

## Culinary Cardinals

Program offers chance to taste students' cooking

**Victor Almazan**  
UP contributor

The Cardinals on the Run program offers Lamar University culinary students the opportunity to get hands-on experience by preparing and selling chef-designed meals to the campus community. The program combines classroom instruction with real-world training in a professional kitchen setting.

Culinary arts and restaurant management students design menus, calculate costs and execute meal service. Plates costing \$10 may be ordered in advance and picked up at the Nutrition, Hospitality and Health Sciences Building during scheduled service days.

"We each get split up into groups, and we each get to design a

menu for that week and just offer different varieties of food to campus." Adriana Houston, Fort Worth sophomore, said.

The program teaches students the importance of time management within the kitchen, Myah Wilson, Missouri City sophomore, said.

"It is a fun, four-week project of different foods (where) each group gets to present different flavors — and it's a fun time to support the culinary team," she said. "You have to work together to complete everything in time."

The students also learn the importance of communicating with each other.

"We all work in the back of the kitchen, but you still have to tell somebody something in a professional manner," Javon Moore,

Houston junior, said.

Frances Venegas, Conroe sophomore, said the program also strengthens practical skills. Working in a fast-paced environment allows them to apply classroom concepts directly to meal preparation and service.

"Whenever you learn hands on, you have that skill that is needed and you tend to learn it better versus if it's verbally taught," she said.

Hazel Lewis, Houston sophomore, said she has learned aspects of working in a kitchen that she never realized. One crucial part in this field is understanding the cost of meals.

"I was surprised on the amount of math that is involved," she said.

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UP photo by Victor Almazan

Adriana Houston, left, Hanna Mitchell and MiCayla Brown make sausage for the Cardinals on the Run program in the Nutrition, Hospitality and Human Services, Feb. 25.



Alexandra Irvine, the new director of the Dishman Art Museum, poses in the Eisenstadt Collection gallery. UP photo by Regina Ruiz

## Dishman Art Museum welcomes new director

**Regina Ruiz**  
UP staff writer

For Alexandra Irvine, stepping into the role of director of the Dishman Art Museum is both a professional milestone and a personal homecoming.

With more than three decades of experience in museum administration, Irvine said returning to her hometown to lead Lamar University's gal-

lery feels like the natural culmination of her career.

"I grew up here in Beaumont, so it was a homecoming of sorts," Irvine said. "My mother still lives here, and I've been involved in museum administration for the last 30-plus years. It all seemed like a good coming together of different areas of my life."

Irvine said she originally planned to pursue a career as an artist. She began as a stu-

dio art major at the University of Texas at Austin before being encouraged by her father to consider a path that combined her artistic interests with business skills. That advice led her toward museum administration.

Her first professional experience came through an internship at the Art Museum of Southeast Texas, which

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## South TX State Fair set for March 26 to April 5

**Caraline Otte**  
UP staff writer

The annual South Texas State Fair, hosted by the Young Men's Business League, will be held at Doggett Ford Park, March 26-April 5.

"Expect to have lots of fun, make family memories and meet new vendors," Lori Perkins, YMBL director of marketing and community engagement, said. "We have lots of local bands scheduled for the outdoor stage. We have a Kids Fun Zone, rides, a petting zoo, things like that."

Perkins said a fan-favorite ride will be making a return.

"We have a big ride coming back this year, the Crazy Mouse roller coaster," Perkins said. "It's been several years since it's been out here. Then, there's a new ride called the Kraken — it swings at 147 feet."

YMBL office administrator Tina Johnson said there will be around 175 vendors in attendance.

"Ninety percent of the vendors we had last year are coming back," Johnson said. "Rudy Kabobs, Amish Donut — they're definitely coming back."

Along with amusement and ven-

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## Public library book sale set for March 27-28

**Maria Rodriguez**  
UP news editor

Towers of boxes line fill the basement in the downtown Beaumont Public Library. Each box is filled with books waiting for their new owner.

The Friends of the Library will host its annual used Book Sale, March 27-28, at the downtown library. Bibliophiles will be able to buy a paper grocery sack for \$2 which they can fill with as many books as will fit. Visitors can buy as many sacks as

they please.

FOL members get early access, from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m., March 27. Memberships may be purchased at the door for \$10 for an individual and \$20 for a family. Free general admission is 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., March 28.

Friends of the Library was formed to support the Beaumont Library System by providing the system with materials they need for the summer reading program and

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UP photo by Maria Rodriguez

Cathy Saur Allen sorts through boxes, Feb. 27, ahead of the Friends of the Library's annual book sale which will be held March 27-28 in the downtown library.

## QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"Fight for the things that you care about, but do it in a way that will lead others to join you."

— Ruth Bader Ginsburg

## NOTICE

The University Press can be read online at [www.lamaruniversitypress.com](http://www.lamaruniversitypress.com). For updates, follow us on Facebook, or on Instagram at @uplamar.

## CULINARY from page 1

"As groups, we create a budget, make conversions for recipes and make sure we spend within the set budget."

Watching the future chefs work in the kitchen, one notices that enjoyment they take from the experience.

"Every time I come to class, I'm happy to come in and ex-

cited to get to work," Moore said.

Meals are limited to 50 per session.

For more information, visit [www.lamar.edu/nursing-health-professions/nutrition-hospitality-human-services/events/cardinals-on-the-run.html](http://www.lamar.edu/nursing-health-professions/nutrition-hospitality-human-services/events/cardinals-on-the-run.html).

## BOOKS from page 1

other outreach activities.

"What we can do is help them with needs that they have that aren't met by their budget," Cathy Saur Allen, FOL president, said. "So, that's really what all of our fundraising is for. We also try to help promote the library and all the great services they have going on. We also volunteer at some of their outreach events if they need additional hands."

The book sale is held once a year and is the library's main fundraiser, Allen said.

"When they have books that are going to be withdrawn from the library and are no longer needed, they give them to us," she said. "So, we have all these books, and that's mainly what it is. It's just a fundraiser to support."

The books will be sep-

arated by categories, Allen said, to help buyers find what they want.

"It can be kind of overwhelming when you shop it," Allen said. "You kind of have to just get in your focus, because it's just so many books, and you can kind of get lost in searching. But that's the fun of it."

