



The J-TAC

NOVEMBER 22, 2024

A PUBLICATION OF THE TEXAN NEWS SERVICE



HOLIDAY EDITION

texannews.net

VOL. 106, NO. 6

HOLIDAY EDITION

The best tech gifts under \$50

BY ANDREW UTTERBACK

Multimedia Journalist

Christmas is right around the corner but that doesn't mean you have to break the bank on gifts for your tech-savvy loved ones. Here are my favorite tech Christmas gifts under \$50 that I either personally own or have been able to use.

Apple AirTag

Without a doubt, one of the best tech gift recommendations is an AirTag. As long as the recipient is an iPhone user, these small trackers let you see where your keys, backpack, wallet etc. are at all times. The battery lasts around a year and the accuracy when hunting down your lost items is great. Retail price is \$29 but you can frequently find them on sale for closer to \$20.

New Xbox/PlayStation controller

For the gamer in your life, a new Xbox or Playstation controller is a risk free gift. Controllers lose their "new button" feeling after months of usage and can suffer from stick drift. PS5 controllers are usually pushing above the \$50 range, but Xbox controllers can frequently be found for less than \$50.

Smart Plugs

More and more people want a smart home in 2024 but not everyone wants to shell out hundreds of dollars for Philips Hue lights in every room and smart speakers in every corner.

A pack of smart plugs turns pretty much anything from your lamp to your coffee maker into a smart device. Simply pair to your smart home of choice and then from your phone, flip the power on and off.

The Kasa Smart Plugs have 4.5+ stars on Amazon and work with Homekit, Alexa and Google Home.

Smart Speaker

For those looking to start their smart home journey with smart speakers,



COLLAGE MADE BY ANDREW UTTERBACK

Best holiday tech gifts under \$50.

both the Amazon Echo Dot and Google Nest Mini are both \$50. These speakers put Alexa or Google Assistant, respectively, in whichever room you please and are loud enough to fill a room with music.

Bluetooth speaker

Even for under \$50 you can score a solid bluetooth speaker from JBL, Sony or Anker. These speakers can still fill a room pretty well and are all available in multiple color options.

The JBL Go 4, Sony XB100 and Soundcore Anker 3 are all rated the best in their category and fall right around \$50.

iFixit Screwdriver Set

Not everyone is taking apart computers, but this screwdriver and bit kit from iFixit is perfect for taking batteries out of regular household items or tightening whatever loose screw you come across. The screwdriver tips are

even magnetic so you never drop a screw.

The Moray Driver Kit comes with the screwdriver and 32 bits for \$20.

Power bank

A portable power bank is a life saving gift, especially if you're shopping for a college student. For under \$50, you can get stand alone battery banks to charge all of your devices or even MagSafe capable ones that can snap to the back of your phone and charge it wirelessly on the go.

Anker makes a wide variety of well priced battery banks with very positive reviews.

LED light strip

A \$25 Govee LED light strip behind your desk or shelf adds the perfect amount of fun to a room. Even if you don't want fun colors, having a light glow from behind your desk gives your workspace a perfect visual and

functional upgrade. You can also change the color and create color gradients all via the Govee app.

Screen cleaner

The OXO Good Grips Sweep & Swipe Laptop Cleaner features a brush to clean your keyboard and laptop, plus a microfiber wrapped pad to wipe down your screen. At \$12, this is a perfect stocking stuffer for the person who always needs to clean their tech.

CMF Buds

If you're looking for budget wireless earbuds that are still feature packed, the CMF buds are a very solid pick. They feature decent sound, build quality, transparency mode, noise cancellation, battery life and a very good app all for \$39. They're some of the very best budget earbuds out there and even come in fun colors.

History of Christmas & its traditions

BY ANNABETH JOHNSON
Multimedia Journalist

Stockings are hung above the fireplace, the Christmas tree is covered in ornaments and bright lights are spread all across town covering yards with Christmas spirit, but these holiday traditions have not always been around.

Christmas can be defined as the annual celebration on Dec. 25 of the birth of Jesus Christ as a religious and cultural celebration for Christian believers.

Before the birth of Jesus Christ, people of European descent celebrated the winter solstice which signified the end of the most challenging days of winter.

The Norse people of Scandinavia celebrated the end of the winter solstice which began on Dec. 21 and lasted through Jan. 1. This period between these months is called Yule.

In the Norse traditions, fathers and sons would collect large pieces of wood and set them on fire. The people would indulge in a celebratory banquet until the fire burned out which could last around 12 days.

The Norse people believed that every spark of the fire represented an individual pig or calf that would be born in the next season of the new year.

The first Christmas story, that most are familiar with today, can be observed in the Gospel of Luke 2:7-14 in the Holy Bible. The beginning of Luke states that in those days Caesar Augustus, the Roman emperor, demanded all his subjects return to their place of birth to be taxed and complete a census. Because of this, Joseph and Mary, to whom he was engaged, traveled from Nazareth to the city of Bethlehem.

This was God's plan to have His Son, Jesus Christ, be born of a virgin in the city of Bethlehem.

"7 And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a

manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

8 Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. 9 And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. 10 Then the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. 11 For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. 12 And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger.'

13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying:

14 'Glory to God in the highest,

And on earth peace, goodwill toward men,'" Luke 2:7-14.

From these verses, one can observe Jesus's birthplace at Bethlehem. The gospel of Luke recounts the first Christmas holiday that is still cherished today.

Christmas is celebrated by billions of people all across the globe through numerous traditions such as decorating Christmas trees, hanging stockings, gift-giving, seasonal music, stringing colorful lights and enjoying a classic meal together with loved ones.

The tradition of Christmas tree decorationing consists of adorning a pine tree with ornaments including lights and a star or angel resting on top.

Most people often hang their stockings on the mantles above fireplaces or walls and may fill them with trinkets to be opened on Christmas morning.

Gift-giving is a part of the Christmas holiday. The reason why people give gifts is because God gave the gift of His Son, Jesus, to redeem mankind back to Himself after the fall of humanity in the Garden of Eden. Families often



PHOTO BY ANNABETH JOHNSON

Cold Smoke gets into the holiday spirit by decorating with a Christmas Tree.

exchange gifts on Christmas morning.

Christmas would not be complete without the signature Christmas songs that are only played once a year during the winter season, making them more special.

Christmas lights are one of the most beautiful traditions of the holiday season. They adorn neighborhoods, parks, houses and more. The colorful lights emphasize the joy that comes through the Christmas holiday.

Finally, Christmas is to be spent

surrounded by the people you love making memories together over a holiday feast of an assortment of all kinds of foods.

The month of December has been shaped by history to be one of celebration and community in the cherished traditions of Christmas.

So enjoy all the holiday festivities and always remember the true reason for the season, the birth of Jesus Christ.

Merry Christmas Texans!

HOLIDAY EDITION

Thanksgiving and Christmas spent on the clock

BY BETHANY KILPATRICK

Contributing Writer

Thanksgiving and Christmas Day are traditionally celebrated in the comfort of one's home, surrounded by the ones they love most. However, not all have the luxury of slipping away from their place of work.

Essential workers and their families in Erath County make sacrifices every holiday season to ensure the safety and care of its community members.

Jeremy Woodruff is the chief deputy at Erath County's Sheriff's Office in Stephenville and has worked on multiple holidays in past seasons.

"The patrol division covers 24 hours a day, 7 days a week," Woodruff said. "It is quite common that if that holiday happens on our day of work, we will be here."

The special time of year often brings on special types of emergent situations requiring the aid of first responders.

"A lot of families get together, and sometimes unfortunately there are conflicts, and they need us to go help," Woodruff said. "Sometimes there are domestics and we have to go and respond [to]."

Holiday traveling and poor weather conditions often produce crucial scenes that require a professional's service.

"With holidays there is always traffic, and so because of traffic, there are motor vehicle crashes. It requires us to go and respond to those crashes and assist those citizens as well," Woodruff said. "One Christmas I had to come in and help with dispatch because we had a number of motor vehicle crashes because it was weather related."

JD Gambino is a firefighter and paramedic at the Stephenville Fire Department and works on Thanksgiving and Christmas Day typically every three years.

"Our services are essential all the time," Gambino said. "Emergencies



Firefighter and paramedic, JD Gambino, enjoying his job working for Air Evac while actively serving with his coworkers.

PHOTO COURTESY JD GAMBINO

don't consider holidays when they decide to occur."

Tye Box is the captain of patrol and dispatch at the Erath County's Sheriff's Office. He has been in law enforcement for 17 years and has worked roughly a dozen times on a holiday during his career.

"I had two Christmas days in a row that I had to work a death first thing that morning," Box said. "You don't get to schedule when you die."

Box's family adjusts their holiday schedule to fit his work schedule when necessary.

