



Red Solo Cup BBQ Bash raises \$95,000 for schools

AISD and AEF celebrate with evening of fun and funds

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AZLE — Fifteen years in, the Azle Education Foundation (AEF) is going stronger than ever. Since it started, the Azle

ISD auxiliary organization has awarded \$1.3 million to the district through teacher grants, innovative projects, scholarships, teacher gift cards and more. Since last year alone, the AEF has even provided \$19,000 to teachers pursuing graduate degrees.

For 12 years, one of the ways the foundation has collected money for local schools is through its

JIM STEVENS | TRI-COUNTY REPORTER
An outrageous game of heads or tails was held for attendees with coach Sam Carter acting as coin flipper and Meg Arnold acting as announcer.

PLEASE SEE RED | A10

Springtown Council OKs demolishing splash pad, improving city streets

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SPRINGTOWN — The saga of Springtown's splash pad has ended as the Springtown City Council voted to permanently close the splash pad and order it to be demolished.

This action was taken during the council's Jan. 25 meeting. City staff will research other park features that can go in that space.

During the Jan. 18 infrastructure workshop, City Administrator David Miller stressed that the council needed to decide what to do with the splash pad.

"We can't let it sit there any longer," Miller said. "We got to do something with it, so we need to make that decision."

The splash pad operated 2014-16 and has been closed since the 2017 season, City Secretary Christina Derr said. The splash pad was not financially self-sufficient and wasn't producing a profit, let alone breaking even.

"Constructed in 2013, the splash pad was built without a recirculatory system which led to the use of hundreds of thousands of gallons of water each summer it was open to operate the attraction," according to the city's news release. "Due to the purchase, treatment and distribution costs of water (and the resulting wastewater from the system) needed to operate the system, the city council voted in the fall of 2016 to keep the splash pad closed for the

2017 season." In developing a park master plan — which was created with the public's involvement — there were a few options for the splash pad: take it out and repurpose the space, repair and reopen it, or turn it into a fountain park, City Administrator David Miller said during the Jan. 18 infrastructure workshop.

The council had showed interest in transforming the

PLEASE SEE COUNCIL | A11



FILE PHOTO | TRI-COUNTY REPORTER
Children play in Springtown's splash pad. The splash pad operated 2014-16 and has been closed since the 2017 season.



MADelyn EDWARDS | TRI-COUNTY REPORTER
The new Springtown Starbucks store is located south of State Highway 199 and west of Walnut Creek Veterinary Hospital. It is expected to open this spring.

Springtown Starbucks to open this spring

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SPRINGTOWN — It won't be long before Springtown residents are able to pick

up white chocolate mochas and cake pops from the new Starbucks store on State Highway 199.

"Starbucks is always looking for great locations to

better meet the needs of our customers, and we are happy to confirm that we will be opening a new location at

SEE STARBUCKS | A11

Azle PD buys body armor, shields, forensic equipment

Council submits nearly \$45,000 in grant applications for police equipment

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AZLE — Detective Mike Winterrowd of the Azle Police Department requested council approval to apply for state and federal grants during the Jan. 23 Azle City Council meeting. The council approved each of the department's requests and desig-

nated Chief of Police Ben Hall as the grantee's authorized official. The requested items covered the spectrum from officer safety to evidence and crime scene technology. The city will pay the costs of the requested materials up front; costs will be budgeted for fiscal year 2024-25 and will be fully reimbursed in fiscal year 2025-26.

The first three — and the costliest — items will be reimbursed by the government and will cost approximately \$28,000 together.

A 55-gallon portable burn unit incinerator was first on the list. Winterrowd said this investment will pay for itself in a short time, reduce

PLEASE SEE POLICE | A9



ZACH FREEMAN | TRI-COUNTY REPORTER
Officer Winterrowd brought one of the heavier police shields to the meeting so council members could get a feel for its size and weight.



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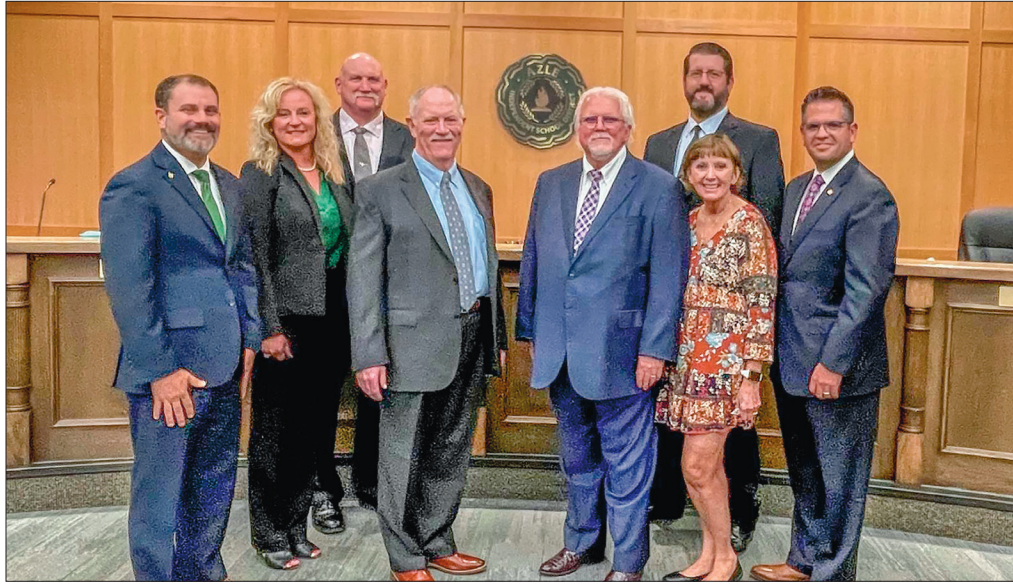


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INSIDE
News - A1 - A12 | Obituaries - A6 | Diversions B1 - B5 | Classifieds B6 - B8

“Locally elected, community connected”

AISD recognizes school board members during School Board Appreciation Month



COURTESY AZLE ISD

Azle ISD’s board of trustee members are (l-r): along with Superintendent Todd Smith, Sarah Bennett, Jeff Edwards, Ray Lea, board President Bill Lane, Jeremy May, Dr. Brenda Reed and Vice President Tim Brown. The district celebrated these individuals with social media posts throughout January.



ZACH FREEMAN | TRI-COUNTY REPORTER

Azle schools showed their support for the board during January by creating thank you posters, letters and pictures. Classes from kindergarten and up made their own creative thank you messages to the board which were displayed at the Azle ISD Administration Building during the Jan. 22 school board meeting.



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When things start downhill it is hard to right the ship

This past week was intended to be my vacation. I had been working for quite a few months without a break and determined that some time off was well advised. Frankly, I was worn out as it had been over three years since I had taken an entire week away from work. My wife was anxious to get away so we booked a cruise out of Galveston which would take us to ports of call in Mexico. My newspaper staff was very supportive of my decision and wished me a happy week of relaxation and fun.

My wife and I enjoy cruising. It is relaxing and we both love the sound of the ocean. Cruising seemed like the solution to all that ailed me, but little did I know what adventures I had coming.

We took off for Galveston on Friday, stopping in Houston at Captain Bennie's, one of our favorite places to eat. My wife and her family have been going to the restaurant for years, so whenever we are in Houston, we look



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.

forward to dining there. We made it to Galveston with no issues. The hotel room was fine, and next morning the breakfast at the Sunflower Café was tremendous. We parked our car and checked in at the ship about 1 pm. and were ready for the ship to launch and start enjoying our vacation.

Unfortunately, it seems that during the previous night, while crossing the Caribbean and on its way back to Galveston, our ship had encountered tumultuous weather. Evidently the ship passed through a storm so severe and unexpected it caused the ship to list severely. The sea became so rough even the water in the swimming pool was cast

out! There was hail, and high waves that crashed into the ship from multiple directions. We saw a video on YouTube showing people wearing their life jackets, with furniture and glassware falling from shelves. In conversing with some of the ship's crew, they made it clear there were some issues with the ship because of the storm.

When we arrived at our room, we found the carpet wet and some of the furniture damp. We were on the eighth floor, so the only explanation I can imagine is the wind blew so hard it forced rain under the balcony door. As we visited with other guests, it was apparent other travelers faced similar challenges with

their staterooms.

At this point we received an email from the cruise line, explaining the problems they were encountering and assuring us the cruise was not canceled but making everyone aware they had options. Guests could stay on board and receive a \$1,000 onboard credit, or they could leave the boat and receive a full refund, plus receive a free trip on a future cruise. We had our hearts set on making this trip and getting away, but at the same time, tried to be practical. We talked and decided perhaps it would be best to disembark. Who knew what issues the ship might have? Who wanted to be at sea and find out the toilets did not work, or the kitchen was shut down?

Let me be clear, I do not blame the cruise line at all. They were very kind, so much so I felt bad that an act of nature was going to cause them so much expense and trouble. This was simply bad luck all around.

We disembarked the ship and were giggling and joking about our situation, thinking about how there was no reason to be upset. It was just a little bad luck. We could get back in the car and drive over to San Antonio or Fredericksburg and spend two or three nights and have a very good time. We would get our money back from the cruise and in the future, get a free cruise to boot! We were good troopers and determined to make the best of a bad situation.

Then the other shoe dropped. The cruise line could not find our luggage. With over 8,000 pieces of luggage to sort through, they could not find our two bags prior to the ship departing. We were in Galveston with none of our belongings.

Our hearts sank. With no clothes, toiletries or my CPAP machine, we would have no choice but to drive home. There would be no cruise, there would be no fun in San Antonio, there would be no

"making the best of a bad situation." We simply got in the car and drove home.

I would like to tell you the rest of the week went well but I can't. A fraudulent bank transaction was uncovered, and I spent a portion of my time getting that issue resolved. I fell down a stairway, but fortunately was not injured other than a few bruises and a blow to my pride. We did decide to go the stock show but got called back home because my beloved Miss Jayne had been taken to the hospital. Fortunately, she is back in her residence and doing fine. Perhaps the highlight of the week was cleaning out the garage. Now, that is some vacation!

Right now, I am thinking that going back to work seems relaxing.

Thought for the day: Write your bad luck on the sand of a beach, chisel your blessings on a piece of granite stone.

Until next time...I will keep ridin' the storm out!
sam@hcnews.com

Springtown ISD - February Update

It is the beginning of February, and we find ourselves deep in various initiatives and activities in Springtown ISD.

Our district is currently finalizing an extensive utilization study, assessing the efficiency of space utilization across our campuses. The experts conducting this study have commended Springtown ISD for our commitment to creativity in utilizing our "available" space. Whether it's transforming closets into pull out instruction rooms or maximizing spaces under



SPRINGTOWN ISD

By Shane Strickland, Superintendent SISD

I am a blessed husband to Leighann and father of 4 girls and grandfather of one granddaughter. 26 years in public education. 1 year Belton ISD/Belton HS teacher-coach, 5 years @ Hooks ISD/Hooks HS teacher-Head Volleyball Coach, 21 years at Springtown ISD/Springtown HS teacher-coach 3yrs., 6 years as Asst. Principal (3 @ SMS, 3 @ SHS), 5 years as Director of Operations, 6 years as Deputy Superintendent, 1 year as Superintendent

stairwells, we are dedicated to maximizing every inch of our facilities. The findings of this utilization study will be presented in a detailed report to the administration and

board in February.

Additionally, Zonda is conducting a demographic report to rezone our elementary campuses, addressing the challenges of overcrowding at

Springtown Elementary and Goshen Creek Elementary. While this won't immediately alleviate overcrowding at Springtown Intermediate, Springtown Middle School and Springtown High School, it aims to optimize student distribution among elementary campuses. Revised boundaries and details affecting specific families will be communicated as soon as the report is completed.

Shifting gears, our curriculum team is excited to announce the annual RefreshED Professional Development

Conference. Open to all educators in Springtown ISD and neighboring districts, this conference will take place from July 30 to August 1. With a call for presenters currently underway, RefreshED will be a one-stop shop for summer PD, featuring sessions on content, TEKS, pedagogy, data literacy, social-emotional learning (SEL), classroom management, technology integration and much more.

In the sports world, basketball, powerlifting, soccer, wrestling, tennis, baseball,

softball and track are all currently in play, making our fields and gyms full with activity. We encourage you to come out and support these student-athletes as they showcase their skills.

As always, I want to extend a heartfelt shoutout to the amazing teachers and staff in our district who work tirelessly for our Porcupines. Your commitment to the education and well-being of our students is truly appreciated.

It's a great day to be a Porcupine!

What's in my water?

MADelyn EDWARDS

springtownreporter@tricityreporter.com

RENO — The city of Reno is gearing up to switch its water disinfection process from using chlorine to chloramine at all well sites.

This change will make it easier for Reno to enhance its supply with water from other entities, i.e. Azle, Springtown and Walnut Creek Special Utility District. By using the same chemical mixture as those other water providers, city staff will not have to require residents to boil their water before using it after Reno gets additional water from those entities.

City leaders have been working toward getting the disinfection systems installed, and that project was expected to be finished by the second week of February. During this transition, curious Reno residents may be

An explainer on the differences between chlorine, chloramine ahead of Reno disinfection system conversion

asking themselves a few questions — What is chloramine? How does it differ from chlorine? How will the change affect the water supply?

