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Big bundle of Sci-Fi
Disney buys LucasFilm for \$4 billion, giving them the rights to 'Star Wars' franchise

NEWS Page 3

Giving Day pays off
Baylor's nursing school raised more than \$35,000 to be dispersed in scholarships in coming semesters

SPORTS Page 5

Reeling in a win
The Lady Bears basketball team picked up where they left off last season by beating Oklahoma City

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In this week's podcast, listen to the Lariat sports desk break down the NBA. Only on

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"We could make sure that our high school seniors can pass a test like we ask immigrants to this country to pass...we could use education to integrate critical thinking skills to the average person's political decisions...to make people realize they have a vested interest in voting intelligently."

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Bear Briefs

The place to go to know the places to go

Spring Break service

Baylor freshmen are invited to join the 2013 Baylor freshman spring break mission trip led by the BU Missions staff in partnership with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. Students will serve LaPlante, La., and assist with disaster relief. Applications and the \$100 deposit to hold your spot are due Dec. 12. For more information, contact Megan_Pike@baylor.edu.



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney lifts bottles of water to load into a truck as he participates in a campaign event collecting supplies from residents and local relief organizations for victims of Hurricane Sandy, on Tuesday at the James S. Trent Arena in Kettering, Ohio.

Nature thrusts presidential campaign into the real world

By CONNIE CASS
ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — Suddenly, after drifting through months of confusing finger-pointing and iffy economic theory, the presidential candidates are getting walloped by an October surprise. Superstorm Sandy is a real-world, gut-level test.

The force of nature threw cold water on the campaign bickering just as President Barack Obama and Republican nominee Mitt Romney were charging into a final week of man-made rancor.

"It's sort of like Mother Nature is intervening and calling a timeout," said historian and presidential biographer Douglas Brinkley.

Obama can't afford to be caught taking his eyes off an unfolding crisis. Romney needs to avoid appearing callous about the lives lost and homes flooded while campaigning; he decided to go on with events but dialed down the politics Tuesday.

Seven years after Hurricane Katrina, neither candidate wants to talk about the political implications of the giant storm that lurched up the East Coast

and left millions without power.

But their campaigns have to think about it.

All presidential teams sweat about the potential for a late-in-the race event or disclosure that can turn the race upside down. And there's never been one quite like this.

Obama canceled his campaign appearances from Monday at least through Wednesday but is staying in the public eye as commander of federal relief efforts.

SEE NATURE, page 6



Get your spooks

The Spooktacular Zumba Mash
The campus recreation fitness department presents this night of fun from 5:30 to 6:45 p.m. today at the McLane Student Life Center gym. The free event will include zumba, costume contests and treats.

Halloween Dyno Competition
Join the outdoor adventure crew for its climbing event from 7 to 8 p.m. today at the McLane Student Life Center rock wall. The entry fee is a bag of candy. Costumes are encouraged. Awards will be given to the first place male and female contestants.

Halloween Organ Concert
The 22nd annual event will feature a collection of spooky pieces performed by Baylor organ students and Assistant Professor Organ, Isabelle Demers. The audience is invited to attend in costume at 7:30 p.m. today in the Jones Concert Hall of the Glennis McCrary Music Building. This event is free and open to the public.



\$2 million added to enhance traffic flow to new stadium

By LINDA WILKINS
ASSISTANT CITY EDITOR

The Waco Metropolitan Planning Organization voted to add an additional \$2 million to a project that would renovate the interchange of Interstate 35 and Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard.

Chris Evilia, the director of the Waco Metropolitan Planning Organization, said the additional funds will make the traffic to and from Baylor Stadium smoother when the stadium opens.

He said there are three construction projects on portions of road that feed into the I-35 and Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard interchange. One project, which would cost \$48 million, is to construct frontage roads over the Brazos River. Another project, set to cost around \$24 million, is to extend frontage roads going northward across the railroad

tracks from Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard. The third project, called Loop 574, extends Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard eastward to LaSalle Avenue. The \$2 million will go into the funds for the third project, which will total about \$13 million.

"None of those projects actually did any work to the interchange at I-35 and Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard itself," Evilia said. "It's an oversight the Texas Department of Transportation noticed about a month ago."

Evilia said the work done on the interchange is part of a larger, long-range project to widen and expand I-35.

He said the larger project is to completely reconstruct the interstate and add one lane in each direction to the existing interstate. The \$2 million is part of the process to widen and modernize the frontage roads.

Because the frontage roads are being widened to three lanes instead of the current two lanes, the interchange road needed to be renovated.

Otherwise, Evilia said, the frontage roads would be three lanes leading into a two-lane interchange that would then have to widen back to three lanes. He said the construction is making the interchange and the frontage roads consistent.

In addition to the construction on the frontage roads, turn-around roads that do not currently exist are going to be added so people can turn around without having to go through the interchange.

Jodi Wheatley, the I-35 Information specialist for the Waco district of the Texas Department of Transportation, said the inter-

SEE TRAFFIC, page 6

Robbery sparks BU to tweak its alert system

By CAROLINE BREWTON
CITY EDITOR

Following an armed robbery that occurred near campus Monday night, Baylor students, faculty and staff received emergency alerts that have led to the refinement of Baylor's emergency notification system.

The notices, which were sent at 11:18 p.m. by Leigh Ann Moffett of Baylor Emergency Management, alerted readers to an incident that occurred near the intersection of Eighth Street and Bagby Avenue.

The email said an armed suspect, a black man approximately 5 feet 4 inches tall and wearing a blue-and-white lettered jacket, approached a female victim with a handgun.

Those subscribed to the Baylor Emergency Alert text message system also received a text message warning them of an armed suspect seen running west on Bagby Avenue following the incident and instructing them to check their email for more information.

The alerts identified a female victim, but Waco Police Sgt. W. Patrick Swanton said the victim was a 26-year-old Asian male.

A routine review of the alerts done on Tuesday has led Baylor PD and Media Communications to re-evaluate the emergency procedures in place.

Swanton said the robbery took place about 9:30 p.m. Monday night in the alleyway behind University Plaza Apartments, located in the 1700 block of South Eighth Street. The victim was robbed at gunpoint for his cellphone, car keys and wallet. During the course of the robbery, the suspect assaulted the victim and the suspect's handgun discharged, although no gunshot

SEE ROBBERY, page 6

Mystery material poses hazard to West Texas folks

By JUAN CARLOS LLORCA
ASSOCIATED PRESS

SANTA TERESA, N.M. — An unknown hazardous material sickened about 200 people Tuesday just northwest of El Paso, as some workers in the industrial area where the substance released described feeling a burning sensation on their skin, according to New Mexico authorities.

A one-mile area surrounding the Dona Ana County Industrial Park and Mexico border crossing at Santa Teresa was evacuated for a few hours and the county airport was closed. Workers a few miles away said they could smell something in the air.

"I got there after they bar-

ricaded the road. When I rolled down the window, I started feeling irritation on my skin," said Gerardo Gomez, who was on his way to work. "It felt like when you get chile on your skin."

