

2025 in review, Part 2



By Lynette Sowell
The Belton Journal

The City of Belton marked the midpoint of the year 2025 when the Belton community celebrated the completed restoration of one of the few surviving early African American churches in Texas.

A dedication ceremony was held at the historic Mount Zion United Methodist Church following a more than \$500,000 restoration project. The church has served as a place of worship and community gatherings for generations.

Originally built in 1893, the church resides in its original location along the western banks of Nolan Creek, which is now the Nolan Creek Hike and Bike Trail. The church also stands close to the former T.B. Harris School for African American students – now the Harris Community Center.

The building was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1990. Attendees had the opportunity for self-guided tours of the church's restored interior along with a viewing of before-and-after photos of the restoration work. A

vision for the church's restoration began in 2018. In 2020, the city began to seek state and federal grants to restore the church's exterior and interior. This includes the masonry, siding, windows, roof, bell tower, flooring, ceilings, painting, and air conditioning.

Funding for the \$573,889 project came from the following sources. Preservation Texas Grant (2022), \$77,500; National Trust for Historic Preservation Grant (2023), \$100,000; Mount Zion

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HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Courtesy Photo/The Portal to Texas History, University of North Texas Libraries

The Belton Journal, established in 1866, is beginning its 160th year of continuous publishing. Vol IV, No. 17 is the earliest known surviving paper; all previous editions were destroyed by fire.

The Belton Journal begins 160th year of continuous publishing

By Susan Kolodziejczyk
The Belton Journal

and typesetting equipment from a facility in Waco, TX.

They moved the equipment to Belton and set up the company in the John Henry Building on the southwest corner of the courthouse square

It's 1866, and the founders of "The Belton Weekly Journal," Maj. James H. Davenport and James T. Longino, publisher, purchased printing

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Courtesy Photo

The late Rudy Calooy is pictured with Grandon Taylor in front of Calooy's labor of love – the mural on the east side of the Belton dam.

A legacy in color: Remembering Rudy Calooy, Jr.

By Shanna Grote
The Belton Journal

Rudy Anthony Calooy Jr., the artist who trans-

formed the massive stretch of concrete along the east side of Belton Dam, died on Nov. 22, 2025. Calooy believed art should belong to everyone, and his work lives on as one of the most recognizable landmarks in Belton.

The mural at Belton Dam has been part of the backdrop of daily lake life in Central Texas for decades. Visitors see it from across Belton Lake and children grow up recognizing its colors and scenes, however few know the full story of how it came to be.

Calooy was a young artist who envisioned some-

thing far greater than a single work of art when he took on the oversized project.

The Belton Dam mural project began in July 1978, when Calooy was a student at the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor. The project was coordinated through the City of Belton in partnership with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which manages the dam and lake. Faculty members at the university supervised and organized the project, encouraging students to submit design concepts, especially in the art department. Calooy's

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The HOP service expands in Belton



Courtesy Graphic

The map shows the expanded coverage for The HOP's microtransit service starting Jan. 1, 2026.

Special to the Journal

The HOP has announced region-wide service changes to begin on Jan. 1, 2026, with one of the most significant improvements taking place in Belton.

Belton's microtransit zone will expand to offer riders greater access to community destinations, faith centers, neighborhoods, and commercial areas in the city.

The HOP says the expansion extends its services to more places where people work, live, and shop in Belton, including Crossroads Church, River Springs at Barge Ranch Apartments, Taco Bell, Popeyes, and McDonald's.

"As demand for flexible, on-demand transit continues to grow, these service

improvements help ensure that riders in Belton have convenient, reliable access to essential destinations," said Raymond Suarez. "This expansion is an investment in both mobility and quality of life for the community."

To celebrate the changes, throughout January The HOP is running a promotion that allows people to use microtransit at no cost throughout January. Using promo code RIDEHOP26, riders will receive \$4 in ride credit, or the equivalent of one microtransit round trip. The code is valid January 1-31, 2026, and may be used once per rider account.

While Belton's expansion is a highlight of the January 2026 service updates,

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Legacy From Page A1

proposal was selected, and he was awarded the project.

His design was grand in both scale and spirit. Calooy planned an 800-foot paint by number mural depicting scenes from Bell County history and envisioned public participation as an important part of the project. Large scale public art projects were rare in the area at the time, and his idea was unconventional. Rather than working behind scaffolding with a closed crew, Calooy designed the mural so that anyone and everyone could take part in completing the mural. Students, families, community leaders, and visitors were invited to pick up a brush and fill in the color-coded panels.

Coverage from the Belton Journal in the late 1970s documents the mural's progress in real time. Headlines boasted large volunteer turnouts and visits from public officials. One article noted that the project faced major challenges due to regional paint shortages caused by the 1970's energy crisis. Volunteers returned day after day, completing sections of the mural as supplies became available. Their dedication showed just how deeply invested the community had become in the project.

A mural of this size was not completed overnight. The work took more than a year and a half to finish, and by the time it was complete, hundreds of people had contributed. The mural became more than a work of art, it became a shared community experience. For many residents, the memory of painting the dam became a memory built into the finished piece. Parents brought their children, friends painted side by side, and the mural left a permanent mark not only on the structure but on the people who helped create it.

The mural depicts scenes from Bell County's past, in-

cluding early settlement, transportation routes, local institutions, and the landscape surrounding Belton Lake. It is a pictorial history of sort, unfolding panel by panel like a visual timeline.

Over the years, the Belton Dam mural has become one of the area's most recognizable landmarks. It has been described as an iconic Central Texas public art project, highlighting both its sheer size and its role in preserving local history. The mural was more than decoration; it stood as an example of community driven public art that has weathered decades of weather, growth, and changes around the community.

The project expanded in the 1980s, when additional artwork was added to other areas of the dam. In 2000, students and faculty from Mary Hardin-Baylor took part in a restoration project to repair several panels all while taking care to preserve the original artwork.

Calooy's connection to the mural remained strong throughout his life. Decades after its completion, he returned to the project when portions of the mural were vandalized. In 2021, with approval from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Calooy helped lead restoration efforts as volunteers gathered and local businesses donated supplies. In an interview with KXXV-TV, Calooy stated that the original project "involved a cast of thousands". This statement alone gives a small glimpse into Calooy's mind and love of art and the community. Park officials noted the significance of seeing the original artist return to help preserve a piece that had become part of the area's identity.

The Belton Dam mural was not Calooy's only major

work. In 2020, he completed a large military themed mural in Nolanville honoring Fort Hood units and local veterans. The project was covered by KWTX-TV, which celebrated that the mural mirrored Calooy's respect for military service and history. The work also included a tribute to his father, a Korean War Army veteran, depicted in uniform with his unit's patch. Just like during the dam mural, Calooy invited volunteers to work alongside him, supporting the community centered style that defined his career.

In his final months, Calooy faced a difficult battle with acute myeloid leukemia. According to his family, he was diagnosed three months before his death and underwent multiple rounds of chemotherapy, including a long hospital stay. His illness prevented him from returning to the work he loved, and his health declined rapidly. Friends that visited Calooy in the hospital stated he still asked for paper and pencils so he could continue his beloved art to pass the time.

Calooy left behind a visible legacy across Central Texas. More than that, he left a lasting legacy, a reminder that art can be shared, history can be painted together, and a community working side by side can leave a permanent mark on a community.

The family of Rudy Calooy invites people to honor his legacy by donating to the Rudy Calooy Jr. Memorial Fund at the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor. Donations may be made online at advance.umhb.edu or by mailing a check to UMHB Advancement, UMHB Box 8409, 900 College St., Belton, TX 76513.

HOP From Page A1

The HOP is also implementing microtransit improvements in Killeen, Harker Heights, and Temple. Regional updates include enhanced school access, expanded residential coverage, and the relocation of the Urban Commuter Temple mobility hub from City Hall to the nearby Santa Fe Mobility Hub.

The HOP will also discontinue microtransit service in Salado beginning January 1. Riders there may continue using Bell County Rural Demand Response services. Additionally, a minor schedule adjustment will be made to the Urban Commuter route to improve reliability during peak travel times.

Belton residents can learn more about the upcoming changes by visiting The HOP website at <https://takethehop.com/service-announcements>.

To redeem the RIDEHOP26 promo code and use the microtransit service, download The HOP mobile app.

160th From Page A1

(current location of the newly restored 1895 Belton Opera House).

In 1868, Davenport purchased the full interests in the paper from Longino and held it until he was elected State Senator in 1874. The paper was then sold to Capt. J.G. Batte, and in 1883 to Hunter and George C. Robinson. After 38 years of publication and several owners, the Journal had its first major disaster in 1898, when the building burned, destroying all equipment, files, and records. Robinson immediately purchased the equipment and files of the rival newspaper, Belton Reporter, and quickly renamed the paper The Journal-Reporter.

At the turn of the century, the paper changed hands again, with C.H. Wedemeyer and J.F. Crouch publishing it until 1911, when O.P. Pyle ended a major feud and purchased both The Journal-Reporter and Bell County Democrat. After Pyle's death in 1919, his son, Charles W. Pyle, took over and renamed the paper The Belton Journal and Bell County Democrat. In 1925, Pyle sold the paper to C.C. Watson and then to F.B. Russell in 1927. After his death in 1943, Mrs. Russell and their son, James H. Russell, took ownership of the paper again and continued until 1981, when they sold it to Sam Kinch, Jr.

In the April 21, 1966 issue, in an article titled Journal Observes 100 years of Continuous Publication, the paper recognized its 100th birthday and featured a warm congratulations Western Union Telegram from Texas Governor John Connally. The writer of the article said, "In the interest of honest reporting, the Journal must admit it was not the first newspaper in Belton - but it was the only surviving one, there having been, by the best count available, a total of 13 others, which gave this town an earned reputation as 'the graveyard of newspapers.'"

In its April 8, 1982 issue, the paper announced new ownership and adopted the name The Belton Journal—a name it proudly carries to this day.

Lastly, in March 1996, current CEO and Publisher, David Tuma, took over operations of The Belton Journal, where he has stayed committed to publishing a local, family- and small-business-oriented paper. In addition to the weekly news, he provides the community with specialty monthly publications highlighting the families and businesses that make Belton and the surrounding areas unique.

"The Belton Journal doesn't belong to any one person or corporation—it belongs to you. Every time you

pick up a copy, you become a part of our story. Whether we're in print or online in the years ahead, our mission remains the same: to share the stories and news that shape our community," Publisher David Tuma said. "It's been my privilege and greatest joy to serve Belton through these years."

The one thing that has remained constant is that the paper is printed and delivered to its subscribers. Although the introduction of computers has replaced the production of layouts, it is still set on a printing press using broadsheet paper. The old typeset ink blots are no longer used to create the paper, although it still looks very close to its original design.

The newspaper has developed a strong, collaborative relationship with community members, local chambers of commerce, city leaders, and the school district. The Belton Journal places a high priority on local news, working closely with community businesses to offer affordable advertising rates that even the smallest businesses can afford. During challenging economic times, the local business community has continued to support the newspaper, understanding the importance of mutual assistance and fostering a sense of respect on both sides.



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Submission guidelines for

The Belton Journal and related properties:

Any image, story or other unsolicited information sent to The Belton Journal is considered a community-contributed submission of material and falls under these guidelines.

- You retain ownership of any submission that is your original work. Submissions sent from third parties should only be by permission of the organization or individual who owns it, who also must agree to this

submission policy.

- You understand that submissions may or may not appear in the Belton Journal and its related forms of publication, now or in the future.

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- Submissions used become a permanent part of the Belton Journal and its product offerings. By virtue of

appearance on the Belton Journal Web site, submissions may also become a permanent part of search engine caching libraries (such as google.com) and online archiving organizations (such as archive.org).

- Submissions not immediately used become a permanent part of the Belton Journal's library, with rights for possible future use.

- By contributing any submission, you are indicating you have read and understood this policy and agree to its terms.

SUBMISSION DEADLINES:

To be considered for inclusion in the Belton Journal, all submissions must be received by 5:00 p.m. on Monday of the week in question.

Opinions expressed (including Letters to the Editor) are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions held by the Belton Journal's management, staff or advertisers. Letters to the Editor should not exceed more than 350 words. Contact us at (254) 939-5754.

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OBITUARIES

Marek

Alvin James Marek
 November 25, 1935 – December 15, 2025

Alvin James Marek, a beloved husband, father, and cherished member of his community, passed away peacefully at his daughter's home on Monday, December 15, 2025, surrounded by his family. He was born on November 25, 1935, in Red Ranger, Texas, to Rudolph and Justine Marek and his life was a testament to hard work, love, and dedication.

Growing up on a family-owned farm, Alvin developed a strong work ethic as he helped cultivate the land, primarily focusing on cotton, corn, and maize. This early experience laid the foundation for a fulfilling career that would span over two decades. Alvin worked as a carpenter with Cloud Construction for 29 years, demonstrating his craftsmanship until his retirement in 2000. His commitment to his trade earned him the respect of colleagues and community members alike, and he remained an active member of the carpenter local unions.

Alvin's warmth and devotion were perhaps best exemplified in his long-lasting marriage to Wanona Goldman. The couple first met at the Marek Picnic in 1955, and soon after, they became partners for life, wedding the following year after their high school graduation. Their bond lasted 69 years until Wanona's passing in July 2025, leaving behind a legacy of love and partnership that served as an inspiration to all who knew them.

Throughout their lives together, Alvin and Wanona fostered a nurturing home in Bell County, where they spent most of their days, with a notable ten-year period in Dallas before returning to establish permanent roots. Alvin's deep love for his family was matched by his passion for gardening and farming.

