

Belton Senior Activity Center receives remodel over the holidays



BELTON JOURNAL/Michele Weismann

ABOVE LEFT: The kitchen and storage areas at the Belton Senior Activity Center receive a remodel over the holidays. **ABOVE RIGHT:** The restrooms have been remodeled and have plenty of room.

By Michele Weisman
The Belton Journal

The Belton Senior Activity Center, popular with Belton seniors and those in neighboring cities, began a remodel over the Christmas and New Year's break.

Sam Listi, City Manager, and the City Council chose the center as one of many organizations to receive \$100,000 from remaining Covid funds.

Loved by its attendees and those who work to keep it a vital location, the work is being done in the kitchen, the storage room, and its restrooms.

The remodel in the kitchen involves a new ceiling, removing an older vent hood, and replacing and rewiring the wall between the kitchen and storage room. The storage room is be-

ing updated to two activity rooms. This room will require new furnishings, of tables and chairs.

The ADA-compliant restrooms will provide plenty of room for those using wheelchairs and walkers.

Where other senior centers are city funded and operated, the Belton Senior Activity Center is funded by a nonprofit, the Belton Area Citizens for Seniors, Inc. (BACFS) and donations. There are no membership fees, although some activities have a nominal charge to participate.

Seniors in the know find the Belton Senior Activity Center the place where fun, friendships, and community happen.

"They have a place that they can feel safe, have friends...check in on

each other. Their lives are improved," said David Jones, president of the board of directors of BACFS.

The entire project cost is \$375,000.

The board of BACFS received an interim loan from Extraco Bank, said Jones, for the balance needed to complete the work.

Jack Sims, a long-time board member, is the vice president of facilities.

He has been the main point of contact with Baird/Williams Construction, LTD, which has experience in building large municipalities.

John Stroker of Baird/Williams Construction, said, "We're having to re-do all the power for the building."

See **REMODEL**
Page A2



Courtesy Photo

North Belton Middle School sixth grader Kimberly Lezama is shown with her first-place entry in the Lions Club International Peace Poster Contest. Her artwork, created in response to this year's theme, Together as One, will now represent the Belton Lions Club at the national level.

NBMS student's peace poster advances to Nationals

Special to the Journal

North Belton Middle School sixth grader Kimberly Lezama is moving on to the next round of the Lions Club International Peace Poster Contest after earning first place in the local competition.

Her artwork, created in response to this year's theme, Together as One, will now represent the Belton Lions Club at the national level.

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The Peace Poster Contest is organized by Lions Clubs International, with local chapters inviting students ages 11 to 13 to envision and express their ideas of peace through art.

Belton ISD Fine Arts Director Keith Zuehlke helped connect

See **NBMS**,
Page A7

Texas Heritage Mural adds to local art scene



Courtesy Photo/Christopher Winston

A new mural is being painted by artist Russell Cushman with the help of Belton Mayor David Leigh. The Texas Heritage mural on the Crow and Cactus Co. and Highlands Lounge building located at 122B N. Penelope St. on the E. First Avenue side of the building.

Texas heritage and community pride on various buildings and public spaces.

The Texas Heritage mural grant funding proposal was approved by the City Council on July 22. Murals have grown in popularity as a marketing tool.

"I got some good ole Belton red for you. We are going to put shadows to add dimension to it," said Leigh. He painted the red letters in the word Belton. The weather was perfect for them to paint. They are trying to get it done while the weather is nice.

"I've painted all my life. I started painting when I was eleven years old. The mural is an original design. It's hill country meets the Chisholm Trail," said Cushman.

Cushman lived in Navasota for 27 years and spent more than 30 years as a freelance artist, book illustrator, and wildlife and history muralist.

"This building was a county building. It was a Christian bookstore. It was a Thomas Kincaid Gallery back in the 90s when the county bought it. It's a perfect place in Belton to have a mural because it's like a blank canvas. Everything else has a crossroad or something," said Leigh. "I'm coloring within the lines like my mom taught me."

They are using an outdoor latex paint with polymer to paint the mural.

Other murals in the city include the Cochran, Blair, and Potts building located at the corner of Penelope and E. Central Avenue by Dallas muralist Michael Mcpheeters that showcases the town of Belton.

There is one on the Belton Journal office building at the corner of N.

See **MURAL**,
Page A7

Temple, Belton meetings to focus on I-14 expansion, I-35 upgrades

By David Stone
The Belton Journal

The Texas Department of Transportation will be hosting public meetings on Tuesday, Jan. 13 in Temple and Wednesday, Jan. 14 in Belton to gather feedback on proposed Interstate 35 improvements from south of Loop 121 to Loop 363/US 190.

According to Jake Smith, a TxDOT spokesperson, the improvements will enhance mobility, connectivity and safety along I-35 in the Belton/Temple area.

Both meetings will be from 5 to 7 p.m. The Temple meeting will be at the Mayborn Civic & Convention Center, 3303 N Third Street. The Belton meeting will be at the Cadence Bank Center Assembly Hall, 301 W Loop 121.

Both meetings will be available online at www.txdot.gov (keyword search, "I-35 Extension.")

According to Smith, project staff will be available to answer questions.

"No formal presentation is planned," Smith said. "Attendees may

come and go at their convenience."

"We welcome any comments, feedback or questions for both communities," he said. "TxDOT is proposing the widening of I-35 from Loop 121 in Belton to Loop 363 in Temple as part of the expansion of Interstate 14 from where it merges into I-35 in Belton to the I-35/Loop 363 exchange in Temple."

"The project will be built to serve current and future traffic volumes," Smith continued. "The proposed typical section would include — in each direction — an additional general purpose lane for a total of four general purpose lanes, three express lanes, two to three frontage road lanes and a shared-use path."

"This segment is part of a larger project that will extend I-14 from its current terminus in Belton to Business 190 in Rogers, comprising a total of three segments," Smith added.

Smith said the project

See **UPGRADES**,
Page A2

TABLE OF CONTENTS	
Obituaries.....	A3
Lifestyles.....	A4
B-TOWN.....	A5
Church Directory.....	A6
Sports.....	B1
Classifieds.....	B4
Editorial.....	B6
Service Directory.....	B7

By Michelle Rodriguez
The Belton Journal

The City of Belton is actively growing its public art scene with a new mural by artist Russell Cushman.

The Texas Heritage mural is being painted on the Crow and Cactus Co. and Highlands Lounge building located at 122B N. Penelope St. on the E. First Avenue side of the building.

Cushman was seen painting with the help of Mayor David Leigh over the prior weekend.

The city supports the public art scene through grants, encouraging local artists to add color and tell stories about

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First Business After-Hours of the new year set for tonight

Special to the Journal

The Belton Area Chamber of Commerce Business After-Hours hosted by Concierge Title is scheduled for Thursday, January 8, 5-7 p.m. at Concierge Title, located at 112 N. East street in downtown Belton.

Business After-Hours events provide opportunities for Chamber members to connect and network in a social and fun environment, while providing the hosts an opportunity to showcase their business. In addition to great food, drinks and door prizes, new Chamber members will be introduced and have an opportunity to connect with other members.

Concierge Title of Texas is a full-service title and escrow provider. They accommodate transactions throughout the entire state of Texas and offer a significant cost savings advantage and custom closing

experience. Their mission is to be the most trusted, respected concierge service for realtors, investors, loan officers, builders, and consumers across all 254 Texas counties by providing custom “Concierge” service and convenience to everyone by catering to all parties involved in the transaction.

The owners of Concierge Title of Texas, Mecca and Scott Dreisbach, are known for creating one of the most progressive and forward-thinking title companies in the state. Mecca has twenty years of escrow and title experience in the state of Texas. She grew up in central Texas and graduated from Belton High School and then Texas A & M University.

Scott brings great leadership to the company with his life experience. Scott is a former professional football player. He played in the NFL as quarterback for

almost a decade. Originally from Indiana, he played college football as a quarterback for the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. Scott joined Mecca in the Real Estate Industry after retiring from the NFL. They have two children and are actively involved in the Texas real estate market and local communities.

“We are excited to join together with Concierge Title to provide this great opportunity for our business community to gather for a fun and informative event, stated Randy Pittenger, Belton Area Chamber President/CEO. “We encourage all Chamber members and prospective members to join us!”

For more information about this event or membership in the Belton Area Chamber of Commerce, visit the website at www.beltonchamber.com, call 254-939-3551, or email info@beltonchamber.com.

Upgrades - From Page A1

could be completed by 2030, but he pointed out that the timeline is subject to change.

Plans for Bell County’s own little interstate to eventually stretch 1,300 miles from Odessa to Augusta, Ga., may take decades, but work to expand I-14 through Temple could start by 2027.

Smith said TxDOT started an environmental study and schematic design process in 2023.

Don Rodman, administrator for the Gulf Coast Strategic Highway Coalition, has been working on the I-14 project since 2001, and he sees 2021’s infrastructure bill and a change in I-14 designation as important steps forward.

“Interstate 14 received Texas designation in 2015, and last year Congress changed that to a five-state designation,” Rodman said. “But, that did not come with money attached.”

“The National Interstate & Defense Highways Act of 1956 helped establish interstate highways in the United States, but that program ended years ago,” he said.

“Now, there is no direct federal program for build-

ing interstates. Each state’s Department of Transportation is now responsible, but thankfully there is federal money available. A five-state I-14, however, will be built in stages and it will take several decades to complete.”

According to Rodman, the Unified Transportation Program — a 10-year plan for allocating money for federal transportation projects — shows several I-14 related projects that will begin between 2026 to 2032.

