



**TUESDAY**

February 25, 2025

VOLUME 114 ISSUE 23

# THE UNIVERSITY STAR

DEFENDING THE FIRST AMENDMENT SINCE 1911

## Measles case unlikely to spread in Hays County

**By Blake Leschber & Lucciana Choueiry**  
Managing Editor & News Editor

After an individual who visited Texas State last week tested positive for measles, Hays County Health Department said the risk of the disease spreading in the county is low.

Hays County looked at three factors to determine the risk of the measles case: vaccination status with a positive patient, symptom onset of the positive patient and vaccination status within the community. The individual has one dose of the measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine and did not develop rashes until Feb. 20, six days after they visited campus, according to Natalie Frels, Hays County communications manager.

“The individual visited San Marcos outside the most optimal time for virus transition,” Frels said. “These two facts alone give us a little confidence that we won’t see spread [in Hays County].”

**SEE HEALTH PAGE 3**

## Companies eye San Marcos for potential data centers

**By Ryan Claycamp**  
Assistant News Editor

Two separate groups are looking to build data centers in San Marcos in the coming years.

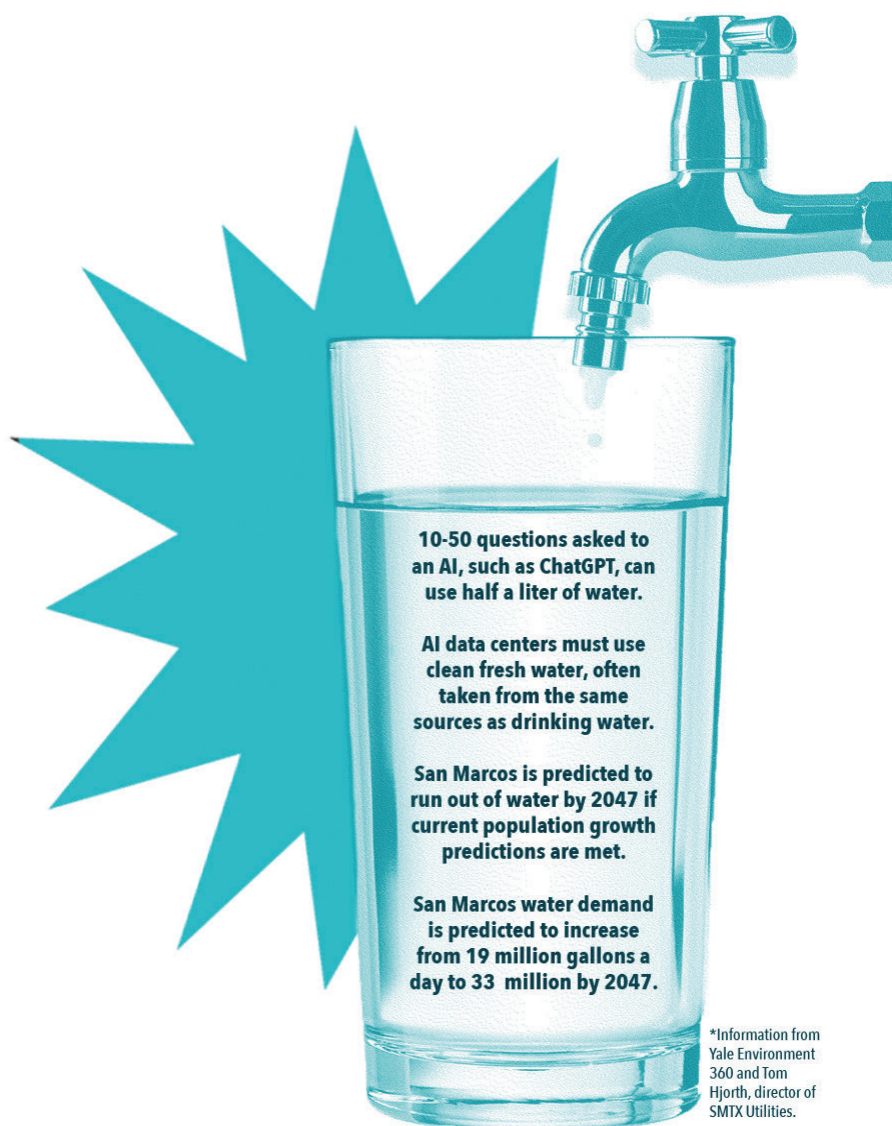
The two data center proposals are currently in different stages. Armbrust & Brown, PLLC, on behalf of Highlander SM One, LLC and Donald and Germaine Tuff, have submitted a proposal to the city. The second proposed data center from CloudBurst has not been submitted to the city.

Data centers are facilities full of computers and computer servers that can be used for various purposes, such as data storage and hosting artificial intelligence algorithms.

The proposals for the two data centers come just weeks after San Marcos was predicted to face a water shortage by 2047. According to Yale Environment 360, data centers can consume millions of gallons of water to cool their computer systems.

“[Data centers] are absolutely huge wastes of water,” Councilmember Matthew Mendoza said at city council’s Feb. 18 meeting. “The reason why they use so much water is to cool their render servers basically. They have floors full of servers.”

**SEE TECHNOLOGY PAGE 3**



SOPHIA GERKE | ASSISTANT DESIGN EDITOR

## Inside the Capitol: House Bill 2549

**By Lesdy Hernandez**  
News Reporter

“Inside the Capitol” examines key bills from the 89th legislative session that impact the Texas State and San Marcos communities. The session began on Jan. 14 and ends June 2.

A person’s biological sex may be required on their identification cards under a new bill in Texas’ 89th legislative session.

State Rep. David Lowe, R- North Richland Hills, introduced House Bill 2549 (HB 2549), which would require the inclusion of a person’s biological sex on licenses including, driver’s licenses, commercial learner’s licenses and personal ID certificates.

“The application for the personal identification certificate must provide space for the applicant to identify the applicant’s biological sex as either male or female as determined at birth,” HB 2549 text stated.

As of August 2024, the Texas Department

of Public Safety (DPS) does not accept court orders or amended birth certificates used to update gender marker changes in state and federal IDs, including driver’s licenses, social security cards and U.S. passports.

Under HB 2549, gender non-conforming markers and further changes would be made unavailable in identification cards.

Lauren Gutterman, liberal arts associate professor at the University of Texas Austin who teaches LGBTQ+ history, said the bill erases and stigmatizes oppressed minority groups, posing a risk to transgender and nonconforming people.

“This would forcibly out people as trans in daily aspects of their lives when they’re required to show a driver’s license or other personal identification,” Gutterman said. “So this could put trans people right at risk of harassment and even physical violence.”

