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EDITORIAL:

Social media diet trends have more going on behind the scenes



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WOMEN'S TENNIS:

Head coach Joey Scrivano uses Celtics fandom to lead WTEN



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YOUTUBE LEGENDS:

Where are the 'Kappa Rap' girls 15 years after viral music video

Students push to organize alternative event to TPUSA

CHRISTIAN WELLS
Staff Writer

As Turning Point USA prepares to visit Baylor, a coalition of student groups are organizing an alternative event focused on unity, dialogue and inclusion.

The proposed event, titled "All Are Neighbors," is organized by groups including the NAACP, Students Demand Action, Hearts for the Homeless, College Democrats and Texas Rising. Organizers said the event is intended to bring together students, faculty and staff across backgrounds and beliefs.

Waco senior and College Democrats President JW LaStrape said the event aims to create space for community and conversation.

"The main goal of this event is to bring together a broad coalition of students and faculty within the Baylor community through interfaith dialogue and solidarity with the marginalized," LaStrape said.

The effort comes as Baylor prepares to host Turning Point USA's "This Is the Turning Point" tour, featuring conservative speakers at Waco Hall as part of a national campus speaking tour.

The main goal for Fort Worth senior and event organizer Joseph Naylor is to allow students to have a voice, feel comfortable and remind the community about the importance of caring for one another.

"This event is something we're doing to make everyone feel welcomed, safe and comfortable here and to let the population know that we are all neighbors of one another



CONNECTING Waco senior and College Democrats President JW LaStrape (top row, second from the left) and other members of The College Democrats of Baylor are organizing an alternative event for students to attend instead of Turning Point USA's tour April 22.

and we should care for each other as such," Naylor said.

Dallas junior Carson Runnels favors TPUSA but said he is happy to see both sides have the opportunity to host an event.

"I'm interested in what TPUSA has to say, but I also think it's a good thing that students who see things differently have their own event, too," Runnels said.

LaStrape said the timing and message of the event are intentional.

"If TPUSA can have speakers come to campus in large venues, our student organizations should be able to host events with speakers too," LaStrape said.

The event will serve as an alternative space for students who feel negatively influenced by TPUSA's message.

"It is important that the event take place at the time that Turning Point USA is on campus to provide an alternate sanctuary and focus for students, faculty and staff," LaStrape said.

Houston senior Hanna Al Hayek told Baptist News Global she thought it was important that another event was organized as an alternative to TPUSA.

"It is no secret that TPUSA promotes ideologies of Christian supremacy and white supremacy," Al Hayek said in an interview with Baptist News Global. "They are the same group that had to have an alternate Super Bowl performance despite an American already performing at it. Bad Bunny just wasn't their type of American."

The program is expected to

include indoor speakers followed by an outdoor interfaith prayer gathering. Planned speakers include Kelley Robinson, president of the Human Rights Campaign, and the Rev. Paul Brandeis Raushenbush, president of the Interfaith Alliance, along with Baylor faculty and student leaders.

LaStrape said the event will focus on unity and dialogue across differences.

"We will not use our platform to promote division, but will instead advocate for dialogue and collaboration between people from all backgrounds and faith traditions," LaStrape said.

Fort Worth junior Kendall Aviles said it's important to allow both

STUDENT EVENT >> A8

DIA 2026

TUESDAY, APRIL 14, 2026



Mesha Mittanasala | Photographer

Campus Schedule

FOOD TRUCKS | 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
MORRISON PARKING LOT

Beachy's Baking Co Pop's Lemonade
Zuke's Tea Bar Texas Snow Pokey O's
Frenchie Daddy French Toast

ATTRACTIONS | 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
FOUNTAIN MALL, SUB, BEAR PARK

- Silent Disco
- Petting Zoo
- Splatter Paint
- Ice Skating
- Axe Throwing
- Rock Climbing
- Mini Golf
- Obstacle Course
- Velcro Wall
- Bungee Trampoline
- Bungee Cord Run
- Nerf Gun Battles
- Wrecking Ball Game
- Carnival Games
- Gaga Ball
- Human Foosball
- Inflatable Jousting
- Arcade Games
- Bumper Cars

DR PEPPER HOUR | 1 - 2 p.m.
SUB SECOND FLOOR LOBBY

Baylor senior finds steady pulse with epilepsy, raises awareness

RHEA CHOUDHARY
Staff Writer

The device in Houston senior Isla Ritchie's chest goes off every five minutes. It is subtle, a 30-second pulse she has grown used to, but it is a constant reminder of a condition she's been living with for over a decade. Nonetheless, Ritchie doesn't allow it to slow her down.

Ritchie studies entrepreneurship, corporate innovation and international business, along with a minor in Chinese. She is also a member of the Alpha Phi sorority and is serving her second year as president of Baylor's Urban Dance Society. Ritchie previously completed a summer internship in Singapore and is now preparing to begin her MBA in Healthcare Administration at Baylor after graduating in May.

None of that felt possible when she was first diagnosed.

"I was a very sporty kid," Ritchie said. "I did triathlons and soccer, then everything kind of came crumbling down."

At 11 years old, she had her first seizure, waking up in the middle of the night with her arms shaking, unsure of what was happening to her body. After multiple hospital visits

EPILEPSY AWARENESS >> A8



LIVING TO THE FULLEST Baylor senior Isla Ritchie was diagnosed with epilepsy since she was 11 years old, yet has continued to pursue her passions.

StuGov passes amendments, spring elections shift control

RHEA CHOUDHARY
Staff Writer

Spring brought change for Baylor Student Government. The April election results are finalized, ushering in new leadership, constitutional amendments and clarification on long-standing governance procedures outlined in the Senate bylaws.

The election resulted in DeRidder, La., junior Ashlyn Graves' selection as the next student body president with 1,287 votes, defeating Erie, Colo., junior

Lauren Adams' 788 votes. For internal vice president, Argyle senior Chandler Johnson won with 1,183 votes over China Spring senior Caleb Brown's 643 votes, along with Parker junior Lucy Dennis securing the role of external vice president with 1,855 votes. Additionally, 10 senior senators, 13 junior senators and 13 sophomore senators were elected.

As she prepares to be promoted to student body president's office, Graves said her focus is on initiatives that strengthen student life and campus connections.

"I'm most excited to build on initiatives that directly impact students' daily experience, like improving game day engagement, strengthening campus traditions and creating more opportunities for students to connect and feel a sense of belonging," Graves said. "I'm also looking forward to working with the administration to advocate for practical changes like meal plan flexibility and academic support. More than any single project, I'm excited to listen

ELECTIONS >> A8

GOT SOMETHING TO SAY?

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

EDITORIAL

Food for thought: Avoid diet fads

Take a scroll on social media, and it'll be almost impossible to avoid a message telling you to "fix" the way you look. Open the app to a video about a way to change your body, scroll to start a fresh workout routine and again to find a new diet that fixes everything.

On social media platforms like TikTok and Instagram, influencers dominate our feeds, showcasing their lifestyles and coaxing others to follow in their footsteps. Videos titled "What I eat in a day" or "What I eat in a day to stay skinny" have found their way into our algorithms, planting the all-too-familiar seed of comparison in the mind of viewers.

If you make it to the end of one of these videos, you're likely to see a few things.

First, you may watch a slim or toned person on your screen, making a point to showcase their flat stomach or ideal curves.

Second, their diet may fail to account for numerous necessary nutritional factors, such as a healthy, adequate number of calories or may focus unrealistically on protein while ignoring other necessary food groups.