"There have been some times when I worked Christmas Eve nights," Box said. "I would work all night long and come home Christmas morning, and then they [my family] would wait to open presents until I woke up at noon or 1:00 p.m. You just adjust."

Essential workers not being able to celebrate the holidays traditionally

comes with mental and emotional challenges.

"Being away from my family is difficult, especially with a young son," Gambino said. "Over the years it has just become part of the job though. We don't get too upset about what we can't control."

Gambino's coworkers and their families still keep their spirits merry and bright though by being flexible.

"We always celebrate with each other at the fire station," Gambino said. "Sometimes our family gets to come and help us celebrate at the fire station."

Regardless of the hardships that Erath County first responders may experience, they take great pride in being of service to their citizens.

"My job is the most rewarding job there is," Gambino said. "We get asked to help people on their worst days and sometimes on their best days. I have

delivered babies as well as delivered the news to families that their loved one has passed on."

Erath County's first responders' sacrifices do not go unappreciated or unnoticed.

"We will see our citizens in restaurants, and sometimes they will buy our meals for us, and sometimes it's a pat on the back," Woodruff said. "Erath County is great for law enforcement, they really, really are. We don't have what you see in some of the other states where law enforcement is being chastised."

Gambino encourages all who have to work on a holiday to not let a shift steal their holiday cheer.

"Chin up. Celebrate every day, and don't get bogged down with dread about one day of the year," Gambino said. "Make it extra special when you get to celebrate, and not a drag because you have to work."

HOLIDAY EDITION

How holiday traditions bring everyone closer

BY BARRETT JORDAN

Multimedia Journalist

The holidays give us an opportunity to reminisce about the traditions and memories that make the season stand out each and every year. These moments are created through family gatherings, special friendships and our unique experiences stemming from childhood that are remembered well into our adult life. There's something about the spirit of the season that makes for some of the most memorable times.

Looking forward to annual holiday activities surrounding family is one of the most common themes among favorite holiday memories.

And it's hard not to put greater emphasis on holiday traditions celebrated with family. For some

people, this time of year is one of the few times they can see distant relatives or have a majority of family members all gathered in one place.

Freshman Brooklyn Abbate appreciates the time she gets to spend with family during the holidays and one of her favorite traditions immediately came to mind.

"Every Thanksgiving we make gingerbread houses," Abbate said. "It's fun to be with all my family, we do it every single year and we always have a competition to see who can make the best one."

For others, it's family and those beyond blood-related with whom you've established solid friendships and connections over the years that deserve to be celebrated.

For freshman Austin Hurdle, the holidays are a good reminder to be grateful for the positive influences and friends you've created lasting relationships with.

"I like Thanksgiving," Hurdle said. "It's a cool environment just to be surrounded by people you love."

For me, at some point in the middle or towards the end of December we usually host or travel to some kind of family get-together where we enjoy great food and everyone's company during the Christmas season.

However, the memories and experiences that differentiate the holidays for me are the generational traditions passed on by my own parents to me and my brother to potentially share with our own families in the

future.

On Christmas Eve before going to sleep we read Luke 2: 1-20 from the Bible and light a bayberry candle that burns through the entirety of the night until morning.

Traditions like these that reflect my personal values and hold generational significance will always make the holidays special for me.

So, during this season hold on to the nostalgia of your childhood and past memories while also looking forward to creating new ones. Every year, new traditions are born; in a time where division is so prevalent in society, and everything seems to fly by so fast, embrace the value of togetherness that arrives with the holidays.

How to make your resolutions stick in 2025

BY BROOKLYN MCKINNEY

Multimedia Journalist

With the New Year countdown on Jan. 1 comes many traditions, like the ball drop in Times Square, firework shows and the possible romance of a New Year's kiss when the clock strikes twelve.

But the start of a new year also comes with people treating their "New Year's Resolutions" like Christmas lists.

It's like these people think that they can just stay on Santa's nice list for the whole month of January by staying consistent with something, and they're just magically going to achieve the goals on their list without actually putting in the work for the rest of the year.

In fact, according to the U.S. News and World Report, at least 80% of New Year's resolutions end up failing by February.

If you've been doing this, here are six ways to get your New Year's Resolutions to actually stick in 2024.

Break down your goals

A drastic life change can be pretty intimidating to think about at first. For example, sophomore communications major Taylor Nash said her New Year's resolution was to start her day at 6 a.m. instead of waking up late.

But if you usually tend to get up at 10 a.m., or 11 a.m., you might want to start slow. Instead of just setting your alarm for 6 a.m. the next day, you could set it an hour earlier each week. That way, it's a more gradual change and you're less likely to give up and snooze your alarm.

Make it specific

According to the National Society of Leadership and Success, it helps to identify exactly what you're trying to accomplish.

If Nash's resolution was to "get up early" rather than wake up at 6 a.m., she'd be less likely to meet it. If you don't define what is early enough, then maybe one day 11 a.m. or noon will be early enough after a long night.

Stay Accountable

How will you know that you've accomplished your goal and how many

steps will you have to take until then? For example, Nash will probably have to go to sleep earlier each time she decides to set her alarm an hour earlier.

Other things that might help would be limiting distractions like her phone screen at least 30 minutes before going to sleep. Something else she could try would be to take melatonin or another medication to sleep.

She will know that she's met her goal when she can wake up at 6 a.m. without snoozing her alarm.

Make it attainable

According to a Pew Research Center survey, 79% of New Year's Resolutions were health, exercise or diet-related.

Something to consider if your goal is weight loss through working out or eating clean is that for the average person, it's only recommended to lose one to two pounds per week, which is 50 to 100 pounds in a year.

Center for Disease Control guidelines state that rapid weight loss can lead to health issues such as muscle loss, gallstones and malnutrition.

Remind yourself of your why

Setting the right intention behind your goal can ensure that you stay motivated, persistent and overall more satisfied with your progress.

For example, if you want to lose weight so you can feel better and lead a healthier lifestyle, then depending on where you started, you would be a lot happier with losing five pounds than someone who is only concerned about how they look.

Create a clear schedule with strict deadlines

According to Indeed.com, making deadlines is an effective way to prioritize the importance of your tasks that lead up to a goal. Deadlines also provide a direct incentive to complete tasks and the problem solving that often comes with meeting them may even enhance creativity.

Most importantly, meeting deadlines can help boost your confidence and keep you consistent.

Hopefully, with all of this in mind, you can go forth and achieve your new resolutions before the ball drops in Times Square next December.



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Multimedia Journalist

Thomas Engelbert
Multimedia Journalist

Austin Lewter
Faculty Coordinator

CONTACT US

Mail: Box T-0230,
Stephenville, TX 76402

(254) 968-0519
editor@texannews.net

Holiday meaning for the Monk Strong Memorial Foundation

BY JAXON HANSARD

Sports Editor

Around Halloween, the weather cools off and the leaves change colors. This time of the year is used for spending time with family and loved ones. For Monica Monk and her family that means keeping the memory of late husband Justin Monk alive around his hometown and surrounding communities.

Justin Monk was a Stephenville native who touched more people's lives than he would've known. Throughout Justin's life, he wanted to help and serve people. He accomplished that in multiple selfless ways.

The hometown kid served his country as a United States Marine for four years in the 2/3 Fox Company. During his time of service, his company was involved with storied missions as the rescue team that would save the American "Lone Survivor" Marcus Luttrell. At his funeral, 60+ marines were in attendance.

One of his fellow Marines Jared Procter from Lotus Texas has made multiple trips across the Lone Star state to support Monk's battle with brain cancer.

"I'm here whenever they need help," Procter said. "when we got back from our first deployment, Justin actually flew in the same time and we hung out with my family and then we drove up there to Stephenville and surprised his family."

Later on, Justin became a nurse and worked for a few years at the Hamilton Hospital where he would later have his first Monk March around the Hamilton Healthcare campus and neighborhood to help raise funding and awareness for brain cancer that would later take his life.

Justin's brother Garrett wanted to make sure that the things Justin stands for are carried on even without him.

"He was big on people, he loved people and we wanted to make sure we could help so we felt this would be the best opportunity to continue his legacy by continuing his name to help out people," Garrett said.

While the Monk family will forever be changed by Justin's battle with brain cancer, their memorial foundation acts like a vessel for anyone touched through Justin's life and even some after it.

Koll Bickerstaff was the overall winner of the "Justin Monk Memorial Rugged 5K" that was hosted at Melody Mountain Ranch on Nov 9. While he did not know Justin Monk he was an advent racer, running 5K's since he was nine years old. Bickerstaff

found the first Justin Monk Memorial Rugged 5k that was hosted at Stephenville City Park last year and won that race.

"I don't know anyone else or any of these people, but everyone treated me like family, so I just keep coming back," Bickerstaff said.

Bickerstaff ran the original race because it was close to him in Stephenville and wanted to keep his legs warm. When he arrived to the first race he appreciated how official and put together the event was.

