



THE LIONS ROAR

"Lion pride in print"

Monday, December 14, 2015

ALBANY HIGH SCHOOL

ALBANY, TEXAS 76430

VOLUME 14 NUMBER 3

Effects of divorce on holiday season



Teens share the difficulties of spending Christmas with divorced parents. — See page 5

Students discuss hunting experiences



Students share what they enjoy about hunting, favorite memories. — See page 6

Lions hope for redemption

Football team makes deep playoff run with hope of returning to championship game in Houston. — See page 7



Briefs

Winter Formal set

Winter Formal is set for the Whitney Theatre on Jan. 16. The annual event is scheduled from 7:00 to 10:00 p.m. Tickets will be available after the Christmas break for \$15 from class presidents or \$20 at the door.

Angel Pacanins will serve as the discjockey. The naming of Mr. and Miss AHS will be announced, along with class princes and princesses.

Breakfast food will be served at The Feed Store immediately following the winter dance and will be open to anyone who attends.

The dance is sponsored by the Student Council and is the main fundraising activity of the year.

Finals start today

The fall semester exam schedule is set for Monday through Wednesday, Dec. 14-16, and information has been released about when the holiday break will begin based on if the Lion football team advances to the state championship game.

Whether or not the Lions make the playoffs, the testing schedule will be as follows:

Monday
1st period (JH 8th) - 8:00 a.m. to 10 a.m.,
2nd period -- 10:05 a.m. to 12:05 p.m.
3rd period -- 12:50 to 2:50 p.m.

Tuesday
4th period -- 8:00 to 10:00 a.m.
5th period -- 10:05 a.m. to 12:05 p.m.
6th period -- 12:45 to 2:45 p.m.

Wednesday
7th period -- 8 to 9:45 a.m.
8th (JH 1st) -- 9:50 to 11:35 a.m..

If the Lions advance to the state finals, school will be dismissed for the Christmas holidays at noon on Wednesday, Dec. 16, and students will not return until Tuesday, Jan. 5.

However, if Albany does not advance to the state football finals set for next Thursday, all students will be required to attend regular classes on Thursday with a 3:00 p.m. release. Classes will also be held on Friday, Dec. 18 with early release at 12:00 p.m., which will mark the start of the Christmas holiday.



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

Inquiry uncovers 'dirt' on mound

Students, teachers question plan for piles of dirt

BY KYLEA GARDNER
Assistant Editor

"It's going to be a new school!"

"No, it's going to be a softball field!"

"It's definitely going to be a new practice field for the football players."

Opinions have varied widely about a growing mound of black fill located behind the junior high building. Dump trucks have been unloading all semester with an occasional timeout to level

what appears to be the ever-expanding pad of topsoil.

"Guesses have ranged anywhere from a new school, to a swimming pool, to a shooting range," Superintendent Shane Fields said. "But as of right now it's nothing more than a mound of dirt."

Speculation has been running rampant through the halls as the mounds of dirt began to pile up, and though many people believe that they have the answer to the mystery, there really isn't a mystery at all.

"The dirt is not being used for anything," Fields said. "It's just landfill. That area has a rather large drop off and we used the dirt to level the space to reduce the chances of flooding



Superintendent Shane Fields poses in front of the mysterious dirt mounds located behind the high school. Speculation has continued to pile up among students and teachers since the mounds began arriving last spring. PHOTO BY KYLEA GARDNER

near the baseball field and batting cages."

Although people have heard the reasoning behind why the soil has been dumped, they still ques-

tion where it came from.

"The school administration has always been good friends with the City of Albany, and this past summer they dug out a

tank at the golf course and needed somewhere to dump all of the dirt, so we agreed to let them dump it

SEE "DIRT" Pg. 8

Service opportunities available



Seniors Kelsey Tollett (top) and Tobi Nall sort through donated "teen" clothes at Closet Angels, the local community clothes closet. Tollett and Nall, along with a few other girls, volunteer at Closet Angels a couple of times a month to earn community service hours for National Honor Society. PHOTO BY LORI DAVIS

Volunteer hours required for students

BY RYLIE SCOTT
News Editor

Community service hours are in high demand for juniors and seniors planning to attend college in the future.

Counselor Dee Dee Waggoner helps guide students and emphasizes community involvement instead of just meeting the minimum requirement of hours. A total of 12 hours a year are required - six hours per semester to meet National Honor Society requirements.

"Students should feel free to come up with their own community service projects," Waggoner said. "Something that is student-led shows organization, which impresses many colleges."

Members of the junior class noticed that the school parking lot has not been painted recently, explained Waggoner.

"The project was completed before Thanksgiving and really was helpful," she said.

There are several opportunities in the community for students to gain community service hours.

"Students can get involved in many organizations such as Closet Angels, the food bank held at Bethel Assembly, Cause for Paws, citywide cleanups, and Neighbors in Need just to name a few," Waggoner said. "They can contact the Chamber of Commerce for more information about events such as the Cinco de Mayo health fair and Watt Matthews Days."

Librarian Karen Noble also has information about specific volunteer work available for students.

"This year we have started offering volunteer hours for babysitting during the GED classes held at the county library on Monday and Tuesday nights," Noble said. "The students are able to receive 3 hours a day, from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m."

New opportunities for

SEE "SERVICE" Pg. 8

NHS hosts lunch for Toys for Tots

Donations used to buy toys for youth

BY PARKER MOON
Staff Writer

National Honor Society members held a luncheon Nov. 15 to raise money for the Toys for Tots program sponsored by the U.S. Marine Corps.

In addition, a gift wrapping party was held Dec. 10 by NHS members to wrap the presents before they are distributed.

Both events were held to assist with the program designed to provide toys to children in need in the Albany community. Boxes were also set up in the high school

hallway to collect toys.

NHS became involved with the organization four years ago when NHS co-sponsor/counselor Dee Dee Waggoner was employed.

"I like Toys for Tots because it teaches our juniors and seniors the spirit of giving to families that are less fortunate," Waggoner said.

The luncheon raised a little over \$800 to assist with buying toys.

"I like how the toys go to families who really need help," NHS president Curry Wilson said. "In some cases, these are the only toys that children receive during Christmas."

Waggoner also likes the benefits of the organization.

"I like how the organization stays local,"



Waggoner said. "It gets our students involved and teaches them to meet the needs where they are in their own community. I like that it allows them to work with a larger organization outside of school. It encourages them to have a spirit of

giving."

There are other perks for students as well.

"Doing this gives NHS members much needed community service hours," NHS co-sponsor/librarian Karen Noble said. "Students learn so much more than

they realize by helping others. I really think it builds character."

NHS members helped with serving the food and clean up at the luncheon.

"I'm happy that I get

SEE "NHS" Pg. 8

Editorials

Cheating hurts everyone

“Cheaters never win and winners never cheat.” This old saying, though it remains true, is becoming increasingly difficult to validate.

With each generation, cheating on schoolwork becomes more acceptable. Although cheating provides temporary success, long-term disadvantages accompany this as well.

One problem with cheating is that it is not fair to the students who work hard to earn good grades. Many students simply wait until the assignment’s due date and copy a friend’s work. Or they sit next to the “smart” kid during a test and copy their answers. While some students are staying up into the wee hours of the morning studying or finishing assignments, others take only five minutes of their time to copy the answers from someone.

Cheating also makes it challenging for the teachers. Teachers aren’t able to trust students anymore, and as a result many teachers do not give homework anymore because students will not do the assignments themselves. Without homework, more class time is spent covering the basics and isn’t available to challenge students.

Finally, and most importantly, cheating on schoolwork hurts those that partake in it. Students think that cheating will help them, but there is nothing helpful about it. Failing to learn the material with homework assignments makes it almost impossible to do well on tests and end of course exams.

If students cheat for an A on one assignment, then what? There will come a point in time when there is no way to cheat. Those that have learned the material will excel while those that have cheated their way through will suffer the consequences.

Cheating affects class ranking, scholarship money, knowledge, and trust. Although it may seem like a good idea, nothing good ever comes out of cheating. Spend a few extra minutes to do the assignment, and save yourself a lot of panic later when a test rolls around.

