

Helping Hands Ministry hosts Summer Block Party



BELTON JOURNAL/Harvey Jackson Oss
Helping Hands Ministry hosted a Summer Block Party at their location on Holland Road.

By Harvey Jackson Oss
The Belton Journal

On Saturday, July 25, Helping Hands Ministry hosted a Summer Block Party event. This year’s party featured hot dogs off the grill as well as fresh produce. “We love an opportunity to get together and share some food,” remarked Executive Director Alicia Jallah.

The Summer Block party is an annual event and has been hosted previously in various locations, typically at Belle Oaks or Mitchell Circle. This year’s event took place at the Helping Hands Ministry food pantry location on Holland Road. “It’s so hot this year, we decided to have it inside, so we had it here,” explained Jallah.

Helping Hands Ministry partners with other local organizations, referring beneficiaries to groups aligned

with their needs. “If it’s something that maybe we can’t help a neighbor with, we definitely connect them to other amazing organizations,” said Jallah.

Present at the event were representatives of the Human Animal Support Coalition, Head Start, Belton Christian Youth Center, and Texas SNAP. “One of my favorites is the Human Animal Support Coalition. They do amazing things to help not only the pets, but the families that want to keep their pets in their household safely,” shared Jallah.

Helping Hands Ministry receives funding to purchase food from grant partners such as United Way. The fruit provided at the event was purchased from Brothers Produce as well as donated by Central Texas Food Bank.

Upcoming events include Project Apple Tree on August 8, an op-

portunity for students to receive back-to-school supplies at BCYC. “Students that are registered are able to come through and get new shoes, new backpacks, socks, hygiene kits, a little bit of everything to get them started for the first day of school,” explained Jallah.

Helping Hands Ministry hosts Thanksgiving and Christmas food pantries to give food during the holidays. Fundraising begins in September and supports around 1200 families.

“We continue to see more and more families,” added Jallah. Last week the food pantry saw 724 households. Over 100 new households come to the food pantry every month. “There’s just a lot of need here. It takes a lot of food, and it takes a lot of resources to be able to meet that need,” said Jallah.



Belton ISD Teacher Pathway strengthens educator pipeline

District invests in “grow your own” initiatives to develop the next generation of educators

Special to the Journal

Belton ISD is investing in the future of education through its Teacher Pathway, a “grow your own” initiative designed to help paraprofessionals become certified teachers while strengthening the district’s pipeline of highly qualified educators.

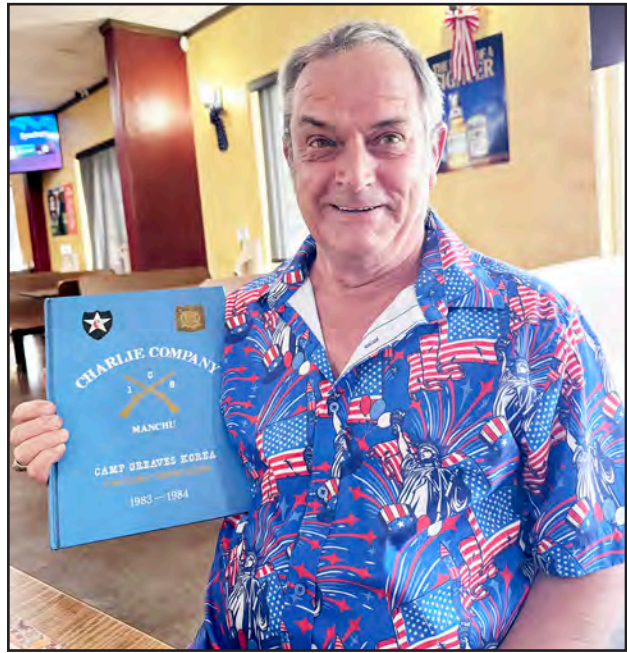
Now entering its second cohort, the Teacher Pathway provides current paraprofessionals and instructional aides with a clear pathway to earn their teaching certification while continuing to support students in Belton ISD classrooms. By investing in employees who already know the district, its students and its culture, the program creates opportunities for career advancement while helping address the growing need for exceptional educators.

“Our Teacher Pathway is about recognizing the potential that already exists within our schools and investing in the people who have chosen to serve our students,” said Jennifer Ramirez, executive director of human resources. “By creating opportunities for paraprofessionals to become certified teachers and partnering with UMHB to support future educators through a residency model, we’re building a stronger workforce from within while ensuring our students continue to learn from passionate, highly qualified professionals.”

The Teacher Pathway is one of several initiatives

See PATHWAY,
Page A2

MPR resident reunites with first COHORT 45 years later



BELTON JOURNAL/Michele Weisman
John Seibert holding the yearbook for the 1st COHORT filled with photos while serving on the DMZ.

By Michele Weisman
The Belton Journal

John Seibert’s military career began in 1981 with about 169 other men who were the first to train in a three-year program called COHORT under President Reagan. 45 years later, he and his wife Denise Seibert are preparing for the first reunion. John Seibert’s active duty ended on Nov. 30, 2002, retiring as a Master Sergeant, E8.

John Seibert said,

“They came up with this experimental unit called Project Cohesive Operational Readiness Training, and it was COHORT for short. We had a really hollow army, post-Vietnam era.”

Eventually there were 1,100 trained COHORTS soldiers.

Seibert said, “All of our drill sergeants at Fort Knox, at basic training, every one of them had a combat infantryman’s badge, meaning they had all

served at least in Vietnam, and many of them, multiple tours. They were the elite of the elite.”

He explained, “When President Reagan was in office, they had a concept for a new way of doing things with combat arms units, a foot soldier.”

They were all sent to the DMZ.

“In 1983, the 30-year ceasefire between North and South Korea expired. So in the summer of 1983, they picked up the entire

battalion, all 1,100 of us, and they flew us over to Korea and parked us right on the DMZ for a year. So we were working right on the border between South Korea and North Korea within mortar range,” said Seibert.

The men from the first COHORT and their families plan to meet for a reunion in Branson, Missouri this Aug.

See COHORT,
Page A2

TABLE OF CONTENTS	
Obituaries.....	A3
Service Directory.....	A5
Lifestyles.....	A6
Church Directory.....	A7
Sports.....	B1
Classifieds.....	B4
Editorial.....	B6
B-TOWN.....	B7

Strategic Plan presented to City Council



By David Stone
The Belton Journal

Belton City Council heard a presentation on the City’s Strategic Plan for FY 2027 through 2031, then invited public input on the plan at the Aug. 25 Council meeting.

The five-year plan was updated following a June 18 workshop that produced a number of recommenda-

tions. Like the old strategic plan, the new one focuses on six “pillars of emphasis” that include connectivity, business development, quality of life, infrastructure and public facilities, engagement and public safety.

There are 42 initiatives within the six pillars, which is comparable to previous years. Here are a few of those initiatives:

Connectivity — Criti-

cal street, trail and sidewalk projects such as Interstates 14 and 35, Loop 121 (phases 2 and 3), Sixth Avenue maintenance, FM 93 widening, analysis of extending Wheat Road, and Central/Spring Street bridge work.

Business Development — Work on utilities to Belton Economic Development Corporation proper-

See COUNCIL,
Page A5

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Don’t miss these upcoming events at the Bell County Museum

By Michele Weisman
The Belton Journal

The Bell County Museum’s mission is “to engage and educate the community by collecting, preserving and interpreting the prehistoric and historic heritage of Bell County.” Entry is free, and all who enter log their names in the history of visitors who came to view the past through permanent and current exhibits.

Come and see over 20 Quilts of Valor on display through Sept. 12. When the exhibit ends, the patriotic quilts will be presented to veterans and active-duty servicemen and servicewomen who have served in war. The quilts will be presented Sept. 19.

Family-friendly events coming up are: Historic Escapes for people 13 and older on July 31; Celebrate Freedom on Aug. 8 with crafts to celebrate America turning 250; Tiny Thinkers will explore friendship on Aug. 19; A Native American Celebration exploring culture and traditions on Sep. 12; Tiny Thinkers meet again on Sept. 16 to learn about the Gold Rush; an

exclusive Homeschool Day on Sept. 24; and a Victorian Lemonade Party perfect for dress up on Sep. 26. Visit bellcounty-museum.org for details as pre-registration is required to attend and some events have fees.

Mark your calendar for Dec. 1 through 19 for America’s 250th anniversary display curated by the Betty Martin Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution. Guests will see artifacts and discover stories of people who were part of the revolution and those affected by it.

The 1904 Historic Carnegie Library, called Discover Bell County, displays land, agriculture, ranching, transportation, industry, education, and culture. Exploring the past is an adventure with historical photos and interactive displays. Archaeological work depicts human life at the Gault Site from thousands of years ago.

Little River Log Cabin, built in the 1850s, displays original logs and stones, seen in a smaller

version of the original. Come in and imagine what life must have been like in



BELTON JOURNAL/Michele Weisman

Quilts of Valor will be presented to nominated veterans at the museum on Sept. 19.

the reconstructed cabin that originates from the Little River/Academy area.

The largest display of mustache teacups in the United States is at the museum, made popular in the second half of the 1800s. Stop by and find the left-handed teacup.

The museum has an in-house research library. See staff for assistance. Research materials cover topics such as the Chisholm Trail, Bell County family and genealogy, historic map reproductions, Salado history, Sanctified Sisters of Belton, and Bell County cemeteries.

Pathway - From Page A1

designed to cultivate talent from within and create meaningful opportunities for employees to grow professionally while continuing to make a difference in the lives of students.

Belton ISD is also expanding its educator development efforts through its partnership with the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor’s Texas Teacher Residency Program.

As UMHB’s teacher residency partner, Belton ISD will provide experienced mentor teachers who will host aspiring educators for a full-year residency experience. During the residency, teacher candidates will receive immersive, hands-on classroom training while working alongside accomplished educators to develop the skills and confidence needed for long-term success in the pro-

fession.

The 2026-2027 school year will serve as a year of planning and preparation, with the district welcoming its first teacher residents during the 2027-2028 school year.

Together, the Teacher Pathway and Teacher Residency Program reflect Belton ISD’s commitment to investing in people and creating innovative opportunities that prepare exceptional educators to inspire students for years to come.

Ready to take the next step toward becoming a certified teacher? Belton ISD invites paraprofessionals and aspiring educators to explore the Teacher Pathway and other career opportunities by visiting www.bisd.net/join-our-team or contacting the Human Resources Department at 254-215-2000 to learn more.



Courtesy Photo

The Leon River Band will perform at the Sounds of the Community Concert & Kayaking event on Friday, July 31, from 7 to 9 p.m., in the Heritage Park pecan grove.

Community Concert & Kayaking is Friday night at Heritage Park

By David Stone
The Belton Journal

Parks & Recreation Month comes to an end Friday with a celebration of live music, Bingo, kayaking and celebrations at Heritage Park in Belton.

“We will be wrapping up National Parks & Recreation Month with our Sounds of the Community Concert & Kayaking event on Friday, July 31, from 7 to 9 p.m., in the Heritage Park pecan grove,” said Joseph Dyer, Belton Park & Recreation superintendent.

This year marks the 41st anniversary of Parks & Recreation Month, and like much of the country, the City of Belton celebrated throughout July. The monthlong celebration concludes Friday.

“Friday will wrap up National Parks & Recreation Month with live music from the Leon River Band,” Dyer said. “The concert will be under the trees along the Leon River near the Fishing & Kayak Dock.”

“The Leon River Band will be performing on stage, and we will have kayaks and life jackets available to those who would like to get out on the water,” he said.

