



2025, a year in review: Part 1

By **Lynette Sowell**
The Belton Journal

The City of Belton and Bell County saw new businesses emerge, the return of community events, and historical landmarks celebrated along with a new park in 2025.

The oldest business in Belton, The Belton Journal marked its 159th year in publication on Jan. 6 of this year.

The Belton Weekly Journal (Established in 1866), now The Belton Journal, is the oldest business on record in Belton and the second oldest continuously published weekly newspaper in Texas.

The founder and first publisher of The Journal was James T. Longino, presumably of Italian extraction. His step-father Major Jouett Harber Davenport joined him in the business. The major soon bought the son out, as per an article commemorating the newspaper's 100th birthday.

"No person or corporation owns The Belton Journal. You own it. With your 50 cents you paid this week, you are a part owner of the newspaper. In 10 years, we

may only be found online. Either in print or on your phone, our job and the job of future publishers is to report what is going on in the community," Publisher David Tuma said. "I am lucky as a businessman to have spent the best years of my life serving this community."

Most issues of the Belton Journal can be found on the City of Belton's Lena Armstrong's Public Library website at beltontexas.gov. The issues from 1866-1869 are not available online. There were fires in 1898 and 1914 that irretrievably destroyed any pages that existed.

A number of Bell County officials rang in the new year just after midnight, January 1, 2025, as they took their oaths of office for new terms. Bill Cooke took the oath of office as Bell County Sheriff. Cooke ran for office after Sheriff Eddy Lange announced his retirement. Other officials sworn in included County Precinct 1 Constable Pat Duffield, Precinct 3 County Commissioner Greg Reynolds, Precinct 1 County Commissioner Russell Schneider, Precinct 2 Constable Chris Bazar, Precinct 3 Constable Devon Rosenthal, Precinct 4 Constable Martha Dominguez, County

Attorney Jim Nichols, County Tax Assessor Shay Luedeke, Justice of the Peace Precinct 3 Place 1 Rosanne Fisher, Justice of the Peace Precinct 4 Place 1 Gregory Johnson, 426th Judicial District Court Judge Steve Duskie, and 146th Judicial District Court Judge Mike Russell. Also sworn in after the new year were County District Attorney Stephanie Newell and 27th Judicial District Court Judge Debbie Garrett.

Adam Trujillo was hired as the Recreation Superintendent for the City of Belton's Parks Department.

With more than a decade of experience in parks and recreation, Trujillo brings a strong background in program development, event coordination, and team leadership. Before joining the team in Belton, Adam made significant contributions in Harker Heights, where he successfully expanded community events, enhanced outdoor education programming, and transformed the Activities Center into a vibrant community hub featuring a Maker Space.

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BELTON JOURNAL/Michele Weismann
 Sammy Holt, Luka Boian, and Christian Holt enjoy the free skating in downtown Belton.

Downtown ice rink continues through Saturday

By **Michele Weisman**
The Belton Journal

Cochran, Blair and Potts continues to entertain children and families with a temporary ice skating rink, located in downtown Belton, across the street from their establishment.

The hours are Monday through Friday from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. and Saturday, noon to 9 p.m. The rink has been closed on Sundays.

The rink will be closed on Christmas Day but will open back up from noon to 9 p.m. for Friday, Dec. 26, and Saturday, Dec. 27, the final day to skate.

The ice rink is located in the parking lot at the corner of E. Central Avenue and S. Penelope Street.

Skate rental is free, and skating is free at the skating rink. The entrance is roped off with red and white striped stanchions for wait-

ing in line. Staff members assist with skate selection and a small courtyard of chairs to put on skates.

Tiny houses sit at one end of the lot with activities for the children.

One house is a photo opportunity. It has a front porch kids can gather and pose on. Another option is to stand behind a gingerbread family with head cutouts and pose with their faces.

On Saturday, Dec. 20, in another tiny backdrop booth, children could have their faces painted from 11 a.m. until 2 p.m. at no charge. In another miniature setting, from 6 p.m. until 9 p.m. they gave out hot chocolate and s'mores.

Stop on by while the event is still in operation for a free time on the ice in downtown Belton, compliments of Cochran, Blair and Potts.



File Photo

The City of Belton celebrated opening a new park, Standpipe Park, in May 2025.

More Family, Fishin' & Fun on Dec. 30

By **David Stone**
The Belton Journal

Belton Parks & Recreation will host two big events in upcoming weeks — Family, Fishin' & Fun and the annual Father-Daughter Dance.

Fishermen of all ages will line Nolan Creek on Tuesday, Dec. 30, armed with poles, bait and hope for catching some of the rainbow trout stocked earlier in the day. Family, Fishin' & Fun will be held at The Landing at Creekside Park,

219 S East Street.

Belton Parks & Recreation will host the second Family, Fishin' and Fun event of the season. The first event took place on Friday, Dec. 19.

"Today was an early release from school. We hope to get the kids to fall in love with fishing. We have Nolan Creek running downtown, what a blessing. With the

Gin development, white water area, and walking trail, this area is special," said Matt Bates, Assistant City Manager, City of Belton.

The City of Belton has multiple fishing poles for those who don't have them. Around 100 fisher-folk showed up along Nolan

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File Photo

Prizes will be awarded to the boy and girl for the largest fish caught at the event on Dec. 30.

Two days of Christmas stories at the Belton library, for ages three to five

By **Michele Weisman**
The Belton Journal

The Belton Public Library hosted two Christmas story reading times for pre-school-age children on Wednesday, Dec. 17, and Thursday, Dec. 18, at 11:00 a.m.

Faith Martinez read three Christmas-themed books to the children and led them in holiday songs.

About a dozen kids and their families crowded into the Lena Armstrong Public Library for reading time.

Giggles and gasps were heard as the stories were read. Some parents shuffled about the room with younger children in tow. Martinez held the attention of all with her story reading and questions for the audience to ponder as the stories unfolded.

"Pig the Elf", written by Aaron Blabey and illustrated by Aaron Blabey, was read first. After the book was read, hand-held jingle bell instruments were passed out. Martinez led the singing of Jingle Bells two times through.

"A Unicorn Named Sparkle's First Christmas", written and illustrated by Amy Young, was read next. At the completion of this book, Martinez led the children in the song, "Up On the Housetop", as they all clapped to the rhythm.

The third book was "How Does Santa Go Down the Chimney?", written by Mac Barnett and illustrated by Jon Klassen. Snacks were offered after the final reading.

Juice boxes, small bottles of water,



BELTON JOURNAL/Michele Weismann
 Faith Martinez, a clerk at the Lena Armstrong Public Library, is pictured with a book read to the children during the library's Christmas story reading times. The next reading time is on New Year's Eve at 11 a.m.

cookies with red and green centers, small candy canes, and peeled apple slices were available. A craft also followed story time. One option was to create a Santa beard by applying cotton balls to a beard cut out.

The next reading time will be held at the Belton Library on Wednesday, Dec. 31 at 11 a.m. This will be a Kids NYE Countdown including songs and a countdown at noon.

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Review- From Page A1



The City of Belton reached a milestone in January 2025 when Mayor David K. Leigh handed over the keys to a resident whose home was rebuilt through the HOME Program, which provides funds to replace homes for low-income residents who meet program requirements. Belton has been participating in the Home Program since 2001. The home completed was the 40th rebuild in Belton under the program.

The Belton City Council approved new zoning changes that allowed three businesses inside the city limits to operate as package stores. According to Paul Romer, director of communications for the city, the three stores are the first liquor stores to operate in Belton.

"Voters passed a new law last year allowing package stores in the city," Romer said. "These are the first package store zoning requests — the first wave. Two are convenience stores, and they will expand what they are selling. Our laws are in line with other communities that allow liquor stores — they can't be near schools or churches."

The Belton Area Chamber of Commerce hosted its Annual Awards Banquet, when community members, business owners, and local leaders were recognized for their hard work and contributions to the city's growth.

Danny Dossman received the 2024 Beltonian Award for his years of volunteer work in the city. The 2024 Citizen of the Year Award went to Emilio Perales, a co-owner of Vista Real Estate and an Army veteran.

Karen Wheeler, a Relationship Banker with Extraco Banks, was honored as the 2024 Ambassador of the Year. The Rising Star Award was presented to Krista Snyder for her leadership in business and efforts to create new mentorship opportunities for young professionals in Belton.



For his dedication to veterans and the Chamber's Military Relations Committee, Frank Minosky received the Legendary Impact Award for his longstanding service and advocacy for those who served in the military. Three local businesses—Level 3 Coworking and Event Center, KPA Engineers, and Emerson Construction—were honored as the 2024 Businesses of the Year for their influence on the city's economic growth.

The Chamber recognized Crossroads Church and KWTX Channel 10 as Community Partners for their involvement in local events, including the annual 4th of July Parade and Festival.

Belton ISD was recognized as a CTE District of Distinction by the Career and Technical Association of Texas (CTAT). This prestigious award highlights districts that demonstrate leadership, innovation, and a commitment to student success through high-quality Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs.

February

In February, high school students from across Texas' 31st Congressional District were recognized for their achievements in career and technical education (CTE) at an awards ceremony hosted by U.S. Congressman John Carter on Saturday, Feb. 8, at Temple College.

The event honored 29 students from various school districts, with Anna Baez of Temple High School receiving the overall 2025 CTE Award. Baez, who is pursuing an audio-visual design pathway, discovered her interest in video editing through the program.

Other students recognized included Julia Broderick from Belton ISD, who developed a health records app called Archive, and Grant School from Killeen ISD, who plans to become a game warden with Texas Parks and Wildlife.

Several students from Belton ISD were honored for their achievements in CTE programs. Julia Broderick, a senior at Lake Belton High School, was recognized for her entrepreneurship pathway and her innovative app development project. Jazzell Jenkins and Matthew Antuna, also from Belton ISD, were acknowl-



edged for their dedication to their respective CTE pathways.