AR becoming burden

Almost every student in junior high and high school is required to earn at least 10 Accelerated Reading (AR) points each six weeks. Although the intent behind AR is good, it is not fulfilling the purpose that it was designed to do.

AR was created to keep students reading and to increase their vocabulary, but this program is not working anymore.

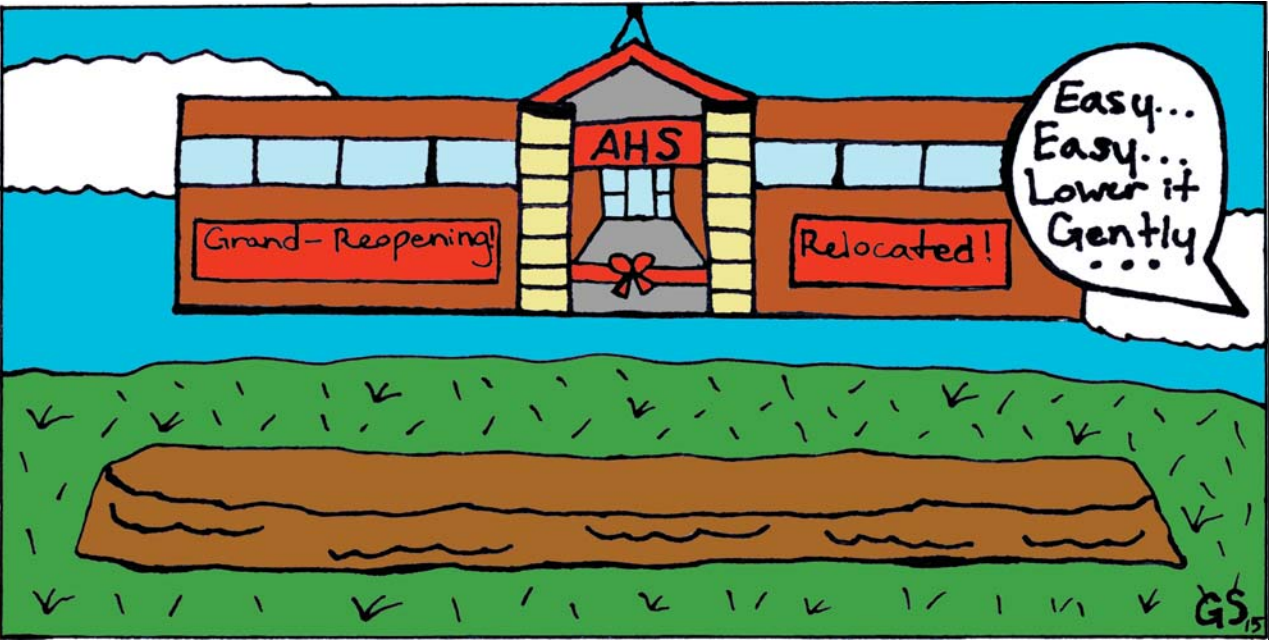
The first reason for this is that many students simply do not have enough time. Students are being pulled in a million different directions throughout the week, and AR points are just one more thing to add to the pile. Weekdays are filled with school, practice, games, jobs, homework, youth groups, and other extracurricular activities, and the weekends are just as busy. With all of these events to occupy their time, many students aren’t able to finish a book before the deadline.

Another flaw of AR is that it can cause some students to despise reading. Some people love reading, while others strongly dislike it. Forcing students that don’t enjoy reading to read will only cause them to dislike it more and may scare them away from reading for good.

Lastly, often students don’t even read an AR book. Students will take the test based off of the movie version that they watched, or use SparkNotes to read a summary of the book. This bypasses the purpose of AR entirely, and unfortunately there is no way to prevent this.

The purpose of Accelerated Reading is to expand students’ vocabulary and keep them reading. However, this goal is not being accomplished. Many students don’t read at all, and those that do often skip over words that they don’t know instead of learning them.

Although the AR program is supposed to foster a love for reading, it has become another homework burden that many students dread. Teachers and students need to work together to find an alternative method that will keep students reading without all of the complications of AR.



Military deserves recognition

From the time I was just a three year old girl back in September of 2001, to recent events such as the ISIS threats, I have always had a very deep appreciation for all of those who serve in the military. However, there are people that don’t have the same perspective that I have.

I have found myself in several conversations with people who dare to make claims stating that some branches of the military are “useless” and “only for people who aren’t smart enough to go to college,” and in all honesty, I find those to be some of the most absurd comments that I have ever heard in my entire life. In my opinion, if someone has the nerve to criticize a person in the service for their choice, then the person complaining should just go fight for himself.

In a few days, most everyone reading this article will be waking up early Christmas morning with all of their family members and celebrating the day together, while some people never have the chance to come home for the holidays. Some people never have the chance to come home again, ever. Excuse me if I’m wrong, but I firmly believe that those brave men and women don’t just deserve to be recognized, but they deserve to be appreciated.

There are a whole lot of people in my life that are very close to me who serve, or have served in the military, and I find it not only inconsiderate, but also completely ignorant to believe that what these incredible individuals have done for everyone in our country was done without a purpose. These people are heroes, and they deserve to be treated as a hero should be treated.

I would like to apologize for all those who are unappreciative of those who serve, and I would also like to thank each and every one of the courageous men and women who live their lives every day to protect people like me. So, from the bottom of my heart, thank you and God bless America.



GARDNER SEEDS

by KYLEA GARDNER

A Wilson family Christmas

I imagine a family Christmas gathering as a peaceful get-together where everybody wears matching Christmas sweaters and enjoys a relaxed Christmas dinner. Then everybody gathers around a warm fire and reminisces about fond memories. However, that is not the case when it comes to my family.

My family Christmas consists of 50 family members who come together and ramble all day and eat all night. It’s kind of like the Griswold family Christmas, but five times bigger, crazier, and louder.

Nothing can keep us apart for the holiday season. No matter how busy we are, or if we live six hours away from each other, our family still manages to make it home for the Christmas holidays. On Christmas morning, my immediate family and I open gifts and drink hot chocolate and wassail. After opening the presents, waves of people come out to our house like a stampede of cattle.

We start cooking mounds of food and begin to talk about the “good ole times.” Laughter and Christmas music fills the air with the scent of cinnamon and peppermint emanating from the kitchen.

After the food is prepared, we join hands and say a prayer for one another and everyone who celebrates Christmas. Then we dive in and devour what we put on our plates until our stomachs are ready to pop.

Once we have gorged ourselves, we open presents that we bought for one another, and finish telling stories about each other. Even though the ideal Christmas doesn’t apply to my family, I still love seeing distant cousins and close relatives for the holiday season.



REDHEADED RANTS

by CURRY WILSON

College playoff process

In the new age of the college football playoffs, fans are having a hard time accepting the decisions of the messy selection committee that picks the four lucky teams.

The selection committee is comprised of twelve highly distinguished men and women from all FBS conferences and Notre Dame who all have experience coaching and directing athletics at the college level. The committee ranks the top 25 schools in the nation, and the top four schools make the playoff. This means there are usually four or five schools that have good records and have beaten good teams, but are left out.

So what exactly are the criteria for a team to make it in according to the selection committee?

The main goal of the committee is to create competitive matchups between the best four teams in the nation. They also attempt to avoid matchups that occurred during the regular season. They look at several important attributes to rank the top four. They look at who the team has played, what their record is, the point margin of their wins, how they have overcome adversity, head-to-head results against common opponents, and championships won. They have to come to an un-biased, unanimous decision, so if your team got left out, it’s probably for a good reason.

College football will use this format for at least 12 years. The four teams who qualify play in qualifying bowls. These bowls rotate between the Sugar Bowl, Rose Bowl, Orange Bowl, Cotton Bowl, Peach Bowl and Fiesta Bowl. The winners of each respective bowl then play each other for the BCS national championship. Although I enjoy the excitement this brings to the table, I would make a few changes if I could. I would take the top eight teams instead of four. This would allow for a more competitive playoff, as well as prevent the exclusion of teams who should be in the playoff. This year, the championship will be played at the Arizona Cardinals’ stadium in Phoenix, Arizona.



