

Central Texas BBQ Roundup rides through Belton

By Michelle Rodriguez
The Belton Journal

BBQ enthusiasts gathered at the Cadence Bank Center on Saturday for a BBQ competition with activities for children, food trucks, vendors, a car show, a corn hole tournament, and a pet adoption event.

“The event couldn’t have happened without the businesses, cooks, volunteers, and artisan vendors. They made it happen. I feel like the team that stepped into the arena with me took it on headfirst. It was a monster! We received 90 percent of praise and 10 percent of criticism. I think about Roosevelt’s Man in the Arena speech that says, ‘the credit belongs to the man that is actually in the arena.’ They are the folks that showed up and carried more than I could have carried myself,” said George Bunker, Founder and CEO of Central Texas BBQ Roundup.

The event raised funds for Healing Heart Rehab, Belton Education Foundation, Temple CERT, Belton CERT, Belton Lions Club, and Civil Air Patrol – Bell County Composite Squad-



Courtesy photo

Austin Embleton and Dylan Maxwell with Bony Legs BBQ with Mad Dog Military won Best in Show at the Central Texas BBQ Roundup.

ron TX- 403.

“The two biggest sanctioning BBQ bodies, IBCA and CBA, split 10 years ago and took with them the best BBQ competitors. They all showed up. It was the first time they were all together in 10 years,” said Bunker.

“Something impossible happened at this event because they believed in the mission. The mission was to build industries around the community and give back to the most vulnerable,” Bony Legs BBQ with Mad Dog Military won Best

in Show. Mad Dog Military raises money to take veterans hunting and fishing. Bony Legs BBQ team is Dylan Maxwell’s family’s BBQ team.

“The name Bony Legs See **CTBR**, Page A3

Council, EDC discuss tools for building strong economy

By David Stone
The Belton Journal

The City of Belton and the Belton Economic Development Corporation have many tools at their disposal to assist with building a strong economy, a topic discussed during Tuesday’s Council meeting.

City Financial Director Mike Rodgers and EDC Director Cynthia Hernandez presented the information on activities of the Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone No. 1.

Council member Luke Potts presented other Council members with a prepared statement about modernizing the Belton EDC.

“The purpose of this memorandum is to outline and evaluate potential reform options for the Belton Economic Development Corporation, including governance structure, statutory authority, and funding mechanisms, and to recommend a path forward that aligns economic development spending with Belton’s current size, needs, and fiscal priorities,” Potts said in his statement.

“In doing so, this memorandum recognizes the BEDC’s longstanding positive impact and the important role it has played in supporting economic growth, job creation, and investment in Belton,” he said. “The BEDC has been a key organization to credit for the strong economic position of the city of Belton.”

“The desire to build on the BEDC’s past successes while ensuring the city’s economic development framework remains effective, proportional, and aligned with current conditions,” Potts continued.

“This memorandum aims to ensure the city and BEDC have the appropriate tools and resources to maximize support for all types of jobs in Belton while being financially responsible and preparing for upcoming I-35/I-14 corridor

See **COUNCIL**, Page A7

Family legacy spans 150 years at Texas’ oldest independent title company



Courtesy photo

75 years ago, Lida and Frank Turner, Sr purchased Monteith Abstract. The company is celebrating 150 years in Bell County this year, and celebrating a third-generation of ownership with grandsons Brad and Brett Turner.

By Susan Kolodziejczyk
The Belton Journal

When A.M. Monteith founded his abstract company in 1876, Reconstruction-era Texas was still finding its footing. Nearly 150 years later, the business stands as the oldest independently owned title company in Texas, now celebrating a milestone that also marks 75 years since Frank J. Turner, Sr. purchased the company in 1951.

“My dad was the finest man I have ever known. I was always proud of him and the legacy he left,” said Frank Turner, Jr., who was just 12 years old when his father acquired the company. “It gave our family the means and ability to live in this community and grow the business.”

That personal connection has remained the company’s defining characteristic. Frank Sr. deliberately preserved the Monteith name in recognition of its historical significance.

Today, Brett and Brad Turner lead the company as third-generation owners who grew up in the office surrounded by longtime staff.

“It was basically on-the-job training,” Brett said. “My grandparents, Frank Sr. and Lida, passed their knowledge to my parents, Frank Jr. and Marilyn, who are now passing everything down to us.”

Marilyn Turner, who has worked in the business for 50 years, credits her mother-in-law Lida with teaching her daily operations. That mentorship extends beyond family—more than 20 escrow officers average over 17 years with the company.

From a single office with four employees, Monteith has grown to seven locations serving Bell and Coryell counties with approximately 70 professionals, evolving from early abstracting practices to modern title insurance while maintaining its commitment to personal service.

In an era when most title companies are owned by banks or large corporations, Monteith remains proudly independent.

“Most title companies are owned by banks, but we are a ‘mom and pop’ shop,” Brett said. “That’s what we’ve always been, and it’s what makes us successful.”

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Belton ISD selected for Raise Your Hand Texas Community Leaders Fellowship

Special to the Journal

Raise Your Hand Texas announced that Belton ISD will join 31 additional Texas public school districts as part of the inaugural cohort of the Community Leaders Fellowship.

The 18-month program is designed to equip local teams composed of parents, educators, business leaders and school trustees with the tools and skills needed to engage in

state education policy and advocacy.

Belton ISD will be represented in the Fellowship by Board Secretary Erin Bass and Board Vice President Chris Flor.

“Belton ISD is honored to join the inaugural Raise Your Hand Texas Community Leaders Fellowship,” said Superintendent Dr. Malinda Golden. “This opportunity allows our district and community leaders to deepen our engagement with the legislative process,

enhancing our collaborative role as we work alongside others at the state level to share the local insights that best support our students, teachers and families.”

The program builds on the foundation of the Trustee Advocates Program, which launched in 2022.

While the previous program focused on teams composed of school board members

See **RAISE**, Page A2

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City warns residents of scam text messages

Special to the Journal

Belton residents have reported receiving texts from Dynata about a survey regarding issues that are important to Belton residents.

These texts are often sent by others fraudulently impersonating Dynata, which is a legitimate market research firm.

These texts are not affiliated with the City of Belton. When receiving a text from an unfamiliar source, residents should not click links or share personal information. The messages could be phishing attempts to steal personal data. If you receive an unsolicited text, it is best to ignore it and delete it.

Residents are urged to be cautious when receiving unsolicited texts,

emails or direct messages. If you receive a phishing text or lose money to a scammer, you can contact the Belton Police Department at 254-933-5840 to report the incident.

Additional steps include:

- Contact your bank or credit card company to report fraudulent charges immediately.
- File a report with the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) at report-fraud.ftc.gov.
- File a report with the Federal Communications Commission at consumercomplaints.fcc.gov.
- Visit identitytheft.gov for information about monitoring your accounts.

Native Plant Society of Texas plant sale set for this weekend

Special to the Journal

The Tonkawa Chapter of the Native Plant Society of Texas invites locals to seize the opportunity to enhance local ecosystems at its highly anticipated annual spring sale.

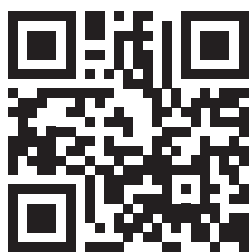
Kicking off with an online Texas native tree and shrub sale, this event culminates in a gathering on Saturday, March 28 and Sunday, March 29 at Barrow Brewing, where the sale will run from 9 a.m. To 4 p.m. both days.

With hundreds of varieties of plants, grasses, trees, and shrubs available, including many drought and cold-resistant species that are hard to find, this sale is a crucial step in promoting biodiversity and resilience in our gardens.

Saturday also marks a special Saturday only Tax-Free Day on purchases making it an excellent time to invest in the powerful, hardy Texas natives that not only thrive in our unique climate but also support the health of our local environment.

This is a family event with lots of information booths and children's activities. Located under the shade trees by the bridge at Barrow Brewing, 108 Royal Street in Salado.

For more information and to view a partial list of available natives, please visit www.npsotcentx.org.



Raise - From Page A1

and superintendents, the Community Leaders Fellowship expands that model by bringing together teams of seven to 10 participants that include community members who are not school board trustees or district employees.

This year's Fellowship includes school districts ranging from 500 to 50,000 students across Texas.

While each district brings unique perspectives and priorities, all share a commitment to strengthening public education and advocating for policies that support student success.

"The Community Leaders Fellowship empowers Texans to become stronger public education leaders in their hometowns, directly shaping the future of their local school districts by engaging state lawmakers," said Dr. Libby Cohen, executive director for Raise

Legacy - From Page A1

The Turner brothers are keenly aware of the statistics working against them. Third-generation businesses often fail, but they're determined to beat the odds.

"Brad and I will not let that be our story," Brett said. "We know that if we show up, work hard, and take care of our people, then our business will be taken care of, and we will succeed for many generations in the future. We will never take this business for granted."

"We love this community," Brett said. "We were born and raised here. Our family and the Monteiths before us were supported by the very people who built this community."

Your Hand Texas. "Public schools impact their entire communities. That means the work of advocating for public education in the Texas Capitol belongs to entire communities as well."

Raise Your Hand Texas was founded in 2006 by Charles Butt, chairman of the Texas-based H-E-B grocery company and a longtime public education advocate, along with a group of Texas business and community leaders who believe every child in Texas should have equal access to high-quality public education.

Through a combination of in-person, virtual and self-paced sessions, participating teams will develop a deeper understanding of the legislative process while learning strategies for community engagement and sustainable advocacy.

In addition to Belton ISD, the other school districts

That gratitude extends to the choice both brothers made to enter the family business. Unlike some family enterprises, there was no pressure to join.

"We were never pressured to go into the business, just like my father was never pressured to take over the business from my grandfather," Brett said.

Their commitment extends beyond business. In 2013, Marilyn and Brett started the Monteith #Give-Back program to give back to the community that has given so much to them.

In 13 years, Monteith has given over \$500,000 to local nonprofits, exemplifying the values that have

selected include Abilene ISD, Alamo Heights ISD, Arp ISD, Canutillo ISD, Carrollton-Farmers Branch ISD, Cedar Hill ISD, Cleburne ISD, Chisum ISD, Comanche ISD, Corpus Christi ISD, Eanes ISD, Early ISD, Granbury ISD, Gregory-Portland ISD, Harlingen CISD, Lake Dallas ISD, Lewisville ISD, Liberty Hill ISD, Lyford CISD, Martin's Mill ISD, McKinney ISD, North Lamar ISD, Paris ISD, Plano ISD, Prairieland ISD, Port Aransas ISD, San Marcos CISD, Schertz-Cibolo-Universal City ISD, Shiner ISD, Splendora ISD, and Wylie ISD (Taylor County).

More information about the Community Leaders Fellowship is available on Raise Your Hand Texas online at <https://www.raiseyourhandtexas.org/advancing-public-education/advocacy-fellowship/>.

guided the company for 150 years.

As Monteith moves into its next chapter, the Turner family remains committed to the philosophy that has sustained the business: trust is built with every transaction, and legacy is measured by relationships, not just years.

