



Azle News

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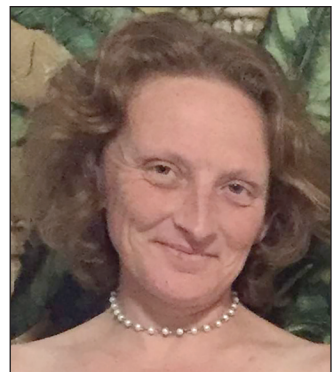
Hit-and-run suspect arrested

FROM STAFF REPORTS

A man was arrested Tuesday in connection with a May hit-and-run death of an Azle woman.

Azle Police Department detectives arrested 46-year-old Ryan Ellis Collier of Azle for an accident involving death, a second-degree felony, police stated in a news release. Investigators identified Collier in the accident that caused the death of Amber Linehan Lemke, 40.

On May 19, Azle police responded to a hit-and-run fatality collision in the 400 block of Wells Burnett Road. Linehan Lemke's body was found at the scene.



Amber Linehan Lemke

Ryan Ellis Collier, right, exits a vehicle at Azle Police Department with Azle Police detectives Chris Javarone, left, and Loren Lyon tending to him.

Photo by Jessica McKinney

Driver's seat

New principal begins at Azle High School



Nate Driver said prayer and Bible study helped inspire him to choose education as a career field.

Photo by Don Munsch

BY DON MUNSCH
don@azlenews.net

Nate Driver decided in college that he wanted to be an educator.

He said he wanted to become an educator after Bible study, lots of prayer and feeling a pull to go into education.

"It's a calling, it's a pas-

sion for me, and this is where I feel like God's always wanted me to be, is to be making an influence on students' lives, and so that's what I continue to do," he said.

Driver starts as the new principal at Azle High School this year after serving as an academic assistant principal at Saginaw

High School in the Eagle Mountain-Saginaw ISD. He replaces Randy Cobb, who had been AHS principal for six years.

A meet-and-greet for Driver will be 5-6 p.m. July 27 at the Azle High School commons. Classes for the 2022-23 school year begin

SEE DRIVER, PAGE 4A.

Changing the culture of senior care

BY JESSICA MCKINNEY
azlereporter@azlenews.net

Nursing homes have carried a stigma for many years. Families struggled when making the decision of whether to place a loved one at a senior care facility because of that stigma.

But there are some nursing home employees and administrators who are working to change that, like those at Azle Manor and Eagle Crest Villa.

Kip Kruger took over the role of administrator at Azle Manor in January 2021. From that time, he has worked to create a different environment for both staff and residents.

"I would say I'm trying to bring back the passion and compassion, and the love and the wholesome, like, gain that you get when you serve others," Kruger said.

"I believe long-term care is a labor of love," he said. "These folks need it, and they need something great to hold on to. Because when you come into these communities, sometimes it's not always the greatest of situations. You've gone through health concerns and issues. It's a lot. It's a stressful time

for families to put loved ones in a nursing home."

Kruger acknowledges that the previous stigma has been "never put me in a nursing home" because of how poorly run some nursing homes have been.

"But I hope to change that stigma by encouraging and showing the positive light and the fun atmosphere that we do have and can have

when we just love all these people and serve them," Kruger said.

Employees at Azle Manor have felt the changes as well, and it has encouraged them to follow their path in health care.

Hope Chipman is a charge nurse at the facility and has spent most of her

SEE SENIOR CARE, PAGE 2A.



Employees at Azle Manor are treated to luncheons as a show of appreciation from the administrator. Courtesy photo



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INSIDE News 1-9A | Obituaries 6A | Sports 14-16A | Classifieds 10-12A |

SENIOR CARE, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1A.



Kip Kruger dressed as a turkey around Thanksgiving and let residents have a good old fashioned Turkey Hunt at Azle Manor. Courtesy photo

23-year nursing career there. She describes it as a “genuinely happy place to be.”

“I feel like I’m allowed to spend more time with patients,” Chipman said. “I had a lot of respect for Mr. Pack (the previous administrator).”

Now under new leadership, Chipman said she and other staff members see the difference in the culture, and it’s been positive.

“Kip did an amazing job bringing the culture up to today’s expectations,” she said. “Coworkers are like family.”

Heather Holman, the administrator for Eagle Crest Villa, talked about how they make sure there are activities that get their residents engaged and enjoying their lives there. Eagle Crest Villa offers both independent living and assisted living options for residents.

“We do have activities and outings planned,” Holman said. “We have a ‘ride to nowhere’ where our residents get in the bus and just ride around — get some sunshine and vitamin D. We also have outside performances planned. They usually sing and perform for our resi-

dents.” Eagle Crest Villa also has a group come out to do ballroom dancing with the residents.

“That’s always a big hit,” said Holman.

Terrylynn Tidwell has been working as a nurse for many years, many of them working with seniors. She has been with Eagle Crest Villa for over a year and has enjoyed her time at the assisted living facility.

“Heather is one of the best administrators,” Tidwell said. “I love the environment (at Eagle Crest). It feels like home.”

With administrators working to change the culture in their facilities, more employees are finding joy in their work.

“I have been at Azle Manor now for four years,” said Jennifer Harris, staffing coordinator at Azle Manor. “From administration and management, a lot has changed for the better ... we get more appreciation. Things like cooked meals from Kip himself. We get our trusty Donut Fridays. Even hugs and high fives in the halls. His happy and outgoing personality has made

Azle Manor better for the residents and us as staff.”

Chipman also said that the positive environment has an impact on the health of the residents they care for.

“This is just an observation, not medical proof, but patients are on less medications, their blood pressure is lower,” said Chipman. “(Residents’) appetites have increased, there are less weight loss issues. The environment is contributing to better health.”

Chipman also said that more residents are actively participating in the extracurricular activities that are planned.

“Our activity director (Allison Phillips) is phenomenal,” Chipman said. “Her heart is so big.”

Kruger is known for his TikTok videos (@nursing-homeadministrator) that show the fun activities that residents and staff get to enjoy from week to week, including a Turkey Hunt before Thanksgiving in which residents “hunted” Kruger with Nerf guns while he was dressed as a turkey and ran through a forest of Christmas trees.



Donut Fridays are one of the best days for employees and residents at Azle Manor. Courtesy photo

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Council approves salary plan, changes to comp master plan

BY DON MUNSCH
don@azlenews.net

Azle City Councilmembers at their July 5 meeting approved a revised salary plan for city employees.

The city adopted a new salary plan in 2019 as a result of a comprehensive salary survey of 13 other governmental entities performed by Public Sector Personnel Consultants. But since the pandemic, area salaries have risen dramatically while Azle employees' salaries have remained static.

"Employees are leaving our employment for other positions with other cities to earn significantly higher salaries," the council agenda packet information stated.

There are now 15 full-time positions in the city that are open or will be soon, and there are five open part-time positions in the city, said Lawrence Bryant, assistant city manager. In February, city staff requested PSPC to perform another survey of the same governmental entities. The survey showed that the city's three-year-old salary plan was already deficient.

"Based on their recommendations, the proposed changes will result in an increased cost of \$660,948 (7.86%)," the packet agenda info noted. "These proposed changes will be funded by cost savings from open positions and health insurance. Step increases for eligible

employees are not included in these amounts but would continue as scheduled for the rest of the fiscal year."

Staff recommended council approve implementing the new salary plan, which would take effect with the first full pay period of July.

City Manager Tom Muir described the plan to the council, explaining the city is losing employees to other places where they will receive better pay.

"That's why I'm kind of in a hurry trying to do something with this," he said.

Employees would get a minimum of a 5% increase in pay with most of the raises going to police and fire employees, he said. Police officer starting pay would be \$59,000 and starting firefighter/paramedic would be \$62,000. Most of the front-line police and fire would see double-digit increases in pay. He also wanted to ensure part-time employees get a raise.

The city had a comparison of city employee salaries with some other cities' employees. Mayor Alan Brundrett said he thought some salaries were still too low, explaining someone who works in street maintenance and parks should receive a higher salary, given that they work in the heat, and also because that employee could work at a fast-food restaurant and draw a comparable salary.

Bryant said later in an

email that the starting salary of a Street Maintenance I position on an hourly basis under the old plan was \$13.02. Under the new plan, that same position's starting salary is now \$15.82, which amounts to an increase to the starting pay of 21.5%. This is one of several jobs in the city where there are multiple openings and the employees who were previously in that position were making \$15.02 per hour at the time they left city employment. Because these employees were making more than the minimum prior to their departure then, at a minimum, their salaries would have been increased to a level greater than the new minimum of \$15.82, Bryant said.

