

Belton’s newest coffee shop’s advantage, the view



BELTON JOURNAL/Michele Weisman
While looking out from the deck you might get a glimpse of someone looking back at you, a Highland Cow.

By Michele Weisman
The Belton Journal

The grand opening of Mini Moos Coffee & Farmstand occurred on Saturday, Aug. 1. It coincided with Highland Acres Homestead monthly maker market. Owners Anja and Frank Lagrange welcomed and served the public at their new coffee and farm stand. Singer-songwriter Lilly Milford played live music on the spacious deck of the coffee house.

The store was stocked with locally sourced produce and meats, and the coffee beans are from Austin.

Anja Lagrange, whose chickens provide the eggs, said, “Everything is local to Texas. We work with local ranches, local farmers. Our milk is served from Volleman’s, which is about an hour and a half from here. Our meats are all done within about 45 minutes of here. Our coffee’s roasted in Austin. It’s all ethically sourced, organic. You know, we’re

really striving to bring quality products to people.”

The deck and ground level have several seating arrangements. Picnic tables sit further away from the coffee and market shop with the added view of the Highland Acres cows and donkeys.

With their monthly makers market, it made sense to put in a coffee shop and farmstand in.

Frank Lagrange said, “We bought the building, had it delivered, and then we finished the inside, with the coffee shop.”

Customers waited in line, with watermelons on a center display tabletop and local honey sat along a wall, and merch was also available.

Their business naturally attracts families with young children; future plans include date night events like Chicken Poop Bingo.

Highland Acres opened two years ago with a love of Highland cows.

Frank Lagrange said, “We bought two Highland cows, and then we’ve got two bottle baby Highland cows. And so, me and Anya were talking, and I was like, “Baby, I will buy you all the animals that you want. I just don’t want the monthly payments to go with it, the feed. She’s like, “Okay, I’ve got an idea.” She started listing bottle feedings to bottle-feed the baby cows. And it just started and evolved from there.”

The coffee shop and market hours are Wednesday and Thursday 8 a.m. - 1 p.m., Friday, 8 a.m. - 1 p.m. and 5 p.m. - 8 p.m., Saturday, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., Sunday is 9 a.m. - 5 p.m., closed Monday and Tuesday.

Located at 2875 Rocking M LN in Belton, their soft open was Saturday, July 18.

Their Facebook page is Mini Moos Coffee & Farmstand. Highland Acres Homestead’s website is www.highland-acrestx.com.



BELTON JOURNAL/Harvey Jackson Oss
Bell County residents inspect TxDOT I-14 project schematics at the Bell County Expo Center.

TxDOT holds final public meeting on I-14 project

By Harvey Jackson Oss
The Belton Journal

On Thursday, August 6, the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) held the third public meeting at the Huntington Bank Expo Center for the I-14 Extension Project in Bell County. Segment 1 of the project will extend I-14 from south of Loop 121 in Belton to Loop 363 in Temple. An additional two segments will be completed in Temple and Rogers. The project will also widen I-35 and improve system interchanges between I-35 and I-14. The project design has been coordinated with the Cities of Belton and Temple.

The crash rate for the I-35 segment between I-14 and 6th Avenue is 40% more than state average crash rates. The stretch contains exits 294B to 6th Avenue and 294A to Central Avenue less than half a mile

apart. “We have seen a lot of congestion there, and that’s why we want to deliver on this project,” explained Jake Smith, Public Information Officer for TxDOT Waco District.

Among local leaders present at the meeting was Representative Hillary Hickland of the 55th Texas House district covering most of Temple and Belton. “This project has come a long way, I heard from many concerned constituents, small business owners in the downtown Belton area were the most concerned about the original design, and so we advocated pretty heavily with the transportation department,” remarked Hickland.

TxDOT plans to consolidate the two exits into one at 6th Avenue, maintaining downtown access while reducing unnecessary conflict points for drivers. Consolidation will align the exit spacing with current Federal

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Van Til to retire from City, plans to devote his time to a greater commitment



Courtesy photo
Development Services Director Bob Van Til.

Special to the Journal

Development Services Director Bob Van Til will retire from the City of Belton, effective Sep. 30, concluding nearly nine years of service at the city and a municipal planning career that spanned nearly four decades.

Van Til joined the City in 2017 as Grants and Special Projects Coordinator. In October 2020, he became Interim Planning Director. He was appointed as Planning Director on Jan. 1, 2021.

“It has been a pleasure to serve the Belton community,” Van Til said, noting his appreciation for the colleagues who worked beside him in Development Services, formerly the City’s Planning Department.

During his tenure, Van Til guided a wide range of planning, development and policy initiatives as Belton continued to grow. His work included updates to the City’s Thoroughfare and Future Land Use Plans, annexations, transportation funding requests through the Killeen-

Temple Metropolitan Planning Organization, and development of the Trails and Sidewalk Plan.

Other efforts included instituting the Building and Standards Commission, securing utility easements for the I-14 Utility Project for the Belton Economic Development Corp., renewal of City-County platting agreements, development of alcoholic beverage sales policies, and establishment of the Life Safety and Mural Grant programs.

Van Til also helped facilitate adoption of the Imagine Belton

development standards and associated zoning changes, updated Short-Term Rental regulations, overnight truck parking regulations, sign code amendments and the 2024 Building Codes.

In his tenure in Belton, Van Til placed an emphasis on developing employees within Development Services, which including leadership training, career development and succession planning.

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Council considers budget, tax rate

By David Stone
The Belton Journal

Belton City Council on Tuesday heard a presentation on the Fiscal 2027 proposed annual budget for the City of Belton.

According to Director of Finance Mike Rodgers, the budget will raise more total property taxes than last year’s budget by \$1,194,804 or 9.13 percent, and of that amount, \$286,488 is tax revenue to be raised from new property added to the tax roll this year.

The tax bill for a median-valued homestead property in the City of Belton in the current year was \$1,509. Rodgers said the estimated tax bill for the same property in Fiscal 2027 would be \$1,444 if the proposed budget is adopted or \$1,335 if a balanced budget funded at the no-new-revenue rate is adopted.

“The budget includes total resources of \$55,938,180 and expenditures of \$52,866,100, including transfers, planned use of fund balance, and the activity of the Belton Economic Development Corporation,” Rodgers said.

“The priority for any budget is main-

taining adequate municipal service levels to deliver a high quality of life to our constituents,” he added. “Budget development for Fiscal 2027, however, has been particularly challenging as the City of Belton faces significant financial and legislative challenges now and in the future.”

“The total value of properties located within the city has increased by 1.5 percent due to rising housing inventories and elevated mortgage rates,” Rodgers added. “Mod-

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BPD, TxDOT urge safe back-to-school driving

By David Stone
The Belton Journal

To help keep kids safe, the Texas Department of Transportation is urging drivers to slow down, avoid distractions and follow the rules of the road during its “Be Safe. Drive Smart” back-to-school safety campaign.

The Belton Police Department also is emphasizing safe driving and awareness of kids heading to school.

“As we welcome our little ones back for the start of a new school year, the Belton Police Department is committed to helping make this a safe start for everyone,” said Belton Police Chief Larry Berg.

“We ask drivers to slow down, put away distractions, and stay alert around school zones,” Berg said. “A little bit of care and caution can make all the difference in protecting our children.”

Berg said BPD officers will have an increased presence around schools to help traffic flow safely and to enforce school-zone laws.

“Public safety is a shared responsibility,” he said. “Please do your part. By working together and making safety a top priority, we can help ensure that every student returns home safely each day.”

School zones can be chaotic places, with people in a rush and children not always watching for cars while they hop on and off buses or in and out of cars. Drivers can become impatient or distracted, which leads to mistakes.

In 2025, there were 877 traffic crashes in Texas school zones, a 12 percent increase from the previous year. Also last year, 2,358 collisions involved school buses. Distracted driving and speeding were the most common contributing factors in these crashes.

Parents and guardians can also help teach their kids about ways to stay safe when walking or biking to school.

Tips for driving in school zones:

Look for flashing school zone lights in the morning and afternoon and obey school zone speed limits. Traffic fines increase in school zones.

Stay alert and put your phone out of reach. Using a handheld electronic device while driving in an active school zone is against the law.

Stop and yield the right of way to pedestrians and other vulnerable road users in crosswalks. The Lisa Torry Smith Act of 2021 protects people in crosswalks and enhanced the penalties for failing to follow the law. Seriously injuring someone who is lawfully in a crosswalk is now a state jail felony.

Know where to go. Drop off and pick up your kids in your school’s designated areas, not the middle of the street.

Be on the lookout for children gathered at bus stops.

Watch out for kids who might dart across the street or between vehicles.

Tips for sharing the road with school buses:

Follow school buses at a safe distance. Remember they make frequent stops.

Keep an eye out for children exiting the bus and crossing the street.

Stop for school buses. Do not pass a school bus if you see flashing red lights or an extended stop sign, regardless of which direction you’re headed, unless the bus is on the opposite side of a divided highway. Continue once the bus has moved, the lights stop flashing or the bus driver signals it’s okay to pass.

Violations can result in a fine of up to \$1,250 for a first offense.

Tips for children walking or biking to school:

Use sidewalks. If there’s not one, it’s best to walk on the left side of the street, facing traffic.

Cross the street only at intersections or crosswalks. Wait for the walk signal and look left, right and left again before crossing.

Pay close attention to crossing guards and obey their instructions.

Make eye contact with drivers before crossing the street. Never assume a driver sees you.

Always wear a helmet when riding a bicycle or scooter.

Stay alert. Phones or other devices are distracting and can take your eyes and ears off the road.

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Highway Administration guidelines, which recommend a minimum distance of one mile between exits in urban areas. The project will also include a northbound I-35 to westbound I-14 flyover to be placed inside the frontage road.

Segment 1 of the project is estimated to cost \$1.2 billion. Currently, the project will require around 150 acres in right-of-way acquisitions, a nearly 15%, 26 acre reduction from the previous estimate. Construction on segment 1 is anticipated to begin in 2031, following environmental clearance and right-of-way acquisitions.

Bell County experienced population growth of 20.9% between 2014 and 2025. The improved corridor design

seeks to accommodate increased traffic in the future. Over 55% of the population of Texas lives within a 150 mile radius of Belton and Temple, a massive market of potential new and returning visitors.

Feedback on the project must be submitted by August 21. Commenters may use the project webpage at txdot.gov, send an email to mneal-c@txdot.gov, or mail a comment to 1949 S. I-35 Frontage Road, Suite 105, Austin, TX 78741. “We appreciate the help from the community, giving us that sort of on the ground expertise that they have, because they live here. So we appreciate their feedback,” stated Smith.