Lastly, a sea of comments likely follows, as dozens ask for further advice on how to change themselves to better mirror the original creator.

Basing your diet on the advice of online influencers is



James Ellis | Cartoonist

a dangerous route to take, as it often lacks critical information that allows consumers to make healthy, responsible choices on their own.

Taking diet advice from anybody online is a risky gamble at best.

There is no way to verify if the food an influencer claims to be eating actually shaped their potentially desirable physique.

With current technologies like filters and AI, access to

cosmetic surgeries and simple genetic differences, we cannot expect diet changes to deliver the healthy, satisfying results we see on the other end of the screen. Not to mention the power of camera angles and strategic lighting alters our perspective. It's unrealistic to think we can truly know how someone's diet plays into their appearance.

The largest food production companies aren't often

concerned with providing the most nutritionally dense products to their consumers; rather, they aim to maximize profits by keeping costs low and market interest high.

Influencers may not be trying to help their audience either, but rather jumping on the newest fad to help propel their accounts on the algorithm. We have seen this year after year, with the food industry and popular voices

walking hand in hand to sell you on the newest craze.

We've seen this in the 1990s when avoiding carbohydrates was all the rage. We witnessed it again when low-sugar alternatives flooded store shelves a decade later. Now, we are seeing a new surge with everything from popcorn to soda packing a protein punch.

Constantly consuming media that shovels unrealistic dieting advice into your psyche

can, and often does, disrupt your relationship with food. Eating disorders continue to be a prominent issue among millions, with teens and young adults being the most vulnerable.

Studies have proven this vulnerability, with the Eating Recovery Center reporting that in 2017 49% of Instagram users who follow health-food related accounts show symptoms of anorexia nervosa, and 50% changed their diet based on social media posts.

A 2023 study published by the National Library of Medicine found significant possible correlations linking disordered eating, anxiety and body dissatisfaction and the use of social media. More likely than not, being continually exposed to videos critiquing your habits and reminding you of ways you can change your body will damage your perception of yourself and your diet.

When mixing social media and dieting, stick to simple content like recipe ideas or restaurant recommendations. When we get into the weeds on nutritional needs or closely tracking our intake, consulting with a healthcare professional or nutritionist is the best route.

Food is fuel, and food can — and should — be fun. Eat good food, consult with your doctor and find what makes you feel good.

A letter to the victims of sexual assault

MACKENZIE GRIZZARD
Assistant News Editor

When the Rosenbalm Fountain glows blue every April, I'm transported to the time in my life when blue was my favorite color.

I loved the blue of the ocean, the glow of the sky and the fluffiness of state fair cotton candy, as most young girls do.

When I see that blue light now, I think of that girl.

The fountain glows blue in honor of Sexual Assault Awareness Month, but more importantly, it glows for those who have had everything taken from them.

It glows for those terrified to report, for those who wanted to protect those who wronged them and for those like me, who never really "got over it."

"Don't let it have power over you."

I repeated this to myself as much as I heard it said to me. Yet power is a tricky thing. It can't be given to you, bestowed upon you by an enchanted sword in fairy tales. But it can be taken by hands, minds and bodies consumed by lust and greed.

I told myself that what happened to me only had power if I allowed it to, but in reality, it held power because it

stole mine.

It's hard to come to terms with loss. I was once a young girl who viewed the world with wide-eyed wonder and was unafraid because she had no reason to be. There was once a time when the only thing that had touched me without my permission was the ocean waves.

I'll never get over the loss of that girl. If it's true that there's nothing more powerful than hope, then she had all the power in the world.

As women, we're often told that beauty is power. We're told that "power" is having eyes linger on your backside as you walk past, like vultures circling a dying animal. We're told that we should reframe lust as power to take back control from a world that celebrates sexuality yet punishes empowerment.

The piece of meat that sits behind the glass at the butcher's is not powerful simply because it is stared at hungrily. In that same way, power becomes a deformation of righteous benevolence. A gentle hand becomes a muzzling one — clamped over a trembling mouth.

When discussions arise around sexual assault, most already have what is usually referred to as a "perfect victim" in their eyes. There's a certain nuance that often arises when religion enters the conversation, and it's what kept me shackled with shame.

For years, the shame I felt sitting in the Lord's house, trapped inside

a body defiled, was all-consuming. As my innocence was stolen, my relationship with God paid the price.

In my experience, shame and anger often go hand in hand. Most days, I was so angry at God for allowing that to happen to me. I couldn't understand how something so vile could be a part of his plan. But mostly, I was angry that the body he created was tarnished.

I had to accept that I was cursed. Not just with memories that would shake me awake in tears, but to spend the rest of my life living inside a body that no longer belonged to God or me.

There are some harsh truths for you to come to terms with to heal. They are non-negotiable, and they are from the heart of someone who knows what it's like to shy away from the touch of others.

There will be no linear path. Scrubbing your skin raw will not erase what happened. The worldly distractions you chase will not drown out the feeling of loss. You cannot combat suffering with omission — you have to feel it to heal it.

One day, you'll look up and realize the world has passed you by, and that, even though you're not physically in that memory, you never really left it. You cannot expect to wash yourself clean when you're afraid of standing under the hot water.

Embracing and accepting what happened doesn't always set you free;

more often than not, we are willing prisoners to our own suffering.

That's how we often misconstrue power. A constant tug-of-war battle between you and that memory isn't you taking power back from the person who stole it in the first place — it's taking it away from the person you are today.

What happened to you doesn't define you, but it does shape you. You have a choice to be stuck in that room forever or to become a person they never touched, never stole from and never had power over.

One day, you'll feel the sun warm on your face and realize you aren't still trapped in that room. You will relax in the arms of your close friends and hug your father, and you'll finally realize that taking power back isn't done through the same violence that took it in the first place — it's allowing yourself to live again.

My favorite color isn't blue anymore. It's green, like the wide-open fields in the West and the leaves of trees that sweep the world. I'm not 12 years old anymore, and I'm not a perfect victim.

For those who resonate with blue lights this month, I wish you nothing but healing and peace. Hopefully, my story has encouraged you to find hope in loss and power in prayer.

If nothing else, maybe knowing you aren't alone is enough.

Wherever you are in your healing process, whether it's shame or anger or

somewhere in between, I encourage you to feel it. If you can feel pain, you can also feel all the wonderful joys of being alive — and what an incredible blessing that is.

The hands of strangers do not have power over you, but the hands of the Lord do. His hands are the soft and gentle deliverance of divinity — and that is what true power is. Be gentle with yourself. Most times, our God's gentle touch is so light we are numb to it entirely.

I am not dirty. Neither are you. John 15 reminds us that we are already clean because of the words God has spoken to us, and what a miracle it is to bask in that power. Perhaps you and I have felt unclean because we were deaf to his word and numb to his touch.

It was when I stopped trying to scrub my skin away that I felt the cleanest. We often lose ourselves in the glorification of unfeeling, and it's in that trap of emotional anesthetic that we lose God too.

Whatever the case may be, and whatever your story might say, there is freedom in feeling and power in peace. You are loved, and you are already clean. What's stopping you from feeling it?

Letter from the editor: If you are a victim of sexual assault, Baylor has resources available. Anonymous reports can be made through the Title IX website.

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Opinion

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Kamryn Anthis | Intern

EXPLORATION Cady the ostrich explores the new enclosure at the Cameron Park Zoo.



Kamryn Anthis | Intern

LUNCHTIME Veronica the camel chews on lettuce for lunch at Cameron Park Zoo.

