



THE LIONS ROAR

"Lion pride in print"

Tuesday, December 16, 2014

ALBANY HIGH SCHOOL

ALBANY, TEXAS 76430

VOLUME 13 NUMBER 3

Resolutions made for New Year



Students hoping to improve with resolutions for New Year.

— See page 3

Team Neece overcoming obstacles



Parent and coach Doug Neece inspires others while battling cancer.

— See page 6

Football continues

Lions continue to fight towards state title.

— See page 7



Briefs

Semester Tests Scheduled

The fall semester exam schedule is set for Dec. 18-20. The following is the schedule: Wednesday, Dec. 17: 8:00 a.m. – 1st period, 10:00 a.m. – 2nd period, 1:00 p.m. – 3rd period. Thursday, Dec. 18: 8:00 a.m. – 4th period 10:00 a.m. – 5th period 1:00 p.m. – 6th period. Friday, Dec. 19: 8:00 a.m. – 7th period 10:00 a.m. – 8th period. Students who are exempt and do not have a final on certain days are still required to sign in at the office by 9:30 a.m.

If Albany makes it to the state game in football playoffs, the exams will start Tuesday, Dec. 16. Exams will be held Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday allowing students and teachers to attend the game on Thursday at AT&T stadium.

Early Release Days Planned

In preparation for finals and the holidays, school on Monday, Dec. 15 and Tuesday, Dec. 16 will follow the Friday schedule. Classes will be released at 3 p.m. on both days.

School on Wednesday, Dec. 16 and Thursday, Dec. 17 will be on a final exam schedule and will also release at 3 p.m.

Friday, Dec. 18 will be a 12 p.m. early release following finals in the morning.

Winter Formal set for Jan. 17

Winter Formal will be held Saturday, Jan. 17, at the Whitney Theatre starting at 7:00 p.m. The Student Council has put in extra effort to make the event a night students will never forget. Tickets can be purchased in advance from each class president or at the door for \$15. Juniors and seniors will be allowed to bring two extra guests to the event. Nominations for Prince and Princess for each class will be held in January, and the winners will be announced at Winter Formal.



Scan QR code to load the SchoolWay app which can be used for both iPhone or Android.

Seniors get college apps in early

Benefits of applying early recognized

BY SHELBY BARTON
Photo Editor

As a reward to those who have already submitted college applications, Counselor Dee Dee Waggoner recently organized the annual pie party for 22 seniors that met the early application deadline.

The tradition of the pie party was started several years ago by Susan Montgomery to push the senior class into the long application process.

"The purpose of the pie party is to motivate seniors to take the first step in the application process, not procrastinate, and mainly get the hardest part of the process completed early," Waggoner said.

This year the pies were made by volunteers in the community including Helen Ivy, Leigh Lowe, Trumi Wiloth, Carolyn Hill, Kim Hill, Jennie Bailey, Joann Estridge, and Karen Noble.

"Applying to colleges early is very important because it allows the seniors to get their choice of housing, begin scholarship applications, and helps them get one stressful task out of the way so they enjoy the rest of their senior year," Waggoner said.

All 24 seniors applied before December 1 with one student planning to enroll in the military, two students working toward technical certifications, seven attending two year junior colleges with plans to transfer later, and 14 planning to go straight into a four year university.

"My mom really

pushed me to send in applications early," senior Kaylee Waters said. "She convinced me to get on the ball so neither one of us would have to deal with it later in the year."

Waters applied to both Weatherford College and Tarleton State University. She has been accepted to Weatherford and is waiting on test scores to be submitted to Tarleton.

"I am most interested in attending Tarleton right now," Waters said. "It offers several benefits, especially in the criminal justice program that I want to study."

Waters believes there are many advantages to applying to college early.

"Completing the longest process, already making my plans for next year, not stressing, and being worry-free until after graduation relieves a burden and



Dee Dee Waggoner (above) serves pie to seniors to reward them for applying to college. A total of 22 seniors applied early. PHOTO BY SHELBY BARTON

allows me to enjoy my final year of high school," Waters said.

Senior Faith Brooks has applied and been accepted to both Angelo State University and Tarleton State University.

"Next year, I plan on attending the nursing program at Tarleton,"

Brooks said. "I knew right after my visit to Stephenville where I wanted to be; I fell in love with the town and campus right away."

Brooks agrees that applying early makes the rest of the year peaceful

SEE "PIE" Pg 8



Senior Teagan Brandon mends a broken fence and practices his welding skills as part of a community service project. Brandon and other ag students have been helping make improvements at the ag farm and decorating the town for Christmas, along with assisting local organizations. PHOTO BY MOLLY LEE

Projects benefit citizens

BY RACHEL HILL
Copy Editor

With the holidays rolling around, there are some behind-the-scenes projects being done by the Ag classes for the Christmas season.

Helping the community has become a tradition for the Ag department.

"This year we welded and constructed oil field Christmas trees to help light up the Bank Park and downtown," Ag teacher Chris Beard said.

Not only do the students help out there, they have an impact on the people of the county.

"Each year I take my classes down to the courthouse to unload and box commodities,"

SEE "FFA" Pg 8

EOC drives changes in final exam policy

Courses have different requirements

BY RACHEL HILL
Copy Editor

With a new policy for finals being enacted this year, students will hopefully be better prepared for End-of-Course exams in the spring.

Not much has changed in the final policy, but what has is important.

"Earning exempt status has not changed, but the tests each student must take has," principal Kevin Hill said.

Last year, students could choose whatever course exams they wanted to be tested over, as long as they were exempt in that class for the semester based on their grade average and absences.

"In the past, all four core exams were taken, but

the student could choose which two per semester," Hill said.

The new policy doesn't affect all students, but it is a way to prepare for the EOC tests in the spring.

"The new policy for finals doesn't really affect me, because we are required to take two tests anyway," sophomore Syd-

ney Key said. "I think it's good so the teachers can see where we are in classes and how we are doing. It might affect me in the future when I have more than two EOC courses to worry about. Right now it doesn't make a big difference."

Semester exams can serve as a benchmark so teachers can see if students

are on pace for the EOC and they enable students to go into the semester knowing which two exams they must take.

The exemptions from previous years have not changed.

"If a student has perfect attendance and at least an 80 average, they are exempt from that class unless it is

an EOC or AP course," Hill said. "One or two absences require at least an 85 average. If the student has three absences, they must have a 90 average. If there are more than three absences in a subject, the student is not exempt and must take the test whether it is an EOC, AP or regular course."

The EOC tested courses for high school include Algebra I, English I and II, Biology, and US History. Students taking dual credit courses, AP courses, or calculus must also take finals.

"In junior high, all students must take the math and ELA exams in the fall, whether they are exempt or not," Hill said. "This leaves them with social studies and science in the spring."

STAAR exams given in junior high have to meet the SSI (Student Success Initiative), which dictates that junior high student must pass math and ELA STAAR exams in the 8th grade.

EXEMPTION REQUIREMENTS

Perfect attendance
at least 80 average

1 to 2 absences
at least 85 average

3 absences
at least 90 average

More than 3 absences
not exempt

MANDATORY FINALS

FALL

SPRING

7TH GRADE

English
Math

Social Studies
Science

8TH GRADE

English
Math (& Algebra I)

Social Studies
Science

9TH GRADE

English I
Algebra I

Social Studies
Science

FALL

SPRING

10TH GRADE

English II
Biology

Social Studies
Math

11TH GRADE

U.S. History
Dual Credit (or 1 core)

CC Biology (or 1 core)
+ 1 Core

12TH GRADE

Dual credit & AP
+ Calculus
or 2 core

Dual credit & AP
+ Calculus
or 2 core

Editorials

Getting head start for college

College is right around the corner for many high school students, and it may catch some by surprise. The final couple of years in high school can be much less stressful if students start looking at colleges early during their junior year.

Tours and college visits help prepare students to make a decision at the end of senior year.

Visiting colleges during the junior year makes the senior year much more enjoyable and lifts a huge weight off of your shoulders. Students will not be faced with the immediate pressure of figuring out what college to attend and quickly planning college visits if they already have a good idea of where they would like to go.

It is also possible to visit more schools, or the same school multiple times, if students get a head start on touring campuses. The more colleges looked at, the more prepared seniors will feel when it is time to make the final decision. Looking early also makes it possible to attend several activities at the school like an athletic event, a special tour, or others.

Touring early gives students more time to think about what college to attend and investigate majors so that when it is time to choose it will be an easy choice.

Many say that touring a lot of different schools is a waste of time and money, but the time and money that is put towards college now will end up making it much easier in the future.

To make your final year of high school much easier, it is a good idea to begin looking at colleges early.

High school heroes

After each graduating class leaves, there always seem to be a select few who stick around more than they should. Once the chapter of high school is over, some students refuse to move on to their next step in life, unknowingly claiming the title of “high school hero.”

