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Welcome to Belton, the heart of Bell County! Whether you're just passing through, visiting a friend, or considering making this your new home, I'm delighted that you're taking the time to explore and learn more about us. In this digital age, where communities often feel distant, I hope you discover an authentic community filled with great people.

Take the time to explore our historic downtown, drive through this charming corner of the hill country, and enjoy the outdoors on our hike and bike trails or at one of our beautiful lakes. While there are many stories to be experienced here in Belton, I encourage us all to look up from our screens and explore life beyond posting pictures and memories.

Belton is ideally located at a crossroads between Ft. Cavazos, Austin, and Waco. We're not far from Dallas-Ft. Worth and San Antonio, nestled between two lovely lakes—Belton Lake and Stillhouse Hollow Lake. This central location has made us a regional hub for education, healthcare, and logistics. Our diverse economy benefits residents, but it's our vibrant culture that truly sets us apart. This community offers a wealth of experiences for both visitors and residents, including live music, varied restaurants, great schools, active churches, and wonderful celebrations like our 4th of July Parade and Rodeo.

My favorite place in Belton is our downtown, located along

Nolan Creek and highlighted by the beautiful and historic County Courthouse. Our downtown is a lively and integral part of our community. It's a gathering place where small businesses thrive and people come together in a safe, welcoming atmosphere. I cherish weekends when you can see young and old from diverse backgrounds sharing common experiences. It's a wonderful canvas for building community and creating lasting memories.



Belton is a melting pot of cultures and people, from descendants of the first settlers in Texas to those who have moved here for retirement or new job opportunities. You won't find a greater representation of the true Texas spirit: a community that is both fiercely independent and loyal. I've heard it said that you can define community as having at least three connections with another person. By this definition, you're part of a community if you see someone at the coffee shop, sit in the bleachers at a sporting event, and possibly attend church together. The quality of our community is defined by the many opportunities we have to join together and experience life.

While I've come across many places that seem to foster community on the surface, it's rare to experience it firsthand. I hope you'll see what a great community we have, and my greatest hope is that you'll take part in it yourself. Belton is truly special—a welcoming and diverse community—and we hope you can help make it even better.

Belton Area Chamber of Commerce – Better Together

The Belton Area Chamber of Commerce supports and promotes our community in a variety of ways to make the Belton area a great place to live, work, shop, play, and raise a family. Through the promotion of business growth and providing opportunities for members to learn, lead and serve, the Chamber provides opportunities for its members to work together to make our community better and stronger.

“Better Together” is more than just a slogan for the Belton Area Chamber of Commerce. As a membership organization, our strength comes from the collective and coordinated efforts of our members.

Working with our community partners is a

key focus for the Chamber. Through coordination with the City of Belton, Belton Economic Development Corporation, Bell County, Belton ISD, Workforce Solutions of Central Texas, Central Texas Council of Governments, Fort Cavazos, University of Mary Hardin-Baylor, Downtown Belton Business Alliance, local VFWs and American Legion, elected officials, and other member organizations, we are better able to serve our growing community. These strategic partnerships are essential to coordinated efforts to promote economic growth and quality of life within the Belton area.

For both established businesses and those looking to open a new busi-

ness in the Belton area, the Chamber provides a variety of resources and opportunities to connect and invest in the community. New businesses especially find the information, connections and opportunities available through the Chamber to be valuable in establishing themselves and expanding their influence.

The Chamber actively promotes supporting local businesses through “Shop Local” campaigns. Locally owned small businesses are vital to the health and growth of our community, and the support our community provides to them is returned in numerous ways. The impact our local businesses have on the quality of life we enjoy in the Belton area cannot be over-

stated.

An important role for the Chamber is in its ongoing advocacy for local small businesses, both through legislative avenues and through its efforts to inform and equip members with knowledge, resources and connections to impact rules and regulations. The Chamber provides timely and accurate information to members through regular emails, website and social media.

Perhaps the most widely recognized activity of the Belton Area Chamber of Commerce is the annual 4th of July Celebration, the largest event in our central Texas area with over 50,000 people enjoying the various



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Belton Celebrates 175 Years of Colorful History

This year marks the 175th anniversary of the City of Belton and Bell County. Located on Nolan Creek at the center of the county, Belton was first settled in the late 1840s as Nolan Springs. When Bell County was established in 1850, it was renamed Nolanville.

In August 1850, the town was laid out in blocks and streets, with a courthouse square at its center, as described by longtime librarian Lena Armstrong. The name was changed from Nolanville to Belton in 1851. Initially the only town in the county, Belton served as a key stop for pioneers heading west.

Soon after lots were sold, businesses and a post office were established, and mail arrived by horseback. But, a stagecoach route that started in Tennessee and ended in Brownsville made Belton a weekly stopping point. That brought more business and people to the county seat.

A two-story log jail was erected in 1853, and it was quickly followed by a school, hotel, church, saloons, stores and other businesses. Most were log buildings or pole shacks, but as more people arrived the buildings began to be permanently constructed.

A log courthouse was built in 1852, followed by a limestone courthouse in 1859. By 1860, Belton had become the largest town in the county, with a population of 300.

The city has a great deal of history, and here are



a few highlights:

Despite some pro-Union sentiment during the secession crisis, the county ultimately voted for secession. After the Civil War, Belton faced violence and lawlessness, marked by several lynchings. The town began to recover in the late 1860s and grew as a business center, especially for agriculture, with the establishment of the first bank in 1867 and the rise of the Belton Woman's Commonwealth.

Although a fire in 1879 destroyed much of the central business district, the town quickly rebuilt and by the mid-1880s had a population of 4,000, daily mail service, three newspapers, and several schools and banks. Belton developed into a processing and shipping center for cotton, with the first cottonseed oil mill

opening in 1879.

The arrival of the Gulf, Colorado and Santa Fe Railroad in the early 1880s brought growth, but Temple, established eight miles to the northeast, quickly surpassed Belton in size. Nonetheless, Belton retained its status as a county seat and continued to thrive, particularly after an electric interurban line connected the two towns in 1905.

Andrew Carnegie established over 2,500 free public libraries worldwide, including 300 in Texas. One such library fulfilled the dream of the Women's Wednesday Club, a literary organization founded in Belton in 1898 with 25 members who aimed to create a public library for the community. In collaboration with the Century Club, the Wednesday Club secured a \$10,000 donation

from Carnegie in 1903 to build a library, provided the city would obtain a lot and maintain it. Local residents raised an additional \$1,500 for a lot on Main Street. The completed library, a two-story building with 6,220 square feet, opened on May 15, 1905. However, it closed two months later due to funding issues, struggling for the next 25 years. By 1933, the library became a city department. After outgrowing its original location in the 1970s, a new building was constructed at 301 East First Avenue in 1974, while the original library now houses the Bell County Museum.

Significant developments included the establishment of a public water system in the mid-1880s, a fire department in 1884,

See **HISTORY**,

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BISD a destination district for central Texas families

Belton ISD is a fast-growth district in Central Texas, with over 13,000 students in pre-K through twelfth grade. As a destination district for many families, Belton ISD is known for its academic excellence, innovative programs, and extensive extracurricular opportunities.

The Big Red Community is committed to providing exceptional learning experiences for each and every student. The district's 20 campuses are spread across 198.6 square miles covering Belton, Morgan's Point, parts of Temple and unincorporated areas of Bell County.

Belton High School and Lake Belton High School are renowned for their award-winning extracurricular activities and career and technical education programs, while Belton New Tech @Waskow serves as the school of choice for BISD students in grades 9-12.

Belton ISD is recognized



for its commitment to academic excellence, innovative programs, and a wide array of extracurricular opportunities. This year's key achievements include the recent openings of James L. Burrell Elementary and Hubbard Branch Elementary, the addition of more buses, the expansion of Southwest Elementary School, ongoing construction of the Delta Program facility slated for completion in 2025, and

enhancements to the BISD Agricultural facility.

The district celebrated a remarkable 98.6% graduation rate, with 807 students earning industry-based certifications that equip them to enter the workforce directly after high school. Additionally, 42 students were recognized by the National Merit Program, and 25 students earned associate degrees through a partnership with

Temple College and the Texas Biosciences Institute. Over 3,000 secondary students participated in fine arts competition groups, and Belton New Tech High @Waskow earned a spot on the AP® School Honor Roll.

This year marks the third production of The Penguin Project at Belton ISD, and the featured show will be Shrek Jr. The Belton ISD Board of Trustees championed this innovative and inclusive program, which began with the district's first collaboration with The Penguin Project. Last year, the program delivered outstanding performances of Finding Nemo Jr.

The Penguin Project is unique because all roles are performed by young artists with developmental disabilities, supported by dedicated "peer mentors" who volunteer to work

See **BISD**,
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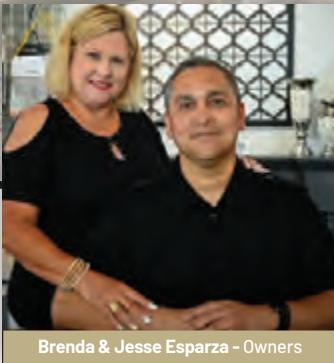
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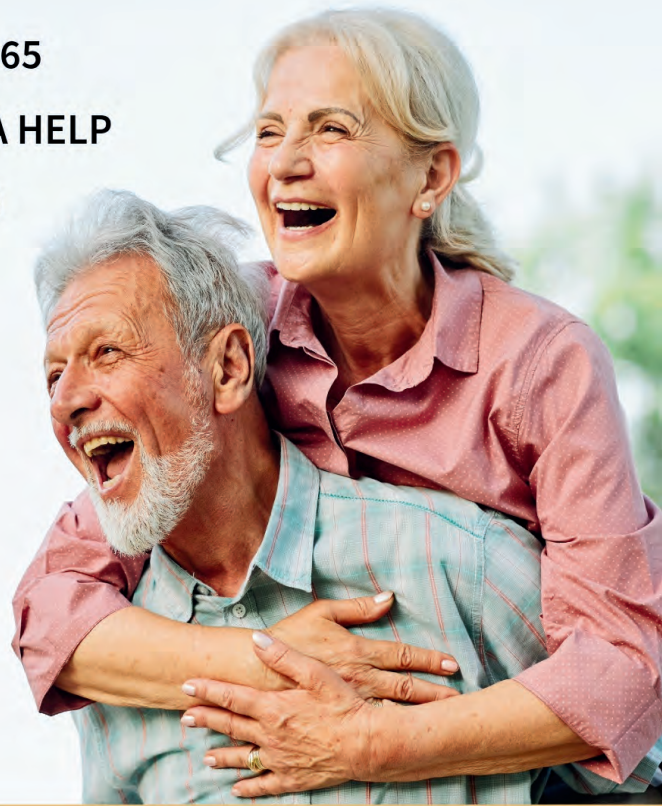
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Belton ISD sports adding to historical roster

Belton ISD's next great athlete has arrived.

Over the course of the school district's existence, which began in 1904, Belton and to a lesser degree Lake Belton have produced numerous standouts in a variety of sports with countless individuals earning championships, state titles and scholarships for their abilities.

During the span, certain athletes have entrenched themselves as elite, and Kendrick Jones Jr. is one of them.

Furthermore, he is only getting started.

Jones entered the 2024 University Interscholastic League Class 5A Track & Field State Meet with a gold medal after bursting onto the scene as a freshman, when he culminated the schedule by winning the 200-meter dash state title.



One year later, Jones cemented his legacy by defending the championship, and he added yet another to his collection by winning the long jump. Jones cleared 23 feet, 0 inches for the gold medal and crossed the finish line 20.83 seconds.

By capturing two of his three state titles as a sophomore, Jones easily had the best 2024 of any Belton ISD athlete, but there were still plenty of other reasons to celebrate Belton, Lake Belton

and New Tech.

The Lady Broncos made their presence known across the state's softball landscape after putting together an historic season.

Led by seniors Shelby Schultz, a pitcher, shortstop Casey Schultz, third baseman Angelina DeLeon, outfielders Lilliana Piedra and Haley Hoffman and catcher Victoria Shimabukuro, Lake Belton amassed an overall record of 41-5, falling

to eventual champion Melissa in the state semifinals.

On the basketball court, the Tigers produced the best season in school history behind senior forward Trap Johnson, who now plays at Montana State, and senior shooting guard Gian Carlo.

The duo guided Belton to a record 30 victories and an appearance in the third round of the playoffs.

The success was mimicked by the Lady Broncos basketball team, which also established a new high with 24 wins and a trip to the postseason's third round.