Most people probably understand that water coming from lakes or wells can contain harmful germs and may need to be cleaned before being used. Water can also be contaminated as it travels through pipes. Chlorine and chloramine are used to clean water and prevent illnesses like Salmonella, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

"Chlorine and chloramine are both used as disinfectants when it comes to drinking water," Reno Public Works Director Chris Albright said.

"Free chlorine is a more potent disinfectant compared to chloramine. Free chlorine reacts quickly with microorganisms and organic matter in water, providing rapid disinfection while chloramine is a more stable compound and has a longer-lasting disinfection effect. It is often used in situations where a residual disinfectant needs to be maintained throughout the distribution system."

The CDC's website states that both chlorination and chloramination make water safe to drink by killing germs. Chloramines, specifically, contain chlorine and ammonia, and the type of chloramine used to disinfect drinking water is monochloramine. Consuming water with less

than 50 milligrams per liter of chloramine (though the normal range of disinfectant levels is 1-4 milligrams per liter) has not been known to affect a person's health. However, some people may be more sensitive to chemicals than others.

Likewise, water with chlorine or chloramine is safe for pets that are mammals or birds, but not for fish, reptiles and amphibians which need water that doesn't include a disinfectant, according to the CDC.

As far as taste and smell, water with chloramine may differ from the specific sensory reactions invoked by water with chlorine.

"Chloramine will generally produce fewer taste and odor

issues in water than free chlorine," Albright said.

Neither chlorine nor chloramine are new. They have been used as water disinfectants for decades in the U.S., starting in the first half of the 20th century, according to the CDC's website. As for Reno, Albright suspects the city has been using chlorine as a disinfectant since the water system was installed.

"One of the primary reasons for treating groundwater with chlorine is to disinfect it and eliminate or reduce the presence of harmful microorganisms, such as bacteria, viruses and parasites," Albright said. "Chlorine is effective in killing or inactivating a wide range of pathogens, making the water safe for consumption.

Chlorine can create a residual disinfectant in the water that continues to provide protection as the water travels through distribution systems. This residual helps prevent the regrowth of microorganisms and maintains water quality until it reaches the consumer's tap."

The CDC's website states that water providers can temporarily switch from chloramine to chlorine to get rid of biofilm, or slime, that can develop in pipes and makes disinfection more difficult. Alternatively, chloramine can last longer in pipes than chlorine and create fewer chemicals, or disinfection by-products, when reacting to particularly dirty water.

For more information on chlorine and chloramine, visit the CDC's website at [cdc.gov/healthywater/drinking/public/water_disinfection.html](https://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/drinking/public/water_disinfection.html) online.



A residential structure fire on Long Circle in Pelican Bay is suspected to have originated in a back bedroom, Azle Fire Chief Will Scott said. The fire was under control within about 15 minutes of the second alarm being struck.

ZACH FREEMAN | TRI-COUNTY REPORTER

Pelican Bay fire prompts large FD turnout

ZACH FREEMAN

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AZLE — The Briar-Reno Fire Department was dispatched to a residential structure fire on Long Circle Drive in Pelican Bay after initial reports stated there were possibly two individuals located inside of the residence. The department received the call at approximately 10:14 a.m. Jan. 30. In accordance with department policy, a second alarm for mutual aid was

Missing persons uninjured and accounted for after Pelican Bay fire

requested. Air medical was placed on standby due to the possibility of burn victims and nearly half a dozen fire departments from the tri-county area arrived on the scene. Upon arrival, firefighters conducted searches of the house locating neither potential victim. At approximately 11:30 a.m., the two miss-

ing persons arrived at the scene of the fire unharmed. Currently the fire is under investigation by the Briar-Reno Fire Marshal's office.

For any further questions regarding this incident please contact Fire Chief Moses Druxman by email at madruxman@briarfd.com or phone (817) 677-4227.

TRI-COUNTY REPORTER
THE NEWS OF AZLE, SPRINGTOWN, AND SURROUNDING AREAS

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SISD digital learning director takes on new role

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SPRINGTOWN — Amanda Lanicek started her career in education to make the classroom a better place for kids who don't like school.

"I didn't love education as a student, so it was always my passion and mission to make education as non-traditional as possible, make it fun for kids," Lanicek said. "That is why I chose to get into education is to kind of break the cycles where kids get bored and things like that and really engage them."

To this end, work has led her to multiple schools to hold a variety of K-12 education roles, including high school science teacher, elementary school educator, digital learning coach, instructional coach and more recently, Springtown's digital learning director. Now, she is ready for a new job.

Amanda Lanicek promoted to executive director of technology

Springtown Independent School District's board of trustees recently promoted Lanicek to the position of executive director of technology. This is a new position that was created after Chief Technology Officer Robert McHenry retired after working at SISD for 22 years.

SISD Superintendent Shane Strickland called Lanicek a "tremendous asset to the district."

"I think hiring a good quality staff or keeping a good quality staff hired on is important," Strickland said. "Her communication with the campuses and the staff around the district is already exceeding expectations. I think that's critical that she had that relationship with the

teaching staff. Technology is ever-changing, so she'll constantly have to evaluate where we are and where we need to be going."

Lanicek, who is in her 16th year in education and her fourth year at SISD, is proud to be an educator in this new position. She's worked with technical aspects of education and believes in utilizing technology in the classroom.

"Education has evolved. Technology is in our everyday lives as civilians, as students as well," she said. "I like to just embrace that technology and see how we can use it; let students learn the use of the different devices, different apps, technologies, but also keep them safe."

A big misconception

Lanicek has noticed about digital learning is the idea that technology will replace teachers, but she said that definitively is not the case. She also pointed out that when Springtown kids use technology on the school's system, there are filters in place to keep them on instructional sites and tools, not just freely surfing the web.

While using technology in class can supplement instruction, it can also present a learning opportunity to younger students, Lanicek said.

"Just the basics of digital citizenship, I think, is very important because at some point, they're all going to have a cell phone in their hand, which is just a computer in their hand," she said. "If we can teach them now how to be responsible digital citizens, I think that it will pay off in the long run."

Moving forward, Lanicek



MADELYN EDWARDS | TRI-COUNTY REPORTER
Amanda Lanicek is Springtown ISD's new executive director of technology.

hopes to resolve outstanding technical needs in the district and then plan for the future.

"Mr. McHenry left us in great hands; he built our current network," Lanicek said. "Now, I'm working to figure out where are our needs."

Above all else, Lanicek wants the Springtown ISD

community to know she always puts kids and their needs first.

"We're not going to purchase different technologies just because they're flashy," she said. "We'll make sure that it's in the students' best interests and that it's instructional."



FILE PHOTO | TRI-COUNTY REPORTER
Winners of last year's Azle Chamber of Commerce People's Choice Awards.

Chamber to host 62nd awards banquet

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AZLE — The 62nd Annual Azle Area Chamber of Commerce Awards Banquet is slated Feb. 15 at the Orchard Event Venue located at 1421 Northwest Pkwy. The chamber asks guests to reserve their seat or table by purchasing no later than Feb. 1. Tickets may be purchased for \$40 for individual chamber members, \$50 for non-

Event scheduled for Feb. 15 at Orchard Event Venue

member individuals, \$320 for a chamber member sponsor table of eight, or \$400 for a non-member sponsor table of eight. The night will begin with a 6 p.m. social hour and a 7 p.m. meal, with festivities and revelry continuing until 9 p.m. Among the awards to be presented are Businessman

and Businesswoman of the Year, the Shining Star Award, the Rising Star Award and more, in addition to the annual People's Choice Awards. More information can be found at <https://business.azlechamber.com/events/details/2024-annual-awards-banquet-3058>

GARDEN PATCH Assess roses for freeze damage

PHYLLIS WEBSTER

Valentine's Day is closely associated with roses for a couple of reasons. First, many lucky loved ones receive rose bouquets on this occasion. And second, mid-February generally marks the best time to prune roses in North Central Texas. This year might be an exception.

In mid-January, just prior to the Artic blast, area landscapes boasted rose plants in full bloom. During last summer's extended drought, roses struggled. In late fall, however, rain soaked the thirsty plants, giving them a boost. Rain, combined with unseasonably warm temperatures through December, caused

roses to resume growth and flowering. The sudden drop in temperatures likely harmed the plants, at least damaging the fresh growth.

It will take longer than usual to determine freeze damaged canes, so be patient and examine the plants closely before pruning. Another cold front could further harm freshly cut roses. When leaf buds swell, however, prune to make way for new growth.

To access damage on rose plants, look for blackened or wilted canes, discolored tissues and any signs of mushiness. Use sharp, clean (disinfected) pruning shears to carefully remove any severely damaged or dead canes. If

a cane is partially damaged, prune it back to healthy wood, making diagonal (45-degree angle) cuts about 1/4-inch to 1/2-inch above outward-facing healthy buds. This type of cut will direct new canes to grow outward.

If you notice any diseased or damaged canes not related to the winter blast, go ahead and remove these as well, cutting them back in a similar way. If your plant has grown to look excessively tall and top heavy or if it lacks healthy branching, cut the canes to reduce height and encourage lower branch development. Healthy canes may be shortened by about one-third to one-half their

original height. Also, remove any inward growing or crossing canes, keeping the center of the plant more open for better air movement. Water plants deeply after pruning.

Closely monitor the plant going forward. If no new growth appears on certain canes in spring, these canes may have suffered extensive freeze damage and they require removal. During the growing season, deadheading spent blooms will tidy roses and promote new blooms, but it is not needed for rose health. When deadheading, cut just above a five-leaflet.

Do not trim roses that bloom on last year's growth, such as many climbers. Wait

until after the spring bloom to prune these beauties by about half and remove all unproductive canes.

Depending upon the rose variety, pruning may not be critical to the life of the plant. Old roses live for decades at abandoned homesites. However, pruning away dam-

aged or dead canes, crossing branches, etc., is good for the plant's overall health. Pruning improves a rose's form and overall appearance. And pruning encourages the development of new shoots that produce more blooms. Know your rose type to learn about its specific care.

View roses and learn more about their care at the Lake Granbury Master Gardener Demonstration Garden, 1410 W. Pearl St., during the group's Annual Plant Sale to be held 8 a.m., April 20. For answers to your horticulture questions, please call the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension, Hood County at 817-579-3280 or go online to visit lakegranburymastergardeners.org.

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“Let’s Talk Azle” breaks ground with public meeting

ZACH FREEMAN

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AZLE — Whether by sign or sticker, anyone driving around the Azle area is sure to have spotted friendly invitations to chat in front of places of worship, businesses and educational facilities. Let’s Talk Azle is a growing initiative intended to promote conflict resolution strategies and sow unity and friendship within the Azle community.

A modest gathering came to listen to Randa Goode, mayor pro tem and Azle native, speak at the initiative’s first public town hall, Thursday, Jan. 25 at 6 p.m., since planning began between church and community leaders over a year ago. Goode is on the committee planning the organization’s messaging. The event was hosted at the Azle Memorial Library.

“Communicating with people will help us start seeing people,” Goode said. “Instead of seeing them as an outsider, we’ll start seeing them as friends, see the similarities, and just kind of bridge that gap that can divide us.”

Let’s Talk Azle was founded after local churches procured a federal grant to promote effective communication and reduce extremism. Other communities, like Keller and Fort Worth, have begun developing similar programs with similar grants, but Let’s Talk Azle remains the most complete and successful so far, advocates say.

“We are finding because we are such a close-knit com-

Mayor Pro Tem leads first meeting of its kind at Azle library

munity, at every event there’s the city, there’s the chamber, there’s the churches, all of the different groups are coming together to benefit Azle,” Goode said. “Everybody is contributing, everybody knows each other. In Keller or Fort Worth you’re not going to have that. So, we have a unique opportunity.”

The organization has created informative packets and cards that have gone to the Azle Area Ministerial Alliance, Azle Area Chamber of Commerce, and Azle Independent School District, among others. During the meeting, Goode stressed that poor communication often leads to frustration and misunderstandings. With proper communication techniques, Goode said people can remain friends even after difficult conversations and that the downstream effect is a friendlier, less-polarized community.

“You do not have to have conversations that you don’t want to,” Goode said.

When having conversations, the councilmember said to consider whether it’s the proper time and place, whether you have the emotional energy and whether the issues are worth debating. For talks that are not worth having, Goode said to refuse, step back and say, “that’s not for me,” but also that the emotional temperature of a

conversation can be lowered just by letting people know they’re being heard.

“On the (Azle city) council, we do not agree on everything,” Goode said. “One of my favorite council meetings was when we did the tree ordinance and nobody on the council agreed to it in one certain way. We had a very lengthy conversation, but during that, I’d say my piece then Brian would say ‘I don’t really agree with that. I think we blah blah blah.’ But during that conversation I, would think ‘you know what, I hadn’t even thought about that.’ That didn’t occur to me when I was thinking about what to do. It took so long that we had to table it and come back at the next meeting. We finally came up with a good compromise and that’s the main goal, not changing minds, just finding common ground.”

