The Mysterious Maya
ON THE COVER: A close look at the frieze, or decorative band, on El Castillo in Xunantunich, Belize. El Castillo is the second largest structure in ancient and modern Belize.

ON THIS PAGE: UTSA graduate student Sarita Turcotte gazes out over the jungle from Temple 4 at one of the largest Mayan archaeological sites, Tikal, in Guatemala. The Maya have been the dominant culture in Mexico and Central America for more than 3,000 years.

Photos courtesy of Eleazar Hernández

Unraveling a Mystery
More than two dozen UTSA students braved the Belizean jungle to dig up clues that may one day unlock ancient secrets of the Maya.

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After the worst oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico signs of a larger, hidden impact are found beneath the ocean floor.

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It’s not easy leaving UTSA, and for this group of retired faculty it was impossible.

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A fascinating class about the history and evolution of the genre will put students’ knowledge into music.

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The University Career Center offers students interview training—and a wardrobe.

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One alum’s dissertation is becoming a business that may someday save lives.

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Profile of Kim D. Denver ’98, deputy assistant secretary of the Army for procurement, J.E.B.; Nutritional Letty Holbrook, E.M.B.A. ’94; Brian Woods, M.A. ’98, Ed.D. ’12; San Antonio’s newest superintendent; plus other campus and alumni news.
The Movement

I love Sombrilla. Photographers Mark McClendon went abroad and beyond the call of duty by participating in “The Movement” as well as documenting it. The students saw him as a friend and resource, asking for his perspective. Thank you all so much for your partnership and support throughout the years. LINDA A. DOMÍNGUEZ Staff

I received your copy of Sombrilla in the mail yesterday, and I have to commend you and [writer] Vincent T. Flores on the work with the article on “The Movement.” I had no idea that it would have such an impact on me reading it with Mark McClendon’s pictures. I have to say this is one of the best articles I have seen printed in Sombrilla in the seven years I have been here at UTSA. I say this because this article truly captured our student experience on this trip. I was particularly moved by the editor’s note about your experience in Atlanta. More importantly the students who have read the article, and seen the interactive map and video reflection, are amazed that their “little trip” is getting so much attention. They were already proud of the fact that they had this opportunity to go on the trip, and you have made them even more proud as this is something they will be able to share with family friends, former teachers and each other for a lifetime. My heartfelt thanks to you, Vincent and Mark for telling our story and sharing it with our alumni and supporters. MARILYN ANDERSON Staff

Wow You brought me to tears. It’s so powerful. Thank you!

YOVINE PENA Staff

Opportunity of a Lifetime

Chukki, keep the Nigerian flag flying. You are doing us proud. Make the change.

NIKRU ARAH Buffalo, N.Y.

Bullfrogs and Butterflies

Sombrilla

Fall 2011

I would like to write something about my daughter Tere Malufa, who you featured in Sombrilla Magazine. I am incredibly proud of her and her two younger sisters, Rachel and Sarah. They are my life and have provided me with precious grand-children. I do not get to see them as much as I would like to, but I see them in my heart every day.

DONNA SASSEEN San Antonio, Texas

Forever Young Sombrilla

Winter 2010

Just a note to Paul Kattapong, who you featured in the Winter 2010 issue of Sombrilla. I worked with this joyous man in Nellingen, West Germany, in the mid-1980s. His optimism and love of learning were a daily pick-me-up for you. You still look 35, Paul! MARY ANN YENOK Indianapolis, Ind.

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The day I graduated from college was one of the happiest of my life. It wasn’t so much out of a sense of completion, of achieving a life goal. It was much more basic—I was finally leaving.

No more all-nighters spent at the nearby open-all-night pancake house, trying to figure out the difference between a rock and a mineral. No more semester projects begun the day before they were due and finished 15 minutes before class was to start. No more worries about whether the C I got on my Fundamentals of Math final (yes, math was a tough one for me) would be enough to pass me out of this class.

I was finally free.

It’s been 12 years since I slid my purple and white tassel to the left, and I’ve never looked back. My only connection to the place that was home and hell had been the monthly loan statement I consistently received (and still do).

But that recently has changed.

I look back and remember all the all-nighters spent at the 24-hour pancake house only pretending to study, the nights spent goofing around with my friends, thinking about that semester project I really should start—but that I’ll certainly start tomorrow.

You helped me with my performance as a young Erita in my musical theater class, where I pranced around the stage with a suitcase. My prof told me he hated the performance so much that he passed me so I would never have to take his class again.

Oh, how I miss college.

I find as I get older and the gap widens between my undergrad experience and me, I feel more connected to my alma mater. I follow the football team and I even fly a flag outside my home. The person I was a dozen years ago would never recognize the person I am today.

Kind of bleed purple—and I like it.

I still have those nightmares where I realize on the day of the final exam that I never attended math class. But now I think that if I could, I would choose to make that night- more come true if it meant going back to college and living the good times all over again. Maybe.

Or maybe I don’t have to. I work at a university, and with an office at the Main Campus, I’m fully immersed in the culture, the life, the rhythm of the place. I’ve discovered that I don’t have to travel hundreds of miles to my alma mater just to experience school pride.

I feel the energy that comes from being on a thriving college campus.

So maybe I am reliving my college days after all, in an even better way. There are only deadlines, no exams. Even better, there’s very little math.

And my closet is becoming crowded with all the orange and blue shirts and paraphernalia I am accumul- ating. I take my sons to football games, and every one of us has our special game-day shirt. We regularly chant “Go Runners” and even my 3-year-old knows the Runnermen hand sign.

So, maybe I bleed orange and blue, as well as purple. I think I need to buy another flag.

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Saludos,
More than two years after the worst oil spill in the Gulf, signs of a larger, hidden impact are found beneath the ocean floor

BY GUILLERMO GARCIA

R esearchers looking at tiny worms, algae and other microscopic organisms among grains of sand at the water’s edge have developed a remarkable, if incomplete, picture of the sub-surface impact on sea life caused by the BP oil spill, the most devastating ever to take place in the Gulf of Mexico.

New beaches off the Louisiana and Alabama Gulf Coast that were heavily impacted by the April 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil platform blowout stand in sharp contrast to the biological changes below the surface, a federal study concludes.

The study of DNA from organisms like coastal intertidal nematode worms, some as small as one millimeter, was led by researchers from the University of New Hampshire, along with scientists from Auburn University and UTSA. It was funded by a $200,000 grant from the National Science Foundation.

The yearlong project was part of the government’s time-sensitive, post-disaster study of the damage caused by the massive oil leak occurring more than a mile below the surface, which took three months to cap.

