



TUESDAY

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THE UNIVERSITY STAR

DEFENDING THE FIRST AMENDMENT SINCE 1911

THC ban may impact product access

By Lesdy Hernandez
News Reporter

Access to THC products in Texas may soon face major restrictions, as a proposed ban seeks to outlaw the sale of all consumable THC items, potentially disrupting the cannabis market and users' access to these products in cities like San Marcos.

Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick proposed Senate Bill 3 (SB 3) for the 89th Texas legislative session, a law that aims to ban the sale of all consumable Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) products in Texas.

In a Dec. 4, 2024 press release, Patrick said the law's goal is to combat the "life-threatening, unregulated forms of THC products" that have been made accessible to the public.

"Since 2023, thousands of stores selling hazardous THC products have popped up in communities across the state, and many sell products, including beverages, that have three to four times the THC content which might be found in marijuana purchased from a drug dealer," Patrick wrote.

SEE LEGISLATION PAGE 3

Sheriff's office to end inmate transfers

By Ryan Claycamp
Assistant News Editor

The Hays County Sheriff's Office plans to end its practice of outsourcing Hays County inmates to other jails across the state.

Currently, Hays County Jail only sends inmates to Haskell County Jail. According to a public information request, the outsourcing cost reached \$8,488,581.54 in the 2024 fiscal year. According to Sheriff Lt. Clint Pulpan, that figure does not include the cost of transporting inmates to and from Hays County.

"To reduce money [spent] on outsourcing, we're trying to keep as many inmates in the jail as we can. In October of this year, we returned all outsourced inmates, other than those with Haskell County," Pulpan said.

Pulpan said the outsourcing agreement with Haskell County requires a minimum of 200 inmates to be sent to Haskell County at all times. According to the Hays County Jail Dashboard, there were 495 people in the Hays County Jail as of Jan. 7. That means that Haskell County currently houses at least 40% of Hays County detainees.

According to Pulpan, one of the reasons the sheriff's office will be able to bring all detainees back to Hays County is because there has been a decrease in the total number of people kept in the jail. Pulpan said a large amount of credit for that should go to the Hays County District Attorney's office and local judges.

SEE HAYS COUNTY PAGE 2

Turning Loss into Lessons



STACY DALTON | COURTESY PHOTO

Ethan Dalton wins academic achievement award while in the seventh grade in Deerpark Middle School in 2016 in Austin.

Student's legacy continues through nonprofit

By Lucciana Choueiry
News Editor

The Dalton family founded a nonprofit in 2017 to support foster children, but after the death of their son Ethan, a Texas State finance senior, their commitment to helping all at-risk youth has grown stronger than ever.

Ethan was beginning his senior year at Texas State when he died from accidental fentanyl and alcohol poisoning on Sept. 1, 2024, while he was in Colorado.

Ethan had a deep passion for baseball, cherished playing video games with his younger sibling Ace and was dedicated to fitness. But above all, his passion for people

set him apart, according to his dad Dennis —connecting with them, uplifting them and making them feel seen.

"He's someone you would meet once and you would not forget him," Dennis said. "He had such a bright smile... there could be six people in a picture and he would be the one you'd see the most."

However, Ethan's mom, Stacy, said growing up wasn't always easy. As a child, Ethan was impulsive and pushed boundaries, a reflection of his experience living with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

"He could mask his anxiety. He could mask his addictive behavior. He was very quick to anger, but

he masked that with humor and things like that," Stacy said. "... Every situation that he was in, he would always just go a little bit extra, he knew the consequences of his behavior, but he wasn't able to internalize those."

The Daltons channeled their experiences into founding The Collaborative for Family Education, a nonprofit inspired by their journey with Ethan.

The organization offers comprehensive support to children and their families, providing financial assistance and connecting them with vital resources for mental health care.

SEE REMEMBRANCE PAGE 3

Bates' unorthodox journey to the NFL



STAR FILE PHOTO

Texas State junior kicker Jacob Bates (47) approaches the ball to kick off during Fan Day scrimmage, Friday, Aug. 14, 2021, at Bobcat Stadium.

By Jackson Kruse
Sports Editor

From playing college soccer to kicking game-winning field goals at the highest level, former Texas State Bobcat Jake Bates has progressively reached new heights in his career.

On June 18, 2024, Bates signed a two-year, \$1.98 million contract with the Detroit Lions.

The rookie kicker went 26-for-29 on field goal attempts in the 2024-25 regular season, including three game-winners, earning Detroit the NFC's No. 1 seed for the 2025 NFL playoffs. If it weren't for Bates' clutch kicking, the Minnesota Vikings would be the NFC's top seed and the Lions wouldn't have the luxury of a first-round bye.

Before his successful NFL

rookie campaign and college football career, Bates played two seasons of soccer for the Central Arkansas Sugar Bears (2018-19).

"I was kind of done with soccer [after playing for Central Arkansas]," Bates said. "I wanted to see what else might be out there."

After his time with the Sugar Bears, Bates, who hadn't played in an organized football game since high school, began regularly kicking footballs in aid of his friends' quest to walk on at TCU. Eventually, the former soccer player sparked the idea of attempting to walk on somewhere himself.

SEE FOOTBALL PAGE 7

Inspections no longer required for personal vehicles

By Candace Taggart
News Reporter

Non-commercial vehicles no longer need an inspection to be registered in Texas as of Jan. 1.

The 88th Texas legislature passed House Bill (HB) 3297 in 2023, which repeals the Transportation Code requiring safety inspections for non-commercial vehicles. Non-commercial vehicles mainly refers to personal-use vehicles.

“This helps our customers, helps the taxpayers, because they don’t have to take the vehicle to have it inspected any longer, so we don’t have to send people away, as we did in the past,” Hays County Motor Vehicle Supervisor Mary Garza said. “I think that it’s helpful to all of us, so long as we do our part.”

The \$7.50 fee, originally designated as the inspection fee, is renamed the inspection program replacement fee. Drivers will now pay it alongside normal registration fees at the county tax assessor’s office.

“The most important thing is [residents] still need to keep their vehicles in good condition,” Sgt. Deon Cockrell of the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) media communications office said. “When the roads are wet or

dry, the vehicle needs to be running in safe conditions to drive.”

According to Cockrell, the \$7.50 fee will continue to support transportation infrastructure.

“Please note the inspection program replacement fee is not an increase in the cost of your vehicle registration,” DPS wrote on its website. “As its name suggests, this fee simply replaces the revenue source for state programs and operations—like the construction and expansion of state highways—once supported by vehicle safety inspections,” DPS wrote on its website.

Under the Texas Transportation Code, a commercial vehicle is defined as any motor vehicle with a gross weight rating of less than 48,000 pounds, used on public highways to transport passengers or cargo. This includes vehicles weighing more than 26,000 pounds, those designed to transport more than 15 passengers or those used to transport hazardous materials.

According to Cockrell, there are no significant changes to safety inspections for commercial vehicles. These vehicles will not incur an additional fee for the inspection program replacement but will continue to pay their standard inspection fees.



