THE CURRENT SAUCE

02-03 NEWS

Read about NSU's annual Christmas GALA put on by the Dear School of Creative and Performing Arts, and how the pandemic brought a wave of fake tickets being sold for the Natchitoches Christmas festival.

04-05 ARTS & LIVING

In this set of stories read about how Front Street businesses prepare for the Holiday season, things to keep in mind while attending the Natchitoches Christmas festival and get inspired by some winter fashion ideas.

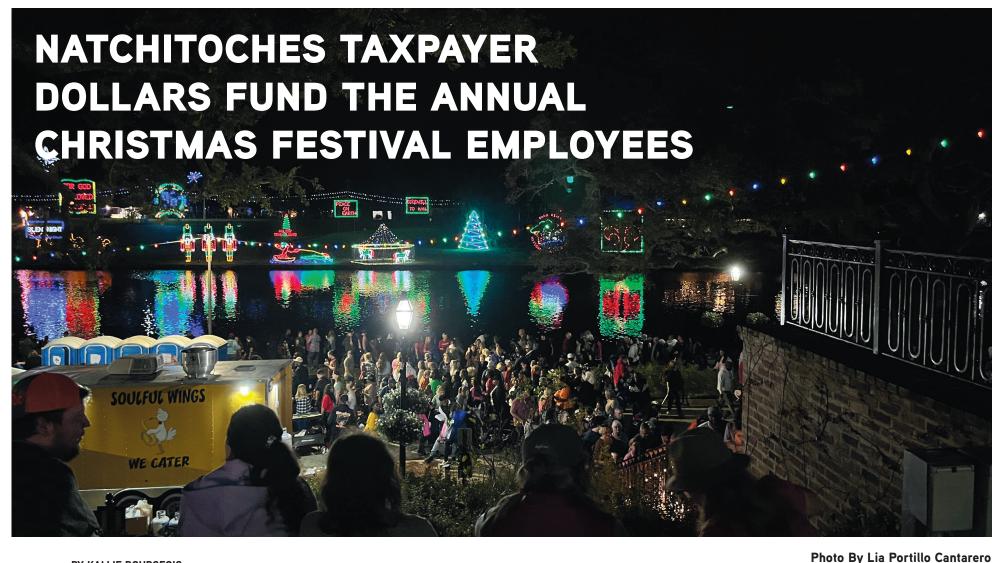
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NSU Demons' basketball teams stay over holiday breaks to perfect their game.

07 VIEWPOINTS

Read Destin Lopez's opinion piece on why "Happy Holidays" creates an inclusive environment.

NOVEMBER



BY KALLIE BOURGEOIS

As the 97th Annual Natchitoches Christmas festival nears, attendees should be cautious about where they buy their tickets.

peculation among Natchitoches residents regarding their taxpayer dollars funding the lights and decorations of the annual Natchitoches Christmas Festival has been proven false.

Natchitoches Mayor R onnie Williams Jr. explained that no additional taxes are added on Natchitoches residents to fund the Christmas festival. However, the city's employees working during the festival are paid through taxpayer dollars. "Many people say how we pay for the lights, is that the people's light bills go up. But that's not true either," Williams clarified.

Williams explained that the Historic District Business Association (HDBA) plays a large part in funding the Christmas festival. property taxes do not fund the event.

"Property taxes on land owned do not fund the Natchitoches Christmas Festival," Masson said. "It is funded through the Natchitoches Historic District Foundation, which gets money from hotel and motel taxes in the parish and through ticket sales for festival admission, corporate sponsors, etc." Christmas festival, because the festival is a staple of Natchitoches tradition," Jett said.

"With all the amount of effort put into the festival, it's pretty obvious," Jett added.

Heather Salter Dromm, an instructor in the English department, believed that the Christmas festival's funds come

"There's no special tax for the Christmas festival," Williams said. "It's true to the extent that you have employees that are being paid by the taxpayers, so to that extent you have taxpayer dollars being used only for employee-based support."