"As we celebrate 150 years in business and 75 years of family ownership, we are honored by the trust our communities have placed in us for generations," Brett Turner said. "This anniversary reflects the dedication of our employees, the loyalty of our clients, and the values that continue to guide our work."

City sales tax revenue higher than March 2025

By Lynette Sowell

The Belton Journal

The City of Belton will receive \$748,754.08, which is 15.468 percent more compared to last March, according to the monthly sales tax report released by Acting State Comptroller Kelly Hancock.

Belton's sales tax revenue is a hair lower for 2026 compared to 2025, by 0.68 percent.

The allocations are based on sales made in January by businesses that report tax monthly.

Statewide, city sales tax revenue is 0.3 percent less than March 2025.

Morgan's Point Resort will receive \$32,263.20, which is up 13.49 percent compared to receipts in March 2025.

The City of Temple's sales tax disbursement for March is up 2.5 percent from March 2025, at \$52,928,901.67.

The City of Nolanville will receive \$122,466.52, up 8.57 percent from March 2025.

Troy will receive \$83,103.48, up 2 percent compared to March 2025. The Village of Salado will receive \$86,466.77 up a whopping 27.89 percent compared to last March.

Holland will receive \$11,769.06, down 4.24 percent compared to last March.

Killeen will receive \$2,674,884.67, an increase of 1.16 percent compared to March 2025.

Harker Heights saw a decrease of 3.59 percent for this month's sales tax rebate which totals \$791,421.66.

Belton	\$748,754.08	up	15.46%
Harker Heights	\$791,421.66	down	3.59%
Killeen	\$2,674,884.67	up	1.16%
Holland	\$11,769.06	down	4.24%
Morgan's Point Resort	\$32,263.20	up	13.49%
Nolanville	\$122,466.52	up	8.57%
Salado	\$86,466.77	up	27.89%
Temple	\$2,928,901.67	up	2.5%
Troy	\$83,103.48	up	2%

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OBITUARIES



Brentham

Mary Seaford Brentham
April 8, 1936 – March 14, 2026

Mary Seaford Brentham of Salisbury, NC went to be with the Lord on Saturday, March 14, 2026.

Born in Rowan County on April 8, 1936, to the late John Hub and Esther Cauble Seaford.

She attended Rowan County Schools. Mary spent her entire adult life in the service of the Lord. She married the love of her life, Pastor Ed Brentham in November of 1968. She was stationed in Haiti with her husband as a missionary for many years. When they retired from Haiti they settled in Belton, Texas and worked for Hope for the Hungry. She attended First Baptist Church. After the loss of her husband and a couple health issues Mary moved back to North Carolina. She joined Carmel Baptist Church.

Mary was preceded in death by her husband, parents, two brothers, two sisters, and three nieces. She will be missed by everyone that knew her. She always had a big smile and if you were lucky enough to see it then you will never be able to forget it.

Memorial service will be held at 2PM on March 28, 2026, at Carmel Baptist Church.

In lieu of flowers donations may be made to Carmel Baptist Church, 2100 Mooresville Rd., Salisbury, NC 28147 or Hope for the Hungry, Mission House, PO Box 786, Belton, TX 76513.

Summersett Funeral Home is serving the Brentham family. Online condolences may be made at www.summersettfuneralhome.com.

Seale

Carol Ann Seale
September 1, 1957 – March 10, 2026

Born September 1, 1957, in Fayetteville, North Carolina, she went to our Lord and Savior on March 10, 2026, at the age of 68.

Carol was a beloved daughter, sister, aunt and friend. She was a longtime resident of Belton, Texas for over 40 years. However, she was a resident of Round Rock, Texas at the time of her death. She was a proud graduate of Killeen High School in 1976, where she was a member of the choir and explorers. She was a dedicated worker. She worked at Rockwell Industries and Texas Instruments where she worked for over 19 years. Carol achieved an Associates of Arts from Temple College in 2001, as well as certificates in Computer Aided Design and Geographic Information Systems. She was very artistic and poured her heart into every hobby she pursued—from photography, ceramics, sewing, and drawing as well as many others—mastering each with grace and talent. She is survived by three siblings, older brother and his wife, William “Bill” and Cindy Seale; younger sister, Debra Shaffer, and younger brother, Howard “Buster” Seale; as well as four nephews, Kevin, James, Matthew and Nathan; plus one niece, Sarah; and two great-nephews, Jackson and Stetson. She is preceded in death by her parents William “Bill” and Louise Seale as well as her younger sister, Marie Seale.

A celebration of life will be held on April 12, 2026, at 1 p.m. at LaQuinta Inn in Belton, 229 West Loop 121.

CTBR - From Page A1

came from Dylan’s grandma saying, ‘Bony Legs will get you’ instead of ‘the boogeyman is gonna get you’ when he was a kid, so they use that phrase to honor her,” said Austin Embleton, owner of Mad Dog Military. “Mad Dog was my call sign when I was in the Marines, in Iraq.”

The Grand Champion was Michelle Martinez with team AMP Cookers.

“The win qualifies her for the BBQ World Cup in Las Vegas in 2027 where the pot is a million dollars,” said Bunker.

The Reserve Grand Champion was Eric Arnold with team BIGG E BBQ.

The first-place brisket went to Matt Kasper with Rapsak BBQ.

The first-place chicken went to Derrick Bermea with We Stay Smokin.

The first-place pork spareribs was Edward Oakes with Dirt Track Cookers.

There were many activities for children including a fishing pond with over 200 fish in the tank, a petting zoo, Chencho the Clown made balloon animals, face painting, and bounce hous-

es.

Animal enthusiasts were invited to bring their pets and there was an animal adoption event where 23 dogs and a cat were adopted to new homes along with 70 microchips and vaccines given out.

For results of the competition visit the website at <https://ibcabbq.org/contest-details/?contestid=11587>.

To participate in next year’s event, reach out to George Bunker at 970-632-4917 or email at george@ctbr.net.

Whiddon Jr.

Aubrey Clinton Whiddon Jr.
September 28, 1949 – March 16, 2026

Aubrey Clinton Whiddon Jr., affectionately known as “Bunky,” passed away on Monday, March 16, 2026, at Heritage House Nursing Center in Rosebud, Texas, following a lengthy battle with Parkinson’s disease. Born on September 28, 1949, in Conroe, Texas, Aubrey lived a life marked by devotion—to his family, his faith, and his community.

A graduate of Cleveland High School, Aubrey honored his country by enlisting in the Army, where he served proudly as a Missile Technician. Following his military service, he dedicated many years to the family enterprise, Whiddon Construction Company, contributing his craftsmanship and creativity until his retirement. His passion for woodworking extended beyond the business; he joyfully transformed scrap wood into beautiful furniture, sharing his artistry with those around him.

A deeply spiritual man, Aubrey was a devout reader of his Bible and spent considerable time nurturing his faith at church. His commitment went beyond attendance; he used his gifts and talents to support the church’s needs and took great care in teaching Bible studies. Those who knew him respected his steady faith and the example of courage and trust in God. His interests reflected a love for nature and creativity. Aubrey enjoyed hunting for arrowheads, fishing, and was a phenomenal artist known for his evocative drawings of landscapes and animals. These pursuits enriched his life and were a source of happiness and peace.

Aubrey’s legacy is carried forward by those who loved him dearly. He is survived by his daughter Priscilla Whiddon Foster and her husband Tim; his sisters Betty Cooper and her husband Jackie, Patty Kemp and her husband Dean Schmuck; his brothers Wesley Whiddon and wife Ellie, James Whiddon, Thomas Whiddon and wife Sassy, Steve Whiddon and wife Monica, and David Whiddon. Aubrey was also a proud grandfather to Dalton Lindemood, Alex Foster, Trent Foster, and a beloved granddaughter, Abigail Gawryszewski, and her husband Connor. He cherished his five great-grandchildren, as well as numerous cousins, nieces, nephews, and dear friends, including a very special friend, Charlotte Thomas.

He was preceded in death by his parents; his wives, Pamela Jackson Whiddon (3 years) and Patricia Shipp Whiddon (43 years); his step-son James Jason Lindemood; and his sister Elizabeth Johnson.

In lieu of flowers please consider making a memorial donation to Happy Life Church Highway 321, Cleveland, TX 77327.

Aubrey’s life was celebrated with a graveside service held on Friday, March 20, 2026, at Oak Shade Cemetery located 1807 County Road 2212 in Cleveland, Texas, with Pastor Tim Foster of Temple Christian Center Pastor Betty Watson of Happy Life Church in Cleveland, Texas. His memory endures in the hearts of his family and friends, who remember a man of faith, artistry, and steadfast dedication to those he loved. His profound belief in God and his unwavering spirit remain a guiding light for all who had the privilege of knowing him.

A special thank you extends to all of his extended “family” at Heritage House Nursing Center in Rosebud, Texas, where he resided the last three years. Their care, attention and love for Aubrey exceeded their duty as caregivers and established their role as family for him. The friends he made during his time there provided an excellent quality of life in his final years. Our family is forever grateful for the tenderness shown to him. A special thank you Young’s Daughters for their attention to the details and careful handling after his transition.

The family also wishes to thank Interim Hospice Care for their attentiveness during his final days. Your compassion and kindness toward him and our family are deeply appreciated.

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

MPR Dive Team gets underwater sonar grant

By David Stone
The Belton Journal

Morgan’s Point Resort’s City Council voted unanimously earlier this month to apply for a Homeland Security Grant to benefit the city’s Search & Recovery Dive Team.

The grant would be used to purchase a new Aqua-Eye Pro-Command underwater sonar system that is assisted by Artificial Intelligence. The Aqua-Eye will let divers know the difference between a tree, a car and a human body in murky waters.

According to a resolution passed unanimously by City Council, the Aqua-Eye would cost \$32,469.60, and it is available through a Homeland Security grant through Fiscal Year 2026.

“The system would improve diver safety and speed of search efforts,” said Gustavo McMillan, dive team coordinator. “Right now, sonar is used from a boat, but with the Aqua-Eye, it could be performed by two divers. It would take what is now a two-day search down to about 30 minutes.”

“Belton Lake is a beautiful lake until you get underwater,” he added. “Then it gets very murky. This will help us navigate those waters.”

The Morgan’s Point Resort Search & Recovery Dive Team, a part of the Police Department, has been in operation since 2008. The unit’s primary responsibility is the recovery of drowning victims in area lakes and rivers.

The team is made up of police officers, volunteer firefighters, active military and citizen volunteers. The team is highly trained in body and evidence recovery.

There are 23 members of this elite team and all divers are required to hold an advanced level of certification. The Dive Team is one of the best trained units in the region and is the designated Search & Recovery Dive Team for all law enforcement agencies in Bell County.

In other action: Council re-appointed Scott Fournier, Greg Weisman and Ted Teegarden as directors of the Morgan’s Point Resort Economic Development Corporation. They will serve two more years.