MANDALYN LEWALLEN | MULTIMEDIA EDITOR

State inspection sign sits outside of Reliable Automotive, Wednesday, Jan. 8, 2025, in San Marcos.

Garza said the Hays County Tax Assessor-Collector’s Office has seen a rise in vehicle registrations from local residents compared to last January, a trend attributed to the impact of HB 3297.

“We have so many individuals that did not register in December or in October or November... as well as all the people who did expire in January or the people that are expiring in February,” Garza said. “[The increase is] creating a little bit of a line, but at least we’re not having to send them away and having them to come back, which I think that’s the best part of this bill.”

Cockrell wants to remind drivers there are still violations

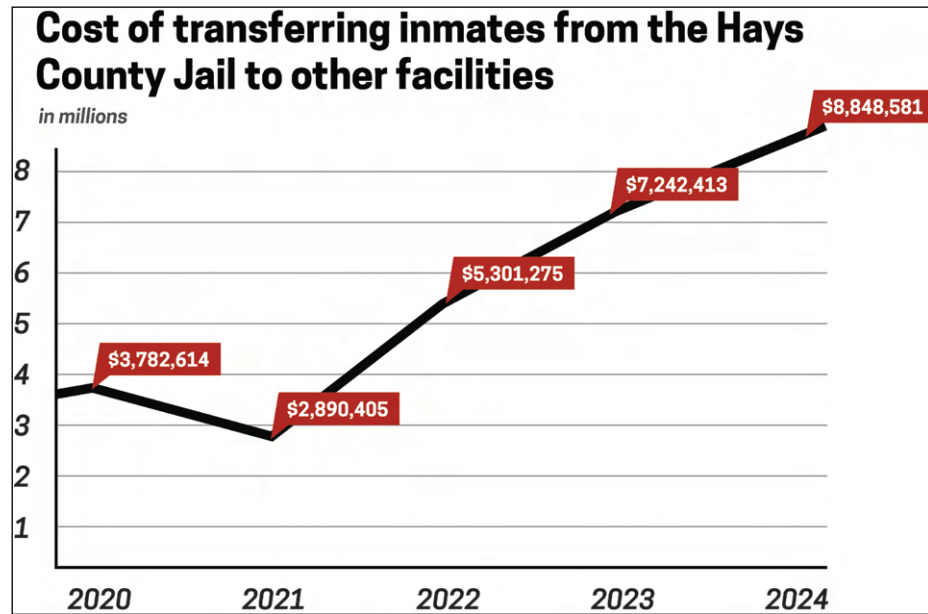
for unsafe equipment and long run.

“If people will continue to check their vehicles before they get out on the road, then it’s going to be a good thing for everyone,” Garza said. “We’re saving the money and saving everybody’s time, which is valuable. We as individuals just need to put forth the effort to make sure our vehicles are still safe.”

According to DPS, there are 17 counties that are emission counties, where all vehicles, including non-commercial, still require emissions inspections. Hays County is not a registered emission county.

Mary Garza acknowledged that balancing vehicle safety with customer convenience can be challenging. However, she believes taxpayers will ultimately appreciate the streamlined process in the

FROM FRONT HAYS COUNTY



TANNER BROWN | DESIGN EDITOR

“The sheriff is [in charge of] the jail, and the jail simply houses the inmates. That’s it. Who comes into the jail, who leaves the jail? The sheriff has no control over,” Pulpan said. “It’s bonds, it’s getting cases moved through the system. That’s all the courts and the DA office.”

The Hays County Sheriff’s Office is the largest arresting body in Hays County. According to the Hays County Jail Dashboard, 42.1% of jailed individuals were arrested by the sheriff’s office as of Jan. 13.

Pulpan did not provide a figure for the cost of transporting inmates to and from Haskell County, which is located

over 300 miles from San Marcos.

According to Mano Amiga Executive Director Eric Martinez, the costs of transportation quickly add up, especially when court dockets change and a case gets delayed after the inmate has already been transported back to Hays County.

“That gets incredibly expensive to taxpayers, right? When you think about transportation administration legal delays are a huge thing,” Martinez said.

Martinez also said outsourcing inmates can lead to difficulties in cases, such as properly utilizing legal representation when an individual is jailed in a facility five hours away from their attorney.

“When people are outsourced to distant facilities, they are cut off from their families and their legal representation,” Martinez said. “Imagine trying to fight for your freedom when your attorney has to drive hours to meet you.”

Myles Martin spent 30 months in the custody of the Hays County Sheriff’s Office before being acquitted in 2022. Martin estimates he only spent eight months in the Hays County Jail, with the other 22 months in four different jails.

“[I was transferred to] Burnet County, Fort Bend County,

Travis County, Atascosa County,” Martin said. “I went to Fort Bend twice.”

Martin said he was never given notice he was going to be transferred to another jail.

“[Guards] came in with pepper spray guns, with the pepper spray pellets, and three guys said ‘Martin pack your stuff. You’re on chain,’” Martin said. “You got about three minutes to pack your stuff up, and if you refuse, you get shot with pellets.”

Martin said he was unable to have visitation when transferred to other jails because of the distance.

“Imagine being in jail in San Marcos, and now I have a consistent visitation, then now you’re in Houston, nobody’s there to visit you. It messes with your mind,” Martin said.

Martin said being transferred to other jails felt like “warfare on the psyche.” He said he faced racism, religious discrimination and other issues at the jails he was transferred to.

Martin condemned the practice, saying he believes outsourcing contracts lead to more arrests due to having to meet a minimum transferred population.

“If they got to send 200 people a day, then obviously they have to arrest that many people. That’s why they sent so many people to jail, so [both jails] can make money,” Martin said.

“[Guards] came in with pepper spray guns, with the pepper spray pellets, and three guys said, ‘Martin pack your stuff. You’re on chain. You got about three minutes to pack your stuff up, and if you refuse, you get shot with pellets.’”

Myles Martin
Previous Hays County Jail detainee



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FROM FRONT REMEMBRANCE



STACY DALTON | COURTESY PHOTO

(From Left to Right) Lindsay Dalton, Ace Dalton, Ethan Dalton and Elise Dalton posing in summer 2021 in Estes Park, Colorado.

“[Our experience with Ethan] drives the organization, because I have an understanding that there’s not a black-and-white answer to anybody’s struggles...” Stacy said. “It just really drives me to reach out to the community and be like, ‘Hey, nobody really chooses to do this it’s just something in their brain that’s just different, and that’s okay.’”

Ethan’s older sister Elise loved watching him grow into the person he became, especially after seeing him struggle in childhood to make friends and fit in.

“Teenagers struggle a lot with growing and finding themselves and I think Ethan was no exception he had a lot of struggles in his childhood that I watched him go through,” Elise said. “Then once he started going to Texas State, I think he found a lot of independence, and he was really for the first time able to be proud of himself and we were so proud of him.”

