

Leon Heights Elementary celebrates 70 years



BELTON JOURNAL/Michele Weisman

Above left: The theme for the Leon Heights Elementary celebration was 70s groovy. Above right: Keepsakes and mementos from the school's past were on display.

By Michele Weisman
The Belton Journal

Leon Heights Elementary's 70th anniversary was celebrated on Friday, Feb 6, from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. There was a parade, followed by an assembly attended by current and former staff, parents, grandparents, and students.

This year is "groovy" for Leon Heights, as legacy, love, and lions is this year's school theme mixed with 70s fashion.

The classes, starting with kindergartners, donned birthday crowns, leading the way to sit on the sidewalk

lining the pick-up and drop-off drive at Leon Heights Elementary. Teachers stood with their classes, wearing 1970s fashion, as each class sat along the fenced sidewalk.

Families gathered under the school's awning, awaiting the parade, enjoying the children's experience. Julie Evans, former student, parent, and now grandparent and great-aunt of current students, looked forward to the parade starting.

Evans said of her time at Leon Heights, which began in 1968, that she lived across the street and would walk to and from school.

Starting off the parade in a teal

and white '55 Chevy was the school mascot. The lion stretched his paws out the window, waving at the students. Next, driven by Assistant Principal Deanna Ivy in a golf cart, were Superintendent Dr. Malinda Golden and Principal Lexie Newberry. The Belton High School band drummers rounded through the drive, followed by City Council member Dave Covington and Randy Pittenger, president of the Belton Area Chamber of Commerce. Next in the parade were the cheer teams from Belton High, followed by a Calvary division. The

See LEON HEIGHTS
Page A2

Belton receives more than \$9 million for Connell Street project

By David Tuma
The Belton Journal

In a visit to Belton, U.S. Rep. John R. Carter announced that he has secured \$9.68 million in federal funding for the Connell Street widening and reconstruction project.

"Good roadways are essential to a good community. You people work hard at that. Belton is a great community. Thank you for all the support over the years," said Carter. "Traffic can be so frustrating at times."

The funding will fully support rebuilding Connell Street, a key north-south corridor used daily by residents, businesses, and emergency responders. The project will widen the road from two lanes to four. It includes roadway reconstruction, drainage improvements, new sidewalks, and a shared-use path for pedestrians and bicyclists.

"The goal is to fix problems before they get worse and make sure Connell Street keeps up with the people who rely on it every day," Carter said.

City leaders completed planning and design work ahead of time so the project would be ready once funding became available. Construction is anticipated to begin in 2027 or 2028.

Mayor David K. Leigh thanked Carter for his ongoing support of local infrastructure initiatives, including water infrastructure upgrades and a bridge replacement currently in progress.

"Connell Street runs parallel to IH-35. It is close to the Cadence Bank Center and Bell County Justice Complex. This has been a great project of work," said Leigh.

City Manager Sam Listi said the project has been in development for several years, with local

See STREET PROJECT,
Page A7



BELTON JOURNAL/David Tuma

Congressman John Carter presents a check to the City of Belton during a special ceremony last week at the Harris Community Center. The funding will be used on Connell Street project.

Belton business owners meet with representative for proposed TxDOT projects

By Michele Weisman
The Belton Journal

State Representative Hillary Hickland met with Belton business owners on Feb. 3 at Schoepf's BBQ restaurant about discussions she has been having with the Texas Department of Transportation about the proposed IH-35 and IH-14 widening project.

The original plan for the project would be to remove the two current freeway accesses to downtown Belton.

This meeting was a way for Hickland to continue the conversation after a public meeting TxDOT held at the Cadence

Bank Center on Jan. 14.

More than 100 businesses bring commerce into the area, and easy access to Belton is of high concern to the owners.

Prior to the meeting, Leila Valchar, owner of My Giving Tree said, "We support safety and progress, but not at the cost of cutting off access. The proposed design would move key exits more than two miles away and could create a highway over 20 lanes wide through Belton, which will directly affect emergency medical services and response times."

Before the gathering, Luke Potts, owner of Cochran Blair & Potts

said, "I really appreciate representative Hillary Hickland taking our concerns so seriously. Having conversations behind the scenes. I appreciate her providing updates and meeting with us and changes that may take place."

Ronnie Schoepf, before hosting the event at Schoepf's BBQ said, "We all want to see TxDOT do the right thing with extra safety." He was asked to host the meeting for the business owners.

The Texas to Georgia Forts-to-Ports Connectivity Corridor began a feasibility study in 2008. It encompassed the US 190 Corridor across Central

Texas. Congress, in 2015, created the Central Texas Corridor, taking the US 190 route designating it the Future I-14.

Known as Fort-to-Ports, this project falls under the Gulf Coast Strategic Highway Coalition.

Mayor David Leigh, at the meeting, spoke about the history of the project. He said they're looking at alignment between Killeen to Belton to be easy. He noted that this initiative runs between key military installations.

After the meeting Leigh said, "There is

See TxDOT,
Page A2

TABLE OF CONTENTS
Obituaries.....A3
Lifestyles.....A4
B-TOWN.....A5
Church Directory.....A6
Sports.....B1
Classifieds.....B4
Editorial.....B6
Service Directory.....B7
Business Showcase.....B8

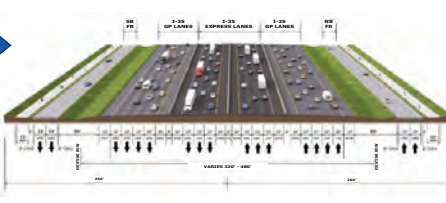
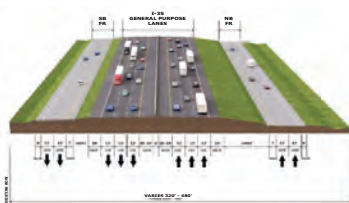
Existing and Proposed Typical Sections

Typical existing section along I-35

- Three lanes of traffic in each direction.
- Two-lane frontage road in each direction.

Typical proposed improvements along I-35

- Three express lanes and four general-purpose lanes in each direction.
- Two- or three-lane frontage roads in each direction.
- A shared-use path on each side.



I-14 Extension: I-35 Improvements from Belton to Temple

Bell County voters to head to the polls starting Tuesday

By Lynette Sowell
The Belton Journal

The March 3 primary elections are less than two weeks away, and early voting starts Tuesday, Feb 17 for the Republican and Democratic primaries.

Polls will be open Tuesday, Feb. 17 through Friday, Feb. 27 Hours are 8 a.m. until 5 p.m. next week.

On Saturday, Feb. 21 polls will be open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., and on Sunday, Feb. 22 from noon until 6 p.m. Polls will open from Tuesday, Feb. 17 through Friday, Feb. 27.

For opposed races in which a candidate does not receive a 50-percent plus one majority vote, those races will be decided in a May 26 runoff election.

For races which do not have a candidate running in the opposing party, the March 3 primary will be the deciding race for that county position. Primary winners would then take office on Jan. 1, 2027.

For county offices with candidates from Republican and Democratic parties, the winner will be determined in the Nov. 3 election.

See VOTERS,
Page A1



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Czech Heritage Museum invites community to preview new museum design

Special to the Journal

The SPJST Foundation invites the public to a special community update regarding the future of the Czech Heritage Museum & Genealogy Center.

The free event is set for Sunday, Feb. 15, from 2 to 5 p.m. at the SPJST Home Office. The office is located at 520 North Main St. in Temple.

Attendees will enjoy a traditional Czech “svačina,” or light snack. They will also see the first look at the museum’s new home.

The new space will offer a modern, interactive ex-

perience. It features a flexible theatre and an art gallery. The design includes expanded exhibit areas and dedicated learning spaces.

The Foundation has partnered with Pillar Architecture Studio for this project. The Temple-based firm specializes in community-minded design. Their team has provided 3D modeling and schematic plans for the best ways to improve the museum for preservation and guest experience.

SPJST President/CEO Brian Vanicek explains the modernization and relocation of the museum.

“We want to reimagine what a regional culture institu-

tion can be,” Vanicek said. “Our Museum Advisory Board envisions a ‘living museum’ to inspire cultural discovery for future generations.”

Founded in 1897, SPJST is a fraternal benefit society committed to enriching the lives of its members and strengthening communities through fellowship, service, and financial security. With a strong focus on education, volunteerism, and meaningful member engagement, SPJST offers life insurance and annuity products along with youth and adult programs across Texas. Learn more at www.spjst.org.

New Life Methodist Church celebrates land loan payoff

Special to the Journal

On Sunday, Feb. 1, New Life Methodist Church announced a major milestone in its young history. Treasurer John C. Perry shared with the congregation that the loan used to purchase the church’s five-acre property on Williams Road, acquired just over two years ago, has now been fully paid off.

The land, located across from Salado Middle School and just south of the new Salado High School currently under construction, will serve as the future site of

the church’s permanent home.

Pastor Tom Lathen expressed deep gratitude for the moment.

“God has poured out blessing after blessing on this congregation,” he said. “We give Him all the praise for guiding us, sustaining us, and allowing us to share the Good News of Jesus Christ with the Salado community. This is a joyful step toward the future He is preparing for us.” Following the announcement, Administrative Council Chairman Greg Siegel introduced the

church’s newly launched capital campaign to raise funds for the construction of the future building.

The campaign theme, “Building Faith. Building Families. Building Our Future.” reflects the congregation’s commitment to spiritual growth, community, and long-term ministry in Salado. The fundraising goal is \$2 million, and the campaign began with remarkable generosity, one church family has already contributed \$250,000 to help launch the effort.

Pastor Lathen also shared that New Life Methodist Church will once again offer Lenten “Imposition of Ashes” at the church property on Wed., February 18, from 7-9 a.m., and again from 3:30 to 6:00 p.m. The church property is located at 1245 Williams Rd. People can simply drive up and have ashes placed without leaving their car. The Lenten tradition, observed by many Protestant denominations including Methodists, symbolizes repentance and the reminder of human mortality. Ashes, typically made from the

previous year’s Palm Sunday palms, are placed on the forehead in the sign of the cross, accompanied by the words from Genesis 3:19: “Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.” New Life Methodist Church is a Bible-based congregation affiliated with the Global Methodist Church. Founded a little over three years ago, the church currently meets each Sunday at Salado Middle School, with Adult Education at 9 a.m. and Worship Service at 10 a.m.

Leon Heights - From Page A1

Belton fire truck Q-2 rolled up behind them. The final showing in the parade was a school bus with a banner that read, “Our Past Principals: the heart of 70 years,” and the former principals waved from the bus.

Vallery Millar, a retired choir director, played the piano at the reception.

Principal Lexie Newberry opened the reception with a welcome message.

“This is a school that has long stood at the heart of the community. Relationships here are strong. Community is such an important part of this campus. I’m honored to serve as this principal and to walk in the footsteps of so many familiar faces that I see here today. Each and every one of you have helped shaped the spirit of this campus that we all cherish,” said Newberry.

Debra Johnson, the choir director, was introduced

and the Honor Choir of third to fifth-grade students stepped onto the stage. They were dressed in ‘70s themed clothing and accessories. Their first song was *Dancing Queen*, performed with choreography. They returned to the stage one more time to sing *Love Train* by the O’Jays.

There was a time of reflection for the guests and staff. Several retired employees spoke about their time at the school.

Johnson spoke about the self-discipline and goal-setting that the children in choir learned. She also listed events Honor Choir took part in over the years.

Pittenger shared one of his fondest memories when in 2016, Leon Heights was named a Blue Ribbon winner for a national award. The conference celebrating it was in Washington, DC.

“Nobody knew where Belton was. That was the big

question. We got to tell where Belton was and what Leon Heights Elementary was about. Our students, y’all, are carrying on a great legacy,” said Pittenger.

Wayne Carpenter, a former principal, said, “We had a great community. This is a wonderful school community. The parents here have always been extremely supportive.”

Judy Trader, formerly the librarian at the school, spoke about how much she enjoyed her job with the kids.

Retired Lead Custodian, Sara Arjon started work at Leon Heights as a custodian. She said she was so happy to be a part of Belton ISD. She hoped her daughter would teach at Leon Heights one day, and she recently was hired.

The anniversary celebration was originally planned for Tuesday, Jan 27; the inclement weather caused the celebration to be rescheduled.

TxDot - From Page A1

always going to be tension between progress and a little town. Everyone wants the least negative impact and safety. Hickland and (Sen. Pete) Flores are making sure Belton has a seat at the table. There is legislative work to be done, and Hickland and Flores are working toward that.”

Hickland reported she met with TxDOT engineers from the Waco district on Thursday, Jan. 22, at her district office. The meeting lasted just short of three hours as they evaluated the feasibility of options. She has also reached out to TxDOT Commissioner Alex Meade and Commissioner Christi Craddick of the Railroad Commission

of Texas.