By Tuesday afternoon, only the industrial park remained off-limits as hazmat crews took samples to determine what made the people sick. No serious injuries were reported and no one was hospitalized.

An investigation initially centered at the FoamEx plant on the industrial park campus, but was being expanded to other areas in the park, authorities said. A New Mexico National Guard support

SEE HAZARD, page 6



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Emergency personnel stand at the Santa Teresa Industrial Park in Santa Teresa, N.M., on Tuesday after the site was evacuated and the nearby airport was closed due to the release of unknown hazardous materials.

We need to decrease the power of uninformed voters

Editorial

Democracy is a great thing, but it fails in a lot of ways.

There are plenty of places in the world where people are oppressed and don't get any say in their own government. To a much lesser extent, one of these places is the United States of America. In America each person gets one vote for each political position in their district. That means that the people they vote for should reflect the will of the majority, but that vote gets watered down by a system of electors, representatives and gerrymandering and eventually dumped in a big tub with all the other votes. This means that each individual vote means a lot less than the aggregate.

Advocating for the removal of votes from the uninformed is wrong, but what about rewarding intelligent people with an extra vote?

Every citizen deserves a say in the election process, but to what extent?

Let's take two hypothetical American voters. One is a professor of political science that dedicates his free time to educating people about different issues pertaining to our country. He watches all of the debates and gives speeches at different universities.

The other pays no attention to politics whatsoever. He votes, but never engages in any kind of political discussion with anyone. He can't name anything that either

candidate stands for, but he votes for his registered political party because that's what his family has always done.

Is it really ethical that these people have the same say in our political process?

In our current system the answer is yes. The informed and intelligent voter gets the same vote as the sheep-like voter who does what he is told, even if he has no rhyme or reason for doing it. It would be wrong to deny him his vote. He still has a stake in the outcome of elections. But what if informed, intelligent voters were given an additional vote in elections?

One immediately comes up against the problem of voter suppression.

In the past, districts in the south used Jim Crow laws and literacy tests to keep minorities from voting, but the motivations for these laws were racially charged. Intelligence is a whole different ball game.

Being denied a job based on race is different than being denied a job because of a lack of intelligence. If someone isn't intelligent enough for a job, then they aren't qualified, and there is nothing ethically or morally wrong with that.

The same should be true for voting. If voters can't identify half of the states in the Union on a map, then they should only get one vote. Let the smartest people have the loudest voice.

It all stems from education, and compared to other developed

nations, the United States is behind the curve.

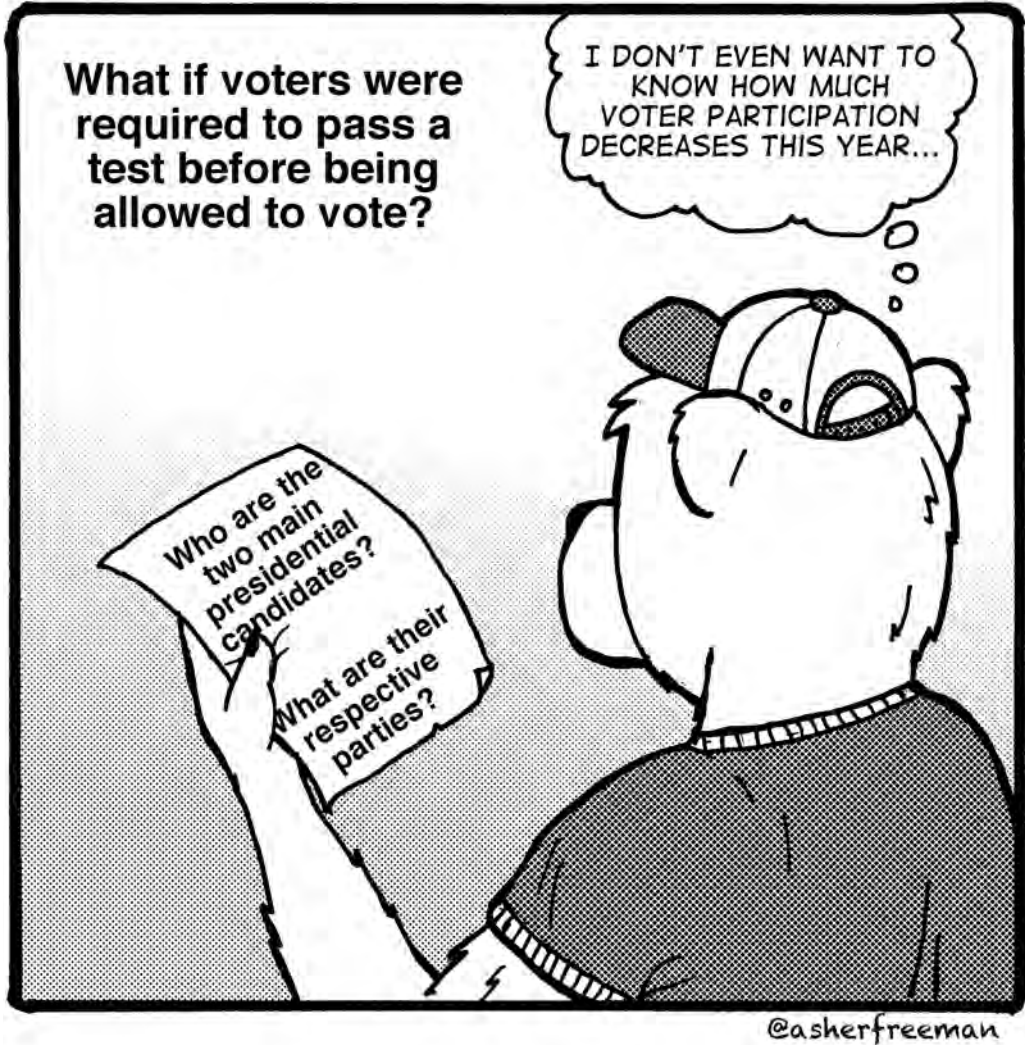
Harvard University published a study in July titled "Achievement Growth: International and U.S. State Trends in Student Performance."

This study says, "the gains posted by the United States in recent years are hardly remarkable by world standards. Although the U.S. is not among the nine countries that were losing ground over this period of time, 11 other countries were moving forward at better than twice the pace of the United States, and all the other participating countries were changing at a rate similar enough to the United States to be within a range too close to be identified as clearly different."

In other words, our education system is not keeping up with the world and is not outputting as many intelligent voters.

Few people call the system into question, but it deserves to be inspected. The main argument against giving intelligent, deserving people an extra vote is that it isn't equal for everyone. The United States has the ability to let smarter people have a more powerful voice, but is it really right to intentionally dumb down the voice of the popular vote in the effort of equality?

The Electoral College already has the power to go against the people's popular vote. If a more informed voice is influencing the Electoral College, then that gives the part of the popular vote cast by intelligent people more power.



