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News for the students by the students



EDITORIAL

Thankfulness is like Toby Flenderson: Sometimes you just forget about it

It's that time of the year: time to go around the table and have everyone say something they are grateful for. It may be cheesy — or the holiday equivalent of your parents asking “How was your day at school?” — but that spirit of gratefulness has made Thanksgiving into far more than simply a day to remember pilgrims.

It's easy to overlook Thanksgiving, especially as the holiday finds itself flanked by the Halloween and Christmas seasons. However, as the name implies, it should not be taken for granted. The time to be thankful doesn't start in late November and end on Dec. 26; it's daily and year-round.



Gwen Ueding | Cartoonist

Daily gratitude is not simply a healthy life practice. A focus on genuine daily thankfulness can actually improve relationships and

relieve anxiety, stress and depression, according to a 2021 study by Harvard Medical School.

Thankfulness isn't the practice of saying “thank you.” In the context of the Thanksgiving holiday and the Harvard study, thankfulness is a mindset. It is a feeling of contentment with what you have and where you are in life. It is a genuine spirit of gratefulness found even in the smallest daily interactions.

When was the last time you truly felt that way? The answer, hopefully, isn't the last time you sat down for Thanksgiving turkey.

Daily thankfulness sounds healthy, right? What

does that look like in your life? It can mean something different to everyone. It really breaks down into constantly showing appreciation, and there are many ways to do that.

Before it's too late, be present with those around you. Recognize the things they do for you — especially the little things. Maybe you give back through a meaningful gift. Maybe you help around the house, talk to family and simply be present this season.

A thankful heart doesn't need to make a huge gesture to have an impact on someone's life or your own. Next time you stop to be thankful, hopefully

it isn't simply because someone asked what you're thankful for.

“HAPPY
HOLIDAYS”
vs.
“MERRY
CHRISTMAS”



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

Non-Christian students engage in holiday events

EMMA WEIDMANN
Staff Writer

Baylor is known for its holiday-themed events like Christmas on Fifth, which caters to its majority-Christian population. However, students of non-Christian faiths on campus still enjoy partaking in the holiday season.

Katy senior Sanjana Natarajan practices Hinduism, but she said her favorite holiday is Christmas. For as long as she can remember, she and her family have celebrated the season like millions of others worldwide — with gifts, music and a family dinner.

Because her extended family does not come into town for Christmas or Thanksgiving, it's just Natarajan, her two sisters and her parents.

"We like the festive spirit. We like the trees with the lights," Natarajan said. "We do the presents and everything. We just like Christmas a lot."

Natarajan said people typically are surprised when they learn that her family celebrates Christmas. She said some of her family friends who practice Hinduism also celebrate the Christmas season in the same way.

"For the most part, our religion is very accepting of other religions," Natarajan said. "Nobody has ever really come at us for celebrating Christmas and not being Christian."

Fort Worth senior Nelley Sobh and her family are Muslim. She said she and her family celebrate the holiday because Islam acknowledges Jesus and because they enjoy

the festive spirit.

"Muslims still believe in Jesus, and so we're not opposed to celebrating a 'Hallmark Christmas,'" Sobh said. "I think a majority of Muslim Americans in our age group participate in the holiday's social events. Christmas on Fifth is always a fun thing as well as the tree lighting."

Sobh said Muslim businesses in Egypt also decorate their stores for Christmas, so the blending of the religions is not foreign to her. Sobh said that in America, Christmas is oftentimes seen as a "default holiday" that has been separated from its religious roots, so people aren't always surprised to hear she and her family celebrate. By that same token, the ubiquity of Christmastime can be isolating.

"Sometimes people don't associate Christmas with faith," Sobh said. "People often think, 'Why wouldn't you celebrate Christmas? Why wouldn't you get a Christmas present?' I feel like it can isolate people who don't celebrate Christmas, especially people of the Jewish faith or non-Abrahamic faiths."

Sobh said she felt isolation seeing Nativity scenes and experiencing the religious aspects of the holiday, having grown up celebrating without faith involved.

Despite that, Sobh said the holidays are a special time for her and her family.

"The holidays are one of my favorite times of year," Sobh said. "Me and my whole family, we just love the lights and the whole concept of Christmas."