In the July 5 meeting, the mayor asked for examples so that he could understand the salary step system, and some others on the council also asked for examples of what pay would be for existing employees and new hires — a request that Muir filled. Later, after obtaining some copies of documents showing employee salaries, council and Muir examined specific numbers on raises, with Bryant appearing before the council to discuss those numbers.

Bryant explained the city has "needs all over the place." He spent considerable time formulating the plan, and the vast majority of employees will receive more than a 5% increase in

pay, he said. The plan council examined was affordable to the city while being the most impactful to the biggest number of employees. After a lengthy discussion, council eventually approved the salary plan, which will be included in the proposed budget next month. The vote was 6-0, with councilmember Amy Estes absent from the meeting.

Also on July 5, council approved updating and amending the city's 2005 Comprehensive Master Plan. Among those changes were an update in logo throughout the document and changes in demographics, such as noting the population estimate in 2030 would be 15,000. The bump in population was acute between 2015 and 2020, from 11,140 to 13,369. The city's population in 2005 was 10,150.

During the public hearing on the updating and amending of the City of Azle's 2005 Comprehensive Master Plan, resident Jim Kirk suggested width sizes for sidewalks. He explained in the interior of a residential development, sidewalks should be a minimum of four feet in width, and sidewalks on the perimeter of a residential development, along a collector street or in a commercial area, should be six feet wide. Also during the hearing, Cynthia Barrios asked about population changes on the document.

Mayor Pro Tem Randa

Goode said she would like the city to have a new comprehensive master plan created and that a firm specializing in city planning be hired to do that plan, as the city has changed and the current master plan dates to 2005.

"I think we need to have an idea of what we want Azle to look like or what the citizens want Azle to look like and get their input, get a roadmap and get an actual ... action plan," she said.

Councilmember Stacy Peek said when city leaders want to bring businesses to town, company representatives want to see a business plan that details the city's ambitions, vision and goals. Goode said her impression is the city is "just kind of winging it" as far as what it wants to accomplish. David Hawkins, director of planning and development for the city, said there's not a singular action plan document for the city, but there exists a combination of working documents that the city uses.

Brundrett asked about the cost of a comp master plan. Hawkins estimated it would be \$150,000-\$200,000 and that it would take nine to 12 months to complete. Brundrett said he thinks it would be a good idea to have a new comp plan but he also was concerned about the cost of the plan and said that the city could devise a plan that could be attached to the

current comp master plan. Goode supported crafting a new plan because of its importance to the city. Other councilmembers supported investigating getting a new plan through hiring a consultant.

Muir said the city will conduct a request for qualifications for a firm that conducts these kinds of comp master plans. He said if the city were to conduct a new comp plan, it would hire the best qualified firm and negotiate cost. The Municipal Development District could assist on funding, as that would be an option to be explored and negotiated. A comp master plan committee also could be formed.

Council also approved Ricky Simmons to the Planning and Zoning Commission Place 7 alternate spot. Simmons answered some questions from councilmembers before they voted on his request. When asked where he would like to see Azle five years from now, he said he would like to see the city have better traffic flow and that new developments be built with regard to highways and traffic and that the requirements be that they are conducive to a better community, and he hopes that is happening now with current developments.

Also, council heard that 6,000 people attended the Follow the Flag July Fourth event at Central Park.

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DRIVER, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1A.

Aug. 17. "It's humbling," Driver said about being principal at AHS, adding he is "super-excited," too. "It's a big role and I have a lot of responsibility to lead a campus of 2,000-plus people and knowing that I've got to be the one who communicates the expectations and what our goals are moving forward."

"First and foremost, the thing we're going to focus on is the safety and security of the school building," he said. "That is paramount this day and age and what we've dealt with across the state this summer. Just thinking about that – that's a huge responsibility to be thinking about. These parents entrust us with their kids, and our goal is to make sure that they have a safe environment – physically and emotionally, each and every day."

Driver said the community and sense of pride attracted him to the AHS principal job. He started June 6, and since he began, he has met people as he has been out and about. The community has been "very welcoming," and he looks forward to meeting more people. "It's just always been appealing to have a community with a one-high school town where there's a big sense of pride and tradition," he said, referring to what he liked about the job. "I'm excited to be a part of that community and to be a part of this team. I feel like I am here to serve and be a part of the

team." He describes his leadership as being the servant-leader style, explaining one goal he has is to lead by example, and he desires to be the instructional leader and the relational person with the students and staff.

"That's what I'll be expecting from the assistant principals as well, that we're out and in classrooms and with the kids and with the teachers as much as possible," he said. Driver said his wife and children are as much a part of the school as he is. Driver and his wife, Shelby, have three children: Brady, 11; Madelyn, 8; and Grace, 5.

Driver said he will have an open-door policy for students. He wants a positive learning environment and said he knows he will need time to build trust and relationships for the kind of culture and atmosphere that the school wants. The goal is to get kids connected somewhere to the campus.

MOVING UP THE CAREER LADDER

Driver was born in Fort Worth, grew up in North Richland Hills and attended Birdville ISD schools, including Richland High School, where he graduated in 2002. At RHS, he played sub-varsity basketball, varsity soccer and participated in the spirit group Johnny Rebs and was mascot for the group for a couple of years.

After high school, he attended Tarrant County Col-

lege (Northeast campus) for two years and then transferred to the University of North Texas, where he earned his degree in kinesiology. He earned his master's degree from West Texas A&M University.

He has been in public education for 14 years, with six years in campus administration. Driver has served as an assistant principal at both the middle and high school levels. Prior to entering administration, he taught math and coached middle school sports. His previous stops have included Carroll and Birdville ISDs in addition to Eagle Mountain-Saginaw. He had been at Saginaw High School for the last six years.

LEARNING THE TOOLS OF THE TRADE

At SHS, he learned in his job to build relationships with kids and families. He also learned how to implement systems and processes in how a school functions.

"I learned a lot these last couple of years on how to build a master schedule for a high school," he said, describing that schedule is a "huge puzzle every single year" and is ever-changing. He learned all the ins and outs on how a school operates at a high level, and he learned from "some really great mentors on what those things are and how we can be highly functioning in what we do."

Driver has spent his time this summer hiring and in-



In the Driver's seat. Nate Driver is the new principal at Azle High School. He formerly worked in the Eagle Mountain-Saginaw ISD. Photo by Don Munsch

interviewing people to ensure the school is fully staffed for the year.

"That's probably goal number one in the summer, especially with kind of the climate out there in education, with the teacher shortage," he said.

He also has worked on the master schedule, which details balancing class sizes and determining which teachers will instruct certain classes. Plus, he has been planning professional development for when teachers

arrive or return to campus.

Concerning people in his life who inspired him in his career, Driver said an aunt who was a middle school and high school teacher and a teacher from high school were instrumental in his vocation. Kathy Hudson, a longtime coach at RHS and Driver's senior English teacher, helped inspire him. Hudson served as a Fellowship of Christian Athletes sponsor.

"I don't remember everything that she taught me

in the classroom, but I remember her because of the relationship I had with her," he said. Hudson has retired from teaching.

Away from school, Driver, who serves as a board member for the Texas Association of Secondary School Principals, said he and his wife enjoy spending time watching their kids play sports. Driver said she is a "very competitive" person who likes to play sports and various games, such as board games and cornhole.

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Notice of Public Hearing
Notice is hereby given that the Azle City Council will be conducting a Public Hearing August 2, 2022 at 6:00 p.m., for the purpose of allowing input on the proposed FY 2022-23 Azle Crime Control and Prevention District Budget (CCPD).
This public hearing will take place in the Council Chambers, 505 W Main St, Azle, Texas 76020.

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A copy of the 2021 Return of Private Foundation on Form 990-PF for the Dreams Scholarship Foundation can be obtained within 180 days of this notice by written request to the foundation Treasurer, J.R. Seeds, at the following address: PO Box 667, Azle, Texas 76098. The telephone number for the Foundation is 817-832-3845.

