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BELTON JOURNAL/Jack Freedman

ABOVE LEFT: Jay White and the Blues Commanders perform. **ABOVE RIGHT:** A boy watches his pig win the pig race.

Food, Music, and Fun Highlight Belton's Bacon, Blues, & Brews Festival

By Jack Freedman
The Belton Journal

From Friday, Sept. 25 to Saturday, Sept. 26, the City of Belton hosted its 10th annual Bacon, Blues, & Brews festival and the historic downtown square. People and families from all across Bell County showed up to experience good food, exclusive vendors, and craft beer while enjoying the stylings of talented guest blues musicians. The event was not ticketed and there was no entry fee.

As guests entered the square, they were immediately hit by the intoxicating aroma of the meat served by the various food trucks. The trucks sold a variety of dishes, from barbecue to ice cream to sandwiches to fair food, most of which involved bacon in some capacity. A food truck award ceremony was held at 5 p.m. on Saturday. Other vendors sold their homemade beer and wine. HEB was one of the main sponsors. Employees offered bottles of water to the thirsty attendees.

"We need to make sure everyone stays hydrated," the HEB employees said.

While the guests went about the festival, there were a total of six bands who performed. These were the 1st Cavalry Division Brass Band, the South Austin Moonlighters, the Peterson Brothers, Jay White and the Blues Commanders, ZZ Tex, and Texas Flood. Each band performed blues music with their own styles, often mixing genres including jazz, rock, and country. Attendees were able to put their lawn chairs on the grass in front of the courthouse and listen to the bands.

"This is our first time in Belton, and we really enjoyed it," Chris Beall, lead guitarist and vocalist of the South Austin Moonlighters, said. "If they invite us back next year, we'll take it." "There was a lot of good food, especially barbecue," Holly Carr, an attendee, said. "A lot of people were really engaged in the music."

In addition to the food trucks, there were numerous vendors who sold homemade goods. These ranged from clothes to wood carvings to novelties. Some vendors even sold snacks such as beef jerky, salsa, jelly and cheese.

In addition to food and live music, there were a variety of small competitions for contestants to take part in. On Friday at 7, a youth pig racing contest was held. Children between the ages of 5 and 10 were allowed to race mechanical pigs across a table. The winning child was allowed to keep his pig. The following day there were three pig calling contests based on age.

The festival took place around the Bell County Courthouse and blocked off Huey Rd. and Independence District. Despite this, the restaurants on those streets were still open and available to the attendees. The Beltonian Theater remained open and held a showing of "The Blues Brothers" at 7 p.m. during both days.

The festival had a great turnout and was loved by many. Beltonians look forward to the 11th annual Bacon, Blues, & Brews.

Hernandez accepts leadership position at Killeen Chamber of Commerce

By David Stone
The Belton Journal



Courtesy photo

Long-time executive director, Cynthia Hernandez to head Killeen chamber and EDC

After more than 20 years of serving the Belton Economic Development Corporation, Executive Director Cynthia Hernandez is stepping down to accept the president/CEO position with the Greater Killeen Chamber of Commerce.

She is also expected to head the Killeen EDC, which is closely tied with the Killeen Chamber.

"My last day at Belton EDC is Oct. 16, and my first day in Killeen is Nov. 2," Hernandez said.

To celebrate her service to Belton and the local economy, Hernandez will be honored with a reception on Wednesday, Oct. 7, at Tirzah, 115 N East. The reception will run from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. Tirzah is a venue for special occasions and celebrations.

"I'm proud of my accomplishments, but the work is a product of many people and partnerships," she said. "We had major announcements, built relationships with our industries, supported business expansions, invested millions in infrastructure, and found creative ways to market Belton and attract new investment."

"It was in the company visits, the grand openings and the full parking lots that I felt a great sense of pride," Hernandez added. "Our work helped create opportunities for individuals and families, and I am grateful to have had a role in these efforts."

Brandon Bozon, a member of Belton ISD's Board Budget Committee and former chief financial officer at Temple College and director of finance for the city of Belton, said the Belton EDC has "benefited tremendously from Cynthia's 20 years of service, including 15 years of leadership as executive director."

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Bell County, nation sees an uptick in rabies cases

By David Stone
The Belton Journal

The Centers for Disease Control & Prevention issued a health-alert advisory last month warning of a nationwide increase in human exposures to rabid or potentially rabid animals, and according to Lt. Jared Alton, director of Bell County Animal Control and the Belton animal shelter, there has been an uptick in rabies cases locally.

Alton discussed rabies in Bell County during Monday's Animal Control Advisory Board meeting at the historic courthouse in downtown Belton.

"We have seen an increase in the need to send wild animals for testing," he said. "We have sent a couple of bats, a raccoon, and a skunk, and some pet owners have had to place their animals in quarantine due to the pet coming in contact with the wild animal."

According to Alton, quarantine times range from 10 days to 90 days depending on the type of exposure and the animal's vaccination status.

"To my knowledge, we have not had any cats or dogs that have tested positive," he said. The only real prevention is the rabies vaccine, which state law requires. The only testing for rabies requires that an animal be euthanized and its head and part of its spinal cord sent to the state lab for testing."

The CDC received 17 percent more rabies-related inquiries in July and August of this year compared to the same period in 2025. Phar-

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Day of Service Helps Belton Church Members Serve Neighbors in Need

By Jack Freedman
The Belton Journal

On Sunday, Sept. 27th, the Belton Church of Christ completed its second Sent to Serve Sunday. Over 200 churchgoers broke into groups and went to community service projects in the city. Every church member was sent out to work in one way or another according to their own ability.

"I helped coordinate the groups with two others, then I led a group who did some tree trimming," Darren Reese, lead minister at Belton Church of Christ, said. "Our group had seven people, while others had between four and twenty."

Most of the able-bodied men and women did manual labor such as yard work or home repair. A few of the members who could not go stayed behind to prepare lunch and write thank you letters to the groups that were served. The church has a sewing ministry who worked on repairing clothes.

"Today we framed a door and removed a wall at a house on Leon St.," Rick Espinosa, who led the construction, said. "A disabled child lives there and he has trouble getting around, so we worked to make his house more accessible. This way, he can get from the bedroom to the bathroom easily and medical personnel can get around."

While most of the jobs involved working with people associated with the church, some groups went to schools and nursing homes.

"I was asked to build a flower cart for an assisted living center," Danny Taylor, a church member, said. "There were just five of us, and we were led by Harry Scott. He did all the design work and we couldn't have done it without him."

Even the children of the church were invited to go out and serve, being given simpler jobs that were attuned to them.



Courtesy photo

Volunteers constructed a new fence on the Day of Service

"We had two or three families with kids join us, so we had them do things that they could do," Ann Reese, children's minister, said. "We went to the home of an older lady and they raked leaves, put down mulch, and organized her shed. There was another group who

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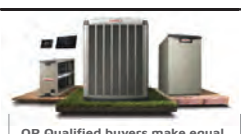












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Bell County responding to statewide voter registration backlog

Special to the Journal

On Thursday, September 24, the Bell County Election Office learned the local impact of the Secretary of State backlog of voter registration applications affecting elections offices across the state. Bell County officials are working to address the issue as quickly and as thoroughly as possible.

"This is a time of year when our office is always fully engaged," Elections Administrator Desi Roberts said. "We will be everything necessary to make sure this issue doesn't negative impact Bell County voters."

Bell County has received a database of 12,776 applications, which were submitted to the Secretary of State from the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS). It is not clear how many of these applications are from unique individuals or new Bell County voters. Some of these backlogged applications appear to date back to the fall of 2025.

Bell County is moving to address this backlog of applications as quickly as possible, while ensuring that

every application and voter is processed accurately.

The Bell County Elections Office has been approved to pursue additional short-term staffing and to extend overtime as necessary to process all backlogged applications.

The office is also actively working to secure resources and establish systems to ensure a smooth election for any individuals impacted by the statewide backlog.

If voters wish to confirm whether or not they are currently registered to vote in Bell County, they can call or visit the Bell County Elections Office or visit VoteTexas.gov. The Bell County Elections Office is located at 550 E. 2nd Ave in Belton. Its phone number is 254.933.5774.

Treasured photos find a showplace in Crafted Memories



BELTON JOURNAL/Michele Weisman
Owner, Amar Chakraborty, unboxing a Crafted Memories album.

By Michele Weisman
The Belton Journal

Belton resident and entrepreneur of Crafted Memories, Amar Chakraborty, had a dream of bringing premium photo album keepsakes to Central Texas. Raising his family in Belton, in 2024, attended his son and daughter-in-law's wedding in India. Seeing the larger, lay-flat, quality wedding albums in Dec. 2025, he started his company.

Retired from the IT industry, Chakraborty said, "I came up with an idea of opening an album company, where I will bring a new style of album here in the U.S."

He also found that photographers don't always offer an album in their package, leaving a newlywed couple with images but no storyline and physical album.

Crafted Memories sets itself apart, beyond the cover selection of gem, leather, wood, and more. Uploading photos to a site is not the end of the story.

"I'm not competing with the big companies. We're selling a service. If you take 200 photos, 300 photos, you give us the photos. We take those photos, curate those photos, and then sequence it. We have the designers design the whole thing."

Next is the consultation process with the client, which can be in person or through a videoconference.

"They will go over every photo, page by page, and get the approval from the customers."

Albums fall into two categories: premium and photo book. The largest is 12 X 18 and called the panoramic view. The smaller and for family functions, graduations, maternity, and sports. Albums come with a box, either a paper box that is printed on the front and back with photos or, what they call a custom wooden box with a ribbon inside to help lift out the album.

Chakraborty explained they use archival-grade, library-quality paper with flush-mount pages and professional lay flat binding built to last for generations

Chakraborty said, "If you go to my website, you can see that each product has a paper type."

Feedback from customers has been positive, such as a man who worked with Crafted Memories to capture his girlfriend's trip to Paris.

Chakraborty said, "Twelve photos is not even twelve pages. I changed the photos in focusing on it, making a smaller, different type, position or portion of the photos. And make multiple photos. So, from the twelve, I made twenty-five photos. And that's how I created the whole fifteen page album."

Crafted Memories works with legacy, restoration, students, athletes, individuals, families, and professional photographers. Chakraborty explained that whether your photos are in a box or on your phone, they can help you tell your story. Chakraborty encourages people to put their family photos into an album that tells the story of the event, create conversation with family and friends. For photographers, a page is coming for a list of professionals to get listed.

Chakraborty suggests that brides and grooms request RAW files from their photographers, so images can be enlarged without losing quality.

Photographers can work with Crafted Memories at a discount.

Chakraborty encourages people to visit his website where many questions can be answered. "Everything is clearly described in every step." craftedmemories.us or contact Crafted Memories Photo Albums LLC at 1 (512) 522-4521.

'Pups' taking break from extreme heat

By David Stone
The Belton Journal

The Belton Police Department's program to strengthen relationships with local residents — especially those with tail-wagging family members — is on hold until cooler weather arrives in Central Texas.

Pups on Patrol formed late last summer after about 20 Beltonians and their dogs met at Sly Fox Coffeehouse for a new effort to prevent crime and grow partnerships in the community between residents and police.

"I have two dogs, and one of them is like a magnet — people gravitate toward him," said Belton Police Chief Larry Berg. "I saw how many people were attracted to him and come up to us, and I thought dogs would be a good way for people to interact. Once the weather levels out, we will make gatherings a regular thing."

