COMPLIMENTARY ISSUE

CONCIERGE

TITLE OF TEXAS

Close With Confidence

Proud to Salute Our

WOMEN *in* BUSINESS



FULL-SERVICE TITLE & ESCROW

CLOSINGS ANYTIME, ANYPLACE

EXPERIENCED. TRUSTED. LOCAL.

RESIDENTIAL COMMERCIAL LAND & MORE

112 N East St.
Belton, Texas 76513

(254) 781-0102

orders@ctotx.com

Weekdays: 9:00 am - 5:00 pm
Weekends: Closed

CTOTX.COM

Salado woman is a nurse and operates farm with her family

By David Stone
The Belton Journal

Megan Grigsby has been an intensive care and pediatric nurse for 14 years, and now she works from home as a registered nurse specializing in medical reviews. She's also a wife, a mom, and a farmer and rancher.

Yep, Megan is a busy woman. She and her family — her husband, Nathan, and two sons, Tyler and Logan — run a small farm near Salado. Grigsby Farms raises registered Beefmaster cattle and chickens and grows and sells Christmas trees. It's a busy life.

"I'm a co-owner of Grigsby Farms along with my husband, and I'm involved in various aspects of the business," Megan said. "I manage the day-to-day operations and help with various events."

"We hire seasonal high school help during open hours," she continued. "Year round, we raise the cattle and chickens, and we started growing the Christmas trees and try to be good land stewards."

"We started selling Christmas trees in 2023, and I love creating a nostalgic Christmas tradition for families," she said. "I do manage the books and accounting for the farm."

"We have two kids, both boys. Tyler is 10 and plays youth football. Logan just turned 7 and loves baseball."

"As for me, I was born in Tyler and grew up in southeast Texas," she said. "I met my husband in college at Tarleton State while getting my first degree in Animal science. I've always loved agriculture and interned at the Four Sixes Ranch."

Located in Guthrie, Texas, the historic Four Sixes Ranch sets the standard by producing the finest cattle and Quarter Horses while providing state-of-the-art veterinary and reproductive services backed by generations of expertise.

"I worked in the horse industry for a year but ended up going back to nursing school and graduated from Texas State in 2012," Megan explained. "I've been a Neonatal Intensive Care and pediatric nurse for 14 years, but now I work from home doing Medical Reviews as an RN."



"The work allows me to be home for the boys and better manage the farm. In my free time, I enjoy spending time with my family, reading, and spending as much time outdoors as I can."

Megan said Grigsby Farms is a member of Beefmaster Breeders United, the Texas Christmas Tree Growers Association, and the Salado Chamber of Commerce.

"We're very involved in Texas 4H," she added. "Our oldest is currently showing one of our heifers in Texas stock shows and is working on another project for the Bell County Youth Fair."

Grigsby Farm, located at 917 Hackberry Road in Salado, has been selling Christmas trees since 2023, and the family started to plant and grow trees in 2024.

"We're still relatively new to that," Megan said. "Our planted trees are very small right now, but in the next 5 years or so we will have some available for cutting."

"Right now, we carry Fraser firs that are freshly cut in North Carolina and are delivered to our farm on refrigerated 18-wheeler trucks," Nathan added.



Courtesy Photos
Megan Grigsby of Grigsby Farms, takes a break from her job conducting nursing reviews to feed a young Beefmaster.

CELEBRATING

Women in Business

The women behind confident smiles.



Lacee Tuerck
Office Manager



Rachel Bass
Clinic Lead

SATW
ORTHODONTICS

209 Hilliard Road • Temple, TX 76502

254-773-8028 | **smileattheworld.com**

SmileAtTheWorldOrthodontics | @smileattheworldortho

Highlands Lounge Pours Texas Hospitality with Scottish Spirit



Courtesy Photo

The team behind Highlands Lounge helps create a warm, inviting experience in the heart of downtown Belton.

By David Tuma
The Belton Journal

Highlands Lounge was founded on a simple idea: the spirit of Texas hospitality and the depth of Scottish whisky tradition belong together in one room. Born in Belton and shaped by the people who call this place home, Highlands is where conversation lingers, glasses are raised slowly, and every pour has a story.

"We owned Off the Rails at one time. We (husband Stephen) travel and are always looking for cocktails. I wanted to bring something like the places we visit to Belton. Amy Morter and I decorated the inside. Highlands Lounge was one of Amy's first projects. Amy designed the bar stools, bookshelf, and coffee tables," said owner Amber Hill.

