



NEWS | A4-A5

HOLIDAY SEASON:

Indoor All-University Thanksgiving provides community celebration



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BASKETBALL:

Littlepage-Buggs rides leadership, experience into senior season



A&L | A8

EASY EATS:

Going to Friendsgiving but don't know how to cook? Check out these recipes



Alyssa Meyers | Photographer

POTLUCK Baylor faculty, students and staff gather in East Village to celebrate All-University Thanksgiving Wednesday after the event was moved inside.

Rain or shine: All-University Thanksgiving moves indoors

MARISA YOUNG
Staff Writer

All-University Thanksgiving took on a unique feel this year, due to a rainy forecast that prompted a last-minute move indoors. Though the student, faculty and staff body were divided in person, students still expressed feeling united in spirit throughout the event Wednesday night.

The event is traditionally hosted on Fountain Mall, but it was divided between Penland, Memorial and East Village Common Dining halls this year, with Memorial featuring dietary restriction meals.

Ormond Beach, Fla., senior and Campus Promotions Co-Chair

Jordyn Murchison said her team has been planning this event since the summer. The annual tradition is a product of a close partnership between several other Baylor organizations, including the Student Government, the Baylor Police Department, Chartwells Higher Education and Baylor Eats, according to Murchison.

While it was a hectic turnaround to move the event indoors, Murchison said she doesn't think it

tainted the community experience of All-University Thanksgiving at all.

"If anything, you're literally being physically brought closer together, and you're joining tables with other people and meeting new friends," Murchison said. "I think it'll be great either way."

Greenwood, S.C., second-year Ph.D. candidate Ben Luke said despite the dining halls being "more crowded than anticipated," the energy was a fun aspect, and it did not take away from the draw of the event.

"It's free, so it incentivizes more people to show up," Luke said. "I think the food is better this year than I remember it being last year."

As a Ph.D. student, Luke said there can be a slight disconnect from most Baylor traditions, which primarily engage the undergraduate community. Despite this, he feels All-University Thanksgiving stays true to its name by bringing all of campus together, regardless of their grade.

"There's definitely a richer undergraduate tradition here on campus, which I think is a great thing," Luke said. "But this event is fun because it's university-wide, so



Sam Gassaway | Photographer

THANKSGIVING >> A3

'Baylor Pisser' unenrolled after campus investigation

MARISSA MUNIZ
LTVN Social Media Editor

A Baylor freshman who ran an anonymous account posting videos of urinating on campus was identified by police and referred to Student Conduct on Sept. 26, according to the Baylor University Police Department. As of today, the university has confirmed the student is no longer enrolled at Baylor.

Once officers identified a suspect, they met with the student to confirm he was behind the account. According to police reports, the student said he was and filmed videos at McLane Stadium, Fountain Mall, the 5th Street Parking Garage, the Baylor Bear Habitat, Judge Baylor and near Pat Neff. All content was recorded between midnight and 1 a.m.

The student told police he used a water bottle to fake the videos — except for one recorded near the Bear Habitat, "where he was concealed by the trees." With limited evidence, BUPD chose not to pursue criminal charges after filing the report on Sept. 26 and forwarded the case to Judicial Affairs for further review.

At the start of this semester, a social media trend swept campuses nationwide.



Illustration by Sam Gassaway | Photographer

IDENTIFIED A former Baylor freshman is no longer enrolled after he recorded videos at six on-campus locations under the alias "Baylor Pisser."

Dozens of accounts were created anonymously, labeling themselves as their university's 'pissers.'

These accounts, usually run by students, posted nightly videos of people urinating around different campus landmarks.

After a tip from another student, BUPD launched an investigation into the account.

"On September 10, 2025, the Baylor University Police Department was made aware of several incidents that occurred on campus property that were circulating on a social media platform," a BUPD statement said. "Following a BUPD investigation, in lieu of criminal charges, the matter was referred to Baylor University's Student Conduct Administration for review." The report states that

officers reviewed footage from Sept. 10 at 12:34 a.m., where the suspect parked next to the Bill Daniels Student Center, walked around the building and headed for Fountain Mall. It read, "The subject walks over to the fountain and urinates on the ledge."

The subject then intermittently flashed a cell phone light or a flashlight before returning to his vehicle and leaving campus.

The student was identified on Sept. 26 after recording at McLane Stadium. He met with officers later that night, where he admitted owning the account and confirmed he "passed the barriers and went down to the 50-yard line. When asked what he did on the 50-yard line, he stated that he recorded himself," the report read.



Alexia Finney | Staff Writer

HELP NEEDED Waco's Salvation Army is looking for volunteers to help sort items in time for the holiday season.

Salvation Army prepares Waco for Thanksgiving

ALEXIA FINNEY
Staff Writer

As Thanksgiving approaches, the Salvation Army is ramping up its holiday programs by providing meals, gifts and financial support to families in need. Behind the scenes, staff and volunteers work tirelessly to sort donations and manage logistics to ensure no one is left out of Waco's holiday traditions.

The Salvation Army's Thanksgiving programs are extensive. Volunteers and staff organize the annual community Thanksgiving lunch downtown, which serves hundreds of Waco

residents. They also distribute food and clothing vouchers and coordinate Angel Trees, a holiday program that gives children gifts tailored to their needs and wishes.

Sarah Feimster, Salvation Army's PR and events coordinator, said for the staff and volunteers who run the organization's Thanksgiving programs, this is the time of year when their work feels heaviest and most meaningful.

"This season hits people in different ways," Feimster said. "For some, Thanksgiving is joyful. For others, it's a reminder of what they've lost, what they

can't afford or who they don't have with them. That's why we care so much. We don't want anyone to feel forgotten this time of year."

Joseph Finch, a truck driver who has worked at the Salvation Army for about four years, said he spends his afternoons navigating the organization's seemingly endless flow of donations. Finch said the donation warehouse is a "mound of treasures," with clothes and household items stacked up to eight or 10 feet high before being sorted time and time again.

