

# UNDER AGE PAGE

## Akon plea

■ Hip-Hop star Akon pleaded guilty to tossing a teenage fan off the stage at a concert in upstate New York last year. He will receive no jail time if he performs 65 hours of community service and pays a \$250 fine.  
— Please see story, Page 4B



# 'Tis the season to be politically correct

BY ANTHONY J. GARCIA  
BELTON HIGH SCHOOL

## ANALYSIS

With political correctness being at its highest this holiday season, specific holidays seem to be unmentionable. When shoppers go to Wal-Mart, greeters no longer say "Merry Christmas," they say "Happy Holidays." People do not buy Christmas trees anymore, they buy Holiday trees.

It has even come to a debate on what to call decorative house lights; Christmas lights or Holiday lights. Some are speaking out about this.

Being politically correct has become more difficult now with the diverse country we live in. Americans practice many different religions, including Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism, thus, many different holidays are celebrated. With Christmas approaching many can notice all the decorations, music, and store displays, but they are not being linked to Christmas, rather overall holidays.

"Some atheists believe that school children should not say the pledge of allegiance, so their children can live out their lack-of-religious freedom, thus, children who believe in God lose theirs," Belton High School mathematics teacher Katy Harrell said. "Retail stores today have 'holiday sales' so those of different faith are not offended. Thus, freedom of the people is lost."

Many Belton High students disagree with holiday political correctness.

"People don't understand that there can never be political correctness, people will always be offended one way or another," sophomore Eve Clardy said.

"In a way political correctness has taken the real meaning away from the holidays because in America we have freedom to celebrate whatever holiday we wish," Addie Durbin, sophomore, said, "As long as people are respectful of what others choose to celebrate,

there should no hostility. Holidays are about joy and happiness."

Trees have also become a hot topic in political correctness.

Even the tree on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C., has had its name changed to a "Holiday Tree."

"The 'trees' aren't for all the holidays, they are for Christmas," Belton High student Mara Wyatt said. "If we start calling them Holiday trees then are we going to put them up for every holiday? They're just for Christmas, not for New Years. It's a Christmas tree."

Sophomore Ian Smith felt differently than Wyatt, "You can call it whatever you want, in the end it's still a tree," he said.

Others compared the tree change to other religions. "Changing Christmas trees to Holiday trees would be like changing Hanukkah candles to Holiday candles," Francesca Presta said.

For many years December holidays to Americans have become another day to go to church, buy gifts, or visit

relatives.

"The reason that Christmas has become so political is a direct effect of the commercialization of Christmas," said University of Mary Hardin-Baylor junior Rebecca Loftis, "People are so caught up in the gifts and decorations, they forget what Christmas is really about. Stop taking Christ out of Christmas, political or not."

Atheists have also made themselves known with a new advertisement campaign which cost the American Humanist Association \$40,000. They have used the "Santa Claus Is Coming to Town" song verse in an advertisement on a Washington, D.C., bus that says "Why Believe in God ... just be good for goodness' sake."

"Because I don't believe in Christ, Christmas for me is a time of giving thanks for all the things we have in life and celebrating life with family," Belton High tutor Henry Spencer said.

The American Family Association did something similar by selling buttons that said, "It's OK to say Merry

Christmas"

Famous political speech writer and actor Ben Stein said in a letter he recited on CBS Sunday Morning, "I am a Jew, and every single one of my ancestors are Jewish. It doesn't bother me a bit when people say, 'Merry Christmas' to me. I don't think they are slighting me or getting ready to put me in a ghetto. In fact, I kind of like it. It shows that we are all brothers and sisters celebrating this happy time of year. It doesn't bother me at all that there is a manger scene on display at a key intersection near my beach house in Malibu. If people want a crèche, it's just as fine with me as is the Menorah a few hundred yards away."

Many Americans may not remember, but the First Amendment in the Bill of Rights says Congress shall make no law establishing a religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press.

The importance of this is up to America and how we utilize it is too.

## Are your gifts safe?

BY CYNTHIA SHOWS  
TEMPLE HIGH SCHOOL

Over the past years China has recalled many different items. In 2005, 13 items were recalled; 20 items were recalled in 2006, 112 items were recalled in 2007, and 64 items just this year, according to MSNBC.

Other countries such as Vietnam, Peru, India, Taiwan and Korea had items recalled. The harmful substance in most of the items is lead, which can cause irreversible learning disabilities and behavioral problems. Lead exposure can cause seizures, comas and even death. If an item has more than 600 parts per million of lead in it, it is extremely dangerous for children. This is especially true for infants, since they put most toys into their mouths.

Last year more than 600,000 Barbie accessory toys were recalled. Mattel Inc.'s Fisher-Price unit recalled 1.5 million preschool toys last month. Now Mattel and Hasbro reportedly said, "they are rigorously testing for lead."

A big shocker is that lead and other chemicals found in toys and other items such as food are purposely added. China is also recalling chicken, eggs and dairy products because they may contain melamine. Melamine can cause kidney stones and life-threatening kidney failure. It can be found in fish, meat, and many more food items from China.

