



Sights & Sounds festival scales back for 2024

By Lucciana Choueiry, Jacquelyn Burrer
News Editor, News Reporter

The Sights & Sounds of Christmas festival, traditionally held over eight days across two weeks, will be condensed to a single day for the 2024 season.

Since 1987, the Sights & Sounds of Christmas festival has drawn locals and visitors from across Central Texas with live music, carnival rides and a variety of food vendors. However, Elva Zdeb, president of the board of directors, said the carnival vendor responsible for the rides announced they would not operate this year, prompting the board to pause the festival in June.

“We had a long-time relationship with that carnival and trying to find another carnival; that’s something you do two, three years in advance... we weren’t coming up with any equivalents that would work,” Zdeb said.

The carnival vendor also supplied the money system to the park, called ‘Magic Money.’ That system was used to pay for the entrance fee, to go on rides and how the festival got its percentage proceeds from nonprofits.

“Without that money system they provided, there’s no way to do ticket sales or all the great things we do when it comes to money,” Zdeb said. “Most events pay an additional rate to have a money system but because ours was wrapped into the carnival, we were really blessed, and we didn’t have to do that for so many years.”

If Zdeb had found a new carnival and paid for a new money system, she said the cost outlay would’ve gone to the guests who would’ve had to pay a higher entrance fee.

Organizing the eight-day festival was a major undertaking, Zdeb said, with responsibilities shared between the board of directors and committee members. Despite the workload, all members volunteer their time and are unpaid.

Brian Olson, former president of Sights & Sounds and current ex-officio, said as a member of the board, the financial commitments have changed over the years.

“For an entity of our size that’s over a half a million dollar budgeted event, we’re lucky to just pay our bills and have enough money for next year to reinvest in something small,” Olson said. “We’re not walking away with hundreds of thousands of dollars, so if...you have one bad rain day, you now can’t pay your bills because you need all six days to bring that money.”

SEE HOLIDAYS PAGE 2



Decorations light up the Sights and Sounds festival, Saturday, Dec. 9, 2023, at the San Marcos Plaza Park. MANDALYN LEWALLEN |The University Star

Community bands together, saves Tantra’s live music

By Megan Weise
Life and Arts Reporter

Live outdoor music has been a staple of Tantra SMTX’s culture since its opening in 2005. When Tantra’s ability to continue hosting live music events was threatened, the San Marcos community came together to support.

On Sept. 24, Tantra’s renewed conditional use permit for their live music restricted the

accepted decibel limit to 60 decibels. Its owners attended a city council hearing on Nov. 19 to modify its permit to a decibel limit of 85 decibels before 10 p.m. and 75 decibels after 10 p.m.

“We have been fully adhering to our conditional use permit,” Jack DeCiutiis, the general manager of Tantra, said. “We had a response from law enforcement, but every single time we were within our rights.”

SEE COMMUNITY PAGE 5



The Whips perform for the crowd at Tantra, Saturday, Nov. 9, 2024, near downtown San Marcos. KATHERINE REA |The University Star

Kinne’s extension creates more opportunities for TXST football

By Jackson Kruse
Assistant Sports Editor

Head Coach G.J. Kinne’s new contract could potentially attract more recruits to Texas State.

Texas State President Kelly Damphousse extended Kinne with a five-year, \$5 million contract extension on Dec. 21, 2023. The two-year university president recently took that one step further, announcing a brand new contract for Kinne on Nov. 21, 2024, that extends through 2031 and averages \$2 million annually with potential bonuses, making him the highest paid coach in the Sun Belt. The new contract not only rewards Kinne for his success but also makes San Marcos a more attractive destination for future recruits.

“My family [and I] love it here. [We love] this administration [and] this fan base,” Kinne said. “It’s just a special place [and] I know we can build something special here.”

If a college football program extends its head coach, it signifies that said coach has had success with the team. Also, if a recruit is looking for a place to call home, playing for a program with a successful coach staying for the long run is an enticing offer. This was proven after Kinne’s last extension, when the reigning Sun Belt Player of the Year, redshirt senior quarterback Jordan McCloud,



Texas State Head Coach G.J. Kinne holds the I-35 Showdown trophy with his son after defeating UTSA 49-10, Saturday, Sept. 7, 2024, at UFCU Stadium. SARAH MANNING |The University Star

agreed to join the Maroon and Gold in February 2024.

Like McCloud, sophomore wide receiver Beau Sparks joined Texas State following Kinne’s first contract extension with the university.

SEE FOOTBALL PAGE 6



TXST receives grant for teacher safety training

By Ryan Claycamp
Senior News Reporter

The Texas School Safety Center at Texas State received a \$1.4 million dollar grant to fund training for teacher safety.

The training, which will be available for all K-12 public and charter schools in the state, will focus on teaching school administrators how to handle incidents of teachers being assaulted or harassed.

“We partnered with colleagues at UTSA who have been doing some research on teacher victimization, and from that data, they found that teacher victimization does have an impact on school climate,” Kathy Martinez-Prather, the director of the Texas School Safety Center said.

According to Martinez-Prather, the Texas School Safety Center, located on West Hopkins Street, was created by the Texas Legislature in response to the Columbine High School Shooting. The center’s mission is to oversee all aspects of school safety.

The new training will expand on the research center’s mission of making Texas schools safer.

“Our charge is to provide training, research and technical assistance,” Martinez-Prather said. “We review every emergency operations plan for every school district, charter school and junior Community College.”

A National Institute of Justice (NIJ) study led by the University of Texas San Antonio and Rochester Institute of Technology surveyed 1,628 high school and middle school teachers in Texas. Just 17% of teachers surveyed said they had experienced no form of victimization at the end of the four-year study.

According to Martinez-Prather, teacher victimization affects teacher retention in school districts, but also whether teachers choose to change professions entirely. The NIJ study backs this, with 42% of teachers leaving the profession before the study was completed.

“The researchers concluded that the quality of school decision-making and treatment of teacher victimization reports correlates positively with a substantial increase in teachers’ satisfaction with schools’ responses,” the study wrote.

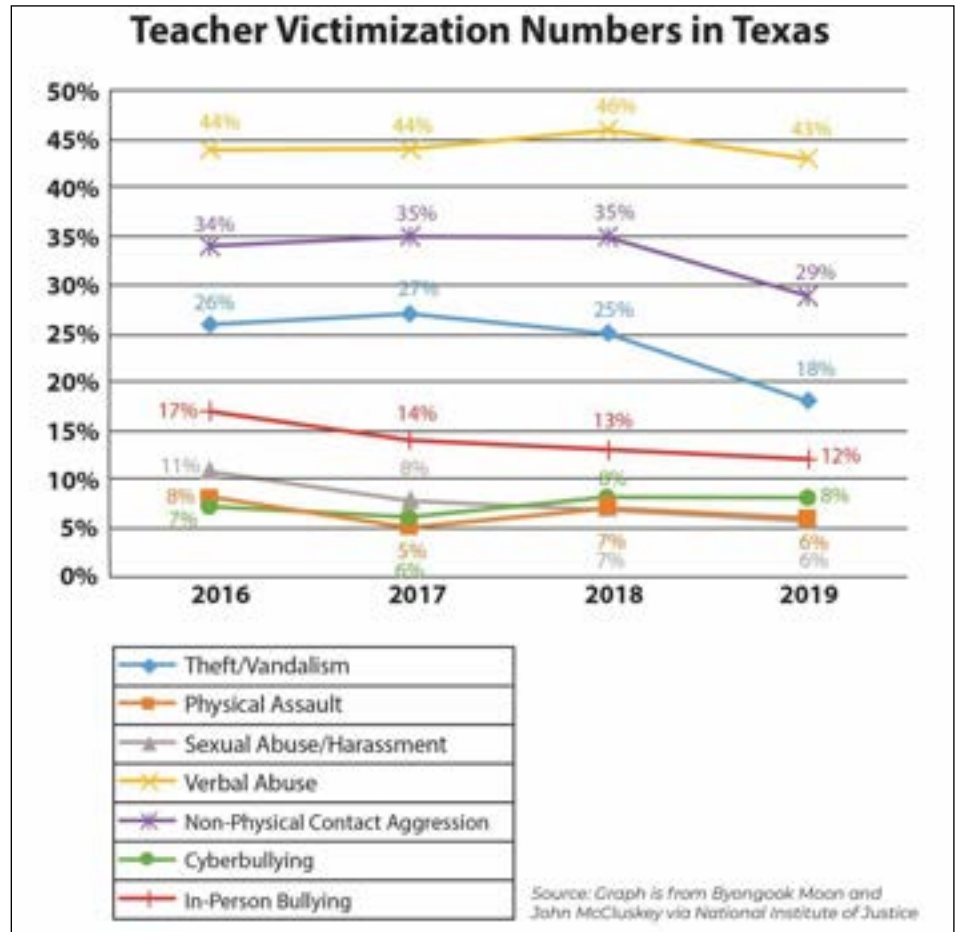
Texas is currently facing a decrease in the number of teachers. The decline has forced some school districts to turn to hiring uncertified teachers. According to a study from the UT School of Education, 52% of newly hired teachers in the 2023 school year were uncertified.

According to a press release emailed to *The Star* by Sen. John Cornyn’s office, some of the grant funding comes from the Department of Justice’s STOP School Violence Program created by the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act.

According to the release, the program behind the grant is aimed at ensuring the safety of students and teachers in response to the Uvalde school shooting.

“The Bipartisan Safer Communities Act is about mental health, school safety and ensuring that the tragedy that struck Uvalde was not in vain,” Cornyn wrote in the release. “I’m grateful this law is giving schools across our state the resources needed to keep students, staff, and teachers safe.”

In the NIJ study, 48% of teachers who were physically victimized reported that they were dissatis-



LUCCIANA CHOUERY | The University Star

fied with the response of school administrators.

The training the Texas School Safety Center is working on aims to improve the experience of teachers when they report victimization by better training administrators to deal with it.

“We’ll work through different scenarios, different situations, different types of victimization. In the training, we’re really focusing on leaning more into educator maltreatment, because it’s not just teachers. We had an incident just recently where it was a school principal that was assaulted,” Martinez-Prather said.

Martinez-Prather said they will check back in with school districts

after they have received the training to see how it is working, and make any necessary changes to improve the training going forward.

“What we’re hoping to collect is some baseline data to see if there are improvements in attitudes and perceptions about how district and campus administrators are addressing this issue,” Martinez-Prather said.

Martinez-Prather said all training through the Texas School Safety Center is free to all K-12 public and charter schools in Texas. She also said the registration to receive the training is currently open for schools.

FROM FRONT HOLIDAYS



A star lights up the Sights & Sounds festival, Saturday, Dec. 9, 2023, at the San Marcos Plaza.

MANDALYN LEWALLEN | The University Star

One major change to this year’s festival is its shift to a free, single-day event dubbed Hometown Holidays on Dec. 14.

In previous years, the park was enclosed by a mile and a half of fencing with security provided for four weeks. This year, security will be in place for the single festival day only, with no fencing around the park.

“Without having fencing, then how do we charge [attendees] \$5 to come in when you can come in any way you want?” Zdeb said. “So then the next feat was ‘if we’re going to have a zero cost event, then how do we make enough money to pay for the

expenses?’ and that’s where we rely on sponsorships.”

In addition to cutting costs on security, Zdeb said the festival is also saving on infrastructure, goods and insurance – spending just 30% of what is typically allocated for Sights & Sounds.

Olson said the city now requires Sights & Sounds to acquire temporary food permits 60 days in advance of the event rather than the standard requirement of 72 hours.

“When I was president, we could submit our health permits the week prior to the event opening, and they’d come and do their surveys,” Olson said. “That envelope has continued to be pushed out further and further and further for us versus a normal event, and they use the excuse of our size.”

The one-day event will kick off with the 5k Jingle Bell Run at 9 a.m. and run until 9 p.m., ending with a performance from The Spazmatics.

Zdeb said the festival’s light displays are a cornerstone of its appeal. Sights & Sounds receives a city grant aimed at boosting tourism, a portion of which is specifically allocated to funding these lights.