Council accepted a \$10,000 fire-rescue training aid grant that is designated to support rural fire operations through the purchase of training equipment.

The money will be used to acquire training materials that enhance fire & rescue preparedness, improve operational readiness and strengthen overall emergency response capabilities.

The grant does not require matching funds from the city. Council designated Mary Tolman, assistant city manager and chief financial officer, as the officer for MPR’s bank depository services.

Kim Helka was designated as vice chair of the Mary Ruth Briggs Library Board.

Council met in executive session March 23 to discuss finalists for the city manager position that will be vacated by Dennis Baldwin in May.

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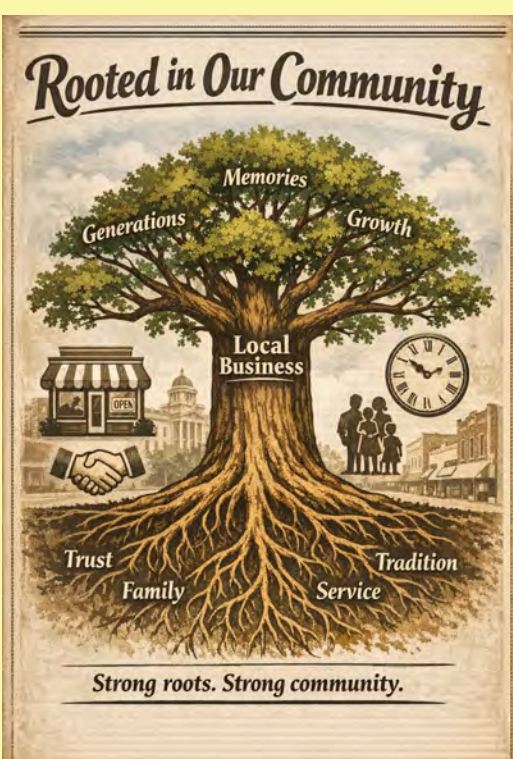
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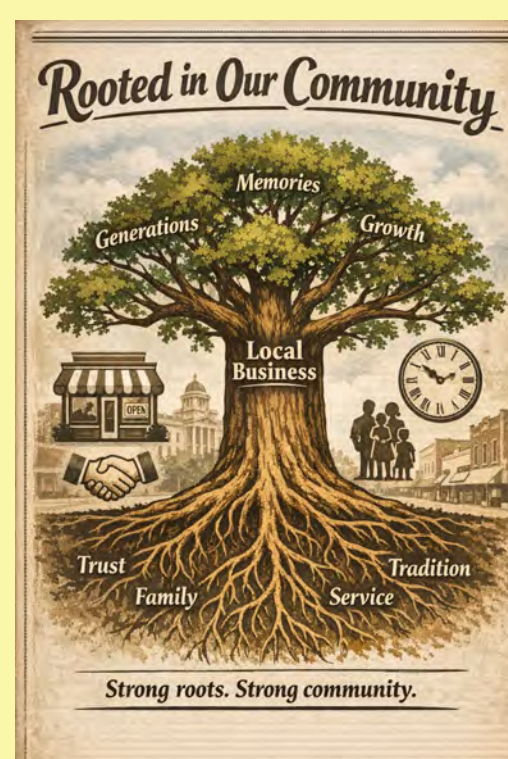
In a world where businesses come and go, there is something deeply meaningful about a local establishment that has stood the test of time. These businesses are more than storefronts—they are part of our story. They've watched generations grow, supported families, sponsored little league teams, and stood steady through both good seasons and hard ones.

jobs, family traditions, and familiar faces that greet us by name.

As locals, we don't just support these businesses because they've been here a long time—we support them because they've been here for us. Their success is tied to the heartbeat of our community. When they thrive, we all feel it.

Longevity in business doesn't happen by accident. It reflects trust, consistency, and a commitment to serving the community with integrity year after year. For many of us, these places hold memories—first

So the next time you walk into a business that's been serving your town for decades, remember—you're not just making a purchase. You're investing in a legacy.





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A6
Thursday,
March 26, 2026

LIFESTYLES

THE BELTON JOURNAL

AR Homes opens Belton location

By David Tuma
The Belton Journal

AR Homes has opened an office on Central Ave. Jarrod Gaither President of Hill Country Design Group, LLC is excited to open an office in Belton. AR Homes also has offices in North Austin and Cedar Park. The company has 40 different offices nationwide.

Gaither moved to Texas in 1999 and is familiar with the Central Texas area. Each franchise is independently operated. "We got to make our own decisions locally. I have been working in the home building industry since 2009. The custom homes we build are in the 3,200 to 4,500 sq ft range. We are looking to bring the AR Homes brand into the area," said Gaither.

What sets AR Homes apart is a commitment to embracing the latest technologies to deliver comprehensive marketing strategies that cater



Courtesy photo

AR Homes, a local home building franchise, has opened its newest location in Belton.

to every step of the customer journey. They are looking to reach the right customers. Building a custom home is a personal experience.

In the world of luxury custom homebuilding, their

goal is not just about building a home or homes; it is crafting dreams and fulfilling aspirations.

"For individuals looking to purchase a custom home in an affordable price

range we have the experience to make that a reality. You spend a lot of time in your home. We take a black piece of dirt and make memories for life. We get to build it knowing it is going to im-

act people's lives. If you do a line of work, you love you are lucky," said Gaither.

Gaither co-owns the AR Homes franchise with Donald Jarrod. "Donald and I have worked together

for three years. We are not the least expensive nor expensive builders of custom homes. Our product will last. What we do offer is an upper end high quality luxury product," said Gaither.

Applications are being accepted for the Leadership Central Texas class of 2026

By Michele Weisman
The Belton Journal

Applications are now open for the Leadership Central Texas class of 2026, for Bell, Coryell, Hamilton, Lampasas, Milam, Mills, and San Saba counties.

Applicants who have an interest in understanding and involvement in a

regional process of their local cities need to apply by 5 p.m. on April 30.

The three class dates and times are from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on June 18, July 16, and August 20, 2026. Those registering for the leadership training must attend those dates and times.

When planning this program with local elected officials over 20 years ago, they hired a futurist.

She helped them see that more citizens needed to become involved.

Applicants receive regional training over three days on economic development, senior centers, meal programs, and much more.

Ideal candidates are already involved in city leadership or want to understand the operations of regions before getting involved.

Jim Reed, executive director at CTCOG, said, "Citizens need to under-



Courtesy Photo

Applications are now open for the Leadership Central Texas class of 2026 for residents of Bell, Coryell, Hamilton, Lampasas, Milam, Mills, and San Saba counties.

stand that we can make that group broader. If we make it broader, it's going to look more like the community. The end goal is to create a cadre of citizens that understand the bigger picture," said Reed.

Networking across seven counties starts on the first day of class, with their classmates of the Leadership Central Texas class of 2026. An endorsement follows their course completion.

"We send those

names to all of our elected officials looking to fill positions on volunteer boards and advisory boards," Reed said.

All applications must be received by 5 p.m., April 30, 2026. For the application process, contact David Rodriguez by phone at 254-770-2383 or

email david.rodriguez@ctcog.org.

An Economic Development Administration grant covers most of the program's costs, so there is an application fee. Adults and mature youth with parental attendance may apply.

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County Emergency Management prepares for statewide drill

Special to the Journal

The Bell County Emergency Management Office is trying to spread the word regarding an upcoming statewide drill testing the public warning system which will take place on Thursday, April 2 between 10 a.m. and 12:30 p.m.

During the drill, residents can expect to receive emergency alerts, which will clearly state that the communications are part of a test.

The planned drill was mandated by the Texas Division of Emergency Management (TDEM) to evaluate the state's landline-based emergency notification sys-

tems, wireless emergency alerting (WEA), and Integrated Public Warning systems (IPAWS).

The purpose of the test is to confirm that every aspect of the emergency communications system is functioning properly.

Additionally, it is an opportunity to prepare members of the public to receive emergency messages during real emergency events. It also serves as a reminder for residents to develop their own plan for disasters.

Emergency Management officials from both the county and cities will be testing their emergency alert systems during the drill window.



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BISD career programs get ink from New York Times

By David Tuma
The Belton Journal

The Belton School System was featured recently in the New York Times.

The newspaper printed an article on the district's Architecture and Construction program, which has won multiple gold awards on the national level.

"They came down and did a story shadowing student in the program, and they watched students build a tiny home," said Denise Ayres, BISD Director of PK-12 Career Readiness.

The program is for students helping students, and students are employment-ready upon completion.

"In Construction Careers at Belton High School, the biggest growth I see is students mastering their skills, earning industry-based certifications, and gaining confidence in their career pathway. Many come in unsure of their future, but they leave with a clear plan and real-world experience solving problems they will face on the job," said Michael Carrillo, Construction Careers Instructor at Belton High School. "Safety and responsibility are foundational in our program because protecting our workforce starts here. Construction CTE does not just teach students how to build projects; it builds character, confidence, and a strong framework of technical, workplace, and personal skills they will carry with them into any career."

Overcoming obstacles is part of life in general. At the high school level, sports often come to mind for teaching that to students.

"The career and technical applications learned can be applied to real-world situations. They mirror what the students face in the real world," Ayres added.

Jay Morales, a student at Belton High, said the program helped him find focus on the future.

"Before taking on construction, I didn't really have a plan. Now I'm interested in becoming a project manager or general contractor. I love seeing a project go from a sketch to something I can actually stand in," he said. "This class has taught me how to read blueprints, understand how systems work together, and prepare for my OSHA-10 certification. Most of all, it's built my confidence. In construction, 'close enough' isn't good enough. It has to be right."

Students in Belton ISD's CTE programs build a strong foundation for future opportunities through rigorous, career-connected learning that blends academic knowledge with hands-on technical training and employability skill development.

Whether entering college, joining the workforce, or doing both—working while pursuing higher education—CTE equips students with the skills, experiences, and certifications needed to thrive in high-wage, high-skill, and in-demand careers.

Angel Armas, a student at Belton High, credits the program with changing his mind on exploring a trade.

"Before taking electrical, I thought I wanted to pursue sports as a career. Now, I'm



Courtesy Photo

Students at BISD learn construction trades that help prepare them for real-world careers.

interested in learning more about electrical and exploring other skilled trades. This program showed me that a career in the trades can be challenging, but if you put in the work, it pays off," he said. "The best part of class is getting hands-on experience and using critical thinking skills to make something work. I've learned time management, teamwork and the importance of safety. Working with real tools and real-world situations has helped me become

more careful, resourceful and confident. This program is helping me build a strong foundation for life after high school."

From programs in Agriculture to Automotive, students get real-world experience to become as employee-ready as possible.

"Students have the choice to engage in learning. In every soft skill, students are learning what they like and don't like. In life, you don't take a test," said Ayres.

Belton Public Library holds Reading Rodeo



BELTON JOURNAL/Michele Weisman
Alex Corad creates a horse's mane as her mom, Tawnie Corad, looks on. The crafts were part of last week's Reading Rodeo activities at the Lena Armstrong Public Library.