Salado Museum hosts first Founder’s Day Celebration on August 22

Special to the Journal

Salado Museum & College Park, the Museum of Salado, Texas, hosts the first Founder’s Day celebration in Salado, Saturday, August 22, from 9am to 2pm, at the Museum in honor of Salado founder, Colonel Elijah Sterling Clack Robertson, on the occasion of his 206th birthday.

“The Founder’s Day Celebration is free and open to the public but donations to support the museum’s ongoing programs are always welcome in person or online,” says Lynette Jones, Salado Museum Executive Director. “The event will include a memorial ceremony on College Hill and activities, reenactors, and birthday cake in the Museum.»

The celebration begins at 9:00 a.m. in the Museum’s Lucile A. Robertson Event Center where guests can view a pre-recorded musical tribute to the Robertson family by renowned Celtic fiddler Colin MacLeod, of Edinburgh, Scotland. At 9:30 guests will follow Bagpiper Doug Slauson to College Hill to gather around Colonel Robertson’s statue near the ruins of Salado College for the memorial ceremony.

The ceremony will include a brief oral history of Colonel Robertson, a formal wreath laying by Salado Mayor Jeff Ingram and Salado Museum Chairman of the Board Sterling Ambrose, a memorial under the direction of Ray Don



Courtesy Photo

McIntosh, Family Life Minister at Salado Church of Christ, the bagpiper’s playing of *Amazing Grace*, and a mayoral declaration by Mr. Ingram.

Returning to the museum, guests can visit with members of the Robertson family, join in singing “Happy Birthday” as the cake is served, and talk with history reenactors including “Sam Houston”. At 11:00, guests will be seated for a live presentation by Mr. Gene Rhea Tucker, Ph.D.,

Professor of History at Temple College, which will focus on Colonel Robertson’s life and his contributions to Salado and its people.

“We are happy to host Salado’s first Founder’s Day to celebrate the history and heritage of Salado and we thank everyone for your continued support of the museum,” says Jones. “We plan to continue this new Salado tradition as an annual event on or near the Colonel’s birthday on August

23rd.”

Salado Museum and College Park is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Its mission is to promote and preserve the pioneer history of Salado through educational programs and exhibits that document the settlement and heritage of this area. The museum is located at 423 South Main Street in Salado across from the Stagecoach Inn. College Park is located just south of the museum. www.saladomuseum.org.

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est property value growth makes it more difficult to generate sufficient revenue for operations. Compounding the problem, a jump in health insurance premiums and pay adjustments for employees will elevate personnel costs in FY 2027.”

“Forthcoming negotiations with the police and firefighter associations may push wages, benefits, and equipment expenditures upwards,” he said. “The amounts charged by Bell County for dispatch services, jail operations, and animal control activities are expected to rise as well.”

Included in the Fiscal Year 2027 Proposed Annual Budget is the FY 2027-2031 Capital Improvements

Program (CIP). The CIP represents the city’s plan for infrastructure development over the next five years. It provides a framework for the recognition of capital obligations and the impact of capital projects on future operating budgets. A total of \$104,470,000 of capital projects has been identified for the next five years.”

A public hearing on the proposed 2027 budget will be held at the regular City Council meeting on Sept. 8 at 5:30 p.m. at the Harris Community Center, 401 N Alexander.

The proposed tax rate for the Fiscal 2027 proposed annual budget is \$0.5619 per \$100 of taxable

value. For comparison, last year’s tax rate was \$0.5225 per 100.

The average taxable value of a home in the City of Belton decreased by 14 percent from \$306,660 in 2025 to \$263,098 in 2026. The city property tax paid on the average home last year was \$1,602. The average homeowner would pay \$1,478 in city property taxes if the budgeted tax rate of \$0.5619 is adopted, a decrease of \$124.

A public hearing on the proposed tax rate for Fiscal 2027 also will be held at the Sept. 8 City Council meeting.

Both the budget and tax rate will be considered for approval on Sept. 15.

Van Til - From Page A1

“Bob is a highly capable professional planner with a servant’s heart,” City Manager Sam Listi said. “His efforts have strengthened the community and made Belton a better place to live, work, and visit.”

Before coming to Belton, Van Til served as Director of Development and Planning for the City of Taylor for 13 years and as Housing Development Coordinator for the Taylor Housing Authority from 2015 to 2017.

Van Til is certified by the American Institute of Certified Planners, and earned a bachelor’s degree in sociology from Stephen F. Austin State University and a master’s degree in Urban Affairs from the University of Texas at Arlington.

In his retirement letter, Van Til said he plans to transition from his career in public service to a greater commitment to his faith, continuing his service as a Deacon at St. Patrick Catholic Church in Hutto.



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OBITUARIES



Stewart

James “Jim” Thomas Stewart
May 29, 1952 – July 31, 2026

James “Jim” Thomas Stewart passed away on July 31, 2026, at the age of 74. Jim was a man of intelligence, curiosity, humor, and strong convictions. He had a lifelong habit of wanting to understand things properly—whether a matter of business, history, language, or simply a question that had caught his attention. He read, researched, and thought before forming an opinion, and when he had something worthwhile to say, he usually said it well. He had little interest in speaking simply to be heard.

Born on May 29, 1952, in Washington, D.C., Jim was the son of Colonel James Thompson Stewart and Ruth Estelle Vannoy Stewart. His father’s Army

career meant that Jim’s childhood was spent in a number of places, including Japan, San Francisco, and Illinois. Belton, Texas, however, became the family’s home base during his father’s overseas assignments and remained an important part of Jim’s life.

At Belton High School, Jim ran track and played football for the Belton Tigers. He was especially proud of the 1969 football team, which advanced to the state semifinals, an achievement still remembered in Belton. Athletics suited him. He appreciated discipline, preparation, competition, and the satisfaction that came from doing something well. Football remained a particular love throughout his life.

Jim went on to college on a football scholarship and later attended the University of Texas at Austin, where he studied pharmacy. His years in Austin also gave him the opportunity to experience firsthand the music of an extraordinary time and place. Music remained important to him throughout his life. He loved rock, country, and much in between, and he and his wife Edith loved to dance.

His professional life eventually led him to the mortgage industry, where he built a long and successful career. Jim understood people, but he also understood the importance of knowing his

subject. He prepared carefully, paid attention to details, and could make a convincing case without needing to make a spectacle of himself. Those qualities served him equally well in sales and in the administrative side of business.

Jim is survived by his beloved wife, Edith Stewart; their three children, Lara Curry and her husband, Scott, and their children Trevor, Colette, and Josephine, of Lookout Mountain, Georgia; Amanda Szabo and her husband, Joseph, and their daughter Catalina, of Katy, Texas; and Christopher Shields and his wife, Alexandra, of Sylmar, California.

He is also survived by his five siblings and their families: Lessane Hamrick of Granbury, Texas; Jan Ward of Belton, Texas; Julie Griggs of Troy, Texas; Laurie Steger of Belton, Texas; and Jack Stewart of Holland, Texas. He was preceded in death by his parents, Colonel James Thompson Stewart and Ruth Estelle Vannoy Stewart.

Jim lived a life shaped by curiosity, independence of mind, loyalty, humor, and love for the people closest to him. He believed in being prepared, in knowing what you were talking about, and in doing things well. He appreciated a strong argument, a good song, a clever turn of phrase, and people whose character earned his respect. And for those he

loved, behind all of that strength was a great deal of tenderness.

He will be remembered for both. Arrangements are with Dossman Funeral Home, and a private celebration of life will be scheduled later.

Melendez

Raquel Melendez
November 19, 1941 – August 3, 2026

Raquel Melendez, 84, of Belton, Texas, passed away on August 3, 2026, at Park Place Manor in Belton. She was born on November 19, 1941, in Vega Baja, Puerto Rico. A proud graduate of Carlotta Alfaro Fashion Designer College, Raquel became an accomplished fashion designer and built a successful wedding shop, creating wedding gowns from scratch for brides from Puerto Rico and the mainland United States. She was preceded in death by her sons, Gabriel Velez at birth and Efrain “Frincito” Velez in 1984. She is survived by her sons, Enrique Velez, Edgardo Velez, and Eric Velez; five grandchildren; and three great-grandchildren. A memorial service will be held at 11:00 a.m. on Saturday, August 15, 2026, at Crotty Funeral Home & Cremation Services in Belton, Texas.

County adds 5 animal control positions

By David Stone
The Belton Journal

Bell County Commissioners Court unanimously approved adding five animal control officer positions on Monday, and the new positions will take effect Aug. 17.

The new positions will be funded by eliminating four corrections officer positions and the amount of jail overtime needed to cover the difference between the newly created animal control positions and vacant positions that were removed.

The need for additional animal control and animal shelter officers was revealed in part by a recent evaluation by Maddie’s Million Pet Challenge, according to Bell County Judge David Blackburn.

“The Court commissioned the study on the Animal Control Facility and one of the key recommendations was to add staff to the facility,” Blackburn said.

The report highlighted critical gaps in staffing, funding and operational structures, showing that current resources under law enforcement oversight fall short of modern professional animal sheltering standards.

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 or-

dinances, 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.

“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.”

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.



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Texas GLO to host Disaster Recovery Assistance Outreach Event in Bell County

Special to the Journal

Homeowners impacted by storms in 2024 are encouraged to attend, get information, and apply!

The Texas General Land Office (GLO) will host a homeowner outreach event on Saturday, August 22, 2026, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the City of Temple Public Library, 100 W Adamas #310, Temple to assist residents impacted by the 2024 disasters. This event will provide information on available programs to help eligible homeowners repair, rebuild, or receive reimbursement for storm-related damage. Residents of Bell County are encouraged to attend and learn more about eligibility for rebuilding, repair, and reimbursement assistance programs.

“The Texas General Land Office’s housing programs have helped more than 14,000 Texas families rebuild their homes – and their lives,” said Commissioner Dawn Buckingham. “In 2024, many Texas communities experienced significant damage from severe storms, including devastating straight-line winds, tornadoes, and Hurricane Beryl. While many communities are familiar with the GLO’s housing efforts, many are new to the programs. We hope homeowners still struggling to recover in the 27 eligible counties will visit recovery.texas.gov/apply to learn more and apply.”

The programs are only available for a main home (primary residence). Homeowners can only apply for one of the two programs - either re-

imbursement or repair/reconstruction assistance. An application must be submitted along with required documents for consideration. Applications for both programs will be reviewed on a first-come, first-served basis and eligible homeowners are encouraged to apply immediately.

Eligible counties: Anderson, Bell, Brazoria, Caldwell, Cooke, Dallas, Denton, Fort Bend, Galveston, Guadalupe, Hardin, Hays, Henderson, Hockley, Jasper, Kaufman, Liberty, Matagorda, Montgomery, Newton, Polk, San Jacinto, Smith, Trinity, Tyler, Walker, and Wharton

The application is available online at recovery.texas.gov/apply. Potential applicants should review the document checklists prior to applying. For assistance,

email cdr@recovery.texas.gov or call 1-844-893-8937.