In the early years of The Collaborative for Family Education, Ethan dedicated himself to working

with foster youth, particularly those who had aged out of the system. His commitment was deepened by his parents’ decision to foster children in their own home.

“He always had a lot of passion for people, whether it was people with special needs, or people in foster care, and people with autism, or even people with just differences in their personality, [Ethan] always rooted for the underdog,” Stacy said.

Now, the nonprofit is prioritizing community education on mental health resources and guiding children through that journey, and that work has already begun. Stacy spoke at the Colorado Organization for Victim Assistance in October, addressing how families in rural areas can access additional support for children with mental health challenges.

To support the Dalton family’s mission and help fund their nonprofit, Pi Kappa Alpha (PIKE) is hosting a public fundraising event at Sewell Park on Feb. 8 as most of the nonprofit’s funding comes directly from the family.

“Being able to honor him in that culmination of his choices, good and bad, is so important to us and I do see [the organization] changing directions,” Stacy said. “We’re still going to work with the foster kids, but I see more and more of that mental health aspect coming in. With our experiences, how could it not?”

Though Ethan faced challenges growing up and often found himself in trouble, that changed when he entered early adulthood at Texas State. He excelled academically, maintaining a 4.0 GPA throughout college, and built friendships, many of whom were his fraternity brothers in PIKE.

Jose Villarreal, who was the

president of PIKE when Ethan died, said Ethan set the example for what a member of the fraternity should be: smart, overachieving and down to earth.

Ethan held a scholarship within the frat for two years, which is now being renamed in his honor as the Ethan Dalton Zeta Theta Scholarship and will launch in March.

“We are hoping whoever holds this scholarship will always strive for better and carry on the qualities Ethan represented to honor him,” Villarreal said.

PIKE also organized a memorial to honor Ethan a few days after his death on Sept. 5 outside the LBJ Student Center. Ethan’s older sister Lindsay said the ceremony showed her what Ethan meant to the people around him.

“I didn’t expect to see as many people as we did at his memorial, and to hear all the stories and how much people loved him and looked up to him and cared about him meant the world,” Lindsay said. “It’s tough for the circumstances but it was so nice to see the impact he left behind.”

The U.S. Drug Enforcement

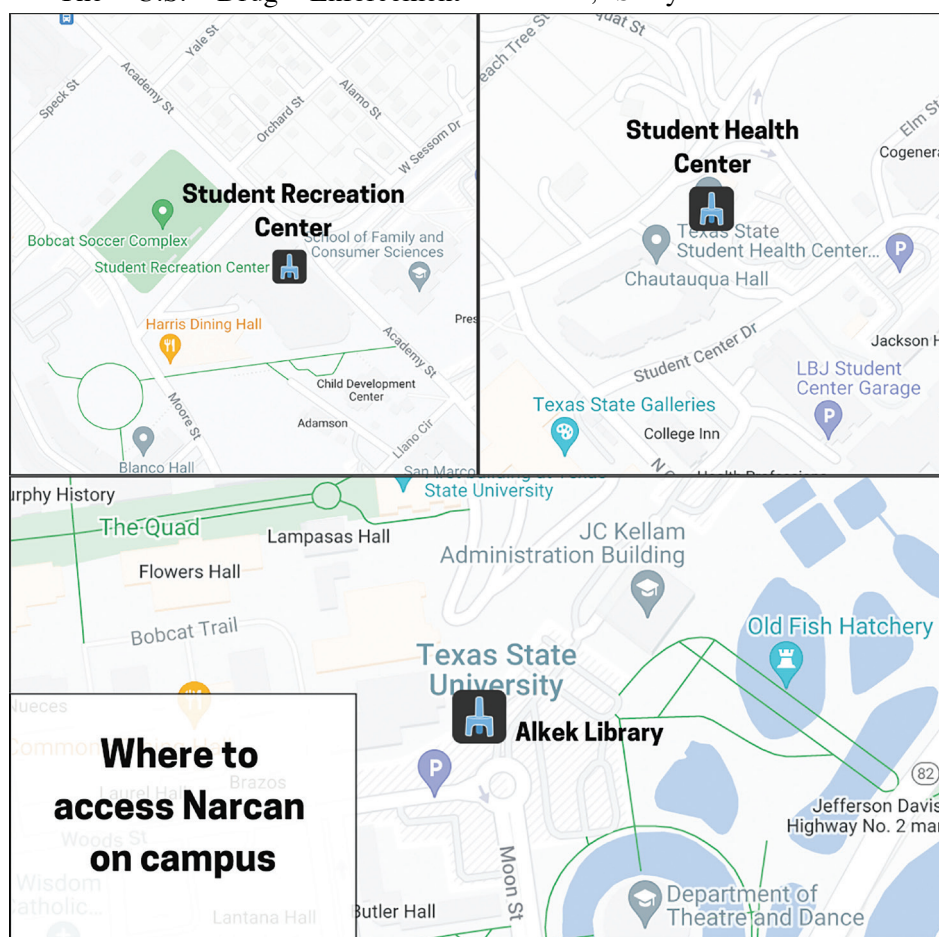
Administration reported a 14.5% decrease in overdose deaths from June 2023 to June 2024 and a decrease in the potency of fentanyl pills and that downward trend is reflected in Hays County.

“We’re making a difference but it’s never going to go away. We’re going to continue to have poisonings in our community but our job is to keep it as close to zero as possible,” Hays County Sheriff Anthony Hipolito said in a June interview with The Star. “So we’re going to work tirelessly to do that; both on the street and educationally.”

Texas State also has a Narcan Distribution Program available at the Student Health Center, Alkek Library and the Student Recreation Center.

Stacy said Ethan always wanted to be a rock for others, someone they could turn to. Now, that spirit lives on through the work of the nonprofit, echoing his hope to make a lasting difference.

“Ethan died like he lived; just a little bit extra and a little bit impulsive but he was such a good human and that is what we want the organization to honor,” Stacy said.



Diego Medel | Engagement Editor

FROM FRONT LEGISLATION



Mandalyn Lewallen | Multimedia Editor

THC products sold at Holy Smokes smoke shop, Wednesday, Jan. 8, 2025, in San Marcos.

In 2019, House Bill (HB) 1325 legalized the production and regulation of hemp products in Texas. Under the bill, industrial hemp must contain no more than 0.3% THC, aligning with the standards set by the 2018 Farm Bill.

With SB 3, all products containing any amount of THC would be banned.

Eric Martinez, executive director of Mano Amiga Action, said a ban on THC products would put consumers who use these products for a variety of health-related issues, including anxiety, insomnia and chronic pain, at risk.

“By banning these products, it could cut off access to products that they trust which would then, in turn, potentially make them

[consumers] likely to get [THC products] on the black market,” Martinez said. “Which means exposing themselves to the danger of law enforcement and not knowing the quality of the THC product that they are consuming.”

Ty Schepis, psychology professor, said Cannabidiol (CBD) and THC are the two primary active forms of psychoactive components of cannabis, with THC being primarily responsible for the euphoric effects of cannabis.