By Michele Weisman
The Belton Journal

Spring break at the Belton Library roped up 5 days of fun for school-age children.

The theme was Reading Rodeo, and Monday through Friday of last week, at 2 p.m., families were invited to the activities.

On Wednesday, the library hosted *Come-and-Go Cowboy Crafts* between the hours of 2 p.m. and 4 p.m. Western crafts were on display for the children to create.

Two tables were lined with paper projects to choose from. One table had horse heads, with punch marks for yarn to be laced through, creating a mane. Large popsicle sticks could then be glued to the neck. A variety of possible color paper horse head cutouts, yarn strands of different colors, and googly eyes

provided artistic options for the children.

On the other table were paper snake heads and bookmark size bodies for the snakes. Again, children could choose a variety of paper body colors and orange or green paper heads for the snake. Glueing or stapling was provided for attaching the body.

Four tables were set up in the library's main room, with tablecloths, where the craft projects were completed. The open time frame allowed families to

be unrushed as they came at the time between 2 p.m. and 4 p.m. that worked for them.

Lauren Gommert, library coordinator, said that reading times are changing starting April 1.

Baby Time will be on Tuesdays at 10 a.m. Toddler reading time will be on Wednesdays at 10 a.m. Pre-K reading time will be on Thursdays at 10 a.m.

A bilingual children's reading time called El Día Del Niño will occur on April 30 at 10 a.m.

Fatih Martinez, a library clerk, said that the reading time is about honoring the rights and well-being of children. Go to the Belton Public Library's Facebook page for more information about these events at www.facebook.com/BeltonPublicLibrary.



Council - From Page A1

changes that could disrupt local businesses and mobility,"

"This raises two fundamental policy questions," Potts said. "How much should Belton be spending on economic development? And, what types of investments should Belton be able to make with those BEDC dollars?"

Belton's Type A EDC was established in 1990 when the city had about 12,000 residents and Type A was the only option. Belton EDC started with a modest annual budget of \$320,000. Type A EDCs are focused on primary jobs (industrial/manufacturing/distribution) and Type B EDCs may focus on both primary and secondary job creation and retention, as well as many other quality of life projects.

Belton residents voted to approve the formation of the BEDC with a funding stream of a ½ cent sales tax.

Today, Belton's population is now more than 27,000, annual revenue for BEDC averages \$4.21 million, and the city has lost many small-city flexibilities designed for broader business support, according to Tuesday's presen-

tation.

"Today the BEDC appears to have more money than deployable authority under Type A rules, while the city's General Fund faces rising pressures from infrastructure, quality-of-life needs, and property-tax relief," Potts said in his statement.

"While the BEDC is funded by a ½ cent sales tax, the current annual revenue is the equivalent of about 16 cents worth of property tax funds."

Also Tuesday, Council: Recognized Assistant Director of Finance Amanda Cox for receiving her Certified Government Finance Officer designation.

Approved a zoning change from Commercial Highway to planned Development - Commercial 2 on 0.46 acres at 400 W Avenue O.

Approved a zoning change from Single Family-3 to Planned Development Single Family 3 on 34.73 acres on East Avenue R.

Approved a zoning change from Agriculture to Commercial-2 on 1.02 acres located at 704 East Loop 121.

Approved a final plat

for Burnet Addition, Phase 2, comprising 0.99 acres located on North Burnet Street.

Approved a final plat for River Farm, Phase 1B, on 23.62 acres east of Tollbridge Road.

Approved a final plat for River Place, Phase 10, on 56.57 acres, located west of North Main Street and South of the Leon River.

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Do I Really Need Church?



John C. Perry

I often invite people I meet to come visit our Methodist Church in Salado. Fairly often I hear the response, "I don't need to be part of a church. My personal relationship with God is enough." I understand that sentiment. I believe a genuine relationship with Christ is the foundation of faith, and God certainly meets us personally. But I also remind them

that being part of a Biblebased church can strengthen and enrich that relationship in ways we simply cannot experience alone.

In John 13:34-35, Jesus says, "Love one another . . . by this everyone will know you are my disciples." To me, this is Jesus' clearest statement about belonging. He is essentially saying, "You cannot follow Me in isolation. Your love for each other is the proof you belong to Me."

So how does being an active member of a church help us live that out?

One of the most important reasons is worship. Gathering with fellow believers resets the heart. It reminds us of what truly matters and recenters our lives on God. Worship

is not just a weekly habit, it is a weekly homecoming.

Our Methodist church is only about three years old. We are still small, around 60 or 70 members, but that smallness is a blessing. I have been part of larger congregations, yet there is something uniquely special about a church family where everyone knows your name, your story, and your struggles. We genuinely care for one another, and when someone needs help, people show up. That kind of community is becoming rare in today's world.

Church is also where we learn. Through sermons, singing, and Bible study, we grow in our understanding of God's Word and how to apply it to daily life. Our adult Bible study

teacher, Dr. Tim Crowe, has opened my eyes to the deep connection between the Old and New Testaments. Before attending his class, I was mostly a New Testament guy. Now I see the beauty and unity of Scripture in a way I never had before.

There is also something about singing praises to God with your fellow believers. To me, even though I cannot even carry a tune, church music is a powerful spiritual experience in itself. It lifts the heart in ways words alone simply cannot do.

Witnessing and discipleship matter deeply to me. When I see generosity, love, and worship lived out in our church, it inspires me to share with others what a Christcentered life can bring.

When you look at these reasons, it becomes clear why being part of a church family can make your life richer and stronger. A congregation offers love, accountability, encouragement, and a place to grow. I encourage you to find a Biblebased church and visit. If the first one doesn't feel right, try another. Don't give up after one attempt.

God never intended faith to be just a solo journey. He calls us into a community where His love is practiced, shared, and multiplied, and where we learn, together, what it truly means to follow Christ.

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.



Local Activities & Events

Newcomers Club Activities

March

03/25: Fun Lunch
03/26: Mexican Train Dominoes
03/27: Trailblazers Walking Group
03/28: Jimmy's Egg

April

04/01: Monthly Luncheon
04/06: Chat 'n' Canasta
04/09: Mexican Train Dominoes, Couples Night Out
04/10: TGIF Lunch
04/13: Bookworms
04/14: Singing Bluebonnets
04/16: Nonfiction Book Club, Meet

**"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."**

MPR Explorers - Mar 26

MPR Explorers invites residents to its monthly gathering featuring a musical performance by the Lake Belton High School Choir Show Ensemble, followed by a meet-and-greet with the Directors of the Friends of the Mary Ruth Briggs Library. The program highlights local talent and strengthens community connections as MPR continues building momentum for events and programs that benefit residents of all ages. Thursday, March 26, social at 10:00 a.m.; program concludes at 11:30 a.m. at Garrett & Mic Hill Event Center, 60 Morgan's Point Blvd.

Bell County Master Gardener - Mar 28

Join us for our upcoming plant preview. Curious to see what will be offered at our upcoming Spring Plant Sale? Come to our preview where Master Gardener Christy Reese will go over what's to come. March 28, 8:00 to noon or until sold out at Cadence Bank Center, 301 W Loop 121, Belton.

Roses for Hoses - Apr 11

The Ladies Auxiliary of the Morgan's Point Resort Volunteer Fire Department will be hosting the Roses for Hoses 5K Run & Walk on Saturday, April 11, at Oakmont Park, located at the end of Tanyard Road. The event begins at 8:30 a.m., and the run is part of the Centex Race Series. Attendees are encouraged to dress in a costume. Roses for Hoses supports the fire department and local outreach projects. For more information email Karen Stagner at kastagne@att.net.

NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) will meet on TUESDAY, Mar 24 at 6:30 p.m. 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.

Temple-Belton Ladies Lion Club Meeting Second and Fourth Monday of every month at 6:30 pm at the Belton V.F.W., 2311 S. Pearl St., Belton.

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, mark-

ers and education. To volunteer or for more information please visit historicalcommission@bellcounty.texas.gov, call 254-933-5917 or visit the office located in the historic Bell County Courthouse, 101 E. Central Ave., RM 117.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Community Information

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

stay connected: Stay informed

Got a local event, church gathering, or meeting?
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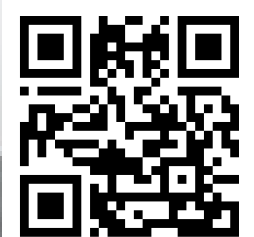
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Lake Belton avenges last year's loss to Red Oak with 4-1 score

By Aries Ramos
The Belton Journal

Friday night at Waco Midway Panther Stadium, the Lake Belton Lady Broncos opened the UIL State Playoffs with a statement, defeating Red Oak 4-1 and avenging a 4-1 loss to the same opponent a year ago.

Windy conditions greeted both teams on a hot evening, and with the Broncos playing into the wind in the first half, they leaned heavily on their defense. Goalkeeper Elizabeth Gudgen was up to the task, making several big stops to keep the sheet clean early.

The breakthrough came four minutes before halftime.

Audrey Mughelli launched a long throw in across the box, and Clara Hill met it with a header to put Lake Belton up 1-0 heading into the break.

The second half belonged to the Broncos. Hill was at the center of the action again when Teagan Pettijohn found her wide in the box. Hill beat her defender toward the goal line before being taken down hard, drawing a penalty kick. Evelyn Bragewitz stepped up and buried it to the left side of the net, pushing the lead to 2-0.

The third goal started with another Mughelli throw in, this time finding Pettijohn again. She shook off three defenders and played a ball to the back post, where Hill was waiting once more to finish and make it 3-0.

Red Oak pulled one back on a penalty kick after a foul call in the box that drew some criticism from the crowd, trimming the deficit to 3-1. But Lake Belton responded quickly. Pettijohn delivered a corner kick into the box that Mikaela Ebberts finished to seal the 4-1 final.

For the Broncos in the goal, Gudgen finished with 10 saves and was strong throughout, particularly in the second half. Her stand out performance helped elevate the Broncos to an impressive 1st round win.

The Lady Broncos advance to the Area Playoff Round and will face West Mesquite on Tuesday, March 24th, at 6 p.m. in Hillsboro.

Lady Broncos stay unbeaten in district play, improve to 3-0

By Clay Whittington
The Belton Journal

The Lady Broncos improved to 3-0 in league play Tuesday, and they did so in impressive fashion.

After winning its first District 16-5A contests by a combined score of 20-2, Lake Belton exploded at Killeen Ellison, needing only three innings to capture a run-rule victory.

Thanks to an eight-run outburst to open the game, the Lady Broncos were never challenged, cruising to a 23-0 win behind 20 hits.

Isabell Magana was one of the top performers with three hits and four RBIs, including a two-run double in the third inning.

She was walked to leadoff the game before stealing second, and moments later, Magana scored on a passed ball, opening the floodgates.

Analia Diaz was hit by a pitch with the bases loaded to score Maliyah Gooden, and Madison Naser added two more runs with a single to center field.

The Lady Broncos produced six runs before the Lady Eagles secured two outs.

Ellison finished with just a single hit.