“There will be lights but like the big star, the carriage, the big ornaments on the ground, we won’t have those, because the [carnival company] that we use, would have to set those up,” Zdeb said.

For resident Michael Pinkston, the festival became part of his Christmas tradition. Pinkston attended his first Sights & Sounds festival in 2002 and he has seen the festival grow over the years.

“It used to be very small and just focused on the citizens and just for the children but over time, that changed,” Pinkston said. “One year they put the fences around it and started charging admission, which I get. But then they started doing the carnival and once that was introduced, that just got bigger and bigger until now.”

Plans for the 2025 festival include preserving traditions while rethinking key attractions, according to Zdeb.

“We’re going to try and make the best decisions with what we have available so that our community doesn’t have to incur a lot of additional costs,” Zdeb said.

Scan the QR code to access the Hometown Holidays schedule.



THE UNIVERSITY STAR

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203 Pleasant St.
San Marcos, TX 78666
(512) 245-3487

History: *The University Star* is the student newspaper of Texas State University and is published every Tuesday of the spring and fall and once a month in the summer semesters. It is distributed on campus and throughout San Marcos at 8 a.m. on publication days with a distribution of 3,500. Printing is by the New Braunfels Herald-Zeitung.



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Publication Info

Copyright: Copyright Tuesday, December 3, 2024. All copy, photographs and graphics appearing in *The University Star* are the exclusive property of *The University Star* and may not be reproduced without the expressed written consent of the editor-in-chief.

Deadlines: Letters to the Editor or any contributed articles are due on Monday the week prior to publication.

Corrections: Any errors that are in the pages of *The University Star* and brought to our attention will be corrected as soon as possible.

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Hays County general election experiences decrease in voter turnout percentage

By Ryan Claycamp
Senior News Reporter

The Nov. 5 general election, which included races for federal and local offices, saw a 68.1% voter turnout in Hays County.

The turnout this year was lower than the previous presidential election in 2020, which had a 71.58% turnout rate. Despite the lower turnout percentage, there were 16,720 more votes this year.

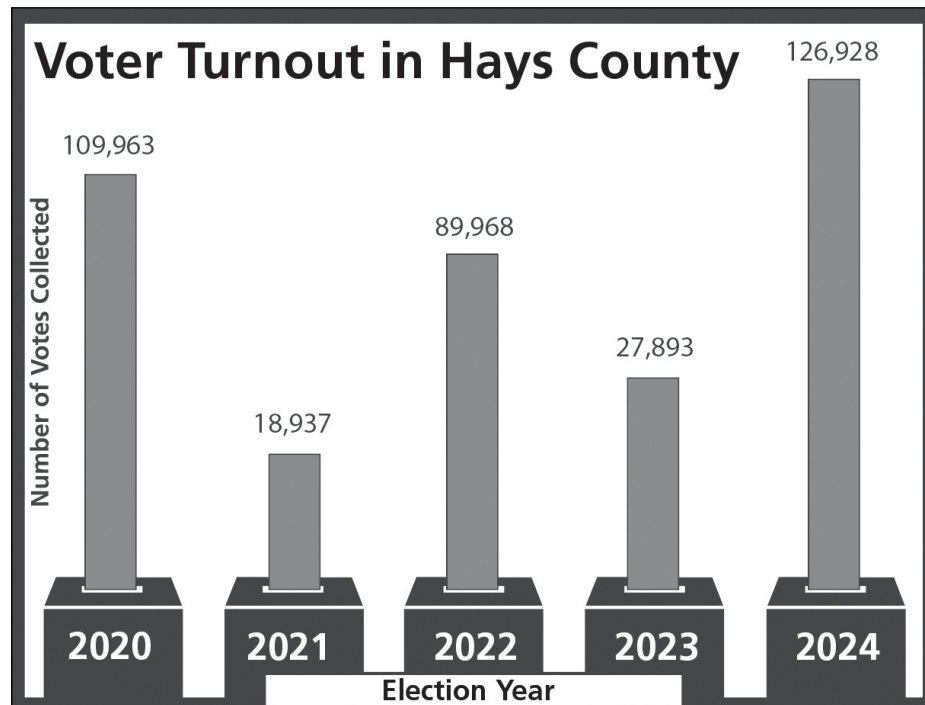
In Hays County, voter turnout is calculated using voter registration figures. A decrease in turnout but an increase in voter registration indicates the number of newly registered voters outpaced the growth in ballots cast.

“I would say there’s been a lot of effort... in the last several years to really focus on voter registration,” Roger Abshire, political science professor of instruction, said. “Registering involves just filling out a form. Whether a person is more inclined to exercise their vote [once registered]... there seems to be a disconnect between those two things.”

Hays County’s trend reflects the statewide trend, where despite record levels of voter registration, there was a lower overall turnout.

Besides registration efforts making a difference, Hays County has experienced rapid growth since 2020. According to data from the Census Bureau, Hays County’s population increased by nearly 40,000 people from April 2020 to July 2023.

The University of Florida’s Election Lab reported voter turnout is trending upward nationwide. Abshire argued 2024 has continued that trend, with 2020’s turnout being a statistical outlier.



KAYLEE MARSH | The University Star

“[Turnout] has been trending up very slowly. There was a big uptick in 2020, it was the highest presidential turnout rate in a long time,” Abshire said. “So it may not be so much that 2024 was abnormally low... it might just be that 2020 was just really big.”

There are many factors contributing to lower voter turnout in an election year. According to an article from The University of Rochester, some of these reasons can include party affiliation, timing and weather.

Texas has not elected a Democrat to a statewide office since 1994, meaning the state has been reliably Republican at the state and federal level for 30 consecutive years.

According to Abshire, media coverage focuses on statewide and federal elections, which may not be competitive, but often ignore local elections. He said that may contribute

to voters feeling like their vote doesn’t matter.

“When you get reporting on politics, it’s often the national perspective, even [in] local newspapers,” Abshire said. “Even within Texas, there are competitive races, especially if you go to local races.”

While the turnout was down from 2020, the turnout was significantly higher than the 2023 constitutional amendments election and 2022 midterms. The 2023 midterms had a 15.17% voter turnout and 2022 had 52.81% of registered voters cast a ballot.

“Low turnout is most pronounced in primary elections, off-year elections for state legislators and local elections,” FairVote wrote.

Abshire said that another factor that may discourage voting is the “cost” of voting, such as time spent researching

information about candidates.

“There’s an information cost to voting and that’s one of the biggest costs of voting that we talk about in political science,” Abshire said. “The cost of voting, the actual time and effort that it takes to go to the polling place, means that a lot of people... have to make the choice of about whether it’s worth going to vote.”

There are several ideas for how to increase voter turnout. Some ideas include making Election Day a national holiday, making voter registration easier and more. According to Abshire, those efforts may help, but age and education are the largest determining factors of voting habits, rather than ease of access.

“The more education you have the higher your turnout is. We’re talking about a 50- point spread. In 2022 [people with] no high school education had 20% turnout rate, post grads had 70%,” Abshire said.

The Hays County Elections Office did not respond to a request for comment.

Scan the QR code for the official Hays County election results



Dining tries to diversify for international students

By News Staff

Texas State’s record 1,431 international students this fall has caused an increase in the demand for more diverse dining options.

Some international students have criticized the dining options on campus. Archana Aryal, pre-nursing freshman from Nepal, said Texas State does not have enough diverse options in its dining halls to accommodate the growing number of international students.

“Because Texas State is welcoming so many international students they need to take into account their diet,” Aryal said. “I wish there were more options so students would feel more comfortable.”

Yuno Momma, international studies sophomore from Japan described Revolution Noodle in the LBJ Student Center as “overpriced” and “inauthentic.”

While disappointed by the available options, Momma is glad the university is making an effort to provide more international cuisine.

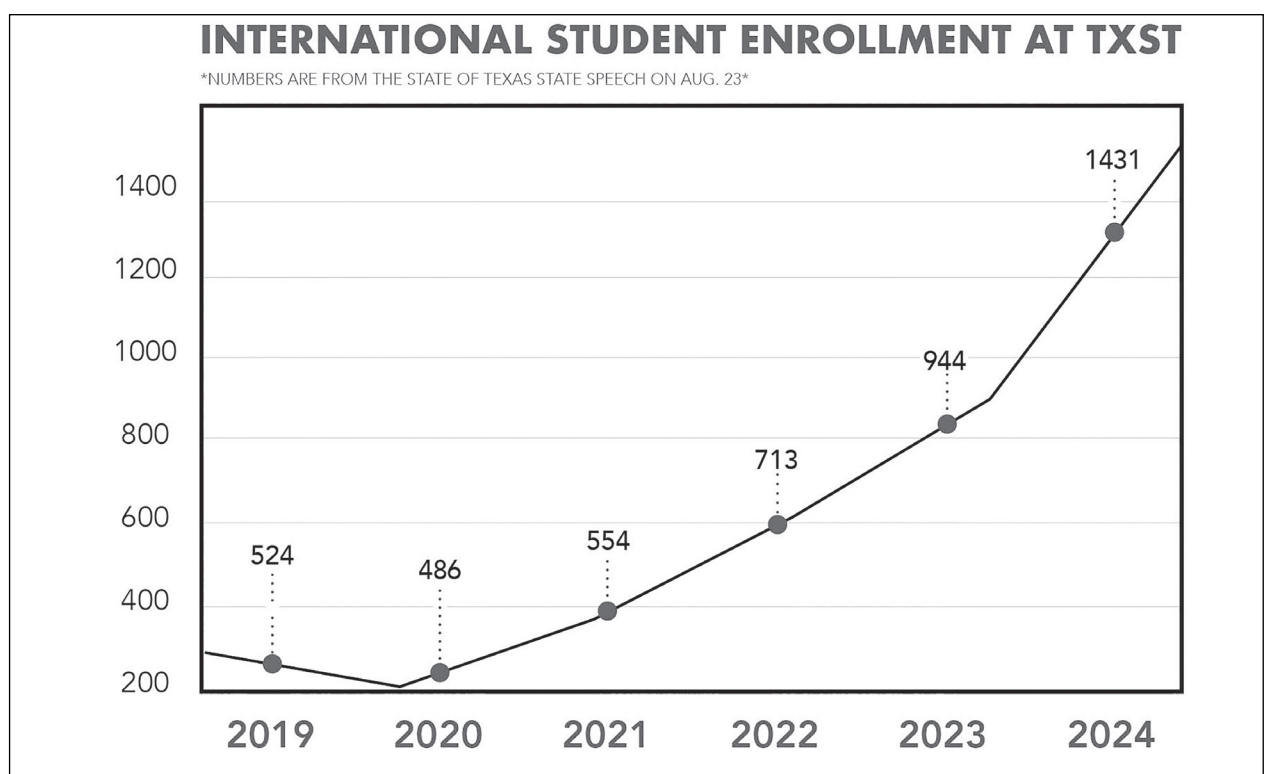
“I have friends at other universities in the U.S. and they don’t have any Japanese restaurants. Maybe I’m lucky to have at least one,” Momma said.

Momma said that he has opted to buy ingredients locally to make meals in his dorm.

Aryal said she also had issues with Texas State’s meal plans. The university requires any freshman living on campus to purchase a meal plan, which ranges from \$1,495-\$2,350 per semester. Aryal said that is financially unsustainable for her as she doesn’t have many options to choose from on campus.

“I have the bronze meal plan and it’s the cheapest one but it’s still so much money and I don’t have many options to choose from as a vegetarian,” Aryal said. “I think [Texas State] needs to look into the needs of international students so they are comfortable purchasing a meal plan.”

Texas State does have a way for students to give feedback through the Food Service Survey. According to Chin Hong Chua, Chartwells’ resident district manager, the survey runs every October.



CARSON RODGERS | The University Star

Chua also said that students can give recipes to dining hall chef’s to cook for them.

“The challenge we face is sometimes the ingredients are hard to source, or sometimes it could be the equipment,” Chua said.