Cameron Park Zoo welcomes new animals to family

KAMRYN ANTHIS
Intern

It's a new era at the Cameron Park Zoo as new camels and ostriches bring change and hope for a brighter future in wildlife conservation.

This March, Waco's Cameron Park Zoo introduced four new camels and two new ostriches to the zoo community. The staff hopes to encourage hands-on care and compassion for these animals to inspire a heart for conservation and animal activism in younger generations of zoo-goers.

By the end of the summer, the zoo will launch its immersive Camel Encounter, allowing guests to interact with the animals up close. According

to Zoo Director Brendan Wiley, these hands-on experiences are designed to create lasting memories while fostering a deeper connection to wildlife.

"These encounters result in a person's attitude, beliefs or behaviors changing," Wiley said. "Touching an animal, like a rhinoceros, creates a very different experience than just seeing one."

The decision to introduce these new species was not made lightly. It followed the loss of Tembo, the zoo's beloved 49-year-old elephant. When deciding what to do with her former space, Wiley and other leaders carefully considered how best to honor her legacy. They landed on camels and ostriches, which they

believe offer a unique impact on the zoo.

Mammal Keeper Chloe Baker believes the animals' unique personalities will play a critical role in connecting with visitors.

"They're really people-going, camels are," Baker said. "They love attention. So we just hope that the guests can have a fun time interacting with them."

At the heart of the zoo's mission is a commitment to conservation through connection. Wiley and Baker hope that by creating memorable, personal encounters, visitors develop a stronger sense of empathy for animals and a greater desire to protect them.

"As an industry, we've learned

about the value of creating empathy," Wiley said. "You're going to see more of those experiences at Cameron Park Zoo."

The new exhibit was designed with both animals and guests in mind. Camels and ostriches, though distinctly different species, share similar diets, habitats and social behaviors, making them well-suited to cohabitate, Wiley said.

"They were selected specifically from a place that encourages positive interactions between animals and people," he said.

The zoo staff named most animals after characters from the 2004 film "Mean Girls." Each animal's personality was assessed and assigned to the character that they best fit.

Zoo-goers are encouraged to pay attention to each animal's name and how it may relate to its behavior. The animals include Gretchen, Regina, Karen, Aaron, Cady and Veronica. Baker hopes getting to know each animal's flare will instill deeper care and compassion in guests.

"They're very personable," Baker said. "They all have their different personalities."

Baker and Wiley encouraged guests to get to know the zoo's newest residents. As the Cameron Park Zoo continues to evolve, its mission remains to create meaningful experiences that inspire visitors to care about wildlife and protect those who share the planet.

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Lariat file photo

Bleeding green

The inside story behind Scrivano's unconventional coaching success

DYLAN FINK
Sports Writer

Women's tennis head coach Joey Scrivano has built his career around developing his players through unconventional means. The six-time Big 12 Coach of the Year leads his team through an array of lessons taken from the Boston Celtics.

"I love the Celtics," Scrivano said. "What a great organization, that's what it's all about. There's a great saying with that team though, and it's that 'being a Celtic is a way of life.' That's really the whole thing ... What I want to do here is to keep making this program a way of life."

Scrivano sat at a wooden table, his legs crossed, with a gas-station coffee in hand on a humid Wednesday morning. His office is decorated with antique rackets pinned to a wall beside a windowsill that plays host to a handful of unaligned trophies. The veteran coach took the opportunity to reflect on his journey through the sport.

"I picked up tennis later in life," Scrivano said. "I was 14, which — you know, saying starting anything at 14 is 'later' is funny, but if you're trying to be a good player that is very late."

Scrivano grew up in a hub for junior tennis in Cambridge, Ontario. The town's population hovered around 70,000 while he was growing up, but more than a handful of local junior players found their way to collegiate tennis on scholarship, Scrivano said.

Seeking to be one of the kids to make it to the next level, the Canadian gave the game everything he had for the next four years. Scrivano made his journey to the U.S. in 1992 when he joined the men's tennis team at Eastern Michigan on scholarship.

Ypsilanti, Mich., is where Scrivano discovered his passion for coaching the sport to which he'd dedicated eight years of his life. When a coaching vacancy opened his senior year, the four-year letterwinner took hold of the situation and switched to the other side of the court.

"I asked the guys on the team, like, 'Hey, can I coach the team while we try to find a coach?'" Scrivano said. "I decided we weren't going to have a bad year, so I stepped up into the coaching role then."

Throughout his collegiate journey, Scrivano said he saw God revealing to him that coaching was the path he was meant to take. Beginning with his experience leading Eastern Michigan his senior year, the budding young coach began to surround himself with mentors and figures in the sport he believed he could learn from.

"You want to have a lot of different mentors when it comes to solving some of the more challenging things in tennis because you have got to find people with experience to do it," Scrivano said. "Not only from an educational standpoint, but you got to know coaches that have been in the trenches and have figured out what they're dealing with."

Following the end of his college career, Scrivano began the search for a coaching opportunity wherever he could find one. Throughout the late '90s, he suffered through the Rick Pitino era of the Celtics and bounced around a few assistant coaching gigs in Alabama and Illinois.

Scrivano spent time as an assistant at Mobile, Northwestern and South Alabama before he eventually took the reins for the Jaguars at the turn of the century. In his first three years at the helm of South Alabama, Scrivano won two Sun Belt Coach of the Year awards.

Come 2002, schools across the nation came calling for the young women's tennis coach to come take over their program. At the top of that list was Baylor, which Scrivano had kept on his radar following a visit for a tournament the previous season.

"I'll never forget that first time driving down University Parks [Drive] and just seeing there before me what was possible here," Scrivano said. "You could see that this was just a beautiful facility and that this was a school that was dedicated to tennis."

When the Baylor position became available that following summer, Scrivano immediately



Lariat file photo

WICKED SMAHT Six-time Big 12 Coach of the Year Joey Scrivano, an Ontario native, leans heavily on his experience and Celtics fandom in his coaching.

applied. His initial hopes of taking over the women's program in Waco were stifled when the men's coach for the Bears at the time made it clear to Scrivano the school was going in a different direction.

Following the rejection, Scrivano turned his attention toward an interview at Louisville.

"They brought me out there, and knowing I'm Italian, of course they had Rick Pitino there for me to meet," Scrivano said. "I wanted to tell him about his time with the Celtics — that, you know, [Larry Bird] isn't walking through that door anytime soon. I started to tell him that, but I didn't get to ... But my point to that was, they were recruiting me really hard."

Scrivano credits a mentor for advising him to wait a day or two to think about the Louisville offer. During that short window, Baylor came calling back.

"I told them if they couldn't get me to Waco in 24 hours then I was going to take the Louisville job," Scrivano said. "When I got down here it was really apparent that the AD at the time, a guy named Tom Stanton, wanted to win."

Once making the quick journey to Waco, Scrivano knew it wouldn't take much to get him to commit to Baylor's offer. The Sun Belt champion's interview opened with a question that baffled Big 12 programs for decades: what was his plan to beat Texas?

"I loved that," Scrivano said. "Right away I was sold, and I answered the question by saying that I wasn't worried about Texas, but rather, I was already looking towards Stanford, who had won like 20 national titles at the time."

The Bears went on to win 11 conference championships in the coach's first 13 seasons and

won 12 straight matches over the Longhorns. They did so to the tune of Scrivano's beloved Celtics metaphors.

"I actually share with the team a lot about the Celtics," Scrivano said. "You'd be amazed how well that works with tennis. They love it."

Scrivano, who coaches a team with a majority of international students, tells tales of the Celtics' storied history to build team camaraderie among his players. The coach repeatedly said that if he goes too long without using a Celtics metaphor in practice, the players will call him out and complain.

