

ROUNDING UP CAMPUS NEWS SINCE 1900

THE BAYLOR LARIAT

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 2009

Baylor religion survey under dispute

Surveyors dismissive of CSH complaints

By Sommer Ingram
Staff writer

A report released Tuesday by the Council for Secular Humanism contradicts many findings in the National Baylor Religion Survey on Americans' Beliefs and Practices, one of the most extensive surveys ever conducted on American religious beliefs.

Released in the fall of 2008, these results were the second wave of the researchers' land-

mark study on religious attitudes in 2005, and dispelled the myth that the Atheist population of America is growing. In fact, the survey found that the nation is as religious as it has always been.

Dr. Rodney Stark published these and other findings in the book "What Americans Really Believe."

The CSH challenges the Baylor survey, implying that Baylor researchers in the Institute for Religious Studies manipulated data and misled the public.

"As far as the current survey, Stark and his co-workers seem

to suffer from the reluctance to admit the trend of rising secu-

"America is not increasing in its religiosity, but that's what Baylor hopes we all believe."

Gregory S. Paul
Council for Secular Humanism

larization in America," said independent scholar Gregory S.

Paul, author of the CSH report. "America is not increasing in its religiosity, but that's what Baylor, as a Christian and conservative university, hopes we all believe."

Stark discredits Paul's accusations, claiming that the independent scholar didn't do his research thoroughly and is misinformed about much of what he reports on.

"It's important for him, as a militant atheist, to believe that religion will disappear very soon, and he believes we are

Please see SURVEY, page 4

Survey says ...

National Baylor Religion Survey on American's Beliefs and Practices

Baylor says survey results are legitimate and valid.

Results

The survey says over 90 percent of people believe in a God.

Says only 11-12 percent have no religion, increasing from 6-7 percent since 1980.

Council for Secular Humanism

CSH claims Baylor manipulated data and misled the public

Results

Two Harris polls show that 20% of population is skeptical about God

People are reluctant to identify as Atheists because of negative attitudes towards Atheism.

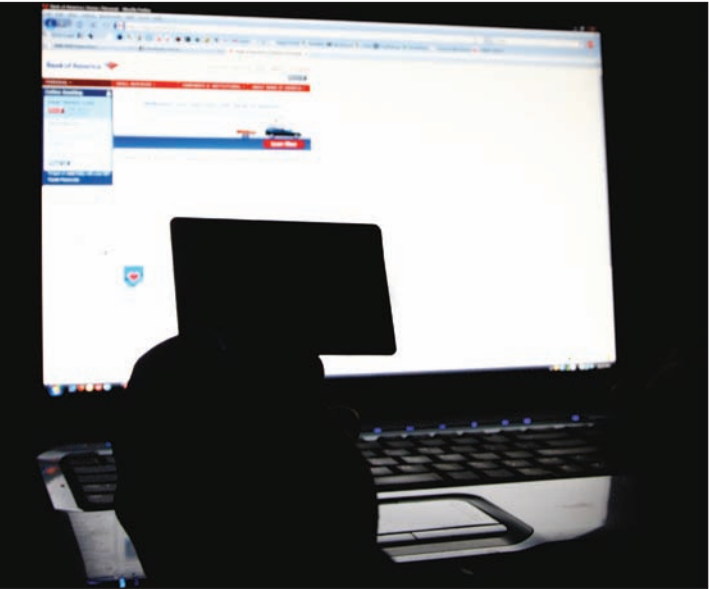


Photo Illustration by Stephen Green

The Baylor Police Department is now offering a new two-hour identity theft course free of charge to Baylor Administration in order to educate others about the often unnoticed threat.

Students not immune to identity theft

By Brittany Hardy
Staff writer

There's a new kind of thief on campus and victims may not even know if they've been robbed. Identity theft is on the rise and many college students are susceptible.

Officer Kevin Helt, of the Baylor Police Department, has undergone special training concerning this issue and, along with another officer, is offering two-hour identity theft courses that are free to Baylor administration.

"It's what most people would consider a white collar-type crime. It's not looked at in the same way as someone who walks up to you with a gun in order to rob you, but it can be much more serious. The robber may get away with \$80, but someone going at you from an identity standpoint can continue for 5 to 10 years or more," Helt said. "Six months down the road they might start again, it can be a reoccurring problem"

One of the easiest precautions, Helt said, is to run a free credit report through each of the credit reporting agencies: Equifax, Experian and Trans Union, once a year. Because there are three agencies, an individual can run a credit report every four months.

"We have had our fair share of instance, most cases have pertained to students or staff responding to phishing e-mails. We've had a few cases where stuff is accessed," Helt said in reference to campus occurrences.

Baylor Police Chief James Doak said identity theft is a huge problem. Currently, the Baylor police department is working with a Baylor student whose

credit card was used, without her knowledge, in a pharmacy in Washington, D.C.

Helt suggests taking certain measures to protect against identity theft. He said there is no reason for students to keep social security cards in their wallet; they should be at home or in a safety deposit box.

Helt said to not have checks sent to residence halls or homes, but, instead, to the bank. Especially for women, he warned against leaving a purse in the front seat, in plain view. If a thief breaks the window and steals the purse, the thief then has access to all kinds of information.

