

THE COMMUNITY NEWS

Serving Aledo · the Annettas · Hudson Oaks · Willow Park, Texas

ALEDO

Parker Station lot could be rezoned a second time

The land was first rezoned to commercial in 1987

By Brandi Addison
The Community News

Aledo could see a familiar zoning change next week, when city council is set to vote on an item that proposes 500 Old Annetta Road in the Parker Station subdivision, becomes a commercial property.

The lot was already rezoned to a commercial property when approved by city council in 1987, city planning consultant Betty Chew said. However, she believes the changes did not get reflected on the city's zoning maps.

"We don't know (what happened), but we would have to assume that it just did not get reflected in the (1987) map, and that possibly could've just carried forth to the current (2008) zoning map," Chew said.

City officials began the hunt for the decades-old documents when it was brought to their attention by longtime resident and former council member Jim Lasater, who owns the property and voted for the change in the late 1980s.

Because the zoning maps do not accurately reflect the lot as a commercial property, the city must complete the traditional process for a zoning change, including two public hearings, a recommendation from the planning and zoning committee, and a vote by the council.

Frank Urquidez, who is a resident of Parker Station, said he and several other residents will submit a petition against the zoning change during the council meeting.

Urquidez said he was aware that the property should have already been fully transitioned to a commercial property decades ago, but he believes it was a conflict of interest for Lasater to vote on the

Turn to LOT, page 6



RANDY KECK/THE COMMUNITY NEWS

Workers far below ground level on the Beggs Ranch side of I-20 install the line that will eventually bring water from Fort Worth to Willow Park and Hudson Oaks. Willow Park city officials hope to be able to draw water from Fort Worth by mid to late summer.

ALEDO ISD

Board approves attendance zone maps

Incoming fifth-graders may stay if desired

By Mercedes Mayer
Aledo ISD

The Aledo ISD Board of Trustees voted unanimously Thursday night, March 11, to approve new attendance zone boundaries for elementary students for the 2021-2022 school year and for middle school students starting in August of 2022.

The attendance zones were recommended by the district's Attendance Zone Committee, a group of 39 citizens appointed by the board who met for more than 10 hours over four meetings to study data about projected enrollment, campus capacity, safety, transportation, infrastructure, planned development, and more.

AZC co-chairs Peter Healey and Cynthia Lewellyn presented the proposed attendance zone maps to the Aledo ISD Board of Trustees. View and download the zone map at community-news.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/zones.pdf.

"It really was a district-wide thought process and truly took all of the district kids into consideration," Healey said. "That really was one of the primary factors behind our thought process, 'How can we ensure the best learning environment for the greatest number of kids for the longest time period possible?'"

"Every opinion was heard and every concern was voiced, and the committee as a whole did a very good job of hearing out every thought on the matter and taking it all into consideration as we went through the process," Healey said.

In addition to working with the district's demographer from Templeton Demographics, AZC members had access to all of the community feedback gathered via an online survey plus the feedback received from the Board of Trustees and fellow AZC members. The AZC analyzed and discussed the feedback and reviewed what adjustments could be made to the proposed initial elementary and middle school maps. Co-chairs Healey and Cynthia Lewellyn also presented and discussed the AZC process and proposed maps twice publicly with the Aledo ISD Board of Trustees.

"What people need to know is the amount of work that went into this and that you went through every scenario that committee members brought up, walked through that and all looked at the results that may bring," Aledo ISD Trustee Forrest Collins said. "There's a lot of thought, a lot of effort and a lot of time."

The areas the AZC most frequently discussed were downtown Aledo as they tried to alleviate traffic congestion as much as possible and also north of Interstate 20 where the current numbers and projected fast growth meant moving students

Turn to AISD, page 5

'ALMOST NEARLY BUT NOT QUITE'



Willow Park's new Cross Timbers Park Playground, on the site of the old public safety building, has all the looks of completion.

City officials are asking that the equipment not be used just yet, as safety inspections have not been completed on the new features. A grand opening is planned in April.

SPECIAL TO THE COMMUNITY NEWS



COVID Vaccines
Cancer center announces COVID-19 vaccinations for cancer patients, caregivers, and families.
PAGE 4

Clay Shoot
Annual Business Development Development Group of Aledo hosts 12th annual clay shoot.
PAGE 3



Baseball
Bears complete tournament season, prepare for district.
PAGE 8

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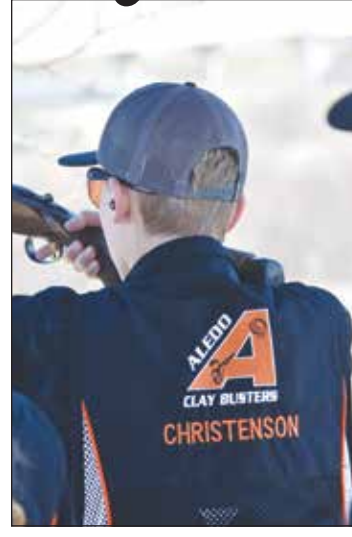
The Business Development Group of Aledo held its 12th annual Clay Shoot this year at a new location, Defender Outdoors Clay Ranch in Benbrook, on Saturday, March 11.

Long a source of donations for local organizations, this year's event benefited Young Life Aledo, Aledo FFA, Brock FFA, Camp Fire, Aledo AdvoCats, Project Celebration 2021, Aledo Clay Busters, and the Trinity Christian Academy Clay Shooting Team.

Organizer Craig Harbuck said the donations are provided to groups who provided volunteers for the event, which included a youth shoot in the morning, followed by adult shooters.