For Amber, being in business brings challenges and rewards. "I love the creativity and constantly adjusting based on what the community wants and needs. We have four employees. One of my biggest challenges is knowing when to step in on any issue that may arise. We have high standards for those who visit. There is a slight dress code. Our cocktails take a few minutes to make. We want you to sip, savor, and have a good conversation," said Hill.

Highland Lounge has both inside and outside seating. They offer live music at times, bringing in a DJ once a month. Several distillery representatives/owners have visited the lounge. At times, they have food trucks on site.

The collection spans more than eighty-five whiskeys across three traditions — American bourbon and rye, Irish pot still, and Scotch single malt and blends — chosen one bottle at a time. Whether you're new to whiskey or have been collecting for decades, there's a seat at the bar for you.

For those looking to run a small business, Hill has a few suggestions. "Read about small business networks with people who own or run a small business. Start saving and get a financial advisor.

My Giving Tree: 15 Years Rooted in Faith, Family and Community

For Leila Valchar, owner of My Giving Tree Gift Shop and Gallery in downtown Belton, business has been a journey of faith, family, and community. In 2011, Leila and her husband Rick took a leap of faith, investing in a 6,000 square foot building downtown. Leila left her longtime career and stepped into something entirely new. That step became My Giving Tree, which has now been part of the community for 15 years. Over time, the shop has grown into an eclectic destination filled with unique gifts, jewelry, home décor, artwork, women's clothing, and a magical children's area. But Leila says the true measure of success has never been what's on the shelves. It's the relationships built, the community strengthened, and the chance to give back. Her commitment to downtown Belton runs deep, supporting small businesses, promoting local events, and encouraging others to discover the heart of downtown. At the center of her story is family. Leila is the proud mother of four beautiful daughters, each following her own path and purpose. Two of her daughters, Jessica Shelton and Jamie Davenport, founded iMERAKi and continue to evolve through online sales, corporate fittings, traveling for menswear, pop-ups, and new opportunities. Watching all four of her daughters grow into the women they are today has been, as she says, one of her greatest blessings. Fifteen years have brought challenges, surprises, and lessons she never could have imagined. Through it all, her faith has been her anchor, helping her move forward even when the path wasn't clear. Today, she looks back with gratitude and forward with purpose, hoping everyone who walks through the doors of My Giving Tree feels welcomed and leaves with a little more joy. For Leila, being a woman in business isn't simply about owning a store. It's about having the courage to take chances, the faith to persevere, the willingness to lift others, and the joy of watching the next generation find their own way.

My Giving Tree
Gift Shop & Gallery • Downtown Belton
Celebrating 15 Years
Faith. Family. Community.
Honoring Women in Business • Leila Valchar, Owner

Real Skin
DERMATOLOGY
We Salute
Women in Business
Expert care. Healthy skin. Confident you.
Emily Patton, DO
Megan Nixon, PA-C
Alyssa Sweeney, PA-C
Brennan Calder, PA-C
Common Skin, Nail & Hair Issues
Aesthetic Services
Skin Cancer Screening & Surveillance
Procedural Dermatology & Mohs
Serving Waco, Temple and Gatesville
Schedule your appointment today
254-265-7100
1618 Canyon Creek Dr., Ste. 120
Temple, TX 76502
RealSkinDerm.com
Major Insurances Accepted

Lisa Copeland Roars with a Lioness Spirit

By Michele Weisman
The Belton Journal

Lisa Copeland serves Bell County clients looking to buy, sell, invest, luxury, relocations, and 55-plus communities. Decades of experience in the mortgage business, a sought-after speaker at Fortune 500 companies, and an author, founder of Lisa Copeland Real Estate, brought her to partner with eXp Realty. In six-and-a half years, she's built a team of 900, in 29 countries, and had over 5 billion in sales.



2025 Real Trends top 1.3 percent of realtors in the nation and top 0.6 percent in Texas, handles her clients' business as she does her own.

Copeland said her biggest accomplishment is her family.

She said, "I've been married to the same guy for 38 years, James Copeland. And my two kids, Allix Jackson, who lives here in Belton, and J T Copeland. And then our four grandsons."

Invited to build and partner with Tarek El Moussa, HGTV star, in six and a half years, her heaviest concentration is in Texas, Arizona, California, and Florida.

Copeland is representing Riata Builders, with a new model home showcasing coming opportunities in Belton called Ranch Latitude 31.