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Popcorn Players presents 'Male Order Brides'



Some of the cast for "Male Order Brides" take a break during dress rehearsals. Pictured are (back, from left) Cheyenne Hilbert, Trey Thornton, Lee Dunlap, Jessi Green, Jacob Heath, Joshua Holden Jr., and (front, from left) Hannah Nurmela and Grace Edstrom. Courtesy photo

BY JESSICA MCKINNEY
azlereporter@azlenews.net

The Azle Arts Association Popcorn Players will be performing "Male Order Brides" for its July production.

The comedic play was written by Billy St. John and will be directed by Emily Ball. Supporting crew includes Scott Nurmela

as the assistant director, Stephanie Jordan Levy as choreographer and Lucas Phillips as technician.

The play tells the story of a scheming lawyer called Big Harry Deal who comes up with a devious plot to make a quick dollar.

Harry hires Starr Billings to pretend to be four different mail-order brides for four unsuspecting bache-

lors to trick them into marriage.

Then, on the wedding night, the grooms will be trapped in a mine and blown up — leaving Starr a widow four times over and the beneficiary of a nice payout.

But what Harry doesn't expect is that love conquers all and that good will always triumph over evil.

This performance gets the audience involved with rowdy attitudes, sass, boozing and hissing, and throwing popcorn at the villain.

The cast of characters includes Boyd Mooney as Big Harry Deal; Lee Dunlap as Starr Billings; Jessi Green as Calico Shurtz; James Kelly as Forrest Green; Jacob Heath as Grubby Shurtz; Joshua Holden Jr. as

C.D. Nichols; Trey Thornton as Lucky Betts; Canton Brenneman as Tiara Rhinestone; Cheyenne Hilbert as Trinket La Glitz; Hannah Nurmela as Bailey; Sarah Lee as Colada; Bryson Ingle as Ivory Keys; Robert Koury as Richie Bucks; Bella Bucy as Millie Bucks; and Grace Edstrom as Billie Bucks.

The first performances will take place July 22-24,

with the second set of performances July 29-31. Friday and Saturday shows start at 7:30 p.m. and Sunday matinees are at 2:30 p.m.

Tickets for adults are \$15. Students, seniors and military tickets are \$12. All Sunday matinee tickets are \$10.

Tickets can be purchased online at www.AzleArts.org, or by phone at 817-238-PLAY (7529).

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Obituaries

Frances Ann Holsomback 1943 - 2022

Frances Ann Holsomback, 78, passed away Monday, July 11, 2022 at her home in Springtown.

Funeral was at 12 p.m. Monday, July 18, 2022 at Alexander's Midway, Springtown.

Visitation started at 11 a.m. on Monday, prior to the service. Burial followed at Goshen Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers family request donations be made to Cook Children's Hospital or St Jude.

Ann was born Dec. 27, 1943 in Gatesville to Lawrence and Vera Herring. They both preceded her in death along with two brothers and her granddaughter, Haley Mobley. She married her sweetheart in 1961 and they moved to Springtown in 1968. Ann was a devoted wife, mother and grandmother.



Left to cherish her memory are her son, J.T. Holsomback and wife, Wendy; daughters Starla Irby and husband Philip, Tisha Mobley and husband, Michael and Tomi Jean Vaeth and husband, Nathan; her sister, Lanell Hill and husband Harold; 17 grandchildren; five great grandchildren; and several nieces and nephews.

The Azle News, July 20, 2022 Edition

Michael Padilla 1957 - 2022

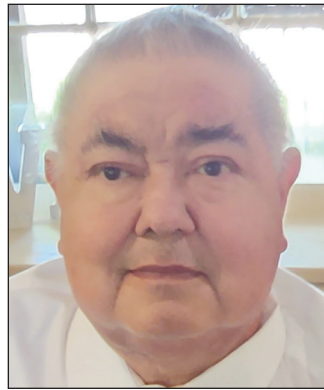
Michael Padilla, age 64, loving husband, father, brother and son passed away peacefully on July 14, 2022 in Fort Worth, Texas.

Michael was born August 14, 1957 in Albuquerque, New Mexico to Teodoro and Olivia Mary Martinez Padilla. He graduated from Rio Grande High School in 1975. In 1976, he enlisted in the US Marine Corps, where he achieved the rank of sergeant before his discharge in 1982. On May 5, 1990, he married his wife, Debby, with whom he had two children he dearly loved. He spent his life working in IT, which provided the means for him to support his family and to pursue his interest in raising thoroughbreds.

Michael prioritized fatherhood, giving all of himself to create opportunity for his children. Over the years, Michael has touched many lives, and he will be missed by all who knew him.

Michael is preceded in death by his parents, Teodoro and Olivia Padilla.

He is survived by his wife of 32 years, Deborah Padilla; son, Patrick Padilla of Springtown, and daughter, Michelle Huff and husband Ryan of Fort Worth; brother, Ted Padilla and wife Jennie; sisters, Rose Mary Montoya and husband Avenicio,



Lillian Picard and husband Pete, and Cecilia Maestas and husband Jerry; as well as numerous nieces, nephews, and friends.

Visitation will be held on Monday, July 25 at 6:00 p.m. at White's Springtown Chapel in Springtown, Texas, with recitation of Holy Rosary to follow at 7:00 p.m. Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated on Tuesday, July 26 at 9:30 a.m. at Holy Trinity Catholic Church in Azle, Texas. Interment will follow at 1 p.m. at DFW National Cemetery in Dallas, Texas.

Flowers are gratefully declined. In lieu of flowers, donations in the memory of Michael may be made in support of the American Diabetes Association. You may make your gift online, by phone at 1-800-DIABETES, or by mail.

The Azle News, July 20, 2022 Edition

A trip around the writer's block



BE AMAZING By Gerry Lewis

Azle resident Dr. Gerry Lewis guides explorers to discover their AMAZING. He is an author, musician, and speaker, and a coach-sultant for individuals, churches, and organizations. More at www.discoveryouramazing.com.

His name was David. I'm going to call him David #2 for reasons that will be clear in a few more lines.

He was two grades ahead of me in school and lived on the corner of 7th and Eric streets. I have only one vivid memory of him.

My best friend was David #1 and he lived two doors down from me in the 600 block of Franklin street. David #1 was also two grades ahead of me but we played together all of the time and he was like a brother.

By that I mean we went from playing to fighting sometimes several times in the same day.

On this particular day, we were all playing together and David #1 and I had one of our frequent fights. He stormed off toward his house and I was left with David #2. I was really upset about the fight and he said something that has proven true for over 50 years since that day. He said, "Gerry, you're not a fighter. You're a lover."

I was in the 3rd grade. My mom married my stepfather in June after that school year and we moved. Both the David's moved away at some point after that and I never saw them again.

Why did I begin with that story today?

Because I couldn't think of anything to write about.

But, here's the sequence of thought: I don't know what to write ... writer's block ... block ... around the block ... David who lived on the opposite corner of the block ... a profound observation from an eleven-year-old boy ... well, that was a productive trip

around the block! "You're not a fighter. You're a lover."

I suppose my people-pleasing, conflict-avoiding, peace-seeking nature was already showing up—despite my frequent fistfights with David #1 and my younger brother, Jeff.

But there was also something in that observation of nine-year-old Gerry that returned to time after time for all these intervening years. And hundreds of people have affirmed it.

I have learned that there are a few things worth fighting FOR—but the list is really short. I prefer words like "advocating" or "championing" rather than fighting. I'll even go for "defending" as long as we're talking about people.

There is almost nothing I'm going to fight OVER.

I'm not going to suggest that anyone take my approach to life (though I certainly think it's a lot healthier than going around looking for a fight).

What I am going to suggest is that every person reading this should understand who you really are—the unique and amazing you God created—and find a way to live purposefully in that God-given identity.

If I can help people know how much they are loved by God, how much their lives matter, and that I love them and will seek their benefit, then I'm well on the way to living my amazing.

Even if I can't think of anything to write.

Be amazing today, my friend.

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Ministerial Alliance to hold blood drive

Azle Area Ministerial Alliance will hold a Carter BloodCare community blood drive from 3:30-6:30 p.m. Aug. 1 at the First United Methodist Church in Azle, 200 Church St.

People may sign up by accessing https://ww3.greatpartners.org/donor/schedules/drive_schedule/127874.

For more information, call Colleen Horan at Carter BloodCare at 817-412-5372.

