SPRINGTOWN AREA CHAMBER AWARDS • 2021 •

SPRINCTOWNEERCE

Thursday, May 20, 2021

A Special Supplement to

Member FDIC



SPRINGTOWN AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE HOMETOWN HEROES

Community still coming to terms with loss of beloved pastor

BY SUSAN MCFARLAND sptreporter@azlenews.net

Darrell Mathis was a hero, a courageous warrior, and someone his commuthose who knew him.

at Hilltop Family Church, died Dec. 17 following a COVID-19 at age 61.

was honored during the Springtown Area Chamber of Commerce awards banquet for being a Home- liked to talk. He knew how town Hero.

Springtown

dent School District Su- he was called to do. He was perintendent Mike Kelley very heroic," Coplen said. presented the award to the Mathis family.

nity admired, according to as a Hometown Hero," Kel- ing at his family owned ley said. "Darrell Mathis radio station, he went Mathis, senior pastor really left an impression on on staff at Hilltop Famhis community."

courageous battle with Pastor Brent Coplen, who ministry, administrator, was a personal friend and associate pastor and then On May $\overline{6}$, Mathis worked with Mathis for 17 senior pastor in January years in ministry, said he 2015. was "the real deal."

to deal with people, and Springtown Ministerial Indepen- was not afraid to do things group, Lions Club, SISD

Mathis attended SISD for all 12 years and gradu-"Very few are recognized ated in 1977. After workily Church in 2004. Roles Hilltop Family Church there included children's

He was involved in many "He liked preaching, he community functions in Springtown such as the

School Board, Neighborto-Neighbors, Springtown Athletic Booster Club and most recently, Springtown Area Community Connection.

Those he left behind have a void in their life that is hard to fill.

His wife Sheri Mathis said the family takes things "day by day."

"The church family is doing well but their hearts still hurt," she said.

Mathis said church

Hometown Heroes CONTINUED PAGE 4



Darrell Mathis, senior pastor at Hilltop Family Church, passed away on December 17.. PHOTO COURTESY MATHIS FAMILY



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SPRINGTOWN AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE **ALVIN ORD'S**

Alvin Ord's blessing the community

BY QUINTON LILLEY editor@azlenews.net

When Mistie Rivera took over as owner of Alvin Ord's Sandwich Shop in March of 2017, she knew she would have a chance to affect the community through service.

What she didn't know was that an opportunity would arise to give back to others through blessing boxes.

Back when the pandemic began in March of 2020 multiple businesses began shutting down, schools closed, sports were canceled and people needed support as money became hard to come by.

One of the few restaurants that were able to stay open throughout the year was Alvin Ord's and Rivera says she and her staff did as much as they could



Mistie Riviera was presented the Spirit of Springtown award at the Chamber banquet. PHOTO BY JESSICA MCKINNEY

to serve the community in donations to people in the their time of need.

"We began using blessing boxes where we would give

Alvin Ord's **CONTINUED PAGE 5**

Hometown Heroes CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2



Members of Darrell Mathis' family were presented the Hometown Hero award at the Chamber banquet. PHOTO BY JESSICA MCKINNEY

members have been a blessing, are "still very supportive and check in often" doing ok.

Brent Copeland is senior and helped." pastor, there are newcomers in the church every husband to Covid-19 was Sunday, baptisms are up ... hard to grasp. And then and life still goes on," she the winter storm hit, which tearfully said.

money has been donated emotional time for her. in his memory. Those

playground. grass and the fence up, the to make sure the family is kids are real excited," she said. "It's awesome how "God is still working. the community stepped up

Mathis said losing her

added to the grief. Fortu-Mathis said since her nately, her home was not husband's death a lot of damaged but it was an derstand," she said. "Der-

"I went downhill, it was funds were used for a new a tender moment," she said. him. He was our rock."

She missed her husband's "They are still getting the presence, and imagined what he would be doing to help not just his family, but the whole community.

