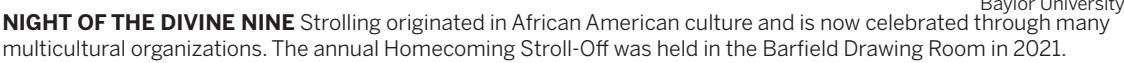




**MARIAH BENNETT**  
Staff Writer

**FOREVER FAMILY >> Page A3**

**JONAH KRAMER**  
Staff Writer

STROLLING &gt;&gt; Page A3

**LILY NUSSBAUM**  
Staff Writer

**ROYAL LINE >> Page A3**



# Homecoming is fun, Diadeloso is oso tragic

EMMA WEIDMANN  
Staff Writer



Homecoming events are more fun than Diadeloso events. There, I said it.

Before you write me off immediately, consider the events you went to on Dia. You probably went to none of them. You may have been sleeping in, cherishing a random Tuesday off — that is, one that won't negatively affect your attendance. You may have been spending your time with friends off campus on your day off from classes.

Did you miss goat yoga? How about the ferris wheel and the slides? Were you one of the few people on Fountain Mall listening to Apollo LTD? I bet not.

However, you can expect to see hundreds, if not thousands, of students crowd Fountain Mall to watch the bonfire, hear the Golden Wave Band play and flock over to the Bill Daniel Student Center to watch the Stroll-Off.

Students actually care about the on-campus festivities held during homecoming. However, when it comes to Dia, the low turnout makes the whole event a pretty depressing ordeal, if you ask me. Fountain Mall is more crowded between classes than it is on Dia.

On the “Day of the Bear,” campus lacks an alarming amount of school spirit. Where are all the Bears, you ask? I’ll leave that to your imagination.

This phenomenon is partly due to the fact that people use their day off to either rot in their dorm rooms or apartments or do something fun with their time off campus. However, homecoming falls on a weekend like any other. Classes are in session, responsibilities persist and students still find the time to come out and show their school spirit.

Homecoming is also spread across an

entire week, with events beginning on the Monday of homecoming week that keep the excitement and school spirit going for much longer than just one Tuesday.

With a bonfire, a parade, a football game and more, there's simply more to enjoy during homecoming than on Dia.

To be clear, I wouldn't trade Dia for anything.

If you asked me if I'd rather go to homecoming events or take a day off, I'd take my free Tuesday any time.

But I believe homecoming inspires a lot more feelings of warm fuzziness for the university than Dia does, with zero risk of sunburn and a whole lot less sweaty grossness.


So, when you're watching the parade go by or staring into the bonfire this homecoming, enjoy the cooler temperatures and just think about how this spring you'll probably be spending your time stressed about finals, procrastinating your homework and running to CVS for aloe vera gel.

I believe homecoming inspires a lot more feelings of warm fuzziness for the university than Dia does, with zero risk of sunburn and a whole lot less sweaty grossness.

# Grinch of homecoming

## This tradition is overhyped

CAITLYN MEISNER  
Staff Writer



Homecoming is very overhyped and overwhelming, even for the most spirited Baylor fans.

There are way too many homecoming activities for me to keep up with. Between the bonfire, the parade, the football game, Pigskin Revue and other random events, I really don't know what to do or where to go all weekend.

Entering Baylor as a freshman in fall 2020, I've only experienced two homecomings, both of which were at opposite ends of the capacity spectrum.

Most juniors and seniors remember homecoming 2020.

We sat in McLane Stadium for a few hours watching Pigskin Revue from the big screen and saw a couple of fireworks. Go Bears!

Homecoming 2021 was a completely different story. I couldn't keep up with all the events going on, especially with all of them

I've always felt like homecoming was more for the alumni. Most of the events seem tailored to them, especially if they were in Greek life. I mean, it is in the name: homecoming.

happening on Friday night and Saturday morning. It was utterly overwhelming.

Not to mention I am the first one in my family to even know about Baylor. I didn't have a family member or alum to walk me through or familiarize me with the events when I was a kid.

I was going through homecoming completely alone, with the help of some other college kids my age who had never experienced a college homecoming — let alone a Baylor one.

Maybe it's my family or just the northern schools I grew up around, but returning to your alma mater for homecoming has never been a thing my parents did. It was something they did for their high schools, not college.

Now that the football game is set for 11 a.m. Saturday, all of the events in the morning are going to go by even faster so everyone can scramble to the game. And this means I have to wake up even earlier to find a good spot to watch the parade, if I have the willpower to go. Yay!

Even as an undergraduate student, I've always felt like homecoming was more for the alumni. Most of the events seem tailored to them, especially if they were in Greek life.

I mean, it is in the name: homecoming. Alumni are coming home. I already live here, so I'm really just coming to campus from my apartment.

So, yes. I am the Ebenezer Scrooge of Baylor Homecoming. Maybe my cold, non-southern heart will warm up to the idea of homecoming when I'm a senior next year and I realize it's my last one.

This year, though, I think I'll watch all the traffic and chaos happen from my apartment window, reading my Lariat homecoming print edition.

# Baylor's bad gameday culture

## Early football games kill school spirit

MATT KYLE  
Assistant News Editor



This weekend's homecoming football game is set for an 11 a.m. kickoff. It will be the third 11 a.m. game Baylor plays this season and the second morning game at home. We have had a 2:30 p.m. kickoff against Oklahoma State and a 6 p.m. kickoff against Albany at home.

Not only is this early game another in a continuing trend, but the 11 a.m. start time has also pushed the start time of the homecoming parade up by an hour. While there is enough time between the end of the parade and the start of the game, there is



Illustration by Grace Everett

**WAKEY, WAKEY** The early homecoming football game causes a rushed schedule and interferes with gameday atmosphere.

still a considerable overlap when it comes to tailgate time.

A good tailgate should go for two to three hours before the game, but this homecoming, fans will have to choose: watch the parade or tailgate.

For homecoming, I'm willing to wake up early for the parade. But it is also homecoming, and I would like to go to a tailgate before the game. And for all the people participating in the parade, it creates a big time crunch between the parade and the game — not to mention the huge traffic jam that is bound to happen, though that happens every game day, and pretty much every other day in Waco.

I would like to tailgate before an 11 a.m. game any day, but I also want to sleep in on a Saturday and not have to wake up for a 9 a.m. tailgate. It just isn't exciting enough to wake up early on a Saturday to watch Baylor thrash Texas State.

Plus, morning and early afternoon games mean the games are in the hottest part of the day. I have little incentive to stay at the stadium when I'm tired and sweaty and the Bears are beating down some unknown team or getting their own butts kicked.

I know Baylor has very little to do with deciding what times their games are; that is all up to the TV networks. And we aren't doing well this year, so we aren't going to get primetime spots. However, Baylor fans can still make the most of this season and finally make Baylor game days fun again.

Early tailgates aren't the best, but we can make the best of them. As fans, we have to show up for our team. We can't only show love when Baylor is winning.

It took years for Baylor to build the great athletic programs we have now, and fans have to stick through a down year here and there. I'll be the first to admit that I leave at almost every halftime.

But if we aren't filling up McLane Stadium and making it loud, we can't keep the home-field advantage, and we won't get primetime games.



Illustration by Olivia Havre

**PSL SEASON** Switch up trendy hot drinks, try green tea.

JESSICA RAJKUMAR  
LTVN Reporter

# Fall is coming:

## Prep your kitchen to feast

Going out to the grocery store in the cold can be discouraging; however, with these additions to your kitchen, you will be inclined to cook a hot meal as soon as you come inside from the chilling air.



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**STROLLING** from Page A1

The audience can expect to see passionate stepping and strolling on Friday night, with both traditions allowing members to display who they are culturally, Jackson said. The event will reflect the spirit of homecoming, as many alumni come back looking forward to this event in particular. Jackson said the Stroll-Off is an opportunity for NPHC alumni to see

Alongside tradition and remembrance, the Stroll-Off reflects Phi Beta Sigma's motto — "Culture for service, service for humanity" — by partnering with Cure BU in an effort to raise money for children in need of



**COMPETE** Phi Beta Sigma's annual Homecoming Stroll-Off invites NPHC chapters to embrace tradition.

“There are so many different sides of Baylor, so many different cultures, and it’s just another one to experience,” Omolewa said.

