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BELTON JOURNAL/ Jack Freedman

ABOVE LEFT: Runners leave the parking lot with Mace Wager in the lead. **ABOVE RIGHT:** Jose Luis Baez crosses the finish line in second place at the Captain "D" Dash for "Sight" 5K.

Like Running Lions: Belton Lions Club Hosts Annual 5K

By Jack Freedman
The Belton Journal

On Saturday, Oct. 3, at 8:15 a.m., over 50 Bell County residents braved the rain and came to Heritage Park to compete in the third annual Captain "D" Dash for "Sight" 5K held by the Belton Lions Club. All proceeds from the fun run allowed the club to fund future projects to benefit people in the community.

"We're hoping to support the Texas Lions Camp down in Kerrville," Lions Club Tailtwister Danny Dossman said. "Most [projects] are related to sight." Dossman was one of the main organizers of the event.

The entry fee was $40, while students were given a $20 discount. In the end, the contestants had a very diverse age range, ranging from 12 to 74.

"We support all members in the community, and we're glad for all those who came out," Dossman said.

Once all of the participants arrived, the Belton High School choir sang the national anthem and Dossman said a prayer for the runners. At 8:30 a.m., the race officially began and the runners took off across the park as the singers disbanded and the organizers prepared for the award ceremony. The race had many sponsors, including H-E-B.

"H-E-B was kind enough to provide food for the runners," Amy Flores, an H-E-B worker, said. "This is my second year at one of these, and I'm glad to be able to go out and help an organization like the Lions Club. We're happy to be out here rain or shine."

At around 9:00 a.m., the runners gradually started to cross the finish line. The fastest time was held by Luke Griner, who finished in a whopping 16 minutes and 23 seconds.

"Pretty soon I'm going to be running professionally, so this was a fun race to do before all the seriousness starts," Griner said. "Road races are always pretty fun, just something to do on a Saturday morning."

While some competitors, like Griner, were recreational runners, others opted to take the 5K at a more leisurely pace. Some contestants ran alongside their dogs while some pushed strollers.

"The rain took some of the runners from us, but I think most of them came out," Dossman said.

While rain had been projected that morning, it stayed dry for the majority of the race. Once everyone had finished, they gathered under the pavilion and treated themselves to free hot dogs, water and watermelon, all of which were provided by H-E-B. After everyone's time had been entered, the Lions Club handed out medals while the rain poured down. Awards were given to the top three males and females in each age bracket.

"I'm thankful to all of our runners who support us and for the sponsors who helped us," Dossman said.

My Giving Tree celebrates anniversary and expansion with 'friends and family'



BELTON JOURNAL/ Michele Weisman

Leila Valchar ringing up guests who came to help her celebrate

By Michele Weisman
The Belton Journal

My Giving Tree's expansion reveal and 15-year celebration open house was held on Saturday, Oct. 3, starting at 10:00 a.m. Customers showed up to celebrate Leila Valchar, owner of My Giving Tree, even with the forecast of heavy rain.

Valchar greeted guests, "Welcome, thank you for coming."

Gift bags holding door prizes lined a shelf in the expanded showroom, with raffle tickets nearby. Ruby Tea Room provided tea, scones, and assorted desserts. Railway Express Diner also brought food. Caricature artist Seth Krumonow of Kraftykrum.com was on hand to draw customers.

Large decorative flowers with moving petals and lighted greenery decorated the expanded reveal. The children's section, creating a wonderland.

Valchar said, "I wanted it to be magical," and added that butterflies that fly and fairies will complete the look.

The additional floor space includes jewelry, women's, and men's clothing, and more.

Valchar said, "I am so grateful that I've had a good turnout. These are some of my favorite customers who come in. Dear friends, I love. My customers become my friends, and I love them. They become part of our family. It means a lot to me. It chokes me up. I'm feeling blessed. I'm very grateful."

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A national event with local appeal brings community together



BELTON JOURNAL/ Michele Weisman

An evening of law enforcement and the community coming together at the MPRPD Public Safety Center.

By Michele Weisman
The Belton Journal

National Night Out (NNO), held the first Tuesday in Oct., brought local law enforcement and neighbors together across the nation to build relationships. Morgan's Point Resort Police Department (MPRPD) hosted NNO at its Public Safety Center, located at 6 Lake Forest Drive, Tuesday, Oct. 6 from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.

MPR's diverse community of young families up to retirees came out to enjoy community connection. Children were able to see a police car and fire engines up close that were parked in front of the Public Safety building. MPR is unique in that its Fire Department and Police Department share the same building. Youth and adults

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MPR Fire-Rescue Adds State-Ready Wildland Engine 'Fiona' to Fleet

By Michele Weisman
The Belton Journal

Morgan's Point Resort Fire-Rescue Division (MPRFR) invited the community to a push-in Ceremony for 'Fiona,' Brush 63, a Type 3 wildland fire engine. Held on Tuesday, Sep. 29 at 4:00 p.m., City Council members, city staff, Chiefs from other departments, the Ladies Auxiliary, firefighters and their families were there to welcome, the newest fire engine is the color of Fiona from Shrek to their firehouse.

Fiona is a great resource for MPR, but is also a recognized asset by the Texas Intrastate Fire Mutual Aid System (TIFMAS) and the Texas Division of Emergency Management (TDEM) for a broader reach.

Shane Sibley, fire chief, said, "It'll not only be a community asset, but a statewide asset. It'll be our apparatus that we send out on TIFMAS when the state calls for help and we answer. It'll be a resource that we can send out with firefighters to help our neighbors across the state."

James (Jimbo) Snyder, battalion chief, explained the push-in ceremony, dating back to the 1800s when equipment was horse-drawn. He said, "The animals were unable to back into the station, requiring members to detach the horses and push the equipment into the base. Before returning the horses and wagons to the station, cooling the horses simultaneously. Blessing a new fire engine during a push-in ceremony is a symbolic way of recognizing both the apparatus and, more importantly, the firefighters who will use it in their service to the community. A blessing asked for protection for the safety of the firefighters who will ride the apparatus of the people that they are called to help."

Shane Sibley, fire chief, after thanking everyone for attending, said, "This is a big step for the department. This is a 2025 international CV. It is spec'd out as a Type Three wildland fire engine. It's got a 750-gallon water tank on it.



BELTON JOURNAL/ Michele Weisman

Brush 63, affectionately called FIONA, being pushed into the MPRFR house.

We had different organizations and agencies that contributed to this apparatus."

The members of TFS present were Matthew Schlaefer and Matthew Mullins.

Schlaefer said, "We inspected it when they joined possession. I'm honored to be here to-to you know to be part of this celebration, this apparatus for the fire department. It's good to see fire departments growing capacity, whether it's with membership or equipment."

Mullins said, "It's a really awesome feeling knowing that the state is able to push out the funding to be able to help better the local response tempo for the area and increase their capabilities from what they currently have."

Sibley said, "City Council helped us to get approved for the grant matching funds that we needed to obtain the skid unit on the back. The Ladies Auxiliary their fundraising helped us obtain additional equipment and put graphics on it. The VFA, which is our volunteer firefighting association, the funding they provided to help us do addi-

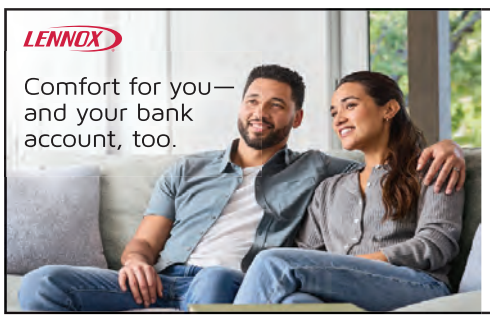
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Victim in 1983 Cold Case Murder Now Identified



Courtesy Photo
Betty Jo Norris- Using Sexual Assault Initiative Kit (SUKI) authorities were able to identify Betty Jo Norris, brutal murder victim.

Special to the Journal

After more than 42 years, using modern forensic DNA technology and extensive police work, investigators have finally identified the victim of a brutal murder in Hamilton Co. as 44-year-old Betty Jo Norris.

On the morning of Sept. 1, 1983, ranchers discovered a human skeleton with female clothing while working cattle along Highway 36 in rural Hamilton Co. Investigators determined that the female victim had been left at the location several months before, after suffering a single gunshot wound to the head. Clothing and jewelry at the scene included a pair of brown knee-length boots, a blue and white polka dot blouse, stretch blue jeans, a Timex watch with a brown leather wristband, bobby pins and two barrettes with orange roses on them. In the years that followed, the Hamilton Co. Sheriff's Office and Texas Rangers made several attempts to identity the victim using statewide announcements and forensic reconstruction images – but no leads developed and DNA testing available even as recent as 2005 did not yield any results. The case went cold.

Then, in January 2024, in coordination with the Hamilton Co. Communications Office and the Hamilton Co. Sheriff's Office, the Texas Rangers began reprocessing evidence from this case and submitted it to DPS' Crime Laboratory in Waco for updated testing. This led to the extraction of an unknown male DNA sample from the victim's clothing in early 2025 – but it was too degraded to obtain a profile. Over the next year, the University of North Texas Center for Human Identification (UNTCHI) also attempted to develop a profile with the degraded sample, but it did not qualify for a database search.

Determined to identify the female victim, DPS submitted her remains for testing and comparison through DPS' **Sexual Assault Kit Initiative (SAKI)** program. The program is funded by

See **COLD CASE 83',** *Page A3*

Belton ISD Expands Lifesaving CPR Training with 12 New Training Kits

Special to the Journal

Belton ISD is expanding its commitment to lifesaving education with 12 new CPR in Schools Training Kits from the American Heart Association, an $8,700 investment that will significantly increase hands-only CPR training opportunities across the district.

Each $725 kit includes 10 Mini Anne inflatable manikins, knee mats and 10 AED training simulators and can be used to train up to 30 people at one time. The new kits will be placed at campuses that do not currently have one, making CPR training equipment readily available at all campuses across the district.

"Anyone can help save a life, and we want our students and staff to have the confidence to act when every second matters," said Marylisa Fanning, R.N., Belton ISD Director of Health Services. "Having this equipment available across our district gives us greater flexibility to provide hands-on training and empowers our students and staff with skills that can make an impact not only in our schools, but throughout our community."



Courtesy Photo
Community partner awards Belton ISD received 12 new CPR training kits.

Each year, Belton ISD school nurses provide hands-only CPR education to approximately 2,000 full-time employees. An additional 400 substitutes receive training through new hire orientation. Students also receive instruction in CPR and the use of an automated external defibrillator, or AED, at least once before graduation, as required by Texas law.

The 12 new kits build on six CPR in Schools Training Kits donated by the American Heart Association last year, bringing the total number donated to Belton ISD through the partnership to 18. Prior to those donations, Health Services had purchased two kits that were transported between campuses to conduct training. The additional equipment provides greater flexibility and creates more opportunities to train students and employees throughout the school year.

The donations are part of Belton ISD's ongoing partnership with the American Heart Association and the district's goal of becoming an AHA District of Lifesavers, a designation recognizing school districts that go beyond minimum CPR education requirements to strengthen cardiac emergency preparedness.

The donation grew out of Belton ISD's partnership with the American Heart Association and the district's goal of becoming an AHA District of Lifesavers, a designation recognizing school districts that go beyond minimum CPR education requirements to strengthen cardiac emergency preparedness.

Belton ISD has already met several requirements for the designation, including maintaining a written cardiac emergency plan, providing accessible AEDs at all campuses, conducting campus emergency response drills and expanding hands-only CPR education beyond the state's student graduation requirement.

The final piece is participation by all Belton ISD campuses in the American Heart Association's Kids Heart Challenge, or American Heart Challenge. Fourteen campuses participated during the 2025-2026 school year, and the district hopes to expand participation to all campuses this year.

"Our goal is to reach as many people as we can with this training," Fanning said. "When our students and staff know what to do in an emergency, those skills extend far beyond the walls of our schools. They have the potential to save a life anywhere in our community."

Extravaganza to feature more than 300 animals for adoption

By David Stone
The Belton Journal

Hundreds of dogs, cats and other animals will be available for adoption Oct. 24 and 25 at the 11th annual Pet Extravaganza at Huntington Bank Expo in Belton.