The Leon River Band is a popular Central Texas country, rock and dance band based out of Belton. Fronted by lead singer Kyle Heitmiller, the group regularly performs at local rodeos, community street parties and regional music series.

“In addition, we will have yard games, and the Central Texas Master Naturalists will be on-site with their Stream Team to talk about water-way conservation and fish identification,” Dyer said. “They will have a live interactive fish tank at the park.”

The Master Naturalists’ Central Texas Chapter, founded in 2010, has members from Bell and surrounding counties and is one of approximately 50 Texas Master Naturalist Chapters. Through education, outreach and service the group is dedicated to management and conservation of natural resources and natural areas within local communities.

Also Friday, Belton Parks & Rec will hold it’s final Wellness Bingo session of the month. During National Parks & Recreation Month, Bingo has been played every Friday. This Friday’s participants will have opportunities to win hats, mugs, pens, sunglasses, stickers, buttons and more, said James Grant, executive director of Belton Parks & Recreation.

“We (have had) a month-long Bingo Game, where participants can stop by the Harris Center and pick up a Bingo card,” Grant said. “It’s super easy — just follow the directions on the Bingo Card by doing the activities, and when you have completed a row or column of activities you get a BINGO.”

“Take your completed Bingo card back to the Harris Center and turn it in before 10 am each Friday during the month of July to be entered into a weekly drawing. At 10 a.m., we will draw a lucky winner to receive a goodie bag full of Belton Parks & Rec Swag.”

Launched in 1985, National Parks & Rec Month is a nationwide celebration that happens in all 50 states.

COHORT - From Page A1

John Seibert said, “So the gentleman that introduced Denise and I way back in ‘81 is from Southern California. He’s the one who came up with the 45th anniversary of the formation of this unit.”

They have been searching on Facebook for the other men they trained with and found twenty-five so far.

The initial meeting will be on Aug. 11 at the Branson Community Center. They will open with prayer and the pledge. Then everyone is welcome

to share for a few moments about themselves. Aug. 12, will be an informal day, and on Aug. 13, they will meet at the Golden Coral Banquet Hall.

The hope is to meet back up again and find others whom they served with in COHORT.

“Back then, granted, we could all get a little wild and crazy, but I’m sure we’ve all been seasoned a little bit and changed a lot over the years. I think it’ll be a really good gathering,” Seibert said.

He said that those he

trained with had the privilege of being the first in this experiment. But he also spoke about losing one of the men six months ago and one this month. Another man who could do 40 push-ups with ease, he heard that he died by suicide.

Denise Seibert made the point that her husband always carries a Veterans Crisis Line card in his pocket. On it is the number 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1, text to 838255. Or have a confidential chat online at VeteransCrisisLine.net.



Courtesy Photo

John Seibert, at the DMZ, outside his office.

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OBITUARIES



Blair

Debra Ruth (Spangler) Blair
January 21, 1955 – July 11, 2026

On, July 11, 2026, the world lost a remarkable woman, Debra Ruth (Spangler) Blair, who passed away peacefully in Buda, Texas, after bravely battling Alzheimer’s disease since 2016. Born on January 21, 1955, in Austin, Texas, Deb’s 71 years of life were filled with love, joy, and unwavering devotion to her family, friends, and faith.

Deb was the beloved daughter of Chuck and Donnie (Freund) Spangler, who preceded her in death, and was raised in Austin. She attended John H. Reagan High School where, because of her joyful and accepting attitude, she was friends with everyone. Her peers recognized her radiant spirit by voting her head cheerleader and homecoming queen. She married her high school sweetheart and the love of her life, Tom Blair, on June 7, 1975, in Austin, Texas. Their union was blessed with three wonderful children: Christine Rae

(Blair) Hummer, Jacqueline Renee (Blair) Cuellar, and Brian Blair.

Her educational journey was a testament to her determination and strength. Deb earned a BA in Journalism from the University of Texas, a remarkable achievement while raising three children. She also earned her black belt in Tae Kwan Do in her late 30s, a reflection of her discipline, perseverance, and adventurous spirit. She chose to dedicate her life to being a stay-at-home mom, raising her children with boundless love and care. Deb converted to Catholicism shortly after her marriage to Tom and was actively involved in Catholic women’s groups, Bible studies, and multiple retreats. Her faith was her anchor throughout her life.

Deb’s greatest joy was in being a mother. She wholeheartedly supported her children in every stage of their lives—whether it was school, sports, or personal passions—and she encouraged them to follow their own goals and dreams. She nurtured their independence while always being their strongest cheerleader, and she took immense pride in the people they became.

Deb’s joyful presence left an imprint wherever she went. She was known for her great smile, her contagious laugh, and the way she made everyone feel valued. She volunteered tirelessly for causes close to her heart, including her children’s schools, her church, and organizations focused on nature, animals, and the outdoors. With her background in journalism and gift for writing, she often became the “voice” of the groups she joined. Yet, it wasn’t just her skills that stood

out—Deb naturally gravitated into leadership roles, inspiring those around her with enthusiasm and encouragement.

Among her many passions, Deb had a lifelong love of animals—especially horses. Taught by her grandfather, Ed Freund, she developed an early bond with them and carried that affection throughout her life. Though she set aside her love of horses while raising her family, her dream was realized when she and Tom purchased their beloved ranch in Salado, La Posada. There, surrounded by nature and with her horses nearby, Deb thrived. She poured her heart into making La Posada a welcoming home, a joyful gathering place filled with laughter, warmth, and community for family, friends, reunions, and church events.

She lived with unmatched joy, resilience, and faith, even after her Alzheimer’s diagnosis in 2016. Deb adored her grandchildren—Brooklyn Blair, Reed Blair, Emma Saccomanno, Eva Saccomanno, Nolan Cuellar, Isabel and Ellis Hummer—and cherished every moment with them. Her legacy of love and joy will forever live on in their hearts.

Deb is survived by her devoted husband, Tom Blair; her loving children, Christi and her husband Michael, Jackie and her husband Carlos, and Brian and his wife Danielle; her six grandchildren; her brother Charles (Beno) Spangler Jr. and his wife Toni.

Family and friends are invited to a visitation from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. on Sunday, July 19, 2026, at Cook-Walden/Capital Parks Funeral Home in Pflugerville, with a rosary prayer service following at 7:00 p.m.

A funeral mass to celebrate Deb’s life will be held on July 20, 2026, at 11:00 AM at St. Albert the Great Catholic Church. Following the funeral mass, a reception will be held in the parish hall of the church.

In lieu of flowers, the family kindly requests donations be made to the Alzheimer’s Association, in memory of Deb’s courageous battle with the disease (Alz.org) or Pioneer Farms (https://www.pioneerfarms.org/).

Deb Ruth (Spangler) Blair was truly the most joyful person anyone could ever meet. She touched lives with her smile, her kindness, her leadership, her love of animals, and her steadfast faith. She will be deeply missed, but her light will shine forever in the lives of those she inspired.

Acknowledgments: The Blair family wishes to extend their heartfelt gratitude to the many friends and family who helped with Deb’s care during her long journey with Alzheimer’s. A special word of thanks goes to Flor Hernandez, one of her regular caregivers at the end and her dear friend Kathy Crabtree, her caregiver since April 2021, who was by her side with unwavering love and support. The family also deeply appreciates the compassionate care provided by hospice staff from Hospice Austin, whose guidance and kindness made Deb’s final days peaceful.

May her soul rest in eternal peace. To share condolences and memories of Deb with the Blair family, please visit www.cookwaldencapitalparks.com.

Arrangements under the direction of Cook-Walden/Capital Parks Funeral Home, Pflugerville, Texas

Belton rivers, a topic at free workshop this summer in Hamilton

By David Stone
The Belton Journal

A free workshop on the Leon and Lampasas River watersheds will be held Aug. 27 in Hamilton. The free event will run 1 to 5 p.m. at Hamilton Public Library, 201 N Pecan, and is open to anyone interested in improving the region’s water quality.

According to Annalee Epps, a Texas AgriLife specialist with the Department of Soil & Crop Sciences, the workshop will include a discussion on watershed systems, along with types and sources of water pollution.

Speakers will also address community-driven watershed protection and provide an overview of water quality related to local watershed management.

“This workshop helps people learn about water resources and efforts to protect local water quality,” said Epps, who also serves as coordinator of the Texas Watershed Steward program. “Participants will be introduced to regional watershed protection and management efforts and how they can get involved.”

Participants must preregister by visiting <https://tx.ag/TWSHamilton> or calling (979) 321-5921. Upon registration, participants will receive additional meeting information.

Though the workshop will emphasize local water resources, the information applies to all waters throughout the region. Light refreshments will be provided. Those

attending will receive a copy of the Texas Watershed Steward Handbook and are eligible to earn a certificate of completion.

“The health of our water resources are directly related to how we live on the land,” said Audrey McCrary, research specialist for the Texas Water Resources Institute. “The goal of this Texas Watershed Stewards workshop is to increase awareness and understanding of water quality in the Leon and Lampasas rivers and discuss how we can be good stewards of these watersheds through our actions on the surrounding land.”

Workshop presenters will discuss the function and benefits of community-driven watershed protection and management, explain types and sources of water pollution, and identify best management practices that watershed stewards can use to improve and protect water quality.

“What we do as individuals and communities on the land within our watersheds affects water quality downstream,” McCrary said. “By learning about watershed management and adopting best management practices, watershed stewards can help improve water quality in these rivers and their tributaries and encourage others to do the same.”

“Both the Leon River and Lampasas River watersheds have watershed protection plans in place to address bacteria concentrations that are above the water quality standards for their designated use,” she said.

A watershed pro-

tection plan (WPP) is a voluntary, non-binding, community-driven effort to identify potential sources of water pollution and recommend locally agreeable management strategies to improve water quality.

A WPP is developed with the input of local stakeholders who live, work, or recreate in the watershed and follows guidelines from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

Approval of the WPP by the EPA unlocks funding opportunities for communities to implement the management strategies within the WPP, such as funding for septic system inspection or decommissioning programs, hiring field technicians for local Soil and Water Conservation District offices to help develop agricultural conservation plans, or purchasing pet waste stations for local parks and neighborhoods in the watershed.

“The Leon River WPP was accepted by the EPA in 2015 and the Lampasas River WPP was accepted in 2013,” McCrary said. “Since then, stakeholders, communities, and numerous watershed partners have been working together to improve water quality in these rivers by implementing various management measures with the goal of reducing bacteria concentrations.”

“The upcoming Texas Watershed Stewards workshop will discuss these water quality challenges and the WPPs in place for the Leon and Lampasas rivers, including the recommended management practices

that individuals and communities can use to address the elevated bacteria concentrations,” she added.

The Texas Watershed Steward program offers continuing education units, CEUs, for multiple professional disciplines.

Available CEUs include four hours in soil and water management for certified crop advisers, professional engineers, certified teachers, professional geoscientists and certified floodplain managers.

American Institute of Certified Planners members are eligible for four certification maintenance hours and one law hour.

Four CEUs are also offered for each of the following Texas Commission on Environmental Quality occupational licensees: wastewater system operators, public water system operators, on-site sewage facility installers and landscape irrigators.

Additionally, three general CEUs are offered for Texas Department of

Agriculture private pesticide applicator license holders, and two credits are offered for nutrient management specialists.

Funding for this effort is provided through a federal Clean Water Act



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Sunny Speech opens new office with Chamber ribbon cutting



BELTON JOURNAL/Michele Weisman
Dawn Orange, chief operating officer of the chamber, presents Christy Villegas with their window sticker.