The Belton City Council agreed to purchase Miller Heights Elementary School for \$750,000 plus closing costs and the cost of a survey of the property. According to information provided by Matt Bates, assistant Belton city manager, the building will be used to provide space for the city's expanding services. The city became aware in November that the 8.36 acre, 40,000-square-foot property was being prepared for sale by Belton Independent School District and took steps to purchase the school building for both intermediate and long-term needs. The city already owns about 3 acres adjoining the school property. The facility in southeast Belton could be used for public safety services and a police substation, which would improve response times and safety in the area. Other uses could include storage, space for victim services, and room for the city's RU OK program. Future uses for the old school could include an emergency shelter and warming center for residents who are unsheltered.

Winter Storm Uri occurred four years ago in February 2021, and in February 2025, Bell County Water Control & Improvement District No. 1, the local water supplier for area cities and Fort Cavazos, celebrated the installation of 16 backup generators to ensure that if power to the local area is affected by a disaster of any type, such as Uri, area cities will still be able to have water pumped to them.



This project equips the Belton Lake Treatment Plant with generators that will ensure continuous operations in the event of a power failure similar to what was experienced during Winter Storm Uri. Local officials, along with community and regional leaders, gathered at BCWCID's facility near Lake Belton to cut the ribbon for the generators.

The Belton ISD Communications Department earned top honors at the Texas School Public Relations Association's (TSPRA) annual conference in San Antonio. TSPRA is a professional organization committed to enhancing public school communications.

During the conference, the district was honored with four Gold Star Awards and one Silver Star Award for their outstanding submissions. The awards were presented at TSPRA's 63rd annual Star Awards Celebration.

Chief Communications Officer Christie Parks stated, "It has been several years since our team has submitted entries for these state level awards and I could not be more proud of the work that Candice and Marty produce. Our department is committed to delivering consistent, accurate and trustworthy information that engages and informs our students, staff, parents, and community. Earning the trust and respect of those we serve is the ultimate measure of success, but being recognized by our peers is absolutely an additional honor."

Superintendent Dr. Malinda Golden stated, "One of our district goals is to strengthen and support the engagement of all stakeholders in pursuit of the BISSD vision. We are committed to sharing our comprehensive story, including both challenges and triumphs, with our Belton ISD community and our communications team plays a critical role in this process. The team is setting a new standard for Belton ISD communications and our community can expect this level of transparency and engagement to continue and expand." Eligible submissions were produced and used by educational institutions between July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024.

The Friends of the Belton Public Library hosted their 20th Annual Book & Author Luncheon at Christ the King Catholic Church Family Life Center in Belton.

The event featured New York Times bestselling author Lisa Wingate as the keynote speaker and served as the organization's largest annual fundraiser for the Lena Armstrong Public Library.

"The funds raised here help the library with projects that might not fit into their regular budget, and we also use part of it to provide free books to children at different library events," said Juanita Smith, president of the Friends of the Library.

The luncheon drew 289 attendees, just shy of the 300-person goal set by organizers.

March

Camp Tahuaya, located at 2603 Tahuaya Dr. in Belton, is officially open to the public after traditionally being limited to Scouting programs.

Longhorn Council, Scouting America, hosted a ribbon cutting ceremony at the camp on Saturday, March 1, to mark the completion of several upgrades aimed at welcoming families, schools, church groups, and other community organizations.

Traditionally, Camp Tahuaya was only available to Scouts and typically operated on weekends and during the summer. Now, with modernized facilities and expanded programming, the camp is open year-round to the public.

New accommodations include family suites, family cabins,

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From our family to yours... Merry Christmas & Happy New Year



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Any image, story or other unsolicited information sent to The Belton Journal is considered a community-contributed submission of material and falls under these guidelines.

- You retain ownership of any submission that is your original work. Submissions sent from third parties should only be by permission of the organization or individual who owns it, who also must agree to this

submission policy.

- You understand that submissions may or may not appear in the Belton Journal and its related forms of publication, now or in the future.

- By contributing a submission, you are granting to the Belton Journal unrestricted, non-exclusive right to use it now and in the future. This includes modifying the original submission to fit print requirements.

- Submissions used become a permanent part of the Belton Journal and its product offerings. By virtue of

appearance on the Belton Journal Web site, submissions may also become a permanent part of search engine caching libraries (such as google.com) and online archiving organizations (such as archive.org).

- Submissions not immediately used become a permanent part of the Belton Journal's library, with rights for possible future use.

- By contributing any submission, you are indicating you have read and understood this policy and agree to its terms.

SUBMISSION DEADLINES:

To be considered for inclusion in the Belton Journal, all submissions must be received by 5:00 p.m. on Monday of the week in question.

Opinions expressed (including Letters to the Editor) are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions held by the Belton Journal's management, staff or advertisers. Letters to the Editor should not exceed more than 350 words. Contact us at (254) 939-5754.

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RV sites, wall tents, and traditional campsites. Families and visitors can also participate in a variety of outdoor activities such as archery, climbing, hiking, fishing, and paddleboarding. The decision to upgrade and expand access came after the council noticed more families looking for ways to spend time outdoors.

A new program implemented by the Belton Police Department is designed to help authorities locate people with dementia, autism or specific mental health needs who have wandered away from home. The program — Take Me Home — has created a local database with photos and personal information that helps police officers find someone who is lost, according to Mary Deville, crime victim liaison with the Belton PD. When an elderly man with dementia went missing for two weeks last March, it became a catalyst for getting the program started in Belton.

The Lena Armstrong Public Library celebrated renovations

with a ribbon cutting. Over the past few years, the library has been remodeled both inside and outside. The library was closed for a few days as the inside changes could be completed. Back in 2018, a study of the library was completed by Library System Services. In this inside revamp, the bookshelves were moved to the walls to create an open and inviting space. Seating options were changed and an area for middle school-aged children within the main room was created. Additionally, shelving was installed with rollers. The children's room was revamped with a color scheme inspired by the mural outside.

In commemoration of Sustainability Month, representatives from Fort Hood and surrounding cities met at the Harris Com-

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Happy 60th Anniversary



Courtesy Photo

Margaret and Danny Scott are celebrating their 65th Wedding Anniversary on Dec. 31, 2025.



BELTON JOURNAL/Michele Weismann

Delta students from the Belton Independent School District stop by the Belton Journal office and drop off Christmas cookies. Delta students work at the Journal throughout the school year.

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LETTERS TO SANTA



Mrs. Pepper 1st Grade Sparta Elementary

Dear Santa, how r yr rander? I wut a rnbo unaern. Love, Zoe

Dear Santa, how are the rander? For Christmas I would like a dron. Love, William

Dear Santa, How are yr der boing? For Christmas I would like a bay blades that hav not cum out yet. And a urenu. Love, Jett

Dear Santa, dog, bik, and hel-met. Love, Quetzali

Dear Santa, For Christsmas I wunt a toy rander. Love, Charles

Dear Santa, I wunt a brbi grl santu. And a dog for Crismis. Love, Brynnleigh

Dear Santa, dino toy and poke-mon toy and rel dog. Love, Canyon

Dear Santa, r u redi for Crissmiss? I wint a robo dog and a snak toy. Love, Sebastian

Dear Santa, for cristmas I wud lik a bic, and rel robot. Love, Cristian

Dear Santa, I wunt a mery Crismis. Legos and tshrt frum a stor. Love, Sammy

Dear Santa, prete dres, new cup, new fance rum, babe cat, t pot, santa to elen my rum. Love, Lydia

Dear Santa, I wunt a bat, and a basboll and a toy dog. I love you. Love, Jennings

Dear Sana, I wunt a uniorn and I wunt a prinsis and I wunt a robot of me. Tank yu, Santa. Love, Paxton

Dear, Santa, How are the rander? For Christmas I wunt a crunch lab box and a bay blad and a lego set. Love, Rhett

Dear Santa, I wunt stufd anml and shoz and a blanke. Love, Amaya

Dear Santa, I wunt a toy milatare tank. Love Brayden

Dear Santa, i want you to wash the dishes please. Love, Sophia

Mrs. Neeley 1st Grade Sparta Elementary

Dear Santa, I have been very good this year

I would like for Christmas this year is... a 67 stuffy and 67 toy and brainrot stuffys and brainrot toys and 21 and it says Whats 9+10 21 stuffy and just me me toys and stuffy. Love, Addicus

Dear Santa, I have bee very good this year i lee jar Love, Silas

Dear Santa, Moth HDLZKAS WehaBr 27 Puche noBsc heBaD Love Stella

Dear Sant, I wut a cicha and a chlngoina soll and most hix bols and pull. Love, Aria

Dear Santa, I have been very good this year I would like a cat for Christmas this year is... Love, Nailah

Dear Santa, I want a biek and sum legose and a stad Dag with the sam brth as me and A lat AV muneo Love, Audrey

Dear Santa, FKMS I APUE FKMS I WT BRe FK MS I WT AKOB FK MS I WtWDa to EMAP Love, P'la

Dear Santa, I wot for christmas a Bres dll has a clegBook cake gog Dominl hirt Love, Andrea

Dear Santa, I wish that you give me all ove the toys that I want this year. Love, Elijah

Dear Santa, I wunt a titamasuris and a closowldomerets Love, Lincoln

Dear Santa, I wun a scofr. New shrts. how kaw grl hat. Love, Kaleigha Dear Santa, I have been very good this year. I wunt a toy solder set with toy tanks. Love, Samuel

Dear Santa, i have Bin vare Good this yeer. this i wunt gNrfs5oMBShrlik and a BuBoL firNtt Love, Davis

Dear Santa, I have been very good this year I would like for Christmas this year is a dig car Love, Charlotte

Dear Santa, Legos Love, Josyah

Mrs. Rabroker 1st Grade Sparta Elementary

Dear Santa, Please give me a Sonic Flash, a Shadow Batman, and a silver green lantern. Love, Maximus

Dear Santa, For Christmas I want a cool book you think I like, something for my brother and sister, and a plain piece of paper so I can draw my family. Love, Avianna

Dear Santa, I have bin rilee good so can I please have a Bibll and a swich and a camera that takes out the pictures and has a strap. Love, Leo

Dear Santa, I really have been good. I really want a Nintendo and Nintendo 2 and a Christmas fox stuffy. Love, Porter

Dear Santa, I wod like a candy kane, a nrf gun, and an elakehrik skudr. I wod like a litl ranjre (ranger). Love, Stone

