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46th Rusty Awards Celebrate Courage, Service and Community



BELTON JOURNAL/Michele Weisman

On behalf of Belton Lions Club, Chief Lary Berg receives the Community Champion award from Bree Salazar.

By Michele Weisman
The Belton Journal

The Bell County Committee for People with Disabilities hosted the 46th annual Rusty Awards Banquet Tuesday evening, Oct. 20, at the Huntington Bank Center. The theme was "Country Roads and Community Champions."

The awards banquet is named for Anthony "Rusty" Morales who at the age of 17, became disabled, but that would not stop him.

His mother, Judy Morales, said that Rusty would go everywhere on the HOP to visit people at work the library, and college.

She said, "We started a group called Trust, a special wing in a nursing home for young adults. And that nursing home kept it for 30 years."

About the banquet, she said, "Everybody's accomplished something, in spite of whatever it is. It's the stories that keep me motivated."

The evening began with introductory remarks by the Chair, Melissa Ingriola.

Judge Blackburn welcomed everyone, and said, "Rusty Morales, who in 1978 was in a motorcycle accident led to the formation of what was then called the Temple Mayors Committee, and is now the Bell County Committee for People with Disabilities. And he never stopped fighting as an advocate for individuals with disabilities in Bell County."

Attendees stood for the Pledge of Allegiance, the Texas Pledge, and the National Anthem, sung by Hayden Maroney, followed by an invocation by Tim Cartwright.

The Sharon Stephenson Educator of the Year award was presented by Cheryl Nelson to Danell Betbeze.

Nelson said, "She got a grant to start, much like our Delta program here, a catering business in the school district."

The Commissioner's Award for Community Service was presented by Susan Peters presented to Ticee Kobylanski.

Peters said, "She has been there for our family ever since our daughter was in middle school. We don't go out into the community when Ticee is with us without running into someone else who she is impacting."

The Laura "Pat" Taylor Advocate of the Year was to be presented by Dr. Kristy Delony to Anne Jackson. In their absence, Susie Marek read the presentation and acceptance speech.

Marek said, on behalf of Anne Jackson, "Because of the Bell County Autism Intervention Team, Tres and I found the courage to tell our story. Like Teresa Phelps, Barry Gormley, Nelson Barnes, Richard Lazott, Jim Michols, and Dawn Ownes that I had the opportunity to integrate stories from police reports and prosecutions that describe the dire

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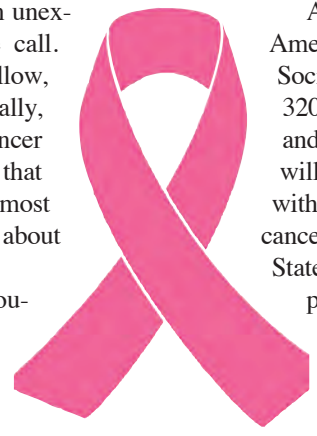
Breast cancer awareness is more than wearing a pink ribbon

By Jon Humphries
The Belton Journal

Sometimes it's a lump. Sometimes pain, fatigue or something that just doesn't seem right. Other times, there is no warning at all.

For many, the warning signs were there all along, but simply went unnoticed.

Then comes a doctor's appointment, a mammogram or an unexpected phone call. More tests follow, and eventually, a breast cancer diagnosis that changes almost everything about everyday life.



For thousands of Americans each year, the diagnosis brings fear, uncertainty and questions about what lies ahead. Beyond the immediate concerns about treatment and survival, however, there is sometimes another, more personal question.

If something so serious could happen inside of me without my recognizing it, can I ever really trust my body again? It's a question that doesn't necessarily disappear when the cancer does.

A changing battle

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month, an annual reminder of a disease that will affect approximately one in eight American women during their lifetimes. Women aren't the only victims, though.

According to the American Cancer Society, more than 320,000 women and 2,600 men will be diagnosed with invasive breast cancer in the United States in 2026. Approximately 42,140 women and 530 men are expected to die from the disease this year.

These numbers, however, don't tell the whole story. While breast cancer is still killing thousands of Americans every year, fewer women are dying from the disease than a generation ago.

Since 1989, breast cancer death rates among

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Belton ISD Earns Highest State Financial Rating

Special to the Journal

Belton ISD has once again earned the state's highest rating for financial accountability, achieving a Superior Achievement "A" rating in the School Financial Integrity Rating System of Texas (FIRST) for the 15th consecutive year.

This milestone reflects the district's longstanding commitment to sound financial management, responsible stewardship of taxpayer dollars and ensuring resources support student success.

The state's FIRST system evaluates school districts on key financial indicators, including fund balance, debt management and overall financial stability. Ratings range from superior achievement to substandard achievement, providing communities with an important measure of financial accountability.

"Fifteen consecutive years of the state's highest financial rating is an extraordinary accomplishment, and one that speaks to the strength and consistency of our district's financial leadership," said Superintendent Dr. Malinda Golden. "Our community places tremendous trust in us to manage public resources responsibly. We take that responsibility seriously because every financial decision ultimately supports our mission to provide exceptional learning experiences for each and every student."

Belton ISD Chief Financial Officer Melissa Lafferty said the milestone represents years of intentional planning, disciplined financial practices and a team dedicated to maintaining the highest standards of accountability.

"Earning this distinction once is an achievement. Maintaining it for 15 consecutive years speaks

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Friends of the Poor walk three years in a row

By Michele Weisman
The Belton Journal



BELTON JOURNAL/ Michele Weisman

Several of their walkers partake in the effort to bring awareness to helping their neighbors who have financial needs.

The third annual Friends of the Poor Walk (FOP) was held on Saturday, Oct. 17, at Yettie Polk Park, to raise awareness and donations. FOP is part of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul (SSVdP). Registration was free and open to the public. Check-in began at 9 a.m. and the formal walk started a half hour later.

Fr. Sang Quan, who brought the SSVdP Christ the King Conference to Belton, led everyone in a prayer, asking God to bless their walk for the "sake of their brothers and sisters in need."

Participants gathered to walk up to three miles, heading in any direction at the park. Over 20 people signed up.

During the year, SSVdP Christ the King Conference Belton goes in twos to visit their neighbors who have requested financial help.

Marcia Thigpen, president of said, "They don't have to be Catholic. They don't have to be Christian. They just have to be someone in need that is going through a hard time, whether they just lost their job or they have an illness causing them to miss work."

Thigpen said, "We take a resource list, which includes other entities that are giving. Some of them are waiting on disability checks, and they're trying to make it till they get those. If we have the funds, we'll help, and if we don't, then we kind of try to gear them toward that list of other resources"

Brian Kondrat said, "The Friends of the Poor Walk is our biggest fundraiser of the year."

Elicia Greene, the social organizer, said, "The home visits, instead of having the neighbors have to come in and apply to us to get assistance, we go to them."

During a home visit, they listen to the neighbors and also pray with them.

Stephanie and Kevin Rapczynski attended the walk for the first time.

Stephanie Rapchzynski said, "The ministry is for everyone."

Kevin Rapczynski said, "People have hard times."

Corey and Matt Gokinco attended each of the walks and brought their dog, Winnie.

Corey Gokinco said, "It's for people that need help. We all run into it at some time in our lives."

Matt Gokinco said, "Whether it's for food or help paying bills."

Tina Coppin and Dolores Borges worked the check-in table.

Coppin said, "God asks us to be his hands and heart to other people." She also observed that it is a great ministry for youth with opportunities for all ages to serve.

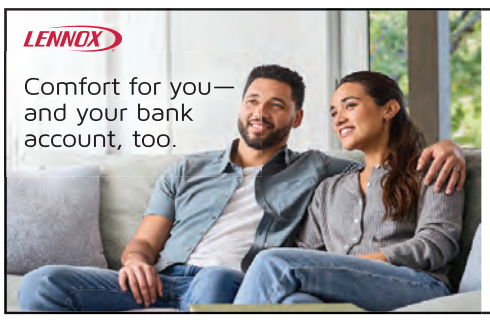
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Bell County voters prepare for Nov. 3 general election

By Jon Humphries
The Belton Journal

Bell County voters will head to the polls Nov. 3 to decide a slate of federal, state and county races.

Among the countywide contests, incumbent Republican Bell County Judge David Blackburn is running unopposed for another four-year term after defeating challenger Ted Duffield in the March Republican primary.

Other Bell County offices being decided in uncontested races include district clerk, county clerk and county treasurer. Republican Lacey Martindale is seeking to replace outgoing District Clerk Joanna Staton, who chose not to seek reelection. County Clerk Shelley Coston is running unopposed for reelection, while Adriane Hodges is seeking the county treasurer's seat after defeating incumbent Gaylon Evans in the March Republican primary.

Voters will also decide two county commissioner races.

In Precinct 2, incumbent Republican Bobby Whitson faces Democrat Stacey L. Wilson. Speaking about this year's election, Whitson emphasized the importance of voter participation in midterm elections.

"I would caution people across the county, and the country, about not getting out to vote for this election. People tend to get out to vote more for the national elections, but it's the local elected officials who can have more of an impact. Local officials are the ones who do the work for you."

Whitson also stressed the importance of understanding the candidates and issues on the ballot.

"I encourage people to vote from the bottom up on the ballot and not just focus on the candidates that they may, or may not, support."

In Precinct 4, Republican Curtis Emmons faces Democrat Ernest Wilkerson, who defeated incumbent Commissioner Louie Minor in the March Democratic primary.

Other county races include justice of the peace positions and three seats on the Bell County Appraisal District board of directors.

At the state level, incumbent Republican state Rep. Hillary Hickland faces Democrat Amelia Rabroker in House District 55, which includes Belton. In neighboring House District 54, incumbent Republican Brad Buckley faces Democrat Dawn Richardson.

Republican state Sen. Pete Flores faces Democrat Joe Paz Herrera in Senate District 24.

In congressional races, incumbent Republican John Carter faces Democrat Justin

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Hope - From Page A1

American women have declined approximately 44%, largely because of earlier detection and improvements in treatment. Compared with 2000, the death rate has fallen roughly 30%. Although breast cancer diagnoses have increased, improvements in detection and treatment mean more patients are surviving the disease.

Today, more than four million Americans are living with or after a breast cancer diagnosis, but the disease remains formidable and no two diagnoses are exactly alike.

There are more than a dozen different types, and subtypes, of breast cancer, each with different characteristics and treatment options. Depending on the type and how far it has progressed, treatment can include surgery, chemotherapy, radiation, hormone therapy or newer medications designed to target specific cancer cells.

Regardless of the diagnosis or treatment prescribed, however, the road ahead can be long, painful and uncertain. For patients and their families, the fight against cancer often becomes a struggle that touches nearly every part of their lives.

Stories of survival

Amy

Amy, who lived near Temple when she was diagnosed in 2019, had just returned from a summer vacation when she noticed a lump in her breast.

"I'd had lumps before, and had always had them checked out so I didn't think much of it, but I thought that I needed to schedule an appointment anyway."

Her physician ordered a mammogram that same day. Two days later, the doctor's office called and asked her to return the following morning.

Within another 48 hours, Amy learned she had stage 2 triple-negative breast cancer, an aggressive form of the disease that lacks three biological markers commonly used to guide treatment.

"I remember thinking, 'This is just not real.'"

She was not the only one who struggled with the diagnosis.

"It was devastating for our family. My husband was devastated. We waited for a few days to tell anyone, I think because we were both in shock. Telling my children was the hardest thing I've had to do as a parent."

Within a month, Amy began chemotherapy. Her doctors elected to treat the cancer before surgically removing the tumor, an approach frequently used with aggressive breast cancers.

What followed was a brutal chemotherapy regimen: eight treatments over 12 weeks. Ironically, it was the treatment, not the cancer itself, that first made her feel seriously ill.

Her husband became caregiver, cook, housekeeper and chauffeur while continuing to operate his business.