Chua said the university is working to accommodate the dietary needs and desires of international students and one way they are doing this is by hiring international students to work in the dining halls. He said bringing those students in allows them to share recipes from their home country with dining staff.

According to Chua, the Den serves halal food and the LBJ Student Center has options for Indian and Nepalese foods. The university is trying to expand their offerings with future expansions to the on-campus dining system, Chua said.

“We are planning for a third dining hall,” Chua

said. “We are looking at putting a tandoori oven in the dining hall. A tandoori oven is widely used in the Middle East, [so you] can make more authentic meat or naan bread.”

Chua said dining staff will work with students when possible to meet necessary dietary restrictions, such as for halal or kosher foods.

“I believe we also have a dietary form for [students] to fill out,” Chua said. “Then our campus chef will reach out to the person and walk that walk.”

While there are no current dining facilities that are allergen-free, Chua said they are hoping to put an allergy-free serving station in the planned new dining hall located by LBJ Student Center.

“Because Texas State is welcoming so many international students they need to take into account their diet. I wish there were more options so students would feel more comfortable,”

Archana Aryal
Pre-nursing freshman from Nepal



Opinions in The University Star are not necessarily those of our entire publication, Texas State University's administration, Board of Regents, School of Journalism and Mass Communication or Student Publications Board.

Markets on The Square are harming local businesses

By Jayce Jackson
Opinions Columnist

Saturdays are meant to be the busiest days for many downtown San Marcos businesses, but several shops have been negatively impacted due to markets on The Square switching from monthly to weekly.

From thrift stores to apothecaries, small businesses find themselves competing with the Saturday markets, which include the Vanilla Bean Market, Art Squared Market and seasonal festivals such as the Tamale Fest and Merry On The Square.

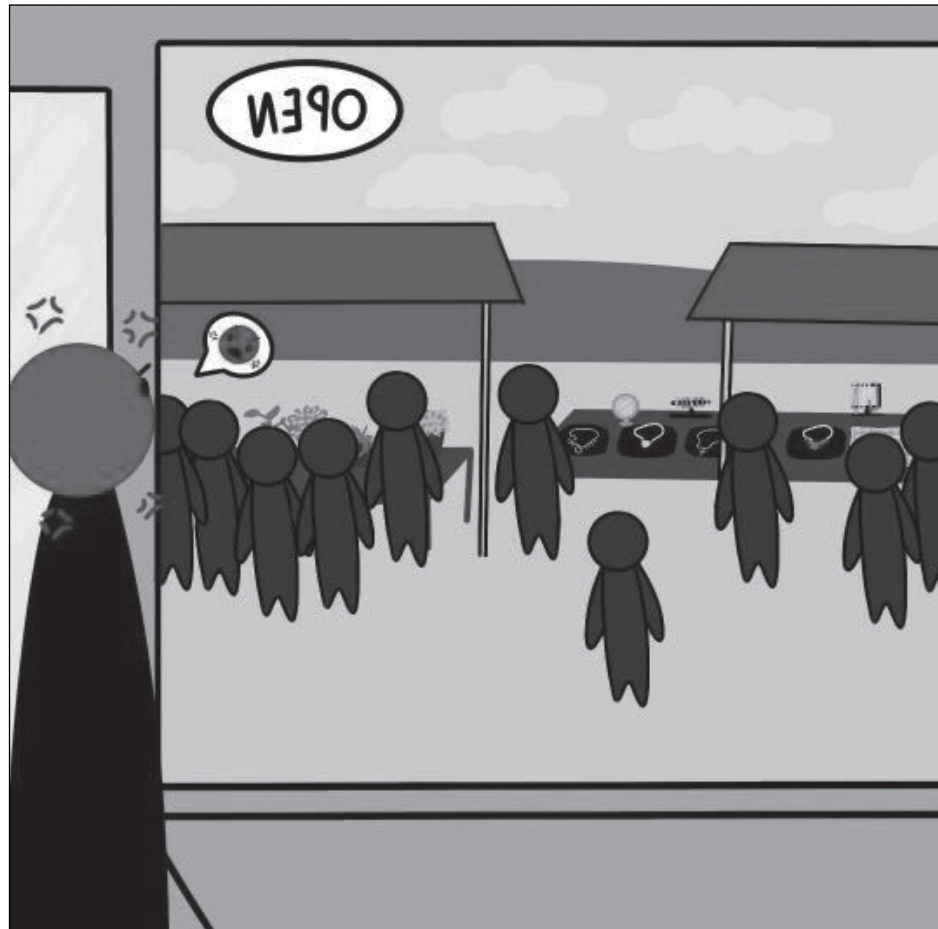
One negatively impacted local business is a vintage clothing store named Vagabond. David Marrs has owned his business for over 20 years.

"It kills [my sales]," Marrs said. "They're not bringing anything to me; the city says by having them there, it's helping the economy around here."

Business owners are told by those who organize the markets they may be good for the economy and bring customers into the downtown area to trickle off and visit local businesses, but that's not what business owners are seeing.

"Why are you hurting businesses that are here contributing to the economy every day?" Marrs said. "You may get a little sugar rush, but [the markets] are crippling the businesses that are here every day, and people like me who have been here every day for 23 years."

Another issue surrounding the



ABBY FUNDERBURK |The University Star

markets' economy is many vendors come from outside San Marcos, meaning the money they make does not circulate back to local businesses, as they would return to their cities to spend most of the money there.

"What are they contributing? Something to the community? No, not really," Marrs said. "They're competing with me and taking money away from me. That is a percentage of

money that I would add back to the community and they are not."

It is unlikely vendors are paying San Marcos taxes unless they live in the city, which is something local businesses have to do. According to Tax Hero, businesses in San Marcos must pay a sales tax rate of 8.25%. However, vendors still have to pay taxes to the state comptroller every quarter based on sales, as well as to

the IRS, given they follow these rules.

"[Our taxes] go to the schools and upkeep of the roads," Marrs said. "I know a bunch of these [vendors] don't live here, so they're pulling from [San Marcos]."

Vendors and customers of the markets affect local businesses in other ways, such as taking up the limited parking spaces downtown that could be used for customers of the shops, and devaluing products sold at local businesses.

The city tends to suggest local businesses should start vending at the markets too, but many don't believe it's affordable or fair that they should have to compete in the first place, due to already having to pay for and upkeep a brick and mortar business.

Many local businesses don't believe markets should stop altogether, but they do want solutions to be implemented. Some solutions could be decreasing the frequency of markets, creating parking specified for vendors and market customers and more signage promoting local businesses.

While the downtown markets are a fun addition to the community, local businesses don't deserve to have their sales negatively impacted. The markets should not end, but mindful solutions must be implemented.

-Jayce Jackson is a journalism sophomore

Hazlewood benefits should extend to study abroad programs

By Emma Bean
Opinions Contributor

Texas State's faculty-led study abroad programs are a popular choice for students, but for many, the cost is prohibitive. These programs, which can cost up to \$6,300, include about \$1,845 in tuition fees — an expense many students cannot afford without additional financial aid.

While the Hazlewood Act provides educational benefits for eligible Texas veterans, it cannot be applied to study abroad programs.

The Hazlewood Act is a benefit program available to veterans in Texas who have served at least 181 days of active duty and were Texas residents when they enlisted. Before veterans can use their Hazlewood benefits, they must first exhaust any other educational benefits they are eligible for.

The Hazlewood Act can also be passed onto a veteran's child or spouse, making it an incredibly useful tool for veterans and their families. However, this benefit cannot be applied to study abroad programs at Texas State.

Study abroad programs can have great impacts on a student's success in their future endeavors. According to a national study done by IES Abroad, a not-for-profit internship provider, 50% of alumni felt a study abroad program helped them get their first job out of school.

Not only do study abroad programs look great on resumes, they also provide real-life experiences difficult

to find elsewhere. *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad* wrote, "Disciplinary learning in another cultural context can correct culturally ingrained research biases. Students gain knowledge difficult to capture without the cultural exposure provided by the experience abroad, which informs their work with nuances of first-hand research, moving it beyond the intellectual."

Learning how to navigate others' opinions, lifestyles and cultures is a crucial part of joining the professional workforce. This is an opportunity missed by too many students who do not have the means to spend over \$6,000 for a semester abroad.

John Connors, a construction science and management freshman and a dependent of a U.S. veteran, is one of those students. Connors said while he would love to study abroad, his family's financial situation makes that impossible without the help of the Hazlewood Act.

"I would absolutely consider studying abroad if Hazlewood covered the cost of tuition," Connors said. "Coming from a family without much disposable income, I'll never have that opportunity otherwise. If Hazlewood covered a portion of the cost that would certainly allow me to be able to explore that possibility."

The Hazlewood Act provides 150 credit hours to either a veteran or a dependent of that veteran, to be used at any public Texas institution. Because of these benefits, it



AUTUMN POTTER |The University Star

does not make sense that the Hazlewood Act does not translate to study abroad programs.

Texas State offers numerous types of aid for study abroad programs, including scholarships, grants and opportunities for tuition waived entirely. These recourses are available to any student who applies, making education abroad possible. Depending on how much aid a student is eligible for, students are only required to pay \$200 upfront, as an application fee. If that student is accepted, that fee is applied to the total cost of the program.

According to Texas State's undergraduate website, the average cost for a 12-hour semester is more than \$3,000, while tuition for a study

abroad program is less than \$2,000. Since the study abroad courses are still part of a public Texas institution, it seems logical to allow Hazlewood benefits to apply to these programs as well.

While the Hazlewood Act is a significant privilege, expanding its flexibility to cover study abroad tuition would open new educational opportunities for students who rely on this aid. It would allow them to gain invaluable global experience that they might otherwise miss.

-Emma Bean is a public relations junior



The University Star welcomes Letters to the Editor from its readers. All submissions are reviewed and considered by the Editor in Chief and Opinions Editor for publication. Not all letters are guaranteed for publication.

‘Lead with love’: salon owner creates safe space for San Marcos

By **Jamin Ochoa**
Life and Arts Reporter

A small salon across from The Square became a safe space for San Marcos residents by giving back to the community in multiple ways, including accepting shoe donations and offering donation-based haircuts.

Mari Perez, local business owner, prioritizes more than just business with their salon Mari’s Safe Space. They opened their doors to accepting shoe donations for the With Love, San Marcos shoe drive and will offer a pay-what-you-can day on Dec. 4. To Perez, their focus lies in the ability to give back to San Marcos residents, especially the LGBTQ+ community.

“It’s one thing to call yourself a safe space, but I think giving back to [the] community is going to help foster more safety,” Perez said. “Not only am I your local hairstylist, but I want to help people [who] don’t feel comfortable going anywhere else.”

The With Love, San Marcos shoe drive is a joint effort with a local mutual aid organization under the same name. New and gently used shoes and socks donated to the salon are accepted to give back to the community. The drive will directly distribute the shoes to the homeless people in the San Marcos area following the drive.

Perez opened their doors to the donation bin when they felt no one else would, and according to friend Rachel Valenz, digital marketing manager, an act of kindness like this isn’t out of the ordinary for Perez.

“Mari’s drive to give back shines in every aspect of who they are,” Valenz said. “Beyond their work, they consistently educate themselves on issues that matter and advocate for the greater good.”

To Perez, not all business interactions should be transactional, which is why they will offer “pay-what-you-can” cuts on Dec. 4. They took

inspiration after seeing a social media post of a hairstylist in Oregon doing similar work and wanted to bring it to San Marcos. Perez plans on offering a donation-based day every couple of months to help those who can’t afford a regularly priced haircut. They will use any donations from it to buy new shoes for the shoe drive, as this is how they can help foster a sense of community.

“People are calling me radical, but I just want people to eat, have somewhere to sleep and not be hate-crime,” Perez said. “I’m just trying to push my own agenda of community and caring for each other, and caring for people that just deserve basic necessities.”

