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Native American History Month acknowledges Waco’s history — but it’s time for us to do more

THE EDITORIAL BOARD

Nov. 1 marked the first day of Native American Heritage Month. Since its official designation in 1990, the month has been a time to honor Native American culture, achievement, societal contributions and history.

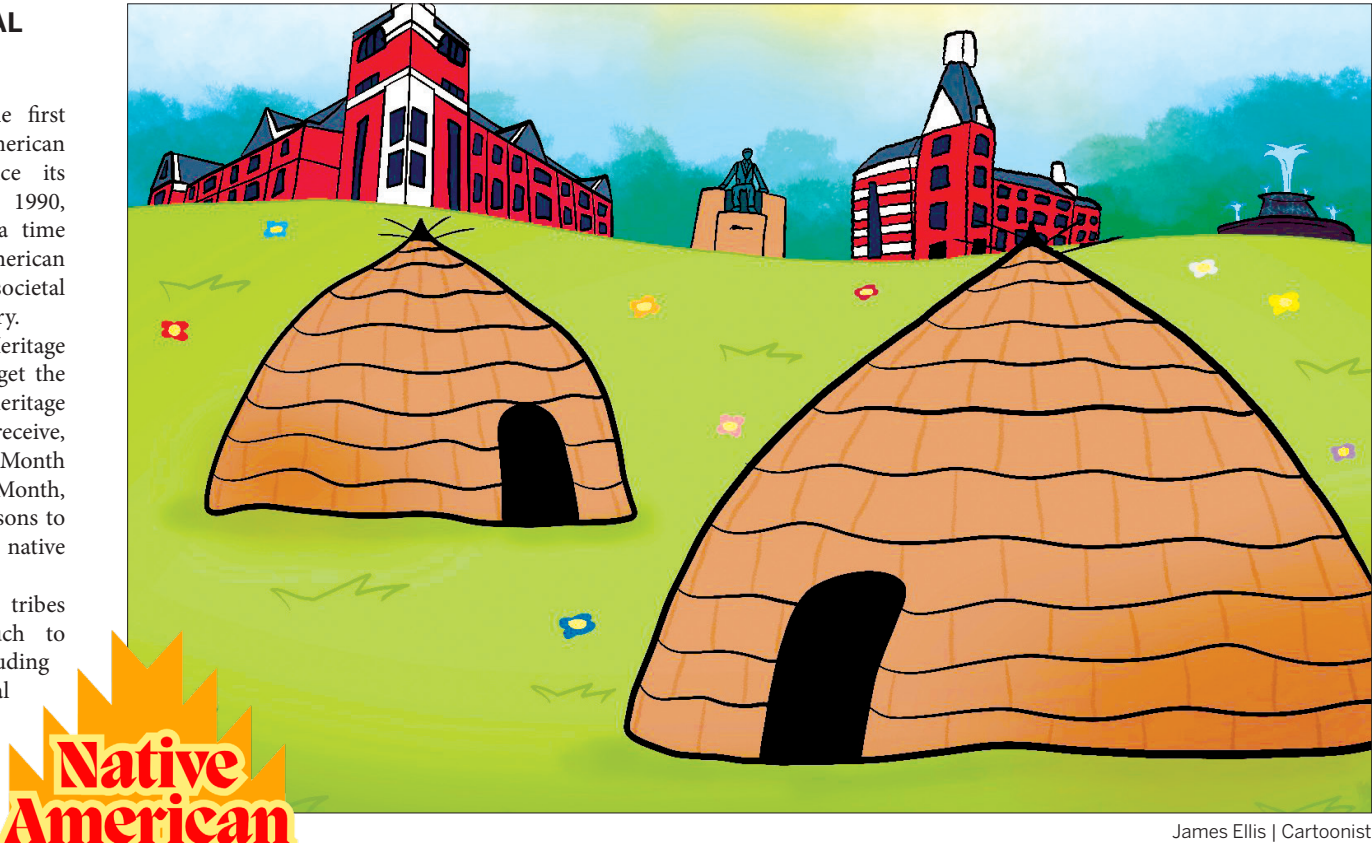
Native American Heritage Month doesn’t always get the same attention other heritage celebration months receive, namely Black History Month or LGBTQ+ Pride Month, but there are many reasons to recognize the influence native culture has in history.

Native American tribes have contributed much to our society today, including technology, political systems, art and music.

The Iroquois Great Law of Peace was a major influence on our own system of government. Many American cities are named after the tribes that once inhabited the land.

Baylor was built on lands originally occupied by Native American tribes, including “Waco and Tawakoni of the Wichita and Affiliate Tribes, the Tonkawa, the Numunuu (Comanche), Karankawa and Lipan Apache,” according to the university’s acknowledgment.

These peoples were



James Ellis | Cartoonist

dispossessed from their original lands. Because of that, Baylor now seeks to maintain good relationships with the tribes and recognize that long and painful history, which is a step in the right direction.

In recent years, there have been national conversations about historical guilt. How much do the descendants —

or people who look like the descendants — of colonial settlers owe to the descendants of those they displaced and harmed? Typically, these conversations revolve around paying reparations for slavery, but, they also extend to the context of reparations for atrocities such as the Trail of Tears, assimilation boarding schools and other means of oppression levied against Native Americans.

While these conversations

are worth having, Native American History Month is more than an apology for what those before us did wrong. It’s about acknowledging and celebrating a group of people who loved and cared for the lands that we now live on. How do we honor what came before while we look to become faithful stewards of the land moving forward?

One of the most powerful things we can do to celebrate Native peoples is talk about

them. When it comes to historically marginalized groups, erasing their memory and history or ignoring their presence in the modern day only further harms those communities.

That means having hard conversations. We must acknowledge the wrongs that have been committed and make efforts to learn about the culture and heritage so often pushed aside.

Don’t stop there. Dive into

our past by reading books such as “Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee,” which sheds light on 19th-century America’s campaign of bloodshed against the tribes. Spread awareness about the ways in which the crippling of these communities continues to impact them today.

That’s a good place to start, but true celebration of Native American History takes action. To that end, Baylor is holding a plethora of events to honor the month. From concerts and luncheons to plays, November is chock-full of opportunities to not only welcome Native American History Month, but to learn more about the contributions of Natives and how they change our world today.