That plan calls for the widening of US 190 from the western end of I-14 to the Coryell County line. It also includes several Temple projects that will upgrade US 190 to a freeway between South 31st Street and the eastern portion of Loop 363 by removing traffic signals and building overpasses or underpasses.

The plan does not list a I-35/I-14 flyover that would connect to US 190, a project that would be vital to a I-14 designation in Temple, but Smith said that would be included in the Temple project.

Interstates 14 and 35 will be the same highway from Belton north to Temple, the 14 will veer eastward at the intersection with South HK Dodgen Loop (Loop 363)

near Cracker Barrel.

“The Texas Department of Transportation purchased right-of-ways years ago for flyovers that will eventually take motorists from I-35/ I-14 to what is now US 190 in Temple,” Bell County Judge David Blackburn said. “That’s a huge project — there are others as well.”

“Discussions about the need for an east-west interstate designation through Bell County began years ago as a means of increasing economic development, particularly in the Killeen area,” Blackburn said.

“Companies looking to move into a new area have a checklist of things they want and need, and proximity to an interstate is at the top of that list. An interstate designation opens doors of opportunity, there’s no doubt about that.”

Blackburn believes I-14 will eventually cross five states.

“Yes, I think it will become a five-state interstate, but it may not be in my professional lifetime,” he said. “There are obstacles, especially when it comes to funding.”

Remodel - From Page A1

Baird/Williams Construction was “very generous with their quote to us,” Jones said.

The remodel was projected to take months. But ingenuity by Baird/Williams Construction shortened the time greatly. Bringing in wheelchair and walker accessible portable bathrooms with ramps means the facility can remain open during construction.

“The Belton Senior Activities Center is important to the community, important to men and women,” said Judy Owens, activities director for the center.

Hill County Community Action Association, a seven-county organization, uses the kitchen at the senior center to pack and

deliver nutritious meals. They are brought to seniors who are homebound and those who have mobility limitations.

January dances will be held on January 15 and 29 with a \$5 cost per person to cover the live music. Potlucks are held on the fourth Monday of the month. For a calendar of events, go to beltonseniorcenter.org.

There are grants available to help with the cost of the project. To help with grant writing or to make a donation for the remodel, contact Judy Owens at activities@belton-seniorcenter.org or at 254.770.7958.

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Teen dies from Dec. 30 gunshot wound

By Lynette Sowell
The Belton Journal

The 17-year-old who suffered a gunshot wound to the head on Dec. 30, 2025, died from his injuries on Saturday, Jan. 3.

Belton police have identified the victim as Josiah Alcozer, Paul Romer, director of communications for the City of Belton, stated in a media release.

“Our hearts go out to the friends and family of Josiah,” Police Chief Larry Berg said. “This is a tragic reminder that guns

should be handled with extreme care.”

According to Romer, Alcozer and others at a residence in the 800 block of W. Avenue I handled a gun, which discharged and struck Josiah in the head on the evening of Dec. 30, and occurred around 8:13 p.m.

Alcozer was transported to a local hospital and there was no threat deemed to the public.

Anyone with information about this incident is encouraged to reach out to the Belton Police Department at 254-933-5840 or text 254-217-6764.

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The Belton Journal (ISSN 1053-9131) is published every Thursday, 210 N. Penelope, Belton, TX 76513. Second Class periodical postage paid at Belton, TX. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: The Belton Journal P.O. Box 180 Belton, TX 76513

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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.



OBITUARIES

Dragoo

Jason Matthew Dragoo
April 12, 1975 – November 11, 2025

Jason Matthew Dragoo, born on April 12, 1975, in Temple, Texas, passed away on Tuesday, November 11, 2025, in his beloved hometown. He is remembered as a spirited individual whose kindness, generosity, and joyful spirit touched the lives of many around him.

A proud graduate of Temple High School, Class of 1996, Jason participated actively in the community, becoming a beloved member of various organizations including the Special Olympics and the Special Needs League Baseball. He also served as the Basketball Manager at Temple High School, where his passion for sports shone brightly. His infectious enthusiasm and warm demeanor drew people in, making him a friend to all who crossed his path.

Jason's career was marked by diverse opportunities, including meaningful roles at Scott and White, several restaurants, and HEB, where he found joy and fulfillment. His friendly nature and dedication to his work endeared him to colleagues and customers alike.

Jason was a beloved resident of his living community at Avir at Western Hills, a proud member of the Downs But Not Out Buddy Walk, and was deeply committed to his faith as a member of the First Church of the Nazarene.

He was not only passionate about his jobs and community involvement, but he also delighted in music, singing, and dancing. His love for sports included the Temple Wildcats and Texas Longhorns. He displayed his devotion by wearing burnt orange and his whole room was decorated with fan paraphernalia, and video games added to a vibrant tapestry of interests that filled his life with excitement and joy. A true gentleman, he held a deep respect for the women in his life, embodying grace and consideration in his interactions with others. One of Jason's proudest accomplishments was his bond with his younger sister, Keyera Dragoo. Their relationship was a source of mutual pride and happiness, with Jason always eager to support her at school dances and other functions. Together, they enjoyed playing guitar, singing, and sharing the carefree joys of youth.

Jason is survived by his loving parents, Daniel Wayne Dragoo and Elnora Darnell (Culp) Dragoo, and his cherished sister, Keyera Dragoo. He is preceded in death by his beloved grandparents, Barney and Prebble Dragoo, and Thurman and Celia Culp.

Visitation will be Saturday, January 17, 2026 at 2 p.m. at Young's Daughters Funeral Home with a Celebration of Life beginning at 3 p.m.

As we remember Jason, we honor a life characterized by an uplifting spirit, sincere friendships, and a heart that knows no limits. He has gone home to be united with his heavenly father, leaving behind a legacy of love, friendship, and cherished memories that will live on in the hearts of those who were fortunate to know him.

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

Edmonds

Dale Charles Edmonds
June 7, 1948 – December 17, 2025

Dale Charles Edmonds, a beloved husband, father, and grandfather, passed away peacefully on December 17, 2025, at the age of 77. He was born on June 7, 1948, in Menomonie, Wisconsin, and throughout his life, he exemplified kindness and warmth, touching the hearts of everyone who had the privilege to know him.

Dale served in the Navy during the Vietnam era on the USS Lexington and USS Roosevelt. Dale was very devoted to the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW). He had 10 years of services to the VFW Post 1820 in Temple, Texas before he moved to Marshall, Texas.

Dale is survived by his devoted wife of 38 years, Nanette Edmonds. Together, they cultivated a nurturing and loving home that became a sanctuary for their family. His legacy continues through their three children: Kevin (Tammy) Edmonds, Stephanie (Micheal) Edmonds, and Adam Edmonds. Dale was also known as the world's best Papa, a title he wore with pride as he cherished each moment spent with his grandchildren: Bethanie (John) deFoore, Megan (CJ) Anderson, Nathan (Jazmyn) Edmonds, Evelyn Edmonds, Amiee Edmonds, Ellie, and Broxon; one brother Roger (Tina) Edmonds; one sister, Gloria Dutcher.

Dale was preceded in death by his parents, George Dunlop Edmonds and Alice Marie (Francis) Edmonds, and by his siblings, including four brothers, Bob Edmonds, James Edmonds, Wayne Edmonds, and Les Edmonds, as well as two sisters, the baby Edmonds and Ruth Kettner. Their memories and legacies live on in the stories and values that Dale instilled in his own family.

A Celebration of Life to honor Dale Charles Edmonds will be held on January 10, 2026, at Young's Daughters Funeral Home & Bereavement Center in Temple, Texas. The service will begin at 1:00 PM, concluding at 2:00 PM.

As we remember Dale, let us hold onto the love, laughter, and memories he shared so generously with us all. He went to be with the Lord and Savior, leaving behind a legacy of love and devotion that will forever be cherished.

Rabroker

Dennis Gerald Rabroker
November 14, 1937 – December 20, 2025

Dennis Gerald Rabroker, fondly known as Papa Ray, was born on November 14, 1937, in Lott, Texas. He went to be with the lord on Saturday, December 20, 2025, leaving behind a legacy of kindness, love, and hard work.

A proud military veteran, Dennis enlisted in the Army in 1956 and served his duty at Fort Louis, Washington. Following his military career, he dedicated his professional life to various esteemed roles, including his time at General Tire and Rubber in Waco and Kirk-Darnell-Ford in McGregor, Texas. In 1980, he embarked on an entrepreneurial journey by founding Rabroker Construction, a venture that showcased his dedication and work ethic.

Education was important to Dennis, and he graduated from Rosebud High School. This foundation propelled him into a life characterized by relentless determination and a profound commitment to his work. Known for his warm and giving nature, Dennis had a servant's heart; he often prioritized his professional responsibilities over family obligations. Nevertheless, his kindness shone through in every interaction, making him a beloved figure to many.

Dennis cherished a variety of hobbies that brought him joy and fulfillment. He found great pleasure in working, hunting, camping, fishing, and boating. In particular, he adored spending time on the lake, where he created countless memories with family and friends. His spirit for life was evident in every endeavor he pursued. He was a member of the Christ the King Catholic Church and was a member of the Knights of Columbus.

Throughout his life, Dennis experienced a profound love that emerged during his years working alongside Donna Locke. Their relationship blossomed into a beautiful partnership over the past eight years. Together, they enjoyed traveling and created lasting memories, particularly in beautiful Colorado, which held a special place in their hearts.

Dennis is survived by his beloved wife, Donna Locke; his son, Gerald W. Rabroker, and his wife, Shellie; his daughter, Sherri A. Smith, and her husband, James C. Smith III; his brother, Charles Rabroker, and his wife, Catherine; along with eight grandchildren and ten great-grandchildren, all of whom will carry his memory forward.