Other helpful tips that were communicated during the event included stepping away when someone is being hateful, that boundaries are healthy, and to be wary of what you might hear from the news or social media. Goode said the need for Let’s Talk Azle is only going to become more apparent as Azle continues growing.

“Azle is changing, but people are not moving here to change Azle,” Goode said. “They’re moving here be-



Randa Goode spoke with community members about conflict resolution and how to “do no harm” to yourself and others.

cause they see Azle, and they think it’s the greatest place!”

Library staff members said they appreciated Goode’s personal examples and the lessons she shared.

“It was helpful, it was good to gain insight and new communication skills,” library visitor Laurel Chi said.

Let’s Talk Azle is preparing training videos to come out each month from March to

September which will focus on a “conversation card.” It also plans to place a half-page advertisement in the Tri-County Reporter and will continue to post the signs, stickers and fliers at consenting local businesses and entities throughout the city.

“We think 2024 should be a big year, and kind of a well-timed year, to kind of talk about communication

and respectful disagreement and how to handle that,” Son Shine Ministries Director David Shaffer and Let’s Talk Azle steering committee member said. “The main thing with this initiative is we want it to be for every single person in the community: from school, children, businesses and everything.”

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Azle PD year-in-review

Crimes, stats discussed during city council meeting

ZACH FREEMAN

azlereporter@tricountyreporter.com

AZLE — Azle Chief of Police Ben Hall presented the Azle Police Department's year-in-review during a Jan. 23 city council meeting. The department's staff includes patrol, support operations and animal control.

The department consists of 32 full-time sworn officers, one part-time sworn officer and 18 full-time civilian employees. Along with hired staff, the department has also benefited from 730 hours served by 15 volunteers. Volunteers attend many community events and do lots of driving for the department. Police Chief Ben Hall said the PD wouldn't be able to manage without the help of its volunteers.

Hall also called Azle Animal Control the "unsung heroes" of the department, saying they have one of the most emotionally and physically demanding jobs. In 2023, the shelter received 1,824 calls for service, 10,243 shelter phone calls, 6,266 visitors to the shelter, held 12 adoption events, and assessed 84 injured or dead deer calls. Hall said 34.1% of impounded animals were returned to their owners, 61.4% were adopted out and 4.4% were transferred to other shelters. In 2023, the shelter received \$18,941.40 in donations. Its live release rate for wild animals was 94.95%.

"That's pretty spectacular given the volume of animals."

Hall described how Azle Animal Control staff even occasionally make trips to other

nearby shelters to help ease their burdens. Last year, the shelter got a new truck.

Hall described the continuing process of phasing out Azle PD student resource officers after the creation and growth of an internal Azle ISD police force. There are two SROs who continued to be employed by the PD. One is stationed at Forte Junior High and the other at Azle Junior High.

The department started 2023 with five SROs; by the end of May 2024 all campuses are expected to be fully covered by Azle ISD police personnel. This year, SROs reported 18 drug-related offenses, nine assaults and seven terroristic threats. The department expects to maintain good relations with the school district and hopes to reinvigorate the Shattered Dreams program in the future.

In June, the department began dispatching for the Pelican Bay Police Department. Dispatch saw an unrelated 29% increase in 911 calls this year. On average, calls were dispatched in one minute, 58 seconds. Hall said this number is down from last year and is a good time considering the volume of calls the dispatch center receives. Dispatchers answered 50,318 calls in 2023, with 18% being 911 calls.

The department received 20,197 calls for service, made 738 arrests and conducted 6,948 traffic stops. Of those stops, 49.8% of violators were issued warnings, while 50.2% were issued citations. Hall said this is a good bal-

ance to show the city takes traffic violations seriously. The municipal court signed 2,438 class C warrants in 2023. The top arrest charges are warrant arrests, driving while intoxicated and public intoxication.

Accident reports are up 9% with a total of 388 having been filed for the year, 47% of which took place on Farm-to-Market 730 North. The top contributing factors in accidents were driver inattention, failure to control speed and failure to yield the right-of-way. The number of hit-and-run accidents was up for the year at 110. Accidents involving minors were up at 43. Major accidents were down at 140 incidents. There were 30 DWI-related accidents and 98 DWI arrests made. Hall reported Azle PD made more DWI arrests than Weatherford by a big number, which he said is due to the hard work and vigilance of Azle officers.

The department's Criminal Investigations Division investigated 37 sex-related offenses, was assigned 384 criminal cases and had a 45% case clearance rate.

Hall said the department's relationship with Fort Worth-based Alliance for Children has been invaluable over the last year.

"Many of the offenses that our officers have had to investigate this year involve children," Hall said. "We coordinate a great deal of our efforts with them. What we pay them pales in comparison to the services our community gets from them. Not only do they provide forensic inter-



COURTESY AZLE PD

Photos used in Chief Hall's presentation to the council.

viewers for child victims and families, they provide counseling, they provide potential legal help."

The department also conducted 3,741 training hours in crisis intervention, leadership and active shooter situations.

NUMBER OF VIOLENT CRIMES AND PROPERTY CRIMES IN 2023

- Homicide — zero | Three-year average — 0.33 | 100% decrease since last year.
- Rape — 12 | Average — seven | 71% increase.
- Robbery — 2 | Average — four | 45% decrease.
- Aggravated assault — 28 | Average — 22 | 27% increase.
- Total violent crime — 49 | Average — 33.33 | 47%

- Burglary — 33 | Average — 38 | 12% decrease.
- Larceny — 171 | Average — 137 | 25% increase.
- Auto theft — 16 | Average — 29 | 45% decrease.
- Total property crime — 220 | Average — 204 | 8% increase.

Hall assured the council that increases in the rape statistic were largely due to changes in how rape is legally classified and that only one rape involved a stranger.

"These are usually not stranger offenses," Hall said. "These are people who know each other, who make choices to spend time with each other and things go where they shouldn't, or these are family mem-

bers abusing other family members."

Hall explained that violent crime was up largely because of the sexual assault numbers and that larceny was up largely because of vigorous action on the part of Walmart in tracking down "skip scanners." Hall explained that while the department records reported skip scanner cases, it does not typically prosecute.

The department raised over \$5,000 combined for Angel Tree, Good N.E.W.S., and the Community Caring Center. Hall pointed out the department also made massive gains on Facebook after the hiring of a new community liaison.

OBITUARIES

Laurell Barnes 1951-2024

Laurell Lea (Loflin) Barnes, 72, passed away in the late evening of Friday, Feb. 2, 2024.

Memorial service is at 2 p.m. Friday, Feb. 16, at White's Azle Funeral Home. Interment will take place at a later date at Mount Hope Cemetery in Anson.

Laurell was born Sept. 15, 1951, the daughter of Wilburn Monroe and Wilma Dee (Warren) Loflin.

Laurell was very "sugar and spice" and had a zest for life. She loved to dance and could be found every Saturday night at the Springtown Senior Center, two-stepping. She also enjoyed shopping and keeping with her glittery personality, her favorite things were anything that sparkled and cheering on her granddaughter as she played softball, because of all the things that brought her joy in life, her first love was her family. Her daughter and granddaughter were the light



of her life.

Laurell was preceded in death by her parents; sisters, Lola Lindsey and Linda McDonald; brothers, Joe Loflin and David Loflin.

She is survived by her daughter, Kyra Pitts and husband, Tommy; granddaughter, Morgan Pitts; numerous nieces and nephews; many other extended family and friends.

The Tri-County Reporter, Thursday Feb 8, 2024

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BOOK REVIEW

Four bills, a political flier, a request for a charity, and a magazine

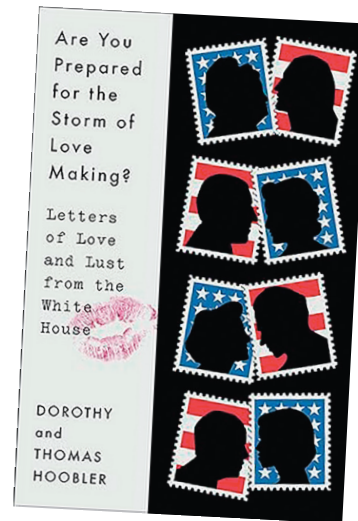
TERRI SCHLICHENMEYER

That's what came in the mail yesterday, which is about average. If you get a letter, man, that's unusual because almost nobody does that anymore. Imagine spending all that time writing, then waiting ten days to hear back from friends and family. Imagine, as in the new book, "Are You Prepared for the Storm of Love Making?" by Dorothy and Thomas Hoobler, romance in an envelope. Your phone is never too far away. It's literally your line to your loved ones, a place to catch up, pick up, or follow up on what's happening, whether by call or text. For most of our country's history, though, the only means of communication was through written letter — and that includes private, unofficial Presidential notes written to actual

or potential First Ladies. "This," say the authors, "is a book of love stories..." While John Adams was away from Abigail Smith, they obsessively wrote letters to one another, some 1,100 of them, expressing their longing. Not to be outdone, James Garfield and Lucretia together wrote more than 1,200 letters. Martha Washington tried to burn everything George ever sent her. Thomas Jefferson did the same with his letters. Grover Cleveland fretted about life after the White House, praising his wife, Frances' idea of raising chickens for income. Teddy Roosevelt worried about not making his fiancé, Alice, happy enough. Woodrow Wilson seduced his first wife through the mail. Louisa and John Quincy Adams

argued through letters, and Lyndon Johnson ordered his Lady Bird to tell him she loved him with "a continuous flow of letters." Abraham Lincoln missed his sons through the mail. Without Elizabeth Johnson's tutoring, Andrew Johnson wouldn't have been able to send her letters at all: she taught him to read and write. Franklin Roosevelt kept Eleanor apprised of his many health matters. And the most poignant love letter Thomas Jefferson ever wrote still exists on his wife, Martha's, tombstone... Admit it: it's almost impossible not to read notes and letters you find in random places. They're permissibly voyeuristic, also magnetic, and some are delightful. Others are weird, pragmatic or really kind of boring. You'll get a taste of this and

more inside "Are You Prepared for the Storm of Love Making?" Acting as guides dropping little breadcrumbs of trivia along the journey, authors Dorothy and Thomas Hoobler frame dozens of Presidential letters with historical references before they share them, which gives readers a sense of why each President was thinking what he was thinking. These men presented a public front, but your suspicions will be confirmed on both the awkward and the amorous, as Hoobler and Hoobler reveal a few surprises. Woodrow Wilson, Richard Nixon, you'll never think of them the same. Lincoln, Obama, LBJ? Yep, them, too. For the romance reader who also likes history, or the history lover who wants a hint of spice,



"Are You Prepared for the Storm of Love Making? Letters of Love and Lust from the White House" by Dorothy and Thomas Hoobler c.2024, Simon & Schuster \$28.99 293 pages

here's your book. Read "Are You Prepared For the Storm of Love Making?" You'll love every letter of it.

Springtown's financial reporting deemed excellent by national association

MADELYN EDWARDS

springtownreporter@tricityreporter.com

SPRINGTOWN — The city of Springtown reached an accomplishment that, to the best of its city administrator's knowledge, it hasn't attained before. The Government Finance Officers Association awarded Springtown a Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting for the city's annual comprehensive financial report for the fiscal year that ended Sept. 30, 2022. City Administrator David Miller announced this victory

with pride at the Jan. 25 city council meeting. "With the way Doug (Martella, chief executive officer at Go Virtual CFO LLC) has handled the finances, the way our staff has handled the finances, they deserve this award," Miller said to the council. "I'm excited to announce tonight that we are the recipient of such an award and look forward to doing it again next year." After the meeting, Miller said the city won this award in its second year to apply. The first year city staff sought the award, the city did not win because of a format-

ting error. Started in 1906, the Government Finance Officers Association aims to "advance excellence in public finance," according to its website. The association represents public finance officials in the U.S. and Canada and has thousands of members. Almost 40 years after being founded, the association began its Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting Program in 1945 "to encourage and assist state and local governments to go beyond the minimum requirements of generally accepted ac-

counting principles to prepare annual comprehensive financial reports that evidence the spirit of transparency and full disclosure and then to recognize individual governments that succeed in achieving that goal," according to its website. "The goal of the program is not to assess the financial health of participating governments, but rather to ensure that users of their financial statements have the information they need to do so themselves." The association's website lists 3,580 governments throughout the country that

received a Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting for fiscal year 2022 as well as 389 Texas award winners, including Springtown and Azle. Miller's announcement came on the heels of his financial report, in which he told the council about the city's rising revenue from sales tax and building permits. "We've collected ... almost \$215,000 in building permits," Miller said to the council. "To do a year-to-year comparison, last year at this time, we had only collected \$56,000."

After giving details about the city's general fund, water fund and next debt service payment, Miller concluded that Springtown's finances are in good shape. "Overall, our funds are doing extremely well," he said. For more information about the most recent financial report, visit the city's website at cityofspringtown.civicweb.net/document/56157/The%20City%20Administrator%20will%20report%20the%20expendit.pdf?handle=BBDECA116A3C41C3B53C7C07C9AF4C1C online.

