With Christmas around the corner, many parents and couples run to the stores to buy Christmas pajamas for their families and partners. It’s a tradition most have heard of and participate in — but why?

Kevin Williams, a USU student, guessed the origin story of the Christmas PJs. “Christmas is the day to be lazy, completely lazy, and not get out of our pajamas all day,” Williams said. “Then somebody was like, ‘Well, we might as well match,’ and we’re all in the house all day wearing pajamas.”

Another USU student, Caleb Taylor, shared his thoughts. “It makes the holidays more fun when everyone is engaged in the same kind of family activity,” he said.

Social media has made matching jammies a viral sensation in the last decade. The most recent example is from the YouTube channel of the Dean and Kim Holderness family.

The family quartet originally posted a video titled #XMASJAMMIES! in 2013. The Holderness family video currently has 18 million views and counting, with a new #XMASJAMMIES! song posted each year.

“I think it’s really cute, and I like how they’re all matching,” said USU student Olivia Arosva.

But you don’t need to have a big following to show off your Christmas spirit. Families now show off their matching outfits on Instagram. The hashtag #christmasjammies has 195k posts of families donning red and green matching PJs.

The most recent trend regarding Christmas sleepwear, however, is couples. USU student Ashley Herbert said it can even mean a step forward in your relationship.

“I would say the more serious you are, the more likely you are to get Christmas pajamas together,” Herbert said.

A New York Times article titled “Will you be alone for matching pajamas season?” explores the new trend and how single adults view it as somewhat isolating.

“I could see why people are upset about couple matching jammies,” Arosva said. “I think they’re so fun. I also think that just getting matching Christmas pajamas with your friends is just as fun.”

Read the rest of this story at usustatesman.com

— alivia.hadfield@usu.edu
Column: Give the gift of Pilk this Christmas — or don’t

By Jacee Caldwell
NEWS EDITOR

Pilk — A genius marketing strategy but one that leaves a horrible taste, figuratively and literally, in my mouth.

Confused? Let’s start from the beginning. Pilk is a combination of Pepsi and milk. The idea was born from Pepsi’s new marketing campaign they launched through a Christmas commercial this holiday season with the beloved celebrity and “Parent Trap” star, Lindsay Lohan.

The commercial starts off in a home with Santa Claus sitting in front of a plate of cookies and a glass of milk — you know, like he’s supposed to be. Untraditionally, however, as Lohan tiptoes toward the living room where Old Saint Nick is, he then opens a can of Pepsi and pours it into the glass of milk.

As the commercial continues, you see Lohan make it to the living room and find the Pilk, with no Santa to be found. She tries the new drink and says, “That is one dirty soda, Santa,” with a smile on her face — a fake one, I’d confidently assume.

The commercial ends with a picture of Pilk that looks way more appealing than it tastes and the words “Pilk and cookies” on the screen.

Now as negative as I have been so far, I have to admit the marketing is nothing short of brilliant. Pepsi has done it all: the timing is perfect with the Christmas element, they bring in an A-list celebrity and they present a whole new idea that appears somewhat as a challenge.

“I think they picked the right celebrity too, because it’s like nostalgia for Millennials,” said Jake Ellis, the Statesman sports editor who introduced me to the commercial and has tried Pilk himself. “It’s just odd enough that you’ll get people reacting to it out of shock, which was my initial reaction.”

Though I may not be an expert in many things, I do consider myself a soda genius, wizard, professional, specialist, even goddess. Not only do I currently work for a local soda shop, I’ve also been an avid Pepsi lover my entire 21 years of life.

Why am I telling you this? Because I literally mix soda drinks for a living (OK, maybe just for extra cash, but still,) and I know what tastes like heaven and what tastes worse than dirt — Pilk is the latter.

And I’m not just saying all this on the assumption of what it would taste like — I’ve tried it myself. And if you couldn’t tell by now, I wasn’t a fan, and I knew I wouldn’t be.

After having a discussion on the commercial, the Statesman’s managing editor Darcy Ritchie came up with the idea of taste-testing Pilk with our entire editorial staff at our Christmas newspaper production night.

“I thought maybe it would have sort of a root beer float moment, but it just wasn’t the same,” Ritchie said. “I think the milk really canceled out everything that’s good about Pepsi.”

My thoughts exactly. I could taste both the Pepsi and the milk separately, rather than having them blend to make a good mix and a new flavor. Really, the milk just took out all of the Pepsi’s carbonation.

Ritchie and I weren’t the only ones left unsatisfied.

“At first I was like ‘OK, that’s good,’” said Audrey Flood, the Aggie Radio station manager. “But then I drank the whole cup, and I was like ‘That was just bad. My stomach hurts really bad.’”

As bad as I’m making Pilk sound, and as bad as it is, I would bet money that Pepsi purchases will increase just solely based on people’s curiosity — mine being no exception.

“I literally bought Pepsi just to make Pilk,” Ritchie said. “It worked on me. I fell for it; I did it.”

Even news anchors on the FOX21 morning team in Colorado tried the beverage on air. Anchor Craig Coffley said, “I taste Pepsi up front, and then I get the milk.”

Another FOX21 meteorologist Valerie Mills said, “I like milk and I like Pepsi, not together. But I’ve definitely had worse.”

As much coverage as it’s gotten, I don’t agree with all of the branding. Calling it “dirty soda” isn’t my favorite because it’s not even a new idea — it’s changing one that already exists.