**ROYAL LINE** from Page A1

“Even though I might not know the queen 20 years ago or 20 years from now, we are able to share in those memories of the homecoming weekend, of being able to pass on the pearl — the moment the crown hits your head and all of those shared traditions,” Knight said.



Photo courtesy of Kennedy Knight

**PEARLY WHITES** Kaylin Clemmons (left) received the pearl from Kennedy Knight (right) backstage after the ceremony.

**FOREVER FAMILY** from Page A1

Sterling said it is important to know that when someone

Meredith said children come to placements with nothing — no beds, clothes or school supplies. She said students can help

"It just has given me more of a heart for people," Meredith said. "They've changed everything."

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# YOUR HOMECOMING

## Safety first: Tips on staying safe throughout the event

ANA RUIZ BRICTSON  
Staff Writer

As people prepare for, and travel to Waco during homecoming weekend, the Baylor University Police Department and Baylor Department of Public Safety offer several tips for staying safe throughout the eventful days.

BUPD assistant chief DJ Rodman said thousands of people come to Waco for the traditional weekend. Although some people may be familiar with the area, he said many tend not to be. The biggest safety tip Rodman gave is to plan ahead.

“We really wanted to try and get a message out to our students and to our community about the importance of planning ahead and taking care of each other to be able to have a safe and memorable homecoming,” Rodman said.

Since there are so many activities that are happening on and around campus, Rodman said it’s good for people to consider their exact routes and what to do at specific times of the day.

“When you are traveling, we want you to make sure that you have a situational awareness,” Rodman said.

Rodman said people can maintain awareness of their surroundings by getting rid of distractions like earbuds and phones. He also recommends traveling with a group, staying in well-lit areas during evening events and downloading the BU Campus Guardian app.

The BU Campus Guardian app is a tool with multiple safety features the Baylor community can use. The app allows people to request a safety escort and to quickly dial 911 or connect with BUPD.

“We have over 87 emergency call boxes on campus and another 123 emergency telephones,” Rodman said. “But everybody is carrying a mobile device today, and so literally, it gives you one of those emergency call boxes at the touch of your fingertips.”

Rodman said one of the biggest things individuals should be careful of is underage drinking or drinking too much. He said he does not recommend accepting open containers from strangers.

Mark Childers, associate vice president for public safety, said the Baylor Department of Public Safety strives to provide the gold standard of campus safety, security and law enforcement through a layered security platform. He said although the department strives for these things, they cannot do it alone.

“We all are partners in this effort through our personal situation awareness, and if you see something, say something,” Childers said. “Trust that intuition.”

Additionally, Childers said those who see something that doesn’t look



Photo by Kenneth

**STAY SAFE** Officer Scott Curry ensures student safety on Baylor campus.

or feel right should call 911 or BUPD’s emergency line at 254-710-2222. Rodman also said the department looks forward to a successful homecoming and appreciates everyone’s efforts to help keep the Baylor community safe.

“Our goal is to be able to support our community, to be able to have a fun

and safe homecoming, but also try to get that message out to the community and to take care of each other,” Rodman said. “That’s the goal. We take care of each other in a way to where we can all have a good time and other to make sure the events are going well.”

## THURSDAY, OCT. 20

### PIGSKIN REVUE | 7 - 9:30 P.M. | WACO HALL

This annual production features the top eight acts from the All-University Sing spring performance.



Photo by Grace Fortier | Photographer

**SING-OFF** Alpha Phi will be one of many student organizations participating in this year’s Pigskin.

### MASS MEETING | 9 - 10:15 P.M. | FERRELL CENTER

This tradition welcomes first-year students to homecoming and features the retelling of the story of the Immortal Ten and the presentation of the Eternal Flame.



Photo by Josh Wilson | Roundup

**PRAY ON** Students sit through last year’s Mass Meeting in the Ferrell Center wearing their Line jerseys.

## FRIDAY,

### ARMSTRONG BROWNING LIBRARY OPEN HOUSE | 9 A.M. - 1 P.M. | ARMSTRONG BROWNING LIBRARY AND MUSEUM

Baylor alumni, friends and family are welcome to kick off homecoming weekend with tours and treats from the Armstrong Browning Library.

### HOMECOMING TEA AT TIDWELL | 4 - 5 P.M. | TIDWELL BIBLE BUILDING

Alumni from the history, religion and sociology departments are encouraged to attend this event to tour the recently renovated Tidwell building.

### ROYAL AND PURE HOMECOMING STROLL-OFF | 7 - 9 P.M. | BARFIELD DRAWING ROOM IN BILL DANIEL STUDENT CENTER

Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc. with the help of the National Pan-Hellenic Council hosts this annual event, which showcases coordination, rhythm and skill.



Photo from Baylor University

**DANCE OFF** Students sit through and enjoy Phi Beta Sigma’s traditional Stroll-Off after months of rehearsal.

### MULTICULTURAL AFFAIRS HOMECOMING RECEPTION | 5 - 6:45 P.M. | BILL DANIEL STUDENT CENTER

The Multicultural Affairs Department and Baylor Alumni Alliances have partnered for this meet-and-greet networking and fellowship event.



# COMING GUIDE

## Events

## Where to start? Where to end? Here's your Parade Map



Prabhakar | Photographer

age out early to be wise  
really what Baylor does  
e want to support each



Illustration by Katy-Mae Turner

## OCT. 21

### SINGSPIRATION! BAYLOR ALUMNI WORKSHOP SERVICE | 7 - 8:15 P.M. | SEVENTH AND JAMES BAPTIST CHURCH

This Baylor tradition goes back 70 years and features a variety of congregational singing and choral music.

### GOLDEN GRAD 50TH REUNION | 6 - 7:30 P.M. | BAYLOR CLUB - SUITE LOUNGE

The class of 1972 will celebrate 50 years and receive their golden grad diploma during this annual tradition.

### FIRST NIGHT FLASHBACK | 6 - 10 P.M. | BILL DANIEL STUDENT CENTER

Go back in time through Baylor's Homecoming history and traditions on the first floor of the SUB.

### EXTRAVAGANZA, PEP RALLY AND BONFIRE | 6 - 10 P.M. | FOUNTAIN MALL

Join the Baylor Family in celebrating Homecoming weekend with family-friendly activities, food trucks, games, a bonfire and more.

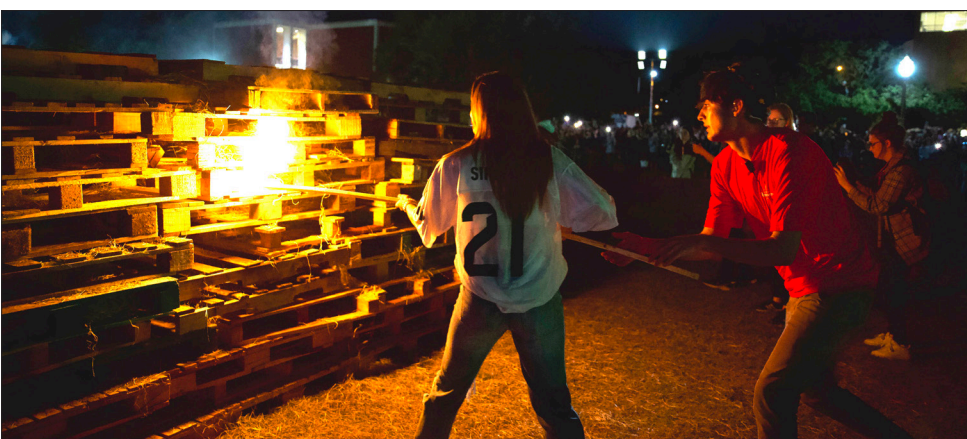


Photo By Josh Wilson | Roundup

**LIGHT IT UP** Baylor community gathered back in 2021 for the traditional Bonfire evening.



Photo by Brittany Tankersley | Photographer

**JUST DO IT** Spirit squads perform in front of a big audience.

## SATURDAY, OCT. 22

### HOMECOMING PARADE | 7 - 9:30 A.M. | DOWN- TOWN AND FIFTH STREET

Join this celebration of community and Baylor pride in the nation's largest and oldest collegiate homecoming parade.