"I'm honestly not sure how my husband did it. Our extended family lives on the West Coast. My mom and sister came to help when they could, but my husband somehow ran his own business, cooked, cleaned and got me to all of my appointments."

Surgery followed, complicated by an infection that kept her in and out of the hospital for six weeks. Then, more chemotherapy.

Finally, in late 2020, Amy was declared cancer-free, but the experience changed her relationship with her body.

"I'm probably a hypochondriac now," she added with a laugh.

"It was the first time in my life I had felt mortal, like something bad could really happen to me. I remember feeling like my body had somehow malfunctioned."

In 2023, Amy elected to undergo a preventive mastectomy with reconstruction, a decision she believes has helped her remain cancer-free.

"I just thank God every day that it's another day without it. I don't worry about the future or the what if's too much. I really just try to stay thankful for today."

J.T.

J.T. never expected to develop breast cancer. Like most men, he hadn't given the possibility much thought. Breast cancer is generally considered a women's disease, but in January 2025, he learned otherwise.

He had been feeling somewhat unwell for nearly a year when he discovered a lump in December 2024.

"I'd been feeling off for about a year; just not like myself."

It wasn't until he was playing with his son one day that he noticed some pain and a small lump in his chest.

Initially suspected as an inflammation of breast tissue called mastitis, his physician prescribed a 10-day course of antibiotics. When the condition failed to improve, additional testing followed.

"When they did the ultrasound, it took the tech about five seconds, and she said 'I'm going to get the doctor.'"

J.T. was diagnosed with stage 3 triple-positive breast cancer, meaning his tumor tested positive for estrogen receptors, progesterone receptors and HER2.

Following three weeks of insurance preauthorization, he began chemotherapy in February 2025.

"When you get a diagnosis like that, you start seeing the healthcare system work differently."

Treatment brought severe complications almost immediately and after his second round of chemotherapy, J.T. was hospitalized. Intestinal complications included a thinning in the wall of his colon and he subsequently became seriously ill with a C. difficile infection and required an ostomy bag while completing treatment.



J.T. continued trying to work throughout his treatments, relying heavily on family and friends, and a lot of understanding from his employer.

"I don't think people really grasp how difficult treatment is. I leaned hard on my parents. I couldn't have done it without my dad and my friends. I had a community that really gathered around me."

By late 2025, J.T. was in remission. He completed maintenance treatment recently, but persistent back pain prompted an MRI that revealed two lesions on his spine. Their significance remains uncertain.

"I still feel like my body is betraying me."

His experience also revealed another challenge: Breast cancer support services are overwhelmingly oriented toward women.

"All of the support structure for breast cancer is for women. When I was diagnosed I went on Facebook looking for support groups for men with breast cancer and couldn't find any…so I just joined the women's groups."

More than a scar

For many breast cancer survivors, treatment leaves permanent physical reminders.

Mastectomies, lumpectomies and radiation can change the appearance, texture and sensitivity of breast tissue. Scars, hair loss and other effects complicate a patient's relationship with a body already subjected to extraordinary trauma.

For some women, reconstructive surgery and paramedical tattooing can help restore something cancer took away.

Molly Humphries, a state-licensed esthetician with specialized training in paramedical tattooing, uses pigments and specialized techniques to recreate the appearance of nipples and areolas following mastectomy, with or without breast reconstruction.

"With 3D techniques, I use carefully chosen colors, shading and highlights to create the illusion of depth on flat skin. Those details help make the result look more natural and individual to each woman."

Some techniques can also camouflage healed scars or changes in skin pigmentation. For many patients, though, the work is about more than appearance.

"By the time a patient comes to me, they may have spent months or years undergoing treatment—having to undress, be poked, prodded, examined and touched. After surgeries, chemotherapy or radiation, some patients may have lost a sense of femininity or don't quite recognize themselves in the mirror," Humphries said.

Of course, not every survivor chooses reconstruction or tattooing. Some embrace their scars. Others simply want to move forward without additional procedures. What matters is that the choice belongs to them.

Knowledge and survival

While treatment continues to improve, medical professionals emphasize that early detection remains one of the most effective tools against breast cancer.

The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force recommends mammograms every two years for women ages 40 through 74 at average risk. Women with elevated risk factors may need different screening schedules.

Warning signs can include lumps in the breast or underarm, nipple discharge, skin dimpling, swelling or changes in breast appearance. Some cancers, however, develop without any noticeable symptoms.

Any unusual breast change deserves medical attention, even following a normal mammogram.

For eligible uninsured or underinsured Texans, the state's Breast and Cervical Cancer Services program offers assistance with screening and diagnostic testing.

Awareness, after all, must mean more than wearing pink ribbons each October.

It means scheduling a mammogram, recognizing changes in one's body, helping someone get to an appointment and understanding that breast cancer can affect anyone, including men.

Learning to trust again

Perhaps one of the greatest misconceptions about breast cancer is that the journey ends when treatment does. For many survivors, though, that's when the journey toward healing begins.

After treatment ends, scars can fade and hair grows back. Doctor's appointments become less frequent, but for many survivors, recovery continues long after the last procedure or appointment.

"I wish people knew that there's treatment, and then there is recovery…and the two are not necessarily the same thing. In many ways…more emotionally… recovery was harder than the treatment part of it." Amy said.

For Amy, J.T. and thousands of survivors like them, there is life after cancer. There are still things to do, places to go and memories to make.

Perhaps after coming so close to losing it all, those ordinary things mean a little more now.

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OBITUARIES



Sandlin

Barton Wilson Sandlin
April 08, 1933 – October 15, 2026

Barton Wilson Sandlin, age 93 years, passed away at Providence hospital on 10/15/26. He was surrounded by his loving family.

Mr. Sandlin was born in Belton, Texas, and attended Texas A&M University earning a degree in Agricultural Economics. He married Alice Joan Shine in 1954. He served 14 years in the United States Army and Army Reserve rising to the rank of Major. He worked 40 years at Hercules/Orbital ATK until retiring to focus on grandchildren and his beloved cattle ranch, assisted by his dog, Buddy.

Mr. Sandlin is preceded in death by his wife of 71 years, Alice Joan Sandlin as well as his son, James Barton Sandlin, parents Barton and Dorothy Sandlin, and grandneph-ew Case Beken.

He is survived by son Johnny M. Sandlin, daughter in law Candy Sandlin, daughter Sally Borucki and son in law Michael Borucki. He is also survived by his 5 grandchil-dren—grandsons Scott Sandlin & wife Nicole, Kevin Sandlin & wife Blanca, and granddaughters Paige Sandlin Marks & her husband Greg, LiAnn Borucki Prado and her husband Nathan, and Jenna Borucki. His cherished "little people" include his 8 great grandchildren. He is also survived by his beloved sister Carol Sandlin Lewis and brother-in-law Arthur B Lewis of Conroe, nieces Carrie Hrozek, Robin Beken and nephew Brett Lewis as well as 5 grand nieces and nephews.

Education was very important to him. All 5 grandchildren received college degrees including one from The United States Military Academy at West Point.

A memorial service celebrating Mr. Sandlin's life will be held at Cole Funeral home in McGregor on 11/6/2026 with visitation at 1 pm and burial following service at McGregor cemetery.

In lieu of flowers please donate to a charity of your choice.

The family wishes to thank:

- Ascension Providence hospital for consistent, excellent and compassionate care over many years, particularly the ER doctors, nurses, and hospitalists.

- Providence Hospice for relieving his pain and guiding us through the end-of-life jour-ney with dignity and peace.

- Dr. Schultz at Waco Cardiology

- his caregivers from Right At Home and The Grandson who were his daily support al-lowing him to stay in his home

- special thanks to Inez Chapa for 4 years of loving care, Debra Jones for 1 year of loving care at night as well as Marvine Walker and Elizabeth Marek for months of lov-ing care. special thanks to Mr. Octaviano Gallegos for the beautiful Veterans Walk of Honor sa-lute at Providence Hospital.

Munder

Marjorie "Margie" Frances Munder
March 27, 1932 — September 26, 2026

Marjorie Frances Munder, lovingly known as 'Margie', passed away peacefully on Saturday, September 26, 2026, in Harker Heights, Texas. She was born on March 27, 1932 in Washington, to Ernest Rulien and Maybelle (Gore) Rulien.

Margie attended Stadium High School and met Charles 'Patrick' Cowan in Tacoma. The two married and made their home in Tacoma, Washington, then having four children. After the marriage ended, she married Bobby Eskew, and together they also had four children. She opened her home to fostering children for a time, as well. Margie was married twice after, before later in life marrying Willard Munder, and welcoming his 3 previous children into family. Their years together were marked by deep devotion, shared hobbies, and a life built side by side. She outlived all 5 of her husbands.

She found happiness in the simple and lasting pleasures of life. Her favorite pastime was to do word search books, which she'd spend countless hours discovering the words and completing many stacks of books. In her younger years she enjoyed crocheting afghans for friends and family's couches. She had dance classes and learned to play the piano as a youth, enjoyed singing gospel songs with her family, listening to country music, and square dancing. She had a fondness for Chinese food, as well as, making her potato salad and fried chicken for the many picnics at Point Defiance Park. She always wore an apron, as she loved to cook and bake the home-made meals everyone devoured. Camping, boating, hiking, traveling, and being outdoors in nature brought her joy, as did the roses and gardens around her home. The ocean and evergreens calmed her soul.

Above all, Margie cherished family, and adored children. She is survived by her son, Charles Cowan; 3 of her daughters, Cheryl Adams, Karen Waldrop, and Norma Eskew; her nephews Brian Nelson, Steven Rulien, niece Diane Jordan, and her stepchildren, Willie Munder, Jodi Munder, and Tammy Amos. She also leaves behind a large and cherished circle of grandchildren, including Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, Misty, Jack, Pilo, Autumn, Jeffery, Jody, Jason, Carrie, Jenny, and Chrissy, as well as many other great-grandchildren. Her love for family was evident throughout her life, and the home she built was one of welcome, care, and togetherness, creating a fully branching family tree with blooms of everyone's significant others and extended family members to sparkle in her sunlight.

She was preceded in death by her father, Ernest Rulien; her mother, Maybelle Cowan; 2 daughters, Judy Appling and Kathleen Morgan; 2 sons, James Cowan and David Eskew; her brother, Ernest 'Ernie' Rulien; her sister, Nancy Nelson, a nephew, Harvey Rulien, and a grandchild Kimberly Cowan, as well as all her aunts, and uncles. She was a legend.

Margie will be remembered for her warm smile, her soft voice and laugh, her devotion to those she loved, her enjoyment of life's everyday pleasures, and the enduring care she gave to family and friends. She endured much and overcame much more in her 94 years, with strength and courage. Her memory and spark will remain a blessing to all who knew her, and she will be truly missed.

A special thank you to those from Altus Hospice and Harker Heights Nursing and Rehab who provided for her their compassionate care.

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

Caraballo

Frances Sue Caraballo
January 05, 1950 – September 30, 2026

Frances Sue Caraballo, lovingly known as Sue, Momma and MawMaw, passed away on September 30, 2026 at the age of 76.

On January 05, 1950, Sue was born as the sixth child to Frank and Thelma Eldridge, in Lampasas, Texas. She grew up primarily in the central Texas area, and had been a resident of Temple since 1968. Sue graduated from the last class of the King's Daughters Hospital Vocational Nursing Program in the mid-1980's. Then spent several years as an LVN at King's Daughters Hospital.

Sue was a strong woman with a big heart, a Texas soul, a soft spot for animals, a love for bluebonnets, and the #1 Dallas Cowboys Fan! Above all, she loved her family more than anything.

Her family was the center of her world, and she never needed a reason to show it. Sue was one of those people who could make family feel bigger than just a family tree. Sue was incredibly proud of and cherished her children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. Her love wasn't always wrapped up in perfect words or grand gestures. It was in simple, everyday things. The conversations, the laughter, checking in, and simply being there is where her love shined the brightest.