When people come through at my job and order a “dirty Coke” or “dirty Pepsi” that means they want it with lime — I sure hope they don’t mean with milk now.

Pilk is worth a shot, though. Don’t get me wrong, I’m not switching up on you now and recommending you drink it on a regular basis, but I do get why it could be a fun group activity to try it once and see for yourself.

“My favorite part of pop culture is where people do things out of their comfort zone and create a shared experience like trying this,” Ellis said.

So, would I drink it again? No. Am I a little sad that Pepsi’s reputation could be tainted, and I’ll get made fun of more often by my coworkers for loving the brand because of this commercial? Yes.

And as much as I think I’m right about Pilk, everyone has their own opinion, and because Utah State University is a Pepsi school, you have an easy way to obtain the means to try Pilk for yourself.

What are you waiting for? Just know, your taste buds have been warned.

Jacee Caldwell is a broadcast journalism senior who strongly dislikes Pilk. Other than writing, Jacee loves Nike, Subway and the Dallas Cowboys.

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Logan Downtown Alliance celebrates 23rd year of Gingerbread Homes Contest

From Dec. 3 to Dec. 31, Logan Downtown Alliance hosts its 23rd year of celebrating Christmas with the Parade of Gingerbread Homes Contest.

Gingerbread creations from professional artists and community members now sit on display around downtown Logan.

Watermelons, cheeseburgers and even a chocolate campfire set the scene for Jackie Haws Bradshaw’s professional gingerbread house entry, “Cache Valley Christmas in July.”

“My favorite part is that we make it happen every year. We didn’t let it die during covid, and we don’t let it die now,” said Gary Saxton, the director of Logan Downtown Alliance.

The contest has around 12-16 creations each year, amounting to about 150 entries for the past 23 years, according to Saxton.

This year, five professional and six community member contestants participated. Each house displayed a different theme, whether that be a building unique to Cache Valley or their own scene celebrating Christmas.

“Everyone has a different artistic representation of something in the valley,” Saxton said.

Jennifer and Ashlyn Erickson, both professional contestants, created a scene complete with a gingerbread Old Main, the Logan temple and the Logan tabernacle. They titled their entry, “Logan’s Landmarks at Christmastime.”

Other themed entries included Robyn and Blake Rusch’s “Christmas on Crockett Avenue,” Muyly Miller’s “Smithfield Implement Company,” and Leticia Dornfield’s “Christmas at the Logan Pride House.”

Some artists, rather than making a Cache Valley-themed creation, crafted their own ideas.

In “Joy to the World,” community contestant Cindy Atkin designed a nativity scene complete with a gingerbread Mary, Joseph, Jesus, angels and lambs.

Chelsea Roberts’ “I’ll BEE Home for Christmas” entry presented a gingerbread beehive. According to her information flyer, the pieces are glued together with honey.

Two gingerbread figures puzzle over how to build their own gingerbread house in “Us in the Kitchen,” an entry from professional contestants Cynthia and Samantha Russell.

Saxton said some artists have incorporated lights, animation or mechanical effects to make their creations come to life.

“It became a running joke that it wasn’t a real gingerbread house unless we had to use power tools — yes; the drill, the jigsaw, the dremel and a lot of imagination,” the Dettore said.

Saxton encouraged Logan residents to visit the houses, which are placed in downtown locations within walking distance of each other. He said residents could vote for their favorites on the Logan Downtown Alliance’s website, logandowntown.org.

“Just find a day that works to get together, go around and see the creations,” Saxton said.

**POLICE BLOTTER**

**THEFT**

**CANYON CREST SUITES**

**DEC. 1** — A student called to report a crème colored hoodie was taken from a dryer in the laundry room at Canyon Crest. No suspect/s identified at this time.

**SEX LEWDNESS**

**CANYON CREST SUITES**

**RICHARDS HALL**

**DEC. 2** — Two separate female students reported a 20-30 year old white male exposed his genitals in the parking lots of Canyon Crest and Richards Hall. One female student victim was able to record the suspect leaving the scene with her phone. USU Police and Security observed the suspect and his vehicle on video surveillance system, and quickly notified our law enforcement partners in the county. The vehicle and male suspect was quickly located, leading to the suspect who is not a USU student being booked into jail on two counts of lewdness.

Campus Crime Alerts were sent out through the Aggie Safe App and later advising of the suspect being located and arrested.

**WARARRANT**

**LARS HANSEN DRIVE**

**DEC. 3** — Traffic stop on vehicle matching the suspect vehicle was conducted and the driver of the vehicle who is not a USU student had multiple Failure to Appear warrants for his arrest. Driver arrested and booked into jail.

*If you have any more information regarding these cases, contact the USU Public Safety Department at 435 797-1939. Summaries are from USU Police Chief Blair Barfuss. You can find these and other USU reported crimes at www.usu.edu/dps/police/daily-crime-log
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<tr>
<td>Read the Christmas edition of the Statesman</td>
<td>Go Christmas shopping for presents</td>
<td>Put up Christmas decorations</td>
<td>Drive to Ogden to see lights at Christmas Village</td>
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<td>DEC. 17</td>
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<td>Build a gingerbread house</td>
<td>Go ice skating at the George S. Eccles Ice Center</td>
<td>Drive to Preston to buy lottery tickets for stocking stuffers</td>
<td>Go sledding in the snow down Old Main Hill</td>
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<td>Donate food to the Cache Community Food Pantry</td>
<td>Build a snowman</td>
<td>Wrap your presents</td>
<td>Watch a Christmas movie in your PJ’s</td>
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Protecting pollinators throughout Utah: There is no plan bee

By Avery Truman
LIFESTYLES STAFF REPORTER

Vibrant campus flowers, crops Utahns depend on and the reproduction of essential plants are all reliant on pollinators such as bees, butterflies and moths. Ph.D. student Calvin Luu is working with the United States Department of Agriculture’s “bee lab” to track the fate of pesticides in solitary bee nests.