"Dozens of rescue groups and animal shelters from Temple, Bell County, Killeen, Salado, Harker Heights, Copperas Cove and throughout the region will be bringing a variety of dogs and cats," said Ron Ducharme, event organizer and publisher of Rescue Magazine.

The event will run 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. both days, and admission is $10 for adults and $5 for kids 6 and up.

"This year, we will be in the dome," he said. "That gives us a bigger area. Of course, we will have about 300 cats and dogs, but we also will have sugar gliders, tortoises, reptiles and more."

Ducharme said the event will also be a Halloween celebration since this year's Extravaganza is so close to the spooky holiday.

"This will be the largest indoor trick-or-treat event in Central Texas with more than 140 vendors handing out treats," he said. Organizers urge attendees to wear costumes.

The two-day Halloween-themed pet festival will bring together thousands of animal lovers, families, and pet owners for a weekend full of fun, adoptions, and community impact, according to Ducharme.

"H-E-B has become a show title sponsor this year along with other community partners such as Walmart, Realty Executives, PetCo, and more," he said. "We've added huge attractions and displays. There's definitely something for all."

This year's Extravaganza features appearances by Bumblebee, Captain Sparrow, trick-or-treat events, a Haunted Trail Adventure by Shih-tzu Knot, dog tricks, pony and horseback rides, Happy Hounds dog demonstrations, and reptile exhibits.

"Two years ago, we adopted out a bearded dragon," he said. "We will have about 40 adoption agencies represented and more than 100 vendors. We're expecting more than 10,000 visitors."

"This is like a pet expo, a home improvement show and a comic con all rolled into one," Ducharme added. "We definitely will have a little bit of everything."

"We are trying to attract as many people to the Expo as possible so we can get these animals adopted," Ducharme said. "We will have all kinds of dogs and cats — there will be lots of variety and choices."

Ducharme started Rescue Magazine after learning firsthand how shelters struggle to keep animals alive. A Rottweiler named Leo was going to be put down because his shelter didn't have money to feed all of its animals.

"They only have so much money," Ducharme said. "They need food, supplies and an ongoing resource for public awareness."

Rescue Magazine started as a single-page flier in 2012. It has grown to 74 pages and features more than 800 animals in need from 70 shelters and rescue groups. (Check out their web page at rescuemagazine.org)

"We are more than a magazine," he said. "We raise thousands of dollars in food and supplies to help shelters throughout Central Texas. Last year, the Bell County Animal Shelter were able to vaccinate up to 107 animals a month with the extra money we helped put in their budget."

Now that's something to wag about!

Community Closet Turns Caring Into Action at Chisholm Trail

Special to the Journal

What began as a holiday tradition at Chisholm Trail Elementary has grown into something designed to serve students and families throughout the school year. Community Closet Creates a Welcoming Space Where Families Can Find the Essentials They Need

The CTES Community Closet provides clothing, shoes, school supplies, hygiene products and other essentials to members of the school community who need them. But counselor Angela Cavanaugh wanted the space to offer something beyond the items on its shelves.

She wanted it to offer an experience.

The need can be as simple as a student spilling something on their clothes during the school day or as significant as a family needing ongoing support. Before the Community Closet, finding a change of clothes could mean searching filing cabinets, closets, or wherever items could be stored.

"Taking them out where they can pick out a pair of pants is better than going in the office, opening up a filing cabinet and trying to think where I would find something," Cavanaugh said. "I want it to feel like they are having an experience."

The idea grew from the campus Elf's Closet, a holiday program that allows families to select items in a welcoming, store-like environment. When Cavanaugh was given a dedicated portable space for the Elf's Closet, Principal Sydnie Sewell encouraged her to consider how the space could also serve the

See **CHISHOLM,** *Page A3*



Courtesy photo
Angela Cavanaugh stands among the clothing racks inside the Chisholm Trail Elementary Community Closet, where families can shop for essentials and receive support in an environment designed to promote dignity, choice and care.

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Cold Case 83' - From Page A2

the Department of Justice/ Bureau of Justice Assistance (DOJ/BJA), which provides investigative funding for agencies across the United States to further unsolved sexual assaults and sexually related homicides, aiming to bring justice to the victims and their families.

Using SAKI grant funds, the sample was sent to BODE Technologies for advanced DNA testing and genealogy research – and a breakthrough in the decades-old case was made. In July 2026, advanced DNA testing and research by BODE ultimately led investigators to relatives of the female victim living in Brazos and Bell counties. After conducting several interviews, relatives pointed the Rangers to a male family member living in Belton whose mother – identified as Betty Jo Norris – had disappeared in the early 1980s. The Texas Rangers traveled to Belton, where the son, now in his 60s, provided a DNA sample for testing. On Aug. 20, 2026, that testing confirmed that the unidentified female victim was in fact the man's mother – Betty Jo Norris.

The Texas Rangers and Hamilton Co. Sheriff's Office continue to actively investigate Norris' case and are determined to identify who is responsible for her death. **Anyone with information is encouraged to contact the Hamilton Co. Communications Office at (254) 386-3300.**

The Texas Rangers would also like to thank our partners, including the Hamilton Co. Sheriff's Office, Hamilton Co. Communications Office, DPS' Crime Laboratory Division, UNT CHI, DOJ/BJA and BODE Technologies for their years of commitment and dedication to identify Norris and help to push law enforcement one step closer to solving this cold case.

OBITUARIES

Mills

Ella Pearl Mills
October 1, 1946 –
September 18, 2026

Ella Pearl Mills passed away peacefully at her home in Belton, Texas, on Friday, September 18, 2026, just days before her 80th birthday. She was born on October 1, 1946, in Corsicana, Texas.

Ella was a graduate of Belton High School and continued her education at Temple Junior College. She became a proud mother to her son, David Stewart, and later met and married the love of her life, Matt Mills. Together they blended their family and shared 42 years of marriage.

She was a homemaker and devoted mother who gave her wholehearted support to her son, his baseball teams, and his goals in life. She was also a devoted wife who faithfully supported her husband throughout his career. Ella brought warmth and dedication to her home and family, and those who knew her understood how deeply she cared for the people she loved.

Known by the nickname "Lil Bit" because of her small stature, Ella was truly larger than life. Before Alzheimer's changed the course of her life, she was adventurous and full of energy, enjoying camping, fishing, and dancing. She had a fun, vibrant personality that left a lasting impression. She also took special joy in collecting angel figurines, which filled her home and could be found in nearly every room, reflecting both her spirit and the comfort she created around her.

Ella was preceded in death by her father, Belton Stewart; her mother, Lena Crawford; and her sister, Francis Whiteknight.

She is survived by her beloved husband of 42 years, Matt Mills, and by her son, David Stewart, and his wife, Rena and her two beloved dogs, Midnight and Snoopy. Her family was the center of her life, and she will be remembered with love for her devotion, her lively spirit, and the steady encouragement she gave to those closest to her. Her memory will remain a lasting blessing to her family and friends.

In lieu of flowers please consider making memorial donations to help with funeral expenses to www.YoungsDaughters.com or by calling 254-401-1302

A Celebration of Life will be held on Tuesday, October 6, 2026, starting at 2:00 p.m. at Young's Daughters Funeral Home & Bereavement Center, 4235 E. US Hwy 190, Temple, TX 76501 with Rev. Wayne Ziegler.

A special thank you to Loretta Schultz for her compassionate friendship and care over the years, and for Wayne Ziegler for officiating.

Arrangements Are under the direction of Sabrina Young at Young's Daughters Funeral Home and Bereavement Center

Chisholm - From Page A2

community year-round.

Cavanaugh immediately saw the possibilities.

"We're not just going to put it out there," she said. "We're going to make it a store. We're going to make it fun, just like we do with Elf's Closet."

That approach is intentional. Rather than receiving a prepacked bag of clothing or supplies, families visiting the Community Closet can look through the available items and choose what works for them.

"Regardless of what you're going through, you should still have the choice," Cavanaugh said.

The closet currently includes shirts, pants, shorts and shoes in a range of children's and adult sizes, along with school supplies, hair accessories and hygiene products. The campus is accepting new or gently used clothing and shoes, as well as supplies such as markers, crayons, colored pencils, notebooks, pencils, paper, deodorant, toothpaste, toothbrushes and shampoo.

The Community Closet is available to anyone in the Chisholm Trail Elementary community who needs assistance. Families can reach out directly, but Cavanaugh also works closely with teachers and staff members who may recognize when a student could use additional support.

"If they see a need, then they come to me, and then we work together to let the family know that you get to come here and see what you need," Cavanaugh said. "We're not going to pack it up and send it home."

Cavanaugh said those relationships are important because a family's needs are not always visible. She currently coordinates 85 weekend meal bags each Friday through the campus partnership with Helping Hands Ministry, a number she expects could grow as the school year continues.

For students, she said meeting basic needs can have a direct impact on how they feel when they walk into a classroom.

"I look at it the same as if I go and buy a new shirt or a new pair of shoes. I feel spectacular. I feel like a new person," Cavanaugh said. "I think it's the same for those students. They feel like a brand new person and that gives them the ability to learn."

Cavanaugh said students who are hungry, tired, cold, or worried about not having the supplies they need may have a harder time concentrating in class. Something as simple as a new backpack, notebook, or pair of shoes can help a student feel more comfortable and ready for the school day.

For some families, the need can be much greater. Cavanaugh recalled a family whose home burned down last year and how the campus immediately began looking for ways to help.

"What do you need? If we don't have it, we'll reach out to others across Belton ISD," Cavanaugh said. "But please come and shop and get what you need to make sure you're good."

The Community Closet is stocked primarily through donations from staff, families and community members. Cavanaugh said shorts, leggings, sweatpants and T-shirts are especially useful because they can accommodate students in a variety of situations and sizes. She also hopes to expand the selection of adult clothing as the closet grows.

For Cavanaugh, creating spaces like the Community Closet is an extension of work she has done throughout her career. Before coming to Belton ISD, she helped with a school food pantry and volunteered with an after-school program serving families in Washington.

At Chisholm Trail, she has been able to take that same desire to serve and turn it into something bigger.

"I've always been a giver," Cavanaugh said. "Here, I've just been given the opportunity to do more and make it bigger."

And while clothes, shoes and supplies may bring families through the door, Cavanaugh hopes what they leave with goes much deeper.

"Love," she said. "Love, and the knowledge that we're all in this together. It doesn't matter what you're going through. You're part of our family, and we're going to take care of you."

Community members interested in supporting the CTES Community Closet may drop off donations at Chisholm Trail Elementary, 1082 Wheat Road in Belton.







Fiona - From Page A1

tional upfitting as needed. Chief Wilkerson and his father worked tirelessly to wire that whole truck up with emergency lights, which is no small feat."

Pastor Jeremy Franks, from Fellowship Baptist Church, gave the invocation at the opening remarks and for the firetruck blessing.

He said, "Father, we pray that every man and woman who would man this vehicle would be protected by a hedge of protection by you. Thank you for this community. We pray this in the name of Jesus. Amen."

After the push-pull, people visited, enjoying refreshments and viewing the new fire engine.

The Ladies Auxiliary raised $23,500 for FIONA. Snyder is also the Mayor of MPR.

Expansion - From Page A1

Part of the expansion is having two display windows at 121 N East St. Suite B. Christmas merchandise can be found on both sides of the shop. Virtual reality STEM sets by Abacus and National Geographic, and shaped jigsaw puzzles are some attractions in the children's section.

On the original side of the gift shop, is a selection of LogosTap, to connect your smart phone. The usual display of jewelry, candles, cards, and holiday items for Halloween is up. And for the person who has everything, there are individual spinning planets on a top shelf.

Valchar asked guests to take selfies with her.

Customer and friend, Pamela Diers said, "I've known her for the last year, coming in every week, getting her little purse charms that she has. I got the room spray, the Bluebonnet. I have a girlfriend who is in the middle of chemo right now, and we just lost my husband's mom. We've been buying gifts for a lot of people. I was so glad she was able to expand to the other side."