Former FOL president Elaine Wikstrom said originally people could just buy books for 10 cents each. However, the checkout lines would get too long.

"Now we sell them as many grocery bags as they want, \$2 each, and they fill them up," she said. "And sometimes they overflow them and tear. A lot of people have figured out that it's a good idea to bring a box and put the bag in the box, and it makes it easier to carry."

"And then other people bring friends, and some people will fill up one or two bags, take them to the car, come back and do it again."

Public libraries receive an allocated budget for spending that doesn't allow for additional programs. The proceeds from the sale benefit the library and the public., Wikstrom said.

"We support the librarians, we support the libraries and support the programs," Wikstrom said. "So, anytime they need a little something extra, we're there. That way, the general public gets an enhanced program, whereas they might have gotten a cheaper program. It works out for everybody. Everybody gets a little something out of it."

For more information, visit [beaumonttexas.gov/271/Friends-of-the-Library](http://beaumonttexas.gov/271/Friends-of-the-Library).

# UNIVERSITY PRESS

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UP file photo

Visitors browse some of the thousands of books during the 2024 Friends of the Library sale in the downtown library.

## GET INVOLVED AT LU!

# LU Division of Student Affairs

### APPLICATION DEADLINES

Run for Student Government Association • March 20 • [lamar.edu/sga](http://lamar.edu/sga)  
Seniors of Significance • March 31 • [lamar.edu/studentaffairs](http://lamar.edu/studentaffairs)  
Ann Shaw Leadership Award • March 31 • [lamar.edu/studentaffairs](http://lamar.edu/studentaffairs)  
Student Organization Awards • March 31 • [lamar.edu/studentorgs](http://lamar.edu/studentorgs)

### UPCOMING EVENTS

#### WEDNESDAY, MARCH 18

Greek Week: Unfog Your Future • 6pm - 8pm • Price Auditorium  
Swimming Lessons • 7pm - 7:45pm • Indoor Pool

#### THURSDAY, MARCH 19

Greek Week: Casino Night • 6pm - 7:30pm • SSC 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Lounge  
Canoe Battleship • 6pm - 8pm • Indoor Pool

#### FRIDAY, MARCH 20

Show Us Your Red • 11am - 1pm • Galloway 102  
Greek Week: Pickleball • 6pm - 7:30pm • Tennis Courts & Rec Patio

#### MONDAY, MARCH 23

Popcorn Monday • 11am - 1pm • Galloway 102

#### TUESDAY, MARCH 24

Free STI Testing • 10am - 4pm • Morris Hall  
Swimming Lessons • 4pm - 4:45pm • Indoor Pool

#### WEDNESDAY, MARCH 25

Movie Night • 4pm - 9pm • Intramural Turf Field  
Swimming Lessons • 7pm - 7:45pm • Indoor Pool

#### THURSDAY, MARCH 26

Enterprise Career Development Day • 11am - 2pm • SSC Cypress 125  
Build-a-Bear • 3pm - 6:30 pm • SSC Food Court  
Canoe Battleship • 6pm - 8pm • Indoor Pool

#### FRIDAY, MARCH 27

Show Us Your Red • 11am - 1pm • Galloway 102

#### SATURDAY, MARCH 28

The Big Event • 8am - 2pm • McDonald Gym  
[Register at lamar.edu/bigevent](http://lamar.edu/bigevent)  
Cardinalpalooza • 5pm - 10pm • Dining Hall Lawn

#### TUESDAY, MARCH 31

Criminal Justice Career Fair • 12pm - 2pm • SSC Ballroom  
Swimming Lessons • 4pm - 4:45pm • Indoor Pool

### MONDAY-THURSDAY EACH WEEK

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*MFAH exhibit explores cultural impact of Mexican artist*

## THE MAKING OF AN ICON

HOUSTON — The gallery walls, adorned with paintings, collages, textiles and graphics, tell a story of a life and a legacy.

“Frida: The Making of an Icon,” curated by Mari Carmen Ramirez, is on display at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston through May 17.

Walking through the exhibit, the viewer travels from Frida Kahlo’s own art to works inspired by her life and her likeness enabling us to explore Kahlo’s identity as an artist and as an icon.

The exhibition’s first galleries explore how Kahlo portrayed life within her art, sometimes in very radical ways. This is seen especially in “The Suicide of Dorothy Hale,” dating from 1938-1939. Kahlo’s frank depiction continues to shock.

“It was a commission by a friend of Frida for a portrait of a friend that had committed suicide,” Cindy Peña, MFAH assistant curator, said. “She’s showing the friend throwing herself from the window and then on the floor on her death. This was a commission that was not liked by the person that commissioned it, so it was hidden for many years.”

Kahlo depicts the trials and tribulations of ordinary life throughout her work in a way that draws the viewer, turning shock into appreciation for even the dark moments in life.

“The things that she’s doing are so revolutionary,” Peña said. “I think that’s kind of one of the things that we’re trying to get at in the exhibition.”

After delving into Kahlo’s life, we move into her impact as she moves from being simply an artist to being a cultural icon in the 1970s.

“It’s here that the pop icon phenomenon starts to unfold,” Peña said. “The argument of the exhibition is really that the Chicano movement was first to propel her forward into that arena, into the cultural aspect of things, not only showing her as an artist but also as someone to admire, someone to look after, someone to feel connected to personally.”

We also see how Kahlo portrays indigenous people differently from other artists at the time. “She identifies them,” Peña said. “She actually



Story package by Rayna Christy

See **KAHLO** page 4



Clockwise from top left: Camila Fontenele de Miranda’s “Everyone Can Be Frida,” Frida Kahlo’s “My Dress Hangs There” (courtesy of MFAH), Marcos Raya’s “Frida the Last Portrait,” Astrid Hadad’s “The Lamp” and “The Fawn,” Kahlo’s “The Heart” (courtesy of MFAH) and Kahlo’s “Self-Portrait (in a Velvet Dress)” (courtesy of MFAH).

## FRIDA from page 3

makes her faces knowable and recognizable. For Frida, it's very much about representing the individual, honoring them and giving them a prominent place, saying their portraits are just as worthy of doing as anybody else's."

The gallery highlights Chicano works inspired by Kahlo. Some are inspired by her work, but artists also appropriated her likeness — the traditional dresses, the flower headdress and also her "unibrow," which challenged conventional beauty standards.