By Michele Weisman
The Belton Journal

Christy Villegas, M.S. CCC-SLP and owner of Sunny Speech, was surrounded by friends, clients, and their families for the Belton Area Chamber of Commerce ribbon cutting on Friday, July 24 at 4 p.m. Sweet treats, small bubble wands with a sun on top, sun shaped lollipops, and a savory tray of food greeted guests who entered the Sunny Speech office.

Villegas’ background is in education, with a master’s in speech pathology. She provides personalized, one-on-one support and encourages early intervention. Offering speech therapy and academic tutoring in different locations, she now has her own space for clients to come to her. Seeing children as young as newborns up to eighteen years old, Villegas was excited to christen her new office with the ribbon cutting.

She gave her speech inside due to the heat.

Villegas said, “I started Sunny Speech in my home. It began with a dream, a leap of faith, and a heart that simply wanted to serve children and their families. I knew that if I could help even one child find their voice, it would all be worth it. To my incredible clients and families, thank you for trusting me from the very beginning.”

About the move to her own office she said, “It represents every child who has worked so hard to say their first words, and every parent who has celebrated a breakthrough, and every reminder of why I chose this profession in the first place to help my own son Aden.”

She let everyone to know that the ribbon cutting signifies the beginning.

Villegas continued, “I can’t wait to see how Sunny Speech continues to grow, how many more families we have the privilege of

serving, and the lasting impact we can make in our community together. So from the bottom of my heart, thank you. For believing in this dream, for praying for me, for supporting me, and for celebrating this incredible milestone today.”

The Belton Area Chamber of Commerce then asked everyone outside to the front of the building for the ribbon-cutting.

Dawn Orange, chief operating officer for the chamber, facilitated the event. After the ribbon was cut, Orange said, “But wait! But wait! There’s more!” a tradition of the chamber as they presented a certificate and chamber window sticker to Villegas.

Dominic White, Villegas’ Pastor and principal at North Belton Middle School, surprised everyone, saying, “Wait! Wait! There’s one more! Let’s bless it. Every little soul that walks into this place, let them feel the spirit of inclusiveness that they’re welcome, and able to prepare for their futures.”

Too hot to handle: Protecting your pets from heat stress

Special to the Journal

Warm weather often means more time outside with your pets, but higher temperatures also increase the risk of heat stress, which occurs when an animal’s body cannot properly cool itself, causing its core temperature to rise.

“The problem with heat stress is it can start happening a lot faster than you would initially think it would,” said Dr. Sarah Manning, a clinical assistant professor at the Texas A&M University College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences. “It can really start after just 10 minutes of a good play session and it’s really subtle.”

To help owners recognize the early signs of heat stress, Manning shares key warning indicators and how to respond so that owners can act quickly at the first signs of overheating.

- From heat stress to heat stroke**
- Heat stress can occur when a dog or cat’s body temperature rises only two degrees above their normal temperature, which is typically 100 to 102 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Because this can occur quickly, early recognition of signs is important.
- According to Manning, subtle facial changes can be one of the first signs in dogs. Others can include:
- Panting or mouth breathing (less heavy in cats)
 - Seeking shade and water
 - An elongated tongue
 - Excessive grooming for cats
 - Increased respiratory effort (harder breathing)

“You might see heat stress in the facial expressions of dogs, if their eyes start to get a little bit narrow and their tongues can start to get really long,” Manning said. “They’re panting a lot, so you tend to see their teeth a lot more as their lips pull back.”

Cats, on the other hand, groom themselves more and tend to spread their bodies out rather than curling into a ball.

As pets spend more time outdoors and their body temperature climbs, the brain and internal system begin to be affected, and the progression to heat stroke can happen quickly.

“A technical heat stroke is when their temperature rises to 106 degrees Fahrenheit,” Manning said.

At this point, serious health issues also can occur — dogs can get dizzy, too weak to stand, become inattentive, and symptoms could progress into seizures.

Heat stress has many side effects, all of which are equally important to notice before serious health issues appear.

Recognizing the risks

Certain breeds are more susceptible to overheating, particularly those with short muzzles, such as bulldogs, Boxers, Boston Terriers, and Persian cats.

While panting facilitates cooling in all animals, “because their heads are smaller, it makes panting less efficient — so each breath results in less heat dissipation,” Manning said.

Environmental conditions also play a major role in heat risk — the heat index and relative humidity are important to monitor, especially during sudden temperature spikes before pets have time to acclimate.

In addition, when temperatures reach above 90 degrees, Manning suggests checking paved areas where your pet may play using a simple test: if the pavement or concrete is too hot for your hand, it is too hot for your pet’s paws.

If changes occur in the animal’s behavior and body, the heat index or humidity begins, the pet struggles to acclimate to a new environment, or your pet starts seeking out shade, Manning advises that owners act quickly to:

- Bring your pets indoors
- Offer water to rehydrate
- Use shades, fans, or air conditioning to cool them

If your pet continues rapidly breathing and experiencing weakness or lethargy after proper cool-off time, contact your veterinarian.

Protecting pets through prevention

Hydration and planning ahead are key to prevention.

“If you know that it’s going to be a hotter day and you will be spending time outside together, increase their hydration beforehand,” Manning said. “This could be by adding water or wet food into their diet and increasing water intake daily.”

For cats, a primarily wet food diet can help maintain hydration, and additional water can be mixed in. The same approach can be used for dogs by adding water to dry kibble.

Prevention can also come in the form of staying on top of routine grooming needs during warmer months,

See **PETS**,
Page A5

Belton’s sales tax revenue payment slips for July

By Lynette Sowell-Stevens
The Belton Journal

The office of Acting Texas State Comptroller Kelly Hancock’s office released its monthly sales tax revenue report for July, and the City of Belton sees a slight decrease in its monthly sales tax check, although still keeping pace with its increase overall for 2026.

Belton’s July sales tax disbursement is down 0.62 percent compared to July 2025 and the City will be receiving \$766,468.92.

For 2026, the City’s sales tax revenue is up 2.66 percent. This is a little less than the state average for the year so far, with receipts for cities statewide up 4.7 percent.

The July sales tax report is for sales made

in May 2026 by businesses that report tax monthly.

Morgan’s Point Resort is receiving \$30,509.38 this month, down 9.60 percent compared to July 2026.

Temple also is down, by 1.86 percent, and will receive \$2,993,052.03.

The City of Killeen’s sales tax revenue is down 3.06 percent at \$2,765,013.77, and overall down 1.40 percent for 2026.

Harker Heights sees a slight increase of 0.62 percent for July 2026 compared to July 2025 and will receive \$917,139.14.

Nolanville and Salado are also down for July, and will receive \$127,018.34 (1.97 percent less), and \$87,398.51 (4.40 percent less), respectively.

Central Texas Regional Advisory Council launches regional prehospital whole blood initiative to improve trauma survival

Special to the Journal

Emergency medical service providers, health-care systems, trauma centers, and public safety partners across Central Texas announced the launch of the Central Texas Regional Advisory Council Prehospital Whole Blood Initiative, a groundbreaking regional effort designed to deliver life-saving whole blood transfusions to trauma patients at the scene of injury and during transport to definitive care.

The initiative represents a significant advancement in prehospital emergency medicine, allowing paramedics and critical care transport teams to administer low-titer O positive whole blood to pa-

tients experiencing severe hemorrhage—the leading preventable cause of death following traumatic injury.

Research has demonstrated that early blood transfusion can improve outcomes for patients suffering from traumatic blood loss. By bringing whole blood directly to the patient, EMS clinicians can begin replacing lost blood components sooner, helping restore oxygen delivery, improve circulation, and increase the chances of survival during the critical minutes following injury.

The Central Texas Prehospital Whole Blood Initiative brings together EMS agencies, hospital systems, blood centers, trauma surgeons, emergency physicians, and regional health-care leaders to establish a sustainable program that ensures the safe storage, transport, administration, and replenishment of whole blood resources across the region.

Key goals of the initiative include:

- Improving survival rates for patients experiencing life-threatening hemorrhage.
- Reducing delays in blood product administration.
- Standardizing clinical protocols and training throughout the region.
- Strengthening collaboration among EMS agencies, hospitals, and blood suppliers.
- Expanding access to

advanced trauma care in both urban and rural communities.

The program includes comprehensive provider education, quality assurance monitoring, and data collection to evaluate patient outcomes and support ongoing clinical research. Participating agencies will follow evidence-based protocols developed through collaboration with regional trauma experts and transfusion medicine specialists.

The initiative also highlights the critical role of blood donors in sustaining emergency medical care. Community members are encouraged to support Baylor Scott & White-Temples blood bank through regular donations, helping to ensure an adequate supply of whole blood for patients facing life-threatening emergencies.

As the first coordinated regional prehospital whole blood program in the CENTEX RAC coverage area, the initiative demonstrates a shared vision among healthcare and public safety partners to advance trauma care and improve outcomes for residents and visitors throughout the region. This initiative will be rolling out in Bell, Coryell, Hamilton, Lampasas, and Milam Counties in the coming weeks.

July 2026 sales tax payments to area cities			
Belton	\$766,468.92	down	0.62%
Harker Heights	\$917,139.14	up	0.62%
Holland	\$14,904.84	up	34.5%
Killeen	\$2,765,013.77	down	3.06%
Morgan’s Point Resort	\$30,509.38	down	9.60%
Nolanville	\$127,018.34	down	1.97%
Salado	\$87,398.51	down	4.40%
Temple	\$2,993,052.03	down	1.86%
Percentages reflect a monthly increase or decrease compared to July 2025			

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Council - From Page A1

ties, implement updated building codes, expand landscaping and murals, and employee recruitment and retention because of I-35/I-14 construction.

Quality of Life — Implement Parks and Library master plans, establish Data Center standards, and enhance Belton’s historical cultural resources.

Infrastructure/Public Facilities — Water & Wastewater Master Plan, Central Texas Water Alliance participation, evaluate street maintenance fees, and a water/sewer boundary analysis.

Engagement — National Citizen Survey recommendations, provisions of exceptional customer service, community marketing plan, logo, tourism emphasis, and the roll out of a HOP bus for project evaluation and community engagement.

Public Safety — Miller Heights Center phased occupancy, employee mental health needs awareness, cybersecurity and AI training for community safety.

“With Council input provided by Aug. 3, we will place the draft plan on the City’s website on Aug. 4 and invite public input at the Council meeting on Aug. 25,” said City Manager Sam Listi. “Adoption of the FY2027-2031 Strategic Plan is scheduled for Sept. 15 in conjunction with the FY2027 budget.

Pets - From Page A4

as pets with dual coats can lose their ability to keep an insulated layer if not groomed properly. This can cause them to overheat quickly, because they cannot keep cool air trapped in their coats, according to Manning.

If your pet appears to be overheating, the best way to cool them is to put room temperature water on their bodies and blow a fan over them, a method called active cooling.

“Start active cooling measures as soon as possible — including moving into shade or into AC — and then seek veterinary care. Do not delay cooling,” Manning says.

As with any situation, pet owners should have a plan for accessing veterinary care in case of an emergency. Delayed or improper cooling can lead to serious complications.

When your pet starts showing even subtle signs of heat stress, pay attention and act quickly. Be mindful of the humidity and forecast so that you are prepared to provide proper cool down for your pet.

Pet Talk is a service of the College of Veterinary Medicine & Biomedical Sciences, Texas A&M University. Stories can be viewed on the web at vetmed.tamu.edu/news/pet-talk. Suggestions for future topics may be directed to vmbs-editor@tamu.edu.