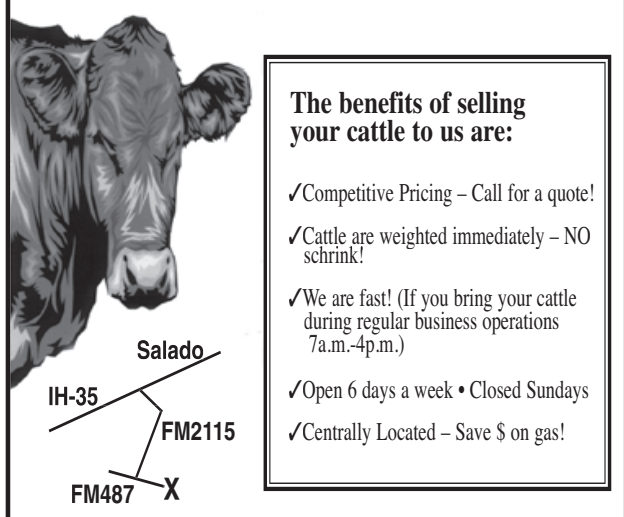
Friend and jewelry maker Dale Koebnick said, "I love Leila. We met at the Central Texas Art League several years ago. I came to her shop, loved it. She knew I made jewelry and asked me if I'd put some in here. Leila is so complimentary of everyone. She makes you feel really good about who you are or what you do. She's just a wonderful person, and I couldn't think of a better place to have my jewelry."

Valerie Williams, a customer and friend, said she stopped by "let Leila know that I think this is awesome that she's expanded."

Jamie Davenport, one of her daughters, was helping with customers' questions. Her boyfriend, Justin Ferstl, attended, he said, "for the food and moral support."

The dressing room, no longer in the back of the store, redesigned and built by Rick Valchar, Leila Valchar's husband, is now at the front.









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Early Voting: Oct.19-30 ★ Election Day: Nov. 3
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Night Out - From Page A1

were able to meet and talk with MPR's first responders.

Engine 6,1 firetruck, Squad 61, EMS Division firetruck, and Brush 63, FIONA were parked out front.

Karrie Cooke, a resident, visited the event with her rescue dog, Niki, who is a fan of the MPRPD.

Cooke said, "She loves the officers here." She explained that Niki loves all of the officers. When she sees one of the police cars in town, "she goes screaming for them."

Officer Matthew Thompson, who has served in MPR for 15 years, including animal patrol, said, "I'm glad that we're able to hold this for the community, so we can come together and hopefully gain more trust with the police department."

Roxanne Stryker, mayor pro-tem for MPR, visited the event, said, "It's great that the community comes out and we have the same people supporting the community."

Chief of Police Todd Hodge, serving MPR for fourteen years, said, "It brings the community together, along with getting to meet first responders and police officers. All the great neighbors together. It strengthens our community.

State Representative Dr. Brad Buckley was in attendance to visit with officers and greeted the community.

Buckley said, "National Night Out is really quintessential Texas. You have neighbors that join together on an evening, and you celebrate your community. You build relationships so you can look out for each other across the community. But also, you have an opportunity to say thank you to the first responders that serve communities and that risk their lives all too often for us. It's just it's a real special night, and Morgan's Point has that community character that's built around neighborliness, and this is a great example of it."



BELTON JOURNAL/ Michele Weisman
Sweets were a hit at the National Night Out, especially the ice cream.

The Ladies Auxiliary set up with flyers, cookies, and Breast Cancer Awareness reminders. Their save-the-date flyers were for vendors and residents to attend the Shrek's Holithanksmas Sale on Saturday, Nov. 21 from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m.

For more information about NNO and its history, visit natw.org.



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Hispanic Heritage Month honors history and culture

By David Stone
The Belton Journal

Hispanic Heritage Month is an annual celebration in the United States from Sept. 15 to Oct. 15 that honors the history, culture, and contributions of people with ancestors from Spain, Mexico, the Caribbean, and Central and South America.

Hispanic Heritage Month is celebrated from coast to coast, as well as right here in Belton. In fact, two Belton ISD schools — Charter Oak and Belton Early Childhood — held events this year.

While the Heritage event is held during a specific time each year, Hispanic-owned businesses in the Belton area are finding success throughout the year. Chamber of Commerce President/CEO Randy Pittenger recognizes the contribution Hispanic-owned businesses have made to the community.

"We are proud to be a diverse community, offering hard working entrepreneurs opportunities to succeed," Pittenger said.

"With a diverse population, Belton exemplifies the American dream, with people from a variety of backgrounds finding a welcoming environment to build their business," he added.

Coronas De Oro Mexican Restaurant is one of the Hispanic-owned businesses that have thrived in Belton.

"I think Hispanic-owned businesses are finding success in the Belton area because there is a strong sense of community here," said Carlos Crisanto, catering manager for Coronas De Oro.

"Belton has grown quite a bit, and with that growth comes an increasingly diverse customer base," Crisanto said. "Hispanic-owned businesses can provide food, services and experiences that reflect the culture and traditions of the community, while also bringing people from different backgrounds together."

"I do believe there has been growth in Hispanic-owned businesses in the area," he continued. "From my experience working in the restaurant industry, I've seen how Hispanic businesses can become more than just places to spend money. They can become gathering places where families, friends and people from throughout the community come together."

"I also think diversity is important to a community like Belton because it gives people an opportunity to learn from one another and experience different cultures," Crisanto said. "At the same time, I think the success of a business ultimately comes down to serving people well, building relationships, and becoming a positive part of the community. Culture can be a big part of that, but bringing people together is something everyone can appreciate."

"At Coronas De Oro, we try to be involved in the community beyond simply being a restaurant," he continued. "We want to create a place where everyone feels welcome, regardless of their background. Being able to serve the Belton community and participate in local events is something I really value."

Cynthia Hernadez, executive director of the Belton Economic Development Corporation, said, "Belton's central location in the region and business-friendly environment are keys to success enjoyed by Hispanic-owned and other businesses in the Belton area."

"Our businesses have access to a skilled labor pool, strong population growth, and reliable infrastructure and transportation systems," Hernandez said.

"Belton EDC does not track the race or ethnicity of our business owners, but today, 32.6 percent of Belton's population is Hispanic, according to ESRI data," she said. "Diversity in population, skill sets, and industry sectors can result in greater opportunities strengthening the community's stability and quality of life."

In Texas, Hispanic-owned businesses comprise more than 59,000 employer firms and represent a major economic driver. These businesses make up about 13 percent of all employer firms in Texas, while Hispanics form 38 percent of the state's workforce.

These businesses employ nearly 600,000 workers with a total annual payroll of $19.8 billion. Concentration is highest in accommodation and food services (14.4 percent), construction (14 percent), and healthcare, social assistance, manufacturing, management and the arts.

President Lyndon B Johnson created Hispanic Heritage Week in 1968 and President Ronald Reagan expanded the week to a full month in 1988.

Local Father finalist in Super Dad Contest



Courtesy photo
Morgan and Orin Cook pose next to a small tree.

By Jack Freedman
The Belton Journal

On Friday, Oct. 2, Morgan Cook, a local father and manager at the City of Taylor Cemetery, made it into the top five best fathers in Colossal's National Super Dad competition.

"When I found out that I'd been nominated, I couldn't believe it," Cook said. "My family's very proud of me."

The contest promotes the Children's Miracle Network and is sponsored by Ace Hardware and is open to fathers all across the country. Cook and his family are honored to be nominees.

"I don't consider myself a great dad, much less a 'super' one," Cook said. "We all have flaws, but I strive to support my family every day. And if that makes me a super dad, then I guess it does. I think that I'm raising my son to be the best man he can be."

Kate Cook, Morgan's wife entered him in the contest after observing how good of a father he is to their four-year-old son Orin.

"I think 'super' is a corny word, but he really is a great man," Kate Cook said. "He's a good role model to both our son and me. He has a great work ethic and is very calm. At first I thought being a funeral director was a weird career, until I saw him working and interacting with families. I knew he'd be a great husband and father."

Kate looks up to Morgan as an equal in their roles as parents and believes that they are setting a good example.

"Morgan's not afraid to do things like make lunch or fold laundry, and I'm not afraid to mow," Kate said. "I think that's a good way to teach Orin to value others."

The grand prize for the contest is $25,000. Should Morgan win, he has several plans for how to spend the money.

"If I win, I'm gonna put that money toward my son's future," Morgan said. "We'll put some back for college and take a really good vacation. I'll also start saving up to build him a car. Of course he's only four, so I've got a while to do that."

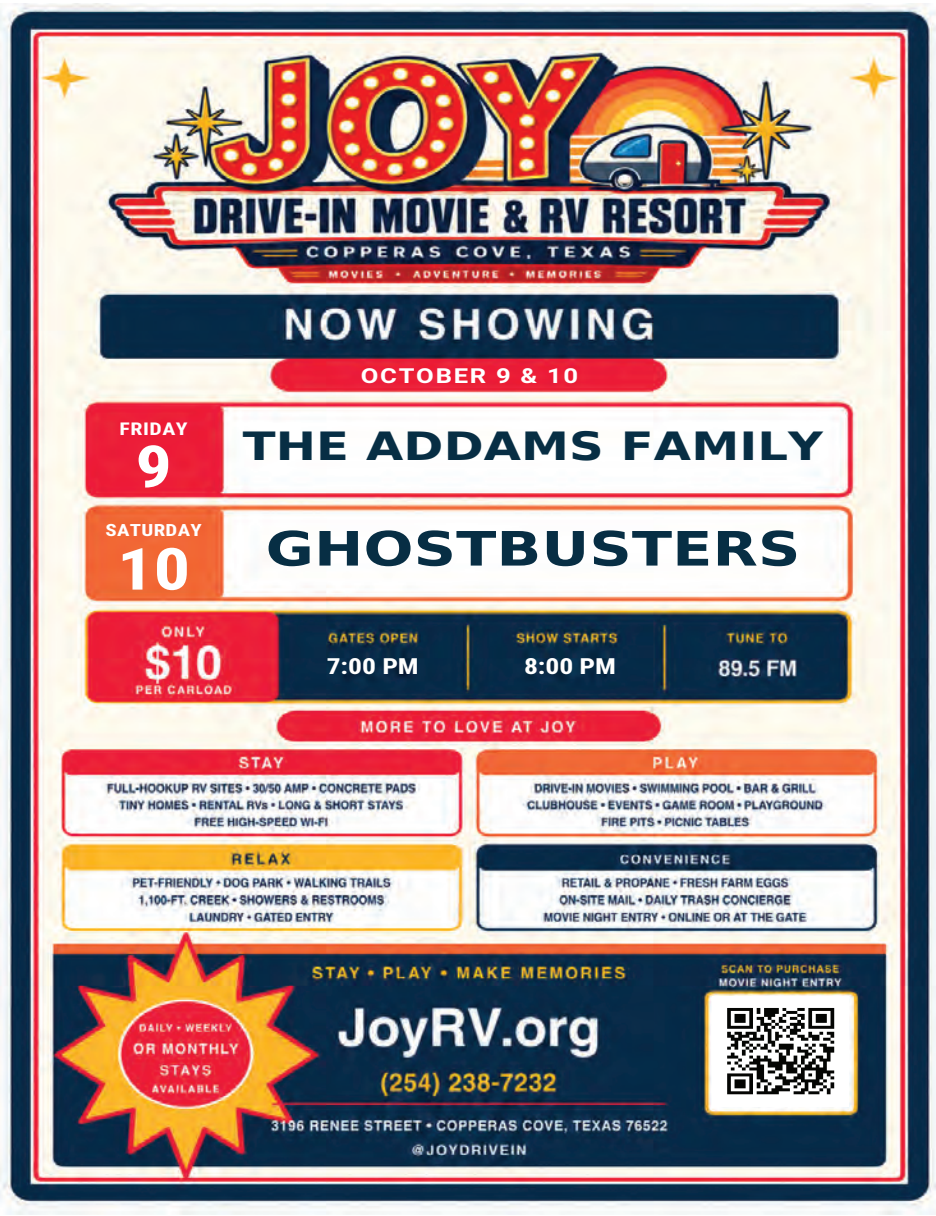
Above money, Morgan places his loyalty to his family, his country, and God.

