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Haley Carter (third from left) values time with her family and wants to create as many memories as she can with them.

20 YEARS AS A 'GOOD NEIGHBOR'

By Jessica McKinney

Haley Carter has been a part of the State Farm family since she was 10 years old, when her mother became a State Farm agent. From that time, she knew that she wanted to follow that same career path.

"I loved seeing how she was able to help people" she said. "I can't remember ever wanting to be anything else!"

Carter started her own journey with State Farm in 1998 right out of college. She worked on the operations side.

"I was an auto underwriter first then supervisor," said Carter. "After a couple years in underwriting, I transitioned to agency resources to help train agents and their teams on bank and health products. In 2002, I opened my own agency."

At the end of 2022, Carter celebrated her 20th anniversary as an agent with State Farm.

But the entrepreneurial spirit has been a part of her life

even before she opened her agency. In high school and college, Carter and her brother owned a few shaved ice stands. The experience she gained made a big impact on her future as a businesswoman.

"I'm grateful my parents helped encourage us in this direction," she said. "We were in charge of everything from staffing, stocking, managing, operating, marketing, etc. this opportunity really helped me be a better business owner, once I started my own agency."

Carter loves that she works in a career that is all about helping people.

"State Farm's mission is to help people manage the risks of everyday life, recover from the unexpected, and realize their dreams. Whenever we help in someone in that capacity, it's the most rewarding aspect of what we do."

Since opening her agency 20 years ago, Carter has been

diligent about becoming an active member of the Azle community and the local Azle Area Chamber of Commerce.

"I love being a part of this community and feel it's very important to be involved in as many areas as possible. Whether it's supporting other local businesses, participating in Chamber of Commerce events, or giving back to our community through our non-profits/schools; I feel like they are all equally important in order for our community to thrive."

Haley Carter State Farm Agency maintains a presence at community events like Sting Fling and Christmas on Main, as well as any Azle sporting events.

What are some of her favorite things about Azle?

"There are too many favorites to list them all! Azle welcomed me, my family, and my business with open arms in 2005. We're proud to say we raised our family here. Everything about this town was good to us and continues to bless us. I think the wonderful people of Azle make it so great. I also love the small-town feel of Azle, even though we're so close to the big city."

Carter grew up in Arkansas and still has a lot of family and friends back home. She attended Henderson State University in Arkadelphia, Arkansas, earning her Bachelor of Business Management/Marketing. She and her husband met in college and got married shortly after graduation. Then, they moved to Texas to set down their roots.

Today, her children are 24 and 23, and the family welcomed the start of a new generation when Carter's granddaughter, Kollyns, was born.

"I love spending time with my family and friends, doing anything and everything" Carter said. "We especially enjoy our time on the lake and travelling. Life is even sweeter this last year with the addition of our first grandbaby. My husband and I try to spend every possible moment with her. They grow up too fast!"

Today, Carter's agency is thriving and has become as much a part of the Azle community as Buzzy, with the same level of recognition too.

"One of my favorite memories are the kids that would recognize me from my billboard on 199," she said. "I'm definitely not famous but it was always cute that they thought I was."

To any new agents getting their start in insurance, or new business owners in general, Carter says: "Take a chance and bet on yourself. The hard work is the reward. Surround yourself with good people; my team is my biggest asset. Never be satisfied, we can always learn and get better."



ABOVE: Carter enjoys every minute with the newest member of the Carter clan, Kollyns.

BELOW: Haley Carter's State Farm team can be found at almost every community event around Azle throughout the year, from Christmas on Main Street to Sting Fling.



When You Need Help STAT

Medical personnel take team approach in treating patients

BY DON MUNSCH



Eagle Mountain Fire Department EMT Jolene Hermosillo and paramedic Ivan Basco said their jobs require a team approach when treating a traumatic situation with patients. Photo by Don Munsch

Emergency medical responders must know how to react to medical matters every day, whether they are trauma or routine cases.

They never know what each day will bring. Training kicks in for emergency situations.

The work of first responders in treating trauma patients drew national scrutiny and praise when a Buffalo Bills player, Damar Hamlin, collapsed from a cardiac arrest during a Monday Night Football game in early January and needed immediate intervention from medical staff and trainers. He survived and is still in recovery.

Azle Fire Department Chief Will Scott outlined how local paramedics and EMTs handle traumatic situations when a life is on the line.

Scott was given an example: A person calls 911 to say someone is not breathing.

When people call 911, dispatchers will ask whether the person is breathing and whether the caller can check for breathing or a pulse, Scott said.

"That way, it sort of-kind of helps us know what kind of response model we need and what we're sort of expecting when we're there," Scott said. "So a lot of times when those cardiac arrest-type situations come in, their mindset already

“ We all try to keep each other on top of our game. ”

~EMT Jolene Hermosillo



changes to things they need to do.”

Emergency responders each have a specific duty when they enter a person’s house to treat the patient, as one person would take care of the patient’s airway, one person checks pulses, another person initiates CPR and another person will put the cardiac monitor and defibrillator pads on the patient.