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A6
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LIFESTYLES

THE BELTON JOURNAL

Report: Animal shelter needs new hours, additional staff, cooler kennels

By David Stone
The Belton Journal

A report on operations at the Bell County Animal Shelter — conducted free of charge by Maddie’s Million Pet Challenge — highlights critical gaps in staffing, funding and operational structures, showing that current resources under law enforcement oversight fall short of modern professional animal sheltering standards.

The report was presented and discussed Monday during a Bell County Commissioners Court workshop.

Maddie’s Million Pet Challenge is a partnership among the University of Florida and the University of California at Davis’ shelter medicine programs, Team Shelter USA, Open Door Veterinary Collective, National Kitten College, and Be Spay Neuter Consulting.

MMPC awarded the Bell County Animal Shelter (BCAS) a pro bono consultation. Pre-visit research included a review of the Texas State Statute, local ordinances, historical statistical trends, record-keeping, written standard operating procedures, the BCAS website, and social media.

During the on-site visit, the MMPC consultant — Cameron Moore — toured the shelter campus and met with individual staff, the Sheriff’s leadership team and two commissioners to learn more about the processes in place from intake through outcome as well as their goals for moving forward.

Key findings and recommendations from Moore’s evaluation included:

Staffing and Funding Deficit — The review emphasizes that the facility suffers from severe understaffing and a lack of dedicated operational funding.

Professionalization of Services — Evaluators noted that animal sheltering requires specialized staffing models, distinct training requirements, and targeted medical protocols separate from traditional law enforcement duties.



Operational Protocols — The assessment points to the necessity of modernizing intake processing, population management, and daily animal care to reduce length of stay and improve overall animal welfare.

“Cameron found a lot of positives,” said MMPC Administrator Sara Pizano. “The Bell County shelter has an amazing staff and volunteers. We think it has enormous potential. There are a lot of shortcomings, but we hope local leaders reevaluate the shelter’s administrative structure and increase budget allocations.”

Pizano said while there are issues, there is no need to rebuild the existing shelter facility.

“Things can be improved without building a new facility,” she said. “The shelter is very much understaffed. A two-person kennel staff for 85 animals — that’s not appropriate. There should be seven people for that many

animals.” Pizano said the shelter is advertising for another staff member, but the pay is \$10 an hour.

“It’s going to be hard to fill that position at that wage,” she said. “The average wage for animal shelter workers is \$13 to \$18. It can be a hard job.”

Both Pizano and Moore indicated that the Bell County shelter needs to focus on getting animals out of the shelter quickly.

“The county is missing opportunities to rehome pets and implement a better foster care system,” Pizano said. “Also, the hours of operation are inconvenient for the working public.”

Right now, the shelter is open from 10:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. on Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday, and noon to 4 p.m. on Tuesday and Sunday.

“The shelter needs to be open at least one evening a week,” Moore said. “Also, there is no central air in the kennels, and the county needs to invest in training.”

According to several local animal welfare and rescue officials attending the meeting, state law requires shelters to be between 50 and 85 degrees. But, the Bell County shelter is often above 85, and hotter during a Texas summer. Two of the officials pointed out that severe heat is dangerous for dogs.

Community stakeholders and advocates said the Bell County Commissioners Court needs to utilize the expert roadmap provided by the Maddie’s Million Pet Challenge to implement systemic reforms.

Bell County Commissioners said they are looking at adding employees but they would have to do so within the current budget. They are looking at what can be done to correct some of the issues revealed by the study.

“The Sheriff’s Office is making changes, and they will continue to do so moving forward,” County Judge David Blackburn said.

Belton businesses helping provide school supplies

By David Stone
The Belton Journal

A Belton business is helping families by taking a big bite out of the high cost of back-to-school shopping.

Belton ISD classes for the 2026-2027 school year begin Aug. 13.

Lauren Smith State Farm, 7206 SH 317, is hosting Snapshots & School Supplies on Aug. 3 through 7, and giving away 100 backpacks filled with supplies and coupons to Belton stores.

The event will be open at Smith’s office from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. on Aug. 3 and 4, and from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Aug. 5, 6 and 7.

“Our office will have a special snapshot area for the perfect back-to-school pictures and free school supplies for the

first 100 kiddos that come in,” Smith said. “Make sure and stop by to get your photo and supplies.”

According to Amber Haines, marketing coordinator for Snapshots & School Supplies, this is the first year the business has held the event.

“We have created a back-to-school backdrop in the office for photos,” Haines said. “We will even take the photos — as many photos as they would like. We wanted to get our name out there and give back to our community.”

Haines said Lauren Smith State Farm purchased the supplies, and local businesses provided coupons. Several businesses also have expressed interest in helping fund the event.

In addition to supplies and photos, there

will be refreshments available. The event is open to all families of school-age children.

“We will be open all day,” Haines said. “Come by when you can.”

Many Belton stores will be selling back-to-school supplies and services such as haircuts, but Perry Office Plus will be selling prepackaged supplies specifically designed for Belton and Temple schools. Perry Office Plus is located at 214 E Central in Belton.

Several school supply giveaways have already been had, including a backpack giveaway sponsored by the Belton Lions Club, H-E-B and Mount Zion United Methodist Church.

A list of Belton ISD school supplies by grade level can be found at <https://www.bisd.net/>



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[enrollment-13/school-supply-lists](#).

Belton shoppers are urged to support local businesses while saving on money on tax-free purchases of most clothing, school supplies, footwear and backpacks during the annual Back-to-School Sales Tax Holiday, which begins Friday, Aug. 7 and runs through midnight Sunday, Aug. 9.

According to Texas Comptroller Kelly Hancock, qualifying items

can be purchased tax free from a Texas store or from an online or catalog seller doing business in the state.

Hancock said sales tax exemptions apply only to qualifying items you buy during the sales tax holiday. Items you buy before or after the sales tax holiday do not qualify for exemption, and there is no tax-refund available.

The clothing exemptions include everything from barrettes and purses to pants, shirts and Scout uniforms.

Book bags, calculators, pens and pencils, protractors, notebooks, lunch boxes and glues are among the many school supplies that will be sold tax free. Student backpacks selling for less than \$100 will be exempt from tax, and shoppers may purchase up to 10 backpacks without paying tax.

Delivery, shipping, handling and transportation charges by the seller are part of the item’s sales price. Since clothing, backpacks and school supplies have to be less than \$100 to qualify, shoppers must look at the item’s total sales price to determine if they can buy it tax free.

For example, you buy a pair of jeans for \$95 with a \$10 delivery charge for a total price of \$105. Because the jeans’ total price is more than \$100, tax is due on the entire \$105 price.

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New Hope Church of God
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2807 Oakdale Dr. ~ 254.773.1561
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7051 Stonehollow Dr. ~ 254.774.7992
Wildwood Baptist Church
5195 Cedar Creek Rd. ~ 254.773.3177

The Treasure Beneath Your Feet



John C. Perry

I heard a quote while driving and listening to a podcast recently: “Work out what God has worked in.” I am sorry I don’t know who the author of the quote is, but it got me to thinking about what wonderful advice it is.

The quote is a classic summary of Philippians 2:12-13: “.

. . . work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.”

Paul does not say “work for your salvation,” in other words, earning it. Instead, he says, “work out your salvation,” expressing what is already inside us.

I heard one author describe it like a mine: salvation is the rich deposit God places in the soil of our hearts. “Working it out” is simply bringing that treasure to the surface through our daily actions, choices, and kindness. In the mine analogy, we aren’t creating the gold; rather, we are just digging up what is already there.

My personal belief is that we are saved by grace alone, so

how do good works really fit in? I have been thinking about that a lot lately. Like many of you, I sometimes look back on my own life and wonder: am I doing enough, or am I falling short of what God wants me to do? It is easy to get caught up in self-doubt or feel overwhelmed by the needs around us. It would certainly feel easier if God handed us daily assignments so we always knew exactly what to do.

Think about it: rather than handing us a strict checklist, God constantly hands us opportunities. Opportunities to love and help others, like a neighbor who needs encouragement, a local ministry or mission that needs an extra pair of hands, a friend who needs a listening ear, or a strang-

er who needs a little extra grace.

In my own life, I’ve spent thirteen years volunteering at the Body of Christ Community Clinic, a ministry that is dear to my heart. When I am there, I see it up close: a patient who finally gets the care they so desperately need, and the many volunteers who come to help them. And still, I wonder if that is enough, or if there is more God wants me to do. Maybe you’ve felt that same tug, that quiet question of whether you’re making the impact God intends.

When you start looking at life through that lens, you see that “working out” salvation is not something mystical or complicated. It is practical, daily, and often very small. We don’t serve

to earn God’s love; rather, we serve because we already have it.

God has already placed His Grace, His Spirit, and His calling inside you, the gold is already in the ground. Your job is simply to dig it up, one act of kindness, one step of obedience, one moment of courage at a time.

So, my brothers and sisters, don’t wait for God to hand you an assignment sheet. Your assignment is already written in your heart. Just work out what He has worked in.

John C. Perry is the Lay Leader Emeritus with New Life Methodist Church. They meet every Sunday at 9 a.m. (Bible Study) and 10 a.m. (Worship Service) at 1245 Williams Road in Salado.

Mockingbird Management: multifaceted stewards for the community

By Michele Weisman
The Belton Journal

Mockingbird Management, LLC, under its umbrella of property management, helps clients find a home to rent or manage a rental, serves clients in purchasing or selling their home, and provides professional services for clients with businesses.

Candice George, broker, CAM, CPO, CRHM, FHS, is from the Temple and Belton area and graduated from UMHB. She always loved accounting but felt called to work where she could have a daily impact on the community through property management.

George, who began working for Mockingbird Management in 2002 and purchased it in 2022, said, “Our mission is to provide communities that people want to live in. If you have maintenance concerns, we want to fix those. We want to care for your assets. If an owner entrusts us to care for their home or property, we take that very seriously. For the resident, that means you have a house that’s safe, decent, and sanitary that you can call home, somewhere you can flourish.”

Serving the Central Texas area, Mockingbird Management has decades of experience.

George said, “When it comes to real estate, we can 100% give you confidence that we’re educated and knowledgeable to

help you make sure that you have the best transaction that you can have.”

She felt God pulled her to working in the community through property management, rather than the path of fulltime bookkeeping she was on.

George explained that she tries to push that to all her employees too. It’s not just about the paperwork, compliance, leasing, and getting these units rented. It’s about the person in front of you. You can impact them.

George said, “A lot of our portfolio is low-income housing, multifamily. I’ve helped people with restricted income have a really nice place to call home. That’s our goal when it comes to multifamily, providing something that people can be proud of. We take the same approach to managing every portfolio, whether it’s one house, a conventional property, or high-end luxury.”

A need Mockingbird Management kept hearing was managing personal businesses. With George’s background in accounting, they added it to their suite of services.

George said, “We can help you manage your business. We can help you manage your portfolio. We can help you manage your employee training. We can help you manage how to read a financial statement.”

“Every day I can make an impact in the life of that one



Courtesy Photo
Candace George of Mockingbird Management, LLC person.”

Mockingbird Management, LLC is accepting agent applications, and they have a Property Management Referral Program portal on their website at mockingbirdmanagement.com. They work from home offices and can be reached at 214-751-6160 or engorge@mockingbirdmanagement.com.

New Belton library branch could be in the works

By David Stone
The Belton Journal

A growing number of visitors to the Lena Armstrong Public Library has Belton City Council pondering the idea of opening a library branch inside the Belton Safety Center as part of a new strategic plan approved Tuesday night.

The Safety Center, located on eight acres near the Belle Oaks Apartments, is in the former Miller Heights Elementary School building.