He is preceded in death by his parents, Joseph Rabroker and AnnieBell (Franks) Rabroker.

As we remember Dennis Gerald Rabroker, we celebrate a life well-lived, marked by unwavering dedication to his family, service

to his country, and an insatiable love for hard work and the great outdoors. His kind, loving spirit will be deeply missed but fondly remembered by all who knew him.

A visitation was held on Sunday, January 4, 2026 from 6:00 p.m.-8:00 p.m. at Young's Daughters Funeral Home with a Rosary starting at 7:00 p.m. A Mass was held on Monday, January 5, 2026, at 2:00 p.m. at Christ the King Catholic Church, with a burial following at 3:30 p.m. at Greathouse Cemetery.

In Lieu of flowers please make memorial donation to the Christ the King Catholic Church.

Arrangements are under the direction of Sabrina Young at Young's Daughters Funeral Home and Bereavement Center.

Aguallo

Irene Aguallo
June 28, 1946 – January 4, 2026

Irene Aguallo, 79, passed away peacefully on January 4, 2026, in Temple, Texas. Her visitation will be on January 9, 2026, from 5:00 PM to 7:00 PM at Dosman Funeral Home. The funeral service will take place the following day, January 10, 2026, starting at 10:00 AM at the same location. Irene will be laid to rest at North Belton Cemetery following the service.

Irene loved life. She worked at St. Vincent De Paul for over 20 years, which stands as one of her proudest accomplishments. Her love for social engagement was evident in

her hobbies; she enjoyed playing bingo, dining out, and visiting with friends and family, activities that brought warmth not only to her heart but to those around her. Irene's life was characterized by her quiet, kind, and loving nature, which left an indelible mark on all who had the privilege of knowing her.

She is survived by her four daughters: Diane Ribeiro, Donna Benavidez, Dora Miller and husband Rick, and Dominique Escarciga and husband Gabriel; her grandchildren, Angie Dickey Homan, Christina Dickey Davenport, Shane Dickey, Amanda Irene Brummett, Victoria Hernandez Nichols, Catherine Hernandez Ford, Nichole

Lea Miller, William Arthur Miller, Alyssa Mendoza, Alexa Escarciga, and Gavin Escarciga; and 29 great grandchildren.

Irene was preceded in death by her parents Santiago and Catarina Luna, her husband Arthur Hernandez Aguallo, and her sisters Mary Sunday "Maruca" Ybarra, Mary Jane Del Castillo, and Margaret Vaughn; and her brother Paul Luna, Sr. They welcomed her back into their arms with love.

She will be deeply missed by her family, friends, and all who knew her gentle spirit. Irene Aguallo's legacy of kindness and love will continue to resonate within the hearts of those she leaves behind.

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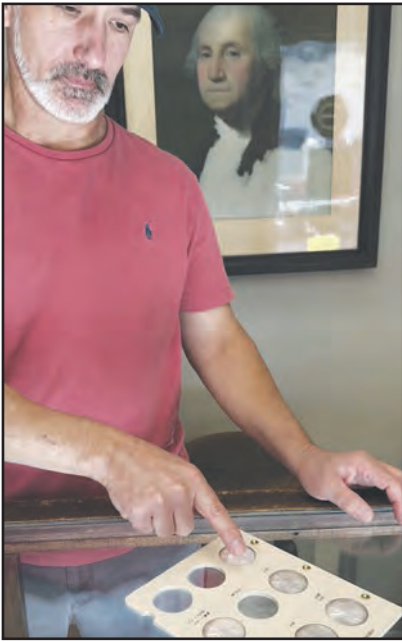
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A4
Thursday,
January 8, 2026

LIFESTYLES

THE BELTON JOURNAL

Coin shop owner sees local collector interest in silver



BELTON JOURNAL/Michele Weismann
Troy Emilson buys and sells silver coins at his shop. The price and demand for silver by collectors has risen.

By Michele Weisman
The Belton Journal

Troy Emilson, Army veteran and former U.S. history teacher, opened Emilson's Coin Shop in Belton in 2023.

Since opening his shop in 2023, Emilson has seen interest in silver growing because of its rise in value.

A love of coins and history began in childhood for Emilson. He found his first collectible coin when his family moved to Oxford, Indiana.

Emilson said, "I was sitting on the floor, and I picked up a coin, and it was a two-cent piece."

His mother secured it away for safe-keeping.

Another time, while helping family clean his grandmother's house, Emilson said, "I found a Colombian Exposition half-dollar from 1893."

Throughout childhood, Emilson would examine coins and research the

mottos, people, and dates on the coins. He still has those first two treasured coins.

Emilson said, "When I got into the business, I had no idea how many people had gold, silver, coins, that they collected, inherited, or whatever. But there's no shortage of people who want to sell me coins, or who want to buy coins."

For those who are starting with buying and selling gold bullion, silver bullion, or coins, Emilson gave suggestions.

"Do your research first. Look at more than one site, more than one place, more than one person, and then start small until you know for sure what you want to do. I don't want to influence people what to do and not to do. But...do your own research and figure out what makes sense for you," Emilson said. "You want to go to a coin shop or a person or a place that you trust and that you know is going to work with you and help you find things that you're looking for, but also give you a fair price as well."

"Right now, a lot of folks have a fear that they're going to miss out, even though silver has jumped so high. Normally the idea is, buy low, sell high. But silver's three times what it was, and it's really high," Emilson added. "The reason customers feel that it has that big opportunity to grow is because you have countries now that are stockpiling silver. There's so many uses, such as AI, electric vehicles, solar power. There's a huge demand for it, and it's driving prices up."

"A lot of different things help drive silver up, including speculation, which I don't get involved in."

Located inside the bank from the 1800s, Emilson's Coin Shop attracts clientele such as hobbyists, collectors, numismatics, and more so now, preppers and investors.

Emilson's Coin Shop is open Tuesday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at 201 E Central Ave. in Belton.

Extreme Cheer celebrates 25 years in 2026

By Michele Weisman
The Belton Journal

Extreme Cheer & Tumble (ECT) teaches gymnastics, cheer, trampoline and tumbling, and karate, will celebrate its 25th anniversary in 2026.

In Dec. 2001, Bridget Wiley rented space in a karate studio located in Academy, Texas, opening her first classes. Now with two locations, one in Killeen and the other in Temple, 1,500 youth are enrolled in afterschool

programs, mommy and me classes, to competitive classes.

ECT's mission statement reads, "To provide quality gymnastics and cheerleading instruction in a safe and fun environment that helps athletes learn, grow, and strive to the best they can be!"

Wiley, after outgrowing the Academy space said she reached out to AC Boston to secure a building several years later, and he added onto their building because they needed to grow.

Wiley's husband, David Freddy, an insurance adjuster, built the Killeen gym in 2011.

"My husband and I both grew up there for a short period of time because we were army brats."

Speaking about the Temple location that opened in 2014, Wiley said, "I have a very dear friend, Barbara Proctor...this was their family land...they sold me this property, and so I was able to build. And then, in 2024 when the tornado hit, we took a direct hit and another total rebuild." Again, Freddy built the gym.

With their ten 15-passenger vans, the Temple location picks up students at all Belton schools and two Temple schools for their after-school programs.

Wiley spoke about where she began and what drives her today.

"I started out by coaching at 15 in exchange for classes. But I always loved the sport, and I love the kids even more. Gymnastics was, like, my first love."

Colleen Dittmer began coaching for ECT almost from the start.

"My athletes are with me at least nine hours a week. Your words matter, what I say, or how I say it. It works on their self-confidence. It works on their self-discipline. It works on so many different levels."

Dittmer added, "We



BELTON JOURNAL/Michele Weismann
Extreme Cheer & Tumbling holds classes for students of all levels.

treat everyone like family. Bridget invested in all of her coaches. We took a class this entire summer on 3D coaching. Coaching the heart, the body, and the mind to make sure that we had every tool to benefit every single child. When you teach a child a love for something, the sky's the limit. There's always going to be hard things, but if you're patient and work through it with them, they realize that they can do this. I'm grateful for the athletes that I've been blessed to work with."

Dustin Adams had decided to try out for his high school cheer team back in 2011 when he was 15.

A friend who worked at ECT invited him to practice together after work. That day, with his experience, he was asked to teach cheer.

"The past 15 years, it's definitely been a home and something that has just

shaped me that to be the human being I am today and helped shape my career," Adams said, who is also a coach and in-house choreographer.

"When you find the people who believe in you the most, stick to them and remember that you can go far by yourself, but you can go even further when you have someone by your side."

Plans for ECT's 25th anniversary include an update to its website.

"We are revamping our already excellent curriculum. It's a really great flow chart to be able to show where kids can advance to be on a competitive team."

Extreme Cheer & Tumble is located at 1402 E Stan Schlueter Loop in Killeen and

20 Old Waco Road in Temple. Their website is www.extremecheer-tumble.com.

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Local Activities & Events

Newcomers Club Activities

January

- | | |
|---|---|
| 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 |
| 01/17: Exploring Wines | 01/27: Singing Bluebonnets |
| | 01/28: Fun Lunch |

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

Bell County Master Gardeners - Jan 10

Growing vegetables in Central Texas is tough. Join Bell County Master Gardener Dave Slaughter as he delivers an informative and practical seminar focused on the unique challenges of growing vegetables in our tough climate and how to overcome them! Dave will teach us about proper planning, variety and site selection, planting timing, seed and transplant starting techniques, and strategies for managing insects and diseases. Saturday Jan 10, 11:00 a.m. at Temple Public Library, 2nd floor.

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 .