Photo by Olivia Martin | Photographer

**WE ALL FLOAT** Students showcase their floats during the 2021 traditional homecoming parade after months of working on it.

### BAYLOR ALUMNI TAILGATE VS KANSAS | 8 -10 A.M. | TOUCHDOWN ALLEY ALUMNI TENT

Bring your family and friends to prepare to cheer on the Bears. This event requires registration through the Baylor Alumni website and is \$5 per person.

### AFROTC HOMECOMING OPEN HOUSE | 8 - 10 A.M. | SPEIGHT PARKING GARAGE

Stop by to meet staff and cadets, while grabbing light refreshments during and after the parade.

### BAYLOR VS. KANSAS | 11 A.M. | MCLANE STADIUM

Come out to cheer on the Bears as they play Kansas for the Homecoming game.

Click here for more  
What to do in Waco





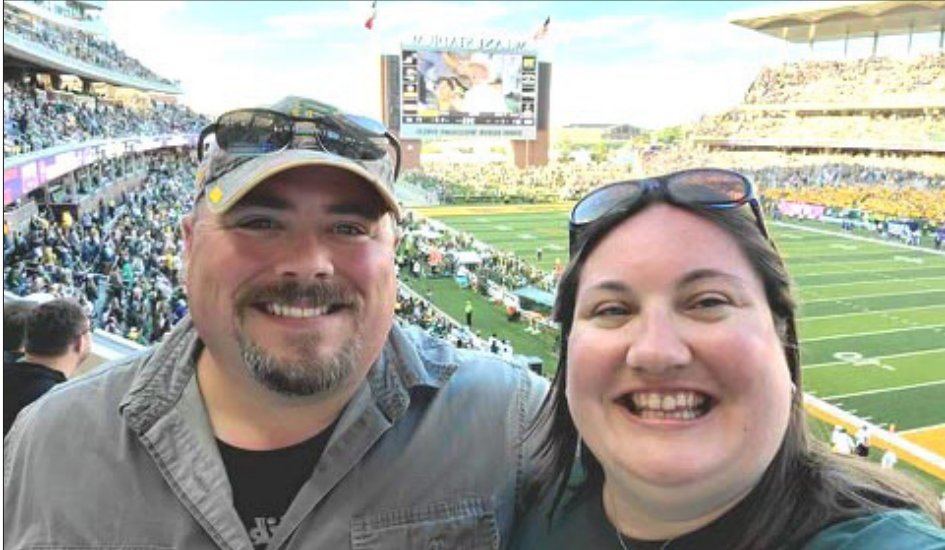


Photo Courtesy of Eva Baker

**THEN AND NOW** Eva Baker, class of 2007, with her husband Mathias Baker at a Baylor football game in 2007 (left) and at the 2021 Baylor Homecoming football game (right). Baker said last year’s Homecoming game was the first time she returned to campus since graduation.

# Baylor is still home, even 15 years later

**CAITLYN MEISNER**  
Staff Writer

Even if alumni graduated 10, 20 or 30 years ago, many say that Baylor is still home to them and that they continue to be proud of the improvements made since their undergrad years. The Baylor Homecoming tradition was established in 1909 and has been held, whether virtually or in person, every year since 1915. Baylor alumni come back in droves each year to watch the football game, meet up with their college friends and visit the campus they once walked through as students. Although thousands of Baylor alumni attended during different times in Baylor history, their stories

and memories echo each other as they reflect on their time and how the university has changed. Eva Baker, a 2007 graduate, said homecoming 2021 was the first time she had ever come back to campus since graduation. “The campus and the city itself has grown so much, but it all still felt like home,” Baker said. “I was so happy when I stepped back on campus. A lot was the same, so it made me feel very welcomed and excited to come back to a place that’s been so meaningful to me.” Baker said her favorite part of Baylor Homecoming has always been the football game. She said she attended all but two home football games during her time

as an undergraduate and master’s student. Chad and Mary Becker, 1995 and 1996 graduates, attended homecoming last year as alumni and parents. They came to homecoming soon after they graduated, around 1999 or 2000, and they attended homecoming 2021 with their daughter, Pasadena, Calif., junior Caeden Becker. “When we came back as alumni, we came back to the Floyd Casey Stadium, and we went to a lot of bars and hung out with college friends,” Chad said. “This time, we did none of that. We went to restaurants, made reservations and hung out with our daughter.” Chad and Mary said they had the opportunity to attend an alumni reunion for both their classes last year, since

COVID-19 had pushed back Chad’s reunion. “They had [an event] at the Baylor Club in McLane Stadium,” Chad said. “It wasn’t super well attended, but it was cool that they did something.” Mary said it was nice to return to campus and feel welcomed, especially since they haven’t had opportunities to return due to their busy schedules. “Chad and I aren’t the best alumni,” Mary said. “We have not stayed in touch with the university except through Caeden.” Both Chad and Mary said they participated in Pigskin Revue as undergraduates. Chad said that was always his favorite part of the weekend, especially getting ready and performing. Mary said she

always enjoyed watching the parade. “I think because it was an opportunity for the community to be a part of it,” Mary said. “I loved seeing all the families that came with their little ones to enjoy the parade.” Alan Ratliff, a 1985 graduate, said he has come back for 15 homecomings since he graduated. He said homecoming weekend is a shared experience between alumni and students. “From my perspective, homecoming always is and has been about a particular experience,” Ratliff said. “You have things which are oriented to celebrate a particular [population], but the name ‘homecoming’ is really about those coming back.”

Ratliff, Baker and the Beckers all said they are proud of the improvements Baylor has made since they were undergraduates. “Since I graduated, there have been so many new buildings, so many new programs,” Ratliff said. “It’s three times as large in terms of the student body, and we didn’t have a school of engineering when I was there.” Chad compared Baylor’s growth to a child growing up. “It’s like when you don’t see someone for 20 years; then they’re thriving and doing well, and you’re like, ‘Oh, wow, you’ve grown up,’” Chad said. “You were an adolescent when I last saw you, and now you’re an adult and thriving. You’re not what you used to be, but you’re still the same person.”

## Neighbor Nights:

**CHARLIE WAILES**  
Reporter

Neighbor Nights, Better Together and the Coalition of Asian Students collaborated Tuesday at the Bobo Spiritual Life Center for a night of food, community and cultural understanding. The event included guest speaker Michelle Ami Reyes — vice president of the Asian American Christian Collaborative in Austin. Reyes writes regularly about faith and culture and said she is in the process of writing a new book. “My husband and I are church planters in east Austin,” Reyes said. “It’s a multicultural community. East Austin is a disadvantaged Black and brown community, and everyday life is crossing cultures. The more I talked to other pastors, they didn’t know how to do church across cultures. My first book was for the church and how we can do it with love and passion.” Reyes has also written a book entitled “Becoming All Things,” which aims to help Christians interact more openly with cultures different from their own. “I think for college students struggling to find their faith, we should spend more time with ourselves asking, ‘What is my story, and what

are the narratives born of my ethnic heritage?’” Reyes said. In her speech, one of the questions Reyes asked was how we can use cultural celebration to rectify social injustice. “When it comes to activism and justice, it needs to be personal,” Reyes said. “I want to encourage you all to think about deconstructing institutional racism. And our aim is not to burn things down or throw the metaphorical molotov cocktail; it is to make things better, and that path means not shaming people or labeling.” Dallas senior Nelley Sobh is one of the organizers for Neighbor Nights and a civic interfaith leader with Better Together. Sobh said the goals of Better Together and Neighbor Nights are alike. “Neighbor Nights and Better Together are under the same umbrella of spiritual life organizations,” Sobh said. “They’re so intertwined in values and missions. Better Together is more of a verbal exercise, while Neighbor Nights is putting our words into action.” Sobh said Neighbor Nights regularly have speakers from many different backgrounds. “The student associations that we collaborated with for this event chose Reyes to speak on their behalf,” Sobh said.