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Servolution "Love Your City" gala coming soon

ZACH FREEMAN

azlereporter@tricountyreporter.com

AZLE — The second "Love Your City" Servolution Network Gala will be here before you know it, planners said. The gala will be at the Church At Azle 6-9 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 24, and the band Branded will return as the night's musical guest. Awards will be presented to "legacy supporters," "game changers," "newcomers," "heroes" and more. Servolution will also look back on 2023 with a "heartbreakingly beautiful" video of client testimonials.

Spin a wheel, win a prize, participate in silent auctions, or get some new bling in a jewelry pull — the gala hopes to have activities for everyone.

Among the auction items are a hunting trip to New Zealand, a dream vacation getaway and even several sheds. Platinum and gold sponsors will receive swag bags containing a three-month subscription to the Tri-County Reporter, coffee samples, fuzzy socks and more. Myers Jackson of "Storage Wars" fame will be the evenings master of

Events Coordinator Maria Rivera speaks on second gala

ceremonies.

Tickets for an on-going raffle ending in March will also be up for grabs. Each ticket gives participants a chance to win an up-to \$30,000 car or truck from Honda and Toyota of Denton. The dealership lets seven to 10 charities sell these tickets, and Servolution is currently the top seller, having released about 15,000 out of 100,000 total tickets sold.

The gala is intended to raise funds for Servolution's many projects including Carry the Load, Good Neighbors blitzes, Pay it Forward, Love Your Vets and more. Now in charge of organizing, Events Coordinator Maria Rivera hopes to make the gala an annual fundraising event for the nonprofit.

"As the economy gets worse, the need for what Servolution does and the help we provide to the community is just increasing," Rivera said. "We are getting more and more applications for our Good Neighbors program every single day. We

hate to have to put people on a waiting list and a lot of that has to do with not having the resources to just go out and if somebody needs a new roof or has a plumbing issue or an electrical issue or there was a fire we can't just go out and fix it because we don't have the money to pay the contractors to do it. This helps fund not only the Good Neighbors program but helps allow us to maintain the facility and to grow the facility so we can (for example) take in more furniture so we can get out more furniture."

Servolution's Spring Blitz will take place April 12 and 13. The nonprofit also hopes to expand by building a Pay it Forward warehouse and serve more veterans through the Love your Vets Program.

Attendees are asked to wear "red, black and bling" semi-formal attire.

Servolution's first gala in 2022 (no gala was held in 2023) saw 260 guests and approximately \$95,000 raised. Rivera hopes to break the \$150,000 mark with at



A collage of the many activities and programs Servolution Network has conducted.

COURTESY PHOTO

least 300 guests this year. Individual tickets are \$75 per person, and tables and larger packages can also be purchased. Buy tickets soon

because seats are selling out, Rivera said.

For more information on pricing or to register, visit www.servolutionnetwork.com

at www.servolutionnetwork.com/love-your-city-gala, then go to "RSVP Here" and click "Registration" to see the list of options.

The eyes of TxDOT are upon you

ZACH FREEMAN

azlereporter@tricountyreporter.com

AZLE — The eyes of TxDOT are upon you, all the live-long day.

During its Jan. 22 meeting, the Azle City Council resolved to allow the city manager to execute a multiple-use agreement with the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) allowing the installation and operation of automated license plate recognition (ALPR) cameras. This is the city's next step in authorizing artificial intelligence-driven Flock Safety traffic cameras since it was approved in the budget during August 2023 meetings. The resolution passed with only Mayor Alan Brundrett dissenting.

"For me, it's just Big Brother, it's too much government," the Azle mayor said. "I don't feel like our government should be tracking our every move, so I'll be against it to the end."

Five or six cameras will be mounted in rights-of-way and high traffic areas on State Highway 199 service roads (also called Northwest Parkway and Southeast Parkway), Boyd Road, South Stewart Street and Main

Azle council authorizes license-reading cameras within city limits

Street to gather data on passing cars. Flock cameras will take a picture of the license plate and rear of the vehicle, to determine color and make, in order for Azle police to find suspected criminals, stolen vehicles and aid in Amber Alert cases. It will also record the time, date and location where the picture was taken.

In order to maintain privacy, Flock is contractually obligated to dump all data every 30 days. This data cannot be removed by the police department without assigning it to a criminal case. During discussions with the council and Police Chief Ben Hall, Brundrett voiced concerns that the FBI, border control or other government agencies might somehow access data and that the installation of cameras may lead to a further erosion of privacy down the line. The chief and City Manager Tom Muir were unable to say whether those agencies might be capable of doing this or under what circumstances.

"There's advantages to do-

ing everything," Brundrett said. "If we went in and shut down all our bars, DWIs would probably drop by 80%. There's a lot of things we could do to reduce crime but it's always at what expense. For me, this is the privacy of the people being invaded even if they're not doing anything wrong."

Chief Hall reassured the council that conditions for ALPR data use are strict and carry severe criminal penalties for misuse.

"These are a crime fighting tool," Chief Hall said. "They do a great job. I have a lot of success stories we'll talk about as we move forward on these things. Cities that have recently adopted them, such as White Settlement, have taken tons of guns off the road, 13 stolen cars, lots of violent warrant arrests, because they are utilizing this tool and they're making communities safer."

In 2023, the city council approved \$166,332 in capital outlay for an increase in vehicle purchases, Flock



A standard Flock Falcon ALPR camera.

COURTESY FLOCK SAFETY

cameras and radar speed signs. Flock cameras look like unmarked solar panel poles on the roadside and are typically rented for \$3,000 per camera per year with a \$750 installation fee. The police department and city will consider budgeting additional cameras after the upcoming Flock cameras are in use for

about a year. ALPR cameras have become more and more commonplace in the D-FW area, with cities like Dallas installing nearly two hundred since 2022. Recent upgrades to Flock cameras in Fort Worth also allow some ALPRs to detect loud noises like gunshots, illegal fireworks or screeching tires.

According to Chief Hall, there are currently two Flock cameras already placed on the north and east boundaries of Azle. The five or six cameras budgeted by the city will be the subject of discussion in future council meetings and do not yet have a confirmed date of installation.



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A joke from the 20th Century...

It's an old joke from the 1990s, pulled from the files each time the Super Bowl rolls around.

Late Congressman Charles Stenholm, a distinguished Christian statesman from Ericksdahl (near Stamford) popularized the yarn in Texas, claiming it originated in Washington, DC. It was during more civil times, when Republicans and Democrats not only talked to each other, but shared jokes across the aisle.

That the joke has whiskers is further linked to the "good old days" because it was shared at Super Bowls featuring the Dallas Cowboys. It was back when there was little argument but that the Cowboys were "America's team." Yes indeed, it was a LONG time ago.

Here's the joke: The youth minister of a church put up signs all over town inviting



THE IDLE AMERICAN

By Dr. Don Newbury

Dr. Don Newbury, longtime university president, writes weekly and speaks regularly throughout Texas. Contact: 817-447-3872. Email: newbury@speakerdoc.com.

youth to attend a Super Bowl party. There'd be sandwiches and cookies for all.

Hours before the party, he grew antsy, fearing they'd run out of food before they ran out of "takers."

As a precaution, he prepared a hasty sign for the sandwich table. It read: "Please take no more than two sandwiches. Remember, God is watching you."

When he exited, a junior high kid slipped in, noticing the stark request on the sandwich table sign.

He decided to make a sign of his own for the cookie

table.

It read: "Take all the cookies you want — God is watching the sandwiches."

During the recent Christmas/New Year's bowl season, James and Jeanie Williamson and their family gathered at their daughter's home in Houston. Mary and her hubby, Justin, have a spacious home, complete with all kinds of kitchen paraphernalia, the kind Justin, an accomplished cook, deems important. During the visit, Mary and her sister-in-law, Sarah, busied themselves with small talk.

Thinking it may have been misplaced or somehow relocated by the Cornetts' five children, Mary asked, "Where is the sugar bowl?"

Pausing, Sarah answered, "I think it's in New Orleans." Justin, as well as Sarah's hubby, John Williamson, and the grandchildren made great sport about the exchange, deciding that the small talk had grown even smaller.

Their laughter perhaps lessened Sarah's shade of red, but powers that be at Texas Christian and Baylor Universities should be blushing about mystifying boo-boo's concerning their basketball playing floors.

Both are obvious to fans who have witnessed home games of both Baylor and TCU.

Let's take the two issues one at a time....

At TCU, the Daniel-Meyer Coliseum is state-of-the-art

after a recent multi-million-dollar facelift.

Overall, the re-do is magnificent. The floor pattern may be a work of art, but to the hordes of us who'd prefer to follow the game without risking sea sickness, it is lacking. Trying to follow the players and fast ball movement induces dizziness, the artwork appearing to be ocean waves shortly before storms brew. It may win a prize at the art show, but it is hard on TV viewers.

Social media is buzzing with unhappiness with TV coverage at Baylor's new \$212 million Foster Pavilion, where the Bears now play basketball. Fans say no provisions were made for TV cameras' placement for horizontal shots. Cameras are decidedly directed downward, the effect somewhat lessened by "zooming in."

At a time in history when

both Baylor and TCU are combatants in big-time sports with big-time budgets and the big-time glitz that goes with such emphases, changing floor designs and finding new areas dedicated to TV cameras should be "slam dunks."

Somehow, reference to colors brings to mind a tale attributed to my late Uncle John Harper, who was in law enforcement much of his life.

He often parked near a newly painted STOP sign. The black letters shined boldly against a brilliant red background. There, he ticketed and lectured motorists failing to come to complete stops. One driver objected, maintaining that he had merely "oozed through" the intersection.

"S-T-O-P don't spell 'ooze,'" Uncle John countered, handing him a citation.

POLICE

FROM PAGE A1

man hours and contribute to safer working conditions for department members. Currently, officers travel to incinerate old evidence and hazardous materials, with each round trip costing \$1,200. By reaching extremely high temperatures at a rapid rate, the device is able to burn contraband instantly without the risk of toxic smoke or fumes.

The next item up for discussion was a forensic drying cabinet.

"Without getting too gory, a population's up, crime's up,"

Winterrowd said. "Drying a piece of clothing with blood or other bodily fluids on it is a forensic process. Currently, our process is to hang it in the closet... Again, not to get gory, but I've seen blankets with blood and brains and things and depending on environmental conditions that might take two weeks to dry."

Winterrowd said the cabinet will preserve biological evidence for the court and protect handlers, speeding up the drying process dramatically.

The third requested item was a crime trend and scene processing package that will be used to equip and train a specialized Azle crime scene

technician. Detectives are currently responsible for collecting all evidence and documenting scenes; Winterrowd said having a dedicated specialist for the job could free up man hours and be more efficient.

On behalf of the police department, Winterrowd also asked the city council to apply for a \$10,500 state grant for three small rifle-rated, bullet-resistant shields. The Azle PD received three 32-pound, nearly body-sized shields last year and said new lightweight shields would have a greater benefit in many different scenarios.

"It's the most protection we can get in a man-portable

fashion," Winterrowd said of last year's shields. "The next step up is literally on wheels. However, running through the school or searching a large area or shooting around the shield is something with that weight is difficult to say the least. It's easier accomplished with a smaller, lighter-weight, rifle-rated shield. Also, in the event that we went into a confined space like a trailer, house or bus, moving through those spaces with a shield that large is difficult. A shorter, lighter-weight shield which still provides (rifle-rated) protection would be an advantage to us."

The new shields will be stored in officers' cars during

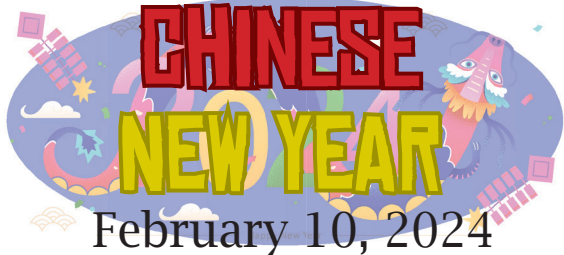
their shift and dropped off at the equipment room at the end of the day. The shields are a steel shell with aluminum and silica carbides inside.

During the meeting, councilmember Rouel Rothenberger recalled not seeing officers equipped with any shields on the scene of the infamous Uvalde school shooting. An investigation by the Texas House committee found that only one rifle-rated shield was on the scene at Uvalde. It was used to provide cover to the officer who ultimately confronted and killed the gunman after officers had waited one hour and 14 minutes to enter a classroom with the shooter.

The National Institute of Justice and the grant writers recommend that departments dispose of or relegate shields and similar protective equipment to training after five years.

The final grant requested was for four rifle-rated armor sets for \$5,000. These will be full replacement sets that will replace expired armor acquired under past grants. The city first applied for this grant at least 10 years ago. The department has shaved 6.6 pounds off each vest by investing in lighter-weight technology over the years. Winterrowd stated he and at least one other officer wears the armor every day.

TCR Junior



Chinese New Year, also known as the Spring Festival, is eagerly awaited by families around the world, and in 2024, the festivities kick off on February 10th. This vibrant celebration marks the beginning of the lunar new year and is a time filled with joy, tradition, and hope for the future.

The Chinese zodiac operates on a twelve-year cycle, each year associated with an animal sign, and 2024 welcomes the Year of the Wood Dragon. Dragons are

considered powerful and auspicious creatures, and the element of wood adds a touch of flexibility and growth to the year.