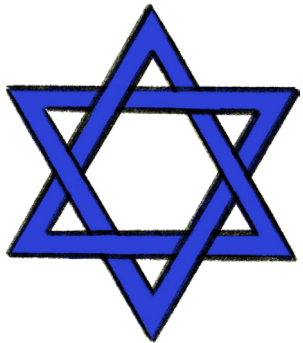


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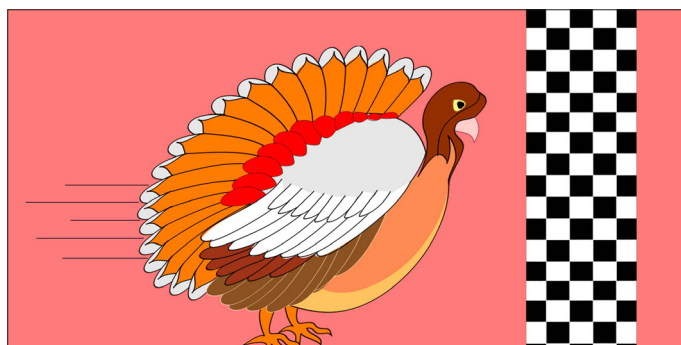


Illustration by Grace Everett | Photo Editor

TROT IT LIKE IT'S HOT Turkey Trot tradition is about more than just exercise on Thanksgiving Day.

Turkey trot tradition is an exercise in family time

AVERY BALLMANN

Staff Writer

The Turkey Trot, a national fun run, has dominated Thanksgiving mornings for decades. As people stretch and ruffle their feathers before they bolt across the starting line, they cherish exercise and time with family.

Dripping Springs sophomore Madison Marotz started the Turkey Trot tradition with her mom in 2019, as both enjoy working out. Marotz wore a bright red ruffled tutu and ran with her dog and a stuffed turkey, while her mom wore running clothes. Meanwhile, her brother watched from the sidelines.

"It was kind of crazy, because we had to wake up at 4 in the morning to be there by 6 when it started, but it was a lot of fun," Marotz said.

After their race, Marotz, her mom and her brother ate breakfast at Whataburger — a new ritual for her family.

"When it was just me and my mom and my brother, we were able to sit down as a family and be able to enjoy a peaceful conversation before the chaotic beauty that is Thanksgiving," Marotz said.

Centennial, Colo., senior Ryan Renshaw said her family is so large, they created their own Turkey Trot.

Renshaw travels with her

family to Fort Morgan, Colo., to run their race and celebrate Thanksgiving with her dad's side of the family. A total of 40 people, age newborn to 87, show up to Riverside Park to run or walk the park's loop.

"As people go to college or venture out of Fort Morgan — because that's where the whole family started — it's really special that we all get to come back and do all of our Thanksgiving traditions," Renshaw said.

Renshaw said the park's longer loop, which is about two to three miles hugging the South Platte River, is for family members who are feeling more motivated. There is also a one-mile loop for less eager participants.

"My family's very active, and they're very antsy," Renshaw said. "So it's just a good way that we can get our exercise in the morning and still be together."

While the origins of their family tradition differ, both Marotz and Renshaw said the Turkey Trot brings their families together and helps them avoid the stress of the holidays.

"I'm very grateful for those traditions looking back," Renshaw said. "I definitely took them for granted at the time."

Waco's Turkey Trot has been canceled, but the tradition lives on as students participate at home.

Christmas on Fifth returns for 55th year as campus holiday tradition

JONAH KRAMER

Staff Writer

Baylor's Christmas on Fifth has made a 55-year journey, bringing traditions back each year while also welcoming new activities for the festive day.

"Back in the fall of 1967, going toward the Christmas season, there was no Christmas decoration on campus at all," Dr. Alton Hassell, Baylor alumnus and retired professor of chemistry, said.

Hassell, a junior at the time, said he and his fellow Kappa Omega Tau brothers wanted to do something about the lack of decoration.

"We went out into the countryside and cut down probably about a 6-foot tree," Hassell said.

KOT set up the tree between Old Main and Carroll Library, gathering around it to read the Christmas story and sing hymns.

"The first year, we probably didn't have a dozen people other than girlfriends and the KOT team members," Hassell said. "It was just not a big deal."

Fast-forward 55 years, and the present-day tradition of Christmas on Fifth draws an average of 10,000 people each year, according to Jordy Dickey, senior associate director of Student Activities.

"Christmas on Fifth has been a long-standing tradition here on campus," Dickey said. "Not only do we get to celebrate the birth of our Lord and Savior, but our community comes together and you just feel the hope of the season. You feel the joy of the season, [and] you feel the peace of the season."

In addition to annual Christmas on Fifth staples — including a live Nativity, carriage rides, a petting zoo and photos with Santa — Dickey said this year's Dec. 1 celebration will feature new sights and activities.