"Even from last year, feeling like they put so much effort into it, to this year being huge. You can really tell people care and that makes you want to run it" Bickerstaff said.

He plans to become a regular runner (and maybe a regular victor) as long as the Monk Strong Memorial keeps putting on the races.



PHOTO BY JAXON HANSARD

The overall winner of the Justin Monk Memorial Rugged 5K Koll Bickerstaff leading the race as he is the first to turn around in the route.

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Which Grinch is best?

BY ASHTYN HANSARD
Executive Producer

As the fall semester at Tarleton State University reaches its end, students are beginning to get into the Christmas spirit. One way to do that is to watch a Christmas movie.

Over several years, there have been three different Grinch movies released that are well known. While everyone may have their preference, I sat down and dissected what really made these movies different from one another.

Between all three movies, the plot line stays relatively the same. The Grinch is a citizen of Whoville that hates Christmas. He lives isolated and alone so he can avoid the other Whos.

When Whoville decides to host their annual town-wide Christmas celebration, the Grinch decides to take the holiday spirit by stealing Christmas. However, through the help of Cindy-Lou, a little girl living in Whoville, the Grinch learns about the joys of Christmas and grows a heart.

While the plot is the same, there are some differences that make each movie unique and its own product.

The 1966 “How the Grinch Stole Christmas!” directed by Chuck Jones and Ben Washam, was the first Grinch movie that was released to the public. The animated movie established the Grinch as an iconic Christmas movie and character.

Although the 1966 version is based on a book created by Dr. Suess, the actual film helped establish a foundation for other adaptations to grow inspiration from.

Mackinsy Morgan, a Stephenville resident, has a deep love for this original version of “How the Grinch Stole Christmas!”

“It’s a classic Christmas movie,” Morgan said. “The nostalgia of the animation brings me back to being a kid during Christmas time. It’s almost impossible to not love it.”

In 2000, a live action version with the same title was released everywhere. This adaptation had a low rating on Rotten Tomatoes with a 49% critical review, despite winning an Oscar for best makeup in 2001. Ironically, this is the most popular adaptation.

The 2000 live adaptation has become a staple movie for families to watch during the Christmas season for many reasons.

In this version, Jim Carrey stars as The Grinch, bringing a new kind of chaotic energy that radiates throughout the entire film. The movie also features an edgier type of humor that hadn’t been seen in the previous movies, later creating many iconic moments that are still quoted today.

Another Stephenville resident, Emilio Gray, has always loved this adaptation.

“It’s a timeless classic,” Gray said. “I think it’ll hold up to the test of time better than the others. It’s already cemented itself as a yearly ritual with my family.”

One detail that differs this movie from others is the love triangle between the mayor, Martha May and the Grinch. Martha May and the Grinch had crushes on each other in school but the Mayor had bullied the Grinch into leaving, seemingly ending any chance he had with Martha May. At the end of the movie, they reunite and get together.

In 2018, yet another adaptation of the Grinch was released to the public. This version was created as a 3-D animation, giving it its own twist on an animated

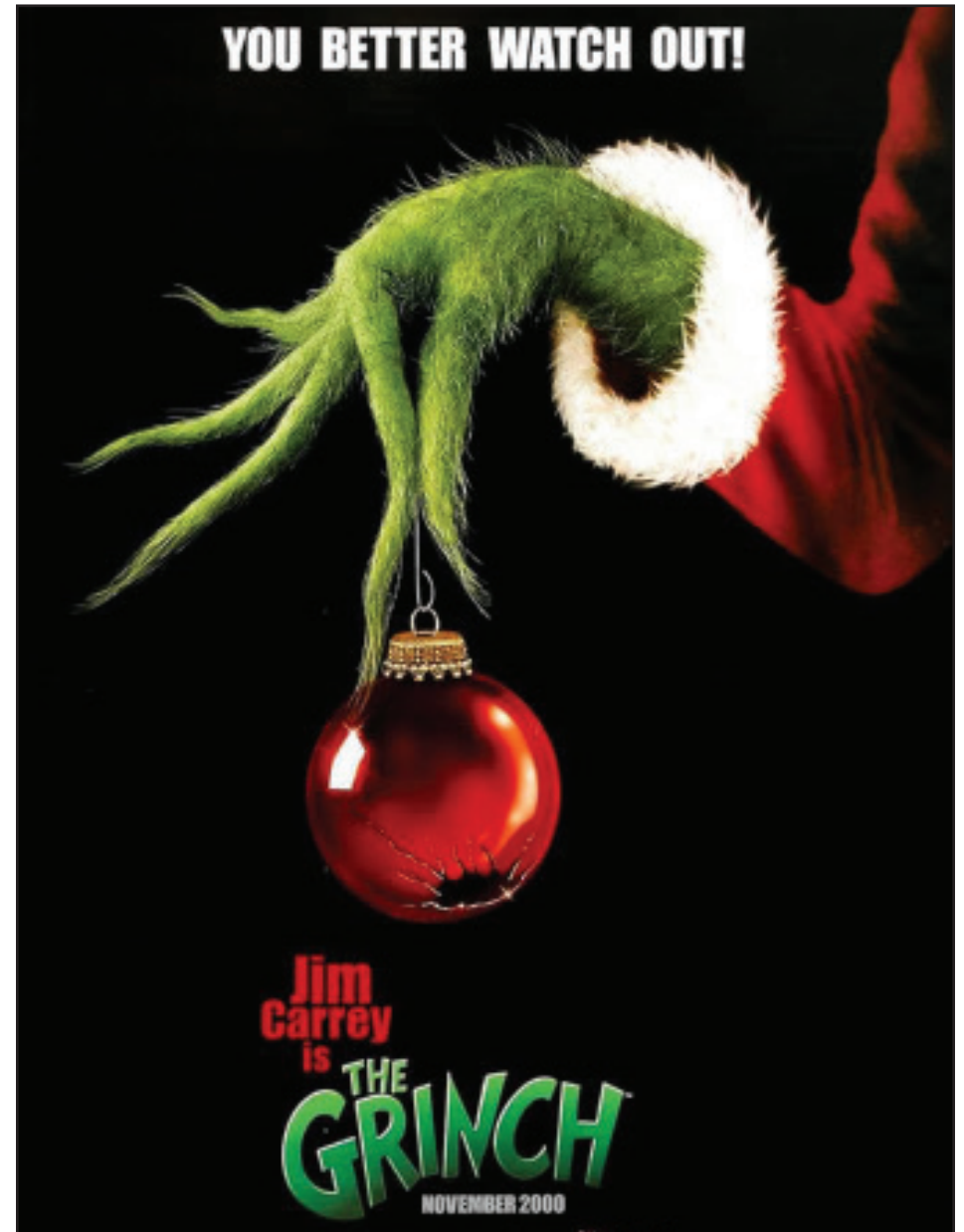


PHOTO COURTESY MOVIE POSTER ARENA

Poster for the 2000 adaptation of “How the Grinch Stole Christmas!” This adaptation became the most popular despite negative reviews when first released.

Grinch movie. The character arc for the Grinch is relatively the same, but another character has a different development.

In this adaptation, the audience gets a deeper dive into Cindy-Lou’s life in Whoville. Her mother, Donna Who, is a single mother struggling to make ends meet with her three kids. For Christmas, Cindy-Lou wishes to Santa that her mother wouldn’t have to work as hard to keep her family happy.

Something that sets this movie apart from the rest is the original soundtrack featuring famous artists such as Grammy winner Tyler, the Creator and

Pentatonix.

Rece Elkins, a senior at Tarleton, has some fond memories of watching this 2018 adaptation.

“I watched this movie at the Alamo drafthouse when I was about 13 and I had a blast,” Elkins said. “It was nice to get to watch a familiar movie in a new location.”

While all three Grinch adaptations may have similar plots, these comparisons show just how different and unique each movie is. If you’re looking for a movie to get you in the Christmas spirit, I recommend any of these three Grinch movies.

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Ten Holiday classics

BY HELENA KNUTSON

Multimedia Journalist

Christmas, the most magical time of the year, is approaching fast; There is nothing better to get you into the season than some classic Christmas movies. Here are ten Christmas movies to watch this season.

Love Actually

“Love Actually” is a classic Christmas romance movie for those who love a good romance story.

This movie follows seven storylines: a single father helping his son negate his school crush, a man in love with his best friend’s fiancée, a woman trying to save her marriage after her husband cheats, a rockstar who realizes the importance of friendship and a British minister falling in love with his housekeeper.

These storylines all intertwine, showing how love comes in different ways: family, friendship and relationships.

This is the perfect movie for anyone looking to watch a romantic holiday movie while cuddling up on the couch.

Elf

Buddy (Will Ferrell) has spent his entire life believing he is an elf but soon discovers he is a human. After discovering his true identity, Buddy searches for his biological dad, who is on the naughty list.

