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Turn off TikTok, read past the headline and do your own research



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Reviewing a trip to the Scarborough festival in Waxahachie

## Professor arrested on family violence charge

**CHRISTIAN WELLS**  
Staff Writer

A Baylor adjunct professor was arrested last week on a family violence charge following an alleged altercation with his wife, according to Waco police and an arrest affidavit.

Robert Reed, an adjunct instructor in the philosophy department, was charged with Class A misdemeanor assault involving family violence. He remains free on bond, according to KWTX.

The arrest stems from an incident at a residence in the 1800 block of North 12th St. According to the affidavit, Reed's wife told officers the two were arguing "over some activities they would participate in later that day" when she laughed "in a sarcastic manner" at a comment he made.

The affidavit states Reed became upset, grabbed her wrist "in a forceful manner" and twisted it upward, causing her pain.

Reed corroborated his wife's account and told officers he grabbed her "out of anger."

Reed could not be reached for comment.

University spokesperson Lori Fogleman said in a statement to The Lariat that Baylor is aware of the arrest.

"Baylor University is aware of the recent arrest of an adjunct faculty member," the statement reads. "As a personnel matter, we are unable to comment further. However, our commitment has been — and always will be — to provide a safe and caring community for our students, faculty and staff."

Mike Chapple Jr., a December 2024 grad and former student of Reed, described him as a passionate and engaged instructor.

"My experience as Dr. Reed's student was nothing short of superb — he possessed not only a strong command, but a clear passion for what he taught," Chapple said over text.

Chapple said Reed maintained a balance between academic rigor and approachability in the classroom.



Photo courtesy of Waco Police Department

**MUGSHOT** Robert Reed, an adjunct instructor in Baylor's philosophy department, was charged with Class A misdemeanor assault involving family violence last week.

"Dr. Reed is particularly serious about the discipline of philosophy, but not at the cost of being approachable and even funny," Chapple said. "His lectures and discussions reflect a balance between rigor and invited curiosity."

Chapple added that Reed fostered a collaborative classroom environment that left a lasting impact on his academic development.

"Dr. Reed fostered a kind of classroom collegiality that, for me, was truly formative as an academic and professional," Chapple said. "Of course, I can only speak to Dr. Reed's conduct and character as it relates to his being my professor — the domains of house and classroom are different."

The case remains ongoing.



Sam Gassaway | Photo Editor

**LEAVING A MARK** Dr. Nancy Brickhouse announced she would be stepping down from her position as vice president and university provost on Wednesday.

## Brickhouse to step down as provost

**MACKENZIE GRIZZARD**  
Assistant News Editor

Vice President and Provost Dr. Nancy Brickhouse announced she will step down in an email Wednesday, marking an end to her seven-year tenure at Baylor.

"I've known since my appointment in 2019 that I would make Baylor my final stop," Brickhouse said in the announcement email. "I also knew that I would want my final years to be engaged in the work that attracted me to the professoriate at the beginning: teaching and writing."

University President Dr. Linda Livingstone said in an email that Brickhouse will step down effective July 31 and, following a year-long sabbatical, will return to Baylor's faculty to focus on teaching.

"Provost Brickhouse was integral in the successful completion of 'Illuminate,' and she helped shepherd the development of 'Baylor in Deeds,' Baylor's last two strategic plans," Livingstone said in the email. "In all, by working collaboratively with deans and faculty across disciplines, Provost Brickhouse has helped lay a solid academic foundation for Baylor's next chapter."

Brickhouse was a champion of Baylor's strategic plan *Baylor In Deeds*, which launched in 2024 and will direct the university through 2030. Additionally, during her tenure, Baylor received Research 1 designation in 2021, something that Brickhouse worked to grow throughout the years.

"While I will not be the Provost who leads the way in the completion of this work, please know that I will be your greatest cheerleader, and I will pray for your continued success," Brickhouse said.

Livingstone said that Dr. Lee Nordt, outgoing dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, will serve as interim vice president and provost upon Brickhouse's departure this summer.

"Dean Nordt is a familiar face to many faculty, staff, and students after serving in this leadership role for more than 20 years," Livingstone said. "He has overseen nearly half of the University's academic enterprise in his Deanship, and his leadership has been both steady and strategic. I am confident he will ably guide our academic and research endeavors during this season of transition."

Baylor will announce a national search for Brickhouse's permanent replacement at the conclusion of the spring semester, Livingstone said.

Looking forward, Brickhouse said she is grateful for her time at Baylor and will cherish the memories and accomplishments from her time.

"Together, we transformed Baylor into the country's premier Christian R1 university," Brickhouse said. "We laid the foundation, and now it is the work of the next cohort of leaders to build upon and improve on that work."

## Baylor Poetry Club provides space for personal stories, calls to action

**CAMILLE KELLY**  
Reporter

For the past three years, Baylor Poetry Club has hosted Sic 'Em Slam, a slam poetry event open to students and staff to perform original slam poems in the Bill Daniel Student Center. This year's slam was part of Civil Discourse Week, and students took the opportunity to share personal stories, reflections and political calls to action through their slam poem performances.

Red River, N.M., freshman Sofia West performed her original slam poem, "Glimpses of Myself," a self-reflective piece about identity and allowing yourself to change.

Although she has been writing poetry since seventh grade, this was West's first time doing slam poetry.

"Of course, you can speak and memorize and perform regular poetry, but I think what sets slam poetry apart is it is really like a performance," West said. "It's not just reading to you or telling you a poem. It's very much an experience. They're trying to get you to envision it with them."