MIKE’S MOMENTS

by MICHAEL COTTER



THE
LIONS ROAR
ILPC 2014 Gold Star Winner
ALBANY HIGH SCHOOL

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2¢ worth

What kind of Christmas tree do you prefer and why?

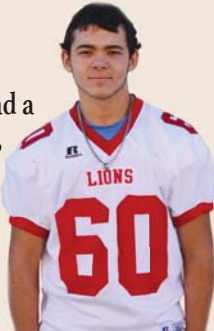
“I like fake Christmas trees because they are easy to put up.”
Kade Everitt
Freshman



“I like real Christmas trees. They make my house smell like the holidays and remind me of my childhood.”
McKenna Wilkins
Sophomore



“I have never had a real tree before, so I prefer fake trees.”
Mathew Mitchell
Junior



“I prefer fake Christmas trees because you don’t have to buy a new one every year.”
Tobi Nall
Senior



Holiday films boost Christmas spirit

Students binge on seasonal films annually

BY HENRY KELLY
Entertainment Editor

Christmas movies have become just as much a tradition as Santa himself.

Although some of these Christmas movies do not always have the most intriguing storylines, that does not stop students from watching their favorite holiday film every year.

The results of a recent poll from The Lion's Roar show that *Elf* is the most popular Christmas movie among the student body. In second place was *National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation*, and in third place the winner was *How The Grinch Stole Christmas*.

Many of the students add to the tradition of watching their favorite Christmas movies by enjoying certain foods and drinks every year.

"We always watch *Elf* on Christmas Day or Eve," Torie Fuentes said. "And we always drink hot chocolate and eat popcorn."

Junior Emmy Shirley and sophomore Jesse Vega both cook their own food to eat as they watch Christmas movies.

"Every year, we cook up a bunch of snacks to eat," Shirley said. "Then we usually all fall asleep on the couch while watching the movie."

Vega's cooking adds a bit more culture to her tradition.

"My favorite Christmas movie is *Elf*," Vega said. "My mom and I always make tamales and chocolate chip cookies on Christmas Eve and watch the movie."

For some students, the movie is enjoyed while participating in other Christmas

activities.

"My family watches *Elf* every year," seventh-grader Laney Jaco said. "My brother and I decorate the tree while it's on."

Although they watch it every year, for many students the movie is just as enjoyable

than just once a year.

"I watch *How the Grinch Stole Christmas* every year, at least twice," sophomore Chase Hill said. "I like it because it delivers the message of kindness."

Some students' traditions are a bit more unusual than others.

Hawkins appreciates a more alternative Christmas movie.

"I like watching the movie *Black Christmas*," Hawkins said. "I enjoy it because it's filled with suspense."

Although most students favor either animated or live-action, senior Chelsi Freasier

Others enjoy puppet Christmas movies.

"Every year, my family watches *The Muppets Christmas Carol*," Shirley said. "I love all the characters and the story."

The holiday movie not only gets Shirley into the Christmas spirit, but also the singing spirit.

"Sometimes when we were watching the movie, my sister, brother, and I break out in song with the Muppets," Shirley said.

Other students enjoy action-packed Christmas movies to get them in the Christmas spirit.

"I like watching *Die Hard* around Christmas time," sophomore Harvey Hinkle said. "It's fun to watch, and it's technically a Christmas movie."

Sophomore Madison Russell enjoys watching her favorite Christmas movie because it reminds her of family.

"I usually watch *Night Before Christmas* every year," Russell said. "I like watching it because it was my Meme's (grandma) favorite movie."

Some students enjoy watching certain Christmas movies because it reminds them of their childhood.

"I love watching *Frosty the Snowman* because it is a classic Christmas movie," eighth-grader Max Balliew said. "It reminds me of what I used to think about when I was younger." Balliew watches the movie and eats with all of his family members.

Although there are many different types of Christmas movies out there that students watch for the holidays, there is still a tradition that keeps them interested year after year.

So while shopping, food, and Christmas trees have all been traditions for years, movies have now become time-honored traditions in their own right.



Two students gather for a Christmas movie marathon and attempt to decide between holiday classics, *Santa Clause 2*, starring Tim Allen, or a student favorite, *Elf*, starring Will Ferrell. A school-wide survey revealed that *Elf* took first place with a total of 27 percent of the votes. The second place movie was *National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation* with 14 percent, followed in third by *Dr Seuss' How the Grinch Stole Christmas* in third place with 12 percent.

PHOTO BY HENRY KELLY

as the first time they saw it.

"I watch *Elf* every Christmas," sophomore Weston Vickers said. "I laugh just as hard as the first time I watched it."

Christmas movies often contribute to the mood of the holidays.

"*National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation* gets me in the Christmas spirit each year," sophomore Chloe Fields said. "My whole family watches the movie by the fire."

Some even watch their favorite Christmas movie more

"Our whole family gets together to watch *Rudolph*," said eighth-grader Abigail Moore. "We all go into the living room wearing antlers while holding bowls of popcorn to watch the movie."

Other students enjoy movies that aren't typical Christmas stories.

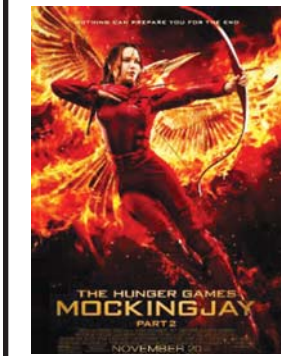
"My favorite movie is *Nightmare Before Christmas*," sophomore Katarina Caudel said. "I like it because it has both Halloween and Christmas in it." Like Caudel, senior Ben

says otherwise.

"My favorite Christmas movie is the Claymation *Jack Frost*," Freasier said. "I love clay movies, and the story line is great."

Senior Taylor Brooks compares his favorite holiday movie to his own family.

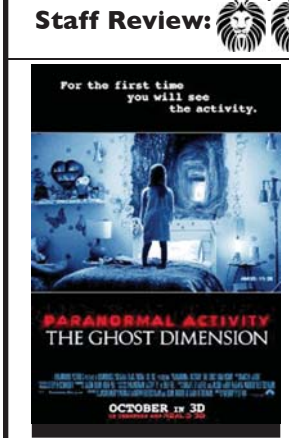
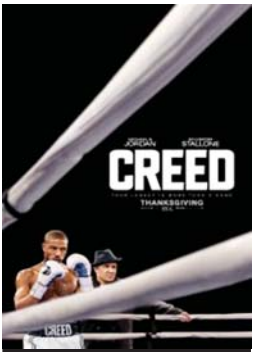
"My favorite Christmas movie is *National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation*," Brooks said. "It's a perfect representation of my crazy relatives that come to visit during the Christmas break."



The Hunger Games: Mockingjay, part 2
November 16, 2015 PG-13 137 min
Fantasy | Science Fiction
Realizing the stakes are no longer just for survival, Katniss Everdeen (Jennifer Lawrence) teams up with her closest friends, including Peeta (Josh Hutcherson) and Gale (Liam Hemsworth) for the ultimate mission. What lies ahead are mortal traps, dangerous enemies and moral choices that will ultimately determine the future of millions.
Stars: Jennifer Lawrence, Josh Hutcherson

Staff Review: [4 lion icons]

Creed
November 25, 2015 PG-13 133 min
Drama | Sports
Adonis Johnson (Michael B. Jordan) never knew his famous father, boxing champion Apollo Creed, who died before Adonis was born. However, boxing is in his blood, so he seeks out Rocky Balboa (Sylvester Stallone) and asks the retired champ to be his trainer. With Rocky's help, Adonis soon gets a title shot, but whether he has the true heart of a fighter remains to be seen.
Stars: Michael B. Jordan, Sylvester Stallone



Paranormal Activity: The Ghost Dimension
October 23, 2015 R 95 min
Horror
Ryan Fleege, his wife Emily, and their daughter Leila are preparing for Christmas in their new home. After finding an old and mysterious camcorder, Ryan learns that it can record strange apparitions that are invisible to the naked eye. When young Leila starts talking to an imaginary friend and displaying strange behavior, the couple find themselves in a battle with a supernatural force.
Stars: Chloe Csengery, Hallie Foote

Staff Review: [2 lion icons]

The Peanuts Movie
November 6, 2015 G 93 min
Adventure | Comedy
Life always seems complicated for good ol' Charlie Brown (Noah Schnapp), the boy who always tries his best against seemingly impossible odds. When the Little Red-Haired Girl moves into his neighborhood, Charlie Brown develops a crush on her. Meanwhile, his best friend Snoopy embarks on an epic adventure in a fantasy world.
Stars: Noah Schnapp, Troy Andrews (Trombone Shorty)



Staff Review: [4 lion icons]

THAT'S ENTERTAINMENT BY HENRY KELLY

Love The Coopers

There was nothing to love about *Love The Coopers*. The story describes the pain and unhappiness of families during the holidays. After watching the movie, I realized the deception of the trailer, which made it out to be a light-hearted and funny movie. But when I saw it, I couldn't help feeling gloomy.