"I want them to think of our team as an organization that handles things together," Scrivano said. "We'll look at the Bill Russell era, the [Larry] Bird era or the [Kevin Garnett] era and say, 'OK, here's how they handled this, now how does that apply to our situation?'"

The team is at the center of everything that Scrivano does as a coach. He credits tennis as the truest team sport, noting that how no matter how well an athlete plays in a match, her win only counts as one point. One player can't drag an entire team to victory on the courts; everyone has to do their part.

"On the court we can't doubt each other because we're all working as one," senior Na Dong said in November. "Our strategy and our techniques work because we're sticking to Coach Joey's plan and just being disciplined all the time."

Scrivano will lead the Bears (12-7, 7-4 Big 12) into the final stretch of the regular season Thursday at Colorado (10-11, 2-9 Big 12). The Big 12 Tournament is set for April 15-19 in Orlando, Fla.

Sports Take: 5 transfer portal needs for Baylor MBB

JACKSON POSEY
Sports Editor

Baylor invested heavily in the transfer portal last offseason. It didn't work.

After losing the entire roster to eligibility, the NBA Draft or the transfer portal, including the late loss of Robert O. Wright III to BYU, the Bears had to rebuild from scratch.

Season-ending injuries to presumed rotation players Juslin Bodo Bodo, JJ White and Maicol Perez left the team short-handed, particularly with unexpected struggles from big-name additions Michael Rataj (7.2 points per game, down from 16.9) and James Nnaji, a former NBA Draft pick who entered the transfer portal Tuesday.

Along with Nnaji, four of Baylor's eight rotation players are out of eligibility, and two more — Cameron Carr and Tounde Yessoufou — could enter the NBA Draft, which would leave sophomore guard Isaac Williams IV as the lone returner.

With only one incoming freshman, four-star wing Elijah Williams, head coach Scott Drew will again need to raid the portal to fill out the roster. Here are five archetypes the team needs to target.

1. Backup big man

The past two seasons have seen Baylor's starting centers (Josh Ojianwuna, Bodo Bodo) sustain season-ending injuries, leaving the team without a bona fide rim protector. Bodo Bodo should be back and recovered from his arm injury, but that's only one piece of the puzzle.

It's been years since Baylor has had a serviceable backup big man. Baylor's defensive rebounding has ranked 200th, 315th, 190th and 335th in the past four seasons, magnified by extended stretches without a center on the court.

Caden Powell was supposed to fill that role this season, but Bodo Bodo's injury thrust him into the starting lineup. The center rotation must go three deep in 2026-27. If Baylor wants to have a chance against Kansas and Houston, the team can't give significant rotation minutes at the five to Rataj and Nnaji — or to Jalen Celestine and freshman Marino Dubravcic, for that matter. Roster balance has to matter.

2. Sharpshooting guard

The Bears have tried (and failed) to find a Jayden Nunn-level shooter in the portal, but haven't been able to replace his



Mesha Mittanasala | Photographer

THE RETURN Sophomore Isaac Williams IV, a former transfer, announced last month that he was re-signing with the Bears.

production. Instead, a line of players have tried (and failed) to maintain high-level 3-point shooting from previous stops.

Baylor has lately made a habit of recruiting players after career-best years, then watching them fall back to earth. Obi Agbim (43.7% to 35.6%), Rataj (35.1% to 21.8%), Celestine (44.0% to 35.4%), Jeremy Roach (42.9% to 33.3%), RayJ Dennis (36.6% to 32.8%) and Third Team All-American James Akinjo (40.8% to 29.5%) have all taken significant steps back on similar or lower volume.

Since the national championship team in 2020-21, Nunn is the only transfer with at least two 3-point attempts per game to increase his 3-point percentage in his first season in Waco.

3. Two-way forward

This was supposed to be Rataj, but his struggles — 49.8% true shooting, down from 57.4% in 2024-25 — left a gap in the rotation. While Dan Skillings Jr. provided some of the frontcourt defense the Bears needed, Jalen Bridges' absence has been sorely felt the past two seasons.



Alyssa Meyers | Photographer

THE DEPARTURE Freshman center James Nnaji announced Tuesday that he was entering the transfer portal.

Baylor hasn't had a forward with true perimeter creation ability in years. That added dimension would help round out an offense which looked stagnant at times against Big 12 defenses this season.

4. True point guard

Baylor built its 2025-26 team around Wright, who left late in the cycle and is now leaving BYU, too. Drew's system is best run with a bona fide facilitator at the helm — preferably someone who will stay for multiple years. He's filled the role through the portal before, and is well-positioned to do it again.

5. I mean honestly, who even knows at this point

So much of the offseason search has to depend on the decisions of Carr and Yessoufou — if one (or both) return, the entire calculus changes. I don't envy the back-room conversations about recruiting wings out of the portal; the delta between a Carr-Yessoufou-Williams trio and Williams leading a hastily-assembled island of misfit toys could be the difference between a Big 12 contender and another .500 finish.

Chance to chase championship

How Plano senior Tiriah Kelley became one of Baylor's most dynamic sprinters

MARISSA ESSENBURG
Sports Writer

Ten years ago, Tiriah Kelley sat in her sixth-grade classroom in Plano, still convinced her future was making it big on the next Disney Channel special. She hadn't picked up a ball or run a mile, and the idea of lacing up track spikes wasn't even a passing thought.

As a kid, Kelley didn't believe she'd fit the mold of a prodigy. She didn't love sports, didn't chase competition, didn't see herself as an athlete at all. What she did love was people — and as a middle schooler in North Texas, the easiest place to find them in the spring was at a track meet. That accidental proximity became the spark.

Little did anyone know that the girl who just loved to socialize would turn out to be the fastest sprinter on the track — and one who, 10 years later, would become that prodigy, joining the list of the most dynamic and decorated track athletes to come through Baylor.

"I just wanted to socialize," Kelley told John Morris on the Sic 'Em Podcast. "It was purely unintentional that I turned out to be fast. It all happened by chance."

For the first-generation college student, while much of it did happen by chance, it all really began with the idea that track could give her the opportunity to attend college — and walk away with a debt-free degree.

That's where the 12-year-old girl who just so happened to be pretty fast began to aim higher, turning a simple spark into a dream and pouring everything she had into chasing it.

"When I first started, I definitely wasn't thinking long-term. I was just having fun with it," Kelley told The Lariat. "It wasn't until high school that I was like, 'OK, this is something that can pay for my college.' Because my mom didn't graduate from college, and neither did my dad. There was no, 'This is the money we saved for you to go to college.' So when I started getting better and better at track, I



Photo courtesy of Baylor Athletics

RUNNING THE SHOW Senior sprinter Tiriah Kelley has earned All-Big 12 selections in the 4x100, 4x400 and the 200 meters where she now stands as the school record holder.

knew this was my ticket to earning a degree and a full ride."

Kelley had always imagined herself in green and gold, but when her junior year ended, Baylor didn't have a scholarship to offer. So she committed to Louisville instead — a choice made before anyone knew what her senior season would become. Then came the breakout: two state titles, a surge of confidence and the kind of speed that suddenly made her look like the recruit Baylor wished it hadn't missed.

"It was all in God's timing," Kelley said. "I think he knew I needed another year somewhere else to build a foundation before I came here."

That foundation came under Louisville head coach Tony Miller, a former Baylor sprinter (now Hall-of-Famer) and close friend of Baylor head coach Michael Ford. Miller saw the spark, nurtured it and ultimately

became the bridge that led her back to the school she'd dreamed of all along.