Or, we could invest in better civic education. We could make sure that our high school seniors can pass a test like we ask immigrants to this country to pass or at least name all the branches of government. We could use educa-

tion to integrate critical thinking skills to the average person's political decisions. We could use advocacy campaigns to make people realize they have a vested interest in voting intelligently.

Instead of giving more votes

to the intelligent we could strive to bring up the intelligence of the population to a level that we can all vote like that political science professor.

Then maybe the uninformed will have no sway on politics.

Romney less serious about deficit reduction than Obama

Guest Column

Both Republican challenger Mitt Romney and incumbent president Barack Obama agree the deficit needs to be addressed, but it is Romney and not Obama who has repeatedly failed to prove himself as someone who is serious about tackling the issue.

Some facets of Romney's tax reformation plan include cutting taxes by 20 percent across the board, considerably reducing marginal tax rates, repealing the inheritance tax, and reaffirming the low tax rates on capital gains.

According to the Tax Policy Center, Romney's plan would cost \$4.8 trillion over ten years.

The TPC also found that, for the plan to not add to the debt, taxes on middle-class households would need to be raised by an av-

erage of \$2,000.

In the same time frame, Romney augments the national defense budget by \$2 trillion. This figure consists of spending that the Pentagon itself has not even requested. Romney needs to sort through \$6.8 trillion before even beginning to shrink the national debt.

The most egregious aspect of this tax plan is that Romney provides few specifics of how to actually pay for it.

Romney claims his tax plan will be revenue-neutral by closing loopholes and deductions to offset lost revenue. However, his campaign consistently refuses to reveal a single one, instead promising he will work out the specifics with congress after elected president. Romney expects voters to just take his word that the various pieces of his plan can coexist.

It is groundless to assume Romney can honestly pay for his

\$6.8 trillion of revenue cuts and military spending while simultaneously keeping the tax burden off the middle class while still reducing the deficit. The reason Romney avoids specificity when discussing his plan is that it is mathematically impossible to meet all of his own stipulations.

One of Romney's few specifics involves a talking point about ending funding for PBS, an outlay of \$445 million or just 0.014 percent the federal budget.

Romney presents himself as a belt-tightening fiscal conservative but refrains from going after the true propagators of our debt. Romney is reluctant to address entitlement reform and actually doubles-down on our bloated military budget.

Obama's proposed deficit reduction plan claims to reduce the debt by \$4 trillion over a decade. The budget's prominent reductions are \$1 trillion from closing

corporate loopholes and raising taxes on high-income earners, \$2 trillion in spending cuts, \$850 billion in savings from concluding the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, and \$800 billion in savings from curbed interest payments on the national debt.

Critics contest the \$4 trillion mark. One analyst called Obama's factoring in of the war savings a "gimmick." Others argue the spending cuts on which Obama compromised with congress should not be awarded to the plan because they were "already banked."

Still, when compared to Romney's, Obama's plan looks like a panacea for all of our deficit woes. Obama's plan makes sure America is still investing in salient programs without overburdening any one group. And, as expected from a president, it incorporates specifics.

In an attempt to paint the

president as no longer qualified to reduce spending, opponents may cite his alleged spending binge. But, in reality, spending of such a magnitude never occurred under Obama.

The truth is Obama has increased federal spending by a relatively small percentage. His yearly percentages of spending increases are significantly smaller than those of President George W. Bush. According to the White House Office of Budget and Management, federal spending in 2010 spending actually decreased 1.8 percent; in 2011, spending increased 3.4 percent. In 2012, spending is estimated by the Congressional Budget Office to increase only 0.7 percent.

In 2009, spending increased 17.9 percent. FactCheck.org said this 17.9 percent spike "was mostly due to appropriations and policies that were already in place when Obama took office." It cal-

culated Obama is responsible for no more than \$203 billion of the \$3.52 trillion from that fiscal year. While Obama is often attributed with generating the entirety of the national debt over the last four years, his personal addition to the bulk of deficit spending is objectively minute.

The crux of Romney's deficit reduction plan is frivolous spending and revenue cuts coupled with a lack of specifics or plausibility in paying for them. Obama's plan is not perfect, but consists of a tangible outline that reduces the national debt over the long-term in a balanced way.

Romney has proven himself a starkly less serious candidate than Obama when it comes to addressing the deficit.

Dev Merugumala
Austin junior
Biology

PETA's tactics are not for everyone, but they do work

Lariat Letters

I am writing in response James Herd's Oct. 24 article, "PETA Video Games Detract From Others' Fight for Animal Rights."

The game's main message is that animals are not ours to eat, wear, experiment on, use for entertainment or abuse in any other way.

There are a lot of similarities between how Pokémon are used in the game series and how animals are abused in real life. The difference between real life and this fictional world full of organized animal fighting is that Pokémon games paint a rosy

picture of things that are actually cruel.

Humor is often a very useful tool for reaching people who may be put off by a more serious approach, and by sharing this game with others we can educate people about the ways in which animals are abused.

PETA often uses the gaming genre to reach new groups of people — people who might not otherwise be aware of what is happening and who wouldn't seek out PETA's more conventional materials.

Millions of people have played PETA's online games.

They have fun and laugh and are also encouraged to think

about how the games that they have been playing have shaped the ways that they think about animals and how their choices can help animals. If people come away from the game both entertained and more compassionate, then we've accomplished our goal.

We understand that our game is not to everyone's taste.

PETA does make a point of having something for all tastes, from conservative to radical and from tasteless to refined, and this approach has proved amazingly successful — in the three decades since PETA was founded, it has grown to be the largest animal rights group in the world, with more than 3 million members

and supporters worldwide.

We've had great success in attracting the media's attention through both serious and slapstick means, including celebrity advertisements, colorful protests, graphic ads, and undercover exposés.

Students should check out peta2.com to learn more about our lifesaving work and the victories that we have won for animals around the world.

Kenneth Montville
College Campaigns Assistant
PETA2

Editor's Note: James Herd's Oct. 24 column was critical of two video

games created by PETA — "Pokémon Black and Blue" and "Mario Kills Tanooki." Both can be found on the PETA website. The original column can be read in full on the Lariat website.

Corrections

The Baylor Lariat is committed to ensuring fair and accurate reporting and will correct errors of substance on Page 2.

Corrections can be submitted to the editor by sending an e-mail to Lariat_letters@baylor.edu or by calling 254-710-4099.

Lariat Letters

Letters to the editor should include the writer's name, hometown, major, graduation year, phone number and student identification number. Non-student writers should include their address.

Letters that focus on an issue affecting students or faculty may be considered for a guest column at the editor's discretion.

All submissions become the property of The Baylor Lariat. The Lariat reserves the right to edit letters for grammar, length, libel and style.

Letters should be e-mailed to Lariat_Letters@baylor.edu.