"We're moving items out

VOLUNTEER >> A3

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EDITORIAL

Don't polarize family functions this year

It's Thanksgiving and the TV has been blaring between football and parades the entire day. Meanwhile, your siblings have been blasting TikTok all day and you haven't eaten in eight hours. Finally, the moment arrives. "Dinner's ready!" your parents yell as you drag your feet to the table.

In a world that's more politically charged than ever, sometimes holiday dinner tables can feel more like war zones and conversations turn into cross-examinations. Between outdated political beliefs and an influx of propaganda, it frequently feels like the weight of changing our parents' beliefs falls on us, making holidays seem more like interventions.

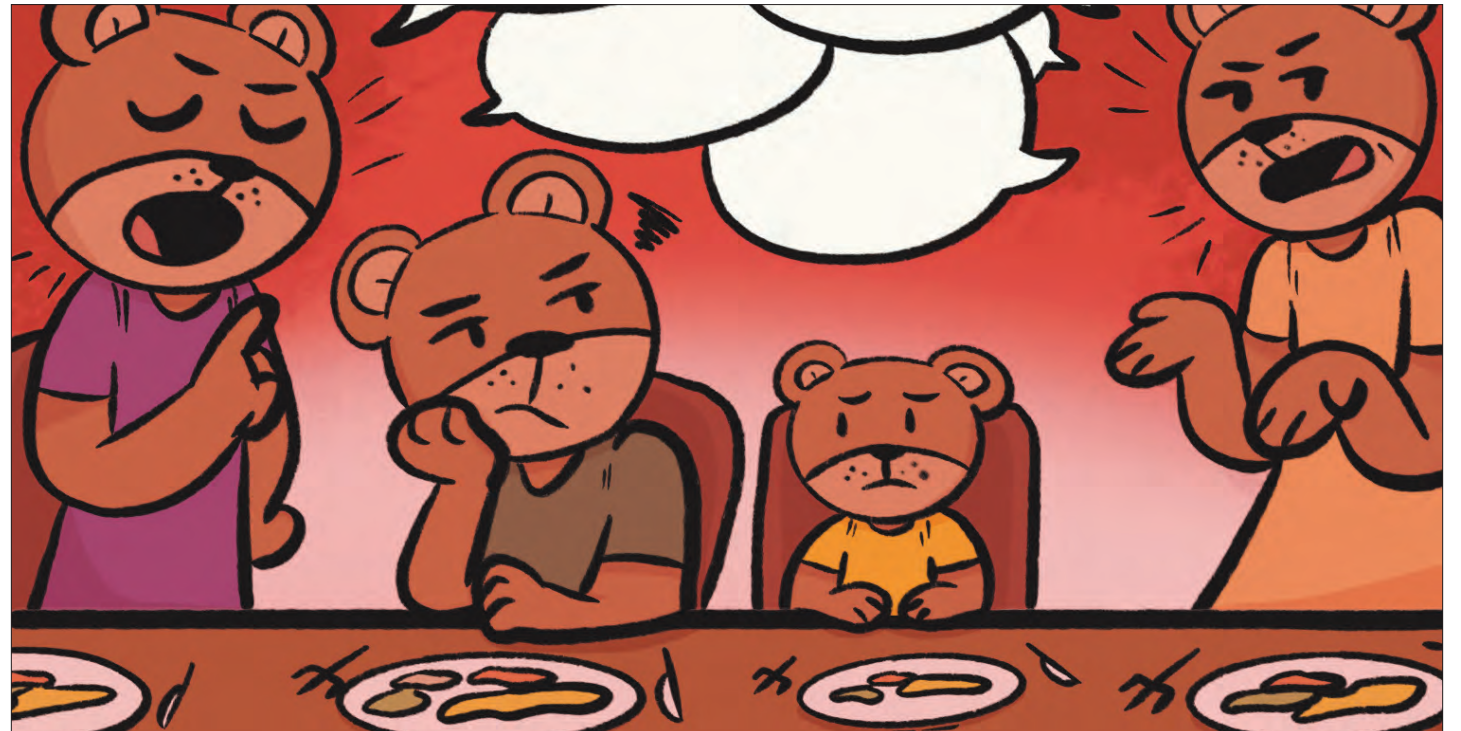
A 2024 poll by The American Psychological Association showed that two in five adults "said they were stressed by the thought of politics coming up at holiday gatherings."

Whether it's politics, religion or money, chances are there is probably something within those topics that we all fear will arise during our parents' conversations over Thanksgiving dinner. However, it's important to realize that arguing with our parents to change their beliefs is rarely productive. We can yell, fight and stomp all we want, but the truth is that facts often aren't what change people's minds.

Mel Robbins, a No. 1 New York Times bestselling author who has amassed an online following of over 40 million people, coined the term "let them" in her 2024 book "The Let Them Theory."

The book emphasizes the importance of removing expectations for those around you and instead focusing on what you can control. "Acceptance of another person, as they are, is the foundation of a healthy and loving relationship," Robbins said in her book. "When someone feels that you accept them as they are, they feel safe with you. The opposite happens when you pressure, change, criticize, push or expect someone to behave differently than they are. This pressure puts you and your loved one in a

“Our parents ... are imperfect, just like us, and while we often fall into the trap of placing unrealistic expectations on them, we must remember this is their first time being human, too.”



James Ellis | Cartoonist

battle for control."

And don't get us wrong — there are many instances where it's essential to speak up, have a voice and be loud about your thoughts, but holidays are probably not one of them. Ultimately, choosing silence isn't suppression; it's self-respect.

An article from The New Yorker utilized cognitive science to explain the psychology behind our beliefs. As humans, we automatically justify our beliefs through "motivated reasoning" or "cognitive bias," making it harder to see the facts objectively. We are also naturally inclined to judge and analyze the faults in other people's

beliefs before our own.

While it's logical to think that providing facts would influence people's opinions, the truth is that in most instances, humans would rather justify their own beliefs, even if statistics prove them wrong.

It can be easy to want to argue your way into changing your parents' beliefs, but at the end of the day, life is finite. Spend your holidays expressing gratitude, and if someone wants to share their opinion on something you disagree with, let them.

While this is not an excuse for lackluster beliefs, it is a reminder that draining your own mental energy attempting to change your parents' ideology is only causing more damage to your relationship.