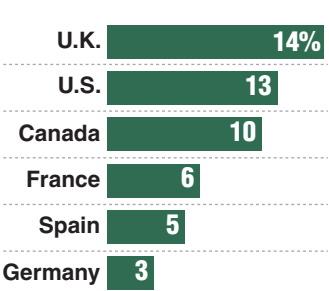
Identity theft attempts on the Internet are becoming more prevalent.

"Any type of online solicitation is a big issue these days," Helt said. "Thieves and crooks are getting better at disguising their Web sites. We've even been getting issues now with Craigslist and things of that nature."

Please see THEFT, page 4

Identity theft

Online shoppers affected by identity theft, by country:



Source: Paypal, Ipsos
Graphic: Scott Bell

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Top church leaders aim to spark ideas

'Big Idea' conference brings big names to Truett Seminary

By Morgan Hoffman
Reporter

Baylor University will be playing host to some of the nation's top church leaders in a conference addressing God's transforming love in our community next week.

The "Next Big Idea Conference" will take place at the George W. Truett Theological Seminary and Bill Daniel Student Center Feb. 9 to 11.

One of the guest speakers at the conference is Dr. Kim Kotria, assistant professor at the School of Social Work, who says the conference's goal is to educate local churches.

"It's really about giving congregations ideas about how their own churches address some of the issues that are facing our communities," Kotria said.

Sponsoring the national conference is the Baylor School of Social Work, George W. Truett Theological Seminary and the Leadership Network, which according to its Web site, LeadershipNetwork.org, fosters church innovation and growth in order to identify, connect and help

Christian leaders expand their audiences.

The conference will have 26 guest speakers and more than a dozen workshops covering topics such as human trafficking and the church's response to it, community renewal, orphan care locally and globally, and mentoring.

Featured guests speaking at the conference include Kay Warren, international activist for the global HIV/AIDS crisis and co-founder of Saddleback Church with husband Rick Warren; Lynne Hybels, best-selling author and co-founder of Willow Creek Community Church with husband Bill Hybels; Darrell Guder, dean of academic affairs at Princeton Theological Seminary; Eric Swanson and Rick Rusaw, co-authors of "The Externally Focused Church" and "Living a Life on Loan," and Rick McKinley, founder of Imago Dei Community Church in Portland, Oregon.



Warren

Those attending will also have the opportunity for couch conversations with featured presenters, built-in time to pray, plan and prepare for next steps and worship celebrations nightly.

Also speaking at the conference is Dr. Michael W. Stroope, an associate professor of Christian Missions at the seminary, who will be discussing world Christianity and ideas associated with it.

"My discussion focus will be translating idea into action and how we transfer action from ideas through Christianity," Stroope said.

Diana Garland, dean of the Baylor School of Social Work, said in a press release that it is important to allow local churchgoers the chance to take part in the conference.

"Our planning team agreed we really wanted our local churches, with whom Baylor has had such a long-term and meaningful relationship, to benefit from this conference," Garland said in the press release.

The conference is offering Baylor students, members of churches in McLennan County and social work practitioners a discounted price of \$15 per

Please see IDEA, page 4

The Next Big Idea conference

Feb. 9 - 11

Guest Speakers

Lynne Hybels
'A Hope and a Future: Poverty, Disease and the Local Church'
Feb. 9 at 7 p.m.

Eric Swanson and Rick Rusaw
'The Externally Focused Church'
Feb. 9 at 1:15 p.m.

Michael Stroope
'World Christianity: The Next Big Idea'
Feb. 10 at 7 p.m.

Rick McKinley
'Breaking into the Kingdom'
Feb. 10 at 9:30 a.m.

Registration

Deadline for registration is Feb. 4

More information

Visit the Web site:
www.baylor.edu/bigidea

Unpaid 'Ike' bills torment Texas

By April Castro
The Associated Press

AUSTIN - Texas is sitting on \$134 million in unpaid bills from the emergency response to Hurricane Ike and blames the federal government for failing to take care of the bulk of them.

Such vendors as grocers who provided food and water and bus companies that helped evacuate people from the deadly Sept. 13 storm are tired of waiting for payment, the state Senate Finance Committee was told Tuesday.

"We are not broke; why aren't we paying these bills?" asked committee Chairman Steve Ogden.

The reason is that about \$120 million of the amount owed is the responsibility of the federal government, said Allison Castle, spokeswoman for Gov. Rick Perry. The state's share of the unpaid Ike costs that have already come due is \$14 million, she said.

"In recent weeks, the governor has been working with the lieutenant governor to secure funds to be able to start making payments to those vendors because the process is moving too slowly," she said.

On Monday, Perry sent a letter to U.S. Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano, reiterating Texas' post-hurricane needs.

Castle said the situation emphasizes the need for a well-funded disaster contingency fund, which Perry has recommended.

The state set up such a fund in the last session, but never put any money in it.

On Tuesday, Perry declared several hurricane-related items to be emergencies, allowing the Legislature to begin considering them in the first month of its session, which began Jan. 14.

They include extra spending for hurricane response and recovery; assistance for public and private entities with hurricane recovery; and reform to



Associated Press

Downtown Houston sustained considerable damage from Hurricane Ike on Sept. 13. Texas has incurred a \$134 million dollar debt from the emergency response to the hurricane.

the Texas Windstorm Insurance Association, as well as funding a catastrophe reserve trust fund connected to the association.

The windstorm association is the wind insurer of last resort for Texans in 14 coastal counties where private companies have pulled out of the

market. Private-sector insurers pay into the windstorm fund, which begins to drain money from the state budget when wind damages reach a certain level.