“There’s always one person that’s always calling the shots,” Scott said. “Usually, that’s the primary medic that’s in charge for that call. And he or she sets the tone, the pace, for everything.”

That medic will ensure everything is established to help the patient, and that patient will be worked on for an amount of time and then a decision will be made to transport the patient or make the call that the patient has died.

Scott described the myriad ways that emergency medical responders react to trauma and how they treat patients. Responders must know the differences between heart failure, heart attack and cardiac arrest. Heart failure means a person’s heart cannot properly function anymore to sustain the body without assistance.

“There are people that can live two to 10 years with heart failure, depending on the medical treatment that they’re receiving,” Scott said.

The American Heart Association’s website explained the difference between a heart attack and cardiac arrest: A heart attack occurs when blood flow to the heart is blocked. Sudden cardiac arrest occurs when the heart malfunctions and suddenly stops beating.

“A heart attack is a ‘circulation’ problem and sudden cardiac arrest is an ‘electrical’ problem,” the website states.

A heart attack is usually brought on by coronary heart disease, congestive heart failure or heart failure, Scott said.

In addition to understanding heart issues, medical personnel also must be knowledgeable about stroke patients, and the training that EMTs and paramedics receive about patient care is constant throughout their careers.

EMTs and paramedics make assessments on the scene with a patient and the reality of the job requires these professionals to diagnose a problem based on a hypothesis until the patient reaches the hospital and then a doctor runs tests and then makes definite determine of the medical condition, Scott said.

READY WHEN CALLED

EMT Jolene Hermosillo and paramedic Ivan Basco discussed their jobs at Eagle Mountain Fire Department.

She has been an EMT for 12 years and has worked at EMFD for two years. Basco has been a paramedic for about two years and has been at EMFD for about four years; he works full time for Bedford Fire Department. Paramedics have more training and skills than EMTs.

“I want to basically advance my knowledge,” Basco said. “Being around other paramedics as an EMT, you become very intrigued and interested in what you can do on the job.”

His school was only six months long as paramedic, as it was fast-track program, but he said that is not the typical time frame, as the schooling can be several months longer than six months.

Hermosillo said she wanted to be EMT because she always had an interest in medicine. When she was little, she thought about a career as a veterinarian. She worked in the vet industry for 20 years, but she decided to move





on to another career after her father had an accident.

"I got to interact with EMS then, and I thought that was really cool," she said. "And my husband was also a firefighter so I knew a little about EMS and soon after my dad's accident I looked into it and here I am."

Both emergency responders said they enjoy their jobs.

"Can't see doing anything else," Hermosillo said.

Emergency medical personnel must balance family life, social life and work and deal with a sleep schedule, Basco said. He said responders have to be on top of their game every day and every call.

Hermosillo said she has small children, and they understand their mom's flexible shift schedules.

DEALING WITH DEMANDS OF JOB

"The cliché is 'some of the calls will get to you,' I mean, most of the calls you can compartmentalize pretty easily," Hermosillo said. Pediatric calls are the worst calls to encounter. While Hermosillo said there's a lack of support system for personnel to deal with calls, Basco said people can find counseling if they need it.

Plus, he said, there's a brotherhood in the fire department and people look out for each other.

"We all try to keep each other on top of our game," he said.

ON THE SCENE

Trying to prioritize tests for patients on the scene is the most difficult part of the job, because "everything has to happen right now," Hermosillo said. Putting tasks together in order and assisting with emotional support with family members who are there also challenge responders at the scene. Having familiarity with co-workers can help emergency responders when they are on scene.

"I like to designate people (for) what I expect them to do because there's multiple things that

need to be done, so if you give someone a job, at least you know the task is going to get done," Basco said.

Emergency medical responders mentally prepare for a situation as they head to a call.

"You kind of know your role and what questions you're going to ask and what are you need to look for, and a lot of times you're going to have calls that are pretty much the same, but every day, you're going to see something different," Basco said. "That's the beauty of the job - you never run into the same thing every day."

Responders can be aided by those who have experience with unusual calls. As Basco said, it's always helpful to have someone at the station with extensive experience who is able to walk others through a call that a responder potentially can't seem to figure out on his or her own.

Hermosillo said there is always some trusted person who can be counted on for support at the station if an EMT or paramedic is upset about something that happened at the scene and he or she is dealing with the emotional aftermath.

If a paramedic or EMT encounters a family member who can't help with a patient at the scene because of the high stress, Hermosillo said responders just "treat the patient with what you see and what they're complaining of." Language barriers at the scene are common, the EMFD responders said, and language lines over the phone are available for a translator to speak in a language to communicate to someone at the scene.

As for an athlete who collapses on the field, emergency personnel at the stadium devise emergency action plans to determine which action to take, such as route taken to the hospital for patient transport, Hermosillo said.

"It was good to see, I think, for all those people to see how medical teams of different levels were working together," she said about the situation Jan. 2 in Cincinnati, where Hamlin collapsed during the game.

"And how quickly they were to respond to it and act upon on it," Basco said.