Care for people is what started Mari’s Safe Space. Perez knew queer people don’t feel comfortable going just anywhere for a haircut, inspiring them to make a safe space for those who don’t. Perez decorated the space to feel like people were going to a friend’s apartment. They offer snacks and drinks, fidget toys and a TV to keep clients entertained. The atmosphere keeps clients like Emma Stewart, psychology junior, coming back to Perez’s business.

“The space is bright, fun and makes you feel so safe right away, and that’s exactly how Mari is too,”



Mari’s Safe Space owner Mari Perez poses in front of their station, Saturday, Nov. 16, 2024, at Mari’s Safe Space in San Marcos.
JAMIN OCHOA | The University Star

Stewart said. “I’m so thankful to have a stylist who truly cares about their clients.”

To Perez, all this work including shoe drives, donation-based haircuts and creating a safe space is a part of just being a good neighbor to fellow San Marcos residents.

“Lead with love, compassion, empathy and remember that the people around you are not the people to blame for what’s happening,” Perez said. “As long as it’s actively being worked on, things are slowly going to change for the better.”

‘I’m following my dreams’: TXST artists explore life and subconscious

By **Trae Solis**
Life and Arts Contributor

Two collections of paintings, pictures, sculptures and ceramics will allow senior students to tell both grounded and bizarre stories.

The first exhibition, “When All is Said and Done,” opened Dec. 2 at the Joann Cole Mitte building and will be on view till Dec. 6. The second, “Surreal Slumbers,” opens on Dec. 5 at The Oasis in apartment 632. Both receptions will provide guests with food and drink.

According to Katie Hernandez, studio art senior, “When All is Said and Done” showcased highly personal and narrative works from each artist. For Hernandez, her pieces explore a relationship with religion.

“I take pieces of cardboard, stitch them all together and I collage on top of that,” Hernandez said. “The torn edges: that’s kind of representing the doubts and questions that I have, and then stitching



Studio art senior Katie Denson installs work for the “When All is Said and Done” senior student thesis exhibition, Sunday, Dec. 1, 2024, at the JCM Flex Gallery.
LUCAS KRAFT | The University Star

it back together, that signifies how I’m always going back to my faith. It’s a way of repairing that relationship — even though I have questions about it, I’m always going back to it.”

Hernandez’s pieces often consist of charcoal and collage. Asia Estelle, photography senior, used photography and ceramics to convey her themes.

“I make work about Blackness, about my culture, the Black experience,” Estelle said. “That’s how I exist. That’s how I present to the world. It’s something that I’m passionate about making work about; representing myself or being able to add to the many definitions of the ways that Blackness already exists and has been represented.”

While “When All is Said and Done” explored artists’ relationships with subjects like culture and religion, according to Hope McNabb, studio art senior, “Surreal Slumbers” will explore the relationships people have when they’re asleep.

Scan the QR code to continue reading the story.



FROM FRONT COMMUNITY



The Whips performs for the crowd at Tantra, Saturday, Nov. 9, 2024, in downtown San Marcos.
KATHERINE REA | The University Star

According to DeCiutiis, a very small number of people were upset about Tantra’s noise levels. When the San Marcos Police Department addressed the community members’ concerns, Tantra was still within its decibel limit. Following the risk of Tantra’s live music possibly getting shut down, the community came together to show their support.

“We had at least 200 emails to the city, and I think we had at least 50 people speak at the public hearing,” DeCiutiis said. “So, we were there for about three and a half hours just voicing our love for Tantra.”

With the support of the community, Tantra’s conditional use permit was modified to support its outdoor live music with a 7-0 vote in the San Marcos City Council. Justin James Bridges, a musician who often performs at Tantra with his 7-year-old daughter, Kali Bridges, attended the city council meeting, where Kali stood in front of the council to speak.

“They voted unanimously to save [the live music],” Justin said. “And so after the vote, three of the councilmen came up to Kali and told her that they changed their vote because of her speech.”

In her speech, Kali played her harmonica for the council and followed her performance by explaining how Tantra is one of the few places where children can perform due to its family-friendly atmosphere.

“She [was] like, ‘I think that we should save Tantra in the music scene because we need to,’” Justin said when recalling Kali’s speech. “We need to bring the music back to San Marcos.”

Tantra hosts live music anywhere between three to five times a week. Every Wednesday, it hosts a Bluegrass night, which DeCiutiis said is the best community event it has. Many of the bands who regularly play at Tantra voiced their concerns at the public hearing or emailed the city of San Marcos in opposition to the issue.

“There’s not a lot of sober spaces,” Justin said. “There’s not a lot of places where you can hang out

and get food and drink and be sober, and we need more places like that.”

Samantha Radloff, a Tantra employee, said it was scary when Tantra’s live music was threatened because she could have lost her job. With the threat that Tantra could have lost its ability to host live music, it would have likely closed, and the community formed during the live music events would be lost. With the city council’s unanimous vote, Tantra’s live music can continue.

“I feel so much more in the community in San Marcos than I ever did before,” Radloff said. “I feel like I have a family around me all the time... Everybody knows everybody, and I feel like I have made so many friends from working [at Tantra.]”

Tantra’s live music was saved with the community’s support. Justin said building a good music scene is difficult, but Tantra maintained that despite its adversities.

“I’m just glad the music’s there,” Justin said. “So go support local music, make sure you go out, go pay the cover and go see some bands.”



San Marcos River Rollers founding member retires

By **Brendan Fielding**
Sports Reporter

Early November 2024, River Ridge Park watched the San Marcos River Rollers play their final game of the roller derby season. As the season ended, so did the career of one of the River Rollers' final three founding members, Angelica Hogan, or as the roller derby world knows her, Arch Angel.

Founded in 2017, the San Marcos River Rollers is a skater-owned non-profit organization aimed at creating a supportive community that encourages strength and teamwork. According to founding member Rebecca Hudson, the league allows

women equal opportunities to earn virtuous qualities through competition.

"Our country is built on this game of football, and lots of boys get to play that at a young age. They learn communication, they learn how to lose [and] they learn how to win," Hudson said. "It sets them up for the rest of their lives."

According to Hogan, joining the River Rollers was part of an effort to find something that could beat the mundane and repetitious life routine many face. In doing so, she found a place where she could take back some satisfaction through her roller derby alias' strength.

"I needed that break. I

needed something to break up the routine of 'go to work, go home, be a mom,'" Hogan said. "So, when I saw [the River Rollers], I saw this opportunity to kind of step back out and take something back for me."

Hudson agrees roller derby fosters a healthy mind, and added that having something physical to provide a mental release brings her back to the sport time after time.

"For me, why I derby, [it's for] that release, man," Hudson said. "I'm like an adrenaline junkie for sure. I found it in derby and I just can't let it go."

Through countless derby matches and even a compound fracture in her ankle followed by self-administered physical therapy, Hogan said her experience and career on the roller derby track have filled her with profound confidence.

"When I came back on the track [for] my first practice after that [injury], it was like 'I am unstoppable,'"



River Rollers Founding Member Angelica Hogan skates forward, Saturday, Oct. 26, 2024, at River Ridge Park
BRENDAN FIELDING | The University Star

Hogan said.

According to Hogan, her injury comeback isn't the only thing that gives her confidence. When she transforms into Arch Angel on the track, a new level of empowerment overtakes her, she said.

"I found this playful person I could be where I can dress up and kind of create this whole other character," Hogan said. "What I found was, when I play, she was fierce, and just tough and mean on the track

and all the things that I wish I could be in my [day-to-day]."

Though her reputation precedes her in the world of roller derby competition, Hudson said the time has come to shift her focus away from the River Rollers.

"I may be hanging up my skates, but I'm still going to skate around town," Hogan said. "I may come back, who knows? But I've loved the journey."

“When I came back on the track [for] my first practice after that [injury], it was like ‘I am unstoppable.’”

Angelica Hogan
San Marcos River Rollers Founding Member

TXST soccer says bye to history-setting seniors

By **Candice Gilmore**
Sports Reporter

Texas State soccer finished its 2024 season with a series of accolades and broken records, making it to the Sun Belt Conference Championship for the first time since 2018. At the end of the season, Bobcat soccer said goodbye to nine seniors, six of whom spent their entire collegiate careers at Texas State.

A few accolades include the Bobcats seeing their first positive outcome in program history against a ranked team with a draw against #13 Oklahoma State, maintaining their longest win streak since 2018 and appearing in the Sun Belt Championship.

The list of seniors includes goalkeeper Katelyn Chrisman, midfielders Madi Goss and Mya Ulloa, forward Zoe Junior and defenders Kennley Bradley, Anna Dunch, Angela Gatto, Lucy Hart and Haley Shaw.

Head Coach Steve Holeman said this group of seniors greatly impacted this season's success and has redefined the program entirely.

"The seniors have meant everything to this program," Holeman said. "They're leaving a legacy. They set a standard for years to come. The bar and expectations are now very high because once you achieve a certain



Texas State players celebrate forward freshman Sydney Bassa's (20) goal during the game against Incarnate Word, Sunday, Aug. 25, 2024, at Bobcat Soccer Complex.

MANDALYN LEWALLEN | The University Star

level; anything less is obvious."

Six seniors started in all 22 regular-season games this season and contributed 39 out of the 43 goals scored this season. While at Texas State, the entire group of nine seniors accumulated 20,442 minutes of total game time.

"I wouldn't give my time at Texas State or playing soccer up for the world," Bradley said. "It has shaped

me and given me so many lessons to take, even just beyond soccer. My time here was extraordinary."

Bradley stated her success in her final two years fills her with gratitude while still leaving her feeling bitter-sweet. While positively reaffirming her 18 years of playing soccer, the idea of closing this chapter in her life left a lingering feeling of sorrow throughout the season.

"It's helped me to feel like a part of something that's bigger than just a soccer team," Bradley said. "It's just helped me to feel overall happy and super thankful."

Ulloa, a fifth-year senior, said the seniors' motivations and drives were high at the start of the season compared to past ones, cultivating a hunger to make her mark in her final year.

"We were playing for something for our last year, we wanted to do something we had never done," Ulloa said. "Something lit up in us and we wanted to make it a good team for the younger players. I wanted to do something we had never done, we told we told each other we would make it, and we did."

Holeman stated this group of seniors has impacted his approach to coaching, emphasizing the need for strong team chemistry.

"They've brought a lot of lessons from on the field and off the field and showed how important real relationships are," Holeman said. "We worked really hard on our team chemistry because when you care about each other off the field and in the locker room, you see success more success on the field."

Texas State soccer will return for the 2025 season in August 2025.

FROM FRONT FOOTBALL

"[Kinne is a] great players coach and I'm just blessed to be able to play for him," Sparks said.

With Kinne's extension, young players like Sparks are more likely to stay with the Bobcats in the future. When Duke University Head Coach Mike Elko left the Blue Devils for Texas A&M after the 2023 season, key players like graduate student defensive lineman Aeneas Peebles, senior linebacker Dorian Mausl, senior quarterback Riley Leonard and more departed for other programs. The fact that Kinne remains in San Marcos creates a stable environment for the team.

A domino effect leading to the landing of highly sought-after recruits has a high chance of occurring for Texas State, as the young players wanting to stay with the coach give recruits a reason to think the program is worth participating in. The hope for Damphousse and the football program is that by giving Kinne an even larger contract extension than before, more recruits will want to move to San Marcos to represent Texas State.