He took pride in cultivating his crops not only as a means of sustenance but also to share with those around him. His commitment to raising cattle, goats, hogs, and chickens highlighted his dedication to both family and community values.

Alvin will be remembered not just for his hard work, but also for his engaging personality. He was a devoted family man, often found sampling his wife's cooking before meals were served. His interests included fishing, playing dominos, and making memorable trips to the casino. Alvin was particularly fond of treasure hunting at garage sales and had a noteworthy collection of ball caps that reflected his unique spirit.

In addition to his personal interests, Alvin was known as the SPIST 42 Domino Tournament Winner. His love for Dr. Pepper was well noted, and he always made sure to keep his supply plentiful.

Alvin leaves behind a lasting legacy of his love for life, family and friends. His community involvement as a member of the SPIST Lodge 24 showcased his commitment to fostering connections with others. He will be missed not only by his family but also by the countless friends whose lives he touched.

He is survived by his daughter, Ruth and her husband Creed Cox; one brother, Reuben Marek of Temple; four grandchildren, Rebecca Cox, James Spohn, Jennifer Spohn and Jason Spohn.

He is preceded in death by his parents, Rudolph and Justine (Jezek) Marek; his beloved wife of 69 years, Wanona (Goldman) Marek; one daughter, Diane Spohn; one brother, Rudolph Marek Jr.; one sister, Edna Malcik and her husband Frank Malcik.

A visitation will be held on Saturday, January 24, 2026, at 10:00 AM at Young's Daughters Funeral Home & Bereavement Center in Temple, Texas. A memorial service to honor Alvin's life

will be held shortly after, with the service commencing at 11:00 AM. This will provide an opportunity for family and friends to come together and celebrate a life well-lived.

A special thank you to Baylor Scott and White Hospice team for their compassionate care.

In lieu of flowers please consider making a memorial donation to the Ronald McDonald House in Temple.

Alvin James Marek's spirit will continue to thrive in the hearts of those who knew and loved him, and his contributions to both family and community will be remembered with great affection and respect.

Arrangements are under the direction of Sabrina Young at Young's Daughters Funeral Home and Bereavement Center in Temple, TX

Davis

Donald Ray Davis
 May 25, 1937 – December 21, 2025

Donald Ray Davis, 88, of Temple, Texas, passed away peacefully on Sunday, December 21, 2025, following an extensive and courageous battle with Parkinson's disease. Don was born on May 25, 1937, in Oenaville, Texas, to John Hazel and Effie Adeline Davis. He spent his early years there, where his love for sports began. Naturally gifted athletically, Don excelled at any sport he chose to pursue.

He met the love of his life and high school sweetheart, Carolyn Ann Hilliard, and they were married on August 4, 1956, while Don was attending Ranger College on a football scholarship. An ankle injury ended his playing career at Ranger, after which he transferred to Temple College to play basketball, and eventually to Southwestern University in Georgetown, Texas, where he completed his education.

Following graduation, Don began his professional life in coaching, holding brief

positions in Rockwall, Belton, Houston, and Hillsboro. He later stepped away from coaching to work in the family business for twelve years. In God's perfect timing, a door opened that allowed Don to return to his true passion. He went on to spend the final 26 years of his career coaching the Temple Wildcats alongside his lifelong friend and head coach, Bob McDonald Queen. During his tenure at Temple High School, Coach Davis was instrumental in the Wildcats' state championship victories in 1979 and again in 1992—achievements of which he was deeply proud. The 1979 championship was especially meaningful to Don, as his daughter Joy was a cheerleader for that team.

Aside from his passion for coaching, Don greatly enjoyed the outdoors. He had a lifelong love for fishing and took pride in making his own lures. He cherished weekends with family at the deer lease, and few things could capture his attention like a good big-buck story. Don also enjoyed the game of golf and was quite a player, finding both camaraderie and quiet enjoyment on the course. Don lived an honorable life, guided by an exceptionally strong Christian faith that was evident in everything he did. His greatest passion was pouring into the lives of young men, helping mold them into future leaders. A man of few words, Don spoke with purpose and conviction. He took great pride in teaching "The Wildcat Way," often emphasizing the importance of taking care of "The Little Things."

Don was preceded in death by his parents, and by

his brothers, John Hazel Davis Jr. ("Sonny") and Ronald Frank Davis.

He is survived by his beloved wife of 69 years, Carolyn Davis; his daughter, Joy Schneider, and her husband, Russell; and his son, Bryant Davis, and his wife, Kelly. He is also survived by five grandchildren: Jeffrey Schneider (Hope), Mindy Washington, Shane Schneider (Emily), Braydon Davis, and Connor Davis; and eight great-grandchildren: Princeton Schneider, Rhett Schneider, Jaleigh Schneider, Quinn Schneider, Blakely Schneider, Noah Schneider, Royce Washington, and Sofi Washington.

Coach Davis was blessed with an abundance of friends, colleagues, former players and students all whom he considered extended family. His legacy lives on in the countless lives he touched both on and off the field. Having lived a life of faith and service, we trust Coach has now heard the words, "Well done, good and

faithful servant... enter into the joy of your Lord." (Matthew 25:21)

The family extends sincere thanks to the staff and caregivers of Georgetown Living Memory Care, whose compassion and faithful care over nearly five years brought comfort and dignity to Don and peace of mind to his family.

Visitation took place on December 27, 2025, from 11:00 AM to 1:00 PM at the funeral home followed by a service to honor his life on the same day, at 1:00 PM at Temple Bible Church. He was then laid to rest at the Hilliard Family Cemetery in Buckholts, Texas, following the service.

In lieu of flowers please consider making a memorial donation to the Georgetown Living at 2700 Shell Road, Georgetown, Texas 78628.

Arrangements are under the direction of Sabrina Young at Young's Daughters Funeral Home and Bereavement Center in Temple, Texas

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Review - From Page A1



United Methodist Church, \$25,000; City of Belton Federal ARPA Funds (2022), \$371,389.

rowly escaped rising flood waters that tore through her Hunt, Texas hotel during a Fourth of July gathering. Riata Schoepf waded through chest-deep water in the middle of the night before she was rescued by a group of strangers. Schoepf was part of a group of 33 friends and family members who spend the July 4th holiday every year in Hunt.

Local relief efforts in Belton went to aid flood victims. Brandon Baker, Ashley Janke, Troy Tubbs, Guy Humphrey, Stanley Durbin, and Alecia Williams were among those at Belton Feed and Supply organizing donations for

the flood relief in the Hill Country. The room was filled with donations from area residents who wanted to give back. Bold Republic Brewing & Troy Tubbs helped collect & take donations to Belton Feed and Supply, where they were sorted and sent on their way. The donations were put on pallets at Belton Feed.

Volunteers used their own trucks and trailers to haul the donated supplies to their destination. At least 12 pallets of items were delivered to San Saba, nine to Leander, nine to Hunt, and three to Center Point.

The Texas Historical Commission

staff to share the potential projects that could be placed into a bond. The community also had an opportunity to provide feedback on how the district plans to use the bond funding. Superintendent Dr. Malinda Golden called the meeting "a meaningful opportunity to hear directly from our families and community members about the proposed bond projects." The proposed bonds fall into four propositions, which cover general needs, sports stadiums, technology devices, and the swim center.

Native Beltonians, brothers Marcus and Michael Ogas, became the new co-owners of L & R Meat Market, located at 601 E. Central Avenue, Suite B. The original owner of L & R, Larry, owned it from 1988 to 2015, followed by Steve Gray, who owned it from 2015-2025. In 37 years, the store has had three owners and has always been in Belton.

Marcus and his brother Michael Ogas grew up in Belton and try to give back to the community, by donating meat to different sports teams, benefits like Boot Out Brain Cancer for Brandon Newman, and the Penguin Project for special needs students.

Councilmember Dave Covington handed over the keys to residents in the 600 block of E. 8th St. whose home was rebuilt through the City of Belton's HOME Program, which provides funds to replace homes for low-income residents who meet program requirements.

The home was the 42nd rebuild in Belton under the program. The recipients were Ennis and Lynna Taylor, who



July

The annual Belton 4th of July festivities went on, despite the rains on parade day. This year's theme for the parade was Celebrating 175 years of Bell County and featured 195 entries.

Other areas of Central Texas did not fare so well, such as Kerr County and other areas experiencing devastating flash floods. The Guadalupe River surged more than 26 feet in less than an hour, resulting in more than 100 lives lost, including Julia Anderson Burgess, a former teacher at Lakeway Elementary School in Belton.

A 19-year-old Belton woman nar-

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(THC) awarded a 2024 Distinguished Service Award (DSA) to the Bell County Historical Commission (CHC). This annual award affirms Bell CHC for its exemplary initiation and execution of comprehensive programs that preserve Texas's multitude of historic and cultural resources. In 2024, Bell CHC volunteers committed over 1,750 hours working to preserve the county's historical resources. This included creating a quarterly history education program in collaboration with the Bell County Museum, updating and publishing the 2025 Bell County Historical Resources Guide, and contributing to the establishment of the Comanche Hunting Grounds Interpretive Trail in Temple.

Also in July, Belton Independent School District shared proposed bond projects that include updates on general classroom needs as well as expansions to sports facilities, such as high school football stadiums and the Swim Center. The Bond Exploration Meeting allowed board members and district



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will live in the four-bedroom home with their adult daughter and grandchildren.

Belton City Council approved a funding agreement with the Texas Department of Transportation for construction of five-foot sidewalks along both sides of East Sixth Avenue from I-35 to Main Street (Texas 317).



Belton's Parks and Recreation Department welcomed their new Recreation Coordinator Adam Wells to his position in late June.

August

The Belton City Council approved a zoning change that will allow Lamar Advertising to put up a billboard with an electronic changeable sign at 1269 W. Highway 190.

The Council also approved changes related to overnight truck parking.



According to Director of Development Services Bob van Til, the number of applications for truck stops has increased in recent years.

Belton ISD has announced new leadership for two campuses for the 2025-2026 school year.

Cheyenne Babb has been named principal of James L. Burrell Elementary. With more than a decade of experience in public education, Babb has served as both a teacher and campus administrator across multiple grade levels.

A graduate of Lubbock Christian University, Babb holds both a bachelor's degree in early childhood education and a master's degree in school administration.

"Cheyenne leads with a focus on student success—fostering strong relationships, empowering teachers and building a campus culture where each and every learner can thrive."



serve Burrell Elementary and the Belton ISD community well."

Babb succeeds Julee Manley, who has transitioned to a new role within the district as the Early Literacy and Learning Academy Administrator.

Belton ISD announced Rachel Ramirez as the principal of Lake Belton Middle School and Cheyenne Babb as the principal of James L. Burrell Elementary.

A large residential development is a step closer after the Belton City Council approved plans for about 1,760 homes in the proposed River Farm subdivision east of Interstate 35.

also is in the subdivision's footprint. The proposal included the Phase 1 preliminary plat with 1,600 lots on 478.5 acres and Phase 2 with 164 residential lots and 10 homeowner association lots on 72 acres.

The Belton Independent School District welcomed the "Big Red Community" back to classes for the start of the 2025-2026 school year, a total of 13,500 students.



through 12th grade.

On August 13, former UMHB First Lady(1991-2009), Vicky Bawcom passed away. For nearly two decades, Vicky worked alongside Jerry Bawcom and left a mark on the UMHB community that still lingers today.

Salado Museum & College Park hosted a celebration to commemorate the 205th birthday of Salado founder, Colonel Elijah Sterling Clack Robertson. Festivities included a wreath laying ceremony, an audio-video presentation, a musical tribute, a bagpiper and birthday cake.

Amanda Hairston was hired as the

new Library Director for the City of Belton's Lena Armstrong Public Library. Hairston has worked for the Belton Independent School District since 2020 and served as a Digital Instruction Specialist at Hubbard Branch Elementary School.

The Belton Police Department opened the South Substation at the former Miller Heights Elementary on Aug. 26. The renovated space include an informal interview room with chairs and a side table, an evidence storage room, and an office space with a desk, office supplies, mini-fridge, and coffee maker.

September

Bell County Historical Commission issued four grants for the 2026 county fiscal year. Josh Hogan on behalf of The Al Edwards Central Texas Juneteenth Association 7 Star Cemetery Restoration Eagle Project, will receive \$2,820.



identify historical places and promote Killeen history. The Railroad and Heritage Museum in Temple will receive \$1,800. The Bartlett Activity Center will receive \$2,715.

Belton ISD announced that Belton High School Principal Claudia Knox was selected as the Texas Association of Secondary School Principals (TASSP) Region 12 Outstanding Principal of the Year.

See REVIEW CONT. Page A10



A large celebratory graphic for the New Year. It features the text 'HAPPY NEW YEAR' in large, stylized letters. Below it, a message reads 'HERE'S TO A NEW YEAR FULL OF BRIGHT BEGINNINGS AND ENDLESS POSSIBILITIES.' At the bottom, there are portraits of seven Bell County Elected Officials: David Blackburn (County Judge), Cari Starritt-Burnett (169th Judicial District Court), Ted Duffield (Peace Justice, Pct. 1), Shay A. Luedeke (Tax Assessor-Collector), Pat Duffield (Constable Pct. 1), Rosane Fisher (Justice of the Peace), and Shelley Coston (County Clerk). The graphic is decorated with stars and fireworks.



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A6
Thursday,
January 1, 2026

LIFESTYLES

THE BELTON JOURNAL

Glow Theory Academy holds open house

By Michele Weisman
The Belton Journal

Owners and Nurse Practitioners Erika Mendoza and Whitney Bremer hosted an open house for Glow Theory Academy on Dec. 19.

The academy is located at 204 N. Penelope St. Unit F1, in downtown Belton.