Hickland said, “I communicated the necessity for increased access to downtown.” Per their meeting, TxDOT is “evaluating several options with their consultants.”

Hickland assures “she is not slowing down.” And TxDOT is “willing to meet with stakeholders, and the official comment period is still open. It is not a closed door.”

“This one project has the potential to effect historic significance, the character of a city,” Hickland added. “It’s crucial we get movement on a solution. TxDOT is looking at having another hearing this summer.”

Hickland is seeing “uniform concern” and is “encouraging colleges in legislature to recognize the urgency of the issue.”

Chip Howell attended the meeting, representing Senator Pete Flores.

After the meeting, Cynthia Hernandez, executive director of Belton Economic Development Corporation (BEDC) said, “There seems to be a collaboration. It’s nice to watch advocacy for Belton’s best interest from the business owners, to community, to state level, government officials, and local officials. They seem to all be speaking in one voice...It was a great meeting from the BEDC perspective. Hickland

gave an overview of her efforts of support for Belton and who she reached out to at the state level.”

Including businesses, the proposed project affects access to Belton ISD buildings, the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor, and Parks & Recreation events. The meeting was originally planned for Monday, Jan. 26 in the evening. Due to the inclement weather, it was rescheduled for Feb. 3.

The project page can be viewed on the TxDOT website at <https://www.txdot.gov/projects/hearings-meetings/waco/2026/i14-extension-segment-1-011326.html>.



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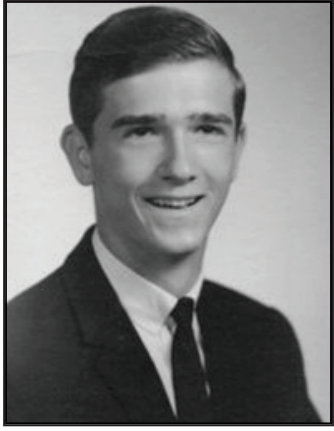
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OBITUARIES



Doerr

Ronnie Lynn Doerr
December 17, 1950 – July 27, 2025

Ronnie Lynn Doerr of Morgan's Point Resort, Texas passed away on July 27th, 2025

Ronnie was born on December 17th, 1950, to Oscar J. Doerr and Annie M. Supak Doerr in Austin, Texas.

Ronnie is preceded in death by his parents and wife Clara Bernice Cloughly Doerr of 50 years, who passed just six months prior, his brother O. J. Doerr and sister Janice Doerr Heath.

Ronnie is survived by his sister Janie R. Doerr Kollman of Round Rock, Texas

Ronnie was a graduate of the University of Texas and a CPA. Ronnie enjoyed listening to music and watching movies. He will be remembered as a generous friend, outdoor enthusiast, and Texas Longhorn Fan.

Bauer

Josh Bauer
November 18, 1974 – January 27, 2026

Josh Bauer, affectionately known as "Huckleberry Slim" or "Huck," passed away unexpectedly in his home on Tuesday, January 27, 2026, at the age of 51. Born on November 18, 1974, in Waco, Texas to Steven Bauer and Lisa Dove, Josh lived a life marked by service, dedication, and an indomitable spirit.

Josh's educational journey included graduating from Leander High School in 1993. He further pursued a nursing degree at the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor, followed by attending the Killeen Police Academy and the federal academy in Little Rock, Arkansas, where he graduated with accommodations for leadership.

An accomplished individual, Josh served his country with great honor. He began his career in military service as an intelligence specialist in the Marine Corps. After his time there, he further enriched his life experience by becoming a firefighter in Newbern, NC, before enlisting in the US Army as a shooting instructor. His commitment to serving did not end with his military service, he continued to contribute to his community in various capacities, including working with Exxon Mobile, All Weather Restoration, and as a police officer for local authorities, where he also served as an extradition officer for the Marshal's office.

Josh was known for his passionate nature which shown after he met Jillene Marie Tatum he was determined to make her his wife and blend their lives together. He was also known for his fierce determination to stand up for those in need. Described as stub-

born yet selfless, he was a funny man with magnetic energy who drew people to him. His loved ones fondly remember him as the problem solver within the family and among friends, a courageous individual who exemplified the standard of a true man. Josh cherished his faith, family, and country, and he kept a servant's heart throughout his life.

In his leisure time, Josh found joy in watching baseball, particularly the Astros and Rangers, as well as enjoying football games and cozy family movie nights. He took pride in his collection of watches, and those who saw him around town would often find him driving his pick-up truck named Ashley. His love for family was evidenced in the day trips and travels they shared together.

Josh is survived by his beloved wife, Jillene Marie (Tatum) Bauer; two sons, Josh and Charlie; four daughters, Kelsey, Emily, Lillian, and Clara; two brothers, Eric, Jacob; sister, Candi; and grandson, William. He is preceded in death by his mother, Lisa Dove, and one daughter, Cheyenne Bauer.

A graveside service will be held in his memory at Carlton Cemetery, located .5 miles west of Carlton on FM 2823, Carlton, TX, on February 14, 2026. Visitation will start at 2 p.m., with the graveside service starting at 3 p.m., with a Celebration of Life following at the Hamilton Community Center.

In lieu of flowers please consider making a memorial donation to the local Ronald McDonald House or to St. Jude's Children's Hospital.

Josh Bauer's life was a testament to his unwavering dedication to his family and country. His legacy will continue to inspire those who knew and loved him.

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

Filing ends Friday for City, BISD May 2 elections

By David Stone
The Belton Journal

The city of Belton and Belton Independent School District will officially have a joint election on May 2 to elect Place 1 and 2 council members and two at-large school board seats.

The first day to file an application for a place on the ballot was Jan. 14, and

the last day is Feb. 13. Remember to register to vote by April 2. Voting hours on May 2 will be 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

The BISD at-large positions are currently held by Rucker Preston and Brandon Bozon. The city positions are currently held by John R. Holmes Sr, Place 1, and Dave Covington, Place 2.

If either the city or

school district is allowed to cancel its election, the joint-election contract will be nullified, according to Belton City Clerk Amy Casey.

The city will rent election equipment from the Bell County Elections Department at a cost of \$20 per machine. The city has \$10,000 budgeted for ballot preparation, voting equipment and supplies,

and poll-worker compensation and training.

Any candidate receiving a majority of votes cast for an office will be elected, but in the event of a tie or in the event that no candidate has the majority of votes a run-off election will be held on June 13 between the hours of 7 a.m. and 7 p.m.

If a run-off is needed, the names of the two can-

didates receiving the highest number of votes will be on the ballot. A drawing would be held to determine the order that names will appear on the ballot.

Early voting for the May 2 election will be at Belton City Hall, 333 Water Street. Applications for early voting by mail can be obtained from the City Clerk, (254) 933-5817.

Election Day voting

will be at Harris Community Center, 401 Alexander, Belton.

Related action at Tuesday's City Council meeting included adopting an ordinance ordering the May 2 election, authorizing an agreement with Belton ISD for conducting a joint election, and authorizing a deal with Bell County for the lease of election equipment.

Voters - From Page A1

Early Voting in Person Locations

Belton Annex, 550 East 2nd Ave.
Morgan's Point Event Center, 60 Morgan's Point Blvd.
Salado Annex, 11057 Event Dr., Salado
Temple ISD Admin Building, 401 Santa Fe Way, Temple
True Deliverance Ministry, 709 W. Dean Ave., Killeen
Jackson Professional Learning Center,
902 Rev. R.A. Abercrombie Dr., Killeen
Senior Center @ Lions Club Park,
1700 E. Stan Schlueter Loop, Killeen
Harker Heights Parks & Recreation Center,
307 Millers Crossing

For County Offices

Republican Party Candidates

County Judge - David Blackburn,
Theodore "Ted" Duffield
Judge, County Court at Law No. 1 - Paul Motz
Judge, County Court at Law No. 2 - John Mischian
Judge, County Court at Law No. 3 - John Gauntt, Jr
District Clerk - Pam Blair, Lacey Martindale
County Clerk - Shelley Coston
County Treasurer - Gaylon Evans
County Commissioner Precinct 2 - Bobby Whitson

Republican Party Candidates Cont.

County Commissioner Precinct 4 - Curtis Emmons
Justice of the Peace Precinct 1 - Joey Agee,
Patrick "Pat" Patterson
Justice of the Peace Precinct 2 - Gary D. Meyer,
Richard Sapp, Buddy Schwab, Michael Tice
Justice of the Peace Precincts 3, Place 2 -
Larry Wilkey
Justice of the Peace Precinct 4, Place 2 -
Beatrice "Bea" Cox

Democratic Party Candidates

County Chair, Democratic Party - Brandy L. L. Byrd,
Teresa "Tess" Griffin, Terry Mustapher
County Commissioner Precinct 2 - Stacey L. Wilson
County Commissioner Precinct 4 - Louie Minor,
Ernest Wilkerson
Justice of the Peace Precinct 4, Place 2 -
Jessica A. Gonzalez, Nicola J. James,
Latasha Carroway Quarles

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Thursday,
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LIFESTYLES

THE BELTON JOURNAL

Commissioners hear Hope Pregnancy Center presentation



Courtesy Photo

Katie McRae, director of the Hope Pregnancy Center, spoke to Bell County Commissioners last week about Hope Pregnancy Center, which has offices in Temple, Killeen and Copperas Cove.

By David Stone
The Belton Journal

Hope Pregnancy Centers in Temple, Killeen and Copperas Cove served 6,240 clients and distributed more than 25,000 baby items during 2025, Center director Katie McRae told Bell County Commissioners last week.

The Center is a Christ-centered, life-affirming support program for women, men and families in Bell and Coryell counties, McRae said during a presentation at Tuesday's morning workshop.

"We offer compassionate care with dignity and truth," she said.

"We help a lot of families in the area — providing support so women don't end up in an emergency room," McRae added. "There's an OB shortage, especially in Texas, so there's a long wait to see the doctor in emergency rooms."

An OB doctor specializes in prenatal care, pregnancy, childbirth, and postpartum care, often in combination with gynecological services.

"We believe every human life begins at conception and is worthy of protect," McRae continued. "Hope Pregnancy Center offers Christ-centered support to women and men navigating pregnancy, providing life-affirming guidance and post-abortion healing through our community of centers, churches and partner organizations."

Of the clients served during 2025, 2,499 were new clients.

"We administered 1,776 pregnancy tests and 1,130 ultrasounds," she said. "About 21 percent of our clients last year were connected to the military, and 68 percent were Medicaid eligible. Another 75 percent were WIC eli-

gible."

In addition to administrating tests, the Hope Pregnancy Center's facilities monitor blood pressure stats, provide abortion information and offer counseling.

"The Center holds virtual classes, in-person classes and incentives for course completion," McRae added. "We also provide diapers, wipes, car seats, and maternity and baby clothes to those in need."

McRae said one of Hope's newest programs is geared toward men.

"Hope Dads is a program that equips fathers to lead, provide and stay engaged," she said. "Dads are making a comeback — a huge portion of our women clients don't know who the father of their child is or the dad doesn't feel like they can come to the Pregnancy Center with the mom. We want to get those dads involved."

"Hope Dads connects men to programs in the community to get them jobs and keep them employed," she said. "It also provides parenting education for dads and connects them to churches where they have a connection to the community and mentors."

McRae said Hope Pregnancy Center is a strategic partner for Bell County.

"We're making a difference and would like to expand across Bell and Coryell counties."

While McRae didn't ask Commissioners Court for financial assistance, Bell County Judge David Blackburn urged her to apply for monetary aid.

"We provide funding for about 20 to 25 agencies," he said. "There's a process — an application. But, unfortunately, there is more need than we have dollars."

Monday Night Hikes provides guided walks for all ages

By David Stone
The Belton Journal

More than 40 people showed up at Miller Springs Nature Center last week for the inaugural Monday Night Hikes, a new program started by Belton Parks & Recreation.

The park, located at 1473 F.M. 2271, is home to miles of scenic trails and a recently recreated boardwalk and observation deck.

The walk is open to

all skill levels and starts at 5:30 p.m. every Monday.

The guided hike lasts about an hour, according to James Grant, executive director of Belton Parks & Recreation.

"This is brand new, but we had a huge turnout at our first hike," Grant said. "It was more than we anticipated — I think this is going to be well received by Belton area residents."

Grant said the hike will vary from week to week, but for now all hikes will be at Miller Springs.

"The hikes will depend on the crowd," he said. "If we have a lot of small children and

elderly folks, the hike will be to the observatory and back, which is about a mile. But we can break the crowd into two groups based on age and take two guided hikes — something for everyone."