“About 85 to 90% of the species are actually solitary bees,” Luu said. “They are usually native and wild pollinators.”

According to Luu, honeybees are often used as the baseline for research on bee species, which can be problematic because they differ from the abundant solitary bees. Unlike honeybees, all female solitary bee species are reproductive, and they do not live in hives.

“I’m looking at the transport of pesticides in solitary bee nests,” Luu said. “Currently, a lot of EPA pesticide risk assessments for pollinators use honeybees.”

Certain pesticides pose a risk to bee populations when sprayed on fields.

“The pesticide will land on the leaves,” Luu said. “They’ll land on the soil, then the solitary bee pollinators will use leaves—they’ll use soil for nesting material.”

Unlike honeybees, solitary mothers do not care for their young. The mothers let them grow independently by leaving eggs with a bead of nectar, which Luu calls “provision.”

“A lot of these experiments are still ongoing,” Luu said. “But some preliminary data that we collected is that yes, there is a transfer of pesticides into the solitary bee larvae provision.”

According to Luu, pollinators contributed about $24 billion to the economy in 2015 and are essential to food production.

“About 120, maybe 130 different food crops in the United States require pollination by pollinators,” Luu said. “When we start having this decline in pollinators, then we’ll see a lot less food production, a lot less economic productivity from the agricultural sector.”

While pesticides are part of the issue, Luu warns against inaccurate judgments toward them.

“Pesticides can be a problem if they’re overused and used irresponsibly, but pesticides are needed for agriculture and for our economy and also food security,” Luu said. “They can be harmful, but with responsible use, they are beneficial.”

Farmers will often release their pollinators into the fields on a schedule that does not clash with the pesticide schedule.

“We set a date when we’re spraying the pesticides,” Luu said. “And we set an amount of time before we allow the solitary bees with the honeybees to go out into the field to reduce the amount of risk.”

Luu said the problem is with the native bees who are not released on a schedule and pollinate independently of human influence.

“No one’s managing them,” Luu said. “They’re going out and pollinating these crops themselves. They can be at high risk of exposure.”

Luu said that everyday people can help the bees in a very simple way.

“You can make little bee hotels in your backyard,” Luu said. “It’s a little box with straws in it, and solitary bees will go ahead and use those straws to make their nests. So, you can actually start propagating your own bees.”

Theresa Pitts-Singer, a research entomologist in the USDA Agricultural Research Service Pollinating Insects Research Unit, focuses on bee health and management.

“There was a year where they introduced a new product that’s a growth regulator,” Pitts-Singer said. “An insect eats it or is exposed to it somehow. It causes the bee not to advance to the next life stage.”

Pitts-Singer used the example of a caterpillar that is unable to grow into a bigger larva or an egg that cannot hatch because of this regulator.

“It just prevents that next molt,” Pitts-Singer said. “But a growth regulator doesn’t harm adults. So, if you spray it when the bees are present, you’re not going to kill your bees, but you will kill the little bugs that are growing and feeding on the seeds.”

Pitts-Singer is interested in finding out if the pesticides moving through plant matter used in egg cavities will kill the egg.

“If the leaf pieces they use to build that little cell have pesticides on it, does it move into the nectar and pollen—can it kill it that way?” Pitts-Singer said.

To help with the issue, Pitts-Singer advised that people become more educated about agriculture.

“I think that if we were more tolerant of imperfect food, it would be nice. And understanding that farming isn’t simple,” Pitts-Singer said. “The general public just—if they make themselves aware of where their food comes from, and appreciate it more, then I think that it would help.”

Avery Truman is a first-year student pursuing environmental studies and geography. She is passionate about astronomy, writing and reading science fiction and learning about wildlife.

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Holiday gift guide for shopping locally

By Cait Keith
LIFESTYLES STAFF REPORTER

With the holidays right around the corner, everyone is in a rush to find the perfect gifts for their loved ones. Don’t look too far — there are local businesses right here in Logan that could have the gifts you need for your friends or family. Here is a quick guide for shopping locally this holiday season.

**The Spirit Goat:** Located at 28 Federal Ave., The Spirit Goat specializes in goat’s milk soaps, lotion and other products. All of their products are handmade and don’t have the harsh chemicals usually found in factory-made products. They currently have a variety of seasonal holiday items such as reindeer soaps, snowflake bath fizzies and Christmas bathtub tea. Their holiday products have been inspired by the Christmas traditions of their employees. The Spirit Goat is open Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

**The GreenHouse, Inc.:** The GreenHouse is a nursery providing high-quality nursery stock to both landscape professionals and local homeowners. They sell a variety of plant materials and pond supplies and employ landscape professionals. For this holiday season, The GreenHouse has fresh wreaths, poinsettia plants and live Christmas trees. They also have gift certificates available for purchase. The GreenHouse is located at 295 W. 300 S. and is open Monday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

**Bluebird Candy Company:** Bluebird Candy Company is located at 75 W. Center St. Bluebird’s website states they have been selling hand-dipped chocolates since 1914. Aside from chocolates, the shop sells candy bars, nuts, popcorn, gift baskets, tins and trays of candy and Bluebird Candy merchandise. This holiday season, they are also selling seasonal items such as advent calendars filled with Bluebird Chocolates. The store is open Monday through Thursday, 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. and Friday and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.

