

look at this!

The Belt Buckle is INSIDE!

City council gives support for regional 9-1-1 district

By David Stone

The Belton Journal

The Belton City Council approved a resolution Tuesday supporting the transition of the Central Texas Council of Governments to a Regional 9-1-1 Emergency Communication District.

According to Sam Listi, Belton city manager, CTCOG currently administers the State’s 9-1-1 Emergency Communication Program, providing emergency dispatch equipment, technology and training, GIS Mapping, and 911 addressing in the rural areas of the CTCOG region.

Residents and businesses are charged 50 cents on phone bills to

pay for these services. The money is remitted to, and held by, the State of Texas until the Legislature appropriates the funds to the Texas Commission on Emergency Communications and then to statewide councils of government.

Under this reimbursement format, the COG does not receive all the money generated locally, funding that is sent may be delayed, and the amount of funding is unpredictable, making the scheduling of long-range equipment purchases difficult.

By creating the Regional 9-1-1 Emergency Communication District, all funds collected from

See COUNCIL, Page A2

Local Salvation Army receives donation of 1,100 pounds of meat



BELTON JOURNAL/MICHELLE RODRIGUEZ

Hugh Shine and the Buyer’s Team unload meat for a donation to the Temple Salvation Army.

By Michelle Rodriguez

The Belton Journal

Hugh Shine and the Buyer’s Team recently donated 1,100 pounds of meat to the Temple Salvation Army and Feed My Sheep in Temple.

Both places prepare meals for the homeless.

“The Buyer’s Team is a group I put together for the youth fair including Dennis Green with Johnson Brothers Ford, Donny Ringler, and Jason Scott with Mac Haik Dodge, and Pat Mullins. The youth fair is held every year at the Bell County Expo Center. The FFA and 4H have a livestock show in February. Our team bought the grand champion steer and the reserve grand champion steers,” said Shine.

Shine said this has been an annual thing for the past 12 to 13 years.

“The grand champion cost \$41,000 this year, and I had it processed in a way where it’s convenient. The money spent at the youth fair is for the kid’s college. It’s delightful to be able to do this,” said Shine.

Marcine Chambers, Development Manager at the Temple Salvation Army, showed the group the cafeteria and the kitchen.

“This is where we serve meals, even to kids. It breaks my heart that we have kids here. It’s a full-service kitchen. We do community meals Monday through Friday to serve those that otherwise wouldn’t have any food,” said Chambers. The UMHB men’s soccer team volunteers at Feed My Sheep.

“We try to volunteer once a week depending on our schedule and help Jeff Stegall’s needs at Feed My Sheep,”

said soccer player Dylan Vadnais.

The ladies at Feed My Sheep baked chocolate chip cookies with a sprinkle of salt, made from scratch, as gifts to donors. “Hamburger meat is unbelievably high. This is a huge gift that will help our cost go down. We are looking ahead for eggs and deer meat. We ask, ‘How can we provide quality goods?’ It is an unbelievably huge donation! We might use 30 pounds of meat to serve 130 meals,” said Stegall.

Shine recalled when Stegall first received the freezer. “We work with the Temple Salvation Army. The UMHB soccer guys are helping and painting. The thought of people coming here and eating the grand champion steer here, we know they are getting good quality here. We give them the best,” said Stegall.

Volunteers help restore trails and scatter wildflower seeds at Miller Springs



BELTON JOURNAL/DANIEL MOCTEZUMA
Volunteers gather at Miller Springs Nature Center before beginning the City of Belton’s wildflower seed scatter and trail cleanup on Saturday.

By Daniel Moctezuma

The Belton Journal

Volunteers came out to Miller Springs Nature Center on Saturday morning, March 22, to scatter wildflower seeds, clear trails, and help remove invasive trees during an event hosted by the City of Belton Parks and Recreation Department.

Participants met at the nature center’s entrance, located at 1473 FM 2271, and spent the morning hiking down the trails in groups, picking up trash and helping restore the park’s natural habitat.

Adam Trujillo, one of the organizers, said the event has been a long-standing tradition.

“We’ve been doing this over ten years,” Trujillo said. “We try to do at least four volunteer events each year.”

Trujillo explained that one of the primary goals is to support the native ecosystem.

“We’ll be casting out wildflower seeds. Some of them will take hold and grow more flowers, and some will feed the birds—which we love,” he said. “We’re also cutting out a lot of invasive species like ligustrum and

See SPRINGS, Page A2

Belton general and special elections set for May 3

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Obituaries-----A3

Lifestyles-----A6

Service Directory---A7

Editorial -----A8

Sports-----B1

Classifieds-----B4, B5

B-Town Bulletin-----B6

Church Directory----B7

Special to the Journal

On May 3, residents can vote in the City of Belton’s first contested City Council election in five years and on a proposed measure to amend the City Charter to allow changes to the city’s municipal court system.

General Election Three City Council terms are expiring: Daniel Bucher (Place 5), Wayne Carpenter (Place 6), and Stephanie O’Banion (Place 7). Bucher and O’Banion seek to retain their seats, while Carpenter is

not seeking re-election.

Bucher, a former member of the Belton Parks Board, seeks a third term, while O’Banion, a former member of the Planning and Zoning Commission (P&Z), seeks a second term. She did not draw an opponent for Place 7.

Current P&Z Commission Members Ty Taggart (Place 5) and Luke Neale Potts (Place 6) have also filed for seats, as has Clinton Bailey (Place 6), who serves as an alternate on the Building and Standards Commission.

After the filing period closed, candidates had an opportunity to draw for ballot placement, which resulted in:

Place 5
Ty Taggart
Daniel Bucher
Place 6
Luke Neale Potts
Clinton Bailey
Place 7
Stephanie O’Banion

During this election Belton residents may vote for up to three candidates, one vote for each Place. The candidate with the majority of votes in each respective Place will be declared the winner. Places differ from districts in that there are no geographical restrictions other than the city limits.

Special Called Election The Special Called Election will allow residents to vote whether to amend the city’s charter regarding the Municipal Court. A vote “For” would change Belton’s Municipal Court to a Court of Record where proceedings are recorded and cases with procedural concerns may be appealed. In addition, the amendment would create fixed terms of two or four years for City of Belton municipal judges.

A vote “Against” would maintain the current operations of the municipal court.

Early Voting & Election Day Early voting for both elections will take place at City Hall on six different days prior to Election Day, including two days with extended hours.

On Election Day, the polling location moves to the Evans Room at the Harris Community Center.

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Springs - From Page A1

chinaberry trees. These were brought in for landscaping but ended up spreading here through birds.”

Alongside clearing brush and planting seeds, volunteers also learned how to maintain trails and identify problematic growth.

“It’s a long, ongoing process. Nature reclaims fast, so we’re constantly doing trail maintenance and erosion control,” Trujillo said.

The wildflower seeds used were part of a Texas native prairie mix that included bluebonnets, Indian paintbrush, and other local species.

“Whatever takes hold, that’s what nature does best,” he added.

Amanda Carter, a returning volunteer, came with her family and a local fencing group called Sword Play Fencing.

“This is our third year helping to scatter seeds,” Carter said. “It’s good for our family to get outside and help

the parks. I enjoy being in nature.”

Carter said she’s walked many of the trails before and has seen firsthand how previous efforts have paid off.

“It feels good to give back and improve the area,” she said. “Coming back later and seeing the flowers grow is actually kind of neat.”

Elliot Hemstreet, another participant, said he heard about the event through friends from church and wanted to tag along.

“I’ve always been interested in wildflower spreading,” Hemstreet said. “I don’t get out in nature much, so it’s a great way to start a Saturday and do something helpful.”

No registration was required for the event, and all supplies were provided by the city. The next volunteer day at Miller Springs is expected later this year. For updates and more information, visit www.beltontexas.gov.

Organizations give
away bicycle helmets



BELTON JOURNAL/MICHELLE RODRIGUEZ
Volunteer medical students Taylor Hartshorne and Tony Ciampaglio and BCMA Board member Amee Tuggle help with the children’s bicycle helmet giveaway.

By Michelle Rodriguez
The Belton Journal

The Temple Children’s Museum hosted a free bicycle helmet and giveaway along with the Bell County Medical Alliance and Feed My Sheep on Saturday, March 15.

“The Bell County Medical Alliance and Feed My Sheep did child’s bicycle helmet measurements and giveaways. They also had free vision screenings. No admission charge to the museum was necessary. They also raffled a kid’s bike. We gave away free helmets in January and decided to do another one,” said Emily Smith, executive director of the TCM.

In January, they gave away 40 to 50 helmets.

Volunteer medical students, Taylor Hartshorne and Tony Ciampaglio were helping at the event.

“I’m here at the museum to help provide free helmets for protection during biking injuries. I’m in my second year. Volunteering with little kids counts towards the server’s learning organization and it’s part of the dean’s distinction,” said Hartshorne.

Helmets help keep kids safe.
“It’s near and dear to my heart. I’m the past president. Covid put us (through) a few years of lapsed social

events. Hard Hats For Little Heads is a statewide project of the Texas Medical Alliance. We’ve been doing it probably off and on for at least 20 years,” said BCMA board member Amee Tuggle.

In addition to the free helmets, BCMA does more in the community.

“We’ve been doing Meals on Wheels for over 40 years in the community. We do a book share program with the children’s hospitals and clinics. We helped with Covid vaccines, sewing masks, and getting meals for the physicians who are stuck at the hospital. We have our fingers in a number of events in order to further organizations in the community, and we’re just here to support health and health education among Bell County residents,” said Tuggle.

Dr. Stephen Ponder is a pediatric endocrinologist, with Feed My Sheep and the Bell County Medical Alliance was also at the event.

Past District Governor Lisle Meeker, Julia Dewitt, Sandra Meeker, and Treasurer Virginia Mattson with the Temple Breakfast Lion’s Club were doing the vision screenings and gave away books.