Mathis said her parents as well as her late husband's mom, all in their 80s, are still trying to cope with the loss but know after this, they can survive anything else.

"This is so hard to unrell loved people. His familv loved him. We all miss









Brookshire's Grocery recognized for extra hours and service

BY QUINTON LILLEY editor@azlenews.net

The last year has been a difficult one for many people across the world.

But here in Springtown specifically Brookshire's Grocery did their part to help the community keep some sort of normalcy not only through a global pandemic but also through a record-breaking snowstorm.

Under the leadership

Brookshire's CONTINUED PAGE 7



Brookshire's Grocery was presented the Spirit of Springtown award at the Chamber banquet. PHOTO BY JESSICA MCKINNEY





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To our Chamber Staff, Volunteers & Members for another great year! We appreciate you more than we can

EXPRESS!

Alvin Ord's continued from page 4

did what we could."

ed packs of water to local home so the internet acresidents when the winter cess came in handy." storm hit in February this year something Rivera tional efforts made by Alsaid she was happy to do. vin Ord's the Springtown

that other people couldn't

storms, Alvin Ord's also nity of Springtown." allowed locals to use their

so we allowed locals to she's received.

community, whether it was come park in the parking basic goods like flour, gro- lot and use our Wi-Fi free ceries, or canned food we of charge for whatever they need. Many people Alvin Ord's also donat- were still working from

Because of these addi-"Because we order all Chamber of Commerce our food and goods from recognized the sandwich an industrial company we shop with an award at a had access to water and recent banquet held at the flour and other things Covered Bridge on May 6.

"It's really exciting find at times in stores. So when your community donating those things to recognizes you for the people was a true honor." work you've done. As the Through their dona- owner of my own busitions as well as staying ness, I take pride in earnopen for business through ing a great reputation and the pandemic and winter serving the great commu-

Rivera also added that wifi from the parking lot. since the pandemic has "When people's power subsided she's been overwent out we were lucky whelmed and honored by enough to keep ours on, the support and thanks



Office Hours: Monday - Friday 8:30 am - 5:00 pm; Saturday by appointment only.

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SPRINGTOWN AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE CHADWELL & SON GAS CO.

Family run business treating others like family

BY QUINTON LILLEY editor@azlenews.net

Chadwell & Son Gas Co. is a family-run business like any others in Springtown.

They serve the community with quality service and provide motor fuel, propane tanks, and clean air-fuel.

But during the pandemic and especially during the winter storms in February Chadwell and Son made sure they did their part to assist locals in need.

Store manager Kerry

ily business for nearly 15 though it was really cold." years.

During the storms that hit Texas in tate shifts so each person ceiving this award means February both Kerry and wasn't working outside too Kenneth agree to help fill long but made sure that locals RV bottles, never people who were looking changed their prices on for heating sources could propane tanks even as demand roses, and made sure Son. to keep their store open for business like normal.

tough because we had no what we felt was right." electricity inside the store

owner Kenneth Chadwell payments, but we kept our and the two have worked doors open and served together in their fam- the people outside even Kerry also said that his

winter 11 employees would rofind them at Chadwell and

for many people including "The winter storm was our employees, but we did

to be appreciated." Based on the outstand-

Chadwell is the son of and could only take cash ing service they gave to the community the Springtown Chamber of Commerce recognized Chadwell and Son at a recent award banquet.

When asked what reto their family Kerry said, "Our community has shown its thankfulness for what we did, and that makes us feel good. We appreciate all our customers "It was really tough times and this community very much; it's been an honor to serve the people who need



us most. It's truly an honor Kenneth Chadwell at the banquet.

PHOTO BY JESSICA MCKINNEY

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SPRINGTOWN AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE **THE SPRINGTOWN** BREAD LADY

Giving the bread of life

BY JESSICA MCKINNEY azlereporter@azlenews.net

Jennifer Lanham comes from a family that is dedicated to simple living. They are entrepreneurs with a focus on the community around them.