**Global Village Gifts:** Located at 53 E. 100 N., Global Village Gifts sells products made by artisans from around the world. They specialize in “fair trade”, buying their products at a fair price for the artisans but also selling them at an affordable price for customers. Fair trade is possible because the store is operated by volunteers. Global Village features products from Africa, East Asia, South Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean and the Middle East, including figurines, lip balms, sauces and jewelry. The store is open from 12-4 p.m Monday through Thursday and from 12-6 p.m Friday and Saturday.

**Earthly Awakenings:** Earthly Awakenings is a metaphysical supply store selling a variety of stones, jewelry, clothing and other accessories. Located at 21 Federal Ave., Earthly Awakenings has been open for 21 years. Many of Earthly Awakenings’ products are locally made, such as glass stud earrings. Other products include cleansing sprays, spell jars, candles and rock carvings. The shop also offers tarot, oracle and affirmation cards. Earthly Awakenings is open Monday through Saturday 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Sunday 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

**Caffe Ibis:** Caffe Ibis serves mountain-grown and roasted Arabica coffee. They aim to provide quality and freshness while respecting the people whose labor brings them their coffees and safeguarding the environment. Caffe Ibis has their own line of coffee available for purchase along with merchandise. Located at 52 Federal Ave., the cafe is open from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. Sunday through Thursday and 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. on Friday and Saturday.

**The Sportsman:** Established in 1947, The Sportsman provides a wide variety of all-season sporting goods to Cache Valley. There is a variety of clothing and shoes available for purchase alongside biking and camping gear. The shop also sells skiing products, including boots, bindings, poles, helmets and goggles along with other winter apparel. The Sportsman, located at 129 N. Main St., is open Monday and Saturday 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Tuesday through Friday 9 a.m. to 7 p.m.

**Directive Boardshop:** A board shop providing skateboarding, longboarding and snowboarding products, Directive also sells shoes, apparel and various vintage items. They have a variety of gift cards available, ranging from $25 to $500. Currently, Directive is offering a deal on their website directiveboards.com for free shipping on orders over $139. The shop is open Monday through Saturday, 11 a.m. to 8 p.m., at 65 S. Main St.

A Christmas tree outside The Sportsman on Main St. in Logan.

Caitlin Keith comes from Utah and is currently a junior studying journalism. Other than writing she enjoys watching and ranting about TV shows or sports, speaking German and eating snacks.

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Aggies share favorite holiday traditions

PHOTO BY Dylan Anderson

Hannah Jensen is a first-year exploratory major from American Fork: “I love sledding with my family during the break.”

PHOTO BY Ella Budge

Kathryn Sorensen is a third-year student from Cache Valley studying bioengineering: “My favorite holiday tradition is decorating the tree with baked orange slices.”

PHOTO BY Dylan Anderson

Akira Muramoto (left) is a first-year exploratory major from Draper: “Me and my siblings on Christmas Eve stay up all night. We have a sleepover in the same room, and we just hand out and watch movies until we wake up the next morning.”

PHOTO BY Jessica Stewart

Maddison Steel is a first-year from Boise, Idaho, majoring in animal dairy science: “My favorite holiday tradition is probably on Christmas Eve. We have my mom’s side of the family over, and we do a little Christmas pass around left-and-right game, and then we go back and open our Christmas pajamas.”

PHOTO BY Paige Johnson

Jack Orgill, a junior in the ceramics program, kneads balls of clay together to store away easier: “It’s more of a New Year’s tradition, but the banging of pots and pans happens on New Year’s, and it happens on Christmas. It’s an excuse to go outside and be loud.”

PHOTO BY Paolo Johnson

Aspen Teuscher, a third-year student from Ogden in the environmental program, sets up for the college’s upcoming holiday market: “Christmas morning french toast at my grandpa’s house.”

PHOTO BY Jessica Stewart

Maddison Steel is a first-year from Boise, Idaho, majoring in animal dairy science: “My favorite holiday tradition is probably on Christmas Eve. We have my mom’s side of the family over, and we do a little Christmas pass around left-and-right game, and then we go back and open our Christmas pajamas.”

PHOTO BY Dylan Anderson

Mathew Rivas is a first-year exploratory major from North Washington: “My favorite tradition is playing paper football with my family during Christmas dinner.”

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Aggies share favorite holiday traditions

Brooklynn Adams, a senior from Bountiful studying food science, said her favorite Christmas tradition is baking gingerbread houses and watching "A Christmas Story" with her cousins.

Anne Yardley is a junior from Gunnison studying elementary education: "On Christmas Eve, we wait for Santa Claus to come around. In my small hometown, Santa Claus comes around to visit all of the families in their houses. We make gingerbread houses while we wait for Santa Claus to come."

First-year kinesiology student Sophie Gillette (left) and sophomore animal science student Ella Nichols pose together while getting lunch at the Forum Cafe in the Merrill-Cazier Library on Dec. 1. Gillette is from Farmington, and her favorite holiday tradition is when her family does Christmas pajamas each year. Nichols is from Orem, and her favorite holiday tradition is making holiday foods and desserts.

