

# Registration for Belton 4th of July Parade is now open



**FILE PHOTO**  
Lone Star Cowgirls get cheers along last year’s 4th of July parade route in Belton. Registration is now open for this year’s parade.

Special to the Journal

The Belton Area Chamber of Commerce is currently accepting applications for the 4th of July Parade. The annual parade is a treasured family event with generations of central Texans lining the streets of Belton to celebrate the birth of our country.

The theme for the 4th of July Parade this year is “Celebrating 175 Years of Bell County” in conjunction with the significant milestone being observed. Bell County, as well as the City of Belton, was established in 1850, so celebrating this anniversary is an appropriate theme to celebrate our history.

The Bell County Historical Commission, as well as the Bell County Museum, have been focusing on this significant milestone through special events, and will be helpful resources as people plan for their parade entries.

Several different lengthy words have been used for 175th anniversary, including “dodransbicentennial,” “demisemiseptcentennial,” and “septaquintaquingecentennial,” so it might be interesting to see which is most popular, or at least pronounceable.

The parade will be held on Friday, July 4 beginning at 9:00 a.m. and will follow the traditional route

south on Main Street starting at UMHB, turning east on Central Avenue at the Courthouse, and continuing north on Birdwell, ending at the Belton Police Memorial.

Parade registration applications are available online at BeltonChamber.com. The parade features Belton Area Chamber of Commerce members, and includes categories of for-profit organizations, non-profit organizations, clubs, teams, equestrian, and car groups.

The Chamber Parade Committee has been planning for several months to ensure that this year’s pa-

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**BELTON JOURNAL/DANIEL MOCTEZUMA**  
Jessica Taylor, event organizer and volunteer with BLORA Ranch, stands beside Ruger during the Red Carpet Rodeo in Belton.

## Belton horse receives red carpet treatment at film fundraiser

By **Daniel Moctezuma**  
The Belton Journal

One of Belton’s own four-legged stars, Ruger the horse, received a red carpet welcome at the Beltonian Theatre last Wednesday during a film screening and fundraiser hosted by BLORA Ranch to support its nonprofit program, Hoofbeats for Heroes.

The “Red Carpet Rodeo” featured photos with Ruger, a silent auction, refreshments, and a screening of Jane Got a Gun, a 2015 Western

starring Natalie Portman in which Ruger appeared. He also had a role in The Homesman, a film starring Tommy Lee Jones.

“We wanted to showcase him tonight and give him a moment to shine,” said Jessica Taylor, a volunteer with BLORA Ranch and the event’s organizer. “We’re trying to raise money for the ranch because we have a herd of 26, and it’s a lot of mouths to feed and tack

See **FUNDRAISER**,  
Page A2

# One Community One Day returns



**COURTESY OF PARKS AND RECREATION/JOE DYER**  
Volunteers who participated in One Community One Day gather for a group photo outside the Harris Community Center on Saturday morning.

By **Daniel Moctezuma**  
The Belton Journal

Rainy weather didn’t stop more than 60 volunteers from showing up to the Harris Community Center Saturday, April 5th to take part in One Community One Day, a citywide service event organized by the Belton Youth Advisory Commission and the City of Belton.

Groups were assigned to 15 homes across the city to assist residents, most of them elderly or disabled, with yard work, minor outdoor repairs and general beautification.

“I’m hoping we’re able to help those people not only when it’s rainy and cold

like this,” said Finn Mauk, a member of the Youth Advisory Commission, “but also when they’re just not able to on their own, whether it’s because of age or physical limitations.”

This year’s projects included weeding flower beds, cutting branches and removing bulk trash.

“I really hope this helps build a meaningful connection between the people of Belton and the residents we’re helping,” said Kira Woods, chair of the Youth Advisory Commission. “I hope it brings everybody together.”

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# City council delays bond issuance until later in April

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By **David Stone**  
The Belton Journal

A planned \$17.7 million Certificate of Obligation bond that was set to be issued Tuesday has been delayed until at least April 22.

The bond was delayed because of recent increases in municipal bond interest rates, according to Belton’s Director of Finance Mike Rodgers.

Council approved a resolution Tuesday to issue the bonds next month, but Rodgers said the issuance could be delayed again if rates don’t come down.

The bond will provide funding for several major projects, including Belton’s share of expanding the wastewater treatment plant that is

shared with Temple.

Belton’s 25 percent share of the \$71.2 million wastewater project is \$17.8 million. The project will expand the existing facility located off FM 93 between Belton and Temple.

Also, more than \$1.75 million of vital improvements to the primary Belton lift station must be done, and the second phase of the Loop 121 expansion project requires the relocation of utilities at a cost of \$2.3 million.

The Belton Fire Department must also replace its aerial apparatus for \$1.7 million, and the city will spend \$750,000 to purchase the former Miller Heights Elementary School property.

Each of these projects will be included in the bond when it is released. Even with a \$6.6

million cash contribution by the city, an additional \$17.7 million is necessary to complete these projects.

According to Rodgers, utility revenue — not property taxes — will be used to pay the debt for the utility projects.

In other action, Parks & Recreation Director James Grant and his staff received a proclamation from the City Council proclaiming April 25 as Arbor Day in Belton.

According to the proclamation, Texas first observed Arbor Day in 1889. Residents are encouraged to plant a tree on April 25 to mark the occasion.

Mayor David Leigh’s proclamation states

See **COUNCIL**,  
Page A4

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# UMHB to host 86th annual Easter Pageant next week

Special to the Journal

On Wednesday, April 16, the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor will host its 86th annual Easter Pageant. There will be performances at 12:30 p.m., 3:00 p.m., and 5:30 p.m. in front of Luther Memorial on the UMHB campus. All three performances will be free and open to the public.

The pageant will be available live online on the UMHB Facebook page and at [www.umhb.edu/live](http://www.umhb.edu/live).

The Easter Pageant chronicles moments from the Gospel story, including Christ's triumphal entrance into Jerusalem, the Last Supper, and Christ's trial by Pontius Pilate, crucifixion, death, and resurrection. This event has become a tradition for many Central Texas families and is expected to attract thousands of visitors.

Seating is available on a first-come, first-serve basis. Pageant organizers said the 5:30 p.m. show is usually the most popular, so visitors are encouraged to attend earlier performances if possible. Audiences are also encouraged to bring sunscreen, as umbrellas are prohibited.

The production is stu-

dent-led and features a cast of hundreds of students and children and grandchildren of university students, faculty, and staff. Each year, UMHB President Dr. Randy O'Rear selects a student to direct the pageant and two students to play the key roles of Jesus and Mary. The selection of the two roles is based on their strong Christian faith and character.

Victoria Kuntz, a senior public relations major from Los Fresnos, has served as this year's pageant director. Erin Doyle and Brock Pfrommer have served as Kuntz's assistant directors. Doyle is a senior nursing major from Kingwood, and Pfrommer is a senior mass communication major from Katy. Banner Scarborough is portraying Jesus this year. He is a senior entrepreneurship and small business major from Lubbock. Emily Huynh, a senior marketing and management major from Richardson, is taking on the role of Mary.

Olyvia Owen, a sophomore church music major from Austin, will sing "In the Name of the Lord." The song "Arise My Love" will be performed by Avalyn James, senior vocal performance major from Killeen, and Abby



COURTESY PHOTO

The 86th annual Easter Pageant will take place on April 16 on the campus of UMHB.

Russell, a freshman music education major from Round Rock. Alumni Angel Tolbert, will sing "Joy

and Sorrow."

The tradition of the annual Easter Pageant at UMHB began in 1940 when it was held during

the afternoon on Easter Sunday. At that time, Mary Hardin-Baylor was an all-female campus, so all of the roles were played

entirely by women. Over time, the production expanded to include male students and additional performances.

## Fundraiser - From Page A1

to buy."

The fundraiser supported Hoofbeats for Heroes, a nonprofit that uses equine-assisted services to help military veterans, active-duty soldiers, first responders and their families. All of the horses are either donated or rescued and later trained to assist in therapy sessions.

"We call them our horse angels," Taylor said. "They help a lot of people do different things."

Tiffany Zeitouni, founder of Hoofbeats for Heroes, said Ruger was previously a polo horse. A former owner saw his potential for film work, which led to a four-year stint in Hollywood.

"Ruger was donated in 2019," Zeitouni said. "He has a really cool personality, but he also provides a lot of confidence for our riders."

Samantha Kopecky, who attended the event, said she and her daughters ride at the ranch regularly.

"They do so much for our family,"

she said. "What they provide us, we could never repay them."

The Napolet family has been involved with the program since 2019, starting when their daughter Ryan began riding lessons. Over time, it became a full family experience.

"We were there when it was Ruger's first day out at the ranch," said James Napolet. "Everybody fell in love with Ruger—he's great with the kids and with the soldiers."

Amanda Napolet, an Army service member, spent six months working full time at the ranch through the military's SkillBridge program.

"It gave me adequate time to get my mind right and not have to do my daily job," she said. "It was a beautiful place to just have time to reset."

Hoofbeats for Heroes operates out of BLORA Ranch near the intersection of Sparta Road and Cottage Road in Belton.

## Registration - From Page A1

rade is the best ever. Dozens of volunteers work alongside City of Belton Police, Public Works, and Parks and Recreation staff to take care of the logistics for this massive event, bringing over 30,000 spectators to our community to celebrate.

"We are excited about continuing this cherished tradition for our community," stated Randy Pittenger, Belton Area Chamber President/CEO. "We are a community that values tradition, so honoring the generations of families who have made Belton and Bell County their home over the past 175 years will be especially meaningful."

"The parade has been such an important part of our community for generations, and the many wonderful family traditions that are celebrated make this something we can all look forward to," added Pittenger. "This is a great opportunity for us to celebrate our community and history together while also bringing huge crowds of people to Belton to enjoy what we have to offer. It also serves as a great

opportunity for our sponsors to get their message out to thousands of people."

The annual parade serves as the centerpiece of a weeklong celebration in Belton that includes a kick-off Downtown Street Party on the Courthouse Square Saturday, June 28, Carnival in Liberty Park July 1-5, and the 101st annual three-day PRCA Rodeo at the Cadence Bank Center July 3-5.

On Friday, July 4 in addition to the Parade, we will celebrate with the Annual Patriotic Program at the Bell County Historic Courthouse, Festival on Nolan Creek in Liberty Polk Park featuring the Rev, White & Blue Car Show, and the Backyard Party Concert and Fireworks at Schoepf's.