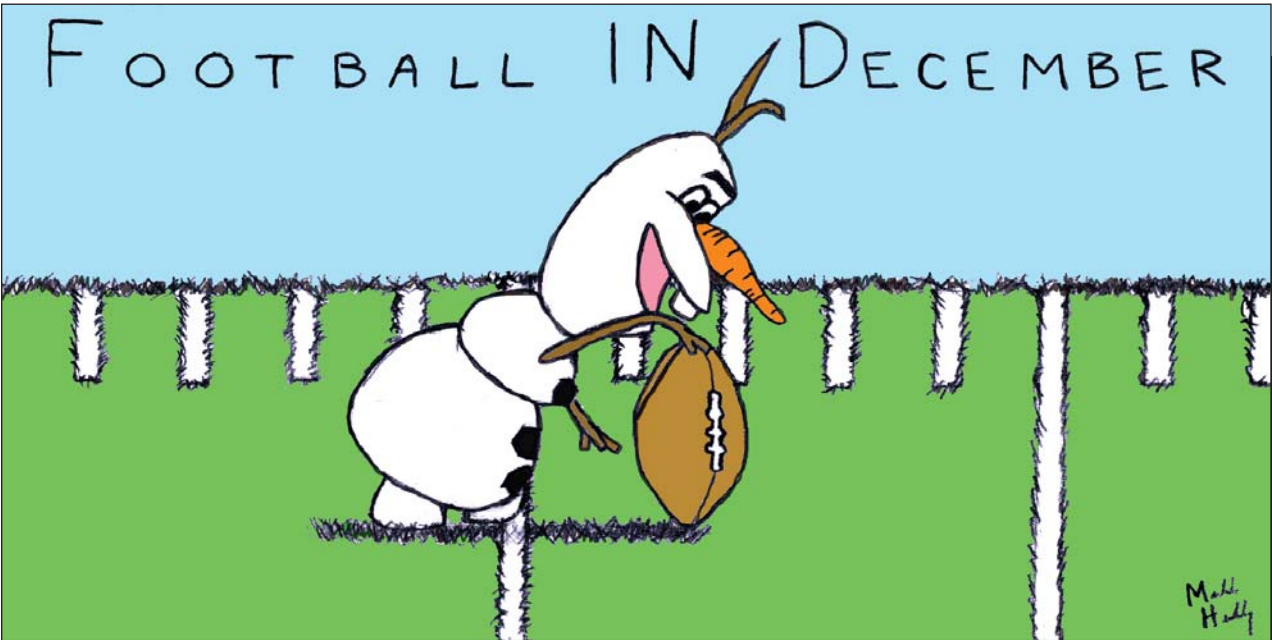
There are always some alumni of AHS who are at every football, basketball, and volleyball game. But when they come to every single home game and many of the away games, you know something is out of place. Some college freshmen can’t make the adjustment to college life and come home more often than others, but there are some exes who can’t seem to move past their glory days of high school.

Some alumni seem to have an even bigger love for high school and all that goes along with it. Their presence goes farther than sporting events. You see their faces at banquets, pep rallies, fifth quarters, and many other school functions. As a current student, it’s very uncomfortable to me seeing these people at events.

Some ex-students defend their case by saying that since they care about Albany traditions, such as team sports, they just want to watch and support. Others seem to be able to adjust to their new life and become homesick. There’s nothing wrong with coming home and even attending games or community functions, but don’t make it a habit.

It has come to the point that some college students aren’t even missed because they are in town every weekend. It is sad to see these people because either they can’t move past high school and embrace their new life, or they are having a horrible college experience. Being at college is supposed to be the best time of your life, a time to have new experiences and fun.

Everyone should try to be happy where they are. We all need to remember AHS for what we did here, but there comes a time to cut the ties and make new memories and grow.



Christmas perfection not necessary

I pull myself out of a deep slumber on Christmas morning to roll over and see my mother wearing her Christmas best while holding a tray of my favorite breakfast items. My sister, Lexie, brings me a hot chocolate with the perfect amount of mini marshmallows. My brother breaks through the entryway with armloads of presents for his favorite sister (ME) and a few presents for the others in my family. My dad emerges from behind the Christmas tree dressed as Santa Claus singing Christmas carols and holding a tray of cookies that we all made together as a family the night before. Then we all sit together around the Christmas tree with Rudolph himself and look what Santa left in our stockings.

If you haven’t picked this up by now, I’m obviously joking. Christmas morning in my house is actually a war zone disguised with garland and mistletoe. I am NOT a morning person 364 days a year. But the one day a year that I am is Christmas morning. Some years I wake my whole family up at six in the morning because I have been up for an hour and have already dug through my stocking, baked cinnamon rolls, shook all of my presents, and have arranged them by name under the tree.

Then after they finally roll their lazy bums out of bed, the fighting begins. With three kids, my mom has the ultimate “mom challenge” of spending not only the same amount

of money on each kid, but we all have to have the same amount of presents too. The fighting doesn’t end there, though. Before I open each present, I will shake it, smell it, and possibly even weigh it, and then I will take a guess at what it is. My mom will scream at me and get so huffy because I am the Christmas Queen, and 9 times out of 10 my guess is correct.

I used to get very angry with this because I spent so much time wanting Christmas morning to be perfect like you see in the Macy’s commercials where all of the kids and parents giggle and hug until those 30 seconds of perfection are over. I think Christmas morning shouldn’t be portrayed the way it is in the movies and commercials. It gave me expectations when I was little that my perfect family could not measure up to. When Christmas cookies were burned, I would cry. When my favorite ornament broke, I would throw the worst toddler tantrum that you have ever seen (oops that one happened last year...).

I don’t think Christmas needs to be “perfect” though. The little quirks and mishaps that happen each year in my family give me some of the most hilarious stories and memories. Christmas will always be perfect because of what Christmas actually is and means, not because of what your family does to celebrate it.



#blessed
by MOLLY LEE

Christmas toys can be broken

Kindness and tenderness have never been my forté. I usually don’t go crazy over a lot of things, but when I do there is nothing that can keep me from it. When I love something, two things happen. One, I must have the thing that I love so dearly RIGHT AWAY, and two, I never want to share or give it up.

The first action of my “love” illness was when I was still in diapers and wobbling around the house. Earlier that week my mother brought home a surprise for my two sisters and me in a white little cage with a small figure in it. Once she bent down to show us what was in the cage, I gasped at what I saw.

A little brown hamster with beady eyes, petite hands and feet, and fur that you just wanted to roll around in, stirred amongst the wooden flakes at the bottom of the cage.

I started to fill up with excitement; I wanted to play with it so bad! But my mother stepped in the way of the lovable animal and me. After we had dinner, my parents sent us to bed, though I didn’t sleep. How could I when the little hamster was on my mind? The next morning, my sisters and mother went to school. I was home alone with my father and had nothing to do but wait till they got home that afternoon. Being only three, I was very limited in what I could play with by myself. Sitting on the couch, I was trying to think of something to eliminate the boredom that grew within me.

All of the sudden it came to me! I walked into the kitchen as if I were on a mission. My dad was sitting at the table with papers up to his ears due to his demanding scouting job. I stood on my tiptoes to see his face and asked if I could play with the hamster for a while.

Being the good father that I knew he was, he got the fuzz ball out of its jail cell and handed it to me, stating clearly to be careful and gentle while playing with it.

Ignoring his remark, I went back to the couch and started playing with my “toy.” The hamster would run around on me as I laughed and giggled. I loved it so much that I started to hug and kiss it, for a long time...

After our brief moment of togetherness, I set the hamster down to see what antics it would do next, but it did nothing. I poked it; it didn’t move. The next thing I knew, my father came over with a trash sack and set the hamster in the trash bin. I cried my eyes out for what seemed like decades.

My mother and two sisters came home later in the afternoon and questioned me about the hamster. All three of them looked at me with confused faces. I looked back and I said, “I did this to him,” and I put my hands together in a squishing motion. Nothing but laughter came from my mother. She came over to me and said that it was okay and that we would get another one. I’m not so sure my sisters were as forgiving.



REDHEADED RANTS
by CURRY WILSON

Cavaliers have promising season

After Cleveland Cavalier fans obtained their all-star small forward, LeBron James, they definitely had high hopes for the upcoming season, but more importantly an NBA championship. Those high hopes are beginning to dwindle after the Cav’s slow start. With three top scoring threats in Kevin Love, LeBron James, and Kyrie Irving, sharing is definitely not caring amongst them.

Although superiority is being tossed up between the three, they still managed to pull out a .500 record at 3-3 through their first six games. Critics are bashing and fans are unraveling at the seams, but the Cavaliers are brand new and squeaky clean. They just signed their former star LeBron James back to the team, they obtained a double-double monster in Kevin Love, and they signed head coach David Blatt to a four-year \$20 million deal just this past summer. Not only are the players working out

their differences, but the coach is also finding his groove in the NBA as he coaches his first year.

There are plenty of people who have their doubts about this team because of how much star power they have, but I have no doubts at all. The big three worked in Miami, so why would it not in Cleveland? The NBA season has only just begun. If the Cavs are your team, do not worry, my friend. These players and coaches will work out all the kinks, and they will figure out what is going to work. Give them a break. Kevin Love, LeBron, Kyrie, and David Blatt have never played together at any level at any point in time.

Once this team gets going, they are going to be a well-oiled machine. Whoever comes across this team better be smart enough to just get the heck out of their way because they are coming through, ready or not.



SPORTS WITH STEVE
by STEVE PHILLIPS



THE
LIONS ROAR
ILPC 2014 Gold Star Winner
ALBANY HIGH SCHOOL

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2¢ worth

What is your favorite thing about Christmas break?

“I like that there is so much food around Christmas time, and I like spending time with my family.”
Ryan Sanders
8th Grade



“I love waking up on Christmas morning with my baby cousin, Peyton, and getting to be with my family.”
Kaleigh Clevenger
Sophomore



“My family usually plans a ski trip every year, and when our plans work out, that’s my favorite part about Christmas break.”
Levi Britting
Junior



“My favorite thing would be getting to hang out with my family and play games and eat all of our favorite snacks.”
Jennifer Everitt
Teacher



Students reflect on new year

Resolution
success, failure
varies by person

KYLEA GARDNER
Features Editor

It's about to be that time of year where everyone feels obligated to reflect on their triumphs and failures of the previous year, hoping that they will do better in the next year; a time to celebrate the blessing of being able to live another year, while surrounded by loved ones.