The employees paid by taxpayer funds include those in the public works department, responsible for maintaining cleanliness at the festival, law enforcement providing security and utility workers managing the installation of the decorations. "There's an organization called the Historic District Business Association that is mostly incharge of funding," Williams said. "They get their money primarily from vendors and the armbands that they sell, that's where the most of their revenue comes from." Natchitoches residents who are also faculty, staff and students at Northwestern State University of Louisiana shared their opinions on what they believe their taxes support during this holiday season.

Stephanie Masson, an instructor in the Department of English, Languages and Cultural Studies and a former editor for The Natchitoches Times, was already aware of HDBA's role in financing the Christmas festival. Masson believes her Denali Cobb, a senior psychology major and Natchitoches resident, was unsure of the exact funding but believed that taxes did not finance the Christmas festival.

"I know from other festivals in Louisiana, funding money comes from vendor fees and sponsors," Cobb explained. "They also charge guests to get in, which I think could possibly help cover the cost of the festival."

Rannon Jett, a freshman communication major, believed that taxes played a role in financing the festival.

"Yes, taxpayer dollars go into the

from ticket sales and not taxes.

"I am not 100% sure, but I think that the Christmas festival funds itself through ticket sales," Dromm said.

Dromm also said that she greatly appreciates the Christmas festival, and what it does for local businesses and their employees with the tourist revenue it brings to the Natchitoches area.

Despite contradicting opinions and uncertainties, Williams has confirmed that Natchitoches taxpayers' dollars are not allocated for the planning and setup of the Christmas festival.

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NEWS



This year's theme revolves around the favorite family pastime during the Christmas season of sitting at home with loved ones and enjoying some of the many Christmas movie classics.

35th Annual Christmas Gala

BY DAVID WEST – NSU NEWS BUREAU

ATCHITOCHES - The Dear School of Creative and Performing Arts at Northwestern State University will present the 35th Annual Christmas Gala on Nov. 29-30 at 7 p.m. and Dec. 1 at 7 p.m. and 9 p.m. in the A.A. Fredericks Auditorium.

Tickets are \$15. NSU, BPCC@NSU, and LSMSA students are admitted free with a current student I.D. Tickets can be purchased online at www.nsu.la/ Gala23,

Dr. Robert Cardwell is the Gala director. More

chosen an opera-inspired finale in honor of Jim Bob Key, co-founder of the Natchitoches-Northwestern Symphony Society and supporter of the arts at NSULA.

"Last year was my first time directing this wonderful event, and I am honored to once again lead this incredible faculty in preparation for this year's Christmas Gala," said Cardwell. "Rather than try to tie a bunch of music

together to tell a story, I thought it would be fun to allow the music to be the centerpiece of the program. You'll get to hear some of your favorite Christmas music from Some of the ensembles involved this year include the Natchitoches-Northwestern Symphony Orchestra, NSU Jazz Orchestra, NSU Chamber Choir, Musical Theatre Ensemble, The NSU Dance Company, the NSU Percussion Ensemble, Opera Theater Ensemble, Improv Troupe and other CAPA students.

SCAN ME!

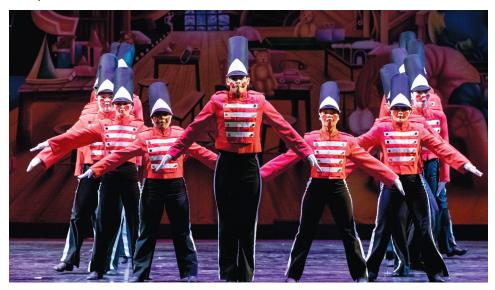


than 300 Northwestern State students, faculty and staff in the School of Creative and Performing Arts combine their talents to present the Gala as a kickoff to the Natchitoches Christmas Festival. Large crowds attend the Gala each year which is based on the long-running Radio City Music Hall Christmas Spectacular.

This year's theme revolves around the favorite family pastime during the Christmas season of sitting at home with loved ones and enjoying some of the many Christmas movie classics. This year's gala will feature some of the most beloved Hollywood Christmas tunes. As a special treat, we have also classic and more recent movies and television shows. We will also close our program with a rather hilarious take on some of opera's most famous tunes in 'Santa Claus: The Opera!"