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Devoted to Joy

**Azle High grad and blogger turns
experiences into book**

BY DON MUNSCH



Baylee Myers figured she could take all of her thoughts from her blog and transform them into a book.

“Joy is My Portion” is the result.

She assembled the 58 blog posts and created “Joy,” which is now available on amazon.com.

“The first copy I got, I had tears in my eyes because I couldn’t actually believe it happened,” she said, noting that the “move of God” was present through the words in the book.

An Azle native and a 2012 graduate of Azle High School, Myers earned an associate degree in small business management and entrepreneurship from Tarrant County College. She works as an AVP/junior lender/loan associate at NBT Financial in Azle. She will have worked there for 10 years this April.

“I started a blog back in 2017, just kind of with one post that was a little bit too long for a Facebook post,” she said, explaining the book’s beginning. “It just kind of went from there. Probably, the past year or two, my mom, husband, dad and a couple of other people (said) you just need to compile it into a book. I was like, I’m not going to do that. And then I kind of set that as my New Year’s resolution last year.”

She said “Joy” is “basically like a devotional book and really I’m calling it more of like my journey with Christ.” The book features “daily words from God,” she said, and she explores Scripture and discusses what God is showing her.

“Hopefully, encouraging words for people,” she said, explaining the essence of the book.

She got the book self-published late last year in December. Besides Amazon, where it can be purchased for \$12, Myers has copies of the book that she can sell to people. She doesn’t have the book available at local stores, but she does some copies at her church, Community Bible Fellowship in Reno, where Myers serves as worship leader and she and her husband Kellen are the youth pastors. Kellen is a 2010 graduate of AHS and is a mechanical engineer at Poco Graphite. She and Kellen live in Azle.

Myers said writing a book never crossed her mind, when she started her blog, it was just going to be a compilation of her thoughts. The blog was something she enjoyed doing and saw as “almost therapeutic.” And then with encouragement from people in her life, she decided to create the book. Not all of the blog posts appear in the book, as she chose 58 of the nearly 80 posts.

She said she didn’t change any posts that are in the book.

“They’re pretty raw from when I first wrote them till now,” she said. “So, I’ve just kind of seen the journey that I’ve experienced in my walk with Christ over the past six, seven years.”

Myers is considering writing something in the future, perhaps a second volume to this book. She might write about her experiences with infertility in her blog that would be in a separate book.

Her blog, Words of Wisdom, can be found through WordPress: Words of Wisdom – The Journey of a Jesus Christ Follower (wordpress.com).



An excerpt from “Joy is My Portion” by Baylee Myers

Our joy is found in and through Christ and it is not circumstantial. It is not based on what we physically receive, in how God answers our prayers, what people say about us, or the events of the current day. It does not matter if you are in the valley or on the mountaintop, lacking or wanting for nothing, rich or poor, sick or healthy. JOY, the JOY of the Lord, is a gift we receive when we lower ourselves and place God at the forefront of all we say and do. It is a change of perspective from accepting the things we can control and allowing God to do the rest. It is viewing the things of this world as temporary and viewing the things of God as eternal.

True joy through Christ CANNOT be contained. It is an involuntary, over-flowing light, it is living life, abundantly thriving in Christ. It makes unbelievers want what you have, through nothing more than you just living JOYFULLY, in all that you do. The best way to be a witness, a walking testimony for the Gospel, is to live JOYFULLY in ALL circumstances.

And, if we stay in Christ, JOY IS OUR PORTION, now and forevermore.”



WHEELS TURNING

SPRINGTOWN KIDS RIDE MOTORCYCLES, RUN BUSINESSES

BY JEFF PRINCE

Traveling from the West Coast to the Springtown area to compete at a motorcycle race a couple of years ago convinced the Tesene family that Parker County would make a great place to live.

At the time, the family of five was living in Brentwood, California - not the glitzy suburb of Los Angeles made infamous by O.J. Simpson, but the more rural Brentwood about an hour's drive east of San Francisco.

Chris and Cassy Tesene were raising three children there, including two boys who race motorcycles.

That trip to Springtown made them consider a life-changing move to the Lone Star State.

"We met a lot of people, and people were very nice," Chris Tesene said. "We enjoyed it. My wife and I decided to come out here and look."

During a subsequent visit, the couple found a 23-acre property that included a large metal house, several outbuildings, a pond for fishing and swimming - and motorcycle tracks designed to train for motocross and supercross races.

"It's been great," Chris said. "We've loved it."

The two racers in the family are Luciano Tesene, 13, who attends Springtown Middle School, and Dimaggio Tesene, 11, who attends Springtown Intermediate School. Both boys raced in December at the Arizona Open in muddy and challenging conditions, and both finished in the top 10.

On a sunny afternoon in January, Luciano was back in Springtown, practicing on his home supercross track alongside a couple of adult professionals who were training.

"I just think it's fun," Luciano said. "I've been doing it for a while."

The dirt moguls - also known as hills or jumps - are placed high and tight for supercross, making them more difficult for riders. Flying over one hill requires landing with accuracy on the next tightly placed hill. Not an easy task.

Chris began allowing professional supercross racers to train on the property not long ago.