“Recovery is taking place, there is no doubt, but at what pace, and what is the process of that recovery, we just do not know,” said Jyotsna Sharma-Srinivasan, a research assistant professor in UTSA’s Department of Biology.

Official government estimates indicate that over an 85-day period, about 2.6 million gallons of oil a day poured out of the sea floor as a result of a methane gas explosion far below the seabed. Some estimates calculated that significantly more than 2.31 billion gallons were released into the ecosystem in a huge, dark plume that eventually made landfall along the upper Gulf Coast.

Samples from beaches around Alabama’s Dauphin Island and Mobile Bay were collected shortly after the blowout but before the plume made landfall. Five months later, a second set of samples was collected after the coastal beaches were cleaned. Samples were also collected from Grand Isle, off the Louisiana coast, during a period in September 2010 when those beaches were heavily oiled.

Holly Blik, the study’s lead author, took a spoonful of pre-spill sand from each beach and extracted millions of DNA genetic barcodes from every organism in that spoonful, Sharma-Srinivasan said.

“We then sequenced a specific ‘barcode’ region of DNA from our samples and compared those pieces of DNA to online databases to determine what species were living on each beach,” she added.

The research team concluded that the oil had caused “massive harm to the microscopic creatures in coastal sands” and that a diverse mix of those organisms that existed before the spill has been obliterated, replaced by only a few species of fungi and nematodes.

“Shrimp and oysters were deeply impacted—their spawning grounds were destroyed—and the juveniles were wiped out,” she said.

But it was not until the DNA sequencing samples were taken from the worms that a clearer picture of the impact on the ecosystem emerged.

In her portion of the study, Sharma-Srinivasan found that while there had been more than 70 different species of nematodes in the sampled Gulf waters before the accident, only about six species were found afterward.

“Some worm [species] turned out to be very resistant to the oil, maybe able to eat fungi that were able to break down the hydrocarbons,” while other species were not, she said.

The scientists noted that they still don’t have a clear picture of how long the spill’s impact will be felt, whether the microscopic organisms’ diversity will return to pre-spill numbers, or whether the shoreline will be repopulated by new organisms.

“What is known is that microscopic organisms like nematodes are critical to maintaining a healthy marine habitat. They are ‘the machinery that keeps the ecosystem working,’” Blik said.

“In this instance, the worms act as a sort of mini-canary,” Sharma-Srinivasan said, adding that the microscopic organisms are a crucial element in the complex food chain and play a major role in key ecosystem functions like nutrient recycling.

She noted that a cursory view of the surface water fails to reveal what apparently has been occurring far below.

“If people look at the Gulf waters and see no oil on the surface, they often conclude the area has recovered to its original state, but that often is not the case,” she said. “The oil sinks below the sediment and may affect the entire ecosystem.”

Nematodes, like other microscopic organisms, play a critical role in the ecosystem by serving as food for fish and shrimp, which are a valuable source of revenue for the area’s fishermen.

“The worms also serve to keep the system healthy by eating bacteria and decaying matter, contributing to the decomposition process that is vital to the ecosystem’s overall health, she said. They also introduce carbon and other important minerals back into the food chain.

“But struck me was that you wouldn’t have known there was an oil spill—most of our sample sites looked like normal beaches,” said Blik, who at the time of the study was a researcher at the University of New Hampshire, but who now works at the University of California–Davis. “But when we analyzed the genomic data, there seemed to be all these biological repercussions going on.”

The research was published in the journal Public Library of Science ONE.

In their report, the scientists concluded that the “marine habitats experienced visible, heavy impacts following the spill, yet our scant knowledge of what was there before the spill has precluded a thorough assessment of this disturbance.”

Yet, the study reported, based on the researchers’ analysis of organisms before and after the massive spill, “our data suggest considerable initial impacts across Gulf beaches may be ongoing, despite the disappearance of visible surface oil in the region.”

A diverse mix of organisms has been wiped out, and only a few species of fungi and nematodes have replaced them.
They may be retired from the university, but Retired Faculty Association members’ love for UTSA lives on

BY REBECCA LUTHER

O ver box lunches from Jessica’s Deli, 10 retired faculty members shared their war stories of a nascent university, one where job interviews were conducted in the president’s temporary office in the athletics building and where many of the students were older than the faculty.

That luncheon would turn out to be the first meeting of the UTSA Retired Faculty Association, which was formally established in September 2011 by a memorandum of understanding with the university.

But even before the paperwork was drawn up, the members of the RFA were making their presence known on campus by attending and举办的 faculty functions and by knocking on doors to get answers about available benefits beyond insurance and retirement programs. (“Their happiest discovery to date?” They’re getting a campus parking permit at no cost.)

Getting retired faculty back on campus, where they invested so much of their professional lives, is the impetus behind the RFA.

“We can be a service organization for the university and a social organization for ourselves,” said RFA president Marco Martinez. “I see our group as having unlimited capabilities. It’s only limited by our imagination, and collectively we have a phenomenal imagination.”

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Field continues to mount exhibitions of his land- scape paintings, his former colleague in the De- partment of Art and Art History Jan Broderek, the group’s treasurer, works as a consultant to universities and independent colleges of art and design. Martinello has published two books on musical genre switched gears and is on campus more days than not.

And they give more than time. To date, more than 40 retirees have donated money to UTSA, with average giving of more than $17,000. Having a program to recognize RFA members’ support for students through endowed scholar- ships and other means is one thing Martinez hopes the association can accomplish. Another initiative—one they plan to begin this fall—is to collect and document their own oral histories of the university’s early days.

One item on the RFA wish list will come to fruition soon: When members lamented the loss of the university’s faculty-staff dining room a de- cade ago, a venue to form collaborations with colleagues across disciplines, they were invited to give input into a new faculty center to be con- structed in the John Peace Library.

The center, due to be completed sometime in 2013, will be a space where both retired and current faculty can connect formally and inde- pendently, and, as Broderek said, enjoy “the intense pleasure of a high level of conversation with extraordinary people”—another perk of having an association of retired scholars.

“I love that,” said Broderek, “and I hope to be doing it until my last gasp.”

The course’s goals will include “getting students to perform more frequently, to get out there and play the music in public,” said lecturer Michael Acevedo, a well-known local mariachi performer who plays on the San Antonio River Walk as well as other venues.

Begun as regional folk music in the 18th century, most likely in the state of Jalisco in southwestern Mexico, “mar- iachi” refers to the type of music—played on guitars, violins and trumpets—as well as to the musicians and the band that perform the music.