Of course, Kinne's monster extension is only the cherry on top of displaying an attractive football program to future recruits. On Dec. 8, the Bobcats will find out who they will face in their second bowl game in history. Kinne brought them to their first bowl game in program history last year, defeating Rice University 45-21. On top of the success on the

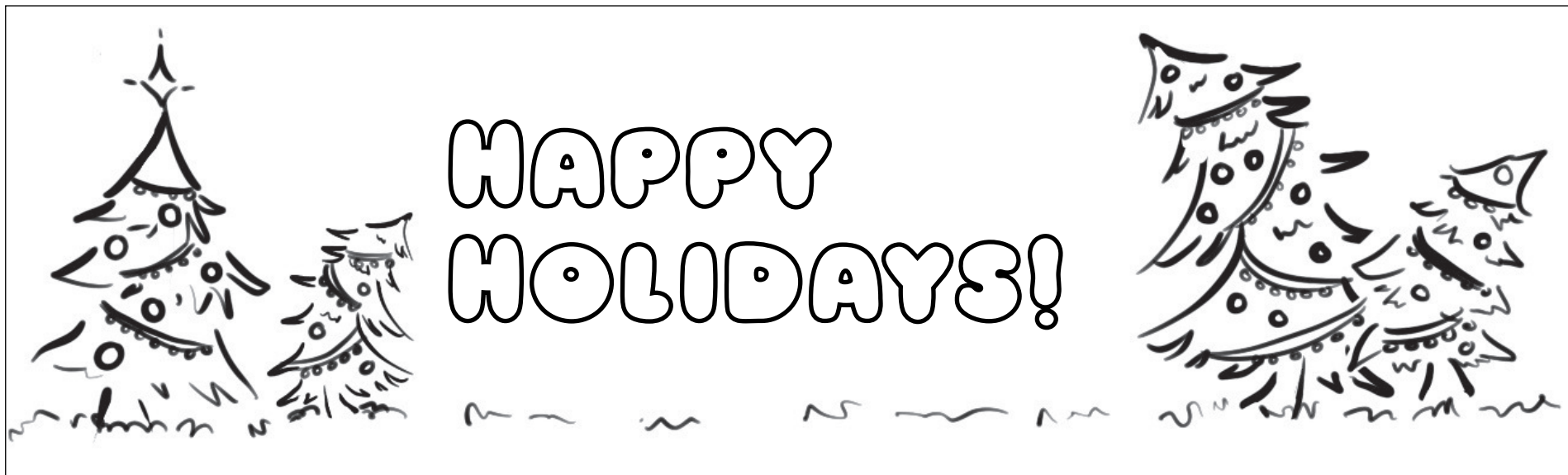


Texas State Head Coach G.J. Kinne holds the I-35 Showdown trophy after defeating UTSA, Saturday, Sept. 7, 2024, at UFCU Stadium.

MEG BOLES | The University Star

field, the recent partnership with University Federal Credit Union in addition to 26 players being signed with Maroon & Golden Collective are among the many incentives that come with joining the Texas State football program.

"The culture is heading in the right direction," Kinne said. "We got a bunch of really good players and a really good coaching staff."



SUDOKU

Game by sudoku-solutions.com

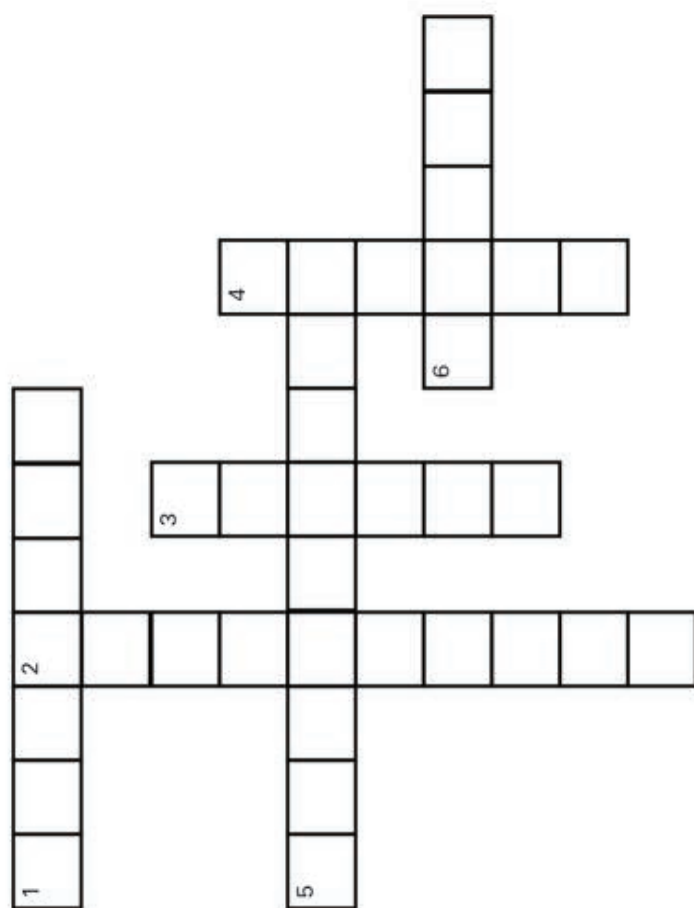
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DECORATE A SNOWMAN



7	8	4	1	5	2	3	6	9
2	6	1	4	3	9	7	5	8
3	5	9	7	8	6	1	4	2
6	9	5	3	7	8	2	1	4
1	3	8	5	2	4	9	7	6
4	7	2	9	6	1	8	3	5
9	4	3	8	1	5	6	2	7
5	1	6	2	9	7	4	8	3
8	2	7	6	4	3	5	9	1

- Word Scramble**
- (1) Pecan, (2) Turkey,
 - (3) Apple Pie, (4) Wishbone
 - (5) Gratitude, (6) Green Beans
- Crossword**
- (1) Friday, (2) Maecy's,
 - (3) Ham, (4) Stuffing,
 - (5) Peanuts, (6) Gravy



WORD SCRAMBLE

Happy Holidays

- 1. OSTY _____
- 2. IOGOL _____
- 3. EOGNG _____
- 4. IENDERRAGB _____
- 5. LEWFSNAOK _____
- 6. PMNTRPPIEE _____

CROSSWORD

Happy Holidays

- DOWN:**
- 2. A ballet that features the Sugar Plum Fairy and the Rat King.
 - 3. " _____ " borealis, another name for the northern lights.
 - 4. Charlie Brown's best friend and famous beagle.
- ACROSS:**
- 1. The quintessential woodsman shirt.
 - 5. A type of tree that keeps its color even in the colder seasons.
 - 6. A hot chocolatey drink.



Top 10 news stories of 2024, scan QR to read more



Transfer quarterback settles civil suit stemming from sexual assault case

Nichaela Shaheen
 January 18, 2024

Editor's note: This article contains graphic details of sexual assault.

A day after former Arizona quarterback Jayden de Laura settled a civil lawsuit that stemmed from a 2018 sexual assault case, Texas

State signed him to play quarterback for the Bobcats. De Laura settled the civil lawsuit on Jan. 16, 2024 after three years in the court system. The plaintiff filed the civil lawsuit on Dec. 2, 2021, which details information from the sealed 2018 juvenile case.

1

River Fest results in multiple injuries

Lucciana Choueiry and Ryan Claycamp
 April 15, 2024

At least two students were injured at River Fest on April 11 after attendees forced their way into Sewell Park, breaking down the barricades.

University Police Department (UPD) Sgt. Michael Rodriquez, who was on-site,

said 20,000 to 30,000 people were in attendance. However, UPD Chief of Police Matthew Carmichael, who is out of town, said approximately 5,000 students were at River Fest. Meanwhile, Texas State Fire Marshal James Frye who was also on-site said there were less than 10,000 people there, but he does not know the exact number.

2

Presidential candidates refuse TXST debate

Lucciana Choueiry
 June 4, 2024

The first of three presidential debates planned at Texas State on Sept. 16 may no longer take place.

On Nov. 20, 2023, the Commission on Presidential Debates (CPD) announced Texas State's San Marcos campus as the first host site for the 2024 presidential debates. However, on May 15 the Biden administration sent a letter to CPD refusing its debates.

3

New Title IX rules won't go into effect at TXST

Ryan Claycamp
 July 11, 2024

The Supreme Court ruled that the Department of Education cannot enforce new Title IX regulations in states like Texas, where a court has blocked the rules.

The Department of Education's regulations amended Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, which prohibits sex-based discrimination in any school or education program that receives federal aid, such as Texas State. The new amendment extends protections based on gender identity, sexual orientation and for pregnant students. The rules were initially proposed in 2022 but were not finalized until April 19, 2024.

5

Incoming TXST student's message lives on after death to fentanyl overdose

Lesdy Hernandez
 September 3, 2024

Driven, well-spoken and loyal are only some of the words Angela and Gavin Wright used to describe their 18-year-old son Matthew Wright who died from fentanyl poisoning on May 2, 2024.

Texas State welcomed 8,182 new freshmen this fall, making it the largest freshman class in university history, however Matthew is one student absent amongst the class of 2028. The youngest of three boys, he had just been accepted into Texas State University when he unexpectedly died from taking counterfeit pills laced with fentanyl.

6

TXST changes free speech policy for antisemitism

Ryan Claycamp
 July 11, 2024



Texas State has updated its free speech policies to comply with Gov. Greg Abbott's March 27 order on antisemitism on college campuses.

Executive Order (EO) GA-44 requires Texas public universities to adopt the state of Texas' legal definition of antisemitism into their free speech policies and to "establish appropriate punishments, including expulsion from the institution," for students violating the new policy.

4

Overcrowding at Texas State requires some RAs to share rooms with freshmen

Jacquelyn Burrer
 September 25, 2024

Due to Texas State's record-breaking freshman class and a lack of on-campus housing, some Resident Assistants (RA) are now required to live with a student roommate if needed based on availability.

At the start of the fall semester, there were 52 freshmen living with their RAs as their roommates on campus. As of Sept. 9, that number now sits at 22 students, according to Bill Mattera, Director of Housing and Residential Life (DHRL).

7

Proposed housing project faces local scrutiny, potential legal questions

Jacquelyn Burrer
 April 9, 2024

Questions are being raised around a development company proposing a high-rise student apartment complex called the McLain Project, which is set to be built across the street from Texas State's campus.

At the first reading of the proposal on April 2, city council voted 6-1 on the first of the proposed amendments after the initial vote failed to secure a supermajority, which is required after the San Marcos Planning and Zoning Committee recommended denial on Feb. 27.

8

San Marcos Police Department, FBI investigate false shooter threat at San Marcos High School



Blake Leschber and Lucciana Choueiry
 September 25, 2024

The San Marcos Police Department (SMPD), in collaboration with the FBI, is investigating the false active shooter threat in San Marcos High School (SMHS) on Tuesday, Sept. 24.

At a Sept. 25 SMPD press conference, San Marcos Communications played a recording of the 911 phone call reporting an armed individual at SMHS. In the call, two gunshots went off. After the first gunshot, the caller did not continue communication with the dispatcher.

9

Demonstrators spark counter-protest of hundreds at TXST

Lucciana Choueiry, Blake Leschber, and Marisa Nuñez
 November 6, 2024

Trigger Warning: This story contains references to offensive language
 Two demonstrators with provocative signs drew

a counter-protest of hundreds of students at the Stallions. The demonstrators arrived before 12:20 p.m. and quickly had a crowd of at least 100 students surrounding them in opposition. The two demonstrators were with the Official Street Preachers, a news outlet that covers events "from a Christian

perspective." There were two signs the demonstrators held – one said "Homo sex is sin" the other said "Women are property" on the front and "Types of Property: Women, Slaves, Animals, Cars, Land etc." on the back.

10



Top 10 columns of 2024, scan QR to read more



1 Main Point: There's more work to be done

By 2023-24 Editorial Board
January 30, 2024

Resource Center. These numbers are frightening. In addition, 90% of campus assaults are committed by someone the victim knows personally.

One in five women and one in 16 men will be sexually assaulted during their time attending college, according to the National Sexual Violence

2 TXST puts winning above morals in signing of de Laura

By Carson Weaver
January 23, 2024

stemmed from a 2018 sexual assault case that occurred when de Laura was a juvenile. De Laura won the Pac-12 Offensive Freshman Player of the Year in 2021, totaling 2,798 yards and 23 touchdowns.

On Jan. 17, Texas State officially signed former Arizona quarterback Jayden de Laura, who settled a civil lawsuit that

3 Texas State invites entire student body to fest limited to 5,000

By Carson Weaver
April 16, 2024

Chaos was the word UPD Sergeant Michael Rodriguez used to describe River Fest. After security closed entrances and denied entry at around 7:30 p.m. Thursday, concert-goers did not go home. They instead toppled the chain link fences to get into Sewell Park. "When [staff] said they were shutting down the entrances, everyone started freaking out," Gabriel Kohl, a pre-med freshman who witnessed the event, said. "They were pushing toward the gate, and I saw a girl get trampled to the ground."