She said, "My newest project, Lioness Real Estate Group, is partnering with Riata Home Builders. It's a new custom home development, 600 home sites, three quarters of an acre and larger. It's really nice, and the website behind that is going to be lionesshomegroup.com."

Copeland's newest book, *Lioness Unleashed: A Manifesto for Women Who Refuse to Stay Silent,* just released, is a number one international best seller. In it, she invites women around the world to join Lionespride.com.

She said, "I talk about 39 different women in the book. From big celebrities to some local women. Ordinary women who have done extraordinary things."

As an entrepreneur, Copland finds it fun to create and build. An inspiration on her journey has been her mother, Susan Colegrove, who she gave the first copy of *Lioness Unleashed* to.

About her mom, she said, "She went back to school later in life, got her Ph.D. She's shown me what grit and never giving up is all about.

For women thinking of starting their own business, Copeland has this advice.

She said, "Get clear on your why. And then number two, I would find somebody, a company, that is already doing it. Put the whole business plan on one sheet of paper, how you're going to start it up, what it's going to cost you, how you're going to make money, how you're going to recoup your investment, like it has to be crystal clear on one sheet of paper."

Copeland found a home for her business in Belton.

She said, 'We love being part of the downtown community of business owners. We love everything about Belton. We've been here five years now, and we plan to stay here forever."

The Copeland Building is located Downtown Belton at 210 East Central Avenue. Find more information at lisacopelandrealestate.com, lionesshomegroup.com or contact her at lisa@lisacopeland.com or 512-944-5472.

Sol Life Puts Down Roots in Belton



By Harvey Jackson Oss
The Belton Journal

Sol Life Natural Wellness relocated to Belton last year. The studio, founded by Shae Stinson, offers a variety of herbal and holistic products and services. The new venue is located on Lake Road near the Quail Meadow neighborhood. Stinson founded Sol Life in 2023 on West Adams in Temple, after being inspired by a yearlong struggle with her own health. Stinson endured lengthy treatments of conventional medicine, but was unsatisfied with the poor results. She decided to look into holistics, and discovered the use of herbal medicine. When her herbs finally brought her relief, she knew she needed to share them with the area.

"It really was like a voice from the divine spoke to me and told me to bring herbal medicines to the community," said Stinson. Stinson is an herbalist, a type of holistic health practitioner that matches symptoms to specific herbs.

"I'm really good at helping get down to root causes," explains Stinson. Her clients' problems may be emotional, lifestyle-based, or physical. Stinson also sells minerals

Sol Life, located at a new location on Lake Road, offers a variety of holistic health options for the local community.

Sol Life also features an in-house masseuse, Julie Rodriguez from Buena Vida Massage. Stinson hosts monthly community classes where she demonstrates things like making bath salts or crystal grids. She holds yoga sessions in the back of the property.

In May 2024 the West Adams area was ravaged by a devastating EF-2 class tornado that destroyed over 500 homes and businesses.

In August 2024, Stinson moved her business to a house on

Lake Road. The venue was intended to be temporary, but she came to love the area so much that she bought the building to establish a permanent presence. "We have the trees, and we have the land… it's just a cool place to be," mentioned Stinson. The living rooms were converted into retail spaces, and the master bedroom became an office. Another two rooms were made into healing areas.

Stinson's family has lived in Belton since 2008. She appreciates that Lake Road gives her business visibility, as it's one of the busiest roads in town. "I love this area too; I just love the community," said Stinson.

Many of Stinson's original Temple customers frequent the new Belton location. Sol Life has also received lots of growth from customers in Belton.

Shae hopes to continue growing and serving the Belton community, and eventually open franchises.



Hometown Roots, Statewide Reach: Mecca Dreisbach Brings a Personal Touch to Texas Closings



Courtesy Photo

Staff at Concierge Title of Texas; bottom row Monica Smith, Charissa Trovinger, Mecca Dreisbach, Savanah Neely, Thelmalynn Rojas, top row Shawnee Staton and Hillary Glossup.



By Michele Weisman
The Belton Journal

Concierge Title of Texas is a full-service title and escrow provider. They accommodate transactions throughout the entire state of Texas and offer significant cost savings and a custom closing experience. The intention is to provide custom "Concierge" service and convenience by catering to all parties involved in the transaction.

The owners of Concierge Title of Texas, Mecca and Scott Dreisbach, are known for creating one of the most progressive and forward-thinking title companies in the state. Mecca has twenty years of escrow and title experience in Texas. She grew up in central Texas and graduated from Belton High School and then Texas A & M University.