Kids can anticipate exciting dragon and lion dances during parades, where colorful and intricate costumes come to life. Families gather for feasts featuring delicious dishes like dumplings and noodles, symbolizing longevity and prosperity.

One of the highlights for children during Chinese New Year is receiving red

envelopes, known as "hongbao," containing money for good luck and blessings. The bright red color represents good fortune and happiness.

Participating in traditions like making paper lanterns, crafting dragon masks, or even trying their hand at cooking traditional dishes can make the celebration even more special for kids. Learning about different customs and cultural practices during Chinese New Year fosters an appreciation for diversity and glob-

al celebrations.

The Spring Festival lasts for fifteen days, culminating in the Lantern Festival. On this day, families light and release lanterns into the night sky, creating a beautiful display of wishes and dreams for the upcoming year.

So, on February 10th, get ready to join in the festivities, celebrate the Year of the Wood Dragon, and embrace the joyous spirit of Chinese New Year with your family and friends!

Crossword Puzzle

1			2			3
4		5		6		
7						
		8				
9						

ACROSS

- Related to the moon
- Muddy color
- Slight hollow in surface
- Most suitable
- Hailing from China

DOWN

- Desire to achieve
- Happening each year
- Astrological system
- Instrument

Answers: Across: 1. Lunar 5. Brown 7. Dent 8. Ideal 9. Chinese Down: 2. Ambition 3. Annual 4. Zodiac 6. Oboe



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RED FROM PAGE A1

annual Red Solo Cup BBQ Bash fundraiser. This year's bash took place on the night of Saturday, Jan. 27 and raised \$95,000 after expenses. Along with good food, games and an auction led by Kent Meyerhoeffer, the AEF also recognized two individuals with its first-

ever Distinguished Alumni and Distinguished Citizen Awards.

Andrew Greer, singer-songwriter, author and television/podcast personality was recognized with the foundation's first Distinguished Alumni Award with a plaque that will hang in Azle High School. Greer graduated with the Azle High School Class of 2000 and attended Azle schools from kindergarten through

12th grade. Greer was a dedicated student who was highly involved in extracurriculars. Now he is now an eight-time Dove (Christian and Gospel Music) Award nominee.

"Every single life has value, has worth and has dignity," Greer said while accepting the award. "On the days that I've doubted that about myself, it's often been the words from people in Azle that have encouraged and affirmed



Auctioneer Kent Meyerhoeffer with the state seal leatherwork donated by state Rep. Glenn Rogers.



Board of trustees member Ray Lea with Distinguished Citizen Renee Ball.

me to say, 'hey you got that, you have worth and you've got dignity' and some of the first people to do that were teachers."

The Distinguished Citizen Award went to Renee Ball, a former longtime AISD employee who worked for six AISD superintendents over her career. Described as one of the most respected people in the community, Ball was praised for continuing to advocate for athletics, academics and fine arts even after retirement.

"I couldn't have done it all for 37 years without all the wonderful people I've worked with and the foundation, people I've gotten to know over the years," Ball said.

"The foundation does amazing work for all the students and teachers, and I know what it means to change lives. My biggest joy was watching students (who she has known since kindergarten) walk the stage. Azle has so much to give to students."

The funds generated during the event were raised through ticket sales, donations and an auction full of fun, unique Azle experiences and items. A Hornet Field skybox experience, with light snacks and reserved parking, went for \$2,000. The chance to be or to appoint the Grand Marshal for 2024's homecoming parade went to coach Sam and Kayla Carter for \$1,200. A BBQ brisket and ribs dinner

for 25 sold for \$7,000. A special surprise item was even donated by state Rep. Glenn Rogers. The framed leatherwork of Texas' state seal was created by Texas Department of Corrections inmates and is only directly available to state government officials. The winning bid was \$1,700.

"I'm just so grateful for this community and the support they provide to our schools and teachers," event planner Meg Arnold said. "I'd like to say thank you to all our sponsors, The Orchard, Railhead Smokehouse and Charlie Geren, AHS Culinary Arts and Floral Design, and the AEF board members who help make the event possible."



Superintendent Todd Smith with Distinguished Alumni Andrew Greer.



The barbecue dinner was donated by state Rep. Charlie Geren, prepared and served by his restaurant, Railhead Smokehouse BBQ.

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COUNCIL

FROM PAGE A1

splash pad into a fountain park, but that project is costly, and the city hasn't been able to receive grant funds to help cover that expense.

Miller said it would cost about \$250,000 to renovate the splash pad as well as add the recirculation system and about \$160,000-\$161,000 per year to maintain it, not including personnel expenses. Creating a fountain park would cost about \$120,000 for the equipment, about \$350,000 for the installation and ongoing costs like for water-cleaning chemicals and personnel.

During the workshop, council members brainstormed ideas of features that could replace the splash pad, such as pickleball courts or a community garden. Some council members still expressed interest in creating a fountain park.

"My opinion is some kind of water feature there because I think that would help the public opinion," council member Scott Richardson said. "I think people would be happy to see at least some kind of water feature there instead of us just tearing it out and nothing there or putting in the pickleball courts or something."

Meanwhile, some council members didn't like the cost of a fountain park with a recirculation system. In addition, Mayor Pro Tem Walter Roberson was concerned about unintended consequences of the water feature, like kids getting infections.

"I just don't want us to be liable to those kinds of things," Roberson said. "I don't care

how much you monitor it. Something could happen. I think it's too expensive. I say demolish it and do something else with that land."

Despite their different ideas, council members did agree that the splash pad needed to be demolished in order to proceed. Restoring the space in-house is expected to cost about \$15,000, Miller said at the workshop. The demolition will not include taking out the concession stand located near the splash pad.

STREETS IMPROVEMENTS

Springtown City Council also discussed a variety of street improvements at the Jan. 18 workshop and approved moving forward on those upgrades in a vote at the Jan. 25 council meeting.

The city issued certificates of obligation last year and received about \$4 million to spend on streets and park projects. These funds were first used for the city to reimburse itself for improvements made on Roy Lane, leaving about \$3 million for other projects.

Miller told the council that city staff has identified multiple streets that can either be micro-surfaced or rebuilt in order to add another 10 years onto their lifespan. The estimated cost of these projects is almost \$2.8 million. After receiving council's approval, staff will seek bids on the street projects. Depending on the amount of the bids, the city may authorize a few additional streets be improved.

"The ability to fund such a large-scale project without increasing the city's tax rate is directly attributable to the fiscally conservative financial practices and policies set by the city council and

implemented by city staff, as well as the ongoing growth that we continue to see in our community," Miller said in the city's news release.

According to the council's agenda packet, the street projects include:

- Avenue A: Reconstruction from First Street to Ninth Street with asphalt as well as water line and sewer line replacement.
- Avenue D: Patching and micro-surfacing from Avenue B to Seventh Street.
- Bonnie Bell Estates: Patching and micro-surfacing of all roadways in this subdivision.
- Church Street: Patching and micro-surfacing from Old Cottdale Road to western limit and some replacement of water lines.
- Enderby Lane: Stabilization of subgrade and installation of chip-seal paving from Old Cottdale Road to the western entrance to the Lions Club ball fields to the north.
- Hilltop Drive: Reconstruction with asphalt from State Highway 199 to Martin Avenue.
- Northgate Subdivision: Patching and micro-surfacing of all roadways in this subdivision.
- Oakview Drive: Patching and micro-surfacing from Cherry Lane to Westover Lane.
- East Third Street: Patching and micro-surfacing from Avenue C to Springbranch Trail.
- East Sixth Street: Patching and micro-surfacing from Avenue E to Springbranch Trail.
- East Ninth Street: Patching and micro-surfacing from Main Street to Springbranch Trail.



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STARBUCKS

FROM PAGE A1

(SH) 199 and Westover in Springtown... in the spring of 2024," a Starbucks spokesperson told The Tri-County Reporter. "The new location will feature café seating as well as an outdoor patio. We are excited to welcome customers to this new space and look forward to serving the

Springtown community." The Tri-County Reporter also inquired about the construction details, hiring of new staff members and the menu, but the spokesperson did "not have any additional information to share about this location."

Springtown City Council approved the site plan for the new Starbucks in late 2022. At the time, City Administrator David Miller told the council the plat met

the requirements of state law, and the site plan is in accordance with the city's ordinances.

The store is located south of State Highway 199 and west of Walnut Creek Veterinary Hospital. At the December 2022 council meeting, the Springtown Starbucks building was described as about 2,200 square feet with space for parking, a drive-through lane and one entrance/exit from SH 199.

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Going for the glow

Springtown Cub Scouts race black light cars in annual Pinewood Derby



PHOTO COURTESY OF SPRINGTOWN CUB SCOUTS PACK 303'S FACEBOOK PAGE

This year's Pinewood Derby, hosted by Springtown Cub Scouts Pack 303, was black-light themed.



PHOTO COURTESY OF SPRINGTOWN CUB SCOUTS PACK 303'S FACEBOOK PAGE
Springtown Cub Scout Izzy Nanni places first in the Heat 8 race at this year's Pinewood Derby while Jerrik Hansen and Gabriel "Gabe" Salazar place second and third, respectively.



PHOTO COURTESY OF SPRINGTOWN CUB SCOUTS PACK 303'S FACEBOOK PAGE
Springtown Cub Scout Abi Carter paints a block of wood in preparation for Pack 303's annual Pinewood Derby Jan. 27.



PHOTO COURTESY OF SPRINGTOWN CUB SCOUTS PACK 303'S FACEBOOK PAGE
Sean Lanigan raises his arms in victory after placing first in the Outlaw class at Springtown Cub Scouts Pack 303's Pinewood Derby Jan. 27. Next to him are Eric Nanni and Steven Ward, the other winners of the Outlaw class.

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THE TRI-COUNTY REPORTER

DIVERSIONS

B

THURSDAY, February 8, 2024

Azle students make strides at stock show

AHS sophomore Landrie Lain wins Grand Champion for market lamb, ag mechanics win blue ribbons, and more

ZACH FREEMAN

azlereporter@tricityreporter.com

AZLE — The Fort Worth Stock Show and Rodeo is a time-honored tradition for cowpokes, ag enthusiasts and spectators alike. For Azle High School students, the event's competitions offer a chance to prove their skills, make some money and get a foothold in the world of professional animal husbandry. For Landrie Lain, an AHS sophomore, winning Market Lamb Grand Champion meant the world.

"To say she has been dreaming of this day is a(n) understatement," Lain's father said in a Facebook post. "You did it Landrie Grace!!! Everything she has worked for and dreamed of came true Sunday right here at home, in Cowtown!! A huge thank you

to Chad Walker for trusting in Landrie, and constantly pushing her to do her best."

The lamb, named Panda, was bred by Chad Walker Livestock and sired by a ram named Mr. Brown. Grand and Reserve Champion livestock were sold at live auction on the last day of the rodeo, Feb. 3. Last year's sale raised a record \$7.3 million. Lain's welter lamb, "Goose" won Reserve Grand Champion (second place) last year and went for \$70,000 at auction. This year, Lain's Grand Champion Lamb sold for \$100,000. To go from Reserve Grand Champion in her freshman year to Grand Champion her sophomore year was no small feat according to Lain.

"The HARD work, dedica-

PLEASE SEE **SHOW** | B2



COURTESY LAIN FAMILY

AHS sophomore Landrie Lain with her Grand Champion Market Lamb, Panda.



Sound of Springtown Winterguard earns first place at NTCA

COURTESY PHOTO

The Sound of Springtown Winterguard earned a first-place finish at the North Texas Color Guard Association on Feb. 3.

From l-r: Emily Allbright - Senior, 1st Lieutenant, Molly Frank - Junior, Captain, and Mia Guillen - Sophomore, 2nd Lieutenant



COURTESY AHS COLORGUARD

Back row, l-r: AHS Colorguard Director Caleb Hunter, Abigail Evans, Phylbie Guinn, Karma Cavil, Jayden Evans, Dunessa Gutierrez, Edward Holt, Nevaeh Jackson, Madilyn Sweetser and Debra Oldroyd (staff). Middle row, l-r: Sierra Leal, Evelyn Hymer, Jianna Menefee, Annika Birkeland and Katie Ann Hoyt. Front row, l-r: Bryanna Pender, Captain Gracie Cazares and Sara Gonzales.

Azle Winter Guard takes first in season opener

Azle Winter Guard starts off season strong

ZACH FREEMAN

azlereporter@tricityreporter.com

AZLE — Azle High School's Varsity Winter Guard won big at the first contest of the season. The school's var-

sity team placed first above some 2023 Winter Guard International and North Texas Colorguard Association winners. The guard competed Feb. 3 NTCA at Independence High School

in Frisco in the National A category. The next contest is at Alvarado Friday. The group will perform at WGI Dallas Feb. 17-18, WGI's

PLEASE SEE **COLOR** | B4

SPORTS

Roundup

Wrestlers qualify for regionals

RICK MAUCH

Special to the Tri-County Reporter

District wrestling tournaments were held this past week and area schools lived up to expectations. In all, 25 wrestlers qualified for the upcoming Class 5A Region I Tournament Friday and Saturday, Feb. 9-10 at West Texas A&M University. From there the top four finishers in each classification will advance to state in Cypress Feb. 16-17.