The only thing that kept me interested was the hope of all the problems being resolved in the end, but all that resulted was a five-minute scene where everyone looked happy for the first time in the whole movie. Although it kept me in the theater, it didn't keep others. As I sat watching the movie, several people left, some leaving only thirty minutes in.

Many of the characters that seemed one way in the trailer, came off a completely different way. As the movie began, you quickly begin to hate the snobby characters and never could build a relationship with them and sympathize with them. Although the film was trying to show the side of Christmas when families aren't having the best time, it came off as annoying, because there are other people far less fortunate than the whiny characters in this movie.

The script was quirky, with the dog serving as the narrator, who talked about himself in third person. The characters talk about some trip, but never really explained why they wanted to go so badly. The writers tried to add a few funny lines, but they seemed

poorly thought out or just plain stupid.

This film will easily be forgotten. Unlike *Elf* and *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*, it will never be known as a Christmas classic. This movie is one I wouldn't suggest to anyone. It is easily one of the worst Christmas films I've ever endured.



Spectre

A hard follow-up film, *Spectre* held its ground after succeeding *Skyfall*. The film went back to what its best at with car chases and fancy suits to make this film an excellent one.

Daniel Craig plays 007 in his fourth James Bond movie. He portrays the part very convincingly and is considered by many as the best James Bond, though others of the older generations may disagree. Craig carries on the tradition of a classy spy who always saves the day.

The setting was one of the engaging aspects of the movie, using several different locations including London, Mexico, Rome, Morocco, and Austria. This provides for beautiful

backgrounds in each of the scenes as well as a great adventure for Bond in this action-packed movie.

Although it's not easy to follow up a great film like *Skyfall*, *Spectre* did it well. The movie provided a great sense of thrill as well as a romance between James Bond and Madeleine Swann (Léa Seydoux). The mystery behind the villain (a childhood companion) who was thought to be dead adds a great twist to the storyline.

The action keeps you on the edge of your seat and reminds viewers just how great the Bond movies are with these scenes. Although it goes back to its roots for yet another movie, it is not at all stale or repeating. The story is unique and ties back to the previous Bond movies but doesn't require that. For movie goers that have seen the previous titles, it is very enjoyable if you have never seen a James Bond movie or if you have seen every James Bond movie.

I would recommend this movie to those who enjoy the James Bond series or who just simply love action-packed movies.



Students discuss distracted driving

Drivers tell stories of mishap, give advice

BY CAITLYN PATTERSON
Staff Writer

One of the leading causes of teen accidents today is distracted driving and Albany youth are certainly not immune to the trend.

According to the website *distraction.gov* a total of 3,179 people were killed and 431,000 were injured in accidents resulting from some form of distracted driving during 2014 alone.

Most drivers both young and old may not understand the risk that they are taking when they drive while being distracted by some other activity.

McKenna Thompson, a junior, says she sees distracted drivers almost daily when she travels to Breckenridge and Abilene.

“Kids our age think that they’re invincible and that it’s a right not a privilege to be driving,” she said. “They just kind of take it for granted and risk other people’s safety.”

Lety Cecilio, a junior, worries that being distracted while driving does not only affect her personal life, but the lives of others around her.

“I get mad at people when they’re sidetracked because they could possibly end up hurting me or someone else,” Cecilio said. “But I forget to think about that myself when I’m driving and get distracted.”

Science teacher Andre Raymond says adults are just as guilty as adolescents when it comes to driving while juggling other activities.

“It’s not just students,” Ray-

mond said. “I can’t tell you how many times, when I’m leaving school or driving around, I’ve seen parents driving with their kids in the backseat through the school zone while illegally talking on their cell phones.”

Raymond thinks students often mimic the behavior of their parents or other adults.

“When students see their parents talking on their phones while driving, they may start to think that it’s okay for them to do it,” he said. “If students never face the consequences of distracted driving, then they’re not going to realize how dangerous it is until something tragic happens.”

The teacher said that many drivers have a false sense of security.

“Even adults don’t always pay attention to the potential consequences,” Raymond said. “If nothing bad ever happens, then they think it never will.”

When students receive a text and decide to answer it, chances are they are not thinking about the possible dangers involved. Most students choose to text back because the temptation to respond is too strong for them.

Cecilio admits she nearly had an accident this summer when she decided to check a text message while driving.

“I tried holding the phone in my right hand so I could shift my gaze between my phone and the road,” she said. “I guess I glanced at my phone for too long, because I ended up going off the road and into a ditch.”

Texting is not the only cause of distracted driving. Eating, adjusting the radio, changing clothes, falling asleep, putting on makeup, and interacting with passengers can also take the focus off of driving.

Thompson says that she is most distracted when driving long distances.

“I have this thing about driving for an extended period of time,” Thompson said. “I get distracted easily because it’s so boring and I get tired.”

Kyle Manning, a junior, was involved in an accident in August when he fell asleep at the wheel.

“I was driving home from Baird when I started to get tired,” Manning said. “I pulled over and took a nap, but then my dad called and told me to come home.”

Manning shook his friend in the passenger seat to wake him up and ensure that he was wearing his seatbelt.

“If you want to live, put your seatbelt on,” Manning said. “It’s not worth risking your life.”

Raymond emphasizes that any and all forms of distracted driving are dangerous and should be avoided.

“Anything that is not allowing you to give your full attention to the road is distracted driving,” Raymond said.

It is important for the drivers to stay focused on the road and not be distracted by the things that surround them, according to Cecilio.

“Our lives are fragile,” Cecilio said. “We shouldn’t distract ourselves with anything while we’re driving.”

Raymond makes an effort to avoid any distractions while he is driving.

“I don’t put myself in the situation where I’m going to be distracted,” he said. “I try to make sure to eliminate potential distraction.”

Getting rid of possible distractions while driving can be difficult for some drivers.

“It’s all related to discipline,” Raymond said. “Don’t suffer from big consequences because you didn’t want to deal with the small ones first.”

Divorce can complicate holiday season

Students from divorce describe holiday changes

BY GENEVIEVE STUNKARD
Features Editor

This Christmas, millions will celebrate the holiday in what could be described as a picture-perfect way: surrounded by loved ones, eating and laughing, enjoying each other's company.

However, for those who belong to broken families, the holidays scarcely resemble the jovial celebrations seen in movies. Divorce often plays a major role in forever changing the way a family celebrates Christmas. Holidays can be stressful for everyone, but for children of divorced or separated parents, the holidays can be especially challenging.

Junior Kylea Gardner, whose parents separated in August of 2012, recalls the sadness that her parents' divorce caused during previous holidays.

"I can definitely say that the first Christmas my family didn't spend together as a whole made me way more upset about my parents' separation than I had ever been before," Gardner said. "Christmas is easily my favorite holiday, and having to spend it in different households for the first time was horrible. Fortunately, over time, we've learned to make it work."

Senior Newton Koemel tells of how his parents, who recently divorced, have always done their best to put their children's happiness ahead of any disagreements.

"My parents always tried to set their differences aside for the sake of trying to be a 'normal' family during the holidays," Koemel said. "This is the first year in which my siblings and I will spend Christmas with each parent separately."

Gardner says that she has gradually adapted to the separation of her parents.