To find out when the next giveaway will be held, look up the Bell County Medical Alliance, Feed My Sheep, or the Temple Breakfast Lion’s Club’s websites for their events.

Council - From Page A1

the 50-cent fee locally would be remitted to the district without going to a “middleman.”

Full recovery of local fees by the District would provide predictable funding for the enhanced 9-1-1 system, and would generate an estimated \$3.7 million during Fiscal Year 2027.

Also Tuesday, the council authorized Listi to execute a contract with Paragon Constructors for the installation of a multipurpose field in Heritage Park as part of a park expansion project.

According to Park & Recreation Director James Grant, the new field will provide much-needed irrigated practice space, primarily for soccer and baseball. This new practice area will benefit from an upgraded lighting system, which includes four new light poles and two of those poles have six rear-mounted lights.

The city authorized \$160,000 on Oct. 22 to fund the park expansion project.

Council approved a 40.098-acre tract located at Capitol Way and Groves Road for the new Capitol Way Industrial Park. The plat was approved on March 18 by the Planning & Zoning Commission.

Council also authorized Listi to execute an agreement with Dominica Garza for the use of an existing city sign frame as a way-finding sign for businesses located on North Pearl.

Several residential homes on the street have transitioned to commercial use, and the sign will let visitors know these businesses exist. An existing city way-finding sign was installed before the transition and does not advertise the new businesses.

Council approved a resolution authorizing the release of 110.04 acres from the city’s extraterritorial jurisdiction, owned by JT Carothers Holdings and consisting of two tracts of land west of Lark Lane, north of FM 2484 and east of FM 1650.

The tracts are 40.32 acres and 69.72 acres, and both are conveyed to Debby and Darin Chick.

City Council members gave consent for a bond issue by Bell County Municipal Utility District No. 1 in the amount of \$3.54 million for public improvements. This is the District’s fifth round of bonds since 2018.

Council approved a general development plan for the 480-acre River Farm Development, located east of I-35 between Shanklin and the Lampasas River, north of Elmer King Road and east of Toll Bridge Road.

It also held a public hearing and approved a zoning change from Commercial-2 and Planned Development Multi-Family/Commercial-2 to Commercial-1 on approximately 16.07 acres located at the southwest corner of I-14 and South Loop 121.

Also, the Council held a public hearing and approved zoning changes from Planned Development-30 with a specific use permit for used car sales, a drive-in restaurant and retail zoning to Amended Planned Development for a Whitewater Express Car Wash that will be located on 1.59 acres at 111 Sparta Road.

Council approved two zoning changes related to the Imagine Belton standards.

The first zoning change involved planned development districts in the Central Downtown Zone, generally located west of I-35, north and east of Nolan Creek and south of Second Avenue. Another zoning change involved locations in the Uptown Zone between Shine Street and I-35, north of Second and South of Ninth.

The Imagine Belton Plan was adopted in mid-2022. One of the key recommendations in the Plan was to create the Imagine Belton Standards that would implement and guide the development and redevelopment of the Plan area. The Imagine Belton Standards were approved on Jan. 14 of this year.

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

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OBITUARIES



Fraga
Raul Leija Fraga
September 6, 1951 –
March 19, 2025

Raul Leija Fraga, lovingly known by his friends and family as simply ‘RuRu’, passed away peacefully of natural causes on March 19, 2025, at the age of 73 in his hometown of Temple, Texas. Born on September 6, 1951, in Temple, Raul was a man whose vibrant spirit and unwavering dedication to his family left an indelible mark on all who had the pleasure of knowing him.

Raul’s life was one rich with love, hard work, and joyous moments. He was a proud father to his five children, his sons Kristopher Fraga of Belton, Texas and Lance Fraga of Hebbbronville, Texas; his daughters Shelby Hanlon of Suffolk, Virginia, Samantha Lopez and Stephanie Chapman both of Round Rock, Texas. Each of his children will remember him as a guiding light — a source of strength and wisdom that will continue to influence their lives.

He was the cherished brother to Frank Fraga, Jr of Wichita Falls, Texas, Artie Fraga of Eloy, Arizona, Ruben Fraga and Gerald Fraga, both of Temple, Texas. Raul’s legacy is also carried forward by his 15 loving grandchildren and 2 great grandchildren, who were the apple of his eye and for whom he never missed a chance to express his pride and affection.

Raul was preceded in death

by his father, Frank Fraga, Sr. and his mother, Rev Raquel Fraga, his brother, Arthur Fraga, and his grandson, Aiden Fraga. Each of them held a special place in his heart, and he carried their memories with him throughout his life.

Industrious and respected businessman, Raul owned and operated a successful concrete construction company. His work not only built solid home foundations but also strong community ties and a reputation for reliability and quality. He was a mentor to many in his field, sharing his expertise with grace and generosity.

Beyond his professional accomplishments, Raul was a man of diverse interests. He had a passion for music and could often be found strumming his guitar, a pastime that brought him great joy and solace. Raul was also an avid player of video poker and bingo, and he relished the thrill of the game and the camaraderie of his fellow players.

A staunch supporter of the Dallas Cowboys, Raul’s enthusiasm for his favorite football team was infectious. He cherished the excitement of the game and the spirit of competition. But above all, Raul’s heart swelled with pride for his grandchildren. He was a constant presence at their various events, be it sports, performances, or academic achievements, applauding their efforts and celebrating their successes.

Raul’s enduring presence will be sorely missed, but his legacy is one of love, laughter, and the deep bonds of family. His was a life well-lived, filled with the joys of simple pleasures and the warmth of close-knit kinship. As we bid farewell to Raul Leija Fraga, we do so with gratitude for the time we shared with him and the countless memories that will continue to inspire and comfort us in the years to come. His spirit, much like the enduring structures he built, will stand the test of time, supporting and enriching the lives of those

he touched.

Raul’s visitation will be held on Saturday April 12, 2025, from 10 am till Noon. A private family service at a later date. In leu of flowers,

Webster Jr.
Robert Lee Webster Jr.
November 25, 1941 –
March 19, 2025

Robert Lee Webster Jr. of Belton, Texas, left this world on March 19th, 2025. He was 83 years of age. Visitation will be from 5-7 p.m. on March 31st, 2025, at Dossman Funeral Home, Belton, Texas.

Funeral service will be at 10 a.m. on April 1st, 2025, at Dossman Funeral Home.

Burial with full Military Honors will be at 2 p.m., on April 1st, 2025, at Central Texas State Veterans Cemetery, Killeen, Texas.

Robert was born on November 25th, 1941, in Fort Worth, Texas to Robert Lee & Genievene Evelyn Carpenter Webster Sr.

Robert was a 23-year retired U.S. Army 1st Sergeant, He did two tours in Vietnam. He married Carolyn Joyce Bohanan on May 19th, 1972, in Fairfax, Virginia. Robert attended Belton First United Methodist Church, he had a passion for fly fishing and cars of any type, be they antiques or modern hot rods.

Robert is survived by his wife Carolyn Webster of Belton, Texas, sons; Jeffery Alan Webster of Marietta, Ohio, and Lee Branson Webster of Belton, Texas, Daughters; Lisa Ann & husband Larry Byer of Middleport, Ohio, and Michele Renee & husband Rick Magowan of Temple, Texas, brother Elmer Kermit & wife Nancy Webster of Anchorage, Alaska, grandchildren, Ian Riley Magowan, Piper Madison Magowan, Colin Garrett Magowan and Hunter Lee Webster.

Robert is preceded in death by his parents and brother Roy Harrison Webster.

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Former BISD staff members face charges

By Lynette Sowell
The Belton Journal

Two former Belton ISD teachers are facing charges.

On March 10, Belton Police Department officers arrested Logan Michael Demeny, a teacher at South Belton Middle School, for sexual assault of a child.

The arrest ensued after detectives obtained a warrant following the investigation, and Demeny was taken into custody at his home in Belton and booked into the Bell County Jail.

Back in February, officers received a report regarding the incident that took place in 2021. The victim reported the assault occurred while they were a student in Demeny’s English class at South Belton Middle School, and did not occur on school grounds.

Belton ISD issued a media notice regarding a letter from Superintendent Malinda Golden that was sent to parents regarding Demeny, after his arrest.

She shared that criminal charges were filed against Logan Demeny for an incident that occurred in 2021, and his employment with Belton ISD was being terminated.

“We will continue to fully cooperate with the Belton Police Department and prosecutors

throughout the legal process. Reports regarding these charges have also been submitted to the Texas Education Agency, State Board of Educator Certification, and Child Protective Services. Our priority remains supporting those directly impacted,” Golden wrote to parents.

“I am committed to being honest with you about this process and the actions we have taken. Belton ISD will not tolerate any behavior that puts our students at risk. We will take strong and decisive action to hold those who cause harm accountable.

Then, four days later, the district issued another notice from Superintendent Golden regarding another BISD employee, this one at Tarver Elementary.

Estavan Banda, a 4th grade teacher, was arrested on charges of indecency with a child – sexual contact.

“Following my notification last month regarding a Tarver Elementary staff member placed on administrative leave, I am writing to inform you that criminal charges have been filed against Estavan Banda and his employment with Belton ISD is being terminated.

“It is deeply disturbing to me that I am having to share this news with you espe-

cially in light of my earlier communication this week. Any behavior that endangers our students will not be tolerated and should be met with the strongest possible consequences, including legal action.

“I am committed to being transparent with you about this process and the actions we have taken:

We conduct thorough background and reference checks on all employees as part of the hiring process to ensure a safe environment. If anything were to flag in the system, it would give us cause not to hire the individual.

All staff members engage in annual training around recognizing and reporting child abuse and neglect.

Our students play a vital role in our safety protocols and we urge all students to report any safety concerns immediately.

We have and will continue to fully cooperate with the Temple Police Department throughout the legal process.

Reports regarding these charges have also been submitted to the Texas Education Agency, State Board of Educator Certification, and Child Protective Services.