According to Amanda Hairston, director of Library Services, the library’s previous Strategic Plan (2019 through 2023) remained in effect through early 2025 while major initiatives were completed. Key accomplishments from that plan included an exterior renovation (2024), a reimagined library floor plan (2025), and significant improvements to the library’s collection development process (2025).

Following completion of these initiatives, the Texas State Library & Archives Commission identified the need for a new strategic plan during the library’s annual accreditation process. Maintaining accreditation is essential for continued access to state library resources and eligibility to apply for TSLAC grant funding, Hairston said in a statement to Council.

Library staff and city management began a two-year effort to update the strategic plan in September 2025. Key opportunities, challenges and priorities were identified that will guide the Lena Armstrong Public Library over the next five years.

The new strategic plan focuses on four strategic priorities that position the library to meet the demands of Belton’s continued growth, evolving community needs, and the changing role of modern public libraries. These priorities include:

- Invest in staff development and organizational growth;
- Expand digital services and electronic resources;
- Develop a comprehensive library marketing plan;

- Explore the development of a satellite library at the Belton Safety Center.

“Since September 2025, the library has experienced unprecedented growth across nearly every major performance measure,” Hairston said.

“Library visits are up 31.5 percent, circulation is up 6.5 percent and program attendance is up more than 7,000 attendees,” she said. “The average length of visit is 47 minutes per patron, and new library cards are up 62.4 percent. That’s 886 additional new members over the previous year.”

“This growth has been driven by a deliberate focus on providing high-quality, responsive services for our community,” Hairston continued. “Children’s programming was redesigned around early literacy skills that support school readiness, resulting in three weekly early literacy programs tailored to different ages and developmental stages.”

“Programming also expanded significantly for all age groups through partnerships with Belton ISD, Bell County Museum, Texas Master Naturalists, City of Belton departments, H-E-B, the Friends of the Library, First Texas Bank of Belton, HOT Goodwill, and many other community organizations.”

“The 2026 Summer Reading Program was a particular highlight, demonstrating both the library’s growing reach and the community’s enthusiasm for high-quality programming,” she continued. “Signature events such as Dinosaur George, which welcomed approximately 1,500 attendees, and the Mini Fourth of July Parade, with more than 200 participants, showcased the caliber of programming now available to Belton families.”

These enhanced summer offerings were made possible through the H-E-B Summer at the Library Grant from the Texas Library Association and generous financial support from the Friends of the Library, Hairston added.

“Much of this success can also be attributed to a renewed

emphasis on marketing and community engagement. By expanding our social media presence, increasing both digital and in-library marketing efforts, and strengthening outreach throughout the community, we significantly increased public awareness of the library’s services, programs, and resources.”

Looking ahead, the next fiscal year will bring an expansion of children’s services through implementation of the Family Place Libraries Model, shifting our focus from serving children alone to supporting the needs of the entire family.

This initiative is made possible through the TSLAC Family Place Grant, which provides both specialized staff training and funding for the materials needed to support expanded family-centered programming.

“The accomplishments of the previous strategic plan also laid the foundation for the library’s current success,” Hairston said.. “Community response to the renovated library has been overwhelmingly positive, with patrons increasingly viewing the library as both a destination and a gathering place. As demand has grown, so has the need for additional quiet workspaces and meeting areas. In January, the library received a \$10,000 Carnegie Gift, which was used to purchase a Loop Quiet Booth, providing patrons with a dedicated space for phone calls, virtual meetings, online testing, studying, and focused work.”

Implementation of the Library Strategic Plan will be supported primarily through the city’s General Fund, supplemented by grant funding when appropriate opportunities are available, Hairston said.

Funding for the proposed Satellite Library will be evaluated through future budget processes based on project feasibility, available funding, and city priorities.

Adoption of the new strategic plan does not commit City Council to funding any specific recommendation, and priorities may be modified over time as budget cycles and available resources allow.

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Belton Yankees wrap up season second in state

By Clay Whittington
The Belton Journal

The Belton Yankees' season ended with a loss in the championship game, and Lucas Cali could not be any prouder.

After months of games and practices, the local Belton Youth Baseball Association tee ball team earned its spot to compete at sport's grandest stage — the 6U Texas Teenage T-Ball State Tournament.

During the course of five days, the roster of 5- and 6-year-olds meandered a path into the final, but a heartbreaking conclusion left the Yankees just shy of hoisting the event's trophy.

Despite the disappointment, Cali does not feel like the outcome was a loss.

"Those kids played some great baseball," the Yankees coach said. "There was not a time when they didn't play as a team. The infield and outfield all contributed.

"So, just to be able to see this high of a level of baseball at such a young age is just awesome. There is a lot of potential in the Belton area."

The outcome could have easily been reversed, though.

With the Texas Teenage Baseball-Softball Association tournament being hosted by Belton, the Yankees entered the bracket with a home field advantage and immediately capitalized, winning their first three games by a combined score of 82-42.

Then, their momentum was halted by the undefeated Grand Saline Orioles, who earned a 17-11 victory to drop the Yankees into the Loser's Bracket.

With a 26-18 victory against the Buffalo Bison, however, they set up a rematch with the Orioles in the finals. Due to Grand Saline's unbeaten record, the Yankees needed to defeat them twice to clinch the championship.

In a must-win situation, the Yankees rose to the occasion, creating a winner-take-all situation with a 17-10 victory to snap the opposition's undefeated streak.



Top: Belton Yankees pose with their trophy after placing second at the 6U Texas Teenage T-Ball State Tournament. **Bottom Left:** Yankees player Rowan Cali connects with the ball at the tournament. **Bottom Right:** Yankees player Hudson Hanke attempts to beat out a throw at first base.

But the celebrations concluded there.

The squads played into extra innings before an RBI single secured a 21-20 win for the Orioles, who returned home with the tournament's ultimate prize.

"The kids knew what that loss meant," said Cali,

who coached the team along with Jason Hanke. "They knew that meant it was done, and they knew how close it was. They were one play and one run from beating a very, very good Grand Saline team.

"There were no bad calls on the field, though. It

was a fair game and a fun game, and their coaches were as impressed with our kids as we were with theirs."

Along with finishing as the state's runner-up, the Yankees walked away from Heritage Park as city champions to cap off another

successful season. The program is coming off a third-place finish at state last year, and it has captured a state title within the decade under Cali's guidance.

It is time to turn attention toward the future, though, and while the players will change, Cali is confident the expectations will

not.

"There is so much time and effort that goes into the season," he said, "and these kids are not being forced to do this. They want to be out there.

"They love every bit of it."

Photo Credit: Thomas Mendez, Jr.

Broncos name Braden St. Ama as new quarterbacks coach

By Aries Ramos
The Belton Journal

The Lake Belton Broncos have brought in a new addition to their offensive coaching staff, hiring Braden St. Ama to lead the program's quarterbacks room. The hire pairs a coach who spent his own playing career under center with a Broncos staff looking to sharpen its passing attack heading into the new season.

St. Ama's football roots run through Hardin-Simmons University, where he spent three seasons on the roster as a quarterback. During his time at HSU, he balanced the demands of playing the sport's most cerebral position with an equally demanding academic path, majoring in math. That combination of on field decision making and classroom rigor speaks to the kind of detail ori-

ented approach he's expected to bring to Lake Belton's quarterbacks.

The results of that balancing act showed up in the classroom as much as on the field. St. Ama was named Academic All-ASC in both 2022 and 2023, a distinction that recognizes student athletes who excel in the classroom while competing at a high level in their sport. The back to back honors reflect a level of consistency and discipline that carried through his final two years of eligibility at Hardin-Simmons.

Rather than immediately stepping away from the program after graduating, St. Ama chose to stay on at Hardin-Simmons, taking a position as a graduate assistant. The move allowed him to begin his coaching career in a familiar environment, learning the demands of coaching at the college level while still connected to the program that shaped

him as a player. Graduate assistant roles are often a proving ground for young coaches, requiring long hours and a hand in nearly every facet of the program, and St. Ama's time in that role gave him a foundation to build on as he looked toward his next step.

That next step arrived when Lake Belton's new head coach, Kirk Rodgers, brought St. Ama on board to take over the quarterbacks room. The hire gives the Broncos a position coach with firsthand experience playing the exact position he'll now be developing, a perspective that can be invaluable when it comes to teaching footwork, reads, and the mental side of the game that only becomes second nature through experience under center.

For Lake Belton's quarterbacks, the addition of a coach with recent playing experience brings a detail driven ap-



proach to a room that will be counted on to run the Broncos' offense. As fall camp approaches, all eyes will be on how quickly St. Ama's system takes hold with Lake Belton's signal callers and how that development translates once the Broncos take the field this season.



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Sports Briefs

By Clay Whittington
The Belton Journal

The Tigers football team will host a benefit car wash Saturday with proceeds providing funds for the upcoming season.

The event will be held at the Tejas Hoa Management parking lot located at 105 Lake Rd, and it will run from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

VOLLEYBALL

The Lady Tigers and Lady Broncos will each conduct tryouts for the upcoming season beginning Saturday, which is the first day the University Interscholastic League allows teams to start workouts.

At Belton, freshmen will check in at 7 a.m. with their first session of the day following from 7:30 a.m. to 9:30 a.m. Sophomores, juniors and seniors will check in at 9:30 a.m. and workout from 10 a.m. to noon.

Then, all four grade levels will combine for a session from 3:30 p.m. to 6 p.m.

All participants will work out next on Aug. 3 from 7 a.m. to 9 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. to 6 p.m. The first round of cuts will follow.

A freshman intrasquad scrimmage will take place Aug. 4 at 3:30 p.m. with final cuts following. A junior varsity intrasquad scrimmage will be conducted at 4:45 p.m.



with final cuts following.

The week concludes with practices and team pictures before the season’s opening scrimmage is held at home on Aug. 7. A scrimmage at Round Rock Cedar Ridge will be held Aug. 8 at 9 a.m., and the regular season schedule begins Aug. 11 at Round Rock McNeil.

At Lake Belton, freshmen will take part in two sessions (6-8 a.m. and 1-3 p.m.) Saturday, while all other grades will attend from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.

First round of cuts will follow the initial session, and a second round of cuts will occur after the second session.

The schedule repeats for freshmen on Monday and Tuesday with the only exception being Tuesday’s second session will run from 4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

Sophomores, juniors and seniors will attend from 8 a.m. to 10 a.m. and 1 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. on Monday and from 8 a.m. to 10 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. on Tuesday.

All players will then practice at the same times on Wednesday (8:30-10 a.m. and 4:30-6:30 p.m.) and Thurs-

day (6-8 a.m. and 4:30-6:30 p.m.).

A preseason parent meeting for all potential participants is set for Friday at 6 p.m.

Regardless of school, a current physical and all necessary paperwork must be submitted prior to participating in tryouts.

All participants need to wear a T-shirt with school colors, appropriate shoes and shorts, knee pads and bring water to the gym for each day of tryouts.

FOOTBALL

The Tigers and Broncos will each hold a parent meeting at their respective campuses today at 6 p.m. before the first practice is conducted Monday.

On Aug. 6, the Tigers will start a group fundraiser, and an intrasquad scrimmage and youth football clinic is set for Aug. 8.

Tiger Moms Camp and media day follow on Aug. 15, and Dads/Guardians and Decals will take place Aug. 22.

The regular-season schedule opens Aug. 28 with a home game against Pflugerville Hendrickson.

The Broncos will hold their picture day Wednesday at 6 p.m. with a community pep rally (6:30 p.m.) and Bronco Bash (7 p.m.) set for Aug. 21. Decals with Dads/Guardians will be held Aug. 22 at 1 p.m.