Engineering student Brett Safely said his favorite holiday tradition is getting to ski with his family every year.

Photos were submitted by students in the Intro to Photojournalism class.
Opinion: A commentary on fast food in Logan

We are reaching the crescendo of fast food culture in the greater Logan area, with an ample variety of dopamine-dosing, salivating destinations fit to satiate all the hungry desires of a USU student.

As a Utah State community, we have come a long way. In the genesis of my time at USU, during the B.D.T. age (before Del Taco), options were limited. A fall 2018 trip westward down 400 or 1000 North lacked the fruitfulness the same journey brings today. Sure, the golden arches stretching over the 700 N. McDonald's were still a pillar of society, and Chick-fil-A was well established. But the In-N-Out, Cupbop, Twisted Sugar, Del Taco, Chipotle, Cafe Zupas and Wingstop were undeveloped.

The acceleration nearly began at the start of the A.D.T era (after Del Taco) in 2019. The establishment of Del Taco was undoubtedly transcendent. But unforeseen circumstances developed, as the pandemic had a residual impact on the Cache Valley's quick culinary scene, in both circumstances developed, as the pandemic had a residual impact on the Cache Valley's quick culinary scene, in both a lack of new restaurants and a downfall of existing ones.

Back on a trajectory of growth in the valley, it's the appropriate time to rank a handful of these joints.

Suboptimal

Burger King, Main Street and 200 N.  
I journeyed to this Burger King in August 2022 with a simplistic purpose in mind: order one large Dr. Pepper. My reasoning was simple. Although I detest the food here, I knew everyone else would too, so the drive-thru line would be empty, making it a painless experience.

My assumption was correct; however, I overestimated the restaurant's ability to meet my demands. “Our fountain drink machine isn’t working,” said the voice from the speaker, and I proceeded to drive off empty handed. Two weeks later, Burger King closed down.

Wendy’s, 1305 N. Main St.  
Truthfully, this Wendy’s should not be considered a fast food joint.

But if you have an hour on your hands and are looking to burn some fossil fuel while waiting to order some mediocre food, it’s the place to be.

There could be three cars in line, there could be six, or there could be zero; it makes no difference at all. An irritated voice will correctly gather roughly 60% of your order, then six radio songs later — if you’re lucky — the food will be delivered, probably with a melted Frosty and one of your nuggets missing.

Honorable mentions: Taco Bell (gross), the TSC food court (better options at every other university food court in the state).

Used to be legendary

McDonald’s, 810 N Main St.  
The winter of 2020 — prior to the pandemic — was nothing short of legendary.

Aiding to its glory was the local McDonald’s, nicknamed “The Neighborhood Kitchen” for those whose cooking prowess extended to driving to the drive-thru lane and ordering a Hot n’ Spicy.

Every time Utah State basketball, led by Sam Merrill and Neemias Queta won a game that year, a trip to McDonald’s was in order. Victory meals after Nevada, UNLV, Colorado State, Boise State and San Jose State were truly chemistry-changing experiences.

Tragically, McDonald’s post-coronavirus has taken a nosedive. Limited hours are the main reason — midnight trips for a Sprite are unattainable. Comrading with fellow college students inside the lobby on a late Tuesday night feels like a thing of the past.

Honorable mention: The south McDonald’s (Same issues; residual impact on my lifestyle is less consequential.)

Trending up

In and Out, 404 Main St.  
The year-long construction of the In-N-Out brought a churn in my stomach and skepticism for the future. The busiest junction in the valley was about to be flipped up on its head.

But here’s the fickle thing about change: our anticipation for it often outweighs its actual effects.

When 1000 West was built, did it fix the traffic issue on Main Street by streamlining slow Franklin County pickup trucks? Nope. Did the In-N-Out make the intersection that much busier than it already was? Also nope.

Instead, it added some pizzazz to the corner and another late night, dine-in option. And while the fries still taste like cardboard, the hamburgers hit from time to time, and the shakes are elite.

Wendy’s, 895 S. Main St.  
Growing gray hairs on your noggin from waiting too long in the north Wendy’s drive-thru for a 4 for $4? Cut loose, and head south. The south Wendy’s, carved out between a La Quinta and a health clinic, will be waiting for you with open arms.

The Jekyll to the north Wendy’s Hyde, the ying to its yang, the south Wendy’s is everything its northern counterpart isn’t. Efficient drive-thru line. Friendly staff. Getting your order right. When those three star align, a $5 biggie bag is well worth the trek.

Honorable mentions: Einstein Bagels (Purely vibes, but cinnamon sugar bagels are growing on me); Costco food court (I don’t have a Costco card I can’t make this one official.)

Goaded

Del Taco, 497 E 1400 N  
Friends come and go. Circumstances change. We experience times of success and moments of growth. Through it all, one thing never will change: Del Taco will always be there for you.

Open 24/7, seven days a week and always properly staffed, it’s the finest fast food establishment in Cache Valley. Fine goods pierce your nose and emanate through your car with additive toxins of deliciousness. Churros, grilled chicken tacos, ranch chicken rollers, Taco Tuesday deals, or even a cheeseburger and fries. You name it, they got it. 3 p.m., or 3 a.m. Always delivers.