## Having a Dickens of a time



Courtesy photo/Temple High School  
Four members of the Temple High School Polyfoniks singing group — Corrie Hermans (left), Trenton Schneiders, Alexandra Tolleson, Madeline Howell — ride an elephant at the "Dickens on the Strand" event in Galveston on Dec. 5.

## Shopping online is a big option

BY BRITTANY HERRERA  
TEMPLE HIGH SCHOOL

This holiday season is all about giving. With so many options, where should you get the gifts you are about to give?

Many people have turned to the Internet to find gifts for friends and loved ones instead of regular retail stores. In fact, U.S. online retail sales this holiday season will reach \$33 billion.

Online you get a wide variety of gifts and you do not even have to get off your couch. The Internet may be convenient; however the number of identity thefts is increasing all the time. In 2006 alone there were 26,000 victims of identity theft. It is so easy to have your identity stolen online because you are giving very personal and important information, such as your Social Security number and PIN number, in a very public domain.

What has people shopping online instead of in stores varies. Some people don't like standing in long lines, walking in crowded stores, dealing with rude people and, according to peoplesupport.com, 55 percent of consumers agree that they shop online due to choice of products. All it takes is a few clicks and you may have found a better deal on the product you are looking for.

Online auctions are a good way to find what you are looking for too. There are 212 million members of the popular Ebay.com. However, online auctions are where most Internet scams happen. Faulty products could be given out or people not paying for what they've bought are always factor to consider when auctioning online.

With the economy going down, sales are not expected to change online or in stores, so either way consumers buy products, the products will be bought.

## 'Twilight' movie differs

BY CYNTHIA SHOWS  
TEMPLE HIGH SCHOOL

## REVIEW

The soundtrack made No. 1 in just a week (164,700 copies sold), advanced ticket sales went through the roof, and all because of the saga that started in 2005. The mesmerizing story of Twilight hit the big screen with results not quite as strong as the series.

Like many Twilights, I was excited about the movie. So for me, the movie was amazing, but others who have seen the movie but not read the novel seem to not think as highly of it. But there are definitely those who haven't read the book who adore the film.

"The movie is amazing," said sophomore Taylor Welch, who watched the movie twice over the weekend.

"It was a good movie, it just didn't follow the book," Sheila Stewart said.

Some people who say that need to realize that Stephenie Meyer helped with the movie and that some things

were changed on purpose.

Critics consider it a downfall, but that could just be because they aren't a teenage Twiligher like some, actually most, of the viewers going to the film.

Reactions received by stars Jackson Rathbone (Jasper Cullen) and Robert Pattinson (Edward Cullen), squeals and screams from fangirls, were reenacted in the theater as the two stars appeared in the movie for the first time.

Things were slightly different from the novel, but it was mostly intact. Most readers just need to comprehend that Meyer herself helped with making the movie. She changed things on purpose to make it a little interesting.

Making an opening weekend sale of \$70.55 million, it's the best opening weekend since "The Dark Knight" (\$155.3 million for opening weekend) in July.

## 'Black Friday' sales up

BY ALEX ANDERSON  
TEMPLE HIGH SCHOOL

Despite the recession, this year's "Black Friday" sales saw an increase compared to previous years.

"Black Friday" is the Friday after Thanksgiving, when stores go "into the black" from profits generated from weekend door-buster sales.

The National Retail Federation (NRF) reported in a BIGresearch Black Friday Weekend survey shoppers increased spending 18.5 percent.

Consumers spent an average of \$372.57 over the weekend, 7.2 percent more than last year's average of \$347.55. Entire spending reached an estimated \$41 billion, up from last year's \$34.6 billion.

The survey reported 23.3 percent of shoppers were at stores by 5 a.m. and another 57.6 percent there by 9 a.m.

An estimated 73.6 million people hit stores and Web sites that Friday, 56.9 million on Saturday and 26.2

million on Sunday.

PriceGrabber, an online product comparing Web sites, reported the top five items purchased during Black Friday were the Nintendo Wii video game system, the Ugg Australia "Classic Short" boot, the Sony Blu-ray disc player, the Samsung 52-inch LCD TV and the Nintendo Wii Fit.

"Though retailers should be encouraged by strong traffic and sales over the weekend, consumers are still being cautious," Phil Rist, executive vice president of BIGresearch, said on NRF's Web site. "Weekend shoppers indicated that they are still sticking to a budget and thinking carefully before making any holiday purchases."

While Black Friday features door-buster sales in stores of all categories, the NRF survey reported 54.7 percent of shoppers made holiday purchases at discount stores, 43 percent visited classic department stores, 36 percent visited specialty stores and 34 shopped online.

5TH ANNUAL

# Day for Women

at the Frank W. Mayborn Civic & Convention Center

presented by

## TEMPLE DAILY TELEGRAM

Precious Memories accessories • shopping • door prizes • & more!

Saturday, Feb. 28,  
10am - 5pm

FEATURING A  
**style show**  
SHOWCASING THE  
LATEST PROM FASHIONS.

for more info call **778.4444**

*Georgia's*  
Dresses & Formalwear