In football, the Tigers saw their reign with back-to-back district championships come to an end, but despite massive turnover and devastating injuries, Belton endured to qualify

See **SPORTS**,
Page 65

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Festivals, nightlife and events keep Belton thriving

Located deep in the heart of Texas, Belton is a bustling city with friendly folks and a rich history. Founded in 1850, the city is located along the once thriving Chisholm Trail, and the city's location also puts it in the middle of natural wonders, shopping and entertainment.

With its many dining, entertainment and shopping opportunities, Belton has become a fun destination for local residents and out-of-town visitors. And, according to Belton Chamber of Commerce President Randy Pittenger, most of these opportunities are family oriented.

"The Chamber presents the Fourth of July Kickoff at Courtyard Square the Saturday before the Fourth, and the Backyard Party at Schoepf's on the Fourth," Pittenger said. "But we also support many other events throughout the year that are put on by other organizations."

"There's always something going on in Belton, and as the Chamber, we support those events," he added.

"We have a community that supports small businesses, and people come together and enjoy being together at these gathering spots. People are comfortable bringing kids to Belton for safe, family entertainment, to dine or to shop."

"We have great places to dine and to enjoy a night out," he said. "Belton truly is a great place to live, work, shop, play and raise



a family."

Pittenger said the many restaurants and nightspots in Belton provide ideal locations to gather as a community. Events such as Market Days, the Fourth of July activities, Christmas on the Chisholm Trail, and many others contribute to Belton's image as a family friendly city.

"We have several places that have live music on weekends," he said. "There's always something going on."

While the Chamber's big Fourth of July

focus is on the opening and closing celebrations, a full week of events is sandwiched inside.

This year's Fourth of July Kickoff Street Party will be Saturday, June 28, at 5:30 p.m. in downtown Belton. The annual PRCA Rodeo will run July 3-5 at the Cadence Bank Center.

The big parade and program start at 8 a.m. on the Fourth, followed by the festival, car show and Hot Dog Eating Contest from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Finally, the Backyard Party at Schoepf's features live music and fireworks beginning at 6 p.m.

An estimated 30,000 people are expected for the festivities. USA Today has named Belton as one of the Top 10 places in the nation to celebrate Independence Day.

Another massive event is the annual Belton Bacon, Blues and Brews festival, organized by the Belton Visitors Center and held at the Bell County Courthouse Square. The event features live entertainment, arts and craft vendors, brewery and winery displays, a pig calling contest and a bacon cook-off between local food trucks.

The two-day festival features Central Texas bands and bacon-inspired dishes.



Harris Community Center, a venue with historical significance

Nestled along the scenic Nolan Creek, the Harris Community Center in Belton stands as a versatile local venue with rich historical significance.

Originally a segregated African American schoolhouse, the building was restored by the City of Belton in 2006. The earliest record of public education for African American students in the area dates back to 1882 when Mrs. Aleck McGee was hired "to teach the colored school." In 1890, Professor Thomas

Breckenridge Harris (1862-1907), a Fisk University graduate, became the first instructor at the African American High School. In 1900, the name "West Belton School" was adopted. A new building was erected in 1936 to accommodate students of all grade levels, and by petition, the school was named "T. B. Harris" in honor of its respected principal. The last class graduated in 1966, and the following year, Belton schools were integrated.

The Harris Community Center

boasts a variety of amenities, including spacious parking, a full-service kitchen equipped with a large refrigerator/freezer, double oven, stove top, and microwave, free Wi-Fi, and multiple room configurations to cater to different event needs. The Evans Room has a capacity of 220, the Kinchion Room holds 55, the Simpson Room accommodates 40, and the Smith Room can host 12 people around a large conference table. The entire center is also available for reservation.

The center is perfect for hosting a wide range of events, such as family reunions, birthday parties, baby showers, bridal showers, company parties, and legal depositions. The Harris Center staff is dedicated to setting up the room according to your preferences.

Tours of the center are available Monday through Friday between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. For tours or more information, call (254) 933-5860 or visit their website at HarrisEvents.org.





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Though Sheriffs may not be like they appear in old western movies, they certainly are not less effective or cool. The Bell County Sheriff's Department are highly trained technologically, mentally, physically and know the law back and forth. People look up to the Sheriff's Department as law enforcers, and the Sheriff's Department takes pride and provides the best service possible for the citizens of Bell County, from warrants to civil issues.

The Civil section of the Bell

County Sheriff's Department is responsible for serving all the civil process papers issued from the Attorney General's Office, County and District Offices, private law firms and people who may request services. This includes the serving of Subpoenas Sequestrations, Order of Sales, Writ of Possessions, Forcible Detainers, Protective Orders, Injunctions and other services of process.

The Warrant section of the Bell County Sheriff's Office, however, deals more with criminals because they are responsible for all felony and misdemeanor warrants issued in Bell County that are filed with the Sheriff's Department. Not only can the Sheriff's Department serve warrants and write them, but they can also log, maintain, update and recall the warrants in Bell County, be it a misdemeanor or felonious.

The Bell County Sheriff's Department also maintains an Animal Control Division.

The office is responsible for handling all domesticated animal calls, which include care, treatment and transportation of animals.

When needed, the Sheriff's Department can issue citations for statutory violations, trapping animals, rabies quarantines and euthanizing animals, as it may be in the best interest of the safety of the community. They also work with animal adoption agencies to find homes for pets and want to better the lives of the animals and people of Bell County.

They are also responsible for Zoonosis control and guidelines, which detail how to handle a situation with a dangerous wild animal and the caging requirements and standards for such animals that may be dangerous.

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Morgan's Point is a growing resort

Morgan's Point Resort is a General Law city in Bell County, Texas. Morgan's Point Resort was incorporated in 1970. As of the 2020 census, the population was 4,636. Morgan's Point Resort (MPR) is booming with multiple new subdivisions opening. Many of the homes being built are in the \$500,000-plus range with some lakefront lots selling around \$300,000. Several of the homes built are in the \$1 million-plus range.

MPR has had between 15-20 new home construction in the past few years.

MPR started as a retirement community but has ended up with a mixture of retirees and young, up-scale families. There is now a large percentage of young families in the community. Sidewalks

will be added to Lake Belton High School through grant funds from the Four Corners.

MPR has phenomenal police and fire departments. Fundraisers are held year-round for both departments. Part of being a citizen of MPR is supporting public servants. It is not an act; the relationship between these departments and the community is special. A K-9 unit was added this year.

Additional groundwater storage has been completed. Generators have been added to each water tank.

MPR has some beautiful parks along Belton Lake. The MPR Community Pool sits on a finger reaching out into the lake with a spectacular view unmatched in Bell County. The MPR Marina has a wait-

ing list of around a year long. The boat docks are state-of-the-art with lighting and video cameras. Many of the law enforcement and Army Corps of Engineers boats use this facility, which includes a dock for fuel.

The Garrett and Mic Hill Event Center was completely renovated. With a pool and the best view of Belton Lake, the event center is rented out for a variety of special occasions. A screen cover was added to the kid pool.

If you live in this area, you have most likely seen a few of the deer that live in and around the subdivision of MPR, as walking near deer along the wide streets of MPR is a common occurrence.

Additionally, MPR has a brush burner and storage bins.

City employees return and pick up the bins to dispose of the brush. The MPR pool and Community Center has arguably the best view in Bell County.

What makes the MPR community unique is the location on the lake and all the live oak trees and wildlife. If you think you might be living in the woods by purchasing a home there, you are correct. Remember, all the water meters are automated. The community's rescue boat is a former U.S. Coast Guard rescue boat and is equipped to handle any weather situation Mother Nature throws at it.

During the Christmas celebration, you can witness how appreciative residents feel toward one another and their community



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Chamber

- From Page 6

events. The annual parade has been held for over 100 years in Belton, and includes a variety of entries, including floats, bands, military and community groups. The weeklong celebration kicks off with a Downtown Street Party and Concert and includes other events, such as the Festival on Nolan Creek, Carnival, Backyard Party at Schoepf's Concert and Fireworks and three-day PRCA Rodeo at the Bell County Expo. USA Today has recognized Belton as one of the top 10 places in the nation to celebrate the 4th of July.

The Chamber serves as an advocate and resource in five strategic areas: Workforce Development, Economic Development, Leadership Development, Marketing and Business Development and Networking Development. The Chamber has several programs in place to improve the growth and development of the Chamber, as well as providing opportunities to connect and serve in the Belton community. These programs include Ambassadors, Leadership Belton, Mentor Belton, Business After-Hours, Chamber Coffee Connection (C3), Legislative/Governmental Affairs, and Military Relations Committee.

The Ambassadors program provides opportunities for members to be actively involved in welcoming new members with ribbon cuttings and other celebrations. They represent the Chamber in connecting with our members and in hosting the annual awards banquet.

The Leadership Belton program is a year-long leadership training experience providing participants opportunities to learn about and connect with the community. The program meets one day per month focusing on a different aspect of the community, including Social Services, Education, Healthcare, Economic Development, City and County Government, State Government – Day at the Capitol, Fort Hood, Recreation/Quality of Life and more.



Mentor Belton is a program pairing UMHB students with mentors in the community to promote workforce development.

Several networking opportunities provide a way to connect with others within our business community.

Business After-Hours is a monthly event designed for members to gather in a social setting for networking and to meet new members. This event also provides an opportunity for the host organizations to showcase their business.

HYPE – Helping Young Professionals Excel, provides networking social events for people ages 20-40 looking to develop closer relationships with others in the community.

Chamber Coffee Connection (C3) is a Chamber event geared toward all members and potential members who are interested in learning about member organizations or specific programs in our community. Often, a non-profit organization is featured.

Business Bites & Insights is an opportunity for members to learn together in a relaxed setting. Topics have included learning how to use Canva and social media, and stress management.

The Chamber is actively engaged in legislative and governmental affairs, hosting legislative updates and provid-

ing information to citizens about notable issues. The Chamber is an active advocate for its members and business community.

Our Military Relations Committee serves as the focus of coordination for our outreach, not only to neighboring Fort Cavazos, but also to military families living in our community. The Military Relations Committee has sponsored several specific programs including Adopt-a-Unit, Belton Area Military Spouse Support (BAMSS), and Single Soldier Care Packets.

The Chamber also sponsors the Patriot Way Brick Walk along Central Avenue in Downtown Belton providing an opportunity to honor those who have served in our armed forces with engraved bricks. In addition to the engraved bricks, story boards are located along the walkway to share the story of our local heroes. Special ceremonies for Memorial Day and Veterans Day are held to honor those who have had bricks added each year.

The Belton Area Chamber of Commerce is here to serve our business community through advocacy, collaboration, engagement, support, and networking. For more information about Chamber projects, activities and services, please call (254) 939-3551 or visit beltonchamber.com.

The City of Belton has a Home Rule Charter that was adopted on May 7, 2005.

The Belton City Council is composed of the Mayor and six council members elected from the city at large. The Council is responsible for enacting legislation, adopting budgets, appointing citizens to advisory boards, establishing and adopting city-wide policies and appointing the city manager.