Sue was preceded in death by her parents; sister June; all three of her brothers, James, Hugh, and Mike; and her first husband and father of her children, Charles Presley Sr.

Sue leaves behind her beloved husband of 18 years, David Caraballo; her four cats; and her four children: Charles Presley Jr. (Brandi) of Texas; David Presley of Louisiana; Allison Anderson (Brian) of California; and Matthew Presley of Louisiana.

Her legacy continues through her grandchildren: Charles "Trey" Presley III (Brittaney) of Florida; Elizabeth Boyd (Ethan) of Germany; Savannah Leonard (Mason) of Louisiana; Shelby Anderson of Louisiana; and Sydney Anderson of Louisiana. She was also a proud great-grandmother to Axl Presley and Baylee Presley of Florida.

She will also be missed by her two sisters Doris and Shirley, as well as many nieces and nephews whom she loved as if they were her own.

So from here, we will carry Sue, Momma, MawMaw with us. In the bluebonnets blooming along a Texas backroad. In the sound of a Cowboys game playing loudly on the television. In the silly antics of a cat. In family stories told again and again. In the people she loved, and the generations that carry her legacy forward.

Our hearts ache that we didn't get more time with her, but we are grateful that she did not have to endure a long goodbye. She left us quickly, surrounded by love, and that is a comfort we will carry with us.

Memorial Service were be held at Young's Daughters Funeral Home on Thursday, October 15, 2026 at 1:00 p.m.

Arrangements are under the direction of Sabrina Young at Young's Daughters Funeral Home & Bereavement Center in Temple, TX

Voters - From Page A2

Early and Green Party candidate Greg Stoker in District 31, while longtime Republican incumbent Pete Sessions faces Democrat Casey Shepard in District 17.

Statewide, Gov. Greg Abbott is seeking a fourth term against Democrat Gina Hinojosa and

Libertarian Pat Dixon. Voters will also choose between Republican Ken Paxton and Democrat James Talerico for U.S. senator in one of the nation's most closely watched races. Contests for lieutenant governor, attorney general and several other statewide offices will also be decided Nov. 3.

When and where to vote

Early voting in Bell County began Oct. 19, with polling locations open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. through Oct. 23.

Polls will be open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 24, and noon to 6 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 25. During the final week before Election Day, Oct. 26-30, voting hours will be 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Early voting locations serving the Belton and Morgan's Point Resort areas include:

Bell County Belton Annex, 550 E. Second Ave., Belton.

Morgan's Point Event Center, 60 Morgan's Point Blvd., Morgan's Point Resort.

On Election Day, Nov. 3, polls will be open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. at designated voting centers throughout Bell County. A complete list of locations is available at https://www.bellcountytx.com/departments/elections/election_day_locations.php.

The deadline to register to vote was Oct. 5. Applications for ballots by mail must be received by the Bell County Elections Department no later than Oct. 23. Voting by mail is limited to voters who meet Texas eligibility requirements.

Voters should bring an acceptable form of photo identification or, if eligible, supporting identification and a reasonable impediment declaration.

Residents can check their registration status, review sample ballots and find additional election information through the Bell County Elections Department at https://www.bellcountytx.com/departments/elections or by calling 254-933-5774.

Walk - From Page A1

Borges said, "We get to be a voice for people who don't have a voice."

The St. Vincent de Paul Food Pantry at Christ the King Catholic Church is open three times a month. The first Wednesday of the month, from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m., the first Saturday of the month from 9 a.m. to 11 am, and the second or third Saturday of the month from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. Belton and Temple residents may contact their help line at 254-444-2556, requesting assistance. They take about 24 hours to return calls after weekends. Their SSVdP link to donate is giving.myparishsoft.io//app/giving/WeShare-2571?tab=home.

Sponsors of the event were UPS Store #5828 Belton, Don Ringler Automotive Chevrolet Toyota, Belton Feed & Supply, Scott & White Employees Credit Union, and H-E-B Belton. The event coordinator was Monika Krzysik-Hang. Next year's Friends of the Poor Walk, which is a national event, will be held either in Sep. or Oct.







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Texas DPS Leadership recognizes National Top Trooper Team win

Special to the Journal

The members of the Public Safety Commission (PSC) honored two Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) Troopers for bringing home the top team trophy at this year's National Top Trooper Competition. Trooper Melanie Moreno (Seguin) and Trooper Brody Telfer (Belton) were at the meeting to be recognized. The pair was named the top team overall at the second annual National Top Trooper Competition in Columbus, Ohio, last month.

"Troopers Moreno and Telfer represented Texas with skill, determination and professionalism," said DPS Colonel Freeman F. Martin. "Winning the overall team title is an extraordinary accomplishment, and I am proud of the way they performed on a national stage."

In addition to the team title, Moreno placed first in overall female physical training and was runner-up in both firearms and the overall top female standings. Telfer placed first in overall male driving and was runner-up in the overall top male standings.

"Every part of this competition demanded something different from these Troopers, from physical endurance and precision on the range to sound judgment under pressure," said Texas Highway Patrol Chief Bryan Rippee. "Troopers Moreno and Telfer rose to that challenge together. Their performance speaks to the dedication they bring to serving Texans every day."



Courtesy photo

Trooper Melanie Moreno (Seguin) and Trooper Brody Telfer (Belton) were recognized for National Top Trooper Competition.

The National Top Trooper Competition is a rigorous three-day event designed to test the full scope of a Trooper's operational readiness. Participants compete in nine events that evaluate physical fitness, mental resilience, tactical proficiency and overall job knowledge. In addition to the competitive challenges, Troopers must appear before an interview board, where they are assessed on professionalism, communication skills and critical thinking. Core components of the competition include advanced driving scenarios, physical fitness and marksmanship with all department-issued weapon systems, ensuring each competitor demonstrates mastery in essential law enforcement skills.

Moreno and Telfer earned their places at the national competition after being named the top female and top male Troopers, respectively, at DPS' 14th annual Javier Arana Jr. Top Trooper Competition in March.

North Belton Middle School Theatre earns exemplary campus distinction

Special to the Journal

North Belton Middle School has been named an exemplary campus by the Texas Educational Theatre Association, recognizing a theatre program that gives students opportunities to build confidence, develop their talents and find their place both on stage and behind the scenes.

The distinction recognizes theater programs for providing a comprehensive educational experience that includes areas such as performance, UIL participation, theatrical design and technology.

For North Belton Middle School Theatre Director Allison Ware, the recognition reflects a program designed to give students a wide range of experiences throughout their middle school years.

Students can progress through multiple levels of theatre while also exploring technical theatre, giving them opportunities to discover where their individual talents fit.

"I try to find places where students are going to succeed, whether it's on stage or backstage," Ware said.

That approach has helped students stay connected to the program. Of the 26 students in Ware's advanced class last year, 21 were eighth graders and 13 participated in theater with Ware throughout all three years of middle school.

Ware said the growth she sees during those years often extends far beyond theatrical skills.

"I've seen them start as very shy sixth graders and blossom and come out of their shells and find their place," Ware said. "I just want them to feel valued, and that they have a voice, and that they matter."

Students have opportunities to put those skills into practice through a robust slate of productions and experiences. Last year alone, the program presented four plays, participated in one-act plays and provided students with opportunities outside the classroom, including a trip to Austin to see a professional production of *The Outsiders*. The campus also rechartered its Thespian troupe and inducted 12 new members.



Courtesy Photo

Students helped bring recognition and accolades to the school's theatre department.

Ware said those opportunities are also made possible by families who support students through the many hours of rehearsals, performances and preparation that happen behind the scenes.

"Theatre takes a huge commitment from our students, but it also takes a commitment from their families," Ware said. "Our parents give so much of their time and support. One of my favorite things is watching their pride when they finally get to see all those hours of rehearsal, hard work and dedication pay off. That moment belongs to the families, too."

North Belton Middle School Principal Dominic White said the strength of the program comes from the intentional environment Ware has created for students.

"She challenges students to be better while also creating an environment where students feel safe enough to take risks, make mistakes and grow," White said. "You can see their confidence developing, not just in their performances, but in the way they communicate, collaborate, problem-solve and lead."

For White, the exemplary distinction also reflects the campus's commitment to helping each and every student discover where they belong.

"Our theatre program creates a space where students can take risks, express themselves, work together and develop skills that extend well beyond the stage," White said. "We are incredibly proud that the work happening at NBMS is being recognized at this level."

Belton ISD Fine Arts Director Keith Zuehlke said the recognition highlights the value of providing students with meaningful fine arts experiences throughout their education.

"This recognition speaks to the quality of theatre education happening at North Belton Middle School," Zuehlke said. "Allison has built a program where students are encouraged to explore, take creative risks and discover their strengths, whether that's performing on stage or working behind the scenes. Those experiences build confidence, collaboration and a sense of belonging, and we're excited to see the program recognized by the Texas Educational Theatre Association."

For Ware, however, what she hopes students remember most isn't a production or an award.

"They're loved. They're capable. They're magical," Ware said. "I just want them to feel valued, and that they have a voice, and that they matter."

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Courtesy photo

2026-27 Leadership Belton class participants gather at the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor during a recent visit to the Belton campus. The class meets monthly for behind-the-scenes tours and discussions designed to give participants a better understanding of the institutions and organizations that shape the Belton community.

Leadership Belton builds community connections, develops future leaders

By Jon Humphries
The Belton Journal

Leadership isn't always about holding a title or occupying a position of authority. As members of this year's Leadership Belton class are discovering, it's about building relationships, understanding the community around you and finding ways to make it better.

The Belton Area Chamber of Commerce recently kicked off its 2026-27 Leadership Belton class, a 10-month program designed to bring local professionals together to develop leadership skills and become more involved in their community.

Chamber President and CEO Randy Pittenger said the program focuses on three primary objectives: community awareness, leadership development and building relationships with other community leaders.

"It's common to have leadership programs like this in communities," Pittenger said, explaining that the experience gives participants opportunities to meet people and see things outside their normal routines.

For Michael Smith, of the Temple Area Builders Association, becoming more connected to Belton was a primary reason for enrolling.

"I was interested in being a better part of the community. I wanted to be tied into what was going on in Belton," Smith said.

Smith has participated in similar programs in other communities but said he was particularly interested in learning what makes Belton special. After just two class meetings, he said he has already gained new insights, particularly about the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor.

The 15-member class meets on the second Tuesday of each month, visiting businesses, nonprofit organizations, government offices and other institutions for a behind-the-scenes look at how the community operates.

Sessions focus on education, manufacturing, health care, state services, Fort Hood and the military, and issues affecting the community's overall quality of life.

"The course is about more than just learning. Participants will meet key people in the community and learn how to get more involved," Pittenger said.

In addition to an in-depth self-assessment at the beginning of the course, participants receive leadership training covering personal goals, time management, teamwork and professional development.

But Leadership Belton isn't simply a series of tours and presentations.

Class members also put those lessons into practice through community improvement projects.

This year's participants will be divided into two teams, each responsible for selecting and developing a project intended to make a lasting impact on Belton.

Teams work with mentors who previously completed the program and are responsible for securing donations to fund their projects.

The process gives participants practical experience in collaboration, fundraising and problem-solving while working alongside people from different professional backgrounds.

Each team will make a formal presentation about its project during the final class meeting in June 2027.

For Pittenger, the program represents an investment not only in the individuals who participate but also in the community's future.

"I want participants to leave the course with a list of contacts and resources for making an impact in their community," he said.

The hope is that the relationships, knowledge and leadership skills developed during the course will continue benefiting Belton long after graduation.



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Rails-to-Trails project will link pathways in Temple and Belton

By David Stone
The Belton Journal

The three-phased Georgetown Railroad Trail project — a regional rails-to-trails plan created by the cities of Temple and Belton that converts a retired Missouri-Kansas-Texas corridor into a 10-foot-wide shared-use path — is under way in Temple. It will eventually connect with Belton's trail system, local experts said this week.