As of Feb. 1, the windstorm association had paid out more than \$904 million in claims from Hurricane Ike.

point of view

Correct grammar is, like, so hard

Dear Grown-Ups:
Thank you for not punching me in the face every time we have a conversation. Over the last six months, I've followed the words young people, including myself, use to fluff up our speech. And the more conscious of an effort I make to tune in to our grammatically incorrect utterances, the more I find myself grinding my teeth.
For example, here's the gist of a conversation I recently overheard:
Girl 1: "And I was like, 'you lied to me about where you were yesterday.' And he had, like, this blank stare on his face. And I'm all, 'I think we should talk about this.'"
Girl 2: "Oh my gosh! I'm so impressed you said that."
Girl 1: "I know, and I was like, basically you've been acting, like, really weird lately and, like, not calling me as much or texting – and stuff like that."
And so the story goes. Now, you may ask, was I standing outside the movie theater on a Friday night with a bunch of 15-year-old girls when I heard this? No, this was a conversation between two very smart, very successful college seniors on campus. The content was fine. The content happens. But it was buried beneath phrasing that makes one puzzle with wonder: Is this "The Hills" or an institute of higher education?

Most of us say like. It's sewn into our speech. I only noticed how distracting it was when I started working in formal work environments last year. I would watch the eyes of my coworkers dart from the flippity-swirly motion of my hands to the fluctuating rhythm of my sentences. Those same eyes said it all: Please slow down and get to the point.

I know it's a youth thing, because I rarely talk with professors or professionals who intersperse their wording with a thousand like's and end nearly every sentence with "and stuff like that." Thus, I cannot help but question if our resumes will ever outlive our annoying speaking habits. In other words, as we grow older, will we continue to inject our language with such distractions? Will business jargon mate with teenybopper jargon?

"Umm, yeah basically I think, like, our critical initiative should be organizing our internal communications, best practices and innovations, into, like, effective management systems, you know?"
Studies show this could happen. Grammar guru Patricia T. O'Conner wrote in 2007 that like is becoming more acceptable, citing linguists and lexicographers who say it's natural for words to take on new roles in a process called "grammaticalization."

Traditionally, the word has several uses: a preposition ("He looks like a cow"), a verb ("I like cows"), a noun ("Cows have many likes"), and a conjunction ("It seems like being a cow would be really boring").
But if like could be a hero, it would be a Power Ranger. The word has morphed into a number of meanings in slang language: a quotative ("He's like, 'I love Oprah,'" And I'm like, 'good luck with that)'), a hedge to indicate an approximation ("I live, like, ten minutes from Oprah"), or an adverb meaning "nearly" ("Oprah owns, like, the whole world").

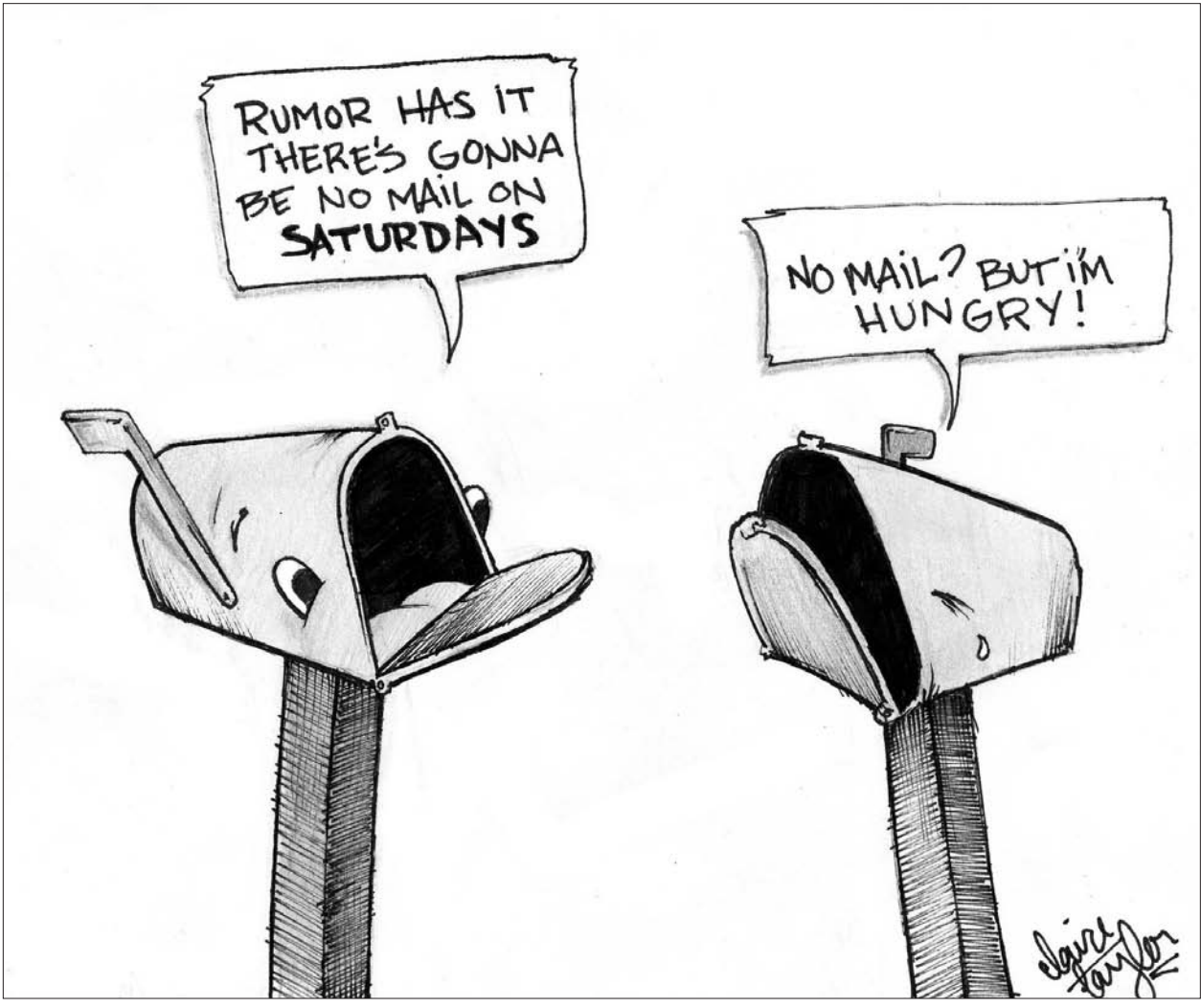
Jennifer Dailey-O'Cain, an associate professor at the University of Alberta in Canada, has done extensive research on the word. Her work shows that even though men colloquially use the word as frequently as women, and that even adults in the 30-49 age range sometimes use it, the perceived age and gender associated with the term is, overwhelmingly, an uneducated teenage girl.
So, no matter how smart we are or how many degrees we have, the way we talk conjures images of adolescent ignorance and lack of maturity for those listening to us. I've tried omitting like, but it's challenging. It's so ingrained in my speech that I have to speak slowly, pausing every few sentences to think of an alternative word, which is just as distracting to the listener, who now probably wonders if English is my second language.