Dear Santa, I chride to be good. Please bring me a Big Labubu. Love, Layne Dear Santa, I try to be good. Pleaes giv me a glidr slim (glitter slime) and kids high heels. Love, Kennedy

Dear Santa, I have ben werkeg varey herd this year. Please breg me a Labubu, gloves, and notebooks, and a big LOL Surprise. Love, Andilynn

Dear Santa, I want a tedeber and a soer ball. I want a tablit. I want a Prinses Peach toy. Love, Mallory

Dear Santa, Please bring me some glasses and a Barbie house. Love, Adeline

Dear Santa, I know that I couldev been bad this year, but also!!! I was try ing sooooo hard to be good! Please bring me a little toy pig,

a Big turtle, a bible, a stuffed bunny, and a Nintendo Switch. Love, Ellery

Dear Santa, Please, mae I have a book, rolrskats, a lamp, a long sleeve dress, and hiking gluv. Love, Rayn

Dear Santa, I have been nice. Please bring me two hot wheel tracks, a Nerf Gun Set, and a remot control truck with lights. Thank you! Everett

Dear Santa, I tried to be good, Santa. Please bring me a Nintendo Switch, a sokateboard, a sck-ootr, a bike, spinig clay art, and a toy car. Love, Clayton

Dear Santa, I have been wrkeg hard to be kind. Can you pelase breg a skateboard. I wot dry erase markers, shrpee rainbow mark-ers, and a kande kane. Love, Riley

Dear Santa, For Krissmist I wut a dr bic (dirt bike). I would like an iPad because my iPad broke. Love, Spade

Dear Santa, I want a gift. I be gud. I want a choo choo train and a toy com-puter and a toy reindeer. Love, Amelia

Dear Santa, I have bin good this yer. Please breg me a robot cat and a Nintendowe swich 2, and a fox snowglobe from the North Poll for Crismist. Love, Ellison

Ms. Salazar's 1st grade at Sparta Elementary

Dear Santa, I would like a pink elf on the shelf and a suprise would wro to so wut you can chooz is the suprise make shr the suprise is su-per du-per uu-per cute pleeeez. Love, Ella

See SANTA LETTERS, Page A9

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A6
Thursday,
December 25, 2025

LIFESTYLES

THE BELTON JOURNAL

Grace Art Gallery's new exhibit Emerging Voices features BISD students' artwork

By Michelle Rodriguez
The Belton Journal

Grace Art Gallery located at 108 W. Central Avenue opened a new exhibit, Emerging Voices. The artists are high school students from BISD. Grace Art Gallery is open Fridays and Saturdays from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. and by appointment.

"We had a good turnout for the grand opening. There were a lot of high school students and their families. The students were selected by their teachers. Our next exhibit will be the teachers at BISD," said owner of Grace Art Gallery, Jo Mapel.

Mapel met with the BISD teachers. They felt the name of the exhibit Emerging Voices represented the students and the development of their art. The artists used different mediums like yard and embroidery.

"My granddaughter, Emma Haberer, has art here. The Raggedy Ann doll in her art was mine, and I gave it to her. The dress Raggedy Ann wears is calico print," said Lisa Niemeier.

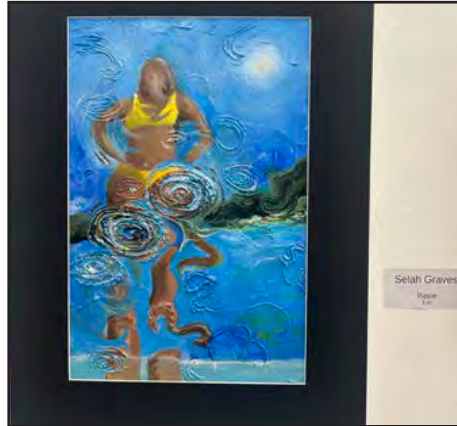
Haberer had a stack of books that she shredded. The dress on Raggedy Ann took a while to make. She used a magazine, books, and a newspaper.

"It was difficult because it was mixed media. The prompt was containment. I used an exact-o knife for the strings. I used black and white then color. I grabbed what was in the classroom. I used a paper cutter to make the doily," said artist and sophomore at Lake Belton High School, Haberer.

Haberer watched the movie version of Raggedy Ann, the Broadway musical, as inspiration for the art. She also plays the flute in the Lake Belton High School band.

"I found a colorized picture of Ivey Austin where she was Raggedy Ann. The red and white stockings were from the Temple Daily Telegram," said Haberer.

Another featuring artist from Lake Belton High School is Azaya Blair.



TOP LEFT: Hug Life, Thug Life. MIDDLE LEFT: The Prince Pickle by Lizzy Simeroth. BOTTOM LEFT: Ripple by Selah Graves. ABOVE: Rags by Emma Haberer. All their art is featured at Grace Art Gallery's new exhibit Emerging Voices

Blair's work represents her creativity and personality. She loves to draw real world things, make it unique, or give it a sense of unnaturalness. Her work as a whole helps her experience how she feels or what she wants to reflect, in a sense. The imperfections are always perfections, if you give it a chance.

Featuring artist from New Tech High School is Severin Martinez from Austin. Martinez grew up surrounded

with music and art. She's been able to explore different artistic outlets such as drawing, singing, and painting. She likes going to concerts and is especially drawn to jazz and blues singers.

Another featuring artist from New Tech High School is Justice Fetting from Salado and currently lives in Belton. She's been drawing for a really long time and just got into painting in the last few years. She likes to draw,

read, and "crank that soulja boy".

Featuring artist from Belton High School is Angel Romanhurd. He has been doing art since sixth grade; however, his art really didn't become something he's focused on until last year during their senior year where he got into drawing superheroes. His art regularly consists of colored pencils and graphite, but he really wants to move away from that for his piece, Icarus.

Fishing - From Page A1

Creek. Measure the fish and track the biggest fish.

"We have been working on this for over a month. We received a waiver in the spring for no fishing license this day on Nolan

Creek," said Adam Wells, Recreation Coordinator for the City of Belton. "Everybody enjoys working on this event. If you are a novice fisherperson, we can get you assistance."

The Texas Parks & Wildlife staff will be present, assisting with demonstrations and helping the kids learn how to fish, said James Grant, director of Belton Parks & Recreation.

"There will be hot chocolate and free bait, and even a few fishing rods that we loan out for those that may not have one yet," Grant added. "Prizes will be awarded for the kids who catch the largest fish."

On Dec. 19, Dec. 30 and Feb. 22, 2,750 rainbow trout will be added to Nolan Creek. The Dec. 30 fish will be greeted by dozens of rod-and-reel wielding anglers looking for fun and a tasty dinner.

No fishing license will be needed during the event. Bait will be supplied by Bel-

ton Parks & Recreation while supplies last.

Kids 12 and younger can enter for a chance to win in the Longest Rainbow Trout contest.

"Family Fishin' & Fun is a free, family-friendly event where participants can catch rainbow trout," said Adam Wells, Belton's recreation coordinator.

"Belton Parks & Recreation also awards prizes to children (boys' group & girls group) for the longest fish caught," he said.

"The event is very well received by the community. While I don't have exact attendance numbers, I can share that The Landing at Creekside is typically packed between 2 and 4 p.m."



No fishing license will be required. Poles and bait will be provided for those in hopes of catching some of the rainbow trout stocked earlier in the day.



MERRY
Christmas
& Happy New Year

May your holidays be
Merry & Bright!

From the City of Belton
City Council, Manager and Staff



B-TOWN BULLETIN

THE BELTON JOURNAL

A7 Thursday,
December 25, 2025

Local

Activities & Events

Newcomers Club Activities

DECEMBER

12/27: Jimmy's Egg

12/31: Crochet & Knit

January

01/05: Chat 'n' Canasta

01/07: Monthly Luncheon

01/08: Mexican Train Dominoes,
Couples Night Out

01/09: TGIF Lunch

01/12: Bookworms

01/13: Singing Bluebonnets

01/15: Nonfiction Book Club,
Meet & Greet

01/17: Exploring Wines

01/19: Snack Time Mah Jongg

01/20: Bunco

01/22: Mexican Train Dominoes

01/23: Trailblazers Walking Group

01/24: Jimmy's Egg

01/26: Well Read Women,
Monday Canasta

01/27: Singing Bluebonnets

01/28: Fun Lunch

"To join or for more information, please call:

**Mary Pringle (760)265-5035 or
email at: pringlem@msn.com.**

Visit the website: www.bellcountynewcomers.com."

Family, Fishin & Fun - Dec 30

Family, Fishin' & Fun is an annual family-friendly event along the banks of Nolan Creek. It's a great time for family and friends to grab fishing rods as we stock the creek with rainbow trout from the Texas Parks & Wildlife Rainbow Trout Program. The event is FREE. Bait provided while supplies last. No fishing license is required during the event. For more information visit beltontexas.gov.

Artist 2 Artist Showcase - Jan 3

Artist 2 Artist Showcase presents Infatuation Art Showcase Part III Featuring over 20 artists. Food, music, vendors. \$10 entry fee per person, tickets sold at the door, kids 10 & under free. January 3 from 6 p.m. to 11 p.m.. Art Space Central Texas, 103 Mountain Lion, Harker Heights

For vendor info. Email a2showcase@gmail.com.

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

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

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

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

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

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. Majong 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.

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

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

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

Engage & Empower with 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.ez-communicator.net/edu/beltonisd/login_form.aspx?app=0.

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.

Community Information

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

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

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

Citizens Helping in Police Service (CHIPS)

are extra eyes and ears while in areas where large groups may gather. Contact the Belton Police Dept. to join.