"It feels like it's come full circle. The first time I came to this campus, I was a sophomore in high school, and I just remember being like, 'This is where I'm going to go,'" Kelley said. "For that to come full circle now, it's crazy. It doesn't seem real, but I feel so blessed."

Since her arrival at Baylor, Kelley has done nothing but rise. She quickly worked her way into the program's elite, landing alongside Baylor greats like Alexis Brown on a 4x100 squad that stormed to a Big 12 outdoor title and secured a spot at nationals. The relay earned All-America honors while Kelley stacked her own accolades with All-Big 12 selections in the 4x100, 4x400 and her signature event — the 200 meters — where she is now the school record holder.

The accolades matter to Kelley, but the past three years have meant something deeper. They have been foundational years marked by growth, rising confidence and a steady gratitude she carries with her every day, grounded in her faith in herself and in the Lord.

"Coming into Baylor when I was 19, I wasn't as confident in myself," Kelley said. "I obviously wasn't as fast, but deep down, I knew my potential and knew what I could run. So now, knowing that the faith I had in myself back then is turning into what I'm experiencing now, I'm just living in answered prayer."

Now in her final season, Kelley stares down her last chance at the one prize that's slipped through her fingers: a national championship.

She shattered her own program record in February at the Jarvis Scott Invite, ripping a 22.53 in the

200 meters — a mark tied for the fastest in the nation before the altitude adjustment. Even after illness sidelined her from competing at the Big 12 Championships, the season she had already put together carried her to indoor nationals, where she delivered a 22.64 and brought home the bronze.

With indoor season only sharpening her focus and three months left in her collegiate career, every race now feels heavier, more intentional and tied to the championship she's been chasing for years.

"Every time I compete, it's for a reason now," Kelley said. "Being a senior, this is it. I'm not a freshman saying, 'Oh, I have three more years,' or even a junior saying, 'I have another year.' Every time I get on the track, it's 1,000% intentional because this is going to determine what I do when May comes around."

Four meets stand between Kelley and the Big 12 Championships, and a potential six between her and the final time she laces up her spikes wearing Baylor across her chest with each one moving her closer to the finish line of a journey she never could have imagined back in that sixth-grade classroom. The girl who once showed up to track meets looking for people to chat with is now chasing a national title.

With plenty of races still in front of her, and her sights fixed on a national title and the professional career she hopes to launch after Waco, Kelley isn't spending much time picturing the moment her spikes finally come off. But when asked what she hopes that moment feels like, she doesn't shy away from imagining it.

"I want to feel accomplished and proud of my past four years," Kelley said. "I don't want to overthink it. I just want to be happy — like, 'Wow, I did what I needed to do.' Making my family proud, especially my mom, means everything. She never got to go to college, so I feel like she gets to live that through me and be proud of herself and me."

Baylor men's tennis feeds off home court advantage

JEFFREY COHEN
Sports Writer

No. 11 Baylor men's tennis rode into an early February match against No. 8 Texas A&M after dropping its first two matches against ranked opponents. The Bears struggled to gain an edge over then-No. 5 TCU in Fort Worth and then-No. 8 San Diego.

Head coach Michael Woodson knew the Baylor faithful would show up wearing all black for the Monday night match.

"Mike promised us that we're going to have a lot of fans," graduate Alexander Chirita said. "He promised us that they'll come."

The revival of the Battle of the Brazos proved to be a classic. Baylor lost the doubles point but turned the match around in singles, capping off the 4-1 victory with a roar from the crowd as Chirita clinched the win and got mobbed by his teammates.

"I was expecting a huge crowd, and it was actually crazy," Chirita said. "Everybody went crazy. I was so excited for it."

The Bears got over an early-season hump, securing their first ranked win.

The difference? Playing on home court. The Baylor fans at the Hawkins Indoor Tennis Center and Hurd Tennis Center have given the Bears one of the most formidable home court advantages in the nation.

"It hasn't always been perfect, but I think the fans make a huge difference," Woodson said. "I really appreciate their efforts in helping pull our guys through."

Baylor (19-7, 5-1 Big 12) continues to protect its home court, boasting a dominant 14-1 record at home.

"They love playing in front of their fans," Woodson said. "It's a big thing for us to defend our home court."

Protecting home court is not just a goal for the Bears, it is a motivator. The guys on the team

have expressed throughout the season how they play for each other and for Baylor along with its fans.

That motivation has lifted the Bears through a gauntlet of a schedule. Baylor is 5-0 against top-25 teams that travel to Waco, including the marquee victory against then-No. 1 Ohio State on March 5. The Bears' first win over a top-ranked team since 2011 came in front of an exuberant crowd at the Hurd Tennis Center.

"It's the biggest reason why they love to compete," Woodson said. "It's important to understand that and to appreciate it, and then for them to utilize the home court advantage."

Beyond just the wins, the Bears embrace each moment with their supporters. Whether it's clinching a major upset victory or simply earning a break, they have learned to appreciate the energy a packed house can bring.

"You break someone and the whole crowd is going nuts," senior Luc Koenig said. "It really gets in that other guy's head. It gets you pumped up."

Baylor has not seen the same results on the road despite its success at home. It started 0-4 in away matches, dropping three of those matchups to teams ranked in the top 10. The biggest upset against the Bears came from No. 32 Illinois' 4-1 win in Urbana-Champaign, Ill.

"When we go on the road, it's the complete opposite, and it's really difficult," Woodson said.

The Bears have recently started to gain some traction when hitting the road. They have gone 5-1 away from home since falling to Illinois, including a sweep of No. 25 Arizona State in Tempe.

Baylor's final Big 12 home match is set for 1 p.m. Sunday against No. 4 TCU. But first, the Bears will have to go through Texas Tech at 5 p.m. Thursday at the Don and Ethel McLeod Tennis Center in Lubbock. The match will be streamed on ESPN+.

“ You break someone and the whole crowd is going nuts. It really gets in that other guy's head. It gets you pumped up. **”**

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| SENIOR

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Photo courtesy of Hannah Lee
KAPPA RAP RESURFACE Hannah Lee, Shelley Keller Zych and Katie Whitmire Keil created the "Kappa Rap 2" music video for Kappa Kappa Gamma in 2011.

Where 'Kappa Rap' is now

CAMILLE KELLY
Reporter

When Hannah Lee, Shelley Keller Zych and Katie Whitmire Keil created the "Kappa Rap 2" music video for Kappa Kappa Gamma recruitment in 2011, they never expected it to still be trending across social platforms and on college campuses nationwide 15 years later.

The video now has 1.4 million views on YouTube, a legacy that has recently resurfaced in the lives of the three women in ways they would never have anticipated.

The idea was born when Keller Zych began experimenting with GarageBand and writing original songs. The three friends wrote the original "Kappa Rap" during their sophomore year at Baylor shortly after joining the sorority. They released the first "Kappa Rap" music video with their sorority sisters' help, solely for recruitment.

According to Lee, the three took a lot of inspiration from Kesha when producing the lyrics.

"I think the 'Kappa Rap' started initially out of boredom," Whitmire Keil said. "We had just become Kappas, and we were in our dorm room quite a bit. We were so excited to become Kappas, and we were like, 'Well, we should just make a song about it.'"

"Kappa Rap 2" was created and released the following year on YouTube with the help of their videographer friend, Bailey Eubanks, who was a member of Alpha Tau Omega.