"With the extreme heat, there have been no get-togethers for Pups on Patrol," Berg said. "I continue to use my pair of Presa Canario dogs as ambassadors and to meet people, engage the community and listen to our residents, but until the weather cools down, I don't foresee any planned events."

Pups on Patrol is a crime prevention initiative that helps people develop situational awareness and fosters relationships.

"This is geared toward a social hour with police," Berg said. "We use the time to throw out safety tips. It's a fun time for police and the community to get to know each other. We will meet at one of our fine local parks, and people are encouraged to bring their dogs."

According to Berg, Pups on Patrol encourages dog walkers to report anything suspicious they may see while out walking their animals.

"I'm hoping it expands and grows," he said. "This can be a great crime prevention tool. There are no sign-ups or registrations — just come to the meetings. It's really informal."

In addition to reporting suspicious activities, Berg said it's important for dog walkers to learn how to stay safe while on foot. They should be alert and aware of their surroundings while on a stroll.

While hundreds of communities around the country have similar programs, Belton's Pups on Patrols is a local effort to bring the community together and build a connection with the police department.

"It's another way to keep the community safe," Berg added. "In addition to crime prevention, the program allows everyone to share their common love for dogs — it's a beneficial program."

Rabies - From Page A1

macy data through early September of this year showed a 33 percent increase in the use of licensed rabies vaccines and a 76 percent increase in human rabies immune globulin products compared to 2025.

Bell County and federal health officials confirmed a rabid raccoon east of Temple in late June 2026, The raccoon was captured on Creek Road near FM 2086 on the east side of Temple. Animal control collected the animal and tests confirmed the positive rabies diagnosis.

Bell County Animal Control and the Texas Department of State Health Services warned local residents to watch for symptoms in pets and wildlife,

As of mid-September, Texas has reported roughly 383 animal rabies cases statewide, primarily driven by bats, skunks, foxes and raccoons.

Alton urges residents not to touch wild animals, especially those acting aggressive, sick or unusually tame. He also urges pet owners and ranchers to have up-to-date rabies vaccination.

If bitten or scratched by a mammal, wash the wound immediately and contact your health-care provider.

Also at Monday's meeting, Alton discussed needs at the Bell County Animal Shelter.

"We had a new roof put on the shelter last week," he said. "We are working on getting more shade in the back play yards and need to strengthen some fencing around the shelter."

"Our big goal for the next three months is to get new software for record keeping and animal tracking," he said. "We are also working to get our new hires trained and adjust our operating hours to allow more time where we can be open to the public."

"Our capacity at the shelter is 48 dogs and 50 cats, but we are averaging more than 170 animals in our care each day," he said. "When I left the shelter (Friday) we had just over 100. We have been able to decrease our euthanasia numbers over the past year."

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OBITUARIES

Goates

Bobby Dale Goates
February 7, 1951 – September 23, 2026

Bobby Dale Goates, of Temple, Texas, passed away on September 23, 2026, in Temple, Texas. He was born on February 7, 1951, in Gorman, Texas.

Dale will be remembered as a hardworking man who worked for the BNSF Railroad as an Engineer for 40 years, and as someone who found joy in life's simple pleasures. He loved traveling to the mountains, and those who knew him will remember his spirited personality. He was a jokester who enjoyed picking on people in fun, and he cherished time with his family and friends. He also had a fondness for margaritas, which suited his warm and lively way of enjoying life.

His faith and fellowship were important parts of his life. Dale was a member of the Mason-Knob Creek Lodge #401 and also a member of Soldiers of the Cross Church in Nolanville, Texas. These connections reflected the values he carried throughout his life and the communities that were meaningful to him.

Above all, Dale loved his family. He is survived by his wife, Charlotte Goates, with whom he shared a marriage that began on July 17, 1971. Their years together were the foundation of a family that brought him deep pride and lasting happiness. He is also survived by his son, Robert Goates, and spouse, Kristi; his daughter, Tracie Benson, and spouse, Kenneth; and his sister, Brenda McGuire, and Brenda's spouse, Kenneth. He also leaves behind eight grandchildren, Kenneth, Kelcie, Troy, Kaylee, Kylie, Emma, Eli, and Renee, 3 nieces, Leann Bowden, Rhonda Jerigan, Kelly Hosch, Jeffery McGuire, each of whom was a treasured part of his life.

Dale's memory will live on in the laughter he inspired, in the love he gave so freely, and in the many moments shared with those closest to him. He will be deeply missed and lovingly remembered by all who had the blessing of knowing him.

A funeral service will be held on September 29, 2026, at 11:00 a.m. with Visitation beginning at 10:00 a.m. at Young's Daughters Funeral Home & Bereavement Center, 4235 E. US Hwy 190, Temple, Texas 76501. Burial will follow from 12:30 p.m. to 1:30 p.m. at Greathouse Cemetery, 2343 East FM 93 near State Hwy 95, Temple, Texas 76502.

In lieu of flowers, the family asks that you donate to a charity of your choice in Bobby Dale's honor.

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

National Night Out is Oct. 6 in Belton

By David Stone
The Belton Journal

Residents of neighborhoods throughout Belton will be celebrating National Night Out on Oct. 6 with block parties throughout the city, according to Sgt. Wayne Cooley of the Belton Police Department.

National Night Out is an annual event held across Texas and the nation on the first Tuesday in October. In Belton, the celebration runs from 5:30 to 8 p.m. on Tuesday night.

"The event promotes partnerships between police and residents and encourages connected communities where neighbors look out for one another and work together to reduce crime and fear," Cooley said.

"Belton has been participating in National Night Out since 2005," he said. "Nationally, the program officially began in 1984."

"The Belton Police Department takes pride in the partnerships we have with our community," he stated. "Our mission of providing excellent service through partnerships that build trust, reduce crime, create a safe environment, and enhance the quality of life in our community, is paramount."

"National Night Out is one of many avenues for Beltonians to connect with the department and enjoy the wonderful community we have," Cooley said.

There will be nine National Night Out block parties at the Belton celebration. They are:

- Dawson Ranch (Chisholm Trail at Spring Canyon)
- River Place (1700 Canyon Springs Dr.)
- Legend Oaks (Legend Oaks Cul-de-Sac)
- Cliff Drive (Cul-de-Sac on Cliff Dr.)
- Belton Housing Authority (Mitchell Circle Park)
- Circle Drive (Middle of Circle Drive)
- Chisholm Trail Senior Village Pavilion
- Coronas/Gin/Scores (Lower Parking Lot)
- Belle Oaks/Helping Hands (800 Shady Ln)

National Night Out brings together residents, police officers, local organizations, and elected officials, according to Cooley.

The event builds community partnerships and reminds criminals that police and residents are united.

Belton residents can get involved by attending neighborhood block parties, decorating front yards, changing exterior lights to blue bulbs, or using other creative ways to show neighborhood unity.







Zebra mussels here to stay in local lakes

By David Stone
The Belton Journal

Zebra mussels continue to spread in Texas lakes and unfortunately, they are likely here to stay.

"Statewide, zebra mussels are spreading," said Dr. Jason L Locklin, managing editor of the Texas Journal of Science and dean of Temple College's Division of Natural Sciences. He has been studying the effects of the invasive species for many years.

"Texas Parks & Wildlife now reports the mussels in 40 Texas lakes, with 36 of those considered fully infested," he said. "So, from that standpoint, the problem is continuing to expand geographically. When Stillhouse Hollow was first infested, it was just the seventh lake in the state to be described as fully infested."

"Locally, however, I would not describe it as a population that simply gets larger every year," Locklin added. "One of the interesting things we have found in our research at Belton Lake and Stillhouse is that these populations can fluctuate quite a bit. We have documented rapid growth during favorable periods followed by substantial declines during the hottest part of the summer."

"Our work suggests that the very warm conditions in Central Texas can put considerable physiological stress on zebra mussels, leading to massive die-offs for populations in Texas," he said. "That doesn't mean they are disappearing from our lakes though. They are firmly established and continue to reproduce. It does mean their population dynamics here may be somewhat different from populations farther north where most zebra mussel research historically has been conducted."

According to Locklin, zebra mussels were first discovered in Belton Lake in September 2013, although the sizes found at that time suggested they were probably introduced sometime in 2012. They were reported in Stillhouse Hollow during the summer of 2016.

"We really can't say exactly how they arrived in either lake," Locklin said. "The most likely way zebra mussels move from one lake to another, however, is boats transporting them unknowingly from one infested lake to another."

"Adult mussels can attach themselves to boats, anchors and other surfaces, but their larvae are microscopic and can also be

See **MUSSELS** Page A4

Day of Service - From Page A3

went to a tortoise farm and helped rake leaves. We want the kids to be an active part of our ministry, because it's important to instill Jesus' values in their lives."

When the churchgoers returned at noon, they all had sandwiches provided by the older women. Most of the members parted ways after lunch, but some of them stayed behind to do work around the church building.

"After lunch, I went to pick up brush and debris to make sure what needs to be picked up gets picked up," Derran said.

Derran plans to hold another Sent to Serve Sunday, though a date has not been set.







Three Belton ISD seniors earn national merit semifinalist honors

Special to the Journal

Top Scholars Pair Academic Excellence With Leadership, Service and Ambitious Plans for the Future. Three Belton ISD seniors have been named semifinalists in the 2027 National Merit Scholarship Program, earning recognition among some of the nation's highest-achieving high school students.

Belton High School senior Anya Jinadatha and Lake Belton High School seniors Shreya Muni and Guru Rajkumar earned the distinction based on their performance on the Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT).

For the three seniors, the recognition represents years of academic effort, consistency and support from family, friends and their school communities.

Jinadatha, daughter of Ushma Shah and Chetan Jinadatha of Belton, said learning she was named a semifinalist was especially meaningful because it confirmed that her preparation paid off.

"I was happily surprised," Jinadatha said. "It made me really happy to know my hard work paid off and that all the people who supported me got to see this happy outcome."







Courtesy Photo

ABOVE: Anya Jinadatha of Belton High School earned the distinction based on her performance on the Preliminary SATNational Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSATNMSQT). **MIDDLE:** Guru Rajkumar of Lake Belton High School earned the distinction based on his performance on the Preliminary SATNational Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSATNMSQT). **ABOVE RIGHT:** Shreya Muni of Lake Belton High School earned the distinction based on her performance on the Preliminary SATNational Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSATNMSQT).

Jinadatha credits consistency with helping her reach this point, particularly focusing her study time on areas where she needed improvement. She also credits her parents with encouraging her to work toward the recognition and her younger sister with giving her another reason to set a strong example.

"Knowing that whatever I do is going to influence how she does in the future, I wanted to be the one that would inspire her to do well, too," Jinadatha said.

At BHS, Jinadatha participates in varsity tennis and golf, serves as president of HOSA–Future Health Professionals and vice president of the National Honor Society, and is a member of Astra and the UIL Academics team. After graduation, she plans to pursue a premed pathway, potentially majoring in biology, neuroscience, or public health. Her long-term goal is to become a physician and conduct medical research.

For Muni, daughter of Sarla Patil and Vishe Muni of Belton, the National Merit recognition provided validation for the work she invested in reaching the milestone.

"I enjoyed having the comfort of knowing that I actually put work and effort into something worthwhile, and I got something back out of it," Muni said.

Muni said her parents have been among her greatest influences, not simply telling her to work hard but demonstrating through their own careers that there can be different paths to success.