When the pandemic forced Lanham to close down her massage business, By Faith Massage Therapy, Lanham soon found a new calling.

She had been baking bread for her church, and taking what she had left over to the parking lot of Brookshire's to pass out to those in need. Soon, that need for bread grew, and from that The Springtown Bread Lady was born.

People would line up, hoping to get a homemade, handmade loaf of fresh bread, and words of demic, Lanham made and



Jennifer Lanham receivied Springtown Chamber Area

encouragement and faith distributed thousands of from Lanham when most loaves of bread, nourishing residents in Springtown her community both physwere feeling at their lowest. Throughout the pan-

of Commerce. PHOTO BY JESSICA MCKINNEY

> **Bread Lady** CONTINUED PAGE 8



Brookshire's Grocery CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

of Store Director, Wes Richardson in March of 2020.

"We previously had ceries in the area so once every few days. we opened those senior while our supplies were work. available."

their own designated did as well. time to shop, but the pers as well.

discounts and their own people didn't have extra is amazing. They've alhours every day starting figured any little bit of serve our community saving could help."

senior shopping hours tioned that his staff ceiving recognition for on Tuesdays only, but would close slightly ear- what we've down here with restaurants clos- lier in the evening to reing down; there was a stock each night, somehigher demand for gro- thing they typically do

shopping hours up to a fort, the Springtown shire's also gave disfew hours each day. So Chamber of Commerce counts to first responder that older folks could recognized Brookshire's get what they needed for their tremendous all year long in 2020.

Not only did the store the honor but credited pride in serving the allow seniors to have his staff for what they Springtown community,

store also gave five-per- the last year has been to know we're there for cent discounts to shop- under a lot of stress, them. That's what it's all with people losing their about"

"While five percent jobs, water damages and Brook- doesn't seem like much, power outages from the shire's began giving se- once the winter storm storm its been tough on niors over the age of 65 came in February a lot of a lot of us. But my staff independent shopping money coming in, so we ways done their best to with honor and in the Richardson also men- best way they could. Rein Springtown is a special feeling."

Even more impressive than the efforts previ-And for this extra ef- ously mentioned Brookand military members

"As the only grocery Richardson received store in town we take and when there's a need, "Our staff throughout we want our customers



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Bread Lady CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

ically and spiritually.

She was one of several community members who were honored during the Celebrate Springtown awards banquet.

"It's just such an honor to be recognized in this way and with some of the biggest people in our community," she said upon receiving her award.

Lanham believes that everyone should take every opportunity to help your community, whenever one presents itself.

"When you have an idea, do it. When you hear the Lord, obey him. We have a community of amazing people. There are so many opportunities to help."

SPRINGTOWN AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE **CITY OF SPRINGTOWN**

The community coming together during a crisis

BY SUSAN MCFARLAND sptreporter@azlenews.net

Providing services to a city during a global pandemic was challenging for city of Springtown employees. But they figured tight-knit the community it out, helped each other is." and found a way to make it work safely and efficiently. About when they had that situation under control, the winter storm hit, throwing many more not allowed pre-pandemic. challenges their way.

Christina Derr, administrative specialist, said during the pandemic, staff faced a lot of the same challenges everyone else did, and the blessing in disguise is that everyone

was trying to combat the same issues.

"I think that helps people be more patient and understanding," Derr said. "It made me realize how

The pandemic changed the way city staff operated. In March, they started holding city council meetings virtually, something

Once things opened up, they had limit the number of people in the council chamber.

From a staff perspective,

City of Springtown CONTINUED PAGE 10



The City of Springtown was honored for the work it has done for its citizens with the Spirit of Springtown award at the banquet. PHOTO BY JESSICA MCKINNEY





SPRINGTOWN AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE **PARKER COUNTY ESD1 ESD1** continuing to serve locals



Representatives from Parker County ESD #1 accepted the Spirit of Springtown award at the Chamber banquet. PHOTO BY JESSICA MCKINNEY

BY QUINTON LILLEY editor@azlenews.net

The Parker County Services District 1 is no stranger to stressful situations that happen at a moment's notice and their high-quality training is what allowed them to function in impressive fashion all of 2020.