So, this November, pay attention to events. Attend and come with humility and a willingness to learn. Come to find beauty in an unfamiliar culture. If we all commit to doing this, we can repair little by little a relationship fractured by the past.

Scan for a list of events!

LinkedIn: Opportunity expander or job market killer?

JOSH SIATKOWSKI
Staff Writer



LinkedIn, the corporate equivalent of Instagram, has made it easier than ever to find your dream job. All you have to do is open your phone. But has it made it easier to actually get that dream job? The numbers say not really.

In 2003, Reid Hoffman founded LinkedIn to build professional networks and share job opportunities. In 2024, job opportunities still exist, but the extent to which it has helped the job market is questionable.

With a scroll through LinkedIn, you find a job with a six-figure salary. It’s in the perfect city, and it even matches your previous experiences.

You get excited as you begin to feel the endless job search coming to a close. Finally, you’ve found a position that you can really see yourself not just doing, but enjoying. You click “apply,” and things are starting to look up.

But here’s the catch: the job was posted three hours ago, and 117 other people just went through the exact same dance as you.

Because you understand that one-to-118 are not odds you’d wager your livelihood on, you decide to look around and toss in some more applications. Then some more. And then a lot more. And then a couple more after that.

And if you’re an average person, by the end of your search, you’ve applied to 294 jobs. But maybe you like to be a cut above, or you like

round numbers, so let’s say you went for 300.

You read that right. According to career guidance firm Pathrise, it now takes an average of 294 job applications to land a position. That’s a 0.3% acceptance rate, which is 10 times more competitive than Harvard. Compared to Baylor — which just reported an all-time low 38% acceptance rate — it’s over 100 times harder.

This creates a few problems. The first is that it takes exponentially more work for young professionals to crack into the job market. Even if all 294 of those applications could be auto-filled and submitted within minutes, there’s still the process of finding the job, seeing if it matches your resume and uploading your materials. And then you do that almost 300 times.

But there’s a bigger problem: Getting a job requires work, as it should. However, this hyper-competitive market has caused job searchers to value quantity over quality. That first job you applied to might have been the perfect one, and the next few might have been, too. But then, after a dozen or so applications, you begin to branch out to jobs that maybe don’t fit you as perfectly. By the time you reach triple digits, you might be applying at companies you’ve never heard of, in cities you’d never live in and with an income you could earn at Starbucks. And because those companies also received 118 applications, they might not even notice you.

This is getting really bleak — let’s throw in some positive data to lighten the mood. In 2022, Baylor reported its highest job placement rate ever at 92%. As long as you’re in the right industry, you’re pretty safe.

But did all 4,000 of those graduates apply to

300 different positions? Actually, no. It probably wasn’t even close to that.

According to CNBC, as many as 70% of all jobs are not publicly posted on any job sites, and nearly 80% of jobs are filled through personal or professional connections. Most of the time, it’s unfortunately — or fortunately, depending on who you are — not what you know, it’s who you know.

That leaves you with two choices. On one side, you could spend your weekends doom scrolling LinkedIn and Handshake. On the other side, you can build up a network. Now, this is easier for some than others. You may come from humble beginnings, but the kid next to you might be the son or daughter of a CEO.

The reality is that for most people, finding a job will be a mix of both. Don’t rely just on your parents’ friends, but understand that there’s a better way to find a job than applying for hundreds. It’s easier than ever to apply for a job, but it’s also easier than ever to connect with people at those jobs. Send emails to people, schedule phone calls and go to career fairs. We are unfortunately in a time where simply applying for a job doesn’t indicate enough interest to be considered.

That leads back to the underlying question: has LinkedIn done more good or bad for the job market? The answer is overall probably more

good than bad. Getting a job might not be any easier, but at least there’s a way to know about it.

But what LinkedIn does well is show the disparity in opportunity between connected and unconnected individuals. I don’t think we’ll ever see Baron Trump or Rory Gates spamming applications.



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Faculty among world’s top 2% most-cited researchers

KRISTY VOLMERT
Staff Writer

Baylor’s notorious R1 status was yet again illuminated when a Stanford database listing the world’s top 2% most-cited researchers was released, featuring 43 current and retired Baylor faculty members.

On Sept. 16, the Elsevier Data Repository released the August 2024 data update of the World’s Top 2% Scientists’ most-cited researchers.

The list features faculty from a wide range of academic disciplines, covering researchers from nine out of the 12 individual academic colleges at Baylor.

Dr. Kevin Chambliss, vice provost of research, said he thinks that having researchers from so many different academic fields “speaks to the holistic quality of a Baylor education.”

“The fact that our faculty are among the most cited of researchers across their disciplines says that the contributions we’re making in those areas are both meaningful and impactful — not just on our campus, but beyond our university and into the larger community,” Chambliss said.

Chambliss mentioned a few of the most notable research studies done at Baylor in the past few years — one of which was a global flourishing study, led by Institute of Studies of Religion Director Byron Johnson. This collaborative study is being conducted by researchers from Baylor’s ISR and Harvard University’s Human Flourishing Program, in partnership with Gallup and the Center for Open Science.

Forty researchers from each of these organizations are working together to collect data from approximately 200,000 individuals from 22

different countries with vastly different cultural backgrounds and demographics. The study’s holistic approach in its methodology allows it to discover not only what globally promotes human flourishing and well-being, but also what takes away from it.

According to Chambliss, this research is influential across global populations because of its applicability to just about anybody. He also described it as an area that “really resonates with Baylor’s Christian mission, but is also much more broadly of interest.”

Chambliss mentioned the work being done by biochemistry professor Dr. Brian Shaw and Dr. Erik Carter, executive director of Baylor Center for Developmental Disabilities. Shaw has been researching ways to improve and innovate laboratory resources for the visually impaired. Carter, a newly endowed chair in the School of Education and national leader in his field, is also working towards facilitating impactful research that will help serve the disabled community.

“I think it’s really sort of a preview, in some respects, to what’s likely to become a much larger effort at Baylor to do research around creating resources to help people with disabilities,” Chambliss said. “It’s an important part of the population that is often overlooked.”