"They've led by example a lot," Muni said. "They both taught me that there are multiple ways to succeed and that you don't necessarily have to work a certain way, but you can still achieve success."

At LBHS, Muni participates in cross country and holds officer positions in the Belton Youth Advisory Commission, National Honor Society, HOSA, Business Professionals of America (BPA) and Astra. She plans to complete premed requirements in college before attending medical school and ultimately becoming a physician.

Rajkumar, son of Aruna Josyula and Rajkumar Arumugam of Temple, viewed the semifinalist designation as an affirmation of the academic goals he has set for himself.

"It's an affirmation that I'm doing the right thing," Rajkumar said. "I'm going along the path that I want to, and I'm meeting some of the goals that I hoped to achieve."

Rajkumar credits his parents, friends and recent graduates who shared advice with helping him along the way. He also pointed to the support of his aunt and uncle in Wisconsin as especially meaningful after moving from Wisconsin to Texas just before beginning high school.

"Just in general, the community has been very supportive of me being able to be the best I can in academics," Rajkumar said.

At LBHS, Rajkumar serves as captain of UIL Science and Math and participates in HOSA, BPA and National Honor Society. He plans to study biophysics before pursuing an M.D./Ph.D. program, with the goal of becoming a physician-scientist. He is considering universities including the University of Michigan, the University of Texas at Austin, Duke University, Carnegie Mellon University and Princeton University.

As National Merit semifinalists, Jinadatha, Muni and Rajkumar now have the opportunity to continue in the competition for finalist standing and National Merit Scholarships.

Their recognition reflects not only exceptional academic achievement but also the drive to pursue opportunities beyond the classroom. From medicine and research to leadership, service and extracurricular involvement, all three students have built high school experiences that pair academic excellence with a commitment to their communities.

Council OKs pay adjustment for new Belton police officers

By David Stone
The Belton Journal

Turnover in the Belton Police Department is at an all-time high — there have been eight officer vacancies since January. To mitigate this challenge, City Council this week has approved a pay-scale boost for entry-level police positions.

Belton Police Chief Larry Berg said he believes the pay increase is a step in the right direction.

"It is difficult to be competitive with starting pay $12,000-plus behind neighboring cities," Berg said. "Through the process, human resources and city management has been very supportive. So has our City Council."

City Manager Sam Listi said the need to make a change to entry-level scale for police officer positions was discussed at a June 18 Strategic Planning meeting.

"This was also discussed during the recent budget process, with the decision made at that time to defer this action until after budget adoption," he added.

The Fiscal Year 2027 budget was approved earlier this month, prompting council to consider and adopt the pay-scale adjustment Tuesday.

"Our proposed solution to the issue is to adjust the entry level positions by adjusting the starting salary to $70,000," Listi said. "Officers will remain at this step for 6 years until they are eligible to move to the next step in year 7."

"Also included is the cost of labor adjustment of 1.5 percent that we added for FY 2027 for the remaining steps," he said. "Officers receive their step increase each anniversary year."

The city hopes to make these scale adjustment Oct. 3.

Belton PD has lost 18 officers since the start of FY 2024, and officials say pay is the primary reason for departures.

According to Mike Rodgers, Belton's director of finance, the new pay scale will have an annual cost of $130,000.

Under the pay scaled adopted this week, starting pay for cadets will be $60,000, and pay for officers will range from $70,000 to $79,855. Pay for police sergeants will range from $80,652 to $91,250. Pay for Lieutenants will range from $94,143 to $103,917, and pay for captains will range from $106,604 to $117,672.

The chief of police's salary will range from $123,629 to $136,465.

In 2025, starting pay started at $50,001 for cadets, $61,460 for officers, $79,460 for sergeants, $92,751 for lieutenants, $105,030 for captains and $121,803 for the chief of police.

Wayne Cooley, National Night Out corrdinator for Belton Police Department, spoke about the upcoming National Nigh Out event on Tuesday, Oct. 6. He said there will be events all over town that night. He said National Night Out gives the community a chance to get to know police officers.

Mussels - From Page A3

transported in small amounts of water left in a boat, LiveWell, or other equipment. That is why TPWD emphasizes 'Clean, Drain and Dry' whenever removing a boat from a lake where zebra mussels occur."

Locklin said zebra mussels are highly disruptive to infested lakes.

"There are really three concerns: ecological, economic and recreational," he said. "Ecologically, zebra mussels are extremely efficient filter feeders. They remove large amounts of plankton from the water, which changes the food web and puts them in competition with native organisms. They can also attach directly to native mussels and interfere with their feeding, movement and survival.

"Economically, they can colonize water intake pipes and other infrastructure and become very expensive to control. And recreationally, their shells can be extremely sharp and can easily do some tissue damage to hands and feet quickly."

"They aren't poisonous," he said. "The main direct concern is their shells. Zebra mussel shells are extremely sharp, and when large numbers accumulate along shorelines or cover rocks and other underwater surfaces, they can easily cut bare feet. I've seen some pretty significant scars that are a result of zebra mussels. The same thing can happen to a dog's paws. That's one reason wearing water shoes is a good idea in heavily infested areas."

"They can certainly alter aquatic ecosystems," Locklin continued. "The effects on fish are complicated and can vary among species and lakes. I would hesitate to say that zebra mussels simply make a lake bad for fish. They change how energy moves through the ecosystem, and some organisms can be negatively affected more than others."

Once zebra mussels have become established throughout a reservoir, there really isn't a practical way to eradicate them, according to Locklin. Control measures can be used around water intakes and other infrastructure, but treating an entire reservoir without harming everything else in it isn't realistic.

"That is why prevention is so important," he said. "Cleaning, draining and thoroughly drying boats and equipment before moving them to another lake is still one of the most important things individuals can do. We may not be able to remove zebra mussels from Belton or Stillhouse, but we can reduce the likelihood of carrying them into lakes that don't have them yet."

"This is currently our only mechanism to mitigate these invasive mussels."

Moore named interim director after Van Til's resignation

By David Stone
The Belton Journal



Tina Moore

Belton's Assistant Director of Development Services Tina Moore has been named interim department director effective Oct. 1. She will replace Bob Van Til, who has announced his resignation after serving nearly 10 years as grants and special projects coordinator and director of development services.

Van Til's last day was Sept. 30.

"I look forward to continuing to work with the developers and residents of Central Texas for the betterment of the Belton community," Moore said.

Moore served as a city planner in Belton for six years before she was appointed assistant director of development services in May 2025.

Previously, she was employed for 20 years with the city of Sierra Vista, Arizona, in administrative, communications, and city planner positions.

Moore is an AICP (American Institute of Certified Planners) certified planner with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Business Administration from the University of Arizona.

"Tina is an important and productive part of the city's planning and development process," said Belton City Manager Sam Listi, who named Moore to the interim position. "I am confident she will perform in this role with similar professionalism."

A professional search for Belton's next director of development services will be conducted during the first quarter of 2027.



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Hernandez- From Page A1

"I had the pleasure of working with Cynthia as a colleague during my five years with the city and later as a member of the BEDC Board," he said.

"Cynthia's accomplishments are extensive," Bozon said. "Broadly, her tenure has included the recruitment of new industries and employers to Belton, as well as assistance and retention efforts supporting long-standing employers that have provided jobs and opportunities to generations of Beltonians."

"During Cynthia's tenure, new businesses have filled much of the Belton Business Park, while several existing employers have expanded within the original Belton Industrial Park," he added.

"Cynthia has also played a significant role in positioning Belton for future economic growth through strategic land acquisition and redevelopment," Bozon said. "She devoted extensive effort to the redevelopment of the former Rockwool Superfund site, helping transform a challenging property into an economic development opportunity."

Hernandez has led negotiations to secure additional land along both I-14 and I-35 for the development of future business parks, ensuring that Belton will continue to have sites available for new investment and job creation.

Her tenure has also included critical infrastructure expansion efforts that support both existing businesses and future development, including water and wastewater extensions along the I-35 and I-14 corridors, the expansion of Loop 121, and the Avenue D extension into the Belton Business Park.

"Cynthia has also played an important role in downtown revitalization efforts, including the reconstruction of East Street and the development and rollout of the Imagine Belton plan," Bozon continued.

"Just as importantly, Cynthia has been instrumental in strengthening BEDC's partnerships with the city of Belton, Bell County, Dog Ridge Water Supply Corporation, the Belton Area Chamber of Commerce, the Central Texas Council of Governments, the Texas Department of Transportation, and the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality. Those relationships will continue to benefit Belton well beyond her tenure."

"At the Oct. 6 EDC Board meeting, the board anticipates taking action to name an Interim executive director who will step into the role upon Cynthia's departure," Bozon said. "We also expect to begin the recruitment process for a permanent executive director shortly thereafter."

Belton City Manager Sam Listi said Hernandez worked with the BEDC Board and the city to extend city infrastructure to enhance economic development.

These BEDC-funded infrastructure projects totaled more than $11 million from 2016 to 2026. They include:

- 2016 – Sparta Road Improvements: $ 310,000
- 2017 – COB Street Maintenance Plan: $ 33,622
- 2017 – Capitol Way Sewer: $ 50,000
- 2019 – East Street Improvements: $ 530,791
- 2019 – Loop 121 Expansion: $ 843,340
- 2020 – IH-35 Waterline: $1,083,322
- 2025 – Avenue D Extension: $2,660,611
- 2025 – IH-14 Wastewater Extension: $3,428,500
- 2025 – Pearl Street Improvements: $1,081,326
- 2025 – Capitol Way/Grove Road Improvements: $ 246,796

2026 – Rockwool Infrastructure (Grant Match): $ 800,000

Under her guidance, BEDC also developed a Visionary Partnership of redevelopment for Belton's core:

The Imagine Belton Concept Plan led to creation of multiple Zoning Districts, with these objectives to enhance future development:

Investments within the core of the Belton Community

Improve connections into Belton Downtown

Utilize characteristics of Belton, specifically Nolan Creek

According to Listi, BEDC pursued industrial development and job creation:

- Developed/sold virtually all of BEDC Business Park 200 acres.
- Managed, marketed, and sold former Rockwool Superfund Site, parcels, following EPA cleanup and conveyance from city.
- Recommended incentives to prospective businesses, reflecting their investment and job creation in Belton.

"All of us with the city of Belton wish Cynthia the best in this new opportunity for her economic development career," Listi said.

Hernandez said she would greatly miss her Belton EDC job and the folks she worked with.

"Our staff, the BEDC Board, the Belton City Council, the city of Belton staff, our neighbors at the Belton Chamber of Commerce, and so many community partners, I could go on and on," she said.

"Everyone's heart is in serving this community, and it has been such an honor to be a part of this Belton team."

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Morgan's Point tortilla maker getting ready for holiday rush

By David Stone
The Belton Journal




Courtesy Photo

ABOVE LEFT: One of Primo Tortillas traditional corn tortillas is dressed and ready to eat. **ABOVE RIGHT:** Primo Tortillas green-tinted flour tortillas are made with avocados. Also pictured is the company's jalapeño and serrano red-roasted salsa.

The unique flavor of James Cozzens flour tortillas was discovered by accident. He was trying to -hide vegetables from his picky-eating son — James made his tortillas out of whole avocados, and the kid woofed them down.