Kahlo's influence extends past the Latino experience.

"In the 1970s and '80s. Frida was rediscovered by several groups of feminist academics and scholars," Raquel Carrera, curatorial associate, said. "Frida was raised (up) as an icon of womanhood."

Kahlo was not afraid to depict difficult topics in her paintings. For example, she had many miscarriages and represented those experiences in her work. One example is

"The Henry Ford Hospital."

"Frida is crying, she's having a miscarriage, but she's not representing herself," Carrera said. "She's a woman owning her thoughts, owning her situation, owning whatever is happening to her at the moment."

"This is unprecedented because the woman having the miscarriage is the one depicting herself — she's the one representing the situation. It's not the maternity represented from the gaze of the male artist."

Along with miscarriages, Kahlo depicts domestic violence, specifically in her piece "A Few Small Breaks."

"This was the headline of the news in the newspaper describing a crime where a husband kills his wife," Carrera said. "Frida had just divorced Diego Rivera, so she was going through a very traumatic moment herself, but she was still denouncing violence, denouncing crime."

The feminist section also showcases artworks which



Frida Kahlo's "Moses," courtesy of MFAH.

question the art world's treatment of women artists, such as the Guerrilla Girls' piece "When Racism and Sexism Are No Longer Fashionable, How Much Will Your Art Collection Be Worth?"

"Frida has proven to be an exception," Carrera said. "But still today, it's a very unbalanced market for women."

After exploring how Kahlo has impacted Chicano, feminist and LGBTQ+ arts, the exhibition looks at "Fridamania," the commercialization of the many versions of Kahlo.

"Frida appears as many Fridas," Carrera said. "She's the communist, she is the indigenous. She is the woman who had the accident. She's the

woman who had a husband who abuses her. But she's also the woman who can overcome all of that. She's the artist. She's the woman who eventually divorced Diego and goes to make a life by herself. She's the woman who has lovers.

"She's so many things at once — many different kinds of people can relate to Frida. That's part of the success of the Frida phenomenon as we know it."

Kahlo's likeness is seen on clothing, mugs, dolls and much more. After exiting the gallery, viewers have the opportunity to purchase their own merchandise.

Looking past the merchandise, the exhibit shows us the amazing artist Kahlo truly was. She took her experiences and allowed them to strengthen her creativity rather than let them define her.

The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston is located at 1001 Bissonnet St. and is open Wednesday-Sunday. For more, visit [www.mfah.org](http://www.mfah.org).

## DISHMAN from page 1

helped launch her career. She later transferred to the University of Houston after meeting the director of the university's art museum, who offered her another internship.

Art and museums have been part of Irvine life since childhood. Irvine recalls growing up across the street from the Beaumont Art Museum when it was located in the historic Wilson-Cook House, often visiting exhibitions as a child.

"That was kind of my playground," Irvine said. "I popped

into all of those exhibitions as a little kid, and I think I just became comfortable with art and with museums at a very young age."

Now at Lamar, Irvine said what excites her most is the opportunity to work closely with the LU community — "just that wide variety of talent to pull from."

Looking ahead, Irvine said one of her priorities is for the museum to highlight artists from the region.

"I want it to continue to be a resource for the community

and showcase the talent that we have here in Southeast Texas," she said.

The museum plans to bring in new exhibitions beginning next fall, though Irvine said details are still being finalized. In the meantime, she hopes more Lamar students will take advantage of the museum's free admission and welcoming atmosphere.

"We just need to get our name out there within the Lamar community," Irvine said. "We're not an intimidating space. We're a very friendly

space, and there's always going to be good stuff to look at."

Students can also get involved through internships and work study opportunities.

This summer will see the return of the museum's "After School Special," a juried alumni exhibition which is open to LU graduates no matter what their major was.

Outside of museum work, Irvine said she still enjoys creative projects.

"I make collages," Irvine said. "I don't call myself an artist — I'm a crafter. I enjoy

making costumes and putting glitter on stuff."

For students interested in pursuing careers in museums or the arts, Irvine said she encourages them to seek out hands-on experience.

"Get involved with museums and art groups in town," she said. "Internships are a great way to get your foot in the door."

As she begins her tenure at Lamar, Irvine said she is looking forward to the opportunity.

"I'm just super excited to be here," she said.



# DISHMAN ART MUSEUM

MUSEM HOURS:  
MONDAY - FRIDAY  
9 AM - 4 PM

## EXHIBITION DATES

January 23<sup>rd</sup> - April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2026

## LUIS CORPUS

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TETHER  
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# THE WOMAN BEHIND CALLER ID

Shirley Ann Jackson advanced telecommunication technology

**Kami Greene**  
UP managing editor

It's known that Alexander Graham Bell pioneered the telephone, and Steve Jobs paved the way for touch-screen phones.

While both of those men contributed a great amount to telecommunications, there's a lesser-known woman, Dr. Shirley Ann Jackson, who contributed just as much to mobile technology.

