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Total Solar Eclipse <small>NASA Ambassador Presentation</small>	April 5th Yettie Polk Park	Schoepf's Music Series	For dates go to: schoepfsbbq.com/events
Total Solar Eclipse <small>NASA Ambassador Presentation</small>	April 6th Bell County Museum	4th of July Celebration <small>Downtown Street Party, Patriotic Program, Parade, Festival, Rodeo</small>	June 29th - July 6th
Solarbration Market	April 6th	Bell County Comic Con	Aug 3rd - Aug 4th
Solarbration Concert at Schoepf's BBQ <small>Shane Smith & the Saints</small>	April 6th	Central Texas State Fair	Aug 29th - Sept 1st
3rd Annual Schoepf's Bulls & BBQ	April 6th	Belton's Bacon, Blues, & Brews Festival	Sept 27th - Sept 28th
Total Solar Eclipse <small>Belton Solarbration</small>	April 8th	Lions on the Leon	For dates & info: beltonlionsclub.com
Rockin' Rotary	April 13th 6:00 PM	Candy Trail	Oct 26th
Concert at Schoepf's BBQ <small>Vanilla Ice with the Funky Bunch</small>	April 27th	Christmas on the Chisholm Trail	Dec 6th - Dec 7th



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MAYOR'S WELCOME

I'd like to welcome you to Belton, the heart of Bell County. Whether you're passing through, visiting a friend or considering this as your new home, I'm glad you're taking the time to explore and read a bit more about us. In this time of digital communities and greater distances between neighbors, I hope you will find an authentic community of great people while you explore. I also hope you will take the time to explore our historic downtown, drive through this little corner of the hill country, and maybe even experience a little 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 hope we can all look up from our screens and stop relying on posting our pictures and memories in order to have truly experienced something.

Belton is an ideal location situated at a crossroads between

Ft. Cavazos, Austin and Waco. We're not far from Dallas-Ft. Worth and San Antonio and we are nestled between two awesome lakes – Lake Belton and Stillhouse Hollow Lake. Because of this central location, we have become a regional hub for education, healthcare and logistics. The diverse economy is great for our residents, but our culture is what makes the difference. This community offers so many things for its visitors and residents including live music, diverse restaurants, great schools, active churches and wonderful celebrations like our 4th of July Parade and Rodeo.

But my favorite place in Belton is our downtown. Located on the Nolan Creek and highlighted by our beautiful



and historic County Courthouse, our downtown is a vibrant and active part of our community. It has become a place where small businesses are able to make their impact and the people are able to gather in a safe and welcoming atmosphere. I enjoy weekends where you can see young and old from a very diverse set of backgrounds gather together and share a common experience. This place is a wonderful canvas for creating community and wonderful memories.

Belton is a melting pot of culture and people. From descendants of the first settlers to Texas brought here during retirement or for new job opportunities, you will not find a greater representation of our true Texas Spirit: a community that is fiercely independent and fiercely

loyal. I've heard it said that you can define community as having at least 3 connections with another person. Using this definition, you would be in community with someone that you see at the coffee shop, sit in the bleachers of a sporting event and possibly go to church with. The quality of the community as a whole is one that offers as many meeting places for each of us to experience life together.

I've found a lot of good places that appear to have community on the outside, but it is rare to actually experience it firsthand. At a minimum, I hope that you can see that we have a great community. . .but my hope for you, and for all of us, is that we get to experience it for ourselves. Belton is one of the best. It is a very welcoming and diverse community and we hope you can help make it even better.





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One Community One Day

One Community One Day is an annual event in Belton where volunteers assist residents in need with yard work, painting, or minor home repairs. This community-wide service project is organized by the Belton Youth Advisory Commission under the direction of the Parks and Recreation Department. This year's One Community One Day is Saturday, April 1, 2023. Residents may apply for assistance at the Harris Community Center or online at www.beltontexas.gov/ocod. Following a review process, addresses are selected for assistance. Community members are welcome and encouraged to volunteer their time & help with the selected projects. To apply for assistance or to volunteer please visit our website at www.beltontexas.gov/ocod.



Heritage Park is expanding! With a proposed finished date of Summer 2023, Belton's largest park will provide the community with even more recreational space with ample parking and accessibility. Improvements include a large multi-purpose field, concession stand with restrooms, a fish camp, and a kayak dock.

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2023



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 business 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 overstated.

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 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 & WPRR Rodeo at Cadence Bank Center. 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

See **BETTER TOGETHER**,
Page 12



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Better Together - From Page 11

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 Cavazos, Recreation/Quality of Life

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

Networking opportunities provide opportunities to connect and 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.

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.

The Chamber is actively engaged in legislative and governmental affairs, hosting legislative updates and providing information to citizens about notable issues, including a monthly interaction with State Representative Hugh Shine. 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.

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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 Economic Development Corporation

Cynthia Hernandez, Executive Director
Ana V. Borchardt, Director of Business Expansion & Retention
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Finance Department

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

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Tami Bliven, Admin. Assistant

Central Fire Station

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

RU OK? Senior Program

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(254) 933-5897

Municipal Court

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(254) 933-5838

Human Resources

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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

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BELTON INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

Belton ISD is one of the fastest-growing public school districts in Texas, with new families joining the Big Red Community each year. The district currently serves about 13,650 students but expects to reach an enrollment near 15,500 by 2027. 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 that include Belton, Morgan's Point, part of Temple and unincorporated areas of Bell County.



Belton High School and Lake Belton High School stand out for their award-winning extracurricular and career and technical education programs, while Belton New Tech @ Waskow is a popular school of choice open to



BISD students in grades 9-12.

Belton ISD has earned a reputation for academic excellence, innovative programs and an abundance of extracurricular opportunities. This year's achievements include:

The newest BISD campus – James L. Burrell Elementary – which opened in January 2024. Hubbard Branch Elementary, current-



ly under construction, will open in August of 2024.

1,400 students participated in Advanced Placement and 49 percent of our students who have taken the AP exams (779) scored a 3 or higher meaning that 265 students earned AP scholar distinctions.

BISD was one of only 17 districts accepted to the Leadership Collaborative through the Holdsworth Center, a nonprofit focused

See **BISD**,
Page 18

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BISD - From Page 17



them through months of rehearsals and in the final performance. The collaboration with The Penguin Project was an idea championed by the Belton ISD Board of Trustees because it aligns with the district's Values & Beliefs, each and every student deserves exceptional learning experiences according to their unique needs and passions. The 2024 spring performance will be "Finding Nemo Jr."

Belton ISD believes parents are their child's first and most important teachers. That's why we invite parents to come alongside our classroom teachers and staff. Parents are encouraged to volunteer at schools, en-



on building leaders in public education. The Leadership Collaborative is designed to develop aspiring principals.

The BISD Board of Trustees advocated for an innovative and inclusive program called The Penguin Project. Last year, the first-ever collaboration with Belton ISD and The Penguin Project culminated in outstanding performances of "Annie Jr." The Penguin Project productions are unique because all of the roles are filled by young artists with developmental disabilities. They are joined on stage by a dedicated group of "peer mentors" who volunteer to work side-by-side with



gage in district activities and stay informed about curriculum and learning opportunities.

In May 2022, voters approved a \$173,825,000 bond to address growth, aging and evolving facilities, program equity, and safety and technology in Belton ISD. Administrators have been hard at work to make the promised projects a reality. Projects underway include the construction of two new elementary schools, additions and renovations at several campuses, safety and security upgrades, and the purchase of new buses. To read more about the latest happenings in Belton ISD, visit www.bisd.net/news.