"I've gotten pretty used to the whole idea of spending the holidays in a million different places, but I can't say that it doesn't



A young Kylea Gardner (left) gives a thumbs up to her parents after opening a present during Christmas of 2004. Newt Koemel and siblings Alayna and Kolt (below) gather for a photo used for a family Christmas card. Both photos were taken prior to their parents divorcing.

PHOTOS PROVIDED BY KYLEA GARDNER AND NEWT KOEMEL



still bother me some," Gardner said. "Divorces are really hard on people and their families, and I feel like, in all honesty, the holidays will never really feel 'normal' again."

Koemel expresses similar feelings.

"Christmas isn't really a bitter time for me," Koemel said. "I'm still always looking forward to that time of year. It's just that memories from my earliest Christmases always remind me of the way things used to be, and I'm always disappointed that it can't be that way again."

Gardner describes that she occasionally feels envious of friends from unbroken homes.

"I do find myself being jealous of seemingly 'normal' families, because it's really special to be able to spend Christmas all together as a family, and I know that's something I'll never have again," Gardner said.

Koemel disagrees.

"I'm not necessarily jealous of those who have married parents, but I miss the times when every-

one was under one roof during the Christmas season," Koemel said. "When my grandfather was alive, about eight years ago, he did a good job of bringing the family together at Christmastime."

Koemel further describes the importance of his grandfather's presence.

"My grandfather always managed to keep my mom's side of the family together because he was such an affable person," Koemel said. "He managed to get along with everyone, even when other members of the family weren't agreeing with each other. My family used to meet at his house for the holidays with food and presents for every person, and everyone was always happy to see each other. Since we lost him to ALS, we've never had another Christmas like that."

Gardner also describes Christmases of her past.

"Every Christmas before the divorce, our whole family would wake up super early in the morning, open all of our presents together, and spend the entire day as a close-knit family," Gardner said. "Now, I alternate every other year spending Christmas Eve with one parent and spending Christmas Day with the other."

Despite now having to spend the holidays in different places, Gardner says the way her family celebrates the holiday has changed very little.

"The Christmases I spend with each parent usually don't differ much," Gardner said. "We typically do the same things we did when we were all together: wake up early, open gifts, take a nap, and spend the day being lazy together."

Koemel also says that even with the recent change in how he will celebrate the holiday, some traditions will still be upheld.

"My father was raised in Cor-

pus Christi, and his parents always received homemade tamales from a Hispanic family that worked on their ranch," Koemel said. "We like to continue that tradition, as well as a tradition honoring our German ancestry. On Christmas morning, we eat a German Christmas bread called stollen. It's filled with fruit, covered in powdered sugar, and meant to represent baby Jesus in swaddling clothes."

Koemel says that he's learned valuable lessons from his parents' situation.

"From my parents, I've learned what not to do when it comes to keeping my family together," Koemel said. "Also, I've learned not to underestimate the value of heartfelt family moments."

Gardner agrees that strong family connections should be highly valued.

"I feel like far too many people take having families not affected by divorce for granted," Gardner said. "I know I did. If I could go back in time, I would cherish those moments much more, because now I realize life is wildly unpredictable, and it's not guaranteed that people will always have time to spend with their loved ones."

Koemel explains, because of his personal experience, how he will do everything in his power to keep his future family whole and happy.

"When I have a family of my own, I'm going to do my best to always keep Christmas sacred," Koemel said. "I've always cherished the holidays, and I am going to do my best to present it in a special, loving way to my wife and children."

Gardner has high expectations for her future family as well, in hopes that they will never have to endure what she has.

"I want more than anything in the world for my children to never know what it's like to be forced to spend Christmas in separate places," Gardner said. "I hope that the first person I marry is the only person I'm with for the rest of my life, so that my family will never be troubled with the pain of divorce. I want us to be able to spend every holiday together as a family, no matter what happens."

Students dream of Christmases future

Fantasies steeped in traditions, nostalgia

BY GENEVIEVE STUNKARD
Features Editor

Winter celebrations are drawing ever closer, bringing joyfully rousing Christmas dreams: visions of flawless, beautifully decorated firs and mantelpieces, flurries of snow, and aromatic ciders grace the minds of many.

Three students share what their dream holiday would be like, with whom they'd celebrate, and where it would take place.

Sophomore Shelby Snead vividly describes her ideal Christmas spent in the snowy mountains of Colorado with her future husband and children.

"My ideal Christmas would be spent in a cabin in Colorado, preferably at a ski resort or something," Snead said. "I say that because my parents took me skiing there when I was six during Christmastime before they divorced. I was actually pretty good at it for my age. My mom was paranoid about me wanting to go down the larger hills, but my dad took me skiing on them anyway. Sometimes we listened to my mom, though, and we just stayed on the bunny

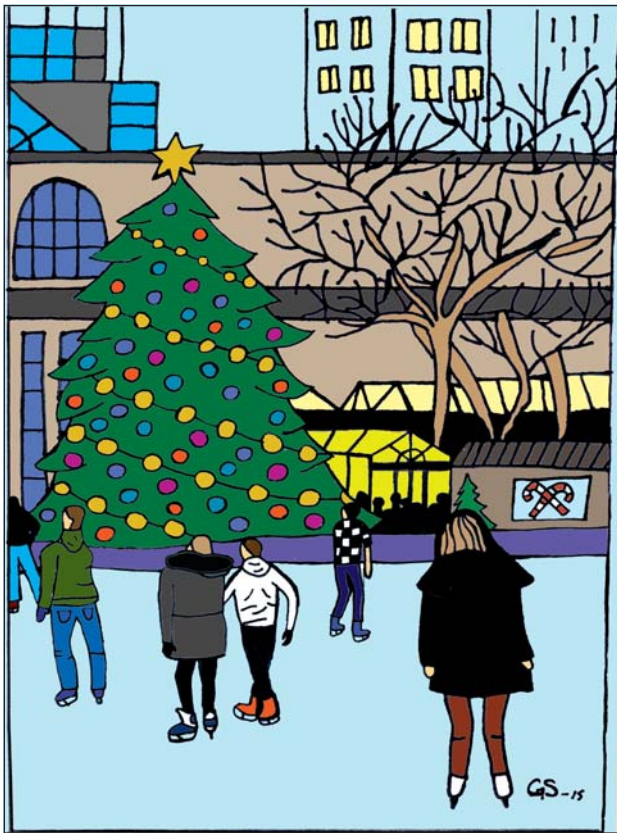
hill."

Snead returns to her original thoughts.

"Anyway, I think it'd be wonderful to stay in a relatively isolated log cabin in the Colorado mountains, so that my family and I would be given the opportunity to fully enjoy the gorgeous natural surroundings," Snead said. "Still, it'd be nice to be close to some kind of little village where we could go for ice cream, coffee, and desserts, as well as t-shirts and other souvenirs."

Snead describes her ideal family conditions for her dream Christmas.

"I'd like to have two or three children to bring with me, all young enough to still believe in Santa Claus, yet old enough to ski and remember the trip," Snead said. "I'd only bring my live-in family at the time. On Christmas Eve, we could eat an amazing dinner of ham and Brussels sprouts and tons of desserts at the cabin. Then, on Christmas morning, my husband and I could wake up early and make our kids' favorite breakfast. From late the previous night, after they'd already gone to bed, the big, grand Christmas tree would be surrounded with tons and tons of presents. We'd get them anything they had asked for on their lists, as well as some board games we could all play together in our pajamas after we



The illustration depicts Davis's ideal Christmas vacation. She spoke of ice skating in Rockefeller Center and admiring its famous Christmas tree when asked to describe the perfect holiday. ILLUSTRATION BY GENEVIEVE STUNKARD

finished opening gifts. The rest of the day would be spent just like that: playing board games, lying around the cabin, and drinking sparkling apple cider. It would just be great."

Meanwhile, senior Lori Davis imagines her perfect Christmas occurring in a heavily urban setting: New York City.

"I've always wanted to spend Christmas in New York with my immediate family," Davis said. "I feel like a lot of Christmas movies are set in New

York, so maybe that's where the fascination came from. I love seeing all of the colorful, festive decorations of the city, and I'd love to experience seeing those firsthand. I also love cold, snowy weather around Christmastime, so being in New York would be the perfect place to experience that, too!"