"As long as we can put those first, we can build each other up," Morgan said.

In addition to working as a funeral manager, Morgan manages Pistons on the Creek, a car cruise-in held every third Friday evening of the month at the Gin at Nolan Creek.

"I work as an AMSOIL dealer as a side hustle and thought this might be a good way to make connections," Morgan said. "We've built strong ties and enjoy working with the Gin and the other downtown businesses to bring families together."

People will be allowed to vote for Morgan until Oct. 8 at 7 p.m. In order to vote, visit yoursuperdad.org/morgan-cook-iuOo.





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The English Leather Submarine



John C. Perry

The summer of 1964 was supposed to be the summer I became cool. I had my very first date, with, well, let's call her Linda, to protect the innocent.

It had taken all my courage to ask her out, leaving me none for the date itself. When I pulled up to her house in my 1953 Ford coupe, my brain had stopped working and I was fully dedicated to not passing out.

I had waxed my hair down with Brylcreem, and I'd saved up to buy a bottle of English Leather cologne. The really good stuff. I applied it with the confidence of a man who had never been told "less is more." My mother caught me on the way out, took one whiff, and said, "John, that is way too much." I thanked her and left anyway. After all, I was sixteen. I knew things.

She came out the front door in a yellow dress, blonde hair catching the Texas sun like something out of a movie poster. Drop dead gorgeous.

I got out to open her door like a gentleman. I pulled the handle. Nothing. I pulled again. Still nothing. My first thought, as always with that old Ford, was that something had broken. It was a 1953 Ford with opinions.

I jiggled it. I crouched down to inspect it like a man who understood cars. She watched with great patience, the kind Paul must have had in mind when he wrote about being "patient in affliction" in Romans 12:12. Then, very gently, she said, "Perhaps it's just locked?"

It was.

I reached in through my open door, popped the lock, walked back around, and opened her door without a word. She slid in. I got in and closed my door, and we were sealed inside an English Leather submarine together.

She said nothing. She was very polite about it. The drive to the Arcadia Theater in downtown Temple took about seven minutes. I said exactly four words: "You look real nice." Then I stared at the road like it owed me money.

Inside the theater I bought popcorn, handed it to her, and immediately knocked it out of my own hand. Kernels everywhere. The couple in front turned around. I briefly considered starting a new life in another state.

Around the middle of the picture, I worked up the nerve to rest my arm on the armrest between us. She had her arm there too. Our elbows touched. I immediately forgot the plot of the movie. I almost forgot my own name.

I spent the last twenty minutes rehearsing what I would say at the door. I had three options. I practiced all three. I delivered none. What I actually said was, "Well." Just "Well." She said goodnight and went inside.

I walked back to the Ford. The English Leather was still going strong. My mother had been right. She was always right.

I drove home with the windows down and the warm Texas air coming through, grinning like a fool. It wasn't smooth. It wasn't cool. But sixty-two years later, I still remember every excruciating, wonderful second of it. Turns out your first date doesn't have to be perfect to stay perfect in your memory.

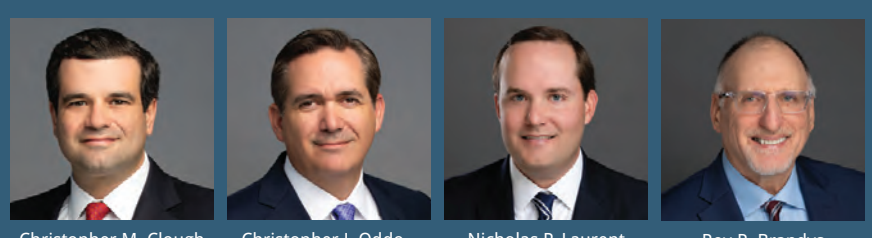
John C. Perry is the Immediate Past Lay Leader with New Life Methodist Church. They meet every Sunday at 9 a.m. (Bible Study) and 10 a.m. (Worship Service) in the Salado Middle School at 1169 Williams Rd.

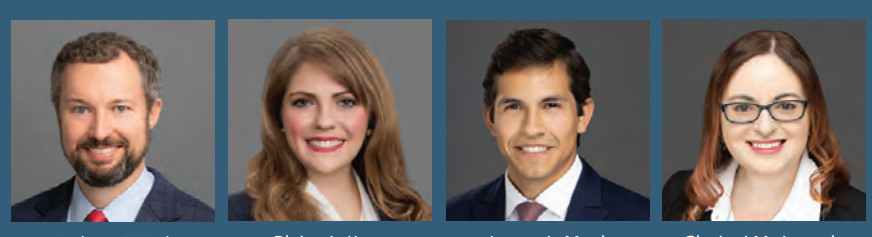


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Business Showcase

Bell County Museum offers art, history and holiday fun

Bell County Museum
Night at the Museum

Wear your Halloween costume for a magical museum night featuring Bell County historical figures brought to life, fun activities, trunk-or-treat and balloon twisters.



Date: Oct 29, 2026
Time: 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM

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BellCountyMuseum.Org

By Michele Weisman
The Belton Journal

Bell County Museum welcomes visitors from Fall to mid-January 2027 to view their fine art collection in the West Gallery. The pieces shown, which are part of the Bell County Museum's collection, date back to the turn of the 20th-century through the end of the 1900s.

Upstairs, on exhibit through Nov. 14, are photos and paintings of Temple's historic buildings and places. The Temple Historic Preservation Board, through the Temple Community Treasures Photography and Painting Contest, provided the pieces.

On display Dec. 1 through the19, honoring America's 250th anniversary, is an exhibit called The American Revolution. Created in partnership with the Betty Martin Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, there will be stories, artifacts, and interactive elements about those who were involved in the revolution or were affected by it.

It's always free to enter the Bell County Museum and view the exhibits and permanent collection, such as the log cabin and mustache tea cup collection; however, most events require RSVP through the website to attend, and several do have a fee to attend.

Oct. 17 they will host a Weird Science morning, learning about DNA. Oct. 21, Tiny Thinkers will have a story time and finger print art. Oct. 29, hosts Night at the Museum, an evening event where history is promised to come alive and participants are invited to wear a costume.

Nov. 7, in the morning, Dia de Los Muertos will be held to honor those who have passed. Tiny Thinkers, on Nov. 18, a will have story time, writing letters to Santa, and more.

Tiny Thinkers meets again Dec. 9 to investigate transportation. And Dec. 12, there is a Holiday Fest, to learn about winter holidays around the world.

See the website for information about the research library, educator resources, homeschool days, at-home learning, virtual class programs, scout badges, and more at www.bellcountymuseum.org.







SPORTS



Lake Belton delivers statement sweep of Chaparral



COPPERAS COVE LEADER PRESS/ David Morris

Ava Wood (21) gets a full swing on the ball in front of Harker Heights' middle blocker Makinna Smith

By Aries Ramos
The Belton Journal

The Lake Belton volleyball team pulled off one of its best wins of the season. The Broncos swept Chaparral 25-18, 25-22, 28-26 in a District 12-6A match.

Chaparral came into the match 27-7 overall and unbeaten in district play at 5-0. Lake Belton had battled through a tough season, entering at 12-21 overall and 2-4 in district. None of that showed once the match began. The Broncos controlled the first two sets and held their nerve in a tight third to finish the sweep.

The turning point came late in the first set. Lake Belton trailed 18-13. The Broncos did not lose another point. Lake Belton scored the final 12 points of the set to take it 25-18. The run flipped the momentum of the match and gave the Broncos a confidence they carried the rest of the night.

Chaparral pushed back in the second set and kept it close throughout. This time Lake Belton made the plays down the stretch, holding off Chaparral 25-22 to take a 2-0 lead in the match.

The third set was the most competitive of the night. Fac-

See **LAKE VOLLEYBALL,**
Page B3

Lake Belton leads local runners in rain-delayed district tuneup

By Clay Whittington
The Belton Journal

Last week's thunderstorms postponed the final cross country meet of the regular season. The delay, however, was worth the wait for Lake Belton.

Originally scheduled for Oct. 1, the Pro-Fit Last Chance Invitational was conducted Tuesday at Heritage Park, where the Broncos and Lady Broncos each placed among the top five in the team standings.

Paced by senior Wyatt Potts, who posted an eighth-place time of 16 minutes, 45.13 seconds across the three-mile route, Lake Belton was sixth in the boys Class 5A-6A division, scoring 147 points, while the Lady Broncos were fifth (135).

Shreya Muni, a senior, was first to cross the finish line for Lake Belton, finishing 21st (21:06.21), and her effort was complemented by junior Lucy Loa (28th, 21:19.87), junior Elizabeth Sandlin (29th, 21:22.15), senior Sarah Gray (34th, 21:31.80) and freshman Amara Bodeman (35th, 21:33.30).

Additionally, senior Madely Rivas was 36th (21:33.36) and sophomore Sophia Garza was 45th (22:35.48), but their times did not factor into the Lady Broncos' total.

With all five scoring runners placing among the top nine, Comal Canyon easily won the championship, scoring a mere 22 points, while Liberty Hill (2nd, 87), Cedar Park (3rd, 100) and Liberty Hill Legacy Ranch (4th, 128) followed.

Belton was ninth (192) thanks in part to junior Isabella Warner, who was 22nd (21:06.31).

The remaining points were produced by senior Nataly Valdez (43rd, 22:09.78), sophomore Leimya Palomares (46th, 22:37.61), sophomore Ayla Wakershauser (47th, 22:38.07) and freshman Kate Jones (48th, 22:38.65), while freshman Markayla Allen (51st, 22:44.41) and senior Roxanna Delgado (69th, 23:58.50) also represented the Lady Tigers.

Competing as an individual, Round Rock Stony Point senior Sophia Lopez won the individual championship in 18:22.10.

Adding to Potts' production was sophomore Drew Houston

See **CROSS COUNTRY**
Page B2

Three schools, three classifications: Belton ISD tennis reaches playoffs

By Aries Ramos
The Belton Journal

Belton ISD tennis had a busy start to October. For the first week of the UIL team tennis playoffs, all three of the district's high schools were in the field. Belton, Lake Belton and Belton New Tech each qualified out of their district standings and played their bi-district matches Monday and Tuesday. The three teams entered the postseason in three different classifications.

Belton competed in Class 5A this fall and finished second in District 16-5A. Liberty Hill won the district title. Belton placed ahead of Liberty Hill Legacy Ranch and Killeen Shoemaker, which also earned playoff berths. Second place set the Tigers up for a bi-district meeting with Corsicana, the third place team from District 15-5A, a league won by Midlothian.

For Belton, the runner up finish was a step forward. In a recent fall season, the Tigers took third in district, edging Killeen in their final district match, and then fell to Montgomery Lake Creek in the bi-district round. Finishing second gave Belton a matchup against a third place team rather than a district champion.

Lake Belton also finished second in its district, this time in District 12-6A behind champion Waco Midway. The Broncos placed ahead of Killeen Harker Heights and Copperas Cove in a district that sent four Central Texas teams to the playoffs. Their bi-district opponent was Mansfield, the third place team from District 11-6A.

The playoff berth marks another milestone for a program that has grown quickly since Lake Belton opened its doors in 2020. In the spring of 2022, they sent five players to the 4A state tournament in San Antonio. This fall, Lake Belton reached the postseason in 6A, the state's largest classification.

Belton New Tech had the toughest road of the three. The 4A school finished fourth in District 25-4A, a league that included Lampasas, Marble Falls and Salado, to claim the district's final playoff spot. That placement paired New Tech with Wimberley, the champion of District 26-4A, in the opening round.

Teams that won their bi-district matches advance to the area round, scheduled for Thursday through Saturday. Regional quarterfinals follow Oct. 12-13, and the regional tournaments are set for Oct. 15-16. The UIL Team Tennis State Tournament will be played Oct. 21-22 in San Antonio.

