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'Planking' photo trend reaches Waco

By Jessica Chia

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Lie facedown, arms at your sides and body stiff as a board, and have a friend take a photo or video.

People in the U.K. and Australia have for years amused themselves with this exact activity, called planking (not to be confused with the abdominal exercise).

Wacoans like Kirk Wakefield and Ben Peterson recently have caught onto the trend, which spread to the U.S. via sharing websites like YouTube and Facebook.

Wakefield, a 55-year-old Baylor University professor, first planked while in Denmark



A photo posted online shows two people "planking" in front of Waco's Starplex Galaxy 16 theater.

with his brother and said the line reveals people around the globe planking everywhere

A look at planking media on-

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imaginable: trees, cars, light posts, statues and even retail displays.

"I've planked in a fountain, on refrigerators, balconies and I just recently planked on an artillery cannon," said Peterson, a 20-year-old Baylor senior.

Experienced plankers like to plank in unexpected or difficult places, which adds a competitive aspect to the activity.

The lengths to which plankers have gone to get extreme planks have warranted serious consequences, including firings for planking on the job, arrests for planking in certain places and even the death of a 22-year-old Australian man attempting to plank on a balcony several stories high.

Nevertheless, location is the key to successful planking, according to Lane Wakefield, a 23-year-old Baylor graduate student who has been planking for two months.

Unique spot

The younger Wakefield's recent planks include sculptures by the Waco Suspension Bridge and the pylons on the sidewalk in front of the Starplex Galaxy 16 movie theater.

"I like the challenge of finding a more unique spot than my friends have. Part of planking is the challenge of finding cooler spots, better spots, something out of the blue," said Courtney Bourgerie, 22, who has been planking for just two months. She added that plankers must use good judgment and have friends accompany them in case something goes wrong.

Planking is a social activity. Plankers go out with friends who can help them get to their planking spot, enjoy the hu-

mor in the plank and capture the moment with a photo or video to share with more friends online.

"It's senseless and pointless, but it's fun with a group of friends," said the elder Wakefield, who started a private Facebook group, Planking in America, so his friends and family could share laughs at their latest planking photos.

Plankers enjoy amusing absolute strangers with their unusual recreational activity.

"People on the street smile when they see someone doing something ridiculous," Peterson said.

Planking is as accessible as recreation gets. All you need is your body, a little balance and a sense of humor to get started, and it doesn't cost a dime.

For those unsure of whether to plank, Kirk Wakefield offered this advice: "Just do it and you'll like it."

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