Should we, as college students, encourage the changing tides of grammar? As we graduate and get jobs, should we bring our flawed but comfortable speaking habits with us to the workforce and tell everyone to, like, get over it? I think I'll keep practicing. I'd prefer that my speech match my intelligence.
Ashley Corinne Killough is a senior journalism and international studies major from Plano and a staff writer for The Baylor Lariat.



BY ASHLEY KILLOUGH

Editorial



Keep six-day delivery schedule

Wind, rain or scorching heat can't keep mail from reaching mailboxes across the United States. Unfortunately, the United States Postal Service is no match for the stormy economy that has settled over the country.

Last week, the United States Postal Service voiced concerns over a large deficits that could potentially force mailing services to be limited to five days a week instead of the current six days a week. This would call for lawmakers to lift a requirement that states mail must be delivered six days out of the week.

The postal service reported a \$2.8 billion loss last year and estimates suggest that, if current trends continue, a potential net loss of \$6 billion is in the works. Mail volume suffered its largest single drop this past year with 202 billion items being shipped, more than 9 billion fewer than the year before.

A study performed by George Mason University revealed that by shifting to a five-day-a-week delivery, the postal service would save \$1.9 billion annually. A Postal Service study found savings to be at an estimated \$3.5 billion.

This move by the Postal Service would not only be a major annoyance to anyone who mails anything,

but could only exacerbate the already grim situation.

Usage of "snail mail" has significantly dropped with the increased use of e-mail and faxing. By cutting service, the Postal Service is only going to further hurt their circulation volume. Senders are going to turn to other methods of delivery, whether that be heavier use of e-mails or simply taking business elsewhere. Shipping competitor Federal Express could see potential gains in customers if they continue to ship 6 days a week.

During these hard economic times, it's inevitable that businesses will experience financial difficulties and government agencies like the Postal Service are no exception. The difference is that the Postal Service is performing an important duty that millions of people rely on every day.

If this new plan is approved, there will be 52 less days of mail service per year, which doesn't sound like a lot, but time is of the essence when it comes to bills and late fees. By cutting out an entire day of service, this puts more strain on getting things mailed out in a timely fashion.

Yes, it is a good lesson in organization and one should be aware of due dates and deadlines, but unless the Postal Service plans on speeding up

their delivery process, it's going to be a major inconvenience.

Postal rates have continued to increase in the past few years. The Postal Service is arguing that another rate increase intended to supplement the financial deficit could drastically affect mail volume. By now, Americans have become accustomed to continually raising rates and would probably take the couple-cent increase in exchange for mail six days a week.

Postal workers will also feel the effects of a shorter workweek. One less day of work translates to one less day of pay. In these strained economic times, no one will benefit from this possible change.

Despite all the technology, there are still those who rely on the Postal Service to deliver bills or letters. There are just some things that aren't suitable for e-mail. Formal or important documents usually entail a stamp and envelope.

When senders drop their items into a mailbox, they place faith in the postal service to ensure these documents will arrive on time. It's an important responsibility to the public that can't be taken lightly. By cutting out a day from service, its really doing a disservice to themselves and those they serve.

Opinion policy

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Letters to the editor should include the writer's name, major, graduation year, phone number and student identification number. Non-student writers should include their address. Letters that focus on an issue affecting students or faculty may be considered for a guest column at the editor's discretion.