At a recent Springtown unnoticed." Chamber of Commerce Award banquet, the Parker Co. ESD1 was honored for their tremendous work in the Springtown community during both the COV-ID-19 outbreak last spring just to name a few. and the record-breaking winter storms that came by ESD1 during the panthrough Texas in February. ESD1 is led by Fire Chief Stephen Watson who said receiving recognition for the work his staff does is a great honor.

has been really stressful for a lot of people, but the work is always worth it. Being recognized for the a great honor and something all our staff should be proud of. We put in a lot of long hours and we're grateful our sacrifices didn't go

ESD1 is the primary emergency response company in Parker County and serves the communities of Aledo, Peaster, Poolville, La Junta, and Springtown

Some of the efforts made demic and winter storm including handling nearly a 50-percent increase in emergency calls, 11 fires during the winter storm that lasted just over a week,

"This past calendar year helping fix home water leaks, and giving oxygen tanks to those who needed them most.

"During the pandemic, fantastic work we did was one of our biggest concerns was trying to keep enough staff healthy and working. With the increased amount of calls coming in we had more people working than usual so it was great that we figured it out and did so successfully."

When asked how he felt the community received his staff's extra efforts during the past year Watson said the response had been overwhelmingly positive.

"We've received lots of thanks you notes, thoughtful gestures and that means a lot. We love this community and we will continue to do our best to serve them."

SPRINGTOWN AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE **CORN FED CATERING** Serving the community, one meal at a time

BY JESSICA MCKINNEY azlereporter@azlenews.net

Less than one month after embarking full-time on the dream of running their own business, Corn Fed Catering, the pandemic threw a big wrench in the plans of Trent and Jennifer Shaw. Catering jobs that were lined up were canceled; Jennifer, who had quit her job as a dental practice manager to focus on the business, was now unemployed.

The Shaws got creative. They began offering familv style takeout meals, offered holiday meal specials. When they prepared free meals for them. Whatever they could do to keep their business going, they did it.

By June, they were finally able to reopen their event venue, and in November Trent found it necessary to leave his corporate job to focus on their growing business. The catering jobs were coming in, thanks to partnerships within the community.

Then in February, Springtown, like much of Texas, was hit hard by an unprecedented winter storm that left thousands of local families without water, electricity, or both.

they found people in need, Events and catering jobs were to the community, free of canceled once again.

Trent and Jennifer recognized an immediate need within their community and knew they could help. Instead of sitting on stores of food that would have gone to waste, they decided to take that food to the venue and get cooking. Surprisingly, the venue had not lost power or water.

They looked through their storage of non-perishable foods from a previous job at a movie shoot - sodas, coffee, tea, granola bars, fruit, and candy. They invited others to help open the venue to distribute what they had charge.

"We recognize how fortunate we are to have opened a small business in the food service industry, and that we were able to survive the hardships over the past year. There is no explanation for the success other than hard work, a supportive community, and God's Grace."

The focus of Corn Fed will continue to be serving delicious food, giving back to the community that has been welcoming, and repaying kindness with kindness whenever the opportunity presents itself.



Corn Fed Catering was presented the Spirit of Springtown award at the Chamber banquet. PHOTO BY JESSICA MCKINNEY

City of Springtown CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

they wore multiple hats, During the crisis everyone main breaks, power outagworking in other departments as other staff members were quarantined.

"It really made us realize we are a cohesive unit and support each other in our day to day functions," Derr said. "I really think that helped lessen the potential impact on the services we provide."

Before the storm hit, city officials held emergency management meetings to prepare.

"What nobody prepared for and nobody expected was a three-day power outage. We were prepared for short term outages; we have reserves when it comes to water," she said.