While mariachi groups in middle and high schools have been popular since the 1960s in the American South- west, particularly in the San Antonio area, “you can prob- ably count on one hand the number of university mariachi programs,” Acevedo noted.

UTSA’s community ensemble will serve to educate both the students and the general public on the various mariachi styles, Frego said. It will also help strengthen students’ mastery of the music while expanding their repertoires, which could lead to more musical engagements, Acevedo noted.

“Usually in high school or middle school, mariachi [students] will learn a few songs that they play repeat- edly,” Acevedo said. “One of the course goals will be to significantly expand both different techniques and the number of songs in their repertoire, because [a mariachi] band and喇叭 comes from how many songs you know.”

Acevedo performs with a group on the San Antonio River Walk and also serves as the mariachi and orches- tral director at the Northside Independent School District’s Sam Rayburn and Pat Neff middle schools.

He noted that his goal with the college-level course is to develop enough interest so the university could someday offer a minor in mariachi music.

While Frego said there is still work to do before a minor is created, “there is a great desire to go down that road. But first we need to build up critical mass, get more students interested in it to create a need for more classes.”

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
http://www.utsa.edu
http://www.utsa.edu/retired/
You’ve got a Friend
Student coaches help their peers navigate the stacks
BY GUILLERMO GARCIA

For students tackling college-level research projects for the first time, the library can seem daunting. But the UTSA Libraries now has a staff of five student coaches available to assist other students in finding and utilizing tools like electronic databases to help in their research projects and class assignments.

The program, known as the Peer Research Coaches, is the first of its kind, said Library Dean Krisellen Maloney. It is funded by a $30,000 Houst Foundation endowment, part of a $350,000 donation to the university by the media chain. Separately, local insurance firm USAA has donated $45,000 of a $150,000 donation to the university by the media chain. Maloney said.

“We quickly found him a nice charcoal suit, he checked it out he had a job interview in two hours, but he didn’t have the clothes to make the right impression on a potential employer, said Magnuson. “It has been just unbelievably successful, and the students’ feedback has been very positive,” she said.

With a $2,000 UTSA Family Fund grant, Magnuson was able to buy several men’s business suits in common sizes as well as women’s slacks and jackets.

“The idea came from my counselors, who were encountering a number of students who just did not have professional-quality clothing they could wear to interviews, job fairs or etiquette dinners,” she said. Since the fall semester, between 75 and 100 students have taken advantage of the free service.

Shirts are available in common sizes, and ties are also part of the loaner outfit. The only thing the service does not provide is shoes, she said.

“We are able to offer an extended service to our students, so they will have the confidence they need,” Magnuson noted. “Now we help [students] with the complete package, getting them resumés together, helping them with interview practice and getting them professionally dressed for the interview.”

Web Extra: Go to sombrilla.utsa.edu/closet to watch a video about the Career Closet.

Dress for Success
Center provides interview training and a wardrobe
BY GUILLERMO GARCIA

The student was in a panic. A senior about to graduate, he had a job interview in two hours, but he didn’t have the proper attire. That’s where the Career Closet in the University Career Center came in.

“We quickly found him a nice charcoal suit, he checked it out and was on his way,” recalls Audrey Magnuson, director of the Career Center.

An idea born of need last December—getting students professionally dressed for job or internship interviews—is proving successful this year.

The Career Closet loans out high-quality suits to students who would not otherwise have the clothes to make the right impression on a potential employer, said Magnuson.

“It has been just unbelievably successful, and the students’ feedback has been very positive,” she said.

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Don’t Do This!
No party, sweat, T-shirts, muscle shirts, ball caps or pajamas. Save those for home. Slow your MP3 player away and turn off your cell phone—texting can wait. Leave your flip flops for the beach.

Example B
Do This!
Keep it conservative. Men should wear a suit, tie and dress shoes. Subdued colors like gray, navy and black are best. Women should also wear a suit with pants or skirt. Subdued colors like gray, navy and black are best. Women should also wear a suit with pants or skirt. Subdued colors like gray, navy and black are best. Women should also wear a suit with pants or skirt. Subdued colors like gray, navy and black are best. Women should also wear a suit with pants or skirt. Subdued colors like gray, navy and black are best. Women should also wear a suit with pants or skirt. Subdued colors like gray, navy and black are best. Women should also wear a suit with pants or skirt. Subdued colors like gray, navy and black are best. Women should also wear a suit with pants or skirt. Subdued colors like gray, navy and black are best. Women should also wear a suit with pants or skirt. Subdued colors like gray, navy and black are best. Women should also wear a suit with pants or skirt. Subdued colors like gray, navy and black are best. Women should also wear a suit with pants or skirt. Subdued colors like gray, navy and black are best. Women should also wear a suit with pants or skirt. Subdued colors like gray, navy and black are best. Women should also wear a suit with pants or skirt. Subdued colors like gray, navy and black are best. Women should also wear a suit with pants or skirt. Subdued colors like gray, navy and black are best. Women should also wear a suit with pants or skirt. Subdued colors like gray, navy and black are best. Women should also wear a suit with pants or skirt. Subdued colors like gray, navy and black are best. Women should also wear a suit with pants or skirt. Subdued colors like gray, navy and black are best. Women should also wear a suit with pants or skirt. Subdued colors like gray, navy and black are best. Women should also wear a suit with pants or skirt. Subdued colors like gray, navy and black are best. Women should also wear a suit with pants or skirt. Subdued colors like gray, navy and black are best. Women should also wear a suit with pants or skirt. Subdued colors like gray, navy and black are best. Women should also wear a suit with pants or skirt. Subdde
In an effort to increase opportunities for small businesses—the critical backbone of many of Latin America’s and the Caribbean’s emerging economies—UTSA’s Institute for Economic Development (IED) has expanded its effort to provide expert assistance to foreign governments in that part of the world.

Basing it on the model used in the U.S., the IED’s International Trade Center is expanding its outreach services beyond Mexico, into the Caribbean and Central and South America.

The program’s aim is to facilitate trade opportunities by setting up assistance networks for micro, small and medium-sized businesses and then link them to each other and to existing networks throughout the Americas via an online trade platform.

In doing so, the program will help Latin American governments promote the growth, innovation and competitiveness of their small business sector and help their business people benefit from international trade.

It will empower residents to generate a stable source of income for themselves, more tax revenue for their government and expanded market and trade opportunities for U.S. businesses, officials said.

“Seldom is there an opportunity to create a win-win-win situation,” said Cliff Paredes, director of the International Trade Center, which hosts the federally funded program. “This program accomplishes that.”