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SUDOKU
THE GAME OF PUZZLES By The Mathman Group

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THE Daily Crossword

Edited by Wayne Robert Williams

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By Adele Mann
New York, NY

2/4/09

For today's crossword and sudoku answers, visit www.baylor.edu/Lariat

ACROSS

- 1 Spill the beans
- 5 Japanese entertainer
- 11 Silent assent
- 14 World-class
- 15 Presser
- 16 Lennon's lover
- 17 1986 hit by Heart
- 19 Sebaceous cyst
- 20 Asparagus unit
- 21 Top point
- 22 Boater or bowler
- 23 Passport stamp
- 26 Canine hotels
- 28 With frankness
- 32 Salty droplet
- 33 Conceit
- 34 Alan and Nathan
- 36 Goblet parts
- 39 River of Hamburg
- 41 1963 hit by the Orions
- 43 Melville novel
- 44 Infamous Helmsley
- 46 Jeweled coronet
- 48 Plus
- 49 Toy person
- 51 Ceylon, today

DOWN

- 1 Prohibits
- 2 Air show maneuver
- 3 Chip in chips
- 4 Act right
- 5 Rummy call
- 6 Hurler's stat
- 7 Speck
- 8 Late-night bite
- 9 Protective headgear
- 10 Dahl and Francis
- 11 1966 hit by the Beatles
- 12 Shaq of the NBA

- 13 Prohibited acts
- 18 Cork populace
- 24 Musial or Mikita
- 25 Portion out
- 27 W. alliance
- 28 Loaf end
- 29 Leer at
- 30 1981 hit by Elton John
- 31 Abominable snowmen
- 35 Sting
- 37 Pianist Thelonious
- 38 Word with water or pop
- 40 Slaughter of Cooperstown
- 42 One of HOMES
- 45 Fact book
- 47 Permit
- 50 City near Rawalpindi
- 52 Room recess
- 53 Greek letter
- 54 Voiced disapproval
- 55 Geneva's lake
- 56 Unruly crowds
- 61 Three-spot
- 62 Transition point
- 63 Russian ruler
- 66 Grande
- 67 Serving of corn

point of view

Kamikaze beggars deserve respect, too

My fiancé always says a homeless person is going to stab me in the gut. While I don't believe my eventual demise will come at the hands of a blade-wielding vagabond, her warning is not without merit. Throughout our last four years in Waco, she has seen me engage in verbal altercations with vagrants on a fairly regular basis, and she's worried one of these altercations will end with a switchblade in my stomach.

I grew up in Houston where homeless people get their change the old-fashioned way by standing at busy intersections with crudely constructed cardboard signs depicting their hardships and begging for kindness. But thanks to a local law, Waco's impoverished are prohibited from panhandling at busy intersections, leading to more personal encounters with the begging community.

Because stationary begging is off limits, Waco's "kamikaze panhandlers" will charge directly at citizens without regard for personal privacy or general well-being. The first few times I was approached in this manner, I would do as any good citizen would and pat my pockets, sigh and force the sincerest sounding apology I could. However, after years of being unable to walk through a Wal-Mart parking lot without hearing how hungry someone's kids are or how the government won't let them work, my fraudulent apologies grew to a simple, "No," and eventually became, "Get away from me."

I've been approached by hobos with hopes of a handout at numerous locations throughout Waco, from the aforementioned WalMart parking lot to the post office and even at the bank. But the last straw came one night while ordering nachos at the Taco Cabana drive-through.

After ordering, a kamikaze popped out from behind the menu, approached my window and began telling me his life story and pleading for change. I did not end up getting those nachos because I angrily drove off after trying to explain how traditional panhandling methods were becoming extinct with the rise in popularity of debit cards and elaborating on the cost of attending Baylor versus work-study wages. Our conversation ended with me demanding that he give me money.

I just want a little respect when I go out in public. I would be a miserable celebrity. If I get this upset about the local homeless pleading for charity, I'm sure I would punch a paparazzo or two. Is personal privacy in public extinct? Should I not be treated with respect walking down the Waco streets?

As I reflect on my past altercations, it's painful to realize that the so-called kamikaze panhandlers could pose the same question to me. I've easily dehumanized the less fortunate for inconveniencing me while trying to mail packages and ignored the fact that they, too, want to be treated with a little respect.

While many beggars will turn around and use a patron's gullible generosity to buy booze, there are people in Waco genuinely hurting and wrestling daily with their own humility as they are forced to rely on the crumbs from others' tables.

When someone feels the need to resort to begging, even if they do not receive any money, they can at least get respect from those who will probably never walk a mile in their tattered shoes.

I wonder how I will react the next time I'm approached by a homeless person. Will I give them money? Probably not. If I gave them money, then I'd be the one needing money, forming a sick circle of irony that I wouldn't dare step into. But instead of berating them or openly questioning the veracity of their pitches, I hope I can treat them with a little more common decency, because they, too, deserve respect. And because I don't want to get stabbed.

Chad Shanks is a journalism graduate student from Dayton.



BY CHAD SHANKS

The Baylor Lariat is committed to ensuring fair and accurate reporting and will correct errors of substance on Page 2. Corrections can be submitted to the editor by sending an e-mail to Lariat_letters@baylor.edu or by calling 254-710-4099.

Dance troupe performs for God

By Kristina Bateman
Reporter

Let's face it — not all chapels are fun to go to, or possible to stay awake in for that matter. That being said, the energizing performance by a Christian ballet company called Ballet Magnificat! at Monday's chapel was truly a rare and cultural experience.

THEATERREVIEW

Ballet Magnificat!, a company based in Jackson, Miss., is not just a group of Sunday school ladies who know a little ballet and want to perform at a few churches; it's a professional international touring dance company with marvelous dancers.