For more information about these events, sponsorship opportunities, or membership in the Belton Area Chamber of Commerce, visit the website at [www.beltonchamber.com](http://www.beltonchamber.com), call 254-939-3551, or email [info@beltonchamber.com](mailto:info@beltonchamber.com)

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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.

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# OBITUARIES

## Spivey

**Gary Lynn Spivey**  
March 17, 1941 – March 23, 2025

Gary Lynn Spivey, a loving husband, father, grandfather, and friend, passed peacefully on Sunday, March 23, 2025, in Belton, Texas. He was born on March 17, 1941, in Bowling Green, Kentucky, and lived a life filled with joy, laughter, and a steadfast dedication to his family.

Gary began his impressive career as a butcher's apprentice at the age of 16, transitioning to become a professional butcher until age 31. Seeking new opportunities, he joined Hormel Foods, where he worked as a truck driver and later as a salesman in the food services division, dedicating himself to the company until his retirement in Minneapolis in 2002. Gary earned numerous sales awards and was highly

respected by his peers and colleagues. His career took him and his family across Indiana, Kentucky, Minnesota, Iowa, Illinois, and Wisconsin.

In his senior year at Beech Grove High School in Indianapolis, Indiana, Gary met and fell in love with Merlene Fern Cline. They eloped on October 13, 1959, and began 65 wonderful years of marriage together. They welcomed three children into the world: Derra in 1960, Scott in 1962, and Jeffrey in 1967. Gary cherished his role as a husband and father, relishing each moment spent with his family and creating treasured memories filled with love, laughter and stories.

Gary had a larger-than-life personality, marked by his energy, warmth, and quick wit. He was always smiling and sharing jokes, embodying a humble spirit that never boasted about his own accomplishments. In retirement, he and Merlene travelled extensively, visit-

ing their family and friends across the United States. They visited Europe and the United Kingdom and did several cruises. He had a special affection for Rome and Venice and due to his genuine passion for food and wine, he delighted in the culinary experiences he encountered.

An enthusiastic fan of the Green Bay Packers and Indiana basketball, Gary collected memorabilia from his favorite teams, proudly showcasing his love for sports. His devotion extended beyond fandom; he also nurtured a great affection for his dogs and grand-dogs over the years. Gary's legacy is enriched by his deep love for his family and he is survived by his beloved wife, Merlene F. Spivey. His children: Derra M. (Spivey) Zieser and husband Don; Gary S. Spivey and wife Lisa; and Jeffrey L. Spivey and wife Laura.

Known affectionately as "Pop" or "Papa," he was a proud grandfather to: Zach-

ary (Stephanie) Mote, Nicholas (Emily) Spivey, Hannah (Reggie) Richter, Sean Spivey, Jeffrey Spivey, Megan (Jordan) Martin, Mallory (Dakota) Scott, Emma Spivey (Alyssa Castro), Madeline Spivey, and Jonathan Spivey; and bonus grandchildren Jonathan, Derek, and Travis Gingerich. His great-grandchildren include Julia and Max Mote; Norah and Ruby Richter; Olivia and Maeve Spivey; and Myla Martin. They are all honored to carry forward his spirit and values.

He is also lovingly remembered by his niece Dawn Spivey and her life partner Brooks Miller; nephew Darin (Michelle) Spivey; great-niece Leah Spivey; and great-nephew Nathan Spivey.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Robert D. Spivey and Bernice (Kinaird) Spivey, one brother, Ronnie Joe Spivey, and daughter-in-law Ann Spivey.

Always departing with a warm farewell, Gary would

say, "Okie Doke! I love you, see you later," leaving behind a legacy of love, mentorship, and cherished memories. He was a man of faith and most recently attended Grace Bible Church of Killeen. As we remember Gary Lynn Spivey, we celebrate a remarkable man who touched the lives of those around him and has been reunited with the Lord in his heavenly home.

A special thank you to

the staff of Enhabit Hospice and Stoney Brook for their compassionate care.

In lieu of flowers please consider making a memorial donation to St. Jude's Children Research Center or The Wounded Warrior Foundation.

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



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# Eldred's Nursery Foundation receives \$5,000 donation

Special to the Journal

Amy's Attic Self Storage recently donated \$5,000 to Eldred's Nursery Foundation, a nonprofit organization in Belton, dedicated to empowering individuals with disabilities through job skill development, independence, and real-world business experience.

Located at 1220B Main St., Eldred's Nursery operates not only as a vibrant nursery selling flowers, plants, shrubs, and trees, but also as a transformative job training facility for adults with special needs in Bell County.

Since its founding on January 1, 2017, the organization has offered individuals the opportunity to build confidence and gain experience in a supportive work environment.



**FILE PHOTO**  
A fundraiser is scheduled for Saturday, April 26, to support the Eldred's Nursery Foundation.

"Amy's Attic Self Storage is honored to support the mission of Eldred's Nursery Foundation," said a company spokesperson. "We believe in the power of meaningful employment and inclusion, and we're proud to help create opportunities for adults with special needs in our community."

To further support these

efforts, Eldred's Nursery Foundation invites the public to a Wine Pairing Fundraiser—a special evening of wine, food, and giving back—on Saturday, April 26, from 6-9 p.m. at The Smith Family Farm House, located at 3205 Airport Trail, Temple.

Guests will enjoy a thoughtfully curated selec-

tion of fine wines paired with gourmet dishes, all while learning more about the mission and impact of Eldred's Nursery Foundation. The event promises an unforgettable evening of community, connection, and charity.

"All proceeds from the fundraiser will go directly toward programs that promote independence, personal growth, and job training for individuals with disabilities," said a board member of Eldred's Nursery Foundation. "We are deeply grateful to Amy's Attic Self Storage for their generous donation and ongoing support."

Registration is only \$75 per person and can be found at Enfound.org/upcoming-events, by phone 254-831-3006 and in-person at Eldred's Nursery, 1220 B North Main St. in Belton.

## Community - From Page A1

Before heading to assigned locations, volunteers were given safety reminders, such as avoiding ladder work due to the wet ground. A QR code provided directions to each house, and tools were available behind the center.

Recreation coordinator Kyle Velasco said the event has been held for about 10 years and continues to grow.

"We're just happy the volunteers actually showed up," Velasco said. "More than 60 people of this community came out and said, rain or shine, we're still going to help."

Velasco said most homeowners served this year were older or disabled. Volunteers were matched with locations in advance through submitted requests.

He added that future events may include new projects.

"We hope to be able to do more than just mowing lawns and trimming branches," he said. "Maybe painting fences, planting or even murals."

More information about upcoming service events is available at belton.texas.gov.

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# Bell County Area Parkinson’s group now meets at CTCOG

By **Michelle Rodriguez**  
*The Belton Journal*

Bell County Area Parkinson’s support group (BAPS) helps people learn about cognition and memory. They meet every second and fourth Friday of the month from 2:30 pm to 4:30 pm. The meeting used to be held at the Temple Sammons Community Center, but now they are meeting at the CTCOG located at 2180 N. Main St in Belton.

The founder of BAPS, Gayle Shull, helps gives insight on issues related to seniors.

“I started the group because I made a friend that was also a mentor who later

in life developed Parkinson’s. He lost his wife to cancer the year he was diagnosed, and he retired that year,” said Shull.

At the last BAPS meeting, on Friday, March 28, the guest speaker was Jared F. Bengé, PhD, ABPP. He is a board-certified clinical neuropsychologist in the UT Health Austin Comprehensive Memory Center. He specializes in the assessment of Alzheimer’s disease and relation disorders like dementia, and cognitive impairment in movement disorders. Additionally, Dr. Bengé is an associate professor for the Dell Medical School Department of Neurology.

“Dr. Bengé talked about mood, motivation, and memory related to Parkinsons.

Some people think of Parkinsons as tremors and freezing, but it also affects cognition. Alzheimer’s and Parkinson’s are brain related. There is Lewy Body dementia. In our group, not every member with a movement disorder has a Parkinson’s diagnoses. They come to the group because they have something that shares the Parkinson’s symptoms,” said Shull.

The next BAPS meeting is on Friday, April 11 at 2:30 p.m. to 4 p.m. at Belton CTCOG. They will have a UMHB Therapy Project, an exercise for persons with Parkinson’s.

There will be another meeting on Friday, April 18 at 2:30 p.m. to 4 p.m. at the Belton Senior Center. Then on Mon-

day, April 21, from 11 a.m. to noon, there will be a meeting on Zoom. There will be a Yale mindfulness series for PWP and care partners. People with Parkinson’s and family members are invited, and is free with completion of pre and post surveys. The course instructor is Sarah Mulukutla, MD, MPH, a neurologist and researcher who specializes in meditation practices catered to those affected by neurological disease such as Parkinson’s disease. She was recently featured on the Michael J. Fox Foundation podcast, “Breathing Through: Mindfulness as a Parkinson’s treatment tool.” Learn more about Dr. Mulukutla at Mindful Neurology, [www.mindfulneuro.com](http://www.mindfulneuro.com).

## Council - From Page A1

that trees help clean air, clean water, reduce erosion, and reduce heating and cooling costs. Trees also provide habitat for birds and wildlife.

The proclamation has the city on track to become a Tree City USA member.

Council authorized City Manager Sam Listi to enter into a professional services agreement with State-side Right-of-Way Services for the acquisition of 32 parcels of land pertaining to the South Connell reconstruction project.

The project is currently in the design phase for reconstruction, which will transform the existing 22-foot, two-lane roadway into a major collector. The proposed improvements will expand the roadway to four lanes with a curb and gutter, along with sidewalks on both sides to enhance pedestrian accessibility.

Also Tuesday, Council approved a Building Life-Safety Grant Program as presented. The grants will provide up to \$50,000 per project with a 50 percent match in the Central Downtown, the Uptown and the Main Street zones.

The grant program will pay for building improvements that are related to safety. These include fire suppression systems, sprinklers, and mitigation of asbestos, lead and mold.

During Tuesday’s meeting, Council heard a presentation about the Main Street Traffic Study and the River Fair Traffic Impact Analysis.

“Over the past year, we have conducted and completed two significant traffic studies in our community,” said Assistant City Manager Matt Bates.

The Main Street study provided an in-depth analysis of traffic patterns and intersections between 13th Avenue and Avenue D. Key takeaways included adjusting signal timing between intersections to improve traffic flow during peak hours, identifying potential lane additions, and considering re-striping the Main Street bridge to a three-lane configuration (two northbound lanes and one southbound lane).

Another significant recommendation was to conduct further analysis of the 2nd Avenue and 6th Avenue intersections to determine whether modifications —

such as a roundabout — could improve traffic circulation at these critical locations.