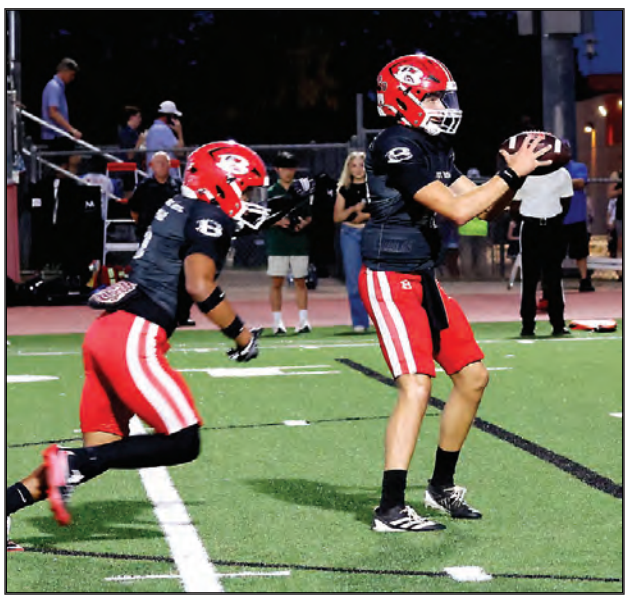




Photo Credit/ Tony Adams

Belton begins District 8-5A-II action Friday against Rudder

By Tony Adams
The Belton Journal

The Belton Tigers return to regular season action on Friday evening, as they host the Bryan Rudder Rangers at Tiger Field in the opening game of District 8-5A-II play.

Kickoff is scheduled at 7 pm. The game will be broadcasted on Dave Campbell's Texas Sports/ NFHS Network (subscription required to view).

"It's another opportunity for the team to shine in front of the home fans," Belton head coach Joshua Mann said. "We have five district games, so consistency is the key."

Belton (3-2 overall) enters Friday's contest after a bye week. The Tigers started their season with three straight wins (Hendrickson, 39-17, Bryan, 48-23, and Bastrop, 41-0) followed by a pair of tough losses (Midway 21-10 and San Angelo Central 52-29).

Will Shepard (72-of-107, 960 passing yards, 11 TDs, 5 INTs, 89 rushing yards, 2 TDs) has had a solid start with Gavin Ross (47-694. 9 TDs) on pace for 1,000 yards receiving in the regular season. Nash Jordan (61-365, TD), Brody Lee (38-236, 2 TDs), and Javid Nua Planz (34-235, 2 TDs) have carried the load on the running game. The Tigers' offensive line had blocked expertly to the tune of 396 offensive yards per game (205.2 passing, 190.8 rushing).

The Big Red defense has 24 tackles for loss, 19 pass defenses, 13 interceptions, four sacks, and a fumble recovery.

Azian Wilkinson (57 tackles, 31 solo), Oakley Torres (34 tackles, 21 solo, 6 TFL), and Graham Chambley (22 tackles, 11 passes defensed, 3 TFL, 2 INT) are the leading stoppers for the Tigers.

Rudder (4-1 overall) won their first two games (Houston Kashmere, 39-0, and Richmond Tomas, 30-13), lost to Jacksonville (28-20), and won their last two (Bryan, 40-34, and Elgin, 63-19).

The Rangers average 250 yards on the ground and 163.6 yards through the air for an average of 413.6 total yards.

Sylas Sullivan (47-of-76, 756 passing yards, 10 TDs, 3 INTs, 121 rushing yards) is the starting quarterback of the Rangers. Sullivan's long TD of the season is 85 yards to Logan Taylor (16-243, 2 TDs). Aiden Grey (7-202, 4 TDs) and Jabari Burrell (5-126, 2 TDs) are also a pair of receivers to watch for in passing situations.

The run game has accounted for 1,250 yards on 141 carries (8.9 yard per carry), led by Jack Schneringer (62-636, 5 TDs, including a 93-yard TD run). Amarrion Gibson (15-249, 4 TDs) is also a critical part of Rudder's rushing attack.

Rudder's defense has allotted 18.8 points per game this season.



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Sports Briefs

By Clay Whittington
The Belton Journal

The Tigers and Lady Tigers hosted the annual Belton ISD Fall Invitational on Saturday and delivered a strong showing in their home meet.

Jamie Hall emerged with the championships in the 200-yard freestyle, finishing in 2 minutes, 1.51 seconds, and the 100 freestyle (56.49), while teammate Ema Whitzel placed first (27.48) in the 50 freestyle and second (1:04.79) in the 100 butterfly.

In the boys division, Adrien Oros won the 500 freestyle in 5:06.48 and was third (1:57.53) in the 200 freestyle, and the effort was complemented by Wyatt Nelson and Micah Rodriguez. Nelson was second (5:17.56) in the 500 freestyle and fourth (2:00.85) in the 200 freestyle, while Rodriguez was fifth (2:33.29) in the 200 individual medley and seventh (1:11.56) in the 100 backstroke.

Additionally, the girls 400 freestyle relay team was second (4:42.60), and the 200 freestyle relay team was fourth (2:01.10).

The boys 400 freestyle relay team captured the championship with a time of 3:57.09, and the Tigers were fifth (1:46.03) in the 200 freestyle relay.

Overall, the Tigers placed fourth with 176 points, while the Lady Tigers were fifth (150).

Lake Belton was also successful at the meet.

The Lady Broncos scored 288 points en route to the team title, while the Broncos were eighth (122).

Jentry Ferguson won the 200 individual medley (2:17.71), breaking the school record in the process, and the 100 backstroke (1:01.65).

Furthermore, the Lady Broncos placed first in the 200 freestyle relay (1:50.95) and 400 freestyle relay (4:04.17).

The Broncos were guided by Conner Florea, who won the 100 backstroke (59.98) along with swimming a leg of the 400 freestyle relay.

The boys 400 freestyle relay team was fourth (4:10.17).

Belton and Lake Belton both return to action Oct. 22 for a meet at Belton High.

WRESTLING

Lake Belton begins its preseason activities Tuesday, and participants should use the first two days to ensure all paperwork is in order and receive any necessary equipment.

Workouts begin Oct. 19 with the first weight certification set for Oct. 21.

Any athlete currently involved with another sport of band will transition to wrestling after the other season concludes.

For further information contact head coach Kevin Grimm at Kevin.Grimm@BISD.net.

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.

Belton volleyball weekly preview/recap

By Clay Whittington
The Belton Journal

The Lady Tigers simply could not win the points they needed.

Looking to avenge a five-set loss at home in the opening round of the District 16-5 schedule, Belton traveled to Ellison on Tuesday evening, but things did not go according to plan.

After splitting the first two sets, the Lady Tigers fell just short in the ensuing sets, suffering a 25-17, 22-25, 25-23, 28-26 defeat as the Lady Eagles swept the series.

Belton had opportunities, though.

Ellison was in control throughout the opening set, breaking away after the Lady Tigers used a 5-1 outburst punctuated by Malu Pula's ace to tie the score 9-9. The Lady Eagles responded with four unanswered points, and it provided all the cushion needed to win.

In the second set, however, Belton found ways to overcome a similar situation.

With the score tied 20-20, the Lady Tigers were responsible for five of the next seven points. During the finish, Reagan Stuart assisted Emma Harvey on a pair of kills.

The scenario repeated itself in the third set with the squads playing to a 22-22 tie, but Belton could not rally despite thwarting a set point at 24-22.

The Lady Tigers owned a 13-11 lead following Ciaran Messersmith's ace, and they were ahead 20-17 after Harvey connected on a kill. They also led 22-20 on Taylor Collins' kill, but the advantage evaporated as Ellison won five of the next six points.

The fourth set saw the teams play to eight ties after knotting the score 17-17, and once again, the Lady Tigers avoided defeat on three occasions before eventually succumbing.

The loss comes on the heels of another disappointing defeat against Liberty Hill Legacy Ranch on Friday.

After leading the Lady Wrangles 2-0, Belton saw their cushion completely deflate as Legacy Ranch rebounded for a 20-25, 23-25,

See **TIGER VOLLEYBALL,** *Page B3*

Cross Country - From Page B1

(27th, 17:33.85), senior Jack McCullagh (31st, 17:40.64), senior Austin Adams (35th, 17:43.74) and senior Josiah Briggs (46th, 18:04.53).

Belton was 13th (276) as senior Jose Perez-Diaz (32nd, 17:41.81), freshman Ethan Bass (42nd, 17:49.59), sophomore Ethan Trevino (68th, 18:45.65), junior Marcus Hernandez (69th, 18:46.94) and junior Nelson Funez (78th, 19:05.00) combined for the score.

Lake Belton junior Cooper Schels (50th, 18:08.55), junior Kyan Whitmire (56th, 18:17.29), senior Adrian Rentas-Quiles (57th, 18:18.18) and junior Anthony Garza (89th, 19:27.90) and Belton junior Taj Keeler (79th, 19:05.19), senior Zander Orsag (90th, 19:31.52), senior Hayden Brown (94th, 19:40.28), sophomore Luke Roberts (100th, 19:49.98), senior Jetli Carbajal-Diaz (101st, 19:50.87) and sophomore Noah Majano (112th, 20:47.53) also competed.

Now, Lake Belton turns its full attention toward the District 12-6A meet at Waco's Heart of Texas Soccer Complex on Oct. 15, while Belton prepares to run in the District 16-5A at Heritage Park on the same day.

Only the top three teams and top 10 individuals advance to regional meets.

New Tech will take part in the District 19-3A meet on Monday at Cameron Junior High School.

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Tiger Volleyball - From Page B2

25-16, 25-13, 15-9 win.

The losses dropped the Lady Tigers' district record to 5-4 with five matches remaining in the regular season.

Belton hosts Killeen Shoemaker on Friday at 6 p.m. and plays at Killeen on Tuesday. Then, the Lady Tigers conclude the campaign by hosting Liberty Hill (Oct. 16) and playing at Waco (Oct. 20) and Waco University (Oct. 23).

Liberty Hill improved to 9-0 with a straight-set win against Legacy Ranch on Tuesday, leaving the Lady Panthers atop the league, while Ellison follows at 8-1. Belton and the Lady Wranglers are tied for third place with identical records.

Shoemaker (4-5), Killeen (3-6), Waco University (2-7) and Waco (0-9) round out the field.

Lake Volleyball - From Page B1

ing a team that had not lost in district, the Broncos found themselves in trouble late. Chaparral earned three set points and had a chance to extend the match to a fourth set. Lake Belton saved all three. The Broncos then closed it out 28-26 to finish the sweep in straight sets.

The win moved Lake Belton to 4-4 in District 12-6A, while Chaparral fell to 5-2. For a team that has had to fight for results all season, beating a 27 win opponent in straight sets was a statement. It showed the Broncos can compete with anyone in the league when they serve well and finish sets.

Lake Belton will try to build on the win when it hosts Copperas Cove on Tuesday, Oct. 13. Copperas Cove enters at 21-17 overall and 3-4 in district play.

The matchup carries weight for both teams as district play heads into its final stretch. A home win would give the Broncos back to back district victories. It would also extend the momentum from the Chaparral upset. Copperas Cove, meanwhile, will be looking to get back to .500 in district play.

Lake Belton and Copperas Cove are scheduled to play Oct. 13 at Lake Belton.



Courtesy Photo

Members of Temple College Vocal Point perform.

Temple College Vocal Point to Perform Free Musical Theatre Showcase Concert

Special to the Journal

Temple College Vocal Point will perform TC Musical Theatre Showcase on Tuesday, October 13, 2026, at 12:30 p.m. The event will take place in the Jackson-Graeter Backstage Theatre, located in the Mary Alice Marshall Performing Arts Center on the Temple College campus.

Students will bring to life featured musical selections from the 1920s in honor of Temple College's 100th anniversary. They will also preview scenes and songs from Wonderland, a contemporary spin on the classic story of Alice in Wonderland, which will be the featured Temple College musical for Spring 2027. Auditions for the spring musical will take place at the end of October and are open to all Temple College students.

Vocal Point ensemble members include TC musical theatre and theatre majors, dual credit students, and students pursuing a variety of degrees. Fall members include Audrena Ativalu, Kathleen Chavira, Catearina Crawford, Rebecca Flynn, Grace Frazier, Eden Johnson, Joel Johnson, Rohan Mantey, Maggie Nicholson, Malachi Nuckolls, Gaia Rooters, Julian Sepulveda, Jules Tisdale, Jaaron Uyechi, and Willow Weaver.