“There are other forms of THC, like Delta-8 THC and Delta 10 THC, but it’s naturally occurring cannabis, Delta-9 is the most potent of the three,” Schepis said.

In 2020, the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) launched the

Consumable Hemp Program which helps with the regulation and sale of hemp-derived products. Retailers must register with the DSHS for a one-year license, costing \$155 per location where THC products will be sold.

From edibles to beverages, the variety of hemp-derived products began to expand, and according to Martinez, so did the businesses selling THC. DSHS states there are almost 8,000 registered hemp retailers in Texas.

“What this bill is threatening to do is basically rip businesses away from business owners and threaten to enforce against people who are law-abiding community members,” Martinez said.

Carl Stovall, owner of Miracle Leaf Health Center in San Marcos, said the ban would have a significant financial impact on business sales as they offer different products containing Delta-8 THC and Delta-9 THC.

Stovall said the only alternative that could save his business if the ban is imposed is if consumers are required to register for the legal purchase of any THC products.

“I have doctors on staff that their Telehealth service to get people registered for the use of medical THC,” Stovall said. “I think most smoke shops don’t have that privilege and I kind of got set up for the long game here.”

Schepis said the big difference between hemp-derived products and other forms of cannabis is their concentration amounts, with hemp-derived products having a much smaller amount of THC or CBD.

Ambassador of Students for Sensible Drug Policy Blake Coe said the ban is not a solution, but a reinstatement of past problems.

“That [ban] doesn’t mean that cannabis use is going to stop,” Coe said. “You’re going to see a flourishing of the black market, and even all of the problems that they say are the problems of the legal market are going to come back.”

Coe said with no other legal alternatives consumers would turn to illegal and unsafe means to obtain THC products posing dangers to themselves.

“The real issue is, you’ll get something that is super strong and [dealers] don’t tell you how strong it is or if [dealers] do have the amount of THC those people don’t have an idea of what that is,” Coe said.

Martinez said instead of a total ban, there should be more focus on providing better education on the effects of different hemp-derived products to consumers.

“There could be more packaging with clearer signifiers or identifiers for THC and hemp-derived products,” Martinez said.

“In the face of people in the opioid crisis, we want people to hopefully engage in partaking in a product that doesn’t have such a great risk of them falling into a cycle of addiction or anything of that sort.”

Proposition A, passed in San Marcos in 2022, decriminalized the possession of up to four ounces of marijuana. However, Attorney General Ken Paxton sued the city over the measure. A Hays County district judge later dismissed the lawsuit, but Paxton’s office has appealed the decision.

Texas State wrote it does not comment on pending legislation in an email to The Star. According to an interview The Star conducted with UPD Chief Matthew Carmichael in July, under TXST’s current drug policy, the university remains a drug-free school and no-smoking campus.

“We ensure [TXST’s drug policy] is consistent with the state and federal statute, we ensure it is consistent with the health of our students,” Carmichael said. “The policy is intended to keep our campus safe, our students safe.”

SB 3 will be presented at the 89th Texas legislative session to be voted on, which begins on Jan. 14.

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.

Senate Bill 3 will harm Texans and local businesses

By Jolee Gavito
Opinions Contributor

Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick proposed Senate Bill 3 (SB 3), which aims to ban the distribution of tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), including in the case of medical pretenses on Dec. 4, 2024. Individuals often seek THC for pain relief, yet Patrick isn't concerned with the needs of citizens.

In June 2019, House Bill 1325 passed in Texas, permitting the production and distribution of hemp products. This allowed dispensaries to legally distribute regulated marijuana products. This bill opened the door for Texans diagnosed with severe health issues to purchase marijuana from a trustworthy source.

SB 3 aims to replace House Bill 1325, impacting Texans who distribute and use marijuana for health conditions. If SB 3 passes, businesses that distribute THC will crumble along with their customers.

THC products are regulated by the FDA, however, if THC is banned in Texas, individuals might be forced to resort to unregulated products to ease their pain.

Harvard Health states THC binds to specific receptors "on the brain and nerve cells, which slows pain impulses and eases discomfort." While studies are still being conducted, individual patients vouch for its effectiveness.

According to Patrick's website, HB 1325 permits the use of "dangerous" non-traceable amounts of THC in



SOPHIE PICKERELL | ILLUSTRATOR

products sold in smoke shops and dispensaries. Despite this claim, there are no reliable sources on his site to prove HB 1325 allows the purchases of unregulated THC.

Patrick also claims companies are selling THC products and directly targeting children. According to the Texas Occupations Code, these cases occur because those younger individuals have chronic pain or illnesses. If Patrick was actually concerned for Texan youth, he would propose

protections and safety nets instead of insecurities.

Despite Dan Patrick's biased accusation of HB 1325, the Texas State Law Library states in Texas, legal THC has a maximum concentration of 0.3%. Depending on the amount, anything beyond the legal concentration, even under medical pretenses, will result in a fine between \$2,000 to \$50,000, as well as jail time ranging from 180 days to 99 years.

Even though those numbers seem scary, there are laws in place to act as

a safeguard for Texan residents who use medical THC.

Initially passed in 2015, the Compassionate-Use Act allows individuals to purchase and use medical marijuana. Legal conditions include being a permanent Texan resident over 21 years old, a signature from a physician and a diagnosis, such as chronic pain or insomnia.

Go Green Botanicals, a dispensary in San Marcos, offers THC products. Employee Trevor Hamarlund said the store relies on THC sales in order to stay afloat.

"There are times where parents buy [medicinal] hemp products for their kids who have some sort of mental, emotional, [or] physical condition," Hamarlund said. "[Parents] have been verified to purchase THC by their physician..."

To help prevent the ratification of SB 3, Texans must communicate concerns with their state representatives by utilizing the "Who Represents Me?" website, and spread information to medical marijuana users who might be unaware.

Texas lawmakers must realize the overwhelming importance of medical marijuana in the daily lives of many citizens. SB 3 must not be passed to ensure the safety of those who rely on the effects of medicinal marijuana, before it's too late.

-Jolee Gavito is a journalism sophomore

Counseling Center sets standard for inclusivity

By Aubrey Haynes
Opinions Contributor

As students begin the new year and semester, the Texas State Counseling Center's commitment to equity and culturally competent mental health care sets a powerful example -- one the entire university should follow to ensure students feel supported and valued.

According to the American College Health Association, almost 63% of students reported feeling overwhelming anxiety in the past year, and 23% reported being diagnosed and treated by a mental health professional for anxiety. These numbers represent an emerging mental health crisis in need of innovative solutions.

The Texas State Counseling Center provides services, including counseling, group therapy and workshops conducted by a diverse professional team. These services ensure all students, regardless of background, feel seen and heard.

For far too many students, especially marginalized communities within the university, culturally competent mental health care can mean the difference between a student surviving or thriving.

First-generation students have different stressors, like navigating higher education without familial guidance, while Black students often have to deal with the mental toll of systemic racism and microaggressions.