The River Fair Traffic Impact Analysis was conducted in partnership with Barge Properties, which needed to complete a Traffic Impact Analysis for its two new commercial developments at River Fair Boulevard and North Main Street. The city collaborated on the TIA to expand the study’s scope, incorporating the longer-term effects of further development on Barge Ranch, including future phases of RiverPlace.

Also Tuesday, Council gave approval to a policy that bans sex offenders from residing within 1,000 feet from schools, churches, parks, arcades, bus stops and other places where children congregate.

Assistant Fire Chief Wesley Gilbreath led a pinning ceremony resulting from the latest promotions in Belton Fire Department:

- Lieutenant to captain, Josh Isbell
- Driver-Operator to lieutenant, Carter Davis
- Firefighter to driver-operator, Jeff Booker

# EDITORIAL

## Lucky Yards

Pleasant Ramblings • Mark Magnan

I often drive some country roads, and this is a sight you might not see along a major highway and probably not as obvious in a residential neighborhood. Have you ever seen a house with a yard full of things that need repair? It is a fairly nice house, but there is a big tarp on the roof. There are a couple of vehicles, the pickup truck has the hood up, the car is on a jack and a wheel is off. The boat is sitting on a broken trailer, the cowlings are off of the motor. The hot tub has the access panels missing, the ladder to the pool out back is out in the middle of the yard and not close to the pool.

Now we have all been in a place where we have had a run of bad luck, so this is certainly not judging this house or the folks that live there. However I do know that some people tend to start on a project and get sidetracked so end up with half a dozen things not finished. Other times it might just be that everything seemed to break down at once.

These might be the lotto players that buy several tickets for each drawing and

usually win just enough to keep them coming back, but never quite hitting the “big one”. I secretly hope that this family has a long weekend where they can get most everything back together, and at the least fix the car so everyone can get back and forth to work or school.

Then you have the property, which probably has a house somewhere in there, that looks like a poorly organized junkyard had an explosion. You know the type, stuff stacked on top of more stuff. Just by looking you can’t quite figure out what all is there. There is a pathway to the front door of the dwelling and perhaps a spot to park some vehicle. Otherwise items are just tossed around to make everything fit within the property lines. And to top things off, there is a “No Trespassing” sign out front. I can’t think of a good reason to enter that area, it looks so confusing, but most of all it would seem quite dangerous as you could easily see something falling on you.

If I am in the mood for garage sales, I like the ones that are the least organized.

I like where the owners just dump a box of “whatever” on a table with no sorting or even prices, those are the most likely to find something good and at a reasonable price. Now don’t get me wrong you can find good deals at the garage and yard sales where items are placed orderly and in relation to size or value. Of course some of those folks tend to think their belongings are worth a lot more than the average buyer thinks. Those people must want to move all of those things back into the house at the end of the day. Garage sales are meant to rid a house of useless clutter, and in the process generate just enough revenue to make the owner feel okay about sitting in the sun all day.

Now before anyone thinks that I am a very organized and tidy person, well, I am fairly organized, but that doesn’t always mean things look that way to others. I often know where something is located, it might not be visible to the average viewer, but I can find it.

With that said, I like stores that are not as well organized. Now I am not

talking about Neiman Marcus or those types, but the “used” places or stores that haven’t been remodeled in a long time. I always enjoy an army surplus store that was opened before I was born, those are like a museum to me. I like the real antique fairs, not the more modern “arts and crafts” type. I like a place that has years’ worth of old stuff that is just piled on a table and you have to sort through it to find something that catches your eye, then you haggle with the proprietor to get a good price.

As I drive through the small towns of our state I look at the stores lining the main street area. Those with flashy signs and organized displays in the window are where you want to shop if you are outfitting a new home with “antique” furniture. The ones that have the door propped open with an antique metal ashtray and the sidewalk is cluttered with items that no one has stolen in the past decade are the most interesting, at least to me. I might even be a street or two off of the main drag, looking for a more “junky” place to shop.

# You wouldn’t believe what I heard

My Front Porch • Lynette Sowell

Sometimes the “juiciest” conversations start with that phrase.

However, it’s my belief that the news shouldn’t. It’s great to share new information, but if I had a dollar for every “tidbit” that came my way that wasn’t *exactly* how the sharer gave me the information, I’d have a nice little nest egg to enhance my 401K.

In a real-life news story, a Sonoma, California woman with thousands of Instagram followers shared about an attempted “kidnapping” of her two children at a craft store in December 2020. She described a Hispanic couple

whom she said had gone as far as to grab her stroller in which one of her children rode.

But the Hispanic couple she spoke about were seen on the store video, where they were simply shopping to buy a baby Jesus for their Christmas collection.

The two were understandably shocked that this woman, with whom they’d had no interaction, would accuse them of such a thing.

And the Sonoma woman? No explanation from either her or her attorney as to what was behind her videos and story, which brought her a LOT

of attention.

The couple were cleared by police of any wrongdoing.

The Sonoma woman now faces two misdemeanor charges along with possibly six months in jail, for lying to a police dispatcher and for making a false report to a police officer. Her videos went viral and caught the attention of authorities in that area.

This leads me to my point: hearsay isn’t news.

But how many of us believe what we hear, such as in the case of the Sonoma woman, who told her ‘followers’ a very convincing story that was false?

Or, what about a ‘story’ we hear from someone or read online, that isn’t exactly false, but other details are left out?

Once upon a time, I was contacted by a grandmother with a sad story. Her daughter’s family had a potbellied pig, and they weren’t allowed to keep it in the city limits and were told they had to get rid of it. However, it was a dear family pet and provided much emotional support to her very young granddaughter, who had severe medical issues. She was upset and outraged that they were being asked to get rid of the pig. She wanted the news to focus

on that particular aspect of the story. The pig was an emotional support animal, she said, and therefore should be able to keep it.

But, I wondered, was the pig an ‘actual’ emotional support animal? There’s a certificate process to go through, that isn’t complicated nor that expensive.

No, the pig didn’t have that certificate.

I asked if they were going to take the steps to have that done.

Well, they were going to look into it.

The last I had heard, the family decided to move out of town.

End of story. No news

story there.

Bring your story, but bring what you have to back it up. Sometimes, the story isn’t over yet, such as with court cases. In that aspect, let’s watch it play out and see what the court decides.

Because the court of public opinion is not always right, nor does that court receive all sides of the story. Such as Sonoma woman, who made up a story entirely.

Do you need to vent? Do it in the right way. That’s what letters to the editor are made for. It’s a shame far too few people make use of them.



ing Wall, Penelope, and North Beal Streets along 13th Avenue, but reopened shortly before 5 p.m.

## 2

**Answer: Grass (lawn)**

Different species of this plant grow better in certain climates, so homeowners must choose carefully.





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**A6**  
Thursday,  
April 10, 2025

# LIFESTYLES

THE BELTON JOURNAL

## Smokey Bear Visits Charter Oak for Art Celebration and Wildfire Prevention

BELTON, TX — Smokey Bear paid a special visit to Charter Oak Elementary on March 27, 2025, to recognize the artistic accomplishments of students whose work was selected for the Texas A&M Forest Service's 2025 Wildfire Prevention Calendar. The event highlighted the contributions of former fifth graders who participated in a statewide contest combining art, science, and civic engagement.

Four Charter Oak Elementary students had their artwork selected for the calendar, with one student earning the coveted front cover spot and another receiving honorable mention recognition.

Rhone, now attending Atascadero Middle School in California, was featured on the front cover of the calendar. Lauren, now a student at Lake Belton Middle School, was selected as a Division 2 Winner and is featured in the month of April. Charlotte, also attending Lake Belton Middle School, was named a Division 2 Winner and is featured in June. Brylee, now at Lake Belton Middle School as well, earned an Honorable

Mention and is featured on the back cover of the calendar.

The project was led by Candy Crocker-Dukich, fifth grade science and social studies teacher at Charter Oak Elementary. "I was looking for creative ways to integrate art into science and social studies when I found this amazing opportunity," said Crocker-Dukich. "Students learned about environmental changes and civic duties—two themes that are echoed in Smokey's message of personal responsibility in preventing wildfires."

Students were required to create original artwork on 8½ x 11-inch paper using traditional art materials. Each piece had to feature a wildfire prevention message and a properly illustrated likeness of Smokey Bear. The surprise and joy were palpable when students received word of their selection directly from the Texas A&M Forest Service, along with copies of the calendar and a special Smokey Bear goodie package.

During the visit, Heather, a program specialist from the Texas



COURTESY PHOTO

Students at Charter Oak Elementary are visited by Smokey Bear during an event that highlighted artistic accomplishments from a statewide calendar contest. Four students had their artwork selected for the calendar.

A&M Forest Service, personally delivered customized goodie bags for every Charter Oak classroom—over 600 students received Smokey Bear cards, pencils, bracelets and books. She also pro-

vided calendars for every staff member. "Heather has gone above and beyond," said Crocker-Dukich. "She's been an incredible partner and has even volunteered to return for our future Career Day.

Her dedication to educating students about fire safety is truly inspiring."

The Smokey Bear contest left a lasting impact on students, and Crocker-Dukich says her current fifth graders are al-

ready eager to participate in this year's contest. "I hope students see that the skills they learn in class have real-world value. Today's poster contest winner could be tomorrow's wildland firefighter."

## Touch-Root Gala to raise funds for water wells in Nigeria

By DAVID STONE  
The Belton Journal

Belton-based Touch Root Foundation, a charity organization that provides

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solar water wells to small communities in Nigeria, is holding a Gala Night fundraiser on Saturday, April 12, at the Cultural Activities Center in Temple.

The event will start at 6 p.m. Sponsorships range from \$1,500 to \$10,000. Individual tickets are \$100. Tickets may be purchased at <https://givebutter.com/c/ZU2hI8>.

The black-tie gala will provide the gift of clean water to the people of Ogwuge in Umulumbe, Nigeria and support the village's only health center, said Touch Root Founder Uche Ogwudu, a Nigerian native who has lived in the US for 18 years.

"Thanks to donors like you, in Nov. 2024 we opened another solar-pow-

ered water borehole in a rural community in Nigeria," she said. "This is the fourth borehole since Touch Root was started in 2020."

The gala will feature the rich flavors of modern Nigerian cuisine. Live music and dancing also will be featured. In addition, an auction of items curated from Nigerian and offerings donated by local businesses and individuals will be held.

"In the heart of eastern Nigeria, many rural communities lack access to clean, safe drinking water, clothing and educational opportunities," Ogwudu said.