Today, Primo Tortilla of Morgan's Point Resort continues to sell those green-tinted tortillas, but Jame has added other products to his line as well. He also makes a traditional corn tortilla, red-roasted salsa with jalapeño and serrano peppers, a green cooking salsa, a creamy pink habanero and beet salsa, and a non-dairy queso.

All of the Primo products are produced out of the Cozzens home.

Today, the business sells its tasty products on Facebook (Primo Tortillas) at pop-up markets in Temple, Belton and the surrounding area, and he rarely has a single tortilla left at the end of the day.

"I started selling my tortillas more than two years ago, and they really took off," Cozzens said.

"My flour tortillas are made with avocados and there's no animal fat," he added. "You can taste the avocado — I successfully disguised a healthy food inside a tortilla."

To order Primo Tortilla products via Facebook, simply message James with your requests.

Customers order several dozens every week on Facebook, and with Halloween, Thanksgiving and Christmas approaching, those numbers will go through the roof.

"We deliver only fresh tortillas — they are never frozen — we keep batches small. They are always made the day they are sold."

During the holidays, the Cozzens add baked good to their list of product.

"But, the red-roasted salsa is our biggest seller by far," James said. "We also sell a lot of tortillas, but salsas are our most popular products."

The Cozzens have recently welcomed a baby into their home, and James said that has slowed down the business to an extent. But the smell of fresh tortillas and salsa still waft from their home.

"My queso is nondairy — I try to make healthy foods that everyone can eat," he said. "I'm working on some other products."

While Primo Tortillas currently operates out of Cozzens' home, he has big plans for the future.

"I'd like to start a food truck," he said. "I'm also working to get my products into grocery stores such as H-E-B. I'm building a website, but until it's finished, I will sell my products at pop-up markets and events, and on my Facebook page.

Funny farm with a funny name

By David Stone
The Belton Journal

The farm with the funny name doesn't sell meat, milk or eggs. Instead, the 26-acres on FM 1123 is all about fun.

Screaming Goat Funny Farm is a one-of-a-kind property where visitors can cuddle Highland cows, love on pigs and goats, and enjoy peaceful animal experiences, according to farm owner Renee' Tubbs.

The farm is open by appointment only or guests can book a night in Screaming Goat's bunkhouse.

"This was never meant to become a business," Tubbs said earlier this week. "It grew from my love for the animals and from people wanting to meet them, hear their stories and enjoy them as much as I do."

"I have a lot of visitors — we love field trips," she said. "My favorite thing is watching kids interact with the animals. I don't sell any food products. My 'friends' earn their keep by entertaining people."

So what's up with that crazy name?

"The name came from my husband," Tubbs said with a grin. "I have a goat named Biscuits, and when she was a baby, she would scream anytime I wasn't with her. My husband got mad and said: 'I don't know why you don't just call this place the Screaming Goat.'"

"I laughed and said: 'I hope you mean that because I am.' It has since been referred to as Screaming Pig, Donkey or Cow — whoever's yelling for me."

"My animals are my friends," she said. "None of this was ever part of a business plan — I just have impulse-control issues when it comes to animals. After I got my cows, everyone wanted to come see them, and the farm simply evolved from there."

Let's meet some of the Screaming Goat Funny Farm residents.

"Missy Missy Moo Moo is an almost 3-year-old small Highland cow," Tubbs said. "She is a complete diva and demands everyone's attention. You cannot stand next to her without petting her — she will bump you until you do. She may allow the other animals to stand nearby for a moment, but if they interfere with her attention, she runs them off."

"Goldie is a Jersey cow. I originally got her as a recipient cow carrying an implanted embryo — Mini Pearl. Goldie is a fabulous mother and now tries to adopt every baby on the farm, including the baby goats."

"Mini Pearl will be 2 in December," Tubbs continued. "She is fabulous — and probably the cutest little fat mini Highland cow you will ever meet."

"Jethro is a Guernsey steer with special needs. He requires special food and was brought to me as a bottle baby because he could barely eat and wasn't expected to be worth anything. Goldie immediately scooped him up, nursed him and took care of him. He may look a little pathetic, but he is an absolute love bug."

"Lulu is the emu I never knew I needed," Tubbs laughed. "She loves snuggles and snacks, and spends her time with the bird herd — five ducks and two geese. They are a very lively crowd."

"We also have two donkeys. Jack is 2, and I brought him home from Oklahoma in my car when he was a tiny bottle baby. The veterinarian wasn't thrilled that I was raising him inside my house, so I got him a friend named Opal. They are now the very best of friends. They constantly pick on each other, play jokes and cause trouble."



Courtesy Photo

Renee' Tubbs, owner of Screaming Goat Funny Farm, hugs Jack, one of the many animals that call the farm home.

"I have six pigs. The first two were Kunekune piglets named Peppah and Petunia. They are 3 now, and they love belly scratches and have absolutely no problem making sure everyone knows exactly what they want."

"Since getting them, I have learned just how many pigs need to be rehomed. The other four were all brought to me by people who could no longer keep them."

"Miss Piggy was supposed to live at a petting zoo, but they decided she was too much trouble. She is only about a year old and already has arthritis. I have no idea what breed she is. She enjoys attention, but she mostly loves treats."

Anna Banana was purchased for a child, but the family didn't realize how large she would become or how much she would root up their yard," Tubbs added. "She is also about a year old and is pretty timid. She will come running for treats, but she doesn't particularly enjoy being touched."

"Big Poppa is a large potbellied pig. No one is sure how old he is, and this is at least his third home. He is very sweet and loves attention. Sylvia came with Big Poppa, but she is still scared to death and disoriented from the move. I make sure she receives a gentle pat and plenty of treats while she adjusts."

That's not all of the residents — not even close.

"I also have 10 rabbits, and every one of them was rehomed," Tubbs said. "People get rabbits because they are cute, then discover how much care and upkeep they require. One of our rabbits, Cotton, is 11 years old. She was purchased for a granddaughter when the girl was in middle school. When the granddaughter left for college, Cotton needed a new home."

"Three of the rabbits are former FFA projects," she said. "The student didn't want to sell them, so the mother compromised by bringing them here. I also have two former FFA goats whose kids didn't want them to be slaughtered."

Speaking of goats, they are another very common animal people need to rehome.

"They are adorable as babies, but they become a handful when they grow up and start getting into everything. BB is a special-needs goat, and Lucy is her friend. They were raised inside someone's home, but BB's career as a house goat ended when she ate the internet cord."

"There is a whole mess of other goats — some fainting goats, some dairy goats and some meat breeds.

"Every animal here has a place, and they are allowed to live as freely as possible," Tubbs said. "Much to my family's dismay, they are rarely penned the way farm animals are supposedly 'meant' to be."

Tubbs said Screaming Goat Funny Farm is not trying to be the biggest or fanciest farm of it's kind.

"I just want the happiest animals and the happiest guests," she said.

While most visitors just come for the day, some want to spend a night or two and hang with the animals.

"I do have a bunkhouse," Tubbs said. "It's an apartment in my party barn, and it has an open floor plan like an old bunkhouse with a few modern conveniences. It has a king bed and two twin beds, a full kitchen and a bathroom."

Tubbs offers two packages for those who want to celebrate outdoors with room to play, farm animals to meet and spaces to enjoy.

The Basic Farm Party is $150 and is similar to hosting a party at the park, except guests get to enjoy the farm and visit the animals.

The Basic package provides access to designated outdoor areas and the animals that are "feeling social that day." Guests bring their own food, drinks, decorations and party supplies.

The Basic package accommodates up to 20 people.

Tubbs also offers a Barn Party for $240. It includes up to three hours of access to the party barn, bunkhouse, tables, chairs, a full kitchen, bathroom and designated farm area. It accommodates up to 30 people.

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Keys Valley Baptist Church
4393 W. US Hwy. 190 ~ 254.939.1650

Lakeview Baptist Church
7717 N Hwy. 317 ~ 254.780.1884

Liberty Church
302 E. Central Ave. ~ 254.933.7107

Liberty in Christ Church
2520 N. Main ~ 254.939.3337

Miller Heights Baptist Church
1400 S. Wall St. ~ 254.939.1835

Ministerios Vida
2020 S. IH-35 ~ 254.624.8015

Mt. Zion United Methodist Church
218 Alexander St. ~ 254.939.5621

New Life Fellowship
706 E. 4th. ~ 254.939.8011

Nolan Valley Baptist Church
13206 W. FM 93~ 254.721.5998

Pentecostal Church of Jesus Christ
117 N. Birdwell St. ~ 254.939.0822

Redeemer Reformed Baptist Church
2378 FM 1670 ~ 818.519.9855

Tapestry Community Church of Belton
1215 S. Wall St. ~ 254.218.4008

Temple Vision de lo Alto
4357 Orchard Hill ~ 254.563.1231

Trinity Full Gospel
810 East 2nd Ave. ~ 254.939.7673

Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Bell County
1726 Morgan's Point Rd. ~ 254.778.8034

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Chalice Church - Disciples of Christ
300 N 5th St ~ (254) 773-9061

Christ Episcopal Church and School
300 N. Main St. ~ 254.773.1657

Christian Life Church
4343 West FM 93 ~ 254.939.2626

Covenant Lutheran Church
4202 Hickory Rd. ~ 254.733.7718

Eighth Street Baptist Church
215 Martin Luther King Jr. Dr. ~ 254.773.2598

First Baptist Church Temple
8015 West Adams Ave. ~ 254.773.6866

First Methodist Church Temple, GMC
102 N. 2nd Temple. TX ~ 254.773.7992

First Presbyterian Church Temple
12 West French ~ 254.773.3407

Foundation Church
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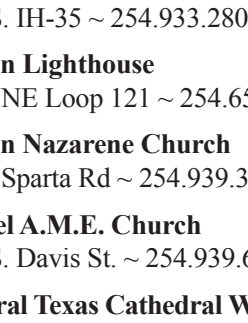
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318 N. 2nd ~ 254.770.0070

Vineyard Christian Fellowship
7425 W Adams Ave. ~ 254.778.2802

Vista Community Church
7051 Stonehollow Dr. ~ 254.774.7992

Wildwood Baptist Church
5195 Cedar Creek Rd. ~ 254.773.3177

Out Patienced by a Two Year Old



John C. Perry

Last week Sandra and I were at our beach condo in Destin for a couple of weeks. On the beach the morning of our next to last day we were enjoying one of those calm Gulf mornings when the water looks like glass and the sand feels cool enough to make you forget the heat. A young couple sat a few yards away with their daughter, Emma, two years old, according to her proud parents.

She was busy scooping and mounding sand with an oversized, bright red plastic shovel. Then, without warning, the shovel snapped. The handle parted ways with the scoop.

What caught my attention wasn't the broken toy, but Emma's reaction.

She didn't cry. She didn't run to her parents. She didn't fling the pieces down the beach in frustration.

Instead, she sat cross legged and studied the parts like a tiny engineer. First, she tried forcing the broken peg back into the handle. No luck. Then she inspected the seam, turned the blade upside down, and tried again. She managed to wedge them together, but the moment she lifted it, the scoop clattered back down.

So, she tried again. And again. And again.

Finally, after several attempts, she offered a classic shoulders to the ears toddler shrug, the universal gesture for "Well, that's life," and went right back to building her sandcastle, happily using just the blade. No drama. No tantrum. Just quiet curiosity, simple problem solving, and graceful acceptance.