"Everybody's got a little skin in the game," Harbuck said of the more than 200 volunteers who helped.

PHOTOS BY
RANDY KECK
THE COMMUNITY
NEWS



Brady Christenson



William Ragland



James Kehrt



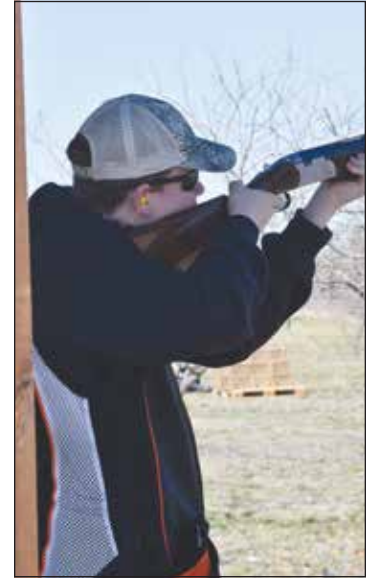
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Chamber presents annual awards



Baker's Ribs received Business of the Year (11-20 employees).



CASA-Hope for Children received Nonprofit of the Year.



Debra Smith with Pulliam Pools received Businessperson of the Year.



Karina Pappas of C&K Designs received the Ambassador of the Year.



Lightfoot Mechanical received Business of the Year (51+employees)



The Pappy Thompson Public Service Award went to County Court at Law 2 Judge Lynn Marie Johnson.



The Playspace Willow Park received Business of the Year (21-50 employees).



Urban Air Hudson Oaks received Entrepreneur of the Year.



Your Personal Chef received Business of the Year (1-10 employees).

The East Parker County Chamber of Commerce held its annual awards banquet on March 5 at Film Alley in Weatherford.

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Barnyard Reading

On March 10 students from Coder Elementary School visited the Aledo High School ag barn to learn about ag programs and to read to the animals assisted by ag students. Book topics related to the animals who were read to, including rabbits, pigs, and cattle. *Photo IDs were not available at press time.*



Students read to rabbits in the AHS ag barn.



Students read to rabbits.



Students learn about shearing goats.



An Aledo ag student reads with a student from Coder Elementary School.



Students got practice in a simulated cow milking.

PHOTOS BY RANDY KECK/THE COMMUNITY NEWS

TEXAS CROSSWORD

by Charley & Guy Orbison
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ACROSS

1 TXism "never ___ eyes on it"

5 in Tarrant County on highway 199

6 burrowing rodent

7 West TX climate

8 name of several businesses in the Waco-Austin area: "___Tex"

9 TX Charley Pride's "My Eyes Can Only See ___ You"

16 TXism: "useless as a saddle on ___"

18 TXism: "if it ain't true, ___ a cow in Texas"

21 Gov. Hogg's daughter (init.)

22 golf ball peg (2 wds.)

23 ___ Grande

24 many Texans have had to ___ COVID vaccine

30 time off when you are ill (2 wds.)

34 not morning (abbr.)

35 many Texas cities use the council-manager ___ government

36 dog's wagger

37 this Chiles once owned the Texas Rangers team

39 preacher's job (2 wds.)

43 workplace outfits

44 hit by TX-born Sly Stone: "___ the Music"

45 TXism: "up ___ snuff"

46 these powers fought the Allies in WWII

47 TXism: "___ a calf crying for mama"

49 TXism: "got as much chance as a ___ a packing plant"

52 Texas ___-Step

53 univ. in Lawrence, KS

54 TX-born aviator: Wiley ___ man Post

55 College in Corsicana

58 TVs once had these

59 he took TX Foreman's title in 1974

60 this technical institute had five Texas campuses before it closed

61 19th gov. ___ Ross

DOWN

1 Port ____, TX

2 volcanic islands in the Atlantic

3 birth state of noted TX rancher Charles Goodnight

4 property document

9 TXism: "chompin' ___ the bit"

10 these look like onions

11 fancy word for "celebration"

12 ___ of expertise

13 Pecos is the seat of this county

14 Groveton H.S. class

15 respectful word for a man

17 in Gregg County on U.S.80

19 TXism: "___ the bud" (stop)

20 TXism: "he's a good man not ___ with" (mean)

24 in 1901, Capt. ___ Lucas helped drill first Spindletop well

25 surprise exclamation

26 TXism: "mad as ___ -eyed cow"

27 "___ what I said"

28 "on a need-___ basis"

29 largest federation of unions in U.S.

31 TX Bonnie & Clyde always used a getaway ___

32 Basinger of 1986 "No Mercy" with TX Bruce McGill

33 Mexican "Edward"

38 "The Chicks" name once had this word

40 TXism: "does a fat man sweat?"

41 pigpen

42 some medicine is considered to be ___ forming

48 scuttled ___

50 TXism: "plain as the ___ on a mule"

51 make a mistake

56 TXism: "he couldn't drive ___ into a snow bank" (inept)

57 Chevy hybrids

COVID-19 vaccines available to cancer patients and caregivers

Availability begins Tuesday, March 16 at West Magnolia location in Fort Worth

The Center for Cancer and Blood Disorders, a comprehensive cancer center serving 12,000 patients annually in North Texas, announced the practice will offer cancer patients and their caregivers COVID-19 vaccinations beginning Tuesday, March 16.

The Center is a partner of OneOncology, the national platform for independent, physician-led practices providing care across the cancer continuum for 259,000 patients annually at 175 sites of care throughout the U.S.

