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When Passion Meets Talent

Andrews University

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WINNERS OF AU’S GOT TALENT SHARE THEIR EXPERIENCES

“There was an a cappella group, individual singers, people who played instruments, recited poems, a person who used a Launchpad, one who rapped and the list goes on.”

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“UNITY IN BROKENNESS”

“These common themes, paired with this recent outbreak of hatred, have mobilized these religions to put their differences aside.”

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CARDINALS VS. HOLY CROSS

“Win or lose, the brotherhood of the Cardinal team is ever-present on the gym floor.”

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THANKSGIVING REFLECTION

“...we define our circumstances—thankfulness is not a response but an attitude.”

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AN ON-CAMPUS THANKSGIVING

“There’s nothing worse than Thanksgiving Break arriving and being stuck on campus with nothing to do.”

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THANKSGIVING WARMED OVER

“Mashed potatoes are a lost cause.”

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AU Talent Electrifies Howard

Richla Sabuin | Kara Herrera

Last Saturday night, Nov. 10, from 8-10 p.m. at the Howard Performing Arts Center, Andrews University’s annual “AU’s Got Talent” talent show was held. There was an acapella group, individual singers, people who played instruments, spoken word poets, a person who used a Lauchpad, one who rapped, and many more. There was also a pastor who read a poem out loud for his girlfriend after his performance because it was her birthday. All the participants did a marvelous job but the audience chose three winners for the talent show: Kelli Miller (sophomore, undeclared) got third place, Joshua Bojorquez got second place, and Jeremy Ahn and Brandon Shin got first place—for the third time in a row.

Kelli Miller won third place by singing “I Choose You/Love” while playing the piano. When asked about why she joined, Miller said, “I joined the talent show because I like to sing and I really love music. I learned to like singing because my mom really loves it too. I enjoy it now as a form of self-expression.”

Joshua Bojorquez (freshman, computer science) won second place by creating beats with the Lauchpad. When asked why he decided to perform, he said, “Coming into a whole new state, a new school, new environment, I wanted to get my name out there since freshmen really aren’t well known. I wanted everyone to know that I can bring really cool and unique skills to the table to always have a great time.” He described the way he learned about the Lauchpad through a TED Talk he watched once. “I actually didn’t know what it was until I saw a TED Talk about this guy who beat boxes for a living and looped his voice on this board with pads. I was intrigued about what those pads were and searched on YouTube to find out more about Launchpads, which are MIDI keyboards that display lights, and music when triggering the buttons at the slightest touch.” Bojorquez started using the Launchpad at the end of his sophomore year in high school. He added, “I’ve messed around with other people’s songs and designed lights for them but no, I don’t have my own masterpiece… yet!”

Brandon Shin (junior, biology) and Jeremy Ahn (junior, engineering and music) won first place by doing a cello duet. “I joined the talent show because I love collaborating with my man Brandon Shin,” Ahn said. “The ideas for arrangements that he’s got and the music we make together are too much fun, to put it simply. Plus, the talent show is one of the coolest places for us to share that with as many people as we can.”

Shin and Ahn like to make covers and make their own arrangements. “They also like to play by ear instead of following sheet music.”

Honoring Women in Ministry

Moriah McDonald | Kara Herrera

On Saturday, Nov. 10, students and teachers gathered at the Howard Performing Arts Center at 11:45 a.m. for the annual Honors Church service. This year’s Honors Church theme was “Women of Faith: Past, Present, and Future.” The service concentrated on women in ministry in the Adventist church, through the incorporation of several hymns written and composed by women of faith, special music, readings centered around women in ministry, scripture and testimonies. All students of Andrews University and peoples from Berrien Springs communities were invited. The featured speakers included Honors Scholars Amanda Bange (senior, theology and speech-language pathology and audiology) and Nancy Kardos-Moldovan, (senior, religion and secondary education) who spoke about their experiences being called to ministry and the situations they faced along the way. Dr. Hywel Williams, Professor and Director of Homiletics at Andrews University Seminary, gave the homily.

Before the service began, a small group of four students sang a prelude. The Honors orchestra accompanied them, and the group performed as people began to take their seats. Many Honors professors and students were in attendance with their families.