AZLE GIRLS WRESTLING

The Lady Hornets finished second in the District 4-5A Tournament, with Mariah Dillard and Annabelle Davis each winning individual championships in the 120 and 165-pound divisions, respectively.

Davis won a state cham-

ionship in the 145 division last season and Dillard qualified for state in 2022, along with her sister, Alicen, who placed second at district in the 138 division.

Also qualifying for regionals were Noah Kovach, second in 120; Elly Yelle, second in 185; Kinzlynn Camarillo, second in 235; Brooklyn Debbs, third in 126; and Mollie Morris, third in 152.

The top four finishers in each weight class qualified for regionals.

Placing sixth were Kamryun Hance (107) and Hayli Ross (114).

AZLE BOYS WRESTLING

The Hornets placed second in the District 4-5A Tournament and qualified eight for the Region I Tournament this weekend.

They were led by first-place individual finishes by Wyatt Hicks (126 pounds), Chase Yancey (132), Landin Evans (138) and Devin Wingfield (285). Hicks is the team's lone returning state qualifier from last season.

Runners-up were Camryn Latham in the 120 division and Johnmikal Aguilar in 157. Eli Bryan placed third at 175 and Roman Frasier was fourth at 190.

Regional alternates are Mark O'Neil and D'Lathian Young, who were fifth in the 106 and 215 divisions, respectively. Taking sixth in their divisions were Josh White (144) and Allen Harris (150).

The JV Hornets won the district championship the

PLEASE SEE **ROUNDUP** | B3



Senior Brayden Forsythe scored the lone goal against Granbury.

Realignment for Springtown and Azle

RICK MAUCH

Special to the Tri-County Reporter

The league schedule will have almost an entirely new look for the Springtown football team come the fall, thanks to the University Interscholastic League's biennial realignment announced Thursday, Feb. 1.

The Porcupines and Lady Pines are still in Class 4A in almost all sports (wrestling is 5A), with the football team competing at the Division I level. In football, they are moving to District 5-4A Division I, with the only returning league opponent being Decatur.

Also in the new district will be Fort Worth Carter Riverside, Fort Worth Eastern Hills, Fort Worth Southwest, Fort Worth Western Hills and Diamond Hill-Jarvis.

"Our district is very different from what we have had in recent years. It's been seven or eight years with the same core teams, with Decatur now being the lone holdover," said Brian Hulett, Springtown football coach and athletic

Porcupines football paired with plenty of new league foes

director. "Of course, they will be very good as always, but the rest are new and kind of a mystery to us at the moment. We will have to learn about them, and also get used to playing in new stadiums, as well as the likelihood of several Thursday and/or Saturday games, which will be a new routine for our kids."

"But no matter who we play, we have to focus on ourselves and be the best we can be every day, until the time gets here when we get the opportunity to prove ourselves on the field. As of this moment, we have a long way to go, but we have great character, hardworking kids who trust us as coaches and I feel confident we will be prepared when that time comes."

The Porcupines football team will scrimmage Brock and Mineral Wells, and non-district games are Joshua, Graham, Kennedale and China Spring.

In basketball and volleyball, Springtown will compete

in District 7-4A with familiar opponents Bridgeport, Decatur, Krum, Lake Worth and Castleberry rejoining them. New to the district will be Burkburnett and the new Eagle Mountain High School.

"Our new district alignment will be okay, we will still have powerhouse Decatur and Krum to compete with, but adding the drive to Burkburnett won't be much fun. We've faced Burk a few times in the playoffs and done well against them," Lady Pines volleyball coach Leighann Strickland said.

"The new Eagle Mountain school is looking to possibly be another good competition as well. Our girls are young and with their experience on varsity this season it should be beneficial for the program to continue to compete at a very high level. A deep run into the playoffs is expected from this incredibly talented group."

Girls basketball coach Kyle Sivadon believes the district

got more challenging for his sport.

"It is a lot tougher district than we have now. In addition to the three top 20 teams we currently have (Decatur, Krum, Bridgeport), we add Burkburnett who is in first place in their district right now," Sivadon said. "Burk is starting several freshmen, plus their eighth-grade team is currently undefeated in the last two years."

"Then you bring in a new Eagle Mountain team with 9-11th graders from very successful teams. There will be multiple really good teams not making the playoffs. We will have to continue to work hard. On the flip side, the competition will prepare us for the playoffs."

The alignment for other sports will be released at a later date.

AZLE

The Hornets and Lady Hornets will remain in Class 5A for at least the next

couple of years. In football, the Hornets will compete in 3-5A Division I with returning district mates Aledo, the two-time defending state champions, perennial power Denton Ryan and Brewer. New to the league will be Granbury, Denton, Keller Fossil Ridge, Birdville and Richland.

In other sports, Azle teams will be in 5-5A with Aledo, Granbury, Saginaw and Brewer remaining in the same district, while Chisholm Trail and Fossil Ridge come onboard.

Lady Hornets volleyball coach Kenley Buckholt said the addition of Chisholm Trail and Fossil Ridge will bring in some more competitive play in a pretty well-rounded district.

"We have a lot of strong programs in the mix and it will continue to be a battle for the top four spots," she said. "My hope is that we continue to be in a position where we are in the running for a play-

off spot.

"After coming off a strong post season (second round of playoffs), both myself and my girls are hungry for more. We are going to keep focusing on our goals and I think with this new district we will be able to do great things next season."

Boys basketball coach James Crafton said, "Northwest moved up to 6A, Wichita Falls Rider no longer exists due to WFISD morphing into two new high schools. We picked up Chisholm Trail and Keller Fossil Ridge, both dropping from 6A. Both schools bring well-coached athletic teams to the district. Adding both schools, as well as returning multiple familiar teams to the district, we have no front runner."

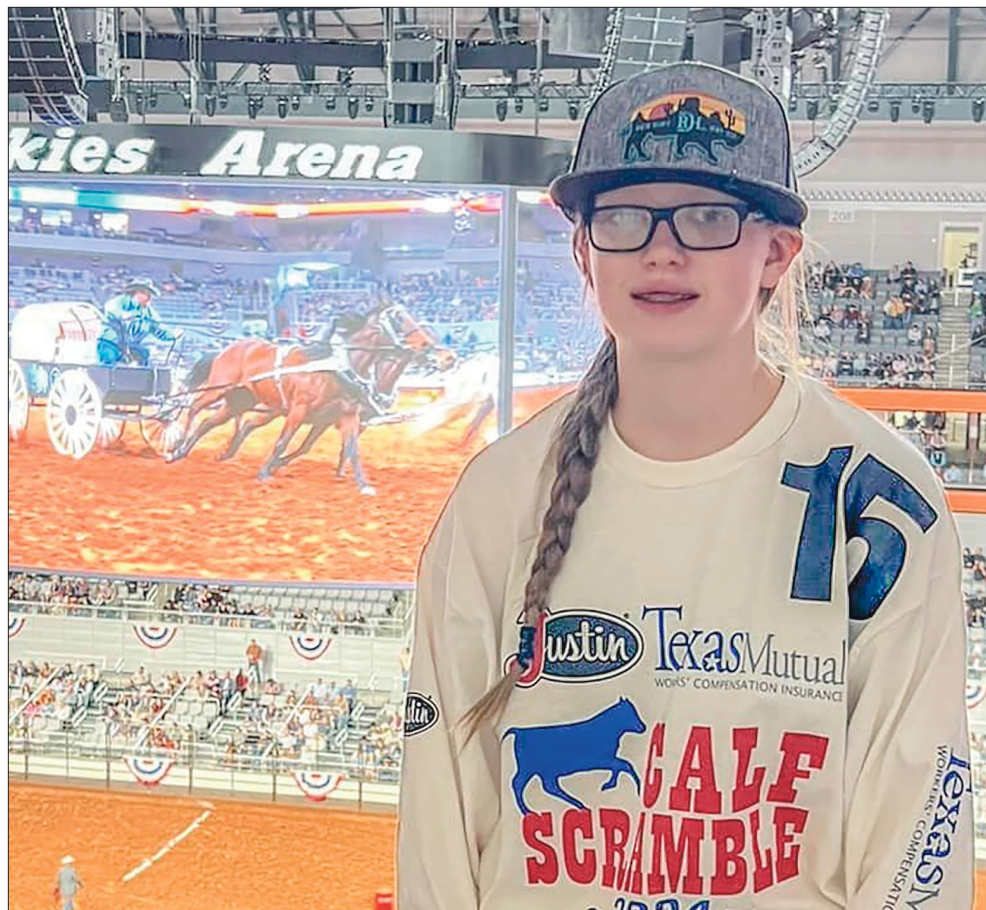
"It will be a district that has competitive games night-in and night-out. We will be young and look forward to the challenge of competing in the new district."

All alignment changes for the next two years will begin competing in the fall.

Two Springtown youths catch \$500 calves at Fort Worth Stock Show and Rodeo



Hayden Morrison, who is from Springtown and a member of Weatherford FFA, caught a calf during the Fort Worth Stock Show and Rodeo's Calf Scramble, earning a \$500 purchase certificate for a show heifer and the chance for up to \$16,000 in scholarship awards.



Springtown High School freshman Zoey Sheets caught a calf in the Jan. 31 Calf Scramble at the Fort Worth Stock Show and Rodeo. Youth that catch a calf are awarded a \$500 certificate to purchase a heifer to raise and show at Fort Worth the following year. The Calf Scramble's greatest impact may be its dedication and commitment to the students and their future education. Students who catch are eligible for scholarships.



COURTESY AZLE FFA

Azle FFA Lamb and Market Goat exhibitors.

SHOW FROM PAGE B1

tion, blood, sweat and tears this all takes is truly worth it," Landrie Lain said in a Facebook post. "To see everything that you've worked for payoff is a blessing, but I couldn't have done it without my dad Scott Lain. He has pushed me harder with this sheep than he has with any other. He saw the outcome "Panda" could have and he helped me make it happen. Also, a big thank you to Chad Walker for trusting me with this special guy. To the rest of the Chad Walker group, my friends and family that have supported me. THANK YOU!"

Lain was not alone in her success. Other Azle student lamb and market goat exhibitors saw their hard work pay off with many landing a respectable place in the rankings.

Trystin Ellis won 16th place for his Class 1 goat and 17th place for his Medium Weight Dorper. Cheyanne Redd won eighth place with her Class 10 goat. Kaileigh Slough won 13th place in the Medium Weight Fine Wool category. Madeline Lemley won 12th place in the Medium Weight Southdown category. Talon Slough won 15th place in the Medium Weight Dorper category.

Rodeo Team member Laurel Allred won a \$1,500 scholarship in Youth Pole Bending as part of the horse shows.

Numerous Azle FFA participants also won blue ribbons in the Agricultural Mechanics Show. Azle FFA had four projects earn blue ribbons, a gooseneck trailer, front bumper, headache rack, and a round bale hauler. They were built by Kasen Scarlato, RJ Rutledge, Koen Remley, and Caden Cox. This was the first time Azle FFA has shown any ag mech projects at a major show since the late 1990s.

"I was extremely proud of all of our ag mech students that showed a project this year and look forward to seeing how well they compete at the Tarrant County Junior Livestock show later on this month," FFA advisor



COURTESY AZLE FFA

Kasen Scarlato (shown,) along with RJ Rutledge, Koen Remley, and Caden Cox were all Azle FFA Agricultural Mechanics Blue Ribbon winners.



COURTESY RODEO TEAM

Azle Rodeo Team member Laurel Allred.

and CTE teacher Brad Merck said. "We had students compete in the following shows, Ag Mechanics, Gilts, Goats, Lambs and Barrows. We are

proud of all the hard work put in by all of our students and how well they represented Azle Schools at the Fort Worth Stock Show."

ROUNDUP

FROM PAGE B1

previous weekend. Winning gold medals were Mark O'Neil, Noah Swint, Preston Deas, Tanner Harlan and Ashlynn Schlotzhauer.

SPRINGTOWN WRESTLING

The Porcupines qualified nine athletes for this weekend's Region I Tournament, led by Grant Butler winning the 157-pound division. Hunter Binz and Dallin Fabrizius each took second at 175 and 215, respectively.

Third-place qualifiers are Joseph Newman, 138; Jeremiah Duvall, 144; and Josue Martinez, 165. Qualifying as fourth place are Jace Rutledge, 113; Angel Benitez, 120; and Daniel Garcia-Diaz.

For the Lady Pines, Hayleigh Jenkins is a regional alternate with a fifth-place finish at 120 pounds. Brynlei Taylor took sixth at 126.

SPRINGTOWN GIRLS BASKETBALL

Despite dropping a pair of games, 49-31 at Krum and 52-26 at home to Bridgeport Jan. 30 and Feb. 2, the Lady Pines (18-17, 3-6 in 8-4A) are preparing for the upcoming postseason as the fourth-place team from the league. Leading Springtown in the two games were:

Vs. Krum — Esther Balado 12 points, six rebounds; Allison Ford 11 points, eight rebounds; Brylynn Bazzell 11 rebounds; Chloe Kirk six rebounds.