With the outcome, Lake Belton (20-6) remains alone atop the district

See **SOFTBALL**,
Page B3

Belton tops Lake Belton on baseball diamond, 7-6

By Aries Ramos
The Belton Journal

It took eight innings, a handful of momentum swings, and a clutch walk off single, but the Belton Tigers left with the result they needed Friday night, defeating the Lake Belton Broncos 7-6 in the opening game of district play.

Evan Echipare delivered the decisive blow in the bottom of the eighth inning, lacing a single to score Casey Morton and give Belton its first district win of the season. The victory also handed Lake Belton its first district loss.

Belton drew first blood in the bottom of the first inning. Billy Young came around to score on a sacrifice fly off the bat of Garrett Stremer, giving the Tigers a 1-0 lead heading into the second.

Lake Belton answered quickly. DJ Lavallee, who would go on to have a monster night at the plate, ripped a double in the top of the second that brought Braxton Cope home and knotted the game at one. The Broncos showed early that they were not going to be pushed around in their district opener.

The answer from Belton was swift and forceful. The Tigers sent three runs across in the bottom of the second inning to retake control and push their lead to 4-1 heading into the middle frames.

Lake Belton kept fighting. In the top of the fourth, Lavallee came through again, this time with a two run single that scored Logan Winkler and Braxten Cope

See **BASEBALL**,
Page B2

Belton earns win over Kaufman in soccer playoffs

By Aries Ramos
The Belton Journal

The Belton Lady Tigers did not need much time to make a statement Friday night.

Just under six minutes into their Class 5A bi-district matchup against Kaufman, Belton was already on the board. McKinney found space at the top of the box, wound up, and buried a shot in the upper-right corner before Kaufman goalkeeper Camila Castellanos could get across to stop it. That early strike set the

tone for what became a dominant performance from start to finish.

From that point on, the Lady Tigers locked things down on both ends of the field. Belton controlled possession and continued to pressure the Kaufman defense throughout the match, eventually outshooting the Lady Lions 11-1 on the night. Of those attempts, eight found the target compared to just one for Kaufman, leaving goalkeeper Destiny Mendez with a quiet evening between the posts as she earned the shutout.

The 2-0 final was a fitting result for

a Belton squad that spent the entire regular season making life difficult for opposing offenses. The Lady Tigers gave up just one goal against district competition all year, a testament to how locked in Head coach Bersozza's group has been defensively.

Friday's win also meant something beyond just advancing. It marked the eighth straight year Belton has won a first round playoff game, a streak that now stretches back to 2017 and shows no signs of stopping. The program has also now reached the postseason in 29

consecutive years.

Senior leadership has been a driving force behind that consistency. Captains Tori Lucksinger and Ava Itz have guided the group all season, while Kiersten Rowland, Marissa Christenson, and Bella Stermer round out a senior class that has been part of some of the program's best runs in recent memory.

Belton, now 10-5-4 on the year, will next travel to Ennis to face Mesquite Po-teet in the area round on Monday, March 24 at 7:30 p.m. as the Lady Tigers look to keep their postseason run alive.



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Sports Briefs

By Clay Whittington
The Belton Journal

Nani Rubio did it again. One year after capturing a state title for Temple, Rubio recently repeated the feat, earning another gold medal, but this time, she was representing the Lady Broncos. At last week's Texas High School Women's Powerlifting Association Unequipped State Meet in Edinburg, the junior collected another state championship, setting new state records in the process. Rubio combined a 300-pound squat, 125 bench press and

325 deadlift for a first-place total of 750 in the 123-pound division. The squat and deadlift were new Texas benchmarks. Additionally, in the same weight class, freshman Taytum Hobson was 10th (240-140-235-615) for Lake Belton. The pair propelled the Lady Broncos to a fourth-place finish in the final standings with seven points. Castroville Medina Valley (1st, 12), Comal Pieper (2nd, 10) and Comal Davenport (3rd, 7) occupied the top three positions. The Lady Broncos also found success at the Class 5A, Division I state meet, where Jaya Lisenbe, a senior, received a bronze medal in the 220 weight class. She had 1,110 total (435-315-360).

second as Nylah Berrian won the 400 in 58.50, while sophomore teammate Alexa King was first (2:25.43) in the 800 and second (5:36.50) in the 1,600. The Lady Broncos pair propelled the squad to 80.7 points, sandwiching it between champion Temple (167.2) and third-place Killeen Chaparral (80.5). Belton was sixth (42.7) as senior Laila Page emerged with two gold medals, winning the triple jump (37-7) and pole vault (9-6), while sophomore Tara Stone was first (133-3) in the discus. The Tigers scored 87 points en route to finishing third behind Killeen Shoemaker (1st, 186) and Chaparral (2nd, 98).

Belton Lake: Stillhouse

FAIR. Water normal stain; 60 degrees; 0.87 feet below pool. It is a "tale of two fisheries" right now for Lake Belton white bass. There are fish steadily making their way up the Leon River to spawn, and there are fish still residing in the main lake. Both have their pros and cons. The river fishery is best on the weekdays and during poor weather when fishing pressure is minimized, otherwise, expect plenty of company. Trolling crankbaits which imitate medium-sized threadfin shad, like the Bomber 5A, or the Storm Smash Shad will put fish in the boat slowly but steadily. If you closely watch side-imaging, you will likely spot migrating schools which can be cast to to put bonus fish in the boat. Horseshoe-style jigs with an under-spin in white and chartreuse less than 2 inches long do well. Back on the main lake the deep, lethargic fish which have been present but difficult to goad into biting are now much more aggressive. Look in 35 feet or less along the old Leon River channel or Cowhouse Creek channel during bright conditions, and as shallow as 12-14 feet at first light, last light, and under cloud cover. The Mini White Bass Alabama rig with white paddle tails less than 3 inches long or MAL Originals get the job done when retrieved with a sawtooth retrieve. Report by Bob Mandelle, Holding the Line Guide Service. Catfish are excellent in 10-25 feet of water. Slow drifting with suspended baits around points and river channels has worked best for blue catfish. Flathead catfish are slow, but have been caught near structure and rock piles with live perch and shad. Channel catfish are fair and have been caught in shallow water around timber using punch bait. Report by Brian Worley, B&S Catfishing.

FAIR. Water stained; 60 degrees; 1.90 feet below pool. It is a "tale of two fisheries" right now for Stillhouse white bass. There are fish steadily making their way up the Lampasas River to spawn, and there are fish still residing in the main lake. Both have their pros and cons. The river fishery is best on the weekdays and during poor weather when fishing pressure is minimized, otherwise, expect plenty of company in tight quarters. Trolling crankbaits which imitate medium-sized threadfin shad, like the Bomber 5A, or the Storm Smash Shad will put fish in the boat slowly but steadily. If you closely watch side-imaging, you will likely spot migrating schools which can be cast to to put bonus fish in the boat. Horseshoe-style jigs with an underpin in white and chartreuse less than 2 inch long do well. Back on the main lake the deep, lethargic fish which have been present but difficult to goad into biting are now much more aggressive. Look in 35 feet or less along the old Lampasas River channel during bright conditions, and as shallow as 12-14 feet at first light, last light, and under cloud cover. The mini white bass Alabama rig with white paddle tails less than 3 inches long or MAL Originals get the job done when retrieved with a sawtooth retrieve. Report by Bob Mandelle, Holding the Line Guide Service.

Also representing Lake Belton was sophomore Catalina Esquivel (9th, 97, 215-115-235-565) and senior Moriah Rydberg (12th, 114, 265-165-270-700). The Lady Broncos were 16th with three points. Thanks to a trio of top-five finishes, the Lady Tigers were 20th (5) at the Class 5A, Division II state meet. Melissa Farmer (220, 405-260-355-1,020) and Byonka Donaldson (242+, 460-225-360-1,045) just missed the medal stand with identical fourth-place showings, while teammate Kennedy Weston was fifth (380-215-390-985) in the 181 weight class. Rounding out Belton's lifters, Claire Gouveia was ninth (114, 230-135-260-625).

Christian Porter was responsible for two event championships with times of 10.72 and 48.23 in the 100 and 400, respectively, and junior Graham Chambley won the 110 hurdles in 14.25. Behind champions Wyatt Potts (1,600, 4:44.81) and Ji'yson Sherman (triple jump, 45-2), Lake Belton was fifth with 50.5 points.

TRACK & FIELD
Lake Belton will host the annual Bronco Relays today, beginning at 3:30 p.m. Belton will also be in attendance, and both schools bring momentum after producing impressive outings at the Temple Relays two weeks ago. At Temple's Wildcat Stadium, the Lady Broncos were

TENNIS
Lake Belton travels to Liberty Hill on Friday for its final competition prior to the District 16-5A meet on April 7. The event will be held at Lake Belton.

GOLF
Killeen's Stontree Golf Club will play host to the annual Belton ISD Invitational today, beginning at 9 a.m. Both of Belton's and Lake Belton's teams will be part of the field. Then, the course will serve as the site for the two-day District 16-5A tournament starting Monday at 9 a.m.

Baseball - From Page B1

to trim the deficit to 4-3. A Easton Robertson ground out let Lavallee get across tying the game at 4-4 a piece. But Belton extended the lead right back in

the bottom half of the inning, plating two more runs to push ahead 6-4 and seemingly take control of the contest. In the top of the seventh, with runners on base and the Broncos trailing, Lavallee drilled a triple that cleared the bases and scored three runners. The hit capped a remarkable

individual performance that saw Lavallee finish with six RBIs on the night. Lake Belton suddenly had the lead at 7-6. After, Belton answered with a run of their own in the bottom of the seventh to send the game to extras. In the bottom of the eighth, Morton reached base and eventually came around to score on Echipare's walk off single, sending the home crowd into a frenzy and sealing the 8-7 Belton victory. For the Tigers, the win was a statement in district play, they showed resilience, bouncing back from a late deficit and finishing the job when it mattered most. For Lake Belton, despite Lavallee's heroic effort, the loss serves as an early reminder of just how competitive district play can be. Both teams will look to build on Tuesday's performances as district action continues with a rematch on Friday.

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Kirk Rogers named second head coach for Lake Belton football program

By Clay Whittington
The Belton Journal

Kirk Rogers likes what he sees. After spending a dozen years serving as the mind behind one of the most successful offenses in state history, Rogers recently relocated and became just the second head coach for the Broncos.

Tuesday, he finally interacted with his players in a formal capacity, and admittedly, Rogers was impressed.

“For about a week,” he said, “I just kind of sat back and evaluated what was going on. I just wanted everyone to keep carrying on with what they’ve been doing, because I believe in observing things instead before jumping in and creating a plan.

“So, that was our first action, and the kids are worker bees. They are excited and ready to accept coaching, and I was pleasantly surprised with the progress we made.”

It was the first step in what Rogers hopes will be a path to prominence for the team experiencing its first transition.

After spending their entire existence under the guidance of Brian Cope, the Broncos were forced to find a new head football coach following his departure for the same position at New Caney West Fork.