**SEE LEGISLATION PAGE 2**



SOPHIA GERKE | ASSISTANT DESIGN EDITOR

## Students explore directing with Honors Capstones

**By Megan Weise**  
Life and Arts Reporter

Four theater students are exploring their abilities as directors for their Honors Capstone projects this semester.

According to the Texas State website, the Honors College requires a capstone project which allows Honors students to explore their interests independently to demonstrate skills for employers and graduate schools. Students working on Honors Capstone projects develop their ideas with the help of capstone supervisors.

“I wanted to do [my project] with the Honors College and have this be my capstone project... because I also wanted to use it as a good educational tool because I’m going to be a future theatre educator,” Alyssa Rodriguez, theatre educator junior, said. “I’m a firm believer that theater is a powerful educational tool to use.”

**Alyssa Rodriguez**

Rodriguez will direct “Reasons to be Pretty” by Neil LaBute for her project with performance dates on

Feb. 28-March 2 in Lampasas Hall. According to Rodriguez, the story tackles how women are affected by beauty standards and how men play a role in reinforcing the standards.

“[Reasons to be Pretty] was a show that needed to be told,” Rodriguez said. “Texas State has done a great job of selecting plays that have talked about diversity and inclusion, but I’ve noticed that in the past few years, there has been not as much talk of beauty standards.”

Rodriguez said she is grateful to have a platform to express the issues concerning beauty standards.

“I feel like it’s such an issue that people don’t necessarily really think about because it’s not as pressing,” Rodriguez said. “But it’s something that everyone has grown up with, especially women. I remember being so young and already knowing about beauty standards and how a girl has to look a certain way to be considered pretty.”

Tickets for “Reasons to be Pretty” are available on the Texas State Presents website.

**SEE THEATER PAGE 6**



**DIEGO MEDEL | ENGAGEMENT EDITOR**

Texas State theater majors freshman Andrew Tapia and senior Amelia Hobson embrace one another during a run through of “Karagula,” Thursday, February 21, 2025, at Lampasas Hall. “Karagula” written by Phillip Ridley, is directed by Abigail Thompson as part of her Honors Capstone project.

# SMTX begins reconstruction of downtown alleys

By James Philips  
News Reporter

The city of San Marcos is set to begin work on reconstructing Kissing Alley as part of a pilot project to redesign downtown alleys.

Construction on Kissing Alley, located between East Hopkins and East San Antonio Street, will begin in late 2025 as part of San Marcos' downtown Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) approved in 2024.

The project will replace asphalt with permeable pavers, allowing water to filter through limestone gravel beneath, aiding flood control. The reconstruction will also include measures to improve walkability for residents traveling in downtown San Marcos.

The project started in 2019 as part of the Green Alley Initiative (GAI) from the work of Lisa Arceneaux, a San Marcos environmental engineer and a co-author of the GAI, and Sarah Simpson, an urban designer and co-author of the GAI.

"If you're going to already renovate [the alleys], let's include green aspects," Simpson said. "Include low-impact development designs into the project versus just plain old asphalt and keeping the alleys in the dormant state that they have been in for a really long time."

The city and GAI co-authors chose Kissing Alley as the pilot due to its establishment as a space for community gathering and its inclusion as a part of broader downtown revitalization efforts.

According to the city's 10-Year CIP, the current estimated construction time for the Kissing Alley project is from September 2025 to March 2027.

While the CIP estimates that renovations to Kissing Alley will cost just over \$1 million, cost overruns have caused delays to the project's start.

According to Arceneaux, rising building costs are a significant cause of the cost overruns, with a REjournals report finding construction expenses across Texas rose 30% from 2023

to 2025.

Madeline Baker, San Marcos communications specialist, said most of the project's funding comes from the San Marcos Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone, a special district that reinvests property taxes into developments, a grant from the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality. The remaining costs are covered by CIP funds.

According to Arceneaux, future reconstructions of additional alleys will depend on the success of the Kissing Alley pilot.

Aspen Navarro, community science and watershed services manager of the Meadows Center, said the center was an early supporter of the project as part of its watershed protection outreach.

Arceneaux said expanding the project to include all the alleys in San Marcos would be simple, utilizing the same basic technology of permeable pavers and urban design concepts.

"If it's going to be one way for one alley, all you do is scale up, you're just using the same technology, the same concepts, the same funding you're just scaling up," Arceneaux said.

According to the GAI report, permeable alleys would filter stormwater runoff and send cleaner water to the San Marcos River. This would also prevent surface water buildup, reducing the risk of localized flooding during rain events.

"If there are utilities under the pavers, and that utility line breaks, [the city has] to be able to get to that utility," Arceneaux said. "There's a way to open up the pavers, get to the utility and put the pavers back; current city staff is not trained in that, but there are people who can train them."

Simpson said the GAI will benefit pedestrian foot traffic in downtown San Marcos.

"A part of what's proposed is activating the alley with lights... When somebody sees a lit alley, you're going to feel safer walking through it," Simpson said.

Scott Gregson, owner of the Blue Dahlia Bistro which sits alongside



DIEGO MEDEL | ENGAGEMENT EDITOR

The Kissing Alley in San Marcos, Thursday, Feb. 20, 2025, off the Square. Below the image is the concept mockup created by the Green Alley Initiative for the proposed improvements.

Kissing Alley, said the pilot project would be good for his business.

"The city's investment in enhancing our alleys, starting with Kissing Alley, often overlooked as simple back-end access points for businesses, paired with a unified effort by local business owners to responsibly manage refuse, creates a unique opportunity to revitalize an underutilized area," Gregson wrote in a statement.

Gregson also said while construction on the alleys would be painful for businesses, it would be necessary for development.

"Progress is painful but it's necessary as the city continues to grow and downtown continues to develop," Gregson said. "[But] any type of construction like that [creates] some kind of access problems."

Kyle Mylius, founder and Chief Visionary Officer of the Taproot Restaurant Collective, which owns the Root Cellar Cafe located on the opposite side of the building near Kissing Alley, also expressed his support for the renovations GAI would bring to the back alley.

"We're very excited for this initiative and would love to see the stinky, ugly dumpsters right [in Kissing Alley] get a major glow up," Mylius said.