We reclaim our power by letting go of the feeling that we have to control or change our parents' beliefs, actions or opinions. While heated topics like politics, religion and money can quickly become gasoline-fueled fires during holiday dinners, our power comes from intentional silence.

Our parents and grandparents grew up in a much different era than we did, with vastly different ideas, virtues and beliefs. And while a majority of these concepts might seem outdated or incorrect to us now, it's what seemed right to

them during their early adulthood.

And just like us, I'm sure our parents, too, felt the impending doom of holiday dinner conversational differences. However, the reality is that the chances of adopting a new worldview at age 50 or 60 are low, and expecting our parents to do so is draining.

Our parents don't know everything; they are imperfect, just like us, and while we often fall into the trap of placing unrealistic expectations on them, we must remember this is their first time being human, too.

"Let them," Robbins said in her book. "Let your parents be less than what you deserve. Let your family life be something that isn't a fairy tale. They are doing the best they can with the resources and life experiences they have. Now you get to choose what happens moving forward."

Remove the expectation that you are obligated to change your parents' beliefs. Enjoy your family time, which becomes increasingly limited as we grow up. You're your own person, and while we all owe something to our parents, their validation isn't necessary to be happy. Love your parents, regardless of your differences. And whatever happens at the Thanksgiving dinner table, let it.

Caught in the crossfire: My summer in Jordan

CHRISTINA IKHBEIS
Social Media Assistant

This past summer, I traveled to Jordan for the first time since I was a child. I was brimming with excitement in the months leading up to the trip, wrapping up my second semester of college while daydreaming about seeing family for the first time in over a decade and walking the streets I only remembered through faded memories and old photos. But what was supposed to be a trip about roots and reconnection became a reminder of the fragility of peace.

Tensions between Iran and Israel were already high when I arrived. News reports buzzed with warnings and speculation, but life in Jordan felt calm. My family and

I decided to spend a few days at a resort by the Dead Sea — a peaceful escape from the hustle and bustle of Amman, Jordan, with nothing but the short stretch of the still blue water separating us from Israel just across the horizon.

That evening, we sat together laughing as a belly dancer performed to our favorite songs, when the sudden wail of sirens cut through the music, making my heart race. Next thing I knew, missiles, heading straight for Israel, lit up the night sky. I could hear the distant thud of explosions echoing from across the sea.

Later that night, I woke to the room trembling from the reverberation of nearby strikes. Even though the danger wasn't directed at Jordan, the unease was inescapable. I lay awake, trying to process the reality that destruction was unfolding just miles away.

In the days that followed, sirens became routine across Amman.

Missiles continued to fly overhead, and although Jordan remained neutral and untouched, the sense of uncertainty never left. The airports shut down. My plan to visit Lebanon was canceled. For a while, I didn't know when or how I'd be able to leave.

I was surrounded by family who had lived through decades of regional tension. They carried on with daily life, remaining calm amid alarms and missiles. My aunt went about her daily routine, sitting on her porch swing in her garden patio as the mingling scents of cigarettes and Turkish coffee filled the morning air. My cousins played soccer in the streets and a constant stream of neighbors stopped by for mint tea and a chat.

Their quiet resilience — refusing to let conflict strip away their humanity — stood in stark contrast to my own restlessness. I was a visitor unaccustomed to living with danger so close, hyperaware of the fragile line between normalcy and chaos.

Being in Jordan during this tense

“Next thing I knew, missiles, heading straight for Israel, lit up the night sky. I could hear the distant thud of explosions echoing from across the sea.”

time reminded me how easy it is to take stability for granted. I came

home grateful for safety, but also with a new sense of empathy for those who navigate daily life under the shadow of conflict that so many of us cannot begin to comprehend.

As students at Baylor, it's easy to view global crises as distant headlines, something happening "over there" while we live here, comfortable in our daily routines, often out of touch with the realities others wake up to every day. A day we grumble through, complaining about an exam or the food at the dining halls, might be the kind of ordinary peace someone else longs for.

But behind every alert and every breaking news banner are people. Allowing that simple fact — really acknowledging the human stakes — can pull you out of the self-absorbed ease of blissful ignorance. Don't underestimate the power of staying informed. Letting that awareness shape your perspective can be the most meaningful way to connect to the world around us.



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News

VOLUNTEER from A1

every day, sorting and getting ready for people to shop or pick up what they need," Finch said. "It's hard work, but seeing the impact keeps us going."

Finch said the Salvation Army could use roughly 20 to 25 additional volunteers daily to keep everything moving efficiently.

"Every volunteer makes a difference," Finch said. "If we had that, it wouldn't feel as overwhelming."

Feimster said some volunteers are especially meaningful to staff. One woman who relies on the Salvation Army's services for her own family chooses to give back by volunteering once a week.

"She can't afford to pay for everything, but she gives her time," Feimster said.

Despite the high demand, Feimster said many people misunderstand where help is most needed.

"A lot of people think volunteering only means working in the soup kitchen," Feimster said. "That's actually where we need the fewest volunteers."

The biggest need, Finch said, is at the thrift store and warehouse, where donations must be sorted, priced and displayed before families can access them.

"Nobody wants to volunteer there,

but it's where we could use the most help," Finch said. "It's physically demanding, but it directly affects how quickly we can get items to people who need them."

Feimster said knowing that children will wake up on Christmas morning with gifts, and that shelters like Sally's House ensure children and mothers are safe and cared for, makes the labor worthwhile.

"It's heartbreaking sometimes, seeing families start over with nothing," Finch said. "But it's motivating, too. You want to do better for them."

As a delivery driver, Finch said the behind-the-scenes process is overlooked and laborious.

"We have vans, ringers and volunteers coordinated behind the scenes so everything runs smoothly," Finch said. "If it looks easy, it's only because of all the people working tirelessly to make it look that way."

As the holiday season continues, the Salvation Army encourages Baylor students to get involved and help the Waco community.

"Every donation, every hour volunteered stays in Waco," Feimster said. "You're not just helping someone you don't know, you're helping your neighbors. And that's what makes this work feel so real."