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BISD-ATHLETICS

By Clay Whittington

The Belton Journal

Belton ISD athletics has aspirations of producing months and months of memorable moments this year. Regardless of what happens, though, forgetting 2023 will be difficult. Belton and Lake Belton experienced a wealth of success in 365 days in a variety of sports by advancing to the playoffs, earning awards, signing scholarships and delivering signature athletic feats.

And no single player commanded more attention than Broncos wide receiver Micah Hudson. The senior was the most coveted collegiate recruit in Lake Belton's brief history, receiving offers from countless schools, including powerhouse programs Texas, Alabama, Texas A&M, Georgia, Miami, LSU and Ohio State.

Hudson decided to continue his career at Texas Tech, however, sending shockwaves across the college football landscape, and during his final season at Lake Belton, he proved worthy of the hype. Among the honors Hudson garnered, he was named 4-5A, Division I All-District Most Valuable Player for the second consecutive season after accounting for 1,400 total yards of offense, catching 70 passes for 1,353 yards and 18 touchdowns to go with 158 yards and another score rushing.

The showing propelled the Broncos to a record of 8-3, 6-2 en route to returning to the playoffs, but it did not compare to the Tigers' run. Belton (10-2, 5-1 District 11-5A, Division II) only lost one game during the regular season to defend its outright district title, and while there was some concern about where each team would reside fol-

lowing the University Interscholastic League's biennial reclassification and realignment, both will remain. Although the construction of each program's district will be altered when the official realignments are released in February, Lake Belton will stay in Class 5A, Division I and Belton will stay in Class 5A, Division II.

The outcome

allows plenty of other Belton ISD programs the opportunity to continue building as well.

Lake Belton freshman Kendrick Jones has the potential to emerge from Belton ISD as one its most decorated athletes after beginning his career with a state championship.

Jones claimed Lake Belton's first state title by winning the 200-meter dash in 20.57 seconds, and he was part of the Broncos' third-place 800 relay team, joining Ty Legg, Dawson Cabiad and Hudson. Belton senior Sydney Alamein qualified for two events at the state swimming meet, becoming the school's first representative since 2018, and the Tigers and Lady Tigers also thrived outside of the pool. On the

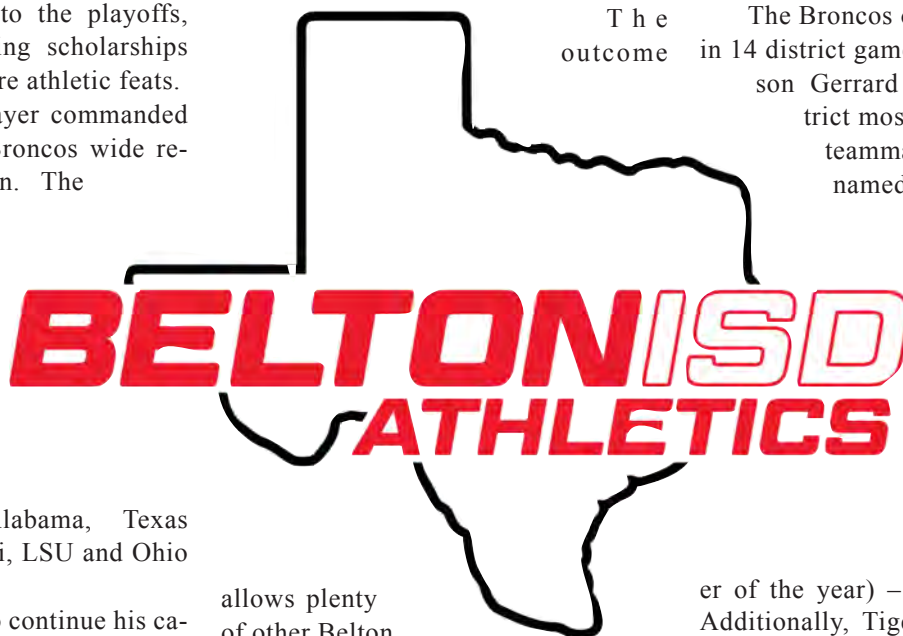
soccer pitch, standout Makenna Morrow – the program's all-time leading scorer – guided the Lady Tigers to their first regional final since 2000. She was named all-district most valuable player and an all-state honorable mention. Team district championships were also earned by Lake Belton baseball and Lady Broncos volleyball thanks to undefeated performances.

The Broncos only allowed six runs in 14 district games, while pitcher Mason Gerrard was named all-district most valuable player and teammate Mason Law was named pitcher of the year.

First-year head coach Allison Waits oversaw the Lady Broncos' unblemished run, and two of her players – Gabby Jones (MVP), Trinity Pearson (co-block-

er of the year) – earned superlatives. Additionally, Tigers powerlifter Isaac Jones and Lake Belton powerlifter Elaina Herrera and Belton cross country runners Briac Ybanez and Olivia Brillhart each made appearances at their respective state meets. On the basketball court, Belton junior Trap Johnson continued his standout career by being named all-district offensive player of the year and landing on the all-region team, setting the stage to potentially join a litany of prior greats by one day receiving the school's greatest honor. Belton's Wall of Honor ushered in two new members in 2023 as Logan Hall, Class of 2018, and 2022 graduate Ayanna Jones were granted the distinction.

Hall currently plays for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, while Ayanna Jones won a track state championship as a senior.



SHOPPING DOWNTOWN

The history, the people and the layout along Nolan Creek are unique. Luckily for Belton, the shops here are just as unique as Belton itself. The community is vibrant and dedicated to each other. This bodes well for those willing to invest in the community.

On any afternoon you can find residents walking around the downtown area. The white-water area along Nolan Creek is simply a draw communities in the area can't match.

Belton is home to Cochran, Blair & Potts, the oldest department store in Texas.

Inside is a variety of clothing, western wear, unique gifts and even a mini museum. It is much more than a department store. Recently remodeled, this store can order many items they do not have in stock.

If you are looking for antiques or items from the past, Exchange on Central is the place to visit. The store contains many unique, handmade items in stock. If you look as you enter the store, there are a couple of very old signs from the community's past.

"Downtown Belton has become a destination for shoppers looking for fashion, gifts, home décor, antiques and collectibles," Brett Baggerly of Exchange on Central said. "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 on Central Avenue.

Main Street Bridal has wedding gowns and formal wear in a completely restored building. This store is a dream come true for many who are preparing for a wedding or special occasion. Whimsies Boutique on Lake Road has modern clothing and unique gifts. Like most of the shops in Belton, the business is locally owned. Bourland Landscape Supplies & Outdoor Power Equipment has everything you need for yard work, such as dirt and rock formations for your yard. The power tool selection is very well stocked, and they know the equipment they sell.

Pink Bulldog Boutique has a variety of women's clothing. The custom shirts are a hot item with women in the area. They are located on Penelope Street next to Nolan Creek Brewery. Next to Nolan Creek is La Luncheonette a custom food eating establishment that is a hot spot for locals. Get there early.

Two new shops opened in December of last year Clover & Co. Boutique on Main Street in a house constructed in the 1880's and Turquoise Buffalo and Co. on East 1st Ave Downtown. Both are women's clothing stores.

Lindy Lu's on the Square offers a variety of hand-crafted gift items that must be seen. This store is like The Exchange just in a different setting with a different set of vendors.