Our priority remains supporting those directly impacted.

“Here is the message

that I need our students, families, staff, and community to hear: I will not tolerate any behavior that compromises student safety. We will continue to implement preemptive measures with our hiring and training processes and we will take strong and decisive action to hold those who cause harm accountable.”

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Cowboy Breakfast No Fee, Sponsored by the City of Belton	MAR 30 / 7 AM - 9 AM (Or Until Food Runs Out)
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A6
Thursday,
March 27, 2025

LIFESTYLES

THE BELTON JOURNAL

New floral shop opens in Belton

By Michelle Rodriguez
The Belton Journal

Blooming Belles has opened its doors at 304 E. 6th St. in downtown Belton and recently celebrated with a ribbon cutting held by the Belton Area Chamber of Commerce.

"A lot of family and the community were here at the ribbon cutting. People from H-E-B too. I used to work there," said shop co-owner Lorena Rivera Villanueva.

"I did 13 years in floral, 8 years in management, and I did cake decorating, bookkeeping, bakery, a little bit everywhere. I met Tiffany Martin at cross-functional at H-E-B."

Tiffany Martin is the other co-owner of Blooming Belles.

"Our price point is competitive compared to the other florists in the area," said Martin. "It's something to leave for our families. We are invested. We are the first business owners in our families and want to be examples for the girls."

Rivera also spoke to how their families support them.

"Our husbands think they own it too. Our daughters help us. The girls are more excited than we are. I learned a lot from H-E-B, but I was ready to move on and create something my family could inherit. They want to be here. Dreams do come true," said Rivera.

There are no other standalone floral shops currently open in Belton. They are busy making boutonnieres and corsages for prom.

"A lot of businesses are shopping for

gifts and gift baskets," said Martin.

"The hardest part about opening the floral shop was it was a struggle to get the floral cooler through the door. We had to take the door off the hinges to get it through. It was dark because we didn't have electricity yet," said Rivera.

Martin's husband Carlos drove the cooler in his truck very carefully from Buda.

"We have done a lot of things ourselves to save money, such as, my husband Jorge built and installed the tree shelves," said Rivera.

Their family members are vendors for the store. For example, Martin's sister Erica Lopez started Honeywood. She makes organic candles with a wood wick. She made taper and tealight candles made from honeycomb for the shop.

"Tomorrow's Crochet is my niece Lyla Perez's business. She goes to Lake Belton High School and she's on color guard. She crochets for fun. She's currently sold out. We made the gift baskets ourselves they're great for birthdays, Mother's Day, and Easter," said Rivera.

Rivera's daughter, Lilia Victoria, is floral certified. She earned her certification from Lake Belton High School. She currently attends Temple College and is studying business. She helps the shop with marketing, design, and runs the register.

"For the grand opening, there were a lot of customers. I had to type everything manually in, bag their stuff in, and still have great customer service. I felt like I was the owner," said Lilia Victoria.

"A lot of people come in for little



BELTON JOURNAL/MICHELLE RODRIGUEZ

Picture of (from left to right): Lorena Riviera Villanueva and Tiffany Martin at their new floral shop Blooming Belles.

things," said Rivera.

At the grand opening, Rivera thanked everyone that helped them from painting the walls and putting water in vases.

"I am going to offer design classes starting in June kind of like painting with a twist but not painting," said Martin. "We had a lot of names. We started making logos with our names. Then I thought, 'why don't we do Blooming Belles'."

"We thought it was perfect because we have the Magic Belles and it goes

with Belton," said Rivera.

There are two bells that complete a circle in the Blooming Belles business logo.

"There are two flowers which represent both of us. It's a never-ending circle. The business will be passed down to the girls," said Martin.

They are open Monday through Friday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Friday 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. They sell plants, earrings, purses, flowers, floral bouquets, vases, cards, wreaths, gift baskets, candles, crocheted animals, and teddy bears.

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Belton Health Spa expands location, services

By Michelle Rodriguez
The Belton Journal

Belton Health Spa has expanded to include a new location across from their main offices at 111 N. Main in Belton.

"There are two main treatment rooms in the new, extended office. We are expanding into more chiropractic care, acupuncture, dry needling, and cupping," said nurse practitioner and owner of Belton Health Spa, Erika Mendoza.

A new aesthetician, Kim Hubbard, starts in a few weeks. She will be offering waxing, brow lamination, lash lift and tint. There will be a new machine called Glow2facial for Russian head spas which is like a facial, a scalp head massage.

"There will be more spa requests across the



BELTON JOURNAL/MICHELLE RODRIGUEZ

Picture of nurse practitioner and owner of Belton Health Spa, Erika Mendoza, at the new extended office to open soon.

street. More medical aesthetics like Botox, filler, and lasers," said Mendoza.

Their website is fully functioning. They will be scheduling appointments for the extended location soon. They will move their tooth whitening there.

"We've added a nutritionist for nutrition consults to go over protein, water, fiber, and general nutrition information," said Mendoza.

The extended location was the Bell County Engineering office which became vacant. Mendoza noticed it was

vacant and reached out to them.

"I'm excited about it. I think it will allow us to offer more services and do things we haven't been able to do yet. It keeps us busy," said clinic director for Belton Health Spa, Stephanie Shaft.

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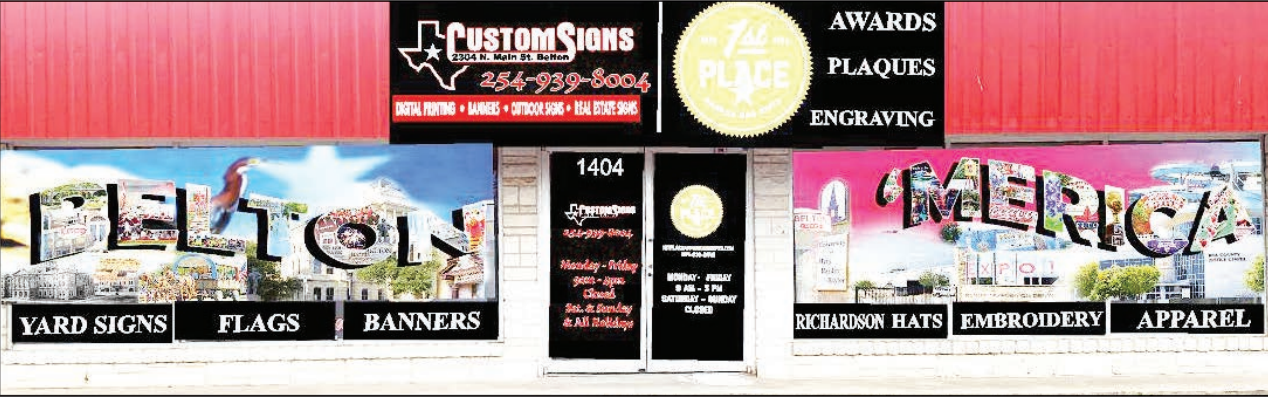
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Custom Signs is moving to a larger location



Submitted Photo

Custom Signs will be opening their new location on Main St. in Belton beginning March 31.

By David Tuma
The Belton Journal

Custom Signs in Belton is moving to 1404 N. Main Street, a new location, on March 31st. They are moving about a ½ mile South on the West side of Main Street. They began as Trophies Etc. around 18 years ago. Owners Tella and Ricky Ruiz worked for HEB before starting their own business in Belton. They have been at their soon-

to-be former location for around 15 years. “Those first few years the growth was around 80 percent per year. The sign business has been very good to us. About eight years ago I sold the gift and trophy business to my son. Being on Main Street has been good to us. I think this new location will be more visible,” said Ricky. The Ruiz’s have been a mainstay in the community for almost two decades.

“We will have more room at the new location with 3,200 sq ft. I found out in January we had to move by the end of the year. This is my last hurrah. My son will take over the business when I retire. Belton has been great for us. We have raised our children here. The community has supported us 100 percent over the years. I enjoy my job. I have great help and been able to cut back to three days a week,” said Ricky.

City of Belton launches community-wide survey

Special to the Journal

The City of Belton has sent out a resident survey to get input on government services and measure the quality of life in the community. The City plans to use this data in its upcoming strategic plan. The survey allows more people to participate in shaping that plan and the future of Belton. “We look forward to receiving more input from residents to guide our strategic planning efforts,” City Manager Sam Listi said. “The survey will help us get a baseline understanding of our services and allow us to measure our impact going forward.” The National Com-

munity Survey (The NCS) was developed by the National Research Center at Polco. The survey captures opinions on the economy, mobility, community design, utilities, safety, natural environment, inclusivity, engagement, and other elements of Belton’s overall livability. The results will show Belton’s strengths, areas of improvement, and what matters most to residents. The City will also be able to see how its performance compares to other communities across the country. Randomly selected households will receive mailed survey invitations over the next few weeks. Households that receive

an invitation are asked to follow the enclosed instructions and complete the survey. All residents will have the opportunity to share their input in a few weeks, when the survey becomes available to the entire community. “We strongly encourage all residents to take the survey. The more people who participate, the better data we will

have to inform our planning efforts,” Listi said. “This is an opportunity for everyone in the community to share their thoughts and shape the future of Belton.” For more information on this process, contact Paul Romer, 254-933-5889 or promer@beltontexas.gov. The survey closes on May 1, 2025.

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Students perform at teen open mic

By Daniel Moctezuma
The Belton Journal

Belton students took the stage last Thursday night to share original songs, poetry, and live performances in front of their peers.

The Belton Youth Advisory Commission hosted Teen Night: Open Mic on March 20 at the Harris Community Center. From 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., students in grades 8 through 12 were invited to perform poetry, play instruments, or sing in front of a supportive audience of their peers.

Recreation Coordinator Kyle Velasco said the event was inspired by input from students during YAC meetings. “Some of the kids were talking about what they wanted to do and how to bring students from other high schools together,” Velasco said. “They unanimously chose open mic night because it gives them the opportunity to go up and perform—do something a little different than just playing games—and actually interact with people and show what they’ve been working on,” said Velasco.