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Central Texas Council of Governments to open housing choice voucher waiting list

Special to the Journal

Eligible households are encouraged to prepare now as the application portal will be open for a limited time.

The Central Texas Council of Governments (CTCOG), in partnership with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), will open the waiting list for the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program at 12:00 p.m. (Noon) on Thursday, August 13, 2026.

The Housing Choice Voucher Program helps eligible low-income families, seniors, and individuals with disabilities access safe, decent, and afford-

able housing in the private rental market. Participants may use their voucher with landlords who accept the program throughout CTCOG’s seven-county service area, including Bell, Coryell, Hamilton, Lampasas, Milam, Mills, and San Saba counties.

Because demand for housing assistance is expected to be high, the on-line waiting list portal will remain open for a limited time only. Closing the portal after a short application period allows CTCOG to process applications more efficiently and reduce the amount of time applicants wait to be contacted.

“Our goal is to help eligible families move



into housing as quickly as possible,” said Jim Reed, Executive Director of the Central Texas Council of Governments. “By limiting the time the waiting list is open and encouraging applicants to prepare in advance, we can accelerate the application process and better serve the communities that rely on this program.”

Applicants selected from the waiting list will be contacted to schedule an in-person appointment. Prior to their appointment, applicants should review and gather the required documentation using the printable checklist available at www.ctcog.org/housing.

Applicants are encouraged to:

- Visit www.ctcog.org/

housing before August 13.

- Download the printable checklist of required documentation.

- Bring all requested documents to their scheduled appointment.

- Be prepared to provide additional information if needed during application processing.

CTCOG emphasizes that bringing all required

documentation to the appointment will help staff process applications more quickly and move eligible households toward receiving housing assistance sooner.

The Housing Choice Voucher Program provides participants the flexibility to choose housing that meets program requirements anywhere within CTCOG’s service area where a participating landlord accepts vouchers.

For additional information about the Housing Choice Voucher Program or the upcoming waiting list opening, visit www.ctcog.org/housing or contact the CTCOG Housing Department at (254) 770-2370.

Proposed tax rate subject of two public hearings

By David Stone
The Belton Journal

The Bell County Commissioners Court proposed a budget Monday using a property tax rate of \$0.3635 per \$100 valuation for its Fiscal 2027 budget year. The budget and tax rate likely will be adopted Aug. 24.

If approved, this budget will raise more total property taxes than last year’s budget by \$18,277,845, which is a 14.27 percent increase. The property tax revenue to be raised from new property added to the roll this year would be \$7,875,160.

The county will hold two tax-rate hearings. The first will begin at 6 p.m. Wednesday, Aug. 19. The county will hold the budget public hearing and second tax rate public hearing at 9 a.m. Monday, Aug. 24, before adopting the fiscal year 2027 budget and tax rate.

Fiscal 2027 officially begins Oct. 1 of this year. The proposed county rate sits roughly 2.82 percent below the calculated no-new-revenue rate of 32.59 cents and is heavily influenced by adjustments in the Road & Bridge Fund.

The proposed road and bridge rate represents a 129

percent increase from the no-new-revenue rate, according to a presentation by County Auditor Tina Entrop. The overall increase still sits below the voter-approval tax rate of 41.08 cents.

According to Entrop, the increase would generate roughly \$3.2 million in additional revenue. Blackburn said the county is trying to “right-size” the road and bridge fund, which state law requires counties to maintain.

Judge Blackburn said state-mandated services account for about one-third of county costs and equate to 10.3 cents of the property tax rate. Top state-mandated costs include tax exemptions for disabled veterans and people over 65, indigent health care, indigent defense and Child Protective Services.

Blackburn said the disabled veteran exemption alone reduced county revenue by \$21.5 million. Blackburn said Bell County faces a disproportionate impact because of Fort Hood, noting the number of properties receiving the exemption grew from about 700 in 2009 to more than 21,000 now.

Precinct 2 Commissioner Bobby Whitson said these exemptions do not eliminate the cost of those services but



shift the tax burden to other property owners.

“I’m not arguing (against) the exemptions, but I think all of us need to understand that when exemptions are given, the folks that don’t get the exemptions still pay that tax,” Whitson said.

University of Maryland Global Campus announces Spring 2026 Graduates

Special to the Journal

University of Maryland Global Campus (UMGC) graduated more than 7,300 students worldwide in the spring 2026 term including Belton residents, London Burris, Tiffany Harrison, Kenneth Harrison, and Itze Sotomayor of Salado.

University of Maryland Global Campus was founded more than 75 years ago

specifically to serve the higher education needs of working adults and military service members. Today, UMGC is the largest provider of postsecondary education in Maryland and continues its global tradition with online and hybrid, courses, more than 175 classroom and service locations worldwide, and more than 100 degrees and certificates backed by the reputation of a state university and the University System of Maryland. For more information, visit umgc.edu.



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It is the policy of Belton ISD not to discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex or handicap in its vocational programs, services or activities and provides equal access to the Boy Scouts and other designated youth groups as required by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended; Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972; and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended.

It is the policy of Belton ISD not to discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, handicap, or age in its employment practices as required by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended; Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972; the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, as amended; and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended.

Belton ISD will take steps to assure that lack of English language skills will not be a barrier to admission and participation in all educational and vocational programs.

For information about your rights or grievance procedures, contact the Title IX Coordinator at casandra.spearman@bisd.net, or 254.215.2078

El distrito escolar independiente de Belton (Belton ISD) ofrece programas de Educación profesional y técnica en: Agricultura, alimentos y recursos naturales; Arquitectura y construcción; Artes, tecnología audiovisual y comunicación; Negocios, mercadeo y finanzas; Educación y capacitación; Ingeniería; Ciencias de la salud; Hotelería y turismo; Servicios humanos; Tecnología de la información; Derecho y servicio público; y Transporte, distribución y logística. La admisión a estos programas se basa en el interés

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Belton ISD announces new policy for free and reduced-price school meals

Special to the Journal

Belton ISD announced its policy today for providing free and reduced-price meals (breakfast and lunch) for children served under the attached current income eligibility guidelines. Each school/site or the central office has a copy of the policy, which may be reviewed by anyone on request.

Applications are available at <https://www.school-cafe.com/beltonisd>, or a physical copy of the application can be received upon request from the cafeteria.

Criteria for Free and Reduced-Price Meal Benefits

The following criteria will be used to determine a child's eligibility for free or reduced-price meal benefits:

Income

1. Household income that is at or below the income eligibility levels Categorical (Automatic) Eligibility

2. Household receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF); or Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR)

Program Participant

3. Child's status as a foster child, homeless, run-away, migrant, or displaced by a declared disaster

4. Child's enrollment in Head Start or Even Start

Income Eligibility

For those households that qualify for free or reduced-price meals based on income, an adult in the household must complete an application for free and reduced-price meals online at <https://www.school-cafe.com/beltonisd>.

cafe.com/beltonisd. Completed physical applications can be turned into the school's front office or Support Services at 1220 Huey Rd. Belton, Texas, 76513. Those individuals filling out the application will need to provide the following information:

- Names of all household members
- Amount, frequency, and source of current income for each household member
- Last 4 digits of the Social Security number of the adult household member who signs the application or, if the adult does not have a social security number, check the box for "No Social Security number"
- Signature of an adult household member attesting that the information provided is correct

Categorical or Program Eligibility

Belton ISD is working with local agencies to identify all children who are categorically and program eligible. Belton ISD will notify the households of these children that they do not need to complete an application. Any household that does not receive a letter and feels it should have should contact Tiffney Freeman, Assistant Director of School Nutrition, tiffney.freeman@bisd.net. Any household that wishes to decline benefits should contact Tiffney Freeman, Assistant Director of School Nutrition, tiffney.freeman@bisd.net.

Applications may be submitted anytime during the school year. The information provided by households on the application will be used for the purpose of determining eligibility. Applications may also be verified by the school officials at any time during the school year.

Determining Eligibility

Under the provisions of the free and reduced-price meal policy, Tiffney Freeman will review applications and determine eligibility. Households or guardians dissatisfied with the Reviewing Official's eligibility determination may wish to discuss the decision with the Reviewing Official on an informal basis. Households wishing to make a formal appeal for a hearing on the decision may make a request either orally or in writing to Melissa Lafferty, Chief Financial Officer, melssia.lafferty@bisd.net.

Unexpected Circumstances

If a household member becomes unemployed or if the household size increases, the household should contact the school. Such changes may make the children of the household eligible for benefits if the household's income falls at or below the attached current income eligibility guidelines.

Community Eligibility Provision (CEP)

The following schools, Leon Heights Elementary, Chisholm Trail Elementary, Hubbard Branch Elementary, Southwest Elementary, Belton Early Childhood School, and South Belton Middle School at Belton ISD announced today it will operate the Community Eligibility Program (CEP) under the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program for the 2026-2027 school year. Schools qualifying to operate CEP serve breakfast and lunch to all children at no charge and eliminate the collection of meal applications for free, reduced-price, and paid student meals. This approach reduces burdens for both families and school administrators and helps ensure that students receive nutritious meals.

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LIFESTYLES

THE BELTON JOURNAL

Top BBQ and country music one-day Brownwood event

By Michele Weisman
The Belton Journal

The Feels Like Home Festival, presented by Kohler, announced the 10 award-winning BBQ pitmasters invited to their yearly event. Some of the invitees are listed in the Texas Monthly BBQ Top 50 winners and honorees. The country music lineup also draws a crowd.

Located in Brownwood, the event takes place on Saturday, Oct. 3. The gates open at Noon and goes until 11 p.m. The tickets are on sale now.

The music artists performing are Gary Allan, Scotty McCreery, Mark Chesnutt, Jack Ingram, and singer/songwriter Caroline Hale.

The invited pitmasters are: Bosque River Taphouse from Stephenville and are also known for their craft beer; Brantley Creek Barbecue in Odessa sells their own rubs and sauces; Hill City Chop House from Tolar opened in 2022 by a husband and wife team; Hurtado Barbecue in Arlington has a grilling YouTube channel, Olmos BBQ

from Fort Worth is Fort Worth Magazine's Best Pop-up for 2026; Pody's BBQ from Pecos; Rossler's Blue Cord Barbecue from Harker Heights is Veteran owned and operated; Schoepf's BBQ from Belton is also known for its music venue; The Original Roy Hutchins Barbecue from Trophy Club sells their own BBQ sauce and brisket seasoning; Victorian's Barbecue from Mart has a grilling YouTube channel and was on Netflix's Barbecue Showdown.