4 Rethink River Fest featured artists in the future

By Rhian Davis
April 16, 2024

Just two months after the scandal surrounding a former quarterback transfer, Texas State promoted a featured artist for River Fest who also has a problematic background.

Texas State Student Involvement hosted River Fest April 11 at Sewell Park. River Fest is a "20-year-old tradition that allows the [Texas State] community to relax, participate in activities and enjoy live music," according to the Texas State Student Involvement website.

5 Being pro-Palestine isn't antisemitic; neither is being anti-Israeli policy

By Zayna Abdel-Rahim
April 24, 2024

Free speech is under attack across Texas college campuses due to the ulterior motives of Gov. Greg Abbott.

On March 27, Abbott issued Executive Order GA-44, "Relat-

ing to addressing acts of antisemitism in institutions of higher education" with the supposed intention to "fight the increase in acts of antisemitism at colleges... and ensure a safe learning environment for Jewish students and all Texans."



6 Everything's bigger in Texas, except women's abortion rights

By Faith Fabian
May 3, 2024

Although Texas is already among the states with the strictest abortion laws, legislative attention given to the issue of abortion has not stopped. Many West Texas counties are drafting ordinances meant to

punish those who aid women in traveling out of state to obtain a legal abortion.

Abortion travel bans are ordinances passed in order to further establish an anti-abortion initiative, despite Texas banning nearly all forms of abortion in August 2022 after Roe v. Wade was overturned.

7 Clash of Columns: College Republicans and Democrats

By Carly French and Averyann Guggenheim
October 24, 2024

Texas State, San Marcos and Hays County are represented very well on the Republican ballot. We have Bobcat alumni Morgan Hammer running for County Commissioner of Precinct 3 and Philip Muzzy running for County Clerk, adjunct professor for criminal justice Judge Tanner Neidhardt for District Judge and student Tenyson Moreno running for State Representative for HD 45.

Local elections play a pivotal role in shaping the political process, as they directly control the facets of daily life that matter most, including education, public safety, transportation and housing.

8 Gentrification threatens SMTX neighborhood

By Nikita Arefiev
November 5, 2024

The Dunbar neighborhood in San Marcos, historically an African American community, is endangered by the social phenomenon of gentrification.

The neighborhood was initially

established due to segregation policies and African American San Marcos residents were forced into this part of town due to discriminatory housing practices in the Jim Crow era. The neighborhood has since evolved into a prominent cultural center, but it is now under threat of dissipation.

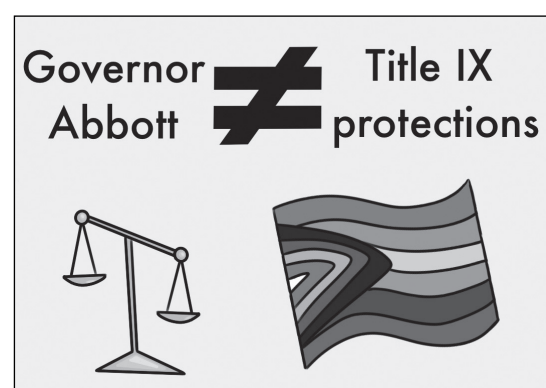
9 Title IX rejection emphasizes hate in Texas

By Rhian Davis
September 10, 2024

On April 27, Gov. Greg Abbott ordered the Texas Education Agency to ignore a Title IX expansion by the Biden administration.

The new amendments would have extended protections based on sexual identity to students at Texas State.

The Texas government is once again showing Texans how little they truly care. Students have the right to feel protected and valued. Abbott has shown time and time again he has one agenda: hate.



10 Speak on It: Black students discuss recent hate crime

By Staff
October 15, 2024

After Jemein Lefang's, a computer information systems freshman, car was vandalized with a racial slur on Sept. 24, discussions surrounding the seriousness of hate crimes are happening on campus.

The University Star inter-

viewed Lefang, Texas State's National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) President Jordan Williams and Black Men United Vice president Jordan Hunter in order to gain perspective on this issue and insight on how this hate crime is affecting Lefang and the black community at Texas State.



Top 10 Life and Arts stories of 2024, scan QR to read more



1 Cheatham Street Warehouse celebrates 50 years of songwriting legacy

By Cara Cervenka
November 2, 2024

What started as a small, honky-tonk bar in San Marcos is now a celebrated venue that music lovers flock to experience the magic of songwriting.

Kent Finlay, musician and business partner, and Jim Cunningham, San Marcos Daily Record writer, leased Cheatham Street Warehouse in June 1974. The 50th anniversary party was held Oct. 20 to honor the legacy of Kent and the bar.

2 Memory of former student lives on after death through new bar

By Marisa Nuñez
September 10, 2024

“I picked up my phone, and the first thing that I saw was a text from her grandfather, that said, ‘My Bayle’s died in Miami last night,’” Lilla Herman, Bayle’s best friend, said. “I will never forget that feeling. I sat up and my whole body, from head to toe, went numb and tingly. I remember looking down at my hands,

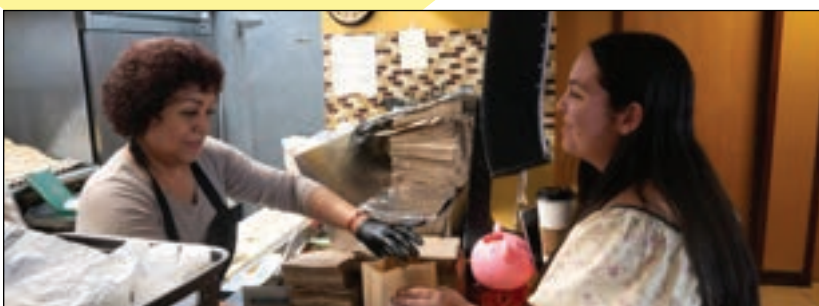
and I was like, ‘Oh my god, I’m gonna pass out,’ and I screamed, just screamed the loudest ever.” Herman described the death of her best friend and former Texas State student Bayle Bucceri as the worst thing that ever happened to her in her entire life. Bayle died on May 25, 2022, after a car lost control and slammed into a duplex in Miami, which overturned and burst into flames.

3 From taco stand to ‘Downtown Legend’: The Bobcat Quickie story

By Brianna Bordosky
March 3, 2024

Due to the positive impact Bobcat Quickie has had on the community, the city of San Marcos awarded Bobcat Quickie with the “Downtown Legend” award last year for embodying the essence of that title.

Feras Abuhweij, general manager of Bobcat Quickie and Texas State alumnus, is known for being the longest working employee. Since the installation of the kitchen in 2010, Abuhweij has worked closely with the owner of the Bobcat Quickie Exxon.



4 In her footsteps: Stories of mothers and daughters of TXST

By Brianna Bordosky
April 7, 2024

Ann Marie Quaid studied and lived in San Marcos from 1988 to 1993. She met her husband, a Texas State ROTC student, and had a son and daughter who eventually became Bobcats as well.

On campus Ann Marie volun-

teered at the Child Development Center, the Family & Child Development Association, and the Gamma Phi Beta sorority. Her time was centered around Greek life and social events. Although she attended the same school, she believes her time at Texas State differs from her daughters.

5 Rainbow Night returns to San Marcos after 10 years

By Marisa Nuñez
March 18, 2024

Before SMTX Pride and the opening of Stonewall Warehouse in 2014, the San Marcos LGBTQ+ community went bar to bar dressed head to toe in rainbow to show off their pride at an event called Rainbow Night. After 10 years, Rainbow Night made its way back to San Marcos on March 9 and is here to stay.

Sylvia Sandoval, creator of Rainbow Night, originally created the event to provide a safe space for the San Marcos LGBTQ+ and drag communities in 2010. Since the closure of the previous LGBTQ+ bar Stonewall Warehouse in Jan. 2023, the local LGBTQ+ and drag communities feel San Marcos lacks a safe space. Sandoval stepped up to change that once more.

6 Wittliff Collections celebrates anniversary of classic Chicano film

By Megan Weise
September 23, 2024

The Wittliff Collections at Texas State reunited Director Severo Perez and two co-stars of the classic Chicano 1994 film “...and the earth did not swallow him” for its 30th anniversary on Sept. 19. “...and the earth did not swallow him” is based on the famous 1971

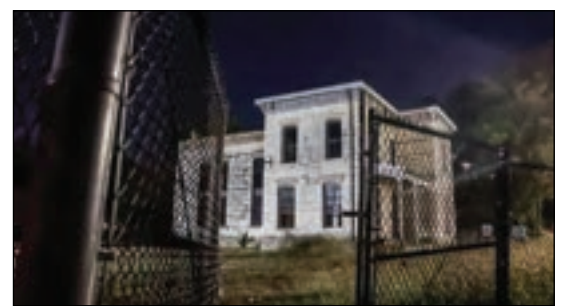
autobiographical novel, “...y no se lo tragó la tierra”, by Tomás Rivera, Texas State alumnus. In the novel, Rivera shares the experiences and struggles of Mexican American farmworkers in the 1950s. Steven Davis, literary curator and book series editor for the Wittliff Collections, said the book is a story about an experience not often told or shared.

7 The story of the San Marcos serial killer

By Marisa Nuñez
October 31, 2024

Trigger warning: This story contains mentions of suicide and murder.

On the second floor of the Old Hays County Jail, serial killer Anna Hauptreif was found hanging from the bars of her jail cell by a waistband of her underclothing, on Oct. 31, 1924; just five months before going to trial for the murder of her



first husband and four step kids and the attempted murder of her second husband. Oct. 31 will mark the 100th anniversary of her death.

8 Disabled pet owners of Texas State

By Jamin Ochoa
April 9, 2024

The San Marcos Regional Animal Shelter (SMRAS) is participating in an annual nationwide campaign called Clear the Shelters.

From Aug. 10 to Sept. 10, it waived adoption fees for all ready-to-go pets, though pre-adoption fees still apply. Ready-to-go pets are cats and dogs that are spayed/neutered, up-to-date on vaccinations, microchipped and have their vet exam completed.

9 SMRAS helps more pets find homes during campaign

By Carlene Ottah
September 5, 2024

The San Marcos Regional Animal Shelter (SMRAS) is participating in an annual nationwide campaign called Clear the Shelters.

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10 “Stand tall”: TXST community bands together after demonstration

By Jamie Moore
November 12, 2024

In the days following demonstrators with signs appearing on campus, the Texas State community rallied together to find ways to reconnect and create symbols of unity.

Two demonstrators arrived before 12:20 p.m. on Nov. 6 at the Fighting Stallions, holding multiple provocative signs targeting women and the LGBTQ+ community. A counterprotest from students quickly followed.





Top 10 Sports stories of 2024, scan QR to read more



Woodard further establishes legacy with 800 career wins

By Brendan Fielding February 22, 2024

In her 24 years of coaching Bobcat softball, Head Coach Ricci Woodard has not only proven her ability to win but also to mentor young women preparing to enter the real world successfully.

On Feb. 9, Woodard achieved her 800th career win in Texas State's 3-1 victory against Kennesaw State University, making her overall record 800-487-2. In doing so, Woodard became the 13th softball head coach of all time to reach the attainment for one program.