Students, faculty come together to enjoy food, company of others



Olivia Havre | Photographer

**LOVE THY NEIGHBOR** A Neighbor Night is hosted by Better Together and the Coalition of Asian Students. Neighbor Nights are dinners hosted by multicultural student organizations, and any Baylor students, faculty or staff are able to attend. Dr. Josh Ritter works in the department of spiritual life and student life and helps oversee Neighbor Nights, which he said began in 2015. “That’s when spiritual life developed a partnership with spiritual affairs,” Ritter said.

**NEIGHBOR NIGHTS >> Page A7**

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News

# Hundreds flock to Allbritton for Dinner with the Livingstones

**SAMANTHA GARZA**  
Staff Writer

The university’s annual Dinner with the Livingstones kicked off homecoming week Tuesday on the lawn of the Allbritton House. Hosted by the president and first gent, the event is a time for students to come together, celebrate and kickstart homecoming week.

The first ever Dinner with the Livingstones was hosted in 2017 when Dr. Linda Livingstone became president. Since then, she and her husband, Brad Livingstone, have made it a tradition for students to gather on the lawn of their home, eat good food and listen to live music.

Tables and chairs covered in green and gold filled up the lawn of the Allbritton House for students to sit down and enjoy their dinner. The live music and twinkling lights draped on the trees made it a special homecoming welcome for the year.

Like previous years, students were given a voucher for one free meal and one free drink or dessert. Arranged on Third and Fourth Streets, 18 popular Waco food trucks had

hundreds of students lining up to cash in their vouchers. Local fan favorites like Waco Cha, could line up right outside the Livingstones’ door and take a picture with the president and first gent.

Cuernavaca, Mexico, senior Antonio Cano said this was his first time attending the event and that he decided to come out for the free food.

“I think it’s something fun,” Cano said. “I don’t know if many universities have the same thing, so I appreciate it.”

Houston freshman Alisa Donis said she and her friends were not only excited for the food but also looking forward to seeing, meeting and taking pictures with the Livingstones.

Mexico City sophomore Francisco Rivera said he enjoyed the event, although the lines to get food were too long.

“I think this is something unique that Baylor



**FAMILY FIRST** President Linda Livingstone and first gent Brad Livingstone take “family photos” with students.

has,” Rivera said. “All my friends that go to UT or other schools — I’ve never heard of them having events like this. So I think that Baylor is a very giving community, and I think that this [event] represents that.”

“Baylor is a very giving community and I think that this [event] represents that.”

**FRANCISCO RIVERA | BAYLOR SOPHOMORE**

Pop’s Lemonade, Nightlight Donuts and Shorty’s Pizza Shack were present.

After grabbing something to eat, students

## NEIGHBOR NIGHTS from Page A6



**DINNER AND A COMMUNITY** Neighbor Nights are held to help bring different communities of Baylor students together.

“Neighbor Nights actually used to be called Cross-Cultural Dinners.”

Ritter said Neighbor Nights aim to pair with more multicultural student organizations. Last month’s dinner was a partnership with the Hispanic Student Association.

“We also started Better Together, which is the interfaith group on campus,” Ritter said. “In fall 2015, we had a prayer time for students to let them know they were welcome here. Once that happened, we really started with Better Together, and that was when we did our first interest meeting and common ground issue, which was literacy.”

Ritter said the purpose of Neighbor Nights is to encourage students and faculty to have conversations with people from different backgrounds.

“The question for us — the main question — is how do you love your neighbor if you don’t know how to get to know them?” Ritter said.

Neighbor Nights have different ways to try to encourage communication, according to Ritter.

“We have conversation cards at the table or guided conversation or panel discussion or sometimes a speaker,” Ritter said. “For our last Neighbor Night, we had Dr. Jorge Burmick, who is also the speaker of the Hispanic Heritage Luncheon.”

Ritter said he thinks Neighbor Nights help students create new relationships by sharing personal stories and creating connections.

“Research indicates that none of us are persuaded by logical argumentation,” Ritter said. “But by personal stories and emotions, we can have amazing conversations and get to know each other without theological debates. We can highlight differences but still do good work together.”

Katy senior Sanjana Natarajan has regularly attended Neighbor Nights and said the open atmosphere allows different cultural groups to make conversation over dinner.

“My experience with it was great as well,” Natarajan said. “There is great food, and it’s a sit-down conversation about

“The question for us — the main question — is how do you love your neighbor if you don’t know how to get to know them?”

**DR. JOSH RITTER | OVERSEES NEIGHBOR NIGHTS**

anything really. There are cultural groups that go like ISSA, which is the Indian Subcontinent Student Association.”

Natarajan said she encourages students to attend because Neighbor Nights promote diversity and shared cultural experiences.

“I think they do a good job with cultural events,” Natarajan said. “Neighbor Nights always helps me feel welcome, and I’d highly recommend that anyone who hasn’t been should go.”

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**Homecoming**  
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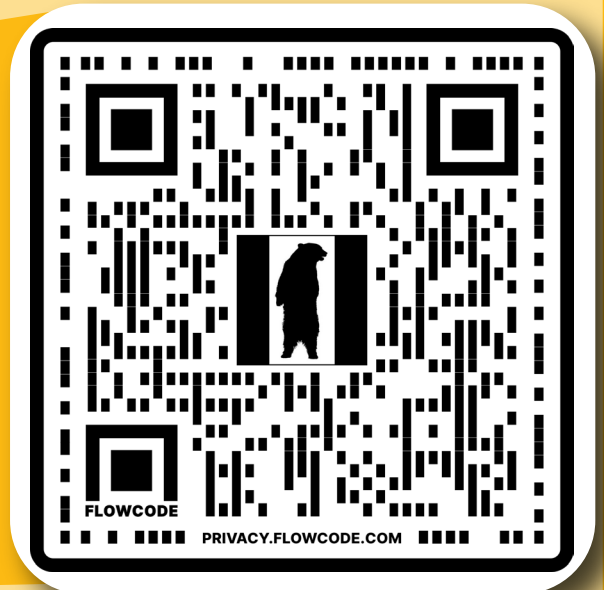


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RAISING STANDARDS

Read more about the Heart O' Texas Fair and Rodeo and its improvements  
**pg. B2**



CHANGE OF PLANS

Find out how the early kickoff shifts homecoming plans  
**pg. B3**

**I obviously have more goals that I want to achieve. But so far, I feel really proud of what I've accomplished."**

Victoria Smith of Dreamy Picnics talks her new business and its future. **pg. B4**

BaylorLariat.com

# Homecoming Traditions reform through century of progress, set national precedent

EMMA WEIDMANN  
Staff Writer

Baylor held the nation's first homecoming celebration in 1909, sparking a tradition that has spread across the country. Throughout its history, Baylor's oldest and proudest celebration has changed as much as it has remained constant, Sylvia Hernandez, assistant librarian at the Texas Collection, said.

"Through time, you can see the way that the band is there, the cars are there and when floats were introduced," Hernandez said. "Now Pigskin is the bigger thing ... You're still getting the same weekend, but you're getting a bigger emphasis on different activities."

The first homecoming celebration kicked off with speeches by then-President Samuel Palmer Brooks and Dr. George Truett in Carroll Chapel. While Carroll Library still stands on campus, the chapel burned down in 1922, so opening worship services are now held on Fountain Mall through Vertical and the mass meeting in remembrance of the Immortal Ten.

The parade route in 1909 looked similar to that of today, beginning at Washington and 11th, though it ended in a spot that has changed drastically since.