From 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. during the open house, attendees could meet the staff, fill out applications, and tour the campus.

Makenna Peace, didactic instructor, and Sadie Grote, student services coordinator and dean, greeted families, assisted with applicant questions, and gave tours of the facility. Attendees had the opportunity to meet the entire team and view academy rooms.

Currently, their esthetician course teaches waxing, makeup, skincare, anatomy, and more. They use *Milady Standard Esthetics* for their curriculum.

"In a few months," Grote said, "a lash program will be offered."

This will be the *Milady Lash Extension Training* curriculum.

The classroom is where aesthetics students will be two days a week, learning and taking tests and exams. The other two days a week are lab days. There are two lab rooms. The spa room is where facial treatments and brow lamination are practiced. There are black curtains separating each spa room table, and a robe for the model. The wax room has a pink-covered table where facials and hair removal is practiced. This is also the room where students practice IVs and injectables.

Interested guests filled out applications for the academy's Jan. 5 class start. Applications are continuous, and with each month new students may begin their training.

Advanced courses in medical aesthetics for licensed medical professionals are also coming soon. Students will receive training in laser treatment, IV hydration, dermal filler, and more.

Refreshments available were trays of cheese, fruit, vegetables, salami, donuts, cupcakes, cake pops, Cheetos, croissant sandwiches, and wraps.

For more information, visit their website at www.glowtheoryacademy.com.



BELTON JOURNAL/Michele Weismann
Glow Theory Academy owners Whitney Bremer and Erika Mendoza answer questions from applicant Mitzie Bonfil.

MPR COPS delivers Christmas cheer and gifts to seniors in need



Courtesy Photo

The all-volunteer team of Morgan's Point Resort Community Outreach for Police Support (MPR COPS) prepare to deliver 38 Silver Santa gift bags to local senior citizens in need.

By Michele Weisman
The Belton Journal

Morgan's Point Resort Community Outreach for Police Support (MPR COPS), with the Morgan's Point Resort Police Department (MPRPD), delivered 38 Silver Santa gift bags to senior citizens in need. The official planning and preparation began in November. The heartbeat of MPR is seen where volunteers bridge with city departments, bringing the community together to serve the needs of others.

The MPR COPS nonprofit's mission is to: "work together facilitating a strong supportive bond with the MPR Police Department and our community." Founded in 2020, the Silver Santa began in 2021.

President of MPR COPS and a geriatrics home nurse, Lynn Milam said, "Unnoticed by many were seniors living in MPR that go without insurance, in-home healthcare, and visits. We never knew, so when we found that out, it was a no-brainer. That was a unanimous vote...we just went to work."

MPR residents provided names and contact information for local seniors

in need. Recipients were also selected through the MPRPD.

The official Silver Santa senior wish list included Christmas stockings, calendars, bandages, lip balm, small note pads, drink insulators, compression socks, jumbo puzzles, books, jumbo playing cards, small flashlights, pocket planners, jar openers, disposable face masks, large piece jigsaw puzzles, hand sanitizers, and box tissues. They personalize the bags too, as they get to know the individual needs of the seniors.

Milam said, "We try to fill in on things that they might skip... because food might be more important."

The nonprofit's group of nine members had a bag stuffing party to prepare the gifts.

Milam said, "So we were building bags and having dinner, you know, some tea, we just turn it into something fun."

Deliveries occurred on the Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday before Christmas.

Of one delivery, Milam said, "They had just had to put mama in the nursing home the day before. And the son excused himself. He said, 'Well, I'll let y'all, you know,

have your time.' And I sat down with him. He was telling me stories about how that had been the first night they'd ever been apart. And I sat there hearing stories about his wife and him. And some of them were very touching. Some of them were sad. And some of them were hilarious. I had the best time ever."

Gustavo McMillen, officer and dive team coordinator, delivers the Silver Santa bags to the recipients nominated by the MPRPD.

Milam said, "Some of the police officers who go to these people's homes, we don't even know who they are. We give them to Gus, and he gets them out there."

"But we do love Silver Santa the best because we know that it's doing good for people that can't do it for themselves. We would never not do the Silver Santa," Milam said.

MPR COPS meets monthly at 60 Morgan's Point Boulevard, inside the Garrett and Mic Hill Event Center. They are actively welcoming new members. They will not meet in January. Dues are \$20

a year. Follow and message them at MPR COPS on Facebook to get involved.

Candidate forum set for Jan. 15

Special to the Journal

Salado Area Republican Women are hosting a Candidate Forum for all Bell County Republican Candidates.

The event is scheduled for January 15th at the Salado Middle School at 1169 Williams Road, Salado, starting at 6 p.m.

There have been 26

Republican candidates file for the various offices in the county. All candidates will be allowed to speak and only those with a Republican opponent will be allowed a few more minutes to answer one question each, posed by President Brenda Howard.

The two state representatives for the county, House District #54, Dr. Brad Buckley, and House District #55, Hilary Hickland, do not have any Republican opponents but will be in attendance.

Questions will not be entertained from the floor because of the number of candidates.

Attendees are encouraged to come early or stay late to ask candidates their personal questions. The Bell County Young Republicans are sponsoring the event venue and the Bell County Republican Party is sponsoring refreshments. The event is free to the public. Reservations are not required and everyone is invited.

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Local Activities & Events

Newcomers Club Activities

January

01/05: Chat 'n' Canasta	01/17: Exploring Wines
01/07: Monthly Luncheon	01/19: Snack Time Mah Jongg
01/08: Mexican Train Dominoes, Couples Night Out	01/20: Bunco
01/09: TGIF Lunch	01/22: Mexican Train Dominoes
01/12: Bookworms	01/23: Trailblazers Walking Group
01/13: Singing Bluebonnets	01/24: Jimmy's Egg
01/15: Nonfiction Book Club, Meet & Greet	01/26: Well Read Women, Monday Canasta
	01/27: Singing Bluebonnets
	01/28: Fun Lunch

**"To join or for more information, please call:
Mary Pringle (760)265-5035 or email at: pringlem@msn.com.
Visit the website: www.bellcountynewcomers.com."**

Artist 2 Artist Showcase - Jan 3

Artist 2 Artist Showcase presents Infatuation Art Showcase Part III featuring over 20 artists. Food, music, vendors. \$10 entry fee per person, tickets sold at the door, kids 10 & under free. January 3 from 6 p.m. to 11 p.m.. Art Space Central Texas, 103 Mountain Lion, Harker Heights. For vendor info. Email a2showcase@gmail.com.

Baugh Center for the Visual Arts - Jan 12 - Feb 12

This collection of works highlights a year of dedicated portraiture resulting in a diverse selection of drawings and paintings. It includes energetic life drawings, often executed during collaborative sessions with students, which emphasize spontaneity and capturing immediate impressions. Complementing these are more intensive long form painted portraits, developed over multiple sittings in the studio. These focus on the subtle, untold narratives that emerge between artist and sitter, capturing not just a likeness, but the unique spirit and story of each individual. This exhibit will be on display January 12–February 12, 2026. Exhibitions are free and open to the public. Gallery Hours are Monday-Friday, 9AM-4PM. at 812 Shine St, Belton.

Central Texas Republican Women RED ROOF Connections - Jan 13

Central Texas Republican Women invites you to attend our first RED ROOF Connections event of the year. Join us January 13th from 9:00am until 11:00am at the famous Miller's Smokehouse located at 300 E. Central Ave in Belton. This is a fantastic way to start the day, network, meet candidates and elected officials, and support a small local business. Come join us for coffee, breakfast, and conversation about policy, legislation, upcoming elections and local political issues. Beverage and food purchases are on your own. The company and conversation is free. Email us at rsvpctrw@gmail.com to let us know you're coming or for more information about Central Texas Republican Women, visit www.ctrw-pac.com .

Bell Area Parkinson's Support group (BAPS-North) meets at CTCOG, 2180 N. Main St, Belton on the 2nd and 4th Fridays from 2:30-4:00 PM every month. All are welcome, and there is no membership cost. The Bell Area Parkinson's Support group (BAPS-West) meets at St. Andrews United Methodist Church Fellowship Hall, 206 W Fowler Ave, Killeen on the 1st and 3rd Fridays from 2:30-4:00 PM every month. For more information contact Gayle Shull at GayleInBelton@gmail.com or (254) 718-4197.

Marine Corp League will meet the third Tuesday of each month at VFW 3859. Dinner is served at 6:30 p.m. and meeting will begin at 7:00 p.m. 201 VFW Dr, Harker heights, Tx 76548. Email commandant@mc1249tx.com for more information.

Aspen Hospice and Palliative Care Volunteers Needed Listed here are many ways you can help make a difference for our hospice patients. You can provide companionship, listen to music, read, reminisce, play games, cards, checkers, paint nails, apply makeup, curl hair or take them on walks. Please visit aspenhealthcare.net or call 512-856-5668 for more information.

Young's Daughters Funeral Home Dementia/Alzheimer's Caregiver Support Group occurs weekly on Fridays from 6-7 p.m. This group allows your loved ones to join. Loved ones will be doing activities while the group of caregivers are joining together to better understand and learn tips and tricks for daily life. Young's Daughters Funeral and Bereavement Center is located at 4235 East Hwy 190 in Temple.

Bell County Historical Commission holds their meetings on the fourth Monday of every month at 6 p.m. in the historical Bell County Court House, 101 E. Central Ave in Belton. Join us in our vision of preserving and promoting Bell County's rich historical heritage for current and future generations. We are dedicated to initiating and conducting programs that preserve and celebrate the county's historic cultural resources in alignment with state laws governing historical preservation in Texas. Our community resources consist of a research room, book repository, cemetery information, historical markers and monument records. Our services include information on historic preservation, educational programming, history community outreach and partnerships. We welcome you to join other history minded folks and get involved by serving on one of our committees that consist of preservation, cemetery, markers and education. To volunteer or for more information please visit historicalcommission@bellcounty.texas.gov, call 254-933-5917 or visit the office located in the historic Bell County Courthouse, 101 E. Central Ave., RM 117.

Pistons on the Creek will meet every third Friday from 5:30 p.m. to 11 p.m. Come down to Nolan Creek and show off your rides. From classic to modern, muscle, rat rod, exotic, all automotive enthusiasts are welcome. Support our awesome downtown businesses and restaurants surrounded by live music, food, drinks and a great atmosphere.

Bell Fine Arts Visitors welcome Wednesday's from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at 306 E 5th Ave in Belton. Majong games are available every Monday from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. Come join the fun and meet new folks. For more information text Jeanne at 409-313-0611.

Local chapter of the Crochet Guild of America meets from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. on Wednesdays at the Lena Armstrong Public Library, 301 E. First St., in Belton. The group is open to anyone interested in crochet. All skill levels are welcome. For information email Betty Reichert at bettyreichert@yahoo.com or Kathy Bement at katshookandneedle@gmail.com. Anyone interested in joining the local chapter of the Crochet Guild of America will also need to join the National Crochet Guild of America. Visit www.

crochet.org for details.

Bell County Texas Democratic Women holds their monthly meeting on the third Saturday of each month at 10 a.m. in the Belton AgriLife Center, 1605 N Main in Belton. Join us to hear from local and state candidates and about important issues and events. This is open to the public.

Leadership Belton is an excellent source for learning leadership skills. This 10-month program focuses on three key elements: community awareness training, leadership training, and team building. Do you have someone ready to take the next step to become a leader? If so, Leadership Belton is here to make that difference. For more information on how to participate, contact the chamber at 254-939-3551 or e-mail at info@beltonchamber.com.

Engage & Empower with BISD Belton ISD believes the learning experiences of our students are enhanced through the engagement of our community. We invite parents and community members to get involved in our schools. Register as a volunteer with our new volunteer and partnership system at the following link: https://beltonisd.ezcommunicator.net/edu/beltonisd/login_form.aspx?app=0.

Community Information

TAKE ME HOME PROGRAM The Belton Police Department is adopting the Take Me Home Program, aimed at helping individuals who need special assistance to return safely home after getting lost. The program is a database with photos and personal information to help police officers find someone who is lost or wandered away from home. Take Me Home is designed for individuals who may need additional aid including those with Dementia, Autism or specific mental health needs. It's free to register someone and the data is kept confidential to first responders. You can sign up a loved one here: www.beltontexas.gov/takemehome. Read more about the program here: https://www.beltontexas.gov/news_detail_T11_R1166.php.

Dial 988 for Mental Health Emergencies To help those contemplating suicide, press option 1 for assistance with military/veteran population.

Text-to-911 for speech/ hearing impaired, those unable to call or speak due to home invasion, abduction or domestic violence or physically incapable. Providing location, city name and nature of the emergency in the first message is imperative. For further education on this service, don't hesitate to call 254-933-5500.

Citizens Helping in Police Service (CHIPS)

are extra eyes and ears while in areas where large groups may gather. Contact the Belton Police Dept. to join.

Belton Citizens Police Academy meets Thursday nights to enhance police and community partnerships. Apply online to be a part of this exciting program.

Slam the Scam Throughout the year, we give you the tools to recognize scams and stop scammers from stealing your money and personal information. Share the information with your loved ones & Slam the Scam! Visit ssa.gov/scam for tips.