Council Members

David K. Leigh, Mayor
John Holmes, Mayor Pro Tern
Craig Pearson, Councilmember
Wayne Carpenter, Councilmember
Stephanie O'Banion, Councilmember
Daniel Bucher, Councilmember

Belton City Hall

333 Water St.
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 120 Belton, TX 76513
(254) 933-5818

City Administration

Sam Listi, City Manager
(254) 933-5818
Amy Casey, City Clerk
(254) 933-5817

Development Services

Robert Van Til, Planning Director
(254) 933-5812
Fax: (254) 933-5822

Belton EDC

Cynthia Hernandez, Executive Director
Ana V. Borchardt, Director of Business Expansion & Retention
2180 N. Main St., Ste. C1
(254) 770-2270
Fax: (254) 770-2279

Finance Department

Mike Rodgers, CPA, Finance Director
Susan Allamon, Asst. Finance Director
100 S. Davis St.
(254) 933-5800
Fax: (254) 933-5859

Fire Department

Jonathan Fontenot, Fire Chief
Tami Bliven, Admin. Assistant

Central Fire Station

203 S. Penelope St.
Fire Station No. 2 420 Sparta Road
(254) 933-5881

Police Department

Larry Berg, Police Chief
Debbie Smith, Office Manager
711 E. 2nd Ave.
(254) 933-5844

RU OK? Senior Program

2509 N. Main Street
(254) 933-5897

Municipal Court

100 S. Davis St.
(254) 933-5838

Human Resources

Charlotte Walker, Director of Human Resources
100 S. Davis St.
(254) 933-5803

Public Works

Matthew Bates, Director of Public Works
1502 Holland Rd.
(254) 933-5823

Utilities

Amanda Cox, Utility Billing Supervisor
100 S. Davis St.
Billing Department: (254) 933-5800

Parks and Recreation

401 N. Alexander St.
(254) 933-5860

Lena Armstrong Public Library

Kim Kroll, Director of Library Services
301 E. First Ave.
(254) 933-5830

Belton Senior Activity Center

842 S. Mitchell St.
(254) 939-1170

Belton Area Chamber of Commerce

Randy Pittenger, President/CEO
412 E. Central Ave.
(254) 939-3551

Post Office

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Bell County Museum

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Bell County Courthouse

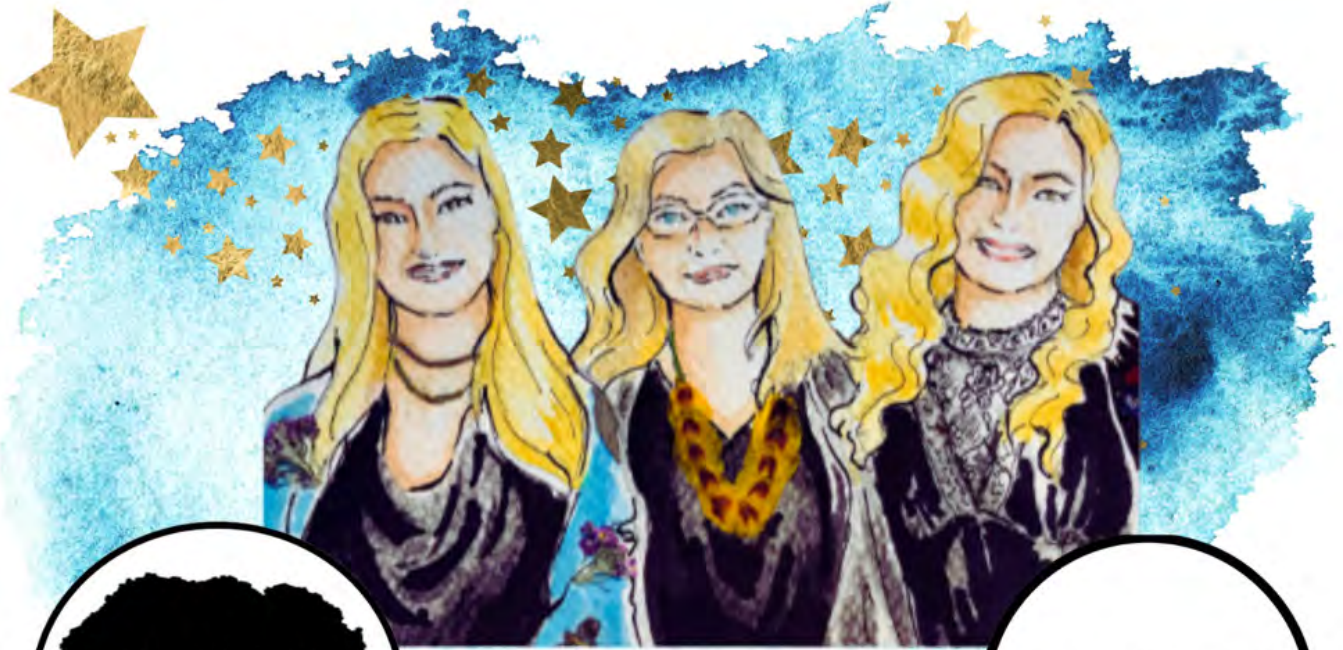
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July 4th celebration key for city of Belton

Throughout the United States, particularly in smaller towns and rural areas, the Fourth of July, Independence Day, has always been recognized as a big and important holiday. It's a time for community gatherings and remembrance, a time to honor, commemorate, recognize and celebrate freedom and independence from tyranny and the vision of the Founding Fathers in 1776.

July 4th in Belton is known both nationwide and worldwide. What the world saw then remains as true now as it has ever been; the Fourth of July festivities in Belton are basically the same as described in the first recorded Independence Day celebration in 1852, as well as when they became an annual tradition in 1919. In 2008, USA Today named the Belton 4th of July Parade as one of the Nation's "Top



Ten Places to Fly Your Flag on the 4th."

"The parade and PRCA Rodeos are a family event. You see many of your friends at these events. We like to bring people together. There is something for everybody in the July 4th Parade. It is a Bell County get together,"

said Randy Pittenger, President/CEO of the Belton Area Chamber of Commerce.

In addition to the parade, the week-long celebration typically features a carnival, Patriotic Program and is capped off by the Patriotic Fest. 2019 introduced a new tradition: the Downtown

Street Party, which kicked off the festivities with live music and an opportunity to gather around the Bell County Historic Courthouse. The Festival on Nolan Creek is held at Yettie Polk Park and features vendors, local craft merchants selling their wares, entertainment, food and kid friendly activities. Yettie Polk Park is located at 101 S. Davis St.

The Downtown Street Party is the kick-off for the many July 4th events in Belton, including a carnival in Liberty Park, located at 700 Veterans Way. Last year was the 100th PRCA & WPRA in Belton at the Cadence Bank Center. Each year the July 4th Program starts at the Bell County Courthouse at 101 E. Central Ave. The parade begins at UMHB (10th Ave. & Main

See **FOURTH**,
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Belton Police Department Continues to Grow Community Programs

The Belton Police Department is dedicated to providing exceptional service by fostering partnerships that build trust, reduce crime, create safe environments, and enhance the quality of life within the community. The department plays a vital role in ensuring the safety and security of Belton residents and is committed to improving their overall quality of life.

The Belton Police Department serves residents, businesses, and visitors 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The department prides itself on building strong relationships within the community. Its goal is to be friendly and approachable while fulfilling its duty to protect and serve. By engaging with the people of Belton, the department employs a prevention-focused model aimed at deterring crime. Partnerships with residents, businesses, and organizations are essential for creating positive impacts and effectively preventing crime. The Belton Police Department has earned a strong local reputation and is respected throughout Texas for its modern, service-oriented approach to law enforcement.

Police Chief Larry Berg



has been with the Belton Police Department for 28 years. He took over as Chief on February 2, 2024, after Chief Gene Ellis retired. Before assuming the role of Chief, Berg served as Deputy Chief for seven years.

The Belton Police Department strengthens its relationships with citizens by actively participating in community events. Officers frequently attend events organized by the Belton Independent School District, as well as gatherings such as Coffee with a Cop and National Night Out. These interactions allow residents to meet the officers who are dedicated to their protection.

The Belton Police Department was the first law enforcement agency in Bell County

to receive accreditation as a Recognized Law Enforcement Agency from the Texas Law Enforcement Best Practices Recognition Program. This program assesses compliance with over 170 best practices established by Texas law enforcement professionals. These best practices are designed to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of agencies in serving the public and safeguarding individual rights. The standards cover all aspects of law enforcement operations, including the use of force, protection of citizen rights, vehicle pursuits, property and evidence management, as well as patrol and investigative operations.

In late 2011, the Belton Citizens Helping in Police Ser-

vices (CHIPS) program was established to enhance police resources through volunteer support. This program helps deter crime by providing a visible presence in the community. CHIPS volunteers serve as extra eyes and ears by patrolling parks, shopping centers, and other areas where large groups gather. Each year, the Belton Police Department participates in over 100 community outreach events. Additionally, volunteers assist with administrative tasks both inside the police building and at community functions.

CHIPS members are graduates of the Citizens Police Academy Program and receive further specialized training. They also staff phones for the RU OK Program, which helps ensure the safety of elderly residents in Belton. The RU OK Program has successfully assisted 17 individuals in potentially life-threatening situations. Typically, CHIPS members contribute over 7,000 service hours to the department each year. The Belton Police Department is committed to treating all individuals with respect, dignity, and professionalism.

Belton Fire Department Focuses on safety in the community

The Belton Fire Department is a dedicated team of professionals committed to improving the quality of life in the community. They deliver expert fire and emergency services, focus on fire prevention, and provide public education, along with any other services they are equipped to offer.

The Fire Department is constantly seeking innovative ways to enhance its services, aiming to create a safe, economically via-

ble, and inclusive community for everyone.

The Department remains a "Recognized" fire department through the Texas Fire Chief's Association. This recognition, which focuses on Best Practices, involves a comprehensive self-assessment process that allows fire departments to evaluate their practices against the best industry standards.

In June 2020, Chief Jon Fontenot was appointed as the

new fire chief, succeeding former Chief Bruce Pritchard, who retired. Chief Fontenot brings over 25 years of fire service experience and holds a Master's Degree in Public Administration.

Since taking on this role, Chief Fontenot has implemented several positive changes to the services provided by the firefighters. Some of the key changes made in 2020 include the establishment of an additional Fire Captain position, the

outsourcing of EMS services to American Medical Response (a national leader in the EMS field), and an increase in the number of firefighters assigned to each fire response crew. Furthermore, the Belton Fire Department has become a certified training facility for various fire department certification courses.

In recent years, the Department has made a significant ad-

History - From Page 11

and the introduction of electricity in 1889. In 1885, Baylor Female College moved to Belton, which later became the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor. A cotton yarn factory opened in 1901, and the population reached 3,700 by 1904.

Belton was dependent on the cotton industry from the 1880s to the 1920s. As a result, there was a need for a yarn mill to complement the cotton trade and to provide facilities for cotton processing locally. Cotton bought on the streets of Belton was manufactured into cloth and yarn.

The Belton Yarn Mill was a two-story building built by a group of businessmen in 1900. The mill was erected at a cost of \$25,000. The fuel used by the Belton mill was lignite, shipped from Rockdale in Milam County. The mill began operation in October 1901 and originally had 3,100 spindles and 100 looms. At its peak, the mill consumed from 2000 to 2200 bales of cotton annually.

The mill employed approximately 112 people and had an annual payroll of about \$30,000. Most of the employees were residents of Bell County; some from poor families and some from tenant farms. The tenant farmers worked as semi-annual hands, coming to town twice a year in between cotton planting and cotton harvesting. The mill owned 25 cottages to house employees.

After the Panic of 1907, the mill closed and stood empty for nine years. It was eventually reopened and continued to operate until the late 1920s or early 1930s when the cotton industry in the county collapsed.

The building was sold and functioned as a school and library furniture manufacturer until a fire ravaged the 300,000-square-foot complex of buildings shared by Indeco Sales and Maco Manufacturing.

In its early history, Belton experienced several disastrous fires, and as a result, local residents were determined to build a waterworks system that



would provide adequate protection.

After consulting with engineers from waterworks companies, Belton designed a complete water system including water mains in the business district, a 50-foot standpipe north of town, and a double pumping plant at the Leon River, all costing \$41,500 in bonds. The first municipal water system was completed and delivered on July 1, 1884.

The original standpipe, an iron structure near 10th Avenue, was raised by 35 feet years later. Unfortunately, it deteriorated and burst in October 1909, flooding Main Street. The site was then abandoned in favor of a new standpipe south of town.

The Belton standpipe was built on Denison's Hill, standing 75 feet high and 24 feet wide, to provide water to residents south of Nolan's Creek.

In August 1928, the standpipe became a topic of concern when residents noticed small water bugs in their faucets. Rumors circulated about dangerous creatures allegedly crawling over it. The State Department of Health analyzed the water and found it safe, but fears persisted.

To address the concerns, the City Council moved up the planned cleaning of the standpipe. A raft with a dozen men was placed inside, and as water was drained, the raft sank. The

Belton Journal noted that the men's efforts revealed only a few inches of sand, contrary to the expected debris.

By the mid-1960s, the standpipe was insufficient for the city's needs, especially during summer, leading to higher fire insurance costs. The City Council proposed a \$600,000 bond for additional storage, and in 1975, the standpipe was retired. City Manager George Ferrell reported leaks made repairs impractical, so the structure was drained and abandoned after a new 100,000-gallon overhead tank was completed.

Ultimately, it was decided to preserve the standpipe. Added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1990, it is now undergoing renovation and will open as a community park this year.

In December 1913, downtown Belton flooded, but the town thrived until the Great Depression, which caused many businesses to close. The population peaked at 6,500 in 1928 but dropped to 3,779 in 1931. The economy began to recover in the early 1940s with the development of nearby Camp Hood later named Fort Hood and now Fort Cavazos.

Belton has experienced a lot of growth since the 1970s and now sits at 25,171 according to the 2023 estimate census and Bell County now has over 450,000 residents.

Downtown Belton offers variety of shopping experiences

The history, people, and layout along Nolan Creek are truly unique. Fortunately for Belton, the shops in this area are just as distinctive as the community itself. The residents are vibrant and committed to supporting one another, which is promising for those looking to invest in the community.

On any given afternoon, you can find locals strolling through the downtown area. The white-water section along Nolan Creek is an attraction that other communities in the region cannot compete with.