Photos by Chris Reich



Current Sauce Staff

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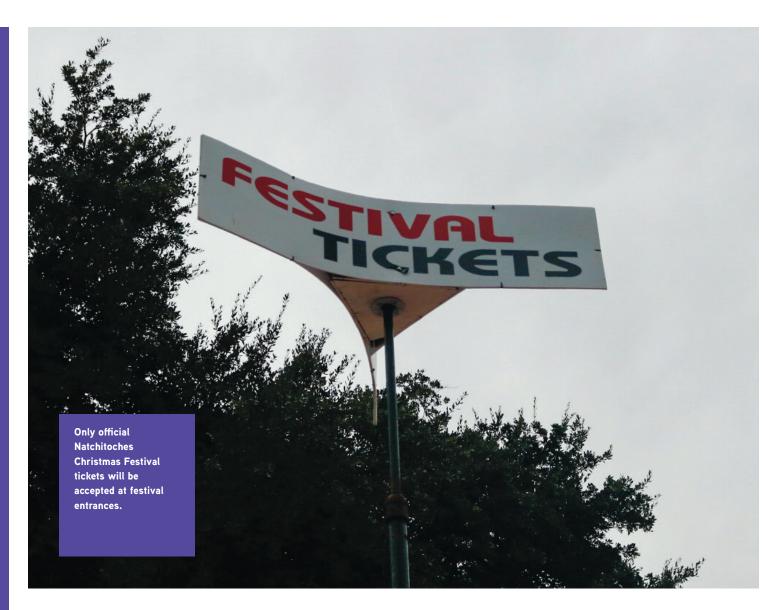
FOR A By Garret Ambrose

If your past has held hardships Fraught struggles and choking breaths

I wish for your future to be kind I would like for time to be gentle

If I could, I would smooth your past Press gentle fingers to your history book

Rewrite every page to suit you But that would change you, and I adore you



How fake tickets made their way into the Natchitoches Christmas festival

BY NINA OVALLE

ach year, anywhere from 10,000 to 30,000 official Natchitoches Christmas Festival of Lights tickets are purchased by consumers from all around the country. Beyond that, however, there is a growing number of fake tickets being sold within the community.

Jill Leo, Natchitoches historic district business association director, shared that a major issue this festival season is the creation of fake festival events.

"I can tell you right now there are probably over 50 fake Natchitoches Christmas events that have been added to Facebook, they're saying it's an event and they're copying all of our and offering 'discounts' to those who purchase from them. Buying from any private individuals puts consumers at risk of being scammed.

Leo explained that the sale of scam festival tickets began in 2020 due to the limited festival capacity. Guidelines set by the Natchitoches Fire Marshal's office limited the sale of tickets greatly.

"Because of the nature of things in 2020, we were only allowed to have 3,000 people on the riverbank each weekend, so once we sold out of 3,000 tickets, we could not sell any more official tickets," Leo said.

Festival tickets in 2020 sold out months before the festival had started which

Festival tickets will be accepted at festival entrances.

Official festival tickets are only credible for the selected date purchased at checkout and selected by the consumer. If tickets are purchased at the festival, ticket booths will be available on Front Street and the Riverfront and can be purchased with cash or credit.

When attending the festival with prepurchased tickets, attendees should bring their receipt with them to avoid any errors or misconception. Visitors will need to supply proof of purchase in order to receive an armband to enter the festival area.

If there is anyone in this world who deserves A soft epilogue, an easy descent It is you Glorious, gorgeous you

I would be Joan of Arc for you I would tie your banner to my wrist And use your name as a battle cry Though you need no champion, and I am not much of one

Devotion is a strange thing And my loyalty may waver some day But for now (and ever, in any capacity)

You have me. Endlessly. Ardently.

You have me.



information," Leo said.

Rather than scam through a thirdparty website, social media has been the main source of fake Natchitoches Christmas festival tickets.

Fake Natchitoches Christmas Facebook accounts are using bots to increase their following by thousands a day. These accounts have spread in popularity, through their use of bots, and gained a false sense of credibility within the community.

"Most of the scamming we've had has not necessarily been through a site, but just people posting that they have tickets for sale and unfortunately other people fall for it and purchase those 'tickets," Leo said.