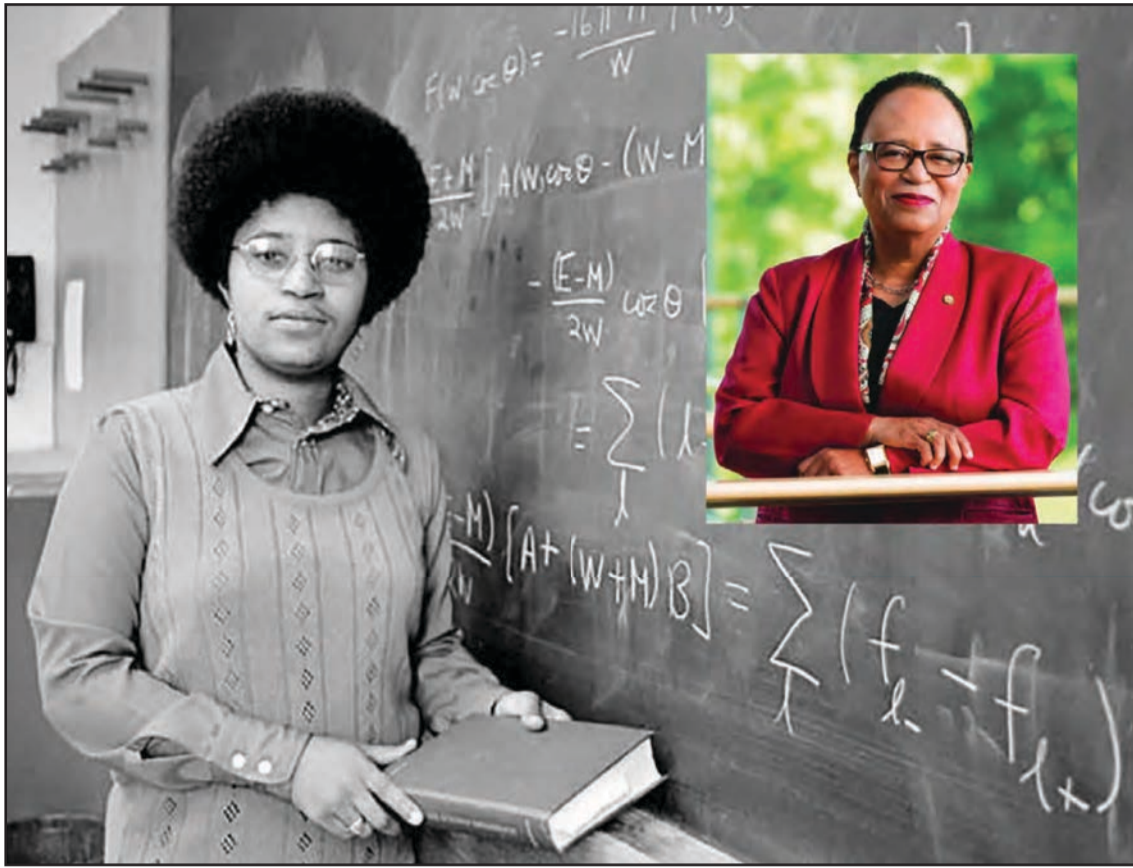
In her childhood years, Jackson piqued an interest in mathematics and science, conducting small experiments such as honeybees' eating habits.

However, her interest in STEM was not just a childhood hobby.

In 1964, Jackson became one of the first African American students to attend Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), and she became the first woman in the institute's history to graduate with a Ph.D. in theoretical elementary particle physics.

Over a decade later, in 1976, the physicist began her career as a part of AT&T's Bell Laboratories Theoretical Physics Research Department, where her main areas of expertise lay in theoretical physics, solid-state physics, quantum physics, and optical physics.

One might ask, what does



Shirley Ann Jackson is a leading figure in Science and Technology and pioneered telecommunication technology.

any of that have to do with telecommunication advancement? Surprisingly, a whole lot.

"Dr. Jackson's groundbreaking research in theoretical physics and breakthrough advances would serve as the foundation of caller ID and call waiting," an article in Somos states. "In fact, her groundbreaking research on materials used in the semiconductor industry laid the foundation for the development of other communication tools such as the touch-

tone telephone and the fax machine. Further yet, her exploration of optical physics contributed to the development of fiber optic cables, which now serve as the backbone of high-speed internet and telecom networks."

While Jackson did not necessarily invent caller ID, she pioneered the advancements to make it happen.

If you thought Jackson's achievements stopped there, you'd be mistaken.

From 1995 to 1999 Jackson, was appointed as the

chair of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

"At the NRC, Dr. Jackson conceived and promulgated risk-informed, performance-based regulation, and created a new planning, budgeting, and performance management process," an article in NTI states. "Under Dr. Jackson's leadership, the NRC authored and advanced the Convention on Nuclear Safety, which was signed by over 170 countries and remains in force today. During her tenure at the NRC, Dr.

Jackson spearheaded the formation of the International Nuclear Regulators Association and served as its Chair from 1997 to 1999."

For 23 years, she served as the 18th president of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, which is the oldest technology research university in the U.S.

She also served as the co-chair of former president Barack Obama's Intelligence Advisory Board from 2014 to 2017.

Jackson holds numerous accolades such as, being named the 2021 recipient of the American Association of Physics Teachers Oersted Medal, 2021 recipient of the FBI Director's Community Leadership Award, 2019 recipient of the American Physical Society Joseph A. Burton Forum Award, as well as the W.E.B. DuBois Medal from the Hutchins Center for African and African American Research at Harvard University.

Jackson has also been presented with 57 honorary doctoral degrees.

And the list keeps going, as Jackson is a Life Member Emerita of the MIT Corporation and currently serves on the board of corporations for Kyndryl.

Thanks to Jackson pioneering the science behind caller ID, we're no longer left wondering who the caller could be.



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# Festival honors Stanley with award

**Heather Harmon**  
UP contributor

“At the end of the day, it feels like a lifetime achievement. One foot in front of the other and look what we built.”

Lamar University film professor O'Brien Stanley was awarded the Beaumont Music & Film Festival lifetime achievement award, Feb. 21. Stanley helped found the festival in 2002.

At a ceremony held in the Jefferson Theatre, Stanley received the Lifetime Achievement Award Gusher trophy and was shown an appreciation video from his former colleagues and students.

Stanley, Gordon Williams, Chris Castillo and Robert Fong organized the first Spindletop Film festival in Beaumont 25 years ago. Stanley said the idea came when he saw an announcement about a film festi-

val to be held at Angelo State University in the small Texas town of San Angelo.

“A student said, ‘Well, if Angelo State University could do a festival, we ought to do one,’ Stanley said. “And there’s something that just stuck with me. I remember thinking we needed to take enough steps — kind of like you’re making a film — to where you can’t go backwards, and you’re committed to doing this thing.”

The Spindletop festival ran for seven years up until Castillo and Fong moved.

“Back in 2006, Gordon and I realized that we were the last two founders that were doing it, and you need about at least four people or so,” Stanley said.

“Chris (Dombrowski) stood up and volunteered, and said, ‘I’m gonna do this festival,’ and we passed the baton. We helped him in every which way, you know, for that continuity. And

it’s been fun ever since.

“He got it going, then our job is to get students here to help out — enter the festivals, work the festivities. I mean, it just took off from there.”

The festival is annually hosted in Beaumont at various locations, showcasing films from far around the world. Stanley said the area’s film community has been able to boom from 100 people to 1,500.