Derr said crews worked round the clock trying to make the situation better.

"Everyone stepped up from warming centers to sharing food and water," community-wide effort. via Facebook about water

came together to make the es, boil water notices, and situation as best as it could where to find help. be."

storm, Joseph McCanless the police station getting was named Springtown's updates. public works superintendent, which proved quite vid Miller said the staff the test for the new super truly appreciates receiving as he led his team through hour after hour of water main breaks and other issues.

without my guys, if any- pandemic and ensure that thing's going to show you we were able to provide what your team is made the highest level of service of, it's a once-in-a-lifetime possible to our residents weather event," McCan- while keeping the health, less said. "We always want safety, and well-being of to do our best, but it hits everyone in mind," Miller home. Our families were said. "This same level of also without heat and water. It's a helpless feeling through February's winter when you're doing every- storm when staff members thing you can do and it's worked for nearly a week not enough."

Derr said. "That was a kept residents informed our residents."

McCanless said Derr Just a few days before the spent most of the week at

> City Administrator Dathe Judy Smerud Spirit of Springtown award.

"I know the staff has worked tirelessly to adapt "I couldn't have done it throughout the COVID-19 dedication was shown straight to maintain and During the storm, Derr restore critical services to

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SPRINGTOWN AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE SPRINGTOWN ISD

Learning as we go

BY JESSICA MCKINNEY azlereporter@azlenews.net

When students left for spring break back in March 2020, no one knew what changes were coming.

That one week of spring break soon extended into two, and then the decision was made to keep students at home, learning virtually for the remainder of the school year.

This unexpected change left faculty and staff at School District scrambling to learn a new way aspect, the district needed to find ways to get meals to students for the rest of the school year, through the summer, and into the start of the new year.

Bus drivers were set on routes to deliver meals. Chromebooks and Wi-Fi hotspots were distributed to students at home for the venture into a whole new learning platform.

When things returned to a little more normalcy later difficult for Springtown into the 2020-2021 school year, SISD was hit by winter storm Uri, leaving students and their families tools to learn, although it without water and electricity for days while belowfreezing temperatures and had to juggle between Springtown Independent icy conditions kept everyone at home.

of teaching students. In burst, boilers leaked, and addition to the learning water lines broke. Boil water notices were spread across the district for those the district stepped up in a who had access to it. It seemed like one thing after another was hitting Springtown.

The school district came together to repair damages, to assist families in whatever way they could, and soon students were welcomed back to campus to resume learning.

The last year has been students and their families. SISD worked to ensure that the students were given the was a hard adjustment for everyone. Teachers have their virtual and in-person students, learn new tech-Pipes in the schools niques for helping their students learn both in the classroom and at home.

> The nutritional staff in big way to make sure their students were provided with breakfast and lunch to keep them nourished resilience of faculty, stu- these challenges over the



Springtown ISD overcame many obstacles over the last year, and were recognized by the Chamber for their hard work. PHOTO BY JESSICA MCKINNEY

while they learn.

dents and staff through- last year and have come It is amazing to see the out the district, who faced out successful.



SPRINGTOWN AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE **SPRINGTOWN FAMILY HEALTH** McDaniel paves the way during the pandemic

BY SUSAN MCFARLAND sptreporter@azlenews.net

Dr. Gene McDaniel knew Covid-19 was going to be a life-changing event. In January, a few months before the shutdown, he started trying demic." to get personal protective to the health department in the community, they and to FEMA for supplies.

"At the very beginning

when it first started, there this side of the county to were no set guidelines ... do testing," he said. "Inso you were on your own stead of sending people as to what to do to see pa- to the hospital or to the tients," McDaniel said. "I health clinic, we were spoke to other physicians, able to help people here." and made my own way to navigate during the pan- challenges with social

Through equipment but it was un- efforts and figuring out opted for Covid-19 testavailable. He then turned how to get people tested started to get supplies.