Dementia/Alzheimers Support Group- Young's Daughters Funeral Home & Bereavement Center, 4235 E. US HWY 190 in Temple. Fridays from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m., Join us for activities while caregivers discuss and help each other during this difficult time. Call Sabrina at 254-401-1302



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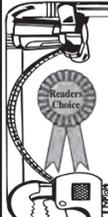


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2025 Morgan's Point Rd ~ 254.780.2388 | Nolan Valley Baptist Church
13206 W. FM 93 ~ 254.721.5998 | Grace Comm. Primitive Baptist Church
3111 N. 3rd St ~ 254.774.8192 |
| Anchor of Hope Fellowship
5700 F.M. 439 ~ 254.831.1035 | First Baptist Church Belton
506 N. Main St. ~ 254.933.3391 | Pentecostal Church of Jesus Christ
117 N. Birdwell St. ~ 254.939.0822 | Grace Presbyterian Church
2401 S 57th ~ 254.773.2134 |
| Belton Christian Church
9425 W FM ~ 436 254.939.1172 | First Mexican Baptist Church
703 S. Wall St. ~ 254.939.6900 | Redeemer Reformed Baptist Church
2378 FM 1670 ~ 818.519.9855 | Harvest Church
2501 General Bruce Dr. ~ 254.780.3566 |
| Belton Church of Christ
3003 N. Main ~ 254.939.1816 | First Presbyterian Church of Belton
2500 Church Street ~ 254.939.2115 | Tapestry Community Church of Belton
1215 S. Wall St. ~ 254.218.4008 | Immanuel Lutheran Church
2109 W. Ave H ~ 254.773.3898 |
| Belton Church of God in Christ
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205 E. 3rd Ave. ~ 254.939.5703 | Temple Vision de lo Alto
4357 Orchard Hill ~ 254.563.1231 | Leon Valley Church of Christ
4404 Twin City Blvd. ~ 254.939.0682 |
| Belton First Assembly of God
500 S. IH-35 ~ 254.933.2803 | Free Pentecostal Church of Jesus
1111 Cacti Lane ~ 254.933.8201 | Trinity Full Gospel
810 East 2nd Ave. ~ 254.939.7673 | New Hope Church of God
2005 W. Ave D., Suite D. ~ 254.742.2181 |
| Belton Lighthouse
1001 NE Loop 121 ~ 254.654.7278 | Freedom Bible Fellowship
3087 W. Ave. D ~ 254.933-3310 | Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Bell County
1726 Morgan's Point Rd. ~ 254.778.8034 | Oak Park United Methodist Church
5505 South 31st St. ~ 254.773.3021 |
| Belton Nazarene Church
1701 Sparta Rd ~ 254.939.3404 | Holy Temple of Our Lord Jesus Christ of the Apostolic Faith
519 S. Pearl St. ~ 254.613.4591 | ~ TEMPLE ~ | St. Francis Episcopal Church & School
5001 Hickory ~ 254.733.4255 |
| Bethel A.M.E. Church
401 S. Davis St. ~ 254.939.6090 | Hope Community Church
507 Mitchell St. ~ 254.933.8222 | Chalice Church - Disciples of Christ
300 N 5th St ~ (254) 773-9061 | St. Luke's Catholic Church
2807 Oakdale Dr. ~ 254.773.1561 |
| Central Texas Cathedral Worship Center
700 S. Main Street ~ 254.831.3064 | Hope Tabernacle
202 E. 1st Ave. ~ 254.933.8222 | Christ Episcopal Church and School
300 N. Main St. ~ 254.773.1657 | St. Mary's Catholic Church
1018 S 7th St. ~ 254.773.4541 |
| Christ Bible Baptist Church
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3303 N. Main ~ 254.939.6910 | Christian Life Church
4343 West FM 93 ~ 254.939.2626 | Taylors Valley Baptist Church
2497 W. FM 93 ~ 254.939.0503 |
| Christ the King Catholic Church
310 E. 24th Ave. ~ 254.939.0806 | Keys Valley Baptist Church
4393 W. US Hwy. 190 ~ 254.939.1650 | Covenant Lutheran Church
4202 Hickory Rd. ~ 254.733.7718 | Temple Bible Church
3205 Oakview Drive ~ 254.778.3233 |
| Christian Tabernacle Church Apostolic UPC
1010 S. Wall St. ~ 254.939.3464 | Lakeview Baptist Church
7717 N Hwy. 317 ~ 254.780.1884 | Eighth Street Baptist Church
215 Martin Luther King Jr. Dr. ~ 254.773.2598 | Temple First Church of the Nazarene
5000 S. 31st ~ 254.773.3744 |
| Cornerstone Community Church
5081 Dog Ridge Rd ~ 254.721.8250 | Liberty Church
302 E. Central Ave. ~ 254.933.7107 | First Baptist Church Temple
8015 West Adams Ave. ~ 254.773.6866 | Unity Church of Temple
318 N. 2nd ~ 254.770.0070 |
| Crossroads Church
500 South I-35 ~ 254.939.2122 | Liberty in Christ Church
2520 N. Main ~ 254.939.3337 | First Methodist Church Temple, GMC
102 N. 2nd Temple. TX ~ 254.773.7992 | Vineyard Christian Fellowship
7425 W Adams Ave. ~ 254.778.2802 |
| Dominion Life Chapel
105 Green Briar St. ~ 254.563.0472 | Miller Heights Baptist Church
1400 S. Wall St. ~ 254.939.1835 | First Presbyterian Church Temple
12 West French ~ 254.773.3407 | Vista Community Church
7051 Stonehollow Dr. ~ 254.774.7992 |
| Elm Grove Baptist Church
6388 Elm Grove Rd. ~ 254.933.8127 | Ministerios Vida
2020 S. IH-35 ~ 254.624.8015 | Foundation Church
10751 W. Adams ~ 254.780.9673 | Wildwood Baptist Church
5195 Cedar Creek Rd. ~ 254.773.3177 |

Footprints on the Heart



John C. Perry

With a new year on the horizon, many of us start thinking about resolutions. The idea isn't new. Over 4,000 years ago, the ancient Babylonians made yearly promises to repay debts and return borrowed items. The Romans later adopted the practice, shifting it to January and focusing on commitments to better one's behavior in the new year. Centuries later, the American

theologian Jonathan Edwards added his own influence. Though his famous list of 70 resolutions weren't tied to New Year's Day, his resolutions concept caught on.

So, what will your resolution be for 2026? If you don't have one yet, may I offer you a suggestion.

We all know how precious family is, even when certain relatives test our patience from time to time. But what about friends? Euripides, centuries ago said, "One loyal friend is worth ten thousand relatives." How are you doing in the friendship department? I count myself blessed with a number of dear friends.

I've written before about my best friend from high school, Tom. Though life has taken him all over the country, we've stayed close for

all these years. He's the kind of friend who would drop everything if I needed him, and I'd do the same for him. Friendships like that don't happen by accident; they're gifts from God that we nurture over a lifetime. Walter Winchell once said, "A real friend is one who walks in when the rest of the world walks out."

A dear friend is so very valuable in life, someone who gets you, who understands you. Even Socrates saw the value of friendship, saying, "There is no possession more valuable than a good and faithful friend."

Scripture gives us a beautiful example in Onesiphorus, not a name you hear every day! It's pronounced, "oh-nee-sif-or-us," with emphasis on the second syllable

(nee). This is a man whose loyalty shines across the centuries. He was one of the seventytwo Jesus sent out to share His Gospel (Luke 10:1-24). Onesiphorus eventually teamed up with the Apostle Paul, and they became true brothers in Christ and close friends.

Later, when the Apostle Paul was imprisoned in Rome, Onesiphorus made the long, difficult, and dangerous 1,000mile journey from Ephesus to find him. He crossed seas, continents, and faced the dangerous anti-Christian policy of Emperor Nero's Rome, simply to stand beside his friend. Paul wrote that Onesiphorus "refreshed" him and "searched hard for me until he found me" (2 Timothy 1:16-18). What a legacy of friendship!

So, here's my resolution sug-

gestion for 2026: expand your circle of friends. You truly can't have too many. How do you begin? Step out a bit. Be open to new connections. Join a club or volunteer group. Say yes to invitations, even when you're tempted to stay home. Be approachable. Ask questions. Offer compliments. And above all, listen well. Good listeners make great friends.

Eleanor Roosevelt once said, "Many people will walk in and out of your life, but only true friends will leave footprints in your heart."

Let 2026 be the year you welcome a few new footprints on your heart!

John C. Perry is the Lay Leader with New Life Methodist Church. They meet every Sunday at 9 a.m. (Bible Study) and 10 a.m. (Worship Service) in the Salado Middle School at 1169 Williams Rd.



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Parks Master Plan ‘moving along very well’

By David Stone
The Belton Journal

The Belton Parks Master Plan will improve existing and develop new sports facilities, pursue opportunities for indoor recreation, construct an inclusive playground, add native landscaping, and provide supporting facilities such as shade structures, restrooms and signage to local parks.

“Our Parks Master Plan is moving along very well,” said James Grant, director of Belton Parks & Recreation.

“A draft of the plan will be presented to our Parks Board in February followed by a Town Hall Meeting in March,” Grant said. “We hope to have a final document ready to go before City Council in April.”

City Council approved an amended agreement in November with Dallas-based MHS Planning & Design to provide a feasibility study for an Indoor Recreational Center as part of the 10-year Master Plan.

According to Joe Dyer, Belton parks superintendent, the study will determine if such a center is needed within the city.

“An indoor recreation center would likely include basketball and volleyball courts, along with various fitness programs such as yoga and kickboxing,” Dyer said this week.

“We’ve received community engagement on items that should be in the Master Plan by having pop-ups at events such as Bacon, Blues & Brews; Polka on the Square; the Lions Club’s Wacky Boat Race; and Candy Trails,” he added. “We also have held three focus groups and conducted a community survey.”

“The survey was available for five weeks and 893 responses were received. An indoor recreation center scored high with survey respondents. MHS Planning & Design is looking at what we have and what we need now and in the future based on population growth.”



Courtesy Photo

Standpipe Park, the City of Belton’s newest park, opened in 2025. Belton city administration will present a draft of the Parks Master Plan in February 2026.

Survey respondents named many programs that should be considered while developing a Parks Master Plan, including art festivals, more clean-up days, foot races, concerts in the park, dances, dog competi-

tions, environmental events, a farmers market, family Olympics, fitness events, Lake Day with boat races, photography classes, skateboard competitions, yoga and youth camps.

Belhouse would provide water to 6 Central Texas counties

By David Stone
The Belton Journal

Brazos River Authority officials say residents in six Central Texas counties would benefit from water being moved from Belton Lake to Stillhouse Hollow through the Belhouse Drought Preparedness Project.

The Belhouse pipeline would pump water out of Belton Lake near the Deadfish Grill and run seven miles to Stillhouse.

Then, water would be piped to Lake Georgetown and other areas to provide drinking water during times of drought.

“While we do pump to Lake Georgetown through the Williamson County Regional Raw Water Line, municipalities in four other counties draw their water from Stillhouse Hollow Reservoir,” said Judi Pierce, public information officer for BRA. “They would benefit from water being available through the Belhouse pipeline should drought cause lake levels in Stillhouse to severely decline.”

“Besides Bell and Williamson counties, (residents in) Lampasas, Burnet, Milam and Falls will benefit from the ability to move water from Belton Lake to Stillhouse Hollow,” Pierce added.

Construction of the one-way Belhouse pipeline linking the two lakes is expected to begin in 2028 and be operational by 2032, according to another BRA official — Brad Brunett, chief operations officer.

“The permitting and design phase for Belhouse began in May,” Brunett said. “Design for both the intake structure and pipeline are under way by the Walker Partners engineering team, and they are expected to be in early 2026.”

He said the pipeline route that was presented at the public hearing in 2023 will be pursued, with some minor deviations as a result of recent development.

The pipeline will allow water to flow from Belton Lake to Stillhouse, to provide water for drought-related needs in Austin’s booming northern suburbs.

“As populations in the Georgetown and Round Rock areas grow, there won’t be

enough water for Brazos River Authority customers served by Lake Georgetown,” Brunett said.

“Lake Georgetown is small,” he said. “During dry times, there simply is not enough water in Lake Georgetown to meet the needs.”

According to the US Census Bureau, Georgetown is one of the fastest growing cities in America, and its population of 104,000 is expected to double in less than seven years.

The Brazos River Authority has been pumping water from Stillhouse to Lake Georgetown for years, but the potential amount of water being moved will soon increase, Brunett said.

A whopping 20 billion gallons of water every year could be piped from Stillhouse Hollow Reservoir to Lake Georgetown in the next few years, and up to 9.8 billion gallons could be moved annually from Lake Belton to Stillhouse by the Belhouse pipeline.

“We first started pumping in 2006, and we added multiple pumps in 2011,” Brunett said. “We have four pumps capable of pumping 42 million gallons a day. We are replacing those with four higher-capacity pumps that can move 56 million gallons per day. There will still be one pipeline, but we will be able to move more water.”

“We are currently in the pump design phase, and it will be two or three years before they are operational,” he said. Once complete, they will have the capacity to transfer about 61,000-acre-feet — 19.88 billion gallons — from Stillhouse to Georgetown annually.

The amount of water actually transferred is related directly to ongoing drought conditions.

“The pumps don’t run constantly,” Brunett said. “It all depends on the weather and how much natural runoff goes into Lake Georgetown. In 2016, the pumps didn’t run at all. But, in 2022, they ran most of the year.”

Cedar fever peaks Jan. 7

By David Stone
The Belton Journal

We are smack dab in the middle of cedar fever season in the heart of Texas. Noses are running, eyes are itching and sufferers are miserable, and these days we respond to concerning glares with six words: “It’s allergies, I don’t have COVID.”

What exactly is cedar fever and why is it so insufferable this time of year? For starters, cedar fever isn’t a flu or a virus — it is an allergic reaction to the pollen released by mountain cedar trees. In Texas, the predominant species of mountain cedar is the Ashe juniper.