"At Concierge, it is the culture that is important. We do not use branch managers. Our environment is professional. This industry involves high stress. It involves what is usually the largest investment a family can make. I answer all my calls. I don't want to get so large I can't return my calls. My job is to protect people's money. We spent six figures acquiring software to do just that," said Mecca.

At Concierge Title of Texas, the client is always our top priority. Their goal is to offer a competitive fee structure industry-wide and to make the closing process as smooth and as easy as possible for all parties involved. Our experienced staff has handled thousands of closings throughout Texas. If you are buying, selling, or refinancing a residential home, investment property, commercial property, or vacant land, our staff will ensure the closing process is handled properly and in a professional manner. We are underwritten by Title Resource Group (TRG), Westcor Land Title Insurance Company, and First American Title, who support every transaction and ensure quality in compliance and service.

After opening a location in Belton, where she grew up, Mecca has received support from the local community. "We have received so much old-fashioned community support. My daddy, who is an old cowboy who still lives here, is on our walls in photos. This community is really kind. They stop by to see the building. We have Bell County roots," said Mecca.

For those looking to open a small business, Mecca has some advice. "If you have to sweep the floor, you sweep the floor. You can't overthink it all. Trust your gut. If you have something you want to do then do it. Do something every single day to get there," said Mecca.

"This business doesn't exist without these employees."

WOMEN IN BUSINESS

Celebrating the Women Behind **EXTREME**



EXTREME

GYMNASTICS ★ T&T ★ CHEER ★ KARATE

Empowering Athletes. *Inspiring Confidence*. Building Champions.

GYMNASTICS | TRAMPOLINE & TUMBLING (T&T) | CHEER | KARATE | NINJA

Temple (254) 780-0087 | **Killeen** (254) 526-3547 | www.extremecheer-tumble.com

English Maids Cleans Up Across Central Texas

By David Tuma
The Belton Journal

English Maids has grown into a trusted name in residential and commercial cleaning, serving Central Texas for over 20 years. From homes to offices, they proudly serve Waco, Belton, Temple, and the surrounding communities with reliable, top-tier service.

Their commitment to quality, proven cleaning methods, and exceptional attention to detail has helped them become one of the most respected cleaning providers in the region.

English Maids was established in 2006 with a simple yet ambitious goal: to deliver high-quality cleaning services backed by reliability, trust, and family values. From the start, our mission has been to be the cleaning company customers can count on—for both excellence and dependability.

English Maids has offices in Waco and Belton and averages around 25 employees. Several of the employees have worked for English Maids for over 10 years. Each employee goes through a five-day training program. "We make sure they are ready before we send them out. We are bonded and insured," said Lauren.

Kay English spent more than 30 years in dental and medical administration in Waco, Texas. When her dentist employer retired in 2005, she decided it was time for a new chapter where she could help others and tangibly improve their lives.

A perfectionist with an eye for detail, Kay launched English Maids from the laundry room of her home. Her methodical approach, commitment to quality, and customer-first mindset quickly elevated English Maids into a leading cleaning service in Central Texas.

Each day each employee reports in the morning to either the Waco or Belton offices. They primarily work in teams. "My advice to those wishing to get into business for themselves is to remember you are going to make mistakes. The hardest challenge is how you handle those mistakes. Reflect and learn from the past. Learning the hard way is just part of life. It is how you bounce back and do things differently the next time that is a key to success in life and business. I like the Temple-Belton area, it has that small-town feel. They support local small businesses," said Lauren.

While Kay still owns the business, day-to-day operations are now overseen by her daughter, Lauren English Thurman.

While studying at Texas A&M University, Lauren began working with her mother part-time at English Maids. After earning her master's degree in human resource development from TAMU, she initially worked in corporate HR.



Courtesy Photo
Lauren English-Thurman manages English Maids, serving the Waco-Temple-Belton area.

In 2009, Lauren transitioned to working full-time with English Maids. Her leadership, paired with a deep understanding of business and customer service, helped grow the company into one of Central Texas's most respected cleaning services.

A clean space is a healthier, more productive one—and they are here to make that happen. Whether it's a one-time deep clean or routine service (house maintenance or office cleaning services), our trained team handles it all with care and professionalism.



Kitty's Kakery

Sweet Treats FOR EVERYONE

Delicious. Inclusive. Local.

Vegetarian/Vegan Bakery

Specializing in Allergy Friendly Desserts

We offer a variety of baked goods with regular, vegan (egg-free, dairy-free) and gluten-free options.