"There are a lot of places to ride outdoor tracks but not the very peaky, tight courses," Chris said.

The Tesene kids train most often on their motocross track that offers longer straightaways and greater distances between moguls.

When Luciano and DiMaggio aren't training for motocross, they tend to their other passion - entrepreneurship.

BUSINESSMEN IN TRAINING

The Tesene boys wore T-shirts from the Mini Moto Mafia clothing line while practicing on the



track. Their clothing came with a discount – the brand is owned by Luciano.

In 2021, he created the company to help pay expenses related to racing motorcycles.

“I started it so I can help pay to go to bigger races,” he said.

Through his website www.minimotomafia.com, Luciano sells shirts, hats, sweatshirts, flannels, and jewelry with his logo.

Mini Moto Mafia logos incorporate the familiar marionette strings used in the original Godfather movie. Luciano paid to have several logos created but didn’t like them. He came up with his own logo using palm trees that harken back to his upbringing in California.

“I like the palm tree, and we just put the name around it,” he said.

DiMaggio, noting his older brother’s success as a clothing guru, started a business with little sister Xylina recently. They raise chickens in their backyard and plan to sell the eggs.

Every morning we pick them up, but we haven’t started selling them yet,” DiMaggio said. “We can eat them, or we can sell them.”

Chris is a proud father watching his three kids start businesses and oversee them with energy and passion. Selling T-shirts and eggs teaches them responsibility, he said.

Chris is a computer software engineer who works remotely at home.

“I’m trying to get them ready to become adults and to become business owners,” Chris said. “They wanted to start a business selling chicken eggs, so we bought an incubator. They are going to sell eggs and make babies and do all the things that it takes. It’s a good learning experience for them.”

DiMaggio began riding motorcycles at age 3 just like his



DiMaggio and Luciano Tesene work on their motorcycles in a shop on their property.
Photo by Jeff Prince, Azle News



Luciano Tesene created the Mini Moto Mafia clothing line in 2001. *Courtesy Photo*



Xylina Tesene models clothing on her older brother’s website. *Courtesy Photo*

brother.

"It's fun, the thrill of riding," he said.

He has made new friends in Springtown and appreciates diving into the pond or wetting his fishing line when the weather is nice.

"It was stocked with catfish and a couple other fish," he said.

He's caught a few but turned them loose to grow bigger for another day.

Chris and Cassy take comfort in seeing their kids play, ride bikes, fish, swim, and raise animals, and the couple is pleased their gamble on Springtown has paid off.

"We wanted a better life for our kids," Chris said. "Where we were living in California wasn't the best place to raise kids."

He described Brentwood as suburbia with restrictions.

"You couldn't have dirt bikes riding around," he said.

Most of the tracks they frequented were at least 30 miles from their house. Some were 100 miles away. The family traveled to tracks to practice and spent \$30 to \$40 admission for each kid.

Add in the cost for transportation, motorcycle maintenance, proper gear and racing entry fees, and the dollars added up.

Still, moving to Texas required a leap of faith.

Chris grew up in California and felt "strange" in Texas at first. He wasn't used to all the friendly faces.

"People are very nice," he said. "Where we were, you generally don't have that. People are very rushed. It's not the same. That's what drew us out here."

Living in unincorporated Parker County allows his kids to pursue their hobbies and business endeavors with little interference.

"They just have a ton of fun," he said. "For me, this is what I'm working for. Everything we do is so that they can live a good life. We picked a place that they can have fun."

As for those names, Chris wanted unusual monikers for his kids after growing up with a plain-Jane name himself. Chris recalled attending school in California. When a teacher or someone would call out the name Chris, two or three people would raise their hand.

"I wanted my kids to have unique names," he said.



Luciano Tesene flies over a mogul at his family's track near Springtown. *Courtesy Photo*



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What Does the Shape of Your Tongue Mean?