The trail follows the right-of-way of the former Georgetown Railroad and includes the renovation of the historic MK&T truss bridge near Belton. The bridge is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Phase 1 of the project is a 10-foot-wide trail running from Ray Allen Elementary School on Fifth Street in Temple to South 31st Street. Temple spokesperson Nohely Mackowiak said that phase likely will be completed in March 27.

Earlier this week, Temple City Council approved a professional services agreement with Kasberg, Patrick & Associates for design work on Phase 2 in the amount of $814,250, she said.

"The anticipated completion date for the design of Phase 2 is July 2027," Mackowiak said "No construction date has been set."

"Phase 2 will run from 31st Street to the historic railway bridge over the Leon River," she said. It will include tree-preservation buffers and large shade tree plantings along adjacent properties.

Phase 3 of the project is being called the Belton-Georgetown Rails-to-Trails project, and the $3.5 million trail segment will run across the Leon River bridge, detour around a heavily industrial area, and end near I-35, according to Matt Bates, Belton's public works director.

"We don't want pedestrians coming into contact with heavy industry," Bates said. "We will secure easements that would go around the industrial area."

"At I-35, trails will go north to Temple or south to connect with Belton's 3-mile Nolan Creek Hike & Bike Path," Bates added. "That path runs through Liberty Park, along Nolan Creek and through other parks, past the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor campus, and ends at North Loop 121."

"We will benefit from the I-35 and I-14 expansion projects," he said. "The expansion will include trails along the side of the interstates from Loop 121 in Belton to Loop 363 in Temple. We will use those trails to create a regional trail network."



Courtesy photo

This rendered map shows the Belton-Georgetown Rails-to-Trails project. Once the Georgetown Railroad Trail reaches the old truss bridge at the Leon River, Belton will take the trail across the bridge, around an industrial area and to Interstate 35. Then, hikers and bikers can go north to Temple or South to Belton's 3-mile Nolan Creek Hike & Bike Path.

Bates said the Belton project will be funded in the future by the Killeen-Temple Metropolitan Organization through the Central Texas Council of Government.

Right now, the project is under construction in Temple," he said. "From our side, we will be thrilled to work with Temple on this project. It's their project, but we are a willing and excited partner."

Belton City Manager Sam Listi said: "The alignment for Phase 3 in Belton has been revised due to industrial use along the railroad, and is still subject to change due to the IH 35/IH 14 widening project."

According to Mackowiak, the entire project transforms roughly 7 miles of defunct track into a scenic fitness and alternative transportation route connecting Temple and Belton.

"The project demonstrates the regional cooperation that exists between the cities of Belton and Temple," she said.

The city of Temple purchased the railroad right-of-way in 2010. Federal law regulates how inactive railroads may be removed or repurposed, following those guidelines, Temple's City Attorney Office applied for "railbanking" in 2020.

Railbanking is the term for federal approval that allows inactive railroads to be converted to trails. Temple is obliged to keep the right-of-way in case the need arises in the future to reconstruct the railroad. Temple received approval through the federal Surface Transportation Board in May 2021 to allow conversion to a hike and bike trail.

Sausage Fest is Nov. 14 in The Grove

By David Stone
The Belton Journal

The Grove Community Center Sausage Fest — an annual event that raises money for the maintenance and improvements to the center — will be Nov. 14 from 5:30 to 7 p.m. Although the center has a Moody address, Sausage Fest will be at The Grove.

"The Community Center is 17 miles from Temple, about 17 miles from Belton and 19 miles from Gatesville," said event organizer Miriam Winkler. "We will have a sausage dinner served inside the Community Center or at our drive through."

The menu will include sausage, noodles, pinto beans, coleslaw and various trimmings, according to Winkler. The meal — $20 for adults, $10 for children 10 and under — also will include beverages and desserts.

"We expect to serve about 250 inside and another 200 at the drive through," she said. "All major credit cards will be accepted."

In addition to the sausage meal, there will be a bake sale featuring cookies, cakes and candies, as well as several rafles.

"The raffles will start after 7, but people can start buying tickets when the arrive," Winkler added. "There will be many items raffled off, including a special Christmas tree, guns and much more. You can buy tickets for the different items. We also will have an auction."

Proceeds benefit The Grove Community Center.

"One year, we were able to buy a 10-burner stove," she said. "We've done a lot of renovations as well."

Winkler said there have been many Sausage Fests in The Grove.

"I think it started in 1986," she said. "Back then, we used to stuff our own sausage — that took a lot of time and a lot of helpers."

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Rating - From Page A1

volumes about the work happening behind the scenes," Lafferty said. "Our finance team understands that every dollar matters. This recognition is a reflection of our commitment to financial integrity, transparency and making responsible decisions that serve our students, staff and community."

Rusty - From Page A1

need for first responders and criminal justice professionals to understand neurodiversity and the autism spectrum."

The Judge's Meritorious Service Award was presented by Cheryl Nelson to Donna Shriner, who was absent.

Nelson said, "Donna is the face and name of advocacy for Belton ISD for proactive communication."

Employer of the Year had three recipients. Towanna Smith presented the award to Joshua Sullivan of Spare Time. Tammie Baggerly presented the award to Philip Severson of Babba's 33 and Rhonda Lewis, who was absent, for UMHB.

Sullivan said, "The Texas Workforce is absolutely amazing. Makes it seamless."

Baggerly said about Severson, "He provides young adults with special needs the tools and support they need to thrive on the job."

Baggerly said about Lewis, "Whether mentoring students during their shift or looking out for their well-being after hours, her dedication empowers them to reach their full potential."

The 2026 Rusty's Scholarship was presented by Judy Morales to Rebeckah House.

Morales read part of House's application. "I am a self-proclaimed unstoppable force, and I have made up my mind to achieve."

The Pat Elliott Inspirational Award was presented by Judy Morales to Sabrina Young.

Young said, "It's a reminder of courage carried by every veteran who serves our nation, and the battles that many disabled veterans continue to face long after they left the battlefield."

The Community Champion award was presented by Bree Salazar to Chief Larry Berg for the Belton Lions Club.

Berg said, "It's just an amazing group. We have fun. We really have fun at our meetings. We tell jokes. But at the same time, we plan for services. I think that's the most important part of it. We say where there's a need there's a lion."

The John C. Garth Person of the Year 2026 was presented by Melissa Ingriola to Carma Franco.

A standing ovation greeted Franco as she accepted her award. She in turn thanked all those who have helped her.

The closing song was by Joel Maroney. DJ Miguel, of 5-oh Entertainment, played music for dinner. The Belton ISD Delta Program provided dessert. Dinner was by Honey Wheat, LLC. Hoctil and Superior Health plan had informative tables set up.

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American Revolution exhibit coming to Bell County Museum

By Jon Humphries
The Belton Journal

As America celebrates the 250th anniversary of its founding, a traveling exhibit exploring the American Revolution will make its final Texas stop of 2026 at the Bell County Museum in Belton.

The American Revolution Experience Traveling Exhibit will be open to the public Dec. 2-19, offering visitors an opportunity to explore the people, events and sacrifices that shaped the nation's independence.

The exhibit is being brought to Belton through the efforts of the Betty Martin Chapter of the National Society Daughters of the American Revolution in Temple, in cooperation with the Bell County Museum.

Chapter Regent Janie Reed spent three years petitioning to bring the exhibit to Bell County and has worked with museum officials for four years to make the event possible.

"I was relentless with them," Reed said of her efforts to secure the exhibit. "They finally said, 'Here.'"

With more than 200 DAR chapters across Texas, Reed said she was determined to bring the exhibit to Belton during the nation's 250th anniversary celebration.

"I wanted it in 2026, because it's America 250," she said.

The exhibit features 12 themed panels highlighting the Revolutionary War, along with interactive kiosks, digital biographies, historical documents and rare artifacts. Visitors can explore stories of the people who shaped the Revolution, including some whose contributions have received little recognition.

Two special panels will highlight Texas' connection to the Revolutionary War.

Activities for children will also be available.

Reed said interest from area schools is already strong. Four field trips, representing approximately 385 students, have been scheduled to visit the museum during the exhibit's December run.

Teachers and organizations interested in arranging additional field trips or group visits are encouraged to contact the museum directly.

For Reed, the exhibit is about more than commemorating a historical event. She hopes visitors will leave with a greater appreciation for the sacrifices made by those who fought for American independence.

"I hope visitors see the sacrifice of our forefathers for our freedom," Reed said. "Those who signed the Declaration of Independence were subject to death, loss of their fortunes and imprisonment."

"Americans rallied together for our freedom. We need that spirit again today. Our freedom is not guaranteed." Reed added.

The DAR will also host a Liberty Tree dedication at noon Monday, Oct. 26, in Miller Park in Belton. The public is invited to the dedication of the tree, which was planted on April 6, 1904.

The Bell County Museum is located at 201 N. Main St. in Belton. The exhibit will be open during regular museum hours, Tuesday through Friday from noon to 5 p.m. and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Admission is free.

Candy Fest to sweeten downtown Belton

By Jon Humphries
The Belton Journal

Downtown Belton will be filled with families, fun and costumes of all varieties on Sunday, Oct. 25, as the 11th annual Downtown Belton Candy Fest returns for an afternoon of Halloween fun.

The free, family-friendly event will take place from 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. in historic downtown Belton, with trick-or-treat stations, children's activities, vendors and Halloween-themed photo opportunities.

The event, previously promoted as the Downtown Candy Trail, has become a popular fall tradition, bringing families and local businesses together for an afternoon of Halloween festivities.

Children are encouraged to dress in their favorite costumes and bring candy bags to collect treats at stations throughout the downtown area.

In addition to bucket loads of free treats for the kids, families will have an opportunity to visit vendors, participate in activities and explore the shops and businesses surrounding Belton's historic downtown square.

The annual celebration has traditionally attracted families from across Bell County and surrounding communities, offering children a chance to enjoy Halloween activities in a safe, community setting.

For the safety of participants, downtown streets will be closed to vehicle traffic during the event. Children attending Candy Fest must be accompanied by an adult.

The celebration also provides an opportunity for downtown merchants to welcome visitors who may not regularly visit historic downtown Belton.

Candy Fest is one of several seasonal



activities that bring residents and visitors to downtown Belton throughout the year, highlighting the district's role as a gathering place for the community.

The event is scheduled for Sunday, Oct. 25, from 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. at 101 E. Central Ave. in downtown Belton. Admission is free.

Additional event information is available through the Belton Parks and Recreation Department and Discover Downtown Belton on Facebook.

Local artist carves her way to the top



Courtesy photo
Kristina Patenaude turns pumpkins into works of art.

By David Stone
The Belton Journal

Kristina Patenaude is a graphics designer by trade, and she does everything from art direction to social media management and content creation. She also is one of the best pumpkin carvers on planet Earth.

"I've been on four Food Network shows," she said this week. "I was a finalist on *Outrageous Pumpkins* season 2, the winner of *Halloween Wars* season 13, the captain and a finalist on *Halloween Wars All-Stars* season 14, and I'm currently airing *Halloween Wars Professional* season 16."

"The very last public pumpkin carving contest I ever entered was in Belton," Kristina said. "I had been hesitant to enter because I felt it would be unfair for me to join, but the coordinator of the contest was very insistent that I enter and be a part of it, so I agreed to enter under the condition that if I won I would be donating my winnings. I do love being involved in the community."

"I did end up winning, and that was my last public pumpkin carving competition ever," she said. "There was a little boy who did a really cute baseball-themed pumpkin, and I was really rooting for him to win, I believe he got second place. For the life of me, I can't even remember what pumpkin I carved for that competition, lol."

Kristina, a longtime Temple/Belton area resident, said she also carves giant pumpkins live every night at Pumpkin Nights Fest in Austin. The event is held at Pioneer Farms every night until Halloween, and the event features thousands of pumpkins in all shapes and sizes.

When you think of pumpkin carving, Jack-o-Lanterns and other scary faces come to mind. Kristina does those, but sometimes she sets loftier goals.