The Belton Depot opened last year. With a wine bar, a candy shop, crepes, brick oven pizza and a diner to die for, the Depot is a tourist attraction itself. The buildings were constructed in the 1800s.

Arusha's Coffee Co. is a place to meet on East Street. Their breakfast tacos are a specialty.

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 loaded with those looking to enjoy Nolan Creek.

Water Street Waffle Co. is a business that is located on Water

Street not too far from The Gin area. They have a wonderful, unique breakfast selection.

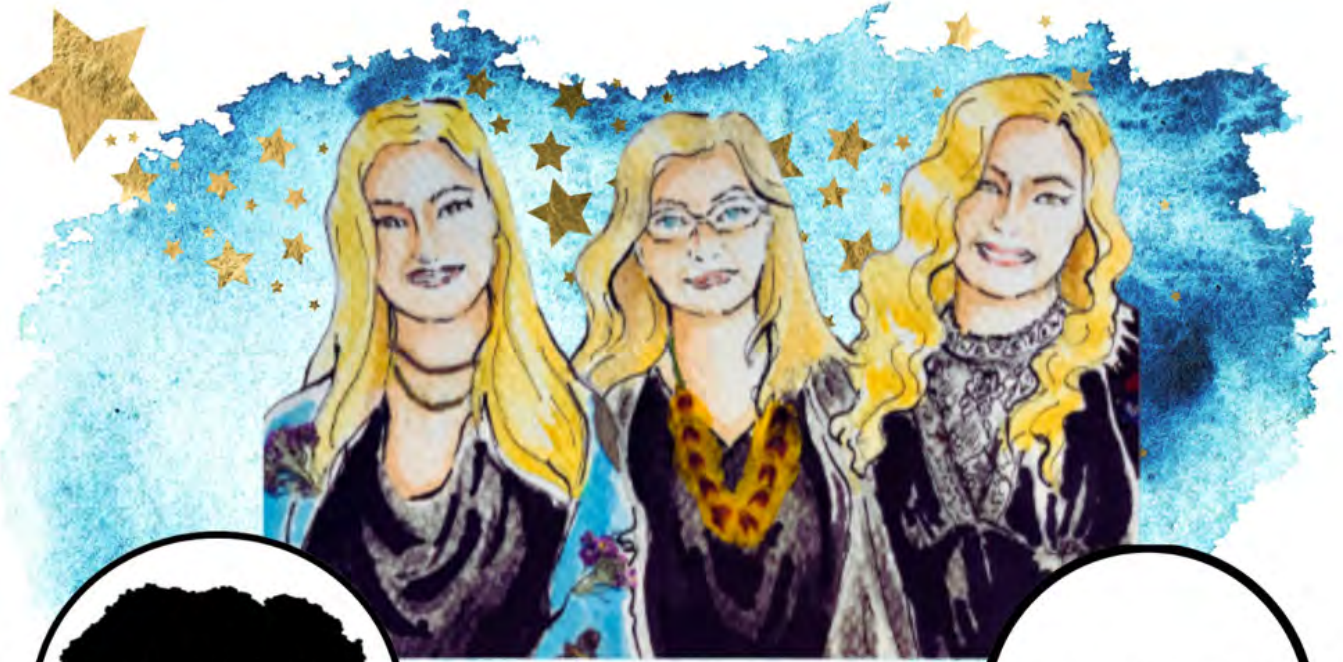
"I love it downtown. It is so beautiful. Our vendors were really pleased with Christmas shoppers. I am a huge believer in going local. Support your local businesses. We got a lot of response from our ads run in The Belton Journal," said Lindy Lu's owner Belinda Manzella.

Looking for local artists? There is no better place than My Giving Tree Gift Shop & Art Gallery. The store has a lot to offer including custom made jewelry. There is a large selection of wood carved art and paintings ranging from a couple hundred dollars into the thousands. What makes this store special is that it features local artists made in the U.S.A. and Texas.

iMERAKi is located next to My Giving Tree. This store carries a large selection of modern men and women's clothing that is must-see. There are many unique gifts for men in this store.

"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 and visit, and spend the day exploring all the downtown shops and restaurants. We are looking forward to seeing y'all soon," Leila Valchar, owner of My Giving Tree, said.





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MK&T DEPOT AND THE KATY FULLY LEASED



BELTON JOURNAL/MIKE MYERS

Downtown Belton is home of the historic MK&T train depot and the KATY. The area is full of tenants for locals' shopping and dining.

By MIKE MYERS

The Belton Journal

The purchase of the MK&T train depot and the KATY by four investment partners in December 2021 sparked a wave of economic growth and turned Downtown Belton into a destination location.

Business partners Terry and Luke Potts undertook the ambitious project to renovate the depot and the neighboring KATY building, in a remarkable revitalization of the area.

The Potts played a significant role in the project going beyond being investors. Terry Potts, alongside Luke, took on the role of contractors and dedicated themselves to reviving the long-abandoned depot.

Over a span of 14 months, they dedicated themselves to carefully restoring the depot and the KATY, using as many original and historic components of the building as possible. Their efforts paid off when they successfully located the original train car and a caboose, which were returned to the City of Belton and became part of the project renovation.

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 attracted attention nationwide, drawing people to explore what Belton has to offer. Visitors engage not only in dining and shopping in the train depot, but also in other

shops, contributing to the overall economic activity in the area.

"Activity breeds activity," said Gunter, stating that the domino effect of development is having an impact on Belton. Additionally, as more people visit and do business, the city sees a compounding effect, leading to even more future activity. The success of the depot restoration created a vibrant hub of activity and growth and breathed a new life into the heart of Belton for businesses and opportunities in Belton.

Gunter expressed his optimism that Belton will see continued growth for the future.

"With so many opportunities for growth, expansion, and business opportunities, Belton is 'ripe for the picking,'" said Gunter.

In October 2023, the MK&T and the KATY were fully leased as a mixed use commercial area for a total of 10 new businesses including 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, 100x35 Latin Cuisine, and Katy Deli.

Nestled on 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 success of this project was not solely dependent on one person, but required the involvement and collaboration of business partners, city approval for plans, designers and community support.

EXPLORE BELTON'S PARKS AND RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

Some of the best amenities in the region are among the 21 recreational facilities in Belton. Miller Springs Nature Center, Heritage Park and the Nolan Creek Hike & Bike Trail are just a few of the attractions within the Belton Parks and Recreation system. These locations each provide unique opportunities to enjoy the best nature has to offer here in Central Texas--and Heritage Park, with the Leon River as its western border, is one of the main hubs for youth sports in the region.

Miller Springs is a 265-acre nature park popular with hikers, bikers, bird watchers and others. It is located near the Belton Dam and allows those who use the facility to enjoy everything from unique vistas to secluded woods. The park is a destination for locals and visitors alike. Miller Springs is operated through a partnership between the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the cities of Belton and Temple.

Many changes are being made at



Heritage Park, with plans to preserve and improve upon the current park. Belton Parks and Recreation is dedicated to creating a space that meets the needs of the community. Phase I is nearly complete

and includes high priority items, such as an additional multi-use recreation field that soccer players will appreciate, more

See **PARKS**,
Page 27



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Parks - From Page 26

parking, extension of Park Lane Road for access through Heritage Park, and a pavilion with restroom facilities. Other amenities include a fish camp and kayak dock. In addition to being a venue for youth recreation sports leagues, Heritage Park also hosts Ultimate Frisbee and Disc Golf tournaments, which are open to adults.