Lake Belton plays host to Cedar Park Vista Ridge on Aug. 27 to open the regular season.

RUNNING

Registration for the Lions on the Leon Captain “D” Dash for Sight is open until race day Oct. 3.

Hosted by the Belton Lions Club, the five-kilometer race will be held at Heritage Park beginning at 8:30 a.m. An opening ceremony will start at 8:15 a.m.

The event will begin and end at the Lions Pavillion.

Awards will be given to the top three finishers in each age group, and an award will be given to the best pirate costume.

The race proceeds help provide eye exams and glasses for those in need, and donations of used glasses will be accepted for recycling.

Lady Broncos new HC relishes overseeing first camp

By Clay Whittington
The Belton Journal

Taylor Ellis feels refreshed.

For her entire life, softball has been serious competition as she battled for all-state recognition while attending Waco Midway before transitioning to Baylor, where collegiate success became her athletic focus.

Then, as an assistant coach at her Alma mater, she helped the Pantherettes consistently contest for state championships, celebrating the Class 6A, Division I title in 2025, and recently, Ellis embarked on her head coaching career at Lake Belton, where her intent is to elevate the program to an elite level.

Earlier this week, however, her attention was elsewhere.

Starting Monday, the Lady Broncos hosted their annual three-day summer camp, welcoming all incoming third-through ninth-graders interested in improving their skills for a series of two-and-a-half-hour sessions.

Although Ellis is accustomed dealing with the sport as a job, she could not help but be overwhelmed at times by the innocence of her young campers, who might be learning the basic mechanics of the game for the first time.

“It gives me a different perspective of the game,” Ellis said. “It reminds me why I fell in love with the game when I get to see their excitement. The little kids just have a different level of joy.”

“They do little things that get you to laugh and help you realize to slow down a little bit and truly enjoy the game, because at the end of the day, it is a game and not a job.”

Along with enjoying the purity of the sport, Ellis witnessed plenty of talent in action as well.

Split into groups based on age and skill level, participants took part in drills focused on fundamentals, including hitting, fielding and throwing, enjoyed contests and learning philosophies.

For the younger kids, the interactions were more light-hearted and fun, while older campers were involved in an atmosphere similar to a varsity practice.

“The older kids experience a different pace of play and intensity level,” Ellis said. “When they are young, they are still learning the game, but I have been really impressed with the younger kids and their I.Q. level for the game. Usually, I’m having to make sure they know where baserunners are at or how many outs there are.”

“These girls have been on it, though, and they are all communicating, and that has been very neat to see.”

Along with Ellis and her staff, multiple members of the Lake Belton program contributed their time and energy toward the camp. For the participants, it is an opportunity to interact with someone who excelled within the sport, but for Ellis, the Lady Broncos’ commitment to the program is exciting.

After all, softball is a game and not a job to Ellis.

“So many girls have come out to help show these kids the Bronco way or what we like to call the ‘Lake way,’” Ellis said. “I’m also getting to know all of their personalities, and that has been really cool to see what these girls are like as individuals.”



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Scot Hrbacek, CFP® Financial Advisor

Many people have a 401(k), or other workplace retirement plan, but aren’t sure what to do next.

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Is there an employer match, and how much do I need to contribute to get all of it? Do I have the option to make Roth contributions?

What kind of investments are in the plan, and how are they different? And keep two simple ideas in mind:

First, try to contribute at least enough to get the full employer match available under your plan, or you’ll be leaving money on the table.

Second, start as early as you can, even if the amount feels small. Having more time to invest can increase the potential benefits of compounding.

You don’t have to be an expert. You just have to get started.

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

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LEGALS

THE STATE OF TEXAS
CITATION BY PUBLICATION - CIVIL
CAUSE NO. 26DCV362075

To THE UNKNOWN HEIRS OF SAMUEL T HIGHTS AND THE UNKNOWN HEIRS OF DEBORAH LANELL ROBERTSON

Greetings: You are hereby commanded to appear by filing a written answer to the plaintiff’s original petition at or before 10 o’clock AM of the first Monday after the expiration of 42 days from the date of issuance of this Citation, the same being Monday, at or before 10 o’clock AM, before the Honorable 169th Judicial District Court, Bell County, Texas to be held at the Bell County District Courts Building in Belton, Texas. Said PLAINTIFF’S ORIGINAL PETITION was filed in said court on May 29, 2026.

The file number of said suit being No. 26DCV362075. The names of the parties in said suit are: FELICITAS ORTIZ VS. UNKNOWN HEIRS OF SAMUEL T. HIGHTS AND UNKNOWN HEIRS OF DEBORAH LANELL ROBERTSON

The nature of said suit being substantially as follows, to wit: A civil action seeking to quiet title to real property has been filed in the 146th Judicial District Court of Bell County, Texas, in Cause No. 26DCV362075, styled Felicitas Ortiz vs. Unknown Heirs of Samuel T. Hights and Unknown Heirs of Deborah Lanell Robertson.

The subject of the suit is a quiet title action, where Plaintiff seeks a judicial determination of her ownership in the real property, located in Bell County, commonly known as 411 n. 16TH St., Temple, Bell County, Texas, and legally described as Lot Number Eight (8), in Block Number Eleven (11) of McCelvey’s Addition to the City of Temple, Bell County, Texas. Plaintiff alleges that title has vested in Plaintiff through adverse possession under applicable statutes, based on her possession of the Property for the statutory period. Plaintiff requests the Court declare Plaintiff the lawful owner of the property, remove cloud on title, and bar Defendants and all persons claiming under them from asserting any right, title, or interest adverse to Plaintiff.

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

LEGALS

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 June 30, 2026. Joanna Staton District Clerk Bell County, Texas, 1201 Huey Road, P.O. Box 909, Belton, Texas 76513 By: M Cortez Deputy Clerk 07.09,07.16,07.23,07.30

THE STATE OF TEXAS
CITATION BY PUBLICATION - PARENT AND CHILD
CAUSE NO. 26DFAM359509

To AUSBERTO VARGAS

Greetings:

You are hereby commanded to appear before the 426th Judicial District Court, Bell County, Texas to be held at the Bell County District Courts Building in Belton, Texas, to be held at the courthouse of said County in the City of Belton, Texas, at or before 10 o’clock AM of the Monday next after the expiration of 20 days after the date of service of which this citation, then and there to answer the original petition for termination of parental rights and adoption of minor stepchild of Johnathan Max Mckinney, Petitioner filed in said Court on February 13, 2026, against AUSBERTO VARGAS, respondent, and said suit being number 26DFAM359509, on the docket of said Court, and entitled In the Interest of Children NEYSHLIAN LEE ZORRILLA, DOB August 21st, 2015

The nature of which suit is a request to Parent/Child Relationship.

The Court has authority in this suit to enter any judgment or decree in the child’s/children’s interest which will be binding upon 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/children’s adoption.

The officer executing this writ shall promptly serve the same according to requirements of law, and the mandates hereof, and make due return as the law directs.

This was issued at the request of attorney: JOHNATHAN MAX MCKINNEY, 601 PERSEUS DR, KILLEEN TX 76542.

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 twenty 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. Witness, Joanna Staton, District Clerk of Bell County, Texas.

Issued and given under my hand and the seal of said Court at office in Belton, Texas, on July 16, 2026. Joanna Staton District Clerk Bell County, Texas, 1201 Huey Road, P.O. Box 909, Belton, Texas, 76513 By: Consuelo Rodriguez Deputy Clerk 07.30pd

No. 26CPB00170

In the guardianship of Zenta Zumwalt, an incapacitated person in the County of Bell County, Texas

Notice To Creditors

Notice is hereby given that original Letter of Guardianship for the Person and Estate of Zenta

Zumwalt, an Incapacitated Person, were issued on the 25th day of June 2026 in Cause No. 26CPB00170 pending in the County Court of Law of Galveston County, Texas to: Friends for Life.

The residence of the Guardian is Waco, McLennan County, Texas; The Post Office Address is: Friends for Life, P.O. Box 23491, Waco, TX 76702-3491

All persons having claims against this Estate which is currently being administered are required to present them within the time and in the manner prescribed by law. Dated the 25th day of June 2026

J. Marvin Roach, P.O. Box 155392, Waco, TX 76715-5392, Telephone: (254) 772-7600, Attorney for the Guardian State Bar No: 24025835 07.30

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 20, 2026, against Inez Hernandez, Unknown Father, Tavrik Williams, Respondent(s), numbered 26DFAM358953, and entitled “In the Interest of ANGEL HERNANDEZ, 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: ANGEL HERNANDEZ, DOB: February 9, 2017, Place of birth: Texas KELANI WILLIAMS, DOB: January 12, 2023, Place of birth: Texas KENJI WILLIAMS, DOB: August 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 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 24 day of July 2024

Joanna Staton, District Clerk of Bell County, Texas 1201 Huey Road, P.O. Box 909, Belton, TX 76513 By: C. Rodriguez Deputy 07.30

NOTICE TO CREDITORS

Notice is hereby given that original Letters Testamentary for the Estate of ALBERT DALE RASBERRY, Deceased, were issued on July 13, 2026, in Cause No. 26CPB00359, pending in the County Court-At-Law No: 1, Bell County, Texas, to: JO ANN RASBERRY GALINSKY.

All persons having claims against this Estate which is currently being administered are required to present them to the undersigned within the time and in the manner prescribed by law. c/o: Jeffrey A. Thigpen Attorney at Law PO Box 428 TEMPLE, TX 76503

SIGNED on July 21, 2026.

Jeffrey A. Thigpen Attorney for JO ANN RASBERRY GALINSKY ,State Bar No.: 24099990, PO Box 428, TEMPLE, TX 76503, Telephone: (254) 773-1663, Facsimile: (254) 773-2574 Email: jeff@linzythigpen.com 07.30

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AUG 5-9	CAPTAIN BLOOD WED-THURS @ 7	MUPPET TREASURE ISLAND WED-FRI @ 12, 3 SAT-SUN @ 11:30, 2	PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN FRI @ 7 SAT-SUN @ 4:30, 7:30
AUG 12-16	LED ZEPPELIN CONCERT MOVIE WED @ 4:30, 7:30 THU @ 7:30	TROLLS WORLD TOUR WED @ 11:30, 2 SAT-SUN @ 11:30, 2	BOHEMIAN RHAPSODY FRI-SUN @ 4:30, 7:30
AUG 19-23	VALLEY GIRL WED-THU @ 7:30	DIARY OF A WIMPY KID SAT-SUN @ 11:30, 2	CLUELESS FRI @ 7:30 SAT-SUN @ 4:30, 7:30
AUG 26-30	TENACIOUS D & THE PICK OF DESTINY! WED-THU @ 7:30	MINECRAFT SAT-SUN @ 11:30, 2	NACHO LIBRE FRI @ 7:30 SAT-SUN @ 4:30, 7:30



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Solve the code to discover words related to irrigation.
Each number corresponds to a letter.
(Hint: 12 = R)

A. 14 7 22 11 12

Clue: H_2O

B. 10 12 9 8 20

Clue: Plants grown as food

C. 22 1 12 4 17 11

Clue: Flourish

D. 24 12 4 8

Clue: Slowly leak

Answers: A. water B. crops C. thrive D. drip

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

for the
Western District of Texas

Nationstar Mortgage, LLC)

Plaintiff

V.

Jordan Isaiah Escamilla Brown, et al.

Defendant

Civil Action No. 6:25-cv-00469

SUMMONS IN A CIVIL ACTION

To: Jordan Isaiah Escamilla Brown and Lizett Laguna

A lawsuit has been filed against you.