MPR Explorers @ The Point- Jan 29

The MPR Explorers (sponsored by the Mary Ruth Briggs Library) is holding their monthly "Conversation over Coffee" with entertainment by the Lake Belton High School Choir Show Ensemble. Join us for a discussion with the Friends of the Mary Ruth Briggs Library (non-profit 501 (c) 3 organization) and learn how you can help bring a stronger, more accessible library to life in Morgan's Point Resort, Garrett & Mic Hill Event Center 60 Morgan's Point Blvd., Morgan's Point Resort on Jan 29, 10:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) will meet both on TUESDAY, Jan. 13th and Jan. 27th at 6:30pm at the Temple VA Hospital. Use the entrance on the Valet parking side of the hospital and take the elevator to the 5th floor -Conference Room 5G31. Both care-givers, supporters and those suffering from mental illness are welcome to join us for mutual support and sharing of information . For more information, call 254-771-3638.

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@mc11249tx.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 katchookandneedle@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.

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.belontexas.gov/takemehome. Read more about the program here: https://www.belontexas.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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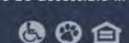
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2025 Morgan's Point Rd ~ 254.780.2388 | Nolan Valley Baptist Church
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| Anchor of Hope Fellowship
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4404 Twin City Blvd. ~ 254.939.0682 |
| Belton First Assembly of God
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810 East 2nd Ave. ~ 254.939.7673 | New Hope Church of God
2005 W. Ave D., Suite D. ~ 254.742.2181 |
| Belton Lighthouse
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1726 Morgan's Point Rd. ~ 254.778.8034 | Oak Park United Methodist Church
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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
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| 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
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7051 Stonehollow Dr. ~ 254.774.7992 |
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Rebooted by Grace



John C. Perry

On a recent cool Fall morning, I had worked on my laptop finishing up a project. I went to shut down my PC, and I had problems turning it off, so I did a forced shutdown. Concerned that something just wasn't right, I rebooted it and the first of a series of screens I had never seen before appeared. The first screen was titled BitLocker.

I considered myself somewhat computer savvy, but BitLocker? What in the world, sounded like a brand of chewing gum? I have battled a lot in my life, from broken down cars on the highway to a family of squirrels in our attic, but just how do you tackle a BitLocker problem? After some online research, using my phone, it turns out that my PC wanted a 48-character recovery screen ID from Microsoft. What? More research, finally I found where to access this mysterious ID. I confidently entered it expecting immediate gratification.

The result? Another screen saying it couldn't connect (to what?) and to wait 30 minutes and it would try again. So, I patiently waited 30 minutes, then the same screen fast forwards another hour

and still nothing, just wait another 30 minutes.

Then I get the final message, a message of doom, the system declared itself "Unrepairable." And I, a man who's faced down tougher foes than a stubborn machine, felt utterly defeated.

It did give me the option to power it down, so I waved the surrender flag and turned my laptop off. A while later just for kicks, before I headed to Best Buy to buy a new laptop, I turned it back on. This time it fired right up perfectly, no problems, no issues.

And yet, in the middle of this digital wilderness, I found something deeper than frustration. I found a life lesson. Because isn't life just like that sometimes? We feel locked out, by grief, by fear, by

circumstances we didn't choose. We stare at life's blank screens and error messages, wondering if restoration is even possible. We question our memory, our worth, our ability to fix what's broken.

As the psalmist reminds us, "Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord." (Psalm 27:14) Even when life's screen is black, even when the world says "unrepairable," God is still working behind the scenes in our lives. And sometimes, the miracle is just a reboot away.

I hoped my laptop would come back, and by a fluke, it did. But in life, our hope runs deeper than a lucky restart. As Christians, we are never without hope, because our trust is not in systems or circumstances, but in a Savior who

never fails. Jesus Christ is our living hope, our unshakable foundation. Even when life doesn't reboot the way we want, we can rest in the assurance that He will provide, sustain, and redeem.

So, if you're feeling locked out today, by fear, by grief, by uncertainty, don't give up. Wait on the Lord. Be strong. Take heart. And remember: the Author of your story is still writing . . . and He's already secured the ending.

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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CTRW to hold networking luncheon with candidates on Jan. 19

Special to the Journal

The Central Texas RW Networking Luncheon on Monday, Jan. 19 will feature a 2026 Republican Primary Texas Attorney General Candidate Forum.

This is an opportunity to meet current elected officials, the candidates appearing in the forum, and other candidates appearing on the March Primary Ballot.

The Club's Networking Lunch is open to all Republicans, and the

Candidate forum is conducted for information purposes only to help voters make an informed decision.

A table will be available for candidates to place materials. All Republican Primary candidates will have an opportunity to speak. All Texas Attorneys General candidates have been invited to include (in ballot order) Senator Joan Huffman, Senator Mayes Middleton, Aaron Reitz, and TX Representative Chip Roy. The luncheon will be

held at the Harris Community Center, 401 N. Alexander Street, Belton.

Doors open at 11 a.m., with the meeting called to order at 11:30 am.

RSVP and ticket are required by Tuesday, Jan. 13 by email at rsvpctrw@gmail.com or Prepay at www.ctrw-pac.com/events.

The event is \$20 cash/check or \$22 by credit card for a catered lunch, or \$10 cash/check or \$12 credit card – no lunch. A ticket is required for each attendee, and no outside food is allowed.

Mural - From Page A1

Penelope St. and Second Avenue, by David Moreno, with a roaring tiger surrounded by bluebonnets and the phrase "Tiger Country" in red above the tiger with "The Belton Journal" in blue below.

Another mural is located on the east wall of the Belton Dam, along F.M. 2271, and is a pictorial history of Bell County including scenes of Fort Hood,

historical homes, hospitals, the Chisholm Trail, covered wagons, and Belton Lake.

There is another mural at the Lena Armstrong Library, located at 301 E. First Avenue at the N. Penelope St. side of the building. Painted by Laced+Found, it is a mural of a girl reading a book with a blue background with a robot, a dinosaur, and the moon.

NBMS - From Page A1

the opportunity to classrooms across the district, resulting in 40 student entries. A panel from the Belton Lions Club selected the top three posters, with Kimberly earning the highest recognition.

North Belton Middle School students earned a strong showing in the competition, with sixth grader Maddie Cooper receiving second place and sixth grader Eleanor Maxfield earning third place.

Notably, all three top winners were students in the same sixth grade art class taught by Nick Bottesini, highlighting the creativity and collaboration fostered within the classroom.

"This contest gives students a meaningful way to reflect on the world around them," said Zuehlke. "Our young artists used their skills to communicate hope, unity and belonging. Kimberly's work stood out for both its creativity and its message, and we are proud to see it advance."

Kimberly said the theme immediately sparked ideas about peace through connection.

"At first I thought about all the countries combined together to make peace," she said. "I was thinking about cultural diffusion and how when one culture meets another, it creates fusion. Maybe if more people come together, it could create peace."

The project also gave her an opportunity to develop new artistic techniques.

"I learned how to better apply shading and light. I really enjoy using watercolors and graphite, and my art style is

usually more cartoon-inspired, but sometimes I like realism too."

Her art teacher, Bottesini, said Kimberly's thoughtful approach set her work apart.

"The students embraced the theme and pushed themselves to communicate visually. Seeing Kimberly's piece recognized and advancing is a moment of real pride for our class."

"This is the first year the Belton Lions Club has participated in the Lions Club International Peace Poster Contest, and it has been incredibly meaningful to partner with our local youth in promoting peace, tolerance, and international understanding," said Keith Cook, Belton ISD Executive Director of Operations and Belton Lions Club member. "The contest encourages students to think deeply about what peace means to them and to express that vision creatively. Kimberly's artwork now advances to district-level judging alongside winners from across Texas, and we are proud to see her representing both her school and our community."

Posters advancing to the final international judging are eligible for prestigious awards, including an International Grand Prize of \$5,000 and a trip to an award ceremony, as well as 23 Merit Awards of \$500 each.

Notification of advancing artists is expected by February 1, 2026.

Kimberly's artwork will now compete in the next round of judging as part of the national Lions Club Peace Poster program.

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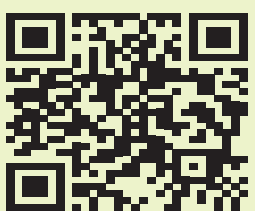
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Belton sprints past Copperas Cove, 65-42

By **Tony Adams**
The Belton Journal

The Belton Tigers and Copperas Cove Bulldawgs rivalry has been hotly contested over the years.

The on-and-off district rivals renewed the rivalry at Tiger Gym on Tuesday night.

Belton scored 12 of the game's first 13 points inside the opening 2:56, used excellent team defense to get past the Bulldawgs, 65-42.

"I was really proud of the way the team played," Belton Head Coach Phil McCaslin said. "We held a solid Copperas Cove team under 20 points in the first half. Teams with the make-up of Cove will be a great deal of what we will see out of teams from our district.

Prior to the game, the Belton basketball program honored Noah Childers for breaking the career 1,000-point mark at the Kaufman Tournament.

Belton's offensive attack was on full display in the opening eight minutes. Jay'dn Loggin hit the Tigers' first shot of the game 15 seconds. Belton forced

a turnover; Ty Johnson drained a three-pointer from the top of the key and was fouled in the process. After Johnson converted the free-throw, the Tigers led 6-0 just 38 seconds in.

Eden Carter put Cove on the board 1:06 into the game, as he converted the back end of a two-shot foul.

The Tigers answered with a 7-0 run, as Loggins scored four points and Johnson added a three-pointer to give Belton a 13-1 lead with 3:32 to play in the opening period.