"We can expand it to increase the distance and height we hike — more of an advanced hike," Grant explained.

"A lot of residents stay away from Miller Springs because they worry about getting lost in the wilderness. But these hikes are guided — you won't get lost. Once people have been out on the trails, they can go out on their own."

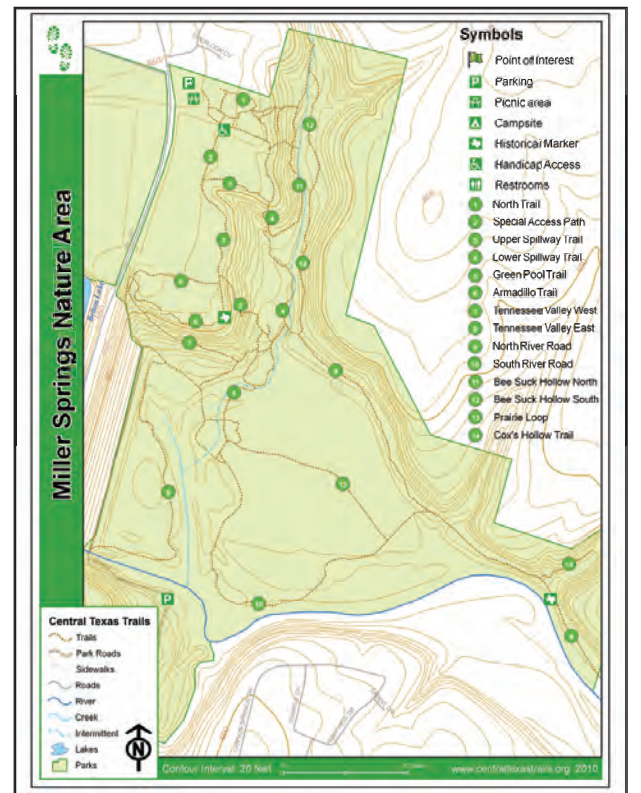
Grant said the more advanced hikes will take

steeper routes and go further into the massive park. Miller Springs is owned by the US Army Corps of Engineers and operated by the cities of Belton and Temple.

Temple takes care of trails and general maintenance, and Belton handles activities and educational programs, according to Grant.

"The weather is getting warmer," he said. "This is a perfect time to go hiking." He added that the number of trails at Miller Springs provides hikers with many options.

"Our intent is to get people out to the park and enjoy the wilderness," Grant said.



Gift provides needed funds for new UMHB science lab

By David Stone
The Belton Journal

Construction on a new 56,032-square-foot science lab could begin this summer with a goal of opening

in January 2028, according to a statement by the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor.

An anonymous donor has offered a \$1 million gift plus a \$5 million challenge grant to help fund construction of the new state-of-the-art facility. To receive the full \$5 million grant, the university must raise an additional \$5 million for the project by the end of this year.

Along with resources

See LAB
Page A7



Courtesy Graphic

An architect's rendering shows the new three-story science lab planned for the UMHB campus. The building would be located on the corner of Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue and College Street, directly across from the Davidson and Heard buildings.

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Local Activities & Events

Newcomers Club Activities

February

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 02/12: Mexican Train Dominoes | 02/23: Well Read Women, |
| 02/13: TGIF Lunch | Monday Canasta |
| 02/14: Exploring Wine | 02/24: Singing Bluebonnets |
| 02/16: Snack Time Mah Jongg | 02/25: Fun Lunch |
| 02/17: Footloose Singles, Bunco | 02/26: Mexican Train Dominoes |
| 02/19: Nonfiction Book Club, Couples | 02/27: Trailblazers Walking Group |
| Night, Meet & Greet | 02/28: Jimmy's Egg |
| 02/21: Exploring Wine | |

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

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.

Bell County Master Gardeners - Feb 12 & 18

Join us for our next Herb Roundtable as we explore Valerian, Ashwagandha and St. John's Wart. We will discuss its history, uses, growing considerations, and more. These roundtables are an interactive, discussion-based sessions where everyone is encouraged to share and learn together. Choose between two dates- February 12th, Thursday 6pm or February 18th, Wednesday 10am Bell County Extension Office- Learning Center, 1605 N. Main Street, Belton. No registration needed.

Bell County Museum Historic Escape Games - Mar 6

A robbery has been committed and we need your help to solve it! You have one hour to solve the crime and "escape" the museum. Bell County Museum - 201 N Main St, Belton Pre-registration is required and available online at bellcountymuseum.org. Call 254-933-5243 for more information.

Bell County Master Gardeners - Mar 7

Registration for the March 7th, 2026, Spring Garden Forum, "Gardens that Nourish" is now open! Join us Saturday, March 7th for a community gardening forum offering expert-led talks designed to inspire and inform Central Texas gardeners. Hear from an outstanding lineup of speakers Saturday, March 7, 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. at Temple College Pavilion, 1903 S 1st St, Temple, TX Register at txmg.org.

SPJST Hosts Public 42 Domino Tournament - Mar 7

Compete in the Texas classic game of dominoes at the SPJST 42 Domino Tournament Saturday, March 7. All seasoned and new players are encouraged to join. The tournament offers a full day of friendly competition, prizes, and community fellowship. Held at the SPJST Home Office, 520 North Main Street, Temple, Texas, check-in runs from 8 to 8:45 a.m. Play time begins at 9 a.m. The tournament is open to players 16 and older. Registration is \$30 and includes admission, lunch, snacks, and refreshments. Seating is limited, with space available for 30 teams. This is a two-player format, and partners will be assigned if needed. Prizes will be awarded to the top teams. Registration is available online at spjst.org/tournaments. For more information, please call 254-773-1575, ext. 164, or email tammym@spjst.com

NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) will meet both on TUESDAY, Feb. 10th and Feb. 24th 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@mcl1249tx.com for more information.

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

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

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

that consist of preservation, cemetery, markers and education. To volunteer or for more information please visit historicalcommission@bellcounty.texas.gov, call 254-933-5917 or visit the office located in the historic Bell County Courthouse, 101 E. Central Ave., RM 117. **Pistons on the Creek** will meet every third Friday from 5:30 p.m. to 11 p.m. Come down to Nolan Creek and show off your rides. From classic to modern, muscle, rat rod, exotic, all automotive enthusiasts are welcome. Support our awesome downtown businesses and restaurants surrounded by live music, food, drinks and a great atmosphere.

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

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

Community Information

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

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

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

Citizens Helping in Police Service (CHIPS)

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

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

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

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

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 - Hope Tabernacle 202 E. 1st Ave. ~ 254.933.8222
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 - Lakeview Baptist Church 7717 N Hwy. 317 ~ 254.780.1884
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 - Grace Presbyterian Church 2401 S 57th ~ 254.773.2134
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Living Jubilee Today



John C. Perry

Every so often, I find myself wishing for a reset button. Life piles up, debts, obligations, regrets, burdens, and I wonder what it would feel like to start fresh, to start anew. As it turns out, God has done just that. He has built such a rhythm into the life of His people. It's called Jubilee.

In the Old Testament, Leviticus

25 describes Jubilee as a sacred year, observed every fiftieth year, announced with the blast of a ram's horn on the Day of Atonement. Imagine the sound echoing across the hills of Israel: a trumpet declaring freedom, restoration, and rest. In that year, the land was not to be planted or harvested. Debts were released. Hebrew slaves were set free. Property was returned to its original families. It was God's way of reminding His people that the land, the people, and even their future belonged to Him.

Jubilee was more than an economic reset. It was a spiritual declaration: "This world is God's world, and we are His stewards." By commanding rest for the land, God showed His care for creation. By releasing

debts and restoring property, He showed His mercy for the poor and vulnerable. By reuniting families, He showed His heart for community. Jubilee was justice wrapped in grace, a rhythm of renewal woven into the fabric of Israel's life.

I had my own little "Jubilee moment" not long ago. I sold my beloved C8 Corvette, a car I cherished, polished, and paraded with pride. It was more than a vehicle; it was a symbol of a chapter in my life. But Sandra and I decided it was time for a reset, to focus on something we could do together. So, we traded horsepower for ocean waves, and we bought a beach condo in Destin.

That decision, however, was more than real estate, it was about restoration. My wife is the ultimate

beach person, and this gives us something we can do together. A new rhythm, a new chapter, a fresh reminder that life is best lived in partnership, not possessions.

And here's what I think is the real beauty of Jubilee, it points us today to Jesus. When He stood in the synagogue and read from Isaiah, proclaiming "freedom for the captives" (Luke 4:18), He was announcing the ultimate Jubilee. In Christ, we find release from sin, restoration of our brokenness, and rest for our weary souls.

So, what does Jubilee look like today?

It looks like rest, choosing to pause in a world that never stops, trusting God's provision.

It looks like release, more than

forgiving debts, but letting go of grudges, freeing ourselves and others from burdens.

It looks like restoration, mending relationships, reconnecting with family, caring for creation, and rebuilding community.

Jubilee is not just an ancient Old Testament ritual; it's an invitation to live in God's rhythms of grace. To rest from striving, to release what binds us, and to restore what has been lost. Imagine the freedom if we lived Jubilee not just every fifty years, but every day.

John C. Perry is the Immediate Past 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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Burn ban issued following weekend fires

Special to the Journal

Bell County Judge David Blackburn has issued an Emergency Burn Ban, which took effect at 8:00 p.m. Tuesday.

The decision to issue this ban came after a week-end of heavy fires across the county.

The Bell County Office of Emergency Management noted an increase in fire activity on Friday, Feb. 6. By the end of the weekend, the number of fires reported (30) was double that of the previous week (15).

“We were stretched very thin in terms of trucks,” Emergency Management Coordinator Bob Reinhard said. “We ended up needing support from McLennan, Falls, and Williamson Counties to respond to some of them.”

“The decision to issue an emergency burn ban order is always based on several factors, to include a

state-generated drought index measure for our county,” Blackburn said. “I also consider the actual conditions on the ground here in Bell County.”

“This past week we have seen a significant increase in the number of grass fires across the county. That, along with recommendation from our Emergency Management office, were persuasive enough for me to issue the Burn Ban order at this time,” Judge Blackburn said.

The Keetch-Byram Drought Index (KBDI) is a tool used to estimate how likely wildfires are in an area. It looks at how much moisture is in the ground by weighing ongoing dry conditions against recent rainfall. The index runs from 0 to 800, with lower numbers showing moist soil and little fire risk, and higher numbers showing very dry conditions and a much greater fire danger.

The average KBDI score across Bell County is

271, which is lower than would usually lead to the issuance of a Burn Ban. However, those numbers on their own don’t explain last weekend’s fires.

“The ground is moist after the ice storm we experienced at the end of last month,” Reinhard said. “However, that same storm dried out all the vegetation, which is now very tall, which poses a fire risk regardless the wet ground around it.”

Residents living in unincorporated areas of Bell County are prohibited from outdoor burning. The order does not prohibit welding or the use of barbecue pits.

Violations of the Burn Ban constitute a Class C Misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$500.

“Our hope is that we might get enough rain this week and over the weekend that we can just allow the ban to expire without being reissued,” Blackburn said.

Library receives state accolades

By David Stone
The Belton Journal

Belton’s Lena Armstrong Public Library has been awarded the 2025 Achievement of Library Excellence Award from the Texas Municipal Library Directors Association. The award was announced at Tuesday’s City Council meeting.

Of the 516 public library systems in Texas, only 101 received the award, according to Michelle Cervantes, association president.

“The application clearly demonstrated your commitment to providing exceptional service to your community,” Cervantes wrote to Library Director Amanda Hairston late last month. “Your library is now in the top 20 percent of all public libraries in Texas.”

“We know you will want to proudly display your accolades, which include a congratulatory letter, a digital medal and an award template that can be used to order a plaque,”

Cervantes wrote.

“The digital medal is an image file that can be used on websites, email signatures, stationery, and other official library promotional materials. The digital image can be made to be clickable to the TMLDA award site or to a page displaying your accomplishment.”

“The Texas Municipal Library Director’s Association wants to thank you for enriching the lives of your residents and providing your community with outstanding and innovative services.”

To receive the award a library must submit any application that shows they exhibit excellence in 10 service areas which include:

Services to underserved populations either through outreach, special programs, collaborations with other libraries or organizations, special classes, special collections, etc.

See ACCOLADES
Page A8



File photo

Belton’s Lena Armstrong Public Library has been awarded the 2025 Achievement of Library Excellence Award from the Texas Municipal Library Directors Association.

Lab - From Page A4

already secured, a successful challenge would make it possible for the \$50 million project to be fully funded, according to Dr. Randy O’Rear, UMHB president.