Houston sophomore Yasmina Haddad has also been writing poetry since middle school. She took this opportunity at the Sic 'Em Slam to perform her original slam poem, "Pick Up a Fire Extinguisher," a call-to-action work that addresses the current political landscape in the U.S.

"I'm a political science major, and honestly, I've been overwhelmed with all the political things going on in the country," Haddad said. "This was a way for me to finally express that through art. My piece was to compel people to not be 'not political.' I think they should know that, in my opinion, is parallel to being apathetic. People should care more."

West and Haddad both heard about Sic 'Em



Photo courtesy of Yasmina Haddad

**WORDPLAY** Members of the Baylor Poetry Club pose for a photo after the Sic 'Em Slam event on March 27 at the Bill Daniel Student Center.

Slam through their What's New BU weekly emails. For each of them, using the art form of slam poetry was a deeper way to communicate something more complex.

"With poetry, you're telling a story, but you're telling it so symbolically," West said. "If you're writing a memoir, or a biography, it's very literal, sharing, 'These were the events of my story.' But with poetry, it's a lot more obscure, so it's vulnerable, but you don't have to tell the person exactly what it is. It allows you to have that vulnerability without feeling afraid."

Both Haddad and West were inspired by the

use of slam poetry alongside Civil Discourse Week to bring up political conversations in a respectful yet direct way.

"A lot of my writing has always been about self-reflection, but I was really inspired by a lot of the people that I performed with that did politically charged pieces," West said. "A stereotype of slam poetry is that it's very aggressive and always political. However, I think they did it in the way I want to, which is edifying us as a nation. Not aggressive toward the other side, but not shying away from it or from real things that are going on in our country."



I've known since my appointment in 2019 that I would make Baylor my final stop.

**DR. NANCY BRICKHOUSE**  
VICE PRESIDENT & PROVOST

# NOTES TO NAILED IT



**GOT SOMETHING TO SAY?**

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

**EDITORIAL**

# Shut off the noise, find real news

At a time when it seems like world news hits new extremes every day, it feels nearly impossible to distinguish AI-generated clickbait from reality. While this phenomenon has only intensified with our coverage of international affairs, it started quite a while ago at the national level.

Picture this: you're at dinner with your friends. Exchanges of friendly banter and back-and-forth comments continue until the conversation shifts to current events.

It starts with a sly remark about the government, war, gas prices, inflation or a mix of all. Everyone chimes in, confirming the concerns until eventually it becomes the main topic of conversation.

Phrases like "the bottom line" or "when all is said and done" are thrown around, ultimately turning your evening chatter into a tutorial on how clickbait news thrives.

To clarify, we aren't talking about right or left-wing media; we are talking about all of it.

Because of commoditization, news now thrives on fear.

In George Saunders's 2007 essay "The Braindead Megaphone," he outlines the reality of media coverage. While this seems long ago, his ideas are incredibly relevant to today.

"But more than fear, our new braindeadness has to do, I think, with commerce: the shift that has taken place within our major news organizations toward the corporate model, and away from the public-interest model," Saunders said. "The necessity of profit is now assumed for our mass-media activities."

News outlets now have to focus on providing profitable truth, not just truth — this is where we've all gone wrong. The news we see is not all the news there is.



James Ellis | Cartoonist

What makes this shift particularly dangerous is not simply what is added, but what is quietly removed. Context is trimmed for speed, nuance is sacrificed for virality and complexity is flattered into something easily digestible and shareable.

In our dopamine-chasing, attention-deficit society, we thrive on short, punchy news that grabs our attention. What doesn't garner views doesn't get outrage, attention or advocacy.

In this way, misinformation does not always arrive as outright falsehood. More often,

it comes as an incomplete truth that feels convincingly precise because it is shorter.

And with the current Iran war on our hands, it seems as though international coverage has become unreliable from both parties.

Saunders described that this reality was born from the media's coverage of the O.J. Simpson trial.

The trial could have been summarized in an 800-word article every week; instead, there were thousands of hours of coverage floating around the U.S. Because of the sheer amount of information being published, something had to be

added to fill the gaps and reach those hundreds of hours.

Somewhere along the way, media outlets adopted this style of reporting and now use it to cover major international affairs, such as wars.

"In that hour of fear and need, finding in our hands the set of crude, hyperbolic tools we'd been using to discuss O.J., et al., we began using them to decide whether to invade another country, and soon were in Baghdad, led by Megaphone Guy," Saunders said.

Our media is designed for distraction; as a result,

you can't have productive conversations because they want intellectual diversions.

The result is a kind of intellectual echo chamber masquerading as informed discourse. We mistake familiarity for accuracy and repetition for truth, echoing headlines we have absorbed rather than arguments we have examined.

The more saturated we become with rapid-fire updates, the less equipped we are to discern what actually matters. Information is no longer a tool for clarity; rather, it becomes a mechanism of confusion.

You're not getting the whole truth from either side; you're getting whatever would bring in the most profit.

To shut down this echo chamber, it's crucial to intentionally educate yourself and shut off the "noise."

The media provides us with a million different perspectives on the same subject every day; it's crucial to understand the entire story.

This requires a shift not just in what we consume, but how we consume it. Slowing down, seeking primary sources and resisting the urge to react instantly are small but necessary acts of resistance. To be informed is no longer passive; it is an active discipline that demands attention, patience, conviction and discernment.

While liberal outlets typically provide more humanitarian news and conservative ones are capitalistic, a functioning, thriving society needs both.

Turn off TikTok, read past the headline and do your own research. Neither CNN nor Fox provides the full story, so don't get comfortable just reading those. This is the only way to break past the intelligence ceiling that's been placed on us.