Watching her, I felt a pang of guilt as I remembered my own "broken shovel" incident from three days earlier: attempting to reconnect my portable Epson printer to the condo Wi Fi.

I approached that task with all the maturity of a grown man who should know better. Which is to say: I lost my temper almost immediately and uttered a few choice words.

I pressed the setup button. I waded through the "easy connect" menu, which has never once made anything easy. I restarted the printer. I restarted the laptop and the router. By the third failed attempt, I was ready to declare the innocent little appliance a hostile foreign power.

Emma, meanwhile, faced mechanical failure with far more dignity and poise than a man many decades older could muster over a wireless signal.

Somewhere along the way, some of us trade curiosity for irritation. We lose the patience to tinker, to give a problem another turn, or to shrug and say, "Well, at least this part still works." We expect a complicated world to run seamlessly, and when a hinge sticks or a blue light blinks amber, we forget how to adapt.

A toddler on the beach reminded me that patience isn't rare; it's an instinct we all started with, only to misplace.

Little Emma adapted, learned what she could do with what was left, and got right back to work.

My printer, on the other hand, is still sitting unplugged in the corner. Winning.

And maybe that's the real lesson: patience isn't about fixing everything; it's about refusing to let the broken pieces win.

John C. Perry is the Immediate Past Lay Leader with New Life Methodist Church. They meet every Sunday at 9 a.m. (Bible Study) and 10 a.m. (Worship Service) in the Salado Middle School at 1169 Williams Rd.

Strongman competition coming to Belton on Oct. 3

By David Stone
The Belton Journal

Physical strength, live music, local vendors, food, drinks and Oktoberfest fun are coming together for a massive Central Texas event when CTX Strength Octoberfest takes over the Bell County Expo on Saturday, Oct. 3, in Belton

Built around the CTX Strongest Team competition, CTX Strength Octoberfest turns strongman competition into an all-day festival designed for athletes, families and spectators alike.

"CTX Strength Octoberfest is coming to Belton, bringing together competitive strongman events and a full-day Oktoberfest-style festival," said event director Morgan Crabtree.

"One of the biggest highlights will be the CTX Strongest Team competition,"Crabtree said. "That includes a firetruck pull and other strength events. We'll also have a Kids Strongman Competition, giving younger athletes a chance to get in on the action."

"Beyond the competition, the festival will feature live music throughout the day with Joey Green and Noah Derrick, 50-plus vendors, food trucks, beer, mead and wine, a beer stein-holding competition, and family-friendly activities," he added.

The centerpiece of the event will feature teams of three athletes competing across multiple strength events, including the truck pull, a max deadlift, a stone load, relay-style events and the Beer Run. The CTX Strongest Team competition is scheduled to begin at 10 a.m.

But, Crabtree said, the competition is only part of the day. CTX Strength Octoberfest will feature live music, the large vendor market, food trucks, and beer, mead and wine.

"The Octoberfest-inspired activities will provide plenty of fun and excitement for spectators to experience throughout the day," he said.

Festivalgoers can also put their own strength to the test during the beer stein-holding competition, sponsored by Bold Republic Brewing Company.

CTX Strength Octoberfest isn't just for adult athletes.

A Kids Strongman Competition will give younger competitors an opportunity to step into the action with age-appropriate strength challenges of their own, making the festival an event families can experience together.

Between competitions, families can explore vendors, grab food, enjoy live entertainment and watch some seriously strong athletes tackle events rarely seen up close.

Tickets are $15 at the door.

CTX Strength Octoberfest combines the atmosphere of a Central Texas fall festival with the spectacle of competitive strength sports.

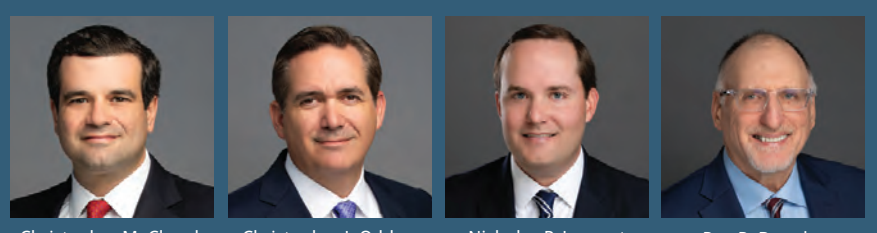
Live music starts at noon with Madstone, Billy Bone, Ryan Morrow, the KCD Band, X Factory, Scott D Taylor and 38 West. Noah Derrick starts at 7 p.m., followed by Joey Green.



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SPORTS



Lake Belton continues District 12-6A Thursday against Harker Heights



Photo Credit/ Tony Adams

By Tony Adams
The Belton Journal Sports

The Lake Belton Broncos look to bounce back after a tough District 12-6A opening loss to Waco Midway against Harker Heights Thursday night in Killeen.

Kickoff at Leo Buckley Stadium will be at 7 pm.

The Broncos played their first 6A district game this past Friday at Tiger Field, which resulted in a 58-22 loss to the Panthers.

The Panthers scored two touchdowns in each of the four quarters and picked up a safety in the third quarter.

Cort Strickland went 13-of-17 for 165 yards, four touchdowns, and an interception, and Hudson Pierce added six completions for 162 yards and a touchdown pass.

Nine different receivers caught passes, with Sloan Blackwell having hauled in two touchdowns, and Lathan Whisenton, Marcus Cain, and Jeyden Fields-Vaughn having caught a touchdown pass each.

Fields-Vaughn added 113 rushing yards and a touchdown, and Whisenton chipped in 93 rushing yards and a score.

Jessiah James was 6-of-10 passing for 161 yards and a 65-yard strike to Zion Harness. Talley Bears rushed for 86 yards and James Maiwo added 60 yards.

The Broncos average 231 yards rushing, 223.2 passing yards, and 454.2 total yards per game.

James (46-of-84, 1,081 yards, 9 TD, INT, 24-120 rushing yards TD) will get the call at quarterback. Adrian Pippins (80-266, 9 rushing TDs), James Maiwo (39-422, 5 rushing TDs), and Beard (10-86) will see time in the backfield. Harness (15-523, 6 receiving TDs), Brock Von Racjs (7-210, 2 receiving TDs), and Tanner Oliveria (6-62) will be three options in the passing lanes for James.

Defensively, the Broncos have registered 28 tackles for loss, 28 quarterback hurries, 13 passes defended, ten sacks, four interceptions, and a fumble recovery.

Gavin Carpenter (39 tackles, 27 solo, 6 TFL), Carter Mach (31 tackles, 22 solo, 3 TFL), Jamari Haye (23 tackles, 14 solo), Chris Harmon (22 tackles, 13 solo, 2 INT), and Khi Roberts (21 tackles, 3 TFL)

Harker Heights drew the first District 12-6A bye week, and a week off after a 62-28 loss at Dripping Springs Tigers. Prior to the game with the Tigers, the Knights began the season with a huge road win at Hutto (53-50), a loss to Odessa Permian (45-38) and a win against Buda Hays (42-35).

In his fourth year at the helm, Harker Heights' head coach Mark Humble's Knights allowed 596 yards of total offense, including 27 completions for 375 yards and six touchdowns through four games.

"Coach Humble has a great program at Heights," Lake Belton head coach Kirk Rogers said. "His son is a solid quarterback, and he has a great offense. The defense is also solid."

Hudson Humble was 21-of-34 for 363 passing yards, two touchdowns and three interceptions for the Knights. Ryan Taylor had a huge night, having caught ten passes for 228 yards and a receiving touchdown. Arshawn Span added 111 receiving yards and a touchdown.

Heights averages 334.8 yards passing, 212 yards rushing, and a total of 546.8 yards per contest.

Humble (86-of-125, 1,335 passing yards, 16 TDs, 7 INTs) will get the call behind center. Brandon Fowlkes, Jr. (47-334 rushing yards, 4 TDs) is the primary back, with Taylor (36-687 receiving yards, 9 TDs) and Spann (22-418 receiving yards, 5 TDs) the primary receivers in the pattern.

Heights has registered 14 tackles for loss, four sacks, four interceptions for 115 yards, five passes defended, and three fumble recoveries.

Arkeevian Thomas (42 tackles, 31 assisted, 3 TFL), Aubrey Auduze (37 tackles, ten solos, 2 TFL), and Isaiah Oliver, Jr. (32 tackles, 25 assisted) are the Knights' leading tacklers on defense.

"It will be another big battle in a short week," Rogers said. "We will be at work early to game plan for the Knights on Thursday night."

Belton ISD cross country teams make final push before district

By Clay Whittington
The Belton Journal

The end is here.

After months of training and races, the cross country regular-season schedule is reaching its conclusion with only one meet remaining before district competition arrives.

Heritage Park will host the Pro-Fit Last Chance Invitational today, and all three Belton ISD programs — Belton, Lake Belton and New Tech — will be in attendance.

The Class 5A-6A girls race is set to start at 8 a.m. with the boys following. Class 1A-4A races begin at 8:50 a.m.

The event serves as the final opportunity to improve both individually and collectively ahead of upcoming league meets, where only the top three teams and top 10 individuals extend their seasons.

Lake Belton will take part in the District 12-6A meet at Waco's Heart of Texas Soccer Complex on Oct. 15, when Belton returns to Heritage Park for the District 16-5A meet. New Tech travels to Cameron Yoe Junior High School on Oct. 12 for the District 19-3A meet.

All three schools are entering their regular-season finals with momentum after producing impressive outings last week.

The Lady Broncos emerged with the best showing of the local teams, placing sixth at the Mansfield Maberry Invitational with 177 points.

Paced by junior Lucy Loa, who posted a 30th-place time of 21 minutes, 14.37 seconds, the five scoring runners completed the five-kilometer course within 24 seconds of one another.

Lake Belton's remaining points were generated by seniors Shreya Muni (35th, 21:21.12), Sarah Gray (39th, 21:29.96) and Madelyn Rivas (40th, 21:31.07) and freshman Amara Bodeman (41st, 21:37.98). Additionally, junior Elizabeth Sandlin (43th, 21:41.60) and sophomore Sophia Garza (55th, 22:18.44) raced, but their times did not contribute to the team total.

Leander (1st, 67), Midlothian (2nd, 84) and Mansfield (3rd, 85) topped the standings, while Euless Trinity senior Ariel Simpson (1st, 19:03.85) was the individual champion.

See **CROSS COUNTRY**
Page B2

Belton volleyball looks to strengthen district standing on road swing

By Aries Ramos
The Belton Journal

The Belton Tigers head out on the road for a pivotal two match week, carrying momentum into district play as one of the district's hottest teams. Belton enters the week 9-16 overall but a strong 3-1 in district play, good for second place in the standings, a sharp turnaround for a team that sat under .500 in non district action.



On Tuesday the Tigers traveled to face Waco University, a team that has struggled to find traction all season. Waco University sits sixth in the district at 1-5 and carries an overall record of 6-23. On paper, the matchup favors Belton, but road trips against teams fighting to salvage their season can bring unpredictable energy, and the Tigers will need to guard against any letdown as they look to keep pace atop the standings.

A win would push Belton's district record to 4-1 and further cement its position near the top of the standings, while also extending the good form the Tigers have carried since district play opened. Belton has leaned on consistent play at the net and improved serve receive as the season has progressed, both of which will be tested against a Waco University squad that, despite its record, will be looking to snap out of its slide against a ranked district opponent.