Dombrowski said Stanley’s influence has crossed state lines. A film maker in Lake Charles in Louisiana was inspired by the Boomtown Film Festival.

“At the time there wasn’t one in Lake Charles either, but a guy by the name of Sean Patrick Bennett came to Boomtown, saw what we were doing and started the Lake Charles Film Festival,” Dombrowski said.

Stanley retired from LU in 2025 and moved to Oklahoma



although he still works with the film community in Southeast Texas. He keeps in contact with former students and colleagues, and even does a podcast with his former students Isaac Duerksen and Cole McKristy. Stanley also hosts a sci-fi podcast with Byron Val-

entine, the former director of 91.3 KVLU, Lamar’s public radio station.

“To be here as the center of the fest, I did not imagine it would ever get this big,” Stanley said. “It’s just so neat to see filmmakers in Southeast Texas go, ‘We can make something.’”

## Review: ‘Iron Lung’ – A cultural touchstone?

**Evan Wolford**  
UP contributor

“Iron Lung” is the feature film debut from gaming YouTuber Markiplier. It was released to positive audience reviews and box office records in January.

Markiplier, a YouTuber and influencer whose channel has more than 38 million subscribers, has been developing the horror video game adaptation for quite some time. “Iron Lung” was a favorite of the filmmaker and he contacted David Szymanski, the game’s creator and writer, about adapting the short-form game into a feature film. Three years and three-million self-financed dollars later, “Iron

Lung” debuted in over 3,000 theaters and grossed more than \$40 million in the process.

However, is the film worth the hype?

Honestly, the film failed to live up to expectations. I am steadfast in the belief that part of the film’s hype comes from the fact that “Iron Lung” was directed, edited, written by and stars Markiplier. However, I’m not one of his legion of fans and so I feel I can watch it from an unbiased perspective.

The story is bland and unappealing, although that’s not necessarily Markiplier’s fault. The story of the original game is self-contained and most play-throughs take an hour at the

longest. It’s a bit difficult to translate that to a two-hour film.

The pacing feels inconsistent, and the writing and exposition seem to drag. The entire movie takes place in one location and Markiplier has attempted to take some creative risks. However, the risks aren’t worth the reward.

Admittedly, I haven’t played the game, but there are several parts of the film that stick out like a sore thumb and are clearly not part of the source material. They were likely added in an attempt to showcase the protagonist’s mental deterioration. These scenes aren’t bad, they are just unnecessary and further confuse the viewer about

whether the sequences are set in reality or a dream.

The directing, however, is fun. For a first-time feature director, Markiplier really showcases a skillset I’d love to see utilized more. The colors, although somewhat muted at times, are fairly consistent through the RED V-Raptor camera they shot on, and the editing for each scene works well.

But, the lighting is inconsistent and dim for no reason, and the dullness lacks life or texture. I couldn’t see what was going on half of the time and the film suffers for it. The audio mixing also needs to be improved. The mixing of the music, the dialogue of multiple characters, and the

sound effects create an incohesive symphony of self-destruction that does not seem intentional.

“Iron Lung” has great ideas but fails in its execution. The fact that a record 80,000 gallons of fake blood were used is a feat I wouldn’t have expected from a YouTuber, and I hope “Iron Lung” creates a surge of innovative, low-budget indie filmmaking — it is certainly inspiring in its huge box office success and the fanbase that it mobilized.

Personally, I just didn’t enjoy it.

3 out of 5 stars  
Dir. Mark Fischbach  
2hr 5 min/125 mins

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**NEW LOCATIONS COMING SOON**

# Engineering grads among high earners

## Press Release

New state workforce data shows Lamar University engineering graduates earning among the highest first-year salaries in Texas while carrying some of the lowest student debt loads in the state.

The latest figures come from Texas CREWS, the College Report on Employment Outcomes and Wages, a joint transparency initiative of the Texas Workforce Commission and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. The dashboard links higher education graduation records with state wage data and reports median

first-year earnings for graduates, offering a more current snapshot than the Federal College Scorecard, which typically tracks earnings four years after graduation.

LU's engineering programs posted strong first-year earnings across multiple disciplines when focusing exclusively on bachelor of science degrees.

Mechanical engineering graduates ranked No. 1 among 22 Texas public universities in median first-year wages, reporting \$89,247. The program also posted a 3% debt-to-income ratio, the lowest in the state, with just 14% of graduates taking out student loans.

Chemical engineering ranked No. 1 in the state with a median starting salary of \$97,311. The program also reported a 9% loan-to-salary ratio, the lowest in Texas.

Industrial engineering placed No. 2 statewide with a median starting salary of \$84,384, surpassing several larger institutions. Electrical engineering ranked No. 3 at \$90,756, and mechanical engineering ranked No. 4 on a separate Bachelor of Science comparison at \$82,021, reflecting year-to-year variation in median-based data. Civil engineering graduates reported a median starting salary of

\$73,577, aligning with the state average.

"We are proud that LU scholarships and aid are awarded to 90% of students across campus, and we are excited to hear that Lamar has been recently voted number one in Texas for the lowest student debt," Maddie Genuardi, scholarship coordinator for the College of Engineering said. "This reflects in our engineering students especially, as so many of our scholarships are gifts from our incredible alumni to support our students through their college journey."

Genuardi said each COE department also offers its own

awards, with some of the most prominent funded by industry partners such as Valero, Cheniere, and Entergy, helping students combine financial support with hands-on experience to set them up for early career success.

"This financial support helps students focus fully on their studies, which in turn allows them to participate in internships and co-ops and quickly enter the workforce," she said. "In turn, our students are able to pay off any minor debts they have quickly and focus on their careers, and hopefully help more future students down the road."

## FAIR from page 9

dors, the State Fair will host a rodeo during the first weekend.

"You get into the rodeo for free with your fair ticket," Perkins said. "You can also buy reserved seats for the rodeo that are only \$12. Also, we'll have a bull ride the second weekend."

Perkins said the YMBL uses the money from the fair to give back to the community. The YMBL holds events such as the Babe Zaharias Memorial Relay and a special needs fair rodeo day, and also gives out Thanksgiving baskets to people in need.

"When people come and spend money at the fair, that money goes back into the community," Perkins said. "We also put on a boys basketball tournament, a volleyball tournament and a golf tournament."