The Golden Wave Band led the parade of cars with advertising by



Baylor Round Up File Photo

**NO RAIN ON THIS PARADE** The first homecoming parade was held in 1909 and followed a route familiar to parade-goers today.

local businesses. It finished at Carroll Field, where onlookers watched the Bears win the homecoming game against Texas Christian University. Now, the Bill Daniel Student Center stands on the site of that historic win and serves an equally central role in student life.

In a Nov. 26, 1909, edition of the Lariat, the Lariat condemned "foolish and reprehensible" behavior by

Baylor and TCU students after the homecoming game, in which students from both schools reportedly destroyed parade decorations downtown. The Lariat chalked up the students' conduct to "excited impulse" due to the win.

Hernandez said people tend to consider their ancestors to be more proper and straight-edge, but it was actually easier to get away with pranks and antics like

these because of the lack of social media.

"They did get a little bit rambunctious," Hernandez said. "Students are going to be students ... Somebody had to see you do it in order to report you doing it ... It's still very well-documented that students did get into shenanigans."

Literary societies like the all-male Philomathesians and Erisophians and the all-female Calliopean Society

held alumni reunions similar to those that sororities and fraternities hold today for homecoming.

"The literary societies can be equated to Greek Life before Greek Life existed here at the university," Hernandez said.

"Seeing the growth over time and meeting new people is how the term 'Baylor family' is used. You always want to meet the next generation and see how

things are the same but have changed."

The celebration was not always as inclusive as it is today. In 1909, the university had not yet allowed Black students or any students of color admission. Instead, according to Hernandez, people of color were present on campus in roles of "domestic labor."

"[The first homecoming] was for the students who came here who were white students," Hernandez said. "There were people of color on campus who were doing these behind-the-scenes sorts of jobs."

Since its creation in 1919, The Baylor Chamber of Commerce has turned homecoming into a week-long event, beginning with the first "Good Will Week" in 1926, meant to deepen the sense of community on campus.

"Homecoming was originally established to welcome back alumni, and 10 years later, Chamber began," Cordero said. "Our underlying mission is to provide service to Baylor in any way that we can ... It's because we want to serve the Baylor community, that we have held down this tradition for so long. Ultimately, we just want students and anyone at the university to enjoy this tradition just like so many others before have."

## Homecoming court expands reign with campuswide nominations

AVERY BALLMANN  
Staff Writer

As the first Asian American homecoming queen and the first-ever homecoming king, alums Nicole Ma and Chris Malone are returning to campus to help this year's homecoming court.

Ma and Malone represented

Isabel Lea said the expanded homecoming court includes both men and women to have a better representation of the student body and to include more students in homecoming activities.

"We want that outstanding group of students to include people from all organizations on campus, because there's outstanding students even in the smallest student organization,"

to nominate one male and female student. Ma was selected by the Baylor Bear Foundation and Malone was nominated by Student Senate, and they then filled out an application. The next step was a group interview with a panel of three judges who are alumni or prominent members of the Waco community.

Ma said after her interview she thought she botched it. She then realized she was treating the process too seriously in a negative way. Ma said she needed to "check herself" and once she did she was able to make connections with other nominees.

"I could start feeling like it was becoming sort of an identity thing," Ma said. "So whether I do or don't get any title at the end of the day, it was just an honor to be a part of so many students who are here together too."

In the end, Ma did receive the title, but she said her favorite part was that she gained friendships from people all over campus.

Malone said he also cherished the connections he made while on homecoming court. The court still keeps in touch with one another via group text.

"All of these people were some of the most incredible people I've met and lifelong friends that have equal service," Malone said. "They are all just as deserving, which was really neat to see."

Chamber also recognizes the 'outstanding members' which are nominees that can be selected for philanthropy, Baylor involvement, academics and spiritual commitment. Nominees who make the court



Matt Ellett | Baylor RoundUp

**WINNER WINNER** 2021 Homecoming Court King and Queen presented with their crowns.

cannot make these outstanding spots as well.

As Ma's name was announced in 2021, the queen's cape was placed upon her. The cape is a longstanding tradition that has been placed on Baylor's homecoming queens for years. The green velvet luscious cape claps along the neckline of the winner and it has gold fabric details hugging its train. The cape has some weight to it, physically and metaphorically.

"I get the opportunity to uphold this legacy that many people before me had held and they've had this cape too and so everything I felt was really symbolic," Ma said.

Since Malone was the first male student on the homecoming court, he and Ma plan to start a tradition of their own. Since 2014, the homecoming queen's passed down a pearl necklace and a scrapbook containing a picture of each queen and information about their

involvement at Baylor. Ma plans to add in a picture of Malone as the first homecoming king.

"I'm definitely excited for all the guys that get to be represented now at Baylor," Malone said. "So I think that part is really cool, and getting to know that I can be a part of it and then just kind of pass the torch to all the other guys at Baylor."

The homecoming court will be announced by Lea at 7:00 p.m. on Thursday in Waco Hall during Pigskin. Students can also see nominees at 7:00 a.m. Saturday in the homecoming parade.

"It's an opportunity for those organizations to say, we're backing this person, this person is incredible and they're a part of our organization," Lea said. "So that's why I think it's important we want even the small organizations to nominate and have someone representing them."

Chamber's plan to expand and invite more nominees to the homecoming court process. This year, the student body had 60 students nominated for their chance to make the court.

Through a rigorous process of group interviews, only 14 students will officially be recognized on the homecoming court.

Cedar Park senior and President of Baylor Chamber of Commerce

Lea said. "So we want them to be represented."

There are several ways the Chamber reinforces inclusion into the court. All nominees will have a spot in the homecoming parade, be recognized at the first Pigskin Revue show and for less-developed student organizations, Chamber will waive the \$55 application fee.

To include more students, each student organization is allowed

**We want that outstanding group of students to include people from all organizations on campus, because there's outstanding students even in the smallest organizations.**

ISABEL LEA |  
BAYLOR CHAMBER OF  
COMMERCE PRESIDENT



# Heart O' Texas Fair and Rodeo 'raises standard' for 70th anniversary

**ERIANNE LEWIS**  
Arts and Life Editor

The Heart O' Texas Fair and Rodeo concluded its 11-day event on Sunday, marking its 70th anniversary. The annual event, which is the largest fair and rodeo in Central Texas, was held at the Extraco Events Center in Waco.

This year's theme was Raising the Standard, said Melinda Adams, senior division manager for marketing and sponsorships.

"There are certain little things that maybe you won't notice just walking in, but overall, it starts to add up," Melinda said.

The Fair instituted smaller changes into its appearance to ensure a better fair and rodeo experience. All the tents in the fair were upgraded to structure tents, which allowed for better stability, and updated signage was displayed on the ground to instruct attendees where to go.

Heart O' Texas also encouraged visitors to use the new app format. QR codes throughout the property led attendees to download the app for easier access of the fairgrounds, attraction lists and tickets.

Other additions to the fair and rodeo this year included a wine and beer garden, a pirate comedy show, as well as a new sea lion attraction, which has been seven years in the making.

Melinda said the size of the outdoor stage was also increased this year to accommodate the larger performers such as Clay Walker, Gary Allan and Midland. Target Solutions was a new sponsor this year and created a VIP lounge at the fair.

Melinda said this year's indoor vendor list was the largest the fair and rodeo has ever seen.

"They have all kinds of boutique shopping in there,"



Kenneth Prabhakar | Photographer

**GIDDY UP** A cowboy lassoes in a calf during the Heart O' Texas rodeo and fair.

Melinda said. "That's been raised up as well, because we didn't have as many vendors last year and there wasn't as much variety, whereas this year, you can find pretty much anything in there."

Melissa Adams, co-owner of Big Top Entertainment, a third-party group that coordinated exhibitors at Heart O' Texas, said Big Top had over 100 vendors that were offered. This was their second year bringing the Heart O' Texas Shops Marketplace to the Fair and Rodeo.

