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# Literary Festival to begin Jan. 10

Four authors, including a former U.S. Poet Laureate and best-selling author, to headline annual event

# By **Alexander Munoz** copy editor

**EVERY YEAR, MARKSMEN** gather in Decherd Auditorium to absorb the wealth of knowledge from writers from all over the country.

This year, the sixth annual Literary Festival will host four authors Jan. 10. Curtis Sittenfeld, Marion Winik and Sid Balman '76 will visit to share their writing experiences. In addition, the Literary Festival has partnered with the Dennard Visiting Scholars Program to host former U.S. Poet Laureate Billy Collins.

David Brown, sponsor of the Literary Festival, chose the authors based mostly on diversity.

"We want several genres represented," Brown said. "So with Collins being a poet, we also like to have a fiction writer and a nonfiction writer, and we like to try to find someone that's a journalist. We also like to bring diversity culturally, gender diversity or racial diversity, some kind of difference so that we don't have the all male, white, Texas writers mentality that we get plenty of just being who we are where we are."

The Literary Festival combined



with the Visiting Scholars Program for the first time this year to get Collins to attend, and Brown is excited to see the result. "Any time you can



get someone of [Billy Collins'] national prominence, his stature, someone who has been the Poet Laureate, someone who's probably the most famous American poet in our generation, then you

utilize him as much as you can," Brown said. For the first time this year, writers will

this year, writers will read excerpts from their work to provide students with an example of their writing. "Students and teachers will hear some DIVORCE | INSIDE Heartfelt stories from those who have experienced separation - page 18

**'tildeath** With the divorce rate hovering around 50 percent in the U.S., millions of children each year are caught in the crossfire. Children of these traumatic parental separations often experience strong feelings of anxiety, confusion and anger. **dous part?** 





**MIDDLE SCHOOLER SAT FIDGETING** in his airplane seat. Something was wrong. He didn't want the plane to leave.

Otto Clark-Martinek was angry.

Not angry at anything specifically, but in general. Angry at his school. Angry at his parents. And at himself.

The American Airlines flight from Jackson Hole, WY back to Dallas represented more than just leaving behind a summer break of hiking, fishing and whitewater rafting with his mom. It represented living the rest of the year apart from her and, instead, being with his dad — but worse, it meant coming back to a school full of people with whom he wasn't getting along.



Balman

collins of their favorite works or passages or something more recent that they've done that they may not have seen," Brown said. "And I think that'll be entertaining and interesting and a little different from what we've done in the past."

After planning out all the details and working for months, Brown believes that this year's Literary Festival will be one of the best yet.

"I think it's going to be one of the most invigorating, entertaining, informative fests that we've had if it's not the best ever," Brown said. "Not just because of the quality of the writers that we have — we've had great writers in the past as well — but these writers overall have more of a national appeal then we've had in the past."









Just as the flight attendants were telling people to turn off their electronic devices, he realized that if they took off now, he couldn't go back. He hit the call button and alerted the flight attendants that he wasn't ready to leave. He had to stay.

"I made them stop the plane and tried to get off," he said. "I didn't want to come back. I didn't want to ever come back here because it was so horrible for me. I was okay coming back to my Dad, but I knew that meant I would have to start school soon, and I couldn't do that." **Continued, pg. 18** 

► by Daniel Hersh, editor-in-chief and Stephen Rambin, issues editor, stats compiled by Teddy Edwards, staff writer | artwork by Robbey Orth, graphics director and Andrew Goodman, visuals director

#### HOLIDAY SPIRIT

# **'Tis the season for giving**

### Seniors' greeting

It's one of the oldest of campus traditions: seniors taking over the campus decorations. Each year, on the Sunday of Thanksgiving break, all members of the Senior Class convene in the school's courtyard to transform the 80 yard deep space into a seasonal wonderland, with hundreds of lights, greenery and even a bowtie for the student depicted in the statue that fronts Centennial Hall.





TEAMWORK Doing their part on Nov. 20, seniors Andrew Graffy (top) and Reid Thompson (above) add lights and stockings to the school courtyard

# The bigger gift:

HUNDREDS OF GIFTS HAVE ALREADY BEEN DELIVERED IN THE ANNUAL GIFT DRIVE, COORDINATED BY STUDENT COUNCIL AND THE COMMUNITY SERVICE PROGRAM. BUT HUNDREDS MORE ARE STILL TO COME.

rowing up in a low-income household, Greg Jones didn't have the big Christmases with many expensive gifts that he saw other kids getting.

Instead, he learned what Christmas is really about.

"When I was a kid, we had a hard time," Jones said. "But I know that the Christmases we had were full of love. So if it was one toy or a used toy or whatever, I knew that my mom did everything she could to have that for me. So our Christmases were just full of joy."