Perkins said she encourages attendees to review security policies before entering the fairgrounds.

"We have a security policy to try to keep everybody safe, where we want people to bring clear bags, and bags could be searched," Perkins said. "Some people have strollers or diaper bags, but guidelines are all on our website."

The YMBL has more than 700 members.

"I'm excited to see the YMBL members pull this off, because they are all volunteers," Perkins said. "There's guys here that have just been here for 40-plus years. We do work here in the office, but they are all out there making things happen."

The fair hosts livestock shows and an auction for local schools' 4H and FFA



This year's South Texas State Fair will be held at Doggett Ford Park, March 26-

UP file photo

programs, Johnson said.

"This is Beaumont's county show, and that's a big part of the actual fair," Johnson said. "So, (attendees) should go out to the barns and see the animals that the kids have worked on.

We do an auction, and all that money goes back to those kids. We don't keep any of that."

Johnson said seeing the fair come together is exciting.

"When you sit over here in the office and we hear on the

radio that the traffic's backing up, you know that people are coming out and they're actually enjoying something that you had a hand in," Johnson said.

For more information, visit [ymbbl.org](http://ymbbl.org).

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# Doc highlights Beaumont's Melody Maids

**Heather Harmon**  
UP contributor

Lamar University hosted a screening of the "The Melody Maids Movie: Morals, Manners, Music" documentary, Feb. 19 in the Communications Building. Producer and director Kai Jai Conner held a Q&A session following the screening.

The film tells the story of a group of young singers organized by Eloise Milam, a Beaumont music teacher, in 1942. Milam began the project when she was tasked with arranging entertainment for a bond rally. The Melody Maids were a big hit and Milam ended up organizing the girls to tour military bases and perform for servicemen up until the 1970s.

Conner's mother joined the group in 1951 as a 14 year old. Conner said she heard her mother talked about her experience but did not realize how important a story it was.

"We thought it was normal

for our mothers to travel the world and sing at military bases," Conner.

When her mother died in 2021, Conner said she realized The Melody Maids story had not been properly told and she set about making the documentary.

Conner described her journey creating the film and what she said was her countless frustrations. Conner inherited 100 photos from her mother but to create the documentary she needed more. After the Melody Maids disbanded in 1972, the girls donated their photos and other paraphernalia to Beaumont's Tyrrell Historical Library.

"We got all the photos I had, then we went to the Tyrell, and we used 101 photos from the archives," Conner said. "The Melody Maids donated everything to the Tyrell library, but we still had pay \$100 per photo. We gave them those photos and they charged us to



Beaumont teacher Eloise Milam, above and top center, founded the Melody Maids in 1946 to entertain troops.

*Courtesy photos*

use them."

Unfortunately, there are no recordings of the Melody Maids performing, so Conner recorded the Calvin High School all girls choir to sing the songs on the soundtrack.

Conner spent countless time interviewing the living Melody Maids who described the pro-

cess of being a Melody Maid and the rules of 'the bible,' Milam's instructional booklet for the girls that included the rules of travel and more than 50 musical selections.

"Well, in this bible, we had songs that she wanted us to all learn," former Melody Maid Carol Grenier Eddins said. "We did have to learn the songs, but we would never know what the order of the program was going to be."

In the documentary, former Melody Maids Bette Ann Stead, Connie Rienstra Joiner, Patricia A. Adams, Kathy Smith Smallwood, Carol Grenier Eddins and Becky Mason describe their time performing for soldiers around the world, including during the Korean conflict and Vietnam.

The Melody maids were considered musical ambassadors to the United States and stayed on military bases along with the soldiers. Former Maid Carol Grenier Eddins joined Conner

for the Q&A. She said the girls were originally on their own as the Department of Defense did not offer any type of security until 1952.

"We had our mothers, some of the mothers were chaperones, but we did not have security," Grenier Eddins said. "When you were on the base, there were men that would follow us."

In the documentary, Kathy Smallwood described a time where she and her other fellow Melody Maids, visited wounded Vietnam soldiers. Smallwood described how one of the soldiers was gravely wounded but alive. Although the Melody Maids were instructed to stay strong for the soldiers, said she ended up crying away from the wounded soldier.

The Melody Maids have been celebrated for their compassion, patriotism, talent and courage, Conner said. For more information, visit [melodymaidsmovie.com](http://melodymaidsmovie.com).

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## SWINGING FOR SLC TITLE

Baseball places six on all-SLC preseason teams

**Caraline Otte**  
UP staff writer

After falling short in last year's Southland Conference tournament, the Lamar University baseball team is ready to hit the ground running for the 2026 season.

"A lot of things went wrong last year," senior infielder Hector Rodriguez said. "We didn't have strong team chemistry — I feel this year is just the opposite. Everybody pushes to be better, and win or lose, we're gonna give 100%."

The Cards had six players earn Southland Conference

pre-season awards. Beau Durbin, Balin Valentine and Landon Grigg were named first team all-SLC, while Chris Oliver and Hector Rodriguez were selected to the second team. Ayden Sunday was named SLC Freshman of the Year.

Returning for his 10th season with Lamar, Will Davis has been named Southland's Coach of the Year.

"With Coach Davis, he has a relationship with the players — we just love playing for him," Rodriguez said. "He's one of those coaches that cares about our opinions. He'll ask me, 'Hey, what do you think about this play?' And he goes through with that the whole season."

The team started the season strong with an underdog win against the Big-12's University of Kansas.

"It helps whenever we go play conference knowing that you can compete with Big 12 and SEC schools," Junior infielder Kevin Duran said. "I don't think anyone's going to be in our way, really."

LU played other power-five schools in preseason which sets them up for SLC play. Although the Cardinals came out swinging in their game against third-ranked University of Texas,

they came up short in the sixth inning after having an early lead.

"For five innings, we were winning four to two, but it kind of goes downhill when

you're playing one of the best teams in the country," Duran said. "They had a six-run inning, and we could have avoided it. But these things still show us that we're ready to compete the rest of the year."

The strong pre-season schedule will help the Cardinals in the SLC.

"It doesn't get better than Texas — it doesn't get better than A&M," Rodriguez said. "Coach Davis did a good job in us playing those guys before, that way our conference games look kind of easy."