# As Mick Jagger said, the world needs a good painting

**JACKSON POSEY**  
Sports Editor

Suppose, for a moment, that Mick Jagger was right.

Suppose we take his philosophy at face value. Every red door really should be painted black; every seaside lighthouse and ancient lantern should lose its sheen. "The Starry Night" and Yankee pinstripes have a bit too much color. Gothic cathedrals are, paradoxically, too bright.

One may debate the merits of painting it all black because another hue would better suit the occasion. Another may protest at the sort of brush or tones of pigment. But whatever the means, all must agree that the world needs a good painting.

In America's semiquincentennial, the house needs repairs. The attic is leaking, the stairs are creaking and the faucet never quite turns off. The decor is a strange mishmash of clashing eras and styles vying for attention between postmodern shelving and impressionist wallpaper.

We have collected relics of ages past like a veteran shopper sniffing fruit; whatever suits our fancy, by whatever obscure standards we choose that day, we put in the cart. Everything else can sit around and rot.

Before the moldy floorboards can be ripped up and replaced, we must determine a clear path forward. After all, where there is no vision, the people perish. Clarity brings safety and strength — yet in the postmodern milieu, there is no coherent philosophy beyond the whims of the day. We inject vapid content into our vapid lives and complain of the difficulty of "finding meaning." It is not lost; only obscured by our own hubris.

America has long benefited from a plurality of voices, but always confident voices, tested and well-rounded. Nothing counters polarization quite like a circle, which easily glides away from fatal attractions and myopic solutions.

A well-rounded philosophy is forged in humility — and must remain anchored to weather life's storms. A free-flowing buoy is worthless to the anxious sailor. The apostle Paul compared those who hold such unfastened positions to "children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes."

Without a defined tether to deeper truth claims, there is no way to interpret the world accurately. Every position has some compromise. Bias is unavoidable. Drift is inevitable.

The late English essayist G.K. Chesterton, who affirmed my deep-seated hunch that "silly examples are always simpler," proposed a stark parable to this effect. Suppose a man wanted a certain sort of world, say a blue world, and

toiled tirelessly to achieve his vision. He would have no complaint about the rate of his work, for the task itself was meaningful. Every day he lived, he made the world a little bluer.

His adventures may be heroic, like touching up the stripes on a blue tiger, or as dreamlike as the dawn of a blue moon. His work may be rapid or crawling, exhilarating or mind-numbing, but it would never be meaningless — assuming, of course, he continued to paint the same shade of blue.

"If he worked hard, that high-minded reformer would certainly (from his own point of view) leave the world better and bluer than he found it," Chesterton wrote. "If he altered a blade of grass to his favourite colour every day, he would get on slowly. But if he altered his favourite colour every day, he would not get on at all. If, after reading a fresh philosopher, he started to paint everything red or yellow, his work would be thrown away: there would be nothing to show except a few blue tigers walking about, specimens of his early bad manner."

Nothing is so taboo to the postmodern mind than claims of absolute truth. Calls to "live your truth" and "go with the flow" imagine that modern technology has rendered ancient truths obsolete. Perhaps, on some topics, it has. But there is no hope of parsing the ethical implications of AGI or constructing rural data centers without an ancient dataset. Something must go beyond us. Something must call

us to account.

"As long as the vision of heaven is always changing, the vision of earth will be exactly the same," Chesterton wrote. "No ideal will remain long enough to be realised, or even partly realised. The modern young man will never change his environment; for he will always change his mind."

For a sufficiently fierce debate of competing visions for a better future, there must be enough substance to dispute. The postmodern insistence on relativity misses the fundamental, unchanging reality that grounds all of existence. Sometimes humility looks like strength; sometimes hubris means never choosing a side.

So perhaps Mick Jagger was right, and we should paint it all black. Maybe an optimist would go for yellow or pink or green. But if the optimist should scuttle between opinions, haphazardly painting it all yellow and pink and green, a sherbet-flavored nightmare would arise. Beautiful shades would overlap into an intricate mosaic — and, elsewhere, into a dull gray sludge.

Paint the world blue. Paint it green, mauve, fuchsia or chrome. Spend all you have to love others and change the world, but don't pretend your hesitation at the palette is a result of humility if it really comes from a fear of picking wrong. Take a deep breath, look at the easel and start again. We may finally change our environment if we could only stop changing our minds.

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## Opinion

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To submit a Lariat Letter, email Lariat-Letters@baylor.edu. Letters should be a maximum of 400 words. The letter is not guaranteed to be published.

**News**

# Changing recruitment, changing identity

*Baptist student population dropped 28% since 2016 after recruitment strategy shift*

**ABBY RATHBURN**  
Staff Writer

In the last few years, Baylor has changed its recruitment process to be less Baptist-oriented, and the statistics show it.

Since its chartering in 1845, Baylor has identified as a Baptist university. It's also been affiliated with the Baptist General Convention of Texas for the past 181 years, but Baylor's Baptist student population has steadily declined since 2016.

According to Baylor's Office of Institutional Research, the Baptist student population has decreased by about 28% since fall 2016, when 4,842 students identified as Baptist. In fall 2025, only 3,483 students were Baptist.

According to Dr. Doug Weaver, chair of the department of religion, it's been decades since Baylor actively recruited Baptist-identifying students.

"Baylor used to require all its regents to be Baptists, and Baptists used to get preference in faculty hiring," Weaver said. "Those things are no longer the case as the school grew beyond its focus on being a heavily regional school that focused primarily on recruiting Baptist students in Texas and surrounding states."