The Center will distribute the Moderna vaccine through a drive-through process at their clinic, located at 800 West Magnolia in Fort Worth.

Cancer patients must make an appointment by clicking visiting <https://go.oncuhub.com/ModernaCOVIDVACCINETXCC>. To schedule an appointment for a patient and caregiver, reserve two appointments.

Center officials have spent weeks working in partnership with the State of Texas

and Tarrant County public health officials to secure COVID-19 vaccine so cancer patients can receive their shots in a safe environment as possible.

"We appreciate the deep concern for cancer patients our state and county public health have shown by working with us to ensure vulnerable cancer patients are prioritized to receive a COVID-19 vaccine," said Barry Russo, The Center's CEO.

"We're excited to be the first cancer center in the country to be able to offer patients access to these vaccines."

As an initial step, last week the State of Texas allocated 100 doses of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine to The Center for cancer patients in active treatment. Late Friday, The Center secured 1,500 doses of the Moderna vaccine for cancer patients and their direct caregivers.

The Center for Cancer and Blood Disorders provides cancer treatment to more than 12,000 patients annually to patients in Fort Worth, Arlington, Mansfield, Weatherford, Burleson, Granbury, Mineral Wells, and Stephenville.

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Obituaries

Dan Tollefson

Daniel "Dan" Lee Tollefson of Aledo passed away on Wednesday, March 3, 2021, in Fort Worth at the age of 60. He was a beloved husband, father, grandfather, son, brother, and friend.



Dan Tollefson

Dan was born on August 16, 1960, in Horton, Kansas, to Kenneth D. and Sonja K. (Soyland) Tollefson. Dan grew up in Hiawatha, Kansas and graduated from Hiawatha High School in 1978. Dan continued his education at Kansas State University, graduating with a Bachelor of Science degree in Mechanical Engineering Technology in December 1983.

On August 11, 1979, Dan was united in marriage to Susan Huggins of Sabetha, Kansas at Hiawatha First United Methodist Church and went on to enjoy nearly 43 years of marriage. Together they had three children, Erin, Bradley, and Chase.

After college graduation, Dan and Susan moved to Liberal, Kansas where Dan was employed by Rosel Well Perforators. This began a lifelong career that he loved. After nearly 40 years of service in the Oil and Gas service industry, he was most recently the Vice President of Technology for Reach Wireline where he was able to pursue his professional passion. Throughout his career and personal adventures, he cultivated countless friendships and was always eager to share his smile, a good story, and a laugh.

Dan was a dedicated volunteer and lifelong member of the Methodist Church where he served in many ways including trustee boards, youth groups, and mission trips. He was a Cubmaster of packs in both Longview, Texas, and Lafayette, Louisiana. He enjoyed time well-spent with family and friends, working on special projects in his "shed," eating barbeque, and always had a big glass of unsweet iced tea.

You could frequently find him on driving adventures, listening to podcasts or books on tape. Above all else, he enjoyed spending time with the love of his life Susan, his two sons Brad and Chase Tollefson, his daughter Erin Oberschlake and her husband David, and his grandchildren Zeva and Ty Oberschlake. He was a loving and supportive husband, amazing father, and the best PopPop this world has seen.

Dan was preceded in death by his father, Kenny; his paternal grandparents, Henry and Henrietta Tollefson; his maternal grandparents, Norman and Cleo Soyland; and aunt Roberta Schuetz.

He is survived by his dedicated and loving wife, Susan; daughter Erin (David) Oberschlake of Prosper, Texas; sons, Brad Tollefson of Lubbock, Texas, and Chase Tollefson of Aledo, Texas; granddaughter Zeva Oberschlake and grandson Ty Oberschlake; his mother, Sonja Tollefson of Hiawatha, Kansas; sister, Laura (Heidi) Tollefson of Hiawatha, Kansas; brothers-in-law, Mark (Rachel) Huggins, of Topeka, Kansas, Pat Huggins of Oshkosh, Wisconsin; sisters-in-law, Mary (Van) Corser of Ulysses, Kansas, and Karen Huggins of McPherson, Kansas; uncles, John Schuetz, Olmstead Falls, Ohio, Phillip (Ingrid) Tollefson, Wichita, Kansas, Harold Soyland, Hiawatha, Kansas, and Mike (Deb) Soyland of Sabetha, Kansas; and numerous nieces, nephews, cousins, and friends.

A memorial service was held on Thursday, March 11, 2021, at the Aledo United Methodist Church. If you were unable to attend, the funeral can be viewed on the Aledo United Methodist Church Facebook page.

The Community News
March 19, 2021



RANDY KECK/THE COMMUNITY NEWS

Stacks of pipes line the north I-20 access road. Once in place, they will greatly increase the amount of water available to Willow Park and Hudson Oaks.

AISD

from page one

out of both Walsh and McCall Elementary Schools to extend capacities as long as possible.

"We had long discussions about how the proposed zones would impact students north of Interstate 20, and we closely analyzed this area and how we could best and most efficiently use building capacity," Llewellyn said. "It quickly became clear that the fast growth on the north side of the district makes it impossible to not make a shift in boundaries."

New attendance zone boundaries are necessary after the passage of the Aledo Bond 2019

proposal that included a new elementary school and new middle school for the district.

Annetta Elementary, the district's sixth elementary school, will open in August, has a maximum capacity of 889 students and is located off FM 5 south of Interstate 20.

Aledo ISD will open its second middle school named McAnally Middle School in August 2022, thus the need for middle school attendance zones for the first time ever. McAnally Middle School's maximum capacity is 1,449 students.