The Temple College Theatre Department recently received the Award of Distinction in Excellence in Theatre Education from the Texas Theatre Education Association (TxTEA).

Vocal Point is under the direction of Priscilla Santana, with pianist David Perez-Guerra.

The concert is free and open to the public.

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LEGALS

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF COBB COUNTY
STATE OF GEORGIA
JUSTIN WHEELER, Plaintiff, V. BRITTANY MORRIS, Defendant CIVIL ACTION FILE NO. 25CV08246

NOTICE OF SUMMONS - SERVICE BY PUBLICATION
TO: BRITTANY MORRIS, Defendant Named Above:
You are hereby notified that the above-styled action for Legitimation and custody was
filed against you in said court on October 23, 2025, and that by reason of an Order for service of
summons by publication entered by the Court on June 1, 2026, you are hereby commanded and
required to file with the Clerk of said Court and serve upon Justin Wheeler, Plaintiff, by and
through his counsel of record, W. Henry Clerke, IV, whose address is 630 Village Trace, Building
15, Suite E, Marietta, Georgia 30067, an Answer within sixty (60) days of the date of the Order
for Service by Publication. If you fail to do so, Judgment by Default will be taken against you for
the relief demanded in the Petition.
Witness the Honorable Ann B. Harris, Judge of said Court.
This the 8th day of June 2026.
Miya Rivers , Clerk of Cobb County Superior Court
10.08,10.15.10.22,10.29 pd

THE STATE OF TEXAS
CITATION BY PUBLICATION
CASE NUMBER 26CPB00607
To: UNKNOWN HEIRS
LILLIE AGNES JOHNSON HARGETT CAUTHEN, Applicant, on October 02, 2026, filed an Application for Dependent Administration, Issuance of Letters of Dependent Administration and Determination of Heirship in a proceeding styled: RONALD WESLEY CAUTHEN A/K/A RONALD WESLEY CAUTHEN, SR. Deceased, and bearing the number 26CPB00607 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 08, 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: JAY R. BEATTY, 3106 SOUTH WS YOUNG DR BLDG D #401, KILLEEN TX 76542
The officer serving this Citation shall, in compliance with the Law, serve it by publication once in a newspaper of the general circulation in this, the County in which the decedent last resided as required by Section 202.052 of the Texas Estate Code, for not less than ten days before the return day hereof, exclusive of the day of publication, and the date of publication said newspaper bears shall be the day of publication.
Issued and given under my hand and seal of said Court at office on October 02, 2026.
Shelley Coston County Clerk of Bell County, Texas, PO Box 48, 1201 Huey Road, Belton, TX 76513
By: Andrea Marks Deputy
10.08

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LEGALS

NOTICE TO CREDITORS
Notice is given that original Letters Testamentary for the Estate of GEORGE ROBERT BRANTLEY were issued on September 8, 2026, in Cause No. 26CPB00347, pending in the County Court at Law Number 1 of Bell County, Texas, to SANDRA JOANN BRANTLEY.
All persons having claims against the estate, which is presently being administered, are required to submit them, within the time and manner prescribed by law, and before the estate is closed, addressed as follows: c/o BRETT H. PRITCHARD, 1201 S. W.S. Young Dr., Ste C, Killeen. TX 76543
Dated OCT 01 2026
BRETT H. PRITCHARD Attorney for Executor of the Estate of GEORGE ROBERT BRANTLEY
10.08

NOTICE TO CREDITORS
Notice is hereby given that original Letters Testamentary for the Estate of DEBORA A. ROBBINS, Deceased, were issued on September 30, 2026, in Cause No. 26CPB00533, pending in the County Court at Law No. 1 of Bell County, Texas, to: THOMAS O. ROBBINS.
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: ESTATE OF DEBORA A. ROBBINS, c/o: THOMAS O. ROBBINS, 2706 Alamo Trl., Temple, Texas 76502
DATED the 1st day of October. 2026.
KAREN M. VILLANUEVA, State Bar No.: 24102608, Telephone: (254) 771-1855, Facsimile: (254) 771-2082, E-mail: karen@templelawoffice.com

NOTICE TO CREDITORS
Notice is given that original Letters Testamentary for the Estate of JOHN HOPKINS, Deceased, were issued on September 15, 2026, in Cause No. 26CPB00148, pending in the County Court at Law Number 1 of Bell County, Texas, to ROBERT HASLAM a/k/a ROB HASLAM.
All persons having claims against the estate, which is presently being administered, are required to submit them, within the time and manner prescribed by law, and before the estate is closed, addressed as follows: c/o BRETT H. PRITCHARD, 1201 S. W.S. Young Dr., Ste C, Killeen, TX 76543
Dated OCT 01 2026
BRETT H. PRITCHARD Attorney for Executor of the Estate of JOHN HOPKINS, Deceased
10.08

NOTICE TO CREDITORS
Notice is given that original Letters Testamentary for the Estate of KENNETH LEE MEDECKE were issued on 9/14/2026, in Cause No. 26CPB00322, pending in the County Court at Law Number 1 of Bell County, Texas, to JULIE ANN MEDECKE.
All persons having claims against the estate, which is presently being administered, are required to submit them, within the time and manner prescribed by law, and before the estate is closed, addressed as follows: c/o BRETT H. PRITCHARD, 1201 S. W.S. Young Dr., Ste C, Killeen, TX 76543
Dated OCT 01 2026
BRETT H.PRITCHARD Attorney for Executor of the Estate of KENNETH LEE MEDECKE
10.08

THE STATE OF TEXAS
CITATION BY **PUBLICATION-PARENT AND CHILD**
To: Eric Snellings, Keiler Locklin, any Unknown Father and All Whom It May Concern, Respondents, in the hereinafter-styled and -numbered cause:
You have been sued. You may employ an attorney. If you or your attorney do not file a written answer with the clerk who issued this citation by 10 a.m. on the Monday next following the expiration of 20 days after you were served this citation and petition, a default judgment may be taken against you. The Original Petition of the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, Petitioner, was filed in the 146th Judicial District Court of Bell County, Texas, on June 17, 2026, against Marissa Boyer, Eric Snellings, and Keiler Locklin, Respondent(s), numbered 26DFAM362519, and entitled "In the Interest of JORDYN SNELLINGS, minor child." The suit requests to terminate the parent-child relationships and/or to appoint a managing conservator of the child. The date and place of birth of the child who is the subject of the suit is: JORDYN SNELLINGS, DOB: June 13, 2026, Place of birth: Texas
The court has authority in this suit to render an order in the child's interest that will be binding on you, including the termination of the parent-child relationship, the determination of paternity, and the appointment of a conservator with authority to consent to the child's adoption.
The name and address of the attorney for plaintiff is Susan Parker, Bell County Attorney's Office, P.O. Box 1127, Belton, TX 76513
Issued and given under my hand and seal of the Court at Belton, Texas, this the 1ST day of October
2024
Joanna Staton, District Clerk of Bell County, Texas, 1201 Huey Road, P.O. Box 909, Belton, TX 76513
By: C. Rodriguez Deputy.
10.08

PUBLISHED NOTICE TO CREDITORS
Notice is hereby given that letters of guardianship for the Estate of Sye Micheal Voth, Jr., an incapacitated person, were issued on September 16, 2026, in Docket No. 26CPB00156, pending in the County Court at Law No. 1 of Bell County, Texas, to Sierra Cheyenne Neeson and Brandon Michael Neeson, co-guardians of the Estate of Sye Micheal Voth, Jr.
Sierra Cheyenne Neeson and Brandon Michael Neeson elect that claims may be presented against the Estate of Sye

LEGALS

Micheal Voth, Jr. to them c/o their attorney, Benjamin D. Burnett, 15 North Main Street, Temple, Texas 76501.
All persons having claims against this estate are required to present them within the time and in the manner prescribed by law.
SIGNED on October 1, 2026.
/s/ Benjamin D. Burnett, Benjamin D. Burnett Attorney for Co-Guardians, State Bar No.: 24072012, benjaminburnett@bcswlaw.com,15 North Main Street, Tel: (254) 743-7324
10.08

THE STATE OF TEXAS
CITATION BY PUBLICATION
CASE NUMBER 26CPB00591
To: UNKNOWN HEIRS
STANLEY BERNARD BOLLING, Applicant, on September 29, 2026, filed an Application for Dependent Administration, Issuance of Letters of Administration and Determination of Heirship in a proceeding styled: GENEVA TUCKER MESHACK, Deceased, and bearing the number 26CPB00591 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 08, 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: JAY R. BEATTY, 3106 SOUTH WS YOUNG DR BLDG D #401, KILLEEN TX 76542
The officer serving this Citation shall, in compliance with the Law, serve it by publication once in a newspaper of the general circulation in this, the County in which the decedent last resided as required by Section 202.052 of the Texas Estate Code, for not less than ten days before the return day hereof, exclusive of the day of publication, and the date of publication said newspaper bears shall be the day of publication.
Issued and given under my hand and seal of said Court at office on September 29, 2026.
Shelley Coston County Clerk of Bell County, Texas, PO Box 480 ,1201 Huey, Road Belton, TX 76513
By: Andrea Marks Deputy
10.08

THE STATE OF TEXAS
CITATION BY PUBLICATION
CASE NUMBER 26CPB00591
To: Kahlina Bolling
No Known Address
STANLEY BERNARD BOLLING, Applicant, on September 29, 2026, filed an Application for Dependent Administration, Issuance of Letters of Administration, and Determination of Heirship in a proceeding styled: GENEVA TUCKER MESHACK, Deceased, and bearing the number 26CPB00591 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 08, 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: JAY R. BEATTY, 3106 SOUTH WS YOUNG DR BLDG D #401, KILLEEN TX 76542
The officer serving this Citation shall, in compliance with the Law, serve it by publication once in a newspaper of the general circulation in this, the County in which the decedent last resided as required by Section 202.052 of the Texas Estate Code, for not less than ten days before the return day hereof, exclusive of the day of publication, and the date of publication said newspaper bears shall be the day of publication.
Issued and given under my hand and seal of said Court at office on September 29, 2026.
Shelley Coston County Clerk of Bell County, Texas, PO Box 480, 1201 Huey Road ,
Belton, TX 76513
By: Andrea Marks Deputy
10.08

THE STATE OF TEXAS
CITATION BY PUBLICATION
CASE NUMBER 26CPB00585
To: UNKNOWN HEIRS
SHARON ADELE WHEELER, Applicant, on September 28, 2026, filed an Application to Determine Heirship and for Letters of Independent Administration- Intestate in a proceeding styled: CHARLES EDWIN WHEELER, Deceased, and bearing the number 26CPB00585 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 08, 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.