## FROM FRONT LEGISLATION

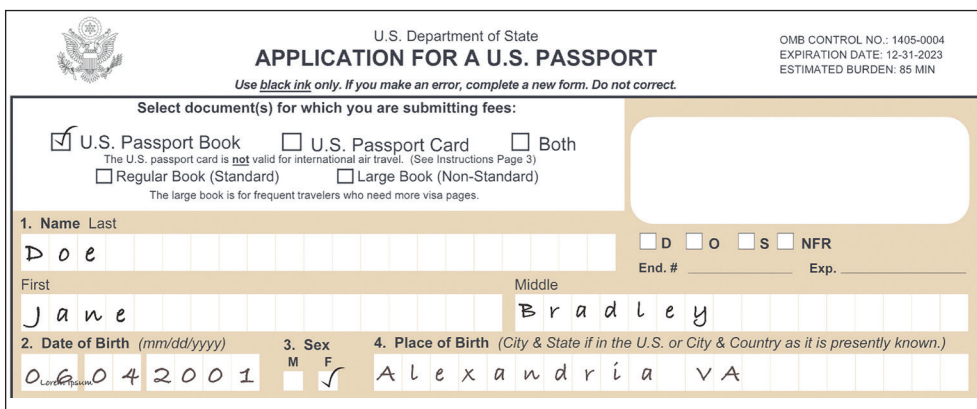
Basil Longoria, Bobcat PRIDE's social chair, said the term "biological sex" is vague and often lacks a clear definition in legislation.

"The [legislature] defines biological sex as the sex you were assigned at birth, but for some people, like intersex people, they might not be getting the right sex assigned at birth, so there's room for clerical error within that," Longoria said.

An intersex person is someone born with physical sex characteristics—such as chromosomes, hormones or genitalia—that don't fit definitions of male or female.

On Jan. 20, President Donald Trump issued the "Defending Women From Gender Ideology Extremism And Restoring Biological Truth To The Federal Government" executive order which stated the U.S. government only recognized two sexes, male and female, calling gender ideology "internally inconsistent," and also required for federal documents, like passports, reflect people's gender assigned at birth.

"The erasure of sex in language and policy has a corrosive impact not just on women but on the



ROBERT RAYA | STAR ILLUSTRATOR

validity of the entire American system," the executive order stated. "Basing Federal policy on truth is critical to scientific inquiry, public safety and trust in government itself."

Longoria said anti-trans policies not only affect the transgender community but the public's mind as a whole.

"If you're disallowing people from expressing your true gender on their identification card, it kind of creates the subclass of people, of like, 'Oh, these are transgender people, they're not? like the others, and I feel like it really alienates trans people in their own community,'" Longoria said.

Guterman said HB 2549 takes part in a set of practices that aims to dehumanize and criminalize LGBTQ+ individuals.

"This is a part of a longer legacy of identifying, often rounding up or pushing out of the nation people who, because they don't fit mainstream norms in terms of their gender identity or their sexuality, are portrayed as a kind of threat to the nation," Guterman said.

HB 2549 has been introduced and will next be read, referred to a committee for discussion and then voted on for presentation to the House.

Scan the QR code to read HB 2549.



## THE UNIVERSITY STAR

Trinity Building  
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 3,000. Printing is by the New Braunfels Herald-Zeitung.



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### Editorial Staff

Editor-in-Chief: Marisa Nuñez  
stareditor@txstate.edu

Managing Editor: Blake Leschber  
starmanagingeditor@txstate.edu

News Editor: Lucciana Choueiry  
starnews@txstate.edu

Life & Arts Editor: Carlene Ottah  
starlifeandarts@txstate.edu

Opinions Editor: Rhian Davis  
staropinion@txstate.edu

Design Editor: Jen Nguyen  
stardesign@txstate.edu

Director: Laura Krantz, laurakrantz@txstate.edu

Sports Editor: Jackson Kruse  
starsports@txstate.edu

Multimedia Editor: Mandalyn Lewallen  
starmultimedia@txstate.edu

Engagement Editor: Diego Medel  
starengagement@txstate.edu

PIR Director: Katherine Andrews  
starpr@txstate.edu

Creative Service Director: Carson Rodgers  
starcreative@txstate.edu

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Contact at: 512-245-3487  
advertising@universitystar.com

FROM FRONT TECHNOLOGY

According to a presentation presented to city council on Feb. 18, the proposal by Armbrust & Brown, PLLC, on behalf of Highlander SM One, LLC, and Donald and Germaine Tuff includes a plan to recirculate cooling water, which would lessen the total water used by their facility.

“We have confirmed that the data center uses a closed loop water system, so once the system is filled and set it continues to use the same water,” John Mayberry, who represented the applicants, said. “We are working to quantify the amount of water that evaporates or is lost.”

According to Mayberry, the data center he was speaking for would obtain water from Crystal Clear and electricity from Pedernales, not from the city of San Marcos.

According to the Feb. 18 city council meeting, the city of San Marcos has not received any zoning or permit requests for CloudBurst’s proposed data center. In an emailed statement to The Star the city said they did not know enough about CloudBurst to comment on the proposal.

Neither the CloudBurst press release nor their website mention potential water consumption but do say the facility will be partially powered by on-site solar panels and a gas power plant.

“About five years ago, [data centers] started using natural gas as a base power source to support these data centers,” Apan Qasem, computer science professor, said. “I think the current plan is for [the CloudBurst] data center that they’re supplying [gas] then converting it to [electricity].”

A press release from the State Comptroller’s Office stated Texas’ power demand is predicted to nearly



LUCCIANA CHOUERY | NEWS EDITOR

double by 2030. The growth in demand is partially credited to an increased number of data centers around the state.

Qasem said the power consumption in data centers is high because of the demand for equipment such as graphic processing units.

According to Qasem, data centers can provide various employment opportunities for the surrounding communities.

“Once the data center is operational, that’s where the computing people come in, and we’ll have demands for IT personnel, network engineers and machine

learning and AI specialists,” Qasem said.

Qasem also said the data centers could create some remote jobs, as not all specialists would need to be on the premises to do their jobs.

Both proposals are in different stages currently. The proposal by Armbrust & Brown, PLLC, on behalf of Highlander SM One, LLC, and Donald and Germaine Tuff will be seen again by city council on April 1 and April 15.

According to CloudBurst’s website, they are seeking permitting approval in late February.

Scan the QR code to watch the Feb. 18 city council meeting.



FROM FRONT HEALTH

Hays County Health Department Epidemiologist Madison McLarry said one dose of the MMR vaccine is 93% effective and a vaccinated individual is considered low-risk. However, vaccinated individuals who do get infected with measles may show atypical or milder symptoms.

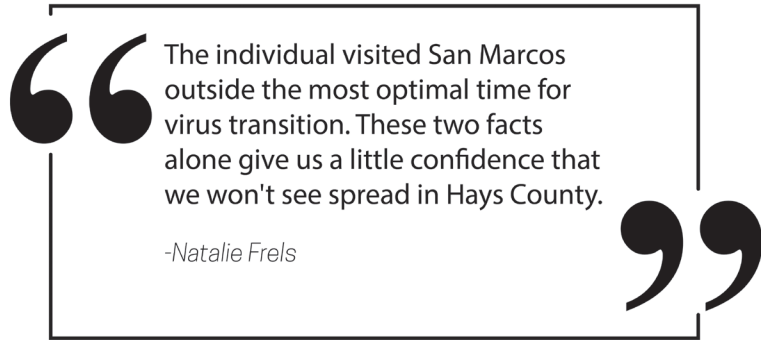
The infected individual is from Gaines County, Texas and visited Texas State on Feb. 14 from about 3 to 7 p.m. and visited Twin Peaks off I-35 from 6 to 10 p.m.