SEASONAL CUPCAKES
(Watermelon Cooler)



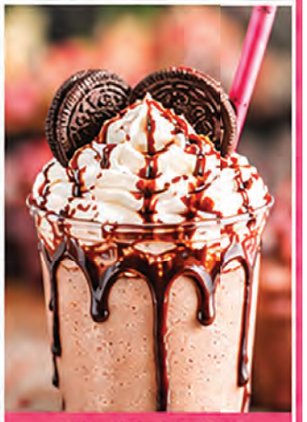
CAKE SLICES
& CAKE CUPS



DESSERT CUPS
(and more!)



CUSTOM CAKES
FOR ALL OCCASIONS



MILKSHAKES
& COFFEES

Coffees ♥ Milkshakes ♥ Homemade Syrups

Also serving coffees, milkshakes, and house-made flavored syrups.

Now with a dine-in area! — ♥ — *Come relax and enjoy a sweet treat!*

858 S. Fort Hood Street
Killeen, TX

254-432-4779

Open
Tuesday-Saturday
11-7 p.m.

kittyskakery.com



LisaCopelandRealEstate.com

(512) 944-5472

The Copeland Building
210 E Central Ave
Belton, TX 76513

FAITH | FAMILY | FREEDOM | LEGACY

Extreme Cheer & Tumble Builds a Legacy of Excellence

By David Tuma
The Belton Journal

Extreme Cheer & Tumble opened in December 2001 by Bridget Preddy and has grown to be one of the top recreational & competitive gyms in Central Texas. Extreme has one of the most qualified staff in the area and prides itself on achieving "perfection before progression", which is why they hold more than 50 National Titles.

Extreme now has two locations: one on Old Waco Road in West Temple and another on E Stan Schlueter Loop in Killeen. There are over 2,000 athletes enrolled in their programs, including cheerleading, gymnastics, tumbling, karate, Ninja Warrior, and even a trampoline & tumbling program.

Extreme employs over 70 people between the two locations. "Our coaches impact the lives of these kids. We teach through our culture. When we get asked about the different gyms, we tell them to go see everybody. Our goal is to give back to our kids," said Manager Bailey Preddy.

"I would not be the employee, the athlete, the coach, or the human being I am today without Extreme Cheer & Tumble. Extreme has been a part of my world since I was 6 years old. The fact that I had a place to call home during the tough teenage years. I found myself falling in love with guiding and leading young athletes to fall in love with their path and their passions as well. I am so thankful and honored to be a part of the legacy of this facility.

This company is not just a building, but a home for many people who can't find solitude or consistency anywhere else in their lives. I hope to bring a little of that love and gratitude everywhere I go. Because I know where it all started for me - at Extreme," said Jasmine Robertson.

Extreme Cheer & Tumble started off small and over the decades became a major employer and instructor for countless children and young adults. The business started in the back of a vehicle. Today the business has over 34,000 sq ft of building space.

"What we do here shows how a woman can do anything. If you get the right people around, you. If you employ the right people, your vision will flourish. Hiring character is a big part of that. A single mom with two kids built this business. We would not be where we are today without these employees. The job my mother did building this business was incredible," said Preddy.



Courtesy Photo

Extreme Cheer & Tumble has been impacting the lives of employees and children for over 20 years. Picture: front row, left to right Bailey Preddy, Bridget Preddy, Carolyn Taylor, Colleen Dittmur; back row Malika Craven, Jasmine Robertson, Zenobia Olivares, Jessica Cleaver and Eden Matney.

They have served athletes and their families from Belton, Temple, Salado, Killeen, Waco, and other surrounding areas since they opened their doors.

"Being able to work at Extreme has been an absolute blessing. I moved from Florida to Texas when I was eight years old, and I still remember walking into Extreme for the first time and being welcomed with so much kindness and love from the staff. During such a big transition in my life, Extreme became a place where I felt welcomed, supported, and at home. My coaches were some of the best, and looking back, I realize just how much of an impact they had on me.

I left Extreme at the beginning of COVID, and I remember being so upset to leave a place that meant so much to me. Now, being back as a staff member has been such a full-circle moment, and I have loved every bit of it. There is something so special about seeing the kids walk through the doors excited for class, watching them grow, and getting to be a small part of their lives.

I strive to be the kind of coach my coaches were to me when I was younger. I always encourage my kiddos to try their best, believe in themselves, and never be afraid to give something a shot. I love being someone they can count on for encouragement and support, and I will always be the loudest one cheering them on when they accomplish their goals, big or small.