The Cardinals entered Southland Conference play with a 5-4 record. After a series sweep against UTRGV, Lamar stands No.1 in Southland after the first

week of conference play.

According to 64 analytics, Lamar is ranked as the 23rd transfer portal class in the nation.

"We get these guys from the portal that have already done numbers in the Division 1 level," Rodriguez said. "We have experience, and I feel that's why we rank high."

Baseball America has ranked Lamar as one of eight "sleeper teams" to watch out for in the 2026 College World Series.

"Everyone kind of plays for each other and it's a fun atmosphere," Duran said. "It makes you want to have a long season and hopefully go to regional supers Omaha. That's always the goal."

As well as the traditional weekend SLC series, LU will host big-name teams at Vincent Beck Stadium, including Oregon State and BYU.

"I'm excited for the home series against Oregon State," junior outfielder Jose Vargas said. "They were final-eight finishers last year in Omaha, and almost went to the national championship. To be able to host them in Beaumont, it's gonna be fun."

Junior Catcher Jake Wagoner said a supportive fanbase is significant in the team's success.

"Having that home field advantage is so important," he said. "It gets the other team making errors, especially in big situations. We also love to put on a show and go out there and win for this program."

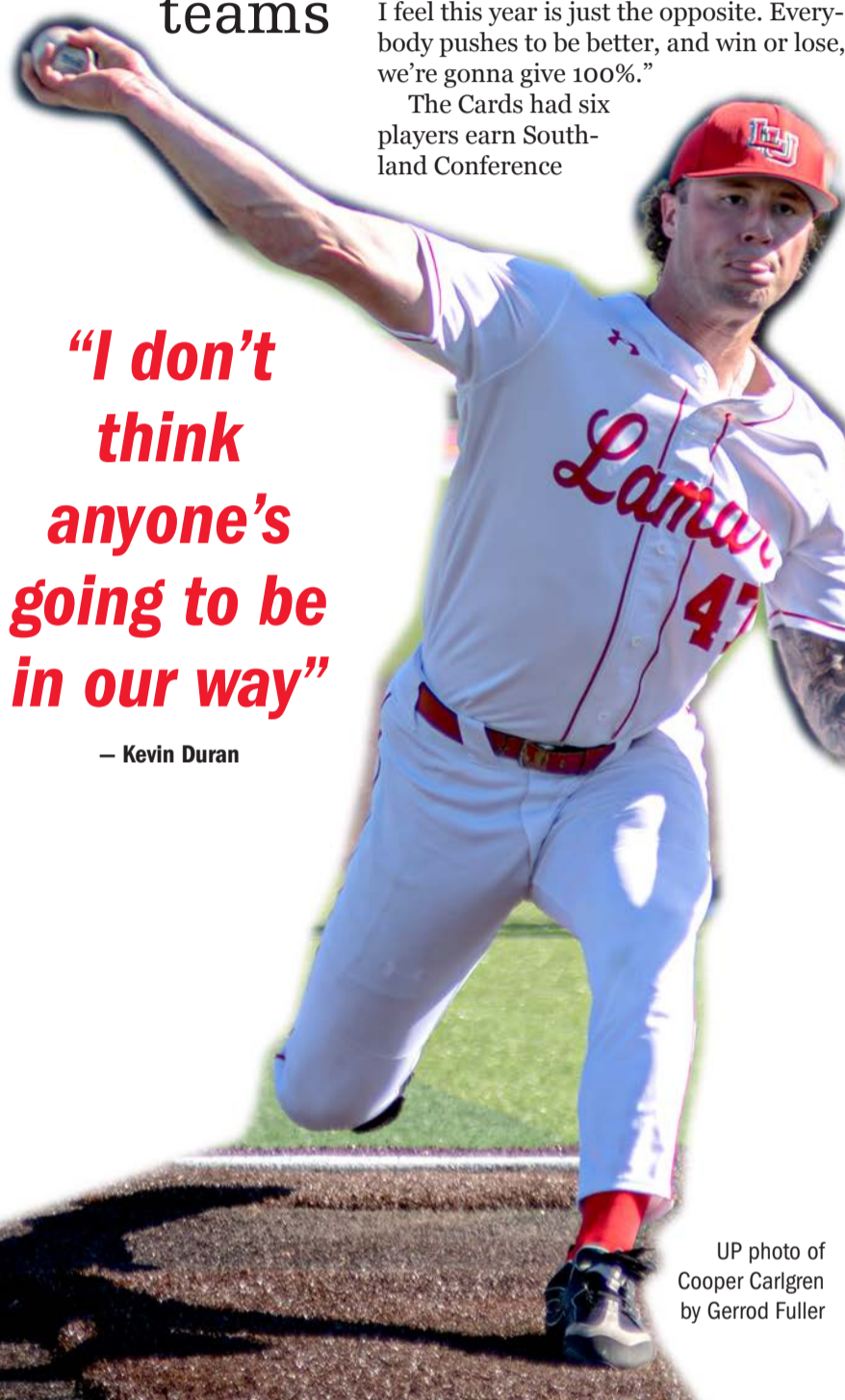
Last season, Lamar experienced a 27-2 record for games held at Vincent Beck Stadium.

"The support means a lot because these bigger schools, like A&M, have their '12th man,'" Vargas said. "And instead of nine guys versus nine, it becomes 2000 versus nine."

The Cardinals are no stranger to playing for big audiences. After playing games at Texas A&M and UT-Austin, Wagoner said that the atmosphere is exciting.

"The adrenaline and the sounds of the fans really gets you on your toes," Wagoner said. "It gets you a little bit shaky, gets you a little nervous."

For a complete game schedule, visit [lamarcardinals.com/sports/baseball](http://lamarcardinals.com/sports/baseball).



**"I don't think anyone's going to be in our way"**

— Kevin Duran

UP photo of Cooper Carligen by Gerrod Fuller

## AIMING FOR PITCH PERFECT

Softball has title in their sights

**Aaron Saenz**  
UP sports editor

The Lamar University softball team's season is fully underway. The team has opened with \_\_\_\_\_ record after starting with a tough road schedule.