Towards the end of the movie, Buddy shows all of New York what the spirit of Christmas truly is: hope.

This hilarious Christmas movie is great to watch when you need a pick-me-up and remember the true meaning of Christmas.

Lydia White, a sophomore nursing major, thinks Elf is a perfect light-hearted and funny Christmas movie.

“I think ‘Elf’ is such a good movie to watch with your family and friends. I especially like the shower scene where Buddy is singing; it’s so funny,” White said.

Home Alone

“Home Alone” is about Kevin McCallister (Macaulay Culkin), a kid struggling with his family staying at his house before their holiday vacation. When the family leaves, they realize they have forgotten something important: Kevin.

As the eight-year old enjoys this newfound freedom, he realizes that staying home won’t be as fun as he thought. Kevin has to protect his home from burglars.

This classic Christmas movie shows the importance of spending time with your family because it can be taken away anytime.

Die Hard

“Die Hard” is controversial as a Christmas movie but it’s great one nonetheless. John McClane (Bruce Willis) comes home for Christmas in hopes of winning back his wife but soon realizes his wife and her co-workers have been taken hostage.

This movie has some of the best cinematic quotes and is a true Christmas action movie.

This movie is excellent for those who need a break from sappy holiday movies and want to watch something fast-paced.

A Charlie Brown Christmas (1965)

“A Charlie Brown Christmas” tells the story of the iconic Peanut comic strip character through the holidays. The story follows Charlie Brown as he searches for the meaning of Christmas.

Charlie Brown struggles because he realizes everyone only idolizes material things during Christmas, but towards the end, he discovers the true meaning: friends and family.

With the holidays coming, we can become materialistic, but it is important to remember that Christmas is not just about presents

Olivia Wolfskill, a freshman nursing major, thinks that “A Charlie Brown Christmas” represents what Christmas is truly about.

“‘Charlie Brown Christmas’ is a good Christmas movie because it elaborates on friendship and togetherness. Christmas is a holiday of being together and enjoying each other’s company. Charlie Brown portrays this importance to all audiences,” Wolfskill said.

How The Grinch Stole Christmas (2000)

“How the Grinch Stole Christmas” is a live-action film based on the cartoon. It stars Jim Carrey as The Grinch, who hates Christmas.

The Grinch develops a plan to steal all the Christmas gifts from Whoville. After The Grinch steals all the presents, he meets Cindy Lou Who, a young girl who struggles to find joy in Christmas.

Towards the movie’s end, Cindy Lou realizes what Christmas is really about, and The Grinch realizes that no one should be lonely on the holidays.

Grace Killian, a junior human resources manager major, loves the vibes that the Grinch movie brings.

“‘How the Grinch Stole Christmas’ is such a good movie because it has a sweet message about how the

holidays aren’t just about gifts but about being with the people you love.” Killian said. “The Grinch is hilarious, especially in the live-action version with Jim Carrey, and his transformation is so satisfying to watch. Plus, the music and Whoville vibes make it feel super festive and fun.

It’s A Wonderful Life

“It’s A Wonderful Life” is a heartfelt story about George Bailey (James Stewart), a selfless and kind man who takes over his father’s business; after some years, he faces some financial hardship that would ruin his life.

George Bailey considers ending his life when his guardian angel, Clarence, appears. Clarence shows George Bailey what his life would be like if he was never born and what his town and family would be like.

This movie shows the importance of love, family and community.

The Polar Express

A childhood classic, “The Polar Express” is a great film to watch with family or friends and remember what it’s like to be a kid on Christmas.

The movie is about a young boy who hears a loud train outside his window on the night of Christmas Eve. When he goes outside, he sees The Polar Express, a magical train that leads to the North Pole.

This movie shows the importance of believing in the spirit of Christmas.

Bryson Bullard, a freshman sports management major, said that The Polar Express reminds him of his childhood.

“[The] Polar Express is one of my favorite Christmas movies of all time. The first time I watched it was at a Christmas party in kindergarten. I associate [The] Polar Express with hot chocolate and sugar cookies, which always makes me happy,” Bullard said.

A Christmas Story

As children, we always wanted a gift dearly, and for Ralph ‘Ralphie’ Parker, it was a Red Ryder BB Gun. “A Christmas Story” is a movie about Ralphie Parker trying to navigate family, bullies and being a kid during the holidays.

This is a heartwarming holiday classic to watch with your family during the holidays.

Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer (1964)

The 1964 stop-motion movie tells the story of a classic Christmas tale. The film follows three characters: Rudolph the Red-Nose Reindeer, Hermey the Elf and Yukon Cornelius.

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PHOTOS BY HELENA KNUTSON

A graphic of all the movies featured in the article

Rudolph left his home because of his red nose, which no other reindeer had. After leaving, he meets Hermey, an elf who dreams of becoming a dentist. On their way to chase their dreams, the duo meets Yukon, who is searching for silver and gold. The trio encounters several adventures and finds friendship amongst the craziness.

This movie shows the importance of friendship and uniqueness and surrounding yourself with the people you love. Mia Castillo, a sophomore nursing major, says this movie reminds her of Christmas morning. “Every Christmas morning me and my family would watch ‘Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer’

before opening gifts. It was one of my favorite Christmas movies growing up,” Castillo said. There are so many more Christmas movies to watch this season, but these are some of the best to help get you in the Christmas spirit.

HOLIDAY EDITION

Tips for tackling the end of semester stress

BY BRENNA DEMPSEY

Multimedia Journalists

With the holidays and finals right around the corner, the stress and potential burnout can also follow.

There are different causes for stress on campus as students prepare to take on the end of the fall semester as well as tackling Thanksgiving and Christmas plans.

With everything going on, there can be demands and expectations from friends, family, classmates and professors.

Professors give plenty of class assignments and families often want to spend more time together. This limits how much free time students have as they try to prepare for everything.

Hallie Mayfield believes that both school and home put pressure on her.

“Definitely professors, ‘cause a lot of them like to do their projects and exams right before Christmas break cause it’s the end of the semester,” Mayfield said. “But then family is also wanting me to come home and all of that stuff so yeah, kind of from both ends.”

Finding the right balance between holiday events, family and school can be challenging.

“At first it was really hard to manage but as I’ve kind of gotten older and gone through multiple semesters I’ve kind of found that just taking a deep breath and like planning out what I’m gonna do really helps me get through all of the stress,” Mayfield said.

Everyone has their own personalized way of handling the stress of the season and it can be beneficial to learn what works for other people.

She finds it helpful to organize all of her thoughts and assignments to limit the overwhelming feeling that can come from all of the things that need to be done.

“I definitely like doing to-do lists

cause it helps me stay organized and writing out the due dates of when each thing needs to be completed so I don’t have this big clump of stuff, I can kind of organize it into what needs to get done first, basically priority at the top and [then] later priority at the bottom and just kind of start checking stuff off,” Mayfield said.

Keeping a to-do list can also help students visualize all the work they have completed that they might not realize. For some people, this is a great place to start getting things done and minimizing stress.

Hayden Nowak finds the holidays stressful because she worries about the pressure from family to get presents for everyone while also having personal needs on a college student budget.

She chooses to work through the stress by getting together with her team to take her mind off things.

“I’m actually a powerlifter on the powerlifting team and so honestly that helps a lot just being able to be with them and kind of forget about everything else and just lift heavyweight like that literally helps a lot,” Nowak said. “I do love to read but I haven’t gotten to as much since I’ve been here, but I know if I set aside time for that would help me a lot, like clear my mind and stuff and I love yoga that’s another thing.”

Focusing on things she enjoys helps her relax and put things off her mind for a moment. This is a great way for students to take a break and refocus on the things that make them happy.

While work, school and family are important, taking the time to focus on some self-care can go a long way toward relieving stress making those other tasks more manageable.

Sometimes the negative aspects of stress can sneak up on people without them realizing it.

The way people handle stress may be different than the way someone else



PHOTO BY BRENNA DEMPSEY

Books on a shelf on the third floor of the Dick Smith Library at Tarleton State University.

does. Identifying the things that keep students locked in stress and doing what they can to get themselves out of that headspace is always important.

Adalee Updegraff has worked out a few ways to help get herself out of the feeling.

“I think that with stress, for me, comes like isolation so I’ll just hide away in my room and not want to speak to anybody and just be cooped up in my little safe space,” Updegraff said.

Something she does to get through the assignments is by getting out of her room.

“My favorite thing to do is to go sit in the library for just hours on end to like force myself to just go sit in there in a study room and just make sure I’m not being just cooped up in my room,” Updegraff said.

It can be difficult to get out of the routines people accidentally set for themselves, but it is never too late to try something new. There is always a chance to find a helpful tactic to release

all the stress that builds up.

“I think that it’s important to find a good group of people who support you and get out of your room and go just join clubs and explore just anything you can do while you can I think that’s so important,” Updegraff said.