The dancers performed excerpts of their normal "Before His Throne" presentation because Chapel wasn't long enough to perform the entire act.

The twelve women of the Omega Company from Ballet Magnificat! were draped in long, flowing teal silk and satin dresses and shining earrings — just flashy enough to make them look elegant while dancing, but not too over the top or revealing to take away from the overall message of their performance. There were no props or back-drop, just lighting to go along with the mood of each individual dance.

The women who performed were so emotionally entwined with the act that I worried for

a moment if one of them would break down and start crying right there on stage. This, in most cases, might be a bad thing, but in the context it was quite powerful in a shocking sort of way.

However, the dancers focused more of their emotion on joy rather than somber faces. Each woman was really affected by the testimony they were demonstrating, even after countless rehearsals and previous performances of the same movements.

It was evident by the facial expressions of the ballerinas that, to them, this was more than just dancing. Many of the movements from the dancers involved reaching, not just a small grab, but really straining with all of their might for either the audience or heaven.

It's too hard not be influenced by these women who are dancing out their hearts. They witnessed to the audience with every one of their muscles and limbs, lining up in just the right way to make the perfect positions and minister to everyone watching.

My only complaints about the Ballet Magnificat! performance concerned the music and the side shows. The act started out slow, with the dancers posing in the darkness while evangelical video clips played on a the screens.

The video had several speakers who chimed in about different attributes of God. This was fine at the beginning of the performance, but it was very dis-

tracting once the lights came up and the dancers took their first steps onto pointe.

Ballet is a visual art that becomes pointless if you are trying to watch a video at the same time. In the middle of the performance, when all of the dancers had exited the stage and it became dark again, "America the Beautiful" started playing and a woman began to ask God to forgive Americans for their pride and idolatry.

She asked to forgive this nation for murder. This condemning prayer was a little unexpected in its placement in the act.

The main problem with the performance was the song choices, and the pantomimes that went along with them.

"God Bless America," especially the version by Céline Dion, does not top my list of songs that a ballet company should have in their performance. I don't see what this particular song has to do with bowing before the throne of God.

The women —who thankfully did not change into red, white, and blue outfits — performed well, but had several choreographed movements that literally went with the words of the music. For example, they would look to the ground and point when a song had the words "earth" in it and during a song that had the words "He came for one, He came for all" they put up their index finger indicating "one."

At moments during the performance the women sang along



Stephen Green/Lariat Staff

A Christian ballet company called Ballet Magnificat! performed Tuesday at Highland Baptist Church. The Jackson, Miss., based group also performed "Before His Throne" at Monday's Chapel.

with the songs, as if they were in a church pew. I suppose to make a dance company Christian-oriented, some traditional ballet customs must be changed. Normally ballets only use classical music, or at least music with no words, and the dancers never utter a word.

The dancers are far too elegant for the canned Christian music that accompanied them. The

choice in songs and cheesy pantomiming were the only things taking away from the seriousness of the act. The songs were too different from each other to go in one performance. One of them even sounded country western.

The Ballet Magnificat! performance was a refreshing new way to experience worship, one that most people would never imag-

ine. It is not everyday that Baylor students and Waco residents can attend a professional ballet without cost or extra hassle.

The dancers were meticulous and refined enough that most of the unpleasantness with the music and video was not a huge factor in enjoying the performance.

Grade: B

Alumna finds calling 'teaching for America'

By Jenna Williamson
Reporter

Baylor alumna Ginnie Snead filled out her Teach for America application last spring knowing she wanted to serve America's under-served children. She also knew something else: "I absolutely did not want to teach elementary school," she said.

She now thrives teaching a classroom of elementary-age special education students.

Snead graduated in May 2008 with an international studies degree. She is part of the Teach for America corps at Melvin E. Sine Elementary School near Phoenix.

Snead calls herself a "box-checker," because on her Teach for America application, she checked that she "would consider" working with special needs children. Actually accepting her

assignment of teaching kindergarten to third-grade special education students wasn't easy. But she realized that in committing to serve underprivileged children, this was where she needed to be.

Snead said that many of her students' problems are "primarily medical and secondarily in the classroom." She has become interested in the medical issues that her kids face, namely autism.

Sine Elementary principal Gwen Parker has noticed Snead's dedication to her students.

"She's become a very good special educator in that she really understands the students' needs and has learned how to address them," Parker said. "Her follow-through is incredible."

After she finishes her two years as a Teach For America corps member, Snead said she

hopes to go to medical school and study neurodevelopmental pediatrics.

"I would never have figured out that I wanted (to go to medical school) if I hadn't done Teach for America," she said.

As a highly-respected non-profit organization, Teach for America draws from the nation's most promising college graduates. This year, online applications are due Feb. 13. Subsequent rounds of the application process include two interviews, one over the phone and one in person.

"I strongly recommend asking a lot of questions. They have a lot of answers," Snead said.

There were several times when she got frustrated with the whole process, but her advice is to "stay confident in what you're doing."

Once Snead was accepted into

Teach for America and received her placement, she began summer training in Phoenix. Training began with the five-week summer institute, where she spent a week getting acquainted with Phoenix, the program and her fellow teachers. This was followed by four weeks as a summer school teacher, where she taught English and math to first graders. During that period, she learned who she was as a teacher.

