



THE DAILY TOREADOR



HOLIDAY SPIRIT

Tech allocates \$275,000 to annual Carol of Lights



JACOB LUJAN/The Daily Toreador
Christmas lights outline the architecture of Texas Tech's Administration Building for the university's annual Carol of Lights Dec. 6, 2023.

By GRACE HARKINS
STAFF WRITER

Texas Tech is preparing for its 66th annual Carol of Lights festival at 6:30 p.m. Sunday, a celebration that combines tradition and a substantial investment of time, money and resources.

Blayne Beal, Tech's senior executive director of events, said the budget for the ceremony itself — performers, stage and lighting, labor and broadcasting — is \$275,000. The majority of this amount, around \$160,000, is allocated to production costs.

Beal said the Carol of Lights budget has gone down significantly from last year's Centennial celebration,

but the event is still just as extravagant.

"Of course, we have our traditional appearances by the choirs and bands," Beal said. "And we also have the band American Authors performing, and of course fireworks and lights."

Planning for the event begins in the spring of the previous year but ramps up around September and October, Beal said.

"We have the initial conversations about planning earlier in the spring when you have to nail down a performer and a production company," Beal said. "And then, over the last month and a half, we've really ramped up planning to get down to the details."

Beal said he feels pressure to make the event better and better each year, but his team works together to come up with new ideas.

"When we kicked off our Centennial show, President (Lawrence) Schovanec said, 'How are you going to top this?'" Beal said. "We knew we had to dial it back in terms of what we were spending but still make it really special, and that's been a challenge."

The scale of the event is not

only reflected in its budget and family traditions but also its energy demands.

Tech Energy and Water Management Plan reported an 8.6 percent increase in campus electricity usage from October to December 2022 and a 4.4 percent increase from January to March 2023. These are a significant rise compared to other quarters, indicating that the Carol of Lights event may contribute to substantial energy consumption.

Beal acknowledged the deep personal connections that the Carol of the Lights ceremony holds for many families, including his own.

"My first memory as a student was going to Carol of Lights, and I went as a kid growing up, so it's always been a very special event to me," Beal said. "When you can take your job and all the things that you love about Texas Tech, and combine it with Christmas and this great tradition and to be handed the reins of this tradition is a great honor. And it's just a lot of fun to work on."

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FOOTBALL

Garcia's NFL dream built on family support

By TY KAPLAN
SPORTS EDITOR

Gino Garcia didn't grow up lounging on the couch. If he wasn't in school or at practice, Garcia spent his summer and winter breaks during high school working with his father and brother at construction sites.

Now, on the verge of graduating from Texas Tech, Garcia and his older brother, Michael, co-own GNG Construction in Dallas. However, Gino Garcia's heart still remains on the gridiron that got him to Tech in the first place.

The super-senior placekicker for Tech football is on a 28-for-31 streak dating to last season in made field goals and has not missed an extra point since joining the Red Raiders from Houston Baptist University in 2022, according to Tech Athletics.

Thanks to the brothers' trust in each other, Gino Garcia said his pursuit of an NFL career has never been hindered by the company's needs.

"That's what my goal is at the end of the year," Gino Garcia said. "I mean, the construction could wait. My brother could run it right now. I'm trying to go make some kicks in the NFL."

Gino Garcia opened his first business, a roofing company, in 2021 when the athletics program sent players home due to COVID-19. He later poached his brother from his father, Longino Garcia, to merge his and Michael Garcia's concrete business together.

"I'm Mexican at heart," Gino Garcia joked. "We do construction all the time, so I told my brother to come along, and then he did, and it's been going pretty well."

Although Micheal Garcia said he loves working alongside his brother, the career path Gino Garcia is on is bringing his family pride and honor.

"We've always been working outside in construction. That's in our family," Michael Garcia said. "We all work. My dad's an

electrician, and I work outside as well. For him (Gino Garcia) to do that — that's a big change for our family, you know, but I would say it's actually a very good change, you know, we want that."

If Gino Garcia is drafted or signed by an NFL team in April, he would become the first in his family to hold the title of professional athlete.

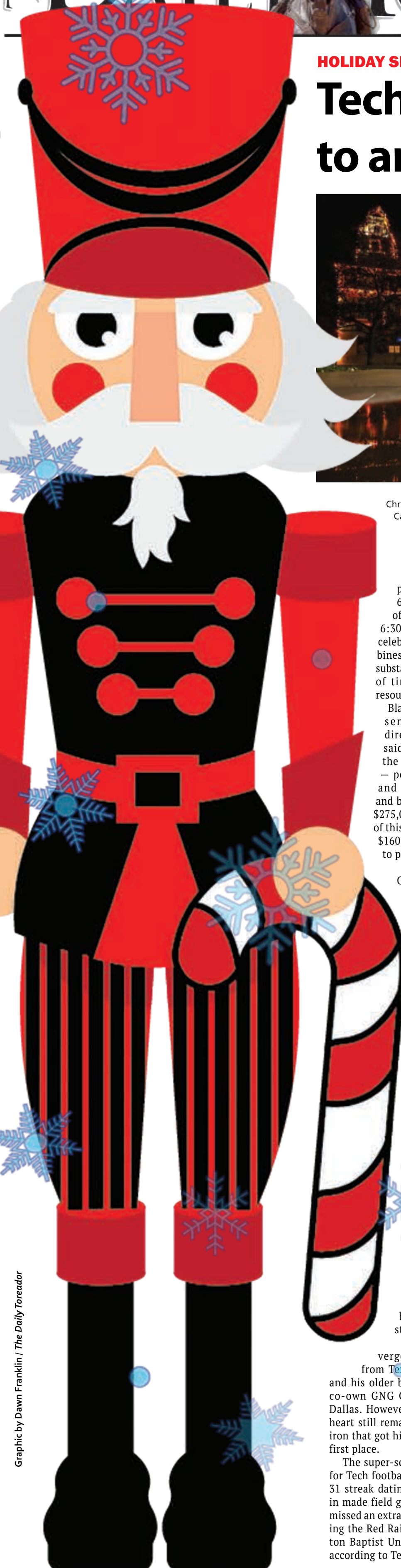
Michael Garcia said the possibility of seeing his brother go professional is one he can't even fathom.

"For him to do all this, like, he's already putting our family name up there," Michael Garcia said. "That's a big accomplishment for us and for my parents as well."

For his father, the reality of knowing his son has the opportunity to do what he loves is everything.

"I can't even imagine it. I might get a heart attack or something," Longino Garcia joked. "I'm so proud to say, you know, that's my son. Some guys, they don't believe me, but I show a picture, and I say, 'That's my son.'"

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Graphic by Dawn Franklin / The Daily Toreador