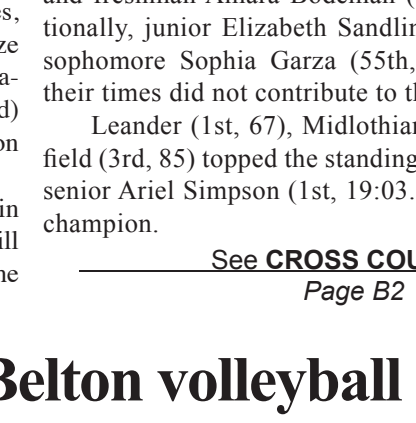
The Tigers then turn around for another road test against Legacy Ranch, a team Belton is already familiar with.

See **BELTON**,
Page B3

Lake Belton volleyball seeks turnaround in key district matchups

By Aries Ramos
The Belton Journal

Lake Belton volleyball has a busy week ahead, squaring off with District 12-5A foes Bryan and Harker Heights in a two match stretch that could shake up the standings.



The Broncos opened the week Tuesday against Bryan, a Bulldogs squad that has struggled to find its footing this season. Bryan entered the district slate sitting seventh in the standings with a 9-21 overall record and carried a three game losing streak into the matchup. For Lake Belton, the contest represented a chance to build momentum in district play after a rough patch of their own, the Broncos have dropped their last two district matches, falling 3-0 to both Temple and Midway to sit at 11-21 overall and 1-4 in district heading into the Match.

The bigger test comes Thursday when the Broncos travel to Harker Heights, a team trending in the opposite direction. The Knights have put together a strong season at 23-10 overall and currently sit fifth in district at 2-3, just percentage points from climbing higher in the standings with a strong week of their own. Harker Heights has shown it can compete with the upper tier of the district, and a matchup with Lake Belton figures to be a physical, back and forth battle between two teams looking to gain ground.

For the Broncos, the two match week carries real weight. A win over a struggling Bryan team would be an important step toward stabilizing their district record, while a strong showing against a well above .500 Harker Heights squad would signal that Lake Belton is capable of hanging with the district's better teams down the stretch. Splitting the week, or worse, dropping both matches, would leave the Broncos searching for answers as the season moves toward its final stretch.

See **LAKE**,
Page B3



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Sports Briefs

By Clay Whittington
The Belton Journal

The Tigers and Lady Tigers traveled to Killeen's Stonetree Golf Club last week for the Killeen Ellison Invitational and emerged with some strong showings.

In the boys tournament, sophomore Bennett Boland shot a 76 to place fifth, helping Belton finish sixth in the standings.

The Tigers' second team was 10th behind senior Caleb Barrett, who posted an 86.

Additionally, Zane Trusky, Reid Erskine, Kai Scarlett, Jack Mavis, Kypton Barrett, Cooper McDonald, Brody Mavis and Zack Avery represented Belton.

Mackenzie McGarry led the Lady Tigers with a personal-best 91, and she was joined on the course by teammates Ella Bralley (112), Betsy Bralley (116), Sydney Rogers (123) and Bella Casto (125).

The Lady Tigers' next competition is set for Oct. 19 at Temple's Sammons Golf Course.

Lake Belton was also in attendance.

The Broncos fielded two teams, posting scores of 312 and 349 with the Silver teams placing third.

Hayes Pethtel, a freshman, shot a 74, while junior Brooks Hull followed one stroke behind with a 75. Rounding out the team was sophomore Jackson Dolotina (80), sophomore Heston Seideman (83) and senior Kaiden Beaty (93).

The Red team was composed of senior Levi Terrance-Crotty (83), freshman Jett Turner (83), sophomore Acelin Wycoff (89), senior Duncan Moore (94) and senior Aiden Newby (96).

The Broncos return to action Oct. 7 at the Salado Invitational.

BOYS BASKETBALL

The Tigers are holding a mandatory preseason meeting for all potential players today at 6 p.m. at the Belton High School cafeteria.

Players and parents are welcome.

GIRLS BASKETBALL

The Lady Broncos took part in the Alamo City Hoops I-35 Challenge in Round Rock over the weekend and split a pair of contests.

In the opener, Lake Belton suffered a 42-34 loss to Austin Westlake, but it responded with a 55-15 victory versus Killeen Harker Heights.

Along with serving as an opportunity to improve ahead of the upcoming season, the event also allows players to display their individual skills as college coaches and recruiters attend the games in search of talent.

TEAM TENNIS

Belton improved to 12-2 overall and moved to 5-1 in District 16-5A after defeating Shoemaker last week.

In doubles, the Tigers and Lady Tigers won six of seven matches before following with 9-3 showing in singles. Isha Jinadatha, Anya Jinadatha, Layne Taylor, Neha Bhat, Eva Rios, Ben Schanzmeyer, Tyler Stock, Landry Preston and Creighton Carroll each earned victories.

New Tech made history by defeating Burnet, earning the program's first playoff berth in the process.

All three boys doubles teams won along with the girls tandem of Ujunwa Ogwudu-Harper Lee.

In singles, Lucas Do, Desmond Long, Gracin Catterton, Jett Lopez, Jackson Truelove and Ogwudu were victorious.

ATHLETICS PASS

Family athletic passes for the current 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.

BOOSTER CLUB

The Belton Tiger Athletic Booster Club is currently accepting memberships for the current 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, which is Saturday.

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

The event will begin and end at the Lions Pavillion.

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

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

Cross Country- From Page B1

In the boys division, senior Wyatt Potts was 13th (16:36.96), guiding the Broncos to ninth (228).

Tyler Adkins-Beltran (39th, 17:25.12), a junior, sophomore Drew Houston (47th, 17:36.10), senior Jack McCullagh (63rd, 17:53.41) and senior Austin Adams (78th, 18:08.21) rounded out the score.

Behind champion Gabriel Martinez-Sanchez (1st, 15:41.32), Mansfield Legacy easily won the team title with 53 points, beating out Cedar Park Vista Ridge (2nd, 123) and Argyle (3rd, 131).

Belton traveled to the Granbury Race for the Loot, where the Lady Tigers landed eighth (182) and the Tigers were 10th (237) in the Class 5A-6A division.

Isabella Warner, a junior, was 16th (21:22.03) for the Lady Tigers, while less than a minute separated their final four scorers — sophomore Ayla Wakershauser (42nd, 22:32.91), sophomore Natalie Mott (44th, 22:40.30), senior Nataly Valdez (47th, 22:55.62) and freshman Kate Jones (50th, 23:12.42).

The Tigers' points came from senior Jose Perez-Diaz (30th, 18:24.52), sophomore Ethan Trevino (49th, 19:04.05), junior Nelson Funez (59th, 19:12.47), junior Taj Keller (60th, 19:13.41) and senior Hayden Brown (67th, 19:20.06).

The Dragons and Lady Dragons took part in the Little River-Academy Invitational, but neither squad fielded a complete team.

Representing New Tech were freshman Daniel Zubaty (17th, 18:27.23), sophomore Abel Carey (51st, 21:13.26), sophomore David Martinez (56th, 21:46.01), sophomore Ellie Megoulloa (23rd, 14:55.41), junior Daniella Idumebor (36th, 16:52.91), freshman Melyann Tort-Negron (43rd, 21:07.82) and freshman Julisa Bedolla-Martinez (45th, 25:24.53).

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Council amends signage codes

By David Stone
The Belton Journal

Belton City Council approved to code amendments related to signage in the Imagine Belton zone during a recent meeting.

Council's approval followed a public hearing on pole signs and wall signs in the zone.

According to Bob Van Til, Development Services Director for the city of Belton, Tuesday's action included two code amendments.

The first amendment allows pole signs in the Imagine Belton area to be 75 feet above the main lanes for properties in the Transition, Uptown and Central Downtown zones that front Interstate 35.

The second amendment will allow the size of attached wall signs to increase. For commercial properties, attached wall signs can be up to 80 percent of the facade length and no more than four feet in height. For industrial properties, the signs may be up to 60 percent of the facade length and no more than 10 feet in height.

"In January 2026, Council adopted new pole-sign height limitations for properties adjacent to I-35 and I-14," Van Til said. "The maximum height was raised from 20 feet to 75 feet measured from the grade of the main lanes of the Interstate 90 degrees perpendicular to the sign location on the property."

"In the Imagine Belton area, pole signs in the Transition Zone are allowed to be 40 feet in height and pole signs in the Uptown and Central Downtown Zone are allowed to extend up to 100 feet above the elevation of the site where the foundation of the sign is located," he added.

Following the adoption of the Sign Code Amendments in January, City Council requested that the pole-sign heights in the Imagine Belton area be adjusted so that they are consistent with the new pole sign height requirements.

The amendment approved this week accomplishes this change, Van Til said.

The second sign amendment proposed changes to attached was sign maximum sizes. Before Tuesday, the limit was one-square-footage of signage per linear foot of façade length. On occasion, this has created challenges for business owners who wanted a larger attached sign for commercial or industrial buildings, according to Van Til.

Their proposals were more in line with the new policies than the 1-to-1 policy. The requested signs appeared to be positive and non-obtrusive and required variances to be approved, which the applicants usually rejected to avoid time delays. To accommodate these preferences, the code amendment was proposed, Van Til said.

The increase in size is the same as the attached signage requirements in the Imagine Belton Standards.

Lake - From Page B1

Coaches on both sides have emphasized limiting unforced errors and finding consistency at the net, areas that have often been the difference in close district battles this season. With the playoff picture still very much in flux in District 12-5A, every match down the stretch carries postseason implications, making this week a pivotal one for a Lake Belton team looking to build on its district win total and climb out of the lower half of the standings.

Fans can expect a full breakdown of both results in the next edition as the Broncos push through one of their toughest weeks of the season.

Belton - From Page B1

Belton opened district play with a sweep of Legacy Ranch at home, and the two sides will meet again with the standings looking much different than they did back in early September. Legacy Ranch sits fourth in the district at 3-3, with an 8-30 overall record that doesn't tell the full story of a team that has found its footing in district play. A win over Belton would pull Legacy Ranch level with the Tigers in the loss column and tighten the race in the middle of the standings.

For Belton, the rematch carries extra weight. Having already beaten Legacy Ranch once this season, the Tigers will be looking to complete the season sweep and keep Legacy Ranch at arm's length in the standings. A repeat performance from that early September sweep would go a long way toward solidifying Belton's grip on second place, while a letdown could open the door for Legacy Ranch to climb back into the thick of the district race.

Belton's two match road swing against Waco University and Legacy Ranch offers a chance to pad its district win total against teams they should be able to handle, but a young Tigers squad will need to stay focused against opponents each looking to spoil Belton's strong start to district play.

Look for a full recap of both matches in the next edition as the Tigers continue their push through the heart of the district schedule.