Dr. Alan Wang, professor and Mearse Chair in Biological and Biomedical Engineering, has done work in the field of electrical engineering that could result in preservation of energy for the operation of data centers. His research was cited by the National Science Foundation and was named as one of the top 5 most innovative contributions to

research across the country in 2023.

According to Chambliss, the attention in these areas encourages Baylor to focus on spaces where professors can continue their research.

“Baylor invests in a number of core facilities and shared capabilities that faculty can access to aid in their research,” Chambliss said. “With the successful outcomes of this research, the university has the ability to become more competitive with funding, such as research grants.”

Dr. Jason Carter, dean of Robbins College of Health & Human Sciences, said he was pleasantly surprised to see that he landed a spot among this top 2%. Carter was sure to emphasize, however, that such an accomplishment was only made possible because of the groups of people he had the privilege of working with.

“This is not a recognition for me. This is a recognition for all the people I’ve had the great opportunity of working with my entire career,” Carter said.

One of Carter’s most recent research publications, a study done on the effects of binge-drinking on a variety of cardiovascular factors, was sponsored by the American Heart Association and published in its Vol. 81 No. 10 Hypertension Journal.

In addition, Carter has taken part in several studies dedicated to researching sleep patterns and disorders and their impacts on general health systems, such as the nervous and cardiovascular systems, going beyond just the classic study of brain activity. He also participates in similar studies that look into the connections between mental health issues and sleep disorders.

“I’m excited to see all of



Photo courtesy of Maxcey Blaylock.

R1 STATUS Dr. Jason Carter, dean of Robbins College, works in a Baylor lab on a research project.

these sleep publications in the field getting more and more citations in recent years,” he said.

Carter said research opportunities and outcomes are essential to almost any academic field, facilitating hands-on learning and allowing students and faculty to gain experience not only in interactive learning, but also in the formation of new knowledge.

“Students who come to an [R1] school like Baylor get to have professors that are not only teaching them what’s in the textbooks, but are also

creating the knowledge that’s going to go into the next edition of a textbook” Carter said. “What I love about research is that that we get to work on things that are going to drive the next editions of textbooks.”

Carter said an increase in funding for Baylor’s research has increased its capabilities when it comes to what’s possible for the latest research ideas.

“We’ve had a record year in terms of our research grants already, and we’re only one quarter into the year,” Carter said. “I’m excited to see our

faculty taking those grants and disseminating them across the country in those core research areas.”

Aside from indications of academic quality and national recognition, these research accomplishments contribute ultimately to the greater good of the world, offering foundations for scientific advancements that could potentially benefit generations of people in the future.

“Something that Baylor greatly aspires to do is to not just do research for the sake of research, but do research that really matters,” Chambliss said.

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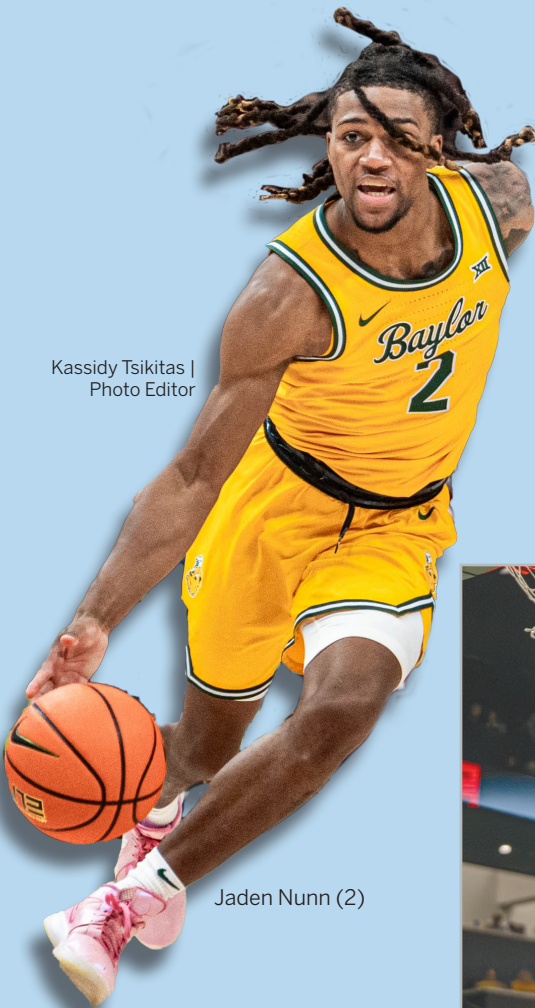
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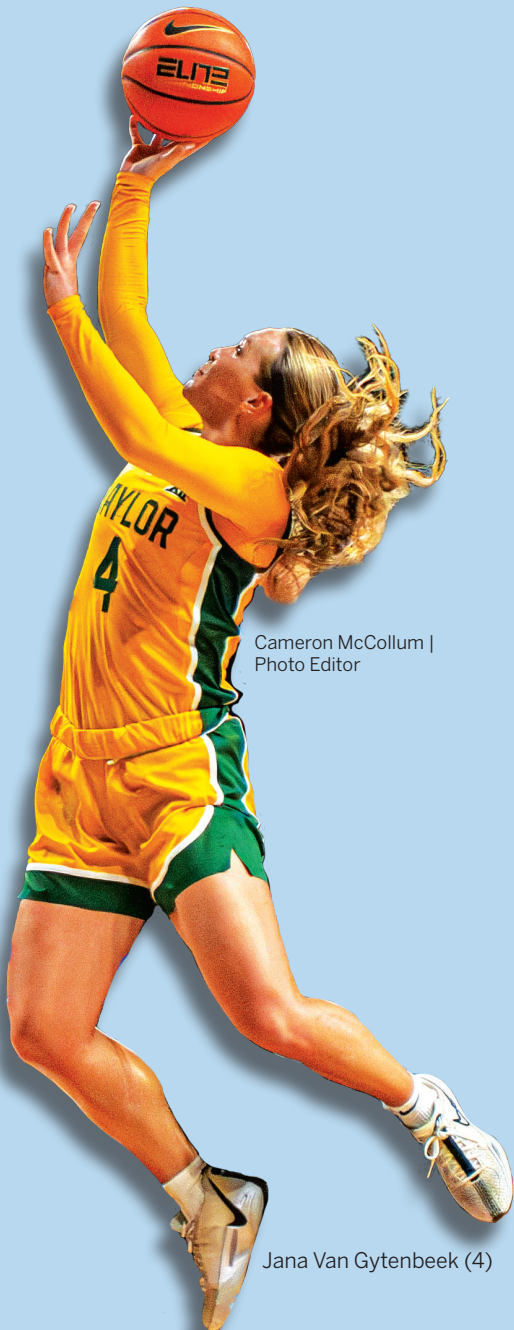


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ROAR FORWARD Fifth year forward Norchad Omier makes a rush during Baylor men's basketball 104-67 win over Sam Houston.