"The guy who made the music video put it on YouTube, and that is when it took off unexpectedly," Keller Zych said. "We never made it to put it on social media. We made it specifically so it would be shown in a room to 100 girls on one day. We had no idea, and I think the night that he put it up, we woke up and it had about 20,000 views."

The fame only continued, and all three shared stories of being recognized by fellow Baylor students and KKG members but also by people all over the nation.

Whether during their time at Baylor or after they started new jobs, the "Kappa Rap" girls would often be recognized as just that.

"I ended up working at Baylor in athletics for a time, so I knew that it was still being used in rush, just because I was in the college world a little bit," Keller Zych said. "But TikTok wasn't a thing then. It didn't feel like a big thing anyway, but cut to today, I am

living in Waco again, and then getting married and having three kids, suddenly they know the 'Kappa Rap.' It's back, fully back in my life within the last year."

According to Keller Zych, the Wall Street Journal has even reached out to the three about covering them for a story within the past year, although it has not been published.

"Every rush season, we're getting TikToks sent to us by all of our friends with people using our song," Keller Zych said. "I put it on Spotify on a whim in 2019, and the streams have gone way up because of TikTok. Nothing has really changed in my daily life, but we are getting asked to now do things 15 years later."

On Jan. 11, the three were asked to visit Baylor's KKG chapter and speak at the sorority event before rush.

"Even my girls now love it," Keller Zych said. "Literally, my daughter has said, 'Do we have a music video, and Taylor Swift has music videos?' and I've had to explain, it's not the same. It's crazy, and I'm not the one showing her."

Although they have stayed close friends, the resurgence of the "Kappa Rap" popularity has brought the three back together.

According to Whitmire Keil, she, Keller Zych, and Lee are working on new projects together that will be released in the next six months.

Many aspects of the music video continue to impact culture today, with not only the clips from "Kappa Rap" circulating on TikTok and Instagram, but also the term "Kappa Arms" for the dance move in the video, now a popular GIF.

Despite the resurgence in fame of "Kappa Rap," the personal lives of all three have changed significantly since college days.

Lee lives in New York working as a professional live event painter, Keller Zych lives in Waco with her husband and three children working in marketing and Whitmire Keil lives in Dallas with her husband and two children, also working in marketing.

According to Lee, the biggest thing she has learned from this experience is "to be weird and be whoever you are without caring what others think."

Keller Zych said that, above all else, friendship is what really matters.

"We spent all of our time in college laughing," Keller Zych said. "We found hilarious friends, and we just were weird and laughed all the time. Friendships stand the test of time if they're built on the right things."

Baylor Men's Choir hits 150,000 follows

CAMILLE KELLY
Reporter

Baylor Men's Choir has been recognized by millions on social media for their creative, humor-filled videos, gaining millions of views on Instagram and growing their account from around 1,500 followers to 150,000 followers in the past three years.



By the end of March, the men's choir account surpassed Baylor football in followers on Instagram, soon after passing Baylor Athletics last summer.

According to men's choir Social Media Manager, Irvine, Calif., junior Luke Reinkensmeyer, a recent video from Valentine's Day of the Men's Choir serenading the Women's Choir with Elvis Presley's "Can't Help Falling in Love With You" increased their following. The video reached 15 million views between Instagram and Facebook.

"We know it was just numbers, but we definitely were happy that we are continuing to grow and are thankful for continued faithful fan base," Reinkensmeyer said. "It's a great community. I think that's kind of part of the reason we're able to have a good social media is we just have a lot of fun and we keep a lot of traditions alive."

Last year, the choir posted a video of their own take on the LeBron James song edits, a video that overnight was viewed by millions. That April, a video was posted of LeBron James mentioning the choir's viral hit in a postgame interview.

"In the past, maybe the first time you would hear about Baylor is because of a national championship in basketball or a really good football team, but maybe now you might hear about Baylor because they sang a song about LeBron, which is just fun, and it's definitely very different," Reinkensmeyer said.

Reinkensmeyer also said that the social media follow has helped highlight choir culture.

"Usually, the choir guys are not at the front, they're on the side," Reinkensmeyer said. "But it's kind of funny that because of Instagram and social media, choir guys are kind of in the spotlight now, and all their quirks are shining through."

Internal Vice President of men's choir, Louisville, Ky., senior August Rothpletz, was the choir's social media manager for the past two years, which included the time the LeBron song video went viral.

According to Rothpletz, his goal when he first started two years ago was to create one video that got 10,000 views. At the time, the choir had around 1,500 followers, and Rothpletz never would have believed that one day a video would get 18 million views.

"Our goal with our social media has been and continues to be to show what it's like to be a part of the men's choir and make fun videos that spread positivity and the joy of music," Rothpletz said. "We want to be part of the positive impact that men involved with singing can have on the world."



For Keeps transitions to in-house roaster



RADICAL ROASTING The storefront of For Keeps Coffee has expanded into in-house roasting.
Courtney Ward | Photo Intern

STACIE BOYLS
Arts & Life Writer

After operating for several years with externally sourced beans, For Keeps Coffee & Bakery has quietly transitioned to roasting its own coffee in-house — a move staff says has deepened both their craft and their connection to the product they serve.

Israel Perez, a 25-year-old Waco native who has worked at the shop since it opened, said the idea to roast in-house was not part of the original business plan.

"I don't think the plan was to eventually start roasting until some Baylor business students did a project on our coffee shop," Perez said. "They showed our owner how much money he could save in the long run if we actually started roasting our own beans."

From that point, the transition to in-house roasting began. According to Perez, the process from internal announcement to implementation lasted roughly a year, involving planning and logistics largely handled behind the scenes.

The shift itself was subtle. Rather than a major public rollout, the shop gradually replaced its previous supplier, Brandywine Coffee Roasters, with its own beans.

"It was a quiet shift," Perez said.

Now For Keeps offers a rotating

selection of house-roasted coffees, typically maintaining four to five core options alongside seasonal blends. Perez described the quality of beans as "on par" with their previous distributors, noting the impressively swift shift to in-house roasting given their young business age.

Behind the scenes, the roasting process is both technical and time-intensive. Judah Venable began roasting for For Keeps about five months ago, after working in coffee for three years.

"I didn't have any prior roasting experience, but my coffee knowledge provided a good foundation," Judah said, crediting former head roaster Daniel Baros for mentorship and hands-on training.

A typical roasting shift involves far more than simply heating beans.

"Start the machine and let it heat up, controlling the heat for 25 to 40 minutes, then determine a roasting schedule, roast, drop and cool beans," Venable said. "Repeat until schedule complete. Then bag what you roasted and clean the roastery."

Through his demanding routine, Venable described the roasting process as deeply rewarding.

"The great thing about roasting can be Grueling at the process, but it's always rewarding trying your roasts after they've sat for a while and are ready to taste," he said.

Roasting in-house also gives the shop

greater flexibility and creative control. Rather than relying on outside roasters, staff can adjust profiles and introduce new coffees more quickly.

"We are able to immediately make adjustments to roast profiles to suit the shop best," Venable said. "We also have more flexibility to bring in new coffee whenever we decide."

The roastery itself sits just across from the main shop, a separate space dedicated to production. While only a few staff members are trained in roasting, the operation supports both in-store use and retail sales, which, Perez noted, often sell out quickly.

"I'm honestly amazed at how often our beans sell out," Perez said. "Normally, that shelf is empty."

That demand reflects the loyalty to For Keeps that many Wacoans have developed, according to Perez.

"I think that's the most impressive thing about this place," he said. "There's a lot of customer loyalty. They really support all the products that come out."

While Venable noted that For Keeps may not offer something entirely unique on a national scale, he believes the shop has carved out a meaningful niche locally.