Additionally, the infected person visited the University of Texas at San Antonio on Feb. 15 between 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., the Riverwalk from 2:30 to 5 p.m. and Mr. Crabby’s Seafood and Bar from 6 to 8 p.m.

However, the individual went to the New Braunfels Bu-gee’s between 9 a.m. and noon on Feb. 16, which may be first day when the individual could be infectious. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, someone can spread measles to others four days before through four days after the rash appears.

Measles is spread through direct contact with infectious droplets or through the air when an infected person breathes, coughs or sneezes, the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) stated.

If anyone was exposed to the infected individual, Frels said they should fill out an Exposure Self-Report Form with the Hays County Health Department. She also said vaccinated individuals who were exposed should self-monitor for 21 days for any symptoms, while the Hays County Health Department is actively monitoring unvaccinated individuals who



were exposed.

“We are still getting in contact with people who we believe were exposed, and the Health Department will continue to monitor and conduct case investigations,” Frels said.

As of Feb. 24, there are no individuals in Hays County infected with measles, Frels said.

According to Texas State’s University Health Services, people can get the MMR vaccine at the health center’s Nurse Clinic by calling 512-245-2161 and at local pharmacies and health clinics. Additionally, uninsured individuals can get vaccinated at Communicare

off I-35 and Wonder World Drive.

For anyone who already has the MMR or Measles, Mumps, Rubella and Varicella (MMRV) vaccines or was exposed to measles as a child, McLarry said they are considered fully up to date, regardless of when they were vaccinated or exposed. McLarry also said the Health Department is not currently recommending boosters.

Texas-born individuals without access to their childhood vaccination records can request them through the DSHS ImmTrac2 website by submitting a mailed release form.

University Health

Services states the following people should not get the MMR vaccine: people with a severe allergy to ingredients like neomycin, pregnant individuals, people with immune system issues and people born before 1957, who are considered naturally immune.

According to the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS), 90 measles cases are confirmed as of Feb. 21 in Texas, with 57 cases reported in Gaines County. In the 2023-24 school year, Gaines County also ranked as the county with the highest unvaccinated rate in Texas at about 18%.

Measles is highly contagious. According to the National Foundation for Infectious Disease, measles is so contagious that “up to 90% of the people close to that person who are not immune will also become infected.”

Despite this, Texas State currently has no plans in response to the contagious case, such as quarantines and additional testing, according

to Senior Media Relations Manager Jayme Blaschke. Additionally, Texas State could not confirm if the infected individual was part of an official group tour with the university even though Hays County provided a map of a campus tour.

Blaschke stated while the MMR vaccine is not required for students, it is “recommended.” The state-mandated Meningitis shot is the only required vaccine by Texas State.

Some symptoms of measles include a high fever of up to 105°F, cough, runny nose, red, watery eyes, sore throat and a rash that typically appears 3-5 days after the initial infection.

Scan the QR code for the Exposure Self-Report Form.



DIEGO MEDEL | ENGAGEMENT EDITOR

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.

## Main Point: Texas State fails to communicate in recent measles case

*The Main Point is an opinion written by The University Star's Editorial Board. Opinions expressed are not necessarily those of our entire publication.*

### By Editorial Board

Texas State dropped the ball while communicating with students, faculty and staff about the confirmed measles case and its risk status.

At midnight on Feb. 23, the Division of Student Success sent an email stating an individual from Gaines County who toured the San Marcos campus on Feb. 14 tested positive for measles.

*The University Star* reached out to the Senior Media Relations Manager to get more information on the case and plans regarding the infected individual. However, we were met with zero information.

Less than an hour later, we talked to Hays County and immediately got a phone call and written interview that answered all of our questions. To our shock: Natalie Frels, Hays County communications manager, said the risk of residents getting infected is low due to the infected individual's symptoms not starting until Feb. 20.

"The individual visited San Marcos outside the most optimal time for virus transition," Frels said. "These two facts alone give us a little confidence that we won't see spread [in Hays County]."

Texas State did not convey this information to students, faculty and

staff, even though they claimed they are "working closely with the Hays County Health Department to identify and notify anyone who may have been exposed to the infected individual."

Additionally, despite *The Star* asking multiple people if the infected individual was with a group tour provided through the university, we were told the information was not available.

With measles being "highly contagious" according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), students and faculty members across the university immediately became concerned. Texas State had the golden opportunity to manage those fears and give the community the facts and information they needed.

Instead, the university has provided little information and forced people to find resources on their own.

We also reached out to University Health Services to get localized information for students. We were given no responses by the university's central health location about a potential health crisis.

This lack of substantial response by the university for plans surrounding the measles case puts serious doubt in our eyes if a situation like this were to happen again.

We were told there are no plans for quarantining or changing the way tours are done for the next couple of weeks. We are lucky that the risk of additional spread is low, but if Texas State cannot properly communicate

with their community for a low-risk case, how will they respond when the situation is worse?

COVID-19 taught us public health should be taken seriously and measles is a more infectious disease according to the CDC. This flippant response shows a lack of care for the situation and how this could impact the university, especially since the measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine is not required for students.

This is not the first time the university has faltered in responding to a crisis. When the sale of University Camp was on the November 2023 Board of Regents Agenda, the university did not communicate with the community at all even though this was a sale that would impact the entire university. It wasn't until *The University Star* released stories about the sale, with no information given by the university, that Texas State responded and informed the community of what was going on.

These patterns of subpar communication should bring concern to the minds of students, faculty and staff. If a crisis happens again, can we trust that the community will get the right information or will we once again suffer in silence?

## MAIN POINT

## Speak On It: Golden Elites President on TXST diversity

*Speak On It is a collaboration of voices compiled by The University Star's Editorial Board. Opinions expressed are not necessarily those of our entire publication.*

### By Staff

For the fourth and final Black History Month edition of "Speak On It," *The University Star* interviewed the Golden Elites President Kam'ryn Scott to hear her perspective on the experiences of Black Students at Texas State.

Scott, a psychology junior, joined the Golden Elites her freshman year and has been president of the organization since spring 2024. She said she originally wanted to be part of the Strutters organization but is grateful to have discovered the Golden Elites.

"I did not know about my dance team until I got here," Scott said. "I wanted to be a part of [the Strutters] but I found out you can't have tattoos and piercings, so I kind of lost my dream there. I found out about the Golden Elites and said 'Here's my opportunity to be a part of something.'"