For Snead, her training was a "lesson in working with other adults," which wasn't something she expected. Her support system, three other teachers and a corps member adviser, walked her through the process of creating lesson plans and handling student-teacher relations.

Now in its 18th year, Teach for America has programs in 29 regions throughout the nation.

Currently, the regions of south Louisiana, the Mississippi Delta and greater New Orleans have the greatest need for corps members, according to the program's Web site. Applicants have the opportunity to rank their regional preferences. Originally from Arizona, Snead said Phoenix was at the top of her list.

After completing the two-year commitment, corps members have access to graduate school and employer partnerships, a strong alumni network and various career services. Alumni move into a wide range of careers including law, business, education, medicine and public policy.

For Snead, the Teach for America experience has been instrumental in shaping her medical school ambitions.

"I've figured out what I want to do with the rest of my life."

BEAR BRIEFS

The School of Music will hold an event featuring the US Army Training and Doctrine Command Band Jazz Ensemble at 7:30 p.m. today at the Jones Concert Hall in the Glennis McCrary Music Building.

Spiritual Life welcomes writer and pastor Max Lucado to chapel today at Waco Hall. He was featured as "America's best preacher" in a 2005 issue of Reader's Digest.

Baylor Opera Theater will present Humperdinck's "Hansel and Gretel" at 7:30 p.m. Thursday at Hooper-Schaefer Fine Arts Center.

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Perry: state has 'duty' to mentally disabled

By Jim Vertuno
The Associated Press

AUSTIN — Gov. Rick Perry on Tuesday declared protecting residents of Texas institutions for the mentally disabled an emergency issue for lawmakers, a move that comes after a federal report found negligent and abusive care and conditions that contributed to dozens of deaths.

The state has "a duty to ensure the safety" of those living in those facilities, Perry spokeswoman Allison Castle said.

Sen. Jane Nelson, R-Flower Mound, working with Perry's office, filed a bill that would create a governor-appointed to investigate injuries and deaths and oversee the institutions known as state schools.

Other proposed changes include better background checks for staff, audits of the schools twice a year and other safety measures.

The bill does not call for a moratorium on enrollment or closing schools that some advocates for the disabled have demanded.

"There are people who feel we should eliminate them, there are people who strongly believe they should continue to exist," Nelson said. "Emotions fly on that issue. We'll look at all that."

A Justice Department report released in December found at least 53 patients in Texas' large residential facilities died in 2007 from preventable conditions that were often the result of lapses in care.

It concluded that the Texas facilities violate residents' rights and called the number of injuries to patients "disturbingly high."

"We must never tolerate the

abuse or neglect of our most vulnerable citizens," Nelson said. "These special Texans deserve to be protected and treated with dignity and respect."

Other changes proposed by Perry's office and Nelson's bill include moving residents charged with crimes to a special facility away from the rest of the population, creation of an abuse-and-neglect hotline and surveillance cameras in common areas.

Nelson also said the state should spend more on salaries and training for institution workers.

Perry's chief of staff Jay Kimbrough, who was a central figure in the TYC reforms, is now tackling the state schools issue for the governor's office.

Susan Payne of College Station is the vice president of the Parent Association for the Retarded of Texas and a defender of keeping the state schools open. Payne's 47-year-old sister lives in the Denton school.

Payne applauded some of the proposed changes, saying they will help ensure residents get quality care.

"There will be a need for these state schools for the severely and profoundly retarded. That's just common sense," Payne said.

Richard LaVallo, interim legal director for Advocacy Inc., which has called for a moratorium on admissions, said his group supports the changes in the bill.

But Advocacy Inc. also wants a ban on use of mechanical restraints and straight jackets and restrictions on the use of psychiatric drugs on residents.

It also wants advocacy groups to be allowed better access to state schools to act as watchdogs.

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SURVEY from page 1

covering that up,” Stark said. “But we are legitimate researchers here. I conducted the first national religion surveys in the ‘60s, and I am absolutely astonished at these accusations. It isn’t like a bunch of the old Baptists at Baylor snuck out into the woods and found a bunch of crazy evangelicals to take our survey.”

Dr. Roger Finke, professor of sociology and religious studies at Pennsylvania State University, said despite the complexity of other issues in the Baylor survey, the quality of the survey is unquestionably valid. A total of 1,648 adults from across the country were randomly selected and answered more than 350 items on the survey, which was conducted by the Gallup organization.

“They used recommended methods for collecting information, especially since they worked with Gallup,” he said. “The Baylor team has done what they should do in this area.”

But the CSH report claims that Baylor researchers ignored data from other polls such as Pew Forum on Religious Life, CBS and Harris Polls that suggest that secularism is growing, as well as the Atheist population.

“They used two data points from the ‘40s and that’s all. Then they exaggerated the numbers,” Paul said. “Pew last year asked people if they absolutely believed in a personal God, and only 51 percent said yes. That doesn’t mean 50 percent of the population is atheist, but this country is not nearly as religious as people have been thinking. We just had the Super Bowl on a Sunday. If this were truly a devout Christian nation, it would have been on a Saturday.”

However, Stark says that data from polls conducted for several decades shows that the percentage of atheists in America has stayed consistent.

“Americans differ a lot in what they conceive of God, but well over 90 percent of them conceive of Him somehow,” Stark said. “We have done a great deal of work on people’s various images of God. There are some people who have fair-

ly vague images of God – they believe in some higher power but just don’t know what. That’s probably about 10 percent of public. We published that.”