The expansion into Latin America and the Caribbean is funded by the U.S. Department of State and the Agency for International Development. The U.S. government has committed $1.5 million over the next three years to support the university’s efforts in Central America and the Caribbean, Paredes noted.

He said the program is modeled after the Small Business Development Centers’ program, which nationally “has been widely successful. In 35 years, there have been 1,300 centers created across the United States, and for every dollar the government invests in the program, it receives almost two in tax revenue.”

Focusing on one-on-one assistance provided free of charge, the SBDC programs were created by the federal government’s Small Business Administration to provide technical and managerial assistance to U.S. small businesses.

This SBDC model is essentially part of a national network which provides core services for small business startups as well as established businesses,” Paredes said. He noted that the program’s mission is to promote growth and increase productivity—and revenue—by improving a small business’s management.

The university began hosting the South-West Texas Border SBDC Network in the mid-1980s. Through that system, some 15 centers were set up to serve 75 counties in the southern and western parts of Texas to undertake market research tailored specifically to individual clients wanting to start or expand their small businesses.

With the successes on the 1,250-mile Texas-Mexico border, officials decided to expand the effort beyond the U.S. UTSA’s International Trade Center, which began in 1992, is the largest and most successful trade assistance organization in the state. It helps companies expand and become competitive in the global marketplace through technical trade consulting, customized market research and training.

The program is flourishing. Beginning with Mexico, the center has assisted in the launch of 108 SBDC programs outside the U.S., including 10 in El Salvador and, most recently, a pair of pilot projects in Colombia.

“The program in Mexico has mushroomed,” Paredes said. “Since 2011, when a university in Guadalajara approached us, a network has been created that has assisted or helped create tens of thousands of small businesses that account for hundreds of thousands of jobs, many in rural areas.”

Negotiations are ongoing and a memorandum of understanding has been signed with Brazil that officials are hopeful will generate new trade opportunities between that country and the United States.

Earlier this year, UTSA also assisted in launching the Caribbean Small Business Development Center, a project to create small business assistance networks in Saint Lucia, Dominica, Belize, Jamaica and Barbados. The initiative partners the university with the Organization of American States, the U.S. Department of State Mission to the OAS, and the Caribbean Export Development Agency.

Paredes said that one of the more exciting projects is in El Salvador, whose economic infrastructure was ravaged by a more than decade-long civil war. A cooperative, founded and run by women living in rural, economically depressed areas, launched a business to manufacture and market fruit liquor that they bottle and sell.

“The women produce and sell, for $6 apiece, wine in a very nice wine bottle,” Paredes said. “They have created a stable source of income where they literally had nothing, not even electricity. They have gone from living at subsistence level with little hope and no opportunity to where we now have a group of empowered women who are succeeding to the point that they are getting their daughters involved in a growing business.”

Paredes noted that “these are truly transformational programs, and what UTSA has done in hosting the regional center is something that has not been attempted, much less accomplished, by any other university. The success this program is accomplishing is something that will outline me and all of us here, and it is something that the university is proud of.”
Kristina Durante, assistant professor in the College of Business, is the author of several thought-provoking studies on how women’s hormones affect everything from the way they dress to the men they choose.

Durante’s research also found that “very often, the friends of the woman have much sharper insight about the cad than the woman herself. Perhaps we should start to listen more closely when our friends think our boyfriend is the jerk we don’t see.”

There may be significant variance in women’s attraction to the cad, depending on the level of circulating estrogen, but that point remains far from clear, she said.

“The professor’s provocative findings have been covered by such media outlets as Business Week, Cosmopolitan, USA Today, Fox News and CNN, and has sparked both praise and criticism,” according to the Sombrilla.
SPORTS BRIEFS

The Roadrunners women’s cross country team successfully defended its UTSA Ricardo Romo Classic title Sept. 14.

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FOOTBALL
UTSA opened its second year of play with five consecutive victories and picked up its first-ever road and Football Bowl Subdivision win with a 33-31 come-from-behind victory in the season opener at South Alabama. The Roadrunners later won their first-ever WAC game, 35-14, on Sept. 29 at New Mexico State.

WOMEN’S GOLF
Junior Fabiola Arriaga opened the fall with a pair of top-five finishes and her 71.17 stroke average for the month of September led the WAC and was tied for fifth-best in the nation. The Tamaulipas, Mexico, native placed fifth at the season-opening Davi McNaughton Invitational before tying a school record with a 54-hole score of 212 at the Golfweek Conference Challenge en route to a tie for second place. She set a personal best and scored the lowest round of any conference player this fall with a four-under-par 68 in the second round of the Golfweek Conference Challenge.

VOLLEYBALL
The Roadrunners opened the 2012 campaign by winning 13 of their first 20 matches, including six of their first 10 WAC contests. Junior outside hitter McKenzie Adams became the first player to earn two WAC Player of the Week awards during the season.

CROSS COUNTRY
The women were victorious at their first three meets to open the 2012 season. The Roadrunners were led by two-time Western Athletic Conference (WAC) Athlete of the Week Alyssia Diaz, who finished as the squad’s top performer four times. One week earlier, senior Stanton Tondre, who led the squad with a 72.17 stroke average during the fall campaign, registered a runner-up showing at the Lone Star Invitational to guide the Roadrunners to seventh place.

OFF THE FIELD:

RAGIN’ CRAWFISH: Growing up in East Texas, Williamson developed a taste for Cajun food early in life. His favorite dish? Alligator tail.

WANNABE MIKE: Michael Jordan is his inspiration. “I like to look at people who started out average and became something great.”

WHERE NOT RUNNING TRACK, you can catch Williamson playing beach volleyball at his apartment complex. “It’s the neatest, guiltiest pleasure and a great sport for a jumper,” he said.

THREE TIMES A CHAMPION: Jeff Huehn, UTSA Athletics

SPOTLIGHT

Tyler Williamson

BY LETY LAUREL

“I was the day before the national championship meet, and Tyler Williamson, UTSA’s record-breaking long jumper, wanted nothing more than to go to bed early. Instead, when his coach asked him to take an extra shift as an attendant at a San Antonio neighborhood pool, he gladly agreed.

The decision saved a 3-year-old’s life. Williamson was in the middle of his shift on June 3 when toddler Jaden Muhlenbruch was found unconscious at the bottom of the pool. After the boy was pulled out of the water by a neighbor, Williamson used CPR to resurrect him.

“I felt really lucky that I was there,” he said. “I felt like he was really lucky too.” Williamson was certified in CPR while in high school. He didn’t remember much, but he insisted and training take over.