During a month of searching, Rogers emerged as his successor, and it is easy to see why.

Rogers served as the offensive coordinator at state powerhouse Austin Westlake for the previous 12 seasons, helping guide the Chaparrals to five state championships, where they won three consecutive state titles beginning in 2019.

Prior to Westlake, Rogers was the receivers coach at Southlake Carroll, earning a pair of state championships.

Now, he looks to take the Broncos to similar heights after finishing last season with a 5-6 overall record, but football was only part of Lake Belton’s appeal.

“I felt like I was ready for a new challenge in life,” Rogers said. “I’ve been really selective about where I’ve coached, and obviously, if I didn’t think this was a really good place for me, then I wouldn’t have gone after the job. After doing my research, I saw how much success they’ve had as a school throughout all their programs, and that was exciting.

“There is a lot of administrative support, and there are all the ingredients to be something special. Lake Belton fits the mold of the places I’ve been, but ultimately, it just felt like the right place at the

right time.”

On the field, the Broncos have qualified for the playoffs in all four years as a University Interscholastic Program, producing an overall record of 28-16 under Cope.

They have yet to celebrate a bi-district championship, though, but there is potential for that to change.

Lake Belton returns a wealth of playmaking talent, including running back Zyien Dupree, who was named 8-5A All-District Offensive Newcomer of the Year as a sophomore.

Additionally, receiver Zion Harness, offensive linemen Colton Crocker, Colton Colvin and Isaiah Fulk and quarterback Jessiah James return among others.

Last season, the group helped the Broncos average 34.5 points en route to a 5-6 record.

Regardless of what the future holds, Rogers is eager to begin creating a legacy at Lake Belton.

“Coach Cope did a really good job of starting the program and laying the foundation,” Rogers said. “Now, it is my job to come in and continue building onto what he began, and it is exciting to be at the forefront of a school’s history.

“There are some advantages and disadvantages to that, but we get to create our traditions here.”



Risks threatening Gen Z’s retirement — and how to tackle them

Scot Hrbacek, CFP® Financial Advisor

For Gen Z workers, saving for retirement may feel out of reach.

High interest credit cards and student loan payments can drain a paycheck before the month even begins.

With rising rents and higher everyday prices, there’s barely room for anything beyond the basics.

But getting started with retirement savings needn’t be hard.

Begin small — even a few dollars per paycheck helps build a good habit. Small, consistent contributions can grow dramatically over time, when you have decades to accumulate them.

If you have a workplace

retirement plan, contribute at least enough to earn any employer match. And if you have no workplace plan, consider opening an IRA.

The choices and financial jargon within a retirement plan may feel overwhelming, but options like target date funds help reduce complexity and keep you properly invested without needing expert advice.

The biggest mistake isn’t choosing the wrong fund for your retirement dollars; it’s not starting at all. Small steps today can build real flexibility tomorrow. And time is Gen Z’s biggest advantage.

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

Edward Jones

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Softball - From Page B1

standings. Belton (2-1) and Killeen Chaparral (2-1) follow, while the Lady Eagles (1-2), Waco University (1-2) and Waco (0-3) round out the field.

Along with the Lady Broncos’ one-sided performance, the Lady Bob-

cats only needed five innings to defeat Waco 21-3 on Tuesday, when the Lady Tigers edged out the Lady Trojans 3-2.

Lake Belton returns to action Friday, when it hosts Waco at 6:30 p.m. before completing the

first round of league play with a home game against Chaparral on March 31.

After having a home field advantage in four of their first five district games, the Lady Broncos will spend a majority of their remaining schedule

on the road with the Lady Eagles serving as the team’s only game at Lake Belton during April.

The Lady Broncos’ home finale will be April 10.

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EASTER *Worship & Celebrations*

“The Debt You Couldn’t Pay” — An Easter Story

Imagine walking into a courtroom. The room feels heavy, quiet, almost overwhelming. Your heart is pounding, because deep down you already know the truth—you're guilty. Not just of one mistake, but of many. Every wrong choice, every lie, every moment you knew what was right but chose something else—it's all there, written down in a thick file with your name on it.

You stand there as the judge looks over the record. There is no arguing with what's been written. It's accurate. It's complete. It tells the full story of your life, not just the good parts, but the hidden parts too—the thoughts, the motives, the things no one else ever saw.

The judge looks up and says, “The punishment is already decided. The cost must be paid.”

Your mind races. You want to explain. You want to defend yourself. You begin to say things like, “I’ll do better,” or “I didn’t mean it,” or “Just give me another chance.” But even as the words come out, something inside you realizes the truth—those words aren’t enough. They don’t erase what’s already been done.

You can’t undo the past. You can’t remove the record. And the cost? It’s more than you could ever afford.

You stand there, feeling the weight of it all. The silence in the room grows heavier. There’s no way out. No solution you can create. No payment you can offer.

Then something unexpected happens. From the back of the courtroom, someone stands up.

You hadn’t really noticed Him before,

but now all eyes turn in His direction. He walks forward calmly, confidently, not rushed and not afraid. There’s something different about Him. He doesn’t carry the same weight you do. There’s no file in His hands, no list of wrongs attached to His name.

He steps forward and speaks. “I’ll pay it.”

The entire room seems to pause. The judge looks at Him and asks, “Are you sure? This will cost you everything.”

Without hesitation, He responds, “Yes.” You look at Him, confused. Why would He do this? He doesn’t belong here. He hasn’t done anything wrong. There is no reason for Him to step in, no obligation, no requirement.

And yet, He chooses to take your place. That is what Easter is about.

The Bible tells us that every single person has sinned. No one is exempt. We have all fallen short of God’s perfect standard. It also tells us that the cost of sin is death—not just physical death, but separation from God, the source of life.

That courtroom scene isn’t just a story—it represents a spiritual reality. Each of us stands guilty before a holy and just God, unable to fix what we’ve broken or pay what we owe.

But then comes Jesus. Jesus lived a perfect life. He never sinned. He never failed. He never had a record of wrongs. And yet, He willingly stepped into our place. On the cross, He took the punishment that belonged to us. He carried our sin, our shame, and our debt.

It wasn’t taken from Him. It was given by Him.

He chose it. He endured the pain, the suffering, and the weight of sin so that we wouldn’t have to. When He died on the cross, it looked like the end. It looked like darkness had won. It looked like death had the final word.

But the story didn’t end there. Three days later, everything changed. Jesus rose from the dead.

The tomb that once held Him was emp-

ty. The stone was rolled away. Death had been defeated. The power of sin had been broken. What seemed like a loss was actually the greatest victory.

The resurrection is what makes Easter so powerful. It proves that Jesus’ sacrifice was enough. It proves that the payment was accepted in full. It proves that there is hope beyond guilt, beyond shame, and even beyond death.

Because He lives, everything is different.

The Bible says that Jesus was given over to death for our sins and raised to life so that we could be made right with God. That means the record that once stood against you can be cleared. The debt that once defined you can be paid.

You are no longer standing in that courtroom alone.

Easter is not just about tradition, or a holiday, or something that happened a long time ago. It is deeply personal.

It means you don’t have to carry the weight of your past anymore. It means you don’t have to spend your life trying to earn something that has already been freely given. It means you don’t have to stay trapped in guilt, regret, or shame.

Because of Jesus, forgiveness is real. Restoration is possible. New life is available.

You are not defined by your worst moments. You are not stuck in who you used to be. Through Jesus, you are offered something completely new—a fresh start, a clean slate, a restored relationship with God.

And it’s not because of anything you’ve done, but because of what He has already done for you.

That is the heart of Easter. Jesus stepped into your place, took your burden, paid your debt, and then rose again so that you could walk in freedom.

Easter means that Jesus took your place so that you could have His life.



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LEGALS

THE STATE OF TEXAS CITATION BY PUBLICATION CASE NUMBER 24CPB00736

To: UNKNOWN HEIRS
MARKESHIA ROCHEL HAYES,
Applicant, on March 20, 2026, filed an Second Amended Application to Determine Heirship without Administration in a proceeding styled: CARLA ROCHEL HAYES, Deceased, and bearing the number 24CPB00736 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 March 26, 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: JOHN TORTI, 512 SOUTH MAIN, BELTON TX 76513
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 March 20, 2026. Shelley Coston County Clerk of Bell County, Texas, PO Box 480, 1201 Huey Road, Belton, TX 76513
By Lillian Phillips Deputy
03.26

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LEGALS

NOTICE TO CREDITORS

Notice is hereby given that original Letters of Administration for the Estate of CHRISTOPHER RAY NEELEY, Deceased, were issued on January 28, 2026, in Cause No. 25CPB00482, pending in the County Court-At-Law No: 1, Bell County, Texas, to: MELISSA HARPOOL.

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, Signed on 3/20/81

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 03.26

NOTICE TO CREDITORS

Notice is hereby given that original Letters Testamentary for the Estate of ANNA M. WILLIAMS aka ANNA MAE WILLIAMS Deceased, were issued on March 12, 2026, in Cause No. 26CPB00126, pending in the County Court at Law No. 1 of Bell County, Texas, to: ASHLEY CLAPPER.

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 20th day of March. 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 JASON M. WILLIAMS
03.26

NOTICE TO CREDITORS

Notice is hereby given that original Letters Testamentary for the Estate of BERNA DEAN LOWE aka BERNADEAN LOWE, Deceased, were issued on March 12, 2026, in Cause No. 26CPB00127, pending in the County Court at Law No. 1 of Bell County, Texas, to: ASHLEY CLAPPER.

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 20th day of March 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 MICHAEL VERNON LOWE
03.26

THE STATE OF TEXAS CITATION BY PUBLICATION CASE NUMBER 26CPB00171

To: UNKNOWN HEIRS
ROBERT THOMAS, Applicant, on March 19, 2026, filed an Application to Determine Heirship and for Letters of Independent Administration in a proceeding styled: BARBARA ANN SCHILLER, Deceased, and bearing the number 26CPB00171 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 March 26, 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

LEGALS

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: KAREN VILLANUEVA, 2106 BIRD CREEK DR, TEMPLE TX 76502
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 March 19, 2026.

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

By Lillian Phillips Deputy 03.26

NOTICE TO CREDITORS

Notice is hereby given that original Letters Testamentary for the Estate of WAYNE ALBERT MOORE a.k.a. WAYNE MOORE, Deceased, were issued on February 5, 2026, in Cause No. 25CPB00756 pending in the Bell County Court at Law No. 1, Bell County, Texas, to: VIRGINIA MOORE.

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: Mary Wiley Attorney at Law, 100 W. Central Texas Expressway, Suite 306, Harker Heights, Texas 76548
DATED the 21st day of February, 2026. MARY WILEY Attorney for VIRGINIA MOORE, State Bar No.: 24032669, 100 W. Central Texas Expressway, Suite 306, Harker Heights, Texas 76548, Telephone: (254) 634-6969,
Facsimile: (254) 634-6587, E-mail: mary@lindleylawoffices.com
03.26

NOTICE TO CREDITORS

Notice is hereby given that original Letters of Administration for the Estate of JDELIA RENEE GONZALES, Deceased, were issued on February 18, 2026, in Cause No. 25CPB00405, pending in the County Court at Law No. 1, Bell County, Texas, to: ROCHELLE JUANITA GONZALES.