"A few years ago, I carved two giant pumpkins during Pumpkin Nights," she said. "I carved a 1,400-pound pumpkin into the sleeping dragon from *Harry Potter*, and I carved a 1,500-pounder into a scene from *Nightmare Before Christmas*. The 1,500-pound pumpkin was about the size of a VW Beetle."

Regardless of the size and the artist's plan for the gourd — you never know the size and shape until they arrive — the pumpkin dictates what the final outcome will be.

"Throughout the year, I make a list of possible themes and carving techniques I want to try. Then, when I see the pumpkins, I can match them with my plan. Sometimes it works out, sometimes it doesn't. You just have to let the pumpkin speak to you"

Kristina said long hours are part of life for a pumpkin carver.

"I put in a lot of 12-hour carving days, sometimes as much as 18 hours straight," she said. "Texas weather really isn't conducive to pumpkin carving like it is in the northeast. I'm from New Hampshire originally, and the rotting process up there is much slower."

"In Texas, when you cut into a pumpkin it starts to rot. You pretty much have to do

See **CANVAS,**
Page A10





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A Triple Crown of Heartbreak



John C. Perry

As we all know in Texas, football on a fall weekend isn't just background noise; it borders on liturgical. For my wife, Sandra, Friday night lights at Wildcat Stadium, burnt orange on Saturday afternoon, and the Cowboys' star on Sunday are practically a sacred rhythm. This past weekend, as I write this, she endured a triple crown of heartbreak: Temple stumbling, Texas falling to the dreaded Oklahoma Sooners in the Red River Rivalry, and the Cowboys faltering against a previously winless team. That's a lot of disappointment packed into a weekend.

To be honest, many of us invest heavily in high school rivalries, college loyalties, and NFL franchises. Sports give us a safe arena to experience hope, agony, collective joy, and bitter defeat without any real existential danger. Maybe part of the reason we care so much is that sports offer a world where the boundaries are clear, the rules are known, and the battles end cleanly after four quarters. Life rarely works that way. The scoreboard isn't always fair, and the losses aren't always temporary.

When all three teams fail at once, the sting reveals something deeper about the human heart: we are creatures built to hope, to invest our loyalty, and to await a victory. That likely explains Sandra's reaction after the final whistle on Sunday: "I am done with football!" Is she? I seriously doubt it. I've watched her ride out plenty of football heartbreaks over the years. She'll swear she's finished, but by next Saturday's kickoff, her eyes will be glued to the screen, ready to believe again. Hope is stubborn like that.

In the grand scheme of things, it was just a bad sports weekend. A slump on the gridiron passes in a matter of days. If that's the worst of our troubles, we are blessed beyond measure. Broken relationships, fading health, lost livelihoods, or unfulfilled dreams leave bruises that don't wash away by Monday morning. Those losses linger. They reshape us.

As humans, we tend to tie our anchors to fragile, shifting things, institutions, teams, leaders, even well-meaning people, and then wonder why we drift when the storm hits. Football teams will fumble, dynasties will collapse, and human institutions will inevitably fail us. But in Scripture, the hope anchored in Christ is fundamentally different because it doesn't depend on momentum, rankings, or a scoreboard. As Paul writes in Romans 5:5, *"Hope does not disappoint, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit."*

My heart went out to Sandra as each clock ran out. She feels every loss deeply because she cares deeply, and that's one of the things I've always loved about her. But her true hope is secure. She is unshakable in her faith, living out that passion for the Good News of Jesus every day. Football may let her down, but Christ never will.

Still, a word of caution to our neighbors and friends: I would not advise anyone wearing Crimson and Cream and yelling "Boomer Sooner" to cross her path this week. Some earthly hope takes just a little time to recover.

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

Canvas - From Page A8

the carving in a single sitting because it rots so fast."

Kristina said a pumpkin carver typically fits a year's worth of work into eight or nine weeks.

"That's part of what makes pumpkin art such a whimsical craft," she said. "It makes it special."

So how did Kristina get started in a career of competitive pumpkin carving?

"When I was in college. I got out of class one day and there was a pumpkin carving competition all set up. I was attending a design school that was connected to a culinary school, and I didn't realize that it was a competition only for the culinary students. I entered and ended up winning, but not even being eligible, technically. But that was my first time ever carving a pumpkin and actually trying."

"I would create fun pumpkins every now and then throughout the years, until one year someone posted a picture of my work online," she said. "The Food Network saw it and called me and asked me if I would like to be on a show for them, and I've done a TV show for them almost every year since."

"I actually do several forms of art, including everything from painting and drawing to leather work and wood burning. Besides pumpkin carving, though, I'm most known for my clay work."

"I do carve for private high profile and celebrity events," Kristina added. "I've also created carves for large businesses, and even sports teams...such as ESPN and the Texas Longhorns."

She also creates a line of "spooky" jewelry under the Lady Modern Jewelry brand and sells her work online and to collectors of custom items. She also carves jewelry out of root vegetables such as potatoes and carrots.

"My goal is to recreate the Crown Jewels out of potatoes," she said. "I know that's kind of out there, but it's something I'd love to do."

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SPORTS



Belton to face Ellison to maintain share of District 8-5A-II lead



THE BELTON JOURNAL/Tony Adams

Frederick Makubi (64), Hunter Harlohs (73) and Nash Jordan (28) provide run blocking to the left side for Gavin Ross (5).

By Tony Adams
Belton Journal Sports

In a district with five games, every one counts.

For the Belton Tigers and Ellison Eagles, it is one that could be a precursor for playoff seedings from District 8-5A-II.

The Tigers and Eagles will face off at Belton's Homecoming on Friday night at Tiger Field. Kickoff is at 7 pm, and can be seen on Dave Campbell's Texas Sports via the NFHSNetwork.com website (subscription is required).

Belton (5-2 overall, 2-0 District 8-5A-II) rallied from a halftime deficit and hung on for a 27-21 win over the Waco High Lions at Waco ISD Stadium.

The Tigers led 3-0 after a 27-yard field goal by Morgan Pascoe. Pascoe hit a 22-yard field goal toward the end of the half to pull the Tigers to within a point.

Will Shepard and Gavin Ross etched their names into the scoring column when Shepard hit Ross on a 23-yard

See **BELTON TIGERS**
Page B3

Lady Tigers take 3rd at 16-5A meet, advance to regionals Tuesday

By Clay Whittington
The Belton Journal

The Lady Tigers are returning to the regional meet after adding a bronze-medal showing to their resume.

Belton traveled to Heritage Park last week for the District 16-5A meet, where only the top three teams and top 10 individuals earned the right to compete once again. All others' seasons concluded.

Thanks in part to four top-20 times, the Lady Tigers survived.

Paced by junior Isabella Warner, who completed the three-mile course 10th with a time of 21 minutes, 33.38 seconds, Belton was third in the team standings, scoring 76 points.

Warner's showing was complemented by senior Nataly Valdez (14th, 21:57.35) and sophomores Ayla Wakershauser (16th, 22:11.60), Natalie Mott (20th, 23:05.56) and Leimya Palomares (21st, 23:05.74).

Additionally, freshmen Markayla Allen (23rd, 23:36.94) and Kate Jones (24th, 23:47.32) raced for the Lady Tigers, but their times did not count toward the team total.

Led by individual champion Taylor Jorde (1st, 20:08.80) and runner-up Faith Romney (2nd, 20:41.37), Liberty Hill claimed the team title with 23 points, while Liberty Hill Legacy Ranch was third (38).

Like the Lady Panthers, the Lady Wranglers also had four of the field's top 10 finishers on their roster, while Warner accounted for another regional berth.

The only remaining ticket to Tuesday's Region II meet was punched by Killeen junior Deja Brooks (4th, 20:51.85), who was racing as an individual.

Killeen Ellison was fourth (120) and Killeen Shoemaker was fifth (126) to complete the team standings.

The regional meet will be conducted at Fort Worth's Rolling Hills Soccer Complex, where the top four teams and top 10 individuals not on a qualifying team advance to the University Interscholastic League Class 5A State Championship.

See **LADY TIGERS**
Page B2

Arena football returning to Belton's Expo Center

By David Stone
The Belton Journal

Arena football is returning to The Expo after a nearly 10 year hiatus, and one Belton official believes its return could bring a boon to the local economy.

Although the new team is named the ATX Bulls, the team will be playing its home games in Belton's Huntington Bank Expo. The Bulls begin competition this spring, and they are the fourth indoor football team to call The Expo home.

Past indoor football teams at The Expo include the CenTex Cavalry in 2017; the popular CenTex Barracudas from 2006 to 2008; and the Texas Bullets, who played a partial season at the facility in 1998.

Randy Pittenger, president and CEO of the Belton Area Chamber of Commerce, believes local merchants and restaurants will benefit from Bulls' games.

"We certainly hope so," Pittenger said. "We expect them to bring people to Belton to enjoy games. This will be their 'home field.'"

The Huntington Bank Expo seats 6,559 for multi-purpose events and sporting games.

According to co-owner Cody Trapp, the team's front offices are based in Austin, but the Bulls officially announced they will play their home games at The Expo because of its community atmosphere and central location.

"It makes sense to me to play in Belton," Trapp said. "I'm from Gerald, and I think this area will be a good fit for the Bulls. I want to impact the community — Belton fits what I want to do, and the Bulls fit Belton."

"I think the Bulls will have a positive impact on Belton's economy," Trapp added. "We are bring in some elite players and I think it will benefit Belton's tourism. Sixty percent of money spent in Belton will stay in Belton."

"There's not a lot to do in the summer other than go to the lake. Our games are family oriented and will involve local schools."

Trapp said the Bulls will wear Texas orange and black.

"We don't want the exact same orange as the Longhorns, so we made Texas orange a shade brighter," he said.

Trapp's partners in the Bulls' venture are Shawna Ciano and Texas Longhorn national champion Richmond



Courtesy photo

The ATX Bulls will sport orange and black uniforms during its inaugural Arena Football One season. Although ATX is Austin-based, they will play their home games at the Huntington Bank Expo in Belton..

McGee, and the trio hopes to bring fast-paced indoor football back to Central Texas.

The Bulls will be competing in Arena Football One (AF1) along with the Albany Freebirds, Beaumont Renegades, Michigan Arsenal, Minnesota Monsters, Nashville Kats and the Washington Wolfpack.

Former Texas Longhorn standout and NFL veteran safety Kenny Vaccaro has been named the team's first head coach. Belton native John Bane will serve as offensive coordinator for the team.

"We will have 24 players and 34 will come to camp," Trapp said. "We will cut to 24 the week before our first game. We play eight on offense and eight on defense. We have 21 signed right now to come to camp. Local guys are invited to try out as well."

"I have five or six players from the NFL coming, and the rest are out of Division 1 college teams," he said.

The league's leading receiver in 2026, Malik Honeycutt, has departed Nashville for the expansion Bulls. Belton native

The Bulls' opening night is locked in for March 20, 2027.

ATX has announced 16 signings, including Honeycutt, who led AF1 with 1,047 receiving yards and 19 touchdown receptions last season for Nashville.

Season tickets are already on sale at atxbulls.com.

In addition to the football team, Trapp said the Bulls will have a professional cheer and dance squad at each home game.

"We also will use students from local high schools and middle schools," he said. "I plan on bringing in a drum line from different high schools as well as local cheer teams to participate with our cheer and dance squad."

The Belton Area Chamber of Commerce will have a ribbon-cutting for the Bulls at 11 a.m. on Oct. 28.

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Sports Briefs

By Clay Whittington
The Belton Journal

The Lady Broncos hosted the fourth-annual Lake Belton Girls Tournament on Monday at Sammons Golf Course, where senior Lyliana Gonzalez captured the championship.

She shot an 87 to win by a single stroke.

Sophomore teammate Hayleigh McConnell posted a 113, while senior Lillie Mikes had a 116, and Whitley Truett, a sophomore, had a 116.