There are different clubs on campus that are available for students to join, there is something for everyone. When students join a club, it gives them the opportunity to meet people who share similar interests and can forge great new relationships.

Finding what works for each person can be a struggle but when people keep looking they are bound to find something that can successfully relieve their stress.

Get with some friends and get out of the holiday blues with these tips.

Just like how finals and the holidays are part of a season so is the stress so stay strong out there Texans and enjoy the holidays.

HOLIDAY EDITION

Childhood toys, lifelong memories

BY DREW FLEMING
Multimedia Journalists

Childhood Christmas gifts hold lasting memories and are meaningful for several reasons. For children, these gifts often come with a sense of Christmas magic because of their love of Santa Claus and festive traditions. As well as the anticipation of unwrapping something new.

I think we can all relate to having that one present as a kid that we waited months to find under the Christmas tree. The toy or gadget that kept you up all night, or occupied your daydreams leading up to Christmas Day.

Beyond the material aspect, childhood Christmas gifts can carry emotional significance. Gifts around the holiday season symbolize the thoughtfulness of family members who carefully choose something that reflects a child's personality and interests.

Landon Ahlsted is currently a student at Tarleton State University.

"The Xbox One is my favorite gift that I got on Christmas, I wanted it really badly and my parents got it for me. It felt pretty incredible because, you know, back then I still believed in Santa Claus and I thought he made it for me," Ahlsted said.

Even as children grow up, the memory of those gifts stay with us as a reminder of the happiness of the holidays and the magic of childhood. Whether it's a favorite present or beloved holiday tradition, moments like opening your dream gift are about

more than what you get after tearing off the wrapping. It's about the memories that you will forever cherish and the love you feel from the person who gave you the present.

"My favorite memory is the anticipation and memory of believing in Santa Claus. Then walking out in the morning and just seeing all the gifts under the tree, it was awesome. Then looking back at it knowing my parents always provided a really good Christmas for me," Ahlsted said.

No matter what holiday you celebrate or who you celebrate with, it is universally agreed that meaningful presents and quality time with the people you love is what matters most during the holiday season.

Trinity Elliott is currently a student at Tarleton State university.

"When I opened up my dream present, an American Girl doll, I was so excited running around my kitchen. It was one of my favorite toys. I was so thankful when I got it, I love braiding hair, so my favorite memory was braiding her hair," Elliott said.

It's not just about the gift or the time you spent playing with it, but the thoughtfulness that your parents, grandparents or loved one considered when picking it out. That's the great thing about gift giving, it is not just about the gift but the love and relationship behind the gift that you'll always remember.

Emily Daly is currently a student at Tarleton State University.



Tarleton student Trinity Elliott in front of Tarleton Christmas tree located outside the Trogon house on campus. PHOTO BY DREW FLEMING

"For me, it's about the relationship behind the gifts. I will never forget the charm my grandma gave me. Every single time I look down at my bracelet and the word granddaughter catches my eye, I think of my grandma," Daly said.

Meaningful childhood gifts become

reminders of our favorite holidays and core memories that shape us into who we are. A toy or a special gift can carry sentimental value long after it's no longer in use and is a reminder of the love and connection of the holiday season.

HOLIDAY EDITION

Your guide to holiday fun in Stephenville

BY CAROLINE CRAIN
Multimedia Journalist

For many Tarleton State University students, the holiday season means heading home. However, for those staying in Stephenville, exploring the town's festivities could be a great way to embrace the season.

Whether you're a freshman spending your first Christmas in the Cowboy Capital or a senior curious about what you've been missing, Stephenville has plenty of seasonal cheer to discover.

To make things easy, we've rounded up five exciting holiday activities—on and off campus—that are perfect for those looking to embrace the local festivities.

Holly Jolly Christmas Festival

The Holly Jolly Christmas Festival will take place Monday, Dec. 9, in the Downtown Stephenville Square. Hosted by Stephenville Parks and Recreation and the Stephenville Chamber of Commerce, this holiday tradition brings the community together for a night of holiday cheer.

Students, families and residents can enjoy an array of activities, including the official lighting of the city Christmas tree, pictures with Santa, carriage and hay rides, Christmas crafts and holiday gift vendors.

With free admission, this event is a great option for students and locals looking to unwind and celebrate the season.

Stephenville ChristmasVille and Parade

The 2024 Stephenville ChristmasVille and Parade is on Saturday, Nov. 30, from 10 a.m. to 9:30

p.m. at Stephenville's Downtown Main Street.

The event offers the chance to celebrate the start of the holiday season with a blend of holiday shopping, food and festive fun. Kicking off with a Chili Cook-off at 10 a.m., the event invites locals and visitors to enjoy delicious chili while supporting local businesses.

The evening culminates in a magical Christmas parade at 6:30 p.m., where community groups, floats and holiday lights will line the streets of downtown.

Sophomore Jacob Miller attended the Stephenville ChristmasVille and Parade last year and said it was a highlight of the season.

"The parade was incredible," Miller said. "Seeing all the floats and lights really made it feel like Christmas."

Whether you're browsing shops, tasting chili, or watching the parade, this day is a fantastic way to experience the holiday spirit in Stephenville.

Light Up the Night

Light up the Night is an annual event that stretches most December weekends, open this year Dec. 6-8, 13-15 and 20-22 at the Stephenville City Park.

Presented by Erath County United Way and Christmas Decor, Light up the Night is a must-see event for holiday enthusiasts. This three-quarter-mile walking trail features nearly 3 million lights and iconic displays, making a festive place for students and families to take in the holiday magic.

Highlights include pictures with Santa every Friday night from 6 to 8 p.m., live performances at the Birdsong Amphitheater on Saturdays at 7 p.m.



PHOTO COURTESY COOPER MORNING

Tarleton alumni Cooper Morning posing at Light Up the Night light show at the Stephenville City Park.

and Christmas movies on Sundays, a new edition for 2024.

The event is family-friendly, with affordable admission: \$10 for adults, \$5 for children 12 and under and free for kids under 2 (with a paid adult).

Freshman Mary Crain said that although it is her first year at Tarleton, she has spent many Christmases in the Stephenville area. Light Up the Night was one of her favorite events.

"The lights are so beautiful, so I always make sure to take pictures with my friends," Crain said. "It's a really nice tradition that we always do."

Theatre at Tarleton Presents "A Christmas Carol"

Theatre at Tarleton will perform the classic holiday tale of "A Christmas Carol" from Nov. 28 to Dec. 1 this year, each showing at 7:30 p.m. in the Clyde H. Wells Fine Arts Center Theater.

These productions will feature talented theater students and local members of the Stephenville community. The shows are great ways for students to get into the holiday spirit while supporting the arts at Tarleton.

Ticket prices are \$10 for adults, \$8 for seniors, children and faculty and \$5 for students with ID.

Tarleton Campus Lighting

The Tarleton Campus Lighting Celebration is a classic way to kick off the holiday season with fellow Texans. The 2024 celebration took place on Nov. 5 at the Trogon House Lawn.

This annual tradition includes the lighting of the campus Christmas tree, symbolizing the start of the festive season. Attendees enjoy a lively evening with free food, giveaways and the chance to connect with the Tarleton community.

Zimrie Goen is a senior at Tarleton who showed her appreciation for the event.

"Every single year I've been here I've been to the tree lighting," Goen said. "I would give it a ten out of ten. It's just a lot of fun."

The 2024 Campus Lighting has already passed, but be sure to mark your calendar for next year's event—it's a tradition you won't want to miss.

HOLIDAY EDITION

From Grinch to grunge

BY GAVIN PATRICK
Multimedia Journalist

A lot has changed since the year 2000. Just ask Taylor Momsen.

Most people still define Momsen by her role as Cindy Lou Who in the beloved 2000 film “How the Grinch Stole Christmas.” She was just 7 years old at the time but has since become the lead singer of a rock band she launched in 2009 -- The Pretty Reckless.

Momsen, now 31, is four albums deep into her music career (the band’s latest release in 2021), but a lot of people are still shocked by her seemingly unprecedented evolution from child star to rockstar.

In Momsen’s eyes, though, she’s still “kind of the same person,” as she said in a 2020 interview with TODAY.

“I grew up, but I think deep down I still got a lot of Cindy Lou Who in me,” Momsen said.

That’s the key: she grew up.

A lot of times, people find themselves unrecognizable when they look back at an old picture from their childhood. Momsen is no different in that sense.

But her upbringing was anything but ordinary.

Momsen was introduced to the spotlight at the age of 2 when her parents signed her up with Ford Models -- an international modeling agency. She never wanted to be a 2-year-old working, but she “had no choice,” as she said in a 2010 interview with Revolver Magazine.