New Year's resolutions are a widely known tradition that most people believe are necessary for success during another new year.

"I say that I'm going to stick with it every year, but I don't think I ever really have," freshman Natalie Hayner said.

Sophomore Steven Ford thinks he is somewhat successful with his resolutions.

"I try to hang on to my resolutions for at least a month or two, but they never actually last that long," Ford said.

Junior Tyler Miller finds a sense of security in New Year's resolutions.

"I think that having resolutions is a great way to tell yourself that it is a new year and to let yourself start fresh," Miller said. "I feel like you can actually set a real goal and have a good starting point."

Although New Year's resolutions are a yearly tradition, some students feel that they are unnecessary.

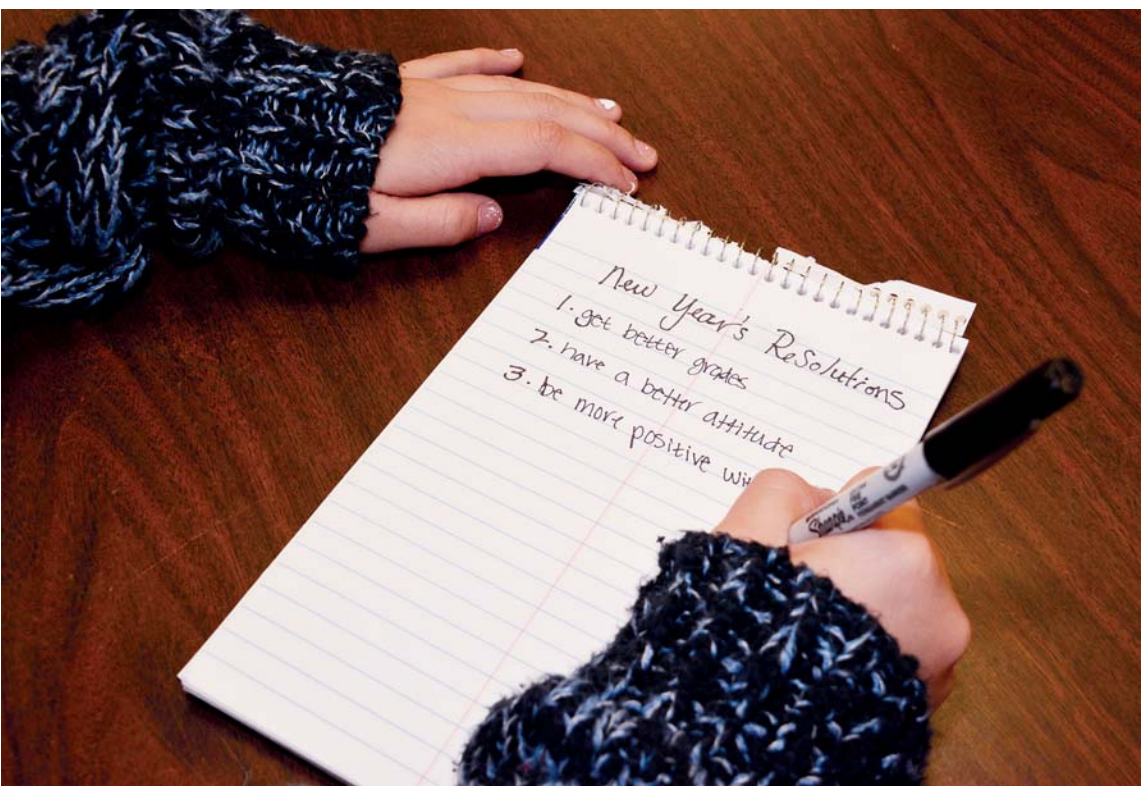
"I think that they are a big waste of time," senior Xavier Coronado said. "No one ever actually keeps up with them."

Although they are helpful, resolutions can become hard to stay on top of.

Eighth grader Summer Wagman expressed that she has never actually kept working on her resolutions after New Year's.

But some people have had more luck staying on target.

"During football season last year, I hurt my knee and was out for the rest of the season," Miller said. "After my surgery, I weighed



A local high school student ponders over a list of resolutions for the upcoming new year. Although many resolutions are made each year with good intent, only a handful are typically kept regardless of the age group.

PHOTO BY KYLEA GARDNER

myself and told myself that I was going to gain 30 pounds before two-a-days, and I reached my goal a few months later."

Ford has kept up with his goals as well.

"I made a resolution a few years ago to stay in church, and I still keep up with that today," Ford said.

Hayner explained that she resolved to make straight A's all year and actually continued for the remainder of the school year.

Students find themselves setting a goal to better themselves in 2015.

"I want to do better in school," Wagman said.

Hayner agreed.

"I want to make better grades and be more friendly to everyone," she said.

Miller also decided to make a resolution to work on his inner being instead of focusing on temporary things.

"I think a big one for me would be to be a better man of God," Miller said. "I really want to work

on my faith."

Ford is hoping for a better work ethic in the upcoming year.

"I want to get a better job, and I also want to work hard to have an

amazing 2015 basketball season," Ford said.

Sophomore Madison Brown hopes to succeed in and out of school in the upcoming year.

"I want to push myself harder in track this year, get my grades up, and keep a smile on my face no matter what," Brown said.

Coronado explained that he had never made a resolution before in his life.

New Year's is a time to embrace something new, but old traditions tag along as well.

"Every year I celebrate with my mom's side of the family on New Year's," Wagman said. "I rarely get to see them because I am so busy with school and sports, so I feel that it is very important to be with them during the holiday season."

Miller also enjoys spending time with family during the holiday.

"My family and I go to Merkel every New Year's to see my aunt, uncle, and cousins for a few days," Miller said. "We always

go see friends and we barbeque, and that night we all sit by the fire and listen to my uncle and cousin sing and play the guitar."

Ford has a similar tradition with his family.

"I always go to Dallas and see my family that lives there," Ford said. "All the adults have a party inside, and the kids make a fire in the back and get in the hot tub."

Coronado's traditions are not as typical.

"My family and I always eat cinnamon tortillas on New Year's," Coronado said.

Hayner enjoys a more relaxed holiday season.

"I usually just sit with my family and watch the ball drop at midnight," Hayner said.

New Year's is a celebration at Brown's home.

"We always invite a bunch of people over and have a big party at my house," Brown said. "We all make it a big deal and dress up in party hats and shiny necklaces. We also play darts, eat a huge meal, and wait until midnight."

Although New Year's is a holiday, it is not out of the ordinary for it to be masked by Christmas cheer.

"I think Christmas overshadows New Year's because you don't get presents on New Year's, and that's what all the kids look forward to," Miller said.

Hayner also believed that Christmas outshines New Year's.

"Christmas is all about family and presents, and New Year's is more about partying and things like that," Hayner said.

Coronado had a differing opinion about why Christmas is more widely celebrated.

"New Year's marks another year, but Christmas is a celebration of the birth of Christ."

Brown also believed that Christmas is more special due to religious beliefs and personal views.

Ford had similar reasoning.

"Christmas is more important to people because it's the day Jesus was born," Ford said. "For kids, it's the presents, and you get to spend time with your family during the Christmas holiday too."



Annie
December 19, 2014 PG 118 min
Comedy | Drama
Annie has led a hard-knock life with her calculating foster mother, Miss Hannigan. However, all that changes when hard-nosed billionaire and mayoral candidate Will Stacks takes her in on the recommendation of his advisers.
Director: Will Gluck
Writers: Will Gluck
Stars: Jamie Foxx, Quvenzhané Wallis

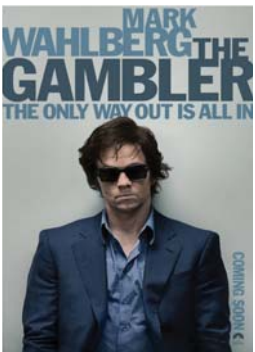
Staff Review:



The Gambler
December 25, 2014 R 111 min
Thriller | Action
Literature professor Jim Bennett (Mark Wahlberg) leads a secret life as a high-stakes gambler. Always a risk-taker, Bennett bets it all when he borrows from a gangster and offers his own life as collateral.

Director: Rupert Wyatt
Writers: William Monahan
Stars: Mark Wahlberg, Brie Larson

Staff Review:



Into the Woods
December 25, 2014 PG-13 124 min
Comedy | Family
As the result of the curse of a once-beautiful witch, a baker and his wife are childless. They venture into the forest to find the ingredients that will reverse the spell and restore the witch's beauty.
Director: Rob Marshall
Writers: James Lapine
Stars: Meryl Streep, Anna Kendrick

Staff Review:



Exodus: Gods and Kings
December 12, 2014 PG-13 150 min
Action | Adventure
Egyptian Princes Moses and Ramses are raised together as brothers. When Ramses becomes pharaoh, Moses is his most-trusted adviser. However Moses soon discovers his Hebrew parentage, and Ramses banishes him to the desert -- often a death sentence. But God has a mission for Moses: Free the Israelites from slavery.
Director: Ridley Scott
Writers: Adam Cooper
Stars: Christian Bale, Joel Edgerton

Staff Review:



THAT'S ENTERTAINMENT
BY RACHEL HILL

Lions Roar
Top Five
Christmas
Movies

The *Lion's Roar* staff recently rated their all-time favorite Christmas movies. Tying for the number one spot are Dr. Seuss's *How the Grinch Stole Christmas* and Director Jon Favreau's *Elf*.

The movie *Elf* is a fun family movie. With only a few swear words, it's great for a family of teens.