Peer Nutrition Advisors offer individualized experience

ARDEN BERRY
Staff Writer

To raise awareness of their diverse nutritional services, the Peer Nutrition Advisors have launched an Instagram page.

Robbins College of Health and Human Sciences offers free Peer Nutrition Advisement for students, faculty and staff. There are six advisors total, led by their professor, Stanley Wilfong, senior lecturer in nutrition sciences and program coordinator for nutrition sciences.

Ashland, Ala., senior PNA Amiyah Smith said the advisors initially provide three sessions for whatever clients need nutrition-wise.

"We meet when you — obviously when we're free — but when you want to meet, we answer your questions," Smith said. "We do what you want to do."

Bullard senior PNA Elise Ellis said St. Louis senior Reilly Brophy started the Instagram page because she hoped to reach more students.

"She really was passionate," Ellis said. "She's a new PNA this semester and was looking through our client list and the responses that she was getting from her clients and how life-changing PNA can be, and she wanted to broaden our horizons so that we can reach more people."

Ellis said they have several post ideas, including dining hall tours, "MythBusters"-style content on nutrition misinformation, nutrition advice for the holiday season and a "day in the life" video for each advisor to introduce themselves.

"We all live very busy, ambitious lives, but very different," Ellis said. "We all have our interests and the different things that we do and that we prioritize, but nutrition definitely brings us all together."



EASY EATS Baylor students can tailor their dining experience with a new Instagram page launched by the Peer Nutrition Advisors. *Sam Gassaway | Photographer*

Ellis said each adviser has their specific niches, from cooking to fitness goals.

"We have a variety of people with different skill sets," Ellis said. "Whether you are trying to learn how to cook for the first time or lose weight or gain weight or train or put on muscle or anything in between, we have someone that is ready to learn with you and educate you and just take your hand on that journey and walk alongside you to achieve your nutrition and fitness goals."

For example, Durban, South Africa, junior PNA Bella Agostinho said she is always making new recipes.

"I did pumpkin monkey bread because I wanted monkey bread, but I wanted it to be softer, like a muffin texture," Agostinho said. "And so I created a recipe; I love doing that in the kitchen. And then I like to put down all the macros and break it down and see how I can adjust it to be more balanced."

Beaumont senior PNA Izzy Darwin said she enjoys the educational aspect of nutrition.

"I've had one client that wants to learn, and he'll ask me so many questions," Darwin said. "It'll be like, 'Oh, I heard something about this supplement.' And I'm like, 'Oh, I actually know this,' with nutrition and science-

based, science-backed research to debunk it so he can save money and not spend \$60 on a certain supplement."

Guatemala City, senior PNA Paola Stackmann said she enjoys learning about nutrition and fitness in day-to-day life.

"I love reading about it, and I feel like I also love the fitness part of nutrition," Stackmann said. "I'm not an athlete, but I love trying out new things and seeing because at the end of the day, like everyone, we all have to move our bodies."

Overall, Smith said that nutrition advising is like a friendship.

"We are here to help you and to give you advice, but we also want to get to know you and figure out your passions and be able to serve you best for what is going to be most beneficial to you — specifically as an individual," Smith said.

Students interested in nutrition advisement can register on the Robbins College website and can learn more about each advisor on the new Instagram.

"We are all friends and we have gotten to know each other and we definitely have our strengths and it would be ignorant not to utilize the different strengths and diversity that we have to serve the population," Ellis said.

THANKSGIVING from A1

it's trying to pull in graduate students and faculty too."

McKinney third-year Master of Divinity student Ethan Tong felt a similar connection to the undergraduate community at All-University Thanksgiving. Being in the dining halls, though "hectic," forced him to interact with more familiar faces, he said.

"I ran into a lot of people here that I know from chapel," Tong said. "These events definitely help me feel connected to the larger campus, just like going to football games."

Harlingen freshman Daniella Sanchez said she felt slightly overwhelmed while navigating the dining halls, but she is glad Baylor persisted in putting the event on. As a first-year attendee, she said she especially appreciated the brown paper and markers lining the tables, on which students could write what they are grateful for.

"There's a lot going on, but it's really cool," Sanchez said. "I think it's important to have university-wide events like this, especially because we're such a small university. You're seeing people that are right down the hall from you that you maybe haven't talked to, and it's like, 'Oh, hey, they need a spot to sit,' and they'll sit with you."

San Diego sophomore Katy Scott agreed, saying she still felt a deep "communal" aspect of All-University Thanksgiving, despite it being indoors.

"Food is a bonding thing for all cultures," Scott said. "I really think the [All-] University Thanksgiving brought us all together."

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FEELING THANKFUL



Caleb Garcia | Photographer

FESTIVE Student Foundation and Baylor dining hall employees team up to serve dinner at All-University Thanksgiving.



Sam Gassaway | Photographer



Sam Gassaway | Photographer

Sam Gassaway | Photographer



Sam Gassaway | Photographer

PACKED IN Memorial Dining Hall reaches capacity as students flock for free food at All-University Thanksgiving.



Alyssa Meyers | Photographer

SWEET SWEET FALL Slices of pumpkin and pecan pies decorate dining hall tables for All-University Thanksgiving.



Alyssa Meyers | Photographer

GRATEFUL REFLECTION A thankful reflection board welcomes students into East Village Dining Commons.



Sam Gassaway | Photographer

THANKFUL Students write out what they are grateful for this season on pumpkins available at each dining hall.



Alyssa Meyers | Photographer

COMMUNITY Members of Student Foundation, Oak Hills, Calif., senior Jaclyn Ebeling (left), Ormond Beach, Fla., senior Jordyn Murchison, Basking Ridge, N.J., sophomore Ella Karins and Belton junior Olivia Johnson (right) welcome students at Penland Dining Hall.



Alyssa Meyers | Photographer

BEARY GRATEFUL Students write out grateful messages on paper lining the tables of Penland Dining Hall.

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Caleb Garcia | Photographer

RUN BRYSON RUN Redshirt sophomore running back Bryson Washington is swarmed by the opposing defense during the Bears' 55-28 loss to Utah at McLane Stadium Saturday. Washington led the rushing game with 97 yards on 14 carries.