Belton is home to Cochran, Blair & Potts, the oldest department store in Texas. Inside, you will find a diverse selection of clothing, Western wear, unique gifts, and even a mini museum. It offers much more than just a shopping experience. Recently remodeled, this department store has the capability to order many items that may not be in stock.

If you're in search of antiques or items with a historical touch, Exchange on Central is the perfect place to visit. The store features a wide selection of

unique, handmade items. Upon entering, you'll notice several very old signs that reflect the community's history.

"Downtown Belton has become a popular destination for shoppers seeking fashion, gifts, home décor, antiques, and collectibles," said Brett Baggerly of Exchange on Central. "Our eclectic mix of old and new offers something for everyone. If you're looking for something unique, handmade, or one-of-a-kind, you'll find it downtown."

The Beltonian is a locally owned theater located on Central Avenue. Another unique venue, the Grand Avenue Theater, can be found on Main Street, and both theaters are independently operated.

Main Street Bridal offers a beautiful selection of wedding gowns and formal wear in a completely restored building, making it a dream destination for those planning a wedding or special event. Whimsies Boutique, situated on Lake Road, features modern clothing and unique gifts, and like many shops in Belton, it is locally owned.

Bourland Landscape Supplies & Outdoor Power Equipment provides everything you need for yard work, including dirt and rock formations for landscaping. Their selection of power tools is extensive, and the staff is knowledgeable about the equipment they sell.

Pink Bulldog Boutique offers a wide variety of women's clothing, with their custom shirts being particularly popular among local women. The boutique is located on Penelope Street, right next to Nolan Creek Brewery. Adjacent to Nolan Creek Brewery is La Luncheonette, a trendy eatery that is a favorite among locals. It's best to arrive early to secure a spot.

Lindy Lu's on the Square offers a variety of hand-crafted gift items that are a must-see. This store is similar to Exchange but operates in a different setting with a unique selection of vendors. The Mercantile opened late last year, located next to Exchange. Both gift shops focus on vendor-oriented products.

See **SHOPPING**,

Page 64



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Woodcarving, quilting and bingo available at the SAC

The Belton Senior Activity Center was first established on Feb. 5, 1976, as it met at the current American Legion Post 55 building. The Center raised funds and through a grant was able to construct a building on its current site at 842 Mitchell St. on Feb. 24, 1981.

"It is delightful to work here at the Center. I have met so many wonderful people. They all have a story to tell. The Center is an activity-oriented facility. Many come just to visit," said Director Judy Owens. "We are open to suggestions on activities."

It is a Belton Senior Activity Center in many ways. Exercise classes are provided and enhanced by a grant from Baylor Scott and White. The classes are free to the public and participation is growing. Two classes are held on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at 8:45 and 9:40 for folks to choose which class they want to attend. It is exercise at your own pace with equipment provided.

Woodcarving is on each Monday. There is a group of artisans there working on carvings and etchings each week. It isn't uncommon for someone to come to watch and learn.

Quilting is on Tuesday and Thursday mornings. Quilting is a major fundraiser for the Senior Center with quilts made to sell, and custom orders are also welcome. More quilters are needed! Line Dance is also on Mondays and Fridays at 10:30, and Tuesdays and Thursdays at 8 and 9. Canasta card game is held every



Tuesday and Thursday. Bridge is held every Friday afternoon.

Bingo is held at noon on Wednesday with prizes given. Between 45-60 people attend Bingo games each week.

Dances with a live band are held on the first and third Thursday of each month. A cover charge of \$5 is used to pay the band. The Center uses six different bands. Arts and Crafts are on the first and third Wednesdays with Art Painting on second and fourth Wednesdays. Bible study is at 10:30 every Wednesday.

A Pot Luck Dinner is held at 5:30 p.m. every fourth Monday each month with music.

In cooperation with the City of Belton, the Center is also offering a Zumba class on Tuesday and Thursday from 6-7 p.m., with the exception of first and third Thursdays when dance is scheduled.

To find out more visit <http://www.beltonseniorcenter.org/activities>.

Jay Taggart, former Board President, said: "Forty-nine years ago, some Belton citizens saw their dreams of establishing a senior center in Belton come true! On Feb. 5, 1976, the Belton Senior Activity Center was established to serve the needs of Belton senior citizens. Over the years, the center has been 'home to many Belton seniors, offering countless hours of enjoyment and healthy nutrition. Today, the Board of Directors of the Belton Area Citizens for Seniors salutes the men and women who had the vision and did the work to establish the center. We are thankful that they and the original senior citizens who formed the Belton Senior Activity Center created something so important to the quality of life in Belton. We remain committed to keep that vision going for years to come."

The Lena Armstrong Public Library

Currently, the library has over 31,897 items, including print materials, audio, DVDs and electronic print and audio books. In 2018, Library System Services performed a needs assessment of the library, which included feedback from a community survey and various focus groups. The assessment helped the library develop a Strategic Plan, which included five goals to guide the library: 1) Establish a library collection that will meet the needs of a diverse and growing com-

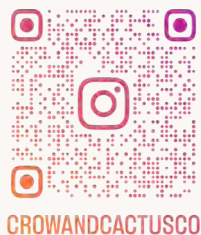
munity 2) Become a gathering place for the community 3) Be a good steward of the library's resources, particularly the history of Belton 4) Promote lifelong learning and innovation, and 5) Serve everyone who enters the library with excellence.

With these ideals in mind, the City of Belton hired Maureen Arndt, of 720 Design Services, to create a plan for the exterior façade improvements that will enhance these strategies. The interior is set for a complete redesign in

the first quarter of 2025. In 2020, the building was painted, a metal canopy was placed over the front door, and the front landscaping was improved. The library now has improved handicap ramps and sidewalks around the entrance—and a beautiful mural facing Penelope Street. The library has a Friends group, which holds an annual Authors Luncheon to raise funds for



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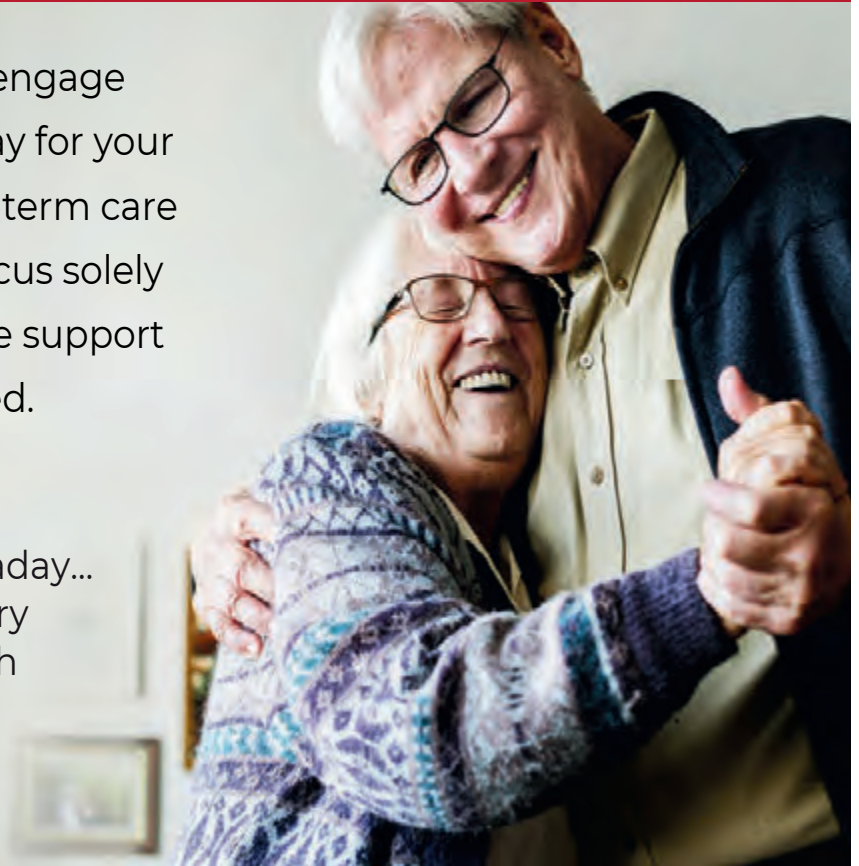
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Cadence Bank Center venue stands out on I35

The Cadence Bank Center, which prior to its renaming in 2023, was the Bell County Expo Center. It is Central Texas' largest and most versatile entertainment venue in Bell County.

The big silver dome stands out to drivers on Interstate 35 and can easily be seen from the air by small aircraft flying in and out of Killeen.

The County Judge John Garth Arena holds 6,000 seats, and the folding chairs on the arena floor raise the total to 8,500 seats.

The main Exhibition structure is 100,000 square feet while the Assembly Hall and Special Events room are 12,000 square feet and 5,000 square feet respectively.

The building stands 100 feet high

and is a symbol of the unity between Belton, Killeen and Temple.

Before its construction, there had been several discussions about the possibility of building such a facility; however, finding the right location was not easy because of the cost. While Temple searched for a location that was within Temple city limits, Killeen preferred a location near Harker Heights. The three cities combined resources and agreed that the center ought to be in Belton, the county seat.

In 1987, a large group of Bell County inhabitants assembled in a pasture close to Highway 190 West, about two miles south of the courthouse in downtown Belton, and they agreed that the site was ideal.

This exposition center was the brainchild of then Bell County Judge, John Garth. This project cost \$12 million and was warmly welcomed by the community.

Initially, the Expo Center was constructed primarily to host the Bell County Youth Fair; however, it has been the venue for an assortment of events, including concerts, rodeos, conventions, graduations, banquets and livestock shows. The annual Jehovah's Witness Convention is one of the biggest conventions in the area and brings in between 35,000 to 40,000 over a six-week period.

Handicapped seating is methodically positioned, and the elevator is at the

See **CADENCE**,

Page 57

Fort Cavazos impacts Bell County, state of Texas

Set in more than 340 square miles of the rugged Central Texas hill country, Fort Cavazos is home to the best and most expansive training facilities the US Army has to offer. It's also home to more than 34,500 soldiers and airmen, 48,500 family members, 24,000 Reserve and National Guard troops and over 9,000 civilian employees and contractors.

Fort Cavazos, formerly known as Fort Hood, is home to the III Armored Corps Headquarters, 1st Cavalry Division, 1st Army Division West, 13th Armored Corps Sustainable Command and other brigades, tenant units and organizations.

The massive fort also distinguishes itself as the largest single local-location employer in the state

of Texas, according to the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts. Its economic impact on the Texas economy is estimated at \$28.8 billion.

While most off-post housing is located in the Killeen, Harker Heights and Copperas Cove areas, additional housing is available in Belton, Temple, Gatesville and Lampasas, all of which are about a 30-minute drive for Fort Cavazos.

Randy Pittenger, president of the Belton Chamber of Commerce, said a large number of families who live in Belton have a connection to Fort Cavazos due to it being the largest employer in our area.

"Many military families choose to live off post and make Belton their home," he said.

"Many spouses of ac-

tive-duty soldiers work in Belton, and families enjoy the shopping, dining, and entertainment available here," he added. "We have many veteran-owned businesses in Belton, since retirees often choose to stay in our area."

"We are thankful for the significant impact Fort Cavazos has on our community, both from an economic impact and for how they contribute to our overall quality of life."

Visitors to the Belton area may want to spend a day exploring the museums of Fort Cavazos, most notably the new National Mounted Warrior Museum.

From the earliest days of the American Revolution to the wars on terrorism, mounted infantry and cavalry have played a significant

role in US military success. This new museum honors the history and importance of soldiers on horseback and in tanks and fighting vehicles.

According to an economic impact study conducted by Texas A&M University-Central Texas, the museum, which opened in September 2024, is expected to draw up to 377,000 visitors annually. Two-thirds of those visitors are expected to be from outside the Bell County area.

"This museum will have a huge impact on Central Texas businesses," said Retired Lt. Gen. Paul Funk, former commanding general of III Corp and Fort Hood, and presently the CEO of the National Mounted War-

See **FORT**,
Page 59



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Bell County Museum a look into the past

The Bell County Museum was founded on April 25, 1988 by the Bell County Commissioners Court and is part of the county government. The Bell County Museum collects, preserves and interprets the historical and cultural heritage of the Bell County region for all its citizens. The museum is housed in the beautifully restored 1905 Belton Carnegie Library building, which is a recorded Texas Historical Landmark and listed in the National Register of Historical Places. Prior to the museum being opened to the public in 1991, the county and museum board embarked on a "Save the Museum" campaign to update and restore the Belton Carnegie Library. The campaign raised the necessary \$400,000 to restore the beautiful beaux-arts building. In 2006, the Guffy Building was renovated and

connected to the Carnegie Library building, creating a unique structure that bridges contemporary style with historical architectural integrity.