YAC member Finn Mauk said the night was also a way for the club to open its doors to more students. “I just wanted to come and support my group,” Mauk said. “I’m about to graduate, and we want to make sure we’re recruiting people.”

The Belton Youth Advisory Commission, or YAC, is a city-supported group made up of Belton-area teens who serve as a voice for youth in the community. Members meet regularly to discuss local issues,

give input on city policies affecting teens, and plan events like Teen Night.

“We want to leave it better than we found it,” Mauk said.

Performances included original songs, covers, and duets. Stella Lufburrow, a YAC board member, sang and played guitar for the first time in front of an audience. “I’ve never performed in front of anybody but my mom and a couple of close friends,” she said. “It was definitely a little bit nerve-wracking at first, but I’m a theater kid, so I’m used to it.”

Lufburrow performed a song by Bob Dylan, a bossa nova tune, and a track by an indie band. She also sang “The Girl from Ipanema” as a duet with fellow student Cannon Hammonds. “I just love music,” Hammonds said. “I love writing and performing, and being able to have a place where I can put that on display for other people is a really exciting thing.”

Velasco said the goal of the night was to encourage teens to connect with peers outside their typical circles.

“We’re trying to put all the high schools and other teenagers that are in the area together to bring them as one community,” he said.

Free snacks were provided, and no registration was required. According to Velasco, the city hopes to host more events like this in the future.

“So far, everybody’s had very positive feedback,” he said. “They’re enjoying it, and they’ve just overall had a good time.”



BELTON JOURNAL/DANIEL MOCTEZUMA
TOP: Cannon Hammonds and Stella Lufburrow sing “The Girl from Ipanema” during. ABOVE: Matthew Farwell sings and plays piano during Teen Night: Open Mic at the Harris Community Center on Thursday night.

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Lady Tiger Soccer wins bi-district crown with 1-0 win over Kaufman

By Tony Adams
The Belton Journal

The Belton Lady Tiger Soccer team started their play-off quest on Thursday as they took on the Kaufman Lions at Blackcat Stadium in Mexia.

Ava Itz's rocket shot from 25 yards out in the game's 27th minute was knocked down by Kaufman goalkeeper Camila Castellanos but leaked across the goal line to provide the Tigers the lone goal they needed for a 1-0 win.

Although it was a Class 5A-2 Region 2 playoff win and bi-district championship, it was not the best game the Tigers played.

The Tigers spent nearly 30 minutes of the first half on the offensive side of the field, as Itz, Tori Lucksinger, Bella Stermer, Karington Kopriya, Destiny Schutz, and Kiersten Rowland were peppering the Kaufman had a variety of shots toward that narrowly missed goal or were steered aside by Castellanos.

Continuing to press forward, Belton found the scoreboard with 12:58 to go

in the first half when Itz uncorked a shot through traffic. Castellanos made the initial save, but the momentum of the shot caused a rebound that she could not control, and the ball rolled across the line for the goal that put the Tigers up, 1-0.

Belton was relentless throughout the remainder of the first half, as they kept the pressure on in their offensive zone.

Kaufman became desperate late in the first half and forced a shot on goal, which was turned aside by Elizabeth Marshall in the goal box with 4:45 left in the first half.

The Tigers continue to pressure the Lions in the second, with Rowland, Itz, and Lucksinger hammering shots at the Kaufman goal, and getting outstanding defense from Marissa Christenson and Penelope Vizcarra, disposing Lions who attempted break through the backline.

The Lions had an opportunity to tie the game with seven minutes to play, as they

See SOCCER,
Page B3

Nolan-Hemphill wins three events in Bronco Relays

By Clay Whittington
The Belton Journal

Damauria Nolan-Hemphill is performing far beyond her years.

Still in her sophomore season, Nolan-Hemphill has become a force for the Lady Tigers on both the track and field, and recently, she put her talents on display, winning a trio of events at the annual Lake Belton Bronco Relays.

Nolan-Hemphill was first in the 100-meter run, completing the race 12.12 seconds, to go with championships in the 200 (25.11) and long jump (18 feet, 4 inches), and she was not

done.

Furthermore, the standout joined Laila Page, Delilah Hoffman and Gabrielle Lewis to complete the 1,600 relay with a third-place time of 4:17.81.

Nolan-Hemphill was not the only Belton athlete to deliver an impressive showing, however, as the Lady Tigers captured the team championship with 134 points.

Senior distance runner Olivia Brillhart was responsible for two of Belton's eight gold medals by topping the 1,600 (5:16.97) and 3,200 (11:24.85) fields, while Page, a junior, was first in the triple jump (36-

10½), second in the 400 (59.93), third in the 200 (26.19) and fifth in the pole vault (9-0), tying the height from teammate Jane Gauntt, who finished sixth.

The freshman duo of Isabella Warner and Tara Stone also excelled for the Lady Tigers. Warner won the 800 (2:24.99) and was sixth (1:03.10) in the 400, while Stone was first (117-6) in the discus and second (33-4) in the shot put.

Hoffman (2nd, 300 hurdles, 49.66), Melissa Farmer (3rd, shot put, 32-7) and Temperance Nunn (5th,

See RELAYS,
Page B3

Belton to host District 12-6A meet

By Clay Whittington
The Belton Journal

The Tigers are just days away from district, and they appear prepared.

Belton will host the two-day District 12-6A meet starting Wednesday, when athletes begin their treks toward potentially competing at the University Interscholastic League Track & Field State Championships in May.

Emerging from the competition will not be easy, but the Tigers recently provided reason to believe they will excel inside their home stadium.

At last week's Lake Belton Bronco Relays, Belton captured the team title and collected seven gold medals.

Christian Porter, a junior, was responsible for a pair of the wins, placing first in the 200-meter run and 400 with times of 21.64 seconds and 49.08, respectively, while also joining teammates Kegan Sherwood, Azian Wilkinson and Miguel Manners to place second (42.09) in the 400 relay.

Additionally, Porter was fourth in the high jump, clearing 5 feet, 8 inches.

Distance runners John Zachary Moehlenbrock (800, 2:06.27) and David Shelburne (1,600, 4:42.98) also finished first, matching the showings from team-

mates Graham Chambley (1st, 110 hurdles, 15.24), Logan Lamberte (1st, pole vault, 14-0) and Manners (1st, triple jump, 42-3½).

The group propelled the Tigers to 165 points, beating out College Station (2nd, 157.5), host Lake Belton (3rd, 104.5) and Little River Academy (4th, 90).

Also yielding medals for Belton was the 800 relay team (2nd, 1:29.57) of David McCallum, Sherwood, Wilkinson and Manners, the 1,600 relay team (2nd, 3:34.77) of Jacob Lewis, Jason Green, McCallum and Manners, Damien Tiumalu (2nd, discus, 146-6), Lewis (2nd, 400, 52.51), Shelburne (2nd, 3,200, 10:32.31) and Chambley (3rd, 300 hurdles, 44.20).

The Broncos were guided by a pair of jumpers and their 400 relay team.

The quartet of Cooper Arnold, Josh Mallard, Zion Harness and Kendrick Jones Jr. combined for a first-place time of 41.63, while Michael Lockett won the high jump (5-10) and Julian Walker posted a winning mark of 21-9 in the long jump.

Complementing the performances were silver medalists Christian Onchweri (100, 11.25) and Travellis Harrison (shot put, 45-1), who edged out teammate Evan

See MEET,
Page B3

Broncos Softball score early runs in 5-0 win over Tigers

By Tony Adams
The Belton Journal

The Lake Belton Broncos and Belton Tigers have several softball members that play on the same select teams during the summer and fall.

On Friday evening at Lady Tiger Field, that was all put on the back burner for a few hours as the Crosstown Rivalry began its fifth chapter of softball play.

Madison Ruiz homered, while Ana Diaz and Lilly Herrera contributed RBI doubles, and Madison Naser and Madison Perkins chipped in RBI singles to help blank the Tigers, 5-0.

"It was a great test of our skills, and showcased Belton ISD softball," Lake

Belton head coach Kelsie McEachern said. "As always, we have things to work on. But to start district 2-0 is a great start."

The Broncos offense posted a pair of runs in the top of the first off Belton starter Tara Stone. Alexis Ortiz singled past a diving Reagan Stuart at third base to start the game. After Ortiz stole second base, Diaz hit a deep drive over centerfield Hailey Schutz that hit the base of the wall, which scored Ortiz. Naser pushed a suicide squeeze bunt down the third base line past a sprinting Diaz for a single to give Lake a 2-0 lead.

See SOFTBALL,
Page B3

Lake Belton girls fall to Red Oak 4-1

By Aries Ramos
The Belton Journal

The Lake Belton Broncos girls soccer team's season ended Friday night as they fell 4-1 to Red Oak in the first round of the UIL playoffs. Despite a strong effort, the Broncos struggled to keep pace with a Red Oak squad that capitalized on its opportunities throughout the match.

From the opening whistle, Red Oak controlled much of the possession and consistently pressured the Lake Belton defense. The Broncos worked hard to hold their ground, showing resilience against the Hawks' attack. However, Red Oak's relentless offensive approach eventually broke through, putting the Broncos in an early deficit. The Hawks recorded 10 shots on goal compared to Lake Belton's five, limiting the Broncos' ability

to generate a steady offensive rhythm.

Lake Belton's lone goal came from Parker Ling, who found the back of the net to give the Broncos a much-needed spark. The goal injected some energy into the team, but Red Oak responded quickly, regaining momentum and dictating the game's pace. The Broncos pushed forward to mount a comeback, but Red Oak's defense remained solid, shutting down key passing lanes and preventing quality scoring chances.