LGBTQ+ students frequently wrestle with identity-based discrimination. These challenges call for counselors to listen with empathy and understand the complexity of each student's experience.

According to the Counseling Center website, Texas State took action by investing in staff diversity and dedicating more resources to such a diverse population of students.

The Counseling Center staff is diverse in background, race, culture and specialty within mental health. Specialties include psychologists, counselors and social workers. This variety ensures counselors can relate to and support the university's diverse student population.

Nationwide, there is a demographic gap within mental health resources. In 2021, 86% of all psychologists in the U.S. were white. TXST actively maintains awareness and advocacy toward this reality.

For students already marginalized, those barriers are much larger. 35% of Black Americans and 27% of Hispanic Americans who needed mental health care reported not getting the treatment they wanted because services were not available in a culturally informed way.

In its Scope of Practice, the Counseling Center states, "It is our intention that the counseling center be an emotionally safe and respectful environment for members of the Texas State community. To this end, we strive to provide quality services that

are sensitive to the lived experiences of all students."

A study published by the American Psychological Association found when a client feels their counselor can share or understand their cultural background, they are more likely to continue their therapy and also report positive outcomes.

In addition, data from PubMed Central shows a counselor's perceived cultural competence enhances the client's engagement in and satisfaction with the process of counseling. For students at Texas State, these efforts are particularly important.

Texas State's commitment to accessible mental health care extends beyond in-person services. The university offers TimelyCare, a virtual counseling platform that lets students access counseling with flexibility around demanding schedules.

A university community thrives in its readiness to handle any challenge to mental health, regardless of background. Texas State continues to lead through investments in diversity, cultural competence, and accessible



ABBY FUNDERBURK | ILLUSTRATOR

resources like TimelyCare.

These characteristics show progress and are indicative of what is possible for other universities striving to meet the mental health needs of their students.

Now is the time to recognize the commitment of the Texas State Counseling Center to foster equity and inclusion in mental health services. Giving value to representation, cultural competence and solution-focused initiatives, the Counseling Center has raised the bar and created the potential for saved lives and thriving students.

-Aubrey Haynes is a social work freshman

Letter to the Editor

The University Star welcomes letters from our readers. Letters must be 300 words or fewer to be considered for publication. Writers must include their full name, mailing address, major and academic year designation (for students), phone number and e-mail address when submitting a letter. Submissions that do not include this information cannot be published. This information is seen only by the editors and is used to verify the identity of the

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Letters can be submitted to staropinion@txstate.edu or by mail to Attn: Opinion Editor, The University Star, 601 University Drive, San Marcos, TX, 78666.



SUDOKU

Game by sudoku-solutions.com

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

Word Scramble

- (1) Toys, (2) Igloo,
- (3) Eggnog, (4) Gingerbread
- (5) Snowflake, (6) Peppermint

Crossword

- (1) Flannel, (2) Nutcracker,
- (3) Aurora, (4) Snoopy,
- (5) Evergreen, (6) Cocoa

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

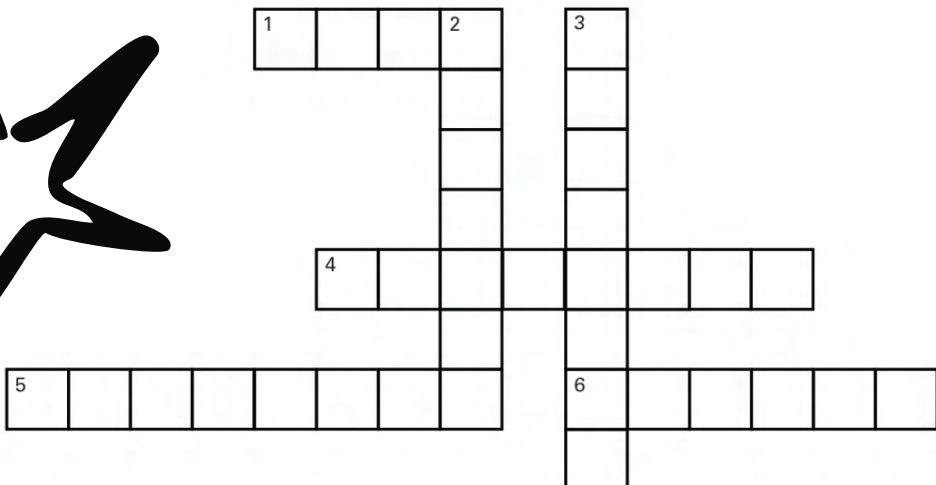
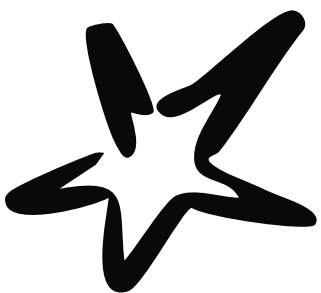
WORD SCRAMBLE

Health and Wellness

1. OPUS _____
2. NCNEEIS _____
3. IEAESSD _____
4. NBAELCA _____
5. DAIDBNA _____
6. INOIATEDTM _____

CROSSWORD

Health and Wellness

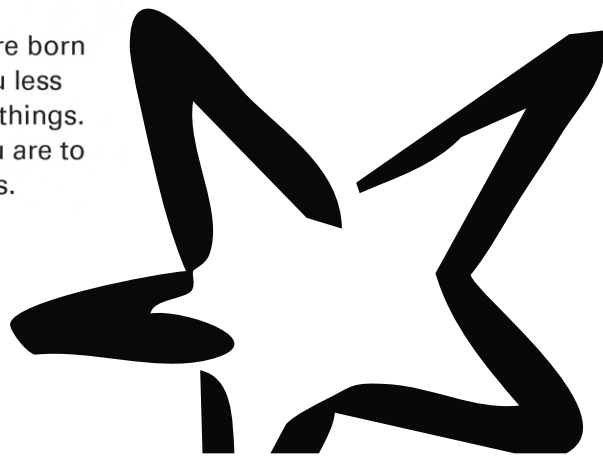


ACROSS:

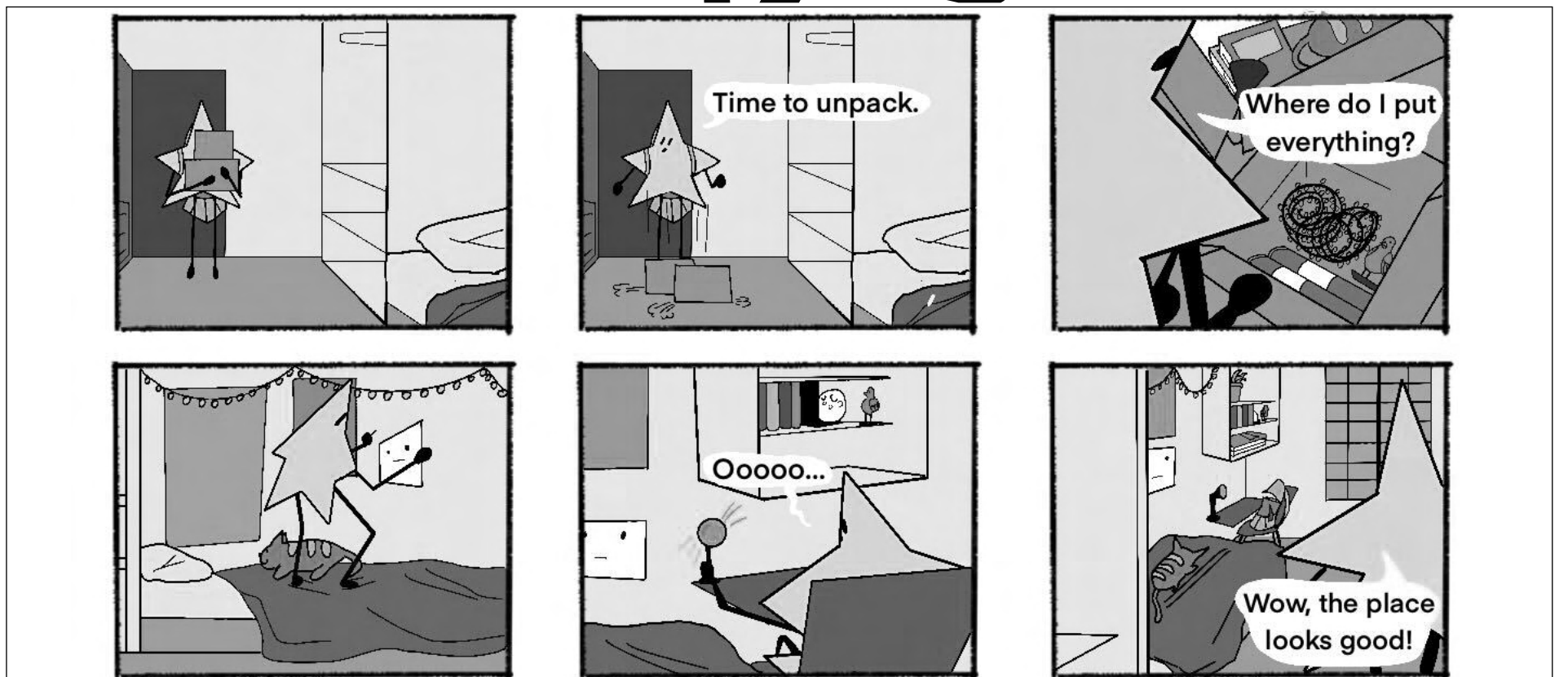
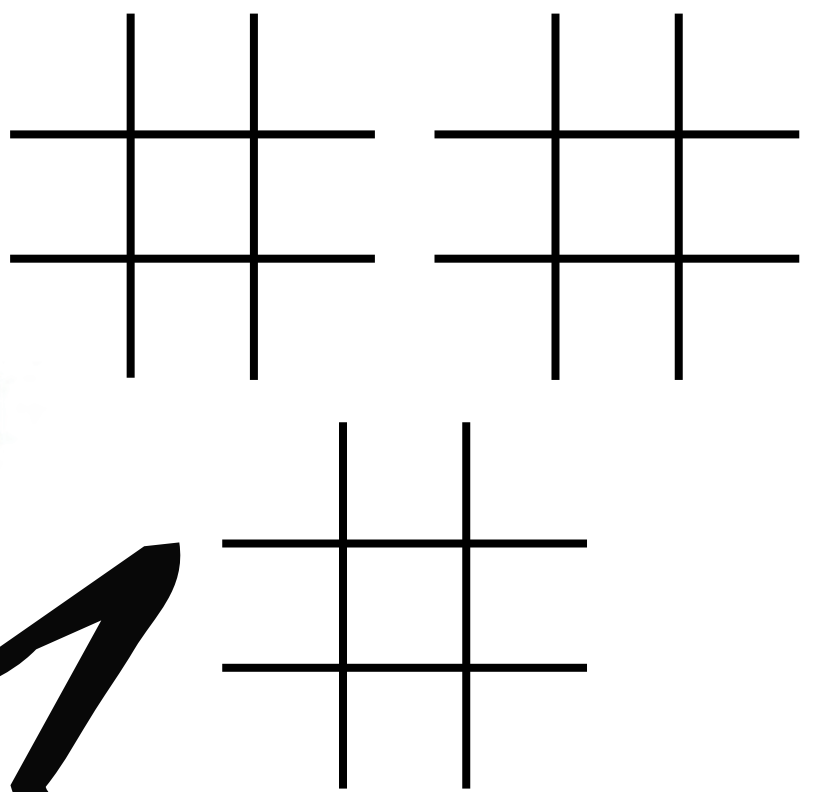
1. A means of doing different poses to stretch.
4. Your physical capability to lift, pull and push.
5. The act of returning to your natural state of health.
6. A piece of cloth used to blow your nose.

DOWN:

2. An ailment you are born with that makes you less immune to specific things.
3. How immune you are to some specific things.



TIC-TAC-TOE



Alumnus visits all state parks in a year

By AnaBelle Elliott
Life and Arts Contributor

Inside a navy blue F-150 stationed in a state park in Texas, the cloth seat of the passenger's side is stocked up on water and protein bars. Having just pulled into one of the last locations on his list, a sense of urgency starts to set in. John Sorsby, business management alumnus, is "racing darkness."

Sorsby traveled to all 88 Texas state parks within one year. He documented his travels on social media and grew to 139,000 Instagram followers as of Jan. 12. Sorsby visited seven to eight parks a month to stay on schedule and met his goal of traveling to all Texas state parks from his birthday on Oct. 14, 2023 to Oct. 14, 2024, creating 90-second videos using his iPhone and tripod from beginning to end.

Sorsby has a list of objectives he wants to accomplish in his lifetime, and he credits his ambition largely to his supportive family. He said this state parks feat is not the first project he's taken on, and his family stayed close throughout his different goals.

"I've always had that belief I could create the life I wanted, and I could make the impact in the world that I wanted to from my little piece of it," Sorsby said. "I'm definitely trying to make the most of the time that I know we have here on earth and live life on my own terms. That's always been a goal of mine even before doing the state parks, just all the different things I've pursued over the years personally and professionally."

Lanita Legan, now retired, was the Associate Director of the LBJ Student Center when Sorsby worked there. Legan is familiar with his recent work making videos and traveling around Texas.

"One of the things that I learned real early after knowing John a little bit was that he's very goal oriented," Legan said. "It would be very clear that whatever he did on campus, whether it was leadership responsibilities or on-campus jobs, all of those things are going to feed into the things that he was passionate about and the things that he had set goals for himself."

Sorsby said while the state parks challenge shaped how he travels around the state, he's nowhere near the end of exploring and telling the stories of the places he visits through video. He has a growing master list of places to visit, with messaging him recommendations on social media. He plans to keep visiting parks, trails, rivers and historic sites, digging up the history of each place.