"At Touch Root Foundation, we are driven by an unwavering mission to bring hope and transfor-



COURTESY PHOTO

Auction items are displayed on the walls at last year's Touch Root fundraiser gala. This year's gala is set for Saturday, April 12.

mation to this small part of the world by providing access to clean, safe drinking water through our solar-powered borehole projects and programs to improve educational opportunities in these communities."

Touch-Root is located in a three-story building in downtown Belton — 213 E Central. The nonprofit moved into the building earlier this year.

The story behind the creation of Touch Root Foundation is stirring.

"I met my husband at a church in Boston, and he, too, was from Nigeria," she said. "I wasn't familiar with

his community, so I took a trip back for a visit."

What she saw was shocking.

"Children and women were getting up at 4 a.m. to hike two hours to fetch water," she said. "That's two hours each way. I was going to go with them until I learned more about it."

"My husband, a physician at the VA, and I bought a hand pump and installed it near the village," she added. "But the well was 700 feet deep. I kept thinking of better ways to move water."

Ogwudu contacted friends and acquaintances to ask for donations, and

the people came through. In 2021, the new Touch Root Foundation purchased and installed a solar water well for a Nigerian community.

The next year, she gave those friends a second call, and again they stepped forward. In 2023 and 2024, the foundation raised money through gala events in Temple.

"I woke up in the middle of the night with this plan in my head," she said. "We will continue building solar wells, and we also are providing scholarships to students in these communities."

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**A7**  
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# SERVICE DIRECTORY

THE BELTON JOURNAL

## SARW to hear from water district managers

Special to the Journal

The Salado Area Republican Women will welcome Dirk Aaron, General Manager, and Whitney Ingram, Assistant General Manager, of Clearwater Underground Water Conservation District to speak at their Saturday, April 26 luncheon.

The water resources topic is very important to all in Bell County because

Dirk Aaron

of our rapid growth. The speakers will discuss current water issues including bills facing the Legislature at this time. The District is responsible for the management of groundwater in Bell County, Texas. The District’s mission is to “develop and implement an efficient, economical and environmentally sound groundwater management program to protect and enhance the water resources

of the district.” The District covers the Trinity and Edwards Balcones Fault Zone (BFZ).

The luncheon will be held at the Salado Civic Center at 11:30 a.m. Everyone is welcome but reservations are needed for food and seating. The cost for lunch is \$20. Reservations need to be made with Sherril Perhach at [sherrilperhach@gmail.com](mailto:sherrilperhach@gmail.com) preferably by Friday, April 18.

## BPD preparing to launch new data-sharing system

By David Stone  
The Belton Journal

The Belton Police Department is testing a new data-sharing program that will go live by the end of May, according to Deputy Chief Daniel Aguirre.

The program — Niche Centurion — was developed by Deputy Police Chief Allen Teston of the Temple Police Department. It allows local police agencies and the Bell County Sheriff’s Office to share arrest records, property and evidence files and much more, according to Temple Police Chief Shawn Reynolds.

“In addition, the system allows officers to quickly determine if a person is a suspect or is involved in cases around the area,” Reynolds said. “Often, an offender is tied to multiple incidents.”

Temple PD implemented the new system earlier this year, and Morgan’s Point Report PD joined the program last week. Troy, Salado and Nolanville are expected to implement Niche this month, and all 16 participating law enforcement agencies should be on

line by August.

Aguirre said Belton PD is currently focusing on going live with Niche.

“We’re getting very close to being ready,” he said. “We are still working to convert data from our old records management system — we want all of our current r e -

Niche.

“(The new system) is very mobile,” he added. “We can use it on our computers, our tablets and even on our phones to a certain extent. And, it’s easier to train new officers on Niche than our current system.”

This groundbreaking effort eliminates the previous fragmented and inefficient system, where each agency maintained separate records that did not communicate with each other. Officers once relied on personal contacts for critical information, leading to delays, gaps in intelligence, and investigative challenges.

With Niche, police officers and detectives around Bell County will have access to real-time accurate data, allowing them to track criminal activity and interactions more effectively.

The successful implementation of the program requires a massive data conversion effort, system integration, and rigorous validation processes, Aguirre said.

records in the new system.”

“The most obvious benefit of Niche is that all of the agencies will be using the same system,” Aguirre added. “A lot of Bell County law enforcement agencies deal with the same people — it will be great for our investigators to share information with other police departments.”

Aguirre said Belton PD’s current records management system has far fewer capabilities than

## CAR CARE WORD SEARCH

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

### WORDS

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April 13: Palm Sunday Services at Salado Middle School 10:00 am

April 18: Good Friday Services at Salado Museum at 6:00 pm

April 18: Stations of the Cross Walk at Salado Museum 6:30 pm

April 19: Holy Saturday at Pace Park in Salado 9:00 am

April 20: Easter Services at Salado Middle School at 10 am

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MXT \$350



Kelly Tire

P225/60R17

A/S \$146



GOODYEAR

P275/55R20

LS2 \$210

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P275/55R20

Alenza \$245



Firestone

P265/70R17

LE3 \$219



UNIROYAL

P225/60R16

M/S \$135



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# Ladies Auxiliary MPR to hold annual fundraiser this Saturday

Roses for Hoses 5K Run/Walk 2025 (formerly Cops vs Robbers) is just around the corner! Saturday, April 12<sup>th</sup> at Oakmont Park at the end of Tanyard Road in Morgan’s Point Resort.

This race is part of the Cen-Tex Race Series; and presented by the Ladies Auxiliary MPR VFD, supporting the Fire Department and Community projects and activities.

The Opening Ceremony will begin at 8:00 a.m., with a Blessing, presenting of the Colors by Scout Troop 118 and the National Anthem sung by the High Point Elementary Choir.

Junction Fitness will be providing participant warm-up exercises; and mascot(s) H-E-Buddy, LBHS BLAZE, and Morgan the Pointer Dalmatian plan to add a little fun and mischief to the pre-race activities.

The race run/walk begins promptly at 8:30 a.m. The route meanders through neighborhood streets where the runners and walkers will enjoy beautiful views of Belton Lake and will be greeted by residents along the way. MPR Police and MPR Fire Department and EMS will be monitoring traffic and safety.

LBHS Cross Country & Track Team members, as well as LBHS Varsity and Junior Varsity Cheerleaders will be all along the route with “energy bubble wands” to cheer on the runners and walkers as they compete for placement in their respective age groups.

There will be two (2) water stations, one at the corner of .78 miles from the start at the corner of Oakmont circle and Timberline (which will be used going out/coming back); and the second one at the marina turn around. In addition to our Auxiliary supporting volunteers and friends, Fellowship Baptist Church and St. Cornelius Episcopal Church members will be helping with the water stations.

During the event, a few of Belton New Tech High School Robotics and Photography students will be taking drone footage and candid photography; along with the photographs by our Official Photographer, Jeremy Hamilton.

Once the runners and walkers return, they will enjoy snacks and beverages courtesy of the Auxiliary, WalMart Belton and Sam’s Club #6336.

In addition, each participant will receive a yellow or red rose from the H-E-B booth. They can either keep the rose ... or give it to one of the firefighters ... “Roses for Hoses”.

Our Bib Raffle Winner board will be unveiled after the first runner comes back in. If their Bib Number is listed, they win one of the corresponding prizes which have been donated by local businesses.

Special Thanks to our Major Sponsors, The City of Morgan’s Point Resort, and of course, our MPR neighbors!

The funds we raise on this event supports our Morgan’s Point Resort Fire Department for equipment not provided in the City Budget.

Support and Sponsorships help underwrite the many costs associated with hosting the event, including portable toilets, t-shirts, race medals, timing, sound system, roses, costume awards, cups, snacks, signage, printing and advertising, etc.

Registration is available on-line only through Run Sign-up: [Roses for Hoses 5K Run/Walk \(formerly Cops vs Robbers\)](#)

For questions or more information, please contact Karen Stagner, President, Ladies Auxiliary MPR VFD, [kastagne@att.net](mailto:kastagne@att.net), 409-750-0102.

We ♥ our Fire Department! We ♥ to let them know it!

And, We hope to see you at Roses for Hoses 5K, Saturday, April 12<sup>th</sup>.



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# Lake Belton to host 5A Area track and field meet today

By Clay Whittington  
The Belton Journal

Lake Belton will host the area meet today, and plenty of Broncos and Tigers will have the opportunity to take one step closer to state.

One week ago, Belton served as the site for the District 16-5A meet, where the top four finishers in each event advanced. Now, with one more top-four showing, athletes will qualify for the upcoming Region II meet – the final stop before the University Interscholastic League State Championships.

Emerging from the area meet versus competition from District 15 will be difficult, but both Lake

Belton and Belton displayed the potential to do so last week.

Paced by five event wins, the Broncos amassed 126 points to place second in the final standings behind only Killeen Ellison (182), while the Tigers tied Killeen Chaparral for third place, scoring 118 points apiece.

Julian Walker, a senior, and junior Kendrick Jones Jr. combined to earn four of Lake Belton's gold medals. Walker won the high jump by clearing 5 feet, 10 inches, and he was first in the long jump with a leap measuring 22-0, while Jones – the two-time defending 200-meter run state champion and last year's long jump state champion – was first in the 200 with a time of 20.71

seconds and the 400 (47.85).

Furthermore, Jones was also third (21-8½) in the long jump, and he joined teammates Prince Moore, Zach Dodd and Zion Harnness to deliver a fourth-place time of 3:34.29 in the 1,600 relay.

Senior thrower Travellis Harrison was responsible for the Broncos' final win, placing first in the shot put with a heave of 45-6¾. He was also third (146-7) in the discus.

Lake Belton also qualified its 400 relay team (3rd, 42.42) of Josh Mallard, Christian Onchweri, Harness and Dodd, and individually, sophomore high jumpers Allen Muchunu and Michael Lockett, who tied for second with matching heights of 5-10, senior

Michael Frazier (3rd, triple jump, 42-9½), junior Carson Yandell (3rd, pole vault, 12-6), junior Davion Peters (4th, 300 hurdles, 41.96) and Harness (3rd, 100, 10.82) captured area berths.

For the Tigers, seniors Damien Tiumalu and Joshua Roberts won the discus (159-1) and pole vault (14-0), respectively, and they will be joined at the area meet by six teammates and all three of Belton's relay quartets.

Christian Porter, a junior, was second in the 200 (21.70) and 400 (48.64) to go along with running the anchor leg for the second-place 400 relay team (42.29) with Kegan Sherwood, Azian Wilkin-son and Miguel Manners.