Defensively, the Broncos fought hard to keep the game within reach. Goalkeeper Aubrey Yeager delivered an impressive performance, making five of the team's six total saves. Despite her efforts, Red Oak's efficient finishing proved the difference, as they capitalized on their scoring chances to maintain a comfortable

lead. The Broncos' backline worked tirelessly to slow down the Hawks, but the pressure ultimately proved too much to overcome.

Despite the tough loss, Lake Belton has plenty to be proud of this season. They battled through a competitive schedule, earned their place in the playoffs, and showed resilience throughout the year. While this playoff run was cut short, the experience will motivate the returning players as they set their sights on next season.

With the season officially over, the team will shift its focus toward the offseason, where it will look to improve and build upon the foundation it's established. The future remains bright for this program, and with a strong core of returning players, Lake Belton will look to come back even stronger next season.

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Sports Briefs

By Clay Whittington
The Belton Journal

The Lady Tigers soccer team earned another spot in the third round Tuesday night, when they traveled to Corsicana and coasted to a 4-0 victory against Mesquite Poteet in the Class 5A, Division II playoffs.

Lauren McKinney needed less than two minutes to score a pair of goals to give Belton an immediate cushion. Michaela Dvotch and Tori Lucksinger were responsible for the final goals late in the second half.

With the victory, the Lady Tigers, who improved to 21-2-3 overall, advance to face either Jacksonville or Frisco Wakeland in the Region II semifinal this weekend.

BRONCOS SOCCER

Lake Belton's playoff run came to an end last week as it suffered a 3-0 loss to defending state champion Midlothian in the opening round of the Class 5A, Division I bracket.

The Panthers took a one-goal advantage into the

second half, where they scored twice quickly to put the score out of reach.

The outcome gave the Broncos an overall record of 5-17-2, and it was the fifth consecutive season the program reached the postseason.

BASEBALL

The Broncos earned a victory versus their crosstown rivals Tuesday, defeating Belton 9-0 at home to begin the District 16-5A schedule.

Lake Belton (11-4-2) scored twice with the bases loaded in the fourth inning — once on a walk and once by hitting a batter — and the lead swelled to 6-0 in the fifth inning.

Zavion Rodriguez was 3 for 4 in the victory with an RBI single, leading Lake Belton to eight hits as a team. Bryce Davis had a two-run single, and teammate Rohde Smith connected for a home run in a three-run sixth inning.

Additionally, Cole Mikulas was 2 for 2 with a pair of RBIs and walks.

On Friday, the series shifts to Belton, where the Tigers (6-8) will attempt even the score. The first pitch is set for 7 p.m.

from last week's Texas High School Powerlifting Association Division I State Meet with a second-place showing in the 114-pound weight class.

En route to a 1,165-pound total, he posted a 455 squat, 255 bench press and 455 deadlift.

Also in attendance, teammate Brett Harmon (615-415-570-1,600) was 29th in the 275 division as Lake Belton finished 15th overall with five points.

Mercedes claimed the team title with 10 points, narrowly edging out Victoria West (2nd, 10) by a tiebreaker. Castroville Medina Valley (3rd, 9) and Victoria East (4th, 9) followed.

Belton did not place, but Daniel Arana was sixth in the 123 weight class with 1,180 (435-290-455), while 165-pounder Logan Ricks had a 515 squat and 300 bench press but did not complete a deadlift.

GIRLS GOLF

The District 16-5A tournament began Tuesday at Killeen's Stonetree Golf Course, where the Lady Tigers built an early lead.

With a team total of 367, Belton held a seven-stroke advantage over second-place Lake Belton (374). Killeen Ellison was in a distant third with a 425.

Results from Wednesday's final round were not available.



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Scot Hrbacek, CFP® Financial Advisor

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already have a credit card that pays you cash back for purchases, but you can go online and find apps that do the same thing.

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Finally, get some help. Your employer may offer an employee assistance program that offers credit counseling and other financial guidance. You might also want to work with a financial professional who can offer suggestions on saving and investing.

Explore every avenue available to improve your savings skills. It could make a big difference in your life.

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Soccer - From Page B1

got into the goal box and chipped a shot at Marshall. She expertly scooped the ball and cleared the goal box.

The Tigers had an insurance goal opportunity late on a corner kick with 2:50 remaining. Itz's kick did not

have enough bend and hit the near-side post and went out of bounds for a Kaufman goal kick.

"Overall, we are moving on," Bersozza said. "I don't want to be too critical because they will be critical

of themselves, but that was not good enough. We played much better than we did today."

Belton will take on Mesquite Poteet in the area round Tuesday at Corsicana.

Softball - From Page B1

Brysen Gott led off the Lake second with a single. After Stone struck out the next two batters, she issued walks to Perkins and Ortiz. Stone struck out Diaz to get out of the bases-loaded jam.

Stuart took the circle for Belton in the third inning and faced Ruiz to lead off. On a 3-1 pitch, Ruiz hit a towering fly ball over the right-centerfield fence for a solo homer. Herrera's tailing drive into the left field corner went for a double that scored Naser. Perkins hit a ground ball to shortstop for an infield single that scored Herrera to make the score 5-0.

Stone came back into the circle in the fourth inning and finished the game.

Ruiz struck out eight consecutive batters between the second and fourth innings before she issued a walk to Presli Thompson in the bottom of the fifth, who previously had the only Tiger hit in the game with a single in the second. A bunt attempt by Jacklyn Munoz was snagged by Naser and doubled off the runner at first.

Ruiz allowed two hits, one walk, hit a batter, and 12 strikeouts for the complete game victory.

Thompson and Iris Molina had the two Belton hits.

"I thought we played well, especially later in the game," Belton head coach Morgan Birkel said. "Lake is a great team and should be another great battle in the second round of district."

Meet - From Page B1

Lazott (3rd, shot put, 42-6).

Lake Belton's remaining third-place medals were earned by Prince Moore (400, 52.96), Leonardo Piedra (800, 2:12.94),

Noah Stevens (110 hurdles, 16.62) and Harrison (discus, 142-0).

Other top-five outings came from Jamari Hays (4th, 300 hurdles, 44.55), Brody Mansfield

(5th, 800, 2:14.49), Wyatt Potts (5th, 1,600, 5:07.18), Caleb Loper (5th, discus, 129-5), Stevens (5th, 300 hurdles, 44.89), Walker (tied 5th, high jump, 5-8) and the 800 relay team (5h,

1:31.14) of Davion Peters, Jaden Hays, Peanit Ware and Stevens.

For Belton, Green was fourth (800, 2:13.33) and Joshua Roberts was fifth (pole vault, 13-0).

Relays - From Page B1

3,200, 14:03.27) rounded out Belton's top-five finishes.

With 128 points, second-place College Station was the Lady Tigers' closest competitor, while Killeen (3rd, 118) and the host Lady Broncos (4th, 97) followed in the final standings.

Lake Belton's lone gold medal was earned by senior pole vaulter Abigail Rydberg, who cleared 11-6, and its only silver medal came from the foursome of Aleya Russell, Nylah Berrian, Bella Garcia and Chelsie Miller, who completed the 1,600 relay in 4:12.44.

Accounting for the bulk of the Lady Broncos' remaining points were freshman Elizabeth Sandlin (3,200, 13:41.85), sophomore Alexa Harbour (100

hurdles, 16.84), freshman Alexa King (high jump, 4-8) and Garcia (100, 12.43), who were each third in their respective events.

King was also fourth in the 400 (1:01.21) and 800 (2:28.41) and sixth (5:54.50) in the 1,600.

Individually, fresh-

man Camryn Mikulas (300 hurdles, 49.91) and sophomores Dannika Kelley (triple jump, 34-7½) and Madelyn Rivas (3,200, 13:59.11) were fourth, matching the finish from the program's 400 relay team (4th, 56.20). Gabrielle Hamilton, Eliana Are-

valo, Shekayla Munoz and Kennedy Hall comprised the quartet.

Now, the Lady Tigers and Lady Broncos turn their attention toward next week's District 12-6A meet. The two-day event begins Wednesday and will be hosted by Belton.



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Stillhouse

FAIR. Water stained; 50 degrees; 2.35 feet below pool. Before the most recent blast of cold came in on February 19, water temperatures had cooled back to the levels they were at before the record-setting, 8-day warming trend that ended on February 8. After a few smaller male white bass began to appear headed toward spawning areas around Mother Neff State Park, the migration run generally halted and will likely remain low key until our next significant warmup. For those heading upriver, light leadhead jigs with white or off-white curl-tail grubs selected to fish just inches above the bottom will produce well, as will grey and/or olive streamers fished on fly gear. Anglers remaining on the upper ends of the main lake on the Leon River or Cowhouse Creek arms, flatline trolling will be improving. Troll multiple baits that dive to different depths, then change over once fish show a preference. Fish in deeper, clearer water will remain interested in the 5/8 ounce and 3/4 ounce white Bladed Hazy Eye Slab worked with a very slow, steady upward motion where fish are seen concentrated on bottom via sonar. Report by Bob Maindelle, Holding the Line Guide Service. Catfish are fair. With cold water temperatures anglers should search for blue catfish in deeper river channels and around steep ledges in 30-45 feet of water. Larger cut baits have been effective for trophy size fish. Eater fish under 10 pounds are still active and slow drifting with small cut shad along sand flats will produce. Channel catfish are fair but can still be caught on warmer days using punch bait in 15-25 feet of water. Report by Brian Worley, B&S Catfishing.

GOOD. Water stained; 50 degrees; 2.92 feet below pool. Before the most recent blast of cold on February 19, water temperatures had cooled back to the levels they were at before the record-setting 8-day warming trend which ended on February 8. After a few smaller male white bass began to appear headed toward spawning areas on either side of the Gravel Crossing, the migration run generally halted and will likely remain low key until our next significant warmup. For those heading upriver, light leadhead jigs with white or off-white curl-tail grubs selected to fish just inches above the bottom will produce well, as will grey and, or olive streamers fished on fly gear. For those remaining on the upper end of the main lake, flatline trolling will be improved. Troll multiple baits that dive to different depths, then change over once fish show a preference. Fish in deeper, clearer water will remain interested in the 5/8 ounce and 3/4 ounce white Bladed Hazy Eye Slab worked with a very slow, steady upward motion where fish are seen concentrated on bottom via sonar. Report by Bob Maindelle, Holding the Line Guide Service.