“It was scary, but one of the most rewarding things was to see how precious life is,” he said.

Early the next day he was bound for Los Alamos, N.M., to compete in the NCAA Outdoor Track and Field Championship. He didn’t go as well as he had hoped, but he’s been working hard in the off-season, training at least two hours a day and watching what he eats to maintain five percent body fat. He said he’s never been in as good shape as he is now.

“I’m pushing harder than I have in the past. I’m getting really good right now,” he said. “I think this year is going to be a really good year for me.”

For this prediction, the senior kinesiology major credits his strict diet of lean meats and lots of vegetables and fruits.

“This sudden fascination with nutrition is what has really elevated my level of athleticism,” he said. “With track, everybody is about the same athletic ability, so it’s a matter of who works harder, who takes care of their bodies the best. You have to train your body to be like a refined machine.”

Williamson has experienced a shift in attitude lately, which has also affected his performance. It wasn’t only saving a 3-year-old’s life that gave him a new perspective. It was the realization that being a good person and living life the best way possible is the only way to earn respect.

“It just want to be better than the person I was yesterday,” Williamson said. “I believe that everyone can be great people.”

“People need to realize they have the ability to do good deeds,” said the Houston native. “You can be a great athlete and a terrible person and people won’t respect you.”

He grew up with his grandfather always reminding him “to live between the ditches,” or choose a straight and narrow path.

“It didn’t really hit me until my junior year [in college] that what he means is if you want to reach your goal, you can’t really deviate,” Williamson said. “He still reminds me every now and then.”

After graduation, Williamson hopes to snag a job as a college track coach. He’s also trying with the idea of running professionally. Eventually he’d like to earn a master’s degree in nutrition and become a dietician.

“I want to help people,” he said. “I want to be an inspiration to people about how to eat right. And I want to people know not just how to be good athletes but how to be good people.”
Nearly 2,000 years before Christ was born, the jungle lowlands of Central America gave birth to a civilization that would introduce the Western Hemisphere to its first fully developed writing system, amazing art and architecture, a complex calendar and a startlingly accurate astronomical system based on precise mathematics that used the concept of zero.>>
The Maya Classic Period, the civilization’s high-water mark that lasted for more than 600 years, gave rise to cultural and artistic achievements and learning that defined it as one of the ancient world’s most advanced cultures.

But after six centuries of spectacular growth and unparalleled achievement, the civilization over the next 100 years was totally transformed as it dealt with massive population loss, a reorientation of the economy and the crumbling of the notion of divine kingship.

How did such a great civilization develop in the tropical rain forest, and what caused the fundamental changes leading to its collapse?

As with any good scientific who-done-it, there is no clear answer. But Jason Yaeger, professor of anthropology, and M. Kathryn Brown, assistant professor of anthropology, have dedicated their careers to trying to solve the puzzle.

A single catastrophe didn’t cause the collapse, Yaeger said. Instead, he points to a combination of culture, climate and the environment as the likely culprits.

But the mystery lingers.

That’s one reason the pair has been leading summer excavations in the sweatbox known as the Belizean jungle since the 1940s, and there are only between 650 and 1,000 tribe members left. For more than two decades Brown and Jason Yaeger, professor of anthropology, have led summer field school digs at Maya sites in the Mopan River Valley of Belize.

Anthropology assistant professor M. Kathryn Brown walks with children from the Lacandon Indian tribe from the Metztitlán village of Chiquin in southern Mexico. They had little contact with the outside world before the 20th century, and there are only between 650 and 1,200 Lacandon members left. For more than two decades Brown and Jason Yaeger, professor of anthropology, have led summer field school digs at Maya sites in the Mopan River Valley of Belize.

As they have for the last two decades, the professors spent this past summer in the humid Mopan River Valley, home to jaguars, jungle bugs and fire ants, exploring two distinct Maya time periods.

Yaeger’s research focuses on the changing relationships between two Belizean cities, Xunantunich and Buenavista, and documenting how competition between the two impacted the people who lived in the nearby countryside during the Classic Period. From roughly 250 to 900 A.D.

Brown, who earned her M.A. at UTSA in 1995 before completing her doctoral degree at Southern Methodist University, is heading fieldwork at Xunantunich as part of the Mopan Valley Classic Project. Focusing on a time period starting less than a millennium before Christ, much is known about the Classic Period, relatively little is known about the Preclassic Period, she explained.

Brown remains amazed at the Maya’s ability to build elaborate architecture using simple tools. She noted that like many of her students, the archaeology bug hit her during her first field experience.

For Yaeger, his fascination with the Maya came early in life, when as a middle-schooler he visited Chichen Itza, one of the best-known sites in the Mexican Yucatan.

“I was simd at the massive pyramids, the militaristic art and the hieroglyphic writing, all of which was so different from anything I experienced as a farm boy growing up in rural Michigan,” he said.

“Maya civilization is so different from Western civilization in terms of technology, religion and environment,” Yaeger noted. “And yet there are many parallels—archaeologists spend their careers understanding the similarities and differences among civilizations, which helps us better understand our species and our own civilization.”

The Maya expanded trade routes extending northeast to present-day Mexico City and south to Panama. They used maize—from which they believed the gods made humans—and cocoa beans as currency in return for jade, shell ornaments, obsidian and other precious metals.

They were also highly skilled farmers, draining swamps and clearing large tracts of forest for terraced fruit orchards and gardens in which they grew maize, cacao (chocolate), chilies, beans, squash, tomatoes, avocados and pumpkins.

The Maya’s system of government was both earthly and divine. They were ruled by men who were considered to be human representations of the gods. Those god-kings used elaborate rituals to display their majesty as they commissioned written records in pottery, stone and elaborately painted murals to describe their military triumphs and other significant events.

They paid the price of leadership: during special events, the leaders used stingray bars to cut themselves, drawing royal blood to be offered to the deities.

Brown likes to tell her students that it was a great life to be a Maya king—except on bloodletting days.

The Maya also offered animal and human sacrifices, especially children, young women and slaves, but also captured warrior captives from rival cities, in a constant effort to appease the gods.

They created what they termed “tree stones,” large stone slabs known as stelae on which they carved complex hieroglyphic texts about their gods, their mortal leaders, their genealogy and their military conquests. The slabs were built not only to celebrate significant events of the day, but also for posterity.

Over the years, archaeologists have poured over remains of this lost culture, carefully piecing together bits of bone and slivers of ceramic to fill in the blanks of history.

The Maya flourished in Mesoamerica. A single catastrophe didn’t cause the collapse, Yaeger said. Instead, he points to a combination of culture, climate and the environment as the likely culprits.