"We were only clinic on

The clinic also faced

distancing, but began McDaniel's telemedicine visits and ing in the parking lot so patients would not expose staff.

> "It was frustrating for patients not to be able to walk in, but it only takes one sick person to expose everybody else," he said. "It was a necessity at the time, now we're open."

> Another accomplishment was getting a machine that provided Covid-19 test results. With test results in hand, the doctor and his staff could follow up with patients and keep in touch with them until their virus went away, to make sure they got better.

day," he said.

McDaniel also played a

PHOTO BY JESSICA MCKINNEY



Springtown award at the Chamber banquet.

the vaccines at the clinic.

role in getting the com- only two clinics in Parker responders vaccines.

The staff at Springtown Family Health were honored to be recognized with the Spirit of

so having another one calling more than 30 per leased, he applied to give in Springtown was very helpful. His staff also At that time, there were held a clinic to give first-





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SPRINGTOWN AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE SPRINGTOWN POLICE DEPARTMENT

Working round the clock, to protect and serve in any situation

BY SUSAN MCFARLAND sptreporter@azlenews.net

Between the pandemic and the winter storm, law enforcement officers have been put to the test this past year.

Responding to calls with potentially Covid-19 infected people is one risk. While most people were social distancing, police officers had to rethink how to effectively do their job.

Along with the potential hazards related to contracting the virus, officers experienced stress from obligations outside of work with possibilities of exposing family members, or having a loved one sick with the virus. Many officers had to work long shifts, as others had to be quarantined.

After almost a year of those issues, Winter Storm Uri added to their stress. While most people were trying to stay warm inside their homes during the winter storm, Springtown officers were on slick, icy roadways taking service calls.

Chief Salazar of the Springtown Police Department accepted the Chamber's award during the Thursday night event. PHOTO BY JESSICA MCKINNEY

Some were for animals ing freezing weather; a were for vehicle crashes.

heritance Estates, where out and then tried pulling someone cut the water out the power meter to valves to new houses dur- cut off the alarm.

left out in the cold with welfare concern about a cers helped pass out water no shelter during the toddler in a yard wearing and assisted other agensnowstorm. Many others only a hoodie and saggy diaper, and someone cut Others included a crim- the lock to a business afinal mischief call at In- ter the city's power went community.

In between calls, officies with needs they had, working round the clock to protect and serve the









Supporting the health of Springtown

BY JESSICA MCKINNEY azlereporter@azlenews.net

The healthcare system has been on the front lines over the past year, and Texas Health Harris Azle supported the health of the citizens of Springtown tients did not feel alone and surrounding areas while they were receiving through it all.

The local hospital did not close its doors to those needing care. They found a way to keep patients safe, whether they were coming in for emergency services or being treated within the hospital for other issues.

Doctors, nurses, and support staff at Texas Health Azle worked around the clock to ensure quality care for each person who walked through their doors.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been scary for many in the area. A lot of loved ones were treated for coronavirus at the hospital,

and it was hard on their families to know that they could not be with them while they were inside the hospital. But the nurses made sure that those pacare

The biggest concern at Texas Health Azle was not the need for personal protective equipment or ventilators. It was for the workforce of caregivers that spent months on the frontline of the fight over the past year. But with the support of the team at the hospital, the staff was able to push through and fight to support their patients in the community, helping them weather the storm of the pandemic, and they will continue to do so until the fight is won

SPRINGTOWN AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE RI-COUNTY ELECTRIC

Together we fight

BY JESSICA MCKINNEY azlereporter@azlenews.net

As one of the essential businesses that serve the community of Springtown, Tri-County Electric Cooperative strived to provide service and meet the needs of its member owners throughout the pandemic and Winter Storm Uri.

Throughout the pandemic, the company found ways to cut operating costs and manage their capital expenditures to not raise member rates, and they did not have to lay off a single employee.