Caleb Garcia | Photographer



Cameron McCollum | Photo Editor

FLY HIGH Junior forward Darianna Littlepage-Buggs makes a layup during Baylor women's basketball 85-33 win against the Incarnate Word Cardinals in the teams season opener.

Hot Rides



Cameron McCollum | Photo Editor



Mesha Mittansala | Photographer

SWERVE AND SERVE Redshirt freshman guard Omar Adegbola flies for the hoop during Baylor men's basketball 104-67 win over the Sam Houston Bearkats on Tuesday at the Foster Pavilion.



HOTDOG TO GO The Oscar Mayer wienermobile makes a stop by Baylor's McLane Football stadium on the vans tour of Wacos iconic landmarks.

Cameron McCollum | Photo Editor



Cameron McCollum | Photo Editor

GLIZZY GUIDANCE Connor Wolff, aka "Captain Glizzy" (left) and Akira Potts, aka "Aioli Akira" (right) make up the Oscar Mayer Hotdogger team for the South.

Celebrating culture and creativity

Waco Cultural Arts Fest to return for 20th year

KATHERINE HATCHER
Staff Writer

Twenty years of creative opportunities and experiences will be celebrated at the annual Waco Cultural Arts Fest this weekend.

The festival, hosted by Cultural Arts of Waco, runs from Friday to Sunday and includes a WordFest, ScienceFest, ArtsFest and a film showcase. Many of the events will take place around and inside the Waco Convention Center at various times clarified on the festival's website.

Part of the festival, Wordfest, opens on Friday evening at 6 p.m. in the convention center. Additionally, a local film that was made entirely in Waco, "Believers," will be shown in the convention center at 7 p.m. Friday will also include performances on their convention center main stage featuring local band, Suede.

Another band, Alex Reyes and the Rays of Light, will perform Friday. Lead singer Billy Gooden, who has sung in the festival with his band for four years now, loves sharing his music with attendees.

"It's bringing the community together more because it gives a place to go and just hang out," Gooden said.

Gooden said that they do gospel, jazz, blues, covers, original songs and more.

"We always have fun with what we do, and we always do a surprise," he said.

In addition to the bands, Squonk - Brouhaha will be performing Friday night at a location near the convention center that can be directly mapped to. This group is performing as a highlight for the 20-year anniversary of the festival. This art form creates boisterous outdoor



Lariat File Photo

PRETTY AS A PICTURE Waco Cultural Arts Fest provides locals opportunities to get in touch with their creative side.

spectacles by combining fantastical visual design, playful staging and high-energy original music. The show also features strong audience participation and includes music styles, of brass, keyboards, winds and guitar riffs.

On Saturday, the main stage performances will continue all day, including Grupo Fantasma, along with dances, orchestra performances and more. A science fest will also be accessible on Saturday starting at 10 a.m. in the convention center, showing off some school's organizations' stem abilities and tools.

On Sunday, there will be more dance performances, including the Gordan Collier Band from

2:30-4 p.m.

Wordfest, Artsfest and main stage performances will last throughout the entire weekend. Cultural Arts of Waco President Doreen Ravenscroft said that the ArtsFest, which will be held at Indian Spring Park right outside the convention center, is inclusive. Art activities will be free all weekend, including easel art, face painting, wood and paper sculpture making and more.

"Those are the hands on arts activities. Anyone can do it, from grandparents, great grandparents, down to the moms that come and want their little one's feet painted because they're too tiny to stand up," Ravenscroft said.

Since the festival is creating activities for very young children, Ravenscroft said that this area will be more child-friendly so kids can focus on making prints and paintings. Additionally, Ravenscroft said that the creative outlets at the festival are so special for kids who do not receive those opportunities at home.

"You see families where the kids are totally engaged, and you have families where the children are searching for how to do [creative art], and you have an opportunity to teach," Ravenscroft said.

Ravenscroft is pumped for the Wordfest, where there are workshops, readings and public open mics.

From Fountain Mall pop-up thrift,

IJM fights human trafficking



Chloe McCauley | Photographer

GET THRIFTY Under the November sun, students browse clothing donations provided by Baylor IJM on Fountain Mall.

OLIVIA TURNER
Arts & Life Editor

Fountain Mall looked a little different than usual on Wednesday. From 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., folded t-shirts lined the surrounding stairs, shoes circled around the fountain and a dozen clothing racks clustered across the walkway with dresses, sweaters and coats draped from their hangers.

This pop-up thrifting frenzy, hosted annually by Baylor's International Justice Mission (IJM), marked a happy day for many a shopaholic: Threads. Omaha senior Graysie Shirey, vice president of fundraising for IJM, said this year was the biggest yet for clothing donations.

"We get these big halls of donations and then we need someone to go through them and sort them and paint things up and price things, so it's just very tedious," Shirey said. "We need a lot of people, but it all comes together in the end."

IJM is the largest anti-human trafficking organization in the world. Of that, Baylor's chapter is one of the biggest in the nation, Shirey said.

Building up to the event, 12 clothing racks, 12 tables and six storage units full of clothes were collected via donation, she said. Students are able to purchase the treasures they find via a Venmo or Zelle donation of their choice.

Shirey said the organization made a particular effort to display more men's clothes and to get the community, fraternities, sororities and other organizations involved this year. IJM also went all-out on social media, posting about the collection process and providing information on their philanthropy mission.

"100% of what we make here is going to fight human trafficking," Shirey said. "It's a \$150 billion industry. About 50 million people currently enslaved, and that number goes up every day, and a large portion of enslaved people around the world are involved in the fast fashion industry."