The district is implementing a "grandfathering" policy for incoming fifth graders so that they may

stay at their current elementary school for the 2021-2022 school year. If a parent chooses for their incoming fifth grader to stay on the campus they are currently assigned for, any sibling of that incoming fifth grader may also attend the campus for only one school year (2021-2022). Parents must provide transportation for their children to that campus. Visit community-news.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/transfer.pdf to read the Elementary Intra-District Transfer Procedure information, and then click here to fill out the Incoming 5th Grade Transfer Request form by 4 p.m. on Friday, April 30, 2021.

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PUBLIC NOTICE OF TEST OF AUTOMATIC TABULATING EQUIPMENT

Notice is hereby given that the automatic tabulating equipment that will be used in the May Local Elections held on May 1, 2021 will be tested on March 24, 2021 at 9:00 a.m. at Parker County Courthouse Annex, 1112 Santa Fe Drive, to ascertain that it will accurately count the votes cast for all offices and on all measures.

Jenise 'Crickett' Miller
Parker County Elections Administrator

AVISO PUBLICO DE PROBAR EL EQUIPO PARA TABULAR AUTOMATICAMENTE

Por lo presente se da aviso que el equipo para tabular automáticamente que se usará en la Elección locales de mayo celebradas el 1 de mayo de 2021 se probará el 24 de marzo de 2021 a las 9:00 am en el anexo de la corte del condado del Parker, 1112 Santa Fe Dr, para determinar si el equipo contará con exactitud los votos para todos los puestos oficiales y sobre todos los proyectos de ley.

Jenise 'Crickett' Miller
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LOT

from page one

item that involved his family's property.

He said he walked house-to-house for a couple hours one day, asking for the opinions of nearby residents. Several voiced their opposition to the zoning change during the first public hearing, which took place on March 11.

Residents are concerned the change will bring a heavier traffic flow, increased noise and disruption, and increased crime.

He said there have been rumors that a brand-new dance studio would be built on the property, and residents are concerned with the subsequent business that could move into the facility if the studio failed or expanded.

"I'm all for bringing a studio to Aledo to serve the boys and girls," Urquidez said. "But people moved to Aledo to raise kids and have a great sense of community. There are other places for businesses."

City council will vote on the item after a second public hearing on March 25.

ALEDO ISD

District awarded \$99,173 grant for safety and security

Funds used for security gates at AHS, upgraded communications tools

By Mercedes Mayer
Aledo ISD

Always looking for ways to keep students and staff as safe as possible, the Aledo ISD was awarded a \$99,173 Texas Education Agency School Safety and Security Grant in April of 2020.

As a part of that grant, the district recently completed installing six safety gates around the Aledo High School complex. AISD is also in the process of purchasing updated communications equipment for school buses and the Aledo ISD Police Department.

Through the grant, districts were able to apply for specific and limited items or equipment to enhance school safety. The grant monies covered the cost to purchase and install the communication equipment and the security gates, so no district funds were used.

"It is important that we have the ability to control access to our campuses and students during emergencies," Aledo ISD Police Chief Fred Collie said. "These new safety gates,



when used, will increase campus safety and help facilitate a more secure educational environment."

The security gates will allow the district to restrict access to and egress from the parking lots on the north side of Aledo High School and Daniel Ninth Grade Campus, as well as on the east side of the stadium. They will be used during emergencies, when needed, and also during large events to mitigate high volumes of traffic. The security gates do not restrict traffic flow on any public roadway.

"Routine use of the gates is not anticipated at this time," Collie said.

The updated communications equipment includes an upgraded repeater system used for buses, new radios on buses, and new two-way communication systems for police officers.

ALEDO

Tri-County responds to Brazos bankruptcy

Brazos Electric Power Cooperative, Inc. (Brazos), Tri-County Electric Cooperative's (Tri-County) wholesale power provider, announced on March 1 that it has filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection. According to a release issued by Brazos, its bankruptcy filing is not expected to impact the delivery of electricity to Tri-County members.

Tri-County, along with numerous other electric providers across the state, has communicated that the long-term impacts of this severe weather are still being assessed. President/CEO Darryl Schriver said "we are in this together with our members." He said he was disappointed that Brazos finds itself in the position to file for bankruptcy.

"The Tri-County Board of Directors has instructed me to investigate the events leading to this decision by Brazos and to leave no stone unturned," he said. "We continue to demand answers and fight for what's right on behalf of our members. All in all, we hope

for a positive outcome in the bankruptcy for our membership."

Brazos provides wholesale power and operates the high-voltage transmission lines necessary to deliver that electricity to 16 electric cooperatives. Collectively, these cooperatives provide electricity to over 700,000 retail customers in 68 counties.

Electric cooperatives were formed to help deliver and expand the availability of electricity to the rural regions of Texas that for-profit electric providers would not service. Because of that unique mission and since cooperatives are member-owned, not-for-profit businesses, electric cooperatives have been essential in fueling economic growth and improving the overall quality of life for many Texans.

"We will continue to be transparent with our members," Schriver said. "As we receive answers from Brazos to our questions, we will provide timely updates accordingly."

Tri-County's management is based in Aledo.

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Find this week's puzzle on page 4.

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Capital Highlights

State's jobless rate still doubles record low



Gary Borders
gborders@texaspress.com

The state's unemployment rate dropped to 6.8% in January, down a tick from December's 6.9% rate but double the record low of 3.4% in May 2019. It is unclear what effect the mid-February winter storm had on employment, when power outages swept the state and many roads were impassable. We'll find out next month.