Cove momentarily slowed the run on field goals by Michael Watson and Idris Carter. However, the Tigers were not deterred, as they closed the quarter on a 5-0 run and led at the end of the first quarter, 23-7.

Belton continued the defensive pressure throughout the second quarter and boosted the advantage out to 24 points. The Tigers led at the halftime break, 39-18.

The Tigers to pressure

See **TIGERS**,
Page B3

Lady Tigers enter district portion of basketball schedule

By **Clay Whittington**
The Belton Journal

The District 16-5A schedule has arrived, and records no longer matter.

After weeks of preparation, league play begins Friday with post-season aspirations hinging on every outcome, and the critical stretch starts with a crosstown encounter.

Belton hosts No. 4 Lake Belton at 7 p.m., and while it will be difficult to upset the state-ranked Lady Broncos, the Lady Tigers have momentum.

In its nondistrict finale, Belton traveled to China Spring on Tuesday and cruised to a 61-44 victory behind four double-digit scorers.

It was the Lady Tigers' second consecutive win after defeating Robinson 53-40 on the road, helping them amass an overall record of 13-11 — two more victories than last year at this point.

Regardless, Lake Belton will be difficult to contend with.

The Lady Broncos are off to their best start in school history, losing just once through their first 24 games, including a one-sided performance at Salado on Friday.

Led offensively by junior Gemma Pierce and sophomore Erica Taylor, who scored 15 and 13 points, respectively, Lake Belton was never threatened en route to a 59-41 victory.

The Lady Broncos held a 12-point advantage, 17-5, following the first period and took a 30-14 cushion into halftime.

Along with the points, Lake Belton finished with 42 rebounds and 23 steals as sophomore Ayaana Omisola accounted for a team-high five steals. Taylor fell just short of a double-double with nine rebounds.

Both the Lady Broncos' and Belton's showings are now inconsequential, though.

Despite how the programs started, a total of 10 games will determine whether either advances to the playoffs.

Lake Belton follows its short trip to Belton by hosting Killeen Ellison on Tuesday before traveling to Waco (Jan. 16) and Killeen Chaparral (Jan. 20). The Lady Broncos close the first half of district with a visit from Waco University on Jan. 23.

After facing Lake Belton, the Lady Tigers play the Lady Trojans on the road Tuesday with a two-game homestand against Chaparral (Jan. 16) and Ellison (Jan. 20) before returning to the road to play Waco (Jan. 23).

Each schedule repeats and plays at the alternate venue for the second round.

Belton is looking to return to the postseason for the first time since 2022, while Lake Belton hopes to improve on its first-round exit from a year ago.

Broncos competitive with China Spring, come up short, 66-54

By **Aries Ramos**
The Belton Journal

Lake Belton battled throughout four competitive quarters Tuesday night but came up short in a 66-54 loss to China Spring, a game that remained within reach before the Cougars pulled away down the stretch.

The Broncos showed early energy and physicality, matching China Spring's tempo and staying composed in a back and forth first half. Lake Belton leaned on scoring and active defense to keep pressure on the Cougars, forcing turnovers and generating transition opportunities. However, China Spring's ability to capitalize on key possessions proved to be the difference as the game wore on.

Ameer Williams led all Broncos with a strong all around performance, finishing with 17 points and four rebounds. Wil-

liams attacked the basket consistently and provided a steady scoring presence when Lake Belton needed answers. Dez Ravizee followed with 13 points, six rebounds, and four steals, showcasing his impact and pushing the pace defensively.

Allen Muchunu added 12 points and two rebounds, giving Lake Belton a third scoring option and helping keep the offense balanced. The Broncos also received valuable contributions from Nick Martin, who totaled four points, four rebounds, and three steals, and Jackson Striegler, who finished with four points, four rebounds, and an assist. Mikey Lockett chipped in four points and four rebounds, while Avery Diaz and Christian Onchweri contributed on the glass with three and two rebounds, respectively.

Despite the effort, China Spring used a

strong second half push to separate. The Cougars capitalized on second chance points and timely perimeter shooting, gradually extending their lead and limiting Lake Belton's late comeback chances. The Broncos continued to compete defensively, but China Spring's execution down the stretch sealed the outcome.

Lake Belton will look to regroup quickly as they prepare for a key matchup Friday night against Gatesville. Gatesville enters the contest with a 15-6 overall record and familiarity with the Broncos after the teams split their previous meetings last season. Lake Belton claimed the first matchup 70-63, while Gatesville answered with a narrow 52-50 win in the second meeting.

For Lake Belton, con-

See **BRONCOS**,
Page B3

Busy post-Christmas schedule nets Tigers Basketball 5-1 stretch

By **Tony Adams**
The Belton Journal

The Belton Tigers started their post-Christmas schedule on Dec. 29-30 at the Kaufman Tournament.

Belton finished third at the tournament. The Tigers started the tournament against the North Fomey Falcons.

Belton scored a season-high 104 points as

they sprinted past the Falcons, 104-66.

The second game of pool play pitted the Tigers against the Garland Owls.

The Tigers defense held the upstart Owls in check on defense and earned a 74-55 win over Garland.

Belton earned the top seed out of pool play and took on Fort Worth Brewer.

The Bears worked past a nine-point margin and defeated the Tigers 53-48 to drop Bel-

ton to the third-place contest.

In the finale, the Tigers took on the Carrollton Creekview Mustangs.

Belton took a commanding lead midway the second half and earned the third-place trophy with a 78-60 win over Creekview.

Daniel Briscoe earned All-Tournament honors.

After the New Year's Day holiday, the Tigers hosted the La Grange Leopards.

The Tigers speed and long-distance shooting helped Belton to an 87-49 win over the visitors.


Luke Munden scored 19 points in the winning effort for Belton. Noah Childers added 14, and Briscoe chipped in ten.

"It was a great tournament, with plenty of lessons learned," Belton head coach Phil McCaslin said. "We played hard on both sides of the floor."



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Sports Briefs

By Clay Whittington
The Belton Journal

The Lady Tigers will conduct tryouts for the upcoming softball season Friday 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 Saturday, and practice begins Monday, 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.

Lake Belton will follow a similar schedule for its tryouts.

The Lady Broncos have two sessions Friday running from 6:45 a.m. to 8:20 a.m. before returning from 4:45 p.m. to 6:15 p.m.

On Saturday, tryouts will run from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m.

For more information, contact Lady Belton Head Coach Kelsie McEachern at KelsieMcEachern@BISD.net.

LAKE BELTON GIRLS BASKETBALL

The Lady Broncos will host Court Side Connections — a special skills clinic — on Jan. 21 from 6

p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at the Lake Belton gymnasium.

The event is intended to help young players grow on the court while also strengthening their bonds with parents.

It is free for all girls in second through sixth grade and one adult.

Led by members of the Lady Broncos' coaching staff, the clinic will focus on simple and effective drills that can be done at home, proving development does not need to be expensive. There is also an emphasis on creativity and accessibility, allowing drills to be created using everyday items from around the house along with a parent.

Spots are limited, so early enrollment is encouraged. For more information, visit LakeBeltonAthletics.com.

Belton Lake: Stillhouse

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.

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.



Belton to head to Leander for weekend soccer trip

By Clay Whittington
The Belton Journal

The Tigers are in the midst of a torrid stretch to their schedule, and Carlo Mosnia is pleased about where his team is at.

After slowly entering the season during the holidays, Belton is now fully entrenched, playing four matches within four days, including this weekend's trip to the Leander Glenn tournament.

While there is the potential for lots to be revealed about the team at the event, the Tigers' head coach believes his players are poised to excel.

"We just have a good mentality this year," Mosnia said, "and we don't stop playing until the whistle. They all just play very hard, are very team oriented and always put the team over themselves. "It is really pay-

ing dividends for all the guys."

Tuesday, it showed.

Playing at Wilson Kerzee Field, Belton held a one-goal advantage within 45 seconds against Killeen Shoemaker and never eased up, cruising to a 7-0 victory.

With 31 minutes remaining in the first half, the Tigers led 3-0, and they entered halftime with five unanswered goals.

In total, four players — William Bralley, Ezra Kahler, Samuel Clark and Jorge Hernandez — delivered shots into the back of the net, helping Belton improve to 3-1-2 overall.

"Having so many contributors just proves the point that these guys are willing to outwork their opponents and be first to the ball," Mosnia said. "That is when good things happen. We have been preaching that a lot this year, and the guys are all buying in.

"We are in a good spot right now, but we still have a long way to go."

The Tigers entered the contest on the heels of their first tournament, traveling to Georgetown for the event.

Belton opened with a 1-1 tie versus Pflugerville Connally thanks to a scoring shot from Clark, while Bralley accounted for the Tigers' lone goal in a 1-1 tie with defending state champion Kingwood Park.

After trailing 1-0 at halftime, Belton rallied to tie the contest despite playing short handed due to receiving a red card.

In their final match, the Tigers lost 2-0 to Austin Westlake.

Belton will attempt to improve on the show-

See **SOCCER**, Page B3

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Lake Belton soccer teams compete in tournament play

By Aries Ramos
The Belton Journal

Lake Belton soccer opened the season with encouraging performances from both the boys and girls programs, as each team faced tournament play that tested early season readiness.

The boys team competed in a three day tournament against high level opposition while working with a limited bench. Short handed throughout the event, the Broncos were forced to rely on effort and adaptability, logging heavy minutes in consecutive matches with minimal rotation. Despite the physical toll, Lake Belton maintained its competitive edge

from start to finish. Defensively, the Broncos stayed organized and worked collectively to limit chances, while the midfield and attacking units continued to press forward even as fatigue set in. The tournament provided valuable experience, revealing the program's depth and reinforcing a team identity built on unity and toughness.