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To contact the Baylor Lariat:

Newsroom:
Lariat@baylor.edu
254-710-1712

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Robert Connolly, left, embraces his wife Laura as they survey the remains of her parents' home that burned to the ground Tuesday in the Breezy Point section of New York. More than 50 homes were destroyed in the fire which swept through the oceanfront community during superstorm Sandy. At right is their son Kyle.

After Sandy, New Yorkers return to find changed city

By COLLEN LONG
AND ERIN McCLAM
ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK — Stripped of its bustle and mostly cut off from the world, New York was left wondering Tuesday when its particular way of life — carried by subway, lit by skyline and powered by 24-hour deli — would return.

Mayor Michael Bloomberg and the power company said it could be the weekend before the lights come on for hundreds of thousands of people plunged into darkness by what was once Hurricane Sandy.

Bloomberg said it could also be four or five days before the subway, which suffered the worst damage in its 108-year history, is running again.

All 10 of the tunnels that carry New Yorkers under the East River were flooded. Sandy killed 18 people in New York City, the mayor said. The dead included two who drowned in a home and one who was in bed when a tree fell on an apartment. A 23-year-old woman died after stepping into a puddle near a live electrical wire.

“This was a devastating storm, maybe the worst that we have ever experienced,” Bloomberg said.

For the 8 million people who live here, the city was a different place one day after the storm.

In normal times, rituals bring a sense of order to the chaos of life in the nation's largest city: Stop at Starbucks on the morning walk with the dog, drop the kids off at P.S. 39, grab a bagel.

On Tuesday, those rituals were suspended, with little indication when they would come back. Schools were shut for a second day and were closed Wednesday, too.

Coffee shops, normally open as close as a block apart, were closed in some neighborhoods. New York found itself less caffeinated and curiously isolated from the world, although by afternoon it had begun to struggle back to life.

Some bridges into the city reopened at midday, but the Brooklyn-Battery Tunnel, connecting Brooklyn to Manhattan, and the Holland Tunnel, between New York and New Jersey, remained closed. And service on the three

commuter railroads that run between the city and its suburbs was still suspended.

Gov. Andrew Cuomo said bus service would be restored at 5 p.m. EDT, on a limited schedule but free. He said he hoped there would be full service on Wednesday, also free.

The New York Stock Exchange was closed for a second day, the first time that has happened because of weather since the 19th century, but said it would reopen on Wednesday.



A 168-foot water tanker, the John B. Caddell, sits on the shore Tuesday morning where it ran aground on Front Street in the Stapleton neighborhood of New York's Staten Island as a result of superstorm Sandy.

Swaths of the city were not so lucky. Consolidated Edison, the power company, said it would be four days before the last of the 337,000 customers in Manhattan and Brooklyn who lost power have electricity again.

For the Bronx, Queens, Staten Island and Westchester County, with 442,000 outages, it could take a week, Con Ed said. Floodwater led to explosions that disabled a power substation on Monday night, contributing to the outages.

New Yorkers were left without power to charge their iPods and Kindles and Nooks for the subway. Not that there was a subway. People clustered around electrical outlets at a Duane Reade drugstore to power up their phones.

At a small market called Hudson Gourmet, in Manhattan's Greenwich Village, cashiers made change by candlelight and shoppers used flashlights to scour the shelves.

Lee Leshen used the light from his phone to make his selections — three boxes of linguine and a can of tomatoes. His power was out,

but the gas in his stove worked, so he could cook. He said he almost never cooks but is learning.

John Tricoli, his wife, Christine, and their 6-year-old twins spent Monday night holed up in their 11th-floor apartment in one of several lower Manhattan office buildings that were converted to condos in the 2000s and have drawn young families. Once the power went off at 7 p.m., there was a major challenge — no TV.

By candlelight, “we colored, we read, we played games — old

school,” Christine Tricoli said as the family emerged to go on a walk on Tuesday that started with a trek down 11 flights of stairs.

“There was even talking,” she said. The city modified its taxi rules and encouraged drivers to pick up more than one passenger at a time, putting New Yorkers in the otherwise unthinkable position of having to share a yellow cab with a stranger.

Livery cabs and black sedans, normally allowed to pick up passengers only by arrangement, were allowed to stop for people hailing rides on the street. The landscape of the city changed in a matter of hours. A fire destroyed as many as 100 houses in a flooded beachfront neighborhood in Queens. Firefighters said the water was chest-high on the street and they had to use a boat to make rescues.

In Brooklyn, Faye Schwartz surveyed the damage in her Brooklyn neighborhood, where cars were strewn like leaves, planters were deposited in intersections and green Dumpsters were tossed on their sides.

Jalili “in the near future.”

Still, there appeared to be no significant advance in the process since world powers instructed Ashton last month in New York to speak with Jalili and gauge Iran's seriousness on coming into compliance with its international nuclear negotiations.

The West fears Iran may be trying to develop nuclear weapons, a charge Tehran denies.

The West has demanded that Iran must stop enriching uranium to 20 percent purity, shut down its underground Fordo enrichment site and ship its 20 percent stockpile out of the country.

In return, Iran has been offered civilian plane spare parts and 20 percent-enriched nuclear fuel for its medical research reactor in Tehran.

Clinton said the U.S. message to Iran is clear. “The window remains open to resolve the international community's concerns about your nuclear program diplomatically and to relieve your isolation, but that window cannot remain open

indefinitely. Therefore, we hope that there can be serious good-faith negotiations commenced soon.” Iran has sent mixed signals on its nuclear program. World powers cited increased flexibility from Iran in September when they agreed to lay the groundwork for a new round of negotiations, and on Tuesday Iran's Foreign Ministry said the standoff could be resolved if the U.S. and its partners recognize Iran's right to produce nuclear fuel.

But senior Iranian officials also have threatened to boost enrichment levels if the West doesn't ease sanctions.

And the U.S. and its partners say measures that are crippling the Iranian economy will remain in force until Tehran first starts coming into compliance with its international obligations. Clinton and Ashton spoke during the first leg of their tour of the Balkans, where they are urging rivals ethnic groups and governments to settle their differences for the good of their nations.

Baylor School of Nursing pulls in more than \$35,000

By AMANDO DOMINICK
STAFF WRITER

Money collected by Baylor University's Louise Herrington School of Nursing during the Communities Foundation of Texas' North Texas Giving Day on Sept. 13 to fund existing scholarships could be awarded as early as this semester or next with disbursement occurring in the following semesters.

During Giving Day, a one-day event in which charitable donations to nonprofit organizations are partially matched by the Communities Foundation of Texas, more than \$35,000 was collected for the school.

The Louise Herrington School of Nursing, located on the Baylor University Medical Center campus near downtown Dallas, prepares baccalaureate and graduate level nurses for their career, all within a Christian community. No scholarships have been awarded yet, although most of the money raised will go straight to endowed scholarships.

“About 95 percent of the donations went into some form of scholarship account for students, with the other 5 percent going to funds not related to scholarships,” said Stephanie Willey, assistant to the dean at the School of Nursing.

This year marked the nursing school's second year of participation in the event.