As a baby, Buddy crawls into Santa's toy bag and is whisked off to the North Pole where he is raised as an elf. A misfit who grows to be three times the size of his elf family, Buddy ultimately heads to his birthplace of New York City to seek out his roots. Unfortunately, his family turns out to be a "Scrooge"-like father and a cynical ten-year-old stepbrother who doesn't believe in Santa. Worst of all, everyone seems to have forgotten the true meaning of Christmas. But using his simple elf ways, Buddy sets out to single-handedly win over his family and save Christmas in New York, hoping to at last find his true place in the world.

How the Grinch Stole Christmas is also a great movie that the whole family will enjoy watching. The Grinch, a bitter, grouchy, cave-dwelling creature with a heart "two sizes too small" wants nothing to do with Christmas. He scowls on the merry "Whos" living in Who-

ville as they prepare for the jolly season. From the Grinch's perch high atop, he can hear the noisy Christmas festivities that take place in Who-ville. Annoyed, he decides to stop Christmas from coming by stealing their presents, trees, and food for the Christmas feast. He crudely disguises himself as Santa and forces his dog Max who is disguised as a reindeer, to drag a sleigh to Who-ville, where he slides down the chimney and steals all of the Whos' Christmas items. As dawn breaks, he expects to hear the Whos' bitter and sorrowful cries, but he is confused to hear them singing a joyous Christmas song instead. He puzzles for a moment until it dawns on him that perhaps Christmas is more than presents and feasting: "Maybe Christmas, he thought, means a little bit more."

Home Alone is a 1990 American Christmas Family comedy film. The film stars Macaulay Culkin as Kevin McCallister, an eight-year-old boy who is mistakenly left behind when his family flies to Paris for their Christmas vacation. Kevin initially relishes being home alone, but soon has to contend with two would-be burglars who threaten to rob every house on the street. Though the film's ending may be somewhat violent, the humor and fun it contains makes this a great contender for the third-place spot.

The Polar Express, dropping in at number four, is an exciting adventure that shows true belief in Christmas. A young boy lies awake in his room one snowy Christmas Eve, excited and alert. He's listening for

a sound he's afraid that he might never hear--the ringing bells of Santa's sleigh. Suddenly, a thunderous roar startles the boy. A gleaming black train rumbles to a stop right in front of his house, the steam from its powerful engine hissing through the night sky and softly falling snowflakes. The boy rushes outside, clad only in his pajamas and slippers, and is met by the train's conductor who seems to be waiting just for him. "Well, are you coming?" the conductor inquires. "Where?" the boy asks. "Why, to the North Pole--of course. This is the Polar Express!" What unfolds is an adventure that follows a doubting young boy, who takes an extraordinary train ride to the North Pole. During this ride, he embarks on a journey of self-discovery that shows him that the wonder of life never fades for those who believe.

Finishing up the reviews at number five is *National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation*. This humor-filled movie is not your typical cookie-cutter Christmas movie. This is the third in the "National Lampoon" series about the Griswold family. This sequel follows the humorous Griswolds as they enjoy a Christmas holiday with their in-laws. With moderate to extreme profanities sprinkled liberally throughout the show, parents should be cautious when showing this to younger children. However, it's a must-see and "yule crack up" when watching this fun movie.

Christmas tradition returns with *Nativity*

Local holiday production includes student actors

LORI DAVIS
Assistant Editor

A long-standing Christmas tradition has returned after a four-year rest.

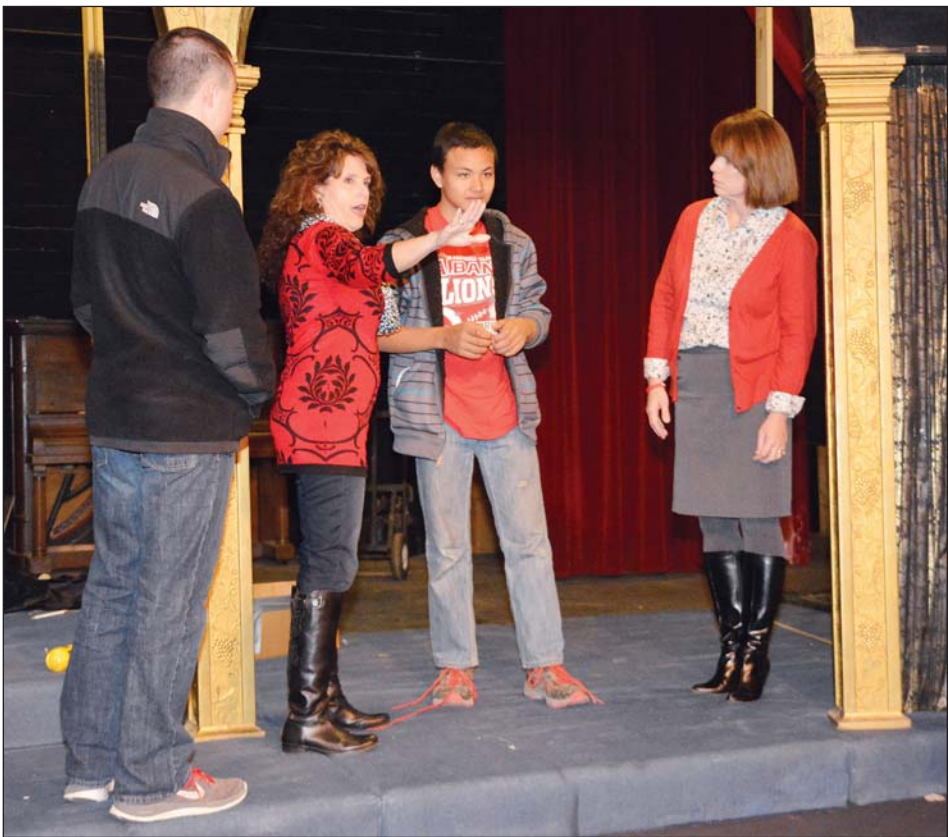
Angels, shepherds, Wise Men, King Herod, Mary, Joseph, and baby Jesus will once again fill the stage of the Aztec Theater in downtown Albany reenacting the story of Jesus's birth.

The play was given to Albany by Robert Nail (who also wrote the *Fandangle*) in 1939 as a Christmas present for the town, and has been performed biennially with a few respites here and there. It has been four years since the last performance.

"The *Nativity* is a tradition that has been going on for a long time, so it is good to keep it going," cast member Matthew Rupp said. "You also get to see a little piece of what makes Albany special."

Lorna Ayers, who has acted in the *Nativity* cast for years, is the new director this year.

"There is a lot more responsibility involved in directing a play because



Director Lorna Ayers (left) gives Gregori Mikeska pointers for the show. The play will be performed on Dec. 19 and 20. The Davis family (above) is ready for their *Nativity* performance in 2004.

PHOTO BY LORI DAVIS
PHOTO PROVIDED BY LORI DAVIS

you are responsible for everyone's part and not just your own," Ayers said.

The *Nativity* is a tradition that has remained basically unchanged for decades.

"The show has been performed for so many years that it sometimes is hard to stay true to the tradition while also trying to put a little bit of your own personality into it," Ayers said.

This year several students and teachers are part of the *Nativity* cast.

For some it is their first year, while others are "old-timers".

"I was in the *Nativity* for the first time when I was about eight or nine because my grandparents were in it," seventh grader Gregori Mikeska said. "I really liked it, so I have been trying to be in it ever since."

Ag teacher Chris Beard is also a *Nativity* veteran.

"I have been in the show since I was seven years old and was Little King David," Beard said. "It is an honor

to be in the *Nativity*."

Freshman Nolan Davis is also in the *Nativity* this year.

"It is a way to celebrate the birth of Jesus while entertaining a crowd," Davis said.

According to many past and present cast members, the *Nativity* is part of the Christmas tradition in Albany.

"I feel like I enjoy and connect with Christmas more when the *Nativity* is performed," teacher and

former cast member Donnie Lucas said. "The play creates this very humble and holy atmosphere which is something that we all need more of at Christmas time."

Beard feels the same way.

"It helps show the true meaning of Christmas and creates a special holiday spirit," Beard said.

There are various opportunities for the community to be involved in the performance, such as lighting and sound, being in the cast,

helping out backstage, or just coming and watching the show.

"The *Nativity* brings a certain togetherness, and it puts everyone in the Christmas mood," Beard said.

Those that have been in the *Nativity* many times have their own favorite memories.

"I like getting to experience new things, and meeting new people in the cast and crew every year," Rupp said.

Mikeska likes the spiritual aspect of the play.

"You get to honor God by celebrating his Son's birth, and the whole community is able to see it, too," Mikeska said.

Beard enjoys the shepherds' scene.

"It gives me cold chills when I am on stage because I get to be a part of reenacting Jesus's birth," Beard said.

According to Beard, the cast and crew work very hard to make the performances realistic.

"The participants practice their parts to make it reflect how life was thousands of years ago," Beard said.

There are two performances of the play on Friday Dec. 19 and Saturday Dec. 20 in the Aztec Theater downtown.

"Everyone needs to see the *Nativity* at least once in their lifetime," Davis said.

Have yourself a delicious December

Students share family recipes

STEVE PHILLIPS
News Editor

With bellies still recovering from a long, food-filled Thanksgiving break, students and staff are gearing up for another go-round with Christmas looming just around the corner.

Since Thanksgiving is so close to Christmas, it might be hard to consume some of the same foods yet again. To avoid this double dose of food from becoming boring, many people have developed some interesting traditions to break up the monotony.

"We always have shrimp and catfish because we just got tired of turkey, so we decided to eat seafood," Ginger Barte said.