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I know about the Maya, the more I am amazed at what they shards. Photo courtesy of M. Kathryn Brown at an abandoned Maya shrine in southern Mexico. The shrine is filled with pottery Anthropology professor Jason Yaeger with Sebastian Salgado-Flores, a Phd student, they become archaeologists or not,” Yaeger said. ignited an interest in archaeology that they will carry forever, whether Maya architecture and artifacts in books or museums. Now I am front and center, excavating and working at a Maya site with people who will be my lifelong friends. Some of us have built up a special bond while we were there.” Brown said she became hooked in 1986, when as an undergraduate student participated in unearthing a burial site at San Juan Island, off the coast of Belize. “Excavating the burial site allowed me to connect with the human side of the ancient Maya past and made me want to learn all that I could about not only the individual, but the society to which he belonged,” she said. That sense of discovery—being the first to touch something that was last touched by Maya hands millennia ago—was renewed this summer. As her students painstakingly dusted away dirt, inch by inch, they hit the proverbial archaeologist’s jackpot—a burial site. Two skeletons were found face down, with the heads facing south. One had a ceramic snuff bottle in its hand, a personal item of the deceased. As her students painstakingly dusted away dirt, inch by inch, they hit the proverbial archaeologist’s jackpot—a burial site. Two skeletons were found face down, with the heads facing south. One had a ceramic snuff bottle in its hand, a personal item of the deceased. “Unfortunately, we did not find a mask, but I did find my future,” Hernández said with a grin. “Once I had the opportunity to see everything that goes into Maya archaeology, I was hooked. I had only seen Maya architecture and artifacts in books or museums. Now I am front and center, excavating and working at a Maya site with people who will be my lifelong friends. Some of us have built up a special bond while we were there.” Brown said she became hooked in 1986, when as an undergraduate student participated in unearthing a burial site at San Juan Island, off the coast of Belize. “Excavating the burial site allowed me to connect with the human side of the ancient Maya past and made me want to learn all that I could about not only the individual, but the society to which he belonged,” she said. That sense of discovery—being the first to touch something that was last touched by Maya hands millennia ago—was renewed this summer. As her students painstakingly dusted away dirt, inch by inch, they hit the proverbial archaeologist’s jackpot—a burial site. Two skeletons were found face down, with the heads facing south. One had a ceramic snuff bottle in its hand, a personal item of the deceased. While such critical information as the sex, approximate age and gender health of the individuals is still being analyzed, it is clear they were unearthing a sacred ceremonial mask. Hernández said he was right. “Once I had the opportunity to see everything that goes into Maya archaeology, I was hooked. I had only seen Maya architecture and artifacts in books or museums. Now I am front and center, excavating and working at a Maya site with people who will be my lifelong friends. Some of us have built up a special bond while we were there.” Brown said she became hooked in 1986, when as an undergraduate student participated in unearthing a burial site at San Juan Island, off the coast of Belize. “Excavating the burial site allowed me to connect with the human side of the ancient Maya past and made me want to learn all that I could about not only the individual, but the society to which he belonged,” she said. 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But for many it is the simple excitement of being the first person in 1,000 years to see a wall or touch a piece of broken pottery that they’ve excavated.” Hernández has his own puzzle. Not far from the burial site lies a large ramp dating from around 600 B.C., one of the first Preclassic ramps to be discovered in Belize. Because of its location, Hernández said it might have served as a meeting point where the population would gather for important festivals. His task is to determine the ramp’s physical dimensions and the possible reason for its construction. While steps at tall buildings and pyramids were commonplace, large ramps are rare at Maya Preclassic sites, Brown said. The Maya did not use wheels for transport, Hernández said. “So why was there such a large ramp there? Was it used to control water flow or to channel water away from the structures during the rainy season? [The questions of] why is it there, what are its dimensions and what sort of purpose did such a structure serve [are what] I will help explore next summer,” he said. Most of the structures that Brown and her students are excavating date from the Preclassic Period. Brown calls Xunantunich “an interesting research location,” because it has a large Preclassic ceremonial center that had been abandoned by A.D. 250. The site was later reoccupied, and a larger, more impressive ceremonial site was constructed in the Late Classic Period just up the hill from the abandoned location. The site is one of the largest Maya ceremonial centers yet discovered in Belize. It also is the country’s longest established archaeological park; the first organized dig there was in the early 20th century, but Europeans first visited the site in the mid-1880s. The area also contains El Castillo (The Castle), a 43-meter-tall pyramid complex that is the second tallest building in ancient or modern Belize. Brown said Xunantunich was strategically located along important river-trade routes that provided a link between some of the ancient Mayas largest, most important city-states and the Caribbean Sea. “River systems were critical for transportation and trade routes,” Brown noted. “But also water sources were crucial for planting and periodic flooding was important, creating good silt that was productive for agriculture.” Brown said she is especially interested in understanding the development of public buildings in the area because so few Middle Preclassic pyramids have been excavated, in part because the Maya custom was to build in layers, placing newer structures atop older ones. One of Brown’s goals at the site is to determine the size and form of specific structures and to analyze construction techniques used by the ancient architects. Extraordinary mathematicians, they were also proficient engineers, building large rainwater reservoirs and canals. And they did it all without the use of metal tools or beasts of burden, Brown noted. DESCENDANTS REMAIN Descendants of the Classic Maya still live today scattered over 135,000 square miles in Mexico’s Yucatan as well as in Belize, El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras. Roughly 6 million people speak Mayan today. Some Maya eke out a subsistence living, others are merchants and manufacturers, while others are government ministers and professors. Yet their ancient forefathers were a commanding presence in the jungles, swamps and mountains of Mesoamerica for nearly 3,000 years, from about 1,200 B.C. to the arrival of the Spanish conquistadors in the early part of the 16th century. In fact, the last independent Maya kingdom—Tayasal in Guatemala—wasn’t conquered until 1697. “The Maya is a success story, with regard to human ingenuity,” Brown said. “They were incredibly adaptive and they tended and transformed the lowland jungle environment into a productive agricultural landscape filled with large and impressive cities.” It is hard to imagine that such an advanced civilization could rise from such a harsh jungle environment, she said—but it did. The Maya not only survived, but also thrived like no other civilization before—or since. — —
It was Roman dramatist, philosopher and politician Seneca who said that luck is what happens when preparation meets opportunity. >

ON TOUGHER TURF

Conference USA will offer a new set of rivals, traditions and possibilities

BY DAVID FLORES
The stakes have gone up...