Central Texas — including Belton, Temple and most of Bell County — is widely known as the Allergy Capital of the World, and cedar plays no small role in that distinction.

And with the peak of mountain cedar sea-

son fast approaching, it’s helpful to understand why many Central Texans start sneezing as soon as they open the front door.

Cedar fever is a seasonal allergy caused by pollen releases from the Ashe juniper, Texas’ most common species of mountain cedar. It can cause intense, almost flu-like reactions.

According to Dr. William Long, an allergy specialist with clinics in Temple and Harker Heights, Santa’s sleigh isn’t the only thing airborne come late December.

“Cedar trees usually start pollinating right around Christmas,” he said. “It usually hits its peak around Jan. 7 and starts to decrease in late February. By March, most cedar is pretty much gone.”

According to Karl Flocke, a woodland ecologist for Texas A&M Forest Service, the pollen

from Ashe junipers isn’t particularly allergenic or harmful — it’s just so concentrated that even if you aren’t generally susceptible to allergies it could still affect you.

Since the pollen is spread by the wind, cedar fever can affect individuals far removed from areas with a high concentration of juniper trees.

Besides the sheer quantity of pollen released, cedar fever is mostly problematic because of when the pollen is released. Most trees pollinate in the spring when many are expecting to have allergic reactions. While ragweed pollen and mold spores can contribute to allergies in the fall, very few plants pollinate during the winter. Juniper trees are the exception.

These trees typically begin producing pollen in mid-December, often triggered by colder weather or the passage of a cold front. Pollen production

reaches its peak in mid-January, before slowly tapering off toward the beginning of March, just in time for oak pollen and other spring allergens to start up.

It’s not uncommon for people experiencing cedar fever to mistake their symptoms as a cold or the seasonal flu, especially given the variety of symptoms triggered by cedar fever. These in-

clude fatigue, sore throat, runny nose, partial loss of smell and — believe it or not — some people actually do run a slight fever. However, if your fever is higher than 101.5°F, then pollen likely isn’t the

cause.

There are a few symptoms of cedar fever that are not linked to coronavirus or the flu though, like itchy, watery

See CEDAR,
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Review cont. - From Page A5



tion for 29 years, including 21 years in Belton ISD. She has served at Belton High School for the past 14 years.

The Belton City Council unanimously adopted the city's fiscal year 2026 budget, which includes total anticipated revenue of \$52.8 million and expenditures of \$47.9 million. The budget incorporates an increase to total property tax revenue in the amount of \$1.2 million based on a tax rate of \$0.5225



cents per \$100 of taxable value. The rate will raise taxes for maintenance and operations on a \$100,000 home by about \$16.20. The average taxable value of a Belton residence was \$295,184 in 2024 year. The 2025 average taxable value of a residence is \$309,386. Under the Fiscal Year 2026 tax rate, taxes imposed on the average home will be \$1,616.

Marjorie Ferrill of Belton celebrated her 101st birthday, with a tea party celebration at Tirzah's in downtown Belton on Sept. 11. Ferrill is the

mother of Margaret Psencik (Don), Ray Schwertner (Linda), and Cynthia Jackson (Don). She has eight grandchildren, nineteen great-grandchildren, and one great-great granddaughter. She retired from Scott & White Clinic as an administrator and is a lifetime member of First Christian Church, Temple. She established scholarships at the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor, Texas A&M, Temple College and gave generously to Baylor Scott & White's Cancer Treatment Center. Ferrill is a cancer survivor.

Two Belton ISD elementary students earned national recognition as National Math Stars, a highly selective program that invests in top-performing math students and their families for 10 years. Third-grader Aayana Jain of Lakewood Elementary and fourth-grader Rosalinn "Rosie" Canto of Sparta Elementary were among just over 100 students selected nationwide.

Pietro Victor Giustino, 39, a former Belton High School teacher, was arrested again, this time by U.S. Marshals in Bexar County on state criminal charges for invasive visual recording of several female high school students in a classroom setting. The arrest took place on Sept. 23. He had previously been arrested on July 18 on federal charges by the FBI for child pornography charges. The depictions in that particular case did not involve local students, but during that investigation, the FBI discovered

13 cellphone videos that it shared with Belton PD to identify and notify victim families and for Belton PD to pursue any applicable state criminal charges.

On Tuesday, September 23rd the 15th Annual Bell County Senior Expo kicked off at the Cadence Bank Center. The Expo had more than 200 booths set up to provide senior citizens of the community with information and resources. The event was organized by The Belton Journal as it has been for the past 15 years.

More than 500 participants registered to walk one mile to raise funds and awareness for a cure for Alzheimer's, and all forms of dementia, at the 2025 Bell County Walk to End Alzheimer's at Liberty Park on Sept. 27. Frank Garrett, a legend in fundraising for Walk to End Alzheimer's, passed away in 2025. In 2024, he raised \$40,000.

October

The Belton ISD Delta Program hosted its first open house with a full house and a ribbon cutting on Oct. 2. The new facility is located at 731 Fourth Ave. in Belton. Presently there are 40 students in the program. Classrooms include a gym, an art room, a kitchen, a sensory room, and a fine motor room. Most of the classrooms offer hands-on learning for job skills and household skills. BISD Delta is ideally located for job training opportunities in the community. Glass Expanse, located at 2600

city is located off University Drive on the UMHB campus. The facility's name honors former UMHB men's golf course Mac Hickerson and his late wife, Jane. In addition, the practice course — four greens and 22 tee boxes — is called The Mac. The new golf center also includes a lighted short-game practice area. Hickerson, who attended the ceremony, led the UMHB men's team from 1980 to 1999. Also, the university dedicated the clubhouse and locker room facility — the Conner Golf Performance Center — in honor of Mary Kay and Jerry Conner of Sugarland.

The 11th annual Candy Trail in Downtown Belton was rescheduled due to the weather, but still went off without a hitch. Organized by the Belton Downtown Business Alliance, more than 50 businesses and organizations lined the downtown streets to hand out candy to children and families.

November

Belton ISD voters went to the polls in November and rejected three out of four propositions that were part of a \$161.8 million bond referendum, including two propositions that focused on upgrades to the district's athletic and sports facilities. Only Proposition C, which will update technology for students and staff, was approved by voters. Proposition C makes up only \$6 million of the bond total.

Proposition A, which included

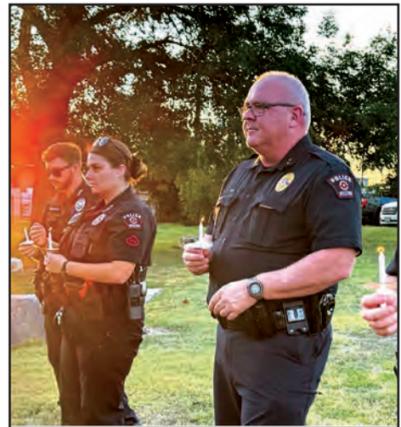


Digby Drive in Belton, moved to Belton about four months ago and was celebrated during Manufacturing Month. The founder said that the company was leasing property in Troy but was outgrowing the facility. Glass Expanse manu-

\$92.9 million in campus security and improvements at several schools, was the closest of the four propositions. It failed — 50.49 percent against to 49.51 for. Prop A would have funded six-foot security fences, security gates and additional exterior lighting around school playgrounds. Proposition B, which included \$43.7 million in improvements to athletic facilities, failed 62.04 percent against to 37.96 percent for. Prop B would have provided improvements at several campuses and would have turfed the Belton High softball and baseball fields.

Proposition C passed 52.85 percent for to 47.15 percent against, and it will provide money to update campus, student and staff technology, including laptop computers.

Proposition D, another proposition focused on athletic facilities, failed



factures premium patio sliding doors and windows using glass and aluminum. Glass Expanse sold directly to builders and homeowners for seven years, but now the company sells its sliding doors and windows in Belton, at Lengfeld Lumber in Temple and at 21 other locations in Texas.

Pet Extravaganza broke attendance records with its 10th annual event, sponsored by Rescue Magazine. It featured vendors for people, pets, services, and their homes, and included free pet microchipping and also pet adoption opportunities of cats, dogs, ferrets, and reptiles.

UMHB dedicated new golf venues, the Crusader golf center including the Jane & Mac Hickerson Golf Club. The event was celebrated with a special ceremony attended by two-time Masters champion Ben Crenshaw. The new fa-



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Cedar From Page A9

eyes, blocked nasal passages and sneezing. But there is one symptom that, according to Flocke, is a clearer indicator.

"Typically, mucus from allergies is clear and runny, while other infections lead to thicker colored mucous," Flocke said.

You can treat cedar fever by taking allergy medications and antihistamines, but you should consult with your physician or health care professional before taking new medications. You can also try to anticipate the pollen by tuning in to your local news station. Many stations will give you the pollen count and

can predict when it's going to be a particular pollen-heavy day. On those days, it's smart to keep windows and doors closed, to limit the amount of time you spend outdoors and to change air conditioning filters in your car and home.

Removing juniper trees from your property isn't recommended, primarily because the pollen is airborne and—since they often wait to release their pollen until it's cold, dry and windy—that pollen can blow for miles. It's also important to note that only male juniper trees release pollen.

Lady Tigers on the road early in 2026

By Clay Whittington
The Belton Journal

Three of the Lady Tigers' next four games are on the road, but they will be home at the right time. After a brief break to celebrate the new year, Belton is set to return to action Friday, when it will travel to play Robinson at 3:30 p.m. Then, on Tuesday, the Lady Tigers play at China Spring with tipoff set for 7 p.m.

On Jan. 9, however, Belton returns home for the first time since defeating Navasota 54-45 on Dec. 19, and the Lady Tigers will need all the support they can get as they open District 16-5A play against a state-ranked rival. No. 6 Lake Belton serves as Belton's first opponent in its 10-game league schedule, and upsetting the

Lady Broncos will not be easy. Although results from Lake Belton's trip to the three-day Killeen ISD tournament, which concluded Wednesday were unavailable, the Lady Broncos were dominant through their first 19 games. En route to an undefeated record, Lake Belton was rarely challenged, winning all but three games by double digits while averaging 62.8 points per game.

The Lady Tigers follow the contest by returning to the road with a trip to Waco University on Jan. 13. Belton concludes the first round with

games versus Killeen Chaparral (Jan. 16) and Killeen Ellison (Jan. 20) and at Waco (Jan. 23) before repeating the series

at the opposite locations. The Lady Tigers have not qualified for the playoffs since 2022. There is reason to believe, however, the skid could end. After winning a combined 21 games during the previous three seasons highlighted by last year's 13-20 showing, Belton owned a 10-8 record heading into the two-day Waco Midway tournament earlier this week. Results from the event were unavailable, but the Lady Tigers took a three-

game win streak into the tournament, and they had won three of their previous five games.

Offensively, sophomore guard Isabella Warner has been instrumental to the team's offensive success, averaging approximately 20 points to go with three rebounds, three steals, an assist and a block per game. Sophomore forward Emma Harvey and senior guard Emma Flory complement the production with 6.9 and 6.5 points, respectively. While the Lady Broncos are the district's frontrunner to be crowned champion, following a 14-5 start, Chaparral appears poised to contend for the title as well, creating an intriguing race among the remainder of the field for positioning in the final standings.



Broncos' final three games before district begins

By Clay Whittington
The Belton Journal

The new year has arrived and so has the final push toward district.

After months of preparing, the most important part of the Broncos' season is on the verge of beginning as only three games remain before the District 16-5A schedule starts, and if all goes according to plan, the season will not end there.

Lake Belton has not qualified for the playoffs since 2022, but following a strong opening, the Broncos intend to end the drought, and they have a trio of opportunities left to ensure they are ready for the run.

On Friday, Lake Belton hosts the homeschool Austin Royals at 1 p.m. before welcoming China Spring to town Tuesday for a 6:30 p.m. tipoff. The Broncos conclude non-district play Jan. 9, when they travel to Gatesville.

One week later, the 10-game league slate begins with a home encounter against Waco.

Finishing among the top four teams will not be easy, though.

No. 14 Killeen Ellison is almost assured one of the berths after advancing to the state semifinals in three consecutive seasons, including a pair of appearances in the title game (2023, 2024). The

Broncos play the powerhouse on Jan. 30 at home and on the road Feb. 17 in the regular-season finale.

Lake Belton must also contend with rival Belton in games that could prove critical to the standings. The squads play Jan. 27 at Belton and Feb. 13 at Lake Belton.

Waco University, Killeen Chaparral and



Waco round out the district's teams.

The Broncos traveled to China Spring for the Cougars' two-day tournament earlier this week, but results were unavailable. Regardless of the outcome, however, Lake Belton generated plenty of momentum in 2025.

The program delivered one of its best starts in its five-year history by winning 14 of its first 17 games punctuated by a 63-point victory against Smithville prior to breaking for the Christmas holiday.

Lake Belton's best campaign resulted in 18 victories in 2022, when it

reached the playoffs.

The Broncos took a three-game win streak into the China Spring tournament, defeating Hillsboro by 22 points, 58-36, before traveling to Georgetown Gateway and beating the host Gators 49-41.

Then, Lake Belton delivered its most lopsided showing of the season by defeating Smithville 76-13 after trailing 6-5 in the game's opening moments.

Krosby Smith, a junior forward, outscored the opposition by himself, posting 15 points, six rebounds and a trio of steals, while junior point guard Avery Diaz had 11 points, four rebounds and a steal.

Additionally, senior shooting guard Dezmin Ravizee (3 rebounds, 3 steals and 2 assists) and senior forward Christian Onchweri (3 rebounds) scored eight points apiece, and Jackson Striegler (3 rebounds and 2 assists) and Mikey Lockett (5 rebounds, 2 assists and a steal) each scored six points.