Within 28 days after the issuance of this summons, you (and each of you) must appear before the United States District Court for the Western District of Texas, Waco Division, at the Courthouse being located at U.S. District Clerk's Office, 800 Franklin Ave., Room 380, Waco Texas 76701, by filing a written answer, or a motion under Rule 12 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, on or before the first Monday next after the expiration of twenty-eight days from the date of the issuance of this citation, the date for answer being Monday, _____, to Plaintiff's Original Complaint filed in said court, on October 10, 2025 as Civil Action number 6:25-cv-00469 and styled Nationstar Mortgage LLC v. Jordan Isaiah Escamilla Brown, Lizett Laguna, and United States of America, on behalf of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs. The answer or motion must be served on the Plaintiff or Plaintiff's attorney, whose name and address are:

Marinosci Law Group, P.C.
Attn: Bradley Conway
16415 Addison Road, Suite 725
Addison, Texas 75001

If you fail to respond, judgment by default will be entered against you for the relief demanded in the complaint.

A brief statement of the nature of this suit is as follows:

This proceeding is seeking judicial foreclosure of the real property located at 301 N. 7th St., Nolanville, TX 76659 and more particularly described in Exhibit A attached to the Deed of Trust that is recorded as instrument number 2022034951 in the real property records of Bell County, Texas.

The officer executing this writ shall promptly serve the same according to requirements of law, and the mandates hereof, and make due return as the law directs.

CLERK OF COURT

Date: 06/24/2026

Signature of Clerk or Deputy Clerk

**ONCOR ELECTRIC DELIVERY COMPANY LLC PUBLIC PARTICIPATION MEETING FOR THE PROPOSED
TEMPLE SWITCH TO SALADO SWITCH 345/138 kV TRANSMISSION LINE PROJECT**

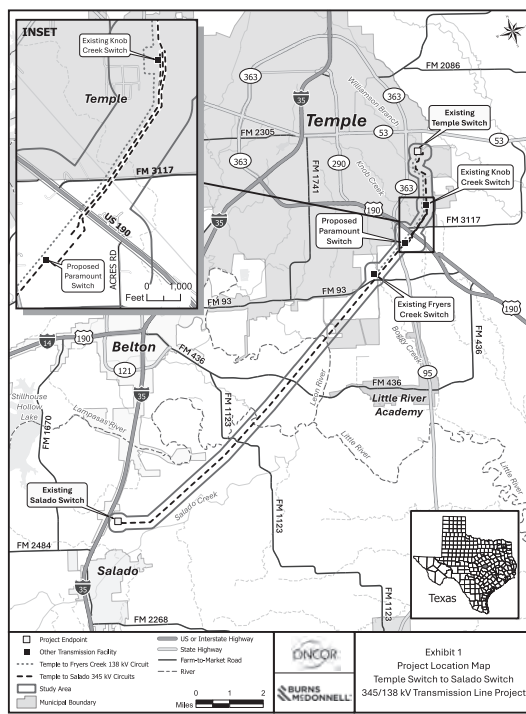
THURSDAY, AUGUST 13, 2026
5:00 PM – 7:00 PM

HARRIS COMMUNITY CENTER (EVANS ROOM)
401 N. Alexander Street, Belton, TX 76513

Oncor Electric Delivery Company LLC (Oncor) proposes to rebuild its existing Temple Switch – Salado Switch 345/138 kilovolt (kV) transmission line in Bell County on a combination of new lattice tower and monopole structures. The Project will connect a total of five existing and proposed Oncor switching stations: (1) Oncor’s existing Temple Switch, located approximately 0.75 miles southeast of the intersection of Loop 363 and State Highway (SH) 53 in Bell County; (2) Oncor’s existing Knob Creek Switch, located approximately 1 mile east of the intersection of U.S. Highway 190 and SH 95 in Bell County; (3) Oncor’s proposed Paramount Switch, which will be located approximately 0.7 miles south of the U.S. Highway 190 and SH 95 intersection in Bell County; (4) Oncor’s existing Fryers Creek Switch, located approximately 1 mile northwest of the intersection of SH 95 and Farm-to-Market Road (FM) 93 in Bell County; and (5) Oncor’s existing Salado Switch, located approximately 1.2 miles northeast of the intersection of Interstate Highway (IH) 35 and FM 2484 in Bell County. Please refer to the attached map for the location of the study area, the project endpoints (Temple Switch and Salado Switch), and the three intermediate switching stations (Knob Creek Switch, Paramount Switch, and Fryers Creek Switch). The proposed project will be built entirely within existing Oncor ROW. The project will be approximately 15 miles long.

Oncor is committed to ensuring the proposed project complies with the requirements of the Texas Utilities Code and the rules of the Public Utility Commission of Texas (PUCT). In support of this process, Oncor is holding a Public Participation Meeting to solicit input regarding the project. Burns & McDonnell Engineering Company, Inc (Burns & McDonnell), a consulting firm retained by Oncor for the project, has identified the preliminary route, which is shown on the map below. The red-dashed line shows the proposed centerline for the 138 kV portion of the project between Temple Switch and Fryers Creek Switch. The black-dashed lines show the centerline of the new 345 kV line between Knob Creek Switch and Paramount Switch; and the 345 kV line between Temple Switch and Salado Switch.

Maps with greater detail will be exhibited at the meeting. Attendees will be free to come and go from the meeting, where they can visit information stations addressing various aspects of the project at their leisure. This format will provide attendees an opportunity to ask questions and provide comments to representatives and technical experts from Oncor and its consultants regarding the proposed project. If you have any questions concerning the proposed transmission line project or the Public Participation Meeting, please contact Kevin Ray of Oncor by phone at (214)486-5835 or by email at transmissionprojects@oncor.com. For more information, please visit Oncor's website at www.oncor.com/transmissionprojects.



Oncor Electric Delivery Company LLC



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THE BELTON **TEXAS** JOURNAL
TREASURE



EDITORIAL

We’re mean

My Front Porch • Lynette Sowell

One of my favorite books from childhood begins like this: “It was a dull autumn day and Jill Pole was crying behind the gym. She was crying because they had been bullying her. This is not going to be a school story, so I shall say as little as possible about Jill’s school, which is not a pleasant subject.”

So opens *The Silver Chair* by C.S. Lewis, published more than 60 years ago.

Supposedly at Jill’s school, the leaders believed children should be allowed to do what they liked, and about 15 of them liked nothing better than bullying the others. Was it stopped? No.

“Instead, the Head[master] said they were interesting psychological cases and sent for them and talked to them for hours. And if you knew the right sort of things to say to the Head, the main result was that you became rather a favorite than otherwise.”

Bullying is nothing new. Our digital natives use the new technology to fling words like darts at anyone they please. And our big digital natives do the same thing. If you go on a community group online, some can be brutal with their harassment, both in the forum and via private messages.

“Kids will be kids,” some people say. And oh yes, they most certainly will.

We’ve all heard of the “pecking” order.

Everyone knows who’s the coolest, the best, the “stars” of the group.

If you stand out in a bad way, the one person you wish wouldn’t notice, does notice, and they never let you or anyone else forget it.

The world is filled with the awkward, the tentative, the ones who haven’t quite figured things out. People can take decades to figure things out.

For those people who see and focus on someone’s backwardness and display it for all to see, the awkward and tentative are fair game.

We all know the one person in the office who’s the backwards one. The one who doesn’t say quite the right thing, the one apt to leave the rest room with toilet paper stuck to their shoe, or the one who doesn’t dress quite as nicely as the others. People know. And people say it doesn’t matter. But it does.

Standup comics and snarky shows make belittling people an art form and make it fun to pick out someone’s worst moment and magnify it for everyone.

No wonder our children learn how to turn their peers into shreds.

Making fun of someone else at their expense may earn someone the title of a quick wit. They look for chances to prove how smart they are by picking on another, to earn laughter and

attention. The more attention they get, the meaner they get.

Bullies aren’t born: they are made.

The line is crossed where “kids will be kids” teasing transforms into a toxic reign of terror that can cause the sweetest kid with the brightest future question his or her very existence.

Kindness and respect don’t come naturally to the self-centered. The self-centered children listen to us, the adults, and pay very close attention to how we talk to and about people who don’t quite measure up to our expectations.

They say it starts at home – and indeed it does. When grownups talk about others, to make fun of them and degrade them, youngsters pick up on it. They hear conversations that we don’t think they hear.

We should not be shocked when the acid and barbs fly from the young mouths or from their fingertips as they text. We can learn who they learn it from. Us. The ones who should know better. They learn bullying from watching us.

There’s a perverse, heady feeling of power that comes to those who bully, who get caught up into making someone’s life miserable for no real reason. But is there a reason to bully if someone “asks for it” by their demeanor? We must face it before we can change it: sometimes, we’re just plain mean.

It’s also something to think about before this new school year is upon us.

Snap. Crackle. Pop.

Shop the Insanity • Darren Blair

This morning, if memory serves, was the first time I had a bowl of Rice Krispies® in 34 years.

As I’ve mentioned before, I’m from a military family. For the first several years of my life, we would be in one location just long enough to put down roots when the Army would decide we needed to go somewhere else. Even when we finally arrived here in Central Texas, we still made one final move as the owner of the house we were renting was coming back and so we needed to vacate. It’s from this personal experience that I give the advice I give on what to do when it’s time to move and how to make the process a little easier on the kiddos.

One of those pieces of advice I give is that you should make it a point to use up as much of the food that is in your refrigerator,

freezer, and pantry as possible in the time leading up to your move. Refrigerated and frozen items won’t survive very long even in the best of ice chests, while many third-party moving companies and private storage facilities won’t accept the risks inherent in storing and transporting even shelf-stable food products. Shelf-stable items, particularly canned goods, can also represent a lot of weight to be moving about, and so if you have a maximum weight limit (the US military will only pay to transport your personal goods if they’re under a certain weight limit; the rest is out of pocket) that can be a problem.

Well, it was time to relocate again. As part of it, we started using up our refrigerated and shelf-stable food items. Yes, we were just moving from the aforementioned rental house to a house we were purchasing,

but we still needed to pare down and generally be mindful of the logistics. I don’t remember the exact details after all this time, but I do recall that somehow or other I found myself eating Rice Krispies® for breakfast every single day for about a week during this process.

I’ve spoken before about how I’m high-functioning autistic but didn’t get diagnosed until well into adulthood, so these moves were especially hard on me. If it tells you anything, one of the very first things I did when we finally finished moving was go into my new bedroom, find the black plastic trash bag I’d loaded all of my G. I. Joe figures and a copy of the regional daily newspaper’s comics page into, and dump it all out on the floor, both so that I could physically see everything and so that I could officially say

this room was my room. Having the same thing for breakfast for a week straight? Not only was I sick of eating it, I psychologically made that the focal point of my frustrations with the relocation.

Well, this past Christmas the local big-box grocery store had a coupon deal: buy two big ol’ boxes of Rice Krispies® get a big bag of marshmallows for free. Mom was wanting to make some holiday baked goods, and that sounded like a deal. Come summer, however, those two boxes were still sitting around, nearing their “best by” date. So I finally, after all this time, had a bowl. I covered them in a deluge of pancake syrup, but I had a bowl.

Do I feel like I’ve moved forward in a way? Yes. Do I intend to purchase any more once I finish those two boxes off? We’ll see.

Cattle Drives

Pleasant Ramblings • Mark Magnan

There are songs that sing about the great times to be had on a cattle drive. We had movies showing what fun it was to chase cattle across open land. A few movies made it seem a bit more realistic. I will admit that a cattle drive would not be as much fun as a leisurely ride on a horse getting to see the beauty of this great land but it would be a great experience.