While results varied, the weekend served as an important early measuring stick. Competing under challenging conditions offered lessons that will carry forward as the season continues, strengthening both confidence and cohesion within the squad.

The girls team opened its 2026 season at the Em-

ily Hunter Tournament in Arlington and finished the weekend with a strong 2-1 record. Facing a variety of North Texas opponents, the Lady Broncos combined an explosive offense with disciplined defensive play, setting an early tone for the season.

Lake Belton delivered a dominant performance in its opening match, controlling possession and producing a lopsided shutout victory. After a physical second game that tested resilience, the Lady Broncos responded to close the tournament with another convincing win, once again keeping their opponent off the scoreboard.

Across three matches, Lake Belton scored 15

goals while conceding just three, demonstrating balance and depth across the field. The defensive unit remained organized and composed, while the goal-keeping tandem provided stability with timely saves. The offense showed versatility, with multiple players contributing to the scoring and playmaking effort.

Together, the boys and girls performances point to a strong foundation for the season ahead. With the boys gaining toughness through adversity and the girls establishing early momentum, Lake Belton soccer enters the coming weeks focused on consistency and building on an encouraging opening stretch.



New tax laws for 2026 that you should know

Scot Hrbacek, CFP® *Financial Advisor*

The new year brings more than resolutions – it brings tax changes that could impact your wallet.

There's good news for retirement savers: You can put more into your IRA, 401(k) or other workplace plan this year compared to last year.

If you're a high earner age 50 or older, catch-up contributions must now be made into a Roth account – for tax-free income later.

Health savings accounts also allow more in annual contributions.

When it comes to education savings, the withdrawal rate for 529 plans has doubled. And the list of qualifying expenses includes more options than before.

Charitable giving shifts too: Standard filers can deduct up to \$1,000 in cash gifts, while itemizers face new thresholds.

Tax changes can be complex. Work with a qualified financial advisor and tax professional to build strategies that make the most of new opportunities while minimizing your tax burden.

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

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Tigers - From Page B1

the Bulldawgs into contested, low-percentage shots. Childers' cannonading block at the third quarter horn wowed the crowd, as Belton maintained a 22-point lead the start of the fourth quarter, 55-33.

Belton's lead grew to 30 points, thanks to an 8-0 run to start the final stanza. Johnson, Loggins, and Daniel Briscoe combined for the eight points.

Cove continued to battle against the Belton reserved in the fourth quarter and pared the margin to 23 points at the end of the night.

The Tigers 11-of-17 at the free-throw line and converted eight three-pointers. Johnson led all scorers with 22 points, having drained five three-pointers and all three free throws. Loggins added 12 points for Belton.

K'Veion Jones and Matthew Ziegler led Copperas Cove with ten points each.

The Tigers will travel to Waco on Friday to take on Connally High School and will start District 16-5A action on Tuesday at Killeen Chaparral.

The Bulldawgs start District 12-6A play Friday as they host Waco Midway.

Broncos - From Page B1

trolling the tempo, limiting turnovers, and finishing defensive possessions will be crucial. Continued production from Williams, Ravizee, and Muchunu, along with rebounding support from the rest of

the rotation, could be the difference as the Broncos aim to secure the win and build momentum heading deeper into the season.

Soccer - From Page B2

ing at Glenn, beginning today, when it encounters the host Grizzlies at 10 a.m. The Tigers follow by playing Marshall on Friday at noon and San Antonio Cornerstone Christian on Saturday at 11 a.m.

Then, Belton plays at Harker Heights (Tuesday, 7:15 p.m.) and versus visiting Copperas Cove (Jan. 16, 6 p.m.) next week.

"This week is packed full of games," Mosnia said, "so we are just try-

ing to balance the guys' minutes and keep them healthy. This is going to be a grueling week."

GIRLS SOCCER

The Lady Tigers travel to Pflugerville Weiss on Friday for a 6 p.m. kickoff.

Belton is coming off a 0-1-2 performance at the ultra competitive Frisco Dr. Pink Tournament, where Lauren McKinney's goal helped the Lady Tigers earn a 1-1

tie against Frisco Lebanon Trail.

Later that day, however, the momentum was halted as Richardson Pearce produced a 2-0 victory, and in the finale, Frisco Wakeland delivered an onslaught of shots on goal. Despite goalkeeper Destiny Mendez's impressive showing, Wakeland won 5-0.

Following its trip to Weiss, Belton is idle until Jan. 15, when it begins play at the three-day Georgetown tournament.



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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

LEGALS

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

LEGALS

APPLICATION HAS BEEN MADE WITH THE TEXAS ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE COMMISSION
for a Wine and Malt Beverage Retail Dealer's On-Premise Permit by L & S Gaines Enterprises LLC Db a Expo Quik Stop to be located at 308 W Loop 121, Belton, Bell Co., Texas. Members of said LLC are Robert Gaines – Member and Shelia Gaines – Member 01.08,01.15

THE STATE OF TEXAS CITATION BY PUBLICATION CASE NUMBER 25CPB00787

To: Unknown Heirs GARY WAYNE DAVIS, Applicant, on December 30, 2025, filed an application to declare heirship & for intestate independent administration & for issuance of letters of independent administration in a proceeding styled: DONNA LEE DAVIS, Deceased, and bearing the number 25CPB00787 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 08, 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 31, 2025. Shelley Coston County Clerk of Bell County, Texas PO Box 480, 1201 Huey Road, Belton,

LEGALS

TX 76513
By: Erika DeCasas Deputy 01.08

NOTICE TO CREDITORS

Notice is given that original Letters of Administration for the Estate of Barry Alan Clemens, were issued on December 18, 2025, in Cause No. 25CPB00611, pending in the County Court at Law Number 1 of Bell County, Texas, to Jason Clemens.

All persons having claims against this 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 Jason Clemens Independent Executor P.O. Box 1916, Lowell, AR, 72745

DATED the 29th day of December 2025.

/s/ Joshua C. Tisdale, Joshua C. Tisdale Attorney for Jason Clemens, Texas Bar No.: 24075164

The Tisdale Law Firm, PLLC, 1216 S. 31st St., Temple, TX 76504, Tel: (254) 634-8600, Fax: (254) 554-6686, Email: legal@thetisdalelawfirm.com 01.08

NOTICE TO CREDITORS

Notice is hereby given that original Letters Testamentary for the Estate of DOROTHY KAY FERRIER

DELGADO, Deceased, were issued on October 21, 2025, in Cause No. 25CPB00590, in the County

Court at Law No. 1 of Bell County, Texas, to: JESSICA E. FERRIER.

All persons having claims against this Estate which is currently being administered required to present them within the time and in the manner prescribed by law to: JESSICA E. FERRIER, Executor Estate of Dorothy Kay Ferrier-Delgado, Deceased 1201 Hidden Vally Drive, Apt. 822 Round Rock, TX 78665

DATED December 29 2025. DANIEL GERKEN ,State Bar No.: 24123539, 2106 Bird Creek Drive Temple, TX 76502, Telephone: (254) 771-1855, Facsimile: (254) 771-2082, E-mail: daniel@templelawoffice.co

01.08

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NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

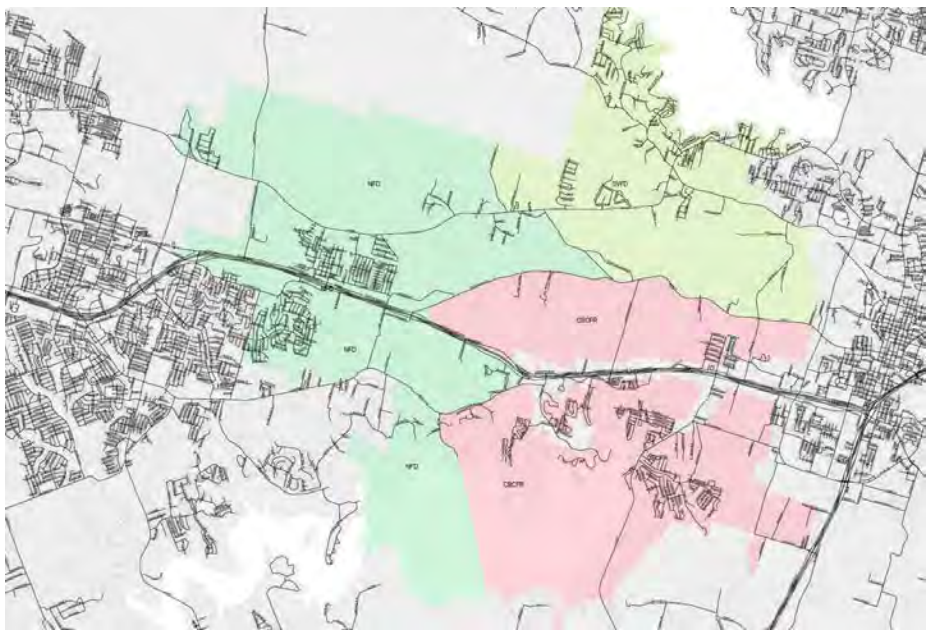
Pursuant to Texas Health & Safety Code 775.015, the County Clerk of Bell County, Texas hereby provides notice of a public hearing to be held on the creation of the proposed Bell County Emergency Services District No. 3. **This public hearing will be held at 9:00 a.m. on Tuesday, January 20, 2026, at the Bell County Historic Courthouse, 2nd Floor Courtroom, at 101 E. Central Avenue in Belton, Texas.** Each person who has an interest in the creation of the district may attend the hearing and present grounds for or against the creation of the district.