A shopper at the pop-up, Cedar Hill senior Dani Bigham, said buying fast fashion and new clothes is something she tries

to avoid at all costs.

"Yes, the price is tempting, but knowing how it's made and what goes into it, it's just awful," Bigham said. "I knit and crochet. I know how it's done. I primarily knit, but knowing how long it takes to create one knit piece and seeing it sell for like \$5 online, it just doesn't sit right."

Instead, Bigham aims to find her fits at garage sales and via thrifting. This is how she gets most of her clothes, she said.

Likewise, New Braunfels freshman Jaela Bailey, who browsed a table of folded shirts, said she finds the thrifting process rewarding, like finding a diamond in the rough, in addition to its ethical nature and the good it does for the environment.

"A big plus of thrifting is that it gets you away from following trends and just buying to buy," she said. "You get to find things that you like, and that you can keep wearing for a while."

Eradicating fast fashion is just one aspect of IJM's mission. The organization advocates for all forms of human trafficking, Shirey said. Threads may be their biggest fundraiser, but they also do other events throughout the year, such as Dressember — a challenge lasting the month of December that encourages students to dress up every day to raise money for their philanthropy.

"Everyone on our team wears dresses on social media," Shirey said. "It's kind of like a 5k where people will pledge to your campaign, and all the money we raised goes to fight human trafficking."

Shirey said the group has meetings every other Wednesday. There will be more advocacy events in the spring focusing on industry-related human trafficking. Those who are interested in learning about and advocating for trafficking in the medical field, law and faith spaces should show up, she said.

"Buying things for cheap is great while we're in college, but ultimately, they're not going to last," Shirey said. "Invest in good quality pieces that will last, thrift when you can and if you don't need something, don't buy it."



Photo courtesy of Marvin Alexander.

BAND BROS Smooth Nature will be going on their Texas tour next year with Marvin Alexander as the manager. In the meantime, they plan to continue releasing songs.

Waco music trio

plays for love, not money, sex, drugs

KALENA REYNOLDS
Staff Writer

Waco-born R&B, soul and jazz fusion group Smooth Nature resonates with authenticity and sonic passion throughout their songs and live performances. The trio is composed of two brothers and one of their longtime friends, making it obvious when listening to their music that their connection runs much deeper to one another than just their craft.

The group's vocalist, Marvin Alexander, has always loved music. In 2021, he was convinced to perform at an open mic night put on by his cousin. While there, he met the group's saxophonist, Gerald Wilburn.

Fast forward a few shows, and Smooth Nature was officially in the works.

The group released their first song in 2022, titled "No More," which Diarian Alexander, the band's vocalist and pianist and Marvin's younger brother, said it was part of a batch of songs that the group initially recorded and released.

"I'd never been inside the studio at that point in time, and it was my first time. That was very memorable," Alexander

Winless in Morgantown

Bears look for first ever road win against West Virginia



Mary Thurmond | Photographer

BODY ON THE LINE Redshirt junior quarterback Sawyer Robertson dives for the pylon during Baylor football’s 37-34 win over TCU on Nov. 2 at McLane Stadium. Robertson appeared to be banged up after the play, but head coach Dave Aranda said the quarterback is back to 100% and slated to start under center in the Bears’ clash with West Virginia at 3 p.m. Saturday at Milan-Puskar Stadium.

FOSTER NICHOLAS
Sports Editor

Baylor football head coach Dave Aranda is one win away from bouncing back from a 3-9 season in 2023 and securing bowl eligibility in 2024. The Bears (5-4, 3-3 Big 12) are on a three-game winning streak and will look to win their first game on the road against West Virginia in program history at 3 p.m. Saturday at Milan-Puskar Stadium in Morgantown.

Coming off the teams second bye week of the season, Aranda said being able to buckle down, correct the details and take a moment to get healthy was productive for a team that is having success.

“There’s always a strain when you’re under the gun, so I think having a chance to breathe is probably good,” Aranda said. “Throughout these last couple weeks, with the wins, have been just

business-like [and] focused. I felt that today too, coming back [from the bye].”

In some cases, Aranda mentioned that bye weeks could stunt growth and remove the focus that helped the team find success in the first place. However, with the “business” attitude, senior offensive lineman Campbell Barrington said the added bye week was exactly what the team needed to stay locked in.

“Honestly, I liked it way more than last season. I think it’s a great time to get healthy and it just worked out good,” Barrington said. “We’ve got three games left. Do whatever you’ve got to do to maintain your body for the last three games and see where it goes from there.”

Winless in Morgantown, the Bears will look to break the spell, which would put the team on its longest winning streak since 2021, when the green and gold won their last five

games of the season including the Big 12 Championship and Sugar Bowl. Baylor holds a 4-8 record all-time against West Virginia in addition to holding an 0-6 record at Milan-Puskar Stadium. Of the six losses in Morgantown, four were decided by one possession.

The green and gold dropped their last two meetings against the Mountaineers, with a 34-31 loss at McLane Stadium on Nov. 25, 2023 and a 43-40 loss as the visitors on Oct. 13, 2022. After a convincing 59-35 road win over Texas Tech on Oct. 19, Aranda and players said there is a different level of confidence when traveling into hostile territory.

“It’s going to be a great environment. There’s going to be people chewing us out and doing whatever. We like that type of stuff,” Barrington said. “It fires dudes up, especially on the offensive line. It’s something that we’re harping on and focused on.

So we’ve got to get one for the Bears.”

Heading into the road test, Aranda and redshirt senior defensive end Treven Ma’ae said the defenses focus during the bye week was to be “consistent” and improve tackling and coverage.

“I think we have to play the pass better,” Aranda said. “We’ve got to communicate and execute those zone responsibilities better. Throw game-wise, we have to improve playing the ball when it’s in the air. That’s been something that has not improved since the beginning of the year.”

West Virginia head coach Neal Brown is still deciding who will start under center for the Mountaineers (5-4, 4-2 Big 12) as starting senior quarterback Garrett Greene hasn’t played since Oct. 19 due to a head injury. In his place, redshirt sophomore Nicco Marchiol has started the last two games as a patient pocket

passer. Greene resumed practicing last week, but his status remains unknown, so Aranda said the Bears are “preparing for both.”