Ronnie Schoepf of Schoepf's BBQ said, "Any time that Staci and I get invited to come and be a part of any type of barbecue festival, especially a music and barbecue festival, we get really excited. It gives us an opportunity to share some samples of a few of our items that we create in our restaurant, or sometimes new items that we don't do on a regular basis."

Ronnie Schoepf and his wife Staci also enjoy who they get to see at the event and try the other grillmaster's food.

Ronnie Schoepf said,



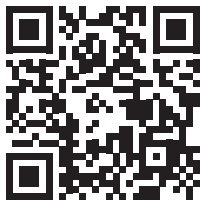
"We take great excitement in trying all the other amazing barbecue places. The dishes they're going to create for the event. My entire family has a huge passion for music. They've got so many great artists, some that we see all the time, and some that we don't get to see that often. Gary Allen, and so we've only seen him a time or two over the

years. I love his music, and then we'll see old friends, Jack Ingram, and some of the other guys. It's going to be a fun-filled night out there in Brownwood."

Feels Like Home Festival was founded in 2024, taking place at the historic Brownwood Event Center. Families and friends gather to experience community, good food, and good music.

Other activities include: axe throwing, riding a mechanical bull, and additional interactive attractions. It is suggested to purchase tickets online in case they sell out before the day of the event. While on their website, you can read about parking for the event and what you can and can't bring into the event. They also provide a list of lodg-

ing suggestions and things that are new at the festival for 2026. To learn all the details go to www.FeelsLikeHomeFest.com



UMHB partners with H-E-B, One More Child to serve Belton ISD

By David Stone
The Belton Journal

Hundreds of University of Mary Hardin-Baylor students took part in Love CTX last week, an event designed for new students to discover opportunities to serve the community.

The Aug. 8 event was part of Welcome Week for UMHB newcomers.

For the seventh year, UMHB's Love CTX event supported One More Child, which provides Christ-centered services to vulnerable children and struggling families.

According to Ashley Smith, director of Marketing & Public Relations at the university, nearly 400

UMHB students packed 28,000 meals and wrote welcome notes to Belton ISD students. Belton H-E-B donated more than \$19,000 in food items for the meals.

"H-E-B is honored and excited to work with UMHB and One More Child to serve the Belton community again," said Amy Flores, H-E-B's area community coordinator.

"As a company committed to Texans Helping Texans, we are proud to work alongside these dedicated students who are making a meaningful difference in the lives of local children and strengthening our community one meal at

a time," Flores said.

Joanna LeMasters, director of initiative engagement at One More Child, said strong partnerships make it possible to meet the real needs in our communities.

"We are thrilled to work alongside UMHB and H-E-B once again to provide meals for Belton ISD students and ensure more children have the resources they need to thrive," LeMasters said.

Katy Hartt, UMHB's associate director of student leadership and organizations, said the event is one of her favorite parts of Welcome Week.

"Seeing our new stu-

dents jump right into serving their new community is really incredible," she said. "I love that we get to partner with One More Child and H-E-B to provide meals to our BISD students."

The meals packed during One More Child will go to Belton ISD's Project Heartbeat program. That program helps students who may not have food at home, and the food will be distributed throughout the school year.

"Supporting our Project Heartbeat students — including those experiencing homelessness through the McKinney Vento program, students in foster care, and other underserved students — truly serves a community," said Christina Wilson, McKinney Vento



Courtesy photo

UMHB student Luke Saenz high-fives another student during One More Child, an event that provides meals to struggling Belton ISD families. The event was held during Welcome Week at the university.

coordinator for Project Heartbeat.

"Thanks to their support, we were able to provide food to students in

pre-K through 12th grade across every Belton ISD campus last year, and we hope to do the same again this year," Wilson said.

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Wait . . . That's Not in the Bible!



John C. Perry

Well, at my age you would think I had seen and heard everything. Not so. I was talking with someone who mentioned the "Mandela Effect." What? I knew who Nelson Mandela was, but I'd never heard of this.

What I learned: it's a collective false-memory phenomenon, where large groups of people remember

something differently than the historical record shows. The key idea: many people share the same wrong memory, confidently, even when shown evidence otherwise.

Again, what? Here are a few examples. The Monopoly Man, from the game, many of us, myself included, remember him wearing a monocle; he never had one. The peanut butter isn't "Jiffy," the brand is Jif. I am zero for two.

In movies, like in *Star Wars*: "Luke, I am your father." Darth Vader actually says: "No, I am your father." From *Snow White*, "Mirror, mirror on the wall..." The Queen actually says: "Magic mirror on the wall..."

Why is it called the Mandela Effect? The term was coined by paranormal researcher Fiona Broome after she and many others remembered

Nelson Mandela dying in prison in the 1980s. Some even recalled news coverage and riots. In reality, Mandela was released, became president of South Africa, and died in 2013.

What is the basis of it? Though above my pay grade, here's what I found out. One idea is the Schema theory, our brains fill in details based on expectations (for example, "Curious George" is a monkey, and monkeys have tails, but Curious George did not have one). Another idea is social reinforcement; hearing others' false memories strengthens our own. There's also time distortion, where childhood memories are especially prone to inaccuracy.

But the Mandela Effect isn't limited to games and movies, it shows up in Scripture too, and matters far more there.

I am sure you have heard, "The

lion shall lie down with the lamb." In actuality, no Bible verse says this. Isaiah 11:6 says: "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb..."

Most people remember Jonah being swallowed by a whale. But the text actually says "a great fish."

"Cleanliness is next to godliness." Many think this is a Bible verse. It isn't, it's from John Wesley, founder of Methodism. But people swear it's Scripture, likely because it sounds proverb-like.

Remember, "Spare the rod, spoil the child"? Another phrase people confidently quote as Scripture. The Bible never says this. Proverbs 13:24 is similar, but not identical.

"God helps those who help themselves." Not in the Bible at all, Benjamin Franklin popularized it. People assume it's Scripture, again because it sounds Proverbs-like.

Why is this so common with Scripture? Likely several reasons. Pastors often paraphrase from the pulpit, and over time people remember the paraphrase as the verse itself. Hymns and religious artwork reshape biblical wording too, until the two blur together in memory.

Our memories may fade, and popular culture may blur the lines, but God's Word does not drift. It stays steady, clear, and unchanged. In a world full of mixed messages and misremembered truths, Scripture remains the one place where we never have to wonder if our recollection is right, the truth is right there waiting for us.

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.

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Judge issues burn ban

By David Stone

The Belton Journal

Bell County Judge David Blackburn issued an emergency order Tuesday that prohibits outdoor burning in unincorporated areas of the county.

The ban will remain in effect until 7 p.m. Friday, Aug. 21, unless extended by the Commissioners Court.

According to Blackburn’s emergency order, the ban was prompted by an extended period of hot and dry weather “will combine with increasing southerly winds and low humidity. This will lead to an increase in grass fire threats across the region.”

“Highs will top out between 99 and 102 degrees with humidity below 25 percent,” Blackburn said. “Winds will also increase to 15 to 25 mph at times, which will help grass fires spread.”

Blackburn said the Keetch-Byram Drought Index is above 500 and increasing. A KBDI above 500 will contribute to increase fire intensity. He said such a situation would create a public safety hazard.

“A person violates this order if he ignites or causes ignition of any combustible or vegetative material outside of an enclosure which serves to contain all flames and sparks, or orders such burning or ignition by others,” he said.

The Keetch-Byram Drought Index, a tool used to estimate how likely wildfires are in an area. It measures how much mois-



ture is in the ground by weighing ongoing dry conditions against recent rainfall.

The index runs from 0 to 800, with lower numbers showing moist soil and little fire risk, and higher numbers showing very dry conditions and a much greater fire danger.

Bell County’s Emergency Management Coordinator Bob Reinhard said there are steps residents can take to deter wildfires on their property.

“Make sure grass around homes are kept cut, and do not allow clutter or trash to build up,” Reinhard said. “If a fire were to start, tall grass and trash will ignite very quickly and act as fuel for that fire to grow at a very rapid pace.”

“Please check the Bell County website (www.bellcountytexas.com) to ensure we are not under a burn ban,” he continued. “That information stays up to date on the Bell County main web page.

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V Q X P N C A B W N I L W F P M O R Q W S A L T S
T X P N C A R C O N A E R T A M A Z R E U N J C H S
Z D L C T E E R T A N K A O R N N Q I O P Q J
L L H N L E V P J Q D A C Z R N O Q X R P T
N L C O T N T O M T L S I D E I B M W W X S N Z M
S U E O U Q X O N A C W E S C I L H A J Z W T D
K T M C A D W F L H A R D E X H I B I C X
O S Q A G R P E E U A V U F E C Z Q X Y W
R E Z H I P E E Y P X V O R C I P Y D E
N K C H I P E E Y P X V O R C I P Y D E
D Y G E A L N B T R A C I N G H R C M N S
O C S E Y H B T R A C I N G H R C M N S
G V J K F M U T R A C I N G H R C M N S

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

WORDS

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COTTON CANDY

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TRACTOR

Broncos show flashes of brilliance during loss to veteran Weiss squad

By **Tony Adams**
The Belton Journal

The Lake Belton Broncos began their 2026 regular season campaign on Monday night as they hosted the Pflugerville Weiss Wolves at Bronco Gymnasium.

The Broncos went point-for-point with veteran Wolves. However, Weiss countered with a pair of prolonged runs to emerge with the straight-set win.

Scores of the match were 25-22, 25-15, and 25-20.

“There were a lot of redeeming pieces to this,” Lake Belton head coach Allison Garner said. “But, you cannot string an 0-10 run twice, and expect to win games that way.”

Lake’s net front was hot early, as Madi Jackman, Ava Wood, and Kalei Kress delivered kills to keep pace with the Wolves as the teams were in a 5-5 deadlock in the opening game.

Weiss was poised to pull away in the middle

stages of the first set, as they led 18-11 before Lake pulled to within four points. The Broncos fought off three game-points before the Wolves closed out the initial game.

The Broncos shrugged off a 7-2 deficit in the second game before three hitting errors by Weiss and kills by Jackman, Kress, Gracie Lott, and Kylie Morgenroth helped Lake tie game two at 15-15.

Deja Carroll and Ava Jackson had two kills each in a 10-0 run to help Weiss take game two by ten points, and gave the Wolves a commanding lead in the match.

Lott contributed back-to-back service aces, and Kress and Wood delivered kills to give the Broncos a 5-2 lead in the third game.

Lake led the game 15-9 before Weiss, who won 39 matches a year ago, demonstrated their experience with a 16-5 finishing run to give the Wolves the sweep.



Above Left: Setter Kaylieanna Dickey serves in the first game with Lake Belton head coach Allison Garner (left) and Cruz Smith looking on. **Top Right:** Middle blocker Audrey Mughelli launches a kill attempt toward the Weiss net front. **Bottom Right:** The Lake Belton Broncos’ backline was in early action against the Weiss Wolves on Monday night.