"You're going to find a little bit of everything here at the rodeo," Melissa said. "Whether you're looking for western wear or you want a custom-shaped hat, you want some 100% covered-in-rhinestone boots, we're going to have that. Also, we are talking about salsas and homemade chocolates and home décor, even furniture made out of whiskey barrels."

Melissa started out as an exhibitor herself six years ago

and said she wasn't sure exactly what she was doing, but she knew there was a need for this type of company.

"It was a smashing success and all of the exhibitors wanted more and more and so we started booking with two events a year and now we do about 30 events a year," Melissa said.

Melissa said she values the connections she makes with vendors.

“The most enjoyable part is getting to work with



Kenneth Prabhakar | Photographer

**FRIENDLY COMPETITION** A mother and son attempt to win a prize at the Heart O' Texas Fair and Rodeo.



Kenneth Prabhakar | Photographer

**BAAAAAD LUCK** Junior cowboy attempts to hang on during sheep run event.



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A dark blue rectangular graphic with white and yellow text. The text reads: "TWO YEARS CAN CHANGE THE FUTURE" in large, bold, sans-serif font, with "CHANGE" in a larger, teal-colored font. Below this, it says "CLASS OF 2023" and "APPLY BY" in white, followed by "October 21" in a large, bold, yellow font. At the bottom left, it says "TEACHFORAMERICA" in white. On the right side, there is a large, square QR code.

A promotional coupon for Fazoli's. At the top is the Fazoli's logo, which features a red tomato with a green stem and leaves above the word "FAZOLI'S" in a stylized, outlined font. Below the logo, the text "5 FREE BONELESS WINGS WITH MINIMUM \$5 PURCHASE" is written in large, bold, dark blue capital letters. In the bottom left corner, there is a QR code and a block of fine print text. In the bottom right corner, there is a photograph of a metal tray containing several pieces of sauced boneless wings and a small white cup of dipping sauce. The entire coupon is framed by a red dashed border.



# Early kickoff poses conflicts for other traditions

**AVERY BALLMANN**  
STAFF WRITER

The 11 a.m. kickoff for Baylor's homecoming game against Kansas has shifted the plans of student and alumni organizations' homecoming traditions. Since ESPN chooses the game time organizations had short notice of the kickoff and resulting in last minute plans. One of the groups affected is student government. Each year, the organization holds an alumni luncheon to reconnect, network with one another and communicate about bylaws. Because of the 11 a.m. kickoff, student government had to cancel its luncheon. The Woodlands junior and External Vice President of student government Nick Madincea they were having trouble rescheduling due to the lack of space available on campus. "An early kickoff is proving to be nothing short of an extreme inconvenience

to our schedule with it," Madincea said. "So that's been quite unfortunate." Madincea said he was able to participate in this student government tradition last year. "It was a great opportunity to meet some of the StuGov legends, so to speak, and learn a lot about our bylaws and the way that they were written from inception," Madincea said. Richardson freshman and Director of Communications of the External VP Madi Cano has yet to experience this tradition. "Going back to what Nick said how he experienced really learning from those in the past because student government, we are here serving Baylor as a whole," Cano said. "And we're learning from them, just so we can make a greater impact on the community." Another tradition affected by the early kickoff is the alumni tailgate. They've



Grace Everett | Photo Editor

**BRIGHTEN THE MOOD** Baylor fans adorned in gold throw up a sic 'em on Oct. 1 at McLane Stadium.

“The tailgate has certainly been one of our most popular events for alumni and their families before football games, home and away”

**LORI FOGLEMAN |**  
**UNIVERSITY SPOKESPERSON**

worked around an 11 a.m. kickoff before so instead of serving lunch, interim director of alumni engagement Heather Beck said they will serve breakfast and end the tailgate before the game. However, alumni now have to decide to either go to the parade or the tailgate. "We understand and support that the

homecoming parade is the primary draw for the Baylor family, but we will be ready to welcome them if they decide to stop by the Baylor alumni tailgate before the game starts," Beck said. Beck said most of the tailgate guests register in advance and have been notified of the early start time, and they have updated their web pages accordingly. B a y l o r

spokesperson Lori Fogleman said the alumni tailgate has been around for several years now, even after it was moved from Floyd Casey Stadium to Touchdown Alley. Though the alumni tailgate has been structurally unaffected, the alumni wanting to attend will have to decide which events to go to. Student government being a smaller entity, suffered by canceling their event.

"The tailgate has certainly been one of our most popular events for alumni and their families before football games, home and away," Fogleman said. "Whether kickoff is at 6 p.m. or 11 a.m., Baylor alumni of all years enjoy the opportunity to fellowship with one another over a meal, listen to the pregame tailgate show and get ready to cheer on the Bears."

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**A WARM WELCOME BACK** Students view the works of eight professors at Martin Museum of Art's showcase reception Tuesday night.

# Retired art professors honored with showcase

**EMMA WEIDMANN**  
Staff Writer

The Martin Museum of Art kicked off homecoming week with a celebration of its own — a reception for Coming Home: A Retired Faculty Showcase on Tuesday night in which the works of eight retired Baylor professors were on display.

The professors to be honored are Mark Anderson; the late Bill Jensen, Ph.D.; Berry Klingman; John McClanahan; Paul McCoy; Terry Roller; Mary Ruth Smith, Ph.D. and Karl Umlaf. Three of these professors retired in 2020 during the pandemic, meaning the art department was unable to give them a proper send-off.

Dr. Heidi Hornik, Ph.D., chair of the art and art history department at Baylor, said this showcase is the department's way of honoring these professors' decades-long careers.

"These are people who have been with us, and most of them committed their entire life and career to Baylor," Hornik said. "This is my 33rd year [in the art department], so I've worked with all of these people and I really have immense respect for all of them, their efforts for the students, their productivity as artists and scholars."

Professor Emeritus Mark Anderson served as chair of the art department from 2010 to 2020. He said for his art to be on display is an honor.

"[I think about] history in the making, passage of time," Anderson said. "I'm glad to see all these people come back."

Hornik said this showcase is meaningful because the retired faculty members touched the lives of thousands of students during their time at the university. She said she wants alumni to see the showcase and be reminded of their

time at Baylor through these works. This is the first year retired faculty's works have been on display for homecoming, Hornik said.

"We hope that people who have had these professors will come back, so they can stop in and be reminded of the works that they probably knew about as they were being produced by these artists while they were professors," Hornik said. "Just as the students are coming home, so are these professors to the department."

Many of the works on display are part of the John S. Belew Collection, a permanent collection of works by each member of the art department. When a studio artist joins the faculty, they are asked to donate one of their pieces to the collection.

In addition to paintings, there are as many different types of works on display as there are disciplines in the art department, such as sculpture, textiles and printmaking.

Belton sophomore Sharon Almon, a studio art major, attended the showcase. Almon said she enjoys coming to arts events and admires the art for the legacy it represents, although each professor retired before she came to Baylor.

"I didn't know any of them, but I know that they made an impact on the art department," Almon said. "It's really cool to see everybody come together for these events and appreciate the work of people who worked here."

Anderson said what he misses the most about Baylor and being the chair of the art department is the people — meeting them, getting to know them and helping them.

"My favorite part was helping to solve problems, supporting the faculty and walking through the hallways and staying in touch with people," Anderson said. "Those were probably my favorite things ... It's the people."

# Life's a picnic for new business

**AVERY BALLMANN**  
Staff Writer

Bohemian rugs are carefully placed across the grassy scape of the park, and comfy decorative pillows are scattered along the blankets. Candlesticks, catered food, drinks and themed decor: This is what customers can expect when using Victoria Smith's business Dreamy Picnics.

Smith launched Dreamy Picnics, a customizable luxury picnic experience, in August. Smith moved to Waco a week before the pandemic hit. They didn't have a babysitter, so Smith started putting on date nights for her husband — this is how she began her picnic business.

"When I started my business, I really wanted to partner with a lot of other local businesses, and incorporate them into my business to make it a true Waco experience for people," Smith said.