Haven’t been? Quit waiting around. Get going. Consider it your new home away from home.

Honorable mention: South Maveriks (Not fast food, but two gas stations with delicious gas station food directly across the street from each other); 7/11 400 N. Main St. (Shoutout to the semi-broken hot chocolate machine and my boy Don.)

Jacob Nielson is a senior studying journalism from Holladay. When he’s not searching for the best fast food, Jacob cheats on Sporcle quizzes.

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Nani Swimwear, a women-run business in Smithfield, strives to empower women and celebrate body diversity. They emphasize that all bodies are swimsuit bodies and want all women to feel comfortable and beautiful in their bodies. Nani means beautiful in the Hawaiian language.

The three pillars of Nani’s mission are inclusivity, sustainability and active coverage.

The first pillar is inclusivity. Nani is working to normalize body diversity by speaking out against unrealistic beauty standards in women’s fashion. Their swimsuit catalog does not feature professional models or digitally manipulate their portraits. They advocate for inclusivity by creating a wide variety of swimsuits designed to make women feel adventurous and beautiful in their own bodies.

The second pillar of the Nani mission is sustainability. Since 2021, all Nani swimsuits are made from recycled water bottles. Nani has a goal to be completely plastic-free by 2024.

The final pillar is active coverage. Amy Rasmussen, the operations director of Nani, said many women struggle to feel comfortable in a swimsuit. The mission was inspired by a lack of fashion-forward swimsuits that also provide active coverage.

Nani seeks opportunities to encourage women to empower other women. In September, they donated $5,000 worth of sweatshirts and sports bras to CAPSA in Logan as part of an effort to support women escaping abuse.

In October, for Breast Cancer Awareness month, Nani encouraged women to prioritize their health and get regular checkups. They donated $10,000 worth of cozy pink sweatshirts and handwritten notes to support women fighting breast cancer.

Pride Embroidery in Logan donated the screen printing to create the sweatshirts, which feature a pink graphic and the breast cancer awareness ribbon. The donations went to women receiving treatment at the Huntsman Cancer Institute and the Intermountain Cancer Center in Logan.

Rasmussen said this year was the first annual donation to women battling cancer, and the company will continue to donate in the future. As breast cancer is the most common form of cancer found in women, the sweatshirt donation is significant to Nani’s mission of women supporting women.

“We are very passionate about what we do and are always looking for ways to give back,” Rasmussen said via a phone interview.

The Nani team received feedback on how touched the recipients of the sweatshirts were. The team was unable to hand them out directly but said the nurses were excited.

Ellie Ward, a designer at Nani, graduated from the outdoor product design and development program at Utah State University. She designed the sweatshirts, along with many of Nani’s products.

“My favorite part of the Nani brand is that they are always striving for innovation and improvement,” Ward said. “They’re always looking for ways to be more sustainable and inclusive for all women’s body types.”

She said she loves the mission and the creativity the brand is constantly aspiring to.

Nani encourages women to be adventurous and spread love.

“Women supporting women really is what it boils down to,” Rasmussen said. “Giving back, serving others and kindness are what it’s all about.”

Rasmussen said her team is actively finding ways to be innovative and achieve their goals. New things are in store for the brand, including a four-way reversible product line that will be released in fall of next year.

The Breast Cancer Support Squad Sweatshirts can be found on naniswimwear.com, where 100% of the proceeds are donated to the cause.

Sav Hammond is a local activist and community organizer. They are a second-year student studying journalism. They are passionate about sustainable fashion and making jewelry in their free time.

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Right now, it is the best of times for USU Men’s Basketball. The Aggies’ 7-0 start was tied for the third-best start in USU basketball history. The same feat was accomplished by the 2019-20, 1934-35, 1933-34 and 1913-14 teams, with the 1961-62 team reaching an 8-0 start. The 1919-20 squad is at the top of the list, going undefeated through the first nine games.

Transfer forwards Taylor Funk and Dan Akin are a big part of the Aggies’ success so far. They have fit into Ryan Odom’s system like a glove.

Funk — whose charisma and dunking ability may remind audience members of NBA G League player Justin Bean — is blazing his own path by keeping up the productive scoring ability he showed at Saint Joseph’s while adding the ability to rebound.

“I was known as a shooter. I see in myself a little more than that,” Funk said after the Utah Valley game. “It’s definitely something that I’m thinking about, and I definitely need to keep that up.”

Funk added that rebounding was an important part of his recruitment to USU.

“Coach, he said, ‘We’re bringing you here. You’re much more than a shooter. You’re a rebounder,’” Funk said.

Nabbing Funk — who was recruited by several Power Five schools — during the offseason was a big feat for Odom and his staff. Odom has wanted the forward to play for him since Funk came out of high school — he even recruited him while coaching at the University of Maryland Baltimore County.

“He’s a natural fit for the way that we coach here,” Odom said in an interview before the season. “He can really shoot the basketball. He’s a willing passer and good rebounder. He’s got a lot of positives.”

In addition to being the second-highest-scoring Aggie per game, Funk is fifth in the nation in 3-pointers per game and 13th in 3-pointer shooting percentage.

Akin, a transfer from Cal Baptist, originally played for Odom at UMBC.

“I’m really familiar with them, so it’s good,” Akin said. “They know what I can do... I know how I fit within that system and just know what to do at the right times.”