Momsen never had a normal childhood from that point. She was in and out of school, struggled making friends; she was working all the time -- and it was largely out of her control. Although, Momsen later spoke to Kerrang Magazine in 2011 to clarify her feelings about her parents.

“I love my mom and dad. Maybe I didn’t have the childhood people

think you should have, but I still went through the ages,” Momsen said.

Momsen started acting in commercials when she was 3, starring in a national advertisement for Shake ‘n Bake in 1997, before landing her first movie roles in “Shiloh 2: Shiloh Season” (1999) and “The Prophet’s Game” (2000).

Though her breakout role, undisputedly, was as Cindy Lou Who in “How the Grinch Stole Christmas.”

People love this film for a number of reasons. It’s a Christmas movie (obvious checkmark); it’s a live-action remake of one of Dr. Seuss’s most iconic works; and it tells a beautiful story of how hate is overcome with love, which is largely brought upon by Momsen’s character.

Cindy Lou Who is one of those characters that forever defines its performer. Think Tom Holland as Spiderman or Miley Cyrus as Hannah Montana (a role Momsen actually auditioned for). Even when the actors grow out of that phase and tackle new endeavors and land other big roles, people will always come back to that first, breakthrough moment.

Now, Momsen may also be defined by the second big phase of her acting career, which was her role as Jenny Humphrey in the teen drama series “Gossip Girl.” But she left the show at the end of its fourth season to entirely reshape her professional image.

Momsen’s desire to be a singer had been in the works for years before it was thrust into the public light. It actually goes back to the set of “How the Grinch Stole Christmas.” Her character, Cindy Lou Who, sings the song “Where Are You Christmas?” in the film, where she found herself in a recording studio for the first time alongside one of the song’s writers, James Horner.

Momsen said in the interview with



PHOTO COURTESY PINTEREST, LAUT.DE

Taylor Momsen as Cindy Lou Who vs. Taylor Momsen in The Pretty Reckless.

TODAY that the music was what resonated with her most from the film, and recording that song helped inspire her to pursue a singing career.

“That was such an impactful moment in my life because it made me go, ‘I wanna make music for the rest of my life,’” Momsen said.

Fast-forward nine years and Momsen is leading a rock band with a name inspired by her life’s tendencies -- Pretty Reckless.

No matter how people may react, though, this kind of transformation is normal. Take me for example. When I was 7 years old, I wanted to be an astronaut when I grew up. How’s that turned out? Well, I’m a Sports Communications major pursuing a career as a journalist -- completely out of the realm of what I was thinking back then.

Things change, including our interests. And celebrities are people, just like me and you.

But Momsen never wanted to be Cindy Lou Who forever or even an actress. She always wanted to pave her own path and express who she really was after so much of her life depended

on portraying a character.

Momsen said in a recent interview that she grew away from acting because it became “easy” to her, but with music, it’s “more personal because you’re writing it and you’re involved in every step of it.” What Momsen is doing now as a musician is unlike so many aspects of her early life, when she was forced into modeling by her parents.

Momsen is truly living her best life in her current career, and like a true rockstar, because she’s doing it on her own terms. Although she truly loved acting and, at least, certain parts of modeling, she no longer has to worry about being someone she’s not.

Today, the songs she sings, the way she dresses, the amount of eye makeup she wears or whatever she does -- it’s a reflection of her authentic self. And if she’s always remembered as the girl who played Cindy Lou Who, that’s a great thing, too.

So as we settle into the holiday spirit, just remember: if Tom Holland decided to quit acting and launch his version of the Beatles, we’d be saying the same things about him, too.

HOLIDAY EDITION

Unwrapping the traditions of gift giving

BY MACKENZIE JOHNSON

Multimedia Journalist

The season of gift giving is upon us. Between family members, friends, coworkers and everyone in between, people are expected to give each other gifts. But what age should you start?

The tradition of gift giving is one that dates back centuries.

Beginning in prehistoric times, it is believed the art of gift giving began on more of a political premise. Giving a gift was considered a social procedure in order to represent one's respect and loyalty to another person, and these were typically given to those of a high social status, such as nobility.

On the flip side, gifts were also given by and among nobility as a means of exhibiting their great wealth and luxurious lifestyle.

Although that's still true to some extent today, maybe just not in such a dramatic manner, presents have since evolved into a custom that encompasses more than simply a social offering.

Now, gift giving is considered the pillar of momentous occasions, designating the important events of anniversaries, birthdays and potentially most prominently, Christmas.

It's human nature to want to show appreciation for one another in a tangible form around the holidays, but with that virtuously built tradition has also come the great expectation to always present the perfect gift at Christmas to every single person you care about, and that pressure doesn't come festively wrapped with a bow.

Nobody does Christmas quite like America does, and from the outside looking in, the days leading up to the holidays may appear more like a scene from a corporate marketing scheme horror movie than a warm Hallmark classic.

The responsibility of gift giving is not one taken lightly, and many people stress themselves out senselessly running from point A to point B checking purchases off their

Christmas lists instead of enjoying the comforts the holiday season brings. And typically on Christmas morning, instead of feeling relieved the chaos leading up to the day has finally ended, many people feel financially spent.

With Christmas gift giving becoming such a weighted pressure, at what age is it assumed that you must jump into the madness of gift giving? And is there a certain age in which you no longer receive presents, but are still expected to give them?

The answer is that there's no singularly clear one, and that the logistics of gift giving differs from family to family.

Hailey Johnson believes in being smart with gift giving.

"I think you should be responsible to get gifts when you have a job," Johnson said. "When we get married in our family, we either share our designated gift budget with our spouse or we get a small gift budget separately. For gift giving at Christmas, we draw names, and the budget is \$50 for your person," Johnson said.

Cindy Eubanks has a similar outlook on the age family members should join in on gift giving.

"Gift giving starts when they are out on their own. Like working, living and paying bills," Eubanks said. "My husband's family stops giving all the kids gifts at 16, but there are fewer kids now, so I usually get them a little something. For adults, we do Dirty Santa for the extended family party and only do small gifts for the immediate family of brothers, sisters etc."

Kaitlen Lifsey's family has a more concrete cutoff for no longer receiving gifts.

"Gifts aren't given after you get married," Lifsey said. "Instead, the married couples play Dirty Santa."

Marriage is also considered a time marker for giving presents for Crystal Crosser's family, just a little differently.

"We give gifts when you accomplish something: graduation, first marriage

or having a baby," Crosser said. "Our kids can give gifts when they feel led to do so with money they earn, but giving gifts is only a responsibility of a parent in my opinion."

Another time marker for gift giving is school, whether that be secondary or collegiate.

Lindee McCurley's family feels this way.

"The unwritten rule we go by is that when you're done with school, you stop getting gifts," McCurley said. "Want to further your education at trade school or university? Super! That counts! When my cousin went back to college in her 40s to work on her degree, she got a present."

The size of the family also plays a part with how roles of gift giving are divided out.

Victoria Mackenzie's family has different rules.

"I have a bigger family," Victoria Mackenzie said. "I'm the oldest of 5 and also have 4 children. In our family traditions, adults give all the children still in school gifts. All the adults draw names and play Dirty Santa."

It's a common census that for a lot of families, outside of immediate relatives, presents are mostly reserved for those not yet married, still in school or under 18. If you don't fit within that criteria and are considered an official adult, it's a typical tradition to then be expected to give gifts to younger family members and provide a gift in Dirty Santa.

However, this is not the case for all families. Elizabeth Milligan feels strongly about giving gifts.

"No one should ever feel they have to give a gift," Milligan said. "That's why it is called a gift: something given willingly. If not willingly, it is an obligation. Christmas time should not feel like an obligation. My parents and adult siblings agreed years ago not to exchange gifts. We are blessed to have all we need, and personally, I don't want more stuff I don't need. If I

choose to give a gift to one of them, it is my choice... I expect none in return."

College student Alea Muñoz views gift giving along those same lines.

"I don't feel like anyone should ever be 'responsible' for giving Christmas gifts, and your status in life such as a job or being an adult shouldn't determine that," Muñoz said. "Parents often feel obligated to give gifts because, well, they're parents. But sometimes things are more important than gifts. As a college student, I feel like I should be responsible for giving Christmas gifts, but due to life, that is looking unlikely... There shouldn't be a pressure of responsibility to give gifts. After all, it is Christmas, and isn't exactly meant for gifts, it's meant for the birth of Christ."

It's no secret that the actual significance of Christmas can be diminished amidst the hustle and bustle of the holiday season.

It's easy to view gift giving as more of a requirement when you're up to your neck in shopping receipts, petrified before checking the numbers in your bank account and faced with the tinsel tight tension of presenting the perfect gift to your loved ones.

Although there isn't a set age for when to start giving gifts and when to stop receiving them, that's the authentic beauty of it.

And no matter what your family's gift giving traditions are, it's important to remember the greatest gifts given can't be rung up by a Kohl's cashier or packaged in plaid wrapping paper, nor are these gifts physical items that can be passed around the living room in a game of Dirty Santa.