What is certain is that state lawmakers must grapple with a revenue shortfall as they build a biennial budget since sales tax revenues are down from the previous year. The state comptroller's office announced February sales tax revenues totaled \$2.68 billion, down 7.5% from the same period last year.

Sales taxes account for most of the state's revenues. Texas Comptroller Glenn Hegar announced in January that the state was running a \$1 billion deficit for the current budget. Hegar estimated state budget writers will have an estimated \$112.5 billion in revenue available for the next two-year budget, which is nearly \$500 million less than the total current budget.

Hegar said the forecast could change due to uncertainties such as the continuing effect of the pandemic, oil and gas revenues, and how quickly the state's economy rebounds as the state fully reopens.

Abbott, Patrick spar over PUC, ERCOT

The market monitor for the Public Utility Commission has revised its claim that the Electric Reliability Council of Texas over-charged power companies by \$16 billion during the winter storm, saying last week that the actual amount is \$4.2 billion.

Gov. Gregg Abbott has made legislation relating to correcting any ERCOT billing errors an emergency item. In a highly unusual move, Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick showed up at a state senate committee hearing to question the lone remaining member of the PUC — new chair Arthur D'Andrea. Patrick on Friday night called on Abbott to replace D'Andrea after he fills the other two vacancies on the PUC. Patrick also said Abbott should intercede to "correct" the pricing error.

Abbott quickly — and tersely — responded to Patrick, saying that, as a former Supreme Court justice and former Attorney General, the governor's legal view is that he does not have "independent authority to accomplish the goals you seek," which is why he made the issue an emergency item for the Legislature to consider. This saga is far from over.

Parts of Texas still face drought

Despite record snowfalls in much of the state, precipitation in February was below average, which led to an increase in the area of the state affected by drought. Dr. Mark Wentzel, a hydrologist with the Texas Water Development Board, said rain during April, May, and June will be crucial. The expected breakup of the La Niña weather system in

April could bring a return to normal amounts of rainfall in May and June, Wentzel wrote.

He noted that there will be pockets of drought almost always in such a vast state. Right now, the United States Drought Monitor shows 62 percent of the state is in some stage of drought, with the most severe areas located in parts of the Panhandle and the Rio Grande Valley. Only 10.8 percent of the state's area has normal rainfall conditions, primarily in Northeast Texas.

COVID-19 vaccines steadily rising across state

With another 800,000 doses of COVID-19 vaccines arriving in Texas this week, more than 5.2 million people have received at least one dose, and 2.78 million are fully vaccinated — about 9.5% of the state's population. The latest shipment is down from the 1 million first doses delivered last week, which included the first large batch of the one-shot Johnson & Johnson vaccine.

Last week the Texas Department of State Health Services announced that vaccinations have been expanded to people older than 50 years of age. Previously, school and child-care workers were added to the Phase 1B list, which also included people older than 65 and those with underlying medical conditions.

"We've seen a remarkable decrease in the number of hospitalizations and deaths since people 65 and older started becoming fully vaccinated in January," said Imelda Garcia, DSHS associate commissioner. "Expanding to ages 50 to 64 will continue the state's priorities of protecting those at the greatest risk of severe outcomes and preserving the state's health care system."

COVID-19 cases, deaths continue to drop

The number of new cases of COVID-19 in Texas dropped again last week to 31,916 — down 26% from the previous week. A total of 1,117 deaths were reported, down 35% from the previous week. To date, there have been 2.7 million cases in the state since the pandemic began, with 46,366 deaths, according to the Coronavirus Resource Center at Johns Hopkins University.

Hospitalizations of confirmed COVID-19 patients also continue to decrease, with 4,219 patients currently in Texas hospitals, according to TDSHS. That's down 14% from the previous week and 70% lower than the record high of 14,218 hospitalizations in mid-January.

Website honors iconic women in legal history

The Texas Young Lawyers Association this week launched an online site intended to educate students about women in our nation's legal history who have fought for equality and civil rights, and who have helped shape American culture. The project is designed to give Texas high school teachers an effective tool to teach students about such iconic women as Rosa Parks and Susan B. Anthony. The site can be accessed by anyone at iconicwomen.tyla.com.

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

DURING THE DARK TIMES



The coronavirus has transformed our lives and all levels of government have taken significant steps to address the pandemic. These changes highlight your need for meaningful, accurate information about government action, and transparency is more crucial than ever. Our reporters use public access laws to shine a light so you can understand what's happening, have a voice in your government and hold public officials accountable.

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As the news media industry celebrates Sunshine Week recognizing the importance of access to public information, we thank you for your continued support and patronage.

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Guest Column

SUNSHINE WEEK

Court records should be open, accessible

By Amy Kristin Sanders and Rachel Davis Mersey
Special to The Community News

The recent winter storm left millions of Texans without power to heat their homes or water to drink. It has shaken our state to its core. As a result, Brazos Electric Power Cooperative, which dubs itself as Texas' largest and oldest generation and transmission cooperative, recently filed for bankruptcy in federal court.

What does this mean for the 1.5 million Texans served by the utility? What about other businesses and families in our communities who will have to file for bankruptcy as a result of the storm's devastation? Unfortunately, the answers to these questions aren't easy to come by because it is needlessly difficult to evaluate the federal courts and how they equitably — or inequitably — engage with the parties who appear before them.

What we know from this example and others is that systematic study of court records—by journalists, legal aid groups and even everyday citizens—has the potential to uncover the successes and failings of our nation's justice system. Yet the records aren't kept in a way that makes that inexpensive or easy.