"That's been an incredibly gratifying portion



MADISON WICKHAM | COURTESY PHOTO

Business management alumnus John Sorsby does a behind-the-scenes photoshoot of creating his videos, Tuesday, Feb. 10, 2024, at McKinney Falls State Park in Austin.

of all this," Sorsby said. "Hopefully inspiring other people to get outside and get active and find the beauty in the good things in your area, because when you start looking for it, you definitely find it."

Some of Sorsby's followers are students who came across his videos without knowing he is an alumnus. Maria Castro, anthropology senior, discovered Sorsby's videos on Instagram reels. Castro said as a homebody, she found the videos make her appreciate nature more, especially since she's not from Texas.

"[Sorsby's] videos are really appealing to somebody who is not from here because it actually piques your interest and makes you want to explore the state a little bit more," Castro said.

Keith Michael, singer/songwriter of Etta Place,

introduced his girlfriend to Sorsby's videos. The couple references Sorsby's page when deciding where to explore in their free time. Michael discovered Sorsby's account when he was closer to several thousand followers.

"I remember thinking, 'Oh, this is cool,'" Michael said. "What he's doing — he should have more followers than this. I've watched his account grow over maybe the past year or so, and it's cool. There's almost this element of living vicariously through him."

To follow up with Sorsby's plans, visit his Instagram or TikTok accounts at @jsorsby.

Photographer's exhibition marks 34 year anniversary with Wittliff display

By Cassandra Tamez
Life and Arts Contributor

When Susan Meiselas' exhibit, "Crossings," first opened at the Art Institute of Chicago in 1990, it captured national attention.

Juxtaposing images of hostile exchanges between migrants and border patrol in California in 1989 with stirring scenes of war-torn Central America made during the 1970s and 1980s, the exhibit shed light on the role the U.S. played in fueling Central America's prolonged displacement. Thirty-four years later, the exhibit embraces a new iteration as "Crossing Borders" on display in the Wittliff Collections.

A collaboration with participatory art and education project, Borderland Collective, "Crossing Borders" motivates viewers to identify connections between the past Meiselas documented and the present lived experiences of youth and their families in border regions of Texas.

In one gallery, the "Crossings" photographs are paired with video clips of "Pictures from a Revolution," a documentary Meiselas made where she interviews individuals she photographed 10 years prior during the Nicaraguan Revolution. An adjacent gallery contains writing, photographs and maps made by youth who worked with Borderland Collective.

Jason Reed, Borderland Collective co-founder, said the sightlines between the two galleries challenge viewers to make connections between them and see multiple layers of the migration experience.

"In the contrast between our work a truth emerges about migration — it is not a binary, Black and white experience but one full of nuance and gradation," Reed said.

In a lecture with students and faculty from



CASSANDRA TAMEZ | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Susan Meiselas considers a question posed by a student during the post-lecture Q&A, Tuesday, Oct. 8, 2024, at the Wittliff Collections.

the School of Art and Design on Oct. 8, Meiselas discussed the driving questions, impulses and lessons that shaped her career, offering pertinent history behind "Crossing Borders."

Early projects, such as "Carnival Strippers," enabled Meiselas to cultivate a documentary practice — a way of working with people that involved "staying, returning and building relationships" — that became integral to her process of later working in Central America and a defining feature of her work.

Throughout the journey of her experiences photographing the Nicaraguan revolution, social and political unrest in other Central American countries, experiences of migration in California and projects outside of a Latin American context, Meiselas shared

highlights about her experiences. She discussed the ethical complexities of photography, the evolution photographs can undergo and the role photographs play in shaping history.

At the close of her lecture, she invited the audience to participate in shaping history.

"With Crossings, these frames are pulled out of my archives," Meiselas said. "They're fragments, and I'm trying to bring them into a history of being made with you, today. I'm hoping you will make associations. I'm hoping you will ask questions. For me, it's still re-visiting. It's still carrying the past forward, thinking about photographs as documents of a historical process."

Francesca Garza, photography senior, praised Meiselas' lecture, noting the importance of her work and how her photographs informed viewers.

"I felt so moved after listening to Susan Meiselas talk and seeing her exhibit... she has captured the gravity of dangerous situations," Garza said. "She has documented important parts of history we would not have known

or seen."

Reed expressed hope for what the joint exhibitions might accomplish. He said he hopes the university community can engage in dialogue about building a future that values solidarity with migrant communities.

"I hope viewers feel the great trauma and devastation that conflict brings and the immense resilience and joy that is built despite this trauma," Reed said. "I hope the exhibition is a catalyst for viewers to begin thinking about border and migration issues in ways that challenge the destructive narrative of us versus them."

"Crossing Borders" will be on display through Feb. 26 at the Wittliff Collections.

FOOTBALL

How TXST won the 2025 First Responder Bowl

By Jacob De Luna
Sports Reporter

The Texas State Bobcats appeared in and won its second bowl game, marking back-to-back First Responder Bowl wins.

“These last couple weeks in college football have been the craziest I have ever been a part of. To come out here in a big-time atmosphere and get a win, that is what it’s all about,” Texas State head coach G.J. Kinne said. “We have a ton of momentum going into the offseason now. I am really proud of the guys and how they came out and played.”

The Bobcats defeated the North Texas Mean Green 30-28 by dominating the time of possession, winning the turnover battle, outgaining North Texas on the ground and making key plays on the defensive side of the ball.

Winning the time-of-possession battle and outgaining the opponent on the ground go hand-in-hand. The Bobcats held the ball for a total of 37 minutes and 47 seconds, compared to North Texas’ 22 minutes and 13 seconds of possession.

Texas State more than doubled the rushing yards of the Mean Green. North Texas recorded 25 rush attempts for 98 yards, averaging 3.9 yards a carry and added two touchdowns on the ground. Texas State carried the ball 44 times for 201 yards rushing, adding two touchdowns on the ground. Texas State’s 44 rush attempts were the fourth-most by the team out of its 13 games this season.

SERVPRO First Responder Bowl MVP running back Lincoln Pare recorded 21 carries for 143 yards and two touchdowns. The junior sealed the game late for Texas State with a 73-yard touchdown run with 2:25 left in the fourth and final quarter.

North Texas quarterback Drew Mestemaker accounted for all three of the Mean Green turnovers. Senior linebacker Mannie Nunnery and junior linebacker Treylin Payne each collected an



MEG BOLES | ASSISTANT MULTIMEDIA EDITOR

Texas State redshirt senior quarterback Jordan McCloud (3) celebrates winning the SERVPRO First Responder Bowl over North Texas, Friday, Jan. 3, 2025 at Gerald J. Ford Stadium.

interception. Senior cornerback Jordan Polk forced a strip sack on Mestemaker and Texas State defensive end Kalil Alexander recovered the fumble.

The Texas State defense finished the bowl game with three sacks, seven tackles for loss and six passes defended. Polk finished the game with nine total tackles (seven solo), one sack and two tackles for loss. Alexander recorded four total tackles (three solo), one sack and two tackles for loss.