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<p>THE ABBEY CHURCH Pastor: Paul Brownback 10400 Jacksboro Highway 817-238-1404 www.TheAbbeyChurch.com Morning Worship.....10:30 AM Community Groups.....Various Times</p> <p>ASH CREEK BAPTIST CHURCH Pastor: Dr. G. Wesley Shotwell 300 South Stewart St. 817-444-3219 www.ashcreekbc.org Sunday School.....9:30 AM Contemporary Worship-TMP.....10:45 AM Traditional Worship.....10:45 AM Evening Worship.....6:00 PM Wednesday Youth Refuge.....6:00 PM Wednesday Evening.....6:15 PM</p> <p>AZLE CHRISTIAN CHURCH (Disciples of Christ) Senior Minister, Ashley Dargai, Katie Medlin, Worship Minister 117 Church St. • 817-444-3527 Sunday School.....10:00 AM Morning Worship.....11:00 AM</p> <p>AZLE FIRST ASSEMBLY OF GOD Pastor: Tim Stevens 1020 S.E. Parkway, Azle 817-237-4903 Sunday School.....9:30 AM Morning Worship.....10:30 AM Wednesday Evening.....7:00 PM</p>	<p>COMMUNITY BIBLE FELLOWSHIP CHURCH Pastor - Alton Davis 817-521-4510 1405 Reynolds Rd., Azle 817-444-7117 Directions: 730 N. to 1542 .5 mi. right on Cardinal, left on Reynolds Sunday School.....9:45 AM Morning Worship.....11:00 AM Sunday Evening.....6:00 PM Wednesday Evening.....7:00 PM</p> <p>CORNERSTONE COMMUNITY CHURCH 2233 Hwy 199 E. • Springtown 817-221-LIFE (5433) 817-755-0279 Sunday Worship Service.....10:00 AM Wednesday.....7:00 PM</p> <p>CROSSROADS BAPTIST CHURCH Pastor - Jon Baker Corner FM 730S & FM 1886 817-755-0279 Transportation Available Worship Service.....10:30 AM Wed. Prayer Service.....7:00 PM</p> <p>THE EDGE CHURCH - AZLE 1313 S.E. Pkwy, Azle 817-237-4822 Missouri Synod "Love God - Serve Others - Share Jesus" Traditional Worship.....9:30 AM Contemporary Worship.....11:00 AM</p>	<p>FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH Pastor: Dr. Richard Reed 200 Church St., Azle 817-444-3323 Morn. Worship.....8:30, 9:45 & 11 AM Sunday School.....9:45 & 11 AM Youth (UMYF).....5:00 PM Sun & 6:30 PM Wed</p> <p>HOLY TRINITY CATHOLIC CHURCH 800 Highcrest Dr. - Azle 817-444-3063 Saturday.....5:00 PM Sunday.....9:00 AM Sunday.....11 AM (Spanish) Daily Mass (M, T, Th, F).....8:00 AM Wednesday Mass Religious ED.....6:30 PM Confessions.....Sat 4 PM</p> <p>HOPE LUTHERAN CHURCH ELCA 4795 E. Hwy 199 - Reno 817-221-HOPE Follow us on Facebook for streaming services Sunday School.....9:00 AM Traditional Service.....10:00 AM</p> <p>SOLID ROCK BIBLE CHURCH 591 S. Reno Rd., Springtown, Texas 76082 Pastor - Bill Gay - 817-304-7443 Coffee and Donuts.....9:00 AM Sunday School.....9:30 AM Morning Worship.....10:30 AM Children's Church After Music Service Wed. Prayer Meeting.....6:30 PM Wed. Bible Study.....7:00 PM</p>	<p>LEGACY CHURCH Assembly of God Church Pastor: Gary D. Veazey Hwy. 199 & Jaybird Lane 817-221-2983 Morning Worship.....9:15 & 11:00 AM Kidz Zone.....9:15 & 11:00 AM Weds Evening Legacy Group Legacy Youth, Kids All Services.....7:00 PM</p> <p>SILVER CREEK UNITED METHODIST CHURCH Rev. Sheila Fiorella - Pastor 2200 Church Rd., Azle 817-444-1382 www.silvercreekumc.org Sunday School 9:30 AM • Worship 10:30 AM</p> <p>SILVER CREEK BAPTIST CHURCH Pastor: Jay Ditty Minister of Music: David Musick Corner FM 730 S. & Veal Station Rd. Church 817-444-2325 www.silvercreekbc.org Sunday School.....9:45 AM Morning Worship.....10:50 AM Evening Worship.....6:00 PM Wed. Prayer Service.....7:00 PM</p>	<p>THE WORD@LAKESIDE CHURCH OF GOD 9396 FM 1886 Fort Worth, TX 76135 817-237-5500 thewordatlakeside.com Pastors: Brandon and Kelly Bohannon Worship Pastor: Christen Moody Family Life and Young Adult Pastors: Jodie and Mark James, Kids Pastor: Katie Pearson, Student Pastors: Taylor and Sheridan Tomlin, Creative Directors: Logan and Carrie Edwards, Connections Coordinators: Preston and Ashley Larrew Equip Sunday School at the WORD 9:30 AM Empower Worship at the WORD . 10:45 AM Kids at the WORD.....10:45 AM PreK at the WORD.....10:45 AM Emanate at the WORD (Special Needs Ministry).....10:45 AM Nursery at the WORD.....10:45 AM Young Adults at the WORD.....6:00 PM</p> <p>Wednesdays Adult Bible Class.....7:00 PM The WORD Students (6th-12th grades) 6:30 PM Awana Kids at the WORD.....6:30 PM Life at the WORD Life Groups Various Times</p>
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Azle FCCLA earns silver medal at national competition

BY JESSICA MCKINNEY
azlereporter@azlenews.net

Azle High School students Skye Dickens and Kristina Birkeland brought home a medal after traveling to San Diego for the Family, Career and Community Leaders of America National Leadership Conference a few weeks ago.

The two-person team competed in the STAR Event Sustainability Challenge Level 2 and won a silver medal for their project. The event was held June 29-July 3.

Skye and Kristina's project was focused on green cleaning, specifically microfiber mops and chemical concentrates.

"I am so proud of everything they have accomplished and all the hard work they have put into their project," said Natasha Deramee, the Azle FCCLA advisor.

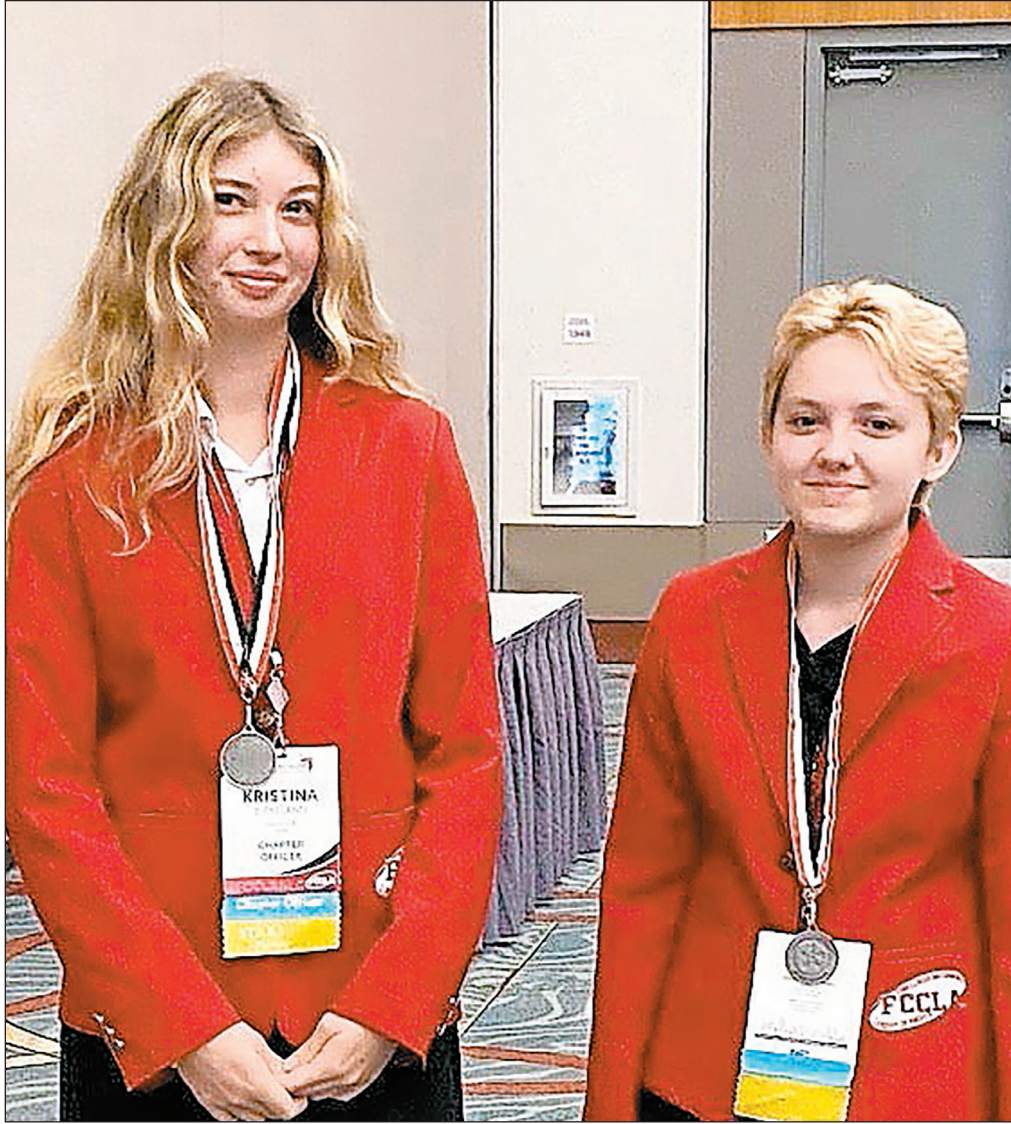
Azle FCCLA joined more than 7,000 other student members, advisers and guests at the San Diego Convention Center for the annual National Leadership Conference.