The nursing school is eligible to participate in the event due to its Dallas location, although the main campus in Waco is not eligible.

Christina Gibson, front desk coordinator for the Communities Foundation of Texas, said, to be eligible to participate in the North Texas Giving Day, organizations must meet several requirements: they must be tax exempt under

“About 95 percent of the donation went into some form of scholarship account for the students...”

Stephanie Willey | Assistant to the Dean at the School of Nursing

the IRS and at least 50 percent of the services rendered must benefit the North Texas area along with several other requirements. Willey said this year's goal was to collect \$35,000 and the school surpassed both it and last year's total despite not using much advertising outside of emails.

“Without having to spend a lot for marketing for this year's event, we felt Giving Day 2012 was very successful,” Willey said.

The cost of attending the nursing school on the Dallas campus for one year is \$37,230. Scholarships allow nursing students, like Hous-

ton junior Gisselle Cardenas, to focus on schoolwork without having to stress about tuition and bills as often as other students. Cardenas attended two years of school on Baylor's Waco campus before moving to complete her undergraduate degree at the Dallas campus.

“They [scholarships] allow me to pay for school because, without them, I couldn't afford to attend Baylor out of pocket,” Cardenas said.

The Communities Foundation uses a website, called DonorBridge, to facilitate donations to North Texas organizations. Although the Giving Day is a one-day event, the DonorBridge website is active year-round. However, The Communities Foundation only offers to match a percentage of the funds on the Giving Day.

On the website, donors have the ability to specify where their money goes. Donors can donate to either the nonprofit of their choice or choose an organization from a range of categories of different types of charity organizations.

“If they do not specify where they want their donation to go, we will determine the most appropriate place for it to go,” Willey said.

“It gives you a very good idea of who you're donating to,” Gibson said. Those interested in donating to the Louise Herrington School of Nursing can visit www.donor-bridgetx.org.

Discipline in Texas schools disputed

By WILL WEISSERT
ASSOCIATED PRESS

AUSTIN — State senators worried Tuesday that Texas has gone too far in imposing a zero-tolerance policy for bad behavior in schools, noting that minority students are bearing the brunt of the punishment and school police of-

ficers are writing too many tickets for insignificant infractions.

Tony Fabelo, an Austin-based criminal justice consultant, told a joint committee meeting of the Senate Criminal Justice and Education Committees that a study following students from seventh grade to high school graduation showed that 83 percent of black

male students and 70 percent of black female students statewide faced at least one disciplinary action.

The cases involved students being written up for poor behavior at school officials' discretion — not for major violations that would mandate disciplinary action, Fabelo said.

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US, EU turn up pressure in Iran nuke talks

By BRADLEY KLAPPER
ASSOCIATED PRESS

PRISTINA, Kosovo — The U.S. and the European Union said Tuesday they'll press on with sanctions against Iran, even as they hope the promise of new negotiations could lead to a diplomatic solution ending the nuclear standoff.

Appearing together at a news conference in the Bosnian capital of Sarajevo before continuing a joint tour of the Balkans in Serbia and Kosovo, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton said both diplomacy and pressure would continue until Iran makes significant concessions over its disputed uranium enrichment activity.

“We continue to try and find ways to move forward on our negotiations,” Ashton told reporters in Sarajevo. She cited contact over the weekend between a top aide and an assistant to Iran's chief nuclear negotiator Saeed Jalili, and said she would be reaching out to

‘Creepypastas’ take over Internet scares

By JAMES HERD
REPORTER

You find yourself in a dark forest, with only a flashlight and a cheap camera to chronicle your experience. You begin walking through the forest, the only noise being the gravelly sounds of your footsteps as you venture deeper and deeper into darkness.

Approaching a makeshift tunnel, you notice something that shouldn't be there. A white piece of scratch paper taped to the inside wall. Picking it up you can see what it says with help from the flashlight. "DON'T LOOK... OR IT TAKES YOU."

You turn around and find an extremely tall man with a black business suit and no face stalking you. You black out.

Welcome to the world of the Slender Man, one of many "Creepy pastas" 'eyewitness' accounts of supernatural or theoretical experiences.

The art of creepy pastas is that, according to its name, it makes an effort to be creepy in nature. This means that they either focus on supernatural creatures, such as the Slender Man or the Rake (a feral creature that causes victims to revert back to childlike behavior before attacking), or more recently, they expose theories in popular childhood TV series or video games and "reveal" a darker or more sinister theme in them. An example of the latter includes "The Rugrats Theory," or "The Ed, Edd, and Eddy Purgatory Theory." When it comes to the supernatural aspect, many talented individuals have taken it upon themselves

to chronicle their "experiences" with their camera and upload the resulting videos onto YouTube. Such series have recently exponentially increased, but the most well known include "Marble Hornets," "EverymanHYBRID,"



"DarkHarvest00," and "TribeTwelve," all of which feature the Slender Man. But some go even further with other creatures that have been created via the Internet.

The origins of the Slender Man can be traced back to the SomethingAwful forums in 2009 when a user posted a paranormal photo contest for users to submit their own creepy photographs that they made out of normal photographs.

Another source of creepy pastas is "the S.C.P Foundation," which is a fictional organization designed to "Secure, Contain and Protect" the world from foreign creatures and strange devices. The Original

S.C.P., SCP-173, is similar in nature to the Weeping Angels, of "Doctor Who" fame. Supposedly, both creatures were created independently of each other, but the Weeping Angels did not start cracking their victims' necks, the SCP-173 signature, until about two years after the S.C.P foundation posted the page.

But now you're probably wondering why these "creepy pastas" matter in the general scheme of things. Let's face it: Horror movies have lost their edge that they once had.

It seems like horror movies can't exist unless they are about possession, serial killers or ghosts, and the genre has been milked beyond recognition with sequels after sequels after sequels.

It would seem that if the Horror genre is to survive, it must pass the gauntlet onto creators who made their start on the Internet, such as the creators of "Marble Hornets" or "TribeTwelve."

This time of year has been dedicated to the horror movie genre for years, and it's about time that someone make a movie that hasn't been done before. It's the least they could do for bringing back "Halloween" and "A Nightmare on Elm Street." Seriously.

Interested parties can write their own creepy pasta stories by publishing them on the Creepy pasta Wiki page, or by spreading them around on Facebook or Twitter.

You'd be surprised at who would take interest.



Homecoming event to feature Dallas worship leader debut

By HAYLEY GIBSON
REPORTER

Coming from a place of pain and brokenness may be enough to cripple the average person, but Christian singer and songwriter Kyle Sherman has responded to difficult times in life by calling out to God through his music.

Sherman's debut studio album, "Hear Me," was released Oct. 7.

He will open for Josh Wilson during the homecoming worship event on campus at 7 p.m. today.

Inspired by places of brokenness in friends' lives, Sherman's songs tackle difficult situations such as the suicide of his friend's son.

"It's a very solemn-like calling out to God, with every song coming from a place of honesty and what God is doing then," Sherman said.