Turning to the expense, court records, unlike other federal government records, are locked behind a paywall. It'll cost you 10 cents per page to read them online — or even just to view your search results. That means to engage in meaningful oversight, journalists, advocacy groups or even everyday Texans would need to review thousands of records, at an unsustainable cost of time and money.

Major legal research databases that collect some

federal court records do exist. But unless you're affiliated with a university, they too carry a hefty price tag.

Second, it has been joked that navigating the antiquated system for accessing the records — known as PACER — requires more luck than money. The system's cumbersome nature and outdated architecture are hardly user-friendly. Often searches return information that is of little value — but you pay for the results anyway.

As our state's watchdogs, Texas journalists regularly engage in government oversight, ensuring the three branches of government operate in the public's interest. But you likely know that relentless budget cuts and staff reductions have made this kind of public-interest, watchdog journalism much less common. For journalists keeping an eye on our court system, the work is expensive, time consuming, and requires significant expertise.

But it doesn't have to be this way. We can build a system that permits free and open access to court records, allowing journalists — and others — the ability to examine these documents just like they can examine the FEMA reports, Congressional roll call votes and nearly every other executive or legislative record.

With a \$5 million award from the National Science Foundation, our team is creating an Open Knowledge Network to increase transparency around court records. Our system, called SCALES, will allow users to engage in natural-language searches of the records — the same way you use Google to search the internet.

With the help of SCALES, journalists, attorneys,

scholars — and even judges — can quickly answer important questions about the justice system. The capacity to analyze large amounts of data holds enormous potential, but it requires being able to access court records without paying 10 cents per page.

Making public records free just makes sense. Assembling and disseminating information to the public is a core function of a democratic government. Journalists, attorneys, and researchers regularly rely on federal records to hold the government accountable, outline legal strategies, and evaluate policy implementation.

As news organizations around the state commemorate Sunshine Week, a nationwide initiative focused on highlighting the importance of open government and public records, we urge you to contact our Texas congressional delegation to voice your support for court records that are open and free to access. Tell them you support the Open Courts Act, a bipartisan bill that would eliminate access fees and align the judiciary with the rest of the federal government. It's time we let a little sunshine into the federal courts.

Amy Kristin Sanders is an associate professor in the University of Texas at Austin School of Journalism and Media and an expert on freedom of information and government transparency. Rachel Davis Mersey is the associate dean of research for the Moody College of Communication at the University of Texas at Austin. Both are former journalists. The views expressed are those of the authors and do not reflect the official policy or position of the National Science Foundation.

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We're always on the lookout for story ideas. To share one, call Randy Keck at 817-441-7661, ext. 207 or email news@community-news.com. Please provide the basic story information as well as contact information in case we have questions.

We welcome letters, articles and guest opinions from our readers. Opinions expressed in this newspaper will be labeled as opinions, editorials or letters, and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the ownership. Letters should be signed, and limited to approximately 300 words. All submissions to the newspaper should

include a telephone number in case we have questions. Letters are due by Monday at noon for that week's paper. Community announcements, achievements and obituaries are due by noon Friday for the following week's paper. Send submissions to news@community-news.com.

Photos submitted should include names of the people in the photograph. For ease in submitting photographs electronically, visit our contact form at community-news.com/contacts.

The Community News does not charge for timely wedding, engagement and birth announcements provided they are of reasonable length. Lengthy announcements will either be edited to a reasonable length or, at the discretion of the person submitting the announcement, be charged a fee. The deadline for submitting announcements is noon Friday for the following week's paper.

SOFTBALL

Ladycats win on the road

Fall to Granbury at home

By **Randy Keck**
The Community News

The Aledo Ladycats softball team had an up-and-down outing at home against Granbury on Friday, March 12, at home.

The Lady Pirates got two runners on base in the first by being hit by pitches.

One of those runners scored on a two-out single before pitcher Kayleigh Smith retired the side with the second strike out of the inning.

The Ladycats looked poised to make up the difference after lead-off batter Macy Graf and Marissa Powell both drew walks. Morgan Brown was hit by a pitch after an almost-perfect bunt rolled just foul to load the bases with no outs.

Unfortunately for the Ladycats, a pop fly, liner to third, and a strike out ended the inning with no score.

The bottom of the second was better for the 'Cats. Smith walked and was relieved by courtesy runner Hannah Pack. With one out, Audrey Pearce walked, and Graf followed with a bunt no one on the Granbury team could handle, loading the bases. Powell drew her second walk, scoring Pack, but a strike out and a fly out again left three Ladycats stranded on base.

Granbury scored again in the fourth when a runner scored on a double-play the ended with a Granbury runner being thrown out attempting to advance to third base.

Granbury took a 3-1 lead in the top of the sixth inning, but Aledo responded with three runs in the bottom of the sixth.

With one out, Claire Byars singled to left, and Pearce singled on a ground ball up the middle. Both runners scored when Graf hit a hard liner to center field, and rounded the bases before Granbury could get the ball to the infield.

The Ladycats led 4-3 going into the top of the seventh. Granbury, with a runner on base and two outs,



RANDY KECK/THE COMMUNITY NEWS

Kayleigh Smith was on the mound for the Ladycats against Granbury. She struck out 14 Pirates in a tough loss.

managed to push two runs across the plate on two consecutive Aledo errors. The Ladycats were unable to score in the bottom of the seventh, taking a 4-5 loss.

Although pinned with the loss, Smith struck out 14 Granbury batters in the game.

The Ladycats came back to defeat Azle 4-1 on the road on Tuesday, March 16.