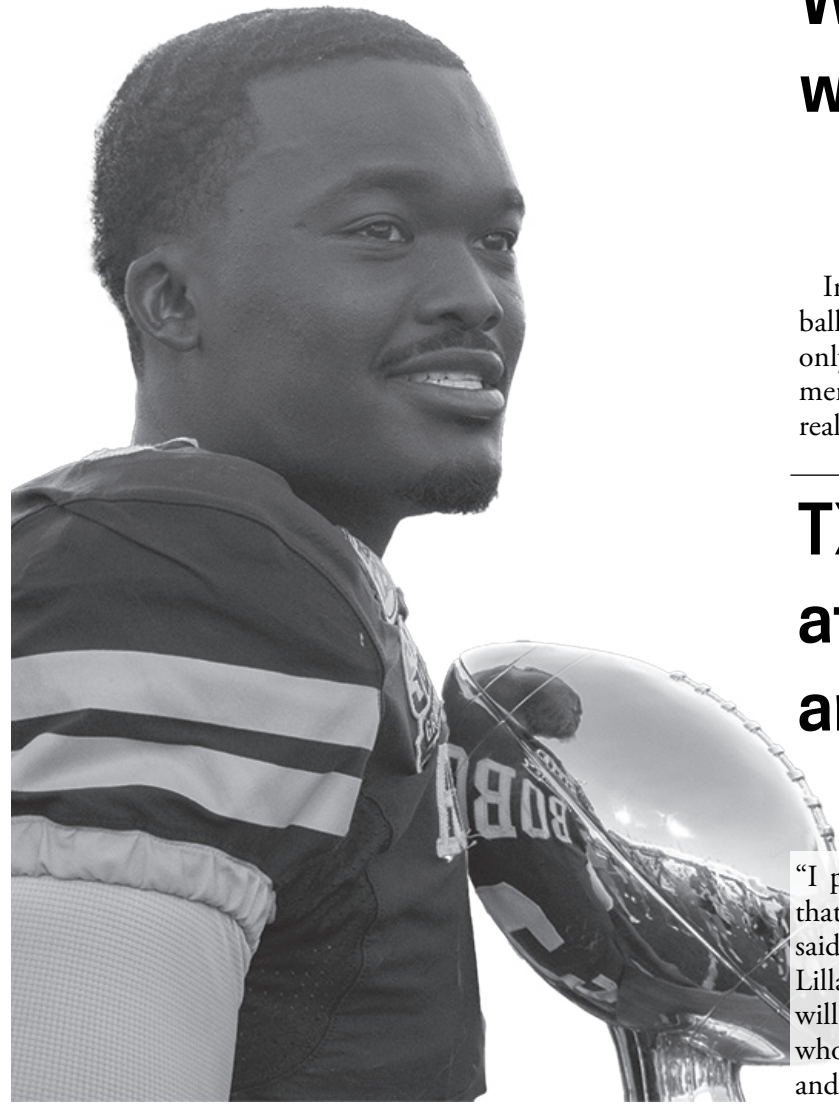
TXST sporting attendance rises after addition of Damphousse and Kinne

By Brendan Fielding September 3, 2024

"I picked up my phone, and the first thing that I saw was a text from her grandfather, that said, 'My Bayle's died in Miami last night,'" Lilla Herman, Bayle's best friend, said. "I will never forget that feeling. I sat up and my whole body, from head to toe, went numb and tingly. I remember looking down at my

hands, and I was like, 'Oh my god, I'm gonna pass out,' and I screamed, just screamed the loudest ever."

Herman described the death of her best friend and former Texas State student Bayle Bucceri as the worst thing that ever happened to her in her entire life. Bayle died on May 25, 2022, after a car lost control and slammed into a duplex in Miami, which overturned and burst into flames.



Earls executing career-best season in final year at TXST

By Adrian Ramirez May 2, 2024

In a society where social media reigns supreme, talent is hard to miss, even in San Marcos. But, every so often, a player can slip through the cracks and escape the social media

void. Senior infielder Hannah Earls seems to do just that, having her career-best season under the radar.

According to Texas State Head Coach Ricci Woodard, Earls has no reservations about not being in the spotlight.

Unexpected pitching trio lead baseball to a winning record

By Jackson Kruse April 4, 2024

If someone told you in January that Texas State's (15-12, 4-4 Sun Belt Conference) weekend rotation will include redshirt junior Austin Eaton, sophomore Sam Hall and senior Drayton Brown, you may have given them a funny look. However, that is the exact trio of pitchers Head Coach Steven Trout has counted on to perform every

weekend. Many expected senior pitcher Tony Robie to play a big part of the weekend rotation this season, considering he pitched the most innings besides now-Orioles prospect Levi Wells and led regular starters in ERA with 4.33 in 2023. This hasn't been the case, as Trout has been primarily using Robie as a weekday starter and having him come out of the bullpen on weekends.

"The fire hasn't died": Antoine reflects on 201 wins as women's basketball head coach

By Jacob De Luna April 3, 2024

Texas State women's basketball Head Coach Zenarae Antoine defines what a consistent and successful coach looks like in

women's college basketball through resilience. Antoine received her first-ever head coaching position in San Marcos with the Bobcats in 2011.

"I've been blessed": Volleyball Head Coach Sean Huiet surpasses 100 career TXST wins

By Hope Monte September 26, 2024

Sean Huiet celebrated not only his team achieving a 3-0 sweep against Texas A&M-Corpus Christi but earning his 100th career win as head coach of the Bobcats Friday night at the

UTEP Tournament in El Paso.

Huiet is no stranger to success as after spending nearly 20 years with the team, stepping up to the head coach position in 2019 following Karen Chisum's retirement.

Transfer players acclimate to Texas State men's basketball program

By Thomas Graham January 28, 2024

Texas State men's basketball welcomed seven new players to its 2023-24 roster via the NCAA transfer portal this offseason.

As the team makes its way further into conference play, the new additions have tremendously impacted the hardwood thus far.

Beyond the broadcast: Freeman's impact on Texas State sports

By Brendan Fielding January 26, 2024

Whether you're watching a Bobcat baseball game, tuning into the "State's Up" podcast for a football recap or just catching up with Texas State sports via social media clips, you'll likely hear the voice of Texas State's Broadcast

Coordinator, Brant Freeman.

Like many others, Freeman started his career at Texas State due to the resources it offers its students. After working for KTSW calling games play-by-play on the radio, Freeman had his start as a broadcaster, but Texas State refused to part ways with him.

Maroon & Golden Collective aims to elevate the Bobcat football experience via NIL opportunities

By David Cuevas July 10, 2024

Name, Image and Likeness (NIL) has changed the landscape of collegiate athletics, and while it certainly

brings positives and negatives at Texas State, Maroon & Golden NIL Collective LLC is determined to showcase its benefits to collegiate athletes.

Mullins plans ahead, reminisces on career at TXST

By Brendan Fielding April 24, 2024

While senior pitcher Jessica Mullins' resume would likely help her land many softball players' dream gig, the national leader in Division I Softball wins said she would rather leave her future

up to the almighty. Mullins led Texas State softball to its current 37-12 record this year and accumulated 25 wins in doing so. After guiding Texas State softball under Head Coach Ricci Woodard's wing to one of its best seasons this century, Mullins' time closes in as a Bobcat as she anticipates her exit.



Senior 30: Finding purpose in The Star

By **Carlota Pulgar**
PIR Director

I started college with no sense of purpose or direction and was uncomfortable with the unknown. I was an accounting major, going through personal struggles and depressed. My first year in college was filled with anxiety and a lack of understanding of who I was and what I wanted to do or get out of my experience at Texas State. I found myself questioning if I even belonged on this campus and if I had a place.

After what felt like a wasted year, my dad told me to apply for *The Star* all of my freshman year as in high school I did newspaper, yet I refused to listen to him. I ended up changing my major to journalism at the end of freshman year, and that summer I met former assistant opinion editor, Tiara Allen working as an orientation leaders. Meeting her we became great friends and hearing her speak so highly of this organization inspired me to apply.

I could not be more grateful to these two individuals for encouraging me to apply for *The University Star*, and for Nichaela Shaheen to have hired me on to the news section. Through my sophomore year I gained so much, I learned to be a better writer, to face my social anxieties, be a better communicator and get comfortable with being uncomfortable.

I feel that the moments we grow the most are the most uncomfortable ones, where we try new things. Working at *The Star* helped build my confidence in myself and see things from a different perspective, and the work ethics of my peers inspired me to want to do better in myself.

I left *The Star* for 6 months and came back during Junior year with yet another changed major in Public Relations and a newfound passion for PR. I applied again as a PR specialist, then got promoted to assistant PR Director and now am the PR Director. I want to thank Abbie Taylor for hiring me to the PR section and seeing potential in me, especially with no PR experience.

This organization has taught me so much about myself, given me amazing experiences and most of all a sense of purpose and community. Working in the PR section has been so rewarding, and I'm so happy to have been able to work with so many creative individuals.

Words can't express the gratitude I feel for this organization, as it truly changed the trajectory of my time at Texas State and helped shape me and a lot of the experiences I had on campus. Thank you to *The University Star* for helping me find purpose, help me find myself and allowing me to grow and learn as an individual.



PIR Director Carlota Pulgar poses in Taylor Murphy Hall, Friday, Oct. 25, 2024, at Texas State.
NILES DAVIS | Courtesy

Senior 30: Writing, Photography and the Field of Dreams: My Path to Graduation

By **Kobe Arriaga**
Multimedia Editor

When I arrived at Texas State as a 23-year-old junior transfer student, I could never have imagined the journey I was about to embark on. I still remember applying to Texas State at 17 and being denied because of my high school grades and GPA. I also remember the countless hours and exams I endured in community college to get here. When I finally made it to Texas State, I was determined not to waste a single second of my time.

My ultimate goal was to cover a wide range of athletics at the Division I level. I had done it in high school, and the passion I felt from being on the field and experiencing fulfilling moments from the sidelines is something I've been chasing ever since. Along the way, I met so many amazing people and picked up a multitude of skills I never could have imagined.

Two years ago, when I first stepped foot on this campus, I thought I was just a writer. I knew I could always write like there was no tomorrow, but I never imagined myself holding a camera and experiencing so many incredible opportunities. *The University Star* is the sole reason my dreams became a reality.

I was blessed to witness Texas State

football win its first FBS bowl game from the sidelines in December 2023. I was invited to be a photographer for both NBA I-35 Series San Antonio Spurs games in March 2024. I even got to cover Texas State football playing Arizona State in its first-ever ESPN primetime showcase.

I feel absolutely blessed to have experienced everything from the sidelines—a feeling I know I'll be chasing for a long time. I will always remember the emotions I felt every time the national anthem played before a game. I was so thankful for my opportunities, and for a brief moment, it seemed like the opportunities became more unbelievable every few weeks.

Now, walking the stage at my graduation ceremony will truly be an unforgettable experience, but it certainly will feel bittersweet to leave all of these amazing experiences behind me. It hurts even more knowing that I have to say goodbye to an incredible group of friends. Since my time at *The Star*, I've met so many amazing people, created valuable connections, and been blessed to lead a dedicated team of photographers who have also helped me grow along the way.

It may have taken me a little longer to get here, but the journey was worth every step. As I close this chapter, I take comfort in knowing that the



Multimedia Editor Kobe Arriaga poses in front of a Texas State image, Friday, Nov. 22, 2024 at Live Oak Hall.
MANDALYN LEWALLEN | The University Star

lessons I've learned, the memories I've made, and the people I've met will stay with me forever. Great things can't last forever—but they can shape the future. Here's to the next adven-

ture, built on the foundation of everything Texas State has given me.

Senior 30: My favorite people

By **Brendan Fielding**
Sports Reporter

I had no idea what to do exiting my sophomore year here at Texas State—I'd lost my direction. My grades began to slip as I became less interested in marketing, and I knew something had to change.

After meeting with an academic advisor and discussing every program Texas State has to offer, I decided to switch my major to journalism. I wanted to work more creatively and felt I could do right by God that way.

Little did I know, I'd found my favorite people.

Conversations with The Lord and the influence of loved ones brought me to the front door of the Trinity building where I met and was interviewed by Carson Weaver to become a sports reporter. Carson was the first of countless (I would list them all, but then you wouldn't be reading this) people at *The Star* who encouraged

me to grow in my patience, writing ability, confidence and teamwork.

As my time at *The Star* went on, I appreciated more and more the like-mindedness of those who filled the newsroom—though we didn't always agree on the best taco restaurant or pet fish name, we knew we were doing something real when we went to work. That was something I didn't have before.

I had become part of something that was not only bigger than myself but something that held weight. As I continued to explore this idea, I became more fond of every editor around me, realizing they felt the same.