They created the internal slogan "Together We Fight" to represent the cohesiveness of the co-op family.

our employees worked from the office so we could take care of our members as a team. Our linemen are not able to maintain our lines from home, so all employees came in."

They worked to imple-



Representatives from Tri-County Electric were presented the Spirit of Springtown award at the Chamber banquet. PHOTO BY JESSICA MCKINNEY

members and the community.

causing a grid crisis hoped Springtown residents. to be a once-in-a-lifetime unchartered waters. Trithose same waters alongside their fellow Texans.

cols both in the office and out the storm and grid temperatures. in the field to ensure em- crisis to make sure memployees and member own- bers were being taken ers were safe. They learned care of and power being how to adapt in a COVID restored as quickly as posenvironment to serve sible. Linemen and field service workers were out in the subzero tempera-When the winter storm tures, snow and ice to bring County. The community "During the pandemic, came through the area power and warmth back to affairs team worked with

Many residents were event, Texans entered concerned about how they were going to be able to pay er County. The Tri-County County employees were in their bills, whether it was CARES employee bendue to reduced incomes eficiary committee raises because of the pandemic or Employees were work- high usage bills due to the ment many safety proto- ing in three shifts through- week-long below-freezing

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"We postponed disconnects and our member services team worked with members to set up payment arrangements."

Concern for Community is a core value at Triarea nonprofits to provide grants, which included \$7,500 to charities in Parkmoney for employees and members in times of need. During the pandemic, the committee voted to help members pay their bills by donating more than \$3,100.

During the rolling blackouts, Darryl Schriver, President and CEO, worked to make sure members were aware of when those blackouts would be happening through Facebook Live updates and posts on the Tri-County website.

The last year has been a difficult for many Springtown residents, but with the support of Tri-County Electric, the community has held together, and will continue on, stronger, because together we fight.



SPRINGTOWN AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE **TUSCANY'S ITALIAN RESTAURANT**

Tuscany's bringing not only quality food, but a family environment

BY QUINTON LILLEY editor@azlenews.net

If you ask around many people would say that Tuscany's Italian Restaurant is one of the best local Italian restaurants in the county.

But it wasn't until 2020 when the restaurant received an even better review from customers after all the extra work they did to help the community in its time of need.

Besnick Ibishi has been the owner of Tuscany's since Oct. of 2019, and just five months into running his new business was shocked to find out that the global pandemic would likely shut knew it.

"There was a lot of uncertainty around the CO-VID-19 virus and how we would survive. But thanks needed food to eat with to God we made a way when we had to. While I knew our business would struggle I also knew others morning during the winwould struggle too so I decided to give back to them in the dark using just our of my business."

as well."

Tuscany went on to donate pizzas to the local police department and firefighters as well as EMT workers and first responders who were working around the clock in local hospitals.

Ibishi manages nearly 20 employees and each of them he says played a vital role in keeping the restaurant open for business.

"I have to thank all my workers for their efforts. needed food to have it and Without them, my family's business would not survive. And with their help, we were able to give back to last week at the Springtown those who need it."

down his business as he storm came to Texas in forts and the Ibishi family February Tuscany's lost all electrical power but still persevered.

> their power out Ibishi began cooking pizzas in the dark.

> "We would be up every ter storm cooking pizzas

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Besnick Ibishi and Amy Walker PHOTO BY JESSICA MCKINNEY

phones for light in the store. We wanted everyone who we did that with the grace of God on our side."

Ibishi was recognized Chamber of Commerce Then when the winter award banquet for his efsays they are very thankful.

"I did this not because I wanted credit from others, While many people I did it because I wanted God and my family to be pleased with me and my deeds. I love helping people and this was a way for me to do that. Thanks to all for their continued support

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SPRINGTOWN AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE WALNUT CREEK SUD

Crews brave historic temperatures

BY SUSAN MCFARLAND sptreporter@azlenews.net

With summer approaching, some North Texans may have forgotten how miserable they were just a few months ago. Winter Storm Uri left millions with no electricity and many with no running water during ice, subzero temperatures and dangerously low wind chills. Steve Harris will never

forget it. The general manager of Walnut Creek Special Utility District said during the historic storm his crew put in 475 hours of overtime, trying to repair and maintain 500 miles of water main. Harris received more than 650 emails and received hundreds of calls.