To further their false credibility, the scam accounts are also stealing official Natchitoches Christmas graphics caused consumers to trust in thirdparty purchasing.

Once pandemic practices were excluded, sale of tickets returned to normal. Leo stresses that now there is no recess of tickets.

"On a typical year, we don't run out of tickets so there's no reason to buy tickets from a third party," Leo said.

Fake tickets may not be sold as often as in 2020, but those looking to buy tickets should still stay aware.

"Out of all the tickets we receive for the festival, we may have been presented with about 35 scam tickets, it's usually not a high number anymore," Leo said. "We're not having tons of people coming to the gates with scam tickets, but it does happen periodically."

Only official Natchitoches Christmas

All information on the Natchitoches Christmas Festival is provided on their official website, natchitocheschristmas. com, including the complete festival schedule, ticket information, questions and all contact information.

To avoid purchasing fake tickets in total, Leo suggested that tickets should only be purchased from the official Natchitoches Christmas website or inperson at the festival.

"We tell everyone the same thing, either you should purchase tickets from our official website, which is natchitocheschristmas.com, or you should purchase tickets in person," Leo said. "Don't take a chance in purchasing from a third-party or an individual who is trying to get rid of their so-called tickets."

ARTS & LIVING

How Front Street businesses prepare for the Christmas Festival

BY MADELYN MURPHY

alking along Natchitoches' Front Street, the Christmas lights glimmer as businesses decorate for the upcoming holiday. They replace the pumpkins with snowmen, autumn leaves with lights and the scarecrows with Christmas trees. Each of these businesses play a part in making Christmas in Natchitoches special. However, the decorations are not all these businesses do to prepare for the holiday season.

"Christmas season is in the October, November, December time frame, and that is the busiest time of our year," Rodney Boswell, owner of Christmas at Stella's, said. "We will do almost as much during those three months as the other nine months combined."

Christmas at Stella's, located on 524 Front Street, sells Christmas decor and other merchandise. Although this store is stocked with everything Christmas all year around, the shop must prepare for a change of pace for businesses on Front Street as Christmas nears.

"To get ready to go into the Christmas season," Boswell explains, "because tourism increases on the street and traffic increases on the street, we do work to expand our inventory so that we've got the pieces available when customers come through our doors, look around and shop."

The demand increases for Christmas decor as the holiday season rolls around. Luckily, Christmas at Stella's prepares for this increase. The other businesses on Front Street, not known for their Christmas merchandise, prepare for the Holiday season too.

Catherine Clary, the manager of Louisiana Lagniappe, said, "on a normal day, I'm able to run it with just one or two people, but on a Christmas Saturday, I'll probably need about four or five people in here."



of coffee every week - They call me the coffee queen around here."

Not only does Cane River Kitchenware benefit from getting good business during the holidays, but their cats do, too. At the front counter, where customers check out, there is a jar. It is not for tips, but for donations to the two cats who live behind the store, Oliver and Midnight, so they can be fed and taken care of.

They use the money in the jar to spoil their cats with goodies. One of the two



Louisiana Lagniappe sells a variety of items from boutique clothing and other apparel to candles and gifts. With this, the tourists who add to the Natchitoches crowd during Christmas time will fill the store with customers, requiring more employees to be present. Although Louisiana Lagniappe has only been open for six weeks and has not experienced Christmas on Front Street, Clary's knowledge and experience as a shop worker in Front Street will prepare them for the season.

"This is my fifth year on Front Street," Clary said. "We have retail experience because we're the sister store to Louisiana Purchase right down Front Street, so we're just hoping the things that have been trending and popular throughout the year will be trending and popular during the Christmas season, too."

Plantation Treasures workers love the job.

each Christmas

engage customers.

business hours do not change,

their customers happy.

it," Rachal said.

Plantation Treasures' staff work longer

organized, their items fully stocked and

"We're wonderfully busy, but we love

Rachal and other workers for Plantation

Treasures welcome their customers

with a kind greeting when they walk

through the doors. The closer it gets

who file in the store, the more

to Christmas and the more customers

hours so they can keep their store

Rayna Treme, who has been an employee of Cane River Kitchenware for almost five years, said, "the customers have such good spirits which really helps the chaoticness."