Now Baylor's recruitment strategy focuses more on Christian values than specifically Baptist ones, Weaver said.

"Baylor as a regional school would have focused on recruiting Baptists in Texas and maybe even Baptists elsewhere," Weaver said. "Baylor today recruits all over the country,



Brady Harris | Photographer

**DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES** George W. Truett Theological Seminary, the home to Baylor's seminary school, is where Baylor students attend chapel.

and I doubt it focuses on Baptists; they market the school as a Christian university ... not as a Baptist university."

Many students reflect this statistic, choosing to attend Baylor for its Christian values rather than Baptist-specific ones. El Cajon, Calif., sophomore Jake Eichhorst said he believes there is value in maintaining a Baptist identity as Baylor continues to grow and change as a university.

"I think it's good for a school, that's like a Christian school, [to have] a base in a denomination or a background," Eichhorst

said. "It's good for them to know where they came from."

Although it doesn't seem like Baylor is anywhere near disaffiliating as a Baptist institution, for such a drastic change to even be possible, the board of regents would have to approve it.

"I would hope that Baylor, as a Christian-affiliated school, would remember the best ideals of the broader Baptist heritage as it practices a robust ecumenical identity that includes people across the spectrum of Christian groups," Weaver said.

Even so, Baylor has reviewed its heritage before, abandoning some of the more stringent aspects of the Southern Baptist tradition. For example, it was not until 1996 that students were allowed to dance at Baylor University.

As Baylor has moved away from these more restrictive traditions, the student body evolved with it, including Lufkin freshman Abigail Miranda.

"I think a lot of people are just shying away from tradition, but still staying strong in Christian beliefs," Miranda said. "I don't agree with traditional Baptist beliefs; it is hard to feel included in their community because of that."

Similarly, San Jose, Calif., freshman Conner Gordon said he thinks the general decline among Baptist students is due to a shift within the Baptist church. Gordon grew up Baptist but stopped identifying as Baptist when he came to college. He said Baptist traditions scare students away and toward other groups, particularly non-denominational.

"I feel like [Baptists] moved away from what Christianity is supposed to be, like me personally, I have a lot of reasons for stepping away from my old church," Gordon said.

But Weaver said the shift isn't necessarily a bad thing. His perspective is that more is gained from a denominationally diverse environment than from strict adherence to Baptist traditions.

"I assume Baylor faculty would tell you a religiously diverse faculty is a stronger faculty," Weaver said. "A school can include the best — there are examples of the worst, too — of a denomination's heritage if it wants to, while being a broad, ecumenical Christian university."



Kamryn Anthis | Intern

**OPEN WIDE** Mammal Keeper Lindsey Prior performs a pulse oximetry reading on an orangutan at Cameron Park Zoo.

## Primates learn to comply with heart monitoring

**KAMRYN ANTHIS**  
Intern

Cameron Park Zoo is teaching its primates to cooperate with blood draws, blood pressure testing, EKGs, echocardiograms, X-rays and more.

Zookeepers from all over the world traveled to Waco April 7-8 to observe the revolutionary medical technology at the zoo at its ninth annual Great Ape Cardiac Clinic Workshop. But this has been in the works for years.

After the addition of a baby orangutan to the primate family, the zoo's clinic allowed specialists from zoos across the world to observe the training and technologies they implemented. The zoo's technology helps increase the longevity and quality of primates' lives.

Through presentations and hands-on demonstrations, three of the Cameron Park Zoo's leading primate experts educated experts on techniques for training apes to comply with cardiac testing, as well as on the machinery itself, according to Senior Keeper of Mammals Emily Ellison.

"Humans have so many tools to monitor and track cardiac health," Ellison said. "Through operant conditioning and positive reinforcement training, we can use those same tools for ape species."

Many of the zoo's orangutans are well trained to receive cardiac care, such as X-rays, EKGs, pulse oximetry and blood draws after operant conditioning —

learned behavior like teaching a dog tricks — and specialized training. By sharing the information in a free clinic, Mammal Keeper Lindsey Prior hopes to spread tips so other zoo staff members can implement the technology at their own zoos.

"Every ape is different, even in the same species, so we really want people to take things that they learn here and modify and adapt them," Prior said.

Staff members like Zookeeper Madi McCaleb know the personalities of their animals inside and out, and the yearly clinic draws people from all over to see the interactions between keepers and animals.

"Because we get so many new people from so many different places

every year, we learn more tips and tricks every single year," McCaleb said. "This is never redundant."

As the zoo continues to grow and new animals come, Ellison said it's increasingly more important to monitor the animals' health. Ravi, the zoo's newborn orangutan, serves as an example to many of how the lives of these creatures can be helped.

"If any of this would extend the life or the welfare of one animal, we have more than succeeded," Ellison said.

The clinic serves as a donation of knowledge to improve the livelihood of different species in zoos all over. Zoo employees encouraged Waco residents to visit the zoo to learn more about the primates and their training.



Kamryn Anthis | Intern

**GIMME DAT** Newborn orangutan Ravi playfully sways out of her mother Mei's arms at Cameron Park Zoo.

## Classroom to campus Students design anti-theft shed for e-scooters, bikes

**ABBY RATHBURN**  
Staff Writer

What started as a class project may become a reality. After receiving a steady stream of emails about electric scooter and bike thefts on campus, a group of students decided to take action.

University Architect David Bess approached Littleton, Colo., senior Elizabeth McGuire; El Paso senior Javier Terrazas; Round Rock senior Lily Hallum; and Scottsdale, Ariz., master's candidate Scott Stanford in their advanced project management class to develop a solution to e-scooter and bike thefts on Baylor's campus.