Davis expresses which activities and events she'd like to do and see while in the city.

"I would love to visit Rockefeller Center to ice

skate and see the huge, decorated Christmas tree, covered from head to toe with beautiful lights and ornaments," Davis said. "Rockefeller Center also has shops and restaurants that are guaranteed to be gorgeously decorated. It would also be awesome to see all of the decorations around the city and the storefront windows. If I went to New York City during Christmastime, I'd have to see The Rockettes perform their special Christmas show at Radio City Music Hall. I'd love to take my friend, Curry, too. In the end, I guess the excitement of being in New York would eventually wear me out, so I think I'd only want to stay for a week before heading home to spend a week relaxing."

Finally, junior Michaela Reames's definition of an ideal Christmas carries strong spiritual connotation.

"My dream Christmas would consist of being able to visit several different towns, delivering massive amounts of nice Christmas dinners to families who are unable to afford to eat well or at all during the holidays. Preferably, we'd give them turkey with green beans, mashed potatoes, gravy, and rolls, packaged in reusable containers that they could use forever. I would also like to bring toys to children of the poor. I wouldn't want to give

them anything too big in order to keep materialism out of the equation; I'd give them just enough to make them feel content.

"Anyone who'd like to join me in sharing this dream would be welcome to do so: the more, the merrier. With more people, maybe some could deliver the meals while others share the gospel. Sharing God's love and affection with those families would make my heart happy."

"I would want to share the gospel with the families and show them that gifts aren't the meaning of Christmas. Christmas is about celebrating the birth of Jesus. Which towns I'd visit in order to achieve this dream, I'm not sure. But anywhere is better than nowhere to share God's love, and I know that this dream could most definitely become reality. This last Thanksgiving, my mom and I delivered meals to people and families in town who can't afford to make nice Thanksgiving meals themselves. However, the experience was very rushed, because we had a Thanksgiving meal of our own to celebrate that night with our family. We didn't really have time to share the gospel with anyone, or even generally keep the families company. If I were to do it again for Christmas, I'd love to take it slow and get to know the families that I'm helping."

Some coaches pull double duty

Coaches give insight on instructing both boys, girls

BY BRIAN HAMILTON
Staff Writer

Year after year, day after day, they start their job at sunrise and leave at sunset.

Adapting to the personality of student athletes is their specialty, doling out a combination of encouragement, knowledge, and the occasional stern correction.

But at the end of the day, their purpose remains the same: to guide students to be all they can be.

Several Albany coaches take on what some may call “double duty” by having to train both male and female athletes.

“I try and help the boys more with their long game while working on the girls’ short game,” golf coach Ryder Peacock said.

Though golf has fewer athletes than other sports in Albany, winning is still the main priority.

“Tristan Cauble and Felicity Coronado are two of my most competitive golfers,” Peacock said. “They show up wanting to win at every tournament.”

Having motivation is always a good thing when it comes to athletics.

“I feel that boys respond better to a challenge, while girls respond better to encouragement,” pole vault coach Rod Brit-



Coach Paul Johnston (top) coaches the Lady Lion basketball team during a timeout. Johnston also coaches boys and girls in cross country. Coach Jimmy Fuentes (left) makes a defensive call from the sideline during a football game. Fuentes also coaches the Lady Lions softball team. Coaches Rod Britting and Ryder Peacock also coach both boys and girls.

PHOTOS BY
RACHEL HILL AND BRIAN HAMILTON

ting said.

At the end of the day every athlete, regardless of gender, is trying to improve his or her game.

“They are all the same outside of the locker room,” girls’ basketball and cross country coach Paul Johnston said. “The athletes do what they’re told and are motivated to win.”

The occasional uplift-

ing comment is always helpful.

“I try and tell them I love them everyday and give them my very best,” coach Johnston said. “I try not to treat boys differently than I would girls.”

Though coaching two very successful athletic programs these past few years, coach Jimmy Fuentes also sees little difference in coaching different

Fuentes said. “However, I somehow ended up with softball.”

Doing the best they can with what is given to them is why these coaches were hired.

“Even though I didn’t get what I thought I was, I still want to be the best at what I do and prove I’m better than the opponent,” Fuentes said.

Coaches enter the profession for various reasons.

“I like getting something out of a kid that they didn’t know they had inside them,” coach Fuentes said.

Athletics isn’t just about physicality.

“An athlete builds their character when they keep competing even though their body doesn’t want to,” Britting said. “I enjoy watching athletes become better people.”

Others voiced different reasons.

“Practice is the best part of coaching for me,” Johnston said. “Any sport with one on one interaction in practice helps me get to know the kids better and see their eagerness to learn.”

His athletes say they love Coach Johnston, but his workouts are notorious for the opposite.

“Coach Johnston is very understanding and always seems to have our backs,” senior Curry Wilson said. “However, I hate his workouts because they always wear us out.”

He says his coaching methods are the same for everyone.

“Coach Johnston has the guys do the same

workout as the girls, and it’s actually really hard,” junior cross-country runner Efen Camacho said. “He never seems to have a bad day and is always encouraging.”

Fuentes is also able to get the best out of his players.

“I really like Coach Fuentes,” junior Jake Green said. “He pushes kids to reach their maximum potential, and I think that is what makes us good at football.”

Girls don’t get any special treatment from Fuentes, though.

“Coach Fuentes gives us tough love,” Wilson said. “You know he loves you, but he still pushes you. He treats us as one of the guys.”

Support from Fuentes is especially uplifting.

“He doesn’t give a lot of compliments, so when he does, you know he means it,” Wilson said.

Golf is a different story considering boys and girls have their individual strengths and weaknesses. However, Peacock strives to treat everyone equal, and does his best to help.

“Coach Peacock is very helpful when it comes to giving instructions on my short game like chipping and putting,” sophomore Kourtnee Waters said.

He uses his knowledge to improve his golfers as they progress through out their careers.

“He’s always been very helpful and encouraging,” sophomore McLennan Jones said. “He taught me how to read the greens.”

Students participate in fall hunting

Students tell hunting experiences

BY NEWT KOEMEL
Staff Writer

Fall is a time that all students enjoy.

The weather is cool, football season is in full swing, and students begin to look forward to the holidays.

There is, however, something else that small town youth love to do during fall: hunt.

In this secluded part of west Texas, full of mesquites and brush, deer thrive, and with the rifle season open since Nov. 7, one of the students’ favorite hunting seasons finally arrived.

“My favorite season is probably deer season,” sophomore Chase Hill said. “I get the opportunity to kill larger animals and it’s cold outside.”

Hill is an avid hunter who said he typically goes hunting three times per week. He enjoys hunting because of the quality time he gets to spend with his father.

“One time my dad, one of his friends and I were hunting,” Hill said. “We shot a deer and thought it was dead, but when we went to field dress the deer, it started kicking.”

Some hunters would rather use archery to down their deer.

“Bow season is my favorite because it is 10 times more fun to use a

bow than a rifle,” freshman Braden Davis said.

Using his bow, Davis has created many memories.

“My favorite hunting experience was my first bow kill,” Davis said. “I downed a 10 point buck.”

One student enjoys going out of state to hunt game that are not found in Texas.

“My favorite hunting season is probably mule deer or elk season in New Mexico because it is different,” sophomore Parker Moon said. “In New Mexico, you are hunting on thousands of acres with sand dunes everywhere. Most of the time when you find a deer it will be a long way away and it will be around a four to five hour stalk.”

Moon describes this type of hunting as one that requires trekking rough terrain to find a trophy.

“Last year, I shot my biggest mule deer and it took a four hour stalk, with about a three-mile hike there and back,” Moon said.

In order to go hunting in Texas, students need an assortment of paperwork to legally hunt. According to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Outdoor Annual, persons aged nine through 16 are required to have a youth hunting license and must successfully complete a hunter education course or be accompanied by an adult who has completed the course. However, people aged 17 and older must have a license for the specific season and must have

completed the course or purchased a Hunter Education Deferral. To help with the education and paperwork, and to inspire them to hunt, agriculture teacher Chris Beard has worked with students in the classroom.