These gifts can't be found on a store shelf and aren't built on the basis of expectations or income salary, but rather found within.

The faith, fellowship and gratitude rooted in holiday traditions are the gifts best given and best received, and luckily, they don't cost a dime.

HOLIDAY EDITION

Home away from home during the holidays

BY LESLIE POSADAS

Contributing Writer

The holiday season is right around the corner, and many Tarleton State University students and faculty face the reality of being unable to go home.

Janet Bell, a Spanish professor at Tarleton, has not spent the holidays with her family in Puerto Rico since 2021.

“The reason I don’t go there anymore is because we had to bring my mother-in-law here to the States since she has health issues,” Bell said.

Although Bell has her son, husband, mother-in-law, daughter-in-law and two grandkids in Fort Worth, the longing for a holiday spent in Puerto Rico doesn’t fade away.

“It’s kind of sad, really, not being able to spend time there with the family,” Bell said. “In Puerto Rico, it’s kind of like a party all the time.”

To help ease the homesickness Bell feels during the holidays, she shared the traditions they incorporate here in the U.S. Bell recreates traditional foods, such as roasted pork, rice with pigeon meat and a drink called Coquito.

“Because the only thing I can do is talk to my family over the phone, my sister and I try to create a kind of atmosphere, like if we were in Puerto Rico, so it can kind of be the same,” Bell said.

Sharing a similar story is Allison Jones, a student at Tarleton who spends the holiday season a bit differently.

Instead of going home to Tennessee for the holidays, her parents brought the holidays to Stephenville.

“I usually stay here, but my parents moved here with me,” Jones said.

For many the holidays are an opportunity to return home and reconnect with family.

However for others the reality of being away from family during the



PHOTO BY LESLIE POSADAS

Holiday letter to a distant family member who is not present

season is a challenge they must adapt to.

Bella Rose, a senior at Tarleton State, has not been home for Thanksgiving in the past two years, but she is not

missing out on the holiday season entirely.

“I do go home for Christmas break for a few weeks,” Rose said.

While Thanksgiving has been spent

in Stephenville for the past couple of years, Christmas break is a time that Rose counts on to reconnect with family and friends back home in Florida.

HOLIDAY EDITION

Cringe and Cheer:

The top 5 Hallmark holiday movies you can't help but love

BY COLTON BRADBERRY

Multimedia Journalist

Hallmark holiday movies are a staple of the season, delighting fans with their predictable plots, picture-perfect towns and cozy charm. But let's be honest—what makes these movies so endearing is also what makes them cringy.

When I say “cringy,” I don't mean bad. Quite the opposite. These films lean into their cheese, giving us laugh-out-loud moments, absurd plotlines and a feel-good factor that's hard to resist.

Here are my picks for the top five cringiest Hallmark holiday movies, the ones so over-the-top you can't help but love them.

5. “The Town Christmas Forgot”

The title alone sets the tone for the cringe-worthy charm of this Hallmark movie. The Town Christmas Forgot follows a middle-class white family who gets stranded in an impoverished mining town during the holiday season.

The name of the town? Nowhere Town. Yes, you read that correctly. Hallmark wasn't exactly subtle with its messaging here and the heavy-handedness is part of what makes this movie a prime pick for this list.

From the moment the family's luxury SUV breaks down in this dusty, struggling community, you know exactly where the story is headed. Cue the uplifting holiday clichés: the family quickly becomes the saviors of the town, bringing positivity, holiday spirit and just the right amount of Christmas cheer to the residents.

In spite of their poverty and lack of gifts, everyone magically finds themselves filled with joy by the end. It's a feel-good resolution, sure, but one that feels so forced it's impossible not to roll your eyes.

Despite all of this—or perhaps because of it—“The Town Christmas Forgot” is oddly endearing.

There's something about its over-the-top optimism and refusal to acknowledge its own absurdity that makes it enjoyable to watch. You know exactly how it's going to end, but you stick around anyway because it's just so quintessentially Hallmark.

Would this movie ever win an award for nuanced storytelling? Not a chance. But if you're looking for a holiday flick that will make you laugh at its earnestness while still warming your heart, this one delivers.

4. “Ghost of Christmas Always”

This movie doesn't just embrace the classic tale; it flips it upside down, throws in a love story and tops it with an extra layer of Hallmark absurdity. The result? A delightfully ridiculous holiday romp that will leave you laughing, rolling your eyes and maybe even tearing up.

The story follows Katherine, the Ghost of Christmas Present, who teams up with her ghostly colleagues, Roy (Christmas Future) and Arlene (Christmas Past), to “Scrooge” Peter Brown, a wealthy and seemingly well-adjusted man.

Here's the catch: Peter isn't your typical grumpy Scrooge. He's self-aware, charming and surprisingly open to the whole being-haunted-by-Christmas-spirits thing. The real twist? Katherine begins to develop feelings for Peter, setting the stage for a love story that defies the laws of life and death.

What makes “Ghost of Christmas Always” so cringy is its sheer audacity. The movie doesn't just ask you to suspend disbelief; it asks you to throw disbelief out the window and fully embrace the absurdity of a ghost-human love story.

From the melodramatic snowstorms to the cheesy dialogue (“You're magical”), every scene is dripping with Hallmark stereotypes. But it's precisely this over-the-top charm that makes the movie so endearing.

3. “Love at the Thanksgiving Day Parade”

“Love at the Thanksgiving Day Parade” perfectly encapsulates Hallmark's tried-and-true formula of holiday romance, miscommunication and feel-good clichés. It's a story about love, tradition and giant turkey floats, all set against the backdrop of Chicago's beloved Thanksgiving Day parade. Cringy? Absolutely. But that's exactly what makes it so entertaining.

The movie follows Emily Jones, a parade coordinator who is as passionate about her job as she is about her hometown. Emily dreams of a picture-perfect holiday season, complete with a long-awaited proposal from her long-distance boyfriend, Brian.

Enter Henry Williams, a wealthy development consultant hired to make the parade more profitable. Immediately, sparks fly—but not the romantic kind.

Is this movie groundbreaking? Absolutely not. But that's not why you watch Hallmark holiday films. “Love at the Thanksgiving Parade” offers an enjoyable, if cringy, escape into a world where

conflicts are mild, love conquers all and everything is wrapped up in a neat bow by the end. It's the perfect film to watch with a warm drink, a cozy blanket and a willingness to laugh at (and with) its cheesiness.

2. “A Christmas Treasure”

Hallmark movies often lean on familiar formulas to create their holiday magic and “A Christmas Treasure” is no exception. It's a story of self-discovery, romance and nostalgia—all wrapped up in a shiny Hallmark package.

While the movie has its endearing moments, it also leans heavily into its clichés, resulting in a charming yet cringy holiday offering that feels almost too polished for its own good.

The story revolves around Lou, an aspiring writer who discovers a 100-year-old time capsule in her small town. As she sifts through the items, Lou begins questioning her life's direction, wondering if she should leave her small town to pursue her dreams in the big city. She meets Kyle, a talented chef passing through town who serves as both her romantic interest and the voice of reason.

The premise is classic Hallmark: small-town girl meets big decisions with a side of romance to sweeten the deal. The time capsule adds a unique touch, but it doesn't take long for the movie to veer into familiar territory.

“A Christmas Treasure” is the kind of movie you watch when you want a light, comforting holiday escape. It's cozy and full of heart. If you can embrace its over-the-top sentimentality, you'll find yourself smiling along with its charm.

1. “Catch Me If You Claus”

If Hallmark has taught us anything, it's that the holidays are the perfect time for implausible plotlines and heartwarming twists.

The movie's setup is as bizarre as it is intriguing: Avery Quinn, a struggling segment producer with dreams of being a reporter, stumbles upon Chris, the alleged son of Santa Claus, who she initially mistakes for a burglar.

Chris insists he's the real deal and Avery reluctantly teams up with him to prove his innocence while unraveling a crime spree committed by the mysterious “Santa Crook.”

While the romantic subplot is serviceable, it often feels secondary to the movie's comedic antics and caper plot. Avery and Chris share some sweet

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moments, like bonding over their struggles to live up to their parents' legacies, but their romance never quite hits the swoon-worthy heights of other Hallmark films.

Instead, their relationship feels more like a buddy comedy with occasional romantic sparks—a refreshing twist for a Hallmark holiday movie.

“Catch Me If You Claus” isn’t trying to be profound or groundbreaking—it’s here to entertain and it succeeds in spades. With its zany plot, cringy

one-liners and a himbo Santa who steals the show, the movie delivers exactly what you’d expect from a Hallmark holiday film: festive fun with a heavy dose of ridiculousness.