Senior guard Ameer Williams (5 points), junior guard Allen Mucunu (5 points), senior Nick Martin (5 points), senior Joe Ferrell (4 points) and senior center Charles Hanson (3 points) also contributed offensively.

Tigers to compete at Kaufman Tourney

By Aries Ramos
The Belton Journal

The Belton Tigers closed out their pre-Christmas schedule with a hard-fought 73-65 loss to Temple. While the result ended in defeat, the performance reflected the competitive edge and depth that have defined Belton's season to this point.

Belton battled from start to finish against a physical Temple squad, trading runs and responding to momentum shifts throughout the game. The Tigers remained within striking distance late, relying on defensive effort and transition opportunities to keep pressure on their opponent. The game served as a strong test as Belton continues to prepare for postseason level competition.

Ty Johnson led the Tigers offensively, finishing with a team high 19 points. Johnson provided steady scoring throughout the night, attacking the basket and knocking down key shots to keep Belton in contention. Jay'dn Loggins added 14 points, contributing both in half court sets and on the break, while Luke Munden chipped in nine points with timely scoring when Belton needed a lift.

Beyond the box score, several players made significant impacts through effort and energy. Daniel Briscoe delivered a strong all around performance, competing on both ends of the floor and battling con-

sistently against Temple's physical play. Noah Childers set the tone with relentless effort, running the floor, defending aggressively, and providing valuable minutes through hustle and intensity.

Belton also received important contributions from its bench. Abran Knight and Gavin Ross provided a spark with their defensive presence and energy, helping disrupt Temple's rhythm and bringing momentum to the Tigers during key stretches. Their contributions highlighted the depth Belton has developed as the season has progressed.

Despite the loss, the Tigers head into the Christmas break with a strong 14-3 overall record. The game against Temple offered valuable experience against quality competition and underscored areas for continued growth as Belton moves into the next phase of the season.

Belton will return to action December 29-30 at the Kaufman Tournament, where the Tigers will face North Forney in tournament play.

With a proven scoring core, high effort role players, and depth throughout the rotation, the Tigers remain well positioned for success. As the season continues, Belton will look to build on its strong start, using the Temple game as motivation while carrying confidence into tournament competition.



Liana and Javid Planz - inspirational Tigers

By Clay Whittington
The Belton Journal

Liana and Javid Planz have lots to be thankful for during this holiday season. Each has plenty to be proud of as well.

Throughout their athletic journeys, the siblings have encountered tremendous adversity both physically and mentally, and the pair has continuously overcome the odds.

They do not intend to stop either. For years, each has pursued a passion, and little detoured either from achieving their respective goals.

In the pool, Liana, a 2022 graduate of Belton High School, set numerous school and club records in multiple

events, including the 100-yard butterfly, 200 butterfly, 100 freestyle and 200 freestyle, but just weeks before departing to compete at Queens University of Charlotte, tragedy struck.

Liana was involved in a life-threatening, head-on collision resulting in a broken femur, broken back, shattered wrist and collapsed lungs among other severe injuries.

Her life and swimming career was altered, but over time, she recovered.

One year after the accident, Liana began competing for Queens and has since raced at the World Championships in Budapest, earning an American Samoa record in the 100 butterfly and 100 freestyle, the World Championships in Singapore and the Pacific Games in

Palau.

Currently, she is attempting to qualify for the 2028 Olympics in Los Angeles.

Younger brother Javid is adhering to a similar relentless spirit as he attempts to mold himself into the household's second Division I athlete despite outside expectations.

Standing 5 feet, 10 inches and weighing 185 pounds, Javid was often considered too small to excel on the football field, but his frame has yet to be an issue.

Last season, as a junior, the running back made an instant impact in his debut, finishing third on the team in rushing.

Along with blocking responsibili-

ties, Javid carried the ball 87 times for 449 yards and five touchdowns as the Tigers reached the playoffs for a fifth consecutive season. He was placed on the 10-5A, Division II All-District Second Team following the performance.

Now, with starting running back Gino Zecca, a senior, graduating, Javid is poised to see his role increase in his final high school season and potentially garner the attention of collegiate coaches.

Regardless of how the upcoming years unfold, Liana and Javid have lots to be thankful for during this holiday season as their stories of overcoming life's adversities provide inspiration entering the new year.



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Sports Briefs

By Clay Whittington
The Belton Journal

Lake Belton's wrestling team traveled to compete in the Hill Country Invitational at Cedar Park Vista Ridge, and both teams placed in the top 20.

The Lady Broncos were 13th, scoring 31 points as Alayna Royals (130 pounds) and Akira Beck (145) advanced

to the semifinals and consolation rounds, respectively.

At 190 pounds, Kameryn Vaden placed third, matching the showing from teammate Lorelai Scallorn at 235 pounds.

The Broncos were 18th (23) as Kameron Adams (132) had multiple victories in the consolation rounds, while Carl Huffman (138) won twice.

Additionally, Akshar Parikh (144) and Jacob Copley (157) also won.

James Holt (126), Jesse Whitmire (150) and Magana Latta (165) also competed.

BELTON SOFTBALL

The Lady Tigers will conduct try-outs for the upcoming season on Jan. 9 from 4:30 p.m. to 7 p.m. and on Jan. 10 from 9 a.m. to noon.

Participants must be academically eligible, have a current physical on file with the school and have submitted all other necessary paperwork.

Final cuts will be made Jan. 10, and practice begins Jan. 12, when there will be a mandatory parent meeting at 6 p.m.

For any questions, contact Belton head coach Morgan Birkel at Morgan.Birkel@BISD.net.

Lady Broncos down Madisonville 74-32

By Aries Ramos
The Belton Journal

The Lake Belton Lady Broncos continued their outstanding season Friday night with a commanding 74-32 victory over Madisonville, further solidifying their position as one of the top teams. The home win extended Lake Belton's perfect record to 19-0, marking another milestone in an already well rounded season.

From the opening minutes, Lake Belton set the tone with an up tempo approach and aggressive defensive pressure. The Lady Broncos quickly established control by attacking the basket, pushing the pace in transition, and forcing early turnovers. That early surge allowed Lake Belton to open a substantial lead in the first quarter, putting Madisonville in catch up mode for the remainder of the contest.

Offensively, the Lady Broncos relied on balance rather than individual scoring runs. Crisp ball movement and strong spacing created open looks, while consistent rebounding on

both ends of the floor limited Madisonville's opportunities to regain momentum. Lake Belton's ability to convert defensive stops into efficient offensive possessions proved to be a key factor in maintaining steady separation on the scoreboard.

Defensive effort remained the foundation of the performance. Lake Belton applied constant pressure on the perimeter, contested shots in the paint, and closed passing lanes with active hands. The result was a disrupted offensive flow for Madisonville and a steady stream of turnovers that fueled transition scoring. Just as important was Lake Belton's control of the glass, which eliminated second-chance points and allowed the Lady Broncos to dictate tempo throughout the night.

Another strength on display was the team's depth. Lake Belton's rotation featured multiple players contributing meaningful minutes, allowing the coaching staff to maintain intensity without sacrificing execution. Whether through rebounding, defen-

sive energy, or timely scoring, each lineup combination provided stability and effort, reinforcing the team's collective approach.

As the calendar turns toward the holiday break, Lake Belton will take a short pause before returning to competition on December 29 at the MT Rice Tournament in Midway. The Lady Broncos are scheduled to open tournament play against Judson, a matchup that will provide another opportunity to test their systems against quality opposition.

With a flawless record intact, Lake Belton enters the next phase of the season focused on continued growth rather than outcomes. The Lady Broncos have demonstrated an ability to win through defensive discipline, balanced scoring, and depth, traits that typically translate well as competition increases. As tournament play begins, Lake Belton will look to carry its momentum forward while sharpening execution in preparation for district play.



Putting you aging parents' wishes first

Scot Hrbacek, CFP® Financial Advisor

As your parents grow older, it may be time to talk with them about financial and aging issues. Position these conversations to honor their plans and understand their wishes, so their affairs will be taken care of as they would like.

First, consider health care. Find out if they have limits on medical care and appropriate legal documents, like a health care power of attorney.

Another subject: independence. Have they thought about the need for long-term care? Also, ask if they have updated wills, revocable trusts and durable powers of attorney, so a trusted person can make financial decisions if they become incapacitated.

Finally, have they left instructions in their will about their funeral preferences?

These are sensitive subjects, but you can get help from other family members or a trusted legal or financial professional.

By raising these issues with your parents, you can help avoid unpleasant surprises — and maybe even create some peace of mind for your family.

This article was written by Edward Jones for use by your local Edward Jones Financial Advisor. Edward Jones, Member SIPC

Edward Jones

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Central Texas Master Singers return

Special to the Journal

After more than a decade of inspiring audiences across Central Texas, Central Texas Master Singers announces its return as a full choral ensemble and is now actively recruiting experienced singers to join its next chapter after sunseting its chamber ensemble Vineyard Voice – the smaller vocal ensemble created during the pandemic.

Vineyard Voice served its purpose in the immediate post-pandemic era. Under the leadership of founder and conductor Steven Kirkpatrick, the organization is poised to usher in a renewed era of artistic vitality, purpose, and community impact through sacred choral music as originally organized in 2009.

Founded in 2009, Central Texas Master Singers quickly became known for its compelling performances, musical excellence, and distinctive ability to connect deeply with audiences. With a repertoire spanning classical and contemporary sacred music, and modern praise and worship, the ensemble has long held a reputation for singing with clarity, conviction, and heart.

“This return is intentional,” said Kirkpatrick. “It’s about reopening the choir with clarity of mission, renewed energy, and a maintaining excellence with enthusiasm and

purpose. We are inviting singers who are ready to be part of something meaningful — something that enriches lives and strengthens our community through music.”

As Central Texas Master Singers reopens its membership, experienced vocalists from across the region are invited and encouraged to participate. The ensemble seeks singers who value musical preparation, expressive performance, and collaboration within a faith-centered artistic environment.

Rehearsals will be held weekly on Monday evenings, beginning with an open rehearsal and audition on Monday, January 19, 2026, from 7:00 to 9:00 PM at Immanuel Baptist Church in Temple. Interested singers are encouraged to arrive early to receive music and rehearsal instructions.

The returning season represents more than a continuation — it marks a deliberate renewal. Central Texas Master Singers enters this era with a refined artistic vision, renewed commitment to community engagement, and a focus on music that moves hearts while honoring God.

Audiences and participants alike have described the ensemble as transformative, often noting the powerful connection between message, music, and performance. This return builds on that legacy, offering singers the opportunity to be part of a respected organization that values

both excellence and purpose.

Those interested in singing with Central Texas Master Singers or supporting its mission may learn more at www.CentralTexasMasterSingers.com. Tax-deductible donations supporting the organization’s mission may be made at performances or online.



Courtesy Photo

The Central Texas Master Singers is seeking vocalists to participate, with the group holding open rehearsal and audition on Monday, Jan. 19.

Belton Lake: Stillhouse

<p>FAIR. Water stained; 76 degrees; 0.26 feet above pool. White bass fishing is good and getting stronger with each passing cold front as the water cools through the 70s. Fish are gathering in large schools and using bottom features in 32-42 feet of water most of the morning and in the late afternoons after feeding briefly in shallow water right around sunrise. The MAL Lure, original or heavy, and with either a white tail or chartreuse tail is a good lure to have on the rods right now. Once a school of fish is found on sonar use your trolling motor to stay on top of them, then drop the lure to bottom and crank it up fast enough to ensure the blade starts spinning and stays spinning. Observe fish reaction using live imaging sonar or 2D sonar. Once the fish settle down and no longer chase, move on and look for the next school. No bird activity, and very limited topwater activity typically with cloud cover just after sunrise. Report by Bob Maindelle, Holding the Line Guide Service. Unseasonably warm conditions have bass holding in a summer pattern. The most consistent bite is coming from nomadic schools chasing shad, best located with forward-facing sonar. Weightless soft plastic jerkbaits and mid-strolling presentations are producing steady action. A few scattered fish can still be caught around submerged vegetation and shoreline cover, but those bites have been less consistent.</p>	<p>FAIR. Water stained; 70 degrees; 0.59 feet above pool. We are at peak fall fishing conditions now for white bass and hybrid striped bass. The fishing is excellent and will likely stay this way until the water temperature a below 60 de-grees in a few weeks. The only thing that could make this better is the arrival of our migratory, fish-eating birds like gulls and terns. A few are present, but so far have been unhelpful locating fish. Sonar remains the staple for finding fish in 30-35 feet around sunrise and sunset, then 35-52 feet the rest of the day. The MAL Dense worked vertically by cranking it upward through the lower third of the water column assisted by viewing this on Garmin LiveScope is my go-to tactic. Report by Bob Maindelle, Holding the Line Guide Service. Fall conditions have bass scattered, making it difficult to find big groups or consistent patterns. Large schools of nomadic bass are roaming the main lake chasing shad. Bass fishing is fair utilizing forward-facing sonar and mid-strolling small minnow-style soft plastics. For bigger bites, fish a football jig along steeper rocky shorelines. Report by Ander Meine, Bassquatch Fishing.</p>
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Fishing REPORT



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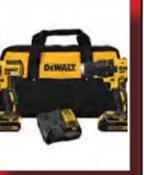
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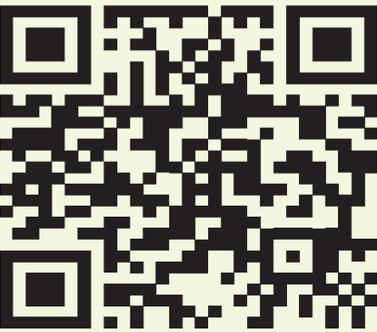
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Review - From Page A10



57.89 percent against to 42.11 percent for. This proposition was designated to provide \$19.2 million to update the district's Swim Center.