"We did some research on our own and came up with a new plan that we've posed to David that's more of like a shed-type looking thing with [radio frequency identification], login so that students can register their scooters, and hopefully that will help prevent kind of the theft that's been going on on campus," Hallum said.

Although the majority of the work was completed independently, the students received some assistance from Clinical Assistant Professor John White, who maintained communication between the group and Bess. As part of the planning process, the students toured the construction of Kokernot Residence Hall, which is currently undergoing renovation.

The students also created a survey for the student body to communicate their own opinions on the problem. The goal is to gauge whether students would utilize a shed like the one the group designed.

"Our next step for our project was creating a survey and kind of asking students, 'Would you use something like this?'" McGuire said. "[We asked] if they'd



Caleb Garcia | Photographer

**PARKED** A row of bikes and scooters sit just outside Moody Memorial Library.

pay for it, if they'd utilize a charging feature."

To be most efficient, they delegated tasks within the group, assigning each member a role in the project.

"Because I'm a grad student, they put me as the project manager for this one, so I feel like communicating with the group is pretty big," Stanford said.

Each group member said they are grateful to be in this class because having gone through the process, they now have insight into all stages of project development from initial design and planning to real-world implementation.

"I think I also have more insight into what it takes to get stuff built on campus," Hallum said. "Researching the requirements for Baylor and getting the project started has been really interesting."

Similar to Hallum, McGuire also felt the reward of completing the project, stressing its long-term potential impact.

"If something similar to our plan or some change is implemented on campus in regards to the theft of the e-scooters and bikes and stuff, it'll be cool years down the road to see if something that we came up with was able to help solve that," McGuire said.

### Author discusses poetry, diversity at Readers Meet the Author lecture

**RYAN VASQUEZ**  
Reporter

Readers Meet the Author concluded its final meeting of the 2025-26 school year with a discussion of poetry and persona from Associate Professor and Director of Ethnic Studies Dr. Ryan Sharp on Wednesday at Moody Memorial Library.

Introduced by Vice President and Provost Dr. Nancy Brickhouse, Sharp sat down with Vice Provost for Community Engagement and Belonging Coretta Pittman to discuss his book, "Another Throat: 21st Century Black U.S. Persona Poetry and the Archive."

Sharp said his introduction to poetry came through his older brothers, who watched televised slam poetry.

**READ MORE ABOUT SHARP HERE:**



# DIADELOSO 2026



**JOUST** Two students take up the inflatable jousting attraction on Fountain Mall as Diadeloso ignites friendly competition, community fun and Baylor spirit.

Sam Gassaway | Photo Editor



Sam Gassaway | Photo Editor

**REFRESHMENT** Several food trucks, including Waco favorite Pop's Lemonade, parked outside Morrison Hall to offer food and refreshment to students celebrating Diadeloso.



Sam Gassaway | Photo Editor

**DIA FUN** Students gather on Fountain Mall and load into inflatable bumper cars to celebrate Diadeloso.



Sam Gassaway | Photo Editor

**FUELING UP** Baylor Eats employees gathered underneath a tent on Fountain Mall to serve lunch to students and faculty members celebrating Diadeloso.



Sam Gassaway | Photo Editor

**FRIENDLY FIRE** In the center of Fountain Mall, students flocked to the Nerf gun battle attraction, where they could duck behind various objects and battle their friends.



Mesha Mittanasala | Photographer

**ROCKING TOGETHER** Fountain Mall offered dozens of activities for students to enjoy on Diadeloso, including a rock climbing wall.



Sam Gassaway | Photo Editor

**JUMPING AROUND** From bungee jumping to rock climbing, Fountain Mall had no shortage of activities for students on Diadeloso.



Sam Gassaway | Photo Editor



Mesha Mittanasala | Photographer

**FURRY FRIENDS** Along with rides and attractions on Fountain Mall, a petting zoo caught the eyes of Baylor students, with exotic animals like kangaroos, sloths and a lemur.

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Sam Gassaway | Photo Editor

**BULLSEYE** Redshirt sophomore base Leavy McDonald (No. 40) and her teammates celebrate against UMHB on Feb. 22. The Bears have won 59 straight heading into the NCATA Championship.

# Built beneath it all

## How faith, family, Baylor shaped A&T base Leavy McDonald

**MARISSA ESSENBERG**  
Sports Writer

The Mannings. The Currys. The Williamses. Families built for sports, with athletics stitched into their DNA.

All famous, yes, but none with more unique first names than the McDonald family. Touchstone, Kyte, Maddox and Baylor's own Leavy McDonald — the latter being a two-time national champion, NCATA All-American and the powerhouse beneath No. 1 Baylor acrobatics and tumbling.

While McDonald's name has quickly become etched beside the name Baylor A&T, the heart of her story lies in what has carried her there. Her faith in God, the steady support of her family, immense gratitude and the people who have empowered her along the way who have shaped the athlete — and person — now dominating the sport.

"My backbone has always been my family," McDonald said. "My parents have been there through every hard day, making sure I feel seen and loved. My brothers paved the way for me and showed me that anything is possible. My grandpa's love and prayers have carried me through

more than I can count. Because of them, I compete on a foundation of unconditional love."

There's something undeniably special in sports about a coach who believes in you, especially when you're young.

For McDonald, it was that belief that became the foundation for everything that followed. Growing up in small-town Castroville, the redshirt sophomore dreamed big early, chasing aspirations of one day becoming an Olympian. That dream eventually led her to San Antonio, where greater opportunity awaited — and so did the adversity that came with it.