Jackman contributed ten kills, Cress added nine, Wood had six kills, and chipped in four. Mor-

genroth and Kaylieanna Dickey each had 13 assists. Dickey had 13 digs, and Cruz Smith had sev-



BELTON JOURNAL/Tony Adams

gen digs. “A lot of people stepped up into positions they had not played yet,”

Garner said. “For that, I am proud. We had some redeeming moments, but way too few of them.”

Tigers travel for season’s first scrimmage tonight

By **Clay Whittington**
The Belton Journal

The time for talk is over, and Joshua Mann is ready to see his team take action.

Following a week of noncontact practice to open the season that ended with the Tigers’ annual intrasquad scrimmage Saturday morning, Belton is on the verge of finally lining up against another team for the first time since being eliminated from the playoffs in mid November.

In the months since, the program entered a new era as Mann was named head coach following the retirement of Brett Sniffin, and while tonight’s scrimmage at Round Rock Stony Point has no effect on the Tigers’ record, anticipation is high. “This team has a lot of potential,” Mann said. “I have lofty expectations for us this year because of what

they have already shown me by picking things up and working so hard over the summer. Our senior leadership has been phenomenal, and now that we know where we are going and our scheme, the question is how do we react when the pads start hitting — Can we be physical? Can we play fast and furious like we want to? Will we be durable and handle contact?

“I can run around and do some drills and look pretty good doing it, but after hitting somebody a few times, I’ll probably be with the trainers. So, we are going to find out a lot very soon.”

After scrimmaging Stony Point, which has posted consecutive 3-7 campaigns, Belton caps off its preparations for the regular season opener against visiting Pflugerville Hendrickson by hosting a scrimmage against Killeen Shoemaker.

The Grey Wolves missed the playoffs for the first time since 2018 last year, when they finished with a 7-3 record but lost a three-way tiebreaker for third place in the District 12-6A standings. While there will be a plethora of things the Tigers’ new head coach will be looking for in the upcoming weeks, undoubtedly, he intends to see chemistry between his standout quarterback and receiver.

The senior duo of Will Shepard and Gavin Ross established themselves among the area’s top talents following their production last season, spurring the team to 403 total yards and 30.5 points per game. Shepard completed 127 of 195 passes for 1,792 yards and 15 touchdowns to go with 112 carries for 631 yards and 10 touchdowns. Along the way, he topped the 100-yard rushing pla-

teau three times.

Ross finished with 84 receptions — 62 more than any teammate — for 1,218 yards and 11 touchdowns, averaging 14.5 yards per catch. “We’re returning a three-year starting quarterback and an all-state caliber receiver,” Mann said. “So, my expectations for the offense are very high. My goal is for those two to have almost the exact same amount of yards this year but on half the plays.

“We’ve got other playmakers who need to be involved in the system too in order to make everyone’s lives better, and at the same time, I’m really excited about how our tight ends and offensive line is coming along. We’ve got size and look the part, but we need to see just how physical they are willing to get.”

Defensively, Belton returns its top two standouts from last season in



junior Oakley Torres (82 tackles, 2 sacks) and senior Azian Wilkinson (70 tackles, 2 interceptions) along with five more starters.

After beginning against the Hawks, the Tigers travel to Bryan (Sept. 3) and Bastrop (Sept. 11) before hosting Waco Midway (Sept. 18). They close nondistrict play at San Angelo Central on Sept. 25 and have a bye the following week in advance of opening the District 8-5A, Division II schedule against visiting Bryan Rudder on Oct. 9.

“We’ve got a great nondistrict schedule,” Mann said. “We just have to be able to stay healthy and get better each week. We have to be able to measure ourselves from week to week, because sure, we want to win, but we have to be getting better as we move toward district.

“This district is going to challenge everyone, and it is going to come down to managing the schedule. Everybody is going to get beat up, and it will depend on how the guys handle it.”

Lake Belton opens tennis season with five straight wins



By **Clay Whittington**
The Belton Journal

The Broncos and Lady Broncos stamped out to a perfect start to the season, earning a quintet of victories during a six-day period.

Following weeks of preparation, Lake Belton took to the courts for its first competition last week, collecting a one-sided outcome at Groesbeck on Tuesday to set the tone for the team’s return. Behind successful tiebreakers from Quint Mackenzie, Alyssa Naumann and Brianna Dubrocq, the Broncos and Lady Broncos cruised to a 14-5 win to begin their schedule.

Then, the squad repeated the feat. Lake Belton returned to action Friday, hosting Little River-Academy, and it encountered little resistance, claiming 16 of the 19 matches. Two opponents awaited the Broncos and Lady Broncos the following day, but despite possessing a home court advantage, neither could derail Lake Belton’s momentum.

First, the Broncos and Lady Broncos combined for a 13-6 victory at

China Spring, winning seven of nine tiebreakers along the way, before relocating to Robinson, where they secured the Central Texas Tennis Classic title with a 14-5 victory. In doubles, Andrew Williams and Mackenzie combined for a tiebreaker win to help clinch a 3-0 record at the event.

Lake Belton pushed its record to 5-0 on Monday as its trip to Pflugerville Weiss yielded a 14-5 outcome.

Although the season is less than two weeks old, the time to prepare for league competition is almost over. After hosting Belton on Friday, Lake Belton opens District 12-6A play with a match versus visiting Waco Midway on Tuesday. It follows with a contest at Leander Rouse (Aug. 21) before continuing league play at Killeen Harker Heights (Aug. 25), Temple (Sept. 8), Bryan (Sept. 15),

Killeen Chaparral (Sept. 22) and Copperas Cove (Sept. 29) round out the district schedule.

Upon facing the Broncos and Lady Broncos, the Tigers and Lady Tigers will be in a similar position. Belton welcomes two opponents to town Saturday, playing Lampasas at 8 a.m. before facing Franklin at 2 p.m.

Then, District 16-5A competition begins. Liberty Hill serves as the site for the Tigers and Lady Tigers to open league play with the match set to begin at 4:30 p.m. on Tuesday.

Belton’s remaining district schedule consists of home matches against Killeen Ellison (Sept. 1), Waco University (Sept. 8) and Killeen Shoemaker (Sept. 22) and road trips to Liberty Hill Legacy Ranch (Aug. 25), Waco (Sept. 15) and Killeen (Sept. 29).



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Sports Briefs

By Clay Whittington
The Belton Journal

The Broncos and Lady Broncos cross country teams open their seasons Friday, when they take part in the Temple Invitational at Temple’s Lions Park.

The Class 5A/6A girls race starts the event at 7:30 a.m. with a three-mile trek across the course, and shortly after, the Class 5A/6A boys race will begin. It is also three miles.

The Lady Broncos placed fourth at last year’s meet, while the Broncos were seventh.

Lake Belton returns to action Aug. 21, when it travels for the Cedar Park Vista Ridge Invitational.

Belton will be in attendance at the Vern’s No Frills 5K at Georgetown’s Berry Springs Park on Saturday as a tuneup for its season opener — the Belton Invitational on Aug. 21. New Tech will also be in attendance to begin its season.

ATHLETICS PASS

Family athletic passes for the upcoming school year are on sale and can be purchased at the Belton High School athletic complex or the BISD administration offices.

The pass admits the holder and immediate family into all home games conducted by BISD. It is accepted for all sports except football. Cost is \$100.



Cash or credit card is accepted for purchases made at Belton High School, while cash is required for purchases at the administration offices.

FOOTBALL

Tiger Moms Camp and Belton media day is set for Saturday, 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 a community pep rally (6:30 p.m.) ahead of the annual Bronco Bash (7 p.m.) on 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.

BOOSTER CLUB

The Belton Tiger Athletic Booster Club is currently accepting memberships for the upcoming school year.

Contributions benefit all athletes across all sports for the entire school year with options for both community and corporate memberships. Benefits vary based on memberships.

For the community, Cub (\$75), White (\$150), Red (\$300) and Varsity (\$500) options are available, while corporate options are Tiger (\$1,250), Elite (\$3,000) and Legacy (\$5,000).

Payments for memberships can be made online at BeltonTigersABC.org, through Venmo by using the handle @BeltonTigers-ABC or by sending via mail to BTABC, PO Box 1454, Belton, TX, 76513.

For more information, visit BeltonAthletics.com or BeltonTigersABC.org.

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 Pavilion.

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.



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Scot Hrbacek, CFP® Financial Advisor

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*This article was written by Edward Jones for use by your local Edward Jones Financial Advisor:
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Lady Broncos down East View in four sets

By Aries Ramos
The Belton Journal

The Lake Belton volleyball team opened the week with a statement, knocking off East View in four sets Tuesday night at home, 25-7, 25-23, 20-25, 26-24. The Broncos controlled the match from the opening whistle and battled through a late push from the Patriots to seal the win.

Lake Belton wasted no time asserting itself in set one, cruising to a 25-7 win that showcased the Broncos' chemistry early in the season. Serving pressure and clean ball

control gave East View little room to establish any rhythm, and Lake Belton carried that momentum directly into the second set.

Set two proved to be a much tighter battle, with East View settling in and trading points down the stretch. The Broncos held on late for a 25-23 win, but the Patriots showed they weren't going away quietly, setting the stage for a back and forth finish to the match.

East View found its footing in set three, flipping the script and taking control early. The Patriots closed it out 25-20,



forcing a fourth set and injecting some urgency into the Lake Belton sideline heading into the final frame.

The Broncos responded when it mattered most. Set four was the tightest of the night, with neither team able to pull away for long. Lake

Belton weathered several East View runs and closed out the set 26-24, clinching the match 3-1 and picking up a quality early season home win.

The victory allows the Broncos to bounce back and show they have the ability to close out tight sets under pressure, a trait that should serve them well as competition ramps up.

Lake Belton won't have much time to celebrate. The Broncos hit the road Thursday, August 13, for a multi day tournament hosted by Westwood High School that runs through Sat-

urday. Tournament play will give Lake Belton a chance to see a wide range of competition in a short window, testing the team's depth and consistency against unfamiliar opponents outside of district play.

For a team that just proved it can grind out close sets against a solid East View squad, the Westwood tournament presents a valuable measuring stick early in the season. How the Broncos respond to the quick turnaround and to opponents they haven't yet scouted will offer an early look at where this year's

squad stands as the season builds toward district play.



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Broncos head to Leander for first scrimmage

By Aries Ramos
The Belton Journal

The Lake Belton football team gets a taste of live action play this Thursday, August 13, when the Broncos travel to Leander for a scrimmage against Leander Rouse. It's a matchup with some history behind it, giving both programs a useful measuring stick as they finish up preparation for the season.