Odom said “in hindsight,” he should have recruited Akin to USU straight from UMBC, but Akin made that clear during his season as a Lancer. He averaged 10.8 points and 8.1 rebounds per game.

“He got better last year,” Odom said. “Cal Baptist, they did a great job with him, and he had a great season for them.”

After a rough first game for the Aggies — including five turnovers and four missed free throws — against Utah Valley, Akin got the “first game jitters” out. Since then, he has led the team in shooting percentage and free throws attempted; he’s second in free throws made and rebounding and third in total points, steals and blocks.

Additionally, Akin has led the Aggies in scoring twice this season, including in a neutral-site game against San Francisco, where his scoring helped a USU squad that only made five threes that game.

Akin’s performance so far has shown he will be an asset in Mountain West Conference play, where he and USU will try to prove the media — who voted USU to finish eighth in the league — wrong.

“They’re going to wake up when they see us play,” Akin said before the season started.
USU Men’s Basketball players take advantage of NIL deals

By Emma Becerra
GUEST REPORTER

Editor’s note: This story was submitted by a student from in a JCOM 1130 News Writing class.

On July 1, 2021, the NCAA passed the name, image and likeness policy, also known as NIL, allowing college athletes to commercialize themselves for a profit with a certain brand or company.

Over the past decade, student-athlete payment has been a debate surrounding college sports. The passing of the NIL policy allowed for a loophole for college athletes.

The policy is no longer new to athletes or universities, and it has been utilized over the past year.

“When NIL first came out, I wasn’t quite sure how it worked,” said Isaac Johnson, a member of the USU basketball team. “But then a person from Opendorse came in and explained it. When I learned more about it, I figured out that I could make some money off of it.”

Opendorse is a company many universities across the country hired in order to help student-athletes utilize the opportunities NIL could provide them. USU is one of them.

The USU’s men’s basketball team is currently in the spotlight. The team, who started their season 7-0, is gaining new fans and more interest from companies.

Taylor Funk, a graduate transfer forward from Saint Joseph's University, is the new star for the Aggie team. Funk has averaged 17.7 points and 8.6 rebounds per game.

“Since transferring from SJU, the opportunities for NIL are much greater here,” Funk said. “Because Logan is smaller, I feel like fans are really bought into our team. With more people buying into the team, I have gained more fans, and companies see me as a good promoter.”

In the last six months, Funk signed multiple NIL deals with places like Greek Streak 2, Print For Players and Mountain West Motor.

Athletes work for their signed companies in different ways. Some use their image, allowing stores to put up a picture of them for advertising. However, the most popular way college athletes work for their compensation in NIL deals is through social media.

“One of my NIL deals is with Boneyard,” said Steven Ashworth, a point guard for USU. “I am allowed to get free haircuts for them as long as I post a picture on Instagram advertising that I go to Boneyard.”

Ashworth, a Utah native, has made connections throughout his life and basketball career which have now turned into NIL opportunities.

“I feel like if I went out of state, the opportunities would be limited,” Ashworth said. “People know me here, and I have reached out to a lot of companies, which is why I have been successful with striking up NIL deals.”

Ashworth’s deals aren’t necessarily enough to make an income, but they allow him to get benefits such as driving a car on game day or getting free food.

Johnson, a transfer from the University of Oregon, has been able to use his popularity to sign an NIL deal with Kartchner Homes. He was also able to experience the benefits big-time athletic programs get with NIL deals.

“After attending the UO, I realized the opportunities that college athletes can get from different universities they are attending,” Johnson said. “The bigger universities with more money and more boosters are able to give their student-athletes more money in NIL deals.”

Johnson believes the NIL deals available at USU aren’t equivalent in merit compared to what was available at the UO.

Funk, Ashworth and Johnson explained the way NIL deals have been set up has allowed bigger universities with more funding to get better deals for their athletes.

With each NIL deal being unique, there was no definitive answer for how much the players are getting, so the financial stability for each athlete can vary.

According to Johnson and Ashworth, the financial benefits they have received from the NIL deals ranged between $5,000 to $10,000 annually.

“In the next five years, I think NIL will be a part of future recruiting,” Ashworth said. “I think that some athletic programs will have some deals that they can offer to certain recruits in order to persuade them into committing.”

Emma Becerra is a sophomore journalism major from Corona, California. Her hobbies include swimming, hanging out with friends and boating. She is currently on the Utah State soccer team.

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MTCs need to put a higher emphasis on cultural competency

Attending USU has me interacting with a lot of twenty-somethings, many of whom are members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and have recently returned from a two-year mission proselytizing in a foreign country. As I have met more of these returned missionaries, I have begun to understand the truth behind a common LDS joke — the missionary who comes home acting like they know more about where they served than the native people.

There’s no doubt that living in a foreign country for two years can instill a love for the culture in a starry-eyed young man or woman. But does this sort of cultural appreciation reflect genuine competence when interacting across cultures? Absolutely not.

LDS church missionary training centers, or MTCs, are not preparing their missionaries to navigate foreign culture in a way that goes beyond simple respect. Because, for a missionary, respect for a culture just isn’t enough. They must gain a full understanding of it and maintain the humility to understand their place as interlopers in a country’s rich political and religious history.

The National Center for Cultural Competence, or NCCC, advises businesses to have a defined set of principles aimed at adapting to different cultural contexts and valuing the diversity that results. Doing so will help people of different backgrounds feel safe and seen. This idea can also be applied to the business of proselytizing, and could be implemented into the ways missionaries are trained. Using the NCCC’s principles as a guideline, MTCs can prepare missionaries to prioritize cultural competence as they go out into the mission field to preach.