Baylor looks to bounce back against wily Wildcats

JEFFREY COHEN
Sports Writer

In legendary head coach Grant Teaff's final game, Baylor faced off against the Arizona Wildcats in the 1992 John Hancock Bowl. Overwhelmed by the Wildcats' "Desert Storm" defense in the first half, two forced fumbles helped the Bears rally back and defeat Arizona 20-15.

The two squads will meet for the first time in 33 years on Saturday, as Baylor (5-5, 3-4 Big 12) hopes to secure a crucial road win against Arizona (7-3, 4-3 Big 12).

Baylor players praised the Wildcats this week for their cohesiveness, crediting it as one of the reasons for their success this season.

"If you just throw on the tape ... you can tell when 11 guys are playing together [and] when they're not," redshirt junior outside linebacker Kyler Jordan said. "Watching Arizona, you can see that, so we got to go out there as a unit."

Baylor will have to match up with a team that doesn't make many mistakes and holds onto the football well, posting a plus-10 turnover margin, while the Bears have struggled to play "complementary football" throughout the season.

Baylor's offense was effective on the ground and through the air last week. Redshirt senior quarterback Sawyer Robertson threw for 430 yards while connecting with redshirt senior receiver Josh Cameron and sixth-year receiver Ashtyn Hawkins for over 100 yards each.

"We clearly have the weapons to do great things," junior tight end Matthew Klopfenstein said of the offense. "We're off the charts in a lot of areas, but there's also places where we struggled — red zone being one of them."

The Bears will be competing against an Arizona pass defense that ranks 7th in the FBS in pass yards allowed per game, with 154 and 14 interceptions.

"They're super talented; they're big in the back end, they got some good linebackers," Klopfenstein said. "They've been playing really well these past couple weeks."

The Wildcats are running on a three-game winning streak, outscoring opponents by 45



Roundup file photo

A SIGNATURE WIN Baylor has only played Arizona once: the 1992 John Hancock Bowl in El Paso. The Bears sent university legend Grant Teaff into a sunny coaching retirement with a 20-15 win.

points in that stretch, including a road win over No. 22 Cincinnati.

Baylor has struggled at times offensively this season, but the running game found some traction throughout the first half against the Utes.

Head coach Dave Aranda said redshirt sophomore Bryson Washington was "the best he's looked" heading into the game against Utah. Washington led the way for the Baylor rushing game with 97 yards on 14 carries. The Bears will hope to attack the Wildcats' 66th-ranked run defense on the ground.

"When you got guys like Bryson, and you got the youngsters out there churning butter, it's pretty cool to see them give full effort and see the O-line surge forward," Klopfenstein said.

"Those extra couple yards is what really gives the offense the push."

On the other side of the ball, the Wildcats' offense will be a different look for the Bears' defense, which allowed 380 yards on the ground to the Utes.

Quarterback Noah Fifita is averaging over 249 yards passing per game while only rushing for 9.8 yards. He is coming off a 294-yard performance against Cincinnati — his third-highest mark of the season.

"This is probably the first time, maybe since Arizona State, that a team's going to dropback pass on first or second down," Aranda said. "Most teams' quarterbacks are going to run, or they're going to be some type of RPO play-action."

The Bears are coming off a 55-28 loss to No. 13 Utah, where the defense allowed three touchdown runs of over 60 yards. After giving up 166 yards rushing and two touchdowns to Utah backup quarterback Byrd Ficklin, they'll have to shift gears to defend a more pass-heavy attack from Arizona.

"There are a lot of hard conversations," Jordan said. "It was probably one of the most intense defensive unit meetings I've been in since I've been here, and honestly, it was necessary."

Players and coaches say the team's expectations have not shifted despite falling to 5-5, in large part due to Aranda's philosophy that everything his team does is a reflection of their whole body of work.

"Since Coach Aranda has been here, he's preached, 'How you do anything is how you do everything,'" Jordan said. "Whenever things don't go as you expect, what are you going to get out of yourself and what are you going to get out of your teammates?"

The Bears' confidence remains high as they aim to win their final two games of the season to become bowl-eligible.

"We know we have two games left," Klopfenstein said. "We're going to go 2-0. We're going to give ourselves the best shot to getting up a good ballgame."

The Bears face off against the Wildcats at noon Saturday at Arizona Stadium in Tucson, Ariz. The game will be broadcast on TNT.



Associated Press

NEW BEAR-DO Hans Tharp, a naturally-blonde sophomore whose mom and great-aunt dyed his mohawk before the 1992 game, said the idea "just came to me one day at practice."

Na Dong stars in postseason

DYLAN FINK
Sports Writer

Na Dong finished her fall season on a dominant stride, capping it off with a trip to the NCAA championship for both singles and doubles.

"My expectation will be getting 1% better every day," Dong said. "I just want to give my best and play for Baylor because I'm really honored to get to represent Baylor out here."

Dong, a senior from Tianshui, China, is 35-6 in her career and 8-3 this fall. Alongside junior Zuzanna Kubacha, she punched her ticket to the NCAA singles championships at the ITA Central Sectional Championship and to the doubles championships at the ITA Texas Regionals.

Tuesday marked the beginning of the first round of the 64-player NCAA singles national championships. Dong came out swinging, upsetting No. 1 seed Valerie Glzman of Stanford. Dong won the match 6-3, 6-7, 6-4.

"I think I just can't do anything without all the support from my teammates and coaches," Dong said. "They just stepped up and supported me and encouraged me all the time. That's the most important thing to me, and I'm just really grateful for that."

Dong is no stranger to competition at the highest level. She took the collegiate women's tennis world by storm last year — her first for the green and gold — as she dominated her way to a 27-3 singles record in the 2024-25 season.

"Playing singles has a lot of complexity, and you got to really be able to move laterally," head coach Joey Scrivano said. "It's an entirely different thing than doubles. ... When a player understands, that is when it all starts to come together in the best way."

Dong lost her second-round matchup to Gabriella Broadfoot of NC State in two sets, 6-3, 7-5.