Maxine Umana (graduate, administrative assistant and recruiter for J. N. Andrews Honors Program) gave the introduction. When asked about the preparation for Honors Church and the construction of this year’s theme, she said, “We had regular office meetings. I asked how the women who spoke today were doing with preparing their testimonies and offered them advice on being honest and positive. At the end of each school year the Honors students in leadership do some brainstorming to come up with a theme for Honors Church. Because the vote for women’s ordination didn’t turn out as hoped, our Vice President Jesse Gray suggested that we thought of the subject of women’s rights in the church, and scripture relevant to its theme. A few of the scriptures were read to the audience in Spanish, Indonesian and Portuguese. A major part of these sections were the reflections and homilies given by the three women in particular who shared their testimonies.”

Amanda Bange was six years old when she was...
Student Leaders Weigh In On NAD Year-End Meeting

Interviewed by Kelli Miller

Name: LJ Robinson
Class standing: Senior
Major: Elementary Education

Could you give a brief summary of what the NAD meetings are? Our church is structured with the General Conference (GC) with a coordinating entity and different subdivisions overseeing various regions like the NAD (North American Division) which includes the U.S., Canada, Bermuda, Guam and Micronesia.

What kinds of things do they discuss at NAD meetings? The meetings concern two primary things: 1. Reports from the different divisions 2. Voting on church policy and take care of financial concerns.

Did you feel like you had a voice as a young person there? Yes, the NAD president and other executive officers seemed to value the young people’s input, and made us feel encouraged to go up to share our opinions and questions.

Did attending this conference give you more hope in our church? Yes, it gave me more hope because I was able to see that many people who are a part of the NAD have progressive ideas. Many of them were supportive of women’s ordination. Everyone there treated each other’s ideas with respect.

Talk a little bit about the statement that the NAD released regarding the GC’s compliance documents. The letter was very respectful. It requested that: 1. Next year the GC rescind the compliance document 2. The GC revise any policies that enable majority fields to dictate non-doctrinal or non-biblical areas to minority fields. 3. An item be placed on 2020 GC agenda that affirms and respects multiple cultures and practices within the church.

What was your favorite part about attending the conference? The SA presidents responded to the compliance document from the GC by writing our own document for young people. It has been published by Spectrum online to encourage other young people.

People are speculating that this bold step in financial support is related to the NAD’s unhappiness with the GC recent compliance document. Is this true? No. This is a misconception. The NAD has been planning to make these cuts for some time now, but they have decided to speed up the process, because our missions need the money that we are sending to other areas right now.

What was the process that the NAD went through in order to produce the document of response to the GC’s compliance document? There was agreement in the room that some sort of action need to be taken. The chair, Dan Jackson (president of the NAD), suggested that a writing committee be formed. The writing committee was made of people representing all of the different conferences, and one student was admitted to the writing committee.

What else of interest occurred at these meetings? There were some important financial decisions that occurred at this year’s meeting: what exactly happened? Right now, the NAD gives six percent of the world church’s tithe. We agreed at these meetings to decrease that to around two percent within the next two to three years.

What advice or encouragement would you give to youth or college students that feel that they are not heard in the SDA church? Get involved in your local communities and become service oriented so that you can bridge the gap between the church and the community. Go visit the Lake Union office and talk to your conference officials. Know that change happens locally.

Did going to the conference give you more faith in the SDA church? There are things that disappointed me and things that gave me hope. I found both at the meeting. It was positive that we students got to have our voices heard; however, we didn’t make up even one third of the people in the room. I am disappointed because if we want to get ahead of the curve, we need to have more young people involved.

Last comments? I think there should be a town hall forum where our Lake Union leaders come to the cafe and have a meet and greet with the students. church, women coming into leadership roles now, and encouragement for those to come.
Faith Out of Pittsburgh

Caitlin Jankiewicz

On Oct 27, 2018, Robert Gregory Bowers entered the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, during Shabbat morning service shouting “All Jews must die.” Bowers killed 11 people and injuring seven more. While being taken into custody, Bowers is quoted to have said that he believed that the Jews were committing genocide against “his people.” Bowers’ social media posts prior to the attack speak similar anti-Semitic rhetoric. This attack, called by some the deadliest attack on Jews in United States history, is the latest in a series of attacks, called by some the “Blue Wave” attack, among others. Bowers’ actions are often influenced by the actions of the sitting president, whose incumbency is not at stake. This can create an interesting dichotomy between voter intent and its subsequence. For example, in the Senatorial, House and gubernatorial races, the Democratic base keyed in on President Trump’s low national approval rating early on to build hype for election night.