Together, they helped the Lady Broncos' Silver team finish third.

The Lady Tigers traveled to the event and finished sixth out of a dozen teams.

Ella Hice recorded a team-low 107, while Ella Bralley followed with a 110. Betsy Bralley and Bella Casto posted identical rounds of 117, Sydney Rogers shot a 122 and Molly Dalton followed one stroke back with a 123 to round out Belton's roster.

The Lady Tigers and Lady Broncos return to action Oct. 29 at Killeen's Stonetree Golf Course.

Lake Belton's Red team, which concluded its fall season at the tournament, was fifth with a 455.

Kaylee Holler, a sophomore, shot a 106 to pace the squad and tie for 12th, while sophomore Emory Jolivet had a 110 to place 14th.

The Lady Broncos' remaining players were freshman Caitlin Stringer (117) and senior Araceli Young (122).

Playing as individuals for Lake Belton, freshman Teresa Turner shot a 115, sophomore Emma Harris shot a 118, and sophomore Josalynn Lester shot a 120.

WRESTLING

Belton will conduct weight certification Saturday at 9 a.m. inside the school's field house.

BASKETBALL

Practice for the upcoming girls basketball season began Wednesday with scrimmages permitted starting Oct. 31.

The first day for interschool competition is Nov. 6.

Boys teams begin practice Oct. 28.

The Broncos will hold tryouts beginning Nov. 9.

The two-day process will run from 7:45 a.m. to 9:20 a.m. each day for freshmen and 4:30 p.m. to 5:45 p.m. each day for sophomores, juniors and seniors.

BELTON ISD ATHLETICS

All participants must be academically eligible, have a current physical on file with the school and submit all necessary paperwork in advance.

Varsity football players will be permitted to tryout after the football season concludes.

A preseason parent meeting for potential players at Lake Belton will be held Nov. 12 at 6:15 p.m. inside the school's gymnasium.

All parents and guardians are encouraged to attend.

Among the topics being discussed will be program expectations and guidelines, schedules and tournaments along with being introduced to the coaching staff.

For more information, contact Broncos head coach Jason Fossett at Jason.Fossett@BISD.net.

The Lady Broncos are holding a similar parent meeting today at 5:45 p.m., and all parents and guardians are welcome.

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.

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Lady Tigers - From Page B1

In the boys division, the Tigers' seasons came to a conclusion at district.

Despite placing two runners — freshman Ethan Bass (15th, 17:44.53) and senior Jose Perez-Diaz (20th, 17:59.15) — in the five-kilometer race's top 20, Belton could not qualify for regionals, landing sixth (132) in the final standings.

The Tigers' remaining points were generated by junior Marcus Hernandez (29th, 18:26.04), sophomore Ethan Trevino (31st, 18:34.27) and junior Taj Keeler (37th, 19:06.86), while junior Nelson Funez (40th, 19:32.29) and senior Zander Orsag (42nd, 19:40.49) also represented Belton.

Behind sophomore Zander Radziwon (1st, 15:31.46) and senior Chase Moederzoon (2nd, 16:04.80), Liberty Hill emerged with the team title, scoring 46 points to beat out Ellison (2nd, 49), Shoemaker (3rd, 65), Legacy Ranch (4th, 82), Killeen (5th, 103), the Tigers, Waco (7th, 211) and Waco University (8th, 217).

Individual berths to regionals were awarded to Wranglers junior Sean Arriaga (3rd, 16:34.26) and Kangaroos senior Emiliano Quintero (7th, 17:05.20).

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Belton Tigers- From Page B1

strike a minute into the second half.

Azian Wilkinson's interception a short time later set up Shepard's 35-yard strike to Josh Brown to put Belton up by 13 points.

Another Belton defensive gem, this time an Anthony Garcia interception, helped set up Shepard's third touchdown pass of the game. Shepard found Evan Echipare on a 20-yard connection to give the Tigers a 27-7 lead a few ticks before the end of the third quarter.

Waco scored twice in the fourth quarter, but pulled up six points short of the Tigers at the finish.

Ellison (4-3 overall, 2-0 District 8-5A-II) got 142 passing yards and 77 rushing yards from quarterback Marlyn Smith in a 28-0 shutout of University.

The Eagles scored 13 points in the second and fourth quarters respectively, and picked up a safety in the third quarter.

Belton had averaged 33.7 points per game overall and has yielded 21.3 points. In district play, the Tigers have averaged 34.5 points and has allowed 18 points per contest.

Shepard (102-of-146, 69.9% completions, 1,390 passing yards, 28-116 rushing yards, 19 total TDs) will get the call behind center. Brody Lee (83-491, 3 TDs), Nash Jordan (78-462, 2 TDs), and Javid Nua Planz (34-235, 2 TDs) will shoulder the running game. While Ross (53-770, 10 TDs) is the primary receiver for the Tigers, Echipare, Brown, Cason Morton, and Braxton Adcock provide sure-handedness in the passing lanes.

The offensive line has been a big key for the Tigers, as they have provided run blocking (193.6 yards per game on the ground) and solid pass protection for Shepard. (178 yard per game through the air)

The Eagles' defense flies to the ball and has been productive. Ellison has 84 tackles for loss, 32 quarterback hurries, 20 passes defensed, 15 sacks, seven interceptions and six fumble recoveries.

Mbaye Ndoye (67 tackles, 49 solos, 13 TFL), Kenyon Thompson (67 tackles 53 solos, 9 TFL), and Jahmire Perry (50 tackles, 11 TFL) are three of an endless array of Eagles' defenders that can disrupt offenses and force turnovers.

Ellison has averaged 28.5 points per contest and allowed 27.4 points. In district action, the Eagles have averaged 31 points per tilt and allowed 8 points per game.

Smith (94-of-186, 1,452, 98-637 rushing yards, 22 total TDs) will start at quarterback for the Eagles. Laboris Creagh (62-381, 3 TDs) is the main running back for Ellison. Tyler Reed (40-653, 6 TDs), Zayondre Crable (10-258, 4 TDs), Josh Burns (16-166) and Samuel Bass (13-156, 2 TDs) provide Smith plenty of options.

Belton's defense is tenacious, with 33 tackles for loss, 28 quarterback hurries, 23 passes defensed, 14 interceptions, ten sacks, and a fumble recovery.

Wilkinson (76 tackles, 42 solos, 4 INTs), Oakley Torres (52 tackles, 31 solos, 11 TFL, 4 sacks, INT), Kainyn Smith (19 tackles, 8 TFL, 5 sacks) and Graham Chambley (27 tackles, 12 defended passes, 3 INTs) create havoc for opposing offenses. Anthony Garcia (4 INTs) and Alex Carpenter (3 INTs) help contribute to the chaos and have helped the Tigers gain the ball back in key situations.



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Keep in mind, though, that contributions to a DAF are irrevocable, investment choices are limited to those offered by the program and fees may apply.

Because charitable giving and tax rules can be complex, talk with your tax professional and financial advisor to determine whether a donor-advised fund fits your goals and overall financial strategy.

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

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Lake Belton teams bound for regional meet after medaling at district

By Clay Whittington
The Belton Journal

Lake Belton's state aspirations remain alive.

In order to extend their seasons, the Broncos and Lady Broncos only had one option — finish among the top three teams at last week's District 12-6A meet.

The programs encountered little resistance en route to accomplishing the feat.

Competing at Waco's Heart of Texas Soccer Complex, the Broncos emerged from the event with team championship, while the Lady Broncos were a mere 11 points shy of doing the same, placing second.

Racing along a five-kilometer course, all five of the Broncos' scoring runners finished in the top 15 with three cracking the top 10.

Wyatt Potts, a senior, paced the squad, completing the route with a fifth-place time of 16 minutes, 46.10 seconds, while junior Tyler Adkins-Beltran (7th, 17:08.52) and sophomore Drew Houston (10th, 17:28.60) followed closely behind.

The senior duo of Jack McCullagh (11th, 17:28.72) and Austin Adams (13th, 17:30.50) rounded out the 46-point team total.

Additionally, junior Cooper Schels (22nd, 18:01.72) and senior Josiah Briggs (23rd, 18:03.05) represented Lake Belton, but their times did not factor into the Broncos' score.

The performance propels Lake Belton into Monday's Region II-6A meet at Fort Worth's Rolling Hills Soccer Complex, where the top four teams and top 10 individuals not on a qualifying team advance to the University Interscholastic League State Championship.

With 59 points, the runner-up Lady Broncos also earned a spot at regionals.

Keira Dzenowski, a sophomore, led the way, placing fifth (20:32.07), and the outing was complemented by junior Lucy Loa (12th, 21:09.17), junior Elizabeth Sandlin (14th, 21:23.06), senior Shreya Muni (15th, 21:25.75) and senior Madelyn Rivas (17th, 21:29.44), who all finished within 21 seconds of each other.

Sarah Gray (21st, 21:47.05), a senior, and freshman Amara Bodeman (22nd, 21:49.49) also raced for Lake Belton.

The Lady Broncos were sandwiched between champion Waco Midway (1st, 48) and Killeen Chaparral (3rd, 72), which will join Lake Belton at regionals.

Along with the top three teams, the top 10 individuals advanced to the regional meet, but six of the spots were filled by an advancing team's members. The remaining berths were claimed by Bryan senior Ava Braden (1st, 19:20.21) and freshman Simone Kalil (9th, 20:51.70) and Temple sophomore Azaria Staples (2nd, 19:49.60) and junior Ilana Desales (3rd, 19:53.73).

The Lady Vikings (4th, 91), Tem-Cats (5th, 92) and Killeen Harker Heights (6th, 140) completed the standings.

In the boys division, Harker Heights (2nd, 62) and Chaparral (3rd, 95) beat out Midway (4th, 102), Temple (5th, 117), Bryan (6th, 138) and Copperas Cove (7th, 141) for the other regional berths.

Individually, Vikings senior Diego Duran (1st, 15:44.06) and sophomore Jonathan Medlock (8th, 17:11.80), Bulldawgs junior Anthony Carter (2nd, 16:12.09), Knights juniors Blake Zimmerman (3rd, 16:13.10) and Kealin Sandifer (4th, 16:33.60), Bobcats sophomore Damari Patterson (6th, 17:02.40) and Panthers junior Samuel Webb (9th, 17:24.84) advanced.