Lake Belton and Rouse are no strangers to each other. The two programs met last season in a game that came down to the fourth quarter, with the Broncos pulling away late to secure a 49-38 win. Lake Belton put together a 21 point fourth quarter to close out the victory, turning a competitive game into a statement win down the stretch. That kind of finish speaks to the character of

last year's group, and it's the standard this year's team will look to build on as a new season gets underway.

While Thursday's scrimmage won't carry the weight of a regular season matchup, it offers real value for a Lake Belton team looking to gauge where it stands heading into the year. Scrimmages are typically run with modified rules and situational sets rather than a full four quarter game, giving coaching staffs a chance to evaluate personnel, test packages on both sides of the ball, and get



extended live reps for players competing for starting roles. For the Broncos, going against a team they know to be well coached and talented in Rouse adds an extra layer of value to the exercise.

Facing a familiar opponent brings advantages beyond just the scoreboard. Lake Belton's staff will be watching closely to see how the team's returners and newcomers respond against a Rouse squad that pushed the Broncos to the final quarter a year ago. It's an early opportunity to identify strengths, iron out execution issues, and get a gauge on depth before the games start to count.

For Lake Belton, Thursday's trip to Leander marks the unofficial kickoff to the 2026 season. It's a chance to shake off the rust, evaluate the roster under game like

conditions, and take an early look at how the pieces fit together heading into the regular season. With Rouse waiting on the other sideline, the Broncos will get a legitimate, game tested opponent to open camp against exactly the kind of test a program wants heading into a new year.

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NOTICE OF APPLICATION FOR AN AIR QUALITY STANDARD

LEGALS

PERMIT FOR AN ANIMAL CARCASS INCINERATOR

PROPOSED AIR QUALITY REGISTRATION NUMBER 184711 APPLICATION. Centex Animal Recovery LLC, 8807 West Farm-to-Market Road 436, Belton, Texas 76513-7636 has applied to the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) for an Air Quality Standard Permit, Registration Number 184711, which would authorize construction of an animal carcass incinerator. The facility is proposed to be located at 8807 West Farm-to-Market Road 436, Belton, Bell County, Texas 76513. This link to an electronic map of the site or facility’s general location is provided as a public courtesy and not part of the application or notice. For exact location, refer to application.

https://gisweb.tceq.texas.gov/LocationMapper/?marker=97.448888,31.023611&level=13.

This application was submitted to the TCEQ on July 17, 2026. The primary function of this facility is to properly dispose of animal carcasses through incineration. The executive director has determined the application was administratively complete on July 23, 2026.

PUBLIC COMMENT. Public written comments about this application may be submitted at any time during the public comment period. The public comment period begins on the first date notice is published and extends to 30 days from the publication date. Public comments may be submitted either in writing to Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, Office of the Chief Clerk, MC-105, P.O. Box 13087, Austin, Texas 78711-3087, or electronically at www.tceq.texas.gov/epic/eComment/. Please be aware that any contact information you provide, including your name, phone number, email address and physical address will become part of the agency’s public record.

RESPONSE TO COMMENTS. A written response to all relevant comments will be prepared by the executive director after the comment period closes. The response, along with the executive director’s decision on the application, will be mailed to everyone who submitted public comments and requested to be added to the mailing list. The response to comments will be posted in the permit file for viewing.

The executive director shall approve or deny the application not later than 30 days after the end of the public comment period, considering all comments received within the comment period, and base this decision on whether the application meets the requirements of the standard permit.

CENTRAL/REGIONAL OFFICE. The application will be available for viewing and copying at the TCEQ Central Office and the TCEQ Waco Regional Office, located at 6801 Sanger Avenue, Suite 2500, Waco, Texas 76710-7826, during the hours of 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, beginning the first day of publication of this notice. The application, including any updates, is available electronically at the following webpage: <https://www.tceq.texas.gov/permitting/air/airpermit-applications-notices>.

INFORMATION. For more information about the permitting process, please call the TCEQ Public Education Program, Toll Free, at 1-800-687-4040 or visit their website at www.tceq.texas.gov/goto/pep. Si desea información en Español, puede llamar al 1-800-687-4040. You can also view our website for public participation opportunities at www.tceq.texas.gov/goto/participation.

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Further information may also be obtained from Centex Animal Recovery LLC, 8807 West Farm-to-Market Road 436, Belton, Texas 76513-7636, or by calling Mr. James Armagost, Owner/Operator at (720) 364-2923. Notice Issuance Date: July 23, 2026 08.13pd

NOTICE TO CREDITORS

Notice is hereby given that original Letters Testamentary for the Estate of Jonette Albright, Deceased, were issued on July 21, 2026, to Nyle Leftwich, Independent Executor. All persons having claims against this Estate, which is currently being administered under Cause No. 26CPB00419 in the County Court at Law No. 1 of Bell County, Texas, are required to present the claims within the time and in the manner prescribed by law. Claims may be presented to the Independent Executor and should be addressed as follows: Estate of Jonette Albright c/o Graber Allen PLLC, 706 Guadalupe St, Austin, Texas 78701, Dated: July 30, 2026 08.13

NOTICE TO CREDITORS

Notice is hereby given that original Letters of Administration for the Estate of Deborah Irene Roti Taylor, Deceased, were issued on August 4, 2026, in Cause No. 24CPB00775, pending in the County Court at Law No. 1 of Bell County, Texas, to Jeanna Lansford. 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. Claims may be presented in care of the attorney for the administrator, addressed as follows: Independent Administrator, Estate of Deborah Irene Roti Taylor, c/o Marcus Beaudin, Attorney for Jeanna Lansford, The Law Offices of Gregory K. Simmons, 2109 S. Clear Creek Rd., Killeen, TX 76549 08.13

NOTICE TO CREDITORS

Notice is hereby given that original Letters of Testamentary for the Estate of SHARON REID, Deceased, were issued on June 2, 2026, in Cause No. 26CPB00258, pending in the County Court-At-Law: Number one, Bell County, Texas, to: ANITA SCARBROUGH. 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: JAY R. BEATTY Attorney at Law, 3106 South W.S. Young Drive Building D, Suite 401, KILLEEN, TX 76542 DATED the 5th day of August 2026 JAY R. BEATTY, State Bar No.: 01992450, 3106 South W.S. Young Drive Building D, Suite 401, KILLEEN, TX 76542, Telephone: (254) 526-3024, Facsimile: (254) 526-2545, E-mail: jbeatty@mbaattorneys.com, E-mail: rdetiberus@mbaattorneys.com Attorney for Anita Scarbrough 08.13

THE STATE OF TEXAS CITATION BY PUBLICATION CASE NUMBER 26CPB00452

To: Unknown Heirs JUSTIN PATRICK WOODS, Applicant, on July 23, 2026, filed an Application to Probate and for Issuance of Letters Testamentary in a proceeding styled: MARIE CLORINDE WOODS, Deceased, and bearing the number 26CPB00452 in the County Court of Bell County, Texas. The court will hear the aforesaid Application after the expiration of ten days, exclusive of the day of publication, from the date this citation is published which will be August 13, 2026 in the County Court at Law #1 Courtroom, at the Bell County Justice Complex, 1201 Huey Road, in Belton, Texas. All persons interested in the aforesaid estate are commanded to appear at or before the time set for said hearing by filing a written contest or answer to said application should they desire to oppose or contest it. Said written contest or answer shall be filed in the office of Shelley Coston, County Clerk, Bell County, Texas, PO Box 480, Belton, Texas 76513. The name and address of the attorney for applicant is: CRAIG W BROWN, 1002 ARBOR PARK DRIVE SUITE 201, BELTON TX 76513 The officer serving this Citation shall, in compliance with the Law, serve it by publication once in a newspaper of the general circulation in this, the County in which the decedent last resided as required by Section 202.052 of the Texas Estate Code, for not less than ten days before the return day hereof, exclusive of the day of publication, and the date of publication said newspaper bears shall be the day of publication. Issued and given under my hand and seal of said Court at office on August 05, 2026. Shelley Coston County Clerk of Bell County, Texas, PO Box 480, 1201 Huey Road, Belton, TX 76513 By: Andrea Marks Deputy 08.13

NOTICE TO CREDITORS

Notice is hereby given that original Letters Testamentary for the Estate of MARVIN BENJAMIN WINKLER, SR., Deceased, were issued on July 23, 2026, in Cause No. 26CPB00417, pending in the County Court-At-Law No: 1, Bell County, Texas, to: Brian Gregory Winkler. All persons having claims against this Estate which is currently being administered are required to present them to the undersigned within the time and in the manner prescribed by law. c/o: Jim Thigpen Attorney at Law, PO

LEGALS

Box 428, TEMPLE, TX 76503, SIGNED on August 4, 2026. Jim Thigpen Attorney for Brian Gregory Winkler, State Bar No.: 19837300, PO Box 428, TEMPLE, TX 76503, Telephone: (254) 773-1663, Facsimile: (254) 773-2574, Email: jim.thigpen@linzythigpen.com 08.13

THE STATE OF TEXAS CITATION BY PUBLICATION – DIVORCE CAUSE NO. 26DFAM360546

To: EFRAIN VELAZQUEZ JIMENEZ Greetings: You are hereby commanded to appear before the 169th Judicial District Court, Bell County, Texas to be held at the Bell County District Courts Building in Belton, Texas, by filling a written answer to the original petition for divorce at or before 10:00 A.M. of the Monday next after the expiration of 20 days after the date of service hereof, a copy of which accompanies this citation, in cause number 26DFAM360546, styled In the Matter of the Marriage of ERICA KISS and EFRAIN VELAZQUEZ JIMENEZ filed in said court on March 25, 2026, and the nature of which suit is a request to Divorce: No Children. The Court has authority in this suit to enter any judgment or decree dissolving the marriage and providing for the division of property which will be binding on you. This was issued at the request of attorney: MARC CHAVEZ, MARC CHAVEZ LAW FIRM, 505 W 12TH STREET SUITE 200M, AUSTIN TX 78701. 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 August 04, 2026. Joanna Staton District Clerk, P. O. Box 909, 1201 West Huey Road, Belton, Texas 76513 By: M Cortez deputy 0813

APPLICATION HAS BEEN FILED WITH THE TEXAS ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE COMMISSION for Caseys Marketing Company for a Wine Only Package Store d/b/a Casey’s #4683 located at 5537 FM 439, Belton, Bell County, TX 76513 Officers: Samuel James – President, Brian Johnson – VP, Douglas Beech – Asst. Sec., Scott Faber – Secretary, Eric Larsen - Treasurer 08.13,08.20