When the crowd of customers gets to where it feels like, as Treme described it, a rock concert where everyone is standing shoulder-to-shoulder, the Christmas-spirited customers usually let the employees make the most out of the chaotic environment. Cane River Kitchenware is prepared for the amount of customers that come their way each Christmas.

"We pretty much have to double up everything [to keep the shelves stocked]," Treme said. "Especially when it comes to coffee. I take care of coffee orders, and I have to make triple orders

cats, Midnight, is 18 years old. Sadly, they found out that he has stomach cancer, but the employees have been sure to spoil him even more by starting him on wet food.

During the Christmas season, the jar fills up more than usual, allowing the business to buy goodies for the cats' Christmas presents. They buy them food, treats and, last year, they were able to buy them a cat house to keep them warm during the winter.

The owners, managers, staff and employees in Front Street businesses work hard to prepare for their Christmas crowds, decorating and stocking their stores with extra goods to help make the holiday season a special one for all of Natchitoches.

ARTS & LIVING

Tips for attending the Natchitoches **Christmas Festival**

BY MARY FLETCHER

s the famous Christmas song says, "It's the most wonderful time of the year." The streets of Natchitoches are aglow with Christmas lights, and historic Front Street is abuzz with activity during the Christmas Festival. As a first-year, transfer or international student, the first Christmas Festival experience can be both exciting and daunting.

Here are some tips for a safe and enjoyable Christmas Festival experience.

First and foremost, have fun! There are a variety of events taking place during the Christmas Festival season, such as the Light the Way 5K on Nov. 19 and the Mistletoe Market on Dec. 2. There will also be live musicians on the Riverfront on Friday and Saturday nights, food trucks available seven days a week and fireworks on Saturday nights at 7 p.m.

Speaking of fireworks, be sure to arrive early to the Riverfront so you can get a good spot for the fireworks show. No one likes having the view of a fireworks show blocked or partially obscured because they weren't able to get a spot in time. It is definitely recommended to get a spot directly on the Riverfront.

While you're enjoying these festive events, it is important

to dress warmly. Just because Louisiana weather is mostly hot or warm doesn't mean the weather won't change on a dime. Check the weather on your weather app and layer accordingly.

Do not bring a purse. If you need to bring personal items, get a fanny pack

Given that the traffic situation on Christmas Festival day can be hectic due to both downtown bridges being closed (as John Dunn, associate professor of fine arts, can attest) walking is usually the preferred way to get to the festivities. Safety in numbers sounds cliche, but going downtown with a group is a much safer way to enjoy the Festival.

Mikalee Sawyer, a senior psychology major, said that if you do intend to drive, it is important to always park in well-lit areas. She also said that leaving before or during the fireworks show is an efficient way to avoid break-ins.

"Always park in a well-lit area and try to leave before or during the fireworks show. That's usually when the break-ins tend to happen because everyone is focused on the fireworks and nothing can be heard over the fireworks," Sawyer said.

> With the Christmas Festival comes break-ins to vehicles and people stealing valuables from others. Therefore, it is extremely important to be careful what you bring to the Festival.



Natchitoches resident, Jonathan Sepulvado, wearing a cardigan, jeans and Birkenstocks to counter act the Louisiana fall weather.

Winter fashion in Louisiana weather

BY KEVIN THOMAS

rom the beginning of the week, with temperatures at 40 degrees, to the end of the week reaching 70 degrees, it can be challenging to decide when to dress accordingly for winter. This especially seems to be an issue when someone may want to achieve the fall or winter aesthetic and feel.

Dressing in layers is not an option for Louisiana's weather. Many people may not choose a puffer jacket and a turtleneck sweater when leaving the house. Instead, they might leave the house with a long sleeve shirt and a lightweight overcoat that is promised to keep them warm.

When dressing for winter, it is important to dress in light layers, allowing for easy and accessible ways to take your clothes on and off when it

access to cool weather. This would be better than picking out a pair of pants, avoiding the trapping of heat that can occur.

To set the outfit off and add a final touch will be sensible footwear. Chunky boots, new sneakers or comfortable sandals would be good choices. The choice of shoes can also be someone's best option when wanting to build an outfit, because the shoe is often what makes or breaks the outfit.