Foreman, Ark.. junior Lauren Galligani is excited that Baylor has chosen an artist that tackles difficult subjects.

"Worship that comes from

a place of brokenness has more meaning behind it because when God has brought you from a place of hardship, there is more thankfulness behind it," Galligani said.

There are also lighter songs on the album such as "Come to Me," which is modeled after Matthew 11:28.

As a worship leader in Dallas at Lifechurch.tv, Sherman has felt a calling to ministry and worship for a long time.

"It became really clear in college that God was going to open doors for me," Sherman said.

Those doors opened when Texas Rangers co-owners Bob and Janice Simpson caught on to Sherman's passion and gifted voice.

Despite his recent fame, Sherman remains humble and willing to go wherever God calls him next.

"My wife and I have been praying for the past five years for God to put us in places of influence

so we can give back to him and reach more people," Sherman said.

Sherman said he tries to remain open and willing to let God take his life wherever he is meant to go, no matter where that leads him.

"It's more than just about the music," Sherman said.

"It is about the message and what God wants to do."

Sherman said his faith has strengthened even more through his marriage. Sherman has been married 10 years and has two children, ages 3 and 1.

"My faith is expressed through my music in very tangible ways since I try to come from a place of real life application," Sherman said.

"I hope people see how God is working in me and through my family because I am so grateful and blessed."

Sherman will perform at 7 p.m. in Waco Hall before Josh Wilson performs. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. Admission is free.

Disney to buy ‘Star Wars’ maker Lucasfilm for \$4.05 billion

By RYAN NAKASHIMA
ASSOCIATED PRESS

LOS ANGELES — A decade after George Lucas said "Star Wars" was finished on the big screen, a new trilogy is destined for theaters as The Walt Disney Co. announced Tuesday that it was buying Lucasfilm Ltd. for \$4.05 billion.

The seventh movie, with a working title of "Episode 7," is set for release in 2015. Episodes 8 and 9 will follow. The new trilogy will carry the story of Luke Skywalker, Han Solo and Princess Leia beyond "Return of the Jedi," the third film released and the sixth in the saga.

After that, Disney plans a new "Star Wars" movie every two or three years. Lucas will serve as creative consultant in the new movies.

"For the past 35 years, one of my greatest pleasures has been to see Star Wars passed from one generation to the next," said Lucas, chairman and CEO of Lucasfilm Ltd. "It's now time for me to pass Star Wars on to a new generation of filmmakers. I've always believed that Star Wars could live beyond me, and I thought it was important to set up the transition during my lifetime."

Disney CEO Bob Iger said Lucasfilm had already developed

an extensive story line on the next trilogy, and Episode 7 was now in early-stage development.

The Walt Disney Co. announced the blockbuster agreement to buy Lucasfilm in cash and stock Tuesday. The deal includes Lucasfilm's prized high-tech production companies, Industrial Light & Magic and Skywalker Sound, as well as rights to the "Indiana Jones" franchise. Lucas was hailed as a cinematic visionary when the original "Star Wars" came out in 1977. But he had become an object of often-vicious ridicule by the time he released 3-D versions of all six films in the Star Wars franchise earlier

this year. Die-hard Star War fans had been vilifying Lucas for years, convinced that he had become a commercial sell-out and had compounded his sins by desecrating the heroic tale that he originally sought to tell. They railed against him for adding grating characters such as Jar Jar Binks in the second trilogy and attacked him for tinkering with the original trilogy, too. Any revision — from little things like making the Ewoks blink or bigger alterations like making a green-skinned alien named Greedo take the first shot at Han Solo in a famous bar scene — were treated as blasphemy.


The criticism grated on Lucas, who vowed never to make another Star Wars movie during an interview with The New York Times earlier this year. "Why would I make any more when everybody yells at you all the time and says what a terrible person you are?" Lucas told the Times.

"Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull," the fourth film in another lucrative franchise, subjected Lucas to even more barbs when it came to the big screen in 2008. Fans of those films were especially outraged about an opening scene that featured Indiana Jones crawling into a

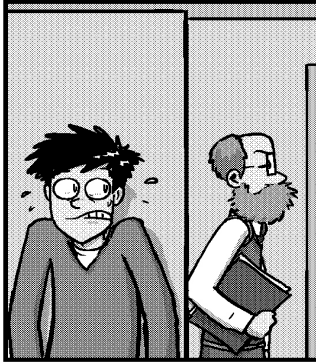
lead-lined refrigerator to survive a nuclear bomb blasting.

Lucas, 68, was fed up by the time he released "Red Tails," a movie depicting the valor of African-American pilots during World War II, earlier this year. He told the Times he was ready to retire from the business of making blockbusters and return to his roots as a student at USC's film school, where he once made a movie about clouds moving in a desert.

Kathleen Kennedy, the current co-chairman of Lucasfilm, will become the division's president and report to Walt Disney Studios Chairman Alan Horn.



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DAILY PUZZLES

Answers at www.baylorlariat.com McClatchy-Tribune

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11 Smidgen

12 Puts in

13 Like Cinderella's stepsisters

14 Bassoon, e.g.

20 Small racer

23 Cheers from tiers

24 Prankster

26 Count (on)

27 Forensic detectives, briefly

28 Trick-or-treaters' costume items

29 Beatnik's "Got it"

30 J. Carrol __: TV's Charlie Chan

32 Fishhook-to-line connection

33 Perfect

34 Cinch course

37 Big name in Argentine politics

40 With no warranties

41 Emmy winner Daly

43 "Shane" star Alan

46 Océano filler

49 The "X" in XFL, so some thought

51 Homemade pistol

52 Imbeciles

55 Awestruck

56 "The Alienist" author Caleb

57 Nobelist Wiesel

59 Slinky's shape

61 Cut and paste, e.g.

62 Story

63 River of Flanders

65 Car starter: Abbr.

66 Young fellow

67 Milne's absent-minded Mr.

68 It begins with enero

No. 1 Baylor back to winning ways in exhibition

By KRISTA PIRTLE
SPORTS EDITOR

The No. 1 Baylor Lady Bears picked up where they left off, defeating the Oklahoma City University Stars 91-42 Monday evening in Waco.

"I got to play some combinations and situations," head coach Kim Mulkey said. "I expected everything that I saw but it was just good to have it in a game setting. I thought first of all, the freshmen did fine. I think conditioning for several of them is obvious. They've got to learn to play longer stretches, but that's being a freshman and having to play at an intense level at both ends of the floor."

From the tip, Baylor was defending both its title and the floor, beginning the game forcing four turnovers. Associated Press pre-season All-Americans, senior post Brittney Griner and junior point guard Odyssey Sims, started off the season offensively with a pass to the block for an easy bucket.

"It felt great getting back on the court," Griner said.

When the freshmen subbed in halfway through the first half, the tempo slowed and the shot selection got more challenging.