The Golden Elites are the only majorette team on campus. According to Scott, majorette is an HBCU (historically Black colleges and universities) style of dance incorporating hip-hop, ballet, jazz, rhythmic and interpretive dance.

Scott said leading the Golden Elites

has been an incredibly rewarding accomplishment. She said it's important for Black students to have a dance outlet on campus.

"While the Strutters are diverse, they still are lacking a lot of diversity so that draws away a lot of Black students that would love to dance," Scott said. "We give them a platform to try out and show off their skills in an environment that makes them feel at home."

Scott said getting the team involved in Black History Month events has great meaning. She said Black History Month is a beautiful reminder of the growth of the Black community.

"This month became super busy for us because we got a lot more performances than we normally do," Scott said. "We get to highlight ourselves where we normally don't get highlighted."

Scott said it's difficult to get the name of the Golden Elites out on campus. She said while the team is well known within the Black community, many students assume the only Texas State dance team is the Strutters.

While the team does receive praise from the administration, Scott

said it would be nice to have more structured support.

"We'd like to be able to perform within the football stadium and also during basketball season. We get asked during Black History Month but it's our goal to perform consecutively during those seasons," Scott said.

Scott said one of the main reasons this hasn't happened yet is because Texas State is currently structured solely around the Strutters.

"It's part of the way things are structured already. [With] the way our [marching band] performs, we were told we would have to change a few things about...

our dance style to fit into it. We'd have to conform a little bit," Scott said.

Scott said in the future, she hopes to see Texas State showcasing

the success of Black organizations on campus. She said incoming and current students should know these organizations are thriving.

"More Black students would want to come to Texas State [if] they knew that when they get here, there are many organizations and many communities here for them," Scott said. "While it's great that we get a month of recognition, having that year-round would be really great."



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# BLACK HISTORY MONTH



## CROSSWORD

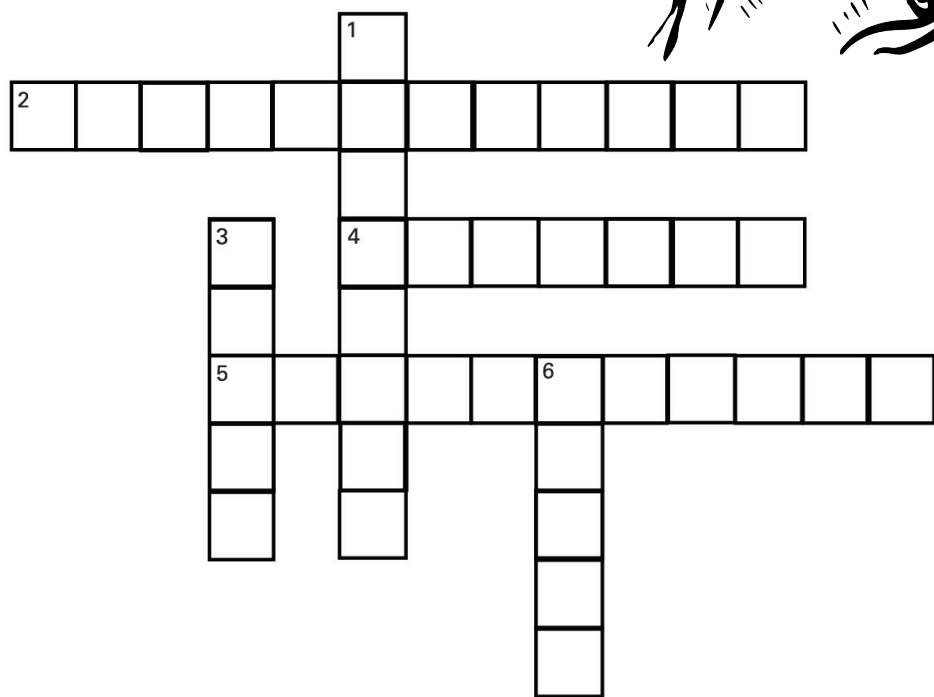
### BLACK HISTORY MONTH

#### ACROSS:

- 2. Known for their 1952 novel *Invisible Man*.
- 4. The 2025 Grammy winner for best rap album.
- 5. Poet, writer, and activist known for the contributions to the '67 Newark riots. (Full Name)

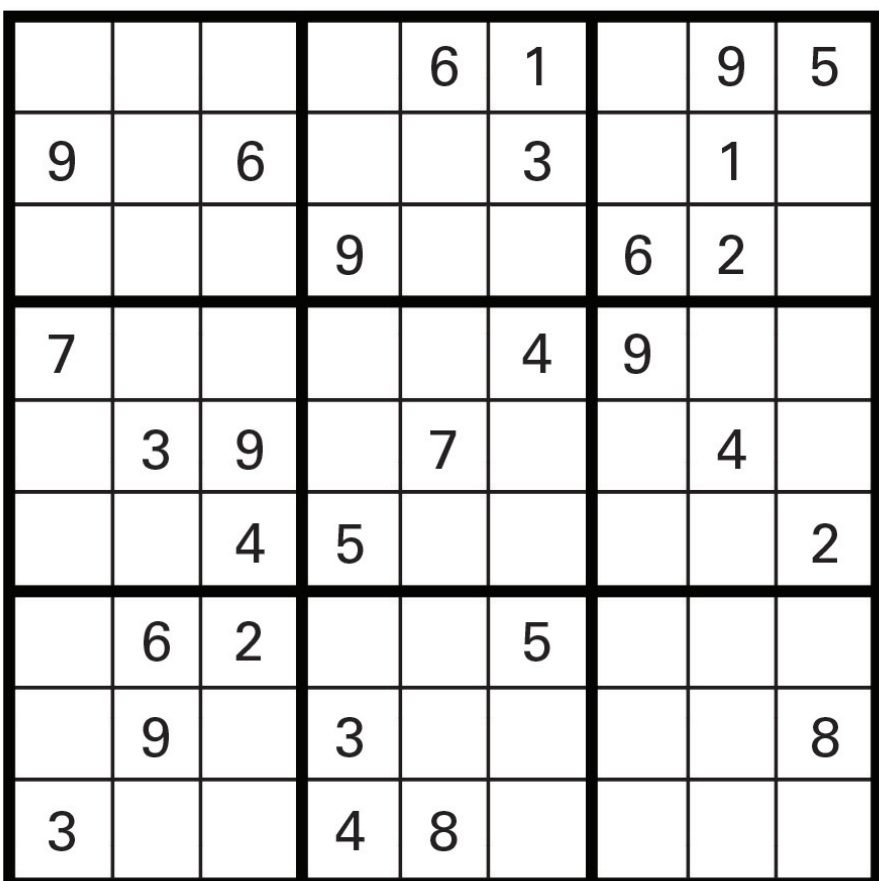
#### DOWN:

- 1. The first and only rapper to win the Pulitzer Prize. (First Name)
- 3. The first Black U.S. president. (Last Name)
- 6. The Gymnastics G.O.A.T. (Last Name)



## SUDOKU

Game by [sudoku-solutions.com](http://sudoku-solutions.com)

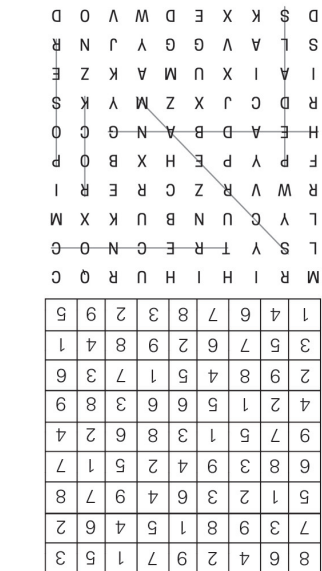


## WORD SEARCH

### BLACK HISTORY MONTH



- 1. FIRSTFIVE
- 2. MARSHAP
- 3. FEBUARY
- 4. MLK
- 5. UNITY
- 5. NAACP



**Word Scramble**  
 (1) Tour, (2) Bass, (3) Drums, (4) Record, (5) Thrasher, (6) Amplifier  
**Crossword**  
 (1) Black Sabbath, (2) System of a Down, (3) Iron Maiden, (4) Led Zeppelin, (5) Slayer, (6) Metallica

## WORD SCRAMBLE

### BLACK HISTORY MONTH

- 1. VILIC HSITGR \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. OLMMLCAX \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. EUAYQITL \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. DIYIRSETV \_\_\_\_\_
- 5. IUCNLIONS \_\_\_\_\_
- 6. GEHAEIRT \_\_\_\_\_

## SNEEZIN' STARS



# Dining halls celebrated Black History Month with African American cuisine

By Sydney Seidel  
Life and Arts Contributor

Commons and Harris Dining Hall featured recipes and menu items from the Sweet Home Café Cookbook: A Celebration of African American Cooking on select days for Black History Month.

The Sweet Home Café Cookbook, which features recipes from chefs Edna Lewis, Bryant Terry and Jerome Grant, was published on Oct. 23, 2018. It is part of the National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC) in Washington, D.C., the only national museum dedicated to documenting African American life.

The cookbook showcases recipes from Sweet Home Café, the Smithsonian's newest dining experience that celebrates the rich and diverse culinary traditions of African American culture.

In previous years, the on-campus eateries celebrated Black History Month with events like day-long "station takeovers." However, this year marks the first time the festivities have been extended over multiple days, allowing students to experience more dishes inspired by African American cuisine.

With 109 different recipes in the cookbook, Arrianna Cruz, executive sous chef of Commons Dining Hall, appreciated the variety of dishes available. She carefully selected the meals to ensure students were not served the same protein every day.

"This is why our guests were able to enjoy shrimp and grits one day and then savor bacon-wrapped pork chops the next," Cruz said.

Other featured menu items included hickory-smoked barbecue



MEG BOLES | MULTIMEDIA ASSISTANT EDITOR

Food featured in "Sweet Home Café," a cookbook from the National Museum of African American History & Culture, is served at Commons Dining Hall, Tuesday, Feb. 18, 2025. Food from the cookbook was served in Harris and Commons Dining Hall as a part of Texas State's celebration of Black History Month.

chicken, ginger and brown sugar candy sweet potatoes, Jamaican jerk chicken and fried okra. According to the cookbook, these recipes were made with locally sourced ingredients and brought "modern flavors and contemporary twists" to classic favorites.

According to the NMAAHC's official website, the book is "more than a collection of inviting recipes," and it "illustrates the pivotal — and

often overlooked — role that African Americans have played in creating and recreating American foodways."

Aliana Reyes, healthcare administration junior, said she was not aware that the menu changes were due to Black History Month. However, once she saw the advertising for it, she looked forward to the select days the menu would be offered.

"I've really been liking the new menus this month, and I am definitely going to be sad when it ends," Reyes said. "I feel like I've tried things before that I never would have without the dining halls doing this."

Students were not the only ones who had the chance to enjoy the special menus. Many faculty members also took part in the dining experience, using it as an opportunity to explore and learn more about African American culture through food.

Whitney Villarreal, director of marketing and guest experiences for Chartwells, said from her experience, everything she ate throughout the weeks was delicious.

"I do think those menus were spectacular and well thought out," Villarreal said. "It was a very nice surprise in the dining halls to see those menus. I think everyone who got to try it enjoyed it."

Due to the overwhelmingly positive feedback from students, the chefs and staff at Commons and Harris Dining Halls plan to continue this celebration as an annual tradition, ensuring students can continue enjoying and appreciating the rich culinary heritage they showcase.

Scan the QR code to read about Sweet Home Café.



## FROM FRONT THEATER

Abigail Thompson

Abigail Thompson, theatre performance and production senior, will direct "Karagula" by Philip Ridley. According to Thompson, the play takes place in a distant future U.S. and focuses on religion and political spaces.

"I went into this show with an unconventional idea that if every audience member left understanding everything about the show completely, then I will have failed," Thompson said. "I want them to leave asking questions and thinking critically."

"Karagula" will be performed on March 7-8 in Lampasas Hall. Thompson organized the performance in a way the audience can engage with the material.

"Every seat in the theater is getting a different visual [of the performance]," Thompson said. "I'm also putting in different visual things like little Easter eggs and stuff for the audience, and then I'm gonna be hosting a talk-back afterward to talk to the audience and hear their questions."

Shelby Breda

Shelby Breda, theatre performance and production senior, will study the effects of immersive theater with the play "Bright Half Life" by Tanya Barfield. According to Breda, the story is about two queer women and their journey with love.

"Immersive theater... involves the audience in a way that I had never, ever seen before," Breda said. "I just realized I could take a play that I already know, that's already non-linear, and break it up and have the audience go from room to room."

The performance will take place in various rooms in Lampasas Hall. After the first scene, the audience can go to different rooms and choose which scenes to watch in any order. The performances will take place March 28-30.

"Immersive theater has the potential to capture audiences who have never had anything to do with theater before," Breda said. "Finding new ways to present theater to audiences can interest them, and it has the potential to interest [new] people."

Meagan Majors

Meagan Majors, acting senior, will perform a devised theater piece called "Loggerhead Ruse," a collaborative performance without a script. The show will be interactive with audience members actively making choices to progress the story and will be performed April 6-13.

"I want [the audience] to be a little fearful and realize, 'Oh, my choices do have stakes,'" Majors said. "The idea is to make it like a real-life video game... very specific moments hit based on audience decisions."

"Loggerhead Ruse" will contain improvisation scenarios that guide the plot of the story. Majors' version of the show will be futuristic and apocalyptic.