No matter who captains the Mountaineer offense, the defense is ready for a hard-nosed battle.

“We know it’s going to be a four-quarter dogfight,” Ma’ae said. “Their O-line is physical and disciplined. We’ve just got to be on point. It’s going to be an amazing game.”

West Virginia has won its last two games against Arizona and Cincinnati, both of which came on the road. The team has featured a patient attack in both the pass and run, averaging 27.7 points per game in conference play on 188.7 rushing yards (fifth in the Big 12) and 194.5 passing yards per game (15th in the Big 12).

“You could tell they’re striving and fighting for something. We’ve got to get in the way of all that, and at

their place, in a tough spot to play. [We’re] excited for the opportunity,” Aranda said. “The last couple times, West Virginia has been in really close, tight games. They are, in a lot of ways, similar to us in that they are a gritty team, they’re a physical team, and they’ve got players that love ball.”

On Monday, Aranda said redshirt junior quarterback Sawyer Robertson, who left McLane Stadium after Baylor’s 37-34 win over TCU in a boot, is practicing again and feeling “100%” after recovering during the bye week. Moving into the home stretch of the season, Robertson sits sixth in the nation in quarterback rating, according to ESPN.

Kickoff is scheduled for 3 p.m. Saturday at Milan-Puskar Stadium in Morgantown. The game will be broadcast on ESPN2. It will be Baylor’s eighth nationally broadcast game of the season.

Baseball finishes fall camp with confidence, belief



Cameron McCollum | Photo Editor

TAKIN’ SWINGS Redshirt senior outfielder Enzo Apodaca takes batting practice during a Baylor baseball fall camp practice.

FOSTER NICHOLAS
Sports Editor

Baylor baseball is no stranger to success, and assistant coach Zach Dillon has been in the middle of it from both sides. Dillon was the starting designated hitter during the 2005 College World Series and acted as an assistant coach when the “Feed the Beaver” craze in 2012 propelled the squad to a Big 12 championship.

With experience as a player wearing the green and gold from 2003-2006 and a volunteer assistant in 2012, Dillon rejoined the program on June 25, 2022 as Baylor’s hitting coach and recruiting coordinator alongside head coach Mitch Thompson, who spent time on Baylor’s coaching staff from 1995-2012. With a proven staff a winning culture on the Brazos is familiar to the 2025 Bears.

“I think that’s why I’m here, I think that’s why [former Bear] Coach [Jim] Blair is here, this was more of a passion project for us,” Dillon said. “We saw a once-proud top-25 program, and we wanted to help Coach Thompson bring it back to what it was. And we feel like we’re on our way. It’s taken some time, obviously, and we’ve gone through some adversity, but there’s not a lot of quit in our coaching staff, so we’re going to keep pushing every day to get it back to where it was.”

Baylor will enter its third season under Thompson and expect vastly improved results. The Bears finished the 2024 season 22-31 with a 10-20 record in Big 12 play. Despite winning four more games in conference play than the team did in Thompson’s first season at the helm, the green and gold missed the Big 12 Tournament for the second consecutive year for the first time in school history.

However, retaining a majority of the team’s 2024 production and seeing growth in younger players has inspired trust from coaches and players that the team can circle back to playing plus-500 ball.

“I think the big word around here for me is ‘belief,’” Dillon said. “Getting everybody in the operation pulling on the same end of the rope and believing in each other and getting everybody going in the same direction is how you start to build a winning program again. And that’s where we’re at. We’re in the belief stage. “We’ve got the pieces, and I feel like we can be really

competitive and put a quality product on the field in the spring. Now, it’s about our guys believing it, owning it and going out and achieving it.”

Sophomore pitcher Mason Green worked his way into weekend starts in his freshman season and dazzled in the fall with 18 strikeouts to only one walk. Green said the pitching staff has been hungry for the regular season and has found the confidence to turn stellar fall ball numbers into Big 12 production.

“I’m pretty sure everyone says baseball is 90% mental and 10% talent,” Green said. “It’s really all about confidence, because if you don’t have confidence in yourself, it’s hard to play to your full potential. I feel like we’re really starting to figure out who’s belonging in certain positions and who can handle the pressure for big moments in the spring.”

Alongside Green, the Bears brought back nine pitchers from the 2024 roster and carried over 13 hitters who fueled a midseason charge. The four primary outfielders — redshirt senior Enzo Apodaca, senior Ty Johnson, redshirt senior Hunter Simmons and senior Wesley Jordan — combined for more than 36% of Baylor’s offense in 2024 and have each seen breakout seasons during their time in Waco.

“Anytime you can return guys, especially in the current state of college athletics, it’s a big deal,” Dillon said. “When you know their personalities and what makes them go, that’s big-time. Those guys are hungry to win and are holding each other to a high standard. Having them in the clubhouse is like an extension of the coaching staff. Our day-to-day standard has been raised, and they understand the value of that.”

The fall roster featured 31 players with collegiate experience, including the four standout bats, something Apodaca said could help form the identity of the team moving forward.

“We’re very experienced, and we’re a lot older. Even the guys we brought in from the transfer portal are experienced,” Apodaca said. “I’m expecting a lot of that senior leadership to step up this spring. That will help us getting over any obstacles — having guys to lean on and pick you up when you’re down.”

As fall ball winds down, Baylor baseball will continue to train throughout the winter with their eyes set on Opening Day against Youngstown State on Feb. 14, 2025, at Baylor Ballpark.

Sports Take: 5 first week MBB takeaways

JACKSON POSEY
Sports Writer

Baylor men's basketball might just have the most fascinating opening season stretch of any team in the country. After getting walloped by No. 6 Gonzaga in the dead of night, the No. 12-ranked Bears (2-1) silenced No. 16 Arkansas in Dallas and took care of business against Sam Houston in the season home opener, 104-67.

With 120 minutes of game time under their belts, it's time to mildly overreact to the Bears' first three games.

1. GONZAGA WAS A FLUKE...

A team with just one returning starter played a functional road game against one of the most experience-laden programs in the country at 10:30 p.m. CST. What was supposed to happen?