"We bring in some good coffees and are a good spot to find beans if you are excited about coffee," he said.

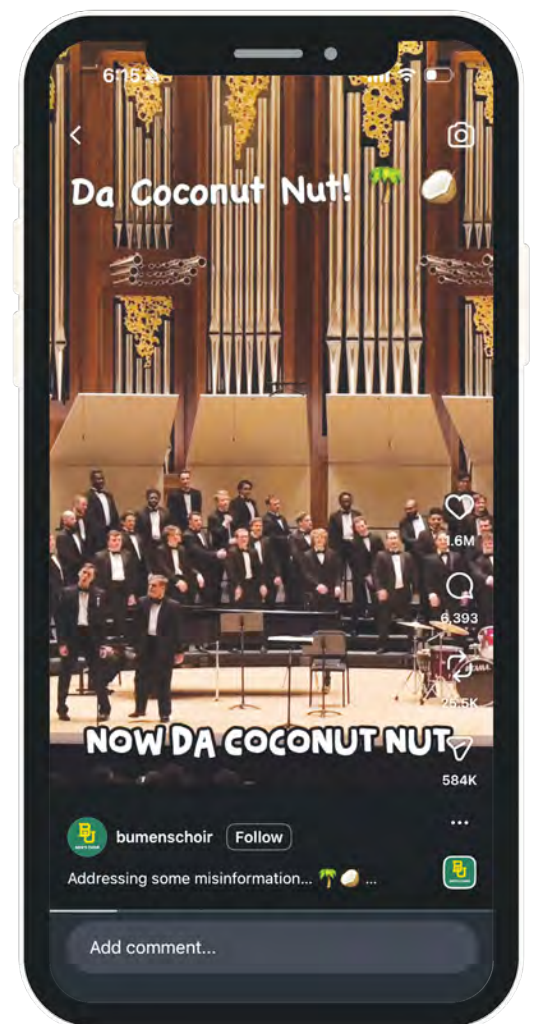


Photo courtesy of Baylor Men's Choir Instagram

CHOIR CHARISMA Baylor Men's Choir recently hit 150,000 followers on Instagram, surpassing Baylor football and Baylor Athletics in followers.

Arts & Life



Photo courtesy of Noah Patton

SHOE CREW Fair Oaks Ranch sophomore Noah Patton (far right) hopes to make his nonprofit an official Baylor organization.



Photo courtesy of Noah Patton

SOLELY FOR CHRIST Good for the Sole collects and distributes gently used running shoes to help children in need, rooted in Christian values.

Shoes that are ‘good for the sole’

Baylor sophomore grows nonprofit sneaker company to help children in need

ISABEL VORST
Intern

Fair Oaks Ranch sophomore Noah Patton founded a nonprofit called Good For the Sole in high school, turning his passion for sneakers into an organization that provides shoes to kids in need.

Currently, the nonprofit has shifted into an interest group at Baylor, focused on collecting, cleaning and distributing sneakers in partnership with other nonprofits.

“I remember sitting down eating dinner with my family and trying to come up with different ways the community could be impacted, and one of my first thoughts was ‘How could I take this thing I already enjoyed being around and push that passion toward others,’” Patton said.

One of the first sneaker giveaways they did was in partnership with

a nonprofit called Inner City Development in San Antonio.

“We had just started out collecting shoes, and for this giveaway we had a total of 37 pairs, which compared to now is crazy considering the growth we’ve seen,” Patton said.

According to Patton, the community’s obvious joy upon receiving the shoes remains an unforgettable milestone in Good for the Sole’s journey.

“I remember the first ever girl that we’d given shoes to,” Patton said. “When she’d come in, she had her head down. On her feet were a pair of slides. They were torn at the toe, and she wasn’t wearing any socks, so it was blatantly obvious she needed new shoes. I remember asking for her size, to which she didn’t have an answer, which took me aback because I was like, ‘Oh wow, this isn’t something you see every day.’”

The moment the girl found a pair of shoes that fit and became her own encapsulates the heart of Good for the Sole’s mission and efforts.

“I remember her opening the box to the shoes, and her face just lit up,” Patton said. “It’s difficult to describe. Her face ... It was like all of the effort made for just that one pair of shoes that were given to her was immediately worth it.”

Good for the Sole has expanded its impact to Baylor’s campus, partnering with events like the Bearathon to encourage students to help those in need.

On March 28, the morning of the Bearathon, they hosted a tabling event where runners could donate their own shoes or bring shoes to the race to donate.

Student volunteers helped set up the tables early, handed out breakfast bars and gave flip-flops to those who

had donated their running shoes after the race.

“I wasn’t expecting this vast amount of shoes, just because people were running and after the race they’re tired, and the last thing they want to do is take off their shoes and donate them, and they were probably good shoes to begin with,” Patton said.

Baylor students are welcome to contribute to Good for the Sole’s mission in spreading love to the greater community.

Friendswood sophomore Levi John, the organization’s social media and communications director, said the purpose runs deeper than just serving the community.

“Something we are learning is that there is power in word of mouth,” John said. “By simply sharing our mission, donating gently used shoes or starting conversations with friends,

students can be a part of something bigger than themselves.”

As Good for the Sole works toward becoming an official organization on campus, they plan to hold tabling events, sneaker donations and shoe-bagging events, like the one held recently at Earle Hall.

“We had residents get the bags, put stickers on them and sizing so that we can organize them,” Patton said. “That’s a cool way to get the community involved for sure.”

According to Patton, Good for the Sole’s main mission is to share the love of Christ through caring for those in need.

“This is the right direction,” Patton said. “Recalling God’s goodness in creating and arranging these opportunities for Good for the Sole to impact others. This is absolutely 100% the way it needs to go — it’s all towards God.”



Photo courtesy of Ezra Sohn

CORN DOG KOTTAGE Newly opened Waco restaurant, Kottage, serves Korean fried chicken and corn dogs to the community.

Kottage brings Korean corn dogs, fried chicken to Waco

ALEXANDRA BREWER
Arts & Life Writer

Kottage, a new Korean fried chicken spot in Waco, is rooted in a mix of personal experience, faith and a desire to bring more Korean food into the city. Owned by Ezra and Ellie Sohn, the restaurant is housed in the kitchen of the Veterans of Foreign Wars building.

Kottage opened on March 6 and is already gaining traction, even hours limited to Friday and Saturday nights. The restaurant is located at 725 Sun Valley Blvd. and open from 5-9 p.m.

“I was going through a difficult time with my back, and I couldn’t do a whole lot, and I wasn’t working,” Ezra said. “I’d be making meals for my wife during the day while she’s working, and I was wondering if doing something like that could be better for me.”

That experience led him to think more deeply about how food can impact people’s lives.

“I was reading in 1 Kings 19,” Ezra said. “There’s a story in the Bible about Elijah. He gets super burnt out, and he’s like, ‘Take my life,’ and God gives him food, and it really encourages him.”

In addition, the couple saw an opportunity to introduce something new to the local community.

“I’ve always wanted more Korean representation in the diverse culinary scene here,” Ezra said. “It made me think people would really enjoy Korean food.”

Finding a location took time, but the couple said the process ultimately came together in an unexpected way.

“I remember there was this one location in Lorena, and we thought that was going to be the location,” Ellie said. “One day, Ezra was in prayer, and he felt like the Lord was telling him, ‘Hey, go here.’”

Since opening, Kottage has received consistent community support.

“It’s been amazing,” Ellie said. “I think there’s families and chefs who come every time we’re open. We just didn’t expect the community to support us this much.”