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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

PUBLISHED NOTICE TO CREDITORS
Notice is hereby given that letters of guardianship for the Estate of Sebastian Eugene Voth, 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 Sebastian Eugene Voth. Sierra Cheyenne Neeson and Brandon Michael Neeson elect that claims may be presented against the Estate of Sebastian Eugene Voth 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
10.22

THE STATE OF TEXAS
CITATION BY PUBLICATION
CASE NUMBER 26CPB00243
TO: UNKNOWN HEIRS
ANNETTE BEDWELL KISELY, Applicant, on October 16, 2026, filed a 2nd amended application to determine heirship & application for dependent administration & letters of administration in a proceeding styled: MARVIN DEAN KISELY, Deceased, and bearing the number 26CPB00243 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 22, 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:
ASHLEY S CLAPPER, CORBIN & CLAPPER PC, 603 N 8TH ST, KILLEEN, TX 76541
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 16, 2026.
Shelley Coston County Clerk of Bell County, Texas, PO Box 480, 1201 Huey Road, Belton, TX 76513
By: Erika DeCasas Deputy
10.22

THE STATE OF TEXAS
CITATION BY PUBLICATION-PARENT AND CHILD
To: Any Unknown Father and All Whom **It** May Concern, Respondents, in the hereinafter-styled and -numbered cause: You have been sued. You may employ an attorney. If you or your attorney do not file a written answer with the clerk who issued this citation by 10 a.m. on the Monday next following the expiration of 20 days after you were served this citation and petition, a default judgment may be taken against you. The Original Petition of the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, Petitioner, was filed in the 146th Judicial District Court of Bell County, Texas, on June 25, 2026, against Esther Ortiz, Martell Taplin, Unknown Father, Respondent(s), numbered 26DFAM362643, and entitled "In the Interest of ARIA ORTIZ, 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: ARIA ORTIZ, DOB: July 2, 2019, Place of birth: Texas,
ADALINE ORTIZ, DOB: July 5, 2023, 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 15th day of October 20 24
Joanna Staton, District Clerk of Bell County, Texas, 1201 Huey Road, P.O. Box 909, Belton, TX 76513
By: C. Rodriguez Deputy.
10.22

THE STATE OF TEXAS
CITATION BY PUBLICATION
CASE NUMBER 26CPB00629
To: Unknown Heirs
PHILIP JOHN QUITUGUA, Applicant, on October 15, 2026, filed an Application to Determine Heirship in a proceeding styled: JUAN JAVIER QUITUGUA, Deceased, and bearing the number 26CPB00629 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 22, 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: 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 October 15, 2026.
Shelley Coston County Clerk of Bell County, Texas, PO Box 480, 1201 Huey Road , Belton, TX 76513
By: Andrea Marks Deputy
10.22

NOTICE TO CREDITORS
Notice is hereby given that original Letters of Administration for the Estate of Davey Allen Houston, Deceased, were issued on September 22, 2026, in Cause No. 26CPB00219, pending in the County Court-At-Law No: 1, Bell County, Texas, to: Sharon Rostovich.
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. Estate of Davey Allen Houston c/o,: Sharon Rostovich, 1705 Lavendusky Dr., Temple, Texas 76501
SIGNED on October 14, 2026.
Respectfully submitted, THE ZIMMERMAN LAW FIRM, P.C.
By: /s/ Garrett L. Beach Garrett L. Beach, State Bar No.: 24101493, 3501 W. Waco Dr., Waco, Texas 76710, Telephone: (254) 633-3333, Facsimile: (254) 752-9680, E-mail: gbeach@zlawhelp.com Attorneys for Sharon Rostovich
10.22

THE STATE OF TEXAS
CITATION BY PUBLICATION
CASE NUMBER 26CPB00627
To: UNKNOWN HEIRS
LINDA DIANE CAFFEY WILKINS, Applicant, on October 14, 2026, filed an Application to Declare Heirship and for Intestate Independent Administration by Agreement and for Issuance of Letters of Independent Administration in a proceeding styled: DONALD HUGH CAFFEY, Deceased, and bearing the number 26CPB00627 in the

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LEGALS

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 22, 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: BURK ROBERTS, 2501 E ELMS RD STE A, KILLEEN TX 76542
The officer serving this Citation shall, in compliance with the Law, serve it by publication once in a newspaper of the general circulation in this, the County in which the decedent last resided as required by Section 202.052 of the Texas Estate Code, for not less than ten days before the return day hereof, exclusive of the day of publication, and the date of publication said newspaper bears shall be the day of publication.
Issued and given under my hand and seal of said Court at office on October 14, 2026.
Shelley Coston County Clerk of Bell County, Texas, PO Box 480, 1201 Huey Road, Belton, TX 76513
By: Andrea Marks Deputy
10.22

THE STATE OF TEXAS
CITATION BY PUBLICATION
CASE NUMBER 24432

TO: UNKNOWN HEIRS OF GEORGE BRADLEY HOPPER
No Known Address
JAMES REGINALD HOPPER, Applicant, on October 14, 2026, filed an application

LEGALS

for appointment of successor guardian in a proceeding styled: George Bradley Hopper, Incapacitated, and bearing the number 24432 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 22, 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: MARY WILEY, 100 W. CENTRAL TEXAS, SUITE 306, HARKER HEIGHTS, TX 78548
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 14, 2026.
Shelley Coston County Clerk of Bell County, Texas, PO Box 480, 1201 Hu**ey** Road, Belton, TX 76513
By : Angela Busby Deputy
10.22

NOTICE TO CREDITORS

Notice is hereby given that original Letters Testamentary for the Estate of Rudolph Samuel Mills, Deceased, were issued on October 7,

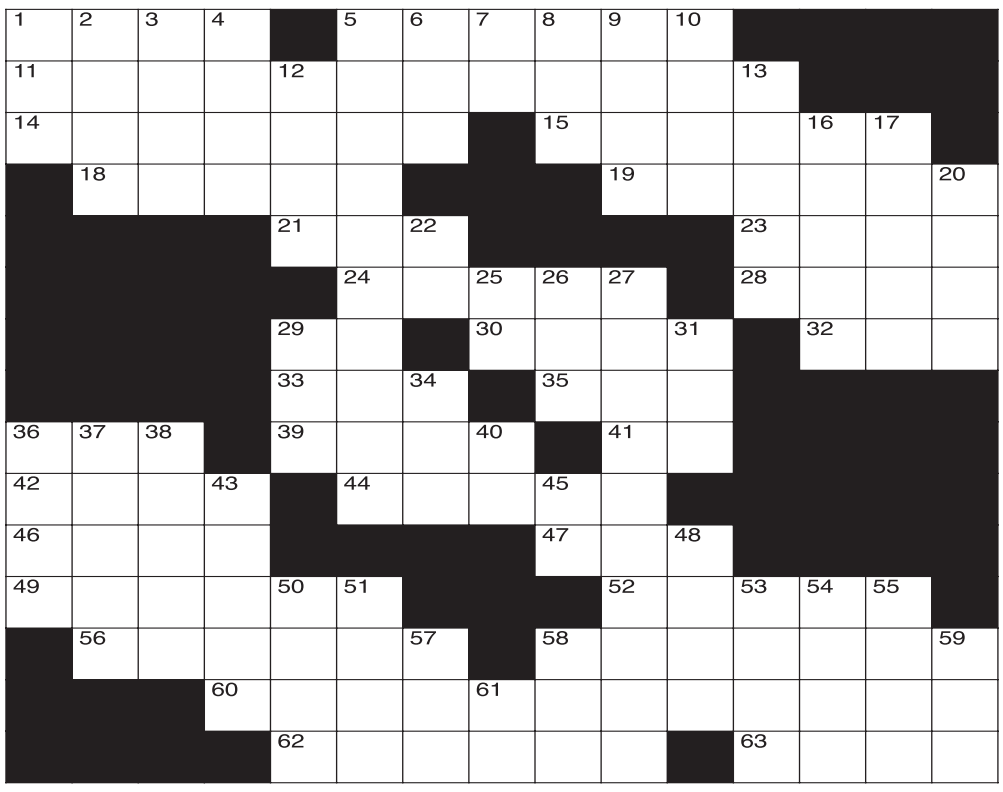
LEGALS

2026, in Cause No. 26CPB00404, pending in the County Court at Law No. 1 of Bell County, Texas, to: ASHLEY CLAPPER.
All persons having claims against this Estate which is currently being administered are required to present them to the undersigned within the time and in the manner prescribed by law. c/o: ASHLEY CLAPPER Attorney at Law, 603 North 8th Street, Killeen, TX 76541
DATED the 14th day of October. 2026
CORBIN & CLAPPER, PC, 603 North 8th Street, Killeen, TX 76541, Tel: (254) 526-4523, Fax: (254) 526-6711,
By: ASHLEY CLAPPER, DANIEL A.CORBIN, State Bar No. 04814300, ASHLEY CLAPPER, State Bar No. 24076317, Legal@CorbinLegalTeam.com, Attorney for DENNIS HAYES LEE
10.22

NOTICE TO ALL PERSONS HAVING CLAIMS AGAINST THE ESTATE OF RICHARD STEVEN SHOEMAKER, DECEASED

NOTICE is hereby given that original Letters of Testamentary were issued on October 9, 2026 in a proceeding styled estate of Richard Steven Shoemaker, Deceased, in Cause Number 26CPB00458, pending in the County Court At Law #1 of Bell County, Texas. Claims may be presented in care of the attorney for the Independent Executrix, addressed as follows: Joyce Ann Denton Independent Executrix of the Estate of Richard Steven Shoemaker, Deceased, c/o Burk Roberts, Roberts & Roberts, L.L.P., 2501 East Elms Rd., Ste. A ,Killeen, Texas 76542-3023
All persons having claims against this estate, which is currently being administered, are required to present them within the time and in the manner prescribed by law.
Signed on October 13th, 2026.
Roberts & Roberts, L.L.P., Attorneys for Joyce Ann Denton
By: Burk Roberts
10.22

Crossword



CLUES ACROSS

1. El Dorado High School
5. A sculpture representing a human or animal
11. A type of return
14. Tie the knot again
15. Washington city
18. Hairlike structures
19. Mark used over a vowel
21. Explosive
23. Popular 500 car race
24. Pile up
28. Currency
29. Commercial
30. A minute amount (Scottish)
32. Mass of fish eggs
33. Baseball stat
35. Licensed accountant
36. Japanese classical theater
39. Gasteyer and de Armas are two
41. Blood group
42. Assist in wrongdoing
44. Language of Cameroon
46. Grayish-white
47. A woolen cap of Scottish origin
49. Microorganism
52. Strong social customs
56. Calm and dependable
58. Congressman
60. Force
62. As a result of this document
63. A main branch of Islam

CLUES DOWN

1. Make a mistake
2. American DJ Rick
3. Fictional Asimov planet
4. Coughed out
5. Singing to one's lover
6. Scotland's longest river
7. One of the six noble gases
8. Body art
9. Two-toed sloth
10. Electronic counter-countermeasures
12. A foolish person
13. Of the wind
16. Mansion
17. Sound
20. English river
22. Business symbol
25. Exclamation of surprise
26. Pouch
27. Individually
29. Satisfaction
31. The bill in a restaurant
34. Japanese delicacy
36. Port in southern Japan
37. Double-reed instruments
38. Center
40. "The Mount Rushmore State"
43. Soldier
45. Indicates position
48. Beauty treatment: __-pedi
50. Nonsense (slang)
51. Republic of Ireland
53. Ballplayers' tools
54. American state
55. Clusters of a fern frond
57. Patriotic women's group
58. A person's brother or sister
59. Breed of sheep
61. Of I

SUDOKU

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

Level: Advanced

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

What's the Difference? for Kids

Find the four differences between the two pictures.

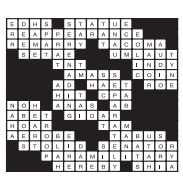
A



B



PUZZLE SOLUTION



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

Answers:
1. Sauce on all pizzas
2. Cheese in bowl
3. Missing hand soap
4. Woman's hair is longer

BREAST CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

Together in hope. Together in strength.

JOY

BARTENDER Needed

Joy Drive-In and RV Resort in Copperas Cove, Texas is seeking a reliable, customer-oriented TABC Certified Bartender to join our team.

- Must have proven experience and reliable transportation.
- Food Handling certification needed.
- 6 days a week from 5PM to midnight.

Apply VIA RESUME TO rick@globalfiltration.com

OR

in person at Joy front office-
3196 Renee St. Copperas Cove, TX 76522

The Grove Community Center

Sausage Fest

Bake Sale & Raffles

November 14, 2026

Meal: 5:30 - 7:00 P.M.

Drive Thru Take Out Available

All Major Credit Cards Accepted

Menu:
Sausage, Noodles, Pinto Beans, Cole Slaw, Bread, Beverages, Trimmings and Dessert

Adult Plate: $20.00

Children's Plate (10 & Under): $10.00



THE BELTON JOURNAL

SELL IT. FIND IT. ANNOUNCE IT.

PUT IT IN THE CLASSIFIEDS.

Have something to list? We can help.

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CALL THE BELTON JOURNAL

SOME SCROLL.
YOU KNOW.
YOU READ.



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By real people.
For real life.

REAL FACTS.
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REAL IMPACT.
Stronger communities.
Smarter decisions.

NEWSPAPERS KEEP YOU IN THE KNOW.

SUPPORT LOCAL.
STAY INFORMED.

Rescue MAGAZINE
Your Guide to Pet Adoption in Central Texas

11TH ANNUAL PET EXTRAVAGANZA

FUN FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY!