“I’m teaching a hunter safety course and a boater-angler course in my wildlife management class,” Beard said. “Students have learned patience, fitting procedures, selection of proper deer management, harvesting the deer, and proper field dressing and care of the meat.”

Beard also described facilities at the local ag farm that have educated students on wildlife.

“We have a quail facility and a fish ecosystem at the farm that I use for class,” Beard said. “The information the students learn in this class not only helps them understand how to manage wildlife, but also can be used in the FFA wildlife competition.”

Grant Zeller, youth minister at The Feed Store, has taken several youth on hunting expeditions to spark an interest in the sport.

“I love hunting and fishing, and inviting others into this hobby and passion of mine is a lot of fun,” Zeller said. “It’s also easy because we are fortunate enough to have several adults whose passion is hunting and conservation. They have allowed me to be go between them and our high school and junior high



Freshman Jillian Guinn (above) poses with her father after killing a hog using her crossbow. Growing up, Guinn learned all of the rules and precautions to take while hunting, due to the fact that her father is the Shackelford County Game Warden. Sophomore Parker Moon (left) poses with his kill. The two share an interest in hunting. Moon prefers mule deer and elk season in New Mexico because it is different from the local hunting.

PHOTOS PROVIDED BY PARKER MOON AND JILLIAN GUINN

students.”

Students say that the best advice to give inexperienced hunters is to be patient. However, one student reminds hunters

the importance of knowing the legalities involved in hunting.

“Make sure you are safe with your gun and also have someone with

you that knows the rules of hunting,” freshman Jillian Guinn said. “Know what you can and can’t shoot, and always have a hunting license.”

Football battles for redemption

Lions look to return to state finals Thursday

BY RACHEL HILL
Copy Editor

Most teams in the Big Country have traded in their helmets and shoulder pads for basketball shoes and shorts weeks ago. Albany, however, is one of the few teams still playing football well into Dec.

"It's such a blessing to be able to continue playing in December," senior Tyler Miller said. "Not many teams ever get the chance, and I'm happy to say that I have played into December each of my years on varsity."

Head Coach Denney Faith is just as pleased as his players.

"Playoffs have gone well for us," Faith said. "The boys have prepared well, and once we got into post-season play, the team as a whole really increased their level

of play." The Lions are still working hard in practice. "It is important for us to stay fundamentally sound," Faith said. "We always try to get better each day because we are never at the point where we can't improve."

Challenges have forced the team to rise up and earn their spot.

"There have been several players who have stepped up and played well," Faith said. "A lot have taken on bigger roles because of the injuries we have had."

Bigger roles mean more preparation.

"I have really tried to work on my weaknesses so our team becomes better as a whole," sophomore Brian Hamilton said. "I need to wrap up and drive instead of diving so I can make more tackles. Playing at a faster pace is a goal I have set for myself."

Senior year can also add more responsibility.

"Being a senior affects my mentality," Miller said. "It makes me push



Senior Caleb Masters dives into the end zone for a touchdown in their 52-14 win over Van Horn in the area championship. The Lions battled through the playoffs to advance to the semi-final game versus the Seagraves Eagles in Lubbock last Friday. Results were not available at press time. PHOTO BY RACHEL HILL

myself so much more knowing this could be my last practice or game wearing the Albany Lion uniform."

A lot more goes into the sport than just being mentally prepared each week.

"I lift to keep my body strong and healthy," Mill-

er said. "Paying attention to the details in practice and watching the film is something that makes me a better player and makes the team better as well."

Fellow senior teammate Newt Koemel agrees.

"Putting more time into the film and scout-

ing reports is just as important as lifting to gain strength," Koemel said.

With all the work being put in, the team strives for their ultimate goal of returning to the State Championship game for Class 2A Div. II.

"If we play to our potential, I believe that

our season will end in Houston with a win," Hamilton said.

The motto "Earn It" has been the focus the entire season.

"The road this year wasn't going to be easy just because we want it or because we were there last year," Koemel said. "'Earn It' means that in order to get back to state it's going to take a lot more hard work and dedication. We all hope it ends in a championship, but as a team we are working together to meet that goal."

The Lions put themselves in great position to achieve this goal by earning a state semi-final birth with a 42-28 victory over Iraan.

"It was one of those exciting games that we will remember forever," senior Michael Cotter said. "We didn't get nervous when we were losing, and we battled back to pull off the win."

The Lions played the Seagraves Eagles Friday, Dec. 11 and results were not available at press time.

Lady Lions prepare for district



Senior Curry Wilson drives toward the basket during a game against Poolville in the Albany tournament. The Lady Lions will begin district play on Dec. 15 against the Anson Tigers. PHOTO BY RACHEL HILL

Girls expecting tough race for district title

BY MICHAEL COTTER
Sports Editor

The Lady Lions are beginning fresh this season with a young but smart team, according to their coach.

"Our girls are very coachable and willing to learn," head girls' basketball coach Paul Johnston said. "They are a very quick team and just a great group of girls."

Pre-season workouts went smoothly.

"We prepared for the season by running cross country," junior Abbi Beard said. "We are running more man defense this year, so our intensity in workouts increased, and we have to be more focused in our practices."

Johnston required players to attend the off-season workouts and run with the Cross-Country team.

"All of the girls worked hard during the off-season," Johnston said. "Even though

not all of them competed in meets, they all worked hard and improved."

The girls have set high goals for the season.

"I expect our girls to play hard every game and improve as we move through the season," Johnston said. "We plan to make a run at the district championship."

The girls have played several games already and are pleased with the results.

"I think we are really playing well," junior Kaleigh Clevenger said. "Even though we still have a long way to go, we are improving with every step."

The players also have high expectations.

"We have a good chance of taking the district championship," Beard said. "As long as we continue to work together and help each other, we will go far."

The team is returning four varsity players.

"The returners are all helping the new players adjust and learn how to play at a varsity level," junior Kaleigh Clevenger said. "The other teams in our district better watch out because they have no idea

what's coming."

The coach is expecting another competitive district race.

"Stamford and Anson are the two teams with the most returners, and they will probably present the most competition," Johnston said. "It is going to be a fight for the top."

The players are also excited for the intensity of the district.

"Anson is going to be the toughest team to beat because they didn't lose many players," senior Curry Wilson said. "This is a very good district and it is definitely going to be a battle moving forward."

Despite being prepared, the girls still have room for improvement.

"We need to work on our passing, quick feet, and talking," Johnston said. "The major thing is just learning to play together."

The players also look for improvement.

"We can definitely improve on both sides of the ball," Wilson said. "Our ball movement isn't where it should be, and we also need to become more in sync on our presses."

The girls will begin district play on Dec. 15, against Anson in Albany.

Basketball starts season late again

Lions delay start due to football post-season

BY RACHEL HILL
Copy Editor

With football season lasting well into the post-season play, the number of boys' basketball players is down, due to the majority of athletes that play both sports. Boys' basketball usually gets off to a late start, but that hasn't seemed to hinder the program.

"The run that football makes each season gives our younger guys a chance to play more games," basketball coach Ryder Peacock said. "This helps them out a lot."

There are, however, several upperclassmen that don't play football who have been prepar-

ing for the upcoming season.

"Over the summer I played a lot of pickup games," junior Dustin Arrellano said. "I try to play with older guys who have more skill or experience in order to get better."

Another off-season member junior Steven Ford put in work this summer.

"I practiced for about 2 hours a day during the summer," Ford said. "I shot an average of 500 shots a day and tried to shoot about 2500 a week."

Ford thinks the extended football season can be beneficial.

"When the football team makes a deep run, it gives the varsity team a later start," Ford said. "I think this helps the JV get a chance to shine and show what they can do. Lots of teams practice for two months compared to our two weeks, and we still go further than most of them."

The team hopes for another

long season, advancing into the basketball playoffs.

"We have a good chance to make it deep in the playoffs," Arrellano said. "We just have to practice hard and make each other better,"

Ford agrees.

"This season looks really good," Ford said. "I think we can go further than last year. We have a faster team and we are all a year older, so we have more experience."

Albany advanced further last year than in several years.