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

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

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



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 - Cornerstone Community Church**
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500 South I-35 ~ 254.939.2122
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 - Elm Grove Baptist Church**
6388 Elm Grove Rd. ~ 254.933.8127

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2210 Holland Rd. ~ 254.721.0707
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2025 Morgan's Point Rd ~ 254.780.2388
- First Baptist Church Belton**
506 N. Main St. ~ 254.933.3391
- First Mexican Baptist Church**
703 S. Wall St. ~ 254.939.6900
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2020 S. IH-35 ~ 254.624.8015
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- Covenant Lutheran Church**
4202 Hickory Rd. ~ 254.733.7718
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- First Baptist Church Temple**
8015 West Adams Ave. ~ 254.773.6866
- First Methodist Church Temple, GMC**
102 N. 2nd Temple. TX ~ 254.773.7992
- First Presbyterian Church Temple**
12 West French ~ 254.773.3407
- Foundation Church**
10751 W. Adams ~ 254.780.9673

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740 Jayline Drive ~ 254.773.1401
- Grace Comm. Primitive Baptist Church**
3111 N. 3rd St ~ 254.774.8192
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5000 S. 31st ~ 254.773.3744
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318 N. 2nd ~ 254.770.0070
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7425 W Adams Ave. ~ 254.778.2802
- Vista Community Church**
7051 Stonehollow Dr. ~ 254.774.7992
- Wildwood Baptist Church**
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Christmas Eve at the Cemetery



John C. Perry

Most of us carry a lifetime of Christmas memories, some wrapped in joy, others touched by sorrow. For many, the season brings laughter, warmth, and family gathered close. But for some, Christmas also carries the ache of loss. I understand that feeling well. I lost both of my parents in the middle of December, in different years, and those Christmases felt

dimmer, quieter, as if a light had gone out.
What is your favorite Christmas memory? When I look back, my childhood Christmases shine bright. My parents worked hard, and even when money was tight, they somehow made Christmas feel magical for me and my two brothers. They gave us gifts far beyond what their budget should have allowed, but the real gift was the love behind every sacrifice they made.
I don't share this with many people, but I still spend Christmas Eve with my parents. How is that even possible? Every Christmas Eve, the night our family exchanged gifts, I drive to the cemetery in Temple and visit their graves. I know they are not there, today they are alive and whole

in heaven, but those quiet moments beside their Earthly resting place remind me of their love, their faith, and the home they built for us. I have never spent a Christmas Eve without them, and at 77 years old, I don't intend to start now.
Too often, we measure Christmas by the gifts under the tree or the ones we didn't receive. It's easy to get swept up in the commercial whirlwind, Santa Claus, decorations, and all the noise that tries to drown out the sacred. But Christmas is so much more than wrapping paper and wish lists.
As Christians, we must hold tightly to the true meaning of Christmas. God gave the world His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. On the day we now celebrate December

25th, heaven touched earth. God's gift wasn't wrapped in ribbon, but in swaddling cloth, laid in a manger, offered so that we might be forgiven and redeemed.
Some say Jesus wasn't born in December, that His birth likely took place in the spring. Recently, I read new historical research suggesting that December 25th may indeed be accurate, based on events from 2,000 years ago. But in the end, the exact date doesn't matter. What matters is the gift. What matters is the love. What matters is that God stepped into our world to bring hope, salvation, and everlasting life.
So, this Christmas, whether your heart is full or a little tender, whether your home is bustling or quiet, I pray you feel the presence of

the One who came to bring peace. The greatest gift you will ever receive will not be found under a tree, but in a Savior who came for you, loves you, and promises eternal life to all who believe.
I wish each of you, my gentle readers, a joyful and blessed Christmas. May your memories warm you; may your faith sustain you, and may your heart never lose sight of the greatest gift the world has ever known, the gift of the Son of God.
Merry Christmas, y'all!
John C. Perry is the Lay Leader with New Life Methodist Church. They meet every Sunday at 9 a.m. (Bible Study) and 10 a.m. (Worship Service) in the Salado Middle School at 1169 Williams Rd.



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I wut a laboo, toy eef, the sam
sise as the reel colour blue.
Love,
Connor

Dear Santa,
Is the rander redy to eat cre-
rist? How do the elfs git ther,
fly? How do the rander git
majic and fly? and nomol ders
do not? I wunt a neintdo switch.
Love,
Emery

Dear Santa,
How dus your rinders git ther
majic? I hop to git a Dallis
Cowboys set.
Love,
Peyson

Dear Santa,
I wunt a PS5. Hal much ilfs are
thir?
Love,
Kris

Dear Santa,
How are your efs doing? Are
you able to kut off an bell from
your rander? I wunt a bell.
Love, Clark
Dear Santa,
Sanic Nic. How is roboth
doing? How are the lfs? Sanic
Nic pes bring me a nawetndo
switch.
Love, Beau

Dear Santa,
How is the weather up at the
north pole? I hope I get boots
with atractive magnet metal
and rubber underneath it a hover
board. Love, Ryker

Dear Santa,
How are the elfs so quiet? I
hope i get a new soccer ball.
Love,
Andrzej

Dear Santa,
How can your elfs flie urand
the nof pll and I hop that you
can giv me a wundfoll pasit.
Love, Delta

Dear Santa,
How do you git your majik.
How do the elfes git that
majik? I wunt a hudde that ses
“slay all day, a owola, a wit
hudde a pink vs bull, an a jum-
prop.
Love,
Emma

Dear Santa,
How r rare deer get ther
magick? I hlpe I get lots uf cool
toys! PS5.
Love,
Bryce

Dear Santa,
I whant a elf on the shelf. How
do the raindears get there
magic? Why are the christmas
cors are red and green?
Love,
Lily

Dear Santa,
How is the weather. Can I heave
a barbie house plase?
Love,
Sophie

Dear Santa,
You is a bes san. I wunt a pa
patrol. Love you.
Love,
Zakiyah

Dear Santa,
Do you hav the ders rede to
cum to ton? I wunt a ATV an a
pawer whel.
Love,
Justice

Dear Santa,
I love Santa he is the beest
Santa. I hope that you give me a
PS5.
Love,
Preston

Dear Santa,
Haw dut the elfs git their
payrs? And is it tru that if aer
pirints tuch aer elf then do you
say ther fr 40 minis an I wunt
a mine mrmaid.
Love, Aliana

Sena Grote,
Kindergarten,
Leon Heights

Mrs. Joyce
I want a iphone, sena

Scotti Grote,
2nd Grade,
Leon Heights

Mrs. Medina
Close, skin care bubble,
wax bottle candy, dubai
chocolate, Summer Friday
Makeup, paint markers.

Syvi Grote,
5th Grade,
Leon Heights,

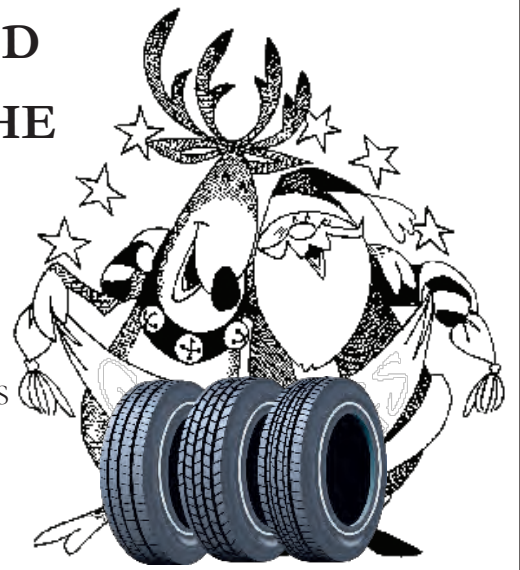
Mr. Jackson
Hiii Santa My name is Syvi and
I have 4 siblings. 3 sisters and
I brother and what I want for
christmas is new shoes, hello
kitty sweatpants, and I want a
Hello Kitty Sweatshirt. Good
bye, Syvi.



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Cari Starritt-Burnett
169th Judicial
District Court



David Blackburn
County Judge



Ted Duffield
Peace Justice, Pct. 1



Pat Duffield
Constable Pct. 1



Shay A. Luedeke
Tax Assessor-Collector



Rosane Fisher
Justice of the Peace



Shelley Coston
County Clerk

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YOU'RE INVITED!

I-14 Extension Project (Segment 1) Public Meetings

Temple

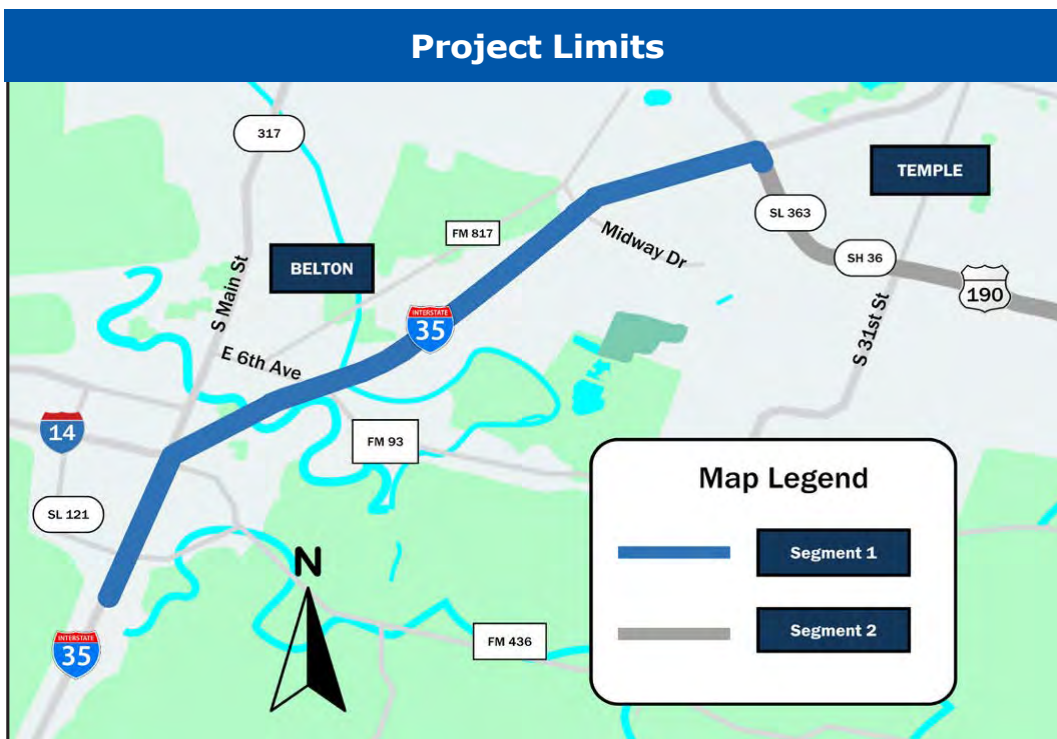
**Jan. 13, 2026
5-7 p.m.**

Frank W. Mayborn Civic & Convention Center, North Rooms
3303 N. 3rd Street
Temple, TX 76501

Belton

**Jan. 14, 2026
5-7 p.m.**

Cadence Bank Center, Assembly Hall
301 W. Loop 121
Belton, TX 76513



The Texas Department of Transportation is hosting a virtual public meeting with in-person options to gather feedback on proposed I-35 improvements from south of Loop 121 in Belton to Loop 363/US 190/SH 36 in Temple, also referred to as Segment 1. Project staff will be available to answer questions. No formal presentation is planned. Attendees may come and go at their convenience.