A petition for the creation of an emergency services district has been filed with the County Clerk of Bell County, Texas and the creation of an emergency service district is proposed.

The district is to be created and is to operate under Article III, Section 48-e of the Texas Constitution, as proposed by S.J.R. No. 27, Acts of the 70th Legislature, Regular Session, 1987, and adopted by the voters at an election held November 3, 1987.

The name of the proposed district is **Bell County Emergency Services District No. 3**. It is to be created and is to operate under Article III, Section 48-e, Texas Constitution, and Chapter 775, Texas Health and Safety Code, for the provision of fire suppression and medical response in response to an emergency situation in accordance with the authority granted to emergency service districts under Chapter 775 of the Texas Health and Safety Code.

The district's boundary map is attached hereto, and incorporated herein for all purposes as Exhibit A. Upon request, the metes and bounds are available for public viewing in the County County Clerk's office during regular business hours and on the public notices page of our website at https://www.bellcountytexas.com/publicnotice_list.php.



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Temple College, Wilsonart to celebrate newest buildings on campus

Special to the Journal

Temple College and Wilsonart are celebrating a collaboration as well as the completion of recent projects on the campus, with a ribbon cutting on Friday, Jan. 16.

Their collaboration on Temple College's new buildings—the Health Sciences Center, Workforce & Visual Arts Building, and its Main Building—exemplifies how design, education, and local industry can align to create an impact.

"The college's longstanding relationship with Wilsonart has been integral to the success of this project," said Dr. Christy Ponce, President of Temple College. "From the earliest stages, their team was deeply engaged in helping us realize our vision for these new environments. Their willingness to collaborate and continue to support our community has made a meaningful difference in bringing these new spaces to life."

A series of transformative new facilities has been funded by the \$124.9 million bond approved by Temple voters in 2021. However, global supply chain challenges and rising construction costs at the height of Covid quickly threatened initial progress.

"We found ourselves with a significant budget gap," Dr. Ponce recalled. "Wilsonart was one of the first partners to step up, offering solutions that allowed us to keep every critical component of the project intact."

Wilsonart's contribution was a direct investment in the region's educational and economic future.

"Their generosity came at a time when we needed it most," noted Dr. Ponce. "Those savings helped us move forward with spaces that support advanced manufacturing, workforce development, and healthcare education, which are all vital to Central Texas' growth."

Temple College's new facilities opened in 2024, just ahead of the institution's upcoming 100th anniversary, with each space thoughtfully designed to foster connection, learn-

ing, and opportunity. Additional building openings and ribbon cuttings are scheduled for early 2026.

Working with Stantec, a leading architectural firm, and Temple-based general contractor Cloud Construction Company, the college envisioned a campus that was open, modern, and inspiring.

The new main building—now the front door to campus—features Wilsonart high-pressure laminates and solid surfaces throughout public and administrative spaces. From the Welcome Desk and Student Success Center to faculty offices and boardroom panels, Wilsonart surfaces help define a cohesive aesthetic that is warm, durable, and timeless.

The response to the new facilities has been positive and adds something truly special to the entire project experience.

"Students are ecstatic," Dr. Ponce added. "They finally have spaces that match their ambitions, places to study, collaborate, and be proud of. Many bring their families to campus to show where they learn."

Faculty and staff share that sense of pride, with new lounge areas, open meeting spaces, and thoughtfully designed work environments that foster creativity and connection.

The new Conference Center doubles as a civic event venue—one of the few large-scale spaces in the region for banquets, training, and public gatherings—further reinforcing Temple College's role as "the community's college."

Education Meets Industry

"We see tremendous potential in growing this partnership," Korzen said. "From internships to specialized training in project management and manufacturing processes, there's a natural alignment between the college's needs and Wilsonart's expertise. Together, we can help strengthen Central Texas' workforce pipeline."

The Workforce & Visual Arts Building, one of the campus's most innovative spaces, demonstrates collaboration in action. Developed with input from local employers, the facility

features advanced labs for automation, robotics, semiconductor training, and even metallic 3D printing. "Employers walk in and immediately say, 'This looks exactly like our manufacturing line,'" Dr. Ponce noted. "That validation means we're preparing students for real opportunities."

As Temple College moves toward its centennial celebration in 2026 and Wilsonart towards its 70th anniversary, this partnership remains integral to the next chapter for both.

"This partnership is about more than product; it's about shared purpose. Wilsonart understands what it means to invest in our own community," Korzen concluded.

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EDITORIAL

Dream big, think small

My Front Porch • Lynette Sowell

Once upon a time, there used to be grocery stores where they knew your name because you shopped there week after week.

You could even run up a “tab” and pay for your purchases all at once at the end of the month. Sometimes, employees would carry your bags out to your car and put them in the trunk for you.

But the little guy could only help you so much. They often couldn’t buy in bulk and give you cheaper prices.

We consumers demanded more exotic products, more variety, more brands. So eventually, the little guy went away. Thinking big became the solution, supposedly. Here came the “big box” stores. Do you remember the first time you walked into one?

You name the product, the size, the color, it was there. No longer did you have to hunt from store to store to find the best deal because Big Box already had it covered. They read your mind and knew what you wanted. Supposedly their savings became your savings.

Friends of mine who are ex-pats return to the United States for a visit sometimes find themselves overwhelmed in the aisles of Big Box because there was “too much to

choose from.”

We literally bought it all and bought into it—that bigger always meant better. We believed that we should always think big because, after all, it’s what works. Big Box always assured us that savings was just around the corner, in every aisle, on every shelf. We needn’t look anywhere else.

However, a curious thing began to happen.

We realized that people at Big Box didn’t know us, nor did they care to.

(I could probably chalk that up to employees working at joyless positions, merely tolerating their time on the clock until they could go home.) Instead of being helpful, it was easier to say things like, “That’s not my department.” Pride in their work at Big Box went down the proverbial tubes.

Big Box headquarters, however, didn’t see the value in thinking small. They controlled everything from the temperature of the store to how many employees ran the checkout lanes, all from their corporate offices.

What did the regular workers know about regulating store temperature and how many employees should be staffed during a shift? Their bottom line was their focus and while they trumpeted news of great deals, other prices in-

creased. We still fell for it. But what else could we do? Big Box forgot what it means to think on a local level.

One thing I hope that big box stores realize is the value of thinking small.

Why think small? Because the people who go through those doors and walk the aisles are fellow residents. They could be someone’s teacher or coach, or the family doctor. Those shoppers are friends of a friend, or someone who lives down the street. This is our neighborhood, our town.

The majority of the employees, too, are “our” people, so we shoppers should consider that whoever is behind the counter might be connected to someone we know. Somehow, when you think about that, it makes a gigantic store feel smaller and more personal. There’s nothing wrong with dreaming big, but thinking small can remind us of what’s most important—the people around us.

Corporate policies and promotions mean little when the boots on the ground people are unmotivated, overwhelmed, or careless about what they’re doing.

But, just think of how a company can shine when the everyday people bring pride to their work and a sense of caring.

Entertainment 101: Topias

Shop the Insanity • Darren Blair

This topic has been on my mind for a while now, but it’s taken a bit to find the wording I want to use when talking about it.

When people discuss fiction, satire, and political material, you’ll often hear the terms “utopia” and “dystopia”. Different works will be described by one of these terms, with many modern television shows and movies being adapted from these works to varying degrees of public controversy. But what do these terms actually mean?

The term “utopia” refers to a situation where the author presents a fictional world as a type of paradise, usually in accordance with their personal views. The term is believed to have originated from the book “Utopia” written by Sir Thomas More in 1516, and is derived from the Greek word for “nowhere”. The book describes a fictional island nation in the New World that operates in a fashion that

More was trying to encourage, using this to contrast what he saw as the ills of then-present Europe. Note that in contrast to More’s political writing, we have such purely fantastical and purely for entertainment works as “Dinotopia”, the 1992 series that envisioned a utopia in which humans and dinosaurs co-existed in peace.

The term “dystopia”, meanwhile, was coined to represent a situation where the speaker or author believes things are the exact opposite of a utopian ideal in the hopes of warning the public about something or encouraging them to re-evaluate something. The specific term as we know it dates to 1868 when politician John Stuart Mill used the term to describe a government policy, but 50 years earlier the term “cacotopia” or “kakotopia” was in use to describe “the imagined seat of the worst government”. I imagine that most

people reading this are familiar with George Orwell’s “1984”, a science fiction – flavored dystopian novel he wrote to warn the public of what life was like under Soviet-style communism. Or we have the purely for entertainment “The Hunger Games” franchise in which a group of teenagers lead a rebellion against a totalitarian government.

Of course, this isn’t the end of the discussion. There are, of course, situations where people have looked at a given work and been divided on which one it is. For example, consider Heinlen’s “Starship Troopers”, a classic science fiction novel told from the perspective of a young infantryman. Is the novel a dystopia meant to remind people of how valuable birthright citizenship and the resulting right to vote are by presenting a world where citizenship and the vote are only available to people who spend at least two years in “federal ser-

vice” as directed by the government and thus may not live long enough to actually earn it? Or is it a utopia arguing that only military veterans should be allowed to run things regardless of the cost in human life? Director Paul Verhoeven saw the book as the latter and so deliberately wrenched the movie into a dystopian work about totalitarianism during wartime, but the novel itself isn’t so cut-and-dried.

This leads us to a point I’d like to make when studying utopias and dystopias: it is entirely possible for a person to see one and presume it the other. It all comes down to each individual’s perspective, personal ideals, and beliefs. Keep that in mind when you go to study not just utopias and dystopias but also how different people respond to them... hence the online meme about how “1984” was supposed to be a warning and not an instructional manual...