Smith has collaborated with many local businesses in her venture. She thrifts her decor at Central Goods, a local antique store, and she also uses Paris Party Platters as an add-on to her picnic services.

Anniesa Paris, owner of Paris Party Platters, began her business three years ago after she received inquiries about a charcuterie board she posted for her family's get-together on Easter. Smith found Paris on social media, and the two businesses frequently collaborate with each other.

"The more people you work with, it's such a benefit to you. It's a win-win; there's nothing negative about it in my opinion," Paris said.

Paris prepares the boards the day of the picnic because everything she creates is fresh, even down to the mustard served on the side.

Smith meets up with Paris to grab the board and then uses her creativity to design the space for the customer.

"It's fun to listen to the feedback, that feedback that you get when you watch people really enjoy what you're giving them," Paris said. "It's very, very rewarding."

Dreamy Picnics offers 12 types of picnic packages including holiday themes, kidnics, photo shoot rentals and the coffee and carb picnic. The coffee and carb picnic features pastries and custom lattes from Be Kind Coffee.

This particular package is what Smith thinks is best suited for college students. This option is \$40 per person and also includes a polaroid with film, Jenga and board games, a bluetooth speaker and utensils for the pastries and lattes.

Another add on customers can include to their picnic experience is Smith's hand-stamped jewelry. Smith holds a pop-up shop once every other week to promote her business, and she brings along her jewelry and other items featured in her picnics.

"I try to give an experience at the pop-up for people so they can sit down and experience what it would be like to book a picnic with me," Smith said.

To book a picnic, people can go through Dreamy Picnic's Linktree. Smith has a fall-themed picnic until November, and she is collaborating with Cultivate 7Twelve to create an indoor Christmas-themed picnic.

"When I went into this, I didn't think that I would be as successful as fast as it's been happening," Smith said. "I obviously have more goals that I want to achieve. But so far, I feel really proud of what I've accomplished."



Grace Everett | Photo Editor

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# Men’s basketball transfer Grimes overcomes odds, paves path to Baylor

**GIO GENNERO**  
Sports Writer

Over this offseason, Baylor men’s basketball acquired junior guard Dantwan Grimes, adding even more depth to the Bears’ stacked backcourt. Grimes comes from Kilgore College where he led the team in scoring and assists, while also helping the team reach two consecutive NJCAA National Tournaments.

“Out of high school I had no offers,” Grimes said. “Nobody really wanted to take a chance on me. I was an undersized guard, I wasn’t really athletic, so I decided to go to a junior college.”

Grimes credits a lot of his success to Cody McCoy, assistant coach at Kilgore who previously was on the coaching staff for Baylor. Grimes said when he first arrived, he didn’t fully understand what it took to be great yet and McCoy was instrumental in that process.

“McCoy was the one who taught me those things, like discipline, setting goals and working every day,” Grimes said. “Not really focusing on the end goal for a moment, just work and let all that pay off in the future.”

McCoy said Grimes was his first recruit to Kilgore, where they built their relationship. McCoy said they had a special connection from the start because of their similar personalities and starting similar journeys together.

“I remember picking him up from the airport, and he’s with his mom and he’s nervous because it was his first time on a plane,” McCoy said. “You know, from the very first practice you could just tell he had something different about him, and he had no clue.”

McCoy said he would tell Grimes stories about Davion Mitchell and other Baylor players’ work ethic and how it led to something bigger than themselves. He said Grimes came ready to work, and that he just did his best to help him along the way.

“These are the possibilities you can pull off, but it’s not going to be easy,” McCoy told Grimes. “Kilgore is an opportunity to springboard yourself somewhere different where a lot of people don’t think you can go. It’s going to be hard and it’s not always going to be fun.”

Fortunately for Grimes, motivation is something he has never lacked. His journey is bigger than basketball for him. His

determination stems from his childhood in Ocala, Fla. He said his mom is his biggest inspiration to keep working in hopes of a better future.

“It was rough out there, so it was kind of rough growing up,” Grimes said. “My mom was someone who really influenced me. She had me young, so it felt like we grew up together. Having to see the things she had to go through put a drive in me to be successful and help her and my family have a better life.”

Despite not having a lot of time here under his belt, Grimes said he is enjoying the transition, and he likes what he sees from the team. He said the team gels very well on and off the court and he wants to give his all during his next few seasons in green and gold.

“The biggest thing for me is trusting the process,” Grimes said. “I got three years here so I’m not rushing. I’m going to come in and do my best and do the best I can for the team. Do my job and play as hard as I can, just trying to help us get to a national championship.”

“You know, from the very first practice you could just tell he had something different about him, and he had no clue.”

**CODY MCCOY | ASSISTANT COACH AT KILGORE COLLEGE**



Photo courtesy of Elijah Pittman  
**JUCO TURNED D-I** Baylor men’s basketball junior guard Dantwan Grimes spots up in the corner and takes a shot.



Kenneth Prabhakar | Photographer  
**ALL SMILES** Baylor baseball head coach Mitch Thompson smiles as he watches practice on Oct. 18 at Baylor Ballpark.

## Coach Thompson celebrates personal homecoming back at Baylor Ballpark

**MICHAEL HAAG**  
Sports Editor

As Baylor celebrates its annual Homecoming this weekend, all eyes will be on the timeless parade Saturday morning or the football game a few hours later. What some may not know is that a certain someone is in the midst of a homecoming of his own.

That person would be Mitch Thompson, who took the reins of the Baylor baseball program over the summer following a woeful 2022 campaign, led by former skipper Steve Rodriguez.

Neither Baylor Ballpark or Waco is a mystery maze for Thompson, who spent 18 years as an assistant coach with the green and gold. Thompson then became the head coach at McLennan Community College, where he found lots of success at the junior college level.

Nine years later, Thompson was awarded the job as Baylor’s skipper and it was time for him to return home. Although just down the road, Thompson found his happy place, which lies on the banks of the Brazos River at Baylor Ballpark.

“Every day I walk into the ballpark, I’ve got an immediate smile on my face,” Thompson said. “It’s been unbelievable. I mean, the whole experience to come back.”

Since taking the job and now still settling in, the longtime Bear said he’s received loads of support from his old players. Thompson said in recent weeks he once had six to eight former players stop by to give him hugs and check in.

Those tight bonds have helped give Thompson quite the reputation in the Waco area. He set the bar with his arrival to the

**FINALLY HOME >> Page B6**

# Reppin’ the green and gold on their home turf: Player, Ables, Castle talk upcoming festivities

**ANNAGRACE HALE**  
Sports Writer

Baylor Homecoming holds something special for everyone, and for student-athletes from Waco, this tradition may even be more special. After growing up with the annual celebration, the players gained a new perspective on what homecoming is, not only as a student, but also as an athlete.

This homecoming for defensive lineman Jaxon Player is more unique. After graduating from Waco’s Midway High School in 2018, Player ventured to Oklahoma to play at the University of Tulsa. Now a fifth-year senior, he has returned home to represent his childhood team, the Baylor Bears. Player said he still has pictures of himself at Floyd Casey Stadium, decked out in the green and gold.

“I’ve been loving Baylor since I was a kid,” Player said. “I finally get to rep the green and gold.”

Player’s family is still in Waco, which makes the move back that much sweeter. Home is just down the road.

“I’m a big family guy. With my family being eight minutes away from me, all my friends and family can come to my games,” Player



Grace Everett | Photo Editor  
**WACOAN WARRIORS** Jaxon Player (left) by Baylor Athletics, Kayley Ables (middle) by Olivia Havre | Photographer and Cortlan Castle (right) by Assoah Ndomo | Photographer.

said. “When I’m done with football for the day, I can go relax with them. It’s way better than being six hours away like I was [at Tulsa].”

Baylor baseball sophomore catcher Courtlan Castle is also a Midway High School graduate. Castle said he is very familiar with Homecoming.

“I think Baylor has one of the best Homecoming traditions of all time,” Castle said. “I’m looking forward to the parade. I’ll be there. The floats are all really cool. Some of my friends are involved in that.”