Harris said during the storm, 40 million gallons of water was used, two and a half times the normal usage for that time of the year.

Walnut Creek SUD kept the community informed of their progress through their alert system. With the rolling blackouts, it limited the ability to pump water and the water usage was more

Pastor Dr. Hal Kinkeade

than could be supplied.

Much of the communications involved pleading with residents to limit water usage, boil water, check for leaks, and "turn off water or get them fixed to preserve what water we can pump."

"I worked 24 hours a day for five days, and so did several of my people," Harris said. "Some had to rotate out, to go tend to livestock. The whole week seems like a blur looking back."

While people were cold in their homes, Harris and his crew were colder-outside trying to help the situation, which to some was not appreciated.

in the book," he said. "People of rerouting water faster complained that we did not than we did," he said. "But answer the phone. But we during a crisis like that, it's weren't there ... we were out not the time to experiment."



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Amy Walker and Steve Harris PHOTO BY JESSICA MCKINNEY

working."

Some folks, however, thanked the crews; some people even brought coffee.

"I never thought I would have to deal with a crisis like that," he said. "Some of our crew has been here 30 years. We have never been without water system-wide before."

Harris said lessons were learned that will be useful in the future.

"We learned a few things, if this happens again, we "I got called every name may know some better ways



SPRINGTOWN AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE **UMBRA WINERY**

The heart of a community

BY JESSICA MCKINNEY azlereporter@azlenews.net

Event venues and any business classified as a "bar" were hit hard at the start of the pandemic. Couples who had planned weddings months in advance had to cancel and businesses that had alcohol sales at their core were forced to shut down.

Umbra Winery was no exception, but one year later they have managed to keep their business going, and have become an integral community partner to the residents of Springtown.

Throughout the pandemic, John and Debbie Wilson worked with couples who had lost jobs, had reduced earnings, even illness. They offered extended payment

ments, and even helped one They struggled to get things couple who were displaced by their original venue levels. when it went bankrupt.

They got creative and offered Micro Wedding and Elopement packages to meet the changing needs of prospective brides.

Just as things were beginning to open back up in Texas, the winter storms hit in February, leaving many without water and electricity. The bills that residents erational again. How could were facing were exorbitant, and many feared they would be cut off from necessary utilities if they couldn't pay.

Umbra Winery was without water, endured dam-

terms, reworked agree- weeks following the storms. back to pre-storm operation

In the meantime, Debbie saw post after post on Springtown social media boards of people who were desperate. They had no heat, no water. Basic needs that no one in the area was prepared to do without. Their neighbors were going to be out of work until businesses could become opthey afford the high electric and water bills that were sure to follow? How would they pay for food and shelter?

Debbie reached out to





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bors who needed help dur- as items for the auction. ing this difficult time. Soon, she found out that Center of Hope in Weatherford was looking to open a satellite location in Springtown, an neighbors, personal friends organization that offered assistance with utility bills, food, daycare, job placement assistance and training. She knew that this was the perfect recipient for any funds they would be able to the wedding industry. It says raise.

bers joined with Umbra tuous year or more, we can Winery to hold a live and online auction, many businesses offering their services toughest of times."

Within a few weeks, they raised \$5,500 for Center of Hope.

"Area businesses, our and vendor network were so amazingly generous," said Debbie. "It was truly heartwarming to see what a great community we have here both in Springtown and in so much about the 'heart' of Many community mem- people, that after a tumulstill count on one another to help us get through even the



Debbie Wilson with Amy Walker at the banquet. PHOTO BY JESSICA MCKINNEY



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