More than anything, I want to make a lasting impact on these kids," said Eden Matney.

Creating smiles is rewarding for local orthodontics staff



LACEE TUERCK, office manager



RACHEL BASS, clinic lead

By David Stone
The Belton Journal

Orthodontics has traditionally been a male-dominated specialty, but women have become an increasingly important part of the profession. Today, there are many talented women in the field, both in clinical practice and in leadership.

"I think that's a positive development for the profession and for the patients we serve," said Joshua Knowles, orthodontist at Smile at the World in Temple. He is surrounded by a female staff that manages the office and takes part in building better smiles for customers.

Knowles and his staff provide high-quality orthodontic treatments to help patients of all ages achieve more beautiful smiles.

"We proudly provide personalized orthodontics in Temple, and we also welcome our neighbors from the surrounding area, including Belton, Troy, Little River, Academy, Rogers, Cameron, Nolanville and Harker Heights," said office manager Lacee Tuerck.

"We strive to stay on the cutting edge of technology, combining years of experience with enthusiasm for orthodontics to create a positive atmosphere," she said.

Knowles agreed, saying "We are proud to care for families throughout the surrounding communities. We welcome patients from Belton and the surrounding areas."

"I've been practicing orthodontics for years," Knowles said. "It's a privilege to work in a profession where we can make a lasting difference in someone's smile, confidence and overall oral health."

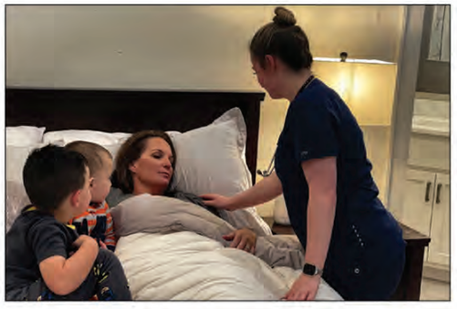
Smile at the World staff members say they were drawn to the orthodontics field because it "combines science, precision, problem-solving and working with people.

"I enjoy the technical side of creating healthy, beautiful smiles, but just as importantly, I enjoy getting to know patients and their families throughout treatment," Knowles said. "Seeing someone's confidence grow as their smile changes is one of the most rewarding parts of what I do."

"My favorite part of the of the job is seeing the transformation — not

Continued on Page 16

Our Hospice House
CENTRAL TEXAS
OurHospiceHouse.org



Our Hospice House
A place to die with love and dignity

Our Hospice House works directly with affiliated hospice agencies who refer patients --- when dying at home is not an option.

We are a donation-only 501c3 charity, supported by the generosity of our local community.

We do not accept any government funding including Medicare and Medicaid.

Founders: Jeff Bates M.D. & Jennifer Bates FNP
Executive Director: Annie McCall
To volunteer or make a donation, visit: OurHospiceHouse.org



Faith, family and community grow my giving tree

By David Tuma
The Belton Journal

For Leila Valchar, owner of My Giving Tree Gift Shop and Gallery in downtown Belton, business has been a journey of faith, family, and community. In 2011, Leila and her husband Rick took a leap of faith, investing in a 6,000-square-foot building downtown. Leila left her long-time career and stepped into something entirely new.

That step became My Giving Tree, which has now been part of the community for 15 years. Over time, the shop has grown into an eclectic destination filled with unique gifts, jewelry, home décor, artwork, women's clothing, and a magical children's area. But Leila says the true measure of success has never been what's on the shelves. It's the relationships built, the community strengthened, and the chance to give back.

Her commitment to downtown Belton runs deep: she supports small businesses, promotes local events, and encourages others to discover the heart of downtown. At the center of her story is family. Leila is the proud mother of four beautiful daughters, each following her own path and purpose. Two of her daughters, Jessica Shelton and Jamie Davenport, founded iMERAKi, and continue to evolve through online sales, corporate fittings, traveling for menswear, pop-ups, and new opportunities.

Watching all four of her daughters grow into the women they are today has been, as she says, one of her greatest blessings. Fifteen years has brought challenges, surprises, and lessons she never could have imagined. Through it all, her faith has been her anchor, helping her move forward even when the path wasn't clear. Today, she looks back with gratitude and forward with purpose, hoping everyone who walks through the doors of My Giving Tree feels welcomed and leaves with a little more joy.

For Leila, being a woman in business isn't simply about owning a store. It's about having the courage to take chances, the faith to persevere, the willingness to lift others, and the joy of watching the next generation find their own way.