The Nolan Creek Hike & Bike Trail is a 3.3-mile path through the heart of Belton providing great views of nature and the commercial area downtown. The trail begins south of IH-35, and connects three parks (Liberty, Yettie Polk and Harris Community Park) and the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor. The trail also features historic Chisholm Trail storyboards that add an educational component to a recreational experience.

Liberty Park, in addition to its wide-open spaces and creek access, has plenty of parking, as it is adjacent to the city's Park and Ride commuter facility. Yettie Polk Park's gazebo, seating and beautiful sights has hosted events ranging from parties to concerts, and even weddings. Harris Community Park offers a perfect combination of open space, creek access and one of the most popular

splash pads in the region.

Nolan Creek is a place that draws people interested in the outdoors. Fishermen frequent its banks year-round, and people wade in it in the warmer months. A kayak and tubing trail from Nolan Creek Nature Trail to Liberty Park is also a great way to view downtown from a new perspective.

The Harris Community Center serves as a diverse venue that can be rented for meetings and special events and also serves as a location for recreational programs such as Swordplay fencing and Zumba classes.

Belton Parks & Recreation hosts Christmas on the Chisholm Trail, Movie in the Park, the Daddy-Daughter Dance, Soggy Doggy Day and other family-oriented events.

Recreation Superintendent Joseph Dyer manages the Harris Community Center as well as the recreation events. James Grant, Assistant Director of Parks & Rec oversees all the parks and athletic fields within the Belton city limits alongside his full-time staff. The city does its best to provide parks and other play areas where families and citizens can roam, exercise and enjoy the world around them. To contact Belton Parks & Recreation, call (254) 933-5860.




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HARRIS COMMUNITY CENTER

The Harris Community Center in Belton is a local venue that is located nearby the scenic Nolan Creek.

Formally a segregated African American schoolhouse, the building was restored in 2006. The center has quite a history. The earliest record of public education for area African American students dates from 1882 when Mrs. Aleck McGee was hired "to teach the colored school." Professor Thomas Breckenridge Harris (1862-1907), a graduate of Fisk University, became the first instructor at the African American High School in 1890.

The name "West Belton School" was chosen in 1900. In 1936, a new building was erected at the site to house

students of all grade levels. By petition, the school was named "T. B. Harris" for its revered former principal. The last class graduated in 1966, and Belton schools were integrated the following year.

With amenities that include spacious parking, a full-service kitchen, free Wi-Fi, and many different packages to choose from, it's the perfect location to host most any event. The Harris Center staff will also set up the room to your preferred liking.

Events such as family reunions, birthday parties, baby showers, bridal showers, company parties and legal depositions are just some of the activities that are held there.

The Evans room has a capacity of 220, the Kinchion room holds 55, the Smith room holds 32, the Simpson rooms holds 40 and the McGee room holds 17. You also have the option of renting out the entire center which holds 364 people.

The full-service kitchen comes with a large refrigerator/freezer, double oven, stove top, microwave, dishwasher, and coffee machine. You are permitted to have alcohol on the premises under the supervision of an off-duty Belton Police Officer.

Tours of the center are available Monday through Fri-

See **HARRIS**,
Page 29



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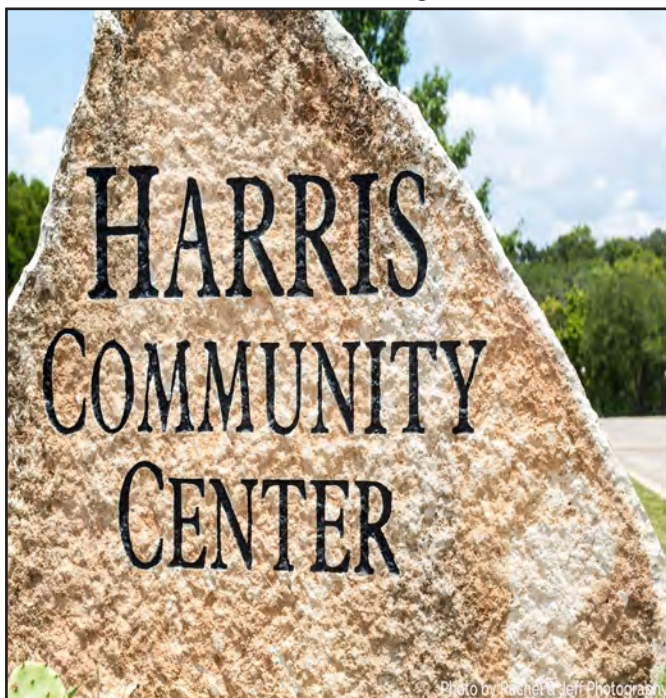
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Harris - From Page 28



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www.downtownbelton.com

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 Carnegie Library opened at 201 North Main Street it had 1,500 books. In 1975, the library moved to a new building at 301 East 1st Avenue and changed its name to the Belton Public Library. 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.

After her 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.

See **LIBRARY**,
Page 32



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Library - From Page 30

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

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BELTON FIRE DEPARTMENT SERVES THE COMMUNITY

Staff Report

The Belton Fire Department is a group of dedicated professionals who work to enhance the quality of life in the community by delivering expert-level fire & emergency service response, fire prevention, and public education, as well as providing any other service it is equipped to deliver.

The Fire Department continually seeks innovative improvements to the services it provides in an effort to create a safe, economically viable, and inclusive community for all people.

The Department remains a "Recognized" fire department through the Texas Fire Chief's Associ-



ation. Recognition for Best Practices is a comprehensive self-assessment pro-

cess, which enables fire departments to compare their practices to the best indus-

try standards.

In June 2020, Chief Jon Fontenot was hired. Under his leadership several positive changes have occurred, including the services provided by firefighters. Chief Fontenot replaced former Fire Chief Bruce Pritchard, who retired. Chief Fontenot has more than 25 years of fire service experience and has a Master's Degree in Public Administration.

Some of the changes initiated in 2020 included the establishment of an additional Fire Captain position, outsourcing EMS services to American Medical Response (a national leader in the EMS field), and in-

See **FIRE**,
Page 35

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Fire - From Page 34

creasing the number of firefighters assigned to each Fire response crew. In addition, the Belton Fire Department became a certified training facility for many Fire Department certification courses.

A major adjustment that has received positive feedback from the Department is the change to the firefighter work schedule from 24-hour shifts with 48-hours off between shifts to firefighters working 48-hour shifts with 96-hours off between shifts. This gives crews more consecutive time to mentally decompress from the hardships seen while on shift. The increase in consecutive decompression time leads to more mentally healthy and stable firefighters.

The health of firefighters is a constant concern. In addition to mental health, the City and Department Command staff are committed to physical

health and well-being. In 2020, each fire station was outfitted with new commercial grade



tractor washing machines which removes carcinogens from contaminated firefighting gear. Utilization of the ex -

tractor after each fire reduces the exposure to potentially harmful carcinogens. Each fire truck has also been equipped with decontamination supplies to quickly remove contaminants from crews before leaving a scene.

What to expect in the future: The focus of the Fire Department is making sure its approach to the work is more proactive than reactive. The focus is on preventing accidents and injuries, while providing professional level response when incidents do occur. The number of safety and training courses will be increased, as well as presentations offered to the community at no cost. Code enforcement activities will also be emphasized to ensure businesses are safe to visit. Partnering with local businesses helps improve safety.

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



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BELTON PD: TO PROTECT AND TO SERVE

The Belton Police Department is dedicated to providing excellent service through partnerships that build trust, reduce crime, create safe environments, and enhance the quality of life in the community. The police department is integral to the safety and security that so many in the Belton community enjoy, and it is fully committed to the mission of creating an all-around better quality of life for the people of Belton.