Graf got the Ladycats started with a lead-off home run. Aledo's one-run lead held until the third inning, when Graf reached first base on a single, Powell walked, and then Madysen Boutwell blasted a three-RBI homer over the center field fence.

The winning pitcher was Nathalie Touchet, who allowed only one hit in seven innings.

BASEBALL

Bearcats complete final tournament

Willems receives scholarship

By **Nolan Ruth**
The Community News

The tournament portion of the high school baseball season has come to a close for the Aledo Bearcats. Last weekend saw the Bearcats win three of their five games in the Drew Medford Memorial Tournament.

The tournament is named to honor Drew Medford, who played baseball for Paschal High School and had accepted an offer to play baseball at TCU in 2016. Sadly, Medford lost his life in a car accident before he was able to take the field for the Horned Frogs. His passion for the game, drive to succeed, and empathy for others impacted the lives of those around him.

A year after his passing, Drew's family and Paschal High School started the annual tournament. With many corporate sponsors and donations, the tournament offers \$2,000 scholarships to one player from each team. This year, the tournament featured 20 teams, including Aledo.

Things started Thursday afternoon at Trinity Valley School against L.D. Bell. The Bearcats started off fast in the first inning with an RBI single by Hunter Rudel that scored Zach Harrison from second base. However, Bell tied it in the bottom half of the inning to make it a 1-1 game.

Things remained quiet until the fifth inning when Bell took the lead just before the third out was recorded. Ethan Jaques came in as a relief pitcher for Eliot Flaherty in the sixth inning and shut down Bell from there.

The Bearcats were down to their last two outs in the seventh, trailing 2-1. Harrison came up clutch with two runners on and knocked an RBI double into left field, scoring Max Belyeu and Keaton Laidley. TCU-commit Creed Willems drove in Harrison on the next at-bat with a double to right field to give Aledo a 4-2 lead. Jaques finished off Bell in the bottom of the inning to seal the win.

"We seemed like we were getting guys on all day," head coach Chad Barry said after the game. "We just couldn't come up with that clutch hit to break it open. Credit their defense, they did a great job fundamentally. But I felt like at some point if we could ever pick up a hit to drive in a run it might open the flood gates. Zach is athletic and Creed is Creed, we just got guys on base and we drove them in."

Mansfield Lake Ridge and Paschal

The next game did not go as well for the Bearcats, who were shut out 9-0 by Mansfield Lake Ridge despite Adrian Guzman's stellar pitching performance. Going six and a third innings, striking out nine and only four hits given up, Barry pulled Guzman in the seventh after surrendering two runs. Kevin Taylor came in for relief but was unable to stop the bleeding, surrendering seven more runs before Ethan Headrick closed out the inning.

"Looking back on it, I think Kevin is more effective coming in behind someone that has a little less velocity than Adrian." Barry said about the pitching decision at the end of the game. "That was a coaching mistake on my part, I probably should've gone to Headrick earlier

or Ethan McBryer from that point to slow things down. That's a mistake on me, and I told him that."

The next day at Paschal the Bearcats squared off with the hometown Panthers late in the morning and appeared to jump out fast. Despite outpitching Paschal 11-9, the Bearcats fell apart late, suffering their second consecutive loss.

Willems started the game with a bang, hitting a three-run home run in the first inning to give Aledo the early lead. David Jones reached on an error later in the inning that scored Nolan Garcia. Estevan Flores drove in the next two runs on a single to score Jones and Guzman. Belyeu drove in the last run on a single to right field that drove in Flores.

Aledo sat on its big lead, only surrendering one run until the sixth inning. With the time limit having been reached, the sixth inning would be the final inning. Unfortunately, the Bearcats were unable to record a single out in the final frame, and the Panthers scored seven runs, winning on a walkoff single by a score of 8-7.

"It was a tough pill to swallow," Barry said about the game. "It was disappointing. You can't just sit on a lead. Good teams don't do that. When good teams get somebody on the ropes, they put them away and knock them out. We did not do that."

Duncanville and Waxahachie

The next game saw arguably the best pitching performance of the weekend, with Carter Shands throwing a complete game shutout against Duncanville. Shands only allowed four hits in the game and struck out eight.

Rudel started the scoring in the second inning by stealing home with one out. Belyeu and Willems added to the score by each going yard in the second inning to make it a 3-0 ballgame. Guzman drove in Aledo's final run in the sixth with a double to center field that scored Garcia.

Shands finished the game off by striking out the final two batters to finish the job.

"He picked up basically where he left off last week," Barry said about Shands' performance. "He was throwing his curveball for a strike, he was spotting his fastball, he mixed his pitches well, and he worked quick and stayed ahead in the count. He had them swinging a lot. Even with his misses he was pretty close. Our defense played well behind him, and he never had any credible threat to giving up a run."

Everything came to a close Saturday morning with the most dominating performance of the week. At Legacy High School in Mansfield, the Bearcats jumped out on Waxahachie early and continued to put up runs throughout the game.

Belyeu started the game off with a leadoff home run that opened the door to a five-run first inning. With the bases loaded for Bridger Wilson, an errant pitch hit Wilson to score Rudel. The next batter, Taylor, singled to right to score Garcia. Sam Sisk singled on the next at bat to drive in Guzman and Wilson.

In the second, Wilson drove in Rudel on a single to left field, followed by Taylor driving in Garcia again to make it 7-0.

The third inning saw more of the same with Willems smacking a double to center field to score Belyeu and Harrison.