Courtesy photo
My Giving Tree owner Leila Valchar stands inside her downtown Belton gift shop, which has served the community for 15 years.



just in a patient's smile, but in their confidence," Knowles added. "Orthodontic treatment is a journey, and it's rewarding to watch patients progress from their first appointment to the day they see their finished smile."

"I also really enjoy building relationships with patients and their families over the course of treatment."

Knowles said that as an orthodontist, he diagnoses and treats problems involving the alignment of teeth, the bite and the relationship between the upper and lower jaws.

"This includes treatment with braces, clear aligners, and other orthodontic appliances," Knowles explained. "We treat children, teenagers and adults, tailoring each treatment plan to the individual patient's needs. The goal is not only a beautiful smile, but also a healthy, functional bite that can last a lifetime."

"Dentofacial orthopedics is part of my specialized orthodontic training," Knowles added. "Understanding jaw growth and facial development allows me to identify issues early and determine whether treatment during childhood or adolescence could improve long-term outcomes."

"Dentofacial orthopedics focuses on the growth and development of the face and jaws, particularly in children and adolescents," Knowles said. "While orthodontics focuses primarily on the position of the teeth and bite, dentofacial orthopedics can involve guiding jaw growth and correcting skeletal discrepancies as a child develops."

Knowles said continuing education is essential in orthodontics.

"Technology, treatment techniques, and our understanding of patient care continue to evolve, so I want to keep learning and incorporating proven advances that benefit my patients."

"My focus is on continuing to improve the quality of care we provide, developing our team, and making the orthodontic experience as positive and effective as possible for every patient," Knowles said.

"I'm married, and we have three children. Family is a big part of my life, and being a dad gives me a special appreciation for the trust parents place in us when they bring their children into our practice," he said.

"I understand how important it is for families to feel comfortable, informed, and confident in the care their children receive."



Our Hospice House, serving guests with experienced care

By Michele Weisman
The Belton Journal

Our Hospice House (OHH) cares for loved ones in the final 30 days of life. It is located in a rural neighborhood and is fully donation supported. Hospice providers and nurses provide bathing and assessment, while the qualified OHH staff provide experienced care for their guests and the loved ones who visit.

Annie McCall, executive director, explained OHH has had over 230 house guests. With professionalism, the staff remain professional while not getting involved personally.

Tending to their guests in the three-bedroom home, they also take care of regular household chores. Families and friends who come to spend precious time with their loved one in hospice care will discover they are welcome to dine, relax, and cook for themselves if they don't mind cleaning up after.

The staff realize the unique opportunity working at OHH.

Bonnie Byram, a part-time caregiver, started with personal care for her dad at the age of 16 and later for her husband. She said about her role, "We keep them comfortable, loving on them. If they want something special to eat, serving them."

Mel Curtis, a full-time caregiver, started caregiving in '86, took a break and returned in 2023. Curtis said, "It's a blessing when I sit with somebody who's fixing to pass. I call it they're growing their wings, and as they're getting ready to pass, I say, you can spread your wings and fly."

Continued on Page 18





Maggie T is a full-time with 18 years of nursing home experience. T said, “Some don’t want to die at home, especially if they have young kids.”

Michelle Whitt, a part-time caregiver, volunteered with veterans on hospice. Whitt said, “We are likely the ones that give the last dance to some of these people, dancing with them on the way to the bathroom so they can continue to have dignity.”

A favorite thing to do for families who visit is to prepare meals for them. They also dine with guests, enjoying time with them. With shift changes, they give a rundown to the next caregiver coming on.

Rosa Mena, PRN, worked in private nursing homes and before that cared for her family. She said, “When I get here, if I don’t know this resident, then the one that’s before me, she’s going to fill me in.”

Sherri Wright, PRN, is a retired healthcare administrator and former foster parent. Wright explained about the shift changes, “We all strive to be the best we can be.”

Many of the women worked professionally with Jennifer Bates, RN, FNP, one of the founders, and McCall, before coming to OHH. The women of OHH appreciate the unique opportunity Bates has created, while still raising her family.

Witt said, “She’s an amazing woman to put something like this together for the community. It was the hand of God that put Annie here and each one of us here together with Jennifer, staring it all.”

“Thank you and God bless you,” they all said to the donors.

Helping clients find their ideal location



By Michele Weisman
The Belton Journal

Realtor Roberta Bair, ABR, GRI, MRP, assists military families and veterans find their ideal location within Central Texas. With personal experience in VA loans and PCS moves that led her into a career in reality, she connects with buyers to see first what locations fit their needs.