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: Mary Wiley Attorney at Law, 100 W. Central Texas Expressway Suite 306, Harker Heights, Texas 76548

DATED the 27th day of February 2026. MARY WILEY Attorney for ROCHELLE JUANITA GONZALES, State Bar No.: 24032669, 100 W. Central Texas Expressway Suite 306, Harker Heights, Texas 76548, Telephone: (254) 634-6969 , E-mail: mary@lindleylawoffices.com
03.26

NOTICE TO CREDITORS

Notice is hereby given that original Letters Testamentary for the Estate of RONNIE JAN REINHARDT, Deceased, were issued on February 26, 2026, in Cause No. 22CPB00309, pending in the County Court at Law No. 1 of Bell County, Texas, to: COURTNEY MEZA.

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: Mary Wiley Attorney at Law, 100 W. Central Texas Expressway, Suite 306, Harker Heights, Texas 76548
DATED the 18th day of March 2026. MARY WILEY Attorney for COURTNEY MEZA, State Bar No.:

LEGALS

24032669, 100 W. Central Texas Expressway, Suite 306, Harker Heights, Texas 76548, Telephone: (254) 634-6969, Facsimile: (254) 634-6587, E-mail: mary@lindleylawoffices.com 03.26

**THE STATE OF TEXAS
CITATION BY PUBLICATION
CASE NUMBER 26CPB00163**

To: UNKNOWN HEIRS
SHIRLEY DEL CONTE, Applicant, on March 17, 2026, filed an application for determination of heirship & issuance of letters of independent administration in a proceeding styled: FRANK DEL CONTE aka FRANK CONTE aka FRANK DELCONTE, Deceased, and bearing the number 26CPB00163 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 March 26, 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

LEGALS

for applicant is: JOHN C BLAZIER, 901 SOUTH MOPAC BLDG V SUITE 200, AUSTIN, TX 78746

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 March 17, 2026.

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

By: Erika DeCasas Deputy 03.26

**THE STATE OF TEXAS
CITATION BY PUBLICATION
CASE NUMBER 25CPB00407**

To: UNKNOWN HEIRS
TOBIAS MARQUIS HALL, Applicant, on June 26, 2025, filed an application to determine heirship & for letters of independent administration in a proceeding styled: ALEXA CHRISTINE WHITE, Deceased, and bearing the number 25CPB00407 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

LEGALS

which will be March 26, 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: ROY TALMADGE HAMMOCK, 1201 SWS YOUNG DRIVE SUITE A, KILLEEN, TX 76543

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 March 17, 2026. Shelley Coston County Clerk of Bell County, Texas, PO Box 480, 1201 Huey Road, Belton, TX 76513

By: Erika DeCasas Deputy 03.26

Morgan’s Point Resort City Hall storm repairs nearly complete

By David Stone
The Belton Journal

Morgan’s Point Resort is close to finishing repairs to City Hall and other city-owned buildings that suffered significant damages during the May 22, 2024, storm, according to Shahdhiah Valentin, MPR’s director of administrative services.

The storm damage in the Morgan’s Point Resort and Temple areas was caused by two separate tornadoes that struck miles apart, according to the National Weather Service in Fort Worth.

“The first tornado started at 6:21 p.m. about 2 miles south-southeast of Morgan’s Point Resort,” said David Bonnette, a meteorologist with the NWS. “It travelled 2.78 miles on the ground and was

rated as an EF2. Top speeds were 120 mph, and the storm ended in west-north-west Temple.”

According to Bonnette, 30 injuries and no deaths were reported, but extensive damage was reported in Morgan’s Point and west Temple.

“The tornado formed near Texas 317 between FM 2483 and West Adams Avenue where at least a dozen power poles were significantly damaged,” he said. “The tornado continued to move east/southeast across the Terrace at Lake Pointe subdivision, damaging many homes, especially roofs and windows.”

Significant roof and tree damage was found in the neighborhood south of Tarver Elementary School, Bonnette said.

The tornado, according to Bonnette,

then crossed Tanglehead Drive and headed toward West Adams, damaging many west Temple businesses, including stand-alone restaurants, shops, banks and strip centers.

“A few of the businesses in the area suffered major roof damage and cars were flipped up and down Adams,” Bonnette reported. “Most of the power poles along West Adams were damaged or snapped in half.”

“The tornado continued to move southeast, crossing Old Waco Road, damaging other homes and businesses. Additional tree damage was found as the tornado tracked across an open field south of W. Adams Ave and west of South Kegley Road.”

While a National Weather Service

survey team found additional damage east of Kegley, debris indicates the circulation lifted around 6:26 p.m., but downdraft winds estimated between 80-90 mph continued throughout the city.

An EF1-rated tornado hit southeast parts of Temple and continued toward Little River/Academy.

“That storm hit at 6:33 pm. and moved 2.20 miles before dissipating,” Bonnette said. “That tornado packed wind speeds of up to 95 mph.”

“The second but brief tornado — it was gone in two minutes — developed in southeast Temple near Bob White Road north of FM 3117. It tracked over mostly open fields, but roof damage was found near the intersection of these roads. It was major damage.”

Peaceable Kingdom Retreat Center transitions to Peaceable Kingdom Retreat of Bell County

Special to the Journal

After more than 13 years of dedicated stewardship and investment, the Children’s Charity of Texas announced the transition of Peaceable Kingdom Retreat Center to new leadership under Peaceable Kingdom Retreat of Bell County.

This transition honors the founding families whose vision created a space in 1984 for respite and connection, while positioning both nonprofit organizations for focused growth and longterm sustainability serving Texas children.

As both organizations look to the future, this transition allows Variety Texas to focus on financial assistance grants and programs that remove barriers and increase access for children with disabilities and their families across Texas.

The retreat center will continue operating without interruption, now under the stewardship of “Peaceable Kingdom Retreat of Bell County” whose mission closely aligns with the founding purpose of the property.

“We are excited to carry forward the legacy of Peaceable Kingdom and to preserve the meaning it holds for our community both in its history and in its future” said Andy Bass, Board President of Peaceable Kingdom

Retreat of Bell County.

Honoring the Founding Vision The Peaceable Kingdom Retreat Center was established through the generosity and commitment of the Schreiner, Bowmer, Simmonds, and Neal families, and the Jim Bowmer Foundation.

Their belief in the power of nature and connecting in the outdoors laid the foundation for what has become a cherished place for so many.

Since 2012, the Children’s Charity of Texas has invested over \$11,600,000 in operational leadership, capital improvements, and high quality programming to sustain and strengthen the Bell County retreat center. Variety Texas ensured the retreat center not only endured but thrived despite challenges from severe weather and ongoing impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Variety Texas is proud to have served over 80,000 students, campers, and community members during our years stewarding Peaceable Kingdom. We are grateful to the Bass Family for their commitment to continuing this legacy,” said Brittany Baize, President & Executive Director of the Children’s Charity of Texas.

For retreat reservations, 2026 summer camps, field trips, facility questions, or Bell County volunteer opportunities at Peaceable Kingdom Retreat of Bell County,

contact Blayne Alaniz at blayne@PKRBC.org, call 254-554-5555 or visit www.PKRBC.org.

For financial assistance grants for children and families with disabilities, Activate Inclusion events, or the 2026 Adaptive Bike Camp with the Children’s Charity of Texas, contact info@varietytexas.org, call 512-328-5437 or visit www.varietytexas.org.

Both organizations remain deeply committed to serving Texas and Bell County families and invite the community to continue supporting their distinct yet complementary missions.

This transition creates an opportunity for donors and community partners to make a meaningful impact in two ways: Support the Children’s Charity of Texas to provide funding for children with disabilities to purchase equipment, services, and experiences like summer camps that enhance autonomy, belonging, and joyful participation in all areas of life.

Support Peaceable Kingdom Retreat of Bell County to continue the efforts in providing summer camps, outdoor education programs, and weekend retreats for our local community seeking a safe, supportive and joyful experience.

Together, these efforts ensure that families receive both immediate support and long-term opportunity.



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EDITORIAL

I'm island hunting, sort of

My Front Porch • Lynette Sowell

In the past year, lottery jackpots have soared to more than \$1 billion. Even after the taxes are taken out and depending on how a winner wants to receive their funds, if a lump sum or over time, that much money is a very, very decent chunk of change. I think one time, I won \$3.

One time, my sister and brother-in-law and I pooled some spare change for the Mega Millions and Powerball drawings and bought six tickets. Woke up the next morning in the same financial situation we had gone to bed in.

The chances are extremely slim of someone winning with one ticket, or five, or ten.

Isn't it fun, though, to imagine what you'd do if you won a lottery? Not that I spend much time, if any, in that activity. There's too much going on to mull over improbabilities. But, humor me.

Say you did win a gigantic windfall like that. What's the first thing you'd do?

I'd call a financial planner, first off. (Cough-Alan-Horn-cough) You can't get back money you've already spent and just think of what a world of good a large sum of funds could do.

Besides giving money away to worthy causes and ministries, it's also fun to think about those luxury items most of us

only dream about having. I'd buy a nice spot in New England where I could flee a Texas summer for a month or so and have a place for whenever I wanted to visit family. Maybe I'd set up a nonprofit – if the winnings were high enough – or at least go down my list of causes to give donations.

One night while up working late, I started watching a show on HGTV called "Island Hunters," which is one step up from the network's other shows, House Hunters and House Hunters International.

People go shopping for an island to buy. Yes, an island. Some have rather small budgets, when you think about buying and island, maybe a little less than \$1 million. Others have budgets of more than \$10 million.

So then, I immediately started planning out what I'd want on my private island, if in fact, I ever won the lottery. Both improbable things.

I would want an island close enough to shore by boat, yet private. I'd like a dock and a nice sandy beach. A home, with some power and amenities. Some type of internet access, of course. I could still work; I can work from just about anywhere.

I could roll out of bed every morning and see the waves lapping the shores of my very own beach. I can then hop

aboard my small boat to head for the grocery store, or travel into town for a dinner out.

I can see how shows like these germinate seeds of discontent, as I look out my very-real window and don't see sandy beaches. My trek for groceries involves negotiating traffic on 190. Dinner out? Well, I have no complaints about that locally.

Truthfully, discontent is easy enough to find if we start thinking of how much we don't have and miss what we have right in front of us.

There's a time to quit island hunting and making the most of what we do have.

Because, island living isn't reality. It's nice to unplug and "get away from it all" but finding those micro-joys wherever we are, takes practice.

Mega Millions might not be in our futures, but we all have things in our lives that other people might consider private islands. If you have at least one person who loves you. Someone who cheers you on. A pet that loves you unconditionally. You know where your next meal is coming from. If you have something beautiful to look at, something to listen to that lifts you up. We can breed satisfaction as much as we can discontent.