It’s going to be a fight. It’s going to be a climb. It’s going to be a tough transition. “There will be no free lunches.” — Football coach Larry Coker

UTSA is on track to become a full-fledged FBS member in the 2013–14 school year and pay a $2 million membership fee. “That’s changed the dynamics quickly,” Roma said. “Basically, where we wouldn’t have paid any attention to us for two or three more years, all of a sudden they said, ‘We want you guys.’ And they came after us. We always thought Conference USA would be a great conference for us. We always felt they had the kind of teams we would want to play. It’s perfect for us because of the geography.”

The three other schools joining UTSA in C-USA football are North Texas, Florida International and Louisiana Tech, making it a 14-team conference. North Texas and Florida International are departing the Sun Belt Conference, and Louisiana Tech is leaving the WAC. UNM, Charlotte and Old Dominion (Virginia) also will join CUSA, but their football teams won’t compete in league play until 2015.

Current C-USA schools are Alabama–Birmingham, East Carolina, Marshall, Rice, Southern Mississippi, UT El Paso, Tulsa and Tubal.

While the ante will go up for UTSA, the Roadrunners stand to make more money in C-USA than by staying in the WAC because of TV revenue and other payouts.

“Conference USA has always had a reputation of keeping athletics and academics prioritized correctly,” Hickey said. “Conference USA is a nationally recognized brand, so the opportunities we’re going to have from ESPN, FOX and CBS Sports are going to be a huge new way of life for us.”

“Using you at the map, the group of schools that we’re going to be able to compete with will allow our fans to be a part of this. We’re going to have new stories, but we’re also going to be able to keep some of our old stories. It’s a win-win because it’s the best of everything.”

CUSA will be divided into two divisions, with the winner of each meeting in a conference championship game. League officials haven’t announced the division alignments yet, but UTSA is expected to be in the same division with North Texas, Rice, UT El Paso, Tulsa, Louisiana Tech and Tulane.

UTSA safety Mauricio Sanchez is an athlete who graduated from Warren High School in San Antonio, said the Roadrunners’ quick rise to the FBS ranks has given them a sense of urgency. “It’s a big challenge, but that’s what champions are made of,” Sanchez said. “You have to have a goal in place and do whatever it takes to reach it. We’ve been working hard because we know we’ll be going against tougher competition.”

While Coker expressed surprise that a conference invitation came so quickly, he said UTSA’s preparation and the lure of San Antonio and the Alamodome accelerated the Roadrunners’ ascent to the FBS.

“Five years is kind of the magic figure,” he said. “I figured that if we proved ourselves and you’re competitive and you’re recruiting better, I thought we would be very attractive in five years.”

Instead the invitation came with in two years.

CUSA Commissioner Britton Banowsky left no doubt about what he thought of UTSA and San Antonio joining when he welcomed Roadrunners into the conference.

“We’ve been impressed by the work that’s been done at UTSA and the community of San Antonio,” Banowsky said. “I have been in Texas for a long time, so I know how dynamic and vibrant that community is and how much it has to offer...
THE RETURNING CLASSMEN:

EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY
LOCATION: Greenville, N.C.
ENROLLMENT: 27,816
MASCOT: Pirates
COLORS: Purple and gold

MARSHALL UNIVERSITY
LOCATION: Huntington, W.Va.
ENROLLMENT: 13,814
MASCOT: Thundering Herd
COLORS: Green and white

RICE UNIVERSITY
LOCATION: Houston, Texas
ENROLLMENT: 5,760
MASCOT: Owls
COLORS: Blue and gray

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI
LOCATION: Hattiesburg, Miss.
ENROLLMENT: 16,000
MASCOT: Golden Eagles
COLORS: Black and gold

TULANE UNIVERSITY
LOCATION: New Orleans, La.
ENROLLMENT: 11,911
MASCOT: Green Wave
COLORS: Olive green and sky blue

UNIVERSITY OF TULSA
LOCATION: Tulsa, Okla.
ENROLLMENT: 4,100
MASCOT: Golden Hurricanes
COLORS: Old gold, royal blue and crimson

UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA AT BIRMINGHAM
LOCATION: Birmingham, Ala.
ENROLLMENT: 17,543
MASCOT: Blazers
COLORS: Forest green and white

UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO
LOCATION: El Paso, Texas
ENROLLMENT: 22,000
MASCOT: Miners
COLORS: Dark blue and orange with silver accent

THE NEW CLASSMEN:

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHARLOTTE
LOCATION: Charlotte, N.C.
ENROLLMENT: 25,063
SPORTS PROGRAMS: 16
MASCOT: 49ers
COLORS: Blue and red

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS
LOCATION: Denton, Texas
ENROLLMENT: 35,934
SPORTS PROGRAMS: 16
MASCOT: Mean Green Eagle
COLORS: Green and white

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS
LOCATION: Denton, Texas
ENROLLMENT: 35,934
SPORTS PROGRAMS: 16
MASCOT: Mean Green Eagle
COLORS: Green and white

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS
LOCATION: Denton, Texas
ENROLLMENT: 35,934
SPORTS PROGRAMS: 16
MASCOT: Mean Green Eagle
COLORS: Green and white

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT SAN ANTONIO
LOCATION: San Antonio, Texas
ENROLLMENT: 31,474
SPORTS PROGRAMS: 17
MASCOT: Roadrunners
COLORS: Orange and blue

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Web Extra: Who should be the next big Texas rivals? Go to utsa.edu/sombrilla/rivals to read what people are saying.
Back Shed Startup
Lifesaving technology born out of dissertation
BY LETY LAUREL

Jordan Kaufmann does all her work in a nondescript shed in her backyard. Fully equipped with an air conditioner and a fan, the shed has everything Kaufmann believes she needs to develop the next generation of cardiovascular stent-grafts that may someday save lives.

“I figure if all those software startups can begin in a garage, this one can start in a shed in my backyard,” she joked. In May, Kaufmann launched Cardovate, a technology startup that will create the stent-grafts to prevent post-surgery aneurysm leakage.

Kaufmann, who received her Ph.D. in biomedical engineering from UTSA in 2012, was sitting at breakfast one day in 2010, brainstorming dissertation topics with her professors, when the subject of aneurysms came up.

There are shortcomings in the current technology, they realized. Stent-grafts are tubes supported by metal mesh that are inserted into arteries, most commonly to support areas that have weakened, or aneurysms. Those that treat aneurysms can migrate. Blood travels around them, which can cause the aneurysm to rupture, leading to death.

“So why not create a stent-graft that will encourage tissue growth?” Kaufmann asked.