By Jessica Brace

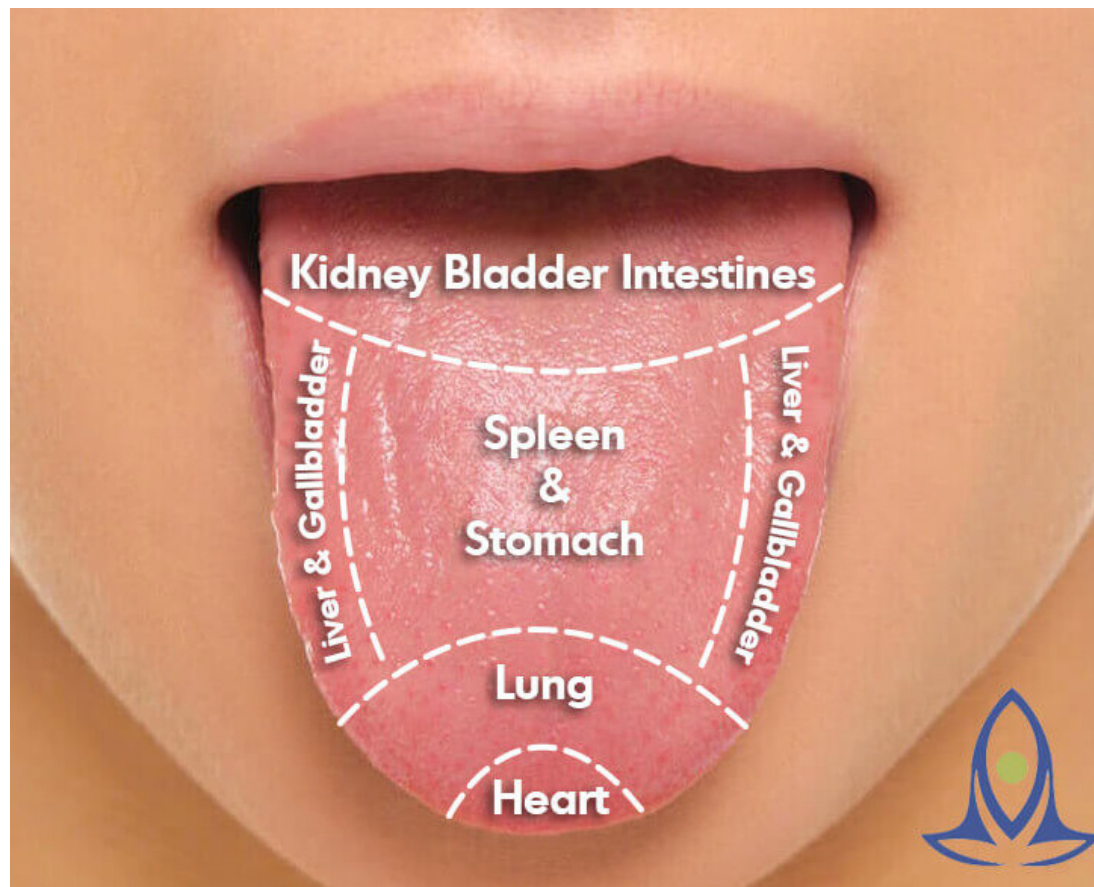


What is Tongue Mapping? Let's take the shape of our tongue and show how it correlates with different symptoms in the body.

The tongue is a critical accessory organ of the human body. It helps with tasting, chewing, and swallowing food and drink. It is also an aid to speech. In traditional Chinese medicine, the tongue reflects the health condition of the entire body. Examining the tongue is an essential component of Chinese medicine.

WHAT IS TONGUE DIAGNOSIS?

In Traditional Chinese Medicine, licensed practitioners often examine the tongue to confirm the diagnosis due to its many relationships and connections in the body, both to the meridians and the internal organs. For example, a pale tongue could be a sign of blood deficiency. No tongue coating or thick tongue coating are signs of digestive system issues.



Chinese Medicine Tongue Diagnosis

by @hayley_stobbs

Purple:

- Blood stasis: Ex's, blood circulation disorder, sharp pain.
- Dusky purple: Liver qi stagnation or Internal cold.
- Blue: Severe internal cold, blood stasis

Liver Imbalance

- Red sides (often raised): Qi stagnation: stress, emotional imbalance, depression, anger, migraines, PMS, dull pain.
- Pale sides: Liver blood deficiency.

Scalloped:

- Dampness: Ex's, water retention, metabolic disorders such as hypothyroidism, diabetes, dwelling and ruminating, aching pain.
- Qi deficiency: Ex's, fatigue, shortness of breath, overthinking and worrying.

Heart Heat (red tip):

- Chronic stress
- Anxiety and obsessions
- Mania
- Rage
- Repressed emotions
- Over-working
- Excess joy or passion

Red:

- Heat (too much yang or too little yin)
- Prickles: usually on tip: heat
- Geographic: yin deficiency
- With yellow coat: damp-heat (greasy yellow) or heat with pathogen, Ex's, skin disorders, bronchitis
- With no coat: yin deficiency

Pale:

- Blood deficiency, Ex. anemia, dizziness, absorption imbalance
- Internal cold
- Thick white pale coat: cold pathogen such as cold virus, food retention
- Greasy (mucousy): damp, phlegm, food retention

Midline Crack:

- Can be constitutional/normal
- Red: Stomach yin deficiency
- Pale: Qi/blood deficiency
- From back to front: Kidney heart disharmony: Ex's, Menopause, insomnia, trauma, panic, congenital heart disorder.
- Horizontal cracks: yin deficiency

Small thin tongue = Yin/blood xu
 Large puffy tongue = Yang/qi xu
 Deviated (crooked) & Quivering = Internal wind

TONGUE ANALYSIS

- A healthy tongue should be firm and fits proportionately into the bottom of the mouth.
- Movement of the tongue should be fluid and easy.
- It should be a solid (one color) fleshy pink and have a thin clear-looking coating over the tongue.

These methods are not intended to make medical diagnosis of any of the indications listed below, but they can give much insight to what is going on in the body.