The improvements aim to enhance mobility, connectivity and safety along I-35. Materials will be available online by 5 p.m., Jan. 13, 2026, at TxDOT.gov (search "I-14 Extension," Segment 1). Feedback may be submitted in-person, online, via email or by mail by Thursday, Jan. 29, 2026, to be included in the official public meeting summary.

TxDOT.gov | Keywords: "I-14 Extension" and refer to Segment 1

Questions or Comments

Chris Mashek, P.E.,
TxDOT Project Manager

254-867-2750

chris.mashek@txdot.gov

Scan the QR code to learn more about Segment 1 of the I-14 Extension Project.





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MPR City Council holds December meeting

By Michelle Rodriguez
The Belton Journal

The City of Morgan's Point Resort's City Council held their regularly scheduled December meeting at the Garret and Mic Hill Event Center.

The meetings are scheduled for the second Tuesday of every month. Workshops, if needed, begin at 5 p.m. followed by the meeting at 6 p.m.

This month, there was an announcement about new microphones so that people could hear the meetings better at home. The meetings can be watched on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/@cityofmorganspointresort35>.

The two public hearings were for the carport variance request and budget amendments. The carport variance request is for 160 Lake Forest Drive. It was dis-

cussed at the workshop and there was a resolution to discuss and consider. They did not need to have a variance because the building officials measured it, and it was in compliance. The budget amendment was for recognizing revenue and expenditures for fiscal year 2025 and to carry forward revenue and expenditures in multiple operating funds from fiscal year 2025. The budget amendments and carryforward passed.

There were 10 resolutions including the one that had the public hearing. All were approved. Minutes for the meeting will go for approval at the next council meeting in January.

The first resolution was discussion and consideration to approve the carport variance request for 160 Lake Forest Drive.

The second was discussion and consideration to appoint members to the planning and zoning commission. There were

three applicants: Andrew Roberts, Maria Martinez, and Christopher Walker, as alternate.

The Council approved authorizing the city manager to enter into a contract for the purchase of a caterpillar 60kw diesel generator for the public safety center.

The Council also approved a 16 Archer septic system and issued a variance due to lot size not in compliance with MPR ordinance of one-half acre.

The Council also approved a memorandum/resolution for a 95 Buena Vista Dr. septic system and issued a variance due to lot size not in compliance with MPR ordinance of one-half acre. The Council also approved an accessory building variance at 3 West Aztec.

It also approved the replat, trailer use, and new building at 18 Mustang Dr. in Belton.

Also, the Council accepted a library board member's resignation and declared a vacancy.

The Council approved changes to authorized representatives on behalf of the City for Horizon Bank.

Lastly, the Council adopted an investment policy in accordance with Texas government codes chapters 2256, the Public Funds Investment Act, and 2257, the Public Funds Collateral Act.

The finance director and city manager gave updates, and the meeting was adjourned into an executive session for a discussion of personnel matters and a discussion of real property.

The next meeting is a city council workshop on Jan. 13 at 5 p.m. and meeting at 6 p.m.

Review - From Page A3



community Center to recognize individuals and schools for their contributions to environmental efforts.

The event included the signing of a proclamation declaring April as Sustainable Environment Month and the presentation of Environmental Ambassador Awards.

Belton's Oscar Bersosa, head girls' soccer coach at Belton High School and vice chair of the Belton Parks Board, was honored as the City's Environmental Ambassador for his leadership in organizing cleanup projects through the school's athletics program.

"I've been in Belton since 1996, so I'm invested in this community, not just because I work at Belton ISD, but because I went to UMHB and Baylor, and my family has lived here a long time," Bersosa said. "Giving back is important, and I think we all have a responsibility in that."

Through Belton High School Athletics, students participate in at least two community service projects per year. Bersosa helped organize seasonal cleanups at Chisholm Trail Park, which has been adopted by the school.

Crow and Cactus Co., an exclusive southwestern gift shop, moved to 122A Penelope Street to be closer to the heart of the downtown area.



"I am very excited. This is our second year in business. I wouldn't want my story to be anywhere else but in Belton. Our community is such a great community. Belton is home for me and my family," said owner Amy Morter.

The store is in the middle of the 8,200-square-foot building with Grappler's Lair in the north part of the building.

In other business news from March, it was announced that the historic Beltonian Theater was up for sale, in the amount of \$800,000. The 102-year-old business launched as a theater in May 1922 and purchased by Dr. Sara and Zechariah Baker in September 2018.

"It's a turnkey operation," Zechariah said. "We've done a lot of work since purchasing The Beltonian. It has a new screen, new projector, two new AC units, a new kitchen floor and appliances, a new roof, an ice machine and a new stand-alone sound system for concerts."

"There's nothing really wanting or making me sell," he added. "It's just that time to take the next step. We've come to points in life professionally and personally where it's time to take the next step." The sale included theater equipment, the building, the business model, social media and more.

The Belton City Council approved a resolution supporting the transition of the Central Texas Council of Governments to a Regional 9-1-1 Emergency Communication District.

According to Sam Listi, Belton city manager, CTCOG administers the State's 9-1-1 Emergency Communication Program, providing emergency dispatch equipment, technology and training, GIS Mapping, and 911 addressing in the rural areas of the CTCOG region.

Residents and businesses are charged 50 cents on phone bills to pay for these services. The money is remitted to, and held by,

the State of Texas until the Legislature appropriates the funds to the Texas Commission on Emergency Communications and then to statewide councils of government.

Under this reimbursement format, the COG does not receive all the money generated locally, funding that is sent may be delayed, and the amount of funding is unpredictable, making the scheduling of long-range equipment purchases difficult.

By creating the Regional 9-1-1 Emergency Communication District, all funds collected from the 50-cent fee locally would be remitted to the district without going to a "middleman."

Full recovery of local fees by the District would provide predictable funding for the enhanced 9-1-1 system and would generate an estimated \$3.7 million during Fiscal Year 2027.

Robert Kenneth Bass, owner of RK Bass Electric started his business with his wife Cheryl Bass in 1984 and retired this March. Their office is located at 1200 E. F.M. 2410 in Harker Heights.

"When we started, we found there was another company named Bass Electric in California. Now, we have 200 employees," said Bass. The Bases started their business together so they could spend time with their kids. Bass worked in Harker Heights for 49 years, but he was originally raised in Panama and now lives in Belton. Since RK Bass retired, his son Andy Bass is President/Owner.

The City of Belton hosted the first Legends on the Chisholm Trail event on March 29-30 at The Landing at Creekside Park to celebrate the City's 175th anniversary.

The event featured Apache Crown Dancers, Native American flute performances, chuck-wagon food, cowboy church, vendors, and educational displays from groups such as the Buffalo Soldier Program by Texas Parks and Wildlife.

Leila Valchar, one of the event organizers, said the idea developed from two separate conversations, one about a chuck-wagon cook-off and another about a Native American flute and



frybread event. Valchar said the goal was to bring both elements together to reflect the city's Native and Western history.

"This is our novel event. We're hoping to grow it to become a very big event in the future," Valchar said. The Diamond Creek Crown Dancers traveled from White River, Arizona, to perform a traditional Apache ceremony. Chuckwagon meals were served for free by volunteers. Dishes included beef tips, chili verde, cowboy beans, green beans with sausage, jalapeño cream corn, biscuits, and cobbler.

Jesse Salsido, one of the cooks, said the food was based on historical trail meals but expanded for variety. Texas Parks and Wildlife interpreters represented the Buffalo Soldier Program with uniforms, artifacts, and educational materials.

Leadership Belton hosted by the Belton Chamber of Commerce is working on a project to improve Miller Heights Park. They presented their project at the Belton Lion's Club Meeting at the Dead Fish Grill on March 27.

"We are excited this Leadership Belton Project will improve quality of life for Miller Heights Park and the surrounding community. It's a great program and opportunity for leaders in our community to learn about the City of Belton and get involved. They are working hard to solicit sponsors to add amenities to the park and upgrade it," said Randy Pittenger, President and CEO of the Belton Area Chamber of Commerce.

"Burning of the B," a Belton High School Student Council video, earned top honors at the Texas Association of Student Councils (TASC) 89th Annual High School Conference in Arlington. Only ten high schools and five middle-level councils received this prestigious recognition. TASC is the largest student council association in the world and the videos recognized at its conference represented the most outstanding submissions from across Texas. The theme for this year's video submissions was "To the Furthest Horizon."

The Burning of the B video highlights Belton High School's long-standing homecoming tradition that brings students, alumni, families and the entire community together. The event, which spans more than 30 years, is organized by the senior class and student council officers and features a giant letter "B" wrapped in burlap and ceremonially set aflame.

April

It was announced that Governor Greg Abbott reappointed Todd Fox of Belton, as well as Michael "Mike" Boyd, and Garry Bradford to the Texas Military Preparedness Commission for terms set to expire on February 1, 2031. Fox is president of First Heroes National Bank. He served in the United States Army for 24 years, retiring as chief of staff, III CORPS in 2018.

Market Days is a Belton tradition dating back to 2010 and



the first Market Days for 2025 was held in April, with 101 vendors signed up for the event. Live music was provided by Michael Mahler, Jay White and Martian Folk Area restaurants and local merchants were open for business, and the day brought an extra number of visitors downtown, making it a big day for tourists and shopping in Belton.

The Belton City Council once again delayed the issuance of up to \$17.7 million certificate of obligation bonds until April 29, but this time the postponement was to avoid competing with a bond issued Tuesday by the City of Georgetown.