And maybe, we can dream about that private island once in a while.

Lift Where You Stand

Shop the Insanity • Darren Blair

I know that this year's Easter column is a touch early, however this year's topic is one that I feel we should in fact be contemplating all year long.

In October of 2008, Dieter F. Uchtdorf, formerly an executive at Lufthansa and currently a senior religious official with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (of which I am a member) gave a sermon entitled "Lift Where You Stand" - <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2008/10/lift-where-you-stand?lang=eng>.

Elder Uchtdorf opened his sermon by recounting an incident which had taken place in a chapel in Darmstadt in his native Germany. A musical event had been scheduled to take place at the chapel, and this required that the chapel's grand piano be moved from the sanctuary to the adjoining overflow area. Several men from the con-

gregation had been asked to assist in the effort, but multiple attempts to lift and move the heavy instrument all proved futile.

Finally, someone came up with what at the time was a novel idea: each of the men should simply get shoulder to shoulder, as close to each other as possible, and lift where they stood. Sure enough, when everyone came together and gave it their best, the grand piano was raised off the ground and slowly moved where it needed to be moved. Presumably, the same method was used to return it to its original position.

He used this anecdote to inspire the brethren of the faith, a way of encouraging them to work together in the service of others. If everyone was to, metaphorically speaking, lift where they stood, the world would be so much better. There should be no eye towards gain or glory, just as there should be no slacking off. Rather, everyone

has their place within the community, such as "spouse" and "parent", and everyone also has opportunities to do good.

As circumstances permit, take a moment to consider how you yourself, in your own way, can contribute, how you can make the world a little better. Even small actions, like a sincere compliment or a meaningful word of encouragement, can help brighten someone's day. We might not be able to immediately see the results of our actions, but our little bit is still contributing towards the better.

...Especially if, as in the anecdote, we're not alone in that endeavor. One single person, for example, might be able to contribute a few bags of clothing to a clothing drive, but multiple congregations coming together can assemble enough to fill an entire gymnasium. And while individual acts can have a positive effect in the short term,

continued acts can lead to long-term benefit, such as how reading to a child when they are young can encourage them to keep reading the rest of their life.

With that, I bid everyone who so observes it a very happy Easter this year.

PS – While you're at it, another thing to consider is acquiring a toy shopping cart, fabric tote bag, or other reusable item for your kids' Easter baskets instead of the traditional single-purpose baskets. Not only do these baskets help contribute to the overall clutter and waste, the fake plastic "grass" traditionally used to line them poses a hazard to pets and the youngest of children, who might attempt to eat it if left unsupervised near it. In contrast, that toy shopping cart, fabric tote bag, or other such item is something they can use all year long. I've even seen pre-assembled "baskets" for teens that use gym bags as a substitute.

Some kind of killer

Pleasant Ramblings • Mark Magnan

There is a saying that I read some time back: There are two types of people that sit around and figure out ways to kill someone, serial killers and suspense novelists.

And that has absolutely nothing to do with my column for the week. What actually started this was being outside earlier.

This time of year is strange in Central Texas, things are budding and growing, and you are just waiting on the next cold spell, or hard freeze to kill everything again. So everything is growing now because we have had some rain and warm weather.

This is a good time to get out and try to get a handle on the weeds. I was working on that earlier when I ran across some fire ant beds, so I grabbed some poison for them. Then I realized that I was just out in my rather large yard with chemicals that kill, that was all I was doing, killing things. Now I was being responsible, using a very specific weed killer, and of course doctoring only the fire ant beds. I try to protect other ants because they are valuable. Fire ants are just a problem and have caused a lot of destruction, so killing them is always on my list of fun things to do in the yard.

I have areas of my lawn with good grass, so I do try to maintain those so they look nice for the summer. Part of that is getting rid of weeds and other grasses. Of course with the size of my yard I cannot afford to water all summer, especially with the hot and dry months we have in late summer.

I did buy a Powerball ticket the other day when the jackpot

was over \$100 million. I calculated it out and I could have sufficiently watered my grass and been able to pay the water bill for the three summer months if I had won that lottery jackpot.

I try to be responsible and have a balance. I water and fertilize my yard, yet I don't want to get carried away to the point where I am constantly cutting the grass. I use some good fertilizer early in the year to ensure my grass has a good spring starting point. Later in the year I use a very natural form to feed my lawn. I entice the deer onto the grass and they drop a very environmentally friendly type of fertilizer.

Of course, it seems that the concrete of my drive and sidewalks seem to stimulate the deer more than the grass, I often have to dodge their droppings as I make my way outside during my regular jaunts outdoors.

I often run across a variety of other critters in my yard. I don't go out of my way to harm any of those. Even the ones that some folks consider evil, for example spiders. I actually see tarantulas several times during a typical summer.

Now, if someone is afraid of spiders this has to be one that would certainly strike fear in the hearts of those suffering from arachnophobia. They are rather large, they tend to stand their ground, so not that afraid of a human that is quite a bit larger than they are. And if you have ever seen one up close they have fangs, not the little sissy looking fangs you see on a regular spider, rather some serious fangs right out of an old sci-fi movie in black and white.

Hot Lips

Coffee Talk • Renae Brumbaugh Green

When I was a teenager, the term "Hot Lips" referred to someone who was sexy and attractive. It's also the common name of a plant that grows in Central and South American rainforests. There's even a medical condition called "Burning Mouth Syndrome" that causes an uncomfortable sensation on the lips and tongue.

But in my mind, hot lips are lips that burn others with their words. I've been the victim of those kinds of careless scorchings. Some delivered third-degree wounds and left lasting scars.

Nobody likes to be the victim of gossip. But despite the sting we've all felt, most of us are willing participants when it comes to talking about others. Gossip is the glazed donut of conversation. It tastes good in the moment, but it has absolutely no nutritional value. Only this donut is sprinkled with arsenic and can be quite deadly.

Picture it. You're sitting with a group of your peers, and the conversation's flowing around you. You feel kind of left out, but you're not sure you have anything worthwhile to say.

But then Joe is mentioned, and you remember the juicy tidbit you learned about him—that thing that's none

of your business, but it's oh, so interesting! If you share it, you'll have everyone around you leaning in. For just a moment, you'll feel interesting and important.

To share or not to share... that is the question.

Not a single one of us has perfect control over our speech. Sometimes, those unkind words slip out before we realize what happened. But when we gossip and slander, we hurt those we talk about, and we hurt ourselves as well. When we speak negatively about others, we send the message that we're not trustworthy. We announce to the world that we can't keep a secret, that we're not loyal, that we have loose lips and unkind hearts.

And though people may listen, licking their lips at our juicy morsels and unnecessary words, those same people will make mental notes to keep their distance from us. Because everyone knows... if they talk about somebody else to you, they'll talk about you to others.

But controlling our speech is hard. Impossible, really. So how in the world do we stop ourselves? Here are some practical tips for controlling our "hot lips":

1. When we start to say something negative about someone, we can say something positive instead. (And

I don't mean sarcasm, either.) This will usually stop the gossip train in its greasy, oily tracks.

2. We can change the subject. My mother taught me that classy people talk about things, not people. Try discussing sports, music, or under-water basket-weaving. A quick Google search will lead you to dozens of conversation starters specifically crafted for uplifting conversation.

3. Finally, we can walk away from any conversation that is unkind, gossipy, and slanderous. We each have a free will, and we don't have to participate in negative, hurtful speech.

Others may think we're odd when we choose not to drink the spilt tea. But those same people will respect and trust us. And in the long run, the good names we earn for

ourselves are much more rewarding than the brief moments of popularity gained by sharing private, hurtful information.

Proverbs 11:12-13 "A man who lacks judgment derides his neighbor, but a man of understanding holds his tongue. A gossip betrays a confidence, but a trustworthy man keeps a secret."

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Supporting Local Services Means Strengthening Belton's Future

In the heart of Belton, local businesses are more than storefronts—they are the backbone of the community. From family-owned restaurants and boutique shops to service providers like mechanics, salons, and home repair companies, these businesses play a vital role in shaping the town's identity and economic health.

When residents choose to spend their money locally, the impact goes far beyond a single transaction. Unlike large national chains, local businesses tend to reinvest a significant portion of their earnings back into the community. That means more support for other small businesses, more local hiring, and more dollars circulating within Belton.

Local service providers, in particular, offer a level of personal connection that is hard to replicate. Whether it's a contractor who understands the specific needs of Central Texas homes or a hairstylist who knows their clients by name, these businesses build relationships rooted in trust. That trust translates into reliability, accountability, and a stronger sense of community.

Supporting local services also helps sustain jobs for residents. Every time a homeowner hires a local electrician, visits a neighborhood auto shop, or chooses a locally owned restaurant, they are helping provide income for fam-

ilies who live, work, and contribute right here in Belton. These are the same people volunteering at events, supporting school programs, and investing their time into making the city a better place.

Additionally, thriving local businesses contribute to the unique character of Belton. Without them, the city risks losing the charm and individuality that make it stand out. A community filled only with chain establishments can feel interchangeable, but locally owned businesses reflect the culture, values, and personality of the people who call Belton home.

There is also a long-term economic benefit. Strong local businesses help stabilize the local economy, making it more resilient during uncertain times. They create a network of support that keeps the community moving forward, even when challenges arise.

In the end, supporting local services is not just about convenience or cost—it's about commitment. It's about choosing to invest in neighbors, preserve community identity, and build a stronger future for Belton.

Every purchase made locally is a vote of confidence in the community—and a step toward keeping Belton thriving for generations to come.

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Michele Weisman
 The Belton Journal

English Maids, in Waco and Belton, celebrates 20 years in business this year. They are locally owned, started by Kay English. Her daughters, Lauren English-Thurman and Elizabeth English, now run the company. They provide the highest level of quality cleaning, sanitation, and communication for their clients.

English Maids believe that a cleaner home is a happier and healthier home, and has a 100% satisfaction guarantee. They use a PH neutral, EPA, all-purpose, all-surface cleaner, which is kid-safe, pet-safe, and cleans 99.9% of all germs.

English-Thurman said, "Relationship building is very important to us. We don't want to have another customer that we're coming to clean for. We want to build a relationship with them and hopefully have lifelong customers."

The English Maids blog explains how profes-


sional cleaning can help whether you're moving out of an apartment, into a new home, or deep cleaning. Find out more at englishmaids.biz/blogs/.

English Maids, through their membership of The Cleaning for a Reason Foundation, a national foundation, offer free cleaning to women receiving cancer treatment. You can find more information here englishmaids.biz/cleaning-for-a-reason/.

Services offered by English Maids are residential and commercial. Quote requests can begin on their website. They belong to several chambers, including the Belton Area Chamber of Commerce, the Temple Chamber of Commerce, and the Harker Heights Chamber of Commerce.

English Maids has been voted Best of Waco and **LocalsLoveus.com** serving a 30-to 40-mile radius from their Waco and Belton offices. To find out more information, visit englishmaids.biz or call **254-355-5756**.

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