"Our record last year was 15-5," Peacock said. "We made it to regional quarterfinals, but came up short to Smyer."

Even though the team lost four seniors, they still have high numbers.

"We have six of our 10 from last year returning," Peacock said. "I also expect a few from JV to join us as well."

The Lions will start district play on Jan. 2.



Freshman Cameron Dacus looks to inbound the ball past Junior Ethen Bernstein. The Lions have yet to play a varsity game due to football post-season play. The Lions will begin district play on Jan. 2 against the Stamford Bulldogs. PHOTO BY RACHEL HILL

"Dirt"

Continued from | PG 1

on our land," Fields said. "The city has been doing all the work, as far as dumping and leveling the ground."

Many people, including teachers and students, have found themselves wondering what the growing mound of fill dirt will be used for.

"Lots of people have been talking about it being used for a new school or a softball practice field," high school coach and special education teacher Sara Wilson said. "But I don't know anything about it, that's just what I've heard."

Junior Alexis Munden has also heard theories as to what its use will be.

"Lots of people were walking around saying that our school was going to start a soccer program and that was going to be the field," Munden said. "I knew that was just a rumor from the second that I heard it because there would be no reason for a small school like Albany to have a soccer team."

Science teacher Andre Raymond had a more comical take on the situation.

"When they first started dumping the dirt, all of the kids in my classes kept asking me what it was being used for, and I told them that it was just dirt that was leveling out the ground, but they wouldn't accept that answer," Raymond said. "Anytime I answered them, they would say something like, 'but what do you really

think it is?' and so I told them what they wanted to hear."

Raymond had his own spin on the soil that isn't quite as typical as assuming that it's a new school.

"It is the makings of the 'Norton-Raymond Science Lab'," Raymond joked. "There will be a Norton Wing and a Raymond Wing, and the center will be used for storage. There is also no reason for the children to fear bad weather because the Norton-Raymond science lab will have escalator stairs leading to an underground tram where the kids will be able to get to the science lab without having to go brave the weather."

Raymond laughed stating that is the answer he gives when the truth isn't good enough.

Although many people still question the purpose of the fill and will continue to for a while, Fields has finally provided an answer. It is just a pile of dirt that there is no real use for right now. Or so he says...

"Service"

Continued from | PG 1

community service continue to present themselves.

"Some students are planning a career fair to be held in the spring, plus we've recently allowed students to gain hours by tutoring in Lion Academy," Noble said.

Several students helped serve at the Toys for Tots

luncheon, which was held on November 15. This not only helped raise money for families who can't afford to give toys to their children for Christmas, but also provided an opportunity for students to get hours.

"I've helped with Toys for Tots luncheons the past couple years, and it has taught me to put others before myself," senior Tobin Nall said. "It helps me realize that my actions contribute to those who need help."

Nall and other students also volunteer at Closet Angels to help organize clothes alongside director Lori Reames.

"I help sort through bags of clothes and occasionally purge out the Teen Room upstairs," junior Michaela Reames said. "We also bag up clothes they don't need and send them to other branches of Closet Angels and thrift houses."

Reames also helps out at Neighbors in Need with Tammy Hare.

"I load furniture in and out of the storage building and help work at their garage sales," she said.

Senior Newt Koemel has taken the initiative to leave an impact in the community through his service.

"For my Eagle Scout project, I am building an addition to the ag farm that will be able to house show cattle for students," Koemel said. "I am hoping this will help students for years to come."

"NHS"

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to participate in an organization that really does help people," Wilson said. "Something as simple as a toy really can make someone's day."

Senior Levi Britting also enjoyed helping with the luncheon.

"I think it went well," Britting said. "A good amount of people who went donated and seemed to have a good time."

Noble also agreed that the luncheon was successful.

"I'm proud of how well the students worked," Noble said.

NHS member Jordan Pleasant had the opportunity to earn hours, too.

"It was good for us to get out and have a chance to serve other people," Pleasant said. "We also got some community service hours. I liked the luncheon because we had an opportunity to help a good cause."

The menu included barbecue, potato salad, desserts and drinks.

"I thought it was well organized once I walked in and was happy that it was set up," Brian Hamilton said. "The food was really good, and the students did a good job of maintaining the place."

NHS members must perform a total of six community service hours each semester, which can include NHS related projects or some other project in Albany.

WHAT'S HAPPENING!

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

DECEMBER

14 Finals for Periods 1-3
14 JH Boys & Girls Basketball vs. ACS @ ACS, 5:00pm
15 Finals for Periods 4-6
15 JV & Varsity Boys Basketball vs. Santo @ Santo, 5:00pm
15 JV & Varsity Girls Basketball vs. Anson @ Home, 5:00pm
16 Finals for Periods 7-8
17 Varsity Football State Championship
18 3rd Six Weeks Ends
19-31 Christmas Break
28-29 HS Basketball May Tournament @ May

JANUARY

1-4 Christmas Break
2 HS Basketball vs. Stamford @ Home, 4:00pm
5 HS Basketball vs. Roscoe @ Home, 4:00pm
7 JH Boys Basketball vs. Anson @ Anson, 5:00pm
7 JH Girls Basketball vs. Anson @ Home, 5:00pm
8 HS Basketball vs. Hawley @ Hawley, 4:00pm
9 JH Girls Basketball Albany Tourney @ Home, 8:00am
11 JH Boys Basketball vs. Haskell @ Home, 5:30pm
11 JH Girls Basketball vs. Haskell @ Haskell, 5:30pm
12 ASVAB Exam, 8:00am
12 HS Basketball vs. Haskell @ Home, 4:00pm
13 AIMS Web Testing
14 & 16 JH Girls Basketball Throckmorton Tourney
15 HS Basketball vs. Winters @ Winters, 4:00pm
16 Winter Formal, 7:00pm
18 JH Boys Basketball vs. Stamford @ Stamford, 5:30pm
18 JH Girls Basketball vs. Stamford @ Home, 5:30pm
19 HS Basketball vs. Anson @ Anson, 4:00pm
21 & 23 JH Boys Basketball Clyde Tourney
22 HS Basketball vs. Hamlin @ Hamlin, 4:00pm
23 HS UIL Meet @ Haskell
25 JH Boys Basketball vs. Hamlin @ Home, 5:30pm
25 JH Girls Basketball vs. Hamlin @ Hamlin, 5:30pm
26 HS Basketball vs. Stamford @ Stamford, 4:00pm
28-30 Shackelford County Stock Show
29 HS Basketball vs. Roscoe @ Roscoe, 4:00pm

FEBRUARY

1 JH Boys Basketball vs. Roscoe @ Roscoe, 5:30pm
1 JH Girls Basketball vs. Roscoe @ Home, 5:30pm
2 HS Basketball vs. Hawley @ Home, 4:00pm
4 & 6 JH Girls Basketball Stamford Tourney
5 HS Basketball vs. Haskell @ Haskell, 4:00pm
9 HS Basketball vs. Winters @ Home, 4:00pm

Students get into Holiday Spirit



FFA student Levi Britting (top) strings one of many strands of lights downtown at the Bank Park. FFA students put the trees out every year. Senior and Student Council Reporter Savannah Perez (right) helps decorate the gym for the Albany basketball tournament by inserting tags for all the teams that participated in the annual event.

With the holidays around the corner, students are busy with a wide range of activities. Some are rushing to local stores to buy last-minute presents for family and friends, while others are helping organizations such as FFA, Student Council, and National Honor Society decorate the High School and downtown Albany for Christmas.

FFA showed Christmas spirit by installing the lighted trees at the Bank Park downtown. Students also helped decorate the gym for the annual Albany Holiday Classic basketball tournament held Dec. 3 and 4 with 18 teams participating.

PHOTOS AND STORY BY CURRY WILSON



Senior Matthew Rupp (above) does some last-minute shopping at a local hunting store downtown for one of his family members. Local shopping is a great way to find gifts for that special someone. Senior and Student Council President, Lori Davis (right) helps set up for the basketball tournament by creating Christmas trees with ornaments with the names of the teams that were playing in the three-day event.



Eighth graders Alayna Koemel, Dani Ford, and Carley Green (above) decorate the high school hallway tree in football decorations and ornaments.