UP Rush outfits are available at the Golden Green Boutique, located off 4th Street and Franklin, for potential new members to try on.



Photos courtesy of Amazon

Spooktacular books to cozy up to this fall

STACIE BOYLS
Arts & Life Writer

Autumn provides the perfect landscape for stories both comforting and strange, adding ambiance and immersion to these plots. This selection of books and novellas has something for everyone and captures the season’s greetings. As the weather chills, grab a hot drink, your favorite blanket and dive into one of these curated books below.

“METAMORPHOSIS” BY FRANZ KAFKA

This chilling classic is perfect for readers wanting a short story that will stick. At around only 100 pages, the story follows a traveling salesman, Gregor Samsa, who finds himself transformed into a giant insect. Struggling to assimilate in his new form, Gregor contemplates his transformation and its possible consequences as they manifest into reality. Kafka’s surrealist novella explores themes of transformation, identity and alienation without ever getting too spooky.

“THE MONSTER OF ELENDAHAVEN” BY JENNIFER GEISBRECHT

This gothic thriller, also on the shorter side, offers a more chilling experience for the reader, as dark fantasy intertwines with horror in this novella. The story itself follows a murderous and cruel monster named Johann, who cannot die and is mysteriously subservient to his frail and traumatized master, Herr Liekenbloom. Complex, dark and rich, this story guarantees an intoxicating storytelling complete with perplexing character foils.

“SPOOKILY YOURS” BY JENNIFER CHIPMAN

This romance is an autumnal refresh for readers looking to embrace Halloween themes and those who love sappy storytelling. This book features a bubbly witch and an angry demon who, regardless of the consequences, can’t help but fall for each other. If you’re looking for a cozy, sweet read, this book is for you.



Interested in more good reads? Scan the QR code to expand your spooky library!

Arts & Life

Bonnie's Greenhouse waters Waco's growing community one plant at a time

STACIE BOYLS
Arts & Life Writer

Just a short drive from campus down Orchard Lane lies a local greenhouse, named after the original owner, Bonnie Murphy.

According to the current owner of the greenhouse, Ashli Robken, Bonnie was a born-and-raised Wacoan and plant lover. Bonnie had originally started the greenhouse as a casual neighborhood shop, later growing her passion into a blooming business and local Waco staple.

Bonnie's legacy lives on 44 years later through the dedicated team of five employees who water, grow and care for each plant individually, a true labor of love.

When Robben took over the greenhouse, she inherited more than a business — she inherited a piece of Waco's history. "I have so many customers whose grandparents brought them here when they were little kids," Robben said. "Now they're bringing their kids here just to walk around and enjoy it."

That long-standing legacy has been built and maintained by Waco women since the greenhouse's inception. With Robken in charge, Murphy's vision for homegrown, high-quality goods lives on.

"Since we have such a small crew, we literally and individually take care of all of our plants," she said. "We hand water

our whole greenhouse. That's very hard to do, but it makes our stuff exceptional."



Sam Gassaway | Photographer

FLOWER FRENZY Bonnie's Greenhouse not only sells flowers, but also provides support for wildlife such as butterflies and bees.

Dallas senior and frequent customer Garrett Woodbury said he is impressed with the selection of plants and local charm Bonnie's provides.

"They have a wide variety of plants, from tropical to desert to herbs and vegetables," he said. "It was really impressive to see such a small local shop carry that selection of plants."

Woodbury said he encourages

young people to get more involved with gardening and building on the community roots Bonnie's has laid for generations to come.

Each member of this small crew has been dedicated to the mission and community at Bonnie's for many years, with previous owner Sandra Killough still on staff, helping to care for the plants in the greenhouse.

"All of our employees are people that have worked here for a long time," she said. "It's really like a close-knit family."

Robken said she plans on expanding the greenhouse by adding younger faces to the staff, creating more community outreach opportunities with organizations like Keep Waco Beautiful and eventually turning Bonnie's old house into a coffee shop and retail store. Robken also hopes to continue drawing young people and college students to the greenhouse, for them to use as both a casual hang-out spot and a learning space for new generations of plant lovers.

Bonnie's Greenhouse is located at 5198 Orchard Lane. Store hours are 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday - Saturday. Bonnie's is closed on Sundays.



Sam Gassaway | Photographer

CASA VERDE Bonnie's Greenhouse holds wide variety of plants, from flowers to herbs and vegetables.



Photo courtesy of IMDb

Review: 'Tron: Ares' may be last in sci-fi franchise

SAM GASSAWAY

Photographer

Like the lyrics of the song used in the trailers, I wanted this movie to “give me something to believe in,” but what I received was a standard, run-of-the-mill action sci-fi movie.

To call myself a fan of the Tron franchise would be an understatement. Like many people my age, I grew up at the perfect time to fall in love with “Tron: Legacy.” It was one of the first and only movies I became obsessed with, and from age 10 onward, it became a constant comfort watch for me.

I also went back and watched the first one, and although I found it cheesy initially, I fell in love with it in its own way. This past summer, I studied in Los Angeles and got to attend the premiere of the original "Tron" 4K rerelease with director Steven Lisberger, which made me love the film even more.

When “Tron: Legacy” had a comeback on social media and a third movie in the franchise was greenlit, I was ecstatic. I couldn’t wait to see where the franchise would go after a 15-year hiatus; however, as more and more details came out about the project, with Jared Leto as the lead and Nine Inch Nails on the soundtrack, I became worried. There were so many ways that Disney could mess this film up, and to my surprise, they didn’t.