"No Kid Sleeps on the Floor in our Town" is the mission statement of Sleep in Heavenly Peace of Bell County, which launched Nov. 2. Sleep in Heavenly Peace (SHP) is a volunteer-driven nonprofit dedicated to building and delivering hand-made, fully furnished beds to children in need. SHP's mission is to tackle the issue of children without beds, which is estimated to affect nearly 3 percent of the population, or more than 1,000 kids locally. Fundraising began with the goal of having the first bed assembly events in February of the new year.

A tour and ribbon cutting was held for the new state-of-the-art imaging Seton Medical Center Harker Heights lo-

cated at 2812 Oakmark Dr. in Belton. One room is for X-rays, another for ultrasound, one for CT scans, and one for MRIs. The Belton location, with its own dedicated staff, will have Harker Heights staff from time to time. It is located near Freedom Urgent Care and Wellstone Health Partner Family Medicine Clinic.

The Belton City Council approved a Facade Improvement Grant in the downtown area. The \$45,000 grant — the maximum amount — was requested by Dusty Miller for a building at 222 E. Central, located in the Downtown Belton Commercial District at the northwest intersection of East Central and North Penelope. The grant will help pay for exterior renovations, including the replacement of non-historic windows and doors, and repainting previously painted exterior walls. The work on the

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building is estimated to cost \$128,000, with the grant covering about a third of that amount. According to the 2022 City of Belton Historic Resources Survey, this commercial-style brick structure was constructed around 1935 and underwent major alterations to the front façade in the 1980s.

Bell County announced the launching of an innovative 911 program to improve efficiency of non-emergency healthcare. When someone calls 911 with a non-emergency or low-acuity medical need, they may be offered the option to be connected with RightSite, a healthcare service that provides direct access to board-certified ER doctors and social care navigators without requiring an ambulance or emergency room visit.

Belton Police Chief Larry Berg was appointed Region 9 director of the Texas Police Chief Association. Berg previously served as Central Texas affiliate representative for the TPCA. He replaced former Temple Police Chief Shawn Reynolds, who became an assistant city manager in Temple. Berg will contribute to training and leadership development initiatives that encourage best law enforcement practices in the region, which includes Temple, Belton, Killeen, Waco, and Copperas Cove. The TPCA is a statewide law enforcement administrators' organization of more than 1,500 members in 16 regions.

Belton First United Methodist Church celebrated 175 years in a special service on Nov. 23. The First United Methodist Church was established in 1850, five years after the Republic of Texas was admitted into the United States as the 28th state. Belton was originally called Nolanville and a circuit rider from the Georgetown Mission served a sanctuary building. Construction of the church began in the 1850s and was completed in the 1860s on a lot on Pearl Street. The



original building was of native rock and hewed cedar, and well-lit. The original structure had no floor and seated 300. By 1884, the church had outgrown its original building, and members voted to build a new one. A lot was purchased at the corner of East Street and Third Avenue, and the sanctuary was completed in 1886. Over the years, church members have been involved in all aspects of the community, including judges, law enforcement, school and city leaders, teachers and administrators.

The City of Belton launched a new online booking platform that makes it easier than ever for residents to sign up for activities, reserve spaces, and enjoy city amenities. Residents can go online at <https://www.rec.us/organizations/city-of-belton?tab=programs>, which gives instant access to future availability for the city's recreational activities. When fully deployed, residents can browse current programs, check availability, pay online, and receive automatic updates--all from one place.

Belton Parks and Recreation held its first Light Up the Night Belton Community Bike Ride on the Nolan Creek Hike and Bike Trail. The route went along the hike and bike trail, with riders and a few pedestrians starting on foot at Liberty Park until at MLK Boulevard, then heading to Veterans Park. Yettie Polk Bridge and the pony truss bridge was decorated with

lights by Parks and Recreation.

Bell County Precinct 2 Constable's Office announced the appointment of Reserve Deputy John Fisher, bringing more than 26 years of law enforcement experience to the agency.

"Deputy Fisher's extensive experience, professionalism, and leadership will be instrumental as we continue our mission of serving the courts in our civil process duties, protecting our most vulnerable, engaging our youth, and advancing public safety initiatives throughout Precinct 2," said Constable Chris Bazar.

Vista Real Estate Group's second annual Thanksgiving meal giveaway more than tripled from 2024, which included giving away 500 meals at Heritage Park in Belton. Vista Real Estate staff, about half a dozen HEB employees, Belton City staff, and many



sponsors came to serve the community, witnessing cars in line at 7 a.m. Occupants were asked to stay in their vehicles while the food was brought to them. No questions for qualifications were asked. The first to be served was 1-8 CAV from 1st Cavalry Division, receiving 100 turkey baskets.

December

The City of Belton will allow Hunt Communities Belton to sell smaller lots than previously approved in the River Farm subdivision, located east of Toll Bridge Road and north of the Lampasas River. River Farm consists of eight phases of residential lots, two amenity centers, a school site and supporting streets and open spaces. Hunt Communities Belton had requested a reduction in lot width from 50 feet to 45 feet for a portion of the development. The Development Agreement stipulated that the maximum number of homes at build-out will be 1,775.

Miller Springs Nature Center had trail improvements made to the trail system. Miller Springs Nature Center is a 260-acre scenic natural area in the historic Tennessee Valley, which is located in or near the cities of Belton and Temple. The nature preserve is open to the public, at no charge, each day of the year. Visitors enjoy hiking and biking in this parkland, which has more than 10 miles of trails divided into several loops. The trail system has been widened, improving access to the trail system, and a scenic overlook. Railings have been added to the park where there is an overlook. A pavilion was added to the overlook. The trail leading to the trails that drop to the bottom is now cement and 6 feet wide.

The Belton Education Foundation Grant Patrol brought celebration and surprise to campuses across Belton ISD, awarding 49 grants totaling \$118,159.02 at 20 campuses, supporting innovative instructional ideas and hands-on learning experiences from early childhood through high school. This year's funded projects focus on expanding STEAM learning, enhancing literacy, strengthening hands on science, supporting special education and growing opportunities in areas including robotics, media, esports and assistive



technology. The Belton City Council upgraded the city's home-based businesses ordinance and added a new category for dog grooming. According to Tina Moore, assistant director of Planning, a new law that went into effect on Sept. 1 adds a "no-impact home-based business," which is allowed in residential areas providing that the use is secondary to a residential use. Home-based businesses cannot sell alcohol or illegal drugs and cannot operate as a "sober living home" or a sexually-



oriented business. The total number of employees and patrons of the home-based businesses must not exceed the municipal occupancy level limits for the property, and it must not generate on-street parking or a substantial increase in traffic through the area.

Lake Belton High School senior Taylor Rogers raised \$1,627 in door-to-door donations to help pay off student lunch debt on his campus. His efforts erased approximately 54 percent of outstanding balances, lightening the load for dozens of Bronco families ahead of the holiday season.

Cochran, Blair and Potts brought back an ice skating rink located in downtown Belton, across the street from their establishment. Skate rental and use of the rink was free to the community and skating ended on Dec. 27 for the season.

We wish you a very Merry

Christmas

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LEGALS

THE STATE OF TEXAS CITATION BY PUBLICATION – CIVIL CAUSE NO. 25DCV353883

To LEON WALLS

Greetings:

You are hereby commanded to appear by filing a written answer to the plaintiff's original petition at or before 10 o'clock AM of the first Monday after the expiration of 42 days from the date of issuance of this Citation, the same being Monday, at or before 10 o'clock AM, before the Honorable 146th Judicial District Court, Bell County, Texas to be held at the Bell County District Courts Building in Belton, Texas. Said PLAINTIFF'S ORIGINAL PETITION was filed in said court on May 16, 2025.

The file number of said suit being No. 25DCV353883. The names of the parties in said suit are:

LAKEVIEW LOAN SERVICING, LLC VS. LEON WALLS, JR, DELOISE WALLS, SECRETARY OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, DOES 1 THROUGH 10, DOES BUSINESS ENTITIES 1 THROUGH 10, INCLUSIVE

The nature of said suit being substantially as follows, to wit:

JUDICIAL FORECLOSURE LEON WALLS AS POTENTIAL PARTY OF INTEREST

This was issued at the request of attorney: NICOLAS MATAYRON MALCOLM, CISNEROS 2112 BUSINESS CENTER DRIVE IRVINE CA 92612.

NOTICE TO DEFENDANT: You have been sued. You may employ an attorney. If you or your attorney do not file a written answer with the clerk who issued this citation by 10:00 AM on Monday next following the expiration of forty two days after you were served this citation and petition, a default judgment may be taken against you. In addition to filing a written answer with the clerk, you may be required to make initial disclosures to the other parties of this suit. These disclosures generally must be made no later than 30 days after you file your answer with the clerk. Find out more at TexasLawHelp.org.

Issued and given under my hand and seal of said Court at office in Belton, Texas, on December 10, 2025.

Joanna Staton District Clerk Bell County, Texas, 1201 Huey Road, P.O. Box 909, Belton, Texas 76513

By: Misty Cortez, Deputy Clerk

12.18, 12.25, 01.01, 01.08-pd

CAUSE NO. 25-CPB00651

IN THE ESTATE OF DEBORAH KAY MELTON A/K/A DEBORAH LINDSEY MELTON A/K/A DEBBIE MELTON, DECEASED IN THE COUNTY COURT AT LAW NO 1 BELL COUNTY, TEXAS

NOTICE TO CREDITORS

Notice is hereby given that original Letters Testamentary for the ESTATE OF DEBORAH KAY MELTON A/K/A DEBORAH LINDSEY MELTON A/K/A DEBBIE MELTON, DECEASED were issued on December 8, 2025 in Cause No. 25-CPB00651, pending in the County Court at Law No. 1 of Bell County, Texas, to: CHARLES THOMAS MELTON, as Independent Executor

. All persons having claims against this Estate which is currently

LEGALS

being administered are required to present the claims to the undersigned within the time and in the manner prescribed by law to: The Estate of Deborah Kay Melton a/k/a Deborah Lindsey Melton a/k/a Debbie Melton

c/o Farren Sheehan, State Bar No. 24000751, Sheehan Law, PLLC, 1601 E. Pfennig Lane, Pflugerville, Texas 78660, Attorney for Independent Executor

DATED this 22nd day of December, 2025.

/s/ Farren Sheehan, Farren Sheehan

01.01pd

THE STATE OF TEXAS CITATION BY PUBLICATION CASE NUMBER 25CPB00776

To: Unknown Heirs

JAMES ROBERT BROCK, Applicant, on December 19, 2025, filed an application to declare heirship & for intestate independent administration by agreement & for issuance of letters independent administration in a proceeding styled: REBECCA ANN BROCK, Deceased, and bearing the number 25CPB00776 in the County Court of Bell County, Texas.

The court will hear the aforesaid Application after the expiration of ten days, exclusive of the day of publication, from the date this citation is published which will be January 01, 2026, in the County Court at Law #1 Courtroom, at the Bell County Justice Complex, 1201 Huey Road, in Belton, Texas.

All persons interested in the aforesaid estate are commanded to appear at or before the time set for said hearing by filing a written contest or answer to said application should they desire to oppose or contest it.

Said written contest or answer shall be filed in the office of Shelley Coston, County Clerk, Bell County, Texas, PO Box 480, Belton, Texas 76513.

The name and address of the attorney for applicant is: BURK ROBERTS, 2501 E ELMS RD STE A KILLEEN, TX 76542

The officer serving this Citation shall, in compliance with the Law, serve it by publication once in a newspaper of the general circulation in this, the County in which the decedent last resided as required by Section 202.052 of the Texas Estate Code, for not less than ten days before the return day hereof, exclusive of the day of publication, and the date of publication said newspaper bears shall be the day of publication.

Issued and given under my hand and seal of said Court at office on December 22, 2025.

Shelley Coston County Clerk of Bell County, Texas, PO Box 480, 1201 Huey Road, Belton, TX 76513

By: Erika DeCasas Deputy

01.01

NOTICE TO CREDITORS

Notice is given that original Letters Testamentary for the Estate of Richard Milare were issued on December 18, 2025, in Cause No. 25CPB00670, pending in the County Court of Bell County, Texas, to Richard Milare, Jr.

All persons having claims against the estate, which is presently being administered, are required to submit them, within the time and manner prescribed by law, and before the estate is closed, addressed as follows: c/o Gregory Wright, 13809 Research Boulevard Suite 425, Austin, Texas 78750

Dated December 26, 2025

/s/ Gregory Wright, Gregory Wright Attorney for Executor of the Estate of Richard Milare 01.01

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Math Blocks

Fill in the missing blocks with numbers between 0-20. The numbers in each row add up to the totals on the right. The numbers in each column add up to the totals on the bottom.

		11	34
2		15	27
	5		20
29	18	34	

8	5	7
15	10	2
11	3	20

Solution

THIS DAY IN HISTORY



1781: Richmond, Virginia, is burned by British naval forces during the American Revolutionary War.

1875: The opera house the Palais Garnier opens in Paris.

1911: Kappa Alpha, the oldest Black fraternity, is founded.

People FACT:



This term for restaurant workers typically refers to those who wait on tables.

Answer: Servers

Get Scrambled

Unscramble the words to determine the phrase.
KMEA A SERVRENOTAI

Answer: Make a reservation

NEW WORD

GRATUITY

a tip given for service

How they say that in...

- English:** Food
- Spanish:** Comida
- Italian:** Cibo
- French:** Nourriture
- German:** Essen

Did You Know?