“Praise God for his continued blessings on UMHB and for this generous donor,” O’Rear said. “This amazing grant supports our vision of becoming the university of choice for Christian higher education in the Southwest by continuing to invest in first-class facilities at UMHB.”

Randy Pittenger, president of the Belton Area Chamber of Commerce, said the continued investment in the community was “exciting news.”

“UMHB continues to invest in quality facilities to provide opportunities for students to learn and develop,” Pittenger said. “This new facility will help attract even more students to Belton, thereby providing more opportunities for workforce development.”

“Quality education and training create quality jobs and promote our economy, both locally and beyond,” he added. “We are proud of how UMHB invests in our community and in its students, and we look forward to seeing how this new facility helps grow our community.”

The new three-story science facility will feature 13 science labs, along with conference rooms and a student gathering space, creating a dynamic environment for both teaching and research.

The first floor — totaling 20,259 square feet — will welcome students and visitors through a lobby that serves as a central hub for collaboration and connection. This level will include a student lounge and study rooms, as well as conference rooms and administrative offices, fostering interaction among students, faculty, and staff.

The second floor — encompassing 16,275 square feet — will be dedicated to biology laboratories, providing flexible, modern lab spaces to support instruction and experimentation.

The 19,498-square-foot third floor will primarily house chemistry laboratories. This level will also include dedicated research and collaborative areas, enhancing academic support and study opportunities.

Each lab will feature state-of-the-art technology for hands-on learning, and it will serve the large population of biology and health science majors attracted to UMHB’s strong undergraduate and graduate health programs.

The current lab science requirement in the university’s general education core means that this building will be used by the majority of UMHB’s undergraduate student body. The facility will also include approximately 40 new offices for faculty and staff.

“This new science lab facility will be a beautiful and modern addition to our campus that will open doors to countless learning opportunities for UMHB students,” O’Rear said. “I am excited to see how God will continue to use the facilities, programs, and people of UMHB to impact the lives of college students for years to come.”

Street Project - From Page A1

and regional partners working with city staff to secure multiple rounds of funding and to make the project “shovel-ready.” Partners include Bell County, the Killeen-Temple Metropolitan Planning Organization, and the Texas Department of Transportation.

“Carter has been working on this project all the way,” said Listi.

State Rep. Hillary Hickland said it’s great when all levels of government can come together to benefit the people.

Officials said the Connell Street improvements will enhance safety, connectivity, and mobility in one of Belton’s fastest-growing corridors.



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902 Rev R A Abercrombie Dr. Killeen, TX 76543
Senior Center @ Lions Club Park,
1700 E. Stan Schlueter Loop, Killeen, TX 76542

TEMPLE
Temple ISD Admin Building,
401 Santa Fe Way, Temple, TX 76501

SALADO
Salado Annex, 11057 Event Drive,
Salado, TX 76571

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Parks & Recreation Center,
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MORGAN'S POINT EVENT CENTER
60 Morgan's Point Blvd
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SCHEDULE

Tuesday, February 17 to Friday, February 20: 8:00 am - 5:00 pm
Saturday, February 21: 7:00 am - 7:00 pm
Sunday, February 22: 12:00 pm - 6:00 pm
Monday, February 23 to Friday, February 27: 7:00 am - 7:00 pm

Accolades - From Page A7

Innovative and effective marketing materials highlighting basic services and publicity about specific programs the library offers

Collaborative efforts with community organizations

Enhanced service to the public during the past year either through increase in service or a change in type of services

Literacy support for all ages (including summer reading programs)

Support for digital inclusion through public internet access, digital literacy training,

and online library services

Support for workforce development

Cultural, topical, and educational programming for adults and families

Professional staff training to include training opportunities for staff at all levels

Any other initiatives that speak to library excellence

The Texas Municipal Library Directors Association is an affiliate of the Texas Municipal League, which has more than 1,100 member cities.

Did you know?

Valentine's Day celebrants who can't wait for the arrival of February 14 each year may want to add India to their must-visit list of travel destinations. That's because Valentine's Day celebrations in India have now expanded into a week-long festival sometimes referred to as "Valentine's Week." Each day of the week between February 7 and Febru-

ary 14 has its own unique designation. Those designations are as follows:

- February 7: Rose Day
- February 8: Propose Day
- February 9: Chocolate Day
- February 10: Teddy Day
- February 11: Promise Day
- February 12: Hug Day
- February 13: Kiss Day

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Happy Valentine's Day



Just for Laughs

What did the octopus say to their valentine?

I want to hold your hand, hand, hand, hand, hand, hand, hand, hand!

Why are roses so popular on Valentine's Day?

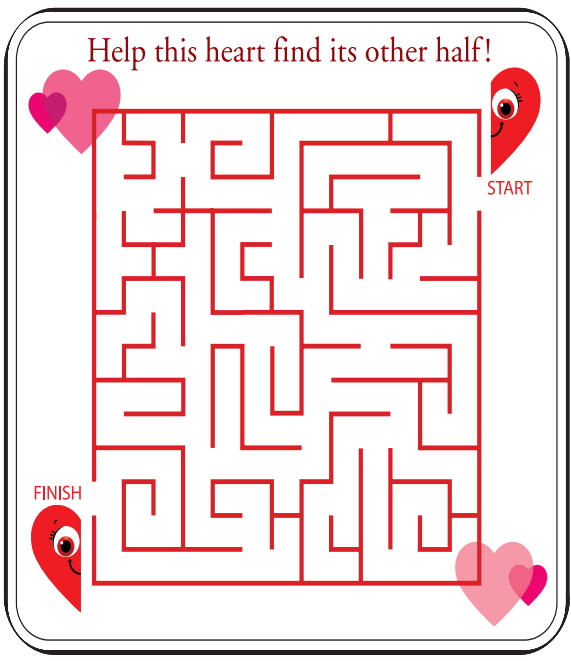
They're scent-imental!

What did the magnet say to the refrigerator?

I'm very attracted to you!

Why did the monkeys get married?

They were bananas about each other!



Spelling Scramble
Unscramble these love-ly letters!

DUIPC _____

ADYCN _____

TREHAS _____

C E R N O M A _____

RWOAR _____

ANSWERS: cupid, candy, hearts, romance, arrow



History in the making at Belton New Tech @Waskow

Special to The Journal

Senior Claire Thomas Becomes the Campus's First Collegiate Signee

Belton New Tech @ Waskow marked a historic milestone on Friday as senior Claire Thomas officially signed her letter of intent to attend the University of Texas Permian Basin and compete as a member of the university's women's swimming program.

She is the first student athlete from New Tech to sign at the collegiate level.

Surrounded by family, coaches, classmates and staff, the signing recognized years of dedication, discipline and perseverance both in the pool and in the classroom.

"To me, signing my letter of intent means that I'm making a dedication to continue to show up and work hard at something I love," Thomas said. "It's about continuing to be the best version of myself through my college experience. Knowing that this is the first signing for my campus is really exciting, and I'm proud to represent Belton New Tech."

Thomas chose UTPB for both personal and academic reasons, including her connection to the community and the supportive culture of the women's swimming program.

"I grew up in Odessa and felt very comfortable on campus when I visited," she said. "My dad earned his degree from UTPB, and on my tour I really connected with the positivity of the swim team and Coach Brian Schroeder.

"It's a place where I can see myself thriving both athletically and academically."

At UTPB, Thomas plans to pursue a Bachelor of Fine Arts in graphic design with a minor in mar-

keting, a path inspired by her Career and Technical Education coursework at New Tech.

"My time at New Tech really helped me discover what I enjoy, especially through my graphic design and art classes," Thomas said. "I've had so many opportunities to grow over the past four years, and I truly would not be where I am today in swimming or academically if it wasn't for my choice to attend Belton New Tech."

She added that the lessons learned through swimming have shaped her well beyond competition.

"Swimming has taught me accountability, discipline and dedication," Thomas said. "Showing up and working hard pays off, even when you don't feel like it. I carry those lessons with me outside the pool by holding myself accountable in school, making sure my work is completed and turned in on time, and even at home with things like my nutrition and screen time."

New Tech athletic coordinator Ben Bralley said the event represented an important milestone for the campus and its student athletes.

"Hosting our first athletic signing day was more than a celebration," Bralley said. "It was a statement that we recognize and value the commitment, sacrifices, and achievements of students who compete at a high level while representing our school with pride.

"This moment reflects the growth of our campus culture, the strength of our programs, and the belief that every student's journey deserves to be honored."

Bralley added that the event sends a clear message to student athletes about their future.

See UTPB,
Page B3

By Aries Ramos
The Belton Journal

Wrestlers from Belton High School and Lake Belton High School represented Belton ISD at the UIL Class 5A Regional Wrestling Tournament, competing against top athletes from across the region in one of the final qualifying events before the state meet.

The multi-day tournament featured both boys and girls divisions and required competitors to navigate championship and consolation brackets in a demanding test of focus.

Belton High School entered the regional tournament with multiple qualifiers on the boys side.

At 106 pounds, Antonio Enciso began his regional campaign with a strong championship round performance, earning a fall over a Frisco Heritage opponent. Enciso advanced to the quarterfinals, where he faced a Grapevine wrestler in a tightly contested match that was ultimately decided by a narrow margin. Dropping into the consolation bracket, Enciso battled through another competitive bout before his tournament concluded.

At 126 pounds, Jacob U'ren delivered Belton's most notable performance of the weekend. U'ren opened with a championship-round victory over an Argyle opponent to advance into the quarterfinals, where he faced a Frisco Centennial competitor. After moving into the consolation bracket, U'ren responded with multiple wins to remain in medal contention.

His effort culminated in a victory in the fifth-place match, securing a top-six finish and earning advancement to the UIL State Wrestling Tournament.

Additional Belton boys competitors included Jonathan Reardon at 132 pounds, Rylan Kranz at 215 pounds, and Beckett Butler at 285 pounds. Each wrestler encountered strong competition in the early rounds. Butler recorded a consolation-round victory at heavyweight before being eliminated, while

By Clay Whittington
The Belton Journal

With two games remaining in the regular-season schedule, the Tigers are right where they want to be — first place.

Belton cruised to a 22-point victory, 79-57, at Waco on Tuesday evening, and after entering the contest in a three-way tie atop the District 16-5A standings, there was more room to breathe following the win.

Along with the Tigers' showing, Killeen Ellison defeated Killeen Chaparral 40-36, dropping the Bobcats into

Belton earns key win over Waco, Lake Belton eliminated from playoff picture

third place, while the Eagles remain in first place with Belton.

Now, Belton is within reach of the league's championship.

The Tigers (6-2) travel to Lake Belton on Friday before hosting Waco University on Tuesday, and Ellison closes with a game at Waco and versus the visiting Broncos. The Bobcats play at home against Waco University and at Waco.

Noah Childers led Belton offensively against the Lions, finishing with 19 points, while teammate Jay'dn Loggins complemented the effort with 18 points.

The showing came on the heels of a 63-49 home loss to Ellison.

Lake Belton (1-7) is eliminated from playoff contention, but they still have plenty to play for.

The Broncos will look to snap a seven-game losing skid during the next week.

Against visiting University on Tuesday, Allen Muchunu and teammate Ameer Williams were Lake Belton's leading scorers with 14 and 12 points, respectively.

Prior to playing the Trojans, Mikey Lockett scored 17 points to go with nine rebounds and five steals, but it was not in a winning effort as Chaparral emerged with a 5-42 victory.

Belton ISD powerlifters prepare trek to State

By Clay Whittington
The Belton Journal

With the regional powerlifting meet rapidly approaching, Belton and Lake Belton are preparing to begin the trek toward state, and the Broncos recently proved they are almost in postseason form.

At last week's Little River-Academy Invitational, Lake Belton placed third in the boys division as seven lifters emerged from the meet with medals.

En route to amassing 33 points, four Broncos captured silver medals, including 165-pounder Stephen Ernst, who combined a 350-pound squat with a 205 bench press and 380 deadlift for a 935 total.

The performance was complemented by teammates J.C. Wolden (181, 435-315-410-1,160), Luke Cowan (275, 455-290-455-1,200) and Ashton Ward (super heavyweight, 395-225-415-1,035), who were each second in their respective weight classes.

Additionally, Brycen McWilliams (220, 410-285-375-1,070), Joseph Ferrell (242, 425-250-455-1,130) and Damien Wilkes (SHW,

305-275-405-985) were third for the Broncos.

Lake Belton's remaining points were produced by Cade Twist (4th, 181, 365-260-405-1,030) and Raul Martinez (4th, 242, 395-280-400-1,075), while teammate Jeffery Gonzales (6th, 165, 280-175-275-730), Jayden Alba (6th, 181, 325-250-385-960) and Lucas Antuna (7th, 181, 320-210-345-875) narrowly missed out on scoring.