While the individual races and platforms of senators and representatives may vary, they all agree that the actions of President Trump did not strongly drive the “Blue Wave.” Despite high hopes, the “Blue Wave” seemed to fall a bit short as election night ended due to high profile losses in the states of Florida and Texas. This made the Democratic goal to win back both houses of Congress nearly impossible from early on in the night. While the results seemed to align much more with the pre-election predictions, unlike in 2016, it once again felt like Democrats dominated the narrative beforehand, and yet the Republican base came out strongly. Beto O’Rourke’s Cinderella senatorial run in Texas seemed to mirror this, with his immensegrass-roots funding in a race against incumbent Ted Cruz. Historically, Republicans dominate Texas in all aspects and most recently, in Cruz’s 2012 Senate run, he outscored his Democratic opponent by nearly sixteen percent of the popular vote. This massive partisan divide occurs regularly in Texas, and it remains a fundamental challenge for American political thought that certain states are “unwinning” by certain parties. California’s position as a Democratic stronghold is a similar example. With this in mind, both Beto O’Rourke’s ascension to political fame and his near upset of the incumbent Cruz became key points for Democratic members. Moreover, coming within two percentage points of Cruz on election night remained a success for itself for the party. However, that race seemed symbolic for the entire night, where Democrats foresaw great strides, and took large ones, and yet seemed just shy of fulfilling their own lofty expectations.

The entire state of Florida remains a political anomaly. Because of their geographical positioning, Florida’s results have been highly contested. In this paradigm, Beto O’Rourke took a similar example. With their Jewish cousins, Trump has not made America great again; he has taken America back to a time when racism, hate and prejudice were acceptable.

The Floridian Reef: Where the Blue Wave Broke

Daniel Self

Midterm elections remain a complex part of the American political experience; voters determine the fate of Congress, yet are often influenced by the actions of the sitting president, whose incumbency is not at stake. This can create an interesting dichotomy between voter intent and its subsequence. For example, in the Senatorial, House and gubernatorial races, the Democratic base keyed in on President Trump’s low national approval rating early on to build hype for election night.

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Ideas

Thanksgiving and Treatment of First Americans

Adriana Santana | In elementary school I colored in pictures of Native Americans and pilgrims gathered around a dinner table. We learned about the origin of the holiday, how the pilgrims didn’t have the Native Americans they wouldn’t have been able to harvest enough food for the winter and how they enjoyed a meal that has now become a national holiday. Native Americans are admired every year for the kindness they showed and pictures of them always pop up to celebrate the best food-filled Thursday of the year. However, I can’t help but notice that Thanksgiving seems to be the only time that Native Americans are ever fully noticed and appreciated by society. Sadly, our country has continuously put Native Americans on the back burner and has never really catered to their issues. Numerous times throughout history we see Native Americans get the short end of the stick— the Trail of Tears, the lack of help and attention given to the state of their reservations, insensitive team names and costumes during Halloween, and the celebration of Christopher Columbus, notorious for killing many of them. Some of you reading this may not understand the significance of what I’m saying. Discrimination toward Native Americans has traditionally been less visible, but it demands no less of a response. We glamorize the cute story that brought people around a dinner table and choose to ignore the injustice that has happened since that day. Now, I’m not saying to boycott Thanksgiving. It’s one of my favorite holidays; but superficially celebrating and conveniently remembering a group of people during a holiday isn’t okay today, yesterday, or ever.

Teddy Kim | In the summer of 2016, I went on a mission trip with my church youth to Fort Belknap, Montana, a Native American reservation nearly 1,000 square miles in area, with a population of 7,000. The reservation seemed vast and barren. When the wind blew, it failed to carry any nearby car horn with it, or even farm animal noises, surprising given how much grass and corn fields we were surrounded by. The strip malls had like two casinos per block, but were desolate of any general populace. I walked into an empty Arby’s and for a minute thought that I had broken in, as there was only one worker there who showed himself long after the door swing bell rung. We saw a total of six cars in an hour-long drive in the reservation, one parked in a driveway, the other at a casino and one at the Adventist church where we would focus our mission. The residents lived in designated sections of shanty towns, some built from what appeared to be the ground up by the residents themselves. Many house walls were just one layer of metal sheet, nailed and glued to their adjacent walls. Forget neighborhoods, restaurants or a strip mall; Fort Belknap and its residents were impoverished and forsaken. We are mistaken to designate a holiday “celebrating” their ancestors. It is belittling of our culture to label this time of year as communal and festive, as one of camaraderie and belonging. It is cruel that our society has historically neglected and dismissed the concerns of this community, while simultaneously eroding its presence. Looking at the living conditions of some of the residents, I wondered what kept these residents from staging a bitter uprising of some sort, either in the voting booths or on the streets. Speaking with one of the teens, I heard the answer: “Look at what you’re surrounded with. We can’t do anything.” And I had to sadly wonder if she was right. In lieu of the rhetoric spoken today surrounding safe spaces and empowering others, Fort Belknap shows there is always work to be done.