When it comes to the busiest day of the year for the restaurant industry, Mother's Day tops the list for bookings and footfall.



Get the PICTURE?



Can you guess what the bigger picture is?

Answer: Restaurant host

EDITORIAL

A history of Ancient 20th century terms

My Front Porch • Lynette Sowell

We thought we were cool in the 80s, sitting by our boom boxes and waiting for our favorite Top 40 song to come on, so we could record it.

If you knew a thing or two, you could “line up” the tape on your cassette to the exact spot you needed, so when you hit the pause button on the record, the tape would start rolling and THE SONG you were waiting for would record. You needed a good pencil to do this.

If you lined up the tape just right, you wouldn’t record over the other song you’d been waiting patiently to hear Casey Kasem, the totally cool disc jockey, play for you and millions of other fans tuned in and waiting by the radios.

Pardon me, I just took a deep sigh while writing this. Kids these days never knew the struggle. You couldn’t just pull up a song you wanted to hear. You had to wait for the right moment on Saturday morning.

So far in the first few paragraphs, I’ve used terms which may or may not be foreign to young ones. What’s a boom box? What’s a cassette tape? What’s a disc jockey?

As we use certain words, technology develops and

evolves around us, but some of the words stay the same. We still look for DJs to play tunes at parties, although discs aren’t as common. I still have a few, though, that I’ll play on our blue tooth turntable.

We don’t use cassette tapes anymore and it’s hard to find players, except maybe online. My “boom box” now fits in my pocket and is currently on my desk. I don’t have to wait to hear a now-classic oldie tune from the 80s. (Where did I put my cane?)

Like cassettes, news depended on tapes too. We still use terms like video “footage” – the term of measurement used for talking about video recording. I remember when we first had the ginormous beta video player. Now, we record digitally without the use of any “tape” or literal “footage”, but the terms remain.

And what in the world is a payphone? I can hear kids asking...so, you literally have to pay to use a phone? And what is that handle thing you have to pick up with a cord and talk into? If you were lucky back in the day, your quarter would cause the phone to work. Kids these days don’t

understand that concept. All they know is unlimited data. They will also never know the satisfaction and release of slamming a phone receiver down so hard that it jangles the bell inside the phone base.

Speaking of old pay phones, I have a vintage photo from my honeymoon, that my husband took of me.

We were in Clifton, and we stopped at a pay phone to call my family. My mid 90s fluffy hair is blowing in the wind and I’m wearing my favorite Banana Republic shirt and my denim shorts, and I’m grinning at him while holding the receiver.

Technology develops, but the terms sometimes stay the same. I like having my boom box in my pocket, and my phone, and being able to pull up information – and video footage – if need be.

But I still don’t think I’m over the fact that my tunes from school are now following me when I shop at the grocery store.

Autism 101: Changes

Shop the Insanity • Darren Blair

As I’ve noted before, I am high-functioning autistic. This means that I have some of the challenges associated with being on the autism spectrum despite appearing to be “normal” under regular circumstances. Earlier in the year the flagship newspaper for this publication relocated, bringing with it one of the challenges I do face with being on the spectrum: difficulty with change.

You see, those of us who are on the spectrum are sometimes said to be a bit rigid about things. That we have to stick to a specific routine. That we only eat certain things. That we only wear certain types of clothing. That we hate when things are different or when we’re in a situation which involves trying something new.

There are a lot of factors that actually go into this. For example, a lot of us who are on the spectrum are unusually sensitive

to physical sensations and textures, so we may dislike clothing made from a certain material or food that has a certain “mouth feel” (yes, that’s an actual term). Our routines, meanwhile, might be a way for us to help remember whether or not we performed a certain task we or others needed to do, like how I personally check to make sure the doors are locked before I go to bed.

Et cetera.

That being said though, often a big issue with change is the fact that things have changed. It can take those of us who are on the spectrum a bit longer to grasp a new routine than people who are considered to be neurotypical, and once we do get into a given routine we have a habit of ossifying in place. As a consequence, having to break from that routine can be more stressful than normal, possibly even leading to paralysis

by indecision or paralysis by fear; the bigger the change, the more overwhelming it can become, especially if we’re already under a lot of stress. This is true even for people who are high-functioning, although we’re often a bit better about being able to handle matters; that being said, even we have our limits, too. Yes, even I’ve been in a few situations where the magnitude of the change combined with other ongoing stresses basically caused me to mentally shut down for a bit, my brain tripping a metaphorical breaker.

Another thing to consider is that because we’re all different, we’ll all handle the same event in different ways. The corporate overlords who own our favorite radio station decide to switch formats without giving us very much in the way of advance warning? For some, it’s a lamentable state

of affairs but we’ll eventually move on. For others, however, it’s a very disruptive, if not catastrophic, turn of events.

This is where, as I mentioned in my previous bit about autism, where we can use a little bit of extra patience. Whether it’s a fussy child who stubbornly refuses to try new food, or an adult who is overwhelmed by the magnitude of a truly life-altering turn of events, we all could use a little bit of extra love and effort trying to help us get it together and take that next step in life. It’s also why I usually republish that piece about how to help make moves easier, something that came from my own experience as a military child having to move around during the first years of my life.

That being said folks, we could all benefit from trying at least one new thing a week.

Odds and Ends

Pleasant Ramblings • Mark Magnan

Have you ever wondered what “odds and ends” really are? I have some odd things, and bookends, but those are not really odd. I have seen odd bookends. I have seen some odd things that people decorate with, but that is their taste so not my place to judge their odd ends.

It used to be that when we were expecting cold weather the highway department went around to all the bridges and flipped down a sign that said something about the upcoming bridge being icy. I realize that was a lot of work. Now there are permanent signs posted at those bridges. Here are my thoughts on this; The signs stay up all year, even during our summer months when the only ice we see is in our drinks. There are studies, by some really

smart psychiatrists, that say a sign is only good for about two weeks, then the viewer tends to ignore them. The signs say, “Bridges May Ice in Cold Weather”. This is confusing for most Texans. At least for me, “Cold Weather” is anything below 50 degrees (F, for my foreign readers, if I have any). I might be “freezing” but water doesn’t freeze at the same temperature that I “freeze.” So, I am running the heater in my truck at full blast, but the bridge is safe for quite a few degrees colder.

Have you ever watched football and thought, like myself, why don’t they start the game by running the “2 Minute” drill and get up by a couple of scores, then just play the rest of the game by being ahead. Of course I am not a good candidate for a coach, so

what do I know?

Did you ever notice that in western shows and movies that cowboys always made sure they had their hats. I guess that was like the air conditioning of the day. I am sure that riding across the country without a hat would have been fairly warm.

Do you ever wonder why doctors “practice” medicine? The old saying goes, “practice makes perfect”. If someone is planning on cutting me open with a knife, I want them to have practiced enough to be perfect.

I often wonder why the “tumbleweed” has such a magnificent place in western lore? They are shown in most western film scenes, there are even songs written about them. For something you can’t eat or has much value,

it is sure famous.

Do you know what an onion and skunk have in common? Nothing eats them. Well actually a buzzard will eat a dead skunk, but not an onion. My previous columns clearly show that I do not like onions, so I just thought I would bring that up, again.

There is a genre of writers that I admire. Those that write for the reality/documentary shows. They have the ability to impart no new knowledge, yet can keep you intrigued and sitting through the entire show. You know when you tune into these shows that you will not get the answer you are seeking, but you watch intently and the slick words of the narrator draw you in, sitting through each commercial break. When the show is over you know little

if anything new and actually end up losing an hour without gaining any news on the topic. It is a talented writer that can entertain you, not tell you anything, and keep you asking for more. Real heroes in my literary book.

Why do superheroes and other fantasy figures have capes? I know that capes were popular and useful a few generations ago but have fallen out of style. Do they just look cool for superheroes? I guess they let you know when they are flying.

Who, besides an extremely hungry Frenchman, first ate the snail? Now don’t get me wrong, I have partaken of escargot and enjoyed it. Of course, few things drenched in melted butter don’t taste good, save the onion, and well, skunk.

Choices

Coffee Talk • Renae Brumbaugh Green

A few years ago, my family and I visited the San Antonio Riverwalk between Christmas and New Year’s Day. It was decorated with twinkling Christmas lights and glittery trees, and mariachi bands played festive holiday music.

We expected the Riverwalk to be crowded. What we didn’t expect was the great sea of college football fans. Our visit just happened to fall on the weekend before the Alamo Bowl game. Everywhere, we saw face-painted fans wearing purple and white for Northwestern or yellow and black for the University of Missouri. We couldn’t even get tickets for a riverboat ride—they were sold out. Entire college bands floated down the river playing their school’s fight songs, followed by boatloads of football players.

We figured since we couldn’t ride the boats, we’d just enjoy from the sidelines. So when the Northwestern band floated past, followed by the Northwestern football players, we yelled, “Go Northwestern!” The players waved

and cheered back at us.

A few minutes later, when the University of Missouri band and players floated by, guess what we did? My mama didn’t raise no fool.

We yelled and cheered for the University of Missouri. Our little family was quite possibly the most popular family on the Riverwalk that evening.

We didn’t have a dog in that fight, so we really didn’t care who won. I’m glad we didn’t have to choose. While my choice of college football teams doesn’t really matter, I make many choices each day that matter a lot.

As I think about my resolutions for my new year, I’m reminded that my goals are pretty meaningless if I don’t back them up with choices. Those extra pounds I want to lose? My choice. No one forces me to eat potato chips and chocolate truffles. I make choices about what I eat; therefore, to some extent, I make the choice about what I weigh.

What about that next book I want to write? That garage I want cleaned out? Those friendships I want to build? They can become reality if I make the choices, day by day, step by step to achieve my goals. Otherwise, they will remain exactly what they are – lofty dreams. (And yes, a clean garage is a lofty dream for me. Have you seen my garage?)

This year, I want to stop talking about my goals and actually achieve some of them. In order to do that, I’ll try to make better choices. I know my goals won’t be met in one fell swoop, but in small steps. Over time. One small choice after another.

“This day I call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live.” Deuteronomy 30:19



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100 Years Ago This Month: Historical events from January 1926

The month of January has been home to many historical events over the years. Here's a look at some that helped to shape the world in January 1926.

- The first radio station in Ireland, 2RN, begins broadcasting on January 1.
- The worst flooding in the German city of Köln occurs on January 1. A torrent of water rises 35 feet, forcing roughly 50,000 people to evacuate their homes.
- General Theodoros Pangalos declares a state of emergency in Greece and assumes dictatorial powers on January 3. General Pangalos had become Prime Minister of Greece in June 1925 after orchestrating a coup d'état.
- Great War cemeteries in France are submerged on January 7 due to ongoing downpours affecting various areas throughout Europe. The same rains flood the London subway system as well.
- Gracie Allen and George Burns are married by a justice of the peace in Cleveland on January 7. The newlyweds ultimately gain renown as the comedy duo Burns and Allen.
- Twelve-year-old Prince Nguyen Phúc Thuy is crowned Emperor of Vietnam on January 8. The prince's father, Emperor Khai Dinh, died two months earlier on November 6.
- Herman, Henry and Hillel Hassenfeld incorporate the Hassenfeld Brothers company on January 8. The company initially manufactures school supplies but eventually begins to make toys under the name "Hasbro."
- Twenty Mexican rebels open fire aboard a train traveling from Guadalajara to Mexico City on January 9. The bandits escape with the equivalent of \$150,000 USD.
- The four-masted schooner Prinz Valdemar capsizes on January 10, blocking all ship traffic in and out of Biscayne Bay and the harbor of Miami, Florida. All aboard are rescued unharmed, but two ocean liners are prevented from leaving the harbor.
- United States Representative John W. Langley of Kentucky resigns from Congress on January 11. Langley's resignation comes after the U.S. Supreme Court affirmed his jail sentence for violating prohibition laws by illegally selling alcohol to New York-based bootleggers with ties to organized crime.
- Michael Bond is born in Newbury, Berkshire, England, on January 13. Bond would survive a 1943 air raid in Reading during World War Two before authoring his first book, A Bear Called Paddington, in 1958.
- Twenty-year-old Ayn Rand departs Russia by train on January 17.

Rand's early life in Communist Russia heavily influenced the philosophy reflected in many of her more notable works.

- Voting rights activist Indiana Little leads several hundred Black men and women on a march to the Jefferson County registrar's office in Birmingham, Alabama, on January 18. Little is arrested for disturbing the peace and would not be registered to vote for another 30 years.
- Multiple ships near New York City are threatened by a gale on January 20. The U.S. luxury liner SS President Roosevelt completes a rescue of the British freighter SS Antiope on January 28 after initial reports indicating the latter ship sank in the storm.
- Chaplin Court Treatt and Stella Court Treatt complete the first successful journey across Africa by motorcar on January 24. The duo began their journey one year, four months and 11 days before completing the trip in Cairo, Egypt.
- Speaking on behalf of the British Empire Cancer Campaign during a luncheon on January 25, British surgeon Sir Berkeley Moynihan says that cancer of the tongue is traceable to two things, including smoking.
- Thousands of mourners line the streets of Brussels to watch the funeral procession of Belgian national hero and cleric Cardinal Désiré-Joseph Mercier on January 28. Cardinal Mercier was known for his staunch opposition to the German occupation of Belgium during World War I.
- Violette Neatley Anderson becomes the first African American woman to be admitted to practice law before the U.S. Supreme Court on January 29.
- The Chamber of Deputies passes "Law Number 100" on January 31. The law grants Italian Prime Minister Benito Mussolini the right to issue judicial norms without prior consultation with the Italian parliament.



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