

What's Up, College Station? Transcript

Season 4, Episode 36

Grace Hallowell: What's up, College Station? I'm Grace Hallowell and today I'm joined by our University and Community Relations Manager, Barbara Moore. Hi, Barbara.

Barbara Moore: Hello, Grace. How are you?

Grace Hallowell: I'm doing well. We were just chatting with Patrick from Parks last week about the exciting fall events coming up, and today we're going to talk about Christmas. I know it's early, but there's a lot of planning required for these wonderful Christmas events. Our College Station Christmas Parade has become a beloved tradition, and sign-ups are very soon.

Barbara Moore: That is correct. It is almost time for the most wonderful time of the year.

Grace Hallowell: To kick things off, tell us a little bit about yourself and what you do for the city.

Barbara Moore: I've been with the city for 19 years. I started out as the city's Neighborhood and Community Relations Coordinator, working with home community groups and neighborhood associations as a liaison between them and the city. A few years into that, I ended up in the City Manager's Office as an assistant to the city manager, still focused on neighborhood-related programs.

A couple of years ago, we formalized the university relations portion of my work along with neighborhood relations. Now, I oversee those neighborhood relations programs and civic engagement opportunities to keep citizens informed about what we do.

Grace Hallowell: For our town — we are technically a college town, but we have a mix of everybody living in our neighborhoods — a position like yours is much needed.

Barbara Moore: We try to bridge the gap between the city and residents. If a resident has a question or a pressing issue, we help them resolve it and find the right department. We feel like it's good to have a one-stop shop for residents to decrease frustration when someone has an issue or question.

Grace Hallowell: With the parade, what sort of things change for you this time of year as we head into parade season?

Barbara Moore: The parade is part of the special projects piece of my role. This will be our fourth year, and December 5th is the date. Starting in late August, we actually start working

on parade details because our fall is so busy across all city departments with year-end finances and events. September is already go-time for us.

Grace Hallowell: It seems early, but with an event like this, you need as much planning and preparation as possible.

Barbara Moore: We need that good three-month runway to get everything done. We're so grateful to have an amazing group of people at the city—the parade would not work without so many different departments making it happen. It's a well-oiled machine, but it still takes three to four months to pull off.

Grace Hallowell: For those listeners or viewers who may be new to our area, can you give us an overview of the College Station Christmas Parade and what makes it so special?

Barbara Moore: A couple of years ago, the BCS Christmas Parade ceased operations. We met with those organizers, got their blessing, and with great assistance from them, launched our own Christmas parade. We had about a six-to-seven-week window that first year and learned a lot, but it has become a great tradition.

It's a time of year when everybody is in the holiday spirit and focusing on positive things. The parade is a feel-good opportunity for our community to showcase themselves and celebrate the holiday season together.

Grace Hallowell: This year is the 100th Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade as well, so it's a big parade year.

Barbara Moore: It is a big parade year. Our parade is about a mile and a half; Macy's is three or four miles, so I can't imagine—they probably never stop planning for it.

Grace Hallowell: It's always been a bucket-list item for me to experience, but it seems pretty chaotic.

Barbara Moore: It does seem chaotic.

Grace Hallowell: For local organizations, businesses, and schools, what makes the parade such a great opportunity to get involved?

Barbara Moore: We really want the community to be involved. It's an opportunity for local businesses to showcase who they are and the services they provide. It's also great for local community groups, schools, cheerleading groups, and high school bands. We have many elementary school kids who come out, so we love giving them the opportunity to showcase themselves to our community. Seeing the kids' excitement about being in the parade is a great feeling.

Grace Hollowell: Absolutely. For someone who has never participated before, why should they consider entering?

Barbara Moore: Over the last couple of years, the number of entries has increased each year. We had around 65 to 75 the first year, grew to over 80 last year, and hope to have even more people participate this year. The city hosts it, but we want the community to feel like it's their parade and feature our local talent, kids, schools, and businesses.

Grace Hollowell: For individuals who are thinking this sounds fun—maybe a single person or just a couple of people—are they able to participate, or do you need a large group?

Barbara Moore: We have a little bit of everything: large groups, small groups, and medium-sized groups. One year, a statewide pageant winner participated by herself in a car, waving to the crowd. We've also had dance troupes of 20 to 30 girls. There is a space for everybody regardless of size.

Grace Hollowell: Fun for all! So what are some of the more creative or memorable entries that you've seen over the last four years?

Barbara Moore: The Texas A&M waterski group always comes to mind. They ride skateboards pulled behind a truck—it's very creative. Our electric department has brought home the prize for best float for the last two years running. Our water department had a fantastic float a couple of years ago that featured a replica of the water tower near Fish. Santa is always memorable, too.

Grace Hollowell: Of course, he's always my favorite.

Barbara Moore: He is everybody's favorite guy.

Grace Hollowell: Do participants need to have an elaborate float or vehicle, or can they just walk? What are the ways to participate?