Vs. Bridgeport — Balado 15 points, 10 rebounds; Bazzell 10 rebounds; Paige Winstead eight rebounds.

The Lady Pines were wrapping up the regular season at last-place Castleberry at press time before beginning the postseason. A win over Castleberry would clinch a winning season for the first time since 2013-14 season, which is also the last time they won a playoff game and would match their most wins since 2010-11.

The Lady Pines are in the postseason for back-to-back seasons for the first time since the 2015-15 and 2016-17 seasons.

AZLE GIRLS BASKETBALL

The Lady Hornets (15-16, 4-7 in District 5-5A) got a

clutch 42-38 win at Saginaw Jan. 30 before falling 52-36 at home to Aledo Feb. 2. Pacing Azle were:

Vs. Saginaw — Landri Seward 11 points, Cheryl Grubbs eight points, Vielka Gonzalez eight points.

Vs. Aledo — Emi Anderson nine points, Abbey Natusch eight points.

Azle is in fourth place in district, one game ahead of 3-8 Saginaw. The teams split their league games, with Saginaw winning 37-36 earlier in January in Azle.

The Lady Hornets were hosting district Brewer at press time to end the regular season. Saginaw was playing last-place Northwest at the same time. Should the Lady Hornets and Lady Rough Riders finish tied, a one-game playoff would be held later this week to determine the fourth-place representative from the district for the postseason.

Azle's last playoff appearance was in 2021. They have finished fifth in district each of the past two seasons.

SPRINGTOWN BOYS BASKETBALL

The Porcupines (16-11, 4-3 in District 8-4A) split a pair of games this past week, leaving them in third place in district. They fell 67-39 at Krum Jan. 30 and blasted visiting Bridgeport 75-40 Feb. 2. Leaders were:

Vs. Krum — Dayne Thompson 14 points, Dylan Crutchfield 11 points.

Vs. Bridgeport — Thompson 24 points, Braylon Easter 21 points.

"Second place is in reach, but we are fully focused on the task at hand, which is Castleberry at their place Tuesday night and then at Lake Worth Friday," coach Nathan Purvis said. "Next Tuesday could be the game that determines second place. If we win out and Decatur wins their next two we will finish tied for second place. There is a good chance we would need to play a seeding game, probably Friday (Feb. 16) to determine who comes away with second in district."

The Porcupines were playing at Castleberry at press time. They travel to Lake Worth Feb. 9 and host Decatur Feb. 13 to end the regular season, both games starting at 7:30 p.m.

SPRINGTOWN GIRLS SOCCER

The Lady Pines (8-3, 1-0 in 8-4A) needed a shootout, but won their district opener at home against Bridgeport after finishing regulation in a 1-1 tie Feb. 2. Earlier, they blanked Mineral Wells 1-0 in a road game Jan. 30.

Icis Lopez scored the goal against Mineral Wells.

"Perfect performance for the dress rehearsal before district," coach Ryan Bylerly said.

Against Bridgeport, the Lady Pines trailed 1-0 at the half before Lopez tied the game with 10 minutes left. In the shootout, Lopez and Lily Duval had goals and goalkeeper Allison Kimball came up with three clutch saves.

"Massive way to start our district run," Bylerly said.

The Lady Pines and Porcupines were playing at Collegiate Academy at press time. They host Castleberry Feb. 9 and Lake Worth Feb. 13, girls starting at 5:30 p.m. and boys at 7:15.

SPRINGTOWN BOYS SOCCER

The Porcupines (1-8-1, 0-1 in 8-4A) fell 2-1 and 5-0 at home to Graham and Bridgeport Jan. 30 and Feb. 2, the latter being the district

opener.

AZLE BOYS BASKETBALL

The Hornets (4-22, 0-10 in 5-5A) fell 93-40 at Saginaw Jan. 30 as Gunner Crow scored 13 points and Cason Cook added 12. Crow led with 21 and Britt Haas scored 12 in a 71-59 home loss to Aledo Feb. 2.

The Hornets were playing at Brewer at press time and will end the season Feb. 13 at Granbury at 7:30 p.m.

AZLE BOYS SOCCER

The Hornets (4-6-1, 0-2 in 5-5A) have gotten off to a rough start in district with road losses to Granbury, 3-1 Jan. 30 and Wichita Falls Rider, 4-1 Feb. 2. Azle was also missing several players with the flu.

Scoring for Azle were: Vs. Granbury — Brayden Forsythe the goal, Adan Sandoval assist.

Vs. Rider — Forsythe the goal. The Hornets and Lady Hornets were playing at Northwest at press time, followed by home games against Saginaw Feb. 9 and at Aledo Feb. 13. Girls begin at 5:30 p.m., followed by the boys at 7:30.

AZLE GIRLS SOCCER

After winning 2-1 at Granbury to open District 5-5A Jan. 30, the Lady Hornets (8-3-1, 1-1) fell 5-0 at Wichita Falls Rider Feb. 2.

Sara Perez scored both goals for the Lady Hornets.

AZLE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL BOYS BASKETBALL

The Crusaders (20-10, 5-1 in TAPPS 2-1A) swept Waco Eagle Christian with wins of 48-17 at home Feb. 1 and 47-24 in Waco Feb. 2. Leading ACS in the first win were Andy Wisniewski with 17 points, along with Jake Skartvedt with nine and Brody Fairman with eight. In the second win, Fairman topped with 14, Skartvedt had 13 and AJ Rollins added eight.

The Crusaders were hosting Waxahachie Prep at press time. They host Eagle Christian Feb. 9 at 7:30 p.m. and end the regular season at home against Granbury Cornerstone Feb. 13 at 6 p.m.

SPRINGTOWN GIRLS POWERLIFTING

The Lady Pines dominated the S&S Consolidated Meet Jan. 25. As a team, they scored 69 points to take home the

championship trophy. Abigail Stoner won the best lifter in the Light Division with a 920-pound total.

In all, Springtown racked up seven gold medals, three silver and two bronze.

"We have a very young team this year. Only four lifters have competed at the state level," coach Missy Castro said. "I am excited about our growth so far this season and look forward to seeing how far this group can go."

Stoner won her individual weight class of 132 pounds, along with Zoe Adams (105 pounds), Izzy Parker (114), Skyler Tyree (123), Melissa Chavez (148), Grace Lewis (165) and Lyndsey Shotwell. In Venus they also scored 69 points to take first place as Stoner lifted a total of 900 pounds to win the Light Division and Ashli Elam won the Heavy Division with 905 pounds.

The JV squad lifted at the Dublin Invitational, a varsity meet, and took first place with 47 points. Callee Gaston won the best lifter in the Light Division with 625 pounds. Dominique Tamaoki won the heavy division with 735 pounds.



Cailyn Halyard is the goal keeper for the Lady Hornets soccer team.

LAYTH THOMAS | TRI-COUNTY REPORTER

Springtown School Menu

BREAKFAST PRICES

EC-12th Grade	\$1.75
EC-12th Reduced	\$0.30
Adult	\$2.25

LUNCH PRICES

PK-4th Grade	\$3.00
5th-8th Grade	\$3.25
High School	\$3.00
Reduced	\$0.40
Adult	\$4.25

Students may prepay for their meals.

Feb 12 - 16, 2024
PK through 12th Grade

*Menus are subject to change.

PK - 12th Breakfast **BREAKFAST: Everyday** - Various Juices & Cereals, Toast, Milk Variety, Fruit, Jelly Assortment, Buttermilk Biscuit, Variety of milk is offered every day for breakfast and lunch.

Mon Mini Pancakes, Applesauce Cup, Juice, **Tues** Chicken Biscuit, Sliced Peaches, Juice, **Weds** Eggstravaganza, Blueberries, Juice, **Thurs** Breakfast Pizza, Apple Slices, Juice, **Fri** No school

K - 4th Lunch **Lunch: Everyday** - Choice of one meat, two vegetables, and one grain/bread with milk. Variety of milk is offered every day for breakfast and lunch.

Mon Macaroni & Cheese or Steakfingers, Roll, Mashed Potatoes, Fresh Veggies Sliced Pears or Strawberry Applesauce **Tues**, Chicken Alfredo or Chicken Fried Steak Sandwich, Roasted Broccoli, Fresh Veggies, Blueberries or Orange, **Weds**, Chicken & Waffles or Fish Sticks, Roll, Tator Tots, Fresh Veggies, Apple or Watermelon Craisins, **Thurs**, Pepperoni Pizza, Chicken Sandwich or Baked Potato w/Ham, Roll, Glazed Carrots, Fresh Veggies, Apple Slices or Banana **Fri**, No School

5th - 12th Lunch **Lunch: Everyday** - Choice of one meat, two vegetables, and one grain/bread with milk. Variety of milk is offered every day for breakfast and lunch.

Mon Steakfingers or Popcorn Chicken, Roll, Corn, Mashed Potatoes, Fresh Veggies, Blueberries or Orange, **Tues**, Chicken Fried Steak Sandwich, Chicken Alfredo or Sweet & Sour Pork Rice Bowl, Steamed Broccoli, Fresh Veggies Apple or Sliced Pears, **Weds**, Cheeseburger, Hamburger or Fish Sticks, Roll, Tator Tots, Fresh Veggies, Apple Slices or Pineapple, **Thurs**, Baked Potato Basket or Pepperoni Pizza, Roasted Broccoli, Fresh Veggies, Strawberries or Sliced Peaches, **Fri**, No School

This menu is sponsored by ...

Azle School Menu Feb 12-16, 2024

BREAKFAST:
PreK-4th Grade, 7-12th Grade \$1.55
5-6th Grade FREE 2nd Meal \$2.00
Visitors/Employees \$2.75

LUNCH:
PreK-4th Grade \$2.55 5-6th Grade \$2.75
7-12th Grade \$2.55 2nd Meal \$3.20
Visitors & Employees \$3.75

PreK - 4th

BREAKFAST: Everyday - Assorted Fruits and Cereal, Juice, White or Chocolate Milk, Graham Crackers, Toast
Mon Breakfast on a stick, Orange Juice, Pears Diced, **Tues** Egg and Cheese on a Bun, Orange Juice, Pineapples, **Weds** Glazed Donut, Orange Juice, Oranges, **Thurs** Breakfast Pizza, Apple, Orange Juice, **Fri** Egg and Cheese Taco, Bananas, Orange Juice

LUNCH: Everyday - Variety of milk. Your choice of 1 entree & 1 fruit or juice
Mon Chicken Nuggets w/ Roll, Homemade Macaroni & Cheese w/ Breadstick Oranges, **Tues** Tater Tot Casserole w/ Biscuit Turkey & Cheese Sandwich, Apple, Peaches, Mixed Veggies, **Weds** Chef Salad w/ Breadsticks, Hot Ham and Cheese Sandwich, Oranges, Pineapples, Steamed Carrots Steamed Peas, **Thurs** Breaded Chicken Sandwich, Chicken and Cheese Quesadilla, Apple Sauce, Bananas, Corn Refried Beans, **Fri** Cheese Pizza Fish Sticks w/ Roll, Pepperoni Pizza, Apple, Mixed Fruit, Crinkle Fries, Steamed Broccoli

GRADES 5TH - 8TH

BREAKFAST: Everyday - Assorted Fruits and Cereal, Juice, White or Chocolate Milk, Yogurt w/Granola
Mon Breakfast on a stick, Orange Juice, Pears Diced, **Tues** Egg and Cheese on a Bun, Orange Juice, Pineapples, **Weds** Glazed Donut, Orange Juice, Oranges, **Thurs** Breakfast Pizza, Apple, Orange Juice, **Fri** Egg and Cheese Taco, Bananas, Orange Juice

LUNCH: Everyday: Variety of milk. Your choice of 1 entree & 1 fruit or juice, rolls, crackers • Salad bar offered daily
Mon Breaded Chicken Sandwich, Chicken Nuggets w/ Roll, Homemade Macaroni & Cheese w/ Breadstick Spicy Chicken Sandwich Oranges, **Tues** Cheeseburger, Hamburger, Tater Tot Casserole w/ Biscuit, Turkey & Cheese Sandwich **Weds** Chef Salad, 2 Honey Wheat Breadsticks Corn dog, Hot Ham and Cheese Sandwich **Thurs** Breaded Chicken Sandwich, Cheeseburger, Chicken and Cheese Quesadilla, Hamburger **Fri** Cheese Pizza, Fish Sticks w/ Roll, Pepperoni Pizza, Spicy Chicken Sandwich, Crinkle Fries, Steamed Broccoli

HIGH SCHOOL

BREAKFAST: Everyday - Assorted Fruits and Cereal, Juice, White or Chocolate Milk, Yogurt w/Granola
Mon Breakfast on a stick, Orange Juice, Pears Diced, **Tues** Egg and Cheese on a Bun, Orange Juice, Pineapples **Weds** Glazed Donut, Orange Juice, Oranges, **Thurs** Breakfast Pizza, Apple, Orange Juice, **Fri** Egg and Cheese Taco, Bananas, Orange Juice

LUNCH: • Everyday: 1% unflavored or non fat chocolate milk & juice • Salad Bar
Mon Breaded Chicken Sandwich, Cheeseburger, Homemade Macaroni & Cheese, Honey Wheat Breadstick Oranges, Pears Diced, Crinkle Fries **Tues** Hamburger, Spicy Chicken Sandwich Tater Tot Casserole w/ Biscuit, Apple, Peaches, Mixed Veggies, Steamed Broccoli, **Weds** Breaded Chicken Sandwich, Cheeseburger, Hot Ham and Cheese Sandwich, w/ Tomato Soup Oranges, Pineapples, Crinkle Fries **Thurs** Hamburger, Meatball Sub, Spicy Chicken Sandwich, Apple Sauce, Bananas, Corn, Green beans, **Fri** Breaded Chicken Sandwich, Cheeseburger, Chicken Nuggets w/ Roll, Apple, Mixed Fruit, Mashed Potatoes Peppered Gravy, Steamed Carrots

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Incredibox

Making music fun



GAME ON
By Jennifer Harrison

My opinions on computer gaming and some of my favorite games. I've been playing games on the home computer since the days of the Trash 80. I love indie, open-world, unique, puzzle, and resource games. The cake is a lie.