Troy (1st, 64) and the host Bumblebees (2nd, 53) occupied the top spots in the final standings. Florence was fourth (28).

In the girls division, the Lady Broncos were fifth (8) thanks in part to three fourth-place performances from Hailey Martinez (105, 120-90-135-345), Annaleah Logan (132, 150-90-155-395) and Isabella Neels (148, 205-105-260-570).

Lake Belton's score was rounded out by Sarah Rogers (5th, 114, 120-55-110-285) and Claire Couture (5th, 148, 155-75-180-410).

Also representing the Lady Broncos was Olivia Raulerson-Greene (6th, 148, 120-75-135-330), America Dickerson (6th, 181, 90-50-155-295), Mariyah Ellis

(8th, 165, 210-100-230-540) and Haein Lee (DNP).

Troy (74) claimed the team championship, beating out Little River-Academy (2nd, 45), Florence (3rd, 17) and Gatesville (4th, 17).

The Tigers also competed last week, traveling to Copperas Cove for a tri-meet with Killeen Shoemaker and the host teams.

In the boys division, Belton scored 13 points to place third as Keaton Richardson earned a silver medal with a 385-185-400-970 total in the 275 weight class.

Brandon Henriguez (3rd, 181, 335-245-375-955), Cameron Jones (3rd, 275, 275-180-400-855) and Dominic Weinert (4th, 181, 360-200-320-880) also scored for the Tigers, who were also represented by Owen Rivera (DNP) and Cash Donnell (DNP).

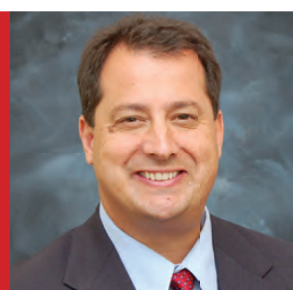
The Grey Wolves placed first (76), and the Bulldawgs were second (26).


Both teams from Belton and Lake Belton took part in Wednesday's Temple Invitational, but final results were not available.

The regional meet is set for March 7 at Del Valle.



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Sports Briefs

By Clay Whittington
The Belton Journal

Lady Tigers standout Kirra Martin and multiple Lake Belton athletes are bound for the upcoming University Interscholastic League Class 5A Swimming & Diving State Meet following their showings at regionals.

In the Region VI meet at College Station on Saturday, the junior placed fifth in the 100-yard backstroke with a personal-best time of 1 minute, 0.6 seconds, earning her a call-up berth in the event.

She was fifth amongst the call-up qualifiers, who

produced the eight best times across the state behind the automatic qualifiers.

Additionally, Lake Belton senior Christine Kim will compete at state in the 50 freestyle and 100 freestyle, and she will be part of the Lady Broncos' 200 freestyle relay and 400 freestyle relay teams. Kim will be joined by freshman teammates Hannah Voss (500 freestyle) and Jentry Ferguson (100 backstroke).

Furthermore, Lake Belton junior Josh Naumann (200 individual medley), senior David Stewart III (50 freestyle, 100 freestyle), the Broncos' 200 medley relay and 400 freestyle relay teams qualified.

The state preliminary races will be conducted Feb. 20 at Austin's Lee & Joe Jamail Texas Swimming Center. A top-16 finish places swimmers in the finals Feb. 21.

At the regional meet, Martin guided the Lady Tigers to a ninth-place finish with 99 points, while Lake Belton was fifth (227).

traveling to the Round Rock Cedar Ridge tournament on Feb. 19.

The Lady Broncos are set to also compete at Bryan starting today before playing at Fredericksburg on Monday. Then, beginning Feb. 19, Lake Belton will take part in the three-day Dripping Springs tournament.

BASEBALL

The Broncos and Tigers open their seasons Feb. 19. Lake Belton will travel to Round Rock Cedar Ridge for its first game, while Belton is set to take part in the three-day Pflugerville ISD tournament.

VICTORY BOWL

Numerous Belton ISD seniors were recently selected for the upcoming Fellowship of Christian Athletes Victory Bowl all-star games.

The faith-based event features graduated players from Central Texas in a varsity of sports, allowing them to experience a final opportunity to represent their schools before moving on in life.

Lake Belton will be represented by football players Caleb Chandler, Hunter Loraus, Gavin Stewart, Braxton Cope and Gavin Owens, softball players Natalie Hosch and Addison Sims and volleyball player Madison Bingham.

Belton will be sending softball players Iris Molina and Presli Thompson and boys basketball player Noah Childers to the event.

The games will be spread out over three days, beginning May 28.

Belton Lake Stillhouse

<p>FAIR. Water normal stain; 51 degrees; 0.78 feet above pool. The warming trend and solar input on cloudless days has stabilized the water temperature around 50 degrees. This paired with the day length has drawn white bass and shad to the main Leon River and Cowhouse Creek channels. These fish are suspended and are able to be caught via a deadstick tactic with jighead and 3 inch or smaller soft plastic tied to hang horizontally. The use of a thumper will draw fish, and Garmin LiveScope will clearly show both fish and your presentation. When fish move in from the left or right of the screen, adjust your depth to be right in front of them as they pass beneath, then, ever so slowly raise the bait and watch for a follow. Misses are common, but stick with it and you will connect. There are also plenty of bottom-oriented white bass on deep topography. These fish are very responsive to snap-jigging with the white, 5/8 ounce Bladed Hazy Eye Slab with stinger hook. The trick is adding an intentional pause after the jigging stroke, and making sure the jigging stroke ends with the slab about 6 inches off bottom. Numbers of keeper largemouth bass are falling to this deep, snap-jigging approach as well. Report by Bob Maindelle, Holding the Line Guide Service. Catfish are excellent. The steady cold fronts have increased activity for larger trophy sized bluecatfish. Eater size catfish have slowed, but can still be caught using small fresh cut bait. Deep river channels and sand flats have been productive in 35-55 feet of water. Report by Brian Worley, B&S Catfishing.</p>	<p>FAIR. Water stained; 54 degrees; 1.61 feet above pool. The warming trend and solar input on cloudless days has stabilized the water temperature around 50 degrees. This paired with the day length has drawn white bass and shad to the Lampasas River channel. These fish are suspended and are able to be caught via a deadstick tactic with jighead and 3 inch or smaller soft plastic tied to hang horizontally. The use of a thumper will draw fish, and Garmin LiveScope will clearly show both fish and your presentation. When fish move in from the left or right of the screen, adjust your depth to be right in front of them as they pass beneath, then, ever so slowly raise the bait and watch for a follow. Misses are common, but stick with it and you will connect. There are also plenty of bottom-oriented white bass on deep topography. These fish are very responsive to snap-jigging with the white, 5/8 ounce Bladed Hazy Eye Slab with stinger hook. The trick is adding an intentional pause after the jigging stroke, and making sure the jigging stroke ends with the slab about 6 inches off bottom. Numbers of keeper largemouth bass are falling to this deep, snap-jigging approach as well. Report by Bob Maindelle, Holding the Line Guide Service.</p>
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College Station A&M Consolidated (381) easily captured the team title, beating out Leander Rouse (2nd, 272), Cedar Park Lake Creek (3rd, 239.5) and Cedar Park (4th, 227.5).

In the boys division, the Broncos were fourth (205), placing behind champion A&M Consolidated (452), Georgetown (2nd, 267) and Cedar Park (3rd, 234).

The Tigers were 11th (63).

SOFTBALL

The Lady Tigers continue their season today by opening play at the three-day Bryan tournament, and next week, they will host Rogers on Tuesday at 7 p.m. before

Tigers pick up district win, Broncos fall on road to Chaparral

By Aries Ramos
The Belton Journal

Belton ISD boys soccer teams were back in district action Friday night, with Belton High School earning a shutout victory at home while Lake Belton faced a tough road challenge against a strong Chaparral squad.

The Belton Tigers opened district play at home by hosting Ellison and delivered a solid 2-0 win in their first district match on their home field this season. From the opening whistle, Belton controlled much of the match, creating consistent scoring opportunities and keeping Ellison under pressure for long stretches.

Despite the steady flow of chances, the Tigers found it difficult to con-

vert early. Belton remained patient and continued to attack, eventually breaking through late in the first half to take a 1-0 lead into halftime. The advantage reflected Belton's control of possession and overall tempo, even as the scoreline remained tight.

The second half followed a similar pattern, with the Tigers continuing to generate opportunities in the attacking third. Belton maintained its defensive shape while pushing forward, limiting Ellison's counterattacks and keeping the ball in dangerous areas. The Tigers were able to add an insurance goal in the second half, extending the lead and providing breathing room as the match wound down.

Jacob Guzman and Sammy Clark each found the back of the net for Belton, accounting for both goals on the

night. Ezra Khaler contributed offensively as well, recording an assist as part of Belton's balanced team effort. Defensively, the Tigers stayed disciplined and organized, protecting the shutout and closing out the win. The result marked a strong start to district play and a positive showing in front of the home crowd.

On the road, the Lake Belton Broncos faced a challenging district matchup against Chaparral and were unable to overcome an early deficit, falling 2-0. Lake Belton trailed 2-0 at halftime after Chaparral capitalized on early opportunities. Despite efforts to regroup in the second half, the Broncos were unable to find a

See **BOYS**,
Page B3

No. 4 Lake Belton Lady Broncos dominate, Lady Tigers fall to Ellison in finale

By Clay Whittington
The Belton Journal

The best regular-season showing in Lady Broncos history is complete.

Three months ago, Lake Belton produced a dominant performance in its first game, defeating visiting Killeen by

45 points, 84-39.

The Class 5A No. 4 Lady Broncos have not slowed since.

Lake Belton lost just one time all season, closing the campaign Tuesday with an 87-14 victory at Waco University to complete the District 16 schedule with an

unblemished 10-0 record.

It was the Lady Broncos' most lopsided win of the season, their second-highest scoring showing of the season, falling one point shy of an 88-22 win at Burnet, and their second time to eclipse the 80-point plateau in three games.

The outcome came on the heels of Friday's 56-41 win against Killeen Chaparral, which clinched the league championship.

Lake Belton (33-1) was never challenged in the contest, outscoring the Lady

See **BASKETBALL**,
Page B3

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Belton and Lake Belton girls soccer teams record shutouts in district play

By Aries Ramos
The Belton Journal

Belton ISD girls soccer programs continued to build momentum in district play with strong performances from both Belton High School and Lake Belton High School, as each team earned shutout victories and remained unbeaten against district opponents.

The Belton Lady Tigers turned in one of their most complete performances of the season Friday night, rolling to a 5-0 road win over Ellison. Belton established control early, setting the tempo with aggressive offensive pressure and quick ball movement. That approach paid off in the opening half, as the Lady Tigers jumped out to a 3-0 lead before halftime.

Adriana Jaimes led the charge in the first half, finding the back of the net twice to put Belton firmly in command. The Tigers continued to attack from multiple angles, keeping Ellison on its heels throughout the opening 40 minutes. Abby Idoux added to the advantage with a strong finish, giving Belton a comfortable cushion heading into the break.

Belton showed no signs of slowing down in the second half. The Lady Tigers maintained possession and continued to generate scoring opportunities, extending the lead with two more goals. The balanced scoring effort reflected Belton's depth as multiple players contributed both offensively and defensively. On the back end, the Tigers stayed organized and

disciplined, limiting Ellison's chances and controlling the pace of the match.

Goalkeeper Destiny Mendez played a key role in the victory, recording the shutout and providing steady leadership from the back. With the win, Belton improved to 2-0 in district play and 3-5-2 overall. The Lady Tigers now return home to Wilson-Kerzee Field for a busy week, hosting Waco before a district matchup against Lake Belton on Friday.

Meanwhile, the Lake Belton Lady Broncos defended their home field with authority, earning a 4-0 shutout victory over Chaparral. Lake Belton controlled the match from the opening whistle, combining strong defensive play with consis-

tent offensive pressure. The Broncos capitalized on scoring opportunities and never allowed Chaparral to gain momentum.

The Lake Belton defense was sharp throughout the contest, cutting off passing lanes and limiting quality chances in the final third. The shutout win lifted the Broncos to 6-5 overall on the season and 2-0 in district play, keeping them near the top of the district standings.

Lake Belton now turns its attention to Waco University, a key district opponent currently sitting in third place. With both Belton ISD programs off to strong district starts, the upcoming matches promise to be critical as the race for playoff positioning continues.



Scot Hrbacek, CFP® Financial Advisor

March 8 is International Women's Day, a time to celebrate women's strength and resilience.

It's also a moment to talk about real-life challenges women face, such as the growing trend of divorce after age 50, often called "gray divorce."

While the changes surrounding divorce can feel overwhelming, they can also offer a chance to create a life that better reflects your individual dreams and values.