While falling short of personal glory in the singles bracket, Dong gained a second opportunity to place a national title in the trophy case in Waco. Kubacha joined Dong in a doubles pairing that began the Bears' further quest for a national title Wednesday afternoon, but ultimately fell short.

Dong and Kubacha qualified for the national championship tournament after winning the ITA regional doubles championship, guaranteeing their place in Orlando come November.

"It was a great time," Scrivano said. "To win tournaments and win in such a way that Na and Zuz did is very hard to do. I don't think they lost a single set that entire tournament."

As the two upperclassmen sought to bring the championship back to Texas, they attempted to find ways to gain greater control over their game.

"A big part of tennis is if you can be in control of the majority of the match," Scrivano said. "When you're in control, good things usually follow, and Na is very good at finding that. I like their chances against anybody, but first things first, they have to be able to find and gain control of the court and kind of work their way to that."

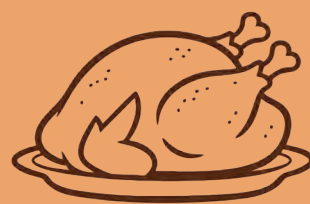
Despite losing her singles efforts in the round of 32, Dong still had faith in her and Kubacha's ability as a doubles pairing to compete for the championship hardware.

"I think this [season] is our first time partnering together," Dong said. "I think because of the experience from the last year, even though we didn't play doubles together, but we practiced a lot and we have a good relationship on and off the court, and I think that's why we have good doubles chemistry together."

Wednesday evening did not go as planned for the talented pairing, as they lost their first-round matchup against Ole Miss in two sets 6-4, 6-3.



Mary Thurmond | Photo Editor



Thanksgiving tasting menu

SATURDAY, NOV. 22

XC NCAA Championships
FB at Arizona (12 p.m. on TNT)
WBB vs Davidson (4:30 p.m. on ESPN+)

MONDAY, NOV. 24

MBB vs Creighton (1 p.m. on truTV)

TUESDAY, NOV. 25

MBB vs St. John's (4 p.m. on truTV)

WEDNESDAY, NOV. 26

MBB — TBD
VB at TCU (2 p.m.)
WBB vs La Tech (2 p.m. on ESPN+)

THURSDAY, NOV. 27

MBB — TBD

SATURDAY, NOV. 29

FB vs Houston — TBD

SUNDAY, NOV. 30

WBB vs Grambling St. (2 p.m. on ESPN+)

Playing with double-double DNA

Darianna Littlepage-Buggs looks back, ahead in final season for green and gold

MARISSA ESSENBURG
Sports Writer

If you've watched women's college basketball, checked a box score, caught a broadcast or even followed Baylor casually over the past four years, chances are you know the name Darianna Littlepage-Buggs. She has stacked double-doubles, big-time accolades and steady dominance across her career in green and gold.

Four years ago, she arrived at Baylor with five-star pressure and All-American expectations, stepping into a program with a history of greatness and the challenge of finding her footing on a new stage. From the start, that freshman made it clear she belonged, quickly emerging as a college basketball phenom. Today, she's the heartbeat of the No. 7 team in the nation — a senior whose dependability and steady dominance have become the foundation of Baylor women's basketball.

An Oklahoma City native, Littlepage-Buggs has never been a stranger to success or the work required to reach it. Ranked No. 17 nationally and the No. 3 forward in her class by ESPN HoopGurlz, Littlepage-Buggs capped her career at Classen High School by leading her team to an Oklahoma state championship. She averaged 15.5 points, 12.8 rebounds and 2.7 assists per game as a senior, earning Oklahoma Gatorade Player of the Year honors and a coveted spot among the 24 McDonald's All-Americans.

That drive followed her to Waco, becoming the through-line of everything she's done.

"Her expectations, who she is and what she wants from her senior year, what she wants for herself, combined with her team — Buggs is about winning, and I've never questioned that," head coach Nicki Colleen said.

Her freshman season set the tone for everything that followed, as she captured Big 12 Freshman of the Year and earned eight Big 12 Freshman



Brady Harris | Photographer

THE EXTERMINATOR Senior forward Darianna Littlepage-Buggs drives toward the basket during Baylor's exhibition against West Texas A&M on Oct. 26 at Foster Pavilion.

of the Week honors, the second-most in conference history and the most ever by a Baylor player. Now a senior, she continues to earn national recognition, most recently landing on the John Wooden Award Most Outstanding Player Top 50 Women's watch list.

But for Littlepage-Buggs, this final season is about much more than the awards. It's about perspective

— learning to embrace the highs, the hard moments and everything in between.

"I'm taking it all in, the joys, the challenges," she said. "That's one thing I've come to learn and love — loving the challenges even in moments when it's so hard."

And it's about leadership, a role she and fellow senior forward Bella Fontleroy have grown into together.

"This has definitely been a change for all of us, especially for me and Bella," Littlepage-Buggs said. "We're the leaders now, and people look up to us like we looked up to our seniors. Just loving the process, because this is our last one."

That leadership has already been tested early, in a season that four games in has already brought its share of highs and lows — something

Littlepage-Buggs said is just part of the journey and a testament to the group around her.

On Sunday, that same leadership showed up on the floor. Fontleroy and Littlepage-Buggs powered a performance to remember, one that saw Littlepage-Buggs find the rhythm she'd been searching for this season — finishing with 26 points and 11 rebounds, including a perfect 10-for-10 stretch before halftime, as Baylor rolled Le Moyné 99-43.

"The first three games I felt like I was rushing a lot, and it has been tough," Littlepage-Buggs said. "So to have a game like this, and for my teammates to see me and keep getting me the ball and encouraging me this far, building and stacking days, this game was needed for sure."

To Colleen, it was a performance that reflected the kind of leader Littlepage-Buggs has become.

"That's a kid that's going to get in the gym and give you the same thing regardless of where she's at," Colleen said.

That unwavering consistency has made her the anchor of this Baylor team.