“We glamorize the cute story that brought people around a dinner table and choose to ignore the injustice that has happened since that day.”
It is Thursday, Nov. 8, and the Andrews Cardinals are playing against Holy Cross College in a basketball game. The crowd is just beginning to fill up and both teams are warming up, shooting some hoops as they are preparing for the game to start. The two teams meet with their coach and go over plays one last time. After about two minutes of conversing with their coaches, both teams move to their respective positions on the court. The referee throws the ball in the air and the game begins.

The Cardinals get a hold of the ball and pass it around, remaining in possession of the ball and making the first two points of the game. They keep playing, but not long after, Holy Cross gains possession of the ball. They take it to their side and try to make a hoop. However, the Cardinals are not giving in and block the shot. Both teams play with all of their effort and pretty soon the Cardinals are in the lead. However, Holy Cross is not giving up and soon enough catches up with the Cardinals. The crowd is starting to go wild, the buzzer goes off and the game reaches half time; the score is 17-27, with Holy Cross in the lead.

During half time, the two teams go to the locker room to talk about the game. Meanwhile, the host tells the crowd that it’s time to make a shot for a prize. Anyone from the audience can come up and attempt to make a shot from the half court line for a prize.

While that’s happening, I ask someone from the crowd, Elizabeth Kerr (sophomore, psychology), who she thinks will win the game: “Right now, I’m hoping we can win, but there is still competition.”

After a while, the boys are back, and the remaining time of the game awaits them. The Holy Cross players make the first shot during the second half, making the score 17-29. Not long after that, the Holy Cross players block a shot from the Cardinals and make another shot. The Cardinals are now motivated to do better and therefore try to get back on the game. After a while, the crowd starts yelling, “defense, defense” to the Cardinals. The Cardinals do not lose hope and start bringing the game back in their favor. Soon enough, they are only six points from tying, with only 11 minutes left in the game.

The final score turned out to be 51-63, with the Holy Cross players taking the game. Once the game was over, I asked one of the players from the other school a question. I asked Bryce Cross (senior, elementary education) if there was any aspect of basketball that he applies off the court and he said, “Definitely the work ethic and teamwork. Being a student in and out of the field teaches you to work hard.”

The work ethic and teamwork were helpful as they gave the Holy Cross team the opportunity to win the game for the night. I also asked one of our own Cardinal boys, Barry Armstrong (sophomore, biology pre-medicine), what the best thing about playing for the AU Cardinals was. He said, “The brotherhood that we have. We come together every day; we grow not only as a team, but as a family.”

His words were uplifting. Even though the Cardinals didn’t win, it was invigorating to see the crowd cheer them on and stand by their side no matter what the scoreboard said. Win or lose, the brotherhood of the Cardinal team is ever-present on the gym floor. The Cardinals teach us that we can miss, shoot, have rebounds and fouls, and that’s okay.”
Seeing the Future: Junior Preview

Dani Maletin | I don’t know about you, but I always seem to think of Junior Preview as a terrible weekend! The cafeteria is always overcrowded, the hallways are a little noisier, the dorm occupancy numbers seem to double out of nowhere, and campus suddenly seems to be entrenched with “kids”.

Gopi Dhillon (junior, marketing) shared his experience with housing one of the preview students: “I didn’t mind having a student in my room so much because I knew the person, and it’s always fun getting to meet new people anyways. However, I did not enjoy the cafeteria being so full. Every time I came to eat there were long lines!”

While many of us might have been feeling this way, I remember that when I came here as a junior in high school for preview weekend, I absolutely loved it. While it was a jam-packed schedule, I got to meet a lot of new friends, receive free stuff and explore the campus. I would call my future home.