Although seafood was also her favorite to eat, her favorite dish to cook had a sweet twist to it.

"Iced sugar cookies are my favorite to cook because the grandkids love them, they are delicious, and I love the smell when they're in the oven," Barte said.

While most students

can't say what their favorite dish to cook is, when asked what their favorite to eat is, they have definite opinions.

"Steak and baked potatoes are the best," senior Chandler Fields said. "We have had that for the last few years, so it's kind of become a tradition."

Fields dislikes the more traditional food fare.

"Ham is definitely my least favorite," Fields said. "I just do not like it at all."

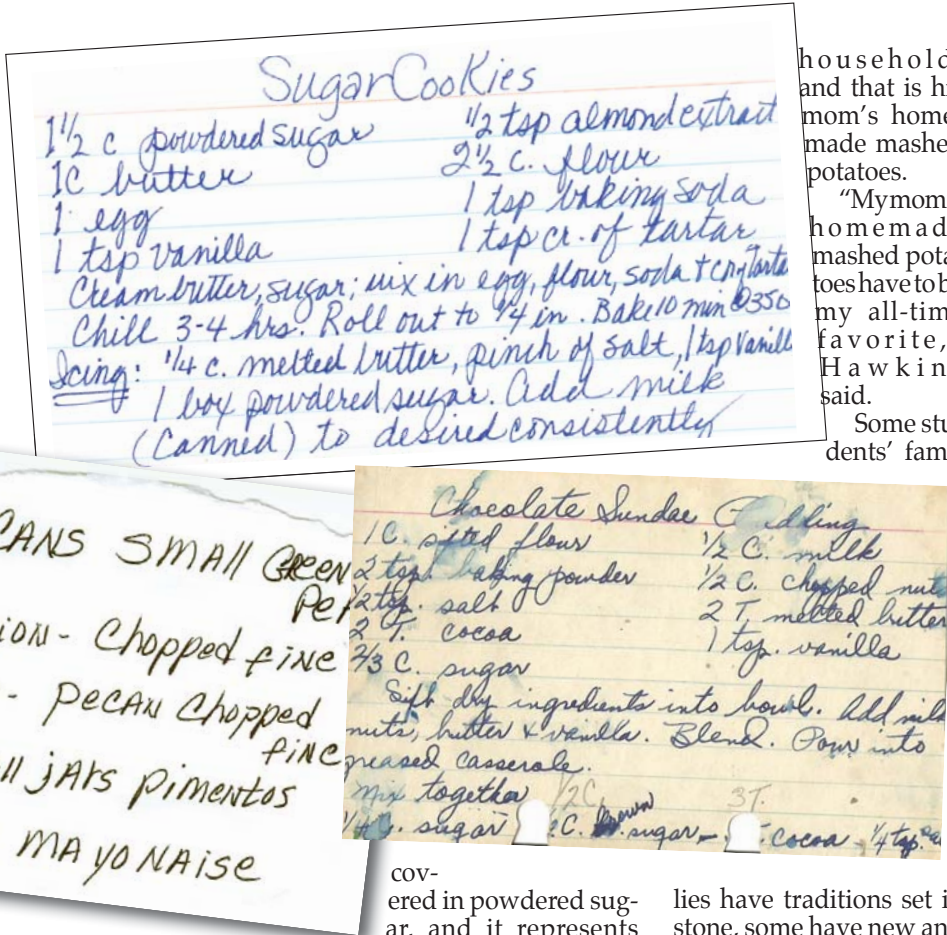
While Fields took the opposing side to a traditional meal, freshman Henry Kelly favored a Christmas go-to.

"My favorite is probably turkey and gravy," Kelly said.

"My uncle usually spends all day cooking the meat, and then by the time dinner rolls around, we finally get to eat it."

On the other hand, Kelly wasn't as enthusiastic for some contenders for Christmas dinner.

"I don't really like the vegetable salad," Kelly



said. "It has too much vinegar, and I'm not really a vinegar person."

Some unusual foods have become part of Christmas meals, too.

"Every Christmas my family eats a German fruit cake called Stollen," junior Newt Koemel said. "It is

covered in powdered sugar, and it represents baby Jesus."

Even though Koemel has taken a liking to the special fruitcake, it doesn't top his list.

"My favorite Christmas dish has to be the prime rib that we have on Christmas Eve," Koemel said.

There was one dish Koemel was marking off his list.

"I like most food, but I do not like the beets that my mom makes," Koemel said.

Like Koemel, another junior, Ben Hawkins, likes the food his family serves for Christmas. In fact, there isn't anything he doesn't like.

"I love 'em all," Hawkins said.

Hawkins couldn't remember any food his family has had on Christmas that he hadn't liked, but he reserved the right to change his mind.

"We have a different kind of food every year, so we never really know what to expect," Hawkins said. "That always keeps us on our heels."

There was one dish that is a hit at Hawkins'

household, and that is his mom's homemade mashed potatoes.

"My mom's homemade mashed potatoes have to be my all-time favorite," Hawkins said.

Some students' families have traditions set in stone, some have new and evolving traditions, while the traditions of others are fading.

"We used to eat tamales for Christmas, but we don't anymore," sophomore Abbi Beard said. "I don't like tamales because we ate them every year, and now I'm just sick of them," Beard said.

Since Beard's family has changed their tradition, it has opened the door to new food ideas.

"We have turkey and ham that is delicious," Beard said.

Although some have given up on traditions, others have stuck with theirs.

"We have Mexican food on Christmas day," sophomore Grant Head said.

Since his family has the tradition of Mexican food, Head has grown fond of a certain dish.

"My aunt's cheese enchiladas are my favorite," Head said. "It is the only good thing we eat."

Along with Koemel, freshman Brian Hamilton also has his taste for prime rib on Christmas Day.

"My uncle normally

makes prime-rib for Christmas, and then he brings it over to our house," Hamilton said.

Hamilton also has a sweet tooth.

"My dad's chocolate pie is definitely my favorite because I love chocolate, and it is just simply amazing," Hamilton said.

Although Hamilton enjoys sweets for Christmas, sour food is a different story.

"I don't like my aunt's lemon squares," Hamilton said. "I hate lemons and the lemon squares are really sour."

While the list ranges from stollen, to steak, to enchiladas, prime-rib and lemon squares, none are as unusual as freshman Krysten Morris's Christmas Eve snack.

"My grandpa always makes crawfish soup the night before Christmas, and it is amazing," Morris said.

But crawfish soup wasn't her number one choice.

"My favorite dish has to be my dad's brisket," Morris said. "He cooks it all day so we have to smell the aroma all day, which makes us just want it so much more."

Morris was ready to shove one menu item off her plate.

"Potato salad is my least favorite," Morris said. "I just do not like all of the stuff that is in it, like eggs and mayo and all of that."

One staff member, Ann Riley, showed definite signs of having a sweet tooth.

"Sweet potatoes are my favorite," Riley said, "or any of the desserts just because they are sweet."

Although she has a liking for sweets, Riley's favorite item to cook differed.

"I like making pea salad because you don't have to cook it, and it's the easiest," Riley said.

Regardless of family traditions or personal preferences, food is an important part of the holidays for most people.

WHAT'S HAPPENING!

DECEMBER

- 16 Jr. Varsity/Varsity Girls Basketball vs. Anson @ 5:00-there
- 16 Jr. Varsity/Varsity Boys Basketball vs. Santo @ 5:00-here
- 19 Jr. Varsity/Varsity Girls Basketball vs. Hamlin @ 5:00-here
- 19 Freshman/Jr. Varsity/Varsity Boys Basketball vs. Dublin @ 3:00-there
- 19 Jr. Varsity II Girls Basketball vs. Woodson @ 2:00-Moran
- 19 Jan. 5 Christmas Break
- 29 Jr. Varsity/Varsity Girls Basketball vs. Baird @ 2:00-here
- 29-30 Varsity Boys Snyder Tournament @ TBD

JANUARY

- 2 Jr. Varsity/Varsity boys/girls Basketball vs. Stamford @ 4:00-there
- 2 Jr. Varsity II boys/girls Basketball vs. Stamford @ 3:00-there
- 5 Jr. Varsity II girls Basketball vs. Hawley @ 6:00-here
- 6 Jr. Varsity/Varsity boys/girls Basketball vs. Roscoe @ 4:00-there

- 8-10 Jr. Varsity Boys Basketball Knox City Tournament @ TBD
- 8 Jr. Varsity II Boys Basketball vs. Anson @ 7:00-here
- 9 Jr. Varsity/Varsity boys/girls basketball vs. Hawley @ 4:00-here
- 9 Jr. Varsity II boys Basketball vs. Hawley @ 4:00-here
- 10 Jr. Varsity Girls Basketball Albany JV Tournament @ TBD
- 13 Jr. Varsity/Varsity boys/girls basketball vs. Haskell @ 4:00-there
- 13 Jr. Varsity II girls Basketball vs. Munday @ 4:00-there
- 16 Jr. Varsity/Varsity boys/girls basketball vs. Winters @ 4:00-here
- 17 Winter Formal @ Whitney Theatre
- 17 Jr. Varsity II boys/girls Basketball vs. Stamford @ TBD
- 19 Jr. Varsity II Boys Basketball vs. Stamford @ 7:00-here
- 20 Jr. Varsity/Varsity boys/girls basketball vs. Anson @ 4:00-here
- 23 Jr. Varsity/Varsity boys/girls basketball vs. Hamlin @ 4:00-there
- 26 Jr. Varsity II boys/girls Basketball vs. Munday @ 6:00-here
- 27 Jr. Varsity/Varsity boys/girls basketball vs. Stamford @ 4:00-here

- 30 Jr. Varsity/Varsity boys/girls basketball vs. Roscoe @ 4:00-here
- 30 Jr. Varsity II boys basketball vs. Cisco @ 4:00-here

FEBRUARY

- 1 College Scholarship Application Deadline
- 2 Jr. Varsity II girls Basketball vs. Baird @ 5:00-there
- 3 Jr. Varsity/Varsity boys/girls basketball vs. Hawley @ 4:00-there
- 3 Jr. Varsity II boys Basketball vs. Hawley @ 4:00-there
- 6 Jr. Varsity/Varsity boys/girls basketball vs. Haskell @ 4:00-here
- 9 Jr. Varsity II boys/girls Basketball vs. Hawley @ 5:00-there
- 10 Jr. Varsity/Varsity boys/girls basketball vs. Winters @ 4:00-there
- 13 Jr. Varsity/Varsity Boys Basketball vs. Anson @ 5:00-there
- 13 Jr. Varsity II boys Basketball vs. Anson @ 4:00-there

Crazy relatives make holidays interesting

Students reminisce about favorite family fun

KYLEA GARDNER
Feature Editor

Family is arguably one of the most important aspects of society; it keeps you sane, or can drive you insane.... Nonetheless family is an important part of who you are.

