



# Home for the holidays

## Students discuss their plans for the break and holiday traditions

By HEATHER CAMPBELL  
THE BATTALION

Lights adorn houses and "Deck the Halls" resounds throughout the neighborhoods, as spirits are lifted for the holiday season. Anticipating Santa Claus and presents, lighting Menorahs and attending midnight church services are among the celebrated traditions.

Jennifer Hoffman, a junior wildlife sciences major, looks forward to going home and spending time with her family. "My grandparents come in town and my family goes to the San Antonio river walk to eat dinner and look at lights," Hoffman said.

Instead of focusing only on Santa Claus and presents, some celebrate other traditions. This season, more than ever, many Americans are turning toward their separate beliefs. Elyse Ackley, a junior education major, joins in her family tradition of reading about Jesus' birth from the Bible.

"I think that too often people forget the true meaning of Christmas," Ackley said.

Traditions with Hanukkah begin Dec. 10. The festival lasts eight days.

Evan Epstein, a junior political science major, said his favorite part is being with family.

"We eat dinner every night, say a prayer, and light candles. Each night we open one present and it starts after sundown," he said.

Peace, love, and selflessness can be seen during the holiday season. Acts of kindness to help others can become a tradition as people need love, especially around the holidays. Rip Parker, a minister at Park Cities Baptist Church in Dallas, spends his nights feeding the homeless and tending to their needs. Ashley McWilliams, a junior education major, has helped him hand out food and care for them.

"Taking care of other people helps to open your eyes to other things than yourself. That's what the Christmas spirit is about, giving to others and not focusing on yourself," McWilliams said.

Timothy Ateek, a junior psychology major, said he sings carols to celebrate Christmas.

"I like singing carols and hymns to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ," Ateek said.

Ateek also enjoys reflecting on the nativity scene and the story it portrays.

"One of the most imprinting symbols of a child in a manger. There's no greater event."

Rick Larson, a lawyer and A&M professor, said. "It's an astronomical mystery," Larson said.

strange star is claimed to have appeared at the account of this star and the improbable claimed for it. It is fascinating to me that very hard, mathematics, science and history the conclusion that the star was a real event. Even more exciting is that a comp of the universe allows us to recreate events of 2000 years ago," Larson said.

Larson will be doing the Star prese Grace Bible Church on Dec. 9 at 9 a.m. and at Rudder Auditorium Dec. 21 at 7 p.m.

During Hanukkah, the Jewish celebrate that originates from the Macabees ov Assyrians. There was only enough oil to day and it instead lasted for eight days. J senior history major, described Hanukkah

"The Menorah which holds the candle and latkes, potato pancakes, are eaten w because they are fried in oil," Kristal s

given, one every night for eight consecuti Rabbi Kenneth Weiss from the Hil Houston, said Hanukkah is a minor Jewish f

celebrating the religion reminds them of the far "I was born into the Jewish religion. I always been Jewish and it's what I am. not something additional that impacts me," Weiss said.

Dec. 25 is the for opening presents with loved ones gathered around.

Scott Birdsell, a junior finance major, said he is thankful for a different kind of gift this holiday season — his faith.

Ateek echoed Birdsell's sentiments and s; he celebrates gives him complete fulfillm

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