Because most surveys don’t specifically ask whether the respondent is an Atheist and instead only ask what religion they are, many jump to the conclusion that those who answer that they have no religion are Atheist or agnostic.

“What it comes down to is that this is an argument over semantics. It really is a struggle to define how many Atheists there are. What’s interesting is that the number of people answering ‘none’ on surveys has been increasing, but the thing is, it’s not clear what that means,” Finke said. “Because at the same time, the number of independent churches is growing rapidly.”

Paul said he believes people are reluctant to answer honestly about their skepticism toward a higher being because of attitudes toward Atheism in America.

“Atheists are so disparaged in this country that they won’t admit to atheism. Two Harris polls show that at least 20 percent of the population is skeptical about the existence of a God,” Paul said. “But again, Baylor didn’t mention this.”

However, the Baylor researchers acknowledge in their book that 11 to 12 percent say they have no religion, while surveys from the late 1940s through the 1980s only had about a 6 to 7 percent response rate. However, 56 percent of the group with no religion say they still pray.

“When the researchers went back and interviewed the people that claimed to have no religion, they found that they are actually involved in organizations and aren’t completely irreligious,” Finke said.

Despite the discrepancies, the Baylor Institute for Religious Studies says it stands by the validity of the survey’s methodology and will continue to do so.

“There are some questions that have been worked out for over 40 years and we ask them because we know that’s the best way to get results,” Stark said. “Baylor believes in us, and it’s silly to pretend that we were trying to hide anything.”

THEFT from page 1

If students have questions about whether or not a Web site is legitimate, they should type the information directly into a search engine, rather than follow a link, Helpert said.

When swiping a credit or debit card at a store or an ATM, Helpert suggested making sure no one is checking the pin number and investing in shredders.

“It’s important to keep an eye on your credit card, even though that can be hard,” Helpert said.

This can even include being careful in restaurants when giving a card to a server to pay. Thieves can make deals with waiters and waitresses and have them swipe a guest’s credit card through a scimmer. Scimmers are basic hand-held devices that

scan the magnetic information from a credit card. The scimmer can hold 20-100 pieces of information on individuals. The thieves can then transfer that information to any type of card with a magnetic strip: hotel cards, Baylor ID’s cards, etc.

Victims of identity theft may not always know immediately that there is a problem.

Thieves can apply for a credit card in someone else’s name and may even pay the monthly bills for as long as two years. During this time, the victim would be oblivious that there was a credit card out in his or her name. Credit cards update the balance, so the thief will allow the balance to rise and then spend a lot of money and not pay. This is why it can be important to get credit checks periodically.

If someone believes they have

become victim to identity theft, they can apply for a security freeze. This locks the information of that person from being seen and therefore inaccessible to anyone without a certain pin number. If a victim shows verification of a police report, they can have the security freeze completed for free. Otherwise, the service costs about \$8 per year.

The punishment for those arrested for identity theft falls under the state jail felony category.

If the suspect has personal information concerning fewer than five individuals, it’s a fourth-degree felony. The more people a suspect has information on, the greater the offense.

For more information, visit the Federal Trade Commission Web site at www.ftc.gov.

IDEA from page 1

person to attend. Baylor faculty and staff can attend for \$75 or \$50 per person if registering with a group of three or more.

The cost for the general public is \$149 or \$99 per person for three or more from the same group.

The conference registration deadline is today and registrations can be made at www.baylor.edu/bigidea or by calling (254)710-3854.

“This is a rare opportunity for those who labor hard in the field to father and hear some of the biggest and newest ideas in how community ministry can impact individuals, families, churches and communities,” Garland said.

Tax break granted to car consumers

By David Espo
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON – The Senate voted Tuesday to give a tax break to new car buyers, setting aside bipartisan concerns over the size of an economic stimulus bill with a price tag approaching \$900 billion.

The 71-26 vote came as President Barack Obama said he lies awake nights worrying about the economy, and signaled opposition to congressional attempts to insert “buy American” provisions into the legislation for fear it would spark a trade war.

Sen. Barbara Mikulski led the successful effort to allow many car buyers to claim an income tax deduction for sales taxes paid on new autos and interest payments on car loans.

She said the plan would aid the beleaguered automobile industry as well as create jobs at a time the economy is losing them at a rapid rate. “I believe we can help by getting the consumer into the showroom,” she said.

The provision was attached to the economic stimulus bill at the heart of Obama’s economic recovery plan and is subject to

change or even elimination as the measure makes its way toward final passage.

Democratic leaders have pledged to have the bill ready for his signature by mid-month, and in a round of network television interviews, the president underscored the urgency.

He told CNN that even three months ago, most economists would not have predicted the economy was “in as bad of a situation as we are in right now.”

He also spoke out against efforts to require the use of domestic steel in construction projects envisioned in the bill, telling Fox News, “we can’t send a protectionist message.”

The stimulus bill remains a work in progress, following last week’s party-line vote in the House and an Oval Office meeting on Monday in which Obama and Democratic leaders discussed ways to reach across party lines.

Republicans are expected to seek a vote later in the week on a plan to inject the government into the mortgage industry in an attempt to drive down the cost of mortgages to as low as 4 percent.



Stephen Green/Lariat Staff

Kiss the cook

Crystal City sophomore Sylvester Salinas prepares a dish at the stir fry station counter at Penland Food Court Tuesday evening.

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