Typically, some family members are more unique than the others, making family reunions and Christmas gatherings much more interesting.

"All of my family members are crazy except for maybe one," senior Sierra Price said.

Sophomore Sydney Key shared her family's uniqueness.

"My brother Diehlan and I are really crazy when we are together," Key said. "We are always running around the house and annoying all of our family members."

Students and teachers both agreed that they have unusual kinfolk.

"My uncle Chris is absolutely crazy, but I love him," freshman Krysten Morris said. "He jokes around all the time and always has everyone laughing."

Teacher Andre Raymond also admitted that some of his family members are a bit different.

"My brother is crazy," Raymond said. "He is a risk taker on high risk things, like climbing up a sand dune

that says 'danger, do not climb' and just seeing what happens, or jumping out of trees. He does things just to see if he can do them."

Spending time with loved ones is a traditional part of the holiday season.

"When they come during Christmas, it is always eventful, and there is never a dull moment," Price said. "I usually try to stay in my room as much as possible."

Although crazy relatives can be hard to handle, they always lighten the mood and keep everyone laughing.

"Everything that they say and do is just crazy," Price said. "They always say the craziest things and make the weirdest comments and suggestions. Everything that comes out of their mouths has some kind of funny meaning behind it."

Key has expressed similar opinions.

"My brother has ADHD, so he can't ever keep still," Key said. "He is constantly trying to find something to do, and that usually ends in disaster."

Raymond explained that time spent with his brother depends on how he is feeling.

"If my brother is in a good mood, he is very fun, but if he is in a bad mood, he is just mean," Raymond said. "Sometimes he's funny and other times he just makes things uncomfortable."

Morris said that though her uncle is different, it's why she loves him.

"He is just so funny, and his personality is really fun," Morris said, "He makes everything a joke and I love that."



In a photo from a Christmas past, Sydney Key poses with a roll of wrapping paper she used as a baseball bat. Key, along with many others, believes that she has a few "crazy" family members.

PHOTO PROVIDED BY SYDNEY KEY

Raymond also spoke highly of his brother.

"My brother is very, very intelligent, although he doesn't always apply it well," Raymond said.

Students and teachers reflected on some of the funniest memories with their family members.

"One year on Christmas my brother and I decided that it would be fun to play baseball with wrapping paper and ornaments, and that turned out a disaster," Key said. "We both ended up cleaning broken ornaments off the ground for hours."

Funny or unusual stories about relatives aren't limited to just the Christmas holidays.

"A few years ago I de-

cided to go see my family about a week after I got out of surgery, and they decided to go to mudding," sophomore Kelsey Bernstein said. "Somehow I got thrown off the 4-wheeler, and we all ended up having to make an emergency visit to my doctor in Fort Worth."

Price's family exploited her biggest fear for the love of a good joke.

"Every year my family and I have a family reunion at the Frio River, and one particular year my cousins were feeling humorous and decided to tell me there were snakes all in the river, which I am terrified of," Price said.

"I wouldn't get in for a long time, and when I finally did they wrapped a rope around

my leg to scare me and that might have been the worst day of my life."

Raymond recalled stories about growing up with his brother.

"One day my brother wanted to build a fort in the trees outside of our house, so he started climbing a tree and hammering nails into it to stay up," Raymond said. "It started getting too hard for him to hold himself up with one hand, so he got two dress belts to hold himself onto the tree...but the belts are made to hold up pants, not people. Right as he swung the hammer, the belts broke and he fell to the ground and a nail cut his leg the entire length of his thigh."

Raymond said.

"Afterward he proceeded to get up and literally held his leg together with his hands so he could run to our house and tell our parents that he thought he might need to go to the hospital," Raymond said.

Spending the holidays without family this year is going to be a difficult task for some students.

"If I didn't have my brother during the holidays, it would be so dull and boring," Key said. "This year is going to be hard because Diehlan is deployed to Korea and is going to miss Christmas this year. That is just going to make me miss him more and realize how much more fun I have when he is around."

Although they can be embarrassing and ridiculous, most people realize just how important family is.

"My family gives me

this sense of security when I'm with them, and they love me like no other person can," Morris said. "They also give me car rides so that is always something I'm grateful for."

Price found that there is something very sentimental about having family around.

"Family is important because it always takes you back to your roots, and it helps you realize what the real meaning of Christmas is all about," Price said.

Raymond found that growing up with a big brother was a good lesson for him.

"My brother is older and much bigger than I am, so when we were growing up, he had the right to push me down the stairs or hit me in the back of the head because he was my brother, and so that was okay," Raymond said. "Although, if anyone else wanted to hurt me, my brother would always be there for me. That's what family is; taking care of your own."

Sometimes family is there simply to spread happiness.

"My family is always there to make me laugh just when I need to," Bernstein said.

There is a much deeper meaning to family than most understand.

"When it comes down to it, your family is your own," Raymond said. "They're there for you in the good times, and they are there in the bad as well. They are there when you need encouragement or just a pat on the back, and family is very important to me."

The old saying hits the nail on the head.

"Family members are a lot like fudge--mostly sweet with a few nuts."

Lions Roar Christmas Gift Guide

GIRLS

SCARF



\$11.00

www.forever21.com

Girls can never have too many scarves! Forever 21 has a large selection of scarves that are fashionable and affordable.

MARLEY LILLY CELLPHONE CASE



\$39.99

www.marleylilly.com

This phone case is durable and a gift that any girl will love. Complete with your choice of background and color scheme, a monogrammed phone case is the perfect gift for girls.

BOYS

NIKE SOCKS



\$18.00

www.nike.com

Nike socks are an easy present to give that you know guys will appreciate. These socks come in many different colors and patterns.

POLO CAP



\$35.00

www.dillards.com

Polo Caps are a classic gift that guys can never have too many of. This hat will last long and offers a casual way for boys to be stylish while staying on budget.

MOM

BATH ROBE



\$19.99

www.kohls.com

Bath robes are an easy present with varying price ranges to pick up for your mom that is still special enough to make her feel appreciated.

CANDLE



\$22

www.bathandbodyworks.com

Bath and Body Works offers a variety of candles in different sizes and scents. Whether you pick a classic scent or a holiday scent for your mom, she is sure to love this gift.

DAD

DALLAS COWBOYS GRILL-A-TONGS



\$29.99

www.shop.dallascowboys.com

This grill accessory is a perfect gift for your dad this Christmas. These tongs will allow him another opportunity to support and show off his favorite team.

MOST POPULAR

KENDRA SCOTT DANIELLE EARRINGS

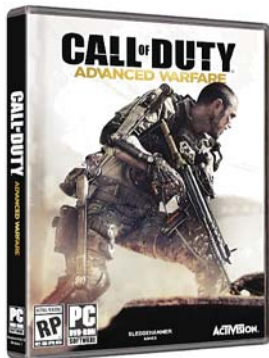


\$60.00

www.kendrascott.com

Kendra Scott jewelry is a hot item in fashion this season. The jewelry comes in many different colors and styles. Besides earrings, Kendra Scott also makes necklaces, rings, bracelets, and various makeup and travel bags.

CALL OF DUTY: ADVANCED WARFARE



\$60.00

www.amazon.com

This video game is a great gift for guys. It provides young men the thrill of war in the safety of their own homes with the single click of a button.

Team Neece battles bigger opponent

Students embrace family during cancer fight

MICHAEL COTTER
Sports Editor

As a first team all-state, all-conference, dynamic high school and college athlete, Doug Neece is used to competition, adversity, and determination.

But now, at age 43, 20 years after his high school and college glory days, Neece finds himself in a whole new ball game, one that requires more than just determination and sweat.

On the morning of October 2, he found out that he has non-small-cell adenocarcinoma, a rare form of lung cancer, so rare that only four percent of non-smokers have this type of cancer.

However this isn't all of the story. The cancer had spread from his lungs to the back of his liver and parts of his brain. This news hasn't brought Neece or his family down. Backed by the community and his strong faith, the Neeces are ready to tackle cancer.

Growing up in Oklahoma, Neece was a natural at adapting to whatever competition or adversity that was placed in his way. As a junior at Edmond Memorial High School in Oklahoma, Neece led his team to the state finals. Neece graduated with his class of 900 seniors, and moved on to play running back and slot receiver at Abilene Christian University in Abilene where he met his future wife, Kim Bartee of Albany. The family moved to Albany, and Neece is raising his four sons after his own heart, loving sports.