"I also want [the audience] to feel a lot of adrenaline," Majors said. "I want them to feel like that just went by and now we're at the end."



CARLENE OTTAH | LIFE AND ARTS EDITOR

Marketing sophomore Andrew Bennett (Left) and digital media innovation junior Joseph Ledet (Right) rehearse a scene from "Reasons to Be Pretty," Wednesday, Feb. 19, 2025, at the Honors Coffee Forum in Lampasas Hall.



CARLENE OTTAH | LIFE AND ARTS EDITOR

Theatre performance and production senior Shelby Breda (Left Center) and performance and production sophomore Maddy Jordan (Right Center) watch theatre sophomore Jaida Angeli Libunao (Left) and performance and production senior Elliot Koch (Right) rehearse a scene from "Bright Half Life," Thursday, Feb. 20, 2025, at the Theatre Center.



DIEGO MEDEL | ENGAGEMENT EDITOR

(From Left to Right) Acting majors Nicholas May, Nathan Bachtell and Rory Schaeffer-Preston act out a scene from "Loggerhead Ruse," Thursday, Feb. 20, 2025, at the Honors College. "Loggerhead Ruse" is a devised theater piece without a script, directed by acting major Meagan Majors.

## TRACK &amp; FIELD

## O'Riley aims to win gold in Indoor Championships

By R.J. Porcher  
Sports Reporter

Senior high jumper Kason O'Riley has been nothing short of phenomenal during the indoor track and field season for the Bobcats, cementing himself in the program record books.

O'Riley posted the second-highest high jump in school history at 7-4.5 (2.25m) at the Charlie Thomas Invitational.

"The best indoor season I've ever had so far [in my career]," O'Riley said. "[I] started off with a personal record and two wins. It's been great."

O'Riley was awarded the Sun Belt Conference Athlete of the Week twice during the indoor season. The first time winning the award came after posting a meet record and the second-best jump in school history. After not having a great week of practice, O'Riley said he felt pretty good after warmups.

"We came in and I jumped at seven feet and a half. I missed the first attempt but blew the second out the water. At that point, you got a lot of adrenaline pumping, so I went up to 7-4.5 and the first attempt [was] no worries," O'Riley said.

Fourth-year Texas State jumps coach Kendall Gustafson said coaching O'Riley is a dream.

"He and I have had really great communication since when he first got here," Gustafson said. "I think our teams are in a really great position to fight for a conference title."

Before the season started, O'Riley and Gustafson discussed their plans and goals for one another. Based on the positive results so far, it looks like the plans are working out well.

"It's going as planned right now," O'Riley said. "We talked about going to win a conference championship and going to win a national championship. Right now, this week we're going to the conference [championship] and we'll see how that goes. I'm pretty confident I can win it."

One of the goals O'Riley had for the season was to hit a new personal best in the high jump. Luckily for him, it didn't take him too long to reach that goal, setting a personal best when he jumped 7-4.5 (2.25m). This jump put him third in the nation for this event.

"I've always wanted to be like the top jumper of the country. Being able to say I'm one of the best

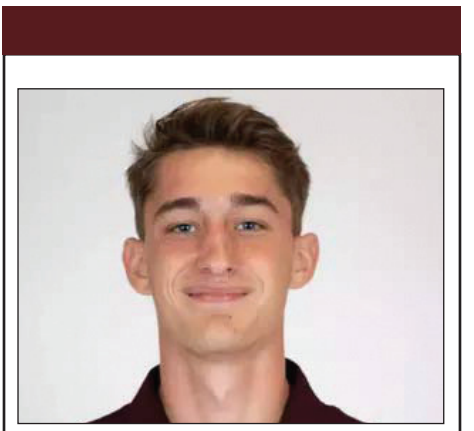
jumpers in the NCAA right now, it's amazing," O'Riley said. "I'm really blessed about being in this position."

With the Sun Belt Conference Championships taking place from Monday, Feb. 24 to Tuesday, Feb. 25, in Birmingham, Alabama, O'Riley said he plans to be unstoppable.

"My mindset is to go out there and win it," O'Riley said. "I have the mindset that no one could beat me. Every meet I go into, I go in like I'm the best, and I'm the one to beat."

O'Riley isn't the only Bobcat competing in the high jump championships. His teammate, Aiden Hayes, will also be competing for a chance to win the conference. When asked what it is like to have O'Riley as a teammate, Hayes described it as motivational and beneficial.

"He's like a brother," Hayes said. "I know we're going to push each other and at the end of the day, whoever wins, I'm happy for him. It's good to be able to compete against somebody like that."



Kason O'Riley  
High Jumper

Class: Senior  
Hometown: Marble Falls, TX  
Career Accolades:  
- Posted the second-highest high jump in TXST history at 7-4.5 (2.25m)  
- Placed third in the high jump at the 2024 SEC Indoor Championships  
- Placed 13th at the 2024 NCAA West Regional in the high jump

## MEN'S BASKETBALL

## TXST getting healthy in time for conference tournament

By Luke Landa  
Sports Reporter

Injuries have nagged the Bobcats (15-14, 8-8 Sun Belt Conference) all season, but with the final stretch of games looming large, they are improving and getting healthy at the perfect time.

Standout forward Tyrel Morgan, who earned a Sun Belt Conference weekly honor earlier in the season, missed nine games due to an undisclosed injury. Morgan is averaging 13.9 points per game on 49.8% shooting with 6.9 rebounds per game.

Junior guard Mark Drone is another key player who missed significant time this season due to an undisclosed injury. Drone has only played in six games this season.

Three-point ace Dylan Dawson missed 10 games this season due to an undisclosed injury. Dawson is second on the team in made 3-pointers despite missing these games.

In addition to the influx of injuries, Kaden Gumbs missed three games for an

unknown reason before returning in the Bobcats' most recent game on Saturday against South Alabama.

Thankfully for the Bobcats, their health is trending upward. Drone, Morgan and Dawson all played in the team's last four games.

"Having those guys back, it makes a big difference because it gives us depth," Texas State head coach Terrence Johnson said. "It gives us guys who can create their own shot and create shots for others and it gives us a high level of toughness."

The Bobcats seem to be on the right track toward playing better basketball. They are 3-1 in their last four games, with that loss being 70-65 against the South Alabama Jaguars in overtime.

"It meant a lot [to be back] because all of our adversities and everything," Morgan said. "Down this stretch we just want to make sure we play right."

A great sign of



KATE MADDISON | STAR PHOTOGRAPHER  
Texas State senior forward Tylan Pope (9) gets hyped up with junior guard Colton Benson (22) before the start of the game against ULM, Wednesday, Feb. 19 2025. The Bobcats won against the Warhawks 80-63.

progression for the Bobcats is that they avenged the loss to the Jaguars in their most recent game by beating them 93-92 in overtime.