David McCallum replaced Porter for the 800 relay, and the unit was fourth (1:30.67), while Jacob Lewis, Jason Green, McCallum and Manners combined for a third-place time of 3:33.32 in the 1,600 relay.

Also advancing for Belton were senior distance runners David Shelburne (3rd, 1,600, 4:47.55; 3rd, 3,200, 10:17.48) and John Zachary Moehlenbrock (3rd, 800, 2:04.72), senior pole vaulter Logan Lamberte (2nd, 13-6), sophomore 110 hurdler Graham Chambley (2nd, 15.06) and sophomore high jumper Jahari James (4th, 5-8).

Rounding out the final stand-ings, Waco University was fifth (47) followed by Waco (6th, 29).

# Belton ISD to celebrate with Wall of Honor Inductions

Special to the Journal

Belton ISD is proud to announce the upcoming Belton High School Wall of Honor Induction Ceremony, scheduled for Saturday, May 17, 2025, at 10:00 a.m. at Belton High School, located at 600 Lake Road. This prestigious event honors Belton's most accomplished athletes and celebrates their contributions from 1909 to the present.

A special meet and greet will take place at 9:00 a.m. to welcome past and present inductees, providing a time to re-connect, reflect and celebrate decades of athletic excellence in Belton ISD.

This year's inductees—Mallory Bankhead, TJ Johnson, Trap Johnson and John Roach—represent a powerful legacy of talent, leadership, and character.



**Mallory Bankhead**  
Girls Soccer—  
TASCO Second Team All-State Goalkeeper

As the starting goalkeeper, Mallory Bankhead helped the Lady Tigers reach the Regional Finals for the first time since 2001. She posted 35 shutouts in 50 starts and allowed just 24 goals across two seasons—anchoring a dominant defense that thrived in postseason play.

Mallory earned multiple All-State and regional honors and signed to play at Dallas Baptist University, a nationally ranked Division II program. She was a standout student, ranking in the top five percent of her class and contributing to campus life through Tiger Media and the National Honor Society.

"Mallory was a game-changer for us," said Head Girls Soccer Coach Oscar Bersozza. "Her leadership, shot-stopping ability, and calm presence gave our entire team confidence. She was the backbone of our defense and one of the biggest reasons for our success these past two seasons."

**TJ Johnson**  
Boys Basketball—Outstanding High School Career, All-Time Leading Scorer

TJ Johnson, the oldest of the Johnson brothers, holds Belton's all-time scoring records for both single-season and career points (2,672), while also collecting 1,213 rebounds. He led the Tigers to a district championship and consecutive playoff appearances, setting the foundation for Belton's basketball resurgence.

A four-year starter and current NCAA Division I athlete at Virginia Military Institute, TJ was known for his versatility, work ethic, and quiet leadership. Over the course of his high school career, he earned numerous accolades, including District Newcomer of the Year as a freshman, District Offensive MVP as a junior, District MVP as a senior and TABC All-Region honors.

"With TJ, it wasn't one single moment—it was his steady growth," said former Head Boys Basketball Coach Jason Fossett. "He kept getting better and as he did, so did the team. By his senior year, we were district champions. Every time we needed a basket, TJ delivered. He was a humble, natural leader who left a lasting mark on the program."



**Trap Johnson**  
Boys Basketball  
TABC All-State  
Two-Time All-State Selection  
2,398 Career Points, Division I Commit

Trap Johnson, son of Justin and Angi Johnson, solidified his place in Belton basketball history with a remarkable high school career. A four-year starter who never missed a game,

Trap led the Tigers to four straight playoff appearances, a District Co-Championship and a milestone postseason win in 2023—the program's first in nearly 20 years.

He totaled 2,398 career points (second in program history), 1,010 rebounds, 407 blocks, and helped his team go 104–30 over four years. Trap earned multiple All-State and Academic honors, was named Super Centex Player of the Year and will continue his career as a Division I athlete.

"A moment I'll never forget about Trap was in the Bi-District playoff game his junior year," said Coach Fossett. "We were down 10 with three minutes left and Trap literally willed us into overtime and to the win with 42 points. Everyone in the gym knew who was taking the shot—and he still delivered. Trap was a natural leader and one of the best to ever wear a Belton jersey."



**John Roach**  
Football—2nd Team TSWA All-State

John Roach, son of Eric and Robin Roach, made a lasting impact on Belton football. At 5'9", he defied expectations to become a dominant offensive lineman and respected team leader. A three-year starter, Roach helped lead the Tigers to the playoffs each season and back-to-back outright district titles—an accomplishment not seen since 1974-75.

Named All-District Offensive Line MVP as both a junior and senior, Roach capped off his career with 2nd Team All-State honors from the Texas Sports Writers Association. He was also a two-time Team MVP and FCA All-Star.

"John Roach was the epitome of what a high school football player should be," said Head Coach Brett Sniffin. "Undersized, yes—but he had every teammate's respect. I'm incredibly proud of him."

Roach's relentless work ethic, old-school toughness, and leadership set the tone for the program. He never missed a summer workout and left everything on the field, carrying on a family legacy—his father, Eric, also played at Belton.

His heart, grit, and dedication will continue to inspire future Tigers.

See **HONOR**,  
Page B3

# Lady Broncos win district track and field championship

By Clay Whittington  
The Belton Journal

The Lady Broncos won the District 16-5A championship but just barely.

Lake Belton kicked off its postseason run last week, traveling across town to Belton for the league meet, and the Lady Broncos were impressive, amassing 169 points to take the title.

The host Lady Tigers, however, posed a serious threat.

Competing inside its home

stadium, Belton (2nd, 163) finished a mere six points shy of its rival, but the squads will have another opportunity to battle for supremacy today, when Lake Belton hosts the area meet, where the top four finishers in each event advance to the Region II meet.

Thanks to placing among the top four at district, multiple Lady Broncos and Lady Tigers will be in attendance today, including all three of Lake Belton's relay teams.

The quartet of Aleya Russell,

Nylah Berrian, Kennedy Hall and Bella Garcia posted a first-place time of 48.24 seconds in the 400 relay, while Chelsie Miller, Audrey Mughelli, Garcia and Berrian won gold with a time of 4:05.58 in the 1,600 relay.

Additionally, the 800 relay team of Ty'anah Debose, Moriah Rydberg, Hall and Russell was fourth (1:46.09).

The Lady Broncos experienced individual success as well.

Abigail Rydberg, a senior, cleared 11 feet, 3 inches to win

the pole vault, while Berrian, a junior, was first in the 400, crossing the finish line in 58.04.

Also yielding area berths for Lake Belton was sophomore Dannika Kelley (2nd, high jump, 5-0; 2nd, 300 hurdles, 47.58), junior Kiely Camacho (2nd, 100 hurdles, 15.44), Miller (2nd, 800, 2:27.41; 3rd, 400, 1:01.52), Mughelli (2nd, triple jump, 35-9¾), Moriah Rydberg (3rd, 300 hurdles, 48.16), sophomore Alexa Harbour (3rd, 100 hurdles, 16.06), freshman Alexa King (3rd, 1,600,

5:37.56), freshman Camryn Mikulas (3rd, triple jump, 34-2¼), sophomore Sarah Gray (3rd, 3,200, 13:10.04), junior Rayne Cory (4th, 100 hurdles, 16.89) and freshman Elizabeth Sandlin (4th, 3,200, 13:21.60).

The Lady Tigers were guided by sophomore Demauria Nolan-Hemphill, who was responsible for three gold medals, winning the long jump (18-9), 100 (12.13) and 200 (25.04).


See **GIRLS**,  
Page B3



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Ruiz throws perfect game as Lake Belton softball wins over Belton, 10-0

By Tony Adams,  
The Belton Journal

The Belton ISD Crosstown Showdown’s final chapter of the 2024-2025 season was written on Tuesday, as the Belton Tigers traveled up Texas 317 to take on the Lake Belton Broncos.

In a game that was played tight early, Alexis Ortiz’s two-run double off the batter’s eye in center field scored Lilli Herrera and Madison Perkins to give the Broncos a lead they would not relinquish, as Maddison Ruiz spun a six-inning perfect game having fanned 13 as Lake Belton run-ruled the Belton, 10-0.

The game started as a pitcher’s duel between Ruiz and Belton starting pitcher Tara Stone. Ruiz struck out seven of the first nine Belton batters, while Stone retired six of the first seven and received a dynamite diving grab by Andalyn Logan to assist on defense.

Back-to-back walks to Herrera and Perkins set up Ortiz’s deep fly ball to centerfield. Hailey Schutz tracked the ball from the start, but it caromed off the batter’s eye and back onto the diamond. Herrera and Perkins scored to give Lake a 2-0 lead. Stone struck out the next two batters. However, an error scored Ortiz from third base increased Lake’s lead to 3-0.

The Broncos had an opportunity to extend their lead in the fourth with a pair of walks and a single to load the bases with no outs. Analicia Diaz hit a fly ball to mid-range

centerfield. Schutz snagged the ball as Herrera bolted for the plate, Schutz’s throw to Presli Thompson was on target, and she applied the tag on Herrera for the double play. Stone struck out Ruiz to end the threat.

The Broncos final rally began in the sixth inning with a single by Herrera and a fielder’s choice at second base that Herrera was forced out on and Perkins landed on first. After two steals by Perkins, Ortiz tried to push a bunt past Stone. Stone grabbed the ball and flipped it to Thompson to tag out Perkins for the second out of the inning.

Lake hit back-to-back RBI triples by Diaz and Avery Park, and a single by Madison Naser to increase the Broncos’ lead to 6-0. After a single by Brysen Gott, Addison Sims reached on an error that scored two runs, Alaysha Williams singled home Sims, and Herrera singled home Williams to secure the win, Ruiz’s perfect game, and Lake Belton’s 55th consecutive district victory.

Ruiz retired 13 of 18 Belton batters by way of strike-out having thrown 77 pitches, 60 of which were strikes. She averaged just over four pitches per batter on the night. She also struck the 600th batter of her career, beginning her career at Temple as a freshman in 2022, transferred to Lake Belton in 2023, and two varsity seasons at Lake Belton in 2024-2025.

“Maddi was dialed in and was hard to hit,” Lake Belton head coach Kelsie MacEachern said. “Once we got the bats going, it went better for us. We will head back to work to prepare for Ellison on Friday.”

Ortiz, Naser, Herrera, and Perkins each had two hits in the Broncos’ 13-hit attack.