"A lot of jitters," freshman Kristina Higgins said. "I've never seen that many people at a basketball game ever. I couldn't hear anything so I was just trying to play as hard as I could.

Junior forward Mariah Chandler took the court for the first time since being redshirted last season and had a big-time block

just under the nine-minute mark. "It was good to see Mariah Chandler back on the floor after redshirting," Mulkey said. "It was good to have her back out there."

At the end of the first half, despite the height advantage the Lady Bears had at every position, the teams were tied at the boards with 23, but Baylor led in points 49-15.

Griner led at the half with 12 points, followed by Sims with 11 and seniors Kimetria Hayden and Brooklyn Pope with seven each.

Baylor only had four turnovers to 12 assists, and Sims personally had four to one.

The Stars also had 19 turnovers at the half.

Oklahoma City only shot 18 percent from the floor for the half while Baylor was at 51.2 percent.

Baylor started the second half in a full-court press made use of fast breaks but fell into a lull around the six-minute mark.

"We knew Coach was a little upset with the group she had in and she put us back in," Sims said. "We didn't really try to send a message, but we just wanted to show the freshmen and that group that you've got to keep the lead up. It's not so much as far as intensity but don't stop playing on defense. Just because you're up, don't give up easy layups. Don't take a play off. You've got to keep playing no matter what the score is."

Sloppy defense and a turnover prompted a timeout and the starters back on the floor.

Every Lady Bear on the roster scored in the match-up.

Sims and Griner led the Lady



No. 1 guard Kimetria Hayden steals the ball from OCU No. 33 guard Ravven Brown during the exhibition game in the Ferrell Center on Tuesday. The Lady Bears dominated the Stars 91-42.

Bears in total points with 16 each, followed by Hayden and Pope with 11.

Each of the three freshmen scored in the game: post Kristina Higgins led with 10, followed by

both guards Niya Johnson with six and Chardonae Fuqua' with two.

Baylor finished the game with 39 total rebounds, 11 offensively and 28 defensively.

Sims finished the game with

seven assists to one turnover.

The Lady Bears kept up their defensive identity, holding Oklahoma City to 26.8 percent from the floor.

"You've got to play hard all the

time," Higgins said. "You can't take a break no matter who the team is. Defense is always number one."

Baylor will play its final exhibition game at 7 p.m. Monday in the Ferrell Center against Shaw.

Volleyball down the stretch

By DANIEL HILL
SPORTS WRITER

The Baylor volleyball team is 16-9 with a 3-7 Big 12 Conference record. With six conference games remaining, the Bears are looking to play their best volleyball down the stretch in the second half of the season. Every game is crucial at this juncture in the season. With the first half of Big 12 play behind them, the Bears believe they are poised to make a positive run.

"I feel like since the first half is over, we've hopefully learned all of our lessons from the first half," senior right side hitter Alyssa Dibern said. "We can use those lessons to show teams that we are a second-half team and they didn't know what they were getting into the first time they played us."

The Bears are still tinkering with their starting lineup and trying to find the perfect blend of chemistry that will lead them to the Big 12 tournament.

One of the changes made by head coach Jim Barnes was to burn sophomore outside hitter Tori Cox's redshirt so she would be eligible to play and contribute to the team this season.

With Cox in the lineup, the Bears have earned two of their three Big 12 wins.

"For me personally, the past couple of days I've been going through the day thinking about the fact that we are going to win," Cox said. "It's been like a positive mindset. I've never once thought about how are we going to beat



No. 7 middle hitter Torri Campbell leaps up to spike the ball over the net during the game against TCU on Oct. 17, 2012, in the Ferrell Center.

them. It's always like we're going to win regardless."

The volleyball team is poised for a second-half surge. The team is bonding and coming together as a unit.

"All the girls have been working hard. Players on this team, the chemistry is tremendous," Barnes said. "I think we are going to be a good second-half team, because

the team is really invested and committed. They want to send the seniors out on the highest note that they can by getting us in that tournament and seeing how far we can go. This is probably the most unselfish team I've coached and that's why I've enjoyed this group so much. We're not far off. We are not far off from making a run and we'll see what we can put together."

Baylor Soccer Big 12 Championships

Today	Sunday	Sunday
v. Okla. State	TBA	TBA
8 p.m.		
San Antonio	San Antonio	San Antonio

Championship time for soccer

By GREG DEVRIES
SPORTS WRITER

The Big 12 tournament has not treated the Baylor women's soccer team well in the recent past. Last year, the team lost to a Missouri team in penalty kicks that it had beaten 3-0 earlier in the season. But this is a new year, and the No. 14 Bears will look to reach further and win the Big 12 tournament in San Antonio.

As the second seed, Baylor will take on the seventh-seeded Oklahoma State Cowgirls, who finished 1-5-3 in conference play, but one of their three ties came in Stillwater, Okla. against the Bears.

In that game, the Bears outshot the Cowgirls 25-6, but Oklahoma State senior goalkeeper Adrianna Franch repeatedly came up with spectacular saves.

"It left a bitter taste in our mouth that we came back with a 0-0 tie after overtime," junior defender Kat Ludlow said. "We just want to go in there and put it away quick. We just really want to show what we have. We've been preparing for this over the past week or so, and I think we're really ready

for it."

Franch is a skilled goalkeeper and the Bears weren't surprised by her abilities. But to advance in the tournament, Baylor will have to get the ball in the back of the net this time in the first round.

"She has been the glue that's kept them together," assistant coach Paul Jobson said. "She is a fantastic goalkeeper and it is an equalizer. If your defense isn't as solid as it has been in the past, she is stopping everything. We tested her really, really well. It's not like we weren't getting great opportunities when we were there. She was just on her game and played great. She's a very athletic kid."

The Bears still identify the Cowgirls as a dangerous opponent. The program has had a lot of success in years past and their overall record is still 11-5-3.

"They definitely have a lot of really good tools," senior forward Lisa Sliwinski said. "I don't know what part of the equation kept them from performing like they have in the past few years, but they're definitely still dangerous."

Postseason soccer brings an added element of excitement to all

of the teams involved. Though the Bears will make it to the NCAA Tournament and will likely play at home, the players know that these games are some of their last.

"There's a little heightened feelings about this game, could be our last one, so lets give it everything we have, but I don't think we prepare for them any differently than we have during the regular season," Sliwinski said.

The Baylor defense has been very good and the Bears will look to limit teams' shots while applying a lot of pressure to pile on shots of their own. Baylor has the third-ranked goals-against average in the nation, allowing .445 goals per game, and the sixth-ranked shutout percentage. As solid as the defense is, the Bears will have to put goals on the board to win. Recently, the team offense has been firing on all cylinders, and Baylor will look to carry that momentum into the postseason.

"[We're] really excited to try and redeem ourselves there," Sliwinski said. "I know a lot of girls have the same mindset. [We're] just kind of out for blood the second time around."

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ROBBERY

from Page 1

injuries related to the crime have been reported.