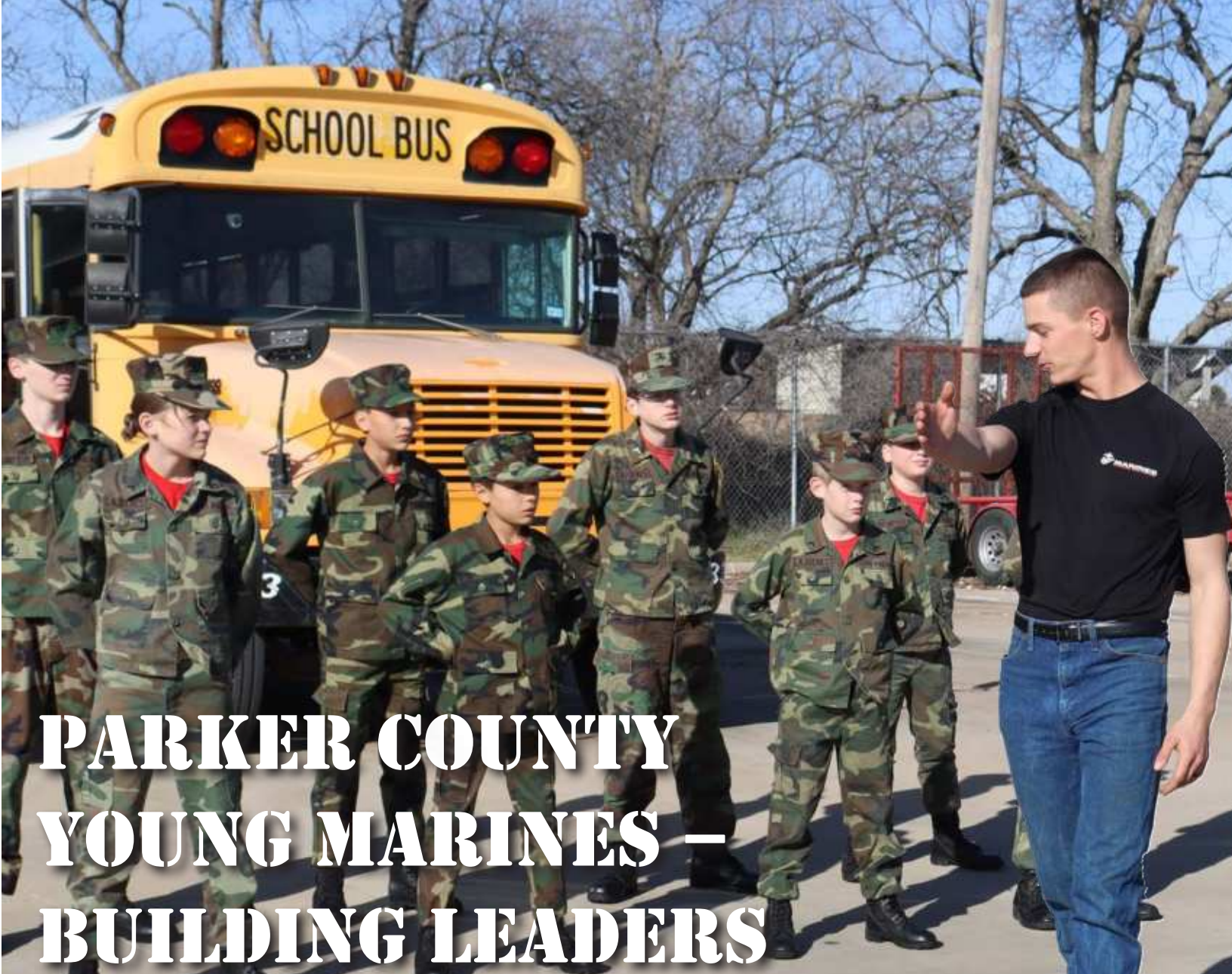
WHAT DO THE DIFFERENT VARIATIONS MEAN?

Tip of the tongue is dark/red - Indicates possibility of heart disease

- Scalloping on the sides of the tongue - Indicates pulmonary involvement and poor digestion (specifically gall bladder)
- Star shaped spotting on the tongue - Indicates various hormonal imbalances
- No vitality or no saliva with a dry tongue - Indicated low energy, poor digestion and poor vitamin absorption from foods
- Teeth marks along the tongue on both sides - Indicates problems with the spleen and poor digestion along with lower immunity
- Cyst on the frenula (Lip connection to the gum) - Indicates liver involvement.

HERITAGE





PARKER COUNTY YOUNG MARINES – BUILDING LEADERS

Story and Photos By Madelyn Edwards

At a January Parker County Young Marines drill, a graduate returned to his old stomping grounds. Pfc. Jared Rountree, 19, a Springtown native, enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps and started boot camp last fall. Before that, he was part of the Parker County Young Marines, which he said helped him prepare for boot camp. Thanks to Young Marines, he was already physically fit, could march and knew the jargon, among other advantages.

“I was climbing ropes faster, jumping obstacles, yelling louder because I was motivated,” Rountree said. “This prepped me for boot camp, and when I got there, I was able to get promoted to squad leader and hold it from the beginning of boot camp to the end whenever everyone else was getting fired around me.”