Korena Wright, one of the preview students from a public high school said, “I really liked getting to meet new people, seeing the campus and what dorm life was like. I think Andrews has a large variety of majors to choose from, so if you end up picking something you no longer like, you can always change. It was a fun weekend.”

While the event is a time for the preview students to tour the Andrews University campus and see all that we have to offer, it is also a chance for prospective students to begin thinking about their future. Another preview student, Sasha Maletin, said, “The college fair helped me realize my options for a potential career and focus on what it is that I enjoy. The approach of the activities was fun, and the competitive games and prizes were a popular favorite amongst the majority of the students.”

Following many of the forums and day activities, Sunday night’s main event was AU All In, where the preview students got to enjoy a true Andrews tradition, experience the enthusiasm of our campus and why we love it so much. The next time you encounter a preview student, tell them the reasons why you love Andrews University, and give them a little taste of what campus life is like.

Principles of Good Time Management, Part 2

Counseling and Testing Center | 1. Keep Tidy—for some of us, clutter can be both a real distraction and genuinely depressing. Tidying up can improve both self-esteem and motivation. You will also find it easier to stay on top of things if your workspace is tidy.

2. Pick Your Moment—all of us have preferred times of day. It’s best to schedule the difficult tasks for those times.

3. Don’t Procrastinate—but do ask why you’re tempted. If a task is genuinely urgent and important, get on with it. If, however, you find yourself making excuses about not doing something, ask yourself why. You may be doubtful about whether you should be doing the task at all. Perhaps you’re concerned about the ethics, or you don’t think it’s the best option. If so, you may find it helpful to talk it over with classmates, family, friends or a counselor, and see if there is an better alternative.

4. Don’t Try To Multi-task—generally, people aren’t very good at multi-tasking, because it takes our brains time to refocus. It’s much better to finish off one job before moving on to another. If you have lots of different tasks to do, try to group them together and do similar tasks consecutively.

5. Stay Calm and Keep Things In Perspective—perhaps the most important thing to remember is to stay calm. Remember that the world will probably not end if you fail to achieve your last task of the day or leave it until tomorrow, especially if you have prioritised sensibly. Going home or getting an early night so that you are fit for tomorrow may be a much better option than meeting a self-imposed or external deadline that might not even matter that much.

More Online Resources: https://www.skillsyouneed.com/ps/time-management.html
https://www.skillsyouneed.com/lead/delegation.html
https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/time-management
https://www.mindtools.com/pages/main/newMN_HTE.htm

“Take a moment to pause and get your life and priorities into perspective, and you may find that the view changes quite significantly.”
Thanksgiving Reflections

Interviewed by Adriana Santana

Yarianni Leal, junior, pre-physical therapy
I am thankful most for my family and the people closest to me who always show that they care. I am also deeply thankful for the opportunity to study and receive a higher education because there are many who want to but can’t. My favorite part about Thanksgiving is being able to spend memorable times with friends and family (eating, Christmas decorating, shopping, etc.).

Sarah Duvivier, senior, graphic design
I’m thankful for the support I get from my peers around me and the love and care I receive from my friends and family. I’m thankful for the positivity around me. My favorite thing about Thanksgiving is watching one by one how everyone just catches the itis, which is being sleepy but satisfied: satisfied from food and also from the loving environment that surrounds them.

Lisa Hayden, senior, biochemistry
I’m thankful for people who commit to activism in all forms, not just media activism and don’t take breaks in untoward circumstances, like myself. And my favorite thing about Thanksgiving is that I always get to see family on my birthday because it falls on Thanksgiving break.

William DosReis, sophomore, architecture
I’m thankful for friends that I can count on for true support. People that I have pure, biblical, God-fearing love with! Also, the usual: my family. They’re the strongest bond I have right now that’s allowed me to grow in all aspects of my life. They’re the biggest support I have!

Alicia Dent, senior, music
I’m thankful for the opportunity to study at Andrews. It has allowed me to grow spiritually, mentally and otherwise and meet people who will stay with me for a lifetime. My favorite thing about Thanksgiving is the process of making all of the food, and laughing and joking with my cousins.

Wesley Marcellus, freshman, computer science
I, Wesley Wilson Marcellus Jr., am thankful for the finer things in life such as a place to stay, food, water and you who are reading this. Also my favorite thing about Thanksgiving having a food coma!