Stone finished with 5 2/3 innings pitched, allowed 10 runs (six earned) on 13 hits, struck out seven and walked six. Stone held the Broncos scoreless in four of the six innings.

“We played well early, but got into a hole we could not get out of,” Belton head coach Morgan Birkel said. “We will get back to work tomorrow and get ready Chaparral at home on Friday.”

Belton ISD teams celebrate big wins on Friday

The Broncos started the week on Friday went they hosted University in District 16-5A action.

Lake pounded University pitching for 13 runs over the final four innings to clinch a run-rule win over the Lady Trojans, 13-1 in six innings.

Perkins was 4-of-4 with three runs batted in and two runs scored hitting out of the ninth position in the batting order. Naser was 2-of-3 and also batted in three runs, as the Broncos crushed 16 hits.

Ruiz picked up the win as she allowed a run on two hits, walked one and struck out 12.

Belton traveled to take on Waco High one Friday night.

The Tigers pounded out 13 hits, as Thompson hit a homer in Belton’s 13-0 win over the Lions in six innings.

Schutz was 4-of-4 with two runs batted in, Jacklyn Munoz was 2-of-3 with three runs scored, and Logan drove home two.

Sports Briefs

By Clay Whittington  
The Belton Journal

The Region II-5A golf tournaments are set to start Monday and all four Belton ISD programs will be in attendance.

The Tigers, Lady Tigers, Broncos and Lady Broncos each qualified for the event at Pottsboro’s Tanglewood Golf Course.

Belton won both the boys and girls District 16-5A team championships, but Lake Belton produced the tournament’s individual winners in junior Miles Parker and sophomore Carly Marshall.

The two-day girls tournament will be held first with the two-day boys tournament beginning Wednesday.

The top three teams and the top three individuals not on a qualifying team advance to the upcoming University Interscholastic League State Tournament.

Last year, the Broncos placed 12th at state, and Marshall was 18th.

The Class 5A state tournament is scheduled to take place at Georgetown’s Legacy Hills Golf Club. The two-day girls tournament begins April 28, and

the two-days boys tournament starts May 5.

**BELTON ISD FOOTBALL**

Season ticket renewal for the Tigers’ and Broncos’ upcoming seasons is running through April 17. Existing ticket holders should receive an email with further instructions.

Trade days for tickets will occur April 23-24, and the process will be done at the Belton High School field house from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. each day.

Enter through door E1.

New season ticket sales will begin April 28.

**BELTON WRESTLING**

Caleb Newcomer was recently promoted to Belton’s head wrestling coach after serving as an assistant during the program’s inaugural season.

Newcomer also serves as an assistant football coach.

He takes over the role from Scott Clark, who left to accept a position at Temple.

Tigers drop close one with Chaparral Bobcats, 4-3

By Clay Whittington  
The Belton Journal

The Tigers split their first four games of the District 16-5A schedule, and now, Belton must hope to split its series with Chaparral.

On the heels of opening league play by suffering a pair of losses to Lake Belton and winning twice against Waco Midway, the Tigers entered Tuesday’s road contest at Killeen Chaparral hoping to sweep a second straight opponent.

It will not happen.

Belton saw a 3-2 advantage

evaporate in the bottom of the seventh inning, when the Bobcats loaded the bases en route to tying the score before centerfielder Mike Schubert connected for a walkoff single to send the winning run across home plate with two outs.

The outburst stained an otherwise strong performance from the Tigers, who forced Chaparral to abandon nine runners through the first six innings.

After giving up consecutive singles to open the contest, Belton turned a double play to avoid any damage, and in each of the next two innings, the Bobcats left

two runners on base.

Then, the Tigers capitalized as Cole Haisler had an RBI shot to score teammate Pecos Smith, and moments later, designated hitter Oakley Torres extended Belton’s lead with a single to send Jacob Quigley home.

The Bobcats, however, would respond in the fourth inning, using three hits to help score two runs and tie the game, but once again, the Tigers had an answer.

In the fifth inning, Quigley produced a double, and he provided the go-ahead run during the ensuing at bat, when pitcher Cole Haisler had a sacrifice fly to right field.

The lead held until the bottom of the seventh inning, which became controversial after a Chaparral player was awarded first base following the umpire declaring he was hit by a pitch — a call contested by Belton head coach Mark Krueger.

The decision loaded the bases with two outs, and the next at bat concluded with the Bobcats scoring the tying run, setting the stage for Schubert’s heroics.

In defeat, Haisler had two RBIs and a double to complement Quigley’s two-run performance.

On the mound, Haisler struck out four batters in six innings of work.

With the loss, Belton (8-10, 2-3) moves into a tie with Waco (2-3) for third place in the district standings. Lake Belton sits atop the field with a perfect record through five league games, while second-place Chaparral improved to 4-1.

Waco University (2-3) and Killeen Ellison (0-5) round out the field.

Following Friday’s 7 p.m. home start against the Bobcats, the Tigers will play a nondistrict game at Georgetown East View on Saturday at 1 p.m. before resuming league play Tuesday at Ellison.

Belton closes its district schedule versus the Lions.

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# Belton high Alumni retires from coaching

*Special to the Journal*

Craig Bales, a graduate of Belton High School, recently retired from Big Lake High School. He was the defensive coordinator and golf coach this past year.

A former head coach of Winters and Italy High School's football teams, he also worked at Eldorado, Iran, McCamey, Salado and Belton High Schools as a football coach in various capacities.

"There are a few coaches that get to stay at one place. In this pro-

fession, you must move around a bit. There is more stability as an assistant coach. It is a changing world in Belton. The change in football is how technical it has become. Even the small schools are more technical. Years ago, you didn't have to worry about kids working out before the season. In the summers they built fences or hauled hay. As a coach, you must pay attention to conditioning. This is year-round. The kids are the same as they have always been. As a coach, you continue to improve by studying and trying to get an edge.

"I was at Belton when we started playing Temple. That was a different level of competition. The number of coaches a team keeps on staff makes a huge difference on the field," said Bales.

Bales married his wife Jenny who graduated from the University of Mary Hardin Baylor. They have four children, Kaytlyn, Kelton, Kaci and Kix.

Bales graduated from BHS in 1990 and coached at BHS for six years.



## Honor - From Page B1

The Wall of Honor Committee conducts a careful and comprehensive selection process to identify athletes who have made extraordinary contributions to their teams, school, and community. The committee also organizes this annual event to recognize and celebrate those achievements in a meaningful way.

"Each of these inductees represents the very best of what it means to be a Bel-

ton Tiger—commitment, resilience, and excellence both on and off the field," said Sam Skidmore, Belton ISD Athletics Director. "Their achievements have not only elevated our athletic programs but have also inspired students, coaches, and our entire community. It's an honor to celebrate their legacies and welcome them to the Wall of Honor."

The community is invited to attend this inspiring celebration.

## Girls - From Page B1

She also made up one fourth of Belton's second-place 1,600 relay team (4:09.70), joining teammates Laila Page, Isabella Warner and Gabrielle Lewis.

Senior distance runner Olivia Brillhart also emerged with three gold medals. She was first in the 800 (2:23.06), 1,600 (5:13.61) and 3,200 (11:13.10).

The Lady Tigers' remaining event championships were generated by freshman Tara Stone (discus, 109-3), sophomore Melissa Farmer (shot put, 33-9) and Page (triple jump, 36-3).

Furthermore, Page was second in the 400 (58.95)

and pole vault (10-0), and Stone was second in the shot put (33-1¼).


Belton's third-place performers were senior Jane Gauntt (pole vault, 9-0), senior Annabella Pula (discus, 83-11½) and Warner (800, 2:28.53), while junior Delilah Hoffman (300 hurdles, 48.61) and Page (200, 25.59) qualified for the area meet with fourth-place outings.

Following the Belton ISD schools, Killeen Chaparral (3rd, 118), Killeen Ellison (4th, 101), Waco (5th, 37) and Waco University (6th, 26) completed the standings.

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ESTABLISHED IN 1966 THE BELTON JOURNAL



### Steps to take before — and after — a divorce

#### Scot Hrbacek, CFP® Financial Advisor

Going through a divorce is emotionally painful — but does it have to be financially devastating?

Not necessarily. Here's how you can help yourself:

For starters, before the divorce is finalized, determine how you'll cover the costs of any litigation and attorneys' fees.

Also, consult with your divorce attorney about establishing independent financial accounts at banks or brokerage firms. And learn the value of your and your spouse's 401(k)s and IRAs. A financial professional can suggest ways of splitting these benefits.

After the divorce is final, finish building your financial accounts. You might

want to close any joint accounts or credit cards you have with your former spouse.

Review your life, auto and homeowners insurance policies. And if you were on your spouse's health insurance, you may continue under COBRA, or you may need to sign up for your employer's plan, if one is offered.

Finally, consult with your estate-planning attorney and tax advisor to determine whether changes need to be made to your estate plans and tax filings.


Divorce is tough — but by taking the appropriate steps, you can help move to a more secure and stable financial position for the next phase of your life.

*This Article was written by Edward Jones for use by your local Edward Jones Financial Advisor*

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## FISHING REPORT



### Belton

FAIR. Water stained; 59 degrees; 2.80 feet below pool. White bass fishing on Lake Belton exists in three distinct areas. There are spawning fish in the upper reaches of the Leon River and Cowhouse Creek. Immature fish which did not spawn and mature fish which have returned from spawning are in shallow water under low light conditions at sunrise and for about an hour thereafter, and at sunset and about an hour prior to it. This is typically in under 16 feet of water where the water temperature is significantly warmer than the water temperature at 25 feet and deeper. Finally, there are fish in deeper, clearer, cooler water from 250-40 feet deep. These fish are much more sluggish and still require wintertime tactics. The shallow fish can be caught throwing MAL Originals with chartreuse tails using a sawtooth method by letting the lure drop to bottom, reeling in 7 times, letting it drop again, and repeating. Deeper fish can be targeted with a 5/8-ounce white bladed Hazy Eye Slabs in conjunction with forward facing sonar. Allow the lure to settle to the bottom, reel it slowly and smoothly up five turns watching sonar for a follow. Report by Bob Maindelle, Holding the Line Guide Service. Catfish are excellent. Anglers should search for blue catfish in river channels and around steep ledges in 20-35 feet of water. Larger cut baits have been effective for trophy size fish. Eater fish under 10 pounds are active and slow drifting with small cut shad along sand flats will produce.