NOTICE TO ALL PERSONS HAVING CLAIMS AGAINST THE ESTATE OF JAMES ALBERT ROBINSON, JR., DECEASED

NOTICE is hereby given that original Letters of Testamentary were issued on August 6, 2026 in a proceeding styled Estate of James Albert Robinson, Jr., Deceased, in Cause Number 26CPB00360, pending in the County Court At Law #1 of Bell County, Texas. Claims may be presented in care of the attorney for the Independent Executrix, addressed as follows: Angela Marie Williams Independent Executrix of the Estate of James Albert Robinson, Jr., Deceased, c/o Burk Roberts, Roberts & Roberts, L.L.P., 2501 East Elms Rd., Ste. A, Killeen, Texas 76542-3023 All persons having claims against this estate, which is currently being administered, are required to present them within the time and in the manner prescribed by law. Signed on August 7, 2026. Roberts & Roberts, L.L.P., Attorneys for Angela Marie Williams By: Burk Roberts 08.13

NOTICE TO ALL PERSONS HAVING CLAIMS AGAINST THE ESTATE OF FRANK AMAYA FLORES, AKA FRANK AMAYA FLORES, SR., DECEASED

NOTICE is hereby given that original Letters of Testamentary were issued on August 6, 2026 in a proceeding styled Estate of Frank Amaya Flores, aka Frank Amaya Flores, Sr., Deceased, in Cause Number 26CPB00385, pending in the County Court At Law #1 of Bell County, Texas. Claims may be presented in care of the attorney for the Independent Executrix, addressed as follows: Olivia Amaya Flores Independent Executrix of the Estate of Frank Amaya Flores, aka Frank Amaya Flores, Sr., Deceased, c/o Burk Roberts, Roberts & Roberts, L.L.P., 2501 East Elms Rd., Ste. A, Killeen, Texas 76542-3023 All persons having claims against this estate, which is currently being administered, are required to present them within the time and in the manner prescribed by law. Signed on August 7, 2026. Roberts & Roberts, L.L.P., Attorneys for Olivia Amaya Flores- By: Burk Roberts 8.13

THE STATE OF TEXAS CITATION BY PUBLICATION CASE NUMBER 26CPB00474

To: Unknown Heirs RANDY ARRIS, SR, Applicant, on August 06, 2026,

LEGALS

filed an Application to Determine Heirship and for Letters of Independent Administration in a proceeding styled: ROBERT CLAYTON ARRIS, Deceased, and bearing the number 26CPB00474 in the County Court of Bell County, Texas. The court will hear the aforesaid Application after the expiration of ten days, exclusive of the day of publication, from the date this citation is published which will be August 13, 2026 in the County Court at Law #1 Courtroom, at the Bell County Justice Complex, 1201 Huey Road, in Belton, Texas. All persons interested in the aforesaid estate are commanded to appear at or before the time set for said hearing by filing a written contest or answer to said application should they desire to oppose or contest it. Said written contest or answer shall be filed in the office of Shelley Coston, County Clerk, Bell County, Texas, PO Box 480, Belton, Texas 76513. The name and address of the attorney for applicant is: STEVE BLYTHE, 319 N THIRD ST, PO BOX 2088, TEMPLE TX 76503 The officer serving this Citation shall, in compliance with the Law, serve it by publication once in a newspaper of the general circulation in this, the County in which the decedent last resided as required by Section 202.052 of the Texas Estate Code, for not less than ten days before the return day hereof, exclusive of the day of publication, and the date of publication said newspaper bears shall be the day of publication. Issued and given under my hand and seal of said Court at office on August 07, 2026. Shelley Coston County Clerk of Bell County, Texas, PO Box 480, 1201 Huey Road, Belton, TX 76513 By: Andrea Marks Deputy 08.13

CAUSE NUMBER 26CPB00072
IN THE ESTATE DARRYL ZANE MADDOX DECEASED IN THE COUNTY COURT AT LAW OF BELL COUNTY, TEXAS
NOTICE TO CREDITORS
Notice is hereby given that original Letters of Independent Administration for the Estate of Darryl Zane Maddox, Deceased, were issued on July 28, 2026 in Cause No. 26CPB00072 in the County Court At Law No. 1 of Bell County, Texas, to: Carmen Hogan, Independent Administrator. All persons having claims against this Estate which is currently being adminis-

tered are required to present them to the undersigned within the time and in the manner prescribed by law.
DATED the 6th day of July, 2026
Respectfully Submitted: /s/ Lane Heginbotham, HARRIS LAW OFFICE, 425 North Eighth Street ,Killeen, Texas 76541, Phone (254) 526-0108, Fax (254) 526-7141, Lane Heginbotham State Bar No.: 24000323, lane@centexlawyers.net 08.13

CITATION BY PUBLICATION
THE STATE OF TEXAS
TO: RANDY LOREDO RODRIGUEZ, 5419 DENMANS LOOP, BELTON, TX 78513-4764
PER THE ORDER FOR SUBSTITUTE SERVICE TRCP 106 (B) OR WHEREVER HE MAY BE FOUND
Greetings: YOU (AND EACH OF YOU) ARE HEREBY COMMANDED to appear before the County Court At Law #2 of Hidalgo County at the Courthouse being located at 100 N. Closner, in the City of Edinburg, Hidalgo County, Texas, by filing a written answer at or before 10 o'clock A.M. of the first Monday next after the expiration of forty-two days from the date of the issuance of this citation, the date for answer being the 17th day of September, 2026 to Plaintiff's Petition filed in said Court, on the 9th day of September, 2025, in this cause, numbered CL-21-2173-B on the docket of said Court and styled LACKS VALLEY STORES, LTD. vs. RANDY LOREDO RODRIGUEZ
A brief statement of the name of this suit is as follows, to-wit:* CONTRACT - OTHER CONTRACT (OCA)
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.
Witness, ARTURO GUAJARDO, JR., Clerk of the County Court(s) of Hidalgo County, Texas. Issued and given under my hand and the seal of said Court at office this the 6th day of August, 2026. ARTURO GUAJARDO, JR. , COUNTY CLERK, HIDALGO COUNTY, TEXAS, 100 N. CLOSNER EDINBURG, TEXAS 78539, COUNTY COURT AT LAW #2
By: LORENA PEREZ Deputy
NOTICE
You have been sued. You may employ an attorney. If you or your attorney's do not file a written answer with the clerk who issued this citation by 10:00

LEGALS

A.M. on the 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 Plaintiff/Plaintiff's Attorney: JOSE W. HERNANDEZ, 206 W STUBBS ST EDINBURG TX 78539
* Here give brief statement of nature of suit, proper description of property, if any, and interest defendants are alleged to hold in said property, if they have an interest therein. See Rule 114, Rules of Civil Procedure. See Rule 115, Rules of Civil Procedure, where suit involves land. Reproduction of this form by any person or party is prohibited.
08.13,08.20,08.27, 09.3PD

NOTICE TO CREDITORS
Notice is hereby given that original Letters of Administration for the Estate of ANDREW SCOTT BLACKSTONE,

Deceased, were issued on July 31, 2026, in Cause No. 26CPB00108, pending in the County Court-At-Law No: 1, Bell County, Texas, to: MARDELLE ATKINS. 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: TERESA SCHILLER HARRELL, STOEBNER & VILLANUEVA, P.C., 2106 BIRD CREEK DRIVE, TEMPLE, TX 76502 SIGNED on August 5, 2026. /s/ Teresa Schiller, TERESA SCHILLER, State Bar No.: 24102467, HARRELL, STOEBNER & VILLANUEVA, P.C., 2106 BIRD CREEK DRIVE, TEMPLE, TX 76502, Telephone: (254) 771-1855 ,Facsimile: (254) 771-2082, Email: Teresa@TempleLawOffice.com 08.13

LEGAL NOTICE

Notification is given that Extraco Banks®, 3615 S 31st St., Temple, Texas 76502, has filed an application with the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency on July 23, 2026, as specified in 12 CFR 5 for permission to establish a branch office that will provide consumer, commercial, wealth & trust management, private bank, mortgage, and insurance services at 8303 West Adams Ave., Temple, Texas 76502.

Any person wishing to comment on this application may file comments in writing with the Director for Licensing, Comptroller of the Currency, 400 7th Street, SW, Washington, DC 20219 or at LicensingPublicComments@occ.treas.gov within 30 days of the date of this publication. To request a copy of the public portion of the filing, contact the Director for Licensing, Comptroller of the Currency, 400 7th Street, SW, Washington, DC 20219, or email Licensing@occ.treas.gov. All comments should be sent by September 5, 2026. You can call Extraco toll free at 1-866-EXTRACO (398-7226) if you have any questions about your account or future banking needs.

07-28-2026

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 76559 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



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EDITORIAL

One hot mess

My Front Porch • Lynette Sowell

Technology is amazing. Just think, if you have a loved one on the other side of the globe, all you have to do is open an app on your phone and you can video chat.

Years ago, it was the stuff on Star Trek and the Jetson’s. I’m still waiting for the flying cars, though.

Internet places like Facebook have transformed society, as we know it.

Whether or not you’re part of that crowd, you’ll see its effects in your circles of friends. I have. For the longest time, my sister Cat refused to join, especially when as soon as my other sister signed up, an ex-boyfriend stalker found her and asked if she was related to Cat. I don’t blame her for avoiding the mess that could have created.

But gradually, Cat heard of plans that fellow friends had made via Facebook and those plans didn’t include her, by accident.

It didn’t dawn on them that Cat would have liked an invite too. She eventually succumbed to the draw of Facebook but has her privacy as tight as it can be for such a public place.

The funny thing about the virtual world is we can share the highlights of our lives and paint a prettier picture than things really are.

Sometimes when we have bad days, it seems like everyone else in the world is standing on top of the world, while we’re struggling to get out of the mud.

When you log onto an app to see what the rest of the world is up to, it can seem worse.

Especially when people share travel photos.

Other people talk about their wonderful, perfectly normal families, bringing back visions of the Brady Bunch, when our family is a motley crew. Some talk about their new jobs and promotions, and we look at the rut we’re in.

Another friend lost 15 pounds, and we’d like to reach through the computer and hurt her, because we can’t get our own nagging 20 (or 30, or 40, or...) pounds off.

I have to admit: there are days when I feel like one hot mess. I jam my finger, spill cosmetics and things all over the bathroom floor, can’t keep up with the laundry, one more bill comes in the mail, I break a tooth, the dog tries to eat my breakfast, there’s more month left than paycheck, you name it.

If I compare that to all my friends’ exciting news, I could feel depressed.

Before you make a judgment, as I have, about where someone else is compared to you, stop.

There’s no good in making comparisons.

It’s been said that we should never compare our insides to someone else’s outsides. We all have good days and bad.