"From a very young age, I was always the tallest and more built than everyone else," McDonald said. "When I started in artistic gymnastics, I was told my feet were too big, too flat and that I was too tall. Then I had a coach who really saw me and took a chance on me. She told me, 'I know you're strong, so I want you to try acrobatic gymnastics.' Her belief in me sparked something, and I fell in love with it."

That love that would, years later and after a memorable stop along the way, write her name into the NCATA

record books.

Unlike most competitive gymnasts, gymnastics would not always be McDonald's only path. By high school, the future NCATA Freshman of the Year had been introduced to powerlifting, trading time on the mat for the weight room while stacking up state and national titles.

"That's a huge part of my story, is my powerlifting journey," McDonald said. It's some of the most fun I've had in my life and I absolutely loved it."

Eventually, Baylor would come to discover and eventually recruit McDonald, bringing her back to acrobatics.

That is, before what looked to be the base's breakout freshman season — with a spot in the starting lineup already secured — came to a halt when a gruesome leg injury during pyramid work in fall practice forced her to redshirt the year and see the mat from a different perspective.

For McDonald, her time on the sideline was anything but wasted. Instead, it became a blessing.

"Looking back now, I would not have wanted it any other way because that year taught me more than any other year of my life up to this point,"

McDonald said. "And it is a huge shaping point in my faith."

"It took what I cared for most, what was bringing me all my happiness in life at that time. It made me find the one thing that really, truly does bring me joy and happiness, which is him. I had this peace within me that I just knew because I had prayed for it. I was like, 'God, allow my comeback to be so undeniable that it is you.'"

And the seven-time NCATA Freshman of the Week had her comeback.

In her first season competing in the green and gold, McDonald took the sport by storm, earning NCATA All-America honors, NCATA Freshman of the Year and national titles in 5-Element Acro, Inversion Pyramid and Synchronized Pyramid, all while securing her second championship ring and the program's 10th national crown.

Now with her second regular season in the books after helping lead the Bears to another undefeated campaign, McDonald has Baylor back in the hunt for one more NCATA championship before acrobatics and tumbling fully transition to the NCAA.

As the accolades continue to pile

up, she's never mistaken where it all comes from. To her, it begins and ends with three things: God's grace, her family's unwavering support and the village that has poured into her and continues to hold her up.

"The upperclassmen last year had such a huge impact on growing me and my confidence as a human being, to where I'm able to walk in a room with my chin up now with my shoulders back because I know, that one, I have people who believe in me, but also, they've helped me believe in myself."

With two years of eligibility still to come and a couple of blue dot titles to chase, what lies ahead for McDonald feels bigger than the trophies.

Somewhere along the way, Baylor became more than just the next stop in her journey. It became a home — one that has shaped her talents, strengthened her faith, deepened her confidence and helped form both the person she is and the one she is still becoming.

"Baylor is the best decision I've ever made for myself," McDonald said. "This school, this sport, this community has provided me so many opportunities to grow as a person, and I'm so incredibly grateful."

## 'Battle-tested' MT eyes Big 12 title push

*The Bears have won nine of 10 heading into the postseason.*

**MARISSA ESSENBERG**  
Sports Writer

After closing out its regular-season slate Sunday, No. 11 Baylor men's tennis heads to Orlando, Fla., for its first postseason push of the spring. The Bears are set to compete in the Big 12 Tournament at the USTA National Campus from April 15-18.

With only the top six teams qualifying for the conference tournament, No. 3-seeded Baylor opens quarterfinal play against No. 6 Utah on Thursday morning, with first serve coming alongside the opposite-side matchup between UCF (19-5, 5-3 Big 12) and Arizona State (17-9, 4-4 Big 12).

"We're a top-10 program, and I think we've shown it all year," head coach Michael Woodson said. "We're ready, and now we're playing good doubles. We have a very strong lineup, and we can win at any position against anybody in the country, so we're really excited for the postseason. I'm looking forward to what we can do."

The Bears enter the tournament boasting a 21-8 overall record and a 6-2 mark in conference play. The team

compiled an 83-38 team singles record this spring behind nationally-ranked junior Devin Badenhorst (No. 8), senior Zsombor Velcz (No. 44) and junior Connor Van Schalkwyk (No. 50).

In doubles play, Van Schalkwyk and Badenhorst each lead the way with 16-7 records. Freshman Blake Anderson has gone 12-4, senior Luc Koenig is 12-9, Velcz sits at 11-11 and graduate Alexandru Chirita is 10-10, helping Baylor compile a 44-25 team doubles record.

"I think the guys take it a little bit for granted to have the success that we've had over the last several weeks because I think their standard is very high for this program and for themselves," Woodson said. "I appreciate that. We've had a good year."

If Baylor advances past Utah, the team would earn another shot at second-seeded TCU in Friday's semifinal at 1 p.m. The Bears fell 4-1 to No. 4-ranked TCU on Sunday in their final Big 12 match of the regular season.

"They outplayed us today," Woodson said after the loss. "But there's always the next time, and hopefully in a few days

we'll get to play them again."

And play them they will — if Baylor takes care of business against the Utes, the same way it did in the teams' first meeting, a 4-1 win in Waco.

Despite sitting behind TCU in the national rankings, Arizona claimed the top spot in the Big 12 after finishing unbeaten in conference play and 20-3 overall to win the regular-season title. If the Bears outlast TCU, they would advance to face either Arizona or the winner of UCF and Arizona State in the championship match, set to be played at 1 p.m. Saturday.