After a scoreless fourth inning,
Turn to **BEARCATS**, page 9



RANDY KECK/THE COMMUNITY NEWS

The Trinity Christian Academy Clay Shooting Team competed in the Business Development Group of Aledo's annual clay shoot on March 6.

TCA Clay Shoot set for March 27

The Trinity Christian Academy Athletic Boosters will host a clay shoot beginning at 8:30 a.m. Saturday, March 27, at Defender Outdoors Clay Ranch, 8270 Aledo Road in Benbrook.

Shells and lunch will be provided, and there will be a raffle during lunch. Eye and ear protection are required. Any shooter younger than 18 must be accompanied by a parent.

Registration is at 8:30 a.m., a safety briefing is at 9:30 a.m., and the shooting begins at 9:45 a.m.

Registration is \$125 per individual or \$500 per team. To register, visit <https://payit.nelnet.net/form/gTgnTINP>.

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BEARCATS

from page eight

Rudel doubled to left field in the fifth to score Parker Stegall. Sisk then singled home Rudel and loaded the bases. Belyeu was hit by a pitch on the next at bat to score Wilson and make the score 12-0 in the fifth inning.

Rudel finished his “complete game” on the mound in the bottom half of the fifth to win by run-rule. Rudel only allowed four hits and struck out four in his ironman performance.

“We were comfortable with it,” Barry said about scrapping a designated hitter to let Rudel hit. “We have a rule now where if he had struggled and we had to bring him out, he could still DH the rest of the game. But he went out there and performed on both sides.”

The Bearcats will be off all week until Friday, March 19, when they travel to Abilene, and then face the Joshua Owls at home on Saturday before starting district play next week against Brewer.

At the end of the tournament, it was announced who would be the recipient of the Drew Medford Scholarship for each team. It came as no surprise when catcher Creed Willems was selected as the recipient for the Bearcats.

“It’s an honor,” Willems said. “Just because of Drew Medford and how he played the game. I’ve been working for it, been spending a lot of hours in the weight room and in the cages trying to help me and help my team. Especially coming off last year, not having a full season, I’ve been trying to work towards Round Rock and keep it for my team instead of for myself. That’s what helped me this week.”

“I can’t take all the glory, I’ve got to thank the Lord. He’s the reason I’m in the place I am today. From there all I’m trying to do is go up there, hit the ball hard, and try and help my team out.”

Game Action

Aledo vs Granbury



LEFT: Morgan Brown put down an almost-perfect bunt that just rolled foul. | RIGHT: Reagan Davis fields a Granbury hit in the top of the seventh inning.

RANDY KECK/THE COMMUNITY NEWS

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Dr. Riaz is excited to be in North Texas where he will be close to his family and looks forward to helping and providing its community members with exceptional care. Dr. Riaz and his wife Dr. Bismah Siddiqui are parents to one daughter and are thrilled to be starting their new chapter in life here. In his spare time, Dr. Riaz loves to travel with family and friends, enjoys music, and is also a huge soccer fan (Fan of Liverpool FC).



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GOLF

Ladycats take second at Burleson

Staff Reports
The Community News

The Aledo Ladycats golf team took second place at the Burleson Centennial Tournament at Southern Oaks Golf and Tennis Club on March 12-13.

The golfers rebounded after finishing the first day 19 strokes off the lead. They gained 10 strokes on Saturday for the second-place finish behind first-place Keller. Keller ended the tournament with 617 strokes to the Ladycats' 627.



JENIFER MILLER/SPECIAL TO THE COMMUNITY NEWS

Aledo Ladycat golfers who took part in the Burleson Centennial Tournament are (from left) Ava Forman, Aly Saunders, Ella Fisher, Sanaa Lemen, Mallory Miller (not pictured) and Kyla Morales.

Burleson Centennial Tournament			
Aly Saunders	71	70	141
Ella Fisher	85	72	157
Sanaa Lemen	87	83	170
Mallory Miller	81	78	159
Ava Forman	92	95	187
Team	324	303	627

Aly Saunders took second place individually, carding the third-best round of the tournament with a second-round 70. A Midlothian golfer had the two best rounds with a 68 and 69.

Aledo Ladycat golfers who took part in the Burleson Centennial Tournament are (from left) Ava Forman, Aly Saunders, Ella Fisher, Sanaa Lemen, Mallory Miller (not pictured) and Kyla Morales.



COLBY MOORE/SPECIAL TO THE COMMUNITY NEWS

JV Bearcats competed in the Chic-Fil-A Challenge at Southern Oaks Golf and Tennis Club in Burleson on March 11. Shown are (front row) Maddox Edwards; (sanding, from left) Tyler Pearce, Logan Ban, Logan Dalton, Dylan Kiser, Payne Wellman, Jack Tregallas, Boyd Thompson, and Cade Moore; and (back) Coach Joe Roquemore.



ANDREA GARNETT/SPECIAL TO THE COMMUNITY NEWS

Maddie Farmer and Georgia Posey placed second in the Keller Timbercreek Tournament.

TENNIS

RacquetCats compete in Keller

By Andrea Garnett
Special to The Community News

The Aledo varsity tennis team traveled to Keller for the Timbercreek Tournament on Thursday, March 11.

The girl's doubles team of Maddie Farmer and Georgia Posey placed second in the finals while in

mixed doubles Ian Leslie and Katie Siddons went home with third place. Allie Farmer placed sixth in girls singles.

After spring break the RacquetCats will return March 26 to play in a Quad Match with Brownwood, Argyle, and Wichita Falls.

Congrats!



TCA Signers Jake Povero and Ryan Hollingsworth

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