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THE STATE OF TEXAS
CITATION BY PUBLICATION – CIVIL
CAUSE NO. 24DCV344981

To Sean Robert Benavides
Greetings:
You are hereby commanded to appear by filing a written answer to the plaintiff’s original complaint and request for disclosure at or before 10 o’clock AM of the first Monday after the expiration of 42 days from the date of issuance of this Citation, the same being Monday, at or before 10 o’clock AM, before the Honorable 169th Judicial District Court, Bell County, Texas to be held at the Bell County District Courts Building in Belton, Texas. Said plaintiff’s original complaint and request for disclosure was filed in said court on March 04, 2024.
The file number of said suit being No. 24DCV344981. The names of the parties in said suit are:
Ryan Walters VS. Sean Robert Benavides
The nature of said suit being substantially as follows, to wit:
Mr. Walters was hit by Mr. Benavides in an MVA and Mr. Walters has had some medical issues since the MVA on 10/28/2022. Attorney has tried to find the Defendant to let him know of the case filed against him with no success.
This was issued at the request of attorney: CHRIS MCDANIEL HORTMAN HARLOW BASSI

LEGALS

ROBINSON & MCDANIEL PLLC, POST OFFICE DRAWER 1409, LAUREL MS 39441.
NOTICE TO DEFENDANT: You have been sued. You may employ an attorney. If you or your attorney do not file a written answer with the clerk who issued this citation by 10:00 AM on Monday next following the expiration of forty-two days after you were served this citation and petition, a default judgment may be taken against you. In addition to filing a written answer with the clerk, you may be required to make initial disclosures to the other parties of this suit. These disclosures generally must be made no later than 30 days after you file your answer with the clerk. Find out more at TexasLawHelp.org.
Issued and given under my hand and seal of said Court at office in Belton, Texas, on February 24, 2025.
Joanna Staton District Clerk Bell County, Texas, 1201 Huey Road, P.O. Box 909 ,Belton, Texas 76513
By: M Cortez Deputy Clerk
03.06,06.13,03.20,03.27


LEGALS


NOTICE TO CREDITORS

Notice is hereby given that original Letters Testamentary for the Estate of BEATRICE ELLEN WHITE, Deceased, were issued on March 17, 2025, in Cause No. 25CPB00102, pending in the County Court-At-Law No: 1, Bell County, Texas, to: RANDALL W. WHITE. 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: RANDALL W. WHITE, 81 Lake Forest Cir., Conroe, Texas 77384
DATED the 21st day of March, 2025.
/s/James O. Cure, James O. Cure Attorney for RANDALL W. WHITE, State Bar No.: 05252800 2584, Blue Meadow Dr., Temple, TX 76502, Telephone: (254) 778-8934, Facsimile: (254) 773-2477, Email: jocure@cureandfrancis.net 03.27

THE STATE OF TEXAS
CITATION BY PUBLICATION
CASE NUMBER 25CPB00194

To: UNKNOWN HEIRS
NANCY CAROLYN GUFFEY SCOTT, Applicant, on March 21, 2025, filed an application to declare heirship and for intestate independent administration by agreement and for issuance of letters of independent administration in a proceeding styled: MARK EVAN SCOTT, Deceased, and bearing the number 25CPB00194 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 27, 2025, in the County Court at Law #1 Courtroom, at the Bell County Justice Complex, 1201 Huey Road, in Belton, Texas.
All persons interested in the aforesaid estate are commanded to appear at or before the time set for said hearing by filing a written contest or answer to said application should they desire to oppose or contest it.
Said written contest or answer shall be filed in the office of Shelley Coston, County Clerk, Bell County, Texas, PO Box 480, Belton, Texas 76513. The name and address of the attorney for applicant is: BURK ROBERTS, 2501 E ELMS RD STE A, KILLEEN TX 76542
The officer serving this Citation shall, in compliance with the Law, serve it by publication once in a newspaper of the general circulation in this, the County in which the decedent last resided as required by Section 202.052 of the Texas Estate Code, for not less than ten days before the return day hereof, exclusive of the day of publication, and the date of publication said newspaper bears shall be the day of publication.
Issued and given under my hand and seal of said Court at office on March 21, 2025.
Shelley Coston County Clerk of Bell County, Texas, PO Box 480, 1201 Huey Road, Belton, TX 76513
By: Sophia Nieto Deputy
03.27





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ACREAGE From the Starry Nights to the City Lights this one-of-a-kind Texas Ranch is under 30 minutes to Waco & 1.5 hrs to Austin! Approx 29 acres with views over Leon River/Lake Belton! 3,000+ square ft custom home you must see to appreciate. Enjoy the fabulous chef’s kitchen and large family room both with panoramic views. Take family game night to a whole new level with wet bar and full bath with separate entrance for possible future pool. Huge covered back porch to see the magnificent Texas night sky and enjoy cool nights by the custom fireplace. Everything is bigger and better in Texas and it is clear to see why when you see this amazing ranch!

NEW CONSTRUCTION! Beautiful rock and brick home situated on 1/2 acre in the newly developed Deer Grove subdivision in Belton ISD. The open floor plan features 3 bedrooms and 2 bath, a pop-up ceiling in the family room as well as a corner fireplace as a focal point. Large open kitchen with beautiful cabinets and granite! A formal dining and breakfast area plus office. A generous master suite with large walk in closet as well as nice sized secondary bedrooms. Large covered porch, perfect for relaxing or entertaining with your friends and family. As if that is not enough - the home has been pre-wired for a home generator.

SALADO -- **Sellers are offering a 2-year home warranty to include pool and septic coverage!** Beautiful custom home with pool to cool off in the Texas summer heat and an oversized backyard to enjoy! This home is located in Salado ISD - features a split floorplan with 4 bedrooms (2 secondary are oversized), 3 bath, formal dining and eat-in breakfast area with luxury vinyl flooring throughout. The kitchen is open to the breakfast and living areas making it great for entertaining. Oversized, insulated garage. All interior walls insulated for sound and exterior walls are fully insulated making this very energy efficient! Great location with easy access to I-35, Belton, Temple, and Austin.

BELTON ISD - Charming home with a nice front porch, 2 bedrooms, one bath and lots of storage. Living area could be used as a meeting room. Lot features a beautiful mature tree in the front yard, fully fenced yard, and several out buildings. Excellent location with many possibilities! Adjacent properties are also listed for sale and could make this an amazing commercial property

THE ESCARPMENT is a legendary neighborhood, and the perfect setting for this gorgeous residence. Just minutes from Stillhouse Hollow Lake, this gated home sits on over an acre and includes a sparkling pool, garden area and a 30x40 building that is insulated. Enjoy the abundance of windows throughout the home and especially in the breakfast area while watching nature. A gourmet island kitchen is a chef’s dream with an loads of countertop space with attached breakfast area. The master suite is an exceptional space with room to make a sitting area and you can enjoy the sunroom just off the suite. The property has beautiful shaded areas, native Texas plants and fruit trees to enjoy throughout the year. As a bonus enjoy the wildlife that passes by in the extended yard outside the fence.

Exceptional property featuring a 3800+ sqft home sitting on 84 fully fenced AG exempt acres with stock tank and views for miles!

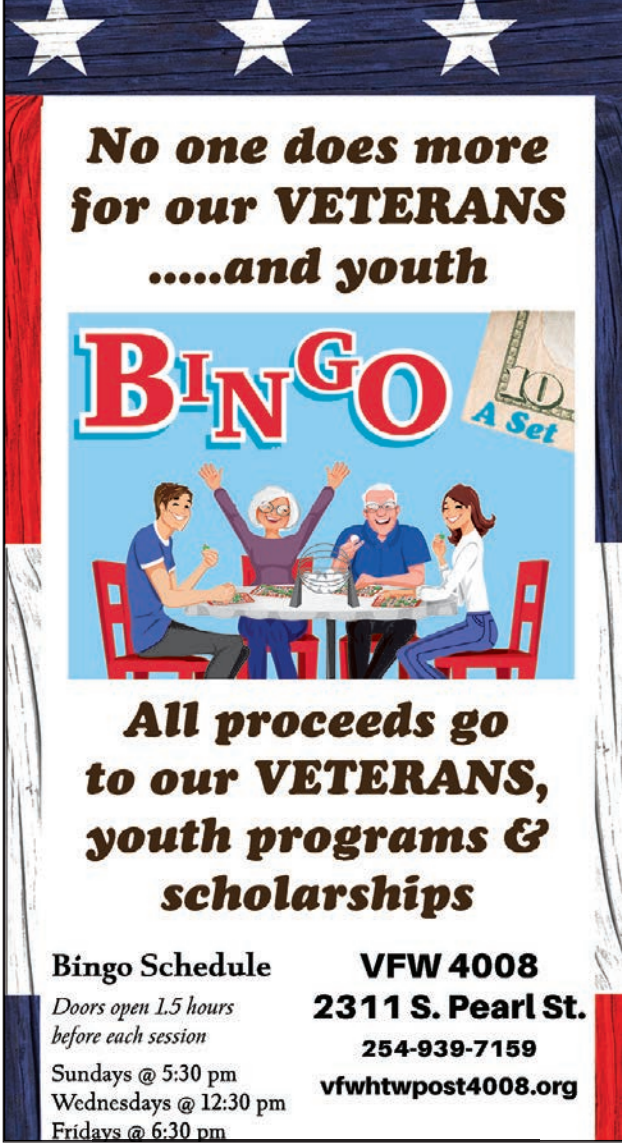
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NOTICE TO CREDITORS

Notice is hereby given that original Letters Testamentary for the Estate of GEORGE FREEMAN, Deceased, were issued on March 17, 2025, in Cause No. 25CPB00129, in the County Court at Law No. 1 of Bell County, Texas, to: GLADYS AZUCENA FREEMAN.
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 to:
GLADYS AZUCENA FREEMAN, Executor, Estate of George Freeman, Deceased, 600 Royal View Road, Salado, TX 76571
DATED March 20 , 2025.
J. ERIC STOEBNER, State Bar No.: 24046919, 2106 Bird Creek Drive, Temple, TX 76502, Telephone: (254) 771-1855, Facsimile: (254) 771-2082, E-mail: eric@templelawoffice.com 03.27



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NOTICE TO CREDITORS

Notice is hereby given that original Letters Testamentary for the Estate of JULIET MCKAY NOEL, Deceased, were issued on February 25, 2025, in Cause No. 24CPB00628, pending in the County Court at Law No. 1, Bell County, Texas, to: GLORIA HOPE DEANS.