Not lose by 38, the Bears' largest margin of loss since 2007, that's for sure. But Baylor couldn't buy a make to save its life, shooting 37.1% from the field (and 14.3% from three) to Gonzaga's 57.1% from the field and 41.9% from beyond the arc. That won't happen again.

The team looks a lot more cohesive, too, racking up 30 assists Tuesday after a combined 23 in the first two games. The offense is gelling faster than anyone anticipated, and the resulting splash of alley-oops have been beautiful.

2. ...BUT THE FRESHMEN ARE FOR REAL

VJ Edgcombe and Robert O. Wright III are the thunder-and-lightning combo no one deserved, but everyone needed. Edgcombe's game-breaking athleticism and high motor have turned every defensive rebound into a thrilling fast-break opportunity, while Wright hasn't skipped a beat in his transition to the college level, bringing much-needed playmaking and high-level dribble-drive penetration off the bench.

3. THE POINT GUARD ROTATION WOULD MAKE THANOS CRY

Perfectly balanced, as all things should be. Fifth-year guard Jeremy Roach (11.3 points, 4.3 assists) offers true veteran leadership and playmaking, controlling the tempo and bringing improved passing vision from last season. And the moment the defense starts

to figure things out, in comes Wright (10.7 points, 4.3 assists) with the first wave of subs to bring a jolt of energy. His flashing speed and short-area quickness bring real dynamism to an offense with plenty of proficient off-ball scorers. To borrow a Dave Aranda-ism, both players have "the juice," and their skill sets have complemented one another perfectly.

4. NORCHAD OMIER IS THAT GUY™

Before coming to Baylor, Omier, a fifth-year, averaged a double-double in all four years of his college career, with career marks of 15.1 points and 11.0 rebounds on 57.6% shooting. He's looked unstoppable the past two games, bullying defenders in the post and converting shots at a 77.8% clip. His rim gravity opened up all kinds of space for 3-point shooters on Tuesday, who responded by shooting a blazing 14-of-32 (43.8%) from beyond the arc. Omier entered the year expected to be the team's best player. He's done nothing to relinquish that title.

5. SCOTT DREW IS COACHING WITH HIS HAIR ON FIRE

Baylor's longtime head coach has been throwing everything on the court this season, and it's (mostly) worked. The Bears ran almost a dozen different defensive looks Tuesday, including a smattering of funky zone defenses (including a 2-2-1, a 1-3-1 and a 1-1-2-1 full-court press) and man schemes that flummoxed the Bearkats' offense. This team will take on several different permutations as they grow and face more adversity this season, but Drew has put the Bears in prime position to explore their identity early and often.



Mesha Mittanasala | Photographer



TO THE RIM Fifth-year forward Norchad Omier forces his way to secure a hoop for No. 12 Baylor men's basketball's 104-67 win over Sam Houston on Tuesday night at Foster Pavilion.



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DOG DAYS

from A1

and hear from the previous class of Hotdoggers.

Wolff took an unusual route, coming to the position after being in the U.S. Army for four and a half years post-graduation from Penn State. Wolff is also known as “Captain Glizzy,” his Army nickname, which he was able to keep.

Although this is a very different position than what he had been doing in active duty — he was an infantry officer running basic training — Wolff said the adaptability he learned in the military has helped him on the “hot dog highways.”

“We were supposed to go to Houston in July, and the day before we were going to leave for Houston is when the hurricane hit,” Wolff said. “So, we can’t go to Houston anymore. What do we do? We had our events, and we had to quickly come up with a new plan, and we rerouted to Dallas. It’s a saying in the Army — ‘no plan survives first contact’ — and I feel like that’s the exact same deal. You’ll pull up, and it will be an event going on. How do we navigate through this festival to get to our parking spot over there? We’re constantly working through little issues.”

The Hotdoggers hop from city to city, arriving on Mondays and spending the rest of the week at events like parades and festivals as well as pop-ups called “Surprise and Delights.” They’ve been to the Ronald McDonald House in San Antonio, driven the Wienermobile on the Circuit of the Americas track in Austin and paid a visit to a dachshund race at a wiener dog festival. All in all, they’ve hit 14 states so far.

“The people in general, it makes all the events go by in a heartbeat. It’s so fun,” Wolff said. “And no one’s ever upset to see the Wienermobile — always happy. So they just

“

It’s a saying in the Army — ‘no plan survives first contact’ — and I feel like that’s the exact same deal.

CONNOR WOLFF |
HOTDOGGER

radiate that joy onto us too, which is great.”

The non-stop lifestyle can be exhausting. But one thing that makes it worthwhile, Potts said, is reminding herself what it was that made her want the job in the first place.

“I’m a people person,” Potts said. “I love talking to people and going into the communities. Getting to talk to everybody and hear their stories and share some of my story is always fun ... It doesn’t feel like work ever. It’s never something we have to do; it’s something we get to do, and I relish the opportunity.”

The Wienermobiles have been on the road since 1936, but there have been cohorts of Hotdoggers since 1988. Because of that, Potts and Wolff said they frequently run into former Hotdoggers, and there’s a strong network made up of those who have been in their shoes.

“The first place that we went to when we left training was Chicago. So that was our first market before we made our way down. On one of our first couple of events, this guy walks up to us, and he’s like, ‘Hi. My name is Stan,’ and he introduced himself as a former Hotdogger. He was

from class number seven — 30 years ago.”

Come January, Potts and Wolff will be reassigned to different regions and different vehicles to finish out the last leg of their journey. But Potts said when her time is up, she’s looking forward to passing on her knowledge and becoming part of the support system for the new Hotdoggers.

“I think that makes it the most fun, being able to give back,” Potts said. “We all like each other, and we know each other and want the best for everybody. And so just passing on the things that we got to learn while we were on the road helps a lot.”

HERITAGE MONTH

from A1

Gordon said the goal is to recognize that certain topics are not always discussed, but that doesn’t mean they shouldn’t be encouraged, and that these conversations should remain at the forefront throughout the year, not just during Native American Heritage Month.

Tucson, Ariz., senior Conrad Barrozo is a co-treasurer of SACNAS. Barrozo said SACNAS is a big proponent for inclusivity and diversity in STEM and is one of the few organizations on campus that represents Native American students.