Belton's proposed funding supports the city's portion of the Temple-Belton Wastewater Treatment Plant expansion, lift station improvements, a new aerial fire department apparatus and the acquisition of the former Miller Heights Elementary School as a public safety facility.

Council initially intended to consider the bond sale on April 8, but market volatility at the time led Mike Rodgers, the city's financial advisor, to recommend a delay.

The Belton City Council approved a professional services agreement with Stateside Right of Way Services to assist with property acquisition for the South Connell Street Reconstruction Project. The project will expand South Connell Street from a two-lane to a four-lane road with curb and gutter, along with sidewalks on both sides. The improvements aim to increase safety, mobility, and pedestrian access.

To support the expansion, additional right-of-way must be acquired along both sides of the roadway. Stateside ROW, based in Temple, will manage the appraisal and negotiation process with affected property owners. City staff will oversee the process, but all communications and negotiations with property owners will be handled by Stateside to ensure a fair and compliant process. The acquisition is expected to take up to 15 months and involves 32 parcels. The \$329,500 contract, funded by the TIRZ Capital Projects Fund, covers appraisal and acquisition services but does not include compensation to property owners, which will be handled separately.

A Scholarship Awards Luncheon was hosted by Central Texas Republican Women on behalf of the CTRW Scholarship Endowment Foundation. Two scholarships were awarded in the amount of \$1000 each. This year's recipient of The Kitty Pope Scholarship is Millye Edwards. Millye is the daughter of Tanya and Marcus Edwards. Mylee is attending Texas A&M University. Her field of study is Agricultural Economics. The second recipient of The Sonny Pope Scholarship is Joshua Veiga. Joshua is the son of Sooky and William Veiga. Joshua is attending the University of Texas at Austin. His field of study is International Relations and Global Studies.



At last, the City of Belton issued \$17.9 million in certificate of obligation bonds to fund several major projects, including Belton's share of the \$71.2 million expansion of the wastewater treatment plant shared with Temple. In addition, the bonds will pay for more than \$1.75 million in vital improvements to the primary Belton lift station, and the second phase of the Loop 121 expansion project that requires the relocation of utilities at a cost of \$2.3 million. Also, the Belton Fire Department will purchase a ladder truck for \$1.7 million, and the city will spend \$750,000 to purchase the former Miller Heights Elementary School property. Even with a \$6.6 million cash contribution by the city, an additional \$17.7 million is necessary to complete these projects.

The project will expand the capacity of the existing facility, located off F.M. 93 between Belton and Temple, from 10 million

Merry Christmas

Luke 2:10
Good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people

CareAge HomeCare

Review cont.- From Page B3

gallons a day to 16 million gallons, according to Belton city spokesman Paul Romer.

"Expanding the plant is necessary to meet the demands of population growth in Temple and Belton," Romer said. "The first phase of the expansion has already occurred — it replaced and expanded the headworks facility, which is where sewage enters the treatment plant."

May

A large family pavilion was dedicated at Chisholm Trail Park in memory of longtime Belton ISD counselor Debbie Potts who died last year. Potts' family donated funds for the pavilion through Belton's Legacy Program, a way to honor others through the beautification of parks throughout the city. Potts' husband Neale, son Luke and daughter Lynsey Patrick donated money for the pavilion in her honor at the park she regularly frequented.

In the May 3 election, city council and school board seats were decided, and voters passed Proposition A.

Daniel Bucher was elected to a third term for Place 5 on the city council, receiving 447 votes to challenger Ty Taggart's 386 votes. Luke Neale Potts landed the Place 6 seat, receiving 542 votes over Clinton Bailey, who received 320 votes. Potts replaces Wayne Carpenter, who did not seek reelection. Stephanie O'Banion was unopposed for Place 7 and was reelected to her



mony for Standpipe Park on May 16, celebrating the completion of a \$1.5 million public park built around the city's historic 75-foot-tall water tower. Mayor David K. Leigh opened the ceremony by reflecting on how the area had gone unnoticed for years and thanking those who helped bring the park to life.

City Manager Sam Listi detailed the standpipe's history, noting its original purpose as a water tower built in the early 1900s and its architectural uniqueness. He said early grant efforts failed, but the vision of a community park on the site changed everything. He thanked partners including Texas Parks and Wildlife and recognized State Representative Hugh Shine for years of support, unveiling a plaque in Shine's honor.

"Standpipe Park achieves three important objectives," Listi said. "It preserves infrastruc-

We wish you a Merry Christmas

Alton D. Thiele P.C.



second term.

The Special Called Election for Proposition A was approved by voters to amend the city's charter regarding the Municipal Court. This passed easily, 700-128.

This changes Belton's Municipal Court to a Court of Record where proceedings are recorded and cases with procedural concerns may be appealed. In addition, the amendment creates fixed terms of two or four years for City of Belton municipal judges.

For the Belton Independent School District board of trustees, there was only one opposing race, for Area 3. In that race, Riley Beck received 88 votes and Suzanne M. McDonald received 78 votes. BISD Area 1 candidate Jeff Norwood and Area 5 candidate Manuel Alcozer both filed and ran unopposed.

For the second year in a row, Lakewood Elementary was named as a Capturing Kids' Hearts® National Showcase School—a recognition awarded to campuses that excel in creating safe, supportive and engaging learning environments. The award highlights schools across the country that are making a measurable impact on student achievement and school culture through relational, student-centered practices.

The City of Belton held a dedication cere-

ture over 100 years old, creates a recreational space for new generations, and connects to historic tourism across Belton."

Josh Pearson, chair of the Belton Parks Board, said other cities might have torn the structure down, but Belton had the vision to preserve it.

The \$1.5 million project was funded through a grant from Texas Parks and Wildlife and support from local partners. Construction began in late 2024 and was completed in spring 2025. Standpipe Park includes paved sidewalks, a pavilion, playground, practice field, and lighting atop the tower. The hillside slide is the only one of its kind in Belton.

The Standpipe was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1990 and became Belton's first Local Historic Landmark in 2019.

Belton ISD recognized three pair of high school students, Julie He as the valedictorian and John Zachary Moehlenbrock as the salutatorian of Belton High School's Class of 2025; Bryce Fournier and Megan Bansal as the valedictorian and salutatorian, respectively, of the Lake Belton High School Class of 2025, and Chinonso Ogwudu as the valedictorian and Tran Le as the

See REVIEW
Page B5



We wish you a very Merry Christmas

Jones Home & Auto

Review - From Page B4



salutatorian for the Belton New Tech @Waskow High School Class of 2025.

Students from all three Belton Independent School District high school campuses celebrated the spring graduation ceremonies at Cadence Bank Center for Belton High School, Lake Belton High School, and Belton New Tech @Waskow. Belton High School had a total of 403 seniors, with Lake Belton High School having 602 seniors, and Belton New Tech @Waskow a total of 65 seniors receive their high school diplomas.

David Shelburne, a member of the Belton High School class of 2025, was named as one of more than 2,000 winners of National Merit Scholarships financed by U.S. colleges and universities. Officials of each sponsor college selected their scholarship winners from among the Finalists in the 2025 National Merit Scholarship Program who plan to attend their institution. These awards provide between \$500 and \$2,000 annually for up to four years of undergraduate study at the institution study at the institution financing the scholarship. Shelburne has received his scholarship from the University of Alabama.

June

Jones Home & Auto in downtown Belton celebrated its 75th year in business. A lot has changed over the years. B.K. Blair, the current owner, has spent most of his life in what is today an auto repair company. His father started at Jones after retiring from the military. They are a Firestone dealership, which opened in Belton in 1950 and was purchased by the Jones family in 1951. B.K. still has the original operations manual for running a Firestone dealership.

The Belton City Council arranged for the sale of 23.4 acres on F.M. 93 to Jon-Tex Properties. The Belton Economic Development Corporation has been working with two prospective purchasers to subdivide a 36-acre tract on F.M. 93. The parcel is part of the Rockwool Superfund Site, which was acquired by the Belton EDC in 2016 from the city of Belton. The sale of the property will allow for the expansion of ECS Environmental Solu-

tions, which is owned by Jeff Jones. The total sale price was \$193,526.

The City of Belton won a first place TAMI Award and a second place Award of Excellence at the Texas Association of Municipal Information Officers (TAMIO) Conference in Fort Worth. The City's first place TAMI award was for Best Social Media Campaign-Unplanned (population under 100,000). The campaign was a series of Facebook posts over a six-week period following the May 2024 storm that spawned two tornadoes nearby and caused significant damage to public and private property.

Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) of Bell and Coryell Counties held a ribbon cutting and grand opening ceremony to officially open their new office complex in Temple. CASA of Bell and Coryell Counties also celebrated their 10th Anniversary in 2025 as a stand-alone agency. Over the past 10 years CASA has served 1,500 children with more than 500 volunteer advocates devoted to making sure their best interests were heard while their cases were heard in court.

SPJST Accounting Assistant Dorothy Stuchly retired in June after 59 years of service. The Home Office hosted a come-and-go reception for Stuchly, who started work



at SPJST February 14, 1966. In 1966, then-SPJST Financial Secretary Ben Zabeik, who was a family friend, told her about the job. She worked before computers were introduced to the Home Office, using a color-coded flag system for monthly and annual dues, typing all information on a typewriter.

The Belton Area Chamber of Commerce celebrated graduates of the Leadership Belton Class of 2025. Graduates of the Leadership Belton Class of 2025 were Daniel Aguirre, Deputy Chief for the Belton Police Department; Amanda Cruz with Edward Jones, Leah Hodges with H2 Realty Team, Jenny McCaslin with Kelly Realtors, Rodney Morales with Horizon Bank, Uche Ogwudu with Touch Root Foundation, Kourtney Rambeau with First Community Title, Delilah Ramirez with Extraco Banks, Freddy Robles with City of Belton Public Works, Justin Rogers with Belton Christian Youth Center, Chad Ruff with CGI, and Lindsay Weaver, formerly with City of Belton. Leadership Belton is a 10-month pro-



gram sponsored by the Belton Area Chamber of Commerce focusing on three key elements: community awareness training, leadership training, and team building.