Rountree was raised with a military mindset by his father who used to be a Marine.

“Our dad taught us like we were recruits,” he said.

Rountree found out about the Young Marines at the Wild West Festival, but his father didn’t let him join until he could run three miles. Rountree rose to the challenge and joined the Young Marines about five years ago.

Young Marines taught Rountree to be a better person, be a

leader and to stay away from drugs, he said. His favorite part of the experience was bonding with the Young Marines.

“We all trained together. We all worked together. We live and die as a team,” Rountree said. “These Young Marines – I know a lot of them, some of them are new – they were my family, my small little family. I loved coming here and seeing them every Saturday that we came down to drill.”

The Parker County Young Marines usually has 10-15 kids in the group, coming from all across the region as far as Decatur, Granbury and Glen Rose, Gunnery Sgt. Verne Bell said.

In fact, a teenager from Mineral Wells was signing up for the Parker County Young Marines during the drill meeting on Jan. 14. Alex Arzate said he wanted to get involved with the Young Marines, and he eventually plans to enlist in the Marine Corps.

The unofficial goal of Young Marines is for the kids to eventually enlist, but Bell said the group is more about teaching the kids to be leaders.

“What we do is try to teach them everything the Marine Corps teaches except for combat arms,” Bell said. “This is not

a paramilitary organization. It just preps them for leadership, for teamwork, self-discipline, disciplining others.”

Executive officer and Gunnery Sgt. Weldon Richey said while several graduating seniors in the group have enlisted in the Marines recently, the kids aren't pressured.

“I just want to make sure these kids have a shot at whatever they want to do,” Richey said. “We don't try to push them in any direction.”

Richey also said that helping the kids get into the Marine Corps or serving at all is “the best thing (he) can do for them.”

Leigh Ward, Parker County Young Marine's paymaster, adjutant and female adviser, said she started volunteering with Young Marines when her nephew and daughter were involved in the group. After they quit, she decided to stick around.

“I love the kids,” Ward said. “The kids are great.”

On Jan. 14, Rountree helped lead the Young Marines in various exercises and instruction during the drill meeting. This was in collaboration with Parker County Young Marines Sgt. Patrick Richey. Richey, a high school junior, said he has been able to make long-lasting friendships because of Young Marines, including with Rountree.

“He's pretty much my brother now,” Patrick Richey said about Rountree. “(I'm) glad I met him.”

Originally, Patrick Richey didn't want to lead the Young Marines because he wanted to learn more before the promotion.

“No one's ever ready to take it,” he said. “I think I am the right fit for right now until I find someone better.”

Through his role as sergeant, Patrick Richey hopes the Young Marines will step up into leadership themselves, especially in terms of public speaking and leading classes. He also said Young Marines are taught things like dressing appropriately and being able to speak to people, which can help make them more employable in job interviews.



Parker County Young Marines run laps during the Jan. 14 drill meeting at the Springtown ISD transportation department.



With the addition of Marine Corps Pfc. Jared Rountree, left, the Parker County Young Marines do push-ups together during the physical training part of the drill meeting on Jan. 14.



Young Marines Lance Cpl. Megan Lajueness, left, works with recruit Jamie McMillan, right, during drill on Jan. 14 at the Springtown ISD transportation department.



Parker County Young Marines present the flags at Springtown's Memorial Day program.

“School prepares you in some ways, but this prepares you in other ways that school can't,” Patrick Richey said.

During the physical exercise part of drill, Patrick Richey asked Rountree what exercise the Young Marines should do next. Rountree suggested bicycle crunches or flutter kicks, prompting one of the kids to exclaim, “Oh, flutter kicks suck!”

“Oh perfect, that's what we're doing,” Patrick Richey said in response.

Young Marines Lance Cpl. Megan Lajueness, 16, chimed in to point out an important lesson.

“That's why you don't say anything about PT,” Lajueness said to the kid.

Lajueness said she has learned to keep quiet during physical training to avoid that exact scenario.

“You can moan and groan after it's been chosen, but before it's chosen, do not say a thing, otherwise it will get chosen, and it will be a nightmare,” she said with a laugh.

Generally, Lajueness said she enjoys coming to drills, but those meetings are not as fun when there are kids in the group who aren't as invested in Young Marines.

“Once you get a group of people who actually want to be here and actually want to enjoy it and not being forced to by their parents, you actually get a pretty good environment because you don't have the toxic, annoying ones,” she said.

Lajueness's favorite part about being in Young Marines is when the group gets to help people, such as passing out gifts for Toys for Tots.

“I like helping people,” she said. “That's just who I am.”

READY, AIM, *FIRE*

Aurora Blackpowder Club brings enthusiasts together for camaraderie

BY MADELYN EDWARDS



Larry Howard shows how to load his late 1700s flintlock black powder rifle replica.
Photo by Madelyn Edwards

Before firing off his late 1700s flintlock black powder rifle replica, Larry Howard stared down the target and paused. When he was ready, Howard raised the rifle up to his face and squeezed the trigger.

POW!

Puffs of smoke erupted from Howard's rifle, and the strong smell of sulfur suddenly filled the air.