A typical graft is inserted into the artery and latches on with bars pinched into the artery wall. But Kaufmann decided to see what would happen if she brought the wall to the graft, coating tissue development between the two.

It took almost six years to create a unique scaffold to promote tissue formation. Called a tissue-engineering scaffold for aneurysm repair (TESAR), it builds a tissue barrier between the blood and the graft after it is implanted. Once the scaffold is in place, the aneurysm stops expanding and the risk of rupture decreases.

After new tissue is in place, the scaffold degrades and is safely reabsorbed by the body.

“It was a very long process to get here,” Kaufmann said. “It was a very long process to get here.”

Kaufmann said that she became interested in aneurysms as a result of a classmate in elementary school who was taken out of school one day.

“It was a very long process to get here,” Kaufmann said. “It was a very long process to get here.”

A variety of factors can cause the aneurysm to rupture, leading to death.

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“It was a very long process to get here.” Kaufmann said. “It wasn’t until after the animal studies came back with pretty cool.”

Kaufmann’s dissertation was completed in 2012. They...
HONORABLE SERVICE

KIM D. DENVER, B.A. ’89

It was Kim D. Denver’s 65th birthday. He was on his ninth day in Washington, D.C. and delivering his first testimony before Congress.

“If you ever thought about cramming for a test or studying for a final, this was [like] that to some extent. It’s something that I would be in business or law. You can serve in many careers,” he said. “I clearly wanted to be in leadership in some capacity,” he said. “I was in business and never be able to have the opportunity to serve in this capacity. So that’s why I say it’s certainly an honor.” —LETTY LAUREL

CLASS NOTES

1975
ELIZABETH CARRIE HESS, B.A. in business administration, education, and a children’s book author and retired education has been named President of the Swan River Community at San Antonio.

1980
Sylvia Reyma, B.A. in public relations, has been named chief of school leadership for the Dallas Independent School District after serving as chief of administration for the Fort Worth Independent School District.

1981
Joe Heirdog, B.A. in political science, has been named the chief communications officer at UTSA.

1982
John F. Mcmurray, M.B.A. in business, has been appointed to the Vertis Financial food industry.

1985
Rob Selvar, B.B.A. in history was honored as the 2012 Duncan and William Hawley of the Year at a Chickasaw Nation Art and Culture Center at the University of Oklahoma in October.

1986
Brian St. John, M.B.A. in art, has been named the San Antonio Art League’s Artist of the Year for 2012, the organization’s centennial year.

1989
BRIAN ST. JOHN

1995
Leticia Holmbo, M.B.A. in accounting, has been named vice president and controller for The Eye of the Needle, a trade show and event marketing firm, as lead event manager.

1997
ROD KILkeeLe, B.A. in political science, has been named director of the Republican Governors’ Committee.

1998
ROBERT FLORES, B.A. in political science, was named president of the UTSA Alumni Association.

1999
KRISTIN BARNES, B.A. in art and design, was named Food Exhibits International’s trade show and event marketing firm, as lead event manager.

DISHING IT UP

LETTY HOLMBO, E.M.B.A. ’94

Lettie Holmbo knows her way around a kitchen. On a recent Tuesday, she flipped around a microwave and put together San Antonio’s CBS affiliate news show, Great Day SA, giving instructions on how to prepare the perfect pork tenderloin and chutney.

While the pork sizzled, Holmbo explained the benefits of eating beets. Two of her children, Ashton, 6, and Hailie, 8, watched on the set of San Antonio’s CBS affiliate news show, Great Day SA.

“I can remember at the earliest age, I clearly wanted to be in leadership in some capacity,” he said. “I treated every day like I was building my resume. Whether it was in school or in my job or profession, I wanted to make sure I was ready whenever the opportunity came.”

Opportunity arrived in the form of an internship with the Army right after Denver graduated from UTSA with a B.A. in business administration in 1989. The internship led to a career in contracting in Arkansas and Florida, and then, in 2008, to a job with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Two years later, he was appointed to his current position.

“I certainly is a challenging position, but I would like to believe that it has been an honor knowing that I would be able to make an impact across the Army and also on behalf of our taxpayers,” he said.

“You can serve in many careers and never be able to have the opportunity to serve in this capacity. So that’s why I say it’s certainly an honor.” —LETTY LAUREL

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BY THE NUMBERS

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COMMUNITY

IN BRIEF

From Labs to the Market

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In some ways, Brian Woods is just like any other parent. He wonders whether his 8-year-old son is getting an appropriate education or is just being taught what's needed to pass a test. He thinks about whether his son gets enough exposure to music and other creative elective courses, and about whether he is learning to be a team player.

But unlike most parents, Woods, superintendent of San Antonio's Northside Independent School District, the state's fourth-largest, sees his concerns multiplied by almost 100,000.

Still, his goal is straightforward—high-quality education for all.

"Across all the dozens of ways that we measure student performance, we want to keep making progress," he said. "When Woods accepted the superintendent's post this summer, he inherited a school district with a booming population, a shrinking budget and a wide variety of student needs.

"Being at the helm has its challenges, but they aren't unique to his district," he said. School districts across the state took a significant hit after the Texas Legislature cut $5.4 billion out of public education last year. As a result, Northside reduced its budget by 8.4 million and eliminated almost 1,000 positions.

The district stands to lose even more if a federal budget stalemate results in across-the-board cuts as part of a federal deficit-reduction deal. For a superintendent, when you talk about the things that you have to worry about, budget and finance are in the top two or three in any conversation," Woods said. The vast majority of Northside's budget—87 percent—goes to staff. "So when you're talking about big cuts, it impacts your ability to keep people on who help kids, and it impacts our ability to do those things that are above and beyond what the state requires."

But if there is anyone who can tackle these challenges, it's Woods, said former Northside superintendent John Folks, who is now a senior lecturer in the UTSA College of Education and Human Development.

"Education today is an especially complicated business with all the accountability and testing and school finance [issues]," Folks said. But Woods has intelligence, common sense and strong communication and decision-making abilities, he added. Woods, who got his start teaching social studies in 1992, never imagined he'd be superintendent. His training through UTSA's educational leadership program prepared him to tackle the job, he said.

Now that he is leading Northside, he will be busy tackling finance problems, keeping the quality of education high and advocating for public education. But the driving force behind all his actions is clear: "You have to make the most of what you have, you do absolutely what you think is in the best interest of the students as your priority in decision making."—LETTY LAUREL
Jean Schnitz, former president of the Texas Folklore Society, has performed at the annual Texas Folklife Festival since 1981. The festival, held at the UTSA Institute of Texan Cultures, marked its 41st anniversary this summer.