The Bobcats' win against South Alabama showcased how special they can look when fully healthy,

as Gumbs returned to his facilitating ways. Drone made the go-ahead layup to put the finishing touches on a big win against one of the best teams in the Sun Belt.

"A win like this can have a good trajectory on where we want to go," junior guard

Colton Benson said. "So we just got to take it day by day and win every day."

Texas State is set to face the Troy Trojans (18-10, 11-5 SBC) at 7 p.m. on Tuesday at Strahan Arena. The game will be available to stream ESPN+.

## BASEBALL

## Linahan brings MLB experience to Texas State

By Jackson Kruse  
Sports Editor

Texas State assistant coach Danny David-Linahan has brought an innovative big-league mentality to San Marcos.

"[Linahan] came from where everybody on this team wants to go, which is the big leagues," shortstop Ryne Farber said. "To have a guy that has that experience has been super helpful. Just thinking about hitting in a different way, I think, is going to help us have a really good offensive year."

Linahan joined Texas State head coach Steven Trout's staff on Nov. 7, 2024, as an assistant coach after spending the last two seasons as the Minnesota Twins' run production coordinator.

His professional coaching career began in 2020 with the Los Angeles Dodgers organization, where he served as a minor league players development coach for two seasons before joining the Cleveland Guardians as a minor league hitting coach. He joined Minnesota in 2023.

"You take a guy from the Minnesota Twins clubhouse and put him right with our guys, going from working with Carlos Correa and [Byron] Buxton and those guys to working with our players," Texas State head coach Steven Trout said. "Just his experience, even though he's only 27 years old, is off the charts."

With the Bobcats, Linahan's duties include helping recruiting coordinator Josh Blakley



TEXAS STATE ATHLETICS COURTESY PHOTO

with recruiting, serving as the hitting coach and working with the catchers on technique and pitcher communication. His hitting coach responsibilities include working with hitters on their swings and approach and helping them connect what they do in the weight room to the batter's box.

"[Linahan] brings that big league mentality, just making sure we are hunting a specific location... [he] even [helps with] the routines.. that's

been really huge," infielder Chase Mora said.

Having worked with some of the world's best hitters, Linahan hopes to bring what he learned in his professional baseball coaching career to Texas State.

"From a scouting standpoint, we just got a trackman, which is the same system we had in the big leagues," Linahan said. "[I'm] just trying to get an idea of the pitcher we are facing and what he has and give our guys an idea of what it's going to look like before they get in the box. We want to try to pride ourselves in being the best offense in the country the first time through the order just to show we are better prepared than anyone else."

Linahan joined a Texas State squad coming off a disappointing 2024 season where they failed to make the conference tournament. Last season, the Bobcats posted what appears to be a respectable slash line: .270/.380/.417. But across the Sun Belt Conference, they ranked tenth in batting average, eighth in on-base percentage and ninth in slugging percentage. Linahan's addition to Trout's staff signifies a change was needed and wanted in San Marcos.

The Linahan era has started off in the right direction. The Bobcats are 5-2, with a win against Oklahoma State.

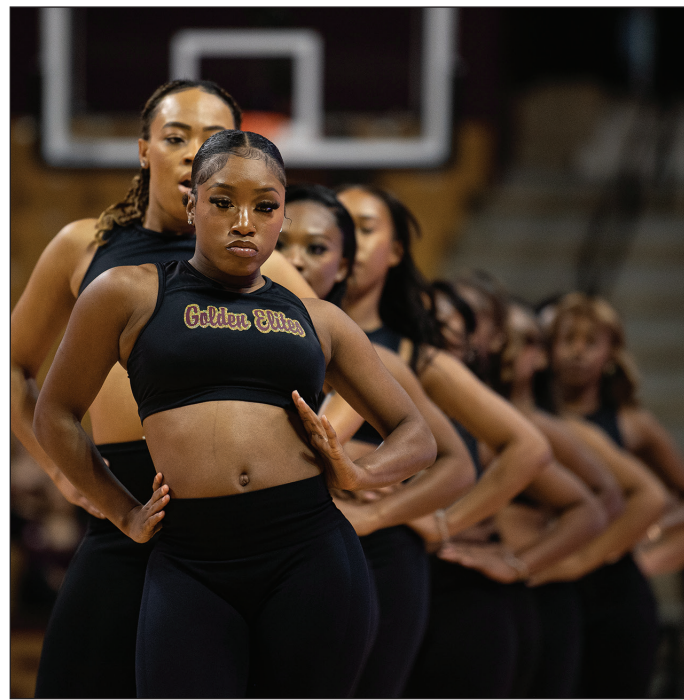
Next, Linahan and the Bobcats will take on No. 1 Texas A&M at 6 p.m. on Tuesday at Blue Bell Park in College Station. The game will be available to stream on SEC Network+.

# This Week in SMTX

The Texas State Hellcats support the men's basketball team in its game against South Alabama, Saturday, Feb. 22, 2025, at Strahan Arena. The Hellcats are Texas State's co-ed spirit fraternity.



KRISTEN HADNOT | STAR PHOTOGRAPHER



KATE MADDISON | STAR PHOTOGRAPHER

Texas State animal science major Haley Greer performs with The Golden Elites at the women's basketball game against the Ragin' Cajuns, as a part of Texas State's Black History Month Celebration, Wednesday, Feb. 19, 2025, at Strahan Arena. The Golden Elites are the first Black Majorette Dance Organization at Texas State.

Supporters of Texas State baseball cheer on the team from the stands as they face the University of Illinois despite the 40 degree weather, Saturday, Feb. 22, 2025, at Bobcat Ballpark. Texas State lost to the University of Illinois 15-3.



MEG BOLES | ASSISTANT MULTIMEDIA EDITOR



KATE MADDISON | STAR PHOTOGRAPHER

Texas State junior forward Austin Green hypes up teammates before the mens basketball game against ULM, Wednesday, Feb. 19, 2025. Texas State beat ULM 80-63.



KATE MADDISON | STAR PHOTOGRAPHER

Texas State journalism senior Grace Reddic preforms a half time routine at the womans basketball game against University of Louisiana-Lafayette with her sorority Delta Sigma Theta, Wednesday, Feb. 19, 2025, at Strahan Arena. The performance was a part of Texas State's Black History Month Celebration.

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ROBERT STEPHENSON | STAR PHOTOGRAPHER

Dean of the College of Fine Arts and Communication John Fleming (Right) takes a picture with public relations junior Maddy Ramon (Left) at the Deans List Celebration, Friday, Feb. 21, 2025, at the LBJ Student Center. To be on the deans list students must have a minimum GPA of 3.5.

Scan the QR code to view the gallery online.