However, you may experience drops in income and living standards. So, building financial confidence is important.

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

Edward Jones

3011 N. Main, Ste C, Belton, Tx 76513
(254) 933-7680 • scot.hrbacek@edwardjones.com
Member SIPC

International Women's Day: Thriving after gray divorce

If you're navigating a gray divorce, here are steps to help you feel more in control:

Find a financial advisor who listens and respects your voice.

Get clear on your finances – know your income, expenses and assets.

Create a plan for today's needs, short-term goals and retirement.

Build an emergency fund of three to six months of expenses, even if it takes time.

Review your estate plan with an attorney.

Gray divorce can be a new chapter. The future is yours to shape, and it can be bright and fulfilling.

Basketball - From Page B2

Bobcats 14-2 in the first quarter to create an insurmountable gap.

The Lady Broncos led 25-16 at halftime and 44-27 following the third period.

Aniya Taylor, a junior point guard, guided Lake Belton offensively, finishing with a game-high 23 points highlighted by a 4-of-8 showing from behind the 3-point line. She also contributed six rebounds, two steals and an assist.

Now, the Lady Broncos turn their attention toward the playoffs.

Lake Belton will be joined in the playoffs by runner-up Chaparral (8-2), Waco (5-5) and Belton (17-17, 4-6).

The Lady Tigers suffered a 45-27 loss at Killeen Ellison on Friday, dropping them into a precarious position entering Tuesday's finale.

Belton needed to either defeat visiting Waco or have the Lady Eagles lose

at Chaparral, and the scenario played out in the Lady Tigers' favor with both happening.

The Lady Bobcats cruised to a 45-19 win, while Belton defeated Waco behind a pair of 15-point performances from sophomores Emma Harvey and Laila Huston.

This will be the Lady Tigers' first postseason appearance since 2022.

The playoffs begin Feb. 23

Boys - From Page B2

breakthrough and the score remained unchanged.

While the result did not go Lake Belton's way, the Broncos now look ahead to an important district con-

test at home against Waco University. Entering the matchup, Lake Belton sits at 1-1 in district play, while Waco University comes in at 0-2. Those records cur-

rently place Lake Belton second in the district standings, with Waco University close behind in third.

With district play heating up, both Belton ISD

programs are positioning themselves for key stretches ahead, where execution will be critical in the push toward postseason contention.

UTPB - From Page B1

"It shows our students that their hard work matters, their goals are supported, and their future opportunities are worth celebrating," he said. "Claire's signing sets the standard, not just for athletics, but for what it means to pursue goals with purpose and determination."

While Bralley coached Claire during her senior year in cross country, he noted her leadership and mindset stood out across all sports.

"She became someone younger athletes looked up

to," he said. "Claire pushed herself beyond comfort and encouraged others to do the same. Her growth as a leader is just as impressive as her athletic accomplishments."

Former New Tech head swimming coach Brett Ringgold highlighted Claire's growth in confidence, leadership and self-awareness throughout her high school career.

"Claire has grown into a confident, self-directed athlete who leads by example," Ringgold said. "She does not wait to be asked

to step up. She seeks opportunities to support her teammates and raise the standard.

commitment, accountability, and care for her own well-being reflects maturity beyond her years."

Ringgold added that Claire's leadership extended far beyond competition.

"She shows up with purpose, encourages others, and gives more than what is expected," he said. "Those qualities will continue to serve her well in college athletics and beyond."

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LEGALS

THE STATE OF TEXAS CITATION BY PUBLICATION – CIVIL CAUSE NO. 26DCV358644

To
UNKNOWN HEIRS OF CARMEN GOMEZ,
UNKNOWN HEIRS OF SAMUEL LOPEZ,
UNKNOWN HEIRS OF RICHARD LOPEZ,
UNKNOWN HEIRS OF RUDY LOPEZ,
UNKNOWN HEIRS OF MARY MORALES
SOTA, UNKNOWN HEIRS OF JOHNNY
LOPEZ, UNKNOWN HEIRS OF YOLANDA
GOMEZ, AND UNKOWN HEIRS OF
CHRISTINA GREESON

Greetings:

You are hereby commanded to appear by filing a written answer to the PLAINTIFF RAMONA MENDOZA'S ORIGINAL PETITION FOR PARTITION OF REAL ESTATE 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 RAMONA MENDOZA'S ORIGINAL PETITION FOR PARTITION OF REAL ESTATE was filed in said court on January 05, 2026.

The file number of said suit being No. 26DCV358644. The names of the parties in said suit are:

RAMONA MENDOZA VS. UNKNOWN HEIRS OF CARMEN GOMEZ, UNKNOWN HEIRS OF SAMUEL LOPEZ, UNKNOWN HEIRS OF RICHARD LOPEZ, UNKNOWN HEIRS OF RUDY LOPEZ, UNKNOWN HEIRS OF MARY MORALES SOTA, UNKNOWN HEIRS OF JOHNNY LOPEZ, UNKNOWN HEIRS OF YOLANDA GOMEZ, and UNKNOWN HEIRS OF CHRISTINA GREESON

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

A civil action for partition of real property has been filed in the 146th Judicial District Court of Bell County, Texas, in Cause No. 26DCV358644, styled Ramona Mendoza v. Unknown Heirs of Carmen Gomez, Unknown Heirs of Samuel Lopez, Unknown Heirs of Richard Lopez, Unknown Heirs of Rudy Lopez, Unknown Heirs of Mary Morales Sota, Unknown Heirs of Johnny Lopez, Unknown Heirs of Yolanda Gomez, and Unknown Heirs of Christina Greeson. The subject of this suit is the partition and determination of ownership interest in the following real property located in Bell County, Texas, and more commonly known as 1010 E Ave O Belton, TX 76513: Lot Number Eleven (11) in Block Two-B (2-B) of the Replat of Lots 7 through 12, inclusive, Block 2-B, Lots 2 through 8, inclusive, Block 2-A of Highland Oaks, First Addition and Lots 1 and 2, Block 3 of Highland Oaks Addition to the City of Belton, in Bell County, Texas, according to the replat in Map Volume 3, Page H-6, of the Plat Records of Bell County, Texas.

This was issued at the request of attorney: RICHARD D. WILSON, HARRELL STOEBNER & VILLANUEVA PC ,2106 BIRD CREEK DRIVE, TEMPLE TX 76502.

NOTICE TO DEFENDANT: You have been

LEGALS

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 January 22, 2026.

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

By: Misty Cortez Deputy Clerk
01.29, 02.05,02.12,02.19

CITATION BY PUBLICATION

THE STATE OF TEXAS COUNTY OF BELL

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 the Monday next following the expiration of 42 days after the date this citation was issued, a default judgment may be taken against you." To: UNKNOWN HEIRS AT LAW OF ROSA VANHORN A/K/A ROSA VAN HORN, DECEASED YOU ARE HEREBY COMMANDED to appear before the 169TH Judicial District Court of Bell County, Texas in the Courthouse in the City of Bell, Texas at or before 10:00 o'clock A.M. Monday, the 16th day of March, 2026, being the Monday next after the expiration of forty-two days after this citation is issued, and you are hereby required then and there to appear and file written answer to the Petition, filed in said Court on October 17, 2025, in suit numbered 25DCV357042 on the docket of said court, wherein Mill City Mortgage Loan Trust 2019-GS1, Plaintiff, v. David Vanhorn a/k/a David Van Horn and Rosa Vanhorn a/k/a Rosa Van Horn and The Heirs at Law of Rosa Vanhorn a/k/a Rosa Van Horn, Deceased, Defendants.

The Petition seeks an order to foreclose the lien on the property and assert a claim to the property located at 4457 West Drive, Belton, TX 76513 and legally described as: Being All That Certain Tract Of Land Containing 0.435 Acre, Being The East One-Half (E 1/2) Of Lots 3 And 4, Block 3, Lakewood Terrace, A Subdivision In Bell County, Texas, According To The Map Or Plat Of Record In Cabinet A, Slide 135-C, Plat Records Of Bell County, Texas, And Being The Same Tract Of Land Conveyed To David And Rosa Van Horn In A Deed Recorded In Volume 3202, Page 350, Official Public Records Of Real Property, Bell County, Texas, And Being More Particularly Described As Follows:

Beginning At A 3/4 Inch Iron Pipe Found At The Northeast Corner Of Said Lot 4, Being On The South Right-Of-Way Line Of West Drive And On The West Right-Of-Way Line Of Lakewood Lane, A Gravel Road, For The Northeast Corner Of The Herein Described Tract; Thence South 19 Degrees 12 Minutes West - 160.06 Feet (Bearing Base)

Along The West Right-Of-Way Line Of Said Lakewood Lane, To A 1/2 Inch Iron Rod Found At The Northeast Corner Of Lot 2; Thence North 70 Degrees 57 Minutes 15 Seconds West - 118.45 Feet Along The North Line Of Said Lot 2, To A 1/2 Inch Iron Rod Set At The Southeast Corner Of A Tract Of Land Conveyed As The Fourth Tract To Ii & L Properties In A Deed Recorded In Volume 3049, Page 196, Official Public Records Of Real Property, Bell County, Texas; Thence North 19 Degrees 13 Minutes East - 160.19 Feet (Record 159.95 Feet) Along The East Line Of Said H & L Properties Tract, To A 1/2 Inch Iron Rod Set On The South Right-Of-Way Line Of Said West Drive, Being The North Line Of Said Lot 4, For The Northwest Corner Of The Herein Described Tract; Thence South 70 Degrees 53 Minutes 24 Seconds East - 118.40 Feet (Record South 71 Degrees East) Along The South Line Of Said Right-Of-Way, To The Point Of Beginning And Containing 0.435 Acre Of Land

Note: The Company Does Not Represent That The Above Acreage Or square footage calculations are correct.

GIVEN UNDER MY HAND AND SEAL OF SAID COURT at Bell, Texas this 29 day of JANUARY 2026

LEGALS

M. Cortez District Clerk Signature & Seal
Issued at the request of: LOGS Legal Group
LLP - Counsel for Plaintiff Address: 13105
Northwest Freeway, Suite 960, Houston, TX
77040 (Clerk info) This document not prepared
by the Bell County District Clerk
02.05,12,19,22

NOTICE TO ALL PERSONS HAVING CLAIMS AGAINST THE ESTATE OF DAVID ROYCE GRUVER, DECEASED

NOTICE is hereby given that original Letters of Testamentary were issued on February 5, 2026 in a proceeding styled Estate of David Royce Gruver. Deceased, in Cause Number 25CPB00741, pending in the County Court At Law #1 of Bell County, Texas.

Claims may be presented in care of the attorney for the Independent Executor, addressed as follows :Delyn Rolfe Gruver Independent Executor of the Estate of David Royce Gruver, Deceased c/o Burk Roberts, Roberts & Roberts, L.L.P.,2501 East Elms Rd., Ste. A, Killeen, Texas 76542-3023

All persons having claims against this estate, which is currently being administered, are required to present them within the time and in the manner prescribed by law.

Signed on February 6, 2026.

Roberts & Roberts. L.L.P., Attorneys for Delyn Rolfe Gruver

By: Burk Roberts
02.12

NOTICE TO ALL PERSONS HAVING CLAIMS AGAINST THE ESTATE OF REXANNA KEARNEY, DECEASED

NOTICE is hereby given that original Letters of Testamentary were issued on February 5, 2026 in a proceeding styled Estate of Rexanna Kearney, Deceased, in Cause Number 25CPB00766, pending in the County Court At Law #1 of Bell County, Texas.

Claims may be presented in care of the attorney for the Independent Executor, addressed as follows : Keith Nolen Kearney Independent Executor of the Estate of Rexanna Kearney, Deceased

c/o Burk Roberts, Roberts & Roberts, L.L.P., 2501 East Elms Rd., Ste. A, Killeen, Texas 76542-3023

All persons having claims against this estate, which is currently being administered, are required to present them within the time and in the manner prescribed by law.

Signed on February 6, 2026.

Roberts & Roberts, L.L.P., Attorneys for Keith Nolen Kearney

By: Burk Roberts
02.12

NOTICE TO CREDITORS

Notice is given that original Letters of Administration for the Estate of Esther Hernanedez, were issued on February 17, 2022, in Cause No. 35382, pending in the County Court at Law Number 1 of Bell County, Texas, to Gina Lennis Hernandez

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 Gina Lennis Hernandez Independent Executor, 3818 Tem-Bel Lane ,Temple, Texas 76502 DATED the 4th day of February 2026.