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: DANIEL A. CORBIN Attorney at Law, 603 North 8th Street, Killeen, TX 76541

DATED the 20th day of Manh, 2025.

CORBIN, STAPLER & CLAPPER, PC, 603 North 8th Street, Killeen, TX 76541, Tel: (254) 526-4523, Fax: (254) 526-6711,

By: DANIEL A. CORBIN, State Bar No. 0481430,0 JAMES BERRY STAPLER, State Bar No. 24013557, ASHLEY CLAPPER ,State Bar No. 24076317, Legal@CorbinLegalTeam.com Attorney for GLORIA HOPE DEANS 03.27

THE STATE OF TEXAS
CITATION BY PUBLICATION-
PARENT AND CHILD

To: Martin Sutton, any Unknown Father and All Whom It May Concern, Respondents, in the hereinafter-styled and - numbered cause: You have been sued. You may employ an attorney. If you or your attorney do not file a written answer with the clerk who issued this citation by 10 a.m. on the Monday next following the expiration of 20 days after you were served this citation and petition, a default judgment may be taken against you. The Original Petition of the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, Petitioner, was filed in the 146th Judicial District Court of Bell County, Texas, on January 13, 2025, against Priscilla Williams and Martin Sutton, Respondent(s), numbered 25DFAM351079, and entitled “In the Interest of IYANNA SUTTON, minor child.” The suit requests to terminate the parent-child relationships and/or to appoint a managing conservator of the child. The date and place of birth of the child who is the subject of the suit is: IYANNA SUTTON, DOB: February 11, 2008, Place of birth: Texas

The court has authority in this suit to render an order in the child’s interest that will be binding on you, including the termination of the parent-child relationship, the determi-

LEGALS

nation of paternity, and the appointment of a conservator with authority to consent to the child’s adoption. The name and address of the attorney for plaintiff is Ryan Smith, Bell County Attorney’s Office, P.O. Box 1127, Belton, TX 76513

Issued and given under my hand and seal of the Court at Belton, Texas, this the

Dated 19th day of March 2025

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

By: C. Rodriguez, Deputy 03.27

THE STATE OF TEXAS
CITATION BY PUBLICATION-
PARENT AND CHILD

To: Keyonte Elliott, any Unknown Father and All Whom It May Concern, Respondents, in the hereinafter-styled and numbered cause: You have been sued. You may employ an attorney. If you or your attorney do not file a written answer with the clerk who issued this citation by 10 a.m. on the Monday next following the expiration of 20 days after you were served this citation and petition, a default judgment may be taken against you. The Original Petition of the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, Petitioner, was filed in the 146th Judicial District Court of Bell County, Texas, on October 15, 2024, against Aaliyah Herrod, Keyonte Elliott, Jay Curtis Jr., Respondent(s), numbered 24DFAM349463, and entitled “In the Interest of JAHMAI BASNIGHT, also known as JAHMAI HERROD,, et al., minor children.” The suit requests to terminate the parent-child relationships and/or to appoint a managing conservator of the children. The date and place of birth of the children who are the subject of the suit are: JAHMAI BASNIGHT, also known as JAHMAI HERROD,, DOB: June 16, 2022, Place of birth: Virginia SYAIRE CURTIS, DOB: February 5, 2024, Place of birth: Texas

The court has authority in this suit to render an order in the children’s interest that will be binding on you, including the termination of the parent-child relationship, the determination of paternity, and the appointment of a conservator with authority to consent to the child’s adoption. The name and address of the attorney for plaintiff is Susan Parker, Bell County Attorney’s Office, P.O. Box 1127, Belton, TX 76513

Issued and given under my hand and seal of the Court at Belton, Texas, this the

march 2025

Joanna Staton, District Clerk of Bell

LEGALS

County, Texas 1201 Huey Road, P.O. Box 909, Belton, TX 76513

By : C. Rodriguez Deputy 03.27

THE STATE OF TEXAS
CITATION BY PUBLICATION-
PARENT AND CHILD

To: Any Unknown Father and All Whom It May Concern, Respondents, in the hereinafter-styled and -numbered cause: You have been sued. You may employ an attorney. If you or your attorney do not file a written answer with the clerk who issued this citation by 10 a.m. on the Monday next following the expiration of 20 days after you were served this citation and petition, a default judgment may be taken against you. The Original Petition of the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, Petitioner, was filed in the 146th Judicial District Court of Bell County, Texas, on January 10, 2025, against Alexandria Tovar and Unknown Father, Respondent(s), numbered 25DFAM351029, and entitled “In the Interest of ANE’YEA TOVAR, minor child.” The suit requests to terminate the parent-child relationships and/or to appoint a managing conservator of the child. The date and place of birth of the child who is the subject of the suit is: ANE’YEA TOVAR, DOB: February 14, 2017, Place of birth: Texas

The court has authority in this suit to render an order in the child’s interest that will be binding on you, including the termination of the parent-child relationship, the determination of paternity, and the appointment of a conservator with authority to consent to the child’s adoption.

The name and address of the attorney for plaintiff is Susan Parker, Bell County Attorney’s Office, P.O. Box 1127, Belton, TX 76513

Issued and given under my hand and seal of the Court at Belton, Texas, this the 19th day of March

LEGALS

2025

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

By : C. Rodriguez, Deputy. 03.27

NOTICE TO CREDITORS

Notice is hereby given that original Letters Testamentary for the Estate of LENNIE LAVIGNE WILKINS, Deceased, were issued on February 25, 2025, in Cause No. 25CPB00084, pending in the County Court-At-Law No: 1, Bell County, Texas, to: Warren Allen Wilkins.

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: Jim Thigpen Attorney at Law, PO Box 428, TEMPLE, TX 76503

DATED the 17th day of March, 2025

Jim Thigpen Attorney Warren Allen for Wilkins, State Bar No.: 19837300, PO Box 428, TEMPLE, TX 76503, Telephone: (254) 773-1663, Facsimile: (254) 773-2574, Email: jim.thigpen@linzythigpen.com 03.27

APPLICATION HAS BEEN
MADE WITH THE
TEXAS ALCOHOLIC
BEVERAGE COMMISSION

for a Wine and Malt Beverage Retailer’s Permit by Victoria Sobiech dab Early Light Creperie LLC, to be located at 201 North East Street, Suite C, Belton, Bell County, Texas. Officer of said corporation are: Victoria Sobiech, Owner.

03.27,04.03

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Local Activities & Events

Newcomers Club Activities

MARCH

3/27: 42, UMHB presents Kathy and Ted Floca with Visionary Leadership Award

APRIL

04/01: Footloose Singles	04/17: Nonfiction Book Club; 42 Dominoes
04/02: Luncheon (Activities Fashion Show); Popcorn Bridge	04/18: Trailblazers Walking Group
04/03: 42 Dominoes	04/19: Exploring Wines
04/07: Chat 'n' Canasta	04/21: Snack Time Mahjong
04/08: Singing Bluebonnets	04/22: Singing Bluebonnets
04/10: 42 Dominoes	04/23: Fun Lunch
04/11: TGIF Lunch	04/24: 42 Dominoes
04/12: Couples Night Out	04/26: Jimmy's Egg
04/14: Bookworms	04/28: Well -Read Women; Monday Canasta
04/15: Bunco	04/30: Crochet and Knit
04/16: Popcorn Bridge	

**"To join or for more information, please call:
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CAC announces 2025 concert lineups

Here's a look at the 2025 Texas Music Series:

THE TEXAS TENORS — March 30

Emmy award-winning classical crossover, the trio was formed in 2009 by country singer JC Fisher, pop singer Marcus Collins and opera singer John Hagen. They were a top four finalist in the fourth season of America's Got Talent, making them the highest-ranking vocal group in the show's history.

SHAWN COLVIN — May 16

In the 30 years since the release of her debut album, Colvin has won three Grammy Awards, released 13 albums, written a critically-acclaimed memoir, maintained a non-stop national and international touring schedule, appeared on countless TV and radio shows, had her songs featured in major movies, and created a remarkable canon of work.

RUTHIE FOSTER JAZZ BAND — July 12

With five Grammy nominations to her name, Ruthie Foster stands as a testament to the power of authenticity and resilience in music. Her soulful melodies, heartfelt lyrics and an unwavering commitment to her art inspire audiences and fellow musicians as she continues to carve a path uniquely her own.

AN CLIBURN FINALIST CLAYTON STEPHENSON — Oct. 18

American pianist Clayton Stephenson's love for music is immediately apparent in his joyous charisma onstage, expressive power and natural ease at the instrument.

ASLEEP AT THE WHEEL — Nov. 8

Founded in 1970, Asleep at the Wheel has been part of the American roots music landscape for more than 50 years.

SHINYRIBS — Dec. 6

Shinyribs, a regular visitor to the CAC, defies genres as a melting pot of Texas blues, New Orleans funk, horn-driven Memphis soul, country twang, border music, big band swing and roots-rock. The 2025 CTOS Classic Music Series includes four big shows.

