

Around the State: ETBU packs Christmas boxes

December 4, 2024

East Texas Baptist University participated in its ninth annual Operation Christmas Child, an outreach program organized by Samaritan's Purse. This ministry involves filling shoeboxes with small toys, school supplies, hygiene products and other items sent to children worldwide as Christmas gifts and tangible reminders of God's love for them. This year, ETBU also served as a designated drop-off location, inviting the surrounding community to join in spreading joy and hope. During national collection week, all 27 of ETBU's athletic teams and various student groups and organizations across campus come together to pack the boxes. The outreach effort has grown each year, with ETBU packing more than 370 boxes in one month. With additional Operation Christmas Child donations from community members, the grand total came to 3,367 boxes packed. Students continue to express how participating in Operation Christmas Child impacts their understanding of generosity and the true meaning of Christmas.



HPU alumni Marc and Kari Dingler, pictured with HPU President Cory Hines (left), were recognized, among other supporters, for establishing an endowed scholarship. (HPU Photo)

Howard Payne University hosted alumni and friends, Nov. 23, at the Legacy Luncheon, an event celebrating the impact of scholarships and giving on students and the campus. The luncheon honored university supporters who

have endowed scholarships, who have been named to the Robnett Legacy Society because of their participation in planned giving or who have become a part of the 1889 Society by giving \$1,889 or more within the 2023-2024 fiscal year. The founders of 10 endowed scholarships at HPU established over the last five years also were recognized during the program. Additionally, student scholarship recipients attended the luncheon and sat with donors connected to their scholarships.



June Hunt of Hope for the Heart with HCU
President Robert Sloan. (HCU Photo)

Houston Christian University and Hope for the Heart held a joint symposium on mental health in the church, on the HCU campus, Nov. 21. The event featured guest speaker, **June Hunt**, founder of Hope for the Heart, who spoke on the topic, “Why Do I Do What I Don’t Want to Do?” Hunt is an author, singer, speaker and host of Hope in the Night, a live one-hour call-in counseling program, now in its 29th year, that helps people address problems with biblical hope and practical help. An accomplished musician, she has been a guest on the NBC *Today* show, has toured overseas with the USO and been a guest soloist with the Billy Graham Crusades. The panel of speakers also included: **Eric Scalise**, president of Hope for the Heart; **Michael Cook**, HCU associate professor of counseling; and **Haley Scully**, senior vice president of ministry operations. Pastors and licensed clinical counselors, as well as students in HCU’s psychology, clinical mental health, marriage and family, human services, divinity, theological studies and Doctor of Ministry degree programs were invited to attend.



Tony Celelli, president of Stark
Seminary and Terrance A. Ford,

president of Foster College, holding the partnership agreement between the two institutions. (Stark Photo)

On Nov. 25, Foster College—formerly Southern Bible Institute & College—announced a strategic partnership with Stark College & Seminary to create new pathways for students pursuing graduate level ministry education. Through this agreement, graduates of Foster College’s Bachelor of Arts in Biblical & Theological Studies program will have streamlined access to Stark Seminary’s Master of Arts in Ministry and Master of Divinity programs. This collaboration ensures that students can transition seamlessly into graduate studies, maximizing transferable credits and minimizing additional educational debt. Stark Seminary also will offer an individualized degree plan for each Foster College graduate, further supporting their academic and vocational goals.



East Texas Baptist University Teague School of Nursing assistant professor Antay Waters has been appointed by Gov. Greg Abbott to the Texas Perinatal Advisory Council. (ETBU Photo)

East Texas Baptist University Teague School of Nursing assistant professor **Antay Waters** has been appointed by Gov. **Greg Abbott** to the Texas Perinatal Advisory Council. Waters, the only advanced practice nurse on the 19-member council, will serve a three-year term. The council is tasked with developing and recommending neonatal and maternal care standards for clinical care settings across the state. In addition to this appointment, the Texas Health & Human Services Commission also selected Waters to serve as a Texas Alliance for Innovation on Maternal Health

Implementation mentor. In this role, she will lead efforts to implement evidence-based practices to improve maternal health outcomes statewide. Waters holds advanced degrees in nursing administration, women's health and midwifery, along with a Doctor of Nursing Practice. Currently pursuing her Ph.D. in nursing at the University of Texas at Tyler, Waters has a rich clinical background in women's health and perioperative services and owns a surgical first-assist practice.

Wayland Baptist University encourages high school seniors and prospective college students to submit their Free Application for Federal Student Aid, which officially opened, Nov. 21, as soon as possible to maximize opportunities for federal, state and institutional financial aid. After a challenging rollout last year, the U.S. Department of Education has implemented fixes to streamline the FAFSA process. "This year's FAFSA form has undergone rigorous testing and is now fully operational, making it easier for students to access the financial aid they need to pursue higher education," **Miguel Cardona**, U.S. Secretary of Education, told the Associated Press. The FAFSA form, which is required for determining eligibility for federal financial aid, also is used by colleges to award additional scholarships and grants. According to the U.S. Department of Education, more than 140,000 students already have submitted the form, allowing their information to be shared with thousands of colleges. **Robert Hamilton**, executive director of financial aid at Wayland, stressed the university's commitment to helping students every step of the way. Students can complete the FAFSA at www.fafsa.gov and should have their Social Security number, tax records and other financial documents on hand. For more personalized assistance, students and families are encouraged to contact Wayland Baptist University's financial aid office at finaidhelp@wbu.edu.