/s/ Joshua C. Tisdale, Joshua C. Tisdale Attorney for Gina Lennis Hernandez, 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
02.12

APPLICATION HAS BEEN MADE WITH THE TEXAS ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE COMMISSION

for the Wine and Malt Beverage Retailer's Permit (BG) by FMG14 Restaurant Inc dba El Green Chile to be located at 12219 FM 2305, Belton Tx 76513 in Bell County Texas. Officer of said Corporation is Maria Luna (President and Secretary)
02.12,02.19

NOTICE TO CREDITORS

Notice is hereby given that original Letters of Testamentary for the Estate of Tracie Jeanese Lang, Deceased, were issued on February 5,

Your home or land could be one
of your largest investments.

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represent you in this important
transaction.



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LEGALS

2026, in Cause No. 25CPB00790, pending in the County Court at Law Number One of Bell County, Texas, to: Karen Wrinkle.
All persons having claims against this Estate which is currently being administered are required to present them to the undersigned within the time and in the manner prescribed by law. Karen Wrinkle c/o: Michelle Lehmkuhl, 200 Josie Lane, Rockdale, Texas 76567
DATED February 6, 2026.
Michelle Lehmkuhl, State Bar No.: 24036964, 200 Josie Lane, Rockdale, Texas 76567, Telephone: (512) 446-9529, Facsimile: (512) 446-9528, E-mail: michelle@milamcountylaw.com, Attorney for Karen Wrinkle
02.12

NOTICE TO BIDDERS

Sealed Bids for furnishing all labor, materials, equipment, and performing all work required for the

construction of improvements associated with **RIVER FARM TOLLBRIDGE ROAD PHASE 1A LANDSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS, for HUNT COMMUNITIES BELTON, LLC.** will be

received at the office of SEC Planning, LLC., located at 3600 W. Parmer Lane, Suite 210, Austin, Texas 78727 until **2:00 pm CDT, Thursday, March 5, 2026** and immediately thereafter publicly opened and read. Bids received after the scheduled opening time will be discarded.

Scope of the Project: The Contractor shall provide construction of Entry Signage, Mail Kiosk, Park

Pavilion, Park, Fencing, Decorative Columns, Planting, and Irrigation. All work must conform to State of

Texas, Bell County rules, specifications and criteria. P&P Bonding will be a requirement of the contract.

Bid Documents (Electronic Format) may be obtained from SEC Planning, LLC, with a request by email at bids@secplanning.com. Bidder must provide contact information including Company Name, Contact Person, Address, Phone and Email to be included in the plan holder bid list and obtain download link.

Files will be available beginning **February 12, 2026.**

A mandatory pre-bid conference will be held on **Friday, February 27, 2026 at 2:00 pm** (Prime Contractors only), in the offices of SEC Planning, LLC., 3600 W. Parmer Lane, Suite 210, Austin, Texas

78727. No questions will be responded to if received **after 5pm February 27, 2026.**

A bid bond or certified cashier's check must accompany each bid in the amount of 5% of the total bid amount payable to Hunt Communities Belton, LLC.

02.12,02.19,02.26

**THE STATE OF TEXAS
CITATION BY PUBLICATION
CASE NUMBER 26CPB00072**

To: Unknown Heirs
CARMEN HOGAN, Applicant, on February 04, 2026, filed an APPLICATION TO DETERMINE HEIRSHIP SEEKING INDEPENDENT ADMINISTRATION & LETTERS OF ADMINISTRATION in a proceeding styled: DARRYL ZANE MADDOX, Deceased, and bearing the number 26CPB00072 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 February 12, 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: LANE HEGINBOTHAM, 425 NORTH 8TH STREET, KILLEEN, TX 76541

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 February 04, 2026.
Shelley Coston County Clerk of Bell County, Texas, PO Box 480, 1201 Huey Road, Belton, TX 76513
By: Erika DeCasas Deputy
02.12

**THE STATE OF TEXAS
CITATION BY PUBLICATION
CASE NUMBER 26CPB00068**

To: Unknown Heirs
MICHELLE A. LUCAS, Applicant, on February 03, 2026, filed an Application for Independent Administration & Letters of Administration & Application to Determine Heirship in a proceeding styled: REX OLIVER LUCAS, Deceased, and bearing the number 26CPB00068 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 February 12, 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: MARY LINDLEY-WILEY, 100 W CENTEX EXPWY STE 302, HARKER HEIGHTS, TX 76548

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 February 04, 2026.
Shelley Coston County Clerk of Bell County, Texas, PO Box 480, 1201 Huey Road, Belton, TX 76513

By: Erika DeCasas Deputy
02.12

**NOTICE TO ALL PERSONS HAVING
CLAIMS AGAINST
THE ESTATE OF LILLIAN IRENE
YOUNG, DECEASED**

NOTICE is hereby given that original Letters of Administration were issued on February 2, 2026, in a proceeding styled Estate of Lillian Irene Young. Deceased, in Cause Number 25CPB00677, pending in the County Court At Law #1 of Bell County, Texas.

Claims may be presented in care of the attorney for the Independent Administratrix, addressed as follows; Pamela Lynn Young Bass Independent Administratrix of the Estate of Lillian Irene Young, Deceased, c/o Burk Roberts, Roberts & Roberts, L.L.P., 2501 East Elms Rd., Ste. A, Killeen, Texas 76542-3023

All persons having claims against this estate, which is currently being administered, are required to present them within the time and in the manner prescribed by law.

Signed on February 3, 2026.
Roberts & Roberts, L.L.P., Attorneys for Pamela Lynn Young, Bass
By: Burk Roberts
02.12

NOTICE TO CREDITORS

Notice is hereby given that original Letters Testamentary for the Estate of ENRIQUETA MUNGIA, Deceased, were issued on February 3, 2026, in Cause No. 25CPB00674, pending in the County Court-At-Law No: 1, Bell County, Texas, to: DANIEL MUNGIA.

All persons having claims against this Estate which is currently being administered are required to present them to the undersigned within the time and in the manner prescribed by law. c/o: Jeffrey Thigpen Attorney at Law, PO Box 428, TEMPLE, TX 76503
SIGNED on February 3, 2026.
Jeffrey Thigpen Attorney for DANIEL MUNGIA, State Bar No.: 24099990, PO Box

428, TEMPLE, TX 76503, Telephone: (254) 773-1663, Facsimile: (254) 773-2574, Email: jeff@linzythigpen.com
02.12

NOTICE TO CREDITORS

Notice is hereby given that original Letters Testamentary for the Estate of ANTHONY JAMES ECKWOOD, SR., Deceased, were issued on January 16, 2026, in Cause No. 25CPB00786, pending in the County Court at Law No. 1 of Bell County, Texas, to: ANTHONY JAMES ECKWOOD, JR.

All persons having claims against this Estate which is currently being administered are required to present them to the undersigned within the time and in the manner prescribed by law. c/o: ASHLEY CLAPPER Attorney at Law, 603 North 8th Street, Killeen, TX 76541

DATED the 3rd day of Feb. 2026.
CORBIN & CLAPPER, PC, 603 North 8th Street, Killeen, TX 76541, Tel: (254) 526-4523, Fax: (254) 526-6711

By: ASHLEY CLAPPER, DANIEL A. CORBIN, State Bar No. 04814300 ASHLEY CLAPPER State Bar No. 24076317 Legal@CorbinLegalTeam.com Attorney for JOE REED
02.12

**THE FOLLOWING VEHICLE IS BEING
STORE AT TRIPLE NICKEL TOWING**

1976 CHEVROLET MALIBU,
VIN: 1D37V6R486462, NO PLATES
Vehicle Abandoned at 3700 Bacon Ranch Rd., Unit A, Killeen, TX, 76542
Vehicle is being stored at 3700 Bacon Ranch Rd., Unit C, Killeen, TX, 76542
02.12

**NOTICE TO ALL PERSONS HAVING
CLAIMS AGAINST
THE ESTATE OF JERRY LEON
KILPATRICK, DECEASED**

NOTICE is hereby given that original Letters of Testamentary were issued on December 10, 2025 in a proceeding styled Estate of Jerry Leon Kilpatrick. Deceased, in Cause Number 25CPB00551, pending in the County Court At Law #1 of Bell County, Texas.

Claims may be presented in care of the attorney for the Independent Executrix, addressed as follows: Jennifer Lynne Fitzpatrick Independent Executrix of the Estate of Jerry Leon Kilpatrick. Deceased, c/o Burk Roberts, Roberts & Roberts, L.L.P., 2501 East Elms Rd., Ste. A, Killeen, Texas 76542-3023

All persons having claims against this estate, which is currently being administered, are required to present them within the time and in the manner prescribed by law.

Signed on December 11, 2025.
Roberts & Roberts, L.L.P., Attorneys for Jennifer Lynne Fitzpatrick
By: Burk Roberts
02.12

**THE FOLLOWING VEHICLE IS BEING
STORED**

AT KILLEEN TOWING & RECOVERY
12197 State Hwy 195 Killeen, TX 76542,
254-526-3856, VSF0651623, http://www.tdlr.texas.gov, 2010 Ford Escape (Red) charges are \$519.88.
02.12

POSSESSION BY COTENANT HEIR

TO: ALL HEIRS OF FRANK QUINTEROS, SR., deceased Property: Being Lot Three (3), in Block One (1), of the H. A. Brocker Subdivision of Blocks Five (5), and Seven (7) and part of Block Three (3) of Highland Addition to the City of Temple, Bell County, Texas, according to the map or plat thereof of record in Volume 621, Pages 241 et seq. Of the Deed records of Bell County, Texas. Name of cotenant heir claiming full title by adverse possession: Mary Quinteros Muriel. Name of owner under whom cotenant claims possession Frank Quinteros Sr., deceased.

Notice is hereby given to all heirs of Frank Quinteros, Sr. that Mary Quinteros Muriel claims the above described Property by her adverse possession of the Property in accordance with the provisions of Section 16.0265 of the Texas Civil Practice and Remedies Code.

The date the affidavit of adverse possession was filed in the Bell County Real Property Records is January 30, 2026.

DATED this 30th day of January, 2026.
By: Pat McGowan, Attorney for Mary Quinteros Muriel Attorney at Law, 2584 Blue Meadow Drive, Temple, Texas 76502, 254-778-8934, patriciafmcgowan@gmail.com, State Bar No: 13641900 02.05

EDITORIAL

Believe it or not...

My Front Porch • Lynette Sowell

...Not everything is for you, or about you. There are people who like things that you don't like. Every activity or pastime is not our cup of tea. It's ok that we are different and like to do different things.

There are events that not all of us are interested in attending. We are ok with sitting home and skipping some events. And that's ok. Not everyone has the same interests. Did I mention that it's ok?

For me, two of those things are golf tournaments and car shows. They are just not my thing. I get that people like to golf. My uncles golfed. Two of my brothers-in-laws golf, on occasion. It is something that other people enjoy, but I don't. I did a nine-hole mini "real" course once, and it was an exercise in frustration.

Car shows. Now I can see that someone is interested in cars more than golf. There's something about a lineup of classic cars, with their gleaming chrome and impeccable paint jobs and snazzy accessories. But truth be told, if given a choice, a car show isn't something I'd make the time to attend if I had a free afternoon.

Yet, I don't begrudge the fact that the above are both things that other people enjoy. I'd rather go to an

art show, a live music event, a museum, or shopping at a flea market. I'm sure some people would rather golf.

Then there's the wide variety of chicken restaurant options. (I can hear some of you laughing.) But really, how many different restaurants does anyone need? And, we have them here. Except for a few. Pizza, too. We have a number of options in our community that we all have different opinions about. And yet, by this time next year, we will have another pizza option.

Not everything is about us, or for us. For example, McLane Stadium in Waco is already selling tickets to view the total solar eclipse on April 8, 2024. The scoffers have already been out in force: "Why would I pay tickets to see something I can view from my own backyard for free?"

To scoffers such as they, I can only say: "That event isn't for you, or about you. Stay home and have a party at your house. Or, be by yourself."

If you live here locally, most of you will probably plan to stay home and watch it from your very own yard. Or, maybe you'll attend a family gathering and be with loved ones as you witness the once-in-a-lifetime

event. But, not every event is for you, or about you. And, know what? That is perfectly ok.

Yet, sometimes it does not hurt to think beyond what we'd like to do, and realize that there are other people coming to town. Sometimes, when company comes, we do things out of the ordinary that we wouldn't necessarily do for ourselves.

It is a knee-jerk thing to think of what we personally want to do, or would prefer to do, first thing. It's human nature to think about what we want, before someone else might want. It's not the best way to do things, but it's how we are wired. It takes practice to remember that.

Before you think I'm saying we should never, ever think of what we want or that our own preferences don't matter, that is not what I am saying at all. It is perfectly fine to have our own preferences and wishes for how we'd like to spend our time. But, we shouldn't discount that other people may have their own ideas about what's fun for them or where they'd like to eat. It's not always about us.