The Cultural Activities Center in Temple has announced lineups for its two premier music series, and visiting bands will include Los Lonely Boys, Asleep at the Wheel and the wildly popular Shinyribs. 2025 will usher in new music in both the Texas Music Series and the Central Texas Orchestral Society's Classical Music Series. Some old friends will be making return engagements in Temple, and many new performers also will be playing the CAC stage. For more information, please visit <https://www.cacarts.org/events>. Be on the lookout for the full 2025 Texas Music Series lineup in next week's edition of the newspaper.

The March meeting of the Central Texas Travel Club will be March 27 at Johnnys Steaks and Barbeque in Salado. The gathering will begin at 11:00 with the meeting at 11:30. We will be discussing upcoming trips including Enchanted Rock and Luckenbach, Kentucky to see the Ark, San Antonio to see Moulin Rouge, and Florida in December. For more information contact us on Facebook or central-texastravelclub@outlook.com. The meeting is open to everyone with no dues or membership requirements.

Salem Lutheran Church BBQ & Silent Auction Fundraiser Nestled in the heart of farmland in Rosebud, Texas, Salem Lutheran Church is getting ready for its 23rd Annual BBQ Fundraiser and Silent Auction benefiting Bell County's Relay for Life. The event will take place on Sunday, March 30, starting at 11a.m. at SPJST Lodge 47 Seaton Star Hall, 10842 TX-53 in Temple, bringing the surrounding communities together for a day of delicious barbeque and charitable giving. Since its founding in 1901, Salem Lutheran has been a pillar of faith and service not only to its own members but to neighboring communities as well. Over the past 23 years, the congregation has worked tirelessly to raise funds for Relay for Life, an organization dedicated to supporting cancer research and assisting those affected by the disease. "We are incredibly grateful for the ongoing support of our parishioners, volunteers and the community," said Co-Captain Gaile Elsik of Salem Lutheran Church. "Every plate of barbecue served, and every dollar raised brings us one step closer to making a difference in the fight against cancer." The 23rd Annual BBQ Fundraiser promises to be another success, with all proceeds going directly to Relay for Life. Plates will be available for dine-in and takeout, ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to enjoy a meal while supporting a meaningful cause. For more information about the event or to find out how to get involved in Relay for Life in your area, please visit www.cancer.org.

Team Poss'Abilities" presents the Central Texas Poss'Abilities" Job Fair for high school & college students, including young adults with disabilities. They're inviting employers, job training programs, and vendors to participate in the 6th Annual Area Poss'Abilities" Job Fair on Friday, March 28 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. for high school students and 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. for college students and young adults. It will be held at the Bawcom Student Union Center located at University of Mary-Hardin Baylor. Lunch will be provided. For any general/registration questions, contact: Cheryl Nelson at 254-913-4193.

We Are Music Salado proudly presents the Third Annual Porch & Planet Festival a three-day event along Salado's scenic music mile celebrating local musicians, artists, merchants and planet earth, kicking off on Friday, April 11-13. Activities and events begin on Friday afternoon, April 11 at 5 p.m. and run through Sunday, April 13 at 5 p.m. Attendees will experience a great weekend with the friendly and charming community of Salado. This year's Porch & Planet offers attendees a wide variety of experiences – all promising three full days of music, entertainment, and family fun. This event is sponsored by We Are Music Salado and Salado's Music Friendly Community.

Ladies Auxiliary M.P.R.V.F.D. presents Roses for Hoses on Saturday, April 12 at 8:30 a.m. at the Oakmont Park in Morgans Point Resort. A 5K run and walk, part of the Centex race series formerly known as Cops Vs. Robbers. Dress in costume or come as you are. The event supports the fire department and community outreach projects.

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 come join other history minded folks and get involved by serving on one of our committees that consist of preservation,

cemetery, markers and education. To volunteer or for more information please visit historicalcommission@bellcounty.texas.gov, call 254-933-5917 or go by their 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. Mahjong games are available every Monday from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. Come join the fun and meet new folks. For more information text Jeanne at 409-313-0611.

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

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

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

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

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.

Community Information

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

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

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

Citizens Helping in Police Service (CHIPS)

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

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

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

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



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3003 N. Main ~ 254.939.1816

Belton Church of God in Christ
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Belton First Assembly of God
500 S. IH-35 ~ 254.933.2803

Belton Lighthouse
1001 NE Loop 121 ~ 254.654.7278

Belton Nazarene Church
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Family Gospel Church
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Fellowship Baptist Church
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1st Christian Church of Temple
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Liberty in Christ Church
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Miller Heights Baptist Church
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Ministerios Vida
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Mt. Zion United Methodist Church
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New Life Fellowship
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Nolan Valley Baptist Church
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4404 Twin City Blvd. ~ 254.939.0682

New Hope Church of God
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St. Francis Episcopal Church & School
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St. Mary's Catholic Church
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Youthful Lesson Learned

I've been working since I was 15, but my first "real" job came in my senior year of high school when I landed a job at the newspaper in Temple. It wasn't glamorous—I was just a gopher, running errands and fetching whatever needed fetching—but it was a job, and I was proud of it. I stayed there even after high school, working through my time at Temple Junior College (now TC).

Recently in church, our preacher posed a question: "Who is someone you look up to in your life?" Oddly enough, the first person who sprang to my mind was Jack Childress, my boss at the newspaper where I worked while I was attending Temple College (TJC back then). Mr. Childress was the Circulation Manager, and I was nothing more than a grunt in his department. But even after all these years, he left an indelible mark on me.

One memory, in particular, stands out. As part of my job, I was tasked with visiting every convenience store in Temple to pick up unsold newspapers and collect payment for those that had been sold. It wasn't a bad gig—I actually enjoyed it—except for one store. This store, a local place on the north side of town, was run by an owner who seemed to have an inexplicable dislike for me. No matter what I did, he was rude, condescending, and downright hateful every time I set foot in his store.

For a year, I bit my tongue and endured his hostility. But one day, I'd had enough. When his usual venomous remarks came my way, I shot back with some of my own. I left the store feeling a mix of relief and dread, but certain my outburst had cost me my job.

Sure enough, the owner wasted no time calling my boss to complain. When I got

back to the office, Mr. Childress was waiting for me. He asked calmly what had happened, and I explained the situation, bracing myself for the worst. To my surprise, he didn't yell or reprimand me. Instead, he said something I wasn't expect-



John Perry

ing: "Your forte is getting along with people. This shouldn't have happened."

Being a teenager at the time, I had no idea what "forte" meant. I left the office that day, convinced it was a bad thing—that it meant I didn't get along with people—and fully expecting to be fired. I went home feeling dejected, but when I

shared the story with my dad, he explained that "forte" actually meant a strength or skill. My spirits lifted instantly. Maybe there was hope after all.

The next day, Mr. Childress asked me to stay and listen as he phoned the store owner. What I heard left me stunned. Mr. Childress firmly told the owner that his treatment of me was unacceptable. He warned him that if there was ever another incident, the newspaper would cut ties with the store entirely, refusing to let him sell our papers. "No one disrespects my employees," Mr. Childress said. I couldn't believe what I was hearing—my boss, standing up for a teenaged kid, against a successful local businessman.

In the end, the store owner was allowed to continue selling newspapers, but with a catch: if he had unsold papers, he'd have to eat the cost. Mr. Childress willing-

ness to stand up for me taught me a lesson about leadership, integrity, and doing what's right, even when it's not easy.

This experience reminds me of one of the many examples in the Bible of standing up for someone. In 1 Samuel 19-20, Jonathan, the son of King Saul, stood up for David when Saul sought to kill him. Despite the risk, Jonathan defended David because he believed his father's actions were wrong. It took immense courage to do the right thing, just as Mr. Childress did for me that day.

As Mark Twain wisely said, "It is never wrong to do the right thing." Mr. Childress could have caved to the pressure of an influential local businessman, but instead, he chose to defend a lowly teenager. That decision has stayed with me, and I'll never forget the impact he had on my life.

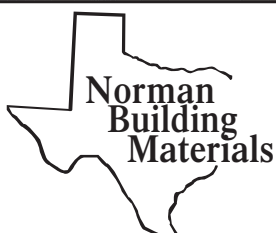
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EDITORIAL

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 every-

one 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 underwater 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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English Maids has been a long-standing dependable and trustworthy business offering residential cleaning services to Belton and the Central Texas communities for over a decade. The business was started by Kay English out of her home in Waco in 2006, and her daughter, Lauren English-Thurman joined the business in 2009. The company then expanded from Waco to serve surrounding communities, including Belton, Salado and Temple. The mother-daughter team focuses on providing the best service for residential and commercial cleaning, offering weekly, bi-weekly and monthly cleaning.

“During COVID, it was really important because a lot of people were trying to keep their house clean and sanitized,” said Lauren English-Thurman. “Our motto is a clean home is a healthy home.”

Every home is cleaned and disinfected during every visit, she added. English-Thurman said that some of their customers utilize their services because they physically cannot clean or do it themselves.

“I get the most joy when we can go in and help them, and then they’re so appreciative because it helps their overall quality of life to have a clean home,” Thurman-English added. “And it definitely helps the busy moms working and things like that, but I find the most satisfaction when I can help somebody that would not otherwise be able to do it.”The company employs around 10 to 12 employees at each of its offices, in both Waco and Belton. Each employee is well-trained, screened and has passed a background check. They are also insured, bonded and carry workers’ compensation.

“I think what sets us apart is we’re family owned and operated,” English-Thurman said. “We pay special attention to detail. I talk to our customers on a regular basis, build a relationship with them, so that we can customize their cleaning.”

English Maids is a member of The Cleaning For a Reason Foundation and offers free cleanings to women receiving cancer treatment. For more information, visit www.englishmaids.biz or call 254-231-0583.

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