Prior to the robbery, the victim was walking in the alleyway and talking with an Asian female. Swanton said the police don't currently view the female as a suspect or a victim, and her role in the incident is unclear.

After the female left, the victim was approached by the suspect, who showed a handgun and robbed the victim.

The suspect was last seen running down the alleyway where the robbery took place. The suspect is a black male in his early 20s; this was reported correctly in the Baylor alerts. He weighed approximately 140 pounds, Swanton said.

At this time, it is unclear whether any of the people involved in the robbery are connected to Baylor University.

Moffett said the notices were sent roughly an hour and 48 minutes after the event. Moffett herself sent the notices but declined to comment on why the notices were sent so long after the event.

Director of media communications Lori Fogleman said the time lapse between the event and the sending of the message was due in part to the time it took police at the

scene to determine what had occurred during the incident.

Once the Baylor Police Department had received some credible information, they discussed sending a warning with university officials and the university decided to send the warning, Fogleman said.

"Any time there is an incident that involves a handgun and it is near our campus, we are going to err on the side of caution and notify our faculty, staff and students about it," she said. The error in the identification of the victim was the

result of an error in communication, she said.

Fogleman said the university conducts post-incident reviews of warnings as standard procedure, to ensure the procedures "don't impede how quickly and accurately we can respond." The post-incident review of Monday night's warning has led to the training of additional personnel at the Baylor Police Department in the use of the emergency notification system and other changes to free up the direct line of communication between

the Baylor PD and Baylor Media Communications.

"We appreciate those who very thoughtfully communicated their concerns about the message sent out last night," Fogleman said. "We can always improve, and we continue to refine our procedures so we can communicate as quickly and as accurately as we can in the event of an emergency."

Moffett said all Baylor email addresses received the email message, but that only those subscribed to the emergency alert texts received the text message.

Students may provide a cell phone number or opt out of the notifications by visiting Bearweb. According to the Baylor website, Bearweb data is uploaded once weekly to the emergency notification system.

Those who provide a cell phone number to the university without opting out of the notifications in Bearweb will automatically receive the notifications.

Fogleman said the incident served as an opportunity to remind students of safety procedures: to be alert to their surroundings, and to ensure their emergency contact information is complete and up-to-date in Bearweb.

TRAFFIC

from Page 1

change is also going to be reveleled to enhance the smoothness of the road. She said the plans for the grade level change were already in place but were meant to begin later in the construction process. Now the grade level change can occur along with the other construction to widen the frontage roads.

Wheatley said that by including the grade level change now, more money won't have to be spent later to do it in the middle of another project.

"Engineers were looking at the ways the projects were coming together and this would have been a

problem," Wheatley said. "The way to handle the mismatched level was to change the intersection itself and widen it."

Costs for each of the projects will not be finalized until the constructors bid on the projects in January.

Wheatley said a bridge camera is located on top of Clifton Robinson Tower that takes five snapshots per day to document construction being done on the roads as well as the construction site of Baylor Stadium. To see pictures of the construction, visit <http://www.my35.org>.

HAZARD

from Page 1

team was en route to help with monitoring and testing.

Officials say some people from businesses in the industrial park were taken to Santa Teresa High School as a precaution after complaining of breathing problems, light-headedness, nausea and dizziness.

Some people also described a burning sensation on their skin.

Dona Ana County spokeswoman Kelly Jameson said officials started getting calls from people about 8:30 a.m.

Emergency officials from Texas and New Mexico responded, and people in nearby homes and businesses were told to stay indoors, seal all doors and windows and turn off air conditioning and heating systems.

Officials said the evacuation area did not include any homes.

Classes were also cancelled at a medical college located in the industrial area, which is also home to wire and paper manufacturing businesses and warehouses.

NATURE

from Page 1

He visited the American Red Cross headquarters on Tuesday and travels to New Jersey today to view damage and comfort people recovering from the storm.

Romney wavered in his strategy. First the campaign said he would skip a Kettering, Ohio, rally Tuesday out of sympathy for the storm victims.

Then Romney decided to do the event but recast it as a storm-relief effort, shorn of the usual campaign speech.

"It's part of the American spirit, the American way, to give to people in need," Romney told supporters in Kettering before they lined up to hand him bags of canned food for storm victims.

Romney planned three campaign events in Florida on Wednesday.

The storm's political impact is still unknown. At the very least, the aftermath in New York City and elsewhere will dominate the news and distract a nation of voters during the crucial days that remain before Nov. 6.

More concrete effects on Election Day are yet to be tallied: how many early voting days lost, how many voters who don't make it to the polls because of power outages, damaged homes or cleanup duties, whether any polling places or election equipment are damaged. Parts of four states seen as pivotal to this election were hit — North Carolina, Virginia, Ohio and New Hampshire.

Though rapid-fire campaign ads continue apace, Brinkley, a Rice University professor, predicted that the presidential race's

less-strident tone will continue through its remaining week, even after campaign schedules return to full strength.

"When the nation's largest city and even its capital are endangered, when so many people are in peril and face deprivation," Brinkley said. "It's hard to get back to arguing over taxes."

For Obama, the federal response to the natural disaster could make or break his bid for a second term.

Romney risks losing momentum in his push to move ahead in the few tight state races expected to decide the election.

"It stops the campaign more or less dead in its tracks," said Republican pollster and strategist Mike McKenna. "A pause always helps the guys on defense. It helps the

Obama guys catch their breath a little bit and think about what to do next."

McKenna says Romney shouldn't take much time off.

"If I were Romney, I'd be in Colorado and Michigan and Wisconsin," McKenna said. "Start off with a prayer for the people in New York and New Jersey, definitely do that, but don't stop attacking. Try to keep your momentum through this."

For Obama, missing a few days of active campaigning for vital presidential duties may be a good trade, politically speaking.

Lingering anger about the previous president's performance when Hurricane Katrina struck New Orleans provides a backdrop that will benefit Obama if his administration does a solid job, said

Kathleen Hall Jamieson, director of the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg Public Policy Center.

"You gain much more as a president being contrasted with George W. Bush and Hurricane Katrina than you do giving a speech in some battleground state and getting on the evening news as a campaigner," Jamieson said.

She said a natural disaster gives a sitting president "unlimited access to the media to say things the public wants and needs to hear in a fashion that reinforces that he is president."

The 2008 election also was hit by a fall surprise, the plummeting stock market and near collapse of the nation's financial sector that September. Many voters blamed that on the Republicans in power, and it helped Obama capture the

presidency.

This time, neither candidate can be accused of failing to prevent the weather. But Obama's reputation will suffer if the federal government's response is feeble or botched.

With Election Day a week away, there may be little time to make such assessments, however, and a risk of appearing to politicize tragedy if Romney speaks up too soon — a complaint that Democrats lodged against him when a U.S. Consulate in Libya was attacked.

"Criticism could boomerang if it appears to be ginned up to win votes in the election as opposed to genuine concern that people were not protected or people were not helped," said Mitchell McKinney, a professor of political communication at the University of Missouri.

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