The museum collection contains more than 17,000 objects related to the Bell County region, including a collection of more than 600 moustache cups, weaponry, clothing, agricultural tools, fine art, textiles, photographs, correspondence, decorative arts, and machinery.

The Bell County Museum features three permanent exhibits: Discover Bell County, The Gault Archaeological Site, and the Marshall Log Cabin. In 2021, Discover Bell County won the John L. Nau III Excellence in Museums Award for the state of Texas. The museum hosts traveling exhibits throughout the year that cover a variety of topics and interests. Programs

and events for people of all ages are offered at Bell County Museum. Visitors of all ages will enjoy the Spring Lecture Series, Day on the Texas Frontier, STEAM Exploration, Weird Science!, Homeschool Day and much more.

Objects in the museum collections are available for research by anyone interested in the history of Bell County. In addition, the museum has a research room with an extensive document and manuscript library to aid those researching Bell County history. Stop by and visit the museum (admission free) located at 201 N. Main Street in Belton.

For more information or to find out about volunteer opportunities, please call (254) 933-5243 or visit the museum website at bellcountymuseum.org.

New parks, improvements coming this year to Belton

It's going to be a busy year for Belton Parks & Recreation with the addition of two new parks plus improvements at many of the other recreation areas in the community.

The new parks — Standpipe Park and Freedom Neighborhood Park in Liberty Valley subdivision — are expected to open in 2025, according to James Grant, director of Belton's Parks & Recreation department.

"Standpipe Park is about two months from completion, but we will wait until spring for a grand opening," Grant said. "It will be nice and green, and everything will be finished."

The park will be built around the renovated Belton Standpipe, which will be lit up in color-changing lights.

"It will instantly be a Belton landmark because it will be visible from both I-35 and I-14," Grant added. "The lights will change according to the season or special events. For example, if the Tigers or UMHB win a game, the standpipe will be illuminated in school colors."

"In addition to the standpipe, the small community park will have a very nice playground, a restroom, a practice field, a butterfly garden and a quarter-mile walking trail."

"The park also will have our first-ever hill-side slide," Grant said. "The slide will run down the hill and into our playground. There also will be a pavilion with multiple tables and street parking along three sides."

Freedom Neighborhood Park, at the intersection of Huey Avenue and Connell Street, will feature a playground, open spaces and a walking trail. Planning is under way and construction should take place this year.

A new pavilion will be built this year at Chisholm Trail Park through the city's Legacy Program. The pavilion will honor Debbie Potts, who served as a counselor at Belton High for many years. The Legacy Program is a unique way to honor others through the beautification of parks and other areas in Belton.

Grant said the new pavilion will be located next to the existing pickleball courts at the park, the number of pickleball courts



will be expanded to six. Also, the park's basketball court will be painted green, and stripes will be added to mark half-court and free-throw areas.

Several projects are on tap for Heritage Park, Grant said.

"The lights on all four baseball fields at Heritage are being retrofitted with LED lights," he said. "These lights will be much brighter and more energy efficient."

"Also, the soccer complex is getting another practice field, and we are adding lights to the new multipurpose field. This will help out during the summer — kids can play later when it's not so hot."

The Belton Baseball Association is putting in batting cages at Heritage Park, and they will be open to the public when not in use by league baseball teams.

"The batting cages will be near Community Garden, which also is getting a facelift," Grant added.

Two big park additions are Leadership Belton projects.

"We just did a Welcome to Belton sign and new banner brackets on downtown lamp posts," he said. "Now, Leadership Belton is doing two more projects. One will be renovation of the basketball court and park benches at Miller Heights Park. They also will add more security cameras on the Nolan Creek Hike & Bike Trail."

In a joint project with Temple, a new access trail and boardwalk, and a renovat-

ed overlook, will be constructed this year at Miller Springs Nature Center near Belton Dam.

Parks in the Belton system include:

Beall Park — Playground and picnic tables.

Carla Kay Park — Small park with a swing set and shaded area.

Chisholm Trail Park — Baseball and soccer fields, basketball courts, and a walking trail.

Continental Field — Special-purpose park with a backstop.

Griggs Field — Backstop for practice.

TB Harris Community Center — Multi-use event center suitable for parties.

Heritage Park — Belton's largest park at 155 acres with athletic fields, picnic areas and pavilions, special-needs accessible playground, community garden, fishing dock and a dog park.

Harris Community Park — Splash pad, playground, and butterfly garden.

Jaycee Field — Baseball field, restrooms and concessions building.

See **PARKS**,

Page 59

See Belton

ANNUAL EVENTS

SELECT SATURDAYS	EVERY SATURDAY	3RD FRIDAY MONTHLY	FEBRUARY 1 - 8	FEBRUARY 15 - 16
NOLAN CREEK SATURDAY MARKET 219 S EAST ST. 	ARTISAN MARKET 411 E CENTRAL AVE. 	PISTON'S ON THE CREEK 219 S EAST ST. 	BELL COUNTY YOUTH FAIR 301 W LOOP 121 	ANIME SUNIKA 301 W LOOP 121 
FEBRUARY 21 - 23	APRIL 4	APRIL 16	APRIL 19	APRIL 19
HOME & GARDEN SHOW 301 W LOOP 121 	ROCKIN' ROTARY 702 E CENTRAL AVE. 	UMHB EASTER PAGEANT 900 COLLEGE ST. 	BELTON MARKET DAYS DOWNTOWN BELTON 	DOWNTOWN EGG HUNT DOWNTOWN BELTON 
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SEPTEMBER 26 - 27	OCTOBER 4	OCTOBER 25	NOVEMBER 15	DECEMBER 5 - 6
BELTON'S BACON, BLUES, & BREWS DOWNTOWN BELTON 	LION'S ON THE LEON 1502 PARK AVE. 	CANDY TRAIL DOWNTOWN BELTON 	BELTON MARKET DAYS DOWNTOWN BELTON 	CHRISTMAS ON THE CHISHOLM TRAIL DOWNTOWN BELTON 



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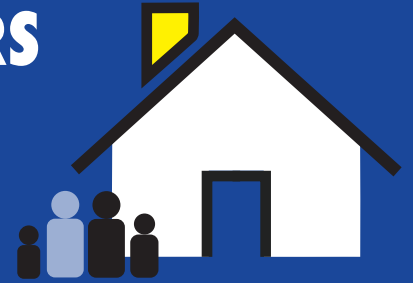


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MK&T Depot and the KATY revitalized

In December 2021, the purchase of the MK&T train depot and the KATY building by four investment partners initiated a wave of economic growth, transforming Downtown Belton into a vibrant destination.

Business partners Terry and Luke Potts undertook the ambitious project of renovating both the depot and the neighboring KATY building, significantly revitalizing the area. The Potts not only invested in the project but also assumed the roles of contractors, dedicating themselves to restoring the long-abandoned depot.

For 14 months, they meticulously worked on the restoration, striving to preserve as many original

and historic features of the buildings as possible. Their efforts culminated when they successfully located the original train car and a caboose, which were returned to the City of Belton and incorporated into the renovation project.

The impact of the redevelopment was tremendous, with an influx of visitors from all over the country.

According to Matt Gunter, one of the project investors, the new development has garnered attention nationwide, enticing people to explore what Belton has to offer. Visitors are engaging in dining and shopping at the train depot and other local shops, which is contributing to the area's overall economic activity.

"Activity breeds activity," Gunter stated, emphasizing that the domino effect of development is positively impacting Belton. As more people visit and conduct business, the city experiences a compounding effect that leads to even more future activities. The successful restoration of the depot has created a vibrant hub of activity and growth, revitalizing the heart of Belton with new opportunities for businesses.

Gunter expressed his optimism about Belton's future growth. "With so many opportunities for expansion and business development, Belton is 'ripe for the picking,'" he said.

In October 2023, the MK&T and the KATY were

fully leased as a mixed-use commercial area, welcoming a total of 10 new businesses. These include The Blackbird Book & Spirits, Railway Express Diner, Off the Rails Wine Bar, Pizza PieRos, Warm Cookie Company, Z&H Candy, Early Light Creperie, Sly Fox Coffee, and Katy Deli.

Located at the corner of First Avenue and East Street in Downtown Belton, the renovated train depot stands as a testament to the power of vision, hard work, and community collaboration. Gunter emphasized that the project's success was not dependent on one individual alone; it required the involvement and collaboration of business partners, city approval for plans, designers, and strong community support.



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Miller Springs Nature center offers 260 acres of natural area

Construction on a new boardwalk and improvements to an observation deck at Miller Springs Nature Center likely will begin this year, according to officials from Belton and Temple.

The 260-acre natural area in the cities of Temple and Belton is located just below Lake Belton Dam along the Leon River.

"The two cities manage and operate the park, and it is owned by the US Army Corps of Engineers," said James Grant, director of Belton Parks & Recreation.

"Everything has to be approved by the Corps of Engineers," agreed Kevin Beavers, Temple's Parks & Recreation head. "We will present plans to the local Corps office, and then it will go to their Fort

Worth regional office for final approval."

"There was a wooden boardwalk at Miller Springs years ago, but it was damaged when the Lake Belton Dam spillway was breached in February 1992," he said. "It essentially washed away, but you can still see some of the concrete pillars."

The boardwalk was rebuilt in the mid 1990s but had to be removed in 2016 because of damage.

"The new boardwalk will be about a third of a mile in length, and it will allow visitors of all ages to enjoy the Nature Center," Beavers said. "Right now, the route to the scenic overlook is not accessible for those who use walkers or are in wheelchairs. After this project, it will be

accessible for everyone."

The new boardwalk will likely be built with a synthetic material such as Trex, a composite commonly used by cities on bridges and decks. It is engineered to resist fading, scratches and stains, and it doesn't rot. Maintenance is minimal.

Grant said that while the boardwalk will likely be used by hikers and birdwatchers, its main purpose will be to provide a smooth walk to the overlook.

The current overlook is used to view a historical marker that sits a few feet away. The new overlook will prominently display the marker, which provides a bit of the history of Tennessee Valley before it was flooded to create Lake Belton.

Now that the plan to improve the overlook and construct the boardwalk has been approved by both Temple and Belton city councils, KPA Engineering has started working on designs for the project.

Temple City Manager Brynn Myers said actual construction of the boardwalk likely will begin this year.

The park opened after the construction of the dam in 1954, and camping and fishing were popular on both sides of the dam. The area was left open to the public with no controls from the 1960s to the 1980s.

Between December 1991 and March of 1992, some 22 inches of rainfall in the area caused the lake elevation to

See **NATURAL**,
Page 57



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UMHB marks 180 years operating in Belton

2025 is a significant year for the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor, as it marks the institution's 180th year of carrying on its tradition as the oldest continuously operating college in the state. Enrollment at UMHB for the current academic year is at nearly 3,400 students from 44 states and 28 countries.

UMHB offers bachelor's degrees in more than 65 undergraduate majors, ten master's degree programs, and two doctoral degrees. It recently expanded its online offerings by launching several new programs that significantly broaden access to a UMHB education, regardless of location. Over 90% of UMHB students receive some form of financial aid, and the university awarded more than \$50 million in grants and



scholarships last year.

The Marek-Smith Center for Teacher Preparation, a groundbreaking 12,808-square-foot training facility to prepare general and special education majors for various academic environments, is officially open and will lead the way for special education training through innovative spaces that incorporate immersive, multisensory, and interactive equipment.

Construction continues on the university's Jane and

Mac Hickerson Crusader Golf Club for the UMHB men's and women's golf teams. The practice facility, which features four par-4 holes, five par-3 holes, and additional short-game practice areas, is now open. The clubhouse should be complete by the summer of 2025.

UMHB competes in 16 sports in the American Southwest Conference of NCAA Division III. The Cru has won over 65 conference championships since beginning intercol-

legiate athletics in 1979.

A welcoming, student-centered approach with a high standard of excellence continuously defines the core UMHB experience. Propelled by an unapologetically Christian commitment, the university is dedicated to helping students deepen their faith and integrate Christian perspectives into every dimension of life. Since it was founded in 1845, the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor (UMHB) prepares students for lives of leadership, service, and faith-informed discernment in a global society. Academic excellence, personal attention, broad-based scholarship, and a Baptist vision for education have distinguished this Christ-centered learning community since its beginning.

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Crusaders continue winning traditions

The University of Mary Hardin-Baylor (UMHB) is nationally recognized for its excellent academic and athletic programs. The Crusaders have achieved national success in recent years, making them one of the most recognized Division III athletic programs in the nation.