The conference provided

members with opportunities to listen to inspirational speakers, attend youth workshops, compete on a national level and network with other youth leaders, according to a news release from Deramee.

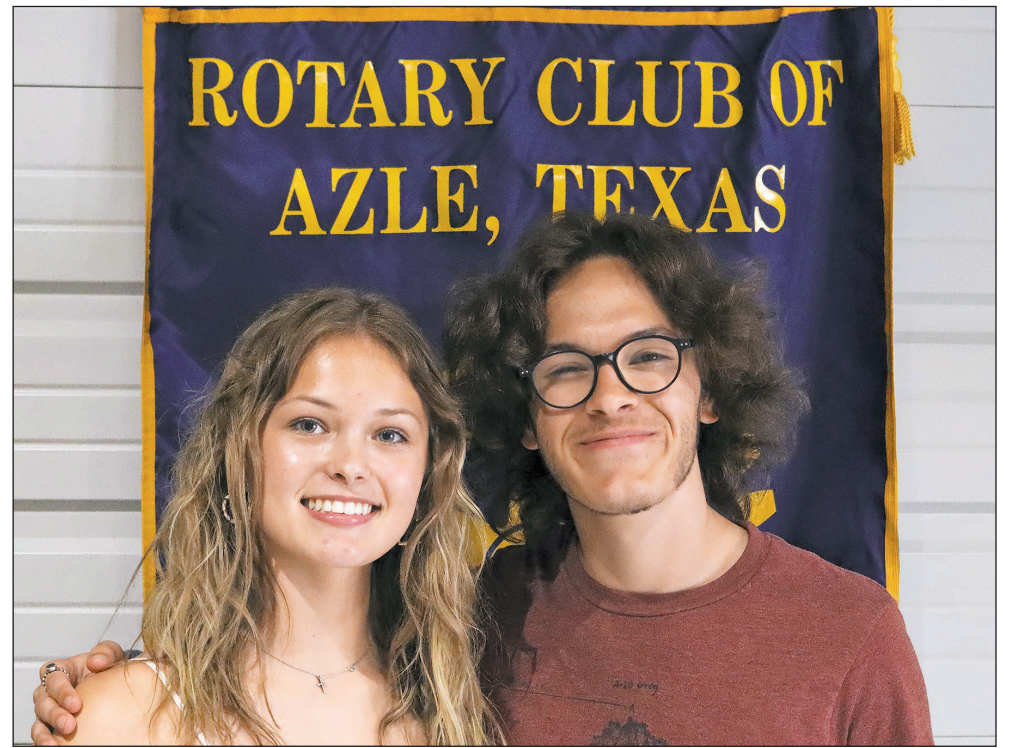
"(Kristina and Skye) are already talking about competing next year," Deramee said.

Next year's NCL will be held July 2-6 in Denver. For more information about how to get involved as a student, sponsor or supporter for Azle FCCLA, contact Natasha Deramee at Azle High School.



Azle High School students Kristina Birkeland, left, and Skye Dickens traveled to San Diego this summer to present their Sustainability Challenge Project at the National Leadership Conference and were awarded a silver medal. Courtesy photo

Rotary Youth Leadership Awards camp



During the Azle Rotary Club meeting last week, Azle High School junior Anna Preston, left, and AHS senior Trey Thornton discussed their recent trip to the Rotary Youth Leadership Awards camp in June at Tarleton State University in Stephenville. Around 170 to 200 students attended the camp, which, as described on RYLA's website, is an "intensive leadership development program developed in 1971 by Rotary International for young leaders." Students at the camp also learn to develop other skills, such as teamwork and self-confidence. Photo by Don Munsch

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Reno City Council extends Stage 5 water restrictions

BY MADELYN EDWARDS
madelyn@azlenews.net

Reno City Council extended the water Drought Contingency Plan at Stage 5 until all conditions are met for replenishing storage capacity for three consecutive days.

According to a letter dated July 11, the city entered Stage 5 of the Drought Contingency Plan because the water consumption reached at least 90% of the available amount for three consecutive weeks and because the water levels in any of the tanks can't be replenished to capacity for three consecutive weeks.

The letter stated exces-

sive water usage and lack of rain explained why the city was having trouble keeping the storage tanks full.

At the special meeting on Monday, City Administrator Scott Passmore said that one of the city's wells is out of commission because of a broken pumping motor, and the other wells in Reno's system have slowed down because they're worn out. Passmore said that it will cost \$30,000 to fix Well 6, and the part is expected to arrive in four to five months.

Passmore also said a water main on Quail Run is cracked and is scheduled for repair this week.

Reno is buying water from Azle and Walnut Creek Special Utility District during this time. Passmore told the city council on Monday that there were some days that Reno's water tank only had two feet when it normally has 15-18 feet. As of Monday evening, the storage tank was at 11 feet.

"I begged and we pleaded with people to quit watering. They wouldn't do it, so we put them on Stage 5," Passmore said during the meeting.

Stage 5 is an emergency water shortage and is defined by the following restrictions:

No watering outdoors

with sprinklers or irrigation systems.

No hosing paved surfaces or other impervious surfaces, unless it's to alleviate an immediate health or safety hazard.

No hosing buildings or structures unless for fire protection.

No allowance of runoff or other waste, such as failure to repair leaks.

No washing vehicles, motorbikes, boats, trailers or airplanes.

No flushing gutters or permitting water to run or accumulate in gutters or streets.

No filling or refilling indoor or outdoor swimming pools or jacuzzi-type pools.

No using water in fountains or ponds for aesthetic or scenic purposes, unless it's to support aquatic life.

No using water from fire hydrants unless for the purpose of firefighting, health, safety and welfare.

The exception to these rules is that the city will allow watering of foundations for house warranties that require that on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 8 p.m. to 6 a.m., according to the city's letter.

Those who are caught violating these restrictions are subject to a citation and \$500 fine per incident, Passmore said during the council meeting.

Reno residents are also

being told to boil and cool water before consuming it – drinking, cooking with it and making ice – because of a water line break, low water pressures and mixing of the city instructed residents to bring water to a vigorous, rolling boil and boil it for two minutes. Residents of Creek Forest do not have to boil water.

Mayor Sam White thanked Azle, Springtown and Walnut Creek SUD for helping supply Reno with water. Mayor Pro-Tem Katie Tucker and Deputy Pro-Tem Hernando Herrera praised Reno staff for their work on trying to fix the water issue.

STAAR results show learning growth in AISD

BY JESSICA MCKINNEY
azlereporter@azlenews.net

Azle educators and students have reason to celebrate this summer.

Students in Azle ISD were rated on 60 performance levels through the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) exams taken last year. Of those 60, students in the district showed growth in 53 areas.

Amanda Wimpee, the district's director of curriculum and student services, made a presentation of the district's STAAR results to the Board

of Trustees during their regular monthly meeting on July 18.