Random Thinks for the Week

Pleasant Ramblings • Mark Magnan

Have you ever wondered who invented the little device that smacks your finger for a blood test? I, mean what sadistic individual decided to put thought into that thing? I know you have to do it some way, but this is over the top. My finger has skin, not cowhide covering it.

Have you dialed a company and had to endure the menu numbers, and at the end they mention rotary dial phones? Are they still around and do they still work? How come they don’t have to navigate the endless menu just because they use an antique phone?

We ride horses in this country and have rodeos using those same horses. What if they had a rodeo in the countries that ride around on elephants? That might be one of those things you would watch on TV, once. I can tell you that the “bucking bronco” version of rid-

ing a jumping pachyderm might be something else!

I know that tattoos are a form of self expression. However have you ever seen a tattoo and just wondered what the heck the person was trying to express at that point in time? Maybe it was; “I have money, poor judgment and a bad tattoo artist”.

I was walking through a very expensive store recently, not that I was shopping there, and noticed some clothes that had worn edges and tears. I can remember a time when it would take several months to get our jeans to look like that, I am glad someone has eliminated the annoying job of wearing out new clothes.

I wonder who was the first person to discover fire, and what was the first thing they cooked on that fire. I hope it was something worth-

while and not some vegetable.

There is a lot of talk about self driving cars these days. I think there might be some merit in that technology. There would be less distractions for the driver. Unless of course the self driving car’s computer catches a glimpse of a hot sports car and hits something, much like human drivers.

Was biscotti discovered by a mistake; “Heya Mama, thisa bread is so hard, I hava to dipa it ina my coffee...” (my apologies for the Italian accent, although a lot of the accent actually would be the responsibility of how the reader reads that statement) Perhaps some innovative Italian baker sold the biscotti with coffee and opened up a new market.

Another bit of marketing genius is the bicycle. Can you name any other technology that has been

passed over so many times and is still around? I mean the bike was a major way of urban transportation, then came the car, and better cars, and even more autos. Yet, bicycles these days sell for a premium price. It went from a needed item to get around, to fun and now sports and exercise. Someone knows how to sell ice to Eskimos. And they even make bikes that sit in your house and don’t go anywhere.

Speaking of exercising, why don’t they have a coffee shop right as you enter a gym. That would sure give you the energy to workout.

Why do cars even have windows that roll down these days? OK, besides the driver’s window for the drive-thru bank, fast food windows, and oh yeah, speaking with the police officer that pulled you over. Honestly when was the last time you or someone you knew,

wasn’t running the air or heater in their vehicle. The three other windows could be solid and no one would know.

Remember when you had a couple of flashlights that were strategically placed around the house in case the power went off? They were rather large and heavy. When the power did go out you fumbled around, found the flashlight and it didn’t work. I was looking around the other day, I must have twenty small LED lights, some have been lost under furniture for years and the batteries are still good as new.

Have you ever considered the irony in the difference between Hells Angels and Charlie’s Angels?

I hope you have a thought filled week.

Boost Your God-fidence!

Coffee Talk • Renae Brumbaugh Green

Most of us have been told it’s important to like ourselves. That doesn’t mean valuing yourself above others, which can be a sign of arrogance or even narcissism. Liking yourself—or holding yourself in high esteem—leads to strong mental health, better relationships, and greater success. Christ instructs His followers to love your neighbor as you love yourself. Yet for someone with low self-esteem, loving yourself can seem like a foreign concept.

Self-esteem is the way we value and see ourselves. It’s not just about how we look on the outside. It involves our self-respect and how we compare ourselves to others. It’s a personal assessment, and it comes from within us. Our self-esteem affects almost every area of our lives, such as how we assert ourselves, make decisions, take risks, accept mistakes, and more. It’s not caused by depression, but those with low self-esteem are often more prone to depression, anxiety, and other mental health concerns. Studies indicate low self-esteem can be a cause, rather than an effect, of these mental health issues.

Low self-esteem can often be traced to abusive or non-supportive relationships in childhood, or to traumatic events. These experiences set the pattern for the way we see ourselves, but patterns can be changed.

7 Ways to Improve Your Self-Esteem

Surround yourself with supportive people. Make purposeful choices to spend time with people who lift you up. Don’t waste time on people who constantly make you feel bad about yourself. You can be kind and still distance yourself.

Make positive self-talk a discipline. Negative thoughts often come as our default setting, especially for those who struggle with low self-esteem. But thoughts aren’t facts. They’re just words that float through our minds. When you catch yourself thinking negative thoughts about yourself, argue back. Say positive things. If you think, “I hate my life,” prove yourself wrong by thinking of all the things you love about your life. For example, “I love my children. I love that I have a place to live and can pay my bills. I love my peppermint mocha coffee creamer.”

Fake it till you make it. If you don’t feel confident or capable, pretend to be a person with high self-esteem. How would that person act? Look people in the eyes. Smile. Shake hands. How would that person talk to themselves? *Good job. You did your best, and you learned something. Next time, your best will be even better.*

Accept yourself. Everyone has good points and bad points. People with healthy self-esteem recognize their own good qualities in a way that shows respect for their contributions and abilities, but doesn’t devalue those around them. They also accept their weaknesses, admit mistakes, and strive for improvement. Mistakes aren’t set-in-stone evaluations of your worth. They’re fleeting moments in time.

Accept compliments. When someone praises you, smile and say thank you, and then move on. Don’t tell them they’re wrong or brush it off.

Be a good friend—to yourself! If you wouldn’t say something to a dear friend, don’t say it to yourself. Be kind, gentle, and encouraging.

Seek professional support. Because low self-esteem often has deep roots, you may benefit from a trained therapist who can help you sort out your thought patterns and help you establish new ones.

As a Christian, I think of self-esteem more like God-esteem. Who does God say I am? I am *loved*. I am *valued*. I am *capable* of anything God wants me to do. I am *strong*, because He strengthens me. Anyone who tells me different—including myself—is wrong.

“So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised.” Hebrews 10:35-36

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If only Hamilton had spellcheck



Alexander Hamilton's legacy rose to new heights in the twenty-first century, a remarkable feat given that the Founding Father passed away in 1804. The debut of the Broadway musical Hamilton in 2015 reinvigorated interest in the American statesman, but even the most ardent fans of Lin-Manuel Miranda's wildly popular play may not realize that Alexander Hamilton made a notable "mistake" that has endured through the centuries. A careful reading of the United States Constitution reveals that the home state of each delegate is listed alongside his name. The names of the delegates' states were written into the document by Alexander Hamilton. Benjamin Franklin was the Pennsylvania delegate at the time, and when writing the state Franklin rep-

resented next to his name, Hamilton spelled it "Pensylvania." That spelling notably contains two "Ns" and not the three in the modern spelling of the state's name used today. But before Americans point a finger at the Founding Father for misspelling the name, it's worth noting that Hamilton was not necessarily incorrect. Indeed, it was considered acceptable to spell "Pennsylvania" with two or three Ns in the late eighteenth century. Alas, modern readers of the Constitution cannot be blamed for wishing spellcheck had been around when the United States became a nation.

GUESS WHO ?

I was born in Texas on October 14, 1890. I am known for my command of the Allied forces in Europe during World War II, and later for my two terms as President of the United States. During my presidency, I focused on maintaining peace and prosperity through a strong military and alliances.

Answer: Dwight D. Eisenhower

GUESS WHO ?

I was born in Virginia on February 22, 1732. I became the commander of the Virginia Regiment during the French and Indian War. I was later instrumental in a movement against the oppression of the American colonists by the British Crown, and became commander in chief of the Continental Army.

Answer: George Washington

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"I'm proud to introduce our East Coast favorite to the Belton community. I'm originally from the Jersey Shore. I grew up in Lighthouse and would visit Ralph's, saying to myself, 'I want to do that one day,'" said Ann Scotti. Ann and her daughter Mikayla enjoyed Italian ices during summer trips to New Jersey before moving to Texas after she and her husband served in the Army.

"Italian ice is a gourmet version of shaved ice. It has a soft, smooth texture, created in a special machine," explained Mikayla. "The business is named after my dad, Dan Scotti, whose go-getter attitude inspired my mom."

The product is made with all-natural ingredients, and the cookies and cream flavor tastes just like cookies. "I really enjoy seeing the kids' reactions. They say, 'It's good because the flavor is authentic, natural, and delicious,'" said Ann. A three-ounce cup of Italian ice contains only 70 calories, compared to 160 calories in a three-ounce cup of ice cream. The Italian ices are crafted using all-natural ingredients like agave, real fruit, and cookies. They are kosher-certified and lactose-free.

The Italian ice flavor options include cookie dough, cookies and cream, chocolate fudge, brownie, and cappuccino. They also offer water ice flavors such as USA rainbow (blue raspberry, cherry, and lemon), watermelon, and a sugar-free lemon that tastes just as good.

In addition to Italian ice, they

sell cannolis, fresh-squeezed lemonades, and Italian sodas. "We can add flavors like strawberry, blue raspberry, and cherry to the lemonades," Mikayla noted. The Italian sodas come in sixteen-ounce plastic cups and are available in flavors such as piña colada, mango, and blue Hawaii. They are low-calorie because they are made with club soda and topped with cream and whipped cream.

"A cannoli is a shell made from dough wrapped around a metal rod, filled with ricotta cheese, powdered sugar, chocolate chips, and orange zest," explained Mikayla. "Dad always took me for cannoli and Italian ice in the summer. It's very nostalgic to relive those summer memories. They are located at 219 S. East St., behind the Gin, and their hours are Friday and Saturday from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. and Sunday from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m."

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