I have not spent days in the saddle while pushing cattle along to the “end of the trail”. I have spent some time on horseback tending to cattle, and will add that for the most part the days I worked as a “cowboy” all had fairly decent weather. Now before I end up looking like the star of a TV series, I admit that most of my work was quite easy. Oh yes, there was the constant opening and shutting of the “bob-wore” gates, that sounds simple enough but as a rather thin, and lightweight, young lad, it could be quite a chore at times. One of my favorite tasks was a full day of riding the fence line. Those days didn’t really involve the cows, just riding along the property lines and making sure the “bob” wire was intact.

Let me explain my bit of “slang” before we go on. Texans have their own words and phrases, you learn these early and they stay with you. I still call that spiked fencing material “bob” wire. I was around the stuff for most of my life, it was always “bob” wire, or “bob-wore” depending on the depth of “Texan” that person was. No one ever used any other terms or names, never

“devil’s wire” or anything, just “bob” wire. I was in my third year of Texas history, which was in high school, when I came across a section of print that referred to this as “barbed” wire. I was shocked! Up until that time I just assumed some Texan named Bob had invented this stuff many years ago and it was named in honor of him. I have only heard one native Texan call it “barbed” wire, and he was a bit of an uppity person anyway.

Back to my story, the days of riding the fence line were great. It didn’t take all day, but no one cared when you left or when you came back, just make sure the fence was still up. All it takes is one strand of wire down and several cows will escape and find their way to the nearest road to obstruct traffic, usually resulting in a call from the sheriff. If you did find a spot where the wire was broken, you usually could patch it easily with some wire and a pair of pliers that you always had with you. Most days were uneventful, which was nice. On the summer days you could break up the ride with a cooling dip in one of the wide spots in the creek. The horses enjoyed it as well.

One thing that I do find accurate in movies and shows about cowboys is that they have a favorite horse. Every horse has a personality, sometimes that doesn’t go well with your personality. So if you get attached to a horse then you can see the value in them. I never owned a horse myself, but I did have my favorites. A good horse

knows what to do and you can just let the horse think for you, a bit like setting the cruise control on a car.

The days spent tending cattle were “cruise control” days. After opening a few gates, letting the cows make their way to the better grass in the river bottom, you just sit and watch them all day. I realize that might sound boring, but there is a certain calming experience to that task. Of course we had to ensure the cows stayed where they were supposed to be and didn’t stampede off in the wrong direction. I am not sure what I could have done, but honestly there was a very slim chance the cattle would leave the lush grass and run off. A few times a youngster would wander off and my horse just calmly intercepted him, and all of this without me touching the reins. At the end of the day we gathered up the herd and pushed them back into the corral, this was probably the closest thing to a cattle drive that I would see. The horses and the cows knew the drill, so mostly it went fine, save the occasional self-thinking cow that just couldn’t see themselves following the same routine that day. As far as roping, that was a task I never mastered, I could have roped my horse, but anything else had a good chance of getting away.

I was a lucky cowboy. I went home every night, I had plenty of clean water to drink. I could take a bath in warm water. Overall as cattle drives go I had it quite easy, although my stories aren’t as exciting.

The Plain Truth

Coffee Talk • Renae Brumbaugh Green

Rick and I are planning a mountain vacation soon. Every chance we find to get out of the Texas heat, we take it. Rick enjoys the mountains for the hiking adventures. I’m just in it for the view. As I’ve prepared the packing list for our upcoming trip, I’ve thought about the peaks and valleys of my life—and there have been a lot. But I’ve also realized those don’t make up most of my memories.

You’ve probably heard life compared to a series of hills and valleys. We struggle and climb, and we live for the mountaintop moments when we’re on top of the world. We dread the valleys, where it seems we’ll be crushed by an avalanche or swept away by the flood.

But what about the plains?

For me, the hardest struggle isn’t

the climb to the summit. And though the valleys can be awful, I often find great strength at my lowest points. The most difficult part of my journey is in the flat parts—the long stretches when nothing much seems to happen.

The plains of my life are the times when everything’s going okay. Not awful. Not great. I wake up, work, pay bills, go to bed. Wake up, work, pay bills, go to bed.

I’ve wondered why the easiest stretches of my life can be the most challenging. Shouldn’t those be the best of times? It seems like, in those places, my joy would be full, my cup overflowing. But that’s not how it happens. For me, the joy comes in the hills and valleys.

The plains bring the blahs and the

blues.

When I’m in the valley, I feel close to God. I seek Him with all that’s in me. I feel His presence, and I cling to Him with every speck of strength.

On the summit, He’s there. With every breath, His presence sings. With every mountaintop view, His essence soaks me.

Why does He feel so close at the extremities but so far in the middle? Where does He go?

That’s when I realized . . . He doesn’t go anywhere. He loves me just as passionately on the prairie as on the peak, just as deliberately in the grassland as in the gorge. The difference is me.

Forget clinging. I don’t even look for Him on the moor.

I get caught up in the hamster-wheel journey, and I forget to talk to Him.

I forget to thank Him.

I’m so busy living the dream, I forget to breathe in His essence.

The reason I get depressed on the plains of my life is because I’m lonely for my Father. But it doesn’t have to be that way. He provides the meadows so I can rest with Him, not escape from Him.

Today, I will call out to my Creator, not because anything bad is happening. I’ll look for Him simply because I love Him. I’ll invite Him for coffee; we can be workout buddies on the treadmill of time. And I’ll thank Him for those sweet savannah stretches of serenity.

“And He said, ‘My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest;’ Exodus 33:14.



Local Activities & Events

Newcomers Club Activities

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

MPR Summer Reading Program 2026 - Aug 1
Join us for a fun time each week for games, crafts and food! All programs will have live animals in attendance and give you the opportunity to learn all about them! Mary Ruth Briggs Library located in Morgan’s Point Resort proudly presents our annual Summer Reading Program. Our program this year is titled “Our 4-legged Friends” and will include:
Saturday, Aug.1: Sit Means Sit
Saturday, Aug 8: Goats
Time: 10 AM until Noon
Mary Ruth Briggs Library, 8 Morgan’s Point Blvd, MPR Texas 76513, 10:00 a.m. to noon. Free of charge for children pre-K through 5th grade! Free backpacks on the last day filled with school supplies! Sign up at City Hall with paper applications in the Lobby OR online at morganspointresort-tx.com

MPR Explorers @ The Point - July 30
Join us for a relaxed MPR Explorers Social featuring Chief of Police Todd Hodge. This daytime community conversation will cover everyday topics in Morgan’s Point Resort, including policing, emergency response, animal control, and code enforcement. Sponsored by the Mary Ruth Briggs Library, this social offers a welcoming space to learn, connect, and enjoy time with neighbors. Light snacks will be provided. July 30, 10:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. at Garrett & Mic Hill Event Center, 60 Morgan’s Point Blvd, Morgan’s Point Resort.

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

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

Marine Corp League will meet the third Tuesday of each mont at VFW 3859. Dinner is served at 6:30 p.m. and metting will begin at 7:00 p.m. 201 VFW Dr, Harker heights, Tx 76548. Email commandant@mcl1249tx.comfor more inforamtion.

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

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

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

The Bell County Genealogical Society meets the fourth Saturday of each month. The group offers free Genealogy Guidance. Members of the Bell County Genealogical Society will be present to help those with questions about researching their family trees. General meetings are held in the Bell County Museum, 201 North Main St., Belton, TX. All meetings are open to the public. You do not have to be from Bell County or have ancestors from Bell County to participate. For additional information please visit our website at https://txbcgs.org/home/events/

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. If you have a desire to meet, learn, and work together with those of similiar interests or just curious, come visit with us and see what we are about. Mah Jong 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 or just come by.

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 katshookand needle@gmail.com. Anyone interested in joining the local chapter of the Crochet Guild of America will also need to join the National Crochet Guild of America. Visit www.crochet.org for details.

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

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

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

Community Information

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



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

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

Citizens Helping in Police Service (CHIPS)
are extra eyes and ears while in areas where large groups may gather. Contact the Belton Police Dept. to join.

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

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

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

STAY CONNECTED: STAY INFORMED

GOT A LOCAL EVENT, CHURCH GATHERING, OR MEETING?
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UMHB Welcomes New Chief of Police

Special to the Journal

The University of Mary Hardin-Baylor (UMHB) is excited to announce the institution’s newest Chief of Police. Adam Carroll was sworn in this afternoon in a ceremony led by UMHB’s Chief Operating Officer and Senior Vice President for Administration, Dr. Steve Theodore.

“We are here today to swear in a new Chief of Police, but we are also here to acknowledge the sacredness of this responsibility. As a Christ-centered university, we believe what the Bible says about those entrusted with authority – that

they are called to serve the good of others,” said Dr. Theodore. “Romans 13:4 states, ‘For the one in authority is God’s servant for your good.’ At UMHB, being a leader is a calling to serve others with integrity, wisdom, and care. A police chief is responsible not only for safety and security but also for building trust, showing compassion, and leading with character. The role requires sound judgment, steady leadership, integrity when no one is watching, and a genuine concern for people.”

Chief Carroll most recently served as a sergeant with the Pearland

Police Department. With more than 20 years of law enforcement experience, he dedicated most of his career to serving the Pearland community. Throughout his tenure, he held a variety of leadership roles and supervised multiple divisions, including traffic and safety operations, investigations and special operations, crisis intervention and emergency response, and professional development and training. Chief Carroll has a BS in criminal justice from Sam Houston State University and a MS in criminal justice from Texas A&M International University.

“His extensive experience, education, commitment to public safety, Christian character, and proven leadership make him an excellent fit for serving as the Chief of



Courtesy Photo

Dr. Theodore swears in Adam Carroll, while his wife, Stacy, stands nearby.

Carroll and his wife, Stacy, are the proud parents of three children: Rylie (23), Zachary (19), and Kenedy (17). A man of strong faith, he and his family were active members of New Hope Church while in Pearland.

Police at UMHB,” Dr. Theodore shared.

Carroll and his wife, Stacy, are the proud parents of three children: Rylie (23), Zachary (19), and Kenedy (17). A man of strong faith, he and his family were active members of New Hope Church while in Pearland.

Committed to defending property rights

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Call us at (512) 478-4995 if your property may be impacted by the LCRA/Oncor Bell County East to Big Hill 765 kV Transmission Line Project



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SUDOKU

	6		9					
		1						
	5				3			7
					8		1	
	9					2	4	
			4	9				
	4	5	3		1		6	
		7				1		
	3		2			7	8	

Level: Advanced

Fun By The Numbers

Like puzzles? Then you'll love sudoku. This mind-bending puzzle will have you hooked from the moment you square off, so sharpen your pencil and put your sudoku savvy to the test!

Here's How It Works:

Sudoku puzzles are formatted as a 9x9 grid, broken down into nine 3x3 boxes. To solve a sudoku, the numbers 1 through 9 must fill each row, column and box. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and box. You can figure out the order in which the numbers will appear by using the numeric clues already provided in the boxes. The more numbers you name, the easier it gets to solve the puzzle!

4	8	7	5	6	2	9	3	1
3	5	1	6	4	8	7	2	9
2	9	6	1	3	7	4	5	8
8	4	5	3	7	1	9	6	2
7	8	5	4	9	6	3	2	1
6	7	4	5	2	8	3	1	9
1	9	3	8	1	5	6	4	7
5	6	1	7	6	2	4	9	3
1	3	8	4	9	5	6	2	7

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