Baylor soccer defender Kayley Ables checks in next as a local native. The Waco High School graduate has seen many homecomings, but she said she had never been to the parade until she was committed to play for the Bears.

Now as a student athlete, Ables sees another side of Homecoming. Because soccer is in season and often has games on Sundays, the players don’t get to attend the Homecoming football games.

“If we have a Sunday game, they limit [attending the game] just because they don’t want us on our feet,” Ables said. “So they limit how long we can be there, or if it’s a night game, probably not [allowed to watch].”

Even though Ables and her teammates miss some of the Homecoming traditions, that doesn’t make the weekend any less special. Ables said being from Waco, she takes more pride in Baylor Homecoming.

“I’m planning on moving to Houston in May,” Ables said. “So, I think it’s just going to be weird because Waco has just always been home. It has a special place in my heart. So, I can definitely see myself coming back to Waco and going back to parades in the future. It definitely is a special place.”



# Baylor men’s tennis’ Bass takes ITA Regional singles title

ANNAGRACE HALE  
STAFF WRITER

Baylor men’s tennis senior Finn Bass claimed the ITA Texas Regional singles title Tuesday afternoon at the Hurd Tennis Center. After six days of play in Waco, the tournament came to a close with Bass at the top of the singles bracket following a 6-2, 6-2 win.

Head coach Michael Woodson said Bass has been putting in the work the last few years and was just waiting for his time to be right. Now is his time.

“Finn has been doing the right things for a while now, but you don’t always see the fruits of your labor in the time that you would necessarily want it,” Woodson said. “[It] certainly doesn’t happen overnight. So, it’s been really impressive to see him, I would say over the last two years, doing everything he needs to do to give himself the best chance to raise his level.”

Leading up to the final, Bass faced TCU’s Sebastian Gorzny and stole the match.

“[I won] 6-1, 6-2 against



**STEPPING UP TO SERVE** Head coach Michael Woodson discusses senior Finn Bass’ singles match in between sets on Oct. 18, at the Hurd Tennis Center.

a TCU player, which is never easy,” Bass said. “Super tough, but tactically played really well. Didn’t make a lot of errors and still played really aggressive.”

On Tuesday, Bass stepped onto the court against Texas A&M’s Pierce Rollins. The match was a chilly one, but the Brit said his locked-in concentration gave him

the edge.

“We are both aggressive players,” Bass said. “I think what I did better is I managed to hold my mental ability a bit better than he did in tricky conditions. When it’s cold and the balls are kind of flying, not playing as fast as [the courts] usually would, you just have to play a bit more

within yourself.”

As one of the seniors this season, Bass has stepped into a leadership role for this Baylor team.

“Really enjoying my time as captain and helping the freshmen settle in,” Bass said. “They’ve got great talent. We’ve got a lot of potential in the team this year. It’s just making

sure we’re all working together for the same common goal and just being the best versions of ourselves every day.”

The squad has lost some senior leadership after Sven Lah and Matias Soto graduated last season. Additionally, former court one star Adrian Boitan began his pro journey this year. Both

losses leave some big shoes to fill. Now, the program has welcomed two new freshmen, Zsombor Velcz of Hungary and Martin Breysach of France.

This local tournament was an opportunity for the team to come together in one place. The fall season is very individualized with players participating in different tournaments across the country. With athletes scattered, this weekend was beneficial to get the team on the same page.

“It’s not that often we see everyone together and work through things or talk through stuff,” Woodson said, “We’ve welcomed the opportunity to host regionals so that everybody can be together and kind of regroup at the end of every day.”

After this regional win, Bass has secured a place in the ITA Fall Nationals in San Diego starting Nov. 2. Throughout the rest of the fall, the Bears will compete individually in different tournaments.

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green and gold in 1995, yet it’s only increased and trickled down to younger generations that are now playing for him.

“Being from Waco and around the Waco area, Coach Thompson’s reputation precedes itself,” junior infielder Cole Posey said. “Phenomenal man, great coach, knows how to win, but is really invested in the people. And so, I feel like it’s kind of the perfect storm we have going on so far.”

Sophomore catcher Cortlan Castle remembers watching games at the ballpark growing up, during Thompson’s first stint with Baylor. Castle

said as he got older, he then transitioned to MCC games once Thompson moved there.

Thompson’s influence, paired with a family connection between him and Castle, brought another unique bond that lasts to this day.

“His daughter is in my sister’s grade, so we’ve kind of known that family [and] seen him around Waco for a long time,” Castle said. “Now that our relationship has changed from someone that I kind of know to now someone that’s my head coach, it’s been really cool to have that.”

It hasn’t been long since Thompson started fall practice with his group, but one of his first points of emphasis was to build team camaraderie. The way he did this is by making team members learn each other’s name, hometown and previous school – whether JUCO, Division 1 or high school.

Thompson did this and told the squad he would quiz them over it at some point later in the year. Fifth-year senior right-handed pitcher Blake Helton said the assessment has yet to happen, but that he’s prepared and ready if the day came

where they would be tested. He said this is a helpful tactic to gain chemistry with so many new faces. As of right now, out of everyone that is practicing on the diamond, a little under half of them are returners from last season.

“So, really studying kind of everybody’s background helps getting to know everyone really quickly and what everybody’s about,” Helton said. “That has played a huge role in getting to know everyone and we’re much closer for it.”

So much of Thompson’s likeability is already rubbing off on his players just a week

into fall practice. This is the case for Castle, who said Thompson looks at his athletes as more than just objects.

Castle compared it to what we’ve seen head football coach Dave Aranda speak about before: A person over player mentality.

“He just really pushes culture and always pushes person over player which is huge for all of us,” Castle said. “Because if you can believe in us off the field, then it’s easy for us to believe in each other on the field. So, person over player is the biggest thing that I really, really enjoy about him.”

The honeymoon phase is still looming over Baylor Ballpark, as the homecoming for Thompson is a feel-good story in itself, at least for right now. He said that although it’s been such a great time being back home, he understands how quickly things can turn when the season begins and games start to matter.

“So, the homecoming has been great,” Thompson said. “And it’ll keep being great until that first loss and then it’ll just be wins and losses, right? So, we’re looking forward to getting that part of it started as well.”

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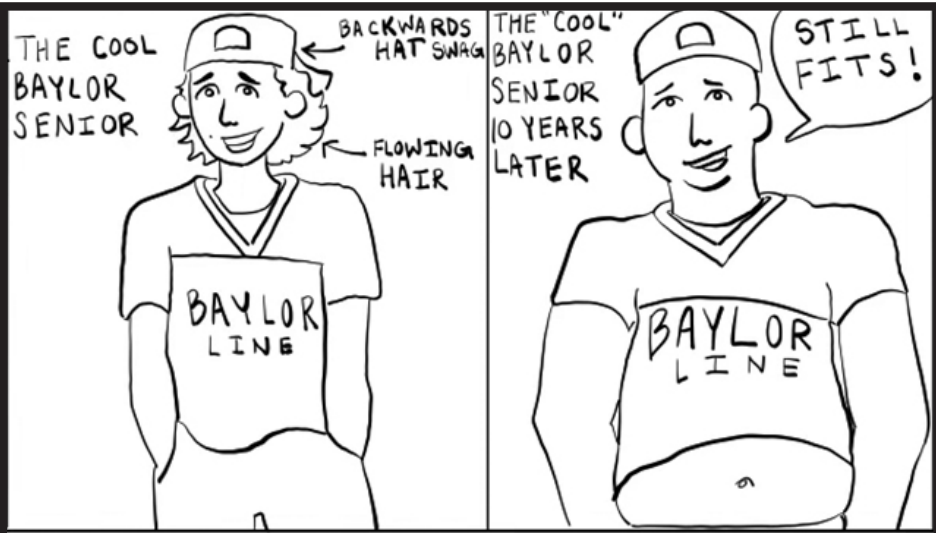




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