To achieve the winter and fall aesthetic, choose darker and warmer colored clothing opposed to bright clothing. Fall colors typically include oranges and creams with a hint of black, that will allow a sense of comfort and warmth. For a winter feel, picking colors like white, powder blues and cool gray tones can help establish that winter

Photo by Kevin Thoma

On a more serious note, drunk driving

tends to increase during the Christmas Festival season. Your idea of celebrating the festive season may be drinking a nice eggnog from Maggio's. However, if you do intend to celebrate by drinking, make sure to have someone in your group serve as a designated driver.

Amy Ables, an alumna of Northwestern State University of Louisiana who currently works as a family nurse practitioner, shared words of wisdom to that same effect.

"If you are planning on drinking or participating in other recreational activities, do so wisely, and always have a DD (designated driver). No one wants to call your parents after you have been involved in a preventable accident," Ables said.

One piece of advice shared by

Catrice Ellis, a sophomore social work major, was to bring a fanny pack to put your valuables in as opposed to bringing a large bag that someone could easily reach into and steal from.

"Do not bring a purse. If you need to bring personal items, get a fanny pack," Ellis said.

However you choose to celebrate the festive season, the Christmas Festival provides people the opportunity to get out into the Natchitoches community and spend quality time with family and friends. Safety and awareness of your surroundings is also an extremely important factor in enjoying your Natchitoches Christmas Festival experience.

is warmer at midday and chilly at night.

A fleece jacket is a good option for an overcoat that is easy to take off and put back on. With the ability to keep you warm during those chilly nights, it will also allow for the extra element your outfit may need. Fleece jackets come in many colors and patterns that will allow for pop in one's outfit. But while you may not be in need of that fleece jacket during that midday heat, it will be quite easy to take it off and on when needed.

If the option of a fleece jacket does not seem like one's style or they are afraid of the heat it may conduct, cardigans or thin cover ups are also fine picks. Oversized cardigans are a great choice for layering and adding dimension to an outfit.

Pairing these options with a skirt or shorts allows your body to have that feel

Natchitoches boasts several stores catering to many styles while remaining affordable, ensuring outfits that are ready for the fall and winter weather.

Clothing stores like Brenda's Clothing and Accessory have a wide variety of options for women who are looking to shop local and find cute ways to stay stylish yet cool during winter. If you are on a budget but still want to expand your closet, Goodwill Industries or Rolling Hills Ministries Thrift Store can have many hidden pieces that one may find to best fit their style or something they have been wanting to achieve.

While Louisiana's weather may be challenging to work around, making it frustrating, it is also a great time to work on creating and establishing a new wardrobe or style for yourself.

ARTS & LIVING



Balancing NSU Demons basketball and the holidays

BY CHRISTIAN ROBINSON

orthwestern State University of Louisiana's Demons basketball men's and women's team practice over the holiday breaks to ensure the success of their seasons. With this consistency comes the sacrifice of missing holidays with their families.

With games extending into November and December, NSU players are practicing during the break. This could

be a unique experience, especially with 14 new student-athletes in the men's basketball team, including four freshmen.

"One thing that is dear to me is family and even though through the week of Thanksgiving we may have practices, I will allow my players to go home for Christmas," Players believe that not being able to go home for the holidays can be good for the team. It allows them to communicate and spend time with teammates outside of practice and classes, building closer bonds and better teamwork.

"I remember on my last team that not going home for the holidays actually builds more cooperation amongst the team and helps us approve trust among players," J.C. Riley Jr.,sophomore center, said.

Our goal for the season is to get a ring and be a part of March madness with our fellow brothers

With senior leaders rallying the freshmen and communicating that the NSU basketball team is a family, players find solace in one another's company during the holidays.

"I try to be a great teammate and be there



head coach Rick Cabrera said.

Adapting to this demanding schedule, particularly for freshman athletes, may lead to holiday blues affecting players during the season.

"Sometimes it is a business, and sometimes it's family matters. The players on this team know that. I believe I will push through it," said head coach Cabrera.

With the holidays in mind, not having a full break would be something many students would have a hard time accepting. However, the men's basketball players have tunnel vision for their one goal this season: winning.