I spoke to my brother, Lewis Miller, who at the time was in his fourth week at the Provo, Utah MTC. He had full days of classes meant to prepare him to serve in the Bangkok, Thailand mission. I wondered if he was learning something akin to these principles.

“We mostly just work on learning the language,” he told me. “It’s really difficult, so it feels necessary. Sometimes one of the Thai natives who teaches us will explain a few things you should and shouldn’t do, like how pointing the sole of your foot at someone is like flipping them off.”

In Thailand, over 94 percent of people identify as Buddhist, but Lewis told me that Buddhism has only been mentioned in passing. It’s a severe oversight to skim over the religious history of a country like Thailand, where religion can be seen in so many elements of its culture. This is especially true when your intention is the introduction of a new religion. I could only encourage Lewis to do his due diligence in learning what he could about it.

While learning the language is important, it seems like only the fundamentals of respect are being taught, along with a few lesser-known elements of the country’s culture. The priority seems to be only the immediate comfort of the missionaries.

Seth Beckett agrees. He returned from his mission to Argentina after only three months due to disagreements with the way it was run. He explained to me how his desire to connect meaningfully with the native people were disregarded in favor of increasing baptism numbers. Beckett’s aim for cultural competency through inclusion and understanding didn’t fit within the goals of the mission. This alienated Seth from the church, and in his opinion also alienated the people he was trying to reach.

Beyond competency within another country’s culture, Missionary Training Centers also fail to teach competency within familial cultures as well. Most missionaries are young and ill-equipped to deal with different family dynamics, or the drama that can occur within families as a result of conversion to a new faith.

Wilfried Decoo wrote for the LDS church member-run blog “Times and Seasons” about the reasons many have for disliking LDS missionaries. He focused primarily on the rifts that can occur within families and communities when not all are willing to convert, and cites the missionary handbook’s lack of helpful instruction for navigating these complex situations. He spoke of his mother’s reaction when he decided to be baptized: “This was the utter ruin of her son’s future and her own lifework... What had she done wrong?” Conversions are dramatic and filled with big emotions—emotions that missionaries are not taught to handle.

Empathy and understanding are key to cultural competency, but the missionary handbook seems more intent on treating confused family members as barriers to another baptism. “For the rather flippant missionaries who taught me at the time, my mother was just a frustrating obstacle,” Decoo remembered. This attitude can be very offensive, especially when family members are devout to their own religions and doing good in their own way.

LDS church Missionary Training Centers need to put a bigger emphasis on cultural competence when training their new missionaries, focusing on the points outlined by the National Center for Cultural Competence. Doing so will protect the cultures and history of foreign countries, protect families who may be disrupted by new faith, and make missionary work a bit more Christlike.

George Miller is a junior studying biochemistry and math. You may also know him as an SI leader for BIOL 1610 and as a member of the USU club gymnastics team.

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An open letter to universities calling for academic accommodations and mental health support for Uyghur and Chinese students

As faculty at USU and a member of the Chinese diaspora, I write to the Aggie family to draw your attention to an Open Letter to Universities Calling for Academic Accommodations and Mental Health Support for Uyghur and Chinese Students in response to the recent protests in China and across the globe. As one of the authors, I will reproduce parts of the letter below to provide you with context and a call for action. You can read the full letter here.

This latest wave of protest was ignited by the recent fire in Ürümqi, Xinjiang, the provincial capital of the “Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region,” or the lands of Dzungarstan and Altishahr. This fire sparked the latest wave of vigils and protests (see reports from Lausan Collective; Bloomberg News; NYU News) and became a particular moment of awakening for many Chinese students and activists. We as a diasporic community are in mourning, mourning the lost lives of these victims, most of whom are of Uyghur descent. Although we cannot speak for Uyghur students since we don’t share the same experiences, we want to stress the fact that they have been facing challenges that are even more complex and arduous with additional layers of oppression.

For many Uyghur and Chinese students, their families and friends back home may have been put into lockdowns, participating in these protests, or experiencing heightened police surveillance. Meanwhile, some took the initiative to organize vigils and protests in universities and communities across the globe. Some are participating in these kinds of events for the first time, and some are mourning privately. Many continue to engage in reflections and discussions about the ongoing events. (To learn more about different perspectives, see comments by international scholars at ChinaFile). Needless to say, it is an incredibly difficult time for the Uyghur and Chinese diasporic communities.

As finals approach, these students may struggle more because they are concerned about family and friends back home, or because they are putting a lot of effort into organizing or participating in events. This effort can take an emotional toll. We especially want to urge the Aggie family to give more support to Uyghur students and listen to their needs, since they have been in a more marginalized, underrepresented place.

Faculty and staff who work with Uyghur and Chinese students should offer appropriate accommodations when possible, such as more flexible deadlines and extensions, or simply checking in with them to see how they are doing. These small gestures can mean a lot in this difficult time. We also encourage USU CAPS to offer additional support and resources for Uyghur and Chinese students who seek mental health services.

Members of the Chinese Diaspora

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Sudoku puzzles are provided by www.sudukooftheday.com.
Elise Gottling is a first-year student currently in the exploratory major. Besides photography, she also loves playing the guitar, singing and music in general (especially Taylor Swift -- she’s a genius).

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