Firstly, casting Jared Leto in anything is a tough gamble. In the past decade, he's been at the center of multiple box office bombs and even more critical failures, but he surprised me in his role as Ares. He does a great job at playing the program, which is thrust into the real world and wants to experience humanity. His performance is a little wooden, but I think that's the point with the character. It's also refreshing not to hear any strange on-set drama; however, this could easily change in the coming months.



To get the full review of "Tron: Ares," the third movie in the series, scan the QR code.



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Wednesday night hikes: A hidden gem of Waco

KATHERINE MICKELSON
Guest Contributor

Every Wednesday from March through October, Park Rangers lead free hikes in Cameron Park to help the public explore the trails. Each week, around 40 participants join the rangers to learn more about the park and build community in nature.

Park Ranger Gary Proctor leads many of the hikes. He said he looks forward to the weekly gatherings because of the people he's met. Since March, the group has welcomed about 225 different hikers for a total of nearly 1,400 miles.

Cameron Park is generally known, but its content is not. Since its inception in 1910, the park has evolved to encompass 400 acres along the Brazos River and contains scenic overlooks, playground sets and event spaces.

Proctor said the group hikes are a great way for participants to become more familiar with the trails. The rangers give directions, share safety reminders and can recommend apps for personal route planning. He said he enjoys all the animals they see that typically are not noticed in the rest of Waco.

"It's a place to get away when you're still in the middle of the city, but you can escape things," Proctor said.

Park Ranger Zharla Jensen said the guided hikes began for people who wanted

to visit Cameron Park but were worried about getting lost. She said the program helps introduce residents to the trails and showcases the park's natural beauty.

"Right in the middle of the city of Waco is one of the top five urban city parks in the nation," Jensen said.

On a typical Wednesday, Jensen said there are two to three hiking groups based on preferred pace. The rangers occasionally share facts about the park's history or wildlife, but most of the time, participants simply enjoy the walk and conversation.

Some hikes bring unexpected encounters. Jensen said that last year, her first season as a ranger, her group came across a venomous copperhead snake.

"Typically, they move; this one just sat there," she said.

According to Jensen, the snake had to be pushed off the trail by another ranger's walking stick.

Jensen also said she understands the fear that newcomers may have about getting lost on their own — in fact, during one of the first hikes she led, she accidentally lost the caboose ranger.

One participant, Trent Langhorne, has been hiking with the group since August after a friend invited her to join.

"I had read about the hikes but thought they were more of a tourist thing,"

Langhorne said. "I didn't realize they were serious hikes."

She enjoys following the crowd without worrying about directions and has gained a deeper appreciation for the park and its beauty.

"It's nice to realize there's this jewel here that we can take advantage of," Langhorne said.

First-time participant and Waco resident Lindsey Embry said she often runs in Cameron Park but joined the hike to meet new people.

Embry's neighbor goes every week and invited her and her dog, Mitzzy, to join. As a newer Waco resident, she said she was looking for a group to join.

Wilton, Conn., junior Reina Calafell said she enjoys the guided hikes.

"It was a fun way to explore Cameron Park and meet new people around Waco," Calafell said.

As the sun began to set toward the end of the hike, participants lingered at the trailhead, petting dogs and sharing stories with each other. The hike serves as a reminder to enjoy all that Waco has to offer.

The Wednesday night hikes will continue at 5:45 p.m. each week until daylight runs out for the season, according to the rangers. The weekly hikes are scheduled to resume in March.



Photo courtesy of Katherine Mickelson

TAKE A HIKE Park Rangers lead free hikes in Cameron Park every Wednesday from March through October.

ALL THE TEA from A1

the Tea app, the concept made a lot of sense to me," Menesses said. "Honestly, there's a big issue now with trying to talk to a guy, and they end up being very deceptive. Especially in the college dating arena, you just don't know."

Though she emphasized the need to "take things with a grain of salt," Menesses said that overall, she values the app as a dating resource. She attributed the potential faults to user error rather than the app itself.

"The concept of the Tea app is not inherently bad — the problem is cultural," Menesses said. "The whole point is to uncover the truth by having people anonymously share their personal stories. But because it's anonymous, you have a lot of lying and deception that can take place as well."

Similarly, Sims said the app's downfall lies in the intentions of users, who have the potential to corrupt a well-intentioned platform.

"I feel like it originally had pretty good intentions, making sure girls are staying safe out there," Sims said. "I think it got misused once it got a little more personal, and it became less about safety."



It's like a dumpster fire. You just can't look away.

AYDEN MENESSES
LACOMBE, LA., JUNIOR

Menesses also emphasized the human tendency to highlight negative experiences over positive ones, which can cause imbalanced reviews.

"No one's raving about how good the experience was, but if it was horrible, you're going to make sure people know about it," Menesses said.

The Tea app had over 6 million users as of September, according to an article by TechPolicy Press. Glamour Magazine also rated it best for women 18–65. The app continues its rise to fame by drawing both positive press and criticism to the table.

Carlsbad, Calif., junior Savannah Conner said in practice, the app is largely damaging and fosters overly harsh criticism.

"There are things on the app that are very bad, and people should be very much held accountable for," Conner said. "But there are

other instances where we shouldn't be punishing people for making simple human mistakes."

Conner said the commentary on the app exceeded the bounds of its intended purpose, which made her feel uncomfortable participating. While some comments are informative about the subject's character, others degrade and make fun of the subject's looks or sexual performance.

"Even having the app on my phone put a bad feeling in my stomach," Conner said. "In theory, it was a good idea, and it could have been used properly, but people are using it way out of proportion."

Despite conflicting perspectives on the Tea app's implications, it continues to draw attention and engagement from male and female students alike at Baylor.

"It's like a dumpster fire," Menesses said. "You just can't look away."



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