Barbara Moore: You do not have to have an elaborate float. Most people do a scaled-down version using a truck, a trailer, or decorated pickup trucks, while others walk. We don't want elaborate requirements to be a hindrance. We keep the theme simple—just "Christmas"—so people can easily participate within that broad theme.

Grace Hollowell: When does registration open, and is there a deadline?

Barbara Moore: Registration opens September 10th and ends November 6th, giving everyone about two months. We cut off registration in early November so our traffic engineers have time to lay out the parade route and coordinate line-ups for 80-plus groups before our mandatory meeting.

Grace Hollowell: Traffic operations and police involvement might not be the first things people think of with a parade, but they're essential.

Barbara Moore: Absolutely. Streets are closed down, traffic is rerouted, and we have to maintain the integrity of the route. Police, Fire, EMS, and Traffic operations are intricately involved. We couldn't do it without them.

Grace Hollowell: What information do participants need to provide when they register?

Barbara Moore: You'll fill out basic information about your planned entry and name a primary contact. If you have minors participating, release forms are required. We also need the driver's license and vehicle insurance information for anyone driving a vehicle in the parade. These are standard requirements for safety.

Grace Hollowell: Is there a fee to register?

Barbara Moore: No fee at all. We want to remove any potential hindrances so the community can easily participate.

Grace Hollowell: Free to participate and free to attend! Is there anything that could cause an entry to be denied or require additional approval?

Barbara Moore: We do not allow political campaign advertising, though currently elected officials are welcome to participate. Music played must be kid-friendly, with no objectionable material.

Most importantly, we can only have one Santa. To avoid confusing young viewers, no duplicate Santas or Santa costumes are allowed in the parade, as we bring the official Santa. Additionally, risk management and police check all vehicles and trailers beforehand to ensure safety and disallow unsafe contraptions or pyrotechnics.

Grace Hollowell: Right, so no fireworks popping off your float and you're good to go. What should participants expect on the day of the parade?

Barbara Moore: Expect a bit of good chaos as everyone finds their place. The route remains the same, running down to Central Park where the parade ends. Participants should arrive an hour to an hour and a half early for parking. We play festive Christmas music along the route to set the mood.

Also, for safety, participants are not allowed to throw candy or items from floats, though walking participants may hand out items along the sides.

We also have judging categories with celebrity judges. City departments compete separately in their own category for bragging rights and a trophy—and the winning city float gets to host Santa the following year!

Grace Hollowell: Electric is undefeated!

Barbara Moore: They are undefeated, so Santa will be riding with the Electric department again this year.

Grace Hollowell: Is there anything first-time participants should know before parade day?

Barbara Moore: Watch the weather and prepare accordingly. We've had years where it rained, years where it was brutally cold, and years where it was warm. Unless weather conditions are severe, the parade goes on rain or shine. Bring water and entertainment items like coloring books for young children during the setup wait. Santa also visits the setup lot early to meet participating kids before the parade starts.

Grace Hollowell: Santa will make it no matter what! Looking ahead, what are you most excited about for this year's parade?

Barbara Moore: I'm looking forward to expanded participation from local businesses, community groups, and K–12 schools. High school football playoffs and band competitions coincide with this time of year, but we're working closely with local ISDs to get more school groups involved. It's always rewarding to see new faces and welcome returning participants back.

Grace Hollowell: From a city employee perspective, our Public Communications team is out there all day, and it's a long but fun day that brings everyone together.

Barbara Moore: It really is a good kind of tired by the end of the day. Seeing the smiles on families' faces makes all the months of hard work worth it.

Grace Hollowell: One more time before we wrap up: when is the parade and where can people find more information?

Barbara Moore: The parade is on December 5th, 2026 at 4:00 p.m. It starts behind Post Oak Mall, travels down Dartmouth, turns at Tap, and ends at Central Park. Registration opens September 10th. You can visit the city's website and search "Christmas Parade" to find rules, FAQs, and registration forms.

Grace Hollowell: Before we go, we have a quick lightning round of Christmas questions! Ready?

Barbara Moore: Absolutely.

Grace Hallowell: Decorating a parade float or riding on one?

Barbara Moore: I'd like to ride on one because I've actually never gotten to watch the parade live—I usually have to watch the recorded video later!

Grace Hallowell: Santa hats or ugly Christmas sweaters?

Barbara Moore: Ugly Christmas sweater.

Grace Hallowell: Hot chocolate or apple cider on parade day?

Barbara Moore: Hot chocolate.

Grace Hallowell: Watching the parade or being a part of it?

Barbara Moore: Watching, since I haven't seen it in person yet.

Grace Hallowell: Register early or wait until the last minute?

Barbara Moore: Please register early! Last year we hit our cap of around 85 entries and had to use a waiting list. Registering early gives you time to build a great float and secures your spot.

Grace Hallowell: Sooner is always better. Thank you so much for joining me, Barbara!

Barbara Moore: I'm glad to be here.

Grace Hallowell: And that's What's Up!