### Stillhouse

GOOD. Water stained; 59 degrees; 3.50 feet below pool. Your best bet on white bass on Stillhouse is to avoid the crowds and take a weekday trip up into the Lampasas River. Look for schools of white bass using sonar in sharp river bends and deeper holes. If your craft can make it past the gravel crossing and into the spawning riffles, flyfishing gear works best to present small gray streamers to imitate river minnows using a sinking tip line and a flat, 6 foot leader of 8 pound test fluorocarbon. Those looking for white bass on the main lake should focus on the middle and lower third of the reservoir, looking for adult fish returning from spawning along the flats adjacent to the river channel. The white, three-quarter ounce Bladed Hazy Eye Slab will excel for this application. Largemouth bass continue to move shallower with the spring warm-up. Medium sized soft plastics 6-8 inches in length with dark, natural hues fished with a Carolina rig are producing well. Report by Bob Maindelle, Holding the Line Guide Service.

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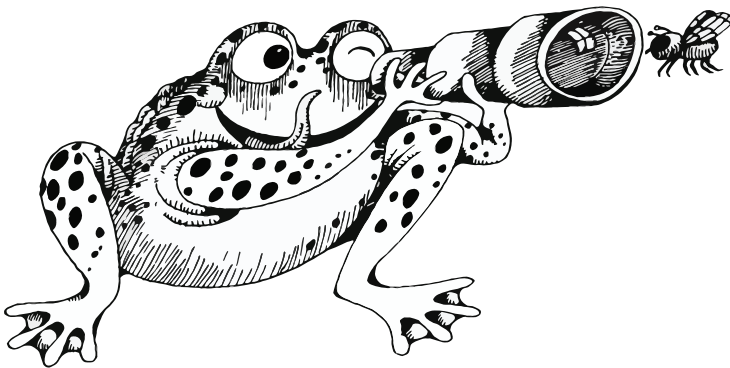






### Creative Coloring

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### THIS DAY IN HISTORY



**1606:** The Union Flag is adopted as the flag of English and Scottish ships.

**1900:** President William McKinley signs the Foraker Act into law, giving Puerto Rico limited self-rule.

**1934:** A 231 mile per hour surface wind is measured at Mount Washington.

### NEW WORD

#### LEAP

jump or spring a long way

### Animal FACT:

The bulging eyes of of these animals allow them to see in front, to the sides and partially behind them.

Answer: Frogs

### Double Word Puzzle

Unscramble the words to reveal the sentence.

MUJP

1

ARWTE

2

3

CKAOR

4

SHIF

5

6

7

8

G

5

3

4

7

8

4

1

2

4

6

2

Answer: Frogs hop to it

### How they say that in...

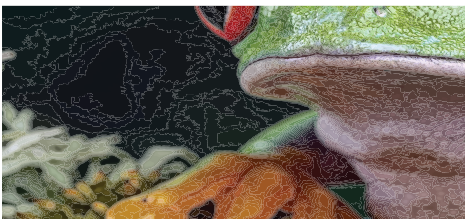
**English:** Frog  
**Spanish:** Rana  
**Italian:** Rana  
**French:** Grenouille  
**German:** Frosch



Frogs are amphibians, which means they are cold-blooded. Their body temperatures change as the temperature of their surroundings changes.

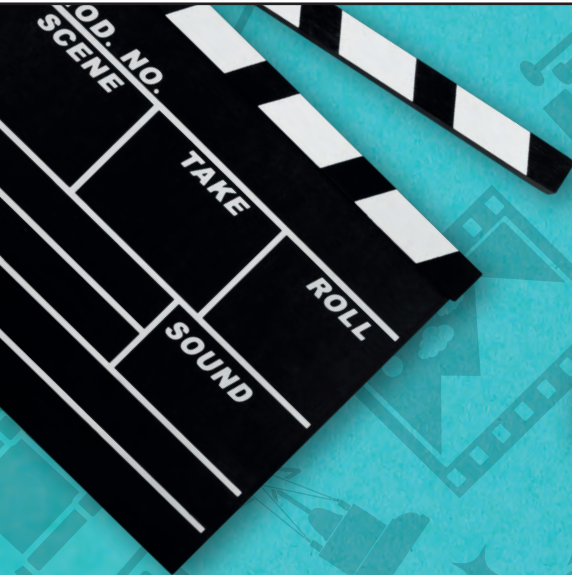


### Get the PICTURE?



Can you guess what the bigger picture is?

Answer: Frog



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## Local Activities & Events

### Newcomers Club Activities

#### APRIL

|  |   |
|--|---|
| 04/10: 42 Dominoes                       | 04/19: Exploring Wines                  |
| 04/11: TGIF Lunch                        | 04/21: Snack Time Mahjong               |
| 04/12: Couples Night Out                 | 04/22: Singing Bluebonnets              |
| 04/14: Bookworms                         | 04/23: Fun Lunch                        |
| 04/15: Bunco                             | 04/24: 42 Dominoes                      |
| 04/16: Popcorn Bridge                    | 04/26: Jimmy's Egg                      |
| 04/17: Nonfiction Book Club; 42 Dominoes | 04/28: Well -Read Women; Monday Canasta |
| 04/18: Trailblazers Walking Group        | 04/30: Crochet and Knit                 |

**"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](http://www.bellcountynewcomers.com)."**

### CAC announces 2025 concert lineups

#### Here's a look at the 2025 Texas Music Series:

##### SHAWN COLVIN — May 16

In the 30 years since the release of her debut album, Colvin has won three Grammy Awards, released 13 albums, written a critically-acclaimed memoir, maintained a non-stop national and international touring schedule, appeared on countless TV and radio shows, had her songs featured in major movies, and created a remarkable canon of work.

##### RUTHIE FOSTER JAZZ BAND — July 12

With five Grammy nominations to her name, Ruthie Foster stands as a testament to the power of authenticity and resilience in music. Her soulful melodies, heartfelt lyrics and an unwavering commitment to her art inspire audiences and fellow musicians as she continues to carve a path uniquely her own.

##### AN CLIBURN FINALIST CLAYTON STEPHENSON — Oct. 18

American pianist Clayton Stephenson's love for music is immediately apparent in his joyous charisma onstage, expressive power and natural ease at the instrument.

##### ASLEEP AT THE WHEEL — Nov. 8

Founded in 1970, Asleep at the Wheel has been part of the American roots music landscape for more than 50 years.

##### SHINYRIBS — Dec. 6

Shinyribs, a regular visitor to the CAC, defies genres as a melting pot of Texas blues, New Orleans funk, horn-driven Memphis soul, country twang, border music, big band swing and roots-rock. The 2025 CTOS Classic Music Series includes four big shows.

The Cultural Activities Center in Temple has announced lineups for its two premier music series, and visiting bands will include Los Lonely Boys, Asleep at the Wheel and the wildly popular Shinyribs. 2025 will usher in new music in both the Texas Music Series and the Central Texas Orchestral Society's Classical Music Series. Some old friends will be making return engagements in Temple, and many new performers also will be playing the CAC stage. For more information, please visit <https://www.cacarts.org/events>. Be on the lookout for the full 2025 Texas Music Series lineup in next weeks edition of the newspaper.

The March meeting of the Central Texas Travel Club will be March 27 at Johnnys Steaks and Barbeque in Salado. The gathering will begin at 11:00 with the meeting at 11:30. We will be discussing upcoming trips including Enchanted Rock and Luckenbach, Kentucky to see the Ark, San Antonio to see Moulin Rouge, and Florida in December. For more information contact us on Facebook or [centraltexatravelclub@outlook.com](mailto:centraltexatravelclub@outlook.com). The meeting is open to everyone with no dues or membership requirements.

**Salem Lutheran Church BBQ & Silent Auction Fundraiser** Nestled in the heart of farmland in Rosebud, Texas, Salem Lutheran Church is getting ready for its 23rd Annual BBQ Fundraiser and Silent Auction benefiting Bell County's Relay for Life. The event will take place on Sunday, March 30, starting at 11 a.m. at SPJST Lodge 47 Seaton Star Hall, 10842 TX-53 in Temple, bringing the surrounding communities together for a day of delicious barbeque and charitable giving. Since its founding in 1901, Salem Lutheran has been a pillar of faith and service not only to its own members but to neighboring communities as well. Over the past 23 years, the congregation has worked tirelessly to raise funds for Relay for Life, an organization dedicated to supporting cancer research and assisting those affected by the disease. "We are incredibly grateful for the ongoing support of our parishioners, volunteers and the community," said Co-Captain Gaile Elisk of Salem Lutheran Church. "Every plate of barbecue served, and every dollar raised brings us one step closer to making a difference in the fight against cancer." The 23rd Annual BBQ Fundraiser promises to be another success, with all proceeds going directly to Relay for Life. Plates will be available for dine-in and takeout, ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to enjoy a meal while supporting a meaningful cause. For more information about the event or to find out how to get involved in Relay for Life in your area, please visit [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org)

**We Are Music Salado proudly presents the Third Annual Porch & Planet Festival** a three-day event along Salado's scenic music mile celebrating local musicians, artists, merchants and planet earth, kicking off on Friday, April 11-13. Activities and events begin on Friday afternoon, April 11 at 5 p.m. and run through Sunday, April 13 at 5 p.m. Attendees will experience a great weekend with the friendly and charming community of Salado. This year's Porch & Planet offers attendees a wide variety of experiences – all promising three full days of music, entertainment, and family fun. This event is sponsored by We Are Music Salado and Salado's Music Friendly Community.

**Ladies Auxiliary M.P.R.V.E.D. presents Roses for Hoses** on Saturday, April 12 at 8:30 a.m. at the Oakmont Park in Morgans Point Resort. A 5K run and walk, part of the Centex race series formerly known as Cops Vs. Robbers. Dress in costume or come as you are. The event supports the fire department and community outreach projects.

**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](http://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 come 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](mailto:historicalcommission@bellcounty.texas.gov), call 254-933-5917 or go by their 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](mailto:bettyreichert@yahoo.com) or Kathy Bement at [katshookandneedle@gmail.com](mailto: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](http://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](mailto: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.ezcommunicator.net/edu/beltonisd/login\\_form.aspx?app=0](https://beltonisd.ezcommunicator.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.

## 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](http://www.beltontexas.gov/takemehome). Read more about the program here: [https://www.beltontexas.gov/news\\_detail\\_T11\\_R1166.php](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.