Belton PD serves residents, businesses, and visitors 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The Belton Police Department prides itself on having strong relationships with the community. The department strives to be friendly to people while meeting its responsibilities to protect and serve.



Its prevention focused model seeks to deter crime through engagement with fellow Beltonians. Partnerships with residents, businesses, and other organizations can be a powerful force for good and an effective deterrent to crime. Belton PD has an established reputation with the people of Belton and is respected across the state of Texas for the way it fulfills its mission with a modern service driven model of law enforcement.

One way Belton PD fosters its relationships with citizens is through community events. Officers often make appearances at Belton I.S.D. events, as well as events such as Coffee with a Cop and National Night Out, which al-

See **POLICE**,
Page 37



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Police - From Page 36

lows people to meet the police officers who work diligently to protect them every day.

The Belton Police Department was the first law enforcement agency in Bell County to be accredited as a Recognized Law Enforcement Agency by the Texas Law Enforcement Best Practices Recognition Program. The recognition program evaluates compliance with more than 170 Best Practices for Texas Law Enforcement. These best practices were developed by Texas law enforcement professionals to assist agencies to efficiently and effectively serve the public and protect individual rights. They cover all aspects of law enforcement operations including use of force, protection of citizen rights, vehicle pursuits, property and evidence management, and patrol and investigative operations.

The Belton Citizens Helping in Police Services (CHIPS) program was formed in late 2011 as a way to expand police resources through volunteers. A benefit of the program is that it deters crime through visible presence.

CHIPS volunteers supplement department resources by being extra eyes and ears while patrolling parks, shopping centers, and other areas where large groups may gather. Each year, Belton PD partic-

ipates in more than 100 community outreach events.

Additionally, volunteers help with administrative tasks inside the police building and at community outreach functions. CHIPS are graduates of the Citizens Police Academy Program and attend additional training specific to the CHIPS program. CHIPS staff the phones for the RU OK Program, which works to ensure safety and provide help to the elderly of Belton. The RU OK Program has 13 life saves to date. In a typical year, CHIPS members volunteer

over 7,000 hours of service to the department. The Belton Police Department is dedicated to treating all persons with respect, dignity, and professionalism.



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BELTON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

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 8.78 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 office 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 two business parks in Belton. Belton Business Park located along Hwy. 190 and Loop 121 has excellent access to water, fiber optics, interstate and 3-phase electricity. Highway 93 Industrial Park is just off of 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 Hwy. 190 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 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. Ana Borchardt, Director of Business Development and Retention 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.

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BELL COUNTY MUSEUM

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 of 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 nec-

essary \$400,000 to restore the beautiful beaux-arts building. In 2006, the Guffy

unique structure that bridges contemporary style with historical architectural integri-



Building was renovated and connected to the Carnegie Library building, creating a

ty. The award-winning Bell County Museum features a permanent interactive ex-

hibit on the Gault Archaeological Site. The exhibit offers an in-depth look at this important excavation through dynamic interactive areas. The Gault Site is one of the largest excavated sites of the Clovis culture (13,500 years ago) and a Texas State Archeological Landmark. In 2024, the museum hosted several interesting exhibits. "Images of Bell County" will feature rarely seen photos and postcards of historic Bell County. "The Vietnam Experience" will feature artworks by Navy artists stationed in Vietnam during the conflict. The exhibit will also feature artifacts from the museum collection. In addition to temporary exhibits, the

See **MUSEUM,**
Page 48

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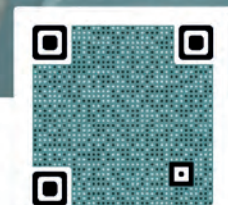
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Museum - From Page 43

museum offers a wide array of programming. Visitors of all ages will enjoy the Spring Lecture Series, Day on the Texas Frontier, STEAM Exploration, Weird Science!, Homeschool Day and much more this year.

The museum owns 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, and decorative arts, and more. The museum will host spring break events March 12-15, 11 am-1 pm daily. On April 27th, the museum hosts Sensory Friendly Morning. This program



is designed for youth with sensory needs and is from 8:30-10:00am. These are just a few of the many events and programs taking place in 2024. 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.



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BELTON'S 4TH OF JULY CELEBRATION

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, 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 is 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 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 Court-



house. 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 on June 29th is the kick-off for the many July 4th events in Belton, including a carnival in Liberty Park, located at 700 Veterans Way. On July 4-6, the 100th PRCA &

See **4TH OF JULY,**
Page 54

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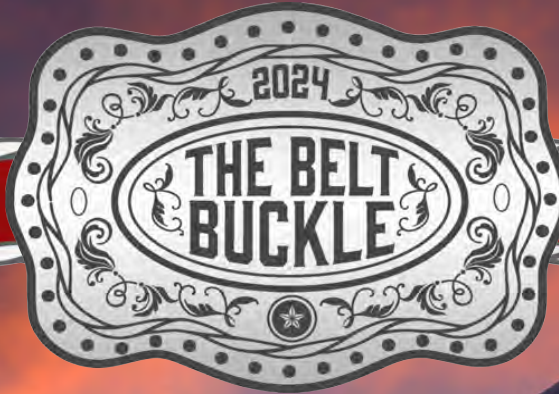
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4th of July - From Page 50



WPRA will be in Belton at the Cadence Bank Center. On Thursday, July 4th, Program starts at at the Bell County Courthouse at 101 E. Central Ave. The parade begins at UMHB (10th Ave. & Main 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 goes from 11:00 a.m.- 4:00 p.m., at Yettie Polk Park located at 101 S. Davis St. At high noon, there will be



a Hot Dog Eating Contest.

At 7 p.m., 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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BELTON SENIOR ACTIVITY CENTER

The 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 by a grant from Baylor Scott and White. The class-



es are free to the public and participation is growing. They are held on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. 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 and line dancing are on Tuesdays. Quilting is a major fundraiser for the Senior Center. Quilters are needed at the center. Custom orders can be made to the center. A 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 35-40 residents show up for the 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

See **SENIOR CENTER**,
Page 58



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Senior Center - From Page 56

to pay the band. The Center uses six different bands. Arts, crafts, and art painting is every other Wednesday. Bible study is at 10:30 every Wednesday.

Tuesday and Thursday the Center hosts a beginner line dance with instructors. A Pott Luck Dinner is held at 5:30 p.m. every fourth Monday each month with music.

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

Jay Taggart, former



Belton Senior Activity Center

Board President, said: "Almost 46 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, of-

fering 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."

BCYC

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 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 vans 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.

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, and, in 1999, the program moved to its current location.

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 this past fall.

For more information on BCYC and its programs, visit beltonyouth.com.

Daniel Bucher is the new 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.



LAKES AND CAMPING

Staff Report

In Belton, we not only take pride in our Parks and Recreation, but also our lakes and our camping facilities. So many things and so much recreational time in the summer is spent around Belton Lake and Stillhouse Hollow. There are camping areas, including RV parks, campsites and screened shelters. There are places for recreational water activities, nature trails, picnicking areas and hunting and fishing areas. Another thing people love to do is go out on their boats and jet skis and feel the breeze and refreshment of the water on a hot summer's day.

Belton Lake's camping fees are very affordable; under \$50 and vary depending on location and utilities. The daily use fee is \$5 per vehicle or pedestrian in the parks. Boat ramp fees are \$5, and group facility fees are typically \$100 or less.