Wimpee's chart broke down the different test areas at each grade level and each campus, comparing the 2022 results to the previous year, as well as the campus' results compared to the state.

Students are scored on three measurements: approaches, meets and masters.

The STAAR exams cover 20 tested areas:

- Third grade reading and math
- Fourth grade reading and math
- Fifth grade reading,

math, and science

- Sixth grade reading and math

- Seventh grade reading and math

- Eighth grade reading, math, science and social studies

Ninth grade STAAR exams include Algebra I, English I and Biology. The 10th grade STAAR test covers English II, and 11th grade STAAR is for U.S. History.

Students showed improvement in all performance levels (approaches, meets, and masters) in 16 of 20 tested areas. There was growth in two masters areas and one

meets.

"We have 53 places that are bright green (higher than the state) and I really want to make sure that we celebrate that because we've had 24 months of hardship and our kids are persevering, so that's something to be proud of," Wimpee said.

AISD Superintendent Todd Smith was equally excited.

"I am extremely pleased with our STAAR results, especially given everything our students and staff have been through the past 2 1/2 school years," he said in an email. "As Amanda Wimpee

shared last night, our students showed a lot of growth in a several areas. We will address our areas of weaknesses while continuing to build on our strengths as well. Our scores reflect the hard work and commitment of our teachers, staff, campus administrators, students, and parents. We look forward to another school year of academic growth for ALL students."

Some changes have been made with regard to STAAR testing in light of House Bill 4545, which passed during the 87th Legislative Session. The requirement for

fifth and eighth grade promotion has been eliminated "so there are no longer any high stakes for elementary and middle school students taking the STAAR. School systems, however, may have local policies related to how students are promoted to the next grade level or retained," the Texas Education Agency stated in a news release.

Other changes will also be coming that will require the STAAR tests to be redesigned to better align with classroom instruction and do away with schools "teaching to the test."

Raindrops may be falling on my head, but do they fall on everyone else?

I must have been about 6 or 7, and I found myself riding with my dad on the way to my grandparents' house. It was a spring morning as we drove down the highway and I was occupying my time like young people of the age did when they traveled in the car; we looked out the window and observed the world around us.

Naturally, my observations would lead to questions directed at my "all-seeing and all-knowing" father. I never had a doubt he could answer any question I would send his way and the answer would be absolutely, unequivocally correct. There was a great deal of comfort to have such a source of information so readily available. On that trip, I would ask questions like, "what kind of stuff do they put in silos?" "how come they plant corn in rows?" "why do cars need gas?" and on and on.

The trip continued with Dad answering my many questions and it wasn't long before I noticed the sky had started to change. As I looked down the highway, I could see the sky had turned very dark. I was young, but I knew this meant it was going to rain. In a few miles, I could see a deluge of rain falling on one side of the highway, but curiously there was no rain on the other side



FROM MY FRONT PORCH

By Sam Houston

Sam Houston is a syndicated columnist and newspaper executive. He is also an author, actor, playwright and entertainment producer/promoter.

of the road. I was mesmerized! For the life of me, I could not understand how the rain just stopped over one side of the road, but yet was flooding the other side.

"Dad," I asked, "How does it rain on one side of the road, and it doesn't rain on the other? I thought when it rained it rained all over the whole world!"

My father looked at me in shaken disbelief, like surely, I must not have sprung from his loins. Perhaps I had been adopted?

"No, Sam, it can rain where you are standing and not be raining 10 feet away. Lots of times rain skips all over the place and it certainly doesn't rain all over the world at the same time."

My mouth dropped open. Are you kidding me? I was young and had the impression that whatever was happening in my world, was happening everywhere. Dad gave his young son a real education that day: Just because something affects you, doesn't mean everyone else in the world is affected the same way.

I was very young so my

ignorance about rain is understandable. Unfortunately, there are a lot of grownups in the world who haven't learned that lesson yet, so it seems. Not everyone in the world has the same experiences, and those different experiences mold us to be different people. Experiences give us different perspectives of the world around us.

I am pretty sure a farm boy in Kansas doesn't really understand what it is like to live in the inner city of Newark, New Jersey. I am equally certain, that "street kid" from Jersey would have no idea of how to milk a cow, nor plant a garden in rural Kansas. It doesn't make one person right and the other person wrong. They simply have different perspectives of the world because of their life experiences. Understanding that differences exist allows us all to live together in peace and understanding.

Thought for the day: We can complain because the rose bushes have thorns, or celebrate because thorns have roses.

Until next time.

BOOK REVIEW

Still plenty to do with kids this summer

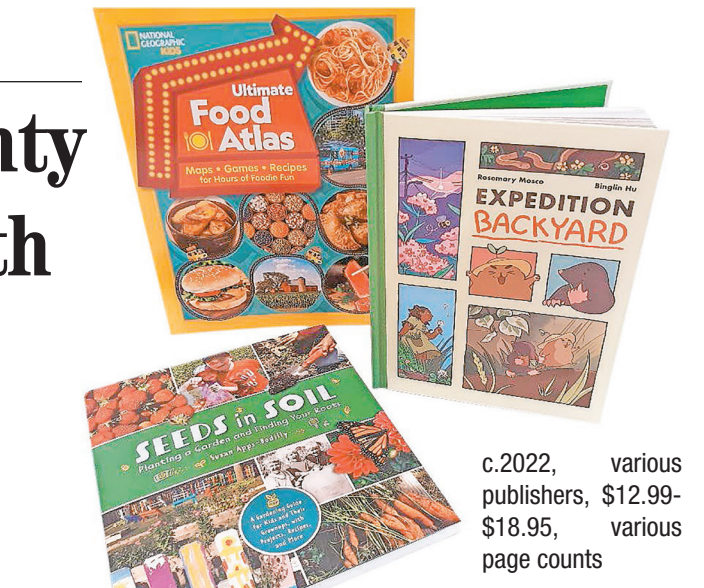
BY TERRI SCHLICHENMEYER

Don't look now.

No, don't! Because if you do, you'll see that school is starting soon. Summer's more than half over and you haven't done even a portion of the things you wanted to do this summer. You need more bike-riding time. You need more time in the pool and more hours with your friends. You need to check out these three great books, to see what else you might be missing.

Do you know what's in your backyard? Really, down to the dirt? If you don't, then take a peek at "Expedition Backyard" by Rosemary Mosco and Binglin Hu (RH Graphic, \$12.99). It's the story of Mole and Vole and the adventure of a lifetime.

On a series of beautiful days, the two friends travel from their side-by-side homes on a walk through the woods, in the country, through the city, and around the trees to see what's there. Along the way, there are birds to watch, wildlife to avoid (eek!), and interest-



c.2022, various publishers, \$12.99-\$18.95, various page counts

ing things to study. Written in graphic novel form, this book is great for kids ages 7 to 10 and will prod them to notice what's beneath their feet and over their heads.

It's July, but so what? There's still enough time to plant a small garden and grow some yummy vegetables, and "Seeds in Soil" by Susan Apps-Bodilly (Wisconsin Historical Society Press, \$18.95) will show you how to do it.

Chances are, you've spent a pretty fair amount of time playing in the dirt, but this book tells you how to get dinner by doing it. From knowing your soil and making it perfect, to determining the kind of garden you want, this book helps kids learn how to garden – but that's not all. There's a few short pages here on putting food up for the winter, a chapter on growing flowers and herbs, and there are projects to do that'll keep them busy all winter long. Though this book is Wisconsin-centric, its information will appeal to eight to

13-year-olds from any geographic area.

And once you've harvested the vegetables, what will you do with them? Find more ideas inside "Ultimate Food Atlas" (National Geographic Kids, \$12.99). Any young foodie will drool over this book, with history, quizzes, and geography inside, and there are all kinds of fast facts that kids love to know. Take your stomach on a trip through each of the continents, learn about the types of breakfast foods people eat in other lands, find some recipes to try, and read about other kids' favorite desserts. This is one of those books that ages eight to 13 will love to browse – especially if they love to eat.

If these great books don't fill the time for your favorite kid, be sure to ask your local librarian or bookseller. There are so many new books and old favorites that can make this summer the best one ever – and all you have to do is ask. In the meantime, these three books are absolutely worth a look right now.