MTV Vacillate

Shop the Insanity • Darren Blair

As 2025 gave way to 2026, a series of conflicting reports caused panic on the internet.

Cable television network Music Television – MTV – first launched in 1981. Music videos had been a thing since the late 1960s when television shows like The Monkees included pre-recorded musical performances, and by the late 1970s they were such a part of the pop culture landscape that a 24-hour channel devoted to them seemed like a risk worth taking. MTV would start out featuring music videos, live hosts known as VJs (a play on "DJ" or "disk jockey"), commercials to pay for everything, and a few other bits.

Before long, MTV would start broadcasting music & entertainment news, artist interviews, and even sketch comedy & variety shows. As the 1980s gave way to the 1990s, MTV would devote an increasing amount of its broadcast day to animated programs, reality TV programming, game shows, and so forth. Music was still ever-present, with dedicated blocks like "120 Minutes", "Headbanger's Ball", and "Yo! MTV Raps" emerging for specific genres as well as the pivotal "Total Request Live". This would continue through the 2000s, with MTV 2, MTV Tres, and various international MTV channels & spin-offs also emerging, most of which featured content tailored for

specific audiences.

The 2010s, however, saw catastrophic change. MTV and sister network CMT (Country Music Television) would see their music videos shunted to the overnight hours and special programming blocks, with reality TV, sitcoms, and other features becoming the focus. Another sister, VH1 (Video Hits 1), had introduced a number of "the stories behind your favorite songs" – type edutainment shows in the 1990s, and was eventually converted wholly to reality television, to the point that spin-off 24-hour video channel VH1 Classic was rebranded as MTV Classic. By this point, MTV had become the metaphorical poster child for "channel drift", where television channels deviate greatly from their original programming format & target audience. Unless you were interested in the increasingly niche reality and pop culture programming it was now primarily offering, MTV, the main channel, was functionally irrelevant.

Cue a great many folks in North America waking up on January 1st to the news that MTV had ceased operations the night before, with The Buggles' "Video Killed The Radio Star", the very video the network first launched with, airing at 11:59 PM ahead of a final farewell. Not only did it seem like the corporate overlords had finally done in the network, if not all

things MTV, but that as a final insult they hadn't even put out any public press releases ahead of time so people could have that closure.

...Except...

Several hours later, clarifications started emerging. It wasn't "all MTV channels". It was a series of 24-hour MTV-branded music video channels that were operating in the British Isles, four of which were dedicated entirely to videos by decade or genre. All five had different "final farewell" songs; only one – the main 24-hour channel – signed off so poetically. (As a contrasting example, the all-80s channel signed off with "Together In Electric Dreams" by Giorgio Moroder and Philip Oakley.) Literally everything else MTV – including all American channels – was still broadcasting as normal.

Folks, things like this are a big part of why I – and others – keep trying to remind everyone that when breaking news stories happen it's imperative that everyone wait for more details to come out before reacting in haste. Let the facts start to solidify. Fortunately, this was a relatively minor situation with a relatively minor response, but I remember all too well situations that were far bigger in magnitude.

Foreign Foods

Pleasant Ramblings • Mark Magnan

I was talking with a friend the other day about food, which seems to be a popular topic with me, and one of my favorites. We both traveled in the Air Force and to other various and sundry places. With the internet and of course television we now know a lot more about food in other parts of the world, and closer to home in this country. The topic of oysters came up. Now I will openly admit I have never tried raw oysters, and will probably never try them. I just do not see the draw to sucking down something whole with a dab of hot sauce. Now I clearly may be missing something here as they seem to be really popular. As a side note, I have eaten, and will eat, some strange foods. I am not easily frightened by something that just is not regular fare. I do draw the line at onions. I avoid them like the plague. I guess that oysters are not real popular in the south because they fall through the grates on the

grill and into the fire. Speaking of the Air Force, we regularly ate rabbit. It was fine, a lot like chicken, pardon the cliché.

It is funny we were discussing foods, because just that day I had eaten coon. Now for the uninformed, coon is slang for raccoon. In case you are not from Texas and perhaps from one of those big cities, a raccoon is a funny creature. Their food is essentially anything that is in a trashcan. I would imagine if you put a brick in a trash can a coon would eventually try to eat it. I am not sure what they eat in the wild where there are no trashcans. Coons have a hand quite similar to our own, perhaps even as useful as a monkey, they can do a lot with those little hands. They are often considered a nuisance, so they are trapped. I have trapped several from my yard and relocated them, I let them all go, something that they were really happy about. Now

I had another friend that decided to cook up a batch of coon recently. He brought me a plate, it was good. This isn't the first time I have had coon, I grew up in some smaller towns here in Texas so the various native critters have often found their way to a table where I was offered a meal. I have never cooked coon, there is a trick to getting the wild taste out of the dish. Now if I had not known what the meat was on this day, I would not have been able to tell it was a wild animal instead of something purchased at HEB.

We have Italian food here, but I have heard about it, and experienced it once in New England, and it is quite different. The best lasagna that I have ever had was near Boston not in Texas. Lasagna is probably my favorite Italian dish and this one was much better than anything I have had before. We have a variety of Mexican food in Texas. I might have a hard time picking my

top ten favorites, but one of the best was near El Paso. That would seem logical. We also have brisket here for barbeque, the yankees soak it for several days and turn it in to pastрами. We make good sausage here, people up north make head cheese. Now if you don't know what head cheese is, it is only slightly less appealing than raw oysters.

We are also lucky to live in an area where we can get different and fresh foods. We get citrus and vegetables from the valley, we also get seafood, and of course the different spices and ways that we cook here. And I am sure that if I had been born north of here that I would have learned to live with the foods of the land. Now I will admit that there are places that are known for special foods, such as Wisconsin for cheese, and the northwest for apples. It is good that we can learn about and try foods from all over the country or even the world. I en-

joy the variety, and would be willing to try most anything. I would like to experience the foods of Paris, and yes I would eat escargot, I have in the past and find it actually something I enjoy. The French have it right, soak anything in butter and you can make it tasteful, maybe not great, but edible.

I am happy I was raised with the culture that we have here in Texas, and of course rural Texas. Perhaps a fancy dish with small servings is just not what we expected, we enjoy pots full of good food soaking in gravy. I like beef cooked on an open fire, most anything stuffed into a good homemade tortilla, the flavor of Texas, and certainly the healthy Texas grapefruit. I want to travel and taste foods from other places, and I will still probably avoid oysters. I might find that I am at home here with my "normal" dishes.

Finding Joy

Coffee Talk • Renae Brumbaugh Green

January is over, and I still hear strands of "Joy to the World" echoing in my mind. When I picture joy, one of my earliest memories comes to mind. I was about four years old, lying in the grass in my backyard, surrounded by dandelions. As far as I knew, I was all alone, and I sang "I've got the joy, joy, joy, joy down in my heart," as loud as I could. It was a moment of perfect contentment.

Joy. That one small word stands for such a big idea. It's such a simple concept, but many have a hard time finding joy in their lives. It's meaning is often confused with happiness, but those are two different things. Happiness is a temporary emotion based on external circumstances, like winning the lottery or getting a promotion at work. Joy is more of an internal mindset and can exist even in the middle of grief. This means we can cultivate joy in our lives no matter how bad things may seem on the outside.

For example, having a fender bender or spilling coffee on our clothes may

equate a bad day, but someone with internal joy can move past those circumstances and keep feeling contentment and purpose. A loss of joy, on the other hand, can point to a deeper issue such as depression.

The Science of Joy

The science behind joy—or the lack of it—is complex. There are some neurotransmitters in the brain that promote feelings of wellness, such as dopamine, serotonin, endorphins and oxytocin. These do things like relax the muscles, speed up the heart rate (in a good way), and help us feel pleasure. This means that if we can find ways to increase these neurotransmitters in our bodies, we'll feel more content, more satisfied, and more joyful. For example, cuddling a puppy or kitten releases oxytocin, known as the "cuddle hormone." Oxytocin makes us feel connected to others.

Ways to Find Joy

There are many ways to increase these feel-good hormones in our bodies, giving us a deeper sense of joy. Everyone is different, so it may take time to find what

works for you. Here are a few ideas:

Exercise. Regular aerobic activity releases neurotransmitters even after you've stopped exercising.

Volunteer. Find a cause you believe in and help out. This gives you a sense of purpose and makes you feel connected to others.

Pray. Meditate. Attend worship services. Connecting to something larger than ourselves increases feelings of peace, gratitude, and compassion.

Try new things. Research shows that doing something for the first time or learning a new skill taps into the part of our brain that releases feel-good hormones.

Allow yourself some pleasure each day. Eat one piece of chocolate, and relish it. Sit in the sunshine.

Write down or speak gratitude. Finding just three things a day to be grateful for helps develop overall contentment and joy.

When possible, avoid things that make you feel bad. If the breakroom is a hotbed of gossip and negativity, stay away. If a

certain friend only calls to whine or complain, stop taking their calls, or limit them to five minutes or less.

Discuss medications with your doctor. Some prescriptions have a negative effect on neurotransmitters.

The Benefits of Joy

Any changes you make to increase joy and contentment will have far-reaching effects on your overall health. Research shows that positive mental health affects immune function, lowers stress hormones, decreases pain, helps with depression, and increases life span. If you lack joy in your life, try some of the tips above. Don't hesitate to reach out to a mental health professional for support. After all, you only get one life. You might as well make it a joyful one.

"You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore." Psalm 16:11

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- BELOVED
- BOYFRIEND
- CANDY
- CHAMPAGNE
- CHERUB
- CHOCOLATE
- CUPID
- DATE
- FLOWERS
- GIFTS
- GIRLFRIEND
- HEARTS
- HUG
- KISS
- LOVE
- MOVIE
- POEM
- RED
- ROMANCE
- ROSES
- SWEETHEART
- VALENTINE

Find the words hidden vertically, horizontally, diagonally, and backwards.

Welcome to Belton, Texas

6 Valentine's Day traditions

Valentine's Day is a day of love nestled in the middle of February. Sweethearts use Valentine's Day as an opportunity to show the people they care about just how deep those feelings run. A 2023 survey from the National Retail Federation found consumers expected to spend \$25.9 billion on Valentine's Day, up from \$23.9 billion in 2022. Forecasters suspect spending is likely to increase this year as well.

Valentine's Day is a wash in many different customs. Here's a deep look at some of those enduring traditions and others that some may feel should be brought back into favor or adopted entirely.

Handwritten cards

It's a common scene each year in card retailers and pharmacies: people three-deep in the aisle trying to pick out Valentine's Day cards in the eleventh hour. People can save themselves the hassle of fighting the crowds if they make their own handmade cards. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, sweethearts created unique cards from scratch, according to Country Living. And prior to products produced by Hallmark and other greeting card companies, people used to send one another cards customized with personalized messages.

Pampering gentlemen

It is common in North America for Valentine's Day celebrations to lean significantly toward favoring women, who are often on the receiving end of flowers and chocolates. However, in South Korea and Japan, it is the men who are pampered with such gifts. Women purchase chocolates for their male partners, family members and coworkers as tokens of appreciation and affection. Never fear, a month later on White Day (March 14) men reciprocate with candy, cake and flowers.

Bouquets

These days a dozen long-stemmed red roses might be the norm for Valentine's Day gifting. However, roses weren't always the preferred flower for the holiday. History.com reports that, in the nineteenth century, bouquets might contain all sorts of flowers, each chosen to convey certain messages. Individuals can research the meanings behind certain flowers and put together a Valentine's Day gift this year that expresses exactly what they are feeling.

Puzzle purses

Sweethearts in Victorian England created "puzzle purses," which were a series of



love letters that could be read separately, but also fit together to create a design and message. These intricately folded sheets of paper had parts of messages or verses written on different corners and were meant to be read in a specific order.

Heart-shaped chocolate boxes

British chocolatier Richard Cadbury is credited with creating the first heart-shaped box for Valentine's Day. The boxes were intended to be so beautiful they would be kept to hold trinkets or love letters. Ornate chocolate boxes are not quite as common today, although the gifting of chocolate for the holiday is still strong.

Celebrating in June?

Many Brazilians skip Valentine's Day in February and choose to celebrate Saint Anthony, the patron saint of marriage and matchmaking, on June 12. Celebrating both is fine for those who prefer to shower affection on loved ones multiple times a year.

Valentine's Day traditions are still strong and can add a little something extra to celebrations this February.

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Scotti's Italian Ice is a small, veteran-owned family business dedicated to serving refreshing, authentic Italian ice, reminiscent of what owner Ann Scotti enjoyed growing up on the Jersey Shore.

"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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