Cedar Ridge Park Campground is located at Belton Lake, which provides some of the best fishing, camping, and boating in Central Texas. This



year-round campground accommodates both tents and RVs and has several sites with screened shelters for those who do not have camping equipment. The facility provides many amenities, including hot showers and group picnic areas. A concession marina within the park offers fuel and basic convenience store items, as well as a seasonal restaurant.

White Flint Park is located at Belton Lake, which provides some of the best

fishing, camping and boating in Central Texas. This year-round campground has 12 sites with screened overnight shelters and 13 RV sites, all with water and electric hookups.

Winkler Park is a small, primitive campground on the northern shore of Belton Lake in central Texas. This facility does not have electricity but does have individual water hookups, paved back-in sites, and a central restroom with showers. There are 14 sites available for RVs and tents.

Temples Lake Park is a day-use facility with over 60 picnic sites and one reservable group area on the southern shore of Belton Lake. The lake provides some of the best fishing and boating in Central Texas and the park offers amenities for large groups of up to 80 people, such as flush toilets, showers, a playground, a swim beach, and two two-lane boat ramps.

Westcliff Park is a day-use area and

See **LAKES & CAMPING**,
Page 60



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Lakes & Camping - From Page 59

campground located on the southwestern shore of Belton Lake. The lake provides some of the best fishing and boating in Central Texas in addition to amenities such as a swimming beach, boat ramp, playground, and picnic areas for RVs and tents, including four tent-only primitive sites.

Belton Lakeview Park has two reservable group day-use areas along the lower shore of Belton Lake, providing some of the best fishing and boating in Central Texas. The facility is perched on a bluff overlooking Belton Lake and Dam, a year-round scenic location for group picnics and large gatherings. The site offers many amenities, such as flush toilets, water and electric hookups, a playground, and a two-lane boat ramp, ensuring your stay is both comfortable and enjoy-

able.

Live Oak Ridge Campground is located at Belton Lake, which provides some of the best fishing, camping, and boating in Central Texas. This year-round campground accommodates both tents and RVs and has many amenities, such as a playground, showers, and a group meeting area. Belton Lake was created by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers with the construction of the Belton Dam in 1954. The 12,300-acre lake is located on the Leon River, just upstream of the confluence of the Leon River and the Little River.

Stillhouse Hollow is south of U.S. Highway 190 on FM 1670. There are more than 30 campsites at Union Grove Park that include RVC and tent camping. Restrooms and showers are accessible and



provided, as well as access to the water for swimming and boating. There are four ramps around the lake. One is located near the marina at Dana Peak Park, at the south end of Union Grove, at the end of the park road at River's Bend, and at Cedar Gap.

At Stillhouse Hollow, there are also nature trails for those who prefer the land.

There is one at Dana Peak Park that is open from dawn until dusk and can be used for hiking, horseback riding, biking, and other outdoor recreational activities. Stillhouse Hollow's camping fees range from \$12 to \$40, depending on location and utilities. The daily fee is also \$5 for Stillhouse Hollow. For more information, call (254) 939-2461.

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LODGING IN BELTON

When coming to Belton for a visit, there is always the question of where to stay overnight. Whether it is for one night or an extended stay, there are many options for all lifestyles and budgets.

Hotel and motels located in Belton are La Quinta Inn & Suites, Expo Inn and Suites, Knights Inn, Budget Host Inn, and River Forest Inn. For those wishing for a more intimate atmosphere, there are some Bed and Breakfast venues as well. Bed and Breakfasts make the perfect place for family to stay or as a “stay-cation” and to enjoy where you live from a different view.

Bryn Oaks B & B opened in 2019 and is located in the heart of downtown Belton. Featuring four rooms with private baths, this historic home offers its guests a refurbished, 1800’s place to land. Casita Among the Oaks is located on Sparta Road near Belton Lake. This venue includes a jacuzzi tub, a full kitchen and welcomes pets.

Sometimes you want to “get away” when you are away from home. Belton is host to several cottages and cabins, many of them located along the shores of Belton Lake, providing that perfect, tranquil atmosphere. Lake Belton Cottages are located at Arrowhead Point and have a view of

Belton Lake from their deck. One or two-bedroom cottages are available and have rates from nightly to monthly. The cottages have full kitchens, a hot tub, and a laundry room for guests. Summers Mill is located on the banks of Salado Creek in rural Belton, where a historic gristmill still stands from the 1800’s. Summers Mill is a retreat and conference center with lodging options available from cottages, cabins, lodges, and homes.

You can find the Ranch Bunkhouse in the rustic countryside of the south Belton area. This venue is perfect for the equestrians and those just wanting to enjoy the peace and quiet of the country. Lodging is available for both you and your horse. There are horse riding and hiking trails that span over 800 acres. Daily continental breakfast is provided and also includes a full kitchen and washer and dryer.

Just outside the gates of The Cadence Bank Center is Belton R.V. Park. In addition to lots for recreational vehicles, they have lodges available for guests. The lodges are available in different sizes with the largest being able to sleep six people. They come with kitchenettes, a private bathroom, a television, and Wi-Fi. An outdoor swimming pool and coin laundry room are also available for guests.

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LOCAL HEALTHCARE

Belton is conveniently located between two large medical centers. Baylor Scott & White Medical Center - Temple is one of the state's premiere medical centers with more than 700 physicians, surgeons and specialists involved in service areas of allergy/immunology, cardiology, dermatology, pain management, pediatrics (including endocrinology, gastroenterology, hematology and neonatology), family practice, infectious disease, neurology, ophthalmology, industrial medicine, psychiatry, geriatrics, rheumatology, urology, obstetrics and gynecology.

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 Plan-based LHP Hospital Group and the Seton Family of Hospitals.

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.

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

Hospitals and Urgent Care in the area:

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(254) 724-2111

Baylor Scott & White Clinic-Belton
1505 N. Main Street
Belton, Texas 76513
(254) 933-4000

Baylor Scott & White Clinic-Belton South
1001 Arbor Park
Belton, Texas 76513
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Baylor Scott & White Belton Convenient Care Clinic

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(254) 939-1844

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CADENCE BANK CENTER

The Cadence Bank Center, which prior to renaming in 2023 was the Bell County Expo Center, 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 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 discus-

sions 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, about two-thirds of the inhabitants of Bell County assembled in a pasture close to Highway



CADENCE BANK CENTER

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 John Garth. This project cost \$12 million and was warmly welcomed by the community.

Initially, the Expo Center was constructed primar-

ily 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 at 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 west end of the north concourse.

The newly established, 17,000 square feet Equine/Livestock Complex on the west side of the campus held its first event in 2018. Add

See **CADENCE**,
Page 66

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Cadence - From Page 63

a 130 foot by 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 foot by 200 foot warm-up arena with stalls and pens, concessions, a bar and grill and many additional amenities to the Cadence Bank Center's excel-

lent location, and you have a world-class combination.

The Cadence Bank Center was constructed with the intent of having a positive economic impact, as well as increasing the quality of life for the community.

To learn about upcoming events, visit www.cadencebankcenter.com or call (254) 933-5353.



MORGAN'S POINT RESORT

Staff Report

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 as 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 through grant funds from the four corners to Lake Belton High School.

The city is working on up-

dating the Master Plan and is halfway through this process.

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. A grant was awarded for new mobile radio units for the Police and Fire Departments.

Additional water storage construction is almost complete. A new water ground storage tank was approved this past year. Generators have been added to each water tank.