LEGALS

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: BRETT PRITCHARD ,1201 S WS YOUNG DR STE C ,KILLEEN TX 76543
The officer serving this Citation shall, in compliance with the Law, serve it by publication once in a newspaper of the general circulation in this, the County in which the decedent last resided as required by Section 202.052 of the Texas Estate Code, for not less than ten days before the return day hereof, exclusive of the day of publication, and the date of publication said newspaper bears shall be the day of publication.
Issued and given under my hand and seal of said Court at office on September 28, 2026.
Shelley Coston County Clerk of Bell County, Texas, PO Box 480, 1201 Huey Road, Belton, TX 76513
By: Andrea Marks Deputy
10.08

NO.25CP800158

IN THE ESTATE OF BILLY MICHAEL PURDUE GORDON, a/k/a BILLY MICHAEL GORDON DECEASED IN THE COUNTY COURT AT LAW NUMBER ONE (1)OF BELL COUNTY, TEXAS NOTICE TO CREDITORS, NOTICE OF LETTERS OF INDEPENDENT ADMINISTRATION AND APPOI NTM ENT OF INDEPENDENT ADMINISTRATOR
Notice is hereby given that on August 18, 2025, Letters of independent Administration upon the Estate of Billy Michael Purdue Gordon, Deceased, were granted to the independent Administrator, Stacy Ann Gordon, by the Honorable County Court of Bell County, Texas, in Cause No. 25CPB00158, pending upon the Docket of said Court.
All persons having claims against said Estate are hereby required to present the same within the time prescribed by law to Stacy Ann Gordon at the post office address of the attorney for the said independent Executor being shown below: Estate of Billy Michael Purdue Gordon, Deceased, Ford + Bergner LLP, c/o David T. Foor, 700 Louisiana Street, 41st Floor Houston, Texas 77002
Respectfully Submitted,
DAVID T. FOOR, 700 Louisiana Street, 41st Floor, Houston, Texas 77002, Ph 713-260-3926, Fax: 713-260-3903, dfoory@fordbergner.com ,Attorneys for Independent Administrator, Stacy Ann Gordon
10.08

THE STATE OF TEXAS
CITATION BY PUBLICATION
CASE NUMBER 26CPB00583

To: UNKNOWN HEIRS
KYLER REY BOYD, Applicant, on September 25, 2026, filed an Application for Independent Administration and Letters of Independent Administration and Determination of Heirship in a proceeding styled: CARY REY BOYD, Deceased, and bearing the number 26CPB00583 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 08, 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: Daniel P. Hare, 3809 West Waco Drive, Waco TX 76710
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 28, 2026.
Shelley Coston County Clerk of Bell County, Texas, PO Box 480, 1201 Huey Road ,Belton, TX 76513
By: Andrea Marks Deputy
10.08

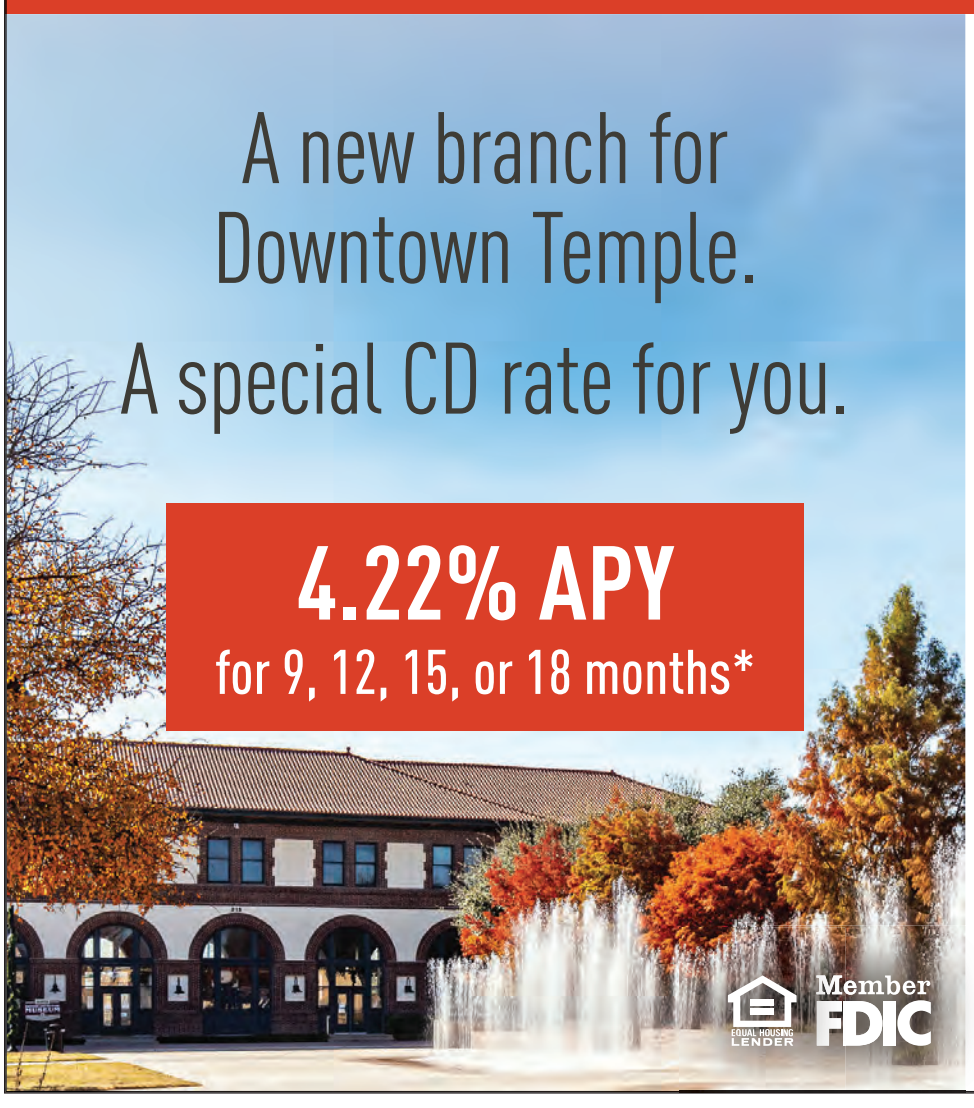
THE STATE OF TEXAS
CITATION BY PUBLICATION-PARENT AND CHILD

To: Christopher Hicks, any Unknown Father and All Whom It May Concern, Respondents, in the hereinafter-styled and -numbered cause:
You have been sued. You may employ an attorney. If you or your attorney do not file a written answer with the clerk who issued this citation by 10 a.m. on the Monday next following the expiration of 20 days after you were served this citation and petition, a default judgment may be taken against you. The Original Petition of the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, Petitioner, was filed in the 146th Judicial District Court of Bell County, Texas, on January 14, 2026, against DiNeasha Huff, Demondela Hayes, Christopher Hicks, Respondent(s), numbered 26DFAM358867, and entitled "In the Interest of JACEN HUFF, et al., minor children." The suit requests to terminate the parent-child relationships and/or to appoint a managing conservator of the children. The date and place of birth of the children who are the subject of the suit are: JACEN HUFF, DOB: August 5, 2019, Place of birth: Texas, CAELAN HUFF, DOB: September 16, 2020, Place of birth: Texas, CASSIUS HUFF, DOB: September 16, 2020, Place of birth: Texas
The court has authority in this suit to render an order in the children's interest that will be binding on you, including the termination of the parent-child relationship, the determination of paternity, and the appointment of a conservator with authority to consent to the child's adoption.
The name and address of the attorney for plaintiff is Yolanda Cortés Mares. Bell County Attorney's Office, P.O. Box 1127, Belton, TX 76513
Issued and given under my hand and seal of the Court at Belton, Texas, this the 2 day of October
2024
Joanna Staton, District Clerk of Bell County, Texas, 1201 Huey Road, P.O. Box 909, Belton, TX13
By: C. Rodriguez Deputy
10.08





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EDITORIAL

Time to make some soup

My Front Porch • Lynette Sowell

There's an old folk tale called "Stone Soup," and you might be familiar with it.

It goes something like this:

A hungry stranger comes to a village, asking to be fed, but the villagers tell him they have nothing and turn him away.

However, he amazes them when he says he's going to make stone soup, and they can all have a taste once he's done.

They gather around the giant kettle, into which the stranger drops the stone. Then, he asks that they each bringing a little something to the pot.

Some bring vegetables, others a bit of meat, everything for a good stew.

And then, the villages sit down with him for a good meal, the stranger's "stone soup."

There are variations of this folk tale throughout the world, but they all have a similar theme: the stranger gets from them what the villagers had all along.

However, they were too stingy to realize the great wealth they all had if they would only work together.

We readers—especially if we heard this story when we were children—probably smiled the first time we read the tale.

You can't fool children easily. I remember sitting in the story circle way back when the teacher read the story to the class. We all marveled that although the villagers said they didn't have "anything," they had enough when they put what they had together.

Isn't it silly, to say you have nothing to offer, or worse, cling to what you have and not share it?

Stingy, hoarding, suspicious. None of those qualities make for cooperation, working together, or any of the positive qualities we try to teach our children.

Stingy: I'm not sharing with anyone, because I'll lose what I have and no one will take care of *me*.

Hoarding: If I don't keep something for myself, I'll lose everything.

Suspicious: If I give to someone, no one will appreciate it and someone, somewhere will definitely take advantage of me.

If we only look out for number one, we don't foster that spirit of community, of working together.

"I'll help you only if it serves my personal interests" doesn't help either.

No wonder sometimes we can come across as uncooperative, stingy, selfish. No matter how much we claim to welcome others to our table.

Just tossing those ideas into the pot. What a great force we could be, what *community*, if we would only choose to work together and leave our own personal agendas at home. Let's hope we can make some delicious stone soup in 2014.

Lollipop Crash

Coffee Talk • Renae Brumbaugh Green

Some people like to be the center of attention... the life of the party... the light in the room. Me? I'm fine with being onstage, as long as it's on my terms. Then I have time to practice my beauty pageant smile and homecoming court wave. But when I'm thrust into the spotlight without proper preparation, it always turns into a scene from *I Love Lucy.*

Last weekend, I agreed to go to Home Depot with Rick. Not my favorite shopping place, unless we're looking at outdoor furniture or granite countertops for my kitchen remodel. Neither of those were on the agenda. I went anyway.

He was buying paint and a window for his parents' house—the one that burned down last spring. We needed two big carts: one for the 25 gallons of outdoor paint and the other for the window. I ended up pushing the paint cart, and wouldn't you know, it had a bum wheel. All up and down the aisles, it made this loud Ba-BOOM! Ba-BOOM! Ba-da-BOOM sound, like the drum section of a marching band. All through the store, people turned and looked at me as if to say, *Can you hold it down, lady?*

I gave them my best smile. It didn't help.

Rick just laughed at me and hummed 70s rock tunes to the wheel rhythms. When we finally had both carts loaded, we headed for the checkout. My drum solo was almost over—I was so close to freedom I could taste it.

I forgot to mention that I'm not the best cart driver. But with the loud warning, other customers heard me coming and got out of my way. Unfortunately, the candy aisle at the register didn't step aside. As I pushed the cart toward the checkout, I clipped a tall, beautifully displayed lollipop tree.

Yes I did.

In a deafening crash-bang finale, lollipops flew everywhere, creating what can only be described as a Willy-Wonka extravaganza. Behind me, Rick's deep belly laugh echoed through the store. Customers stared. Pointed. Snickered.

The manager came over and asked to see my license and registration. (Not kidding.)

I helped the cashier pick up the rogue lollipops while Rick and the manager tried to put the tree back together. They failed. I broke it beyond repair.

We paid for the purchase. All that free entertainment, and they didn't even offer me a lollipop. I have a sneaking suspicion they took my picture to share on a *Home Depot's Most Wanted* site.

Sometimes life is smooth and serene. But most of the time, at least in my experience, life is a series of bum carts and crashes. After many decades on this earth, I've learned that peace and happiness don't hinge on everything being perfect. I can be just as anxious and stressed during the calm times as during the ka-booms.

Or, I can celebrate both. The key to lasting joy isn't found in our circumstances, but in our spirits. The recipe for that kind of inner peace is found in God's Word: when we stay close to God and live to please Him, He rewards us with an inner joy that only He can give.

I just wish mine didn't come so often with public humiliation. But at least it gave me a chance to practice my queen wave, as I exited the store.

"When you obey my commandments, you remain in my love, just as I obey my Father's commandments and remain in his love. I have told you these things so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow!" John 15:10-11

Entertainment 101: Back-Masking

Shop the Insanity • Darren Blair

"Welcome to the show… Welcome to the show…"

I got to talking with someone recently about some of the tricks and gimmicks musicians from past years would do with their songs, and of course the discussion eventually turned to back-masking. And so, off we go.

For those who haven't heard the term before, I'll explain. Back-masking is the process of taking a recording and arranging it so that it plays backwards when something it's included in is playing forwards. This can be music played backwards, but is most often words or even entire phrases. The Wikipedia article on the matter - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Backmasking - claims that Thomas Edison himself first became aware of the prospect back in the 1870s, but history credits The Beatles with bringing the concept to mainstream awareness in the 1960s after they included it in a number of songs.

…Songs that were soon the center of controversy, along with other songs that allegedly had hidden messages as well. You see, there's a quirk with the human brain wherein people will try to make patterns where there are none, and the random noise generated when most forms of music is played backwards is ripe for a particularly active brain to find alleged "patterns" where there are none. This is especially true if a person is deliberately seeking for something, like alleged Satanic messages or "evidence" that Paul McCartney died at some point and was replaced by a body double. (I might do something on the whole "Paul is Dead" bit in a later column, so stay tuned…).