"At this point, we're match-ready, battle-hardened," Woodson said. "I think it's about getting their minds and their bodies right. We know the conditions in Orlando pretty well, so we'll spend a lot of time in the training room, stretching, fueling and hydrating properly, and then doing specific work on the court."

"These guys don't need to practice a ton anymore. They just need to make sure they feel ready to go on Thursday morning."

First serve for the Bears in the Big 12 Tournament is set for 9 a.m. Thursday. The match will be broadcast on ESPN+.



Photo courtesy of Baylor Athletics

Check out our Big 12 Golf Championships preview:



## Roaring, radical, renaissance

Column: I went to Scarborough Renaissance Festival — here's what happened



Sophia Monson | Social Media Editor

**RENAISSANCE FAIRE ROYALTY** The Scarborough Renaissance Festival king and queen transport attendees to the medieval era as they walk the grounds.

**KALENA REYNOLDS**  
Arts & Life Editor

The day started with a twinge of feeling overwhelmed as rain melted into the dirt pathways and people poured into the festival. This was my first time attending a renaissance festival, and I was eager to see what all the hype was about.

The Scarborough Renaissance Festival is located in Waxahachie and runs until May 25. While each weekend has a different theme, I attended the "Artisan's Showcase" weekend; others include "Legends of the Seas" and "Flights of Fantasy."

While the morning weather was not ideal, to take cover from the rain, I decided my smartest move would be to tour vendors with indoor setups.

My first stop was a silversmith station that sold a variety of figurines, jewelry and cups. I ended up purchasing a skull with rhinestones — I know, very 2016.

As I continued shopping, I found a multitude

of handmade trinkets, attire and cups that brought a touch of authenticity to the trip.

I quickly realized that this was an all-immersive experience. Every vendor employee spoke with an accent and wore a beautifully planned costume.

For the women, it seemed that corsets and petticoats were a common theme; for men, it was linen pants and lots of leather.

When the rain finally stopped, I decided it was time to take advantage of the nearing sunshine and grab a turkey leg.

I have to say — for \$24 — I expected the turkey leg to be second to none. This was not the case.

Next up, I decided it was time to pursue my number one priority at the renaissance faire — finding butterbeer. On the journey, I accidentally stumbled into some fried macaroni and cheese bites and a variety of mouthwatering pastries.

Eventually, I discovered the one place that served butterbeer at the festival had forgotten to

order the ingredients — sigh!

My sorrows were short-lived after a trip to the Mermaid Lagoon. The attraction included two mermaids in a human-sized water fountain who guests could ask questions of.

Personally, the mermaids were the absolute cherry on top.

We also passed by a multitude of face painters and palm readers that added a whimsical element to the faire.

Periodically, the king and queen of the festival would walk through the streets with a renaissance-dressed entourage following around them. Procuring a series of glances and ganders, the duo was dressed to the nines in period-accurate attire that transported attendees to the medieval era.

On that note, I couldn't help but take advantage of the people-watching opportunities.

The majority of people were dressed in beautiful Renaissance clothing, while others wore costume-type attire.

Some people wore colorful, intricate makeup, while others wore braids and beads in their hair.

Festival workers all had extravagant clothing that made the festival feel like I was being transported back in time. As a first-time renaissance faire attendee, I have to say that the overall experience was a refreshing break from the real world.

From the moment I walked through the gates, feelings of blissful distraction from reality began to engulf me.

Employees were planted throughout the faire who played into the medieval theme, interweaving a sea of velvet, linen and fur into the festival.

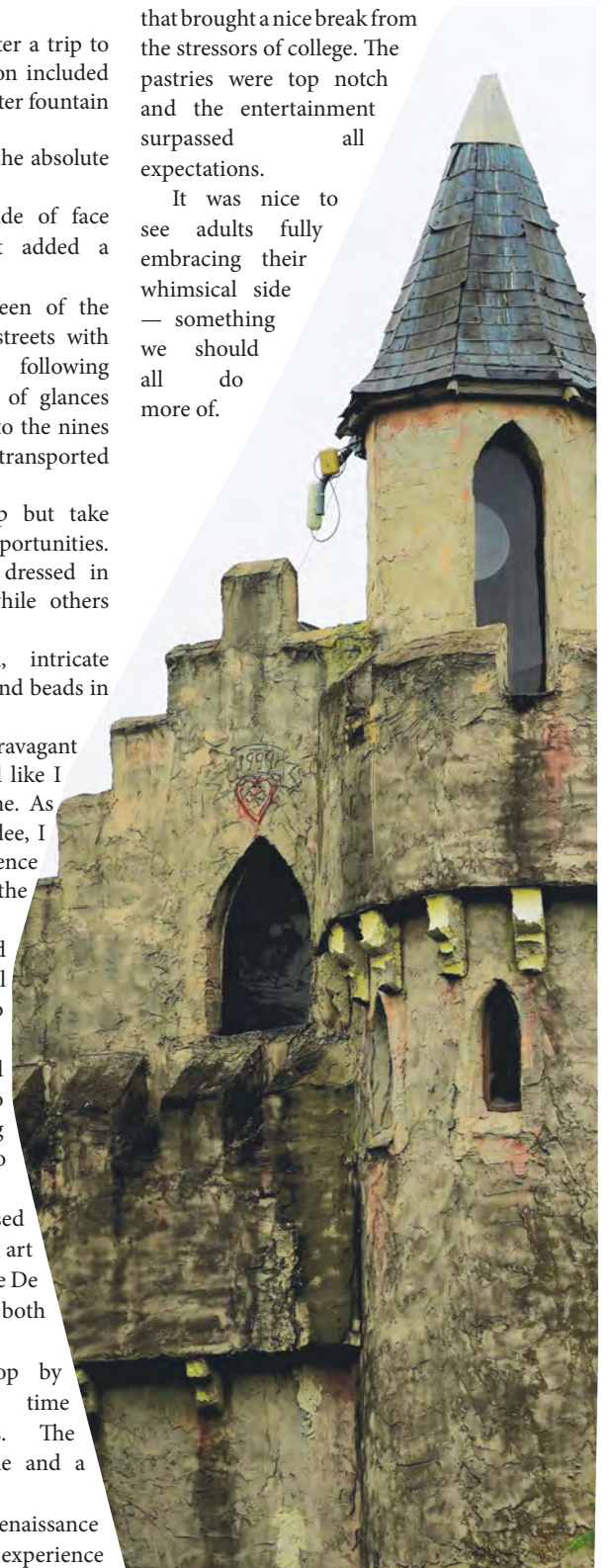
Aside from food, I also browsed through a few card games and art vendors, as well as stopping at Cirque De Sewer — a performance featuring both cats and rats doing tricks.