MPR has some beautiful parks along Belton Lake. The

See **RESORT,**

Page 67



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Resort - From Page 66

MPR Community Pool sits on a finger reaching out into the lake with a spectacular view unmatched in Bell County. MPR's Marina has a waiting list of around a year long. The 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. Over 170 season passes were issued this past year. The MPR pool and Community



Center have 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. Many of these residents have lived there for their entire lives. Texans are friendly folks, and MPR has some of the best.


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Community Calendar & Regular Meetings

- Belton Rotary Club** - Tues./12 pm, The Gin at Nolan Creek
- Rotary After Work** - Tues./6-8 pm, Corky's, 13 S 2nd, Temple.
- Belton Lions Club** - Thurs./12 pm, Deadfish Grill
- Iris Society** - 2nd Mon./6 pm, Saint Paul Un. Methodist in Temple
- Central TX Travel Club** - 3rd Tues./11 am, Johnny's BBQ, Salado
- City Council** - 2nd & 4th Tues./5:30 pm, Harris Community Center
- City Planning & Zoning** - 3rd Tues./5:30 pm, Harris Community Center
- Bell Co. Commissioners** - Mon./9 am, 2nd Floor Courtroom
- Belton Farmers Market** - Sat., City Parking Lot
- Military Spouses Support** - 2nd Thurs., Coronas de Oro
- Bell Fine Arts Paint Day** - Wed./9 am - 2 pm, 306 E. 5th Ave.
- Historical Commission** - 4th Mon./6 pm, Courthouse, first floor.

RESOURCES FOR OUR Veterans & Military & Other Valuable Info

National Alliance on Mental Illness meets bimonthly at the Temple VA Hospital. Care givers, supporters and those suffering from mental illness are welcome to join us for mutual support & sharing. 254-771-3638.

Dial 211 for resources in your local community Whether you need Veterans Resources, help finding Basic Human Needs, Food or Housing, Children, Youth and Family Support, Child Care, Physical and Mental Health Resources, Crisis Counseling or Substance Abuse Treatment, Suicide Prevention, Work Support, Access to Services in Non-English Languages, Support for Older Americans and Persons with Disabilities, Legal Aid/Victims Assistance

Veteran Board Gamers

Come play Board Games at the Temple Public Library! All are Welcome. Thurs., 4-6 PM, 2nd Floor, 100 W Adams Ave

American Legion Auxiliary unit 55 Meetings for Family Members of a Veteran or Active Duty & Service Member, and Veteran Women. (254) 939-8952 alpost55beltontx@gmail.com,

FUN Activities & Events



The Newcomers Club

Inc. ladies who are new (within the past 3 years) to Bell County and surrounding areas, or have experienced a life-change event (i.e. retirement, empty nest, etc.) Come join the activity & fun. BellCountyNewcomers.Com

Bell County Master Gardener Association check out our website, txmg.org and Facebook page for weekly activities & monthly seminars.

Elder Explorers @ The Point

geared towards senior citizens living in MPR, but ALL ages are welcome! Join us to Learn, SOCIALIZE & Be Entertained! Library@mprtx.us

Baylor Scott & White Walk With A Doc program

Join us each month at Miller Park. Open to anyone wanting a healthier lifestyle. See Facebook for upcoming events.

B-TOWN BULLETIN

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Dementia/Alzheimer's Support Group

Young's Daughters Funeral Home & Bereavement Center. Join us for activities while caregivers discuss and help each other during this difficult time. Call Sabrina 254-401-1302

Area Agency on Aging of Central Texas

Free health and wellness programs for seniors. Guidance for Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security, and legal assistance. Find services after suffering a health crisis, caregiver support, respite care, and companion services. 254-770-2330

Emergency Contacts & Volunteer Programs

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

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UNIVERSITY OF MARY HARDIN-BAYLOR

2023 marked the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor's 178th anniversary, carrying on its tradition as the oldest continuously operating college in the state. Enrollment at UMHB for the 2023-2024 academic year is at nearly 3,600 students from 38 states and 35 countries.

UMHB offers bachelor's degrees in more than seventy undergraduate majors, eleven master's degree programs, and two doctoral degrees. New programs include bachelor's degrees in bioinformatics, cybersecurity, educational advocacy, information systems, neuroscience, and

religion and public life. 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.

UMHB recently partnered with the Anne Burnett Marion School of Medicine at Texas

Christian University. This collaborative initiative allows medical students to earn a Master of Public Health (MPH) degree from UMHB while completing their Doctor of Medicine (MD) degree requirements. In addition,

See **UMHB**,
Page 73



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UMHB - From Page 71



tion, the university signed a letter of intent with the Johanniter Academy of Germany for a three-year international student exchange program. Approximately six UMHB students from nursing, teacher education, and social work will be included in the first-year cohort through this exchange program.

The Marek-Smith Center for Teacher Preparation, a groundbreaking training facility to prepare general and special education majors, is expected to open in spring 2024. Innovative spaces will incorporate immersive, multisensory, and interactive

equipment to enhance the overall learning experience.

The University of Mary Hardin-Baylor competes in the American Southwest Conference of NCAA Division III, offering 16 sports. The Cru has won more than 60 conference championships since beginning intercollegiate 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 for more than 178 years.



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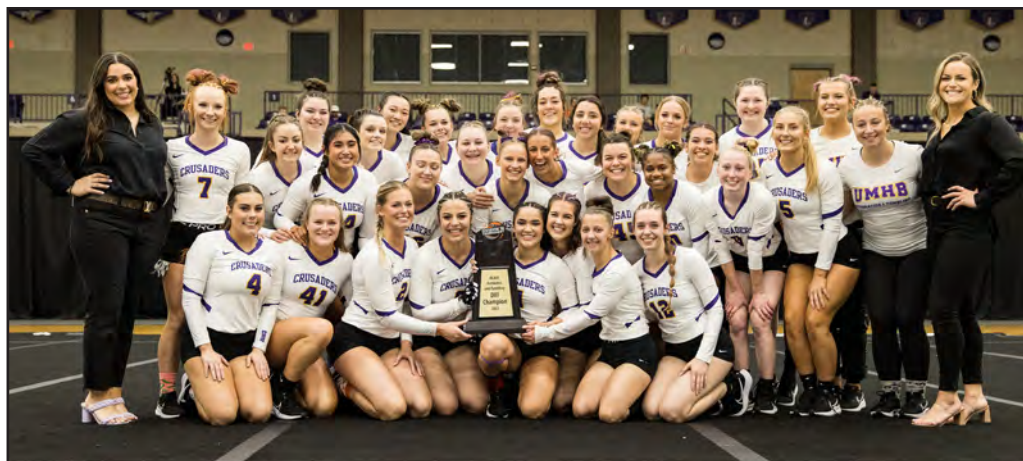


UNIVERSITY OF MARY HARDIN-BAYLOR'S SPORTS

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 Semifinals for the eighth time in program history. UMHB completed its 26th season of football this year. The program boasts two national titles, five NCAA semifinal finishes, 18 NCAA postseason runs and an overall record of 249-45.

The University also re-named the football field at Crusader Stadium 'Fredenburg Field' in honor of former



head coach Pete Fredenburg. Fredenburg started the program in 1998 and led the Cru for 24 years as head coach. He amassed 231 wins in his career with 17 conference titles and two national championships. UMHB dedicated Fredenburg Field in a special ceremony on Saturday, September 17th,

2022.