Now, Jones works as outreach director at the West Dallas Community Church, one of nine charitable organizations that will receive gifts collected from this year's Student Council and Community Service Gift Drive. The church will distribute the gifts among families that wouldn't otherwise be able to provide their children with gifts this Christmas.

"When you get to know these kids and their families," Jones said, "you realize the need for support and resources for their lives."

This year's Gift Drive, which started two weeks ago and runs through Tuesday, aims to help provide those underprivileged children across Dallas the opportunity to wake up to gifts on Christmas morning, and it is doing so by striving to reach its goal of 2,013 gifts.

Student Council President Conner Lynch, who helped direct the council in its efforts to come up with a theme and work with the Community Service Board in collecting the gifts twice a day, knows how important it is that the community here comes together to provide gifts to the children who need them most.

"It really can't be put into words how important the Gift Drive is for so many children," he said. "It's so rewarding to





GETTING THE GIFTS Community Service Board members and Student Council officials have been getting up bright and early to greet students with Santa outfits and megaphones as they collect presents for the annual Gift Drive. One of the dozens of boxes filled in the mornings sits full (above left), senior Milan Savani encourages students to harness the season's joy and donate gifts (top left), and a Lower School student happily donates a gift early one morning (right)

have a chance to make a huge impact on these children's lives because giving them one gift they otherwise wouldn't get can truly make their Christmas. It's imperative that we come together as a student body for this cause and give back to those less fortunate than we are."

Jones gives back by trying to build new bridges and strengthen old relationships with the families in his community. A big part of that effort is going out and finding the families who can't provide gifts for their children during the holiday season and helping to solve that problem.

"A lot of our kids are below poverty guidelines," he said. "It creates a hardship economically when there is no income that really hurts the opportunity for these families to be blessed, so we try to identify things we can do, especially with children, to help shield them from a lot of the problems."

In her effort to collect and donate more than 2,000 gifts in her first Gift Drive last year, Community Service director Laura Day was amazed by the generosity of the community here. For her, the Gift Drive is a annual highlight and important time.

"Many of the gifts we give are all some kids get for an entire year," she said. "[We have] to make sure all kids that we work with during the school year receive something that they want or need for the holidays."

Jones knows firsthand the few gifts the kids receive truly make a bigger impact than seen on the surface.

"Man, these kids get happy," he said. "They're full of joy. They remember you for the rest of their lives."

The way these gifts change the lives of children inspires Jones to work tirelessly to reach every child he can. He has spent weeks collecting orders for gifts, but he isn't done yet. The five days before Christmas are his busiest, trying to find any families that were left out.

'We try to get every kid that is missed or fallen in the cracks identified," Jones said. "I'm not Santa Claus, but there's a joy and comfort inside of me when I know that kids are happy, and that's the key. Joy is the key to this whole thing. They will remember us not for they toys. They will remember us because we cared."

#### Want to donate a gift?

#### irst off, there's still time.

Donation boxes are available every school day morning and after schoolwhen Student Council members bring the collection boxes out for each day's bounty.

Boxes can be found at the school's main entrance in front of the courtyard or in the entrance to Lower School.

Dec. 19 will be the last day collection boxes will be in place.

THE BIGGER GIFT story by Dylan Clark, arts editor | photos by Corbin Walp, staff photographer and Riley Graham. staff photographer

#### LOWER SCHOOLERS EXPLAIN

## What makes this season so magical

Lower School students have always played

#### WISH LISTS What do you want from Santa this year?

"A spaceship as big as the world!" < First grader Nathan Mever





'It's a giving time, not a getting time." < Third grader Maxwell Chuang

an important role in contributing to the annual Gift Drive, a community effort that traditionally brings in more than 2,000 gifts. All gifts benefit local children who normally wouldn't receive presents during the holiday season. Lower Schoolers explained to deputy editorial director Vishal Gokani why they support the Gift Drive and what this season means to them.





< First grader Bennett Alger

"A tree house so I can hang out." < First grader Carter Mank

CHRISTMAS THEORIES Why don't some kids get gifts?

"They don't get presents because they don't have a home or a chimney." < First grader Charlie Hill

'Their parents are very poor and they're wandering around the world, so Santa can't find them. They don't have paper or pencils to write a note to Santa. Also, some might be in hospitals, and there are no chimneys in hospitals."

^ First grader Ryland Ellis

UYVA SEVILLA ILLUSTRATION





"They deserve presents, but they don't get them."

< Third grader Henry Schechter



"We should give gifts without a reward." < Third grader James Singhal



"We should make them feel happy." < Third grader Owen Simon



"You get the feeling you've done something good for the world. You know you've improved it.

< Third grader William Fitzpatrick



< Third grader Raja Mehendale