For Multicultural Affairs to host events is huge for Native American representation on campus because there are so many students on campus who have Native American ancestry, Barrozo said.

“The student demographics only takes account for students who come from a tribe and are affiliated with the government, but there’s so many individuals whose tribes have been ... no longer recognized [by] the government,” Barrozo said. “Being Native American is more than just a tribal affiliation.”

YA LIKE JAZZ?

from A5

said. “I love that song. It’s still a great song, even though, hearing-wise, not many people have heard it. One day, when people are looking back for the deep cuts, they’re gonna see the older songs and be like, ‘Man, these are some bangers.’”

The group’s second and third songs, “Waterslide” and “How Would It Feel?,” were released as a way to explore their own identity within the walls of a studio and figure out what kind of production they wanted.

“We created those songs in 2022, in addition to a few other ones, so that we could move in that direction,” Marvin Alexander said. “Those are very different. We had very little experience. We just knew how to play our live instruments. So we found a producer here in Waco, and he made the beat, and we played the instruments, and that was pretty much it.”

Marvin Alexander said that he began learning how to produce and record vocals and the group’s instruments in 2023. As Alexander developed his production skills, the group began writing and producing their music on their own.

“Our song ‘Genuine’ and our song ‘That Feeling Of Love’ just came out, and the next two that are coming out have pretty much been fully produced by us,” Alexander said. “It’s very much just thinking of ideas, then I’ll make that sound and that feeling at home.”

In every song Smooth Nature writes, the band aims to resonate a sonic and lyrical

“

The music out today is not truly all good. There’s a lot of music that talks about breaking up, money, sex, drugs. We are trying to change that precedent.

DIARIAN ALEXANDER |
BAND MEMBER, SMOOTH NATURE

message of love and passion, he said.

“The music out today is not truly all good,” Diarian Alexander said. “There’s a lot of music that talks about breaking up, money, sex, drugs. We are trying to change that precedent. We spread the message of love, and really, truly, it goes through a lot of our songs. We’re only singing about our ladies, really, to get people to know that in life, the most important thing to do is to love on big skills and large scales, to go close and far to us.”

The group is currently releasing a song a month and is set to release their next one, “Love Story,” in late November. The song started off as a secondary thought guitar riff and soon blossomed into a fully developed song with the help of the other two members.

Aside from releasing songs, the group is also planning a Texas tour for next year, which Marvin Alexander, who doubles as the band’s manager, explains has been a large learning process as far as the logistics go.

“We’re trying to make sure we have the back end of everything we do down because, you know, in the beginning, it was just like, ‘Oh, I want to sing on stages; this is fun,’” Alexander said. “But this job takes way more than just getting some instruments and playing. Understanding how the business works and meeting the right people, the different connections involved getting good at what you do, the skills behind earning and producing, it’s so many tasks.”

WEIGHT LOSS RISKS

from A1

metabolic rate up, and the lower the lean body mass you have, the fewer calories you need.”

If someone chooses to stop taking Ozempic, they will likely gain more weight back than they had before due to the loss of muscle mass.

“Their metabolism is slowed down because they don’t have as much lean muscle mass, and they tend to gain that weight back,” Wilfong said.

Leigh Greathouse, associate professor of nutrition sciences at Baylor, said having more muscle mass results in having a higher metabolism, allowing individuals to consume more calories without weight gain.

“The more muscle you carry, the higher your metabolism is. And that’s why these male athletes, they eat like 3000 to 9000 calories a day. They’re carrying a heck of a lot of muscle mass,” Greathouse said. “They’re expending it.”

Wilfong said some patients who experience negative side effects from Ozempic are hesitant to tell their healthcare provider due to the fear of being taken off of the drug, resulting in gaining their undesired weight back.

“Some side effects include nausea and vomiting. And some folks don’t like to talk to their doctor about it because they’re losing weight and they’re scared to death of being taken off of it,” Wilfong said.

But obesity is a condition that demands constant monitoring and upkeep as well as attention to diet and exercise, according to an article by the Associated Press. While drugs like these can help patients to manage weight, they should not be used as a quick fix, Dr. Andres Acosta, an obesity researcher at the Mayo Clinic, told the AP.

“I don’t think they should be used in intermittent fashion. It’s not approved for that. They don’t work like that,” Acosta said.

PODCAST

from A1

to Baylor with her own twist.

“I wanted ours to be more focused on transparency and connectivity, and I wanted the podcast to be more informal,” Davis said.

Like most shows, Davis said that the podcast is focused on “showing who I am, but also showing who other students are.”

To make the podcast happen, Davis beefed up her communications team by bringing on film major and St. Louis, Mo., junior Jackson Lawrence as videographer. Lawrence, who wasn’t a member of student government until his role as videographer began this fall, said it’s allowed him to connect more with the organization, and he believes it can do the same for all students.

“As someone who hasn’t been in student government for my first two years here, this is a really good opportunity to showcase what student government does, but also who the student body president is,” Lawrence said.

Lawrence and Davis began working on the podcast earlier in the fall. After deciding on branding items like a logo and a jazzy theme, the show began on Oct. 21.

The first episode hosted Garland senior Kate Boyd in what was essentially a trial run.

Boyd, the chief of staff and close friend of Davis, allowed Davis to work through the challenges of podcasting without any nerves.

“That was our first-ever episode, and that’s why we also did it with someone I knew, so we can be comfortable making mistakes and figure it out together,” Davis said. “Now that I have that footing, I’m like, ‘OK, now I feel ready to go and talk to someone I don’t know.’”

Interviewing your best friend one day to interviewing the current face of Baylor athletics the next is absolutely a step up. Despite the magnitude of the interview — which Davis landed with a simple email to Robertson — there wasn’t much rigidity, Lawrence said.

“We prepped stuff for this episode, but whatever happens is going to happen,” Lawrence said.

That idea became especially true around the 20-minute mark, when the conversation turned into talks of infectious disease, childhood nicknames and comedy lookalikes.

But it’s also the guiding sentiment for future episodes. As the team works to create more episodes, Davis said she hopes it becomes whatever it’s meant to be.

24-25
YEARBOOK

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