The Mary Hardin-Baylor soccer teams also achieved success this season as both won their respective American Southwest Conference regular-season titles. The UMHB men finished the 2022 season at 9-5-2, winning the program's third consecutive regu-

lar-season championship.

UMHB Women's Soccer, led by alum Barry Elkins, earned a 16-1-2 record during their 2023 campaign. The UMHB Women won their second consecutive regular-season title and named two

See **UMHB SPORTS,**

Page 76

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– Maureen Coleman

UMHB-SPORTS - From Page 74

all-Americans in Kelsey White (United Soccer Coaches, CSC Academic) and Maren Fields (CSC Academic).

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 2023. The UMHB volleyball team also won the regular-season title with an overall record of 27-2 in 2023. They advanced to the ASC Tournament and ended their season at 17-8. The team named six athletes to the all-conference squads while



Hannah Frasca was an AVCA All-Region selection.

The Cru cross country teams competed at the ASC Championships as the women finished the meet as the runners-up. The team also qualified for the NCAA postseason, making an appearance at the NCAA regionals.

UMHB Men's Basketball

went 23-6 during the 2022-23 season, hosting the NCAA First and Second Rounds. The Cru advanced to the quarterfinals of the 2023 NCAA Division III Championships, tying the record for the second-longest postseason run in program history. The Cru also named several athletes to conference and regional teams while Jo-

siah Johnson was a two-time All-America selection.

Cru Women's Basketball ended their 2022-23 campaign with an overall record of 19-8. The UMHB Women also named several athletes to the all-conference and all-region teams with Ariona

See **UMHB SPORTS**,
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UMHB-SPORTS - From Page 76

Rosborough earning her first All-America award.

Both basketball teams are in action this season with the UMHB women holding a top spot in the ASC Standings.

UMHB Beach Volleyball competed in its second consecutive season, finishing at 15-12 with a 15-8 record against in-Division opponents. The Cru also went 2-2 at the NCAA Division III National Championships in Florida.

Acrobatics & Tumbling saw its more historic season to date with an overall record of 10-1. The team set multiple school records en route to an NCATA Division III Tournament Championship. UMHB also qualified for an event final at the NCATA National Championships, competing in Six Element Acro. Katelyn Kolodziejczyk, Morgan Webb



and Jenna Hall also swept the national NCATA Division III awards.

UMHB's Softball team

also saw an historic season, winning the program's first regular-season championship and hosting both the ASC

Championship Tournament and an NCAA Regional. The Cru went 35-14 last season, advancing to the championship in both the ASC tournament and the NCAA Regional. Grason Long was also named NFCA Third Team and Academic All-America.

UMHB Baseball also competed last season and looks to build a strong 2024 campaign with Mike Stawski's first recruiting class competing as seniors. The Cru earned 14 wins last season with a pair of wins over Top 25 teams.

Men's and Women's Golf were also successful last season. The UMHB Men finished third in their ASC Championship tournament. Sarah Kmiecik also represented the women's team at the NCAA Championship Tournament with an individual bid.



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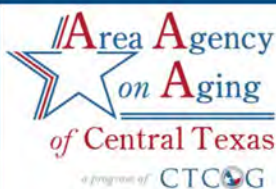
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The Area Agency on Aging of Central Texas (a partner of the Central Texas Aging, Disability & Veterans Resource Center) is funded in part by the Health and Human Services Commission.

CENTRAL TEXAS CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

With a motto of “Teaching Truth That Transforms,” Central Texas Christian School (CTCS) strives to represent more than a private, interdenominational school. Rather, it is the faculty’s mission “To educate students with the transforming truth of Christ, inspiring academic excellence, Godly character, and integrity in life pursuits.” In order to accomplish this goal, CTCS offers in addition to a strong academic program, Bible classes, leadership training and

ministry opportunities. Students are required to attend Wednesday chapel every week in addition to the core curriculum.

To promote unity in academic and spiritual areas, CTCS requires that at least one parent

their belief that Jesus Christ is the son of God. This ideal is represented by the school mascot, the Lion, which is a symbol of The King.

A total of 467 students in grades PK-3 to 12th were en-



rate speaks to the ability of CTCS to not only be academically competitive with the area public schools, but to also place Jesus Christ at the forefront of their education. Because of this, mission trips, retreats and service opportunities are woven into the middle and high school curriculum for the purpose of promoting class unity, spiritual growth, discipleship, leadership



of enrolling families be a professed Christian. Approximately 30 churches are represented in the hallways of the private school; therefore, this faith statement serves as a connection between the school and its administration, the students and

rolled at CTCS for the 2022-2023 school year along with more than 70 faculty and staff. All grades are on the same campus, allowing them to create programs bridging the various grade levels.

A 100 percent graduation

See **CTCS**,
Page 82

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BELL COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT

Staff Report

The Bell County Sheriff's Department is far from the rough riding, cowboy hat wearing and lasso-handling people expect Texas Sheriffs to be. While they could probably do all of that and more, the Sheriff's responsibilities include everything from patrol, investigations, civil and criminal process, jail management and court service.

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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CTCS - From Page 80

development and an exposure to missions and servanthood.

“These are very important to the culture of our school,” Russell said. “In order to transform somebody, you have to be involved in it, so we’re trying to really give them the opportunity to practice what we’re preaching.”

CTCS also hosts a school-wide mission day, wherein all students and faculty take a half-day to visit and volunteer at local organizations.

In addition to these service opportunities, each grade level is assigned a different organization to serve throughout the school year. Over the last three years, our students donated over \$26,000 to the Food for Family food drive.

Class sizes are smaller at CTCS, contributing to the strong student-teacher relationships that provide both parties with ample opportunities for success: approximately 16 stu-

dents are assigned a classroom for elementary school, 22 students per class for middle and high schoolers, and a maximum of 12 students in Pre-K.

Advanced Placement (AP) and dual credit courses are offered to high school students, and CTCS has attained a dual accreditation through the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) and COGNIA.

Supplementing benchmarks throughout the year, the Iowa Test is used for standardized testing through eighth grade, and the PSAT and SAT are used for ninth through 12th graders.

Extracurricular opportunities and a selection of electives establish well-rounded, service-minded individuals. Fine Arts and elective courses, such as art, band, choir, photojournalism, technology and theatre are incorporated into the students’ schedules, which adds up to

eight classes per day for middle and high schoolers, and elementary students are placed in self-contained classes. A variety of programs are made available to CTCS students outside of the classroom, such as Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Praise Band, the aforementioned retreat and mission programs, Student Ambassador Leadership Team, Student Leadership University and Student Council.

The school started its high school STEM Club in the 2016-2017 school year, followed by the middle school STEM Club the following year, 2017-2018. The high school students have been awarded 100 top 10 finishes in state across five years of competitions. Thirty of those entries were awarded best in state. In any given year, three students up to as many as 17 students have competed across 40 categories. In 2021, CTCS HS was awarded 3rd place in state among small schools.

The middle school STEM club students have been awarded 63 top 10 finishes in state four years of competitions, with 33 of those entries – more than half – being awarded best in state. In any given year, a total of six to 14 students compete across 28 categories. In 2018, one team competed nationally in Forensic Technology. In 2019 and 2021, teams qualified for Nationals in Forensic Technology. In both 2018 and 2021, CTCS MS was awarded 2nd place in state among small schools.

As a private institution, CTCS does charge annual tuition rates and enrollment fees, but offers financial assistance for qualifying families. Each spring a public Open House is offered for current transitioning students, as well as those families interested in learning more about CTCS. For more information on CTCS, visit their website at <https://www.ctcsions.com>.



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