On June 10, the Body of Christ Community Clinic, Inc. (BOCCC) celebrated 15 years of being a beacon of hope and healing for the underserved in East Bell County, offering both medical and dental care. Through the years, the clinic has flourished. Expanding beyond

its initial one-night-a-week schedule, BOCCC now serves thousands of patients annually, with more than 3,300 patient visits recorded in 2024 alone.

On Monday, June 23, Caysen Tyler Allison received his final sentencing related to a fatal altercation with a classmate Joe Ramirez that occurred at Belton High School three years ago on May 3, 2022. Allison was initially found guilty of criminally negligent homicide by jury trial in April, a conviction that came with an imprisonment range of six months to two years. However, further review by the court added an assault with a deadly weapon enhancement that raised the possible time in prison from two years to 10. Sentencing took place in the 478th Judicial District Court under Judge Wade Faulkner at the Bell County Justice Center. After a two-hour recess, Judge Faulkner returned with his ruling that Allison would receive 10 years' imprisonment.

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LEGALS

THE STATE OF TEXAS CITATION BY PUBLICATION – CIVIL CAUSE NO. 25DCV353883

To LEON WALLS

Greetings:

You are hereby commanded to appear by filing a written answer to the plaintiff's original petition at or before 10 o'clock AM of the first Monday after the expiration of 42 days from the date of issuance of this Citation, the same being Monday, at or before 10 o'clock AM, before the Honorable 146th Judicial District Court, Bell County, Texas to be held at the Bell County District Courts Building in Belton, Texas. Said PLAINTIFF'S ORIGINAL PETITION was filed in said court on May 16, 2025.

The file number of said suit being No. 25DCV353883. The names of the parties in said suit are:

LAKEVIEW LOAN SERVICING, LLC VS. LEON WALLS, JR., DELOISE WALLS, SECRETARY OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, DOES 1 THROUGH 10, DOES BUSINESS ENTITIES 1 THROUGH 10, INCLUSIVE

The nature of said suit being substantially as follows, to wit:

JUDICIAL FORECLOSURE LEON WALLS AS POTENTIAL PARTY OF INTEREST

This was issued at the request of attorney: NICOLAS MATAYRON MALCOLM, CISNEROS 2112 BUSINESS CENTER DRIVE IRVINE CA 92612.

NOTICE TO DEFENDANT: You have been sued. You may employ an attorney. If you or your attorney do not file a written answer with the clerk who issued this citation by 10:00 AM on Monday next following the expiration of forty two days after you were served this citation and petition, a default judgment may be taken against you. In addition to filing a written answer with the clerk, you may be required to make initial disclosures to the other parties of this suit. These disclosures generally must be made no later than 30 days after you file your answer with the clerk. Find out more at TexasLawHelp.org.

Issued and given under my hand and seal of said Court at office in Belton, Texas, on December 10, 2025.

Joanna Staton District Clerk Bell County, Texas, 1201 Huey Road, P.O. Box 909, Belton, Texas 76513

By: Misty Cortez, Deputy Clerk

12.18, 12.25, 01.01, 01.08-pd

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

LEGALS

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 October 20, 2025, against Alisha Olivarri and Unknown Father, Respondent(s), numbered 25DFAM357062, and entitled "In the Interest of LAYLA OLIVARRI, minor child." The suit requests to terminate the parent-child relationships and/or to appoint a managing conservator of the child. The date and place of birth of the child who is the subject of the suit is:

LAYLA OLIVARRI, DOB: May 26, 2020, Place of birth: Texas

The court has authority in this suit to render an order in the child's interest that will be binding on you, including the termination of the parent-child relationship, the determination of paternity, and the appointment of a conservator with authority to consent to the child's adoption.

The name and address of the attorney for plaintiff is Ryan Smith, Bell County Attorney's Office, P.O. Box 1127, Belton, TX 76513 Issued and given under my hand and seal of the Court at Belton, Texas, this the 19 day of December 2025

Joanna Staton, District Clerk of Bell County, Texas 1201 Huey Road, P.O. Box 909, Belton, TX 76513

By: C. Rodriguez Deputy

12.25

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 Second Amended Petition of the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, Petitioner, was filed in the 146th Judicial District Court of Bell County, Texas, on December 17, 2025, against Jamia McDade and Terrell Lowe, Respondent(s), numbered 25DFAM352578, and entitled "In the Interest of KASSAN ORTIZ, minor child." The suit requests to terminate the parent-child relationships and/or to appoint a managing conservator of the child. The date and place of birth of the child who is the subject of the suit is: KASSAN ORTIZ, DOB: February 8, 2025, Place of birth: Texas

The court has authority in this suit to render an order in the child's interest that will be binding on you, including the termination of the parent-child relationship, the determination of paternity, and the appointment of a conservator with authority to consent to the child's adoption.

The name and address of the attorney for plaintiff is 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 19 day of December 2025

Joanna Staton, District Clerk of Bell County, Texas, 1201 Huey Road, P.O. Box 909, Belton, Tx. 76513

By: C. Rodriguez Deputy

12.25

THE STATE OF TEXAS CITATION BY PUBLICATION CASE NUMBER 25CPB00763

To: Unknown Heirs

GABRIELLA G THOMPSON, Applicant, on December 15, 2025, filed an application to determine heirship seeking independent or in the alternative dependent administration and letters of administration in a proceeding styled: JAMES EDWARD THOMPSON, Deceased, and bearing the number 25CPB00763 in the County Court of Bell County, Texas.

The court will hear the aforesaid Application after the expiration

Notice of Annual Member Meeting for Dog Ridge Water Supply Corporation

The **Annual Member Meeting** for the Dog Ridge Water Supply Corporation will be held at 7480 FM 2410, Belton, TX 76513. The meeting will start at 6:00p.m. on **Monday, March 9, 2026**. The purpose of the meeting will be to update the members on the business affairs of the Corporation and to conduct a director election unless the election is declared unopposed by a resolution of the board of directors.

The Corporation will mail to each member **one** official ballot once receiving the members application by **Monday, January 19, 2026**, regardless of the number of memberships they hold. Corporation will review applications and the petition signatures upon receipt. Corporation will notify candidates of any defects that need to be cured. Only the original official ballot mailed to the member or provided at the annual members meeting will be valid. If a member has lost their ballot, a replacement ballot will be issued to the member. The member must contact the Corporation at 254-939-6533 or by email at **dogridgewsc@yahoo.com** to obtain an official replacement ballot.

Reproduced or copied ballots will not be accepted.

On the day of the election, members will check in with the **Independent Election Auditor** who will verify whether the member's official ballot has been received. If the member has not previously submitted a ballot, the member will be provided with a new official ballot. If the member has sent in their ballot but the Corporation has not received the ballot, the member will be provided with a new official ballot of a different color other than the one mailed to them. Members will receive one ballot no matter how many memberships they hold. The member's name on the ballot must match their application for service name.

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LEGALS

of ten days, exclusive of the day of publication, from the date this citation is published which will be December 25, 2025, 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: LANE HEGINBOTHAM, 425 NORTH 8TH STREET, 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 December 18, 2025.

Shelley Coston
County Clerk of Bell County, Texas, PO Box 480, 1201 Huey Road, Belton, TX 76513

By: Erika DeCasas Deputy
12.25

LEGALS

NOTICE TO CREDITORS

Notice is given that original Letters Testamentary for the Estate of PAULINE REYNAGA were issued on November 3, 2025, in Cause No. 25CPB00557, pending in the County Court at Law Number 1 of Bell County, Texas, to ISSAC REYNAGA.

All persons having claims against the estate, which is presently being administered, are required to submit them, within the time and manner prescribed by law, and before the estate is closed, addressed as follows: c/o ISSAC REYNAGA 512 S. 50th Street Killeen, Texas 76543

Dated December 2, 2025

R. Talmadge Hammock *w/*permission

BRETT H. PRITCHARD Attorney for Executor of the Estate of PAULINE REYNAGA

12.25

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MERRY CHRISTMAS Wishing you peace and joy!

Tanner Roofing

EDITORIAL

Traditions

My Front Porch • Lynette Sowell

Right now we are neck-deep in Christmas and holidays, and many times that means taking part in traditions that we hold as family and sometimes among friends.

By the time you read this, I'll either be relaxing with my family or sleeping in on Friday, and I'll have already made an important decision: trying out a (possibly new) tradition.

We hold onto traditions because of the warm, comforting, satisfying feelings they give us, or should give us, rather.

Traditions can help make the holidays even more meaningful as they connect us over the years before with things that are important to us, the people in our lives, the things and places that matter.

Maybe we can never go to Grandma's again, but we can bake her cake, maybe not as perfectly as she did, but still good and still special.

For example, this is my first year without my mom. At some point, I'm going to make her sweet and sour meatballs, because they're such a unique recipe, and something I remember from growing up. I made them for my own family when the kids were growing and even now that the kids are having

their own traditions, this is something I keep.

Also, around New Year's I'm looking forward to making a recipe from my French Canadian great-grandmother. It's called a tourtiere, which is a meat pie served up with brown gravy. It's absolutely delicious, and it's a recipe that's been handed down over many, many years.

Some of our traditions aren't tied to recipes. Maybe it's a particular activity, such as going to view a drive-through light display, or driving around town looking at lights. Or, opening pajamas on Christmas Eve, or going outside to check the roof for the Man in the Red.

Sometimes, though, life goes on and the traditions become cumbersome. Are you at that point this year? Or are you even sure what tradition to hold?

There are times that traditions fall apart when major events happen in a family, such as when someone passes away, someone moves, a relationship ends or becomes estranged.

So then, what in the world are we supposed to do with traditions?

Some traditions just kind of happen without us realizing

it. So, I hope this year you are enjoying some traditions, especially the old ones, but also take time for something new.

Try something new. And if it's not like you thought it would be, see what happens next year when the season comes around again. If you want to do it, then do it. If not, that's okay, too.

Or, maybe ask your family members what is important to them. You might be surprised! Ask me about the year I didn't make the Chinese chicken wing recipe. (Yikes. I didn't realize that was a big deal.) On the flip side, there was the year I realized the family didn't want to *have* to come by on Christmas Eve. It's not that they didn't love us. Traditions can change and evolve, and part of our holiday peace, I believe, is not holding on so tightly and not wanting to listen.