"My dad has been a huge support growing up, teaching me how to throw a football, shoot a basketball, and hit a baseball,"



Albany and Baird student council officers (top) present their totals during the fundraising challenge between the schools to raise money for the Neece family. Coach Jimmy Fuentes (left) kisses a pig during a pep rally as another fundraiser for the Neece's. Coach Denney Faith (above) supports Team Doug Neece by wearing a sticker decal on his headset during games.

PHOTOS BY CURRY WILSON AND MOLLY LEE

Drew Neece, the couple's oldest son said. "He taught me more than just skills, though. He's taught me to be the best that I can be in all sports and respect my coaches and other teammates, as well as be the best that I can in school and life."

But Doug didn't just stop at Drew; he continued this kind of fatherly coaching with all of his sons.

"He has always been a huge confidence booster for me," Dax Neece, Drew's younger brother said. "He has always taught me to never become satisfied, and to continue to improve through all I do."

Doug has continued his love of sports through

coaching Albany's youth.

"Ever since Drew was old enough to play, I have been coaching," Doug said. "I have coached soccer, football, basketball, and baseball."

The impact Doug has made on this community goes deeper than just the usual volunteer coach.

"I loved having Mr. Neece as a football and basketball coach growing up," Alex Faith said. "He was always trying to teach us the right things and make sure we were being good at sports, as well as in all the activities we did."

When Drew was going to start junior high football, Doug realized something. This community didn't have a pee wee football team. So he took

the initiative to start a team of fifth and sixth graders.

"What Coach Neece has been doing with the youth has been very beneficial to our program," head football coach Denney Faith said. "Those kids that participate in his program have a better understanding of what we are doing in high school. Coach Neece has done a great job with those kids, teaching them the same terminology and the same things we do within our program."

When the news of Doug's cancer reached Albany, the community was stunned.

"It felt like a dream," Drew said. "I thought to myself that there was no way that he could have

cancer. He is the nicest person I know. What was even more surprising is that he is still young and really healthy."

Some of Drew's friends realized that he was going to need people around him he could count on.

"When I heard the news, I was very surprised and I was not sure what to think," Alex Faith said. "I realized that I was going to have to be a good friend to Drew and Dax and make sure they knew that I was there for them."

In addition to moral support, the community blanketed the Neece family with support in a variety of ways.

"The response from this community has been overwhelming," Doug said.

"We have been blessed and amazed by the financial support, prayers, food, t-shirts and bracelets. The amazing thing is the support isn't just from Albany."

The help from the community has made the Neeces realize just how much of an impact Doug has made and how much he is loved.

"With all the support he's gotten from just about everyone in this town, I'd say he's a role model to a bunch of people," Drew said. "And the crazy thing is the amount of love the kids have shown."

Regardless of all that has happened, Doug has still been the same old Doug.

"If you didn't know him, you'd think there was nothing wrong with him besides his bald head and his voice," Drew said. "He still acts normal and like nothing is wrong, which has enabled my mom and brothers to keep positive attitudes"

Others in the family also agreed.

"He has been a comfort to me," Dax said. "He acts like nothing is wrong and is always keeping us happy with his jokes and attitude."

Even though Doug's plate is full, he still makes time to continue to coach and fulfill most of his duties as Booster Club president.

"I was really glad I was able to come back and coach the last three youth football games," Doug said. "I'm planning on coaching basketball and baseball and staying involved."

The community is happy that he is still coaching and is behind Doug.

"I'm really glad to know that my dad is still going to coach my brothers and their friends," Dax Neece said. "I am proud to call him my dad, and I know that he is always a coach you can trust."

Doug is continuing various types of cancer treatment at M. D. Anderson Cancer Hospital in Houston.

Fans perpetuate playoff traditions

Community supports football team during playoffs

CURRY WILSON
Assistant Editor

When Albany football hits the playoff season, people around town go above and beyond the norm to cheer on the Lions. The number of fans in the stands double in size, filling the stadium with varsity red and white.

Five years ago, a new tradition was added to Albany football, with drums beating in the stands pounding support until the last whistle blows.

Monica Dotson and her family started the tradition but decided that it was time to pass along the hauling of the drums to the games. Football mom Melissa Read decided to keep the tradition alive.

"I was contacted by Regina Freasier," Read said. "She told me that Monica and her mother were not going to be able to haul the drums this year, but I believe it helps keep the crowd pumped up."

Not only did Read want the drums to continue, the

football boys did as well.

"I called my son to ask the team if they wanted them, and he immediately replied with 'Yes, we need them there,'" Read said.

Read doesn't haul the drums to each playoff game by herself though.

"Regina Freasier and Nicki Leveridge have been helping me so far," Read said. "We need more adults on the drums so it doesn't sound like a complete mess."

Not only does she beat the drums at the games, she also makes playoff shirts.

"We have been making playoff shirts for the past two years," Read said.

Not only does Read make the shirts, but she and her husband also design them.

"We design the shirts ourselves," Read said. "We also have a graphic designer that puts it all together for us in a different format that allows us to make a screen print."

Her business not only produces shirts, but also makes other clothing material items, too.

"We make hats, hoodies, and all kinds of things," Read said.

She said she plans to continue to support the Lions any way she can.

"I hope we can keep printing playoff shirts down the road," Read said. "I also intend to bring the drums, too."



Several fans beat the drum to show their support during Albany's game against the Winters Blizzards on Nov. 28. The drums are brought to every playoff game and are just one of several playoff rituals.

PHOTO BY MOLLY LEE

The players motivated Read to take on the tasks.

"It's important to the players to have a good playoff shirt, and they want us to be cheering for them at the game," Read said. "I was told by one football player that the drums keep him fired up. The louder our fans get, the more pumped up he gets. If that helps them keep pushing forward, then we have accomplished something."

Another person who helps out during the playoff season is football mom Tami Masters. She has supported the Lions since her son

started in Albany schools.

"My husband and I have enjoyed attending Albany athletics and all the traditions that entails," Masters said. "It wasn't until my husband and Doug Neece started the youth football league during the boys' fifth grade year that we became true football parents."

From hosting team dinners to decorating the bus, the football moms play a very important role during football season.

"Many parents come together to encourage the team, cheerleaders and

band," Masters said. "The helmet was added to the tunnel during playoffs, we have an inspirational speaker before team dinner, we decorate the buses and of course we lull the town to sleep with the all night drum beating."

As a football mom, things can get hectic once playoff season arrives.

"There are definitely times when I doubt how it will all get done, but I know that is the feeling of every parent," Masters said. "As a mom, I often feel that we have just adopted our kids' teammates and classmates. It is truly inspiring to watch the youth work as hard as they do at their sports. It's a blessing to share in the success of their labors."

Just as the team works together, so do the parents.

"We are very fortunate to have a great group of parents and a very supportive community," Masters said. "It is much like on the field; everything is better when done as a team."

Despite all extra work that the parents take on for the team, they all have one goal in mind.

"Our primary objective is to provide encouragement and support for the boys," Masters said.

Another important person who is involved throughout the season is

Dairy Queen manager Nancy Bittle.

"I am very excited for the boys and for the town," Bittle said.

With red and white painted on the windows, Bittle and her staff decorate the DQ as a show of support.

"All of the employees come together to decorate for the playoff season," Bittle said.

Like all great artwork, it takes hard work and time to complete the masterpiece.

"It takes the a couple of days to complete all of the decorations," Bittle said. "We put it up at the beginning of the season and then take it down once the season ends."

The Dairy Queen crew also has a few traditions of their own.

"Before the boys leave for the game on Friday, they come by for a soft drink," Bittle said. "If they play here in town, then we eat lunch with them if they come in."

Bittle appreciates everything that the community contributes to the restaurant.

"The reason why we do what we do is to show our appreciation for what the town gives us," Bittle says.

Bittle's support doesn't end at the restaurant.

"I show up to every game," Bittle said. "I love to watch the boys play and see their success."

Lions continue deep playoff run

Team returns to semifinal for second year

CURRY WILSON
Assistant Editor

For the fourth time in seven years, the Albany Lions have advanced to the Class 2A Division II state semifinals.

The Lions qualified for the semifinal round in 2008, 2009, 2013 and again in 2014. In fact, the Lions have made it to at least the regional round of the playoffs every year since 2003.

The secret to a good playoff run is not only the talent of the players, but the coaching staff as well. "The coaching plays a big factor in our success," senior Stevie Phillips said. "They have all been coaching here for a long time and have their system well established."

Getting to the semifinals again is a great accomplishment to the team.

"It's exciting and an honor knowing that we are one of the last four teams in the state, and all of our hard work that we put in this season has paid off," junior Alex Faith said.

Faith plays for his father, head coach Denney Faith.

"I feel that when we are at practice, he pushes me a little harder because I'm his son," Faith said. "Once we come home from practice, we also talk about new



Junior Alex Faith shakes off defenders from Hamlin. The Lions played Friday Dec. 12 in the semifinal round of playoffs against the Seagraves Eagles. The winner of that game advanced to the state championship game at Cowboys stadium and will play on Thursday. PHOTO BY MOLLY LEE

formations or where I need to be on certain plays."

Being so close to the state championship game again is cause for excitement to most players.

"We know that we are getting closer with each game," Phillips said. "And knowing that we are one step closer makes us work harder in every practice and

game."

Charles Carter, a junior, who ended his season earlier than he should have, tore his ACL in the quarterfinal game against the Hamlin Pied Pipers.

"I was running down the field and cut to break down the defense," Carter said. "When I cut, I heard a popping sound in

my knee."

Carter didn't think his injury was serious at first.