Wildfire danger continues to rise

WILDFIRE DANGER CONTINUES TO RISE

As we cross the halfway point of July, wildfire danger continues to increase across the state. On Friday, Texas A&M Forest Service firefighters responded to 15 new wildfires that burned 651 acres. As of Sunday, there were eight active wildfires; the largest was the Nethery Road Fire in Kimble County, involving an estimated 3,500 acres. It has been 70% contained.

The forest service is taking to the air to augment fire suppression efforts on the ground. It has opened the Austin Airtanker Base at the Austin-Bergstrom International Airport. The service has three dozen aircraft mobilized at 17 airports around the state for wildfire response. The Austin Airtanker Base will serve as a reload station for aircraft coming and going to wildfires. It is the only airport in the state set up for what is known as a Very Large Airtanker, or DC-10.

Forest service aircraft can get anywhere in Texas in under one hour. Since being placed in operation in early December, they have flown 4,641 hours and dumped 6.8 million gallons



CAPITOL HIGHLIGHTS

By Gary Borders

Gary Borders is a veteran award-winning Texas journalist. He published a number of community newspapers in Texas during a 30-year span, including in Longview, Fort Stockton, Nacogdoches and Cedar Park. gborders@texaspress.com.

of water and retardant on Texas wildfires.

“This year, we have utilized aviation resources for response in areas experiencing significant wildfire activity,” said Jared Karns, with the forest service. “These aircraft provide support to ground crews and assist in protecting homes as well as other critical infrastructure.”

There are now 212 counties across the state with burn bans — 84% of the total number of Texas counties.

SIX WAYS TO SAVE WATER IN SUMMER HEAT

TDWB is offering six tips on saving water in a state whose population is expected to increase from 29.5 million in 2021 to 51.1 million in 2070 — a 73% increase that will put a strain on water supplies. Water conservation is one of the major strategies recommended in the 2022 state water plan. Here are

the tips:

- Water landscape in the early morning and at night when winds are calmer and temperatures lower.

- Design a water-wise landscape with native shrubs, trees and grasses. Native plants have adapted to a region’s climate and conserve water more efficiently.

- Follow local watering restrictions. They’re there for a reason: to make sure a community doesn’t run out of water.

- Manage in-ground irrigation systems and check sprinkler heads. Avoid leaving systems on automatic settings that may come on when it isn’t necessary — like during a thunderstorm.

- Consider installing a rainwater harvesting system. In general, for every inch of rain that falls on a 2,000-square-foot roof, about 1,000 gallons of water can be collected. Find out more here: <https://tinyurl.com/mryburys>.

com/mryburys.

- Cover your pool or spa when not in use, since evaporation throughout the summer can add up to the equivalent of a pool’s volume.

FOURTH CONSECUTIVE MONTH WITH RAIN DEFICIT

Unsurprisingly, June was warmer and drier for much of Texas, according to Dr. Mark Wentzel, hydrologist with the Texas Water Development Board. At the end of June, drought conditions covered 86% of the state, up 8 percentage points from May.

“That all adds up to the conclusion that Texas is in a significant drought, the worst since 2011, but not worse than 2011,” Wentzel wrote.

The drought predictably is having an effect on the state’s water supply reservoirs, which are at 75% of capacity, 10 percentage points below normal for this time of year, according to TWDB.

TXDOT APPROVES \$146 MILLION FOR STATEWIDE TRANSIT

Two grants totaling \$146 million have been announced by the Texas De-

partment of Transportation to fund transit providers across the state, particularly in rural areas.

“This funding is critical to ensuring everyone in Texas, especially in rural areas, has access to where they need to go safely and reliably,” TxDOT Transportation Commissioner Alvin New said.

Transit agencies can use the funds, which come from both federal and state coffers, to cover maintenance costs, buy new buses, build new facilities and expand services to more people, according to TxDOT. The funding is a 65% increase over last summer’s funds, in large part due to federal funds from the infrastructure act passed last year.

O’ROURKE OUTRAISES ABBOTT IN LAST FOUR MONTHS

Democratic gubernatorial challenger Beto O’Rourke raised \$27.3 million from Feb. 20 to June 20, outpacing Gov. Gregg Abbott’s \$25 million, according to the Austin American-Statesman. Abbott still has a commanding lead in cash on hand, with \$46 million in the bank. The O’Rourke campaign has not released how much cash it has on hand.

The O’Rourke campaign said nearly all its donations were made online, at an average of \$54. Teachers gave more money than people from any other occupation.

The latest poll indicates the race for governor has tightened, though Abbott still holds a 6-point lead — 45% to 39%.

BA.2 VARIANT OF COVID-19 SPURS HIKE IN CASES

With the highly transmissible BA.2 variant of COVID-19 now the dominant strain, the number of new cases continues to rise in Texas and elsewhere. The Coronavirus Resource Center at Johns Hopkins University reported 107,367 new cases in Texas during the past week, up 27% from the previous week. A total of 124 new deaths were reported, just slightly up from the previous week. The number of lab-confirmed COVID-19 hospitalizations rose slightly to 3,240, according to the Texas Department of State Health Services.

Nearly 60% of the state’s entire population is fully vaccinated, according to DSHS, with 7.178 million Texans also getting at least one booster shot.

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034 Garage & Estate Sales

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Shinola's Texas Cafe in Springtown is hiring for all positions! We are continuing to grow as our in house and catering business expands. Please come by and one of our managers will be happy to assist you. 301 Martin Ave. Springtown

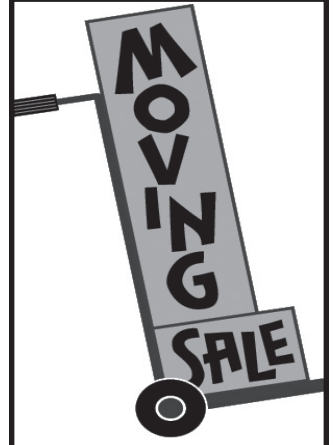
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046 Looking to Buy

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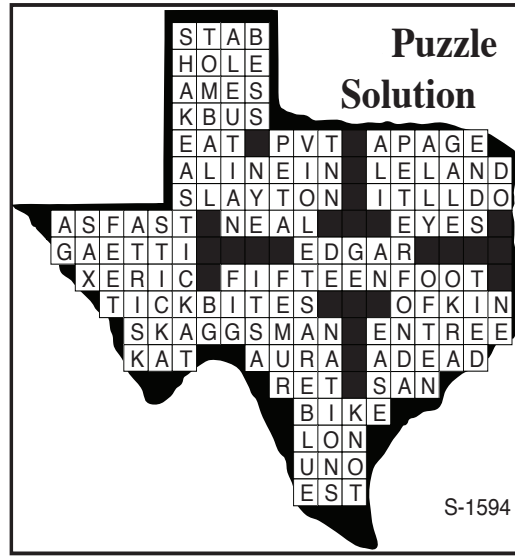
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ACROSS

- 1 hula hoops and mullets, e.g.
- 5 TX George Jones' "The Race ___"
- 6 "___-__-tat" (knocking or gunfire)
- 7 TX Jamie Foxx's first name at birth
- 8 TXism: "Devil's ___" (praying mantis)
- 17 "Texas Tea"
- 18 TXism: "___ ___ duck in water"
- 21 4-term Dallas mayor: ___ Thornton
- 22 truck rubber
- 23 TXism: "he's ___ walk the river with"
- 24 TX Bob Willis' "Take ___ to Tulsa"
- 29 Laredo had a large anti___ smelter
- 30 this Bob started a chain of Texas cafeterias
- 31 big Texas-___ game
- 32 TXism: "like two dogs fighting ___" (vicious)
- 34 QB Blake for IFL Frisco Fighters
- 35 ___ and reel
- 36 Anglican church service at sunset in Coleman County on U.S. 283
- 38 TXism: "would ___ maggot" (putrid)
- 39 TXism: "thick as ticks ___"
- 41 two-___ (fake)
- 42 "without further ___"
- 43 TXism: "get your ducks in ___" (get organized)
- 44 this Warren started with TX Dennis Quaid in 1983 film "Tough Enough"
- 45 "The Texas Chain ___ Massacre" (1972)
- 46 former Cowboy DE Ed "___ Tall" Jones
- 47 a birdie is one ___ par
- 48 walked ostentatiously
- 50 "___ hunt" (prank)
- 51 county prosecutor who wasn't elected (abbr.)
- 52 TX Willie's "Farm Aid ___" was in Lincoln, Nebraska jar top
- 53