Now, if you'll excuse me, I'm going to dust off an old recipe and maybe pick a new one for this year. And I'm thinking of getting a good cup of coffee on Christmas Eve and walking on a trail of lights.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all, and to all a good night!

The Hollywood Calendar

Shop the Insanity • Darren Blair

This one comes from a discussion I recently had online.

To put it simply, it's no coincidence that certain kinds of movies all tend to hit theaters at around the same time year after year. Before Covid, it was a guarantee that certain films would be released at certain points on the calendar. Covid has resulted in a lot of movies going straight-to-streaming or otherwise being displaced from their schedules, but as I type this I'm still seeing many of the same basic trends in place in the few long-term listings I still look at.

For all intents and purposes, the year functionally begins in October; we have Halloween on October 31st, hence the month generally being flooded with horror movies. Those movies almost always go away once November 1st hits, at least metaphorically. This is because the big holiday this month, Thanksgiving, is a major period of time for

people to hit theaters; not only do most people get Thursday and Friday off, many school districts now give the entire week off, so kids have time on their hands as well. Thus, we can expect to see a mix of blockbusters (including controversial fare like "The Wolf of Wall Street", which was intended as a Thanksgiving release) and "family" movies to take advantage of the packed seats.

December is, of course, Christmas and New Year's. So in the lead-up to these holidays, we can expect a lot of family movies, holiday movies, and would-be blockbusters. But there's a big difference this time around: the Oscar-bait movie. These movies are often given "limited" releases on Christmas Day, putting them fresh in the minds of the awards people while still meeting eligibility requirements. Hence the packed final two weeks of the year.

These two weeks being packed gener-

ally mean that January is desolate. With the Oscar-bait going into "wide" release, most studios don't want to try and compete, hence January being a tradition dumping ground for movies the studio either doesn't have confidence in or that missed their original debut dates. This typically includes a fair amount of leftover horror material.

Valentine's Day in February will bring the usual mix of romance movies, but also tends to bring "family" movies for the kids and action or comedy movies as counter-programming, if not a few blockbusters. This bright spot comes ahead of what is often another round of doldrums until Spring Break in March. As people are on vacation, studios will try to rush a blockbuster or two out to take advantage of it before bringing in the usual mix of family and religious fare for Easter, which is usually in April.

The movies from the first few months

generally burn off through the end of April and the first part of May, clearing the way for the Summer Blockbuster Season, which is typically June through August as summer holidays set in and people have time on their hands. A sufficiently packed summer, like the summer of 1989, can crush niche movies or smaller fare, which is why these films are often cradled into September.

Then October hits and the whole cycle starts all over again.

The straight-to-streaming pipeline may mean a disruption to this calendar, but I doubt it will significantly derail matters. Theaters still make up too much of the annual take for studios, and movies released outside of certain holiday windows are at a disadvantage. If anything, I imagine that it'll be underwhelming fare and "look what we have!" titles that will mostly move over.

Keep an eye on those holidays.

A Take on Christmas Eve

(with apologies to all that came before me, including Clement Moore)

Pleasant Ramblings • Mark Magnan

T'was the night before Christmas when all through the house
Not a creature was stirring, especially the mouse.
He could see the cat, by the food bowl well aware,
That no canned food would soon be there.
No stockings were hung, we don't do that no more,
We just wish for our gift in a bag from the store.
Electronics or a tablet, or the newest phone,
Probably delivered when no one was home.
Everyone in bed, no more hopping
We were all tired from last minute shopping.
Laying in bed with the neighbor's lights flashing,
Glad we were able to get that last minute dashing.
Sitting in bed making a few last minutes scrolls,
Remembered that I forgot the cinnamon rolls.
When all of a sudden I heard a truck door slam,
And a delivery driver utter a muffled "fram."
I ran to the window and saw what might appear,
A stranger tripping over and swearing at my inflatable reindeer.
From the flashing lights of their delivery Ford,

I could see them tangled in the dark green extension cord.
Because I live in Texas there was no snow or ice,
However the walk to my doorway was no less nice.
As the driver got up and giving their knee a good rub,
I knew their scanner/phone was probably under the shrub.
My last package was thrown fairly near my welcome mat,
I knew the driver needed a picture but they had no time for that.
They headed to their delivery van and and the door again slam,
The starter did grind but no engine came alive,
another muffled; "fram".
The driver yelled and hollered like in an empty room,
Finally the motor seemed to start and off they zoomed.
I heard their voice scream; "where is number four and number eight",
When then I noticed they had not shut their tailgate.
Out the back poured packages and bags galore,

I was quickly headed toward the front door.
For all the boxes that were lost and spilled out of the back,
Could possibly be a gift for Aunt Gladys and Uncle Jack.
Or perhaps something that I might be able to return for cash,
As I geared up for the "After Christmas" sales dash.
I grabbed as much and hid all I had found,
Before the driver noticed and came back around.
I heard the driver hollering and thought them to be insane,
What they said was, "Get on the app folks and file a claim."
Sneaking back into the house I heard not a peep,
I slipped into my bed, pulled my covers up and finally went to sleep.
From what was a long day of shopping and a bounty of package delights,
I wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a sound sleep tonight.

Great Expectations

Coffee Talk • Renae Brumbaugh Green

I'm going to have an amazing Christmas. I know this because I may or may not have accidentally opened one or more of my gifts already, when the UPS guy dropped them off. I mean, how was I supposed to know I wasn't supposed to peek? And even if I did know better, you can't prove it.

I have great expectations for Christmas morning because I already know what's coming, and I'm excited. I can't wait to tear into those gifts for real. At that point, they'll truly be mine. Not that getting presents is the focal point of Christmas... but it is a nice perk.

It reminds me of a couple of lesser-known characters in the Christmas story: Anna and Simeon. These two people hung out at the temple with great expectations. Both looked forward to a gift they knew was coming, because they'd been told about Him. Instead of blowing it off and saying, "Yeah, whatever," they waited with *anticipation*.

God had told Simeon he wouldn't die until he saw the promised Messiah with his own eyes. When Mary and Joseph brought baby Jesus into the temple, Simeon rejoiced!

God had kept his promise, just like Simeon knew He would.

Anna, a widow, went to the temple every day to fast and pray. Like Simeon, she took God at His Word and *expected* something great. She wasn't disappointed. When she saw the young couple with their baby boy, God whispered to her spirit: *That's him. That's my Son—the one I said would come.* Immediately, Anna began to praise God in a loud voice, telling everyone who would listen that God had kept his promise.

God wants us to have high hope for our lives. He loves us, and He's promised so many good things. Too often, I set my expectations low. I think, *That could never happen to me. It's too much. I could never be that successful, that happy, that loved.* But when I think those thoughts, I create a negative self-prophecy that will most likely come true.

God wants us to have faith in Him. Not in ourselves, not in our education or social status or paycheck, but in *Him*. He wants us to believe that He came so we could have *abundant* life. He wants us to have such confidence in His

love for us that, like Anna and Simeon, we live each day in anticipation of the wonderful gifts He has for us.

Hebrews 11:6 tells us, "Without faith it is impossible to please God." He has blessings unspeakable, ready to pour them out on our lives. He loves all of us, but He reserves some extra special gifts for those who believe. Who anticipate. Who expect. Who *know*.

I know I'll have an amazing Christmas this year, because I have an incredible husband who loves me and wants to see me smile. And I know I'll have a marvelous, mind-blowing 2026, because I have an incredible God who loves me and wants to fill my life with every good thing imaginable.

I believe. Do you?

"No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love him."
1 Corinthians 2:9



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Jingle Bells

It's hard for anyone to resist humming or singing along to the popular Christmas song "Jingle Bells" during the holiday season. A season often characterized as the most festive time of the year seemingly gets a little more so whenever celebrants hear "Jingle Bells" on the radio, in a department store or at a holiday party.

"Jingle Bells"

Dashing through the snow
 In a one-horse open sleigh
 O'er the fields we go
 Laughing all the way

Bells on bobtail ring
 Making spirits bright
 What fun it is to ride and sing
 A sleighing song tonight! Oh,

Jingle bells, jingle bells
 Jingle all the way,
 Oh what fun it is to ride
 In a one-horse open sleigh. Hey!

Jingle bells, jingle bells
 Jingle all the way,
 Oh what fun it is to ride
 In a one-horse open sleigh.

A day or two ago
 I thought I'd take a ride
 And soon, Miss Fanny Bright
 Was seated by my side,
 The horse was lean and lank
 Misfortune seemed his lot
 He got into a drifted bank
 And then we got upst.

Jingle bells, jingle bells
 Jingle all the way,
 Oh what fun it is to ride
 In a one-horse open sleigh. Hey!

Jingle bells, jingle bells
 Jingle all the way,
 Oh what fun it is to ride
 In a one-horse open sleigh.

Though "Jingle Bells" is now synonymous with the holiday season, savvy listeners will recognize the song does not actually allude to Christmas or, for that matter, any holiday at all. That peculiarity has not diminished the enduring popularity of the song, which was written in the 1850s by New England native James Lord Pierpont.

A day or two ago,
 The story I must tell
 I went out on the snow,
 And on my back I fell;
 A gent was riding by
 In a one-horse open sleigh,
 He laughed as there I sprawling lie,
 But quickly drove away.

Jingle bells, jingle bells
 Jingle all the way,
 Oh what fun it is to ride
 In a one-horse open sleigh.

Jingle bells, jingle bells
 Jingle all the way,
 Oh what fun it is to ride
 In a one-horse open sleigh.

Now the ground is white
 Go it while you're young,
 Take the girls tonight
 and sing this sleighing song;
 Just get a bobtailed bay
 Two forty as his speed
 Hitch him to an open sleigh
 And crack! you'll take the lead.

Jingle bells, jingle bells
 Jingle all the way,
 Oh what fun it is to ride
 In a one-horse open sleigh.

Jingle bells, jingle bells
 Jingle all the way,
 Oh what fun it is to ride
 In a one-horse open sleigh.

MERRY CHRISTMAS

Jesus IS THE Reason FOR THE Season

Merry Christmas

*We appreciate your devotion all these years and
look forward to earning new friends in 2026.*



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