The editors at *The Star* are my favorite people. They exercise how to be watchdogs. They take journalism seriously. They are what make journalism in college FUN. They gave me a new lease on my academic career that allowed me to incorporate God into what I do every day in writing, and I'm truly grateful for everything I learned during my time there.



Sports Reporter Brendan Fielding stands on a balcony soaking in downtown San Marcos vibes on Monday, Dec. 2, 2024.
BRENDAN FIELDING | The University Star

TXST art student - future trillionaire



Illustrator Devon Crew hangs up his senior thesis pieces, Thursday, Nov. 7, 2024, at Joann Cole Mitte. SARAH MANNING | Courtesy

By Devon Crew
Illustrator

Creativity, friendship, growth... During my time at Texas State University and *The University Star*, I found these treasures and so much more. My journey has been one of passion and discovery, and now, as I graduate, I reflect upon all that has happened these past few years.

Joining the newspaper was one of the most rewarding parts of my college journey, it allowed me to explore my passion for editorial illustration and design as well as learn more about professional publication. I would never have thought my random “make an drawing based off a news story”

assignment in an graphic design class would lead me to have my designs be published in an actual, real-life newspaper!

The heart of my experience was the design team. Working with such talented and passionate people has truly inspired me to do bigger things with my creativity, especially as I leave San Marcos. The kindness shown throughout our section got me through the stresses of deadlines, endless edits, and canceled stories. It was so nice to work with everyone and I can't wait to see what the next issue holds.

I'm very excited for the next chapter, although I am equally sad to be turning the page. There's always something new and exciting to be discovered, you just have to find it!

Senior 30: Better late than never

By Kimberly Garza
PIR Specialist

Joining *The University Star* in my final semester has been one of the most fulfilling experiences of my time at university. Although my experience with the team was brief, it had a lasting impression on me. I've made great memories and met individuals who I will always remember.

I am grateful for the role of Public and Internal Relations Specialist, as well as Carlota Pulgar, the Public and Internal Relations Director, who presented me to this incredible opportunity. I was able to exchange ideas, pick up new skills and work on impactful projects because of *The University Star*.

The University Star gave me a platform to share ideas, learn new skills, and work on projects that made a difference. The weekly meetings as a Public Relations team were something I always looked

forward to. These gatherings were a place of cooperation, inspiration and support rather than simply planning and strategizing. Being surrounded by such positive team members motivated me to work harder and make a significant contribution to the task we completed. Knowing that I was a part of something greater filled me with pride.

I was able to blend my creative and communication abilities in this role, which gave me great knowledge that I will use in my future endeavors.

As I consider my experience with *The University Star*, I feel incredibly appreciative. It was short, but it was full of progress, happiness, and friendship. In addition to improving my last semester, this group helped me make lasting connections and memories. I will always have a special place in my heart for *The University Star*, and I am so grateful to have been a member of such an incredible team.



PIR Specialist Kimberly Garza poses for a photo, Saturday, Nov. 23, 2024, at Old Main. BRISSA GONZALES | Courtesy

Senior 30: A community like no other

By Madison Green
Opinions Columnist

Originally, I began my journey at Texas State University during peak COVID-19. I was a first-year student majoring in psychology who told everyone she would get a graduate degree and go into psychological research.

It's funny how much a person can change during college.

As I was running out of hours in my degree plan, I kept collecting academic minors to procrastinate the inevitable graduation. Like so many others, I learned more about myself during college and could no longer imagine finding fulfillment in working in a research lab.

Luckily, at this same time, I came across a minor in mass communication. I found myself once again invig-

orated and interested in my coursework, and I sought a way to involve myself in the field.

Although I never had experience with news or writing, *The University Star* seemed like the place for me. Throughout my time in college, I always had a peer who sang the praises of the newsroom, whether it be Andrew Hodge, Madelyn Weirich, Carlota Pulgar or Tiara Allen.

I was even nepo-ed into the Engagement section by my friend Jamie Moore, so *The University Star* was always prevalent in my circle, almost as though it was waiting for me to join.

Being part of the Engagement section was amazing, I got to work under editor Zaria Jackson, who still serves as an inspiration for me to this day. The social media skills that I learned in this position allowed me

to grow and become more knowledgeable about digital content.

However, my true enjoyment came from being an opinions columnist. Writing to inspire others and call for change throughout the campus community made me so happy. Although I had no experience writing, editor Rhian Davis took a chance on me and helped me find a great group of like-minded people.

I had so much faith in the change that was inspired by the Opinions section, that I even recruited one of my closest companions, Aili Ortega, to join. Although I am sad to leave, I will always stay on the lookout for what thought-provoking pieces the Opinions section will come out with next.

Two years flew by! I will always remember my time at *The Star*.



Opinions Columnist Madison Green poses for a photo, Sunday, Nov. 17, 2024 at the LBJ Student Center. BRISSA GONZALES | Courtesy

Senior 30: Writing my way into sports, my journey

By McKenna Ladson
Sports Contributor

As a little girl, I always loved to write. Whether it was creating poems or scribbling stories, writing was my outlet. But at the same time, I was obsessed with sports. I played softball from the age of five and went on to play field hockey in high school. Additionally, football was a giant staple in my family life from the beginning. Eventually, I realized something: I could combine both passions.

A friend recommended *The University Star*, and it all clicked. Journalism and sports could coexist, so my journey as a sports contributor began.

When I joined *The Star* just over a year ago, I had no idea what the next chapters would look like, or if I would like journalism. I started covering Texas State softball, writing feature stories on football and quickly realized that sports journalism was more than just the score at the end of a game. It's about telling stories—about athletes, their journeys, and the spirit of the game. It's about capturing the energy, passion and camaraderie that makes sports a unique and powerful form of storytelling.

While reporting on the softball team, I was lucky enough to witness some of the most successful games in Texas State history. There's something incredibly special about being part of those moments—feeling the thrill of victory as it happens and knowing that your words will help others experience it too. But my time at the *Star* wasn't just about reporting on games but also about being immersed in the community. I got to experience the camaraderie within the Texas State sports culture, especially in rugby, which was a new world for me. Exploring club sports opened my eyes to the diversity of talent on campus and reminded me that there's more to college sports than what we see on the big stage.

Through my time as a sports contributor, I've come to appreciate the nuances of reporting: the research, the interviews and the editing. But above all, I've learned how collaborative the process is. Whether it was brainstorming ideas with editors or interviewing athletes, I was always meeting new people, hearing their stories and discovering new perspectives. It was both exciting and rewarding—and it helped me grow not just as a writer



Sports Contributor McKenna Ladson poses for a photo at Trauth-Huffman Hall. KARSEN BIRDELL | Courtesy

but as a communicator.

Despite my deep love for sports journalism, I've come to realize that my future lies in sports communications, specifically within the NFL. What I've gained from my time at *The Star* is invaluable in preparing me for that path—skills in research, writing and communicating effectively with athletes, coaches and other

journalists. I know that the firsthand experience I've had in the newsroom will only help me in the fast-paced, ever-evolving world of professional sports PR.

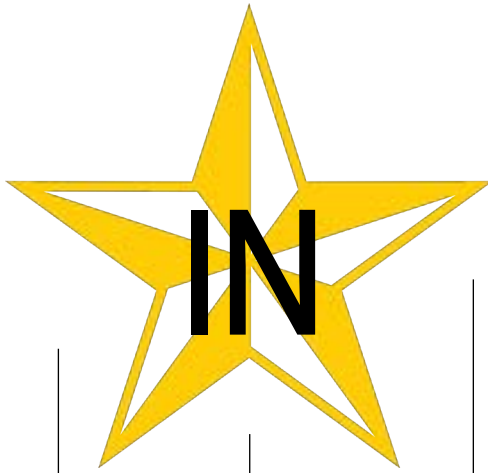
As I prepare to leave *The Star*, I want to express my gratitude. I'm grateful for the opportunities to cover sports I'm passionate about, for the friendships I've made and for the mentorship I've received. While my career may not be in journalism, the experiences I've had here have been a crucial part of my journey, and I will carry them with me into the future.

Thank you to my editors, my fellow reporters and the athletes and coaches who allowed me to share their stories. Your support and trust have meant the world to me. And to anyone reading this: if you're unsure whether to pursue a dream or to take a chance—do it. For me, that dream and chance was joining *The Star*, and it was one of the best decisions I've ever made.

I look forward to the next chapter, and who knows? Maybe one day, I'll be in the press box at an NFL game, ready to tell the stories of the next generation of athletes.



SNAPS



REVIEW



Texas State psychology freshman Marshall McConnell holds a sign reading 'You Are Loved,' Thursday, Nov. 7, 2024, at the Stallions Statue. ISABELLE CANTU | The University Star

Students support the Texas State football team from the student section during the game versus Louisiana, Tuesday, Oct. 29, 2024, at UFCU Stadium. MAYA CONTRERAS | The University Star



Texas State junior running back Ismail Mahdi celebrates bowl eligibility with his team after jumping in the San Marcos River, Saturday, Nov. 16, 2024, at Sewell Park. MEG BOLES | The University Star

Color guard members in the San Marcos High School Rattler Band perform with red flags during the Veterans Day Parade, Saturday, Nov. 4, 2024, on The Square. ALLISON DRINNON | The University Star



Criminal justice freshman Emaya Stahley hugs a transgender pride demonstrator's mom offering free mom hugs at the Stallions Statue, Wednesday, Nov. 13, 2024. ALLISON DRINNON | The University Star



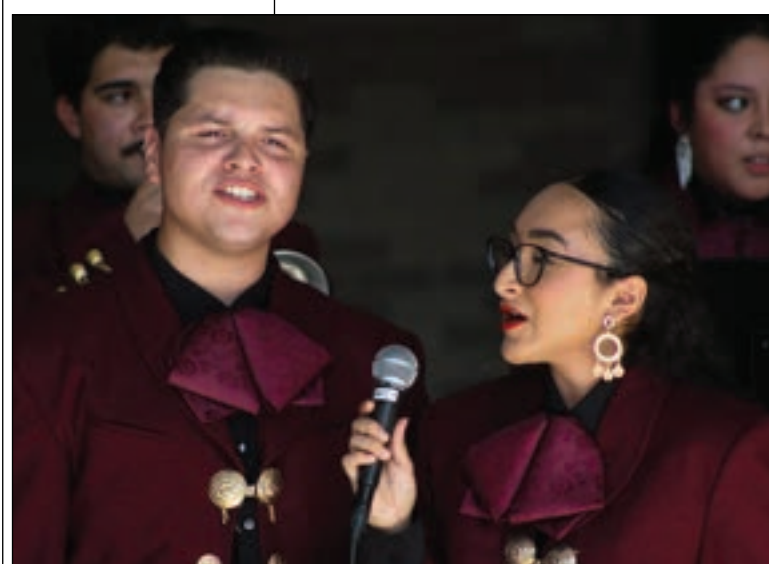
(Above) Pianist and singer Braydon Houston performs with his band Flight By Nothing, Thursday, Oct. 31, 2024, at Zelicks Icehouse. KATHERINE REA | The University Star



(Above) A family competes in Farmer Fred's Harvest Fall Carnival best group costume contest as characters from Monsters Inc., Friday, Oct. 25, 2024, at San Marcos City Park. MEG BOLES | The University Star



(Left) Biology sophomore Carli Marshall and (right) interior design freshman Aiden Peterson wave bubbles at students walking to their first day of classes, Monday, Aug. 26, 2024, outside Derrick Hall. BLAKE LESCHBER | The University Star



Music studies junior Nik Lara and Jacqueline Gonzalez sing a duet in celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month, Tuesday, Oct. 15, 2024, at the LBJ Amphitheater. MAYA CONTRERAS | The University Star



Shoemaker and owner of Tracking Natives Luis Cuervo sings and plays a drum at the headwaters of the Sacred Springs, Saturday, Oct. 5, 2024, at the San Marcos River for the Sacred Springs Powwow celebration. ALLISON DRINNON | The University Star