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LEGALS

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 #4684 located at 614
W Avenue O, Belton, Bell County, TX 76513.
Officers: Samuel James – President Brian Johnson – VP,
Scott Faber – Sec./Treas,. Amanda Jansen – Asst. Sec.
09.24,10.01pd

APPLICATION HAS BEEN FILED WITH THE TEXAS ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE COMMISSION
For Central Roots Group LLC, DBA The Beltonian Theatre. For a wine and malt beverage retailer's on premise permit (BG). 219 E Central Avenue, Belton, TX. 76513. Officers /partners Joseph Carlin (owner/manager of LLC),Katie Carlin (owner/manager of LLC.
09.24,10.01

NOTICE OF LIEN SALE
Notice is hereby given that the undersigned self-service storage facility operator,
pursuant to the Texas Property Code Chapter 59, will conduct a public lien sale
of the personal property to satisfy a landlord's lien.
The sale will be conducted online at www.StorageAuctions.com, where bidding will open and close on the date indicated.
Facility: Salado Eagle Storage, 11315 Blackberry Rd. ,Salado, TX 76571
Tenant: Tiffany Schreiner, Unit Number: Unit #205,208,209,263,265,250
Auction Date: Sept. 28 thru Oct. 16, 2026,
Property will be sold to the highest bidder. The facility reserves the right to withdraw the property from sale at any time prior to the auction
10.01

THE STATE OF TEXAS
CITATION BY PUBLICATION
CASE NUMBER 26CPB00549
TO: UNKNOWN HEIRS
STEPHEN CHARLES BERGMAN, Applicant, on September 14, 2026, filed an Application for Determination of Heirship in a proceeding styled: PATRICK MICHAEL BERGMAN, Deceased, and bearing the number 26CPB00549 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 October 01, 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: Richard I Clark, 2629 University Club Drive ,Austin TX 78732
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 September 25, 2026.
Shelley Coston County Clerk of Bell County, Texas, PO Box 480, 1201 Huey Road ,Belton, TX 76513
By: Andrea Marks Deputy
10.01

No. 26-CPB00163
IN THE ESTATE OF FRANK DEL CONTE, A/K/A FRANK CONTE, A/K/A FRANK DELCONTE DECEASED IN COUNTY COURT AT LAW Of BELL COUNTY, TEXAS
NOTICE TO CREDITORS
Notice is hereby given that original Letters Testamentary for the Estate of FRANK DEL CONTE, a/k/a FRANK CONTE, a/k/a FRANK DELCONTE were issued on September 22, 2026, under Docket No. 26-CPB00163, pending in the County Court at Law of Bell County, Texas, to SHIRLEY DEL CONTE. Claims may be presented in care of the attorney for the Estate addressed as follows: Estate of Frank Del Conte, a/k/a Frank Conte, a/k/a Frank Delconte, c/o John C. Blazier, Blazier, Christensen, Browder & Virr , 901 So. Mopac, Bldg. V, Suite 200, Austin, Texas 78746
All persons having claims against this Estate, which is currently being administered, are required to present them within the time and in the manner prescribed by law.
Dated this 22nd day of September, 2026.
Blazier, Christensen, Browder & Virr, John C. Blazier, John C. Blazier Attorney for the Estate
10.01

NOTICE TO CREDITORS
Notice is hereby given that original Letters Testamentary for the Estate of FLORENCE OPAL MAHALKO, Deceased, were issued on September 23, 2026, in Cause No. 25CPB00576, pending in the County Court at Law No. 1 of Bell County, Texas, to: ASHLEY CLAPPER.
All persons having claims against this Estate which is currently being administered are required to present them to the undersigned within the time and in the manner prescribed by law.
c/o: ASHLEY CLAPPER Attorney at Law, 603 North 8th Street, Killeen, TX 76541
DATED the 24th day of September, 2026.
CORBIN & CLAPPER, PC, 603 North 8th Street Killeen, TX 76541, Tel: (254) 526-4523, Fax: (254) 526-6711
By: ASHLEY CLAPPER, DANIEL A. CORBIN ,State Bar No. 04814300, ASHLEY CLAPPER, State Bar No. 24076317, Legal@CorbinLegalTeam.com Attorney for CARLA LARSSON
10.01

NOTICE TO CREDITORS
Notice is hereby given that original Letters Testamentary for the Estate of DONNA MARY MANSOUR, Deceased, were issued on September 23, 2026, in Cause No. 26CPB00336, pending in the County Court-At-Law No: 1, Bell County, Texas, to: CHRISTOPHER WILLIAM MANSOUR.
All persons having claims against this Estate which is currently being administered are required to present them to the undersigned within the time and in the manner prescribed by law.
c/o: Jeffrey A. Thigpen Attorney at Law, PO Box 428, TEMPLE, TX 76503
SIGNED on September 23, 2026.
Jeffrey A. Thigpen Attorney for CIRISTOPHER WILLIAM MANSOUR, State Bar No.: 24099990, PO Box 428, TEMPLE, TX 76503, Telephone: (254) 773-1663, Facsimile: (254) 773-2574, Email: jeff@linzythigpen.com
10.01

THE STATE OF TEXAS
CITATION BY PUBLICATION – PARENT AND CHILD
CAUSE NO. 282701 02
To JASON WALKER
Greetings:
You are hereby commanded to appear before the 426th Judicial District Court, Bell County, Texas to be held at the Bell County District Courts Building in Belton, Texas, to be held at the courthouse of said County in the City of Belton, Texas, at or before 10 o'clock AM of the Monday next after the expiration of 20 days after the date of service of which this citation, then and there to answer the petition to modify the parent-child relationship of TABITHA ANN DAVIS, Petitioner filed in said Court on June 06, 2025, against JASON RAY WALKER, respondent, and said suit being number 282701 02, on the docket of said Court, and entitled In the Interest of Children JASON RAY WALKER, JR, MAY 9, 2008, MICHAEL DALE WALKER SEPTEMBER 27, 2010
The nature of which suit is a request to Parent/Child Relationship.
The Court has authority in this suit to enter any judgement or decree in the child's/children's interest which will be binding upon you, including the termination of the parent-child relationship, the determination of paternity and the appointment of a conservator with authority to consent to the child's/children's adoption.
The officer executing this writ shall promptly serve the same according to requirements of law, and the mandates hereof, and make due return as the law directs.
This was issued at the request of attorney: TABITHA ANN DAVIS- PRO SE, 976 COTTONWOOD CIRCLE, CORSICANA TX 75110.
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 September 23, 2026.
Joanna Staton District Clerk, Bell County, Texas, 1201 Huey Road, P.O. Box 909, Belton, Texas 76513
By: M Cortez, Deputy Clerk
10.01PD

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OCT 18 · SUN 4:30, 7 & 9:15 PM

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OCT 18 · SUN 11:30 AM & 2 PM

SUSPIRIA R
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OCT 22 · THU 7 PM

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R	G	F	P	E	T	I	V	W	A	S	R	I	R	U	N	C	D	S	N

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

WORDS

ACORN
APPLE
AUTUMN
BONFIRE
CIDER
CINNAMON
CORNUCOPIA
CRISP
FALL
FOLIAGE
GOURD
HARVEST
HAYRIDE
HEARTH
LEAVES
MAPLE
PUMPKIN
SCARECROW
SPICE
SWEATER
THANKSGIVING

EDITORIAL

Makeup Mirrors and Graveyards

My Front Porch • Lynette Sowell

"Every man should have a fair-sized cemetery in which to bury the faults of his friends."
-- Henry Brooks Adams

I have no idea who Henry Brooks Adams is, but the guy made a great point.

When I was in college, I had a lighted makeup mirror. It had a border of bright lights and the mirror could be switched to a magnifier. All I can say now is "ugh" about the thought of magnification. Every little line, pore, and blemish—I can't hide from what I see.

The same is true with friendship. The more time we spend with someone, I can say with 100% certainty that we'll see flaws and faults we didn't notice at first. Just like looking in the mirror, we can't miss those imperfections. They're magnified. We can't escape the reflection of truth. And sooner or later, lest we get smug and congratulate ourselves at what a wonderful friend we are, we end up showing own faults for our friends to see.

So it shouldn't surprise me when friends show me their faults, and I should head out to the cemetery that Mr. Adams speaks of. I should shoulder my shovel, drag my friend's offending fault behind me, and start shoveling.

When digging, say, "I know this is my friend's fault/flaw. Because they are my friend and I love them, I will bury this fault and won't keep it with me. I choose not to hold this against them."

We are all works in progress, and our friends remind us of this without saying a word.

Sometimes small offenses can pile up over time, and before we know it, we're lugging a wheelbarrow full of them around with us.

One friend or another has misspoken or treated us carelessly, and we never make that trip to bury their fault. This can damage friendships over time, even small things.

Recently I have learned just that. Someone had offended me, not in a large way, but in a series of "offenses" that have piled up. I lugged the pile around for far longer than I should have. I saw it, in the corner, not quite buried yet, and worked on my own attitude. We can't change anyone else's perspective, but our own.

On the other hand, I am also reminded that my own faults can irritate, or worse, injure my friends. But this is what friends are for--not to be injured, but to remind us of where we fall short. Friends are the ones who will not hold our faults against us. Instead, our friends will simply hug us, pick up their shovel, and head for the graveyard of forgiveness where our faults are buried.

Some good questions to ask:

Am I carrying reminders of my friend's faults?

Do I need to forgive my friend's offenses or bury irritations?

Am I the one who needs to think before I speak and/or act?

Am I thinking of what I want, more than what is important to my friend?

Do I need to ask forgiveness from my friend?

Maybe asking those questions of ourselves is overthinking things (just a little), but true friends can be scarce in this world, and we do well when we take care of those friendships.

The writer of Proverbs said it well:

"Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful."

Get Ready for Sweater Weather

Coffee Talk • Renae Brumbaugh Green

It's been hot for too long. Now that summer's a thing of the past and I'm back at work, I'm ready for sweater weather. There's something about a crisp, fall day that makes the daily grind a little less grind-y. My local weather expert (AKA my husband) told me there's a cold front coming. In a couple of weeks, I might actually wear one of those once-a-Texas-year outfits. But as I dream of the coming cold, it's easy to forget the down sides: the days get shorter, and chances for outdoor connection dwindle.

Social media paints this time of year as filled with colorful leaves and friends laughing over a spiced latte. But the weather can make connection more difficult, since all we want to do is stay inside. That's why it's important to plan ahead. I've come up with a list of easy, fun ways to socialize, even when the weather is gloomy or frigid. Here I present to you, hot off the press, fun and easy ways to connect with friends and family this sweater season.

1. Have a soup party. Assign one ingredient to each guest (preferably a can or frozen bag of something they can dump in the pot) and enjoy a delicious pot of something warm. Provide crackers, hot tea or cocoa, and anything else that sounds yummy. My favorite recipe for this is Cowboy Soup.

2. Plan a weekly family dinner. Be flexible—order pizza, have breakfast for dinner, whatever. This may not be possible every night, but making it a weekly priority will keep you feeling connected.

4. Host a gift-wrapping party to knock out all those presents.

5. Invite a friend for a spa day. You can go to an actual spa, or provide cucumbers and warm towels right at home.

6. Have a puzzle party. Set up several puzzles of varying difficulty on different tables, and let people wander from project to project or dig into one. You may be surprised at how sitting over a puzzle can open up conversation.

7. Play board games. Whether it's Scrabble, Monopoly, or something else, a little healthy competition is a great recipe for laughs! (Caveat: I will win.)

8. Have a movie marathon. Whether your vibe is the Twilight trilogy or the entire series of Gilmore Girls, you're sure to find others willing to join. (If horror movies are your thing, I won't be coming.)

9. Host a book club. Nothing goes with fall vibes like a cozy mystery.

10. Invite friends or family to decorate a gingerbread house. (Those pre-made grocery story sets are great.) Provide extra candy for munching.

11. Host a cookie decorating party. You can make the cookies yourself or provide plain store-bought ones. Add some frosting, sprinkles, and whatever else you want.