I'm not sure when I first learned about Incredibox. It won the award for Site of the Day from the FWA in 2009 and was so popular it crashed the server after 600,000 visits in one day. It was one of those websites that's just fun to go visit. You can play around with the sound samples and make entertaining loops while you're watching the amusing animations. Check out the demo here: <https://www.incredibox.com/demo/>.

In demo mode, the game (described by the developers as part game, part tool) starts with you selecting one of four themes. Each theme is a grouping of samples that can be combined together to create a musical "experience." Alpha, the first re-

lease, Little Miss, Sunrise and The Love are all available to play with for free. It's all beat-boxing loops. The loop and the way it fits into the current composition is just brilliant; it's timed to come in at the first beat of the next measure. So in other words, if you toss in a sample that you want it to play next, it will play it at the correct time to fit with the song.

Eventually, you'll load up the right combination of sound samples on your guys so it will trigger one of the combos and give you an animation that goes with the song — sort of a triggered musical interlude, using the instruments from the song.

The original Incredibox was created by three French friends in 2006. Allan



PHOTO COURTESY SO FAR SO GOOD

My son and I have played through all the themes, and we agree that Dystopia is our favorite, but The Love is a close second favorite.

Durand, programmer, Romain Delambily, artist, and musician Paul Malburet wanted to create an interactive music game. They worked together to create Alpha, the first Incredibox release, and after its success formed a company "So Far So Good." They released Little Miss after that with a rede-

signed gameplay and more elaborate graphics. Since then they've been further refining the gaming system, adding more sound samples, creating more themes and more animations. The cartoon character is based on the musician Paul Malburet himself.

While the original four

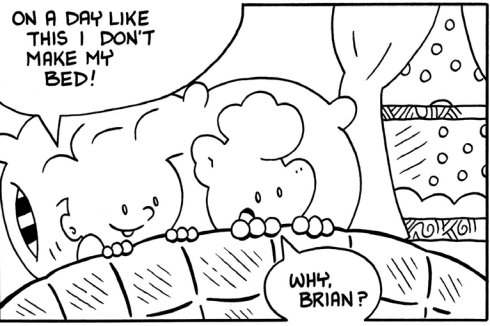
themes are available to play with for free, there are five more that are only available through the paid app: Brazil, Alive, Jeevan, Dystopia and Wekiddy.

Incredibox for Schools was introduced in 2022, allowing schools to use Incredibox in music education classes. It makes learning and compos-

ing music fun, which is really valuable in music education.

The full version of Incredibox is available just about everywhere — through your app store or you can purchase it directly from the website at www.incredibox.com. On SteamOS it's only \$4.99, and well worth the money.

ZED by Duane Abel



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builds on the previous ones. Classes will meet Mondays and Wednesdays beginning March 4 and will end May 13.

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Sudoku

FEBRUARY 8, 2024

			6			3		2
	9						1	
		8	1					7
		5						
	7				5			6
	3				2	7		
	4	1			8			9
	6	2			3	8		4

Level: Advanced

COLOR

FROM PAGE B1

Austin Regional in Leander March 2-3, WGI Southwest Power Regionals at UNT's Colosseum March 16-17, NTCA State Championships April 6-7 and hopes to wow judges at the 2024 Colonguard Championship in Dayton, Ohio. The season will be more contest-heavy than what has been typical in the past, with 10 competitions total.

The varsity team consists of 16 students, only three of which are upperclassmen. This year's show name is "Bridge Over Troubled Water." The show consists of colorguard members performing feats of athleticism and acrobatics around and on-top-of 6-foot and 9-foot blocks. Azle's Winter Guard performs in National A, a merit-based classification which the team earned

through its high-achievement year-after-year. The show has been in planning since April. Colonguard Director Caleb Hunter said the team has put in a tremendous amount of work since November to get its performance to its current level. The director is "super eager" to see his largely freshman and sophomore varsity team continue to exemplify hard work and progress as the season unfolds.

WINTER GUARD CONTEST RANKINGS

- 1st: Azle High School Varsity
- 2nd: LD Bell HS Varsity
- 3rd: Rock Hill HS Varsity (WGI World Class Finalist 2023)
- 4th: Emerson HS Varsity (NTCA First Place National A 2023)
- 5th: The Colony HS Varsity
- 6th: Wakeland HS Varsity
- 7th: Mount Pleasant HS Varsity (WGI World Championship Semi-Finalist 2023)
- 8th: Liberty HS Varsity

"I want to give a special shout-out to our phenomenal parent volunteers," Hunter said. "We had more than 16 parents show up for our 39 students (varsity and junior varsity). These parents work tirelessly to load our heavy props and floor on the truck, they bring our students nutritious food, and they keep our students safe. I could not be more proud of the team we are building in the colorguard program here at Azle High School."

Winterguard student leaders are Captain Graciela Cazares (senior), First Lieutenant Sara Gonzales (junior), and Senior Lieutenant Bryanna Pender (senior). Sophomore team members are Annika Birkeland, Karma Cavin, Abigail Evans, Phylbie Guinn, Dunessa Gutierrez, KatieAnn Hoyt and Jianna Menefee. Freshman team members are Edward Holt, Evelyn Hymer, Nevaeh Jackson, Jayden Evans, Sierra Leal and Madilyn Sweetser.

Solution to last week's puzzle

FEBRUARY 1, 2024

7	1	4	6	5	9	3	8	2
5	9	3	8	2	7	4	1	6
6	2	8	1	3	4	5	9	7
4	8	5	7	6	1	9	2	3
2	7	9	3	4	5	1	6	8
1	3	6	9	8	2	7	4	5
8	5	7	4	9	6	2	3	1
3	4	1	2	7	8	6	5	9
9	6	2	5	1	3	8	7	4

WORD SCRAMBLE

Rearrange the letters to spell something pertaining to caregiving.

R W E K L A

--	--	--	--	--	--

Answer: Walker

CRYPTO FUN
Determine the code to reveal the answer!

Solve the code to discover words related to caregiving. Each number corresponds to a letter. (Hint: 23 = I)

A. 7 4 12 11 22 23 2 11 12
Clue: Tends to someone

B. 6 4 7 23 15 23 3 19
Clue: Building or place of business

C. 4 7 3 23 2 23 3 19
Clue: Keeps you busy

D. 3 20 11 12 4 26 19
Clue: Remediate a health problem

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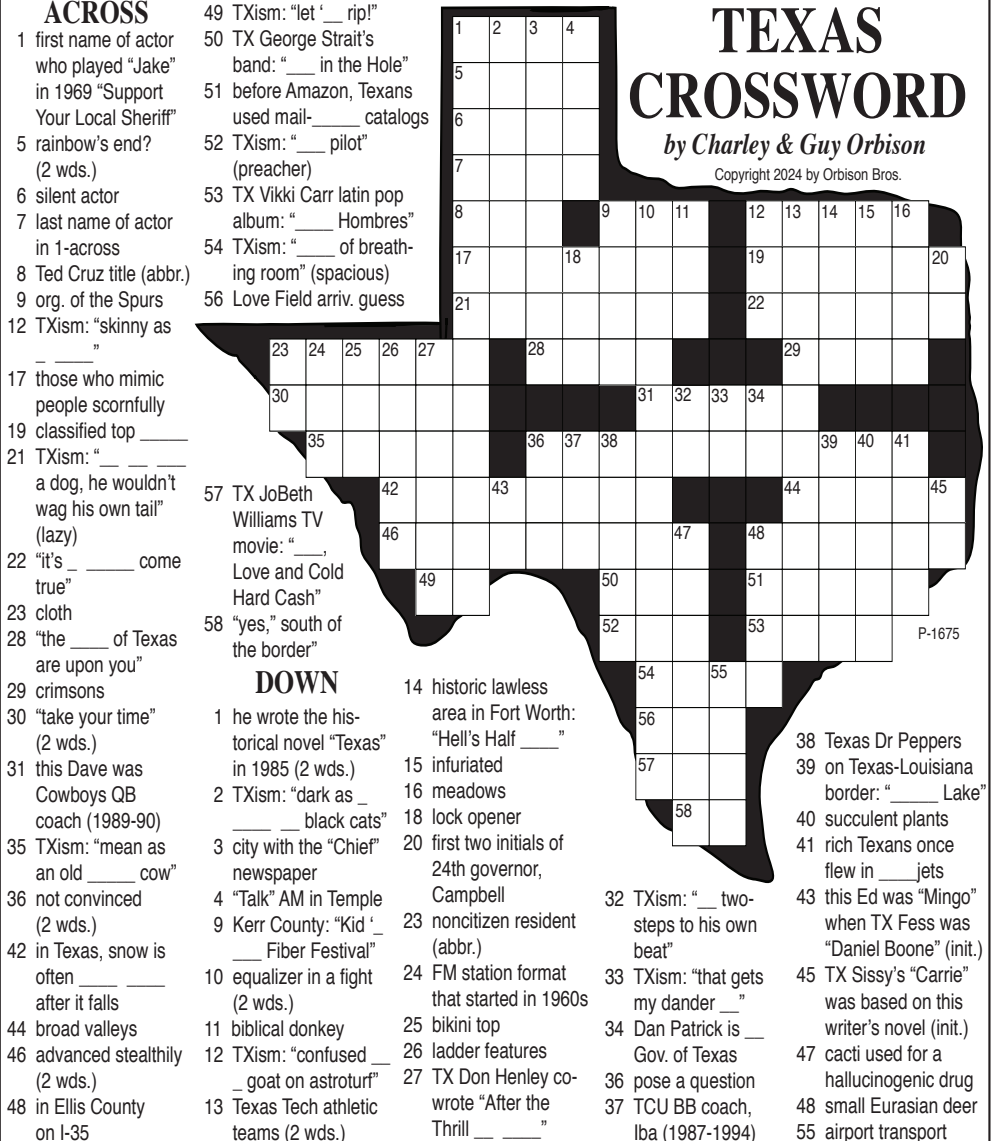
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ACROSS

1 first name of actor who played "Jake" in 1969 "Support Your Local Sheriff"
5 rainbow's end? (2 wds.)
6 silent actor
7 last name of actor in 1-across
8 Ted Cruz title (abbr.)
9 org. of the Spurs
12 TXism: "skinny as _____"
17 those who mimic people scornfully
19 classified top _____
21 TXism: "_____ a dog, he wouldn't wag his own tail" (lazy)
22 "it's _____ come true"
23 cloth
28 "the _____ of Texas are upon you"
29 crimson
30 "take your time" (2 wds.)
31 this Dave was Cowboys QB coach (1989-90)
35 TXism: "mean as an old _____ cow"
36 not convinced (2 wds.)
42 in Texas, snow is often _____ after it falls
44 broad valleys
46 advanced stealthily (2 wds.)
48 in Ellis County on I-35

DOWN

1 he wrote the historical novel "Texas" in 1985 (2 wds.)
2 TXism: "dark as _____ black cats"
3 city with the "Chief" newspaper
4 "Talk" AM in Temple
9 Kerr County: "Kid _____ Fiber Festival"
10 equalizer in a fight (2 wds.)
11 biblical donkey
12 TXism: "confused _____ goat on astroturf"
13 Texas Tech athletic teams (2 wds.)
14 historic lawless area in Fort Worth: "Hell's Half _____"
15 infuriated
16 meadows
18 lock opener
20 first two initials of 24th governor, Campbell
23 noncitizen resident (abbr.)
24 FM station format that started in 1960s
25 bikini top
26 ladder features
27 TX Don Henley co-wrote "After the Thrill _____"
32 TXism: "_____ two-steps to his own beat"
33 TXism: "that gets my dander _____"
34 Dan Patrick is _____ Gov. of Texas
36 pose a question
37 TCU BB coach, lba (1987-1994)
38 Texas Dr Peppers
39 on Texas-Louisiana border: "_____ Lake"
40 succulent plants
41 rich Texans once flew in _____ jets
43 this Ed was "Mingo" when TX Fess was "Daniel Boone" (init.)
45 TX Sissy's "Carrie" was based on this writer's novel (init.)
47 cacti used for a hallucinogenic drug
48 small Eurasian deer
55 airport transport

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