Before I left, I had to stop by the pastry vendor one last time to grab three more treats. The pastries were absolutely irresistible and a staple of the event.

Overall, the Scarborough Renaissance Festival was a completely immersive experience

that brought a nice break from the stressors of college. The pastries were top notch and the entertainment surpassed all expectations.

It was nice to see adults fully embracing their whimsical side — something we should all do more of.



## Everything we ate at Scarborough Renaissance Festival

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Arts & Life Editor

While it was a rainy day at the Scarborough Renaissance Festival, that certainly did not stop us from indulging in the multitude of delicious eats the festival included. From French pastries to fried macaroni and cheese, the faire did not lack in divine dishes.

Here is our review of everything we ate.

### TURKEY LEG

No matter what faire you attend, the turkey leg always sets the tone as the most recommended item. While \$24 is a hefty chunk of change, the turkey leg is good enough as a standalone meal. The skin was crispy and it was fairly well sized, but was slightly dry following the first few bites.

If you're hungry and don't plan on eating other items, the turkey leg is a good option. However, if you plan to taste as much as possible and don't have a group to share the leg with, it might be better to choose a different, cheaper protein option.

### ICED CHAI

With so many coffee shops popping up

every week, there are no shortage of chai places, making it incredibly difficult to stand out. But the bakery's chai did exactly that. The chai had a perfect mix of sweet and spicy with a creamy flavor that was the right level of richness.

The chai stood apart as one of the only festival-made beverages that didn't come out of a can, and it was great. Of all the options, the experience wouldn't be complete without a chai stop at the bakery.

### WONDER BAR

Coconut, chocolate and sweetened condensed milk is a combo that is difficult to beat. The wonder bar brought all three together in even layers of chewy sweetness.

After the first taste, we were in it for the long run, as the addicting texture and flavor had us repeating "just one more bite" again and again. For fans of coconut, the wonder bar is a must try.

### PIZZA

Being a classic bite at most any event, we were hopeful that the pizza would be a crowd-pleaser. Unfortunately, the pepperoni and cheese slices we tried did not live up to our expectations. There seemed to be an imbalanced ratio, with the crust heavily outweighing the sauce and cheese. The crust was breadly and dry, leaving much to be desired.

While it is a convenient snack for hungry festivalgoers to grab, we suggest browsing the other options the faire has to offer.



Sophia Monson | Social Media Editor

**TERRIFIC TURKEY** A staple on any renaissance faire menu, the turkey leg at Scarborough made for a great dish to share with friends.

### FRIED MACARONI AND CHEESE

Being a fan favorite on many appetizer menus, we had high hopes for the fried macaroni and cheese. It came served with a side of ranch dressing, which was the highlight of the dish. Let's be honest, anything in the gene pool of fried cheese is hard to resist.

The only thing that could've taken this from good to great would be a warmer center and a touch more flavor.

The ranch, however, saved the day, as it was the perfect addition of flavor and creaminess the macaroni and cheese needed. The dressing base had the perfect consistency, complementing the even flavors of garlic and dill.

### APPLE NACHOS

A variety of fried cinnamon-sugar chips topped with vanilla ice cream and spiced apples sounded like the perfect dish to end our trip to the renaissance faire. The spiced apples and vanilla ice cream were an unbeatable combo; however, I wish the chips were fresher.

The nachos were a perfect option for a semisweet dessert, but ultimately, we preferred the wonder bar, as mentioned above.

### ONION AND GORGONZOLA PASTRY

Truly a staple dish at the festival, it was mouthwatering. With the perfect cheese-to-veggie ratio, we wanted five more. The croissant like pastry was soft and buttery, leaving a perfect savory flavor that balanced the caramelized onions.

Ultimately, we were super impressed with this pastry and would absolutely recreate it at home. If you're going to a renaissance faire anytime soon, this one is a must-have.

### PALMIER

We had high hopes for this French pastry and were pleasantly surprised to find a cinnamon-sugar coating on the outside. To be honest, we've only tried the pastry at one other place, and we were absolutely mesmerized by the first bite.

We would highly recommend the Palmier to anyone looking for a light, airy pastry. The sugar coating on the outside tied the entire dish together, and we're saddened that we can't find this at our local pastry shop.



Sophia Monson | Social Media Editor

**COCONUT CRAZY** A delicious gooey mix of chocolate and coconut, the wonder bar from the Scarborough Renaissance Festival was second to none.

✦ Google Gemini

# NOTES TO NAILED IT

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