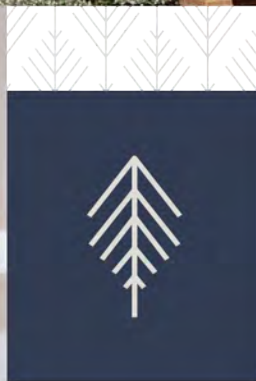
##### Citizens Helping in Police Service (CHIPS)

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](http://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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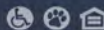
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254.939.1172

**Belton Church of Christ**  
3003 N. Main ~ 254.939.1816

**Belton Church of God in  
Christ**  
1122 W. 2nd Ave. ~  
254.939.1697

**Belton First Assembly of God**  
500 S. IH-35 ~ 254.933.2803

**Belton Lighthouse**  
1001 NE Loop 121 ~  
254.654.7278

**Belton Nazarene Church**  
1701 Sparta Rd ~ 254.939.3404

**Bethel A.M.E. Church**  
401 S. Davis St. ~  
254.939.6090

**Central Texas Cathedral  
Worship Center**  
700 S. Main Street ~  
254.831.3064

**Christ Bible Baptist Church**  
1590 Jack Rabbit Rd ~  
254.939.9247

**Christ the King Catholic  
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310 E. 24th Ave. ~  
254.939.0806

**Christian Tabernacle Church  
Apostolic UPC**  
1010 S. Wall St. ~  
254.939.3464

**Cornerstone Community  
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5081 Dog Ridge Rd ~  
254.721.8250

**Crossroads Church**  
500 South I-35 ~ 254.939.2122

**Dominion Life Chapel**  
105 Green Briar St. ~  
254.563.0472

**Elm Grove Baptist Church**  
6388 Elm Grove Rd. ~  
254.933.8127

**Family Gospel Church**  
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254.721.0707

**Fellowship Baptist Church**  
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254.780.2388

**First Baptist Church Belton**  
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**First Christian Church of  
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**1st Christian Church of  
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300 N 5th St ~ (254) 773-9061

**First Mexican Baptist  
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**First United Methodist  
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254.939.5703

**Free Pentecostal  
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254.933.8201

**Freedom Bible Fellowship**  
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Jesus Christ of the Apostolic  
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**Hope Community Church**  
507 Mitchell St. ~  
254.933.8222

**Hope Tabernacle**  
202 E. 1st Ave. ~ 254.933.8222

**Iglesia de Cristo**  
3303 N. Main ~ 254.939.6910

**Immanuel Prince of Peace  
Lutheran Church**  
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254.939.0824

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

**Lakeview Baptist Church**  
7717 N Hwy. 317 ~  
254.780.1884

**Liberty Church**  
302 E. Central Ave. ~  
254.933.7107

**Liberty in Christ Church**  
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**Miller Heights Baptist  
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**Mt. Zion United Methodist  
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**New Life Fellowship**  
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**Nolan Valley Baptist Church**  
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**Christian Life Church**  
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254.733.7718

**First Baptist Church Temple**  
8015 West Adams Ave. ~  
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**First Methodist Church  
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**Grace Comm. Primitive  
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**Grace Presbyterian Church**  
2401 S 57th ~ 254.773.2134

**Harvest Church**  
2501 General Bruce Dr. ~  
254.780.3566

**Immanuel Lutheran Church**  
2109 W. Ave H ~ 254.773.3898

**Leon Valley Church of Christ**  
4404 Twin City Blvd. ~  
254.939.0682

**New Hope Church of God**  
2005 W. Ave D., Suite D. ~  
254.742.2181

**St. Francis Episcopal Church  
& School**  
5001 Hickory ~ 254.733.4255  
**St. Luke's Catholic Church**  
2807 Oakdale Dr. ~  
254.773.1561

**St. Mary's Catholic Church**  
1018 S 7th St. ~254.773.4541

**Taylor's Valley Baptist Church**  
2497 W. FM 93 ~ 254.939.0503

**Temple Bible Church**  
3205 Oakview Drive ~  
254.778.3233

**Temple First Church of the  
Nazarene**  
5000 S. 31st ~ 254.773.3744

**The Redeemed Christian  
Church of God Salvation  
Center**  
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403A ~ 469-348-1475

**Unity Church of Temple**  
318 N. 2nd ~ 254.770.0070

**Vineyard Christian Fellow-  
ship**  
7425 W Adams Ave. ~  
254.778.2802

**Vista Community Church**  
7051 Stonehollow Dr. Sundays  
8:30, 10, 11:30 a.m., 5 p.m.  
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254.774.7992

**Wildwood Baptist Church**  
5195 Cedar Creek Rd. ~  
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**Little River United Methodist  
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**Little River-Academy**  
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**John Perry**

Since that first concert, I've been a devoted fan, attending their performances whenever I could. I've probably seen them live seven or eight times over the ensuing decades. One of the most memorable moments was their 50th Anniversary Reunion tour in 2012. All the living original Beach Boys were there, and when they launched into their first number, I was moved to tears.

Despite my many concert experiences, I never had the chance to meet the band until my grandson, Danny Agee, came into the picture. We have nine grandchildren, and we made it a tradition to take each of them to a Beach Boys concert. Danny, being the youngest, was the last one we took. Most of my grandkids grew up listening to the Beach Boys at our house, so they knew the lyrics to their popular songs by heart.

A few years ago, we took Danny to a Beach Boys concert in Waco. I splurged on seats in the first couple of rows, and Danny was thrilled, singing along with every song. Mike Love, the lead singer, noticed Danny's enthusiasm and had the stage manager invite him backstage after the concert. My wife and I eagerly agreed, and after the show, we were all ushered backstage to meet the band. They were incredibly kind, showering Danny with memorabilia like the song set, guitar picks, etc.

Taking my youngest grandson, Danny, to the Beach Boys concert turned out to be a remarkable experience. Thanks to Danny's enthusiasm, I finally had the chance to meet the band I had idolized since my youth. It was an unforgettable moment for me, and I hope Danny will cherish the memories just as much.



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# EDITORIAL

## Gen Z: The New Grandma Generation

Coffee Talk • Renae Brumbaugh Green

I’m a proud GenXer, especially since a common observation about us is that we don’t age as quickly as previous generations. I’m easy. Tell me I look young, and I’m your friend for life—or at least long enough to drink a cup of coffee. But the opposite is true for GenZ, those born between 1996 and 2010. They’re growing old before their time... at least if their hobbies are any indication.

Take a quick scroll through any social media site, and you’re likely to see teens and young adults jumping on the “Grandma-core” bandwagon. This phrase refers to a

wide range of slow, quiet hobbies historically associated with older people, such as sewing, knitting, needlepoint, gardening, bird watching, baking, canning, and jigsaw puzzles. Why the sudden interest in these activities? It seems young people are realizing the importance of finding screen-free options, and these hobbies are accessible, low-cost, and fun. They also provide ways to unwind, be present and mindful, and give mental health a boost.

Coping skills aren’t just about deep breathing and yoga. A coping skill is anything that helps us slow down, turn off the negative chaos in our minds, and focus on something that makes us feel good, if even for a few minutes. This gives our thoughts a needed break, lowers our stress levels, and increases dopamine, the feel-good hormone.

explain why they could help improve mood and mental health,” Ho says.

By definition, a hobby is an activity that brings joy and pleasure. From making sourdough bread to bird watching, knitting to hosting a Bunco party, “grandma” hobbies are great ways to be creative, acquire new skills, and connect with others. Besides being fun, many grandma-core hobbies result in a useful product, like baking, knitting and sewing. Learning a new skill engages excitement in the brain. Even if you’ve never done one of these before, they’re typically easy to learn. The dopamine hit from doing something new is enough to balance or get rid of a lot of stress.

Many worry they can’t fit time for a hobby into their already-packed schedule. But finding time is easier than some may think. Check your screen time on your phone—how much time do you spend scrolling through social media? Try to cut that in half and dedicate that amount of time to your new activity. Think in terms of weekly schedule instead of daily. Even an hour a week, doing something you enjoy, can reap huge rewards in terms of mental health.

Another way to find time for a hobby is to consider lunch or break time at work. Instead of heading for the vending machine with your few minutes, pull out some yarn or use the time to find a new recipe. Breaks are supposed to help you unwind, and they’re yours to spend as you please.

Hobbies are a great way to keep your mental health in a good place, especially when combined with a solid self-care routine. Exercise, a healthy diet, and mindfulness techniques like deep-breathing, prayer, and meditation all contribute to peace of mind. If you’re wanting to have some fun and step-up your self-care, join the bandwagon. Look at what your grandparents did with their free time and follow suit.

*“Make it your goal to live a quiet life, minding your own business and working with your hands.”*  
1 Thessalonians 4:11

### James 2

Shop the Insanity • Darren Blair

As long-time readers of this feature may know, I am a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, what most people still refer to as “The Mormons”. Because of this, I have typically delivered some sort of spiritual message or reviewed some sort of religious film to mark the occasion. After thinking about what to say this year, however, I felt impressed to deliver a far different message from what I normally do.

James 2:14-17, KJV – “What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith and have not works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, ‘Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled’; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.”

Not too long ago as I type this, I was one of many people who contributed personal care items to a charity drive. While the stores were starting to stock Easter novelties and

candies, I was thinking about how many people I could afford to help despite possibly looking at a hefty repair bill for my car (pro tip: it’s never a good thing when a ball joint fails en route). I didn’t get much, but what I did get was combined with what a whole lot of other people got.

That’s something people tend to overlook when it comes to charity, how a little can go a long way. A little bit of kindness can be enough to mend a broken heart. A little bit of patience can help someone learn. A little nudge can get someone moving in the right direction. A little bit of effort can free a patch of terrain from whatever trash has been discarded upon it. Note that none of these hypotheticals directly cost money, although there are times where money, food, clothing, personal care items, or other such materials will be asked of the public.

We don’t have to go out of our way, or put ourselves into a difficult situation, in order to help other people. There may even be situations to where we’re simply not in a position to provide any sort of help at all. Nor does it need

to be some grand display. But we’re living in a day and age in which if we don’t start looking out for one another we’re not going to make it. Regardless of what views or beliefs we each have, we need to start reaching out, making those connections, and then pooling what we have to help those around us. If we’re wise about what we do, and are willing to step outside of our comfort zones a little, we can do a lot of good. But insincere words alone won’t get anything done.

Note that this goes for everyone from all walks of life, even those who don’t have the epistle of James as a holy text: words that aren’t backed by meaningful action aren’t enough.

As rock band Aerosmith notes at the end of their song “Amazing”, “The light at the end of the tunnel may be you.” We might not know how great the consequences will be of even small things we do. Even something as simple as a canned ham at Easter, a toy at Christmas, or a moment of time on a difficult day can change the trajectory of a person’s entire life.



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