Vince Harrison, junior, physical therapy
I’m most thankful for family (family is more than just blood) and friends looking out for me no matter what. My favorite part about Thanksgiving is The Good Eats™ my mama be throwing down.

Leah Wooten, junior, international business
I’m most thankful for my family, friends and anyone who has shown extra care in my life. My favorite part of Thanksgiving is definitely the food.
Humans

Dear Dad

Frenzen Pakpahan

I remember the words you’d say to me when I was upset. You know all too well when I am. I take after you. I learned first from you to remain quiet when something irked me, to reflect on whether it mattered. I don’t think you quite understand what those words still mean to me whenever life goes awry; I wonder if you know how they reverberate through my mind, a voice telling those turbulent waters to be still.

You’d say, “Don’t let others take your joy away from you.” And I hated it. Not because you were wrong or I was upset at you, but because you knew me. You know how quick I am to pass responsibility onto others, to vindicate myself even when I’m wrong, to pin the blame elsewhere. But you knew what was really the matter. You knew it wasn’t that others had bullied or hurt me. I was my own destruction. I took it as an act of revenge onto those tur-}

But you know, I’ve realized something recently. I was reading Paradise Lost for a class. Funny enough, Dad, Milton lamented never achieving his truest potential, of never being enough. Anyway, he wrote this: “The mind is its own place, and in itself / Can make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven.” (I. 254-255). How did you, a kid from the kampung, articulate Milton having never read him? It took me awhile to see it, Dad, but I have. Even though I understand from a different perspective, I finally under-}

The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.”

A man once said, “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.”

But how, Dad, I may never understand what I saw in the hospital today, the smile on her face, the words of this man named Job. I am still amazed at how far in life you have gone...
Thanksgiving Break: A Chance to Finally Do Something

Anna Gayle Sparks Safe Space Discussion

Based on the 2008 memoir Beautiful Boy: A Father’s Journey Through His Son’s Addiction by David Sheff, the 2018 film “Beautiful Boy,” directed by Felix Van Groeningen (director), and written by David E. Kelley (screenwriter), delves into the depths of addiction. The film brings a human face to addiction and the struggles of those affected by it.

Adair Kibble
This review does not contain spoilers.

The film weaves back and forth from the timeline of Nic’s early adulthood, when he becomes addicted to heroin, to David’s flashbacks to Nic’s childhood, in touching scenes showing their previously close bond. In this way, the viewer sees Nic as his father sees him, until Nic’s relapses have 5.

5. St. Joseph—yes, getting here does require brave mileage, but once you can find a way to get there, the possibilities are endless! From the various restaurants like Tim’s Too and Silver Beach Pizza, to the Krasl Art Gallery (which is free!), or simply enjoying the harsh November winds as you walk down the pier, St. Joseph really does have a lot to offer, and taking a trip there can last an entire day, as you explore the many that were made. The house lights opened up so that the audience could discuss among themselves questions like “Who was the last time you felt lost?” and “When have you felt heard?” This Q Union sparked questions and thoughts that don’t often cross our minds, and as this series continues I am excited to see what more it will bring to light.

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Acrofest is a Flying Success

Karen Vallado

For those of you who (like myself two years ago) don’t know what Acrofest is, it is an event that takes place every year where gymnastics teams come together for a few days, attend clinics to improve skills and perform one big show on Saturday night. More than learning skills or performing shows, Acrofest is a time of spiritual emphasis and bonding for the teams attending. The location of Acrofest rotates around five universities: Southern Adventist University (SAU), Andrews University (AU), Washington Adventist University (WAU), Southwestern Adventist University (SWAU) and Union College. This year Acrofest was hosted by Southwestern University in Keene, Texas. The only other Acrofest I have to compare this one to is the one hosted by our dear AU in 2016. So I am far from an expert on the subject, but I am happy to share my experience.

On Thursday, the college teams were split up into stations to teach specialty clinics to the high school and elementary school teams attending. The Gymnics demoed tumbling, pyramids, three highs, basket tossing/flying and pair stunting. The coach from WAU was with gymnasts group stunting (WAU), WAU was leading out the stunting. The coach from Southern, Andrews University (AU), Caleb Whitman (sophomore, computer science) and Aymeric Saint-Louis-Gabriel (graduate, divinity). I was told that usually there are two days of clinics at Acrofest, but Southwestern does things a little differently: On Friday, all the teams were sent out to schools around the area for a mini-show. What I liked about this performance is that we all wore our Acrofest t-shirts so we became like one big group rather than different teams from different parts of the country. Our group included WAU, Ozark Adventist Academy, Thunderbird Adventist Academy and Midland Adventist Academy. We performed at the local public school in Keene for middle schoolers and high schoolers. One of our Gymnics, Samantha Phasge (sophomore, nursing) performed her beautiful silks routine to a cover of “Somewhere Over the Rainbow.”