Ode To A Printer

Shop the Insanity • Darren Blair

Longtime readers may recall that shortly after this feature started I got a new all-in-one printer / scanner / fax job I referred to as the *USS Deadweight* for how large and heavy it was. The *USS Deadweight* was very temperamental, to the point that when I had a digital clock sitting on top of it the machine actually launched the clock off due to the vibrations it generated when printing. The *USS Deadweight* was wi-fi capable, but since we had it physically connected to the desktop computer here was never a need to enable the wi-fi. Despite this, one of my relatives decided to do so one night, and they somehow ended up “bricking” the core systems of the printer. After determining that the *USS Deadweight* was now functionally no better than a boat anchor, we were forced to retire it, ultimately bringing it in to an electronics

recycler.

Its replacement was a new, much more compact all-in-one job. I christened this new printer the *USS Lightweight*, carried on... for all of a week or so. At that point, it croaked on us. One phone call (IIRC) to tech support later, and we determined that the problem was most likely a bad power supply inside the printer itself. All we could do was take it back to where we purchased it for a replacement since it was still under warranty.

That is how we wound up with our current printer, the *USS Lightweight II*, which was the exact same make and model. The desktop we had at the time had a few conniption fits because it was trying to make sense of two of the same printer in its memory, leading to a glitch within the printer itself that would cause

the occasional “ghost” print consisting of an error code, but the error code was so widely known that it didn’t take long for some tech people I know to find a solution. We even got it hooked up to accept the wi-fi, meaning that any device on our wi-fi could send a print command.

Eventually, we needed a new desktop. The *USS Lightweight II* was still perfectly serviceable even though it was starting to show a bit of wear from multiple rounds of heavy printing (at least, heavier than it was intended to do), so it went along for the ride. Now, at this point I was getting the periodic fouled buffer if someone sent too many print commands at once, and on occasion I’d get the odd Blue Screen Of Death on the control touchscreen. Typically, this was just a matter of turning it off and then turning it back on to clear everything.

We get two different wi-fi speeds from our service provider: 2G and 5G. A few weeks back as I type this, the 5G conked out; we had no 5G for a few days. This apparently did something to the printer, which was set to the 5G and which vainly struggled to connect to it. After this, if we went to print something from the desktop – which was likewise still plugged in – there was a 50% chance the system wouldn’t read the printer as being connected. Normally a restart would clear it, but yesterday things were so bad I had to manually go into Excel and remind the computer that the printer was connected so I could print off a spreadsheet.

So yeah... looks like the *USS Lightweight II* might be making its final voyage. I wonder what the next printer is going to be.

Ramblings for this week

Pleasant Ramblings • Mark Magnan

As I am writing this week’s column I have a brand new laptop sitting nearby doing whatever updates it needs from the time that I ordered it until it arrived at my door. I would think that something that I ordered last week and arrived within the last couple of days might be up to date, but no, that is not the case. Apparently it was sitting on a shelf somewhere, waiting for someone to pick it out from an online description and hop on the truck headed my way. The battery was almost fully charged. The setup took a few minutes, but then all of the “updates” needed to happen before it could be used.

It is more compact and slimmer than what I am using now. A lot of what I do is type and use a mouse, I don’t need some of the functions that are available on other models and more expensive computers. I have learned that lesson. I bought a really fancy and powerful laptop a few years ago, it was everything you might need. Of course it was a lot more than I needed, and before long it was getting outdated, it wouldn’t support some of the newest upgrades that are required to be useful. I bought a much cheaper and less “fancy” laptop and it worked fine, and is still working. That is not the laptop that I do all of my typing (writing) on for the weekly newspaper contributions. (I am working on that laptop now, and this one

is the one that I am replacing).

It used to be that replacing a phone or laptop was torture, I dreaded it, I waited until my old computer was a heap of melted keys before I even considered replacing it. And my phone was the same way. I had friends that bought the newest phone as soon as it hit the market. I have had only a fraction of the phones that I might have been expected to purchase by the manufacturer. The phones were the first to perfect the upgrade to a new unit. You just get the new phone, do a few magic moves, set them side by side and come back in an hour and you have a new phone with everything on it, you don’t even notice a difference.

For the computer industry, it took a bit longer, and of course I am using two very different brands and platforms. For a long time a new laptop or desktop computer was like starting with an abacus and working your way back to the level you were at when you decided to change. You had to move things over manually, find all of the things you have taken for granted and get those installed. Now you just log in and for the most part everything looks the same. Of course there are a few things you still have to do to get it back to where you feel comfortable with it. However it is nothing like just a few years ago. I actually have more than one laptop and they are essentially

set up the same, even though I use them for different purposes.

I am not sure how long a laptop or any type of computer is supposed to last, but I can tell you about how long it takes for its nonsense to get on my nerves and make me start looking at shiny new models.

One of the improvements is that a lot of what you use is stored online, a cloud if you wish. That makes it easy to just switch from one to another device. Now that brings up the dreaded data centers and all of that content. I will state that I am probably a minimal user of those resources, and I don’t want to get into that discussion at this point.

I am already very fond of my new laptop! It is smaller, yet similar in screen size to my current one. It has a touchscreen which I find helpful at times. Now that is not new technology, I had a touchscreen computer many years ago, it was not as advanced as what we have today. I find the touchscreen function quite rewarding when the computer can’t find something and I get to point right at it and all of a sudden things work. I take joy in little things at times. Hopefully by this time next week I will be typing on new flashy keys, I doubt any of my readers will actually notice the difference. I will be happier and that is good enough for me.

Remembering the Dinosaurs

Coffee Talk • Renae Brumbaugh Green

A few years back, somebody found a rock near Glen Rose, Texas that showed a dinosaur footprint. Many authentic dinosaur tracks have been discovered in that area, but this one is different. The dinosaur’s footprint is smack-dab on top of a human footprint, and they appear to have been made within minutes of each other. If proven authentic, this would supply evidence that man walked the earth alongside dinosaurs.

Experts are still arguing over the legitimacy of this find. Last I checked, the creationists and the evolutionists were still battling it out.

I won’t speculate whether or not this discovery is real. I’m no paleontologist. I don’t even know the proper names for even the most common dinosaurs. I still

call them “the one with the long neck” or “the short, fat, scaly one” or “the scary one with wings.” And whatever the experts decide, it won’t change my views about creationism vs. evolution.

As I look at pictures of the stone, I can’t help but wonder about the story behind the footprints. Was the dinosaur chasing the person? Did the guy know he was being pursued? Maybe he was just walking along, gathering seeds and berries, whistling Dixie (did they whistle Dixie back then?) when all of a sudden, WHOMP! He was cordon-bleu.

Talk about a bad day.

Or maybe the dinosaur was a pet. Anybody who’s watched the Flintstones knows they had pets back then. Maybe they’re authentic Fred and Dino foot-

prints! Next best thing to an autograph.

But seriously, I would hate to have been that guy or girl. I’d have been terrified. Even if the dinosaur was vegetarian, he was huge! And I’ve never seen a friendly-looking dinosaur.

I’ve never seen any dinosaur, but that’s beside the point.

Sometimes it feels like I’m being chased—even stepped on—by a dinosaur. Bills show up, bigger than expected, like a Velociraptor looming overhead. People can be cruel, unkind, and dismissive, making them seem more Stegosaurus than human.

When Rick’s parents’ house burned to the ground last spring?

Big ol’ stompin’ T-Rex.

But there’s good news! The God

who created dinosaurs is bigger than the dinosaurs. He loves each of His creations. But He loves us most of all. After all, we were made in His image. No matter what hovers over us, chases us, or threatens to eat us for lunch, God is stronger. He will help us.

He delivered Jonah from a whale’s guts. He rescued Daniel from the lion’s den. Surely, he’ll save you and me from our own beasts. After all, you haven’t seen any dinosaurs around lately, have you?

“And when Daniel was lifted from the den, no wound was found on him, because he had trusted in his God.” Daniel 6:23

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Community Plant Swap - Sept 5

Belton Public Library Community Plant Swap is coming up, and we can't wait to see what you bring! Join us for a morning of trading plants, sharing tips, and connecting with fellow green thumbs. Come ready to swap and talk all things plant-related! Bring seeds, cutting or extra house plants to trade. 10:00 a.m. to noon at 301 E. 1st Ave, Belton.

Soggy Doggie Day - Sept 12

Pups help end the Splash Pad Season in Belton. Right after Harris Community Park's Splash Pad closes to humans for the season, we fence it off and let dogs in! For more information and rules visit beltontexas.gov/departments/parks_and_recreation

Bacon, Blues & Brews Festival - Sept 25-26

Belton's Bacon, Blues & Brews Festival is a celebration of great food, live music, and community spirit in the heart of downtown Belton. This festival brings together the smoky aroma of bacon-inspired creations, the soulful sounds of blues music, and a wide selection of craft brews and beverages for a day packed with flavor and fun. Enjoy performances from talented musicians, explore unique vendors, sample bacon-themed dishes, and experience the welcoming atmosphere that makes Belton special. Whether you're a blues enthusiast, a foodie, a craft beer fan, or simply looking for a great day out with family and friends, Bacon, Blues & Brews offers something for everyone. For more information visit beltontexas.gov

NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) will meet both on **TUESDAY**, Aug. 11th and Aug. 25th at 6:30pm at the Temple VA Hospital. Use the entrance on the Valet parking side of the hospital and take the elevator to the 5th floor -Conference Room 5G31. Both care-givers, supporters and those suffering from mental illness are welcome to join us for mutual support and sharing of information. For more information, call 254-771-3638.

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

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

Marine Corp League will meet the third Tuesday of each month at VFW 3859. Dinner is served at 6:30 p.m. and meeting will begin at 7:00 p.m. 201 VFW Dr, Harker heights, Tx 76548. Email commandant@mc11249tx.com for more information.

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

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

Bell County Historical Commission holds their meetings on the fourth Monday of every month at 6 p.m. in the historical Bell County Court House, 101 E. Central Ave in Belton. 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 similar 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 katshookandneedle@gmail.com. Anyone interested in joining the local chapter of the Crochet Guild of America will also need to join the National Crochet Guild of America. Visit www.crochet.org for details.

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

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

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

Community Information

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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English Maids, in Waco and Belton, locally owned, celebrates 20 years of business. Begun by Kay English, her daughters, Lauren English-Thurman, and Elizabeth English, now run the company. They sweep their clients off their feet by providing the highest level of quality cleaning, sanitation, and customer communication.

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

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

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

Commerce, the Temple Chamber of Commerce, and the Harker Heights Chamber of Commerce.

Expert cleaning advice for your home provided on the English Maids blogs. August’s blog explains how to keep kitchen cabinets clean while avoiding damaging the finish, and how often the inside of cabinets and drawers need to be cleaned. July’s post details the health benefits of clean doors and windows, along with how to clean them. June’s post tells how easy it is to clean a mirror, and what not to do if it’s an antique. To read these and more, visit englishmaids.biz/blogs/.

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

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



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