The Mary Hardin-Baylor football team reached the NCAA Division III Football Quarterfinals for the 14th time in program history. UMHB started the program in 1998 and has amassed two national titles, five NCAA semifinal finishes and 19 postseason runs.

The Mary Hardin-Baylor soccer teams also achieved success this season. The UMHB



men won their respective American Southwest Conference regular-season title while the UMHB women made it to the ASC championship match.

The UMHB Soccer teams share the newly-built Soccer and Tennis Field House with the Cru tennis teams. The facility features team locker rooms for all four sports with an on-site laundry room and training room. The building

also houses visitor locker rooms and a meeting room.

UMHB Volleyball and Cross Country also competed in the fall of 2024. The UMHB volleyball team advanced to the ASC Championship match, finishing 22-8 on the season. The UMHB women's cross country team won the program's second ASC Championship and advanced to the NCAA Regionals. Two men's cross country

runners also qualified for and competed at NCAA Regionals.

UMHB Men's Basketball went 17-10 during the 2023-24 season and used a late-season surge to make it all the way to the ASC Championship match.

Cru Women's Basketball ended their 2023-24 campaign with an overall record of 12-7. The UMHB Women also earned an at-large bid to the NCAA Division III Championship Tournament. Arieona Rosborough was also named to the WBCA All-America team.

Both basketball teams are in action this season heading into the ASC Tournaments.

UMHB Beach Vol-

leyball competed in its third season, finishing at 26-4 overall. The Cru also won the AVCA Small College Division III Beach Volleyball National Championship. Ali Rojas and Gracie Nichols were also named AVCA All-America.

Acrobatics & Tumbling saw its most historic season to date with an overall record of 9-2. The team set multiple school records en route to an NCATA Division III Tournament Championship. UMHB also qualified for the NCATA National Championships, becoming the first Division III team to qualify. Katelyn Kolodziejczyk and Jenna Hall were also

See **CRU**,
Page 81

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Fire - From Page 30

justment to the firefighter work schedule. Firefighters have shifted from working 24-hour shifts followed by 48 hours off to a new schedule of 48-hour shifts with 96 hours off between shifts. This change provides crews with more consecutive time to mentally decompress from the challenges they face while on duty. The extended decompression time helps promote better mental health and stability among firefighters.

The health of firefighters is a constant concern. Alongside mental health, the City and Department Command staff are dedicated to promoting physical health and well-being. In 2020, every fire station was equipped with new commercial-grade extractor washing machines designed to remove carcinogens from contaminated firefighting gear. Using these extractors after each fire helps reduce exposure to potentially harmful substanc-



es. Additionally, each fire truck is supplied with decontamination materials to ensure that crews can quickly remove contaminants before departing from a scene.

Fontenot's priority for the Fire Department is to adopt a proactive approach rather than a

reactive one. The emphasis is on preventing accidents and injuries while ensuring professional-level responses when incidents do occur. The number of safety and training courses has increased, along with free presentations offered to the community. Code enforcement activities are also

emphasized to ensure that businesses are safe for visitors. Collaborating with local businesses enhances safety within the community.

The Belton Fire Department deeply appreciates the support it has received from the community over the years.








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Lakes are top attractions on hot summer days

Two of Bell County's biggest attractions — Belton Lake and Stillhouse Hollow — draw thousands of visitors to the Belton area every year. Although the two lakes are very different, they both have appeal to those who enjoy the outdoors.

The Morgan's Point Resort Paddling Trail attracts canoe, kayak and paddleboard enthusiasts from across the nation, the hiking ranks among the best in the Texas Hill Country and thousands of birders flock to view eagles, hawks and rare lark buntings, golden-cheeked warblers and black-capped vireo.

Camping and hiking are huge here, and parties, family and class reunions, military events, corporate socials and other large gatherings keep the many pavilions booked at US Army Corps of Engineers lake parks.

But, perhaps the biggest draw to local lakes is fishing — to be specific, white and

hybrid striped bass fishing. Anglers come to test their skills at Stillhouse and Belton lakes and to compete in the dozens of fishing tournaments held annually on the waters and banks of the twin lakes.

Clients of just one of the area's fishing guide services — Holding the Line — have pulled a whopping 33,000 fish out of Stillhouse and Belton Lake in the past two years, and every fish was returned to the lake.

"The fishing here is excellent," said Bob Maindelle, owner of Holding the Line. "There's really no reason to go anywhere else. We focus on white bass on Stillhouse, and on whites and hybrid striped bass on Belton.

Most area lake parks began their spring seasons in early March, and traditionally lake rangers and maintenance crews use the offseason to freshen up and repair park infrastructure such as buildings, picnic shelters and grills,

roads and boat ramps.

"We did have several projects this off season, and most of them were fairly minor," said Park Ranger Cassie Hill, one of three rangers assigned to Belton Lake.

Three lake-region parks boast some of the top hiking and mountain biking in Central Texas at Miller Springs Nature Center just below Belton Dam and at two Stillhouse parks — Dana Peak and Chalk Ridge Falls.

In addition to maintaining lake parks and recreation areas, the Corps of Engineers also provides lake rangers in the parks and on the water.

"Our Rangers patrol the parks and lake looking for violations of rules and regulations, primarily safety concerns," Ranger Jewel Hale said. "As rangers, we try to educate the public on water and boating safety. It's a lake, and water can be dangerous."

Hale said gate attendants working at Belton Lake and Stillhouse parks where an en-

trance fee is charged no longer take payments. Instead, payment kiosks and QR codes are used.

"The fastest way to pay is to use your smartphone and scan the QR code," she said. "That is much faster and more user friendly than the payment kiosks."

Frequent lake users and those who travel may want to invest in the \$40 annual pass, which is good for admission to any Corps of Engineers park. The passes can be obtained at the Belton Lake Office, 3110 FM 2271 near Belton Dam, or the Stillhouse Hollow Office at 3740 FM1670.

America the Beautiful National Parks passes also are accepted at parks with the exception of Belton Lake Outdoor Recreation Area (BLORA). These come in a variety of options, including passes for senior adults and active duty military. Visit <https://www.nps.gov/planyourvisit/passes.htm> for more information.

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Morgan's Point Resort Paddle Trail offers 12 miles of Lake Belton fun

As the fickle Texas weather eventually leans toward the warm side, more and more Central Texans will be looking for a little fun in the sun.

Lake Belton is always a popular spot for fishing, hiking, swimming, skiing, picnicking and just hanging out with family and friends.

A growing number of visitors also are taking advantage of the lake's paddling opportunities, especially the 12-mile Morgan's Point Resort Paddling Trail — one of 81 official paddling trails that explore the state's rivers, creeks, lakes, bays and bayous.

The Morgan's Point Resort Trail was designated by Texas Parks & Wildlife in 2013 and is steeped in history. It's also known for fishing and birdwatching.

There are three main

launches to the trail, and the city is working on getting a state grant that would add an ADA-accessible canoe and kayak launch. Existing launches can be found at Morgan's Point Marina, the Community Center at Kleypas Park and at Rogers Park.

While a location has not been determined, other improvements planned for the paddling trail include a facility to rent kayaks, canoes, paddle boards and paddling accessories.

The closest rental facilities are at Frank's Marina near Belton Dam and at Belton Lake Outdoor Recreation Area at Fort Hood. Both rent kayaks, paddle boards and other watercraft, but they are miles from the paddling trail.

The Morgan's Point Resort Paddling Trail actually consists of three separate

segments, and most paddlers complete each portion in one to three hours.

The Tanyard Springs Trail explores Belton Lake inlets around Morgan's Point Marina. The trail essentially makes a loop with the marina serving as the starting and finishing points. Paddlers can also access this trail from a launch at Kleypas Park.

The Camp Kachina Trail follows the shoreline from Kleypas Park, around the Camp Kachina peninsula to Rogers Park. Paddlers are rewarded with stunning views of the lake and limestone bluffs.

The third trail — the Mother Neff Trail — begins and ends at Rogers Park, crosses the lake and explores inlets and protective coves north of Morgan's Point Resort. Despite its name, the

trail does not go to Mother Neff State Park.

The rocky shoreline and tall bluffs create stunning backdrops when paddling along the Morgan's Point Resort trails. Paddlers can choose to do any of these three trails, or portions of them for a shorter trip. The Tanyard Springs and Mother Neff trails offer quiet, secluded trips, while the Camp Kachina Trail offers expansive lake views.

Now for a little history: The Tanyard Springs Trail is named after the small community of Tanyard Springs, which now rests below the waters of Lake Belton.

Before the Leon River was dammed in the 1950s — it was dedicated in 1954

See **TRAIL**,
Page 56



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Trail - From Page 55

— most of this stretch of the Leon was known as Tennessee Valley. It was originally occupied by settlers from Tennessee, and the natural beauty of the area apparently reminded them of home.

In the 1860s, 70s and 80s, the Chisholm Trail cut through the area, and there are still signs of that traffic today. Wagon tracks worn in limestone rock can be found on the shoreline near the Tanyard Springs trail.

Many paddlers on the Morgan's Point trails take fishing breaks along their way. Largemouth bass, hybrid striped bass, smallmouth bass, white bass, white crappie, and channel and blue catfish are common catches.

While paddling, fishing and enjoying lake views, be sure to keep an eye on shore for the abundant wildlife in the area. Herds of white-tailed deer, squirrels, gray and red fox, and armadillos are common sights — especially the deer.



If bird watching is your thing, you just might think you are in heaven. A variety of songbirds and waterfowl are

common on the lake, and lucky paddlers may get a glimpse of wild turkeys, osprey and eagles.

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Natural - From Page 47

rise 40 feet. Water overflowed the spillway for 42 days, reaching a peak depth of nearly 4 feet.

The water-flow into Miller Springs created new canyons and exposed geological formations. In 1993, the Miller Springs Alliance took over the lease and maintained the area, with a desire to protect it and see it used for educational and environmentally sustainable activities.

The alliance operated using volunteers until 2018, when the cities of Belton and Temple took over the lease to maintain the area.

According to a city of Belton website, volunteers help keep Miller Springs Nature Center functioning and clean. To be added to an email list and receive notification about future volunteer dates, please email parksandrec@beltontexas.gov.

Grant thanked the city of Temple for its role in the Miller Springs project.

"They have really come through and were able to fund this much needed and highly anticipated replacement of the old boardwalk to the Tennessee Valley Overlook through their Places & Spaces Capital Improvement Plan," Grant said.

"This new accessible walking path will connect the parking

lot all the way to the upgraded overlook," he added. "This will make it possible for our mobility challenged patrons to make their way to the overlook where they will be able to see the spillway, the lower prairie, the dam and the upper rim all the way on the other side of the park."

"Make sure to take your binoculars so you will be able to see the wildlife that is all around you," Grant said.

Cadence - From Page 37

west end of the north concourse.

The newly established, 17,000 square foot Equine/Livestock Complex on the west side of the campus held its first event in 2018. Additionally, a 130 x 300

foot performance surface, air conditioning, a generous concourse for vendors with an unrestricted view of the arena, seating for 800 patrons, attached to a 100 x 200 foot warm-up arena with stalls and pens,

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Industrial areas remain for Belton with EDC

The BEDC (Belton Economic Development Corporation) was created in 1990 after the Belton citizens voted in favor to adopt the state's Type A Sales Tax Program, an initiative introduced and supported by the city council. Acceptable projects for the BEDC are governed by state law for Type A Corporations and by policies established by the board of directors and the Belton City Council.

The board of directors consists of five community business leaders appointed to three-year terms by the Belton City Council. Current board members include Brandon Bozon, Stevie Spradley, Marion Grayson, John Holmes and Tyson McLaughlin.

"We are still seeing a lot of requests for building space. Companies are interested in Texas. Companies we have here in Belton are still in the growth mode. The Imagine Belton plan was developed last year. This project is a joint effort between the City of Belton and BEDC. It is a vision for the downtown area," said Executive Director

Cynthia Hernandez. Under Hernandez's leadership the focus of BEDC's services have increased to include local businesses. Traditionally Economic Development Corporations focus on attracting businesses then moving on to the next potential business thinking of relocating. They recently closed on 10 acres of land along 6th Ave near downtown Belton. The property is zoned Retail along 6th Ave and light industrial along the southern side of the property.

Traditional Industrial out of Dallas purchased 19 acres in the Belton Industrial Park and added another 8.56 acres outside of the park for the development of four industrial buildings. The four buildings will add 344,000 square feet of office space in the park. These buildings are to be listed as Class A commercial real estate.

There are four industrial areas in Belton. Available sites can be found in the Belton Business Park and the FM 93 Industrial Park. Belton Business Park located along IH-14 and

Loop 121 has excellent access to water, fiber optics, interstate and 3-phase electricity. Highway 93 Industrial Park is just off IH-35 and is where Belton's heavy industry is located.