Howard examined his shot on the target board before turning away from the shooting line to refill his rifle with black powder and a roundball for the next shot.

Howard wasn't alone. A group of other black powder shooting enthusiasts joined him for the Aurora Blackpowder Club's monthly shoot and meeting. This took place around midday on Sunday, Jan. 15 on a range in a private wooded area that the club uses often for their events.

The club, of which Howard is currently the president, was started up by Howard's oldest brother and two others in 1982 and was nationally recognized in 1984. Howard's brother owned a gun store in Aurora - which is nestled in between Boyd and Rhome - and interest grew from those who visited the shop. A sign was put up outside the shop advertising the club's first shoot, and about a dozen people attended.

The club brings people together for fellowship and camaraderie in a way that's different than groups that shoot the more modern guns, Howard said.

"When you're loading these guns, it's not something that you just walk up the line, you put a cartridge in there and shoot, and you put another cartridge in there and shoot and so on



Bobby Langston in his primitive rendezvous attire. *Courtesy of Bobby Langston*

like that," he said. "No, you got to walk away from the line, put some powder down the barrel of the gun, then a patched round ball on top of that, pack it and all this time you're talking to your next-

door neighbor, and you're having a good time."

Bobby Langston joined the club in 2006 because it was the only place where he could shoot a black powder rifle.

"We've got the modern ranges - Fort Worth, places like that - but they don't want you shooting black powder," Langston said. "Too much smoke."

The group that attended the Aurora Blackpowder Club meeting and shoot on Jan. 15 was made up of men of varying ages, with one exception. Sandie Barker was there serving as the club's treasurer, and she keeps track of the dues and fees that the club charges. She hasn't been shooting in a while and has since taken to the administrative parts of the club and helping with kids' competitions.

Despite the lack of women attendees on Jan. 15, Barker declared that the club is for women, too.

"There have been lots of women, and let me tell you, women are just as good or better than the men," she said with a laugh.

Barker said she joined the club when her daughter, who is now a teenager, was still wearing diapers.

"This is like a second family to me," she said.

The club is also about remembering history, Howard said. The members get together in the spring and fall for rendezvous, where they reenact the fur trade era of 1820-1840. This was when people would trap beavers for their pelts.

"During the fur trade, the trappers did go back to civilization to get their supplies. The people that owned the company that these trappers worked for would bring supplies out to the trappers, and they met at a previously designated spot in the mountains, and it was called a rendezvous," Howard said. "We

"and let me tell you, women are just as good or better than the men," ~Sandie Barker

reenact these rendezvous, and we have competition."

For the Aurora Blackpowder Club, there are two kinds of rendezvous, during which attendees can camp overnight or come for a day. One is a primitive kind in the fall where the rules about dressing in attire no later than 1840s are strictly upheld, Howard said. The club also offers "fun-dezvous" where people can attend in modern clothing. The next "fun-dezvous" is later this Spring, and the general public is invited to attend.

Part of the reasoning behind the "fun-dezvous" is to encourage people to participate in the club. Howard said the club's membership plummeted because of shutdown during the COVID-19 pandemic. So far, the club has not recovered the membership numbers of the pre-COVID days.

The kinds of rifles and pistols as well as knives and tomahawks, which are used in throwing competitions, are the same at both the primitive rendezvous and "fun-dezvous," Howard said. There are shooting competitions as well as ones for fire starting and primitive archery. Winners can receive prizes, both primitive and modern kinds of gear and gifts.

Barker's favorite part about going to rendezvous is visiting with people, especially those who she may not have seen in a while.

"My favorite part is at the end of the day after everything is said and done, you had a good meal. You cooked it on the campfire. And then you go to a friend's camp, and you sit for hours and talk and just visit," she said.

The only limitations of the club are that those who don't have experience with blackpowder guns or with guns at all

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Roundballs, shown in Larry Howard's hand, are used to load black powder rifles. Photo by Madelyn Edwards



Larry Howard pours black powder into his hand before he loads his rifle. Photo by Madelyn Edwards

must be monitored to ensure safety, Howard said. Those under age 18 must be accompanied by an adult.

Barker's daughter has participated in the competitions and campouts. She recalled a time when her daughter was still very young and was playing with other children at the camp. When she came back to camp, she had a biscuit.

"Everybody looked after her," Barker said. "I never ever had to worry about something happening."

For those who want to get into blackpowder shooting, Howard suggested attending the monthly club shoots where the club members shoot on their range. Newcomers can receive instructions from people at those meetings on how to load, aim and shoot a blackpowder gun.

"This is the epitome of big boys' toys," club member Johnny Maddox said. "We're still kids at heart. Our toys have just changed, and we've added a purpose to the toys, the purpose being preserving history and the knowledge of the history and how tough it really was."



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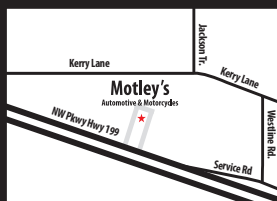
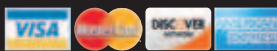
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