What makes these movies so cringy isn’t their flaws—it’s their earnest commitment to delivering holiday cheer. They don’t shy away from overused tropes, sugary dialogue, or wildly implausible scenarios. Instead, they lean into them, creating a safe, comforting world where love is inevitable, problems

are easily solved, and everything is wrapped up with a neat bow.

These movies remind us that the holidays aren’t about perfection—they’re about finding joy, even in the cheesy, ridiculous moments. So grab a cozy blanket, a mug of hot cocoa, and let yourself bask in the warm, cringy glow of Hallmark holiday magic.



Five cringy holiday movies to get you in the Christmas spirit.

COLLAGE BY HAELEY CARPENTER

Tree Lighting Festivities kick off the holiday season

BY BROOKLYN MCKINNEY
Multimedia Journalist

The Christmas season is upon us, which means that as college students, we get to take a much-needed break from the stress of exams and finding parking on campus to join our friends and family in the holiday atmosphere of joy and love.

But who says Tarleton can’t recreate that feeling on campus while everyone is waiting? I think Dr. Hurley said it best at Tarleton’s annual Christmas Tree Lighting on November 2nd, at the Trogon Lawn.

“I just wanted to remind everybody how important it is to remain committed to family, friends and remembering what the holiday season is really about,

and in the end, it’s about those we love,” he said. “So we’re thankful you chose to be here today, and we’re going to have a great night.”

Dr. Hurley also offered some words of encouragement for students, as they’re “nearing the final stretch” of the semester.

After Dr. Hurley joined his family onstage to speak, everyone gathered to watch them light the tree. The festivities went on from 6 to 8 p.m., with plenty of photo opportunities as well as a chance to write a letter to Santa, grab hot cocoa and some snacks or even to grab a free sweater and get a Grassburr for those who were feeling nostalgic.

Hailey Kimmerle, a sophomore kinesiology major and a member of the Alpha Omicron Pi sorority on campus

reminisced on last year’s memories with her friends.

“One of my favorite memories from last year was when they had the big blowup snowglobe and me and all of my friends fit into it and the thing almost came down, but it was pretty funny.”

Carols with a side of Christmas cheer echoed across campus, and Tarleton’s choir even had a stunning acapella performance of “Mary Did You Know?”.

Long lines of students eagerly waited in anticipation for at least 30 minutes before the event.

Freshman Thomas Bennington expressed his excitement for the Christmas Tree Lighting while waiting to get in.

“I’m kind of just excited about the

atmosphere, you know? You come to one of these things and see all the fun stuff they got planned.”

His cousin, freshman Caitlyn Hardy, was the most excited about getting a free cozy sweatshirt while sophomore Emma Parker couldn’t wait to write her letter to Santa.

“I haven’t done it since I was a little kid,” Parker said.

Whether your favorite thing about the annual Christmas Tree Lighting is the hot cocoa, free sweater, or telling Santa what you wanted for Christmas, I think we can all agree that this is a tradition that never fails to bring our Tarleton family together.

Good luck during finals week Texans.

HOLIDAY EDITION

Favorite Feasts: popular Thanksgiving meals

BY LINDSEY HUGHES

Multimedia Journalist

Thanksgiving, a holiday often recognized not just as a time for thankful communion with friends and family, but also a time to feast on famous Thanksgiving meals.

This time of year looks different for everyone; culture, location and family dynamics play a huge role in the different types of foods served for the holiday.

Many versions of a “perfect” Thanksgiving meal exist depending on the person. Some consist of traditional favorites and universally loved dishes, while others include “nonconventional” foods.

Exploring the different meals that families eat over the holidays can be enlightening, with many varying experiences.

Tarleton State University sophomore psychology major Kynlie Bogle, says that her family likes to keep things traditional. Her Thanksgiving looks similar every year, and usually consist of the typical holiday foods.

“My family keeps our Thanksgiving meals pretty classic, and we always eat around lunchtime. We have turkey, mashed potatoes and stuffing,” Bogle said.

Tarleton sophomore and agribusiness major Colby Christian usually has a much more nontraditional spread on his table for Thanksgiving dinner. His family has two Thanksgiving celebrations, stretching the holiday across multiple days.

“My favorite Thanksgiving dish is either the honey and cinnamon covered ham or prime ribs...the perfect meal spread to me is prime rib, ham, mac and cheese, mashed taters and grannies’ special sweet tea.” Christian said, “Prime rib and beer dip is probably the



Thanksgiving cornucopia with holiday foods.

PHOTO COURTESY PIXABAY

most nontraditional thing we have on our table”

Maddie Sanders is an elementary education major at Tarleton, whose Thanksgivings consist of a variety of meats and side dishes.

“My family’s Thanksgiving meals are always fairly classic, we have ham and turkey, with mashed potatoes and

mac and cheese to go with it. We also always have cider to drink with our meals,” Sanders said.

Other popular and noteworthy Thanksgiving dishes include green bean casserole, which is a savory recipe often involving cream of mushroom and onions, sweet potato casserole, a sweet mix of flavors with

marshmallows and cinnamon and various dessert pies, the most common flavor being pumpkin.

The differences in families’ holiday meals serves as a great reminder that regardless of what is on your table this Thanksgiving, it is a time of celebration and gratitude.

HOLIDAY EDITION

Six local non-profits making a difference

BY THOMAS ENGELBERT*Multimedia Journalist*

Stephenville is home to a diverse array of organizations that are dedicated to making a positive impact in the lives of residents, animals and families in our community. From providing safe homes for children and families to supporting the welfare of animals, these local non-profits are at the heart of building a stronger, more compassionate Erath County. Whether you're looking to volunteer, donate or simply learn more, these organizations are always in need of support and they welcome everyone who wants to get involved.

CASA for Cross Timbers

Mission: Ensuring children have a safe, secure, and nurturing environment.

Since 1977, CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates) has been a voice for children in foster care, ensuring their needs and best interests are represented in court. Volunteers play a vital role in supporting the child and their family, working towards stability and well-being.

For more information about their mission or how to volunteer, visit casacta.org.

Erath County Humane Society

Mission: Providing care and homes for lost or unwanted animals.

This independent non-profit is dedicated to the welfare of animals in Erath County. They reunite pets with their owners, reduce pet overpopulation and find loving homes for adoptable animals. With a focus on community engagement, the Humane Society is a cornerstone for animal welfare in the area.

Learn more or find volunteer opportunities at erathcountyhumesociety.com.

PRCAC (Paluxy River Children's Advocacy Center)

Mission: Promoting the healing of child abuse victims one child at a time.

PRCAC provides a safe, child-friendly



The Chamber of Stephenville non-profits making a difference in Stephenville.

PHOTO COURTESY ERATH TX

environment where victims of abuse can share their stories and feel heard. They guide children through the legal process to ensure justice and support their healing journey by fostering a sense of security and belonging.

For more information or to support their mission, visit paluxyrivercac.org.

Foster's Home for Children

Mission: Providing a safe and nurturing environment for children in need.

For over 60 years, Foster's Home for Children has offered a home for children from across the nation. Their cottage-style homes provide care for children in the foster system and privately placed youth. Recently, their SOAR Program has expanded to support young adults aging out of foster care, helping them transition into independence.

Explore more about their programs or donate online at fostershome.org.

Erath County Habitat for Humanity

Mission: Building and improving homes to create a world where everyone has a better place to live.

Habitat for Humanity is part of a global nonprofit that works with

families and individuals in need of affordable housing. By partnering with future homeowners, they construct and renovate homes, offering opportunities for stability and security. Homebuyers invest "sweat equity," working alongside volunteers to build their homes and others in the community.

Habitat also operates ReStores, nonprofit shops that sell furniture, appliances and building materials at affordable prices. The proceeds fund housing initiatives locally and globally.

Ready to help? Volunteer, donate or explore ReStore opportunities through your local chapter at erathcountyhabitatforhumanity.org.

Fifty Women Strong




Mission: Empowering women to make a lasting impact through philanthropy.

Founded in 2021, Fifty Women Strong is a unique foundation focused on raising funds to support Erath County through community-driven philanthropy. Membership is open to any woman who donates \$1,000, and each year, members vote on which grassroots organizations and initiatives will receive funding. The foundation

supports small, local groups that often lack access to major fundraising resources, with an emphasis on culture, education, the environment, family, and health and wellness. Every donation is 100% tax-deductible, and grants are awarded at the spring meeting.

For more information, membership details, or to submit requests, visit 50womenstrong.org or contact Dr. Rita Cook at 785-376-2570.

This holiday season, consider giving the gift of time and compassion to those in need in our community. Volunteering, donating, or simply spreading awareness about these incredible local organizations can bring a little extra holiday magic to those who need it most. As Tarleton State University students, we have the opportunity to make a meaningful impact during this season of giving. Whether you're looking to volunteer or contribute in other ways, your support can help make this holiday season brighter for families, children, and animals in Stephenville.

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