"Each year, I would say it gets a little bit bigger," Dickey said. "And you definitely start to see new elements that are introduced into the tradition."

Dickey said a "snow zone" on Fountain Mall will create a "winter wonderland feel, even if the weather is not perfectly crisp." Also, decorations — including a trail of lights — will fill the entirety of campus.

Christmas movie lovers can head to the Bill Daniel Student Center, which will be decked out with a different movie in each room, Dickey said. A full list of activities is available on Baylor's website.

A feature unique to this year's festivities is a showcase of Baylor professor Dr. Michael Foley's new book, "Why We Kiss Under the Mistletoe: Christmas Traditions Explained." This will take place from 3:30 to 10 p.m. on the first floor of the SUB. Foley will be signing copies of his book as well.

KOT's Christmas tree lighting and concert will run from 8 to 9:30 p.m. in the Quadrangle, capping off the night of celebration.



Baylor Roundup File Photo

TREES AND TRADITION Christmas on Fifth has been a staple on campus since its humble beginnings in 1967.

Austin junior and KOT Christmas on Fifth chair Colby Todd said he first attended the event as a child with his parents, who are Baylor alumni.

"[As a kid], seeing the whole campus become this awesome Christmas sort of fair was great," Todd said.

University chaplain Dr. Burt Burleson will kick off the Christmas tree lighting ceremony with a message, followed by a concert. However, Todd said KOT will not yet reveal the band performing because the contract is still being finalized.

Todd said the 37-and-a-half-foot tree, which is in its second year of use by Baylor, will be lit as the band plays Christmas songs.

"It lights up, and I feel like everybody's just in awe," Todd said. "I think it's just a reminder for us that there's something greater than Christmas, and that's the Lord and his provision over us and that he was able to bring Jesus onto this Earth."

Todd said people can support KOT's philanthropy partner for the event, Unbound Waco, which fights sex trafficking, by purchasing event merchandise. It will be for sale at tables across campus during the week leading up to Dec. 1 and on the day of the celebration.

As preparation for the holiday season ramps up, Dickey said it will be the people present who make the experience.

"What makes it really special is the Baylor community, and so that is what we look forward to," Dickey said. "You can set the stage. You can have the experience ready. But it's really the Baylor community, that when you come together, that truly is what makes it the most magical time."

Check out more holiday content online



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Photo illustration by Grace Everett | Photo Editor

TO TRAVEL OR NOT TO TRAVEL International students often either spend their holiday breaks feeling homesick in Waco or traveling countless hours to see their families.

Holidays from international perspective

EMMA WEIDMANN

Staff Writer

For many international students, the holidays can either be a time to fly home and see family or a time to miss them more than ever.

Mexico City, Mexico, junior Hyusuk Ricky Oh said during the semester it can be hard to be away from family for months at a time. It's often too impractical to travel internationally for Thanksgiving, making for a lonely week in Waco while friends are away with their own families.

"I got really homesick my freshman and sophomore years, but over time I was able to find friends who would stay here in Waco with me or who were in the

same situation as me as an international student," Oh said. "Thankfully I was able to make connections with them and just have company over Thanksgiving."

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, freshman Pedro Enes is not going home over Thanksgiving break. He said he'll be staying here in Waco with a friend and experiencing his first American Thanksgiving.

"I'm excited for everything basically," Enes said. "It's a whole new tradition that I get to partake in, so I'm very excited for that part. I'm very excited to partake in American traditions."

Homesickness is not a problem for him, Enes said. But, as much as he's enjoyed making memories here at Baylor with new friends, he said he's looking

forward to going home to tell stories of his freshman year to his family, especially his two little brothers.

"I'm living in a culture that is not even close to mine," Enes said. "I'm the first one in my family to leave the country and study abroad. That's what I'm most excited about, is telling those stories and sharing my experiences with my little brothers."

Traveling alone makes for a hectic time, but Oh said being in the airport only makes him more excited to go home.

"Instead of celebrating the holiday, it becomes celebrating the coming together again, which is true for a lot of international families," Oh said. "It becomes more of being present with family enjoying each other's company."

A&L Desk Recs: our favorite holiday traditions

ERIANNE LEWIS

Arts & Life Editor

As of Sunday we have entered into daylight saving season, where it's dark at 6 p.m. and there is a slight breeze in the air, marking the beginning of the holidays. Whether you celebrate Christmas, Thanksgiving, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, New Year's or none of the above, this time of year always feels different.

In honor of the season, the A&L staff would like to share some of our favorite holiday traditions. If there are some that pique your interest, don't hesitate to incorporate them into your holidays!

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