Thing is, the controversy over back-masking ended up being such that various entertainers started to make fun of it… often by including spoof back-masks in their music or other recordings. For example, a 1980s episode of "G. I. Joe" ("Skeletons In The Closet", broadcast date 11 December 1985 in most markets that broadcast it) has it that the chant being used by the villains to summon a monster is in fact one long, back-masked message. The message? "Anyone listening to this backwards for a secret occult message is a real dweeb." The audio's online if anyone wants to look.

Or we have Electric Light Orchestra's 1983 album "Secret Messages", wherein the album even had hidden messages in the cover artwork. Yeah. The whole thing is a top-down send-up of the concept of back-masking done as one of several responses to allegations of hidden messages on 1974's "Eldorado".

Granted, there were instances where artists hid various backwards messages that weren't humorous. Frank Zappa, Motorhead, and Roger Waters, for example, reportedly used back-masking to hide messages critical of someone or something they weren't happy with. And some groups have included material that wasn't family-friendly.

But in the 1980s and early 1990s, various bands found themselves being sued because hidden messages allegedly in their music convinced people to kill themselves. This largely culminated in "Vance vs. Judas Priest", wherein a lawsuit against the band was thrown out for lack of merit after the band established that the alleged message didn't exist, that people were indeed susceptible to hearing what wasn't there, and that encouraging fans to kill themselves would be against the band's interests. I can't find too many more cases after that, and back-masking as a whole also seems to have slowly fallen out of favor as well.

So yeah. There we have it. Back-masking.

"Look out, there's danger ahead. / Daeha regnad sereht tuo kool."

Log Cabins

Pleasant Ramblings • Mark Magnan

Some years ago while out in the woods, a friend and I came across what was left of a log cabin. It was not really the type of log cabin you have seen in movies, and certainly not the type you see built today. It was a basic structure that offered shelter to the person that constructed it many years before I discovered it. It is mostly made from the available resources; there were a lot of trees and suitable items in the surrounding area. It had lost most of the roof and was just the four walls.

Now the study of log cabins brings about some interesting observations. Often, they were built by a family or perhaps some neighbors. You were limited in size by the trees that were close to your new home site. Often the cabin was just for shelter from weather, animals and the outside world. It was not a big structure, with separate areas for various activities. Almost every daylight moment was spent outside, working or on some days just enjoying other activities. The house, as it is in the most basic form, was to cook, eat and sleep in.

I have no idea what the story was with the old cabin that my friend and I discovered, no one else seemed to know either. It was not near a road, it didn't seem to be located in a place that made sense, it was just alone in the woods. Perhaps the landscape had changed a lot since it was built, maybe it wasn't as old as we assumed, maybe it wasn't even a house. If you find an old log cabin way out away from civilization you might just assume the occupant is a grumpy old man with a long white beard. While that might be accurate at times, I like to think that such a cabin might be worth a lot more.

Not so long ago a friend asked me where I would want to live if I had a perfect spot in mind. Without thinking I described a place away from town, perhaps at the foot of some mountains looking out over the desert landscape. I know of a place just like this, owned by a famous artist. Immediately I was branded as being antisocial. Why did I want to be away from people? Did I really want to be cut off from friends or society? I don't think that was my initial thought, I just had a place in my mind that made sense to me. I see people living in apartments in a large city and enjoying life. I see ranchers living miles away from the nearest town and seemingly content. I think a lot of "life" is where your mind is living, and less about your body. If I won the lottery and had the money to spend, I would have a couple of places to live, mostly determined by weather. I might even purchase a penthouse apartment overlooking an exciting city. A lot would depend on where my mind wanted to be at the time. My body would certainly dictate moving from the summer home back to my winter residence. I might go out and buy that house with the courtyard facing the mountains. I might find that land where I stumbled across the remains of that old log cabin, and purchase that. I might buy a real log cabin and put it right there next to the old one.

I am certainly not antisocial, I like being around people, especially my friends. I do think there is a time when I would actually like to be out away from the noise of civilization, in the dark at night and able to hear the quietest thoughts in my mind. A spot where nothing really is happening, yet so much takes place. A nice porch to just sit and think for a while, listening to the happiness of the world around me. I don't think I would stay there long enough to grow a long and scruffy white beard. I would come back to my apartment or perhaps my beach house and invite my friends over. I might even go to a museum and see one of those old log cabins and deep down know what life inside is really like.

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OCTOBER B-TOWN BULLETIN

Local Activities & Events

Polka on the Square - Oct 9-10
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.

Master Gardeners - Oct 10
Learn how to create a thriving, resilient garden using nature's best pest control! In this seminar, Bell County Master Gardener Laura Erlandson, reveals the secrets to attracting and supporting beneficial insects with the right plants and gardening practices. Discover eco-friendly strategies you can use right away and connect with fellow gardeners passionate about supporting local biodiversity. Saturday, Oct 10, 10:00 a.m. at Temple Library, 100 W. Adams, Temple. This seminar is free to the public

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 aspen-healthcare.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/take-mehome. Read more about the program here: https://www.beltontexas.gov/news_detail_T11_R1166.php.

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

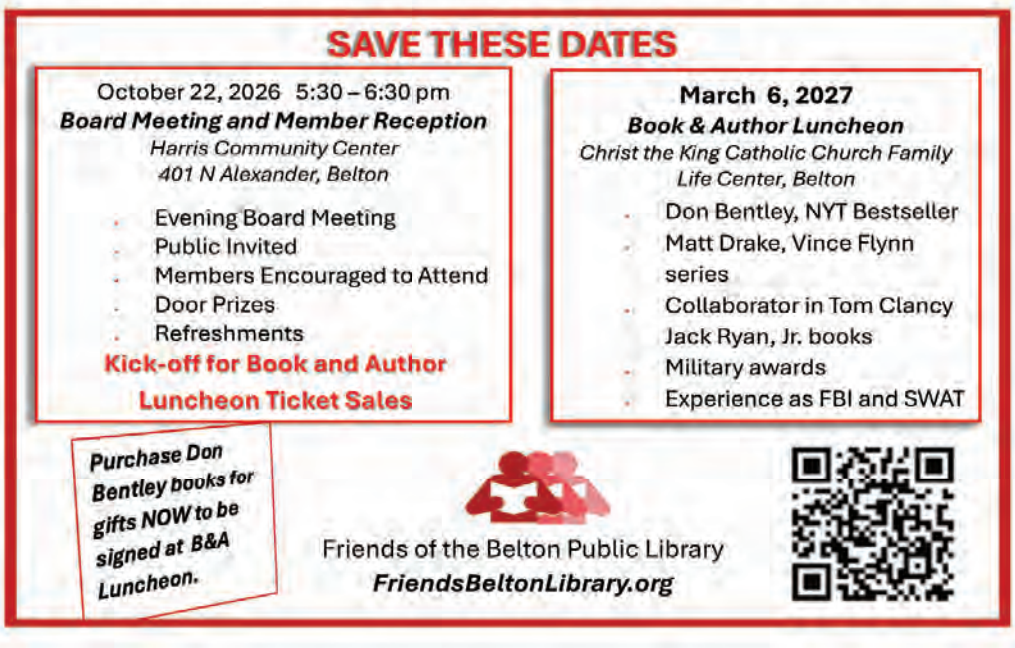
Text-to-911 for speech/ hearing impaired, those unable to call or speak due to home invasion, abduction or domestic violence or physically incapable. Providing location, city name and nature of the emergency in the first message is imperative. For further education on this service, don't hesitate to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

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

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

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

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



The Belton Journal

READERS' CHOICE 2026

Deadline: noon Friday, November 20, 2026

The Belton Journal is conducting a straw ballot of our readers to recognize the best of 2026. One winner per category will be announced in an upcoming special edition.

3 READERS • $50 CASH EACH

Three readers' entries will be selected at random.

VOTING RULES

1. All nominees must be in the Belton area.
2. Drop off ballots in the ballot box at The Belton Journal office, or mail to **210 N. Penelope, Belton, TX 76513.** Call **254-939-5754** for more information.
3. Ballots must be legible and received by **noon Friday, November 20, 2026.**
4. Complete at least **50% of the 2026 ballot** to be eligible for cash prize drawings.
5. For a category not listed, write the category and your selection at the bottom of the ballot.

BEST IN THE COUNTY

College _____
Elementary School _____
Middle School _____
High School _____
Community Event _____
County's Attraction _____
Church _____
Place to Meet People _____
Entertainment _____
Service Organization _____

SHOPPING

Flooring _____
Movie Theater _____
Wine Shop _____
Swimming Pool _____
Firearms _____
New Car Dealership _____
Used Car Dealership _____
Truck Dealership _____
Supermarket _____
Sporting Goods _____
Appliances _____
Pharmacy _____
Women's Wear _____
Children's Wear _____
Men's Wear _____
Shoes _____
Furniture _____
Tires _____
Chevy Dealership _____
Ford Dealership _____
Dodge Dealership _____
Nissan Dealership _____
Toyota Dealership _____
Florist _____
Bank _____
Office Supply _____
Convenience Store _____
Feed Store _____
Western Wear _____
Auto Parts _____
Farm Equipment _____
Wedding Cake _____
Print Shop _____
Building Supplies _____
Gift Shop _____
Lawn & Garden _____
Mattress Store _____
Antiques & Collectibles _____
Eyeglasses _____
Consignment Shop _____
Jewelry _____
Barber _____
Beauty Shop _____
Home Décor _____
Book Store _____

DINING

Meat Market _____
Chicken _____
Pizza _____
Salad Bar _____
Steaks _____
Hamburger _____
French Fries _____
Ice Cream/Yogurt _____
Seafood _____
Hot Dogs _____
BBQ _____
Desserts _____
Catfish _____
First Date Dining _____
Mexican _____
Hot Sauce _____
Chicken-Fried Steak _____
Fajitas _____
Enchiladas _____
Margaritas _____
Italian _____
Business Lunch _____
Oriental _____
Dining Atmosphere _____
Breakfast Taco _____
Buffet _____
Meet for Coffee _____
Catering _____

DINING continued from left

Liquor Store _____
Sushi _____
Take Guests To _____
Deli _____
Donuts _____
Sandwiches _____
Grill _____
Appetizers _____
Special Occasion _____
Take Out _____
Bakery _____

SERVICES

Clinic _____
Shipping Center _____
Chiropractor _____
Veterinarian _____
Oil Change _____
Air Conditioning _____
Insurance Agency _____
Gym _____
Spa _____
Limo _____
Car Rental _____
Real Estate Agency _____
Pest Control _____
Plumbing _____
Dry Cleaning _____
Nursing Home _____
Assisted Living _____
Health Food Store _____
Internet Provider _____
Nail Salon _____
Title Company _____
Pawn Shop _____
Auto Repair _____
Day Care _____
Shoe Repair _____
Landscaping _____
Mortgage _____
Tax Service _____
Window Cleaning _____
Employment Agency _____
Counseling _____
Funeral Home _____
Property Management _____
Pet Grooming _____
Signs/Banners _____
Financial Advisor _____
Carpet Cleaning _____
Dental Office _____
Window Treatment _____
Alarm/Security _____
Credit Union _____
Orthodontist _____
Dermatology _____
Law Firm _____
Hearing Aids _____
House Leveling _____

PEOPLE

Please include where each individual works.

Waiter/Waitress _____
School Teacher _____
Nurse/Dental Assistant _____
Dentist _____
Bank Teller _____
Accountant _____
Local Band _____
Chiropractor _____
Barber _____
Beautician _____
Veterinarian _____
City Employee _____
Secretary _____
County Employee _____
Insurance Agent _____
Attorney _____
Mechanic _____
Electrician _____
Salesperson _____
Grocery Store Clerk _____
Boss _____
Radio News Anchor _____
Travel Agent _____
Unsung Hero _____

ONE ENTRY PER PERSON, PLEASE

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Address: _____

MY VOTE FOR A CATEGORY NOT LISTED

Category: _____

My vote: _____