Belton has an excellent school system and quality of life.

Belton is located at the point where IH-14 and IH-35 connect. Close to Austin, Dallas and San Antonio the Belton community is at the heart of one of the top growing areas in the country. The Killeen Regional Airport is just 15-miles away.

Each year the BEDC assists new companies interested in establishing operations in the City of Belton, encourages expansion of local companies, continues developing the Belton Business Park, and supports infrastructure projects in the community to spur growth.

Business Roundtable meetings featuring special presentations are held quarterly to encourage networking

See **EDC**,
Page 59

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Fort - From Page 38

fare Foundation. "It's going to bring in a lot of people who will spend money in our communities."

"Eventually, we will have about 600 artifacts on display, including a Huey helicopter, an M4 Sherman tank, an M2A3 Bradley Fighting Ve-

hicle and other items representing the history of the U.S. Army from 1776 to the present day," he said.

Fort Cavazos soldiers, both on and off post, head to Belton for dining and events such as concerts, rodeos, festivals and fairs.

EDC - From Page 58

among industry representatives, present topics of common interest and provide opportunities to learn and support our local industry.

The BEDC also holds quarterly meetings with industries located in the Belton Business Parks.

The meetings are more of a roundtable affair with a speaker provided. Warren

Ketteman, Director of Industry Development for the BEDC is in charge of making these meetings a reality.

"Building relationships with our current industries and businesses is as important as new industry development," said Hernandez.

Under Hernandez's leadership the focus of BEDC's services have increased to include local businesses.

Parks - From Page 41

Jeff Hamilton Park — Playground, walking trail, and seating areas.

The Landing at Creekside Park — A popular spot along Nolan Creek.

Liberty Park — Two pavilions, playgrounds, and the Nolan Creek Hike & Bike Trail.

Lions Field — Practice baseball field and basketball court.

Miller Heights Park — Picnic areas, playground, basketball court, fitness station and more than a half-mile of walking trails. A butterfly garden and open green spaces.

Miller Spring Nature Center — Extensive hiking opportunities in a 260-acre scenic natural area owned

by the US Army Corps of Engineers.

Nolan Creek Hike & Bike Trail — 1.26-mile trail linking Liberty Park and the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor, with educational stations.

Nolan Creek Nature Trail — Quarter-mile trail with scenic views.

Quail Meadows Park — Small pavilions, asphalt trail, and playgrounds.

South Wall Tiger Park — Splash pad, playground, a half court and covered picnic tables.

Yettie Polk Park — One of the city's oldest and most-used parks. Features playgrounds, picnic tables, basketball court, and the Nolan Creek Hike & Bike Trail.

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Temple College now enrolling 5,000 students

Temple Junior College was founded in 1926 in response to the need for a postsecondary institution in Temple. The college is a result of the joint efforts of civic, business and educational leaders. In the early years, the college was operated by the public school system. Classes were held in the basement of the old Temple High School building. As the student body grew, so did the need for a permanent campus. A separate junior college district was established in 1955, enabling the college to build a new facility. The college moved to its present location in South Temple in 1957.

In 1996, the name of the college was changed to Temple College to reflect its role as a comprehensive college, offering transfer programs, technical education, community education, career and workforce training, and cultural activities. The college now offers day and evening classes; technical and workforce training; on-campus, online, hybrid, and web-enhanced courses; and continuing education classes.

Temple College has traditionally offered pre-professional courses leading to degrees in medicine, law, education, engineering, and similar fields and more general academic courses that enable students to transfer to four-year institutions for baccalaureate degrees. The technical

program of the college expanded with the opening of the Watson Technical Center in 1967. In recent years, a wide variety of credit and non-credit classes, programs, and workshops have been offered through the Business and Continuing Education Division. Temple College became a leader in education for health professions with the opening of a new Health Sciences Center and Clinical Simulation Center in 2004.

The campus in Temple now exceeds 108 acres, including 27 buildings. The University Courtyard Apartments provide apartment-style student housing and the Temple College Apartments provide housing for low-income student families. Both facilities are located on the east side of the Temple campus.

The Danny Scott Sports Complex includes a gymnasium, fitness center, baseball and softball fields, and an intramural field.

With an enrollment of about 5,000 students, the college is large enough to maintain a flexible and varied program. It is, at the same time, small enough to provide students with opportunities for the development of leadership abilities. Small class size makes possible a close personal relationship between students and their instructors.



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BCYC offers after-school and summer programs

For decades, the Belton Christian Youth Center (BCYC) has served the local community through its commitment to the youth and its promotion of Christian values. Located at 505 E. Avenue C, BCYC is a nonprofit activity center that offers after-school and summer programs for area children, providing plentiful opportunities for learning and fun.



BCYC offers volleyball recreation leagues in the spring and the fall. The youth center's story dates back to 1982 when it originally began operation in the gymnasium of a Belton elementary school. In response to positive community support, activities expanded year-round. They moved to their current location in 1999.

BCYC is licensed by the state to provide childcare for up to 175 students. When the local schools are in session BCYC is an after-school program. A warm meal is provided each afternoon. During the summer months, BCYC is a full-day program offering three meals.

The facility is over 38,000 sq ft with eight classrooms, two kitchens, a dining area, a playground area, and a full basketball court.

There were over 500 children who signed up for the basketball league last fall.

They currently have five funds and three school buses to provide transportation to the school. The buses require a CDL commercial license to operate. One of their biggest challenges is maintaining the buses.

Each year, BCYC serves around 1,200 students, and the praise of parents and community members speaks to the program's long-standing reputation of success. The children raised over 500 lbs. of food for the Helping Hands Ministry for Thanksgiving last fall.

For more information on BCYC and its programs visit beltonyouth.com. Daniel Bucher is the Executive Director for BCYC.

Bucher started working at BCYC after graduating from the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor. He worked at Grand Avenue Theater from 2012-20. "I am back at the place I am meant to be. I love to see smiles on faces. If you can make an impression on one child a day that is all you can ask for," said Bucher.

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Shopping - From Page 32

The Porch on Central Avenue is a women's clothing store that has been in operation for several years. The Belton Depot, which opened last year, features a wine bar, a candy shop, crepes, brick oven pizza, and an exceptional diner that has become a tourist attraction in itself. These buildings were constructed in the 1800s.

Additionally, two major restoration projects are currently underway downtown: the original opera house building and the Boston building on Central and East Streets.

Arusha's Coffee Co. is a popular meeting spot on East Street, renowned for their breakfast tacos.

The Gin area is a hot spot in the summer months with Scores - Belton, The Gin at Nolan Creek, Coronas De Oro, and Graley's Goodies Yogurt Shop are popular spots for those looking to enjoy Nolan Creek. Oak Fire Pizza on East Street serves delicious brick-oven pizza.

Water Street Waffle Co. is conveniently located on Water Street, not far from The Gin area, and offers a wonder-



ful and unique breakfast selection.

"I love it downtown. It is so beautiful. Our vendors were really pleased with the Christmas shoppers. I am a huge believer in going local and supporting local businesses. We received a lot of positive feedback from our ads featured in The Belton Journal," said Belinda Manzella, the owner of Lindy Lu's.

If you're looking for local artists, My Giving Tree Gift Shop & Art Gallery is the perfect destination. The store offers a variety of items, including custom-made jewelry, wood-carved art, and paintings, with prices ranging from a few hundred dollars to several thousand. What makes this store special is its focus on featuring art by local artists from the U.S. and Texas.

Next to My Giving Tree is iME-RAKi, a store that carries a large selection of modern clothing for both men and women—definitely a must-see. They also offer many unique gifts for men.

Leila Valchar, the owner of My Giving Tree, remarked, "The first time I visited Belton, I fell in love with this little town; I knew I wanted to make it my home. I planted roots and raised my children here. Downtown Belton is blooming with new businesses. Come visit us and spend the day exploring all the downtown shops and restaurants. We look forward to seeing y'all soon!"

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Sports - From Page 15

for their fourth straight playoff appearance.

Furthermore, the Lady Tigers soccer program secured a seventh consecutive district championship in 2024, when the Lady Broncos volleyball team, Broncos baseball team and Belton girls cross country team also earned district titles.

The Dragons and Lady Dragons made some program history as well, competing at

the state swim meet for the first time in the team's brief existence.

While lots of athletes were creating names for themselves in 2024, others were honored for their prior dedication.

Makenna Morrow and Allie Angell were each inducted into the prestigious Belton High School Athletics Wall of Honor after helping extend

the Lady Tigers' success on the soccer pitch.

Throughout their careers, each received all-district, all-region and all-state recognition, and they were teammates in 2023, when Belton lost in the regional final, falling just short of sending the squad to state for only the second time.

Festivals - From Page 17

Downtown Belton's annual Candy Trail is a great way to celebrate fall and the spooky Halloween season. Kids dressed as princesses, goblins, and superheroes head to downtown for a fun time that features more than 135,000 pieces of candy.

Organizers say Candy Trail is a fun and free alternative to trick or treating, thanks to the Downtown Belton Business Alliance.

Young ladies and their fathers or father figures enjoy the annual Father-Daughter Dance, held every February. The evening includes refreshments, dancing, games, prizes and a photo booth.

The city is home to many other festivals and family activities as well.

Belton is home to two movie theaters, The Beltonian and the multi-screened Grand Avenue. Both are hot spots for a variety of movies and events. The Beltonian specializes in gourmet food and classic movies.

Two lakes are within five minutes of downtown Belton — Stillhouse Hollow and Lake Belton. Both offer spectacular fishing, camping, hiking and biking. Windsurfing and paddling sports are also popular. A 12-mile paddling trail can be found a short drive away in Morgan's Point Resort.

The massive Cadence



Bank Center, formerly known as the Bell County Expo, is home to concerts, rodeos, the Central Texas State Fair, the Bell County Youth Show and many events featuring horses, dogs and livestock.

Recognizing that the past profoundly influences the future, the Bell County Museum collects, preserves and interprets the historic and prehistoric cultural heritage of the area and provides quality traveling exhibitions for enjoyment and education.

The nearby Gault Site is home to a wealth of archaeological evidence, and the site has been home to human beings for more than 13,000 years. The Gault Site provides archaeologists with a unique look into the lifestyles of the earliest people in Texas and the Americas.

Built in 1899, the Belton Depot served as a train station for the Katy Railroad and later the Belton Railroad company for many decades until it fell into obscurity. Thanks to local developers it has been renovat-

ed into the latest retail hotspot downtown. New businesses have found their home in the old station with more on the way.

The Chamber serves as an advocate and resource in five strategic areas: Workforce Development, Economic Development, Leadership Development, Marketing & Business Development, and Networking.

The Chamber has several programs in place to improve its growth and development, and it provides opportunities to connect and serve in the Belton community. These programs include Ambassadors, Leadership Belton, Mentor Belton, Business After-Hours, Chamber Coffee Connection, Legislative Governmental Affairs, and Military Relations.

The Ambassadors program provides opportunities for members to be actively involved in welcoming new members with ribbon cuttings and other celebrations. They represent the Chamber in connecting with members and hosting the annual awards banquet.

The Leadership Belton program is a year-long training experience that provides participants with opportunities to learn about and connect with the community. Mentor Belton is a program that pairs University of Mary Hardin-Baylor students with mentors in the community to promote workforce development.

Networking opportunities provide a chance to connect with other people and businesses in the community. Business After-Hours is a monthly event designed for Chamber members to gather in a social setting for networking and to meet new members.

Chamber Coffee Connection is a Chamber event geared toward all members and potential members who are interested in learning about member organizations and specific programs in the community. Often, a non-profit organization is featured.

The Chamber's Military Relations Committee serves as the focus of coordination for outreach to military families living in Belton. The Chamber also sponsors the Patriot Way Brick Walk along Central Avenue, providing an opportunity to honor those who have served in the military with engraved bricks and storyboards, which are located along the walkway to share stories of local heroes.

Bell County has a variety of private school options

Central Texas Christian School (CTCS), the largest private school in Bell County, offers quality education in small class sizes, located at 4141 W Highway 93 in Temple. With a strong academic program and a 100 percent graduation rate, the school serves around 500 students in a Christian-based environment.

Enrollment requires at least one parent to be a professed Christian, and the school community reflects around 30 different churches. The mission of the faculty is to educate students with the truth of Christ, fostering academic excellence and character development through strong academics, Bible classes, and leadership training.

CTCS promotes unity and spiritual growth through weekly chapel services, mission trips, retreats, and community service. Each grade level is assigned a local organization to support, and students participate in the annual Food for Families drive.