Bair doesn’t exclusively work with military families and veterans. She said, “I help everybody. My tagline is serving military families and exploring Central Texas living.”

A top agent with Jorgenson Real Estate, Bair said, “Why I chose Casey Jorgenson is he’s a veteran, and been in real estate for 16 years or more. My focus is on education of myself and helping my clients.”

She makes videos of local attractions. Bair said, “I like to find out what they’re interested in before we settle on an area of concentrating on the house. I had a family relocate here from Hawaii that we just closed last week.”

Bair’s biggest accomplishment is making the top five percent of realtors. “I’ve persevered and been successful in a business that even seasoned agents haven’t.”

For military families looking to move, Bair has some advice.

She said, “It’s good to talk to somebody who has experience with VA loans. That they’re a local expert.” Secondly, Bair suggests looking on the Texas Real Estate Commission website at www.trec.texas.gov, to verify a realtor’s current certifications.

With a heart for community, Bair serves on the board of directors at the Salado Chamber, the Temple Belton Board of Realtors, and is involved with the Spouses Club on Fort Hood.

Contact Roberta Bair at 254-931-3993 or robertabair.tx.realtor@gmail.com. Or visit: roberta-bair.jorgenson-realestate.com or Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube at, RobertaBair.TX.realtor.

Kitty's Kakery has gourmet, custom, vegan, and gluten-free options on the menu


Courtesy photo

By Michele Weisman
The Belton Journal

Katherine Alverez, owner of Kitty's Kakery, offers custom cake orders, gourmet cookies and desserts, without a dietary preference, vegan, or gluten-free. Starting as a cottage business out of her home in Alaska, and then in Texas, she opened the Killeen store five years ago, and has yet to have a decoration request she can't create.

Alverez said, "We were stationed in Alaska at the time, and so it grew a lot very quickly."

Starting her baking to make her daughter's cakes and realizing she had to restrict her own diet, from-scratch baking brings the unique charm of an upscale bakery with daily offerings and advanced specialty orders possible without the drive to Austin.

Walk-in customers will find ice cream, coffee, single servings of bars, cookies, cheesecake in a cup, brownies, and more lined in cases, and on Wednesdays from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. all cupcakes are two for $6.

Alverez said, "Our ice creams are dairy free, egg free, and they're really creamy. We get it from Aranka's Five Star Creations, a veteran-owned company, and they have their creamery in Nolanville. Our coffee is a woman-owned business, Armadillo Coffee Roasters out of Austin."

Cheesecakes and cakes are shown online.

Alverez said, "We have our full cheesecake menu online, and the cheesecakes and cakes can be made gluten-free and vegan. We ask for three days' notice because we bake everything from scratch in-house."

Curating her recipes to taste like their counterparts, with the health aspect important to Alverez.

Alverez said, "We have a separate gluten-free prep area outside of the kitchen. It has its own ingredients, its own utensils. We try to prevent cross-contamination as much as possible. No other items are prepared in that area. Fortunately, all of our customers, even those with celiacs, have never had a problem eating any of our baked goods."

Noting a photo of a cake, she said, "I did that, Godzilla. We can pretty much do anything. I love making 3D cakes. We pretty much have a wedding every weekend this month. Any kind of customized cakes we can do. We require a week's notice on custom cake orders."

The holidays are another way Alverez helps her clients. There is a Thanksgiving menu that pre-orders are offered, and at Christmas they offer cinnamon rolls.

She said, "I think the biggest seller on our Christmas menu is our take and bake cinnamon rolls."

Kitty's Kakery has a community focus for youth.

Alverez said, "To kick off summer break, bring their last report card. We do a free cupcake or cookie for students with A's or A B honor roll. We also participate in toy drives for Christmas. We also donate a cake every year for the Fort Hood Scholarship Fund. We try to do career days throughout the year with the local schools."

Kitty's Kakery is located at 858 S Fort Hood St. in Killeen. They are on Facebook at, Instagram at kittys_kakery_ctx and Tiktok at KittysKakery.



A CONFIDENT SMILE CHANGES EVERYTHING

We combine advanced digital orthodontics with personalized care to create confident, healthy smiles. Woman-owned and proudly serving Central Texas, we're committed to making every patient feel comfortable, valued and confident.



WEST TEMPLE ORTHODONTICS

254.899.2500
207 Westfield Boulevard
Temple, TX 76502
westtempleorthodontics.com

LARRISSA CALI, DMD, MSD
Board Certified Orthodontist