Head Coach Amy Hooks leads the Lady Cards into battle. After being hired in 2018 from Northwestern State, she has helped the Cardinals improve every year since 2022. She recorded her 100th career win last season and led the Cardinals to a Mid-Major Top 25 performance.

"I think we've put a really good product together when it comes to offense, defense and pitching," Hooks said. "We obviously always want to improve and bring players in that are going to help us accomplish that. We did that again this year — our freshman class is phenomenal. They've really been able to contribute early this year, so we're excited to see how that carries us throughout the season."

Coach Hooks said it is important to have a consistent tone from the beginning so it carries through the whole season.

"The big thing for them is staying at a six (out of 10) when it comes to energy and hype," she said. "We played Sam Houston State, a team we know really well, and so at the beginning you could feel the energy start to creep up. Everybody's getting excited and getting a little hyped up and then when the ending was over, they came back down to their six, which is like they're neutral. (We're) just making sure we're not too hot and too low, and then just knowing that we can swing it with the best of them."

"We're going to give up runs. And we try not

putting pressure on our defense or our pitching because our bats are good enough to go and score against anybody."

The Cardinals opened their season at the LSU Tiger Classic in Baton Rouge, where they swept their two-game series against Big-10 team Illinois. Coach Hooks said it is a testament to how the players don't think about the team on the other side, only themselves.

"The game is the game, and it doesn't matter how

See **PITCH**, page 10

**"Our bats are good enough to go and score against anybody."**

—Coach Amy Hooks



UP photo of Madison Guidry by Carlos Vitoria

# Fee named men's hoops coach

## Press Release

The architect of the greatest single-season turnaround in NCAA history, a Division II National Coach of the Year, Jordan Fee has been named as Lamar University head men's basketball coach. Fee becomes the 13th head coach in program history.

"Jordan has been described as a 'driving force' and I think once our fans get a chance to meet him they will understand why," Jeff O'Malley, LU vice president and director of athletics, said. "Jordan is a dynamic individual whose résumé speaks for itself. He is looking forward to being a Cardinal and we're excited to be handing him the reins."

Fee comes to the Golden Triangle from Boca Raton, Fla., where he spent the past two

seasons as an assistant at Florida Atlantic, including this past year where he was promoted to associate head coach, helping lead the Owls to 36 wins and a 2025 postseason berth.

After spending eight seasons at Nova Southeastern University — seven as assistant and the final year as associate head coach — Fee was named head coach at Gannon University in 2023. What followed was a turnaround that grabbed national headlines.

Taking over a program that posted a 3-32 (.086) overall record the year before his arrival, Fee literally flipped the script recording a 32-3 (.914) mark while Gannon also made a 17-win improvement in conference play. The Golden Knights would go on to lead NCAA Division II in scoring (100.4 points per game), win

the Pennsylvania State Athletic Conference (PSAC) regular-season and tournament title, win the NCAA DII Atlantic Region title and advance to the 2024 Division II Elite Eight and record the greatest single-season turnaround in NCAA history, regardless of division or gender. For his efforts, Fee was named both PSAC West Coach of the Year and NCAA Division II National Coach of the Year.

Fee took over as GU's head coach following a year where he helped guide Nova Southeastern to a perfect 36-0 record and an NCAA Division II National Championship.

"Lamar University has a proud history of excellence on the basketball court, and we are committed to bringing that championship-level success back to Beaumont," LU Pres-



Jordan Fee

ident Jaime Taylor said. "This search generated tremendous national interest, and I am confident that we have identified the right leader for Lamar University. Jordan brings an energy, a vision, and a proven record that align perfectly with who we are and where we in-

tend to go.

"He is one of the true rising stars in the coaching profession, and I am excited to see our program grow and thrive under his leadership."

During his time as either head coach or assistant, Fee has helped coach a National Champion, posted a 178-77 (.698) overall record, three NCAA Division II Elite Eight appearances, four NCAA Division II tournament appearances, three South Region Championships, three conference regular season and tournament titles and recruited and developed consecutive DII National Players of the Year.

"It is an honor to be named head men's basketball coach at Lamar University," Fee said. "This program has a proud history, I'm excited about the bright future ahead."

## PITCH from page 9

big the school you face and what their budget is, what conference they're in — it's softball," she said. "I think they understood that it wasn't about what was across their chest, it was about us and what we do really well and playing our style of softball. That's really been the theme, just playing Cardinal softball regardless who's across the field."

The Cardinals 2025 season came to an end after an SLC quarterfinals loss to Incarnate Word. Coach Hooks said while was hurt by the loss, they are not dwelling on it.

"We don't harp on it or put too much pressure, but (the team) definitely has huge

goals," she said. "The returners know that feeling, that bad taste that was left in their mouth."

Hooks said the team started its offseason work from the moment last season ended. She said the team is driven to be the first LU team to win the Southland Conference Tournament.

"A lot of prep work went right after season ended, and in the off season and in the summer," she said. "The team was getting after it individually and then the returners trained with the newcomers. They held their own player meetings over the summer to outline expectations and then let the newcomers really get a feel for what

it's going to be like before they ever get on campus.

"It had to be player led. They had to be the ones that wanted to do it and they really just grabbed it by the horns and said, 'This is what we want to do. We don't want to be watching the semifinals or the championship game of the tournament. We want to be in it.'"

The team has already played plenty of away games and Hooks said this is by design.

"I did something that most coaches don't want to do, and that's play the first four weekends on the road to try and become road warriors," she said. "Hopefully, the way our confer-

ence championship is set up we don't have to play the tournament on the road, but if we have to, we're ready and prepared."

Hooks said the away schedule also prepared the team for a tough Southland Conference slate.

"The Southland Conference continues to get better every year," she said. "We try to schedule a really tough non-conference schedule. We want to see all different kinds of levels. We want to see really elite pitching, we want to see dominant hitters, we want to see all of that. And the way you prepare for those games only gets you ready for conference

play. You need to see some tough teams, but you also need to compete to keep the morale up."

The team thrives on support from the students and community, Hooks said.

"When it's your home, somewhere that you pour your blood, sweat, and tears into everyday, it makes you want it more," she said. "To look up there and see your stadium full, and to hear the roar of the crowd, and to have your walk-up song, just little things like that, I think it's huge, and Southeast Texas has showed up for us. I want to make Lamar softball and Beaumont a really hard place to come and play."



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