After the show, we participated in a local Veteran’s Day tradition, which involved lining the streets with American flags on both sides. A little over half of the Acrofest gymnasts found a place somewhere along the road with a hole to put the flag in. Each flag was to be placed about ten feet apart so when the truck drove by with flags in the back, you had to grab it quickly so the next person could get theirs without the truck having to stop. This was a good plan until one person misses their flag and then it throws off the whole system. Anyway, after some running, we figured it out and all the flags got put up.

On Saturday night all the teams sat around the mats and cheered each other on as we performed our routines. After hours and hours of learning moves, building skills, and applying the correct counts, performing our routine felt to me like someone pushed the fast forward button in a movie. I felt like I popped up on the first count of the song, then there was a blur of activity, my shoe slipped off, and the next thing I knew I was coming off the back of a three-high and posing for the end.

There is such a positive, celebratory and encouraging energy around those mats. I was so happy to see the other teams perform and do their best, and I was proud of our team for the performance we gave. My favorite part was definitely meeting new people from other schools and working with them. This trip also inspired me to try new skills and made me incredibly grateful for all the talented Gymnics I get to work on our team with. I’m already looking forward to next year’s Acrofest.

You can see all the performances by scanning the QR code below. (Andrews is at 1:16:35)

“Despite the challenges, the time we spent teaching the other teams was such a blessing because we got to see their progress, their joy as they improved and celebrate with them when the moves hit.”
Recipe for Tradition

I don’t like mashed potatoes. I know, I know. I haven’t tried your (mom’s, dad’s, uncle’s, grandma’s, insert-amazing-family-cook-here) mashed potatoes, so therefore I haven’t had true mashed potatoes, and if I did try your mashed potatoes I would instantly be a mashed potato convert.

No such luck.

I’ve tried mashed potatoes at least once a year since I was very small, and I still don’t get the appeal. It’s just goopy starch with a zillion calories, zero texture, and sauce on top. I might as well eat oatmeal. You can at least add good things to oatmeal. Mashed potatoes are a lost cause.

For years, we avoided mashed potatoes for Thanksgiving. My family had this weird thing where we’d pick a different country and cook a meal based on their food for Thanksgiving. We did this for my entire childhood. There were always a few staples, of course—my mother’s empanadas, pumpkin pie, my brother’s favorite dinner roast—but it was a revolving door of entrees and appetizers that often had little in common with the American tradition. I’ve grown up believing that ultimately it doesn’t really matter what you eat. It matters that you eat it together.

This year, however, I will probably be eating mashed potatoes instead of empanadas, and that won’t take a signature after-dinner walk around the neighborhood, and that I won’t come home to eat leftover pie while officially heralding in the Christmas season with It’s a Wonderful Life.

None of this should be new to me. I’ve spent Thanksgivings away from home before. I’ve celebrated it on three separate continents, in countless states with countless friends and a veritable cornucopia of food. But honestly? This year is hitting me harder than it has in the past. It’s Thanksgiving, after all—it doesn’t matter what you eat. It matters that you eat it together.

Thanksgiving is about more than just the people around me right now. It’s also about the people who never leave me—my mother, whose encouragement steels my spine; my father, who challenges my thinking and bends over backwards for me at the drop of a hat; my siblings, who never leave me—my fiercest defenders.

This year, I will not be eating my mother’s empanadas, or watching my mother steal them in between board game turns, or learning new recipes from my sister-in-law, or picking the Christmas movie to watch later on with my dad. And I will miss all of that.

But I’m trying on a new set of traditions this year—a new kind of mashed potatoes, so to speak. I’ll inevitably play board games with my friends, we’ll probably still watch a Christmas movie at some point over the course of the weekend, and maybe I’ll even get to see the Macy’s Thanksgiving Day Parade from the comfort of my own living room. I’ve grown up believing that ultimately it doesn’t really matter what you eat. It matters that you eat it together.