Four years in, Littlepage-Buggs' name sits in the same conversation as the Baylor greats who came before her — not because of one season or one stretch, but because of that standard she's carried every day she's worn a Baylor jersey. Her legacy isn't finished, but it's already written across record books, watch lists and the trust of a program that has leaned on her since the moment she arrived.

"It hasn't sunk in at all," Littlepage-Buggs said. "I think about how long I've been here and what it was like coming in as a freshman with all my upperclassmen, and then it being me, Bella and Kyla [Abraham] these last few years. That's something I hold close to my heart because, through everything, it's still been us. It's crazy, but I'm so happy. This journey has been amazing, and I've enjoyed every bit of it. I'm here to live in the moment and cherish it all."

BAYLOR LARIAT PODCASTS

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What students are thankful for



Caleb Garcia | Photographer

IT'S GIVING THANKS Students at Penland Dining Hall feast on rolls, sweet potatoes and pie as they draw turkeys on the table runner.

OLIVIA TURNER
Arts & Life Editor

Penland Hall was more crowded than usual Wednesday night as students gathered to celebrate All-University Thanksgiving. Among the chatter of students waiting in line for slices of pecan pie and chairs scooching on the floor as students sat down to feast, there was an air of thankfulness.

With their plates full of turkey, steamed vegetables, mashed potatoes and gravy in front of them, groups of friends shared what means the most to them in their lives.

"I'm thankful for all the friends I've made here at Baylor," Universal City freshman Macie Hill said.

Next to her, Woodway sophomore Madeleine Goff spoke of her love for her small, closely knit community at her dormitory.

"I'm thankful for the community at Brooks Residential College," she said.

For others, like Richmond freshman Cathy Obawole, gratitude centered on Baylor's beloved and frequently visited feline colony located in the center of Draper Academic Building.

Toward the back of the dining hall, Chicago freshman Melvina Udeze sat with her friends as they conversed over their Thanksgiving meal. Like many fellow students preparing for final exams, Udeze said grades were on the brain.

"I'm grateful for all my classes this semester and being able to pass them with a good score," she said.

Harare, Zimbabwe, freshman Tatenda Sanhokwe, who sat across

from Udeze, said she was happy just to have the opportunity to be able to attend Baylor. She said she is also grateful for the dear friends surrounding her.

Students hundreds of miles from home, like South Glastonbury, Conn., freshman Vedhik Dasari and Richmond, Va., freshman Durham Dodson, said they were especially grateful for their families.

"I'm thankful not only for my friends and family, but also God for putting me at this institution," Dodson said.

Baylor love was a theme among several students scattered around the dining hall.

"I am thankful to be able to go to a school that loves its students," Southlake sophomore Cameron Killian said.

For fourth-year students like San Antonio senior Elena Semler, thankfulness inevitably includes nostalgia as she reflects on her time at Baylor before graduation.

"I'm really grateful for the friendships I made freshman year that are still going strong," she said.

Across the table, Overland Park, Kan., junior Allie Dodd and Corpus Christi junior Elam Fox also emphasized their thankfulness for quality friendships, ones they see lasting long after their time at Baylor.

For some, this meal was the first of many All-University Thanksgivings. For others, it was the last. But all around, reflected in the laughter, conversation and the mixture of turkey drawings and notes on brown paper table runners, it served as a means for scholars to reflect on what is meaningful to them, in the company of friends.



Photo courtesy of IMDb

Why I'm still watching Stranger Things after the three-year wait

O'CONNOR DANIEL
Reporter

The final season of "Stranger Things" premieres this November, nearly a decade after the show first blew up. When Netflix finally dropped the trailer for the final season of "Stranger Things" and confirmed the 2025 release date, the realization hit me that it's been three years since we've seen anything new from Hawkins. Many people have moved on or forgotten half the plot by now, but I know I'm still watching.

This is mostly because I still remember the first time I clicked on Season 1 in 2016. It wasn't hyped. It wasn't a franchise. It was a mysterious new show featuring kids on bikes, blinking Christmas lights and a missing boy no one could explain.

Nothing on Netflix looked like it. It felt original, even while nodding at the movies it pulled inspiration from. It had pieces of "E.T." and "The Goonies," but it wasn't trying to be them. It just understood why those stories worked: a group of kids who shouldn't be the heroes ... but somehow are.

As The Guardian reported, the Duffer brothers pitched the series as "John Carpenter mashed up with E.T.," drawing from Stephen Spielberg, Stephen King and the adventure-film DNA of the 1980s. A decade ago, hardly anyone knew what the Upside Down was. No one was talking about Demogorgons or Mind Flayers. The cast was mostly young unknowns. Nothing about it was guaranteed.

But when Season 1 premiered that summer, it shattered Netflix viewing records and immediately became a cultural phenomenon, and for a lot of us, it became personal. With all its scrappy sincerity, it captured why those beloved '80s stories mattered: a tight-knit group of kids who weren't chosen or special — just loyal, brave and in way over their heads.

And now, after a three-year wait for its final season, I'm still going to watch it. "Stranger Things" was always built to be that kind of story: a group of ragtag kids teaming up to fight evil in their small town, where nothing ever happens, until something does and it changes everything.

The final-season trailer doubled down on exactly that. Vecna isn't gone. The Upside Down is spilling into Hawkins. And for the first time since 2016, we're back in the basement with the original crew. The bikes, the maps and the supernatural girl with a number for a name. Full circle, but with everything at stake.

Over the footage, we hear Dustin say, "We stay true to ourselves, to our friends, no matter the cost." After nearly 10 years, this is the last ride, and the characters are teaming up one final time.

And as the series filmed its final scenes, the cast felt that weight, too. Caleb McLaughlin, who plays Lucas Sinclair, said in an interview with The Guardian that the ending felt emotional in a different way.

"Playing these characters has been amazing ... but growing up with these guys and having the family that we've built is something I won't get again," McLaughlin said. "I'm going to miss that a lot."

A decade ago, the biggest threat to those kids was a bad D&D roll in Mike Wheeler's basement. Now they're facing the collapse of Hawkins and the end of their childhood all at once. It's a full circle: the first adventure and the last one somehow meeting in the middle.