DOWN

- 1 crowd pleaser all over Texas on July 4 (2 wds.)
- 2 TXism: "skinny ___"
- 3 TXism: "it'll ___ something better comes along"
- 4 between meals treat
- 9 TXism: "you can write it ___" (certain)
- 10 "___ a scratch" (unharmd)
- 11 it's now Verizon
- 12 "mi casa es ___ casa"(neighborly)
- 13 emotional shock
- 14 poetry metrical foots
- 15 Henrietta is the seat of this county state where the Chisholm Trail ended (abbr.)
- 19 "The Three ___"
- 20 Barbary sheep
- 22 "shoo" is a word said ___
- 24 "Mighty ___" does not flow in Texas
- 25 New Year's ___
- 26 UT-Austin mascot
- 27 AT&T Center and Toyota Center
- 28 country of Astros and Rangers Blue Jays foe
- 29 TXism: "___ mama" (waitress)
- 30 ___-Temco-Vought was a Dallas corp.
- 33 TXism: "he's ___ big for his britches"
- 34 white precipitation
- 35 TX A.J. Foyt, e.g.
- 37 TXism: "dead as ___"
- 38 a secure Texas subdivision?
- 40 TXism: "could count the ___" (light rain)
- 41 TX Buddy Holly's "Not ___ Away"
- 44 TXism: "went to the well ___ too often"
- 47 volunteer worker
- 49 TX Willie's "Farm ___" was in Manor, Texas



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Nine questions Azle athletes ponder minutia that matters

BY JEFF PRINCE
jeff@azlenews.net

Tyler Akers, a top athlete at Azle High School, was down on one knee with his head bent over, looking as if he were about to heave.

Sweat flowed from every pore, creating a saline puddle on the concrete beneath him. His skin was flushed.

That's how someone looks after putting maximum effort into a training session that lasts an hour and 45 minutes. Since June 6, hundreds of high school kids have attended the Azle athletic performance camp, a summer training program focusing on agility, speed, strength and conditioning.

Overseeing the program is Monte Sparkman, Azle ISD's athletic performance head coach. Sparkman is a nationally certified strength and conditioning specialist with USA Weightlifting, a nonprofit group that supports athletes finding success in Olympic and world competition.

Sparkman and more than a dozen other Azle ISD coaches are leading high school boys in workouts from 7 to 8:45 a.m., high school girls from 9 to 10:45 a.m., and middle school kids from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Mondays through Thursdays.

The sessions are designed to improve athleticism while reducing injuries.

On July 13, three senior football players – Akers, Gavin Green and Kaleb Vasquez — were asked a series of random questions just after their workout ended. Tired, sweaty and out of breath, the boys responded as best they could.



Gavin Green, Tyler Akers and Kaleb Vasquez take a breather after a long workout at the Azle summer training program.

Photo by Jeff Prince

Favorite professional athlete?

GG: Christian McCaffrey
TA: DeAndre Hopkins
KV: Odell Beckham Jr.

Favorite thing to do in your free time?

GG: Working out and hanging out with my friends.
TA: We go out to fish a lot.
KV: Go to the gym or play games with the boys.

Favorite TV show?

GG: The Gordon Ramsey chef show
TA: I don't even know – I don't really watch that much TV.
KV: "Regular Show"

Favorite book?

GG: The Outsiders
TA: Diary of a Wimpy Kid – I don't really read that much
KV: Jack the Ripper

Favorite movie?

GG: "Yogi Bear"
TA: "The Natural"
KV: "I Am Legend"

Favorite cartoon character?

GG: Rick from "Rick and Morty"
TA: Patrick from "SpongeBob SquarePants"
KV: Morty from "Rick and Morty"

Favorite musical group?

GG: Kodak Black
TA: The Beatles
KV: That's tough ... Lil Baby

Favorite social media platform?

GG: Twitter and Instagram
TA: Instagram
KV: Instagram

What question do you wish you would have been asked for this survey but weren't?

GG: How awesome is my mom? My mom is very awesome.
TA: How are the summer workouts going? Going pretty well.
KV: What is your favorite color? Red.

Azle kids nurture strength, speed at camp

BY JEFF PRINCE
jeff@azlenews.net

About 40 kids from junior high school had sweated through their T-shirts, with the dark wet splotches offering undisputed verification that a 100-degree day in July can be brutal.

Welcome to Azle High School's athletic performance summer training program. The camp is held in June and July to help kids develop speed, conditioning, agility, flexibility, strength and work ethic.

The boys and girls were shaded from the sun inside a large workout facility, but the heat was omnipresent. Large fans and open doors were little match for Mother Nature.

Mason Vanrachack, a seventh grader, was attempting to jump over a hurdle from a standing position, but his feet knocked the obstacle to the ground. Camp director Monte Sparkman chastised him good-naturedly for hitting a hurdle in front of a reporter who was there to write about the camp.

Vanrachack laughed. Sparkman keeps the camp structured but fun.

"I've known him since last year," said Vanrachack,

who attended the same camp in 2021. "It's more of a brotherhood, so I don't get offended or anything."

He returned to the back of the line and waited for his turn to try to jump over the hurdles again. While waiting, he talked with several other boys.

"I like being with my friends," he said. "It's a really good environment to get pushed and do work. All your friends push you, and they don't hold you back. I'm improving physically and mentally."

He tried the hurdle again and cleared it with no trouble three times in a row.

"I like jumping," he said. "That's one of my favorites."

Seventh grader Hudson Carroll enjoyed the jumping drill, as well, although the effort left him red-faced and winded.

"It's kind of hot," he said.

Despite the exertion, he looked forward to camp each day, he said.

"You really get stronger, faster, and you can jump higher," he said. "It overall just helps you. And it's really fun. You don't work you super hard. They do what they have to do to get you built up while not overwork-



Austin Kinard works on his pectoral muscles.

Photo by Jeff Prince

ing you. They make it fun."

CAMP DRILLS

Athletic performance camp is held Monday through Thursday from June 6 to July 28. The kids perform a wide assortment

of drills to promote general health and conditioning regardless of which sports they play.

After jumping hurdles in the indoor facility, the kids headed to a nearby weight room for another round of

drills. The first exercise required standing atop blocks and jumping in the air while holding a dumbbell in each hand – weighted dumbbell jumps, also known as DB jumps.

"We are jumping from the

blocks straight up in the air and landing in what position?" Sparkman said.

"UAP," the kids responded in unison.

"What does that stand

SEE TRAINING, PAGE 13A.

Azle cheerleaders embark on three-day summer camp in Grapevine



Azle ISD cheerleaders load onto a bus bound for camp.



Photos by Jeff Prince Lillian Phelps is packed and ready to board the bus for her first visit to the Great Wolf cheer camp.

BY JEFF PRINCE
jeff@azlenews.net

Bags packed. Hair pulled back. Luggage stacked.

Azle cheerleaders were ready to attack.

On July 13, a large group of rah-rah royalty loaded onto a yellow school bus headed to Grapevine for three days and two nights of summer camp at Great Wolf Lodge.

"They'll get to learn a lot of

cheers, dances and stunts," said Haley Hopkins, varsity cheer coach at Azle High School. "On the last day, there is a competition where they will compete against the other teams that are at camp."

Members of the junior varsity and junior high school cheer teams went on the trip.

"We've been going to Great Wolf Lodge at least since I was in high school, and I graduated in 2015," Hopkins said. "It's a really

fun camp, and the girls make a lot of memories."

The Forte Junior High cheer team was making its debut at the resort.

"This is our first year to do the Great Wolf Lodge camp, so they are super excited to go and do this," said Kristen Cook, cheer coach at Forte.

Earlier, while waiting for the bus to arrive, the girls hung out, talked and braided one another's hair.

"We like to have all of our hair fixed the same so that we look a little bit more uniform and like a team," Hopkins said while working on Kylie Bennett's hair. "The reason we like to do the braid is to make sure that all their hair stays out of their faces while they're jumping around and stunting and all that kind of stuff."

Layniebeth Hodges braided the hair of friend Kayley Brekel, and both girls looked forward to camp.

Brekel attended for the first time in 2021.

"I learned a lot of dances and cheers and more stunts," she said. "It helped me in the long run of becoming better with stunts and stuff."

Homesickness tends to seep in while away, but she looks forward to camp.

"I miss my family, but it's fun to be around my team," she said.




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