OCTOBER 24TH & 25TH

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BRING YOUR PETS, YOUR KIDS, AND YOUR HALLOWEEN SPIRIT!

AMAZING ATTRACTIONS & ACTIVITIES!

- GIANT TRICK OR TREAT
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- HAUNTED HOUSE
- PRIZES
- Pet Adoptions
- COSTUME CONTEST
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- PONY RIDES
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Information

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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: _____

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 2026.

Dropped Calls

Coffee Talk • Renae Brumbaugh Green

Yesterday, I got a nearly life-changing phone call. "Hi Renae! This is Publisher's Clearinghouse, and you've just won . . . ," silence. The line went dead.

That didn't really happen, but it could. Nearly every time I have an important phone conversation, my call gets dropped. And I have the good cell phone company. One of the drawbacks of living in a hilly area is dead spots.

But the only calls that seem to get dropped are the important ones. The ones where my best friend tries to advise me on what to wear to a job interview. Or my mother tells me about Macy's end-of-season sale, and if I go right now I'll get... nothing but silence. I can't hear what I'd get if I went to Macy's right then, and by the time I do find out, the sale is over.

Unimportant, annoying sales come through loud and clear. Apparently, I've been chosen to receive an exclusive offer for an extended warranty on my vehicle... twelve times in the last month. Oy, vey.

When those people call, I want to say, "What was that? I can't hear you. You're breaking up on me." Then I can just hang up on them.

But that's lying. I don't like to lie. So I just hang up.

Sometimes, it feels like my calls to God have been dropped. It seems like the connection went dead somewhere between Dear Father and Amen. Nothing but silence. I'm left wondering if God even heard my praises, my pleas, my intercessions.

Good thing God knew about dropped calls way before Verizon and AT&T. He made it clear in His Word that calls to Him are never, ever lost. There's no static, no dead spots. We don't have to stand on the roof or drive to the next ridge, repeating, "Can You hear me now, God?"

Our calls are important to Him. We are His top priority. No matter our reason for contacting Him, He never feels rushed or annoyed. He will never hang up on us.

Any time, night or day, He's there. He gets excited when His phone buzzes, and He picks up on the first ring. Leaning forward, He says, "Oh, good! That must be (your name here)." He always answers His phone, and He hangs on to every word you say.

He always responds to us, too. Oh, He doesn't always give the answer we want. Sometimes He says no. Sometimes it's, "Wait a while. I'll get back to you on that." But those who love Him can be assured of this: He's listening. He hears. And He is always working things out for our good.

Jonah 2:7"I remembered you, LORD, and my prayer rose to you, to your holy temple."

Night Walkers

Shop the Insanity • Darren Blair

Well folks, another Halloween is upon us. By now, you no doubt have heard numerous times over all of the various bits of safety advice people give out talking about how to be safe while going out Trick-or-Treating. Well, I have something to add to this.

A lot of it is, indeed, good advice.

For example, let's consider some of the advice concerning how to go out-and-about at night. "Always wear bright colors, especially something reflective." "Always use the sidewalk whenever possible and stay out of the road." "If you must walk near the road, walk so that you're facing oncoming traffic and thus can see any vehicles."

Is this actually important?

Yes.

As I've mentioned before, I got my start in the newspaper industry by delivering the newspapers themselves at night. Because of this, I've seen – and almost didn't see - quite a few situations that very nearly ended badly due to people not following these rules. For example, one night I was going about my regular route when I turned off of a main highway and on to a residential road. As soon as I completed the turn, I hit the brakes and came to a dead stop.

In the road in front of me were two young men walking side-by-side. Both young men were in the middle of the lane, and both were facing away from the direction of oncoming traffic. One of the two was dressed completely in dark clothing. Fortunately for everyone, the other young man was wearing shorts made out of a bright red reflective material. My headlights caught the material and reflected the light back at me, letting me know that someone or something was in the lane. I had not seen these young men when I checked for traffic before turning off the highway, and apparently they had not heard my car (despite the engine being noisy). I was only aware of their presence due to the one young man wearing reflective clothing, and they were not aware of me until they suddenly realized that there was light flooding the area around them.

Or we have the bits of advice about one's treats, such as "Never eat unwrapped candy" and "Always have your parents check your candy before you eat it." Do I seriously think that there is a cabal of people out there who make it their goal to hurt people as some anti-Halloween tracts have argued?

No.

I agree with the advice from personal experience.

I've lost count of the number of times I've opened up a brand-new bag of candy, only to find individual pieces that were not wrapped properly, if they were wrapped at all. This wrapping guarantees that the candy was protected from the time it was produced until the time the bag was opened. No wrapper means no assurance that it wasn't somehow contaminated even at the factory.

And checking candy? I remember one of my brothers buying a brand-new bag of gummi bears from a store one day. When he opened the bag up, he found wood splinters inside some of the bears. The only explanation we could think of was that something broke apart at the factory, leading to wood splinters making it into the product and quality control failing to notice this before allowing the product to ship. Again – what happened had to have happened at the factory, as the bag was untouched and brand new.

It might seem overwhelming to have to constantly keep hearing such admonitions repeatedly, but folks, we're being told this for a reason. A little bit of care aforethought can save a lot of grief later on.

Random Thinks

Pleasant Ramblings • Mark Magnan

Who buys crispy tacos to go? I mean you might as well just dump it all in the bag before you leave the restaurant. Crispy tacos need to be eaten fresh, right out of the kitchen so they stay, well, crispy. And you have to eat them fast because by the time you get to about the seventh taco they are getting a little mushy in the middle!

Now I am sure someone will call me out on "crispy tacos" not being real "tacos". Those folks will claim that real "tacos" are the street tacos on small tortillas. I won't argue that point at all, those are great too when properly done by a street taco expert! I just like crispy tacos, since that is what I was raised on.

(A bit of a disclaimer or clarification on this next point, Saran Wrap is/was a major brand of clear kitchen wrap for covering dishes of leftover food, and the Saran brand is still around and they make a very good "wrap". So, Saran Wrap is generic for every type of wrap on the market... kinda like Kleenex)

You know that little sticky "dot" on a dispenser of Saran Wrap? That is such a great invention! It can save so much time. Have you ever had the end of a roll of clear wrap get back into the box, and you spend ten minutes trying to find the end, only to start several strips of wrap before getting back to a full width piece again?

I was reading an article the other day about a British actor that needed to do an American accent for a movie. Okay, just what is an American accent? I mean that is normal, there is no accent. I mean I can do a right dandy English accent, but I don't think it is possible for a Brit to do an acceptable American accent. And if you watch that movie with closed captioning, how do you know if the accent is correct?

Back when our trashcans were emptied by hand, do you think that the trash men judged us based on what we had in the can? I mean did they make comments about Taco Bell take-out bags or the excessive number of Cheetos packages? What if you drank cheap sodas? Thankfully it is all automatic now, I feel better about my disposings.

Do bird families recognize the sounds of their relations? I am sure they know if the kids are hanging out at the birdbath and having a good time singing. Or; "Dangit, that sounds like Uncle Bert, he always comes around at supper time and eats all the good worms, and he probably doesn't regurgitate any for the kids when he gets home."

Can I sign a waiver to keep from getting "child-proof caps" on any pills or medication that I buy from now on? I can easily get into child-proof caps, but it is just an unnecessary hassle. Ever so often I get one that sticks and is in a bind until I can "wrassel" it free. Besides that it is an extra cost for the packaging when it is not needed at a lot of homes. I don't have any kids that I need to worry about, but if a child did get into my pills they would likely not have any joint pain well into their 30s.

Do you remember that smell of the first rain after the long summer dry spell? It was a welcome aroma, perhaps nothing notable like a floral smell, but it was a mixture of relief and refreshment. It was something that just smelled like nothing else, not even a rain during the rainy season. Another of those rain-smells was when the rain hit a screen door with the old metal screen. That was another very unique smell.

I want to know what expert decided that two slices of bacon was a full serving. I mean if you go to a restaurant you expect to get just two slices. And you notice there is never an all-you-can-eat special on bacon. At home it seems senseless to heat up a pan for just two slices of bacon. And you can't really cook extra, because if we are honest, there are never leftovers. Lets just say that whatever happens in my house when I am cooking bacon is my business and I will not let some package tell me how much of a specific food that I need to be eating.





Local Activities & Events

Friends of the Library - Oct 22
The Friends of The Belton Library will be having their monthly Board Meeting on Thursday, October 22, at a special evening time from 5:30-6:30 pm at the Harris Community Center, 401 Alexander, Belton. All members are encouraged to attend. Community members will be welcome to join us to learn more about our Board Meetings and have refreshments and a chance to win door prizes. This will be a great time to purchase books written by Don Bentley, our guest speaker at this year's Book and Author Luncheon. Mr. Bentley is a New York Times Best-seller. He writes the Matt Drake and the Vince Flynn series. He has also taken up the mantle of Tom Clancy's Jack Ryan Jr. books. This will be a great time to get a book and then purchase a ticket for the luncheon on March 6, 2027, where the author will be signing books. These are wonderful books and make great gifts for family and friends.

Foster Love Fall Classic Pickleball tournament - Nov 7
We're so excited to have you at the Foster Love Fall Classic Pickleball Tournament! This is a fun day to bring our community together at the UMHB Pickleball Courts while making a meaningful impact. All proceeds from this event will directly benefit foster children and caregivers in Bell and Coryell counties. Your registration helps us purchase essential items and ensuring more children have safe, loving homes. This exciting event will be Saturday, Nov, 7, at the YMHB Pickleball courts. For more information visit fosterlovebellcounty.org

8th Annual Library Art Show - Nov 14
Mary Ruth Briggs Library will hold our 8th Annual Library Art Show on Saturday, November 14th, from 6:00 to 8:30 p.m. at the Garrett and Mic Hill Event Center located at 60 Morgan's Point Blvd in MPR. Drop off times for art pieces are as follows: Friday November 13th 9:00 a.m. until 6:00 p.m. and Saturday, November 14th, 9:00 a.m. to Noon. Art entries are limited to 3 per artist and should not include previous entries. Artwork that can be hung must have a hanger on the back that can be suspended on wires to be hung on a wall and all should be matted. Include a 3 x 5 white index card with a short description of your work. Questions? Contact at library@mprtx.gov. Cash prizes and ribbons will be awarded for Children and Adults(16 and up) For online applications see the website at morganspointresorttx.gov or paper applications are available at MPR City Hall at 8 Morgan's Point Blvd, Morgan's Point Resort Texas 76513. We look forward to seeing you for a night of music, drinks, food and fun while overlooking Lake Belton! Free to all artists and patrons!

Irreverent Warriors Silkies Hike - Nov 14
On November 14 at Miller Park, 1919 N. 1 st St, Temple, veterans and military service members will take to the streets of Temple for the annual Irreverent Warriors Silkies Hike. During the 2026 season, IW events will bring thousands of veterans together across the United States. For more inforamtion visit irreverentwarriors.com.

Amputee Support Group
ASG meetings will be held the first Tuesday of every month from 6:00 to 7:30 p.m. at Unity Church of Temple, 318 N. 2nd Street, Temple.

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.

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

STAY CONNECTED: STAY INFORMED

GOT A LOCAL EVENT, CHURCH GATHERING, OR MEETING?
TELL US AND KEEP EVERYONE IN THE LOOP.

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Business Showcase

English Maids celebrates 20 years serving customers with excellence



By Michele Weisman
The Belton Journal

English Maids, in Waco and Belton, celebrates 20 years in business this year. They are locally owned, started by Kay English. Her daughters, Lauren English-Thurman and Elizabeth English, now run the company. They provide the highest level of quality cleaning, sanitation, and communication for their clients.

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

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

The English Maids blog explains how professional cleaning can help whether you're moving out of an apartment, into a new home, or deep cleaning. Find out more at englishmaids.biz/blogs/.

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

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

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