And maybe that's the real reason fans are still here. As Finn Wolfhard, who plays Mike Wheeler, told The Guardian, "Everyone was there on the last day ... even people who had wrapped earlier stayed to be together. That was a very necessary experience. It's been 10 years."

And that's reason enough to watch the final season when it arrives.

Volume 1 of the final season will be released on Netflix Nov. 26, with Volume 2 following on Christmas Day and the series finale on New Year's Eve.

What to whip up when you're cooked

Quick recipes to survive friendsgivings, potlucks and family dinners

STACIE BOYLS
Arts & Life Writer

As the holiday season approaches, there is one commonality that glues our festive celebrations together: a shared meal with loved ones.

Whether it's helping family prepare for the big meal, a work potluck or a Friendsgiving celebration, we are all subject to cooking or baking a dish and standing before consumers for judgment. For the natural "Iron Chef" type, this is an invigorating challenge and impressive show of skill. For our instant ramen makers and fast-food-reliant friends, this is an absolute nightmare.

Whether you struggle to use appliances more complex than a microwave, need a last-minute dish for a potluck or are stressed hosting your own holiday gathering, here are some recipes that are simple, foolproof and perpetual crowd pleasers that will soften the blow of your holiday cooking obligations.

SWEET POTATO PIE

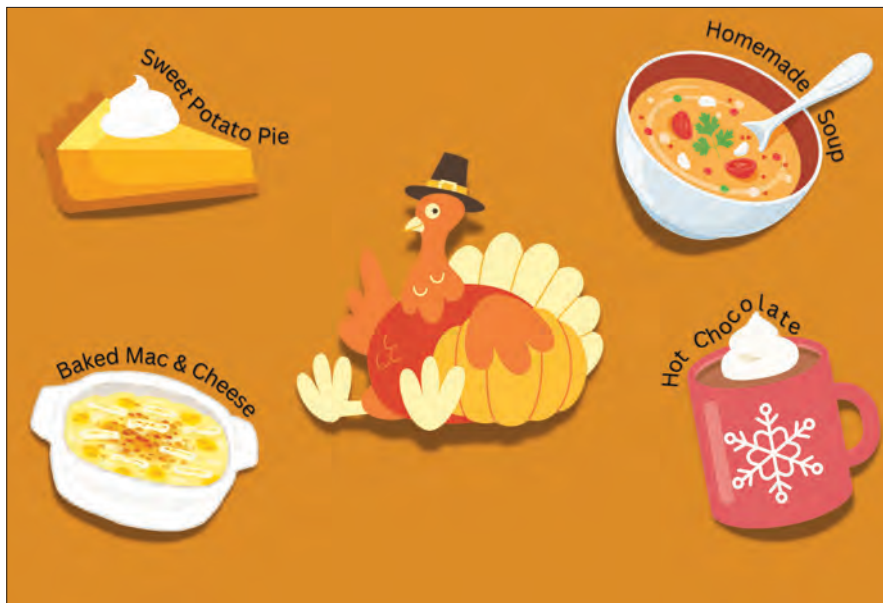
Tired of the constant push for pumpkin pie or sweet potato casserole? Want to show off your contrarian culinary style? Then look no further than a sweet potato pie.

This pie is less familiar than its pumpkin counterpart, making it a unique offering while maintaining holiday spirit. Sweet potatoes are easily accessible and inexpensive, along with other ingredients, such as eggs, butter, sugar, milk and a premade pie crust. This recipe calls for nutmeg, cinnamon and vanilla extract, but don't be afraid of spicing it up yourself if you are feeling adventurous. Cloves, allspice and pumpkin pie spice can offer similar flavor profiles while adding a personal touch. You can even attempt a homemade pie crust if you're a more experienced cook.

This recipe takes less than two hours to complete. It is flexible, fun and fits the mark of a holiday classic.

HOMEMADE SOUP

Soup is typically a welcome dish during the cold months. To make a good soup, you need to balance three main components: broth, vegetables and spices. Of course, countless variations add more things to this list, but for the sake of



Mary Thurmond | Photo Editor

simplicity, here are some components to focus on.

This dish is also very flexible, accommodating dietary restrictions and time constraints. The total cook and prep time ranges from 30 minutes to an hour.

The basic formula for making a soup is to put around one to two cartons of broth in a pot and bring it to a boil. This amount of broth yields enough soup to sufficiently feed five to 10 people.

While the broth is boiling, chop or prepare the vegetables you want in there. Tomatoes, carrots, garlic, peas, okra, potatoes, celery or whatever you have is acceptable. Feel free to measure with your heart. Put starchy vegetables in first so they can cook longer and soften. Almost any typical vegetable will work.

After all your desired veggies are in, add your seasonings and let the soup simmer for 10-15 minutes. Good soup seasonings include, but are not limited to, garlic powder, onion powder, red pepper, Old Bay, Slap Ya Mama, lemon pepper and, of course, salt and pepper. Don't be afraid of spices when making soup; you usually need more than you think.

You can add cream and meat for a more decadent soup or keep it simple with vegetables and clear broth. It is truly up to you. If you want to add chicken, you can cook some separately in a pan or buy pre-shredded rotisserie chicken. After that, voila, you have yourself a cozy

holiday soup.

BAKED MACARONI AND CHEESE

Macaroni and cheese is a perpetual crowd pleaser and a trusted staple among the pickiest eaters. This recipe should take no longer than 45 minutes.

Creating your own displays a balance of sophistication and whimsy, perfect for holiday gatherings. This is another dish you can customize based on your party's preferences. Try different cheeses or different toppings to add a personal touch. Regardless of your kitchen experience, this recipe is beginner-friendly and easy to follow.

HOT CHOCOLATE

If food is not your specialty, opt for a holiday beverage to bring to the function instead. Hot chocolate is another holiday classic that can be easily made at home in a matter of minutes. Plus, you can bring toppings separately, making this a low-effort yet heartfelt contribution.

Hot chocolate can be substituted with alternative milks to maintain a creamy texture while suiting our lactose-intolerant friends. It offers another opportunity to get creative in how you present your beverage. Try different flavor combos, make several batches and curate fun toppings or keep it simple. The choice is yours.