12. Instead of decorating cookies, try a cookie swap. Invite everyone to bring two to three dozen of their favorite cookies—a dozen to share at the party and the others for people to add to their boxes, one or two of each, to take home with them.

13. Host a mystery dinner. Assign each person a certain part of the meal: appetizer, side dish, dessert. Don't specify what type of food, and see what you end up with! (This is also known as a good, old-fashioned potluck.)

14. Have a karaoke party.

15. Sing! Christmas carols are great, but you can also sing Disney songs, old show tunes, or 80s rock songs.

16. Have a hayride, with or without the hay. Just find someone with a truck and a trailer, and pile on. (Make sure the driver goes slow and stays off the main roads. Don't ask me how I know.)

17. Build a bonfire, or just sit around a small firepit and roast marshmallows. I like mine crispy-black.

18. Join a choir. Many churches and community groups host musical presentations this time of year.

19. Find a local Bingo night, grab a friend or two, and go! Or go alone. You'll meet some interesting folks at Bingo.

20. Host a sports party and watch the big game together.

21. Invite a friend to join you in something normal, like grocery shopping or taking an afternoon walk.

22. Volunteer at a soup kitchen.

23. Volunteer at a pet shelter.

24. Connect with long-distance friends and family with a virtual tea party over Zoom. You don't even have to drink tea.

25. Play an online game with friends.

26. Have a virtual movie watching party. Everyone can log in at the same time and comment, either through audio or chat, as you all watch "together."

27. Organize or take part in a virtual book club.

28. Send a meme a day. Those silly memes bring smiles and remind your friends and family that you're thinking of them.

Studies show that feelings of isolation and loneliness increase this time of year, but it doesn't have to. Find ways to connect with friends and family, early and often. The great thing about planning for joy is that it's contagious—lifting the spirits of everyone around you.

"And the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." Isaiah 51:11

Entertainment 101: Polybius

Shop the Insanity • Darren Blair

aWhat would you say if I told you that one of the most famous video games in the world likely never existed?

That at best it's a mish-mash of vague memories from the 1980s, and at worst a hoax someone created to juice traffic to their website?

Welcome to the fun and lovely world of Polybius.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polybius_(urban_legend)

The gist of the urban legend is this. At some point, usually 1981 or so, a mysterious game named Polybius appeared in video game arcades in a specific area, usually Portland, Oregon or another specific major city. The mysterious games were on solid black arcade cabinets with no adornments beyond the name of the game. Equally mysterious individuals could often be seen working on the games and analyzing it, and "Men In Black" types were also hovering around areas where the cabinets were. Those who played the game often suffered from lingering side effects such as tremors, hallucinations, nightmares, and even seizures. But despite this the game was so popular kids were fighting over who got to play it next. Then one day all of the cabinets disappeared, and the game was never seen again.

Sounds like the stuff of horror stories, eh? Except…

Over the years numerous outlets have investigated this urban legend.

The most common description of the game itself makes it sound like the popular video game "Tempest". Tempest was so popular that it's quite plausible kids might have fought over who got to play next. And the differences between Tempest and the report suggests that the mythical game could hypothetically have been an early build or a copy.

The all-black arcade cabinets? The specific cities? Apparently some video game manufacturers would use certain cities to test-market proposed games before mass release, and it was common for these games to be in all-black cabinets so that the cabinets could just be re-used.

Workers constantly tinkering with the machines? Purportedly, early laserdisc-based games were prone to malfunctions and other issues, requiring constant maintenance.

Men in Black types? Arcades were often used as fronts for illegal gambling and other operations, so it's plausible that law enforcement and regulatory agencies were in and out of different arcades conducting investigations.

Seizures, hallucinations, tremors, nightmares, and other side effects? Anyone who has played a video game created since the 1990s will likely be familiar with the warnings most games have about the possible negative effects of the lights, sounds, and other elements within the game. This is because during the 1990s a series of incidents made people aware of how video games could trigger photosensitive reactions even in people who had previously shown no sensitivity to light or motion, and some of the reported side effects of Polybius sync up with it.

Is it possible that at some point in the early 1980s, a prototype video game was triggering reactions in kids, no one could figure out why, G-men got involved, and the company yanked the game before disappearing in order to avoid legal consequences? Sadly, yes.

It's also possible that half-remembered bits and pieces from nearly 20 years prior were cobbled together on the internet by people whose imaginations filled in the gaps.

And, of course, it's possible it's all one big hoax.

Perhaps it's appropriate, then, that the real Polybius was a Greek historian who focused on the importance of historians being able to verify their reports through interviews and eyewitnesses, as there's little direct evidence the game itself existed and a whole lot of question marks to sort through instead…

Random Ramblings

Pleasant Ramblings • Mark Magnan

A few thoughts for the week, pleasant or maybe tolerable.

Are you the 'fridge door open' or 'fridge door closed' type? You know, get something from the refrigerator to use and leave the door open for however long it takes, including an unexpected phone call, the temperature of the kitchen drops 5 degrees, then replace the item and finally shut the door. Or open the door, grab 'whatever', close the door, use the item for 10 seconds, open the door, replace the item and close the door again.

How is it that "fridge", which is short for refrigerator, has a "D" but the full word, refrigerator, does not?

Have you gone into a public restroom and found that most of the items are "automatic", then somewhere in the process there is one device that is still manual? You stand there waiting for something to happen, then wave your hands before realizing that you actually have to do something for yourself.

Do you ever find yourself walking up to a set of doors to enter a store, your mind senses that they are automatic opening doors, so you slow your pace awaiting the doors to part and let you enter, then coming to the realization that you are going to have to touch the handles and yank it open by your own strength?

(I like to throw in a run-on sentence every so often to give my editor something to stress about)

Do you buy small household batteries by the color or by price? One of the major companies has spent a lot of money and time trying to convince the consumer that their batteries, based on color combination, are much better than the others. Color or Bunny? The big question about what is best.

Do you ever find yourself looking at some particle in the sink and instead of getting a cup of water to wash it down the drain you splash water at it, but each splash moves it higher and away from the drain, leaving you with no other option than to get the cup of water and now wash the "whatever" further to the drain where it belonged to begin with?

(that is two run-on sentences, can I complete a hat-trick this week....unless you count the hidden one.)

Here is one that gives us professional writers heartburn. (I use the term "professional" here very loosely). What if a word was originally spelled wrong in the first dictionary? How would we ever know if it was correct? Could we correct it now if we discovered the error? How many millions of school kids would have been taught a word that was spelled wrong? And since the spell checkers are based on common knowledge of spelling, we are corrected to the wrong spelling.

Speaking of "spell checkers", I am surprised at how many news articles contain misspelled words. One might think that a major news outlet would have a program that might check spelling, well, perhaps they didn't get that option. I had to actually learn how to spell in school, there was a huge dictionary but no one used it, we just learned how to memorize the correct spellings. If you did poorly you were subject to public embarrassment when the test was graded by a fellow student.

And along the same lines I see news stories that are thrown together in an attempt to get them online as quickly as possible. I think there are too many trains of thoughts and they collide and just make a... well.. train wreck of the news story.

You will never get that poor quality in my columns! I strive for perfection. When I do have a rare, but possible mistake, it is up to my editor to correct the error for your reading enjoyment. That is one reason that I hide a few run-on sentences, you know, to keep my editor on their toes. I like to do my part.

I hope everyone has a wonderful mistake-proof week.

SEPTEMBER B-TOWN BULLETIN

Local Activities & Events

McDowell Cemetery Association – Oct 3
The McDowell Cemetery Association will hold its annual meeting at 10:00 am on Saturday October 3, 2026. The meeting will be held in the Sanctuary at Nolan Valley Baptist Church, 13206 FM 93, Belton. Anyone with a desire to assist with maintenance, upkeep or administration Of the cemetery is encouraged to contact the association, as we wish to keep the grounds as presentable as possible. If you have any questions or comments, John can be reached at (254) 541-4349.

Polka on the Square - Oct 10
Polka on the Square is returning to Downtown Belton, and we can't wait! The City of Belton is bringing Two days of music, dancing, great food, and plenty of that one-of-a-kind Downtown Belton atmosphere, all surrounding our beautiful Historic Bell County Courthouse Square. Friday Oct 9, 5:00 p.m. - 10:00 p.m. and Saturday, Oct 10, 11:00 a.m. - 10 p.m. at the Historic Bell County Courthouse Square Downtown Belton.

Annual Chili Fundraiser - Oct 12
Central Texas Republican Women's Annual Chili Fundraiser is set to be a great time of fun, fellowship, and good cooking! The question is…Spicy or Mild? Beans or no beans? Grab your secret winning chili and/or dessert recipe and enter the Chili or Dessert Challenge for a chance to earn bragging rights. There will be a live auction that will feature many one-of-a-kind Texas and U.S.-themed items. Congressman Pete Sessions will be our main guest speaker in addition to other candidates appearing in the Midterm elections. Tuesday, October 12, 2026 at Family Life Event Center, 210 E 24th Ave, Belton. Doors open at 11:00 a.m., with the opening program starting at 11:30a.m. General Seating - $30 per person. Each attendee must purchase a ticket to the Annual Chili Lunch Fundraising Event to *Help*Elect*Republicans* - We look forward to seeing you at this fun and lively event!

Belton ISD Fine Arts – Oct 15-18, 23-24
The Belton ISD Fine Arts Department and our talented high schools are thrilled to present three theatrical performances this season. I'm excited to offer you a special invitation to be my guest at any of these shows! 30 exclusive tickets are available for each production. Lake Belton presents Little Women, Belton New Tech present MacBeth, and Belton High School presents Failure: A Love Story. If you have any questions, please reach out to Dora Martinez at dora.martinez@bisd.net or 254.215.2004. Let's celebrate fine arts in schools together. I hope you will join us!

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.

The Newcomers Club, Inc. would like to welcome ladies who have moved into Bell County and surrounding areas within the last three years. The club meets for a luncheon and program once a month and may participate in other various activities such as book clubs, a choral group, several dining out groups, walking, and games groups. The club also welcomes ladies who have just retired, or have experienced a life-changing event and are looking to connect with other ladies. For information about joining, contact Sheri Clifton at (602)-432-7510, or sherbear@bearhouse.us

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

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

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 similiar interests or just curious, come visit with us and see what we are about. Mah Jong games are available every Monday from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. Come join the fun and meet new folks. For more information text Jeanne at 409-313-0611 or just come by.

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

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

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

Community Information

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Ogletree Gap Park, Copperas Cove, Texas

Saturday, October 10, 2026

10:00 am - 5:00 pm



Old West Gunfight Shows

FREE ADMISSION

- Pioneer Crafts
- Music
- Kids Games
- Pie Eating Contest
- Hands-on Activities for Young and Old

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FRIDAY, OCTOBER 9
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A LITTLE SOMETHING FOR

SEPTEMBER SIDE NOTES

TEXAS TRANSLATION
Fall on the calendar.
Summer in the afternoon.

01 / WORD ORIGIN

7

WHY SEVEN?

Its name comes from septem, Latin for seven. September used to be the seventh month.

02 / BIRTHSTONE

MORE THAN BLUE

September's birthstone is sapphire. Sapphires can be pink, yellow or green, too.

03 / THE SEASON

HELLO, FALL

The September equinox starts astronomical fall in the Northern Hemisphere.

FACT CHECK: TIMEANDDATE.COM / GIA / NASA