"At first as a freshman, it was difficult but more and more I got used to it and now it doesn't even cross my mind," Justin Wilson ,senior forward, said. for my guys if they ever feel homesick during the holidays. I offer them to come spend the holidays with me and my family if they can't go to theirs," Mitch Williams, freshmen guard, said.

However, the team will not allow anything to deter them from their ultimate goal: reaching March Madness and earning a championship ring.

"Our goal for the season is to get a ring and be a part of March madness with our fellow brothers," Wilson said.

> On Nov. 6, 2023, the men's basketball team opened their season with a win and prepares for the rest of the season.

VIEWPOINTS

Embracing Inclusivity: The significance of "Happy Holidays"

BY DESTIN LOPEZ

orking in customer service, particularly where you deal with older customers, you might know how vocal people can be about their beliefs and feelings. In the South, as winter approaches, service workers are often subjected to hearing customers' thoughts, especially when opting for "Happy Holidays" instead of "Merry Christmas" when bidding farewell.

Some Christians who celebrate Christmas feel that December is solely the Christmas season, that it should be the only holiday that is celebrated during this time. This could be rooted in a perception that their faith is the only valid one.

This sentiment might also come from the feeling that Christianity is being 'pushed out of schools and government.' Although, the First Amendment clearly established the separation of church and state. Public schools, ideally, should be free in matters of religion, ensuring that students of all faiths should not have others forced upon them.

In fact, Christianity is sometimes integrated into public schools in the United States. The daily Pledge of Allegiance, during which most schools require students to recite while facing the flag, includes the phrase "one nation under God." In most schools in the U.S., students are required to recite this every day, regardless of the students' religious beliefs.

At my high school, there were consequences for not standing up when the bell signaled the daily ritual. Furthermore, most U.S. schools observe Christian holidays, which means students of other faiths must either attend school during their holidays or skip classes to observe their traditions.

The Pledge of Allegiance is just one example of Christianity's presence in all kinds of public life, despite claims of its exclusion and beliefs of being persecuted for being Christian. Christmas is a major and commercialized holiday in the U.S. Nearly every department store caters to Christmas-themed advertisements, decorations and exclusive Christmas deals. But Christmas is not the only holiday in December: others include Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, Boxing Day and Ōmisoka. All those holidays are celebrated not only globally, but also by Natchitoches and Louisiana residents.

Choosing to say "Happy Holidays" is a way to include everyone. In the grand scheme of things, one statement does not mean life or death. Still, everyone should have an opportunity to feel included. I have heard personal accounts where Jewish peers, for example, participated in Christmas activities in elementary school, never able to share their Hanukkah traditions.

Simple changes like referring to "winter break" instead of "Christmas break," including activities that respect diverse religious backgrounds and overall allowing an environment where students can be proud of their faith are meaningful steps. Christianity is not the only religion, and no one should be made to feel bad for the religion that they chose to celebrate, whether Christian or not.

Illustration by Naomi Adam



Choosing to say "Happy Holidays" is a way to include everyone.





The Sauce's Holiday Playlist

Juan Castilla- The Christmas Song by Shanw Mendez, Camilla Cabello

Nina Ovalle - Holly Jolly Christmas by Burl Ives.

Juliana Nobles Pacheco- Bomba de las Navidades by Richie Ray & Bobby cruz

Kallie Bourgeois - Rudolf the red nose reindeer

Jayda Gee - This Christmas by Chris Brown **Christian Robinson** - Beautiful Christmas by Big Time Rush

Naomi Adams - All I Want For Christmas by Mariah Carey

Samuel Bailey - Santa Tell Me by Ariana Grande

Kevin Thomas - Hey Sis Its Christmas by Rupaul Drag Race

Destin Lopez- Happy x mas wars over by John Lennon and Yoko Ono

Mary Fletcher - Winter Wonderland by El Fitzgerald

Lia Portillo Cantarero- Feliz navidad by José Feliciano

Naydu Daza Maya- Mi burrito sabanero by Juana

Kelsie Campbell - Last Christmas by Wham!

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THE CURRENT SAUCE

GALLERY





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Photos by Purple Media Network Students





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