The menu features Korean fried chicken and Korean corn dogs, with an emphasis on both flavor and quality ingredients. For the Sohns, the goal is to create an experience that feels approachable and enjoyable.

“We’re not trying to be corporate or commercial,” Ezra said. “We’re just trying to be fun here.”

The name itself reflects that intention. “It all started from home,” Ellie said. “We want people to feel like it’s home ... We want people to feel warmth and coziness, but when they come to Kottage, it’s also fun and playful.”

As first-time restaurant owners, the couple said they had to adapt quickly, especially given the limited kitchen space and equipment.

“We weren’t really like, ‘Oh, we can’t do this at all,’” Ellie said. “It was just more like, ‘Oh, here’s a bump, but I think we’ve got this.’”

For now, Kottage is only open two nights a week, but the Sohns are already looking ahead.

“We are going to take steps to see if we can find another, bigger kitchen or a bigger space,” Ellie said. “I hope that we can have a brick and mortar so people can come in and dine in and have their food while it’s still fresh out of the fryer.”

Looking forward, Ezra said he hopes to continue expanding both the business and the community’s exposure to Korean cuisine.

“I want more folks in Waco to try more Korean food,” Ezra said. “I want to keep sharing as many new flavors and new menu items as Waco will have.”



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EPILEPSY AWARENESS from A1

and tests, doctors diagnosed her with epilepsy, later classified as drug-resistant epilepsy, meaning traditional medications wouldn't control her seizures.

At one point, Ritchie's seizures occurred twice a week, sometimes lasting up to five minutes, with her recovery taking up to days.

"If I had one Monday, then Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday were recovery days," Ritchie said. "Then on Friday, I had another one, and the cycle would just continue."

Ritchie's diagnosis went beyond just affecting her physical state, and memory loss became one of the most difficult challenges.

"I lost a lot of my memory," Ritchie said. "Even now, it's hard to study because things don't stick with me."

According to The Epilepsy Foundation, epilepsy is not just a rare disorder. One in 26 people will develop epilepsy during their lifetime. About one-third of people with epilepsy have drug-resistant forms of the condition, requiring alternative treatments beyond medication.

In Ritchie's case, this alternative was Vagus Nerve Stimulation Therapy, a device placed in her chest that sends electrical pulses to the brain, regulating seizure activity. However, the adjustment period was not immediate.

"The first six to eight months were a lot harder, and I actually had more seizures, but slowly, it got better," Ritchie said.

Over time, the frequency of Ritchie's seizures dropped from multiple times a week to none at all. She went six years seizure-free before experiencing one again last July, and even then, her perspective began to shift.

"I had to remind myself that I didn't have one for six years," Ritchie said. "That means it's possible. There's a light at the end of the tunnel."

Despite affecting nearly 3.4 million Americans and almost 293,000 people in Texas, epilepsy remains widely undiscussed. Each year on Mar. 26, Purple Day, also known as World Epilepsy Day, is observed worldwide to raise awareness and reduce stigma around epilepsy. People recognize it by wearing purple and sharing their journeys that emphasize the realities of living with epilepsy — Ritchie's

journey included.

Dr. Alyssa Mascolo works with Red Havas in marketing and collaborated with Ritchie and global med-tech company LivaNova to help share her story.

"Epilepsy is often misunderstood, leaving many feeling unseen," Mascolo said. "Purple Day shines light on real stories from real people to change that."

Mascolo explained that Ritchie's experience shows both the struggle of living with epilepsy and the progress made using alternative treatments.

"Her experience reflects what many endure, but also how add-on treatments are helping people regain control of their lives," Mascolo said.

But that sense of control didn't just happen. Ritchie still manages multiple health conditions, frequent doctor visits and the harder aspect of living away from home.

"Coming to college at first was definitely a hard switch," Ritchie said. "I had to transition doctors, learn how to handle everything on my own and start 'adulting.'"

Academically, Ritchie has had to adapt, often spending more time studying to make up for memory challenges, but she has still found ways to succeed and lead.

"I try my best to be a good student, and I've enjoyed dancing for a while, so I'm grateful I've been able to keep up with the Urban Dance Society since freshman year," Ritchie said.

Ritchie's long-term goal is to pursue a career in healthcare administration, combining her lived experience with a passion for improving systems for others.

"I've kind of lived in the hospital while growing up," Ritchie said. "Healthcare has always been my passion."

In Ritchie's journey, epilepsy awareness is not just about the newest statistics found, but about understanding what the reality is behind those numbers: the fear, setbacks and progress that frequently go unseen by people who don't understand what the diagnosis entails. That is the message she hopes others can take from her story, not just when Purple Day comes around, but every day after.

"It is a long road, but it can get better," Ritchie said. "I have learned to be patient with what I'm going through. Even when it's hard, you have to remember things can improve."

ELECTIONS from A1

to students and help turn their ideas into real, lasting improvements."

For the Class of 2026 permanent class officers, current Student Body President and Pflugerville senior Landon Self was elected permanent class president with 221 votes, and Mena, Ark., senior Annika Thompson will serve as permanent class secretary and treasurer after her 306-vote win.

Student government elections, governed by the electoral commission stated in the Student Body Constitution, are the primary mechanism by which students select representatives to serve in the legislative and executive branches.

The election came alongside a few notable legislation updates as well, including "Classified Forever." This legislation was passed March 26 and revises the structure for electing permanent class officers. According to Self, the amendments were primarily intended to formalize practices that were already followed informally.

"Prior to the amendments, the junior class would elect a permanent class president upon graduation," Self said. "In practice, we've been electing seniors when they graduate to serve in that role. The purpose of this legislation was to clarify what we've already been doing."

Under the updated constitutional language, graduating classes, disregarding juniors graduating early, will continue electing their permanent class president, secretary and treasurer, relating the official policy with historical precedent, as outlined in Student Senate documentation. The amendments also reaffirm the roles of permanent class officers as members of the student body president's cabinet and clarify the electoral eligibility requirements, specifically for graduating students.

The legislation passed through the Senate before being presented to the student body for approval, and Self said approximately 500 students participated in the vote approving the amendments.

Beyond the class officer revisions, the Senate also passed additional initiatives, including a Moody Wi-Fi bill, which would place additional Wi-Fi routers to improve internet speeds and infrastructure within Moody Memorial Library.



Photo courtesy of Isabella Varghese
LEADERS Baylor Student Government poses with President Linda Livingstone during All-University Thanksgiving on Nov. 19, 2025.

Self described the effort as the result of extended collaboration among senators and campus partners.

"This is something that had been in the works for a long time, and I'm very proud of the senators for their hard work," Self said.

The legislative updates come at a time when student government also prepares to face wider institutional challenges, including anticipated budget reductions across student-facing divisions. Self emphasized that leadership is focused on minimizing impacts on student resources, particularly the Student Government Allocation Fund.

"I'm working to advocate for the Student Government Allocation Fund and make the impact on it as minimal as possible," Self said.

STUDENT EVENT from A1

parties an opportunity to host an event for students to attend.

"I think it's important that both events are happening because it gives students the opportunity to hear different perspectives and decide for themselves what they believe," Aviles said.

The event is scheduled to begin at 5 p.m. with speakers, followed by an interfaith prayer gathering at 6 p.m. The event is open to all members of the Baylor community.

LaSrape hopes attendees leave with a better understanding of community and shared values.

"We are trying to promote a campus culture based on empathy, understanding and equal partnership," LaSrape said.

Organizers said they are still seeking university approval to hold the event on campus.



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