"I wasn't thinking about it much when it popped," Carter said. "I was thinking about the next play."

Carter played running back and corner back for the Lions. Two sophomores stepped in to fill his

FOR THE RECORD:

ALBANY LION FOOTBALL 13-0	
Baird.....	W 64-34
PLAY-OFFS	
Miles.....	W 38-6
Winters.....	W 31-14
Hamlin	W 49-35

positions on offense and defense.

"Hunter Owen took my position on offense and Roman Fuentes played for me on defense," Carter said.

The injury that Carter has faced will take him out for the rest of the year.

"The doctor said that I will be out for at least nine months," Carter said.

Though he was not able to play on the field, Carter remained a part of the team.

"I have been motivating and encouraging the team on the sideline," he said.

Head Coach Denny Faith said that having several members of the team with experience at the semifinal round last year helps this year's squad.

"All of the guys that returned have been there before," Faith said. "So I think that the experience from last year will carry over to this year."

Faith said that this year's team also has another "secret weapon."

"This team has great chemistry," he said. "They all like each other both on and off the field, and that helps when playing at this level."

Lady Lions prepare for district

Girls improve through start of season

MICHAEL COTTER
Sports Editor

As the season has progressed, the Lady Lions have come together and learned to work as a team.

"We only had three returners from last year," head coach Paul Johnston said. "We have six girls coming off the JV with no varsity experience. However, Ruby, Valerie, and Rachel are doing a great job molding this team."

Despite the inexperience, the team has improved and learned to gel as a team.

"So far the season has been great," junior Curry Wilson said. "I love playing with my teammates and playing the sport that I love."

The girls have been working hard on the basics.

"We have been working on

basic fundamentals," Johnston said. "We are trying to get everyone on the same page. Job one is learning to play great defense, and job two is taking care of the ball."

One of the things the girls are concentrating on is hanging on to the basketball.

"We really need to work on taking care of the ball," Wilson said. "I think we had at least 36 turnovers in our first game."

With the loss of six seniors, several players have stepped up to fill their spots as leaders.

"Rachel, Valerie and Ruby have really stepped up and are doing a great job leading this team," Johnston said. "They are really setting a good example and showing the younger girls the way to go

about things."

The team also works hard and gets along well.

"They are working very hard together," Johnston said. "They are an extremely cohesive group who love to play together."

Since the girls have a new district, they know that the competition is tough.

"I think that we will do well in district," Wilson said. "But there are still some things that need polishing."

Johnston said the new district will be competitive.

"We are right in the middle of things; it's up to us to figure out a way of working our way toward the top," Johnston said. "Right now it's looking like Haskell and Anson are the favorites."

The girls begin district play tonight in Anson, with a pre-season record of 7-5.

FOR THE RECORD:

LADY LION BASKETBALL 7-5

Newcastle.....	W 41-37
Merkel.....	L 37-32
Veribest.....	W 46-17
ACHS.....	W 37-23
Trent.....	W 61-23
Coleman.....	W 41-36
ACHS.....	W 42-30
Strawn.....	L 58-29
Olney.....	W 31-26
Santo.....	L 36-31
Breckenridge.....	L 44-18
Rising Star.....	L 36-31



Junior Abby Reed shoots the ball over a defender during their pre-season game against the Merkel Badgers. The Lady Lions will begin district on Dec. 16 against Anson. PHOTO BY MICHAEL COTTER



Sophomore Jordan Pleasant goes up for a jump shot during the Lions JV tournament game against Graham. The Lions have their first district game on Jan. 2. PHOTO BY STEVE PHILLIPS

Lions' varsity season delayed

Boys begin year with limited number of starters

STEVE PHILLIPS
News Editor

Due to a longer football season, boy's basketball is being pushed back significantly again this season. However, players and coaches don't anticipate the late start to hurt the team's success.

"The only thing the lengthy football season affects is the schedule," head coach Ryder Peacock said, "Other than that it really doesn't affect anything else in my opinion."

The Lions have just three returning varsity players, three junior varsity players from last year, and six freshmen.

"This is their opportunity to get better and to figure out what level they are on," Peacock said. "Some of them won't get much playing time once everyone (football players) gets here."

Peacock is not only the boy's head basketball coach, but he's also an assistant football coach. "It's tough and time consum-

ing," Peacock said. "You must have good time management and support."

With Peacock's schedule being packed full, he looks for other coaches to try and work to his advantage.

"The other coaches work well with me," Peacock said. "Especially Coach Faith, who usually tries to work football practice around my schedule."

One senior leader, Tyler Morgan, reflects on his time in the gym without his team.

"I practice a lot by myself aside from scheduled practice, and I try to play as if the whole team were there," Morgan said.

Morgan said he is doing what he can, along with a handful of other players, until the entire squad joins him.

"Yes, I wish I had them," Morgan said. "But I hope they go as far as they can, and I will just keep practicing."

Motivation is not lost for Morgan, though.

"I'm always competitive, and I want to get better," he said.

Morgan's competitive spirit has a soft side too.

"I love to win, and I love those guys," Morgan said. "I want them by my side on the court, but they

need to go as far as they can in football first."

Another senior leader, Chandler Fields, concurred with Morgan.

"I try my best to improve what I can control like my skills and leadership," Fields said. "I believe that if you try to do more than what you can control, you aren't benefiting anything."

Fields also has motivation to play even with about half of the team missing.

"I just try to make myself better everyday and perfect the fundamentals of the game," Fields said.

Just like Morgan, Fields has the drive to win.

"Once the season really kicks off, I'm ready to win," Fields said. "Winning isn't everything, but having fun won't get you into the playoffs."

After players that are dual-athletes return to basketball, the group will not have much time before the start of district play. District action is set to begin Friday, Jan. 2.

Several members of the basketball team who do not participate in football played in the Woodson junior varsity tournament Dec. 4-6. The Lions finished second in the tournament.

"PIE"

Continued from | PG 1

and stress free.

"I really pushed myself early because I knew it would make my choice of campus housing easier, and I would get to eat some good pie," Brooks said.

Senior Ruby Sanchez applied early and has already been accepted to both Navarro College and South Plains College.

"I sent in my applications this semester to get it over with and try to decide early on where I want to attend," Sanchez said. "I am really leaning toward Navarro right now to major in psychol-

ogy because it is around the Dallas area, so I will always be able to find something to do. I have also heard it is a good school."

Now that the seniors have completed the application process, the next steps are securing housing with deposits, filling out scholarship applications, and submitting FAFSA paperwork after Jan. 1. Some university scholarship deadlines were as early as Dec. 1.

Seniors will also need to apply for local scholarships, but those are not due until May.

"The juniors should also be working toward getting a plan together," Waggoner said. "Reg-

istering for the ACT and SAT tests, visiting schools, working on community service hours, and building a resume are all important steps that can be completed now to make the next year easier."

"FFA"

Continued from | PG 1

Beard said.

Commodities range from canned goods, to drinks, to all types of food a family might need.

The classes have also recently been doing renovations at the FFA barn.

"My Ag classes have helped me construct another ten-foot by eleven-

foot wash rack," Beard said.

With an increase in Ag participation, construction of more animal pens is always needed.

"In our FFA program, there are 70 out of 101 students showing an animal," Beard said.

Although some exhibitors keep their animals at their home, the Ag barn offers a place for "city kids" to keep their livestock.

"Since we have so many more kids this year, we have recently built more rabbit pens, reconstructed walkways for the pigs, and made new pens for goats and sheep," Beard said.

Students are preparing for the big shows com-

ing up during January through March.

"Our county show is January 29-31," Beard said. "Majors are after that, with shows in Fort Worth, San Angelo, San Antonio, and Houston, followed by the Star of Texas in Austin on March 21."

Students not showing an animal still have a way to stay involved.

At the LDE (Leadership Development Events) Oil Belt District Contest, Albany was represented by almost 20 competitors.

"My Radio team, consisting of Curry Wilson, Kelsey Tollett and Savannah Perez, placed second out of 14 teams and will be advancing," Beard

said. "In the Junior Creed Speaking event, Natalie Hayner placed first, and will also advance from district, and Shelby Snead was third out of a total of 22 teams. My Senior Quiz team placed fifth, and the Junior Quiz team placed ninth."

There are 19 schools in the district and 76 schools in Area IV.

"All the participants did a great job preparing for the district contest," Beard said. "I appreciate the hard work and dedication they put forth to represent the Albany FFA."

The students received their banners at the Oil Belt District Banquet in Olney, Texas on December 11.



PLAYOFF FRENZY

Roaring fans, spirited cheerleaders, and crazy scream team members have all been traveling to many different stadiums

to watch and support the Lion football team battle their way through the state playoffs. As the Lions' season grows

stronger and crowds grow bigger, so does the hype at the game and throughout the community.

Photos by
Molly Lee

Story by
Shelby Barton



Senior cheerleader Sierra Price (far left) tries to get drivers of passing cars to honk in support of the Lions as the traditional beating of the drum starts after the Thursday night pep rally. Flag runner Tyler Beard (left) watches the game to spot his cue to run after the touchdown.

Scream Team members (at right, l-r) Michaela Reames, Kyler Conde, Kylea Gardner, Lori Davis, and Abbi Beard, dressed as lumberjacks make noise and cheer on the football team at the area playoff game against Miles at Gordon Wood Stadium in Brownwood on Thursday, Nov. 20. Besides lumberjacks, the scream team has come up with a beach theme and a Christmas theme so far during the Lions' playoff run.



Committed fans (left) celebrate while watching the Lions play against the Miles Bulldogs. Coach Ryder Peacock (above) raises his hand to signal a touchdown made against Winters.