Class sizes are small—approximately 16 students in elementary, 22 in middle and high school, and a maximum of 12 in Pre-K—enhancing student-teacher relationships. High schoolers can take Advanced Placement and dual credit courses, and the school is accredited by the Association of Christian Schools International.

CTCS also emphasizes extracurricular activities and electives, offering options like Fine Arts, technology, and various leadership programs. The school hosts a public Open House each spring for prospective families.

For more information, visit their website at <https://www.ctcsliions.com>.

Holy Trinity Catholic High School

Holy Trinity Catholic High School is a private, coeducational Catholic college-preparatory school dedicated to the educational mission of the Church. The school provides students with a high-quality, gospel-based education while fostering engagement with the Catholic heritage.

Students develop their intellectual gifts through effective communication, diverse subject offerings, and classes that promote research skills and civic awareness. The college preparatory curriculum includes Honors and Advanced Placement (AP) courses designed to enhance critical thinking and problem-solving abilities.

With a 7:1 student-teacher ratio, Holy Trinity boasts SAT and ACT scores above the national and state averages, along with dedicated faculty. AP courses are available in subjects such as English, Calculus, Biology, Chemistry, U.S. Government, History, Spanish, and Art History.

St. Mary's Catholic School

St. Mary's Catholic School in Temple provides educational opportunities for children from Pre-K3 through middle school.

The St. Mary's Way of Catholic Classical Education

aims to foster students' love for the True, Beautiful, and Good, guiding them closer to God. This educational approach is based on the medieval Trivium (grammar, logic, rhetoric), which serves as both a framework for learning and a method for developing independent thinking.

The Classical Education model at St. Mary's is structured to align with childhood development, with each stage building on the previous one. The school follows the St. Jerome Model of Classical Education in implementing this approach.

Providence Preparatory School

Providence Preparatory School in Belton is a private Christian school offering education for pre-K through high school.

The school's mission is to blend classroom and at-home instruction, emphasizing the importance of the parent-child relationship in fostering vibrant learning. Providence collaborates with families in Belton, Temple, and the greater Central Texas area through a schedule that combines half homeschool and half traditional school.

Founded in 2011, Providence has 445 students enrolled, with average class sizes of 11 in pre-K and first grade, and 16-17 in grades two through twelve.

Daily Chapel prioritizes spiritual growth through singing, scripture recitation, devotionals, prayer, and announcements, facilitating a sense of community among students of all ages in the Worship Center.

St. Francis Episcopal School

St. Francis Episcopal School is located in Temple on the grounds of the church of the same name and was established in 1971.

Focused on diverse learning styles, the school provides a warm environment for children to grow spiritually, socially, emotionally, and cognitively. Offering early childhood education from ages two to kindergarten, St. Francis uses a play-based curriculum that promotes critical thinking and independent learning.

The school also offers after-school activities, including basketball, dance, art, and science.

Vintage Christian Academy

Located in Harker Heights, Vintage Christian Academy (VCA) offers a Christian classical education for students from Pre-K through sixth grade, emphasizing academic, moral, and spiritual development.

VCA also features a part-time Mother's Day Out program for Pre-K children that encourages growth through play and social interaction.

Students are prepared for both academic success and spiritual resilience, symbolized by their mascot, the Warriors, representing the ongoing spiritual battles they will face in life.



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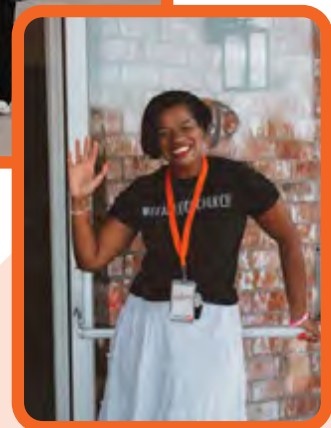
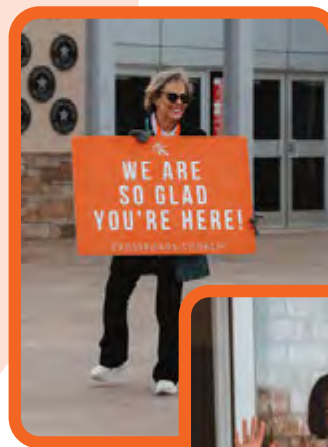
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Seton Medical Center Harker Heights has been growing steadily since construction began in the spring of 2011, and its doors were opened on June 18, 2012. The hospital is a joint venture between Austin-based Ascension and Nashville-based Ardent Health Services. The facility as a whole is 192,400 square feet and has 83 beds, not including the 60,000 square-foot Harker Heights Medical Pavilion. The hospital provides family practice, internal medicine, cardiology, general surgery, orthopedic surgery, neurosurgery, plastic surgery, obstetrics and gynecology, gastroenterology, otolaryngology, nephrology, neurology, oncology, podiatry,

rheumatology and urology services.

AdventHealth Central Texas is the primary healthcare provider in West Bell and Coryell counties, serving more than 125,000 patients per year, with more than 300 physicians offering 43 medical specialties and wellness services. AdventHealth Central Texas, a 207-bed hospital, offers many services including a 24-hour emergency center, behavioral health care, digestive care, heart and vascular care, imaging services, lab services, men's care, mother and baby care, orthopedic care, senior care and sleep care.

In addition to private practices in the area, several hospitals maintain clinics and/or urgent care facilities in Belton.

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Belton dog park keeps tails wagging

Belton's Heritage Park will benefit from many improvements during upcoming months, but local residents are quite pleased with one element of the park that will remain the same.

"The (Heritage Park) Dog Park is a great place — I go there every day," said Belton resident John Kinney. "If it had lights, I'd go at night as well."

Phillip Anderson, also of Belton, is a big fan of the bark park.

"I use it often — I like the size of the park," he said. "The water station needs a little work, though, but I think Belton needs a second park for dogs."

Despite its popularity, residents such as Anderson

say the city needs another dog park to serve northside and lake-area residents and their pups, but that likely won't happen anytime soon.

"We do not have any plans to build another dog park at this point, but that doesn't mean we won't build one in the future," said James Grant, director of Belton Parks & Recreation.

According to Grant, the city put up a temporary dog park back in 2019 to see if the community would use it. It became an immediate hit with local pups and their owners.

"We were trying to decide if we wanted to spend the money and build a permanent one, but we didn't want to build something our community didn't want or use," Grant

said.

"Boy, were we ever surprised," he added with a laugh. "It was a resounding hit, and we had more compliments on it and its location than we could count."

"It was so successful that we decided to extend the temporary fence rental for several more months while we planned a permanent dog park."

The temporary park — it was called Pop-Pup Dog Park by the city — was divided into two areas, one for large dogs and the other for smaller canines. The park was small — about a quarter-acre in size.

Today's Park also has two sections, but the overall size is now 1.5 acres.

"We kept it at the same location because everyone loved

the shade trees, and it worked well with parking, walking trails and the nearby park playground," Grant said.

"It is completely fenced in with a 5-foot chain link fence, drinking fountains for both human and canines, and we have repurposed some old playground equipment to give our furry friends something to play on," he added. "Most of it is irrigated to help with turf management, and it has park benches and even a picnic table or two."

Now called Heritage Park Dog Park, money to build the puppy playground was part of a \$750,000 Texas Parks & Wildlife grant awarded a few

See **DOGS**,

Page 79



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Dogs - From Page 77

years ago.

"The park is very popular with pet owners and their furry best friends," Grant said.

"The Belton dog park is great," said Joshua Landon. "It's way better than others in the surrounding area."

According to Grant, several projects are on tap for Heritage Park and many will be started this year.

"The lights on all four baseball fields at Heritage Park are being retrofitted with LED lights," he said. "These lights will be much brighter and more energy efficient."

"Also, the soccer complex is getting another practice field, and we are adding lights to the new multipurpose field. This will help out during the summer — kids can play later when it's not so hot."

The Belton Baseball Association is putting in batting cages at Heritage Park, and they will be open to the public when not in use by league baseball teams.

"The batting cages will be near Community Garden, which also is getting a facelift," Grant added.



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BISD - From Page 12

alongside them through months of rehearsals and the final performance. This initiative reflects the Belton ISD Board of Trustees' commitment to the district's Values & Beliefs, ensuring every student has access to exceptional learning experiences tailored to their unique needs and passions.

Belton ISD believes that parents are not only their child's first and most influential teachers but also essential

partners in education. That's why we invite parents to work alongside our classroom teachers and staff. Parents are encouraged to volunteer at schools, engage in district activities, and stay informed about curriculum and learning opportunities to support their child's success.

To read more about the latest happenings in Belton ISD, visit www.bisd.net/news.

Cru - From Page 49

named NCATA All-America while UMHB swept the national NCATA Division III awards.

UMHB's Softball team finished 24-15 overall and with a 13-8 mark in conference play.

UMHB Baseball also competed last season and looks to build a strong 2025 campaign. The Cru advanced to the ASC Tournament last season and saw head coach Mike Stawski earn

his 300th win as a head coach.

Men's and Women's Golf were also successful last season. The UMHB Men earned four top-three finishes on the season. Sarah Kmiecik also represented the women's team at the NCAA Championship. The UMHB women finished second at the ASC Championship, winning three other tournaments last season.



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Library - From Page 33

the library and to support the free book give aways at community events like Christmas on the Chisholm Trail.

The library began with a Belton woman's study club, The Woman's Wednesday Club. The library occupied a single room at Central Hotel, which was owned and operated by the Women's Commonwealth, a very successful women's religious group with several businesses in Belton and Temple.

When the book collection outgrew the room, the club rented a space in the Harris & Walker building on Main Street. Emma A. Lee was hired as the first librarian, and members of the club set a goal of having a Carnegie Library and began a resilient letter writing campaign to Andrew Carnegie. The letter campaign paid off when, with assurances of support from the City of Belton, a Carnegie grant was awarded.

In 1905, when the Car-

negie Library opened at 201 North Main Street it had 1,500 books. Miss Lee retired in 1924 and was replaced by Miss Louie C. Meyer.

In 1933, the Library Board petitioned the City Council to take over the operations of the library, and the library became part of the city government.

In 1946, Miss Meyer retired and was replaced by Miss Lena Armstrong, who served the library for 53 years before retiring in 1998.

In 1975, the library moved to a new building at 301 East 1st Avenue and changed its name to the Belton Public Library. After Armstrong's death in 1999, the library was renamed the Lena Armstrong Public Library due to the deep love and respect the people of Belton had for Lena Armstrong.

Kim Kroll, the current Director of Library Services, was appointed in September 2000.

Fourth - From Page 29

St.) with 10's of 1000's of people lining the parade route. The end of the parade will be at the Belton Police Memorial on Birdwell St.

You're going to want to visit the Festival on Nolan Creek. It begins after the parade and is located at Yettie Polk

Park at 101 S. Davis St. At high noon, there will be a Hot Dog Eating Contest.

That evening it's on to the Backyard Party at Schoepf's Bar-B-Que Restaurant at 702 E. Central Ave. The concert is free to the public. Fireworks later that night.

The PRCA & WPRA features the top cowboys and cowgirls in the business. The rodeo is held at the nearby Cadence Bank Center located at 301 W Loop 121 in Belton. The Candence Bank Center is a state of the art 6,559 seat multipurpose arena in Belton.



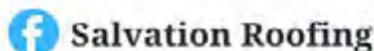
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No problem. The options for accommodations are many, whether you are staying one night or many. There are options to fit all lifestyles and budgets.

Hotels and motels located in Belton include La Quinta Inn & Suites, Expo Inn & Suites, Knights Inn, Budget Host Inn and River Forest Inn. For visitors wanting a more intimate atmosphere, there are Bed & Breakfast venues as well.

Bed & Breakfasts are a perfect fit for families and staycations.

Bryn Oaks B&B opened



in 2019 and is located in the heart of downtown Belton. Featuring four rooms with private baths, the refurbished historic home is a perfect getaway.

Casita Among the Oaks is located on Sparta Road near Lake Belton, and this pet friendly B&B includes a jacuzzi tub and a full kitchen.

For those seeking more of an at-home feel while on the road, Belton is home to several cottages and cabins, many

of which are on the shores of Belton Lake, providing a perfect tranquil atmosphere. Many are listed through Vrbo or Airbnb.

Summers Mill, located on the banks of Salado Creek near Belton — a historic gristmill still stands from the 1800s — is a retreat and conference center with lodging options ranging from cottages and cabins to lodges and homes.

Ranch Bunkhouse is lo-

cated in the rustic countryside of the south Belton area, and the venue is perfect for equestrians and those wanting to enjoy the peace and quiet of the country. Lodging is available for both horses and humans. Horse riding and hiking trails are plentiful spanning more than 800 acres. A daily continental breakfast is provided.

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