Texas State recorded two turnovers in the victory against North Texas. In the beginning stages of the fourth quarter, senior quarterback Jordan McCloud was intercepted by sophomore safety Evan Jackson. On the following possession for Texas State, McCloud was strip-sacked by junior defensive lineman Fatafehi Vailea II, and junior defensive

lineman Breylon Charles recovered the ball.

The North Texas defense finished with two sacks, five tackles for loss, two takeaways and three passes defended against the Texas State offense.

With Kinne leading Texas State to consecutive bowl victories for the first time ever also signed for the next seven seasons, it appears the next stepping stone for the Bobcats is a Sun Belt Conference championship.

“Being able to build a culture and to have some buy-in to win eight games at a place that really has not done that, it’s special,” Kinne said. “I signed that seven-year contract, so I am trying to get a statue, a field and be here awhile.”

BASEBALL

What the Bobcats need to improve on in 2025

By Adrian Ramirez
Sports Reporter

If there is one word to describe the 2024 Texas State baseball season, disappointing seems a good fit. A team riddled with talent went 27-29, missing the NCAA and Sun Belt Conference tournaments.

For Texas State to meet its lofty expectations in 2025, numerous things will need to change for the better, starting with getting pitching back on track.

High-velocity arms might not be as much of a draw as they were 10 years ago due to the ever-increasing number of those capable of throwing 95-plus. Still, when a pitching staff littered with plus-fastballs and good off-speed begins to underperform, people tend to take notice. Texas State pitching coach Chad Massengale’s staff had an earned run average over 5.00 in each of the last two seasons, leading to questions about why.

Aside from the inflated ERA the last two seasons, walks appear to be a real concern for Massengale’s staff and could be the chief reason for the uptick in ERA. Texas State’s pitching walked 4.49 and 4.32 batters per game in 2023 and 2024. Neither of those numbers is a recipe for success in high-level collegiate baseball.

Signs may point to this being a “prove it” year for Massengale, the biggest of which is the arrival of former Texas Longhorns head coach David Pierce. Pierce has been a collegiate coach for 25 years, 13 of which he spent as a head coach. Pierce led the Longhorns to three College World Series appearances in seven seasons at Texas. Before his first head coaching job at Sam Houston, Pierce served as pitching coach at Rice University. From 2006-11, Rice had 27 pitchers drafted under Pierce’s guidance.



MEG BOLES | ASSISTANT MULTIMEDIA EDITOR

Members of the Texas States baseball team wait in the dugout during their game against Washington State. Sunday, Feb. 25, 2024, at the Dell Diamond in Round Rock, Texas.

Scan the QR code to read
the rest of the story.



FROM FRONT FOOTBALL

“I started taking video and sending it out to literally every school that I could find the special teams coordinator’s email,” Bates said. “Texas State was literally the only one that responded. I had no connection to them or anything. I think [special teams coordinator Nick Whitworth] just happened to be scrolling through his email that day.”

Despite serving solely as a kickoff specialist, Bates said he learned a lot from his time at Texas State, citing kicker Seth Keller as an inspiration.

“A big thing [I admired about Keller] was how he approached every single day, whether it was a practice or a game. He had so much intent behind everything he did,” Bates said. “Just being able to shadow that and turning it into the way I wanted it to be for my kicking [was helpful].”

Bates spent two seasons with Texas State (2020-21) before transferring to the University of Arkansas for his final season of eligibility (2022), where he earned First-Team All-SEC honors.

“For somebody that didn’t have much attached to his name as far as kicking, I think [earning First Team ALL-SEC honors] at least added something to my resume and showed



STAR FILE PHOTO

Texas State junior kicker Jake Bates (47) kicks the ball to Appalachian State after the Bobcats scored during the game, Saturday, Nov. 7, 2020, at Bobcat Stadium.

that I do have a good leg,” Bates said.

After being cut by the Houston Texans in the 2023 NFL preseason, Bates, thinking his football career was over, worked as a brick salesman in Houston before finding a spot on the UFL’s Michigan Panthers.

“My agent happened to know the [general manager] for the Panthers, so they brought me on to camp,”

Bates said. “I don’t know if they knew anything about me or if they were literally just doing a favor for my agent.”

Even though his roster spot was potentially earned as a favor, Bates immediately made a name for himself in the UFL, kicking a jaw-dropping 64-yard field goal with three seconds remaining to give the Panthers an

18-16 victory against the St. Louis Battlehawks. The field goal, Bates’ first since high school, was two yards shy of Baltimore Ravens kicker Justin Tucker’s 66-yard NFL record.

“I definitely think [the 64-yard field goal] got a little attention stirring, and then [with] the whole back story of I haven’t kicked a field goal since high school, I think there was so much left [of me] to be seen,” Bates said.

The 25-year-old kicker converted 17 of 22 field goals in 10 games with the Panthers, leading to his deal with Detroit.

After a strong rookie season, Bates prepares for the next step in his unconventional career: the NFL playoffs.

“I know [the playoffs are] a little bit bigger of a stage, but at the same time, I know I can’t get too ahead of myself or let the moment get too big,” Bates said.

If Detroit wins its next two games, Bates will become the fourth former Bobcat to compete in the Super Bowl.

Bates and the Lions will face the Washington Commanders in the NFL Divisional Round at 7 p.m. on Saturday, Jan. 18 at Ford Field in Detroit. The game will be available to stream on FOX.



Bobcats Go Bowling

A fan holds a sign thanking Santa for tickets to his first bowl game, Friday, Jan. 3, 2025 at Gerald J. Ford Stadium. MEG BOLES | ASSISTANT MULTIMEDIA EDITOR

Texas State senior cornerback Jordan Polk (10) celebrates his interception of a pass thrown by North Texas quarterback, with senior safety Bobby Crosby (27) during the SERVPRO First Responder Bowl, Friday, Jan. 3, 2025, at Gerald J. Ford Stadium.



MEG BOLES | ASSISTANT MULTIMEDIA EDITOR



MEG BOLES | ASSISTANT MULTIMEDIA EDITOR

Texas State fans celebrate in the stands at the SERVPRO First Responder Bowl, Friday, Jan. 3, 2025, at Gerald J. Ford Stadium.



MANDALYN LEWALLEN | MULTIMEDIA EDITOR

Texas State band performs before the SERVPRO First Responder Bowl, Friday, Jan. 3, 2025, at Gerald J. Ford Stadium.

Fans climb onto the railing to celebrate Texas State taking the lead in the SERVPRO First Responder Bowl against North Texas, Friday, Jan. 3, 2025, at Gerald J. Ford Stadium.



MEG BOLES | ASSISTANT MULTIMEDIA EDITOR



MANDALYN LEWALLEN | MULTIMEDIA EDITOR

Texas State color guard gives a performance before the SERVPRO First Responder Bowl, Friday, Jan. 3, 2025, at Gerald J. Ford Stadium.

Scan the QR code to view the gallery online.

